

1

The Best **Full-Day** **Tours**



The Best in **One Day**

Previous Page: A guard in ceremonial uniform patrols the grounds at Edinburgh Castle.

With only 1 day to spend in Scotland's capital city, you will have to be quite selective about the places you visit. This tour is packed with intriguing sites, and concentrates primarily on the historic heart of Edinburgh, the Old Town (where the city first began)—though it will introduce you to a bit of the New Town, the largest historical conservation area in Great Britain. **START: Princes St., at Waverley Bridge. Bus: 3, 10, 12, 17, 25, or 44.**



Iconic Edinburgh Castle offers some of the best views in the city.

1 ★★ Princes Street Gardens.

With Edinburgh Castle looming above, this is one of the most picturesque parks in Europe. In the early 19th century, this was a nasty sewage-filled loch. How times have changed. Today, the 15-hectare (37-acre) park is a great spot for a picnic . . . or you can join the locals and lounge on its grassy slopes on a nice day. ⌚ 45 min. **Princes St. (at Waverley Bridge.) ☎ 0131/529-4068. www.cac.org.uk. Admission free. Daily dawn–dusk.**

2 ★★★ **Calton Hill.** Get an overview of the city, literally. Rising 106m (348 ft.), Calton Hill offers perhaps the best panoramic views of Edinburgh, and was Robert Louis Stevenson's favorite spot for gazing at the city. The hill also boasts a pair of noteworthy monuments. The first is the so-called National Monument, an unfinished replica of the Parthenon—meant to honor war

dead—that helped earn Edinburgh the name “Athens of the North.” The Nelson Monument, in honor of Admiral Horatio Nelson, was built in the shape of an inverted telescope and visitors can climb to the top of it. Americans should find the Lincoln Memorial in the old Calton Burial Ground off Waterloo Place. ⌚ 1 hr. **Waterloo Place., at the Royal High School. Nelson Monument open Mon–Sat. Tickets £3. Bus: x25.**

3 ★★★ **Royal Mile.** This is the most famous street in Scotland; it runs east for about 1.6km (1 mile) from Edinburgh Castle down to the new Scottish Parliament building and the ancient Palace of Holyroodhouse. Walking is best way to experience this truly ancient road, which follows the crest of one of Edinburgh's many hills. Also take time to explore some of the narrow alleys that jut off the street, like ribs off a spine. Do note that the Royal Mile takes different names along its length: Castlehill, Lawnmarket, High Street, and finally Canongate. ⌚ 1–2 hr. **High St., at North Bridge. Bus: 28.**

4 ★ **Edinburgh Castle.** I'm not completely sold on the tour of this castle's interiors, the oldest bit of which (St. Margaret's Chapel) dates back to the 12th century. But even if you don't go inside, you should at least take a look at its ramparts and esplanade, located at the head of the Royal Mile. You'll get views in practically all directions, so have your camera ready. ⌚ 30 min. **Castlehill. See p 23. Bus: 28.**

5 ★★ Ramsay Garden. While you're at the top end of the Royal Mile, I strongly encourage you to take time to admire the set of picturesque late-19th-century buildings known as Ramsay Garden (in honor of the poet Allan Ramsay, whose 18th-c. home was incorporated into the project). They are one of the landmarks perched on the edge of the ridge above Princes Street Gardens. The brainchild of Sir Patrick Geddes (1854–1932), a city planner and general polymath whose efforts helped to preserve the Old Town you see today, the complex is still used for private residences and, alas, tourists cannot get inside. 🕒 **15 min.** *Castlehill (northeast corner of the castle esplanade).* **Bus: 28.**

6 ★ St. Giles' Cathedral. The English burned this church, originally constructed in the 12th century and named for the patron saint of cripples, when they overran the city in 1385; most of the current

Ramsay Garden is a photogenic mix of Scottish baronial and English cottage architecture.



