

Jim Malcolm's Tour of Scotland

May 15 – 25, 2012

Jim and I invite you to join us as we sing, laugh and play our way around Scotland on a ten-day holiday tour next May. We chose May because, while Scotland's weather is famously unpredictable, there's a better-than-usual chance that in May you will see Scotland at her most beautiful. The trees are in leaf, the blossom and bluebells are out, and the daylight lasts well into the evening. Flights are less expensive than in June, July and August – oh, and there's not a midgie to be seen.

Over ten days our holidays will take us from the medieval city of Edinburgh to the rural splendour of Perthshire and Angus; we'll visit St Andrews, Royal Deeside and whisky-kissed Speyside, then head up to Inverness-shire. From the capital of the Highlands we'll travel down the Great Glen to Oban, board a ferry to Mull, and on to the tiny and lovely Isle of Iona. Back on the mainland, we're heading south to Robert Burns country, where we'll visit Rabbie's old stamping grounds and, if luck is with us, even meet the man himself (nudge nudge, wink wink).

Music will be at the heart of our tour plans. We'll be singing and teaching you songs from the places we're travelling through, and we'll organise concerts from some of Scotland's most wonderful musicians. Other special events we hope to include are: a ceilidh (we'll teach you some dances), a Burns Supper (haggis alert), whisky tastings, and a chance to try out some Highland Games events (such as throwing the hammer and tug of war).

We will keep our holiday plans flexible so we can make best use of the weather we're given, spontaneous ideas, and opportunities which arise as we travel around. Once we know who's coming with us and what sort of things they enjoy, we'll do some tailoring to suit. So what follows is not set in stone. All outside activities are weather dependent and we may change any details as we go along. But here's an idea of the holiday you can expect if you choose to join us. And we hope you do.



The basics

When and where will the adventure begin?

Our holidays will begin on Tuesday May 15th 2012 at Edinburgh Airport.

Where will we be staying?

We'll stay in mostly four-star hotels around Scotland – beautiful and comfortable bases for our activities. We will usually be booking hotels for dinner, bed and breakfast.

How big will our party be?

We'll be a party of 40, plus our driver and Jim and Susie. We may be joined here and there by friends, family and musicians.

How will we travel?

We'll travel in one coach – with a rest room.

Will we be together all the time?

When we're travelling between hotels we will be together, but at many other times you'll be able to choose whether to join us for outings and activities. After all, you're on your holidays.

What will the holiday cost?

Based on two people sharing a room, the holiday will cost \$2875 per person. If you are travelling alone but would be happy to share a room, we may be able to pair you up with another of our party to avoid the single supplement. The single person supplement is \$500.

If the value of the dollar rises or falls by more than 5% between the costing of our holiday and the time you have made all your payments, we may adjust the price to compensate.

What is included?

Transfers to and from Edinburgh Airport and ground travel on our tour bus.

Your accommodation for ten nights and breakfast each morning.

Dinner every evening.

All concert and ceilidh entry fees and entry to most historic sites.

What is not included

Your airfare to Scotland.

Lunches and drinks.

Single room supplement or tips.

Travel insurance – please don't forget this.

Do I need a visa to travel to Scotland?

At time of writing (July 2011), a US citizen who normally and legally lives in the USA does not need a visa to come on a short holiday to the UK. You WILL need a passport.

How do we secure our place on the trip?

Please let Susie know you want to come by emailing susie@jimmalcolm.com. Susie will then send you our booking form, which you should return to us with a normal US check for \$500 payable to Jim Malcolm and a signed copy of our terms and conditions. We require a further payment of \$500 by December 31st 2011, and the remainder no later than February 28th 2012.

What is your cancellation policy?

If you cancel your booking before February 28th 2012 then all monies paid to us will be returned, minus a \$200 administration fee. For cancellations between February 28th 2012 and March 31st 2012 there will be a 50% refund of all monies paid to us. Any refunds for cancellations made later than March 31st 2012 are entirely at the discretion of Jim and Susie Malcolm, and will depend on whether we can fill your place.

We reserve the right to cancel the holiday any time before March 17th 2012 if fewer than 30 people have booked and fully paid for the holiday, in which case all monies will be reimbursed to you. Other than due to lack of reservations we will not cancel the tour except in cases of force majeure.

Where will the holiday end?

We will deliver you back to Edinburgh Airport on the morning of Friday, May 25th, 2012.

Our day by day itinerary

The Flowers of Edinburgh: Days 1 and 2

Tuesday May 15th

Jim and/or Susie Malcolm (or if absolutely necessary our representative) will meet you at Edinburgh Airport and take you to your Edinburgh hotel. If you can, choose a flight which arrives in the morning (Continental flies direct to Edinburgh from Newark NJ every day, but there are many options to travel via London, Paris, Amsterdam, Manchester, Reykjavik, Dublin – it's worth shopping around for a good deal). We encourage you to take it easy on this day as you recover from your journey, but we may organise a gentle afternoon outing and we will meet for dinner in the evening – and a little music and laughter, of course.

