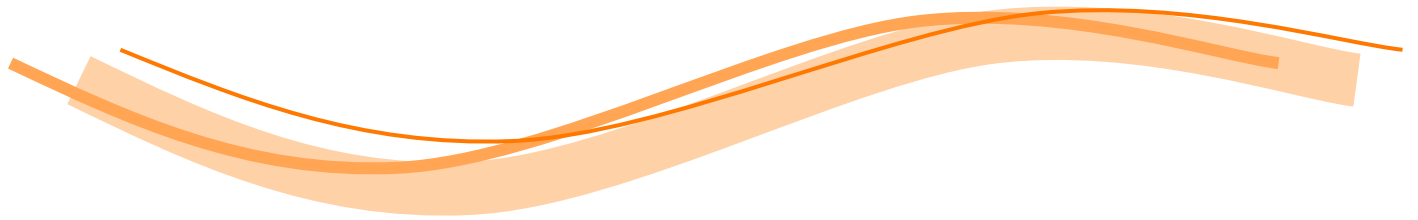




SCOTLAND





<p>SCOTLAND</p>	<p>Undeniably big on breathtakingly lush scenery, big on vivid history and huge on good-humored character - Scotland is a vast culture squeezed inside a small country. It's easy to reach with a choice of direct flights, and with the current strong Canadian Dollar it is great value!</p> <p>Take a tour, or explore at your own pace. Discover cosmopolitan cities, a wealth of artistic and cultural activities, world class cuisine, great golf courses plus colourful history and heritage.</p> <p>If you hail from Scotland - trace your roots. Don't just learn about your Scottish heritage - live it! Experience first-hand the places your ancestors lived and worked. Try on the kilt of your clan, touch the walls of your family castle and see the very documents that chronicle their lives.</p> <p>Scotland has an unrivalled range, depth, quality and accessibility of ancestral archives and historical resources across the country. Visit one of the local family history centres, registrars offices or historical buildings to access their records. You'll receive a friendly welcome from one of the local experts and you can ask them any questions you might have.</p> <p>The main centre you can visit in Edinburgh - ScotlandsPeople – which has one of the largest online sources of original genealogical information; with almost 80 million records to access there is every chance that you will be able to connect with your own Scottish ancestry. Check out www.Scotlandspeople.gov.uk to start your search.</p> <p>www.Ancestralscotland.com is the official ancestral tourism website of VisitScotland - this unique online resource provides a wealth of information for those wishing to make that trip 'home' to walk in the footsteps of their ancestors. Start planning your own personal ancestral trip now with the clan surname search and clan touring itineraries.</p>
<p>Location</p>	<p>Larger than Nova Scotia, Scotland is two-thirds the size of England and Wales - the other two countries that constitute the kingdom of Great Britain – with a tenth of the total population. It is surrounded by sea on three sides: to the west and north by the Atlantic Ocean and on the east by the North Sea. Its only land border runs for approximately 96 km along the line of the Cheviot Hills in the north of England.</p>
<p>Geography</p>	<p>Scotland divides into three regions: the Islands and Highlands in the north, the Central Lowlands in the middle and the Southern Uplands to the south. Rising to 1,344 metres above sea level, Scotland's highest</p>

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	point is the summit of Ben Nevis, in Lochaber, while Scotland's longest river, the River Tay, flows for a distance of 190 kilometres. The land area of Scotland is 78,772 km ² roughly 30% of the area of the United Kingdom. The mainland of Scotland has nearly 10,000 kms of coastline.
Name	Scotland is derived from the Latin Scoti, the term applied to Gaels, people from what is now Scotland and Ireland, and the Dál Riata who lived on the islands and lands on either side of the the Irish Sea. By the 11th century at the latest, Scotia was being used to refer to Gaelic speaking Scotland north of the river Forth, alongside Albania or Albany, both derived from the Gaelic Alba. The use of the words Scots and Scotland to encompass all of what is now Scotland became common in the Late Middle Ages.
Population	There are 5.2 million Scots living in Scotland, but many more around the world, particularly in Canada, trace their roots back to the country. There are 1.8 million Ontarians with Scottish ancestry and over 150,000 in Quebec too. In total, there are over 4 million Canadians whose families originated in Scotland.
Language	English Despite a revival, the Gaelic (a Celtic language) is considered a “vernacular” spoken only by 3% of Scots. There is, however, a rich colloquial vocabulary in common usage. Examples are : bairn (child), loch (lake), lassie (girl), wee (small), ken (to know/to have knowledge), ceilidh (gathering, usually with traditional music), ben (mountain), and dram (shot of whisky).
Currency	The British Pound is the local currency, even though some of the bank notes are very Scottish – it’s still the same currency! Currently the Canadian Dollar is at 0.63 against the Pound (as at August 10 th 2011)
Tipping	There are no definite rules for tipping. If you feel that you have received good service then you may wish to leave a tip. This is most common in restaurants, where it is normal to leave 10% of the total bill but you should check to see if a service charge has already been included. Tipping in hotels is also at your discretion. It is not normal to tip bar staff.
Government	Scotland has partial self-government within the United Kingdom as well as representation in the UK Parliament. Executive and legislative powers have been devolved to, respectively, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood in Edinburgh. The United Kingdom Parliament retains power over a set list of areas, including, for example, levels of UK taxes, social security, defense, international relations and broadcasting. The Scottish Parliament has legislative authority for all other areas relating to Scotland, as well as limited power to vary income tax.
Documentation	Passports are required for Canadians visiting Scotland.
Time zone	Scotland is 5 hours ahead of EST, Ontario and Quebec.
Health	Good medical care is widely available. Visitors who become ill while in

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	Scotland are eligible for free emergency treatment at National Health Service Accident and Emergency hospital departments. Don't forget travel insurance for all trips outside your home province.
Safety tips	Scotland is one of the safest countries in the world even at night, when people may walk alone with confidence.

CLIMATE	
General climate	<p>Scottish weather isn't always the best and is extremely variable, but give it time and the sun will soon be shining. You might come across the odd 'dreich' day, where the weather is wet and overcast, but soon enough you'll be able to see the bright blue skies of Scotland and the sun sits proudly in the sky.</p> <p>July and August are normally the warmest months with average temperatures of 15-19°C. The days are very long in summer as Scotland is significantly further north than Toronto and Montreal. The driest months in Scotland tend to be between April and June, when temperatures average around 15° C, they even reach 28C at their peak</p>
Today's weather	Edinburgh has sun and showers today (August 13 th 2011) and a temperature of 20C.
Best time to visit	Scotland has a milder climate in winter than Eastern Canada due to the warming effects of the Gulf Stream, so you can visit any time of year. The summer months are the warmest and the most popular, but spring and autumn are often glorious times to visit Scotland too.

GETTING AROUND	
Getting There	Canadian Affair flies directly from Toronto to Glasgow in 7 to 8 hours and Glasgow Airport is just 13kms from the city centre.
Cities	<p>Edinburgh: has been referred to as Europe's prettiest city; the capital, it is so steeped in tradition and venerable in age it is listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Built on seven hills like Rome, its topography adds an extra beauty to the architecture, divided chronologically between the ancient streets and the looming castle of the Old Town, and the elegant, classical buildings of the New Town (which, in spite of its name, dates back to the golden age of the late 18th Century). Its population is 584,000.</p> <p>Glasgow: Scotland's largest city with a population of 1.2 million, Glasgow leapt to prominence in the 19th Century when it became one of the greatest commercial hubs in Britain, feeding the furnaces of the sprawling Empire. Today the city has reclaimed its fame as a centre of style and Britain's finest Victorian city, through stunning architecture, a thumping cultural pulse, and a sizzling restaurant scene. Glasgow has earned bragging rights as the UK's coolest city.</p>

