

Edinburgh – Two days

With lots of options, and many of them very close together, you can pack out two full days in Edinburgh quite easily.

Day 1

We are going to start at Waverley station – that covers you for arriving by train, nearly all the bus routes in Edinburgh have a stop nearby, and you can also find a tram stop within easy walking distance.

From within the station, you need the Princes Street exit that comes out close to the Balmoral hotel, on the north side of the station. From there turn left along Princes Street. You will pass the Scott Monument and a couple of galleries then cross The Mound. The first stop is on the other side of the road to the left, Princes Street Gardens.

Head into the gardens and just keep walking west until you reach the Ross Fountain, an 1872 cast iron fountain that has Edinburgh Castle behind it. There's a café in the gardens (the Sir Walter's) and you can also pop back out onto Princes Street for more options.

Once you have finished head back to where you entered the gardens and turn right along The Mound. The route will curve to the left as it climbs and you will then take Mound Place to the right. It will then curve left and change name to Ramsay Place. Just follow it as it climbs a little more and you will come out near the top of the Royal Mile, opposite the Scotch Whiskey Experience.

Look to your right and you will see Edinburgh Castle and we would suggest that to any visitor – steeped in history and great views across the city and beyond.

From the castle just head down hill, down the Royal Mile. You can pick and choose whatever you wish as you head downhill – Scotch Whisky Experience, Camera Obscura, Mary King's Close, St. Giles' Cathedral, Holyrood Palace, numerous side closes and courts to explore, lots of lunch spots and more. You will generally find more near the castle – more people, more shops, more attractions, more food places and even more people! As you head down hill it will all thin out.

It depends how much you want to pack out your day – there is a mix of paid locations and free places to explore. Our favourites are St. Giles' Cathedral, Mary King's Close and Holyrood Palace. There's more on those in our other itinerary ideas.

Once you have got to the end of the Royal Mile (where you will find Holyrood Palace and the Scottish Parliament) you can then head to Calton Hill. From the Palace, with it behind you, turn right. Pass the mini roundabout that is at the foot of the Royal Mile and then take the very next left, Calton Road.

You will pass New Calton Burial Ground on your right, one of Edinburgh's many interesting graveyards. If you do go in just come back out the same way. About four or five minutes from the Palace you need to take a narrow path to the right – it slopes up and is opposite number 132.

That path will come to a four-way junction, and you need to keep on ahead and to the right. This will then come out on Regent Road and you need to turn left. You will see a slim round tower to the right and after a few minutes will find a crossing point – on the right-hand side of the road you will see some wide steps up to Calton Hill.

On the hill there are a range of monuments to discover and long-range views. It's a great sunset spot too, if that suits your day.

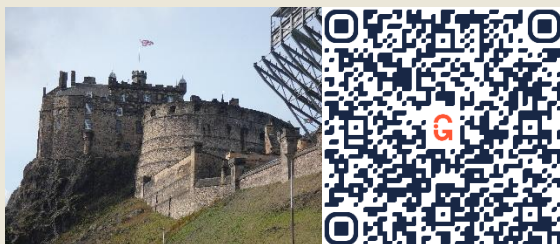
Once you have finished leave the hill via the same steps and turn right. This will take you back to Waverley station in a few minutes.

An option for the evening would be to go on an underground vaults tour or something similar. Most meet near to the Mercat Cross on the Royal Mile, that is just behind St. Giles' Cathedral, or near the very obvious Deacon Brodie's Tavern.

Waverley Station – Princes Street Gardens (Ross Fountain) – Edinburgh Castle – Royal Mile – Holyrood Palace – Calton Hill

Here are some great links for some of the places mentioned. Any of these that are entry only should be exactly the same price as booking direct but have the real advantage of being cancellable until just before the visit (normally 24 hours but do check the listing.) We earn a small affiliate fee if you book via one of our links, helping us create more of our montages – click a picture or scan the QR code.

