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Scotland

BEAUTIFUL ISLAND, SPECTACULAR EDINBURGH FESTIVAL
MAKE UNPLANNED VISIT WELL WORTH OUR WHILE

About Scotland

Previously an independent kingdom, Scotland entered into a union with England in 1707. Scotland is one of four constituent nations of the UK, along with England, Northern Ireland and Wales. As of 1999, it has its own parliament.



When To Visit

The best weather is in May, June and September; July and August are usually warm, but may be wet too.

Visa Requirements

Citizens of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA may stay for up to six months without a visa; however, working is prohibited. EU citizens don't need a visa and can live and work freely.

Getting There

A drive from London to Edinburgh takes about eight hours. There are direct air services to many Scottish destinations, or you can take the bus or train from England, or the ferry from Ireland.

Bahrain Connection

It was Scottish motor racing legend Jackie Stewart who played a major role in bringing F1 to Bahrain by introducing the Crown Prince, HH Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa to F1 boss Bernie Ecclestone.

By Ali Hussain Mushaima

SCOTLAND WAS NOT ON OUR INITIAL ITINERARY when we set out from Bahrain. However, a Scotsman, Bill Wren, who was following the course of our trip on the *Bhirainguide.org* and



The bride and groom pose for family pictures after a traditional Scottish wedding in Edinburgh.

Gulf Daily News websites, sent us an email urging us to visit Scotland too since we were going to travel to the UK.

Bill once used to live in Bahrain - his father worked for the Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco) from 1949 to 1957. In fact Bill even has a photograph of himself shaking hands with HH Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Bahrain's Ruler at the time.

We thought it would be interesting to meet Bill and also drive through the highlands of Scotland, so we added the country to our itinerary.

Bill and his wife Liz live on a beautiful island called Bute, well known in the region for its forest walks. They invited us home for lunch and I was delighted to see on display a miniature dhow, complete with Bahrain flag on the mast. It made me feel very proud to be Bahraini.

Liz made Petra and me some cake and coffee too and the couple gave us a tour of the island.



PAGE OPPOSITE:
The Friendship Tour vehicle under the Forth rail bridge in Edinburgh.



Ali flanked by Bill Wren and his wife Liz on Bute Island.



One of Bill's prized photographs, shaking hands with former Bahrain Ruler HH Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa in the 1950s.



Scotland is a place to get out and walk around. It looks least attractive when seen through a rain-streaked window.

It turned out to be a very good time to be visiting Scotland. The spectacular Edinburgh International Festival – the world's biggest performing-arts festival – was on during our trip, and the big crowds allowed us a forum to promote Bahrain as well. The festival attracts well over 200,000 people and has a global TV audience of an estimated 100 million.

The Edinburgh Festival is actually not a single event but a generic term used to describe the cultural explosion in July and August each year. It includes the Jazz Festival, the Edinburgh Mela, the Edinburgh Book Festival, the largest book festival in the world, the Edinburgh Film Festival, a world renowned

showcase of cinematic talent and the Military Tattoo set against the magnificent backdrop of Edinburgh Castle.

We visited the Tattoo, whose participants came from over 30 countries. In the glowing twilight, the floodlit Edinburgh Castle draws all eyes, a hush falls and darkness deepens. Then the great oak gates of Edinburgh Castle swept open, and the swelling sound of hundreds of pipes and drums cracked through the night sky.

A dazzling show is spread out on the Castle Esplanade, a whirling and colourful kaleidoscope of music, dance and display. The Tattoo can be both



An Asian dance troupe performs at the Edinburgh Festival, one of Scotland's best known international events.

exciting – daredevil motorcycles at speed and the breathtaking re-enactment of battles, and exotic – Turkish music and Chinese dancers, or simply the best of Scottish – Highland dancers wheeling and swirling to a fiddle orchestra.

Then the audience gathered themselves together for the finale of the Edinburgh Military Tattoo. All 1,000 or so performers on the Castle Esplanade, column after column of marchers, dancers and bandmen. The Tattoo audience joined in a great chorus of singing, cheering, and applause; cries of 'Bravo!' before a hush fell for the singing of the Evening Hymn, the sounding of the Last Post and the lowering of the flags on

the Castle. Finally, all faces turned to the Edinburgh Castle ramparts, where a single spotlight cued the Lone Piper of the Edinburgh Military Tattoo to play his haunting lament, the high notes echoing across the still night sky and over the dark Edinburgh skyline, as the flames of the Castle torch lights and the piper's warming brazier flicker and slowly die.

It is a fantastic feeling and a great experience, and certainly a high point of our tour. Considering we'd never even planned to visit Scotland, it's been very refreshing indeed.

Now though, it's time to take the ferry and head for Ireland.



This ace of clubs is a golfer's dream come true

SCOTLAND is often called the home of golf, and with good reason too. The Friendship Tour team was fortunate to experience first hand one of the country's finest courses at the Loch Lamond Golf Club.

Loch Lamond is where The Barclays Scottish Open is played, and indeed it would be difficult to imagine a more spectacular setting than the one by the shores of the most famous stretch of inland water in Scotland.

A stone's skip from Glasgow, it is considered one of the world's top golf courses. Ranked the best inland course in Britain by *Golf World* magazine and 21st in the world by *Golf Digest* (USA), it sits in 660 acres of the Clan Colquhoun estate and is surrounded by some of the most spectacular scenery in Scotland.

Designed by Tom Weiskopf and Jay Morrish, the 7,100 yard parkland course opened in 1994 and has since become home to an international membership spanning over 30 countries, including an elite few in the Middle East.

Weiskopf, who won the Open Golf Championship at Troon in 1973, considers Loch Lomond his lasting memorial to golf.

The course is criss-crossed by streams, awash with marshes and cloaked in fabulous mature trees, such as beeches, Douglas firs, larches, limes, pines and vast oaks.

Weiskopf and Morrish made full use of the rolling landscape, the mature woodland and the spectacu-



Rossdhu House, the stately clubhouse, was built by the Colquhoun Clan in 1773. The family lived in Rossdhu House up until the mid 1970s.

lar stands of azalea and rhododendrons in their design. In late spring and early summer, a kaleidoscope of colours illuminate the surroundings of Rossdhu House, the ancestral seat of the Colquhoun Clan, and visitors to the course during the Scottish Open can experience the mystique that surrounds this special place.

INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP: In September 2004, the club launched a Captains' Programme for the benefit of the club's international membership.

The programme is aimed at increasing awareness of the club's prestige throughout the world and creating a truly unique international private members club.

Since its launch, there have been various Captains' events including a golf tournament in Dubai, a Burns Supper in New York and a 'Talking Golf' dinner in Scotland.

The club has 40 suites, two fine dining rooms, a conference room, drawing room, library, Rossdhu Bar and the informal Spike Bar.

Outdoor pursuits including boating, fishing, driven pheasant, grouse, stag and clay pigeon shooting are available for members and their guests.

• For more information, visit www.lochlamond.com





The Loch Lamond course, which double Scottish Open champion Ernie Els calls “probably the best course in Europe”. Another club member described it better: “It’s 40 minutes from Glasgow and half an inch short of heaven.”

Fast Fact
There are more than 100 distilleries scattered around the country. Ask the Scotch Whisky Association about The Whisky Trail.