



VISIT GUIDE 2026

Edinburgh Castle

Edinburgh · From 40.82€

<https://edinburghcastle.visit-tickets.com/en/> · Skip-the-line tickets & rail



History & experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

A Thousand Years on the Rock

GOOGLE **4.6** ★★★★★ 109 480 reviews

TIQETS **4.7** ★★★★★ 14 064 reviews

Edinburgh Castle is far more than a fortress; it is the beating heart of Scottish identity, rising dramatically from the dark volcanic rock of Castle Rock. Archaeological evidence suggests human presence here since the Bronze Age, but the first documented reference appears in the 14th century, linked to the death of King Malcolm III in **1093**. This ancient site has witnessed every major conflict in British history, serving as a royal residence, a military stronghold, and a symbol of national resilience against English invasion.

The castle's evolution was shaped by its most significant architect, King David I, who completed major works in **1153**, including St Margaret's Chapel dedicated to his mother. For centuries, the structure served as the primary seat of power for Scottish monarchs until James IV built Holyroodhouse as the main residence. The defensive architecture was heavily modified during the Wars of Independence, with strategic destruction ordered by Robert I in **1314** to prevent English occupation, followed by extensive reconstruction under David II that defined much of the current layout.

In the 16th century, the castle became a stage for dramatic political intrigue, notably when Mary Stuart took refuge here after her troubles in **1567**. She remained safe within these walls until the changing of the guard allowed her eventual capture. The 18th century brought further military adaptations, with the addition of North and West bastions in the **1720s**, which altered the silhouette while strengthening defenses against modern artillery and housing prisoners from global conflicts like the Seven Years' War.

Today, the castle stands as a museum and active garrison, blending medieval grandeur with modern preservation. It houses the Honours of Scotland, discovered by Sir Walter Scott in **1818**, and offers panoramic views over the city. From its origins as a fortified hilltop to its role as a cultural icon, Edinburgh Castle encapsulates the complex, turbulent, and majestic history of Scotland, inviting visitors to walk in the footsteps of kings and warriors.

THE EXPERIENCE

Stepping through the gates of Edinburgh Castle feels like crossing a threshold into another era. The sheer scale of the **volcanic rock** beneath your feet creates an immediate sense of awe, while the steep climb up the Esplanade sets the tone for an adventure. The air is crisp, carrying the scent of history and the distant sound of the city below, promising a journey that is both physically engaging and intellectually stimulating.

As you ascend, the light shifts, illuminating the ancient stone walls and revealing the intricate details of the architecture. The atmosphere is charged with anticipation, as if the castle itself is waiting to share its secrets. You are not just observing a monument; you are participating in a living narrative that spans a thousand years. The promise of the visit is clear: to witness the Crown Jewels, explore the war memorial, and stand where history was made, all while enjoying breathtaking views of Edinburgh's skyline.



PREPARE YOUR VISIT

Practical information

ADDRESS

Old Town • Access: Waverley Station (train) or buses
15/18/20/21 from the city center, 10 min walk via the Royal
Mile slope.

OPENING HOURS

Hours vary by season (summer/winter). Be sure to check
exact dates on the official website before your visit.

FARES

Free child entry based on age (check variants). {promo}.

VISIT DURATION

Allow 2 to 3 hours to fully enjoy the exhibitions, the Crown
Jewels, and the gardens. This includes time needed to climb
up and down the volcanic rock.

PHOTOS

Photography is allowed in most indoor spaces without flash.
Certain specific areas like the St Margaret's Chapel may have
restrictions. Professional photos requ

AUDIENCE

Ideal for families thanks to interactive elements and
captivating stories. The uneven terrain requires comfortable
shoes. People with reduced mobility should ch

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & transport

**Metro**

: Princes Street — 5 min à pied

Edinburgh Waverley Train Station (8 min) • Edinburgh Airport (30 min)

**Bus**

: Princes Street — 5 min à pied

Edinburgh Waverley Train Station (11 min) • Edinburgh Airport (48 min)

**Car**

Edinburgh Waverley Train Station (5 min) • Edinburgh Airport (36 min)

**Bike**

Edinburgh Waverley Train Station (5 min) • Edinburgh Airport (48 min)

