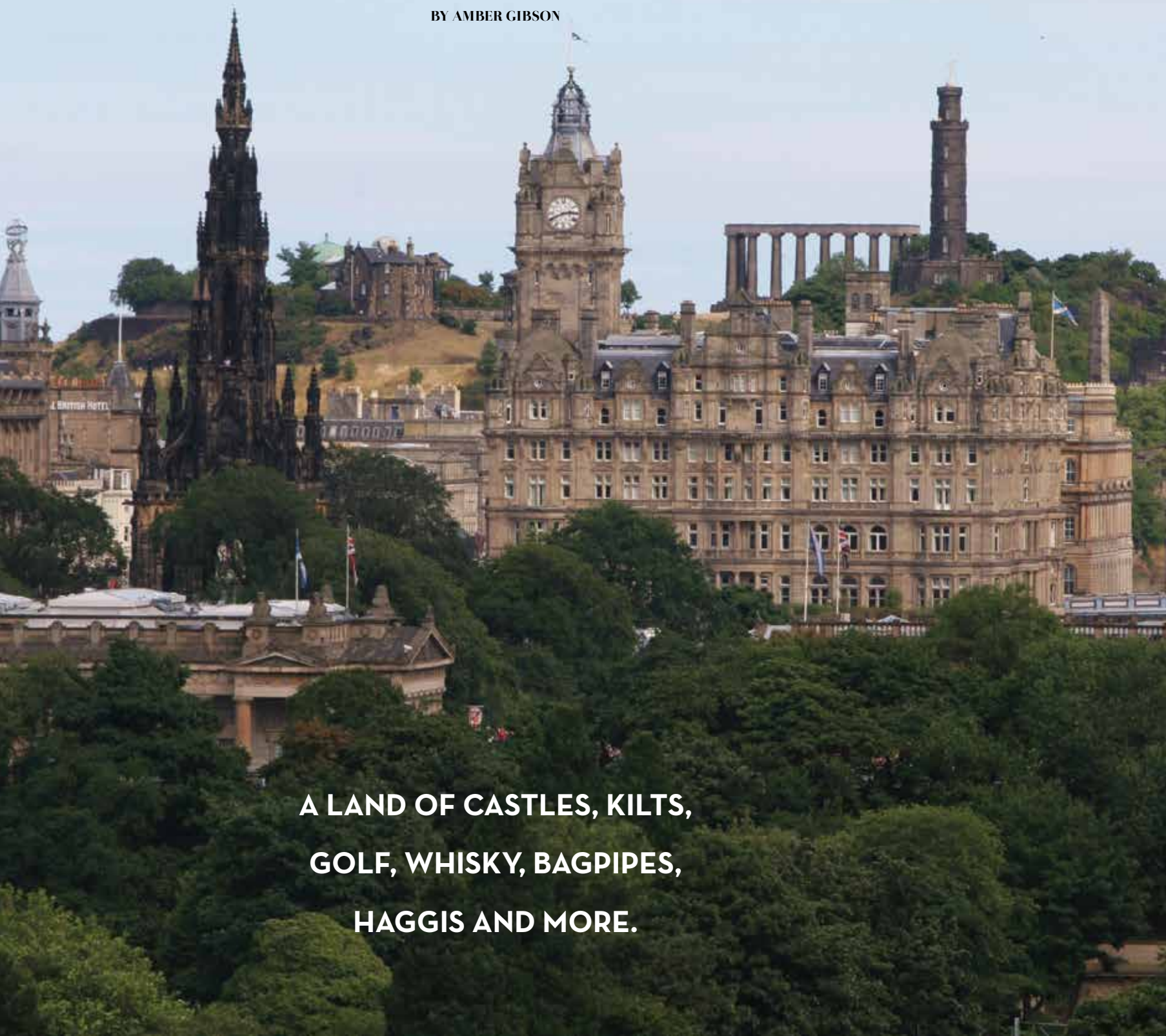


# DESTINATION SCOTLAND

BY AMBER GIBSON



A LAND OF CASTLES, KILTS,  
GOLF, WHISKY, BAGPIPES,  
HAGGIS AND MORE.



The Duke's, St. Andrews

"If it's a dry day, it's a good day," says Paul, the jovial chauffeur who picks me up at the airport and shepherds me into the front seat beside him instead of the back. I don't mind the informality – it's rather charming when accompanied with a Scottish brogue and gentle reminders to watch my bag since we're in a big city. I don't mention that Chicago is four-and-a-half times larger than Glasgow, the most populous city here.

Within cities like Edinburgh and Glasgow, walking is the best mode of transport to take everything in. If you don't fancy driving on the opposite side of the road, the train system can take you nearly anywhere in the country. Either way, there's no reason not to see as much of Scotland as you can while visiting.

