



Accessible Edinburgh

A Festival Guide



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Travel for All



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Credits

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Accessible Edinburgh: A Festival Guide

Edinburgh is one of Europe's most beautiful cities, draped across a series of rocky hills overlooking the sea. It's a town intimately entwined with its landscape, with buildings and monuments perched atop crags and overshadowed by cliffs – in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson, 'a dream in masonry and living rock'. From the Old Town's picturesque jumble of medieval tenements piled high along the Royal Mile, its turreted skyline strung between the black, bull-nosed Castle Rock and the russet palisade of Salisbury Crags, to the New Town's neat grid of neoclassical respectability, the city offers a constantly changing perspective. It's a city that begs to be discovered, filled with quirky, come-hither nooks that tempt you to explore just that little bit further.

The Athens of the North – an 18th-century Edinburgh nickname dreamed up by the great thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment – is a city of high culture and lofty ideals, of art and literature, of philosophy and

science. It is here that each summer the world's biggest arts festival rises, phoenix-like, from the ashes of last year's rave reviews and broken box-office records to produce yet another string of superlatives. And it is here, beneath the Greek temples of Calton Hill – Edinburgh's acropolis – that the Scottish parliament sits again after a 300-year absence.

Edinburgh is also known as Auld Reekie, a down-to-earth place that flicks an impudent finger at the pretensions of the literati. Auld Reekie is a city of loud, crowded pubs and decadent restaurants, late-night drinking and all-night parties, beer-fuelled poets and foul-mouthed comedians. It's the city that tempted Robert Louis Stevenson from his law lectures to explore the drinking dens and lurid street life of the 19th-century Old Town. And it's the city of Beltane, the resurrected pagan May Day festival where half-naked revellers dance in the flickering firelight of bonfires beneath the stony indifference of Calton Hill's pillared monuments.

Evening sunshine on Calton Hill / © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam





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Acknowledgements

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We gratefully acknowledge permission to use the access information for all venues reviewed in this guide provided by Euan's Guide (www.euansguide.com). We also gratefully acknowledge permission to reproduce images provided by VisitScotland (www.visitscotland.com), Edinburgh International Festival (www.eif.co.uk) Edinburgh International Book Festival (www.edbookfest.co.uk) and the Edinburgh Military Tattoo (www.edintattoo.co.uk).

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Resources

City Sightseeing Bus, Grassmarket / © VisitScotland/Paul Tomkins



Access Guides

Euan's Guide (www.euansguide.com) Our partner in production, *Euan's Guide* is the crowd-sourced disabled access review website and app that aims to 'remove the fear of the unknown' and inspire people to try new places. Read their introduction to Edinburgh here: <https://www.euansguide.com/reviews/scotland/edinburgh-city-of/edinburgh/>.

Historic Scotland (<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/media/2613/access-guide.pdf>) A 127-page guide to more than 80 historic sites across Scotland, including 10 in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

Sage Traveling (www.sagetraveling.com/edinburgh-handi-capped-accessible-travel-keys-to-success) Top tips for a successful trip to Edinburgh from wheelchair-travelling veteran, John Sage.

VisitScotland (<https://www.visitscotland.com/holidays-breaks/accessible/>) Scotland's national tourism organisation is at the forefront of promoting accessible tourism. This is the accessible holidays landing page, where you will find information about accessible accommodation, attractions and activities.

Edinburgh Airport Information Centre

0131-473 3690; www.edinburghairport.com; Edinburgh Airport; 7.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Sat & Sun

VisitScotland Information Centre in the airport's terminal extension.

Edinburgh Royal Infirmary

0131-536 1000; www.nhsllothian.scot.nhs.uk; 51 Little France Cres, Old Dalkeith Rd; 24hr

Edinburgh's main general hospital; has 24-hour accident and emergency department.

General

Artlink (0131 229 3555; www.artlinkedinburgh.co.uk/) Offers a companion service for people who have difficulty attending arts performances on their own.

Edinburgh Festival Guide (www.edinburghfestivalcity.com) Everything you need to know about Edinburgh's many festivals.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com/edinburgh) Destination information and hotel bookings; great for planning.

The List (www.list.co.uk) Local listings and reviews for restaurants, bars, clubs and theatres.

Gig Buddies

<http://www.gigbuddies.org.uk/>

This fantastic organisation aims to link music fans who have a learning disability with other music lovers for gig nights, or whatever other activities they enjoy doing together. This year, Gig Buddies is working with the Festival Fringe Society to extend their services to Fringe audiences. Whether you are a person with a learning disability looking to visit the Fringe, or you are looking for a volunteering opportunity with the Gig Buddies project in Edinburgh and Mid-Lothian, contact Sam Maggs at samuel.maggs@thera.co.uk, by phone on 07738-486 001, or visit the Gig Buddies Facebook page.

Lothian LGBT Helpline

0300 123 2523; www.lgbt-helpline-scotland.org.uk; noon-9pm Tue & Wed

Toilets

Throughout this guide, reference is made to RADAR keys. The National Key Scheme (NKS), previously known as the Royal Association for Disability Rights (RADAR) Scheme, was introduced to prevent accessible toilets being damaged or misused. Some local councils will provide this key free or for a small charge; others charge about £5, including postage and packing. They can also be bought for a similar price from Disability Rights UK (<https://crm.disabilityrightsuk.org/radar-nks-key>).

If you need a fully accessible Changing Places toilet, search here: <http://changingplaces.uktoiletmap.org/find?toiletLocation=Edinburgh>.

Western General Hospital

0131-537 1000; www.nhsllothian.scot.nhs.uk; Crewe Rd South; 8am-9pm

For non-life-threatening injuries and ailments, you can attend the Minor Injuries Clinic here without having to make an appointment.

Getting to Edinburgh

Airport

By all accounts, this is a very accessible airport, where much thought has been put into making life easier for passengers with disabilities.

The buses drop off right outside the terminal and taxis have a specific drop-off area which isn't too far from the entrance. The car park has dedicated Blue Badge parking spaces at the closest point to the airport. On approaching the terminal from the walkway there is a call point to summon assistance if required. There are automatic doors and lifts up to the terminals. Once inside a large and easy-to-read sign indicates the availability of assistance for disabled visitors and directs people to the dedicated assistance area for people who have booked assistance. Signage is clear and easy to read, even from wheelchair height.

Accessible toilets are spacious, well appointed and signposted (including in Braille), and clean, but more than one reviewer mentioned the heaviness of the doors.

Staff are universally praised for their friendliness and helpfulness; one reviewer remarked that although staff were meant to take them only to the luggage carousel, they were escorted right to the taxi rank, while another reported that although assistance had not been booked, it was still readily available. Cafe staff are also reportedly happy to take purchases to the table.

Airlink

www.flybybus.com; adult/child £4.50/2

Airlink is great way to travel between the city centre (Waverley Bridge) and the airport, with departures in each direction every 10 minutes for most of the day. All the buses are equipped with ramps, a wheelchair space and priority seating for elderly and disabled passengers. Audio announcements tell you where you are and the next approaching stop. Scottish National Concession cards are accepted. They even have on-board wi-fi!

Megabus

0141-352 4444; <http://uk.megabus.com/passengers-with-disabilities.aspx>

It's worth checking Megabus for cheap intercity bus fares from Edinburgh to Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow, Inverness and Perth. There are various buses to Edinburgh from London and the rest of the UK. Information for passengers with disabilities can

be found on the above webpage. If you need to remain in your wheelchair for your trip, do NOT purchase a ticket online, but instead call 0141-332 9644 to ensure there is a wheelchair space for you. Note that weight restrictions mean not all wheelchair users can use the Megabus.

National Rail Enquiry Service

08457 48 49 50; http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/disabled_passengers.aspx

For fare and timetable enquires, phone the National Rail Enquiry Service or use the journey planner on the website. Full details of all accommodations for passengers with disabilities can be found on the above webpage, including links to different regions and stations. Passengers with mobility restrictions who require assistance are advised to book 24 hours in advance.

ScotRail

0800 912 2901; 18001 0800 912 2901 (Assisted Travel Text-phone for people who are hard of hearing); <https://www.scotrail.co.uk/plan-your-journey/accessible-travel>

Use the above numbers to book assistance at least four hours in advance. Full details of all accommodations for passengers with disabilities can be found via links on the above webpage. Reviews of Edinburgh's central stations can be found below.

Scottish Citylink

0141-332 9644; www.citylink.co.uk/assistedtravel.php

There are currently only three services that are fully accessible:

- » M9 – Aberdeen to Glasgow/Edinburgh via Dundee
- » M 90 – Inverness to Edinburgh/Glasgow via Perth
- » 900 – Glasgow to Edinburgh

If you need to stay in your wheelchair for the journey, do NOT purchase your ticket on the website; instead call the above number no less than 36 hours before you travel and check wheelchair weight restrictions.

Getting Around

Edinburgh is not overwhelmingly large, which makes finding your way around a bit easier. It's very much a city for walking, but be aware there are lots of steep hills and stairs.

Blue Badge Parking

A Blue Badge allows drivers or passengers with severe mobility problems or a disability to park without payment or penalty in otherwise restricted areas. For example, if you have a Blue Badge, you can park free and (often) for any length of time at on-street parking meters and on-street pay-and-display areas. It also allows you to park in designated accessible parking bays. For full details about use and eligibility, visit <https://www.mygov.scot/apply-blue-badge/?via=http://www.bluebadgescotland.org/>. Full details and locations of street Blue Badge parking bays can be found on the City of Edinburgh Council website at www.edinburgh.gov.uk or you can call them on 0131-469 3891.

Lothian Buses

0131-555 6363; <http://lothianbuses.com/about-us/community/accessible-buses>

Buses are the most popular form of public transport; information about timetables and access can be found on Lothian Buses website.

All buses in the fleet are accessible, with retractable boarding ramps, flat areas on the lower deck, high visibility handrails and a (single) dedicated wheelchair space that's relatively easy to manoeuvre into. Drivers receive training to better assist PWDs. Mobility scooters are not permitted on buses.

Edinburgh Bus Station

Accessible toilets require a RADAR key and can be used during station hours.

Taxi

There are numerous taxi ranks located around the city.

Central Taxis (0131-229 2468; <http://taxis-edinburgh.co.uk/>)

Edinburgh's largest taxi company has 465 wheelchair-accessible taxis (black cabs).

Train

www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20088/public_transport/423/rail_travel_for_people_with_disabilities

Information for PWDs travelling within Edinburgh by train can be found on the above website, including dedicated numbers for people with a hearing impairment or those who need particular advice and/or support.

Edinburgh Haymarket

0800 912 2901; 18001 0800 912 2901 (for the hard of hearing)

There's step-free access throughout and wheelchairs are available for passenger use.

All reviewers bemoan the lack of accessible parking, but agree that this newly refurbished train station is a vast improvement on the old one. There are wheelchair-accessible turnstiles, large and well-appointed accessible toilets – access to which is at street level before going through the ticket barrier using a RADAR key – lifts to all platforms and helpful staff. It's reportedly very easy to navigate your way around.

Edinburgh Waverley

0845 722 5225; <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/edinburgh-waverley-station/disabled-access/>

Accessible parking is available in the main car park, from where you'll need to take two lifts to get to the ticket office and main concourse. There is no longer vehicle access to the main station area for cars or taxis; the accessible drop-off/pick-up point is located off Carlton Rd. One lift takes you to the bridge and a second down on to platform level. More than one reviewer has remarked that this vehicular access is less than ideal. When booking assisted travel staff can meet you at the accessible drop-off point.

There's an accessible toilet just before the barriers to the main toilet area. It can be opened by a staff member or with a RADAR key, which may mean a wait for those without a key. It's clean and fairly spacious, although it does require a 90-degree turn to access the door.

The various shops and cafes in the concourse are all accessible. Staff are particularly helpful.

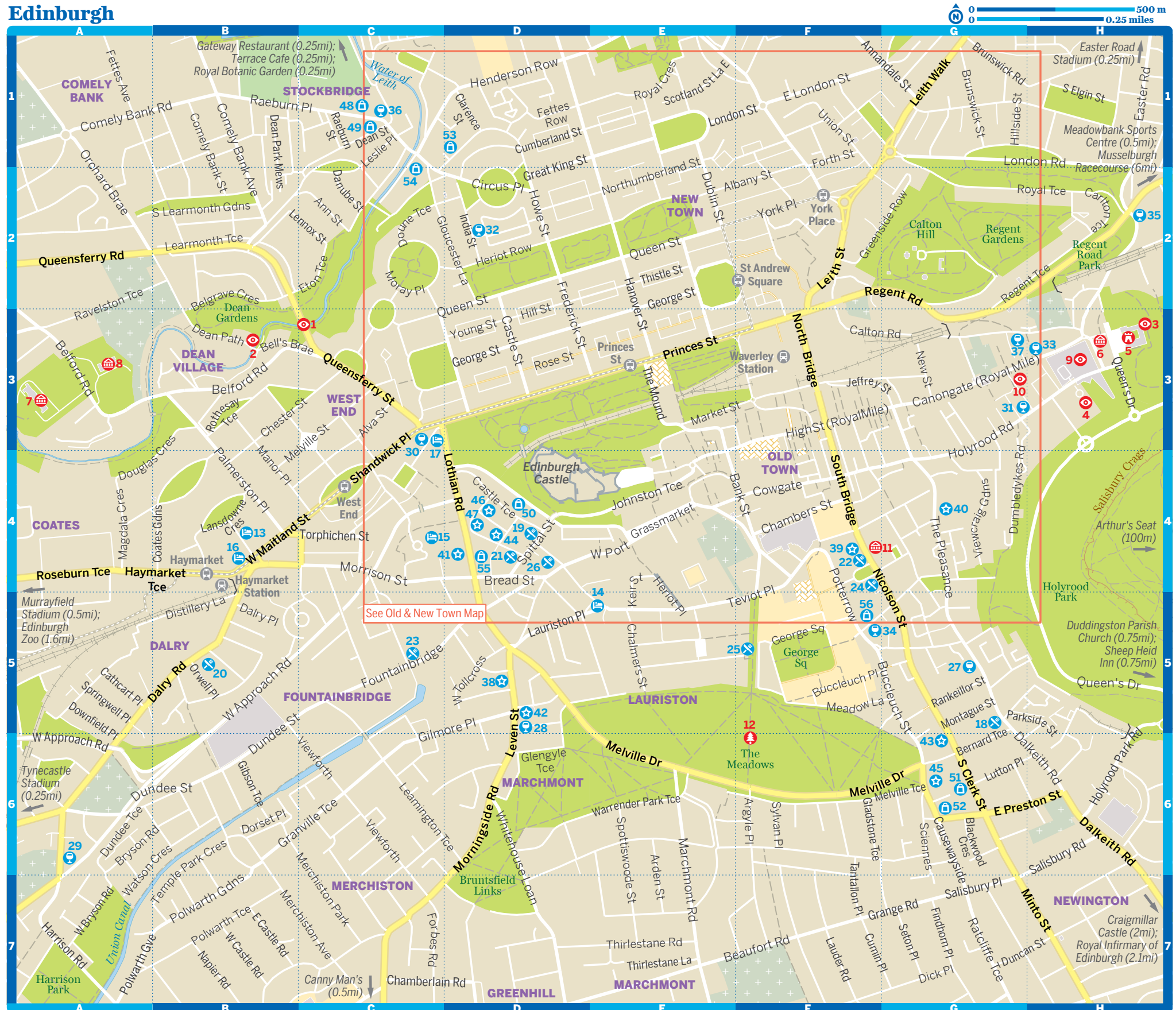
The ticket offices have induction loops and there are a number of wheelchairs available and a mobility vehicle for use by passengers.

For further details, refer to the website or call the number above.

Tram

City trams can take you along the length of the major shopping strip, Princes St, out to Edinburgh Airport. The entire fleet of trams is wheelchair-accessible, and stops have ramps and lifts where necessary. Trams have two wheelchair spaces.

Edinburgh



Edinburgh

👁️ Sights

- 1 Dean Bridge C3
- 2 Dean Village B3
- 3 Holyrood Abbey H3
- 4 Our Dynamic Earth H3
- 5 Palace of Holyroodhouse H3
- 6 Queen's Gallery H3
- 7 Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art A3
- 8 Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art – Modern Two A3
- 9 Scottish Parliament Building H3
- 10 Scottish Poetry Library G3
- 11 Surgeons' Hall Museums F4
- 12 The Meadows F6

🛏️ Sleeping

- 13 Hilton Edinburgh Grosvenor B4
- 14 Novotel Edinburgh Centre E5
- 15 Sheraton Grand Hotel & Spa C4
- 16 Tune Hotel B4
- 17 Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh – The Caledonian C3

🍴 Eating

- 18 Aizle G5
- Cafe Modern One (see 7)
- Cafe Modern Two (see 8)
- 19 Castle Terrace D4
- 20 First Coast B5
- 21 Kanpai Sushi D4
- 22 Kebab Mahal F4
- 23 Loudon's Café & Bakery C5
- 24 Mosque Kitchen F4
- 25 Peter's Yard F5
- 26 Timberyard D4

🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 27 Auld Hoose G5
- 28 Bennet's Bar D5
- 29 Caley Sample Room A6
- 30 Ghillie Dhu C3
- 31 Hemma G3
- 32 Kay's Bar D2
- 33 Kilderkin H3
- 34 Pear Tree House F5
- 35 Regent H2
- Royal Dick (see 45)
- 36 Stockbridge Tap C1
- 37 Studio 24 G3

🎭 Entertainment

- 38 Cameo D5
- 39 Edinburgh Festival Theatre F4
- 40 Edinburgh Folk Club G4
- 41 Filmhouse D4
- 42 King's Theatre D5
- 43 Queen's Hall G6
- 44 Royal Lyceum Theatre D4
- 45 Summerhall G6
- 46 Traverse Theatre D4
- 47 Usher Hall D4

🛍️ Shopping

- 48 Annie Smith C1
- 49 Bliss C1
- 50 Edinburgh Farmers Market D4
- 51 Hogs Head Music G6
- 52 Meadows Pottery G6
- 53 Miss Bizio D1
- 54 Stockbridge Market C2
- 55 Wonderland D4
- 56 Word Power F5

New & Old Town

👁️ Sights

- 1 Bute House A4
- 2 Calton Hill G3
- 3 Canongate Kirk H4
- 4 Charlotte Square A4
- 5 Church of St Andrew & St George D3
- 6 City Art Centre F5
- 7 City Chambers E5
- 8 Dunbar's Close Garden H4
- 9 Edinburgh Castle C6
- 10 Edinburgh Dungeon E5
- 11 Fruitmarket Gallery F5
- 12 Georgian House A4
- 13 Gladstone's Land E5
- 14 Grassmarket D6
- 15 Greyfriars Bobby Statue E6
- 16 Greyfriars Kirk E7
- 17 Greyfriars Kirkyard E6
- 18 Highland Tolbooth Kirk D6
- 19 John Knox House G5
- 20 Mansfield Place Church E1
- 21 Mercat Cross E5
- 22 Museum of Childhood F5
- 23 Museum of Edinburgh H5
- 24 Museum on the Mound E5
- 25 National Museum of Scotland F6
- 26 National War Museum of Scotland C5
- 27 Parliament Hall E6
- 28 People's Story H4
- 29 Princes Street Gardens C5
- 30 Royal Scottish Academy D4
- 31 Scotch Whisky Experience D6
- 32 Scottish National Gallery D5
- 33 Scottish National Portrait Gallery E3
- 34 St Cuthbert's Parish Church B5
- 35 St Giles Cathedral E5
- 36 Talbot Rice Gallery F6

🛏️ Sleeping

- 37 Ibis Styles Edinburgh Centre D3
- 38 Jurys Inn F5

🍴 Eating

- Amber (see 31)
- 39 Bon Vivant C3
- 40 Brew Lab F6
- 41 Café Hub D6
- 42 Café Marlayne C4
- Cafe Portrait (see 33)
- 43 Cannonball Restaurant D6
- 44 Contini B4
- 45 David Bann G5
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- 47 Fishers in the City C4
- Forth Floor Restaurant & Brasserie (see 99)
- 48 Hadrian's Brasserie E4
- 49 Howie's F3
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- 54 Mussel Inn C4
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- 58 Petit Paris D6
- Scottish Cafe & Restaurant (see 30)
- 59 Social Bite B4
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- Valvona & Crolla Caffé Bar (see 112)
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🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 62 Bongo Club E6
- 63 Bow Bar D6
- 64 BrewDog E6
- 65 Café Royal Circle Bar E3
- 66 Cask & Barrel E1
- 67 Cumberland Bar D1
- 68 Ecco Vino E5
- 69 Guildford Arms E4
- 70 Holyrood 9A G5
- 71 Indigo Yard A5
- 72 Jolly Judge E5
- 73 Joseph Pearce's G1
- 74 Kenilworth C4
- 75 Liquid Room E6
- 76 Malt Shovel E5
- 77 Sygn A5
- 78 Villager E6
- 79 White Hart Inn D6

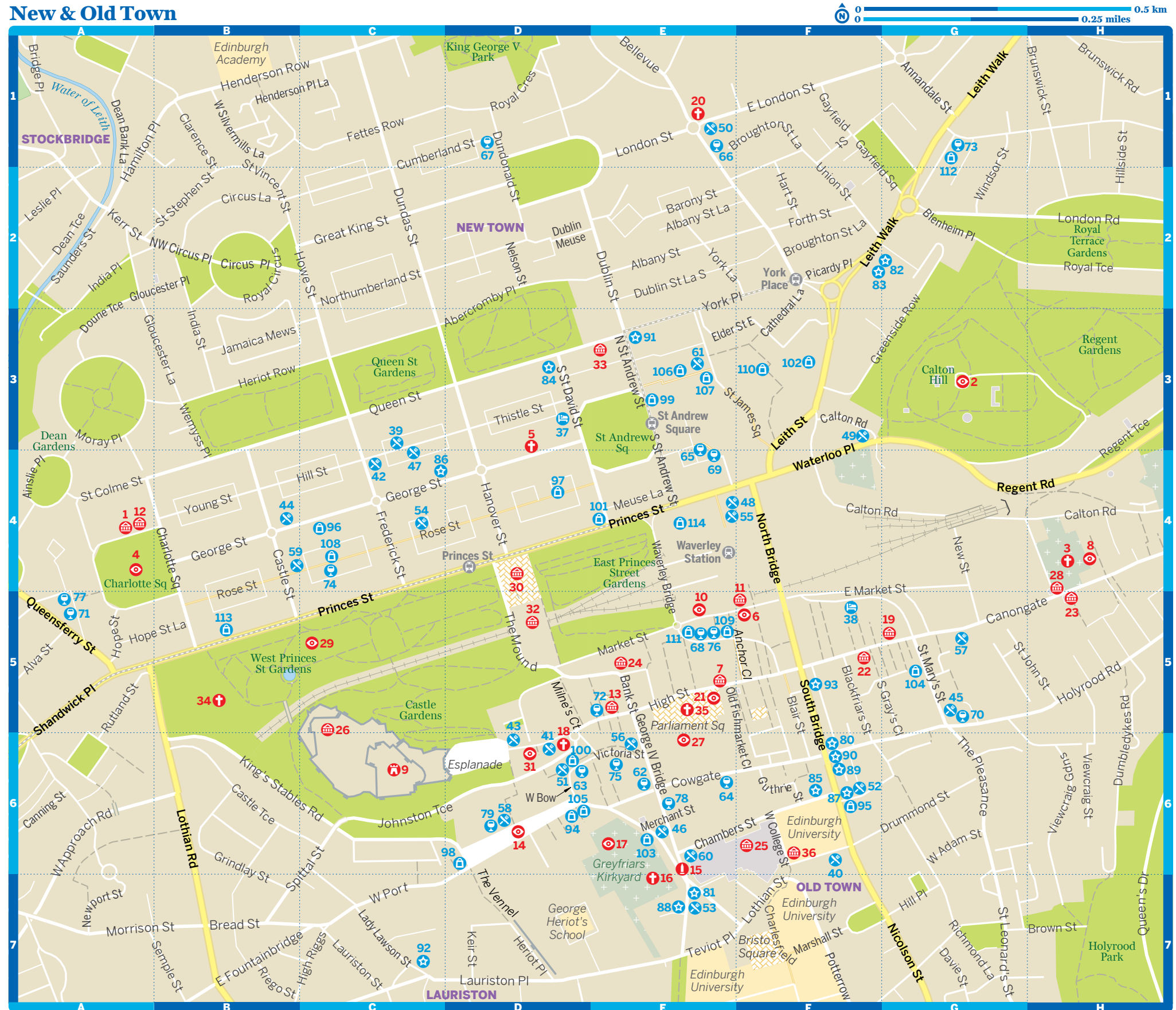
🎭 Entertainment

- 80 Bannerman's F6
- 81 Bedlam Theatre E7
- 82 CC Blooms G2
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- 84 Jam House D3
- 85 Jazz Bar F6
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- 87 Royal Oak F6
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- 89 The Caves F6
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- 91 The Stand Comedy Club E3
- Voodoo Rooms (see 65)
- 92 Wee Red Bar C7
- 93 Whistle Binkie's F5

