



**SOUTH OF
SCOTLAND**

**DESTINATION
ALLIANCE**

TALES FROM THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND

SCOTLAND STARTS HERE





Mijbil, the otter featured in Gavin Maxwell's 1960 book *Ring of Bright Water* overlooks Monreith Bay near Whithorn.

STORIES START HERE

In this Scotland's Year of Stories, we invite you to embark on a journey to discover the literary landscape of the South of Scotland.

Ever since Sir Walter Scott's home of Abbotsford opened to the public in 1832 - surely the first literary home to open in the South of Scotland - the region has been at the forefront of literary tourism.

This is Scotland's literary heartland - home of Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott; of J.M. Barrie, Hugh MacDiarmid and John Buchan. Here are the landscapes that inspired their imaginations and offer the backdrop to their tales. Tales offering an escape through which you can journey.

Ten unique tales have been created for you, all guided by story tellers relating the narratives that are woven through the architecture and the landscapes of the South of Scotland.

Did you know Melrose was once the site of the most northern amphitheatre, fortress and settlement of the Roman empire? Or that the first Christian settlement in Scotland is tucked in the southwest of Dumfries & Galloway?

You may have sung *Auld Lang Syne* on New Year's Eve, but do you know it was written in the study of a farmhouse near Dumfries? Would you like to see the covert spaces where tea smugglers once dodged the exciseman? Or learn the secrets behind the hidden images and stitches of the Great Tapestry of Scotland? Or perhaps uncover the secrets to curating historical objects at the Devil's Porridge Museum?

These stories are sure to inspire you to return home and retell these tales. And come back wanting to hear more. Here in the South of Scotland. Here where Stories Start.



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EXPERIENCES

- 1 THE BUILDER'S TALE**
Modern day apprentices recreate the stories of builders past at the Whithorn Trust
- 2 TALE OF A BOOK TOWN**
Guided walk through the bookshops of Wigtown, Scotland's National Book Town
- 3 THE POET'S TALE**
Hear the stories of the farm and house at Ellisland, home to Robert Burns, with a unique refreshment
- 4 TALES OF NEVERLAND**
Guided tour of Moat Brae - its garden inspired J.M. Barrie's Neverland in his tales of Peter Pan
- 5 THE CURATOR'S TALE**
Spend a morning with the Devil's Porridge Museum curator learning how to take care of treasured, historical objects
- 6 THE STITCHER'S TALE**
Learn the stories behind the people who stitched the Great Tapestry of Scotland
- 7 THE WRITER'S WALK**
Follow the footsteps of Sir Walter Scott as you walk through the Borders landscape that influenced his works
- 8 THE ROMAN'S TALE**
Guided walking tour of the site of Britain's most northerly Roman fort, Trimontium
- 9 THE WRITER'S TALE**
Taste whisky in a hidden room while you tour the house that Sir Walter Scott created at Abbotsford
- 10 THE SMUGGLER'S TALE**
Take afternoon tea at Gunsgreen House, the home of notorious smuggler John Nisbet

THE BUILDER'S TALE

On the site of the Whithorn Trust there is evidence of settlements dating back to AD450. Without modern machines how did these structures come together? What stories would those early builders have told of their techniques and tools?

This is a unique opportunity to understand the tools and trades of early builders at the "Touching History" experience at the Whithorn Trust. Here is your chance to get your hands dirty, helping to build early structures as well as handling artefacts from the Whithorn Trust's excellent collection.

Following an introduction to early technologies and buildings at the Trust's Iron Age roundhouse replica, you'll divide into groups where you have a choice of different activities. Will you learn how to make a bowl on a human-powered lathe? Or heat water Bronze Age-style?

Not feeling that brave? Then you can have a demonstration by one of the Trust's experts to see how a mediaeval carpenter squares a beam using only an axe or how to create a wall with wattle and daub.

Visits can be arranged to suit your needs and could include guided tours of the Whithorn Priory and the Iron Age roundhouse, as well as object handling – suitable for FIT as well as groups.



Learn how early builders used basic tools



Replica Iron Age Roundhouse



Whithorn Priory

The Whithorn Trust is a nationally-important archaeological site, where you can trace the origins of Scotland through the artefacts discovered here, on show in the exhibition and museum.

