Tour Code
SC20

ADVENTURESABROAD

SCOTLAND & IRELAND EXPLORER

19 days

Created on: 18 Nov, 2026

Day 1 Arrival in Edinburgh

Today we arrive in Edinburgh, where the buzz of Scotland's capital city sits in perfect contrast to the peaceful tranquility of the surrounding Lothians region. Edinburgh has one of the most beautiful cityscapes in the world, making it the ideal city break destination. With Scotland's most famous castle dominating the city skyline, there is plenty to see and do with the perfect balance between all things traditional and contemporary.

Overnight in Edinburgh.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Edinburgh: City Touring

We devote the whole day exploring one of the world's most beautiful cities on foot.

Our local guide leads us through Edinburgh's atmospheric Old Town, beginning at Holyrood Abbey at the foot of the Royal Mile. We pass the striking Scottish Parliament building before ascending toward the castle. At St Giles' Cathedral, we admire the crown spire that has defined Edinburgh's skyline for centuries. Greyfriars Kirkyard tells darker tales—the graveyard that inspired J.K. Rowling and where Greyfriars Bobby kept watch over his master's grave for 14 years. The Grassmarket, once the site of public executions, now buzzes with cafes and pubs. We visit the National Museum of Scotland, where collections span natural history, world cultures, science and technology, and Scottish history.

Then to Edinburgh Castle itself, perched on Castle Rock. This fortress has witnessed a thousand years of Scottish history. We view the Honours of Scotland (the crown jewels), visit St. Margaret's Chapel (the city's oldest building), marvel at Mons Meg (the massive 15th-century cannon), and walk through the Great Hall. The panoramic views extend across the city to the Firth of Forth and the hills beyond.

Overnight in Edinburgh

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Edinburgh - Falkirk Wheel - The Kelpies - Stirling

Today we travel to Stirling via the Falkirk Wheel, The Kelpies, and Stirling Castle.

The Falkirk Wheel boat lift is an exceptional feat of modern engineering that connects the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals. This unique and elegant mechanical marvel lifts boats by a height of 35 metres to bridge the gap that was originally linked by a flight of 11 locks. At the end of the 20th century, it was decided to reconnect the 2 canals with the innovative wheel as an inspiring symbol for the new Millennium.

We'll enjoy the full experience of the Falkirk Wheel as we sail through the sky to join the Union Canal 35m above. After moving smoothly through the aqueduct and through the Roughcastle tunnel to the beginning of the Union Canal, we then descend to the start point returning to the visitor centre.

Continuing along the Forth & Clyde Canal, we arrive at The Helix Park to visit The Kelpies, two monumental 30-metre-high horse-head sculptures that have become modern Scotland's most striking landmarks. Created by sculptor Andy Scott, these gleaming steel giants pay homage to the heavy horses that once pulled barges along Scotland's canals and ploughed the fields of central Scotland. Named for the shape-shifting water spirits of Scottish folklore, these engineering marvels capture both mythological power and working heritage.

We then head to the city of Stirling where we visit Stirling Castle, the largest in Scotland. The castle is well defended by cliffs on 3 sides, and became a military stronghold and seat of royalty and government. Stirling Castle rock has been used as a fortress for centuries, probably since Roman times. The earliest buildings upon it mentioned in surviving records are the castle and the chapel dedicated by Alexander I in 1120. From the 12th Century it became one of the principal royal strongholds in Scotland. Destroyed or rebuilt several times in the 13th and

14th centuries, it was close to great battles against the English during the Wars of Independence.

Overnight in Stirling.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Stirling - St Andrews - Aberdeen

Departing Stirling, we travel to Scotland's east coast and the ancient university town of St Andrews.

St Andrews has been a place of pilgrimage, learning, and sport for centuries. Scotland's oldest university was founded here in 1413. The town was Scotland's ecclesiastical capital in medieval times. The Royal and Ancient Golf Club made St Andrews the spiritual home of golf worldwide.

Our guided walking tour begins at St Andrews Cathedral, once Scotland's largest medieval church. Now romantically ruined, enough remains to convey its former grandeur. We explore the museum and visitor center. We see St Andrews Castle from the outside—this ruined fortress overlooks Castle Sands Beach. Then to the Old Course, the most famous golf course in the world and home to the Open Championship. At the University, we walk the same quadrangles where Prince William met Catherine Middleton. We finish at St Salvator's Chapel, stunning late Gothic architecture from the mid-15th century.

