

# SCOTLAND ON A BUDGET

Transport and accommodation are major cost elements in any holiday – so booking well ahead with budget airlines can save you a great deal. Check which days around your time of travel are the cheapest – airlines adjust prices depending on demand and those willing to be flexible can make great savings.

Hostels and hotels can change their advertised prices at any time so book early, especially for peak season accommodation. However, prices may drop at the last minute, though this usually only happens out of season. Grab a good price when you see it!

On arrival in Scotland, don't be afraid to ask other travellers and you'll soon discover the best value places to eat and drink.

## TRAVEL

### Trains

#### First ScotRail Freedom of Scotland Travelpass

The Freedom of Scotland Travelpass offers train, coach and ferry travel – all with just one ticket. Most of the services covered are included in the price, while some others offer a substantial discount.

The Travelpass ticket offers any 4 out of 8 consecutive days travel for only £100, or any 8 out of 15 consecutive days travel for only £135. These fares are valid from 2 January-19 May 2007. Buy online or buy from any staffed railway stations throughout Britain; rail appointed Travel Agents; First ScotRail Telesales (+44 (0)8457 55 00 33); British Visitor Centre, Regent Street, London; BritRail outlets in Europe and North America.

Other ticket types for rail travel in Scotland include the Central Scotland Rover and the Highland Rover. [www.firstgroup.com/scotrail](http://www.firstgroup.com/scotrail)

#### Young Persons Rail Card

Visitors to Great Britain can buy a Young Persons Railcard if aged 16 to 25. Purchase online or from a staffed rail station in England, Scotland and Wales. Also available at Gatwick Airport and Stansted Airport rail stations, Luton Airport Parkway and Manchester Airport (but NOT London Heathrow Airport). [www.youngpersons-railcard.co.uk](http://www.youngpersons-railcard.co.uk)

Mature students i.e. over 25, will need to produce an ISIC (International Student Identity Card) to qualify. [www.isic.org](http://www.isic.org)

Also consider the BritRail Pass. There are a variety of passes available, for example, the BritRail Scottish Freedom Pass. [www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com)

Traveline – impartial information on planning your journey, by bus, coach or train. [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)

### **Trains – Sleepers**

First ScotRail's Caledonian Sleepers are overnight train services operating between London Euston and Scotland. Online advance bookings for overnight seated and berth accommodation on Caledonian Sleeper services are now available up to certain dates – depends when you are travelling. Also bookable at principal staffed stations, rail accredited travel agents and from First ScotRail Telesales on +44 (0)8457 55 00 33.

Bargain Berth tickets also available and bookable online. Great deals, currently £19, £29, £39 and £49 single fares, for travel on First ScotRail's Caledonian Sleeper service between Scotland and London Euston. All tickets based on single trips travelling in standard twin berth accommodation. Berths subject to availability with early booking recommended.

### **Coach travel**

Coaches are usually cheaper than the equivalent train journey and, as a result, very popular. For busy routes and travel at weekends and holidays buy a 'reserved-journey ticket', guaranteeing a seat.

### **Scottish CityLink**

This company offers various discount cards on offer for those with children, those under 26 or over 50 and full-time students:

One child under five years of age not occupying a seat, and accompanied by an adult fare-paying passenger, will be free. Any additional child or children under five years of age, accompanied by the same adult, and all children aged 5 to 15 years inclusive can get discounts of up to 30% off normal fares. Contact Scottish Citylink for details. [www.citylink.co.uk](http://www.citylink.co.uk)

### **Explorer Pass**

If you are planning a lot of coach travel, then a good option is an Explorer Pass, offering unlimited travel on Scottish Citylink. They provide fast and frequent services to over 200 towns and cities across Scotland. Students who register with My Citylink save 20% on online bookings.

The Explorer Pass means you can use any service at any time within the validity of the pass and you can also take advantage of the great discounts available from other transport and accommodation providers.

3 days travel out of 5	£35
5 days travel out of 10	£59
8 days travel out of 16	£79

[www.citylink.co.uk/explorerpass.htm](http://www.citylink.co.uk/explorerpass.htm)

If you're travelling a lot in England and Wales too, consider a National Express Brit Xplorer Pass, giving you unlimited travel throughout Britain on National Express coaches.

