

## The August of Cultural Explosion in Edinburgh, Scotland UK

By Rebecca A. Sebek



It is my third time to The United Kingdom of Great Britain; specifically Edinburgh, Scotland. When August, the "hottest" month appears, it signals the beginning of the brilliant festivals that take place in Edinburgh, the capital city of Scotland. Choose from the Art Festival, Festival of Spirituality and Peace, International Film Festival, Military Tattoo Festival, International Fringe Festival, International Festival, International Book Festival, and many more. If you enjoy art, meeting people, culture, craziness, and an overload of your senses, then Edinburgh is the place to be in August!

I graduated with a Masters of Science, Management degree on May 2, 2007 from Indiana Wesleyan University in Independence, OH. My trip to Edinburgh, Scotland was my graduation gift from me to me! Plus, my birthday is in August, so the trip was a birthday gift as well. I always desired to be in the capital city to experience all of the festivals. I love culture and art; especially dance, music, theatre, books, and basically anything art!

I booked my plane ticket through Pleasant Valley Travel, located in Parma, OH. However, I booked my accommodations through the internet. I stayed in hotels before, and I felt that I have been there and done that. Plus, it was time to try something new. So, this time I booked a hostel. I always had a strong desire to stay in a hostel. I booked with Budget Backpackers, which is located in the city centre of Edinburgh, Scotland. It is a hip, colorful, and funky hostel. You can find them on the internet at [budgetbackpackers.com](http://budgetbackpackers.com) or at you can visit the website [visitscotland.org](http://visitscotland.org). *Click on find accommodation, a-z listings, hostels, backpackers, and budget backpackers.* This website has additional information about the hostel, in addition to the plethora of information about Scotland.

Oh! My! Due to storms, my flight from Cleveland, OH to Chicago O'Hare was somewhat delayed, not too bad. London Heathrow airport is major. I missed my connecting flight to Edinburgh because my flight was scheduled to close to my arrival. The security is very tight at Heathrow, as it should be. Anyway, I was placed on a later flight to Edinburgh, and I made it! Edinburgh airport is fabulous. It is smaller, but it is very efficient. I found my way to the ground level where the transportation is located. I located the no. 100 Airport bus to the city center, purchased a round trip ticket, and I was on my way!

I arrived at Waverly Bridge in the "new" town of the city center, and I was off to Budget Backpackers. I was thrilled when I found my hostel. I was in seventh heaven when I heard the music blasting as I walked through the door. Nice! Led Zeppelin can help put you at ease. The atmosphere and people are very easy going and friendly. It was a good vibe! I ended up in a six bunk room, which was fine with me. The room was vibrant and clean. It was chilly because the window was opened a little bit. But, it worked out.

The ages of the guests at the hostel ranged from 20-somethings to families. It was very diverse, which was refreshing. Most guests were from the UK and Europe with a few from Asian countries as well as the Americans. I loved being around all of the culture!

The people in my room were from Barcelona, Spain, England, Australia, and California. The California couple had somewhat of an attitude, they were from L.A. But, they left on Sunday, so it worked out in our favor! We had a couple of guys stay for a night, and then

our new roommates arrived the next day. I am not sure which country they were from. I was trying to listen to their accent. The only English they spoke was "hello" and "goodbye," but that was all right. They were very friendly and polite.

I chose to travel the city on foot. If you really would like to discover a city, walking is the best way. The UK does have a fabulous public transportation system, but I chose to walk. I became familiar with the city and its streets. Cafes are everywhere and for a coffee drinker like me, it was pure heaven. I went to The Elephant House Café in Edinburgh. J.K. Rowling wrote a few of the ever popular Harry Potter books at this café. Sweet! I will admit that I did go to the local Starbucks. I know, I know, I should have spent my money in another café, but I had to check it out. The staff was very friendly, and the coffee was good.

The Royal Mile was packed with people. From tourists to artists, it was complete chaos. It was wonderful! One item I could have done without was all of the cameras. From zoom lens' to camera phones, it was a sea of flash and silver. Here is a hint: Do Not Be a Tourist!! I know people would like to have photographs as a memory of their trip. I mastered the "duck and run" in a short amount of time. Here is a tip, buy postcards. You can take and send them home to family and friends. It may be exciting for someone to receive a postcard with the "Royal Air Mail" stamp on it!

People who think that they only eat "Haggis" in Scotland will be pleasantly surprised that Edinburgh offers a variety of dining options. For a quick bite, eat at Subway; try a more elegant atmosphere at the Thai House Restaurant, which is located on Candlemaker Row. Trying a new cuisine is fun. By the way, Haggis is not bad. I had it before. Plus, I knew what it was, and I still tried it. You never know if you will like something unless you try it.

On a more stylish topic, the art and culture of Edinburgh, Scotland are brilliant. The museums are **FREE!** Very nice! From the National Museum of Scotland to The National Gallery of Scotland, which sits on three sites, the collections are spectacular. One and a half million visitors walk through the doors every year. My favorite piece was the Millennium Clock at the National Museum of Scotland. Hand carved from top to bottom, it envelopes you when you stop to look and admire it. It chimes every hour on the hour. Before it chimes, I suggest you read the placard to the left and to the right of the clock. The one on the right explains the intricacies of the clock and the story that it tells. It was really moving and made me stop and think about the world and how it is in my opinion "on fire" and out of control.

For those who do not enjoy the nightlife, this may seem like a less important topic. But, I must mention it. The city's distinctive howffs (pubs) are unique. All pubs are not the same. For example, Frankensteins Pub boasts three levels. It is more like a club than a pub. The Last Drop pub would be deemed a traditional pub because of its décor. Connected to its brewing and distilling traditions, does make Edinburgh a great drinking city. Edinburgh has three universities, plus several colleges. A youthful presence can be found in the city for most of the year. This is a welcome remedy for a city that is often regarded as stuffy; Edinburgh's Achilles heel.

What a trip! I love the UK! I dropped ten pounds! I definitely am a "city" girl. It was very refreshing to walk everywhere and take public transportation. Did I miss my car? I missed it a "wee" bit, but not that much. I could live without it. The shopping in Edinburgh was absolutely fabulous. So many choices, it made my head spin. And, the toiletries aka beauty products smelled so good. The packaging was outstanding. From the bold colors to the funky designs, as an artist it was a dream come true to see such creativity and stretching of the mind.

The Scottish people are brilliant. The performances were spectacular. Everything about the country is awe inspiring. It is a dream come true for anyone who loves "city" living. I say ditch the car and SUV. Walk and or take public transportation if you can. You will feel better physically and the environment will thank you!