

Glasgow, Scottish City of Culture

Contributed by Passepartout

Glasgow has had more than its fair share of ups and downs - from a major industrial port known as the "Second City of the British Empire" in the Victorian era, to bleak industrial decline of enormous proportions, and a cultural renaissance in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, Glasgow is Scotland's largest and most "vibrant" city. Following its year as European City of Culture in 1990 and UK City of Architecture and Design in 1999, it is one of Europe's top twenty financial centres, has a thriving and varied cultural scene, and is the second largest shopping centre in the UK after London. It has a wealth of cultural attractions and activities that attract over 3 million tourists from all over the world each year. Many of these visitors regularly report on the welcome they have received - Glaswegians are well known for their hospitality and generosity of spirit. The 2014 Commonwealth Games will be held in Glasgow after Scotland's successful bid to host them. This city which loves to shop makes a great short break destination!

{snippet 1}Find out more

Glasgow 's earliest history, like so much else in this surprisingly romantic city, is obscured in a swirl of myth. The city's name is said to derive from the Celtic Glas-cu , which loosely translates as "the dear, green place" - a tag that the tourist board are keen to exploit as an antidote to the sooty images of popular imagination. It is generally agreed that the first settlers arrived in the sixth century to join Christian missionary Kentigern - later to become St Mungo - in his newly founded monastery on the banks of the tiny Molendinar Burn.

William the Lionheart gave the town an official charter in 1175, after which it continued to grow in importance, peaking in the mid-fifteenth century when the university was founded on Kentigern's site - the second in Scotland after St Andrews. This led to the establishment of an archbishopric, and hence city status, in 1492, and, due to its situation on a large, navigable river, Glasgow soon expanded into a major industrial port . The first cargo of tobacco from Virginia offloaded in Glasgow in 1674, and led to a boom in trade with the colonies until American independence. Following the Industrial Revolution and James Watt's innovations in steam power, coal from the abundant seams of Lanarkshire fuelled the ironworks all around the Clyde, worked by the cheap hands of the Highlanders and, later, those fleeing the Irish potato famine of the 1840s.

The Victorian age transformed Glasgow beyond recognition. The population boomed from 77,000 in 1801 to nearly 800,000 at the end of the century, and new tenement blocks swept into the suburbs in an attempt to cope with the choking influxes of people. At this time Glasgow became known as the "Second City of the Empire" - a curious epithet for a place that today rarely acknowledges second place in anything.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Glasgow's industries had been honed into one massive shipbuilding culture. Everything from tugboats to transatlantic liners were fashioned out of sheet metal in the yards that straddled the Clyde. In the harsh economic climate of the 1930s, however, unemployment spiralled, and Glasgow could do little to counter its popular image as a city dominated by inebriate violence and - having absorbed vast numbers of Irish emigrants - sectarian tensions.

Shipbuilding, and many associated industries, died away almost completely in the 1960s and 1970s, leaving the city depressed, jobless and directionless. Then, in the 1980s, the self-promotion campaign began, snowballing towards the 1988 Garden Festival and year-long party as European City of Culture in 1990. More recently, Glasgow was UK City of Architecture and Design in 1999, an event which strove valiantly to showcase the city's rich architectural heritage.

[Destination Guides](#) > [Europe & Russia](#) > [Europe](#) > [Scotland](#) > [Glasgow and the Clyde](#) > [Glasgow](#)

{snippet 2}City Centre

Glasgow's large City Centre is ranged across the north bank of the River Clyde. At its geographical heart is George Square , a nineteenth-century municipal showpiece crowned by the enormous City Chambers at its eastern end. Behind this lies one of the greatest marketing successes of the 1980s, the Merchant City , an area which blends magnificent Victorian architecture with yuppie conversions. The grand buildings and trendy cafés cling to the borders of the run-down East End , a strongly working-class district that chooses to ignore its rather showy neighbour. The oldest part of Glasgow, around the Cathedral , lies immediately north of the East End.

Called by poet John Betjeman "the greatest Victorian city in the world", Glasgow's commercial core spreads west of George Square, and is mostly built on a large grid system - possibly inspired by Edinburgh's New Town - with ruler-straight roads soon rising up severe hills to grand, sandblasted buildings. The same style was copied by many North American cities, and indeed parts of Glasgow have been pressed into service as nineteenth-century New York in films such as *House of Mirth* . The main shopping areas here are Argyle Street , running parallel to the river, and Buchanan

Street , which links Argyle Street to the pedestrianized shopping thoroughfare, Glasgow's most famous street, Sauchiehall Street. Here, Charles Rennie Mackintosh fans should head for the Willow Tea Rooms , not all that easy to spot at first, above a jewellery shop at 217 Sauchiehall St. This is a faithful reconstruction on the site of the 1904 original, which was created for Kate Cranston, one of Rennie Mackintosh's few contemporary supporters in the city. Just to the northwest of here is Charles Rennie Mackintosh's famous Glasgow School of Art .

Getting there:

Glasgow International airport (tel 0141/887 1111 ,) is at Abbotsinch, eight miles southwest of the city - not to be confused with Glasgow Prestwick airport, which is thirty miles south near Ayr. From the international airport, the Glasgow Airport Link bus runs regularly into the central Buchanan Street bus station.

From Glasgow Prestwick airport (tel 01292/511000 ,), buses to Glasgow depart from directly outside the terminal. The train station is a short walk from the terminal (alight at the airport not Prestwick Town), with trains taking 45 minutes to reach Glasgow. Ryanair, bmibaby and easyJet, along with some other budget airlines, have flights to Glasgow from London Stansted and other English regional airports.

