

The tale of a tail



A self-guided walk along Edinburgh's Royal Mile

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**the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks**







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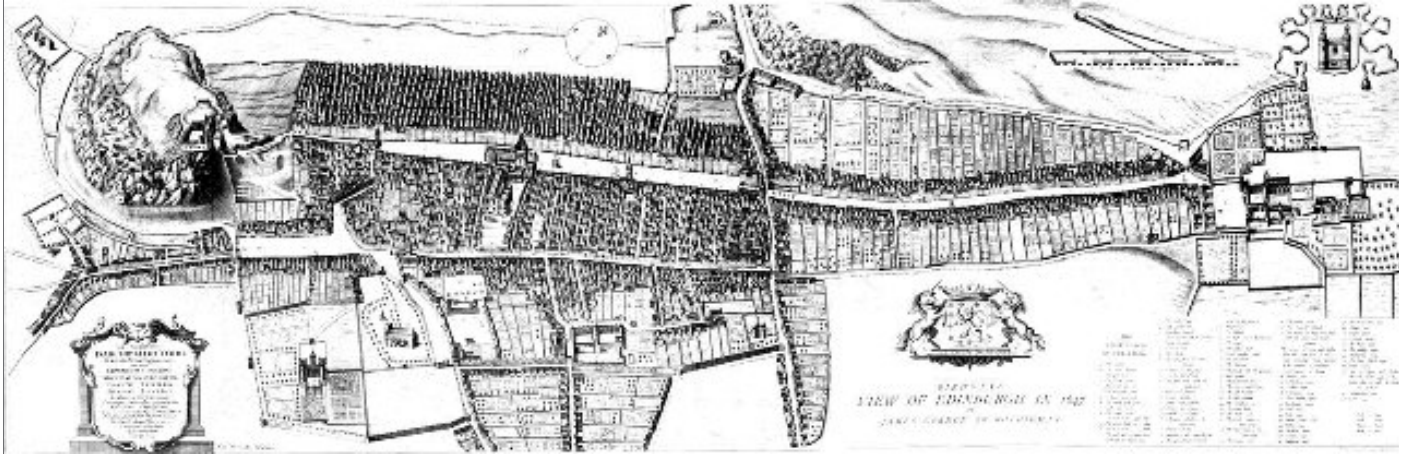
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The tale of a tail

Discover the stories along Edinburgh's Royal Mile



A 1647 map of The Royal Mile. Edinburgh Castle is on the left
Courtesy of www.royal-mile.com

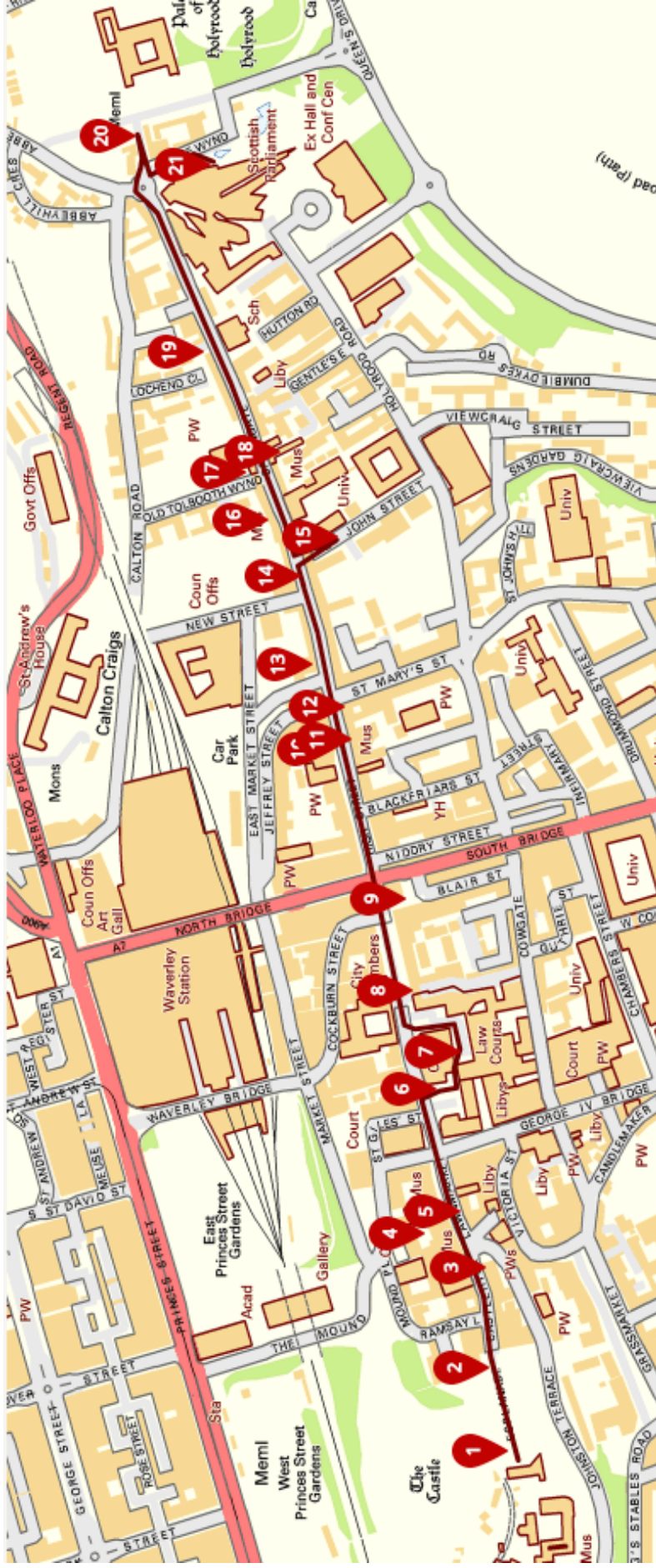
Lined with cobbles and layered with history, Edinburgh's 'Royal Mile' is one of Britain's best-known streets. This famous stretch of Scotland's capital also attracts visitors from around the world.

