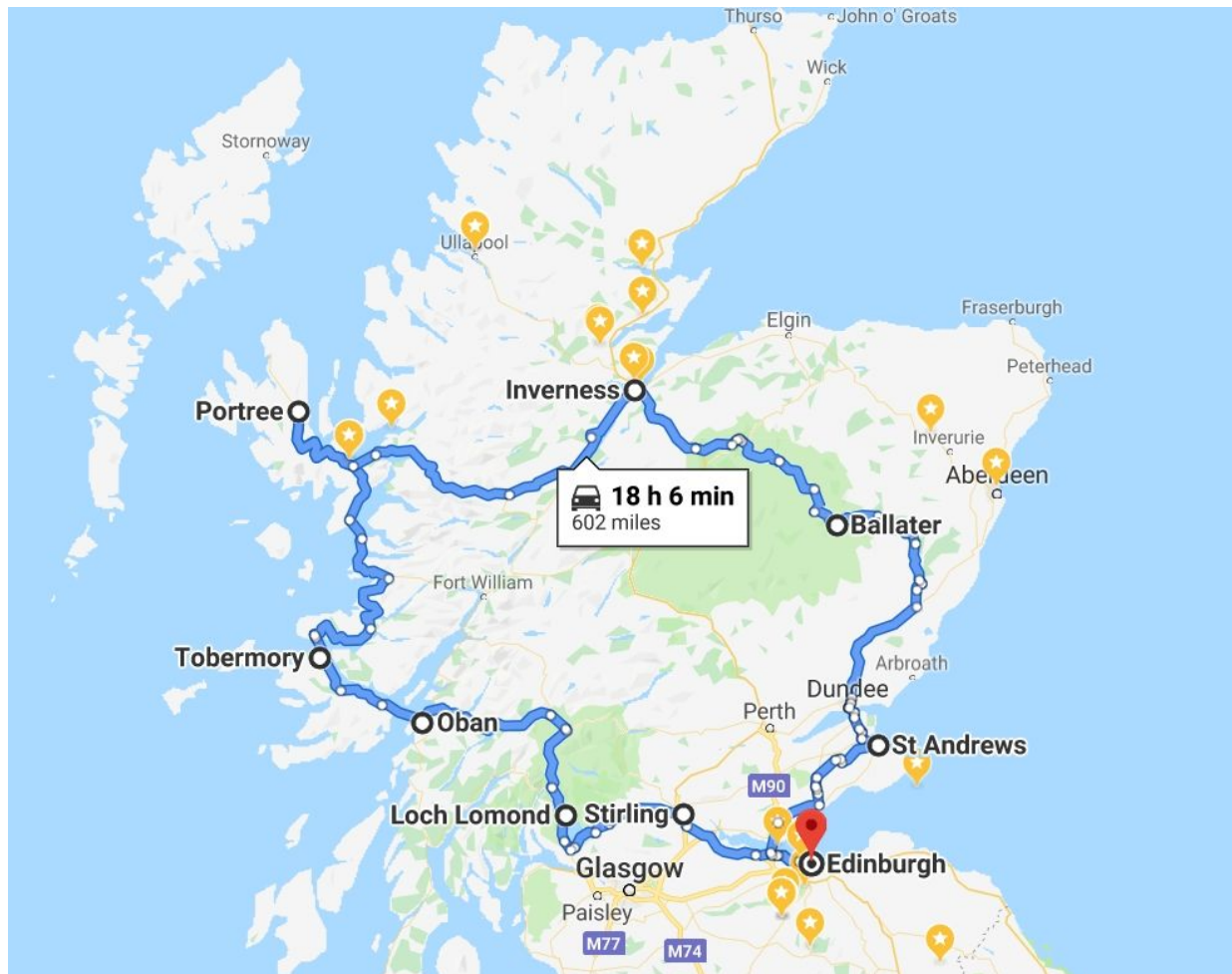


Jonathan's Brief Tour of Scotland

6~8 days not including arrival/departure days. *Some places I'd recommend at least two nights.

This [route is slightly shorter: about 600 miles \(or 960km\)](#)



Keyword Glossary

Scots English is distinct from both UK and American English, principally in the accent, but occasionally you will come across words that are unique to Scots English. This glossary is intended to help you understand and say the words.

