



# Rabbie's Special Interest Tours

## 2017

*Our themed tours include all accommodation, entrances and a knowledgeable and enthusiastic specialist guide to bring your tour to life, showing you an insight into unique areas of Scotland and Ireland with its rich history and local produce.*

### **Scottish Castle Experience - 4 day**

**Friday** (05/05/17, 19/05/19, 09/06/17, 30/06/17, 21/07/17, 18/08/17, 08/09/17, 22/09/17 and 06/10/17)

Explore Scotland's ancient past from prehistoric to medieval. Royal residences will feature highly on this tour as well as the stories of epic battles, mystical legends and bravery. Enjoy the majestic scenery, lochs, glens, rivers and waterfalls of Scotland, land of the brave.

*(Includes accommodation, entrances & 1 dinner).*

### **Irish Castles, Gardens and Manor Houses - 4 day**

**Sunday** (23/04/17, 07/05/17, 21/05/17, 25/06/17, 16/07/17, 06/08/17, 27/08/16, 10/09/17, 24/09/17 and 08/10/17)

A 4-day discovery of Ireland's fabulous collection of country houses, beautiful gardens and historic castles. With a relaxed itinerary allowing plenty of time to enjoy all the fascinating sites, this is a tour for lovers of mystical ruins, exotic gardens and grand houses full of fine art and antiques. This tour will lead you into the soft green landscapes of Central Ireland with tales from myth and legend through to much more recent history. Ireland has been inhabited for thousands of years and the people of this country have left a wonderful collection of historic buildings to be explored.

*(Includes accommodation, 3 breakfasts, 2 dinners and 1 afternoon tea)*

### **Islay, Edinburgh & Speyside Whisky Holiday - 8 day**

**Friday** (07/04/17 - 22/09/17 (except 21/04/17, 19/05/17, 26/05/17 and 04/08/17)

Combining our two specialist whisky tours this 8 day tour is a must for all Scottish whisky enthusiasts. Explore the distilleries of the Isle of Islay and immerse yourself in their distinctive peaty aromas. This tour returns to Edinburgh where you will experience a lunch at the exclusive members club of the Scotch Malt Whisky Society before heading on your next tour to Speyside, home to the greatest number of distilleries of any of the whisky-producing areas of Scotland. Speyside's light, sweet single malts are a great contrast to the peaty Islay whiskies.

*(Includes whisky lunch & all accommodation).*

## SCOTTISH CASTLE EXPERIENCE

4 Day from Edinburgh

### Day 1

You depart from the World Heritage City of Edinburgh and travel north, crossing the Forth Road Bridge into the ancient Kingdom of Fife. Your first visit of the day will be Falkland Palace, where during a private, guided tour you will be able to discover more of this pretty Royal Palace. Built between 1502 and 1541, it is set in the heart of the unique medieval village of Falkland and has been the residence and hunting lodge of eight Stuart monarchs. Highlight of the visit will be to see the Real Tennis court, built in 1539! You continue to St Andrews and during a town walk, your guide will tell you more about its past and more recent history. Its connection to the patron Saint of Scotland, birthplace of Golf, ancient University town and matchmaker to a Royal couple – there is a lot to see!

Your afternoon visit will be at the House of Dun near Montrose. This beautiful Georgian house, overlooking Montrose Basin, was built in 1730. It features superb plasterwork and now houses the Hutchison collection of Scottish colourists and the Stirling collection of furniture, ranging from the 18th century to the 1960s. On route to Aberdeen you will make a photo stop at Dunnottar Castle, a dramatic and evocative ruined cliff top fortress in a truly stunning setting. Dunnottar is where they filmed Hamlet's Macbeth and provided inspiration for Disney Pixar's movie "Brave". From here you continue to Thainstone House Hotel where you will stay for 2 nights.

### Day 2

Today will be spent in the Royal Deeside area, famous for its many castles.

Your first visit will be Castle Fraser, one of the grandest of the Scottish baronial tower houses. Begun in 1575, the present castle contains an evocative Great Hall, fine furniture and many Fraser family portraits. You can round the visit off with a walk through the beautiful 18th century walled garden. The tour continues to Banchory where you might be able to see salmon jumping at the Falls of Feugh. Maybe take a short nature walk in Glen Tanar or the Burn o' Vat.