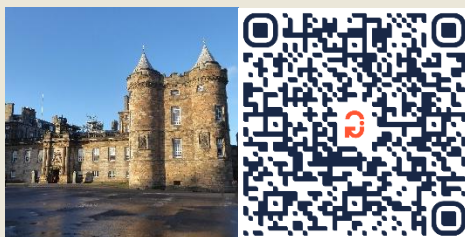
Edinburgh Castle – entry and guided tour



Mary King's Close – entry and guided tour



Holyrood Palace - entry



Haunted Vaults and Greyfriars Kirkyard



Day 2

Start the day by heading to Stockbridge – a few buses go from the Waverley area if needed. This is a pleasant area of Edinburgh that is very close to the centre and has a certain charm. The Stock Bridge itself is today a stone bridge over the Water of Leith where Hamilton Place and Kerr Street meet.

This area is full of cafes, bars, boutique shops and more. Some of the charity shops of Stockbridge are the best around, if that's your thing. If you look over the bridge you should see one of Anthony Gormley's statues in the water.

From here you can head along Saunders Street, running parallel to the Water of Leith. After a few minutes you will see the road ends and turn into a path that goes through an arch – go through and you will find the Water of Leith walkway.

Follow this as far as you wish – you will first come to Bernard's Well, then go under the arched Dean Bridge before coming to the older buildings of Dean Village, one time home to numerous grain mills. We would suggest using Dean Brae Bridge to head into that area and then head back the way you came – but you could follow the waterway further if you wished, with the National Gallery modern art collections further along.

Presuming you came back to Stockbridge, you can take a thirty minute walk through parts of Edinburgh's New Town. Take NW Circus Place then, when you reach Howe Street, turn right. Follow that all the way to Princes Street and turn left. Take the next right, The Mound, which starts at the end of Princes Street Gardens.

Follow that as it climbs up the hill and curves left and stay with it. Just keep following the main route as it crosses the Royal Mile (St. Giles' Cathedral will be to the left).

Almost opposite Chambers Street you will find the Greyfriars Bobby statue and pub. More or less behind the pub is Greyfriars Kirkyard so if you didn't go on a tour the evening before this is a good time to head in – the church is small but has some great stained glass, and you can search the graveyard for headstones that inspired characters in the Harry Potter series.

Right by the statue and pub you will find a smaller street starting called Candlemaker Row. Head down there (do note you could get onto Candlemaker Row further down by walking through the Kirkyard).

Candlemaker Row ends at a mini roundabout where it meets Cowgate, the road you were above earlier. Turn left here. As it opens up, it becomes Grassmarket. You will see various pubs on the right, and you should cross over at the first opportunity to that side.

You will see a street heading off to the right, West Bow. It's normally blocked off to cars and you will see it climbs and curves to the right. Close to the start of it you will find the Covenanters' Memorial, site of many executions.

You can head further into Grassmarket if you wish but need to come back to West Bow and head up it to continue. As you do so you will see colourful facades for some of the shops as it changes name to Victoria Street. Above you to the left you will see a higher-level terrace of shops too.

Follow Victoria Street to its end and the national Library is directly in front of you – you walked along here earlier, coming from the left of it. Turn left and the next street you come to is the Royal Mile once more.

This is a great opportunity to visit anywhere you missed on day one and there are plenty of food places nearby.

The route will now end back at Waverley station, on its south side. Our favourite route would be to turn right onto the Royal Mile, pass St. Giles' Cathedral, and look for one of the many narrow passages called Fleshmarket Close. It's just before the proper road Cockburn Street and is next to the Albanach bar. The first section is short so just cross the road you come to (another part of Cockburn Street) and continue on as Fleshmarket Close begin to go down steps. You'll find a pub or two along the way!

You will come out at the southern side of the main station – if you need to get to the other side you can go through the station without a ticket.

Stockbridge – Dean Village – National Museum - Greyfriars – Grassmarket – Victoria Street

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Old Town walking tour



New Town walking tour



Dean Village