Loch (n) refers to a lake, the waters of which can be either fresh or sea water. It is pronounced in the following way, l - aw - kh. [The 'kh' sound is distinctive in Scots English](#). Google's pronunciation guide for this word is wrong. Do not say 'lock'! Practice that fricative!!!!

Firth (n) refers to an estuary or inlet of ocean water. It is commonly used to describe such things in Scotland. Its pronunciation rhymes with 'birth'.

Burgh (n) Many towns and cities in Scotland are called 'burgh' (pron: bu-ra, NOT burg).

Day 1: *Edinburgh and the Lothians

Edinburgh is the capital city, the home of many parts of Scottish life, and the 2nd largest city in Scotland. In this photo, it is seen settled between Arthur's Seat and the Pentland Hills in the distance.



Castle/Royal Mile/ with a visit to the Castle, Royal Mile, and the Palace.



Recommend staying on your feet for this one. This is the beating heart of old Edinburgh and Scotland. In ancient times, the Castle & and the Palace formed the powerbase for the ancient Kings of Scotland.

In modern times, many of Scotland's institutions are still located along or near the Royal Mile, including the Scottish Parliament, St. Giles' Cathedral, and National Library of Scotland.

<https://www.edinburghcastle.scot/>

You can easily spend 2 hours inside the castle, but there is a lot of walking and the views over Edinburgh are incredible. Best pictures of the castle are taken from outside, bizarre but true.

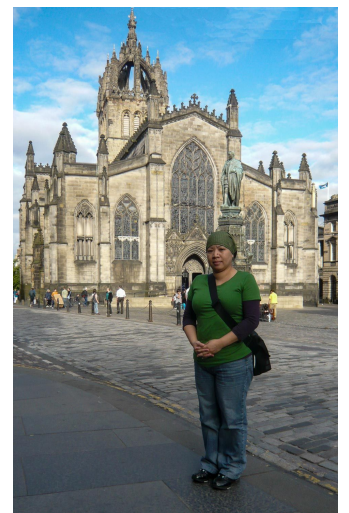
<https://www.scotchwhiskyexperience.co.uk/>

I haven't been here but it is recommended by whisky lovers. And it's just outside the castle grounds.

The Royal Mile is a famous tourist trap these days, but there are wonderful places to stop off along the way. It is about a mile long: St. Giles Cathedral (right), [Holyrood Palace](#) are two. You definitely should go in, if they are open to the public.

There are some rather nice photos of Edinburgh on Josh Ellis' blog.

>>> <https://www.goteamjosh.com/blog/edinburgh>



Day 2: Stirling, Callander & Loch Lomond

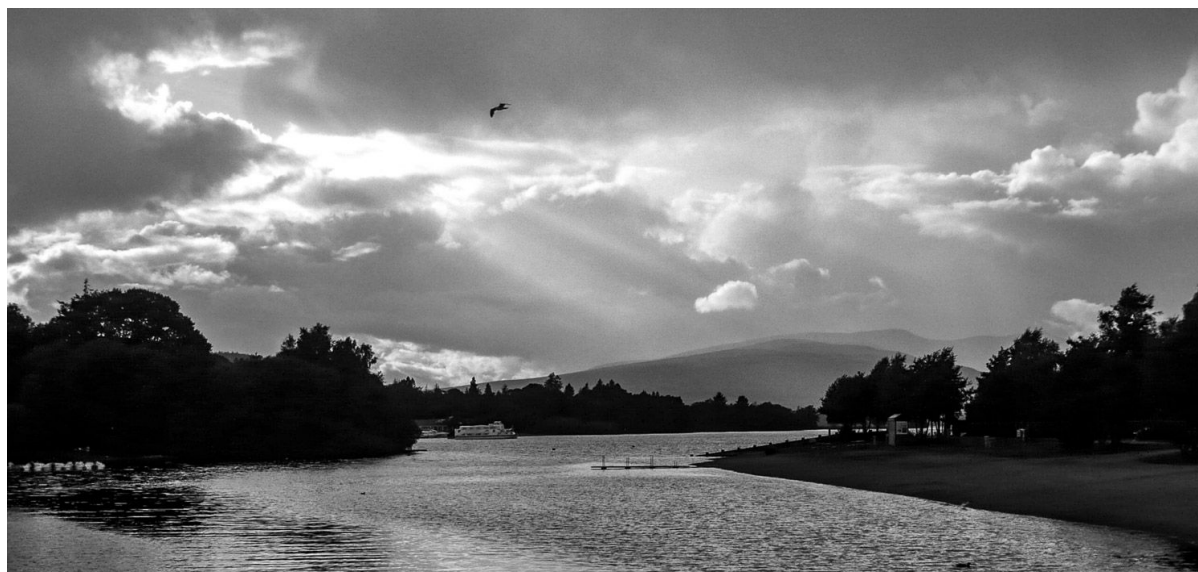
Bus or car for the most part. Walking in Stirling/Callender and Balloch Castle.



