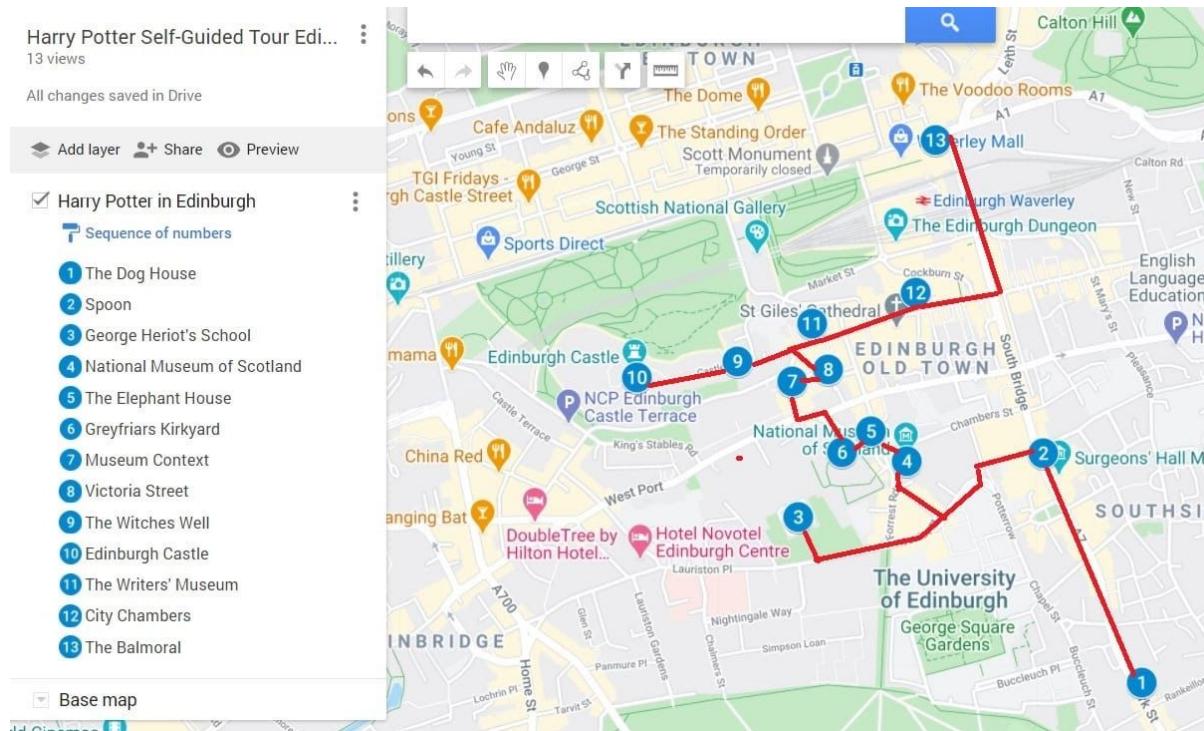


This post is a free, self-guided tour of Harry Potter sights in Edinburgh, along with a map and route, put together by Free Tours by Foot's resident Muggle, Margaret.

You can expect to walk nearly 2.2 miles or just over 3.6 kilometres.



**Click the map to enlarge or download**

The tour will last, on average, just under 90 minutes. Although this may change depending on your walking pace or stops you wish to make along the way.

For guests with mobility issues, or those with prams or buggies, there is only one set of steps on the route and there is an alternative spot to place yourself which we will point out to you at the time.

You can [use this Google map](#), which you can download to the Google Maps app to get the written directions.

Alternatively, you can take our GPS-led audio tour, which costs €1.99 but comes with a much more in-depth tour than what is in this PDF.



---

## **1. The Dog House - 18-24 Clerk Street, Edinburgh EH8 9HX**

The Dog House is one of the few places on earth where you can drink Butterbeer.

In the Harry Potter series, Butterbeer is sold at a multitude of pubs, but primarily in The Three Broomsticks and The Hog's Head.

