



Dram busters

If your interest in Scotch whisky goes beyond the contents of your glass, these are the tours for you

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For today's informed whisky aficionados, the pleasure gained from their spirit of choice does not begin and end with the contents of a glass. Dram drinkers now want the complete story behind the whisky they enjoy, from ingredients, process and flavour profiles to the heritage of the distillery.

So it's no surprise that 2021 saw Diageo launch luxury experiences across several of its top Scotch brands, making Scotland – already a magnet for single malt lovers – an even more enticing winter jaunt. We investigate two of the most intriguing experiences on offer, both perfect for a whisky-centric weekend break.



JOHNNIE WALKER PRINCES STREET
Johnnie Walker's new eight-floor attraction is housed in a historic former department store on Princes Street in the heart of Edinburgh. The ground floor offers sought-after limited editions and a personalisation area where bottles can be customised. Visitors can bottle their own special-edition Johnnie Walker whisky, using a spirit exclusive to the venue.

In the cellar an extensive treasure trove of drams may be found. This area is also home to live casks where special whisky expressions are matured. Another must-do is the Johnnie Walker Journey of Flavour tour, a high-tech sensory journey bespoke to each visitor, mapping their

flavour preferences to whisky-based drinks tailored to their palate – state-of-the-art dispensation systems contain 1,296 flavour combinations.

Lastly, enjoy a sundowner at the rooftop bar. At 1820, cocktails are paired with delicious Scottish fare, while the Explorers' Bothy offers over 150 whiskies plus one-of-a-kind cask editions and highly exclusive serves – this is the only place in the world where it's possible to buy a dram from Diageo's Prima & Ultima collection, or from revived ghost distilleries Port Ellen and Brora.

Tickets from £25 per person, including a 90-minute tour and three personalised Scotch whisky drinks. johnniewalker.com



BRORA

There is more for whisky lovers to discover outside of Edinburgh. Located on Scotland's North-East coast in the Highland wilds of Sutherland is Brora, a legendary ghost distillery, now triumphantly revived, with a unique tale to tell. Though the building had lain closed since 1983, in May 2021 Brora reopened its doors. The brand has held cult status among Scotch collectors for decades, with historic bottlings often achieving five-figure sums at auction. What's more, during Brora's 38-year closure, whisky of remarkable quality and character continued to mature in the distillery warehouses, which only served to heighten demand.

Diageo has undertaken an extensive three-year, multi-million-pound restoration to reinstate the 202-year-old distillery's former glory, from repairing the roof to refurbishing the original stills, to replicate the conditions, equipment and processes that crafted Brora's signature spirit. New casks are now being filled and laid down, safeguarding Brora's legacy for future generations.

Pilgrims to Brora can experience the distillery's miraculous resurrection on one of two tours. Lasting three hours, Brora Awakened tells the fascinating story of the



distillery's heritage, complete with rarely seen archive materials. Alternatively, the full-day The Eras of Brora tour goes deep into the distillery's past, present and future, from witnessing today's craftspeople at work to a private tasting of Brora Triptych, the highly coveted one-off recent release featuring a trio of extremely rare single malts that showcase three distinct eras of Brora in terms of their remarkable flavour profiles. Both tours include a Brora tasting, a guided spirit nosing, and a Scottish-themed lunch. Visits are by appointment only and restricted to small groups, so book ahead. *Visitor experiences start from £300 per person, brora.com*



Clockwise from top left: the light-filled interior of Johnnie Walker Princes Street; restoration at the Brora distillery includes the stills and the gates; the Brora Triptych of rare single malts; Brora's distinctive buildings; Johnnie Walker's new home was formerly a department store