



David McGuffin's
EXPLORING EUROPE

EDINBURGH

DESTINATION GUIDE



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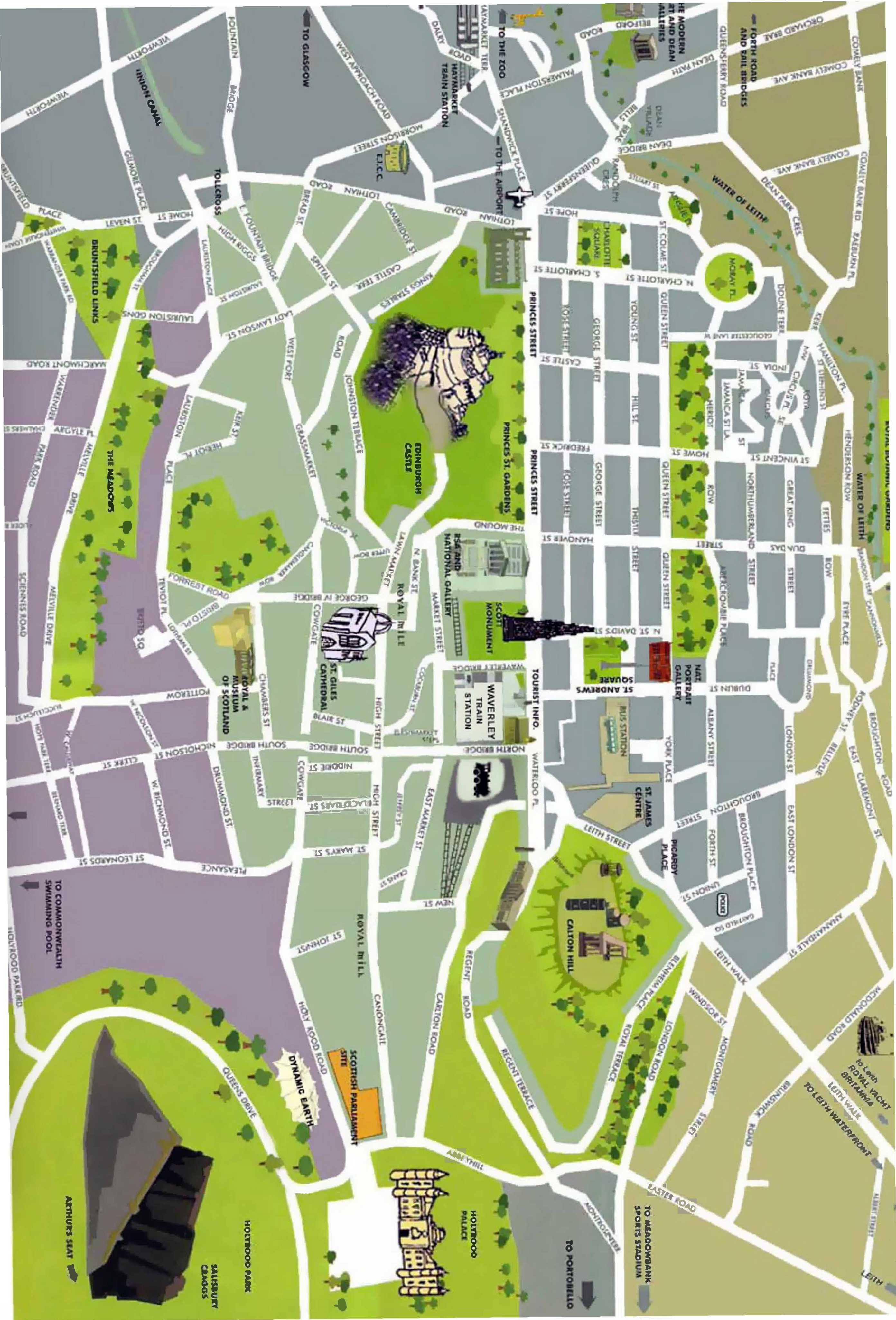
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Introduction

Edinburgh is the second largest city in Scotland. With a population of 495,360 it is certainly set up to accommodate its citizens and visitors with public transportation, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment. It is the historic and cultural capital of Scotland. Just a glance at the castle on the hill will tell you that this has always been an important city. Centuries after that castle was built, the English moved in and constructed a well-thoughtout and “grid-planned” grand Georgian-era modern city. The city is easy to organize and navigate on foot. The old medieval town, with its crooked cobbled streets, narrow alleys, steep stairs, and underground caves is flanked on either end by “royal” castles. The Royal Mile connects the “Castle” on the cliff with the “Palace” in the valley.

