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9 Days - Edinburgh Return



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EDINBURGH, THE HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS

Edinburgh Return

Edinburgh ■ Glasgow ■ Ballachulish
Isle of Mull ■ Inverness



9 Days

Day 1. Arrive Edinburgh

Arrive in Edinburgh, Scotland's much-loved capital, and be transferred to your centrally located hotel, close to the station. **Stay:** Edinburgh, Apex Hotel Waterloo Place.

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Day 2. West Highland Line, Ballachulish ★

All aboard for Glasgow this morning, [before changing trains for a journey on one of the world's most incredible railway lines, the West Highland Line](#). Travel along a hillside ledge overlooking Gare Loch before entering the spectacular Highlands, an idyllic, remote and untouched landscape. The incredible route skirts the western banks of Loch Lomond and climbs quickly from Crianlarich to Upper Tyndrum and wild Rannoch Moor, a dramatic region of peat bogs, streams and ancient forests that are only visible from the comfort of your train. Mighty mountains provide an imposing backdrop to the journey on the approach to Fort William. On arrival, transfer to the nearby village of Ballachulish. **Three Nights:** Ballachulish, Isles of Glencoe Hotel or Ballachulish Hotel'. BD

Day 3. Isle of Mull, Duart Castle ★

[Venture to the town of Oban where you'll board a ferry and cruise to Craignure on the Isle of Mull](#). Heading through the small islands and across to Mull, the incredible picture-postcard views are truly awe-inspiring; rugged coastline, hills rising sharply from the water's edge, endless greens, purples and browns of the moorland and jagged, exposed rock faces – this is Scotland's

stunning west coast just as you had imagined it to be. Approaching the island, you'll notice a lonely castle standing guard above the sea cliffs. This is Duart Castle, the ancestral home of the Maclean Clan. Visit the castle, taking in its eclectic rooms and stunning views. Later, return to Ballachulish. BD

Day 4. Neptune's Staircase, Loch Linnhe. ★

Travel by coach to [Neptune's Staircase, an impressive flight of eight locks](#) operated by a team of at least three lock keepers. Situated on the Caledonian Canal, the 22-ton lock gates were originally hand-powered, but are now operated by hydraulics. It takes approximately one-and-a-half hours to pass from one end of the staircase to the other, where water overcomes gravity and nature to climb the hillside. From here, [continue to Loch Linnhe and enjoy a scenic cruise](#). BD

Day 5. Jacobite Steam Train, Inverness ★

Departing from Fort William, [join the Jacobite Steam Train for a return journey to Mallaig on the final leg of the West Highland Line](#). During the journey the train steams past Ben Nevis, then climbs into the mountains surrounding Glenfinnan, a small town famous as the rallying point for Bonnie Prince Charlie's assault on the British throne. At Glenfinnan, reach the line's most picturesque section – the 21-arched Glenfinnan Viaduct. A magical experience, it's no wonder this train was featured as the Hogwarts Express in the Harry Potter films, and a shot of it crossing this section of track, one of Britain's most iconic engineering works, is shown in the

film. As we head towards Mallaig, we drop down to the sea's edge and the landscape opens up with the first views of the rugged 'Small Isles' – Rum, Eigg and Muck – which hang tantalisingly close offshore and tease in and out of view near the journey's end. After a lunch stop, it's time to make the return journey to Fort William, then continue by coach along the banks of Loch Ness to Inverness for three nights. **Three Nights:** Inverness Palace Hotel & Spa. BD

Day 6. Inverness

Enjoy a day at leisure in Inverness, the capital of the Highlands. Perhaps take a relaxing stroll along the banks of the River Ness, which runs right through the town, or explore further afield. Your options include a visit to Culloden, the Battlefield where Bonnie Prince Charlie and his Jacobite forces were defeated, and the site's visitor centre. Alternatively, you could cruise from Inverness to the tranquil waters of Loch Ness, as famous for its 'monster' as much as for its beauty. Otherwise the mountain resort of Aviemore is a short distance away by train, as are the Speyside whisky towns, Keith and Elgin. BD

Day 7. Kyle Line, Eilean Donan Castle ★

Today, [enjoy one of the most breathtaking railway journeys in Europe, the Kyle Line](#). This incredibly scenic route traverses Scotland from the east coast to the west, crossing the Caledonian Canal. Leaving Inverness and skirting the shores of crystal-clear lakes, countless photo opportunities present themselves. The Kyle Line winds through wooded hillsides and over sparse moors, climbing over the

highlands and past charming loch-side and seaside towns. The tracks rise and fall over hills and valleys, travelling at low speed throughout most of the journey, giving you time to soak up the terrific views. The train sweeps one way and the next, wild deer grazing beside the tracks that follow a route dictated by politicians and powerful landowners as much as by civil engineers. During the final part of the journey, pass the picturesque white-washed houses in the village of Plockton. Arrive at Kyle of Lochalsh, the end of the line, located across a short stretch of water from the Isle of Skye. Afterwards, [make a visit to Eilean Donan Castle](#), situated on a tiny island in Loch Duich, it is joined to the mainland by a small, elegant bridge. The island was part of the Macrae Clan's territory and in the 13th century they built Eilean Donan Castle, which was initially designed to defend the clan's land from invading Vikings but which actually saw more battles between the warring Scottish clans. BD

Day 8. Inverness, Edinburgh

Leaving Inverness, travel south through the Cairngorms, via Aviemore, Pitlochry and Kingussie, to arrive back in Edinburgh. Check-in to your centrally located hotel then this evening, try some traditional Scottish fare (haggis, anyone?) and listen to a stirring chorus of bagpipes and drums during an unmissable Scottish-themed evening, to mark the end of your journey.

Stay: Edinburgh, Radisson Blu Hotel. BD

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Day 9. Depart Edinburgh

Your journey ends with an airport transfer today. B