You'll be hard-pressed to see all of the Museum of Scotland's numerous historical exhibits in a single visit.

exterior of the church, also known as the High Kirk of St. Giles or St. Giles' parish church, is the result of Victorian renovations. On the sidewalk near the main entrance, make sure to note the heart-shaped arrangement of cobbles, which marks the site of the Old Tolbooth and a city jail—the latter referenced in Sir Walter Scott's history-filled novel *The Heart of Midlothian*. Spitting into it supposedly brings good luck. 🕒 **30 min.** **High St., at Parliament Sq.** See p 24. **Bus: 35.**

7 Always Sunday is a welcome break from the sometimes overly touristy competition on the Royal Mile. Come to this cafe for good and fresh home cooking in modern surroundings. **170 High St.** ☎ **0131/622-0667.** www.alwayssunday.co.uk. **\$.** **Bus: 35.**

8 Cockburn Street. This “recent” addition to the Old Town cityscape was built in 1856. Curvy Cockburn Street cuts across older,

extremely steep steps (such as those of the macabre-sounding Fleshmarket Close) that descend precipitously down the hill toward Waverley train station. There are some interesting shops (CDs, art books, gifts), as well as some pubs and restaurants on this winding road, originally designed to make it easier to get from Waverley railway station to Old Town. ⌚ 20 min. *Between High St. & Market St.* Bus: 35.

9 ★★ Museum of Scotland. Opened in 1998, this impressive sandstone building contains exhibits outlining the story of Scotland, from its geology and ancient archaeology to royalty, technology, and science. On display are around 12,000 items, which range from 2.9-billion-year-old stones to a cute Hillman Imp, one of the last 500 automobiles manufactured in Scotland. The roof garden has more excellent views, while the Royal Museum, which has been incorporated into the newer building, includes a well-preserved and airy Victorian-era Main Hall and some 36 more galleries. ⌚ 2 hr. *Chambers St.* ☎ 0131/247-4422. www.nms.ac.uk. Free admission. Daily 10am–5pm. Bus: 2, 7, 23, 31, 35, 41, or 42.

10 ★★ National Gallery of Scotland and Royal Scottish Academy. Located on the Mound, a hump of earth that divides the valley of Princes Street Gardens (and which also forms a land bridge between the Old and New Towns), this complex of Victorian exhibition halls is home to the National Galleries of Scotland's core collection of art. It includes Renaissance, Impressionist, and key Scottish art. The National Gallery building, designed in 1850 by architect William Playfair (1790–1857), is today connected internally to the Royal Scottish Academy building, also by Playfair in 1825. They are classic examples of the Victorian

