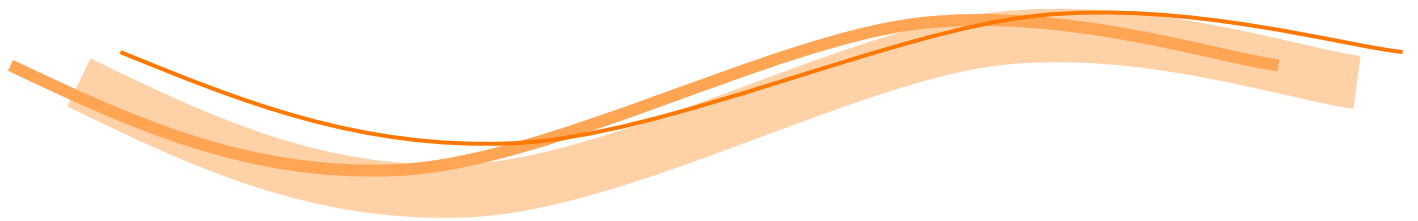




VISIT BRITAIN with TRAFALGAR





NOTES	<p>These notes are organized into four sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Trafalgar2. England3. Scotland4. Wales <p>Together, this information should help you plan your perfect trip to Britain!</p>
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TRAFALGAR	<p>Trafalgar - the world's favourite touring company – has over 65 years of touring experience and worldwide itineraries for everyone. It's this dedication to taking their guests beyond the obvious sights that has helped them grow into one of the most trusted and successful international guided vacation companies in the world.</p> <p>Trafalgar's 2017 program is marked by the large number of new itineraries and enhancements to current ones. Trafalgar work ever harder to delve deeper into each destination to provide travellers with a richer experience you will remember for a lifetime.</p> <p>Trafalgar is the friend you'd wish for in every destination, providing a unique insider's perspective on the local people, places and cultures you encounter. They surprise you with hidden places only the locals know about and introduce you to the people you'd never meet if travelling on your own. And Trafalgar give you fascinating insights into local traditions and bring history to life in ways you simply can't get from a guidebook.</p> <p>Trafalgar's First Class itineraries include exclusive Insider Experiences that provide an authentic and enhanced vacation experience you wouldn't have travelling any other way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be My Guest – your exclusive invitation to dine with the locals• Local Experts – specialists in the cultures and landscapes of the area you're visiting• Local Guides – passionate locals who entertain you with stories of their hometown• Local Specialties – visits to see locals at work, learn about their craft and sample their wares• Hidden Treasures – surprise sights and experiences revealed by your Travel Director• Unique Insights – visits to places of unique cultural significance in a particular area
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Travel in comfort and style on board luxury coaches. Savour the flavours of each region with authentic local dining. Stay in ideally located hotels that perfectly complement your itinerary. Customize your vacation with a fantastic choice of Optional Excursions. And explore the famous sights you've dreamed of and beyond! From Europe to North America and South America to Asia - Trafalgar capture the true essence of each destination and help you see the world from the inside.

Since 1947 Trafalgar has been a global leader in escorted tours, vacation packages and dream holidays to favourite destinations in Europe, Britain, USA, Canada, South America, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Every year, over 50% of their passengers have travelled with Trafalgar once before and many return to travel with them again. Trafalgar's 65 years of escorted touring experience and over 200 worldwide itineraries mean something for everyone – travelling solo, as a group, with family or friends. Your experienced Travel Director takes care of everything – on a balanced holiday, with just the right amount of planned activities and free time.

Trafalgar is leading the evolution in guided holidays. Tours are yesterday's product. Today's Trafalgar guided holidays take you on unique local experiences. With their exclusive insider highlights, they'll show you the unexpected, provide local expertise and deliver unforgettable experiences you could not have on their own. Trafalgar's exclusive insider highlights will surprise you with Hidden Treasures and immerse you in local culture with Be My Guest dining experiences. Trafalgar show you the unexpected, provides local expertise and delivers unforgettable moments.

Trafalgar offers unbeatable value for your travel dollar and lots of free inclusions with your Trafalgar Vacation.

- Free Airport Transfers
- First Class Hotel Accommodations
- VIP Access to major attractions
- Breakfast daily & some meals included
- Included Be My Guest dining experience
- Free Welcome Reception
- Free sightseeing in every city
- Free audio headset for guided visits
- Free Local Guide in major cities
- Included Farewell Dinner on your final night on your trip
- Free Travel Wallet & Trip Souvenir Photo
- Transportation on modern, comfortable air conditioned coach

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	<p>- Plus much more (hidden treasure & local specialists, experienced Travel Director)</p> <p>In addition, Trafalgar offers unique itineraries and features: a vacation is about being immersed in a new culture - and some of the best experiences centre around food and family.</p> <p>Trafalgar's exclusive "Be My Guest" feature brings you freshly prepared, traditional meals using local produce and wines – served in unforgettable, authentic settings such as family homes, wine estates, farms and chateaux.</p> <p>Over the years Trafalgar Travel Directors have discovered many European secrets. They know all the local sights and will reveal Europe's Hidden Treasures - be they concealed landmarks, monuments, excluded destinations or sights. Very few other travellers will get the chance to see these Hidden Treasures which are exclusively part of every Trafalgar itinerary. At the same time "At Leisure" tours offer effortless, guided holidays, but with more freedom to go your own way than ever before.</p> <p>Local experts –meet guides who really know the history and insider secrets about a destination you visit & are your private guide when you reach a historical or unique sights.</p> <p>If you want to see the world - but don't want to leave the rest of your family behind - Trafalgar "Family Experience" tours are the best choice. This range of fascinating tours allows you to spend quality time with the kids on fun adventures which family members of all ages will adore.</p> <p>Trafalgar's CostSaver program allows you to travel to the UK and Europe with the greatest flexibility, all for an unbeatable price! Each tour is carefully designed to include plenty of free time to experience each destination as you have always dreamed, but still with the peace of mind of being accompanied by Trafalgar's professional and experienced Tour Directors and Drivers throughout your entire journey. All this, for considerably less than you would pay on your own.</p>
<p>SPECIAL DEAL FOR TRAVEL SHOW LISTENERS</p>	<p>Exclusive offer for Chris Robinson Travel Show Listeners: Trafalgar have a special offer for their Best of Britain tour. It's a special discount only for Travel Show listeners of 10% off all July departures of this most popular guided vacation of the highlights of Britain. You need to quote promo code PPT BRITAIN ON AIR to your travel agent and it's a limited time offer – so check out the tour on www.Trafalgar.com and speak to your travel agent soon!</p>

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<p>Why Trafalgar Tours?</p>	<p>Here are 15 reasons for choosing Trafalgar:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Over 65 years of escorted touring experience 2. Over 200 worldwide itineraries to choose from 3. The world's most experienced Travel Directors 4. Great value - you'd pay close to 50% more if you planned the same holiday on your own 5. Hassle free holidays - you don't have to worry about car rentals or booking accommodation 6. No anxiety over hotel check-in or carrying heavy luggage 7. You'll experience all the 'must see' attractions without the long lines 8. Conveniently located hotels 9. Perfectly balanced holidays, with just the right amount of planned activities and free time 10. Most breakfasts and many sumptuous dinners are included in the price of your tour 11. Travelling alone? Take advantage of their Room Mate Matching Service 12. Modern and comfortable fleet of coaches 13. Choose from a number of optional excursions to enhance your trip 14. Great special offers 15. 98% satisfaction rating from past guests and over 50% return, year after year
<p>Be My Guest Dining Experience</p>	<p>Discover the true taste of Europe on a Trafalgar Be My Guest Dining Experience. It's your invitation to meet and dine with the locals. You'll be invited into family homes, working farms and unique venues to enjoy amazing regional food and wines prepared by your hosts. It's insider moments like these you won't find anywhere else.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make yourself at home at a family olive grove estate in Tuscany, where you'll savor authentic cuisine and local wine as the invited guest of Count Francesco Miari Fulcis at their 16th Century Estate. - Muckross Traditional Farms, Killarney, Ireland. Meet and chat with the farmers and their wives as they go about their daily work. You'll see how real butter is made and enjoy traditional music and storytelling with an old-fashioned dinner (including black pudding!) in Quilles Farmhouse. - Casa Esposito, Bay of Sorrento, Italy. A warm welcome awaits you at the Esposito family farmhouse. Enjoy a walk through the lemon groves and take a tour of the farm's wine cellar complete with wine tasting. Then sit down to a home-cooked Italian feast prepared using secret recipes from generations past.

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	<p>- L'Etape Gourmande, Villandry, France. Be welcomed by Béatrice de Montferrier and her daughter Alexandra to their 17th century farm. Admire the rich countryside while sipping on an aperitif and later make your way to the superbly renovated barn to enjoy an authentic meal made with regionally grown produce.</p>
<p>At Leisure</p>	<p>This is the Trafalgar tour for those who like to relax and have an easy pace holiday and see Europe at their leisure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sleep in later - No start on travel days before 9 am - 2-3 night stays in each city you visit so relax and enjoy your first class accommodations
<p>History</p>	<p>Trafalgar Tours started almost by accident and for the first 12 years of its existence was known by the name of Industrial Recreational Services. Through the 60 years following its inception, Trafalgar has become a world leader in travel by continually adapting to bring their guests better touring experiences.</p> <p>1947 - After leaving the army - where he had spent the war working in intelligence and personnel - Bill Nunn, Trafalgar's founding father sets up Industrial Recreational Services (IRS), organizing group travel and entertainment for industry.</p> <p>1949 - IRS offers trips to the London Palladium to see Harpo Marx. The cost includes return coach travel and a reserved seat at the show for 12 shillings! (about one dollar). IRS moves offices to 139 Grand Buildings in Trafalgar Square, the landmark which 10 years later would give the company its now familiar name.</p> <p>1957 - The leisure side of the business gains popularity, Mr. Nunn and Mr. Appelby sell some of their shares to the Overseas Visitors Club in London and to Mosenthal, a South African conglomerate. It is here that the strong links between South Africa and Trafalgar were made, and which still contribute to Trafalgar's success today.</p> <p>1958 - IRS starts operating European Coach Tours like the 21-day "Young Commonwealth Special". The Overseas Visitors Club (OVC) moves to Earls Court. For South Africans, the OVC in London becomes a home away from home in Europe.</p> <p>1959 - The company changes its name to Trafalgar Tours.</p> <p>1960's - At the height of the Cold War, Trafalgar organises tours to Moscow despite the difficulty in arranging visas.</p>

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	<p>1961 - Trafalgar opens its first overseas office in the heart of Johannesburg, South Africa.</p> <p>1962 - Trafalgar charters Edinburgh Castle, a 1600 passenger ship, for a 14-day voyage from Cape Town to Southampton. The charter costs only £28, and the ship was double booked within a week. Several more charters follow over the next 3-years.</p> <p>1964 - Trafalgar expands into new areas and the original partners sell their shares to Nick Tarsh. Mr. Tarsh, who had studied law and economics at Cambridge, sells Tan Travel and disbands the overseas sales offices.</p> <p>1966 - Rhodesia declares independence and Trafalgar loses money when charter flights between London and Salisbury come to an end. Mr. Tarsh flies to South Africa and introduces the concept of newspaper tours based on travel offers to readers and the first tour is a sell-out. Mr. Tarsh revives the Union Castle Line charters between Cape Town and Southampton.</p> <p>1967 - Newspaper tours are introduced to Australia. This market replaces South Africa as Trafalgar's most productive.</p> <p>1970's - The Tollman family becomes involved with Trafalgar and with their tremendous knowledge and experience in the travel industry, proceeded to take the company to new heights.</p> <p>1997 - New programs offer tours to a wider variety of destinations including North America, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, South Africa and the Far East.</p> <p>2004 - Trafalgar expands its European product with luxurious new "River Cruises" and revolutionary new products like experiences.</p> <p>2012 – Trafalgar’s tours become “Guided Vacations”, personalizing the holiday experience as never before.</p>
<p>Trafalgar Value</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pay 12 months in advance and save 10% of the tour cost 2. Trafalgar Travel Club for loyal customers: save 5% of coach tour 3. For groups of 5-8: save 5% of coach tour 4. For groups of 9 and more: save 50% off one person 5. Young travellers aged 5-17 save 10% 6. Book two tours and save 5% for one of the tours 7. Travel with three people sharing one room and each of you will

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	<p>receive a discount off the land-only portion</p> <p>8. Share a room and save: Trafalgar will pair you with another traveler of the same gender to avoid single supplements</p> <p>9. There are big savings when you travel as a family with Trafalgar and join one of their 3 new Family Experiences: when a child 14 years and under shares either a triple or quad room with 2 adults, you can save up to 40% on the adult price.</p>
<p>Europe and Britain in 2017</p>	<p>Trafalgar boasts 4 ways and 4 brochures to discover Britain & Europe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First Class - Take pleasure in comfort on their premier tours - CostSaver - They pass savings on to you, so you enjoy a quality tour while benefiting from unbeatable value - At Leisure - Enjoy Trafalgar's tours with even more choice, more opportunity for in-depth experiences and more freedom to go your own way. - Family Experiences - vacations designed exclusively for families
<p>Travel Directors</p>	<p>Trafalgar's Travel Directors are amongst the finest in the industry. They are experienced travellers, learned historians and culture buffs. Their expertise and years of travel make them the world's best travel professionals. They are the ideal personal guides and can be relied upon for their good humour and adventurous natures. Through their in-depth expertise, you'll discover the history and be immersed in cultures of the places you visit.</p> <p>Your Travel Directors can help interpret, steer you towards the best bargains and give you those pieces of information that can make your holiday truly memorable. Whether it's the best shops for watches in Switzerland or arranging a gondola ride in Venice, they can be relied upon to help. They are there to make things smoother, more interesting and ultimately more enjoyable.</p>
<p>Fellow Travellers</p>	<p>Trafalgar sells its tours in more than 38 countries around the world. It is therefore quite typical to find 6-10 different nationalities on any one tour. You'll forge new friendships with other Trafalgar guests from Australia, America, Canada, Europe, New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore, Japan, and the U.K.. There will be a maximum of 49 people on First Class tours throughout Europe.</p>
<p>Accommodation</p>	<p>A good night's sleep and a comfortable place to relax are invaluable when on holiday. All Trafalgar Hotels are carefully selected so you'll enjoy comfortable rooms and quality amenities. From arrival to departure, your Tour Director will take care of your check-in and check-out, as well as portage service for your luggage.</p> <p>To ensure you have complete peace of mind your travel documentation</p>

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	<p>includes the contact details for each of your hotels, so friends and relatives can easily stay in touch.</p> <p>Trafalgar’s First Class Hotels, Europe On a Trafalgar First Class holiday in Europe and you’ll stay at some of the most respected hotel chains in the world, including Accor, Hilton, Westin, Marriott, Renaissance, Sheraton and Radisson. These hotels are rated First Class, Superior First Class or Deluxe. Convenient hotel locations put you close to shops, sights, restaurants and landmarks. Most of these hotels include satellite or cable TV, mini-bar, room service, concierge, restaurant and bar, swimming pool, laundry and dry cleaning services. Trafalgar's First Class hotels include: Copthorne Tara, London - close to Harrod's; Hilton, Paris - beside the Eiffel Tower; Mercure Colosseum, Rome - near the Colosseum; Intercontinental, Budapest; Panorama hotel, Amalfi Coast, Italy</p> <p>Trafalgar’s CostSaver Hotels, Europe Enjoy a stay at one of Trafalgar’s CostSaver hotels and you’ll be guaranteed a stay at a Superior Tourist Class or First Class hotel. Trafalgar has recently enhanced its range of CostSaver hotels to include more First Class and Moderate First Class hotels. Your room will have a private bathroom or shower and many will also have sat TV.</p>
<p>Dining</p>	<p>Eating is one of the best parts of any holiday and Trafalgar makes sure that no matter which part of the world you're travelling to, your taste buds get the full culinary experience.</p> <p>Trafalgar's First Class, Europe While on tour in Europe you'll be treated to continental style buffet breakfasts with fruit juice, cold meats and cheese, cereals, bread rolls, preserves and tea or coffee. When making your way through the English or Irish countryside enjoy cooked breakfasts of bacon, sausage, egg, tomatoes, mushrooms and more. On some evenings you’ll enjoy 3-course meals specially prepared by your hotel's Chef - all included in the tour price.</p> <p>Trafalgar's First Class, Exclusive Dinner Highlights If you are our guest on a tour for longer than a week, you'll be treated to specialty dinners at selected restaurants, featuring delicious regional cuisine. Enjoy a traditional ‘roast beef and Yorkshire pud’ in an English pub, sample a true Scandinavian smorgasbord or be served mouth-watering pasta dishes in an Italian trattoria. These exclusive Dinner Highlights are more than meals, they are unforgettable experiences.</p>

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	<p>Trafalgar's CostSaver, Europe When travelling on a CostSaver tour through Europe, you will enjoy a cooked English breakfast in the UK & Ireland and a cold buffet breakfast in London and Europe. 50% of evening meals are also included. Included dinners are set 3-course menus planned by your hotel's Chef to reflect a taste of Europe.</p>
<p>Kids Discount</p>	<p>Share your holiday memories with your family and take advantage of a 10% discount on the land-only portion of your tour. Young travellers must be under the age of 18 years old on the tour departure date, and be accompanied by an adult. On all escorted tours, children under 5 years old are not accepted.</p>
<p>Groups Discounts</p>	<p>If a group of 5 - 8 people travel together a discount of 5% per person applies to the land-only portion of your tour. So it pays to get together with your family and friends! Save even more for 9 or more - If you have a group of 9 or more people travelling together on the same scheduled tour, then you automatically qualify for more savings. Your savings will be determined by the number of people travelling. Ask your travel agent for details.</p>
<p>Save on a 2nd Tour</p>	<p>Book two Trafalgar holidays, each 8 days or longer, for a reduction of 5% off the land portion of the tour with the shortest duration. Take three tours and save on two; ask your travel professional for suggestions on your perfect tour combination.</p>
<p>Last Minute Deals</p>	<p>Check out this website page for the latest deals: http://www.trafalgar.com/CAN/LastMinuteDeals</p>
<p>Tipping</p>	<p>Tips are customarily given to your Tour Director, Driver and Local Guides at your discretion. The recommended amounts are: Travel Directors \$4 per day, Drivers \$2.50 per day and Local Guides \$1 per day.</p>
<p>How to Book</p>	<p>To book your Trafalgar vacation, simply visit your local travel agent. Your travel agent will answer your questions and assist you with choosing the perfect Trafalgar experience. There is a travel agent finder on their website at: http://www.trafalgar.com/CAN/How_To_Book</p>
<p>Sustainable Travel</p>	<p>Protecting the environment and the people and places their tours visit is a top priority for Trafalgar. They want to help ensure these remain for future generations to enjoy and are committed to ensuring they minimize the environmental impact of their operations around the world.</p> <p>Every time we travel, whether by car, train, plane or coach, we are burning fossil fuels and contributing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. And while there are many ways to travel while on holiday, they are pleased to advise that by choosing a Trafalgar escorted tour,</p>

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	<p>you are opting for one of the most environmentally friendly ways to go. A grid on their website shows you the amount of carbon dioxide emitted per km for a passenger traveling on various forms of transport which clearly shows coach transport as emitting significantly less carbon dioxide than other forms of transport. With carbon dioxide being one of the main causes of global warming, it's good to know that buying an escorted tour holiday is a better way to travel.</p> <p>With constant improvements in technology newer engines offer greater fuel efficiency while also emitting less pollutants which is why Trafalgar is continually upgrading its motor coach fleet and are proud to have one of the best in Europe.</p> <p>Trafalgar are reducing the carbon footprints and environmental impact of their offices by introducing recycling, energy reduction and waste minimisation projects as well as supporting local community projects where employees live and work. Staff are proud to be involved in making a difference and Trafalgar will be encourages staff to spend two working days a year volunteering for charitable projects.</p>
<p>For more information on Trafalgar Tours</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pick up a brochure at your local travel agent - Website: www.trafalgar.com - Videos: http://www.trafalgar.com/can/insider-experiences/watch-our-videos Facebook: www.facebook.com/TrafalgarTravel Twitter: https://twitter.com/trafalgartalk
<p>Tour Example: Trafalgar's "Best of Britain"</p>	<p>A 13 night tour around Britain from \$3,141 per person.</p> <p>British icons - new and old - will shape your journey, from Liverpool's Fab Four to Shakespeare. Travel to the Scottish Highlands, exploring rugged Dartmoor, the idyllic Lake District and Tudor town of Chester. Take a ferry to the Isle of Skye and contemplate battles fought on Culloden and the golfing grounds of St. Andrews before travelling to Edinburgh and Stratford-upon-Avon.</p> <p>Sightseeing Highlights</p> <p>City tour in London, Liverpool and Edinburgh</p> <p>Orientation of Bath, Plymouth, Cardiff, Chester, Glasgow and York</p> <p>See Dartmoor, the Lake District, Ben Nevis and Glencoe in the Scottish Highlands, the Isle of Skye and the 18th green at St. Andrews</p>

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View Eilean Donan, Alnwick Castle used as Hogwarts in the Harry Potter films, York Minster and Anne Hathaway's thatched cottage

Visit the ancient stone circle at Stonehenge, the Roman Baths in Bath, picturesque Polperro, Buckfast Abbey, Glastonbury Abbey, the town of Ludlow, the Isle of Skye, Culloden, Edinburgh Castle, medieval Alnwick, and Shakespeare's Birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon

Dining

13 full breakfasts
5 dinners
1 lunch

The Trafalgar Difference

BE MY GUEST

Enjoy lunch with the Dyer family on their 15th century dairy farm in Somerset complete with home-made ice-cream

CULTURAL INSIGHTS

Visit Buckfast Abbey, a Benedictine monastery built on the site where monks have lived and prayed for over 1,000 years

HIDDEN TREASURES

Enjoy at least one surprise Hidden Treasure

LOCAL SPECIALIST

For included sightseeing in London, Liverpool and Edinburgh

AUTHENTIC ACCOMODATION

Enjoy Highland hospitality at Laggan Hotel located within Cairngorm National Park in the Scottish Highlands.

