



CITY, COAST AND COUNTRYSIDE

*Taking to
the road in
Scotland*

WORDS: CAOILFHIONN ROSE

Scotland is the perfect country for a road trip. The ever-changing scenery, small villages and beautiful cities, coastal towns and sprawling highlands, incredible food scene and rich heritage make it one of the world's most incredible destinations, yet it's often overlooked. Our writer, Caoilfhionn Rose is now based in Edinburgh, so she's taken it upon herself to bring Scotland to the top of your bucket list – starting with this simple road trip.

DAY ONE TO TWO

Whether arriving by plane or train into Edinburgh City, or driving from south of the Scottish Border, start your road trip with a chilled out night at Dalhousie Castle. Rest and relaxation is just as important as cramming in all the sites while on a road trip, so ensure that you're well-rested before take-off. And really, what's a Scottish roadtrip without a castle?

As Scotland's oldest inhabited castle and dating back to the 13th Century, Dalhousie Castle is both romantic and intriguing and nowadays guests enjoy a warm welcome and the finest hospitality within its stone walls and barrel-vaulted dungeons. Yes, it has a dungeon! The 4-star property is just 8 miles South East of Edinburgh, in the town of Bonnyrigg, meaning guests can easily enjoy a trip to the bustling city knowing that they can retreat back to the countryside with ease. Set in 11 acres of private grounds, with the River Esk running through, guests can partake in archery and falconry, as a magnificent collection of birds of prey, owls, eagles, falcons and hawks housed here on the Castle estate. The Aqueous Spa is a further attraction to guests and was one of the first spas in Scotland to offer a holistic thermal spa concept, with a hydro pool, 'Laconium', a Roman-style dry Sauna and Ottoman steam baths – perfect for some pre-adventure relaxation.

Spend a night at this regal getaway, enjoying the peace of the countryside and 2 AA Rosette dungeon dining before setting off towards St Andrews.

DAY TWO TO FOUR

Leaving Dalhousie Castle, it's best to bypass Edinburgh City (save the best for last) and travel to St Andrews via the Queensferry Crossing. Stop off for a bite to eat in South Queensferry if you have time to spare for an afternoon in a quaint, seaside town – dine at Orocco Pier

Restaurant for the best seafood that side of the Forth. The drive is relaxed, and you can choose from a longer, coastal route or a shorter, countryside route. If the sun is shining, I'd recommend driving the coast and doing some dolphin spotting.

Arriving into St. Andrews is how I used to imagine Diagon Alley when listening to Harry Potter audiobooks as a child. It is Scotland's oldest (Britain's third oldest) University town and is home to impressive medieval architecture, idyllic white sand beaches, independent eateries and shops – pay a visit to Topping and Company Booksellers – and a host of fine golf courses, including that of the Fairmont St Andrews.

The 520-acre 5-star Fairmont St Andrews resort encapsulates luxury, elegance and truly breathtaking surroundings in the 'Home of Golf'. A truly unique and special venue that makes your visit one to remember, with its lavish and stunning surroundings, peaceful setting and stunning cliff top views of St

Andrews and the North Sea. World-class facilities, set against the stunning backdrop of the Fife coastline and designed with timeless elegance and an authentic local experience in mind, are combined with Fairmont's legendary service to create a place where memorable moments are made. Spend two nights in this coastal paradise, enjoying a few rounds of golf or even more rounds in the state-of-the-art spa, before tucking into a famed Fairmont afternoon tea or some delicious Italian cuisine at the ever-popular La Cucina restaurant.

Take a break from Fairmont indulgence to explore the town of St Andrews, visiting the Eden Mill distillery for gin and whisky tours, exploring the grounds of the world-famous St Andrews University and indulging in a bag of fish and chips from the award-winning Cromars. If, like me, you need something a little sweet after your dinner, stand in line at Jannetta's Gelateria, where 4 generations and 100s of ice creams later have ensured that the queue is always as big as their scoops. I desperately wanted to buy an ice cream cake, but sadly we don't have a car with a built-in freezer.

Before leaving St Andrews and venturing towards Dundee, stop off at Balgove Larder. Conceived from a love of fresh, Scottish fare, Balgove has become a hub for top notch locally reared, grown, stalked, caught, handmade, and prepared foods.



