



ROSSLYN CHAPEL, THE SCOTTISH BORDERS & GLENKINCHIE DISTILLERY

Our tour begins at the top of the Royal Mile, the main street of Edinburgh's 'Old Town'. Everyone used to live on this street and the ones leading off it until the building of the 'New Town' began in 1770. The Royal Mile ends at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, home to the Kings & Queens of Scotland for over 500 years: opposite it is the Scottish Parliament which opened in 2004.

However we turn off the Royal Mile and pass on the right the now closed 'Elephant House', one of the cafes where JK Rowling wrote some parts of the Harry Potter books. Then we pass by a small statue of a dog – this is Greyfriars Bobby, one of Edinburgh's most famous characters. He was a Skye terrier who went everywhere with his master, John Gray, a night watchman. When John died in 1858 Bobby was so devoted to his master that he spent the next 14 years sitting at his graveside in the Greyfriars cemetery, a few metres from this statue, and the only time he left it was to go to a local inn for a meal when the One o'clock Gun sounded at the castle. When Bobby died in 1872 he was buried at Greyfriars cemetery and his gravestone reads: *"Let his loyalty and devotion be a lesson to us all."*

Soon after leaving the city we come to the village of Roslin (spelt differently from the chapel) but just before it, on the left, is the entrance to the Roslin Institute where a team led by Ian Wilmut created the first cloned animal, Dolly the Sheep, in 1996.

We now arrive at Rosslyn Chapel*, one of Scotland's great architectural treasures and the source of many myths and legends, even more so following the publication of Dan Brown's novel, 'The Da Vinci Code' in 2003 and the subsequent film. The chapel was founded in 1446 by Sir William St Clair and his original plan was for a much larger church but when he died in 1484 it was unfinished and his family decided not to complete it. The chapel has many magnificent sculptures & carvings throughout and one of the most impressive is the 'Apprentice's Pillar'. It was carved by an apprentice when the senior stone-mason was abroad but on his return the stone-mason was so jealous of the superb pillar that he killed the apprentice with a hammer.

There is also a carving of Indian corn (maize) which was unknown in Europe at the time Rosslyn Chapel was built and this strengthens the belief that Sir William St Clair's grandfather, Henry Sinclair, was part of an expedition which reached Nova Scotia (USA) in 1398, nearly one hundred years before Christopher Columbus is said to have discovered America in 1492.

From Rosslyn we drive into the Scottish Borders, a beautiful area of rolling hills, rivers, sheep farms and a few small towns. In the Middle Ages (14th – 17th centuries), the



Borders region was an area of constant fighting & cattle-raiding, a lawless place where the king had very limited control.

Our lunch stop will be in the attractive small town of Melrose. It sits beside the major river of the area, the Tweed, and has a large, ruined Abbey*. The Abbey was founded in 1136 and was one of four Abbeys built in the Borders during the reign of King David I. Buried here is the heart of King Robert the Bruce, our other great leader against the English during the Wars of Independence in the early 14th century. Bruce asked that after his death, his heart was to be cut out and taken in a casket to the Holy Land. However the man given the task, Sir James Douglas, was killed on the journey in a battle in Spain and his men decided to return home, bringing Bruce's heart to Melrose for burial. The rest of Bruce's body had been buried in Dunfermline Abbey, not far north of Edinburgh.

Soon after leaving Melrose there is a sign on the left to a small village called Trimontium – the name comes from the latin for 'three hills' (the Eildon hills nearby) and a very large fort was built here when a Roman army invaded what is now Scotland in 81 AD.

We now head northwards across more farmland and over the Lammermuir Hills before reaching Glenkinchie Distillery. It is one of only a few distilleries in the Lowlands (nearly all are in the Highlands and on Islands) and was opened in 1825 by George & John Rate. You will have the chance to go on a tour of the Distillery* and learn about the process of making our national drink before sampling a few whiskies for yourself including the distillery's popular Glenkinchie Single Malt.

Soon after leaving Glenkinchie we will see the outline of Edinburgh in the distance as we make our return to the city.

* This is an optional extra – the cost for this attraction is not included in the price you have paid for the tour.