We continue north to Aberdeen, the "Granite City," where Victorian architects made lavish use of local stone. Aberdeen pulses with cosmopolitan energy, enriched by North Sea oil yet rooted in centuries as a fishing port.

Overnight in Aberdeen

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Aberdeen - Highland Cattle - Inverness

We begin our morning with a walking tour of Aberdeen itself --- the "Granite City," where Victorian architects made lavish use of the local silver-grey stone to build one of Britain's most distinctive urban landscapes. Our guide leads us through the city's handsome streets, revealing the layers of history beneath that gleaming exterior: centuries as a fishing and trading port, the North Sea oil boom that gave it a cosmopolitan edge, and a university tradition that stretches back to 1495.

From Aberdeen we head south into Aberdeenshire to meet a herd of pedigree Highland Cattle up close -- those magnificent shaggy beasts with their sweeping long horns and thick russet coats. We learn about this ancient native breed, how it has shaped the Scottish countryside for centuries, and how it is farmed today. Lunch follows at the farm.

We end our day in Inverness, the vibrant capital of the Highlands.

Overnight in Inverness

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 6 Loch Ness Folklore & Nature

Today we devote ourselves to Scotland's most famous loch and the landscape surrounding it.

We begin at Loch Ness itself, that long, deep slash of water running southwest from Inverness. More than 20 miles long and reaching over 750 feet deep, Loch Ness contains more fresh water than all the lakes in England and Wales combined. We drive along the famous shoreline to Urquhart Castle, occupying a strategic promontory jutting into the loch. The castle's dramatic history involves centuries of warfare, and the ruins remain evocative. We continue to Fort Augustus, a pleasant village at the southern end of Loch Ness where the Caledonian Canal begins. We have free time to explore and find lunch.

This afternoon brings something special --- a visit to the Dundreggan Rewilding Centre. The conservation charity Trees for Life has been rewilding the 10,000-acre Dundreggan estate since 2008, working to restore the native Caledonian forest and its wildlife. The estate now supports over 4,000 species. A knowledgeable staff member guides us through Dundreggan, explaining why rewilding matters and how it's accomplished.

Overnight in Inverness

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Highland Safari - Blair Atholl Distillery - Pitlochry

This morning we embark on a Land Rover safari through the Scottish Highlands with our own expert safari ranger.

We travel on private hill tracks through forests thick with pine and birch, across open moorland purple with heather, and up into the mountains. Our ranger watches for wildlife: majestic red deer, grouse exploding from the heather, mountain hares, perhaps even a golden eagle soaring on broad wings. The ranger shares knowledge of Highland ecology, geology, and history — explaining how this landscape was shaped by ice, cleared for sheep, and is now slowly being restored. At a traditional mountain bothy, we stop for tea, coffee, local shortbread, and a dram before descending back to the valley.

This afternoon we head to Blair Atholl Distillery in Pitlochry — one of the oldest working distilleries in Scotland, standing at the gateway of the Highlands. Our Signature Experience includes a guided tour of the distillery followed by a tutored tasting of three whiskies, plus an exclusive distillery bottling to take home. A fitting tribute to a landscape that has been producing remarkable whisky for generations.

Overnight in Pitlochry

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 8 Pitlochry - Scone Palace - Loch Lomond - Glasgow

Today we head for Glasgow with a stop at Scone Palace, offering a captivating journey through Scottish history and set against the stunning backdrop of its picturesque grounds. Here we explore the regal rooms that once hosted Scottish kings and queens, immersing themselves in the opulence of the palace's architecture and décor. The surrounding gardens, with their vibrant flora and serene landscapes, provide a tranquil escape.

Next we'll venture out beyond stately homes and the magnificent Ben Lomond, Scotland's most southerly Munro, to Inchmurrin Island, the largest inland island in Great Britain and home to the ruins of the 12th century Lennox Castle.