Although Butterbeer is consumed by adults and kids alike in the books, that the one served at The Dog House is definitely for adults only, one of the ingredients being - you guessed it - beer.



*Facing the Dog House, turn LEFT and walk up Clerk Street. You will pass St. Patrick Square on your left and the street will change names to St. Patrick Street.*

*Continue along and the street again changes names to Nicolson Street. You will pass Nicolson Square Gardens on your left.*

*Continue until you reach No. 6A and the junction with Drummond Street.*

---

## **2. Spoon - 6A Nicolson St, Edinburgh EH8 9DH**

Although the Elephant Cafe usually claims the title of the “birthplace of Harry Potter” we know that Spoon played just as large a role in the creation of the legendary series.



(And as an aside, it tends to be less busy than Elephant Cafe' so this maybe a good way for you to avoid the crowds!)

In 1997 Spoon was known as Nicolson's Cafe and it was owned by JK Rowling's brother-in-law, Roger Moore.

At the time, Rowling didn't have much money so she would hide out in cafes, ordering a coffee now and again as she worked on the groundbreaking first book of her Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

*With your back to the plaque, Drummond Street is on your right, and on your left, it crosses over Nicolson Street and becomes South College Street.*

*Cross the road and continue down South College Street. When South College Street curves right and becomes West College Street, continue straight ahead along the pedestrianised path and walk until you get to Brighton Street.*

*Here take a quick LEFT then fast RIGHT onto Lothian Street.*

*As you proceed, the street you are adjacent to on your left, for vehicular traffic only, is charmingly called Potterrow. Listen to the next clip as you walk.*

---

## **Walk and Listen - POTTERROW**

We couldn't let you walk next to Potter Row and not mention it!

This street bears the name of the world's favourite Wizard, and it would make sense to think that the name perhaps inspired JK Rowling when she was naming her main character.

However, she says it's just a coincidence. When giving her first ever interview in America in 1999, JK was asked about the name of her hero and how she chose it.

Her reply was, “*...he had several different surnames before I chose Potter. Potter was the name of a brother and sister who I played with when I was very young.*”

**Lothian Street merges at an angle with Treviot Place and merges with Potterrow, so continue in the same direction with the university on your left.**

**Treviot Place turns into Lauriston Place. Continue until you get to the grounds of George Heriot's School on your RIGHT.**

---

### **3. George Heriot School - Lauriston Place, Edinburgh EH3 9EQ**

Originally built in 1628, George Heriot's school was opened as an orphanage and hospital for boys and today is a co-ed primary and secondary school.

You'll notice the four grand towers that top the building, which many said were the inspiration for the towers atop Hogwarts Castle.



The school also has four houses that students are divided into and they all do, in fact, compete for a house cup!

The school is easily visible from the locations Rowling used to write in and walk along so it's very easy to see why, for so many years, Potter buffs believed this building to be the inspiration for her wizarding school.

*With your back to the school ground gates, turn LEFT and go back on yourself down Lauriston Place. When Lauriston Place splits into two, take the LEFT branch, Forrest Road.*

*Go straight until Forrest Road merges with George IV Bridge. Continue in the same direction until you get to Chambers Street on your RIGHT. The National Museum is on that corner.*

---

**4. National Museum of Scotland** - Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF

Ron Weasley taught Harry to play Wizard's Chess.

This is just like regular chess except the pieces are enchanted and can be directed like troops - they also literally knock each other down when taking a square!



It would seem that when Rowling was creating Wizard Chess, she was also thinking of the Lewis Chessmen.

This is a group of distinctive 12th-century chess pieces that were discovered in a hoard on Lewis in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland in 1831.

Eleven of the over ninety chess pieces are held at the National Museum of Scotland and are viewable to the public.