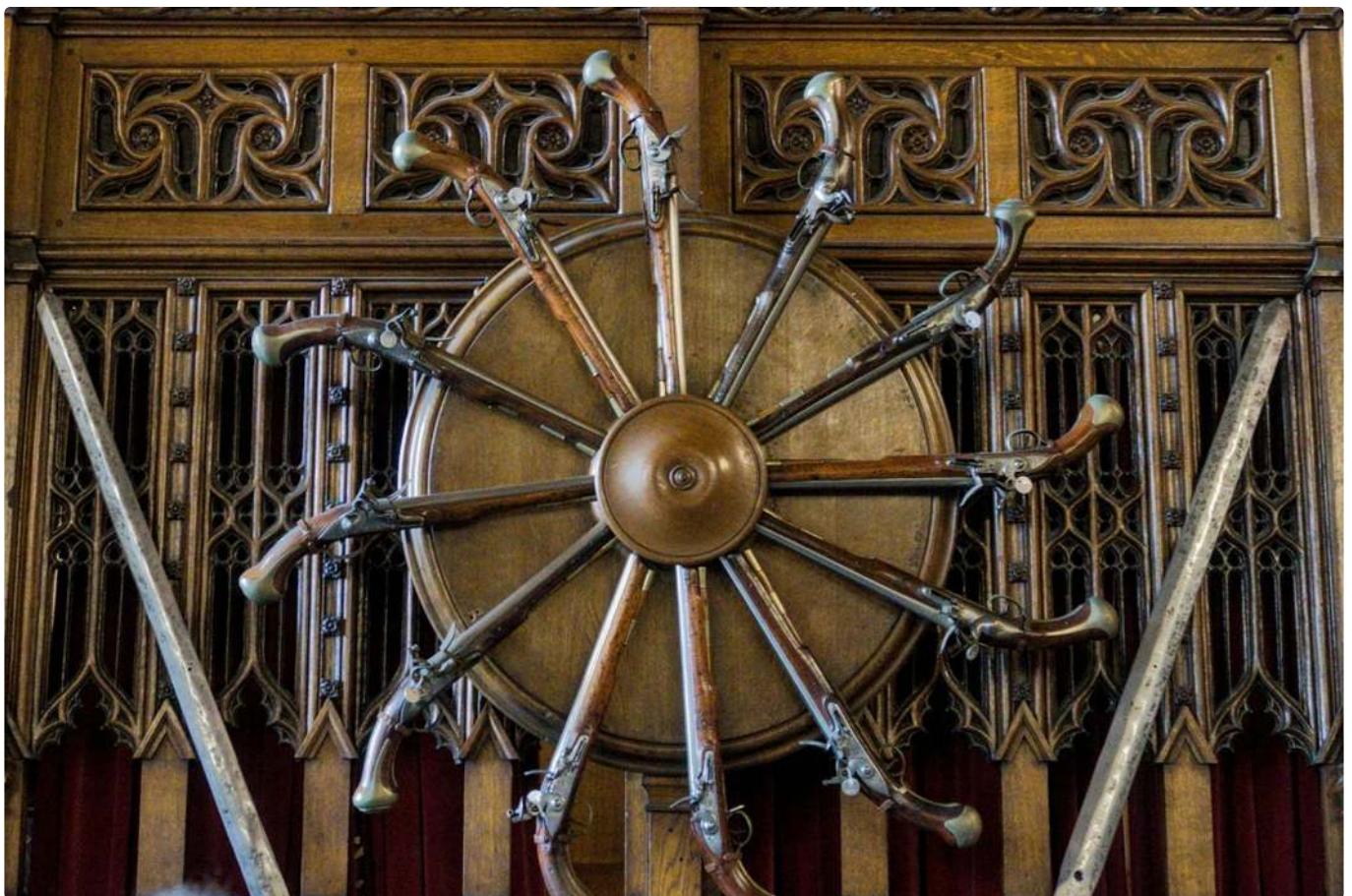
LOCALISATION

Où se trouve Edinburgh Castle ?