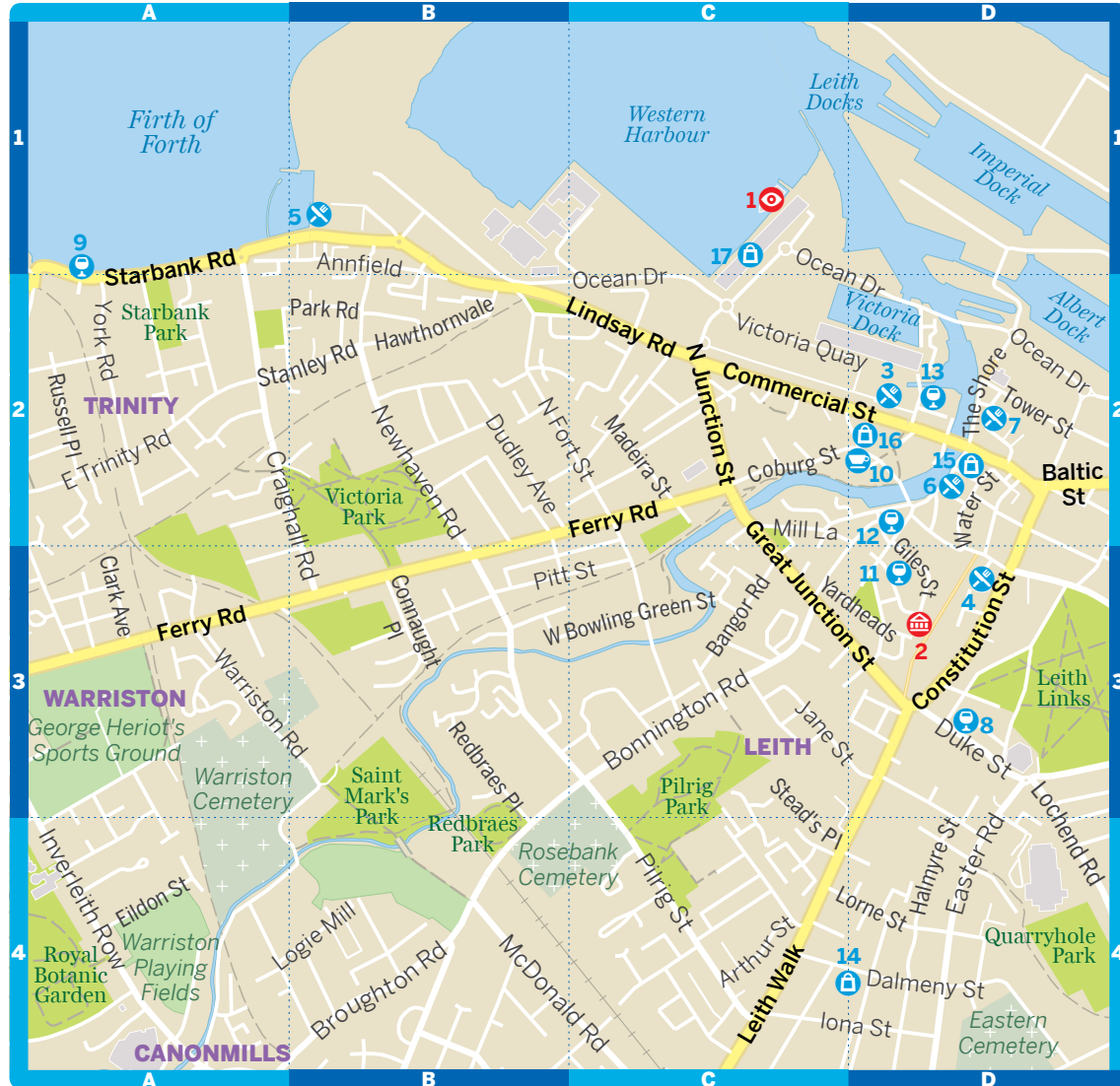
🛍️ Shopping

- 94 Armstrong's D6
- 95 Blackwell's Bookshop F6
- 96 Cruise C4
- 97 Fopp D4
- 98 Godiva D6
- 99 Harvey Nichols E3
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- 101 Jenners E4
- 102 John Lewis F3
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- 106 Multrees Walk E3
- 107 Oscar & Fitch E3
- 108 Palenque C4
- 109 Pie in the Sky E5
- 110 St James Centre F3
- 111 Underground Solush'n E5
- 112 Valvona & Crolla G1
- 113 Waterstone's West End B5
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New & Old Town



Leith



Leith

- 📍 Sights**
 - 1 Royal Yacht Britannia.....C1
 - 2 Trinity House.....D3

- 🍴 Eating**
 - 3 KitchinD2
 - 4 Leith Chop HouseD3
 - 5 Loch Fyne.....B1
 - 6 Martin Wishart.....D2
 - Royal Deck Tea Room.....(see 1)
 - 7 Shore.....D2

- 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife**
 - 8 Lioness of Leith.....D3
 - 9 Old Chain Pier.....A1
 - 10 RoseleafD2
 - 11 Scotch Malt Whisky Society.....D3
 - 12 Sofi's.....D2
 - 13 Teuchters Landing.....D2

- 🛒 Shopping**
 - 14 Flea Market.....C4
 - 15 FluxD2
 - 16 Kinloch AndersonD2
 - 17 Ocean Terminal.....C1



Accessible Edinburgh: A Festival Guide

Festivals

Virgin Money Fireworks Concert, Princes St Gardens / © Dave Stewart



Beltane

<https://beltane.org>; tickets £8-10; Apr 2017

Beltane is a pagan fire festival that marks the end of winter and the rebirth of spring. It was resurrected in modern form in 1988 and is now celebrated annually on the summit of Calton Hill. The spectacular rituals involve lots of fire, drumming, body paint and sexual innuendo (well, it's a fertility rite, after all). Bring your sparklers. Held annually on the night of 30 April into the early hours (around 1am) of 1 May.

Be aware that access to Calton Hill involves a sloping ascent and the festival takes place in darkness with some areas becoming very crowded. Contact access@beltane.org if you have specific questions about access.

Edinburgh Festival Fringe

0131-226 0026; www.edfringe.com; 5-29 Aug

When the first Edinburgh Festival was held in 1947, there were eight theatre companies that didn't make it onto the main program. Undeterred, they grouped together and held their own mini-festival, on the fringe, and an Edinburgh institution was born. Today the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is the biggest festival of the performing arts anywhere in the world.

In a strong tradition of enabling access to the arts, the Fringe has long been committed to catering to diverse audiences. The Fringe Box Office has designated staff in place deal specifically with access enquiries and ticket bookings. Contact them at accessbookings@edfringe.com or by phone on 0131-226 0002.

There are a number of accessible performance search tools on the website. Within the Filter Results panel located on the search results page, you'll find an extensive number of accessibility filters that you can use to quickly locate performances that meet your requirements. These features are also available on the Fringe app.

Alternatively you can download detailed listings of audio described, captioned, relaxed and signed performances. These lists are updated regularly throughout the season, so download the latest copies of the listings for the most up-to-date information at the links at <https://www.edfringe.com/visit-the-fringe/accessibility>.

Note that the ticket collection point at the Fringe Box Office is not easily accessible. Customers with access requirements can buy and collect tickets in the Fringe Shop at 180 High St, which has automated doors and a designated accessible ticket counter; take your payment card or transaction ID number. The vast majority of companies with the show in the Fringe offer a complimentary

companion ticket to customers who need one. Just make your needs known when you buy your ticket for the Fringe event.

Edinburgh Food Festival

www.edfoodfest.com; 27-31 Jul

This four-day festival, based in George Square Gardens, precedes the opening of the Edinburgh Fringe with a packed program of talks, cookery demonstrations, tastings, street food stalls and entertainment.

Access to this pop-up venue is via a steepish ramp at the back (accompanied by a staff member) and, while the square is ramped and the surface is boarded and covered with astroturf, it's still quite uneven. The streets surrounding the square are cobbled and uneven. During festival season, there's an accessible toilet set up in the square. Access to the box office at the Assembly is apparently poor.

If attending a Fringe performance at this venue, the viewing platform gives you a great view.

Edinburgh International Book Festival

0845-373 5888; www.edbookfest.co.uk; 13-29 Aug

Held in a little village of marquees in the middle of Charlotte Sq, the Edinburgh International Book Festival is a fun fortnight of talks, readings, debates, lectures, book signings and meet-the-author events, with three cafes and two tented bookshops thrown in. The festival lasts for two weeks in August, to coincide with the Edinburgh International Festival.

There are two parking bays for PWDs at the end of George St. There are metered parking spaces along George St along with some bays for disabled drivers. Drop-off/pick-up for wheelchair users is outside the Entrance Tent or at the west end of George St. There is level access across the pedestrian crossing between the end of George St and the entrance, and a shallow ramp up into the Entrance Tent. Once inside Charlotte Square Gardens, there is level access around the whole of the Book Festival site and the venues within it. Wheelchairs are available to borrow free of charge.

There are infrared systems in all theatres, except the Baillie Gifford Story Box and the Baillie Gifford Imagination Lab, to assist people with auditory impairments. Earphones can be collected from the Information Desk in the Entrance Tent. A selection of events are BSL interpreted. Guide dogs and hearing dogs are welcome. A brochure of events is available in large print, Braille

and audio CD – all available by contacting 0131-718 5666 or admin@edbookfest.co.uk. (For bookings, call 0845-373 5888.)

Artlink's Access Service offers support to disabled visitors to Edinburgh to attend Book Festival events with a volunteer escort. For further information, contact Artlink on 0131-229 3555 (Typetalk 18001 0131 229 3555) or email info@artlinkedinburgh.co.uk. Alternatively, contact the Box Office (boxoffice@edbookfest.co.uk) to discuss specific access needs.

Edinburgh International Festival

0131-473 2000; www.eif.co.uk; 5-29 Aug

First held in 1947 to mark a return to peace after the ordeal of WWII, the Edinburgh International Festival is festooned with superlatives – the oldest, the biggest, the most famous, the best in the world. The original was a modest affair, but today hundreds of the world's top musicians and performers congregate in Edinburgh for three weeks of diverse and inspirational music, opera, theatre and dance.

Full details about accessible performances, including touch tours, captioning, BSL interpretation, audio description and ticket discounts, can be found at <http://www.eif.co.uk/access#.V4XZs-J95hE>. You can also download a brochure for the festival, a 36-page access guide and audioguides, and add your name to an access mailing list. Links to individual venues, many of which have been reviewed above, can also be found on this page.

Edinburgh International Film Festival

www.edfilmfest.org.uk; Jun 2017

One of the original Edinburgh Festival trinity, having first been staged in 1947 along with the International Festival and the Fringe, the two-week June film festival is a major international event, serving as a showcase for new British and European films, and staging the European premieres of one or two Hollywood blockbusters. There are always a small number of captioned and audio-described screenings. See website for details closer to the event.

Edinburgh International Jazz & Blues Festival

www.edinburghjazzfestival.com; 15-24 Jul

Held annually since 1978, the Jazz & Blues Festival pulls in top talent from all over the world. It runs for nine days, beginning on a Friday, a week before the Fringe and Tattoo begin. The first

Edinburg International Book Festival, Charlotte Sq / © Helen Jones/Alan McCredie



Edinburg International Book Festival, Charlotte Sq /
© Helen Jones/Alan McCredie



weekend sees a carnival parade on Princes St and an afternoon of free, open-air music in Princes Street Gardens. Links to all venues can be found at <http://www.edinburghjazzfestival.com/explore/venues.html>.

Edinburgh International Science Festival

0844-557 2686; www.sciencefestival.co.uk; 1-16 Apr 2017

First held in 1987, it hosts a wide range of events, including talks, lectures, exhibitions, demonstrations, guided tours and interactive experiments designed to stimulate, inspire and challenge. From dinosaurs to ghosts and alien life forms, there's something to interest everyone. The festival runs over two weeks in April. The main venues are the [City Art Centre](#) (p63) and [Summerhall](#) (p138). For details of 2017 venues, check the website closer to the time.

Edinburgh Military Tattoo

0131-225 1188; www.edintattoo.co.uk; Aug

August kicks off with The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, a spectacular display of military marching bands, massed pipes and drums, and cultural acts from around the world, all played out in front of the magnificent backdrop of the floodlit castle. Each show traditionally finishes with a lone piper, dramatically lit, playing a lament on the battlements. The Tattoo takes place throughout August.

Edinburgh Castle, the setting for the Tattoo, is set on an extinct volcano 135m above sea level at the end of the steeply inclined and cobbled Castlehill and a further gentler 100m gentler incline up the Esplanade. There are also steps to reach the amphitheatre, which are quite steeply tiered. Nonetheless, there are facilities for wheelchair guests, but they must be accompanied by an able-bodied companion. Vehicle passes are available for patrons holding tickets for disabled seating areas (not available for Saturday performances).

A limited number of personal PA systems are available, which should be booked at the time of ticket purchase.

Accessible toilets are available on the Esplanade.

For more details, visit www.edintattoo.co.uk/tickets/facilities-for-disabled.

Edinburgh's Christmas

0844-545 8252; www.edinburghschristmas.com; late Nov-early Jan

The youngest of the Scottish capital's festivals, first held in 2000, the Christmas bash includes a big street parade, a Christmas market, a fairground and Ferris wheel, and an open-air ice rink in Princes Street Gardens.

Wheelchair users and people with sensory impairments beware: it's dark and crowded! Pay-and-display parking is available on Frederick St, George St, Hanover St and Waterloo Pl, free for Blue Badge holders with no time limit.

There are several sites, served by a number of accessible toilet facilities.

Organisers have tried to make the walkways as even as possible, with ramps to stalls where possible. Wheelchairs are welcome on the Ice Rink, and there are pods in the Big Wheel and spaces in the Spiegel tent designed to accommodate wheelchairs. Note that large electric wheelchairs may not be accommodated on the Big Wheel due to weight restrictions.

There is no ride-wide policy for the suitability of rides for visitors with disabilities. Individual ride operators will determine whether the ride is suitable, according to safety criteria, and whether they will grant admission.

If any of your party are wheelchair users call 0844-545 8252 (10am-6pm Mon-Sat) to make a booking.

Edinburgh's Hogmanay

0844-573 8455; www.edinburghshogmanay.com; tickets £20; 27 Dec-1 Jan

Edinburgh's Hogmanay is the biggest winter festival in Europe. Events include a torchlight procession, huge street party and the famous 'Loony Dook', a chilly sea-swimming event on New Year's Day. To get into the main party area in the city centre after 8pm on 31 December you'll need a ticket – book well in advance.

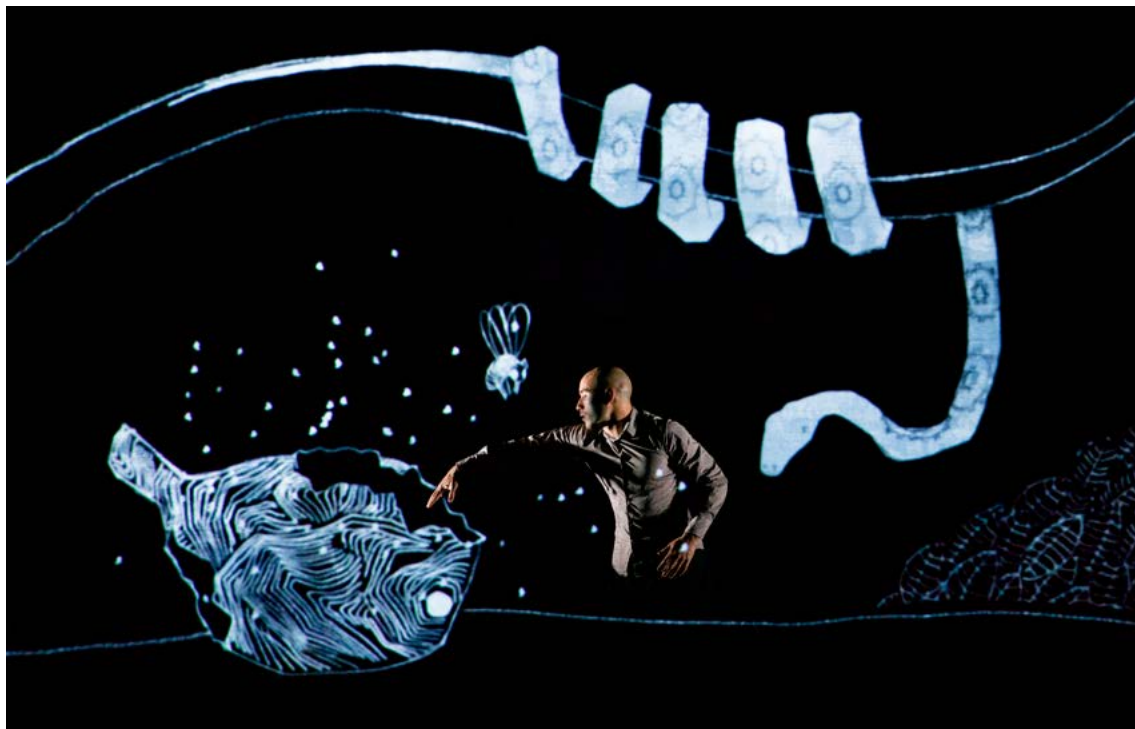
Ferry Fair Festival

<http://ferryfair.co.uk>; Aug

If you're in Edinburgh on the first Friday of August, head to the village of Queensferry to see the bizarre Burry Man. As part of the village gala day, a local man roams the streets wearing a woolly suit, which has been laboriously covered in prickly burrs. One glance at his costume – he looks like a child's drawing of a Martian, with added prickles – would make you think he's suffering a medieval punishment, but it's actually a great honour to be selected.

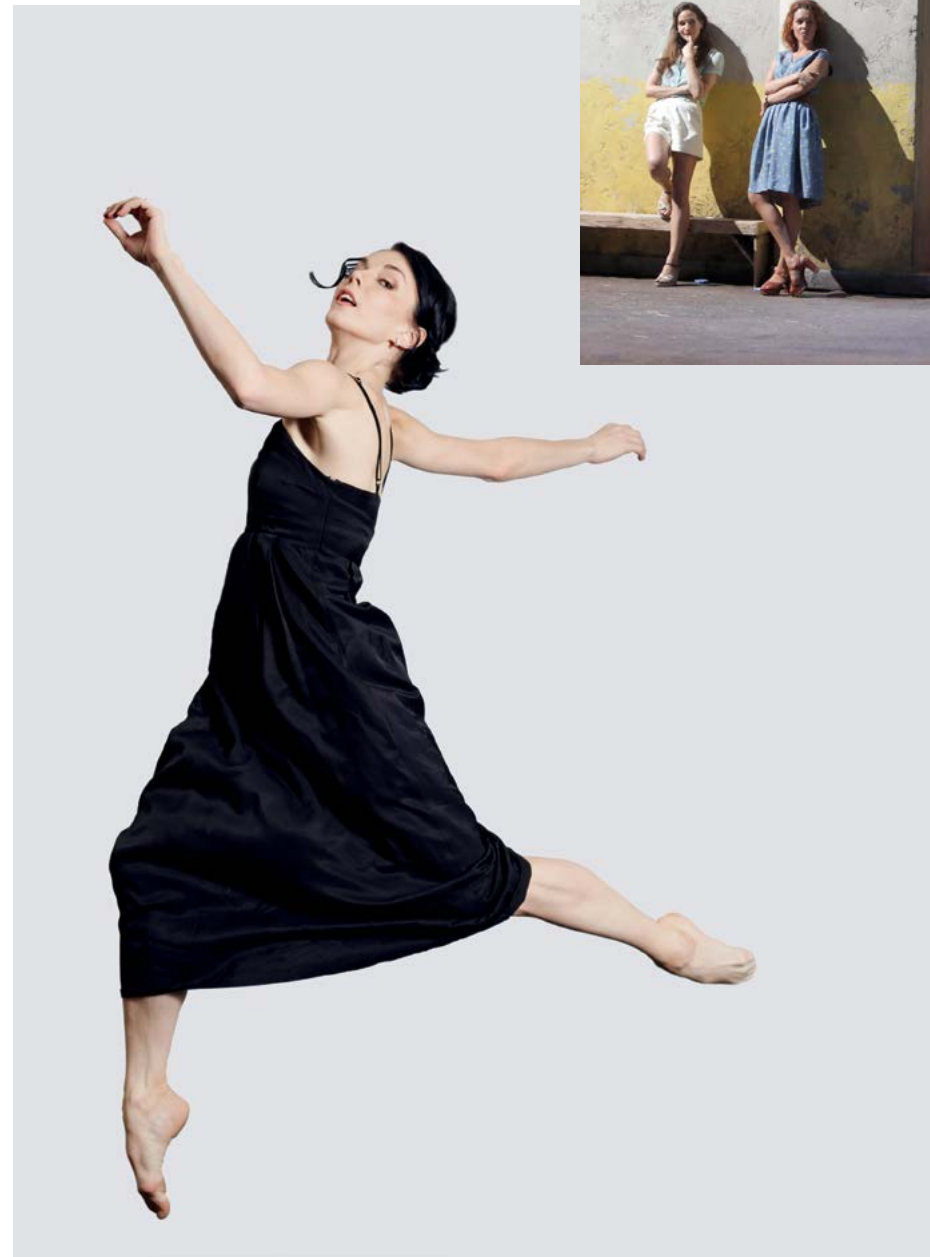


Emergence, Scottish Ballet, Festival Theatre / © Angela Sterling



Chotto Desh, Akram Khan Company, Edinburgh International Conference Centre / © Dennis Alamanos

Festival d'Aix-en-Provence 2016 / © P. Victorartcomart



Natalia Osipova, Festival Theatre / © Nikolai Gulakov

TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION

Wed 30 Dec

There is full disabled access to the Torchlight Procession. However, due to the nature of the event there are no wheelchair viewing platforms/areas either on the route or at the finale point. Torchlight Procession route areas can be steep and uneven and not well lit, though there is a tarmac road in areas. There are no specific disabled access facilities for wheelchair users accessing the finale site, but there should be an accessible toilet. Accessible parking can be found on Regent Rd between Carriage Dr and Regent Tce.

CANDLELIT CONCERT – ST GILES' CATHEDRAL, ROYAL MILE

Thu 31 Dec

There is a ramp at main entrance to St Giles' Cathedral but this is very steep; staff are on hand to help. The cathedral has no designated areas for wheelchair users, and a limit of four can be accommodated within the general seating area. There's an accessible toilet, but no designated Blue Badge parking.

EDINBURGH'S HOGMANAY STREET PARTY – PRINCES STREET

Thu 31 Dec

The Street Party arena is fully accessible. However, this event is extremely busy and there are no wheelchair viewing platforms or specified viewing areas. Wheelchair users are therefore advised to attend either the Concert in the Gardens or the Old Town Ceilidh events, which have smaller capacities, safe viewing zones and are easier to access away from the crowds of the Street Party. Contact the Box Office at edinburghshogmanay@edfringe.com or call 0844-573 8455 to speak to a member of staff about your assistance requirements, access and advice on the most suitable event for your needs.

There are accessible toilets at South St Andrew St, South St David St, Frederick St, Castle St, and the bottom of the Mound.

EDINBURGH'S HOGMANAY STREET PARTY – WEST PRINCES ST GARDENS

Thu 31 Dec

Entrance for disabled patrons is at King Stables Rd. The viewing area for wheelchair users (limited to 10) is at the rear of the enclosure, where the accessible toilets is also located.

OLD TOWN CEILIDH – CITY CENTRE

Thu 31 Dec

This event is fully accessible, with no specific disabled access facilities, areas or viewing platforms.

Imagine Festival0131-225 8050; www.imagine.org.uk; 27 May–4 Jun 2017

This is Britain's biggest festival of performing arts for children, with events suitable for kids from three to 12. Groups from around the world perform classic tales like Hansel and Gretel, as well as new material written specially for children.

Pride Edinburgh

Edinburgh's Pride festival celebrated its 21st birthday in 2016. The date for the 2017 festival will be announced in September, but is likely to be in June/July.

Royal Highland Show0131-335 6200; www.royalhighlandshow.org; Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston; 22-25 Jun 2017

Scotland's hugely popular national agricultural show is a four-day feast of all things rural, with everything from showjumping and tractor driving to sheep shearing and falconry. Countless pens are filled with coiffed show cattle and pedicured prize ewes.

There is a limited number of Blue Badge parking bays on hard surfaces, which are closer to the main gates than public parking. Overspill parking for Blue Badge holders may not offer the same advantages. The parking fee is £8.00.

Electric scooters and manual wheelchairs are available from Mobility Hire 4 You. Their two hire-stations are located at both the East and West Gates. Prebooking is strongly recommended at www.mobilityhire4you.com/diary/ or by phoning 0135-365 3752. For visitors arriving by public transport at the South Entrance, arrangements may also be made directly with them.

Assistance dogs are admitted.

Scottish Real Ale Festivalwww.sraf.camra.org.uk; Corn Exchange, Chesser Ave; 7-9 July 2016

A celebration of all things fermented and yeasty, Scotland's biggest beer-fest gives you the opportunity to sample a wide range of traditionally brewed beers from Scotland and around the world. Froth-topped bliss. The festival is held over a long weekend in June or July.

Tattoo Highland Dancers / © The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo



Malta / © The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo

Diamond Pipes / © The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo





Accessible Edinburgh: A Festival Guide

Sights

Edinburgh Castle / © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam



Edinburgh Zoo

www.edinburghzoo.org.uk; 134 Corstorphine Rd; adult/child £19/14.55; 9am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct & Mar, to 4.30pm Nov-Feb

Opened in 1913, Edinburgh Zoo is one of the world's leading conservation zoos. Edinburgh's captive breeding program has helped save many endangered species, including Siberian tigers, pygmy hippos and red pandas. The main attractions are the two giant pandas, Tian Tian and Yang Guang, who arrived in December 2011; the penguin parade (the zoo's penguins go for a walk every day at 2.15pm); and the sea lion training session (daily at 11.15am).

The zoo is 2.5 miles west of the city centre; take Lothian Bus 12, 26 or 31, First Bus 16, 18, 80 or 86, or the Airlink Bus 100 westbound from Princes St.

Wheelchairs are available for loan, and there's mobility vehicle available for wheelchair users and visitors with restricted mobility. The hilly location means that there are steep slopes and steps along some routes. Assistance dogs are only allowed if accredited and in certain areas. There are several spacious accessible toilets throughout the zoo, but none with a hoist. Carers are allowed entry free of charge. For further details about accessibility at the zoo, including a downloadable accessibility map, visit www.edinburghzoo.org.uk/plan-your-visit/day-planner/visitors-with-disabilities/.

