

Glasgow & Southern Scotland



No-one ever does a lowland fling, but as you dance across this region with its historic sites, epic walking and cycling, and renaissance city Glasgow, you'll wonder why not. While tour buses chug to the must-sees of the Highlands, there's a gentler, less crowded beauty along the border.

Early tourists were raiding English armies who wanted to souvenir the whole country, causing borderland forts to spring up like thistles. Waves of invasion washed back and forth over the Borders with large prosperous abbeys holding rock-like despite the violence around them. Most were regularly ransacked before the Reformation completed the trashing, leaving ruins that are linked today by popular cycling and walking paths.

To the hilly west is the rugged terrain that inspired Robert Burns, Scotland's best-loved poet, whose earthy yarns proved popular as stories to tell in pubs. You might even find yourself recalling *Tam o' Shanter* as you drink in market-town pubs here.

Snaking from the west, the River Clyde was once the lifeblood of Glasgow. The basis of the city's now-defunct shipbuilding industry, the Clyde continued its course to bring prosperity to the market town of New Lanark. But Scotland's biggest city is alive and kicking with a significant cultural contribution to make, particularly with a live-music scene that's bound to have you on your feet and dancing (though, hopefully, not flinging).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Pioneering Glasgow's new **Kelvingrove Museum** (p790) – playful art and clever history
- Making the pilgrimage along **St Cuthbert's Way** (p801), taking in towns like **Kelso** (p805), **Jedburgh** (p806) and **Melrose** (p803)
- Tracking down that hard-to-find secondhand classic from *Beano* to *Bond* in the book nooks of **Wigtown** (p811)
- Getting up close and personal with a great Scott: Sir Walter at his home **Abbotsford House** (p804), or his **court** (p802) in Selkirk
- Breaking into the live-music scene at a **T Break gig** (p796) or at one of Glasgow's thumping **live-music venues** (p796)
- Packing a picnic on the **Isle of Arran** (p819), which includes a wee dram from the island's own **distillery** (p817)



■ POPULATION: 2,701,580

■ AREA: 7464 SQ MILES

History

Traditionally a dubious borderland between the Scots and their chief tormentors, southern Scotland was lawless for centuries, as local chiefs sought power by engaging in skuldugery with one side or the other. The Border abbays set up in the 12th century succeeded in maintaining order for a period, but were soon reduced to ruins by rampaging English raiding parties, a pattern that continued right up until the union in 1707.

Activities

Despite the active reputation of Scotland's northwest, Southern Scotland has plenty of walking and cycling routes. We give suggestions for shorter routes throughout this chap-

ter. If you're looking for something longer, several long-distance walking and cycling routes originate in Glasgow; many form part of the constantly expanding **National Cycle Network** and follow traffic-free routes for most of the way.

Glasgow's tourist office (p785) has a range of maps and leaflets detailing these routes, many of which start from Bell's Bridge by the Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre (SECC), beside the river.

The **Glasgow to Loch Lomond Route** traverses residential and industrial areas following disused train lines and towpaths. The route actually extends all the way to Inverness, from Balloch via Aberfoyle to link with the Glen Ogle Trail, Killin, Pitlochry and Aviemore.

The **Glasgow to Irvine/Ardrossan and West Kilbride Cycle Way** runs via Paisley, then traffic-free as far as Glengarnock. From there to Kilwinning it follows minor roads, then the route is partly traffic-free to Ardrossan, from where ferries leave for the Isle of Arran.

The **Glasgow to Edinburgh** route partly follows the Clyde Walkway and a disused railway line.

The long-distance footpath, the **West Highland Way**, begins in Milngavie, 8 miles north of Glasgow, and runs for 95 miles to Fort William.

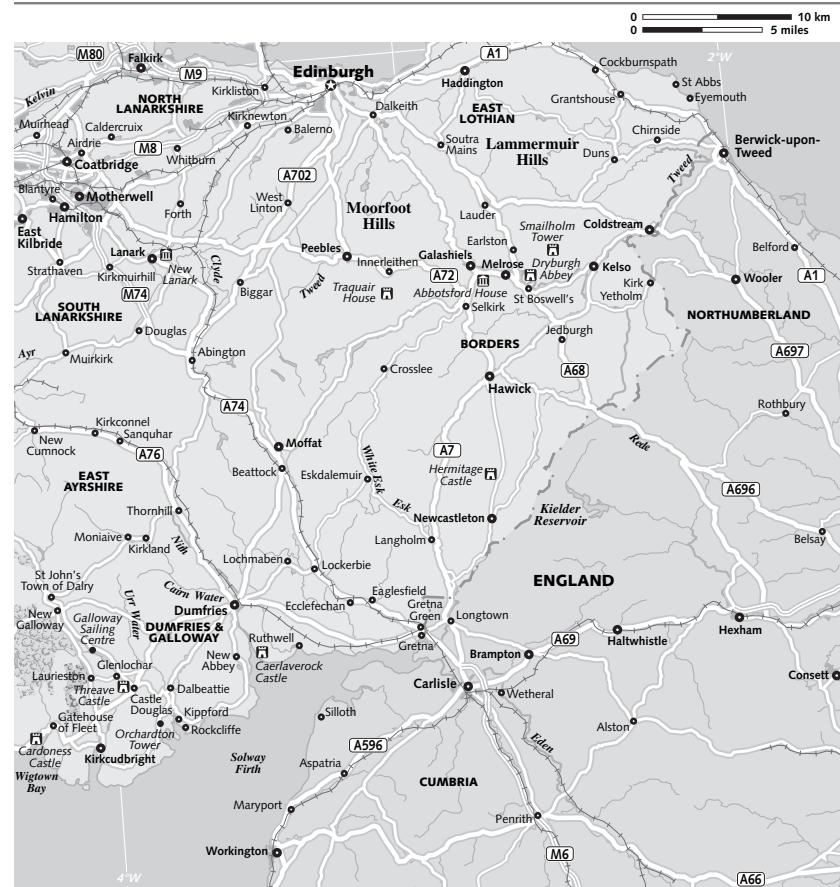
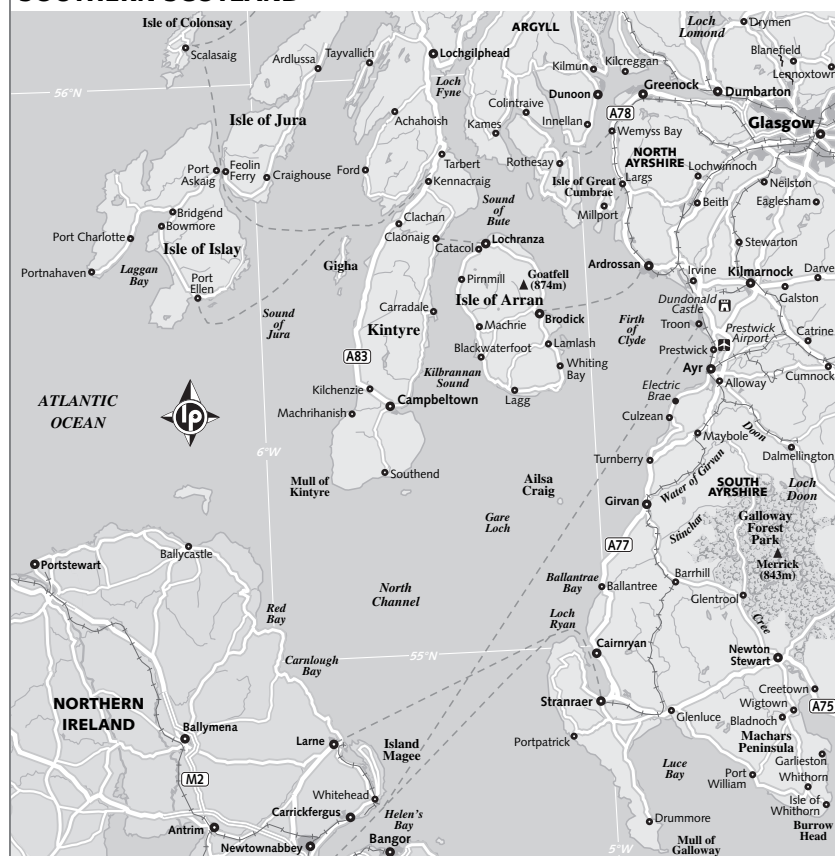
One of Scotland's great long-distance walks is the challenging, 212-mile **Southern Upland Way**, which stretches from coast to coast across southern Scotland. There are

several tough stretches with sturdy hills to be climbed, but the sheer variety of the landscape traversed makes it memorable. For more information, check out www.southernuplandway.com.

Getting Around

Glasgow is an obvious transport hub, and bus services are good throughout the region. Train services are more limited. Other stations of interest include Berwick-upon-Tweed (in Northumberland on the English side of the border, but the natural jumping-off point for the Tweed Valley) on the main east-coast line; Dumfries on the main west-coast line; and Stranraer and Ayr, which are linked to Glasgow.

SOUTHERN SCOTLAND



GLASGOW

☎ 0141 / pop 629,500

With a CV that includes City of Architecture (1999) and City of Culture (1990), you'd think Glasgow would be a shoe-in for the 2014 Commonwealth Games (the host city will be determined in late 2007). But this is also the city whose inhabitants have the highest cholesterol in the EU, and in which there's still a simmering sectarianism between Roman Catholic and Protestant residents. Consider that Glasgow produced both the comedian Billy Connolly and tea-mogul Sir Thomas Lipton, and you'll soon learn what a complex and contrary place it can be.

Part of the problem is Edinburgh. While Glasgow is Scotland's largest city it was pipped for capital by the more sophisticated city to the east. And a (mostly) friendly rivalry has existed ever since. Folk from Edinburgh tease Glaswegians (or Weegies) for their thick working-class accents; you may be saying 'Huh?' more than you expected in an English-speaking city.

But Glasgow is no longer the rough little brother to Edinburgh's urbane older sister. The city is picking itself up and developing along the once-grim River Clyde faster than you can say 'urban renewal'. It's a city famous for its architecture (from Mackintosh curls to Gothic cathedrals), with music a big cultural contribution (and everyone claiming to have seen 'Franz' here before they made it big). The city that was once 'Workshop to the World' is finding a new vocation.

HISTORY

Glasgow grew around the cathedral founded by Kertigan, later to become St Mungo, in the 6th century. Other than the cathedral, virtually nothing of the medieval city remains, as it was worn away by energetic reformers: from the Reformation to the Industrial Revolution.

But Glasgow has never dwelt on its past. In the 18th century, the tobacco trade between Europe and America came through Glasgow, creating great wealth and an architectural flowering. Even after tobacco crashed in the 19th century, the city continued to prosper with healthy textile manufacturing, shipbuilding and the coal and steel industries. This prosperity, however, came at great cost to workers, who endured appalling conditions.

In the first half of the 20th century, Glasgow was the centre of Britain's munitions industry, supplying arms and ships for both world wars, in the second of which the city was carpet-bombed. In the postwar years, however, the port and heavy industries dwindled, and by the early 1970s the city seemed doomed.

Unlike Edinburgh, working-class Glasgow had few alternatives when recession hit and the city became synonymous with unemployment, economic depression and urban violence, centred on high-rise housing schemes such as the infamous Gorbals. The urban development programmes of recent times have renewed confidence, but behind the optimism the standard of living remains low compared with the rest of Britain and life continues to be tough for many. Recent bright signs include the redevelopment along the Clyde and the celebration of Glasgow as a centre for culture.

ORIENTATION

Glasgow's tourist sights are spread over a wide area. The city centre is built on a grid system north of the River Clyde. The two train stations and bus station are within a couple of blocks of George Sq, the main city square. Running east-west along a ridge in the northern part of the city, Sauchiehall St (first syllable pronounced soch as in loch) has a pedestrian mall with numerous shops at its eastern end. Merchant City is the commercial district, east of George Sq, and a focus for fashionable eating and drinking. The West End, divided from the centre by the M8 motorway, is a similarly buzzy nightlife zone, with a more student-driven feel. Motorways bore through the bleak suburbs and the main airport lies 8 miles west of the centre.

Maps

The *A-Z Premier Street Map* (£4.75) is a clear fold-out map of Glasgow and its suburbs, which includes a street index. It's widely available in bookshops and newsagents.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Borders (☎ 222 7700; 98 Buchanan St) Wide range of Scottish literature, good travel section, and a café.

Voltaire & Rousseau (☎ 339 1811; 18 Otago Lane) A real studenty secondhand store.

Emergency

Dial ☎ 999 or ☎ 112 for police, ambulance, fire brigade or coastguard.

Internet Access

easyInternetcafé (☎ 222 2364; 57 St Vincent St; per hr about £1.50; ☎ 7am-10.45pm) Under-18s need an adult companion to enter.

Hillhead Library (☎ 339 7223; 348 Byres Rd; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Tue, 10am-5pm Wed, noon-8pm Thu, 9am-5pm Fri & Sat) Free internet access, but book ahead.

Internet Resources

Glasgow Galleries (www.glasgowgalleries.co.uk)

Glasgow Museums (www.glasgowmuseums.com)

Greater Glasgow & Clyde Valley Tourist Board (www.seeglasgow.com)

Laundry

Havelock Laundry (☎ 339 1499; 10 Havelock Rd) Just off Byres Rd.

Medical Services

Glasgow Royal Infirmary (☎ 211 4000; 84 Castle St) Medical emergencies and outpatient facilities.

Money

The post office offers the most competitive rates on currency exchange. There's a bureau de change at the tourist office and at both airports. There are many banks with ATMs around the centre and at the airports.

American Express (☎ 222 1401; cnr Hope & Bothwell Sts; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat)

Post

Main post office (47 St Vincent St; ☎ 8.30am-5.45pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm Sat)

Tourist Information

St Enoch Square Travel Centre (☎ 226 4826; St Enoch Sq; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Provides information on all transport in the Glasgow region.

Tickets Scotland (☎ 204 5151; 239 Argyle St; ☎ 9am-6pm) Sells tickets for most tours and gigs around town.

Tourist office (www.seeglasgow.com) Central (☎ 204 4400; 11 George Sq; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-May, 9am-7pm Mon-Sat Jun & Sep, 9am-8pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Sun year-round); Glasgow Airport (☎ 848 4440; ☎ 7.30am-5pm)

SIGHTS

City Centre

A walking tour (p791) covers the main sights. Two buildings designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh – the Glasgow School of Art and the Scotland School Church – are also in the area (see p789).

GEORGE SQUARE

This grand open space is dignified by statues of famous Glaswegians and folk from Scotland's south, including Robert Burns, James Watt, Sir John Moore, and atop a column, Sir Walter Scott. A regal pair of lions guard the war memorial that epitomises the Victorian-era environs.

The seat of local government, the **City Chambers** (☎ 287 4018; George Sq; admission & tours free) was built in the 1880s at the high point of the city's prosperity. The interior is even more extravagant than the exterior, and the chambers have been used as a movie location, standing in for the Kremlin and the Vatican. The 45-minute tours (10.30am and 2.30pm Monday to Friday) are worthwhile for the sheer opulence on show.

MERCHANT CITY

The prosperity of Glasgow's boom years are evident in Merchant City, a planned 18th-century civic expansion. The city's 'tobacco lords' profited from lucrative transatlantic trade routes, importing tobacco, rum and sugar. The noble civic and private buildings they erected have recently been renewed as stylish apartments, and as some of Glasgow's best bars and restaurants.

The pompous exterior of the 1775 former mansion that has become the **Gallery of Modern Art** (GoMA; ☎ 229 1996; www.glasgowmuseums.com; Queen St; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Wed & Sat, 10am-8pm Thu, 11am-5pm Fri & Sun; ♿) contrasts with the contemporary paintings and sculpture inside. It's a popular gallery particularly geared for kids, with plenty of activities. Outside, local smart-artists do a daily 'installation' of a traffic cone on the horseback statue of the Duke of Wellington, despite the local council's regular removal of their handiwork.

GLASGOW CATHEDRAL

Majestic **Glasgow Cathedral** (HS; ☎ 552 6891; www.glasgowcathedral.org.uk; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4pm Mon-Sat, 1-4pm Sun Oct-Mar; ♿) is an exemplar of Gothic architecture and Scotland's only mainland cathedral to survive the Reformation. This cathedral was built in 1136, but prior to its construction no less than three houses of worship were built and rebuilt on this sloping hill. The present structure dates principally from the 15th century when the city's trade guilds fought to save the structure, which then



INFORMATION		Blue Sky Backpackers.....	31 C2	Arches.....	(see 51)
American Express.....	1 D3	Cathedral House Hotel.....	32 F3	Barrowland.....	60 F3
Borders.....	2 D3	Devoncove.....	33 B2	Bloc.....	(see 52)
easyInternet Café.....	3 D3	Euro Hostel.....	34 D3	Cathouse.....	61 D3
Glasgow Royal Infirmary.....	4 F2	Glasgow SYHA Hostel.....	35 B1	Cineworld.....	62 D2
Main Post Office.....	5 D3	Malmaison.....	36 D2	Citizens' Theatre.....	63 D4
St Enoch Square Travel Centre.....	(see 83)	Rennie Mackintosh Hotel.....	37 C2	Clyde Auditorium (Armadillo).....	64 A3
Tickets Scotland.....	6 D3	University of Strathclyde Campus Village.....	38 E3	Garage.....	65 C2
Tourist Office.....	7 E3				
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		EATING			
City Chambers.....	8 E3	13th Note.....	39 E3	Café Gandolfi.....	40 E3
Gallery of Modern Art.....	9 E3	Café Lava.....	41 E4	Centre for Contemporary Arts.....	42 C2
George Square.....	10 E3	Fanny Trollope's.....	43 B2	Fratelli Sarti.....	44 D2
Glasgow Cathedral.....	11 F2	Fratelli Sarti.....	45 D2	Hunterian Art Gallery.....	14 B1
Glasgow School of Art.....	12 D2	Hunterian Museum.....	15 B1	Merchant Square.....	16 E3
Glasgow Science Centre.....	13 A3	Mercatopolis.....	17 F2	People's Palace & Winter Gardens.....	18 F4
Hunterian Art Gallery.....	14 B1	Pride o' the Clyde.....	19 D3	Provand's Lordship.....	20 F3
Hunterian Museum.....	15 B1	Provand's Lordship.....	20 F3	Sheffield Court.....	21 E3
Merchant Square.....	16 E3	St Mungo Museum of Religious Life & Art.....	22 F2	Tall Ship & Pumphouse.....	23 A2
Necropolis.....	17 F2	Tall Ship & Pumphouse.....	23 A2	Trades Hall.....	24 E3
People's Palace & Winter Gardens.....	18 F4	Trades Hall.....	24 E3	Waverley.....	25 C3
Pride o' the Clyde.....	19 D3	Waverley.....	25 C3	Willow Tea Rooms.....	26 D2
Provand's Lordship.....	20 F3	Willow Tea Rooms.....	26 D2	SLEEPING	
Sheffield Court.....	21 E3	SLEEPING			
St Mungo Museum of Religious Life & Art.....	22 F2	ABode.....	27 D2	ENTERTAINMENT	
Tall Ship & Pumphouse.....	23 A2	Adelaide's.....	28 D2	13th Note.....	(see 39)
Trades Hall.....	24 E3	Alamo Guest House.....	29 B2	ABC.....	59 D2
Waverley.....	25 C3	Babbly Bowster.....	30 E3		
Willow Tea Rooms.....	26 D2				

became the principal Protestant church. This site has been hallowed ground for over 1700 years, since St Ninian blessed the area for Christian burial, though it wasn't until the 6th century that St Mungo built a church here.

