When in Scotland
Welcome to Scotland!
This handbook is designed to introduce you to our country, our culture and to our university campus – Scotland is the perfect choice for you, and you will be warmly welcomed into our Scottish culture, and will join our family of researchers.

Scotland is the most beautiful country in the world*  
Rough Guide 2017

Geography
Scotland is a progressive nation built on dynamism, creativity and the fabulous warmth of its people. Scotland accounts for the northern third of Great Britain, and with a mainland boarding England to the south, Scotland is otherwise surrounded by several different seas.

Our country consists of nearly 800 islands, including the northern isles of Shetland and Orkney, the Hebrides, Arran and Skye. The country boasts a sprawling coastline occupied by numerous magnificent castles, just waiting to be explored.

Scotland itself consists of five distinct regions:
- Glasgow and the West
- Edinburgh and the East
- Dundee and Perth
- Aberdeenshire
- Inverness and the Highlands

Each of Scotland’s regions offers an inspiring mix of cosmopolitan life and stunning countryside which are unique to any other British country.

Beauty
Our dramatic landscapes, distinct geography and scenic landmarks are breath-taking. Mountains, lochs, islands and castles offer you wonderful opportunities to get out and discover our gems.

Want to know more about what Scotland has to offer? View the Scotland is now film here: scotland.org/#

Our history
The history of Scotland is as fascinating as it is complex. The country has been occupied by tribal Celts and ancient Picts, Roman conquerors and Vikings. Monarchs and powerful warrior-royals, noble clansmen, great explorers, pensive philosophers, bright inventors, have made their mark on the Scottish landscape leaving behind astonishing signs of their presence and sophistication.

Scotland offers great views of many castles and lavish stately homes, striking architecture, derelict fortresses, and world-famous feats of engineering.

*in Scotland for welcoming international students
International Student Barometer 2016
Discover Scotland

Currency
Our British currency is the pound Sterling (£), with 100 pence (p) to a pound, but we sometimes use the word Quid as a slang term for pound. Although the Bank of England remains the central bank for the UK government, the Scottish corporate banks still issue their own banknotes: the Bank of Scotland, the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Clydesdale Bank.

International cards, such as Visa and MasterCard are all widely accepted through Scotland, and these cards as well as Amex can all be used to withdraw cash from ATMs belonging to most banks. Cash from some ATMS may be subject to a small charge (about £1.50), but some are free.

Climate
The Atlantic Ocean, which frames the coastline of western and northern Scotland and its islands, is warmed by the north Atlantic drift. This makes Scotland's climate temperate and changeable, but rarely extreme.

Average temperatures for winter range from 1-6 degrees Celsius; whilst summer temperatures average from 11-19 degrees Celsius. Western coastal areas of Scotland are warmer than the east and inland areas due to the influence of the Atlantic currents.

The mountainous Western Highlands force warm wet air to rise in contact with the coast, attracting rainfall and making this area one of the wettest places in the UK.

In Scotland rainfall tends to be associated with the autumn and winter which are the wettest seasons here in Scotland, especially from October to January. A further factor affecting rainfall is altitude.

Snowfall is not frequent in the south of Scotland, but it becomes common with altitude. Parts of the Highlands average 26 to 60 snow days per year, whilst snow is not common in the Western coastal areas.

The number of hours of bright sunshine is controlled by the length of day as well as cloudiness. In general, December is the dullest month of the year, with May and June being the sunniest.
### Surrounding area

The University of Stirling lies in the shadow of the Wallace Monument, a towering tribute to ‘Braveheart’, Sir William Wallace. Less than two miles away, dominating the skyline, is the spectacular Stirling Castle, from which one can gaze across Bannockburn, scene of Robert the Bruce’s epic victory in 1314.

The ‘bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond’, and the rugged Highlands are easily accessible from Stirling’s central location; the vibrant and cosmopolitan cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh are each a mere 45 minutes’ drive or train away.

Other places of interest include:
- Blair Drummond Safari and Leisure Park
- National Wallace Monument
- Old Town Jail
- Stirling Castle
- The Falkirk Wheel

Left: Loch Ard  
Right: The National Wallace Monument, Stirling
Our culture

Language
Many varieties and accents of the English language are spoken throughout the U.K. In Scotland, the general accent is influenced by the old Scottish language of the Scots.

Gaelic is a traditional language that is spoken in some parts of the Scottish highlands and islands, however almost all residents in Scotland use English as their first language.

