

Local Area Guide

You will find that the Scottish Borders feels peaceful, relaxed and beautiful after the unsettling times we have had. Perhaps what you're craving most is fresh air, views and landscapes – we have all of this in abundance! The local area offers unique things to do and interesting places to go. Our market towns have retained their gorgeous independent shops so they are perfect for a mosey. To top it off, you will eat well here – our fantastic cafes and restaurants are passionate about serving local and seasonal produce. Of course, you will probably also be taking the time to relax at Dod Mill, watch the ducks on the pond, stroll along the river, and cosy-in with the woodburning stove.

We have updated this guide in July 2021 to take account of covid-specific information. **Please always check the Facebook pages and/or websites for information including whether tickets should be purchased.**

The other good source of info is <https://scotlandstartshere.com/> - it's an excellent new website for the region. It has lots of ideas on things to do as well as a directory of everything that's going on in the Scottish Borders.

Dog-friendly listings are marked with a 🐾 - please note this is always on the basis of "to the best of our knowledge"!

LOCAL SHOPS & AMENITIES

The nearest shops, pharmacy, petrol station and post office are in Lauder, just 3 miles away. The shops are open during business hours on weekdays, have shorter hours on Saturdays and are closed on Sundays (except the Co-Op).

- **Purple Plum:** excellent greengrocers, also sells nuts, spices, speciality ingredients.
 - **Spotty Dog deli:** cheese, wine, biscuits, store cupboard essentials, coffee, local eggs, speciality ingredients etc.
 - **Shaws Fine Meats:** local meats from an outstanding butcher. Local ice-cream too.
 - **Firebrick Bakery:** freshly baked, artisan bread and homebaking
 - **Weigh Greener:** dry ingredients and eco products – a new shop for Lauder!
 - **Flat Cat Gallery:** local artists, crafts, gifts and coffee shop. Lovely place for a browse and a take-away or outdoor coffee (open Thur-Mon)
 - **Made in Grey Britain / Liv 54:** we love this shop! You can always pick up unusual house and home items as well as locally made tweeds and wools which usually end up with big fashion brands but which the owners sell at trade prices.
 - **Post Office:** has a beautiful selection of cards and gifts, and sells local ice-cream in the warmer months too.
 - **Co-Op at the petrol station:** you can get most of what you need from a quick shop here! At the north end of the town on the A68. Open 5am to midnight every day.
 - **Local free range eggs:** in a yellow "hutch" in Pyatshaw, a 1 minute drive from Dod Mill. Turn left out of our gate then immediately left again, drive under the stone arch, around the sharp corner to the left, then at the end of the run of houses. It's £4 for a tray of 30! You can get smaller trays of double yolkers or XL eggs too.
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- **Over Langshaw Ice Cream:** another 5/10 mins drive from Lauder at postcode TD1 2PE, a shipping container has 1L tubs of the best ice-cream. Amazing flavours, lots of choice. It's vending machine style!
 - **Electric car charging:** we are happy for you to charge your car – we can provide an extension lead. Alternatively there are chargers in Lauder (in the Industrial Estate) and a superfast chargepoint at Carfraemill (7 miles north).

Supermarkets

The closest supermarket is Sainsburys in Kelso (20 minutes). However, there are also smaller Co-Op stores at the petrol stations in both Lauder (5 mins) and Earlston (10 mins, larger store). There is also a Tesco, Asda, M&S Food and Aldi in Galashiels (25 minutes).

MARKET TOWNS

The Scottish Borders is known for its pretty market towns including **Melrose, Lauder, Kelso, St Boswells and Selkirk**. Take time to wander their streets, book ahead for take-away / outdoor / socially-distanced cafes and restaurants, and pop into the many shops. There are loads of excellent, independent home, garden, clothing, jewellery and country pursuits shops, particularly in Melrose, St Boswells and Kelso.

Lauder is also definitely worth a visit – You can't beat a traditional grocery shopping trip – go to the Firebrick Bakery for bread, the Purple Plum for fruit, veg and dry ingredients, Shaws Fine Meats for outstanding local produce, and the Spotty Dog deli for cheese, wine, local spirits and deli ingredients. See below for non-food shops.

