

DALMAHOY

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Neighbourhoods

The city is basically split into two main districts — the Old Town and the New Town — with Princes Street Gardens separating them. The surrounding areas offer a wealth of places to visit.

The Old Town: This is the largely medieval heart of Edinburgh in which most of its important historical monuments can be found, including Edinburgh Castle, Holyroodhouse Palace (the Royal Scottish residence) and St Giles' Cathedral.

The Royal Mile is the historical artery of the Old Town, linking together Edinburgh's two royal strongholds: Edinburgh Castle and the Holyroodhouse Palace. Running the length of four streets — Castlehill, Lawnmarket, High Street and Canongate — it's a vibrant, buzzing location. This is especially so during the Edinburgh Festival, when the Old Town is filled with street performers and people thrusting flyers into the hands of passers-by, all in the hope of drumming up larger audiences for their shows. It's also something of a tourist trap and, as a result, souvenir shops have sprung up in droves. However, the vitality and historical significance of this part of town make it an essential stop on any visitor's checklist.

The Cowgate and Grassmarket areas are towards the southern end of the Old Town. This bustling area is filled with clubs, pubs, music venues and second-hand clothes shops. It's a pretty cool place in which to be seen and for the locals it's their first port of call on a night out. When the sun shines the Grassmarket has the feel of a continental town; relaxed *al fresco* coffee drinking, little traffic and authentic, colourful shop-fronts make this one of Europe's premier haunts.

Princes Street Gardens: These gardens fill the valley between Old Town and New Town, with Princes Street itself lining the northern side. During the Christmas and New Year period there is an ice-rink set up here under the gaze of a crystallised Edinburgh Castle. There is a decidedly festive atmosphere in the park at this time with stalls selling Christmas trees and seasonal ornaments. During the summer months the park acts as a Mecca for visitors in search of panoramic views of the city; for tourists who wish to climb the Scott Monument; for workers lunching in the open; for children who want to play a round of mini-golf; and for just about anybody who needs to relax. In Princes Street Gardens you never escape the atmospheric sound of the bagpipes, though you can escape the hustle and bustle of Princes Street itself.

The Mound is bang in the middle of Princes Street Gardens. It is called The Mound because it is, quite literally, the mound of earth that was left over from dredging the Loch at the foot of the castle. It's the site of the Royal Scottish Academy and the National Gallery of Scotland. In the summer it attracts many festival performers and craft stalls.

The New Town: Whilst the Old Town marks the historical part of the city, the New Town is more a celebration of business, order and classical Georgian architecture. This is the terrain of the shops, offices and banks, which are laid out in gridded streets that emanate precision and symmetry.

George Street is the centrepiece of the New Town. It is an up-and-coming area and now boasts high quality shops and restaurants including Browns, Space NK Apothecary, Jones and many others. Flanked by Queen Street and Princes Street, which run in parallel, it is a wide and elegant street with impressive squares at both ends. At the western end lies Charlotte Square, designed by Robert Adam in 1791 and home of St George's church (now West Register House). The other end finds St Andrew Square — home of the Melville Monument and the Royal Bank of Scotland. It also marks the financial area of the New Town.

Princes Street, just below George Street, is the main shopping area of Edinburgh and the most famous part of the New Town. A very busy spot, its views of the Edinburgh Castle and proximity to Princes Street Gardens happily make up for the crowds of shoppers. The most impressive building is General Register House, at the north-eastern end of the street. Also at this end is Waverley market, just next to the station. This shopping centre is a popular venue for performers during the Festival. Whilst Princes Street offers shoppers department stores and high street chains, Rose Street, just behind it, is an attractive pedestrian area with small shops and cafes.

Stockbridge & Dean are in the western part of the New Town, and are known for being bohemian and less structured. Funky, trendy little shops and boutiques sit alongside various eating-places and bars. Places like Randolph Crescent and Moray Place give the area a more curvaceous look with classical Georgian fronts. Dean Village is an attractive old milling community, whilst Stockbridge is a great place to browse through antique and ethnic shops.

Calton: At the east of the city, this hill is a popular spot for watching the Festival fireworks. The views of Edinburgh Castle and Arthur's Seat are wonderful and if you like, you can climb the Nelson Monument to increase the panorama. The Royal City Observatory and Old Royal High School are situated in this area.

Holyrood Park and Arthur's Seat: This area is just behind the Holyroodhouse Palace. Known as Arthur's Seat (from the Gaelic "ard-Na-Said" — meaning "height of arms"), this extinct volcano — it hasn't erupted in 350 million years — towers over of Holyrood Park. Originally a hunting ground, the public can now stroll through the park's 650

acres and walk over lava flows to get a great view of the city. There are also many swans and ducks to feed in St. Mary's loch. The best way to climb is from the east by Dunsapie Loch.

Duddingston: Located at the northeast end of Dunsapie Loch, this area is tranquil with a village feel.

Bruntsfield, Marchmont and Morningside: These southern suburbs offer large open spaces such as The Meadows and Bruntsfield Links. It is also the site of the medieval Burgh Muir (town heath) — used to isolate dying victims of plagues and for training armies. Marchmont is a popular student area.

Leith: A docklands area, Leith feels quite separate from the rest of the city - people here often prefer to say they're from Leith rather than from Edinburgh. It has its own financial centre, waterway (the water of Leith) and shopping/eating areas. A source of inspiration for Irvine Welsh's "Trainspotting", it is today the scene of a thriving café society. Leith Links, the park where the rules of golf were originally formulated, is a lovely place to stroll. The sport has been prohibited on this ground, however, since 1907.