



Southern Scotland

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Why Go?

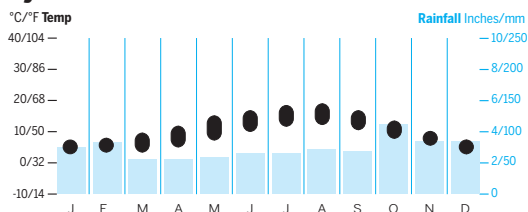
Though folk in northern England are well aware of its charms, for many others southern Scotland is just something to drive through on the way to northern Scotland. Big mistake. But it does mean there's breathing room here in summer, and peaceful corners.

Southern Scotland's proximity to England brought raiding and strife; grim borderland fortifications saw skirmishing aplenty. There was loot to be had in the Borders, where large prosperous abbeys bossed agricultural communities. Regularly ransacked before their destruction in the Reformation, their ruins, linked by cycling and walking paths, are among Scotland's most atmospheric historic sites.

The hillier west enjoys extensive forest cover between bustling market towns. The hills cascade down to sandy stretches of coastline blessed with Scotland's sunniest weather. It's the land of Robert Burns, whose verse reflected his earthy attitudes and active social life. Offshore, Arran is an island jewel offering top cycling, walking and scenery.

When to Go

Ayr



May If winter hasn't been too wet, lace the hiking boots and stride up Arran's hills.

June The perfect time to visit the region's numerous stately homes, with spectacular gardens in bloom.

Autumn Hit Galloway's forests to see red deer battling it out in the rutting season.



Southern Scotland Highlights

- 1** Hiking or cycling between the noble ruins of the **Border Abbeys** (p138)
- 2** Admiring 18th-century architectural genius at **Culzean Castle** (p164), perched on wild sea cliffs
- 3** Pondering the tough old life on the England–Scotland frontier at desolate **Hermitage Castle** (p149)
- 4** Exploring charming, dignified **Kirkcubright** (p172), and the creative flair of its inhabitants
- 5** Learning some Lallans words from the Scottish Bard's verses at the new **Robert Burns Birthplace Museum** (p163)



6 Whooshing down forest trails at the **7stanes mountain-biking hubs** (p175)

7 Marvelling at the radical social reform instituted in

the mill community of **New Lanark** (p151)

8 Blowing away the cobwebs on the scenic, activity-packed **Isle of Arran** (p155)

9 Plunging the deeps off the picturesque fishing village of **St Abbs** (p138)

10 Browsing secondhand books at **Wigtown** (p176)

BORDERS REGION

Domestic tourists grease the wheel of the Borders' economy – they flock here from north and south of the border, eager to explore links to the country's medieval past. It's a distinctive region – centuries of war and plunder have left a battle-scarred landscape, encapsulated by the remnants of the great Border abbeys. They were an irresistible magnet during the Border wars, and were destroyed and rebuilt numerous times. The monasteries met their scorched end in the 16th century and were never rebuilt. Today these massive stone shells are the region's finest attraction.

But there's more. Welcoming villages with ancient traditions pepper the countryside, one of the best cold-water diving sites in Europe is off the coast, and grandiose mansions await exploration. It's fine walking and cycling country too, the gentle hills lush with an artist's palette of shades of green. And don't miss Hermitage Castle; nothing encapsulates the region's turbulent history like this spooky stronghold.

i Getting Around

There's a good network of local buses. **First** (☎01324-602200; www.firstgroup.com)

operates between most of the border towns and connects them with Edinburgh.

Cockburnspath

The 16th-century **Mercat Cross** in Cockburnspath village square, about a mile inland from the coast, is the official eastern-end start of the Southern Upland Way (see below). There are a couple of B&Bs here, but no pub; it's not a particularly inspiring place to spend the night, so jump on a bus to nearby Coldingham for accommodation.

Bus 253 running between Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed stops in Cockburnspath every two hours or so.

Coldingham & St Abbs

Coldingham and St Abbs are the two most popular places for tourists on this section of Scotland's east coast, a short distance north of the English border. This picturesque area is fantastic for those who love the great outdoors – there's loads to do, as evidenced by the anglers, scuba divers, birdwatchers and walkers who flock here.

BORDERS WALKING & CYCLING

The region's most famous walk is the challenging 212-mile **Southern Upland Way** (www.southernuplandway.gov.uk). If you want a sample, one of the best bits is the three-to four-day section from St John's Town of Dalry to Beatock. Another long-distance walk is the 62-mile **St Cuthbert's Way** (www.stcuthbertsway.fsnet.co.uk), inspired by the travels of St Cuthbert (a 7th-century saint who worked in Melrose Abbey), which crosses some superb scenery between Melrose and Lindisfarne (in England). In Galloway the **Pilgrims Way** follows a 25-mile trail from Glenluce Abbey to the Isle of Whithorn.

The **Borders Abbeys Way** (www.bordersabbeysway.com) links all the great Border abbeys in a 65-mile circuit. For shorter walks and especially circular loops in the hills, the towns of Melrose, Jedburgh and Kelso all make ideal bases.

For baggage transfer on these walks, contact **WalkingSupport** (☎01896-822079; www.walking-support.co.uk). In early September, look out for the **Scottish Borders Walking Festival** (www.borderswalking.com), with nine days of walks for all abilities and an instant social scene.

With the exception of the main A-roads, traffic is sparse, which, along with the beauty of the countryside, makes this ideal cycling country.

The **Tweed Cycle Way** is a waymarked route running 62 miles along the beautiful Tweed Valley, following minor roads from Biggar to Peebles (13 miles), Melrose (16 miles), Coldstream (19 miles) and Berwick-upon-Tweed (14 miles). Jedburgh tourist office (p148) has details.

For an island tour, the **Isle of Arran** offers excellent cycling opportunities. The 50-mile coast-road circuit is stunning and is worth splitting into two or three days.

👁 Sights & Activities

From the village of Coldingham, with its twisting streets, take the B6438 downhill to the small fishing village of St Abbs, a gorgeous, peaceful little community with a picture-perfect harbour nestled below the cliffs. St Abbs is a great place for walking – head for the car park at the harbour and have a stroll over the rocky sea walls to get a feel of this fabulous location.

The clear, clean waters around St Abbs form part of **St Abbs & Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve** (www.marine-reserve.co.uk; Northfield, St Abbs), one of the best cold-water diving sites in Europe. The reserve is home to a variety of marine life, including grey seals and porpoises. Visibility is about 7m to 8m but has been recorded at 24m. Beds of brown kelp form a hypnotically undulating forest on the seabed.

Drop by the **St Abbs Dive Centre** (☎018907-71237; www.stabbs.org/postoffice.html) at the post office; these folk provide plenty of advice on diving in the area. They also sell and repair (no charge) equipment, and nothing seems to be too much trouble. Divers can charter boats from **Paul Crowe** (☎018907-71945, 07710-961050; www.divestabbs.info) or **Paul O'Callaghan** (☎018907-71525; www.stabbsdiving.com) among others.

Back in Coldingham try **Scoutscroft** (☎018907-71669; www.scoutscroft.co.uk; Scoutscroft Holiday Centre, St Abbs Rd) for pointers on the best places to dive in the area and what you'll likely see. You can also hire equipment here (full kit per day £60) and organise a boat dive. This professional setup can kit you up with nitrox tanks, and do a full range of IANTD courses.

In Coldingham, a signposted turn-off to the east leads just under a mile down to away-from-it-all **Coldingham Bay**, which has a sandy beach and a clifftop walking trail to Eyemouth (3 miles). At St Vedas Hotel (p139) is **St Vedas Surf Shop** (www.stvedas.co.uk) where you can hire surfboards and snorkelling gear. Surfing lessons are also available.

North of St Abbs, the 78-hectare **St Abb's Head National Nature Reserve** (NTS; www.nts.org.uk) is an ornithologist's wonderland, with large colonies of guillemots, kittiwakes, herring gulls, fulmars, razorbills and some puffins. You get to the reserve by following the 2-mile circular trail that begins beside the Northfield Farm car park (£2) on the road just west of

St Abbs. The clifftop walks here are spectacular, especially on sunny days. There's a good little **nature exhibition** (☎10am-5pm Apr-Oct) in the Old Smiddy complex alongside.

🏠 Sleeping & Eating

Rock House

BUNKHOUSE, B&B ££

(☎018907-71945; www.divestabbs.info; St Abbs; dm/s/d £18/30/60) Right by the harbour in St Abbs, this is run by a friendly dive skipper; you can almost roll out of bed onto the boat. There's a bunkhouse which is normally booked up by groups at the weekend, and a sweet room that can sleep up to three. There's also a self-catering cottage here.

St Vedas Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎018907-71679; www.stvedas.co.uk; Coldingham Bay; s/tw without bathroom £35/60, d £70) Just opposite the path down to the beach, St Vedas is a cheery, British-beach-resort-style hotel. It has a touch of faded grandeur, and is very popular at weekends over summer. Rooms are plain but neat and tidy – No 1 is a good double with sea views and en suite. Meals are available at the **restaurant** (mains £6-9) and there's a cafe on the beach itself in summer.

📍 Getting There & Away

Bus 253 between Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed (six daily Monday to Saturday, three Sunday) stops in Coldingham and St Abbs, as does bus 235, which runs at least hourly from Eyemouth.

Eyemouth

POP 3383

Eyemouth is a busy fishing port and popular domestic holiday destination. The harbour itself is very atmospheric – you may even spot seals frolicking in the water, and tourists frolicking around the boats, snapping pics of old fishing nets.

The community here suffered its greatest catastrophe in October 1881, when a storm destroyed the coastal fishing fleet, killing 189 fishermen, 129 of whom were locals.

👁 Sights

Eyemouth Museum

MUSEUM

(www.eyemouthmuseum.org.uk; Manse Rd; adult/child £2.50/free; ☎10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct) Captivating Eyemouth Museum has local-history displays, particularly relating to the town's fishing heritage.

Its centrepiece is the tapestry commemorating the 1881 fishing disaster.

Eyemouth Maritime Centre MUSEUM
(www.worldofboats.org; Harbour Rd; adult/child/family £3.75/2.50/9; ☉10am-5pm) Situated right on Eyemouth's working fishing harbour, what was once the fish market has now been decked out to resemble an 18th-century man o'war. A changing yearly exhibition occupies most of the interior, drawing on the museum's large collection of well-loved wooden coastal craft. The museum guides are great for extra information.

Gunsgreen House MUSEUM
(www.gunsgreenhouse.org; adult/child £5/3; ☉11am-5pm Thu-Mon Apr-Sep, weekends only Mar & Oct) Standing proud and four-square across the harbour, this elegant 18th-century John Adam mansion was built on the profits of smuggling; Eyemouth was an important landing point for the illegal cargoes of ships from northern Europe and the Baltic. The house has been beautifully restored to reflect this and other aspects of its varied past.



Sleeping & Eating



Churches Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01890-750401; www.churcheshotel.co.uk; Albert Rd; s £75, d £85-120; ☉Mar-Oct; 📶) This is a very stylish place set in an 18th-century building, with rooms exuding a cool demeanour and a classical look. Each room has a different theme but No 4, with its four-poster bed, and No 6, with huge windows overlooking the harbour, are our favourites. Little conveniences like bottled water and iPod docks are complemented by excellent personal service from the owners. The menu (mains £10 to £16) is blessed with the day's catch from the harbour – it's the best spot in town for fresh seafood.

Oblò BISTRO ££
(www.oblobar.com; 20 Harbour St; bar meals £6-10, dinner mains £12-15; ☉food 10am-9pm) For a meal pretty much anytime, find your way upstairs to this modern bar-bistro with its comfy seating and modish interior. It's urban, it's trendy, it's just down from the tourist office, and it's got a great deck to lap up the sunshine. Try the local seafood.

Bantry B&B ££
(Mackays; ☎018907-51900; www.mackaysofeyemouth.co.uk; 20 High St; s/d £40/60, without

bathroom £25/50) Plonked on top of the restaurant of the same name on the main drag, this place has redecorated and refurbished rooms with muted tones and a luxurious, modern feel, positioned right on the waterfront. Try to get No 3 if you're after a double, as it's the only one with sea views. Add £2.50 per person for continental breakfast, or a fiver for the works.

Information

Tourist office (☎018907-50698; eyemouth@visitscotland.com; Manse Rd; ☉10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun Apr-Oct) Very helpful; it's in Eyemouth Museum near the harbour.

Getting There & Away

Eyemouth is 5 miles north of the Scotland-England border. Buses go to Berwick-upon-Tweed (15 minutes, frequent), which has a train station, and Edinburgh (£5.60, 1¼ hours, six daily Monday to Saturday, three Sunday).

South of Eyemouth

Further south, 3 miles west of the A1 along the B6461, **Paxton House** (www.paxtonhouse.com; adult/child £7.50/3.50; ☉11am-5pm Apr-Oct, grounds 10am-sunset Apr-Oct) is beside the River Tweed and surrounded by parkland and gardens. It was built in 1758 by Patrick Home for his intended wife, the daughter of Prussia's Frederick the Great. Unfortunately, she stood him up, but it was her loss; designed by the Adam family – brothers John, James and Robert – it's acknowledged as one of the finest 18th-century Palladian houses in Britain. It contains a large collection of Chippendale and Regency furniture, and its picture gallery houses paintings from the national galleries of Scotland. The nursery is a feature designed to provide insight into a child's 18th-century life. In the grounds are walking trails and a riverside museum on salmon fishing.

Duns & Around

POP 2594

Duns is a peaceful market town in the centre of Berwickshire, with some pleasant walks. You can get to **Duns Law** (218m) in Duns Castle Estate by following Castle St up from the square. The summit offers great views of the Merse and Lammermuir Hills. The Covenanter's Stone marks the spot where the Covenanting armies

camped in 1639; a copy of the Covenant was later signed at Duns Castle.

Buses running between Galashiels and Berwick-upon-Tweed (six to nine daily) stop at Duns.

Lammermuir Hills

North of Duns, the low-lying Lammermuir Hills, with their extensive grouse moors, rolling farmland and wooded valleys, run east-west along the border with East Lothian. The hills are popular with walkers and there are numerous trails, including a section of the **Southern Upland Way** (see p138).

To the west, the Way can be accessed at **Lauder**, where it passes through the grounds of **Thirlestane Castle** (www.thirlestanecastle.co.uk; castle & grounds adult/child £10/6, grounds only £3/1.50; ☀10am-3pm Wed, Thu & Sun May-Sep, also Mon & Tue Jul-Aug). The narcissism of the aristocracy is evident here perhaps more than in most 'great homes'. Notice how many of the family portraits adorning the walls look similar? The extensive assemblage here is the result of the common practice of mass production used at the time. Many of the family have almost identical features, as the same bodies were used for their portraits with different clothes, faces and hands superimposed. Thirlestane is also home to some of the finest plasterwork ceilings in Europe.

Thirlestane is just outside town, off the A68, beside Leader Water. Munro's buses running between Kelso and Edinburgh pass by.

Coldstream

POP 1813

On a sweeping bend of the River Tweed, which forms the border with England, Coldstream is small and relatively hidden from the well-trodden Borders tourist beat. It can be a handy base when nearby Kelso is overflowing.



Sights

FREE Coldstream Museum MUSEUM
(12 Market Sq; ☀10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 2-4pm Sun Apr-Sep, 1-4pm Mon-Sat Oct) The proud history of the Coldstream Guards is covered in this museum. Formed in 1650 in Berwick as part of Oliver Cromwell's New

Model Army, the regiment took its present name from the town where it was stationed in 1659. It played a significant part in the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and saw service at Waterloo, at Sebastopol during the Crimean War, in the Boer War, at the Somme and Ypres in WWI, and at Dunkirk and Tobruk in WWII. It remains the oldest regiment in continuous existence in the British army and is the only one directly descended from the New Model Army.

Sleeping & Eating

Eastbraes B&B

B&B ££

(☎01890-883949; www.eastbraes.co.uk; 100C High St; s/d £45/70) Trundling down the main street in Coldstream, you simply don't expect the view you get out the back of this welcoming place; an idyllic vista over a grassy garden and a picturebook bend in the Tweed just beyond. A double and twin share a bathroom and there's one en suite double, which is simply enormous, and comes with a separate sitting area.

Calico House

B&B ££

(☎07985-249207; www.bedandbreakfast-luxury.co.uk; 44 High St; d/ste £70/90) Set behind a shop that churns out high-quality interior designs, this is a superb B&B with sumptuous rooms blessed with great views and attention to detail. 'Cleanliness is next to godliness' could easily be the mantra here. Privacy from your hosts and value for money are two very strong points in this excellent accommodation option. The rate is £10 less if you stay more than one night.

Besom

PUB £

(www.besom-inn.co.uk; 75 High St; mains £9-11; ☀lunch & dinner) Cosy, creeper-covered High Street pub with a beer garden and solid bar meals.

Garth House

B&B ££

(☎01890-882477; 7 Market St; s/d £25/60) This old bastion is cheap and comfy with no frills attached. It's a basic, old-fashioned B&B – personable, good value and friendly – but nothing flash. If you want value for money – here it is.

Getting There & Away

Coldstream is on the busy A697 linking New-castle with Edinburgh. There are about six buses daily Monday to Saturday (three on Sunday) between Kelso (20 minutes) and Berwick-upon-Tweed (45 minutes) via Coldstream.

Kelso

POP 5116

Kelso, a prosperous market town with a broad, cobbled square flanked by Georgian buildings, has a French feel to it and a historic appeal. During the day it's a busy little place, but after 8pm you'll have the streets to yourself. The town has a lovely site at the junction of the Rivers Tweed and Teviot, and is one of the most enjoyable places in the Borders.

Sights

FREE Kelso Abbey

ABBEY

(HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; Bridge St; ☉9.30am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat-Wed Oct-Mar) Once one of the richest abbeys in southern Scotland, Kelso Abbey was built by the Tironensians, an order founded at Tiron in Picardy and brought to the Borders around 1113 by David I. English raids in the 16th century reduced it to ruins, though what remains today is some of the finest surviving Romanesque architecture in Scotland.

Floors Castle

CASTLE

(www.floorscastle.com; adult/child £7.50/3.50; ☉11am-5pm May-Oct) Grandiose Floors Castle is Scotland's largest inhabited mansion and overlooks the Tweed about a mile

west of Kelso. Built by William Adam in the 1720s, the original Georgian simplicity was 'improved' in the 1840s with the addition of rather ridiculous battlements and turrets. Inside, view the vivid colours of the 17th-century Brussels tapestries in the drawing room and the intricate oak carvings in the ornate ballroom. Palatial windows reveal a ribbon of green countryside extending well beyond the estate.