The **lower church** is the most interesting part; its forest of pillars creates a powerful atmosphere around the altar that sits on St Mungo's tomb, the focus of a famous medieval pilgrimage.

Behind the cathedral, the crumbling tombs of the city's rich and famous crowd the renovated **Necropolis**, which is worth a stroll for impressive city views.

It's a 20-minute walk to the cathedral from George Sq, but numerous buses pass by, including buses 11, 12, 36, 37, 38 and 42.

ST MUNGO MUSEUM OF RELIGIOUS LIFE & ART
Amid the city's bellicose sectarianism, this **museum** (☎ 553 2557; www.glasgowmuseums.com; 2 Castle St; admission free; ☽ 10am-5pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 11am-5pm

Fri & Sun; ☺) in the cathedral forecourt gathers the world's many faiths in one building. Art is the great unifier, with paintings and sculpture depicting the similarities and differences of universal themes such as birth, marriage and death.

From a Day of the Dead dancing skeleton to impressively decorated copies of the Koran, the exhibition is never slowed by love-thy-neighbour sentimentality. The top floor is dedicated to Scotland's religion. Outside, you'll find Britain's first Zen garden with an aspect that contemplates the Necropolis.

PROVAND'S LORDSHIP
Across the road from St Mungo Museum, **Provand's Lordship** (☎ 552 8819; www.glasgowmuseums.com; 3 Castle St; admission free; ☽ 10am-5pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 11am-5pm Fri & Sun) is Glasgow's oldest house. This rare example of 15th-century domestic Scottish architecture in the city was built as a manse for the chaplain of St Nicholas Hospital. It's particularly interesting to explore:

the ceilings and doorways are low and the rooms are decked out with staunch oak furniture and period artefacts; one room is a reconstruction of the living space of an early 16th-century chaplain. The building's best feature is its authentic feel – if you ignore the tacky, imitation-stone linoleum covering the ground floor.

The Clyde

Strolling along the Clyde gives two very different insights into the city: one of fading glory and another of new prosperity in the redevelopment that some locals call the 'silver city'.

GLASGOW SCIENCE CENTRE

Scotland's flagship millennium project, **Glasgow Science Centre** (☎ 420 5000; www.glasgowsciencecentre.org; 50 Pacific Quay; adult/child Science Mall £6.95/4.95 plus £2 for Planetarium, IMAX £6.95/4.95, combined ticket £9.95/7.95; ♿ 10am–6pm; 🇬🇧) could be a *Dr Who* spacecraft with its silver armadillo aesthetic. The two gleaming buildings are packed with kid-friendly activities and even adults will find some fun. The centre consists of an IMAX theatre, a massive interactive science mall and a planetarium that explains the night sky. Take Arriva bus 24 from Renfield St or First Glasgow bus 89 or 90 from Union St.

TALL SHIP & PUMPHOUSE

Across the Clyde from the Science Centre, via pedestrianised **Millennium Bridge**, is the **Tall Ship** (☎ 222 2513; www.thetallship.com; Stobcross Rd; adult/child £4.95/2.50, one child per adult free; ♿ 10am–5pm Mar–Oct, 10am–4pm Nov–Feb), one of five Clyde-built sailing ships still afloat due to extensive restoration. Launched in 1896, the *Glenlee* is a daunting three-masted vessel that currently holds displays on its restoration and on life aboard.

Nearby, the old **Pumphouse** houses exhibits on the manmade history of the river, which involved the amazing dredging work carried out to enable the big ships to sail into Glasgow. Evidence of the old shipyards still prevail here, in the foundations of a swing bridge, trolley tracks and old warehouses.

CLYDEBUILT

Further away from the centre, **Clydebuilt** (☎ 886 1013; Kings Inch Rd; adult/child £4.25/2.50; ♿ 10am–6pm Mon–Thu & Sat, 11am–5pm Sun; 🇬🇧) is a superb collection of model ships, industrial displays and narrative depicting the river's history. There's a three-screen audiovisual display on

shipbuilding and the decline of the Clyde's shipyards, which once clanged and buzzed with industry. Outside you can board *Kyles*, a typical 1872 vessel that's been left here forlorn among gull cries. To complete the time-travel experience, you can get here on the *Pride o' the Clyde* (see p799).

PEOPLE'S PALACE & WINTER GARDENS

Not just a local museum for local people, the **People's Palace & Winter Gardens** (☎ 271 2951; Glasgow Green; admission free; ♿ 10am–5pm Mon–Thu & Sat, 11am–5pm Fri & Sun) showcases what it means to be Glaswegian. From the goofy 1970s portrait of Billy Connolly to dance cards from the former dance hall Barrowland, this is definitely popular history. Displays on language, comedy and the grim old housing are all excellent. The emphasis on interactivity makes it kid-friendly, though some exhibits are getting long in the tooth (phones for AV materials make the PlayStation generation yawn). The attached Winter Gardens is a large greenhouse that's strictly for botany buffs.

West End

The West End is Glasgow's alternative hub, where university students and sophisticates mooch in the plethora of restaurants and bars or bargain-hunt in the many shops.

HUNTERIAN MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

Housed in two opposing buildings on University Ave, the **Hunterian Museum** (☎ 330 4221; www.hunterian.gla.ac.uk; University Ave; admission free; ♿ 9.30am–5pm Mon–Sat) was opened in 1807 as Scotland's first public museum. It houses the collection of William Hunter, physician, medical teacher and former student of the university. It's an eclectic collection of artefacts including a medieval coin collection, dinosaur eggs, and some of Captain Cook's curios from his voyages to the Pacific.

A nearby modern concrete building houses the **Hunterian Art Gallery** (☎ 330 5431; www.hunterian.gla.ac.uk; 82 Hillhead St; admission free; ♿ 9.30am–5pm Mon–Sat; 🇬🇧). The Scottish colourists (Peplow, JD Fergusson, Cadell) are well represented, and the gallery also includes McTaggart's Impressionistic Scottish landscapes and a gem by Thomas Millie Dow. Also located here is the unmissable Mackintosh House (see opposite).

Buses 11, 44 and 44A pass this way from the city centre (Hope St); it's also a short walk from Hillhead underground station.

CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH, GLASGOW'S GENIUS

Wherever you go in Glasgow, you'll see the quirky and geometric designs of this famous Scottish architect and designer. Many of the buildings Mackintosh designed in Glasgow are now open to the public, and his lean Art Nouveau typeface is so ubiquitous it's virtually *the* Glasgow font.

Born in 1868, Mackintosh studied at the Glasgow School of Art and, aged 27, won a competition to design the School of Art's new building. His talent was quickly recognised on the Continent (he contributed to several exhibitions in France, Germany and Austria) but, at the time, he did not receive his due in Scotland. His Glaswegian architectural career lasted until 1914, when he moved to England to concentrate on furniture design. He died in 1928, but it was only in the last decades of the 20th century that Mackintosh's genius began to be widely recognised and he became Glasgow's favourite architectural son.

Fortunately, Mackintosh left a legacy of impressive edifices throughout the city. His best-known building is the **Glasgow School of Art** (☎ 353 4526; www.gsa.ac.uk/tour; 167 Renfrew St; tours adult/concession £6.50/4.80; ♿ tours 10.30am, 11am, 11.30am, 1.30pm, 2pm & 2.30pm Apr–Sep), which still houses the educational institution. The oft-photographed building was named one of the world's 100 greatest artistic achievements of the 20th century by the BBC. The first portion was opened in 1899 and is the earliest Art Nouveau piece in Britain. Built on a sloping hill, this structure is seen as the perfect balance of style and function.

North of the city, **Queen's Cross Church** (☎ 946 6600; 870 Garscube Rd; adult/child £2/free; ♿ 10am–5pm Mon–Fri Nov–Feb, 10am–5pm Mon–Fri, 2–5pm Sun Mar–Oct), lit by dazzling stained glass, is Mackintosh's only church design to be built (1896). The simple design draws on both Gothic and Japanese motifs.

On a more intimate scale, **Mackintosh House** (☎ 330 5431; www.hunterian.gla.ac.uk; 82 Hillhead St; admission £2.50, after 2pm Wed free; ♿ 9.30am–12.30pm & 1.30–5pm Mon–Sat) is part of the Hunterian Art Gallery (opposite). This reconstruction of the architect's demolished Glasgow home shows his innovative style even today. You ascend from the gallery's gloomy ground floor into the cool, white, austere drawing room. There's something otherworldly about the mannered style of the beaten silver panels, signature long-backed chairs and surface decorations echoing Celtic manuscript illuminations.

The **Scotland Street School** (☎ 287 0500; 225 Scotland St; admission free; ♿ 10am–5pm Mon–Thu & Sat, 11am–5pm Fri & Sun; 🇬🇧), an impressive Mackintosh building dominated by two glass stair towers, is now a museum of education from Victorian times to WWII; it may sound dull but it's actually fascinating.

Although designed in 1901 as a competition entry for a German magazine, **House for an Art Lover** (☎ 353 4770; www.houseforanartlover.co.uk; Bellahouston Park, 10 Drumbreck Rd; adult/child £3.50/2.50; ♿ 10am–4pm Mon–Wed, 10am–1pm Thu–Sun Apr–Sep, 10am–1pm Sat & Sun Oct–Mar, call for weekday admission times), 1.5 miles south of the river, was only completed in 1996. It's part of the Glasgow School of Art and has permanent Mackintosh displays. Its rooms are stunning for their light and elegance. The house was co-designed by Mackintosh's wife Margaret MacDonald and is interesting to see how Mackintosh was able to collaborate so well.

The **Willow Tea Rooms** (☎ 332 0521; www.willowtearooms.co.uk; 217 Sauchiehall St; ♿ 9am–5pm Mon–Sat; wi-fi) were famously designed by Mackintosh in 1903 for local tea lady, Kate Cranston. Mackintosh took his inspiration from the willow, as *sauchiehall* is the Gaelic word for the tree. It used to cost an extra penny to enjoy the silver furniture and mirrored friezes of the Room de Luxe, but today it can be enjoyed for the price of a cuppa.

A good way to get around all the sites is with a **Charles Rennie Mackintosh Trail pass** (www.spt.co.uk/tickets/mackintosh.html; £12), which gets you entry into most Mackintosh attractions in town, allows you to ride public transport for free and is available from the tourist office, SPT travel centres or online from the **Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society** (www.crmsociety.com).

Outside Glasgow

BURRELL COLLECTION

Three miles south of the city centre, the **Burrell Collection** (☎ 287 2550; Pollok Country Park, Pollokshaws

Rd; admission free, parking £1; ♿ 10am–5pm Mon–Thu & Sat, 11am–5pm Fri & Sun; 🇬🇧) was donated to the city by wealthy industrialist Sir William Burrell. The building was a result of a design competition

KELVINGROVE RETURNS

After a long closure for a refurbishment that cost in excess of £25 million, Glasgow's much-loved cultural icon, **Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum** (☎ 287 2699; www.glasgowmuseums.com; Argyle St; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 11am-5pm Fri & Sun), reopened to the public in July 2006. It originally opened in 1901 and the museum's fusty Victorian display cases and crowded collection needed a re-think, so works were put into storage or taken to another site during restoration.

You might not recognise the museum after its face-lift, which included stripping 100 years worth of grime from the interior walls to reveal honeyed-yellow hues. There are a few old favourites, including **Roger the Asian Elephant** sitting proudly in the west wing, but there's been an ambitious shake-up. The **Conflict and Consequences** display on the 2nd floor hits the target by showing off a weaponry collection while arming it with a strong message for peace. The **Animal Armoury** juxtaposes arms and nature to show how a suit of armour uses the design of an armadillo. If it sounds obscure, you're not thinking hard enough, because this is interaction for the mind, as much as for the kids.

Littlells will love the new museum. Not just for larger stunts like hanging a **Spitfire** from the roof, but also for thoughtful touches like hanging pictures at their eyelevel. Plus there are costumes to try on, replicas to paint, and they can even watch the everyday affairs of a busy beehive.

The old art collection was a byword for national treasure, but the redesign makes it even stronger. There's the necessary nod with **Mackintosh and the Glasgow Style**, but this leads to **Looking At Design**, which gives artistic contexts as well as showing off 1950s plans for a railplane that would hang from a rail and be powered by propellers. Must-see masterpieces include Dalí's sublime *Christ of St John of the Cross* and Rembrandt's *Man in Armour*, as well as the works of the Glasgow Boys.

Before closing, Kelvingrove was the UK's second most-visited museum outside of London, though with inspired curatorship and plans to rotate one in 10 exhibits each year, this revitalised museum could take the premier spot.

in 1971, with a spectacular interior providing a fitting setting for its exhibits and European stained glass. Floor-to-ceiling windows flood the interior with natural light, and trees and landscape outside enhance the exhibits. Many of the doorways between galleries are stunning carved portals purloined from Spanish and Italian churches. This idiosyncratic collection includes everything from Chinese porcelain and medieval furniture to paintings by Boudin and Cézanne and sculpture. It isn't so big as to be overwhelming, and the collector's character creates a curious coherence.

The exquisite tapestry galleries are outstanding, with intricate stories woven into staggering, wall-size pieces dating from the 13th century. The massive *Triumph of the Virgin* exemplifies the complexity of this medium, drawing on crusader tales to re-create the Holy Land.

In warmer months picnicking in the flowering park makes for an excellent day-trip. Once part of the Pollok House estate, the grounds boast photogenic Highland cattle and plenty of greenery to lounge on.

There are guided tours of the gallery (free) at 10.30am and 2pm. Numerous buses pass

the gates (including buses 45, 47, 48 and 57 from the city) and there's a twice-hourly bus service between the gallery and the gates (a pleasant 10-minute walk), or you can catch the train to Pollokshaws West.

POLLOK HOUSE

It's possible to visit **Pollok House** (NTS; ☎ 616 6410; www.nts.org.uk; Pollok Country Park, 2060 Pollokshaws Rd; admission £8; 🕒 10am-5pm), a sumptuous Edwardian mansion brimful of period furniture with walls graced with paintings by El Greco and Murillo. The servants' quarters alone give an idea of how the British aristocracy once lived.

ACTIVITIES

There are numerous green spaces within the city. **Pollok Country Park** surrounds the Burrell Collection with many woodland trails. Nearer the centre, the **Kelvin Walkway** follows the River Kelvin through Kelvingrove Park, the Botanic Gardens and on to Dawsholm Park. There is also the walk along the Clyde (p788). Several long-distance walking/cycling routes originate in Glasgow (see p782).

WALKING TOUR

Start your walk on busy pedestrianised Buchanan St, just outside Borders bookshop. Heading east from here along Exchange St, you pass through the ornamental **entrance gateway (1)** to Merchant City.

If you were a 19th-century industrialist, the Royal Exchange directly ahead of you might well have been your destination, but this stately colonnaded neoclassical building is now the **Gallery of Modern Art (2)** (p785).

The statue of the Duke of Wellington on horseback is facing down Ingram St, which you should follow for a couple of blocks. Continue southwards down Glassford St past **Trades Hall (3)**.

Turn left onto Wilson St, where the bulky **Sheriff Court (4)** fills a whole block. It was built in 1842 as Glasgow's town hall and merchants' house. Continue eastwards to **Merchant Square (5)**, a covered courtyard that was once the city's fruit market but now bustles with cafés and bars. Across the road is **Blackfriars (6)**, one of the city's most relaxed pubs; grab a window seat and see what's going on. Refreshment on board, continue along Bell St, a continuation of Wilson St, and emerge onto High St. Take a left and follow the street uphill to **Glasgow Cathedral (7)** (p785).

Behind the cathedral, wind your way up through the noble tombs of the **Necropolis (8)** (p787) with rewarding city views, before heading back down and taking in the **St Mungo Museum of Religious Life & Art (9)** (p787) and **Provan's Lordship (10)** (p787).

Then follow busy Cathedral St back towards the centre, passing the buildings of the University of Strathclyde as you go. A left down North Frederick St and you'll reach **George Square (11)** (p785) with its statues of famous Glaswegians and the monumental **City Chambers (12)** (p785).

TOURS

Two open-top bus tours of Glasgow offer commentary and follow a similar city route. Both start on George Sq outside the tourist office and offer a hop-on, hop-off service.

City Sightseeing (☎ 204 0444; www.citysightseeingglasgow.co.uk; adult/child £9/3) Runs similar buses in many world cities.

Classic Glasgow Tour (☎ 636 3190) Run by First, the urban bus company.

Scot-Trek (☎ 334 9232; www.scot-trek.co.uk; adult £8-22) Does a range of walks in Glasgow's surrounding area from affordable evening walks to full-day hikes.

Waverley (☎ 0845 130 4647; www.waverleyexcursions.co.uk; Anderston Quay; cruises £6-30; 🕒 Apr-Sep) Board this for a trip on the world's last ocean-going paddle-steamer. It cruises the Firth of Clyde, serving several towns and the islands of Bute, Great Cumbrae and Arran, as well as other coastal areas in the UK.

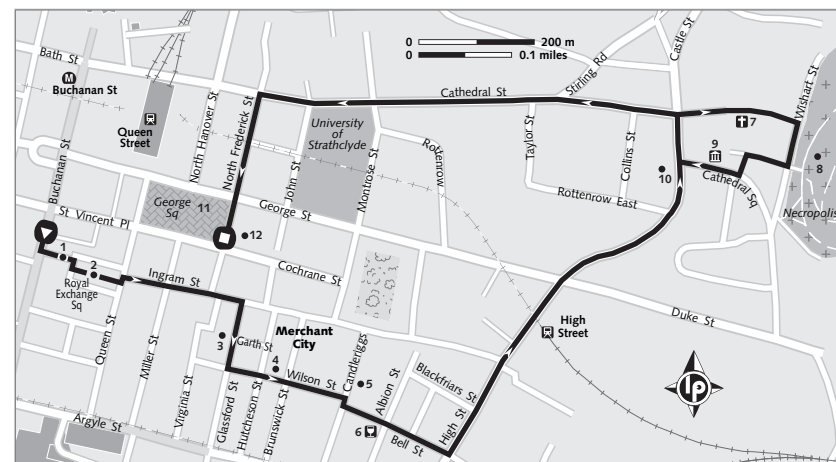
WALK FACTS

Start Buchanan St

Finish George Sq

Distance 2.5 miles

Duration one to three hours



SLEEPING

Finding decent options in July and August can be difficult – for a B&B, arrive reasonably early and use the tourist office's booking service. Beware of some 'backpacker accommodation' advertised at train/bus stations that often amounts to nothing more than a scam, with backpackers sleeping in filthy shared flats because the nonexistent hostel is being 'renovated'.

City Centre

BUDGET

Euro Hostel (☎ 222 2828; www.euro-hostels.co.uk; 318 Clyde St; dm £14-16, s/tw £35/40; 📶 📺) You'd be tempted to add 'Eastern' to this bunkhouse's name, as it's a large institutional slab that wouldn't be out of place in Soviet-era Poland. Luckily this spot is close to Central Station, and as a former university hall of residence it almost always has a bed. The 13-bed dorms are crowded, but with the city so handy you'll be partying for most of the night. Some of the midrange options offer better-value singles and twins.

University of Strathclyde Campus Village (☎ 548 4381; www.rescat.strath.ac.uk; Rottenrow East; s B&B £32.50, without bathroom £26.50, 4-/6-bed flats weekly £330/360; 📶 mid-Jun–Sep) During summer, these halls of residence can be a good bet with accommodation in shared, single-sex, self-catering flats on a weekly basis, or good-value B&B.

