

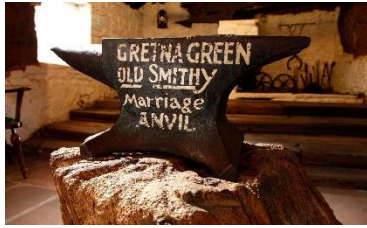


The Abbeys and Priory of Dumfries & Galloway

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The Abbeys and Priory of Dumfries & Galloway...



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Border Abbeys grab the headlines, yet the less-frequented abbeys and Priory at Whithorn are atmospheric, ancient and tell an important story about this unique area of the South of Scotland. Galloway once viewed itself as an independent kingdom, separate from and viewed askance by the Kingdom of Scots.

The abbeys and Priory below include both the most ancient site inhabited by Christians in what is now Scotland as well as the most romantic. At Sweetheart Abbey, where Devorgilla Balliol is buried with her husband's heart.

For music buffs, visit Glenluce's Chapter House with the best acoustics of all the mediaeval abbeys; for sculpture, see France's best mason's work at Lincluden Collegiate Church or where Mary Queen of Scots spent her last hours in Scotland, at Dundrennan!

Day 1



Lincluden Collegiate Church



Annandale Distillery



The Globe Inn

Consider designing this day for an afternoon arrival in Dumfries, allowing time to visit [Lincluden Collegiate Church](#) before checking into the hotel.

Lincluden was built in about 1400, replacing a 12th Century nunnery. It was probably constructed by John Morrow, one of the finest master masons in Scotland, whose work you can also see at Melrose.

Collegiate churches were built to provide for Masses for the souls of the founders – in this case, Archibald Douglas. The architecture of the Choir is particularly fine, representing some of the finest Gothic work in Scotland. You will see a stone pulpitum which separates the choir from nave, decorated with angels and cherubs, and scenes from the life of Christ; sedilia, or seating for the priests officiating at mass; a piscina, or stone basin for washing communion vessels, and the monumental tomb for Archibald's wife Princess Margaret, Lady of Galloway, who died in 1450. She petitioned for an Indulgence to raise funds for a new bridge for pilgrims crossing the Bladnoch, further west, to Whithorn.

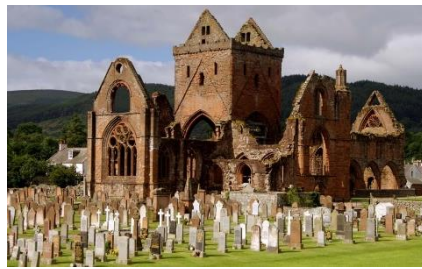
In the evening why not pay a visit to [the Globe Inn](#), which can be found down a narrow passageway lined with murals depicting Burns' poems. The Globe was established in 1610, making it one of the oldest pubs in Scotland. It was also one of Burns' favourite watering holes. The pub has Burns memorabilia like handwritten letters and plaster busts on show, and lines of his poems are etched into the window panes of the bedroom he used to stay in upstairs. You can even sit in Burns' favourite chair next to the fireplace – though anyone who does has to recite one of his verses or pay the forfeit of buying a round for the whole pub.

Drink a toast to Burns with a dram or two in The Globe – you can book your groups for dinner here as well.

Day 2



[New Abbey](#)



[Dundrennan Abbey](#)



[The Whithorn Priory Museum](#)

From Dumfries, it is a short drive south to New Abbey where you can visit [Sweetheart Abbey](#) – Scotland's most romantic Abbey.

It was founded in 1273 by Lady Devorgilla of Galloway in memory of her husband John Balliol. When she died, she was buried with her husband's embalmed heart in an ivory casket she had always carried with her. Her tomb is a 16th-century copy of the original destroyed at the Protestant Reformation and is in the Abbey's sanctuary.

Sweetheart Abbey was founded by Cistercian monks, from nearby Dundrennan, who named the abbey Dulce Cor or Sweetheart in memory of Lady Devorgilla. The monks lived and worshipped at Sweetheart for the next 250 years. The reformation of 1560 brought a gradual end to the use of the Abbey in 1603. After that, the stonework of the building was robbed for new buildings in the village.

New Abbey is one of Dumfriesshire's prettiest villages and there are stunning views of Criffel hill and the nearby Solway Firth. Also in the village is the unique working Corn Mill, also in the care of HES.