Scottish traditions

Clans
A Scottish clan is a kinship group with a sense of shared identity and descent, and an association to a place. Clans have their own heraldry and coat of arms. They also have a tartan pattern.

Tartans
Tartan is a woven material, generally of wool, with stripes of different colours and widths. The arrangement of colours has the appearance of being a number of squares intersected by stripes which cross each other. Each clan has its own colours and patterns for weaving cloth. Weavers in the Highlands and Lowlands would produce a cloth pattern favoured in their area. As prominent clans or families would wear the tartan of their area, the rest of the clan members would be keen on adopting it.

Kilts
The kilt is the traditional garment of the highland clansmen, which was made to be suitable for climbing through rough hills. Nowadays, the kilt is considered the national costume, worn for special formal occasions. Formal dress consists of a kilt, woollen socks (called kilt hose) turned down at the knee and a sporran (leather pouch which hangs around the waist).

Ceilidhs
A Ceilidh / ‘keili’ is a traditional Gaelic social gathering. It involves the playing of traditional Scottish folk music, with a set of traditional dances, for both groups and couples. The formality of Ceilidhs can vary. Nowadays, some Ceilidhs fuse modern popular music with the traditional Scottish country melody. Dress codes can vary from the obligatory ceremonial highland, to relaxed dress.

Music
Bagpipes are a key part of the musical tradition of Scotland. Originally used as a military musical instrument, bagpipes now mark special occasions, from commemorations to graduations, to public festivals. If you’re interested in piping, you can hear the best we have to offer at the annual International piping festival held each year in Glasgow.
Food and drink

**Haggis**
Haggis, the national dish of Scotland, is a savoury type of pudding composed of the liver, heart, and lungs of a sheep (or other animal), minced and mixed with beef and oatmeal and seasoned with onion, cayenne pepper, and other spices.

**Angus beef**
Aberdeen Angus beef is world renowned for its superior quality. Angus cattle were developed from cattle native to counties of Aberdeenshire and Angus in Scotland, although they are now bred in many parts of the world.

**Tablet**
Tablet is a compact sugary sweet made from sugar, condensed milk, butter, and vanilla essence, boiled to a soft ball stage and allowed to crystallize. It dates back to the early 18th century.

**Shortbread**
Shortbread is a biscuit that consists of flour, butter and sugar. Shortbread originated in Scotland, with the first printed recipe, in 1736, from a Scotswoman named Mrs McLintock. Shortbread is widely associated with Christmas and Hogmanay festivities in Scotland, and the Scottish brand Walkers Shortbread is exported around the world. As a Scottish brand, shortbread is sometimes packaged in a tartan design, such as Royal Stewart tartan.

**Stovies**
Stovies is a Scottish dish based on potatoes. Recipes and ingredients vary widely but the dish contains potatoes, fat, usually (but not always) onions and often (but again not always) pieces of meat. In some versions, other vegetables may also be added.

The potatoes are cooked by slow stewing in a closed pot with fat (lard, beef dripping or butter may be used) and water or sometimes other liquids, such as milk. Stovies may be served accompanied by cold meat or oatcakes.

"To stove" means "to stew" in Scots. The term is from the French adjective étuvée which translates as braised. Versions without meat may be termed barfit and those with meat as high-heelers.

**Scotch broth**
Scotch broth is a filling soup, originating in Scotland but now obtainable worldwide. The principal ingredients are usually barley, stewing or braising cuts of lamb, mutton or beef, root vegetables (such as carrots, swedes, or sometimes turnips), and dried pulses (most often split peas and red lentils). Cabbage and leeks are often added shortly before serving to preserve their texture, colour and flavours. The proportions and ingredients vary according to the recipe or availability. Scotch broth has been sold ready-prepared in cans for many years.
Scottish Whisky
Often referred to by its somewhat shortened name of Scotch, this is a malt whisky made following a process that is specified by law. In order to be officially named a ‘scotch’ whisky it must be produced from water and malted barley. Grains are mashed, fermented by yeast, distilled at an alcoholic strength by volume of less than 98.4% and matured in oak casks for at least three years.

Whiskies are produced in different regions of Scotland, and each has a distinctive feature and taste. When ordering whisky at a pub in Scotland, the correct term is a ‘dram’ as a unit of measure for a whisky.

Sport
Scotland competes in sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup. Scotland does not compete in the Olympic Games independently however, in athletics, Scotland has competed for the Celtic Cup, against teams from Wales and Ireland, since the inaugural event in 2006.

