



RIGHT
Glaswegian
youngsters
shopping on
Buchanan
Street
BELOW The
Trongate Clock
Tower



Once considered the toughest city in Britain, Glasgow has bloomed into a home of high culture, haute cuisine and gentle banter, says local writer Mike MacEacheran

PHOTOGRAPHY: MARLEEN DANIELS

Scotland with swagger



FROM RIGHT
A vegetarian take
on a traditional
British breakfast;
George Square



“Just look up - it's one of the most architecturally stunning cities in Europe. I even like the taste of Irn Bru!”

“I belong to Glasgow,” sang the jovial Will Fyffe in 1927, “but when I get a couple o’ drinks on a Saturday, Glasgow belongs to me!”

This is the music hall melody that once boomed from Glasgow’s Victorian tobacco factories and the beating heart of the city’s shipyards.

But as those industries slipped away, leaving ailing docks and closed factory gates, so did the joviality.

“The great thing about Glasgow,” famous Glaswegian comic Billy Connolly said back in the 1980s, “is that if there’s a nuclear attack, it’ll look exactly the same afterwards.”

How times have changed. While Glasgow remains ruggedly urban, it long ago shrugged off its tough guy reputation. Now, etched across the bell of the Tron Tower on Argyle Street, ‘Let Glasgow Flourish’ is the city’s optimistic aphorism, a message the city’s style advocates preach to the

masses. Glasgow has undergone a cosmetic makeover and, like the city’s famous musical sons Franz Ferdinand, comes dressed to impress and sporting a pencil moustache and a skinny hipster tie.

Winner of the European City of Culture, UK City of Architecture and Design, and Intelligent Community of the Year, the city has become an expert at forging its fiscal future out of its less lucrative past. Post-industrial sites have been pressed into creative service. A stroll down Scotland’s prime shopping mile, Buchanan Street, to the south bank of the River Clyde presents the Tramway, one of the most extraordinary theatre spaces in Europe, which began life in 1893 as the Coplawhill tram shed.

Even religion has been forsaken in the name of regeneration. A saunter through the leafy West End ▶▶



