



The new Macallan Distillery

A new era for Scotch Whisky Tourism

by Becky Paskin

Not that long ago, a curious visitor to a whisky distillery was considered a nuisance interfering with the daily work. Today, the whisky tourists are treated as valuable guests and the tours are tailored to suit everyone's palate.

When Alfred Barnard toured the whisky distilleries of the United Kingdom in the late 19th century, there was no such thing as a gift shop. Distilleries at the time were more concerned with making whisky than entertaining visitors who happened to drop by; in fact showing any guest around a site was considered an inconvenience, taking the distillery manager away from their work.

It wasn't until the 1960s, when the Glenfarclas, Glenfiddich and Glenlivet distilleries opened their visitor centres on Speyside that the potential for whisky tourism was realised. Gradually, more distilleries on popular tourist routes added their own centres – by 1999, 44 distilleries offered visitor facilities – but it's only really been in the last decade that Scotch producers have been placing the visitor experience right alongside production at the heart of their operation. Of the 122 malt distilleries operating