Scotland is the “Home of Golf”, and is well known for its courses. As well as its world-famous Highland Games (athletic competitions), it is also the home of curling, and shinty, a stick game similar to Ireland’s hurling. Scotland has 4 professional ice hockey teams that compete in the Elite Ice Hockey League. Scottish cricket is a minority game.
Media
Scotland’s media are partly separate from the rest of the UK. For example, Scotland has several national newspapers, such as the Daily Record (Scotland’s leading tabloid), the broadsheet The Herald, based in Glasgow, and The Scotsman in Edinburgh. Sunday newspapers include the tabloid Sunday Mail (published by Daily Record parent company Trinity Mirror and the Sunday Post, while the Sunday Herald and Scotland on Sunday have associations with The Herald and The Scotsman respectively.)

Scotland has its own BBC services which include the national radio stations, BBC Radio Scotland and Scottish Gaelic language service BBC Radio nan Gaidheal as well as Two Independent Television stations, STV and ITV, which also broadcast in Scotland. Most of the independent television output is the same as that transmitted in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with the exception of news and current affairs, sport, comedy, cultural and Scottish Gaelic-language programming.

Left: Stirling Castle
Right: Students visiting Stirling
Traditional celebrations
Scotland is proud to host some of the most internationally renowned annual celebrations.

Burns Night
Burns Night is annually celebrated in Scotland on or around January 25. It commemorates the life of the bard (poet) Robert Burns, who was born on January 25, 1759. The day also celebrates Burns’ contribution to Scottish culture. Everyone enjoys a hearty feast (which includes haggis, turnip and potatoes, rounded off with drams of whisky), some of Burns’ poems and songs are recited and tributes are made to the great Bard. Each Burns supper is individual, but the running order normally goes something like this:

1. To start – everyone gathers, the host says a few words, everyone sits and the Selkirk Grace is said.
2. The meal – the starter is served, the haggis is piped in, the host performs Address to a Haggis, everyone toasts the haggis and the main meal is served, followed by dessert.
3. After the meal – the first Burns recital is performed, the Immortal Memory (the main tribute speech to Burns) is given, the second Burns recital is performed, then there’s a Toast to the Lassies, followed by a Reply to the Toast to the Lassies, before the final Burns recital is performed.
4. To end the night – the host gives a vote of thanks, everyone stands and sings Auld Lang Syne, crossing their arms and joining hands at the line ‘And there’s a hand, my trusty fere!’.

Halloween
Halloween in Scotland is all about the supernatural, witches, spirits and fire.

The origins of Halloween can be traced back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (summer’s end). The Celtic year was determined by the growing seasons and Samhain marked the end of summer and the harvest, and the beginning of the dark cold winter.

The festival symbolised the boundary between the world of the living and the world of the dead. It was believed by the Celts that on the night of 31st October, ghosts of the dead would walk again amongst them, and large bonfires were lit in each village in order to ward off any evil spirits. All house fires were put out and new fires lit from these great bonfires. Whilst bonfires to scare away the undead are still lit in some areas of Scotland, more usually “neep lanterns” (turnip lanterns) are made by scooping out a turnip and cutting through the skin to create eyes, nose and mouth. A candle is then placed inside to make the lantern. These lanterns are also supposed to ward off evil spirits. Nowadays thanks to the influence of American culture, pumpkins are as common as turnips for lanterns.

Until recently, ‘trick or treat’ was unknown in Scotland. Instead children dressed up and pretended to be evil spirits and went ‘guising’ (or “galoshin”). The custom traces back to a time when it was thought that by disguising children in this way they would blend in with the spirits that were abroad that night. Children arriving at a house so ‘disguised’ would receive an offering to ward off evil. Today it is expected that the children, as well as dressing up, also perform a party trick – a song or a dance, or recite a poem, for example – before they are offered a treat which could be fruit, nuts or more commonly nowadays, money or sweets.

The Samhuinn Festival in Edinburgh is an annual event marking the Celtic New Year. Presented by the Beltane Society, the event features a spectacular procession of fire, music, dancing, theatre and fireworks and takes place along Edinburgh’s famous Royal Mile.

