The Scottish Borders Tapestry Trail

An Inspirational Journey Through Scotland's Stitched Heritage



THE great tapestry of scotland
GALASHIELS



Follow the threads that have woven Scotland's story for centuries.

Scotland's past is woven into its landscapes, castles and communities, but nowhere is it expressed more beautifully than through its extraordinary textile traditions. From magnificent tapestries that once adorned the walls of grand country houses to intricate embroidery created by queens, noble families and skilled artisans, the Scottish Borders offers a fascinating journey through centuries of creativity and craftsmanship.

At the heart of this experience stands **The Great Tapestry of Scotland**, one of the world's largest community textile art projects. From here, the journey unfolds across the Borders, uncovering hidden collections, remarkable houses and enduring traditions that together reveal a unique chapter of Scotland's cultural legacy.

Created as inspiration for travel trade professionals, the Scottish Borders Tapestry Trail brings together a collection of exceptional experiences that can be combined to create memorable programmes for cultural touring groups, textile enthusiasts, educational travel and discerning independent travellers.

The Great Tapestry of Scotland



Scotland's Story, Stitched by Its People

Every great journey begins with an introduction, and none captures the spirit of Scotland more vividly than The Great Tapestry of Scotland.

Created by more than 1,000 volunteer stitchers from across the country, its 160 hand-embroidered panels trace Scotland's journey from ancient landscapes and legendary figures to innovation, discovery and modern life. Rich in colour, craftsmanship and imagination, the tapestry is both a remarkable work of art and a celebration of the people whose hands brought it to life.

It is the perfect starting point for a journey that continues beyond its walls, inviting visitors to discover the remarkable textile collections and historic houses that have shaped Scotland's stitched heritage over the centuries.

Booking Contacts

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Mary Queen of Scots Visitor Centre

The Queen Behind the Crown

Mary Queen of Scots is remembered for political intrigue, imprisonment and tragedy. Less well known is her extraordinary skill as a needlewoman.

Throughout her years of captivity, embroidery became both solace and self-expression, allowing her to maintain friendships, exchange gifts and preserve her identity during the most uncertain years of her life. At the Mary Queen of Scots Visitor Centre in Jedburgh, visitors discover this deeply personal side of one of Scotland's most famous monarchs through historic textiles, exquisite appliqué work and needlepoint inspired by embroideries traditionally associated with Mary herself.

The result is an intimate encounter that reveals not simply a queen, but a woman whose creativity endured even in the darkest chapters of her life.



Booking Contacts

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Traquair House



Hidden Treasures

Behind the ancient walls of Scotland's oldest continually inhabited house lies one of Britain's finest private collections of historic family needlework.

For centuries, generations of the Stuart family quietly preserved exquisite seventeenth-century petit point embroideries depicting flowers, plants and animals, together with rare French colifichet work created by daughters of the family during their education at a convent in France. The collection also includes beautifully preserved priests' vestments, a rare seventeenth-century silk quilt associated with Mary Queen of Scots and an exceptional crewel work tapestry.

These treasures remained largely unseen until Traquair opened its doors to visitors in the 1950s. Today they offer a rare opportunity to experience centuries of domestic craftsmanship, preserved not by museums or collectors, but by one remarkable family that simply never let its past disappear.

Booking Contacts

Gillian Steele / Catherine Maxwell Stuart
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www.traquair.co.uk

Bowhill House



The Art of Collecting

For centuries, Europe's greatest tapestries were far more than decoration. They reflected power, prestige and an appreciation of artistic excellence.

At Bowhill House, visitors encounter one of Scotland's finest private tapestry collections, where magnificent Mortlake weavings inspired by Mantegna's Triumphs of Julius Caesar hang alongside elegant eighteenth-century Aubusson furnishings and masterpieces from the renowned Buccleuch Art Collection.

Each piece reflects centuries of craftsmanship, patronage and collecting. Specialist guided tours reveal not only their artistic significance but also the fascinating stories behind how these extraordinary textiles found their home in the Scottish Borders, creating an experience that brings together art, architecture and one of Scotland's great country houses.