There is evidence for 1600 years of settlement and activity, including the very first Christians ever known in Scotland, around 450AD.

Whithorn's long history suits clients who are looking for something off the beaten track yet historically and culturally rich, with surprising international connections.

Whithorn is within easy reach of Stranraer/ Cairnryan ferry port to the west, and Dumfries and Carlisle to the east, with Glasgow around 100 miles north.

A LITTLE TALE...



St Ninian's Cave where the 3rd century saint reputedly came for reflection and contemplation. Near Whithorn.



Price from: £65
Group size: 6-30
Contact: Julia Muir Watt
The Whithorn Trust
Whithorn
enquiries@whithorn.com
www.whithorn.com

TALE OF A BOOK TOWN

Home to more than a million books, the Royal Burgh of Wigtown has been called a booklover's Brigadoon.

Join your professional guide on a walking tour of many of the dozen or more secondhand bookshops (including Scotland's largest) in Wigtown.

Your guide will tell you the story of how a historic market town in the beautiful Galloway countryside revitalised itself and found worldwide recognition as Scotland's National Book Town.

From literary ghosts and scandalous scribes, to exploding Kindles and romance among the shelves, you'll discover that you can't always judge a Book Town by its cover.

Along the way, we'll take in a unique bookstore that visitors can pay to run themselves, celebrate a beloved bookshop cat and explore aspects of Wigtown's history that have inspired some of the nation's most iconic writers.

If you are unlucky, you may even meet Scotland's grumpiest bookseller. Enhanced with music, video and the odd surprise, The Original Book Town Tour is suitable for families of all ages and readers of all pages.

NB: Available from 2023



Scotland's largest secondhand bookshop



Be a bookseller at the Open Book



Wigtown, Scotland's Book Town

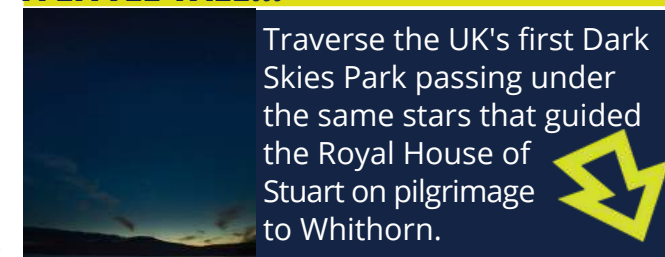
Wigtown Festival Company is a literary charity that runs the multiple award-winning Wigtown Book Festival, which takes place over 10 days each autumn and offers more than 300 events for all ages.

The charity also runs Big DoG children's festival in Dumfries and a number of educational and outreach projects.

Since 2018, the Festival Company has been promoting literary tourism in Dumfries & Galloway. In 2019 it won the Innovation in Tourism Award at the Scottish Thistle Awards for its Airbnb, The Open Book, a residential bookshop experience.

This tour is supported by the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Unesco Biosphere.

A LITTLE TALE...



Traverse the UK's first Dark Skies Park passing under the same stars that guided the Royal House of Stuart on pilgrimage to Whithorn.



Price from: £14pp
Group size: 20
Contact: Anne Barclay
Wigtown Festival Company
Wigtown
anne@wigtownbookfestival.com
www.wigtownbookfestival.com

THE POET'S TALE

Join a local storyteller as they immerse you in the picturesque world of the ploughman poet, Robert Burns, and take you on a tour of the farmstead he built for his young wife Jean Armour and family.

Ellisland is where Burns produced works of genius while labouring in his fields. He was one of the first environmental poets and his empathy for animals put him ahead of his time.

Here you can see nature through his eyes. You will look at the manuscript of *The Wounded Hare*, which he wrote after witnessing the creature being shot in the fields near the house. You will walk in his footsteps along the riverside path where he penned his supernatural masterpiece, *Tam o' Shanter*.

Once inside the farmhouse, see the study where he wrote a quarter of his songs and poems. From here you'll head to the kitchen and see the stove where Jean baked "bannocks" - a unique type of bread, best served warm with a good Scotch dram. Burns praised the bannock in verse, as he did the national drink, once writing that "Freedom and Whisky Gang thegither!" (Freedom and Whisky Go Together!)