Itinerary

DAY 1

ARRIVE LONDON (2 NIGHTS)

Welcome to Britain. After check-in, spend time simply relaxing or take a leisurely stroll through the bustling streets of London.

HOTEL Park Plaza Riverbank

DAY 2

LONDON SIGHTSEEING

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This morning a Local Specialist will take you on a sightseeing tour of London. See Big Ben, Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. You are free later to explore and shop on your own in the centre of London.

DAY 3

LONDON – STONEHENGE – BATH – EXETER (2 NIGHTS)

Meet your Travel Director this morning before leaving London. Arrive in rural Wiltshire and visit the mystical ancient monoliths at Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain. On arrival in the UNESCO World Heritage City of Bath, see the impressive Abbey and visit the Roman Baths from which the town derives its name. Later we arrive into the historic cathedral city of Exeter. This evening get to know your companions and Travel Director during your Welcome Reception at your hotel.

HOTEL Mercure Southgate

DAY 4

EXETER – EXCURSION TO PLYMOUTH, POLPERRO, DARTMOOR AND BUCKFAST ABBEY

Your orientation of Plymouth includes the Mayflower Steps where the Pilgrim Fathers set sail for the New World. See the Royal Citadel overlooking Plymouth Sound. Consider taking an optional cruise around the famous coastline. Visit Polperro, a quaint fishing village nestled around a picturesque harbour. Travel along rugged Dartmoor, famous for its dramatic and breathtaking scenery. Later enjoy a Cultural Insight at Buckfast Abbey where monks have lived and prayed for nearly 1,000 years.

DAY 5

EXETER – GLASTONBURY – CARDIFF

Enjoy a picturesque drive through the South West countryside to Glastonbury. Visit the ruined Abbey, said to be the burial place of King Arthur. Later enjoy a special Be My Guest lunch in a 15th century Manor House on a working dairy farm in Somerset. Cardiff, the capital of Wales, is your final destination. View the impressive Castle and the Millennium stadium during your orientation, before checking in at your hotel.

HOTEL Jurys Inn

DAY 6

CARDIFF – LUDLOW – CHESTER – LIVERPOOL

Stop this morning to visit the Tudor market town of Ludlow in Shropshire. Your Travel Director takes you on a walking orientation tour of Chester, which includes views of the medieval walls, the Cathedral

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and the famous Tudor Rows. Liverpool is the home of the Merseybeat. This evening hear tales of the 'Fab Four' as you drive through Liverpool with your Local Specialist on an included Beatles tour.

HOTEL Jurys Inn

DAY 7

LIVERPOOL – LAKE DISTRICT – GLASGOW

Travel north through characteristically glorious scenery from Lancashire to the Lake District. Travelling along the shores of England's largest lake Windermere, and through countryside that inspired the Romantic poets, you reach Grasmere. View the grave of William Wordsworth, buried at St. Oswald's Church. You cross the Scottish border and visit Gretna Green, where eloping couples would say their vows over the anvil. This afternoon your orientation tour of Glasgow includes views of the Cathedral, magnificent George Square and the River Clyde, former heart of the shipbuilding industry. Celebrate your first night in Scotland with a Regional Meal in a local restaurant.

HOTEL Double Tree by Hilton Strathclyde

DAY 8

GLASGOW – GLENCOE – FORT WILLIAM – SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS (2 NIGHTS)

Journey along the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond, immortalised in the well-known Scottish song, towards the site of the 1692 massacre Glencoe – 'Glen of the Weeping'. At the Commando Memorial near Fort William see breathtaking views of Britain's highest mountain Ben Nevis. Dine tonight at your hotel in the Scottish Highlands.

HOTEL Laggan Authentic Accomodation

DAY 9

ISLE OF SKYE, CULLODEN AND SCENIC HIGHLAND EXCURSION

This morning travel to the coast and take a ferry over the sea to Skye from Mallaig to Armadale. Drive up the Sleat Peninsula and admire the spectacular scenery before stopping for time to have lunch. Cross over a road bridge to view scenic Eilean Donan Castle back on the mainland. Continue your journey past the lochs and glens of the Scottish Highlands and view Culloden battlefield. This site was where the final confrontation of the Jacobite rising of 1745 took place and also played a part in the religious civil war in Britain. Later return to your hotel in Newtonmore.

DAY 10

SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS – PITLOCHRY – ST. ANDREWS – EDINBURGH (2 NIGHTS)

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Heading south, stop in the picturesque village of Pitlochry before heading to the historic town of St. Andrews, the home of golf. Take a photograph on the 18th green of the Old Course, where the first games of golf were played during 1400s. Cross the Firth of Forth to the Scottish capital, Edinburgh, your home for the next two nights. During the Edinburgh Festival tickets to the Edinburgh Tattoo in the castle grounds are included.

HOTEL Holiday Inn

DAY 11

EDINBURGH SIGHTSEEING

This morning your Local Specialist takes you on a sightseeing tour of this wonderful city, followed by your choice of sightseeing to Edinburgh Castle or Edinburgh's Camera Obscura. See the Royal Mile, the elegant Palace of Holyroodhouse in the shadow of Arthur's Seat and the new Scottish Parliament building. Admire the elegant Georgian architecture in the New Town. Tonight why not enjoy an optional night out including traditional song, dance and Scottish fare?

DAY 12

EDINBURGH – ALNWICK – YORK

Visit the medieval market town of Alnwick. See the impressive castle home to the Duke of Northumberland and the Tenantry Column, topped by the Percy Lion. Marvel at the magnificent scenery as you cross Northumberland. Cross the River Tyne at Newcastle en route to York where your walking orientation includes the medieval walls, the Shambles and the awe-inspiring Minster. This evening enjoy a Farewell Dinner with your fellow travellers.

HOTEL Hotel 53

DAY 13

YORK – STRATFORD-UPON-AVON – LONDON

View Anne Hathaway's thatched cottage and visit Shakespeare's Birthplace and Visitor Centre in Stratford-upon-Avon, where the Bard was born and raised. Explore the cobbled streets or walk along the banks of the River Avon. Later, travel back to London.

HOTEL Park Plaza Riverbank

DAY 14

DEPART LONDON

Say goodbye to your new found friends at the end of a memorable holiday.

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<p>ENGLAND</p>	<p>England is one of the most visited destinations on the planet – and for many good reasons.</p> <p>If you’ve come in search of the patchwork fields and elegant country gardens you’ve seen on screen – in <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> or <i>Downton Abbey</i> – you’ll find them and more. As you travel through villages and towns, listen for the country’s rich tapestry of dialects, which seem to change in the space of a few miles!</p> <p>Discover the eye-opening diversity that makes modern Britain – from global cuisine to urban culture. And at the heart of it all, find London. This cutting-edge city is as into its new trends as its old traditions. You could spend weeks seeking out its hidden treasures, but to experience England in all its glory, you’ll want to venture further afield.</p> <p>It is no surprise that many of the most visited attractions in England are museums and galleries. Most are free to visit: The British Museum in London is the most visited free attraction with more than 6.7 million visitors a year, followed by London's National Gallery and the Natural History Museum.</p> <p>The most visited paid-for attractions in England include the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and London Zoo.</p> <p>Outside London, the most popular sites in England include Stonehenge, the Roman Baths in Bath and the Eden Project in the southwest, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard in the south east, Tatton Park and the Museum of Liverpool in the north west, Cadbury World in the West Midlands, Chatsworth House in the East Midlands and Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire.</p>
<p>Location</p>	<p>England is part of the United Kingdom and shares land borders with Scotland to the north and Wales to the west. The Irish Sea lies northwest of England and the Celtic Sea lies to the southwest. England is separated from continental Europe by the North Sea to the east and the English Channel to the south. The country covers five-eighths of the island of Great Britain (which lies in the North Atlantic) in its centre and south; and includes over 100 smaller islands such as the Isles of Scilly, and the Isle of Wight.</p>
<p>Geography</p>	<p>England covers most of the central and southern two thirds of the island of Great Britain and is 209,331 square km². Its highest mountain is Scafell Pike (978 metres), the largest lake is Lake Windermere</p>

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	(14.7km ²) and its longest river is the Thames (346km) which flows through London.
Name	The name "England" is derived from the Old English name Englalund, which means "land of the Angles". The Angles were one of the Germanic tribes that settled in Great Britain during the Early Middle Ages.
Population	The population of England is 54.8 million.
Language	English – naturally!
Currency	Britain stayed out of the European common currency and sticks to the Pound. The current rate as at March 2017 is 1.64 dollars to the pound, which is a much more advantageous exchange rate for Canadians than in recent years.
Tipping	Similar to Canada.
Government	As part of the United Kingdom, the basic political system in England is a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary system. There has not been a government of England since 1707, when the Acts of Union 1707, putting into effect the terms of the Treaty of Union, joined England and Scotland to form the Kingdom of Great Britain. Before the union England was ruled by its monarch and the Parliament of England. Today England is governed directly by the Parliament of the United Kingdom, although other countries of the United Kingdom have devolved governments. In the House of Commons which is the lower house of the British Parliament based at the Palace of Westminster, there are 532 Members of Parliament (MPs) for constituencies in England, out of the 650 total.
Documentation	Canadians need Passports, but no Visas, for a trip to Britain.
Time zone	Five hours ahead of EST in Toronto and Montreal.
Health	The National Health Service is deservedly the envy of the world – but always remember to purchase adequate travel insurance before you depart.
Safety tips	Very safe. There are less murders in all of England each year than there are in the city of Toronto!

CLIMATE	
General climate	England has a temperate maritime climate: it is mild with temperatures not much lower than 0 °C in winter and not much higher than 32 °C in summer. The weather is damp relatively frequently and is changeable. The coldest months are January and February, the latter particularly on the English coast, while July is normally the warmest month. Months with mild to warm weather are May, June, September and October. Rainfall is spread fairly evenly throughout the year. Important influences on the climate of England are its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, its northern latitude and the warming of the sea by the Gulf Stream. Rainfall is higher in the west, and parts of the Lake District

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	receive more rain than anywhere else in the country.
Today's weather	London is 15C today, March 11, 2017 with sun and showers.
Best time to visit	Any time is a good time! Weather is unpredictable, so be ready to cope with all four seasons on your trip. Winters are usually very mild and spring is a long glorious season in England with flowers from February onwards. Summers are busiest, but sunniest and warmest, while fall is ideal touring weather with beautiful colours in the woods.

GETTING AROUND	
Getting There	There are numerous direct flights from both Toronto and Montreal to the UK airports, principally Heathrow and Gatwick for London and the southeast and Manchester for the north.
Cities	UK City of Culture 2017: Hull, Yorkshire For 2017 Hull will be the UK City of Culture and host the Turner Prize, one of the biggest events in British art, at Hull's Ferens Art Gallery. Organizers have separated the year into four different "Seasons", each with its own theme: Made in Hull (January - March), Roots and Routes (April - June), Freedom (July - September), Tell The World (October - December) www.hull2017.co.uk
Distances	London to Manchester by road is 340 kms. London to Land's End is 511 kms London to Edinburgh is 666 kms London to Cardiff is 242 kms
Ferries	Britain is an island nation, so there are plenty of ferry routes for you to add to your itinerary. Despite the Channel Tunnel (which is rail only), there are many ferry routes linking England to France, Belgium and Holland as well as several other European countries. The islands off the coast of England are all linked by ferry to the mainland: the Channel Islands, the Isles of Scilly, the Isle of Wight and the Isle of Man all have regular services.
Trains	Britain has a privatised rail network that covers the whole of the country, serving more than 2,500 stations - the system is efficient, reliable and taking the train will add a real sense of adventure to your trip. Journeys across the country may involve changes since most lines radiate from London, which has seven major terminals. There is also a fantastic rail link with continental Europe on Eurostar, from King's Cross St Pancras station in London and Ebbsfleet and Ashford in Kent. Travelling by train is one of the most scenic and relaxing ways to discover the real Britain. A fast and frequent rail network means you can escape London and be in Scotland in as little as 4 hours. And with a BritRail train ticket, it couldn't be easier to explore: offering unlimited journeys and huge savings, this exclusive tourist pass gives you the

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	<p>freedom to go at your own pace.</p> <p>How to purchase tickets You can buy your train tickets from large travel agents and all railways stations. First-class tickets cost about one-third more than standard fares, and buying a return fare is sometimes cheaper than buying two singles. Allow plenty of time to buy your ticket, and always ask about any special offers or reduced fares. An advance ticket is usually cheaper than one bought on the day, but often has restrictions on your ability to change or cancel your journey. Consumers can buy tickets directly from the rail provider, National Rail or a third-party website, such as the trainline At Rail Easy, you may find discounted tickets in advance. Virgin Trains cover much of England, Scotland and Wales and there are no booking fees. Ticket offices in rural areas may close at weekends, so if you are unable to buy a ticket a conductor on board will sell you one.</p> <p>Rail Passes If you plan to do a lot of train travel around Britain, it's worth buying a BritRail pass. This can be purchased from many agents abroad, such as Rail Europe. National Rail's All Line Rail Rover gives adults unlimited travel through-out England, Scotland and Wales for 7 or 14 days. For many trips, a Family & Friends Railcard or Network Railcard saves one-third on adult and 60 per cent off kids' (aged 5-15) fares. A Young Person's Railcard offers discounts to 16- to 25-year-olds or full-time students attending a UK educational establishment. The Senior Rail Card entitles those over the age of 60 to a discount of one-third on most fares. There are special passes for London transport, too, and a pass that covers London, Oxford, Canterbury and Brighton. Children aged 5 to 15 pay half fare; those under the age of 5 travel free. Disabled travelers qualify for many discounts. Keep a passport-sized photograph handy for buying passes. If you have a pass, make sure you always show it when you buy a ticket.</p>
Car Rental	<p>The two most startling difference for foreign motorists is that in Britain you drive on the left and distances are mostly measured in miles. Once you adapt, however, rural Britain is a nice place to drive and you'll enjoy an extensive network of toll-free motorways and trunk roads, which make travelling around the country pretty straightforward. You'll also view many quaint towns and villages as you drive from place to place and you can tailor your journey to your individual desires.</p> <p>What you need To drive in Britain you need a current driving licence with an</p>

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	<p>international driving permit if required. You must also keep proof of ownership or a rental agreement in your vehicle, plus any insurance documents.</p> <p>The roads in Britain Rush hour can last from 08.00 to 9:30 and from 17.00 to 19.00pm on weekdays in the cities so avoid starting your journey then if possible. Most hire cars will include GPS but keep a good map handy. If you want to delve into the more rural areas it'll be worth picking up a map from the Ordnance Survey (link is external) series – they're comprehensive and will guide even the most specific of trips. Motorways are marked with an "M" followed by their identifying number. "A" roads, sometimes dual carriageways (that is, with two lanes in each direction), are main routes, while "B" roads are secondary roads. The latter are often less congested and your view will almost certainly be prettier. Rural areas are crisscrossed by a web of tiny lanes.</p>
<p>Buses</p>	<p>Travelling around Britain by coach will often save you money and offer an alternative to train travel if you're on a budget - just be aware that the journey time will probably be longer. If you know the route you wish to take, plan ahead and book your coach before you arrive in the UK to guarantee yourself a seat.</p> <p>The British coach networks The largest British coach operator is National Express (link is external), which has a nationwide network of more than 1,200 destinations. The company offers a number of discounts, such as their £5 Funfares (+50p booking fee), which are available online, to over 50 destinations. Megabus offers tickets to destinations all over Britain from as little as £1 (+50p booking fee). Make sure you book early to get the best deals. If you travel to Glasgow from London on a Megabus you also have the option to book a sleeper coach with a bed!</p> <p>The Oxford Tube and Oxford X90 run frequent, wheelchair-friendly services between Oxford and London, while Scottish Citylink is a major operator running regular services between London, the North of England and Scotland. Some services run from Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports.</p> <p>Discounts are available for full-time students and anyone under 25. The over-50s qualify for a discount coach card, which means the save up to 30 per cent on many fares.</p>
<p>Passes</p>	<p>There is a large range of passes available to the visitor to England, both for travelling around the country and for visiting the main attractions.</p>

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	<p>You can purchase and select these on the Visit Britain website here: https://www.visitbritainshop.com/world/travel-and-transport/?utm_source=visitbritain.com&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=travel_and_transport&utm_campaign=special_offers_page</p>
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ACCOMMODATION TYPES	<p>The variety varies from cozy bed and breakfasts to historic country houses and from village pubs with rooms to five star glitzy city centre hotels. Take your pick!</p>
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LIFESTYLE GROUPS	
Families	<p>England is perfect for kids of all ages. There is something to amaze and wow them around every corner. From the sights of London (think London Eye, the dinosaurs of the Natural History Museum, Madame Tussaud's, the Tower of London and the London Dungeons) to the open air of the countryside with its range of history and soft adventure.</p>
Romance	<p>As a honeymoon destination, or simply as a perfect couples place, England is difficult to beat. For culture vultures, the possibilities are endless. The countryside doesn't get any better than rural England and the range of romantic accommodation options is endless.</p>
Zoomers	<p>Safe, easy to get around and increasingly good value – there are lots of reasons why England should appeal to older travellers. There are also many discounts available on the passes to get around and visit attractions for Senior Citizens.</p>

UNIQUES	
Surprising	<p>There are strong cultural and heritage links between Canada and Britain. Consider these numbers: Canadians with British origins (from 2011 National Household Survey):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6,570,015 Canadians listed themselves as being of English origin • 4,714,970 Canadians listed themselves as being of Scottish origin • 441,965 Canadians listed themselves as being of Welsh origin • 4,941,210 Canadians listed themselves as being of French origin (for comparison) • 4,354,155 Canadians listed themselves as being of Irish origin (for comparison) <p>Also: 4 Canadian prime ministers were born in Britain: Sir John A Macdonald, born Glasgow, Scotland Alexander Mackenzie, born Logierait, Atholl, Perthshire, Scotland, UK Mackenzie Bowell, born Rickinghall, Suffolk, England John Turner, born Richmond, Surrey, England And one British prime minister was born in Canada - the only UK PM born outside Britain:</p>