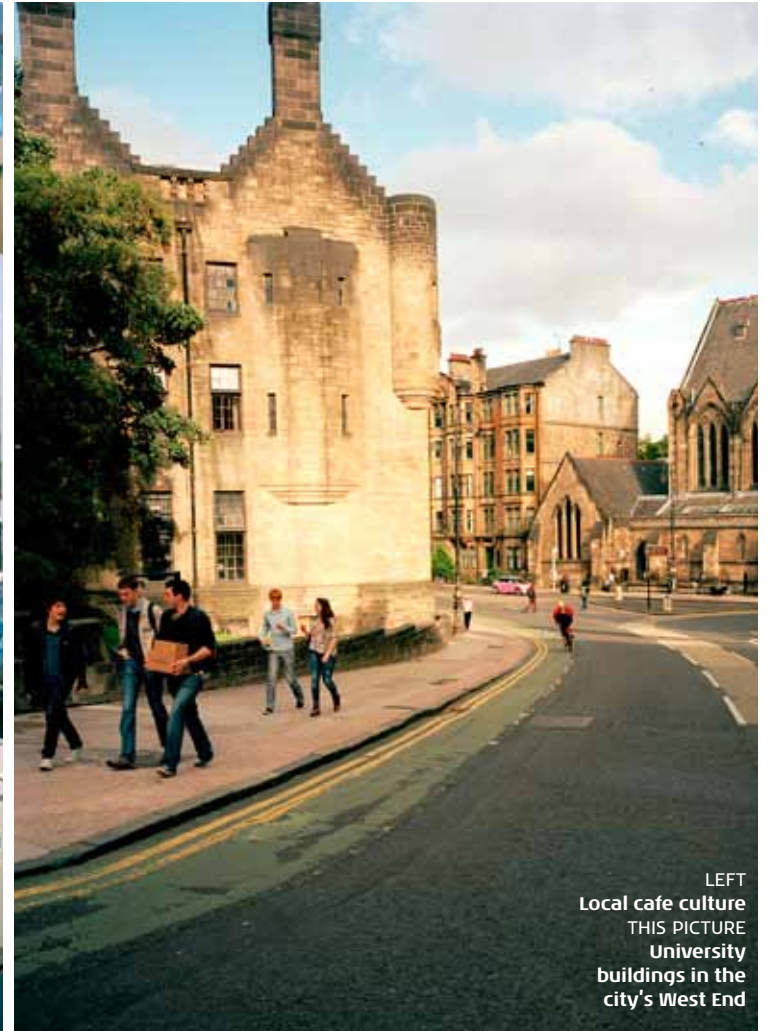
West Mile
Street,
central
Glasgow

Glen of the wild geese

"Whisky," says Melanie Stanger, with a poignant pause. "You either love it or you hate it. We Scots are rather partial." Bearing testament to years of drams, snifters and tots, Melanie is a tour guide at the Glengoyne whisky distillery, which serves the slowest distilled whisky in the country. Like Glasgow itself, it has matured over time. "Glengoyne is an unpeated whisky, giving it subtle flavours of the local water and from the oak of the cask," says Melanie. Set 15 miles north of the city centre, Glengoyne ('Glen of the wild geese') is Scotland's most southerly Highland malt distillery, but one of the few independents left. "A tenth of our whisky disappears through evaporation," says Melanie. "It's known as the 'Angel's Share' and they've become the heaviest drinkers in the whole of Scotland."



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Artist Subodh Gupta at his opening at Tramway; the Clyde riverbank, with the Opera House and Finnieston Crane; 2010, the Chinese Year of the Tiger, marked on the renovated Clydevalk



LEFT
Local cafe culture
 THIS PICTURE
University buildings in the city's West End

“Glasgow comes dressed to impress, sporting a pencil moustache and a skinny hipster tie”

▶▶ offers up Òran Mór, a converted church turned bar, with a ceiling mural by celebrated home-grown artist and author Alasdair Gray. Every lunchtime its popular series, ‘A Play, a Pie and a Pint’, combines the city’s cultural holy trinity. Around the corner – via the bohemian vibe of Byres Road and the odd Belle and Sebastian art-pop poster – is the city’s premiere creative space, SWG3. And like the raw art factories of Berlin or New York, Glasgow has its very own Andy Warhol.

Surrounded by a jungle of prints and lithographs, artist Mutley is in his element. “Every day is something new in this

city – there’s a really healthy arts scene. Glasgow and Glaswegians will embrace anything that shows a DIY ethos and entrepreneurial spirit, and this is our launching pad.”

Mutley provides studio space to a community of 120 creatives, including visual artists, curators, photographers, performance artists, musicians and dancers in buildings crafted out of the city’s defunct railway arches. There’s a waiting list of more than 200 to join the cosmopolitan collective. In the rehearsal dance studio, while German break dancer Storm teaches Glaswegian youngsters the art of teutonic body-popping, London artist Giles Round is in ▶▶



RIGHT
Picnicking in the grounds of the Botanical Gardens

“The ‘Weegies’ have invented a colloquial language all of their own”

▶▶ relaxed mood, setting up a new art installation in the +44 141 gallery, which is named after the city’s international dial code. “We’re very good at getting on with things without any fuss,” smiles Mutley. “And without big pots of cash.”

Glasgow owes much of its existence to the River Clyde. While prestigious investment banking companies like J.P. Morgan, Barclays Wealth, and Morgan Stanley now line the Broomielaw riverfront like a Scottish Wall Street, its most instantly recognisable symbols fringe the old docks. The landmark Finnieston Crane that towers over the River Clyde and ‘Squinty’ Bridge are a symbol of the city’s engineering heritage. As a sign of Glasgow’s big heart, it’s regularly used for charity abseils. Then there is the Riverside Museum, a £74-million tribute to the city’s maritime past. Scheduled to open in spring next year, it is very much in keeping with the style stakes: it’s being designed by ‘starchitect’ of the moment, Zaha Hadid.

Close by, entertaining the city’s new-found taste for bravura, Brian Maule is a specialist of the Glesga patter

(local slang) and French *pâté*. Having trained under the famed Roux brothers, he has brought a slice of classic haute cuisine to the growing culinary appetite on Glasgow’s inner-city streets.

“We use a lot of locally sourced produce to make it classically French with a local twist,” says Brian, with a distinctly gruff West Coast twang. “Michael Caine’s (two Michelin-starred) chef has come to town and Gordon Ramsay (three Michelin stars) has been and gone, so it shows there’s a hunger for quality cooking here. The key is attracting people from Glasgow first and then everything else falls into place. We’re popular with Scandinavians and they’re certainly a stylish bunch, so that’s a pretty good start.” Glasgow’s come a long way since urban legends of deep-fried Mars bars lurking on backstreets after dark.

