

Harry Potter

EDINBURGH LOCATIONS SCOTLAND



The Elephant House, Address: 21 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EN

Self-titled as 'the beginning of Harry Potter', this quaint little café may well be where it all began... And, indeed, a sign on the front window of the café reads '**birthplace of Harry Potter**'. That being said, Rowling herself often refers to a '*train journey between London and Manchester*' as the place where she first dreamt up the Potter world and so perhaps this café being the birthplace is a little wishful thinking...

However, JK Rowling did come to the Elephant House frequently to pen her novels in the backrooms of the café. There are even photos of her in the mid-90s scribbling down notes for her acclaimed works. From this café, she could see the Castle, Greyfriars Kirkyard and many other places which gave her inspiration for lots of locations in the books.

Today, the toilets here have become a kind of homage to Harry Potter in of themselves. Covered in scrawls and pen marks, people have added themselves to the ever-growing list of 'Dumbledore's Army'. You can enjoy a coffee, cake or simply wander around for the fee of £1.

Due to the book's popularity, this is easily the busiest Harry Potter location in Edinburgh. If you don't want to wait too long, make sure to come here early or late at night. Finally, it's worth noting that there is also no Wi-Fi here. A sign at the front desk proclaims you should 'talk to one another like it's 1995,' the same year in which Rowling would have come here to write.



Greyfriars Kirkyard, Address: Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh EH1 2QQ

Much of the inspiration in the books for the locations and names in the series were sourced from a combination of Rowling's imagination, and what she could see from the back windows of the Elephant House Café. As such, many character's surnames from the books can be found in Greyfriars Kirkyard.

After all, this ancient churchyard is merely a few minutes walk from the Elephant House and would have been the perfect place to take a break in between writing chapters. Notable names to be found here include Riddell and McGonagall.

The graveyard itself is accompanied by the nearby Greyfriars Kirk and was established as early as the 16th Century. It is open most of the time during daylight hours and is well worth a visit; if only to pay homage to some of the city's most notable residents.



George Heriot's School, Address: Lauriston Place, Edinburgh EH3 9EQ

Of all the Harry Potter in Edinburgh, the George Heriot school looks the most like it's come straight out of the books. Imposing and slightly austere, George Heriot's school is complete with a stone façade and winding turrets. Though Rowling has never explicitly said she gleaned inspiration from this medieval looking school, it's visible from the windows of the Elephant House.

What's more is that the George Heriot school has four houses and four turrets. Remind you of anything? Furthermore, Rowling has previously said that Hogwarts is located somewhere in Scotland... You should note that no Harry Potter scenes were actually filmed in Edinburgh, and the city was instead used as the inspiration for the books!



The Balmoral Hotel, Address: 1 Princes St, Edinburgh EH2 2EQ

Tired, stressed and looking for a little bit of peace, JK Rowling checked herself into the Balmoral Hotel to finish the final installment of the series. Rumour has it that upon completion of the book, she added a little graffiti to the furniture of the room to denote that she'd stayed within that particular suite.

Now, of course, as one of the most exclusive places to stay in the city, a night at the Balmoral does not come cheap. However, for those looking for a little bit of luxury on a trip to the Scottish capital, it is indeed possible to [stay in the very suite](#) that Rowling finished the book series in (*room 552*); for the princely sum of £1000.



Candlemaker Row and Victoria Street, Address: Victoria Street & Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh

With its candy-coloured houses and winding cobbled lanes, it's not hard to see why people might think that Candlemaker Row became a source of inspiration for Diagon Alley. And while it's true that JK Rowling sourced much inspiration from her surroundings in Edinburgh, she has never explicitly said that Candlemaker Row and Victoria Street inspired Diagon Alley.

Others have claimed that the inspiration for Diagon Alley comes from [Gandy Street](#) in Exeter, Devon. Whatever the case, a stroll down these winding streets is definitely worth it during your visit to Edinburgh... If only to see the pretty architecture and get a feel for the older part of the city!



Writer's Museum, Address: Lawnmarket, Lady Stair's Close, Edinburgh EH1 2PA

A trip to the writer's museum to see the exterior is worth a trip in itself! Looking like its straight out of the world of Harry Potter, this quirky and misshapen building sits in a little courtyard of its own. Tucked away and hidden from the main high street, you'll have to look hard to find this gem of a building.

While it's not explicitly sourced as the inspiration for anything in the books, this museum is an ode to all writers in Edinburgh, of which JK Rowling is one. There's even been an exhibition here on Harry Potter in Edinburgh, making this cultural space easily one of the [best secret spots in Edinburgh](#).



Map of Harry Potter locations in Edinburgh & Self-Guided Tour

Here's a map for the Harry Potter tour of Edinburgh. Locations that are easy to visit together include the Elephant House, Greyfriars Kirkyard, and Candlemaker Row. From Candlemaker Row, it's more than possible to travel down the hill, through the Grassmarket, and to the Vennel (*which is also one of [Edinburgh's best photo locations](#)*), which then leads on to George Heriot's School.

If you're in search of a guided tour of the city in order to see all of the Harry Potter inspiration locations, then you might want to [book this Harry Potter Magical Guided Walking Tour](#). Lasting for two hours, the walk can be taken in English or German and encompasses a trivia quiz and an exploration of Edinburgh.

