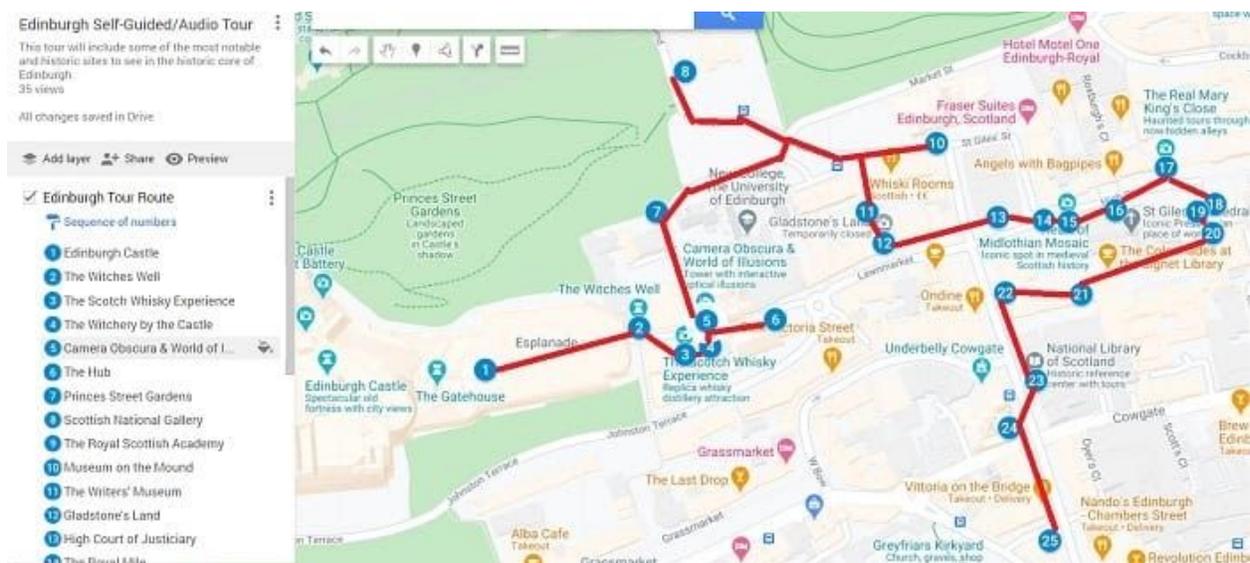


This post is a free, self-guided tour of Edinburgh, along with a map and route, put together by local tour guides for Free Tours by Foot.

You can expect to walk nearly 2 miles or just over 3.2 kilometres.

Below is the abridged version. You can get the full version with directions by downloading this map, clicking on this PDF, or downloading our audio tour.

Additionally, you can also take [free guided walking tours](#). These tours are in reality pay-what-you-wish tours.



Click the map to enlarge or to download it to your smartphone.

Edinburgh is one of the most historic cities in Scotland and the entire United Kingdom.

In addition to its medieval history, this city's history of education and learning has also affected our modern lives.

Whether it be the contributions that Adam Smith made to our modern understanding of a free market economy or the inspiration pulled from Edinburgh for the Harry Potter series, the people and the atmosphere of this city have contributed to the world in many important ways.

This tour will lead you through some of the most influential and popular landmarks in Edinburgh with plenty of sightseeing on the way.

In addition to historic sites, I'll also point out some options for food, museums, art, and other ways to make the most of your time in Edinburgh.

This tour will begin at Edinburgh Castle and continue downhill, mostly following the Royal Mile, with a few turns onto other streets.

Once you've made your way to the castle gates, you'll be ready to begin this tour.

Edinburgh Castle

This fortress stands on some of the oldest inhabited ground in Edinburgh - archaeologists have established that people occupied this area as early as the 2nd century CE. But the castle before you wasn't built until a millennium later.



It started in 1124 as the royal residence of David I, King of Scotland. It served that role until 1633, when it started to be used as a military barracks, soldiers sleeping where royalty used to live.

Edinburgh Castle was involved in several conflicts including the Wars of Scottish Independence. In total, there were 26 sieges in the history of this castle, making it the most besieged location in Scotland and one of the most attacked locations in the entire world.

St. Margaret's Chapel, located inside, is considered the oldest surviving building in Edinburgh, dating back to the castle's original construction in the 12th century.

This is also the home of the Honours of Scotland, otherwise known as the Scottish Crown Jewels. You'll also find the Scottish National War Memorial and the National War Museum of Scotland within these walls.