Ultimately, Glasgow has retained its distinct identity because of its people and their perennially upbeat attitude but downbeat banter. ‘Weegies’ (Glaswegians) have invented a colloquial language all of their own. There’s ‘Sanoffy’, as in ‘Sanoffy cold day’ (it’s an awfully cold day), ‘Glaikit ▶▶



July, a fashion-conscious local, at Glasgow Central station

►► 'eejit' (stupid idiot), 'Dreich' (miserable wet weather), 'Skelpit erse' (smacked bottom) and a million other quips. King of the friendly put-down, don't be offended if a waitress or cashier says you've got "a face like a camel eatin' sherbet". One firm doing business in the city even advertised for translators who could, as the local phrase has it 'Parliamo Glesga' (speak Glaswegian).

As Katalin Thomann, a Swiss tourist from Zurich, says: "Sometimes it's really hard for me to understand people here – they have really thick accents. But everyone is so friendly." Having travelled across from Edinburgh to see the other side of Scottish city life, she's thinking of prolonging her stay. "If

you look up, it's one of the most architecturally stunning cities in Europe. And I even like the taste of Irn Bru!" An electric-orange-coloured soft drink, Irn Bru is Scotland's ubiquitous national drink, favoured hangover cure and the number one enemy to dentists across the country: a super sweet enamel-scraper, it is said by locals to be triple-filtered through a nuclear sock.

Glasvegas, Glasgae, Glesga, or just simple Glasgow: call it what you will, the city is a reformer and its sandstone arcades and rain-splattered arches symbolise many things to many people. Will Fyffe would have to change his tune: today, Glasgow belongs to everyone. ■

Glasgow fact file

GETTING THERE

KLM operates four direct daily flights to Glasgow International Airport from Amsterdam Airport Schiphol.

WHERE TO STAY

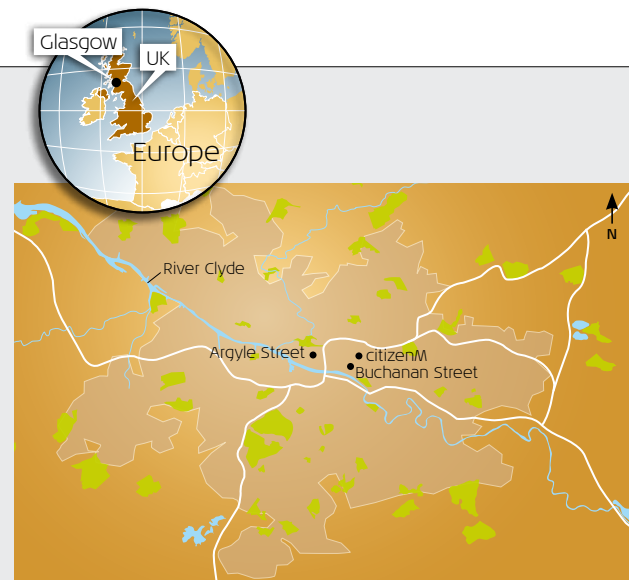
Funky Dutch brand **citizenM** opened its first international hotel in Glasgow in September to rapturous applause. The epitome of the city's new-found style, its pod rooms have king-size beds, monsoon power showers, mood lighting, free on-demand movies,



electronic shutters and free WiFi. citizenM is also within easy walking distance of the UK's best selection of shops, bars and restaurants outside of London (citizenmglasgow.com).

GOING OUT

For a night out in Glasgow, head to **Ashton Lane**, the **Merchant City** or **Bath Street** for the best bars and most raucous restaurants. Places to be seen include **Òran Mór** (+44 141 357 6200; oran-mor.co.uk), **Brel**, **The**



Loft, The Corinthian, The Butterfly and Pig, Mono and Arta. Brian Maule at **Chardon D'Or** does award-winning

French fine dining (+44 141 248 3801; brianmaule.com).

WHISKY

See if Glenqoyne whisky is as good as Melanie Stanger says (see Glen of the wild geese, page 30, +44 1389 878 561; glenqoyne.com).

With more than 100 whiskies the West End's **Uisge Beatha** is the connoisseur's choice for a wee dram (+44 141 332 1622; uisgebeathabar.co.uk).