In the morning, get on the road for **Stirling** to visit the Castle there. It's a famous location but Stirling itself has lots of wee 'nooks & crannies' that are worth exploring. <https://www.stirlingcastle.scot/>

Head to **Callander** for lunch in a picturesque Scottish village in Perthshire. Highly recommended for a quick stop off. If you fancy a short nature walk, then try Bracklinn Falls.

<http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/things-to-do/walking/short-moderate-walks/bracklinn-falls-circuit/>.



Drive through **Loch Lomond** for scenic country. Consider a couple of hours stop at Balloch Castle and Country Park for a tour and general sightseeing.

<https://goo.gl/maps/8J3evuQ5Cfcmgdt8>

Once you leave Perthshire, you'll find the distances get longer, the transit times longer, and the roads worse. In other words, you can spend a lot more driving.

Your hotel should ideally be nearer **Oban**, because you still have a way to go before reaching Mull, including a ferry ride.



Day 3: Oban, Isle of Mull, and Tobermory

You will visit Oban in the morning. It's a small market, tourist town with connections to the highlands and islands.



The ferry departure for the **Isle of Mull** is also there. You'll need plenty of time to catch the ferry, including queuing, parking, then loading.

The ferry to Mull takes about 50 minutes overall, but you could easily spend two hours in total. Oban Ferry Terminal also serves other destinations including Stornoway on the Outer Hebrides.



Oban Distillery is a popular place for buying whisky, but by no means the last place on the tour! (above)

Ganavan Sands might be a good place to view the ocean, walk on the beach, and enjoy the breeze! It's only a few miles north of Oban.

Waiting for a ferry. Be there early! They don't wait for missing passengers! Otherwise you have to catch the next one!

*The Isle of Mull

Once you set off on the short journey to Mull, you'll get off at Craignure. There really isn't much at Craignure, so set off for Tobermory. I recommend spending at least two nights or three days here. Iona is a whole day trip.

Quick facts about Mull: the island is home to barely 2,000 people but is 3x larger than the entire area of Taipei City. As you can expect, there aren't that many places to stay so it's important to book accommodation early. I strongly advise you to stay near or in **Tobermory**.



Tobermory village, home to approx. 1000 inhabitants, has several famous distilleries worth visiting. It's a pleasant fishing village with a port, restaurants, hotels, and shopping. Enjoy!

Spend an afternoon exploring the village. It's also quite scenic in its own right. You'll notice the large church building above center right!

Iona is a famous island for its Celtic religious history. It is a little difficult to visit because it involves another ferry crossing, and no cars are permitted on the island.



So you have to walk. The abbey is tremendous, but you can walk around the entire island of Iona in an hour or less, if it's not raining. There are small stores selling provisions and light meals, so you won't starve there! Just don't forget to catch the last ferry back to Mull!

But wherever you go on Mull, you'll find dynamic light, delicious landscapes, deserted beaches, misty hills, and a wide range of wildlife. For planning tours in this area, you need to know that many roads are single-track so driving requires patience, skill and slow speeds.

Day 4: To Portree, *Isle of Skye

This is probably one of the longest day trips: It's only 110 miles, but it takes nearly 5 hours because it involves either 2 ferry trips or a longer drive.

Portree, Isle of Skye Fishing Harbor.

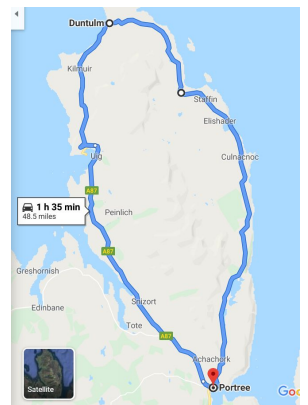
Take the short ferry ride to **Kilchoan** then journey along the B8007/A861 as far as Mallaig for the Ferry to Skye. You can also avoid this second ferry by taking the longer bridge route (at Kyle of Lochalsh).