[www.nationalexpress.com/book\\_tickets/index.cfm](http://www.nationalexpress.com/book_tickets/index.cfm)

### **Bus tours**

Many companies offering personalised small group coach tours of Scotland for independent travellers. Companies like Haggis Adventures offer tours with the price including transportation and tour guide. They also reserve all the accommodation. Hostel prices are approximately £14-£16 per night. With Haggis Adventures the accommodation, meals and entrance fees are not included in the tour price allowing you to keep your options open. [www.haggisadventures.com](http://www.haggisadventures.com)

Some of the other companies offering similar style tours are:

Rabbies Trail Burners  
[www.rabbies.com](http://www.rabbies.com)

Wild in Scotland  
[www.wild-in-scotland.com](http://www.wild-in-scotland.com)

Highland Explorer Tours  
[www.highlandexplorertours.com](http://www.highlandexplorertours.com)

Macbackpackers Tours and Hostels  
[www.macbackpackers.com](http://www.macbackpackers.com)

The Backpacker Tour Company  
[www.backpackertours.co.uk](http://www.backpackertours.co.uk)

Roadtrip Overland Tours  
[www.roadtrip.co.uk](http://www.roadtrip.co.uk)

Premium Tours  
[www.premiumtours.co.uk](http://www.premiumtours.co.uk)

Timberbush Tours  
[www.timberbush-tours.co.uk](http://www.timberbush-tours.co.uk)

**Bus tours (half day – one day tours)**

City Sightseeing Glasgow  
[www.scotguide.com](http://www.scotguide.com)

City Sightseeing (Inverness)  
[www.city-sightseeing.com](http://www.city-sightseeing.com)

Jacobite operates a bus tour to Culloden Battlefield and the Clava Cairns (standing stones). They also run tours and cruises all year round on Loch Ness.  
[www.jacobite.co.uk](http://www.jacobite.co.uk)

Puffin Express – runs half-day and full-day minibus tours from Inverness to various Highland and island locations.  
[www.puffinexpress.co.uk](http://www.puffinexpress.co.uk)

Inverness Tours  
[www.invernesstours.com](http://www.invernesstours.com)

Tim Dearman Coaches runs a scheduled service from Inverness to Durness serving the North West Highlands.  
[www.timdearmancoaches.co.uk](http://www.timdearmancoaches.co.uk)

Edinburgh Bus Tours Edinburgh  
[www.edinburghtour.com](http://www.edinburghtour.com)

Inverness to Orkney Day Tour  
Day tours of Orkney visiting main sites of interest.  
[www.jogferry.co.uk](http://www.jogferry.co.uk)

Scotline Tours Edinburgh  
Day and half day sightseeing tours of Scotland from Edinburgh.  
[www.scotlinetours.co.uk](http://www.scotlinetours.co.uk)

### **Postbus**

The Royal Mail Postbus scheme picks up passengers as well as post, once or twice a day. This is a good value option for travel in more remote areas of Scotland where there may not be other forms of transport. Because Postbuses follow postal delivery and collection schedules, they don't always travel the same route on the return journey, so travellers may have to plan their trip carefully to get back! Stop a postbus at any point along its route and it will pick you up. As postbuses need to deliver mail in the morning and pick it up in the afternoon, there are usually two services a day from Monday to Friday. In the most remote parts, there's just one service a day, and in others the service also runs on Saturday morning. [www.royalmail.com/postbus](http://www.royalmail.com/postbus)

### **Budget airlines**

You may be able to fly direct to one of Scotland's four main airports. Scotland enjoys excellent air links with most European and Scandinavian countries. The travel section of [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com) has a complete listing of airline connections with Scotland's major airports. There are now many budget or low-cost airlines serving Scotland.

Compared to budget carrier prices, internal flights within Scotland can seem expensive, especially with very few discounted tickets available; however, the time saving compared to other travel methods may make it worthwhile.

Most flights are operated by British Airways or Loganair. For inter-island flights book direct through Loganair. Other services between the mainland and several of the major islands are provided by Highland Airways and Eastern Airways.