Holyrood

Facing the imposing royal palace of Holyroodhouse at the foot of the Royal Mile, a once near-derelict district has been transformed by the construction of the Scottish Parliament Building. Holyrood Park, a former hunting ground of Scottish monarchs centred on the miniature mountain of Arthur's Seat, allows Edinburghers to enjoy a little bit of wilderness in the heart of the city. One of Edinburgh's oldest sights – 12th-century Holyrood Abbey – and one of its newest – the 2004 Scottish Parliament Building – lie next to each other at the foot of the Royal Mile, along with a cluster of other attractions all within a short stroll of each other. Above them rise the russet rocks of Salisbury Crags and the hill of Arthur's Seat, a superb viewpoint that can be hiked to from Holyrood in about 30 to 45 minutes.

The Palace of Holyroodhouse can get very busy during the main part of the day – visit early or late to avoid the worst of the

crowds. If you plan to visit both the Palace of Holyroodhouse and the Queen's Gallery, purchase a combined ticket, which costs about 60% of the two tickets bought separately.

Duddingston Parish Church

www.duddingstonkirk.co.uk; Old Church Lane; church 1-4pm Thu & 2-4pm Sun Aug only, kirkyard dawn-dusk; bus 42

Poised on a promontory overlooking Duddingston Loch, this church is one of the oldest buildings in Edinburgh, with some interesting medieval relics at the kirkyard gate: the Joug, a metal collar that was used, like the stocks, to tether criminals and sinners, and the Loupin-On Stane, a stone step to help gouty and corpulent parishioners get onto their horses. The early-19th-century watchtower inside the gate was built to deter body-snatchers.

There's an induction loop as well as loudspeakers to assist hearing. There's level access, accessible toilets and a dedicated wheelchair space.

Holyrood Abbey

9.30am-6pm Apr-Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Mar; buses 6, 35, 60

King David I founded the abbey here in the shadow of Salisbury Crags in 1128. It was probably named after a fragment of the True Cross (rood is an old Scots word for cross), said to have been brought to Scotland by his mother, St Margaret. Most of the surviving ruins date from the 12th and 13th centuries, although a doorway in the far southeastern corner has survived from the original Norman church.

Admission to the abbey is included in the cost of the Palace of Holyroodhouse ticket. Wheelchair access is via a wooden ramp.

Our Dynamic Earth

www.dynamicearth.co.uk; Holyrood Rd; adult/child £13.50/9; 10am-5.30pm Easter-Oct, to 6pm Jul-Aug, 10am-5.30pm Wed-Sun Nov-Easter, last admission 90min before closing; buses 35, 36

Housed in a modernistic white marquee, Our Dynamic Earth is billed as an interactive, multimedia journey of discovery through Earth's history from the Big Bang to the present day. Hugely popular with kids of all ages, it's a slick extravaganza of whiz-bang special effects and 3D movies cleverly designed to fire up young minds with curiosity about all things geological and

environmental. Its true purpose, of course, is to disgorge you into a gift shop where you can buy model dinosaurs and souvenir T-shirts.

Dynamic Earth is fully wheelchair-accessible, with steep ramp access up to the entrance of the building and lifts throughout to navigate through the exhibition, and to gain access to and from the car park. There are accessible toilets on both sides of the building. There is additional information about exhibits for the visually impaired, and transcripts in English for hearing-impaired visitors. Assistance dogs are allowed throughout. Note that lighting within some of the galleries might disturb assistance dogs or affect epileptics.

To quote from their website: 'As well as these specific facilities, the Dynamic Earth attraction consists of outstanding visuals, dramatic sound effects, spectacular music, evocative smells and amazing physical sensations which allow a multi-sensory experience for all.'

Palace of Holyroodhouse

www.royalcollection.org.uk; Horse Wynd; adult/child incl audioguide £12/7.20; 9.30am-6pm Apr-Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Mar; buses 35, 36

This palace is the royal family's official residence in Scotland, but is more famous as the 16th-century home of the ill-fated Mary, Queen of Scots. The highlight of the tour is Mary's Bed Chamber, home to the unfortunate queen from 1561 to 1567. It was here that her jealous second husband, Lord Darnley, restrained the pregnant queen while his henchmen murdered her secretary – and favourite – David Rizzio. A plaque in the neighbouring room marks the spot where he bled to death.

The palace developed from a guest house, attached to Holyrood Abbey, which was extended by King James IV in 1501. The oldest surviving part of the building, the northwestern tower, was built in 1529 as a royal apartment for James V and his wife, Mary of Guise. Mary, Queen of Scots spent six turbulent years here, during which time she debated with John Knox, married both her second and third husbands, and witnessed the murder of her secretary.

The self-guided audio tour leads you through a series of impressive royal apartments, culminating in the Great Gallery. The 89 portraits of Scottish kings were commissioned by Charles II and supposedly record his unbroken lineage from Scota, the Egyptian pharaoh's daughter who discovered the infant Moses in a reed basket on the banks of the Nile. The tour continues to the oldest part of the palace, which contains Mary's Bed Chamber,

connected by a secret stairway to her husband's bedroom, and ends with the ruins of Holyrood Abbey.

The Palace is largely accessible; for full details, visit <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/visit/palaceofholyroodhouse/plan-your-visit/access/>. The Palace has a lift for wheelchair users to get to the upper floor; staff will assist as this is not on the public route.

Queen's Gallery

www.royalcollection.org.uk; Horse Wynd; adult/child £6.70/3.40, combined admission to gallery & Holyroodhouse £16.90/9.50; 9.30am-6pm Apr-Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Mar; buses 35, 36

This stunning modern gallery, which occupies the shell of a former church and school, is a showcase for exhibitions of art from the Royal Collections. The exhibitions change every six months or so; for details of the latest, check the website.

The Queen's Gallery is fully accessible; for full details, visit <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/visit/queensgalleryedinburgh/plan-your-visit/access/>. There's a limit to the number of wheelchairs permitted at any one time, so you may have to wait.

Scottish Parliament Building

0131-348 5200; www.scottish.parliament.uk; Horse Wynd; 9am-6.30pm Tue-Thu & 10am-5pm Mon, Fri & Sat in session, 10am-5pm Mon-Sat in recess; buses 35, 36

The Scottish parliament building, on the site of a former brewery, was officially opened by HM the Queen in October 2005. Designed by Catalan architect Enric Miralles (1955–2000), the ground plan of the parliament complex represents a 'flower of democracy rooted in Scottish soil' (best seen looking down from Salisbury Crags). Free, one-hour guided tours (advance bookings recommended) include a visit to the Debating Chamber, a committee room, the Garden Lobby and an MSP's (Member of the Scottish Parliament) office.

Miralles believed that a building could be a work of art. However, this weird concrete confection at the foot of Salisbury Crags has left the good people of Edinburgh staring and scratching their heads in confusion. What does it all mean? The strange forms of the exterior are all symbolic in some way, from the oddly shaped windows on the west wall (inspired by the silhouette of the Reverend Robert Walker Skating on Duddingston Loch, one of Scotland's most famous paintings) to the asymmetric panels on the main facade (representing a curtain being drawn aside – a symbol of open government).

The Main Hall, inside the public entrance, has a low, triple-arched ceiling of polished concrete, like a cave, or cellar, or castle vault. It is a dimly lit space, the starting point for a metaphorical journey from this relative darkness up to the Debating Chamber (sitting directly above the Main Hall), which is, in contrast, a palace of light – the light of democracy. This magnificent chamber is the centrepiece of the parliament, designed not to glorify but to humble the politicians who sit within it. The windows face Calton Hill, allowing MSPs to look up to its monuments (reminders of the Scottish Enlightenment), while the massive, pointed oak beams of the roof are suspended by steel threads above the MSPs' heads like so many Damoclean swords.

The public areas of the parliament building – the Main Hall, where there is an exhibition, a shop and cafe, and the public gallery in the Debating Chamber – are open to visitors (free tickets needed for public gallery; see website for details). If you want to see the parliament in session, check the website to see when it will be sitting – business days are normally Tuesday to Thursday year-round.

For full details regarding accessibility, including introductory videos, BSL contact details and how to access information in other formats, including Braille, visit www.parliament.scot/visitandlearn/12518.aspx. Access information doesn't get better than this and, unsurprisingly, reviewers rave about accessibility. There's even a Changing Places toilet here!

Scottish Poetry Library

www.spl.org.uk; 5 Crichton's Close, Canongate; 10am-5pm Tue, Wed & Fri, to 7pm Thu, to 4pm Sat; buses 35, 36

A fantastic literary resource housed in award-winning modern architecture, the poetry library hosts regular exhibitions and is a source of information on the mysterious Edinburgh Book Sculptures. The venue 'aims to be as accessible as possible for users with sensory deprivation or mobility problems' and is wheelchair-accessible.

Leith

Leith has been Edinburgh's seaport since the 14th century, but it fell into decay following WWII. It is now undergoing a steady revival, with old warehouses turned into luxury flats and a lush crop of trendy bars and restaurants sprouting up along the waterfront leading to Ocean Terminal, a huge shopping and leisure complex, and the former Royal Yacht *Britannia*.

Leith's big attraction is the *Britannia*, moored next to the massive Ocean Terminal shopping mall and cruise ship berth, easily reached by bus from the city centre. From here, it's a 10- to 15-minute walk east along Ocean Dr to The Shore, the heart of Leith's pub and restaurant scene.

Britannia is best visited as soon as it opens at 9.30am or 10am; to avoid waiting in line, you can buy tickets online until 4pm the previous day. After a morning exploring the ship, you could head over to The Shore and choose a restaurant for a slap-up seafood lunch, although it's about 1km away.

If you plan to visit the *Britannia* as well as Edinburgh Castle and the Palace of Holyroodhouse, consider buying a Royal Edinburgh Ticket, which includes admission to all three plus unlimited travel on hop-on hop-off tour buses among the various attractions.

Royal Yacht Britannia

www.royalyachtbritannia.co.uk; Ocean Terminal; adult/child £15/8.50; 9.30am-6pm Jul-Sep, to 5.30pm Apr-Jun & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar, last admission 90min before closing; buses 11, 22, 34, 35, 36

Built on Clydeside, the former Royal Yacht *Britannia* was the British royal family's floating holiday home during their foreign travels from the time of her launch in 1953 until her decommissioning in 1997, and is now moored permanently in front of Ocean Terminal. The tour, which you take at your own pace with an audioguide (included in the admission fee and available in 20 languages), lifts the curtain on the everyday lives of the royals, and gives an intriguing insight into the Queen's private tastes.

Britannia is a monument to 1950s decor, and the accommodation reveals Her Majesty's preference for simple, unfussy surroundings. There was nothing simple or unfussy, however, about the running of the ship. When the Queen travelled, with her went 45 members of the royal household, five tons of luggage and a Rolls-Royce that was carefully squeezed into a specially built garage on the deck. The ship's company consisted of an admiral, 20 officers and 220 yachtsmen.

The decks (of Burmese teak) were scrubbed daily, but all work near the royal accommodation was carried out in complete silence and had to be finished by 8am. A thermometer was kept in the Queen's bathroom to make sure the water was the correct temperature, and when in harbour one yachtsman was charged with ensuring that the angle of the gangway never exceeded 12

degrees. Note the mahogany windbreak that was added to the balcony deck in front of the bridge. It was put there to stop wayward breezes from blowing up skirts and inadvertently revealing the royal undies.

Britannia was joined in 2010 by the 1930s racing yacht *Bloodhound*, which was owned by the Queen in the 1960s. She is moored alongside *Britannia* (except in July and August, when she is away cruising) as part of an exhibition about the Royal family's love of all things nautical.

The Majestic Tour bus runs from Waverley Bridge to *Britannia* during opening times.

The tour is fully accessible for wheelchair users with lifts and ramps throughout, although wheelchairs wider than 670mm may not access all areas. There are also restrictions with regard to power wheelchairs. (*Britannia* nonetheless gets a five-star rating from a power chair user.) PRMs can borrow a wheelchair free of charge and will enjoy having plenty of places to rest during the tour. There is an audio tour for the visually impaired, with a tour script available in Braille and another for visitors with learning difficulties, which may also be useful for those whose first language is not English. There are also tablets available with the tour in BSL. Assistance dogs are welcome. There's even an accessible toilet on board! For full details of all accommodations, visit www.royalyachtbritannia.co.uk/plan-your-visit/your-visit/accessibility/.

Trinity House

0131-554 3289; www.trinityhouseleith.org.uk; 99 Kirkgate; 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri; all Leith Walk buses

This neoclassical building dating from 1816 was the headquarters of the Incorporation of Masters and Mariners (founded in 1380), the nautical equivalent of a tradesmen's guild, and is a treasure house of old ship models, navigation instruments and nautical memorabilia relating to Leith's maritime history. Admission by prebooked guided tour only.

There are three accessible parking bays in the nearby Kirkgate Shopping Centre car park and the ramped entrance is at the side of the building. There is level access only to the ground floor, with steps to the vaults and the 1st-floor collection. Assistance dogs are welcome. The nearest accessible toilet is at Taylor Gardens, half a mile away, which requires a RADAR key.

The Scottish Parliament Building / © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam



New Town

Edinburgh's New Town lies north of the Old, on a ridge running parallel to the Royal Mile and separated from it by the valley of Princes Street Gardens. Its regular grid of elegant, Georgian terraces is a complete contrast to the chaotic tangle of tenements and wynds (narrow alleys) that characterises the Old Town, and is the world's most complete and unspoilt example of Georgian architecture and town planning; along with the Old Town, it was declared a Unesco World Heritage Site in 1995.

Apart from the streetscape, the main sights are the art galleries and gardens on Princes St, and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery near St Andrew Sq, all within walking distance of each other.

Bute House

6 Charlotte Sq; not open to the public

The centrepiece of the grand Georgian facade on the north side of Charlotte Sq, No 6 is the official residence of the First Minister of Scotland.

Calton Hill

All Leith St buses

Calton Hill, which rises dramatically above the eastern end of Princes St, is Edinburgh's acropolis, its summit scattered with grandiose monuments dating mostly from the first half of the 19th century. It is also one of the best viewpoints in Edinburgh, with a panorama that takes in the castle, Holyrood, Arthur's Seat, the Firth of Forth, New Town and the full length of Princes St. On Regent Rd, on the hill's southern side, is the Burns Monument (1830), a Greek-style memorial to poet Robert Burns. Note that this is a 1km-long steep hill.

Charlotte Square

Buses 19, 36, 37, 41, 47

At the western end of George St is Charlotte Sq, the architectural jewel of the New Town, which was designed by Robert Adam shortly before his death in 1791. The northern side of the square is Adam's masterpiece and one of the finest examples of Georgian architecture anywhere. Bute House, in the centre at No 6, is the official residence of Scotland's first minister.

Church of St Andrew & St George

www.stagw.org.uk; 13-17 George St; 10am-3pm Mon-Fri, 11am-1pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun; buses 10, 11, 12, 16

The Church of St Andrew & St George, built in 1784 with an unusual oval nave, was the scene of the Disruption of 1843, when 451 dissenting ministers left the Church of Scotland to form the Free Church. Access is via a temporary ramp at the side of the venue; insiders level.

Edinburgh Dungeon

0131-240 1000; www.thedungeons.com/edinburgh; 31 Market St; adult/child £17.95/13.95; at least 11am-4pm Mar-Oct, check website; bus 6

This manufactured attraction combines gruesome tableaux of torture and degradation with live actors who perform scary little sketches along the way. There's also a 'horror labyrinth', a creepy mirror maze inhabited by the ghost of a little drummer boy. It's mildly amusing in a large group, mildly embarrassing in a small one and genuinely terrifying for small children. Children under 15 must be accompanied by an adult; not recommended for kids under eight.

The majority of facilities are fully accessible, with the exception of the Boat Ride and Drop Dead – Drop Ride to Doom. There's also a limit of one wheelchair-using visitor at any one time for safety reasons. Accompanying carers are admitted free of charge as long as there is documentary evidence of disability. Visually impaired guests will struggle to navigate due to the darkness and may need to bring a companion. Similarly, hearing-impaired guests may struggle with the voice-over audio and actors delivering a speech in low light. For further information, email edinburgh.dungeon@merlinentertainments.biz.

Fruitmarket Gallery

www.fruitmarket.co.uk; 45 Market St; 11am-6pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun; bus 36

One of Edinburgh's most innovative and popular galleries, the Fruitmarket showcases contemporary Scottish and international artists, and also has an excellent arts bookshop and cafe.

There is level access, good circulation space and a large accessible toilet. The lift to the 1st floor was described by two reviewers as shaky and unnerving! Blue Badge holders should be able to find on-street parking, but may struggle during festival time. Chairs and tables can be rearranged as necessary if visiting the cafe.

Georgian House

NTS; www.nts.org.uk/Property/Georgian-House/; 7 Charlotte Sq; adult/child £7/5.50; 10am-6pm Jul & Aug, 10am-5pm Apr-Jun & Sep-Oct, 11am-4pm Mar & Nov; buses 36, 47

The National Trust for Scotland's Georgian House has been beautifully restored and furnished to show how Edinburgh's wealthy elite lived at the end of the 18th century. The walls are decorated with paintings by Allan Ramsay, Sir Henry Raeburn and Sir Joshua Reynolds, and there's a fully equipped 18th-century kitchen complete with china closet and wine cellar.

The venue is not wheelchair-accessible. However, a Braille guidebook and large-print information are available, along with a guided touch tour (book in advance) and a subtitled video with an induction loop.

Mansfield Place Church

www.mansfieldtraquair.org.uk; Mansfield Pl; 1-4pm 2nd Sun of the month Jan-Nov, 11am-1pm most days Aug; bus 8

In complete contrast to the austerity of most of Edinburgh's religious buildings, this 19th-century, neo-Romanesque church at the foot of Broughton St contains a remarkable series of Renaissance-style frescos painted in the 1890s by Irish-born artist Phoebe Anna Traquair (1852–1936). The murals have been restored and are on view to the public (check the website for any changes to viewing times). It's wheelchair-accessible, with a wheelchair-accessible toilet on the lower floor, accessed via a lift.

Princes Street Gardens

Princes St; dawn-dusk; all Princes St buses

These beautiful gardens lie in a valley that was once occupied by the Nor' Loch (North Loch), a boggy depression that was drained in the early 19th century. At the gate beside The Mound is the Floral Clock, a working clock laid out in flowers; it was first created in 1903 and the design changes every year.

In the middle of the western part of the gardens is the Ross Bandstand, a venue for open-air concerts in summer and at Hogmanay, and the stage for the famous Fireworks Concert during the Edinburgh Festival.

The gardens are split in the middle by The Mound – around two million cart-loads of earth dug out from foundations during the construction of the New Town and dumped here to provide a road link across the valley to the Old Town. It was completed in 1830.

There are good public transport connections, with a tram stop nearby, a bus stop right outside the gates and Waverley Station just across the road. Wheelchair users should use the Waverley Bridge entrance since the entrance from Princes St to the East Gardens is not accessible.

A lift takes you down to the garden cafe at the National Galleries, where there is plenty of space and tables outside to admire the views. Going back up you can use the paths, although manual wheelchair users are advised to take the lift since the paths are steep. The Galleries have an accessible toilet, and there are others not far away at St Andrew Sq, Waverley Station and the Waverley Shopping Centre.

All of the pods in the Festival Wheel are wheelchair-accessible for manual wheelchair users using a portable ramp; if you are a power chair user you will need to confirm with the booking office regarding the weight and size of your chair.

Royal Scottish Academy

0131-225 6671; www.royalscottishacademy.org; The Mound; fee for special exhibitions; 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun; Princes St buses

This Greek Doric temple, with its northern pediment crowned by a seated figure of Queen Victoria, is the home of the Royal Scottish Academy. Designed by William Playfair and built between 1823 and 1836, the RSA took over the building in 1910. The galleries display a collection of paintings, sculptures and architectural drawings by academy members dating from 1831, and they also host temporary exhibitions throughout the year.

The RSA and the Scottish National Gallery are linked via an underground mall – the Weston Link – which gives them twice the temporary exhibition space of the Prado in Madrid and three times that of the Royal Academy in London, as well as housing cloakrooms, a lecture theatre and a restaurant.

Access for wheelchairs is to the rear of the building, between the RSA and the National Gallery. The Gardens Entrance is accessible via lift from both the National Gallery and the rear of the Academy.

Scottish National Gallery

www.nationalgalleries.org; The Mound; fee for special exhibitions; 10am-5pm Fri-Wed, to 7pm Thu; Princes St buses

Designed by William Playfair, this imposing classical building with its Ionic porticoes dates from the 1850s. Its octagonal rooms, lit

by skylights, have been restored to their original Victorian decor of deep-green carpets and dark-red walls. The gallery houses an important collection of European art from the Renaissance to post-Impressionism, with works by Verrocchio (Leonardo da Vinci's teacher), Tintoretto, Titian, Holbein, Rubens, Van Dyck, Vermeer, El Greco, Poussin, Rembrandt, Gainsborough, Turner, Constable, Monet, Pissarro, Gauguin and Cézanne.

The upstairs galleries house portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds and Sir Henry Raeburn, and a clutch of Impressionist paintings, including Monet's luminous *Haystacks*, Van Gogh's demonic *Olive Trees* and Gauguin's hallucinatory *Vision After the Sermon*. But the painting that really catches your eye is the gorgeous portrait of Lady Agnew of Lochnaw by John Singer Sargent.

The basement galleries dedicated to Scottish art include glowing portraits by Allan Ramsay and Sir Henry Raeburn, rural scenes by Sir David Wilkie and Impressionistic landscapes by William MacTaggart. Look out for Sir George Harvey's hugely entertaining *A Schule Skailin* (A School Emptying) – a stern dominie (teacher) looks on as the boys stampede for the classroom door, one reaching for a confiscated spinning top. Kids will love the fantasy paintings of Sir Joseph Noel Paton in room B5; the incredibly detailed canvases are crammed with hundreds of tiny fairies, goblins and elves.

Recent research has suggested that the iconic 1790s painting of *Reverend Robert Walker Skating on Duddingston Loch*, historically attributed to Sir Henry Raeburn, may in fact be the work of French artist Henri-Pierre Danloux.

Each January the gallery exhibits its collection of Turner watercolours, bequeathed by Henry Vaughan in 1900. Room X is graced by Antonio Canova's white marble sculpture, *The Three Graces*; it is owned jointly with London's Victoria & Albert Museum.

There is wheelchair access to all areas of the gallery; you can plan your visit using floorplans found at <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/visit/gallery>.

As part of an awesome outreach program, the Gallery currently offers monthly programs for both visually impaired and hearing-impaired visitors; check the events calendar on the website for details. These usually focus on a particular aspect of the collection or a new exhibition and are led by expert freelance artists and educators. Upcoming events can be found at <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/whatson/events-calendar/hearing-impaired-tour-inspiring-impressionism> and <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/whatson/events-calendar/visually-impaired-tour-and-workshop-inspiring-impressionism>.

Hearing loops are available at all talks, lectures and events. The Gallery is also looking at introducing BSL tours later in the year; contact them directly for details.

Scottish National Portrait Gallery

www.nationalgalleries.org; 1 Queen St; 10am-5pm; St Andrew Sq

The Venetian Gothic palace of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery reopened its doors in 2011 after a two-year renovation, emerging as one of the city's top attractions. Its galleries illustrate Scottish history through paintings, photographs and sculptures, putting faces to famous names from Scotland's past and present, from Robert Burns, Mary, Queen of Scots and Bonnie Prince Charlie to Sean Connery, Billy Connolly and poet Jackie Kay.

The gallery's interior is decorated in Arts and Crafts style, and nowhere more splendidly than in the Great Hall. Above the Gothic colonnade a processional frieze painted by William Hole in 1898 serves as a 'visual encyclopedia' of famous Scots, shown in chronological order from Calgacus (the chieftain who led the Caledonian tribes into battle against the Romans) to writer and philosopher Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881). The murals on the 1st-floor balcony depict scenes from Scottish history, while the ceiling is painted with the constellations of the night sky.

The gallery's selection of 'trails' leaflets adds a bit of background information while leading you around the various exhibits; the Hidden Histories trail is particularly interesting.

The Portrait Gallery is generally wheelchair-accessible, and you can plan your visit using the floorplans at <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/visit/scottish-national-portrait-gallery-23551/>. However, at the time of going to press, their website says the lift is currently out of service and that there is no wheelchair access to the upper floors.

St Cuthbert's Parish Church

Lothian Rd; all Lothian Rd buses

St Cuthbert's Parish Church was built in the 1890s on a site of great antiquity – there has been a church here since at least the 12th century, and perhaps since the 7th century. There is a circular watchtower in the graveyard – a reminder of the Burke and Hare days when graves had to be guarded against robbers.

It's not obvious how you get down to the church until you go into Kings Stables Rd, from where there is level entry. If you're taking the bus and arriving via Princes St and Lothian Rd, you'll

The Royal Yacht *Britannia* / © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam



need to negotiate steps. There's Blue Badge parking adjacent to the main entrance, where you'll find a ramp with a handrail; manual wheelchair users may find it a little steep. Once inside, there is level access and an accessible toilet. The staff are reportedly extremely helpful.

Old Town

Edinburgh's Old Town is a jagged, jumbled maze of historic masonry riddled with closes, stairs, vaults and wynds (narrow alleys) leading off the cobbled ravine of the Royal Mile, which links Edinburgh Castle to the Palace of Holyroodhouse. The restored 16th- and 17th-century Old Town tenements support a thriving city-centre community, crammed at street level with museums, restaurants, bars and shops.

The compact Old Town is best explored on foot, starting at the highest point, Edinburgh Castle, and working your way downhill.

Be at Edinburgh Castle for opening time, and plan on spending two hours exploring its many attractions before heading downhill along the Royal Mile, stopping off as the fancy takes you at the Scotch Whisky Experience, the Camera Obscura and Gladstone's Land.