Lunch stop is at Ballater before continuing with your afternoon programme. Crathes Castle provides the highlight for the afternoon. Turrets, gargoyles and the ancient Horn of Leys given in 1323 by Robert the Bruce are just a few of the features of this historic castle. You are free to explore the house and the stunning gardens at your own pace. The gardens stay green irrespective of the time of year, as with the ancient yew hedges that frame the upper parts of the gardens, particularly the fountain and rose gardens. Wandering through the outstanding, world-renowned June Borders, beautiful vistas of the castle can be seen through the fusion of colourful flowers.

You return back to Thainstone House Hotel later for another overnight.



### Day 3

Your tour heads further north today and starts the day with a visit to Fyvie Castle near Turriff, which will open its doors especially for our party at 9.30. Fyvie Castle dates back to the 13th century and has a fine collection of arms and armour as well as 17th century tapestries and opulent Edwardian interiors. You then continue, travelling through beautiful scenery and on to Nairn, where lunch will be taken at nearby Brodie Castle. Then you have time to explore the castle further. Dating from the 16th century, this imposing castle stands in rich Morayshire parkland. It has unusual plasterwork and a major art collection and tells the fascinating story of the Brodie family.

In the afternoon you will be able to take the Clan Walk at the Culloden Visitor Centre. The Clan Stone Walkway is designed to commemorate the Scottish Clans and their clansmen who fought at the battle of Culloden with a special Insignia Stone. The Clans are represented with their individual Crest and personal inscription.

After the visit you continue to Knockomie House Hotel. A dinner for our group will be held tonight in one of the private rooms.

### Day 4

Today sees you travelling south again through some of the most stunning scenery Scotland has to offer. You will travel to Kingussie for a photo stop at the Ruthven Barracks. From here you continue to Dalwhinnie Distillery. Dalwhinnie is the highest Distillery in Scotland and takes its waters right from the source of the River Spey. A tour of the distillery is included and you will also have the chance to taste the 'Water of Life'.

After a lunch stop in Pitlochry you head to Loch Leven by Kinross. In the middle of the Loch you find Loch Leven Castle, a late 14th century tower, which was the setting for the most traumatic year in the life of Mary Queen of Scots. It was in 1567 that she was imprisoned and forced to abdicate her throne before her dramatic escape a year later. You will enjoy a short boat ride over to the castle, following in the footsteps of Mary Queen of Scots. Then explore at your leisure the island and tower house, before returning back to Edinburgh.



## SCOTTISH CASTLE EXPERIENCE

### Per Person in £ GBP

#### Special Package includes:

Accommodation at Thainstone House Hotel and Knockomie House Hotel;  
Private 3 course farewell group dinner at the Knockomie House Hotel.  
Entrances as listed: Falkland Palace, House of Dun, Castle Fraser, Crathes Castle, Leith Hall, Brodie Castle, Culloden, Dalwhinnie Distillery, Loch Leven Castle.

Hotel Package per person		Adult	Child
Mid and High Season	Sharing	£519.00	£415.00
	Single	£619.00	n/a

## IRISH CASTLES, GARDENS AND MANOR HOUSES

4 Day from Dublin

### Day 1

After departing Dublin at 09.00 you will travel West through the Midlands to Emo Court House, an 18th century neoclassical mansion surrounded by beautiful parkland and gardens. There will be time for a short walk in the grounds, photos and refreshments in the tea rooms before continuing west through the Slieve Bloom Mountains to the unique setting of Birr Castle and Gardens. The castle itself is still a private home and it will not be possible to see inside but the gardens are world famous and include the unique "Great Telescope" built by the 3rd Earl of Rosse in the 1840s and the largest in the world for over 70 years! The 3rd and 4th Earls were both pioneers in scientific discovery and there is a fascinating exhibition on site. After Birr the tour continues to the historic village of Adare just outside Limerick. Often called "Ireland's prettiest village", Adare has a wonderful collection of thatched cottages and historic buildings including the ruins of a 15th century Franciscan monastery and the 13th century Desmond Castle - great for photos! This is your overnight stop and you will be staying in the Dunraven Arms Hotel with dinner included.