Depending on when you take this tour, it may not come as a surprise that this is the most visited tourist attraction in Scotland. If you manage to come during a quieter hour, it's definitely worth getting a ticket and taking a look around.

The Castle is open from 9:30 am - 18:00 (6 pm) daily from April - September and from 9:30 am - 17:00 (5 pm) daily from October - March.

Tickets are £17.50 for Adults, £14 for Seniors and Unemployed, and £10.50 for Children. Kids under 5 get in for free with an Adult.

Alternatively, you can save money on tickets using either the Edinburgh Explorer Pass or the Royal Edinburgh Ticket.

Whether or not you decide to enter the castle and look around, you'll find the next stop on our tour close to the welcome sign for Edinburgh Castle, attached to the side of the Tartan Weaving Mill and Exhibition building, facing the castle.

You're looking for a wall-mounted structure that at a glance looks like a decorative planter, and there's a good chance there's a plant inside it.

This is the Witches' Well. It's identified by a sign on the fence to the left of it.

The Witches' Well

This is a monument to the accused witches who were burned at the stake in Edinburgh between the 15th and 18th centuries.

During the 16th century, more women were murdered on this site than anywhere else in Scotland, and each one was denied a fair trial.



At the time that King James VI ruled over Scotland from 1567 to 1625, he believed that Satanism was widespread and that its practitioners showed signs in the form of powers, markings, or habits.

A woman accused of being a witch might be someone known for her medical skills, an unpopular nonconformist, or just the enemy of someone willing to make an accusation.

Over 4,000 alleged witches were killed here in front of the castle, most by hanging but some by burning. The last hanging was in 1728.

The plaque at the bottom of the memorial portrays a few symbolic images: a foxglove plant, which had some uses in herbal medicine but which in excess could be deadly; two heads, one grimacing with malice, the other one serene, representing the likely mix of kind and malevolent people killed in this crusade; and a snake twined around the heads, with its Biblical connection to evil, but also its ancient classical connection to the art of medicine, something still seen today in the caduceus, the symbol of medicine showing two snakes entwined around a staff.

When someone was accused of witchcraft, her death was often a given; only her postmortem reputation was really at stake. Sometimes the trial was itself the means of execution.

Not man, but god was invited to judge her, in what was called a Trial by Ordeal. Ordeals were used to test many crimes, but their use with witches is particularly famous.

A woman was thrown in the water. If she sank, she wasn't a witch, and her grieving relatives could rest assured that she'd been vindicated. If she floated, she was a witch, and she would be pulled out and executed.

Given this treatment, many groups, including Edinburgh World Heritage and groups of doctors and professors from the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow have called for a new, more prominent memorial than this one.

To reach our next stop, walk down Castlehill and prepare to turn left onto Ramsay Lane. There are a few great attractions you might want to visit on Castlehill, so we'll stop at this intersection to take a look around before continuing on.

Castlehill Attractions

Directly across from the intersection of Castlehill and Ramsay Lane, you'll find both the Scotch Whiskey Experience and the Witchery.

The Scotch Whiskey Experience is part distillery visit, part amusement park - they offer a ride where you hop into a barrel to experience the production of whiskey firsthand.



In addition to that, they also offer tasting opportunities and the chance to see the world's largest collection of Scotch Whiskey.

You can also take tasting classes to help you discern the differences in quality between different types of whiskey. Daily tours are offered for between £17 - £40 from 11 am - 17:30 (5:30 pm).

The Witchery is a restaurant which also has 9 theatrical suites designed to look almost medieval.

They have an award winning wine list and dishes with nods to the local medieval menu, including lamb, ham hocks, mackerel, trout and even vegetarian options.

The Witchery is open daily from 12 pm - 23:30 (11:30 pm) and prices are a bit on the expensive side with 3 course dinners starting at around £38.

If you look to the left of the intersection at Castlehill and Ramsay Lane, located across from the Scotch Whiskey Experience, you'll see Camera Obscura & The World of Illusions.

This is a family-friendly attraction which has been entertaining and educating visitors since 1835. It started by offering the opportunity to see a telescope and other scientific instruments of the era.

In 1853, the business found a permanent home at its current location and introduced the Camera Obscura, which reportedly projected moving images some 40 years before film was invented.

Today, there are six floors of interactive exhibitions, but you can still find references to the original location and the people who founded it in the presentation on the top floor which actually includes the original Camera Obscura.

Tickets are £16.50 for Adults, £14.50 for Seniors and Students, and £12.50 for Children. Kids under 5 get in for free.

