
About Scottish People

What do you know about Scottish people?



If you can bring any stereotypes to mind you might think that they're mean.... or miserly or bad-tempered.... or a bit too fond of a drink.... but you'd be wrong (*well on the first two anyway!*)

Okay, so what does a Scot look like?

I'd hazard a guess that the movie 'Braveheart' has coloured your views on that, and again you would be wrong... at least at this point in history!

As a born-and-bred Scot myself (Isle of Skye) I'm happy to share what I've learned about our people's origins, and what I know about our looks, personalities and characteristics.

Scottish People – The Original 'Melting Pot'

Unless you've done your research on this little country's history, you might not know that today's Scots are the descendants of people from many different countries. The people who were native to Scotland in its very early days were the **Picts**.

The name translates to 'Painted People' – a reference to their custom of painting/tattooing their bodies. This was a warlike Celtic tribe descended from this area's indigenous Iron Age inhabitants.

The Picts were harassed by the first invaders to land on their shores – the Irish Celts.

Pictish culture left no written records, only some eerily impressive stone monuments and carvings.

This means that a lot of what historians believe about the Picts is based on a few artifacts, scant records, and a fair amount of conjecture and guesswork.

But a recently discovered DNA marker suggests that 10% of Scottish men are directly descended from the Picts. Dr Jim Wilson, Chief Scientist for Scotland's DNA, found a new Y chromosome marker which arose amongst the direct ancestors of the Picts.

So, here's another real-life taste of Scotland's magic... an almost mythical war-painted race who disappeared into the mists of time leaving hardly a trace of their existence. Perfect.

The Irish were the first invaders, but they most definitely weren't the last.



Over hundreds of years, Scotland was invaded by Vikings (from Scandinavian countries including Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Also known as the Norse).

Then there were the Romans and the English.

For a long time, this was believed to be the melting pot from which all present-day Scottish people are descended.

But recent DNA research done at Edinburgh University and St. Andrew's University shows a much more diverse genetic pool.

They found DNA from African races (most likely due to the 18th century slave trade) as well as Asia and several other European countries, and now believe that today's Scots are descended from almost 100 different ethnic groups.

'Astonishing and unique' is how the University spokesman described it. I'll just say 'melting pot!' If you're researching your genetic history or have Scottish ancestors, your family tree may just have got a whole lot more complicated (and interesting).

Scots Don't All Have Red Hair!

Of course, people from specific countries often share some physical characteristics in a very broad sense (ie. skin colour, eye or lip shape, hair texture and so on) but there's so much more to physical looks than those basic elements

Just for fun, here's a quick look at the possible variations of skin, eye and hair colouring.

Each area has a distinctly different genealogical 'flavour'!

Given that Scottish people descended from such a mixed bag of ancestors, it's not surprising that there isn't one 'look' that makes you say "Oh, he's Scottish!" with any degree of certainty. There are *some* features and colouring that might show up depending on which region your ancestors came from in the very beginning.



How Scottish people look can vary depending on whether they're descended from Highlanders or whether their family tree has roots in the Central Lowlands, Southern Uplands, or the northern isles.



Of course, there are endless variations on this theme because over time family members come and go, adding their own heritage and DNA to the mix.

Some research seems to show that the combination of red hair (sometimes called 'carrot-top'), pale skin (often with freckles) and blue/green eyes tends to be more common in countries with cooler summers and long winters. This could apply here too.

☐ Original Highlanders tended to be below average in height, strong and wiry in build.

Lowland Scots were taller, and bigger built, as were Orcadians and Shetlanders.

Of course, as with hair/eye/skin colouring, so much time has passed and so many different bloodlines have been blended, that the physical characteristics of today's Scottish people cover the whole spectrum.



The Scottish Personality – A Nice Surprise

If you base your expectations of Scottish character traits on common 'wisdom' or stereotypes, you're going to be happy to learn that most of them are not accurate.

Of course, we don't expect all American/Canadian/Australian/English/French people (etc. etc.) to be the same – or to think/act the same way, or have the same beliefs. It's the same principle.

But there are often cultural similarities which show up in large numbers of the population, and this is as true of Scotland as it is anywhere else.

Here's a list of character traits that your average Scot may have (but remember, any individual may have 10% of these, or 50%, or 90%.... or none!). Every one is unique.

- **We know the value of a dollar (or pound!).** This doesn't mean that Scots are tight-fisted or mean, just that ☐
- **Polite but reserved,** until we get to know you.
- **Forthright and honest.** We'll say what we mean, but not with malice.
- **Patriotic** – Scottish people might complain about the weather, or politics, or whatever but ☐
- **Fiery and bold.** Historically Scots are brave, stubborn, and courageous. Still true.
- **Social and friendly, once they know you.** You might be surprised at how 'chatty' a Scot can be, ☐
- **Practical and down-to-earth.** One side of our personality is very grounded and matter-of-fact. We don't like pretenses or 'fake-ness'.
- **Superstitious, sentimental and spiritual.** Many Scottish people have a strong belief in the supernatural, and in the strength of mythical and psychic worlds. ☐
- **Appreciate the arts.** ☐ Scots especially love music, dancing, story-telling and literature.

- **Hard-working.** ☐ First farmers and crofters, then heavy industrial plants and shipyards, today it's finance and service industries.
- **Know how to have a good time.** ☐ we're expert at these.
- **Enjoy their food!** The Scottish diet is traditionally rich in red meat, fats and sugar. ☐ Today's government is encouraging healthier eating – hoping to reduce the high heart-attack stats and fight obesity. Not all Scots appreciate this!
- **Also like 'a wee dram'.** ☐ Scotch Whisky is world-famous, and for a good reason. Younger generations enjoy vodka and beer too, and we don't all like whisky (*personally I can't even bear the smell of it!*) and the all-time favourite soft drink of Scotland is Irn Bru.

Scottish people are also a talented, creative and forward-thinking bunch.

Our little country has more than its fair share of famous people and many of the things we take for granted today were invented by Scots.



Complete these sentences

1. The native inhabitants of Scotland were _____.
2. The term means _____.
3. It makes reference to _____.
4. They vanished throughout history leaving _____.
5. Scotland was first invaded by _____.
6. Then came _____.
7. It was also invaded by _____.
8. Research done found DNA from _____.

Some phrases/sentences have been removed from the text. Match them to the corresponding blanks. Write the number in the box.

1. There's no one physical build either.
2. Of whisky that is.
3. we're careful about spending and expect value for money.
4. Unexpectedly emotional for such a practical people.
5. Scottish inventions include the TV, telephone, radar, penicillin and many more.
6. Celebrations, dancing, drinking, singing....
7. That's because each separate area had a different balance of invaders and immigrants.
8. they're fiercely proud of their country and will defend it with their last breath.
9. Scotland has produced more than its fair share of artists, poets, writers & musicians.
10. Tastes great, but not so good for your health.
11. This also helps distinguish Scots who come from the different regions which make up Scotland as a whole.
12. Historically this is a country founded and grown on hard work.
13. especially if he / she has had a drink or two.

