



Royal Mile Info & Edinburgh Terminology

An Edinburgh Planning PDF

OutlandishScotland.com

A Novel Holiday Travel Guidebook

Outlandish Scotland Journey

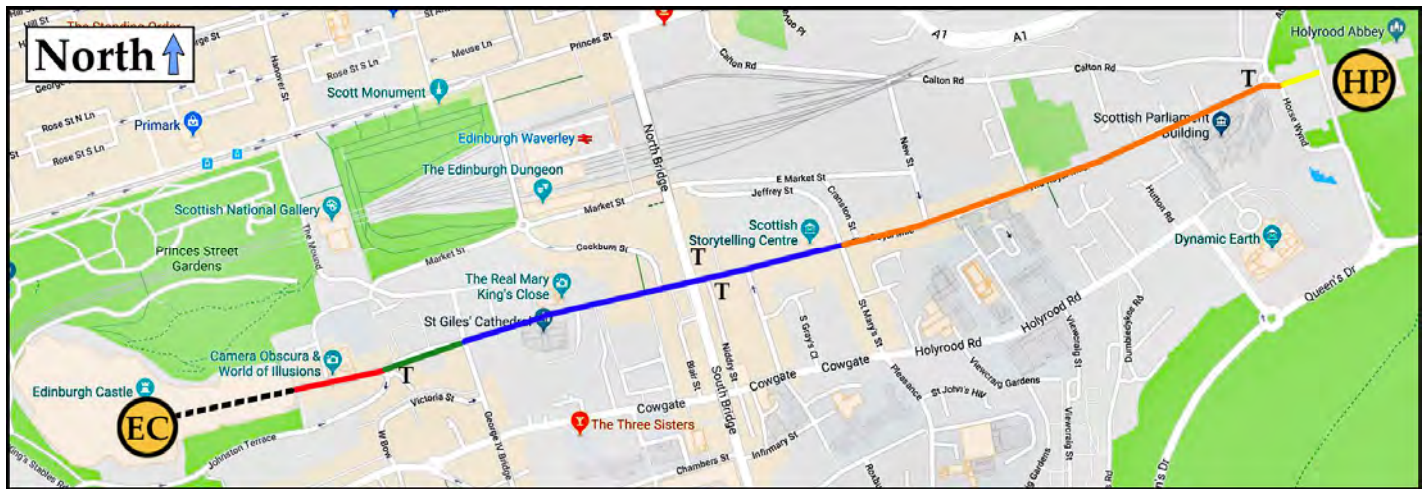
The Royal Mile & Some Edinburgh Terminology,

The Royal Mile

The main thoroughfare of Edinburgh's Old Town is a succession of consecutive medieval streets that extend downhill from Edinburgh Castle in the west (the "top" of the mile), to Holyrood Palace in the east (the "foot" of the mile). In 1901, these streets collectively became known as, "The Royal Mile."

As its name suggests, the Royal Mile is approximately one Scots-mile-long (5,952 feet/1,814 metres), a distance slightly longer than an English mile (5,280 feet/1,609 metres). It is called "Royal" because it runs between two historic royal residences.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Mile



[©2018 Google Map segment (enhanced)]

The map above identifies the Royal Mile's medieval street sections as they are encountered when walking downhill from Edinburgh Castle (EC), at left, to Holyrood Palace (HP), at right.

- Edinburgh Castle Esplanade—dotted-black line
- Castlehill—red line
- Lawnmarket—green line
- High Street—blue line
- Canongate—orange line
- Abbey Strand—yellow line
- **T—Taxi ranks on the Royal Mile** (We included these on the map so that you'll know where to find them, should you wish to take a taxi back to your Edinburgh lodgings.)

Lawnmarket west end, south side

North Bridge at High Street, east side

High Street at Niddry Street, south side, in front of the Radisson Hotel

Canongate east end, north side

Please Note: The map above, and its key, is in the Edinburgh City & Castle (Site #39) chapter of *Outlandish Scotland Journey*.

The Royal Mile is the busiest tourist street in Edinburgh, rivaled only by Princes Street in the New Town, located just to the north. While walking the Royal Mile you'll encounter a multitude of historic buildings, museums, galleries, kirks (churches), and a vast variety of shops—several selling inexpensive souvenirs (“tartan tat*”), others selling high-quality Scottish goods, some offering a combination of both.