MIDRANGE

Adelaide's (☎ 248 4970; www.adelaides.freesevice.co.uk; 209 Bath St; s £30-40, d £50) This big church decided to bless guests with its spacious mint-green rooms that include TVs and bathtubs. The central location and cheery staff are praiseworthy. It's still very much a functioning church so guests can attend services, or even a concert by the Glasgow Symphony Orchestra.

Rennie Mackintosh Hotel (☎ 333 9992; 218-200 Renfrew St; s/d £33/53) This is a pleasant option on the guesthouse-heavy Renfrew St. It's at the top of a steep hill and has SKY TV and a full Scottish breakfast to draw guests in. If you ignore the Mockintosh fittings, this is a solid, straight-up guesthouse that's very handy to Mackintosh's School of Art.

Babbity Bowster (☎ 552 5055; 16 Blackfriars St; s/d £40/55) With a quirky name taken from a Scottish courting dance, it's hard not to be caught up in the rough charm of this roguish pub with six rooms upstairs. The pub may have seen better days, but the rooms are well-

presented and you're never far from the action of Merchant City. Breakfast is not included.

Cathedral House Hotel (☎ 552 3519; www.cathedralhousehotel.com; 28 Cathedral Sq; d £65-85; 📶 📺) With only eight rooms, you'll need to book ahead to be king and queen of this faux-castle, but you'll feel like royalty with the impressive turrets and 19th-century fittings. It's right by the cathedral and rooms are decorated in baronial purples and reds, while breakfasts range from vegetarian to Scottish cuisine.

TOP END

ABode (☎ 221 6789; www.abodehotels.co.uk; 129 Bath St; d ste £125-195) Too big to doss with their mums these days, local lads Franz Ferdinand have been known to bunk down here, as has visiting Eminem. This suave spot has over 60 rooms (with numbers woven into the carpet) with an old-style lift as a centrepiece. All rooms were refurbished in 2006 and come complete with cashmere throws, full baths and DVD players. Suites are even roomier and come with bounteous arrival hampers.

Malmaison (☎ 572 1000; www.malmaison.com; 278 West George St; d from £140, ste £195) Part of a boutique chain that's conquering the UK, the Glasgow chapter is every bit as swanky as you'd expect. Built in a converted Greek Orthodox church, rooms have been individually styled with private CD collections and sink-in baths. Suites have a mezzanine level and the Big Yin (named for Glaswegian Billy Connolly) comes with a swish tartan tub.

West End

BUDGET

Blue Sky Backpackers (☎ 221 1710; www.blueskyhostel.com; 65 Berkeley St; dm/d £10/30; 📶 📺) This party place has fun theme rooms like the Trainspotting dorm and the Red Rum, the latter from *The Shining*, complete with a spooky picture of Jack Nicholson that might keep you awake. The rooms themselves are fairly basic and the kitchen is a little cramped, but this is a good place to sling your bag and go out for the night. Don't confuse this place with other hostels in the street, which aren't as nice.

Bunkum Backpackers (☎ 581 4481; www.bunkumglasgow.co.uk; 26 Hillhead St; dm/tw £12/32) This hard-to-find spot is set in a leafy street and feels miles from the city. There's a homey feel in the spacious dorms (which include lockers), and a comfy lounge room to read in. It's not a wild party place, more a mild relaxing space.

Keep your eyes on the street numbers, as it's not well signposted.

Glasgow SYHA Hostel (☎ 0870 004 1119; www.syha.org.uk; 7 Park Tce; dm £15; 📶 📺) This austere townhouse perches on a hill above Kelvingrove Park and has wonderful dark-wood interiors. It's large and warren-like, but you can enjoy the spacious TV room and dining room. Unlike some SYHA places there's 24-hour access and breakfast is available (£2.60). From Central Station, take bus 44 and get off at the first stop on Woodlands Rd.

MIDRANGE

Alamo Guest House (☎ 339 2395; www.alamoguesthouse.com; 46 Gray St; s/d from £28/48) Cheerful new owners are steadfastly renovating this old favourite but are equally determined to keep the prices stable. Rooms come in larger sizes than city-based hotels and the beautiful breakfast room looks out on such a tranquil park, that you won't mind the shared facilities. It's a good-value guesthouse that goes the extra mile to make your stay with tips on dining, sightseeing and, most crucially, city parking.

Belhaven Hotel (☎ 339 3222; www.belhavenhotel.com; 15 Belhaven Tce; s/d from £40/65; 📶 📺) This sweet little hotel has plenty to offer since its recent refurbishment, which coloured rooms a rich red and brought out Art Nouveau features like the elegant plaster moulding and tall windows. The in-house bar is a fine place to start your night out.

Devoncove (☎ 334 4000; www.devoncovehotel.com; 931 Sauchiehall St; s £45, d £55-65) There are lots of pleasing details in this well-equipped hotel such as in-room safes, SKY TV and natty dispensers for soap, shampoo and conditioner. Straddling both the city and the West End, this is an ideal spot from which to explore both areas.

TOP END

Hotel du Vin at One Devonshire Gardens (☎ 339 2001; www.onedevonshiregardens.com; 1 Devonshire Gardens; r £155-295, ste £365-925; 📶 wi-fi) Acquired by new owners at the time of research, this spot has the feel of a rather sophisticated hunting lodge spread over a row of terrace houses. This hip hotel has always been a favourite with George Clooney, Madonna and Robert Carlyle when they're in town. All individually designed rooms have lofty ceilings and loads of little extras including DVDs, baths and your very own putter and mini hole for in-room golf on rainy days.

Outside Glasgow

Craigendmuir Caravan Park (☎ 779 4159; Campsie View; 2-person tents £12) This well-equipped camp site is just 4 miles from the city and only 500m from Stepps train station.

EATING

Just because Glasgow is the heart-attack capital of the EU doesn't mean you can't eat healthily here. Most of the best restaurants are in Merchant City and the West End. Many offer a two-/three-course lunch special for as little as £5 and 'pretheatre' evening menus before 7pm, which are both good ways to sample the more expensive restaurants. Several of the pubs listed on p795 also do affordable pub grub.

City Centre

BUDGET

Café Lava (☎ 553 1123; www.cafelava.com; 24 St Andrews St; mains £4-9; ☺ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun; 📶 wi-fi) Here, amid modish art, you can power-breakfast with your morning java blast. Scarf down eggs Benedict with Stormway black pudding while browsing the internet. If blood sausage isn't your perfect start to the day, it also does yummy cakes, as well as more sensible muesli.

Mono (☎ 553 2400; 12 Kings Ct; mains £5-7; ☺ noon-10pm) Not content to be one of Glasgow's best vegetarian cafés (with special attention paid to vegans), this place also crams in the record- and bookstore Monoral, an organic grocery shop, is an occasional live-music venue and an ale brewery which does a surprisingly good ginger beer. Hearty food such as vegetable bakes and pastas of the day is served in a casual dining space that can get crowded if there's a band in (usually Friday and Saturday nights).

Where the Monkey Sleeps (☎ 226 3406; www.wtms.co.uk; 182 West Regent St; mains £5-9 ☺ 7am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat) This funky monkey serves up fresh fruit salads and grilled tortillas but is famous for the Kurgan (there can be only one!), a burger that changes regularly (it could feature prosciutto and rocket one week before slipping back to bacon and cheddar the next). This eatery is down in the basement, and staff like to crank up the Thin Lizzy-esque tunes to rock that hangover out of you.

Also recommended:

Centre for Contemporary Arts (☎ 332 7959; www.cca-glasgow.com; 350 Sauchiehall St; snacks £3-6, meals £6-10; ☺ 11am-9.30pm Tue-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun; 📶) Gaze up at the glass roof while munching on the platter of antipasti, or save room for the goo-ily good desserts. See also p795.

13th Note (☎ 553 1638; www.13thnote.co.uk; 50-60 King St; mains £5-8; ☺ lunch & dinner daily) Another good vegetarian place that does gigs too (see p797)

MIDRANGE

Wee Curry Shop (☎ 353 0777; 7 Buccleuch St; 2-course lunch £4.75, dinner mains £10; ☺ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner daily) Could there be a better evocation of Scotland's embracing of globalisation than a curry shop decked out in tartan? The Indian food is authentic though, so there's no fear of a faulty balti. The West End has another branch (☎ 357 5280), at 29 Ashton Lane, open for lunch and dinner (dinner mains £10 to £11), which offers similar rogan josh nosh.

Fratelli Sarti (☎ 204 0440; 121 Bath St; pizzas £7-9, meals £8-12; ☺ 8am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat, noon-10.30pm Sun) For authentic Italian food that's reasonably priced leave it to the brothers to sort you out. The original Bath St branch has a deli feel, crammed with smallgoods as you gobble down your spaghetti *aglio olio peperoncino* (with olive oil and chilli). The classier restaurant at 133 Wellington St (☎ 248 2228) maintains the tradition with thin-crust but flavoursome pizza straight from the oven, and inventive pastas.

Mao (☎ 564 5161; 84 Brunswick St; mains £9-15; ☺ noon-11pm; ☺ lunch) The chairman would appreciate his portrait given a Warhol-esque treatment lining this pan-Asian eatery. Each dish is a fusion – expect a thumping chutney with a stir-fry or naan pepped up with lemongrass. The wine list is slim, but the large beer range better suits this casual-yet-classic food.

Café Gandolfi (☎ 552 6813; 64 Albion St; mains £10-15; ☺ 9am-11.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-11.30pm Sun) This Merchant City wizard maintains its place in a busy eating precinct by working innovative magic with Mod Scottish meals that keep locals and tourists crowding its slick interior. There are new twists on old favourites: the oatcakes come with tastier white pudding. The bar downstairs is the perfect place for pre-dinner (and probably post-dinner) cocktails.

West End BUDGET

Beanscene (☎ 334 6776; Cresswell Lane; sandwiches £3.70; ☺ 8am-11pm Mon-Sat, 10am-11pm Sun; ☑ wi-fi ☺) It's impossible to fault this caffeine chain gang that's sprung up around Scotland in the last few years. This West End branch pumps out great coffee, wraps and soups to an adoring student population who also come in for the

irregular live music. It's adapted to meet the area's newcomers, with coffee bowls for mums and Scooby snacks menu for kids.

Goat (☎ 357 7373; thegoat.co.uk; 1287 Argyle St; mains £8-10; ☺ lunch & dinner) This congenial local boozier has hip leather lounges where you can comfortably read the Sunday papers; upstairs is the best spot for dining and people-watching. The affordable menu runs to salads, pastas and sandwiches, though you can always opt for a liquid lunch with cocktails like the Highland Sling and Loch Almond.

MIDRANGE

Stravaigin 2 (☎ 334 7165; 8 Ruthven Lane; mains £10-13; ☺ noon-11pm; ☺) A cornerstone of the West End dining scene. Its burgers are widely regarded as Glasgow's best, with accompaniments like Thai salad or chunky chips, but this menu is anything but lowbrow. You can also try first-class haggis, tatties and neeps, as well as a dreamy haloumi-and-bean empanada.

Fanny Trollope's (☎ 564 6464; www.fannytrollopes.co.uk; 1066 Argyle St; mains £10-14; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Décor is an afterthought at this neighbourhood restaurant, because everyone's focused on the top-notch food. You can chow down on venison haunch swimming in redcurrant jus or herb-crusted baked cod with saffron sauce, just don't ask who Ms Trollope is. The best we could get is that she was known for smoking a clay pipe while wearing a Freudian slip.

Oran Mor (☎ 357 6200; www.oran-mor.co.uk; cnr Great Western & Byers Rds; mains £10-15; ☺ lunch & dinner) In a restored church, Oran Mor's setting is obviously divine, with stone features and restored massive windows, and the food may also bring you closer to God with Orkney smoked salmon and pan-seared West Coast scallops topping the restaurant menu. The bar serves up simpler fare including pastas and sandwiches. There are also regular events like lunchtime plays, music gigs and the odd session.

TOP END

Ubiquitous Chip (☎ 334 5007; 12 Ashton Lane; set lunch/dinner £21.80/32.80; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) Since the 1970s this straight-up Scottish classic has held its place for innovative work on traditional dishes. If you want to sample a stovie try the delicious apricot and lamb variety here and you'll spare yourself a thousand bad bakeries, otherwise there's Scrabster-landed ling with pepper and seaweed. The Chip has grown huge, with two bars, and sometimes the

upstairs-downstairs service can be stretched; our pick is downstairs for fast feeds.

DRINKING

Whether it's a wee dram or a New World wine, Glaswegians aren't shy of drink, so it's no surprise that some of Scotland's best nightlife can be found in Glasgow's pubs and bars. The famous Glaswegian 'style bar' is a welcome move away from the traditional spit-and-sawdust boozier. Merchant City is the epicentre of fashionable drinking with any number of different concept-bars, while Sauchiehall St has mainstream boozers that attract their fair share of buck's and hen's nights. The West End promises inventive spots to keep the student population out later than their essay deadlines.

City Centre

Red Lizard (☎ 552 3539; 51 Bell St) Sink into plush couches and armchairs and you may never want to leave this loungey bar. Given pride of place amid the gold-and-orange wallpaper are Brit kitsch relics, like *Minder* *Annals*, which give a sense of the offbeat crowd this place attracts. Cocktails are advised.

Arches (☎ 565 1000; 253 Argyle St) This nightclub-experimental theatre is always a good spot for a wine underneath Central Station. A rainbow of lights softens the industrial feel while flirty staff serve the crowd who pop in here on their way to or from the station.

Variety (☎ 332 4449; cnr Elmbank & Sauchiehall Sts) This Art Deco watering hole attracts a mixed crowd. Among the heaving bars of Sauchiehall St, this cosy one-room bar is a good place for a quiet drink and a chat.

Bloc (☎ 574 6066; www.bloc.ru; 117 Bath St) With a late licence that brings in young drinkers, this buzzing basement bar with a Soviet Union theme has bands and local DJs spinning into

the wee hours. Look for the hammer-and-sickle iconography that chips away at the more conservative neighbours in Bath St.

Nice 'n' Sleazy (☎ 333 0900; www.nicesleazy.com; 421 Sauchiehall St) Better known as plain old Sleazys to locals, this casual bar attracts a young crowd who appreciates the cheap drinks and '70s décor, even if most of them weren't even born then. A well-stocked jukebox kicks in with indie classics when there isn't a local band or DJ.

Centre for Contemporary Arts (☎ 332 7521; 350 Sauchiehall St) Popular with the boho crowd, this is one of the more refined spots for a relaxed drink on Sauchiehall St. Occasional DJs shake it up, but it's never as mad as other places on this strip.

Other recommendations:

Waxy O'Connor's (☎ 354 5154; 44 West George St) An Irish bar that hasn't sold its soul, with a cavernous layout that is even more disorientating after a few too many.

Babbity Bowster (☎ 552 5055; 16 Blackfriars St) A dignified town-house pub in the middle of Merchant City. It attracts an older crowd with real ale.

West End

Tchai Ovna (☎ 357 4524; www.tchairovna.com; Otago Lane) There's no shame in resting your liver with a good cup of tea in this cosy Bohemian den (it's based on Czech tea houses) frequented by local indie kids. Its dizzying range of teas, eclectic décor (no single chair matches any other) and good vegetarian grub make it a good spot to recover from a hangover.

Uisge Beatha (☎ 564 1596; 232-246 Woodlands Rd) The collection of hunting trophies (including a well-bagged Maggie Thatcher) and portraits of smug nobility on the walls of this place bristle at the mention of the city's style bars. This place is a traditional boozier with a reputation for impromptu sessions and over a hundred whiskies; no wonder it's named 'water of life' after Scotland's national spirit.

THANK YOU FOR SMOKING

With the introduction of nonsmoking in 2006, Glasgow's grimmest pubs have had a breath of fresh air, but spare a thought for smokers. Many congregate out the front of pubs or on the street for their quick puff in the cold. Here are a few venues with outdoor areas where you can light up without leaving:

Babbity Bowster (☎ 552 5055; 16 Blackfriars St) Has a great beer garden for summer days.

Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) (☎ 332 7521; 350 Sauchiehall St) There's outdoor seating here where you can happily puff on even the stinkiest cigar.

Tchai Ovna (☎ 357 4524; www.tchairovna.com; Otago Lane) With views of the river, the outdoor area here is the perfect spot for a breath of not-so-fresh air, especially since it sells the lung-straining shisha pipes (£7) in flavours like molasses, mint and coconut.

Jinty McGinty's (☎ 339 0747; 23 Ashton Lane) If you think Irish pubs are all bolted-down leprechauns and blarney, then this little pub will change your mind with its warm welcome, nightly folk sessions and brimming pints of the black stuff. You can snuggle up in one of the booths and peruse Ireland's literary legends on the walls.

Booly Mardy's (☎ 560 8004; www.bloodymarys.co.uk; 28 Vinicombe St) After a copyright tussle, this cocktail bar took on an anagram of its original name, but didn't change its long drinks list. It's patronised by a smart set that has been known to include BBC TV stars (or at least their make-up people) who enjoy the loungey feel and the reasonable prices. Just don't order the vodka and tomato juice!

Other recommendations:

Oran Mor (☎ 357 6200; www.oran-mor.co.uk; cnr Great Western & Byers Rds) A restored church that makes an atmospheric drinking spot.

Radio (☎ 334 6688; 46 Ashton Lane) With comfy couches, this upstairs bar transmits to a student crowd.

ENTERTAINMENT

The *List* (£2.20) is an invaluable fortnightly events guide available at newsagents and bookshops, which details everything happening in both Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Cinemas

Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT; ☎ 332 8128; www.gft.org.uk; 12 Rose St; adult/concession £4.50/3.50) This is the city's best cinema for classic art-house, international independent films and frequent screenings themed on a particular genre or director.

Cineworld (☎ 0871 200 2000; www.cineworld.co.uk; 7 Renfrew St; adult/child £6.20/4.90) Reputedly

the world's tallest cinema complex when it opened at the turn of the millennium, this place does similarly big films.

Grosvenor (☎ 339 8444; www.grosvenorcinema.co.uk; Ashton Lane, West End; adult/child £5.50-6.50/3.50) This highly regarded movie house is a Glasgow favourite, showing edgier mainstream releases and offering discounts during the day.

Gay & Lesbian Venues

Glasgow's vibrant scene centres on Merchant City, with a few good West End bars. **Glasgay** (☎ 334 7126; www.glasgay.co.uk) is a performing arts festival held around October/November, spotlighting the gay, lesbian and transgender community.

Waterloo Bar (☎ 229 5890; cnr Wellington & Argyle St) This less-sceney traditional pub is Scotland's oldest gay bar. The all-ages crowd includes a large, welcoming group of regulars.

Revolver (☎ 553 2456; 6a John St) Less a 'go for your gun' pick-up joint and more of a comfortable hang-out, this downstairs spot attracts a relaxed crowd for its laid-back feel and free jukebox.

Live Music

Buoyed by the success of Franz Ferdinand and music festivals like T in the Park (see below), Glasgow has Scotland's best live scene. As well as the venues listed below, several of the bars and clubs listed have frequent live acts or folk-music sessions.

King Tut's Wah Wah Hut (☎ 221 5279; www.kingtuts.co.uk; 272a St Vincent St; ☎ Mon-Sat) Reigning over the city's music scene, this classic upstairs band room is known for indie, rock, punk and hardcore, but also embraces hip-hop and dance.

It's so big it's just started its own record label, but you wouldn't know it from this intimate venue. Gigs sell out quickly so keep an eye on the website. Opens Sunday if there's a gig on.

Nice 'n' Sleazy (☎ 333 0900; www.nicensleazy.com; 421 Sauchiehall St) Sleazys is the ideal atmosphere in which to see some of Glasgow's up-and-coming bands, with cheesy décor and a leaning towards rock acts (though other genres can be heard).