Camera Obscura & World of Illusions is open from 9:30 am - 20:00 (8 pm) every Monday - Thursday, as well as 9 am - 21:00 (9 pm) on Friday - Sunday.

Another place worth noting is The Hub, an event venue located at the end of the street. You can walk down the street to see it if you want, but it's not a necessity for the purposes of this tour.

This is the home of the Edinburgh International Festival, which hosts a programme of performance art including dance, music, opera and theatre.

The Hub is an example of Gothic Revival architecture, built in the 1840s. This structure was originally designed to serve as a meeting hall for the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and from the 1920s - 1980s, it was used as a church.

Once you're done looking around Castlehill, head down Ramsay Lane to our next stop.

Princes Street Gardens & Museums

As you walk down Ramsay Lane, you'll notice that the street begins to turn about halfway down, and on the Northern side of the road you'll start to see some trees in the distance.

Head to the left sidewalk of this street for an excellent view of our next few stops.



Once you reach the iron fence, go about halfway down the hill and take a moment to enjoy a quick look at the Prince Street Gardens and two of the most excellent museums in the city.

The Prince Street Gardens are the best known parks in Edinburgh, and one of the nicest places to enjoy some time outside.

Created in two phases in the 1770s and 1820s, these gardens surround Edinburgh Castle and offer some of the best views of the castle, too.

There are many monuments in this part of the park, including the Sir Walter Scott Monument and statues of David Livingstone, Lord Provost Adam Black and John Wilson.

Every Christmas, there is a Winter Wonderland festival held in the East Gardens which includes amusement rides, a Christmas market, an ice rink

and a ferris wheel sometimes called the “Edinburgh Eye” in reference to the London Eye.

From this perspective, you’ll see both the Scottish National Gallery and the Royal Scottish Academy to the right of the Prince Street Gardens.

The Scottish National Gallery is in a columned Neoclassical building, first opened in 1859. It was designed by William Henry Playfair, who was also responsible for the design of the Royal Scottish Academy.

Artwork in this gallery spans from Renaissance works to the 20th century, with both Scottish and international artists on display.

Notable works include *Madonna Bridgewater* by Raphael, *Haystacks* by Claude Monet, *Vision after the Sermon* by Paul Gauguin, and *Vase of Flowers* by Jean-Baptiste-Simeon Chardin.

Although you have to book your tickets in advance, it’s free to visit the Scottish National Gallery and they are open from 10 am - 17:00 (5 pm) daily.

The Royal Scottish Academy is right across the street from the National Gallery, and it’s home to the National Academy of Art, which promotes contemporary Scottish art.

Although it was originally founded in 1826 simply as the “Scottish Academy,” it would only take another 12 years before they were granted a royal charter in 1838.

The Royal Scottish Academy hosts several exhibitions throughout the year, typically one per month. Almost all of their exhibitions are free to enjoy, but you may need to book your tickets ahead of time.

They are open from 10 am - 17:00 (5 pm) Monday through Saturday and 12 pm - 17:00 (5 pm) on Sundays.

Our next stop will take us further down the hill, and if you look to the East from here you’ll probably see the Bank of Scotland in the distance.

Go down the hill to where Mound Place and North Bank Street intersect. From here, begin walking up the right side of North Bank Street. Stop when you reach the Wash Bar and look at the large building on the left side of the street.

Museum on the Mound

The building you're looking at is the historic Head Office of the Bank of Scotland, but it's also the home of yet another excellent museum you may want to visit while you're in the city.



**Ronnie Macdonald from Chelmsford, United Kingdom / CC BY
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The Head Office of the Bank of Scotland is a great example of Baroque Revival style, built in 1806.

The museum is dedicated to money, coinage and the economy, focusing on the history of economics in Edinburgh.

The permanent collection includes a variety of artefacts covering the history of the bank since its foundation in 1695.

Other exhibits focus on the history of currency, ranging from items used for barter to coinage and paper money - even a £1 million note from the Bank of England!

The [Museum on the Mound](#) is open from Tuesday - Friday from 10 am - 17:00 (5 pm). It's also open on Saturdays and Bank Holiday Mondays from 13:00 (1 pm) to 17:00 (5 pm), and admission is free.

Our next stop will take us up the stairs to the left of the Wash Bar. These steps will take you directly to the intersection with James Court.

The Writer's Museum

Walking up the stairs, you'll eventually reach a clearing which is known as Makar's Court, "makar" being a Scottish term for a skilled writer. As you enter, you'll see the Writer's Museum to your right.