The Old Town literally falls off the cliffs into what was once a swampy marsh. In the “Age of Enlightenment” the English filled in the marsh transforming it into a beautiful city park. Today, Princes Street Gardens is a mecca for sun worshipers and dog walkers, and it’s a perfect way to dawdle away a few hours with people-watching.

Alongside the park is the busy Waverly Train Station and an underground shopping center. Spanning the gorge, are two bridges and a roadway, known as The Mound, carrying pedestrians and vehicles from the old town to the new town.

The New Town was built in the era of British history spanning the reigns of the Hanoverian Kings George I, II, III, and IV. This is roughly the period from 1714 to 1830, or some say 1837. Architecturally speaking, the style is similar to that of the neo-classical public monuments in Washington DC. Edinburgh’s Georgian city gleams with broad straight streets, elegant squares (similar to Savannah, Georgia), circular or oval promenades (called circuses), beautiful buildings with uniformed and symmetrical columns, and many other Neo-Classical construction designs dating from the era.

You'll also see Victorian-era construction around Edinburgh (Glasgow and Oban too). The architectural style dates from the era of Queen Victoria (1837 – 1901) and is recognized by the “pointy” rebellion from the constraints of the previous neoclassical orderliness. This neo-gothic style features ornate spires, reddish-colored sandstone, and rounded turrets with pointed roofs, all blended with styles picked up from Middle Eastern and Asian influences.

EDINBURGH CASTLE

Cost: £16.50. Open daily: April – September

09:30 18:00. October - March 09:30-17:00. Last entry is 45 minutes before closing.



This is the birthplace of Edinburgh. This hunk of lava was a perfect place from which to defend a growing Edinburgh. In the 11th century, the Scots began building a fortress here, which has stood as the symbol of the city for 1,300 years. Most of the building you see today date from recent history, where the castle has served as a military garrison. Be sure to get in on the 20-minute guided tour that starts hourly at the entry. One of the highlights is the Scottish Crown Jewels, tucked away in the massive vault.

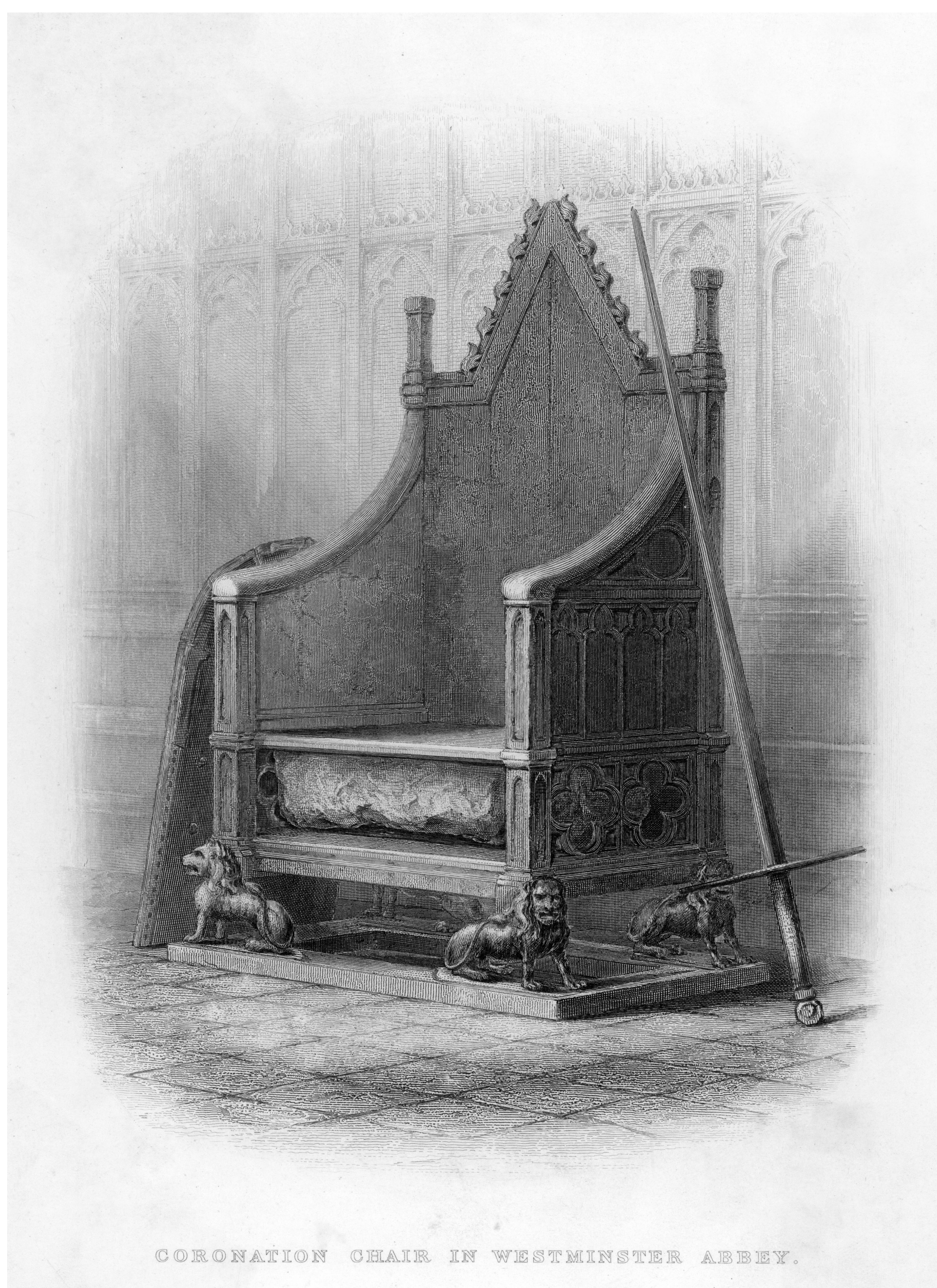
The Crown Jewels have been a longtime symbol of pride. They were made in Edinburgh in 1540 and contain Scottish diamonds, gems, and gold (often said to be the gold of King Robert the Bruce). The Crown Jewels were last used to crown Charles II in 1651. When the Act of Union was handed down to the Scots in 1707, a portion of the “deal” was that the Scots could keep their Crown Jewels. The jewels remained hidden in Edinburgh for more than 100 years. They were rediscovered in 1818 by Sir Walter Scott. In 1999, the crown jewels were brought out of Edinburgh Castle for the first time in over 300 years for the opening of the Scottish Parliament.