Our final destination is Glasgow, a city famous for its contributions to architectural styles, with the Glasgow School of Art being the most notable example. The wealth of the city's merchants in the 18th century saw a shift towards neoclassical architecture with simple lines and grand imposing stately buildings. Glasgow's friendly residents, diverse culinary experiences, and abundance of green spaces, make it a welcoming and unforgettable destination for experiencing Scotland's unique charm.

Overnight in Glasgow.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Discovering Glasgow

Glasgow's museums, galleries, and historic sites rank among Britain's finest, and today we explore some of the city's most remarkable treasures.

We begin at Glasgow Cathedral, a magnificent medieval structure believed to stand on St Kentigern's tomb—Glasgow's patron saint and founder. This is Scotland's only mainland cathedral to survive the Reformation of 1560 intact. The dark stone interior creates an atmosphere of ancient devotion, with soaring Gothic arches and intricate stonework0

After touring the cathedral, we step outside to the adjacent Glasgow Necropolis. This Victorian garden cemetery sprawls across a hillside—a remarkable collection of architecture, sculpture, and stories. Modeled on Paris's Père-Lachaise, approximately 50,000 people are buried here, commemorated by some 3,500 tombs and monuments. A passionate local volunteer guides us through.

We enjoy a panoramic tour, stopping at George Square with its impressive collection of statues. We pause for free time and lunch before crossing the River Clyde to the world-renowned Burrell Collection. Today we receive a VIP tour including a rare behind-the-scenes look at objects not on public display. Afterward, we explore the main galleries independently.

This evening we gather for a farewell dinner.

Overnight in Glasgow

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Glasgow, Scotland - Fly to Dublin, Ireland

Today we fly to Dublin, Ireland's capital city.

Since its beginning around AD 988, Dublin has accommodated many diverse nationalities from the Vikings and English invaders, to sailors, traders and writers who settled and lived here over the centuries. Modern Dublin is being transformed by enormous changes brought about by the recent economic boom, though the city will always have a reputation as a great historical city, and its strong links with world literature and the arts are readily apparent.

Overnight in Dublin.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Discovering Dublin: City Touring

Dublin's warmth extends beyond its temperate climate—it's in the pub banter, the unhurried pace, and the genuine welcome that has drawn writers and dreamers for centuries.

This morning we delve into Ireland's complex history at Glasnevin Cemetery, one of Europe's most significant burial grounds. As we drive through Dublin, our guide introduces the city—the River Liffey, government buildings, Victorian pub facades, and the Botanical Gardens. At Glasnevin, we walk among the graves of Ireland's heroes and rebels: Michael Collins, Roger Casement, Charles Stewart Parnell, and Countess Markievicz. Their stories unfold—revolution, sacrifice, and the long struggle for independence. We ascend the O'Connell Tower for sweeping views across Dublin to the Irish Sea.

Our panoramic city tour continues through Dublin's architectural treasures. We pass Merrion Square with its Oscar Wilde memorial, Gothic St. Patrick's Cathedral, the President's House, and vast Phoenix Park. At Trinity College, we admire Ireland's most prestigious university before exploring Dublin Castle's courtyard. We see the Molly Malone statue, stroll Grafton Street, and experience Temple Bar's artistic energy.

This evening we gather at the Merry Ploughboy, a pub with two centuries of history. Over a three-course dinner, we're treated to traditional Irish music and step dancing by championship-level performers—the rhythmic thunder of feet on wood, soaring fiddle and tin whistle, the infectious energy of a culture that celebrates life through song and dance.

* We do not include a full visit of Trinity College and the Book of Kells, as it takes a considerable time investment, making it impractical for a busy city tour with many other things to see and do. A popular option for including this location in your itinerary is to add an extra hotel night/free day during which to accomplish this visit. For more info please visit: www.visittrinity.ie/book-of-kells-experience/

Overnight in Dublin.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Dublin - Rock of Cashel - Distillery Experience - Cork

We depart Dublin this morning, journeying south through Ireland's patchwork countryside to County Tipperary.

