

Central Scotland



The country's historical roots are deeply embedded in the sandy soils of Central Scotland. Significant ruins and castles that chronicle the region's charismatic history pepper the landscape. Key battlegrounds shaped the country's fortunes around Stirling, and Perth is the former capital where kings were crowned on the Stone of Destiny.

Arriving from the cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, visitors begin to get a sense of the country further north as the lowland belt gives way to Highland splendour. It is here that the majesty of Scotland's landscape unfolds in deep, dark steely blue lochs that hold the shimmering silhouettes of soaring, sentinel-like craggy peaks on a still day.

This part of Scotland is big-tree country, with pockets of ancient woodlands thriving side by side with regrowth forests, some planted by visionary landowners 300 years ago. Opportunities to enjoy the landscape abound and walking, cycling, mountaineering and wildlife safaris are all easy possibilities. Capping off the exhaustingly fresh outdoors are some of the country's best pubs and eateries, which greet weary visitors at the end of the day.

It's also the variety in the region that pulls the punters – learn all about crannogs, have a drink in an ancient pub that holds scrawlings from Robert Burns, throw a line into a picture-perfect loch and explore one of the country's most stunning wooded glens all in a day.

The coastline along the 'kingdom' of Fife offers quaint fishing villages along East Neuk and one of Scotland's most enjoyable towns – St Andrews. The township, touched with a gentle dignity, has a medieval shell that belies the sophistication and dynamism of a student population drawn from around the globe.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Walking the eerie fields of Bannockburn and rambling through the imperious castle lording it over the city in **Stirling** (p193)
- Mixing history, nostalgia and, of course, golf on the hallowed fairways of **St Andrews Old Course** (p211)
- Bagging magnificent **Ben Lawers** (p224), and keeping an eye out for Neolithic rock art on the way
- Whizzing down the slopes of **Glenshee** (p230), one of the country's largest ski runs
- Nursing a pint of Ale of Atholl and toasting the toes by a roaring log fire at the **Moulin Inn** (p229), a pub dripping with Scottish character.



■ POPULATION: 764,000

■ AREA: 9254 SQ KM