This walk follows the Mile from historic Edinburgh Castle to the modern Scottish Parliament. The varied sights along the way reveal Edinburgh's development from a dormant volcano into a modern city.

Also uncover tales of kidnap and murder, a dramatic love story, and the dramatic deeds of kings, knights and spies.

The walk was originally created in 2012. It was part of a series that explored how our towns and cities have been shaped for many centuries by some of the 206 participating nations in the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We hope you enjoy the walk.

Route map



Stopping points

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Outside Edinburgh Castle | 8. Old Fishmarket Close | 15. Chancery of the Priory of Scotland |
| 2. View down Castlehill | 9. Hunter Square | 16. Sugarhouse Close |
| 3. The Hub | 10. John Knox House | 17. Canongate Tollbooth |
| 4. James Court | 11. Cashmere shop, 28 High Street | 18. Huntly House (Museum of Edinburgh) |
| 5. Ridell's Court and Close | 12. The World's End pub | 19. Panmure Close |
| 6. St Giles' Cathedral | 13. Mid Common Close | 20. Palace of Holyroodhouse |
| 7. Parliament Square | 14. Cross of St John | Scottish Parliament Building |

Practical information

Location	Edinburgh Royal Mile, Scotland
Getting there	<p>Train - The nearest station to the walk route is Edinburgh Waverley in the city centre. Regular services run from London Kings Cross, York, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Durham, Berwick, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen</p> <p>Bus - There are many local and long-distance services to the city centre. The bus station is just off Elder Street, near St Andrew Square.</p> <p>Car - Edinburgh is easily accessible from the north and south. The M8 links to Glasgow, the M74 and A1 to northern England.</p>
Start point	Castlehill, outside Edinburgh Castle, EH1 2NG
Finish point	Scottish Parliament Building, EH99 1SP
Directions from railway station to the start	<p><i>From Edinburgh Waverley</i> - Exit onto Waverley Bridge and cross over the road. Turn left and with Princes Street Gardens on your right continue up to a roundabout. Turn right into Market Street. At the end bear right at the crossroads and go up Mound Place and into Ramsay Lane. There are no steps but it is steep - so take your time. At the top of Ramsey Lane turn right. The entrance to the castle is ahead.</p>
Onward journey	To return to Edinburgh city centre and Waverley station at the end of the walk use Directions 20.
Distance	1 ½ miles

Level	Gentle - a short city centre walk with no steps or climbs
Conditions	The walk is on a mixture of pavements and cobbled paths so wear suitable footwear. Make sure to take care when crossing busy roads.
Suitable for	Families - take care of young children, especially at busy times of year (see Other Info below) Wheelchairs / pushchairs - an entirely step-free route though the streets are cobbled in parts Dogs - must be kept on a lead
Refreshments	Plenty of cafés and shops along the route
Facilities	Free public toilets are available in Hunter Square and at the end of the walk at the Palace of Holyroodhouse
Other info	The route can be very busy at weekends and holidays - especially during the Edinburgh Festival (August) and at Hogmanay (New Year). Edinburgh Castle is open daily from 9.30am to 5pm / 6pm (Winter / Summer hours). Entry by ticket only, booking advisable at busy periods. Tel: 0131 225 9846 The Palace of Holyroodhouse is open from 9.30am to 4.30pm / 5pm (Winter / Summer hours) except during royal events. Check before visiting. Free entry to the café and shop, ticketed entry to the Palace. Tel: 0131 556 5100
Tourist Information	Edinburgh Information Centre, 3 Princes Street EH2 2QP. It is next to Stop 3 of the walk or Tel: 0131 473 3868

1. A proud fortress

Castlehill, outside Edinburgh Castle

From almost anywhere in Edinburgh you will see the Castle looming high above the city. As we can see the Castle is on an ideal defensive location, high up and with panoramic views for miles around.

Castlehill is an ideal defensive location, high up and affording panoramic views for miles around. As a result, there has been a royal castle here since at least the twelfth century and the rule of King David I of Scotland.

Today Edinburgh Castle is Scotland's biggest tourist attraction. Over a million people visit it each year. During the busiest times, such as Festival season in summer and Hogmanay at Christmas, it's possible to forget that the castle was designed to keep people out rather than draw people in!



Edinburgh Castle and motto
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Over the centuries, many people have tried to take the Castle by force, including King Henry VIII, Oliver Cromwell and Charles Stuart ('Bonnie Prince Charlie'). As a result the Castle has been strengthened and added to several times.

Look above the entrance doors for a Latin phrase - 'Nemo Me Impune Lacesit'. This translates as 'Nobody assails me with impunity', in other words 'Nobody attacks me without a fight'. The phrase is the motto of The Order of the Thistle, the Scottish order of chivalry. It was also the motto of the Royal Scots, a regiment of the British Army based at the Castle until 2006. Placed here, the phrase describes the Castle's defences - literally and symbolically as a stronghold of Scottish identity.

You might also have found it in your pocket. The motto was one of several stamped on the rim of old £1 coins.

Directions 1

Turn your back on the Castle and look downhill along the Royal Mile.

2. The tale of a tail

View down Castlehill

The Romans referred to Edinburgh as Alaufa, the 'rock place'. This is very fitting as Edinburgh's rocks shaped the city, especially the Royal Mile. Though Edinburgh Castle sits on almost sheer cliffs, the Royal Mile slopes downhill like a ramp. Have you ever wondered why?

Castlehill is around 350 million years old and was created during a volcanic eruption. The rock is technically known as a 'volcanic plug'. It formed when volcanic activity deep inside the Earth forced a stream of hot molten rock (lava) up to the planet's surface.