Edinburgh

55°56.916' N, 3°11.995' O



ORGANIZATION

Navigating the Fortress Layout

Level 0 (Esplanade & Entrance)

This level features the main entrance, the Great Hall, and the initial exhibition spaces. Visitors begin their journey here, passing through the iconic gatehouse. The area includes information desks and the start of the audio guide route. It serves as the gateway to the upper levels and offers a first glimpse of the castle's scale.

Level 1 (Royal Palace & Chapels)

Here you find the Royal Palace, St Margaret's Chapel, and the Honours of Scotland. This level houses the most precious artifacts, including the Crown Jewels displayed in the Crown Room. The architecture reflects the medieval residential quarters of the kings. It is the historical and cultural core of the castle visit.

Level 2 (Ramparts & War Memorial)

The upper ramparts offer panoramic views of Edinburgh and house the Scottish National War Memorial. This level includes the One & Only Gun and Mons Meg, two massive cannons. The open-air sections provide space for reflection and photography. It represents the military aspect of the castle's history.

ACCESSIBILITY



Disabled Access

Limited access due to medieval structure and uneven terrain; check for specific assistance.



Families

Ideal for families with interactive activities; wear comfortable shoes for the elevation changes.



Audio guide

French, English, Spanish



Must-sees

SELECTION

Must-See Treasures of the Castle

01

Royal Palace

St Margaret's Chapel

Built by David I in **1153**, this is the oldest building in Edinburgh. Its Romanesque architecture contrasts with the later Gothic styles found elsewhere in the castle. The chapel is dedicated to Queen Margaret, the patron saint of Scotland. It offers a serene escape from the busy tourist trails.

💡 The chapel survived the destruction ordered by Robert I in **1314**, making it a rare survivor of the castle's turbulent history.

02

Crown Room

Honours of Scotland

These are the crown jewels of Scotland, including the Crown, Sceptre, and Orb. They were rediscovered by Sir Walter Scott in **1818** after being hidden for centuries. The display case allows close-up viewing of these exquisite pieces of craftsmanship. They represent the continuity of the Scottish monarchy.

💡 Scott found them in a sealed room, believing they had been lost forever after the Acts of Union in **1707**.

03

Ramparts

One & Only Gun

This massive cannon is one of the largest ever cast. It was originally intended for the French Navy but ended up in Edinburgh. Its size and weight make it a striking feature on the ramparts. It serves as a reminder of the castle's military significance.

💡 It is often mistaken for a weapon used in battle, though it was never fired in anger.

04

Ramparts

Mons Meg

Another giant cannon, Mons Meg was a gift from the Duke of Burgundy to James II. It was used in the siege of Berwick in **1455**. The name 'Mons Meg' likely refers to its powerful roar. It stands alongside the One & Only Gun as a testament to medieval artillery.

💡 The name may derive from the French 'montagne' (mountain) due to its size, or from a local legend about a woman named Meg.

05

Upper Ramparts

Scottish National War Memorial

This solemn tribute honors the men and women who died in the World Wars. The interior features a bronze relief depicting soldiers in action. The exterior offers a quiet space for reflection amidst the bustle of the castle. It is a poignant reminder of the cost of conflict.

💡 The memorial was designed by Sir Robert Lorimer and opened in 1927.

06

Castle Buildings

Prisoners of War Cells

These cells housed prisoners from various conflicts, including the American War of Independence. The conditions were harsh, reflecting the brutal nature of warfare in that era. The exhibits include personal items and stories of the inmates. It provides a human perspective on the castle's military role.

💡 Some prisoners managed to escape, adding to the castle's reputation for impenetrability.

07

Entrance Level

Great Hall

Originally a granary, the Great Hall now hosts exhibitions and events. Its vaulted ceiling and spacious layout make it a focal point for visitors. The hall has been restored to reflect its medieval origins. It serves as a transition space between the entrance and the upper levels.

💡 The hall was used to store grain for the garrison, highlighting the castle's logistical importance.

08

Outer Defenses

North Bastion

Added in the 1720s, this bastion strengthened the castle's defenses against modern artillery. Its angular design is distinct from the older medieval structures. It offers excellent views of the city and the surrounding landscape. It represents the evolution of military architecture.

