



Perhaps best known worldwide for its whisky exports, Scotland is a country that expresses itself through the colourful and vibrant nature of its local activities and festivals held throughout the year. Students studying in any of the larger Scottish cities such as Edinburgh, Dundee and Glasgow can count on plenty of extra-curricular activities to keep them occupied in the evenings.

"There are quite a number of areas the students go to at night," says Stuart Bannerman from Queen Margaret University College in Edinburgh. "The Grassmarket is probably the best known student drinking area in Edinburgh, with bars such as Biddy Mulligans and the Black Bull. Just up from the Grassmarket is Victoria Street with the Irish pub, Finnegans Wake. [This is] perhaps the most popular bar in this area with live bands seven nights a week."

As the country's capital city, Edinburgh is the most well known city in Scotland and, therefore, the first choice for many international students. Tatiana Mokhova, Chief Executive of York Educational Service in Russia, says, "Edinburgh is the favourite [place for students to go]. They are all happy and many of them return or recommend it to friends."

Edinburgh has a wide variety of bars, nightclubs and pubs to choose from, with music such as hip hop, funk, rock and dance to suit all tastes. Queen Margaret University College offers a guided bus tour of Edinburgh for international students before the start of term to introduce them to what the city has to offer. "This allows people to meet one another and hopefully make new friends," says Bannerman. "There is also Freshers week which involves all students at the university."

### Student facts

#### Average costs

One month's rent for shared flat in Edinburgh: UK£190 (US\$271) to UK£240 (US\$343)

One week's basic groceries: UK£30 (US\$42)

A cinema ticket: UK£5 (US\$7)

An alcoholic drink: UK£2 (US\$3)

#### Celebrations and Festivals

January: Celtic Connections, Glasgow, 25 January: Burns Night

August: Edinburgh International Festival

August: World Pipe Band Championships, Glasgow

31 December: Hogmonay

#### Selection of higher education institutions in Scotland

	Total students	% international students
Dundee College, Dundee	4,103	15
Edinburgh College of Art, Edinburgh	1,700	12
Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow	1,500	12
Napier University, Edinburgh	12,000	2
Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh	3,500	11
Stevenson College, Edinburgh	15,000	13
University of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh	21,000	17
University of Stirling, Stirling	8,500	15

\*institutions that do not currently use education consultants



# Scotland

Scottish people are well known for their strong national pride and regard for local customs, as well as their friendliness. International students in Scotland are assured of an interesting and unforgettable experience.

However, the vibrant social scene is not solely confined to Edinburgh. Ian Thomson, Head of the International Office and Student Recruitment at the Glasgow School of Art, says, "The city centre [of Glasgow] has a multitude of bars, restaurants and clubs, something to cater for all tastes. The clubs in Glasgow are relatively inexpensive to gain entry and they are at the forefront of British clubbing, especially the art school's own student union which has a reputation of having some of the hottest DJs in town at the weekend."

Apart from conventional night clubs and discos, Scotland is also famous for its traditional ceilidhs – originally meaning "visit" – which originate from times when the Scots would gather together in someone's home and recite poetry, sing songs and dance.

"During the winter months ceilidhs are the best events," says Alex Edwards at Dundee College. "They are Scottish parties, with Scottish dancing, a bar and lots of games-type dancing. Everyone mixes really well and students love the local colour [and] kilts. In fact, many students hire kilts for the evening."

For those students wanting to try the local food specialities, there are plenty of options to choose from throughout Scotland. "If people want traditional Scottish food they can try most pubs [in Edinburgh] which will offer haggis, neeps (turnips) and tatties (potatoes)," says Bannerman.

"Fish and chips is very popular [with students in Dundee], as is haggis and chips," adds Edwards. "White pudding [sausage made from oatmeal and beef suet] and black pudding [spiced sausage made from

blood] seem to be more of an acquired taste."

However, traditional Scottish food is not all that is on offer in Scotland's towns and cities. "Glasgow is host to a vast array of eateries representing a host of different nationalities. Cafés and bars sell food

study destination should be made available to students in Brazil as many Brazilians are not aware of its attractions. "Scotland is a very nice place to live, full of culture with beautiful historical castles and buildings. Students love the Scottish life and culture."

subterranean streets and houses. One such is Mark King's Close where many visitors have experienced the paranormal. The close was blocked up after many of its residents died from the plague. You can still feel the presence of the former occupants."

Students keen to explore the countryside and travel further afield from Scotland's towns and cities can go on weekend trips to the highlands and lochs which offer the opportunity for a number of outdoor and sporting pursuits. "Companies such as Haggis Backpackers and Rabbits Trail Burners offer fairly cheap one-, two-, three- and four-day trips," says Bannerman. Students can also ski during the winter at the ski resort in Aviemore, as well as visit the highland whisky distilleries, some of which date from the 18th century.

As costs in Scotland, even in the main cities, are lower than in many locations in England, students often find that major expenses such as accommodation are considerably reduced while studying in this country. "Dundee is said to be one of the cheapest places to live in the UK," says Edwards. "If students want to rent flats this is easy."

Many institutions in Scotland provide accommodation for their first year international students and others provide help to find rented accommodation nearby. "Full-time overseas students are more or less guaranteed accommodation in the school's residences, but there is a large pool of privately rented accommodation in Glasgow and students never have any problem finding accommodation to suit them," says Thomson. "Monthly rent is fairly competitive with other cities in the UK." ○

## Student views

"I came to Scotland because I wanted to spend a full year abroad in an English-speaking country. I didn't want to study abroad with numerous other students from my home institution so I settled upon Scotland because they offered courses in both international business and finance – my double major in the States. Meeting new people and experiencing the life of a British student was my personal highlight. I made some wonderful friends and by the end, adapted to the British way of life. [In my free time] I went to Meadow Park Hotel, Glow or one of the other bars or pubs on campus at night. During the day I would work out at the gym, walk around campus, go to town, spend time in the surrounding countryside, or spend time with my friends."

**Megan Noelle Weber (American), University of Stirling**

"I thought it would be raining all the time [in Scotland] but it doesn't and I also expected to have problems with the accent but [it is] not that bad. [The highlight of my stay in Scotland has been seeing] the city centre of Edinburgh. [In my spare time I] see some friends for a coffee or a beer, go to the pubs on St John's street or in the city centre, go for a walk or [do some] shopping in the Royal Mile or Princes Street or [visit] some other students [studying in England]."

**Ariane Moorman (German), Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh**

"It is difficult to find the highlight [of my stay] as everything has been special and unforgettable. I fulfilled my dream of visiting Eileen Donan Castle and going to the Isle of Skye. In France, Scottish people are said to be very friendly and they really [lived] up to this reputation. I learnt how to play golf, took part in trips organised by the international office, [and] shared a car with other international students and went up north to Loch Ness and Ullapool. I was also invited to an incredible number of parties."

**Isaia Bénédicte (French), University of Stirling**

at a more reasonable, modest price, going up to very fashionable restaurants chefed by some of the UK's best known cooks. Glasgow is famous for its curry houses, both the quality and the inexpensiveness of them," says Thomson.

Alziro Zarur, from Access agency in Brazil, believes that more information about Scotland as a

Scottish culture and history play an important part in the national character of Scotland and international students can experience this, not only in the country's historic architecture. "Edinburgh is a haunted city," says Melville. "Underneath the Royal Mile, itself a medieval district linking the castle to the Palace of Holyrood House, is a network of