



UK Public Transportation

An Outlandish Extra PDF

OutlandishScotland.com

A Novel Holiday Travel Guidebook

Outlandish Scotland Journey UK Public Transportation

The very best way to tour the UK is by renting a car and driving to the places you wish to visit. Being in complete control of your transportation allows you to travel at your own pace. Better yet, it allows you to make unscheduled stops should something unexpected strike your fancy. You'll also be able to visit a greater number of Outlandish sites during your holiday if you don't have to spend time waiting for public transportation arrivals/departures.

That said, many Outlanderites simply don't *want* to drive in the UK.

- Some have holiday budgets that require the lesser expense associated with using public transportation.
- Some are fearful of having to drive on the "wrong" side of the road.
- And, some simply prefer being able to focus their full attention on the countryside and cityscapes as they travel through them.

Additionally, Outlanderites who rent a car will find it considerably more convenient—not to mention cheaper and faster—to use public transportation within major metropolitan areas, particularly the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. [More about this below.]

Happily, public transportation systems in Scotland (as well as the rest of the UK) are plentiful, well established, and relatively easy to navigate.



The best resource for learning how to sojourn in Scotland via public transportation is Visit Scotland's **Getting Around Scotland** directory webpage.

<https://www.visitscotland.com/travel/getting-around-scotland/>

Here you'll find links to individual Visit Scotland webpages that provide information about traveling Scotland by rail (train), bus and coach, ferry, air, and car. Below are summaries of these webpages.

Visit Scotland's Getting Around Scotland via Rail (Train) Webpage

<https://www.visitscotland.com/travel/getting-around-scotland/train/>

This page tells you where and how to buy train tickets, explains the types of tickets available, and provides a link for learning about the luggage storage, bicycle storage, and animal guidelines related to each destination's station. [Should you require such amenities during your holiday, be sure to check whether they're available well in advance.]

The page also provides information (with links) about the **Discount Train Fares and Passes** available.

"**ScotRail** also offers flexible travel passes and other passes for the benefits of travelers.

These include:

- **Spirit of Scotland Traveypass**—gives unlimited train travel within Scotland. The pass is also valid on some buses in certain regions, on all Caledonian MacBrayne ferries and gives discounts on Northlink ferries to Orkney and Shetland.
- **Highland Rover** and **Central Scotland Rover**—flexible tickets offering unlimited train travel and travel on other modes of public transport.
- **Rail and Sail** tickets—combines rail and ferry tickets for great value in one ticket.

“If Scotland is only a part of your itinerary, there are passes available that allow unlimited travel across Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales.

“You can purchase a **BritRail** pass before you leave your own country, through local travel agents or online. Look out for various discounts available for young travelers under the age of 26 or over the age of 60, and for families.

“If you’ve been resident in a European country other than the UK for at least 6 months, an **InterRail** pass, allowing unlimited train travel within Britain, could save you money, if you’re visiting Scotland as part of a longer European trip.”

There *is* a link to **ScotRail** on this Visit Scotland webpage, but it’s a bit difficult to find. (Far down the page, on the right.)

So, we’ve included it here.

<https://www.scotrail.co.uk/>

Also on this webpage is information about **Glasgow’s Subway system**.

[Additional Glasgow public transportation information follows our Edinburgh section.]

Visit Scotland’s Getting Around Scotland via Bus and Coach Webpage

<https://www.visitscotland.com/travel/getting-around-scotland/coach/>

“All of Scotland’s major towns and cities are served by short and long-distance bus services. Long-distance buses are known in Britain as **coaches** and are a popular way to travel across the country.”

This Visit Scotland webpage provides links to the inter-city and longer distance coach services, as well as to local bus services within major Scottish cities.

It also provides links to **Discount Coach Fare** options.

- **Explorer Pass**—offers unlimited travel on Scottish Citylink network.
- **Megarider**—offered by Stagecoach and provides unlimited travel within certain areas.
- **National Express Brit Explorer Pass**—ideal if you’re planning to travel in England and Wales too. This ticket gives you unlimited travel throughout Britain on National Express coaches.

Visit Scotland’s Getting Around Scotland via Ferry and Air webpages are equally as informative.