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Distances	Edinburgh to Glasgow: 72 km; Glasgow to Fort William: 173 kms, to Thurso: 469 km; to London: 650 km.
Ferries	Regular ferry services operate between the Scottish mainland and island communities. These services are mostly run by Caledonian MacBrayne, but some are operated by local councils. Other ferry routes, served by multiple companies, connect to Northern Ireland, Belgium, Norway, the Faroe Islands and also Iceland.
Cruises	Cruising Along the Caledonian Canal: In 1822, a group of enterprising Scots connected three of the Highlands' longest lakes (lochs Ness, Lochy, and Oich) with a canal linking Britain's east and west coasts. Since then, barges have hauled everything from grain to building supplies without having to negotiate the wild storms off Scotland's northernmost tips. Now cabin cruisers tote a different kind of cargo along the Caledonian Canal: people seeking a spectacular waterborne view of the countryside that was tamed centuries ago by the Camerons, the Stewarts, and the MacDonalds. Caley Cruisers, based in Inverness www.caleycruisers.co.uk , rents out skippered boats by the week.
Trains	<p>Scotland's rail network is managed by Transport Scotland. The East Coast and West Coast Main Railway lines and the Cross Country Line connect the major cities and towns of Scotland with each other and with the rail network in England. Domestic rail services within Scotland are operated by First ScotRail. Furthermore, Glasgow has a small integrated subway system since 1896. Currently, 15 stations serve a daily ridership of just under 40,000. There are plans to extend the subway system in time for the 2014 Commonwealth Games. The East Coast Main Line includes that section of the network that crosses the Firth of Forth via the Forth Bridge. Completed in 1890, this cantilever bridge has been described as "the one internationally recognised Scottish landmark".</p> <p>The cost of rail travel in Scotland is often quite low, and trains are generally punctual. Timetables are available at all stations, with free timetables covering only certain regions available at various stations For information on rail travel in Scotland, contact First ScotRail, www.firstgroup.com .</p> <p>The Royal Scotsman www.royalscotsman.com is one of the most luxurious trains in the world. The train passes by ancient mountains and mysterious lochs, through glens and across villages as you live in sumptuous surroundings. It's like being the guest at a private party. The train carries a maximum of 36 guests, each passenger enjoying plenty of space. Plush beds and opulent bathrooms are the order of the day. The classic tour calls for 4 nights aboard, and goes from the panoramic Southern Highlands to the more rugged grandeur of the Western</p>

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	Highlands. Superb cuisine and a long list of fine wines and choice malt whiskies are more reasons to hop aboard.
Car Rental	All major international car rental companies are available. Driving is on the left, remember!
Buses	<p>The cheapest means of transport from London to Scotland is the bus and it's also the least expensive way to travel within Scotland. All major towns have a local bus service, and every tourist office can provide details about half- or full-day bus excursions to scenic highlights. If you want to explore a particular area, you can often avail yourself of an economical bus pass.</p> <p>Many adventurous travelers like to explore the country on one of the postal buses, which carry not only mail but also a limited number of passengers to rural areas. Ask at any local post office for details. A general timetable is available at the head post office in Edinburgh.</p> <p>Scottish Citylink Coaches are a good bet. They link the major cities (Glasgow and Edinburgh) with the two most popular tourist centres, Inverness and Aviemore. Travel is fast and prices are low. For example, it takes only 3 hours to reach Aviemore from Edinburgh, and Inverness is just 3.5 hours from Edinburgh. A direct Scottish Citylink overnight coach makes the run from London to Aviemore and Inverness at reasonable fares.</p> <p>Coaches offer many other popular runs, including links between Glasgow and Fort William, Inverness and Ullapool, and Glasgow and Oban. For details, contact Rapsons www.rapsons.co.uk, or Scottish Citylink www.citylink.co.uk</p>
Passes	<p>The Scottish Freedom Pass provides unlimited transportation on trains and most ferries throughout Scotland and discounts for bus travel. It includes access to obscure bus routes to almost forgotten hamlets, free rides on ferries operated by Caledonian MacBrayne, and discounted fares with P&O Scottish Lines. The ferries connect to the Western Islands, the islands of the Clyde, and the Orkneys. The Freedom Pass covers the entire Scottish rail network and is usable from Carlisle, England (near the western Scotland-England border), and from Berwick-upon-Tweed, England (near the eastern Scotland-England border). In addition, if you have to fly into London and want to go straight to Scotland from there, a reduced rate is available for a round-trip ticket between London and Edinburgh or Glasgow for Travelpass holders.</p> <p>The Freedom Pass is available for 4 days' travel over an 8-day period for \$235 and 8 days' travel over a 15-day period for \$315.</p> <p>BritRail Passes allow unlimited travel in England, Scotland, and Wales on any British Rail scheduled train over the whole of the network during the validity of the pass without restrictions. BritRail Consecutive Pass</p>

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	<p>allows you to travel for a consecutive number of days for a flat rate. In second class, fares are \$323 for 4 days, \$463 for 8 days, \$697 for 15 days. Seniors (60 and over) qualify for discounts in first-class travel. Passengers 25 and under qualify for a 2nd Class Youth Pass: \$259 for 4 days, \$370 for 8 days, \$557 for 15 days. One child (under age 15) can travel free with each adult or senior pass by requesting the BritRail Family Pass when buying the adult pass. Additional children pay half the regular adult fare. BritRail Passes and vacation packages can be found at www.britrail.com Note that Eurailpass is not valid on trains in Great Britain.</p>
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<p>ACCOMMODATION TYPES</p>	<p>Castle Hotels: eg GLENAPP CASTLE Ballantrae, Girvan, Ayrshire - The castle is a spectacular example of the 'Scottish Baronial' style of architecture, set in magnificent private gardens and grounds high on a hill looking out over the Irish Sea to Arran, Ailsa Craig and the Mull of Kintyre.</p>
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<p>LIFESTYLES Kids & Teens</p>	<p>Children generally delight in exploring spooky old castles, heading up to the Highlands - where there are all those bagpipe players - and looking for the Loch Ness Monster near Inverness. So here are some ideas: Start at Edinburgh Castle at the beginning of the Royal Mile in the Old Town. Kids may be a bit bored with the State Apartments where Mary Queen of Scots once lived, but they will delight in the spooky 18th century prisons and the batteries of cannons that used to protect the fortress. Kids also enjoy the nearby Outlook Tower and Camera Obscura. At the Scott Monument, it's fun for the whole family to climb the 287 steps for the most panoramic view of the city. Before the afternoon ends, spend at least an hour and a half taking in Our Dynamic Earth, whose exhibits have been compared to an interpretation by Walt Disney. Kids push buttons to simulate everything from earthquakes to meteor showers. Take your kids aboard the luxury yacht Britannia, once used by Queen Elizabeth II herself. After that, a visit to Edinburgh Zoo, with its more than 1,500 animals, including some endangered species is recommended. End the day by wandering through The Real Mary King's Close, which stays open until 9pm in summer. This was the once-thriving underground part of the Old Town, where the "deepest secrets" are hidden in the warren of almost buried streets, or "closes." Kids seem to expect Robert Louis Stevenson's "Mr. Hyde" to emerge at any minute. Deep Sea World is Scotland's most comprehensive and dramatic</p>
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	<p>menagerie of water creatures, including its most ferocious sharks. Allow 90 minutes for this attraction, which is 19km west of Edinburgh's centre. Stirling, an ancient town, lying between the rivers Forth and Clyde, is famed for its castle. Here the attraction is Stirling Castle, where Mary Queen of Scots lived as an infant monarch. Children especially enjoy going through the on-site Museum of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, with all the pipe banners and other paraphernalia. Visit Bannockburn nearby, where Robert the Bruce once summoned his "Braveheart" army to defeat Edward II in 1314. Kids find the audiovisual presentation of this violent story at the Bannockburn Heritage Centre as fascinating as Mel Gibson's own Braveheart movie.</p> <p>In Glasgow, the Waverley, the world's last seagoing paddle steamer, will carry you to scenic places along the Firth of Clyde. You can have lunch aboard. Back in Glasgow visit the Glasgow Science Centre, a kid-friendly favorite complete with a Space Theatre and plenty of hands-on activities for children. The Museum of Transport has lots of ship models which intrigue kids.</p> <p>Further north, drive through the hauntingly beautiful Glencoe, scene of the famous massacre of 1692, when the Campbells did in the MacDonalds. Kids are fascinated by the audiovisual presentation shown at the Glencoe Visitor Centre.</p> <p>And then there's Loch Ness: stop at the little village of Drumnadrochit to see the official Loch Ness Monster Exhibition. With its lasers and visual effects, this exhibition is definitely a kid pleaser. After you've seen the exhibition, it's great fun for families to explore the ruins of Urquhart Castle, which overlooks the loch. It is from here that most sightings of the Loch Ness Monster are reported.</p> <p>You can explore the Culloden Battlefield, where Bonnie Prince Charlie and his Jacobite army were crushed by the English. Kids also like to walk the ramparts, a distance of 1.6km, found at the Fort George and Queen's Own Highlanders Regimental Museum in Inverness.</p>
Romance	<p>Stay in a castle, cruise gently along a Highlands loch, take a picnic lunch on a hike over the heathered moors, take in a sunset over a Western Isle, ride a deserted Scottish beach or skip barefoot across the sands...there's so many ways to kindle romance in Scotland!</p>
Genealogy	<p>If you hail from Scotland - trace your roots. Don't just learn about your Scottish heritage - live it! Experience first-hand the places your ancestors lived and worked. Try on the kilt of your clan, touch the walls of your family castle and see the very documents that chronicle their lives.</p> <p>Scotland has an unrivalled range, depth, quality and accessibility of ancestral archives and historical resources across the country. Visit one of the local family history centres, registrars offices or historical buildings to access their records. You'll receive a friendly welcome from</p>

