



50 Fascinating Facts about Peebles and around

1. **Peebles** is thought to come from a Brythonic word *Pebyll* meaning tent, possibly the tents of the wandering Gadeni tribes or perhaps referring to sheilings since the area has long been sheep country.
2. Peebles' motto is 'Contra Nanda Incrementum' which means to flourish by going against the flow.
3. Natives of Peebles are called **Gutterbluids** and incomers are known as **Stoorifits**.
4. The explorer **Mungo Park** lived in Peebles from 1801 as a town surgeon before setting off on his final fatal expedition to the Niger delta. Before leaving Peebles he met with his friend Sir Walter Scott. When Park's horse stumbled as they forded the Tweed, Scott is said to have prophesied this as a bad omen, 'I'm afraid Mungo, that's a bad freit.'
5. A tradition of the 6th century links Glasgow's patron saint, **St Mungo**, with Peebles. It claims he visited the town and planted a church there. 'Saint Mungo's Well' still calls to remembrance the visit of the bishop.
6. Peebles sits on the banks of the **River Tweed**, the principal river of the Scottish Borders and, at 96 miles (155 km), the fourth longest river in Scotland.
7. A glorious wooded walk along the river will take you to **Neidpath Castle**, which dates from 1370. It was built by the Hay family and remained in their ownership for over 300 years.
8. The publishers and brothers **William** and **Robert Chambers** were born in Peebles in 1800 and 1802 respectively.
9. **Chambers** publishing is internationally recognised and today's version of the dictionary first published by the brothers is widely used by British crossword solvers and setters, and by Scrabble players. It contains many more dialectal, archaic, unconventional and eccentric words than its rivals, and is noted for its occasional wryly humorous definitions, such as "a cake, long in shape but short in duration", for "éclair".
10. **Merlin**, the wizard of King Arthur legend, was converted to Christianity by St Mungo at the alter-stone a large block of rock opposite **Altarstone Farm** in the parish of Stobo. The following day Merlin met a strange three fold death, as he had already prophesied. He was stoned by local shepherds, slipped down the banks of the Tweed and impaled himself on stakes used to secure fish traps. He drowned as the river unexpectedly rose and his head fell below the water level.
11. The novelist **John Buchan** spent many holidays in his youth in Peebles where his grandparents lived. His book **John MacNab** is commemorated in field sports circles where huntsman endeavour to complete the 'McNab'. Bagging a McNab involves shooting a deer and a brace of grouse and catching a salmon on the same estate in a 24-hour period. Buchan's book is utterly charming.
12. **Traquair House**, Innerleithen is Scotland's oldest continually inhabited house, celebrating its 900th anniversary in 2007.
13. The **Tweed** is internationally known as a salmon fishing location and Peebles coat of arms depicts three salmon, with one going against the flow!
14. Peebles **Beltane Festival** is a festival of local legend, history and tradition. Beltane is a festival that marks the return of summer with the lighting of fires; where people could burn their winter bedding and floor coverings, ready to be replaced afresh. www.peeblesbeltanefestival.co.uk
15. Peebles has been twinned with Hendaye, a town in the Pays Basque of France at the foot of the Pyrenees on the Atlantic coast, since 1998.
16. **Eastgate Theatre and Arts Centre** opened in 2004 as a dedicated venue to bring together the rich and diverse arts organisations in the area.
17. **David I** built a castle in Peebles in the 12th century.
18. The legend of St. Ronan tells how he confronted and overcame Satan ("The De'il") by "cleikin' 'im" (catching him) by his bestial leg with his Episcopal crook and sending him back to hell. The De'il's passage to the nether regions was said thereafter to be marked by a sulphur spring, the spa later known as **St. Ronan's Well**.



