

The Gardens of Scotland

An Adventure in Highland Horticulture

August 21 - 30, 2014

Few visitors travel “north of the border” without leaving at least a part of their heart behind in the Highlands. The breathtaking landscapes, the romance of the tales and legends, and the history of the noble and fiercely independent inhabitants all combine to leave a lasting impression. The Highlands are calling!

And whereas the climate is a little harsher than that of our cousins to the south, this has not prevented the Scots from indulging wholeheartedly in the British passion for horticulture. From small private gardens to those of the great castles; from spectacular natural scenery to the second oldest botanic garden in Britain (the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, est. 1670), we'll take you on a garden-lover's dream.

We'll spend a day in the capital, Edinburgh, exploring its intriguing Old Town, an area of winding streets steeped in atmosphere and history. We'll traverse the Royal Mile, leading from Edinburgh Castle down to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, and all while the Edinburgh Festival is at its peak. From here we take a circular tour through the Highlands encompassing Aberdeen, Nairn and Stirling.

Along the way there will be unexpected stops and detours, plenty of time for a wee dram in the local pub, and the best of Scotland's backroads and scenery. Join us this summer for an unforgettable journey through Scottish landscapes and history as we experience the **Gardens of Scotland**.



Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh



Crathes Castle Gardens

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The cost of this itinerary, per person, double occupancy is:

Land Only:	\$3980
Single supplement:	\$890

Airfares are available from many U.S. cities. Please call for details.

The following services are included:

Hotels:	8 nights accommodation in first-class hotels. All hotel taxes and service charges included.
Coaching:	All ground transportation as detailed in the itinerary.
Meals:	Full breakfast daily, 6 dinners.
Guides:	Services of a fully qualified Discover Europe tour guide throughout.
Expenses:	Porterage of one large suitcase per person.
Entrances:	Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary.
Insurance:	Complete travel insurance inc. cancellation coverage.



Thursday, August 21st. Departure from your chosen gateway city.

Overnight: Plane

Friday, August 22nd. Your arrival at Edinburgh Airport will be met for the transfer to our city-center hotel. The rest of the day is free to unpack, relax and begin exploring the neighborhood. This evening we gather for a welcome dinner. **(D)**

Overnight: Edinburgh

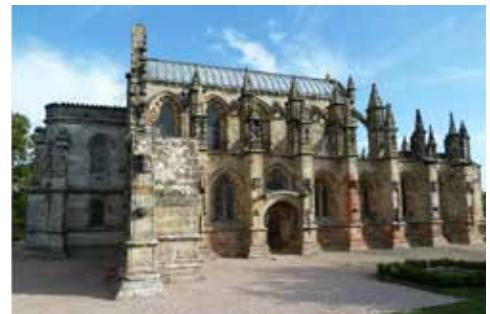
Saturday, August 23rd. The elegant city of Edinburgh is the political and cultural capital of Scotland. Set atop seven volcanic hills, it brims with historic treasures, but its finest is surely Edinburgh Castle, a towering fortification that dominates the skyline. Morning sightseeing with a local guide includes a visit to the historic castle, where you can admire the Honours of Scotland, her crown jewels. Our tour will end at the Royal Botanical Garden, where you'll be able to have

lunch and spend as much time as you like. The rest of the afternoon and evening are free to explore the city and sample one of its many fine restaurants. **(B)**

Overnight: Edinburgh

Sunday, August 24th. An excursion south of the city today takes us first to Kailzie Gardens on the River Tweed. Although an ancient estate, Kailzie is really the work of Lady Buchan-Hepburn who began an ambitious design project in the 1960's, rescuing what had become a wilderness. From here we continue to Little Sparta Garden. Set in the Pentland Hills, just south of Edinburgh, Little Sparta is the garden of the artist Ian Hamilton Finlay. His idea is of a "Garden Gallery" – an outdoor space to exhibit his work that has become a piece of art in its own right. Our final visit before returning to Edinburgh will be to Rosslyn Chapel, made famous recently in the novels of Dan Brown. We return to Edinburgh for a free evening. **(B)**

Overnight: Edinburgh



Rosslyn Chapel

Monday, August 25th. Leaving Edinburgh to the north this morning we cross the Forth Bridge and drive through the ancient Kingdom of Fife, crossing the River Tay at Dundee. Our first stop will be Pitmuies Garden, where two semi-formal walled gardens adjoin an 18th-century house and shelter a long border of herbaceous perennials, superb delphiniums, old fashioned roses and pavings of violas and dianthus. Our next stop is at nearby Glamis Castle, the ancestral home of the Earls of Strathmore for over 600 years. From here we continue up the east coast of Scotland to Aberdeen, the "City of Roses," making a brief stop to view the spectacular ruins of Dunnottar Castle perched on the sea cliffs. Dinner awaits us at our hotel just outside Aberdeen. **(B, D)**

Overnight: Aberdeen



Pitmuies Delphiniums

Tuesday, August 26th. Our excursion today takes us inland along the River Dee, first to Crathes Castle Garden. Known for their magnificent yew hedges and herbaceous borders the gardens at Crathes surround a truly historic building which houses, amongst other things, the Horn of Leys, presented to the Leys family by Robert the Bruce in 1323. On our way back to our hotel we'll stop at Drum Castle, where we'll visit the beautiful Garden of Historic Roses. From our late-afternoon return, there will be free time to freshen up before dinner. **(B, D)**

Overnight: Aberdeen

Wednesday, August 27th. Heading northwest out of Aberdeen we follow the valley of the River Don to Leith Hall Gardens. A 17th-century house with a secluded garden, Leith Hall has extensive herbaceous and shrub planting, and what must be the longest catmint border in Britain! A short drive from here brings us to the Glenfiddich Distillery on Speyside, where we'll take the opportunity to sample a wee dram. We'll then be able to atone for our sins at nearby Elgin Cathedral, known as the "Lantern of the North." Dinner and overnight in the town of Nairn on the coast of the Moray Firth. **(B, D)**

Overnight: Nairn

Thursday, August 28th. Our first stop today is Cawdor Castle, home of the Thanes of Cawdor – amongst whom was counted the King Macbeth. The magnificent castle provides a perfect backdrop for the 3 separate gardens for which the site is also famous: the Walled garden, the Flower garden and the Wild garden. We'll explore all three and have time for lunch before continuing on to our other visit of the day – the Battlefield of Culloden. It was here in 1745 that hopes of Scottish independence from England were brutally laid to rest. We'll return to our hotel in Nairn for dinner. **(B, D)**

Overnight: Nairn



Stirling Castle

Friday, August 29th. Our route back south today takes us through the heart of the Cairngorm Mountains via Pitlochry. This afternoon we'll stop in Perth to visit Branklyn Gardens, a small but magnificent garden with an impressive collection of rare and unusual plants, before continuing to our final overnight in Stirling. On arrival we'll have to visit spectacular Stirling Castle before we gather for a farewell dinner at our hotel. **(B, D)**

Overnight: Stirling

Saturday, August 30th. Morning transfer to Edinburgh Airport for returning flights to the US. **(B)**

Key to included meals: B - breakfast, L - lunch, D - dinner