



AllWays

Edinburgh, The Scottish Borders, UK

www.allwaystraveller.com



So much to discover along the Borders

The Scottish Borders, as its name suggests, is that part of Scotland that abuts the border with England.

This has Dumfriesshire and Kirkcudbrightshire on the Scottish side of the border, with the English counties of Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland on the other.

The Scottish Borders region, unlike the more mountainous Highlands, is gently hilly with swathes of green fields and pastureland and the River Tweed flowing through.

The coast to one side runs along the Firth of Clyde with the North Sea on the other.

Edinburgh is just over an hour's drive away.

In the central part of the Scottish Borders one finds a string of unspoilt country towns including Melrose, Selkirk and Peebles, along with many old abbeys and historic properties.

A short break in the Scottish Borders enables the visitor to take in much of what is a very interesting and naturally stunning part of Scotland.

www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/scottish-borders/

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Don't dash away from the first Scotland you come to

There is a temptation, when arriving in a different country, to get as far away from the point of arrival and as quickly as possible.

This is most certainly the case with the Pas-de-Calais region of France, which is all too often overlooked in favour of more, supposedly, desirable destinations.

In its case there is the lure of Provence and the chic resorts of the South of France.

For we Brits, Calais itself is, literally, the first port of call following a trip across or under across or under the English Channel.

Once on French soil we make great haste in getting well away before considering the trip has really started.

In the case of Pas-de-Calais this is a mistake – as it is with the Scottish borders.

See : <http://allways.williamjack.e-kei.pl/continents/europe/pas-de-calais-france>.

So true with the Borders

So it can be with the Scottish Borders, although getting there on a road trip tends to be up the M6 cum A47(M) from England into Scotland.

We pass the *Welcome to Scotland* sign and accelerate, rather than stopping a while.

Edinburgh is a touch over two hours away and there are the Highlands, Cairngorms, Trossachs and Loch Ness beckoning beyond.

And surely, linked with England will mean the culture in the Scottish Borders will be diluted even tainted by Sassenachs.

Stopping on the way back

On our first Scottish Road trip we too had our first stop Edinburgh before moving North.

We did however decide to stop in the Borders region on our way back and were so pleased we did.

To begin with, the Scots in the Borders are as passionately Scottish as they are throughout the country, with this reflected in the culture and heritage.

There is so much to do and see here – and all with a relatively small area.

For this, sadly limited, stay in the Scottish Borders we decided to get to the Breconshire coast, take in Melrose and visit Abbotsford House, the one-time home of Sir Walter Scott.

We are already planning a longer visit to this less popular but equally rewarding part of Scotland



More information

www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/scottish-borders

www.borders.co.uk

Melrose gets the nod during this trip to the Borders

For our one opportunity to visit a traditional Scottish Borders town, on this trip, we opted for Melrose, which sits on the Tweed.

It was that or Kelso, which Sir Walter Scott claimed was the most beautiful in all of Scotland.

Melrose got the vote from me because, as an ex-rugby player, I associated the town as the birthplace of Rugby Sevens (though 'sevens' were never my forte).

This frightening fast version of the game was first staged back in 1883 and the Melrose Sevens continue to be held every April.

Teams from the home and international rugby playing nations compete and everyone else watches in admiration with a beer or two.

In addition to its rugby tournament, the town also stages the annual week-long Melrose Festival and the Borders Book Festival.

Like the sevens, the Melrose Pipe Band Championships attracts pipers from all over the world.

Melrose Abbey

Melrose Abbey, right in the town, dates from 1136 and stands today as an impressive ruin.

A casket said to contain the heart of Robert the Bruce was found and reburied here, under a commemorative stone tablet.

The town itself is really pleasant, with independent shops, local butchers and bakers and, if not a candlestick maker, a number of fine gift shops and galleries where one can buy candles.

While Ann delighted in exploring all of these, I had the difficult choice of deciding which of several excellent inn to call on.

Other Borders towns

Had we had more time it would have been good to get to Kelso and Selkirk, where Sir Walter Scott served as Sheriff for 33 years.