Wildlife tours are highly recommended with experienced guides. Get out and see some of the natural wildlife on Skye. You might even be able to shoot it (with your camera!).



I recommend driving the northern route around island on the , and stopping off to see the Old Man of Storr (mountain) and the Falls of Mealt (pictured) at the very least.

Do the entire circuit clockwise or anti-clockwise... without stopping Google reckons on a 2-hour drive. I'd suggest at least a half-day trip.



Day 5: Fort William, Loch Ness, Inverness

There are a number of interesting stop-offs on the way to Inverness, so you'll need plenty of time.



Fort William is the opening to the Caledonian Canal (pictured), that flows all the way to Inverness along the same route you will be travelling.

The canals in the UK were built in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution, and the Caledonian Canal is unique in that it joins several lochs along the way.

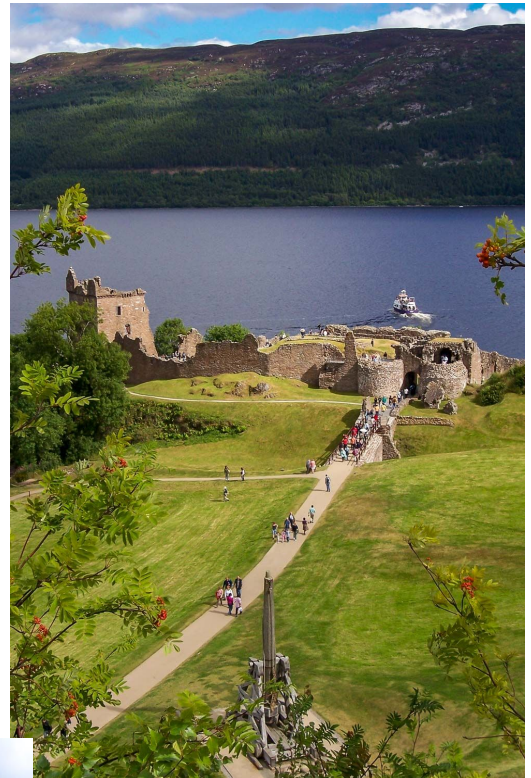
It would be a wonderful idea if you could rent a canal boat to cruise the lochs.

Loch Ness

Loch Ness is famous for the supposed sightings of the eponymous monster, but actually the views along the loch are incredible. Of course, you'll be able to do your own monster hunting.

But you'll be far more likely to enjoy Urquhart (pron.: urkert) Castle ruins (right), which is a popular place to stop off. The views are incredible, but as always, views OF the castle are much better than views FROM the castle.

You should probably stop also at the Loch Ness Centre & Exhibition which is in the micro-village of Drumnadrochit. Of course, you'll find it far easier to spot the tourist souvenirs than the monster!



Inverness

The biggest city in the Highlands, and the end of today's journey. Perhaps a walk to the castle along the river will give you views over Inverness city.

Day 6: Ballater, Balmoral and *St. Andrews

Ballater is the location in the Grampian mountains that forms the backdrop for Balmoral Castle, the Queen's home during the summer. It's a tiny little village that is only a short drive from Braemar.

Balmoral Castle

You may be able to visit if she's not in residence. The castle is usually open to the public. The grounds are particularly attractive in the summer, with both curated and wild areas. The Queen is particularly fond of Balmoral Castle, which is her holiday destination in August every year.

