



Driving & Parking in Edinburgh or *Not!*

An Edinburgh Planning PDF

OutlandishScotland.com

A Novel Holiday Travel Guidebook

Outlandish Scotland Journey

Edinburgh Driving and Parking—or **NOT!**

Do **NOT** plan to drive around *within* Edinburgh's City Centre!

Seriously—Don't Do It.

Like London and Oxford, even visiting UK natives (including Scots) avoid driving within Edinburgh City Centre, for a number of reasons. Below are just a few of them.

Edinburgh City Centre Streets are Perpetually under Construction

When one street project is completed, another is begun somewhere else. If your GPS device doesn't have up-to-the-minute street closure information, you may suffer numerous incidents of rerouting.

Edinburgh City Centre Streets are Confusing

Several city centre streets are off-limits to private vehicles—restricted to buses and taxis. Streets that *do* allow private vehicle access often have lanes reserved for buses or taxis at certain times of the day. If you don't notice the lane restriction, you can be ticketed (£60) for driving in it.

Additionally, many streets within the Old Town are one-way streets, and this restriction may be difficult to recognize.

New as of April, 2018:

Cars Face Ban from [More] Parts of Edinburgh's City Centre in Major Shake-up

"Drivers in the Capital are facing a raft of new restrictions on where they can and can't drive in and around the Old and New Towns, in a bid to hand more space to people traveling on foot and bicycle.

"It is hoped the measures can help protect key routes in and around the capital's World Heritage Site, as well as tackle the 'congested and cluttered' state of many roads during peak tourism and festival seasons. ...

" 'While we are at the early stages, this project aims to improve conditions for access for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport in the city centre.'

"A spokeswoman for the council said it was due to launch an official consultation process on a 'Central Edinburgh Transformation' initiative in May [2018], with a detailed plan of action due to be published in the spring of 2019. ...

" 'We want to reduce congestion in the city centre and believe the key to doing this is improving efficiency of public transport and investing in walking and cycling infrastructure.' "

<https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/transport/cars-face-ban-from-parts-of-edinburgh-s-city-centre-in-major-shake-up-1-4716702>

Good Luck Finding Street Signs

"You won't be able to read street signs until it's too late. You may find street signs on building walls or sign posts in a myriad of sizes, fonts, and colors that were probably once quite useful when traveling by horse and carriage. But, amid all the cargo vans, single and double-decker buses, by the time you focus enough to read the sign you'll be past the intersection. And if you

try to drive slower to see better, the taxi driver in your rear view mirror will appear so close you'll be tempted to charge him a fare.

"What signs? Some roads appear to have been around so long that you're supposed to know them innately [and are not signed]. If you're not intimately familiar with the roads, or don't have a GPS system that's been updated in the last 30 minutes, you may find yourself circling the city centre endlessly with multiple detours around road works. And just because you may find one sign with the direction to Glasgow, don't expect every other turn you have to make to actually get to Glasgow to be similarly signed."

<https://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g186525-c179510/Edinburgh:United-Kingdom:7.Reasons.Not.To.Drive.In.Edinburgh.html>

Good Luck Finding a Parking Space

This actually is the biggest reason for not driving in Edinburgh's City Centre. Even if you feel comfortable navigating congested, confusing, unsigned streets, convenient parking is almost non-existent. Where it does exist, it is often already in use.

"Parking is expensive, *if* you can find it. If you're planning to drive in and park overnight or just for the day, you'll have a choice between expensive car parks which may not be conveniently located to your accommodations, and limited on-street parking requiring plugging of coins or cards into 'pay-and-display' machines and frequent moving to comply with a myriad of parking rules (provided the cars around you haven't boxed you in hopelessly). Many areas of the centre also have parking restricted to residents/permit holders only. The parking wardens are notoriously keen and fines are expensive."

<https://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g186525-c179510/Edinburgh:United-Kingdom:7.Reasons.Not.To.Drive.In.Edinburgh.html>

"The scourge of the city is the infamous parking attendants, locally known as 'Blue Meanies,' who mercilessly swoop on vehicles which may have only been illegally parked for a matter of minutes. ... Parking fines are [£60] and vehicles parked in an obstructive manner are liable to be towed away with a [£180] release fee to be paid for retrieval."