💡 The construction of the bastion required significant earthworks, altering the natural profile of the rock.

TIPS

Tips for the Perfect Visit

TIMING

Visit between 9 AM and 10 AM for the best lighting and lowest crowds, especially on weekdays.

BILLET

Book online in advance, particularly in summer (June-September), to guarantee entry and avoid sell-outs.

PARCOURS

Start with the Royal Palace and Crown Jewels, then move to the ramparts for views, ending at the War Memorial.

PHOTO

The North Ramparts offer the best panoramic shots of Edinburgh, especially during misty mornings.

PAUSE

Take a coffee break in a café near the Royal Mile after descending to relax and reflect on the visit.

ENFANTS

Engage children with the Prisoners of War section and interactive elements, using stories to maintain interest.

AUDIOGUIDE

Use the mobile app audio guide for flexibility, focusing on key areas like the Crown Room and War Memorial.

CONFORT

Wear comfortable shoes for the steep climbs and uneven terrain, and bring layers for variable weather.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do I need to book my Edinburgh Castle ticket in advance?

Yes, booking is highly recommended especially in high season (June to September) and on weekends. This guarantees your precise time slot and avoids long queues at physical ticket counters. We recommend booking at least 4

Are there discounts for children or families?

Reduced fares are generally available for children (often free under 5 years old) and family packages are offered. Exact conditions vary by provider and period. It is essential to check current rules and eligible ages wh

Can I easily cancel or modify my booking?

The cancellation policy depends on the type of ticket chosen and the distributor. Many standard tickets offer free cancellation up to 24h before the visit. Always check the specific conditions displayed at purchase to av

How long does it take to visit Edinburgh Castle?

Allow 2 to 3 hours minimum for a complete visit including exhibitions and outdoor areas. This allows you to discover the Crown Jewels at your own pace without rushing. Plan this time in addition to the initial climb to t

What exactly do you see with the standard Edinburgh Castle ticket?

The standard ticket gives access to permanent exhibitions, the Crown Jewels, and St Margaret's Chapel. It also includes access to the gardens and ramparts for panoramic views. Temporary exhibitions may be included or cha

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

The Volcanic Rock Origin

The castle sits on Castle Rock, a plug of **volcanic rock** formed millions of years ago. This natural formation provided a formidable defense, making the castle nearly impregnable. The rock's height and steep sides deterred attackers for centuries. It is a geological wonder as much as a historical site.

Mary Stuart's Refuge

After her downfall in **1567**, Mary Stuart sought safety in the castle. She remained there until the change of guard allowed her capture. Her story adds a layer of drama to the castle's history. The castle walls witnessed her struggle for survival and power.

Sir Walter Scott's Discovery

In **1818**, Sir Walter Scott was granted permission to search for the lost Honours of Scotland. He found them in a sealed room, now known as the Crown Room. This discovery saved the crown jewels from oblivion. It highlights the castle's role in preserving national heritage.

Prisoners of War History

The castle held prisoners from the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution. Conditions were often harsh, with limited space and resources. These exhibits provide insight into the human cost of war. The cells serve as a somber reminder of the castle's military function.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

The Old Town surrounding the castle is a vibrant extension of the experience. Just down the Royal Mile, you can visit the Palace of Holyroodhouse, the official royal residence, or explore St Giles' Cathedral with its distinctive thistle roof. For a panoramic view of the castle at sunset, Calton Hill offers an ideal photo stop. After your visit, treat yourself to authentic Scottish cuisine at The Witchery by the Castle, known for its medieval atmosphere and traditional dishes. Alternatively, take a coffee break in one of the cozy cafés along the High Street to digest the day's adventures. The National Museum of Scotland on Princes Street provides a perfect next stop for those interested in science and contemporary culture, completing a full day of discovery in Edinburgh's historic core.



Leaving Edinburgh Castle, you carry with you more than memories; you carry a piece of Scotland's soul. The experience is unique, blending the thrill of exploration with the profound weight of history. Whether you stood before the One & Only Gun or gazed at the Crown Jewels, the emotion remains. This is not just a visit; it is a connection to the past that resonates long after you descend the rock. Come, discover why this fortress has captivated hearts for centuries.