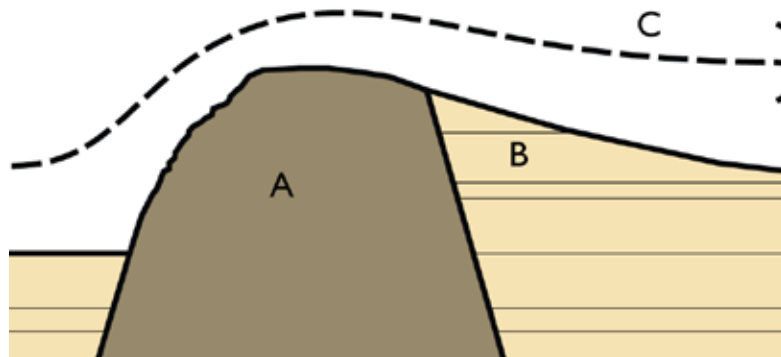


Diagram of a 'crag and tail' formation - 'A' is the crag formed by the volcanic plug and 'B' the tail of softer rock, 'C' shows the direction of ice movement.

© Jonathan Oldenbuck, Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

The lava pushed through layers of softer rocks then rapidly cooled to form a very tough rock called dolerite. Then, from 2.5 million years ago, the Earth's temperature cooled down and the planet entered a series of Ice Ages.

Much of Britain, from Scotland to north London, was covered in thick sheets of ice. When the Earth warmed up again (around 12,000 years ago), the ice began to melt. Some of the ice broke off in large heavy sections called glaciers. Gravity made glaciers melt downhill to sea level, carving valleys and river channels along their way.

But at Edinburgh the dolerite was too tough for the ice to wear down. Instead the ice was diverted over and around the dolerite. This created a rock formation called a 'crag and tail'. A 'crag' is an exposed rock with a steep face, while a 'tail' is a long slope on the other side.

We can see similar effects on a beach at low tide. Pebbles often create a v-shaped 'tail' in the sand where the receding waves have passed around them. In Edinburgh, Castlehill is the crag with the slope of the Royal Mile highlighting the tail.

So though Castlehill was made by intense heat, the Royal Mile was shaped by ice. It's amazing to think that by walking down it we are retracing the routes of huge ancient glaciers.

Directions 2

Go down Castlehill to the junction with Johnston Terrace. On the right is a former church with a spire which is now called The Hub. Stop outside of it.

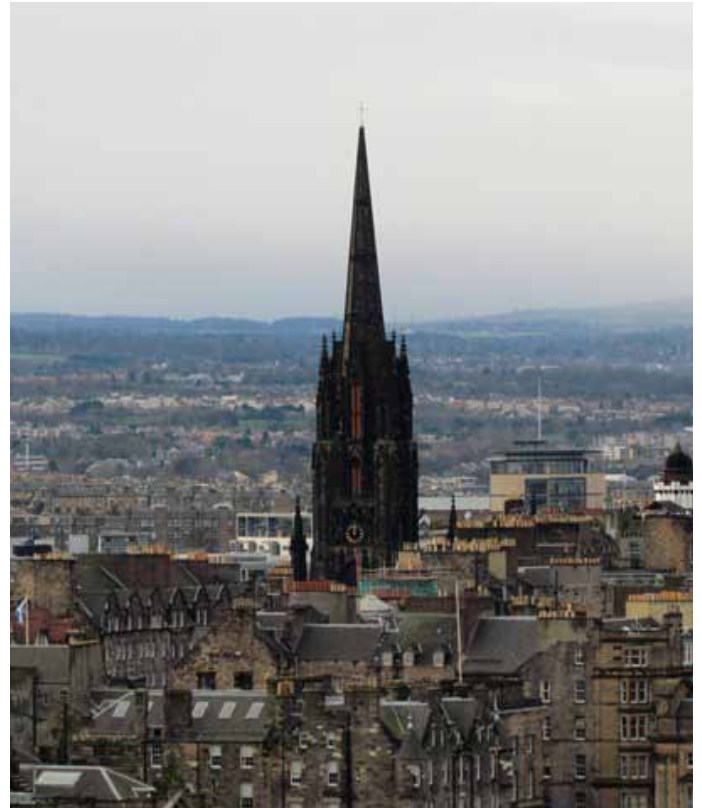
3. An international hub

The Hub

The building now known as the Hub was originally called the Victoria Hall. Designed by J Gillespie Graham and Augustus Pugin, it was built between 1842 and 1845 as a church and assembly hall. The spire is the highest point in Edinburgh city centre and dwarfs all of the surrounding buildings.

The Hub was deliberately imposing and provides a good example of an architectural style known as Gothic Revival. The term 'gothic' refers to a style of thirteenth-century buildings in southern Europe. These ornate buildings became especially popular in Victorian Britain, and were reproduced throughout the Empire.

The Hub is now the centre of the annual Edinburgh Festival. The Festival is actually a series of festivals that include music, literature, dance, opera, visual arts and comedy. Together they make up the largest arts festival in the world.



The Hub spire towering over the Old Town
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

There are over 250 venues and more than 2,500 different shows, totalling around 30,000 performances. During Festival season each August, visitors worldwide flock to Edinburgh. The city's population can grow from about 450,000 to over 1 million people.

Directions 3

From here, the walk goes the whole way down the Royal Mile to the Palace of Holyroodhouse. Sometimes there is only a short distance between stopping points and you will have to look carefully for signs. One of the first alleyways on the left hand side of the Mile is James Court. Go down the alleyway into James Court and stop inside the courtyard.

4. Enlightening times

James Court

Along the sides of the Royal Mile there are many narrow streets, known as 'closes' or 'wynds'. Some of them lead to courtyards like this. Others are alleyways and staircases that cut through to elsewhere in the city. A few are closed off and private property.

Take your time to explore the closes. They are all different and often have interesting features and stories.