[www.visitscotland.com/sitewide/travel\\_around\\_scotland](http://www.visitscotland.com/sitewide/travel_around_scotland)

### **Ferries**

Caledonian Macbrayne ('CalMac') ferries sail to twenty-two islands and four peninsulas on Scotland's west coast. Tour Scotland's islands with Caledonian Macbrayne's Island Hopscotch tickets. These flexible tickets with 26 options are valid for one month from the date of the first journey. Tickets are valid for one journey on each route and can be used in either direction. [www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)

### **Northlink**

NorthLink Ferries sail to the islands of Orkney and Shetland. There are three sailings each day from Scrabster (near Thurso) to Stromness in Orkney and nightly sailings from Aberdeen to Lerwick in Shetland – with four of these sailings going via Orkney’s capital, Kirkwall. Adult single from Aberdeen to Lerwick in peak season is currently £31.80. There is a 10% discount available on standard fares for senior citizens, students and disabled passengers.

[www.northlinkferries.co.uk](http://www.northlinkferries.co.uk)

### **Bike hire**

Scotland is perfect for cycle touring – enjoy the National Cycle Network or plan your own route. Over 1,000 accommodation providers offer special facilities for cyclists with VisitScotland’s Cyclists Welcome Scheme. There are also plenty of bike hire companies, bike retail and repair specialists throughout Scotland. For organisations that can help plan your cycling holiday or short break to Scotland, see [www.visitscotland.com/cycling](http://www.visitscotland.com/cycling)

## **ACCOMMODATION**

VisitScotland operates a 1-5 star Quality Assurance grading scheme in which accommodation of all kinds is assessed on an annual basis by quality advisors. They ensure that each place meets the standards set for facilities and service, for comfort and cleanliness, helping you make the right accommodation choice.

### **YOUTH HOSTELS AND BOTHIES (SYHA MEMBERSHIP)**

#### **Scottish Youth Hostels Association**

The SYHA offer quality accommodation in a varied network of over 70 Scottish hostels in city and countryside. They provide a unique base for outdoor activities and also give visitors of all ages access to Scotland’s unspoilt and remote areas. You can book online with no booking fee charged, but membership is encouraged! [www.syha.org.uk](http://www.syha.org.uk)

#### **Scottish Independent Youth Hostels**

Scottish Independent Hostels have over 120 places throughout Scotland, from Galloway in the south-west via Edinburgh and Glasgow to Orkney and Shetland in the north and the Outer Hebrides in the far west of Scotland. Most hostels are privately owned and the majority family run. They are not just youth hostels – they cater for all ages, and provide a good standard of hostel style accommodation at a fair price. No membership is required. [www.hostel-scotland.co.uk](http://www.hostel-scotland.co.uk)

### **HostelBookers**

HostelBookers is the only independent hostel-booking site that has no booking fees. They offer a database of youth hostels and cheap accommodation in over 2,000 destinations worldwide including a great selection of Scottish hostels. [www.hostelbookers.com](http://www.hostelbookers.com)

### **Mountain Bothies**

Mountain Bothies are unlocked shelters in Scotland's mountains. They are open to walkers and mountaineers free of charge, for short periods. They offer basic (sometimes very basic) but generally weatherproof accommodation in remote parts of the highlands. They often have no furniture, heating or toilets. Bring your own cooking equipment. All users should be self-sufficient. [www.mountainbothies.org.uk](http://www.mountainbothies.org.uk)

### **Camping in Scotland**

Camping and caravanning is an economical way to travel round Scotland. [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com) offers a comprehensive database of listed sites – with most regularly inspected.

### **Wild Camping**

Wild Camping, by definition, is free! It should be done responsibly and only for two or three nights in any one place. There are some obvious rules: don't camp in enclosed fields of crops or near farm animals and don't leave litter.

Useful websites:

[www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)

[www.scottishcamping.com](http://www.scottishcamping.com)

### **Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs) and Guest Houses**

Scotland is famous for its B&B. Generally less formal than hotels; B&Bs are usually in a Scots family home, giving the visitor a chance to experience a small part of Scottish life. [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com) offers a comprehensive database of listed B&Bs and guest houses, with most regularly inspected.

### **Self-catering**

This can be a cost effective option, especially if intending to be in one location for a week or more – or travelling with a group or large family. [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com) offers a comprehensive database of over 3,000 places from city apartments to country cottages, with most regularly inspected.

### **Eating out**

Scotland offers a great range of places to eat to suit all budgets. Meals in pubs are varied and start around £5 per head for a main course.

A good option if dining out in Scotland's cities is to go for a restaurant's pre-theatre or early-bird menu. Menus are priced in the middle range and are usually good value. [www.eatScotland.com](http://www.eatScotland.com)

Fish and chips are a good low-cost meal option. Scotland has superb fresh fish and seafood. You can sometimes eat in as well as take the food away. Chicken, baked potatoes and pizzas are often available at fish and chip shops as well.