The history of this museum begins in a Close which was built in 1622. This became known as Lady Stair's Close, named after one of the inhabitants -- Elizabeth Dundas, the widow of the Earl of Stair.

It wasn't until 1892 that the current building would be constructed here, and in 1907 it was presented by the Earl of Roseberry to the city for use as a museum - at which point it gained the name of Lady Stair's House.

The architecture on display here attempts to recreate the medieval style, and they used replicas of carved stones that had previously been used in the construction of Lady Stair's Close.

The museum inside this building honors the lives of three very important Scottish writers: Robert Burns, Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson.

The collection includes portraits, written works and personal objects owned by the writers.

Some of Burns' most notable works include the poem *Halloween* and the lyrics to *Auld Lang Syne*. Sir Walter Scott is known for the poem *The Lady of the Lake* and novels like *Rob Roy* and *Ivanhoe*.

Robert Louis Stevenson is known for novels like *Treasure Island* and the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

[The Writer's Museum](#) is open daily from 10 am - 17:00 (5 pm) and admission is free.

To reach the next destination on this tour, continue walking up the stairs until you reach Lawnmarket.

Gladstone's Land

Once you've found Lawnmarket, turn to your right and walk past the Olde Edinburgh shop until you reach Gladstone's Land.

You'll know you're in the right spot when you see the sign with the gilt-copper hawk.



Kim Traynor / CC BY-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>)

This 17th century tenement house is one of the oldest surviving buildings on the Royal Mile. The building was originally constructed in 1617.

In 1934, it was condemned and initially scheduled for demolition, but the National Trust for Scotland saved and restored it.

The restoration was so faithful that entering the building today provides a look at what it was like to live in the 17th century. Visitors can expect to find a lack of running water, open fires used for heating, and furniture from the period.

Tickets start at £7 for adults, £6 for children and £20 for families (2 parents + 2 children).

The museum is open daily for most of the year, with hours varying by season, longer in the warmer months and shorter in the winter.

Check out [the official website](#) for more information.

Once you're done here, head West down Lawnmarket until you reach the intersection with Bank Street. Head across the street on the left sidewalk and you'll find our next stop.

High Court of Justiciary

This building at the Northwest corner of Lawnmarket and Bank Street is the supreme criminal court of Scotland, and it is still in use today, with jurisdiction over the whole of the country.



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(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>)

This court hears cases of both serious criminal trials and appeals.

In front of the building is a statue depicting David Hume, a philosopher and historian, in Greek robes.

David Hume was a prominent figure in Scottish Enlightenment, well known for his belief in scepticism, naturalism, empiricism, and other ideas revived in his era.



One of Hume's most famous contributions was his thesis that "reason is the slave of the passions."

He was inspired by scientists like Sir Isaac Newton and philosophers such as John Locke, viewing philosophical thinking as something of a science in and of itself, testable and experimental in nature.

Hume's view of a potential scientific methodology behind philosophy inspired many of the founding fathers in America, and he was friends with men like John Adams and Benjamin Franklin.

It is believed that Benjamin Franklin may have even changed the words of the Declaration of Independence based upon Hume's ideas.

Adam Smith once described David Hume as “approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit.”

From here, our next few stops will be a bit further West down Lawnmarket, which is actually part of the same stretch of road we have been following -- more or less -- during this tour.

The same road that was once Castlehill turns into Lawnmarket, which then becomes High Street at the intersection of St. Giles’ Street, and after that turns into Canongate which leads all the way to Holyrood Palace.

This entire stretch of road is known as the Royal Mile, because it is almost exactly one mile (or 1.6 kilometres) and it connects Edinburgh Castle to Holyrood Palace.

As you may have noticed, this is usually the busiest street in the Old Town Area.

The Heart of Midlothian Mosaic

This mosaic was built into the pavement located near the West Door of St. Giles’ Cathedral and close to the Parliament House.

This area is where the Old Tolbooth was located in the 15th century, the central administrative building in the town which also served as a prison and a site of public executions.

The mosaic, shaped like a heart, is named after the Midlothian county, of which Edinburgh was the county town.



It is said that people spit on the heart for good luck, but this was initially done to show disdain for the prison which was once located here.

Good luck or not, if there are a lot of people in the area when you visit, you might want to think twice about participating in this tradition.

St. Giles' Cathedral

As you're walking down the Royal Mile, it's hard to miss this large and historic structure and the crowds it often attracts.

St. Giles' Cathedral was founded in the 12th century, but it played perhaps its most important historic role in the 16th century during the time of the Reformation.



