

Day 5. 18th June, Sunday.

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The salty air hit our noses when we arrived on the coast of Scotland at St Andrews. It was just low tide, and we took a short walk through this small town. Small, but important. According to what they say (and according to what Thomas says) it was here where golf was invented. The shepherds on the grassy plains used their sticks to hit the stones that got in their way into the sea. And that's why we thematically went to the oldest golf course in the world. This is the place where world-famous golfers end their careers and where major golf matches take place. Since it was Sunday, and golf is not played on Sundays, we were free to walk around the course and take pictures together. Then we continued through the town to the church and the college of St. Salvator. St. Andrews is also a university town, for a long time it was the third university in the UK rank after Oxford and Cambridge. However, nowadays St Andrews is on the second place in the UK and on the first place in the Scotland. And it was also here where Princess Kate Middleton and Prince William supposedly (and allegedly, according to Thomas) met. After that we went to see the ruins of the St. Andrews cathedral and the adjacent cemetery. We also stopped at the Bishop's Castle and ended our walk in the square, on the corner of which we saw a memorial plaque to Paul of Kravař, who came to St. Andrews to spread Hussite ideas. He was eventually burned at the stake, so he was not very successful; on the other hand, St. Andrews is still a religious centre. Then we had a little bit of free time to shop, eat and some of us even went swimming in the sea. We got on our bus and after some time we stopped to see the Falkirk wheel, the one and only boat swivel lift. It was built in 2002 and opened by Queen Elizabeth II.

Next, we moved to the Wallace monument. It was built to honour Scottish national hero William Wallace, who fought bravely against English king and won an important battle at Stirling bridge. But after he lost one of his battles, he had to run away to continental Europe. When he came back, he was betrayed and then cruelly executed. However, Scottish people still look up to him. The monument is a tower with three floors including various exhibitions. It was windy on the top of the building, but the view of Stirling and the countryside was breathtaking. Last we moved to Stirling and had a look at Stirling castle, but unfortunately it was late, so we didn't get inside. We had a lot of time to explore the secrets of the castle grounds, graveyards and the town itself. At the end of the day, we got safely to our host families, had dinner and packed our bags for our way back home.



St. Andrews, Falkirk, Stirling

Our Sunday in Scotland was dedicated to several lesser-known places, however still worth a peek and some photos. In the morning, we went to St. Andrews, a small town situated on the eastern coast of the country. This town is famous for its university and for being the mother of golf – the sport was founded there, and it is home to the world’s oldest golf course – the Old Course, which we visited right after leaving our bus. Afterwards, we set off to explore the ruins of St. Andrews Cathedral with its cemetery, then the town’s castle and lastly the main street. About midway through, there is a mark on the ground, which is the exact spot where Pavel Kravař, a Czech Hussite missionary, was burned. We then had an hour to freely roam around the town and headed to Falkirk.

Falkirk is a beautiful village with a quirky landmark – the Falkirk Wheel. It is a huge complex apparatus designed for moving boats up and down 20 metres, connecting the Clyde and Forth Canal with the Union Canal. We tried to figure out its usage nowadays, but we concluded that it was purely a tourist attraction. All the boats we saw were simply sailing on paid cruises up and down the wheel and the canals.

In the evening, we returned to Stirling, but rather than going back to our host families, we visited what makes Stirling famous for. Firstly, we climbed up to the National Wallace Monument – an old lookout tower with a modest exhibition dedicated to William Wallace, the national hero of Scotland. We especially enjoyed the views from the top and the storytelling of a local warrior.

At the very end, we headed to the Stirling Castle, which was already closed at the time of our arrival, so we had some free time to explore the city centre on our own. It was Sunday evening, so most of the local shops were sadly closed and the city seemed fairly sleepy.

We finally gathered at about 7 to go back to our Scottish host families and prayed we get dinner this time. 😊