Some of our favourite options for **browsing the shops** include:

- **Lauder:** Liv 54 (unusual home and gifts), Made in Grey Britain (great wools, cashmere and contemporary clothes made in local mills), Spotty Dog (deli), Flat Cat Gallery (art, gifts, children's toys).
 - **St Boswells:** Main Street Trading – gorgeous books, contemporary home & gift store and deli across two buildings. Also Border Gun Room which is a rabbit warren and a delight for anyone interested in country sports and fishing.
 - **Melrose:** Hendersons (contemporary garden and gifts, some gorgeous stuff), Bank House (clothes), Love Scottish (handmade candles, fragrances etc), Treetop Toys (wooden toys, natural crafts), antiques (several options!), Tickety Boo (handmade gifts, furniture & homewares).
 - **Kelso:** Focal Point Furniture (lovely home store, unusual finds), Blairs (jewellers), Hawico (cashmere), Beercraft (independent craft beer & gin, fab selection), Floors Castle "Apple Shed" (gifts, deli), A Hume Country Clothing (tweeds, wools, country-wear).
 - **Hawick:** Knitwear, cashmere, tartan and tweed - check-out <https://www.madeinhawick.com/>.
 - **Midlothian:** Restoration Yard at Dalkeith Country Park has fabulous gifts – home, clothes, jewellery, children's gifts, deli, stationary. They have exceptional taste!
 - **East Lothian:** North Berwick has lots of options. Also Archerfield Walled Garden has some brilliant gifts.
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COFFEE & CAKE

An essential pastime for holidays! We have plenty of cafes in the area – most offer a combination of take-away, outdoor eating and indoor (socially distanced to 1m in most cases). We don't think you need to book any of these, but always worth double checking their Facebook pages / websites to be sure. Please remember your face mask:

- **Soutra:** over the other side of Soutra Hill (about 15 mins north of Dod Mill), open every day 9am to 5pm. Really friendly staff, famous for its incredible baking and also has tasty soups with cheese scones and lunch options. Stunning views across East Lothian. Sit in, sit outside or takeaway. 🐾 on terrace.
- **Main Street Trading Company** (20 mins) in St Boswells is wonderful – it's a bookshop, coffee shop, deli and home shop, all in beautiful stone buildings on the main street in St Boswells. There is parking behind the store. A must! 🐾
- **Spotty Dog, Lauder** (5 mins) is a great little deli with cheese, homemade cakes, lots of local produce, and take-away coffees and street-seating (in normal times you can also sit inside). It's a busy little place!
- **Flat Cat Gallery, Lauder** (5 mins) has beautiful paintings, sculptures and also a little gift shop. It's also a coffee shop which is open with inside tables, outside tables and take-away. Serving coffee, light savoury meals and baking.
- **Thirlestane Castle:** now offering an afternoon tea experience in partnership with the Firebrick Brasserie. Looks amazing, pre-booking essential. £22 each (min 2 guests) and £28 including fizz.
- **Apples for Jam, Earlston:** on the High Street, this is the second branch and it's a beautiful little place with interesting cakes and savoury options.
- **Restoration Yard, Dalkeith Country Park** (25/30 mins). Fantastic, modern coffee shop with a lovely clothes, gifts and home shop, set within beautiful courtyard buildings in Dalkeith Country Park. One of our favourites. The Kitchen, which is their restaurant, is open for coffee and cake (booking needed) and The Larder is available for take-away coffee & cake.
- **Birdhouse Tea Room at the Woodside Garden Centre** near Ancrum (30 mins). Set within a Victorian walled garden, with a little oasis of beautiful plants, you'll find this quirky, cosy little tearoom with fantastic cakes and lunch options and also take-away, between 10am and 5pm daily 🐾
- **Old Melrose Tea Room** and river walk: open for outdoor food (lovely little courtyard), a small number of inside tables and take-away – also has a quirky antiques shop spread through several areas. Gorgeous walk by the River Tweed from here. 🐾
- **Sweet Shop Earlston:** not a café but putting on the list as it's a fun stop. Traditional sweet shop – huge selection including local sweets such as Soor Plooms, Berwick Cockles, Jethart Snails and Hawick Balls.
- **Melrose** (20 mins) – lots of options
- **Kelso** (20 mins) – also lots of options!