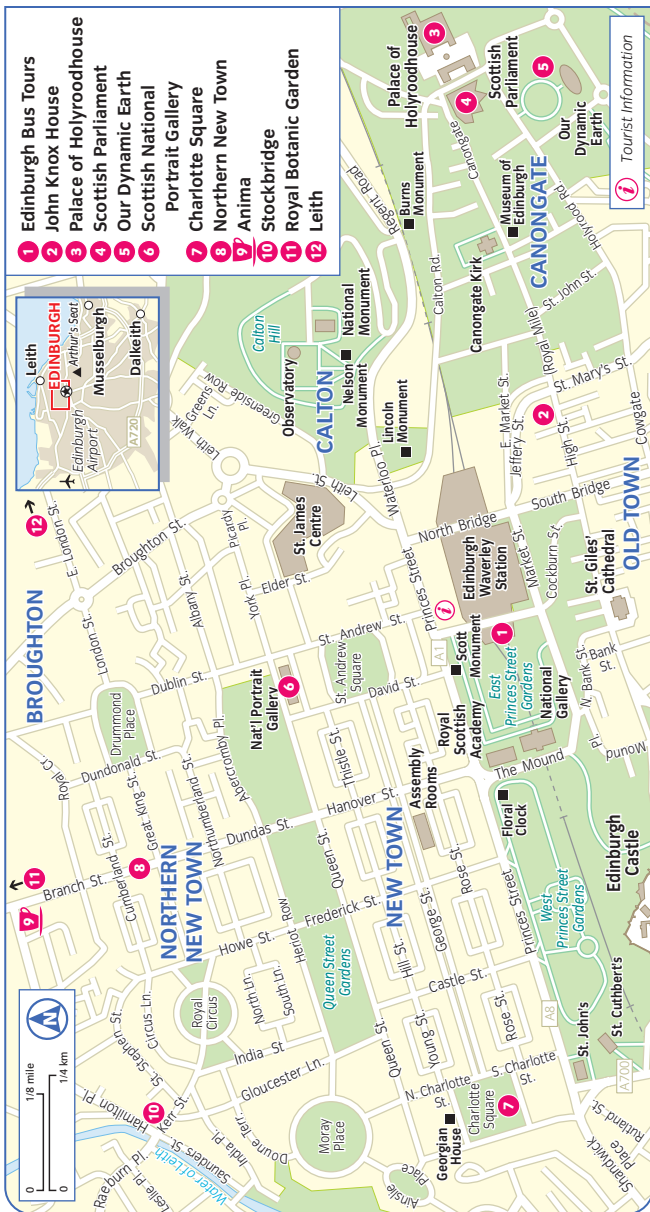
love affair with classical architecture. ⌚ 30 min.; *more to view the art. The Mound.* See p 27. Bus: 3, 10, 12, 17, 25, 28, 41, or 44.

11 ★★ George Street and New Town. This broad boulevard is the central street of Edinburgh's New Town, devised during the reign of George III and constructed between 1766 and 1840. However "new" it was, that means this district is still older than the formation of the United States and is now a World Heritage Site. Notice how all the names of the main streets refer in some way to Hanoverian royalty, whether it be Frederick Street (George III's son) or Charlotte Street (George III's wife). Once the home of bankers and finance, George Street is now one of the hottest shopping strips in Edinburgh, as well as the avenue with the city's trendiest bars, flashy restaurants, and dressy nightclubs. ⌚ 1 hr. *George St., at Frederick St.* Bus: 13, 24, 36, 41, or 42.

The National Gallery is home to a well-chosen collection that includes Old Masters, Impressionists, and key Scottish artists.



The Best in **Two Days**



In 2 days, you can dig a bit deeper and see more of the nuances of Edinburgh, which is usually stuffed with tourists from Easter right through to end of September. With this tour you'll get a fuller picture of central Edinburgh, which is in fact fairly compact. Use buses to get across Old Town and New Town, but when the weather is fine (when there is only a drizzly rain or less), I suggest that you walk to many of the attractions on this tour and get a feel for the city. **START: Waverley Bridge. Bus: 10, 12, 17, 25, or 44.**

1 ★ Edinburgh Bus Tours. For entertaining and informative tours that offer an overview of the city's principal attractions, these open-top buses cannot be beat. During the trip, you will see most of the major sights along the Royal Mile, and also get a gander at the Grassmarket, Princes Street, George Street, and more. The Majestic Tour buses—the ones that are blue and orange—don't take any longer, but deviate from the others' route, by seeing fewer central Edinburgh landmarks while including the port of Leith on its tour. 🕒 *1½ hr. Waverley Bridge.* ☎ *0131/220-0770. www.edinburgh-tour.com. Tickets £9 adults, £3 kids. Daily May–Oct every 15–20 min. 9:30am–5:30pm; Nov–Apr every 30 min. 9:45am–4pm.*

2 John Knox House. This Royal Mile landmark (built in 1490) is difficult to miss, jutting out into the sidewalk on High Street. There is some doubt that Scotland's most famous reformation preacher, who was key to removing the Catholic Church as Scotland's official religious authority in the 16th century, ever actually lived here. But the photogenic building impresses nonetheless; especially noteworthy is its hand-painted ceiling. 🕒 *20 min. 43 High St. For visitor information see p 24. Bus: 35 or 36.*