**Carlos Delgado / CC BY-SA
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When St. Giles' became a Protestant church in 1559, John Knox served as its minister. Before that point, it was a Catholic Cathedral, hence the name of St. Giles' Cathedral.

Knox was a theologian and writer, as well as a leader of the Reformation of Scotland. He also founded the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Knox brought the language of the Bible to everyday Scots, making it accessible to the common man and playing an important role in Scotland's history of education, enlightenment and academic achievement.

John Knox was such an accomplished and important figure in the history of this church that he was buried here, but thanks to changes made over the years, his final resting place is now somewhere in the area of parking spot #23.

After the Reformation in 1560, the church served multiple congregations and was also used as both a prison and a meeting location for the Parliament of Scotland.

This church would also be granted cathedral status from 1661-1689, but since then it has been a Presbyterian church with no arch-bishop and thus cannot be considered a cathedral any longer -- but that hasn't changed what people call it.

In 1637, Charles I tried to force a Scottish Prayer Book on churchgoers in St. Giles', which prompted a riot that would lead to the formation of a group known as the Covenanters and the beginning of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms.

To this day, the National Covenant is housed inside the church and it was signed in blood by the Covenanters, who would all eventually be executed.

As a result of the historic moments that took place here, St. Giles has become known to some as the Mother Church of World Presbyterianism.

Although the first iteration of the church was small and built in the Romanesque style, it was replaced in the 14th century with the current building with several additions being made between the 14th and 16th centuries, and the architectural style used for the new design was French medieval, which was unusual in Britain.

There are over 100 memorials in the church, and quite a few beautiful stained glass windows as well, including the Great West Window dedicated to author Robert Burns.

The most recent addition was the Thistle Chapel in 1909. Every other year, the Queen visits St. Giles' Cathedral and takes part in a ceremony at the Thistle Chapel where new members of The Order of the Thistle are installed.

Due to its significance in the history of Scotland and the United Kingdom in general, St. Giles' Cathedral is often considered the Westminster Abbey of Scotland.

Our next stop is a little further down High Street, opposite St. Giles' Cathedral. Once you've reached the far end of the church on High Street, turn to the left and you'll see The Real Mary King's Close.

The Real Mary King's Close

This historic Close is located underneath many buildings on the Royal Mile. It's named after former merchant burgess Mary King, who once lived on the Close in the 17th century.

A 'Close' is the term used by people in Scotland to describe ancient alleyways. This close was a cluster of underground passages.



There were hundreds of tenement buildings in this area in the past which some regarded as the world's first skyscrapers.

In the 1600's, unsanitary living conditions here led to an epidemic of bubonic plague in Edinburgh, with the worst of it coming in 1645.

Although many blamed black rats for carrying the disease, it was actually the fleas on the rats which were to blame. White rags were hung outside houses of plague victims to indicate they needed food, coal and other supplies brought to them.

The plague doctor George Rae treated plague victims of Mary King's Close wearing what has since become known as the "plague doctor" attire -- a thick leather cloak and a bird-like mask with sweet-smelling herbs to conceal the stench.

Parts of the Close were demolished and buried during the building of the Royal Exchange in the 18th century, and as a result they would be closed off to the public for several years. We'll be visiting what was once the Royal Exchange very soon.

Over the years, many myths and urban legends developed about Mary King's Close, including ghost stories. As a result, this site has become a subject of fascination for people who believe in the supernatural.

It's been featured in multiple television shows such as *Ghost Hunters International*, *Mystery Hunters* and *Most Haunted*.

Nowadays, you can actually get a [fully guided tour](#) of the close which is offered daily from 9:30 - 18:00 every 15 minutes.

Tickets are £17.95 for Adults, £15.95 for Seniors and Students, £11.95 for Children and £49 for families (2 Adults + 2 Children).

Tours last 1 hour and provide a lot of historic information about the Close and Edinburgh's past. If you want to know more about this site, make sure to sign up for a tour after you're finished with this one!

Our next attraction will take you back across the street to the statue of Adam Smith which faces away from St. Giles' Cathedral.

Adam Smith Statue

This is the newest statue on the Royal Mile, having been erected on July 4th, 2008. The monument depicts Smith in his later life, as he spent his last years in Edinburgh.

As you walk up to the statue, you'll notice there is a plough placed behind Adam Smith, which is a metaphor for the idea that he helped to replace agrarian economics.



Kim Traynor / CC BY (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>)

A beehive was placed in front of him to symbolize the industry which he felt progress relied upon.

Smith was a pioneer of free trade economics and author of *The Wealth of Nations*. The modern market economy of today is largely a result of Smith's ideas.