James Court was one of the places where the Scottish Enlightenment developed. The Enlightenment was a period in the eighteenth century that saw Scotland lead great advances in philosophy, economics, engineering, architecture, medicine, geology, archaeology, law, agriculture, chemistry and sociology.

By 1750 Scotland was one of the intellectual centres of the world. Leading Enlightenment figures included Francis Hutcheson, Alexander Campbell, David Hume, Adam Smith, Thomas Reid, Robert Burns, Adam Ferguson, John Playfair, Joseph Black and James Hutton.

The philosopher David Hume lived here in James Court. Above one of the windows is another Latin phrase - 'nisi dominus frustra'. This is Edinburgh's motto and features on the city's coat of arms. Translated as 'Except the Lord in vain' it comes from the 127th Psalm in the Bible. Its appearance here is rather ironic, as Hume was suspicious of organised religion.

A short way down the Royal Mile, there is a statue of Hume outside the High Court building. Look closely at the big toe on his right foot. It's shiny where people rub it for good luck, especially students before exams.



Take time to explore the Royal Mile's closes, there are many surprises tucked away, like this view of the Scott Monument
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Directions 4

Go back onto the Royal Mile. Cross over to the other side and look for Riddell's Court. Stop inside the courtyard.

5. Royalty, rioting and regeneration

Riddell's Court and Riddell's Close

Beyond the narrow alleyway of Riddell's Close, Riddell's Court was completed around 1590 for Bailie John McMorran. At the time he was the wealthiest merchant in the city. In 1593 McMorran hosted a grand banquet here that was attended by King James VI.

Two years later, McMorran met a sticky end. He was caught up in a riot at Edinburgh High School and was shot dead by one of the schoolboys. The boys were protesting after being refused a holiday!

Other notable residents of Riddell's Court include David Hume, who lived here before settling at James Court.



King James VI (left) and architect Patrick Geddes
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

In 1887 one of the Court's pair of L-shaped buildings became a hall of residence for Edinburgh University. Look out for an archway inscribed 'Vivendo Discimus' - 'By living we learn'. This commemorates Patrick Geddes, a Victorian lecturer and pioneering town planner who hosted summer school classes here.

Geddes helped to regenerate Edinburgh's Old Town. Several other buildings on the Royal Mile have links with Geddes. As we continue, look out for them by spotting small plaques that feature Geddes' portrait.

Directions 5

Go back out of Riddell's Close and turn right down the Royal Mile staying on the right hand side. Use the traffic lights to cross George IV Bridge and then stop outside of St Giles' Cathedral.

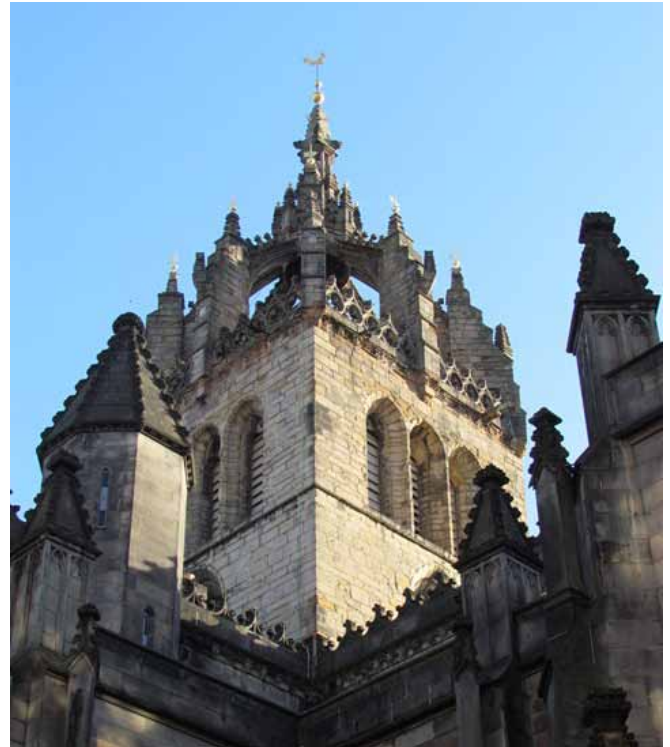
6. To the hermitage

St Giles' Cathedral

With its famed crown spire St Giles' Cathedral is the historic City Church of Edinburgh. It is named after St Giles, a seventh century hermit and later abbot. St Giles is usually shown protecting a deer from an arrow which had pierced his own body. A fine relief of this image appears above the Cathedral's main doors.

Images like these are called 'tympanums'. Tympanums are semi-circle or triangle shaped decorative walls above a building's entrance. Apart from supporting the doorway beneath, a tympanum told people what a building was for in an era when many people couldn't read or write.

The cathedral is well worth a visit. If you have time, do take a look inside. Among the features to explore are the impressive font, stained glass windows and grand organ. There are also many memorials to notable city residents.



St Giles Cathedral spire and Stevenson memorial
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



One celebrates the writer Robert Louis Stevenson. A bronze wall-mounted memorial shows him sitting on a couch, pen in hand. The image was based upon an earlier painting but with a small yet significant difference. In the original painting Stevenson is holding a cigarette.

Directions 6

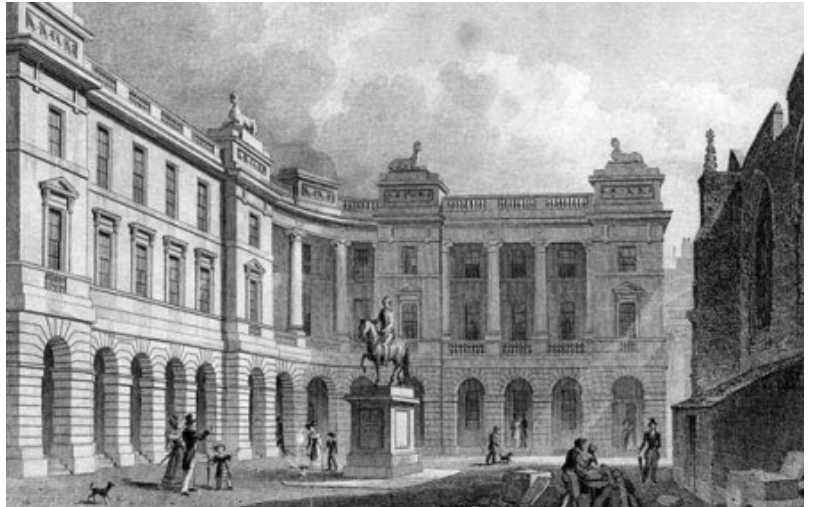
With the cathedral on your left, continue into a square and stop by a statue of a man on a horse.