## EDINBURGH

The Old and New Town neighborhoods are UNESCO World Heritage sites and the striking medieval architecture is reason enough to visit. Although institutions like the **Writers Museum** and **National Museum of Scotland** could easily occupy an entire day, if the weather allows, a thorough exploration of the city's cobbled streets and side alleys can prove even more culturally invigorating.

Pinkies up for afternoon tea at **The Balmoral**, an Edwardian-era escape from the crowds. Strands of

Debussy float through the airy Palm Court, where light streams in through the octagonal dome while fluted white columns and a Murano glass chandelier set the tone for an elegant affair. The hotel overlooks Waverley Station and was originally built in the city center as a monument to the North British Railway Company. Finish a classic afternoon feast of finger sandwiches and scones with a selection of chocolate bonbons, ginger fruit bread and *torrone*, Italian nougat, from the dessert trolley.

With five Michelin-starred restaurants, Edinburgh is second only to London in the UK when it comes to fine dining. **21212** features the modish cuisine of Chef Paul Kitching along with four luxurious rooms above the restaurant. Splurge on the five-course tasting menu and enjoy dishes like curried lamb with haggis chutney and an 'Edinburgh Mess' trifle of strawberries, banana, shortbread and cream, along with a bountiful cheese plate.

There are only so many meals you can eat in a day, but taking a food tour is a great way to meet local chefs and artisans while sampling a bounty of flavorful food and drink. **Tasting Scotland** does an incredible job of creating customized culinary journeys throughout the country, whether it's visiting craft ale brewers and malt whisky distillers in the Highlands or trying shellfish and wild game near Loch Lomond. **Eat Walk Edinburgh** is another great option for group foodie walking tours in the capital. Black pudding and haggis are must-tries – don't let the blood and offal scare you.



Blythswood Square



Blythswood Square

## GLASGOW

It's only 47 miles (about an hour drive) from Edinburgh to Glasgow, a city that first earned its wealth through the tobacco trade, then shipbuilding. Although Glaswegians are proud of their working-class roots, the city has world-class culture as well. The **Glasgow Royal Concert Hall**, Scotland's premier music venue, anchors the Buchanan Street shopping promenade and is a testament to the city's unpretentious sophistication.

Stay at the regal **Blythswood Square Hotel** and you'd never guess that this neighborhood used to be Scotland's most famous red-light district. Plush scarlet booths in the lobby serve as a subtle nod to the square's scandalous past. The Georgian sandstone building was erected in 1823 but the rooms are modern, with bespoke furniture upholstered in Harris Tweed.

The hotel is within easy walking distance to free museums including **Kelvingrove Art Gallery** and the **Riverside Museum**, showcasing Scotland's history of transport, technology and travel, appropriately overlooking the River Clyde. It's also just around the corner from **The Butterfly & The Pig**, a *gemütlich* restaurant/tea room/pub hybrid. The signature fish cake is really a smoked fish, potato and leek casserole brought to the table overflowing from a Le Creuset skillet.



Old Course Hotel

## FIFE & ST ANDREWS

Cross the River Forth and head northeast to one of Scotland's most bountiful agricultural counties. Fife is sunnier than most of the country, with a fresh breeze off the Firth of Forth, which flows into the North Sea.

Drive along the fishing villages of the East Neuk (the Scottish word for 'corner'), hitting St. Monans, Anstruther and Crail, where the Reilly family's humble lobster shack doesn't even have a sign...but the crustaceans speak for themselves.

Cheese connoisseurs should stop at **St Andrews Farmhouse Cheese** to try fresh, smoked and garlic and chive-studded varieties of crumbly Anster cheese, made with unpasteurized milk from a herd of 200 home-bred Holstein Friesian cows meandering outside. Peek inside the viewing gallery at the opportune moment and glimpse cheesemakers valiantly sifting through thick curds. The cheese is smoked in nearby St Monans, at **East Pier Smokehouse**, famous for smoking local seafood. Sample both hot and cold-smoked salmon along with langoustines and mackerel in an unembellished maritime cottage.

At the end of the scenic drive, arrive in St Andrews, best known as the home of golf and Scotland's first university, the **University of St Andrews**, founded in 1413. It's also where Kate Middleton met Prince William. The narrow cobblestone streets are great for a wander and shops are cute but pricey, catering to the university's wealthy international students.

While hotel accommodations abound in St Andrews, the *crème de la crème* is the **Old Course Hotel**. Those familiar with the American Club Resort in Kohler, Wisconsin, might know the Scottish sister property that's equally well known for its spa, dining and golf courses, including The Old Course, where golf was born 600 years ago. Play a round or two at one of the areas more than 45 courses, or relax at the **Kohler Waters Spa** with a signature facial or massage that lulls you to sleep in minutes. Dream about strolling over the Swilcan Bridge to a cheering crowd after hitting a perfect tee shot from the 18th hole. ■



Road Hole Bar at Old Course Hotel

### For more information:

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