Adam Smith started off in Edinburgh as a freelance lecturer, but eventually

he would become the chair of Logic and professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University.

He also published the *Theory of Moral Sentiment* while at the university in 1759.

Smith would later settle in Kirkcaldy, where he wrote *The Wealth of Nations*.

During the last 12 years of his life, he lived in Edinburgh and worked as the Commissioner of Customs starting in 1778.

In addition to his influence in the United Kingdom, Smith was also highly influential to the founding fathers of the United States.

James Madison even went so far as to nominate *The Wealth of Nations* to be placed in the congressional library.

James Monroe and Thomas Jefferson also spoke highly of his ideas, with Jefferson going so far as to say his book was the best examination on the economy in existence to that point.

Our next stop is the Mercat Cross, right behind the Adam Smith statue and closer to the church. There should be a flag to help you locate it.

Mercat Cross

This cross marks the location where market stalls used to set up and where merchants would discuss business.

It was also used as a location where state and civic proclamations were publicly read by a town crier, also known as a bellman.



**User:Kim Traynor / CC BY-SA
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The cross was also the site of many punishments, including hangings and other grisly public executions.

The earliest mention of the Mercat Cross was in 1365. The original cross stood 14 metres high and it was on the East end of St. Giles’.

The cross was moved in 1617 to another location a few metres away, and you can see where this was from the octagonal cobblestone design which was placed on the ground in that area.

Sadly, the cross was demolished in 1756 and re-erected in the Drum House on the outskirts of Edinburgh, where it would remain until 1866.

That year, pieces of the cross were reassembled on a new pedestal on the West side of St. Giles'. Since the pillar was damaged in 1756, the height of this newest installation is now just a bit over 4 metres.

Originally, the Mercat Cross was lined with sculpted heads, but those have since been replaced with the royal arms of Britain, Scotland, England, Ireland, Edinburgh, Leith, the Canongate and the University of Edinburgh.

Atop the shaft is a small statue of the Royal Unicorn holding a shield, and you can see the Scottish flag beside him. Chances are you've already seen this flag somewhere along the way, but it's worth noting its significance.

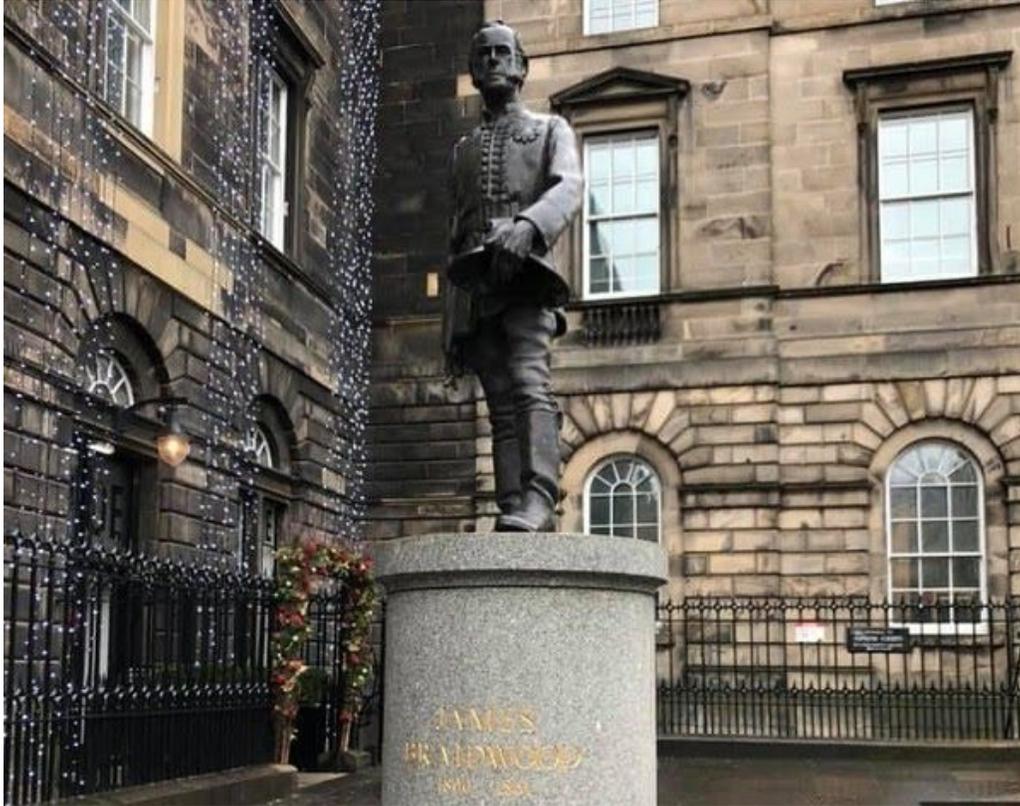
The Scottish flag represents St. Andrew's Cross. St. Andrew was crucified on a cross in an X shape. The X shape in the Union Jack borrows from this design in recognition of Scotland's role in the United Kingdom.

