



HISTORIC SCOTLAND  
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# MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS [1542–1587]

Part of Historic  
Environment  
Scotland



‘I see now that the world is not that that we do make of it, nor yet are they most happy that continue longest in it.’

March 1563



## WHO WAS MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS?

Mary, Queen of Scots is the most famous and intriguing of all Scottish monarchs. Born in 1542, she became queen at a week old, yet she was ultimately executed for treason. Her reign was marred by troubled marriages, betrayal, rebellion and murder.

Exploring regions around Scotland, you'll encounter castles, palaces, priories and abbeys that tell important stories of Mary's life.

From her birthplace, Linlithgow Palace, to Dundrennan Abbey where she spent her final hours in Scotland, there are tales to hear from all throughout her years.

Why not follow her footsteps to some of Scotland's most iconic attractions, all of which played their part in her short, colourful life?



## HISTORIC SCOTLAND EXPLORER PASS

Ideal for groups or individuals visiting a number of properties, holders can visit as many Historic Scotland sites as they wish – there are many not connected to Mary, Queen of Scots to visit in addition to the sites featured in our trail. Passes can be used as part of a package or offered as an optional add-on.

- Includes access to all 77 Historic Scotland attractions
- Fast track entry to all sites

# MARY'S TRAIL

## NORTH & GRAMPIAN

### 1 BEAULY PRIORY

Beauly

**Open all year**

Despite the Reformation, monks were allowed to stay on at some monasteries, and Beauly was one of them. They belonged to the little-known Valliscaulian order, which only had three monasteries in Britain, all in northern Scotland. The name Beauly means 'beautiful place' and when Mary visited in 1564 she is said to have agreed with that assessment.

### 2 BALVENIE CASTLE

Postcode AB55 4GH

**Open summer only**

When Mary visited Balvenie in September 1562, it was the main residence of John Stewart, 4th Earl of Atholl, one of her closest and most loyal Catholic allies. (Despite his name, he was only a very distant cousin.) He was the man who commissioned the Atholl Lodging, still Balvenie's finest feature, and Mary very likely stayed in one of its grander bedchambers.

### 3 SPYNIE PALACE

Postcode IV30 5QG

**Open summer only**

The Bishop of Moray was Mary's host at the northernmost port of call on her northern tour in 1562. Observers criticised the bishop for his lifestyle: he lived in great luxury and had at least 13 children by various mistresses. Mary was not unduly concerned: she was busy brooding about the Earl of Huntly, an eccentric local magnate who had wronged her. The following month Huntly died, suffering a seizure while in battle against her forces.





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## EDINBURGH & LOTHIAN

### 4 LINLITHGOW PALACE

Postcode EH49 7AL

Open all year

Inside one of the most spectacular ruins in Scotland you cannot help but walk in the footsteps of royalty. This royal pleasure palace was where Mary's story started: her birthplace. Visit the great hall where banquets were hosted and witness the elaborate restored fountain in action every Sunday in July & August.

### 6 CRAIGMILLAR CASTLE

Postcode EH16 4SY

Open all year

Admire the city views from the high ramparts of Edinburgh's 'other castle', play hide and seek in its labyrinth of chambers or picnic in its courtyards. Craigmillar Castle was a happy retreat for Mary, although less so for her troublesome husband Darnley. According to legend, it was here that her nobles met to discuss how to get rid of him.

### 5 EDINBURGH CASTLE

Postcode EH1 2NG

Open all year

A mighty fortress, the defender of a nation and a world-famous visitor attraction - Edinburgh Castle has dominated the skyline for centuries. The castle's powerful stone walls have withstood many sieges and its sumptuous apartments were an important residence of Scottish kings and queens. Mary gave birth to her son, James VI, at Edinburgh and during the Lang Siege of 1571-3 the Castle was held in her name by her supporters.

### 7 CRICHTON CASTLE

Postcode EH37 5XA

Open summer only

For centuries, Crichton Castle was home to medieval lords and Renaissance noblemen. It was one of several properties belonging to the 4th Earl of Bothwell who controversially became Mary's third husband in 1567. Mary also attended her half-brother's lavish wedding to Bothwell's sister at Crichton in 1562.

## PERTHSHIRE, KINROSS & ANGUS

### 8 LOCHLEVEN CASTLE

Postcode KY13 8UF

Open summer only

A boat will ferry you to one of Scotland's oldest castles, where Mary spent a traumatic year imprisoned. During her captivity here she miscarried twins and was forced to abdicate. You can visit the room where she was probably held until her dramatic escape in 1568.