Barrowland (☎ 552 4601; www.glasgow-barrowland.com; 244 Gallowgate) A former dance hall that's lavishly decorated and renowned for its good acoustics, this venue is a reason to start a band in Glasgow. Gigs range from international visitors to local lads and lasses made good and, whatever you see, it's an unforgettable night out.

13th Note (☎ 553 1638; www.13thnote.co.uk; 50-60 King St) Papered with indie band posters, the downstairs band room brings in some of Glasgow's alternative bands and is known for giving unknowns a go.

Also recommended:

ABC (☎ 553 2232; 300-330 Sauchiehall St) A big venue for national touring acts.

Bloc (☎ 574 6066; www.bloc.ru; 117 Bath St) Has weekend bands and DJs.

Carling Academy (☎ 0870 771 2000; www.glasgow-academy.co.uk; Eglington St) A newer spot that hosts big visitors.

Garage (☎ 332 1120; www.garageglasgow.co.uk; 490 Sauchiehall St) Packs them in with live music in four rooms.

On the River Clyde, the **Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre** (SECC; ☎ 0870 040 4000; www.secc.co.uk; Finnieston Quay) and the adjoining **Clyde Auditorium** (same contact details) cater for the big acts to hit the city. The acoustics are better in the auditorium than the hangar-like SECC, but tickets are pricey.

Nightclubs

The Glasgow club scene is always producing a new 'now' spot. Glaswegians hit the clubs after the pubs close, so many clubs offer a discounted admission and cheaper drinks before 11pm. Entry to most clubs is between £4 and £8, although bars often offer free passes to nearby clubs. Club nights tend to change venues regularly, so check the *List*.

Arches (☎ 565 1000; www.thearches.co.uk; 253 Argyle St; admission £8-13; ☎ Fri-Sun) One of Scotland's top clubs, reliably pulling top DJs from across Europe. There's something on most nights under the atmospheric girders of Central Station. Music spans old-school techno to happy

hardcore. It's also one of the city's best bars (p795).

Glasgow School of Art (☎ 332 0691; 169 Renfrew St; admission £5-8; ☎ Tue-Sun) For those in the know, this destination has innovative music, from some of the best hip-hop north of the border on Saturdays to drum 'n' bass that packs the checkerboard dance floor.

Cathouse (☎ 248 6606; www.cathouseglasgow.co.uk; 15 Union St; admission £4; ☎ Thu-Sat) This three-floor spot attracts rock, metal, indie, Goth, industrial and emo fans, so you might need a little more eyeshadow and at least a black t-shirt.

Sport

Scottish football is dominated by the 'Old Firm', **Celtic** (seftic; ☎ 551 8653; www.celticfc.co.uk; Celtic Park, Parkhead) and **Rangers** (☎ 0870 600 1972; www.rangers.co.uk; Ibrox Stadium, 150 Edmiston Dr), whose rivalry divides Glasgow down the middle.

Scotland plays international matches at **Hampden Park** (☎ 620 4000; www.hampdenpark.co.uk; stadium tour adult/child £6/3), a stadium that also holds the **Scottish Football Museum** (☎ 616 6139; Hampden Park; adult/child £5.50/2.75). The museum has a Hall of Fame and offers a chance to re-live classic moments in Scottish football. Tours of the stadium include the players' warm-up area and the chance to hear the Hampden Roar as you walk through the tunnel.

Theatre

Theatre Royal (☎ 332 9000; www.theatreroyalglasgow.com; 282 Hope St; ☎) Hosting the Scottish Opera and Scottish Ballet, this venue is one of the city's major performance spaces. Cheap standby tickets are available for some performances; ask at the box office.

Citizens' Theatre (Cit; ☎ 429 0022; 119 Gorbals St; tickets £6-15) This space hosts some of Scotland's premiere performances, particularly old favourites given new life and debut Scottish plays.

SHOPPING

London aside, Glasgow is one of the UK's premier shopping destinations. Its high street is packed with international fashion chains, while independent shops cluster along Great Western and Byres Rds in the West End.

Couture vultures swoop on **Versace** (☎ 552 6510) in the stylish **Italian Centre** (John St). Alternatively, **Designer Exchange** (☎ 221 6898; 3 Royal Exchange Ct) stocks cheaper samples and resale designer labels. Fashionable boutiques line Sauchiehall, Argyle and Buchanan Sts.

ANYONE FOR T?

Scotland's most celebrated musical festival by far is **T in the Park** (www.tinthepark.com), which draws folk from Glasgow and Edinburgh to Balado every July. North of the border, it's the place to see hot up-and-coming bands, particularly Scottish bands.

For aspiring Franz Ferdinands there's a chance to play the big gig in **T Break** (www.tbreak.co.uk), an annual battle of the bands with hopefuls from across Scotland. Because of Glasgow's many venues, the city is always represented in the music competition, which accepts demo CDs from across Scotland.

T Break heats are held throughout May and June, featuring many of the best bands you've never heard of (and you can tell everyone you were into them long before anyone else was). The great thing about these heats is that each band gets a 20-minute set, so in one night you hear a selection of great bands and still get to sample a few pints.

In Glasgow the heats are held at the King Tut's Wah Wah Hut (above) while in Edinburgh there are heats at the Liquid Room (p769).

You can't go past the flea market every weekend at the **Barras** (☎ 552 7258; London Rd), but for more traditional Scottish fashion, **Geoffrey (Tailor) Kiltmaker** (☎ 331 2388; 309 Sauchiehall St) has the best take-home tartan. There are a few good boutiques hidden around the West End, such as the designer **Moon** (☎ 339 2315; www.moonofglasgow.co.uk; 10 Ruthven Lane) and vintage specialist **Starry Starry Night** (☎ 334 4778; 21 Downside Lane). Elsewhere, **Dr Jives** (☎ 552 5451; 111 Candleriggs) sells a unisex range including tees for lads and street clothes for ladies.

In the West End, you could spend plenty of time browsing diverse shops such as **OneWorld** (☎ 357 1567; 100 Byres Rd), which stocks an eclectic range of arty gifts from around the globe, all of them fair-traded; **Fopp** (☎ 357 0774; 358 Byres Rd), a cheap independent Scottish record outlet; or **Voltaire & Rousseau** (☎ 339 1811; 18 Otago Lane), a great secondhand bookstore. **Monorail** (☎ 552 9458; www.monorailmusic.com; 12 Kings Ct; ☎ noon-8pm) stocks the best selection of indie and local vinyl, with a secondhand section that includes Italian horror and Brazilian pop sections.

In the centre, hit **Robert Graham & Co** (☎ 221 6588; 71 St Vincent St) for an excellent selection of malt whiskies and cigars.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Eight miles west of the city near Paisley, **Glasgow Airport** (☎ 887 1111; www.baa.co.uk/glasgow) handles domestic traffic and international flights, including some direct transatlantic routes. It's the main airport for most of the Scottish islands. **Glasgow Prestwick airport** (☎ 0871 223 0700; www.gpia.co.uk), 30 miles southwest of Glasgow, is used by the budget carrier Ryanair.

easyJet (☎ 0870 600 0000; www.easyjet.com) flies between Glasgow Airport and several British destinations including London Stansted (one way from £18, 1¼ hours, five daily), and also to/from Amsterdam (one way from £23, 1¼ hours, one daily).

Ryanair (☎ 0870 156 9569; www.ryanair.com) flies between Prestwick and London Stansted (one way from £12, 1¼ hours, six daily), and to/from European destinations including Dublin (one way from £13, 45 minutes, about four flights daily) and Paris (one way from £22, 1½ hours, up to four daily).

British Airways (☎ 0870 850 9850; www.britishairways.com) and its subsidiaries service many mainland and island destinations from Glasgow, including Stornoway (return from £93, one hour, two

daily) and Sumburgh in the Shetland Islands (return from £151, 2½ hours, two daily).

Bus

Long-distance buses arrive at **Buchanan bus station** (Killermont St). Bus fares from London are competitive. **Silver Choice** (☎ 01355 249 499; www.silverchoicetravel.co.uk) currently offers the cheapest deal for advance purchase (return from £24, 8½ hours, departs 10pm daily from London's Victoria Coach Station and Glasgow). The service is popular so you'll need to book.

Megabus (☎ 0900 160 0900; www.megabus.com) also does a London bus (one-way fares from £10), which sells off its website.

National Express (☎ 08705 808080; www.national.express.com) runs the same route (return from £30, nine hours, up to four daily). There's also a daily direct bus from Heathrow airport, usually leaving at 11.05pm.

National Express also runs services to/from Birmingham (£40.50, six to eight hours, four daily); Cambridge (£46, 10¼ hours); at least nine from Carlisle (£16, two hours); one from Newcastle (£25.50, four hours); and one from York (£29.50, seven hours).

Scottish Citylink (☎ 08705 505050; www.citylink.co.uk) has buses to most major towns in Scotland. There are buses to Edinburgh (£4, 1¼ hours, every 20 minutes). There are also frequent buses daily to the following: Stirling (£4.50, 45 minutes), Inverness (£16.70, four hours) and Aberdeen (£17.20, 3½ hours). Heading up the west coast, there are buses to Oban (£13.10, three hours, three daily), Fort William (£14, three hours, four daily) and Portree (£25, 6½ hours, three daily).

For Northern Ireland buses run via Stranraer to connect with ferries to Belfast (one way £20, six hours, two daily from Glasgow).

Stagecoach Express (☎ 01592-261461; www.stagecoachbus.com) operates services to Anstruther (three hours, hourly) and St Andrews (return £10, 2¼ hours, hourly).

Car

There are numerous car-rental companies; the big names have offices at the airport.

Other operators include **Arnold Clark** (☎ 0845 607 4500; www.arnoldclark.co.uk; 43 Allison St) and **Clarkson** (☎ 771 3990; www.clarksonofglasgow.com; 89 Byres Rd).

Train

Glasgow has two train stations. Generally, Central Station serves southern Scotland, England

and Wales, and Queen St serves the Scotland's and east. There are buses every 10 minutes between the two (50p or free with a through train ticket), or it's a 10-minute walk.

There are direct trains from London's King's Cross and Euston stations; they're not cheap, but they're much quicker (£86, 5½ hours, 10 direct daily) and more comfortable than the bus. You can get much cheaper fares if you book in advance.

First ScotRail (☎ 0845 755 0033; www.firstgroup.com/scotrail/index.php) runs the West Highland line heading north to Oban and Fort William, and other direct links to Dundee (£22.50), Aberdeen (£34) and Inverness (£34). There are trains every 15 to 30 minutes to/from Edinburgh (£8.60, 50 minutes).

Virgin Trains (☎ 204 7960; www.virgin.com/trains) has discount tickets from London, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Bristol, Bournemouth and Plymouth; check its website for the latest prices.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

There are bus services between Glasgow Airport and Buchanan bus station (single/return £3.30/5, 25 minutes, every 15 minutes daily). A taxi costs around £20 to the centre. You can get to Prestwick by bus on the X99 route (single/return £8/12, 1¼ hours, hourly) or train (www.firstgroup.com/scotrail; 50 minutes, every half-hour).

Bicycle

You'd have to be mad to hire a bike in Glasgow. **West End Cycles** (☎ 357 1344; 16 Chancellor St; day/week rental £15/85; ☎ 10am-5.45pm Mon-Sat) embraces such insanity, renting out 24-speed mountain bikes.

Boat

You can get to Braehead Shopping Centre, home of the Clydebuilt Museum, on the **Pride o' the Clyde** (☎ 07711 250 969; www.clydewaterbusservices.co.uk; Central Station Bridge; single/return £3/5), a water-bus (five to six sailings daily) that's a great way to see the regeneration taking place along the Clyde and avoid the city congestion.

Car

A convoluted one-way system and dead-end streets will leave you feeling like you're trying to navigate a pretzel. Expensive and limited parking makes driving an unattractive

proposition, though parking is easier in the West End. The motorway (M8) makes getting into/out of the city easy.

Public Transport

The **St Enoch Square Travel Centre** (☎ 226 4826; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat), in the centre of St Enoch Sq, provides information on all transport in the Glasgow region. Here you can get a copy of the complicated but useful *Glasgow Mapmate* (£1), which shows all local bus routes run by First. You can buy tickets when you board local buses, but on most you must have exact change. Most fares around the city are £1. After midnight there are limited night buses from George Sq.

The circular Underground line serves 15 stations in the city's centre, west and south (£1). The Discovery Ticket (£1.70) gives unlimited travel after 9.30am on the Underground system for a day. The Roundabout Glasgow ticket (adult/child £4.50/2.25) covers all Underground and bus transport in the city for a day.

Taxi

You can hail a black cab from the street or call **Glasgow-Wide Taxis** (☎ 429 7070). Otherwise there's a rank on Gordon St, just opposite Glasgow Central Station.

LANARKSHIRE

Glasgow's sprawl has meant that satellite towns like East Kilbride, Hamilton, Motherwell, Coatbridge and Airdrie have been swallowed by the city. Lanarkshire's biggest attraction is the birthplace museum of David Livingstone in Blantyre, although the Clyde Valley's scenic tangle of foliage, wildlife and waterfalls is another draw.

On the riverbank is the World Heritage Site of New Lanark, a fascinating renovation of a 19th-century cotton mill and the houses of the workers who ran it.

BLANTYRE

☎ 01698 / pop 17,300

David Livingstone's birthplace was founded as a cotton mill in the late 18th century, but Livingstone would hardly recognise his hometown today, as it has become a rather depressing dormitory suburb of Glasgow. The house where he was born, however, has been preserved as an excellent museum.

The **David Livingstone Centre** (NTS; ☎ 823140; 165 Station Rd; adult/child £5/4; 🕒 10am–5pm Mon–Sat, 12.30–5pm Sun Apr–Christmas; 🗺) traces the life of the busy doctor, missionary and explorer from his early days in Blantyre to the 30 years he spent in Africa famously waiting for Stanley. Kids will love the chance to dress up as a millworker, though the displays about Livingstone's opposition to slavery could prove heavy going.

Buses stop on Main St, but it's best to come to Blantyre by train from Glasgow Central (20 minutes, twice hourly).

LANARK & NEW LANARK

☎ 01555 / pop 8250

Below the market town of Lanark, the World Heritage Site of New Lanark is a fascinating collection of restored mill buildings and warehouses in an attractive gorge by the River Clyde. Once the largest cotton-spinning complex in Britain, the mill was built in 1785 to take advantage of the fast-flowing Clyde. You'll need at least half a day to explore this large site; there's plenty to see.

From 1800 Robert Owen managed the mill, introducing social reforms unheard of during the greed-is-good Industrial Revolution. Owen provided his workers with housing, a cooperative store, the first nursery school for children, adult-education classes, a sick-pay fund for workers and a social centre he called the New Institute for the Formation of Character.

Orientation & Information

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 661661; Horsemarket, Ladyacre Rd; 🕒 10am–12.30pm & 1–5pm Mon–Sat year-round, Sun Easter–Sep) is in Lanark, right by the adjacent bus and train stations. New Lanark is a mile downhill from here.

Sights

Wandering the streets of New Lanark you can hear the echo of a once-great industrial centre in the river that drove a mighty cotton mill.

At the **visitors centre** (☎ 661345; www.newlanark.org; adult/child £5.95/4.95; 🕒 11am–5pm; 🗺 most sections) you can buy a ticket to all the main attractions. These include the **New Millennium Experience**, an innovative high-tech ride through New Lanark's past and possible future. The visit continues to the din of a huge working spinning mule, producing woollen yarn – the only fabric to be made here since the mills closed in 1968. Robert Owen's **school** has interactive exhibitions on 'saving New Lanark', as well as

the **Annie McLeod Experience**, a high-tech audio-visual display where the spirit of a 10-year-old mill girl describes life here in 1820. The large globe in the classroom is always a favourite with littlies, plus kids get to wear cotton tunics as if they were in Owen's school.

After you've seen New Lanark you can then walk up to the **Falls of Clyde** through the beautiful nature reserve. Before you go, drop into the **Falls of Clyde Wildlife Centre** (☎ 665262; fallsodye@swt.org.uk; admission free; 🕒 11am–5pm Mar–Dec, noon–4pm Jan & Feb) by the river in New Lanark. There are wildlife and conservation exhibitions and you can organise bat walks (£2.50) or badger-watching (£5). The riverside path takes you 2.5 miles to the beautiful **Cora Linn** (waterfalls that inspired both Turner and Wordsworth). The Clyde is enchanting here, bubbling joyously over the rocks; it seems a different river from its sterner incarnation in Glasgow.

Sleeping

New Lanark SYHA Hostel (☎ 0870 004 1143; www.syha.org.uk; Wee Row; dm adult/child £11.50/9; 🕒 Mar–Oct; 🗺) A bit like your gran with an iPod, this place is a curious mix of old and new. It has four-bed dorms with en suites and other facilities. Using the modern kitchen or the internet feels anachronistic in this authentic, old mill building.

Summerlea (☎ 664889; 32 Hyndford Rd; s; £25, d & tw £48) Near Lanark's tourist office, this guest-house specialises in twin rooms, with one large single room that's painted lilac. It's handy if you want to stay in Lanark, but New Lanark is within walking distance.

New Lanark Mill Hotel (☎ 667200; www.newlanark.org; s/d from £69.50/109, cottages per week from £265) Definitely the spot to stay if you can part with the pounds, this slick hotel has views across the mill and river. The original building has been completely refurbished to give a modern feel and the cottages are particularly peaceful.

Eating & Drinking

Crown Tavern (☎ 664639; 17 Hope St; mains £9–12, bar meals £7; 🕒 bar meals lunch & dinner, restaurant dinner only) Just off the main street, this cheery, highly regarded pub does good bar meals, with a restaurant upstairs that has a solid menu featuring Highland chicken and generous pastas.

New Lanark Mill Hotel (☎ 667200; www.newlanark.org; New Lanark; bar meals £4–8, 2-course dinner £17, 🕒 bar meals 11am–9.30pm Sun–Thu, 11am–6pm Fri & Sat, restaurant dinner daily & lunch Sun; 🗺) Easily the best place to

eat in town, the Falls Bar does superior pub grub, while upstairs the restaurant serves more elaborate meals. The restaurant specialises in Scottish meat and fish like Border lamb roasted in garlic, and does an excellent Sunday roast.

Getting There & Around

Lanark is 25 miles southeast of Glasgow. Trains (£4.60, one hour, hourly) run from Glasgow Central Station. There are also express buses from Glasgow (one hour, hourly Monday to Saturday).

There's an hourly bus service from the train station in Lanark with the last bus leaving New Lanark at 4.42pm (6.50pm Sunday). If you need a taxi, call **Clydewide** (☎ 663221).

SCOTTISH BORDERS

The history of Scotland has been played out along the Borders, from grisly territorial skirmishes to serene monastic monuments, all put to page by local hero Sir Walter Scott. The troubled relationship with the south stretches back to the Romans, with impressive castles and keeps evolving to stave off raiders. But it wasn't all warmongering: small burghs supported monastic communities in abbeys that served as centres of religion and scholarship from the 12th century. As borders lapped back and forth, abbeys and castles were destroyed by waves of raids, only to be rebuilt during peace.

Some of the most visited sites today are the ruins that have emerged from this turbulent history. Walkers and cyclists combine health and history to take in ruins on several trails, in between enjoying historic inns and coaching houses. The scenic River Tweed slices through the Borders creating some beautiful vistas, and there's also world-class fishing.

Day-trippers from Edinburgh and England's north know the Border's charms, but it's often overlooked by international visitors, so midweek travellers could have serene abbeys or eerie castles all to themselves.

