DISCOVER VOYAGE CHRONICLES

London + Scotland

A first-timer route that balances London icons, Edinburgh history and a real Highlands loop - without wasting half the trip backtracking.

10 DAYS	Best for: first-time UK travellers who want city + scenery + classic Scotland in one trip.
ROUTE	London (4N) → Edinburgh (2N) → Highlands / Skye (2N) → Edinburgh (1N)

CURATED WITH CURRENT OFFICIAL TOURISM GUIDANCE + PRACTICAL ROUTING + VEGETARIAN FOOD PICKS

Research refreshed: 13 September 2026 • Always re-check opening hours, transport and local advisories before booking.

Trip at a glance

Ideal trip length	10 days / 9 nights
Best pacing	4 London + 2 Edinburgh + 2-night Highlands loop + final Edinburgh night
Transport style	London public transport; direct rail London→Edinburgh; guided small-group Highlands loop or rental car; rail Inverness→Edinburgh
Book first	Tower of London, West End show, London→Edinburgh train, Edinburgh Castle, Highlands/Skye tour
Vegetarian ease	Excellent in London and Edinburgh; good in Fort William/Inverness/Skye if you plan meal stops
Best seasons	May-Jun and Sep for long daylight with fewer peak-summer crowds; weather is changeable year-round

Route overview

Day	Route / Focus	Overnight
1	Arrive London • Westminster + South Bank	London
2	Royal London + West End	London
3	Tower, City, Borough Market, Tower Bridge	London
4	Museums + Notting Hill / Hyde Park	London
5	Direct train to Edinburgh • Royal Mile	Edinburgh
6	Edinburgh Castle + Old Town + viewpoints	Edinburgh
7	Highlands: Stirling/Glencoe/Fort William	Fort William / Highlands
8	Isle of Skye + Eilean Donan / scenic west	Skye / Inverness area
9	Loch Ness / Cairngorms then Inverness→Edinburgh	Edinburgh
10	Edinburgh slow morning + departure	—

DVC route rule: this itinerary is built around geographic flow and realistic energy, not maximum pin-count. If weather, queues or road delays hit, protect the major experience and drop the lowest-priority stop.

Day-by-day itinerary

DAY 1 • Arrive London + iconic riverfront

Base	London
Morning	Keep arrival gentle. Check in, then walk Westminster: Big Ben, Parliament Square and Westminster Abbey exterior.
Afternoon	Cross Westminster Bridge to South Bank; London Eye area, Tate Modern exterior and Millennium Bridge if energy allows.
Evening	Sunset river walk; optional Thames cruise instead of extra walking.
Vegetarian pick	Mildreds (multiple branches) or a simple Indian vegetarian meal near your hotel.
Sleep	London - stay Zone 1 or near a well-connected Tube station.
DVC note	Do not overbook arrival day; London is best when the first evening is mostly outdoors and flexible.

DAY 2 • Royal London + West End

Base	London
Morning	Buckingham Palace / Changing of the Guard when scheduled, St James’s Park and The Mall.
Afternoon	Trafalgar Square → National Gallery → Covent Garden; add Soho / Carnaby if shopping interests you.
Evening	Pre-book a West End show.
Vegetarian pick	The Gate for plant-forward dining, or Mildreds for fully vegetarian/vegan-friendly comfort food.
Sleep	London
DVC note	Cluster sights geographically; avoid crossing the city repeatedly.

DAY 3 • Tower + City + Borough

Base	London
Morning	Pre-book Tower of London early. Walk to Tower Bridge and the riverfront.
Afternoon	Borough Market lunch, then Shakespeare’s Globe / Tate Modern / St Paul’s depending interests.
Evening	Skyline option: Sky Garden / Garden at 120 if reserved, then dinner in central London.
Vegetarian pick	Borough Market has abundant vegetarian choices; ask vendors about dairy if vegan.
Sleep	London

DVC note	This is your highest-value “historic London” day; start early.

DAY 4 • Museums + neighbourhood London

Base	London
Morning	Choose one major museum: British Museum OR Natural History/V&A; - not all three.
Afternoon	Notting Hill + Portobello (best on market days) or Kensington Gardens / Hyde Park.
Evening	Relaxed dinner and pack for Scotland.
Vegetarian pick	Rasa N16 for South Indian/Kerala vegetarian food, or The Gate if you want a polished meal.
Sleep	London
DVC note	A single museum done properly is better than a museum checklist.

DAY 5 • London → Edinburgh

Base	Edinburgh
Morning	Take a direct East Coast train from London King’s Cross to Edinburgh Waverley; book ahead for better fares.
Afternoon	Check in near Old Town / New Town. Walk Royal Mile, St Giles’ Cathedral, Victoria Street and Grassmarket.
Evening	Calton Hill for sunset if weather is clear.
Vegetarian pick	Hendersons-style vegetarian dining / city-centre vegan restaurants; many Old Town pubs also mark veggie dishes clearly.
Sleep	Edinburgh
DVC note	Rail is the most sensible city-centre to city-centre transfer for this route.