The Stone of Scone (The Stone of Destiny) – This plain piece of rock dates from the 9th Century, and until March 30, 2024, sat next to the Crown Jewels.



It is the historic coronation stone of **The Stone of Scone** (The Stone of Destiny) – This plain piece of rock dates from the 9th Century, and until March 30, 2024, sat next to the Crown Jewels. It is the historic coronation stone of the ancient kings of Scotland. It was stolen by the English in 1296 and took up residence underneath the English coronation chair in London's Westminster Abbey. ancient kings of Scotland. It was stolen by the English in 1296 and took up residence underneath the English coronation chair in London's Westminster Abbey.



Then in 1996 Queen Elizabeth II allowed the “Stone of Scone” to return to Scotland, with the condition that it make a journey to Westminster Abbey for all future English coronations. So, with a lot of hoopla, the Stone of Scone was returned to Edinburgh on St. Andrew’s Day, November 30, 1996. As you can imagine, it is a great source of pride! (Note: The Stone of Scone/Stone of Destiny returned to Scotland, after the coronation of King Charles III, and since March 31, 2024, it is on display at the Perth Museum).

Royal Palace was the fortified refuge of the Scottish royalty in times of war and during attacks. In times of peace and calm the royal family resided at the more comfortable Palace of Holyroodhouse at the foot of the hill.

The Great Hall was the palace’s great formal meeting room dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. It later became a hospital and barracks.

The Scottish National War Memorial commemorates the 149,000 Scottish soldiers lost in World War I, the further 58,000 lost in World War II, and the 800+ lost in British battles since WWII.

Saint Margret's Chapel is the oldest building in Edinburgh and is dedicated to Queen Margaret who died here in 1093. She was later “sainted” in 1250. This chapel was built in 1130 and is in the Norman Romanesque style.

Below the chapel is a wonderful panoramic view of Edinburgh. Crowds gather here for the 13:00 single canon and gun blasts that once was used to give ships in the bay a common point by which to set their navigation and timepieces.

The War Museum of Scotland holds lots of interesting history. It is a bit different than the typical “guns and armor” museums throughout Europe. Take a quick look, or linger if you like. The museum closes one hour before the castle.

THE ROYAL MILE

The Royal Mile is really a series of four different streets linking the Edinburgh Castle at the top and Palace Holyroodhouse at the bottom. Actually it is about a mile and an eighth, so when

walking it, walk from top to bottom and take the bus back home. It is packed with shops, pubs, restaurants, cafes, lanes, and small squares.

Along the Royal Mile you'll encounter common streets, lanes, and alleys some of which are designated by unfamiliar terms. Perhaps you'll find close which is nothing less than a small alley (usually running down the hill) between buildings. These closes date from the Middle Ages.