Activities

Tourist offices along the border have a number of brochures, including *Cycling*, *Walking* and *Fishing in the Scottish Borders*. Walking possibilities include the challenging coast-to-coast **Southern Upland Way**, **St Cuthbert's Way** (www.scot-borders.co.uk/stcuthbertsway) and **Borders Abbeys Way**, which links the border abbeys of Kelso,

Jedburgh, Melrose and Dryburgh in a 65-mile circuit for walkers. The 55-mile **Four Abbeys Cycle Route** is a similar route for cyclists, well marked with blue signs.

For cyclists there is also a range of trails in the Tweed Valley and Glentress Forest Park, well marked and detailed in brochures available from tourist offices in the region, as well as the **Border Loop**, a signposted 250-mile circuit right around the Borders.

Fishing the Tweed is a lifelong ambition for anglers, with salmon fishing in private lochs also popular. Find out more about booking (well in advance) loch and river fishing at **FishTweed** (☎ 01573-470 612; www.fishtweed.co.uk). For a guided experience try **Tweed Guide** (☎ 01750-22279; www.tweedguide.com; 3/6hr session from £60/80), which operates out of Melrose, Selkirk, Galashiels and Kelso.

Getting Around

There's a good network of local buses, although they are comparatively expensive. **First** (☎ 08708 72 72 71; www.firstgroup.com/ukbus/scotland/seeat/home) operates between the border towns and connects the larger towns with Edinburgh as well as Berwick-upon-Tweed. **National Express** (☎ 08705 808080; www.nationalexpress.com) services between Edinburgh and Newcastle/Leeds stop in Jedburgh and Galashiels.

Useful local bus companies serving border towns include **Munro's of Jedburgh** (☎ 01835-862253) and **Buskers** (☎ 01896-755808; Galashiels).

PEEBLES

☎ 01721 / pop 8100

For most visitors Peebles is an endearing town, set amid rolling hills with an idyllic river, but fisherfolk know better. The River Tweed is legendary trout water that some wait their whole life to fish. Other outdoor enthusiasts enjoy strolling among the wooded hills on a variety of short trails.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0870 608 0404; peebles@scot-borders.co.uk; High St; 🕒 daily Apr–Oct, Mon–Sat Nov–Mar) is exceptionally helpful.

Sights & Activities

There are several good walks around town, like the **Venlaw walk** (3 miles) just north of town that follows an old coach path and links to other longer trails including the **John Buchan Way** to Broughton (13 miles). For more details pick up the pamphlet *Tweed Trails* from tourist offices. It's an easy stroll to **Neidpath Castle**

(☎ 720333; adult/child £3/1.75; ☹ 10.30am-5pm Wed-Sat, 12.30-5pm Sun May-Sep), a 14th-century tower house on a bluff above the River Tweed about 1 mile west of town.

Poke your head inside **Tweeddale Museum & Art Gallery** (☎ 724820; High St; admission free; ☹ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm), a small museum dedicated to literature and border sons such as Sir Walter Scott.

Peebles is a good spot for fly-fishing in the Tweed; get useful tips at **Cast Around Peebles** (☎ 729229; 20A Northgate; licence per day £8, rod hire £18; ☹ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat). There are also several good mountain-biking tracks in Tweed Valley Forest including **Glentress** (www.7stanes.gov.uk), a mountain-biking mecca which has trails from beginners to advanced. The **Hub** (☎ 721736; www.thehubintheforest.co.uk; 1-day hire £18) offers mountain-bike hire, sales and repairs.

Sleeping & Eating

Whities (☎ 721605; www.whities.co.uk; 69 High St; d £75) With large church-like windows and a quaint bookstore downstairs, this charming spot does a superior class of B&B that includes clawfoot baths and even fireplaces in some rooms. Breakfasts including haggis and pastries are worth getting up for.

Cross Keys Hotel (☎ 724222; Northgate; s/d £32/56) This historic former coaching inn has several rooms which vary markedly in size, but are all pleasant. The brasserie (mains £6 to £13) offers tasty meals.

Halycon Restaurant (☎ 725100; www.halyconrestaurant.com; 39 Eastgate; mains £11-20; ☹ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) In a side lane off the main street, this hidden gem is the place for posh nosh in town. The menu runs to tempting mains like coley with lobster risotto, but save room for dessert.

Oven Door (☎ 723456; 24 High St; snacks £2-6; ☹ 10am-9.30pm) With a bounty of scones and cakes, this is the top spot for a snack, plus it does a choice of filter or real coffee, with a big beautiful oven door to boot.

Getting There & Away

The bus stop is beside the post office on Eastgate. First bus 62 runs to/from Edinburgh (£4, one hour, every half-hour) and to Galashiels (45 minutes, hourly) and Melrose (1¼ hours, hourly).

AROUND PEEBLES

Traquair House

One of Britain's great noble residences, **Traquair House** (☎ 01896-830323; www.traquair.co.uk;

adult/child £6.20/3.30; ☹ noon-5pm Apr-May & Sep, 10.30am-5.30pm Jun-Aug, 11am-4pm Oct) is believed to have been constructed long before the first official record of its existence in 1107. The massive tower house was gradually expanded over the next 500 years, but has remained virtually unchanged since 1642.

Since the 15th century the house has belonged to various branches of the Stuart family, whose unwavering Catholicism and loyalty to the Stuart cause is largely why development ceased when it did. One of the most fascinating features is the concealed room where priests secretly lived and conducted Mass – up to the passing of the 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act. Other beautiful timeworn rooms hold fascinating relics, including the cradle Mary Queen of Scots used for her son, James VI.

More recent attractions will appeal to kids, including a maze and adventure playground, while the brewery engages adults. You can even stay in one of three elegant rooms (singles £100, doubles £180), complete with canopied beds and rich surrounds; these have to be prebooked. The house is set in beautiful parkland with several woodland walks and secluded picnic spots.

The house is 1.5 miles south of Innerleithen, about 6 miles southeast of Peebles. Bus C1 departs Peebles at 10.15am for Traquair daily and returns at 2.50pm.

SELKIRK

☎ 01750 / pop 5740

Once throbbing with machinery, today this prosperous 19th-century mill town is quiet and quaint. Significantly Walter Scott was sheriff here for three decades and used the stability of the job to create some of his greatest writing.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0870 608 0404; off Market Pl; ☹ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun late Mar-Sep, except 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun Oct) includes **Halliwell's House**, a museum with mocked-up historical grocery stores, displays about common riding and an out-of-place exhibition of local artists. **Sir Walter Scott's Courtroom** (☎ 720096; Market Pl; admission free; ☹ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat Apr-Sep, also 10am-2pm Sun May-Aug, 1-4pm Mon-Sat Oct) features eerie mannequins of Scott as local sheriff (which could almost still punish visitors), as well as displays on his literature.

There's better accommodation in Melrose, but if you want to overnight here try the cosy **County Hotel** (☎ 721233; www.countyhotelselkirk.co.uk;

Market Sq; s/d from £39/69), a former coaching inn that's been well refitted. It also serves lunch and dinner (meals £7 to £9).

First Edinburgh buses 73 and 95 run half-hourly Monday to Friday (hourly on Saturday) to Galashiels and Edinburgh (£4.50, 1½ hours). Bus 72 links Selkirk and Melrose (20 minutes, hourly, three on Sunday).

MELROSE

☎ 01896 / pop 1650

In summer this township is a garden basket of flowers at the foot of the Eildon Hills... and don't the tourist hordes know it. Still it's a pleasing contrast to overbearing Galashiels, whose urban sprawl laps at its western edges. Melrose's classic market square and striking abbey ruins are strong drawcards for the town, but walkers and cyclists will be keen to get out into the Eildons.

Information

The super-friendly and helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0870 608 0404; Abbey House; ☹ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar, 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 9.30am-5.30pm daily Jul & Aug), across from Melrose Abbey, has masses of information on all of Britain.

Sights & Activities

MELROSE ABBEY

The most stunning of the Border abbeys, **Melrose Abbey** (HS; ☎ 822562; adult/child £4.50/2; ☹ 9.30am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-4.30pm Sun Oct-Mar; Ⓜ) was destroyed repeatedly by the English in the 14th century. Rebuilt

in the 15th century in a surprisingly ornate style for the Cistercian order, it was never completed, and by the time of the Reformation only 15 monks remained in the once-thriving community. The vestiges are pure Gothic and the ruins are famous for their decorative stonework. To catch the different colours brought out by varying light (from dawn pinks to sombre greys), several visits to the abbey are recommended.

Founded by King David I in 1136 for Cistercian monks from Rievaulx in Yorkshire, the abbey was rebuilt by Robert the Bruce. After his death, Robert's heart was sealed in a casket and, according to his wishes, borne by the Black Douglas into battle against the Moors in the Spanish Reconquista. Despite Douglas' death, the well-travelled heart was recovered and brought back here for solemn interment.

WALKING & CYCLING

The three volcanically formed hills surrounding the town are known as the **Eildons** and afford good day-walks. The coast-to-coast **Southern Upland Way** and the **Tweed Cycleway** pass through Melrose. **St Cuthbert's Way** (www.scot-borders.co.uk/stcuthbertsway) begins at the abbey before heading across the border for 62 miles to Lindisfarne. From Melrose to Dryburgh (roughly 18 miles) is one of the more spectacular legs of the Borders Abbeys Way (see p806), making it a popular way to sample this longer walk. The **Roman Heritage Way** (www.romanheritageway.com) is a northern limb of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail (see p633), a long-haul walk that takes in several Roman ruins.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Edinburgh-born Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) became the literary voice of Scotland's history. He developed a fascination for folk stories and ballads when as a sick child he was moved to his uncle's farm at Sandyknowe (p805). These stories formed the basis for his multivolume *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. After studying in Edinburgh he was appointed sheriff in Selkirk and bought Abbotsford (p804), a country house where Scott wrote obsessively, until his death, to stave off bankruptcy.

Scott wrote a number of successful ballads. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) was an early critical success; further works earning him an international reputation included *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), set around the Trossachs. He later turned his hand to novels and virtually invented the historical genre, earning the moniker the Wizard of the North. *Waverley* (1814) dealt with the 1745 Jacobite rebellion. Other works included *Guy Mannering* (1815) and *Rob Roy* (1817). His works virtually single-handedly revived interest in Scottish history and legend in the early 19th century.

Tourist offices stock a *Sir Walter Scott Trail* booklet that takes you to many places associated with his life in the Borders.

Good day-walks are detailed in *Walks Around Melrose* (£1), while short cycle trips are detailed in *Melrose: Local Cycling Trails* (free), both available at the tourist office.

Sleeping

If you've got your own transport don't be shy of nearby villages like Earlston and Newstead (a three-quarter-mile walk from the abbey); accommodation here can be booked through the tourist office.

Melrose SYHA Hostel (☎ 0870 004 1141; www.syha.org.uk; dm £14; ♿ Mar-Oct; 📺) Just a stroll from the abbey (in fact you can glimpse it from the 2nd floor), this Georgian mansion features new mattresses and a library with great views. The massive, old building has a great central staircase. This is a serious walkers' bunkhouse, so party animals should crash elsewhere.

Fiorlin (☎ 822984; www.melrose.bordernet.co.uk/fiorlin; Abbey St; d £60) This spacious, well-furnished family home offers relaxed rooms with a breakfast that includes a fruit platter for a healthy start. It's off-street location (in a small alley) also means it's a quieter spot with plenty of parking.

Station (☎ 822038; Market Sq; s/d £40/75) Decked out in ochres and browns, this sophisticated spot has only five rooms, all with generous bathrooms, flat-screen TVs and an excellent breakfast downstairs in Gary Moore's Restaurant at the Station.

Other recommendations:

Dumferline House (☎ 822411; Buccleuch St; s/d £27.50/55) A reliable B&B in a central spot.

Braidwood (☎ 822488; www.braidwoodmelrose.co.uk; Buccleuch St; s/d from £35/55) Very near the abbey, with high-quality facilities and a warm welcome.

Burt's Hotel (☎ 822285; www.burtsotel.co.uk; Market Sq; s/d £56/106) Retains period charm and offers indulgent, luxury accommodation.

Townhouse (☎ 823474; Market Sq; s/d £65/96) Across the road is Burt's big sister, with more class and extras like a Jacuzzi.

Eating

All of Melrose's pubs offer excellent food, including vegetarian options.

our pick **Gary Moore's Restaurant at the Station** (☎ 822038; www.garymoorerestaurants.com; Market Sq; lunch £5-8, dinner £8-18; ♿ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Local chef Moore is fast becoming the doyen of Borders cuisine for his estate-sourced produce. Even his lunchtime sandwiches are delicious constructions (like Ayrshire ham, roasted pepper and mozzarella paninis), while

dinner could include gnocchi with grilled Mediterranean vegetables. A sophisticated dining room and menu that changes monthly complete the package.

Marmions Brasserie (☎ 822245; Buccleuch St; lunch £5-9, dinner £7-17; ♿ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This suave eatery is resplendent with flowers on tables and rich oak panelling throughout. Dinner is a lavish affair often involving game, but lunches offer an affordable way to sample some excellent cuisine, albeit with a simpler, stripped-down menu.

Getting There & Away

First buses run frequently to Jedburgh (30 minutes, at least hourly Monday to Saturday), Peebles (1¼ hours, eight daily Monday to Saturday) and Edinburgh (£5, 2¼ hours, eight daily Monday to Saturday).

AROUND MELROSE Dryburgh Abbey

The most complete exemplar of the Borders' religious architecture is **Dryburgh Abbey** (HS; ☎ 01835-822381; adult/child £4/1.60; ♿ 9.30am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-4.30pm Sun Oct-Mar; 📺). Partly due to its out-of-the-way location by the Tweed, Dryburgh was only ransacked three times by the English after its construction in 1150. It's a time capsule of 12th-century monastic life as it belonged to the Premonstratensians, a religious order also called the White Canons, who were probably relocated here from Northumbrian Abbey in Alnwick. The pink-hued stone ruins were chosen as the burial place for Sir Walter Scott, as well as the notoriously incompetent WWI leader Field Marshall Earl Haig. Pack a picnic to enjoy among the mighty redwoods and cedars that shelter the abbey.

The abbey is 5 miles southeast of Melrose on the B6404, which passes famous **Scott's View Monument**, a small statue inscribed 'Great Patriot Hero. Ill Requited Chief'.

Abbotsford House

For a window into Sir Walter Scott's daily life drop by his former residence, **Abbotsford House** (☎ 01896-752043; www.scottsabbotford.co.uk; adult/child £5/2.50; ♿ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat late-Mar-Oct, 2-5pm Sun Mar-May & Oct, 9.30am-5pm Sun Jun-Sep). The writer lived here for 20 years until his death in 1832, amassing an intriguing collection of literature, with a library that numbers 9000 volumes, and

Scottish relics such as Rob Roy's gun, dirk (dagger) and sword.

The house is about 2 miles west of Melrose between the River Tweed and the B6360. Frequent buses run between Galashiels and Melrose; alight at the Tweedbank roundabout and follow the signposts (it's a 15-minute walk).

KELSO & AROUND

☎ 01573 / pop 5116

Where the River Treviot meets the Tweed is this prosperous town, with a broad market square at its heart flanked by Georgian buildings. With excessive local pride Scott remarked that Kelso was 'the most beautiful, if not the most romantic town in Scotland', though today this seems like hyperbole.

Information

Kelso Library (☎ 223171; Bowmont St; ♿ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Tue, Thu & Fri, plus 5.30-7pm Tue & Thu, 10am-1pm Wed, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat) Free internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 0870 608 0404; kelso@scot-borders.co.uk; Town House, The Square; ♿ daily Apr-Oct, Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) On the main plaza; has limited information.

Sights

KELSO ABBEY

Once the largest of the Border abbeys, picturesque **Kelso Abbey** (HS; admission free; ♿ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-6.30pm Sun Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-4.30pm Sun Oct-Mar; 📺) was ransacked by English armies during the 16th century. The surviving west end dates from the 12th century and was originally built by the Tironensians, an order originally founded in Pireny.

Nearby, the 18th-century **Old Parish Church** (♿ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri May-Sep) breaks with architectural tradition with its curious octagonal design.

FLOORS CASTLE

Flamboyant **Floors Castle** (☎ 223333; adult/child £6/3.25; ♿ 10am-4.30pm Easter-Oct) is Scotland's largest inhabited house. Built by William Adam in the 1720s, its original Georgian simplicity was 'improved' during the 1840s with the addition of rather ridiculous battlements and turrets.

Inside, the drawing room's vivid-toned 17th-century Flemish tapestries and intricate oak carvings in the ornate ballroom always impress. Palatial windows unfurl a ribbon of green countryside extending well beyond the estate. While the real owners are the Dukes of

Roxburghe, this building made a cameo as Tarzan's ancestral home in the film *Greystoke*.

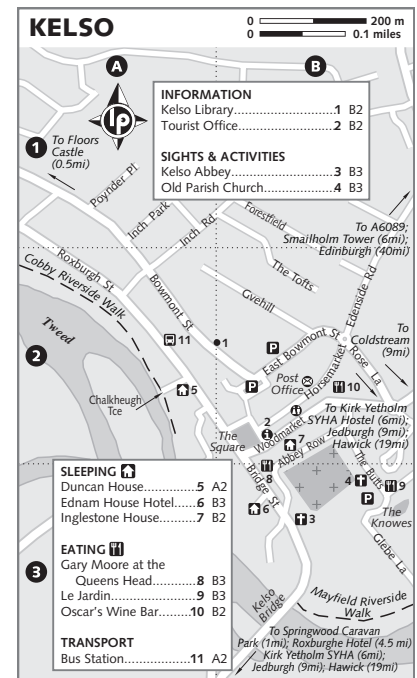
SMAILHOLM TOWER

Perched on a rocky knoll 6 miles west of Kelso, **Smailholm Tower** (HS; ☎ 460365; adult/child £3/1.30; ♿ 9.30am-6.30pm daily Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat, 2-4.30pm Sun Oct-Mar) affords panoramic views as well as being a spectacular sight itself. It's easy to imagine the bloody border clashes from this stone tower; inside are rather unconvincing costumed dummies and tapestries depicting Scott's characters from *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.

On the way to the tower is the farmyard of **Sandyknowe**, once owned by Scott's grandfather. Scott was brought here as a sick child and was inspired by the local ballads and stories, along with his ancestor's ruined tower. Take the B6397 a mile south of Smailholm village to see this epic sight.

Activities

The **Pennine Way**, which starts at Edale in the Peak District, ends at Kirk Yetholm, 6 miles southeast of Kelso, where most walkers



celebrate with a drink at the Border Inn and stay at the Kirk Yetholm SYHA Hostel.

A popular walk with strollers is the **Borders Abbeys Way**, which links the area's abbeys in a 65-mile circuit, one for hikers and one for cyclists. Both cycle and hiking routes run from Kelso to Melrose. The tourist office has free leaflets with map and description of the routes, as well as another detailing other cycling trails around the town.

Less ambitious walkers can take the riverside path to Floors Castle, signposted off Roxburgh St, just off the Square. The free tourist office leaflet, *Walter Scott's Kelso*, gives an orientation around town that takes just under an hour.

The famous **Junction Pool** marks the point where the Rivers Treviot and Tweed meet and **salmon fishing** is legendary here. But great fishing isn't cheap and you can expect to pay from £1000 per day with bookings years in advance. The tourist office has details on less expensive options at other points along the Tweed.

Sleeping & Eating

Kelso's dining scene still hasn't caught up with its surfeit of accommodation, which probably explains why the tourist office has several three-day deals on self-catering cottages.