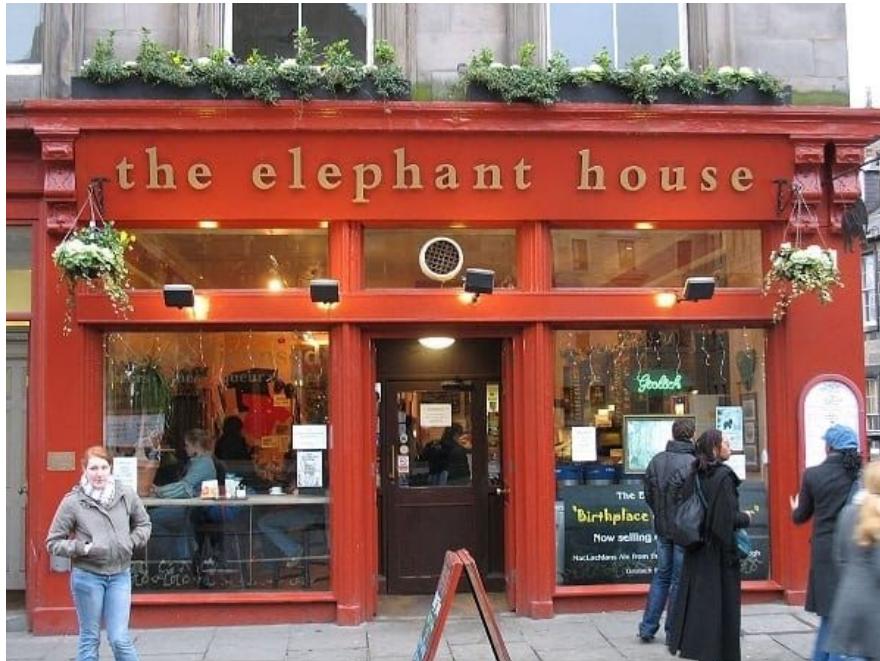
*When standing at the junction of Chambers St. and George IV Bridge, with the National Museum at your back, take the slight right to head up George IV Bridge, opposite the way you walked to the Museum.*

*Just a few moments up the street you will come to No. 21 on your LEFT.*

---

**5 - Elephant House** - 21 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EN

This unassuming cafe is a destination for thousands of Harry Potter fans every year - as well as fans of Ian Rankin and Alexander McCall-Smith who were well-known patrons.



You'll notice a sign on the Cafe which erroneously claims that this is the “birthplace” of Harry Potter.

Rowling herself addressed this sign and is quoted as saying, “*I'd been writing Potter for several years before I ever set foot in this cafe, so it's not the birthplace, but I \*did\* write in there so we'll let them off!*”

Also, make sure to take a trip to the loo! The walls are absolutely covered in Harry Potter graffiti with messages and drawings left by fans who have traveled from all over the world to come here.

*Facing the Elephant House, turn LEFT and walk back down King George IV Bridge.*

*Walk until you get to the statue of the dog - Greyfriar's Bobby, of whom we will tell you more in a moment - and the Greyfriar's Pub.*

*Turn RIGHT and walk down the path that runs to the left of the pub into the park. This is Greyfriar's Kirkyard, your next stop.*

---

## **6. Greyfriar's Kirkyard - 26A Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh EH1 2QE**

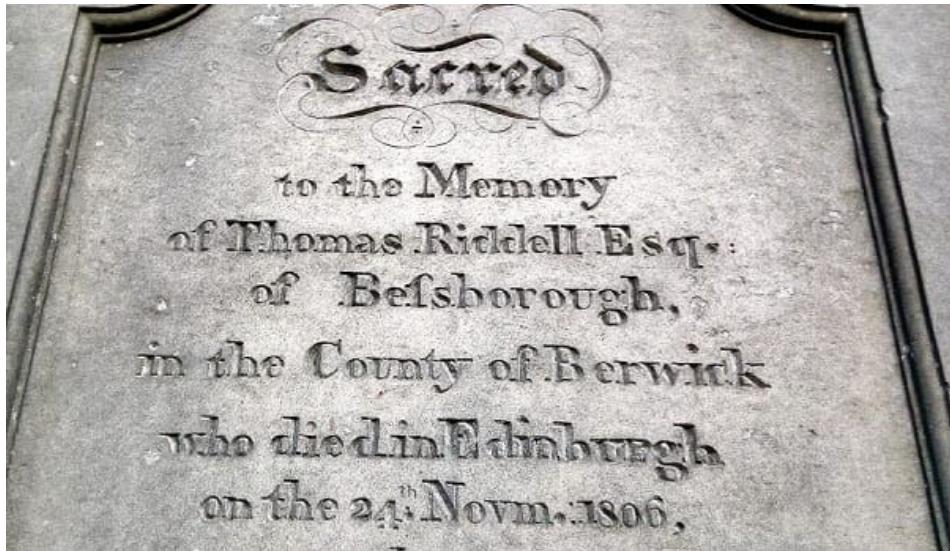
You are now standing outside the iconic - and haunted - Greyfriar's Kirk - kirk being a Scottish word for church.