The Selkirk Common Riding, with over 400 riders taking part, is recognised as one of the oldest of the Border festivals and back to from the Battle of Flodden in 1513.

I was also told that Peebles was well worth a visit.





A bracing day on the Berwickshire coast

In contrast to rolling hills and open countryside inland, its Berwickshire coastline provides the Scottish Borders with some of Britain's most spectacular scenery.

There is the chance to walk atop towering cliffs complete with arches, stacks and crumbling castles and to stroll along bracing sandy beaches interspersed by a string of traditional fishing villages.

The area is also internationally important for seabirds and coastal flora, with a wealth of marine life just out at sea.

The Berwickshire Coastal Path

The best way to appreciate this is to dip in and out of the Berwickshire Coastal Path, which stretches some 28 miles from Cockburnspath to Berwick-upon-Tweed.

We managed to take in the part of the path that rounds St Abb's Head, a National Nature Reserve, to get to the quaint fishing village of St Abbs.

St Abbs remains a working harbour, where fishermen land their shellfish, and it is here one can get to a National Trust for Scotland Nature Reserve.

The reserve home to one of Britain's more accessible seabird colonies, as it is based on the mainland).

Here one finds large numbers of guillemots, kittiwakes and razorbills, with tens of thousands of seabirds nesting here between May to July each year.

We then walked along a couple of invigoratingly sandy beaches to get to Eyemouth.



This also has a thriving harbour with the town itself selling locally sourced produce and crafts.

We ended and all to short trip to the Berwickshire Coast at Cove, its most northerly point.

Yet more spectacular views from the cliffs and a poignant memorial to those lost in an 1881 fishing disaster.

More information

www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/st-abbs-head
www.visitberwickshirecoast.co.uk





Scott's magnificent home is as he intended it to be

A highlight of any trip to the Scottish Borders is going to be a visit to Abbotsford.

This is the ancestral home of Sir Walter Scott, the 19th century novelist and poet Sir Walter Scott who was, for many years, Sheriff-Depute of Selkirkshire.

Scott was the biggest-selling author of his day and used his great wealth to purchase a mountain farm 'on a bare haugh and bleak bank by the side of the Tweed' and add on to it a Scots Baronial mansion.

Although the major works took place between 1817 and 1825, Scott's first project was the garden and surrounds to the house.

He expanded the estate from 110 acres to 1400 and brought in and planted a veritable small forest of mature trees, many of these still stand proudly today.

The House

Scott used his new home, now called Abbotsford, to house his extensive library and large and eclectic collection of ancient furniture, arms and armour.

There were also any number of relics and curios linked to Scottish history.

There was also a procession of house guests representing the 'great and the good' of the time.



The gardens and beyond

Scott designed his Regency walled garden at Abbotsford as 'three outdoor rooms' and what we can enjoy today is fundamentally as Scott determined it to be.

There are also walking trails through the 120 acres of land beside the Tweed, made up of meadow and native woodland . was first planted by Scott



The house after Scott

Scott lived and worked at Abbotsford, through times of great success and affluence followed by near financial ruin, until his death in 1832.

Abbotsford then passed to his descendants who first opened the house to the public just five months after Scott's death.

The house, garden and surrounding acres are now run by the Abbotsford Trust.

As a result, almost all of Scott's books, paintings, furniture and has amazing collection of artefacts have remained very much 'in situ'.

Should Scott's ghost ever return to Abbotsford, it would notice little difference to the house and grounds it knew.

Take the tour

That's what makes a visit to Abbotsford so fascinatingly interesting, particularly if one takes a guided tour of the house and gardens from one of the volunteer guides.

Before doing so, take in the free exhibition on the life and legacy of Sir Walter Scott.

Our guide at Abbotsford was Ann and she really helped us to appreciate Scott's life and times and get to know the man just as we are looking at his hall, study dining room.

The Ochiltree's café

Better still get the tour/meal package and enjoy a delightful lunch, as we did, in the Ochiltree's café.