Kelso Old Parish Church

CHURCH

(The Butts; ☉10am-4pm Mon-Fri May-Sep)

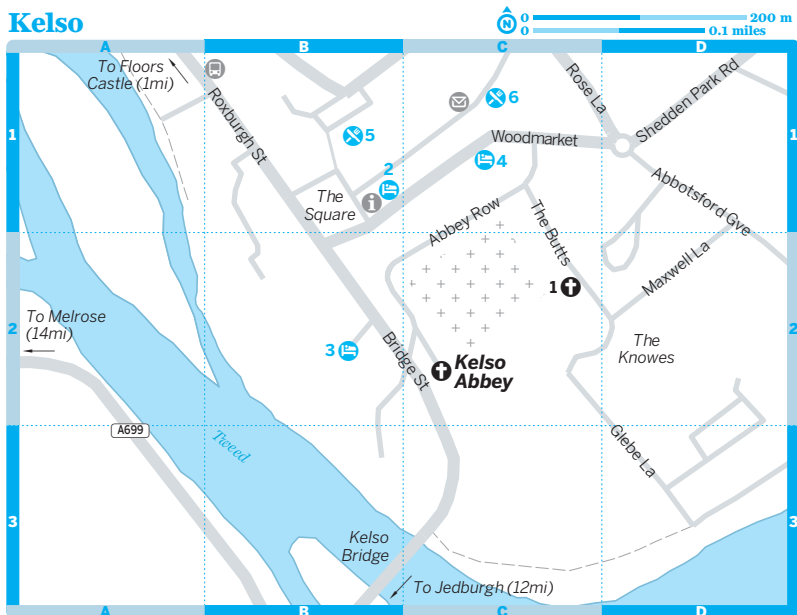
Near the abbey, this rare, octagonal church built in 1773 is intriguing.

Activities

The **Pennine Way** (www.thepennineway.co.uk), which starts its long journey at Edale in the Peak district, ends at Kirk Yetholm Youth Hostel, about 7 miles southeast of Kelso on the B6352.

The **Borders Abbeys Way** (www.borderabbeyway.com) links the great abbeys of Kelso, Jedburgh, Melrose and Dryburgh to create a 65-mile circuit. The Kelso-Jedburgh section (12 miles) is a fairly easy walk, largely following the River Teviot between the towns. The tourist office has a free leaflet with a map and description of the route.

Kelso



Less-ambitious walkers should leave the Square by Roxburgh St and take the sign-posted alley to **Cobby Riverside Walk**, a pleasant ramble along the river to Floors Castle (although you have to rejoin Roxburgh St to gain admission to the castle).

Sleeping

TOP CHOICE **Old Priory** **B&B ££**
(☎01573-223030; www.theoldpriorykelso.com; 33 Woodmarket St; s/d £50/75; 📞📶) The doubles in this atmospheric place are fantastic and the family room has to be seen to be believed; rooms are both sumptuous and debonair with gorgeous dark polished wood pieces. The good news extends to the garden – perfect for a coffee in the morning – and a most comfortable sitting room. The huge windows are another feature, flooding the rooms with natural light.

Edenbank House **B&B ££**
(☎01573-226734; www.edenbank.co.uk; Sitchill Rd; s/d £35/70; 📞) Half a mile down the road to Sitchill, this grand Victorian house (no sign) sits in spacious grounds where only the bleating of lambs in the green fields and birds in the garden break the silence. Opulent rooms, warm hospitality, and any-time-you-like breakfasts featuring homemade produce make for an utterly relaxing stay.

TOP CHOICE **Ednam House Hotel** **HOTEL ££**
(☎01573-224168; www.ednamhouse.com; Bridge St; s/d from £78/115; 📞📶🚰) The genteel, Georgian Ednam House, touched with a quiet dignity, contains many of its original features and is the top place in town, with fine gardens overlooking the river and the excellent **Ednam House Restaurant**. It's very popular with fisher folk and during salmon season, from the end of August un-

til November, the hotel is very busy. Rooms with a river view cost more.

Central Guest House **B&B £**
(☎01890-883664; www.thecentralguesthousekelso.co.uk; s/d £30/45) A bargain in sometimes pricey Kelso and just on the central square. The owners live off-site so call ahead first. The rooms are fine: spacious, with firm beds, new carpets and good bathrooms. Rates are room-only, but you get a fridge, toaster, and microwave so you can create your own breakfast.

Eating & Drinking

Cobbles Inn **PUB ££**
(☎01573-223548; www.thecobblesinn.co.uk; 7 Bowmont St; mains £10-16; ☺lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) We've included the phone number for a reason: this pub off the main square is so popular you should book for a meal at weekends. Why does it pack out? Because it's cheery, very welcoming, warm, and serves excellent upmarket pub food in generous portions. There's a decent wine selection and proper coffee, but the wise leave room for dessert too. The bar always has an interesting guest ale or two as well. A cracking place.

Oscar's **BISTRO ££**
(☎01573-224008; www.oscars-kelso.com; 33 Horsemarket; mains £10-16; ☺lunch Mon & Wed-Sat, dinner Wed-Mon) Posh comfort food and the work of local artists sit side by side in this likeable bar-restaurant-gallery in the centre of town. The menu changes, but when you see avocados, serrano ham, sea bass, sizzling lamb, hummus, and haggis on the same menu, it means one thing: you might have to come back again to try everything. A wide selection of wines accompanies the food, and you can browse the exhibition space downstairs while you wait for your plate.

Kelso

📍 Top Sights

Kelso Abbey.....C2

📍 Sights

1 Old Parish Church.....C2

🏠 Sleeping

2 Central Guesthouse.....B1
3 Ednam House Hotel.....B2
4 Old Priory.....C1

🍴 Eating

5 Cobbles Inn.....B1
6 Oscar's.....C1

Information

Kelso Hospital (☎01573-223441; Inch Rd)

Kelso Library (Bowmont St; ☺Mon-Sat; @) Free internet access.

Tourist office (☎01573-223464; www.visit.scottishborders.com; The Square; ☺daily Apr-Nov, Mon-Sat Dec-Mar)

Getting There & Away

There are six buses daily (three on Sunday) to Berwick-upon-Tweed (one hour). Buses run to/from Jedburgh (25 minutes, up to 11 daily

Monday to Saturday, five Sunday) and Hawick (one hour, seven daily Monday to Saturday, four Sunday). There are also frequent services to Edinburgh.

Around Kelso

SMAILHOLM TOWER

Perched on a rocky knoll above a small lake, the narrow, stone **Smailholm Tower** (HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; Smailholm; adult/child £3.70/2.20; ☉9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun Oct-Mar) provides one of the most evocative sights in the Borders and keeps the bloody uncertainties of its history alive. Although the displays inside are sparse, the panoramic view from the top is worth the climb.

The nearby farm, **Sandyknowe**, was owned by Sir Walter Scott's grandfather. As Scott himself recognised, his imagination was fired by the ballads and stories he heard as a child at Sandyknowe, and by the ruined tower a stone's throw away.

The tower is 6 miles west of Kelso, a mile south of Smailholm village on the B6397. You pass through the farmyard to get to the tower. Munro's bus 65 between Melrose and Kelso stops in Smailholm village.

MELLERSTAIN HOUSE

Finished in 1778, **Mellerstain House** (www.mellerstain.com; Gordon; adult/child £7/3.50; ☉12.30-5pm Sun & Wed May, Jun & Sep, plus Mon & Thu Jul & Aug, Sun only Oct) is considered to be Scotland's finest Robert Adam-designed mansion. It is famous for its classic elegance, ornate interiors and plaster ceilings; the library in particular is outstanding. Give the garish upstairs bedrooms a miss, but have a peek at the bizarre puppet-and-doll collection in the gallery.

It's about 10 miles northwest of Kelso, near Gordon. Munro's bus 65 between Melrose and Kelso passes about a mile from Mellerstain House.

TOWN YETHOLM & KIRK YETHOLM

The twin villages of Town Yetholm and Kirk Yetholm, separated by Bowmont Water, are close to the English border, about 6 miles southeast of Kelso. Hill-walking centres, they lie at the northern end of the **Pennine Way** (see p142) and on **St Cuthbert's Way** (see p138) between Melrose and Lindisfarne (Holy Island) in Northumberland.

As the last stop on the Pennine Way, **Kirk Yetholm SYHA** (☎0845 293 7373; www.syha.org.uk; Kirk Yetholm; dm £15.25; ☉Apr-mid-Sep) is often busy; book well in advance. Bus 81 from Kelso runs up to seven times a day Monday to Saturday (three times on Sunday).

Melrose

POP 1656

Tiny, charming Melrose is a polished village running on the well-greased wheels of tourism. This little enclave is a complete contrast to overbearing Galashiels, whose urban sprawl laps at its western edges. Sitting at the feet of the three heather-covered Eildon Hills, Melrose has a classic market square and one of the great abbey ruins.

Sights

Melrose Abbey

ABBEY

(HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; adult/child £5.20/3.10; ☉9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Oct-Mar) Perhaps the most interesting of all the great Border abbeys, the red-sandstone Melrose Abbey was repeatedly destroyed by the English in the 14th century. The remaining broken shell is pure Gothic and the ruins are famous for their decorative stonework – see if you can glimpse the pig gargoyle playing the bagpipes on the roof. You can climb to the top for tremendous views.

The abbey was founded by David I in 1136 for Cistercian monks from Rievaulx in Yorkshire. It was rebuilt by Robert the Bruce, whose heart is buried here. The ruins date from the 14th and 15th centuries, and were repaired by Sir Walter Scott in the 19th century.

The adjoining **museum** (free for abbey ticket holders) has many fine examples of 12th- to 15th-century stonework and pottery found in the area. Note the impressive remains of the 'great drain' outside – a medieval sewerage system.

Activities

There are many attractive walks in the **Eildon Hills**, accessible via a footpath off Dingleton Rd (the B6359) south of the town, or via the trail along the River Tweed. The tourist office has details of local walks.

The **St Cuthbert's Way** long-distance walking path starts in Melrose, while the

coast-to-coast **Southern Upland Way** passes through town. You can do a day's walk along St Cuthbert's Way as far as Harestanes (16 miles), on the A68 near Jedburgh, and then return to Melrose on the hourly Jedburgh-Galashiels bus. The **Tweed Cycle Way** also passes through Melrose. See the boxed text, p138 for more details.

Festivals & Events

Melrose Rugby Sevens

RUGBY

(www.melrose7s.com) In mid-April rugby followers fill the town to see the week-long competition.

Borders Book Festival



































BOOKS

(www.bordersbookfestival.org) Stretching over four days in late June.

Sleeping

Townhouse

HOTEL ££

(☎01896-822645; www.thetownhousemelrose.co.uk; Market Sq; s/d £90/120;                                   

Mon-Sat, noon-4pm Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Fri & Sat Nov-Mar) By the abbey.

i Getting There & Away

First buses run to/from Edinburgh (£6, 2¼ hours, hourly) via Peebles. Change in Galashiels (20 minutes, frequent) for more frequent Edinburgh services and for other Borders destinations.

Around Melrose

DRYBURGH ABBEY

The most beautiful, complete Border abbey is **Dryburgh Abbey** (HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; adult/child £4.70/2.80; ☉9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Oct-Mar), partly because the neighbouring town of Dryburgh no longer exists (another victim of the wars) and partly because it has a lovely site in a sheltered valley by the River Tweed, accompanied only by a symphony of birdsong. The abbey conjures up images of 12th-century monastic life more successfully than its counterparts in nearby towns. Dating from about 1150, it belonged to the Premonstratensians, a religious order founded in France. The pink-hued stone ruins were chosen as the burial place for Sir Walter Scott.

The abbey is 5 miles southeast of Melrose on the B6404, which passes famous **Scott's View** overlooking the valley. You can hike there along the southern bank of the River Tweed, or take a bus to the nearby village of Newtown St Boswells.

ABBOTSFORD

Fans of Sir Walter Scott should visit his former residence, **Abbotsford** (www.scottsabbotsford.co.uk; adult/child £7/3.50; ☉9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun late Mar-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Sun Jun-Sep). The inspiration he drew from the surrounding 'wild' countryside influenced many of his most famous works. A collection of Scott memorabilia is on display, including many personal possessions.

The mansion is about 2 miles west of Melrose between the River Tweed and the B6360. Frequent buses run between Galashiels and Melrose; alight at the Tweed bank roundabout and follow the signposts (it's a 15-minute walk). You can also walk from Melrose to Abbotsford in an hour along the southern bank of the Tweed.

Selkirk

POP 5742

While the noisy throb of machinery no doubt once filled the river valleys below Selkirk, a prosperous mill town in the early 19th century, today it sits placidly and prettily atop its steep ridge. Naughty mill-workers on the wrong side of the law would have come face to face in court with Sir Walter Scott, who was sheriff here for three decades.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎01750-20054; selkirk@visitscotland.com; Halliwell's Close; ☉10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-3pm Sun Apr-Oct) is tucked away off Market Sq. Inside is **Halliwell's House Museum** (admission free), the oldest building (1712) in Selkirk. The museum charts local history with an engrossing exhibition, and the Robson Gallery has changing exhibitions.


Drop into **Sir Walter Scott's Courtroom** (Market Sq; admission free; ☉10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3pm Sat Apr-Sep, & 11am-3pm Sun May-Aug, noon-3pm Mon-Sat Oct), where there's an exhibition on the man's life and writings, plus a fascinating account of the courageous explorer Mungo Park (born near Selkirk) and his search for the River Niger.

Sleeping

Philipburn Country House Hotel HOTEL ££ (☎01750-20747; www.philipburnhousehotel.co.uk; r lodge/standard/luxury £90/125/175; ) On the edge of town, this place makes a sound place to stay. New owners have pepped this former dower house up, and it features neat rooms and a snug bar and restaurant. The luxury rooms are great – some have a jacuzzi, while another is a split-level affair with a double balcony. There are room-only rates available in the separate **lodge** (single/double £60/70), which has self-catering facilities.

County Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01750-721233; www.countyhotelselkirk.co.uk; Market Sq; s/d £45/89; ) Located in the centre, this is a former coaching inn that has comfortable, recently refurbished rooms. It's popular with golfers and serves good upmarket bar meals (£9 to £12).

i Getting There & Away

First buses 95 and X95 run at least hourly between Hawick, Selkirk, Galashiels and Edinburgh (£6, two hours).

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) is one of Scotland's greatest literary figures. Born in Edinburgh, he moved to his uncle's farm at Sandyknowe in the Borders as a child. It was here, rambling around the countryside, that he gained a passion for historical ballads and Scottish heroes. After studying in Edinburgh he bought Abbotsford (p146), a country house in the Borders.

The Lay of the Last Minstrel (1805) was an early critical success. Further works earning him an international reputation included *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), set around Loch Katrine and the Trossachs. He later turned his hand to novels and virtually invented the historical genre. *Waverley* (1814), which dealt with the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, set the classical pattern of the historical novel. Other works included *Guy Mannering* (1815) and *Rob Roy* (1817). In *Guy Mannering* he wrote about Border farmer Dandie Dinmont and his pack of dogs, which became so popular that they became known as Dandie Dinmont Terriers, the only breed of dog named after a literary character.

Later in life Scott wrote obsessively to stave off bankruptcy. His works virtually single-handedly revived interest in Scottish history and legend in the early 19th century. Tourist offices stock a *Sir Walter Scott Trail* booklet, guiding you to many places associated with his life in the Borders.

Jedburgh

POP 4090

Attractive Jedburgh is a lush, compact oasis, where many old buildings and wynds (narrow alleys) have been intelligently restored, inviting exploration by foot. It's constantly busy with domestic tourists, but wander into some of the pretty side streets and you won't hear a pin drop.

Sights

Jedburgh Abbey

ABBEY

(HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; Abbey Rd; adult/child £5.20/3.10; ☀9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Oct-Mar) Dominating the town skyline, Jedburgh Abbey was the first great Border abbey to be passed into state care, and it shows – audio and visual presentations telling the abbey's story are scattered throughout the carefully preserved ruins (good for the kids or if it's raining). The red-sandstone ruins are roofless but relatively intact, and the ingenuity of the master mason can be seen in some of the rich (if somewhat faded) stone carvings in the nave (be careful of the staircase in the nave – it's slippery when wet). The abbey was founded in 1138 by David I as a priory for Augustinian canons.

Free Mary, Queen of Scots House

HISTORIC HOUSE

(Queen St; ☀10am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4.30pm Sun Mar-Nov) Mary stayed at this beautiful 16th-century tower house in 1566

after her famous ride to visit the injured earl of Bothwell, her future husband, at Hermitage Castle (p149). The interesting displays evoke the sad saga of Mary's life.



Activities

The tourist office sells some handy walking booklets for short walks around the town, including sections of the **Southern Upland Way** (p138) or **Borders Abbeys Way** (p142).



Festivals & Events

Jethart Callant's Festival

CULTURAL


(www.jethartcallantsfestival.com) For two weeks from late June marks the perilous time when people rode out on horseback checking for English incursions (see the boxed text, p148).



Sleeping

Maplebank

B&B £

(☎01835-862051; maplebank3@btinternet.com; 3 Smiths Wynd; s/d £25/40; ) It's very pleasing to come across places like this, where it really feels like you're staying in someone's home. That someone in this case is like your favourite aunt: friendly and chaotic and generous. There's lots of clutter and it's very informal. The rooms are comfortable and large, and share a good bathroom. Breakfast (particularly if you like fruit, homemade yoghurts and a selection of everything) is better than you'll get at a posh guesthouse.

RIDING OF THE MARCHES

The Riding of the Marches, or Common Riding, takes place in early summer in the major Borders towns. Like many Scottish festivals it has ancient origins, dating back to the Middle Ages, when riders would be sent to the town boundary to check on the common lands. The colourful event normally involves extravagant convoys of horse riders following the town flag or standard as it's taken on a well-worn route. Festivities vary between towns but usually involve lots of singing, sport, pageants, concerts and a screaming good time! If you want to zero in on the largest of the Ridings, head to Jedburgh for the Jethart Calant's Festival (p147).

Willow Court

(☎01835-863702; www.willowcourtjedburgh.co.uk; The Friars; d £65-70; With superb views over Jedburgh from the conservatory, where you are served a three-meals-in-one breakfast, Willow Court is a traditional B&B with homespun decor, smiling hosts and a large garden. Ask about the self-catering cottage just out of town.

B&B ££

Jedburgh Camping & Caravanning Club

(☎01835-863393; www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/jedburgh; Elliot Park, A68; tent sites with/without car £15/7.50; ☺Apr-Oct; About a mile north of the town centre, opposite Jedburgh Woollen Mill, this site is set on the banks of Jed Water and is quiet and convenient, particularly if you're interested in fishing.

CAMPING £



Eating

Nightjar

(☎01835-862552; www.thenightjar.co.uk; 1 Abbey Close; mains £10-15; ☺dinner Thu-Sat) Casual but classy, this is a highly commended restaurant dishing out a mix of creative meals, including seafood and Thai cuisine. The real highlight is if you're lucky enough to be here on the last Saturday of the month when a special Thai menu is revealed; locals rave about this night.

RESTAURANT ££

Carters Rest

(Abbey Pl; mains £9-12; ☺lunch & dinner; Right opposite the abbey, this offers up-

PUB ££

market pub grub in an attractive lounge bar. The standard fare is fleshed out with an evening dinner menu featuring local lamb and other goodies. Portions are generous and served with a smile.

Sunrise

INDIAN £

(51 High St; mains £6-9; ☺lunch & dinner) You'll pay slightly higher prices for the dishes at this curry house but it's well worth it. Featuring aromatic south Indian cooking, there's plenty on offer for vegetarians, including delicious homemade samosas stuffed with goodies, plus succulent, spicy tandoori chicken and generous side dishes.



Information

There's a free wi-fi zone around the centre.

