

# The Scotch Whisky Experience

The following areas are presented through a combination of your live guide and an overhead soundtrack of our "Spirit of Whisky" a more theatrical and dramatic voice in comparison to the warmth of your live guide.

## Room 1 - Origins

Your guide will start your tour shortly. For now, just enjoy your surroundings.

*~Lightning Strike~*

### **SPOKEN BY GUIDE**

Welcome, to the Scotch Whisky Experience. You're about to discover how single malt whisky is made. Whisky is the spirit of Scotland. It comes from the elements: from air, fire, earth and water. It's part of a wild landscape that has many moods, which can change suddenly.

### **SPOKEN BY SPIRIT OF WHISKY**

I am born from the storm. I begin life in the rains that fall across this land and fill its veins. Coursing through burns and rivers, from a trickle to a torrent: I am a primal force as old as time.

### **SPOKEN BY GUIDE**

As the water travels, it is filtered through heather, peat and ancient granite rock. Each adds something special to Scotland's pure water, which is an essential ingredient in the making of Scotch whisky. And rain also brings life to whisky's other vital ingredient: barley.

As the summer unfolds, these fields of promise grow and ripen. On each ear of barley, grains swell, turning from green to gold as the harvest approaches. And when water and barley come together, whisky-making begins.

Follow me now, on the next stage of the journey towards the perfect dram.

## Room 2 - The Art of Whisky Making

### **SPOKEN BY GUIDE**

Here, we'll see how our distillers bring these ingredients together across Scotland's many distilleries. Let me introduce you to the spirit of single malt whisky.

### **SPOKEN BY SPIRIT OF WHISKY**

Making malt whisky begins with a clever little trick. The barley is fooled into growing by steeping it in water, then spreading it out on the malting house floor to germinate. As it germinates, the barley generates heat. It must be turned frequently to ensure that germination is even.

To stop it growing, the barley is dried with warm air in the malt kiln - or over a peat fire if a smoky flavour is desired. By now, the germination process has unlocked the starch, which is required for the next stage: MASHING. At the mill, the malted barley is ground into a coarse flour, called GRIST.

It's a very noisy process.

When the grist is mixed with hot water, the starch turns into a sugary liquid called WORT. This process happens in the MASH TUN.

After mashing, the wort is cooled. Only now can another special ingredient be added: YEAST. A violent reaction begins! The washback becomes a trembling, bubbling cauldron, as wort and yeast collide in frenzied fermentation. The yeast greedily devours the sugar, creating alcohol. Eventually, the yeast dies off. But its work is done: a strong, beer-like liquid called WASH is the result. The wash is now a step closer to becoming single malt whisky.

Now the distillation process can begin. The liquid is heated in a pot still and because alcohol boils at a lower temperature, it separates from the water. This alcoholic vapour rises up the neck, and as it cools, it condenses back into liquid. But it needs to be distilled again to further increase its alcohol content... and that takes place here, in the spirit still.

Each distillery has its own unique shape of copper pot still - another factor that ensures each whisky will have its own unique flavour. This time, the spirit is transformed. It is now around 70% alcohol and is known as NEW SPIRIT.

### **SPOKEN BY GUIDE**

Here in the spirit safe the 'stillman' weaves his magic - judging precisely when to send the first and last parts of the run back to be distilled again.

Meanwhile, the middle part - also known as the HEART OF THE RUN - is destined for maturation. But it's still not Scotch whisky! Not for a long time yet. It must be filled into oak casks for the final stage in the process: MATURATION.

Follow me now as we take a unique look at what goes on inside these oak casks. You're about to experience the magic of maturation...

## ROOM 3 - MATURATION

### **SPOKEN BY SPIRIT OF WHISKY**

You're now in a secret place: at the very heart of the inner world of whisky making. You're inside the cask. And when oak cask and spirit meet, they produce something truly remarkable.

### **SPOKEN BY GUIDE**

The oak cask is a vital part of the Scotch whisky process. Making and repairing casks is an ancient skill called COOPERING. You can hear the coopers busy at work; it's hard graft being a cooper.

The cask is absolutely essential for creating Scotch whisky. And each cask must be made from oak wood and only oak wood. That's because oak is strong and porous, which allows the spirit to breathe.

The casks come mainly from the USA - and are made of American white oak. American white oak imbues the whisky with softer, sweeter aromas such as vanilla, toffee and coconut. They were previously used to mature bourbon.

But some casks come from Spain - these are European oak wood. European oak contributes richer, spicier flavours to the whisky. They have previously held sherry, a fortified wine.

Cask interiors are charred or toasted by the coopers. This unlocks more flavours from the wood and can also rejuvenate an older cask.

It is the clear new spirit - the heart of the run from the spirit safe - that is filled into the cask. Over time, this clear spirit draws colour and additional flavour from the wood.

And so begins a waiting game. It will be three years and a day before the maturing liquid can even be called Scotch whisky. But even then, it's often just the beginning of a longer journey. What we need now is time and patience...

Gradually, the whisky's colour changes. Taste and aroma change too, producing different characteristics as the whisky ages.

Each cask is packed with its own unique qualities. The wood and chemistry both play their part in a slow dance through time. Meanwhile, the casks stand silently, hidden away from the world.

In Scotland, up to 2% of the spirit evaporates from each cask every year. This escaping vapour rises towards the heavens and is known as the ANGELS' SHARE.

Finally, the whisky is ready. But once it is bottled and sealed, time stops. The whisky is no longer able to breathe through the wood, so the maturation process ends. A whisky bottled at, say, 12 years will remain that age - no matter how long it is kept.

### **SPOKEN BY SPIRIT OF WHISKY**

So now you've discovered how nature's ingredients, and time itself, have been harnessed in my making. I am created where tradition, science, magic and myth all meet. My journey began many years ago in Scotland's wildest landscapes - and soon it'll reach its final destination: your glass.

Right, I'm off to join the angels myself!

*Please follow your guide upstairs where you can continue to enjoy the rest of your tour with the digital handsets.*