

# I LOVE SCOTLAND

by Karen Kennedy

What can I say, I love Scotland! I have been three times and the last was for 3 months as it was my hope to be able to live there but stringent restrictions on employment didn't facilitate this dream. But nevertheless I had a marvelous time all three times.

Being an avid digital photographer, Scotland was a virtual visual feast, it was one "Kodak moment" after another. I was blessed with often magnificent vistas from double rainbows over Portree Harbor to a blood red sunset over Culloden Battlefield to misty mood over Urquhart and Loch Ness to a starburst of color in the gardens of a House of an Art Lover.



Portree, Isle of Skye



Culloden Battlefield



Urquhart Castle & Loch Ness



Garden – House for an Art Lover

I can now say that truly history does speak to one as I could feel the energy of many of the places I visited. I was literally overcome with emotion when visiting the Culloden Battlefield as well as sensed the mysterious depths of Loch Ness to name a few. Plus there is nothing like attending the Edinburgh Military Tattoo and at the end of the evening when they douse all the lights and the lone bag piper plays Amazing Grace from the top of the battlements to send shivers down your spine. No wonder you can begin to feel a glorious sensory overload and loving every minute of it.



Edinburgh Castle – Edinburgh Military Tattoo Finale

There is the incredible architecture of Glasgow where each building has its own unique architectural character. The multitudes of beautiful plant life from all over the world at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh, especially the newly updated glasshouse displays. Then there is the phenomenal private art collection, made public, the Burrell Collection with its works from works from ancient China, Egypt, Greece and Rome. Glorious churches and cathedrals such as St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh with its awe-inspiring pipe organ, the Glasgow Cathedral which dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, St. Michael' Parish Church at Linlithgow Palace with its ultra modern crown on the tower added in 1964, representing the Crown of Thorns.



Royal Botanical Gardens



St. Giles Cathedral



Glasgow Cathedral

My favorite is the Church of the Holy Rude in Stirling, one of Scotland's finest medieval churches. I admit to being fascinated by its adjoining graveyard where there are some of the most elaborate grave monuments ranging from a Grecian style Temple with its elegant goddess statue and the one built as a pyramid as well as the intricately and lovingly carved crosses.



Church of the Holy Rude – Stirling, Scotland

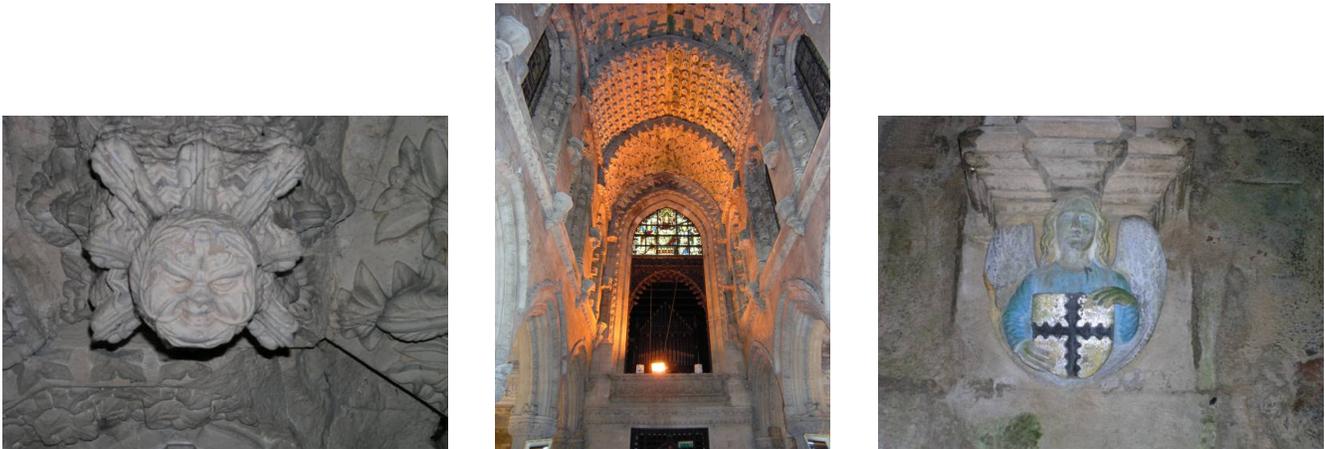
Then there is the remains of St. Andrews Cathedral, Scotland's largest and most magnificent church. The Cathedral itself dates from around 1160. The view from the top of St Rule's Tower is spectacular. During the medieval period it was a place of pilgrimage due to the presence of the relics of St Andrew and was the center for both religion and education. Which brings to mind a famous member of the Clan Kennedy, James Kennedy, was Bishop of St. Andrews. He lived during the 15<sup>th</sup> century and was of the ancient house of Kennedys of Dunnure. He

was a son of Lady Mary, daughter of King Robert III, and was therefore a cousin of James II, who reigned during that time in Scotland. He is best known for all his work and dedication to the Reformation of the Church.