Wednesday May 16th

This day will be your own to explore Edinburgh, but Susie will be up early-ish with her hiking boots on, and everyone who loves to walk and is reasonably fit is invited to join her climbing Arthur's Seat. From the top, if it's not raining, you'll see stunning views to the castle and across the Forth Estuary to Fife. This walk takes around three hours, and will probably end at the Palace of Holyroodhouse on the Royal Mile. While Susie takes the high road, Jim will take the high brow to the city's wonderful art galleries. There's lots to see – Edinburgh Castle, St Giles Cathedral, The National Museum of Scotland, The Gallery of Modern Art, the Portrait Gallery, Cadenheads Whisky shop, Holyrood Palace and the new Scottish Parliament, to name just a few. Excellent city tour buses allow you to climb on and off wherever you please. Just walking around the old High Street is a brilliant way to spend your day. After dinner and some fine music we'll turn in for a good night's sleep, because the next day we'll be...

Losin' Auld Reekie: Days 3 and 4

Thursday May 17th

Today we're heading north across the Forth Road Bridge, to the beautiful and ancient town of St Andrews, which is the home of golf and so much more. Weather permitting, we can play putting right next to the 18th Green of the Old Course (no need to be a golfer to enjoy this), and tell the world we've "played St Andrews". We'll have time to visit the historic castle and cathedral, and tread the streets where romance blossomed between Prince Andrew and his bride Kate Middleton. Travelling on to our beautiful hotel in Dunkeld, we'll see the countryside that has been Jim's biggest inspiration, and spend the night by the mighty River Tay. Prepare to be immersed in the music and song of Perthshire.

Friday May 18th

This day has been put aside for relaxation and fun. On hand at the hotel there's flyfishing, a swimming pool, tennis courts and putting, with a full golf course nearby. There's a great hill for the hikers, a wonderful lochside center for birders, and beautiful walks along the river Tay to visit the charming town of Dunkeld, with its picturesque cathedral. If the weather turns against us, there are a host of interesting historical sites within easy reach.

We'll stay a second night in our Perthshire hotel.

Do you see yon high hills: Days 5 and 6

Saturday May 19th

Royal Deeside, anyone? We'll be driving into the Cairngorm Mountains on our right royal route through Braemar to visit Balmoral, the Queen's beloved Scottish country home. In the afternoon we will visit a whisky distillery, and we'll end the day with dinner, bed and breakfast in Inverness-shire.

Sunday May 20th

Take the morning, or indeed the whole day, off from the tour, or join us on a visit to Culloden, the battlefield where Bonnie Prince Charlie's Jacobite army was finally defeated in 1746. Weather permitting we'll visit Urquhart Castle in the afternoon, with a quick pilgrimage to the ancient standing stones at Clava Cairns on our way home.

We'll have dinner, bed and breakfast again in our Inverness-shire hotel.

Lochanside: Days 7 and 8

Monday May 21st

We'll travel down the Great Glen today, along Loch Ness and Loch Lochy, turning off to visit Glencoe, scene of the massacre of the MacDonalds by the Campbells in 1692. There must be a song in there somewhere...

We'll reach Oban in the late afternoon and take the ferry over the Firth of Lorne to Mull, for dinner, bed and breakfast on the island.

Tuesday May 22nd

We'll reach our most remote destination today, the beautiful island of Iona. This is the birthplace of Christianity in Scotland, a spiritual and charming gem in Scotland's crown. From the majesty of the Abbey to the peace of the north and west beaches, every inch of Iona is special. We'll have a few hours on the island, more than enough time to climb to the well of eternal youth and decide if we dare to drink the water, and to experience the peaceful atmosphere of the ancient abbey.

We'll return to our hotel on Mull for dinner, bed and breakfast.



Tobermory, Mull, above (photo by Stephen Rice), and Iona Abbey, right.

A Man's A Man For A' That: Days 9 and 10

Wednesday May 23rd

We'll take a morning ferry back to Oban, travel down picturesque Loch Lomond to Glasgow (you'll be learning the Skycraper Song, among others), and stay overnight in Glasgow, Scotland's largest city.

Thursday May 24th

Today we'll drive south to visit Burns' Cottage, the Brig o Doon and the Kirk at Alloway, and we hope to end our holidays with a Burns Supper (at lunchtime), at which we hope Robbie himself might grace us with his company.

We'll stay overnight in a lovely country house hotel near Edinburgh airport, for stress-free departures the next day.

Friday May 25th

We'll deliver you back to Edinburgh Airport for your morning flights home. Haste ye back!



Left: pipers at Edinburgh Castle and, above, the Royal Mile – wonderful for strolling along...

*I can tell you that the flowers of Edinburgh
Aren't in the floral clock in Princes Street
They're the quirky little things, Auld Reekie often brings
Tae remind ye of the history beneath your feet."*

*Thanks to Allen Sliwinski and Stephen Rice, who came on tour with us in 2011,
for allowing us to use their lovely photographs on page 1.*