3 ★ Palace of Holyroodhouse. “Rood” is the Scots word for cross, and King David I established the now ruined abbey at

Holyrood in 1128. In the 16th century, James IV (1473–1513) started construction on a palatial residence for royalty off one side of the abbey, though what you see today dates more from the 17th century. A critical episode in the fraught reign of Mary Queen of Scots (1542–87) was played out at Holyrood: the assassination of her loyal assistant David Rizzio in 1566. The grounds include landscaped gardens and the Queen's Gallery, which exhibits bits of the royal art collection. 🕒 *1 hr. Canongate, bottom of the Royal Mile. See p 25, 8. Bus: 35.*

The King's Bed Chamber in the Palace of Holyroodhouse.





The very modern garden lobby inside the Scottish Parliament.

4 Scottish Parliament. After a right brouhaha over its cost (almost £500 million) and delays in construction, the new Scottish Parliament complex finally opened in autumn of 2004, 5 years after the first Scottish Parliament in 300 years was convened. Designed by the late Barcelona-based architect Enric Miralles, it's a remarkable, though controversial, bit of modern design. Take the tour if you're really interested in Scottish government and want to see more of the modern interiors. ⌚ **1 hr.** **Holyrood Rd., across from the Queen's Gallery.** ☎ **0131/348-5000. www.scottish.parliament.uk.** **Admission:** guided tour £3.50 adult; £1.75 seniors, students & kids over 5. **Open** Tues–Thurs 9am–7pm (when Parliament is in session); Mon–Fri (when Parliament is in recess) Apr–Oct 10am–6pm, Nov–Mar (& Sat–Sun year-round) 10am–4pm. **Bus:** 35.

5 Kids Our Dynamic Earth.

Under a tentlike canopy, Our Dynamic Earth celebrates the evolution and diversity of the planet, with an emphasis on seismic and biological activity. Simulated earthquakes, meteor showers, and views of outer space are part of the display. Skies in a tropical rainforest darken every 15 minutes, offering torrents of rain

and creepy-crawlies underfoot.

⌚ **2 hr.** **Holyrood Rd.** ☎ **0131/550-7800. www.dynaminearth.co.uk.**

Admission £8.95 adults, £5.45 seniors & kids 5–15, £1.50 kids under 5. **Daily** July–Aug 10am–6pm; Apr–June & Sept–Oct 10am–5pm; Wed–Sun Nov–Mar 10am–5pm. **Bus** 35.

6 ★ Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

Part of the National Galleries of Scotland (the Scottish national collection of art), this handsome red-stone Gothic-style museum was designed by architect Sir Robert Rowand Anderson (1834–1921). Inside you'll find many of the country's historic and current luminaries in portraiture—from Mary Queen of Scots to the 21st-century composer James MacMillan—done by everyone from Kokoschka to Raeburn. ⌚ **1 hr.** **1 Queen St.** See p 28, **6.** **Bus:** 4, 10, 12, 16, or 26.

7 ★ Charlotte Square. With a charming park at its core, this square—designed by Robert Adam—epitomizes the urbane grace of Edinburgh's New Town. You can almost imagine 18th-century horse-drawn carriages circumnavigating the place, with gaslights illuminating the sidewalks. You can tour the interiors of two properties on the square: no. 28 on the south side (home of the Scottish National Trust); and the so-called Georgian House on the

Our Dynamic Earth is home to a number of climate simulations, including one of a polar region.



opposite side of the square (see p 39). 🕒 30 min. *George St., at S. Charlotte St. National Trust drawing room Mon–Fri 11am–3pm. Free admission. Bus: 19, 36, or 41.*

8 ★ Northern New Town.