Kirk Yetholm SYHA Hostel (☎ 0870 004 1132; Kirk Yetholm; dm £12; ☹ Apr-Sep) All the talk at this hostel 6 miles southeast of Kelso is about comparing how much mud you'd got on your boots as you completed the final leg of the Pennine Way or St Cuthberts Way. It's a basic hostel that compensates with congenial staff. Bus 81 runs to/from Kelso up to seven times daily from Monday to Saturday (three times on Sunday).

Duncan House (☎ 225682; www.tweedbreaks.co.uk; 2 Chalkheugh Tce; s/d £45/64) This spot, overlooking a tempting stretch of the Tweed, is a great base for anglers. Rooms have been refitted but retain period features like clawfoot baths. There's smoked salmon and kippers at breakfast in case you can't hook a fish later in the day. The owner's passion for angling means he offers tips on using salmon rods, and supplies rods and tackle. It's a little like your own gaming retreat, complete with affectionate hunting dogs.

Ednam House Hotel (☎ 224168; www.ednamhouse.com; Bridge St; s/d from £65/97, cottage £90) Set on the riverbank, this Georgian house has been successfully transformed into a stylish hotel. Rooms are done out in bright custardy hues and while rooms with river views will push up the budget, you can always enjoy

the same scene from the excellent restaurant (two-course dinner £18; open for lunch and dinner). A separate cottage on the grounds is a more intimate option.

Roxburgh Hotel (☎ 01573 450331; www.roxburgh.net; Heiton by Kelso; s/d £134/170; ☹) Owned by the Duke of Roxburgh (you'll meet his ancestor's portraits on the way in), this former estate office gives guests the royal treatment. Expect elegant rooms and four-posters aplenty, but failed Prince Charmings may prefer to hit the hotel's golf course or go shooting. To get here, tell your driver to take the A698 to Heiton.

Gary Moore at the Queen's Head (☎ 228899; 24 Bridge St; lunch £5-8, dinner £8-18; ☹ lunch daily, dinner Mon-Sat) The saviour of Borders' dining makes a foray into Kelso with this understated dining room that does innovative seafood, such as cod roasted in bacon, cherry tomatoes and house-made basil pesto.

Oscars Wine Bar (☎ 224008; www.oscars-kelso.com; 35-37 Horsemarket; mains £13-18; ☹ dinner) This hip spot's offerings range from a casual menu of fajitas or mouthwatering rack of lamb to more elaborate dishes like corn-fed breast of duck.

Other recommendations:

Springwood Caravan Park (☎ 224596; admin@springwood.biz; tent sites £12; ☹ Mar-Oct; ☹) A massive park that attracts a cheerful camping community.

Inglestone House (☎ 225800; Abbey Row; s/d/tr £40/55/75) Close to the abbey, this lovely spot has spacious baths and refined décor.

Border Inn (☎ 01573 420237; www.theborderhotel.com; Kirk Yetholm; s/d £40/80) Traditional spot to stop for post-walk ale or meal (£6 to £10); comfy rooms.

Le Jardin (☎ 228288; 5a The Knowes; snacks £4-6; ☹ 10am-4.30pm Mon-Sat) A sweet spot near the abbey; good snacks and cakes.

Getting There & Away

Munro's run regular buses to Edinburgh, some involving a connection (£6, two hours, five to eight daily). There are also very frequent departures for Jedburgh (25 minutes, 10 daily Monday to Saturday, five on Sunday) and Galashiels via Melrose (55 minutes, hourly).

JEDBURGH

☎ 01835 / pop 4090

This township was once such a target of cross-border raids that during the 15th century the Scots destroyed the burgh's castle to prevent it falling into English hands. Fortunately other el-

ements of the garrison survived, to be assaulted anew today by camera-wielding invaders from the south. Jedburgh is the first stop across the border on the A68, and is possibly the most popular border town, with ingeniously restored historic buildings and wynds (narrow alleys) that encourage exploration on foot.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0870 608 0404; www.scot-borders.co.uk; Murray's Green; ☹ daily Apr-Oct, Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) has a bureau de change. The **library** (Castlegate; ☹ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, plus 5.30-7pm Mon & Fri), just up the hill from Marketplace, has free internet access.

Sights

Dominating the town skyline, **Jedburgh Abbey** (HS; ☎ 863925; adult/child £4/1.60; ☹ 9.30am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-4.30pm Sun Oct-Mar; ☹ with notice) is impressive even as a ruin. The red sandstone remains are roofless, with the jutting ribs suggesting a much larger structure. The abbey was originally founded in 1138 by King David I as a priory for Augustinian canons from Beauvais in France; their monastic community is re-created with a herb garden and audiovisual display. The staircase in the nave is slippery when wet, but climbing it is worth it for the stunning view.

Scotland's much-loved monarch reputedly stayed in 1566 at the 16th-century tower house now known as **Mary Queen of Scots Visitors Centre** (☎ 863331; Queen St; adult/child £3/free; ☹ 10am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4.30pm Sun Mar-Nov). Among the limited displays are the last letter she wrote before her execution, and her death mask.

Uphill from the town square, **Jedburgh Castle Jail & Museum** (☎ 864750; adult/child £2/1.50; ☹ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 1-4pm Sun April-Oct, closed Nov-Mar) is another relic of Jedburgh's troubled past. Built in 1823, it served as a debtor's prison, and the grim recreation of cells will have you paying off your credit cards. Kids can dress up as Romans and there's an audio tour (free with admission) that tells of a ghostly history.

Sleeping

Reiver's Rest (☎ 864977; www.reiversrest.co.uk; 91 Bon-gate St; s/d £26/40) This one-room wonder has a big double bed and sauna that shames some Edinburgh hotels. It's an ideal spot for a romantic weekend and, best of all, the owners won't hear of a price rise.

Maplebank (☎ 862051; www.bandbjedburgh.com; 3 Smiths Wynd; s/d with shared bathroom £16/32) Stay across from Mary Queen of Scots at this casual and central B&B with light, spacious rooms.

There are loads of choices for breakfast, from fruit to fry-ups.

Other recommendations:

Froylehurst (☎ 862477; Friars off Exchange St; s/d £25/44) Has views over the thatched roofs of town and some chintzy decoration.

Glenbank House Hotel (☎ 862258; www.glenbankhotel.co.uk; Castlegate; s/d from £44/60) Features spacious en suites with a full bath in every room.

Eating

Nightjar (☎ 862552; 1 Abbey Close; mains £8-10; ☹ dinner Tue-Sat) This intimate (OK, small) bistro could be mistaken for a tearoom with its simple décor, but it's actually a sophisticated dining spot with baked halloumi cheese and marsalastewed calf's liver on the menu. If you arrive before 7pm there's a two-course special (£12.50), plus the last Tuesday of every month features a special Thai menu.

Cookie Jar (37 High St; breakfast £5, snacks £3-6; ☹ 10am-5pm) This refreshingly unpretentious tearoom serves up good-quality sandwiches, cakes and slices, alongside some strong coffee.

Getting There & Away

Jedburgh has regular bus connections to Hawick (25 minutes, roughly hourly), Melrose (30 minutes, at least hourly Monday to Saturday) and Kelso (25 minutes, up to 11 daily Monday to Saturday, four Sunday). Munro's bus 29 runs from Edinburgh to Jedburgh (£5.60, two hours, up to 10 daily Monday to Saturday, five Sunday).

HERMITAGE CASTLE

The foreboding **Hermitage Castle** (HS; ☎ 01387-770244; adult/child £3.50/1.30; ☹ 9.30am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Oct & Nov) was strategically vital in Borders campaigns and holds a uniquely grim place in Scottish history.

Mary Queen of Scots famously visited the wounded Lord Bothwell here in 1566. Fortified, he recovered to (probably) murder her husband, marry her himself, then abandon her months later and flee into exile. Another infamous resident of the castle was Lord de Soulis, who called on demons to secure the castle against Robert the Bruce, though the king had his vengeance when Soulis was boiled in oil. No wonder the castle is said to be haunted.

Portions of the castle were repaired in the 19th century with extensions like the parapets and crowstep gables added. More recent repairs have maintained the castle but the interior is

surprisingly plain, though the grisly dungeon has inspired many tales including those of Lord Douglas starving his prisoners to death. To avoid a similar fate, you should pack a picnic to enjoy outside the forbidding walls.

The castle is 12 miles south of Hawick on the B6357, and 5.5 miles northeast of Newcastleton, a mile off the B6339.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

Blessed with local literati Robbie Burns to immortalise the tales of this area (and create a tourist industry), southwestern Scotland may already be familiar in verse to many visitors. Summer is particularly attractive in this area with mild and sunny weather that has allowed the development of some famous gardens as well as great art.

Attractions abound: superb Caerlaverock Castle is one of the most beautifully situated castles in the country; further west is Kirkcudbright, a town so perfectly positioned that it has been drawing artists for decades. Bibliophiles romp through a plethora of bookstores in Wigtown on the Machars peninsula while, further on, the crucible of Scottish religion is at Whithorn Cathedral, a mission predating St Columba on Iona by over 150 years.

If it's all feeling like too much then you can always skip across to Northern Ireland from the ferry port of Stranraer or take time out at nearby Portpatrick, a soothing harbour on a rugged stretch of Galloway coast.

Getting There & Around

Eurolines (☎ 0870 514 3219) operates bus services between London and Belfast, via Birmingham, Manchester, Dumfries, the towns along the A75, and Stranraer.

Local bus operators cover the region comprehensively. The principal operators are **McEwan's** (☎ 01387-256533) and **Stagecoach Western** (☎ 01387-260383).

Two train lines from Carlisle to Glasgow cross the region, via Dumfries and Moffat respectively. The line from Glasgow to Stranraer runs via Ayr.

DUMFRIES

☎ 01387 / pop 31,000

With the magnificent River Nith flowing through town, Dumfries is known as the Queen of the South. Picturesque red-

sandstone bridges span the river and Burns enthusiasts flock to the museums and to the pub the poet once sunk a dram or 20 in.

Information

Library (☎ 253820; Catherine St; ☎ Mon-Sat) Free internet access to check your emails, in a real architectural treasure.

Tourist office (☎ 253862; 64 Whitesands; ☎ daily Apr-mid-Oct, Mon-Sat mid-Oct-Mar) Opposite the car park by the river; stacks of information on the whole region.

Sights

There are several good walks detailed in leaflets from the tourist office, but real Burners should try the **Burns Trail**, a stroll that takes in the river and most major sights.

Dumfries Museum & Camera Obscura (☎ 255297; www.dumgal.gov.uk/museums; Rothchel Rd; museum admission free, camera adult/child £1.90/95p; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar) is a collection of local historical oddments, including the camera obscura in the tower. The device was originally built to observe the Transit of Venus and a tour shows how the ropes and levers manipulate an image of the town.

Robert Burns Centre (RBC; ☎ 264808; Mill Rd; admission free, audiovisual adult/child £1.60/90p; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar) is an award-winning museum located in an old mill on the banks of the River Nith. It relates the story of Burns and Dumfries in the 1790s, including a scale model of the town and a 20-minute audiovisual show.

Red-sandstone **Burns House** (☎ 255297; Burns St; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar), where the poet spent his last years, features personal relics. Look for his signature scratched into an upstairs window. Nearby, his **mausoleum** is in the graveyard at St Michael's Kirk. Back in the centre at the top of High St is a **statue** of the bard.

Sleeping

There's a good selection of B&Bs along Lovers Walk and around into Moffat Rd.

Glenure (☎ 252 373; www.glenurebnb.co.uk; 43 Moffat Rd; s/d £28/48) This well-equipped guesthouse has several single rooms that are almost like hotel rooms, complete with desks and en suites, plus a well-selected video collection and a really great breakfast selection.

Hazeldean House (☎ 266178; 4 Moffat St; s/d £30/52) This pleasant guesthouse offers a warm welcome and varying rooms (sizes vary so check

one out before you check in). You'll know it by the terrifying eagle out the front (which will make you think twice about pinching those guest towels).

Ferintosh Guest House (☎ 252262; www.ferintosh.net; 30 Lovers Walk; s £35, d & tw £50-54) When you change the name of your place to reflect Robbie Burns' whisky of choice, you almost have to offer your guests a free dram. Luckily it's not the only change, with American and Scottish owners redecorating here with great results: Red Rose is a good twin room for golfing buddies (just buddies!) and breakfast comes with haggis and salmon. It's still handy to the train station and rooms are still bright.

Eating & Drinking

Globe Inn (☎ 252335; www.globeinndumfries.co.uk; 56 High St; bar meals £4-6; ☎ lunch & dinner daily) Hidden down a narrow wynd, this traditional howf (pub or shelter) was reputedly one of Robbie Burns' favourites. There's plenty of memorabilia on the walls to attest to this, but the bard probably would have enjoyed a tug on the folklorically inspired fruit machine, Sir Win-a-lot. It's as much a locals' bar as a tourist haunt.

Hullabaloo (☎ 259679; www.hullabaloorestaurant.co.uk; Mill Rd; mains £8-16; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Tue-Sat) Set in the Robert Burns Centre, this playful eatery has something for everyone from its Really Meaty Kebab (which crams every imaginable form of flesh on a skewer) to flavoursome stuffed squash.

our pick **Linen Room** (☎ 255 689; www.linenroom.com; 53 St Michael St; starters £6-9, mains £14-18; ☎ dinner) Dumfries' best restaurant combines metropolitan sophistication with country prices and locally sourced produce. From the selection of breads (and three different butters as well) to the poussin gorgeously presented on the plate as a butterfly, everything about this restaurant will impress. Local chef Russel R Robertson has created one of southern Scotland's best.

WORTH THE TRIP

Threave Castle (HS; ☎ 07711-223101; adult/child £3.50/1.50; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Apr-Sep) About 3 miles west of the town of Castle Douglas, off the A75, is this imposing tower on a small island in the River Dee. A ferry takes you across the river with a guide who cheerily tells you the site's grim history. Built by the cheerfully named Archibald the Grim in 1369, the castle withheld several sieges mainly due to its high artillery defensive walls and river-based supply lines. It's a great spot for youngsters to frolic, but you can't leave them in the pit prison.

It's a 10-minute steep walk from the car park to the small ferry and wheelchair users must be able to get out of their chairs for the river crossing.

Getting There & Away BUS

Eurolines and National Express run buses 920 and 921 twice daily between London and Belfast, via Carlisle, Dumfries, towns along the A75 and Stranraer; London to Dumfries is £29.

Local buses run regularly to Kirkcudbright (1¼ hours, at least hourly Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday) and towns along the A75 to Stranraer (£6, 2¼ hours, eight daily Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday).

Bus 100 runs to/from Edinburgh (£5.50, 2¼ hours, five daily Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday), via Moffat and Biggar.

TRAIN

There are trains to Carlisle (£7.10, 35 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday, five on Sunday), and direct to Glasgow (£10.70, 1¼ hours, eight daily, two on Sunday).

AROUND DUMFRIES Caerlaverock Castle

The ruins of **Caerlaverock Castle** (HS; ☎ 01387-770244; by Glencaple; adult/child £4.50/2; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Oct-Mar; ☎), on a stretch of the Solway coast, are idyllic. Surrounded by a moat, lawns and stands of trees, the unusual pink-hued, triangular, stone castle looks impregnable – but it fell several times. The present castle dates from the late 13th century. Inside, there's an extraordinary Scottish Renaissance façade to apartments built in 1634. The castle is 8 miles southeast of Dumfries on the B725. Monday to Saturday, Stagecoach Western bus 371 runs nine times a day (twice Sunday) to the castle from Dumfries.

A mile further on is **Caerlaverock Wildfowl & Wetlands Centre** (☎ 01387-770200; www.wwt.org.uk; Eastpark Farm; adult/child £3.60/2.20; ☎ 10am-5pm), a 1,400-acre nature reserve with observation towers and CCTV spy cameras to spot badgers, wild swans and hen harriers.

Ruthwell Cross

Just beyond Caerlaverock, in Ruthwell, the **church** (☎ 01387-870249; admission free by calling keyholder) holds one of Europe's most significant Christian monuments: **Ruthwell Cross**. The 6m-high crucifix is inscribed with New Testament scenes along with the poem *The Dream of the Rood*, written in a Saxon runic alphabet, and one of the earliest examples of English-language literature. Built in the mid-7th century to defy the Roman Church's increasing control, the cross was soon condemned as idolatrous and buried until the 19th century, when it was resurrected in its current location.

Sweethearts Abbey

This crumbling, moss-crustured **abbey** (HS, ☎ 01387-850260; adult/child £2/80p; New Abbey; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-6.30pm Sun, closed Fri Oct-Mar) is a romantic antidote to all the stuffy museums. Monks named the building to honour Devorgilla de Balliol, who was widowed by John Balliol, benefactor of Oxford College. When her husband died she took her love to the grisly extreme of embalming his heart and carrying it with her for over 20 years until her own death. You can see an image of her in the south transept, and she's buried in the presbytery.

KIRKCUDBRIGHT

☎ 01557 / pop 3400

Like all great artists Kirkcudbright (pronounced kir-*koo*-*bre*) was unrecognised in its prime but is being capitalised on after its time. A different Robert Burns (Head of Painting at Glasgow University) once commented that no student's education was complete without a visit to Kirkcudbright, and with the pleasing sun and ocean views you can see how it would inspire great art. Once the home to noted painter and ceramicist Jessie M King, as well as several visiting Glaswegian artists, this seaside spot has become prime real estate, particularly its 17th- and 18th-century merchants' houses and spacious harbourfront. The town also featured in the spooky cult film *The Wicker Man*.

The **tourist office** (☎ 330494; kirkcudbright@dgtb.visitscotland.com; Harbour Sq; ☎ daily Mar-Nov, Mon-Fri Dec-Feb) can give you information on exploring the coast.

Sights & Activities

To get in touch with Kirkcudbright's aesthetic, wander down High St to the **Tollbooth Art Centre**

(☎ 331556; High St; admission free; ☎ 11am-5pm Mon-Sat May, 11am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun Jun & Sep, 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun Jul & Aug, 11am-4pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr), which has a modern gallery and a fascinating AV show telling the history of Jessie M King and EJ Hornel.

MacLellan's Castle (HS; ☎ 331856; adult/child £3/1.30; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Apr-Sep) was originally built in the 16th century and came to be adapted more for domesticity than war with chimneys instead of battlements. Inside, look for the 'lairds' lug', a 16th-century spyhole designed for the laird to eavesdrop on his guests.

Nearby, the 17th-century **Broughton House** (NTS; ☎ 330437; 12 High St; adult/child £8/5; ☎ noon-5pm Thu-Mon Apr-Jun, noon-5pm daily Jul-Aug, closed Sep-Mar) was bought by painter EJ Hornel for £650 in 1901 and today shows his work, as well as scenes from his daily life. Regular changing exhibits from his personal collection are also displayed and there's a large collection of Burns paraphernalia.

Sleeping & Eating

The guesthouses on High St tend to be more expensive than those on nearby streets.

Greengate (☎ 331895; www.thegreengate.co.uk; 46 High St; s/d £40/60) This was once the home of Jessie M King, and you can still see the quaint artist cottages out the back. Today it's all luxury with in-room CD players, spacious bathtubs and a comfy lounge of stuffed leather chairs on the 1st floor. Look out for top hats and bowlers decorating some rooms.

Number 1 B&B (☎ 330 540; www.number1bedandbreakfast.co.uk; 1 Castle Gardens; s/d £40/64) This new spot has bright rooms with castle views and the bonus of a spa in one double. Breakfasts are noteworthy as they're prepared by the owner who once cooked for royalty (the Queen Mum and Prince Charles, no less).