You can toast the Bard as you sample the bannocks, created just for you by a local artisan baker. And to wash it down, there is a wee dram of the superb Man o' Words (named for Burns himself) malt whisky from Dumfriesshire's Annandale Distillery.



See where Robert Burns wrote Auld Lang Syne



Beside the Nith river



Bannocks and a dram



Ellisland: Most authentic Burns home

Ellisland Farm has changed little since 1788, when it inspired Scotland's bard, Robert Burns to write *Auld Lang Syne*, the international anthem to love and friendship.

Chosen by Burns for its idyllic location on the banks of the River Nith, six miles outside the town of Dumfries, the whitewashed steading is one of the best preserved 18th century farms

in Scotland and is considered the most authentic of all Burns's homes. The fields created by the ploughman poet are still cultivated by a local farmer and the peaceful woodland walks on the banks of the Nith allow you to step back in time.

A LITTLE TALE...



The 12 Apostles Stone Circle, mainland Scotland's largest stone circle near Dumfries.



Price from: £185 total
Group size: 10-20
Contact: Joan McAlpine
Robert Burns Ellisland Farm
Dumfries
info@ellislandfarm.co.uk
www.ellislandfarm.co.uk

TALES OF NEVERLAND

Let the spirit of Tinkerbell guide you in this enchanting tour of the house that inspired author and playwright J.M. Barrie to create his most famous literary character, Peter Pan. It was here in the 1870s that a teenage Barrie had imaginative adventures in the beautiful riverside garden which he famously said would always be an “enchanted land” to him.

This elegant Georgian House has been restored to its 19th century glory, replicating the house the young Jamie Barrie would have experienced. This hour-long guided tour encompasses the history of the house and J.M. Barrie’s association with it. Afterwards you are free to further explore the house and garden. And to sprinkle some stardust on your visit, be sure you see the original bell that played the role of Tinkerbell in the 1904 play of *Peter Pan* in London.

Outside, enter the Neverland Discover Garden that inspired J.M. Barrie to write Peter Pan. Marvel at the trees and plants that thrive in this corner of Southwest Scotland. And for the young (and young at heart) have a wander through the wonderland Moat Brae has created with a giant pirate ship, mermaid’s lagoon, Wendy House and fairy bower.

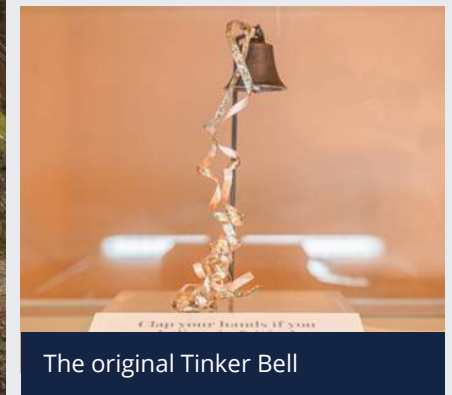
Moat Brae is a destination for children and adult children alike seeking to experience the landscape that inspired Scotland’s greatest children’s book character.



Moat Brae's garden inspired J.M. Barrie when he wrote Peter Pan



Find Peter Pan in his Neverland



The original Tinker Bell

Moat Brae is a restored Georgian House that the author and playwright J.M. Barrie credited with inspiring his most famous literary character Peter Pan, following time Barrie spent here as a boy. Today Moat Brae offers a wealth of events, an annually changing exhibition, reading rooms, children’s library as well as play theatre with fancy dress and scripts and a cinema and purpose-built activity space.

It is also the home of Scotland’s National Centre for Children’s Books and runs a year-round programme of events and festivals hosting some of the world’s most celebrated children’s authors and illustrators.

The centre is proud to have actor Dame Joanna Lumley as its patron.

A LITTLE TALE...



The Globe Inn was Burn’s favourite howff where he ate, drank and made merry, even etching a poem on the window.



Prices from: £12
Group size: 12
Contact: Natalie Smith
Moat Brae
Dumfries
natalie.smith@peterpanmoatbrae.org
www.moatbrae.org

THE CURATOR'S TALE

Have you ever wondered how museums preserve and care for their sometimes delicate and fragile treasures?

You can experience the life of a curator in an exclusive hands-on, behind-the-scenes experience at The Devil's Porridge Museum.