Library (Castlegate; ☺Mon-Fri;) Free internet access.

Tourist office (☎01835-863170; jedburgh@visitscotland.com; Murray's Green; ☺9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) Head tourist office for the Borders region. Extended hours in summer. Closed Sunday in winter.



Getting There & Away

Jedburgh has good bus connections to Hawick (25 minutes, roughly hourly), Melrose (30 minutes, at least hourly Monday to Saturday) and Kelso (25 minutes, at least hourly Monday to Saturday, four Sunday). Munro's runs from Jedburgh to Edinburgh (£6, two hours, at least hourly Monday to Saturday, five Sunday).

Hawick

POP 14,573

Straddling the River Teviot, Hawick (pronounced 'hoik') is the largest town in the Borders and has long been a major production centre for knitwear.

In the centre of town, three buildings form what is labelled as 'The Heart of Hawick'. A former mill now holds the **tourist office** (☎01450-373993; hawick@visitscotland.com; Kirkstile; ☺10am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 10am-7.45pm Fri & Sat, noon-3.30pm Sun), and a cinema. Opposite, historic **Drumlanrig's Tower** is a solid stone mansion that was once a major seat of Douglas clan power in the Borders. It now holds the **Borders Textile Towerhouse** (www.heartofhawick.co.uk; Tower Knowe; admission free; ☺10am-4pm Mon-Sat, also noon-3pm Sun Apr-Oct) that tells the story of the town's knitwear-producing history, while round the back of the tourist office, the **Heritage Hub** ([SOUTHERN SCOTLAND BORDERS REGION](http://www.scotborders.</p>
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gov.uk; Towerdykeside; ☺10am-4.45pm Mon, Fri & Sat, 10am-7.45pm Tue & Thu) is a state-of-the-art facility for anyone wishing to trace Scottish heritage, or other local archives.

Across the river, **Hawick Museum & Art Gallery** (☎01450-373457; Wilton Lodge Park; admission free; ☺10am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri, 2-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, noon-3pm Mon-Fri, 1-3pm Sun Oct-Mar) has an interesting collection of mostly 19th-century manufacturing and domestic memorabilia.

There are several knitwear outlets in town, include **Hawick Cashmere of Scotland** (www.hawickcashmere.com; Arthur St); a full list is available from the tourist office.

You'll be met with a cheery welcome at the amiable **Bridgehouse B&B** (☎01450-370701; ginocafebb@aol.com; Sandbed; s/d £30/58). Functional rooms, in former stables dating back to 1760, are brightly decorated and as neat as a pin, although en suites can be pokey. You can opt out of breakfast for a discount. There's a cafe and a bar overlooking the river, but if you feel like something more substantial, pop into **Sergio's** (www.sergiosofhawick.co.uk; pizza & pasta £6-9; ☺lunch & dinner) next door for pizza and pasta dishes or more elaborate, but overpriced, mains.

The half-hourly First buses 95 and X95 connect Hawick with Galashiels, Selkirk and Edinburgh (£6, two hours).

Hermitage Castle

The 'guardhouse of the bloodiest valley in Britain', **Hermitage Castle** (HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; adult/child £3.70/2.20; ☺9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep) embodies the brutal history of the Scottish Borders. Desolate but proud with its massive squared stone walls, it looks more like a lair for orc raiding parties than a home for Scottish nobility, and is one of the bleakest and most stirring of Scottish ruins.

Strategically crucial, the castle was the scene of many a dark deed and dirty deal with the English invaders, all of which rebounded heavily on the perfidious Scottish lord in question. Here, in 1338, Sir William Douglas imprisoned his enemy Sir Alexander Ramsay and deliberately starved him to death. Ramsay survived for 17 days by eating grain that trickled into his pit (which can still be seen) from the granary above. In 1566, Mary Queen of Scots famously visited the wounded tenant of the castle, Lord

Bothwell, here. Fortified, he recovered to (probably) murder her husband, marry her himself, then abandon her months later and flee into exile.

The castle is about 12 miles south of Hawick on the B6357.

Peebles

POP 8065

With a picturesque main street set on a ridge between the River Tweed and the Eddleston Water stream, Peebles is one of the most handsome of the Border towns. Though it lacks a major sight as a focus to things, the agreeable atmosphere and good walking options in the rolling, wooded hills hereabouts will entice you to linger for a couple of days.

👁 Sights & Activities

If it's sunny, the **riverside walk** along the River Tweed has plenty of grassed areas ideal for a picnic, and there's a children's playground (near the main road bridge). A mile west of the town centre, **Neidpath Castle** is a tower house perched on a bluff above the river; it's closed for the foreseeable future but worth a look from the riverbank.

Two miles east of town off the A72, in **Glentress forest**, is one of the **7stanes** (www.7stanes.gov.uk) mountain-biking hubs (see p175), as well as osprey viewing and marked walking trails. A **cafe** (☎01721-721736; www.thehubintheforest.co.uk) hires rigs and will put you on the right trail for your ability. These are some of Britain's best biking routes.

🍴 Sleeping & Eating

Cringletie House

HOTEL £££

(☎01721-725750; www.cringletie.com; s/d from £210/230; 📞📺📺) Luxury without snobbery is this enchanting hotel's hallmark, and more power to them. To call it a house is being coy; it's an elegant baronial mansion, 2 miles north of Peebles on the A703 and set in lush, wooded grounds. Rooms are plush and feature genteel elegance and linen so soft you could wrap a newborn in it. There's an excellent **restaurant** (mains £23) and an excellent atmosphere.

Rowanbrae

B&B ££

(☎01721-721630; www.aboutscotland.co.uk/peebles/rowanbrae.html, 103 Northgate; s/d £35/60; 📞) A marvellously hospitable couple run

AMY HICKMAN: BIKE CLUB OFFICER

I work in Edinburgh for bikeclub.org.uk, an organisation which aims to encourage healthy lifestyles through cycling, and I'm a fanatical mountain biker myself. Scotland is a great place for mountain biking, and has developed an international reputation – the UCI World Cup competition is held annually in Fort William.

Best Mountain Biking Spots? I'm from the Borders originally, so I'm biased towards the 7stanes centres (see boxed text, p175) – Kirroughtree is the best, the trails there are great fun. I would also recommend Laggan Wolftrax (p333) for really challenging and technical terrain. These are both man-made centres; one of my favourite natural trails is the Gypsy Glen circuit at Cardrona, near the Glentress 7stanes centre (p149); the guys at Glentress can give you the route details.

Off the Beaten Track? My current favourite place for exploring is Fife – get hold of a map and go where looks interesting! Kelty Forest and Blairadam Forest (near the village of Kelty) are good places to start.

this great B&B in a quiet cul-de-sac not far from the main street; you'll soon feel like you're staying with friends. There are three upstairs bedrooms, two with en suite, and an excellent guest lounge for relaxation.

Sunflower Restaurant RESTAURANT ££
(☎01721-722420; www.thesunflower.net; 4 Bridge-gate; mains £10-15; ☺lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Thu-Sat) The Sunflower, with its warm yellow dining room, is in a quiet spot off the main drag and has a reputation that brings lunchers from all over southern Scotland. It serves good salads for lunch and has an admirable menu in the evenings, with creative and elegant dishes that always include some standout vegetarian fare.

Tontine Hotel RESTAURANT WITH ROOMS ££
(☎01721-720892; www.tontinehotel.com; High St; mains £7-14; ☺lunch & dinner; ♿) Glorious is the only word to describe the Georgian dining room here, complete with musicians' gallery, fireplace, and windows the like of which we'll never see again. It'd be worth it even if they served catfood on mouldy bread, but luckily the meals – ranging from pub classics like steak-and-ale pie to more ambitious fare – are tasty and backed up by very welcoming service. Rooms (single/double £75/110) are decent too: there's a small supplement for river views.

Cross Keys Hotel HOTEL ££
(☎01721-724222; www.crosskeyspeebles.co.uk; 24 Northgate; dm/s/d £22/35/60; ♿) The Cross Keys is a renovated 17th-century coaching inn, and the history shows in the curious rooms: glasses slide off the bedside tables

thanks to the time-warped floorboards. But that's character; the beds are comfortable, bathrooms good, and prices fair.

Rosetta Holiday Park CAMPING £
(☎01721-720770; www.rosettaholidaypark.co.uk; Rosetta Rd; tent site & 2 people £16; ☺mid-Mar-Oct; ♿) This camping ground, about 800m north of the town centre, has an exquisite green setting. There are plenty of amusements for the kids, such as a bowling green and a games room.

i Information

Tourist office (☎01721-723159; bordersinfo@visitscotland.com; High St; ☺9am-5pm Apr-Dec, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat Jan-Mar) To 6pm in summer.

i Getting There & Away

The bus stop is beside the post office on Eastgate. First bus 62 runs half hourly to Edinburgh (1¼ hours), Galashiels (45 minutes) and Melrose (one hour).

Around Peebles

TRAQUAIR HOUSE

One of Scotland's great country houses, **Traquair House** (www.traquair.co.uk; Innerleithen; adult/child/family £7.50/4/21; ☺10.30am-5pm Jun-Aug, noon-5pm Apr-May & Sep, 11am-4pm Oct, 11am-3pm Sat & Sun Nov) has a powerful ethereal beauty, and an exploration here is like time travel. Odd, sloping floors and a musty odour bestow a genuine feel, and parts of the building are believed

to have been constructed long before the first official record of its existence in 1107. The massive tower house was gradually expanded over the next 500 years but has remained virtually unchanged since 1642.

Since the 15th century, the house has belonged to various branches of the Stuart family, and the family's unwavering Catholicism and loyalty to the Stuart cause are largely why development ceased when it did. The family's estate, wealth and influence were gradually whittled down after the Reformation, and there was neither the opportunity nor, one suspects, the will to make any changes.

One of its most interesting places is the concealed room where priests secretly lived and performed Mass – up until 1829 when the Catholic Emancipation Act was finally passed. Other beautiful, time-worn rooms hold fascinating relics, including the cradle used by Mary for her son, James VI of Scotland (who also became James I of England), and many letters written by the Stuart pretenders to their supporters.

In addition to the house, there's a **garden maze**, an **art gallery**, a small **brewery** producing the tasty Bear Ale, and an active craft community. The **Traquair Fair** takes place here in early August.

Traquair is 1.5 miles south of Innerleithen, about 6 miles southeast of Peebles. Bus 62 from Edinburgh runs hourly to Innerleithen. Bus 62 runs from Edinburgh via Peebles to Innerleithen and on to Galashiels and Melrose.

SOUTH LANARKSHIRE

South Lanarkshire combines a highly urbanised area south of Glasgow with scenically gorgeous country around the Falls of Clyde and the World Heritage-listed area of New Lanark, by far the biggest drawcard of the region. If you're roaring up to Scotland on the M74, there are some fine places to break your journey.

See p133 for Blantyre, birthplace of David Livingstone.

Lanark & New Lanark

POP 8253

Below the market town of Lanark, in an attractive gorge by the River Clyde, is the World Heritage Site of **New Lanark** – an

intriguing collection of restored mill buildings and warehouses.

Once the largest cotton-spinning complex in Britain, it was better known for the pioneering social experiments of Robert Owen, who managed the mill from 1800. New Lanark is really a memorial to this enlightened capitalist. He provided his workers with housing, a cooperative store (the inspiration for the modern cooperative movement), the world's first nursery school for children, a school with adult-education classes, a sick-pay fund for workers and a social centre he called the New Institute for the Formation of Character. You'll need at least half a day to explore this site, as there's plenty to see, and appealing walking along the riverside.

The best way to get the feel of New Lanark is to wander round the outside of this impressive place. What must once have been a thriving, noisy, grimy industrial village, pumping out enough cotton to wrap the planet, is now a peaceful oasis with only the swishing of trees and the rushing of the River Clyde to be heard.

👁 Sights & Activities

New Lanark Visitor Centre MUSEUM
(www.newlanark.org; adult/child/family £7/6/22; ☀10am-5pm Apr-Sep, 11am-5pm Oct-Mar) You need to buy a ticket to enter the main attractions. These include a huge working spinning mule, producing woollen yarn, the **Historic Schoolhouse**, which contains an innovative, high-tech journey to New Lanark's past via a 3D hologram of the spirit of Annie McLeod, a 10-year-old mill girl who describes life here in 1820. The kids will love it as it's very realistic, although the 'do good for all mankind' theme is a little overbearing.

Also included in your admission is a **millworker's house**, Robert Owen's **home** and exhibitions on 'saving New Lanark'. There's also a 1920s-style **village store**.

Falls of Clyde Wildlife Centre

EXHIBITION, WALK
(www.swt.org.uk; adult/child £2/1; ☀11am-5pm Mar-Dec, noon-4pm Jan & Feb) The wildlife centre is also by the river in New Lanark. This place has child-friendly displays focused on badgers, bats, peregrine falcons and other prominent species. In season, there's a live video feed of peregrines nesting nearby. Outside is a bee tree, where you can see honey being made.

From the centre, you can walk up to Corra Linn (30 minutes) and Bonnington Linn (one hour), two of the **Falls of Clyde** that inspired Turner and Wordsworth, through the beautiful nature reserve managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust. You could return via the muddier path on the opposite bank, pass New Lanark, and cross the river a little further downstream to make a circular walk of it (three hours). The centre also organises various activities in summer, including badger-watching (adult/child £8/4).

Craignethan Castle

CASTLE

(HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; Tillietudlem; adult/child £3.70/2.20; ☎9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun Oct-Mar) This castle has a very authentic feel – it hasn't been restored beyond recognition – and is in a stunning, tranquil spot, too. You'll feel miles from anywhere, so bring a picnic and make a day of it.

With a commanding position above the River Nethan, this extensive ruin includes a virtually intact tower house and a **cap-onier** (unique in the UK) – a small gun emplacement with holes in the wall so men with handguns could pick off attackers. The chilly chambers under the tower house are quite eerie.

Craignethan is 5 miles northwest of Lanark. If you don't have your own transport, take an hourly Lanark–Hamilton bus to Crossford, then follow the footpath along the northern bank of the River Nethan (20 minutes).










Sleeping & Eating

New Lanark makes a very relaxing, attractive place to stay.





New Lanark Mill Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01555-667200; www.newlanark.org; New Lanark; s/d £80/120;          Cleverly converted from an 18th-century mill, this hotel is full of character and is a stone's throw from the major attractions. It has luxury rooms (only £25 extra for a spacious suite and added decadence) or self-catering accommodation in charming cottages (from £285/525 per week in winter/summer). The hotel also serves good meals (bar meals £6 to £9, two-course dinner £23).

New Lanark SYHA

HOSTEL £

(SYHA; ☎01555-666710; www.syha.org.uk; New Lanark; dm/tw £17/38; ☎mid-Mar-mid-Oct;   This hostel has a great location in

an old mill building by the River Clyde. It's been recently renovated and has a really good downstairs common area, and spruce en suite dormitories.

La Vigna

RESTAURANT ££

(☎01555-664320; www.lavigna.co.uk; 40 Wellgate, Lanark; 3-course lunch/dinner £13/24; ☎lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) This well established local favourite is a great spot, seemingly plucked from some bygone age with its quietly efficient service and, charmingly, a separate menu for ladies – without prices! The food is distinctly Italian, albeit using sound Scottish venison, beef, and fish, and there are also vegetarian options. The set-price lunch is fine value at £13.

Crown Tavern

PUB £

(www.crown-tavern.com; 17 Hope St, Lanark; lunch mains £5-7, dinner mains £11-15; ☎lunch & dinner) Off the main street, the Crown is a local favourite. It's a highly regarded place that does good bar meals and even better food (pasta, seafood and vegetarian dishes) in the evenings in its restaurant. Try the local trout or the Highlander chicken.

Information

Tourist office (☎01555-661661; lanark@visitscotland.com; Ladyacre Rd, Lanark; ☎10am-5pm) Close to the bus and train stations. Closed Sundays October to March.

Getting There & Around

Lanark is 25 miles southeast of Glasgow. Express buses from Glasgow, run by Irvine's Coaches, make the hourly run from Monday to Saturday (one hour).

Trains also run daily between Glasgow Central station and Lanark (£5.45, 55 minutes, every 30 minutes).


It's a pleasant walk to New Lanark, but there's also a half-hourly bus service from the train station (daily). If you need a taxi, call **Clydewide** (☎01555-663221).

Biggar

POP 2098


Biggar is a pleasant town in a rural setting dominated by Tinto Hill (712m). The town has a number of offbeat museums that give it a quirky appeal. It's also known for the nationalist, leftist poet Hugh MacDiarmid, who lived near here for nearly 30 years until his death in 1978.

Sights

The **Biggar Museum Trust** (01899-221050; www.biggarmuseumtrust.co.uk) looks after most of the town's museums. It all relies on the goodwill of volunteers, so opening hours can be quite variable: it's worth ringing ahead if you've a special interest in one of them.

Gladstone Court

MUSEUM

(North Back Rd; adult/child £2/1; 10.45am-4.30pm Apr-Oct) An intriguing indoor street museum with historic Victorian-era nook-and-cranny shops that you can pop into to steal a glimpse of the past. Don't miss the **old printing press** and the **Albion A2 Dogcart**, one of the oldest British cars still around.

Biggar Puppet Theatre

THEATRE

(www.purvespuppets.com; Broughton Rd; seats £7) Has miniature Victorian puppets and bizarre modern ones over 1m high that glow in the dark. Different shows are suitable for varying age groups, so inquire before you take along the kids. Check the website for performance times.

Tinto Hill

DAY HIKE

The hill dominates town. It is a straightforward ascent by the northern ridge from the car park, just off the A73 by Thankerton Crossroads. Look out for the **Stone Age fort** on your way up. Allow two hours for the return trip.


Moat Park Heritage Centre

MUSEUM

(Kirkstyle; adult/child £2/1; 10.45am-4.30pm Apr-Oct) In a renovated church, covers the history of the area with geological and archaeological displays.


Greenhill Covenanter's House

MUSEUM

(Burnbrae; adult/child £1/50p; 2-5pm Sat May-Sep) An intelligently reconstructed farmhouse with 17th-century furnishings and artefacts relating to the fascinating story of the local Covenanters, who valiantly defied their king to protect their religious beliefs.

Gasworks Museum



MUSEUM

(Gasworks Rd; adult/child £1/50p; 11am-4pm Jun-Sep) The only reminder of the days when Scotland produced its gas by burning coal.

Sleeping & Eating

Cornhill House


HOTEL ££

(01899-220001; www.cornhillhousehotel.com; Coulter; s/d £75/90;  ) This is a well-



appointed place, complete with turrets, and is situated in a peaceful setting 2 miles southwest of Biggar. The rooms are good value, particularly those that have been refurbished, and a three-course breakfast is included. The restaurant is somewhat overpriced; you may want to eat elsewhere.

School Green Cottage

B&B ££

(01899-220388; isobel.burness@virgin.net; 1 Kirkstyle; s/d £35/60) Just off the sometimes noisy main road in the centre of town, this is an upright little place with courteous homespun hospitality. The neat double and twin here are well kitted out with New Zealand oak furnishings.

Information

Biggar Gallery (01899-221442; 139 High St; 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun) Doubles as a tourist information point. Good walking advice.

