

Press Release

Strictly Embargoed until: 00:01 Friday, 15 October 2021

ON THE GLOBAL TRAIL

World's first UNESCO trail launched in Scotland

The world's first ever UNESCO trail, bringing together some of Scotland's most iconic, diverse and culturally significant sites, has been launched today (Friday, 15 October, 2021).

Scotland's UNESCO Trail connects the country's 13 place-based UNESCO designations, including World Heritage Sites, Biospheres, Global Geoparks and Creative Cities to form a dedicated digital trail. It aims to take visitors on a cultural journey across the country experiencing everything from history to science, music, design and literature to nature and cityscapes.

Designed specifically to support ambitions to make Scotland a world-leading responsible tourism destination, Scotland's UNESCO Trail encourages visitors to stay longer, visit all year round, make sustainable travel choices, explore more widely and at the right time of the year, and in turn, contribute to the sustainable quality of life of those communities surrounding the designated sites.

The digital trail – which is available on www.visitscotland.com/unesco-trail - showcases the breadth of culturally astounding UNESCO designations on offer across Scotland, providing information and inspiration to visitors across the world. It also celebrates businesses and communities that are committed to responsible tourism business practices and promotes sustainable travel options.

Scotland is the first nation in the world to create such a pioneering initiative. Developed through a unique partnership between VisitScotland, the Scottish Government, the UK National Commission for UNESCO, Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot, the National Trust for Scotland and Scotland's 13 UNESCO designations, the project has received £360,000 funding from the Scottish Government to support the strategy for the sustainable recovery of Scottish tourism.

Tourism Minister Ivan McKee officially launched the trail today in Dundee, the UNESCO City of Design, by unveiling a specially commissioned design by illustrator and printmaker, Jagoda Sadowska, a graduate of the city's Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art. The design has been printed onto a door, which will be incorporated into the city's Open Close tour as a permanent legacy of the trail.

Tourism Minister Ivan McKee said: *"Scotland has always been a pioneering nation and I'm pleased to see we're leading the way with the world's first UNESCO digital trail. Tourism is key to Scotland's economy and as we begin to recover from the pandemic, this collaboration between the Scottish Government, VisitScotland, NatureScot and UNESCO could not be more timely."*

“Supported by £360,000 of Scottish Government funding, the UNESCO Trail will help to attract and welcome both domestic and international visitors again, by showcasing Scotland’s unique cultural heritage and many UNESCO sites. As we approach COP26, I’m pleased to see that the UNESCO trail has sustainability at its core and will help visitors make responsible and sustainable choices by highlighting green accredited businesses and promoting environmentally friendly travel.”

Francesca Osowska, CEO of NatureScot and Chair of Scotland’s UNESCO Trail Steering Group, said: *“The Trail is a hugely exciting global first, inspiring visitors to Scotland to journey through its unique natural and cultural heritage. All the designations in the Trail have a distinctive story to tell and we hope that, whether people visit just one, or travel to all the sites, they will be wowed by what they see.*

“Responsible tourism and greener travel are at the heart of our ambitions for the UNESCO Trail. This will lead to a more sustainable economy and will help to create better places for people to live and visit in every corner of Scotland. This is so essential as we work to tackle the nature loss and climate change crises and prepare to host COP26.”

VisitScotland Director of Industry and Destination Development, Rob Dickson, said: *“There is no other journey like Scotland’s UNESCO Trail and we want to inspire visitors to take a once-in-a-lifetime experience across the country, delving into its history and heritage, experiencing the wonder of its natural assets and the magic that inspires art, music and literature.*

“The innovative trail not only showcases the breadth of culturally astounding UNESCO designations we have across Scotland but also the exceptional visitor experiences this trail creates.

“VisitScotland is focused on the recovery of the industry, building a destination and visitor experience which allows tourism and events to flourish now and in the future. We’ll continue to work with, and support, businesses to ensure we rebuild this vital part of Scotland’s economy.

