

# Castles and Gardens of southern Scotland



## Your Detailed Itinerary

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### Day 1

From Prestwick take the coast road, the A719, A77 by way of Culzean Castle southwards through Girvan, then continuing south to discover some of the fine gardens around the 'hammerhead' of the Rinns of Galloway, including **Logan Botanic Garden**. Contrasting with the grand themes and vistas of **Castle Kennedy Gardens**, smaller-scale planting schemes such as Ardwell Gardens and Glenwhan Gardens offer plenty for the enthusiast. They are also reminders of the gentle climate and mild airs enjoyed by the area, especially appreciated by a range of southern hemisphere plants to be seen in gardens here, as well as rhododendrons and azaleas. After exploring some of the gardens here, go east on the A75 for the Newton Stewart area.

### Day 2

Divert from the A75 for Kirkcudbright, with the distinctive outline of MacLellan's Castle on the town skyline. This 16th-century work is transitional, showing the changing priorities of the time – from defensive needs to comfort and prestige. Kirkcudbright has a fascinating artistic heritage thanks to its connections to the artists' group known as 'The Glasgow Boys', notably EA Hornel. Visit his former home, **Broughton House**, which also features a garden with some Japanese elements. From Kirkcudbright, go north-east for Castle Douglas and Threave Castle, on an island in the river. (Ring the bell and the boatman will take you across.) Also within easy reach is **Threave Garden**. Continue east for Dalbeattie, then take the coastal loop to Dumfries.

### Day 3

Continue east via Dumfries, taking the coastal B725 to visit Caerlaverock Castle. This is a moated medieval fortress of a unique triangular design. Continue the coastal route to Gretna, taking the A7/B6357/B6399 for **Hermitage Castle** in its lonely setting in the hills. Then continue north for Hawick and Jedburgh, with Monteviot House Gardens nearby. These attractive riverside gardens have a terrace, rose garden, herbaceous garden, pinetum and water garden.

### Day 4

Head for Kelso to visit **Floors Castle**, then take A698 east for Coldstream and The Hirsell Estate. The parkland gardens here are noted for their rhododendrons in spring. Turn north by A6112 for **Manderston**, a magnificent Edwardian residence near the town of Duns. Then go west on the A6105. A short diversion to the south means you can enjoy (for

free!) magnificent views of the rolling Borders countryside from the restored ramparts of Hume Castle. Minor roads here also lead on to **Mellerstain**, another large countryhouse set in imposing grounds.

### Day 5

Continue to go west, with a possible diversion north along the A68 for Thirlestane Castle. The magnificent castle here has a history going back to the 13th century, with extensive re-modelling and extensions taking place over the centuries. Alternatively, head for Melrose with nearby Abbotsford, Sir Walter Scott's mansion and Priorwood Garden, specialising in flowers for drying, within Melrose itself, next to the Abbey. From the Melrose area, follow the valley of the River Tweed westwards by the A72. Kailzie Gardens lies on the south side of the river, between Innerleithen and Peebles, close to **Traquair House**. On a commanding riverside site just west of Peebles, Neidpath Castle is an imposing 14th-century L-plan

towerhouse. View from the outside only. Take the B712 south east for **Dawyck Botanic Garden**. From Dawyck, there is a choice of crosscountry routes westwards for Prestwick, including the A72/A73 via Biggar, then the A70 via Muirkirk and Cumnock.

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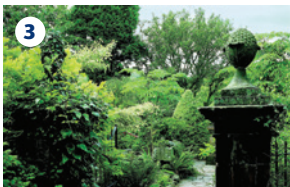
Spend time in the South of Scotland and you will soon be struck by the choice of gardens to visit, especially in Galloway, where the mildness from the Gulf Stream encourages adventurous gardening. Meanwhile, the old days of Border warfare and conflict are reflected by a legacy of castles and fortresses. Some of these, in turn, developed into the stately homes and mansions which delight today's visitors.



**1**  
**LOGAN BOTANIC GARDEN** – An outpost of Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Gardens and especially noted for its collections of Australasian tree-ferns, cabbage palms and other tender species.



**2**  
**CASTLE KENNEDY GARDENS** – The grand gardens here were laid out by the 2nd Earl of Stair. He was a military commander and used troops to build the mounds, avenues and terraces which are a feature of the design.



**3**  
**BROUGHTON HOUSE AND GARDEN**  
This garden contains many features designed by the artist EA Hornel, whose home and studio was here. The influence of his visits to Japan can be seen in plants and design.



**4**  
**THREAVE GARDEN** – The conservation agency the National Trust for Scotland run a gardening school here, which ensures the plantings are always evolving and changing. Spring daffodils are a famous feature.



**5**  
**HERMITAGE CASTLE** – 14th-century Hermitage Castle is not only in an atmospheric setting, but is associated with a 50-mile ride which Mary Queen of Scots undertook there from Jedburgh, to see her lover.



**6**  
**FLOORS CASTLE** – Home of the Duke of Roxburghe, this large and sumptuous house holds extensive collections of art, tapestries and porcelain.



**7**  
**MANDERSTON** – Sometimes described as the 'swansong' of the countryhouse this late (Edwardian) design exhibits great opulence including its unique silver staircase. Extensive formal and woodland gardens.



**8**  
**MELLERSTAIN** – A Georgian mansion with art collection and period furniture. Extensively landscaped grounds and terraced gardens offer an open vista to a parkland lake.



**9**  
**TRAQUIR HOUSE** – Sometimes described as the oldest inhabited house in Scotland, 12th-century Traquair has been visited by 27 Scottish monarchs. There is also an onsite brewery.



**10**  
**DAWYCK BOTANIC GARDEN** – Large-scale plantings in one of Britain's finest woodland gardens – superb arboretum with 300 year old trees, including some of Britain's tallest. Winding walks, excellent autumn colours and also spring rhododendron displays.