RESTAURANTS & TAKEAWAYS

Restaurants in Scotland require face masks except when seated, and most operate with a 1m physical distancing rule in place. The Scottish Borders is in Level 1 at the moment which means restaurants can stay open until 11pm and they can serve alcohol both indoors and outdoors. Please keep an eye on Facebook pages and websites which carry the most up-to-date info on opening days and hours:

- **Firebrick Brasserie, Lauder:** Fantastic restaurant, a definite favourite of ours, run by the same team as Firebrick Bakery. It's had a mini refurb over lockdown. Call to book and tell them you are staying at Dod Mill! You will be well looked-after.
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- **Carfraemill:** Just north of Dod Mill (7 mins), cosy restaurant renovated over lockdown, with a locally-sourced menu. Home cooking as well as steaks, burgers and some great specials. Also really lovely for afternoon tea or high tea. Open every day 🐾
 - **Black Bull, Lauder:** Local pub-restaurant and a popular choice. It has a cosy bar area and a high-ceilinged dining room which has been renovated recently – it's great! 🐾
 - **Buccleuch Arms, St Boswells:** Excellent beer garden and great pub food in their "Blue Coo" open indoors. A bit of a local institution and a great place to spend a few hours. Call to book. 🐾
 - **Hunters Stables, St Boswells:** This is a hugely popular, family-run, Italian restaurant indoor dining and outdoor dining available. Take-away too. Closed Tuesdays. Call to book - essential. We love their pizzas – pick one up then take it to Scott's View to eat?
 - **Provender, Melrose:** as featured in the Michelin Guide, find this fantastic restaurant just off the High Street. Big focus on local produce and higher-end cooking. You can book tables online.
 - **The Hoebridge, Gattonside:** an outstanding local place to eat, run by a hugely talented couple. It's very hard to get a table so do try to book as far in advance as you possibly can. We go here for special occasions!
 - **Seasons, Gattonside:** also run by a couple who are passionate about truly seasonal and local menus. Outstanding food. Book as far in advance as you can. Another great choice for a special meal out. 🐾 at some tables.
 - **Wilson's Farm & Kitchen:** amazing private dining in "wee bothies" at Robert and Lucy's farm, Cowbog Farm, near Morebattle/Kelso. Brand new for 2021, this inventive farming family have repurposed their grain stores to offer a quirky, fun and private way to dine and relax in the countryside without worrying about the weather! These 'off grid' secluded Bothies are heated, have their own private fire pit and seat up to 8 people (either inside or out) with beautiful views of the surrounding countryside. Great way to feast on local produce from a brilliant cook – bookings at least 72 hours in advance. 🐾
 - **Born in Scotland, Lanton Mill** near Jedburgh: inventive team running a café, pizza garden and beer garden (alongside a walking map of Scotland, grass sledging, distillery and shop)). Open daily 10-5 with pizza garden open Friday to Sunday from 12-8. Facebook seems to have the most up-to-date info on everything you can do.
 - **Haggis Box:** roaming street food truck, highly rated! Check Facebook for locations – it has different days in different Border towns! It's all about the haggis, neeps and tatties (traditional, vegetarian and vegan) and you can also buy tea/coffee, cakes, snacks and delicious local ice-cream. 🐾
 - **Fish & Chips:** Lauder and Earlston both have decent "chippies".
 - **Priya Indian:** very good Indian take-away in Earlston.
 - **Rak Thai:** we have heard so many rave reviews of this new Thai takeaway restaurant in Melrose. It's busy so definitely book your slot in advance.
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Thirlestane Castle: Just 5 mins from here, offers small group guided tours and it also has beautiful grounds, a river walk and woodland walk. Highly recommended – such a gorgeous fairytale-turreted castle in stunning surroundings. The history is fascinating. Afternoon tea now available in partnership with Firebrick Brasserie – it looks fantastic. Pre-booking is essential for the guided tours and afternoon teas. Please visit their website for time slots and for tickets.