DAY 6 • Edinburgh deep-dive

Base	Edinburgh
Morning	Edinburgh Castle at opening; then walk down the Royal Mile through closes and wynds.
Afternoon	Holyrood Palace exterior / Dynamic Earth area; choose Arthur’s Seat if fit and weather is good, otherwise Salisbury Crags or Dean Village.
Evening	New Town: Princes Street Gardens, Scott Monument area and a slow dinner.
Vegetarian pick	Choose a dedicated vegetarian/vegan restaurant in the centre; VisitScotland notes many city options and veg-friendly traditional menus.
Sleep	Edinburgh

DVC note	Wear grippy shoes - cobbles and slopes add up.

DAY 7 • Highlands loop: Glencoe + Fort William

Base	Fort William / Highlands
Morning	Start a 2-night small-group Highlands/Skye tour from Edinburgh or self-drive. Typical logical sequence: Stirling/Loch Lomond → Glencoe.
Afternoon	Continue through dramatic Glencoe to Fort William; short viewpoints rather than long hikes if the weather turns.
Evening	Dinner and early night in Fort William / Glencoe area.
Vegetarian pick	Pre-check hotel vegetarian dinner or pick a café in Fort William; veggie soup, baked potato, pasta and Indian options are usually easy to find.
Sleep	Fort William / Glencoe
DVC note	For a first trip, a guided loop is lower-stress than driving single-track Highland roads.

DAY 8 • Isle of Skye + west-coast scenery

Base	Skye / Inverness area
Morning	Head toward Eilean Donan / Kyle of Lochalsh, then Skye. Prioritise 2-3 stops, not every pin.
Afternoon	Good first-timer mix: Portree + Old Man of Storr viewpoint + Kilt Rock / Quiraing viewpoint depending weather and road flow.
Evening	Continue toward Inverness area or stay on Skye if your tour structure allows.
Vegetarian pick	Portree has vegetarian café/pub options; carry snacks because rural kitchens close earlier than London/Edinburgh.
Sleep	Skye / Inverness area
DVC note	Highlands days should be weather-led; protect the route, not a rigid minute-by-minute list.

DAY 9 • Loch Ness + return to Edinburgh

Base	Edinburgh
Morning	If based near Inverness: Loch Ness / Urquhart Castle viewpoint or cruise.
Afternoon	Return south via Cairngorms / Pitlochry depending tour; if travelling independently, take the Inverness→Edinburgh rail after lunch.
Evening	Final Edinburgh dinner and easy stroll.
Vegetarian pick	Vegetarian curry, pizza or modern Scottish menus in Edinburgh.

Sleep	Edinburgh
DVC note	Sleeping in Edinburgh before departure creates a safer buffer than racing from the Highlands to an airport.

DAY 10 • Edinburgh slow morning + fly/train out

Base	—
Morning	Brunch, Stockbridge / Dean Village or National Museum of Scotland if your departure is late.
Afternoon	Collect luggage and head to airport/station with buffer.
Evening	—
Vegetarian pick	Keep breakfast simple near the hotel; airport/station options are secondary.
Sleep	—
DVC note	If flying long-haul, leave the final 3-4 hours unstructured.

Vegetarian food plan

Restaurant operations change, especially in mountain / seasonal destinations. Treat the names below as a strong shortlist, then re-check the latest hours and reservation policy close to travel.

Area	Vegetarian-friendly options	What to order / note
London	Mildreds; The Gate; Rasa N16; Borough Market	London's official tourism site highlights dedicated vegetarian restaurants. Reserve dinner on theatre nights.
Edinburgh	Dedicated vegan/vegetarian cafés + traditional restaurants with marked veg options	Old Town is touristy; New Town/Stockbridge can be calmer for dinner.
Highlands	Fort William / Inverness cafés, hotel restaurants, Indian food	Book dinner with accommodation in remote areas; carry fruit/nuts/protein bars.
Skye	Portree cafés and pub vegetarian plates	Rural hours can be short; do not rely on a late 9:30 pm dinner.

Practical planning checklist

- Waterproof shell + compact umbrella
- Comfortable waterproof walking shoes
- Light layers even in summer
- Power bank for long Highlands road days
- Advance attraction confirmations saved offline

Where to stay - quick framework

Choose location before hotel brand: prioritise a base that reduces repeated cross-city driving, has easy evening food access, and matches your earliest sightseeing starts. For road trips, secure parking / driver accommodation and a reliable breakfast can matter more than a decorative "view room".

Booking sequence

1. Lock trip dates and intercity transport.
2. Book the hardest-to-replace experience / attraction.
3. Book hotels by neighbourhood / route logic.
4. Add local transport / guide.
5. Re-check restaurant hours, weather and local advisories 48-72 hours before each key day.

Planning notes & research sources

This guide is a curated planning document, not a live booking confirmation. Attraction timings, roads, weather, prices and restaurant operations can change. Re-check official sources close to travel.

Visit London - visitlondon.com

Current 2026 first-timer and sightseeing route guidance, top attractions, London itineraries and vegetarian restaurant recommendations.

VisitScotland - visitscotland.com

Edinburgh 3-day routing and Highland itinerary patterns including Glencoe, Loch Ness, Skye and Cairngorms.

LNER / UK rail operators - lner.co.uk

Use for live London–Edinburgh schedules and advance fares before booking.

Save this guide, customise the hotel layer, then book the fixed-date pieces first: intercity trains / flights, high-demand attractions, and any guided mountain/desert transport.