Our next stop will be past the Mercat Cross and continuing down the pathway on the Westernmost side of St. Giles' Cathedral.

This road is also known as Parliament Square, which we'll cover in greater detail after the next attraction, which you'll see on the left hand side of the road.

Statue of James Braidwood

There's only one statue in this corner of Parliament Square, so it should be pretty easy to spot. This statue is a monument to James Braidwood, a firefighter who founded the first fire service in Edinburgh in 1824.



Braidwood was also the first director of the London Fire Engine Establishment, the brigade which would eventually become known as the London Fire Brigade.

Many credit Braidwood with developing modern fire services, as he established principles of firefighting which are still in use today.

He came from a background in construction, and he started by employing people like himself -- masons, carpenters, plumbers -- who had insight into how buildings were constructed and could predict how fires would spread.

One of the most famous fires he ever fought was at the Palace of Westminster in 1834, but he was also recognized for acts of heroism during the great fires of Edinburgh in 1824 and London in 1830.

He died in 1861 in a fire at Cotton's Wharf near London Bridge Station.

If you continue past the James Braidwood statue, and around St. Giles' Cathedral, you'll quickly reach the next stop on this tour, the Old Scottish Parliament Building and of course Parliament Square.

You'll know you're in the right spot when you see an equestrian statue in the middle of what has since become a parking lot.

Parliament Square and Old Scottish Parliament

Located behind St. Giles Cathedral, this public square was formed in front of the Parliament House in 1632.

An equestrian statue of Charles II of Scotland stands at the entrance to the Old Supreme Courts of Scotland which is next to the Parliament House on the right.



The Parliament House would only be in use from 1639 - 1707, when it was dissolved as a result of the Acts of Union.

The Acts of Union led to the creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain.

There is also a memorial to the 5th Duke of Buccleuch on the West end of

the square, which you may have already seen before heading down High Street, and you'll get to see it again as you circle around St. Giles' Cathedral to see the Edinburgh City Chambers.

Edinburgh City Chambers

As you come out from behind St. Giles' Cathedral, you'll see the memorial to the 5th Duke of Buccleuch ahead of you and the Edinburgh City Chambers on the left.

This is the meeting place of the City of Edinburgh Council, and these chambers have existed under one name or another since 1753.

The building here was originally designed to be the Royal Exchange, which led to the partial demolition and burying of Mary King's Close, as we discussed earlier.

The Royal Exchange was never very popular among merchants, so the Town Council eventually took over the Northern part of the building and used it as the City Chambers starting in 1811. By 1893, they had taken over the whole building, and it remained home to the city's council of state for most of the years since.

Its other most important function was as a filming location for the movie Braveheart.

From here, our next stop will be located between St. Giles' Cathedral and the statue of the 5th Duke of Buccleuch.

The National Library of Scotland

Once you reach the intersection of Lawnmarket and George IV Bridge, turn left and walk down the left side of the street until you see a building with blue flags on the side.



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This is the National Library of Scotland, and it is one of the largest libraries in the UK.

It's also right across the street from another important library which we will take a look at next.

There are over 26 million items at the National Library, including Scotland's Moving Image Archive with over 46,000 videos and films.

Although the National Library was initially opened in 1689, it was privately funded until the upkeep became too expensive for private funding alone in the 1920s, at which point the contents were given back to the nation and the National Library of Scotland was officially formed.

In 1928, funding for the current building began, but it took until 1956 to finish construction.

Items of note in the library include a letter from Charles Darwin which was submitted with the manuscript of *On the Origin of Species*, a Gutenberg Bible, a First Folio of Shakespeare and much more.

Feel free to enter the library and take a look at the reading rooms or exhibitions that may be on display.

When you're done here, simply turn your attention to the building across the street.

Edinburgh Central Library

The Edinburgh Central Library is located right across from the National Library of Scotland. Opened in 1890, this was the first public library in Edinburgh.

The library was actually funded initially by Andrew Carnegie, who also had the historic Carnegie Hall built in New York.



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It was built on the site of the former home of Sir Thomas Hope, who was Lord Advocate for Charles I.

