

# MARY OF GUISE

The 450th anniversary of a remarkable Renaissance woman

FAMILY TRAIL

Stirling Castle - Linlithgow Palace - Edinburgh Castle

## CELEBRATING A GREAT QUEEN OF SCOTLAND

*Queen Regent of Scotland*  
*French noblewoman*  
*Wife of King James V*  
*Mother of Mary, Queen of Scots*  
*Last defender of the Auld Alliance*

Follow the trail and enjoy three great royal residences linked to Mary of Guise



Corneille de Lyon, Mary of Guise, 1515-1560. Queen of James V, Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

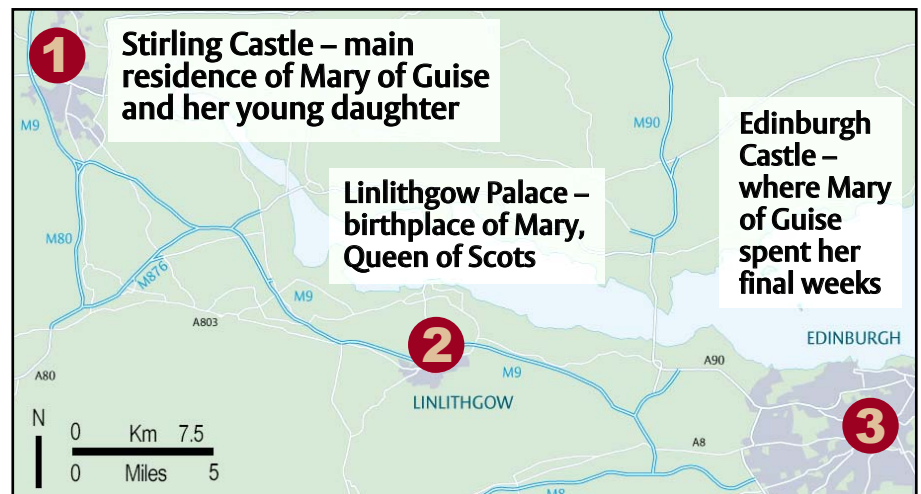
### WHO WAS MARY OF GUISE?

A towering figure in Scottish Renaissance history, Mary of Guise was partly educated in a convent but ended up in Scotland at the helm of a kingdom torn by war and religious strife.

Her story became entwined with three great Historic Scotland heritage attractions – Stirling Castle, Edinburgh Castle and Linlithgow Palace.

Born in 1515 to a great French noble family, she was witty, beautiful, charming, intelligent and rich, but her life was marked by tragedies.

Already a widow, Mary was persuaded to marry James V of Scotland in 1538. After his untimely death, aged 30, she refused to be pushed aside by the Scots noblemen who scrambled to fill the power vacuum. Using Stirling as her powerbase she defended the rights of her daughter 'The Little Queen'; outwitting her rivals she also became regent of Scotland.



Mary used political skill, backed by French money and troops, to repel the English and defend the Catholic Church against the advance of Protestantism.

The last great champion of the Auld Alliance, which had existed between Scotland and France since 1295, she fought for her beliefs right up to her death at Edinburgh Castle in June 1560.

Only then did an Anglo-Scottish army overcome French defenders holding the port of Leith, making way for the Protestant Reformation to triumph.

All that Mary had worked for seemed to have crumbled. But in 1561 her Catholic daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots returned from France, stepping ashore at Leith to begin her rule of Scotland.

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## STIRLING CASTLE

Mighty Stirling Castle, with its gardens and park, had long been a favoured residence of Scottish kings.

James V had ordered a magnificent new palace to be built within the walls where he and his queen, Mary of Guise, would hold court.

But the king died in 1542 – perhaps with the work only partly finished. On his death, Stirling castle became her rightful home.

Soon afterwards there was a struggle for control as the new regent, the earl of Arran, tried to take Stirling for himself.

The Regent Arran disputed Mary's right to control this great stronghold. But she outwitted him and in July 1543 she and her little daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots, left Linlithgow Palace and headed for Stirling with a triumphant procession of 2,500 cavalry, 1,000 infantry and a baggage train a mile long.



### LIFE AT STIRLING

Stirling was the main political powerbase where Mary held court. But the castle and its royal palace were also places of fun.

Within a month of arriving, Mary had brought in a flock of cockerels and hens as pets she could enjoy with her daughter. There were musicians, poets, jesters, a female 'fool' called Senat and maybe even entertainers from Africa.

**In Stirling, off the M9, Junction 9/10. 01786 450000, [www.stirlingcastle.gov.uk](http://www.stirlingcastle.gov.uk)**



### LINLITHGOW PALACE

The palace was among the finest royal residences in Scotland and was also a handy stopover during journeys between Edinburgh and Stirling.

Superb architecture, comfortable rooms, and the lovely loch just outside, it was an impressive place. This was where Mary of Guise gave birth to her daughter, Mary, the only one of her five children to survive into adulthood.

A few days later she received news that her husband, James V, had died at Falkland Palace. This meant Mary's newborn was now the Queen of Scots.

**In Linlithgow off the M9. 01506 842 896, [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)**

## EDINBURGH CASTLE

A hugely important royal stronghold, it was here that Mary of Guise spent her final weeks.

In March 1560 an English army arrived to support the Protestant Lords of the Congregation against Mary and the Catholic Church. She took refuge in the castle while the French defence forces retreated to the nearby port of Leith. The English and Scots debated attacking the castle but the plan was dropped. Meanwhile Mary tried to support the troops in Leith who were enduring a long siege.

But Mary's health faded fast. By early June she had not eaten for a week. Friends and enemies alike paid their respects as she lay on her deathbed suffering from dropsy. On June 10th the French envoys Jacques de la Brosse and Jacques Mennage, wrote the "lady did not speak all day, and by a quarter of an hour after midnight gave up her spirit to God." Within three days the French were ready to sign a treaty with England.



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### PAST AND FUTURE QUEEN

This year is the 450th anniversary of the death of Mary of Guise who struggled to defend the Auld Alliance between Scotland and France and to protect the Catholic Church.

In spring 2011 the magnificent palace of Mary of Guise and Mary, Queen of Scots will reopen at Stirling Castle – fabulously refurbished to look as it did in the 1540s.

## TIMELINE

**1515**

Born the eldest child of Claude de Guise and Antoinette de Bourbon

**1534**

Marries Louis, Duke of Longueville

**1537**

Duke Louis dies. Henry VIII of England suggests marriage, Mary refuses, saying her neck was too small

**1538**

Mary weds James V. James orders a new palace at Stirling

**1539**

Crowned queen at Holyrood Abbey

**1540**

Birth of Prince James

**1541**

Birth of Prince Robert – both princes die

**1542**

Princess Mary born and James V dies

**1543**

The Marys move from Linlithgow to Stirling Castle. The infant's coronation is held in the castle

**1548**

Mary, Queen of Scots sent to France

**1554**

Mary of Guise becomes regent of Scotland

**1558**

Mary, Queen of Scots weds heir to the French throne, Francis

**1559**

Francis becomes King but dies in 1560

**1559**

Uprising of the Protestant Lords of the Congregation

**1560**

Mary oversees the doomed French defence of Leith. Dies at Edinburgh Castle

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