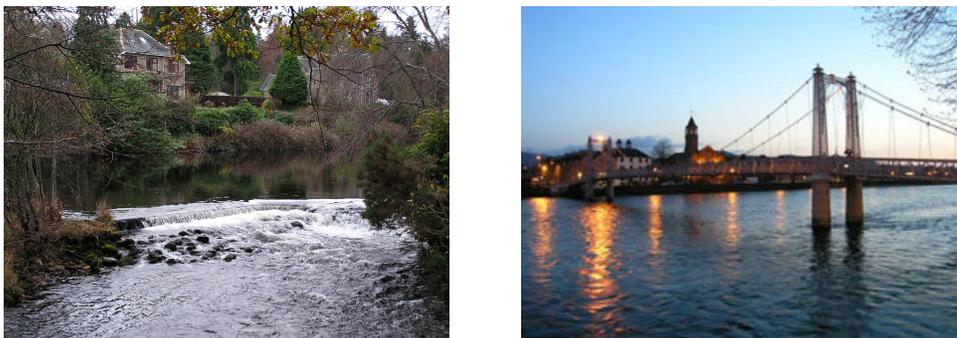
St. Andrews Cathedral and St. Rule's Tower

Of course, now with all the attention on the Da Vinci Code, tourism has greatly increased to the Rosslyn Chapel. I admit I didn't even know of the connection when I visited but it didn't matter as there is so much charm and mystery associated with this Chapel with its mixture of pagan and Christian carvings. With everything from the "Green Man" to carvings of ears of corn from the Americas to symbolism from the Bible and especially the Knights Templars, it is easy to see how speculation could have arisen about what might be buried beneath its floors.



Interiors of Rosslyn Chapel

I had the luxury of spending a week in Inverness and took idyllic daily walks along the River Ness where they have trails and benches so you can sit and contemplate the river flowing by. At night there is a touch of the eerie blended with the beauty of the colorful lights reflecting in the River that is like black glass. In fact, the Lochs in general in Scotland have this incredible quality where the reflections are truly a mirror image.



Inverness and the River Ness

Plus no visit to Scotland is complete without visiting a few castles, palaces and monuments such as Edinburgh, Stirling, Blair, Glamis, Urquhart, Dunnure, Craigmuller, Culzean castles, Falklands, Scone and Linlithgow Palaces

and the Wallace, Robert the Bruce and Glenfinnan Mounuments just to mention a few of each. It is so incredible to believe some of these have been around for 100s of years and to try to imagine the various lifetimes each saw in its history. Scone and Linlithgow Palaces have been associated with the reigns of Scottish Kings as Scone Palaces is the . Linlithgow Palace was home to James II, III, IV, V and VI as well Charles I and Charles II and Mary Queen of Scots, who was born there. At Linlithgow , I fell in love with the barbican on the East side. This was the original entrance to the palace and to me looked like a giant pair of platform shoes.



Edinburgh Castle



Stirling Castle



Blair Castle



Dunnure Castle



Scone Palace



Glamis Castle



Barbicans – Linlithgow Palace



Wallace Monument



Glenfinnan Monument



Bannockburn – Robert the Bruce

Speaking of castles, I had the pleasure of touring our own Kennedy Castles, especially Cassillis and Culzean with receptions at both. One can see why Culzean, a true "storybook" castle dramatically perched on the cliff top location with stunning views across the sea to the Isle of Arran and Ailsa Craig, is considered the "Jewel in the Crown" of the National Trust for Scotland. It is truly magnificent. Plus the additional fact is knowing our own hereditary Chief of the Clan Kennedy, the Most Honourable, the Marquess of Ailsa, Earl of Cassillis was born in this Castle. I mean, who else do you know whose very crib was also a seaworthy vessel!



Culzean Castle – Ayrshire Scotland

I also must mention the swans I found in Scotland. As I have a strong affinity for this particular creature as I love how graceful and serene they are and of course having them on the Clan Crest adds to their appeal. I found a perfect spot to watch them at St. Margaret's Loch in the Holyrood Palace Park. Here was the largest gathering of swans I had yet to find. I couldn't get enough of watching them interact the tourist who would feed them as well as their interaction with each other. I am sure you have seen on the tops of wedding cakes, etc. they symbol of two swans that come together to form the heart shape with their heads and necks. Well let me tell you it is a sight to see it for real right before your very eyes.



If you are into the new age/new wave of the future or are just ecologically minded, then you must visit the Findhorn Foundation and its the ecovillage movement located just outside of Findhorn. Findhorn, on the North Sea coast, is one of the oldest villages in Scotland and has been researched back to the Neolithic period located. There in Findhorn village I witnessed some of the most glorious sunsets. I have to say they were the end to some perfect days and also the end of my most perfect 3 month stay.



Findhorn Ecological Foundation



Findhorn Bay and view out to the North Sea

Visiting and briefly living there in Scotland builds within one this overwhelming sense of belonging, something I admit to having never found here in the U.S. I find myself truly homesick for Scotland.



Crail – Kingdom of Fife



Portree Harbor - Isle of Skye



Ailsa Craig