It is named after Edie Ochiltree, a character from Scott's novel *The Antiquary*, although the word 'café' does not really do justice to what's on offer.

The chefs from the award-winning Orde Food Co offer light lunches; soups and sandwiches and hearty pies and burgers along with seasonal specials and fruit and veg from Abbotsford's Kitchen Garden.



ScottFest

ScottFest, in August, is family festival held at Abbotsford that celebrates Sir Walter Scott's birthday, with jousting, living history, falconry, music and dance across Abbotsford's estate.

It is one of a number of events on the estate.



More information

www.scottsabbotsford.com



The Hawthorn Pod

It was a dark and stormy night when we arrived at Hawthorn Pod on Airhouse Farm in the Scottish Borders.

By Ann Mealor

We had followed the excellent instructions on how to get to the Pod in the village of Oxton, to the letter, as we knew we would be arriving late after a long drive.

As we peered through the gloom, rain streaming down the windscreen and wipers working hard, we edged along the tarmac track that wound across the open farmland.

We were beginning to wonder if we had taken the right turning after all, when we saw a light glowing in the distance.

We breathed a sigh of relief.

The pod, and all its comforts, was within reach.

A cosy cocoon

We pulled up on the hard standing in front of the door, quickly punched in the access code and went in.

The pod was warm and welcoming like a cosy cocoon.

We found wine glasses and robes, took out a bottle of fizz, opened a large bag of crisps and enjoyed the evening.

Snug and perfectly formed

Hawthorn Pod, snug and perfectly formed, had everything we needed for our two-night stay.

A large, extremely comfortable bed with brightly coloured bedding and beautiful views across the farm through the large porthole window (with remote control screen if you didn't want to wake up to the cows).

No chance of anyone peering in, as the two pods at Airhouse Farm were very well spaced apart, giving guests the utmost privacy.

There was a small fridge, microwave oven, matching red kettle and toaster, brightly coloured mugs and all the crockery and cutlery needed.

The small, well designed wet room made the most of space available and included toilet, washbasin and shower and full sized, luxury toiletries.





Hi tech and sound surround

The pod was very high tech:- surround sound, flatscreen TV at the bottom of the bed, mood lighting in a variety of colours, wi-fi, phone chargers and remote controls for everything.

The underfloor heating was another nice touch.

Everything in the pod was of the highest quality and great attention had been paid to every detail.

We even had a welcome box of delicious goodies left for us by our generous hosts, Martin and Carol.

Outside there was a decked seating area with a barbeque and hot tub.

How lovely was that hot tub! As warming and as soothing as an electric blanket in a cold bed.

Heaven! Sitting in a bubbling hot pot, gently simmering, cold air wafting across my face, glass of sparkly in hand, soaking up the scenery.

There is lots to see and do for all the family on the organic Airhouse Farm.

Meeting the animals is a must, with Lily and Dylan the two delightful donkeys and Obama and Orlando, the friendly Llamas – you will find their wool for sale in the quaint farm shop.

Then there's Snuffle and Truffle, the pet pigs, Gertrude and Bob, the playful goats and eight cheeky Shetland ponies-all super cute.

Add to this a small herd of Shetland cattle along with Apple, the Highland Bull, a gentle giant, and three fluffy Valois sheep.

Eggs from the hens can also be found at the farm shop too, which is open 24 hours on an honesty basis and stacked full of good quality, practical items and some little luxuries too.

There are farm walks a plenty from the pod, offering a great way to explore the local area and the Scottish Borders.

There are treasure trails for the children and plenty of places for ball games, hide and seek and building dens and nests.

There is also a charming playhouse for the Under 7s filled with books and games to keep youngsters entertained on wet days.

The Farm does a lot to attract a wide variety of birds and local wildlife including badgers, hares, hedgehogs and stoats.

No need to leave the farm

There is much to enjoy here on a relaxing weekend without ever leaving the Farm. It is an ideal place to get away from it all for a few days.

