

Holyrood Park Points of Interest

Holyrood Park in Edinburgh showing some places of interest (Photographs © Graham Checkley)

Information Centre

A fine Victorian building in its own right, the Historic Scotland Ranger Service information centre is a good starting point for any visit to Holyrood Park. As well as maps and leaflets there are also displays about the history, geology and wildlife of the Park.

1. St Margaret's Loch



Queen Victoria's husband Albert built this loch as part of improvements to the Park during her reign. It now provides a home for a large flock of non-breeding Mute Swan as well as other water birds such as Greylags, Coot, Moorhen, Tufted Duck and Mallard. Rarer bird visitors include Pochard, Little Grebe, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Sandpiper and Whooper Swan.

2. St Anthony's Chapel



St Anthony of Egypt was a hermit and one of the earliest monks. He is considered the founder and father of organised monasticism. This chapel, dedicated to his name, was built in the early 1400s. Records show that the Pope gave money for its repair in 1426. [Canmore information](#)

3. Bonnie Prince Charlie



During the 1745 Jacobite rising the Highland army, fearful of artillery bombardment from Edinburgh Castle, advanced into Edinburgh around the south side of the city. In order to reach Holyrood Palace it's said that Bonnie Prince Charlie rode down through Hunter's Bog, and paused in an emotional moment as he finally set his eyes on the ancient family home of the Stuarts.

4. Deep Time



350 million years ago this part of Scotland was a very different place to what we see today. Down near the equator, and prior to the eruption of the Arthur's Seat volcano, this area was covered by tropical lagoons. You can still see evidence of the water today as ripple marks on the sedimentary rocks.

5. A Naval pageant

In 1564 Mary Queen of Scots ordered that Hunter's Bog be dammed to form an artificial loch. A banquet was laid out beside it to celebrate the marriage of two of her courtiers, and for entertainment they were treated to a re-enactment of a naval engagement that took place during the siege of Leith. You can still see the remains of the dam near the north end of the bog today.

6. A Hunter's Bog?



Despite 8000 years of human habitation in this area the name "Hunter's Bog" may be more modern. John Hunter was Treasurer of the Canongait and Keeper of the Park from 1566-67. Mary, Queen of Scots, granted him a 19 year lease of this area, then called Grundles Myre, in return for draining the King's Meadow (roughly where Dynamic Earth stands today). So, in return for draining a bog, John Hunter was granted...a bog!

7. Mutiny!

In 1778 soldiers from the Seaforth highlanders and the wild Macraas, who had enlisted for home defence, mutinied over rumours that were to be sent abroad. They headed for Arthur's Seat accompanied by a large group of sympathisers. The public supplied them with food and water and a piper played the pipes to keep their spirits up, pacing this path, now known as Piper's Walk.

Later they were persuaded they wouldn't be sent abroad and set sail for Guernsey. However, in 1782, they were sent to India where many died on the journey's there and home.

8. 2000 years ago



An Iron Age hill fort and an old field boundary, stand out in this snowy view looking west across the Park. Remains of the hill fort ditch and dyke, on the right, can be traced for over half a kilometre north across the back of Salisbury Crags.

9. Shrouded in mystery



In 1836 some schoolboys were playing just below the summit of Arthur's Seat, when they found a small cave sealed by slate. Inside were 17 small coffins, and inside each one was a small figure carved and dressed as if to represent an actual person. There is no clear explanation as to what they were for; some suggest it was to do with black magic, others that they may have been carved to represent the victims of Burke and Hare!

10. Up on the Terraces

Crow Hill shows an extremely well-preserved series of cultivation terraces. This was a technique by which a steep hillside was terraced to provide flat areas that would not be washed away. This made it possible to grow crops on land that was otherwise difficult to farm. The terraces in Holyrood Park were certainly used in the early medieval period but evidence from elsewhere in Scotland suggests they were originally made in pre-history.

11. Swan Wars?



The area may look peaceful today, but the Mute Swans of Duddingston Loch were once the subject of a legal dispute between local landowners. In 1688 the Duchess of Lauderdale claimed ownership of the swans on the basis that they had been introduced onto the loch by her late husband. Sir James Dick of Prestonfield, however, said that he owned the swans because they were on the loch that formed part of his land. The case went to court, and when the court ruled in favour of the duchess, Sir James turned all of the rest of the swans off the loch!

12. Edinburgh's Lion



Built from fire and carved by ice, Arthur's Seat is part of the remains of a 350 million year old volcano. This view shows the Lion's Head on the left and the Lion's Haunch on the right, the remains of two ancient volcanic vents.

13. A Radical Road



St Walter Scott wanted to provide a road along Salisbury Crags. In 1820 he employed a destitute group of radical west of Scotland weavers to convert a rough track into what we see today, a great viewpoint over the west of Edinburgh.

14. Worth the walk



Possibly the finest view of Holyrood Palace can be obtained from the Radical Road at this point. The left-hand wing of the Palace is the oldest section, and includes Mary Queen of Scots bedroom.