At certain times of the year a promotion called Dine Around takes place in Edinburgh, Glasgow and East of Scotland – the seasonal promotion offers two courses at quality restaurants for only £15 per person. Book online [www.dinearound.5pm.co.uk](http://www.dinearound.5pm.co.uk).

## **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS**

### **Free events**

#### **Common Ridings in the Scottish Borders**

Unique to the historic towns of the Scottish Borders, these celebrations recall their history, legends and traditions with a succession of colourful festivals, the Common Ridings. Each Borders town celebrates its history once a year during June or July with magnificent rideouts involving hundreds of horses. Some of the biggest and oldest of the Common Ridings take place during June, especially those staged in Hawick and Selkirk. [www.scot-borders.co.uk](http://www.scot-borders.co.uk)

#### **Up Helly Aa – Lerwick, Shetland**

On the last Tuesday of January, the town of Lerwick host's Shetland's biggest fire festival. Up Helly Aa is a superb spectacle and a celebration of Shetland history, lasting just one day (and night). Though the procession is free to watch, there are private parties in halls with invited guests – apart from a couple of halls where tickets are on sale to the general public. [www.visitshetland.com/events/up-helly-aa-event](http://www.visitshetland.com/events/up-helly-aa-event)

#### **The Loony Dook**

This world-famous charity fund-raising event involves a up to 500 participants, many in fancy dress, aged from 8 to 80 taking a plunge in the River Forth near Edinburgh in the shadow of the famous Bridges on 1 January. There are also almost 3000 spectators. The parade with a pipe band prior to the dook (Scots for 'dip' or 'dive' i.e. in the sea!) is also an enjoyable spectacle. [www.theloonydook.co.uk](http://www.theloonydook.co.uk)

**Beltane and Samhuinn Fire Festivals**

The Beltane Fire Festival is held every year during the night of 30 April on Calton Hill in Edinburgh, with an audience of around 15000 for the spectacular procession. The Beltane festival originates in the pre-Christian festival held to mark and celebrate the arrival of spring. Tickets required for this event. The Samhuinn Fire Festival takes place in Edinburgh on 31 October starting at 9pm on the Castle Esplanade and processing to the Mound for the main show. This is a free event, but donations are collected on the night. [www.beltane.org](http://www.beltane.org)

**The Edinburgh Festival Fringe**

This is unique as the largest arts festival on the planet. Each year it brings thousands of performances of hundreds of shows in nearly 300 venues across Scotland's capital city. In 2006 there were 177 free shows plus there is always lots of street theatre and entertainment to watch for free. Fringe Sunday is a day-long free extravaganza where performers to promote their shows. [www.edfringe.com](http://www.edfringe.com)

**Traditional music**

The Traditional Music and Song Association has information on regular traditional music sessions held throughout Scotland, usually in pubs and free. Their website also lists traditional music festivals taking place. [www.tmsa.org.uk](http://www.tmsa.org.uk)

**Museums and galleries**

Glasgow owns one of the richest art collections in Europe and has 13 museums across the city. Free admission except for the small entry charge for temporary exhibitions. [www.glasgowmuseums.com](http://www.glasgowmuseums.com)

The City of Edinburgh museums and galleries are free with a few exceptions. [www.cac.org.uk](http://www.cac.org.uk)

National Museums Scotland have six different locations and themes, with free entry to the main National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. [www.nms.ac.uk](http://www.nms.ac.uk)

## **Attraction Passes and discounted entry tickets**

### **The Edinburgh Pass**

The best way to see Scotland's capital, this pass offers free entry to over 30 attractions, free return Airlink and city region bus transport, exclusive offers in shops, restaurants and tours and child discounts at attractions, plus a free comprehensive guidebook (worth £3.50). [www.edinburgh.org/pass](http://www.edinburgh.org/pass)

### **Mackintosh Trail Ticket**

The one-day Mackintosh Trail Ticket, costs £12 per person. Purchase online or at Glasgow tourist information centre, SPT Travel Centres and all participating Mackintosh venues in and around Glasgow. The ticket gives unlimited travel on the subway, the First Bus service in Greater Glasgow and includes entry to Mackintosh attractions throughout the city for one day. [www.ermsociety.com](http://www.ermsociety.com)

### **Historic Scotland**

Historic Scotland welcomes visitors to more than 300 properties throughout the country. Many Historic Scotland's properties are free and open to the public at any time. These include atmospheric settings such as the Ring of Brodgar on Orkney.

