

The unexpected perks of bus travel in Edinburgh

Moving to another city can be stressful and frustrating but there can also be unexpected benefits, as Hanna (Classical Studies MA Hons) found.



When I first came to Edinburgh, everyone assured me that there was an “amazing” public transport system here. However, coming from a big city in Germany with a close-knit system of trams, undergrounds and buses, I was rather disappointed. I thought Edinburgh was a capital city but all it has is a tram with a single line and buses. Since Edinburgh is exceptionally walkable and most of my weekday appointments are a 30-minute walk or less, this didn’t bother me too much. Besides, especially in the city centre, walking is just as fast or even faster than taking the bus. However, as my radius slowly expanded as the semester progressed, 45-minute walks in the rain down to the Peffermill Playing Fields, the University’s

sports complex, or tiring walks back from the supermarket with full bags of my weekly groceries became more and more tiresome. So, I began to cautiously familiarise myself with the bus system.

Contrary to people's assurances, I felt the buses are not always that reliable. Most of the buses don't tell you the names of the stops, which makes the journey very stressful if you're not yet very familiar with the city. And due to roadworks buses can be delayed or need take a different route than the one your phone shows. This always makes me panic and get off at the next possible stop! But there are some benefits to the buses in Edinburgh.

The infamously changeable Scottish weather sometimes made me take the bus anyway, and then the bus is a warm shelter from the wind and rain. And the exceptional friendliness of the bus drivers is just as warm! Coming from a place where no one speaks to the public transport drivers and they never interact with you, the bus drivers in Edinburgh are a wonder to me. They are – I am not exaggerating – the friendliest, most polite, and helpful people. I once took a bus from the airport to my flat and asked the bus driver for directions. He didn't just tell me the stop. No, he stopped at a bus stop, turned off the engine, got out, helped me with my luggage and showed me the next stop I needed to get to and explained in detail which buses I could take.

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de free in Scotland for people under 22 (for many students, this means the entire duration of their degree), I have decided to officially make my peace with buses. Plus, what I have acknowledge only now, buses are one of the best ways to get to know Edinburgh. The architecture of the city is magnificent but you don't really notice it until you look up – and that's often not an option due to the aforementioned changeable weather. But if you sit in the front at the double-decker's big window, you can see the impressive architecture and all the monuments of Edinburgh from a prime perspective. A truly worthwhile experience.

What's more, buses are free not only in Edinburgh, but all over Scotland. This means you can travel to St Andrews, North Berwick or Glasgow for free in no more than two hours. Unfortunately night buses are not included in the free bus ride which can be annoying when your feet hurt from a night-out at a ceilidh but that doesn't interfere with my

reconciliation with bus travel in Edinburgh. The next time it's pouring rain, my shoulders hurt from grocery bags, and I have the prospect of reading my book on a warm bus, I'll be all appeased again. Buses are now one of the things that make Edinburgh even better for me, and as long as I am not 22 yet, I will definitely make the most of my free bus travel pass.

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