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<p>History</p>	<p>Andrew Bonar Law, born in Rexton, Kent County, New Brunswick</p> <p>Our own Mackenzie King said: “If some countries have too much history, we have too much geography.” He was probably thinking of England as having too much history! This is not the place to try to provide a full history of a country that has such a rich past as England. Simply to say that history is everywhere in England. As an personal example: the old mill house where I grew up in Northamptonshire was originally built a thousand years ago and is named in the Domesday Book of William I in 1086 AD.</p> <p>Read Winston Churchill’s splendid histories if you wish to immerse yourself in the past – he received the Nobel Prize for Literature for these tomes and they are brilliantly readable.</p>
<p>Recommended Reading</p>	<p>My go-to guide book is Lonely Planet.</p> <p>For a wonderfully funny insight into English life, I recommend Bill Bryson’s two books on the country.</p> <p>His ‘Notes from a Small Island’, was voted the book that best represents Britain in a national poll.</p> <p>And his more recent ‘The Road to Little Dribbling’ is equally funny and revealing of the English character.</p>
<p>1000 Places to See Before You Die</p>	<p>Patricia Schultz has quite a list for England and the country is the first in her book...and the first place in the book is my old university:</p> <p>Cambridge University Chester Land’s End, Cornwall Padstow and St. Mawes, Cornwall Chatsworth House, Derbyshire Dartmoor, Devon Exmoor, Somerset Glyndebourne Festival, Sussex The Cotswolds, Gloucestershire Winchester Cathedral, Hampshire Osborne House, Isle of Wight Canterbury Cathedral, Kent Leeds Castle, Maidstone, Kent Sissinghurst Castle Garden, Kent The Lake District, Cumbria London: British Museum, Buckingham Palace, Hampton Court Palace, Hyde Park, St Paul’s Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, London Eye, Tower of London, National Gallery Hadrian’s Wall, Northumberland Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire Ludlow, Shropshire Bath, Somerset Wells Cathedral, Somerset</p>

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	<p>Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwickshire Warwick Castle, Warwickshire Salisbury Cathedral, Wiltshire Stonehenge, Wiltshire Stourhead Garden, Wiltshire Castle Howard, Yorkshire York Minster, York</p>
<p>Must Sees</p>	<p>England has a number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. From natural beauty spots like the Dorset and East Devon Coast to cultural riches such as the Tower of London and Stonehenge.</p> <p>London England's capital has some of the most iconic landmarks in the world, many of which are protected by World Heritage status. Step back in time at William the Conqueror's imposing Tower of London and see the Crown Jewels. Discover Westminster Abbey, the burial place of scores of great Britons from Charles Darwin to Charles Dickens and go to Maritime Greenwich, home of Christopher Wren's baroque masterpiece, the Old Royal Naval College, and the Cutty Sark - the world's last surviving tea clipper ship. And if all that history proves a little exhausting, head west and recharge your batteries at Kew Gardens, home to 300 acres of enchanting greenery, ancient trees, palm houses and even a treetop walkway.</p> <p>Rest of England For thousands of years of history and architecture, explore the great cathedrals of Durham and Canterbury and the largest monastic ruin in Britain, Fountains Abbey. To follow in the footsteps of Roman invaders, a trip to Hadrian's Wall is a must, and if you're interested in our industrial heritage don't miss Derwent Valley Mills, Saltaire, Ironbridge or the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape from where mining technologies spread across the world. If you want to explore one of the world's biggest mysteries, head to Stonehenge, the most famous megalithic (literally meaning 'big stone') monument in the world. Dating back an amazing 50,000 years, it's drawn visitors for millennia. Visit the City of Bath, where novelist Jane Austen once lived, to see its ancient Roman Baths, the elegant Pulteney Bridge, gorgeous Georgian architecture and Bath Abbey. Not far from here, near Oxford, is the birthplace of Winston Churchill, Blenheim Palace. It's a perfectly preserved 18th-century stately home set in a 2,100-acre park landscaped by 'Capability' Brown. Further north, Liverpool is recognised as a 'supreme example' of a</p>

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	<p>Maritime Mercantile City and it's here where you can see the towering Liver Building, the Albert Dock and take a ferry across the Mersey river. Elsewhere, The Dorset and East Devon Coast, also known as the Jurassic Coast was the first ever site to be inscribed as a 'natural' World Heritage Site. It spans 150 kms of dramatic coastline that's exposed to provide an almost continuous geological 'walk through time' spanning 185 million years of the Earth's history.</p>
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SPORTS ACTIVITIES	<p>Soccer, cricket and rugby all enjoy a huge following in England and tickets for most games are readily available to visitors. Like a visit to a village pub, it's a great way to get to know the locals!</p>
Golf	<p>Scotland may be the home of golf, but England has more and varied golf courses. Wherever you find yourself in England, there will be a choice of local clubs. Or you may want to seek out one of the more famous courses from the many great golfing events staged in England.</p>
Fishing	<p>Fishing remains the most popular sport in England. The countryside is full of fishing rivers and lakes and reservoirs, whilst nowhere is far from the sea, so salt water fishing is popular too.</p>
Horse riding	<p>The English love their horses! I was brought up on a small horse riding stables in Northamptonshire in the heart of the English countryside and it is typical of such establishments across the country. Friendly, knowledgeable staff, wonderful horses and some of the most beautiful trail riding imaginable.</p> <p>Here is a link to the stables of my youth, which is still a vibrant equestrian centre today: https://www.facebook.com/pg/boughtonmillequestriancentre/about/</p>
Hiking	<p>An Englishman relishes his right to stride across the countryside on the many thousands of public Rights of Way that crisscross England like a fine spider's web. There are short saunters linking neighbouring villages and there are challenging long distance footpaths that can become the entire focus of your holiday.</p> <p>Here is a link to a review of "Walking to Camelot" by John Cherrington that describes one such long distance hike: http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/TravelTips/ChrisBookPicks.aspx#37</p>
Cycling	<p>Pick up a bicycle and you're free to explore Britain's scenic cycle routes. An hour from London, the Crab & Winkle Way is a leafy, 12 km route following a former railway line, and links the cathedral city of Canterbury with the oyster-fishing village of Whitstable.</p>
Tennis	<p>There is no more famous tennis tournament in the world than Wimbledon. For two weeks the nation goes tennis crazy – especially now that the British have their very own Men's Champion!</p> <p>This year the dates for Wimbledon are 3 July to 16 July and you can find all the information you need here:</p>

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<http://www.wimbledon.com/index.html>

CULTURE

London West End shows and musicals in 2017

The Lion King, Lyceum Theatre

Running until 2 April 2017

Disney's musical phenomenon The Lion King continues to captivate audiences of all ages. Combining dazzling staging and highly imaginative costumes, masks and puppets, this astonishing show at the Lyceum Theatre uses breath-taking theatrical magic to tell the story of Simba - join him now in his epic journey to reclaim his kingdom!

www.thelionking.co.uk

Dreamgirls, Savoy Theatre

21 November 2016 - 11 March 2017

Thirty-five years after the ground-breaking original Broadway production, this UK and West End premiere of the sensational and iconic Tony Award-winning musical Dreamgirls comes to the Savoy Theatre in November 2016. www.dreamgirlswestend.com

Harry Potter and The Cursed Child at Palace Theatre, London

Running until May 2017

A new play by Jack Thorne, inspired by J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, will debut in London's West End this year. It sees Rowling's hero all grown up, working for the Ministry of Magic and a father of three school-age children. The play is presented in two parts, which are intended to be seen in order on the same day (matinee and evening) or on two consecutive evenings. www.harrypottertheplay.com

Billy Elliot The Musical

Touring the UK until May 2017

Based on the successful 2000 film, this West End production with music by Elton John tells the story of one boy's battle against convention to pursue his love of dance. Check tour dates and venues on the website. www.billyelliottthemusical.com

Thriller - Live, Lyric Theatre

Running until 1 October 2017

Moonwalking into the West End after three UK tours and standing ovations across Europe, Thriller - Live is a spectacular, high-octane show celebrating the career of Michael Jackson and the Jackson 5.

www.thrillerlive.com

Matilda The Musical, Cambridge Theatre

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Running until 15 October 2017

This multi-award winning musical from the Royal Shakespeare Company was inspired by the beloved book by Roald Dahl.

www.matildathemusical.com

Wicked, Apollo Victoria Theatre

Running until 4 November 2017

Wicked has been casting its magical spell over audiences of all ages across the world since 2003 and continues to be a record-breaking hit. It has become the 16th longest-running West End musical of all time and earlier this year announced its 21st booking extension.

www.wickedthemusical.co.uk

Jersey Boys, Piccadilly Theatre

Running until 16 April 2017

The smash hit jukebox musical has extended its booking period until next year. It dramatizes the formation, success and eventual break-up of the 1960s rock 'n roll group The Four Seasons, with songs including Big Girls Don't Cry and Can't Take My Eyes Off You.

www.jerseyboyslondon.com

Aladdin - Disney's New Musical, Prince Edward Theatre

Summer 2016 - 1 April 2017

Brought to theatrical life by a legendary creative team, Disney's Broadway musical Aladdin sweep its audience into beautiful spectacle. The musical has been a smash hit on Broadway and includes all the memorable songs from the film including A Whole New World, Friend Like Me, Prince Ali and Arabian Nights.

www.princeedwardtheatre.co.uk

Kinky Boots, Adelphi Theatre

Running until 6 May 2017

This feel-good, colorful, multi-award-winning show was inspired by true events and boasts music and lyrics by pop icon Cyndi Lauper. Kinky Boots tells the story of Charlie Price, who has reluctantly inherited his father's Northampton shoe factory. Trying to live up to his father's legacy, he finds inspiration in the form of Lola and they join together to make shoe history.

www.kinkybootsthemusical.co.uk

Beautiful - The Carole King Musical, Aldwych Theatre

Running until 22 July 2017

Beautiful is the untold story of Carole King's journey from schoolgirl to superstar; from her relationship with husband and song-writing partner

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	<p>Gerry Goffin to her playful rivalry with fellow song-writing duo Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, and her remarkable rise to stardom. www.beautifulmusical.co.uk</p>
<p>Arts</p>	<p>Opera</p> <p>Cinderella (La Cenerentola) A new production of Rossini's sparkling comedy performed by an exciting international cast. A much-loved fairy tale, but not quite as you know it. Sung in Italian with English subtitles. 16 - 25 February 2017: Leeds Grand Theatre, Yorkshire 2 - 4 March 2017: Theatre Royal, Newcastle, 9 - 11 March 2017: The Lowry Salford Quays, Manchester www.operanorth.co.uk/productions/cinderella</p> <p>The Royal Opera House, London 16 January- 4 July 2017: La traviata by Giuseppe Verdi Joyce El-Khoury, Ekaterina Bakanova and Corinne Winters lead three excellent casts in Richard Eyre's much-loved production of Verdi's most famous opera.</p> <p>23 March - 25 April 2017: Madama Butterfly by Giacomo Puccini Antonio Pappano and Renato Balsadonna conduct two great casts led by Ermonela Jaho and Ana María Martínez in Puccini's deeply poignant opera.</p> <p>21 June - 15 July 2017: Otello by Giuseppe Verdi Antonio Pappano conducts a new production of Verdi's thrilling Shakespeare-inspired opera directed by Keith Warner, starring Jonas Kaufmann and Gregory Kunde in the title role.</p> <p>19 - 20 July 2017: The Merchant of Venice by André Tchaikowsky, Welsh National Opera *NEW* Tchaikowsky's Shakespeare-inspired opera is an important rediscovery in 20th-century opera and receives its London premiere in this new production directed by Keith Warner.</p> <p>5 - 16 July 2017: Turandot by Giacomo Puccini Andrei Serban's striking staging of Puccini's final opera. In ancient Beijing, beautiful Princess Turandot decrees that she will marry the prince who can solve three riddles. Those who fail are put to death. Music of exotic color and overwhelming power, including the famous and instantly recognizable 'Nessun Dorma'. www.roh.org.uk</p>

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	<p>Glyndebourne Festival 2017 Britain's most famous opera festival has another brilliant summer schedule for 2017: 20 May - 8 July: Hipermestra by Francesco Cavalli *UK premiere* 21 May - 19 June: La traviata by Giuseppe Verdi 11 June - 6 July: Hamlet by Brett Dean 25 June - 27 July: Ariadne auf Naxos by Richard Strauss 13 July - 23 August: Don Pasquale by Gaetano Donizetti 26 July - 26 August: La clemenza di Tito by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart www.glyndebourne.com/festival_2017</p> <p>Dance</p> <p>Matthew Bourne's The Red Shoes - UK tour An intoxicating drama where life imitates art with fateful consequences. Heart-breaking and dazzling for the sense, Matthew Bourne's magical new adaptation is an inspiration for generations of dancers and audiences alike. 29 November - 3 December 2016: The Lowry, Manchester 6 December 2016 - 29 January 2017: Sadler's Wells Theatre, London 14- 18 March 2017: Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff, Wales 9 - 13 May 2017: Festival Theatre, Edinburgh, Scotland www.new-adventures.net/the-red-shoes/tour-dates</p>
<p>Music</p>	<p>Music in England has always been important in the lives of the people and it has been “exported” all around the world. From Early English choral music in ancient cathedrals to the last pop concerts, there’s something for everyone here.</p> <p>Of course, Liverpool is the place for all things Fab Four. You can spend an afternoon at The Beatles Story museum, see the houses where John Lennon and Paul McCartney grew up and enjoy a night out at the Cavern Club, where the band famously performed.</p>
<p>Film</p>	<p>You will recognize many film and TV locations as you travel around Britain. In fact some people use their favourite TV or film as a way of planning their itinerary around England. Here are a few suggestions:</p> <p>Poldark Cornwall's favorite hero returned to US TV screens with a second series on 25 September. Filmed in and around Cornwall in England, fans can now book Poldark tours around the movie locations in the seaside county. www.poldarktours.co.uk</p> <p>Victoria Already a hit in the UK, the new TV drama Victoria airs in Canada in 2017. Based on the life of Queen Victoria in her early reign, the series</p>

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	<p>stars Jenna Coleman and features eight episodes. Mostly filmed in Yorkshire, locations include Harewood House in Leeds, Castle Howard, and Beverly Minster, which stood in as Westminster Abbey. www.harewood.org, www.castlehoward.co.uk , www.beverleyminster.org.uk</p> <p>Sherlock Inspired by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's much loved book series, the Sherlock TV series has seen huge success in the UK and will be returning to PBS in America for series four in early 2017. Excitingly, there are also rumors Avengers star Tom Hiddleston could feature. Based in Victorian and Georgian England, London has proved to be an ideal location for filming throughout the previous three series. www.visitlondon.com</p> <p>Broadchurch Crime-thriller Broadchurch returns for a final series in 2017 with David Tennant and Olivia Colman reprising their roles. It will continue to be filmed on location in Dorset at Bridport and West Bay, as well as Clevedon in Somerset, England. www.visit-dorset.com</p>
<p>Museums</p>	<p>Britain's museums archive the treasures of the world, while its galleries are home to masterpieces old and new...And many are free for visitors. The problem is where to start. Top of the list has to be The British Museum in London, which is one of the greatest museums anywhere in the world. Not far behind: The Natural History Museum in South Kensington in London. And right across the street from there is the Victoria & Albert Museum. The list goes on and on. Try this link to great museums on the Visit Britain website: https://www.visitbritain.com/gb/en/culture/museums-and-galleries#</p>
<p>Festivals</p>	<p>25th anniversary of the Premier League The world-famous Premier League turns 25 in 2017. The inaugural season kicked off on 15 August 1992 and has been drawing international interest ever since. Attending a match is an unforgettable experience and high up on the must-do list of any visitor to Britain - you'll witness the players' skills, the fans' passion and be surrounded by the stadiums' electric atmosphere. As well as the opportunity to watch the crème de la crème of English and Welsh football (Scotland has its own league), attending a game is also the perfect chance to visit the clubs' destinations. Reaching from the far north-east of England (Newcastle) to the south of Wales (Swansea), over to London and across to the hip cities of north-west England (Manchester and Liverpool), following Premier League football also means discovering some of Britain's most exciting cities - and, of course, the opportunity to</p>

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explore behind the scenes at many stadiums run tours.

For more information check out: www.premierleague.com

125th anniversary of the first Sherlock Holmes short story

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes by Scottish author and physician, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, was published in 1892. Now a popular TV series, London is almost a character in itself in the Sherlock stories and it's hard to imagine the detective living anywhere else. Explore the city as Sherlock did and visit some of his favorite haunts, including 221B Baker Street. While it doesn't actually exist, the exterior of the flat as seen in the TV series, is shot in this quieter west London road, 25 minutes' walk from Baker Street, at 187 North Gower Street. Other destinations include The Sherlock Holmes Museum, featuring a re-creation of his sitting room, as well as a gift shop. The Sherlock Homes Pub in Westminster is stuffed with memorabilia, including Dr Watson's old service revolver and his favourite food, Cumberland sausages.

200th anniversary of the death of Jane Austen

One of the most widely read authors in English literature, Jane Austen died on 18 July 1817 in Winchester, south England. To mark the 200th anniversary of her death, Austen fans can visit Jane Austen's former home in Chawton, near Alton in Hampshire, south England, around an hour by train from London. Here, everything will gear-up for the 2017 'Jane Austen 200' commemorations, as well as in wider Hampshire. The charming house was where she spent the last eight years of her life, wrote Emma, Mansfield Park and Persuasion, and revised Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility and Northanger Abbey. Now called the Jane Austen's House Museum, it runs a program of events throughout the year to keep even the most ardent of Austen aficionados happy.

www.janeausten200.co.uk

20th anniversary of the Harry Potter book series

Since the release of J.K. Rowling's first novel Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone on 30 June 1997, the books have gained immense popularity, critical acclaim and commercial success worldwide, inspiring the popular film series. All eight movies were filmed in Britain, with locations spanning England, Scotland and Wales. While in London, Potter fans shouldn't miss a priceless photo opportunity at Platform 9 ¾ at King's Cross Station. Would-be sorcerers can try their hand at pushing a trolley through the brick wall between platforms nine and ten, otherwise known as the portal to the wizarding world. And a must-visit for any discerning Harry Potter fan is the Warner Bros. Studio Tour - The Making of Harry Potter, a dream come true for muggles - young or

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	<p>old - who watched and loved the movies and books. To celebrate the anniversary, The British Library in London is launching a new exhibition about the magic of Harry Potter, set to open on 20 October 2017 it will run until 28 February 2018. From medieval descriptions of dragons and griffins to the origins of the philosopher's stone, the exhibition will take readers on a journey to the heart of the Harry Potter stories. Look out for an extraordinary range of wizarding books, manuscripts and objects, with original material from Bloomsbury's and J.K. Rowling's archives that will sit alongside centuries-old British Library treasures. #HarryPotter20 www.bl.uk, www.harrypotter.bloomsbury.com/uk/harry-potter-20</p>
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ATTRACTIONS	
Beaches	<p>Nowhere in Britain is more than 120km from the coast so there is every opportunity to get some sea air. Find the hidden sandy coves of Cornwall, island-hop in Scotland, enjoy all the fun of the fair in traditional British seaside resorts, or hit the rugged Welsh coast for exhilarating adventure sports. There are beaches of all kinds from long, sandy strands to pebble piles bordering crashing waves. My pick? The Jurassic Coast. The fascinating rock formations and fossils of the Jurassic Coast chart 185 million years of the Earth's history. Enjoy the coastal walks and cliff-top views of a natural World Heritage Site, and soak up some sea air at the same time. The South West Coast path runs its entire length, and you'll find some truly spectacular walking here.</p>
Nature	<p>Nature is gentle in England. Larger animals such as wolves and bears were banished a thousand years ago. Today, you can still enjoy wonderful bird life, spectacular flowers and smaller animals.</p>
National Parks	<p>Britain's boasts 15 spectacular National Parks across its diverse landscapes. Hike in the mountains of Scotland, camp wild on windswept Dartmoor, or explore the charming villages of the Peak District or Yorkshire Dales. In Snowdonia you can climb the highest peak in England and Wales, or in Northumberland stride out alongside Hadrian's Wall. One of my favourites is the Peak District National Park. Britain's first National Park is easily accessible from the urban centres of Derby, Manchester and Sheffield. Its vast expanse comprises the high moorland tops of the Dark Peak and the southern limestone hills of the White Peak. Try your hand at caving, explore the graceful spa town of Buxton or visit Chatsworth House, one of Britain's grandest stately homes.</p>
Gardens	<p>Woodland walks, classical follies, brilliant blooms and great estates. Explore some of the world's greatest parks and gardens for a taste of</p>