The Rock of Cashel rises dramatically from the Golden Vale—a limestone outcrop crowned with Ireland's most impressive cluster of medieval buildings. This was the seat of Munster's kings for centuries, and legend claims St. Patrick himself climbed these heights to convert King Aenghus to Christianity. In 978, the legendary Brian Boru was crowned High King here, establishing Cashel as his power center. We explore the remarkable complex: a 12th-century round tower standing sentinel, the ornate Romanesque chapel with its intricate carvings, and the roofless Gothic cathedral whose stone walls frame the sky. Below, often overlooked by visitors, sits Hore Abbey—Ireland's last medieval Cistercian monastery, its weathered stones a short walk from the main site.

We continue to the Midleton Distillery Experience, an Irish whiskey museum and visitor centre. During our tour, we learn about the history of Jameson Whiskey and the distillery that operated here between 1825 and 1975. We see the old kilns, mills, maltings, water wheel, still house, cooperage and warehouse. Our visit includes a whisky tasting, sampling a dram of Jameson, Scotch, and American whiskey to become a "Qualified Whisky Taster"—a perfect introduction to Irish whiskey-making traditions.
We end our day in Cork, Ireland's second city.
Overnight in Cork

* For guests who may be combining our Ireland and Scotland programs into one trip, you'll have the unique opportunity to experience both Irish and Scottish whisky-making traditions firsthand and be able to compare the distinct characteristics, production methods, and flavours of both countries' national spirits.

Overnight in Cork.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Cork - The Ring of Kerry - Killarney

A panoramic tour introduces us to Cork this morning--Victorian architecture, colourful shop fronts, and the cultural vibrancy of a city proud of its rebel spirit.

Then westward to one of the world's legendary drives: the Ring of Kerry. This peninsula route captures everything wild and wonderful about Ireland—Atlantic waves crashing against ancient cliffs, golden strands of beach, whitewashed villages tucked into hillsides, emerald pastures divided by stone walls, dark peat bogs, and mountains that brood or shine depending on the ever-changing light.

We begin in Killorglin, famous for the Puck Fair where a wild goat is crowned king each August. Skirting the Kerry coast, we stop frequently for photographs. At Waterville, once favoured by Charlie Chaplin, we gaze toward the Skellig Rocks--those jagged peaks where medieval monks built a monastery at the edge of the known world. In colourful Sneem, painted houses create perfect contrast to the wild landscape.

We continue to Killarney National Park with its stunning vistas of mountain and lake. Our circular drive returns us to Killarney, often voted Ireland's most beautiful town.

Overnight in Killarney.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 The Gap of Dunloe & Lakes of Killarney Adventure

Today belongs to one of Ireland's most enchanting experiences—a journey through the Gap of Dunloe and across Killarney's legendary lakes.

We meet our local guide at medieval Ross Castle before transferring to the foothills of Ireland's highest mountain range. Here we board traditional "pony and trap" carts for a seven-mile journey through the Gap of Dunloe—a glacial valley of almost mythical beauty. Our drivers guide us through this dramatic cleft carved by ice age glaciers. Towering mountains rise on either side, their slopes dotted with grazing sheep.

We cross ancient stone bridges, pass mirror-still loughs, and traverse the Black Valley—one of Ireland's most isolated corners. At Lord Brandon's Cottage, we break for lunch before boarding traditional open-top boats for a fourteen-mile voyage through all three Lakes of

Killarney.

Our boatmen navigate these waters, pointing out Innisfallen Island, Bricin Bridge, Colleen Bawn Rock, Torc Mountain, Old Weir Bridge, and the Meeting of the Waters. The journey brings us to Ross Castle where we explore this magnificently restored 15th-century tower house.

Overnight in Killarney.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Killarney - the Cliffs of Moher - Galway

Departing Killarney, we travel north toward one of Ireland's most iconic natural wonders.

The Cliffs of Moher—Aillte an Mhothair in Irish, meaning "cliffs of the ruined fort"—were formed over 300 million years ago. These dramatic ramparts rise 700 feet at their highest point, presenting a sheer face to the relentless Atlantic. But the true perspective comes from the water itself.

At Doolin harbor, we board our vessel for an hour-long cruise beneath these towering cliffs. As we motor away from shore, the full majesty reveals itself—layer upon layer of sedimentary rock, sea stacks rising like ancient monuments, caves carved by millennia of wave action, and seabirds wheeling: puffins, guillemots, razorbills, and kittiwakes. We pass beneath O'Brien's Tower and see the great sea stack An Bhreannan Mór and the cave featured in Harry Potter. The scale from water level is overwhelming—these cliffs command respect, ancient and immovable against the ocean's fury.

