

50 fascinating facts you should know about Scotland

Scotland has been part of the United Kingdom for more than three hundred years, but it is unlike anywhere else in Britain. Here are 50 facts you should know about the country:



Edinburgh has more listed buildings than anywhere in Britain

1. The official animal of Scotland is the **Unicorn**.
2. The **shortest scheduled flight** in the world is one-and-a-half miles long from Westray to Papa Westray in the Orkney Islands of Scotland. The journey takes 1 minute 14 seconds to complete.
3. Scotland has approximately **790 islands**, 130 of which are inhabited.
4. The Neolithic settlement of Skara Brae (pictured below), on the island of Orkney, is the **oldest building in Britain**, dating from 3100 BC.



5. The Hamilton Mausoleum in South Lanarkshire has the **longest echo** of any man-made structure in the world; a whole 15 seconds.
6. Scotland has more than **600 square miles of freshwater lakes**, including the famous Loch Ness.
7. The capital of Scotland, **Edinburgh**, is only its second largest city, after Glasgow.
8. Edinburgh was the first city in the world which had its own fire brigade.
9. Like Rome, Edinburgh (pictured below) was **built on seven hills** and the capital has more listed buildings than anywhere in the world.



10. Scotland had its own monarch until 1603. After Elizabeth I died, **James VI of Scotland** also became James I of England, ruling both countries.
11. St Andrews Links is considered the "**home of golf**"; the sport has been played there since the 15th century.
12. **Queen Victoria** is reputed to have smoked cigarettes during her visits to the Highlands of Scotland to keep away midges.
13. Edinburgh was home to Skye terrier **Grey Friar's Bobby**, who captured the hearts of the nation by sitting on the grave of his dead owner for 14 years.
14. Scotland is currently the **second largest country in the UK**, after England.
15. The highest point in Scotland is **Ben Nevis**, (pictured below) at 4,406ft (1343m)



16. The motto of Scotland is “**Nemo me impune lacessit**”, or: "No one provokes me with impunity". It is used by the Order of the Thistle and on later versions of the Royal coat of arms.

17. The country is a favourite with the **Royal family**, who holiday at Balmoral castle in Royal Deeside.

18. In the north east of the country, girls are called “**quines**” and boys “**louns**”.

19. The very first recorded appearance of the elusive **Loch Ness Monster** occurred in 565 AD, when a " water beast " attacked one of St. Columba's followers in the loch. "



20. Scottish city **Aberdeen** is known as Europe’s oil capital, or the “Granite City”.

21. The deepest loch in Scotland, **Loch Morar**, reaches 1,077ft (328m) down and is ranked the seventeenth deepest lake in the world.

22. Scotland’s smallest distillery, Edradour in **Pitlochry**, has 100,000 visitors per year but produces just 90,000 litres of malt whisky.

23. It is home to the **oldest tree in Europe** (pictured below), a twisted yew which has stood in Fortingall for 3,000 years. According to local legend, Pontius Pilate was born in its shade and played there as a child



24. The **raincoat was invented** in 1824 in Scotland by Charles Macintosh, a chemist born in Glasgow. In Great Britain, the garment is still called a “Mac”.

25. The official religion of Scotland is **Christianity**, with churches traditionally being called “kirks”.

26. Scotland gained independence in 1314, after **Robert the Bruce** (pictured below) defeated the English army at the Battle of Bannockburn.

27. The Kingdom of Scotland remained as an independent state until 1 May 1707, when the **Acts of Union** joined it with England, in the United Kingdom of Great Britain.

28. Since July 1, 1999, **Scotland has its own parliament**, for the first time since 1707.

29. The country has an **area of 30,414 square miles** (78,772 km²)

30. The total **population is around 5.2 million**, around 8.5 per cent of the UK’s population.

31. The country has approximately **167.5 people living per square mile**.

32. There are **as many Scottish people living in North America as in Scotland**, with censuses in the United States and Canada identifying around five million people claiming Scottish ancestry.

33. The country still has its **own legal system**, separate from England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Juries can return verdict of “guilty”, “not guilty” and “not proven.”

34. The Bank of Scotland, founded in 1695, is the **oldest surviving bank in the UK**. It was also the first bank in Europe to print its own bank notes.