Belfry Cafe (☎ 330861; cnr of St Mary & St Cuthberts Sts; meals £3-6; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) With roasts, toasts and sandwiches, this unpretentious spot serves none of your tourist muck. It's affable and affordable.

Auld Alliance (☎ 330569; 5 Castle St; mains £10-16; ☎ dinner daily, lunch Sun Apr-Oct) Named for the political alliance between Scotland and France, this is the hottest table in town. The menu fuses French flair with local seafood accompanied by a sound wine list.

Other recommendations:

Silvercraigs Caravan & Camping Site (☎ 330123; Silvercraigs Rd; tent sites from £8.70) A brilliant spot overlooking the town.

Anchorlee B&B (☎ 330197; www.anchorlee.co.uk; 95 St Mary St; d £30-40) A large house with stained-glass windows, serving great breakfasts.

Getting There & Away

There are regular local buses to/from Dumfries (1¼ hours, at least hourly Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday). In the other direction buses go to Stranraer (1½ hours, four daily Monday to Saturday, two on Sunday).

NEWTON STEWART

☎ 01671 / pop 3573

On one bank of the sparkling River Cree, Newton Stewart is a convenient base for anglers and walkers to explore some beautiful countryside. The **tourist office** (☎ 402431; Dashwood Sq; ☎ Apr-Oct) is just off High St.

Most accommodation is in Minnigaff, a village just across the bridge. **Minnigaff SYHA** (☎ 0870 004 1142; tents £6, dm £13; ☎ Apr-Sep) is in a spruced-up former school that retains features like high windows (so pupils couldn't look out for distraction). **Galloway Arms** (☎ 402653; www.gallowayarmshotel.net; 54-58 Victoria St; s/d £30/60) is a surprisingly swish spot with renovated rooms, some of which have glittering toilet seats to give your bum the star treatment. The bar serves above-par pub grub.

Newton Stewart has regular National Express/Eurolines buses running between Stranraer (45 minutes, five daily Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday) and Dumfries (1½ hours, six daily from Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday). Frequent buses also run south to Wigtown and Whithorn.

MACHARS PENINSULA

The triangular wedge south of Newton Stewart is where the Galloway Hills ease into the pastures of the Machars peninsula. The south is blessed with several early Christian sites and the 25-mile **Pilgrims Way**.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus 415 runs every hour Monday to Saturday (every two hours on Sunday) from Newton Stewart to Whithorn (one hour) via Wigtown (15 minutes).

Wigtown

☎ 01988 / pop 987

With a bookstore for every 50 residents, Scotland's national book town (www.wigtown-booktown.co.uk) is the perfect spot for

browsing through endless secondhand collections.

The **library** (Market Sq; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon, Thu & Sat, 10am-7.30pm Tue, Wed & Fri, 2-5pm Sun) has free internet, plus CCTV to watch nesting ospreys, for free, upstairs.

Lining the town's central bowling green are several specialist stores that really come into their own during the town's **book festivals** (www.wigtownbookfestival.com).

If you're planning a weekend of browsing, there are rooms at **Mora House** (☎ 403410; 10 Bank St; s/d £30/50), a good B&B that has added luxuries like chocolates and some knowledgeable owners.

Of the many (and ever-changing) bookshops, here are a few favourites:

451f (☎ 402515; www.451f.org.uk; 29 South Main St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Collects a curious mix of poetry, sci-fi and comics, including Brit classics like *Beano* and *Dandy*.

Book Corner (☎ 402010; 2 High St; www.mccormicknicholson.co.uk/book-cnr-wigtown1.htm; ☎ daily May-Oct, Mon-Sat Nov-Apr) A Tardis-like store that has a huge general range and some great Scottish tourist books.

Byre Books (☎ 0845 458 3813; www.byrebooks.co.uk; 24 South Main St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Just off the main street; does Scottish myths, folklore, theatre and film.

M E McCarty Bookseller (☎ 402062; 13 North Main St; ☎ 10am-5.30pm daily Mar-Sep, 10am-4.30pm Mon-Wed, Sat & Sun Oct-Apr) Well-stocked secondhand collection with signed 1st editions, plus they have the expansive Book Vaults (19 Bank St).

Reading Lasses Bookshop Café (☎ 403266; 17 South Main St; www.reading-lasses.com; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat year-round, noon-5pm Sun May-Oct) Specialises in women's literature and nonfiction; has a buzzing café that does amazing baked treats.

In neighbouring **Bladnoch** there are a few more bookish options and, for bored nonreaders, **Bladnoch Distillery** (☎ 4062 2842; Bladnoch; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sun Jul-Aug), Scotland's southernmost distillery.

Whithorn

☎ 01988 / pop 870

Whithorn's grand High St originally enclosed a medieval market, though today it seems worse for wear. The town is worth visiting, because in AD 397 St Ninian moved the frontier of Christianity beyond Hadrian's Wall by founding the first Christian mission here (pre-dating St Columba on Iona by 166 years).

Whithorn Priory's rambling ruins were built to house St Ninian's remains and were

once the focus of an important medieval pilgrimage. Today they form the centrepiece for the **Whithorn Experience** (HS; ☎ 500508; www.whithorn.com; 45 George St; admission £2.70; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Apr-Oct), an audiovisual display and museum that houses the Latinus Stone (c 450), reputedly Scotland's oldest Christian artefact. Young Indiana Joneses also get the chance to try their hand on a mocked-up archaeological dig here.

Isle of Whithorn

☎ 01988 / pop 400

This tiny, scrappy fishing village was once an island unto itself but has become a peninsula with an attractive harbour. A short walk from the township, **St Ninian's Chapel** is a humble ruin, originally built for pilgrims who landed nearby, and there's a sweet **Witness Cairn**, where the bereaved lay stones in tribute to the dead. There are also several nice walks around the area, plus **Machars Cycleway**.

Steam Packet Inn Hotel (☎ 500334; www.steampacketinn.com; Harbour Row; mains £5-9) is a popular pub with dependable (if unimaginative) bar meals and comfortable lodging (singles/doubles from £30/60).

STRANRAER

☎ 01776 / pop 10,850

This port is a workhorse lugging cargo to Belfast, so most visitors only stay on their way to Northern Ireland. To avoid a slow crawl through shallow waters there are plans to move the ferry terminal to nearby Cairnryan, which gave rise to plans to develop Stranraer as a marina. For the moment though it remains a rough-around-the-edges spot where locals pop across to Belfast to do their shopping.

Information

Post office (☎ 702587; Charlotte St) In Tesco's.

Stranraer Library (☎ 707400; North Strand St;

☎ Mon-Sat) Located near the tourist office; has free internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 702595; stranraer@dgtb.visitscotland.com; 28 Harbour St; ☎ daily Apr-Oct, Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) Carries all the ferry timetables.

Sights

St John's Castle (☎ 705544; George St; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Easter-mid-Sep) has a few models and a bit of history with two audiovisual films about the area, plus great bay views from the tower.

Stranraer Museum (☎ 705088; 55 George St; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sat) covers local history, but if you're not digging the oldest plough in Scotland, there are good revolving exhibits.

Sleeping & Eating

There are several guesthouse options on the always popular Agnew Cres.

Jan Da Mar Guest House (☎ 706194; www.jandamar.co.uk; 1 Ivy Pl, London Rd; s/d from £20/36) The great bonus at this large B&B are its effusive hosts, who will go out of their way to give advice or supply board games for rainy days. Rooms themselves are bright and the upper storey has good views of the township.

Neptune's Rest (☎ 704729; 24 Agnew Cres; s £22-28, d £50) Handy for early/late ferries, this place has sweet little rooms bedecked with seafaring paraphernalia (look out for the diver's helmet). Pricier rooms have en suites.

L'Aperitif (☎ 702991; London Rd; mains £6-12; ☎ lunch & dinner) King of the hill geographically and gastronomically, this restaurant does authentic homestyle Italian. The pizzas are great, but fresh pasta with free garlic bread is tough to beat.

Petrucchi's (☎ 705837; 2-6 George St; pizzas £5-7, fish suppers £3.4; ☎ 11am-11pm) There's a glut of pizzerias and chippers around the main streets, but this is the best, particularly for its undebatable Big Yin breakfast made for starving sailors.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

There are two alternatives from Stranraer to reach Northern Ireland: **P&O** (☎ 0870 242 4777; www.poirishsea.com) ferries from Cairnryan to Larne (Northern Ireland); and **Stena Line** (☎ 08705 707070; www.steneline.com) ferries from Stranraer to Belfast, with Stena offering affordable day trips (from £20) and internet bargains.

The Cairnryan to Larne service is used mainly by motorists and hauliers. Cairnryan is 5 miles north of Stranraer, on the northern side of Loch Ryan. Bus 358 runs there frequently.

BUS

Eurolines buses head to London via Dumfries, Manchester and Birmingham.

Citylink is the best bus service to Glasgow (£10, 2½ hours, two daily); it meets the ferries from Belfast. There are also local buses to Kirkcubright (1½ hours, four daily Monday to Saturday, two on Sunday) and towns on the A75, eg Newton Stewart (45 minutes, five daily Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday) and Dumfries (£5.40, two hours, six daily Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday).

TRAIN

The train station is on the ferry pier. There are regular services to/from Glasgow (£15.60, 2½ hours, seven daily Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday), although only some are direct.

PORTPATRICK

☎ 01776 / pop 585

This sweet little marina once served as the main port for Northern Ireland, with Irish couples hopping across to enjoy Scotland's easier marriage laws in the 19th century. Today it's a coastguard station with a strip of beach that makes for great rock-hopping, and the starting point for the 212-mile Southern Upland Way (see p783).

There are plenty of guesthouses along North Cres and Blair Terrace. **Knowe Guest House** (☎ 810441; www.theknowe.co.uk; 1 North Cres; s/d from £35/54) offers contemporary en-suite

rooms with unbeatable harbour views. Downstairs is **Tysties Coffee Shop** (snacks £3-6; ☎ 9am-4pm Mar-Sep), which does scrumptious slices, cakes and light meals. Another good accommodation option is **Mansewood** (☎ 810255; Dean Pl; d £50), with bright if plainish rooms in an elevated stone house.

For food there are a couple of pubs along the harbour, but our favourite is the **Crown** (☎ 810261; www.crownportpatrick.com; 9 North Cres; mains £6-17; ☎ lunch & dinner daily), best known for its superb seafood. The top table in town is at **Campbells** (☎ 810314; 1 South Cres; mains £8-17; ☎ lunch & dinner daily), with a subdued dining room by the sea that excels at seafood but does equally brilliant grills.

Local bus 367 runs to Stranraer hourly Monday to Saturday (three times on Sunday).

AYRSHIRE

Even if you've only got a passing interest in Robbie Burns, you'll find yourself drawn into his story as you pass through the area he was born in. But there's more on offer than wee Rabbie, with sunny stretches of spectacular beaches and world-famous golf courses. Off-shore there's the delightful island of Arran that's everyone's favourite weekend spot, or if you've got less time head for the day-tripper's dream, Great Cumbrae.

Getting Around

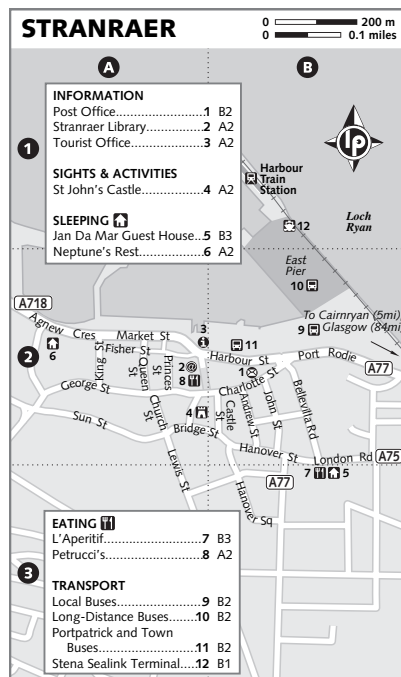
Stagecoach Western (☎ 01292-613500) is the main operator on the mainland and on Arran, where **Western** (☎ 01770-302000) and **Royal Mail** (☎ 01463-256200) run buses around the island. Ferries to here and Great Cumbrae are run by **CalMac** (☎ 0870 565 0000; www.calmac.co.uk).

LARGS

☎ 01475 / pop 11,241

This port town is enjoying a Viking-led recovery. Several shopfronts proclaim allegiance to the Norsemen, and there's the magnificent **Vikinger** (☎ 689777; Greenock Rd; adult/child £4.10/3.10; ☎ 10.30am-5.30pm daily Apr-Sep, 10.30am-3.30pm daily Oct & Mar, 10.30am-3.30pm Sat & Sun Nov & Feb, closed Dec-Jan), which re-tells the story of the Vikings in Scotland and is excellent for littlies.

The **tourist office** (☎ 676182; Main St; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri Mar-Sep) is extremely helpful and books accommodation in town and also on Great Cumbrae.



CalMac ferries link Largs with Great Cumbrae (passenger/child/car return £3.65/1.83/15.35, 10 minutes, every 15 minutes). Largs has frequent bus and train connections to Glasgow.

ISLE OF GREAT CUMBRAE

☎ 01475 / pop 1430

At only 4 miles long, the island of Great Cumbrae is only 'great' because it's bigger than the privately owned Little Cumbrae island (which is also called Wee Cumbrae). It's popular with cyclists who cruise the 10 miles of hilly roads trying to spot sculptures like the **Big Indian** scattered around the island.

Millport is the main town, with tempting sandy beaches (some brave souls even venture in for a swim). The town has two exceptional claims: **50 Stuart Street** is reputedly the world's narrowest house with a façade just 119cm across; and there's also Europe's smallest cathedral, the **Cathedral of the Isles** (☎ 530353; College St; admission free; ☎ daily).

For a peek under the sea, **Robertson Museum & Aquarium** (☎ 530581; admission £1.50; ☎ 10am-12.45pm & 2-4.45pm Mon-Fri, plus Sat Jun-Sep), on the edge of town towards the ferry pier, has a few interesting specimens.

There are some good accommodation options that can be booked in Largs (the tourist office can help), but the **College of the Holy Spirit** (☎ 530535; College St, Millport; d & tw £36) is the most divine. You stay in the verdant grounds of the cathedral and can peruse books at your leisure at the library.

For a decent bite, the **Dancing Midge** (☎ 531278; www.thedancingmidge.com; 24 Glasgow St, snacks £2-5; ☎ 9am-4pm) does good coffee and paninis without stinging your wallet.

CalMac ferries link Great Cumbrae with Largs. Island buses meet the ferries for the short journey to Millport (adult/child £2.40/1.20). Several places in Millport hire out bikes, including **Mapes** (☎ 530444; 3 Guildford St; per hr £2; ☎ daily).

AYR

☎ 01292 / pop 46,400

Stretched along a long sandy beach, this buzzing township boomed as a seaside resort during the Victorian era. Elegant Georgian and Victorian buildings are a testament to its period as a leisure capital, as are nearby world championship golf courses, Turnberry and Troon. Today many visitors use the town as

a jumping-off point for Burns territory, much of which lies within an hour's drive of Ayr.

Information

Carnegie Library (☎ 618492; 12 Main St; ☎ 10am-7.30pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, 10am-5pm Wed & Sat) Free internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 678100; 12 Sandgate; info@ayrshire-arran.com; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat year-round, 10am-5pm Sun Jul & Aug)

Sights

As you'd expect in the capital of Burns Country, Rabbie is ubiquitous: he was baptised in the **Auld Kirk** (Old Church; ☎ 262938). In *The Brigs of Ayr* the town's bridges squabble about who will last longer. Near the bottom of High St, **Auld Brig** was built in 1491 and spans the river just down from the church. If you're over the poetry, the **beach** makes for a pleasant stroll.

Sleeping

Eglinton Guest House (☎ 264623; 23 Eglinton Tce; s/d from £20/38) This budget option may be getting longer in the tooth, but friendly staff and a location that's handy for beach and town ensure its popularity. Breakfast is negotiable if you want to save £5 off the room rates.

Richmond Guest House (☎ 265153; www.richmond-guest-house.co.uk; 38 Park Circus; s/d ff £30/50/68) In a posh pocket of town, this 170-year-old house manages to be friendly and cosy. Lofty ceilings and leather couches add to the sumptuous feel, but Brodie, the ever-affectionate chocolate Labrador, will help make you feel at home. This place effortlessly balances comfort and style.

Daviott House (☎ 269678; 12 Queens Tce; s/d ff £30/56/84) This cheery spot has several en suite rooms that can accommodate families. Great tailored breakfasts (including cold cuts and cheese if you're up for it first thing) and advice on local golf courses are good bonuses.

Numer 26 The Crescent (☎ 287329; 26 Bellevue Cres; www.26crescent.freeserve.co.uk; s/d £45/60-65) One of the more stately Victorian homes in the area actually manages a homy, lived-in feel, with great hospitality. Breakfasts, for example, run to porridge and haddock (not in the same dish!). The pricier double comes with a period four-poster bed, and sink-in baths are a luxury.

Other recommendations:

Heads of Ayr Caravan Park (☎ 442269; www.headsofayr.com; Dunure Rd; tent sites from £8) About 5 miles south of Ayr on the A719. Offers on-site vans as well as tent sites; and a modest bar.

Dunn Thing Guest House (☎ 284531; www.dunn-thing.co.uk; 13 Park Circus; s/d £30/48) A good bet; does airport pick-up and a welcoming cuppa.

Eating & Drinking

Pandora (☎ 289919; 32 New Bridge St; light meals £2-4) The unimpressive shopfront belies a swish back room of dark-wood panelling and groovy orange chairs. Food is light but tasty with wraps, pizzas, cakes and bowls of healthy salad featuring prominently.

West Kirk (☎ 880416; 58a Sandgate; meals £4-6; ☎ lunch & dinner) Okay, so it's a chain pub, but a dazzling one in a converted church that always has pews packed with drinkers and diners.

Tam o'Shanter (☎ 611684; 230 High St; mains £6-8) Claiming its name from Burns' most celebrated poem, this traditional pub hosts locals 'getting fou and unco happy' (as the poet said) on its ales and dining on its solid-if-simple grub.

Fouters (☎ 261391; 2a Academy St; mains £8-16; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) This place is the town's dining institution, stashed in a former bank vault in a side alley. The menu is where Ayrshire meets the Mediterranean with local produce whipped into tapas-style entrees or innovative pastas.

Getting There & Away

Stagecoach Western runs the hourly express X77 service to Glasgow (£4.30, one hour) and

Prestwick Airport (30 minutes). There are also services to Stranraer (£6.30, 1¼ hours, four to nine daily). There are frequent trains from Glasgow Central to Ayr (£5.70, 50 minutes, half-hourly) and some trains continue south to Stranraer (£11, 1½ hours from Ayr, seven daily).

AROUND AYR Alloway

☎ 01292

This pretty village on the southern outskirts of Ayr is the birthplace of Robbie Burns. Several sights have sprung up around the poet's home town all under the umbrella of **Burns National Heritage Park** (☎ 443700; www.burnsheritagepark.com; passport to all sites £5; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar).

Burns Cottage & Museum (admission £4) stands by the main road from Ayr and is one of the more authentic sights. The poet lived the first seven years of his life in this cramped thatched cottage, which includes a suitably musty byre and a warm storytelling hearth. The nearby museum of Burnsiana exhibits some fabulous artwork as well as many of his songs and letters, and the small surrounding garden is impressive.

