



Central Scotland

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Best Places to Eat

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Best Places to Sleep

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Why Go?

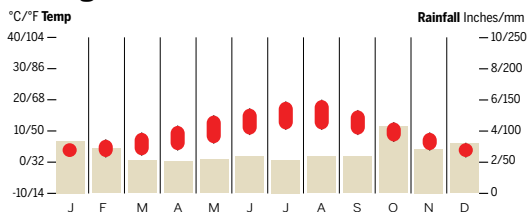
The country's historic roots are deeply embedded in central Scotland. Key battles around Stirling shaped the nation's fortunes; significant castles from the region's history pepper the landscape; and Perth, the former capital, is where kings were crowned on the Stone of Destiny.

Arriving from Glasgow and Edinburgh, visitors begin to get a sense of the country further north as the Lowland scenery ramps up towards Highland splendour. It is here that the majesty of Scotland's landscape begins to unfold among woodlands and waterfalls, craggy hills and rushing rivers, with the silhouettes of soaring, sentinel-like peaks on the northern horizon.

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

When to Go

Stirling



May A magical time before summer crowds arrive, and for 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 woods around Crieff, Comrie and Blairgowrie.

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 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 impressive 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 in 1314.

The castle makes a fascinating visit, but make sure you also spend time exploring the Old Town and the picturesque Back Walk footpath that encircles it. Below the Old Town, retail-oriented 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; Castle Wynd; adult/child £14.50/8.70; ☀ 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



Central Scotland Highlights

1 Stirling Castle (p177)

Admiring the views across ancient independence battlefields from this magnificent castle.

2 St Andrews (p190)

Pacing through the historic

birthplace of golf to play the famous Old Course.

3 Scone Palace (p200)

Strutting with the peacocks at this noble palace where Scottish kings were once crowned.

4 Falkirk Wheel (p185)

Taking a canal-boat trip through an engineering marvel.

5 East Neuk of Fife

(p196) Feasting on local seafood in picturesque fishing villages.