Once Edinburgh's first New Town development was finished, proving exceptionally popular, work began north of Queen Street Gardens on a second model city. Architects William Sibbald (d. 1809) and Robert Reid (1775–1856) were the key designers in 1801, and used a grid pattern of streets, punctuated by “circuses”—round arcs of handsome town houses. At the northern edge of the development is Canonmills, so named for the milling community that served the abbey at Holyrood.

🕒 45 min. *Between Dublin St. & Royal Circus. Bus: 13, 24, 27, or 42.*



Anima is a pizza parlor and cafe (everything's available to go) that aims to offer “Italian soul food.” However humble this operation looks, it offers an extensive wine list to complement the cuisine. 11 *Henderson Row*. ☎ 0131/558-2918. www.anima-online.co.uk. \$. *Bus: 23 or 27.*

10 ★★ **Stockbridge.** No matter how bustling Edinburgh gets during the tourist high season, this neighborhood just northwest of the city center almost always offers a slower, calmer pace. Once a hippie enclave, and still possessing bohemian vibes, Stockbridge is now one of the more affluent and desirable districts in which to live and play. When I visit, I like simply to stroll around, look at the shops, and perhaps visit a cafe or pub, such as the *Bailie Bar* (see p 39). 🕒 45 min. *Kerr St., at Hamilton Place. Bus: 24, 29, or 42.*

11 ★★ **Royal Botanic Garden.** This is one of the grandest parks in all

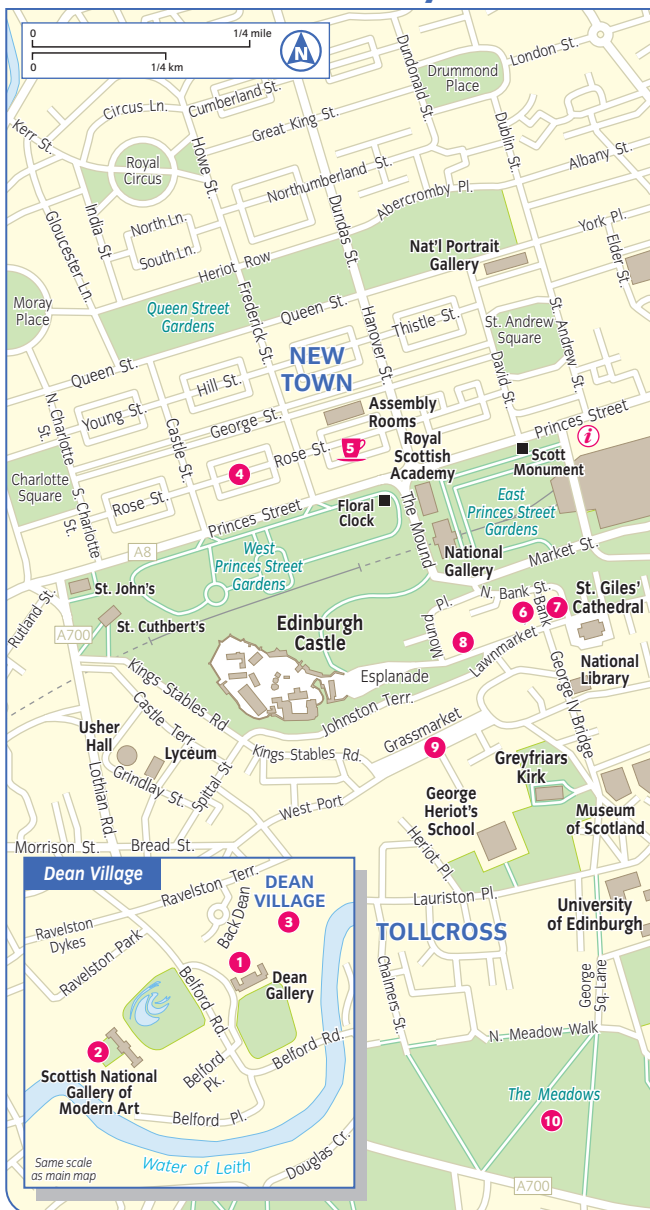


The city's first botanical garden, the Royal Botanic Garden, is one of the best in all the U.K.