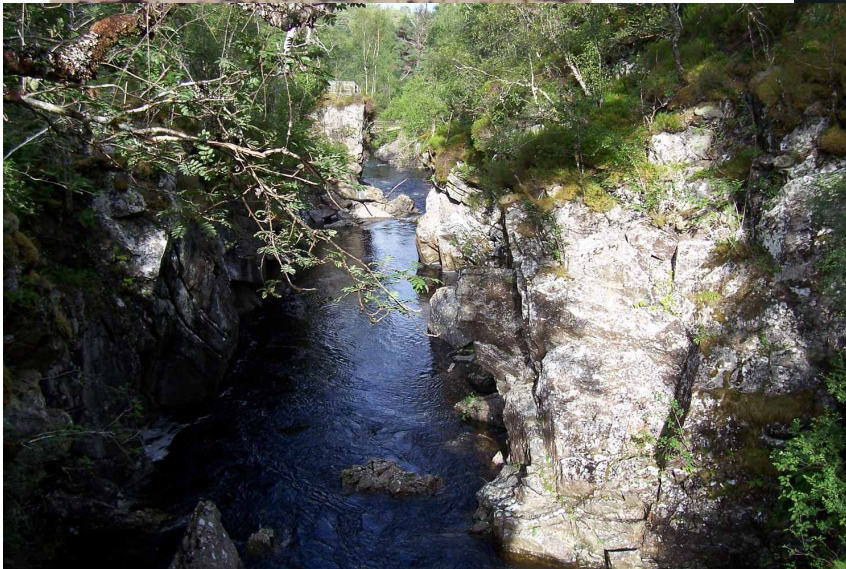


1. Top Left - Gardens at Balmoral Castle
2. Top Right - The Tower at Balmoral Castle
3. Bottom Left - A little bridge located near to a favored camping spot outside Braemar
4. Bottom Right - **The Castle at St. Andrews** on the edge of the coast.

St. Andrews

My alma mater is here. And it's a city situated on the coast of North East Fife with a long history. It's famous for two things: the University of St. Andrews (the third oldest in the English speaking world) and the Royal & Ancient Golf Club. St. Andrews hosts seven golf courses, including the most famous one.

Appendix: Scotland's Scenery



Pictured: top to bottom and left to right

1. The beach at Golspie in the Highlands,
2. Loch Shin, the single biggest loch in Scotland
3. Waterfall and river taken on a woodland walk in the Loch Lomond National Parks
4. Rocky beach on a woodland loch in the Loch Lomond National Parks

Final Notes

Scotland is a big country, with long distances between towns and cities, esp. in the Highlands. My university friend once remarked that it took her less time to get to St. Andrews University from her home in London than a friend who lived on the furthest north coast of Scotland. Both travelled by train.

My recommendation would be to spend at least an entire day in Edinburgh, Skye, and wherever else you fancy. One possibility would be to stay over in St. Andrews and play a round of golf in the morning.

Driving in Scotland

All distances in the UK are marked by miles. Though speeds are faster than in Taiwan on the highways and national roads, the raw distances are 60% longer than marked in Taiwan. Obviously. But it makes the journeys feel EVEN longer. National road speed limit is generally 60mph (nearly 100km/h) except in populated or dangerous areas.

Be very aware of joining roads at intersections and allow enough time to pull out safely. DO NOT CAUSE DRIVERS to brake suddenly and NEVER pull out into oncoming traffic. Taiwanese and UK driving habits are quite different and quite dangerous in the wrong situation. Animals of all kinds stray on to the roads: sheep, cows, deer, etc. so be alert for those, too. Take your time! British drivers tend to be quite patient (except for white van drivers and urban/tourist drivers)

Weather in Scotland (summer)

Summer weather is generally pleasant, though you can expect to have rain or gray days at least some of the time you're there. Average temperatures rarely exceed 25C in the summer, though global warming seems to be making summers hotter and longer. Night time temperatures are rarely below 10C but you need to be prepared for both extremes. Umbrellas are largely useless if the wind picks up.

Walking in the hills even in summer can be dangerous if you're under-equipped or underprepared. Weather on the hills can change dramatically and quickly. Mountain rescue teams will go to search for missing walkers, but you don't want to be that person!

Food in Scotland

Taiwan travellers to Scotland generally can eat the food in Scotland. However, the standard of Chinese or Asian food (esp. outside major urban centers) varies from disappointing to bad in quality. I don't recommend relying on Chinese restaurants for your sustenance.

Bread is commonly eaten at breakfast and lunch. Potatoes are consumed at lunch and dinner. Desserts are notoriously sweet, calorie-laden and heavy. You may prefer to skip them. However, afternoon teas with scones and sandwiches should be fine.

On a similar linguistic note: lunch is often referred to as 'dinner'; and dinner is often called 'tea time' or 'supper time'. Meal times are typically: 12:30~2:30 for lunch or late lunch; tea time is often around 5:30~6:30 but if you're having a formal dinner, expect to eat around 7:30pm or later.

Eating out for lunch is commonplace and lunches tend to be simpler affairs. Eating out for dinner is typically expensive, restaurants require reservations (esp. for larger groups), and meals last a long time (2 hours is not unusual). Shops and restaurants in the Highlands tend to close earlier than you expect, esp. in the long summer days.