<https://www.traveldudes.org/travel-tips/getting-around-edinburgh-scotland-car-and-taxi/2217>

[Fines updated to those effective in 2018.]

BTW: Driving a Rental Car does *NOT* Exempt You from Parking Tickets! Nor does it exempt you from tickets for driving in a restricted lane, or speeding, or any other form of motor vehicle violation. If *anyone* tells you differently, politely thank them, then completely ignore them. According to A Novel Holiday Contributor, Tara Miller:

"I once used a pay-and-display machine in Bath, England. I looked at other cars around me and thought they had put the voucher on the dash, so that's what I did. Upon my return, a Parking Citation for not properly displaying my voucher was tucked under the windshield wiper. (I was supposed to have posted it on the passenger-side window.)

"I went to a nearby police department to show them my valid payment voucher and try to get the fine waived. But, the police department doesn't handle parking citations—private companies do that.

“The Police asked if it was a rental car. I replied that it was, and they said not to worry about it, because the company wouldn’t be able to trace it back to me anyway. **THEY WERE WRONG.** A month after my return to the US, I received a Parking Citation charge **on the credit card I used to rent my UK car** for £80 (approximately \$120 at the time!). UGH!”

An Excellent Solution: Save Edinburgh for the *last* days of your holiday and turn in your rental car before beginning your Edinburgh adventure.

Remember the “**Why not visit the city of Edinburgh first?**” section from *Outlandish Scotland Journey’s* Introduction:

“Visiting Edinburgh requires more walking than any other OSJ site. The most Outlandish parts of the city line steep streets, and you may occasionally have to slog up long and arduous flights of steps. If you spend the first few days of your holiday in a place that demands an inordinate amount of walking, you’ll end up *limping* your way through the rest of your holiday—literally.

Even normally active, physically fit Outlanderites may suffer from blisters if they tackle Edinburgh on the first few days. Few people are accustomed to vigorous walking, all day long.

Saving Edinburgh for the midpoint or end of an Outlandish Scotland Journey will allow your feet to gradually become used to the activity.

Turning in your rental car before reaching the city is quick and convenient—but only if you rented the car at an Edinburgh location, such as the Edinburgh Airport. A bus or tram journey from the airport to Edinburgh City Centre takes only 35 to 40 minutes, and a Return (2-way) ticket costs only £7.50 (bus) or £8.50 (tram). From there you can walk, or catch a bus or taxi, to your lodgings.

If you hired the car at the Glasgow Airport, however, the bus-and-train journey from there to Edinburgh City Centre takes 1.5 hours, and costs £21—one-way. If you’ll have to return to the Glasgow Airport after enjoying Edinburgh, this strikes us as being too much of a time and cash expenditure.

Another Solution: Park at your Edinburgh lodgings, leave the car there and walk, bus, or taxi around the city.

The problem with this option is that few lodgings within the city of Edinburgh have a private parking area. Those that do (especially the high-dollar hotels) may charge extra for it.

Be sure to ask about parking before booking *any* type of Edinburgh lodging. Hotels that charge for parking may not advertise this fact on their website. Some mention a “surcharge” for parking, but few actually identify what it will cost. Fees for Hotel car parks commonly range from £10 to £30 *per night*.

If your central Edinburgh residential lodging advertises “free parking on the streets nearby,” good luck finding an empty space where you can park without a resident permit.



[The Red Line on the map above indicates the Royal Mile.]

Street Parking in the City

Edinburgh's Old Town and New Town, as well as several adjacent residential areas, are situated within **Priority Parking Zones** designed to ensure that each zone's registered resident has the ability to reserve a parking space. There are *very few* non-resident parking spaces in the blue-colored priority parking zones.

You can find the priority parking zone map seen above at the link below. When researching an Edinburgh lodging, check its location on this map. We recommend *not* lodging in a blue-colored zone if you'll need to park a car.

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20277/parking_permits/378/parking_permit_address_search

Pay-and-Display Spaces

Non-resident parking spaces on streets nearest to the city centre are often pay-and-display spaces, and cannot be used overnight. If you manage to find an available pay-and-display space in this area, it will probably cost between £2.50 (\$3.50) to £4.20 (\$6) *per hour* to use it.

Additionally, the number of hours you can park in a street-side, city centre pay-and-display space almost certainly will be less than the amount of time you need to simply enjoy your Edinburgh City Centre visit. Returning to your car and plugging the meter for another "max stay" time period is *not* an option. You must move your car and find another parking space, or risk getting a ticket.

Commercial City Centre Car Parks

While overnight parking may be available at a city centre commercial car park, fees at these car parks are similar to those at city centre hotels, ranging from £10 to £30 *per night*. You can learn more about Edinburgh City Centre commercial car parks at the links below.

National Car Parks (NCP) is an agency that manages car parks all over the UK.

<https://www.ncp.co.uk/parking-solutions/cities/edinburgh/>

"Our FREE Android and iPhone apps make planning your route and finding your NCP car

park quick and easy. Our apps can also help you remember where you parked with easy to understand directions back to your car.”

<https://www.ncp.co.uk/parking-solutions/download-our-apps/>

Parkopedia is an international parking information compendium.

<https://en.parkopedia.co.uk/parking/edinburgh/>

Links to obtain Parkopeida’s free Android and iPhone apps are found at the bottom of their home page.

<https://en.parkopedia.com/>

Parking in the *Outer City* of Edinburgh Residential Zones

Over 100 B&B/Guesthouses are located in the green-colored (“B”) residential priority parking zones seen in the map above. In spite of being “outside” of the city centre, they still are quite close to it—often only a 30 minute walk away. That said, lodgings located in green-colored priority parking zones can legitimately offer “free parking on the streets nearby.” This offer, however, is tricky.

The majority of street-side parking spaces in the green-colored zones are reserved for resident permit holders between specific hours of almost every day. The B7 zone, for instance, reserves spaces for residents between the hours of 9:30am and 11am, on Mondays through Fridays (sign below, left).

Yes, this is confusing. It means that *anyone* can park in *any* car park space on a B7 zone street between 11:01am and 9:29am the next day. But, for 90 minutes on Monday through Friday mornings, cars *without* a permit parked in Permit Holder spaces risk being ticketed, or even towed.



[Google Street View image segment (enhanced)]

To safely park your car on a B-priority parking zone street, and *leave it there* for two or more nights, you must pay close attention to the street markings. **Only park in a space that is *not* bordered with *white dash markings*.**

The photo above right demonstrates the parking available on a section of Marchhall Crescent, in the B7 zone. This photo accurately represents the common ratio of permit-to-non-permit parking spaces within B-priority parking zones.

- Between the yellow arrows on the left of the photo, the street is marked with **white dashes**. This indicates **permit-holder-only** parking spaces. The 4 spaces seen between those arrows are at the end of a stretch of 6 permit-holder spaces.
- The green arrow on the left identifies 3 **non-permit** parking spaces—spaces *without white dash markings*.
- The red arrows on the right identify a **solid white line** street marking that indicates **No Parking** in front of private residence driveways and entrances.
- Between the green arrows on the right are 3 **non-permit** spaces—again, spaces *without white dash markings*.
- The yellow arrow on the right identifies 3 more **permit-holder-only** parking spaces—spaces with white dash markings.

As you can see, permit-holder parking spaces outnumber non-permit parking spaces, even in Edinburgh's B-priority parking zones. Since other visitors lodging in the B-priority parking zone also may be looking for a space, it can be difficult to find an open non-permit space nearby.



Our Favorite Solution: Leave your car in one of Edinburgh's **Park and Ride** car parks just *outside* the city, and use a bus or taxi to reach your lodgings!

We prefer to visit Edinburgh mid-way through a Scotland holiday. Thus, turning in our rental car isn't convenient. (Those who rent a car at the Glasgow Airport also may prefer this option.) Five of the seven car parks seen above offer *free* overnight parking. Not only will your Edinburgh parking be free when using one of these car parks, you won't have to drive into the city to find your accommodation.

<http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/parkandride>

Below is a directory of the Edinburgh Park and Ride car parks as seen from left to right on the map above. We provide website links and coordinates for those that allow overnight parking.

- **Ferrytoll Park & Ride:** Free overnight parking, unlimited nights. <https://www.ferrytoll.org/>
Coordinates: 56.022243, -3.406217
- **Ingliston Park & Ride:** No overnight parking.
- **Hermiston Park & Ride:** Up to 3 nights of free overnight parking.
<http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/hermiston> Coordinates: 55.916663, -3.315147
- **Straiton Park & Ride:** Up to 7 nights of free overnight parking.
<http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/straiton>
"Please ignore the 'no overnight parking' signs." (See note, below.)
Coordinates: 55.885773, -3.166170
- **Sheriffhall Park & Ride:** Free overnight parking, unlimited nights.
<http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/sheriffhall> Coordinates: 55.905365, -3.099190
- **Newcraighall Park & Ride:** "50p per 24 hours of parking." You may be expected to *return* to the car park *daily* to purchase another 24 hour pay-and-display ticket. **Don't park here.**
- **Wallyford Park & Ride:** Free overnight parking, unlimited nights.
You can take a bus *or* a train into Edinburgh from the Wallyford car park.
<http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/wallyford>
Coordinates: 55.942401, -3.011329

Please Note: To prevent people from *camping* in the parking lot, car parks may post "no overnight parking" signs so they can ask those with campervans to leave. *Or*, they may not provide overnight parking information on their website.

When deciding which car park would be most convenient for you, check the "Overnight Parking" section of the lot's website to ensure that overnight parking is still allowed. You may need to contact the car park's management agency—as we did, when compiling the list above in May of 2018.

Please Also Note: Although all of these car parks are under camera surveillance 24/7, overnight parking is "at your own risk." Leave nothing of value inside your rental car. Move any items you'll not be taking with you into the boot of the car.

Determine the Park and Ride car park closest to the lodgings you book (the proprietor can advise you)—OR use the one closest to the direction in which you will *approach* Edinburgh.

You can follow the links on that car park's website to obtain information about the Bus (or Train) services from there to your destination.

However! **Traveline Scotland** usually works better than those links for planning your journey from the Park and Ride to your lodgings destination. Just use the Park and Ride's name as your departure point.

www.travelinescotland.com

www.travelinescotland.com/apps

Everything Beyond This Point is for
 Outlanderites Who Are
 Hell-Bent on Driving in Edinburgh

All others can close this PDF now, and get back to planning a spectacular *Outlandish Scotland Journey!*



[Google Street View image segment (enhanced)]

The **NCP Edinburgh Castle Terrace** car park is the public car park nearest to Edinburgh Castle.

<https://www.ncp.co.uk/find-a-car-park/car-parks/edinburgh-castle-terrace>

Coordinates: 55.948150, -3.204477

Address: Castle Terrace, Edinburgh, EH1 2EW

“At this car park we use number plate recognition technology. On arrival at the entry barrier, your number plate will be read and a ticket automatically issued. If no ticket is issued, please press for assistance. Please keep your ticket safe as you will need this on exit.”

Fees below were current in 2018.

🕒 Opening times		📍 Pay on the day	
Monday	24Hr	1 hour	£5.00
Tuesday	24Hr	1 to 2 hours	£9.00
Wednesday	24Hr	2 to 3 hours	£13.00
Thursday	24Hr	3 to 4 hours	£16.00
Friday	24Hr	4 to 5 hours	£19.00
Saturday	24Hr	5 to 6 hours	£22.00
Sunday	24Hr	6 to 7 hours	£25.00
		7 to 24 hours	£28.00
		Evening rate	£8.00
		1700-2359	

[Evening rate not available in August]

A discounted Edinburgh Castle Terrace car park fee is available when you visit Edinburgh Castle.

“The discounted price is **£10 for 2-12 hours** and is implemented at the Car Park pay machine.

This offer does not apply in August.”

<https://www.edinburghcastle.scot/visit/getting-here>

To obtain the Edinburgh Castle discount:

- Take a ticket from the entry barrier machine and keep it with you.
- Have the ticket stamped at the Edinburgh Castle Audio Booth.
- After enjoying Edinburgh Castle and the Royal Mile *Outlander* sites—walk, bus, or taxi back to your car.
- Drive to the exit and insert your stamped ticket into that machine. The Edinburgh Castle stamp will automatically apply the discount. If you have any problems, press the intercom button on the machine and an advisor will assist you.

Pre-Booked Parking

To ensure that a car park space will be available for you during the high tourist season—June through September—you can **pre-book** (and pre-pay for) a parking space at *any* NCP lot.

“Parking in Edinburgh can be a nightmare during the Festival months [particularly in August], so it’s well worth taking advantage of the online pre-booking facility available at the Edinburgh Castle Terrace NCP car park.”

<https://www.ncp.co.uk/find-a-car-park/car-parks/edinburgh-castle-terrace>

If you pre-book a space at the Edinburgh Castle Terrace car park, you will have a reserved parking space, but will *not* be able to apply the Edinburgh Castle discount to your car park fee. Those visiting in June, July, and September will need to consider whether they are willing to pay more than the discounted price to ensure that a space will be open.

Because the castle discount is not available in August—the most congested month of the year—we *highly* recommend pre-booking your car park space during that month.

Walking From Edinburgh Castle Terrace Car Park to Edinburgh Castle

It is a 10 to 15 minute walk from this car park to the foot of the Castle Esplanade.

Begin by walking north on Castle Terrace, which soon curves east and becomes Johnston Terrace. The entire route is a moderate incline, until you reach the option of climbing a long, *very steep*, stone staircase up to the Castle Esplanade.

“Leading up from the Grassmarket, the Castle Wynd Steps lead to the top of Castle Hill and the entrance of the Castle Esplanade. With a total of 187 steps split in two half-way up by Johnston Terrace, it is a steep shortcut for the fit. There are public toilets near the top.”

<http://www.royal-mile.com/interest/castle-wyndsteps.html>



[Underlying image segment ©2018 Microsoft® Bing™ (enhanced)]

The **magenta arrow** at the bottom left corner of the photo above indicates the route you'll be walking from Castle Terrace car park, along Johnstone Terrace, to reach Edinburgh Castle. The **red arrow** identifies the 94, very steep Castle Wynd North steps that lead up to the Castle Esplanade entrance.

The **yellow arrow** indicates the roundabout where Johnstone Terrace meets the Royal Mile.

We suggest saving your energy by *skipping* the Castle Wynd North steps and continuing along Johnstone Terrace (still a moderate incline) to the Royal Mile. Once there, turn left, and it's little more than a block to the Castle Esplanade entrance. Since your pace is sure to slow if you elect to climb the Castle Wynd steps, skipping them and heading to the Royal Mile will *not* increase your travel time.



[Google Street View image segment (enhanced)]

The NCP car park nearest to **Holyrood Palace** is the **Edinburgh Holyrood Road** car park.

<https://www.ncp.co.uk/find-a-car-park/car-parks/edinburgh-st-johns-hill/>

Coordinates: 55.948990, -3.180831

Address: 2 Viewcraig Gardens, Edinburgh, EH8 9UL

Like the Edinburgh Castle Terrace car park, pre-booking is also available at this NCP car park. Because the Holyrood Road car park is smaller (297 spaces, vs. Castle Terrace’s 750 spaces), we highly recommend pre-booking if this is where you wish to park.



[Underlying image segment ©2018 Microsoft® Bing™]

It is a 10 minute walk from the Edinburgh Holyrood Road car park to Holyrood Palace.

- Head north on Viewcraig Gardens.
- Turn right on Holyrood Road and walk northeast to Reid’s Close.
- Turn left and walk north on Reid’s Close to the Canongate section of the Royal Mile.
- Turn right and walk northeast on Canongate to Holyrood Palace.

In the photo above, you may notice that there is a car park on Queens Drive, merely three blocks south of the Holyrood Palace entrance. That is the **Holyrood Park** “Broad Pavement” car park.

During the high tourist season (June through September) it is extremely unlikely that you’ll find a free space in this car park.

During the low tourist season (October through May), however, this might be a great place to park—if you don’t mind walking *uphill* to visit the Royal Mile *Outlander* sites.

“You must pay for the parking near Holyrood Palace (Broad Pavement).

The cost is £1 an hour (minimum charge £1).”

Charges apply from 8:30am to 5:30pm daily, except on:

- Saturdays & Sundays
- Easter Monday, 25 and 26 December, & 1 January
- Historic Scotland Members are not exempt from the charges.

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/holyrood-park/opening-times-and-getting-there/>