

THE ALTONu3a MAY 2025 HOLIDAY has been a whirl-wind tour for x45 members of some of the most beautiful estates and gardens in SUNNY Scotland – and yes, we had wall to wall sunshine! We started with a train journey from Kings Cross to Edinburgh, and then travelled by coach for most of the rest of the week, with Perth on the River Tay as our base. On our final day we also enjoyed a ride on the Appleby to Settle rail line, the highest in England. So it was almost “a castle a day”, plus visits to places of scenic interest and a few museums & galleries:

Firstly we went to Scone Palace, “the crowning place of Scottish Kings”, which has been in the same family for 400 years – the heir apparent, 37 year old Viscount Stormont, was literally strolling around the gardens with his toddler and dog when we were there! The Stone of Destiny itself, having been stolen by students in 1950, is now in Perth Museum (but was brought back to Westminster for the Coronation last year).



Then on to Stirling Castle the next day, “one of the largest and most historically and architecturally important castles in Scotland”, which was once a favoured residence of the Stewart kings and queens. It looms over the town, surrounded on three sides by steep cliffs, and it remains the headquarters of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. (Due to its similarity to the castle in Germany, it was used to film the exterior shots for the 1970s TV series Colditz!)



Our third estate was Glamis Castle, which has been the home of the Lyon family since the 14th century, and Glamis Castle was the childhood home of Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, who became The Queen Mother. She was the 4th child of the Earl of Strathmore and never expected to become Queen when she married. Princess Margaret was born there. The castle is an interesting mix of the impressive and the personal, and enhanced by many family photos.



And the fourth estate was Dumfries House, saved by a consortium set up by Charles, the then Prince of Wales, as it contains the most important collection of Chippendale furniture in the world, as well as being of unique architectural interest. The house opened to the public in 2008. Since then other parts of the estate have been developed to provide both education and employment, as well as funding the trust's running costs. (The Prince of Wales was in residence at the estate on 8 September 2022, when his mother became gravely ill; he was transported by helicopter to Balmoral Castle, where she died later the same day, and he became king.)



And as next year's Altonu3a holiday is likely to be the Highlands & Islands you might like to think about joining us – holiday groups are typically a mix of singles, friends and couples so you need never feel alone. Please see our website for further details.

Denise Backhouse (Altonu3a Publicity Officer and holiday participant).

The gang at Stirling Castle