Carolside Gardens: a real hidden gem and “one of Scotland’s finest private gardens”, just north of Earlston (10 mins). The garden is flanked by wooded hills and nestles by the River Leader. It’s a romantic and beautiful garden, cultivated for over 200 years. Today it is best known for its soft and delicate herbaceous planting, striking delphinium beds, subtle colour schemes, its design of rooms with a Secret garden, Winter garden, Hidden garden and Herb garden. Sweeping lawns lead to an oval walled garden where an Historical Collection of ancient roses is housed including a National Collection of pre-1900 Gallica roses. It is seriously impressive! Open 1st May to 1st August, Saturdays and Sundays only, 11am to 5pm, adults £6 donation at entrance, children go free. Guided tours £12/adult on request. 🐾 on lead

Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford: visit the house, gardens & playpark (pre-bookable tours available for the house). This is a beautiful house and gardens which once belonged to Sir Walter Scott – one of Scotland’s greatest writers. It’s gorgeous, with a setting right on the River Tweed so also good for walks (or children on bikes). Has a good café/restaurant which is open 7 days a week, 10am to 4pm (last food orders 3pm).

Scott's View: literally “just a view”, but it’s pretty special. Sir Walter Scott’s favourite – you just pull up in your car, hop out, and gaze in wonder. Great spot for a picnic. Also, the giant **William Wallace Statue**, slightly further along the same road – 1km walk on a hard path from the car park. Combine with a trip to Main Street Trading in St Boswells via lovely back roads. 🐾

Mellerstain House: grounds and gardens – this is one of our favourite places for a wander. It’s only 15 mins from here, and there is a café serving drinks to take with you. Open Friday to Monday, 11am to 4pm. 🐾

Floors Castle – Walled Gardens: A magnificent castle on the edge of Kelso, plus the Walled Garden, Millennium Garden and Terrace Café. Please check the website for timeslot reservations. There is a new pop-up deli and gift shop (“the Apple Shed”) and an adventure playground in the gorgeous walled garden. For the children...join the Peter Rabbit nature trail through the gardens and woodlands. The trail runs daily from 26th of June – 31st of August, 10.30am- 4pm. 🐾

Melrose Abbey: A must see, it’s one of Britain’s finest examples of church architecture from the late 1300s. Melrose Abbey was so beloved by Robert the Bruce, he chose it as the final resting place for his heart. It is a magnificent ruin on a grand scale, with incredible sculpture work surviving right across the site. Tickets must be booked in advance.

Bowhill House: grounds and a super adventure playground - a ticketing system is in place. It’s a spectacular drive over and the grounds are huge. Great walks with views and woodland to explore too. A real favourite for us and other families. Thursday to Sunday opening days 🐾

Priorwood Garden and Harmony Garden, Melrose: stunning gardens run by the National Trust for Scotland – both are open daily from now. Priorwood is a rustic walled garden located in the ancient precinct of Melrose Abbey. You can have a picnic in the old orchard, where over 90 different kinds of apple are grown organically. Harmony Gardens, next to

Priorwood is 3 acres of manicured lawns, scented borders and fruit and vegetable beds spread out from a beautiful Georgian manor house.

Traquair House: From 10am to 5pm daily, you can visit the grounds, walled garden, woodlands, children's playground and brew house. The maze is open to one household at a time. The House offers pre-booked, guided tours. The Garden Café is operating a take away service and lunches and teas may be taken in the Walled Garden. Picnics are welcome in the wider grounds too. 🐾

Ford & Etal Estate: 35 mins away, just over the border in Northumberland, this estate is built around the pretty villages of Ford and Etal. It's a bit of a hidden gem with a huge amount to do for families and for outdoor types (horse-riding, canoeing, fishing, walking, cycling). Attractions include Etal Castle, built to defend against Scottish raiders, Flodden Battlefield (1513 battle between the English and the Scots), a steam light railway, a nature reserve, a working corn mill (fascinating for us to visit given Dod Mill's history!), plus loads of excellent footpaths and quiet lanes. There is also a thatched pub (the Black Bull) as well as tearooms and interesting shops. Mostly 🐾

Paxton House (30 mins): grounds, gardens and playpark open daily 9am to 5pm now - explore 80 acres of grounds, gardens, riverside and woodland, including an adventure play park complete with zip wire. Visit the historic House, tearoom, toilets, gift shop and trails (Wed-Sun 10am to 5pm). 🐾

Jupiter Artland, head north towards Livingston (50 minutes): incredible sculpture and art gardens which are well worth a visit – open daily from now. It's very much an outdoor modern art gallery, with both permanent collections and a stream of creative exhibitions. Check the website for ticket-booking.

Royal Botanical Gardens, Edinburgh (50-60mins): One of the world's leading botanic gardens, with a living collection dating back 350 years. 70 acres of beautiful landscape to explore providing a tranquil haven just a mile from the city centre. It's a highlight of any visit to Edinburgh. The Botanics, as the garden is affectionally known locally, is breath-taking at any time of year. Highlights include: 10 magnificent glasshouses with over 3000 exotic plants, rock garden, alpine houses, woodland garden, pond, arboretum, Chinese hillside, rhododendron collection and Scottish native plants collection. Open every day, 10am to 4pm/6pm depending on time of year – tickets must be booked on the website. 🐾

Dawyck Botanic Garden, Stobo near Peebles (65 mins): also part of Scotland's Royal Botanic Gardens, Dawyck is a five star garden renowned for its seasonal displays of snowdrops, bluebells, rhododendrons, azaleas, blue poppies and autumn colour. Well worth the cross-country Scottish Borders drive which is beautiful too! Open daily February to November.

Cragside House (National Trust), near Rothbury/Morpeth (90 mins). A spectacular National Trust property with gardens created by the "landscape genius" Lord Armstrong (see Gardens section). The house is worth a visit – it was the first house in the world to be lit by hydroelectricity. It is crammed full of ingenious gadgets, most of them still working. Tickets must be purchased in advance with slots released every Friday. 🐾 in grounds.

Alnwick Gardens (1 hr 20 mins): Tickets to be booked on the website. The brainchild of The Duchess of Northumberland, The Alnwick Garden is a multi-award winning visitor attraction. 12 acres of meandering and

magnificent Gardens are home to the world's largest Tai Haku Cherry Orchard, a Grand Cascade comprising 120 water jets and the world's largest Treehouse Restaurant (though this may still be closed due to Covid). There is also a rose garden and ornamental garden – you can take it all in from one of 50 swinging benches! Families and children can run freely throughout. No dogs.

Alnwick Castle (1 hr 20 mins): grounds open, tickets required. Alnwick Castle has an 800-year history and is the second largest inhabited castle in the UK, after Windsor Castle. An incredible place to visit. It's an iconic film and TV location as Harry Potter fans will know! Downtown Abbey was also filmed here, along with countless other productions. It's one of the most popular historic attractions in the whole of the UK.

BREWERIES,
DISTILLERIES, TEXTILES
& MUSEUMS

Tempest Brew Co (20 mins away): this local craft beer producer is offering tasting experiences, or "tap sessions", on Saturdays and some Sundays in their outdoor beer garden. You will "taste the freshest, tastiest beer imaginable". Look at the Events section of their website where you'll find a link to tickets. The cost is £5 which gets you a £5 meal token (to spend at a street food truck). You buy beers as you like. 2.5 hour slots. Highly recommended!

Borders Distillery – likely reopening 1st June. Based in a stunning converted building in Hawick (40 mins), this creative team is bringing whisky-making back to our region. You can now book distillery tours once again. It's a beautiful and fascinating place – we absolutely loved our tour here last year. Combine with some textiles shopping (see below).

Textiles – this area is famous for its textiles industry, built around the River Tweed. Knitwear, cashmere, tartan and tweed have been made here in the Scottish Borders since the 1800s. Hawick remains a centre of manufacturing for big brands such as Chanel, Dior, Lovat, Hawico, Barrie, Johnstons of Elgin. Check-out <https://www.madeinhawick.com/>. Selkirk is home to Lochcarron of Scotland, where tartan is made, and you can now book private appointments. Group tours should reopen soon.

Jim Clarke Motorsport Museum – in Duns (20 mins), open every day except Wednesdays, pre-booking essential. Discover the incredible story of Jim Clark's life and racing career at this brand new 5* exciting interactive museum. Jim Clark is widely regarded as one of the greatest racing drivers of all time, admired for his remarkable achievements and famous for his humility. He dominated world motor racing like no one before or since in all genres of motorsport, winning the Formula 1 World Championship in 1963 & 1965 and Indianapolis 500. He was a farmer near Duns. Great for all the family.

National Museum of Flight – in East Lothian, this is a super trip out for all ages, 5* museum. Climb aboard Concorde and visit numerous civil and military aircraft in the museum's hangars. Lots of the museum is outside, and the indoor areas are very spacious (though face coverings will be needed inside). Tickets required for arrival time slots.

National Mining Museum – in Midlothian, open Thursday to Sunday. Another 5* visitor attraction and twice winner of the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions "Best Visitor Experience" Award. The museum provides a great day out for all ages. It's based at one of the finest surviving examples of a Victorian colliery in Europe, the Lady Victoria Colliery at Newtongrange (9 miles south of Edinburgh). It's huge, packed with engineering brilliance in its machinery, and visitors get to retrace the footsteps and struggles of thousands of mining families in the past.

Edinburgh Butterfly & Insect World (30 mins): actually quite a bit south of Edinburgh in Midlothian, usually open every day. We expect it to reopen soon so keep an eye on the website. A lovely warm place to go on a cold or wet day! Particularly good for those with children. Next to a large garden centre with a café for food/coffees etc, and a super deli and small supermarket.

WALKS FROM YOUR DOOR

There are lots of options for walks in the area – see maps. We love taking a picnic with us. You are very unlikely to meet another soul!

WOODLAND WALKS

Head up to the woods by **Spottiswoode** (just a few mins, see map). Alternatively, there are lots of excellent circular walks around Lauder (see maps). Also try **Harestanes**, near Ancrum (30 mins) which is a great place for a walk and it also has a café, playground and some little shops to have a nose in. 🐾

HILL WALKS

Very locally, there are lots of marked paths and circular routes up the hills around Lauder – just Google Lauder Paths Network Scottish Borders Council and you will find the route booklet. If you're opening this doc on a smartphone, you can follow this link:
https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/695/lauder_paths_network 🐾

Good circular walk from **Carfraemill to the Addinston Fort** and the edge of the Lammermuir Hills. Search online for "Scotways Paths In & Around the Lammermuirs". 🐾

Climb the **Eildon Hills** which stand tall above Melrose, head into the **Cheviot Hills** near the border with England, the **Lammermuir Hills** right beside Dod Mill, or the **Pentland Hills**, close to Edinburgh. **Arthur's Seat**, in Edinburgh, is a popular and relatively short hill walk. 🐾

There are plenty of options for walks, too many to list, but check out the Walk Scottish Borders website for ideas:
<https://walkscottishborders.com/top-5-walks/> 🐾

THE COAST

St Abb's Head National Nature Reserve – For stunning seascapes and dramatic cliffs, you can't beat St Abbs Head. It's a National Trust for Scotland site. There are walks of varying lengths starting and finishing at the St Abbs Head Visitor Centre on the edge of the village. This is a coastal haven for birdwatchers, nature lovers, geology enthusiasts and walkers. It is truly a very special place. 🐾

North Berwick (50 mins) – a pretty, seaside town in East Lothian with great beaches and coastal scenery as well as an eclectic mix of shops, cafes and restaurants with outdoor and takeaway options.

Coldingham Bay – there are lots and lots of beaches along the coast which stretches from Berwick-upon-Tweed to Edinburgh. Our favourite is Coldingham Bay – it's the perfect balance of sand and rock pools, with pretty beach huts above the dunes. There is a café – hopefully it's open for takeaway this summer. 🐾

Bamburgh Castle and beaches (60 mins) – Standing on spectacular Northumberland coastline, the castle has a history spanning 1,400 years. It's been a royal fortress, a Norman stronghold and a coastal home. The castle grounds are now open (tickets recommended). The village and the beach are also both lovely places to be. 🐾 in the castle grounds, the tea room, parts of the museum and obviously also on the beach!

Dod Mill: for kids, the river is ideal for playing in (with supervision of course, and not when it's high following heavy rain). Our kids spend hours there, wading upstream, throwing stones, skimming, with nets looking for little fish, and there are even some parts which are deep enough to swim in (with care!). Take a picnic up to the stepping stones (see map). 🐾

Scottish Border Sporting: clay pigeon shooting, tomahawk throwing and archery – can be done near Kelso or at Hillhouse, just a few miles north of here. Tracy and Stuart Ferguson run the Roxburghe Shooting School of Excellence and Scottish Borders Sporting – they are experts in country sports tuition. Organise this with as much notice as you can, but worth calling for last minute options too! <http://scottishborderssporting.com> 🐾

Stand-up paddle boards and kayak hire: excellent fun and a great way to explore local lochs and rivers – you can even practice on the mill pond here before you go further afield! We recommend Audrey at “Live, Love, Paddle Board - SUP Hire, Scottish Borders” (find her on Facebook). She offers inflatable “SUPs” (stand-up paddle boards) and a variety of kayaks for hire for the day or the weekend. Audrey is lovely and very happy to deliver to Dod Mill free of charge! The inflatable SUPs are particularly easy to carry and transport in their carry rucksack and they take just 4 mins to inflate. Life jackets available. Audrey can be reached on 07974 344063, tell her you're calling from Dod Mill. 🐾

Eyemouth Rib Trips: an exhilarating experience on the North Sea, Eyemouth Rib Trips offer a variety of sea adventures: coastal explorer, fast blast, fast blast for kids, geological tour and more. You can get a shuttle from Eyemouth to St Abbs, too, which is a great way to see the coastline as well as one of its prettiest villages. 🐾 Small, well behaved dogs permitted!

Wildlife cruises: In Our Nature offers wildlife cruises from Eyemouth, pre-booking essential. Cruise along the spectacular Berwickshire coastline to St Abb's Head with its amazing breeding seabird colony. Wildlife guide, Liz Cole, is very experienced and can tell you all about the seabirds and aquatic mammals you encounter. £30 per person, £100 for a family (2 adults, 2 children). You can also charter the whole boat.

Fishing & Coastal Sightseeing: Also based out of Eyemouth, BeeCoolFish.co.uk offers fishing trips and sightseeing trips along the Berwickshire coastline. Charter the boat individually or as a group. Will, the skipper, provides fishing gear if needed. Types of fish caught include cod, wrasse, coalfish, pollack, ling and mackerel. If you're more interested in coastal sightseeing, you'll spot a great variety of seabirds and aquatic mammals: dolphins, seals, porpoise, and minke whale are regularly seen off this rich and glorious Scottish coastline. This, along with the most stunning volcanic rock formations known to mankind, will make a most memorable trip.

Jacksons at Jedburgh Farm Visits: a family-friendly outdoor visitor attraction just 5 minutes from the historic town of Jedburgh. Open farm visits at the weekends (pre-booking essential) include meeting the animals and experiencing life on the farm. You'll find cows, goats, sheep, play areas and farm tours on offer.

Wilson's Farm & Kitchen: also near Jedburgh, a more exclusive farm tour operation. Robert and Lucy have a range of private tours including Farm to Fork, Farm Tractor & Tractor, Breakfast Safari and a range of gourmet local food experiences.

7Stanes / Glentress for mountain biking – near Peebles (about 50 mins). It's a mecca for mountain bikers who flock to the award-winning trails. Based on the side of a hill, the dramatic views, which change with the seasons, are more than worth the climb. There are over 50-miles of purpose-built mountain bike trails at Glentress including Green, Blue, Red or Black graded trails, as well as a magnificent multi-graded free-ride area. Bring your bikes or there's bike hire available. Top tip is to park at the higher up car park to save that cycle! There are also excellent walking trails 🐾

Bike Hire / eBikes: the Scottish Borders is a fantastic place for road and off-road biking more generally. There are a few places to hire bikes including Diamond Cycles Centre, Galashiels. If you are interested in e-bikes, a few places are popping up now – Google Border Bike Hire and also on Facebook you'll find Tweed eBike Hire. For mountain bike trails and road routes search for Cycle Scottish Borders which is a comprehensive site.

Beirhope Alpaca Trekking is something a bit different and now reopen – take an alpaca for a walk in the stunning and remote Cheviot Hills. Lots of routes available, some more hilly than others. It's more of a drive to get there (45 mins, near Hownam) but a beautiful one and promised to be an unforgettable experience. Booking definitely necessary.

Surfing, coastering and bodyboarding can be done most of the year round. Search for "Coast to Coast Surf School" on Facebook – it's based in Dunbar but they can meet on a range of beaches.

Bisley at Braidwood (30 mins drive, between St Boswells & Selkirk). It is one of the top shooting ranges in the country, and sister to Bisley in Surrey. Book online for a clay pigeon shooting lesson, use the simulated game clay range, use the rifle range, air rifle range and also a virtual reality shooting simulator. Those with a valid shotgun licence can also "pay and play". 🐾

Foxlake Adventures is an outdoor activity centre in East Lothian (45 mins) with water-based assault courses, wakeboarding, ringo rides, a zip trail and segways. Lots and lots of fun to be had here!

GoApe at Dalkeith Country Park (30 mins) and another one near Peebles (50 mins). The Dalkeith version is brand new and has Scotland's first GoApe course for children (as well as the original TreeTop Challenge which is for teenagers and adults). Thrill seekers will enjoy canopy high tree-to-trees crossings, free-fall Tarzan swings and riding super-fast, very long zips.

Bird Garden Scotland is just 10 mins away, by Oxton. Reopening soon following lot of development including a new visitor centre and play park. It's home to flamingos, ducks, geese, swans, kookaburgh, peafowl, peacock and also wallabies!!

Ryze trampolining in Dalkeith (30 mins): the "ultimate indoor trampoline park" – our kids love this! Pre-book your slot. Good for a rainy day.

PLAY PARKS

The Scottish Borders has been investing really heavily in recent years in play parks. Most towns have a decent playpark. Our favourites are as follows, all open:

- Lauder – 5 mins from here, good park with playpark & football pitch.
 - Oxton – 10 mins smaller park than Lauder but it's super.
 - Harestanes – brilliant playpark and little shops / coffee stops on site
 - Coldstream – great new park
 - Paxton House – adventure playpark in the grounds
 - Fort Douglas (at Dalkeith Country Park, Midlothian) – excellent adventure playground with parents also well-catered for.
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EDINBURGH

The capital of Scotland is an incredible hub of culture, history, arts, food and activities – it's not far from Dod Mill at all. Online ticketing options for **Edinburgh Zoo**, **Royal Botanical Gardens**, the **Museum of Scotland**, **Camera Obscura** are all reopened 26th April. Edinburgh has loads more to do too. Check online.

If you would like to visit Edinburgh for an afternoon, an evening, or the day, we recommend one of the following travelling options. Obviously you'll need to check timetables carefully and face masks are required on public transport:

- Drive all the way into the centre of Edinburgh. A good place to park near the Castle, the Old Town and the West End is Kings Stables Road – this is a long road and we find it usually has on-street paid parking available (get the RingGo app or otherwise you can phone the number on the parking ticket machine to pay). Alternatively, the Castle Terrace NCP car park is near (EH1 2EW). If you need to be at the east end of Princes Street or George Street, try the Q-Park Omni on Greenside Row (EH1 3AN). On a clear run, you can make the journey from Dod Mill in 45-50 minutes.
 - Drive to Stow train station (Postcode TD1 2SQ, 15 minutes) and get the train to Edinburgh Waverley. The train takes about 45 minutes and runs about once an hour – check the ScotRail website for details.
 - Drive to Newcraighall Railway Station (Postcode EH21 8QT, takes 25-30 minutes from Dod Mill) and take the train to Edinburgh Waverley station. Trains take 11 minutes and run about every 30 minutes.
 - Drive to Sheriffhall Park-and-Ride (Postcode EH22 1FF, takes 25-30 minutes from Dod Mill) and take the regular number 49 or number 33 buses to Edinburgh city centre. Buses run up to every 5 minutes in peak times and take about 25 minutes to Princes Street.
 - Drive to Carfraemill (TD2 6RA, 7 minutes), park in the car park and walk around to the bus stop on the A68. Get the 51 or 52 bus to Edinburgh city centre. It goes once an hour and takes just over an hour – check out the Border Buses website for timetables – Carfraemill is a “request stop” between Lauder Cross and Oxton, so you just watch for the bus and put your hand out!
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