of Great Britain—and that's no modest boast given all the impressive gardens in the U.K. Sprawling across some 28 hectares (69 acres), Edinburgh's first botanic was inaugurated in the late 17th century as a place for studying plants with medical uses. In spring, the various rhododendrons are almost reason alone to visit here, but the plantings in all areas ensure year-round interest. 20A *Inverleith Row*. ☎ 0131/552-7171. www.rbge.org.uk. *Free admission (donations accepted). Daily Apr–Sept 10am–7pm; Mar & Oct–Dec 10am–6pm; Jan–Feb 10am–4pm. Bus: 8, 17, 23, or 27.*

12 ★ **Leith.** The Port of Leith is only a few kilometers north of the city center. The area is rapidly gentrifying, losing some of its historic character as a rough-and-tumble maritime community. Still, you can use a bit of your imagination while wandering about the old docks near the Shore, the street that follows the Water of Leith as it spills into the harbor. One big attraction of Leith is its pubs—and its restaurants, three of which have Michelin stars. 🕒 1–2 hr. *The Shore, at Bernard St. For a walking tour, see p 42. Bus: 7, 10, 16, 22, 35, or 36.*

The Best in **Three Days**





Although you may feel like you've seen a lot in 2 days, Edinburgh attractions whether more branches of its National Galleries of Scotland, classic New Town streetscapes, or the historic buildings of Old Town, offer a greater feast for visitors than can be sampled in a couple of days. On day three, you'll traverse the city center from west to east. This tour also offers spots for you to reflect on your visit to Scotland's capital. **START: Belford Rd., northwest of the city center. Bus: 13.**

1 ★ Dean Gallery. The most recent addition to the National Galleries of Scotland, the Dean hosts the best temporary exhibits of modern art and design in Edinburgh, ranging from paintings by Picasso to the architectural plans and detailed drawings of Sir Basil Spence (1907–76). You'll also find permanent exhibits of surrealist art and the re-created studio of pop artist Eduardo Paolozzi (1924–2005). ⌚ 1 hr. 73 Belford Rd. See p 27, **3**. Bus: 13.

Head to the Camera Obscura and Outlook Tower for a neat 360-degree view of the city. See p 20.



An international collection of 20th century works tempts visitors to the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.

2 ★ Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. Yet another branch of the Scottish National Galleries. Highlights of the collection, which occupies two floors of a Neo-Classical building that once functioned as a school, include works by French post-impressionists Bonnard and Matisse; European expressionists, such as Kirchner and Nolde; and recent acquisitions from such contemporary Scottish artists as Christine Borland. ⌚ 1 hr. 75 Belford Rd. See p 28, **5**. Bus: 13.

3 ★★ Dean Village. Like Stockbridge, this tiny enclave offers a break from the buzz of the bigger city. A milling village stood here probably as early as the days of King David I in the 12th century. While nothing nearly that old survives today, there are historic buildings that were in a terrible

state of disrepair until the middle of the 20th century, when conservation helped preserve their picturesque charm along the Water of Leith. See my walking tour of the area (p 60) for more details. 🕒 30 min. *Just west of the intersection of Queensferry & Belford rds. Bus: 13 or 41.*

4 ★ Rose Street. I fondly remember shopping on this pedestrian-only lane in Edinburgh's New Town on my very first visit to the city in the mid-1980s. Designed originally to provide homes and workshops for artisans, the road offers lots of shopping, though it's probably best known as the place in the city center to have a nice, compact pub crawl, which can include the Abbotsford (p 80). 🕒 1 hr. *Between Princes St. & George St. Bus: 19, 23, 27, or 42.*

Owned by shellfish farmers on Scotland's West Coast, the casual

5 🍷 Mussel Inn serves great steaming bowls of fresh mussels and broth, grilled queen scallops, and other seafood options. **61–65 Rose St.** 📞 0131/225-5979. www.mussel-inn.com. \$\$.