19. Peebles history as a textile maker is retained today through, **Holland and Sherry**, one of the oldest and finest established cloth weavers and merchants in the world.
20. The cloth **Tweed** gained its name from a misreading of an order for Tweel which was a north east name given to speckled patterned cloth.
21. Situated in the borders, Peebles, has been touched by the disputes between Scotland and England notably being destroyed by fire in the 13th century War of Independence and then again during the rough wooing of Mary Queen of Scots in 1548!
22. **Stobo castle** built in 1811 was restored after being unoccupied for over a decade and now serves as a superlative spa resort.
23. Traquair House has its own **brewery**. Traquair House ale, Jacobite ale and Bear ale are some of their regular bottled brews.
24. **Dawyck Botanic Garden** with over 300 years of tree planting has created one of the world's finest arboreta. Discover some of Scotland's heritage trees including Brewer's Spruce and the unique Dawyck Beech.
25. **Glentress Forest** offers the first courses in Scotland designed by mountain biking enthusiasts using a colour-graded scheme like ski runs.
26. **Tweeddale Museum** was established by William Chambers, the founder of the famous publishing house. His aim was to create a centre of learning in his home town with his Chambers Institute. Today it presents a lively and diverse programme of exhibitions throughout the year from its historic building.
27. The **Southern Upland Way** is Scotland's longest walk at 212 miles (340km). Its coast to coast route, stretches from Portpatrick's romantic seascapes over the Mull of Galloway to the dramatic North Sea cliffs at Cocksburnspath and passes close to Traquair House.
28. **Robert's Smail's printing works** is a unique example of our industrial heritage in the form of a fully operational Victorian Letterpress Printing Works in the Borders town of Innerleithen. It is cared for National Trust for Scotland.
29. **St. Ronan's Wells** is an attractive pavilion situated on the hillside overlooking the Leithen valley. Originally constructed by the Earl of Traquair in the 1820s to provide a comfortable retreat for visitors to the spa, it was largely rebuilt and extended in 1896 to accommodate indoor bathing facilities and a bottling plant. The waters are still taken by visitors today.
30. **Border Reivers** were raiders along the Anglo-Scottish border (Border country), for nearly three hundred years from the late 13th century to the end of the 16th century. They earned their living through cattle *lifting* or rustling.
31. The Peebles Hydropathic Company opened its doors to guests in 1881 offering a wide range of water cures. Unfortunately, in July 1905, fire destroyed the original building - the iconic building we know as **Peebles Hydro** today was opened on 22 March 1907 and is set in 30 acres of grounds.
32. The ruined church at Peebles, the **Cross Kirk**, was erected on the spot where an old stone cross was located. This kirk was founded in 1261 by King Alexander III of Scotland.
33. Peebles war memorial was unveiled in 1922 by Field Marshall Earl Haig of Beymersyde.
34. Several of the hills around Peebles are topped with prehistoric hill forts adding interest to the skyline.
35. **Sir Walter Scott** published a novel *St. Ronan's Well* which popularised the spa at Innerleithen as a "watering place" and holiday resort, especially with the leisured classes from Edinburgh.
36. In 2005, the **Tweed Valley Osprey Project**, won the New Ways Partnership Award for Natural Resource Enhancement (including the historic environment), sponsored by Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland.
37. Peebles was an occasional residence for royalty when they would come to hunt in Etrick Forrest
38. During Scotland's 13th century Wars of Independence, Edward I gave Peebles to his Warden in Scotland, the Earl of Pembroke. Pembroke was taken captive at Bannockburn and was forced to return the town and sell his English estates to pay his ransom.



39. **Kailzie Gardens** offers a mix of Garden experience with Walled and Wild Gardens environments in addition to Woodland Walks. The gardens are privately owned and still run by the family who restored and developed it in the 1960s.
40. The area around Lyne, Peebles was favoured by the Romans and there is evidence of their presence e.g. Lyne Fort and remains of the roman road that was the transport route from the Clyde Valley to Newstead near Melrose.
41. William Chambers, as provost of Edinburgh, did much to start renovation of Edinburgh's Old Town including a massive restoration of St Giles. He paid the £30,000 bill himself but was to die 3 days before the project was completed. His own funeral was the first service to be held in the newly reopened church.
42. Scotland's Oldest Organised Sports Meeting, **St. Ronan's Border Games** was founded in 1827 and takes place every July at Innerleithen.
43. The Bear gates to Traquair House were erected in 1738 by Charles, 5th Earl of Traquair, who, after receiving a visit from Bonnie Prince Charlie during the 1745 uprising, vowed that they would remain closed until the restoration of the Stewart dynasty. They remain closed today!
44. Meg Ritchie, a landlady of the **Cross Keys Inn**, inspired Sir Walter Scott's character Meg Dodds in the book St Ronan's Well.
45. John Buchan took the title **Lord Tweedsmuir** when he was knighted.
46. In the days Peebles' main industry being weaving, the cloth produced was known as *Peebles White*.
47. A number of miracles were attributed to the Cross Kirk in Peebles resulting in it becoming a place of **pilgrimage**.
48. Peebles' 13th century **market cross** is carved with the town's coat of arms and the strawberries of the Frasers, who were once Sheriffs or Tweeddale.
49. Peebles regularly suffered from English raids and by the 16th century it was encircled by a defensive wall.
50. A 15th century legend corroborates Merlin's demise since it says he was buried close to **Drumelzier** Church, on the level haugh close to the right bank of the River Tweed.