The name Greyfriars is in reference to the Franciscan friary which previously stood here, whose friars wore grey habits.



As the kirkyard is not far from the cafes JK Rowling used to frequent, she would occasionally walk through the rows for inspiration.

Here you will find the tombs of Thomas Riddell (**NOTE SPELLING**), who lent his name to that of the Dark Lord Himself.



You will also find William McGonagall a poet who shares a surname with the head of Gryffindor House and a Mrs. Elizabeth Moodie who perhaps gave her name to a certain Mad-Eyed Professor.

The kirkyard is almost always open to the public, as is the church from April to October for tourism and year-round for services.

To get to the graves we mentioned above, simply walk straight past the church, along the left of the building.

You will find them in the back towards the right, behind the remains of the old Flodden Wall, the remains of a 16th century wall that surrounded the city.

*The path you walked on curves in a horseshoe pattern around the Kirk.*

*Continue along that path down the other side of the Church until it stops, then take a LEFT.*

*This path will take you out of the kirkyard and exists onto Candlemaker Row. When you get to Candlemaker Row, turn LEFT toward the roundabout.*

*At the roundabout, bear left onto Cowgatehead and take the first RIGHT onto West Bow.*

**Walk up West Bow, which turns into Victoria Street, and stop at Number 40 on your LEFT.**

---

### **7. Museum Context - 40 Victoria Street, EH1 2JW**

Known by some locals as ‘Diagon House,’ Museum Context is a (VICTORIA ST) fascinating shop, spread over two stone vaults and looks exactly like the Diagon Alley shops as depicted in the Harry Potter films.



Absolutely every inch of the place is covered in interesting and quirky treasures to take home.

Given that Victoria Street is heavily associated with Diagon Alley, it makes sense to find such a treasure trove of Potter memorabilia in this location.

Make sure to hit the top floor where you'll find a wizarding desk with a hat that you can wear to snap a selfie while you're visiting!

*Step outside of the shop and soak up your surroundings.*

*Turn LEFT and head further down Victoria Street until you get to the staircase on your LEFT.*

*Stop here, and look back from where you came as you play the next clip. Explore the street as much as you'd like, but make sure you return to the stairs when you're done.*

---

## **8. Victoria Street - Victoria St., Edinburgh EH1 2HE**

So as far as we are concerned, this is Diagon Alley - or Victoria Street as the case may be!

This gorgeous, curving road looks just like the twisting and topsy-turvy thoroughfare in the Harry Potter films.



All these ramshackle, colourful buildings are tucked close together, with oddly shaped windows and roofs adorning each one.

Just around the corner is Candlemaker Row, lined with cobblestones and filled with whimsical structures holding just a hint of magic.

It's also worth pointing out the AHA HA HA along the curve of the street at No. 99 West Bow - perhaps a precursor to Fred and George's joke shop, Weasley's Wizard Wheezes?