### 9 HUNTINGTOWER CASTLE

Postcode PH1 3JL

Open all year

Colonies of bats may now fly around the castle's twin tower houses, but legend holds that a love-struck maiden once made a perilous leap between them. Huntingtower Castle was a resting place for Mary during the Chaseabout Raid of 1565 when she and Lord Darnley led their army against rebellious nobles. In 1582, the Earl of Ruthven abducted Mary's son King James VI and held him prisoner at Huntingtower.

### 10 EDZELL CASTLE

Postcode DD9 7UE

Open summer only

Mary came to Edzell on 'progress' to visit her subjects in the north-east in 1562. The castle had been extended a few years earlier, and her host Sir David Lindsay was doubtless eager to show off his new west range. While here she held a meeting of her privy council, her closest political advisors.





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## CENTRAL & WEST

### 11 CASTLE CAMPBELL

Postcode FK14 7PP

Open all year

This remarkably well preserved, brooding medieval castle was the lowland residence of the powerful Campbell dynasty, where the Protestant reformer John Knox came to preach and Mary Queen of Scots came to feast. It occupies a stunning setting at the top of Dollar Glen.

### 12 STIRLING CASTLE

Postcode FK8 1EJ

Open all year

James V's Palace at Stirling is one of the finest and best-preserved Renaissance buildings in Britain. Following a major programme of research and re-presentation, it can now be seen by visitors much as it may have looked on completion around 1545, when the child Queen Mary was its most important resident. She was crowned here at just nine months old, and was a frequent visitor during her adult reign.



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### 13 INCHMAHOME PRIORY

Postcode FK8 3RA

Open summer only

Take a scenic boat trip across the Lake of Menteith to this peaceful, wooded island sanctuary with a medieval priory at its heart. It was to this tranquil place of safety that a four-year-old Mary was brought in 1547 when English forces were poised to invade. Look out for the 500 year old Spanish chestnuts and the boxwood bower supposedly planted by her.



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## GLASGOW, CLYDE & AYRSHIRE

### 14 DUMBARTON CASTLE

Postcode G82 1JJ

Open all year

A powerful fortress since prehistoric times, Dumbarton was a secure royal stronghold on the west coast. Mary came here in February 1548: aged five, she had been betrothed to Dauphin Francis, heir to the French throne, and she then had to await departure for France. For five months, she lived in royal lodgings nestled between Dumbarton's twin summits, and in July 1548 she boarded a ship sent by the French king. She married Francis in 1558, became Queen of France in 1559 and did not return to Scotland until 1561.

### 15 CRAIGNETHAN CASTLE

Postcode ML11 9PL

Open summer only

Mary came here during her final days in Scotland in May 1568, after her escape from Lochleven Castle. She was building an army to reclaim her kingdom, and needed a series of impregnable fortresses to use as bases. At the time, Craignethan was just that, and the Hamiltons who owned it were loyal to her at this time. But her final defeat at the Battle of Langside was only a few days away.



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## DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

### **16** DUNDRENNAN ABBEY

**Postcode** DG6 4QH

**Open summer only**

Enjoy the peace of this beautiful medieval abbey set in wooded pastures. There is particularly fine architecture in its chapter house and towering transepts. Mary spent her last hours in Scotland here after the disastrous Battle of Langside in 1568.

### **17** WHITHORN PRIORY

**Postcode** DG8 8PY

**Open summer only**

Mary's grandfather, James IV, was known for his piety and made several pilgrimages to Whithorn, one of the earliest Christian settlements in Scotland. Mary followed in his footsteps only once in August 1563. Much had changed since James's day – Scotland was now a Protestant country and the monasteries had been closed down.



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## SCOTTISH BORDERS

### 18 HERMITAGE CASTLE

**Postcode** TD9 0LU

**Open summer only**

Mary visited Hermitage only once, but in dramatic circumstances. October 1566 saw her visit Jedburgh on business. During the trip, she learned that her loyal supporter the Earl of Bothwell had been ambushed and injured by Borders brigands. She rode 25 miles to visit him, and 25 miles back. On the return journey she fell desperately ill and very nearly died. Only afterwards was it claimed that Bothwell was her adulterous lover: there is no evidence to support this, even though she married him seven months later.

For opening times, prices and more information on each site, please visit [historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place](http://historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place)





Go behind the scenes and visit Blackness Castle, a key filming location for the film *Mary Queen of Scots*.



#### **BLACKNESS CASTLE**

**Postcode** EH49 7NH

**Open all year**

Mighty fortifications make this 15th-century castle look like a 'ship that never sailed'. Blackness Castle was never just a peaceful lordly residence – its enduring roles were as a garrison fortress and state prison. Today, Blackness has become a popular filming location and has starred in productions such as *Outlander*, *Outlaw King* and now *Mary Queen of Scots*.

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