

The best MARCO POLO Insider Tips

Our top 15 Insider Tips

INSIDER TIP ▶ Let your Celtic hair down

At the *Beltane Fire Festival* held on the last day of April, more than 12,000 go on a pagan, Celtic spree that doesn't end until May. A really spectacular event on Calton Hill → p. 96

INSIDER TIP ▶ Bird's eye view

Fantastic view at a dizzying height over the Royal Mile in the safe haven of the church from the roof of *St Giles Cathedral* → p. 39

INSIDER TIP ▶ From bean to bar

If you want to find out why chocolate is healthy, contact the *Chocolate Tree* well in advance to attend one of its events where you can learn everything about the production and enjoyment of chocolate → p. 52

INSIDER TIP ▶ William Turner likes it gloomy

The *National Gallery* only exhibits some of the artist's watercolours in the weak January light to prevent them from fading → p. 45

INSIDER TIP ▶ Pandas and penguins

Beside the daily penguin parade in *Edinburgh Zoo* (photo right), there's one more highlight: giant pandas → p. 94

INSIDER TIP ▶ Cryptic crypt

Non-stop horror films, pole dancing, cosy corners and "candlelight burgers" in the gloomy *Banshee Labyrinth* under a bridge in the Old Town → p. 67

INSIDER TIP ▶ Breathtaking panorama

You will get the best photo of the castle from *St Cuthbert's Cemetery* at the foot of the hill. It is particularly beautiful in winter when leaves do not block your view → p. 45

INSIDER TIP ▶ Dessert with a steely soft drink

Irn-Bru, the orange-coloured Scottish pick-me-up and national soft drink is the basis of one of the desserts served in the *Hotel du Vin Bistro* → p. 55

INSIDER TIP ▶ A hat to suit every head

For men, it could be Sherlock Holmes' deerstalker cap; for ladies, definitely the mere wisp of a fascinator to decorate their hair – a milliner rules over her realm in the *Fabhatrix* in the heart of the Old Town → p. 62

INSIDER TIP ▶ The local bus to the Da Vinci Code

Bus lines 15 and 62 will take you in comfort, in half an hour, to the legendary, exquisite *Rosslyn Chapel* to the south of the city centre. Do you think you will be able to find the Holy Grail that some people think is hidden inside its walls? You can buy expert literature at the Chapel that will do away with many of the myths (photo left) → p. 81

INSIDER TIP ▶ Celebrate in Scottish style

The people of Edinburgh have storytelling and music in their blood. The Scottish-Gaelic culture is joyfully celebrated at Easter at the *TradFest* → p. 96

INSIDER TIP ▶ Checked nylons

They really exist: tights with tartan patterns – at *The Royal Mile*. The square check powder pink model is even quite sexy → p. 63

INSIDER TIP ▶ Feel at home

You can rent a holiday flat behind the thick walls on *Candlemaker Row* – in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the Old Town near Greyfriars' Cemetery with its tales of vanishing corpses → p. 78

INSIDER TIP ▶ Forward looking

The large clock on the tower next to Waverley Station is two minutes fast so that passengers won't miss their train – the only exception is on New Year's Eve → p. 44

INSIDER TIP ▶ Seaweed brew

You will be able to try a drink you have definitely never had before at the *David Bann* vegetarian restaurant: beer made of seaweed → p. 55



BEST OF...

GREAT PLACES FOR FREE

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FOR FREE

● *Three-hour declaration of love to the city*

You will have certainly fallen in love with Edinburgh after this *free tour* of the metropolis. The enthusiastic guides are devoted to their city and know absolutely everything about haunted houses and spitting, inventions and striving for independence, about music making, etc, etc, etc. ... → p. 36

● *Secret Festival favourite*

Originally, the *Festival Fringe* was just an offshoot of the Edinburgh International Festival. But, for some years now, visitors have not only been attracted to the many comedy and theatre performances just because they're free (photo) → p. 22

● *First the sheep and then the kilt*

Do you want to find out how a kilt is made? The *Tartan Weaving Mill & Exhibition* will provide you with all the answers → p. 36

● *Scotland in session*

The *Scottish Parliament* looks like an upturned ship but this visionary construction fits perfectly into the tightly-knit Old Town. You can satisfy your curiosity about the cryptic architecture on a free tour → p. 38

