

# Scotland Awaits

How to spend a holiday in the home of the Highlands.

BY AMBER GIBSON

Scotland's lush rolling hills are teeming with hay bales and sheep along with world-renowned golf courses. In Edinburgh and Glasgow, food and drink take center stage, with chefs reimagining local ingredients in cosmopolitan contexts. The Scottish exude both fierce independence and natural bonhomie — so whether you're traveling alone or in a group, it's easy to make new friends.

## Hit the Links

The British Open returns to golf's birthplace at the Old Course at St Andrews this year. The last time it was played here, South African Louis Oosthuizen ran away with the title, winning by seven strokes. The British Golf Museum reopens this summer after expanding just in time for the Open Championship. Golfers can play more than 45

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**land of legends** Golf in Scotland presents playful challenges steeped in history.

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courses, new and old, in the surrounding region of Fife, including the New Course, The Duke's, Carnoustie and Kingsbarns.

Accommodations abound, but the Old Course Hotel, sister property to the American Club Resort in Kohler, Wisconsin, is the most luxurious. One poor chap in the lobby moaned that he and his buddies had the brilliant idea of playing nine different courses in nine days. Luckily, they could sooth their aching muscles with golfer's massages at the Kohler Waters Spa.

After a long day on the course, head to the hotel's Road Hole Bar and taste more than 300 Scotch whiskeys while overlooking the Old Course's infamous par-4 17th, where players tee off aiming over a corner of the hotel without seeing where their shot lands then try to avoid the deep Road Hole Bunker obstructing the green. (The hotel replaces more than 2,000 tiles from the west deck roof annually thanks to errant shots.)

An hour west is Gleneagles, where last year's Ryder Cup was held. Along with golf, you can also train gun dogs, ride horses, fish for trout, and learn basic falconry techniques.

## Eat, Drink and Be Merry

Scottish cuisine immediately calls to mind haggis and porridge with a dram of Scotch whiskey, but its agricultural traditions are rich and varied. During the summer, berries ("soft fruits"), including strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries and blackberries ("brambles") are abundant, as are stone fruit. Plentiful seafood, from coastal fishing villages and such heritage land animals as Aberdeen Angus beef and seaweed-eating Soay sheep, will satisfy carnivores.

Take a bespoke food journey with Tasting Scotland and experience the best eats tailored to any food preferences or geographic specifications. A tour of Fife should include a platter of Anster and Cheddar served atop crunchy oatcakes at St. Andrews Farmhouse Cheese followed by smoked salmon, mackerel and langoustines at East Pier Smokehouse in St Monans. Take a peek and whiff of the smokehouse, also used for smoking chocolate, nuts and cheese, before continuing along the East Neuk coast for fresh lobster and crab at an unassuming crustacean hut in Crail.

If fine dining is more appealing, Edinburgh is home to five Michelin-starred restaurants, including 21212, which also has four luxuriously spacious rooms above. What better reason to enjoy wine pairings when it's only a short stumble up the stairs to bed? The dining room's high ceilings, shimmery muslin walls and plush floral banquettes create an airy, romantic atmosphere. The food is bolder: Haggis chutney accompanies curried lamb, while delicate trout is paired with sharp black olives and fried bean sprouts. Finish with a dozen kinds of cheese and a strawberry summer trifle before waddling to your room.



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When it comes to hard liquor, the Scots are known for Scotch whiskey, but recently a gin craze has swept the nation. Pickering's Gin is Edinburgh's second gin distillery, located in the city's newest and biggest arts venue, Summerhall. Animal cages from the building's former life as the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies are still stacked below the two 500-liter holding tanks. The London dry-style gin is based on a handwritten recipe from 1947 with predominant juniper and coriander notes along with seven other botanicals.

Sidle up to The Royal Dick bar for a taste of the gin paired with tonic. Lucky folks might even be able to purchase a bottle. Production is still quintessentially small-batch: Three men do it all, from distilling and bottling to labeling and shipping. For a gin tasting that runs the gamut, head to One Square to try more than 50 types of gin, from English classics to new boutique producers.

### Journey to Glasgow

It's only an hour's drive from Edinburgh to Glasgow, a city that put itself on the map as an international power through the tobacco trade and then shipbuilding. It may not be as storybook as Edinburgh's craggy fortresses and cobblestone streets or as popular with tourists, but it's absolutely worth visiting.

My chauffeur reminds me in his Scottish brogue to be careful in Scotland's largest city. Little does he know that Glasgow is less than a quarter the size of Chicago and less than a 10th the size of New York. "Keep an eye oan yer bag, missy," he warns. "There ur a lot ay Lithuanians an' Polish aroond an' they're a bunch ay chancers."

He needn't have worried. The city's "People Make Glasglow" tag line, seen on eye-catching pink banners all about town, is true. Glaswegians are lovely — Eastern European friends included — and happy to point a visitor in the right direction or

recommend their favorite haunts.

Settle into a quiet room at the majestic Blythswood Square hotel in the heart of what used to be Scotland's most famous red-light district (you'd never guess it now, amidst the languid gentrification). Plush scarlet booths in the lobby serve as a cheeky nod to the square's scandalous past. The Georgian sandstone was built in 1823 and was home to the Royal Scottish Automobile Club for nearly a century beginning in 1910. Black-and-white racing photos from the club's archives decorate guest rooms along with bespoke furniture upholstered in signature Harris Tweed.

Blythswood Square is centrally located — it's no more than £7 for a cab ride anywhere in the city — but as long as the weather is dry, walking is preferable. Impressive museums, from the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum to the new Riverside Museum, are free for visitors and just a short stroll away.

A few steps from the square lies The Butterfly & The Pig, a quirky hybrid of restaurant, tearoom and pub. The food is simple but scrumptious, and servings are hearty enough for growing boys — the signature fish cake, a casserole of smoked fish, potato and leek, is served in a whole Le Creuset cast-iron skillet.

Go for a *swally* (drink) at The Horseshoe Bar to finish the evening and watch a rousing game of rugby or football (that's soccer) on one of 11 big screens. The energy is infectious, even if one doesn't know the first thing about flankers and fly-halves. [A](#)

**people pleaser** Glasgow delivers true friendliness, embodying the city's tag line: "People Make Glasglow."

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