The 400-year-plus Gladstone's Land is home to displays on 17th-century life in Edinburgh.



Pedestrian-only Rose Street is home to a host of shops, pubs, and cafes.

6 ★ Writers' Museum. Devoted to Scotland's three greatest (so far) authors—Burns, Scott, and Stevenson—this museum displays its vast amount of memorabilia in a notable 17th-century town house. My favorite items are the front-page London newspaper notice of Robert Burns's death in 1796, and the basement exhibit filled with various possessions that the great traveler Robert Louis Stevenson had in Polynesia, such as his riding boots and fishing rod. A small shop sells editions of their best works. 🕒 1 hr. *See p 31. Lady Stair's Close, Lawnmarket. Bus: 28 or 41.*

7 ★ Gladstone's Land. This is probably my favorite historic house (that allows visitors inside) in Edinburgh. But first some explanation of a "land" is necessary: Lands are basically the individual plots on which the buildings that face the Royal Mile have been constructed. A land is often quite narrow, but the property is usually deep, running down the hill away from the street.



The Meadows has been a popular place for recreation since the 1700s.

A merchant named Gladstone (then spelled Gladstane) took over this 16th-century property in 1617, adding on a new floor and also expanding the property toward the street. Upstairs you can see the original external facade with friezes depicting classical columns and arches. ⌚ 45 min. 477 **Lawnmarket**. See p 23. Bus: 28 or 41.

8 Kids Camera Obscura and Outlook Tower. Because the camera obscura was added to this 17th-century building in the 1890s by Patrick Geddes, whom I hold in great regard for his work to prevent the wholesale demolition of Edinburgh's Old Town, I'll admit I'm always peeved that this attraction doesn't do more to publicly celebrate its creator. Still, the camera obscura (set atop the tower) is a neat trick: projecting a 360-degree view of the city on a table using a 150-year-old periscope-type lens. To magnify the image, you just need a bit of cardboard. ⌚ 45 min. **Castlehill**. ☎ 0131/226-3709.

www.camera-obscura.co.uk. Admission: £7.50 adults; £5 kids. Daily 9:30am–6pm Apr–Oct (later July–Aug); 10am–5pm Nov–Mar. Bus: 28 or 41.

9 ★ Grassmarket. In a city rich with history, the Grassmarket (shaped like a rectangle with a short street and a small city park running along it) certainly has more than its share. Convicted criminals were once famously hung here until the 1780s, although the area was first intended as the best place for a weekly market at the base of Castlehill. Robert Burns records staying at the Grassmarket's White Hart Inn. Indeed, today, the area still has lots of pubs, hotels, and restaurants.

⌚ 45 min. **Between West Port & West Bow**. Bus: 2.

10 ★★ The Meadows. This sprawling public park, popular for ballgames of all sorts (from golf to cricket), dates back to the 1700s. Tree-lined paths crisscross the playing fields, and during the Edinburgh Festival there are often big tents erected in the park with loud live performances heard for nearly miles around. During the rest of the year, though, it's quite an excellent place for relaxing and quiet reflection, or perhaps even a bit of kite flying.

⌚ 1 hr. **Melville Dr., at Lonsdale Terrace**. Bus: 24 or 41.

11 ★★ Holyrood Park. Holyrood Park is a bit of the great outdoors set right in the middle of the city. It's another super escape, abounding with hiking trails and wildlife. At its center is a long-dormant volcano, the hill known as Arthur's Seat. You don't need to hike to the top to enjoy the surroundings, but if you're up for it see my preferred route on p 56. ⌚ 30 min–2 hr. ☎ 0131/652-8150. Free admission. Daily dawn–dusk. Bus: 2 or 35. ●