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	<p>one of the local experts and you can ask them any questions you might have.</p> <p>The main centre you can visit in Edinburgh - ScotlandsPeople – which has one of the largest online sources of original genealogical information; with almost 80 million records to access there is every chance that you will be able to connect with your own Scottish ancestry. Check out www.Scotlandspeople.gov.uk to start your search.</p> <p>The www.Ancetralscotland.com website is the official ancestral tourism website of VisitScotland - this unique online resource provides a wealth of information for those wishing to make that trip 'home' to walk in the footsteps of their ancestors. Start planning your own personal ancestral trip now with the clan surname search and clan touring itineraries.</p> <p>Other useful genealogy websites are: www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk www.nls.uk/maps www.abdn.ac.uk/emigration/methodology.html</p>
Seniors	<p>Independent or guided touring – you have a choice here. If you prefer the latter, try Insight, Trafalgar or Globus. There are lots of discounts available to older visitors too, from rail and bus passes to entry into many of the big attractions. Just make sure you have the appropriate identification available.</p>

UNIQUES	
Surprising	<p>Rosslyn Chapel: Admittedly, you may have to extend your stay for this one as the fantastic stone carvings of this richly decorated late- Gothic church have defied convincing explanation for more than 500 years. The church's close associations with Freemasonry and the Knights Templars have spawned a raft of conspiracy theories that claim that the carvings hold the key to the whereabouts of various legendary objects stored at Rosslyn including the Holy Grail. The chapel featured in the blockbuster novel, The Da Vinci Code and its popularity as a major pilgrimage site for the curious has soared.</p>
History	<p>Wherever you travel in Scotland, from the cities to the remotest corners, the country's unusually dramatic history lies waiting to be discovered just beneath the surface of the present. Dating back to 2000 BC, the standing stones at Callanish hint at early appreciation of astrology. Living on the western Isle of Skye, the chief of the MacLeod clan traces a direct ancestral link back to the Vikings who settled here in the 9th Century. Every New Year's Day, the ball game of Ba' rages through the streets of Kirkwall in the Orkneys as it has for countless centuries. And</p>

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	<p>Cawdor Castle, where Macbeth carried out his bloody ambitions in the 11th Century, remains one of the most romantic and best preserved fortresses.</p> <p>No visit to Edinburgh is complete without a stroll through the polished halls of Holyrood Palace, where Mary Queen of Scots witnessed the murder of her trusted secretary by her jealous husband Lord Darnley in 1556. Nearby, the Writer's Museum displays the desk at which Robert Burns wrote his evocative poetry, and the pipe smoked by Walter Scott as he brought Ivanhoe to life. The Golf Museum at St. Andrews gives context to the game once outlawed in the 17th Century because its popularity was causing soldiers to neglect archery practice. At another royal retreat, Balmoral, Queen Victoria grieved the loss of her husband Albert, walking the heather-tinted Highlands in the company of her groom, Mr. Brown.</p> <p>The nearness of the past that permeates the whole Scottish experience is perhaps best summarized by the Stone of Destiny. In 1292, the Scots' coronation emblem was taken from Scone Abbey by the invading Edward I of England and held in Westminster Abbey in London. After 700 years of effort, it was finally returned in 1996. Three years later, in 1999, the Scottish Parliament was re-established in Edinburgh, 292 years after it was abolished by Earl of Seafield on May 1, 1707. Although the British Parliament in Westminster, London, still has governance over national issues, the Scottish body has authority over Scotland's affairs.</p>
<p>Books</p>	<p>Frommer's have got Scotland covered from all angles – here are my recommended reads: Frommer's Scotland, 11th Edition Frommer's Best Walking Trips in Scotland Frommer's Scotland's Best Loved Driving Tours</p>
<p>1000 Places to See Before You Die</p>	<p>Scottish golf; The Castle Trail, Grampians; The Hebrides; Isle of Skye; Scotch Whiskey Trail; Highland Games; Loch Ness; I nverlochy Castle (hotel); Edinburgh Castle; Hogmanay; Edinburgh Festival; The Royal Scotsman; The Mackintosh Trail, Glasgow; The Trossachs</p>
<p>Must Sees</p>	<p>There are five UNESCO World Heritage sites in Scotland:</p>

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	<p>St. Kilda is a small, out-lying archipelago of Hebridean islands which was inscribed as a "natural" site in 1986. In 2004, the site was extended to include a large amount of the surrounding marine features as well as the islands themselves. In July 2005 it became one of the few World Heritage Sites to hold joint status for its natural and cultural qualities. The islands were bequeathed to the National Trust for Scotland in 1957. They are also a Biosphere Reserve and a National Scenic Area.</p> <p>Edinburgh Old and New Towns were together inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1996. The former includes the medieval Royal Mile which runs from Edinburgh Castle to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, and is bordered to the north by the neo-classical 18th century "New Town" which includes Princes Street. It is managed by the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust.</p> <p>The Heart of Neolithic Orkney includes Maeshowe, the Ring of Brodgar, Skara Brae, the Standing Stones of Stenness and other nearby sites. It was inscribed in 1999 and is managed by Historic Scotland.</p> <p>New Lanark was inscribed in 2001. It is a restored 18th century industrial cotton mill village in South Lanarkshire constructed by Robert Owen as an experiment in utopian socialism. Restoration was organised by the New Lanark Conservation Trust.</p> <p>The Antonine Wall was inscribed in July 2008. It is an extension to a wider series of sites in Austria, Germany and Slovakia entitled "Frontiers of the Roman Empire". The Wall is the remains of a defensive line made of turf circa 20 feet high, with nineteen forts. It was constructed after 139 AD and extended for 37 miles between the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde. The wall was over-run and abandoned soon after 160 AD, then occupied again for a brief period after 197 AD.</p>
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<p>SPORTS ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>Sport is an important element in Scottish culture, with the country hosting many of its own national sporting competitions. It enjoys independent representation at many international sporting events including the FIFA World Cup, the Rugby Union World Cup, the Rugby League World Cup, the Cricket World Cup and the Commonwealth Games, but not at the Olympic Games where Scottish athletes are part of the Great Britain team.</p>
<p>Golf</p>	<p>The Fife town of St. Andrews is known internationally as the Home of golf and to many golfers the Old Course, an ancient links course dating to before 1574, is considered to be a site of pilgrimage. There are many other famous golf courses in Scotland, including Carnoustie,</p>