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	<p>everything from elegance to romance, geometric layouts to topiary and plenty of Capability Brown. You can walk in the grassy footsteps of historic figures from Winston Churchill to Anne Boleyn, and many more besides.</p> <p>My personal top three recommendations are Kew Gardens in London; Stourhead and the Eden Project in Cornwall.</p> <p>Kew Gardens: West of central London are the spectacular 300-acre Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. Beautifully landscaped parkland joins expertly planted gardens, palm houses and 33,000 species of native and exotic plants, trees and flowers. Don't miss a chance to walk in the treetops on the spectacular canopy walkway that affords great views across this World Heritage Site.</p> <p>Stourhead has a real air of magic about it. Surrounding the great central lake, classical temples lie hidden among the foliage of its rare trees, and as you explore you'll discover secluded grottoes and scenic paths through the woods. It was called 'a living work of art' when it was opened in 1740, which captures the atmosphere here perfectly.</p> <p>The Eden Project: The enormous 'biomes' at this space-age garden are some of the world's largest greenhouses. Explore an entire rainforest undercover, learn about native species and dance the night away at the Eden Sessions series of pop concerts.</p>
<p>Historical Sites</p>	<p>Many ancient standing stone monuments were erected during the prehistoric period, amongst the best-known are Stonehenge, Devil's Arrows, Rudston Monolith and Castlerigg.</p> <p>With the introduction of Ancient Roman architecture there was a development of basilicas, baths, amphitheaters, triumphal arches, villas, Roman temples, Roman roads, Roman forts, stockades and aqueducts. It was the Romans who founded the first cities and towns such as London, Bath, York, Chester and St Albans. Perhaps the best-known example is Hadrian's Wall stretching right across northern England. Another well-preserved example is the Roman Baths at Bath, Somerset.</p> <p>Early Medieval architecture's secular buildings were simple constructions mainly using timber with thatch for roofing. Ecclesiastical architecture ranged from a synthesis of Hiberno—Saxon monasticism, to Early Christian basilica and architecture characterised by pilaster-strips, blank arcading, baluster shafts and triangular headed openings. After the Norman conquest in 1066 various Castles in England were created so law lords could uphold their authority and in the north to protect from invasion. Some of the best-known medieval castles are the Tower of London, Warwick Castle, Durham Castle and</p>

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	<p>Windsor Castle.</p> <p>Throughout the Plantagenet era an English Gothic architecture flourished—the medieval cathedrals such as Canterbury Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and York Minster are prime examples. Expanding on the Norman base there was also castles, palaces, great houses, universities and parish churches. Medieval architecture was completed with the 16th-century Tudor style; the four-centred arch, now known as the Tudor arch, was a defining feature as were wattle and daub houses domestically. In the aftermath of the Renaissance a form of architecture echoing classical antiquity, synthesised with Christianity appeared—the English Baroque style, architect Christopher Wren was particularly championed.</p> <p>Georgian architecture followed in a more refined style, evoking a simple Palladian form; the Royal Crescent at Bath is one of the best examples of this. With the emergence of romanticism during Victorian period, a Gothic Revival was launched—in addition to this around the same time the Industrial Revolution paved the way for buildings such as The Crystal Palace. Since the 1930s various modernist forms have appeared whose reception is often controversial, though traditionalist resistance movements continue with support in influential places. You can step inside many of Britain’s fine cathedrals and ancient churches for free. Consider the splendour of Durham Cathedral in Northeastern England, or catch King’s College Chapel’s famous Christmas Eve carol service in Cambridge, an hour from London by train.</p>
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OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	<p>In Britain you can find those iconic department stores of every shopper’s dreams – snazzy Harrods, beautiful Liberty, and the Queen’s grocer – Fortnum & Mason. Head to London’s Savile Row to find the country’s finest tailors or Glasgow’s Style Mile for more shops than you could ever desire.</p>
Markets	<p>Some of Britain’s markets have been around for centuries so have a good rummage among beautiful historic surroundings. Some markets specialise in antiques, others in flowers. But all over the country you can wander stalls and find vintage clothes, homewares, retro trinkets, or fashion by up-and-coming designers.</p> <p>Portobello Road in West London is the world’s largest antiques market: a bustling warren of sellers and boutiques offering a colourful array of merchandise. Here you can pick up vintage fashions, classic records, perhaps some new sunglasses and probably an old gramophone to go with it. It’s a colourful scene, and fun just to browse and soak up the atmosphere.</p>
Nightlife	<p>Intimate gigs in tiny basement bars, historic venues that have hosted</p>

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	<p>music's biggest names, and vast arenas with incredible sound. Get to the top UK music venues and see the acts that mean the most to you, on stages with more than a few stories to tell.</p> <p>Of course, the English pubs are also a centre of local nightlife and they are a great way to meet the locals too!</p>
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CUISINE	
Food	<p>Feeling peckish? There's an inexhaustible list of delicious culinary delights to discover when visiting the UK. From afternoon tea with scones and clotted cream to regional favourites such as Cornish pasties</p>
Drink	<p>Beer, ale, cider, and wine – all drinks that are made in Britain. Every region boasts its own traditional real ales, each with its own flavour. Vineyards flourish along the sunny south coast of England, where you can sample award-winning wines and even stay among the beautiful scenery. Delicious cider comes from West Country apples – hop on a bicycle and follow the Cider Route!</p>
Restaurants	<p>The world's most celebrated chefs and Britain's finest ingredients make a winning combination. Sample some of the tastiest and most innovative food around as you unwind in some truly elegant restaurants, some of which even grow their own produce.</p> <p>Here is a link to some of the best English restaurants as picked by Visit Britain:</p> <p>https://www.visitbritain.com/ca/en/food-and-drink/top-restaurants#Bol2DciCwPFWDTi.97</p>

CONTACTS	<p>Website: https://www.visitbritain.com/ca</p> <p>Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/lovegreatbritain/</p> <p>Pinterest: https://www.pinterest.com/visitbritain/</p> <p>Twitter: https://twitter.com/visitbritain</p> <p>YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/LoveGREATBritain</p>
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CHRIS' PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	<p>I was born and brought up in Northamptonshire, a county at the meeting and overlap of the Home Counties, East Anglia and the Midlands, right in the centre of England.</p> <p>I am, of course, somewhat biased, but in my opinion Northamptonshire has the most quintessential English countryside to be found anywhere in the country. There are no great monumental sights, so the county tends to be overlooked as visitors drive through on the M1 motorway between London and Birmingham. But that is all the better for those in the know, as it means that the county is uncrowded and tranquil, even in high summer.</p>
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SCOTLAND	Come with me across the Atlantic Ocean to a European country that boasts stunning scenery, fascinating history and a brave and enduring culture. And, as we will discover in these notes – delicious food and drink also await you when you visit. It's dear to the heart of many Canadians, who may even be able to trace their roots back to this magnificent country. Come to Scotland!
Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology 2017	2017 will celebrate Scotland's Year of History, Heritage & Archaeology. It will be a chance to showcase its rich history, heritage and archaeology, ranging from the remains of its earliest settlements going back thousands of years, through to the turbulent times of the Middle Ages and on to the Scottish Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. www.visitscotland.org/business_support/advice_materials/toolkits/yhha.aspx
Location	Larger than Nova Scotia, Scotland is two-thirds the size of England and Wales - the other two countries that constitute the kingdom of Great Britain – with a tenth of the total population. It is surrounded by sea on three sides: to the west and north by the Atlantic Ocean and on the east by the North Sea. Its only land border runs for approximately 96 km along the line of the Cheviot Hills in the north of England.
Geography	Scotland divides into three regions: the Islands and Highlands in the north, the Central Lowlands in the middle and the Southern Uplands to the south. Rising to 1,344 metres above sea level, Scotland's highest point is the summit of Ben Nevis, in Lochaber, while Scotland's longest river, the River Tay, flows for a distance of 190 kilometres. The land area of Scotland is 78,772 km ² roughly 30% of the area of the United Kingdom. The mainland of Scotland has nearly 10,000 kms of coastline.
Name	Scotland is derived from the Latin Scoti, the term applied to Gaels, people from what is now Scotland and Ireland, and the Dál Riata who lived on the islands and lands on either side of the the Irish Sea. By the 11th century at the latest, Scotia was being used to refer to Gaelic speaking Scotland north of the river Forth, alongside Albania or Albany, both derived from the Gaelic Alba. The use of the words Scots and Scotland to encompass all of what is now Scotland became common in the Late Middle Ages.
Population	There are 5.2 million Scots living in Scotland, but many more around the world, particularly in Canada, trace their roots back to the country. There are 1.8 million Ontarians with Scottish ancestry and over 150,000 in Quebec too. In total, there are over 4 million Canadians whose families originated in Scotland.
Language	English

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	Despite a revival, the Gaelic (a Celtic language) is considered a “vernacular” spoken only by 3% of Scots. There is, however, a rich colloquial vocabulary in common usage. Examples are: bairn (child), loch (lake), lassie (girl), wee (small), ken (to know/to have knowledge), ceilidh (gathering, usually with traditional music), ben (mountain), and dram (shot of whisky).
Currency	The British Pound is the local currency, even though some of the bank notes are very Scottish – it’s still the same currency! Currently the Canadian Dollar is at 0.61 against the Pound (as at March 2017)
Tipping	There are no definite rules for tipping. If you feel that you have received good service then you may wish to leave a tip. This is most common in restaurants, where it is normal to leave 10% of the total bill but you should check to see if a service charge has already been included. Tipping in hotels is also at your discretion. It is not normal to tip bar staff.
Government	Scotland has partial self-government within the United Kingdom as well as representation in the UK Parliament. Executive and legislative powers have been devolved to, respectively, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood in Edinburgh. The United Kingdom Parliament retains power over a set list of areas, including, for example, levels of UK taxes, social security, defense, international relations and broadcasting. The Scottish Parliament has legislative authority for all other areas relating to Scotland, as well as limited power to vary income tax. The Scottish people have recently voted against independence from Britain in a nationwide referendum.
Documentation	Passports are required for Canadians visiting Scotland.
Time zone	Scotland is 5 hours ahead of EST, Ontario and Quebec.
Health	Good medical care is widely available. Visitors who become ill while in Scotland are eligible for free emergency treatment at National Health Service Accident and Emergency hospital departments. Don’t forget travel insurance for all trips outside your home province.
Safety tips	Scotland is one of the safest countries in the world even at night, when people may walk alone with confidence.

CLIMATE	
General climate	<p>Scottish weather isn’t always the best and is extremely variable, but give it time and the sun will soon be shining. You might come across the odd 'dreich' day, where the weather is wet and overcast, but soon enough you’ll be able to see the bright blue skies of Scotland and the sun sits proudly in the sky.</p> <p>July and August are normally the warmest months with average temperatures of 15-19°C. The days are very long in summer as Scotland is significantly further north than Toronto and Montreal. The driest months in Scotland tend to be between April and June, when temperatures average around 15° C, they even reach 28C at their peak</p>

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Today's weather	Edinburgh has sun and clouds today (11 th March 2017) and a temperature of 15C.
Best time to visit	Scotland has a milder climate in winter than Eastern Canada due to the warming effects of the Gulf Stream, so you can visit any time of year. The summer months are the warmest and the most popular, but spring and autumn are often glorious times to visit Scotland too.

GETTING AROUND	
Getting There	Air Canada route feature non-stop flights from Canada to Edinburgh . Flight time is approximately 6 hours 50 minutes.
Cities	<p>Edinburgh: has been referred to as Europe's prettiest city; the capital, it is so steeped in tradition and venerable in age it is listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Built on seven hills like Rome, its topography adds an extra beauty to the architecture, divided chronologically between the ancient streets and the looming castle of the Old Town, and the elegant, classical buildings of the New Town (which, in spite of its name, dates back to the golden age of the late 18th Century). Its population is 584,000.</p> <p>Glasgow: Scotland's largest city with a population of 1.2 million, Glasgow leapt to prominence in the 19th Century when it became one of the greatest commercial hubs in Britain, feeding the furnaces of the sprawling Empire. Today the city has reclaimed its fame as a centre of style and Britain's finest Victorian city, through stunning architecture, a thumping cultural pulse, and a sizzling restaurant scene. Glasgow has earned bragging rights as the UK's coolest city.</p>
Distances	Edinburgh to Glasgow: 72 km; Glasgow to Fort William: 173 kms, to Thurso: 469 km; to London: 650 km.
Ferries	Regular ferry services operate between the Scottish mainland and island communities. These services are mostly run by Caledonian MacBrayne, but some are operated by local councils. Other ferry routes, served by multiple companies, connect to Northern Ireland, Belgium, Norway, the Faroe Islands and also Iceland.
Cruises	<p>Cruising Along the Caledonian Canal: In 1822, a group of enterprising Scots connected three of the Highlands' longest lakes (lochs Ness, Lochy, and Oich) with a canal linking Britain's east and west coasts. Since then, barges have hauled everything from grain to building supplies without having to negotiate the wild storms off Scotland's northernmost tips.</p> <p>Now cabin cruisers tote a different kind of cargo along the Caledonian Canal: people seeking a spectacular waterborne view of the countryside that was tamed centuries ago by the Camerons, the Stewarts, and the MacDonalds. Caley Cruisers, based in Inverness www.caleycruisers.co.uk , rents out skippered boats by the week.</p>

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<p>Trains</p>	<p>Scotland's rail network is managed by Transport Scotland. The East Coast and West Coast Main Railway lines and the Cross Country Line connect the major cities and towns of Scotland with each other and with the rail network in England. Domestic rail services within Scotland are operated by First ScotRail. Furthermore, Glasgow has a small integrated subway system since 1896. Currently, 15 stations serve a daily ridership of just under 40,000.</p> <p>The East Coast Main Line includes that section of the network that crosses the Firth of Forth via the Forth Bridge. Completed in 1890, this cantilever bridge has been described as "the one internationally recognised Scottish landmark".</p> <p>The cost of rail travel in Scotland is often quite low, and trains are generally punctual. Timetables are available at all stations, with free timetables covering only certain regions available at various stations. For information on rail travel in Scotland, contact First ScotRail, www.firstgroup.com.</p> <p>The Royal Scotsman www.royalscotsman.com is one of the most luxurious trains in the world. The train passes by ancient mountains and mysterious lochs, through glens and across villages as you live in sumptuous surroundings. It's like being the guest at a private party. The train carries a maximum of 36 guests, each passenger enjoying plenty of space. Plush beds and opulent bathrooms are the order of the day. The classic tour calls for 4 nights aboard, and goes from the panoramic Southern Highlands to the more rugged grandeur of the Western Highlands. Superb cuisine and a long list of fine wines and choice malt whiskies are more reasons to hop aboard.</p>
<p>Car Rental</p>	<p>All major international car rental companies are available. Driving is on the left, remember!</p>
<p>Buses</p>	<p>The cheapest means of transport from London to Scotland is the bus and it's also the least expensive way to travel within Scotland. All major towns have a local bus service, and every tourist office can provide details about half- or full-day bus excursions to scenic highlights. If you want to explore a particular area, you can often avail yourself of an economical bus pass.</p> <p>Many adventurous travelers like to explore the country on one of the postal buses, which carry not only mail but also a limited number of passengers to rural areas. Ask at any local post office for details. A general timetable is available at the head post office in Edinburgh.</p> <p>Scottish Citylink Coaches are a good bet. They link the major cities (Glasgow and Edinburgh) with the two most popular tourist centres, Inverness and Aviemore. Travel is fast and prices are low. For example, it takes only 3 hours to reach Aviemore from Edinburgh, and Inverness is just 3.5 hours from Edinburgh. A direct Scottish Citylink overnight</p>

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	<p>coach makes the run from London to Aviemore and Inverness at reasonable fares.</p> <p>Coaches offer many other popular runs, including links between Glasgow and Fort William, Inverness and Ullapool, and Glasgow and Oban. For details, contact Rapsons www.rapsons.co.uk , or Scottish Citylink www.citylink.co.uk</p>
<p>Passes</p>	<p>The Scottish Freedom Pass provides unlimited transportation on trains and most ferries throughout Scotland and discounts for bus travel. It includes access to obscure bus routes to almost forgotten hamlets, free rides on ferries operated by Caledonian MacBrayne, and discounted fares with P&O Scottish Lines. The ferries connect to the Western Islands, the islands of the Clyde, and the Orkneys. The Freedom Pass covers the entire Scottish rail network and is usable from Carlisle, England (near the western Scotland-England border), and from Berwick-upon-Tweed, England (near the eastern Scotland-England border). In addition, if you have to fly into London and want to go straight to Scotland from there, a reduced rate is available for a round-trip ticket between London and Edinburgh or Glasgow for Travelpass holders.</p> <p>BritRail Passes allow unlimited travel in England, Scotland, and Wales on any British Rail scheduled train over the whole of the network during the validity of the pass without restrictions. BritRail Consecutive Pass allows you to travel for a consecutive number of days for a flat rate. Seniors (60 and over) qualify for discounts in first-class travel. Passengers 25 and under qualify for a 2nd Class Youth Pass. One child (under age 15) can travel free with each adult or senior pass by requesting the BritRail Family Pass when buying the adult pass. Additional children pay half the regular adult fare. BritRail Passes and vacation packages can be found at www.britrail.com</p> <p>Note that Eurailpass is not valid on trains in Great Britain.</p>

<p>ACCOMMODATION TYPES</p>	<p>Bed and Breakfasts: These are ideal for connecting with the locals and are very good value.</p> <p>Castle Hotels: e.g. Glenapp Castle, Ballantrae, Girvan, Ayrshire</p> <p>The castle is a spectacular example of the 'Scottish Baronial' style of architecture, set in magnificent private gardens and grounds high on a hill looking out over the Irish Sea to Arran, Ailsa Craig and the Mull of Kintyre.</p>
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<p>LIFESTYLES</p> <p>Kids & Teens</p>	<p>Children generally delight in exploring spooky old castles, heading up to the Highlands - where there are all those bagpipe players - and looking for the Loch Ness Monster near Inverness. So here are some ideas:</p>
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Start at **Edinburgh Castle** at the beginning of the Royal Mile in the Old Town. Kids may be a bit bored with the State Apartments where Mary Queen of Scots once lived, but they will delight in the spooky 18th century prisons and the batteries of cannons that used to protect the fortress. Kids also enjoy the nearby Outlook Tower and Camera Obscura. At the **Scott Monument**, it's fun for the whole family to climb the 287 steps for the most panoramic view of the city. Before the afternoon ends, spend at least an hour and a half taking in **Our Dynamic Earth**, whose exhibits have been compared to an interpretation by Walt Disney. Kids push buttons to simulate everything from earthquakes to meteor showers.

Take your kids aboard the luxury yacht **Britannia**, once used by Queen Elizabeth II herself. After that, a visit to **Edinburgh Zoo**, with its more than 1,500 animals, including some endangered species is recommended. End the day by wandering through **The Real Mary King's Close**, which stays open until 9pm in summer. This was the once-thriving underground part of the Old Town, where the "deepest secrets" are hidden in the warren of almost buried streets, or "closes." Kids seem to expect Robert Louis Stevenson's "Mr. Hyde" to emerge at any minute.

Deep Sea World is Scotland's most comprehensive and dramatic menagerie of water creatures, including its most ferocious sharks. Allow 90 minutes for this attraction, which is 19km west of Edinburgh's centre. **Stirling**, an ancient town, lying between the rivers Forth and Clyde, is famed for its castle. Here the attraction is **Stirling Castle**, where Mary Queen of Scots lived as an infant monarch. Children especially enjoy going through the on-site Museum of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, with all the pipe banners and other paraphernalia. Visit **Bannockburn** nearby, where Robert the Bruce once summoned his "Braveheart" army to defeat Edward II in 1314. Kids find the audiovisual presentation of this violent story at the Bannockburn Heritage Centre as fascinating as Mel Gibson's own Braveheart movie.