7. A horse and a heart

Parliament Square

Parliament Square was originally built in 1632 by paving over St Giles' churchyard. It is named after Parliament House, which stands opposite St Giles' and served as a parliament building and civil court.

In the 1700s this square was the bustling centre of Edinburgh's business district. Outside the parliament were a variety of jewellers, watchmakers and bookshops. Most of the buildings we can see date from the early 1800s though after the area was twice destroyed by fire.



Parliament House (1829) by Thomas H Shepherd
© Peter Stubbs www.edinphoto.org.uk

This statue of King Charles II on horseback was unveiled soon after his death in 1685. The oldest statue in Edinburgh, it is made from lead with a wooden and steel frame inside. Over time the frame decayed and the heavy lead became badly cracked.

As a result the statue has been repaired several times, the latest being in 2011. During the eighteenth century, the statue was left in a prison yard for 11 years while waiting to be fixed.

Look in the ground of Parliament Square for the Heart of Midlothian. This heart-shaped pattern in bricks marks the doorway of the original Canongate Tolbooth. The Tollbooth was a courthouse and jail.

Many traders and residents hated the Tollbooth and used to spit at the door as they passed by. When Parliament Square was redesigned, the Heart was placed on the site. Folklore says spitting on the Heart ensures good luck.

Directions 7

Walk around the back of St Giles' Cathedral and turn right to continue along the right hand side of the Royal Mile. Stop when you find Old Fishmarket Close. The entrance is decorated with sculpted fish.

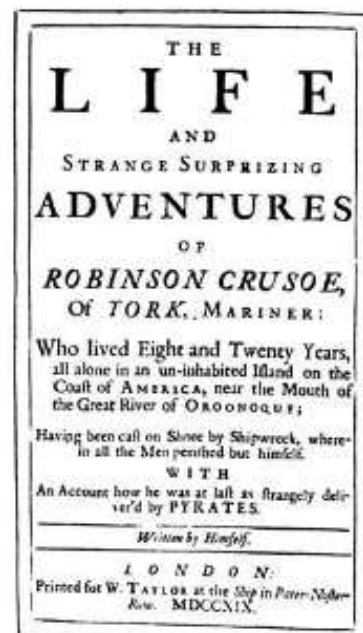
8. Fishy tales

Old Fishmarket Close

Edinburgh sits just inland from the south bank of the Firth of Forth, a major channel to the North Sea. As a result fish have been traded in the city since at least the sixteenth century.

Old Fishmarket Close is named after a fish market that used to be held here. It was once described as “a steep, narrow stinking ravine”. Today the decorative entrance to the close shows what kinds of fish were available, including plaice, cod and herring.

Eastern Scotland shares fishing areas with Iceland, Norway and the Faroe Islands. But Old Fishmarket Close also has a link to warmer waters.



Robinson Crusoe, 1719 first edition title page
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

In 1707 the author Daniel Defoe is thought to have worked here as a secret agent for the English government. At that time the Treaty of Union was being prepared. The Union eventually created Great Britain, with Scotland with England ruled by a single monarch.

Twelve years later Defoe published Robinson Crusoe, often regarded as the first English novel. The story was based on the true-life experiences of Scotsman Alexander Selkirk, a sailor who became marooned off the coast of Chile on the Pacific Island of Mas a Tierra.

Following the success of Defoe's book, Mas a Tierra was later re-named Robinson Crusoe Island.

Directions 8

Continue down the right hand side of the Royal Mile. Stop when you reach Hunter Square outside Tron Kirk.

9. What's in a name?

Hunter Square

We've come off the Royal Mile itself for a moment to think about one of its most surprising features. Many people assume that the Royal Mile is a mile-long street named after the royal castle and palace at either end. But things are a little more complicated.

First, the area referred to as the Royal Mile is actually a series of consecutive streets. These are - the Esplanade, Castlehill, Lawnmarket, the High Street, Canongate and Abbey Strand. Look carefully for road signs with these different names on.



One of the streets that makes up the Royal Mile
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The second complication is that the Royal Mile isn't technically a mile long. Instead it is a 'Scots Mile', a historic measurement of 1,976 yards. The official distance of a mile is 1,760 yards. This standard definition was set after an international agreement in 1959.

Before then, many countries and regions used their own local measurements. There have been different length 'miles' around the world for centuries. The name 'mile' comes from 'mille passus', the Latin for 'thousand paces' – a measurement that varied depending on a person's stride!

If this isn't a mile, or one street, where does the Royal Mile's name come from? The answer is a 1920s guide book called 'The Royal Mile'. The book established this part of Edinburgh as a tourist attraction and the name has stuck ever since.

Directions 9

With the Tron on your right continue down the Royal Mile. Use the first set of traffic lights to cross over South Bridge, then turn left and use another set of lights to cross over onto the left hand side of the Mile. Continue downhill The Scottish Storytelling Centre (John Knox House) on the left hand side.

10. Knock Knox

John Knox House

Built around 1470 this house is the only original medieval building left on the Royal Mile. It is named after John Knox, a controversial religious reformer in the sixteenth century. Knox was born near Edinburgh in 1505 and became one of the most influential churchmen in the Reformation.