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	<p>Gleneagles, Muirfield, and Royal Troon From August 25-28th 2011, Gleneagles will play host to golf's finest players as they compete in the Johnnie Walker Championship on one of the most challenging courses in the game, the PGA Centenary Course. For anyone passionate about golf, this is an incredible opportunity to get close to the best players in golf; to watch and golf with the pros in Scotland, where golf was born.</p>
<p>Fishing</p>	<p>Scotland is best known in fishing circles for its Atlantic Salmon; fly fishing for these elusive and beautiful fish was a life-long passion of my father, especially on the River Tweed. Here are some suggestions:</p> <p>The Borders & Galloway Regions: Sea fishing is pure heaven in the Solway Firth, especially near Port William and Portpatrick villages, in the vicinity of Loch Ryan, and also along the shore of the Isle of Whithorn. The elusive salmon is best pursued along the River Tweed, and the lesser-known hill lochans are ideal for trout fishermen. Local tourist offices distribute two helpful guides: A Comprehensive Guide to Scottish Borders Angling and Castabout Anglers Guide to Dumfries and Galloway.</p> <p>Argyll & the Southern Hebrides: This much-visited area in western Scotland is split in two by the long peninsula of Kintyre. The topography is decidedly northern Atlantic, distinguished by open sea and loch, and the Firth of Clyde separates the region from the Inner Hebrides. Along with about 50 prime freshwater-angling sites, Argyll and the Southern Hebrides contain some two dozen villages with fantastic sea fishing.</p> <p>Tayside: The northeast section of Scotland is filled not only with major rivers -- the Don, Dee, Ythan, and Deverson -- but with smaller ones, too, such as the Ugie, all ideal for salmon fishing. Besides the rivers, numerous estuaries and lochs make this one of the country's best areas for game fishing. Local tourist offices keep abreast of the details about boat rentals and permit prices, and some country hotels offer fishing packages.</p> <p>Sutherland & Northern Highlands: Sutherland's myriad lochs provide endless possibilities for anglers. Trout fishing is the big lure, and local tourist offices will tell you all about boats and permits. Not only is the fishing superb, but your hotel cook may also prepare your catch for you.</p>
<p>Horse riding</p>	<p>Horseback riding through the Highlands & Argyll... There's nothing like an equestrian excursion through the Highlands' fragrant heather and over its lichen-covered rocks. One of Scotland's biggest stables is the Highland Riding Centre, Drumnadrochit www.borlum.co.uk . For scenic rides across the moors, Highlands, and headlands of the Argyll,</p>

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	try the Ardfern Riding Centre , Loch Gilphead (tel. 01852/500-632).
Hiking	<p>The Southern Upland Way offers a variety of terrain including coast, forest, farmland and hills as it traverses the country from coast to coast in 340 kms. After leaving the west coast the route heads through the heart of the Galloway hills, across the high moors of the Lowther Hills, past the Moffat Hills and St Mary's Loch to the River Tweed. From the Tweed the route then crosses the moors around Lauder before a gentler farmland section leads to the coast. The route follows paths throughout, is fully waymarked and is managed by a dedicated ranger service.</p> <p>Likewise the Great Glen Way is an epic hike from Inverness to Fort William.</p> <p>The Munros: The highest mountains in Scotland are known as Munros, named after Sir Hugh T. Munro who in 1891 surveyed all the country's mountains above 3000 feet (914 metres) and produced his Tables which catalogued 236 peaks that he deemed to be individual mountains with 'sufficient separation' between each other. Over the years and with advances in surveying, there have been several revisions to Munro's original listing, the latest being in 1997. Currently, there are 284 Munros.</p> <p>Frommer's Best Walking Trips in Scotland covers 57 walks all over Scotland, together with information on where to eat and stay.</p>
Cycling	<p>Ciclismo Classico has a new Bike Across Scotland tour package in 2011. What better way to see Scotland's breathtaking scenery than riding along its beautiful seaside coasts and lochs, through its verdant hills, dramatic munros and bucolic villages? There are two options for eight-day rides, departing from Inverness in the Highlands on June 18 or August 6 and covering 400kms before ending in the coastal village of Gairloch.</p> <p>Package highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight-days of cycling • Accommodations at three- and four-star country inns • Rides through majestic countryside, along lochs, islands, forests, and dramatic mountains, including the highest pass in the UK! • Opportunities to view local wildlife, ranging from dolphins to osprey • A tour of the 13th century Urquhart Castle along the banks of Loch Ness • A taste of Scotland with locally-sourced and seasonal dining experiences • A whisky tasting at one of Scotland's oldest distilleries in Glen Ord
Sailing & Watersports	Wherever you travel in Scotland, you're never far from the water. Windsurfing, canoeing, water-skiing, and sailing are just some of the activities available at a number of sailing centres and holiday parks.

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	You'll find it easy to rent boats and equipment at any of the major resorts along Scotland's famous lakes.
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CULTURE	
Arts	<p>Scotland has a long and lively literary culture, which consists of the romantic poems of Robert Burns, the classic adventures of Robert Louis Stevenson and the fantasies of JM Barrie, as well as the literary work of many more authors.</p> <p>Scotland is renowned for its art, alongside its music and dance. Having garnered a strong reputation throughout the years thanks to pieces including Allan Ramsay's 18th century portraits and Douglas Gordon's modern video footage, the variety of art on show is vast.</p> <p>National and international artwork is on show in Edinburgh in the National Galleries of Scotland that feature timeless pieces. The capital is also home to doggerfisher, which alongside Sorcha Dallas and Transmission in Glasgow and Dundee's DCA, showcases Scotland's thriving art scene of the present day.</p>
Music	<p>Scottish music often gets underestimated with bagpipes thought to be all the country has to offer, but this is far from the case. Scottish music goes far beyond the cèol beag, or 'little music', of Scotland's national instrument and you can listen to much more than just the sound of the pipes.</p> <p>Rock music has come to the fore in Scotland's music scene in recent years, with the T in the Park Music Festival being one example. Having now been put on for more than a decade, it is an opportunity for music fans to see the best talent produced by Scotland, including Paolo Nutini, Calvin Harris and Belle and Sebastian, as well as acts from around the world.</p> <p>It isn't just festivals where toe-tapping music can be found either, with pubs across the country hosting regular sessions. You'll soon become familiar with Scottish music and have it stuck in your head; something that won't bother you one jot!</p> <p>The home of Scottish Opera is Glasgow's Theatre Royal, which is near the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. The theatre hosts a number of classic productions for which they've won awards, including The Ring Cycle, Madame Butterfly and Der Rosenkavalier. They have even toured their productions across the Scottish countryside, with Orkney and Shetland just two areas to be graced with their presence. The performance of Die Fledermaus has even been tweaked to make it into a contemporary show and open it up to a whole new audience.</p>
Films	Innumerable films have been shot in Scotland including Harry Potter; Braveheart; Highlander; Rob Roy; The World is not Enough; Mrs Brown; The 39 Steps; and one of my favourites, Local Hero.