“Tourism is a force for good – creating economic and social value in every corner of Scotland and enhancing the well-being of everyone who experiences it. ”

Professor Anne Anderson, Non-Executive Director at the UK National Commission for UNESCO said: *“Scotland’s UNESCO Trail is a world-first bringing together Scotland’s world-class cultural and natural heritage. Not only this, the Trail does so within UNESCO’s broader aims of building peace and sustainable development.”*

“Across Scotland, these UNESCO designations are local partnerships and communities that protect and promote their outstanding creativity, cultural heritage and the natural environment. By partaking in the Trail, visitors from around the world will rediscover Scotland’s unique treasures, know they are travelling sustainably, and contribute to the communities who maintain these precious places”.

“From the stunning mountains of the northwest Highlands, the heart of Neolithic Orkney, the vibrant music scenes of Glasgow, to Edinburgh’s outstanding heritage and literature festivals, there is a wealth of people and places waiting to welcome you.”

The full list of designations included in Scotland’s UNESCO Trail are the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, Wester Ross UNESCO Biosphere, Dundee UNESCO City of Design, Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature, Glasgow UNESCO City of Music, Shetland UNESCO Global Geopark, North West Highlands UNESCO Global Geopark, the Forth Bridge UNESCO World Heritage Site, Frontiers of the Roman Empire: Antonine Wall UNESCO World Heritage Site, New Lanark UNESCO World Heritage Site, Heart of Neolithic Orkney UNESCO World Heritage Site, Old and New Towns of Edinburgh UNESCO World Heritage Site, St Kilda World Heritage Site.

For more information, visit www.visitscotland.com/unesco-trail

Ends

Additional Quotes

Artist Jagoda Sadowska said: *“It’s been a great pleasure to be involved in the project. Dundee is a wonderful city and hopefully, with the opening of Scotland’s UNESCO Trail, it will get even more recognition and appreciation.*

“As someone who recently graduated from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, I feel extremely fortunate to be able to persuade Illustration as a full-time job. Dundee is filled with warm and motivated people that create an encouraging environment for upcoming artists. There’s a strong sense of community that is both friendly and welcoming and had a fundamental influence on my practice. Creative Dundee does a wonderful job of connecting people, providing space and opportunities for creatives.

“I hope the Trail can work as a gateway to allow more people to experience the City of Dundee and beyond.”

For further information, contact Louise Purves, VisitScotland Senior Press & Social Media Manager

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Designation information

Biospheres

Biospheres are all about improving the relationship between people and their local environment, globally. They are sites created by UNESCO that find creative ways for people and nature to thrive together. They act as extraordinary testing grounds to put into practice an innovative approach to managing ecosystems sustainably for future generations.

[Wester Ross Biosphere](#) is not only one of the most beautiful places in Scotland, it is also home to a collection of rare and unspoiled habitats where wildlife, fauna and Highland communities co-exist to create an environment of unique natural beauty, history and culture.

[Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere](#) is renowned for its stunning landscape; a natural playground ripe with outdoor adventure and geological interest. It is also a place teeming with rare wildlife and a place where you can experience a rich cultural life and creative scene that is unique to the corner of south Scotland.

Global Geoparks

Scotland’s Geoparks are part of a global network of 169 areas of exceptional geological significance. UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. Geoparks are areas of exceptional geological significance.

[North West Highlands Geopark](#) is a prehistoric landscape of outstanding natural beauty and a geological heritage which is among the most precious in the world.

[Geopark Shetland](#)

The geology of the Shetland Isles spans three billion years and is home to one of the most breathtaking and diverse landscapes in Europe.

World Heritage Sites

UNESCO World Heritage Sites tell the unique story of Scotland's contribution to the world. These sites belong to everyone, and it is everyone's duty to protect them for future generations.

[The Forth Bridge](#)

Spanning the Firth of Forth, the Forth Bridge stands as a seminal moment in the history of engineering and remains the world's longest-ever cantilever bridge.

