

# Scotland

PHOTOGRAPH: BRITAIN ON VIEW

Scotland encompasses a wide variety of different regions, from the industrialised central lowlands in the south, where three-quarters of the Scottish population live, to the Shetland islands on the north coast, which are populated by isolated communities who brave the harsh conditions of island life at the most northerly point of the British Isles. The country has a rich cultural history that can be found in every aspect of local life, whether in the small fishing villages or the metropolitan cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Visitors to Scotland will soon pick up on the distinctive Scottish accent and dialect spoken by the local people. Gaelic was spoken in all of Scotland until the 12th and 13th centuries and, together with French and Scandinavian, this Celtic language has heavily influenced the everyday English language of the Scottish people today. Words such as *ken* (meaning know), *aye*

(meaning yes) and *wee* (meaning little) are just some of the common terms used in Scotland, while Gaelic is still spoken as a first language in a number of communities on the west coast.

Situated on the River Clyde, Glasgow is Scot-

land's largest city and currently enjoys the reputation of being a centre of culture. It boasts an impressive art collection, which can be seen in the many art galleries around the city, and the work of Scotland's most famous architect, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, can be found adorning buildings such as the Lighthouse and the Glasgow School of Art.

As well as modern architecture, Glasgow also has many impressive Victorian public buildings that are a legacy of the wealth generated through the city's close involvement with a number of important industries in the last few centuries. In the 18th century, much of Europe's tobacco trade with America came through Glasgow and this has been replaced over the years by industries such as textile manufacture, shipbuilding, coal and steel.

To the north of Scotland, the landscape changes radically and large cities give way to small pockets of

population living in more rural communities. In some areas, the traditional practice of crofting still exists where crofters rent small areas of land from landowners to rear cattle or grow crops. The word croft originates from the Gaelic word *coitean*, meaning a small enclosed field, and stems from a time when the highlands were largely owned by clan chiefs who rented out three-hectare blocks to tenants.

During the highland clearances large numbers of crofters were driven from their homes, when the landlords decided that sheep farming was more profitable than renting the land out. Today's crofters benefit from regulations that protect their rights as tenants and many still farm their land using traditional methods.

There are many opportunities for outdoor pursuits in the north of Scotland despite the often inhospitable weather. Skiing, mountain climbing and bird watching attract many visitors each year and Scapa Flow on the Orkney Islands is a particularly attractive destination for keen scuba divers. Reputed to be the best diving location in Europe, this area of water between Mainland, Hoy and South Ronaldsey is one of the world's largest natural harbours that was used by King Hakon's Viking ships in the 13th century and is used by the Nato fleet today.

There are a large number of wrecks on the sea bed, including seven German warships that sank themselves, along with 67 others, while interned at the harbour during the first world war, and HMS Royal Oak, which was sunk by a German U-boat in 1939.

It would be almost impossible to visit Scotland without trying some of the many food specialities that exist throughout the country. The most famous of these is Haggis, which is Scotland's national dish and is made of chopped lungs, heart and liver mixed with oatmeal and boiled in a sheep's stomach. This dish plays a particularly special role on Burns night, which is celebrated on the 25th January in honour of the country's national poet, Robert Burns. Traditionally a piper announces the arrival of the haggis and the Burns' poem 'Address to a Haggis' is recited before a *dirk* (dagger) pierces the haggis.

Other traditional dishes include cock-a-leekie (chicken and leek soup), Arbroath smokies (lightly smoked haddock), the bridie (a meat and potato pie) and bannocks (a cross between scones and pancakes).



*'Beautiful, glorious Scotland, has spoilt me for every other country!'*

Mary Todd Lincoln (1818-1882), US First Lady