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<p>Museums</p>	<p>The National Galleries of Scotland The National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh comprise the five galleries, the original National Gallery itself, joined by the Weston Link to the Royal Scottish Academy, which creates an elegant, neo-classical presence at the foot of the Mound. Renaissance Masters, Post-Impressionist works, and the most extensive collection of Scottish paintings in the world are found here. A few minutes away is the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, with the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and the impressive Dada-based, Dean Gallery well worth an excursion north-west of Princes Street. If you don't feel like walking, take the free bus which operates between the five galleries.</p> <p>National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh Visit the 16 stunning new galleries dedicated to the natural world, cultures of the world, art and design and science and technology, exhibiting a range of artifacts from dinosaur bones to designer chairs and mummies to motor cars. The Grand Gallery has been revitalized following recent refurbishment, with a 'Window on the World' display of more than 800 objects rising over four floors. Each one tells its own tale about everyday Scots and their lives, and together they paint a vivid picture of the nation from earliest days to future aspirations.</p> <p>Fossil Grove is Glasgow's most ancient attraction. A unique treasure, situated in beautiful Victoria Park in the west of the city, the fossil trees and surrounding rocks are the remains of an ancient forest, more than 330 million years old. Scottish National Heritage has designated the grove a site of Special Scientific Interest. These fossilised tree stumps were discovered in 1887 when an old quarry was being landscaped during the creation of the park. Careful excavation of the site uncovered the fossil remains and a building was erected to protect them from the elements.</p> <p>The University of Glasgow's Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery is home to one of the top five collections in Scotland, with over a million items ranging from meteorites to mummies. Explore dinosaurs, early man, Roman legionnaires and much more at the Museum. Just opposite, visit the Mackintosh House and displays including Rembrandt, Whistler and Scottish Painting in the Art Gallery.</p>
<p>Festivals</p>	<p>Scotland is home to a number of great festivals every year but it's the Edinburgh Festival that really steals the limelight. This festival actually consists of a number of different festivals, including the Edinburgh International Festival, the Military Tattoo, the International Book and Film Festivals and the renowned and highly popular Festival Fringe. Edinburgh also hosts the UK's Mela Festival, a multicultural event that</p>

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stops off in the Scottish capital before moving onto Glasgow for its tour of Britain.

Other than those three weeks in August, there's still plenty of activity across Scotland to check out. In February there's the Aye Write! Literary festival that takes place in Glasgow. Scotland's second city is also home to the biennial **International Arts Festival**, a new event that sees Glasgow host top notch contemporary art every other April.

If you're after a musical experience you can either relax at Glasgow's Celtic Connections, where the traditional sounds of Scotland come to the fore, or you can join 69,000 other fans of pop music in a Perthshire field for T in the Park.

Highland Games take place right across Scotland throughout the summer. You can see events from June until September, with the Braemar Gathering being one of the most renowned occasions; it's even attended by royalty. Every aspect of the rich Highland culture will be celebrated by a range of traditional and contemporary events.

Winter is just as busy a time across Scotland, with winter festivals taking place in most towns and cities. Edinburgh's Winter Wonderland is one of the most famous, which sees the year brought to an end in style with a four-day **Hogmanay** celebration, a truly unique New Year's Eve party.

Edinburgh is the world's favourite festival city, welcoming some 25,000 performers and thinkers, with over four million attendees each year. The Scottish capital is where huge talents such as Emma Thompson, Mike Myers, Hugh Laurie and Alan Cumming learned their craft; these and many more stars are warmly welcomed back to critical acclaim. A trip to the Edinburgh Festivals is unique, and no more so than in 2012 when they will celebrate the Year of Creative Scotland. Come along to enjoy the line-up of world class talent, as well as plenty of emerging entertainment waiting to be discovered.

In August alone, seven festivals take over the city with something for everyone: from the stirring sounds of the massed pipes and drums at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, to the big opera and dance productions invited by the Edinburgh International Festival. With comedy, dance and theatre populating the Edinburgh Festival Fringe with over 1,000 performances a day and the crème de la crème of bestselling authors appearing at the Edinburgh International Book Festival.

ATTRACTIONS	
Beaches	With a coastline estimated at 13,115 km long, there is plenty of room for Scottish beaches! The east coast has plenty of unspoilt stretches of sands, with places like Dunbar, St Andrews, Montrose, Aberdeen, Fraserburgh, Lossiemouth, Nairn, and Dornoch just some of the towns

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	<p>and cities close to superb stretches of beach. The more rugged north and west coasts likewise have beautiful sands, often as smaller coves set amongst magnificent cliff scenery, while the dazzling white beaches of the Hebrides – look for the Gaelic word ‘traigh’ on maps – are an essential element of the island experience and a real highlight of a visit to, for example, Harris or Islay. The Big Strand on Islay, for example, is at least 12 km long.</p> <p>Some beaches have an association with a particular leisure pursuit – Thurso (Dunnet Bay) for surfing, for instance; beaches on Tiree for wind surfing; St Andrews for kite-surfing – but all of these are practiced at a variety of Scottish beaches.</p> <p>Scotland’s beaches are also leisurely places for beachcombing – lobster buoys from Maine, coconuts from the Caribbean and pumice from Icelandic volcanoes may add a touch of the exotic!</p> <p>More than 60 of Scotland’s beaches hold Seaside Awards – but the Scottish beach, especially in the Highlands, can still be an off-the-beaten-track location, unspoilt and hardly visited.</p>
Wildlife	<p>Scotland's wildlife is typical of the north west of Europe, although several of the larger mammals such as the Lynx, Brown Bear, Wolf, Elk and Walrus were hunted to extinction in historic times. There are important populations of seals and internationally significant nesting grounds for a variety of seabirds such as Gannets. The Golden Eagle is something of a national icon.</p> <p>On the high mountain tops species including Ptarmigan, Mountain Hare and Stoat can be seen in their white colour phase during winter months. Remnants of the native Scots Pine forest exist and within these areas the Scottish Crossbill, the UK's only endemic bird species and vertebrate, can be found alongside Capercaillie, Wildcat, Red Squirrel and Pine Marten. In recent years various animals have been re-introduced, including the White-tailed Sea Eagle in 1975, the Red Kite in the 1980s, and more recently there have been experimental projects involving the Beaver and Wild Boar.</p>
Parks	<p>Scotland has two national parks: Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, created in 2002, and the Cairngorms National Park, created in 2003. These were designated as such under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 which was an early piece of legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament not long after its creation in 1999. It was a Scot, John Muir, who had initiated the first national park in the world, at Yosemite in the United States.</p>
Islands	<p>Scotland has 790 islands, of which 130 are inhabited, including Orkney, Shetland, Outer Hebrides, Skye, Mull, Iona, Arran, Islay, and Jura. Here are two on my ‘bucket list’:</p> <p>Iona: It's an otherworldly rock, one of Europe's most evocative holy</p>

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	<p>places, anchored solidly among the Hebrides off Scotland's west coast. St. Columba established Iona as a Christian center in A.D. 563, and used it as a base for converting Scotland. You'll find a ruined Benedictine nunnery and a fully restored cathedral where 50 Scottish kings were buried during the early Middle Ages. Hundreds of Celtic crosses once adorned Iona; today, only three of the originals remain. Now part of the National Trust, the island is home to an ecumenical group dedicated to the perpetuation of Christian ideals. Reaching Iona requires a 10-minute ferry ride from the hamlet of Fionnphort, on the nearby island of Mull.</p> <p>Orkneys: Archaeologists say the Orkneys, an archipelago comprising some 70 islands, hold the richest trove of prehistoric monuments in the British Isles - an average of three sites per square mile. Ornithologists claim that about 16% of all winged animals in the United Kingdom reside here, and linguists have documented an ancient dialect that still uses Viking terms. Northwest of the Scottish mainland, closer to Oslo than to faraway London, these islands are on the same latitude as St. Petersburg but much more exposed to the raging gales of the North Sea. The late-spring sunsets and the aurora borealis have been called mystical, and in midsummer the sun remains above the horizon for 18 hours a day. An equivalent twilight envelops the islands in winter. Only 19 of the Orkneys are inhabited; the others, often drenched with rain, seem to float above primordial seas.</p>
<p>Gardens</p>	<p>Scotland has over 200 gardens and nurseries each containing thousands of plant varieties.</p> <p>The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh was established in 1670 and during the twentieth century acquired three Regional Gardens - the mountainous Benmore in Argyll; Dawyck in the wooded hills of the Scottish Borders and Logan on the Gulf Stream-warmed southern peninsula of Dumfries & Galloway.</p> <p>Comprising 70 acres of stunning scenery, just a stone's throw from the city centre, the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) captures the imagination of everyone who visits: from the knowledgeable gardener to the curious sightseer.</p> <p>Reflecting the international research and conservation work of RBGE, the Garden is home to the largest collection of wild-origin Chinese plants outside China. See, too, the Scottish Heath Garden, recreating the plantings and landscape of the Scottish highlands; the world-famous Rock Garden, which is home to over 5,000 alpine plants and the stunning 165m-long Herbaceous Border, backed by an outstanding century-old Beech Hedge.</p> <p>Opened in the summer of 2006 is the Queen Mother's Memorial Garden, a fitting tribute to a much-loved royal, which has been</p>