Close by is crumbling **Alloway Auld Kirk**, an eerie setting for the witches' dance in *Tam o'Shanter*. Burns' father, William Burnes (his son dropped the 'e'), is buried in the kirkyard.

ROBERT BURNS

Best remembered for penning *Auld Lang Syne*, Robert Burns (1759–96) is Scotland's most famous poet, and a popular hero whose birthday (25 January) is celebrated as **Burns Night** by Scots around the world.

Born in 1759 in Alloway, Burns came from a poor family but was sent to a local school where he showed a talent for literature and folk songs. He began to write his own songs and satires, some of which he distributed privately. When farm life grew difficult and he was threatened with prosecution by the father of one of his romantic misadventures, Burns decided to emigrate to Jamaica and published his poems to raise money for the journey.

The poems did so well that Burns decided to remain in Scotland and devote himself to writing. He moved to Edinburgh in 1787 and published a 2nd edition, but he was poorly paid and had to take a job as a customs officer in Dumfriesshire. He contributed many songs to collections and a 3rd edition of his poems was published in 1793. Burns composed more than 28,000 lines of verse over 22 years. He died in Dumfries in 1796, aged 37, after a heart attack. He had eventually married Jean Armour (of the litigious father), with whom he had nine children; she even took in a couple of his illegitimate ones, famously sighing 'Our Robbie should have had two wives'.

Burns wrote in Lallans, a language also known as Lowland Scots, that's not very accessible to some English speakers, which may be why Scots still hold Rabbie so dear.

Tam o' Shanter Experience (admission £2) is an elaborate audiovisual retelling of the famous poem; it may beguile children while adults might miss the magic.

Alloway is 3 miles south of Ayr. Stage-coach Western bus 57 runs (hourly 8.45am to 6pm Monday to Saturday) between Alloway and Ayr.

Electric Brae

On the A719 (9 miles south of Ayr), a spooky stretch of road named the Electric Brae is known as the spot where cars appear to roll uphill. Early speculations of magnets and faerie folk are untrue, as the slope just appears to go in one direction but actually subtly tilts in the other, creating this odd illusion. In summer locals waggishly label the natural phenomenon 'Out of Order'.

Culzean Castle

As you approach the magnificent **Culzean** (☎ 01655-884455; www.culzeanexperience.org; admission park & castle £12, park only £6; 🗓 castle 10.30am-5pm Apr-Oct, park 9.30am-sunset year-round; 🚗), pronounced cul-lane, you'll get the sense that the majestic castle is shimmering like a mirage. Of course this is because the entrance is built on a converted viaduct, but it instils the castle's mystery and magic to every visitor.

This impressive 18th-century edifice was designed to perch romantically on the cliffs by influential architect Robert Adam, whose aesthetic embellishes almost every aspect of the castle. The **Blue Drawing Room** showcases Adam's love of details, such as the elaborate chimney frieze of gryphons which caper over the doorways. The **Oval Staircase** provides the centrepiece of the house, serving as characteristic Adam invention and flair. The **Armoury** is second only to Windsor Castle for its collection of flintlock pistols, swords and other weaponry.

The top-floor apartment is known as the Eisenhower Suite and was given to the American general at the end of WWII to salute his role in that conflict. Today this suite is one of many options for staying in the grand surroundings of the castle (singles/doubles/suites from £140/235/250).

The surrounding grounds include a fascinating woodland that hosts deer and birdlife as well as a rugged strip of beach.

Culzean is accessible by bus 58 or 60 from Ayr (30 minutes, 11 daily Monday to Saturday), which pass the park gates, from where

it's a 20-minute walk through the grounds to the castle.

ARDROSSAN

☎ 01294 / pop 11,000

This port town is a hub for buses, trains and ferries on to Arran, but unless you're keen to see a church converted into a pound store there's little reason to stop here. Trains leave Glasgow Central (55 minutes, five daily) to connect with ferries to the Isle of Arran; see p820. Stage-coach's X15 bus runs express from Glasgow (1½ hours, twice daily) and also meets ferries.

ISLE OF ARRAN

☎ 01770 / pop 5060

While international visitors head north for the more remote islands, British people look to this island for their perfect weekender. The combination of gourmet grub and the truly great outdoors makes for a good mini-break no matter what you're after. You'll see novice cyclists enjoying summer sun as they wobble along the manageable trail that loops the island, while walkers head further inland to tackle more challenging hills. Then there are country pubs where the fire is as warm as the banter. The brochures call it Scotland in miniature, but most visitors leave thinking of it as Scotland with the crap bits cut out.

Orientation

The Ardrossan ferry docks at Brodick, the island's main town. A road circumnavigates the island, with a few roads cutting across the hilly interior. South of Brodick, Lamlash is the actual capital and, like Whiting Bay further south, a popular seaside resort. In the north Lochranza is a sweet village that has a non-winter ferry to Claonaig on the Kintyre peninsula.

Information

Brodick has two banks with ATMs, car- and bike-hire facilities, and two co-op supermarkets, where you can access the internet. Other places to get online include the Kildonan Hotel (p819) and Catacol Hotel (p818).

Arran Library (☎ 302835; Brodick Hall; 🗓 10am-7.30pm Tue & Thu-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) Internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 303774; 🗓 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Thu, 9am-7.30pm Fri, 9am-5pm Sat Oct-May) Near Brodick pier; gets swarmed with visitors when the ferry comes in.

Your Computer Shop (☎ 303808; Brodick; per hr £1) Another spot to get online.

Sights

BRODICK & AROUND

The island's biggest town, Brodick, has the major ferry terminal and a delightful long curving bay which makes for a pleasant stroll.

Just north of town, **Brodick Castle** (NTS; ☎ 302202; castle & gardens adult/child £10/7, garden only adult/child £5/4; 🗓 castle 11am-5pm Apr-Oct, gardens 10am-sunset year-round) is a still-inhabited castle known for its trophy room lined with deer heads and its impressive formal dining room. While access to the interior is disappointingly limited, the grounds are worth the entry fee for their walled garden and nature centre, which includes owl-watching.

THE NORTH

The road north weaves between dramatic mountains and the coast, which has been known as a habitat for seals. The sweet township of **Lochranza**, in a small bay at the north of the island, has its own 13th-century **Lochranza Castle** (HS; admission free) that creeps into everyone's photos (if it's closed, ask at the SYHA Hostel for the keyholder). The township itself is so quiet that deer graze in the streets.

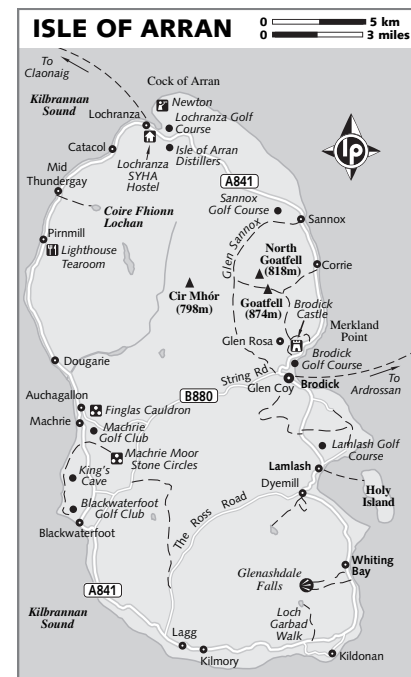
Just south of town, **Isle of Arran Distillers** (☎ 830264; www.aranwhisky.com; tours adult/child £3.50/free; 🗓 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, reduced hours at other times, tours on the hour) only recently produced its first 10-year-old whisky to great acclaim; you can try it on the tour that also lets you pour your own bottle and write your own label.

THE SOUTH

North of Whiting Bay is **Lamlash**, in a byside setting, stretched along a pretty beachfront. Across the bay, **Holy Island** is owned by Tibetan Buddhists whose **Centre for World Peace & Health** (☎ 013873-73232; www.holyisland.org) runs retreats and encourages day-visits to wander in the woods. Check out the lighthouse and contemplate peace, man. A **ferry** (☎ 07932 786524; adult/child return £9/5) will take you to this tranquil spot (six daily from May to September). Tickets are sold from a pierside caravan.

On the island's western side the **Machrie Moor Stone Circles** are six rings of stone circles dating from the 2nd millennium BC. The drive or cycle around this side of the island is scenic, though the roads narrow to single lanes at some points.

In the southern part of the island the road drops into little wooded valleys, and it's par-



ticularly lovely around **Lagg**. At **Kildonan** there are a string of rocky beaches and the ruins of an ivy-clad castle.

Activities

WALKING & CYCLING

Walking up **Goatfell**, Arran's highest peak, takes up to eight hours return, starting and finishing in Brodick. With clear weather the summit gives views of Ben Lomond and Northern Ireland's coast. It can, however, be very cold and windy. Make sure you have the appropriate maps (available at the tourist office), waterproof gear and a compass.

The perfect way to take in the whole island is to stroll the low-level **Coastal Way** (www.coastalway.co.uk), a multiday walk that kicks off in Brodick on a 60-mile loop that passes through most of the villages and up to Goatfell.

Explore the Forests of the Isle of Arran is good leaflet that details seven walks on Arran and is available free at the tourist office.

For cyclists, the 50-mile coastal road has few serious hills – more in the south than the north. For details of bike-rental places, see Getting Around (p820).

A COTTAGE SOMEWHERE

There are plenty of self-catering places in Lamhass, many bookable through **Arran HideAways** (☎ 302303; www.arran-hideaways.co.uk).

OTHER ACTIVITIES

For all kinds of outdoor fun, **Arran Adventures** (☎ 302244; www.arranadventure.com; 1hr kayak hire £10, activities 1/4hr £15/45, boats trips from £15) offers speed-boat trips to Holy Island and around Brodick Bay as well as activities from abseiling to power-kiting to sea kayaking; or take on the waves solo with kayak hire.

The rugged inland can also make for some good horse trekking. A good local outfit is **North Sannox Pony Trekking** (☎ 810222; Sannox; 1/2hr treks £15/28), which explores the scenic north; to get here turn right off the A841.

Arran's geography creates some unique golf courses from the hilly Whiting Bay to 12 holes at Shiskine (near Blackwaterfoot). You can sample them all with the **Arran Golf Pass** (£90) available from **MacAlpine Hotel** (☎ 302155; Brodick) and tourist offices. The pass lasts for a year so you can keep coming back to tackle the tricky holes. Alternatively you can grab a bucket of balls at the **Arran Driving Range** (☎ 860530; Balmichael; 50 balls £2.50) and whack away for an hour or two.

For littlies, Brodick Castle has a basic **adventure playground** that includes a wee flying fox.

Sleeping

Weekends book up quickly, so plan ahead if you're looking to stay awhile. Budget accommodation is particularly scarce.

**BRODICK
Midrange**

Close to the ferry and close to facilities, Brodick is an easy choice for accommodation, but other villages give more of a feel for the island.

Dunvegan Guest House (☎ 302811; Brodick; s/d £35/66) This small homey place features pleasant gardens and has a near-pier location perfect for an early ferry. Fans of TV's *Emmerdale* may recognise that it was used as a location for the show.

Glendoy Farm Guesthouse (☎ 302351; Glendoy Rd; s/d £45/60, with shared bathroom £35/50) This farmhouse is perfect for families, with healthy breakfasts, plenty of animals for kids to pet and videos for

those cabin-fever rainy days. And because it's family-owned, you'll feel like you've been welcomed into the clan by the end of your stay.

Inverdoy (☎ 302225; Brodick; d £70-90) Most rooms in this well-appointed guesthouse include en suites. As well, deluxe top-storey rooms include four-poster beds and small balconies with views across to Brodick Castle and Goatfell. There's also a great lower-storey room if you miss out on the upper-storey glory.

Top End

Kilmichael Country House Hotel (☎ 302219; www.kilmichael.com; Glen Cloy; s £95, d £150-190) With a delightful *Passage to India* feel, this former King's Coroner's house has been royally refurbished into the island's best boutique hotel. Best of all are the modern features such as an iPod shuffling through laid-back lounge music in the dining room as well as Asian art from the owner's travels around the globe. Cottages out the back are perfect for get-away-from-it-all couples and include a double Jacuzzi.

**LOCHRANZA
Budget**

Lochranza Golf, Caravan & Camping (☎ 830273; Lochranza; tent sites £6; ☎ Apr-Oct) An idyllic spot near the golf course, which boasts great views.

Lochranza SYHA Hostel (☎ 0870 004 1140; www.syha.org.uk; dm £12; ☎ Mar-Oct) With superfriendly staff and a relaxed location, this spot is tough to beat. The owner has plenty of tips on local walks and cycling, while the building itself is spacious enough to take in larger groups without overrunning solo travellers.

Midrange

Castlekirk (☎ 830202; r per person from £25; ☎ Mar-Nov) This converted 19th-century church offers divine B&B along with a quirky collection of Scottish art that includes a rather eerie carved eagle.

Catacol Hotel (☎ 830231; Catacol; r per person £25; ☎) This old-style pub is set in a scenic out-of-the-way spot on the west coast, yet somehow manages to be less than 2 miles from Lochranza. It does affordable B&B, with the bonus of free internet.

Apple Lodge (☎ /fax 830229; d & tw £66) This boutique B&B is set just off the bay with unique rooms and enthusiastic hosts. Ask for the four-poster bed for a romantic weekend.

Lochranza Hotel (☎ /fax 830223; www.lochranza.co.uk; s/d £50/90) One of the friendliest spots on the

island and a real hub of the village. Rooms here are comfortable enough, though a few have a garish pink colour scheme. There are brilliant views of the bay from the front rooms. Head downstairs for periodic folk sessions.

**KILDONAN & WHITING BAY
Budget**

Seal Shore Camping (☎ 820320; Kildonan; per person £6, plus per tent £1) Well-located for the Kildonan Hotel and with loads of extras including a pool table and laundry, this is one of the more comfortable camping options. Dig those pegs deep though, as this seaside spot can be exposed to winds.

Eden Lodge (☎ 700357; Whiting Bay; d £50-70) With plush doubles and some good views over the sea, this new hotel makes a modish weekender for couples. If you can, grab the purple room for the best views and minimalist chic.

Midrange

Mingulay B&B (☎ 700346; www.arranwelcome.com; Whiting Bay; s/d £30/54) This charming spot welcomes you with a cream tea and a chat with the owner and other guests; expect your national flag stuck in a scones! Good-sized rooms and sea aspects make it a top spot. Parking skills will be tested with the narrow drive.

Top End

Kildonan Hotel (☎ 820207; www.kildonanhotel.com; d from £75; ☎) Overlooking rocks where seals

regularly bask, this hotel has been refurbished in sleek style. Expect seaside views, even from the hip bar and beer garden out the front. Comfortable beds and an excellent restaurant menu complete the package.

Eating

Kildonan Hotel (☎ 820207; Kildonan; mains £6-8; ☎ noon-9pm; ☎) This hip spot has been stylishly decorated in smooth modern curves and polished floorboards. Expect hefty bar portions and a more refined menu in the restaurant that overlooks the seals basking on the rocks.

Lochranza Hotel (☎ 830223; Lochranza; mains £6-11; ☎ lunch & dinner) Despite being the only place in town for an evening meal, this little pub keeps it cheerful and serves up hearty Scottish pub grub, plus it has a good range of beers and malts for post-prandial sampling.

Joshua's (☎ 700308; Shore Rd, Whiting Bay; mains £8.50-12; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) This big beachside spot is quirky, from the giant bear that greets you to the table decorations of twirled bamboo and the lipstick-red chairs. Nab a spot in the conservatory to watch the tide come and go as you enjoy a coffee, or retreat to the dining room for pasta and risotto.

Broderick Bar Brasserie (☎ 302169; Brodick; mains £12-14; ☎ lunch & dinner) You can tell this is the swish new spot, because they've lacquered the driftwood in the loungey dining area. The menu is innovative: smoked salmon and

PACKING AN ARRAN PICNIC BASKET

Over the last decade, many Scottish islands have established themselves as gourmet brands as much as landmasses. From Stornoway black pudding to Valhalla Breweries, it seems like every island is offering signature ingredients to fancy menus across Scotland.

Arran is no exception, and while you're here you should try to sample some of the local nosh. For more information see www.tastetrail.com. Here are a few of our favourites, though we're sure you can find even more of your own to take on a long walk or cycle:

Arran Brewery (☎ 302353; www.arranbrewery.co.uk; Brodick; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 12.30-5pm Sun Mar-Sep) A chatty owner does tasting tours (£2) that usually conclude with a purchase of the local brew; Arran Sunset quenches best after a day of walking.

Arran Fine Food Kitchen Shop (☎ 600606; Old Mill, Lamhass; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Mar-late Oct, 10am-4pm Wed-Sat late Oct-Feb) Does fine mustards, chutneys and other flavoursome preserves; grab Robbie Burns marmalade with a dram of whisky for a breakfast cure for post-holiday Mondayitis.

Creelers (☎ 302810; Duchess Ct, Brodick; mains £12-17; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) The Smokehouse, attached to the famous restaurant, is ideal for sampling top seafood like salmon pâté or take-home cullen skink.

Island Cheese Company (☎ 302788; www.islandcheese.co.uk; Brodick; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Tastings run all day at the counter, and for an unpretentious nibble grab a cheddar shot through with herbs or chilli.

Wooley's of Arran (☎ 302280; Brodick; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) A traditional bakery that makes the oatcakes that are eaten across the island.

WORTH THE TRIP

Lighthouse Tearoom (☎ 850240; Pirmill; mains £6-10; 🍴 lunch & dinner) A picturesque drive south of Lochranza, this is one of those spots you'll be surprised to find in such a remote location. Meals are straight-up grub, with good menu staples including steak pies and pâté with oatcakes, but the view is magnificent. The gimmicky maritime décor stops just short of shivering your timbers, and the desserts are worth holding out for.

prawn cheesecake, venison with blackcurrants on red cabbage. Definitely the hot-date spot on the island.

Creelers (☎ 302810; Duchess Ct; mains £12-17; 🍴 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Fish fetishists get giggly at the mere mention of this seafood restaurant near Brodick Castle. Its secret is fresh seafood and shellfish, much of which comes from around Arran and which can be bought at the Smokehouse next door.

Other recommendations:

Eagle's Nest Restaurant (☎ 830264; Isle of Arran Distillery, Lochranza; mains £8-13; 🍴 10am-5pm) Set upstairs at the distillery, this restaurant specialises in local produce and seafood.

Ormidale Hotel (☎ 302100; Brodick; 🍴 dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sat & Sun) With a good beer garden and promising pub grub, this is a good spot for a sunny afternoon.

Getting There & Away

CalMac (☎ 0870 565 0000; www.calmac.co.uk) runs daily car ferries between Ardrossan and Brodick (per person/car return £8.55/52, 55 minutes, four to six daily). It also runs a summer-only service between Claonaig on the Kintyre peninsula and Lochranza from late March to late October (per person/car return £7.70/35, 30 minutes, seven to nine daily).

Getting Around

Frequent buses loop from Brodick to Blackwaterfoot, some anticlockwise around the island via Corrie and Lochranza (45 minutes, four to six daily) and some clockwise via Lamash and Whiting Bay (30 minutes, four to 12 daily). An Arran Rural Rover gives a day's travel on buses for £4 (buy on board).

Alternatively, there's car hire from £25 per day from outfits like **Arran Transport** (☎ 302121; ukfilter@lineone.net; Brodick) or **Whiting Bay Garage** (☎ 07967 587481).

Brodick has several bike-hire operators, including **Brodick Cycle Hire** (☎ 302868; Brodick boat-house; per day £11) and **Arran Adventures** (☎ 302244; www.arranadventure.com; 3hr-hire £8)