Guided by the museum's own curator you will have the chance to handle treasured museum objects as you help conserve special items from WWI medals to autograph books and RAF uniforms.

You'll inventory mark objects for posterity, examine pest traps to see if anything is nibbling away at the collection, monitor relative humidity levels to prevent microclimates, and store the objects safely for future generations.

And these skills and new found knowledge will help you care for your own treasured possessions.

Add to this behind-the-scenes conservation experience with a personal tour of the museum and its fascinating history from WWI and WWII - all led by an expert volunteer.

In addition, you can experience a typical lunch from the period between your tour and curator experience.



Handle WWI medals and learn cleaning care



Explore the museum



Curator for a day



Cordite was dubbed 'devil's porridge' by Conan Doyle

The Devil's Porridge Museum is a 5-star Visit Scotland attraction, telling the story of the Greatest Factory on Earth. In 1915 Britain was losing the Great War through lack of ammunition. David Lloyd George, Minister for Munitions, was tasked with turning things around. His greatest project was HM Factory Gretna where cordite was manufactured.

On a visit Sir Arthur Conan Doyle proclaimed the lumpy, white substance 'like porridge but of a devilish sort'. This 'porridge' was cordite and went into every bullet and shell used in World War I. Today's museum is conveniently located just off the M6 near Gretna and Carlisle. There is a changing programme of exhibitions and events throughout the year.

A LITTLE TALE...



The Ruthwell Cross dates from the 8th century, when the area was part of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Northumbria.



Price from: £26pp
Group size: 40
Contact: Arna Johnston
The Devil's Porridge Museum
Eastriggs
info@devilsporrige.org.uk
www.devilsporrige.org.uk

THE STITCHER'S TALE

The Great Tapestry of Scotland (GTOS) is a new visitor attraction offering Scotland's history as a visual record across 160 stitched panels.

Uniquely the GTOS has captured the stories of the crafters who lovingly made this astonishing record of Scotland's past.

After a brief introduction to the Tapestry and its history, one of our trained story tellers will take you through selected panels. Here they will reveal the stories behind the discrete stitches - the icons, images, initials and hidden details added by the stitchers reflecting their own biographies and stories. All woven into the fabric of the story of a nation spanning over 400 million years.

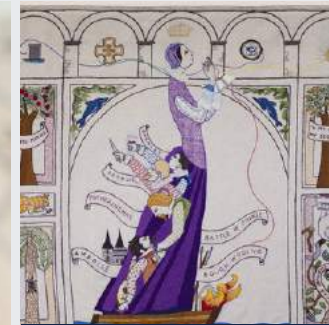
Who are the WWII soldiers? Why is there a crashed helicopter at sea? Which politicians are being held to account? What is the mystery of the stolen Rosslyn Chapel panel?

Questions hidden in workings of the tapestry will be answered in this unique behind-the-scenes tour, which adds insight into the story of the nation as the tapestry itself becomes part of Scotland's social and cultural history.

You'll have time to peruse the Tapestry at leisure before being invited to have lunch at the Stitchers café, made with local produce, traditional dishes, and of course delicious home baking.



Stories from those who stitched the tapestry



Mary Queen of Scots



Architectural museum



Learn the hidden stories



Café with local produce

The brainchild of author Alexander McCall Smith, **The Great Tapestry of Scotland** (GTOS) is one of the world's largest community arts projects. It was hand-stitched by a team of 1,000 stitchers from across Scotland, using 160 linen panels and over 300 miles of wool. The panels were designed by artist Andrew Crummy, based on a narrative written by

Scottish Borders-based writer and historian Alistair Moffat.

The GTOS opened in 2021 and achieved 5-star status as a visitor attraction from VisitScotland that same year. The Tapestry is one of the most ambitious community projects ever undertaken in Scotland: an artwork for the nation by the nation.

A LITTLE TALE...



Galashiels's weaver Robert Coltart penned *Coulter's Candy* in the 19th century which became a lullaby for generations.



