

Scotland Culture & Traditions



Celtic Graveyard



Bagpipe Players

Scotland culture and traditions go so far back in history that their very beginnings are literally 'lost in the mists of time'.

Some of the earliest relics of Scottish life date back as far as 8500 BC (no, that's not a typo - they really are that old!), but not too much is known about the culture of Scotland or its traditions before the Roman invasion in 43 AD.

Even after all this time, it's this history that defines much of Scotland culture and is at the roots of its' traditions, celebrations, myths, arts, literature, national pride.... and just about everything Scottish.

Scotland Culture - *The Scottish People*

At the heart of Scottish culture is its' people, and you might find them to be as surprising as Scotlands' geography and landscape.

At first impression (especially to non-Europeans), the Scottish people may seem a bit 'reserved', but they're actually very warm-hearted, gregarious and friendly - with a very sharp, if dry, sense of humor.

The Scottish 'psyche' and attitudes has a lot of its' roots in an ancient, rich and varied history. You'll find that the Scots are independent, practical, feisty, tough and proud... but they're also sentimental, superstitious, spiritual, generous, friendly and gregarious.

Scotland has its own Gaelic language, but it's really only spoken in some remote Highland regions and on some of the 90+ inhabited Scottish islands. 'Scottish English', on the other hand, is spoken all over Scotland and there are a whole host of regional dialects and variations.

Although this is actually English, the strong accents and dialects makes it very difficult for non-locals to understand what's being said! Check out our [Scottish Sayings, Phrases & Words](#) page to get a taste of Scottish-English.

[The Clans of Scotland](#) are a big part of Scotland culture, and have an important role in Scottish history. The word 'clan' comes from the Gaelic word "Clann" which means family or children.

Scottish clans originated in the Highlands and are a sort of 'extended family' group (taken to the extreme in terms of size and relationship). Each one originally identifies with a specific area of Scotland and an individual 'Clan Chief', and are said to be descended from one ancestor. Knowing which clan you belong to is important to most Scottish people and is a source of pride.

Although '*passionate*' may not have been one of the words I used earlier when describing the average Scottish personality, there is one thing that incites true passion in a Scot (well, in a Scotsman at least) - and that's Scottish football (or Scottish soccer for those in the US/Canada).

Scotland Culture - *Scottish Traditions & Celebrations*



The Scottish love a party, and celebrations usually involve traditional Scottish music (bagpipes and fiddles are the most popular), Celtic lyrics, and Scottish highland dancing.

revelry is often accompanied by popular Scottish food dishes and the taste of good Scottish whisky. No wonder they're so much fun!

Highland Dancing

The usual Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter are of course celebrated, but unlike their English neighbors, the Scottish consider New Year (or 'Hogmanay' as it's known north of the border) to be the biggest winter-time celebration.

Celtic festivals and Celtic traditions are also common, as are religious and ritualistic celebrations. St. Andrews' Day (the Patron Saint of Scotland) is another winter-time celebration and takes place on November 30th.

St. Valentines' Day is also a 'big day' in Scotland culture, even though you may not have thought of the Scots as a romantic nation! In fact, did you know that the remains of the Roman Priest known as St. Valentine are said to lie in St. Francis' Church, Glasgow, Scotland?

No matter what time of year you spend in Scotland, chances are you're going to be able to watch, or join in with, a celebration of some sort..... after all there's more than enough

of them to go around :o)

Scotland Culture - *Scottish Myths & Legends*

Like all ancient cultures, Scotland has more than its' fair share of myths and legends. One of the surprises at the heart of Scottish culture is that such practical and down-to-earth people, have a strong sense of superstition and a respect for what could almost be called the 'supernatural' or 'paranormal', but which they'd most likely call 'magic'.

Many Scottish myths and legends date back to Celtic mythology and folklore, and to the ancient Pictish culture. Many legends are centered around the rugged and imposing castles which are liberally scattered across this small country (there are around 300 castles in Scotland, that's approx. one for every 100 square miles!).

Spirits, Goblins, Elves, Fairies (aka Faeries), ghosts, monsters and mythical beasts are also a big part of Scotlands' mythical realm.

Even today, many Scots people believe in something called the 'Second Sight', which is the ability to see into the future (and therefore predict future events).

Probably the best known Scottish legend is that of 'Nessie', the Loch Ness Monster. She's believed to live in the deep, cold water of Loch Ness ('loch' is the scottish word for 'lake'), which is the biggest and deepest loch in Scotland.

The earliest sightings of Nessie go back as far as 565 AD, and there have been numerous 'sightings' since then, the most recent being in the 1970's.