Comprised of a Farm Shop, the Flower Shed, a café, Butchery and the must-visit Steak Barn, Balgove was the peak moment in our road trip. Not far from Fairmont, tucked down a stony lane surrounded by fields, Balgove is the finest example of independent success I've ever come across. Simple, stripped back and offering exceptional, warm and local service, it is quite possibly my favourite place on the East Coast. Browse the Farm Shop for deliciously fresh car snacks before treating yourself to one of Steak Barn's mouth-wateringly good steaks and exceptional cocktails – the latter is just for you, dear passenger.

This former sawmill clings to its rustic past with walls of potato boxes and rough-hewn communal tables made of windblown beech from the estate, gives this restaurant a true farm feel. The steaks are that of the farm's and have been hung on site for 28 days. Cooked to perfection and served with a banquet of sumptuous sides, Steak Barn will forever own first place on my list of best (and tastiest) steaks ever eaten! Just when we thought that Balgove couldn't impress us any further, I saw my first Highland Coo in the field beside the Farm Shop. I could have happily driven home after an afternoon at Balgove, but the road was calling!

DAY FOUR TO FIVE

A short journey from St Andrews will take you to Dundee, where you can spend the day exploring the new V&A Museum. However, take a short detour inland from St Andrews to Cairnie Fruit Farm and you can spend the afternoon picking your own strawberries, redcurrants or tayberries! If you're roadtripping during autumn, pick yourself a big ol' pumpkin from their patch. We always welcome some good, wholesome fun!

While Dundee is a great city to visit, we travelled a little further north to set up camp for night four of our roadtrip. Nestled on a countryside farm, The Hideaway Experience offers 5-star tailored getaways for those hoping to disconnect from the world or reconnect with themselves... or others. Minimoons, honeymoons, romantic getaways, digital detoxes – whatever the reason for your hideaway, this luxury, secluded escape has everything you need, including a hot tub, for a mid-road trip pit stop.

DAY FIVE TO SEVEN

Following a night beneath the stars at The Hideaway Experience, drive South West towards Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. Just beyond Stirling, spend a few nights at Trossachs Yurts for a taste of slow-living in one of Scotland's most scenic areas. The three Trossachs yurts are a fusion of Kyrgyz design and local materials which create a homely, earthy feel. Thick rugs,





felt wall-hangings and wood-burning stoves add touches of comfort to the traditional Kyrgyzstani dwellings. The stripped back, Instagram-worthy glamping spot has Loch Lomond on its doorstep, making it easy for guests to discover at their leisure.



Loch Lomond has a shoreline of 153 km, so whether you're after a gentle round of golf and a romantic loch-side amble, or a vigorous hike and wild watery adventures, you'll definitely find something to do. Don't forget, there are a number of small islands within the loch, which can be explored thanks to dedicated cruises as well as the Loch Lomond Waterbus ferry services, helping you to peacefully explore all the loch has to offer. Or, you can hire a boat and explore yourself.



DAY SEVEN TO EIGHT

If you can stand to tear yourself away from the astonishing natural beauty of Loch Lomond, make the final drive of your roadtrip back to Edinburgh for a night of luxury.

Edinburgh is the capital city of Scotland and arguably the most beautiful city in the UK. Draped across a series of craggy hills overlooking the sea, with city life intimately intertwined with natural landscape, the city offers an unexpected view at every turn. With medieval architecture piling high from Holyrood Palace along the Royal Mile to the Castle overlooking the sprawling, green Princes Street Gardens and into modern New Town, Edinburgh begs to be discovered.

Spend a couple of days exploring the little nooks, quirky stores, independent restaurants and world-renowned arts scene, while enjoying the luxuries that a capital city has to offer. A night at the cosmopolitan Principal Edinburgh Charlotte Square offers a blend of indulgence and culture typical to Edinburgh. Housed in seven inter-connecting Georgian townhouses in the heart of the New Town, a UNESCO world heritage site, The Principal is in the perfect spot for those wishing to explore old and new Edinburgh.

Treat yourself to the 80-minute Signature Oskia Glow Facial at their spa before dining at Baba, an Eastern Mediterranean restaurant in the hotel serving mezze and charcoal grill delicious with an experimental range of cocktails.

You can see so much (if not all) of Edinburgh by foot, so instead of a to-do list, my advice is to just let yourself get lost. ■