Continue down the Royal Mile, taking a quick look at St Giles Cathedral and John Knox House before taking a tour of either Real Mary King's Close or the National Museum of Scotland. Get your photo taken beside the statue of Greyfriars Bobby and then take a stroll around Greyfriars Kirkyard, before heading down to the Grassmarket for a drink, and a look at the shops in atmospheric Victoria St.

You can escape the tourist bustle of the Royal Mile in a few steps by visiting hidden places just off the street such as Dunbar's Close Garden or the Scottish Poetry Library.

Canongate Kirkyard

<http://canongatekirk.org.uk>; Canongate; 24hr; bus 35

The attractive curved gable of the Canongate Kirk, built in 1688, overlooks a kirkyard that contains the graves of several famous people, including the economist Adam Smith, author of *The Wealth of Nations*; Mrs Agnes MacLehose (the 'Clarinda' of Robert Burns' love poems); and poet Robert Fergusson (1750–74; there's a statue of him on the street outside the church). An information board just inside the gate lists famous graves and their locations. Fergusson was much admired by Robert Burns, who

paid for his gravestone and penned the epitaph – take a look at the inscription on the back.

Canongate Kirk also host concerts. There is level access directly into the church, an accessible toilet and also a hearing loop.

City Art Centre

www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk; 2 Market St; fee for temporary exhibitions; 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun; bus 6

This art centre comprises six floors of exhibitions with a variety of themes, including an extensive collection of Scottish art.

Access is via the main entrance; once inside there's level access, plenty of circulation space and spacious lifts. The cafe is also accessible, with very friendly waitstaff who will bring food to the table. The accessible toilet is reportedly very small. One reviewer was disappointed at the lack of accessibility to a particular exhibition due to 'staff shortages', so it may be wise to call ahead to check.

City Chambers

High St; not open to the public; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

The imposing Georgian City Chambers, home to the City of Edinburgh Council, was originally built by John Adam (brother of Robert) between 1753 and 1761 to serve as the Royal Exchange – a covered meeting place for city merchants – replacing the traditional meeting place of the Mercat Cross. However, the merchants continued to prefer their old stomping grounds in the street and the building became the offices of the city council in 1811.

Though only four storeys high on the Royal Mile side, the building plummets 12 storeys on the northern side, overlooking Cockburn St. It was built over the sealed-off remains of three Old Town closes; the spooky remains of these can be explored on a guided tour of the Real Mary King's Close. The Chambers are wheelchair-accessible, with a lift serving all floors and two accessible toilets.

Dunbar's Close Garden

Canongate; 24hr; bus 35

Tucked away at the end of an Old Town close, this walled garden has been laid out in the style of the 17th century, with gravel paths, neatly trimmed shrubs, herbs and flowers and mature trees. It's a hidden gem, and an oasis of tranquillity amid the bustle of the Royal Mile. Although there are some gravel paths, it's worth the effort.

Edinburgh Castle

www.edinburghcastle.gov.uk; Castle Esplanade; adult/child £16.50/9.90, audioguide £3.50; 9.30am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct-Mar, last admission 1hr before closing; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

Edinburgh Castle has played a pivotal role in Scottish history, both as a royal residence – King Malcolm Canmore (r 1058–93) and Queen Margaret first made their home here in the 11th century – and as a military stronghold. The castle last saw military action in 1745; from then until the 1920s it served as the British army's main base in Scotland. Today it is one of Scotland's most atmospheric and most popular tourist attractions.

The brooding, black crags of Castle Rock, rising above the western end of Princes St, are the very reason for Edinburgh's existence. This rocky hill was the most easily defended hilltop on the invasion route between England and central Scotland, a route followed by countless armies from the Roman legions of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD to the Jacobite troops of Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745.

The Entrance Gateway, flanked by statues of Robert the Bruce and William Wallace, opens to a cobbled lane that leads up beneath the 16th-century Portcullis Gate to the cannons ranged along the Argyle and Mills Mount batteries. The battlements here have great views over the New Town to the Firth of Forth.

At the far end of Mills Mount Battery is the famous One O'Clock Gun, where crowds gather to watch a gleaming WWII 25-pounder fire an ear-splitting time signal at exactly 1pm (every day except Sunday, Christmas Day and Good Friday).

South of Mills Mount, the road curls up leftwards through Foog's Gate to the highest part of Castle Rock, crowned by the tiny, Romanesque St Margaret's Chapel, the oldest surviving building in Edinburgh. It was probably built by David I or Alexander I in memory of their mother, Queen Margaret, some time around 1130 (she was canonised in 1250). Beside the chapel stands Mons Meg, a giant 15th-century siege gun built at Mons (in what is now Belgium) in 1449.

The main group of buildings on the summit of Castle Rock is ranged around Crown Sq, dominated by the shrine of the Scottish National War Memorial. Opposite is the Great Hall, built for James IV (r 1488–1513) as a ceremonial hall and used as a meeting place for the Scottish parliament until 1639. Its most remarkable feature is the original, 16th-century hammer-beam roof.

The Castle Vaults beneath the Great Hall (entered via the Prisons of War exhibit) were used variously as storerooms, bakeries

and a prison. The vaults have been renovated to resemble 18th- and early 19th-century prisons, where graffiti carved by French and American prisoners can be seen on the ancient wooden doors.

On the eastern side of the square is the Royal Palace, built during the 15th and 16th centuries, where a series of historical tableaux leads to the highlight of the castle – a strongroom housing the Honours of Scotland (the Scottish crown jewels), among the oldest surviving crown jewels in Europe. Locked away in a chest following the Act of Union in 1707, the crown (made in 1540 from the gold of Robert the Bruce's 14th-century coronet), sword and sceptre lay forgotten until they were unearthed at the instigation of the novelist Sir Walter Scott in 1818. Also on display here is the Stone of Destiny.

Among the neighbouring Royal Apartments is the bedchamber where Mary, Queen of Scots gave birth to her son James VI, who was to unite the crowns of Scotland and England in 1603.

Even though the castle is an historic building at the top of a steep slope, there is good access to many but not all of its main sites. A mobility vehicle is available for visitors unable to manage the castle's steep slopes and there is a limited number of wheelchairs available, but booking for both is strongly advised. Note, too, that pushing a wheelchair up steep cobbled roadways is hard work! Braille guides, large-print guides and audioguides are available; assistance dogs are welcome; and carers enter free. For full details on accessibility visit www.edinburghcastle.gov.uk/visit/access-for-all.

Reviewers give the castle a five-star rating for its efforts, including tactile replicas of the crown jewels (accessed via a lift for PRMs), spotlessly clean, modern accessible toilets and ramps to as many areas as is practicable, as well as the helpfulness of its staff. But do beware of the cobbles, even in a power chair.

Gladstone's Land

NTS; www.nts.org.uk/Property/Gladstones-Land; 477 Lawnmarket; adult/child £6.50/5; 10am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, to 5pm Apr-Jun & Sep-Oct; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

One of Edinburgh's most prominent 17th-century merchants was Thomas Gledstones, who in 1617 purchased the tenement later known as Gladstone's Land. It contains fine painted ceilings, walls and beams, and some splendid furniture from the 17th and 18th centuries. The volunteer guides provide a wealth of anecdotes and a detailed history. There's wheelchair access only to the ground floor; access to the 1st floor and gallery is via a spiral staircase.

Grassmarket

The site of a cattle market from the 15th century until the start of the 20th century, the Grassmarket has always been a focal point of the Old Town. It was once the city's main place of execution, and over 100 martyred Covenanters are commemorated by a monument at the eastern end, where the gallows used to stand. The notorious murderers Burke and Hare operated from a now-vanished close off the western end.

Nowadays the broad, open square, lined by tall tenements and dominated by the looming castle, has many lively pubs and restaurants, including the White Hart Inn, which was once patronised by Robert Burns. Claiming to be the city's oldest pub in continuous use (since 1516), it also hosted William Wordsworth in 1803. Cowgate – the long, dark ravine leading eastwards from the Grassmarket – was once the road along which cattle were driven from the pastures around Arthur's Seat to the safety of the city walls. Today it is the heart of Edinburgh's nightlife, with around two dozen clubs and bars within five minutes' walk of each other.

Apart from some cobblestones, surfaces are generally smooth and well maintained; approaches from certain directions can be hilly. There shouldn't be a problem finding a parking space on the street if you have a Blue Badge. The accessible toilet has, sadly, been demolished.

Greyfriars Bobby Statue

cnr George IV Bridge & Candlemaker Row; buses 2, 23, 27, 35, 41, 42, 45

Probably the most popular photo opportunity in Edinburgh, the life-size statue of Greyfriars Bobby, a Skye terrier who captured the hearts of the British public in the late 19th century, stands outside Greyfriars Kirkyard. From 1858 to 1872, the wee dog supposedly maintained a vigil over the grave of his master, an Edinburgh police officer. The story was immortalised in a novel by Eleanor Atkinson in 1912, and in 1963 was made into a movie by – who else? – Walt Disney.

The statue is always surrounded by crowds of visitors taking photos of themselves posing beside the little dog. Bobby's own grave, marked by a small, pink granite stone, is just inside the entrance to Greyfriars Kirkyard, behind the monument, and you can see his original collar and bowl in the Museum of Edinburgh.

Greyfriars Kirk

0131-225 1900; www.greyfriarskirk.com; Candlemaker Row; 10.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri & 11am-2pm Sat Apr-Oct, closed Nov-Mar; buses 2, 23, 27, 35, 41, 42, 45

One of Edinburgh's most famous churches, Greyfriars Kirk was built on the site of a Franciscan friary and opened for worship on Christmas Day 1620. Surrounding the church, Greyfriars Kirkyard is one of Edinburgh's most evocative cemeteries, a peaceful green oasis dotted with elaborate monuments. Many famous Edinburgh names are buried here, including the poet Allan Ramsay (1686–1758), architect William Adam (1689–1748) and William Smellie (1740–95), the editor of the first edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

In 1638 the National Covenant was signed in the kirk, rejecting Charles I's attempts to impose episcopacy and a new English prayer book on the Scots, and affirming the independence of the Scottish Church. Many who signed were later executed at the Grassmarket and, in 1679, 1200 Covenanters were held prisoner in terrible conditions in the southwestern corner of the kirkyard. There's a small museum inside the church.

If you want to experience the graveyard at its scariest – inside a burial vault, in the dark, at night – go on one of the City of the Dead guided tours.

Once inside, there's level access and an accessible toilet. Call ahead or email to arrange accessible parking close to the church – gates will have to be opened. This is advisable for manual wheelchair users as there is a short hill and cobblestones to negotiate before entering the grounds. Staff are reportedly very helpful, and will ensure that wheelchair users are given a decent view if attending a concert.

Highland Tolbooth Kirk

Castlehill; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

Edinburgh's tallest spire (71.7m) is at the foot of Castlehill and is a prominent feature of the Old Town's skyline. The interior has been refurbished and it now houses the Hub – the ticket office and the information centre for the Edinburgh Festival. There's also a good cafe here.

Although not all reviewers were equally impressed, access is fine and staff are helpful. There is an accessible toilet. Note that the Hub is located at the end of the Royal Mile, a fairly steep hill. When attending events, wheelchair users will need to use a platform lift and then a conventional lift.

Palace of Holyrood House / © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam



John Knox House

www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk; 43-45 High St; adult/child £5/1; 10am-6pm Mon-Sat year-round, noon-6pm Sun Jul & Aug; bus 35

The Royal Mile narrows at the foot of High St beside the jutting facade of John Knox House. This is the oldest surviving tenement in Edinburgh, dating from around 1490. John Knox, an influential church reformer and leader of the Protestant Reformation in Scotland, is thought to have lived here from 1561 to 1572. The labyrinthine interior has some beautiful painted-timber ceilings and an interesting display on Knox's life and work.

John Knox House is now part of the Scottish Storytelling Centre, home of the Scottish International Storytelling Festival and Tradfest. It's also a host venue for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The venue is fully accessible to wheelchair users, except the upper floors of John Knox House, which can be viewed via an interactive virtual tour on the ground floor. The main entrance has steps, so access is via the John Knox House shop. Audio loops are available in reception and all performance areas, and there's Braille signage throughout. Detailed access information can be found at www.tracscotland.org/sites/default/files/Access%20Statement.pdf.

Being on the Royal Mile, parking is limited, but bus services pass close by. If you have a Blue Badge, you'd best park on High St.

Mercat Cross

Bus 35

Outside the eastern end of St Giles Cathedral stands the Mercat Cross, a 19th-century copy of the 1365 original, where merchants and traders met to transact business, and Royal Proclamations were read. In a revival of this ancient tradition, the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II was proclaimed here by costumed officials in 1952. When (and if) Prince Charles becomes king, his accession will also be proclaimed at the Mercat Cross.

Museum of Childhood

0131-529 4142; www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk; 42 High St; 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun; bus 35

Halfway down the Royal Mile is 'the noisiest museum in the world'. Often filled with the chatter of excited children, it covers serious issues related to childhood – health, education, upbringing etc – but also has an enormous collection of toys, dolls,

games and books, recordings of school lessons from the 1930s, and film of kids playing street games in 1950s Edinburgh.

Galleries One to Three are fully accessible. There are stairs to galleries Four and Five. There is an accessible toilet.

Museum of Edinburgh

0131-529 4143; www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk; 142 Canongate; 10am-5pm Mon-Sat year-round, noon-5pm Sun Aug; bus 35

You can't miss the colourful facade of Huntly House, brightly renovated in red and yellow ochre, opposite the Tolbooth clock on the Royal Mile. Built in 1570, it houses a museum covering Edinburgh from its prehistory to the present. Exhibits of national importance include an original copy of the National Covenant of 1638, but the big crowd-pleaser is the dog collar and feeding bowl that once belonged to [Greyfriars Bobby](#), the city's most famous canine citizen (p66).

Unfortunately, this museum is not wheelchair-accessible.

Museum on the Mound

www.museumonthemound.com; The Mound; 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

Housed in the Bank of Scotland's splendid Georgian HQ, this museum is a treasure trove of gold coins, bullion chests, safes, banknotes, forgeries, cartoons and lots of fascinating old documents and photographs charting the history of Scotland's oldest bank.

The museum is fully wheelchair-accessible and has induction loops and large-print guides, as well as an accessible toilet. There is free parking for Blue Badge holders in Market St and Giles St. Corridors and exhibition areas are spacious, and exhibits are relatively well viewable from wheelchair height. For detailed access information, including photographs, visit <http://museumonthemound.com/sites/default/files/pdf/AccessStatement.pdf>.

Note the word 'mound': it's on a fairly steep hill with no parking close by. The nearest bus stop is about 100m away.

National Museum of Scotland

www.nms.ac.uk; Chambers St; fee for special exhibitions; 10am-5pm; buses 2, 23, 27, 35, 41, 42, 45

Broad, elegant Chambers St is dominated by the long facade of the National Museum of Scotland. Its extensive collections are spread between two buildings: one modern, one Victorian.

The golden stone and striking modern architecture of the new building, opened in 1998, is one of the city's most distinctive landmarks. The five floors of the museum trace the history of Scotland from geological beginnings to the 1990s, with many imaginative and stimulating exhibits – audioguides are available in several languages.

The new building connects with the original Victorian museum, dating from 1861, the stolid, grey exterior of which gives way to a beautifully bright and airy, glass-roofed exhibition hall. The old building houses an eclectic collection covering natural history, archaeology, scientific and industrial technology, and the decorative arts of ancient Egypt, Islam, China, Japan, Korea and the West.

There is level access by the main doors on Chambers St, where there are four designated public parking spaces for PWDs, and the tower entrance at the corner of Chambers St and George IV Bridge. Most reviewers recommend taking public transport as the bus stops directly outside the museum.

Wheelchairs and folding chairs are available for loan. There are induction loops at the information desk, in the auditorium and in the Dunfermline room lecture theatre, and large-print signs on the exhibits. Assistance dogs are welcome. There are plenty of accessible toilets, with at least one on every level. To arrange a tour with handling opportunities or BSL interpretation, email tours@nms.ac.uk or call 0131-247 4041, giving at least three weeks' notice.

National War Museum of Scotland

www.nms.ac.uk; admission incl in Edinburgh Castle ticket; 9.45am-5.45pm Apr-Oct, to 4.45pm Nov-Mar; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

At the western end of Edinburgh Castle, to the left of the castle tearooms, a road leads down to the National War Museum of Scotland, which brings Scotland's military history vividly to life. The exhibits have been personalised by telling the stories of the original owners of the objects on display, making it easier to empathise with the experiences of war than any dry display of dusty weaponry ever could.

For access information, see [Edinburgh Castle](#) (p64). Note that access requires crossing a cobbled area.

Parliament Hall

0131-348 5355; 11 Parliament Sq; 10am-4pm Mon-Fri; buses 2, 23, 27, 41, 42, 45

This magnificent 17th-century hall, with original oak hammer-beam roof, is where the old Scottish Parliament met before its dissolution in 1707. Now used by lawyers and their clients as a meeting place, it's open to the public. As you enter from Parliament Sq (there's a sign outside saying 'Parliament Hall; Court of Session') you'll see the reception desk in front of you; the hall is through the double doors immediately on your right. Parliament Hall (together with a Parliament Sq) is now a Fringe venue.

People's Story

www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk; 163 Canongate; 10am-5pm Mon-Sat year-round, noon-5pm Sun Aug; bus 35

One of the surviving symbols of the Canongate district's former independence is the Canongate Tolbooth. Built in 1591 it served successively as a collection point for tolls (taxes), a council house, a courtroom and a jail. With picturesque turrets and a projecting clock, it's an interesting example of 16th-century architecture. It now houses a fascinating museum called the People's Story, which covers the life, work and pastimes of ordinary Edinburgh folk from the 18th century to today.

The ground and 1st floors are fully accessible, but not the 2nd floor nor the video room.

Scotch Whisky Experience

www.scotchwhiskyexperience.co.uk; 354 Castlehill; adult/child incl tour & tasting £14.50/7.25; 10am-6pm Apr-Aug, to 5pm Sep-Mar; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

A former school houses this multimedia centre explaining the making of whisky from barley to bottle in a series of exhibits, demonstrations and talks that combine sight, sound and smell, including the world's largest collection of malt whiskies (3384 bottles!). More expensive tours include more extensive whisky tastings and samples of Scottish cuisine. There's also a restaurant that serves traditional Scottish dishes with, where possible, a dash of whisky thrown in.

This venue ticks all the boxes and gets rave reviews on Euan's Guide. Wheelchair access is good in all areas, and the barrel car ride is also wheelchair-accessible. Tours are fully guided with excellent descriptions of the production process, which will aid visually impaired visitors; there's even a 'nosing and tasting elements...accompanied by aromas to stimulate the senses'! Printed material is available for deaf and hearing-impaired visitors and visual imagery is used during the

description of the production process. A full access statement can be found at https://www.scotchwhiskyexperience.co.uk/assets/000/001/121/Access_Statement_2015_-_2016_original.pdf.

St Giles Cathedral

www.stgilescathedral.org.uk; High St; suggested donation £3; 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun May-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun Oct-Apr; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

The great grey bulk of St Giles Cathedral dates largely from the 15th century, but much of it was restored in the 19th century. One of the most interesting corners of the kirk is the Thistle Chapel, built in 1911 for the Knights of the Most Ancient & Most Noble Order of the Thistle. The elaborately carved Gothic-style stalls have canopies topped with the helms and arms of the 16 knights – look out for the bagpipe-playing angel amid the vaulting.

Properly called the High Kirk of Edinburgh (it was only a true cathedral – the seat of a bishop – from 1633 to 1638 and from 1661 to 1689), the church was named after the patron saint of cripples and beggars. The interior lacks grandeur but is rich in history: a Norman-style church was built here in 1126 but was destroyed by English invaders in 1385 (the only substantial remains are the central piers that support the tower). St Giles was at the heart of the Scottish Reformation, and John Knox served as minister here from 1559 to 1572.

There are several ornate monuments in the church, including the tombs of James Graham, Marquis of Montrose, who led Charles I's forces in Scotland and was hanged in 1650 at the Mercat Cross; and his Covenanter opponent Archibald Campbell, Marquis of Argyll, who was decapitated in 1661 after the Restoration of Charles II. There's also a bronze memorial to author Robert Louis Stevenson, and a copy of the National Covenant of 1638.

By the side of the street, outside the western door of St Giles, is the Heart of Midlothian, set into the cobblestone paving. This marks the site of the Tolbooth. Built in the 15th century and demolished in the early 19th century, the Tolbooth served variously as a meeting place for parliament, the town council and the General Assembly of the Reformed Kirk, before becoming law courts and, finally, a notorious prison and place of execution. Passers-by traditionally spit on the heart for luck (don't stand downwind!).

At the other end of St Giles is the Mercat Cross, a 19th-century copy of the 1365 original, where merchants and traders met to transact business and where royal proclamations were read.

There's ramped access into the main entrance and an internal ramp to main nave level. There's plenty of circulation space and easy access to most of the building at that level. The Thistle Chapel is the only area that cannot be accessed in a wheelchair.

The nearest bus stops are about 100m to the west and 200m to the east, and Waverley station is not too far away. There is no wheelchair access to the toilet at the southeast corner of building, which is down a few steps, but there may be an accessible toilet – ask staff. Access to the cafe, which is on the lower level, is via an accessible route outside the building.

St Giles hosts a varied program of classical music, including popular lunchtime and evening concerts and organ recitals. The cathedral choir sings at the 10am and 11.30am Sunday services. See also the entry under [Edinburgh's Hogmanay](#) (p37) for limits on wheelchair users attending concerts.

Talbot Rice Gallery

0131-650 2210; www.ed.ac.uk/talbot-rice; Old College, South Bridge; 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat; all South Bridge buses

This small art gallery has three exhibition spaces. The neoclassical Georgian Gallery, designed by William Playfair, houses a permanent collection of works by old masters. The White Gallery, a more modern space, is used to exhibit the works of contemporary Scottish painters and sculptors, while TRG3 is dedicated to new, up-and-coming young artists. Lift access is available.

South Edinburgh

Stretching south from the Old Town and taking in the 19th-century tenements of Tollcross, Bruntsfield and Marchmont, and the upmarket suburbs of Newington, Grange and Morningside, this is a peaceful residential neighbourhood of smart Victorian flats and spacious garden villas. There's not much to see in the way of tourist attractions, but there are many good restaurants, cafes and pubs.

Start your explorations with a leisurely stroll through The Meadows – look to see if there's a cricket match in progress – and spend the rest of the morning browsing the latest exhibitions at Summerhall and/or visiting the Surgeons' Hall Museums.

St Giles Cathedral / © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam



In the afternoon, take a bus to Blackford Hill, and spend an hour or two exploring the walking trails here and in the neighbouring Hermitage of Braid, and climb to the summit of the hill for a glorious late-afternoon view across the city to the castle, the Old Town skyline and Arthur's Seat.

Book well in advance to be sure of a table at [Aizle](#) (p102), and check the listings to see if there's a show on at the [Festival Theatre](#) (p136). If it's a sunny summer evening you might prefer to indulge in outdoor drinks at the [Pear Tree](#) (p126).

If you want to explore a classic Scottish fortress without negotiating the crowds at Edinburgh Castle, head for the photogenic Craigmillar Castle on the southern edge of the city.

Craigmillar Castle

Craigmillar Castle Rd; adult/child £5.50/3.30; 9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Sat-Wed Oct-Mar; buses 21, 24, 33, 38, 42, 49

Dating from the 15th century, the tower house of Craigmillar rises above two sets of machicolated curtain walls. Mary, Queen of Scots took refuge here after the murder of Rizzio; it was here too that plans to murder her husband Darnley were laid. Look for the prison cell complete with built-in sanitation, something some 'modern' British prisons only finally managed in 1996!

The castle is 2.5 miles southeast of the city centre. From the bus stop on Old Dalkeith Rd, walk 500m up Craigmillar Castle Rd. There's one accessible parking space next to the visitor centre. There is a ramp into the visitor centre and on to the castle grounds, but access into the castle itself is hampered by 10cm step. The five different levels of the castle are all reached via stairs. The accessible toilet is about 120m from the visitor centre.

The visitor centre in Hermitage of Braid nature reserve explains the history and wildlife of the glen, and has details of nearby nature trails.

Surgeons' Hall Museums

www.museum.rcsed.ac.uk; Nicolson St; adult/child £6/3.50; 10am-5pm daily Apr-Oct, noon-4pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar; all South Bridge buses

Housed in a grand Ionic temple designed by William Playfair in 1832, these three fascinating museums were originally established as teaching collections. The History of Surgery Museum provides a look at surgery in Scotland from the 15th century – when barbers supplemented their income with bloodletting,

amputations and other surgical procedures – to the present day. The highlight is the exhibit on Burke and Hare, which includes Burke's death mask and a pocketbook made with his skin.

The adjacent Dental Collection, with its wince-inducing collections of extraction tools, covers the history of dentistry, while the Pathology Museum houses a gruesome but compelling 19th-century collection of diseased organs and massive tumours pickled in formaldehyde.

Access to the museums is via the 3rd floor entrance, which is served by a lift. All floors are accessible by lift, although there's a portion of the upper gallery that may not be accessed by wheelchair is wider than 66 cm. (Interactive touchscreen display items in these restricted sections.) There are lowered counters for wheelchair users, accessible toilets in the basement and assistance dogs are welcome.

The Meadows

Melville Dr; all Tollcross, South Bridge buses

This mile-long stretch of lush grass criss-crossed with tree-lined walks was once a shallow lake known as the Borough Loch. Drained in the 1740s and converted into parkland, it's a great place for a picnic or a quiet (st)roll – in springtime its walks lie ankle-deep in drifts of pink cherry blossom, and there are great views of Arthur's Seat. There's an accessible toilet in the north-east corner of the park.