[The Antonine Wall](#)

The Antonine Wall marked the final frontier of the Roman Empire in the north. This mighty fortification was built by Emperor Pius in 142 AD, one of the most ambitious constructions of the ancient world.

[The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh](#)

The beautiful architecture of Edinburgh shows an important development in city building. The medieval city of the Old Town underwent an expansion leading to the construction of the spacious Georgian New Town.

[The Heart of Neolithic Orkney](#) is a collection of the best-preserved New Stone Age sites found in western Europe.

[St Kilda](#)

Home to a compact landscape of rare beauty and drama, the remote archipelago has been shaped over millions of years by powerful volcanic and glacial forces as well as two millennia of human habitation.

[New Lanark](#)

The purpose-built 18th century mill village of New Lanark is the vision of philanthropist and social reformer Robert Owen. For over two centuries it would serve as a world-renowned blueprint for the ideal working and living environment for industrial labourers and their families.

Creative Cities

The UNESCO Global Creative Cities Network is a network of cities working towards the joint mission of placing creativity and cultural industries at the core of their urban development to make their cities safe, resilient, inclusive and sustainable.

[Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature](#)

Books and reading have been at the beating heart of Edinburgh's rich cultural life for centuries. Edinburgh is the first city in the world to be named a UNESCO City of Literature.

[Glasgow UNESCO City of Music](#)

Glasgow is home to one of the largest, most vibrant and accessible music scenes in the world. In 2008, it was named the first-ever UNESCO City of Music – its diverse culture, history and musical identity setting it apart from other cities.

[Dundee UNESCO City of Design](#)

Dundee was once best-known for its flourishing textile trade and shipbuilding industry. It continues to place innovation at its heart, emerging as a cutting-edge multidisciplinary design hub quite unlike any other.

Notes to Editors

- Follow us on twitter: @visitscotnews
- VisitScotland is Scotland's national tourism organisation. Its core purpose is to maximise the economic benefit of tourism to Scotland.
- The organisation's key objective is to contribute to Scotland Outlook 2030, the national tourism strategy ambition of pursuing a sustainable and responsible tourism agenda.
- This will be supported by five overarching strategies: Marketing, Events, Quality and Sustainability, Inclusive Tourism, International Engagement.
- Spending by tourists in Scotland generates around £12 billion of economic activity in the wider Scottish supply chain and contributes around £6 billion to Scottish GDP (in basic prices).
- For VisitScotland's press releases go to http://www.visitscotland.org/media_centre.aspx, tourism statistics and frequently asked questions go to <http://www.visitscotland.org/>
- Where possible, a Gaelic speaker will be made available for broadcast interviews on request (Far an tèid iarraidh, agus far am bheil sin nar comas, bruidhinnidh neach le Gàidhlig aig agallamh)
- For holiday information on Scotland go to www.visitscotland.com
- For information about business tourism in Scotland go to businessevents.visitscotland.com

YCW20/21

- Scotland's Coasts and Waters will be showcased throughout 2020 and 2021 and celebrated with a programme of activity designed to support the nation's tourism and events sectors.
- Following input and feedback from the tourism and events industry, there was strong support and a commitment from Scottish Government to rollover the celebratory year into 2021. Work is currently ongoing to rescope and reshape the supported events programme.
- The year, led by VisitScotland will sustain and build upon the momentum of Scotland's preceding Themed Years to spotlight, celebrate and promote opportunities to experience and enjoy Scotland's unrivalled Coasts and Waters, encouraging responsible engagement and participation from the people of Scotland and our visitors.
- A programme of activities, events and ideas will shine a spotlight on the impact our waters have had on Scotland, from the formation of beautiful natural features to the creation of our national drink – whisky.
- Join the conversation using #YCW2021
- Following an industry consultation, the Themed Years are planned to take place every second year to enable more time for planning and collaboration. Given the impact of COVID-19 an exception will be made in 2021 with the 2020 year rolling forward. 2022 will celebrate the Year of Scotland's Stories. The next Themed Year is planned to follow in 2024.