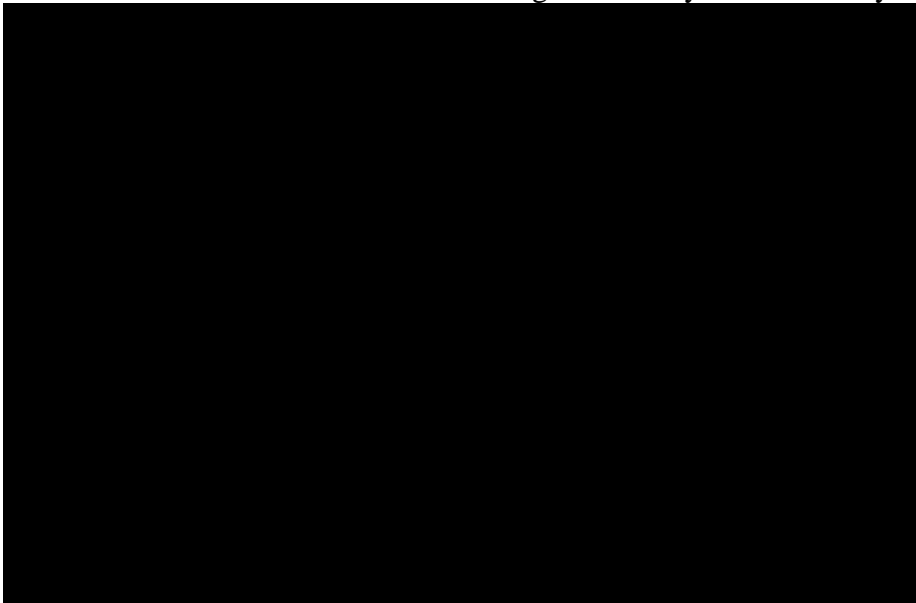
35. Famous Scottish inventions include the **television**, developed by John Logie Baird in 1925, the **telephone** by Alexander Graham Bell (pictured below) in 1876 and **penicillin**, by Alexander Fleming in 1928.



36. The **first teaching hospital in America**, the Baltimore Infirmary was founded by a Glasgow surgeon, Granville Sharp Pattison, in 1816.

37. Scotland has **three officially recognised languages**: English, Scots and Scottish Gaelic, with just one per cent of the population using the latter.

38. It is home to **19 universities and institutes of higher education**, including St Andrews, where the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge met. They returned last year (see video below)



39. Scotland has about the **same land area as the Czech Republic**, the United Arab Emirates, Panama, the US state of Maine, or the Japanese island of Hokkaido.

40. The two first **Prime Ministers of Canada**, John A. Macdonald (1815-1891) and Alexander Mackenzie (1822-1892), were Scottish.

41. One of Scotland's most famous products, **whisky**, was actually invented in China. It was first distilled by monks in Ireland in the early 15th century, before reaching Scotland 100 years later.

42. The most infamous Scottish dish is **haggis**, (pictured below) normally made with the heart, liver, and lungs of a sheep, traditionally boiled in the animal's stomach. It is not known where it originated, but a similar dish was mentioned in Greece 2,500 years ago.



43. Scotland has spawned some of the **greatest thinkers** of the modern age, including Adam Smith, James Watt, David Hume and John Stuart Mill.

44. Notable Scottish inventions include the method of **logarithms** (1614), **tarmac** (1820) and the **pneumatic tyre** (1887).

45. Many of Scotland's most famous inventions – **kilts, tartans and bagpipes** - were actually developed elsewhere. Kilts originated in Ireland, tartans have been found in Bronze Age central Europe and bagpipes are thought to have come from ancient central Asia.

46. Famous names from Scottish literature include: **Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.**

47. The flag of Scotland is known as the **saltire** (pictured below) or St. Andrews Cross.



48. The flower of Scotland is the **thistle**.

49. Scotland has the **highest proportion of redheads in the world**. Around 13 per cent of the population has red hair, with 40 per cent carrying the recessive gene.

50. The **first official international football match** was played at the West of Scotland Cricket Club in Partick in 1872, between Scotland and England.