Getting There & Away

Biggar is 33 miles southeast of Glasgow. Bus 100 runs to/from Edinburgh (1¼ hours, hourly Monday to Saturday, three Sunday). Bus 191 runs hourly to/from Lanark (30 minutes), where you can change for Glasgow.

AYRSHIRE & ARRAN

Ayrshire is synonymous with golf and with Robert Burns – and there's plenty on offer here to satisfy both of these pursuits. Troon has six golf courses for starters, and there's enough Burns memorabilia in the region to satisfy his most fanatic admirers.

This region's main drawback though is the irresistible Isle of Arran. With a gourmet culinary scene, atmospheric watering holes, and the most varied and scenic countryside of the southern Hebridean islands, this easily accessible island shouldn't be missed.

Back on the mainland, retro holiday towns by the seaside, such as Largs, give Ayrshire a unique flavour, while towns such as Irvine provide a link to the region's maritime heritage. There's also spectacular coastal scenery, best admired at Culzean Castle, one of the finest stately homes in the country.

The best way to appreciate the Ayrshire coastline is on foot: the **Ayrshire Coastal Path** (www.ayrshirecoastalpath.org) is 100 miles of spectacular waterside walking.

North Ayrshire

LARGS

POP 11,241

On a sunny day, there are few more beautiful places in southern Scotland than Largs, where green grass meets the sparkling water of the Firth of Clyde. It's a resort-style waterfront town that harks back to seaside days in times of gentler pleasures, and the minigolf, amusements, old-fashioned eateries and bouncy castle mean you should get into the spirit, buy an ice cream and go for a stroll to check out this slice of retro Scotland.

The main attraction in Largs is **Viking-gar!** (www.kaleisure.com; Greenock Rd; adult/child £4.50/3.50; ☎10.30am-4.30pm Apr-Sep, 10.30am-3.30pm Oct & Mar, 10.30am-3.30pm Sat & Sun Nov & Feb). This multimedia exhibition describes Viking influence in Scotland until its demise at the Battle of Largs in 1263. Tours with staff in Viking outfits run every hour. There's also a theatre, cinema, cafe, shop, swimming pool and leisure centre. It's on the waterfront road just north of the centre. You can't miss it, as it's the only place with a longship outside.

Largs hosts a **Viking festival** (www.largsvikingfestival.com) during the first week in September. The festival celebrates the Battle of Largs and the end of Viking political domination in Scotland.

Sleeping & Eating

Brisbane House Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01475-687200; www.brisbanehousehotel.com; 14 Greenock Rd, Esplanade; s/d £80/85, d/ste with sea view £95/120; ☎☎☎) We're not sure about the modern facade on this genteel old building, but the rooms are quite luxurious, and some – it's aimed at wedding parties – have jacuzzis and huge beds. It's on the waterfront road, so paying the extra for a sea view will reward in fine weather, as the sun sets over the island opposite. There's a decent bar and restaurant downstairs and a comfortable contemporary feel.

Nardini

CAFE, BISTRO ££

(www.nardinis.co.uk; Esplanade; mains £11-18; ☎9am-10pm; ☎) Nothing typifies the old-time feel of Largs more than this giant art deco gelateria, well into its second century. The ice creams are decadently delicious, with rich flavours that'll have parents licking more than their fair share from the kids. There's also a cafe with outdoor seating, and a restaurant which does pizzas, pastas,

and some surprisingly decent dishes like duck breast and delicious sardines on toast.

Haven House

B&B £

(☎01475-676389; m.l.mcqueen@btinternet.com; 18 Charles St; r per person £25) One of several good options on a street close to the water, this has comfortable rooms with good shared bathrooms. It's an easygoing place typical of the friendliness of this town. Room-only rates are a fiver less per person.

Glendarroch

B&B ££

(☎01475-676305; www.glendarrochbedandbreakfast.co.uk; 24 Irvine Rd; s/d £34/56; ☎) This B&B typifies Scottish hospitality – the rooms are well kept and the owner is friendly without being intrusive. If it's full, staff will probably ring around to try to find you something else.

Information

Tourist office (☎01475-689962; www.ayrshire-arran.com; ☎10.30am-3pm Mon-Sat Easter-Oct) At the train station, a block back from the waterfront on the main street.

Getting There & Away

Largs is 32 miles west of Glasgow by road. There are very regular buses to Glasgow via Gourock and Greenock (45 minutes), and roughly one or two hourly to Ardrossan (30 minutes), Irvine (55 minutes) and Ayr (1¼ hours). There are trains to Largs from Glasgow Central station (£6.35, one hour, hourly).

ISLE OF GREAT CUMBRAE

POP 1200

Walking or cycling is the best way to explore this accessible, hilly island (it's only 4 miles long), ideal for a day-trip from Largs. **Millport** is the only town, strung out a long way around the bay overlooking neighbouring Little Cumbrae. With the frequent ferry service, the place buzzes with day-trippers and families (there's heaps of stuff for kids to do, such as crazy golf and a funfair). Walking around the bay admiring the views is one of the most pleasurable things to do in town, where you'll find a supermarket, bank (with ATM) and your choice of chippies.

The town boasts Britain's smallest cathedral, the lovely **Cathedral of the Isles** (☎01475-530353; College St; ☎daylight hrs), which was completed in 1851. Inside it's quite ornate with a lattice woodwork ceiling and fragments of early Christian carved stones.

IRVINE

Boat lovers should check out the **Scottish Maritime Museum** (www.scottishmaritimemuseum.org; Gottries Rd, Harbourside; adult/child £3.50/2.50; ☀10am-5pm Apr-Oct) in Irvine. In the massive **Linthouse Engine Shop** – an old hangar with a cast-iron framework – is an absorbing collection of boats and machinery. A ticket also gives admission to the **boat shop**, with its wonderful works of art and huge kids activity area. Free guided tours leave from the boat shop – guides will take you down to the pontoons where you can clamber over various ships and visitors can also see a shipyard worker's restored flat.

Further along the harbour road, make sure to drop into the wonderful **Ship Inn** (www.shipinnirvine.co.uk; 120 Harbour St; mains £7-8). It's the oldest pub in Irvine (1597), serves tasty bar meals (noon to 9pm) and has bucket loads of character.

Irvine is 26 miles from Glasgow. There are frequent buses from Ayr (30 minutes) and Largs (45 minutes). Trains run to/from Glasgow Central station (£5.75, 35 minutes, half-hourly); the other way they go to Ayr.

Just east of town is the interesting **Robertson Museum & Aquarium** (☎01475-530581; adult/child £2/1; ☀9am-12.15pm & 2-4.15pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun, 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat Jul & Aug). A short way along the coast from the aquarium is a remarkable rock feature, the **Lion**.

Little Cumbrae was bought in 2009 by a couple who plan to transform it into a yoga centre, overseen by controversial but massively popular guru Swami Ramdev.

The island's minor roads have well-marked **walking** and **cycling** routes. Take the Inner Circle route up to the island's highest point, **Glaid Stone**, where you get good views of Arran and Largs, and even as far as the Paps of Jura on a clear day. You can walk between the ferry and the town via here in about an hour. There are several bike-hire places in Millport.

If you're staying overnight on the island there are several choices. Try the unusual **College of the Holy Spirit** (☎01475-530353; www.island-retreats.org; College St; s/d £35/60, with en suite £50/70; ☎), next to the cathedral; there's a refectory-style dining room and a library.

The **Dancing Midge** (www.thedancingmidgecafe.com; 24 Glasgow St; light meals £3-5; ☀9am-5pm Thu-Mon; ☎) is a cheerful cafe on the seafront providing healthy, tasty alternatives to the chippies in town, as well as an ideal spot to read the newspaper. Food is freshly prepared (sandwiches, salads and soups) and the coffee freshly brewed.

A very frequent 15-minute **CalMac** (www.calmac.co.uk) ferry ride links Largs with Great Cumbrae (passenger/car £4.70/20.35)

daily. Buses meet the ferries for the 3.5-mile journey to Millport (£1.80/2.80 single/return).

ARDROSSAN

POP 10,952

The main reason – OK the *only* reason – for coming here is to catch a CalMac ferry to Arran. Trains leave Glasgow Central station (£5.85, one hour, half-hourly) to connect with ferries (see p164).

Isle of Arran

POP 4800

Enchanting Arran is a jewel in Scotland's tourism crown. Strangely undiscovered by foreign tourists, the island is a visual feast, and boasts culinary delights, cosy pubs (including its own brewery) and stacks of accommodation. The variations in Scotland's dramatic landscape can all be experienced on this one small island, best explored by pulling on the hiking boots or jumping on a bicycle. Arran offers some challenging walks in the mountainous north, often compared to the Highlands, while the island's circular road is very popular with cyclists.

The ferry from Ardrossan docks at Brodick, the island's main town. To the south, Lamlash is actually the capital and, like nearby Whiting Bay, a popular seaside resort. From the pretty village of Lochranza in the north there's a ferry link to Claonaig on the Kintyre peninsula.

Camping isn't allowed without permission from the landowner, but there are several camping grounds. Good sleeping



options are dotted all around the island, but especially in Brodick and the south. Accommodation is a good deal more expensive on Arran than on the mainland.

i Information

There are banks with ATMs in Brodick. Websites include www.ayrshire-arran.com, www.visit-isle-of-arran.eu and www.visitarran.com.

Arran Library (☎01770-302835; Brodick Hall; ☼10am-5pm Tue, 10am-7.30pm Thu & Fri, 10am-1pm Sat; @) Free internet access.

Hospital (☎01770-600777; Lamlash)

Tourist office (☎01770-303774; www.ayrshire-arran.com; ☼9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Efficient; by Brodick pier. Also open Sundays in July and August.

i Getting There & Away

CalMac runs a car ferry between Ardrossan and Brodick (passenger/car return £9.70/59, 55 minutes, four to eight daily), and from Ayr to late October runs services between Claonaig and Lochranza (passenger/car return £8.75/39.10, 30 minutes, seven to nine daily).

i Getting Around

BICYCLE Several places hire out bicycles in Brodick. Try these:

Arran Adventure Company (☎01770-302244; www.arranadventure.com; Shore Rd, Brodick; day/week £15/55)

Boathouse (☎01770-302868; Brodick Beach; day/week £12.50/45)

CAR Arran Transport (☎01770-700345; Brodick) at the service station near the ferry pier hires cars from £25/32 per half/full day.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT Four to seven buses daily go from Brodick pier to Lochranza (45 minutes), and many daily go from Brodick to Lamlash and Whiting Bay (30 minutes), then on to Kildonan and Blackwaterfoot. Pick up a timetable from the tourist office. An Arran Rural Rover ticket costs £4.75 and permits travel anywhere on the island for a day (buy it from the driver). For a **taxi**, call ☎01770-302274 in Brodick or ☎01770-600903 in Lamlash.

BRODICK & AROUND

Most visitors arrive in Brodick, the heartbeat of the island, and congregate along the coastal road to admire the town's long curving bay.

As you follow the coast along Brodick Bay, look out for **seals**, often seen on the rocks around **Merkland Point**. Two types live in these waters, the Atlantic grey seal and the common seal. The common seal has a face like a dog; the Atlantic grey seal has a Roman nose.

i Sights

Many of Brodick's attractions are just out of town, off the main road that runs north to Lochranza.

Brodick Castle & Park

CASTLE (NTS; www.nts.org.uk; adult/child castle & park £10.50/7.50, park only £5.50/4.50; ☼castle 11am-4pm Sat-Wed Apr-Oct, open daily late Jun-early Sep, park 9.30am-sunset) The first impression of this estate 2.5 miles north of Brodick is that of an animal morgue as you enter via the hunting gallery, wallpapered with prized deer heads. On your way to the formal dining room (with its peculiar table furnishings), note the intricacy of the fireplace in the library. The castle has more of a lived-in feel than some NTS properties. Only a small portion is open to visitors. The extensive grounds, now a country park with various trails among the rhododendrons, justify the steep entry fee.

Arran Aromatics

SOAP FACTORY (☎01770-302595; www.arranaromatics.com; ☼9.30am-5pm) In Duchess Court is this popular visitor centre where you can purchase any number of scented items and watch the production line at work. Free factory tours

run on Thursdays in summer at 6pm. The same people also run **Soapworks** (soapmaking from £7.50; ☺10am-4pm), a fun little place where kids (and adults!) can experiment by making their own soaps, combining colours and moulds to make weird and wonderful creations.

Isle of Arran Brewery

BREWERY

(☎01770-302353; www.arranbrewery.com; Cladach; ☺10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-3.30pm Mon & Wed-Sat) At the Cladach centre there's an excellent self-guided brewery tour for £2.50, which includes tastings in the shop. Arran beers are pure quality. Warning: Arran Dark is highly addictive. There's a good **outdoors shop** here too, if you're heading up Goatfell.

Marvin Elliott

GALLERY

Just beyond the Cladach centre, local artist Marvin Elliot creates impressive wooden sculptures in his workshop.

Activities

Drop into the tourist office for plenty of **walking** and **cycling** suggestions around the island. The 50-mile circuit on the coastal road is popular with cyclists and has few serious hills – more in the south than the north. There are plenty of walking booklets and maps available. There are many walking trails clearly signposted around the island. Several leave from Lochranza, including the spectacular walk to the island's northeast tip, **Cock of Arran**, and finishing in the village of Sannox (8 miles one-way).

The walk up and down **Goatfell** takes up to eight hours return, starting in Brodick and finishing in the grounds of Brodick Castle. If the weather's fine, there are superb views to Ben Lomond and the coast of Northern Ireland. It can, however, be very cold and windy up there; take the appropriate maps (available at the tourist office), waterproof gear and a compass.

Arran Adventure Company

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

(☎01770-302244; www.arranadventure.com; Shore Rd, Brodick; ☺Easter-Oct) Offers loads of activities, running a different one each day (such as gorge walking, sea kayaking, climbing, abseiling and mountain biking). All activities run for about three hours and cost around £48/38/28 for adults/solo teens/kids. Drop in to see what's available while you're around.

Auchrannie Resort

RESORT

(☎01770-302234; www.auchrannie.co.uk) Offers a bit of everything and can make a good destination if you're looking for something to do in Brodick. As well as tennis courts and gym, it has a pool and spa complex which nonguests can access for £4.60.

Festivals & Events

There are local village festivals from June to September

Arran Folk Festival

FOLK MUSIC

(☎01770-302623; www.arranfolkfestival.org) A week-long festival in early June.

Arran Wildlife Festival

WILDLIFE

(www.arranwildlife.co.uk) This celebration of local fauna is held mid-May.

Sleeping

Kilmichael Country House Hotel

HOTEL £££

(☎01770-302219; www.kilmichael.com; Glen Cloy; s £95, d £160-199; ☺☎) The island's best hotel, the Kilmichael is also the oldest building – it has a glass window dating from 1650. The hotel is a luxurious, tastefully decorated spot, a mile outside Brodick, with eight rooms and an excellent **restaurant** (3-course dinner £42). It's an ideal, utterly relaxing hideaway, and feels very classy without being overly formal.

Glenartney

B&B ££

(☎01770-302220; www.glenartney-arran.co.uk; Mayish Rd; s/d £56/78; ☺late Mar-Sep; ☺☎) Uplifting bay views and genuine, helpful hosts make this a cracking option. Airy, stylish rooms make the most of the natural light available here at the top of the town. Cyclists will appreciate the bike wash and storage facilities, while hikers can benefit from the drying rooms and expert trail advice. The owners make big efforts to be sustainable too.

Fellview

B&B ££

(☎01770-302153; fellviewarran@yahoo.co.uk; 6 Strathwillan Rd; r per person £30) This lovely house near the ferry is an excellent place to stay. The two rooms – which share a good bathroom – are full of thoughtful personal touches like bathrobes, and breakfast is in a pretty garden conservatory. The owner is warm, friendly and encapsulates Scottish hospitality; she doesn't charge a supplement for singles (because, in her words, 'it's not their fault'). To get here, head south out of Brodick and take the left-hand turn

to Strathwillan. Fellview is just up on the right.

Rosaburn Lodge

B&B ££

(01770-302383; www.rosaburnlodge.co.uk; d £70-80, ste £90-100; P) By the River Rosa, 800m from the centre of Brodick, this very friendly lodge gets heaps of natural light. There are three excellent rooms (and a chairlift to them). The Rosa suite overlooks the river via its bay window and is closer to an apartment than a bedroom. Note that there are no singles.

Belvedere Guest House

B&B £££

(01770-302397; www.vision-unlimited.co.uk; Alma Rd; s £35, d £60-80; P) Imperiously overlooking the town, bay and surrounding mountains, Belvedere has well-presented rooms and very welcoming hosts, who also offer reiki, healing and de-stressing packages. They provide very good island information and good breakfasts with vegetarian choices.

Glen Rosa Farm

CAMPING £

(01770-302380; sites per person £4; P) In a lush glen by a river, 2 miles from Brodick, this large place has plenty of nooks and crannies to pitch a tent. It's remote camping with cold water and toilets only. To get there from Brodick head north, take String Rd, then turn right almost immediately on the road signed to Glen Rosa. After 400m, on the left is a white house where you book in; the campground is further down the road.

Eating & Drinking

Creelers

(01770-302810; www.creelers.co.uk; mains £11-21; ☺lunch & dinner Tue-Sun Easter-Oct)

Creelers is likely to close in the near future, but if it's still going when you read this, get on the phone and book a table. Situated 1.5 miles north of Brodick, it's Arran's top choice for fresh seafood. It's not licensed, so bring a bottle.

Eilean Mòr

CAFE £

(www.eileanmorarran.com; Shore Rd; mains £8-10; ☺food 10am-9pm, bar 11am-midnight; ☺) Upbeat and modern, this likeable little cafe-bar does tasty meals through the day, with pizzas and pastas featuring. But it's not afraid to give them a Scottish twist; try the haggis ravioli.

Arran on a Plate

RESTAURANT ££

(01770-303886; www.arranonaplate.com; Shore Rd; 2-course lunch/dinner £10/20; ☺lunch & dinner) Unprepossessing from the outside,

this new restaurant makes up for it inside, with solicitous service, a striking mural, and great sunset views over the bay. Dishes focus on fresh seafood and are attractively presented if a little short on quantity.

Ormidale Hotel

PUB £

(01770-302293; www.ormidalehotel.co.uk; Glen Cloy; mains £8-10; ☺lunch & dinner; ♻) This hotel has decent bar food. Dishes change regularly, but there are always some good vegetarian options, and daily specials. Quantities and value-for-money are high, and Arran beers are on tap.

Island Cheese Co

CHEESE PRODUCER £

(www.islandcheese.co.uk; Duchess Ct) Anyone with a fetish for cheese should stop by this place where you can stock up on the famed local cheeses. There are free samples.

Wineport

CAFE £££

(01770-302101; Cladach Centre; lunch mains £7-11, dinner mains £12-19; ☺lunch daily, dinner Fri & Sat Apr-Oct) Next to the brewery, this cafe-bar has a fine sunny terrace and does a nice line in sophisticated bistro fare in the summer months.

CORRIE TO LOCHRANZA

The coast road continues north to the small, pretty village of Corrie, where there's a shop and hotel, and one of the tracks up **Goatfell** (the island's tallest peak) starts here. After **Sannox**, with a sandy beach and great views of the mountains, the road cuts inland. Heading to the very north, on the island's main road, visitors weave through lush glens flanked by Arran's towering mountain splendour.

