



Rough Guide to Scotland praises a “modern dynamic nation” but says hotels are “disappointing”

25 million people worldwide claim Scottish ancestry proving the enduring popularity of Scotland’s rich history and culture. The updated seventh edition of *The Rough Guide to Scotland* explores and illuminates the best – and worst – features of the country. From the Hebrides, where “the locals are more likely to be building websites than shearing sheep”, to the 31,460 lochs and the “cobbled Edinburgh streets”, the book goes beyond clichéd images of Scotland to reveal a country where oil and microprocessors now matter more than tweed, and where surfing, mountain-biking and whale-watching outshine the traditional Highland pursuits of hunting and fishing.

A regular first port of call, **Edinburgh** is described as “dramatically handsome and engaging” and the guide notes “its magnificent castle and historic Old Town”. The “surreal, vital buzz” of the Edinburgh festival also features heavily and there’s a new focus on the more unusual festivals including, The Ba’ in Orkney, the Burning of the Clavie in Burghead and the Whuppity Scoorie in Lanark.

The Rough Guide applauds **Glasgow** for breaking with “the industrial shackles of the past” to become “a cultured and dynamic” city with “some of the best-financed and most imaginative museums and galleries in Britain” and a “thriving” live-music scene.

Further north, **Dundee** is recommended as a “less snooty alternative to Aberdeen” where “regeneration is very much the buzz word” and attractions such as the “hip and exciting” DCA arts venue and the “fun-packed” Sensation science museum are lending the city a “dynamic and progressive” air. **Stirling** may be “lacking the cosmopolitan edge” but with its “steep, cobbled streets and mixed community of locals, students and tourists” the guide picks it out as an appealing place to visit with the best castle in Scotland.

However, the news is not all rosy and the Rough Guide is typically honest in its assessments. **Aberdeen** is in danger of becoming a “soulless” city with its oil wealth and self-confidence lending a “feeling of corporate sterility”. And **Fort William** “should be a gem” but has seen its waterfront “wrecked” by “ribbon bungalow development and an ill-advised dual carriageway – complete with grubby pedestrian underpass”, while **John O’ Groats** “still remains an uninspiring tourist trap”. The book notes that “the standard of many B&Bs, guesthouses and hotels is often disappointing” and states “it can be hard

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work finding places with the standards of taste, originality, efficiency and value which you might expect from a country with as well developed a tourist market as Scotland.” The authors also advise visitors to keep an eye on their watches due to “inflexible and unenlightened meal times” offered by small town B&Bs and hotels. The guide also identifies inadequate attractions such as Balmoral Castle, “a disappointment even for a dedicated royalist” noting “when the doors are nudged open, the general riffraff are permitted to view only the ballroom, an exhibition room and the grounds”.

For a list of Scotland’s top 40 attractions, as recommended by the new Rough Guide, please see the attached document.

Notes for Editors

The Rough Guide to Scotland, 7th edition, available now.

The Rough Guide to Scottish Highlands and Islands, 4th edition, 25th May 2006.

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Scotland’s Top 40, according to The Rough Guide

1. **Mousa, Shetland:** the mother of all Iron Age brochs, on an island off the coast of Shetland.
2. **Iona:** the home of Celtic Christian spirituality, an island of pilgrimage today as in antiquity.
3. **Jarishof, Shetland:** an exceptional archeological site taking in Bronze Age, Iron Age, Pictish, Viking and medieval remains.
4. **Golf at St Andrews:** the most famous fairway in world golf, and you can play for next to nothing at the neighbouring Himalayas putting green.
5. **Islay:** Hebridean Island with no fewer than seven whisky distilleries, and wonderfully varied birdlife that includes thousands of wintering geese.
6. **Burrell Collection, Glasgow:** an unconventional but impressive museum at the heart of Glasgow’s cultural renaissance.
7. **Hill walking:** the array of challenging but accessible hills makes walking one of the best ways to enjoy Scotland.
8. **Shetland Folk festival:** Shetland is the place to experience traditional folk music, and the annual folk festival is the best time to do it.
9. **Whale-watching, Mull:** close encounters with a very different type of Highland wildlife.
10. **Dunnottar Castle:** memorably dramatic ruined fortress, surrounded by giddy sea cliffs.
11. **Scottish Parliament:** Enric Miralles’ startling contemporary design has transformed the old Holyrood area of Edinburgh.
12. **Glasgow School of Art:** finest example of the unique style of Glasgow architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh.
13. **Eigg:** perfect example of a tiny, friendly Hebridean Island with a golden beach to lie on, a hill to climb and stunning views across the sea to its neighbour, Rum.

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14. **Stirling Castle:** the grandest castle in Scotland with a commanding outlook over Highlands and lowlands.
15. **Highland Games:** an entertaining blend of summer sports day and traditional clan gathering, held in locations across the Highlands.
16. **Kinloch Castle, Rùm:** stay in the servants' quarters of this Edwardian hideaway or in one of its few remaining four-poster beds.
17. **Staffa and the Treshnish Isles:** view the basalt columns of Staffa's Fingal's Cave from the sea, and then picnic beside the puffins on the Isle of Lunga.
18. **Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh:** the ivory Lewis chessman are part of the superb collection of artefacts.
19. **Pubs:** forget the great outdoors and install yourself in one of Scotland's cosy and convivial hostelrys.
20. **Arbroath "smokies":** an unsung delicacy – haddock smoked over traditional wood fires, best savoured in this unpretentious east-coast port town.
21. **Calanais, Lewis:** prehistoric standing stones that occupy a serene setting in the Western Isles.
22. **The Falkirk Wheel:** less a wheel, more a mighty claw, this engineering and design marvel lifts boats between two stretches of canal.
23. **St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall:** a medieval cathedral in miniature, built by the Vikings using the local red and yellow sandstones.
24. **Caledonian Forest:** the few gnarled survivors of the great ancient Highland forests are majestic characters.
25. **Melrose Abbey:** ruined Cistercian abbey situated in the most beguiling of Border towns.
26. **The Caingorm Mountains:** natural splendour and terrific outdoor activities.
27. **Flying over Orkney:** take an exhilarating aerial tour of the archipelago in an eight-seater plane.
28. **Edinburgh Old Town:** lose yourself in the capital's medieval cobbled streets and closes.
29. **DCA, Dundee:** The Dundee Contemporary Arts centre, an inspiring focus for the town's up-and-coming cultural scene.
30. **Edinburgh Festival:** the world's biggest festival of theatre and the arts transforms Edinburgh every August.
31. **Pictish Stones:** intriguing stone carvings by the ancient Picts are found up and down the east coast.
32. **Hogmanay:** new Year celebrations, with whisky, dancing and fireworks staving off the midwinter chill.
33. **Glen Coe:** moody, poignant and spectacular glen within easy reach of Fort William.
34. **Gearrannan, Lewis:** stay in the thatched blackhouse hostel in this beautifully restored former crofting village.
35. **South Harris beaches:** take your pick of deserted golden beaches in South Harris, or further south in the Uists.
36. **Maes Howe, Orkney:** Europe's best-preserved Neolithic chambered cairn also contains fine examples of Viking runic inscriptions and drawings.
37. **West Highland Railway:** one of the great railway journeys of the world.
38. **Tobermory:** the main town on the beautiful island of Mull, and Scotland's most picturesque fishing port.
39. **Loch Fyne Oyster Bar:** pick up a picnic or enjoy fine dining at Scotland's top smokehouse and seafood outlet, located just outside Inveraray.
40. **Skye Cuillin:** the most spectacular mountain range on the west coast, for viewing or climbing.

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