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	<p>imaginatively planted to present something for visitors of all tastes - in every season.</p> <p>Among the Garden's many thousands of trees and shrubs are several groups in which its scientists have special interest, such as the conifers, rhododendrons and other shrubs of the Ericaceae family. Further highlights include the Sierra redwoods (<i>Sequoiadendron giganteum</i>) of North America and numerous other species of botanical interest, including beeches (<i>Fagus</i>), maples (<i>Acer</i>), and colourful rowans (<i>Sorbus</i>)</p> <p>At the North East corner of the Garden stands its magnificent Victorian Temperate Palm House - the tallest of its kind in Britain - the glorious entrance to Windows on the World, a glasshouse experience offering visitors the opportunity to explore ten distinct climatic zones holding around one percent of all known flowering plants, cycads and ferns. These range from the economically important species - including banana and rubber - to household favourites and the world's largest collection of tender vireya rhododendron, originating from the mountains of New Guinea and Borneo.</p>
<p>Historical Sites - Castles</p>	<p>Edinburgh Castle (Edinburgh): Few other buildings symbolize the grandeur of an independent Scotland as clearly as this one. Begun around A.D. 1000, on a hilltop high above the rest of Edinburgh, it witnessed some of the bloodiest and most treacherous events in Scottish history, including a doomed 1573 defense by Kirkcaldy of Grange in the name of Mary Queen of Scots.</p> <p>Palace of Holyroodhouse (Edinburgh): Throughout the clan battles for independence from England, this palace served as a pawn between opposing forces. In its changing fortunes, it has housed a strange assortment of monarchs involved in traumatic events: Mary Queen of Scots, Bonnie Prince Charlie, James VII (before his ascendancy to the throne), and French King Charles X (on his forced abdication after an 1830 revolution). The building's present form dates from the late 1600s, when it was rebuilt in a dignified neo-Palladian style. Today, Holyroodhouse is one of Queen Elizabeth's official residences.</p> <p>Drumlanrig Castle (Dumfries): Begun in 1679, this castle took 12 years to build and so much money that its patron, the third earl and first duke of Queensbury, complained that he deeply resented its existence. Later, it was embroiled in dynastic inheritance scandals worthy of a Gothic novel. One of the most prestigious buildings in Scotland, it houses the antiques and artwork of four illustrious families.</p> <p>Culzean Castle (near Maybole): Designed for comfort and prestige, this castle was built in the late 1700s by Scotland's most celebrated</p>

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architect, Robert Adam, as a replacement for a dark, dank tower that had stood for longer than anyone could remember. Culzean was donated to the National Trust for Scotland just after World War II. A suite was granted to General Eisenhower for his lifetime use, in gratitude for his role in staving off a foreign invasion of Britain.

Stirling Castle (Stirling): Stirling is a triumph of Renaissance ornamentation, a startling contrast to the severe bulk of many other Scottish castles. Despite its beauty, after its completion in 1540 the castle was one of the most impregnable fortresses in the British Isles, thanks partly to its position on a rocky crag.

Scone Palace (Scone): As early as A.D. 900, Scottish kings were crowned here on a lump of granite so imbued with ancient magic that, in the 13th century, the English hauled it off to Westminster Abbey. (The Stone of Scone was returned to Scotland in 1996 and is now found in Edinburgh Castle.) The palace you see today was rebuilt in 1802 from ruins that incorporated a 1580 structure with stones laid during the dim early days of Scottish and Pictish union.

Glamis Castle (Glamis): This castle's core was built for defense against rival clans during the 1400s, but over the centuries it evolved into a luxurious dwelling. The seat of the same family since 1372, Glamis is said to be haunted by the ghost of Lady Glamis, a former owner, whom James V had burned as a witch when she resisted his annexation of her castle. It also figured into the ambitions of Macbeth, thane of Glamis.

Crathes Castle & Gardens (Grampian): Crathes evokes the luxury of a 15th- and 16th-century Scottish laird. The style focuses on high heraldry, with frequent references to the persistent Scottish hope of an enduring independence. The gardens' massive yew hedges were originally planted in 1702.

Balmoral Castle (Ballater): Scotland offers far greater castles to explore, but Balmoral, the rebuilt castle of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, draws hordes of visitors, who no doubt hope to glimpse Prince William. That's because it's still the Scottish residence of the queen. Although inside you can visit only the ballroom, the sprawling manicured grounds and gardens also await you.

Braemar Castle (Grampian): Built by the earl of Mar in 1628 as a hunting lodge, Braemar was burned to the ground, and then rebuilt by Farquharson of Invercauld, an ancestor of the present owner. It's often photographed as a symbol of Scottish grandeur and the

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	<p>well-upholstered aristocratic life.</p> <p>Cawdor Castle (Cawdor): From its heavily fortified origins in the 1300s, Cawdor evolved into the Campbell clan's luxurious seat. According to legend and Shakespearean plot lines, three witches promised this castle to Macbeth to tempt him into the deeds that led to his destruction.</p>
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OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	<p>The shopping experience in Scotland is very varied. Though the cities have the 'High Street' names, plus some very stylish and exclusive brands, rural areas have plenty of surprises. Here you'll discover potters and jewellers, knitwear designers, weavers, silversmiths and kiltmakers to name but a few.</p> <p>Scottish textiles, especially the tartan variety, are popular and worth buying. Everything from a travelling rug to your own kilt outfit. Shops up and down the country, and especially in Edinburgh and Inverness, can tell which clan your family belongs to and make you a kilt in that particular tartan. For the full outfit, including kilt, sporran, jacket, shoes and skeann dhu dagger, expect to pay in the region of £600, or more if you want more elaborate accessories.</p> <p>There are mill shops making tweeds and cloths in many parts of Scotland. Most are in the Borders, though it is not necessarily cheaper to buy at source. Harris Tweed is also a good buy and you can watch your cloth being woven on the Hebridean islands of Harris and Lewis.</p> <p>Knitwear is also good value and sold throughout Scotland, though the cashmere industry in the Borders is suffering from high trade tariffs. Shetland is a good place to find high-quality wool products. Note that Aran jumpers are not from the island of Arran, but from Aran (with one 'r') in Ireland.</p> <p>Jewellery is another popular souvenir and there are many excellent craft shops throughout the Highlands and Islands making beautiful jewellery with Celtic designs.</p> <p>Glassware is also popular, particularly Edinburgh crystal and Caithness glass, as well as pottery.</p> <p>Food is another good souvenir and not just the ubiquitous shortbread sold in tartan tins. If you haven't far to travel home, smoked salmon, or any other smoked product, is good value. One of the best places for food products is the island of Arran, where you can buy their delicious local mustards and preserves, smoked fish and game, and cheeses. And, of course, there's whisky. Most distilleries will refund the cost of their guided tour in the form of a discount voucher on a bottle of their brand whisky.</p>
Markets	<p>The Barras Market in Glasgow is an historic marketplace with great character and an eclectic mix of covered and open stalls selling a huge</p>

