



Central Scotland

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Best Seafood Restaurants

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- ➔ Seafood Restaurant (p197)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Forth View Hotel (p191)
- ➔ Gleneagles Hotel (p204)
- ➔ Gilmore House (p208)

Why Go?

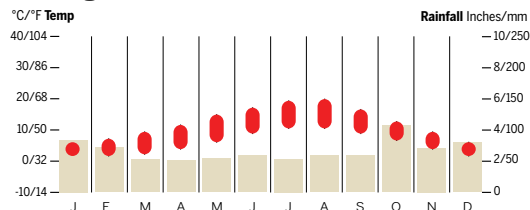
The country's historic roots are deeply embedded in central Scotland. Significant ruins and castles from the region's history pepper the landscape; key battles around Stirling shaped Scotland's fortunes; and Perth, the former capital, is where kings were crowned on the Stone of Destiny.

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

Whether in the softly wooded country of lowland Perthshire, or the green Fife coastline dotted with fishing villages, opportunities to enjoy the landscape abound: walking, cycling and angling are all easy possibilities. The region also has some of the country's best pubs and eateries, which greet weary visitors at day's end.

When to Go

Stirling



May A magical time to explore before summer crowds arrive, and to enjoy the Perth Arts Festival.

Jul-Aug Summer is best for seafood feasts in Fife, and fresh raspberries in Blairgowrie.

Oct-Nov Autumn colours enliven walks in the Perthshire woods around Crieff and Blairgowrie.



Central Scotland Highlights

- ① Admiring the views from magnificent **Stirling Castle** (p179), across ancient independence battlefields
- ② Pacing through the historic birthplace of golf, **St**

Andrews (p192), to play the famous Old Course

- ③ Strutting with peacocks at noble **Scone Palace** (p202), where Scottish kings were once crowned
- ④ Taking a canal-boat trip

through the engineering marvel that is the **Falkirk Wheel** (p188)

- ⑤ Feasting on local seafood in the picturesque fishing villages of the **East Neuk of Fife** (p198)

STIRLING REGION

Covering Scotland's wasplike waist, this region has always been a crucial strategic point dividing the Lowlands from the Highlands. Scotland's two most important independence battles were fought here, within sight of Stirling's hilltop stronghold. William Wallace's victory over the English at Stirling Bridge in 1297, followed by Robert Bruce's triumph at Bannockburn in 1314, established Scottish nationhood. The region remains a focus of much national pride.

Stirling

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With an utterly impregnable position atop a mighty wooded crag (the plug of an extinct volcano), Stirling's beautifully preserved Old Town is a treasure trove of historic buildings and cobbled streets winding up to the ramparts of its dominant castle, which offer views for miles around. Clearly visible is

the brooding Wallace Monument, a strange Victorian Gothic creation honouring the legendary freedom fighter of *Braveheart* fame. Nearby is Bannockburn, scene of Robert the Bruce's pivotal triumph over the English.

The castle makes a fascinating visit, but make sure you also spend time exploring the Old Town and the picturesque path that encircles it. Below the Old Town, retail-minded modern Stirling doesn't offer the same appeal; stick to the high ground as much as possible and you'll love the place.

📍 Sights

★ Stirling Castle

CASTLE

(HS; www.stirlingcastle.gov.uk; adult/child £14/7.50; ☀ 9.30am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct-Mar) Hold Stirling and you control Scotland. This maxim has ensured that a fortress of some kind has existed here since prehistoric times. You cannot help drawing parallels with Edinburgh Castle, but many find Stirling's fortress more atmospheric – the location, architecture, historical significance and com-