Martin and Carol, the owners are very helpful. You will see Martin about the farm tending to the animals and Damian, the General Manager, is always happy to help guests and give advice about where to go and what to do during the stay.

A perfect way to enjoy the great outdoors!

More information

www.premiercottages.co.uk



A snapshot of the Scottish Borders



In addition to this *AllWays Traveller to the Scottish Borders*, you can also enjoy :

**AllWays Traveller to Edinburgh,
Scotland's capital city**



The Scottish capital is the UK's second most popular place for international visitors after London.

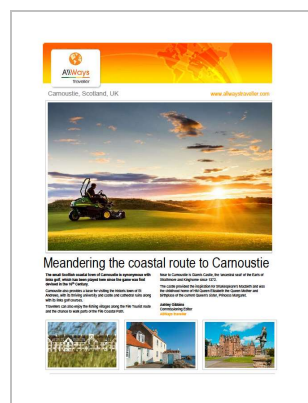
As a city break destination, it offers the chance to appreciate centuries of passionate Scottish heritage.

There is a wealth of arts and culture, particularly during the festivals for which the city is known worldwide.

Princes Street and the Royal Mile provide the city's bustling tourist thoroughfare, particularly during one of the many annual festivals for which Edinburgh is rightly famous.

Just beyond is the Medieval Old Town and Georgian New Town, both with UNESCO World Heritage status along with Arthur's Peak, an ancient volcano and the main peak of the hills in Edinburgh that form most of Holyrood Park.

**AllWays Traveller to Carnoustie,
home of golf links**



The small Scottish coastal town of Carnoustie is synonymous with links golf, which has been played here since the game was first devised in the 16th Century.

Carnoustie also provides a base for visiting the historic town of St Andrews, with its thriving university and castle and cathedral ruins along with its links golf courses.

Travellers can also enjoy the fishing villages along the Fife Tourist route and the chance to walk parts of the Fife Coastal Path.

Near to Carnoustie is Glamis Castle, the 'ancestral seat' of the Earls of Strathmore and Kinghorne.

The castle provided the inspiration for Shakespeare's Macbeth and was the childhood home of HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother and birthplace of the current Queen's sister, Princess Margaret.

**AllWays Traveller to the Scottish
Highlands and Loch Ness**



The Scottish Highlands is undoubtedly one of the grand scenic regions of Europe.

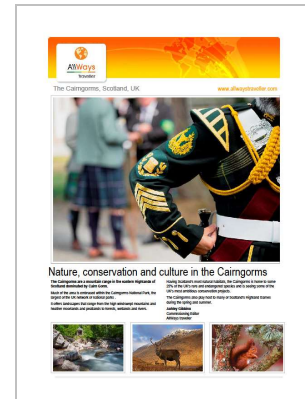
It offers majestic mountains, with Ben Nevis Britain's highest, and a North Sea coastline scattered with remote fishing villages.

Loch Ness, in the centre of the region, is the UK's largest lake and one enmeshed in the myth of the monster, and it is here one finds the ruins of the once mighty Urquhart Castle.

The Highlands also embraces the Cairngorms National Park and Dunrobin Castle, the stately family seat of the Earl of Sutherland.

A fine way to experience the majesty of the Highlands, which covers an area of some 10,000 square miles, is on a road trip that takes in all or part of the North Coast 500.

**AllWays Traveller to the
Cairngorms**



The Cairngorms are a mountain range in the eastern Highlands of Scotland dominated by Cairn Gorm.

Much of the area is embraced within the Cairngorms National Park, the largest of the UK network of national parks.

It offers landscapes that range from the high windswept mountains and heather moorlands and peatlands to forests, wetlands and rivers.

Having Scotland's most natural habitats, the Cairngorms is home to some 25% of the UK's rare and endangered species.

It is also seeing some of the UK's most ambitious conservation projects.

The Cairngorms also play host to many of Scotland's Highland Games during the spring and summer.

Read more at www.allwaystraveller.com

AllWays traveller and the International Travel Writers Alliance



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www.allwaystraveller.com



The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.

www.itwalliance.com



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