The Reformation began when the Pope refused to grant King Henry VIII a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. Henry decided to break the monarchy's ties from Catholic Rome, a decision which eventually created the Church of England.



John Knox House (1829) by Thomas H Shepherd
© Peter Stubbs www.edinphoto.org.uk

Reformation ideas soon spread throughout Europe and led to national churches. John Knox is often regarded as the founder of the Church of Scotland. In 1559 Knox led the Lords of the Congregation, a group of powerful Reformation nobles, into Edinburgh.

Knox was elected minister of Edinburgh and served at St Giles' Cathedral until 1572. There he played a major role establishing Protestant styles of worship that became accepted throughout Scotland.

Knox is thought to have lived briefly at this house, although a plaque in Warriston Close marks the site of another house he might have owned. Either way, his links to this house saved it from demolition. It's worth a visit to find out more about Knox and for its surprising architecture - look out for the devil hiding in the painted ceiling!

Directions 10

Carefully cross over the road to Johnston's House of Cashmere, the shop opposite John Knox House.

11. Copying cashmere

28 High Street

Here we can see evidence of one of Edinburgh's major trades. Cashmere is a fine warm cloth, named after the region of Kashmir in India and Pakistan. The trade stems from the late-eighteenth century when British merchants and soldiers working in India brought back Kashmiri shawls.

With their distinctive floral leaf design, inspired by the Babylonian tree of life, the shawls became very popular. They were very expensive though, so demand grew for a cheaper domestic version.



Multi-coloured cashmere
© Paloetic, Flickr.com (CCL)

Edinburgh already had an established linen weaving industry. Then in 1777 William Mortimer produced the first imitation Kashmir shawls in Scotland. A fashion for muslin sheath dresses, which could be rather cold in winter, helped to make the shawls very popular.

Most early records of Edinburgh's shawl industry come from the Board of Trustees for Fisheries and Manufactures in Scotland. This was an early Board of Trade that encouraged industry by awarding prizes. Mortimer was given the first one for a Kashmir-inspired shawl in 1781.

The first shawls appear to have been printed but in 1798 James Mitchell produced the first woven examples. Production reached its peak in Scotland between 1800 and 1820 when over 1,000 weavers were employed creating Kashmir-inspired shawls.

Directions 11

Continue down the right hand side of Royal Mile. When you reach the junction with St Mary Street, stop outside The World's End pub.

12. The world's end

The World's End pub

The World's End is one of the most popular pubs on the Royal Mile, especially with tourists. Part of its appeal is undoubtedly the name, shared with nearby World's End Close. But this colourful visitor attraction highlights a violent period of Scottish history.

During the medieval era, Scotland and England were military enemies. For protection, Scotland formed an alliance with France. The idea was that Scotland could call upon French support in any future battles against the English.



World's End Close
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

'The Auld Alliance' was formally agreed in 1295. It was tested two centuries later when the English king, Henry VIII, invaded France in 1513. To support their French allies, Scotland retaliated by attacking northern England.

The move backfired when the Scots were defeated at the Battle of Flodden in Northumberland. Around 10,000 Scottish troops were killed including the king, James IV. James IV of Scotland remains the last British king to be killed on a British battlefield.

After the battle, Scotland feared reprisals so a wall was built around Edinburgh to protect the city. Look carefully at the Royal Mile here for a set of metal studs in the road. They mark where a gate was built in the wall to allow access in and out of Edinburgh.

Many residents felt that the land beyond the wall wasn't safe and therefore 'not ours'. With many people refusing to travel beyond the wall, this spot just inside the gate became literally the end of their world.

Directions 12

With the pub on your right, cross over St Mary's Street and continue downhill. When you reach Gibb's Close, look across the road for Mid Common Close and a small statue on the wall above.

13. A romantic adventure

Mid Common Close

This block of buildings is known as Morocco Land. The reason lies high on the wall above Mid Common Close. Look up for a little statue of a Moorish man resplendent in a turban and necklace.

The story behind it relates to the seventeenth century and a young Edinburgh resident named Andrew Gray. In 1633 Gray was sentenced to death for rioting. After the coronation of Charles I, Gray apparently helped to burn down the Provost's house (the Provost was the equivalent to an English mayor).

To escape the hangman's noose Gray fled from the city by sea. He soon landed in Morocco where he made his fortune. Then in 1645 Gray returned to Edinburgh. The city was then riddled with the plague and Gray's cousin had fallen seriously ill. To complicate matters, this cousin was also the Provost's daughter.



Moorish statue, Mid Common Close
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Gray helped to tend her back to health and his execution order was cancelled for his good deeds. The happy couple married and moved into a building near here. The block became known to locals as 'Morocco Land'. The statue that commemorates the dramatic story is said to be Gray's patron, the Emperor of Morocco.

Directions 13

Continue down the right hand side of the Mile. Just past Old Playhouse Close look for a small plaque on the wall. It is next to a brick circle in the road with a black and white cross on it.

14. X marks the spot

St John Cross, 229 Canongate

Here in the road is a Maltese Cross or Cross of St John. At busy times it is very easy to miss in the traffic. It marks the site of the original standing cross of St John, which in turn marked a city boundary.

The Royal Mile's continuous streets are actually part of two distinct areas. The lower end is in a former borough called Canongate. Canongate was named after the canons of the now-ruined Holyrood Abbey. Until 1856 the area had 'burgh' status. In other words, Canongate was a separate town from the rest of Edinburgh.



St John cross in the road at Canongate
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Long before then Canongate had become a hub for crafts and trading. The Confession of Faith, signed in 1638 by a large number of Canongate's residents, indicates that a broad cross-section of craftsmen lived locally. Over 50 tailors signed along with 32 wrights, 25 weavers, 15 dyers and 8 saddlers.

As trading opportunities increased in the seventeenth century connections between Canongate and the wider world became stronger still, as we will see.