Originally they had a door at the entrance that was “closed” at night. The close usually led to a court-yard. You might see several pends or arched gateways. A wynd is a narrow winding lane and a gate, well that means a street and I'm not sure of its origin.

The Castle Esplanade is at the top of the Royal Mile. It was created as a parade ground in the 1800s but today it is known for being the site of the Royal Military Tattoo – a spectacular “show” featuring military bands, pipes, drums, and royal regiments. The Tattoo is presented nightly in the month of August. You may see the modern grandstands flanking the parade grounds.

Saint Giles' Cathedral is Scotland's most important church. It features an ornate spire and "Scottish crown-shaped" steeple dating from 1495. Once inside, marvel at the stained glass windows (1995 by Leifur Breidfjord) dedicated to Robert Burns, Scotland's famous poet. There is also a statue of John Knox, the great 16th-century Calvinist preacher who promoted reform and founded the Presbyterian movement in 1559.

Knox's insistence that every Scotsman should be able to read the word of God put Scotland more than 300 years ahead of the educational systems of Europe.

The four massive central pillars date from 1120 and are the oldest structures in the church.

Mason and DiVinci Code buffs will enjoy the **Chapel of the Knights of the Thistle** which is loaded with lots of veiled symbolism and ornately carved figures.

Open M-F 09:00-19:00. Sat 09:00-17:00. Sun 13:00-17:00.

John Knox Gravesite is just behind St. Giles'. In keeping with his Calvinist beliefs, his grave is unmarked, under the parking lot, at spot #23. Don't confuse him with the nearby statue of King Charles II on his horse.

The Old Parliament House is on the same parking lot. It is now the civil court building, so you'll have to go through security to see the 1639 Grand Hall and stained glass. It was in use until 1707 when the English dissolved the parliament with the Act of Union.

The Mercat Cross is located in the square near St. Giles'. This column, topped by a white unicorn, has been the site for royal proclamations since the 14th century.

The World's End marks a spot halfway down the Royal Mile where a wall designated the end of Edinburgh and the beginning of Canongate.

Canongate was a community related to Holyrood Palace down at the foot of the hill. The wall was located where Mary Street and Jeffery Street cross the Royal Mile. Notice the names change from High Street to Canongate. You can find some brass brick marking this former wall (the original wall was demolished in 1764). Look down Mary Street, about 200 yards and you can see a portion of the former wall.

If you are into whisky, the **Cadenhead Whisky Shop** (not a tourist sight) was founded in 1842 and prides itself on bottling good whisky from casks, straight from the distilleries. No additives and no mass-produced marketing. There is loads of information at the shop. You can ask for a sample, but do plan to buy a bottle, eventually. It is located just beyond the World's End "wall" on Canongate.

The Scottish Parliament Building is located on the right at the bottom of the Royal Mile. Scotland was granted a parliament in 1998. In 2004, this building was dedicated—the first Scottish Parliament since 1707! Scotland now enjoys Home Rule and is looking for independence. It is worth a look. You can go in on weekdays. Pass through security and find the visitor's desk. You can visit the public parts of the building including the "debating chambers."

The Palace of Holyrood house is at the bottom of the Royal Mile. It was originally a 12th-century Augustine Abby named for a portion of the "cross" brought here by Queen Margaret, later Saint Margaret. This has marked the end of the "Royal Mile" since the 14th century.

Scotland's royals preferred living down the hill, in the valley, instead of up at the blustery cold castle. Thus a "palace" has evolved over time in this location. You can visit here, if the Queen (of England) is not in. It costs about £15. Be sure to get the included audio guide.

UP TOP NEAR THE CASTLE AND OF THE ROYAL MILE

The National Museum of Scotland is free and well worth two hours of your time as it chronicles the history of Scotland in photos, exhibits, and realistic displays. Start in the basement and work your way through history! If you are into history, this will put Scotland (and England) into perspective. There is a very good restaurant on the top floor offering good food **AND** great views of the city. Free and Open daily 10:00-17:00.

Greyfriars Bobby is across the street from the National Museum. A story about a man and his dog that will bring a tear to everyone's eye.

The Grassmarket is down in the valley from the Royal Mile. As its name implies, Grassmarket was originally the pastures and stables of Edinburgh. Later it was the site for hangings. Locals actually rented out their windows so all could get a good

This is a detailed, colorful map of Edinburgh, Scotland, showing streets, landmarks, and parks. The map is oriented with North at the top. Key landmarks include Edinburgh Castle, the Scottish Parliament, Arthur's Seat, and the Royal Yacht Britannia. The map also shows the city's layout, including the Old Town and New Town, and the surrounding areas like Leith and Portobello. The map is a stylized representation with various colors used to distinguish different areas and features.