The lintel from Hope's home still rests above the inner doorway of the library, with an inscription from the fourth satire of Persius which reads TECUM HABITA 1616.

The building was designed with the French Renaissance style of architecture in mind. Upon Andrew Carnegie's insistence, the motto "Let There Be Light" was placed above the entrance.

Like the National Library of Scotland, you are welcome to pass through that entrance and look around if you like.

Our next stop is further South on George IV Bridge. Cross the street at a designated crosswalk and go to the right hand side of George IV Bridge before continuing down the road. You'll see the red color of the Elephant House about a block away.

The Elephant House

This is a great cafe to grab a snack before continuing your journey, but there is another interesting reason to stop here.



This popular cafe is probably best known as one of the locations where JK Rowling worked on her first Harry Potter novel.

Two other notable authors, Ian Rankin and Alexander McCall-Smith have also been frequent visitors.

Surrounded by the Edinburgh Castle in the distance and George Heriot's School, it's not hard to see where Rowling got some of her ideas for her books.

If you look around the cafe, you'll see multiple references to Harry Potter, especially in the restrooms, which have essentially been turned into a shrine dedicated to the character.

The Elephant House is open from 8 am - 22:00 (10 pm) every Monday - Thursday.

They are also open from 8 am - 23:00 (11 pm) on Friday, 9 am - 23:00 (11 pm) on Saturday, and 9 am - 22:00 (10 pm) on Sunday.

Our second to last stop is just a block further down George IV Bridge at the intersection of Chambers Street.

This oddly designed building sticks out like a sore thumb among all the surrounding architecture.

National Museum of Scotland

This is a relatively new museum just East of the Greyfriars Kirkyard which combines both the Museum of Scotland and the Royal Scottish Museum.

While the building of the Museum of Scotland opened in 1998, the connected Royal Scottish Museum building opened all the way back in 1866, which is why the museum includes such different architectural styles.

The focus of this museum is the achievements of Scotland and its inhabitants, including examples of art, science, technology, and historical artefacts.



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Exhibits include Dolly the sheep -- the first successfully cloned mammal, one of Elton John's suits, a kinetic sculpture known as the Millennium Clock, and many more.

Admission is free and they are open daily from 10:30 - 16:30 (4:30 pm). Advanced online booking is required.

Our last stop is at the historic Greyfriars Kirkyard, a cemetery located across the street from the National Museum of Scotland.

Before you go too far, walk to the small island between George IV Bridge and Candlemaker Row.

Greyfriars Kirkyard

Before you even reach the graveyard, the first thing you'll want to see is actually a small statue of a dog at the corner of George IV Bridge and Candlemaker Row.

The Greyfriars Bobby statue is located across the street from a bar dedicated to this beloved dog, and you can actually learn more about him from the description on the outside wall of the bar.



The story goes that the dog loyally remained by his owner's gravestone for 14 years after he passed away, and was granted both the name Greyfriars Bobby and a headstone in honor of his loyalty. You'll find this statue at the entrance of the graveyard.

The cemetery also has a Harry Potter connection - it's said that J.K. Rowling wandered the graveyard while she was writing her books and borrowed a few names from headstones.

Greyfriars Kirkyard was built after 1562, when Mary Queen of Scots granted use of the land for a burial ground.

It was named after the Franciscan friary on the site which was dissolved in 1560 before the area was turned into a churchyard.

A religious and political movement known as the Covenanters signed the National Covenant -- now located in St. Giles' Cathedral -- in Greyfriars Kirkyard in 1638.

In 1679, after a defeat at Bothwell Brig, roughly 1200 Covenanters were imprisoned in a field South of the churchyard.

This prison area was also made part of the churchyard in the 18th century, and its distinctive vaulted tombs have become known as the "Covenanters Prison."

If you'd like to visit, the graveyard is open Monday - Friday from 11 am - 4 pm. There are also night tours available at 9 pm.

Daytime tickets are £8 for adults and £6 for children. Nighttime tickets are £13 for adults and £11 for children.

If you [purchase tickets](#) during the day and show proof of purchase, you can get an extra £5 off the night tickets!

That's it.

For more ideas in Edinburgh, including guided tours and activities across the city, check out our website, linked in the notes.

And you can use our site to find articles, audio tours, and guided tours in lots of other cities, too.

Tours: <https://freetoursbyfoot.com/free-walking-tours-edinburgh/>

Things to do: <https://freetoursbyfoot.com/things-to-do-in-edinburgh/>

Thank you for listening and happy travels!