



>> Scotland is not only a visual treat but will also enthrall the cultural traveller as the country is filled with stories of folklore, romantic sagas and tales of mythical creatures

# Land of make believe

From the Loch Ness monster to the sound of hauntingly beautiful bagpipes and snow ridged mountains to experimental food, **Scotland** is filled with rich tradition and culture. **Rhea Dhanbhoora** tells you more...



#### GETTING THERE

Most people travel to Scotland from England. If this is the case, we suggest driving down or taking a train (tickets are around ₹1,200 per person from London to Edinburgh). It might take a while, but the view on the way through the mountains is breathtaking — speckled with snow and passing through sparkling lakes and verdant mountains.

Scotland is more than just a travel destination. It's a land filled with folklore, myths and legends twined into the fabric of the country. Its lochs and mountains have inspired writers, artists, poets and thinkers and a visit there will not only set your creative juices flowing, it will leave you with that magical feeling that's missing from big, snazzy cities.

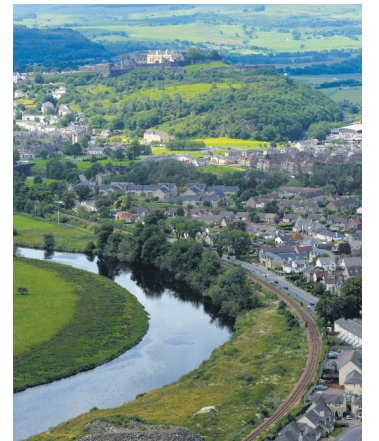
When travelling to Scotland, staying at a bed & breakfast will be your best bet. From fresh breakfasts to interactions with the locals, there's nothing like a taste of Scottish fare in a Scottish home. If you're looking for a hotel, The Point Hotel in Edinburgh is a good option. Situated in the heart of the city, it is contemporary and stylish with an old Victorian charm and can cost you around ₹6,000 a night.

You can't miss out on the country's national parks and if you're up for some mountaineering or water sports, walking around any of the cities will fulfill your need for nature. At the Trossachs National Park you can see coastlines, mountains, forests and lowlands (including Loch Lomond) but also try and visit The Cairngorms National Park — it's double the size of Trossachs and has a breathtaking view of the country.

Scotland is also rich in art and culture with a range of art galleries and museums such as The Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow. If you're looking for destinations that are not buzzing with tourists, visit Loch Lynne, an idyllic lake setting with a ruined castle on its shore. The weather switches quickly from rainy and dreary to golden dollops of sunshine. On a good day, a visit to Kiloran Bay beach is a must.

Scotland is also full of historical sites and most of them don't charge an entrance fee. Open days and offers are something you should look out for.

We loved Holyrood Park in



Edinburgh. It has a beautiful setting of four hill forts and the famous Arthurs Seat in particular was a treat to see. Don't miss the cathedrals and ancient monuments either. Also, in Holyrood is the Scottish Parliament that is worth an evening stroll.

The food here is rich and flavourful and we suggest being experimental and indulging in some haggis (the traditional variety is a lot more flavourful than the tin can options) and game meat such as roasted grouse and roasted woodcock. Scottish pies and tarts are also delectable as is the traditional Dundee cake. Home to the finest scotch whisky in the world, make sure you visit a whisky distillery such as the award-winning Glenfiddich Distillery, based in Banffshire in the Highlands, while in Scotland.

There's no way you'll miss out on a lonesome bagpiper on the streets, adorned in a traditional Scottish kilt — so be sure to stop and listen. Whether it's in cafes or an ancient castle site — the locals are always ready to enthrall you with old Scottish folklore and romantic sagas of ruined castles. We suggest you visit Scotland for more than a few days as the country is steeped in age old history and has a plethora of sights, sounds and tastes to take in.

#### MYTHICAL CREATURES TO WATCH OUT FOR

**Kelpies:** The mythical supernatural water horse is said to be a dark grey or white pony with a dripping mane and is said to haunt the lochs and lonely rivers.

**Selkies:** Creatures that could transform from seals to humans.

**Nessie:** The Loch Ness Monster is one of Scotland's most famous unsolved mysteries, with the dinosaur like creature being said to inhabit the lake Loch Ness.

**Blue men of minch:** Be careful if you're on a boat between Lewis and mainland Scotland. These blue men live in the water and wait to sink boats and drown sailors.

**Bean Nighe:** A Scottish fairy seen as an omen of death.