In Glasgow, the **Waverley**, the world's last seagoing paddle steamer, will carry you to scenic places along the Firth of Clyde. You can have lunch aboard. Back in Glasgow visit the **Glasgow Science Centre**, a kid-friendly favorite complete with a Space Theatre and plenty of hands-on activities for children. **The Museum of Transport** has lots of ship models which intrigue kids.

Further north, drive through the hauntingly beautiful **Glencoe**, scene of the famous massacre of 1692, when the Campbells did in the MacDonalds. Kids are fascinated by the audiovisual presentation shown at the Glencoe Visitor Centre.

And then there's Loch Ness: stop at the little village of Drumnadrochit to see the official **Loch Ness Monster Exhibition**. With its lasers and

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	<p>visual effects, this exhibition is definitely a kid pleaser. After you've seen the exhibition, it's great fun for families to explore the ruins of Urquhart Castle, which overlooks the loch. It is from here that most sightings of the Loch Ness Monster are reported.</p> <p>You can explore the Culloden Battlefield, where Bonnie Prince Charlie and his Jacobite army were crushed by the English. Kids also like to walk the ramparts, a distance of 1.6km, found at the Fort George and Queen's Own Highlanders Regimental Museum in Inverness.</p>
Romance	<p>Stay in a castle, cruise gently along a Highlands loch, take a picnic lunch on a hike over the heathered moors, take in a sunset over a Western Isle, ride a deserted Scottish beach or skip barefoot across the sands...there's so many ways to kindle romance in Scotland!</p>
Genealogy	<p>If you hail from Scotland - trace your roots. Don't just learn about your Scottish heritage - live it! Experience first-hand the places your ancestors lived and worked. Try on the kilt of your clan, touch the walls of your family castle and see the very documents that chronicle their lives.</p> <p>Scotland has an unrivalled range, depth, quality and accessibility of ancestral archives and historical resources across the country. Visit one of the local family history centres, registrars offices or historical buildings to access their records. You'll receive a friendly welcome from one of the local experts and you can ask them any questions you might have.</p> <p>The main centre you can visit in Edinburgh - ScotlandsPeople – which has one of the largest online sources of original genealogical information; with almost 80 million records to access there is every chance that you will be able to connect with your own Scottish ancestry. Check out www.Scotlandspeople.gov.uk to start your search.</p> <p>The www.Ancestralscotland.com website is the official ancestral tourism website of VisitScotland - this unique online resource provides a wealth of information for those wishing to make that trip 'home' to walk in the footsteps of their ancestors. Start planning your own personal ancestral trip now with the clan surname search and clan touring itineraries.</p> <p>Other useful genealogy websites are: www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk www.nls.uk/maps www.abdn.ac.uk/emigration/methodology.html</p>
Zoomers	<p>Independent or guided touring – you have a choice here. If you prefer the latter, try Insight, Trafalgar or Globus. There are lots of discounts available to older visitors too, from rail and bus passes to entry into</p>

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	many of the big attractions. Just make sure you have the appropriate identification available.
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UNIQUES	
Surprising	<p>Rosslyn Chapel: Admittedly, you may have to extend your stay for this one as the fantastic stone carvings of this richly decorated late- Gothic church have defied convincing explanation for more than 500 years. The church's close associations with Freemasonry and the Knights Templars have spawned a raft of conspiracy theories that claim that the carvings hold the key to the whereabouts of various legendary objects stored at Rosslyn including the Holy Grail. The chapel featured in the blockbuster novel, The Da Vinci Code and its popularity as a major pilgrimage site for the curious has soared.</p>
History	<p>Wherever you travel in Scotland, from the cities to the remotest corners, the country's unusually dramatic history lies waiting to be discovered just beneath the surface of the present. Dating back to 2000 BC, the standing stones at Callanish hint at early appreciation of astrology. Living on the western Isle of Skye, the chief of the MacLeod clan traces a direct ancestral link back to the Vikings who settled here in the 9th Century. Every New Year's Day, the ball game of Ba' rages through the streets of Kirkwall in the Orkneys as it has for countless centuries. And Cawdor Castle, where Macbeth carried out his bloody ambitions in the 11th Century, remains one of the most romantic and best preserved fortresses.</p> <p>No visit to Edinburgh is complete without a stroll through the polished halls of Holyrood Palace, where Mary Queen of Scots witnessed the murder of her trusted secretary by her jealous husband Lord Darnley in 1556. Nearby, the Writer's Museum displays the desk at which Robert Burns wrote his evocative poetry, and the pipe smoked by Walter Scott as he brought Ivanhoe to life. The Golf Museum at St. Andrews gives context to the game once outlawed in the 17th Century because its popularity was causing soldiers to neglect archery practice. At another royal retreat, Balmoral, Queen Victoria grieved the loss of her husband Albert, walking the heather-tinted Highlands in the company of her groom, Mr. Brown.</p> <p>The nearness of the past that permeates the whole Scottish experience is perhaps best summarized by the Stone of Destiny. In 1292, the Scots' coronation emblem was taken from Scone Abbey by the invading Edward I of England and held in Westminster Abbey in London. After 700 years of effort, it was finally returned in 1996. Three years later, in 1999, the Scottish Parliament was re-established in Edinburgh, 292 years after it was abolished by Earl of Seafield on May 1, 1707. Although the British Parliament in Westminster, London, still has governance over national issues, the Scottish body has authority over</p>

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	Scotland's affairs.
Books	<p>Frommer's have got Scotland covered from all angles – here are my recommended reads:</p> <p>Frommer's Scotland, 11th Edition Frommer's Best Walking Trips in Scotland Frommer's Scotland's Best Loved Driving Tours</p>
1000 Places to See Before You Die	<p>Scottish golf; The Castle Trail, Grampians; The Hebrides; Isle of Skye; Scotch Whiskey Trail; Highland Games; Loch Ness; Inverlochy Castle (hotel); Edinburgh Castle; Hogmanay; Edinburgh Festival; The Royal Scotsman; The Mackintosh Trail, Glasgow; The Trossachs</p>
Must Sees	<p>There are five UNESCO World Heritage sites in Scotland:</p> <p>St. Kilda is a small, out-lying archipelago of Hebridean islands which was inscribed as a "natural" site in 1986. In 2004, the site was extended to include a large amount of the surrounding marine features as well as the islands themselves. In July 2005 it became one of the few World Heritage Sites to hold joint status for its natural and cultural qualities. The islands were bequeathed to the National Trust for Scotland in 1957. They are also a Biosphere Reserve and a National Scenic Area.</p> <p>Edinburgh Old and New Towns were together inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1996. The former includes the medieval Royal Mile which runs from Edinburgh Castle to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, and is bordered to the north by the neo-classical 18th century "New Town" which includes Princes Street. It is managed by the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust.</p> <p>The Heart of Neolithic Orkney includes Maeshowe, the Ring of Brodgar, Skara Brae, the Standing Stones of Stenness and other nearby sites. It was inscribed in 1999 and is managed by Historic Scotland.</p> <p>New Lanark is a restored 18th century industrial cotton mill village in South Lanarkshire constructed by Robert Owen as an experiment in utopian socialism. Restoration was organised by the New Lanark</p>

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	<p>Conservation Trust.</p> <p>The Antonine Wall was inscribed in July 2008. It is an extension to a wider series of sites in Austria, Germany and Slovakia entitled "Frontiers of the Roman Empire". The Wall is the remains of a defensive line made of turf circa 20 feet high, with nineteen forts. It was constructed after 139 AD and extended for 37 miles between the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde. The wall was over-run and abandoned soon after 160 AD, then occupied again for a brief period after 197 AD.</p>
<p>SPORTS ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>Sport is an important element in Scottish culture, with the country hosting many of its own national sporting competitions. It enjoys independent representation at many international sporting events including the FIFA World Cup, the Rugby Union World Cup, the Rugby League World Cup, the Cricket World Cup and the Commonwealth Games.</p>
<p>Shinty</p>	<p>Shinty is a team game played with sticks and a ball. Shinty is now played mainly in the Scottish Highlands, and amongst Highland migrants to the big cities of Scotland, but it was formerly more widespread, being once competitively played on a widespread basis in England and other areas in the world where Scottish Highlanders migrated.</p> <p>While comparisons are often made with field hockey, the two games have several important differences. In shinty, a player is allowed to play the ball in the air and is allowed to use both sides of the stick, called a caman which is wooden and slanted on both sides. The stick may also be used to block and to tackle, although a player may not come down on an opponent's stick, a practice called hacking. Players may also tackle using the body as long as it is shoulder-to-shoulder.</p> <p>The game was derived from the same root as the Irish game of hurling but has developed different rules and features. These rules are governed by the Camanachd Association.</p> <p>Shinty is also one of the forebears of ice hockey: in 1800, Scottish immigrants to Nova Scotia played a game on ice at Windsor. In Canada, informal hockey games are still called shinny.</p>
<p>Golf</p>	<p>If you are a golfer, then Scotland is a close to paradise as you are ever likely to find!</p> <p>The Fife town of St. Andrews is known internationally as the Home of golf and to many golfers the Old Course, an ancient links course dating to before 1574, is considered to be a site of pilgrimage. There are many other famous golf courses in Scotland, including Carnoustie, Gleneagles, Muirfield, and Royal Troon.</p>
<p>Fishing</p>	<p>Scotland is best known in fishing circles for its Atlantic Salmon; fly fishing for these elusive and beautiful fish was a life-long passion of my</p>

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	<p>father, especially on the River Tweed. Here are some suggestions:</p> <p>The Borders & Galloway Regions: Sea fishing is pure heaven in the Solway Firth, especially near Port William and Portpatrick villages, in the vicinity of Loch Ryan, and also along the shore of the Isle of Whithorn. The elusive salmon is best pursued along the River Tweed, and the lesser-known hill lochans are ideal for trout fishermen. Local tourist offices distribute two helpful guides: A Comprehensive Guide to Scottish Borders Angling and Castabout Anglers Guide to Dumfries and Galloway.</p> <p>Argyll & the Southern Hebrides: This much-visited area in western Scotland is split in two by the long peninsula of Kintyre. The topography is decidedly northern Atlantic, distinguished by open sea and loch, and the Firth of Clyde separates the region from the Inner Hebrides. Along with about 50 prime freshwater-angling sites, Argyll and the Southern Hebrides contain some two dozen villages with fantastic sea fishing.</p> <p>Tayside: The northeast section of Scotland is filled not only with major rivers - the Don, Dee, Ythan, and Deveron - but with smaller ones, too, such as the Ugie, all ideal for salmon fishing. Besides the rivers, numerous estuaries and lochs make this one of the country's best areas for game fishing. Local tourist offices keep abreast of the details about boat rentals and permit prices, and some country hotels offer fishing packages.</p> <p>Sutherland & Northern Highlands: Sutherland's myriad lochs provide endless possibilities for anglers. Trout fishing is the big lure, and local tourist offices will tell you all about boats and permits. Not only is the fishing superb, but your hotel cook may also prepare your catch for you.</p>
<p>Horse riding</p>	<p>Horseback riding through the Highlands & Argyll... There's nothing like an equestrian excursion through the Highlands' fragrant heather and over its lichen-covered rocks. One of Scotland's biggest stables is the Highland Riding Centre, Drumnadrochit www.borlum.co.uk . For scenic rides across the moors, Highlands, and headlands of the Argyll, try the Ardfern Riding Centre, Loch Gilphead (tel. 01852/500-632).</p>
<p>Hiking</p>	<p>Scotland's Great Trails are distinctively waymarked, easily accessible and allow you to discover Scotland's beautiful natural landscapes. From mountains, lochs and forests to coastal paths and riverside walks as well as historical sites and Scotland's fantastic wildlife, there are plenty of stunning natural sights to behold. Take the family and tick off a bite-sized chunk of one of the routes, do a bit each weekend or tackle the whole route in one go.</p> <p>If you wish to see some of Scotland's best dramatic mountain and loch</p>

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	<p>scenery, the Great Glen Way, Southern Upland Way, the Three Lochs Way and the West Highland Way traverse some of the most beautiful places in Scotland.</p> <p>Follow some of Scotland's iconic rivers from source to sea, on routes such as the Speyside Way which runs from Spey Bay in the Moray Firth, upriver to Aviemore, in the heart of the Cairngorms National Park. Follow some other great river trails like the Annandale Way, the Clyde Walkway or the River Ayr Way.</p> <p>Explore some of Scotland's long coastline. Embark on the 187 kms of the spectacular Fife Coastal Path. You will discover fascinating wildlife, sandy beaches and quaint fishing villages. The Ayrshire Coastal Path, John Muir Way, Kintyre Way, Moray Coast Trail and West Island Way or new addition, the Berwickshire Coastal Path, also offer stunning coastal scenery.</p> <p>Uncover Scotland's rich and fascinating history on an historical trail. Follow in the footsteps of St Cuthbert on the St Cuthbert's Way or discover ancient abbeys on the Borders Abbeys Way, perfect for exploring the beautiful countryside of the Scottish Borders. Or why not follow in the footsteps of marauding medieval cattle thieves on the Cateran Trail or Scotland's most famous outlaw Rob Roy on the Rob Roy Way.</p> <p>If you are interested in transport and travel, discover canal towpaths, The Falkirk Wheel and old railway lines on some of the fantastic canal and railway routes, such as the Forth and Clyde Canal Towpath, the Dava Way and the Formartine and Buchan Way.</p> <p>The Munros: The highest mountains in Scotland are known as Munros, named after Sir Hugh T. Munro who in 1891 surveyed all the country's mountains above 3000 feet (914 metres) and produced his Tables which catalogued 236 peaks that he deemed to be individual mountains with 'sufficient separation' between each other. Over the years and with advances in surveying, there have been several revisions to Munro's original listing. Currently, there are 284 recognized Munros.</p>
<p>Cycling</p>	<p>Ciclismo Classico has a Bike Across Scotland tour package. What better way to see Scotland's breathtaking scenery than riding along its beautiful seaside coasts and lochs, through its verdant hills, dramatic munros and bucolic villages? There are two options for eight-day rides, departing from Inverness in the Highlands covering 400kms before ending in the coastal village of Gairloch.</p> <p>Package highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eight-days of cycling - Accommodations at three- and four-star country inns - Rides through majestic countryside, along lochs, islands, forests, and dramatic mountains, including the highest pass in the UK!

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities to view local wildlife, ranging from dolphins to osprey - A tour of the 13th century Urquhart Castle along the banks of Loch Ness - A taste of Scotland with locally-sourced and seasonal dining experiences - A whisky tasting at one of Scotland's oldest distilleries in Glen Ord
Sailing & Watersports	<p>Wherever you travel in Scotland, you're never far from the water. Windsurfing, canoeing, water-skiing, and sailing are just some of the activities available at a number of sailing centres and holiday parks. You'll find it easy to rent boats and equipment at any of the major resorts along Scotland's famous lakes.</p>

CULTURE	
Arts	<p>Scotland has a long and lively literary culture, which consists of the romantic poems of Robert Burns, the classic adventures of Robert Louis Stevenson and the fantasies of JM Barrie, as well as the literary work of many more authors.</p> <p>Scotland is renowned for its art, alongside its music and dance. Having garnered a strong reputation throughout the years thanks to pieces including Allan Ramsay's 18th century portraits and Douglas Gordon's modern video footage, the variety of art on show is vast.</p> <p>National and international artwork is on show in Edinburgh in the National Galleries of Scotland that feature timeless pieces. The capital is also home to doggerfisher, which alongside Sorcha Dallas and Transmission in Glasgow and Dundee's DCA, showcases Scotland's thriving art scene of the present day.</p>
Music	<p>Scottish music often gets underestimated with bagpipes thought to be all the country has to offer, but this is far from the case. Scottish music goes far beyond the cèol beag, or 'little music', of Scotland's national instrument and you can listen to much more than just the sound of the pipes.</p> <p>Rock music has come to the fore in Scotland's music scene in recent years, with the T in the Park Music Festival being one example. Having now been put on for more than a decade, it is an opportunity for music fans to see the best talent produced by Scotland, including Paolo Nutini, Calvin Harris and Belle and Sebastian, as well as acts from around the world.</p> <p>It isn't just festivals where toe-tapping music can be found either, with pubs across the country hosting regular sessions. You'll soon become familiar with Scottish music and have it stuck in your head; something that won't bother you one jot!</p> <p>The home of Scottish Opera is Glasgow's Theatre Royal, which is near the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. The theatre hosts a</p>

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	<p>number of classic productions for which they've won awards, including The Ring Cycle, Madame Butterfly and Der Rosenkavalier. They have even toured their productions across the Scottish countryside, with Orkney and Shetland just two areas to be graced with their presence. The performance of Die Fledermaus has even been tweaked to make it into a contemporary show and open it up to a whole new audience.</p>
<p>Films</p>	<p>Scotland has long been immortalised on the silver screen. But the only way to really appreciate the magic is to see it for yourself! The spectacular hills, landscapes, castles and wildlife have inspired film makers the world over.</p> <p>The dramatic hills of Glen Nevis and Glen Coe were the setting for Braveheart, the portrayal of one of the Scotland's most iconic figures, William Wallace. The majestic Eilean Donan Castle is also recognisable for its appearance in Highlander, starring Christopher Lambert and Sean Connery, and the James Bond movie, The World Is Not Enough. The breathtaking train chase scene from Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets features the Hogwarts Express crossing the historic Glenfinnan Viaduct. Experience the same magical journey with a trip on The Jacobite steam train between Fort William and Mallaig. Many Harry Potter scenes were shot in Scotland, and in Glen Coe you can enjoy Hagrid's views of the Torren Lochan.</p> <p>Scotland's sparkling coastline can be seen in Chariots of Fire, filmed on the West Sands beach at St Andrews. More recently, Oscar-winning biopic The Queen was filmed at the Balmoral Estate in Royal Deeside while The Da Vinci Code showcased Rosslyn Chapel, just outside of Edinburgh.</p> <p>Scotland's capital city is the backdrop for the animation film The Illusionist, which brings 1950s Edinburgh to life, while the adaptation of David Nicholls' best-selling novel One Day, starring Anne Hathaway and Jim Sturgess, features iconic locations such as Calton Hill.</p> <p>Film enthusiasts also shouldn't miss the Glasgow Film Festival in February and the Edinburgh International Film Festival in June.</p>
<p>Museums</p>	<p>The National Galleries of Scotland</p> <p>The National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh comprise the five galleries, the original National Gallery itself, joined by the Weston Link to the Royal Scottish Academy, which creates an elegant, neo-classical presence at the foot of the Mound. Renaissance Masters, Post-Impressionist works, and the most extensive collection of Scottish paintings in the world are found here. A few minutes away is the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, with the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and the impressive Dada-based, Dean Gallery well worth an excursion north-west of Princes Street. If you don't feel like walking, take the free bus which operates between the five galleries.</p>

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	<p>National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh Visit the 16 stunning new galleries dedicated to the natural world, cultures of the world, art and design and science and technology, exhibiting a range of artifacts from dinosaur bones to designer chairs and mummies to motor cars. The Grand Gallery has been revitalized following recent refurbishment, with a 'Window on the World' display of more than 800 objects rising over four floors. Each one tells its own tale about everyday Scots and their lives, and together they paint a vivid picture of the nation from earliest days to future aspirations.</p> <p>Fossil Grove is Glasgow's most ancient attraction. A unique treasure, situated in beautiful Victoria Park in the west of the city, the fossil trees and surrounding rocks are the remains of an ancient forest, more than 330 million years old. Scottish National Heritage has designated the grove a site of Special Scientific Interest. These fossilised tree stumps were discovered in 1887 when an old quarry was being landscaped during the creation of the park. Careful excavation of the site uncovered the fossil remains and a building was erected to protect them from the elements.</p> <p>The University of Glasgow's Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery is home to one of the top five collections in Scotland, with over a million items ranging from meteorites to mummies. Explore dinosaurs, early man, Roman legionnaires and much more at the Museum. Just opposite, visit the Mackintosh House and displays including Rembrandt, Whistler and Scottish Painting in the Art Gallery.</p>
Festivals	<p>Scotland is home to a number of great festivals every year but it's the Edinburgh Festival (August) that really steals the limelight. This festival actually consists of a number of different festivals, including the Edinburgh International Festival, the Military Tattoo, the International Book and Film Festivals and the renowned and highly popular Festival Fringe. Edinburgh also hosts the UK's Mela Festival, a multicultural event that stops off in the Scottish capital before moving onto Glasgow for its tour of Britain. http://www.eif.co.uk/</p> <p>Other than those three weeks in August, there's still plenty of activity across Scotland to check out. In February there's the Aye Write! Literary festival that takes place in Glasgow. Scotland's second city is also home to the biennial International Arts Festival, a new event that sees Glasgow host top notch contemporary art every other April.</p> <p>If you're after a musical experience you can either relax at Glasgow's Celtic Connections, where the traditional sounds of Scotland come to the fore, or you can join 69,000 other fans of pop music in a Perthshire field for T in the Park.</p>