*Walk up the stone staircase which will take you to Upper Bow.*

*It's worth noting here that the area to your right is known as Riddles Court - another bit of inspiration for Rowling?*

*Walk straight along Upper Bow until it stops at the traffic junction. Take the second LEFT - just to the RIGHT of the church - onto Castlehill.*

*You will pass another shop selling Harry Potter merchandise - The Boy Wizard - on your RIGHT.*

*And just beyond that, right before you enter the Castle grounds, on the RIGHT attached to the building you have just walked past which contains the Tartan Weaving Mill and Experience, is the Witches Well.*

---

## **9. The Witches Well** - 555 Castlehill, Edinburgh EH1 2NG

The Witches Well is a small cast-iron fountain - which no longer flows - and plaque, honouring all the Scottish people who were burned at the stake for witchcraft between the 15th and 18th centuries.



Throughout the centuries, more than 4,000 alleged witches were put to death in Scotland - and a great deal of them right here.

Now get back onto Castlehill and face the Castle itself.

---

## **10. Edinburgh Castle**

An imposing, sprawling structure of strength and mystic design that surges out of a great rock into the sky, it's easy to imagine this building filled with hundreds of witches and wizards studying, playing, and living inside.



In fact, Rowling commented that now, ”... *I've come to live in the shadow of what could be a lot like Hogwarts, except Hogwarts has a lake.*”

So aside from the missing lake, this castle essentially showcases most of the features and details of Hogwarts that Rowling describes in her books!

As a side note, there is a canon that fires at 13:00 every day (except for Sundays) which means the Castle is very busy.

So we'd recommend coming either when the castle first opens, or in the late afternoon!

*With the Castle behind you, walk straight down Castlehill. When you come back to the roundabout, continue straight down Lawnmarket.*

*Walk until you get to Lady Stairs Close on your left and turn LEFT down the Close. The Writers Museum is on your left and Makar's Court is on your right.*

---

**11. The Writers' Museum** - Lawnmarket, Lady Stair's Cl, Edinburgh EH1 2PA

This fabulous building is called Lady Stair's House; a faux-medieval structure designed by architect Stewart Henbest Capper in the 1890s which now houses a museum.

Edinburgh became the first UNESCO City of Literature in 2004 and this Museum shows why.

Primarily focused on Robert Louis Stevenson, Sir Walter Scott, and Robert Burns, there are also occasional temporary exhibitions.

One of which was dedicated to JK Rowling and included a first edition copy of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* with annotations and drawings by the author herself!



*With the Museum on your left, keep walking out of the Close by following the path ahead.*

*When you get out onto North Bank Street turn RIGHT. Follow North Bank Street, which will curve RIGHT and turn into St. Giles' Street.*

*Walk until you get to High Street and turn LEFT. When the High Street hits Parliament Street on the RIGHT, go through the arches into the collonade on your LEFT.*

*These are the Edinburgh City Chambers.*

---

## **12. Edinburgh City Chambers - 253 High St, Edinburgh EH1 1YJ**

The beautiful building standing before you now holds the Edinburgh City Chambers. For the purpose of our tour, you will want to head to the quadrangle in front of the building.

Here, under your feet, you will find flagstones displaying golden handprints.



These handprints are those of people who have won the Edinburgh Award - given to those who have made, "outstanding achievements and contribution to the city."

Set up in 2007, the first winner was Ian Rankin, and the second, in 2008 was JK Rowling, whose own handprints are immortalised here.

*Come out of the Chambers, and with your back to them, turn LEFT back onto High Street.*

*Continue along, until the junction with North and South Bridge. Take the LEFT onto North Bridge.*

*Walk along, over the Railway until you get to Princes Street. Turn LEFT and immediately the Balmoral is on your LEFT-hand side.*

---

### **13. Balmoral Hotel - 1 Princes St, Edinburgh EH2 2EQ**

JK Rowling began writing her iconic book series in a number of cafes, but she would write the final words of the series in one of the finest hotels in the city, Room 552 of The Balmoral Hotel.



Today, the room has been re-named the JK Rowling Suite, and the room contains a marble bust of Hermes (now contained in a glass display case), scribbled with the following, written in JK's own hand:

“JK Rowling finished writing Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows in this room on 11th Jan 2007.”

And that's it. Be sure to check out our [free tours of Edinburgh](#).