Directions 14

Continue down the right hand side of the Royal Mile. Stop when you reach Sugarhouse Close.

15. An ancient order

Chancery of the Priory of Scotland

Turning off the Royal Mile again for a moment we come to the Chancery of the Priory of Scotland, or the Scottish headquarters of the Order of St John.

The Order of St John has its origins in the ancient Order of the Knights of St John, who went to the Crusades – not to fight but to look after knights who were sick. They were known as the Knights Hospitaller.

Here in St John Street is where the Knights of St John were believed to have lived in the Middle Ages. This building dates from 1798, though the Order is much older. It evolved from an eleventh-century hospital for pilgrims in Jerusalem and is now an international charity that works in over 40 countries.

The Order is probably best known today for the St John's Ambulance service that provides first aid and first aid training. St John's Scotland is unique as they also work overseas with St John's hospitals in Jerusalem and Malawi.



A 14th century painting of the Grand Master and senior members of the Knights Hospitaller
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Directions 15

Retrace your steps through the arch. Turn right and continue down the right hand side of the Royal Mile. Stop when you reach Sugarhouse Close.

16. A sweet story

Sugarhouse Close

Edinburgh's port, Leith, became Scotland's centre for West Indian trade. Leith's wide estuary was easier for visiting ships to enter than the narrower River Clyde in Glasgow. Leith was also a cheaper port than London because trading here meant avoiding English duty charges.

As a result many West Indian planters made Leith a base for their consignments of sugar cane. Sugar refining became a major Edinburgh industry. The first house in Edinburgh for baking sugars was set up at Leith in 1751.



Sugarhouse Close sign
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The land at Sugarhouse Close was originally owned by the Earl of Dunkeld. Between 1752 and 1824 a sugar refinery was based here. Raw cane was brought into Leith from the Caribbean and processed here to make granulated sugar. The work was hot, dangerous and physically demanding.

In 1829 this site was purchased by MacFie & Sons, a company with a long history of sugar refining in Glasgow. They moved here after their Leith refinery, established in 1804, burnt down. The MacFie & Sons Edinburgh Sugarhouse continued operating until around 1840. The company was later absorbed into Tate & Lyle.

Directions 16

Look directly over the road to the Tollbooth Tavern, the building with the pointed clock tower.

17. The old lock up

Canongate Tollbooth

Canongate Tollbooth is the oldest building in Canongate and one of the landmarks of Edinburgh's Old Town. Built in 1591, this was where town tolls and duties were paid. The building was also a council chamber, police office and a notorious jail. The Tollbooth's colourful history even includes an exorcism.

Many prisoners detained at the Tollbooth were sent to the Caribbean for seven years hard labour on sugar plantations. After completing their sentence they could return to Scotland. Before departure however all the captives were marked. Women had their faces branded with an iron while men had an ear cut off.

The Tollbooth building was remodelled from 1875. The large clock tower was added in 1884 and interior floors were combined. This larger space is now the home of the People's Story Museum.



Canongate Tollbooth clock tower
© Kim Traynor, Geograph (CCL)

Directions 17

Continue along the right hand side of the Royal Mile. Stop after a very short distance by the Museum of Edinburgh, a large building with gold writing on the walls.

18. A better life

Huntly House

The Museum of Edinburgh is based in a grand building called Huntly House, created in 1570 when three small houses were merged. This part of Canongate was home to metalworkers, known as 'hammermen', and bakers. The Museum entrance, at the end of the building, is through Bakehouse Close.

Look up at the walls. The building was also called 'The Speaking House' because of the decorative panels of Latin mottos we can see. In particular look for the motto with a picture of wheat sheaves. It reads 'spes altera vitae' or 'hope for a better life'.

To early agricultural people, a good wheat harvest assured plenty of bread to keep their community alive throughout the winter. Wheat sheaves became symbols of successful harvest and were associated with nourishment and health.

Wheat sheaves can be found in other parts of Edinburgh, including Dean Village. The 'spes altera vitae' motto also appears elsewhere on the Royal Mile, such as in Advocate's Close.



Wheat sheaves on Huntly House
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Directions 18

Carefully cross over the road and walk down the left hand side of the Mile. Stop when you reach the gates of Panmure Close.

19. The wealth of nations

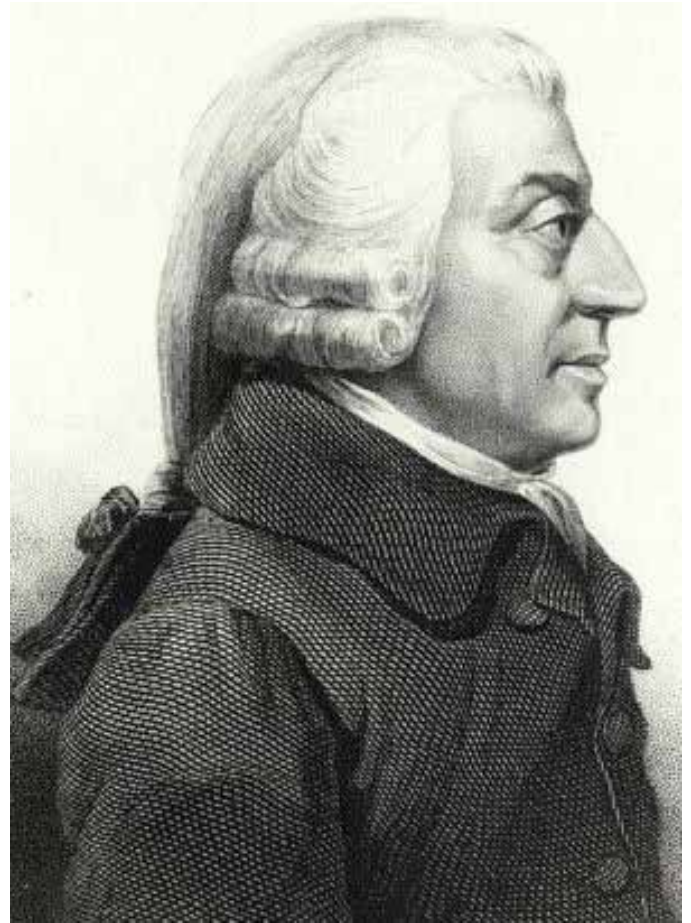
Panmure Close

This small alley is linked to very big ideas. From 1778 Panmure Close was home to the economist Adam Smith, one of the leading figures in the Scottish Enlightenment.