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	<p>Highland Games take place right across Scotland throughout the summer. You can see events from June until September, with the Braemar Gathering being one of the most renowned occasions; it's even attended by royalty. Every aspect of the rich Highland culture will be celebrated by a range of traditional and contemporary events. Winter is just as busy a time across Scotland, with winter festivals taking place in most towns and cities. Edinburgh's Winter Wonderland is one of the most famous, which sees the year brought to an end in style with a four-day Hogmanay celebration, a truly unique New Year's Eve party.</p> <p>Edinburgh is the world's favourite festival city, welcoming some 25,000 performers and thinkers, with over four million attendees each year. The Scottish capital is where huge talents such as Emma Thompson, Mike Myers, Hugh Laurie and Alan Cumming learned their craft; these and many more starts are warmly welcomed back to critical acclaim. Come along to enjoy the line-up of world class talent, as well as plenty of emerging entertainment waiting to be discovered. In August alone, seven festivals take over the city with something for everyone: from the stirring sounds of the massed pipes and drums at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, to the big opera and dance productions invited by the Edinburgh International Festival. With comedy, dance and theatre populating the Edinburgh Festival Fringe with over 1,000 performances a day and the crème de la crème of bestselling authors appearing at the Edinburgh International Book Festival.</p>
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ATTRACTIONS	
Beaches	<p>With a coastline estimated at 13,115 km long, there is plenty of room for Scottish beaches! The east coast has plenty of unspoilt stretches of sands, with places like Dunbar, St Andrews, Montrose, Aberdeen, Fraserburgh, Lossiemouth, Nairn, and Dornoch just some of the towns and cities close to superb stretches of beach. The more rugged north and west coasts likewise have beautiful sands, often as smaller coves set amongst magnificent cliff scenery, while the dazzling white beaches of the Hebrides – look for the Gaelic word 'traigh' on maps – are an essential element of the island experience and a real highlight of a visit to, for example, Harris or Islay. The Big Strand on Islay, for example, is at least 12 km long. Some beaches have an association with a particular leisure pursuit – Thurso (Dunnet Bay) for surfing, for instance; beaches on Tiree for wind surfing; St Andrews for kite-surfing – but all of these are practiced at a variety of Scottish beaches. Scotland's beaches are also leisurely places for beachcombing – lobster buoys from Maine, coconuts from the Caribbean and pumice</p>

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	<p>from Icelandic volcanoes may add a touch of the exotic! More than 60 of Scotland's beaches hold Seaside Awards – but the Scottish beach, especially in the Highlands, can still be an off-the-beaten-track location, unspoilt and hardly visited.</p>
Wildlife	<p>Scotland's wildlife is typical of the north west of Europe, although several of the larger mammals such as the Lynx, Brown Bear, Wolf, Elk and Walrus were hunted to extinction in historic times. There are important populations of seals and internationally significant nesting grounds for a variety of seabirds such as Gannets. The Golden Eagle is something of a national icon.</p> <p>On the high mountain tops species including Ptarmigan, Mountain Hare and Stoat can be seen in their white colour phase during winter months. Remnants of the native Scots Pine forest exist and within these areas the Scottish Crossbill, the UK's only endemic bird species and vertebrate, can be found alongside Capercaillie, Wildcat, Red Squirrel and Pine Marten. In recent years various animals have been re-introduced, including the White-tailed Sea Eagle in 1975, the Red Kite in the 1980s, and more recently there have been experimental projects involving the Beaver and Wild Boar.</p>
Parks	<p>Scotland has two national parks: Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, created in 2002, and the Cairngorms National Park, created in 2003. These were designated as such under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 which was an early piece of legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament not long after its creation in 1999. It was a Scot, John Muir, who had initiated the first national park in the world, at Yosemite in the United States.</p>
Islands	<p>Scotland has 790 islands, of which 130 are inhabited, including Orkney, Shetland, Outer Hebrides, Skye, Mull, Iona, Arran, Islay, and Jura. Here are two on my 'bucket list':</p> <p>Iona: It's an otherworldly rock, one of Europe's most evocative holy places, anchored solidly among the Hebrides off Scotland's west coast. St. Columba established Iona as a Christian center in A.D. 563, and used it as a base for converting Scotland. You'll find a ruined Benedictine nunnery and a fully restored cathedral where 50 Scottish kings were buried during the early Middle Ages. Hundreds of Celtic crosses once adorned Iona; today, only three of the originals remain. Now part of the National Trust, the island is home to an ecumenical group dedicated to the perpetuation of Christian ideals. Reaching Iona requires a 10-minute ferry ride from the hamlet of Fionnphort, on the nearby island of Mull.</p> <p>Orkneys: Archaeologists say the Orkneys, an archipelago comprising some 70 islands, hold the richest trove of prehistoric monuments in the</p>

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	<p>British Isles - an average of three sites per square mile. Ornithologists claim that about 16% of all winged animals in the United Kingdom reside here, and linguists have documented an ancient dialect that still uses Viking terms. Northwest of the Scottish mainland, closer to Oslo than to faraway London, these islands are on the same latitude as St. Petersburg but much more exposed to the raging gales of the North Sea. The late-spring sunsets and the aurora borealis have been called mystical, and in midsummer the sun remains above the horizon for 18 hours a day. An equivalent twilight envelops the islands in winter. Only 19 of the Orkneys are inhabited; the others, often drenched with rain, seem to float above primordial seas.</p>
<p>Gardens</p>	<p>Scotland has over 200 gardens and nurseries each containing thousands of plant varieties.</p> <p>The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh was established in 1670 and during the twentieth century acquired three Regional Gardens - the mountainous Benmore in Argyll; Dawyck in the wooded hills of the Scottish Borders and Logan on the Gulf Stream-warmed southern peninsula of Dumfries & Galloway.</p> <p>Comprising 70 acres of stunning scenery, just a stone's throw from the city centre, the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) captures the imagination of everyone who visits: from the knowledgeable gardener to the curious sightseer.</p> <p>Reflecting the international research and conservation work of RBGE, the Garden is home to the largest collection of wild-origin Chinese plants outside China. See, too, the Scottish Heath Garden, recreating the plantings and landscape of the Scottish highlands; the world-famous Rock Garden, which is home to over 5,000 alpine plants and the stunning 165m-long Herbaceous Border, backed by an outstanding century-old Beech Hedge.</p> <p>Opened in the summer of 2006 is the Queen Mother's Memorial Garden, a fitting tribute to a much-loved royal, which has been imaginatively planted to present something for visitors of all tastes - in every season.</p> <p>Among the Garden's many thousands of trees and shrubs are several groups in which its scientists have special interest, such as the conifers, rhododendrons and other shrubs of the Ericaceae family. Further highlights include the Sierra redwoods (<i>Sequoiadendron giganteum</i>) of North America and numerous other species of botanical interest, including beeches (<i>Fagus</i>), maples (<i>Acer</i>), and colourful rowans (<i>Sorbus</i>)</p> <p>At the North East corner of the Garden stands its magnificent Victorian Temperate Palm House - the tallest of its kind in Britain - the glorious entrance to Windows on the World, a glasshouse experience offering visitors the opportunity to explore ten distinct climatic zones holding</p>

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	<p>around one percent of all known flowering plants, cycads and ferns. These range from the economically important species - including banana and rubber - to household favourites and the world's largest collection of tender vireya rhododendron, originating from the mountains of New Guinea and Borneo.</p>
<p>Historical Sites - Castles</p>	<p>Edinburgh Castle (Edinburgh): Few other buildings symbolize the grandeur of an independent Scotland as clearly as this one. Begun around A.D. 1000, on a hilltop high above the rest of Edinburgh, it witnessed some of the bloodiest and most treacherous events in Scottish history, including a doomed 1573 defense by Kirkcaldy of Grange in the name of Mary Queen of Scots.</p> <p>Palace of Holyroodhouse (Edinburgh): Throughout the clan battles for independence from England, this palace served as a pawn between opposing forces. In its changing fortunes, it has housed a strange assortment of monarchs involved in traumatic events: Mary Queen of Scots, Bonnie Prince Charlie, James VII (before his ascendancy to the throne), and French King Charles X (on his forced abdication after an 1830 revolution). The building's present form dates from the late 1600s, when it was rebuilt in a dignified neo-Palladian style. Today, Holyroodhouse is one of Queen Elizabeth's official residences.</p> <p>Drumlanrig Castle (Dumfries): Begun in 1679, this castle took 12 years to build and so much money that its patron, the third earl and first duke of Queensbury, complained that he deeply resented its existence. Later, it was embroiled in dynastic inheritance scandals worthy of a Gothic novel. One of the most prestigious buildings in Scotland, it houses the antiques and artwork of four illustrious families.</p> <p>Culzean Castle (near Maybole): Designed for comfort and prestige, this castle was built in the late 1700s by Scotland's most celebrated architect, Robert Adam, as a replacement for a dark, dank tower that had stood for longer than anyone could remember. Culzean was donated to the National Trust for Scotland just after World War II. A suite was granted to General Eisenhower for his lifetime use, in gratitude for his role in staving off a foreign invasion of Britain.</p> <p>Stirling Castle (Stirling): Stirling is a triumph of Renaissance ornamentation, a startling contrast to the severe bulk of many other Scottish castles. Despite its beauty, after its completion in 1540 the castle was one of the most impregnable fortresses in the British Isles, thanks partly to its position on a rocky crag.</p> <p>Scone Palace (Scone): As early as A.D. 900, Scottish kings were crowned here on a lump of granite so imbued with ancient magic that, in</p>

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the 13th century, the English hauled it off to Westminster Abbey. (The Stone of Scone was returned to Scotland in 1996 and is now found in Edinburgh Castle.) The palace you see today was rebuilt in 1802 from ruins that incorporated a 1580 structure with stones laid during the dim early days of Scottish and Pictish union.

Glamis Castle (Glamis): This castle's core was built for defense against rival clans during the 1400s, but over the centuries it evolved into a luxurious dwelling. The seat of the same family since 1372, Glamis is said to be haunted by the ghost of Lady Glamis, a former owner, whom James V had burned as a witch when she resisted his annexation of her castle. It also figured into the ambitions of Macbeth, thane of Glamis.

Crathes Castle & Gardens (Grampian): Crathes evokes the luxury of a 15th- and 16th-century Scottish laird. The style focuses on high heraldry, with frequent references to the persistent Scottish hope of an enduring independence. The gardens' massive yew hedges were originally planted in 1702.

Balmoral Castle (Ballater): Scotland offers far greater castles to explore, but Balmoral, the rebuilt castle of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, draws hordes of visitors, who no doubt hope to glimpse Prince William. That's because it's still the Scottish residence of the queen. Although inside you can visit only the ballroom, the sprawling manicured grounds and gardens also await you.

Braemar Castle (Grampian): Built by the earl of Mar in 1628 as a hunting lodge, Braemar was burned to the ground, and then rebuilt by Farquharson of Invercauld, an ancestor of the present owner. It's often photographed as a symbol of Scottish grandeur and the well-upholstered aristocratic life.

Cawdor Castle (Cawdor): From its heavily fortified origins in the 1300s, Cawdor evolved into the Campbell clan's luxurious seat. According to legend and Shakespearean plot lines, three witches promised this castle to Macbeth to tempt him into the deeds that led to his destruction.

OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	<p>The shopping experience in Scotland is very varied. Though the cities have the 'High Street' names, plus some very stylish and exclusive brands, rural areas have plenty of surprises. Here you'll discover potters and jewellers, knitwear designers, weavers, silversmiths and kiltmakers to name but a few.</p> <p>Scottish textiles, especially the tartan variety, are popular and worth</p>

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	<p>buying. Everything from a travelling rug to your own kilt outfit. Shops up and down the country, and especially in Edinburgh and Inverness, can tell which clan your family belongs to and make you a kilt in that particular tartan. For the full outfit, including kilt, sporran, jacket, shoes and skeann dhu dagger, expect to pay in the region of £600, or more if you want more elaborate accessories.</p> <p>There are mill shops making tweeds and cloths in many parts of Scotland. Most are in the Borders, though it is not necessarily cheaper to buy at source. Harris Tweed is also a good buy and you can watch your cloth being woven on the Hebridean islands of Harris and Lewis. Knitwear is also good value and sold throughout Scotland, though the cashmere industry in the Borders is suffering from high trade tariffs. Shetland is a good place to find high-quality wool products. Note that Aran jumpers are not from the island of Arran, but from Aran (with one 'r') in Ireland.</p> <p>Jewellery is another popular souvenir and there are many excellent craft shops throughout the Highlands and Islands making beautiful jewellery with Celtic designs.</p> <p>Glassware is also popular, particularly Edinburgh crystal and Caithness glass, as well as pottery.</p> <p>Food is another good souvenir and not just the ubiquitous shortbread sold in tartan tins. If you haven't far to travel home, smoked salmon, or any other smoked product, is good value. One of the best places for food products is the island of Arran, where you can buy their delicious local mustards and preserves, smoked fish and game, and cheeses. And, of course, there's whisky. Most distilleries will refund the cost of their guided tour in the form of a discount voucher on a bottle of their brand whisky.</p>
Markets	<p>The Barras Market in Glasgow is an historic marketplace with great character and an eclectic mix of covered and open stalls selling a huge range of goods.</p> <p>Perth Farmers' Market takes place on the 1st Saturday of the month in King Edward Street and St John's Place, Perth, from 9am to 2pm. There are between 35 and 40 stalls selling a variety of quality local and Scottish produce throughout the year. The Producers themselves run their own stalls so you can come and speak directly with them, ask them questions about their produce and purchase fresh quality products. Visit the Information Point at Perth Farmers' Market and pick up a variety of free leaflets. There's plenty to see and do: watch the cooking demonstration, sample the food, enjoy the atmosphere and purchase some of the finest produce in Scotland.</p>
Nightlife	<p>Glasgow has one of the most active dance club scenes in the UK. Listed below are just a few selected venues. In local parlance, "venues" are distinct from the actual "clubs" - such as Optimo (electro-clash),</p>

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	<p>Manga (drum and bass), or Pressure (house and techno) - which are associated with a specific style, DJ, or team of DJs. They can move around to different venues. It all makes perfect sense to those in the know.</p> <p>Glasgow also has the reputation as an unsurpassed spawning ground in Scotland for pop and rock groups, such as Franz Ferdinand or Belle and Sebastian. Barrowland, a former ballroom, has to be one of the best venues in all of Britain for seeing live contemporary music. Recently, the company that runs the well-known Brixton Academy converted an old movie house into the Academy on the city's Southside, while in the city centre another former cinema, ABC, was redeveloped into a good music venue in 2005. Plus, two bars, King Tut's Wah Wah Hut (where the band Oasis was apparently "discovered") and Nice 'n' Sleazy, give Glasgow a pair of small venues with performance spaces that would rival those typical of Manhattan's East Village.</p>
<p>Hogmanay</p>	<p>There are many festivities happening across the country to celebrate Hogmanay. Choose from an array of ceilidhs, dinner dances, hoolies and balls.</p> <p>Join Glasgow's biggest party of the year as 25,000 revellers descend on George Square to see in the New Year;</p> <p>Stonehaven Fireball Festival: One of the few remaining mid-winter fire festivals on the Scottish East Coast. Local people celebrate the arrival of the New Year in this traditional way - swinging fireballs around as they walk up and down the old town High Street;</p> <p>The Hogmanay bonfire in the Borders town off Biggar (pop 2000), dates back to the pagan times when fire was worshipped and believed to ward off evil spirits for the New Year. It has continued at Biggar for hundreds of years and there is no other town in the world that celebrates the coming of the New Year like Biggar.</p> <p>Edinburgh's Hogmanay: The world's best New Year celebrations - four fabulous days and nights of amazing events throughout the city. Nobody celebrates New Year better than the Scots so come and join the 100,000 other revellers who pack Edinburgh's Princes Street for a wild night of full-on partying that pauses only for the breathtaking fireworks display from the ramparts of Edinburgh Castle at midnight. The pyrotechnics also signal the start of the biggest kiss-athon you'll ever take part in and you'll never make so many friends so quickly as you do then!</p> <p>Hogmanay Traditions: Traditionally, the Scots were a superstitious race at the best of times and for an event as significant as the dawning of a new year, customs, rituals and traditions inevitably arose around the country. Many of these have now disappeared but others have carried on down through the</p>

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	<p>years and some have even become essential ingredients of today's celebrations.</p> <p>Cleaning the House The last day of the year was traditionally regarded as a time of preparation: business would be concluded to let the new year start afresh and houses were thoroughly cleaned (known as 'redding'). Fireplaces in particular had to be swept out and in a variation on reading tea-leaves, the ashes of the last fire of the old year were believed to show what lay ahead in the new year.</p> <p>First Footing One of the major Hogmanay customs was 'first footing'. Shortly after 'the bells' - the stroke of midnight when public clocks would chime to signal the start of the new year - neighbours would visit one another's houses to wish each other a good new year. This visiting was known as 'first footing', and the luckiest first-foot into any house was a tall, dark and handsome man - perhaps as a reward to the woman who traditionally had spent the previous day scrubbing her house (another Hogmanay ritual). Women or red heads, however, were always considered bad luck as first-foots. First-foots brought symbolic gifts to 'handsel' the house: coal for the fire, to ensure that the house would be warm and safe, and shortbread or black bun (a type of fruit cake) to symbolise that the household would never go hungry that year.</p>
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<p>CUISINE</p>	<p>Burns Supper: What is a Burns Supper? The format can be whatever the organiser wishes. As for the poems used, the Address to the Haggis is essential – verses 1, 2, 3 and 8. The other poems used reflect the kind of personnel attending the Supper. Some functions have guest orators who might offer Tam o' Shanter, Holy Willie's Prayer (with actions) or The Cottar's Saturday Night. Some Burns Clubs do indulge in guest orators as they feel Robert Burns' poems were meant to be read aloud if necessary but not acted. The menu may be as you please but traditionally, it is as follows: Soup such as Cock a Leekie or Scotch Broth; Haggis, Champit Tatties (mashed potatoes) and Neeps (mashed turnip). A main course of beef or steak. Bannocks an' Kebbuck – cheese – such as the hard cheeses of Mull, Galloway or Orkney, biscuits and oatcakes</p>
<p>Food</p>	<p>When you first look at a menu serving traditional Scottish grub you might get a little bit lost, what with the Arbroath Smokies, Champit Tatties, Cullen Skink, Cranachan, Roastit Bubbly Jock and much more unusual sounding food that will leave you somewhat confused.</p> <p>The names might be complex but the method of traditional Scottish cooking isn't, as Scottish food is simply hearty and tasty fare. Here is a guide to eating well in Scotland:</p>

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Breakfast

There is everything from cold starters, including an assortment of juices, yoghurts, fresh fruits, preserves and cereals, to a steaming bowl of porridge, crispy toast, a full Scottish breakfast and a cup of tea or coffee.

Full Scottish breakfast

A full breakfast usually consists of a link sausage, bacon, eggs, tattie scone (potato scone), fried mushrooms, grilled tomatoes, baked beans, buttered toast and the Scottish favourite - black pudding. It certainly is a very complete meal, which will leave you feeling rather full when you finish your last bite. Served typically at breakfast time, but it is also common to feature on the menus as an 'all day' dish.

Porridge

No Scottish breakfast would be complete without the ubiquitous dish of porridge. Traditionally made with oatmeal and water and cooked with a touch of salt, it's stirred with a wooden spurtle, which prevents the porridge from congealing, and served hot in a bowl. It is also popular to add a little milk and toss in some dried fruits as well as sweeten it with a generous sprinkle of light brown sugar.