Booking Contacts

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Mellerstain House

A Stitch in Time

Some of the most fascinating textiles are not those commissioned by kings or collectors, but those created by families themselves.

Within the elegant interiors of Mellerstain House hangs the Mellerstain Panel, an exceptional example of early eighteenth-century tent stitch embroidery created in 1706 by sisters Rachel and Grisel Baillie together with their governess. Inspired by decorative pattern books of the period, the panel offers a rare glimpse into the artistic education and accomplishments expected within Scotland's great houses.

A petit point fire screen in the library is also the work of the Baillie daughters and dates back to 1720. Both offer a glimpse into the Borders rich textile tradition.



Booking Contacts

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Neidpath Castle



Live the Journey

The final chapter offers something different.

Rather than simply admiring centuries of history, visitors have the opportunity to spend the night surrounded by it.

Standing proudly above the River Tweed for more than seven hundred years, Neidpath Castle has welcomed kings, queens, soldiers, poets and travellers. Mary Queen of Scots herself stayed here during her progress through the Borders, providing another thread that quietly links the experiences along this journey.

Today, exclusive castle accommodation allows guests to experience one of Scotland's best-preserved medieval tower houses from within, bringing an unforgettable conclusion to a journey shaped by craftsmanship, culture and centuries of tradition.

Booking Contacts

Venue Office
office@neidpathcastle.com
www.neidpathcastle.com

Build Your Clients' Journey

The Scottish Borders Tapestry Trail has been designed as a flexible collection of experiences that can be adapted to suit different touring styles, group interests and programme lengths. Whether enjoyed as a dedicated textile-themed journey or incorporated into a wider Scottish itinerary, the trail provides countless opportunities to create memorable cultural experiences.

Scottish Borders Tapestry Highlights

One Day

An ideal introduction for individuals and groups touring from Edinburgh or incorporating the Borders into a wider Scottish programme. Begin at The Great Tapestry of Scotland before discovering a carefully selected collection of the region's most significant textile treasures, offering an inspiring snapshot of Scotland's stitched heritage.

The Scottish Borders Tapestry Trail

Two Days

Allow more time to uncover the rich variety of experiences that make the Scottish Borders unique. From royal embroidery and hidden private collections to magnificent country house tapestries, the journey combines exceptional craftsmanship with beautiful landscapes, welcoming towns and the opportunity to stay in the heart of the Borders.

Scottish Borders Heritage Journey

Three Days

Expand the experience by combining the Scottish Borders Tapestry Trail with the wider cultural treasures of the Scottish Borders. Explore Abbotsford, the home of Sir Walter Scott, discover the Roman legacy of Trimontium Museum, wander through the magnificent ruins of Melrose Abbey or enjoy the grandeur of Floors Castle. Together they create a richly layered journey where textile traditions become one thread within the wider story of this remarkable region.

Every programme can be tailored to suit the interests, pace and aspirations of individual groups. Combine the experiences featured within the Scottish Tapestry Trail with gardens, castles, literary heritage, food and drink, walking or other cultural experiences to create bespoke itineraries that showcase the very best of the Scottish Borders.



Trade Planning Guide

Experience	Suggested Visit	Best Suited To
The Great Tapestry of Scotland	1-3 Hours	All group types, FIT, educational and special interest groups
Mary Queen of Scots Visitor Centre	45-60 Minutes	Cultural touring, educational groups, specialist interest groups, small groups only
Traquair House	1-2 Hours	Textile & embroidery groups, heritage groups, cultural touring
Bowhill House	1½ - 2 Hours	Premium groups, private dinners, cultural touring, special interest groups
Mellerstain House	1½ Hours	Decorative arts, heritage groups, cultural touring
Neidpath Castle	Overnight or private visit	Luxury groups, FIT only, exclusive use

Ready to build your clients' Scottish Borders Tapestry Trail?

Each experience featured within this itinerary is independently managed and can be combined to create bespoke programmes for your clients. To start planning your itinerary, please contact the participating organisations directly using the details provided in this guide. Each partner will be happy to discuss availability, group visits and tailored experiences.

LIVE BORDERS