

## History & Culture Facts

- Scotland's culture and traditions date back as far as **8500 B.C.**
- The people who were native to Scotland in its early years were known as the **Picts**. The name Picts translates to the painted people, a reference to their custom painting symbols and tattooing of their bodies.
- The Picts were a group of Celtic speaking people who lived in what is today eastern and northern Scotland during the late **British Iron Age** and Early Medieval periods.
- Scotland has its own **Gaelic language**, but it is not widely spoken. The people of Scotland commonly speak Scottish English, which is English with strong Scottish accents from different regional dialects and variations.
- Scotland has its own **clan system** which is a huge part of Scotland's culture and history. Each clan has their own tartan design which is showcased on their kilts or other clothing items.
- A tartan design on a **kilt** originated back to the 9th century. The kilt which was traditionally worn on a daily basis by the Highlanders is commonly only worn today for ceremonial occasions.
- Like all ancient cultures, Scotland has many **myths and legends**. Many Scottish myths and legends date back to Celtic mythology, folklore, and the ancient Pictish culture.
- The Scottish people have a strong sense of superstition and respect the supernatural. Today, many Scottish people believe in the **Second Sight** which is known as the ability to see into the future and predict future events.
- Nessie, known as the **Loch Ness Monster** is one of the best known Scottish legends that dates back to 500 A.D. The legend states that Nessie lives in the deep, cold waters of Loch Ness Lake. Loch is the Scottish word for lake and the Loch Ness Lake is known as the largest and deepest lake in Scotland.



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- The unicorn is Scotland's national animal. In Celtic mythology, the unicorn was a symbol of purity and innocence, as well as masculinity and power. Tales of dominance and chivalry associated with the unicorn may be why it was chosen as Scotland's national animal.
- The unicorn was first used on the Scottish royal coat of arms by William I in the 12th century. In the 15th century, when King James III was in power, gold coins were made with unicorn designs on them. When Scotland and England unified under the reign of James VI of Scotland in 1603, the Scottish Royal Arms had two unicorns supporting a shield. When James VI became James I of England and Ireland, he replaced the unicorn on the left of the shield with the national animal of England, the lion, to show that both countries were indeed united.
- The thistle plant has been the national emblem of Scotland since the reign of King Alexander III (1249- 1286). The thistle plant is found on many Scottish symbols and was the design on silver coins in 1474.
- A major part of the Gaelic culture is the Great Highland Bagpipe, with its sizable air bag, three trusty drones and a long mouth piece. Bagpipes are known as Scotland's national instrument.
- A number of songs are used as Scotland's national anthems, most notably are "Flower of Scotland" and "Scotland the Brave". The song "Flower of Scotland" is generally performed at sporting events. The song "Scotland the Brave" is commonly played at more formal social gatherings and events.
- Scotch whisky is a world famous spirit drink. The history of Scottish whisky dates back to the 11th century and it was originally consumed for medicinal purposes. Scotch whisky must be produced in Scotland and matured in oak casks for a minimum of three years before it can be officially classified as Scotch whisky. Each region of Scotland produces its own distinctive flavor of Scotch whisky.

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- The most famous Scottish dish is Haggis. Haggis consist of sheep heart, liver, lungs, and boiled with seasonings in the animals stomach. Haggis is traditionally served at "Burns Supper" or "Burns Night" accompanied by tatties and neeps also known as potatoes and turnips. Burns Night or Burns Supper celebrates the birthday of Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns which is held every January 25th.
- Shortbread has been a traditional Scottish food for centuries, though the first printed recipe first appeared in 1736. The story of shortbread begins with the medieval "biscuit bread". Yeast in bread making was replaced with butter, and biscuit bread developed into shortbread. Traditional Scottish shortbread comes in all shapes, sizes and varieties. In Scotland, shortbread is still traditionally offered to "first footers" in celebration of the new year.
- "First footing" or the first foot in the house after midnight on New Years Day is still common across Scotland. To ensure good luck for the house the first foot should be a dark haired male, and he should bring with him symbolic pieces of coal, shortbread, salt, black bun and a wee dram of whisky.
- Scotland contains some of the oldest castles in the world. Some of the 3000 known castles are still structurally intact and currently in use as residences. Scottish castles are closely tied to the Clans of Scotland and the Scottish monarchy. Each clan would have a castle within their territory, where the Clan Chief and his family would live. Today, many castles have been renovated and are still home to the "landed gentry", the official "seat" of a particular Scottish clan.
- Scotland's culture includes the sport of football and golf. Football dates back to 1873 when the Scottish Football Association was first founded. The game of golf originated in Scotland in the 15th century. St. Andrews golf course is one of the oldest golf courses in the world.
- The Edinburgh International Festival is held every August, it is one of the largest art & cultural festivals in the world. The first festival began on August 24th, 1947, with the goal of combining Scottish and international art together from around the world.