Kippers

You may also come across strongly flavoured kippers (cold smoked herring) served for breakfast. Once the quintessential British breakfast food in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, kippers are now enjoying a revival. Split in butterfly fashion, from tail to head, they are salted in brine and smoked over smouldering woodchips, and with only 125 calories per fillet and packed with protein, they provide a healthy way to start a day. Find out more about Scottish seafood.

Main Dishes

Black pudding

Essentially, black pudding is a mixture of suet, oats, blood, barley and a special blend of spices stuffed in a length of protein casing. You'll often find it in a Scottish breakfast served in B&Bs up and down the country, but it has recently become popular on the menus of top-class restaurants. It combines very well with pork, chicken, game and seafood as well as fruit such as pears, apple and rhubarb. Such is its importance that Stornoway Black Pudding has been awarded special protected status.

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Haggis

Scotland's national dish is another type of savoury pudding and has been immortalised by Robert Burns' famous poem, 'Address to a Haggis.' Its origins are similar to that of the black pudding, with the main ingredients consisting of minced offal of a sheep, pig or cow mixed with suet, onions, oatmeal, spices and seasoning. Traditionally it was boiled in the stomach of the slaughtered animal but today synthetic casings are more widely used. Slightly spicy with an oaty texture, it is traditionally eaten with neeps and tatties (swede and potato) but it appears in Scottish restaurants and pubs in many other forms, from burgers to bon bons. Sometimes it'll come as part of a Scottish breakfast, or often you can pick up a haggis supper from a chip shop. Find out more about haggis.

Stovies

The basic ingredients of this winter warmer are meat, onions and potatoes. This stew was traditionally made from the leftovers of a Sunday roast dinner but you'll find it very easy to make from scratch. Recipes can vary, using chicken, beef, lamb or even tinned corned beef as the meat, and some versions include diced up carrot or swede. Often it is served up with oatcakes and pickled beetroot on the side.

Lorne sausage

Lorne sausage is sometimes referred to as sliced or square sausage for obvious reasons; sausage meat, either pork or beef, is set into a square shape and thinly sliced into portions. Grilled or fried, it is usually eaten in the morning as part of a full Scottish breakfast or in a soft roll.

Scotch pie

This savoury snack is a small, double-crust meat pie filled with minced meat. This traditional Scottish pie has an outer shell of hard crust pastry allowing you to hold the pie while eating it which makes it popular with take-away restaurants, bakeries, and at outdoor events such as football matches. The type, quantity and quality of the ingredients used by an individual piemaker are a closely guarded secret. This gives the scotch pie its distinctive individual character that separates it from a scotch pie made by another producer.

Bridie

A bridie or Forfar bridie is a type of meat pastry or pie, originally from the town of Forfar. The filling consists of minced beef, onions and seasoning. Forfar bakers traditionally use shortcrust pastry but similar products on flaky pastry or puff pastry are occasionally found.

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	<p>Fish and chips Fish and chips are one of the nation's most popular takeaway dishes. The dish consists of battered cod or haddock deep-fried and served with chips. You will find chip shops or 'chippies' in almost every town across the country, the best often found in coastal towns within sight of the fishing boats tied up in harbour. Made before your eyes, fresh and hot in your hands, it's an incomparable takeaway feast.</p> <p>Desserts</p> <p>Cranachan This simple Scottish dessert comprises of fresh raspberries, whipped cream, honey and toasted oats. For an added punch, a dram of whisky can be added. Top chefs such as Delia Smith and Nigel Slater have put forward their own recipes of how this traditional dish should be prepared and served while Jamie Oliver and Heston Blumenthal have even suggested cranachan sundae recipes.</p> <p>Atholl Brose In recent years Atholl Brose has become another name for the popular dessert cranachan. Alternatively, it can be a traditional Scottish cocktail. The drink, named after the 1st Earl of Atholl, shares many of the same ingredients as cranachan such as honey, cream, whisky and oatmeal brose - oatmeal water.</p> <p>Tablet Tablet is a traditional Scottish sweet made from sugar, condensed milk and butter. This sugary confection is similar to fudge but with a harder, grainy texture. It is often flavoured with vanilla, and sometimes has nut pieces in it.</p> <p>Shortbread Scottish shortbread is a luxurious biscuit that you can really sink your teeth into. It is made using a generous amount of butter which gives it a crumbly, melt-in-the-mouth texture. They are traditionally baked in a round, flat shape, pricked with a fork and sprinkled with caster sugar.</p> <p>Cloutie dumpling A cloutie dumpling is a rich fruit pudding made with flour, breadcrumbs, dried fruit (sultanas and currants), suet, sugar, spice, with some milk and sometimes golden syrup to bind it. This classic Scottish dessert is best served with a drizzle of cream and a dram of whisky.</p>
Drink - Whisky	Scotland should be proud of its whisky, and it is. After 500 years of

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	<p>practice, uisge beatha (from the Gaelic, meaning 'water of life') was first mentioned in written record in 1494; the Scots have whisky distilling down to a fine art. The tastes change with the landscape as well. In the rolling pastoral Lowlands you'll find grassy and malt flavours, while heathery whisky is the norm in the Highlands. It's different once again in the low hills of Speyside where a mellow sweetness is found, while the rough and salty smokiness of the Western Isles whisky perfectly matches the terrain.</p> <p>Scottish people love whisky so much that pubs are dedicated to the drink; head to Leslie's Bar in Edinburgh, or The Grill in Aberdeen, where more than 400 varieties of whiskies will keep you quiet for the evening. Fellow drinkers and friendly barmen will be only too happy to give you a guide of Scotland's national drink and one of its finest exports. Among the famous Highland malts are Glen Grant, Macallan, Glenfarclas, Knockando, Cardhu, Glenfiddich, Strathisla and Tamnavullin. Of course there are also island malts which have their own special appeal. These include Highland Park and Scapa on Orkney, Talisker from the misty Isle of Skye, Jura and the Islay malts which include Laphroig, Bowmore and Bruichladdich.</p> <p>Edinburgh Gin It's not just whisky that comes from Scotland. This distillery in the heart of Edinburgh produces award-winning gin to suit a variety of tastes – including the powerful Cannonball Gin which I can personally attest will make your head explode! They also features several tours such as: Gin Discovery Tour £10 (per person) 45 Minute Discovery Tour for Groups of up to 8 people Learn the story behind Edinburgh's spectacular gin and discover how it is distilled. Witness their exhibition area firsthand and take an intimate tour of the distillery; getting sneak peeks at what they usually keep hidden from watchful eyes... Included in the tour is a free sample or a miniature bottle of Edinburgh Gin to take home. http://www.edinburghgindistillery.co.uk/</p>
<p>Restaurants</p>	<p>Edinburgh Restaurants</p> <p>The Witchery A world-renowned restaurant housed in sixteenth century building by the gates of the Castle. Expertly prepared Scottish produce in rich surroundings makes dining here a magical experience.</p> <p>Restaurant Martin Wishart Award-winning modern French cuisine impressively cooked to Michelin-star standards, set right in the middle of the historic Port of Leith.</p>

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**Oloroso**

The views from this luxurious restaurant are astounding. Take in panoramic views of Edinburgh and the Lothians. All the while enjoying surprising Pacific Rim flavors.

David Bann

Taking the blandness out of vegetarian and vegan food once and for all, David Bann will impress vegetarians and carnivores alike with its slick environment and colorful menu.

Vermillion

Set in the heart of The Scotsman Hotel, the richly Scottish menu and opulent surroundings of Vermillion set high standards.

Tower Restaurant

Spectacular views of Edinburgh's Castle and city skyline feature on the menu of James Thomson's stunning rooftop restaurant, perched above the landmark Museum of Scotland.

The Kitchin Restaurant

Situated in the picturesque port of Leith, Michelin-starred Tom Kitchin's style is a unique marriage of seasonal Scottish produce with the classical French technique he has mastered working alongside some of the world's greatest chefs.

Blue Bar Café

Clean, contemporary and simple are the keywords when talking about both the stylish interior and internationally influenced menu of this popular café. And it is perfectly situated nearby Edinburgh's main theatres.

Villager

A hip and elegantly retro hangout in the city centre – with a menu to match – who could resist vodka martini mussels? All matched with an eclectic cocktail list and a background soundtrack of the coolest funk.

Dragonfly

Voted 'Most Stylish Bar' in the 2006 Scottish Style Awards – you mingle with the beautiful people and, from the balcony, watch the bartenders make drinks like the Glenfiddich Cavalcade or the aptly named Edinburgh Rocks.

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Glasgow Restaurants

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The popular 'Epicurean Menu' offered by Terence Conran's only UK outpost outside of London is a tasting menu with each course matched perfectly with a different wine. Epicureans will feel truly in heaven in Conran's sleek but subtle penthouse restaurant.

No.Sixteen

Tiny, unpretentious, and ever so slightly off the beaten track – although still pretty close to the throng of the bohemian West End – No.Sixteen is one of Glasgow's favorite restaurants. So good, that it has become one of Edinburgh's favorite restaurants too!

Ubiquitous Chip

Perhaps the most fabulously named restaurant in Glasgow, 'The Chip' as it is affectionately known is renowned for its strong Scottish flavors, and a refined coziness that Glaswegians have grown to love over its thirty-year tenure.

Uisge Beatha

A unique 'old-style' pub in the stylish West End, you'll find over 125 single malt whiskies to choose from, served by men in kilts!

Rab Ha's

A triumph of individuality over uniformity and of soul over empty style comprising boutique hotel, enticing restaurant and traditional Scottish bar, Rab Ha's is found within the Merchant City.

Babbity Bowser's

Housed in an original Tobacco Merchant's house attributed to Robert Adam in the Merchant City. Fraser and his team are a local institution and look forward to welcoming you to this bar, restaurant and small hotel. The restaurant offers a selection of freshly prepared Scottish meals or snacks, daily billboard specials and real ales with live music every Saturday night.

Café Gandolfi

The Tim Stead-designed wooden furniture in this Merchant City institution have become almost as much of a draw as Gandolfi's simple but incredibly enticing menu.

The Lansdowne

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	<p>Through a leafy West End close, you will stumble across The Lansdowne, which after renovations in 2005, emerged as one of the neighborhood’s favorites – with a stylish bar, and well-prepared but uncomplicated dishes.</p> <p>Mother India Glasgow isn’t called the Curry Capital for nothing, and there are many first-class Indian restaurants – with Mother India being one of the most authentic, and one of the best – absolutely bursting with fresh ginger, spices and herbs.</p> <p>Liquid Ship Taking its name from a misspelled letter addressed to ‘Ubiquitous Chip’ (see above) – Liquid Ship is brought to the West End bar by the same family that owns the remarkable Chip. This ambient little bar is home to fantastic acoustic music, accompanied by a great selection of beers and wonderful tapas dishes.</p> <p>Brutti Ma Buoni Translating as ‘ugly but good,’ this unpretentiously hip bar and restaurant on the ground floor of the achingly trendy Brunswick Hotel in the Merchant City is always full of Glasgow’s cutting edge artists and trendsetters, and their new basement level is the perfect pre-club spot.</p>
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MORE INFO	
Brochures	<p>Discover everything that Scotland has to offer by downloading their online visitor brochures. Here you’ll find everything you need to make the most of Scotland’s great outdoors, from interactive maps to music and video clips to give you a taste of what’s on offer. http://www.visitscotland.com/en-ca/e-brochures/</p>
Contacts	<p>Website: www.VisitScotland.com Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/visitscotland Flickr: https://www.flickr.com/photos/visitscotland/ Tracing your roots: www.ancestralscotland.com</p>

WALES	<p>Just a two hour train ride from London, England you can find yourself in a whole new country - Wales. A country that will soon charm you with the warmth of its welcome, and amaze you with the richness and depth of its culture.</p>
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In fact the Welsh culture is one of the oldest in the world – Cardiff, the capital city, has well over 2000 years of history. Wales has 641 castles – more per square kilometer than any other European country – a testament to its fascinating and turbulent past. The castles of Wales are open to visitors: climb towers, walk ancient walls and explore dungeons. This is the land of magic, myth and dragons!

Welsh is the oldest living language in Europe and the most widely spoken Celtic language. This land resonates with literature and song and is bursting with creativity in both its official languages. The beautiful landscapes of Wales inspired Lewis Carroll to write Alice in Wonderland and Beatrix Potter to write her Peter Rabbit books. Many film makers have used the stunning Welsh scenery as a backdrop to their movies. Harry Potter, Robin Hood and Snow White and the Huntsman were filmed in Wales, just to name a few.

The stunning Welsh scenery goes way beyond the film set. Wales is officially beautiful! Over 25% of the land is designated as either a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In fact Wales has 3 National Parks in a small country that is only the size of Massachusetts!

In Snowdonia National Park you can climb Mt. Snowdon - the tallest mountain in England and Wales - or take a historic steam railway to the summit for the spectacular views. The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park takes in sandy coves, fishing villages, cliff-top walks and the rich nesting grounds for millions of seabirds. In the distance, spot dolphins in Cardigan Bay, or seals basking in the sun. And get outdoors in the Brecon Beacons National Park – where you can explore on horseback, bicycle or on foot to really be at one with the enchanting landscape.

Wales will also surprise you with 43 Blue Flag Beaches. In fact Wales has 1200 kms of coastline with breathtaking scenery – it is the only country in the world to have its entire coastline as one continuous coastal pathway. And even if you can only take a short coastal walk - the views from this hiking trail are an essential part of any Welsh experience.

After all that hiking you will be hungry – and Wales is increasingly achieving an excellent reputation for its gastronomy. Produce served in Wales is FRESH! Here you will find a real culture of farm to table and organically produced food. The seafood is excellent and the oysters are superb as there is little to no fertilizer run off. Head to Machynlleth in Mid Wales to dine like a king or queen at Ynyshir Hall. It was once

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	<p>owned by Queen Victoria and is now a fine dining restaurant and luxury hotel.</p> <p>And this isn't the only hotel with Royal connections in Wales! For instance Plas Dinas Country House, a couple of miles outside Caernarfon in North Wales, has been in the possession of the Armstrong-Jones family since the 19th century, and was once home to HRH Princess Margaret. Equally you can stay in small hotels, vacation cottages, cozy inns and Bed and Breakfasts in charming towns and villages throughout the country.</p>
Location	<p>Wales is the friendly green hilly bit on the western side of Britain. More geographically, Wales is one of the four constituent countries of the United Kingdom. It is located in the south-west of Great Britain and is bordered by England to the east, the Bristol Channel to the south and the Irish Sea to the west and north, and also by the estuary of the River Dee in the north-east.</p>
Geography	<p>The facts and figures might lead you to believe that Wales is small – it covers an area of around 20,800 square kilometres. But if you could roll it out flat, it would be almost bigger than Texas! Snowdon at 1085 m (3,560 ft), is the highest peak in Wales</p>
Name	<p>The English name for Wales originates from the Germanic word Walha, meaning "stranger" The Welsh called themselves Cymry, "compatriots", and named their country Cymru (pronounced kəmri), which is thought to have meant "Land of the Compatriots" in Old Welsh Welsh.</p>
Population	<p>Around 3 million in Wales; Cardiff has 300,000</p>
Language	<p>The Welsh language is one of the oldest in Europe, spoken fluently by about one in five of the population. Although everyone speaks English as well, Welsh is a thriving mainstay of the Welsh way of life.</p>
Currency	<p>UK Pounds; currently (March 2017) one Pound = 1.64 Canadian Dollars</p>
Tipping	<p>As in Canada.</p>
Government	<p>The National Assembly for Wales was formed in 1999, with powers to amend primary legislation from the U.K. Parliament. These powers were widened by the Government of Wales Act 2006, which will take effect after the 2007 Welsh Assembly election. The Welsh Assembly Government will be reformed from a committee within the Assembly to a separate Welsh Government executive body, with a role similar to that of the Scottish Executive.</p> <p>The UK is made up of Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland, and is one of the 25 member states of the European Union (EU). The UK is a constitutional monarchy that is a representative democracy, where Queen Elizabeth II is recognised as the head of state, and the elected Prime Minister is the head of government.</p>

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Documentation	On arrival in the United Kingdom, you must show a valid national passport or other equivalent official document that satisfactorily establishes your identity and nationality
Time zone	Five hours ahead of EST
Health	You are advised to take out adequate insurance before travelling to Britain. Your travel agent will be able to suggest a suitable policy. If you become ill while visiting Britain, you are eligible for free emergency treatment in the Accident and Emergency departments of National Health Service hospitals. However, if you are admitted to hospital as an in-patient, even from the accident and emergency department, or referred to an out-patient clinic, you will be asked to pay.
Safety tips	By international standards, Britain is a safe country with low rates of street crime and violence.

CLIMATE	
General climate	Wales has a fairly temperate climate and can sometimes be overcast. However, Wales enjoys long summer evenings due to its relatively northerly latitude and periods of fine weather can happen in all seasons. The weather can vary greatly from day to day, but generally summer (June-August) is a hot 14-30 °C, and winter (December-February) is a cool 1-5 °C.
Today's weather	15 degrees Centigrade and mostly sunny (11 March, 2017)
Best time to visit	All year round!

GETTING THERE	
Flying time	Flying time is 7 hours to London Heathrow. The capital city of Wales, Cardiff, is just two hours by train from London.
Cities	<p>Cardiff</p> <p>Wales' capital city is Cardiff. The Romans had a fortress here in the first Century AD, but Cardiff's a lively youngster really. It was officially designated as capital in 1955.</p> <p>Cardiff Castle Situated in Cardiff's city centre, Cardiff Castle offers a packed programme of events that provide a glimpse into 2000 years of history. In its fascinating life, Cardiff Castle has been a Roman Garrison, a Norman Stronghold, a Gothic Fantasy with lavish Victorian design... and it harboured Wartime Tunnels during the Second World War....</p> <p>National Museum The National Museum Cardiff brings together art, archaeology, natural history and geology, all for free! That's right – there is no entrance fee to this fascinating museum! Starting with our ancestors, the Neanderthals,</p>

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a quarter of a million years ago - everyday objects and beautiful artefacts tell the story of the people of Wales. Plus it explains the forces that created the dramatic Welsh landscapes.

The Art collection at the new **National Museum of Art**, within the same building, is one of Europe's finest. See five hundred years of magnificent paintings, drawings, sculpture, silver and ceramics from Wales and across the world, including one of Europe's best collections of Impressionist works.

Millennium Centre and Millennium Stadium

A testament to the renaissance of Cardiff as a modern city, and its world class architecture, and are the two Millennium project buildings.

The Millennium Centre is an Arts Centre with 6 performance spaces and a year round programme of music, opera, theatre and dance. The BBC National Orchestra of Wales, The Welsh National Opera and the National Dance Company of Wales all have their home at the Millennium Centre.

The Millennium Stadium is one of the most impressive icons of modern Wales. Join a guided tour to visit highlights such as the Press Conference Suite, and an official VIP hospitality suite. Discover the 2012 Olympic football dressing room and experience the atmosphere before a match in the "Dragon's Lair" – the dressing room of the Wales' rugby team. Hear the roar of 74,500 fans as you walk down the players' tunnel towards the hallowed turf, and lift the trophy to the skies like a sports star in the President's Box, an area normally reserved for royalty.

Victorian Arcades

Cardiff boasts six historic arcades, which in total stretch to a length of 797m! The beautiful arcades still retain many of their original features and are home to dozens of unique stores as well as some of Cardiff's most interesting cafés and delicatessens. You'll find vegetarian and organic cuisine as well as great delicatessens for foodies looking to stock-up. One of Cardiff's most famous shops, Spillers Records (the oldest vinyl record store in the world) is based in Morgan Arcade – its 3rd home since opening in 1894.