Stockbridge

Stockbridge is a bohemian enclave to the north of the city centre, with an interesting selection of shops and a good choice of pubs and neighbourhood bistros. Originally a mill village, it was developed in the early 19th century on lands owned largely by the painter Sir Henry Raeburn, who gave his name to its main street, Raeburn Pl.

The best way to arrive in Stockbridge is by making your way along the Water of Leith, starting from either Dean Village (10 minutes) or the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (25 minutes). Explore the side streets and browse the shops before walking along the cobbled lane of St Bernard's Row, then Arboretum Ave and Arboretum Pl to the Royal Botanic Garden, and plan to spend a couple of hours exploring its many attractions. Don't forget to grab a coffee at the garden's [Terrace Cafe](#) (p108) and soak up the view of the castle.

Royal Botanic Garden

0131-248 2909; www.rbge.org.uk; Arboretum Pl; 10am-6pm Mar-Sep, to 5pm Feb & Oct, to 4pm Nov-Jan; buses 8, 23, 27

Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Garden is the second oldest institution of its kind in Britain (after Oxford), and one of the most respected in the world. Founded near Holyrood in 1670 and moved to its present location in 1823, its 70 beautifully landscaped acres include splendid Victorian glass houses (admission £5.50), colourful swaths of rhododendron and azalea, and a world famous rock garden.

The John Hope Gateway visitor centre is housed in a striking, environmentally friendly building overlooking the main entrance on Arboretum Pl, and has exhibitions on biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development, as well as displays of rare plants from the institution's collection and a specially created biodiversity garden.

The Garden is largely accessible to wheelchair users and public buildings have level or ramped ground floor access. There are tarmac paths around the Garden, most of which are flat and accessible. Any steep paths that are not wheelchair-accessible are signposted and Garden staff will advise on any of the Glass-houses that are not accessible to motorised wheelchair or mobility scooter users. Assistance dogs are welcome in the Garden.

Detailed accessibility statements are available for all of Edinburgh's botanic gardens at www.rbge.org.uk/the-gardens/edinburgh/accessibility.

West End & Dean Village

Edinburgh's West End is an extension of the New Town, with elegant Georgian terraces, garden squares and an enclave of upmarket shops along William St and Stafford St. It takes in the Exchange district, now the city's financial powerhouse, and the theatre quarter on Lothian Rd, and in the west tumbles downhill into the valley of the Water of Leith to meet the picturesque Dean Village.

Take a stroll among the independent boutiques of Stafford St and William St before heading down to Dean Village. Follow the Water of Leith Walkway upstream to the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, and plan on having lunch at [Cafe Modern One](#) (p108).

Spend a couple of hours admiring the modern masterpieces at the gallery's two major exhibition spaces, allowing time to explore the outdoor sculptures and landscape art in the gallery

grounds. Then head back uphill to the West End via Belford Rd and Palmerston Pl for a relaxing pint of real ale at Bert's Bar.

The Water of Leith Walkway is a hidden thoroughfare linking the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art to Dean Village and on to Stockbridge. Look out for Antony Gormley's steel sculptures of human figures sited along the river.

Dean Bridge

Buses 19, 36, 37, 41, 47

Designed by Thomas Telford and built between 1829 and 1832 to allow the New Town to expand to the northwest, the Dean Bridge vaults gracefully over the narrow, steep-sided valley of the Water of Leith. It soon became notorious as a suicide spot – it soars 27m above the river – and in 1912 the parapets were raised to deter jumpers.

Dean Village

Buses 19, 36, 37, 41, 47

Set in the valley that runs beneath the Dean Bridge (dene is a Scots word for valley), Dean Village was founded as a milling community by the canons of Holyrood Abbey in the 12th century and by 1700 there were 11 water mills here, grinding grain for flour. One of the old mill buildings has been converted into flats, and the village is now an attractive residential area, with walkways along the river.

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

www.nationalgalleries.org; 75 Belford Rd; fee for special exhibitions; 10am-5pm; bus 13

Edinburgh's gallery of modern art is split between two impressive neoclassical buildings surrounded by landscaped grounds some 500m west of Dean Village. As well as showcasing a stunning collection of paintings by the popular, post-Impressionist Scottish Colourists – in *Reflections, Balloch*, Leslie Hunter pulls off the improbable trick of making Scotland look like the south of France – the gallery is a the starting point for a walk along the Water of Leith, following a trail of sculptures by Anthony Gormley.

MODERN ONE

The main collection, known as Modern One, concentrates on 20th-century art, with various European movements represented by the likes of Matisse, Picasso, Kirchner, Magritte, Miró, Mondrian and Giacometti. American and English artists are also

represented, but most space is given to Scottish painters – from the Scottish colourists of the early 20th century to contemporary artists such as Peter Howson and Ken Currie.

There's an excellent cafe downstairs, and the surrounding park features sculptures by Henry Moore, Rachel Whiteread and Barbara Hepworth, among others, as well as a 'landform artwork' by Charles Jencks, and the Pig Rock Bothy, a rustic timber performance and exhibition space created in 2014 as part of the Bothy Project (www.thebothyproject.org).

A footpath and stairs at the rear of the gallery lead down to the Water of Leith Walkway, which you can follow along the river for 4 miles to Leith. This takes you past *6 Times*, a sculptural project by Antony Gormley consisting of six human figures standing at various points along the river. (The statues are designed to fall over in flood conditions, so some of them may not be visible after heavy rain.)

There are a number of accessible parking spaces next to the entrance. Modern One has wheelchair access throughout and a limited number of wheelchairs for loan. There is also an accessible toilet and lift (not suitable for larger motorised wheelchairs). For events in the Gymnasium, parking is available in the south car park. The book with descriptions of paintings in large print will delight visually impaired visitors.

MODERN TWO

Directly across Belford Rd from Modern One, another neoclassical mansion (formerly an orphanage) houses its annexe, Modern Two, which is home to a large collection of sculpture and graphic art created by the Edinburgh-born artist Sir Eduardo Paolozzi. One of the 1st-floor rooms houses a re-creation of Paolozzi's studio, while the rest of the building stages temporary exhibitions of modern art.

Wheelchair access to Modern Two is from the car park at the rear entrance (press buzzer to be let in). Near this entrance is an accessible toilet and lift, enabling all parts of the building to be accessed by wheelchair. To access the ticket desk and cafe you need to negotiate a cluttered and often busy gift shop.



Accessible Edinburgh: A Festival Guide

Sleeping

The city centre can get very rowdy at weekends, and accommodation options fill up fast, mostly with groups who will probably roll home boisterously some time after 3am. If you prefer an earlier appointment with your bed, you'll be better off in a smaller, quieter lodging, or in the West End. Booking ahead is essential at weekends and in July and August.

Most accommodation providers set prices according to demand, so if there's a big-name concert on a Saturday, expect to pay a hefty premium, even for mediocre places.

Our accessibility partner UMOJA has reviewed seven of the most accessible Edinburgh hotels. Note that the hotel accessibility information was correct as of 1 August 2016. Visit <https://www.umoja.in/location/edinburgh/> for the complete, most up-to-date information. You can also email UMOJA with any queries at info@umoja.in.

- » Ibis Styles Edinburgh Centre, 19 St Andrew Sq
- » Hilton Edinburgh Grosvenor, Grosvenor St
- » Jurys Inn, 43 Jeffrey St
- » Novotel Edinburgh Centre, 80 Lauriston Pl
- » Sheraton Grand Hotel & Spa, 1 Festival Sq
- » Tune Hotel, 7 Clifton Tce
- » Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh – The Caledonian, Princes St

Here are the top three (in no particular order) chosen by UMOJA.

Tune Hotel

Located just opposite Haymarket Station with very convenient access to the airport bus and tram (both wheelchair-accessible), Tune Hotel is an accessible gem. With some rooms in high season available for as little as £85, Tune is one of the best-value accessible hotels in Edinburgh.

Tune Hotel goes above and beyond in catering for guests with accessibility needs. All nine accessible rooms have roll-in showers, very wide doors for easy access, and fittings such as window handles and light switches at an ideal height for wheelchair users or people of short stature. The hotel also caters well for guests with hearing impairments, with two key members of staff proficient in British Sign Language (BSL) and vibrating pillows available on request. The hotel's close affiliation with DeafBlind Scotland also highlights a commitment to accessibility that goes beyond legal requirements. Hotel staff have received disability awareness training from DeafBlind Scotland and support efforts to raise funds for the charity.

Click [here](#) for the full UMOJA access profile and Euan's Guide user reviews.

Hilton Edinburgh Grosvenor

Situated 500m from Haymarket Station, the Hilton Grosvenor has two accessible rooms. Although the main entrance is not

accessible there is a button for visitors to call for assistance. The accessible, ramped entrance is 30m further down Grosvenor St.

Once inside the hotel, both accessible rooms as well as all public areas (including reception, restaurant, cafe and meeting rooms) are on the same floor, which allows for easy circulation for guests with a mobility impairment. The accessible rooms themselves are spacious and equipped with roll-in showers. The Hilton Grosvenor also offers some good features for guests with hearing impairments, including a hearing induction loop at reception and vibrating pillows for bedrooms. Staff are very helpful and welcoming and have all received disability awareness training.

Click [here](#) for the full UMOJA access profile and Euan's Guide user reviews.

Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh – The Caledonian

The Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh is lavishly stylish, overlooking Edinburgh Castle and partly built on the old Princes Street Station. If you're after luxury and accessibility then look no further than the Waldorf Astoria. Situated just five minutes away from the Scott Memorial in the heart of Edinburgh, the Waldorf Astoria offers great accessibility but at a price: its two accessible rooms are available from £280 per person per night.

The hotel is fully wheelchair-accessible throughout, with ramp and lift access to all public areas, wide doors in rooms and well-installed grab rails and roll-in showers in the accessible bathrooms. There is also accessible parking on site. There are, however, no vibrating pillow alarms in the accessible rooms and there was no hoist into the swimming pool. Staff have received disability awareness training.

Click [here](#) for the full UMOJA access profile and also for Euan's Guide user reviews.



Accessible Edinburgh: A Festival Guide

Eating

Eating out in Edinburgh has changed beyond all recognition in the last 20 years. Two decades ago, sophisticated dining meant a visit to the Aberdeen Angus Steak House for a prawn cocktail, steak (well done) and chips, and Black Forest gâteau. Today eating out has become a commonplace event and the city has more restaurants per head of population than any other city in the UK, including a handful of Michelin stars.

Leith

Leith is renowned for having a clutch of excellent restaurants, including two with Michelin stars (Martin Wishart and Kitchin), as well as lots of good-value bistros and pubs, many with outdoor seating and river views in summer.

Kitchin

0131-555 1755; <http://thekitchin.com/>; 78 Commercial Quay; 3-course lunch/dinner £30/70; 12.15-2.30pm & 6.30-10pm Tue-Sat, to 10.30pm Fri & Sat; buses 16, 22, 35, 36

Fresh, seasonal, locally sourced Scottish produce is the philosophy that has won a Michelin star for this elegant but unpretentious restaurant. The menu moves with the seasons, of course, so expect fresh salads in summer and game in winter, and shellfish dishes such as baked scallops with white wine, vermouth and herb sauce when there's an 'r' in the month.

There is lots of parking available in the area with free Scottish exec parking available at night. The entrance path is cobbled which might prove difficult for some. Once inside, access is great and if you inform them when booking if someone in the party is a wheelchair user, they will arrange a table with plenty of room around it. There's a large accessible toilet with grab rails.

Leith Chop House

0131-629 1919; www.chophousesteak.co.uk; 102 Constitution St; mains £10-26; noon-3pm & 5-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat & Sun; buses 12, 16

A modern take on the old-fashioned steakhouse, this 'bar and butchery' combines slick designer decor with a meaty menu of the best Scottish beef, dry-aged for at least 35 days and char-grilled to perfection. Sauces include bone marrow gravy, and Argentinian chimmichurri. Cool cocktails too. It's wheelchair-accessible and has an accessible toilet. Power wheelchair users may find it a tight squeeze, so book ahead to ensure you get the largest, most accessible table.

Loch Fyne

0131-559 3900; www.lochfyne seafoodandgrill.co.uk; 25 Pier Pl; set lunch/dinner from £11/16; 11.30am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-11pm Sat, 9am-10pm Sun; buses 7, 10 or 11

Housed in the old Victorian fish market building next to Newhaven harbour, this stylish restaurant and seafood deli serves

up spectacular shellfish platters (£40, enough for two people) of fresh oysters, mussels, scallops, clams, cockles, crab, lobster and langoustines, as well as sustainably fished or farmed salmon, prawns, cod, halibut and haddock.

There's a car park at the back of the restaurant that is free and is accessed via Newhaven Place. There are cobbles to get to the ramp. There is another ramp at the side of the building, which you would use if you were approaching from the main road along the coast (A901). The most recent review lauded the automatic doors, which must have been recently fitted after an early reviewer struggled with the heavy doors. Staff will reserve a table with plenty of space around it if you warn them there's a wheelchair user in the party. Toilets are spacious and clean.

Martin Wishart

0131-553 3557; www.restaurantmartinwishart.co.uk; 54 The Shore; 3-course lunch/dinner £29/75; noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Fri, noon-1.30pm & 7-10pm Sat; buses 16, 22, 35, 36

In 2001 this restaurant became the first in Edinburgh to win a Michelin star, and has retained it ever since. The eponymous chef has worked with Albert Roux, Marco Pierre White and Nick Nairn, and brings a modern French approach to the best Scottish produce, from langoustines with kohlrabi, vanilla and passionfruit to a six-course vegetarian tasting menu.

There are a couple of accessible parking bays and on-street parking available on streets nearby. There is step-free access from street, but the vestibule area at the door is narrow and might be difficult to manage if in a larger wheelchair. The restaurant itself has enough room to manoeuvre without disrupting other customers and the tables are set at good height for power chairs.

The accessible toilet lets the restaurant down: there is very little floor space, making it difficult to close the door once inside. Grab rails are available, but are rendered pretty much useless by the lack of space to transfer. Since the restaurant uses seasonal ingredients, the menu changes regularly, but management say that they would be happy to arrange a menu in a larger font if requested.

Royal Deck Tea Room

mains £5-13; 10am-4.30pm Apr-Oct, 10.30am-4pm Nov-Mar; buses 11, 22, 34, 35, 36

The Royal Yacht *Britannia's* sun deck (now enclosed in glass) makes a stunning setting for the Royal Deck Tea Room, where

you can enjoy coffee and cake, or even a bottle of champagne, with a view across the Firth of Forth to the hills of Fife. See the [main review](#) (p50) for details of accessibility. Note that the Tea Room is not suitable for large or heavy wheelchairs.

Shore

0131-553 5080; www.fishersrestaurants.co.uk; 3-4 The Shore; mains £12-26; noon-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-10.30pm Sun; buses 16, 22, 35, 36

The atmospheric dining room in this popular Shore pub is a haven of wood-panelled peace, with old photographs, nautical knick-knacks, fresh flowers and an open fire adding to the romantic theme. The menu changes regularly and specialises in fresh Scottish seafood, beef, pork and game.

Management assures us that they have numerous wheelchair-using visitors, despite the small step in from the street and right-angle turn into the bar (large power wheelchair users may struggle; scooters won't get in). Once inside, access is level, but the toilet is not very accessible as it is small with narrow doors.

New Town

You can barely walk 20 paces along a New Town street without passing a place to eat. The cobbled lanes of Rose St and Thistle St between the elegant Georgian terraces to the north of Princes St are crammed with stylish restaurants offering a wide range of cuisines. The abundance of office workers means that there are lots of weekday lunch specials to look out for too.

Bon Vivant

0131-225 3275; <http://bonvivantedinburgh.co.uk/>; 55 Thistle St; mains £9-15; noon-1pm; buses 23, 27

Candlelight reflected in the warm glow of polished wood makes for an intimate atmosphere in this New Town favourite. The food is superb value for this part of town, offering a range of tapas-style 'bites' as well as normal main courses, with a changing menu of seasonal and locally sourced dishes such as tempura of cod with chorizo, puy lentils and garlic cream. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Café Marlayne

0131-226 2230; www.cafemarlayne.com; 76 Thistle St; mains lunch £8-10, dinner £15-18; noon-10pm; buses 24, 29, 42

Leith, The Shore/ © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam



All weathered wood and candlelit tables, Café Marlayne is a cosy nook offering French and Mediterranean cooking – sea bream with ratatouille and pea shoots salad, stuffed rabbit wrapped in Parma ham, boudin noir (black pudding) with bacon and mustard dressing – at very reasonable prices. Bookings are recommended.

Situated on the main road, parking options are limited, but bus stops are nearby. Although the street door may prove awkward, and the entrance narrow, there's level access and room to manoeuvre in a wheelchair. The turn leading into the toilet is very tight, but the toilet itself is large enough.

Cafe Portrait

Queen St; mains £6-10; 10am-4.30pm Fri-Wed, to 6pm Thu; St Andrew Sq

The cafe in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery has something of the feel of a university refectory. The excellent soups and sandwiches make it a popular lunch spot for local office workers. It's located on the ground floor, so is wheelchair-accessible; there's an accessible toilet on the same level.

Contini

0131-225 1550; www.contini.com/contini-ristorante; 103 George St; mains £11-30; 7.30am-11pm Mon-Fri, 9am-midnight Sat, 9am-11pm Sun; all Princes St buses

A palatial Georgian banking hall enlivened with fuchsia-pink banners and lampshades is home to this lively, child-friendly Italian bar and restaurant, where the emphasis is on fresh, authentic ingredients (produce imported weekly from Milan; homemade bread and pasta) and uncomplicated enjoyment of food.

There are two sets of stairs to get in, but portable ramps are available. Limited circulation space may make it difficult to manoeuvre in a wheelchair.

Fishers in the City

0131-225 5109; www.fishersbistros.co.uk; 58 Thistle St; mains £17-23; noon-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-10.30pm Sun; buses 13, 19, 37, 41

This more sophisticated version of the famous Fishers Bistro in Leith, with its granite-topped tables, split-level dining area and nautical theme, specialises in superior Scottish seafood – the knowledgeable staff serve up plump and succulent oysters,

meltingly sweet scallops, and sea bass that's been grilled to perfection.

There is limited on-street parking available on Thistle St, but it's very cobbly with high and bumpy pavements. Two heavy double doors and a bump greet you at entrance; if you are in a wheelchair, you may need assistance. The restaurant is on three levels, two of which are accessible by wheelchair. Unfortunately, as is common in stylish modern restaurant decor, the ground-floor bar area comprises solely bar stool seating, so does not accommodate wheelchair users. Level one is not wheelchair-accessible either, but level two is accessible from the back entrance on Thistle St Lane and has plenty of tables available at a wheelchair-friendly height. Accessible toilets can be found on both ground floor and level two.

Forth Floor Restaurant & Brasserie

0131-524 8350; www.harveynichols.com/restaurant/edinburgh-dining/; 30-34 St Andrew Sq; mains £18-25; noon-3pm Mon-Fri, to 3.30pm Sat-Sun, 6-10pm Tue-Sat; St Andrew Sq

The in-store restaurant at Harvey Nichols has floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking St Andrew Sq, making it a great place to enjoy sunset views across the New Town rooftops. The food has as much designer chic as the surroundings, while the less formal brasserie offers simpler dishes, and also serves Sunday brunch (11am to 5pm).

The entrance is just around the corner from the main entrance in Multrees Walk. When you enter, the lifts right in front of you take you to the restaurant. You roll in one side and roll out the other side, which is useful. The restaurant is spacious and staff will rearrange furniture if necessary. There is an accessible toilet.

Hadrian's Brasserie

0131-557 5000; www.roccofortehotels.com; Balmoral Hotel, 1 Princes St; mains £15-22; 7-10.30am, noon-2.30pm & 5.30-10pm Mon-Fri, 7.30-11am & 12.30-10.30pm Sat-Sun; all Princes St buses

The brasserie at the Balmoral Hotel has a 1930s art deco feel, with pale-green walls, dark-wood furniture, and waiters dressed in white aprons and black waistcoats. The menu includes posh versions of popular dishes such as fish and chips, haggis with whisky sauce, and rump steak with Café de Paris sauce. It's listed as wheelchair level accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Howie's

0131-556 5766; www.howies.uk.com; 29 Waterloo Pl; mains lunch £8-15, dinner £14-19; noon-2.30pm & 5.30-10pm; buses 15, 26, 44

A bright and airy Georgian corner house provides the elegant setting for this hugely popular restaurant. The recipe for success includes fresh Scottish produce simply prepared, good-value, seasonally changing menus and eminently quaffable house wines from £17 a bottle. It's wheelchair-accessible, and there's an accessible toilet on the lower floor.

Mussel Inn

0131-229 5979; www.mussel-inn.com; 61-65 Rose St; mains £11-25; noon-3pm & 5.30-10pm Mon-Thu, noon-10pm Fri-Sun; Princes St

Owned by west-coast shellfish farmers, the Mussel Inn provides a direct outlet for fresh Scottish seafood. The busy restaurant, decorated indoors with bright beechwood, spills out onto the pavement in summer. A 1kg pot of mussels with a choice of sauces – try chilli, garlic, ginger, coriander and cumin – costs £14. It's wheelchair-accessible and there's an accessible toilet.

Number One

0131-557 6727; www.restaurantnumberone.com; Balmoral Hotel, 1 Princes St; 3-course dinner £75; 6.30-10pm Mon-Thu, 6-10pm Fri-Sun; all Princes St buses

This is the stylish and sophisticated chatelaine of Edinburgh's city-centre restaurants, all gold-and-velvet elegance with a Michelin star sparkling on her tiara. The food is top-notch modern Scottish (a seven-/10-course tasting menu costs £85/110 per person) and the service is just on the right side of fawning. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Scottish Cafe & Restaurant

0131-226 6524; www.thescottishcafeandrestaurant.com; The Mound; mains £13-15; 9am-5.30pm Fri-Wed, to 7pm Thu; Princes St

This appealing modern restaurant (part of the Scottish National Gallery complex) has picture windows providing a view along Princes Street Gardens, and offers the chance to try traditional

Scottish dishes such as Cullen skink (smoked haddock soup) and leek and potato soup, and seasonal, sustainably sourced produce including smoked salmon and trout, free range chicken and pork.

Buses run along nearby Princes St. If coming by car there is some dedicated accessible parking on the Mound by the galleries. Alternatively you can come on the tram or train, which are both handy although it is a good five-minute walk away. Enter via the National Gallery, from where a large lift takes you down to the garden level. Alternatively a level path skirts the gardens to lead to Waverley Bridge, from where there is level access. Staff are helpful and will move furniture as required. The restaurant has its own large accessible toilet, or use the ones in the National Gallery.

Social Bite

0131-220 8206; <http://social-bite.co.uk/>; 131 Rose St; mains £4-8; 7am-3pm Mon-Fri; all Princes St buses

Describing its mission as 'good food for a good cause', this cafe is a social enterprise set up to support the homeless (25% of employees are from a homeless background). The food – from freshly prepared sandwiches to hot lunches including Jamaican chicken, and haggis, neeps and tatties – is delicious, and you can donate a 'suspended item' to be claimed by a homeless person. It's wheelchair-accessible.

Valvona & Crolla Caffé Bar

0131-556 6066; www.valvonacrolla.co.uk; 19 Elm Row, Leith Walk; mains £10-15; 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-6pm Fri & Sat, 10.30am-4.30pm Sun; all Leith Walk buses

Try breakfast (served till 11.30am) with an Italian flavour – full paesano (meat) or verdure (veggie) fry-ups, or deliciously light and crisp panettone in carrozza (sweet brioche dipped in egg and fried) – or choose from almond croissants, muesli, yogurt and fruit, freshly squeezed orange juice and perfect Italian coffee. There's also a tasty lunch menu (noon to 3pm) of classic Italian dishes. For wheelchair access, press a button to alert staff who will bring a portable ramp.

Valvona & Crolla VinCaffè

0131-557 0088; www.valvonacrolla.co.uk; 11 Multrees Walk, St Andrew Sq; mains £9-19; 7.30am-7pm Mon-Wed, to 9pm Thu-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun; St Andrew Sq

Foodie colours dominate the decor at this delightful Italian bistro – bottle-green pillars and banquettes, chocolate-and-cream-coloured walls, espresso-black tables – a perfect backdrop for VinCaffè's superb antipasto (£20 for two) of Italian cured meats, roast veggies and bruschetta, washed down with a bottle of pink Pinot Grigio 'Ramato'. It's wheelchair-accessible with a lift to the 1st floor, and accessible toilet facilities on both floors.

Old Town

From cosy, vaulted cellars to stylish rooftop restaurants, the Old Town offers a wide range of appealing eateries, including many that focus on modern Scottish cuisine.

Amber

0131-477 8477; www.amber-restaurant.co.uk; 354 Castlehill; mains £13-22; noon-8.30pm Sun-Thu, to 9pm Fri & Sat; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

You've got to love a place where the waiter greets you with the words, 'I'll be your whisky adviser for this evening'. Located in the Scotch Whisky Experience, this whisky-themed restaurant manages to avoid the tourist clichés and creates genuinely interesting and flavoursome dishes using top Scottish produce, with a suggested whisky pairing for each dish. For details of accessibility, see the review of the [Scotch Whisky Experience](#) (p73).

Brew Lab

0131-662 8963; www.brewlabcoffee.co.uk; 6-8 South College St; mains £4-5; 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat-Sun; all South Bridge buses

Students with iPads lolling in armchairs, sipping carefully crafted espressos amid artfully distressed brick and plaster, recycled school gym flooring, old workshop benches and lab stools...this is coffee nerd heaven. There's good food too, with hearty soups and crusty baguette sandwiches. In summer, try their refreshing cold brew coffee.

Blue Badge parking can be found further down South College St, while buses pass nearby. There is a very small (5 cm) step into the entrance, but inside is level access although the counter is quite high for a wheelchair user. There's an accessible toilet with good circulation space.