Earlier, did you spot a statue of him near St Giles' Cathedral? Smith gave lectures in Edinburgh from 1748 and was a member of the city's Philosophical Society. His work as a tutor allowed him to travel to France where he met other intellectuals including Voltaire and Benjamin Franklin.

While in France, Smith started writing a book on economics. 'An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations' was published in 1776 and is usually known by its shorter title The Wealth of Nations.

The book set out the arguments for a free market economy and was highly influential. Economists and thinkers throughout Europe have followed Smith's ideas. In fact the book probably contains the origins for the current economic model of Western Europe and the United States.



Engraving of Adam Smith,
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Directions 19

Continue down to the end of the Royal Mile. Cross the road at the island, keeping the mini roundabout on your right. Follow it to the right towards the Queen's Gallery. Immediately past the gallery, turn left into the courtyard. Stop outside the entrance gates of the Palace of Holyroodhouse.

20. A retreat and an attack

Palace of Holyroodhouse

Today the Palace of Holyroodhouse is the official Scottish residence of the British monarch. It is open to the public except for days when it hosts state ceremonies and royal social events.

The current palace was built in the seventeenth century. The site is much older though and dates back to Holyrood Abbey which was founded in 1128 by King David I of Scotland. The Abbey ruins stand next to the Palace.



The Palace of Holyroodhouse
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Like Edinburgh Castle, this is a popular visitor attraction that has seen conflict in the past. In 1688 King James VII (known as James II in England) fled Britain to avoid the invasion of the Dutch prince William of Orange. William took the throne and became King William III. Despite his exile James maintained support from the Catholic community, especially in Scotland and Ireland. His followers were known as Jacobites.

On 17 September 1745 James's grandson arrived in Edinburgh to try and reclaim the throne for his family. This grandson was Prince Charles Edward Stuart, better known as Bonnie Prince Charlie. Charles declared his father, James Edward Francis Stuart, was the rightful King of Scotland and some 60,000 people lined the Royal Mile to welcome the prince. But his attempt to regain the throne was not a success.

Unable to capture Edinburgh Castle, Prince Charles set up court in Holyrood Palace. He stayed here for five weeks, while his officers were based at the end of the Royal Mile in White Horse Close. His plans to regain Scotland ended in April 1746 with defeat to the Duke of Cumberland at the Battle of Culloden. The Prince returned to his birthplace – Rome – and lived the rest of his life in exile.

Directions 20

Turn your back on the Palace gates and retrace your steps to the road. Use the traffic lights to cross over and stop in front of the modern Scottish Parliament Building. There are stone seats outside if you would like to sit down.

21. From historic castle to modern city

Scottish Parliament Building

This dramatic building is the Scottish Parliament. Before the foundation of the United Kingdom, Scotland was an independent state with its own parliament. This changed in 1707 when the Act of Union allied Scotland with England. As a result Scotland was ruled from London and did not have its own parliament for another 292 years.

After increasing pressure from the Scottish Nationalist movement Scotland was granted its own legislature and work on a new Scottish Parliament building began in 1999.



The windows of the MSP building, Scottish Parliament
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

An international competition was held to design the building and the winning entry came from Enric Miralles from Catalonia in Spain. Sadly Miralles died before it opened in 2004.



Local granite in the walls
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The building has won several architecture awards including the 2005 Stirling Prize. It is actually a series of buildings each designed in different styles. Miralles' plan was to reflect Scottish national identity. Scottish materials were used such as local granite, oak and sycamore while the grounds are home to Scottish wildflowers and plants.

The roof line was designed to recall nearby Salisbury Crags, another volcanic rock formation. The unusual windows on the MSP building are inspired by Henry Raeburn's painting, *The Skating Minister* - though some have compared the shapes to hairdryers. The seats outside are shaped like fishing boats, reflecting Scotland's strong ties with the sea.

The national imagery continues inside. For example, the roof of the debating chamber features a series of saltire crosses, similar to those on the Scottish flag.

We have now reached the end of our walk and the modern parliament building is a fitting place to finish. With its mixture of international design and traditional Scottish symbols, the Parliament symbolises Edinburgh's status today as a city built on native talent but open to outside influences.

Our journey along the Royal Mile hasn't only taken us from Edinburgh's oldest to newest public buildings. We have also followed Edinburgh's development. Long before its notable people and historic buildings this was a landscape shaped by volcanic eruptions and melting ice.

We hope you have enjoyed the walk!



Some of the sights of the Royal Mile
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Directions 21

To explore the Royal Mile keep the parliament on your left and retrace your steps back uphill. To get to Waverley train station continue up the Royal Mile until you reach Cockburn Street on the right hand side. At the end of Cockburn Street cross over Market Street onto Waverley Bridge. The station is on your right.

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this walk:

- **Alasdair McLeod** for researching the walk and providing the commentary
- **Jenny Lunn** and **Caroline Millar** for editing the walk materials
- **Rory Walsh** for additional research and providing photos
- **Nick Stanworth, William Dyson** and **Christine McKenna** for their assistance
- **Peter Stubbs, Ian Smith** at **Scottish Pictures** and **RoyalMile.com** for kind permission to use archive images
- **Craig Cormack, Paul Joseph, Jonathan Oldenbuck, Paloetic** and **Kim Traynor** for additional images reproduced under Creative Commons Licenses





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