Cardiff Bay

The city of Cardiff thrived as a port in the days when Welsh slate was proudly covering rooftops around the world. Now the old Cardiff docklands have been redeveloped over the last decade to create Cardiff Bay. This is home to a large freshwater lake for sailing and water sports, the stylish five-star St David's Hotel and Spa, and Mermaid Quay – a

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	<p>restaurant hotspot with everything from Caribbean to Turkish cuisine. Cardiff Bay is also home to exciting attractions and hosts events throughout the year.</p> <p>On the Trail of Dr Who Cardiff is indisputably the home of Doctor Who. The series is filmed on location in and around the city as well as at the new BBC Studios in Cardiff Bay. Just next door, the Doctor Who Experience has brought the Doctor back to his roots, making a stop in Cardiff the perfect choice for Doctor Who fans of any age.</p>
Distances	<p>Wales is about 2 hours west of London by rail or by road. Cardiff is about 170 km from London</p>
Ferries	<p>Regular ferry service to Ireland leave from various Welsh ports such as Swansea Holyhead, Pembroke and Fishguard</p>
Trains	<p>The National Rail network covers the entire country, leaving from central London locations and spanning out to the remotest parts of the UK.</p> <p>There are also 14 narrow guage and steam railways such as Ffestiniog railway 24km; Snowdon Mountain Railway; Brecon Mountain Railway</p> <p>For frequent train journeys, a Britrail Flexipass allows travel for up to 15 days in two months; a Classic Pass allows travel on a certain number of consecutive days up to one month.</p> <p>Take the mountain train up Snowdon Snowdon or Yr Wyddfa, as it's known in the native Welsh, is the highest mountain in Wales at 1,085 metres. The Snowdon Mountain Railway is a spectacular way to arrive at the 'rooftop' of Wales, where you'll be greeted with breathtaking views and the highest visitor centre in Britain. www.snowdonrailway.co.uk</p>
Car Rental	<p>All major car rental companies are available in Wales. You may wish to specify an automatic car rather than stick shift. And remember that you will be driving on the left!</p>
Buses	<p>The Tourist Trail Pass will give you unlimited travel on all coach services in England and Wales for a choice of 2, 5, 7 or 14 days.</p>
Passes	<p>The best way to save money (and skip the lines!) at all the National Trust and CADW - Welsh Historic Monuments properties is to get a Great British Heritage Pass. The passes are only available to non-UK residents.</p> <p>The Cardiff and Capital Region Discount Card is on sale in Cardiff Tourist Information Office. The card offers free admission for ten top attractions, including Cardiff Castle, Techniquest and the Millennium Stadium tour. Card holders will also receive discount vouchers with savings for shops, tours and restaurants in Cardiff.</p>

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ACCOMMODATION TYPES	You'll find your ideal accommodation in Wales. Hotels range from luxurious country houses to friendly places beside the sea. Guest houses have moved with the times and now offer standards that rival many hotels, while farmhouse accommodation is something of a Welsh speciality (and a great introduction to country life). On the self-catering front, Wales boasts possibly the finest choice in Britain, with everything from seafront apartments to deluxe country properties. And Wales's caravan and camping parks are second to none.
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LIFESTYLE GROUPS	
Kids	History, sports, fishing, steam trains...so many options!
Teens	Soft adventure opportunities abound throughout Wales
Romance	The Welsh lovespoon is a wooden spoon carved by a young man and presented to his sweetheart as a token of affection
Honeymoons & Weddings	What could be more perfect than a few days in a stately house hotel in the beautiful Welsh countryside?
Genealogy	As the years go by, do you feel a yearning to re-discover your roots? You may have heard your parents and grandparents talk of their Welsh ancestry and would like to find out more about them and their communities. There has never been a better time start looking for your family. The powers of the Internet provide you with valuable information to set you on your way, but to get the very most out of your research, you will need to visit Wales. The National Library of Wales, county record offices and libraries can provide invaluable information to enable you to piece together your family history. Start your search by visiting www.visitwales.ca
Zoomers	There are many discounts on transport and attractions offered to Seniors traveling in Wales

UNIQUES	Canal holidays are an ideal way to see Wales if you are looking for a relaxing trip. Travelling at no more than 4 miles an hour you can take in some of Wales' best scenery and experience little villages and quaint pubs that are rarely visited when travelling by car or bus. Canal boating is easy. A number of companies offer boat hire packages with full tuition provided on your departure day. If that's not for you or time is limited, shorter guided trips are available. Pontcysyllte Aqueduct on the Llangollen Canal is 128 feet high! Famous sons and daughters of Wales you will have heard of include Richard Burton, Sir Tom Jones, Sir Anthony Hopkins and Catherine Zeta-Jones. And lots of other people have been tracing their Welsh ancestry recently - including Tom Cruise, Susan Sarandon, Russell
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	Crowe and Kylie Minogue.
Surprising – Gold Mining	<p>2,000 years ago, the powerful Romans left behind a glimpse of gold-mining methods. The harsh mining environment continued in the 19th and 20th centuries, ending in 1938. Guided tours take you back to experience the conditions of the Roman, Victorian and 1930s underground workings. See and hear the 1930s mine and mine machinery. Have a go at gold panning and take the opportunity to experience the frustrations of searching for real gold. Underground tours involve steep slopes, so stout footwear is essential. Experience the thrill of an underground guided tour; try gold panning in the sifting troughs. Enjoy the walks around this beautiful upland estate and the over-ground mine tours of Roman adits.</p>
History	<p>The Romans mined for gold here, the Normans built castles here and the Tudor dynasty was founded here. Each of the major periods of history has left its mark and the sense of continuity can still be felt all around Wales.</p> <p>Wales's Celtic roots stretch back as far as 1000 BC. That's a lot of time to cover, but here's a short chronology to get you started:</p> <p>1000 BC - the Iron Age dawns. Welsh people group themselves into large hill forts, practice farming, and work extensive copper mines.</p> <p>500-100 BC – the Celts arrive. Despite their fierceness in battle, their lack of political unity leads to their eventual defeat by more disciplined Roman armies.</p> <p>784 – The King of Mercia builds Offa's Dyke, the first permanent boundary between the Welsh and the English people.</p> <p>844 – Rhodri ap Merfyn becomes king of a small area called Gwynedd. By the time of his death in 877, all of Wales is united under his rule.</p> <p>1066-77 – The Normans establish the Marcher Lordships on the borders of Wales. They are reluctant to venture into Wales itself.</p> <p>1400 – Charismatic (but tyrannical) national hero Owain Glyndŵr begins his rebellion against King Henry IV. By 1404, he had summoned a parliament in Machynlleth, and crowned himself Prince of Wales. By 1408, Owain's ambitious plans ran out of steam, and this last real uprising against the English Crown was over.</p> <p>1485 - Henry Tudor returns to Wales, landing at Milford Haven. He defeats King Richard at the Battle of Bosworth Field and goes on to become King Henry VII of England.</p> <p>1768 - The copper industry is now using Welsh ore mined at Parys Mountain, the beginning of an industry that would control half the world's production by the end of the century.</p> <p>1839 – Bute Dock is built at Cardiff, supplying vast amounts of coal to the world's new navies, and causing Cardiff's rapid expansion into the largest and most important city in Wales.</p> <p>1905 – Cardiff is elevated to city status. It has experienced a seven-fold</p>

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	<p>population increase in less than 50 years.</p> <p>1916 - David Lloyd George becomes the first Welshman in British history to achieve the position of Prime Minister.</p> <p>1932 - The weekly Welsh-language newspaper is founded.</p> <p>1935 – The first radio broadcast in Welsh is made.</p> <p>1946 - Welshmen James Griffiths and Aneurin Bevan produce the National Insurance Act of 1946, setting up the UK's welfare state.</p> <p>1953 – Dylan Thomas dies in New York City.</p> <p>1955 – Cardiff is chosen as the nation's capital.</p> <p>1977 – Radio Cymru and Radio Wales are established.</p> <p>2000 – First Welsh Assembly is formed.</p>
Books	Look out for Jan Morris' books on her native land of Wales
1000 Places to see before you die	<p>Caernarfon Castle</p> <p>Bodnant Garden, Snowdonia</p> <p>Snowdonia National Park</p> <p>International Musical Eisteddfod</p> <p>Portmeirion village</p> <p>Hay-on-Wye Festival</p> <p>Dylan Thomas' Boathouse, Laugharne</p> <p>Tintern Abbey</p> <p>St. David's Cathedral</p>
Must Sees	<p>Wales has three UNESCO World Heritage Sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The castles and town walls built by King Edward - Blaenavon Industrial Landscape - The Blaenavon area, in the Gwent Valleys of south east Wales, has been moulded by the coal and iron industries. Its ironworks - which have been carefully preserved - were built in 1789 and were followed by the development of the mining industry. - Pontcysyllte Aqueduct on the Llangollen Canal
SPORTS ACTIVITIES	The Millennium Stadium sees more than its fair share of nail-biting football games: the FA Cup, the Worthington Cup, Nationwide League play-off finals. And there's golf, with Wales boasting some of the best golf in Britain and Europe.
Golf	<p>Wales has a very well established golfing tradition. An 18-hole course was in existence as early as 1885, and the Welsh Golfing Union was founded in 1895. Since then Wales has produced such golfing greats as Dai Rees, Brian Huggett and Ian Woosnam.</p> <p>There's a wide range of courses in Wales, from testing links courses to parkland courses like Celtic Manor.</p> <p>For more information, visit www.golf.visitwales.com</p>
Fishing	If your passion is game angling, then Wales is for you. It has a wealth of rivers and lakes in a variety of stunning scenarios, choosing where to fish is often more difficult than actually catching your fish.

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	<p>Welsh rivers account for more than half the sea trout caught in England and Wales, couple this with the number of large seatrout caught every year and the availability of fishing, it makes for a very special destination.</p> <p>Wild brown trout are abundant, whether you fish the famous rivers or intimate brooks; the stunning lowland lakes or the majestic highland lakes, the challenge is the same. These trout are truly wild and the angler must use all his skill to catch them.</p> <p>The reservoirs of Wales are set in such scenery that you would be forgiven for thinking they had always existed, these, together with small fisheries of quality; provides the angler with plenty of choice.</p> <p>Wales has always had quality grayling fishing, but the choice of rivers is now expanding, the rivers of South Wales are gaining a high reputation for the quality of their grayling.</p>
Horse riding	<p>Galloping on a beach is one of the things that most riders dream of. In Wales, you will find plenty of riding centres which can make your beach riding dream come true.</p> <p>There is also fantastic mountain and forest riding, for beginner or experienced riders, with or without guides.</p>
Hiking	<p>The biggest challenge for hikers in Wales is choosing where to walk. You can opt for Anglesey, North Wales Coast, the Llŷn Peninsula, Snowdonia, Ceredigion, Gower, The Brecon Beacons, the Black Mountains, Wye Valley and the Vale of Usk, Carmarthenshire, Glamorgan or the Clarydian Hills.</p> <p>Alternatively, you could strike out on a long distance walk on any of three National Trails - Offa's Dyke on the Wales Border, the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path and Glyndwr's Way.</p> <p>For more information, visit www.walking.visitwales.com</p>
Cycling	<p>There is no better way to see Wales than from a bicycle.</p> <p>Lôn Las Cymru is a route on the National Cycle Network that offers spectacular views. Running the length of Wales from north to south, it crosses three mountain ranges and goes through many remote and beautiful parts of Wales that no car driver will ever see.</p> <p>The Celtic Trail crosses Wales in the other direction, at its widest point. This route runs from the Pembrokeshire coast in the west to Chepstow in the east, and includes dramatic coastline, forest tracks climbing to 2000 ft, canal towpaths and country parks.</p>
Adventure	<p>The high-adrenaline activities available in Wales will take your breath away. Mountains and sea cliffs provide unsurpassable rock climbing, abseiling and coasteering. Or if you want to go down instead of up, Ogof Draenen in South Wales is one of the world's top caving sites with over 65 kilometres of tunnels and passages.</p> <p>With surfable coastline on three sides of the country, it's no surprise that Welsh surfers have always been amongst the best in Europe.</p>

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	<p>Windsurfers and kitesurfers will also find excellent conditions. Wales offers some of the best diving and snorkelling in Britain, and some of the finest sea kayaking in Europe. There's also white water rafting, paragliding, landyachting, rally trails, trail riding, 4x4 action, quadbiking, jetskiing, wakeboarding and waterskiing.</p> <p>For more information, visit www.adventure.visitwales.com</p>
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CULTURE	
Arts	<p>Time your visit to attend the National Eisteddfod of Wales in August each year. The Eisteddfod is one of the world's greatest cultural festivals, held during the first week of August every year.</p>
Music	<p>The music scene here has never been richer in talent, diversity and originality. Familiar bands like the Manic Street Preachers, Super Furry Animals along with the perennial favourites, Sir Tom Jones and Shirley Bassey, have a worldwide following. And for jazz fans, there's a choice of clubs and festivals - Brecon Jazz is one of the best in Europe. Classical music aficionados are also well served. Catching a performance by the Welsh National Opera in their new home the Wales Millennium Centre is a special experience, and Cardiff's St David's Hall has a world class programme of concerts every year.</p> <p>Folk music has always been at the heart of both entertainment and political protest in Wales. For a great snapshot of what's going on, you can't beat a visit to an event like the Fishguard Folk Festival.</p> <p>And don't forget the National Eisteddfod - apart from the traditional events there's always a very lively programme of alternative nights.</p>
Films	<p>Cardiff is home to a large concentration of media and creative types, turning out award- winning productions like the current incarnation of the legendary Dr Who series and now home to the Dr. Who Experience.</p>
Museums	<p>National Museum of Wales in Cardiff covers all aspects of Welsh history and is home to one of the largest collections of French Impressionism art outside of France</p>
Festivals	<p>One of my favourites is the Hay Festival in May. Hay-on-Wye is famous for one thing – second-hand books. There are millions of them and they are everywhere. But festival time is special - Bill Clinton calls it the "Woodstock of the mind".</p> <p>Royal Welsh Show, July</p> <p>The role of the modern Royal Welsh Show is a rounded one. As well as its principal function of showcasing the cream of Welsh livestock and the high quality food and drink produced in Wales, it encompasses the wider spectrum of farming and rural life and successfully bridges the gap between town and country.</p> <p>It provides something to interest everyone through its kaleidoscopic range of activities including forestry, horticulture, crafts, countryside</p>

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	sports, Sports Village and a 12 hour programme of exciting entertainment that continues throughout each of the four days of the event.
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ATTRACTIONS	<p>Visit The Seven Wonders of Wales</p> <p>It's a list in doggerel verse of seven geographic and cultural landmarks in Wales probably composed in the late eighteenth century. All the 'wonders' are in north Wales:</p> <p>Snowdon (the highest mountain), the Gresford bells (the peal of bells in the mediaeval church of All Saints at Gresford), the Llangollen bridge (built in 1347 over the River Dee, Afon Dyfrdwy), St Winefride's Well (a pilgrimage site at Holywell, Treffynnon in Flintshire) the Wrexham steeple (16th century tower of St. Giles Church in Wrexham), the Overton yew trees (ancient yew trees in the churchyard of St Mary's at Overton-on-Dee) and Pistyll Rhaeadr (Wales' tallest waterfall, at 240 ft or 75 m). The wonders are part of the rhyme: <i>Pistyll Rhaeadr and Wrexham steeple, Snowdon's mountain without its people, Overton yew trees, St Winefride wells, Llangollen bridge and Gresford bells.</i></p>
Beaches	Wales has 1,200 kms of coastline, including Oxwich Bay on the Gower Peninsula, near Swansea, has been named the most beautiful beach in the UK by The Travel Magazine
Wildlife	Dolphins, puffins, seals, red kite, buzzard and more
Parks	Wales boasts 3 National Parks and 5 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Gardens	<p>There is a wonderful array of gardens all over Wales; here is my pick of some of the best in South Wales:</p> <p>- National Botanic Garden The National Botanic Garden of Wales in the Vale of Tywi near Carmarthen is a hugely significant horticultural landmark. This ambitious enterprise, covering almost 240 hectares/600 acres, springs surprises around almost every corner. The largest single-span glasshouse in the world is here.</p> <p>- Colby Woodland Garden This charming National Trust property on the Pembrokeshire coast near Tenby is full of interest from spring to autumn. Set in a tranquil, secluded valley, it is noted for its fine displays of rhododendrons and azaleas, walks through woodland and meadow, and a colourful Walled Garden.</p>

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	<p>- Clyne Gardens Clyne, a mile or so west of Swansea city centre on the road to Mumbles and Gower, is one of Wales's finest gardens. It is internationally recognised for its superb collections of rhododendrons, pieris and enkianthus.</p> <p>- Aberglasney Aberglasney, in the Vale of Tywi near Llandeilo, is an exciting and highly significant garden restoration. Set within 3.5 hectares/9 acres are six different garden spaces including three walled gardens.</p> <p>- Picton Castle These beautiful gardens accompany Picton Castle, an elegant Pembrokeshire mansion with a history spanning 750 years. Picton is particularly noted for its rhododendrons, some of which are unique to this site.</p>
Castles/Forts	<p>There are 641 castles in Wales including UNESCO World Heritage Sites</p> <p>The castles and town walls built by King Edward I in the 13th Century to suppress Welsh independence in Gwynedd were listed in 1986. They include the castles of Beaumaris, Harlech, Conwy and Caernarfon.</p>

OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	There are great shopping opportunities throughout Wales. Consider lovespoons, honey, wool clothing, rugby shirts, crafts.
Markets	Plan on catching a sheep market in one of the hill villages if possible.
Nightlife	The Welsh, perhaps more than most, do enjoy a drink or three. In Cardiff city centre you will find the greatest concentration of pubs in all of Wales.

CUISINE	
Food	<p>With a 1,200 kms coastline, and hundreds of sparklingly clean lakes and rivers, Wales boasts a superb variety of seafood. Oyster, mussel and scallop beds are to be found around the Welsh coast; young lobsters have been re-introduced into the Menai Strait; there's an abundance of 'sewin' - sea trout; and of course, you can't forget the seaweed! Laverbread, made from a lettuce-leaf type of seaweed, is often mixed with oatmeal, and served at breakfast with bacon and eggs. Inland, the glory of Wales lies in its numerous valleys and mountains. Welsh Lamb and Welsh Beef are geared to the fine modern taste - lean and naturally free of additives.</p> <p>Wales produces its own milk and butter and, perhaps most exciting of all, more than 50 farmhouse cheeses, all distinctly different, with regional variations and a wonderful range of flavours and textures. You can usually buy them from market stalls, local shops and larger supermarkets. And you may also be tempted by traditional baked</p>

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	products such as Bara Brith (fruit loaf) or Welshcakes (griddle scones).
Wine	<p>Welsh wines are growing in quantity and reputation and are increasingly becoming the beverage of choice at receptions and events across the globe.</p> <p>Several vineyards are open to visitors, such as Sugar Loaf Vineyard in Abergavenny, Monmouthshire (www.sugarloafvineyards.co.uk) which has self-guided tours and wine tasting daily</p>
Restaurants	<p>Whether you're out to impress a date or simply looking for a quick bite to eat, Cardiff is jam packed with some fantastic restaurants. Thai, Italian, Japanese, Turkish...whatever your preference there are restaurants to suit all tastes in Cardiff.</p> <p>Dine by the fire in a cosy Welsh Pub</p> <p>Wales is the place to go for food – after all, it's home to one of the world's best food festivals in Abergavenny every September (foodies, book in now). There are hundreds of pubs ready to offer you a warm welcome, with a cosy fire to sit beside in winter or a pretty garden in the summer. Try the Felin Fach Griffin, which was named Dining Pub of the Year for the fourth time this year, thanks to delicious food made with local produce. It's a former roadside coaching inn, and you can still stay the night – right on the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park, you're in for a good night's sleep in the middle of the countryside.</p> <p>www.eatdrinksleep.ltd.uk</p>

MORE INFO	
Websites	<p>Website: www.americas.visitwales.com</p> <p>Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/visitwales</p>

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	<p>My wife was bought up in Pembrokeshire and I spent many childhood summers with my parents fishing on the River Cothi in Carmarthenshire.</p> <p>February 2014: The Dylan Thomas Trail – Cardiff, Swansea and Laugharne</p> <p>March 2007: South Wales; Ty Castell B&B, Nantgaredig</p> <p>June 2005: North Wales, Brecon Beacons, Carleon Roman Amphitheatre</p> <p>Previously: Anglesey, the castles, Snowdon summit, Tintern Abbey, St. David's, St Gowan's Chapel, Pembrokeshire Coastal Path, Swansea, Cardiff, Hay-on-Wye, Roman Gold Mines, Cilgerran Castle above Teifi River</p>
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