### Day 2

Today you will be travelling through the counties of Tipperary, Offaly and Roscommon. This is rural Ireland at its best and along the way you will see a huge variety of scenery and sights. In the morning you will travel north to Killaloe on the shores of Lough Derg. A scenic drive from here brings you to Clonmacnoise - an early Christian site in a beautiful setting on the banks of the River Shannon. From you will travel through Athlone with its brooding dark fortress, then north beside Lough Ree to Strokestown Park for a visit to this magnificent country house complete with many of its original furnishings and its recently restored gardens. The house also holds the National Famine Museum for anyone interested in this terrible period of Irish history. From here it is a short drive to Lough Rynn Castle – your base for the next two nights. We will have a welcome dinner tonight with a typically Irish menu (included).

### Day 3

Today will be a very relaxed day exploring the Lakelands of County Leitrim and across the border into County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland. The highlight of the day is a visit to 18th Century Florence Court one of the grandest country houses in the whole of Ireland and former home to the Earls of Enniskillen. After a stop in the historic market town of Enniskillen, with its 600 year old castle sitting proudly on the banks of the River Erne, you will head back for Lough Rynn Castle in time for afternoon tea (included) The rest of the day

is free for you to explore the wonderful formal walled gardens running down to the waters of Lough Rynn or just relax in the hotel. Overnight again in the luxurious surroundings of this 200 year old house.

### Day 4

After a relaxed start to the day and a chance for a final stroll in the grounds of the hotel it is time to start the return journey to Dublin. There are a still some fascinating sights to be visited though including the heritage town of Kells, where the famous Book of Kells was discovered – created by the monks in the monastic site here. You will have time to have lunch and visit some of the historic sites including St Columba's Church and the ancient High Crosses. After lunch you will travel through the lovely rural countryside to Trim Castle, the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Ireland. Construction of the massive three storied keep, the central stronghold of the castle, was begun in 1176 and took over 30 years to build. From here weather permitting, the final visit of the tour will be to the ancient site of the Hill of Tara – traditional seat of the High Kings of Ireland before returning to Dublin around 18.30.

<b>Includes:</b> Accommodation, 3 breakfasts, 2 dinners and 1 afternoon dinner			
<b>Hotel Package per person euro</b>		<b>Adult</b>	<b>Child</b>
23/04/17, 07/05/17, 21/05/17, 25/06/17, 16/07/17, 06/08/17, 27/08/16, 10/09/17, 24/09/17 and 08/10/17	<b>Sharing</b>	€699.00	€559.00
	<b>Single</b>	€899.00	n/a



## 8 DAY - SCOTCH WHISKY EXTRAVAGANZA

Islay, Speyside & Edinburgh

### Day 1

Leaving Edinburgh you will head west through Scotland's largest city, Glasgow, along Loch Lomond then west through the mountains to the beautiful little village of Inveraray on the banks of Loch Fyne. Here you can perhaps sample some of the local seafood for lunch or just explore the historic town itself. After lunch you will then travel through Argyll and into the ancient Kingdom of Dalriada. There are more than 350 prehistoric monuments within a six-mile radius of the village of Kilmartin. You will stop here to see the mysterious stone circles and standing stones and visit the community museum. From here it is a short drive to Kennacraig where you catch the early evening ferry to Islay. The sail is just over 2 hours and you should look out for wildlife such as dolphins, whales and seabirds. On arrival on Islay it is a short drive to Bowmore for your 3-night stay.

### Day 2

A full day exploring Islay. The itinerary today is quite flexible with a mixture of beautiful scenery, white sand beaches, short walks and of course the famous Islay whiskies - renowned for their strong peaty flavours and nurtured by the salty sea air. In the morning you will take the short drive to the west of the island via Saligo Bay for a visit to Kilcho-man Distillery (the newest and smallest on the island) with the option of a coastal walk to Machair Bay for any non-whisky lovers. After lunch you will explore the tiny harbour village of Portnahaven (look out for seals) before taking the back roads along the west coast with its lovely sandy bays, on the way back to Bowmore. You will have the chance to visit Bowmore Distillery or just relax and explore the village.