● *Edinburgh's famous writers*

Burns, Scott and Stevenson are shining stars in the Scottish literature firmament. The memorabilia in the small *Writers' Museum* will give you an idea of the time they spent in Edinburgh → p. 39

● *Modern art from Scotland's capital*

The *Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Two* (formerly Dean Gallery) pays homage to Edinburgh's greatest artist – Eduardo Paolozzi: sculptor, Surrealist, Pop-Artist → p. 48

● *Jazz for free*

The *Jazz Bar* swings more than any other club in town. From Tuesday to Saturday evening, free, unplugged sessions go along with the first beer of the day at the bar's "Teatime Acoustics" events → p. 72



●●● Dots in guidebook refer to "Best of..." tips

ONLY IN EDINBURGH

Unique experiences

● *The castle on the volcano*

The most impressive aspect of *Edinburgh Castle* and the volcanic rock it is built on, is the silhouette the two merge to form. Things are more intimate inside the castle: crown jewels, the Stone of Destiny and a simple chapel are true gems. The views are breathtaking! → p. 30

● *Memento mori*

The gloomy *Greyfriars' Cemetery* in the heart of the Old Town is like a history book of the city carved in stone. A lot of people come here because they believe the place is haunted. The corpse thieves Burke and Hare dug up bodies buried here for an anatomy professor → p. 32

● *Fiddles in the bar*

Sandy Bell's is a pub with a resounding reputation. There is nothing more typically Scottish than listening to folk musicians at a jam session with a glass of beer in your hand → p. 72

● *Eating in the heart of the city*

You will feel like you are in a catacomb in the vaults of the *The Grain Store* restaurant. Tuck into the unpretentious food served by candlelight in what was once a warehouse → p. 56

● *Just a department store?*

Jenners, from 1838, does not try to be modern. Here a small escalator, there a narrow, winding staircase. You can never be quite sure which of the 100 departments on the six floors you will find yourself in – but Jenners sells absolutely everything (photo) → p. 61

● *Farmer's market with a view of the castle*

The best market in the country is quite simply named *Farmer's Market*. Sixty farmers and producers offer their exquisite, out of the ordinary, produce for sale on Saturday: wild boar, organic beer, ostrich and water-buffalo meat, lobster, honey, chutneys ... → p. 61

● *Bar on the bridge*

The *North Bridge Brasserie* has established itself in the foyer of the Scotsman newspaper. Where drinking used to inspire writers, the lovely bar now whets one's appetite for Edinburgh: pure *grandezza* → p. 79



ONLY IN



DISCOVERY TOURS

1

EDINBURGH AT A GLANCE



START: ① Valvona & Crolla Caffè Bar
END: ⑱ Royal Oak

Distance:
 ➔ 9.6 km/6 miles

1 day
 Walking time
 (without stops)
 3 hours



COSTS: admission, food and snacks incl. whisky purchase £ 40–50
WHAT TO PACK: A hip flask to fill up (for those who like whisky)

IMPORTANT TIPS: The Valvona & Crolla Caffè Bar opens at 8:30am

Welcome to Edinburgh's two "Old Towns" – a World Heritage Site. Explore both the mundane and medieval faces of the city on a stroll through the New and Old Towns. Go shopping en route and discover what the city has to offer at night.

08:30am Start your tour with a cappuccino and an Italian-style breakfast in the hip Italian café ① **Valvona &**

① **Valvona & Crolla** ☕

Cities have many faces. If you want to get behind the scenes to explore their unique charm and head off the beaten track or find your way to green oases, handpicked restaurants or the best local activities, then these tailored Discovery Tours are just the right thing. Choose the best route for the day and follow in the footsteps of the MARCO POLO authors – well-prepared to navigate your way to all the many highlights that await you along the tour.

Crolla → p. 52 located in the New Town surrounded by Georgian and Neo-classical architecture.

09:30am Turn to the south, with Calton Hill → p. 41 on your left hand side. Walk along Leith Walk and at York Place, head west to the ② **National Portrait Gallery** → p. 46. Behind the neo-Gothic façade you will see a "who's who" of historical and contemporary Scottish VIPs captured in paintings, photographs and even videos.

② **National Portrait Gallery** 