<https://www.visitscotland.com/travel/getting-around-scotland/ferry/>

<https://www.visitscotland.com/travel/getting-around-scotland/air/>

Lastly, Visit Scotland's Getting Around Scotland via Car webpage offers information important to Driving Outlanderites.

<https://www.visitscotland.com/travel/getting-around-scotland/driving/>

"Scotland's extensive road network makes it easy to drive around the country and provides fast, efficient travel between cities and major towns, and great access to more rural areas. The motorway network runs throughout the central belt, with major links further north to Aberdeen and south to England. Trunk roads (also called A roads) connect the rest of the country."

Here, you can learn about:

- **National Tourist Routes**

"Scotland's 12 National Tourist Routes are some of the best driving roads in Scotland. As alternative driving routes to the main trunk roads and motorways, these routes take you through some of the most awe-inspiring scenery the country has to offer. ... Each route varies in length and they're all well signposted, so look out for the easy to follow brown and white signs."

- **Car and Camper Van Hire Companies**

"There are a number of companies to hire a car from in Scotland—or you can hire a campervan, motorhome or caravan."

Please Note: While the second link above is helpful to UK residents, it is not particularly helpful for Outlanderites who *don't* live in the UK. Instead, please see our **UK Car Rental & Driving Tips** Outlandish Extra PDF.

<http://www.outlandishscotland.com/UKcarRental.pdf>

(4) Search for the Best Car Rental Deals and Book in Advance

Booking in advance, from your home country, is *always* cheaper [and often safer] than booking after you reach the UK. Use an online car hire **consolidator** or **aggregator**, as explained by Reid Bramblett in his **Money-Saving Tips for Car Rentals**.

http://www.reidsguides.com/t_au/t_au_rentals.html



Park Your Rental Car & Use Public Transportation When Sight-seeing *Within* Major Scottish Cities; Particularly Edinburgh & Glasgow – Perhaps even Inverness

Foreign national Outlanderites who rent a car to tour Scotland (especially those from countries where you drive on the right side of the road) may find it difficult driving within any major city in the UK, including those in Scotland. Even UK Outlanderites may find it challenging to drive within major cities they are unfamiliar with.

Instead, we recommend the following:

- When lodging within a major Scottish city, park your car at your lodgings and take a bus or taxi to and from the city centre.
- If you'll not be lodging within the major city you're visiting, park in a lot outside the city and take a bus or taxi to and from the city centre. Happily, many peripheral car parks offer an inexpensive, dedicated bus service between the lot and the city centre.

To support our recommendations, we offer several excerpts from Internet-posted travel articles and traveler testimonies. Please know that, each of these articles/testimonies also provide a wealth of additional information about public transportation available in each city.



Avoid Driving in Edinburgh

TripAdvisor Travel Article: 7 Reasons Not to Drive in Edinburgh

<https://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g186525-c179510/Edinburgh:United-Kingdom:7.Reasons.Not.To.Drive.In.Edinburgh.html>

“3. You won’t be able to read street signs until it’s too late. You may find street signs on building walls or sign posts in a myriad of sizes, fonts, and colors that were probably once quite useful when traveling by horse and carriage; but amid all the cargo vans, and double-decker buses, by the time you focus enough to read the sign you’ll be past the intersection. And if you try to drive slower to see better, the taxi driver in your rear view mirror will appear so close you’ll be tempted to charge him a fare.

“4. What signs? Some roads [apparently] have been around so long that you’re supposed to know them innately. If you’re not intimately familiar with the roads [and streets in Edinburgh] or don’t have a GPS system that’s been updated in the last 30 minutes, you may find yourself circling the city centre endlessly with multiple detours around roadworks. ...

“5. Parking is expensive, if you can find it. If you’re planning to drive in and park overnight or just for the day, you’ll have a choice between expensive car parks which may not be conveniently located to your accommodations, and limited on-street parking requiring plugging of coins or cards into ‘pay and display’ machines and frequent moving to comply with a myriad of parking rules (provided the cars around you haven’t boxed you in hopelessly). Many areas of the centre also have parking restricted to residents/permit holders only. The parking wardens are notoriously keen and fines are expensive. ...