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	<p>range of goods.</p> <p>Perth Farmers' Market takes place on the 1st Saturday of the month in King Edward Street and St John's Place, Perth, from 9am to 2pm. There are between 35 and 40 stalls selling a variety of quality local and Scottish produce throughout the year. The Producers themselves run their own stalls so you can come and speak directly with them, ask them questions about their produce and purchase fresh quality products. Visit the Information Point at Perth Farmers' Market and pick up a variety of free leaflets. There's plenty to see and do: watch the cooking demonstration, sample the food, enjoy the atmosphere and purchase some of the finest produce in Scotland.</p>
<p>Nightlife</p>	<p>Glasgow has one of the most active dance club scenes in the UK. Listed below are just a few selected venues. In local parlance, "venues" are distinct from the actual "clubs" - such as Optimo (electro-clash), Manga (drum and bass), or Pressure (house and techno) - which are associated with a specific style, DJ, or team of DJs. They can move around to different venues. It all makes perfect sense to those in the know.</p> <p>Glasgow also has the reputation as an unsurpassed spawning ground in Scotland for pop and rock groups, such as Franz Ferdinand or Belle and Sebastian. Barrowland, a former ballroom, has to be one of the best venues in all of Britain for seeing live contemporary music. Recently, the company that runs the well-known Brixton Academy converted an old movie house into the Academy on the city's Southside, while in the city centre another former cinema, ABC, was redeveloped into a good music venue in 2005. Plus, two bars, King Tut's Wah Wah Hut (where the band Oasis was apparently "discovered") and Nice 'n' Sleazy, give Glasgow a pair of small venues with performance spaces that would rival those typical of Manhattan's East Village.</p>
<p>Hogmanay</p>	<p>There are many festivities happening across the country to celebrate Hogmanay. Choose from an array of ceilidhs, dinner dances, hoolies and balls.</p> <p>Join Glasgow's biggest party of the year as 25,000 revellers descend on George Square to see in the New Year;</p> <p>Stonehaven Fireball Festival: One of the few remaining mid-winter fire festivals on the Scottish East Coast. Local people celebrate the arrival of the New Year in this traditional way - swinging fireballs around as they walk up and down the old town High Street;</p> <p>The Hogmanay bonfire in the Borders town off Biggar (pop 2000), dates back to the pagan times when fire was worshipped and believed to ward off evil spirits for the New Year. It has continued at Biggar for hundreds of years and there is no other town in the world that celebrates the coming of the New Year like Biggar.</p> <p>Edinburgh's Hogmanay: The world's best New Year celebrations -</p>

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	<p>four fabulous days and nights of amazing events throughout the city. Nobody celebrates New Year better than the Scots so come and join the 100,000 other revellers who pack Edinburgh's Princes Street for a wild night of full-on partying that pauses only for the breathtaking fireworks display from the ramparts of Edinburgh Castle at midnight. The pyrotechnics also signal the start of the biggest kissathon you'll ever take part in and you'll never make so many friends so quickly as you do then!</p> <p>Hogmanay Traditions: Traditionally, the Scots were a superstitious race at the best of times and for an event as significant as the dawning of a new year, customs, rituals and traditions inevitably arose around the country. Many of these have now disappeared but others have carried on down through the years and some have even become essential ingredients of today's celebrations.</p> <p>Cleaning the House The last day of the year was traditionally regarded as a time of preparation: business would be concluded to let the new year start afresh and houses were thoroughly cleaned (known as 'redding'). Fireplaces in particular had to be swept out and in a variation on reading tea-leaves, the ashes of the last fire of the old year were believed to show what lay ahead in the new year.</p> <p>First Footing One of the major Hogmanay customs was 'first footing'. Shortly after 'the bells' - the stroke of midnight when public clocks would chime to signal the start of the new year - neighbours would visit one another's houses to wish each other a good new year. This visiting was known as 'first footing', and the luckiest first-foot into any house was a tall, dark and handsome man - perhaps as a reward to the woman who traditionally had spent the previous day scrubbing her house (another Hogmanay ritual). Women or red heads, however, were always considered bad luck as first-foots. First-foots brought symbolic gifts to 'handsel' the house: coal for the fire, to ensure that the house would be warm and safe, and shortbread or black bun (a type of fruit cake) to symbolise that the household would never go hungry that year.</p>
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<p>CUISINE</p>	<p>Burns Supper: What is a Burns Supper? The format can be whatever the organiser wishes. As for the poems used, the Address to the Haggis is essential – verses 1, 2, 3 and 8. The other poems used reflect the kind of personnel attending the Supper. Some functions have guest orators who might offer Tam o' Shanter, Holy Willie's Prayer (with actions) or The Cottar's Saturday Night. Some Burns Clubs do indulge in guest orators as they feel Robert Burns'</p>
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	<p>poems were meant to be read aloud if necessary but not acted. The menu may be as you please but traditionally, it is as follows: Soup such as Cock a Leekie or Scotch Broth; Haggis, Champit Tatties (mashed potatoes) and Neeps (mashed turnip). A main course of beef or steak. Bannocks an' Kebbuck – cheese – such as the hard cheeses of Mull, Galloway or Orkney, biscuits and oatcakes</p>
<p>Food</p>	<p>When you first look at a menu serving traditional Scottish grub you might get a little bit lost, what with the Arbroath Smokies, Champit Tatties, Cullen Skink, Cranachan, Roastit Bubbly Jock and much more unusual sounding food that will leave you somewhat confused. The names might be complex but the method of traditional Scottish cooking isn't, as Scottish food is simply hearty and tasty fare. Home-cooking and making use of good, local produce have always been important in Scotland and that's no different today as Scottish restaurants make the most of the ingredients they have around them. Scottish smoked salmon is just one example, which has a luxurious delicate taste. The country is also home to cheeses like the Lanark Blue, known as the 'Scottish Roquefort', while Scottish meat including everything from Aberdeen Angus beef to wild venison are bursting full of flavour.</p> <p>Many Scottish eateries will serve up these treats, using classic recipes and giving them a modern twist. When you're in Scotland you really should try the national dish, haggis, which caused Burns to write a special ode for it. Enjoying resurgence in restaurants across the country, including Café Gandolfi and Stravaigin in Glasgow, make sure you wash down your haggis with a wee dram!</p>
<p>Drink - Whisky</p>	<p>Scotland should be proud of its whisky, and it is. After 500 years of practice, uisge beatha (from the Gaelic, meaning 'water of life') was first mentioned in written record in 1494; the Scots have whisky distilling down to a fine art. The tastes change with the landscape as well. In the rolling pastoral Lowlands you'll find grassy and malt flavours, while heathery whisky is the norm in the Highlands. It's different once again in the low hills of Speyside where a mellow sweetness is found, while the rough and salty smokiness of the Western Isles whisky perfectly matches the terrain.</p> <p>Scottish people love whisky so much that pubs are dedicated to the drink; head to Leslie's Bar in Edinburgh, or The Grill in Aberdeen, where more than 400 varieties of whiskies will keep you quiet for the evening. Fellow drinkers and friendly barmen will be only too happy to give you a guide of Scotland's national drink and one of its finest exports. Among the famous Highland malts are Glen Grant, Macallan, Glenfarclas, Knockando, Cardhu, Glenfiddich, Strathisla and Tamnavullin. Of course there are also island malts which have their own special appeal. These include Highland Park and Scapa on</p>

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	<p>Orkney, Talisker from the misty Isle of Skye, Jura and the Islay malts which include Laphroig, Bowmore and Bruichladdich.</p> <p>Glengoyne Distillery: Glengoyne is very attractive and eminently visitable, being less than 20kms from the centre of Glasgow. The distillery itself is like a picture postcard of Scotland. Not only that, but its proximity to Loch Lomond, one of Scotlands most celebrated landmarks, gives it a familiarity for an international audience. Unlike most other single malts Glengoyne has been preserving the essence of its flavour for decades by using air-dried barley rather than barley dried using harsh peat smoke. The result is a more subtle, complex whisky in which all of the delicate flavours are freely allowed to express themselves. You can visit 'Scotland's Most Beautiful Distillery' year round to see the production process and learn how Glengoyne Single Highland Malt Whisky is made.</p>
<p>Restaurants</p>	<p>Edinburgh Restaurants</p> <p>The Witchery A world-renowned restaurant housed in sixteenth century building by the gates of the Castle. Expertly prepared Scottish produce in rich surroundings makes dining here a magical experience.</p> <p>Restaurant Martin Wishart Award-winning modern French cuisine impressively cooked to Michelin-star standards, set right in the middle of the historic Port of Leith.</p> <p>Oloroso The views from this luxurious restaurant are astounding. Take in panoramic views of Edinburgh and the Lothians. All the while enjoying surprising Pacific Rim flavors.</p> <p>David Bann Taking the blandness out of vegetarian and vegan food once and for all, David Bann will impress vegetarians and carnivores alike with its slick environment and colorful menu.</p> <p>Vermillion Set in the heart of The Scotsman Hotel, the richly Scottish menu and opulent surroundings of Vermillion set high standards.</p>

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Tower Restaurant

Spectacular views of Edinburgh's Castle and city skyline feature on the menu of James Thomson's stunning rooftop restaurant, perched above the landmark Museum of Scotland.

