

# Visitors urged to travel on Borders Railway to experience unique riding festivals



They are events steeped in history that uphold traditions dating back centuries and combine the unforgettable spectacle of horses and their riders with local celebrations and pageantry.

And now, VisitScotland is encouraging visitors to travel to the Scottish Borders by train this summer to experience the region's unique Common Ridings and festivals in the Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology, and provide a boost to the local visitor economy.

The opening of the Borders Railway in September 2015 means that the traditional Borders Common Ridings and festivals are now more accessible than ever before. As part of the Borders Railway Blueprint partnership, the national tourism organisation seeks to maximize benefits from the new Borders Railway.

The events, which take place in 11 of the region's towns, kick off this Friday 9 June with Hawick Common Riding, the oldest of the Common Riding celebrations, dating from 1514.

They continue for Selkirk Common Riding on Friday 16 June when the solemn casting of the colours ceremony follows the Riding of the Marches, which commemorate the times when their forbearers patrolled the boundaries of their settlements on horseback.



Throughout the summer weeks, each Borders town then takes its

turn to celebrate its remarkable history and unique identity with hundreds of horses and their riders gathering to follow the chosen principal in:

- West Linton Whipman Play, 2-10 June.
- Peebles Beltane Festival, 18-24 June.
- Melrose Festival Week 18-14 June with the rideout on Monday 19 June.
- Galashiels Braw Lads Gathering from 23 June with the Braw Lads Day on Saturday 1 July.
- Jedburgh Callants Festival from 24 June with the Common Riding on Friday 7 July.
- Duns Summer Festival 2-8 July.
- Kelso Civic Week 16-22 July with the Yetholm Ride on 22 July.
- Lauder Common Week from 30 July with the Common Riding on Saturday 5 August.
- Coldstream Civic Week 6-12 August.

Malcolm Roughead, Chief Executive of VisitScotland said: “The Common Ridings are one of the oldest equestrian festivals in the world and a wonderful spectacle to witness. They take place against the backdrop of the dramatic landscape of the Scottish Borders, when the sheer guts and determination of the people comes to the fore in a perfect example of ScotSprit.

“The re-establishment of the railway line from Edinburgh through Midlothian to the Scottish Borders has had a massive impact on the local economy. The Common Ridings and festivals can attract more than 110,000 visitors\* and provide a boost to the local visitor economy.

“This year in the Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology, we will celebrate both Scotland’s tangible and intangible heritage – everything from our buildings and archaeological sites to our diverse stories, traditions and culture. Scotland’s history and culture are among the top reasons for visiting Scotland and we hope to encourage visitors to make

the journey on the Borders Railway to soak up the atmosphere at these unique events.”

Kate Pearson, Economic Development Officer for Tourism at Scottish Borders Council said: “Borderers are immensely proud of their town’s Common Ridings and festivals, which are full of colour, noise and passion.

“Visitors are made to feel welcome at each, with many Common Ridings and festivals running exile nights to help tourists feel part of the community.

“The Borders Railway has already helped to boost tourist numbers to the area, and I am sure many will use the service to visit Common Ridings and festivals throughout the summer.”

Alasdair Smart, ScotRail Alliance Tourism Manager, said: “We are delighted to be supporting the Common Ridings and look forward to helping visitors from across the country and beyond experience the beauty and rich natural heritage of the Borders.

“Tourism in Scotland is a key economic sector and we recognise the critical role that we play in supporting the national agenda, tourism businesses and local communities.”

VisitScotland’s global ScotSpirit campaign is built on extensive research which shows that people think Scotland has unique spirit – whether it’s the magic of the landscapes or the warmth of the people. Everyone who has shared their #ScotSpirit will become part of a special social movement. To find out more, visit: [www.visitscotland.com/scotspirit](http://www.visitscotland.com/scotspirit)

For more information on the Common Ridings and festivals, including [travel information](http://returntotheridings.co.uk/), visit: <http://returntotheridings.co.uk/>

For more information on the Common Ridings, visit: <https://www.visitscotland.com/see-do/events/common-ridi>

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Photos : Principals from some of the towns in the Scottish Borders gather to encourage people to travel by train

L to r: Braw Lass Amy Thomson, Melrosian Russell Mackay, Jethart Callant Brodie Irvine, Selkirk Standard Bearer Kieran Riddle, Lauder Cornet Hagen Steele and Braw Lad Greg Robertson.

Standard Bearer Kieran Riddle flies the flag for the Borders Railway this summer.