“7. **You don’t need a car in Edinburgh.** [Edinburgh’s city centre] is a fantastic walking city with everything a short stroll away. ... Save yourself the hassle; leave the car [at your lodgings or outside the city] and enjoy Edinburgh on foot. There are buses, trams, trains and taxis that can get you into and around the city quickly ... For more information on buses visit www.lothianbuses.com or trams at www.edinburghtrams.com”

TripAdvisor Travel Article: Edinburgh Public Transportation

<https://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g186525-s303/Edinburgh:United-Kingdom:Public.Transportation.html>

“It is sensible to park outside the city centre and take a bus. The city centre multi-storey car parks in Castle Terrace and the St James Shopping Centre can often get completely full. A limited amount of metered parking is available on city centre streets, but it is expensive and non-payment results in a £60 fine (reduced to £30 if paid within 14 days).

“There are now 5 [peripheral Edinburgh] Park and Ride car parks; namely at Hermiston, Ingliston, Straiton, Sheriffhall and Newcraighall. Park your car for free and spend £4.00 on a Dayticket and the city is yours! The Park and Ride at Ingliston is served by the Tram. The Park & Ride at Newcraighall is served by ScotRail local train services with slightly higher fares than Lothian Buses.”



Avoid Driving in Glasgow

Here are some excerpts from the **Trip Advisor Traveler Article, Glasgow: Public Transportation**

<https://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g186534-s303/Glasgow:United-Kingdom:Public.Transportation.html>

“If you’re staying somewhere central, you’re bound to end up on the Subway—Glasgow’s Underground railway. The [Glasgow] Subway is the third-oldest Underground railway in the

world (and the trains are very small); it has only one circular line and just 15 stations. ... Save money and buy a day ticket—it's the same price as a return [(roundtrip) ticket].

“The principle bus operator in the city is First Glasgow, timetables and route plans are available from their site. [<https://www.firstgroup.com/greater-glasgow>]

“You can buy a day ticket which can be used as often as you want for that day and which is very reasonable if you want to use the bus several times; this ticket would be valid on their 747 service from Glasgow Airport.

“Drivers can accept exact change only, but unfortunately there is no way of telling how much the journey will cost until you are on the bus (unless you take the day ticket, the price of which is written on the side of most buses).

“When in the city centre make sure that you are standing at the right stop for your bus (often there are several stops in the same street because there are so many buses!) and also put your hand out to “hail” the bus you want as it comes towards you—otherwise it won't stop!”

Here are some excerpts from the **Wikitravel Article: Glasgow**

<http://wikitravel.org/en/Glasgow>

“Because of its compact size and extensive public transport system, it is not really necessary to drive around the centre of Glasgow. In fact, for the visitor, driving in the central area can be a stressful and very slow experience thanks to the almost unfathomable one way system ..., bus lanes (monitored by police cameras) and pedestrianised streets. Coupled with impatient and often aggressive drivers that don't make the best use of available lanes, and the frustratingly long duration and frequent traffic lights, it is often better for your blood pressure and average journey times to get out and walk!

“Despite the distinctive American style grid plan of streets (virtually unique among the UK's large cities), the city *doesn't* have the American street naming system, so visitors from the US and Canada in particular should note that talking in the language of ‘blocks’ to a local will only result in confusion.”



To Drive or Not to Drive in Inverness—That is the Question

If you've had several days to become comfortable driving in the UK *before* reaching it, the city of Inverness isn't too terribly stressful to drive in. In 2003, CD Miller drove into the city centre early in the am without difficulty, and parked for the day in a multistory car park only a couple blocks from the city centre office where she boarded the bus that began her 8-hour Loch Ness bus and boat tour. [You'll learn more about this marvelous tour in the Inverness chapter of *Outlandish Scotland Journey's* Part Two.]

That said, Inverness is a relatively small city. A couple taxi rides between your Inverness area lodgings and the city centre are unlikely to be too expensive, and will be far more comfortable and convenient than taking a bus.

Then again, there are at least 50 bus routes available in and around Inverness, mainly operated by **Stagecoach Inverness**. [<https://www.stagecoachbus.com/>] So, taking a bus may be just as convenient as taking a taxi.

[Please know that some busses do not have destination information posted on the outside of the bus. If you use a bus, be sure to let the driver know where you want to go when boarding—*before* you pay the fare. You may need to get off and wait for the next bus.]