Café Hub

0131-473 2015; www.thehub-edinburgh.com/cafe; Castlehill; mains £5-11; 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

A hall beneath the Highland Tolbooth Kirk – now home to the Edinburgh Festival offices – has been transformed into this genial cafe, with artwork lit by sunlight slanting through leaded Gothic windows. Drop in for cake and cappuccino, or try something more filling like a sharing platter of Highland venison charcuterie. It's wheelchair-accessible and there's an accessible toilet.

Cannonball Restaurant

0131-225 1550; www.contini.com/contini-cannonball; 356 Castlehill, Royal Mile; mains £15-25; noon-5pm & 5.30-10pm Tue-Sat; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

The historic Cannonball House next to Edinburgh Castle's esplanade has been transformed into a sophisticated restaurant (and whisky bar) where the Contini family work their Italian magic on Scottish classics to produce dishes such as haggis balls with spiced pickled turnip and whisky marmalade, and lobster with wild garlic and lemon butter. Although the bar/restaurant is on three floors, there is a lift and the venue has accessible bathrooms.

David Bann

0131-556 5888; www.davidbann.com; 56-58 St Mary's St; mains £11-13; noon-10pm Mon-Fri, 11am-10pm Sat & Sun; bus 35

If you want to convince a carnivorous friend that cuisine à la veg can be as tasty and inventive as a meat-muncher's menu, take them to David Bann's stylish restaurant – dishes such as Thai fritter of broccoli and smoked tofu, and aubergine, chickpea and cashew kofta, are guaranteed to win converts. It's supposed to be wheelchair-accessible, but the toilets are downstairs.

Elephant House

0131-220 5355; www.elephanthouse.biz; 21 George IV Bridge; mains £5-10; 8am-10pm Mon-Thu, to 11pm Fri, 9am-11pm Sat, 9am-10pm Sun; buses 2, 23, 27, 41, 42, 45

This is the cafe where JK Rowling famously wrote in the days before Harry Potter was published, and boy, is it cashing in on the connection – there are photos of Rowling on the wall, the toilet

Stockbridge / © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam



Cheese board / © VisitScotland/Grant Paterson

walls are densely scribbled with Potter-related graffiti, and you can barely move for tourists taking selfies. Still, it serves excellent coffee and tasty, homemade food at reasonable prices. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Maxie's Bistro

0131-226 7770; www.maxiesbistro.com; 5b Johnston Tce; mains £9-22; 11am-11pm; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

This candlelit bistro, with its cushion-lined nooks set amid stone walls and wooden beams, is a pleasant setting for a cosy dinner, but at summer lunchtimes people queue for the outdoor tables on the terrace overlooking Victoria St. The food is dependable, ranging from pastas, steaks and stir-fries to seafood platters and daily specials. Best to book, especially in summer. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Mother India's Cafe

0131-524 9801; www.motherindia.co.uk; 3-5 Infirmary St; dishes £4-6; noon-2pm & 5-10.30pm Mon-Wed, noon-11pm Thu-Sun; all South Bridge buses

A simple concept pioneered in Glasgow has captured hearts and minds – and stomachs – here in Edinburgh: Indian food served in tapas-size portions, so that you can sample a greater variety of deliciously different dishes without busting a gut. It's hugely popular, so book a table to avoid disappointment. It's wheelchair-accessible, but the toilets are downstairs and therefore not accessible for wheelchair users.

Mums

0131-260 9806; www.monstermashcafe.co.uk; 4a Forrest Rd; mains £8-11; 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

This nostalgia-fuelled cafe serves up classic British comfort food that wouldn't look out of place on a 1950s menu – bacon and eggs, bangers and mash, shepherd's pie, fish and chips. But there's a twist – the food is all top-quality nosh freshly prepared from local produce. There's also a good selection of bottled craft beers and Scottish-brewed cider. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Museum Brasserie

0131-225 4040; www.benugo.com/restaurants/museum-brasserie; Chambers St; mains £7-11; 10am-5pm; buses 2, 23, 27, 41, 42, 45

The restaurant in the stone-vaulted basement of the Victorian part of the National Museum of Scotland serves tasty light lunches, including Scottish beef burger, fish and chips, and specials such as venison sausages with red onion gravy. Being part of the National Museum, it's fully wheelchair-accessible.

Ondine

0131-226 1888; www.ondinerestaurant.co.uk; 2 George IV Bridge; mains £17-40, 2-/3-course lunch £25/30; noon-3pm & 5.30-10pm Mon-Sat; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

Ondine is one of Edinburgh's finest seafood restaurants, with a menu based on sustainably sourced fish. Take a seat at the curved Oyster Bar and tuck into oysters Kilpatrick, smoked haddock chowder, lobster thermidor, a roast shellfish platter or just good old haddock and chips (with minted pea purée, just to keep things posh). It's wheelchair-accessible, with an accessible toilet, but you have to go through a heavy door from the street and then in a lift.

Pancho Villa's

0131-557 4416; www.panchovillas.co.uk; 240 Canongate; mains £9-12; noon-10pm Mon-Sat, 5-10pm Sun

With a Mexican-born owner and lots of Latin American and Spanish staff, it's not surprising that this colourful and lively restaurant is one of the most authentic-feeling Mexican places in town. The dinner menu includes delicious steak fajitas and great vegetarian spinach enchiladas. It's often busy, so book ahead. It's wheelchair-accessible and there's an accessible toilet, but power wheelchair users will need to use the side entrance to access the toilet.

Petit Paris

0131-226 2442; www.petitparis-restaurant.co.uk; 38-40 Grassmarket; mains £14-19; noon-3pm & 5.30-10pm; bus 2

Like the name says, this is a little piece of Paris, complete with chequered tablecloths, friendly waiters and good-value grub – the moules-frites (mussels and chips) are excellent. There's a lunch/pre-theatre deal (noon to 3pm and 5.30pm to 7pm)

offering two courses for £12.90. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Tower

0131-225 3003; www.tower-restaurant.com; National Museum of Scotland, Chambers St; mains £19-40, 2-course lunch & pre-theatre menu £19; 10am-11pm; buses 2, 23, 27, 41, 42, 45

Chic and sleek, with a great view of the castle, Tower is perched in a turret atop the National Museum of Scotland building. A star-studded guest list of celebrities has enjoyed its menu of quality Scottish food, simply prepared – try half a dozen oysters followed by roast loin of venison. Afternoon tea (£20) is served from 2.30pm to 5.30pm.

Use the wide entrance with automatic doors that is on the corner of Chamber St and George IV Bridge. There is an induction loop at the entrance, where staff will typically greet you. The restaurant itself is a little cramped, with some tight corners to access the small lift. The tables are all low and most have moveable chairs. The spacious balcony can be accessed through a door to the left of the lift as you arrive at the restaurant.

There's an accessible toilet beside the lift and many more in the attached National Museum of Scotland.

South Edinburgh

The student stronghold of Southside, between George Sq and Clerk St, is home to many good-value bistros, cafes and vegetarian places, plus a handful of modern Scottish eateries like Aizle. The gradual 'gentrification' of Haymarket and Dalry Rd has seen the area's long-established Indian and Chinese restaurants challenged by a rash of stylish new eateries such as First Coast and Locanda de Gusti.

Aizle

0131-662 9349; <http://aizle.co.uk>; 107-109 St. Leonard's St; 5-course dinner £45; 6-9.30pm Wed, Thu & Sun, 5-9.30pm Fri-Sat; bus 14

If you're the sort who has trouble deciding what to eat, Aizle will do it for you (the name is an old Scots word for 'spark' or 'ember'). There's no menu, just a five-course dinner conjured from a monthly 'harvest' of the finest and freshest of local produce (listed on a blackboard), and presented beautifully – art on a plate. It's wheelchair-accessible and has an accessible toilet. There is no

menu, as such, only an ingredients list which, if required, management would be more than happy to print out in a larger font.

First Coast

0131-313 4404; www.first-coast.co.uk; 97-101 Dalry Rd; mains £12-20; noon-2pm & 5-11pm Mon-Sat; buses 2, 3, 4, 25, 33, 44

This popular neighbourhood bistro has a striking main dining area with sea-blue wood panelling and stripped stonework, and a short and simple menu offering hearty comfort food such as fish with creamy mash, brown shrimp and garlic butter, or leek and bread pudding, creamed leeks and braised fennel. Lunchtime and early evening there's an excellent two-course meal for £12.50.

There are bus stops nearby and Haymarket train station is not too far away. You can also park in the Co-op car park for up to two hours. Blue Badge holders are also able to park just outside the charity shop almost directly opposite the restaurant.

The front door has a small lip, but once inside everything is on the same level. It can be quite crowded, which can make navigation tricky in a wheelchair. There is a fully accessible toilet at the back of the restaurant, but is accessed via quite a narrow corridor, which may present problems for a power chair user. Book a table at the front of the restaurant for easy access, but at the back for convenience for the toilet.

Kebab Mahal

0131-667 5214; www.kebab-mahal.co.uk; 7 Nicolson Sq; mains £5-8; noon-midnight Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; all South Bridge buses

Sophisticated it ain't, but this is the Holy Grail of kebab shops – quality shish kebab and tandoori dishes washed down with chilled lassi for around eight quid. It's a basic cafeteria-style place with a stainless-steel counter and glaring fluorescent lights, but the menu is 100% halal and the kebabs and curries are authentic and delicious. It's listed as (and appears from images of the shopfront to be) wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial. It certainly doesn't look like the kind of place to have an accessible toilet!

Locanda de Gusti

0131-346 8800; www.locandadegusti.com; 102 Dalry Rd; mains £9-26; 5.30-10pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-2.15pm Thu-Sat; buses 2, 3, 4, 25, 33, 44

This bustling family bistro, loud with the buzz of conversation and the clink of glasses and cutlery, is no ordinary Italian, but a little corner of Naples complete with hearty Neapolitan home cooking by friendly head chef Rosario. The food ranges from light and tasty ravioli tossed with butter and sage to delicious platters of grilled seafood.

There are bus stops nearby and Haymarket train station is not too far away. You can also park in the Co-op car park for up to two hours. Blue Badge holders are also able to park just outside the charity shop very close to the entrance.

Entrance is level, but the door is heavy – although helpful staff will hold it open. It's a small space, with tables quite close together, making navigation difficult in a wheelchair and if you need to use the large accessible toilet.

Loudon's Café & Bakery

0131-228 9774; www.loudons-cafe.co.uk; 94b Fountainbridge; mains £5-10; 8am-5pm; buses 1, 34, 35

A cafe that bakes its own organic bread and cakes on the premises, ethically sourced coffee, daily and weekend newspapers scattered about, even some outdoor tables – what's not to like? All-day brunch (8am to 3pm) served at weekends includes eggs Benedict, warm spiced quinoa with dried fruit, and specials such as blueberry pancakes with fruit salad.

It's well served by buses, but with no accessible parking nearby. The door is heavy, but once inside the cafe's level. There is plenty of space and an accessible toilet.

Mosque Kitchen

0131-667 4035; www.mosquekitchen.com; 31 Nicolson Sq; mains £4-7; 11.30am-10pm, closed 12.50-1.50pm Fri; all South Bridge buses

Expect shared tables and disposable plates, but this is the place to go for cheap, authentic and delicious homemade curries, kebabs, pakoras and naan bread, all washed down with lassi or mango juice. It caters to Edinburgh's Central Mosque, but welcomes all – local students have taken to it big time. No alcohol. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Peter's Yard

0131-228 5876; www.petersyard.com; 27 Simpson Loan; mains £5-9; 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun; buses 23, 27, 35, 45, 47

This Swedish-style coffee house produces its own homebaked breads, from sourdough to focaccia, which form the basis for lunchtime sandwiches with fillings such as roast beef with beetroot and caper salad, and roast butternut squash with sunblush tomato pesto. Breakfast (served till noon) can be a basket of breads with conserves and cheeses, or yoghurt with granola and fruit.

There's a small (5cm) step in from the pavement. Once inside, everything is on the level but somewhat cramped, particularly to get into the accessible toilet at the back of the shop.

Stockbridge

Stockbridge has a decent selection of neighbourhood bistros, ethnic restaurants and pubs.

Gateway Restaurant

0131-552 2674; www.gatewayrestaurant.net; John Hope Gateway, Royal Botanic Garden, Arboretum Row; mains £7-11; 10am-5.15pm; buses 8, 23, 27

The restaurant in the [John Hope Gateway visitor centre](#) (p80) serves hot breakfast and lunch dishes, while the Terrace Cafe in the middle of the gardens has outdoor tables with a superb view of the city skyline. The Gateway Restaurant is accessed via a lift to the rear of the main wooden spiral staircase in the atrium or from the Garden via the John Hope Gateway decking, where there is a push-button automatic door. Tables and furniture can be moved as necessary. There are large-print menus available, and staff are happy to read menus if necessary. There's an accessible toilet on the same floor as the restaurant.

Scran & Scallie

0131-332 6281; <http://scranandscallie.com>; 1 Comely Bank Rd; mains £10-22; noon-3pm & 6-10pm Mon-Fri, 8.30-11am & noon-10pm Sat-Sun; buses 24, 29, 42

Established by the Michelin-starred team responsible for the Kitchin and Castle Terrace, this laid-back gastropub adds a modern chef's touch to old-time dishes such as chicken liver parfait,



Cafe Turva, Leith / © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam

Grassmarket / © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam



ham hock terrine and steak pie. There's also quality versions of classic pub grub like burgers, seafood pie, and fish and chips, and veggie options that include a spelt and lentil burger. It's fully wheelchair-accessible via a lift or from the gardens. There is an accessible toilet.

Terrace Cafe

0131-552 0606; Royal Botanic Garden, Arboretum Row; mains £5-8; 10am-5.30pm

The Terrace Cafe, in the middle of the Royal Botanic Garden, has outdoor tables with a superb view of the city skyline. The cafe is wheelchair-accessible and has an accessible toilet. Two tables outside on the terrace are wheelchair-priority tables. Although it's a self-service outlet, staff are happy to assist and serve at the table if necessary.

West End & Dean Village

The choice of eating places in the West End does not disappoint, with some of Edinburgh's best restaurants (including Michelin-starred Castle Terrace) clustered in and around the Theatre District on Lothian Rd.

Cafe Modern One

75 Belford Rd; mains £4-8; 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4.30pm Sat & Sun; bus 13

Modern design is to be expected in the cafe at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, but more of a surprise is the lovely outdoor seating area, a lunchtime sun trap complete with lawn for the kids to run around on. The menu is hearty comfort food, from parsnip and sage soup to sweet potato bake. For access information, see the review of the [Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art](#) (p81).

Cafe Modern Two

72 Belford Rd; mains £6-8; 10am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4.30pm Sun; bus 13

This elegant cafe is dominated by a gleaming Victoria Arduino espresso machine and a plaster model of Eduardo Paolozzi's statue of Isaac Newton. As well as tempting coffee and cake, the lunch menu (noon to 2.30pm) offers tasty homemade soups and platters of antipasti, focaccia filled with smoked chicken, roast

peppers etc. For access information, see the review of the [Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art](#) (p81).

Castle Terrace

0131-229 1222; www.castleterracerestaurant.com; 33-35 Castle Tce; 3-course lunch/dinner £29.50/65; noon-2.15pm & 6.30-10pm Tue-Sat; bus 2

It was little more than a year after opening in 2010 that Castle Terrace was awarded a Michelin star under chef-patron Dominic Jack. The menu is seasonal and applies sharply whetted Parisian skills to the finest of local produce, be it Ayrshire pork, Aberdeenshire lamb or Newhaven crab – even the cheese in the sauces is Scottish.

There's plenty of Blue Badge parking and taxis can park outside. Kerbs are relatively low, pavements are wide and the roads cobble-free. Although there are two sets of heavy doors at entrance, attentive staff are on hand to hold them open. Access is step-free, but there's a slight bump at the threshold. There's enough space for a wheelchair to manoeuvre comfortably and an accessible toilet on the premises.

Kanpai Sushi

0131-228 1602; www.kanpaisushi.co.uk; 8-10 Grindlay St; mains £9-15, sushi per piece £4-10; noon-2.30pm & 5-10.30pm Tue-Sun; all Lothian Rd buses

What is probably Edinburgh's best sushi restaurant impresses with its minimalist interior, top-quality fish and elegantly presented dishes – the squid tempura comes in a delicate woven basket, while the sashimi combo is presented as a flower arrangement in an ice-filled stoneware bowl. Although there's an accessible parking bay and other parking is available nearby, only the first level of this restaurant is accessible, with just a handful of tables that are wheelchair-friendly. The toilets are up two steps, so inaccessible to wheelchair users.

Timberyard

0131-221 1222; www.timberyard.co; 10 Lady Lawson St; 4-course lunch or dinner £55; noon-2pm & 5.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat; buses 2, 35

Ancient worn floorboards, cast-iron pillars, exposed joists and tables made from slabs of old mahogany create a rustic, retro atmosphere in this slow-food restaurant where the accent is on locally sourced produce from artisan growers and foragers.

Typical dishes include seared scallop with apple, Jerusalem artichoke and sorrel; and juniper-smoked pigeon with wild garlic flowers and beetroot.

There's plenty of Blue Badge parking nearby, while taxis can stop directly outside. There's a slope at to the entrance and a heavy entrance door, which one wheelchair user found manageable. There's plenty of circulation space once inside.



Accessible Edinburgh: A Festival Guide

Drinking & Nightlife

Edinburgh has always been a drinker's city. It has more than 700 pubs – more per square mile than any other UK city – and they are as varied and full of character as the people who drink in them, from Victorian palaces to stylish pre-club bars, and from real-ale howffs to trendy cocktail lounges.

Holyrood & Arthurs Seat

Being mainly devoted to tourist sights, offices and the parliament building, this area gets pretty quiet after 6pm, with only a handful of scattered drinking dens.

Hemma

0131-629 3327; www.bodabar.com/hemma; 75 Holyrood Rd; 11am-midnight Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat, 10am-10pm Sun; buses 6, 60

Set among the glass-and-steel architecture of the redeveloped Holyrood district, Hemma (Swedish for 'at home') is one of a stable of Scandinavian bars, a funky fish-tank of a place furnished with comfy armchairs and sofas and brightly coloured wooden chairs. Good coffee and cakes during the day, real ale and cocktails in the evening. There is level access to the bar and restaurant on the ground floor, where there is also an accessible toilet; there's also wheelchair-accessible alfresco dining. Helpful staff will move furniture and open the large double doors at the entrance if required. There is no access to the mezzanine level for wheelchairs.

Kilderkin

0131-556 2101; www.kilderkin.co.uk; 67 Canongate, Royal Mile; 11am-midnight Mon-Fri, to 1am Sat, 12.30-8pm Sun; bus 35

A successful attempt at reinventing the local neighbourhood pub, complete with polished mahogany, stained glass and snug booths, the Kilderkin stages regular community-building events such as quizzes, open-mic evenings, ukulele nights and whisky-tasting sessions. The bar serves hand-pulled pints of cask ale, more than 100 varieties of rum, and decent food (pizza for £1 on Mondays!). It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Regent

0131-661 8198; www.theregentbar.co.uk; 2 Montrose Tce; noon-1am Mon-Sat, 12.30pm-1am Sun

This is a pleasant gay local with a relaxed atmosphere (no loud music), serving coffee and croissants as well as excellent real ales, including Deuchars IPA and Caledonian 80/-. It's the meeting place for the Lesbian and Gay Real Ale Drinkers club (first Monday of the month at 9pm). There is level access via a double door from the street and also once inside; unfortunately, there is no accessible toilet.

Sheep Heid Inn

0131-661 7974; www.thesheepheidedinburgh.co.uk; 43-45 The Causeway; 11am-11pm Mon-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat, noon-11pm Sun; bus 42

Possibly the oldest inn in Edinburgh (with a licence dating back to 1360) the Sheep Heid feels more like a country pub than an Edinburgh bar. Set in the semirural shadow of Arthur's Seat, it's famous for its 19th-century skittles alley and the lovely little beer garden. It's wheelchair-accessible, including the beer garden. However, groups larger than 12 that include one or more wheelchair users would not be able to be accommodated as they would need to be seated upstairs, which is not accessible. There's also an accessible bathroom.

Studio 24

0131-558 3758; www.studio24club.co.uk; 24 Calton Rd; buses 35, 36

Studio 24 is the dark heart of Edinburgh's underground music scene, with a program that covers all bases, from house to nu metal via punk, ska, reggae, crossover, tribal, electro, techno and dance. The main room downstairs is wheelchair-accessible and has an accessible toilet.

Leith

With its long history as a dockyard neighbourhood, it's not surprising that Leith has more than its fair share of historic pubs, many concentrated in and around The Shore. Plenty of modern bars have sprung up as well, catering to inhabitants of newly developed apartment blocks and offices.

Lioness of Leith

0131-629 0580; www.facebook.com/TheLionessofleith; 21-25 Duke St; noon-midnight Mon-Thu, 11am-1am Fri & Sat, 12.30pm-midnight Sun; buses 21, 25, 34, 35, 49

Duke St was always one of the rougher corners of Leith, but the emergence of pubs like the Lioness is a sure sign of creeping gentrification. Distressed timber and battered leather benches are surrounded by vintage *objets trouvés*, from chandeliers and glitterballs to mounted animal heads, a pinball machine and a pop-art print of Allen Ginsberg. Good beers and cocktails. It's wheelchair-accessible, but the entrance to the toilet is very narrow and may not be accessible for all wheelchair users.

Old Chain Pier

0131-552 4960; <http://oldchainpier.com>; 32 Trinity Cres; 11.30am-11pm Sun-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat; bus 16

The delightful Old Chain Pier enjoys a brilliant location overlooking the sea. The building was once the 19th-century booking office for steamers crossing the Firth of Forth (the pier from which it takes its name was washed away in a storm in 1898). The bar serves real ales, bottled craft beers, cocktails and wines, and the kitchen serves excellent pub grub. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible, but a reviewer has noted the doorways are narrow, circulation space is limited and the toilet is accessible only via steps.

Roseleaf

0131-476 5268; www.roseleaf.co.uk; 23-24 Sandport Pl; 10am-1am; buses 16, 22, 35, 36

Cute, quaint and verging on chintzy, the Roseleaf could hardly be further from the average Leith bar. Decked out in flowered wallpaper, old furniture and rose-patterned china (cocktails are served in teapots), the real ales and bottled beers are complemented by a range of speciality teas, coffees and fruit drinks (including rose lemonade), and well-above-average pub grub (served from 10am to 10pm). It's wheelchair-accessible, with an accessible toilet. It's a bit of a squeeze, so you'll need to hone your wheelchair skills! There's a single accessible parking spot outside, with plenty of on-street parking nearby if you have a Blue Badge.

Scotch Malt Whisky Society

0131-554 3451; www.smws.com; buses 22, 35, 36

If you're serious about spirits, the Scotch Malt Whisky Society has branches all round the world. Membership of the society costs from £122 for the first year (£61.50 a year thereafter) and includes use of members' rooms in Edinburgh and London.

There are a couple of parking spots outside on a single yellow line, but there are lots of buses. Access is pretty good for an old building, with a lift serving all three floors. Be careful with the ramp into the main entrance: it's two separate metal planks, which might be tricky to negotiate. There is an adequate disabled toilet on the 2nd floor. All menus are in large-print format.

Sofi's

0131-555 7019; www.bodabar.com/sofis; 65 Henderson St; 2pm-1am Mon-Fri, noon-1am Sat, 1pm-1am Sun; buses 22, 35, 36

Sofi's brings a little bit of Swedish sophistication to this former Leith pub, which feels more like a bohemian cafe with its mismatched furniture, candlelit tables, fresh flowers and colourful art. It's a real community place too, hosting film screenings, book clubs, open-mic music nights, and even a knitting club! It's wheelchair-accessible, but there is no accessible bathroom.

Teuchters Landing

0131-554 7427; www.aroomin.co.uk; 1 Dock Pl; 10.30am-1am; buses 16, 22, 35, 36

A cosy warren of timber-lined nooks and crannies housed in a single-storey red-brick building (once a waiting room for ferries across the Firth of Forth), this real-ale and malt-whisky bar also has outdoor tables on a floating terrace in the dock. It's wheelchair-accessible, but there are a lot of cobbles to get to the door.

New Town

George St was once the city's most prestigious business district, but most of the offices are now designer boutiques and all the grand old bank buildings have been turned into stylish bars, allowing city wags to make lots of lame jokes about liquid assets and standing orders.

Neighbouring Rose St was once a famous pub crawl, where generations of students, sailors and rugby fans would try to visit every pub on the street (around 17 of them) and down a pint in each one. These days shopping, not boozing, is Rose St's *raison d'être*, but there are still a few pubs there worth visiting.

Bohemian Broughton, at the eastern end of the New Town, is the centre of Edinburgh's gay scene, and has an eclectic mixture of traditional real-ale pubs, modern pre-club bars and all-out gay bars.

Café Royal Circle Bar

0131-556 1884; www.caferoyaledinburgh.co.uk; 17 West Register St; 11am-11pm Mon-Wed, to midnight Thu, to 1am Fri-Sat, 12.30-11pm Sun; Princes St

Perhaps the classic Edinburgh pub, the Cafe Royal's main claims to fame are its magnificent oval bar and its Doulton tile portraits

Taps at the Ensign Ewart Pub, The Royal Mile / © Sandy Grimm/500px



Sygn Bar, New Town / © VisitScotland/Grant Paterson



of famous Victorian inventors. Sit at the bar or claim one of the cosy leather booths beneath the stained-glass windows and choose from the seven real ales on tap. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Cask & Barrel

0131-556 3132; 115 Broughton St; 11am-midnight Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri-Sat, 12.30-midnight Sun; buses 8 or 17

At the foot of Broughton St, the spit-and-sawdust style Cask & Barrel is a beer-drinker's delight, with a selection of up to 10 real ales, as well as Czech and German beers, and a more than adequate array of TV screens for keeping up with the football or rugby. It's wheelchair-accessible and has an accessible toilet.