From here we take the scenic route along the coastline towards Kirkcudbright and to Dundrennan Abbey.

[Dundrennan](#) is a 12th Century Cistercian Abbey, surrounded by peaceful pastures, as the Cistercian Order would have required.

Founded by Fergus Lord of Galloway, Dundrennan is the motherhouse for Dumfries and Galloway's two other Cistercian Abbeys - Glenluce Abbey, around 1190, and Sweetheart Abbey, in 1273. Dundrennan has some of the best-preserved early Gothic architecture in Scotland and is the best place to view the elegant Cistercian architecture.

You can see the graves of several abbots and contemplate the place where Mary Queen of Scots was welcomed after her defeat at the Battle of Langside and before she made for England and into the custody of her cousin, Elizabeth I.

For lunch, stop at the pretty town of Kircudbright, the artist's town with a range of galleries to visit. In the afternoon continue to Whithorn Priory on the Isle of Whithorn.

Whithorn Priory ruins are the remains of one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Scotland. The site has been settled from the 5th Century and churches have likely been on this hilltop for 1600 years, making this the earliest site in Scotland from which we have evidence for Christian practice and worship.

By 1500, this had become a major centre for pilgrimage, patronised by the Kings and Queens of the House of Stuart, and was at the centre of mediaeval power politics. The cathedral grew in size over time to accommodate the large numbers of pilgrims seeking miracles and forgiveness.

Whithorn Priory Museum contains an internationally important collection of early Mediaeval carved stones. This includes the oldest Christian monument in Scotland, reliably dated to the mid 5th Century AD, the Latinus stone.

Highlights of the Museum are the Peter the Apostle Stone, dating from around 0AD, once a marker on the old road from Whithorn to Isle of Whithorn. Also the "Whithorn School" crosses, from 800 to 1100 AD, a school of carving and decoration whose sculptors followed a decorative tradition of Celtic interlace, which derived from a complex cultural melting pot of Celtic, Anglo-Saxon and Norse influences.

Other noteworthy **early medieval Christian sites in the area are -**

St Ninian's Cave (walk from the car park) with 8th Century crosses - on a remote and scenic pebbled beach. This has been a pilgrimage destination for 1300 years and is still the site of the annual Diocesan pilgrimage.

St Ninian's Chapel, Isle of Whithorn: a reception chapel for pilgrims coming to Whithorn, with magnificent sea views. The surviving chapel dates from around 1300 but it was originally built around 1100.

Chapel Finian, on the route towards Glenluce: built in the AD 900s or 1000s, probably as a resting spot for pilgrims on their way to Whithorn. It was built in the Irish style, and is named after the Irish saint Finnian, tutor to St Columba. Some scholars believe that Finnian is a corruption of Uinniau a bishop in the 500s and established churches in Ireland and south-west Scotland. Some believe that Uinniau is the real historical figure behind St Ninian, whose cult centre is at Whithorn .

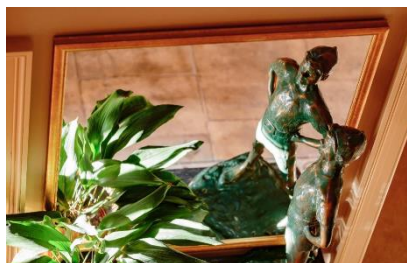
Continue to the last visit of the day, Glenluce Abbey. Roland, Lord of Galloway, founded **Glenluce Abbey** around 1192. You can still see the layout typical of the Cistercian Order and enjoy the acoustics in the chapter house built around 1500 – still roofed and complete – with its fine features and acoustics. There is an on-site museum displaying artefacts, including tiles and the unusual and well preserve monastic water supply system.

After your visits, return back to Dumfries for overnight (90 minutes' drive) or indeed continue to Stranraer (20 minutes) where you could also take a connecting ferry from Cairnryan to Northern Ireland the same or next day.

This itinerary has kindly been provided by Julia Muir Watt, the Development Manager, The Whithorn Trust (www.whithorn.com / enquiries@whithorn.com).

Julia has been an enthusiast for the area's heritage and an archaeologist a long time. She has been with the trust for over 6 years and advocates for heritage-led regeneration, using Whithorn's medieval heritage to secure economic and social benefit for the town and area.

If you like any of the above, you may also like the below suggestions



Peter Pan



Afternoon Tea



Moat Brae House



Galloway Forest Park



Melrose Abbey



Common Ridings