“Despite being crammed with tourists, [the Royal Mile is] one of Europe’s best sightseeing walks.”

<https://www.ricksteves.com/watch-read-listen/read/articles/edinburgh-royal-mile>

*Tartan Tat: a term for cheaply made, low quality souvenirs, imported from places very far away from Scotland.

<https://albanach.org/purveyors-of-tartan-tat-taken-to-task-30b7abc52c40>

The Royal Mile also is home to five *Outlander* Novel Locations and three of Edinburgh’s four *Outlander* Film Sites. These places each have chapters of their own in the *Outlandish Scotland Journey* travel guidebook, presented in the order they are encountered when walking downhill from Edinburgh Castle to Holyrood Palace.

- Signet Library (Site #40); a Film Site
- Tweeddale Court (Site #41); a Film Site
- World’s End Pub (Site #42); a Novel Location
- Canongate Old Tolbooth and Canongate Kirk (Site #43); two Novel Locations
- Bakehouse Close (Site #44); a Film Site
- White Horse Close (Site #45); a Novel Location
- Holyrood Palace (Site #46); a Novel Location

Edinburgh Terminology & Pronunciation Pointers

Our pronunciation pointers are provided in the Edinburgh City & Castle (Site #39) chapter of *Outlandish Scotland Journey*. Below, is a brief explanation of each term—something *not* found in the chapter.

Auld Reekie: “Old REEK-ee”

The Scots nickname for Edinburgh, Auld Reekie means “Old Smoky” in English, and refers to the reek (nasty stink) of chimney smoke that used to blanket the city—not to mention the distinctive stench of chamber pot contents tossed from thousands of windows each night. You’ll learn more about the phrase “Gardylloo!” in the Bakehouse Close (Site #44) chapter.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicknames_of_Edinburgh



[©2006 C.D. Miller, Advocate's Close] [Harry Potter & the Half-Blood Prince screenshot segment (enhanced)]

Close: "CLOSE" (as in *near*, not as in *close the door*)

Close and wynd (below) are Scots medieval street terms—still in use today—for the small lanes and alleys branching off of Edinburgh's Royal Mile. A close is generally defined as a lane or alleyway too narrow or otherwise impassible for a horse cart to navigate. Some closes are private property, gated and closed to the public at night. Several closes contain flights of very steep steps, often with buildings looming on both sides, creating an eerie, claustrophobic, canyon-like atmosphere.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_closes_on_the_Royal_Mile

Two of the Royal Mile closes are *Outlander*-related sites.

- Bakehouse Close (Site #44) is a film site.
- White Horse Close (Site #45) is a minor novel location.

In the *Non-Outlander Edinburgh Sites of Interest PDF* you'll learn more about Edinburgh's Advocate's Close (photo above, left), which resembles "Knockturn Alley" of the *Harry Potter* movies.

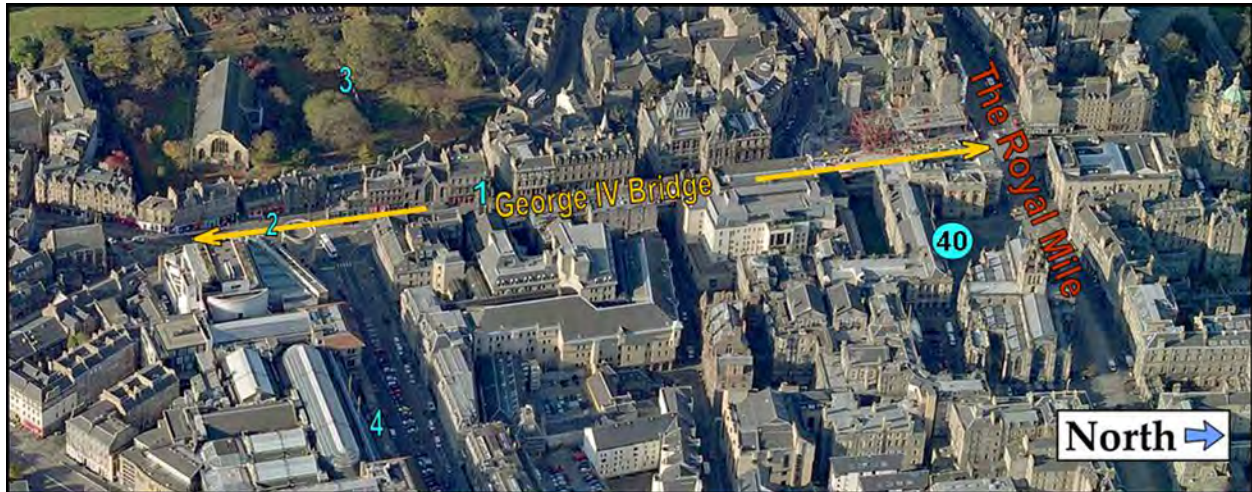
Edinburgh: "ED-in-burra"

There is no hard "g" sound when pronouncing Edinburgh. You may have to say ED-in-burra aloud several times before it feels right. Any other pronunciation proclaims, "I am a tourist!"

Some insist that Edinburgh is pronounced "ED-in-brah." While you wouldn't be lambasted for using this pronunciation, the vast majority of those in the know stick with "ED-in-burra."

To make things more confusing; when seen as a separate term—such as the Royal Burgh of Culross—the word "burgh" is pronounced with a hard "g" sound: "BERG."

Whether using "-burra" or "-brah," as long as you don't pronounce the "g" at the end of Edinburgh you'll be fine.



[©2018 Microsoft® Bing™ Bird's Eye segment (enhanced)]

George IV Bridge: “George Fourth Bridge”

George IV Bridge is an elevated street named for King George IV (“King George the Fourth”). Constructed between 1829 and 1832, it was designed to connect the South Side district of Edinburgh to the Old Town. It is approximately four blocks long and extends south from the Royal Mile, just west of The Signet Library (Site #40).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_IV_Bridge

Two Non-*Outlander* sites of special interest and two Harry Potter Places are associated with George IV Bridge—as indicated by the numbers seen in the image above:

- 1 The Elephant House Café (Harry Potter Place)
- 2 Greyfriars Bobby
- 3 Greyfriars Kirkyard (Harry Potter Place)
- 4 The National Museum of Scotland
- 40 The Signet Library

You’ll learn more about these four places in the Non-*Outlander* Edinburgh Sites of Interest PDF.

Holyrood: “HOLLY-rude” (like *holly bush*, not *holy relic*)

You’ll learn more about this pronunciation in the Holyrood Palace & Abbey (Site #46) chapter. Below is a brief explanation of how the abbey and palace came to be called Holyrood.

“Legend relates that in 1127, while King David I was hunting in the forests to the east of Edinburgh during the Feast of the Cross, he was thrown from his horse after it had been startled by a hart. According to variations of the story, the king was saved from being gored by the charging animal when it was startled either by the miraculous appearance of a holy cross descending from the skies, or by sunlight reflected from a crucifix which suddenly appeared between the hart’s antlers while the king attempted to grasp them in self-defense. As an act of thanksgiving for his escape, David I founded Holyrood Abbey on the site in 1128.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holyrood_Abbey



[©2010 Oliver Bonjoch segment, (enhanced)]

Panorama showing Princes Street (at center) as seen from the Scott Monument

Princes Street: “PRINCES” (the male royal title’s *plural*, not the singular female royal title, “Prin-CESS”)

This street was named for two princes, the two eldest sons of King George III; Prince George (later King George IV) and Prince Frederick.

“Princes Street is one of the major thoroughfares in central Edinburgh, Scotland, and the main shopping street in the capital. It is the southernmost street of Edinburgh’s New Town ... The street is mostly closed to private cars, with public transport given priority. [Only the east end of the street is open to all traffic. The bulk of the street is limited to trams, buses and taxis.]

“Princes Street has virtually no buildings on the south side, allowing panoramic views of the Old Town, Edinburgh Castle, and the valley between.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princes_Street

Wynd: “WIND” (rhymes with “find” and “kind”)

A medieval lane at least wide enough to allow a horse cart to pass through is called a Wynd. Because they didn’t have steps, many medieval wynds were widened in the late 18th century and became streets.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wynd>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_closes_on_the_Royal_Mile