Cumberland Bar

0131-558 3134; www.cumberlandbar.co.uk; 1-3 Cumberland St; noon-midnight Mon-Wed, to 1am Thu-Sat, 11am-midnight Sun; buses 23, 27

Immortalised as the stereotypical New Town pub in Alexander McCall Smith's serialised novel *44 Scotland Street*, the Cumberland has an authentic, traditional wood-brass-and-mirrors look (despite being relatively new) and serves well-looked-after, cask-conditioned ales and a wide range of malt whiskies. There's also a pleasant little beer garden outside. Although there is a small step at the front of the bar to negotiate, staff are willing to assist solo wheelchair users. There's a good wheelchair-accessible bathroom on the ground floor.

Guildford Arms

0131-556 4312; www.guildfordarms.com; 1 West Register St; Princes St

Located in a side alley off the east end of Princes St, the Guildford is a classic Victorian pub full of polished mahogany, brass and ornate cornices. The range of real ales is excellent – try to get a table in the unusual upstairs gallery, with a view over the sea of drinkers below. It's a listed building, so access is restricted. On request, the revolving front doors can be opened to allow wheelchair access. The men's toilets are on the ground floor, but the women's are on the 1st floor (there's no designated accessible toilet); women can use the gent's toilet on request, however.

Indigo Yard

0131-220 5603; www.indigoyardedinburgh.co.uk; 7 Charlotte Lane; 8am-1am; buses 19, 36, 37, 41, 47

Set around an airy, stone-floored and glass-roofed courtyard, Indigo Yard is a fashionable West End watering hole that has been patronised by the likes of Liam Gallagher, Pierce Brosnan and Kylie Minogue. Good food – including open-air barbecues during the summer months – just adds to the attraction. There is level access and an accessible toilet.

Joseph Pearce's

0131-556 4140; www.bodabar.com/joseph-pearces; 23 Elm Row; 11am-midnight Sun-Thu, to 1am Fri-Sat; all Leith Walk buses

A traditional Victorian pub that has been remodelled and given a new lease of life by Swedish owners, Pearce's has become a real hub of the local community, with good food (very family friendly before 5pm), a relaxed atmosphere, and events like Monday night Scrabble games and August crayfish parties. There's wheelchair access and an outdoor seating area; there are also tables at a wheelchair-friendly height. However, there are a couple of steps leading to the toilets, which are therefore not wheelchair-accessible.

Kenilworth

0131-226 1773; www.nicholsonspubs.co.uk; 152-154 Rose St; 10am-11pm Mon-Thu, to midnight Fri-Sat, 10am-11.30pm Sun; Princes St

A gorgeous Edwardian drinking palace, complete with original fittings – from the tile floors, mahogany circle bar and gantry, to the ornate mirrors and gas lamps – the Kenilworth was Edinburgh's original gay bar back in the 1970s. Today it attracts a mixed crowd of all ages, and serves a good range of real ales and malt whiskies. There's a 5cm step to gain access from the street, but once inside it is level. However the toilet is not wheelchair-accessible and, when busy, manoeuvrability around the bar area in a wheelchair is very tricky.

Sygn

0131-225 6060; www.sygn.co.uk; 15 Charlotte Lane; 10am-1am; buses 19, 36, 37, 41, 47

The plush banquettes and sleek, polished tables in this sharply styled bar are just the place to pose with a passionfruit bellini

or a glass of Pol Roger. The languid and laid-back atmosphere is complemented by cool tunes and superb cocktails, and the food menu is surprisingly good. The venue is wheelchair-accessible, but the toilets are downstairs and therefore not accessible for wheelchair users.

Old Town

The pubs on the Royal Mile are – not surprisingly – aimed mainly at the tourist market, but there are still some good old-fashioned drinking dens hidden up the closes and along the side streets. Many Grassmarket pubs have outdoor tables on sunny summer afternoons. Cowgate – Grassmarket’s extension to the east – leads into Edinburgh’s club land.

Bongo Club

www.thebongoclub.co.uk; 66 Cowgate; admission free-£6; 11pm-3am Tue & Thu, 7pm-3am Fri-Sun; bus 2

Owned by a local arts charity, the weird and wonderful Bongo Club boasts a long history of hosting everything from wild club nights and local bands to performance art and kids’ comedy shows, and is open as a cafe and exhibition space during the day. The main bar and performance space are both wheelchair-accessible, and there’s an accessible toilet on the same level.

Bow Bar

0131-226 7667; www.thebowbar.co.uk; 80 West Bow; noon-midnight Mon-Sat, to 11.30pm Sun; buses 2, 23, 27, 41, 42

One of the city’s best traditional-style pubs (it’s not as old as it looks), serving a range of excellent real ales, Scottish craft gins and a vast selection of malt whiskies, the Bow Bar often has standing-room only on Friday and Saturday evenings. There is a small step to get in, which wheelchair users may need some assistance to negotiate, but there is an accessible toilet.

BrewDog

0131-220 6517; www.brewdog.com; 143 Cowgate; noon-1am Mon-Sat, 12.30pm-1am Sun; buses 35, 45

The Edinburgh outpost of Scotland’s self-styled ‘punk brewery’, BrewDog stands out among the sticky-floored dives that line the Cowgate, with its polished concrete bar and cool, industrial-chic decor. As well as its own highly rated beers, there’s a choice of

guest real ales, and – a sign of a great trad pub – coat hooks under the edge of the bar. It’s wheelchair-accessible and has accessible toilet.

Ecco Vino

0131-225 1441; www.eccovinoedinburgh.com; 19 Cockburn St; noon-11pm Mon-Thu, to midnight Fri-Sat, 12.30-11pm Sun; bus 6

With outdoor tables on sunny afternoons, and cosy candlelit intimacy in the evenings, this comfortably cramped Tuscan-style wine bar offers a tempting range of Italian wines, though not all are available by the glass – best to share a bottle. The restaurant is wheelchair-accessible, but there is no accessible toilet.

Holyrood 9A

0131-556 5044; www.theholyrood.co.uk; 9a Holyrood Rd; 9am-midnight Sun-Thu, to 1am Fri-Sat; bus 36

Candlelight flickering off hectares of polished wood creates an atmospheric setting for this superb real-ale bar, with more than 15 taps pouring craft beers from all corners of the country and, indeed, the globe. If you’re peckish, it serves excellent gourmet burgers, too.

There’s a small step to get in, but once inside it’s level and the staff are accommodating. The toilet gets three stars from one reviewer.

Jolly Judge

0131-225 2669; www.jollyjudge.co.uk; 7a James Ct; noon-11pm Mon-Thu, to midnight Fri-Sat, 12.30-11pm Sun; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

A snug little howff tucked away down a close, the Judge exudes a cosy 17th-century atmosphere (low, timber-beamed painted ceilings) and has the added attraction of a cheering open fire in cold weather. No music or gaming machines, just the buzz of conversation. It’s listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Liquid Room

0131-225 2564; www.liquidroom.com; 9c Victoria St; admission free-£20; live music from 7pm, club 10.30pm-3am Wed, Fri & Sat; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

Set in a subterranean vault deep beneath Victoria St, the Liquid Room is a superb club venue with a thundering sound system.

There are regular club nights on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday as well as live bands. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Malt Shovel

0131-225 6843; www.taylor-walker.co.uk; 11-15 Cockburn St; 11am-11pm Sun-Thu, to 1am Fri-Sat; buses 36, 41

A traditional-looking pub with dark wood and subdued tartanry, the Malt Shovel offers a good range of real ales and more than 40 malt whiskies, and serves excellent pub grub including fish and chips, burgers, and steak and ale pies. It's wheelchair-accessible and toilets are on the same level, but there is no designated accessible toilet.

Villager

0131-226 2781; www.villagerbar.com; 49-50 George IV Bridge; noon-1am; buses 23, 27, 41, 42

A cross between a traditional pub and a pre-club bar, Villager has a comfortable, laid-back vibe. It can be standing-room only in the main bar in the evenings (the cocktails are excellent), but the side room, with its brown leather sofas and subtropical pot plants, comes into its own for a lazy Sunday afternoon with the papers. The bar and restaurant areas are wheelchair-accessible, but toilets are on the lower ground level, which is not accessible by wheelchair.

White Hart Inn

0131-226 2806; www.whitehart-edinburgh.co.uk; 34 Grass-market; 11am-11pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30am Sat-Sun; bus 2

A brass plaque outside this pub proclaims: 'In the White Hart Inn Robert Burns stayed during his last visit to Edinburgh, 1791.' Claiming to be the city's oldest pub in continuous use (since 1516), it also hosted William Wordsworth in 1803. Not surprisingly, it's a traditional, cosy, low-raftered place. It has folk/acoustic music sessions seven nights a week. It's wheelchair-accessible and on the level, but the toilets have narrow doors and are not wheelchair-friendly.

South Edinburgh

South Edinburgh's large student population is well served by lots of stylish pre-club bars and cafe-bars clustered around Edinburgh University's George Sq and Old College buildings.

Tollcross, formerly a working-class industrial district, has a good range of traditional real-ale pubs, though designer bars and craft-beer bars are beginning to make inroads, especially in the trendier district of Bruntsfield to the south.

Auld Hoose

0131-668 2934; www.theauldhoose.co.uk; 23-25 St Leonards St; noon-12.45am Mon-Sat, 12.30pm-12.45am Sun; bus 14

Promoting itself as the Southside's only 'alternative' pub, the Auld Hoose certainly lives up to its reputation with unpretentious decor, gig posters on the walls, a range of real ales from remote Scottish microbreweries (Trashy Blonde from BrewDog on Arran, Avalanche Ale from Loch Fyne in Argyll) and a juke box that would make the late John Peel weep with joy. It's wheelchair-accessible, but there is no accessible toilet.

Bennet's Bar

0131-229 5143; www.bennetsbaredinburgh.co.uk; 8 Leven St; 11am-1am; all Tollcross buses

Situated beside the King's Theatre, Bennet's has managed to hang on to almost all of its beautiful Victorian fittings, from the leaded stained-glass windows and ornate mirrors to the wooden gantry and the brass water taps on the bar (for your whisky – there are over 100 malts from which to choose). It's wheelchair-accessible – wheelchair users have reportedly had no problem negotiating the small step at the front door – but there is no accessible toilet.

Caley Sample Room

0131-337 7204; www.thecaleysampleroom.co.uk; 58 Angle Park Tce; noon-midnight Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri, 10am-1am Sat, 10am-midnight Sun; buses 4, 28, 34, 35, 44

The Sample Room is a big, lively, convivial pub serving a wide range of wines and excellent real ales, and some of the best pub grub in the city. It's popular with sports fans too, who gather to watch football and rugby matches on the large-screen TVs. Although it's wheelchair-accessible, one reviewer from 2014 bemoaned the lack of an accessible toilet. However, new management are refurbishing the building, including installation of an accessible toilet, which should be complete by the time you read this.



Bartender mixing a gin cocktail / © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam



Bartender mixing a Scottish gin cocktail / © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam

Canny Man's

0131-447 1484; www.cannymans.co.uk; 237 Morningside Rd; buses 11, 15, 16, 17, 23

A lovably eccentric pub, the Canny Man's is made up of a crowded warren of tiny rooms that are crammed with a bizarre collection of antiques and curiosities (a description that could apply to some of the regulars), and where the landlord regularly refuses service to anyone who looks scruffy, inebriated or vaguely pinko/commie/subversive. If you can get in, you'll find it serves excellent real ale, vintage port and Cuban cigars, and the best Bloody Marys in town. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Pear Tree House

0131-667 7533; www.pear-tree-house.co.uk; 38 West Nicolson St; 11am-1am; buses 2, 41, 42, 47

Set in an 18th-century house with cobbled courtyard, the Pear Tree is a student favourite with an open fire in winter, comfy sofas and board games inside, plus the city's biggest and most popular beer garden in summer.

Royal Dick

0131-560 1572; www.summerhall.co.uk/the-royal-dick; 1 Summerhall; noon-1am Mon-Sat, 12.30-midnight Sun; buses 41, 42, 67

The quirky decor at the Royal Dick alludes to its past as the home of Edinburgh University's veterinary school – there are shelves of laboratory glassware, walls covered with animal bones, even an old operating table. But rather than being creepy it's a warm and welcoming place for a drink, serving craft gins, malt whiskies, and ales produced by its own microbrewery. For access information, see the review for [Summerhall](#) (p138).

Stockbridge

Stockbridge nightlife is decidedly low-key, consisting of traditional pubs and laid-back bars.

Kay's Bar

0131-225 1858; www.kaysbar.co.uk; 39 Jamaica St; 11am-midnight Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri-Sat, 12.30-11pm Sun; buses 24, 29, 42

Housed in a former wine merchant's office, tiny Kay's Bar is a cosy haven with a coal fire and a fine range of real ales. Good food is served in the back room at lunchtime, but you'll have to book a table – Kay's is a popular spot. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Stockbridge Tap

0131-343 3000; stockbridgetap@hotmail.com; 2 Raeburn Pl; noon-midnight Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat, 12.30pm-midnight Sun; buses 24, 29, 36, 42

This cosy bar has more of a lounge atmosphere (sofas at the back) than a traditional Edinburgh pub, but the counter reveals that it is dedicated to real ale – there are seven hand-pulled pints on offer, with three house and four guest beers. There's a good range of craft gins too. There's a 2-inch step into the building, but it's level inside and there's an accessible toilet. Although it's spacious, it can get very busy in the evenings.

West End & Dean Village

The West End and the Theatre District are home to a handful of good old-fashioned pubs, plus a smattering of newer places.

Ghillie Dhu

0131-222 9930; www.ghillie-dhu.co.uk; 2 Rutland Pl; 11am-3am Mon-Fri, 10am-3am Sat-Sun; all Princes St buses

This spectacular bar, with its huge, chunky beer hall tables, leather sofa booths and polished black-and-white tile floor makes a grand setting for the live folk music sessions that take place here every night (from 10pm, admission free). There is a ramp entrance next to the main entrance with an accessible toilet as you come in on your left. There is a lift in the main bar to access the auditorium.



Accessible Edinburgh: A Festival Guide

Entertainment

Edinburgh has a number of fine theatres and concert halls, and there are independent art-house cinemas as well as mainstream movie theatres. Many pubs offer entertainment ranging from live Scottish folk music to pop, rock and jazz as well as karaoke and quiz nights, while a range of stylish modern bars purvey house, dance and hip-hop to the pre-clubbing crowd.

Holyrood & Arthurs Seat

Edinburgh Folk Club

www.edinburghfolkclub.co.uk; Pleasance Courtyard, 60 The Pleasance; admission £10; bus 36

The Pleasance Cabaret Bar is the home venue of the Edinburgh Folk Club, which runs a program of visiting bands and singers at 8pm on Wednesday nights.

Due to building works, access is currently via a courtyard off The Pleasance. There are no steps from the courtyard into the venue so wheelchair access is not a problem, but the room itself is on two levels separated by a few steps, which prevents wheelchair access to the lower level. Unfortunately the toilets can be accessed only from the lower level and are therefore not wheelchair-accessible.

New Town

Edinburgh Playhouse

0844 871 3014; www.atgtickets.com/venues/edinburgh-playhouse; 18-22 Greenside Pl; box office 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 8pm show nights; all Leith Walk buses

This restored theatre at the top of Leith Walk stages Broadway musicals, dance shows, opera and popular-music concerts.

Reviewers are divided in their opinion of this venue. Two bemoaned the lack of a lift to the stalls, the number of stairs to negotiate to get there and the lack of helpfulness of the staff. Two wheelchair users, however, rated access and staff highly, but both were accommodated in the circle, where the accessible toilet is located. This shows how important it is to phone ahead to explain your needs.

Jam House

0131-220 2321; www.thejamhouse.com; 5 Queen St; admission from £4; 6pm-3am Fri & Sat; buses 10, 11, 12, 16, 26, 44

The brainchild of rhythm'n'blues pianist and TV personality Jools Holland, the Jam House is set in a former BBC TV studio and offers a combination of fine dining and live jazz and blues performances. Admission is for over-21s only, and there's a smart-casual dress code.

The Jam House is fully wheelchair-accessible, with a ramp at the entrance to the building, a lift and accessible toilet.

Opal Lounge

0131-226 20275; www.opallounge.co.uk; 51 George St; admission £5; 10pm-3am; buses 19, 36, 37, 41, 47

The Opal Lounge is jammed at weekends with affluent 20- and 30-somethings who've spent £200 and two hours in front of a mirror to achieve that artlessly scruffy look. During the week, when the air-kissing crowds thin out, it's a good place to relax with an expensive but expertly mixed cocktail. Expect to queue on weekend evenings. There is no wheelchair access as such as it's a basement venue; however, staff are happy to assist in helping wheelchair users down the stairs or, with prior notice, can arrange access through the back fire exit, which leads straight into the club.

The Stand Comedy Club

0131-558 7272; www.thestand.co.uk; 5 York Pl; tickets £2-15; from 7.30pm Mon-Sat, from 12.30pm Sun; St Andrew Sq

The Stand, founded in 1995, is Edinburgh's main independent comedy venue. It's an intimate cabaret bar with performances every night and a free Sunday lunchtime show.

Access is via nine stairs at the front of the building, but wheelchair users appear to be welcome since the website states that due to fire regulations they are only allowed to have one wheelchair user in the premises at any time! This may be because staff are available to assist with advance notice (call or email admin@thestand.co.uk). There's level access to a backstage toilet, although it's not clear whether this is fully accessible for wheelchair users. Carers are admitted free of charge and wheelchair users are allowed to jump the queue!

Voodoo Rooms

0131-556 7060; www.thevoodooorooms.com; 19a West Register St; admission free-£10; noon-1am Fri-Sun, 4pm-1am Mon-Thu; St Andrew Sq

Decadent decor of black leather, ornate plasterwork and gilt detailing create a funky setting for this complex of bars and performance spaces above the Cafe Royal that host everything from classic soul and Motown to Vegas lounge club nights (www.vegasscotland.co.uk) and live local bands. There are lots of steps, so it's completely inaccessible for wheelchair users.

Old Town

Bannerman's

0131-556 3254; www.bannermanslive.co.uk; 212 Cowgate; noon-1am Mon-Sat, 12.30pm-1am Sun; buses 35, 45

A long-established music venue – it seems like every Edinburgh student for the last four decades spent half their youth here – Bannerman's straggles through a warren of old vaults beneath South Bridge. It pulls in crowds of students, locals and backpackers alike with live rock, punk and indie bands six nights a week. It's wheelchair-accessible, but getting into the toilet may be tight, especially for power chair users.

Bedlam Theatre

0131-629 0430; www.bedlamtheatre.co.uk; 11b Bristo Pl; admission £5; buses 2, 23, 27, 41, 42

The Bedlam hosts a long-established (more than 10 years) weekly improvisation slot, the Improverts, which is hugely popular with local students. Shows kick off at 10.30pm every Friday during term time, and you're guaranteed a robust and entertaining evening.

This Fringe venue is an old Gothic church, a listed building, so modifications to make it accessible have proven difficult. There are three steps to access the main outdoor seating area and box office, and more steps to access the theatre and toilets through the main doors. However, there is disabled access to the theatre itself, but advance notification is necessary (using the box office number above) in order to arrange seating. It's also possible to access the indoor cafe in a wheelchair from inside the theatre, but only between show times. Toilet facilities, including accessible cubicles, can be accessed in the same way, but the size of the entrance to the toilets may preclude entry for larger chairs.

Jazz Bar

0131-220 4298; www.thejazzbar.co.uk; 1a Chambers St; admission £3-7; 5pm-3am Mon-Fri, 2.30pm-3am Sat-Sun; buses 35, 45

This atmospheric cellar bar, with its polished parquet floors, bare stone walls, candlelit tables and stylish steel-framed chairs, is owned and operated by jazz musicians. There's live music every night from 9pm to 3am, and on Saturday from 3pm; as well as jazz, expect bands playing blues, funk, soul and fusion. There

are 29 steps down to the basement, and no accessible toilet, but management are happy to have a wheelchair user on the premises if they have companions who are able to carry them up and down the stairs and remain with them while they are there. Due to fire regulations, it would be best to call ahead to ensure that the allowable number of wheelchair guests has not been reached.

Royal Oak

0131-557 2976; www.royal-oak-folk.com; 1 Infirmary St; 11.30am-2am Mon-Sat, 12.30pm-2am Sun; all South Bridge buses

This popular folk music pub is tiny, so get there early (9pm start weekdays, 2.30pm Saturday) if you want to be sure of a place. Sundays from 4pm to 7pm is open session – bring your own instruments (or a good singing voice). The toilets are downstairs, making this venue not wheelchair-friendly.

Sandy Bell's

0131-225 2751; www.sandybellsedinburgh.co.uk; 25 Forrest Rd; noon-1am Mon-Sat, 12.30pm-midnight Sun; buses 2, 23, 27, 41, 42, 45

This unassuming pub is a stalwart of the traditional music scene (the founder's wife sang with The Corries). There's music almost every evening at 9pm, and from 3pm Saturday and Sunday, plus lots of impromptu sessions. It's wheelchair-accessible and has an accessible toilet.

The Caves

0131-557 8989; www.thecavesedinburgh.com; 8-12 Niddry St South; bus 35

A spectacular subterranean club venue set in the ancient stone vaults beneath the South Bridge, the Caves stages a series of one-off club nights and live music gigs, as well as ceilidh nights during the Edinburgh Festival – check the What's On link on the website for upcoming events. The main vault (The Big Room) is fully wheelchair-accessible and has an accessible toilet. The box office and bar at **The Rowantree** (0131-510 1080; 255 Cowgate), a sister festival venue, are also fully accessible and have an accessible toilet.

Wee Red Bar

0131-651 5859; www.weeredbar.co.uk; Edinburgh College of Art, 74 Lauriston Pl; buses 23, 27, 35, 45

The art college's Wee Red Bar has been around so long there's a danger the authorities will slap a blue plaque on it and declare it a national monument. Wee, red and frequented, hardly surprisingly, by lots of art students, it's famous for the Egg (third Saturday of the month), a smorgasbord of classic punk, ska, northern soul, indie etc that is still one of the best club nights in the city. It's wheelchair-accessible, but has no accessible toilet. Note that the venue is short on space and can get very busy at weekends. It is currently closed for renovations, so check before you go!

Whistle Binkie's

0131-557 5114; www.whistlebinkies.com; 4-6 South Bridge; admission free, except after midnight Fri & Sat; 5pm-3am Sun-Thu, 1pm-3am Fri-Sat; all South Bridge buses

This crowded cellar bar, just off the Royal Mile, has live music every night till 3am, from rock and blues to folk and jazz. Open-mic night on Monday and breaking bands on Tuesday are showcases for new talent. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

South Edinburgh

Cameo

0871 902 5723; www.picturehouses.co.uk; 38 Home St; all Toll-cross buses

The three-screen, independently owned Cameo is a good old-fashioned cinema showing an imaginative mix of mainstream and art-house movies. There is a good program of late-night movies and Sunday matinees, and the seats in screen 1 are big enough to get lost in.

Although parking in this busy street may be tricky, buses stop right outside the entrance. Two of the three screens are wheelchair-accessible, but each accommodates only one wheelchair, so it would be wise to book ahead. Screen 1 has a hearing induction loop and certain screenings are subtitled; contact the venue for details. There is a generously sized accessible toilet outside screen 1.

Don Juan, Jackinabox Productions, Edinburgh Festival Fringe, 2012/
© Jan Kranendonk/Shutterstock



Edinburgh Festival Theatre

0131-529 6000; text relay on 18001 0131 529 6003; www.edtheatres.com/festival; 13-29 Nicolson St; box office 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 8pm show nights, 4pm-showtime Sun; all South Bridge buses

A beautifully restored art-deco theatre with a modern frontage, the Festival is the city's main venue for opera, dance and ballet, but also stages musicals, concerts, drama and children's shows.

This theatre gets a gold star for its efforts to make this venue as inclusive as possible. There is a limited number of parking spaces that can be reserved in advance and give level access directly into the theatre; otherwise there are several bus stops within 50m of the venue. If you call the box office on 0131-662 1112, they also offer a drop-off and pick-up service!

There are helpful and well-trained staff on hand to open the heavy doors at the front of the building, and there's lift access to all floors. The view from the wheelchair bays is good and, unusually, more than one wheelchair user can sit together. There's also a wheelchair available for loan. Assistance dogs are welcome – they even look after your dog during the performance and have water bowls available! Signage has also been commended. Tours are inclusive and highly recommended. Contact the venue directly or look for the relevant logo in their brochure for details of audio-described, BSL or captioned performances. Braille, audio and large-print versions of brochures are available; contact the marketing department on 0131-662 1112 to be added to the mailing list. For full details, visit www.edtheatres.com/festival-access.

King's Theatre

0131-529 6000; www.edtheatres.com/kings; 2 Leven St; box office 10am-7pm; all Tollcross buses

King's is a traditional theatre with a program of musicals, drama, comedy and its famous Christmas pantomimes.

As with its sister theatre, Edinburgh Festival Theatre, great efforts have been made towards inclusivity. Although there's no accessible parking at the venue, there's limited parking in nearby side streets (single-yellow line in Tarvit St). Entrance is via a lane at the right-hand side of the theatre: ring the bell to summon staff and beware the slope up to and down into the auditorium. Patrons in wheelchairs can sit in one of several dedicated spaces in the stalls; one reviewer complained that the view was not great from so far back. Help is available for ambulant disabled patrons.

The Sennheiser infrared system covers all areas of the auditorium; headsets/personal loops can be collected from the program box in the foyer.

Assistance dogs are welcome, can be looked after during the performance if required and will be given water! Unfortunately the bars are only accessible by stairs; however, staff are happy to bring refreshments to those who cannot manage stairs – speak to a member of staff before the performance starts if you require assistance. There are two accessible toilets, but one reviewer complained about the size of the one they used.

