



National Trust for Historic Preservation

National Trust Tours

# Historic Houses of the Scottish Borders

September 14 - 18, 2024

from \$1395.00

The **Scottish Borders** are often overlooked in comparison with the Highlands and Islands, whose grandeur and drama have an obvious attraction. Yet the Borders have a quiet, understated beauty of their own, with softly rolling hills draped in early morning mist, peaceful valleys dotted with sheep farms and the sinuous, salmon-filled River Tweed, which runs like a silver thread from the Lowther Hills to the sea at Berwick.

This prosperous region is also home to a remarkable number of historic houses, ancient castles and stately homes, allowing the visitor to sample a huge slice of Scottish history and folklore in a short space of time.

These include **Manderston House**, described as "The swansong of the stately home", **Traquair House**, the oldest continuously inhabited house in Scotland, with a host of royal connections, **Mellerstain House**, an outstanding example of Georgian architecture and **Abbotsford**, home of Sir Walter Scott. Perhaps the grandest of all is **Floors Castle**, the magnificent home of the Duke of Roxburghe.

Our tour is based at the **Peebles Hydro**, a landmark hotel with its own rich history and heritage.

## Tour highlights:

- Georgian masterpieces at Mellerstain and Manderston
- Regal connections at Traquair House
- Sir Walter Scott's personal collections at Abbotsford
- The opulence of Floors Castle
- Lunch in the Victorian Kitchen at Thirlstane Castle

## Itinerary

### Day 1

Arrive independently on September 15th. We depart by coach from our local pick-up points and drive into the Scottish Borders for our visit to **Manderston House**. Legend has it that Manderston House was "The swansong of the stately home", and although most legends are unfounded, Manderston is all that the legend claims, and probably more besides. Built in the finest Georgian country house style in the 1790s for Dalhousie Weatherstone, the elaborate house became the home of the Miller Family in 1855, who made their initial fortune from trading hemp and herrings with the Russians. A large-scale remodeling of the mansion was undertaken in the early-20th Century, and when the Edinburgh architect, John Kinross, asked how much he could spend on the work, he was told that "it simply doesn't matter . . .".

We continue to our comfortable three-star accommodation at the **Peebles Hydro**, an historic building in its own right, having been opened in 1881 by the Hydropathic Company to provide fashionable hydrotherapy remedies to guests. Rebuilt after a fire in 1905, the hotel continues to be a landmark in the town of Peebles and today offers a high standard of accommodation. Dinner is served in the evening.

### Day 2

Following breakfast we travel through Tweeddale to **Abbotsford House**, built by Sir Walter Scott

following the success of his great novels. There are extensive grounds leading down to the River Tweed, a fine walled garden and a woodland walk, however it is the house that steals the show. Scott was a passionate collector of armour and weapons - Rob Roy's gun and Montrose's sword along with over 9,000 rare volumes are in his library. Scott died in the dining room overlooking the Tweed in September 1832 and it is poignant to stand there and reflect on his life and work.

In the afternoon we follow the River Tweed back towards Peebles and visit **Traquair House**, which is said to be the oldest continuously inhabited house in Scotland. Twenty-seven Scottish and English monarchs have visited Traquair including Mary Queen of Scots, and William the Lion held court here in 1209. The well-known Bear Gates were closed in 1745, not to be reopened until the Stuarts should ascend to the throne. Everywhere in the house are portraits, old prints and maps, which refer to its history. There is also a micro-brewery producing a tasty Traquair Ale.

We then return to our hotel where dinner is served in the evening.

### **Day 3**

After breakfast we will travel to **Mellerstain House**, the home of the Earl and Countess of Haddington, and one of Scotland's great Georgian houses. Begun in 1725 by William Adam and completed by his famous son, Robert, between 1770 and 1778, the interior decoration is outstanding. The ceilings are especially magnificent having been preserved in their original eighteenth century colours. The Library is a masterpiece of classical decoration and colour with fine detailed plasterwork incorporating marble busts by Roubiliac. Mellerstain houses a superb collection of paintings including works by Van Dyck, Gainsborough, Ramsay, Aikman and Nasmyth, many of which depict members of the family who have owned the house. There are also lovely period furniture and embroidery. The house stands in 200 acres of magnificent parkland with an Italianate style terraced garden laid out by Sir Reginald Blomfield in 1909.

We move on to Kelso to visit **Floors Castle** – home of the Duke & Duchess of Roxburghe, situated on a natural terrace overlooking the River Tweed and facing the Cheviot Hills. In 1721, William Adam was commissioned by the 1st Duke to make additions to the eastern end of an existing tower-house to create a plain, but symmetrical, Georgian country house. The 6th Duke invited the leading architect in Edinburgh, William Playfair, to remodel the castle between 1837 and 1847. He drew his inspiration for Floors from the highly ornamented picturesque style of Heriot's Hospital in Edinburgh. The result is a romantic fairytale castle with its roofscape of turrets, pinnacles and cupolas. In the park can be seen a holly tree marking the spot where King James II of Scotland was killed in 1460, when his own cannon exploded while laying siege to Roxburghe Castle.

Dinner will be served back at our hotel in the evening.

### **Day 4**

Following breakfast we check out of the hotel and travel from Tweeddale over into Lauderdale, where we visit **Thirlestane Castle**, a magnificent 16th Century castle set in a quiet meadow landscape. The family home of the Duke of Lauderdale, Thirlestane Castle is one of the oldest and finest castles in Scotland and dates back to at least the 12th Century. The central part of the present castle was completed in 1590, remodelled in the 1670s and then enlarged in the 1840s. Throughout its long history, Thirlestane has belonged to the Maitland family, one of the most famous in Scotland. The Maitlands came to Britain in 1066 with William the Conqueror and settled in Northumberland. In about 1260, Sir Richard Maitland married Avicia, daughter and sole heiress to Thomas du Thirlestane. It was this marriage that bought the lands of Thirlestane and others into the ownership of the Maitland family. Lunch is provided in the Victorian Kitchen here, a chance to discuss and compare the wonderful houses and castles we have seen here in the bonny Borders.

Following this, our final visit, we return to our original pick-up points.

**Included in the price**

- Three nights' dinner, bed and full breakfast at the 4-star Peebles Hydro Hotel
- One lunch
- Comfortable coach travel throughout
- Visits to Manderston House, Abbotsford House, Traquair House, Mellerstain House, Floors Castle and Thirlstane Castle
- Services of a Brightwater Holidays tour manager

**Not included (per person)**

- Single supplement \$170.00

**Departure points and times:**

	<b>Depart</b>	<b>Return</b>
Edinburgh (Marriott Hotel, Glasgow Rd)	12.00pm	3.00pm