We continue to Galway, one of Europe's fastest-growing cities yet somehow retaining the warmth and accessibility of a small Irish town.

Overnight in Galway

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 16 Galway Food Trail - Slieve League Cliffs, Ireland - Londonderry/Derry, Northern Ireland

This morning we meet a local food enthusiast for a guided tour through Galway's culinary landscape. The famous Galway Market pulses with energy—fishmongers displaying the morning's catch, artisan cheese makers offering samples, bakers pulling fresh loaves from ovens. We visit award-winning restaurants and cafes, sampling 7-8 different treats: perhaps fresh oysters from Galway Bay, farmhouse cheeses, delicate sushi, crab, buttery doughnuts, strawberry tarts, craft beers. Our guide shares stories of Galway's food renaissance, and we leave with a goodie bag of local treats.

Leaving Galway behind, we journey north to County Donegal and the Slieve League Cliffs—Sliabh Liag in Irish. These sea cliffs rise nearly three times higher than the Cliffs of Moher, ranking among Europe's highest coastal precipices. The Atlantic stretches to the horizon, the rugged Donegal landscape spreads in all directions, and racing clouds create an ever-changing play of light. We walk in the footsteps of ancient pilgrims, exploring ruins of an early Christian monastic site—a chapel and beehive huts perched on these wild heights.

We continue to Londonderry/Derry in Northern Ireland, arriving late afternoon.

Overnight in London/Derry (dinner on your own this evening).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 17 Derry Touring - The Giant's Causeway - Belfast

Before we depart for the Antrim Coast, we take time this morning to explore one of Ireland's most compelling cities on foot.

Derry — or Londonderry, depending on which tradition you're standing in — wears its history openly. We walk the 17th-century city walls, among the best preserved in Europe, for sweeping views over the Bogside and across to the Donegal hills. Below us, the famous "Free Derry

Corner" mural marks the entrance to a neighbourhood that became the epicentre of the civil rights movement in the late 1960s. Our walk takes in the Guildhall, the Peace Bridge spanning the River Foyle, and the broader story of a city that has navigated centuries of conflict and division to arrive at something that feels, today, genuinely hopeful.

Leaving Derry, we embark on one of Northern Ireland's most spectacular journeys—the Causeway Coastal Route.

The Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland's only UNESCO World Heritage Site, was once attributed to the legendary giant Finn MacCool. Science offers a different story—volcanic eruptions 60 million years ago created these approximately 40,000 interlocking basalt columns, some reaching over 40 feet high. The result is otherworldly: perfectly hexagonal pillars that seem too geometrically precise to be natural, rising from the sea and climbing the cliff face.

We continue to Ballycastle, where we pause for lunch. Our final stop brings us to Carrickfergus Castle, 12th century Norman castle -- one of the best-preserved medieval structures in Northern Ireland.

We arrive in Belfast in late afternoon.

Overnight in Belfast.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 18 Belfast Discovery

This morning our comprehensive coach tour reveals Belfast's many faces. We explore the elegant Queen's Quarter, the Cathedral Quarter with its cobbled streets, and the Titanic Quarter where the famous ship was built. Belfast City Hall dominates the city center. We drive through various neighborhoods, seeing political murals that chronicle the city's past. Our guide traces Belfast's evolution from a 17th-century settlement to one of Britain's most important ports and industrial centers.

Next we walk the Maritime Mile, hearing accounts of life in the Harland & Wolff shipyard during Titanic's construction. We see the original slipway where Titanic was built, the vast dry dock, the Administration Building, and the SS Nomadic—Titanic's tender ship.

Finally, we visit the award-winning Titanic Belfast. Through nine interactive galleries, we experience the story of RMS Titanic from conception to construction to catastrophe—the sights, sounds, and even smells of the shipyard, the opulence of first-class accommodations, the tragedy of the sinking, and the lasting impact.

Overnight in Belfast

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 19 Departure

Departure from Belfast.

SLAN ABHAILE!!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast