

# Local Area Guide

You will find that the Scottish Borders feels like a peaceful, relaxed and beautiful place to stay. 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 for 2026, though new places turn up all the time, so let us know if you find a gem that we didn't know about. **Please always check the Facebook pages and/or websites for information including current opening times and whether tickets should be purchased in advance.**

The other good source of info is <https://scotlandstartshere.com/> - it's an excellent 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"! It's always worth calling ahead for restaurants and cafes in particular.

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## 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 petrol station mini supermarket, which is open every day, early to late).

- **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. Also now the place to pick up fishing permits for the Leader Water (season tickets £10, season runs 15 March to 4 October).
  - **Shaws Fine Meats:** local meats from an outstanding butcher. Local Overlangshaw ice-cream too.
  - **Firebrick Bakery:** freshly baked, artisan bread and homebaking
  - **Weigh Greener:** dry ingredients and eco products – great shop!
  - **Flat Cat Gallery:** local artists, crafts, gifts and coffee shop. Lovely place for a browse and coffee, cake or light meal (open every day)
  - **Made in Grey Britain:** we love this clothes shop! You can pick up locally made tweeds, cashmere and wools which usually end up with big fashion brands. The super-cool owners sell everything at trade prices.
  - **Oxton Community Shop:** a wonderful, community-run village shop just 10 minutes north of Dod Mill in Oxton (on the A68). We'd love it if you could stop in and support it when passing – it's a real community asset and a lovely little shop. The stock is better than you might expect: fruit and veg, cheeses, meats, deli items, milk, dry ingredients and local produce including organic beef from Inchkeith Organics. Newspapers, alcohol, baked goods and household essentials too. Opening hours: Monday to Friday 8am–12pm and 4pm–6pm; Saturday 8am–12pm; Sunday 9am–12pm. Card payments accepted.
  - **Mini supermarket 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. Early to late every day.
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- **Fingerpost Produce:** not in Lauder, but just 3 mins drive south – take the A697 and then take the turning to Westruther, Fingerpost is on the right-hand side on this road. It's a local market garden and vegetable farm where the land is worked with Clydesdale horses! Selling home grown pumpkin, squash, cucumbers, chickpeas, tomatoes, broccoli, beets, cauliflower, cabbage, leeks, onions etc!
- **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 £7 for a tray of 30. They often have smaller trays of double-yolker eggs too, at a lower price. Cash only.
- **Over Langshaw Ice Cream:** Ice cream direct from the farm shop. 10 mins drive beyond Lauder at postcode TD1 2PE. 1L tubs of the best ice-cream. Amazing flavours, lots of choice. Eggs available too. It's vending machine style, so it's open all hours we think!
- **Electric car charging:** we are happy for you to charge your car – we can provide an extension lead – please just ask us. We can put an electricity usage monitor on the lead to check how much you've used (and how much you'll need to pay). 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). Galashiels has Tesco, Asda, M&S Food and Aldi in Galashiels (25 minutes). There are smaller mini supermarkets at the petrol stations in both Lauder (5 mins) and Earlston (10 mins, Morrisons store). Home delivery can be arranged with Asda, Tesco and Sainsbury's – all deliver to us. Use the name of your cottage or cabin as the first line of the address, then Dod Mill House, Lauder, Scottish Borders, TD2 6SE. Please note in the delivery instructions that drivers should come right inside the double wooden gates to deliver.

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## 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, relax in 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 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** in the area include:

- **Lauder:** 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), Weigh Greener (zero waste shop, with dry ingredients and lots of eco-products and gifts). The Post Office has great cards, wrapping paper, gifts, postcards.
  - **St Boswells:** Main Street Trading – gorgeous books, contemporary home & gift store and deli across two buildings. Brew coffee shop is also great. Border Gun Room 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),
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antiques (several options!), Tickety Boo (handmade gifts, furniture & homewares).

- **Kelso:** Lots of lovely independent shops and places to eat, definitely worth going for a browse. Special mention Scott's of Kelso (deli, bistro, butcher), Beercraft (craft beers, gin), Hume's Country Clothing (a classic, with two shops in town). Nearby there is Floors Castle's Terrace Café and "Apple Shed" (gifts, deli).
- **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, including Laura Thomas Co who make our hand washes, shampoos, sleep mists etc. 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 tables.

- **Spotty Dog, Lauder** (5 mins) is a great little deli with cheese, homemade cakes, lots of local produce, and take-away coffees and a small number of tables. 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 with inside tables, outside tables and take-away. Serving coffee, light savoury meals and baking.
  - **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.
  - **Dragonfly Café, Earlston:** a good café and a menu packed with flavours! Great for brunch, lunch, coffee and cake. They also host supper clubs from time to time.
  - **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! 🐾
  - **Brew** (20 mins), also in St Boswells, a pint-sized coffee shop which has built quite a following since it opened. Serves cake & coffee, usually Thursdays to Sundays.
  - **Apples for Jam, Melrose:** on the High Street, small but perfectly formed, this beautiful little place has interesting cakes and savoury options.
  - **Twelve Triangles bakery, Melrose:** eat-in and take-away artisan bakery. Filled croissants, sourdough sandwiches, sweet treats. Lots of seating, very trendy (but also family friendly with a dedicated area for little ones). It's wonderful.
  - **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.
  - **The Homestead Café & Farm Shop, the Hirsell estate, Coldstream,** with easy walks surrounding. Lots of home baking, options for breakfast and lunch, has a National-Trust-tearoom kind of feel! (20 mins away).
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- **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. 🐾
  - **The Sugar Shack** – a wonderful little honesty-box baking spot on the road between Lauder and Stow. There are always fantastic treats on offer. Payment is via QR code. A really lovely local gem, and the kind of thing that makes this area so special.
  - **Melrose** (20 mins) – lots of other options aside from the above!
  - **Kelso** (20 mins) – also lots of options!

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## RESTAURANTS & TAKEAWAYS

Please keep an eye on Facebook pages and websites which carry the most up-to-date info on opening days and hours:

- **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! 🐾
  - **The Old Thistle Inn, Westruther:** another very close local, everything you would expect from a traditional village pub. Known for its steak and family atmosphere. The smallest bar you will ever see, and the restaurant runs through several small rooms. A friendly vibe. I would book ahead. Check if bringing a 🐾
  - **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.
  - **Sunlaws, Schloss Roxburghe Hotel, near Kelso** (25 mins): freshly awarded 3 AA Rosettes in spring 2026, Sunlaws is now officially one of the finest restaurants in Scotland. Chef Dan Ashmore's tasting menu is built around produce from the hotel's 300-acre estate, with outstanding seasonal cooking. We have been and thought it was superb – a very special occasion restaurant. Open Wednesday to Sunday evenings (booking well in advance is essential). The same hotel is also home to Charlie's, a more relaxed Scottish Bistronomy restaurant open daily from 5pm, with floor-to-ceiling
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windows and a beautiful terrace – a great option if Sunlaws feels too formal or you want something more spontaneous. And Bar 1745 is one of the finest whisky bars in the Borders, with over 250 whiskies and an excellent gin selection – we did a tasting here and loved every minute of it.

- **Café Auberge, Galashiels** (20 mins): a brand new French-European bistro that opened in late 2025 on the High Street in Galashiels, in a beautifully restored old building. I haven't managed to go yet, but I have heard brilliant things – the mussels apparently being particularly worth ordering. One to try!
  - **Cross Keys, Ettrickbridge:** worth the drive (45 mins), awarded Scotland's best pub in 2023 and 2024. Owned by good friends of ours, Rory & Vicki Steel, the food is excellent and there is often something going on, from a games night or pub quiz, to pizza nights and live music 🐾
  - **Capon Tree, Jedburgh:** recently awarded 2 AA rosettes, chef/proprietor Alasdair Wilkie is a rising star in the local culinary scene. We haven't been yet, so can't give you a proper review, but it's very much on our to do list! Jedburgh is a little further away (35-40 mins) but it sounds like it will be worth the drive. Modern, fine dining with an extensive wine list.
  - **Wilson's Farm & Kitchen:** amazing private dining in "wee bothies" at Robert and Lucy's farm, Cowbog Farm, near Morebattle/Kelso. 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. They also run the 25 Mile Feast, the 25 Mile Sunday Roast, Tractor Tours, Breakfast Safaris and Farm to Fork experiences – a great choice for a special meal out with a real sense of place. Bookings via their website at wilsonsfarmandkitchen.com. 🐾
  - **Borderland Food Tours:** see the Tours & Guides section for full details. Genuinely outstanding – thoroughly recommended by us.
  - **Fish & Chips:** Lauder and Earlston both have decent "chippies" – Earlston is the more modern of the two and probably worth the extra 5-10 mins drive.
  - **Priya Indian:** very good Indian take-away in Earlston.
  - **Rak Thai:** we have heard so many rave reviews of this Thai takeaway restaurant in Melrose. It's busy so definitely book your slot in advance.
  - **Shanghai Banquet, Tweedbank** (20 mins): a brilliant all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet, right on the lochside in Tweedbank with lovely views. Over 100 dishes to choose from, freshly made and constantly replenished – classic Chinese stir-fries, sizzling meats, prawns, sushi, as well as familiar alternatives like pizza, battered fish and chips for those who don't fancy Asian cuisine. There's also a chocolate fountain and a dessert bar. The banana fritters come highly recommended! It's good value, family-friendly and always busy. Takeaway is also available. Closed Tuesdays. Card payments accepted.
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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. Pre-booking is essential for the guided tours which run Tues-Sun at 10.30am, 12.30pm and 2.30pm. Please visit their website for tickets. Open May to September. The Castle often hosts events including an annual Vintage Car Show – worth checking the website.

**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). The latest addition is the Witch Corner sculpture trail – it's designed for children, with lots of fun to be had around carvings of witches, fairies, goblins and other characters from Scottish folklore. Abbotsford House is open from March onwards as well as over the festive period. Has a good café/restaurant which is open all year round.

**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 from Spring to end September, 11am to 4pm. 🐾

**Floors Castle & Walled Gardens:** A magnificent castle on the edge of Kelso, plus the Walled Garden, Millennium Garden and Terrace Café. 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...a family nature trail can be followed through the gardens and woodlands. Lots of events planned for 2026 including concerts, Open Air Theatre, kids activities & more 🐾

**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 can be booked in advance.

**Carolside Gardens:** a real hidden gem and “one of Scotland's finest private gardens”, just north of Earlston (10 mins from here). 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 1<sup>st</sup> May to 1<sup>st</sup> September, Saturdays and Sundays only, 11am to 5pm, adults £6 donation at entrance, children go free. Guided tours on request. 🐾 on lead

**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

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and other families. Thursday to Sunday opening days. There are also some events including Duathlon, creative workshops and kids activities 🐾

**The Hirsal, Coldstream:** 20 mins away, the Hirsal Estate is a pretty place for an easy walk with simple, circular routes through the grounds (also suitable for buggies and children's bikes). You can also see Highland cows on the estate, which the children always love. There is a super tea room which does breakfast, coffee, loads of cakes and scones, and lunch. Also a collection of artist's studios, small shops and a farm shop. Mostly 🐾

**Priorwood Garden and Harmony Garden, Melrose:** stunning gardens run by the National Trust for Scotland – both are open daily from April to October. 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 (Apr-Oct), you can visit the grounds, walled garden, woodlands, children's playground and brew house. Brilliant maze which kids will love. The House offers pre-booked, guided tours. The Garden Café offers lunches and afternoon teas. 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 10am to 5pm from 1<sup>st</sup> April onwards. 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. Also available from time to time are canoeing, kayaking and SUPing on the River Tweed, see Adventure Northumberland below. 🐾

**Jupiter Artland,** head north towards Livingston (50 minutes): incredible sculpture and art gardens which are well worth a visit – open daily from May to October, Thur-Sun during November, December, February and March (closed January). It's very much an outdoor modern art gallery, with both permanent collections and a stream of creative exhibitions. Book in advance on the website. 🐾 and dogs have to have their own ticket!

**Royal Botanic 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 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. Note that the glasshouses are closed for a period of time due to large scale renovation works (the Edinburgh Biomes Project). 🐾

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**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, open daily, with gardens created by the "landscape genius" Lord Armstrong (see Gardens section). The house is also 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. 🐾 in grounds.

**The Alnwick Garden** (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. 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. *Also see the incredible Lillidorei in the Outdoor Activities section below.*

**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! Downton 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.

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INDOOR ACTIVITIES:  
BREWERIES,  
DISTILLERIES, TEXTILES,  
CRAFTS & MUSEUMS

**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/>. Several mills open their doors to visitors and offer guided tours – these make for a genuinely fascinating and very Borders experience, and are especially good on a rainy day. Here are the best options:

**Lochcarron of Scotland, Selkirk** (35 mins): the world's leading manufacturer of tartan, right here in the Borders. Their guided mill tours take you through the entire process from yarn to woven fabric – a real working mill, not a polished visitor experience. Fascinating to see how tartans are designed, dyed and woven on site. Tours run Monday to Thursday at 10am, 11.30am and 1.30pm and take about 45 minutes. Booking in advance required. There is also a visitor centre, café and shop. Highly recommended.

**Johnstons of Elgin, Hawick** (45 mins): a 5-star VisitScotland visitor attraction on the banks of the River Teviot. Johnstons have been making luxury cashmere and fine woollens for over 200 years, and their guided Discovery Experience takes you behind the scenes of the working mill to follow the 'goat to coat' journey. There is also a beautiful café with locally sourced food and a wonderful shop. Book in advance via their website. Excellent combined with a visit to the Borders Distillery around the corner.

**Borders Textile Towerhouse, Hawick** (45 mins): a free museum telling the story of the Borders' knitwear and tweed industries across 200 years. Set in the oldest building in Hawick – a 16th-century towerhouse – it has changing exhibitions, craft workshops and a well-stocked gift shop. Well worth combining with a visit to Johnstons of Elgin and the Borders Distillery, all of which are in Hawick.

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**Great Tapestry of Scotland** (20 mins) – this flagship visitor attraction for Scotland. It tells Scotland's story from pre-history to modern time is told through a Bayeux-style tapestry in Galashiels. 1,000 volunteer stitchers in Scotland worked for over 2 years on 160 panels. The tapestry is thought to be one of the longest in the world at 143 meters, and 70 meters longer than the famous Bayeaux Tapestry in Normandy. The panels are exquisite - finely stitched, vividly colourful and animated with detail. A brilliantly told history of Scotland. Open Thur-Sun and café onsite (also open Mondays).

**At Birkhill House CIC** (10 mins) – amazing, very local social enterprise offering art and crafting workshops as well as animal experiences (alpacas, sheep, goats, birds, cats!). Give them a ring if you're interested – Lara, the owner, is an incredibly kind and welcoming person, and we have been to Birkhill many times in recent years for her workshops. They also have a new Fleece & Fibre Hub for those with a particular interest in wool including how to treat it and spin it, and what you can make with yarn. Highly recommend!!

**Goat Willow Pottery CIC** (20 mins) – gorgeous community pottery in nearby Tweedbank. You can book for one-off courses in small groups, both handbuilding and using a pottery wheel. Get creative with clay and discover the joy of crafting your unique pieces. No experience is needed, just bring your curiosity and a willingness to get a little messy! It's a fun, relaxing way to unwind, learn something new and create something beautiful.

**Spa days** – The Schloss Roxburghe Hotel near Kelso has an outstanding spa with a warm outdoor pool and ultra luxurious relaxation areas and treatments – we have been, it's genuinely one of the most beautiful spas we've ever been to. The hotel also has one of the finest restaurants in Scotland: Sunlaws, which was awarded 3 AA Rosettes in spring 2026. We have been and thought it was absolutely superb – the tasting menu with its focus on estate-sourced produce is something really special. And if you fancy a drink before or after, the whisky bar, Bar 1745, is brilliant – we did a gin tasting there which was excellent fun, with some very creative garnishes including burnt rosemary and fresh thyme. Also look at Fletchers Cottage at Archerfield House in East Lothian (no pool, but heavenly treatments). Finally, Stobo Castle, near Peebles, is hugely popular for good reason – it's Scotland's only destination spa and it really has everything you could possibly need. If you would prefer to have a massage at your cabin/cottage, please message us as we can usually recommend an excellent therapist locally.

**Saunas** – the Scottish sauna movement has been growing rapidly, and there are two brilliant options very close to us.

**Airhouses Wild Wellness Sauna** (10 mins, near Oxton): a gorgeous outdoor Nordic sauna for up to six people, set in the stunning countryside of the Airhouses organic farm with views across the Lammermuir Hills. The wellness area includes the sauna, a cold plunge tub, outdoor cold shower, changing pod with WC, and herbal tea-making facilities. Towels are included. Open to day visitors as well as guests – a one-hour session is £65, two hours is £85. Book via [airhouses.com/sauna](https://airhouses.com/sauna).

**Cedar Hus** (30 mins, near Melrose): a wonderful mobile Nordic sauna run by a husband and wife who farm organically in the Borders. Cedar Hus travels to a rotating selection of iconic Borders locations, so each booking offers something a little different – think riverside spots, hilltop views and open moorland. A really special and unusual experience. Book via [cedarhus.co.uk](https://cedarhus.co.uk).

**Trimontium Museum** – (20 mins). Trimontium Museum tells the story of the largest Roman forts north of Hadrian's Wall. Trimontium dates from around AD80 and was a frontier post used as a base for Roman incursions

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further north. The name means “place of three hills” – you’ll find the museum in the heart of Melrose, overlooked by the Eildon Hills. The museum tells Roman tales from the area in exciting new ways, with genuinely spectacular finds – some of the finest Roman military objects on display in Britain. It has been rated 5 stars by VisitScotland and won the Best Visitor Attraction Thistle Award in both 2023 and 2025. We went recently as a family and can highly recommend the Trimontium Experience – a guided VR session using Oculus headsets that takes you back 2,000 years to walk through the fort as it once was. It was genuinely brilliant, enjoyed by all of us including our children. Sessions run daily and tickets include museum entry – check the website for current pricing, as there are separate rates for adults, children and under-5s (who go free). Booking in advance is strongly recommended as spaces are limited. Dogs are welcome in the museum too!🐾

**Tempest Brewing Co** (20 mins away): this local craft beer producer is offering tasting experiences, or “tap sessions”, on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. You will “taste the freshest, tastiest beer imaginable”. Tempest opened a new site in Tweedbank in 2024 which includes the brewery, taproom, beer hall, kitchen, brewery shop and beer garden. Highly recommended!

**Borders Distillery** – Based in a stunning converted building in Hawick (45 mins), this creative team is bringing whisky-making back to our region. You can book distillery tours. It’s a beautiful and fascinating place – we absolutely loved our last tour here. Combine with some textiles shopping (see below).

**Ad Gefrin Anglo-Saxon Museum and Whisky Distillery** – in Wooler, 45 mins south, opened in 2023. Distillery tours and the museums contains an extraordinary amalgamation of artefacts found locally and also on loan from The British Museum. Child-friendly with dressing-up box and interactive screens. Bar & bistro on site. Open daily.

**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.

**Jedburgh Castle Jail and Museum** (35–40 minutes): I haven’t been myself, but I hear great things! Built in the 1820s on the site of the old Jedburgh

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Castle, the jail gives visitors a real sense of what prison life was like in the nineteenth century. Visit the cell blocks, find out about the prisoners held there, and enjoy lovely views over Jedburgh and the surrounding Borders countryside from the grounds. Entry is free, though donations are encouraged. It's also said to be one of the most haunted places in the Borders, so ghost-hunters take note! The jail reopens for the 2026 season on 28 March. Open Monday to Saturday 10am to 4pm, Sunday 10am to 3pm. One to watch: we have heard from the CEO that they are planning to open an escape room later in 2026 – keep an eye on their website for updates.

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## OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

**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!). 🐾

**Fishing:** This is fantastic fishing country. Here's a run-down of the options, from right on your doorstep outwards. The little river running through the Dod Mill grounds is the Boondreigh – we have fishing rights on it, so you are very welcome to fish there. It's a small burn, so you will likely want to head further afield too. The Leader Water (about 10 minutes away) is a lovely local river for fly fishing, with brown trout and grayling. Permits are now available from the Spotty Dog Deli in Lauder – a season ticket is just £10 (season runs 15 March to 4 October), so a day permit will be even less. Catch and release is encouraged, though you may keep a fish for the table subject to the size limits on the permit. The River Tweed (20–25 minutes away) is one of Scotland's great salmon and sea trout rivers and a wonderful place to fish. Permits are available from the Border Gun Room in St Boswells, who are very knowledgeable and good at advising visiting fishermen. More information at [fishpal.com/Scotland/Tweed](http://fishpal.com/Scotland/Tweed). For reservoir fly fishing, Whiteadder Reservoir in the Lammermuir Hills is well worth a visit – a beautiful and peaceful spot. Season and day passes are available from [whiteadderwatersports.co.uk](http://whiteadderwatersports.co.uk). As a bonus, Whiteadder also offers sailing, kayaking, paddleboarding and open-water swimming if others in your group fancy something different on the water.

**Tennis at Hillhouse:** a 10-minute drive north, a mile up a lane behind Carfraemill hotel, you can make use of professional-grade tennis court with the most gorgeous view to the south over Lauderdale. There are rackets and balls up there if you need. Bookable online at [www.hillhouse.scot/tennis](http://www.hillhouse.scot/tennis). It's £5 for 1 hour and £3 for each subsequent hour.

**King's Dog Leisure:** (10 mins north) a dog activity park for hire. Bookable online in 50 minute slots. Designed to provide a safe, fun and stimulating environment where your dogs can run, play and explore off-lead. 🐾

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

**Scottish Border Sporting:** clay pigeon shooting, tomahawk throwing and archery – can be done 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> 🐾

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**Border Berries:** pick your own strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, blackcurrants, redcurrants & tayberries – usually sometime in June until August. We love this place. It's on Rutherford Farm which is on the road between St Boswells and Kelso (we go via St Boswells). No booking needed, free entry, just pay for what you pick! There is a small café on site too. 🐾

**Clackmae Farm, near Earlston** (15 mins): a brilliant local gem that has become something of an autumn institution around here. Sally and Jonny Williams run a working dairy and sheep farm that opens each October for a pick-your-own pumpkin patch with over 85 varieties, a maize maze, pumpkin carving workshops and lots of family fun. The farm is just the right scale – a proper working farm, not a commercial theme park. Pre-booking is essential as it gets busy. Follow Clackmae Farm on Facebook or Instagram for dates each year.

**Faldonside Eco, near Melrose** (20 mins): a beautifully run rewilding estate beside the River Tweed near Melrose, offering a wonderful range of nature-led experiences. These include guided estate tours, foraging walks, forest school sessions for children, wildlife watching, outdoor yoga and 'Babes in the Wood' sessions for parents with babies. The estate has been thoughtfully rewilded over the past few years and is home to roe deer, otters, red squirrels, kingfishers and a wealth of birdlife. A genuinely special place to connect with the natural world. Check [faldonsideeco.com](http://faldonsideeco.com) for what's on.

**Stand-up paddle boards and kayak hire:** excellent fun and a great way to explore local lochs and rivers – you can often practice on the mill pond here before you go further afield! We recommend Audrey at "Kayak and SUP Hire and Sales 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. Life jackets available. Audrey can be reached on 07974 344063 🐾

**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!

**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. 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 (pre-booking essential) include meeting the animals and experiencing life on the farm. You'll find cows, goats, sheep, play areas and

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farm tours on offer including one to meet the Highland cows. Jacksons is a really authentic farm experience – there are “farm parks” a bit further afield too.

**Bairnkine Farm Tour:** Farmers Matt and Lucy Tile will take you on a super trailer tour of their farm near Jedburgh. Sheep, cows, wildlife, birds, nature to see and learn all about farming. Lambing tours also available (spring only).

**Wilsons 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.

**Stouslie Farm, near Hawick** (about 30 minutes): a brilliant, family-run livestock farm in the hills above Hawick. In the spring, they run a popular lambing experience for visitors. In October, they host a pick-your-own pumpkin patch with loads of family activities including marshmallow toasting and archery – great fun! They also have a farm shop on site selling home-reared beef, lamb and pork, plus cakes and local produce. Well worth a look at what's on when you're planning your trip – check their website at [stousliefarm.com](http://stousliefarm.com).

**7Stanes / Glentress for mountain biking** – near Peebles (about 50 mins). It's a mecca for mountain bikers who flock to the award-winning trails. 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 – 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 promises to be an unforgettable experience. Booking definitely necessary.

**Surfing, coasteering 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.

**Lost Shore Surf Resort** (50 mins) is Europe's largest inland surfing destination, close to Edinburgh. Surf lessons and sessions (all levels), waterfront bar, café and restaurant, surf shop and wellness treatments. A spectacular day out – all necessary equipment is included.

**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 a 5\* outdoor activity centre in East Lothian (45 mins) with water-based assault courses, wakeboarding, ringo rides, a zip

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trail and segways. Lots and lots of fun to be had here! Pre-booking essential.

**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.

**Lilidorei, Alnwick Gardens:** an incredible adventure playground for ages 11 and under (and adults enjoy too!) at Alnwick Gardens. Tickets should be bought in advance – they sell out frequently. This magical village is the largest play structure in the world. Lilidorei is home to 9 mythical clans – some friendly, some troublesome, who spend the entire year preparing for Christmas! Although you can't see the mystic creatures that live there, you may hear them whilst exploring the immersive soundscape that has been created, and you can peep into the clans' habitats to find out how they live. Open all year, 10am to 4pm.

**Northumberland Zoo:** a wonderful little zoo which is great for kids. It's the ideal scale for a few hours visit, with over 80 species from tiny harvest mice to fluffy snow leopards to comical meerkats and friendly otters. Our kids have loved their visits here. There is also a café, soft play and excellent outdoor play areas.

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

**Farm parks to visit:** as well as Jacksons of Jedburgh mentioned above, there are a number of other farms slightly further afield which have "the works" in terms of animals, adventure playgrounds, cafes. Lots of fun for little ones albeit a less authentic farm experience!!

- Craigies Farm, Queensferry: an adventure farm park with loads for kids to do inside and out, feed the animals sessions, café, farm shop and pick your own berries.
- East Links, near Dunbar: farm animals, loads of playground and things to bounce on, café etc.

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#### WALKS FROM YOUR DOOR

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

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#### 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. 🐾

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#### MARKED 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](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/695/lauder_paths_network)  
🐾

There is a good walk along the river at **Thirlestane Castle**. We often park in the small car park at the roadside entrance to the castle's woodland lodges (sign off the B6362, less than 5 mins from here). From there, you can take the track behind, then turn left when you reach the Southern Upland

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Way. Continue on the marked path down to the river, cross the bridge, and take the river path to the right. 🐾

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/> 🐾

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## TOURS & GUIDES

If you would like to explore the area with expert local knowledge, there are some outstanding options. These are people who genuinely love this place and can make a day out into something unforgettable.

**Tweed Valley Blogger:** Stewart Wilson is an absolute character and, in our opinion, one of the very best tour guides in Scotland. He knows this area inside out and has a gift for storytelling that brings the history, landscape and people of the Borders vividly to life. He offers bespoke driver-guided days out, walking tours and low-carbon adventures across the Tweed Valley and wider Borders. He has 100% five-star reviews on both Google and TripAdvisor, and won TripAdvisor's Travellers' Choice award in 2025. Whether you want to explore the Borders abbeys, discover hidden stories of the Reivers, take in the landscapes that inspired Sir Walter Scott, or simply go somewhere you'd never find on your own, Stewart will make it a day to remember. Highly, highly recommended. Visit [tweedvalleyblogger.com](http://tweedvalleyblogger.com).

**Borderland Food Tours:** Katrina Reynolds is a font of knowledge on all things to do with farming, food and local produce in the Borders. She can get you access to producers and places that are not normally open to visitors – the kind of behind-the-scenes food experiences that most tourists never get to discover. Thoroughly recommended for food lovers. Visit [borderlandfoodtours.com](http://borderlandfoodtours.com).

**Geowalks:** for geology enthusiasts or anyone curious about the ancient landscape beneath their feet, Geowalks offer outstanding guided geological walks across Scotland and the Scottish Borders. Led by Dr Angus Miller, a geologist with a fantastic ability to make complex science accessible and exciting for all ages. Given the significance of Siccar Point (see The Coast section below), a Geowalks tour of the Berwickshire coast is particularly special. Visit [geowalks.co.uk](http://geowalks.co.uk).

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## 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.

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**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 too. 🐾

**Secret beaches in East Lothian** – excellent beaches include: Seacliff Beach with its stunning views of Bass Rock and Tantallon Castle; Aberlady Bay, which is part of an amazing nature reserve – access over a wooden footbridge through the reserve; Tynninghame Beach for a long stretch of sand which is often deserted, and it has scenic pine forests to explore either side. 🐾

**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!

**Siccar Point and the new Deep Time Trail** (50 mins, on the Berwickshire coast): this is one of the most significant geological sites in the entire world, yet it sits quietly on our doorstep, almost unknown. In 1788, a Scottish farmer and philosopher called James Hutton arrived here by boat and stood on a rocky shore that would change humanity's understanding of the Earth forever. What he saw in the rocks – two completely different strata of stone laid at completely different angles, representing an unimaginable gap in time – proved that the Earth was not 6,000 years old as people then believed, but ancient beyond comprehension. Hutton called this concept 'Deep Time': the idea that geological processes have been quietly shaping and reshaping the planet for billions of years. His companion John Playfair recorded that on seeing the rocks, "the mind seemed to grow giddy by looking so far into the abyss of time". It is the founding moment of modern geology, and it happened here in the Borders. Siccar Point was named the first of 100 Global Geological Heritage Sites by the International Union of Geological Sciences in 2022 – the most important geological site on Earth. A brand new Deep Time Trail, a 1.3 km path from the road to the viewpoint, is opening in spring 2026 to mark the 300th anniversary of Hutton's birth. The trail will have a Discovery Hub at the viewpoint with multimedia interpretation, shelter and seating. The official opening weekend is 30–31 May 2026. It is already worth visiting even before then – simply extraordinary to stand somewhere so quietly momentous.

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## 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.
- Stow – 15 mins, newer park with a pump track for kids with bikes or scooters.
- Harestanes – brilliant playpark and little shops / coffee stops on site
- Coldstream and Kelso both have great new play parks
- 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. It's great to visit all year

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around, including during August for the Edinburgh Festival which is a fabulous experience.

Online ticketing options for **Edinburgh Zoo, Royal Botanical Gardens, the Museum of Scotland, Camera Obscura** etc. 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:

- 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 once or twice an hour – check the ScotRail website.
  - 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 mins, running every 30-60 mins.
  - 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 Lauder, park in the centre of town. Bus stop outside the Post Office takes you to Edinburgh. 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.
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