St Andrews Day
St. Andrews day is celebrated on the 30th November, celebrating the patron saint of Scotland. The day is marked around Scotland with a celebration of Scottish culture, including traditional food, music and dance. This may include ceilidhs, dance festivals and bagpipe playing.
Christmas
One of the most unusual facts about Scottish Christmas traditions is they haven’t been around very long. For nearly 400 years, the celebration of Christmas, or Yule the Scots word for Christmas, as we know it today was banned in Scotland. The Presbyterian Church of Scotland banned the celebrations because it believed that Yule celebrations didn’t reflect what was written in the bible. Nowadays Christmas celebrations in Scotland resemble the ones of other countries around the world. The lead up to Christmas day is filled with celebrations including Christmas markets throughout the country, which all sell arts and crafts, food and mulled wine.

Hogmanay
Hogmanay is the Scottish name for new year celebrations. Edinburgh’s Hogmanay, one of the world’s greatest New Year celebrations, is the biggest party in Scotland and the biggest New Year celebration in the UK. Ranging from fireballs being swung in the air to ceilidhs underneath castles, New Year in Scotland is a great event to attend.

Right: Hogmanay celebrations Edinburgh
Scotland is a land of myths and legends. The stories of Scotland have inspired writers, artists and poets for centuries. Robert Burns and Robert Louis Stevenson both recalled as adults the tales of ghosts, magic and witches they had heard as children.

**Kelpies**
The mythical kelpie is a supernatural water horse that was said to haunt Scotland’s lochs and lonely rivers. The kelpie would appear to victims as a lost dark grey or white pony but could be identified by its constantly dripping mane. It would entice people to ride on its back, before taking them down to a watery grave.

**Selkies**
Selkies were mythical creatures that could transform themselves from seal to human form and back again. The legend of the selkie apparently originated on the Orkney and Shetland Islands where selch or selk(ie) is the Scots word for seal.

Tales once abounded of a man who found a beautiful female selkie sunbathing on a beach, stole her skin and forced her to become his wife and bear his children, only for her to find the skin years later and escape back to seal form and the sea.

**Robert the Bruce and the Spider**
Robert the Bruce became King of Scotland in 1306. Edward I of England took immediate action, forcing him into hiding. According to legend, at some point while he was on the run and when he was at his lowest ebb, Bruce hid himself in a cave. There, he watched a spider spinning a web from one part of the cave to the other. Watching the spider try and try again to build her web before succeeding is said to have inspired Bruce to carry on fighting the English. He did so, and after the death of Edward I in 1307, Bruce defeated Edward II’s armies at Bannockburn in 1314.

There are a number of caves in South West Scotland that claim to be the one where Bruce watched the spider. No one is certain which is the authentic cave or even if the incident with the spider ever really happened.
The Loch Ness Monster (‘Nessie’)
One of Scotland’s most famous unsolved mysteries is that of the Loch Ness Monster (or ‘Nessie’ as it has affectionately come to be known).

The large dinosaur-like creature is reputed to inhabit Loch Ness in the Scottish Highlands. The first recorded sighting of the monster was nearly 1,500 years ago when a giant beast is said to have leaped out of a lake near Inverness and ate a local farmer. Since then the myth of the Loch Ness Monster has magnified.

In 1934, a London doctor snapped a photograph that seemed to show a dinosaur-looking creature with a long neck emerging from the water. Dozens of sightings have since been claimed, many of which have turned out to be hoaxes. In 2009, a newspaper reader claims to have spotted ‘Nessie’ whilst browsing Google Earth’s satellite photos of Loch Ness. Regardless of the truth, the suggestion of the monster’s existence makes Loch Ness one of Scotland’s most popular tourist attractions with thousands visiting it shores each year with the hope of catching a rare glimpse of the famous monster.
The essence of the university is its people: our staff, students and graduates.

Founded on innovation and excellence
Situated in the beautiful Aithrey estate, Stirling was the first new university in Scotland for nearly 400 years. Since its foundations, Stirling has embraced its role as an innovative, intellectual and cultural institution with established reputation for blending arts and sciences.

Stirlings coat of arms dates back to 1967 when we were grated university status by the Royal Charter. Our tartan is called University of Stirling and students, staff and graduates of the university are entitled to wear it.

The universities 1600 employees represent a diverse range of nationalities, experiences and backgrounds, and interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research and collaboration is promoted.

The University of Stirling is organised for learning, teaching and research into five academic faculties:
1. Faculty of Arts and Humanities
2. Faculty of Social Sciences
3. Faculty of Natural Sciences
4. Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport
5. Stirling Management School

Support of the universities activities is provided by:
• HR &OD – Human Resources and Organisation Development
• RIS – Research and Innovation Services
• Accommodation Services & Commercial Services
• IS – Information Services
• Estates and Campus Services
• Finance
• SACS – Student, Academic and Corporate Services
• Sports Development services
International university
The University of Stirling is an international university with a global reputation for high-quality teaching and research. We aim to lead the way globally in our areas of research expertise by addressing the needs of society through innovative interdisciplinary projects.