Moderate walks here include the trail through **Glen Sannox**, which goes from the village of Sannox up the burn, a two-hour return trip.

The traditional stone **Corrie Hotel**

(01770-810273; www.corriehotel.co.uk; r per person £34, without bathroom £28; P) offers simple but comfortable rooms, several with great views, above a pub with a wonderful beer garden that scrapes the water's edge. Groups of four or more can reserve a bunkroom (£15 per head, bed only).

LOCHRANZA

The village of Lochranza is in a stunning location in a small bay at the north of the island. On a promontory stand the ruins of the 13th-century **Lochranza Castle** (HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; admission free; ☺24hr), said to be the inspiration for the

castle in *The Black Island*, Hergé's Tintin adventure. It's basically a draughty shell inside, with interpretative signs to help you decipher the layout.

Also in Lochranza is the **Isle of Arran Distillery** (☎01770-830264; www.arranwhisky.com; tours adult/child £5/free; ☀10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun mid-Mar–Oct), which produces a light, aromatic single malt. The tour is a good one; it's a small distillery, and the whisky-making process is thoroughly explained. Opening hours are reduced in winter.

The Lochranza area bristles with red deer, who wander into the village unconcernedly to crop the grass on the golf course.



Sleeping & Eating



Lochranza SYHA

HOSTEL ££

(☎01770-830631; www.syha.org.uk; Lochranza; dm/f £17.50/72; ☀mid-Feb–Oct; P@☎) A recent refurbishment has made a really excellent hostel of what was always a charming place, with lovely views. The rooms are great, with chunky wooden furniture, keycards, and lockers. Rainwater toilets, a heat exchange system, and an excellent disabled room shows the thought that's gone into the redesign, while plush lounging areas, a kitchen you could run a restaurant out of, laundry, drying room, red deer in the garden, and welcoming management make this a top option.

Apple Lodge

B&B ££

(☎01770-830229; Lochranza; s/d/ste £54/78/90; P) Once the village manse, this rewarding choice is most dignified and hospitable. Rooms are individually furnished, and very commodious. One has a four-poster bed, while another is a self-contained suite in the garden. The guest lounge is perfect for curling up with a good book, and courteous hosts mean you should book this one well ahead in summer.

Catacol Bay Hotel

PUB ££

(☎01770-830231; www.catacol.co.uk; Catacol; r per person £30; P@☎) Genially run, and with a memorable position overlooking the water, this no-frills pub 2 miles south of Lochranza offers comfortable-enough rooms with shared bathroom and views to lift the heaviest heart. No-frills bar food comes out in generous portions, there's a Sunday lunch buffet (£10.50), and the beer garden is worth a contemplative pint or two as you gaze off across the water into the west.

Lochranza Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01770-830223; www.lochranza.co.uk; s/d £58/94; P) The focus of the village, being the only place you can get an evening meal, this bastion of Arran hospitality has comfortable rooms decked out in pink. The showers are pleasingly powerful, and the double and twin at the front (room Nos 1 and 10) have super views. Rooms are a bit overpriced, but they get cheaper if you stay more than one night.

WEST COAST

On the western side of the island, reached by String Rd across the centre (or the coast road), is the **Machrie Moor Stone Circle**, upright sandstone slabs erected around 6000 years ago. It's an eerie place, and these are the most impressive of the six stone circles on the island. There's another group at nearby **Auchagallon**, surrounding a Bronze Age burial cairn.

Blackwaterfoot is the largest village on the west coast; it has a shop and hotel. You can walk to **King's Cave** from here, via Drumadon Farm – Arran is one of several islands that lay claim to a cave where Robert the Bruce had his famous arachnid encounter (p445). This walk could be combined with a visit to the Machrie stones.

SOUTH COAST

The landscape in the southern part of the island is much gentler; the road drops into little wooded valleys, and it's particularly lovely around **Lagg**. There's a 10-minute walk from Lagg Hotel to **Torrylinn Cairn**, a chambered tomb over 4000 years old where at least eight bodies were found. **Kildonan** has pleasant sandy beaches, a gorgeous water outlook, a hotel, a campground and an ivy-clad ruined castle.

In **Whiting Bay** you'll find small sandy beaches, a village shop, a post office and **Arran Art Gallery** (www.arranartgallery.com; Shore Rd), which has exquisite landscape portraits of Arran. From Whiting Bay there are easy one-hour walks through the forest to the **Giant's Graves** and **Glenashdale Falls**, and back – keep an eye out for golden eagles and other birds of prey.



Sleeping & Eating



Kildonan Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01770-820207; www.kildonanhotel.com; Kildonan; s/d/ste £70/95/125; P@☎) Luxurious rooms and a grounded attitude – dogs and kids are made very welcome – combine

to make this one of Arran's best options. Oh, and it's right by the water, with fabulous views and seals basking on the rocks. The standard rooms are beautifully furnished and spotless, but the suites – with private terrace or small balcony – are superb. Other amenities include great staff, a bar serving good bar meals, a restaurant doing succulent seafood, an ATM, book exchange, and laptops lent to guests if you didn't bring one. Applause.

Royal Arran Hotel

B&B ££

(☎01770-700286; www.royalarran.co.uk; Whiting Bay; s £50, d £90-105;  ) This personalised, intimate spot has just four rooms. The double upstairs is our idea of accommodation heaven – four-poster bed, big heavy linen, a huge room and gorgeous water views. Room No 1 downstairs is a great size and has a private patio. The hosts couldn't be more welcoming (except to kids under 12, who aren't allowed).

Lagg Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01770-700255; www.lagghotel.com; Lagg; s/d £45/80;  ) An 18th-century coach house, this inn has a beautiful location and is the perfect place for a romantic weekend away from the cares of modern life. Rooms have been recently refurbished; grab a superior one (£90) with garden views. There's also a cracking beer garden, a fine bar with log fire, and an elegant restaurant (dinner mains £11 to £16).


Viewbank House

B&B ££

(☎01770-700326; www.viewbank-arran.co.uk; Whiting Bay; s £35, d £60-79;  ) Appropriately named, this friendly place does indeed have tremendous views from its vantage point high above Whiting Bay. Rooms, of which there are a variety with and without bathroom, are tastefully furnished and well kept. It's well signposted from the main road.


Sealshore Campsite

CAMPING £

(☎01770-820320; www.campingarran.com; Kildonan; sites per person £6, per tent £1-3; ) Living up to its name, this small campsite is right by sea (and, happily, the Kildonan Hotel) with one of Arran's finest views from its grassy camping area. There's a good washroom area with heaps of showers, and the breeze keeps the midges away.

Coast



BISTRO £

(☎01770-700308; Shore Rd, Whiting Bay; mains £9-10;  lunch Wed-Mon, dinner Thu-Sat) This

funky place decked out in suave red tones and with a sun-drenched conservatory on the water's edge serves grills, seafood and salads in the evening, with lighter offerings during the day.

Isle of Arran Brewery Guesthouse

B&B ££

(☎01770-700662; guesthouse@arranbrewery.co.uk; Shore Rd, Whiting Bay; s/d from £55/80;  ) Newly refurbished, this bright, light place offers five rooms named after Arran beers. The best of them have sea views, and cost slightly more.

Kilmory Lodge Bunkhouse

HOSTEL £

(☎01770-870345; www.kilmoryhall.com; Kilmory; dm £20; ) This new bunkhouse in Kilmory normally only opens for groups but you may be able to grab a spare bed. The Lagg Hotel is a minute's walk away.

LAMLASH

An upmarket town (even the streets feel wider here), Lamblash is in a dazzling setting, strung along the beachfront. The bay was used as a safe anchorage by the navy during WWI and WWII.

Just off the coast is **Holy Island**, owned by the Samye Ling Tibetan Centre and used as a retreat, but day visits are allowed. Depending on tides, the **ferry** (☎01770-600998) makes around seven trips a day (adult/child return £10/5, 15 minutes) from Lamblash and runs between May and September. The same folk also run fun mackerel-fishing expeditions (£20 per person).

No dogs, bikes, alcohol or fires are allowed on the island. There's a good walk to the top of the hill (314m), taking two or three hours return. It is possible to stay on the island in accommodation belonging to the grandiosely named **Holy Island Centre for World Peace & Health** (☎01770-601100; www.holyisle.org; dm/s/d £25/45/65). These prices include full (vegetarian) board. Although it's designed more for groups doing yoga and meditation courses at the centre, individuals are welcome.

Sleeping & Eating

Lilybank Guest House

B&B ££

(☎01770-600230; www.lilybank-arran.co.uk; Shore Rd, Lamblash; s/d £50/70;  ) Built in the 17th century, Lilybank retains its heritage but has been refurbished for 21st-century needs. Rooms are clean and comfortable, with one adapted for disabled use. The front ones have great views over Holy

Island. Breakfast includes oak-smoked kipper and Arran goodies.

Drift Inn

PUB £

(Shore Rd, Lamlash; mains £8-9; ☺lunch & dinner; 🍷) There are few better places to be on the island on a sunny day than the beer garden at this child-friendly hotel, ploughing your way through an excellent bar meal while gazing over to Holy Island. There are pub faves and genuine Angus beef burgers, with generous portions all round.

Glenisle Hotel

PUB ££

(www.glenislehotel.com; Shore Rd, Lamlash; mains £9-12; ☺lunch & dinner; 🍷) Excellent pub food; serves Scottish classics such as Cullen skink (soup made with smoked haddock, potato, onion and milk). Good wine list.

Lamlash Bay Hotel

PUB ££

(www.lamlashbayhotel.co.uk; Shore Rd, Lamlash; mains £10-16, pizzas £7-8; ☺lunch & dinner) Locals love a big meal out here; known for its toothsome pizza and filling Italian-style dishes.

East Ayrshire

In **Kilmarnock**, where Johnnie Walker whisky has been blended since 1820, is **Dean Castle** (www.deancastle.com; Dean Rd; admission free; ☺11am-5pm daily Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Wed-Sun Oct-Mar; 🍷), a 15-minute walk from the bus and train stations. The castle, restored in the first half of the 20th century, has a virtually windowless keep (dating from 1350) and an adjacent palace (1468), with a superb collection of medieval arms, armour, tapestries and musical instruments. The grounds, an 81-hectare park, are a good place for a stroll or a picnic, or you can eat at the visitor centre's tearoom, where snacks and light meals cost around £5. Free guided tours are available and there are regular activities for kids. From Ayr there are frequent buses throughout the day.

South Ayrshire

AYR

POP 46,431

Reliant on tourism, Ayr, whose long sandy beach has made it a popular family seaside resort since Victorian times, has struggled in the recent economic climate. Parts of the centre have a neglected air, though there

WORTH A TRIP

DUMFRIES HOUSE

A Palladian mansion designed in the 1750s by the Adam brothers, **Dumfries House** (☎01290-425959; www.dumfries-house.org.uk; adult/child £10/5; ☺11am-4pm Thu-Mon Apr-Sep) is an architectural jewel: such is its preservation that Prince Charles personally intervened to ensure its protection. It contains an extraordinarily well-preserved collection of Chippendale furniture and numerous objets d'art. Visits are by guided tour; you should phone ahead to reserve a space and check tour times. The house is located 13 miles east of Ayr, near Cumnock.

are many fine Georgian and Victorian buildings, and it makes a convenient base for exploring this section of coast.

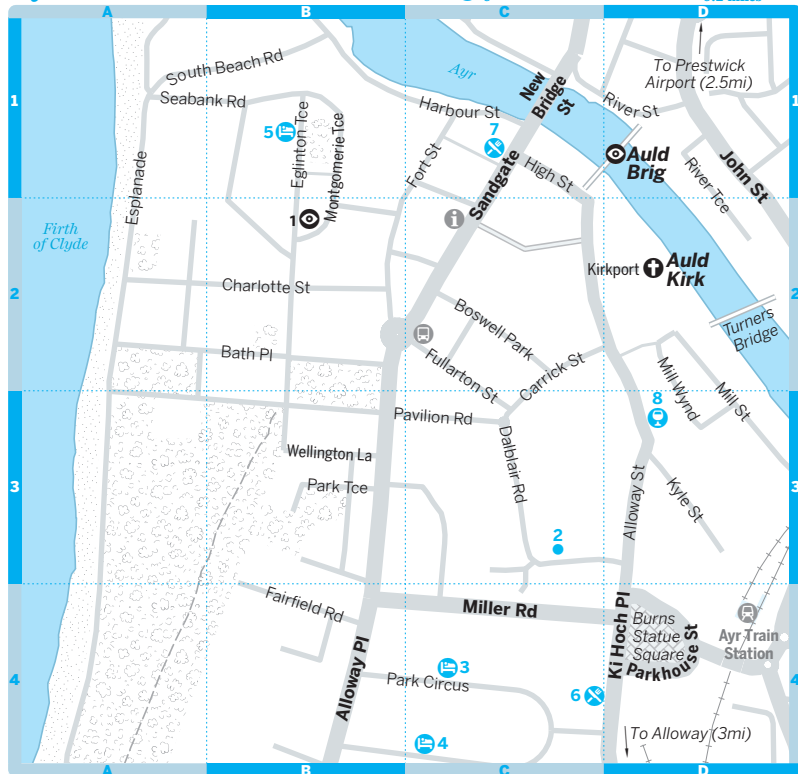
👁 Sight

Most things to see in Ayr are Robert Burns-related. The bard was baptised in the **Auld Kirk** (Old Church) off High St. The atmospheric cemetery here overlooks the river and is good for a stroll, offering an escape from the bustle of High St. Several of his poems are set here in Ayr; in 'Twa Brigs', Ayr's old and new bridges argue with one another. The **Auld Brig** (Old Bridge) was built in 1491 and spans the river just north of the church. In Burns' poem 'Tam o'Shanter', Tam spends a boozy evening in the pub that now bears his name – Tam o'Shanter – at 230 High St (see p163).

St John's Tower (Eglinton Tce) is the only remnant of a church where a parliament was held in 1315, the year after the celebrated victory at Bannockburn. John Knox's son-in-law was the minister here, and Mary, Queen of Scots, stayed overnight in 1563.

🚲 Activities

With only a few steep hills, the area is well suited to cyclists. From Ayr, you could cycle to Alloway and spend a couple of hours seeing the Burns sights before continuing to Culzean via Maybole. You could either camp here, after seeing Culzean Castle, or cycle back along the coast road to Ayr, a return trip of about 22 miles. **AMG Cycles** (☎01292-287580; www.irvinecycles.co.uk; 55 Dalblair Rd; day/weekend/week £12.50/15/35) hires out bikes.



Ayr

📍 Top Sights

Auld Brig	D1
Auld Kirk	D2

📍 Sights

1 St John's Tower	B2
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🚗 Activities, Courses & Tours

2 AMG Cycles (Bike Hire)	C3
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🏠 Sleeping

3 Belmont Guest House	C4
4 Crescent	C4
5 Eglinton Guest House	B1

🍴 Eating

6 Beresford	C4
7 Fouter's	C1

🍷 Drinking

8 Tam o'Shanter	D3
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The beachfront is good for a walk in sunny weather, especially at low tide when a huge sandy beach is revealed. The silhouettes of Arran's peaks over the bay form an impressive backdrop.

🌟 Festivals & Events

Burns an' a' That

CULTURAL

(www.burnsfestival.com) Held in Ayr in late May, this festival has a bit of everything, from wine-tasting to horseracing to concerts, some of it Burns-related.

🏠 Sleeping

Crescent

B&B ££

(☎01292-287329; www.26crescent.co.uk; 26 Bellevue Cres; s £50, d £70-80; 📶) When the blossoms are out, Bellevue Cres is Ayr's prettiest street, and this is an excellent place to stay on it. The rooms are impeccable – a tenner to upgrade to the spacious four-poster room is a sound investment – but it's the warm welcome given by the hosts that makes this

special. Numerous little extras, like Arran toiletries, bottled water in the rooms, and silver cutlery at breakfast, add appeal.

Eglinton Guest House

B&B ££

(☎01292-264623; www.eglinton-guesthouse-ayr.com; 23 Eglinton Tce; r per person £26; 🏠)

A short walk west of the bus station, this friendly family-run Georgian property is in a quiet cul-de-sac and has a range of traditional, tidy rooms. The location is brilliant – between the beach and the town, and it offers plenty of value, with comfortable beds and compact en suite bathrooms.

Belmont Guest House

B&B ££

(☎01292-265588; www.belmontguesthouse.co.uk; 15 Park Circus; s/d £35/56; 🏠) There's a relaxing lounge and library for guests in this comfortable Victorian town house. It's a little deceptive inside, with the '70s decor punctuated by pictures of wildlife staring hungrily down at diners, but the rooms with Victorian furnishings are clean and mostly of a good size. Chocolates on your pillow give a romantic feel to the rooms. Note that over busy periods it doesn't accommodate singles.

Heads of Ayr Caravan Park

CAMPING £

(☎01292-442269; www.headsofayr.com; sites £17.50, chalets per week from £220; ☀Mar-Oct) This caravan park is in a lovely, quiet location close to the beach. From Ayr take the A719 south for about 5 miles.

Eating & Drinking

Fouter's

RESTAURANT £££

(☎01292-261391; www.fouters.co.uk; 2a Academy St; mains £16-20; 🍷dinner Tue-Sat) The best place to eat in town, Fouter's is a class act set in a former bank vault opposite the town hall. It's an ideal place to splash out on a top-class dinner without breaking the budget. It specialises in Ayrshire produce (such as new-season local lamb with pine nut, garlic and herb crust) and seafood prepared Mediterranean style. There's an early-dining menu (£15 for two courses) from 5pm to 7pm.

Beresford

BISTRO ££

(☎01292-280820; www.theberesfordayr.co.uk; 22 Beresford Tce; mains £10-16; 🍷food 9am-9pm) Style and fun go hand in hand at this upbeat establishment serving afternoon martinis in teapots and luring churchgoing ladies with artisanal chocolates. The food is a creative fusion of influences based on solid local produce, with Ayrshire pork,

west coast oysters, and Scottish lamb often featuring. Some dishes hit real heights, and are solidly backed by a wide choice of wines, with 10 available by the glass. It stays open as a bar after the kitchen closes. Top service seals the deal.

Tam o' Shanter

PUB

(230 High St; mains £7) Opened in the mid-18th century and featured in the Burns poem whose name it now bears, this is an atmospheric old pub with traditional pub grub (served noon to 9pm).

Information

Carnegie Library (12 Main St; ☀Mon-Sat; @) Offers fast, free internet access.

Tourist office (☎01292-290300; www.ayrshire-arran.com; 22 Sandgate; ☀9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar)

Getting There & Around

Bus

Ayr is 33 miles from Glasgow and is Ayrshire's major transport hub. The main bus operator in the area is **Stagecoach Western** (☎01292-613500; www.stagecoachbus.com) which runs very frequent express services to Glasgow (one hour) and also serves Stranraer (£6.90, two hours, four to eight a day), other Ayrshire destinations, and Dumfries (£5.70, 2¼ hours, five to seven a day).

Train

There are at least two trains an hour that run to Ayr from Glasgow Central station (£6.70, 50 minutes), and some trains continue south from Ayr to Stranraer (£13, 1½ hours).

