

Walking Tours Edinburgh New Town



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Short Walk in 'New' Edinburgh

All of us at Scottish Tours hope that you will enjoy your stay in Edinburgh, Scotland's Capital City. In order to maximise the pleasure of your visit we have developed this short walking tour which you can experience at your own pace. The walk should take between 1 hour and 1½ hours, but of course you can take as long or as short a time as you wish.

The walk contains concise directions that will return you to your starting point on the Royal Mile, outside the Radisson SAS Hotel. Places of interest are highlighted together with a brief history. This walk can be undertaken by anybody who is reasonably fit, but remember, if you find any part tiring or too much to finish, taxis are readily available to return you to your accommodation and you can finish your walk another day.

We hope you will enjoy your short walk in the company of our silent guide and that you will have a pleasant stay in Edinburgh.

INTRODUCTION

Starting in the Old Town this walk takes you to explore some of the New Town of Edinburgh. This magnificent development began at the end of the 18th century as the Old Town burst out of its medieval confines.

From the Radisson Hotel walk up High Street to the traffic lights and turn right onto North Bridge

1. THE NORTH BRIDGE The foundation stone of the original bridge was laid in 1763 providing the first step in the making of the New Town. It later had to be strengthened and widened because, shortly after opening in 1769, a section of the structure collapsed killing 5 people. Below the bridge are the roofs of the Waverley Railway Station. At one time this whole area was underwater, because the north side of the Old Town was protected by a lake called the Nor' Loch. It took 61 years to fully drain it. The process was finally completed in 1820.

Cross the bridge, at the bottom left-hand corner is the Balmoral Hotel.

2. THE BALMORAL HOTEL Described as being 'aggressive in bulk' this hotel belonged to the North British Railway Company and used to be called the North British Hotel or "The NB". It was opened in 1902 and has an imposing 58m clock tower. The clock is always set three minutes fast so that travellers scurrying towards the train station below have a little extra breathing space.

Go straight across the road. Behind the statue of Wellington is Register House.

3. REGISTER HOUSE This austere elegant building was designed by Robert Adam, generally considered to be the finest architect of his time. Started in 1774 it still fulfils its original purpose as a home for the National Records. The small front towers have clocks and unusual wind vanes that were installed in 1790. The equestrian statue near the street is of the Duke of Wellington. It was designed by Sir John Steell, was completed in 1852, and is sometimes known as The Iron Duke in Bronze by Steell.

Walk westward along Princes Street to South St. Andrew Street.

4. WAVERLEY MARKET On the opposite side of Princes Street is the Waverley Market indoor shopping area. The Tourist Information Centre is on street level and the rest is below. This is a good spot for admiring the huddled shape of the Old Town before entering into the more spacious regularity of the New Town.

Walk straight up South St. Andrew Street and on into St. Andrew Square. Stop outside the large building that is set back from the street.

5. ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND This is the registered office of the Royal Bank of Scotland, founded in 1727. The building was bought by the bank in 1825 but was originally built as a home for Sir Lawrence Dundas. Note that the house was free standing and set back from the street, which was very unusual for the New Town. The monument in the small garden is to the 4th Earl of Hopetoun, Governor of the bank from 1821 to 1823. In the centre of the square is the 41m column commemorating Henry Dundas, the 1st Viscount Melville. (1742-1811). He was a man so powerful in Scottish politics that in his day he was known as the uncrowned King of Scotland.

Walk round the square and out onto George Street stopping at the church on the right.

6. ST ANDREW & ST GEORGE'S Originally intended for St Andrews Square, this church opened in 1784. It was the first New Town church to throw open its doors. It has an unusual elliptical shape and a 51m steeple that was added three years after the main building.

Walk along turning right down Hanover Street then left along Heriot Row and stop outside No. 17.

7. No. 17 HERIOT ROW - This house was once the home of Robert Louis Stevenson, famous worldwide with children and adults alike for such works as, Kidnapped, Treasure Island and The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Born in Edinburgh in 1850 he left Scotland because of poor health and settled on the island of Samoa. It was there that he died in 1894. Throughout his travels he never forgot his Scottish roots. Two years before his death he wrote 'and yet my imagination so continually inhabits that cold old huddle of grey hills from which we came'.

Walk along and take the first left uphill to Queen Street. Cross over. Turn right and stop outside No. 51.

8. No. 51 QUEEN STREET - This used to be the residence of Sir James Young Simpson (1811 - 1870), the man who pioneered the use of chloroform. The son of a baker, he rose to become Professor of Midwifery at Edinburgh University in 1840. His discovery of chloroform's properties was made on the 4th November, 1847. "The first night we took it Dr Duncan, Dr Keith and I were all 'under the table' in a minute or two". The discovery was not widely accepted until Queen Victoria used it when giving birth to Prince Leopold in 1853. Simpson was made a baronet in 1866.