The Kitchin Restaurant

Situated in the picturesque port of Leith, Michelin-starred Tom Kitchin's style is a unique marriage of seasonal Scottish produce with the classical French technique he has mastered working alongside some of the world's greatest chefs.

Blue Bar Café

Clean, contemporary and simple are the keywords when talking about both the stylish interior and internationally influenced menu of this popular café. And it is perfectly situated nearby Edinburgh's main theatres.

Villager

A hip and elegantly retro hangout in the city centre – with a menu to match – who could resist vodka martini mussels? All matched with an eclectic cocktail list and a background soundtrack of the coolest funk.

Dragonfly

Voted 'Most Stylish Bar' in the 2006 Scottish Style Awards – you mingle with the beautiful people and, from the balcony, watch the bartenders make drinks like the Glenfiddich Cavalcade or the aptly named Edinburgh Rocks.

Glasgow Restaurants

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The popular 'Epicurean Menu' offered by Terence Conran's only UK outpost outside of London is a tasting menu with each course matched perfectly with a different wine. Epicureans will feel truly in heaven in Conran's sleek but subtle penthouse restaurant.

No.Sixteen

Tiny, unpretentious, and ever so slightly off the beaten track – although still pretty close to the throng of the bohemian West End – No.Sixteen is one of Glasgow's favorite restaurants. So good, that it has become one of Edinburgh's favorite restaurants too!

Ubiquitous Chip

Perhaps the most fabulously named restaurant in Glasgow, 'The Chip'

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as it is affectionately known is renowned for its strong Scottish flavors, and a refined coziness that Glaswegians have grown to love over its thirty-year tenure.

Uisge Beatha

A unique 'old-style' pub in the stylish West End, you'll find over 125 single malt whiskies to choose from, served by men in kilts!

Rab Ha's

A triumph of individuality over uniformity and of soul over empty style comprising boutique hotel, enticing restaurant and traditional Scottish bar, Rab Ha's is found within the Merchant City.

Babbity Bowser's

Housed in an original Tobacco Merchant's house attributed to Robert Adam in the Merchant City. Fraser and his team are a local institution and look forward to welcoming you to this bar, restaurant and small hotel. The restaurant offers a selection of freshly prepared Scottish meals or snacks, daily billboard specials and real ales with live music every Saturday night.

Café Gandolfi

The Tim Stead-designed wooden furniture in this Merchant City institution have become almost as much of a draw as Gandolfi's simple but incredibly enticing menu.

The Lansdowne

Through a leafy West End close, you will stumble across The Lansdowne, which after renovations in 2005, emerged as one of the neighborhood's favorites – with a stylish bar, and well-prepared but uncomplicated dishes.

Mother India

Glasgow isn't called the Curry Capital for nothing, and there are many first-class Indian restaurants – with Mother India being one of the most authentic, and one of the best – absolutely bursting with fresh ginger, spices and herbs.

Liquid Ship

Taking its name from a misspelled letter addressed to 'Ubiquitous Chip' (see above) – Liquid Ship is brought to the West End bar by the same family that owns the remarkable Chip. This ambient little bar is home to fantastic acoustic music, accompanied by a great selection of beers and wonderful tapas dishes.

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	<p>Brutti Ma Buoni Translating as ‘ugly but good,’ this unpretentiously hip bar and restaurant on the ground floor of the achingly trendy Brunswick Hotel in the Merchant City is always full of Glasgow’s cutting edge artists and trendsetters, and their new basement level is the perfect pre-club spot.</p>
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<p>MORE INFO</p>	
<p>Brochures</p>	<p>Discover everything that Scotland has to offer by viewing the brand new online visitor brochure. In it, you’ll find everything you need to make the most of Scotland’s great outdoors, from interactive maps to music and video clips to give you a taste of what’s on offer. http://www.cometoscotland.ca/plan-your-trip/free-scotland-brochure</p>
<p>Websites</p>	<p>http://www.cometoscotland.ca for tourist information www.ancestralscotland.com for tracing your roots www.canadianaffair.ca for flights to Scotland www.radissonblu.co.uk for hotel accommodation www.rabbies.com for tours in Scotland</p>

<p>TOUR PRIZE PARTNER</p>	<p>Take day tours from Glasgow and Edinburgh with Rabbies Trail Burners www.rabbies.com Rabbie’s Trail Burners has been delivering small group tours since 1993 and in that time have become recognised as the best at what they do. They believe that their small group tours give their guests more. More personal attention, more time with the locals, more time off the bus, more time on the back-roads and more of an all-round enriching and memorable experience. They back this up with their guarantees: - Guaranteed small groups – maximum of 16 passengers on any tour - Guaranteed departures – no minimum numbers or cancellations - Guaranteed experience – or your money back.</p>
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<p>HOTEL PRIZE PARTNER</p>	<p>Stay in Glasgow at the Radisson Blu www.radissonblu.co.uk/hotel-glasgow Bang in the heart of the city centre, the Radisson Blu Hotel is only minutes from the Style Mile, Glasgow’s main shopping area and the international financial services district. Inside the hotel, you will find 247 beautiful rooms, great places to eat & drink, superb meetings and events space and a fully equipped gym & swimming pool. This award winning hotel radiates style and character. The soaring roof and glass front Atrium Bar provides charismatic surroundings and this contemporary hotel maintains its modernistic style throughout all outlets. Stay in Edinburgh in the Radisson Blu</p>
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	<p>www.radissonblu.co.uk/hotel-edinburgh</p> <p>Standing out among hotels in Edinburgh, the Radisson Blu is enviably located on the historic Royal Mile in the heart of Scotland's capital city. It is near attractions such as the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh Castle and the Palace of Holyrood House, as well as the fashionable shopping areas on Princes Street and George Street. The Radisson Blu Hotel offers 238 contemporary, comfortable and relaxing hotel rooms in Edinburgh that reflect the individuality of the hotel and its unique location on the historic Royal Mile.</p>
<p>AIRLINE PRIZE PARTNER</p>	<p>Fly to Glasgow with Canadian Affair www.canadianaffair.ca</p> <p>Founded in 1995, Canadian Affair offers an a la carte menu of services for all types of travel options to, and holiday experiences in, Canada. Since 1995, the company has grown into a multi-million turnover business and is recognised as the pre-eminent choice for holidays & tours in Canada and the UK. Since its inception, Canadian Affair has flown over two million passengers between the UK and Canada. Canadian Affair's capacity for Summer 2011 will be over 400,000 seats, offering over 60 direct non-stop flights to Canada each week and offering departures from 7 Canadian airports to 7 UK Airports and 2 Irish airports. In 2006 Canadian Affair became part of the Transat Group, the leading integrated holiday travel group in Canada.</p>
<p>Flight details</p>	<p>Canadian Affair features direct flights from Toronto to Glasgow five days per week in summer 2011. They also fly weekly on Sundays from Montreal to London Gatwick for easy connection to Scotland.</p>
<p>CURRENT DEALS</p>	<p>Canadian Affair currently has direct flights from Canada to Glasgow from just \$249 plus taxes as at August 13th 2011.</p>
<p>PERSONAL EXPERIENCES</p>	<p>Ben Nevis, The Highlands, The Borders, Loch Ness, John O'Groats, Skye, Dumfries and Galloway, Glasgow, Edinburgh.</p>

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