

Exploring:

Arthur's Seat

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Within the city of Edinburgh, Scotland are the hilly remnants of a long-extinct volcano. On top of one of these hills is Arthur's Seat, a rocky crag that towers 823 feet (251 m) above the city below. The hills and moors, cliffs and lochs, and marshes and bogs surrounding Arthur's Seat all form part of Holyrood Park.

An ancient fort once graced the slopes leading up to the crag. People lived on the hillsides and terraced the land to raise crops. Thieves made their home in a secluded cave. Armies prepared for battle and camped on the slopes. Bonfires lit on top of the peak warned inhabitants of invasion or marked royal celebrations.

But Arthur's Seat has been the site of some lesser-known important events. On May 3, 1840, Orson Pratt arrived in Scotland as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He organized the first Scottish branch of the Church in Paisley. Then, after laboring in several other cities, Elder Pratt made his way to Edinburgh, where he found it very difficult to get the people to listen to the message of the restored gospel.

Sometimes when things seemed difficult, he would climb to the top of Arthur's Seat. There, looking out across the city of Edinburgh, he could see the high peaks of mountains on the horizon and the Firth of Forth stretching to join the North Sea. Below, the tracks of one of Scotland's first railroad lines ran through one of the earliest railroad tunnels. The echo of rifle practice may have risen up to greet Elder Pratt from Hunter's Bog, while the ruins of St. Anthony's chapel silently blended into the background on a lower ridge where sheep grazed. Holyrood Palace, the royal residence, lay at the foot of the hill, and across the way Edinburgh Castle guarded the top of another hill. On top of Arthur's Seat, Elder Pratt prayed that the people would be receptive to the gospel. He then went down into the city and preached for endless hours, trying to establish the gospel in this important city of Edinburgh.

In one of his prayers, Elder Pratt pleaded with the Lord to help him find two hundred converts. After working very hard for ten months, Elder Pratt left Edinburgh having seen more than two hundred people enter into the covenant of baptism.