Take the next left turn up Castle Street and stop outside No. 39, on the left.

9. No. 39 CASTLE STREET - Sir Walter Scott stayed at this address regularly between 1802 and 1826. He was the most successful writer of his day and his works include 'Ivanhoe'. 'Rob Roy' and the 'Waverley' novels. Often described as the 'inventor' of the historical romance, he had a worldwide effect on the attitudes towards the writing of history and the past generally. It was his enthusiasm and encouragement that led to the rediscovery of the Scottish Regalia in 1818. The Crown Jewels of Scotland had lain undisturbed for more than a century inside Edinburgh Castle, which is where they are now on display today.

Go up to George Street and turn right. When entering Charlotte Square move anticlockwise until you stand outside No. 7.

10. CHARLOTTE SQUARE - This square was the grand finale of the first stage of the New Town. It was the last section to be built and the only one designed as a single unified scheme. Nos. 1-11 were designed by Robert Adam in 1791, as a palace front of 'uncommon finesse and grandeur'. The statue in the centre of the square is of Prince Albert, by Sir John Steell. It was unveiled by Queen Victoria just after 4 o'clock on the 17th August, 1876. She must have liked it because he was later Knighted.

Continue round to the next block, the central building at the steps is West Register House.

11. WEST REGISTER HOUSE - This used to be St. George's Church (founded 1811) but was converted into a modern record repository in 1971. It holds probably the best known document in Scottish history, the Declaration of Arbroath of 1320. This was written to Pope John XXII to claim support for Scotland's right to be an independent nation, "*...as long as but a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be brought under English rule*"

Move round the square and turn right into South Charlotte Street. Stop outside No.16.

12. No.16 SOUTH CHARLOTTE STREET - Alexander Graham Bell was born in this house on the 3rd March, 1847. He moved to America where he became Professor of Vocal Physiology and Elocution at Boston University. His experiments with the telephone led him to patent his idea in 1876.

Exit onto Princes Street, turn right to cross at the traffic lights, then turn left and stop outside the church on your right.

13. ST JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH - Dating from 1815 this church is a peaceful haven from the hustle and bustle of Princes Street. Sir Henry Raeburn (1756-1823) is buried in the Mortuary Chapel of St Johns. He was the most sought-after portrait artist in the country and he produced more than 600 portraits in his lifetime. As you walk on from here you will notice the statue of Sir James Young Simpson whose home you saw in Queen Street earlier.

Walk along until you have a clear view of Edinburgh Castle on the right.

14. EDINBURGH CASTLE - To be on a main street of a city and have a view like this is one of the things that makes Edinburgh so special. The Castle is actually built on a volcanic plug, the core of a 350 million year old volcano. This fortress has watched over Edinburgh for centuries, or as Robert Burns put it,
*'There, watching high the least alarms,
Thy rough, rude fortress gleams afar;
Like some bold veteran, gray in arms.
And marked with many a seamy scar.'*

Continue till you stand at the corner of Princes Street and The Mound.

15. THE FLORAL CLOCK - The clock is situated in the corner by the steps. It was built in 1903 and is claimed to be the oldest floral clock in the world. When in full bloom there are over 24,000 flowers. The mechanism for the clock is actually in the plinth of the nearby statue of Allan Ramsay, the Scottish poet and writer.

Carefully cross the road. Beware the demon 23 bus!

16. ROYAL SCOTTISH ACADEMY / THE NATIONAL GALLERY - Both these buildings were designed by William Playfair: the R.S.A. completed between 1822 -1826 and the National Gallery in 1845. They stand as bold examples of the classical influence in Edinburgh in the 19th century, which helped to give the city its nickname of 'The Athens of the North'

Continue along Princes Street until you reach the tall spire-like monument on the right.

17. THE SCOTT MONUMENT - Sir Walter Scott died in 1832 and this monument to him was completed in 1844. It is 61m high and there are splendid views of the city from the top. One drawback is the 287 steps you have to climb to get there. Underneath all this sits Scott himself with his dog, Maida, by his side. Because of its shape the monument is known by some of the younger generation in Edinburgh as the Scottish Space Shuttle. To the left of the Scott Monument is the statue of Sir David Livingstone (1813-1873), the famous missionary and explorer who discovered the Victoria Falls. He was made a Burgess of Edinburgh in 1857. At this point your intrepid explorations are over; hopefully you have enjoyed your swoop through the New Town. If you now feel weary then it is time to make for the great rookery on the hill, the Old Town of Edinburgh.

Turn right along the Waverley Bridge. Climb up Cockburn Street and turn left at the top. The Radisson SAS Hotel is straight ahead of you on the right.

We hope you have enjoyed your walk.

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