ALLOWAY

The pretty, lush town of Alloway (3 miles south of Ayr) should be on the itinerary of every Robert Burns fan – he was born here on 25 January 1759. Even if you haven't been seduced by Burns mania, it's still well worth a visit since the Burns-related exhibitions give a good impression of life in Ayrshire in the late 18th century.

Sights

Robert Burns Birthplace Museum

MUSEUM

(NTS; www.nts.org.uk; adult/child £8/5; ☀10am-5pm Oct-Mar, 10am-5.30pm Apr-Sep) This brand new museum displays a solid collection of Burnsiana, including manuscripts and possessions of the poet like the pistols he packed in order to carry out his daily work – as a taxman. A Burns jukebox allows you to

select readings of your favourite Burns verses, and there are other entertaining audio and visual performances.

The admission ticket (valid for three days) also covers the atmospheric **Burns Cottage**, by the main road from Ayr, and connected by a sculpture-lined walkway from the Birthplace Museum. Born in the little box bed in this cramped thatched dwelling, the poet spent the first seven years of his life here. It's an attractive display which gives you a context for reading plenty of his verse. Much-needed translation of some of the more obscure Scots farming terms he loved to use decorate the walls.

Alloway Auld Kirk

CHURCH

Near the Birthplace Museum are the ruins of the kirk, the setting for part of 'Tam o'Shanter'. Burns' father, William Burnes (his son dropped the 'e' from his name), is buried in the kirkyard; read the poem on the back of the gravestone.

Burns Monument & Gardens

GARDEN

The monument was built in 1823; the gardens afford a view of the 13th-century Brig o'Doon House.

Sleeping

Brig O'Doon House

HOTEL

(☎01292-442466; www.costley-hotels.co.uk; Alloway; s/d £85/120; ) On the main road right by the monument and bridge, a charming ivy-covered facade conceals the romantic, rather luxurious 190-year-old which will appeal greatly to Burns fans. The heavyish decor of plaid carpets is relieved by slate-floored bathrooms; rooms are spacious and very comfortable, and there are also a couple of cottages – Rose, more traditionally decorated, and Gables, more modern – across the way. Service is helpful, and there's a decent **restaurant** (3-course dinner £25), but the place is often booked up by wedding parties at weekends.

Getting There & Away

Stagecoach Western bus 57 operates hourly between Alloway and Ayr from 8.45am to 3.45pm Monday to Saturday (10 minutes). Otherwise, rent a bike and cycle here.

TROON

POP 14,766

Troon, a major sailing centre on the coast 7 miles north of Ayr, has excellent sandy

beaches and six golf courses. The demanding championship course **Royal Troon** (☎01292-311555; www.royaltroon.co.uk; Craigend Rd) has offers on its website; the standard green fee is £165 (caddie hire is £40 extra).

Four miles northeast of Troon, **Dundonald Castle** (HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; Dundonald; adult/child £3.50/1.50; ☉10am-5pm Apr-Oct) commands impressive views and, in its main hall, has one of the finest barrel-vaulted ceilings preserved in Scotland. It was the first home of the Stuart kings, built by Robert II in 1371, and reckoned to be the third most important castle in Scotland in its time, after Edinburgh and Stirling. The visitor centre below the castle has good information on prior settlements, and scale models of the castle and its predecessors. Buses running between Troon and Kilmarnock stop in Dundonald village.

Getting There & Away

There are half-hourly trains to Ayr (10 minutes) and Glasgow (£6.15, 45 minutes).

P&O (☎0871 66 44 777; www.poirishsea.com) sails twice daily to Larne (£24 for passengers, £79 for a car and driver, two hours) in Northern Ireland.

CULZEAN CASTLE & COUNTRY PARK

The Scottish National Trust's flagship property, magnificent **Culzean** (NTS; ☎01655-884400; www.culzeanexperience.org; adult/child/family £13/9/32, park only adult/child £8.50/5.50; ☉castle 10.30am-5pm Apr-Oct, park 9.30am-sunset year round) is one of the most impressive of Scotland's great stately homes. The entrance to Culzean (kull-ane) is a converted viaduct, and on approach the castle appears like a mirage, floating into view. Designed by Robert Adam, who was encouraged to exercise his romantic genius in its design, this 18th-century mansion is perched dramatically on the edge of the cliffs. Robert Adam was the most influential architect of his time, renowned for his meticulous attention to detail and the elegant classical embellishments with which he decorated his ceilings and fireplaces.

The beautiful oval staircase here is regarded as one of his finest achievements. On the 1st floor, the opulence of the circular saloon contrasts violently with the views of the wild sea below. Lord Cassillis' bedroom is said to be haunted by a lady in green, mourning for a lost baby. Even the

THE SCOTTISH BARD

I see her in the dewy flowers,
 I see her sweet and fair:
 I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
 I hear her charm the air:
 There's not a bonnie flower that springs
 By fountain, shaw, or green;
 There's not a bonnie bird that sings,
 But minds me o' my Jean.

Best remembered for penning the words of 'Auld Lang Syne', Robert Burns (1759–96) is Scotland's most famous poet and a popular hero whose birthday (25 January) is celebrated as Burns Night by Scots around the world.

Burns was born in Alloway to a poor family, who scraped a living gardening and farming. At school he soon showed an aptitude for literature and a fondness for the folk song. He later began to write his own songs and satires. When the problems of his arduous farming life were compounded by the threat of prosecution from the father of Jean Armour, with whom he'd had an affair, he decided to emigrate to Jamaica. He gave up his share of the family farm and published his poems to raise money for the journey.

The poems were so well reviewed in Edinburgh that Burns decided to remain in Scotland and devote himself to writing. He went to Edinburgh in 1787 to publish a 2nd edition, but the financial rewards were not enough to live on and he had to take a job as a excise man in Dumfriesshire. Though he worked well, he wasn't a taxman by nature, and described his job as 'the execrable office of whip-person to the blood-hounds of justice'. He contributed many songs to collections published by Johnson and Thomson in Edinburgh, and a 3rd edition of his poems was published in 1793. To give an idea of the prodigious writings of the man, Robert Burns composed more than 28,000 lines of verse over 22 years. He died of rheumatic fever in Dumfries in 1796, aged 37.


Burns wrote in Lallans, the Scottish Lowland dialect of English that is not very accessible to the Sassenach (Englishman) or foreigner; perhaps this is part of his appeal. He was also very much a man of the people, satirising the upper classes and the church for their hypocrisy.


Many of the local landmarks mentioned in the verse-tale 'Tam o' Shanter' can still be visited. Farmer Tam, riding home after a hard night's drinking in a pub in Ayr, sees witches dancing in Alloway churchyard. He calls out to the one pretty witch, but is pursued by them all and has to reach the other side of the River Doon to be safe. He just manages to cross the Brig o' Doon, but his mare loses her tail to the witches.

The Burns connection in southern Scotland is milked for all it's worth and tourist offices have a *Burns Heritage Trail* leaflet leading you to every place that can claim some link with the bard. Burns fans should have a look at www.robertburns.org.

bathrooms are palatial, the dressing room beside the state bedroom being equipped with a Victorian state-of-the-art shower.

There are also two ice houses, a swan pond, a pagoda, a re-creation of a Victorian vineyard, an orangery, a deer park and an aviary. Wildlife in the area includes otters.

If you really want to experience the magic of this place, it's possible to stay in the **castle** (s/d from £150/225, Eisenhower ste £250/375; ) from April to October. There's also a **Camping & Caravanning Club**

( 01655-760627; www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk; tent sites members/non-members £9/16; ) at the entrance to the park, offering grassy pitches with great views.

Getting There & Away

Culzean is 12 miles south of Ayr; Maybole is the nearest train station, but since it's 4 miles away it's best to come by bus from Ayr (30 minutes, 11 daily Monday to Saturday). Buses pass the park gates, from where it's a 20-minute walk through the grounds to the castle.

TURNBERRY

POP 200

Turnberry's **Ailsa golf course** (☎01655-334032; www.turnberry.co.uk) hosted the British Open in 2009 and is one of Scotland's most prestigious links courses, with spectacular views of Ailsa Craig (p166) offshore. You don't need a handicap certificate to play, just plenty of pounds – the standard green fee is £190. In summer though, take advantage of the after-3pm 'sunset' rate and you can go round for £90 a head.

Opposite the course, the super-luxurious **Turnberry Resort** (☎01655-331000; www.luxurycollection.com/turnberry; d from £279; 📞📧📺) offers everything you can think of, including an airstrip and helipad. As well as the luxurious rooms and excellent restaurant, 1906, there's a series of self-contained lodges.

KIRKOSWALD

POP 500

Just 2 miles east of Kirkoswald, by the A77, **Crossraguel Abbey** (HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; adult/child £3.70/2.20; ☀9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep) is a substantial ruin dating back to the 13th century that's good fun to explore. The renovated 16th-century gatehouse is the best part – you'll find decorative stonework and superb views from the top. Inside, if you have the place to yourself, you'll hear only the whistling wind – an apt reflection of the abbey's long-deceased monastic tradition. Don't miss the echo in the chilly sacristy.

Stagecoach Western runs Ayr-to-Girvan buses via Crossraguel Abbey and Kirkoswald (35 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday, every two hours Sunday).

AILS CRAIG

The curiously shaped island of Ailsa Craig can be seen from much of southern Ayrshire. While its unusual blue-tinted granite has been used by geologists to trace the movements of the great Ice Age ice sheet, birdwatchers know Ailsa Craig as the world's second-largest gannet colony – around 10,000 pairs breed annually on the island's sheer cliffs.

To see the island close up you can take a cruise from Girvan on the **MV Glorious** (☎01465-713219; www.ailsacraig.org.uk; 7 Harbour St, Girvan). It's possible to land if the sea is reasonably calm; a four-hour trip costs £20/15 per adult/child (£25 per person if you want three hours ashore).

Trains going to Girvan run approximately hourly (with only three trains on Sundays) from Ayr (30 minutes).

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

Some of the region's finest attractions lie in the gentle hills and lush valleys of Dumfries & Galloway. Ideal for families, there's plenty on offer for the kids and, happily, restaurants, B&Bs and guesthouses that are very used to children. Galloway Forest is a highlight, with its sublime views, mountain-biking and walking trails, red deer, kites and other wildlife, as are the dream-like ruins of Caerlaverock Castle.

Adding to the appeal of this enticing region is a string of southern Scotland's most idyllic towns, charming when the sun shines. And shine it does. Warmed by the Gulf Stream, this is the mildest region in Scotland, a phenomenon that has allowed the development of some famous gardens.

Dumfries

POP 31,146

Lovely, red-hued sandstone bridges criss-cross pleasant Dumfries, which is bisected by the wide River Nith, with pleasant grassed areas along the river bank. Historically, Dumfries held a strategic position in the path of vengeful English armies. Consequently, although it has existed since Roman times, the oldest standing building dates from the 17th century. Plenty of famous names have passed through here: Robert Burns lived here and worked as a tax collector; JM Barrie, creator of Peter Pan, was schooled here; and the former racing driver David Coulthard hails from here.

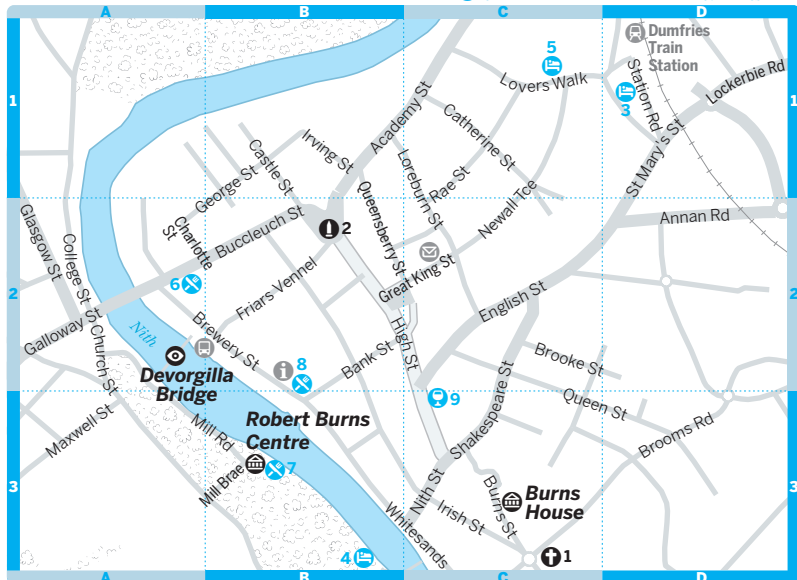
👁 Sights

The red-sandstone bridges arching over the River Nith are the most attractive features of the town: **Devorgilla Bridge** (1431) is one of the oldest bridges in Scotland. You can download a multilingual MP3 audio tour of the town at www.dumgal.gov.uk/audiotour.

FREE Burns House

MUSEUM

(www.dumgal.gov.uk/museums; Burns St; ☀10am-5pm Mon-Sat & 2-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar) This is a place of pilgrimage for Burns enthusiasts. It's here that the poet spent the last years of his life, and there are various items of his



possessions in glass cases, as well as manuscripts and, entertainingly, letters: make sure you have a read.

FREE Robert Burns Centre MUSEUM

(www.dumgal.gov.uk/museums; Mill Rd; audiovisual presentation £2; ☉10am-5pm Mon-Sat & 2-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar) A worthwhile Burns exhibition in an old mill on the banks of the River Nith. It tells the story of the poet and Dumfries in the 1790s. The optional audiovisual presentations give more background on Dumfries, and explain the exhibition's contents.

You'll find Robert Burns' **mausoleum** in the graveyard at **St Michael's Kirk**; there's a grisly account of his reburial on the information panel. At the top of High St is a **statue** of the bard; take a close look at the sheepdog at his feet.

Ellisland Farm HISTORIC HOME

(www.ellislandfarm.co.uk; Auldgirth; adult/child £2.50/free; ☉10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar) If you're not Burnsed out, you could head 6 miles northwest of town and visit the farm he leased. It still preserves some original features from when he and his family lived here, and there's a small exhibition. It's signposted off the A76 to Kilmarnock.

Dumfries

📍 Top Sights

Burns House.....	C3
Devorgilla Bridge.....	A2
Robert Burns Centre	B3

📍 Sights

1 Burns' Mausoleum	C3
2 Robert Burns Statue	B2
St Michael's Kirk	(see 1)

🏠 Sleeping

3 Ferintosh Guest House	D1
4 Merlin	B3
5 Torbay Lodge.....	C1

🍴 Eating

6 Cavens Arms.....	A2
7 Hullabaloo	B3
8 One Bank St	B2

🍷 Drinking

9 Globe Inn	C3
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🏠 Sleeping

Merlin

B&B ££

(☎01387-261002; 2 Kenmure Tce; r per person £30; 📍) Beautifully located on the riverbank across a pedestrian bridge from the centre, this is a top place to hole up in Dumfries.

So much work goes on behind the scenes here that it seems effortless: numerous small details and a friendly welcome make this a very impressive set-up. Rooms share a bathroom, and have super-comfy beds; the breakfast table is also quite a sight.

Ferintosh Guest House

B&B ££

(☎01387-252262; www.ferintosh.net; 30 Lovers Walk; s £35, d £54-60; ☎) A Victorian villa, opposite the train station, Ferintosh has sumptuous rooms done in individual themes. The whisky room is our fave – no matter which you choose, there'll probably be a free dram awaiting you on arrival. These people have the right attitude towards hospitality. The owner's original artwork complements the decor and mountain bikers are welcomed with a shed out the back for bikes.

Torbay Lodge

B&B ££

(☎01387-253922; www.torbaylodge.co.uk; 31 Lovers Walk; s/d £28/54; ☎) This high-standard guesthouse has beautifully presented bedrooms with generously sized en suites (and a single without); the good vibe is topped off with excellent breakfast.



Eating & Drinking

Cavens Arms

PUB £

(20 Buccleuch St; mains £7-12; ☎lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Engaging staff, nine real ales on tap, and a warm contented buzz make this a legendary Dumfries pub. Generous portions of typical pub nosh backed up by a long list of more adventurous daily specials make it one of the town's most enjoyable places to eat too. If you were going to move to Dumfries, you'd make sure you were within a block or two of here.

Hullabaloo

CAFE, RESTAURANT ££

(☎01387-259679; www.hullabaloorestaurant.co.uk; Mill Rd; lunch mains £5-9, dinner mains £10-15; ☎lunch daily, dinner Tue-Sat) At weekend locals flock to this contemporary restaurant at the Robert Burns Centre. For lunch there's wraps, melts and ciabattas, but come dinner time it's inventive angles on traditional creations – with imaginative fish dishes perhaps best on show.

One Bank St

CAFE £

(1 Bank St; lunch £3-7; ☎10am-4pm Mon-Sat) This wee room upstairs around the corner from the tourist office (look for the sign on the street) does gourmet rolls and baked potatoes, but gets even more adventurous

with wraps like roast veg and humus or smoked chicken and raspberry.

Globe Inn

PUB

(www.globeinndumfries.co.uk; 56 High St) A traditional, rickety old nook-and-cranny pub down a narrow wynd off the main pedestrian drag, this was reputedly Burns' favourite watering hole, and scene of one of his numerous seductions. It's got a great atmosphere created by its welcoming locals and staff as much as the numerous pictures of the 'ploughman poet' himself.

Information

Ewart library (☎01387-253820; Catherine St; ☎9.15am-7.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 9.15am-5pm Thu & Sat; @) Free internet access.

Tourist office (☎01387-245550; www.visitdumfriesandgalloway.co.uk; 64 Whitesands; ☎9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, plus Sun Jul-mid-Oct)

Getting There & Away

Bus

Local buses run regularly to Kirkcudbright (one hour, roughly hourly Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday) and towns along the A75 to Stranraer (£7.40, 2¼ hours, eight daily Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday).

Bus 100/101 runs to/from Edinburgh (£7, 2¾ hours, four to seven daily), via Moffat and Biggar.

Train

There are trains between Carlisle and Dumfries (£8.60, 35 minutes, every hour or two Monday to Saturday), and direct trains between Dumfries and Glasgow (£12.90, 1¾ hours, eight daily Monday to Saturday); there's a reduced service on Sunday.

South of Dumfries

CAERLAVEROCK

The ruins of **Caerlaverock Castle** (HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; adult/child £5.20/3.10; ☎9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Oct-Mar), by Glencleap on a beautiful stretch of the Solway coast, are among the loveliest in Britain. Surrounded by a moat, lawns and stands of trees, the unusual pink-stoned triangular castle looks impregnable. In fact, it fell several times, most famously when it was attacked in 1300 by Edward I: the siege became the subject of an epic poem, 'The Siege of Caerlaverock'. The current castle dates from the late 13th century but, once defensive purposes were no longer a design necessity, it was refitted as a luxurious Scot-

tish Renaissance mansion house in 1634. Ironically, the rampaging Covenanter militia sacked it a few years later. With nooks and crannies to explore, passageways and remnants of fireplaces, this castle is great for the whole family.