Of course, there could be a hundred different explanations for the sightings, and some of the earlier photographs have turned out to be fakes, but whether you're standing on the shore, looking out over the loch from Urquhart Castle, or sitting in a boat, the atmosphere and aura of this area makes it easy to believe that the Loch Ness Monster does indeed exist. It made a believer out of me anyway!

Scotlands' history is full of a variety of artistic endeavors, and Scottish art can be traced back to at least 3000 BC. Because of the tumultuous history of Scotland, there have been many influences and inspirations at work over the centuries.

Gaelic, Norse, Pictish and Celtic art forms have existed for centuries, and they're seeing a new surge in popularity. Celtic jewelery and celtic tattoo designs are two of the most popular forms that are finding new fans on an almost daily basis.

'The Bard of Ayrshire'



Although you may not think of them as 'artistic', the Scottish people have a huge appreciation for a good story, poetry, music, painting (even a great joke), and many Scottish traditions/celebrations are colorful examples of this.

Two of the most well-known Scots in terms of literature, have to be [Robert Burns \(aka 'Rabbie' Burns\)](#) and [Sir Walter Scott](#), both of whom lived and worked during the 18th Century.

Today you can see a huge range of Scottish art, and in fact international art, at the Edinburgh International Festival which is held in Scotland's capital city of Edinburgh, during August each year.

It's actually one of the largest cultural festivals anywhere in the world, and showcases a wide variety of art forms from around the world. It's a spectacle that is most definitely worth seeing... but prepare to be exhausted afterwards!

And we mustn't forget the importance of traditional Scottish music and instruments in Scotland culture. The bagpipes and the fiddle are the most popular instruments and are responsible for the unique and stirring sounds that reach right into the soul of every Scot.

Scotland Culture - *Traditional Scottish Food*

When it comes to eating, the Scots know how to do it, but their traditional diet often features dishes that aren't for the faint-hearted, vegans or those who are trying to lose weight!

A 'Full Scottish Breakfast' might include fried eggs, bacon, Scottish sausage (patties), black-pudding (blood sausage), baked beans, grilled tomatoes and deep-fried bread. All washed down with a cup of hot, sweet tea. It's delicious, but if you value your health I'd recommend not eating this on a daily (or even weekly) basis.

Of course, there are plenty of healthier alternatives and Scottish Porridge followed by smoked fish such as kippers or haddock is a good start to any day.

Because of the abundance of lochs, rivers and streams (not to mention the always-nearby ocean), fish and seafood are often served - lobster, crab, oysters, mussels, herring, trout, salmon the list goes on and on. My personal favorite would be smoked Scottish salmon, it's not to be missed!

And don't forget the meat. Aberdeen-Angus beef is known world-wide for its' quality, and this is its' home! Wild game such as venison, grouse and pheasant are also often on the menu.

And let's not forget the [Haggis](#), that famous (or is it infamous) Scottish dish. What is a Haggis you ask? Basically it's a type of sausage meat made from liver and offal, plus

oatmeal, onion and spices. This whole mixture is cooked inside a bag made from a sheep's stomach. Enough said! Joking aside though, Haggis is quite tasty, and there are now newer 'gourmet' versions appearing in restaurants across Scotland, there's even a vegetarian version.

Probably my favorite part of Scotland culture when it comes to [traditional Scottish foods](#) are the baked goods. Scottish pancakes, scones, cakes, pies, shortbread - my mouth is watering already. Trust me, you'll want to try it all :o)

Scotland Culture - *Favorite Scottish Sports*



When it comes to the number one sport in Scotland it's just got to be Scottish football (aka soccer).

Football in Scotland dates back to 1873 when the Scottish Football Association was first founded.

There's an enormous amount of national pride in Scottish football clubs and the national team. Just about every family has their loyalties and they run deep.

[Lion Rampant Flag](#)

[Golf and Scotland](#) go together like Peanut Butter and Jelly... in fact Scotland is known as the 'home of golf' because this is where the sport originated back in the 15th century.

Some of the greatest golf courses in the world are in Scotland, St. Andrews is a nationally recognized name and is one of the oldest golf courses in the world.

Scotland has an abundance of fresh water, and that lends itself well to another sport.... fishing. Salmon, Trout, Pike and Perch are in abundance in the many lochs and rivers. If you enjoy fishing in general, try it among the beautiful and wild Scottish landscape - you'll be 'hooked' (sorry, I couldn't resist!).

Scotland Culture..... *and to sum it all up.....*

Well, actually we can't 'sum it all up'.... at least not right here.

Why not? Because it's impossible to really do justice to Scotland culture in a few short paragraphs, with a country as old, and rich in history as this one, there's just so much to learn and enjoy!

We've looked at all the aspects of Scottish traditions and culture above (and many others), much more closely throughout our site, so we hope you'll continue to browse and enjoy the rest of your 'cyber-tour of Scotland'.