50 fascinating 'facts' about the Tweed Valley area

1. The Tweed is Scotland's fourth longest river after the Tay, the Spey and the Clyde. It's **95 miles long**.
2. The Tweed forms the **border** between Scotland and England for 12 miles of its length. The Tweed is one of Britain's most highly regarded **salmon fishing** rivers and Peebles coat of arms depicts three salmon, with one going against the flow!
3. **Peebles' motto** is 'Contra Nando Incrementum' which means to flourish by going against the flow.
4. Along its length the **Tweed descends 1500 feet** between its source and the sea at Berwick upon Tweed.
5. The river Tweed rises at Tweed's Well, only 7 miles east of **Annan**, almost on Scotland's west coast.
6. For many centuries, the Tweed was kept largely **free from bridges** as a deliberate means of deterring would-be invaders who, otherwise, had no means to cross.
7. In 1785 Vincenzo Lunardi made a trip from Glasgow to Hawick by **hot-air balloon**, taking 2½ hours.
8. The name of the **fabric "tweed**" originated by accident about 1830 when a London customer misread the name "tweel" (twill) on an invoice but the name suited and stuck.
9. **Selkirk** used to be known as a town of shoemakers, or souters: it was the town's primary manufacture.
10. **One hundred Selkirk men** marched to fight for the king at the battle of Flodden Field in 1513. Only 1 returned. He had a captured English banner, which he cast down in the market place. The English came and burned the town, because the Selkirk chaps had given such stern resistance.
11. This event is commemorated in Selkirk's annual **Common Riding celebration**. Many Border towns continue to mark these events when local land borders are ridden and proclaimed to any potential invaders out there.
12. **Common Riding** events can be found as far north as Linlithgow, West Lothian, and as far west as Kirkcudbright, in Dumfries & Galloway.
13. **Innerleithen** enjoyed a spell in the 1840s as a 'choice retreat for invalids, the medical properties of its well being expressly framed to bear salutiferously upon visitors'. Let's all go!
14. **Innerleithen** boasts some of Scotland's most testing downhill mountain biking trails, visited by enthusiasts from all over Britain.
15. **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.
16. 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.
17. **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.
18. 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.

19. **Traquair House**, Innerleithen is Scotland's oldest continually inhabited house, celebrating its 900th anniversary in 2007. Traquair House has its own brewery. Traquair House ale, Jacobite ale and Bear ale are some of their regular bottled brews.
20. 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.
21. **Peebles natives** are known as or Gutter Bluids and incomers to the town are called Stoorifits.
22. Peebles was an occasional **residence for royalty** when they would come to hunt in Ettrick Forrest.
23. 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.
24. 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.
25. 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.
26. **Galashiels** is one of the premier tweed producing towns in Scotland and is home to the Scottish Textiles College, now a campus and specialist school of Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh.
27. The **Eildon hills** just beside Melrose are, according to one legend, the place where King Arthur and his Knights are lying asleep (beneath the hills), waiting to rise and ride again.
28. 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 unexpectantly rose and his head fell below the water level.
29. **St Boswells** is said to have the largest village green in Scotland, at over 40 acres.
30. Dryburgh is first mentioned in connection with St Columba's follower **St.Modan**, who is described as the Abbott of Dryburgh in 622.
31. **Dryburgh Abbey** has the graves of both Sir Walter Scott and Earl Haig.
32. **Smailholm Tower** is a typical Scottish Borders tower house. It commands a vast extent of country and is said to have been used to direct vessels to Berwick, 25 miles away.
33. Sir Walter Scott, the writer, took impressionist **artist JMW Turner** to Smailholm.
34. **Newstead** is the site of a roman fort known as Trimontium due to its proximity to the three hills of the Eildons. It was built around AD 81 at the site where the Roman Road known as Dere Street crossed the river Tweed. All sorts of evidence of the forts use and existence were found there.
35. The fort at **Trimontium** was dismantled in AD 86 when Agricol bailed out of Scotland but it was later rebuilt to serve as one of the furthest outposts of the **Antonine Wall.**
36. In 1995, Houston's of Hawick supplied **"Selkirk Bannocks"** to Safeway's Scottish stores. What a nerve!
37. **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. James Graham, Marquis of Montrose, was ambushed by General Leslie at **Philiphaugh** in a pivotal battle of the 17th C British [usually referred to as English] civil war. At his time Montrose was on the side of the king. The battle site can be visited as part of the Philiphaugh estate.
38. **Stobo Castle** built in 1811 was restored after being unoccupied for over a decade and now serves as a superlative spa resort.
39. **Glentress Forest** offers the first courses in Scotland designed by **mountain biking** enthusiasts using a colourgraded scheme like ski runs.
40. 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.

41. **Sir Walter Scott**, was sheriff of Selkirk and made his home at Abbotsford. He is credited with having a huge impact on Scottish tourism through his historical novels but was also responsible for breathing life into the Border Ballads tradition.
42. **Abbotsford** is the name Sir Walter Scott gave to the neo-Baronial mansion he had constructed on the southern bank of the Tweed, just west of Melrose. He wrote most of his famous novels here and died in the house in 1832.
43. The house and its contents remain intact, including **Rob Roy's sword**, Queen Mary's crucifix, Bonnie Prince Charlie's hunting knife and many more… it's open to the public so you can check out the full list of famous people's stuff!
44. **Aikwood Tower** west of Selkirk has been comprehensively restored by Lord Steel, the former leader of the Liberal party and the first Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament.
45. The **Three Brethren** hill stands at 1522 feet. This hill has three large stone cairns and it was the meeting point of the Yair and Philliphaugh districts and Selkirk Burgh. This point is ridden to each year by the Selkirk Standard Bearer and his followers as they ride the town boundaries as part of the Common Riding tradition.
46. The borders are arguably custodians to the tradition of **Scottish Rugby Union**, a sport where Scots have managed to distinguish themselves generally against the odds!
47. The reputed **wizard and tutor to the Pope**, Michael Scott was mentioned in Dante's Divine Comedy: Inferno! Legend has it that his powers split the Eildon Hills.
48. **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.
49. An outlaw, Johnnie Armstrong,of Gilnockie, second chief of Clan Armstrong and brother of Thomas, Laird of Mangerton was captured and hanged by King James V for being a **Reiver**.
50. Radio Scotland once broadcast a feature in which Hermitage Castle, near Hawick, was described as the embodiment of the phrase **"sod off" in stone.**