Even for properties, which normally have an entrance fee, Historic Scotland's annual Free Weekend means a family of two adults and two children can save up to almost £30 for a great day out at some of the country's leading visitor attractions. Dates for 2007 to be confirmed. Alternatively, buy a Historic Scotland Explorer Pass and save on admission to 75 historic properties including Edinburgh, Stirling and Urquhart Castles. It costs from £19 for an adult for a 3-day pass to be used within a 5-day period. There is also a 7-day pass within a 14-day period and a 10-day pass within a 30-day period. [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)

### **National Trust for Scotland Discovery Ticket**

Discovery Ticket gives admission to The National Trust for Scotland's attractions, valid for 3, 7 or 14 days. Prices start from £16 for a 3-day adult pass. [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk)

### **Walking and wildlife**

Countryside rambles, coastal walks, long distance treks through glens or climbing mountains, use this site to help plan your walking holiday to Scotland. [www.visitscotland.com/walking](http://www.visitscotland.com/walking)

Walking also provides an ideal opportunity to spot wildlife. Find out more by visiting [www.visitscotland.com/wildlife](http://www.visitscotland.com/wildlife)

All woodland belonging to the Forestry Commission offers free access at any time (except where timber operations are in progress). Right across Scotland, there is a good choice of trails, often signposted and with information and interpretation panels, plus many opportunities to see the wildlife of the forests. [www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk)

### **Some city walking tours**

#### **Summer walking tours of Inverness.**

Check boards outside tourist information centre for times – usually 11am and 2pm. There's also a nightly ghost walk tour leaving from the information centre at 7pm and finishing with a visit to a local haunted pub.

#### **Mercat Tours, Edinburgh and Glasgow**

Ghostly themes and entertainment guaranteed.

[www.mercattours.com](http://www.mercattours.com)

[www.mercat-glasgow.co.uk](http://www.mercat-glasgow.co.uk)

#### **Witchery Tours, Edinburgh**

Award-winning ghostly evening walks by 'Cadies & Witchery Tours'.

[www.witcherytours.com](http://www.witcherytours.com)

#### **Auld Reekie Tours**

Ghost, torture and underground tours in Edinburgh.

[www.auldreekietours.com](http://www.auldreekietours.com)

#### **Saints and Sinners Walking Tour**

Step back in time; retrace the steps of Edinburgh's Saints and Sinners. Discover the characters and events that shaped old Edinburgh and Scotland.

[www.oldtowntours.co.uk](http://www.oldtowntours.co.uk)

#### **Edinburgh Jog Tour**

Edinburgh Jog Tour combines jogging, sightseeing, history and theatre. Joggers of all abilities and experienced runners catered for.

[www.oldtowntours.co.uk](http://www.oldtowntours.co.uk)

#### **Pure Dead Brilliant Tours**

Walking tours of Glasgow. Tours include visits to the hidden and unseen parts of Glasgow.

[www.puredeadbrillianttours.com](http://www.puredeadbrillianttours.com)

**Shopping – save money and claim back the Value-Added Tax (VAT)**

All purchases in Britain, with the exception of food and books, are subject to VAT, which increases the cost of an item by 17.5%. Visitors from non-EU countries can claim a refund of VAT from selected shops on goods to be taken out of the country under the Retail Export Scheme. The Retail Export Scheme is voluntary, so not all retailers offer the service. Look for the sign 'Tax Free Shopping' in the windows of stores, which participate. Complete a valid tax refund document obtained from the retailer. Present the tax refund document and goods to Customs on departure from the European Community. Export the goods within the required time limits.

For further information see Notice 704/1 VAT Refunds for travellers departing from the European Community (EC).

[www.hmce.gov.uk/public/vatrefunds.htm](http://www.hmce.gov.uk/public/vatrefunds.htm)

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Welcome to our life.*

Want to know more about Scotland?  
The No. 1 Booking and Information Service for Scotland  
Tel: 0845 22 55 121 or +44 (0)1506 832 121 (outside UK)  
Email: [info@visitscotland.com](mailto:info@visitscotland.com)

**[www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)**

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