### Day3

Another day in paradise! Today you will explore the southern side of the island, home to the smokiest and peatiest of all whiskies – Laphroaig, Lagavulin and Ardbeg. You will visit Ardbeg for a tour, tasting and lunch. The restaurant here is a beautiful place to relax and enjoy local produce as well as some unique whisky. You then follow that up with a visit to Laphroaig or a visit to the ruins of Kildalton Church with its famous 8th Century Celtic Cross. Alternatively we may stop in Bridgend where you could visit the community craft producers at Islay House Square or take a walk through the woods along the nearby River Sorn.



### Day4

This morning you take the ferry back to the mainland then travel up the coast to Oban – a busy harbour town and the main ferry port for the islands. Here we will drop off anyone who is continuing on the Mull, Iona and Isle of Skye extension. The others will have some free time to explore the town, have a late lunch or even pop into Oban Distillery before departing for the return trip to Glasgow and Edinburgh. Return time approx. 20.00 and overnight in Edinburgh. Clients will have to make their own way to the hotel.

### Day 5

Is a free day to explore Edinburgh, the historic capital of Scotland. There are so many options available here - why not take an open top city bus tour to familiarise yourself with the 'old' and 'new' towns of the city. No visit to Edinburgh would be complete without a visit to her medieval castle. Sitting on a volcanic plug there is no other city in Europe to offer a setting quite as unique as that of the castle rising high above the majestic

Princes Street Gardens, to the hustle and bustle of the city's first new town, and the main thoroughfare awash with designer shops. Lunch is booked for you at the Scotch Malt Whisky Society, a private members club of whisky enthusiasts from all over the world. A 2 course lunch will be served in the excellent restaurant, following by a tasting of 2 special cask whiskies in the members rooms. Overnight again in Edinburgh.

#### Day 6

This morning make your way back to the departure point at 09.00 for the next leg of your tour - a three-day Speyside Whisky adventure, starting with the journey north into the Highlands. The first stop will be the historic village of Dunkeld for a short walk through the forest to some atmospheric waterfalls. After lunch in Pitlochry you will make your first distillery visit at Dalwhinnie – the highest distillery in the country and the closest to the source of the River Spey. From here you follow the river north through the Cairngorm National Park to the small town of Grantown on Spey – your base for the next two nights.

#### Day 7

A whole day exploring Scotland's most famous whisky region. After a scenic drive towards the coast your first stop of the day will be at the family owned Benromach Distillery for a personalised tour. From here it is a short distance to Elgin – home to Gordon and MacPhail – one of the world's leading specialist whisky bottlers and suppliers. Their shop has one of the widest selection of malts you will find anywhere. After lunch in Elgin you will travel back up the Spey valley to Aberlour for a visit to the distillery there and time permitting, make a stop at the Speyside Cooperage in nearby Craigellachie. From here is back to Grantown on Spey.

#### Day 8

Takes you through the beautiful Cairngorm Mountains on route back to Edinburgh. In the morning you will explore Glenlivet – not just a distillery but also a beautiful glen with great walks and wonderful wildlife. Later you will pass by the famous Balmoral Castle and stop in the village of Braemar in the heart of the National Park. From here the route south passes over Scotland's highest mountain pass then through Perthshire before arriving back in Edinburgh.



*Please note – itinerary and distillery visits are subject to variation throughout the season and may not be the same described above, however there will always be a minimum of 8 distillery visits during the holiday.*

#### Per Person in £ GBP

##### Special Package includes:

3 nights accommodation at the Bowmore Cottages in Bowmore with complimentary basic breakfast (for details please see notes on Islay Tour on Page 18 of the Edinburgh section);

Ferry crossings as per programme; Accommodation 2 nights in Edinburgh at 3 star hotel centrally located including breakfast; Lunch at the SMWS 2 courses & coffee; Accommodation 2 nights in Speyside at 3 star hotel including breakfast;

**Not included:** entrances.

		Adult	Child n/a
<b>Mid Season</b> 12/04/17 to 19/04/17 & 01/05/17 to 31/05/17 & 01/10/17 to 31/10/17 & 18/12/17 to 03/01/18	<b>Hotel Package Sharing</b>	£928.00	
	<b>Hotel Package Single</b>	£1,070.00	
<b>High Season</b> 01/06/17 to 30/09/17	<b>Hotel Package Sharing</b>	£977.00	
	<b>Hotel Package Single</b>	£1,120.00	
	<i>August Supplement</i>	£120.00	
	<i>August Supplement Single</i>	£100.00	