Prices from: £36.25 pp
Group size: 12 per guide
Contact: Isla Forsyth
The Great Tapestry of Scotland
Galashiels
iforsyth@liveborders.org.uk
www.greatapestryofscotland.com

THE WRITER'S WALK

Immerse yourself in the life and huge influence of Scotland's greatest storyteller, Sir Walter Scott. The Borders Book Festival have handpicked authors known for their local knowledge to take you through the Borders landscape. This unique interpretation will help bring to life how this countryside profoundly inspired Scott and made him a writer.

You will set off from Dryburgh Abbey, one of the four great Scottish Borders Abbeys and where Scott requested to be buried. The walk then crosses the legendary River Tweed, which inspired Scott's poem *On Tweed River*. And then you mount the saddle of the Eildon Hills – so much a part of the landscape Scott experienced and loved. The very point from which to best regard this trio of hills is today known as Scott's View. Finally, you arrive at the picturesque Abbotsford, the home Scott created and dubbed "a flibbertigibbet of a house" on the bank of the Tweed.

On the way expect stories of ghosts and warlocks and standing stones, of the life of St Cuthbert, and of the great abbey at Dryburgh.

Uniquely the guides are all writers, handpicked for their knowledge of the Scottish Borders' rich literary heritage and for their unique understanding of the landscape which inspires it. This is one tour from which you are unlikely to forget the tales.



The Eildon Hills - see the landscapes Scott saw



Walk over the Tweed



Local author Alistair Moffat



Borders Book Festival, Harmony Gardens, Melrose

The experience is presented by **Borders Book Festival**, one of the UK's top literature festivals. The Festival is almost 20 years old and established and run by those from and living in the Scottish Borders community. The festival's ability to call upon guides of such a high calibre

for this experience is truly a unique selling point to be promoted.

Acclaimed writers such as Alistair Moffat, who live locally will give their insight into Scott's writing and the Borders landscape.

A LITTLE TALE...



Melrose Abbey where the heart of Robert the Bruce was buried, lost, found and reburied.



Prices from: £40
Group size: 14
Contact: Paula Ogilvie
Borders Book Festival
Melrose
paula@bordersbookfestival.org
www.bordersbookfestival.org

THE ROMAN'S TALE

Walk in the footsteps of the Roman soldiers who once lived at Trimontium, the largest Roman garrison and settlement north of Hadrian's Wall. As you are guided along the banks of the majestic River Tweed, in the shadow of the imposing Eildon North native hillfort, you will see the landscape as the Roman soldiers saw it. And that landscape today gives us clues as to what was once there.

Imagine the imposing architecture of the northern-most amphitheatre of the Roman Empire. See the location of fort's gyrus – a horse training ring where the mounted soldiers would have spent time practising in the saddle. This site is one of the finest and most important archaeological discoveries across the whole of Roman Britain.

Uniquely on this tour your guide will have original objects to share with you and bring the life of a Roman soldier to life. Earlier archaeological digs have uncovered treasures including imposing face masks, decorated parade helmets, intricately carved intaglios, various weapons, armour and associated militaria. Some of these are on display at the museum in Melrose which can be visited after lunch if you wish to add to your visit.

Once you have finished your walk you will be ready to enjoy a meal at Burt's one of Melrose's popular restaurants and reflect on the Roman encampment in Caledonia built around AD80.



Trimontium - the largest Roman settlement in Scotland



Trimontium museum



Roman cavalry mask



Walk the landscape once occupied by Roman soldiers

Stunning finds from the Trimontium site are now on display in the new £1.2m **Trimontium Museum** in Melrose. Over 200 loans from the National Museum collections sit alongside the Trust's own artefacts and some unique objects loaned from private collectors from around the world. The latest interpretation and audio-visual content tells the fascinating story of the Roman Iron Age across Caledonia.

A dedicated museum shop offers visitors the chance to purchase unique local crafts and gifts as a memento of their visit.



Prices from: £60 pp
Group size: 2-15
Contact: Rob Longworth
Trimontium Museum
Melrose
roblongworth@trimontium.co.uk
www.trimontium.co.uk

A LITTLE TALE...



The Rhymer's Stone marks where local man Thomas was kissed by a Faerie Queen and went to live in her realm.



THE WRITER'S TALE

Join us at Abbotsford, the home of Sir Walter Scott, and discover the home of a best-selling author whose literature reshaped the image of Scotland as a land of poetry and rugged beauty. As you are led on a guided tour of Scott's fascinating 'conundrum castle' you'll see where Scott's stories were born and explore his unique 'museum for living in'.