Consider taking a bus from your Inverness lodgings to the city centre, then returning to your lodgings by taxi.

The following 2012 TripAdvisor traveler report provides additional information important to deciding whether or not to drive within Inverness. Please note that it includes a couple of suggestions that are *not* wise.

Driving in Inverness

Posted by Abs140 (who lives in Edinburgh)

On Mar 22, 2012, 10:17 AM

https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g186543-i626-k5265617-Driving_in_Inverness-Inverness_Scottish_Highlands_Scotland.html

“Inverness is a small city, but the city centre roads are quite narrow and built up (different [from] the wide streets of most American towns).

“I learned to drive in Inverness, and ... used to dread driving down Academy Street, which is the street outside the rail station. I drive it now without difficulty, but it is one of those annoying streets where the ‘ahead’ lane drifts from side to side to make way for ‘left/right turn only’ lanes. (if that makes sense?!)

“There are a few one way street systems in Inverness city centre as well, which may be confusing. I would have a look at the Highway Code online before you arrive, to familiarize yourself with our road signs. [UK road] signs tend to be more pictorial, with fewer explanatory words! [<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/know-your-traffic-signs>]

“There is plenty of parking in the city. There are 2 large multistory car parks, one beside the bus station and one beside the Eastgate shopping centre (mall). These are only about 500 yards apart.

“What I would recommend, though, would be to park in the Morrisons (grocery store) Carpark on Milburn Road. It is flat, open air and reasonably priced, and only a 2 min walk to the High Street, etc. It would be much easier to maneuver your car in Morrisons Carpark than trying to battle with [parking in a] poorly lit, cramped multistory! [**Do NOT do this. See the ★ below.**]

...

“Rocpool Reserve [parking facility] is easily accessible by car.

[**This is a private hotel. You cannot park here unless you lodge here.**]

“The drive in from the airport (assuming you are collecting your car from the airport) is pleasant and easy to navigate. That will start you off gently!”

★ While Abs140’s 2012 information about the potentially confusing characteristics of Inverness city centre streets remains accurate—and should be considered before deciding to drive within the city—do *not* follow his suggestion to park in the Milburn Road Morrisons grocery store lot.

In 2014, the Milburn Road Morrisons grocery store implemented a new parking surveillance system.

“Under the new system, motorists have their number plates photographed as they enter the store in Millburn Road and are allowed three hours free parking. But they are fined automatically if they do not leave within the allotted time.”

<http://www.inverness-courier.co.uk/News/Morrisons-supermarket-in-Inverness-agrees-to-refund-85-parking-fines-26092014.htm>

These days (2016), more and more stores and supermarkets throughout the UK are using a similar system for their car parks. If you shop at a store that has this kind of parking surveillance system—

even though only buying a package of gum—you can park in their lot for the maximum amount of time allowed, beginning at the time you entered the lot. If your car remains in the lot even a few minutes overtime, however, you risk facing a parking fine of £85, or more.

BTW: If someone tells you that you won't be subject to parking fines or citations because you're driving a rental car, politely thank them for the information, but do *not* believe them. Some people may even tell you that rental cars are exempt from fines generated by speed cameras posted on UK motorways and at some traffic lights. **They are wrong!**

Parking fines and speeding tickets incurred while driving a rental car in the UK *will* find you. A Novel Holiday contributor, Tara Miller, learned this the hard way.

“A month after my return to the US, I received a Parking Citation charge **on the credit card I used to rent my UK car** for £80 (approximately \$120 at the time!). UGH!”

To learn more about these and other parking issues, be sure to read our

UK Car Rental & Driving Tips Outlandish Extra PDF:

<http://www.outlandishscotland.com/UKcarRental.pdf>

If you *do* decide to drive within Inverness city centre, consult the Parkopedia website below to obtain addresses for the parking facilities nearest to your destination.

<http://en.parkopedia.co.uk/parking/inverness/>

Another important resource for Inverness city centre parking information is the **Inverness Business Improvement District** website's parking page.

<http://www.invernessbid.co.uk/inverness-city-centre-guide/parking>

This page extols the advantages of parking in an Inverness City Centre multistory parking garage, as well as describing the parking fees charged by each Inverness City Centre multistory parking facility.

That concludes our UK Public Transportation PDF!