It's worth combining a visit to the castle with one to **Caerlaverock Wetland Centre** (www.wwt.org.uk; adult/child £6.70/3.30; ☉10am-5pm), a mile east. It protects 546 hectares of salt marsh and mud flats, the habitat for numerous birds, including barnacle geese. There's free, daily wildlife safaris with experienced rangers and a coffee shop that serves organic food.

From Dumfries, bus D6A runs several times a day (just twice on Sunday) to Caerlaverock Castle. By car take the B725 south.

RUTHWELL CROSS

A couple of miles beyond Caerlaverock, in the hamlet of Ruthwell, the **church** (☎0131-550 7612; ☉ring in advance to visit) holds one of Europe's most important early Christian monuments. The 6m-high 7th-century Ruthwell Cross is carved top to bottom in New Testament scenes and is inscribed with a poem called 'The Dream of the Rood'; written in a Saxon runic alphabet, it's considered one of the earliest examples of English-language literature.

Bus 79 running between Dumfries and Carlisle stops in Ruthwell.

NEW ABBEY

The small, picturesque village of New Abbey lies 7 miles south of Dumfries and contains the remains of the 13th-century Cistercian **Sweetheart Abbey** (HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; adult/child £3/1.80; ☉9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, to 4.30pm Oct, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat-Wed Nov-Mar). The shattered, red-sandstone remnants of the abbey are impressive and stand in stark contrast to the manicured lawns surrounding them. The abbey, the last of the major monasteries to be established in Scotland, was founded by Devorgilla of Galloway in 1273 in honour of her dead husband John Balliol (with whom she had founded Balliol College, Oxford). On his death, she had his heart embalmed and carried it with her until she died 22 years later. She and the heart were buried by the altar – hence the name.

On the edge of New Abbey, a historic house holds the **National Museum of Costume** (www.nms.ac.uk; adult/child £4/free; ☉10am-5pm Apr-Oct), which gives an over-

view of what Scots have worn from Victorian times up to the postwar years. There are also picturesque gardens here.

Kids complaining about all the castles, historic sights and Robert Burns? Pack up the clan and get down to **Mabie Farm Park** (www.mabiefarmpark.co.uk; adult/child/family £5.50/5/20; ☉10am-5pm daily Apr-Oct, Sat & Sun Feb-Mar), between Dumfries and New Abbey off the A710. There are plenty of animals and activities for kids, including petting and feeding sessions, donkey rides, go-karting, slides, a soft play area, picnic areas...the list goes on – put a full day aside.

If you've got a range of ages, you could split up and take the older ones to the adjacent **Mabie Forest Park** (☎01387-270275; www.7stanes.gov.uk) which is one of the 7stanes mountain bike hubs (see p175). There are nearly 40 miles of trails for all levels; bike hire available.

Staying in New Abbey is a good alternative to Dumfries and the **Abbey Arms** (☎01387-850489; www.abbeyarmshotel.com; The Square; s/d £35/60) is a fine old inn with simple but clean and comfy rooms, and a good dose of homespun hospitality. The food is home cooked (mains £7 to £9) and a couple of dishes – Greek spanakopita and lamb rogan josh – deviate from the pub classics.

To get to New Abbey, take Bus 372 from Dumfries.

Annandale & Eskdale

These valleys, in Dumfries & Galloway's east, form part of two major routes that cut across Scotland's south. Away from the highways, the roads are quiet and there are some interesting places to visit, especially if you're looking to break a road trip.

GRETNA & GRETNA GREEN

POP 2705

Firmly on the coach tour circuit for its romantic associations (see the boxed text, p170), Gretna Green still hosts some 4000 weddings yearly. It's on the outskirts of the town of Gretna, just across the river from Cumbria in England, not far from Carlisle.

The touristy **Old Blacksmith's Shop** (www.gretnagreen.com; Gretna Green; adult/child £3.50/free; ☉9am-5pm Sep-Jun, to 7pm Jul-Aug) has an exhibition on Gretna Green's history, a sculpture park and a coach museum (there's even an anvil marriage room!).

TYING THE KNOT IN GREтна GREEN

From the mid-18th century, eloping couples south of the border realised that under Scottish law people could (and still can) tie the knot at the age of 16 without parental consent (in England and Wales the legal age was 21; it's now 18). Gretna Green's location close to the border made it the most popular venue.

At one time anyone could perform a legal marriage ceremony, but in Gretna Green it was usually the local blacksmith, who became known as the 'Anvil Priest'. In 1940 the 'anvil weddings' were outlawed, but eloping couples still got married in the church or registry office.

Today many people take or even reaffirm their marriage vows in the village. If you want to get married over the famous anvil in the Old Blacksmith's Shop at Gretna Green, check out **Gretna Green Weddings** (www.gretnaweddings.com).

Smith's (☎01461-337007; www.smithsgretnagreen.co.uk; Gretna Green; s/d £115/135; 📞📺📺) is a large contemporary hotel with a reader-recommended **restaurant** (mains £12-19). Though the blocky exterior won't delight everybody, the interior is much more stylish. The rooms are decorated in a chic, restrained style with king-sized beds. Various grades are available; you'll get much cheaper rates booking online.

The very helpful **tourist office** (☎01461-337834; gretnatic@visitscotland.com; Gretna Gateway, Gretna; ☀10am-6pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4.30pm Nov-Mar) is a good first stop for information on Scotland if you're driving across from England.

Bus 79 between Dumfries (1 hour) and Carlisle (35 minutes) stops in Gretna (hourly Monday to Saturday, every two hours Sunday). Trains also run from Gretna Green to Dumfries and Carlisle.

MOFFAT

POP 2135

Moffat lies in wild, hilly country near the upper reaches of Annandale. It's really enjoyed by the older brigade and is a popular tourist-coach spot. The former spa town is

a centre for the local wool industry, symbolised by the bronze ram statue on High St.

At **Moffat Woollen Mill** (www.ewm-store.co.uk), near the tourist office, you can see a working weaving exhibition. This place is a retail bonanza – if that's your thing, you're going to love it here.

The flower-decked **Buchan Guest House** (☎01683-220378; www.buchanguesthouse.co.uk; Beechgrove; s/d £37/66; 📞📺) is in a quiet street just a short walk north of the town centre. Room No 5 is a good choice, as it has a lovely outlook over nearby fields.

TOP CHOICE **Groom's Cottage** (☎01683-220049; Beattock Rd; d £60; 📞) is a

beautifully presented, cosy self-contained nook with everything you could want for a comfortable stay. There are self-catering facilities (but breakfast is included). It has good privacy from the owner's residence, views over green fields and even an orthopaedic bed. It's a stylish job and very reasonably priced – weekly deals are available too. Look for 'The Lodge' sign coming in from the M74 – it's on your right before you hit the town centre. This option is ideally suited to couples.

The **tourist office** (☎01683-220620; Churchgate; ☀10am-4pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct) is also open Sunday in summer.

There are several daily buses to Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dumfries (buses 100 and 114). For Gretna, change at Lockerbie.

LANGHOLM

POP 2311

The waters of three rivers – the Esk, Ewes and Wauchope – meet at Langholm, a gracious old town at the centre of Scotland's tweed industry. Most people come for fishing and walking in the surrounding moors and woodlands; check out the **Langholm Walks website** (www.langholmwalks.co.uk) for details.

Border House (☎013873-80376; www.border-house.co.uk; High St; s/d £30/60; 📞) is an excellent central accommodation option with large rooms (the downstairs double in particular), a lovely hostess and big sink-in-and-smile beds. You may get fresh handmade chocolates if a batch has just been made!

Bus 112 has up to five daily connections with **Eskdalemuir** (no Sunday service). This goes on to Lockerbie, from where you can get buses to other destinations.

ESKDALEMUIR

Surrounded by wooded hills, Eskdalemuir is a remote settlement 13 miles northwest of Langholm. About 1.5 miles further north is the **Samye Ling Tibetan Centre** (☎013873-73232; www.samyeling.org; camping/dm/s/d incl full board £15/23/36/56; 📍), the first Tibetan Buddhist monastery built in the West (1968). The colourful prayer flags and the red and gold of the temple itself are a striking contrast to the stark grey and green landscape. You can visit the centre during the day (donation suggested, cafe on site), or stay overnight in simple accommodation which includes full vegetarian board. There are also meditation courses and weekend workshops available.

Bus 112 from Langholm/Lockerbie stops at the centre.

Castle Douglas & Around

POP 3671

Castle Douglas attracts a lot of day-trippers but hasn't been 'spruced up' for tourism. It's an open, attractive, well-cared-for town. There are some remarkably beautiful areas close to the centre, such as the small Carlingwark Loch. The town was laid out in the 18th century by Sir William Douglas, who had made a fortune in the Americas.

👁 Sights & Activities

Threave Castle

CASTLE

(HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; adult/child incl ferry £4.20/2.50; 🕒9.30am-5pm Apr-Sep) Two miles further west of Castle Douglas, Threave Castle is an impressive tower on a small island in the River Dee. Built in the late 14th century, it became a principal stronghold of the Black Douglases. It's now basically a shell, having been badly damaged by the Covenanters in the 1640s, but it's a romantic ruin nonetheless.

It's a 15-minute walk from the car park to the ferry landing, where you ring a bell for the custodian to take you across to the island in a small boat.

Loch Ken

LOCH, WATER SPORTS

Stretching for 9 miles northwest of Castle Douglas between the A713 and A762, Loch Ken is a popular outdoor recreational area. The range of water sports includes windsurfing, sailing, canoeing, power-boating and kayaking. Back on land, off-road buggies can also be hired. **Galloway Activity Centre** (☎01644-420626; www.lochken.co.uk;

📍), on the eastern bank north of Parton village, runs a wide range of activities, and also provides equipment and accommodation. Activities cost £16/26/38 for 1½/three/six hours. There are also walking trails and a rich variety of bird life. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) has a **nature reserve** (www.rspb.org.uk) on the western bank, north of Glenlochlar.

Sulwath Brewery

BREWERY

(www.sulwathbrewers.co.uk; 209 King St; adult/child £4/free; 🕒10am-5pm Mon-Sat) You can see traditional brewing processes at Sulwath Brewery. Admission includes a half-pint of Galloway real ale (tea or coffee is also available). Recommended is the Criffel, an original pale ale, and Knockendoch, a dark brew with a delicious taste of roasted malt.

🍴 Sleeping & Eating

Douglas House

B&B ££

(☎01556-503262; www.douglas-house.com; 63 Queen St; s/d £38/78; 📍) A keen designer's eye is obviously present at this luxurious, attractively renovated place. Big beautiful bathrooms complement the light, stylish chambers, which include flatscreen digital TVs with inbuilt DVD player. The two upstairs doubles are the best, although the downstairs double is huge and has a king-size bed – you could sleep four in it...if you're into that kinda thing.

WORTH A TRIP

WANLOCKHEAD

'Lead mining': even the phrase has a sort of dulling effect on the brain, and you'd think it'd be a tough ask to make the subject interesting. But at the **Museum of Lead Mining** (www.leadminingmuseum.co.uk; adult/child £6.25/4.50; 🕒11am-4.30pm Apr-Oct) at little Wanlockhead, off the motorway northwest of Moffat, they pull it off. It's apparently Scotland's highest village, and not necessarily a place you'd have chosen for quality of life back in the day. The tour of the place is fascinating, and family-friendly, taking in a real mine, miners' cottages, a unique library, and a display on lead-mining and other minerals. In summer, they also run gold-panning activities (£3).

Bus 224 heads to Wanlockhead from Dumfries.

Douglas Arms Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01556-502231; www.douglasarmshotel.com; 206 King St; s/d dinner, bed & breakfast £55/80; 🍷) Smack bang in the middle of town, Douglas Arms was originally a coaching inn, but these days all the mod cons comfort the weary traveller. If you want to splash out, go for the honeymoon suite, which has a four-poster bed, jacuzzi and views over the main drag from a collage of windows. The lively bar serves scrumptious food (bar meals £8 to £12), although the atmosphere is a bit staid. The steak-and-ale pie made with Galloway beef is recommended.

Craig

B&B ££

(☎01556-504840; www.thecraigcastle.douglas.co.uk; 44 Abercromby Rd; s/d £33/60; 📄) This solid old property is a fine B&B with a conscientious owner, large rooms and fresh fruit served up for breakfast. It's old-fashioned hospitality – genuine and very comfortable. Would suit older visitors. It's on the edge of town on the road to New Galloway.

Lochside Caravan & Camping Site

CAMPING £

(☎01556-502949; www.dumgal.gov.uk/caravanandcamping; Lochside Park; tent sites £15.50) Very central campsite attractively situated beside Carlingwark Loch; there's plenty of grass and fine trees providing shade.

Galloway Activity Centre

HOSTEL, CAMPING £

(☎01644-420626; www.lochken.co.uk; Loch Ken; dm £15, tent sites £6 per person) Year-round dormitory accommodation and camping at this lakeside spot 10 miles north of Castle Douglas.

Deli 173

TAKEAWAY £

(173 King St; baguette or panini £2.80; ☺8am-4pm Mon-Sat) For a truly awesome baguette drop into this fine-foods deli. We recommend 'the Godfather'.

Simply Delicious

CAFE £

(134 King St; snacks £2-5; ☺breakfast & lunch) Great cafe serving all-day brekky (£6.50), luxury melts and freshly ground coffee.

i Information

Library (☎502643; King St; ☺10am-7.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 10am-5pm Thu & Sat; 📄) Free internet access.

Tourist office (☎01556-502611; King St; ☺10am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct) In a small park on King St. Also open Sundays in July and August.

i Getting There & Away

Buses 501 and 502 pass through Castle Douglas roughly hourly en route to Dumfries (45 minutes) and Kirkcudbright (20 minutes). Bus 520 along the A713 connects Castle Douglas with New Galloway (30 minutes, six daily Monday to Saturday, one Sunday) and Ayr (£6.80, 2½ hours, two or three daily Monday to Saturday, one Sunday).

Kirkcudbright

POP 3447

Kirkcudbright (kirk-coo-bree), with its dignified streets of 17th- and 18th-century merchants' houses and its appealing harbour, is the ideal base from which to explore the south coast. This delightful town has one of the most beautifully restored High Streets in Dumfries & Galloway. Look out for the nook-and-cranny wynds in the elbow of High St. With its architecture and setting, it's easy to see why Kirkcudbright has been an artists' colony since the late 19th century.

👁 Sights & Activities

Kirkcudbright is a charming town for a wander, dropping into galleries as you go; it won't be long before you stumble across its main sights. In June, the town's **jazz festival** (www.kirkcudbrightjazzfestival.co.uk) is four days of swing, trad, and dixie.

MacLellan's Castle

CASTLE

(HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; Castle St; adult/child £3.70/2.20; ☺9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep) Near the harbour, this is a large, atmospheric ruin built in 1577 by Thomas MacLellan, then provost of Kirkcudbright, as his town residence. Inside look for the 'lairds' lug', a 16th-century hidey-hole designed for the laird to eavesdrop on his guests.

FREE Tolbooth Art Centre

EXHIBITION SPACE

(High St; ☺11am-4pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun) As well as catering for today's local artists, this centre has an exhibition on the history of the town's artistic development. The place is as interesting for the building itself as for the artistic works on display. It's one of the oldest and best-preserved tollbooths in Scotland and interpretative signboards reveal its past. Extended hours in summer.

Broughton House

GALLERY

(NTS; www.nts.org.uk; 12 High St; adult/child £5.50/4.50; ☺noon-5pm Apr-Oct) The 18th-

century Broughton House displays paintings by EA Hornel (he lived and worked here), one of the Glasgow Boys group of painters (p111). Behind the house is a lovely Japanese-style garden (also open in February and March). The library with its wood panelling and stone carvings is probably the most impressive room.

Galloway Wildlife Conservation Park zoo (www.gallowaywildlife.co.uk; Lochfergus Plantation; adult/child £6/4; ☺10am-dusk Feb-Nov) A mile from Kirkcudbright on the B727, this is an easy walk from town, and you'll see red pandas, wolves, monkeys, kangaroos, Scottish wildcats and many more creatures in a beautiful setting. An important role of the park is the conservation of rare and threatened species.

Sleeping & Eating

Kirkcudbright has a swathe of good B&Bs.



Selkirk Arms Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01557-330402; www.selkirkarmshotel.co.uk; High St; s/d/superior d £82/116/136; P @ ☺ ♣) What a haven of good hospitality this is. Superior rooms are excellent – wood furnishings and views over the back garden give them a rustic appeal. Try No 20. The **bistro** (mains £10-18) serves top pub nosh – the fish and chips come wrapped in the hotel newsletter – and the restaurant, **Artistas** (2-course dinner £23), serves more refined but equally tasty fare. Staff are happy to be there, and you will be too.

Castle Restaurant

RESTAURANT ££

(☎01557-330569; www.thecastlerestaurant.net; 5 Castle St; mains £12-14; ☺lunch Thu-Sun, dinner Mon-Sat; ♣) The Castle Restaurant is the best place to eat in town and uses organic produce where possible. It covers a few bases with chicken, beef and seafood dishes on offer as well as tempting morsels for vegetarians. Lunch mains are lighter and cheaper, and there's a good-value evening two-course offer for £16.

Gordon House Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01557-330670; www.gordon-house-hotel.co.uk; 116 High St; s/d/f £40/70/80; ☺) The small, laid-back hotel rooms are in good shape, but they vary a bit, so have a look at a few. No 2 is probably the best of the doubles. You can dine in the restaurant (mains £12 to £19), which serves posh nosh like pan-seared breast of guinea fowl with tarragon and grain mustard, or the lounge bar, and there's a beer garden for sunny afternoons.

Greengate

B&B ££

(☎01557-331895; www.thegreengate.co.uk; 46 High St; s/d £50/70; ☺) The artistically inclined should snap up the one double room in this lovely place, with both historic and current painterly connections.

Number One

B&B ££

(☎01557-330540; www.number1bedandbreakfast.co.uk; 1 Castle Gdns; d £75; ☺) Right by the castle, this tasteful spot offers high-end B&B with solicitous hosts who prepare great breakfasts and dinners and are happy to advise about walks in the area.

Anchorlee

B&B ££

(☎01557-330197; www.anchorlee.co.uk; 95 St Mary St; s/d £55/75; P ☺) Top-floor rooms are a bit frilly but very spacious and neat as a pin. Very friendly.

Silvercraigs Caravan & Camping Site

CAMPING £

(☎01557-330123; silvercraigs.caravan@dumgal.gov.uk; Silvercraigs Rd; sites for up to 2 £15.50; ☺Mar-Oct; P) There are brilliant views from this campground; you feel like you're sleeping on top of the town. Great stargazing on clear nights. Good facilities, too, including a laundry.

Information

Check out www.kirkcudbright.co.uk and www.artiststown.org.uk for heaps of information on the town.

Tourist office (☎01557-330494; kirkcudbrighttic@visitscotland.com; Harbour Sq; ☺daily mid-Feb-Nov) Handy office with useful brochures detailing walks and road tours in the surrounding district.

Getting There & Away

Kirkcudbright is 28 miles southwest of Dumfries. Buses 501 and 505 run hourly to Dumfries (one hour) via Castle Douglas and Dalbeattie respectively. Change at Gatehouse of Fleet for Stranraer.

Gatehouse of Fleet

POP 892

Gatehouse of Fleet is an attractive little town stretched along a sloping main street, in the middle of which sits an unusual castellated clock tower. The town lies on the banks of the Water of Fleet, completely off the beaten track, and is surrounded by partly wooded hills.