Our vision
To be acknowledged worldwide as a distinguished university that addresses the social and environmental needs of society through innovation, interdisciplinary research and education.

Our mission
To be a university of distinction that is ambitious, accessible and self-reliant, and whose purpose is to develop these qualities in our students, staff and the communities we serve.

Our priorities are to
• Enhance the student experience by putting students first
• Improving research performance and postgraduate enrolment
• Be a vibrant intellectual community for scholars and the region
• Connect locally and globally to students, alumni, academia and business
• Be aware of societies need and response to them

Research with impact
The University of Stirling has an established reputation as an institution that contributes innovative research that is relevant to the social, economic and cultural needs of society. Working with academic, commercial, public, private and voluntary sector partners, Stirling is one of the UK’s leading research universities in the fields of health sciences, psychology, aquaculture, social policy as well as business and management, wellbeing, the environment and people, culture and society, enterprise and the economy, and sport.

Ranked among the top 50 research intensive universities in the UK in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF).

The breadth if our research activity makes Stirling a unique academic environment that stimulates creatively and critical thinking, supporting highly skilled and motivated researchers.
The campus
In the heart of Scotland Stirling enjoys a superb location in the centre of Scotland, with easy access to major cities and some of Europe’s best countryside. The centre is approximately two miles - a ten-minute bus ride from campus.

Both the city and the University have a warm, friendly atmosphere, with a strong sense of community.

The campus community
The campus, regularly described as one of the most beautiful in the world, nestles at the foot of the Ochii Hills in over 330 acres of landscaped grounds.

The campus has a loch, golf course, an Olympic-sized swimming pool and an 18th-century castle, designed by Royal Architect Robert Adam.

Café culture on your doorstep
For a different perspective and within walking distance, the historic spa town of Bridge of Allan offers a variety of independent shops, with great delis, gift shops, boutiques, bars, restaurants and even a micro-brewery. As well as a wide range of Victorian architecture built when the village developed into a spa town during the Victorian era. A charming riverside pathway called the Darn Walk, is thought to have been in use since Roman Times. A relaxed café culture comes into its own on sunny days.

20% of the population in Stirling is aged between 16 and 29 years
National Records of Scotland 2017
**Our facilities**

**Accommodation**
Stirling Court Hotel has 100 bedrooms - 91 with double beds, 5 twins and 4 specially equipped rooms for disabled guests. All bedrooms have en-suite facilities. Rooms feature direct dial telephone, tea and coffee making facilities, hairdryer, trouser press, flatscreen TV with Freeview and a well-lit, purpose-designed working area.

There is free WiFi available in all bedrooms and public areas. The hotel operates a 24 hour reception desk.

All bedrooms feature a number of home comforts:
- En-suite bathroom with bath and shower
- Complimentary WiFi throughout the hotel
- Tea and coffee making facilities
- Flatscreen TV with Freeview
- Direct dial telephone
- Hairdryer
- Trouser press
- Well-lit desk area

[stirlingcourthotel.co.uk/accommodation/bedrooms-stirling](stirlingcourthotel.co.uk/accommodation/bedrooms-stirling)

**Sports facilities**
As Scotland’s university for sporting excellence, our sports facilities are truly five-star*, and free for you to use while here on the mentoring programme. They include the national tennis centre, the national swimming academy and the MP Jackson fitness centre.

*QS World University Rankings 2018

**Everything else**
Macroberts arts centre, providing theatre, dance, cinema and exhibition space - shopping precinct with bank, pharmacy, bookshop and newsagent - various cafes, dining rooms and retail outlets.

1st in Scotland for teachers, lecturers and feedback
International Student Barometer 2016
Useful Contacts

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NHS 24
Scotland national telehealth and telecare organisation
nhs24.scot
If you feel unwell, or are seeking medical advice call the telephone number 111

Police Scotland
General information can be found at scotland.police.uk
In an emergency call 999 / to report a crime call 101

Scotland tourism information
General information regarding Scotland and its surrounding areas can be found at: visitscotland.com

Stirling’s information and tourist website yourstirling.com

Glasgow’s information and tourist website visit-glasgow.info

Edinburgh’s information and tourist website edinburgh.org