Nearly all trains from England come into Central station , which sits over Argyle Street, one of the city's main shopping thoroughfares. Queen Street station , at the corner of George Square, is the terminus for trains serving Edinburgh and the north. The walk between the two takes about ten minutes. Buchanan Street bus station is the arrival point for regional and inter-city coaches.

Where to Stay in Glasgow

Best Western Glasgow City Hotel * SPECIAL VALUE
Average Nightly Rate £61.20. The Best Western Glasgow City (Scotland) stands one kilometre from the Scottish Exhibition Centre and two kilometres from the Modern Art Gallery. Complimentary continental breakfasts are provided each morning. Reception provides luggage storage and movie rentals. Guestrooms feature plasma televisions and complimentary Internet access. Coffeemakers and complimentary minibars are offered.

Area Attractions

Charing Cross Station - 200 metres
Sauchiehall Street (Shopping) - 900 metres
Buchanan Street - 1.5 kilometres
Merchant Lane - 2.5 kilometres
Botanic Gardens - 3.5 kilometres
Cathedral Square - 3.5 kilometres
Burrell Collection (Museum) - 8.0 kilometres

Fraser Suites Glasgow - Scotland * SPECIAL VALUE
Average Nightly Rate £58.40. Fraser Suites Glasgow Hotel in Glasgow is housed within a 1850s baronial building with Victorian façade designed by JT Rothead, located in the center of the city in the Merchant City district. more...

Thistle Glasgow * SPECIAL VALUE
Average Nightly Rate £58.65. Thistle Glasgow (Scotland) stands within 250 metres of shopping and nightlife on Sauchiehall Street, 300 metres from the School of Art and 800 metres from the Gallery of Modern Art. more...

Next Page: Best of Glasgow - top sights for tourists!

Best of Glasgow

Glasgow School of Art

One of four independent art schools in Scotland, and the finest example of the unique style of Glasgow architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The Mackintosh Building, built between 1899 and 1909, is still the heart of the campus and continues to be a functioning part of the school. The only part of the building open to the general public is the Mackintosh gallery, which holds many different exhibitions throughout the year; all other areas are of the school are only viewable by guided tour.

{snippet 2}Gallery of Modern Art, Royal Exchange Square

GoMA opened in 1996 and is housed in an elegant, neo-classical building in the heart of Glasgow city centre. The building was originally built in 1778 as the townhouse of a wealthy Glasgow Tobacco Lord, and has served as a bank, the Royal Exchange, and a library before being refurbished to house the city's contemporary art collection. It is the second most visited contemporary art gallery outside London, offering an idiosyncratic but populist collection of

contemporary artworks.

Burrell Collection, Pollok Country Park

Sir William Burrell, an avid and eclectic art collector, and his wife, Constance, Lady Burrell gifted his collection of over 9,000 works of art to Glasgow in 1944. It was one of the greatest collections created by one person, made up of a vast array of works of all periods and from all over the world. It is displayed in a purpose-built museum, the result of an architectural competition, and opened in 1983. Pollok Park and the woodland offer plenty of outdoor activities and picnicing opportunities.

Necropolis

A Victorian cemetery on a hill above, and to the east of, Glasgow Cathedral (St. Mungo's Cathedral). Built when Glasgow was the second city of the empire, it reflects the feeling of confidence and wealth and security of that time. Fifty thousand individuals have been buried in approximately 3500 tombs, including the remains of almost every eminent Glaswegian of its day, under monuments designed by leading Glaswegian architects. Glasgow Necropolis Heritage Trail is a great way to see this elegantly crumbling Glaswegian version of the famous Père-Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Argyle Street, West End

Glasgow's premier museum and art gallery, housing one of Europe's great civic art collections. Since its refurbishment the museum is the most popular free to enter visitor attraction in Scotland, and the most visited museum in the United Kingdom outside London. It has one of the finest collections of arms and armour in the world and a vast natural history collection. The art collection includes many outstanding European artworks, including works by the Old Masters, French Impressionists and Scottish Colourists.

Retail District

Glasgow is the largest and best retail centre in the UK outside of London. The vibrant shopping district in the heart of the city is focused around the famous "Golden Z", the approximately two and a half mile long retail district of Buchanan Street, Sauchiehall Street and Argyle Street. Buchanan Street forms the central stretch and features a generally more upmarket range of shops than its two neighbours Argyle Street and Sauchiehall Street. Its combination of impressive Victorian architecture and modern urban design won Buchanan Street the Academy of Urbanism 'Great Street Award' 2008. This is where you can find Buchanan Galleries, the main shopping centre, and Argyll Arcade - one of Britain's oldest covered shopping arcades, built in 1827, which has the biggest selection of jewellers shops all under one roof. Other major shopping areas include the refurbished St Enoch Centre, the Designer Exchange off Royal Exchange Square, and the up-market Princes Square set in a renovated 1841 square which has a cosmopolitan selection of designer names. It's also worth checking out the unique and colourful Barras weekend street market, and the smaller, characterful outlets of the city's bohemian West End.

People's Palace And Winter Gardens, Glasgow Green

Situated on the edge of Glasgow Green, the oldest public park in the city, the People's Palace museum was opened in 1898, to provide a cultural centre for ordinary working people at a time when the East End of Glasgow was one of the most unhealthy and overcrowded parts of the city. Since the 1940s, it has been Glasgow's social history museum and a veritable treasure trove of Glasgow memorabilia, relating the story of the city's social and political past from 1750 to the present. Attached to the People's Palace is the Winter Gardens, a huge and elegant Victorian glasshouse where you can relax among the tropical plants and ferns and enjoy the café. There is a programme of temporary exhibitions and events throughout the year. Just across the road is the Templeton Carpet Factory - designed to look like the Doge's Palace in Venice!