In the centre of town, **Mill on the Fleet Visitor Centre** (www.millonthefleet.co.uk; High

St; admission free; ☺10am-5pm Apr-Oct), in a converted 18th-century cotton mill, traces the history of the local industry. The town was originally planned as workers' accommodation. There's also tourist information and a cafe here.

One mile southwest on the A75, the well-preserved **Cardoness Castle** (HS; www.historic-scotland.gov.uk; adult/child £3.70/2.20; ☺9.30am-5.30pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) was the home of the McCulloch clan. It's a classic 15th-century tower house with great views from the top.

Bobbin Guest House (☎01557-814229; bobbinguesthouse@sky.com; 36 High St; s/d £30/60; ♿), situated right in the middle of town, is a home-from-home with a variety of spacious, well-appointed rooms with good en suite bathrooms.

The friendly, family-run **Bank of Fleet Hotel** (☎01557-814302; www.bankoffleet.co.uk; 47 High St; s/d £33/65; ♿) has bright rooms with a blue decor that gives them a cool, contemporary feel. Live entertainment's on offer, plus good bar meals (mains £8 to £11) – try the grilled Galloway trout.

Buses X75 and 500 between Dumfries (one hour) and Stranraer (1¼ hours) stop here eight times daily (three on Sunday).

Around Gatehouse

Ideal for families, **Cream o' Galloway** (☎01557-815222; www.creamogalloway.co.uk; Rainton; visitor centre adult/child £2/4; incl all rides £10; ☺10am-5pm mid-Mar–Oct, to 6pm Jul & Aug) has taken off big time. It offers a plethora of activities and events at the home of that delicious ice cream you'll see around the region. There are 4 miles of nature trails, an adventure playground for all ages, a 3-D maze, wildlife-watching, a farm to explore and plenty of ice cream to taste. Daily events include a farm tour and ice cream tasting, and there are regular special happenings. It's about 4 miles from Gatehouse off the A75 – signposted all the way. You can also hire bikes from here.

Galloway Forest Park

South and northwest of the small town of New Galloway is 300-sq-mile Galloway Forest Park, with numerous lochs and great whale-backed, heather- and pine-covered mountains. The highest point is **Merrick**

(843m). The park is criss-crossed by some superb signposted walking trails, from gentle strolls to long-distance paths, including the **Southern Upland Way** (see the boxed text, p138). The park is very family focused; look out for the booklet of annual events, and the park newspaper, *The Galloway Ranger*, in tourist offices.

The park is also great for **stargazing**; it's been named a Dark Sky Park by the International Dark-Sky Association.

The 19-mile A712 (Queen's Way) between New Galloway and Newton Stewart slices through the southern section of the park.

On the shore of Clatteringshaws Loch, 6 miles west of New Galloway, is **Clatteringshaws Visitor Centre** (☎information 01671-402420; www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland; car-park fee £2; ☺10.30am-4.30pm mid-Mar–Oct, to 5.30pm Jul & Aug), with an exhibition on the area's flora and fauna. Pick up a copy of the *Galloway Red Kite Trail* leaflet here, which details a circular route through impressive scenery that offers a good chance to spot one of these majestic reintroduced birds. From the visitor centre you can walk to a replica of a Romano-British homestead, and to Bruce's Stone, where Robert the Bruce is said to have rested after defeating the English at the Battle of Rapploch Moss (1307).

About a mile west of Clatteringshaws, **Raiders Rd** is a 10-mile drive through the forest with various picnic spots, child-friendly activities, and short walks marked along the way. It costs £2 per vehicle; drive slowly as there's plenty of wildlife about.

Further west is the **Galloway Red Deer Range** where you can observe Britain's largest land-based beast. During rutting season in autumn it's a bit like watching a bullfight as snorting, charging stags compete for the harem. During summer there are guided **ranger-led walks** (adult/child £3.50/2.50).

Walkers and cyclists head for **Glentroot** in the park's west, accessed by the forest road east from Bargrennan off the A714, north of Newton Stewart. Located just over a mile from Bargrennan is the **Glentroot Visitor Centre** (☺10.30am-4.30pm mid-Mar–Oct, to 5.30pm Jul & Aug), which stocks information on activities, including mountain biking, in the area. There is a coffee shop with snacks and an opportunity to rest those weary legs. The road then winds and

MOUNTAIN-BIKING HEAVEN

A brilliant way to experience southern Scotland's forests is by pedal power. The **7stanes** (stones) are seven mountain-biking centres around the region with trails through some of the finest forest scenery you'll find in the country. **Glentool** is one of these centres and the Blue Route here is 5.6 miles in length and a lovely ride climbing up to Green Torr Ridge overlooking Loch Trool. If you've more serious intentions, the Big Country Route is 36 miles of challenging ascents and descents that afford magnificent views of the Galloway Forest. It takes a full day and is not for wimps.

Another of the trailheads is at **Kirroughtree Visitor Centre**, 3 miles southeast of Newton Stewart. This offers plenty of singletrack at four different skill levels. You can hire bikes at both of these places (www.thebreakpad.com). For more information on routes see www.7stanes.gov.uk.

climbs up to Loch Trool, where there are magnificent views.

St John's Town of Dalry

St John's Town of Dalry is a charming village, hugging the hillside about 3 miles north of New Galloway on the A713. It's on the Water of Ken and gives access to the Southern Upland Way. It's a good base for Galloway Forest Park.

Lodgings (☎01644-430015; www.thelodgings.co.uk; St John's Town of Dalry; r per person £29.50) has just two very good rooms, one sleeping three and the other a family room sleeping four. Its advantage over other B&Bs here is privacy: the owners live offsite.

Vine-engulfed **Lochinvar Hotel** (☎01644-430107; www.lochinvarhotel.co.uk; St John's Town of Dalry; s/d £45/70, without bathroom £40/60; ☑), an old hunting lodge built in the 1750s with a stately interior, is a fine place to stay, or pop by for a pint. Front-facing rooms have the best views.

Bus 521 runs once or twice daily (except Sunday) to Dumfries (55 minutes). Bus 520/S2 connects New Galloway with Castle Douglas (30 minutes, three daily Monday to

Saturday, one Sunday); one to three services continue north to Ayr (1¼ to 1¾ hours).

Newton Stewart

POP 3600

On the banks of the sparkling River Cree, Newton Stewart is at the heart of some beautiful countryside, and is popular with hikers and anglers. On the eastern bank, across the bridge, is the older and smaller settlement of **Minnigaff**. With excellent accommodation and eating options, this makes a tempting base for exploring the Galloway Forest Park.

For advice on landing the big one, fishing gear and permits, drop into **Galloway Angling Centre** (☎01671-401333; 1 Queen St). Also see the very useful site at www.fishgalloway.co.uk.

Sleeping & Eating

Creebridge House Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01671-402121; www.creebridge.co.uk; Minnigaff; s/d/superior d £60/110/120; ☑☎☎) This is a magnificent refurbished 18th-century mansion built for the Earl of Galloway. A maze inside, it has tastefully decorated rooms with modern furnishings and loads of character. Try to get a room overlooking the garden (No 7 is a good one). There's also good food here (mains £10 to £15).

Galloway Arms Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01671-402653; www.gallowayarmshotel.com; 54 Victoria St, Newton Stewart; s/d £39/75; ☑☎) A traditional refurbished hotel offering excellent-value accommodation, with good-sized, well-furnished rooms and sparkling renovated en suites. Try No 11 if you're after a double. The hotel is walker- and cyclist-friendly, with bike storage and a drying room, while the bar and restaurant churn out excellent local fare: try the pork-and-apple burger.

Flowerbank Guest House

B&B ££

(☎01671-402629; www.flowerbankgh.com; Millcroft Rd, Minnigaff; s/d £30/60; ☑) This dignified 18th-century house is set in a magnificent landscaped garden on the banks of the River Cree. The two elegantly furnished rooms at the front of the house are slightly more expensive, but are spacious and have lovely garden views. Two-course dinners are £15.

Minnigaff Youth Hostel

HOSTEL £

(SYHA; ☎01671-402211; www.syha.org.uk; Minnigaff; dm £15.25; ☎Apr-Sep; ☑) This converted

school is a well-equipped hostel with eight-bed dorms in a tranquil spot 800m north of the bridge on the eastern bank. Although it's popular with outdoor enthusiasts, you may just about have the place to yourself. Expect a lockout until 5pm.



Café Cree

CAFÉ £

(www.cafecree.co.uk; 48 Victoria St, Newton Stewart; mains £6-10; ☺lunch & dinner; ♿) On the main street, this most hospitable place makes a real effort to source produce locally, and creates wraps, salads, and other dishes vibrant with flavour with it. To try the best of the region, go for a 'local hero platter', with smoked salmon, cheese and other goodies. They'll even spoil your canine companions.



Information

Tourist office (☎01671-402431; www.visitdumfriesandgalloway.com; Dashwood Sq; ☺10am-4pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct)



Getting There & Away

Buses stop in Newton Stewart (Dashwood Sq) on their way to Stranraer (45 minutes) and Dumfries (1½ hours); both served several times daily. Frequent buses also run south to the Isle of Whithorn.

The Machars

South of Newton Stewart, the Galloway Hills give way to the softly rolling pastures of the triangular peninsula known as the Machars. The south has many early Christian sites and the loping 25-mile Pilgrims Way.

Bus 415 runs every hour or two between Newton Stewart and the Isle of Whithorn (one hour) via Wigtown (15 minutes).

WIGTOWN

POP 987

Wigtown is a huge success story. Economically run down for many years, the town's revival began in 1998 when it became Scotland's National Book Town. Today 24 bookshops offer the widest selection of books in Scotland and give book enthusiasts the opportunity to get lost here for days. A major **book festival** (www.wigtownbookfestival.com) is held here in late September.

The **Bookshop** (www.the-bookshop.com; 17 North Main St; ☺9am-5pm Mon-Sat) claims to be Scotland's largest secondhand bookshop, and has a great collection of Scottish

and regional titles. **ReadingLasses Bookshop Café** (www.reading-lasses.com; 17 South Main St; ☺10am-5pm Mon-Sat, also noon-5pm Sun May-Oct) sells caffeine to prolong your reading time and does a cracking smoked salmon salad sourced locally. It specialises in books on the social sciences and women's studies.

Folk in this town love their resident ospreys. It's a good conversation starter and if you'd like to learn a bit more about the majestic birds and see a live CCTV link to a nearby nest, drop by the **Wigtown County Buildings** (Market Sq; admission free; ☺10am-5pm Mon, Thu & Sat, 10am-7.30pm Tue, Wed & Fri, 2-5pm Sun) for its osprey exhibition.

Browsing books can be thirsty work, so it's fortunate that **Bladnoch Distillery** (☎01988-402605; www.bladnoch.co.uk; tours adult/child £3/free; ☺9am-5pm Mon-Fri, also weekends Jul & Aug) is just a couple of miles away in the village of the same name. Ring for times of tours, which include a dram.

Four miles west of Wigtown, off the B733, the well-preserved recumbent **Torhouse Stone Circle** dates from the 2nd millennium BC.

Wow! That's what we said when we saw the rooms in **Hillcrest House** (☎01988-402018; www.hillcrest-wigtown.co.uk; Station Rd; s £40, d £65-75; ☑☑☑). A noble stone building in a quiet part of town, the house features high ceilings and huge windows; spend the extra for one of the superior rooms, which have stupendous views overlooking rolling green hills and the sea beyond. This is all complemented by a ripper breakfast involving fresh local produce.

Pop into the bright dining room at **Café Rendezvous** (2 Agnew Cres; dishes £4-7; ☺10am-4.30pm) for fresh, home-cooked paninis and filled crêpes. There's also decent coffee, gooey treats and outdoor seating.

WHITHORN

POP 867

Whithorn has a broad, attractive High St which is virtually closed at both ends (it was designed to enclose a medieval market). There are few facilities in town, but it's worth visiting because of its fascinating history.

In 397, while the Romans were still in Britain, St Ninian established the first Christian mission beyond Hadrian's Wall in Whithorn (pre-dating St Columba on Iona by 166 years). After his death, Whithorn Priory, the earliest recorded church in Scot-

land, was built to house his remains, and Whithorn became the focus of an important medieval pilgrimage.

Today the ruined priory is part of the excellent **Whithorn Trust Discovery Centre** (www.whithorn.com; 45 George St; adult/child £4.50/2.25; ☎10.30am-5pm Apr-Oct), which introduces you to the history of the place with a good audiovisual and very informative exhibition. There's ongoing archaeological investigation here, and you can see the site of earlier churches. There's also a museum with some fascinating early Christian stone sculptures, including the Latinus Stone (c 450), reputedly Scotland's oldest Christian artefact. Learn about the influences their carvers drew on, from around the British Isles and beyond.

ISLE OF WHITHORN

POP 400

The Isle of Whithorn, once an island but now linked to the mainland by a causeway, is a curious place with an attractive natural harbour and colourful houses. The roofless 13th-century **St Ninian's Chapel**, probably built for pilgrims who landed nearby, is on the windswept, evocative rocky headland. Around Burrow Head, to the southwest but accessed from a path off the A747 before you enter the Isle of Whithorn, is **St Ninian's Cave**, where the saint went to pray.

The 300-year-old **Dunbar House** (☎01988-500336; pompeylewis@aol.com; Tonderghie Rd; s/d £23/40) overlooking the harbour has two large, bright, perfect rooms that share a spotless bathroom. It's a bargain at this price, and cordially run. You can admire the view while tucking into your breakfast in the dining room.

The quayside **Steam Packet Inn** (☎01988-500334; www.steampacketinn.com; Harbour Row; r per person £35, without bathroom £30; 🍷) is a popular pub with real ales, scrumptious bar meals (mains £8 to £10), a snug bar and comfy lodgings. Try to get a room to the front of the building as they have lovely views over the little harbour (No 2 is a good one).

Stranraer

POP 10,851

The friendly but somewhat ramshackle ferry port of Stranraer is gradually seeing its boat services to Northern Ireland move up the road to Cairnryan. Though locals fear it'll turn their town into a ghostly shadow of what it was, it'll probably become a more

pleasant place if the scheduled waterfront redevelopment takes place.

👁 Sights

FREE St John's Castle CASTLE
(George St; ☎10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat East-mid-Sep) Worth a quick visit, St John's Castle was built in 1510 by the Adairs of Kihilt, a powerful local family. The old stone cells carry a distinctly musty smell. There are displays and a couple of videos that trace its history and, from the top of the castle, superb views of Loch Ryan and the ferries chugging out to Ireland.

FREE Stranraer Museum MUSEUM
(55 George St; ☎10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) This museum houses exhibits on local history and you can learn about Stranraer's polar explorers. The highlight is the carved stone pipe from Madagascar.

🍴 Sleeping & Eating

TOP CHOICE Corsewall Lighthouse Hotel HOTEL £££
(☎01776-853220; www.lighthousehotel.co.uk; Kirkcolm; d incl 5-course dinner £150-250; 🍷) It's just you and the cruel sea out here at this fabulously romantic 200-year-old lighthouse, right at the northwest tip of the peninsula, 13 miles northwest of Stranraer. On a sunny day, the water shimmers with light, and you can see Ireland, Kintyre, Arran, and Ailsa Craig. But when the wind and rain beat in, it's just great to be cosily holed up in the snug bar-restaurant or snuggling under the covers in your room. Rooms in the lighthouse building itself are attractive if necessarily compact; chalets are also available.

Balyett Farm Hostel & B&B B&B, HOSTEL ££
(☎01776-703395; www.balyettbb.co.uk; Cairnryan Rd; dm/s/d £20/45/65; 🍷🍷) A mile north of town on the A77, Balyett provides tranquil accommodation in its tidy hostel section, which accommodates five people and has a kitchen/living area. The relaxed B&B at the nearby ivy-covered farmhouse could be the best deal in town. The rooms are light, bright and clean as a whistle. Room No 2 is our fave but all are beautifully furnished and come with lovely aspects over the surrounding country.

Ivy House B&B ££
(☎01776-704176; www.ivyplace.worldonline.co.uk; 3 Ivy Pl; s/d £30/56) This is a great guesthouse and does Scottish hospitality proud,

with excellent facilities, tidy en suite rooms and a smashing breakfast. Nothing is too much trouble for the hosts, who always have a smile for their guests. The room at the back overlooking the churchyard is particularly light and quiet.

North West Castle Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01776-704413; www.northwestcastle.co.uk; Port Rodie; s/d £85/130;

The walk is waymarked until 800m south of Stranraer, where you get the first good views of the village.

Harbour House Hotel (☎01776-810456; www.theharbourhousehotel.co.uk; 53 Main St; s/d £40/80) was formerly the customs house but is now a popular, solid old pub. Some of the tastefully furnished rooms have brilliant views over the harbour. The hotel is also a warm nook for a traditional bar meal (£8 to £10).

For a real dose of luxury, head 3 miles southeast to **Knockinaam Lodge** (☎01776-810471; www.knockinaamlodge.com; dinner, bed & breakfast for 2 £320-420; 📞📺), a former hunting lodge on a little sandy bay. It's where Churchill plotted the endgame of WWII – you can stay in his suite – and it's a very romantic place to get away from it all. The excellent French-influenced cuisine (lunch/dinner £38/50) is backed up by a great range of wines and single malts.

See also the Corsewall Lighthouse Hotel (p177) for accommodation not too far away.

Buses 358 and 367 run to Stranraer (20 minutes, eight Monday to Saturday, three Sunday).

South of Portpatrick

From Portpatrick, the road south to the Mull of Galloway passes coastal scenery that includes rugged cliffs, tiny harbours and sandy beaches. Dairy cattle graze on the greenest grass you've ever seen, and the

warm waters of the Gulf Stream give the peninsula the mildest climate in Scotland.

This mildness is demonstrated at **Logan Botanic Garden** (www.rbge.org.uk/logan; adult/child £5/1; ☀️10am-4pm Sun Feb, 10am-5pm daily Mar & Oct, 10am-6pm daily Apr-Sep), a mile north of Port Logan, where an array of subtropical flora includes tree ferns and cabbage palms. The garden is an outpost of the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh. Port Logan itself is a sleepy place with a decent pub and excellent sandy beach.

Further south, **Drummore** is a fishing village on the east coast. From here it's another 5 miles to the **Mull of Galloway**, Scotland's most southerly point. It's a spectacular spot, with windswept green grass and views of Scotland, England, 19 miles south to the Isle of Man and 26 miles west to Northern Ireland. The 26m-high **lighthouse** (adult/child £2/1; ☀️10am-4pm Sat & Sun Easter-Oct, plus Mon Jul & Aug) here was built by Robert Stevenson, grandfather of the writer, in 1826. You can learn more about the Stevenson clan of lighthouse builders in the small **exhibition** (adult/child £2/1; ☀️10am-4pm) at the lighthouse's base. The Mull of Galloway RSPB nature reserve, home to thousands of seabirds, has a **visitor centre** (www.rspb.org.uk; ☀️10am-5pm) with plenty of information on local species, including where to see them. There's also a cafe here.

The former homes of the lightkeepers are now available to stay in; check out www.ntsholidays.com.

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