Audio-described, BSL-interpreted and captioned performances are noted on the website and in the main brochure, and touch tours are sometimes also offered. Braille, audio and large-print versions of brochures are available; contact the marketing department on 0131-662 1112 to be added to the mailing list. For further details, visit www.edtheatres.com/Kings-access.

Queen's Hall

0131-668 2019; www.thequeenshall.net; Clerk St; box office 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, or till 15min after show begins; all Newington buses

The home of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra also stages jazz, blues, folk, rock and comedy.

The Queen's Hall is accessible to wheelchair users via the entrance next to the box office, or to the rear of the building; advise the box office when purchasing your ticket if you need a wheelchair space. Also advise the box office when purchasing your ticket if you are bringing a guide dog, as they will try to seat you in an area that is comfortable for both you and your dog. There's an induction loop in the main auditorium to assist patrons who have hearing difficulties: turn the hearing aid to the T position to pick up sound directly from the stage.

There is level access throughout, and dropped counters at both the bar and the merchandise stall.

There is an accessible toilet, but one reviewer remarked that it was inconveniently located on the opposite side of the building to the wheelchair viewing area. The same reviewer had trouble accessing the building as there were no staff to open the accessible entrance. Also note that the venue is small and can be crowded, which is not ideal for wheelchair users.

Summerhall

0131-560 1580; www.summerhall.co.uk; 1 Summerhall; buses 41, 42, 67

Formerly Edinburgh University's veterinary school, the Summerhall complex is a major cultural centre and entertainment venue, with old halls and lecture theatres (including an original anatomy lecture theatre) now serving as venues for drama, dance, cinema and comedy performances. It's also one of the main venues for Edinburgh Festival events.

Due to the age of the building, not all the venue spaces are fully accessible. A full list of accessible and inaccessible spaces, along with information about BSL-interpreted and relaxed performances, is available at <http://www.summerhall.co.uk/about/accessibility/>. You are advised to book ahead, arrive early and, if possible, let the venue know if you have particular access needs. They will also arrange a familiarisation tour of the venue should you require it; one reviewer found this particularly helpful, which should be borne in mind given that other reviewers found the layout complicated.

Wheelchair and limited-mobility access is via the side entrance on Summerhall Sq – beware the narrow ramp. The entrance is clearly marked by the original Dick Vet gates and a staff member is present in the courtyard at all times. As you enter, The Royal Dick (as it is colloquially known) is situated to your right as you come in, with a ramp at the rear of the bar, and there is a ramp directly ahead that leads to the box office (with lowered counter), press office and cafe (accessible owing to the movable furniture), which also has rooms that can be reserved – a bonus for anyone with hearing/speech issues as you can close the door for quiet. There's a large accessible toilet.

West End & Dean Village

Filmhouse

0131-228 2688; www.filmhousecinema.com; 88 Lothian Rd; all Lothian Rd buses

The Filmhouse is the main venue for the annual Edinburgh International Film Festival and screens a full program of art-house, classic, foreign and second-run films, with lots of themes, retrospectives and 70mm screenings. It has wheelchair access to all three screens.

Royal Lyceum Theatre

0131-248 4848; www.lyceum.org.uk; 30b Grindlay St; box office 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 8pm show nights; all Lothian Rd buses

A grand Victorian theatre located beside the Usher Hall, the Lyceum stages drama, concerts, musicals and ballet.

There are designated Blue Badge parking spaces directly opposite the theatre. Staff are available to open the heavy main doors, after which there is level/lift access to all areas. An induction loop is available from the box office, while infrared and radio headsets are available from the foyer shop for use during audio-described performances. Assistance dogs are welcome and can either accompany their owner or be looked after by staff during performances. There is space for up to 27 people in wheelchairs in the Stalls Boxes, to which drinks may be brought by staff during the interval (although there is lift access to the bar). Carers are admitted free of charge by prior arrangement. The accessible toilet is on street level and, although small, handily close to the lift.

Information on all productions and the theatre is available in audio format, in large print and in Braille. Details of audio-described, BSL-interpreted, captioned performances and touch tours are available either on the website or in the theatre's listings.

For further information, visit <http://lyceum.org.uk/your-visit/accessibility/>, where you will find a seating plan and a downloadable access brochure, or contact Jacqui Nagib on 0131-248 4818 or jnagib@lyceum.org.uk.

Traverse Theatre

0131-228 1404; www.traverse.co.uk; 10 Cambridge St; box office 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 8pm show nights; all Lothian Rd buses

The Traverse is the main focus for new Scottish writing and stages an adventurous program of contemporary drama and dance. The box office is only open on Sunday (from 4pm) when there's a show on.

From the Cambridge St entrance there is level access to the box office. There is lift access to the bar-cafe and theatres, and accessible toilets on the box office and bar cafe levels. Assistance dogs are welcome. Mention when booking if you require lift access to Traverse 1 or Traverse 2 as a staff member will meet and accompany you. When booking, make it known if you require a wheelchair or if you are interested in an audio-described, BSL-interpreted, hearing-enhanced or captioned performance.

Touch tours of the stage set are also available for visually impaired ticketholders prior to the start of an audio-described performance. For full details, visit: <http://www.traverse.co.uk/visiting/access-guide/>.

All reviewers give this a high rating; one reviewer regularly visits the venue just to use the bar-cafe.

Usher Hall

0131-228 1155; www.usherhall.co.uk; Lothian Rd; box office 10.30am-5.30pm, to 8pm show nights; all Lothian Rd buses

The architecturally impressive Usher Hall hosts concerts by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) and performances of popular music.

Blue Badge parking is available opposite the Royal Lyceum Theatre in Grindlay St and in Cambridge St outside the [Traverse Theatre](#) (p139). If you are arriving by taxi or being dropped off at the venue, use Grindlay St, which is adjacent to the level access entry, where you will find lifts to all levels.

There are 12 wheelchair-accessible spaces (none in the upper circle, which is also unsuitable for PRMs), which must be reserved at the time of booking – online booking is not available for wheelchair users and concession prices are available only for certain performances. There's a hearing loop available – switch your aid to the T position. Assistance dogs are welcome.

Although the stalls bar area is not fully accessible, staff are available to assist with drinks orders. There are a number of accessible toilets. The high rating given by reviewers is due partly to the great view given to wheelchair users.



Accessible Edinburgh: A Festival Guide

Gay & Lesbian Edinburgh

Pride Edinburgh march along the Royal Mile / © Skully/Shutterstock



Edinburgh has a small – but perfectly formed – gay and lesbian scene, centred on the area around Broughton St (known affectionately as the ‘Pink Triangle’) at the eastern end of New Town. *Scotsgay* (www.scotsgay.co.uk) is the local monthly magazine covering gay and lesbian issues, with listings of gay-friendly pubs and clubs. See also www.edinburghgayscene.com for online listings. Useful contacts include **Edinburgh LGBT Centre** (www.lgbthealth.org.uk; 9 Howe St) and **Lothian LGBT Helpline** (0300-123 2523; www.lgbt-helpline-scotland.org.uk; noon-9pm Tue & Wed).

Pubs & Clubs

CC Blooms

www.ccbloomsedinburgh.com; 23 Greenside Pl; 11am-3am Mon-Sat, 12.30pm-3am Sun

New owners have given the raddled old queen of Edinburgh’s gay scene a shot in the arm, with two floors of deafening dance and disco every night. It’s overcrowded and the drinks are a bit overpriced but it’s worth a visit – go early, or sample the wild karaoke on Sunday nights. Sadly, management inform us that it is not wheelchair-accessible, nor do they have an accessible toilet.

Regent

2 Montrose Tce; noon-1am Mon-Sat, 12.30pm-1am Sun

This is a pleasant gay local with a relaxed atmosphere (no loud music), serving coffee and croissants as well as excellent real ales, including Deuchars IPA and Caledonian 80/-. It’s the meeting place for the Lesbian and Gay Real Ale Drinkers club (first Monday of month at 9pm). It’s listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.



Accessible Edinburgh: A Festival Guide

Live Music

Edinburgh is a great place to hear traditional Scottish (and Irish) folk music, with a mix of regular spots and impromptu sessions. The *Gig Guide* (www.gigguide.co.uk) is a free email newsletter and listing website covering live music in Edinburgh and Scotland.

Edinburgh is home to the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO; www.sco.org.uk), one of Europe’s finest and well worth hearing. Their performances are usually held at [Queen’s Hall](#) (p137) or [Usher Hall](#) (p140).

Scottish Opera (www.scottishopera.org.uk) and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO; www.rsno.org.uk) are based in Glasgow but regularly perform in Edinburgh, at the [Edinburgh Festival Theatre](#) (p136) and [Usher Hall](#) (p140), respectively.



Accessible Edinburgh: A Festival Guide

Sport

Edinburgh is home to two rival football teams playing in the Scottish Premier League: Heart of Midlothian (aka Hearts) and Hibernian (aka Hibs). The domestic football season lasts from August to May, and most matches are played at 3pm on Saturday or 7.30pm on Tuesday or Wednesday.

Each year, from January to March, Scotland's national rugby team takes part in the Six Nations Rugby Union Championship. The most important fixture is the clash against England for the Calcutta Cup. At club level the season runs from September to May. Murrayfield Stadium, about 1.5 miles west of the city centre, is the venue for international matches.

Easter Road Stadium

www.hibernianfc.co.uk; 12 Albion Pl; buses 1, 35

Hibernian's home ground is northeast of the city centre at Easter Road Stadium. Visit the website of the Hibernian Disabled Supporters' Association (www.hdsa.org.uk/accessibility-at-easter-road/) for full details regarding accessibility at the stadium.

Reviewers commend the club on its accessibility. With appropriate credentials, companions are admitted free of charge, and have a reserved seat next to each wheelchair space. Accessible toilets are spacious. An early arrival is recommended due to very restricted parking options, even with a Blue Badge.

Meadowbank Sports Centre

0131-661 5351; www.edinburghleisure.co.uk/venues; 139 London Rd; buses 2, 26

Many sporting events, including athletics and cycling, are held at Meadowbank Sports Centre, Scotland's main sports arena. Not only is the venue wheelchair-accessible for PWDs attending as spectators, but most of the facilities are also highly wheelchair-friendly, including parking, accessible changing rooms, meeting rooms, showers and a pool-side hoist. For details of accessibility for sporting events, see the relevant event website.

Murrayfield Stadium

www.scottishrugby.org; 112 Roseburn St; buses 1, 2, 22, 30

Murrayfield Stadium, about 1.5 miles west of the city centre, is the venue for international rugby matches.

There are 124 dedicated wheelchair spaces available, all in the West stand, and plenty of accessible toilets. For full details of Murrayfield's access, including ticketing, parking, seating and toilets (including one Changing Places facility), visit www.scottishrugby.org/murrayfield-stadium/disabled-access. Reviewers rave about access and the helpfulness of the staff; and, in particular, about the free parking passes for disabled ticket holders.

Musselburgh Racecourse

www.musselburgh-racecourse.co.uk; Linkfield Rd; buses 26, 44

Horse-racing enthusiasts should head 6 miles east to Musselburgh Racecourse, Scotland's oldest racecourse (founded 1816), where meetings are held throughout the year.

PWDs with a Blue Badge are permitted to park in the Owners/Trainers and Disabled car park just off Linkfield Rd, subject

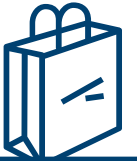
to availability. Wheelchair users can access viewing ramps at three points along the running rails. Dogs are allowed in the grounds, but must be kept on the lead at all times.

Tynecastle Stadium

www.heartsfc.co.uk; Gorgie Rd; buses 2, 3, 4, 25, 33, 44

Football team Heart of Midlothian (aka Hearts) has its home ground at Tynecastle Stadium, southwest of the city centre in Gorgie.

Wheelchair users are entitled to a reduced entrance rate and to bring one carer free of charge. Assistance dogs will only be admitted by prior arrangement. Full details of Hearts' access policy, including information regarding accessible entrances to each stand, accessible toilets and number of available wheelchair places, can be found at www.heartsfc.co.uk/pages/disabledpolicy.



Accessible Edinburgh: A Festival Guide

Shopping

The Royal Mile / © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam



Leith

Leith is home to Edinburgh's biggest shopping mall, Ocean Terminal, with its wide range of big-name high-street stores. But the streets around The Shore also harbour a small fleet of independent shops selling everything from gifts and homewares to kilts and tartan.

Flea Market

www.outoftheblue.org.uk; Drill Hall, 36 Dalmeny St; 10am-3pm last Sat of month; all Leith Walk buses

A Paris-style flea market it ain't, but this monthly rummage through the back of Leith's collective cupboards is an interesting place to trawl for vintage clothes and accessories, old books, tools, toys and scratched vinyl.

Kinloch Anderson

0131-555 1390; www.kinlochanderson.com; 4 Dock St; 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat; buses 16, 22, 35, 36

One of the best tartan shops in Edinburgh, Kinloch Anderson was founded in 1868 and is still family run. It is a supplier of kilts and Highland dress to the royal family. Management assures us that it is wheelchair-accessible.

Ocean Terminal

0131-555 8888; www.oceanterminal.com; Ocean Dr; 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat, 11am-6pm Sun; buses 11, 22, 34, 35, 36

Anchored by Debenhams and BHS department stores, Ocean Terminal is the biggest shopping centre in Edinburgh; fashion outlets include Fat Face, GAP, Schuh, Superdry and White Stuff. The complex also includes access to the former Royal Yacht *Britannia* and a berth for visiting cruise liners.

New Town

Princes St is Edinburgh's trademark shopping street, lined with all the big high-street stores from Marks & Spencer to Debenhams, with more upmarket designer shops a block north on George St, and many smaller specialist stores on pedestrianised Rose St and Thistle St.

There are also two big city-centre shopping malls – Waverley Mall, at the eastern end of Princes St next to the Balmoral Hotel, and the nearby St James Centre, at the top of Leith St – plus

Multrees Walk, a designer shopping complex with a flagship Harvey Nichols store on the eastern side of St Andrew Square.

Cruise

0131-226 3524; www.cruiseffashion.co.uk; 94 George St; 9.30am-6pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 10am-7pm Thu, 9am-6pm Sat, 11am-6pm Sun; buses 19, 23, 27, 37, 41

An ornately corniced and plastered foyer leads into three floors of white-painted, minimalist art-gallery-like decor. This and a second outlet at nearby 80 George St show off the best of mainstream designer labels for men and women including Paul Smith, Jasper Conran, Hugo Boss, Joseph Tricot, Armani and Dolce & Gabbana. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Fopp

0131-220 0310; www.fopp.com; 3-15 Rose St; 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun; all Princes St buses

A good place to hunt for cheap CDs and vinyl, and the friendly staff really know what they're talking about. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial. However, as wheelchair users will know, bookshops and music shops are not always easy to negotiate in a wheelchair.

Harvey Nichols

0131-524 8388; www.harveynichols.com; 30-34 St Andrew Sq; 10am-6pm Mon-Wed, 10am-8pm Thu, 10am-7pm Fri & Sat, 11am-6pm Sun; St Andrew Sq

The jewel in the crown of Edinburgh's shopping scene has four floors of designer labels and eye-popping price tags.

Jenners

0344 800 3725; www.houseoffraser.co.uk; 48 Princes St; 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Wed, 8am-9pm Thu, 8am-8pm Fri, 8am-7pm Sat, 11am-6pm Sun; Princes St

Founded in 1838, and acquired by House of Fraser in 2005, Jenners is the grande dame of Scottish department stores. It stocks a wide range of quality goods, both classic and contemporary.

John Lewis

0131-556 9121; www.johnlewis.com; St James Centre, Leith St; 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 6.30pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun; tram

The place to go for good-value clothes and household goods.

Multrees Walk

www.multreeswalk.co.uk; St Andrew Sq; St Andrew Sq

A designer shopping complex with flagship Harvey Nichols store and boutiques by Louis Vuitton, Kurt Geiger, Boss and Burberry, among others.

Oscar & Fitch

0131-556 6461; www.oscarandfitch.com; 20 Multrees Walk; 10am-6pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, to 7pm Thu, 11am-5pm Sun; St Andrew Sq

If you're looking for some stylish spectacles, this boutique stocks the city's largest selection of designer eyewear, from head-turningly avant-garde daytime glasses to popstar-cool shades, all expertly fitted to your personal satisfaction. It's inside the shopping centre so should be wheelchair-accessible.

Palenque

0131-225 7194; www.palenquejewellery.co.uk; 99 Rose St; 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun; Princes St

Palenque is a treasure trove of contemporary silver jewellery and handcrafted accessories made using ceramics, textiles and metal-work. It's wheelchair-accessible, as is its sister store at 56 High St (0131-557 9553).

Valvona & Crolla

0131-556 6066; www.valvonacrolla.co.uk; 19 Elm Row; 8.30am-6pm Mon-Thu, 8am-6.30pm Fri & Sat, 10am-5pm Sun; all Leith Walk buses

The acknowledged queen of Edinburgh delicatessens, established during the 1930s, Valvona & Crolla is packed with Mediterranean goodies, including an excellent choice of fine wines. It also has a good cafe. It's wheelchair-accessible.

Waterstone's West End

0131-226 2666; www.waterstones.com; 128 Princes St; 9am-7pm Mon-Wed & Fri-Sat, 9am-8pm Thu, 10.30am-6pm Sun; all Princes St buses

A large bookshop with good selection of Edinburgh and Scottish interest titles; it also has an in-store cafe with great views of the castle. There are accessible buses and trams that stop nearby on Princes St. There are single yellow lines on side streets of Princes St for Blue Badge holders. Access is quite good as there is a (small) lift the back of the store serving all floors. There is an accessible toilet at the back of the top floor near the cafe.

Waverley Mall

0131-557 3759; www.waverleymall.com; Waverley Bridge; 9am-6pm Mon-Wed & Fri-Sat, to 7pm Thu, 11am-5pm Sun; all Princes St buses

A so-so shopping mall perched beside Waverley train station, with fashion stores such as Superdry, Oasis and Pulp and gift shops selling whisky and tartan.

Old Town

The top end of the Royal Mile, from the castle down to the Lawnmarket, is infested with tacky, tartan tourist shops, but there are many interesting, independent shops further downhill, and on nearby Victoria, Cockburn and St Mary's Sts.

Armstrong's

0131-220 5557; www.armstrongsvintage.co.uk; 83 Grassmarket; 10am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, to 6pm Fri & Sat, noon-6pm Sun; bus 2

Armstrong's is an Edinburgh fashion institution (established in 1840, no less), a quality vintage clothes emporium offering everything from elegant 1940s dresses to funky 1970s flares. As well as having retro fashion, it's a great place to hunt for 'previously owned' kilts and Harris tweed, or to seek inspiration for that fancy-dress party. It's wheelchair-accessible, but there's a step inside to access back rooms. The bathroom is inaccessible to wheelchair users due to a flight of stairs. There are outlets in Teviot Pl and Clark St, which both have level access.



Christmas shopping / © VisitScotland/Jakub Iwanicki

Princes St / © VisitScotland/Kenny Lam



Blackwell's Bookshop

0131-622 8222; www.blackwell.co.uk; 53-62 South Bridge; 9am-8pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, 9.30am-8pm Wed, 9am-6pm Sat, noon-6pm Sun; all South Bridge buses

The city's principal bookstore covering all subjects, including a huge selection of academic books. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Godiva

0131-221 9212; www.godivaboutique.co.uk; 9 West Port; 10.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-5.30pm Sun; bus 2

This unconventional and innovative boutique specialising in both vintage and modern cutting-edge designs won Best New Designer prize in the Scottish Variety Awards 2010, and is committed to ethical fashion. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Ian Mellis

0131-226 6215; www.mellischeese.co.uk; 30a Victoria St; 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Wed, to 7pm Thu-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun; buses 2, 23, 27, 41, 42

Scotland's finest cheesemonger purveys the best of British and Irish cheeses. This is the place to purchase traditional Scottish cheeses, from smooth Lanark Blue (the Scottish Roquefort) to sharp Isle of Mull Cheddar. There's also a branch in Stockbridge. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Joyce Forsyth Designer Knitwear

0131-220 4112; www.joyceforsyth.co.uk; 42 Candlemaker Row; 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat; buses 2, 23, 27, 41, 42, 45

The colourful knitwear on show at this intriguing little shop will drag your ideas about woollens firmly into the 21st century. Ms Forsyth's trademark design is a flamboyant, flared woollen coat (can be knitted to order in colours of your own choice), but there are also box jackets, jumpers, hats, scarves and shawls. There's a 3 ½ inch step into the shop, but the door shouldn't present a problem.

Kilberry Bagpipes

0131-556 9607; www.kilberry.com; 27 St Mary's St; 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat; buses 35, 36

Makers and retailers of traditional Highland bagpipes, Kilberry also sells piping accessories, snare drums, books, CDs and learning materials. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Mr Wood's Fossils

0131-220 1344; www.mrwoodsossils.co.uk; 5 Cowgatehead; 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat; bus 2

Founded by the famous fossil hunter Stan Wood, who discovered 'Lizzie', the oldest fossil reptile yet known, this fascinating speciality shop has a wide range of minerals, gems, fossils and other geological gifts. There is a low step of the front door, which is usually not a problem for wheelchair users. However, management has a portable wooden ramp that can be used if necessary for power chair users. There's a small raised area at the back of the shop that is not wheelchair-accessible.

Pie in the Sky

0131-220 1477; www.facebook.com/pieinthelky72; 21 Cockburn St; 10am-6pm; bus 6

Gorgeous vintage and alternative fashion and accessories. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Underground Solush'n

0131-226 2242; www.undergroundsolushn.com; 9 Cockburn St; 10am-6pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, 10am-7pm Thu, noon-6pm Sun; bus 6

A paradise for searchers of new and secondhand vinyl, this place has thousands of records – techno, house, jungle, hip-hop, R&B, funk, soul and 45s – plus a (smaller) selection of CDs, T-shirts, videos, books and merchandise. It's also a good place to find out what's happening on the local music/clubbing scene. It's wheelchair-accessible.

South Edinburgh

Eclectic South Edinburgh offers a broad range of retail therapy, including the crafts and antique shops on Causewayside and the bookshops clustered around the university.

Hogs Head Music

0131-667 5274; www.hogs-head.com; 62 South Clerk St; 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-4.30pm Sun; all Newington buses

A classic, old-school music and film shop that buys and sells secondhand CDs and DVDs. Thousands of discs and box sets to browse among, a good range of T-shirts, and staff who know of what they speak. It's wheelchair-accessible.

Meadows Pottery

0131-662 4064; www.themeadowspottery.com; 11a Summerhall Pl; 10.30am-7.30pm Mon-Tue, to 6pm Wed-Sat; buses 2, 41, 42, 67

This little shop sells a range of colourful, high-fired oxidised stoneware, both domestic and decorative, all hand-thrown on the premises. If you can't find what you want, you can commission custom-made pieces. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Word Power

0131-662 9112; www.word-power.co.uk; 43 West Nicolson St; 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun; buses 41, 42

Word Power is a radical, independent bookshop that supports both small publishers and local writers. It stocks a wide range of political, gay and feminist literature, as well as non-mainstream fiction and non-fiction. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Stockbridge

Stockbridge is a good place to shop for gifts, crafts and jewellery. The main shopping areas are on Raeburn Pl, Henderson Row and St Stephen St, which has a selection of boutiques selling everything from jewellery and vintage fashion to retro furniture.

Annie Smith

0131-332 5749; www.anniesmith.co.uk; 20 Raeburn Pl; 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun; buses 24, 29, 42

Annie Smith's back-of-the-shop studio creates beautiful and original contemporary jewellery in silver and 18-carat gold, with beaten and worked surfaces that reflect natural textures such as rock, ice and leaves. If there's nothing in the shop that takes your fancy, you can commission Ms Smith to make something to order. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Bliss

0131-332 4605; www.stockbridgeedinburgh.com/bliss; 5 Raeburn Pl; 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun; buses 24, 29, 42

This is a great place for girly gifts, from colourful handmade cards and giftwrap to copper and silver jewellery, scented candles, art prints and accessories. It's listed as wheelchair-accessible on Yelp, but we have no first-hand testimonial.

Miss Bizio

0777-558 3675; <http://missbiziocouture.com>; 41 St Stephen St; 11am-6pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat; buses 24, 29, 42

Established by an enthusiast who has been collecting vintage fashion for more than 30 years, this boutique is a cornucopia of high-end clothes and accessories from the Victorian era to the 1970s. Not much in the way of bargains, but fascinating to browse through. There are two wide, shallow steps up from the street.

Stockbridge Market

www.stockbridgemarket.com; cnr Kerr St & Saunders St; 10am-5pm Sun; buses 24, 29, 36, 42

On Sundays, Stockbridge Market is the focus of the community. Set in a leafy square next to the bridge that gives the district its name, stalls range from fresh Scottish produce to handmade ceramics, jewellery, soaps and cosmetics. Grab an espresso from Steampunk Coffee, which operates out of a 1970s VW campervan.

West End & Dean Village

Edinburgh's West End has a string of high-street chain stores on the main drag of Shandwick Pl, but there's also a hidden enclave of decadent designer shops clustered around the junction of

William and Stafford Sts, plus the weekly foodfest of Edinburgh Farmers Market.

Edinburgh Farmers Market

0131-652 5940; www.edinburghfarmersmarket.com; Castle Tce; 9am-2pm Sat; all Lothian Rd buses

This colourful weekly event attracts stallholders who sell everything from wild boar, venison and home-cured pedigree bacon to organic bread, free-range eggs, honey and handmade soap.

Wonderland

0131-229 6428; www.wonderlandmodels.com; 97-101 Lothian Rd; 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat; all Lothian Rd buses

Wonderland is a classic kids-with-their-noses-pressed-against-the-window toy shop that is filled with model aircraft, Lego Star Wars kit, radio-controlled cars and all sorts of other desirable things, but it also caters to the serious train set and model-making fraternity. It's wheelchair-accessible, with ramps in the store to the different levels.