Following your exploration of the house with your expert guide you'll see the chapel and head to an exclusive room nestled beside the Victorian wing of the house, not normally accessible to the public.

From this unique perspective hear stories of Scott's association with whisky - he is thought to be the first novelist to mention specific Scotch whisky distilleries in his work. Enjoying a dram himself, Scott encouraged King George IV to drink it during his visit to Scotland's capital. And, as a generous host, he shared the amber nectar with many of his famous guests using the traditional quaich – Scotland's cup of friendship.

Today you can indulge in a wee tippie of Abbotsford's very own whisky, launched to coincide with the Walter Scott 250 celebrations.

Your tour will end in the walled gardens where you are left to explore in your own time. As a memento of your visit, you'll receive the 64-page guidebook full of photographs and information describing the design and construction of Abbotsford along with a guide to each of the rooms open to the public.



Tour the grounds of this flibbertigibbet of a house



Sir Walter Scott's library



Work up a thirst



Stories galore

Abbotsford, the historic home of the nineteenth-century celebrity writer Sir Walter Scott, opened to the public in 1833 just five months after his death the previous year. This was the first literary home to open as a visitor attraction in the South of Scotland, and indeed the British Isles. Today the historic house and gardens are complemented by a visitor centre with an exhibition space, café and gift shop.



Price from: £19 pp
Group size: 10-25/guide
Contact: Jill Paterson
Abbotsford
Melrose
groups@scottsassbotsford.co.uk
www.scottsassbotsford.com

A LITTLE TALE...



In nearby Selkirk remains of a medieval chapel were found. Was this where William Wallace was proclaimed Guardian of Scotland?



THE SMUGGLER'S TALE

We invite you to take tea where smugglers once hid their contraband from the Customs officers and counted their loot. Hear the stories of Gunsgreen House's original owner, John Nisbet - by day respected merchant of Eyemouth, by night a self-confessed notorious smuggler.

Your visit begins as you sweep up the grand steps through the imposing front door where Nisbet would have welcomed the notables of the day. Sit down to a genteel afternoon tea in the grand dining rooms once used to entertain guests and know that you are sitting on top of a myriad of smugglers' tales.

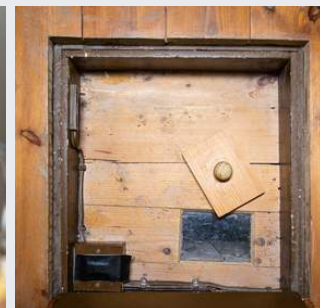
Which of these stories will you find to be true? The hidden lead-lined chute built to conceal substantial quantities of tea, normally heavily taxed at 119%? The moving fireplace grate that allowed smugglers a passage to safety? Or that Nisbet's smuggling activities went on unhindered thanks to friends in the local Customs House?

Gunsgreen Afternoon Tea offers insight into the history of this architecturally important house, its links to smuggling and its importance to the wider economy of Eyemouth and the Berwickshire Coast.

Using authentic recipes and locally sourced produce, the cakes, biscuits and tea will add to the ambience of your visit. For an additional fee, clients can sample the brand new Gunsgreen House gin, Gunsgreen Cocktail or Prosecco.



Take afternoon tea in a smuggler's abode



Is this a hidden chute?



Gunsgreen House



Some of the oldest wallpaper in Scotland on show

Gunsgreen House is an imposing Grade A listed Georgian Palladian villa situated on the harbourside in the Berwickshire town of Eyemouth.

Designed by architect John Adam (eldest of the Adam brothers, architects and builders), this fine example of a mid-eighteenth-century classical villa was built in 1753 by John Nisbet, a merchant and notorious smuggler.

The house, restored by Gunsgreen House Trust, opened as a Museum/Visitor Attraction in 2009.



Price from: £25 pp
Group size: 4-30
Contact: Tracy Duffy
Gunsgreen House
Eyemouth
tracy@gunsgreenhouse.org
www.gunsgreenhouse.org

A LITTLE TALE...



Siccar Point: the birthplace of modern geology. In 1788 these rocks proved James Hutton's theory the Earth was a 'deep age'.





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