



Glasgow

POP 595,100

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Why Go?

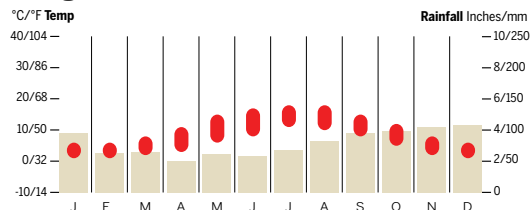
Disarmingly blending sophistication and earthiness, Scotland's biggest city has evolved over the last couple of decades to become one of Britain's most intriguing metropolises.

At first glance, the soberly handsome Victorian buildings, legacies of wealth generated from manufacturing and trade, suggest a staid sort of place. Very wrong. They are packed with stylish bars, top-notch restaurants, hedonistic clubs and one of Britain's best live-music scenes. The sheer vitality is gloriously infectious: the combination of edgy urbanity and the residents' legendary friendliness is captivating.

Glasgow also offers plenty by day. Its shopping – whether you're looking for Italian fashion or pre-loved denim – is famous and there are top-drawer museums and galleries. Charles Rennie Mackintosh's sublime designs dot the city, which also innovatively displays its industrial heritage. The River Clyde, traditionally associated with Glasgow's earthier side, is now a symbol of the city's renaissance.

When to Go

Glasgow



Feb The drizzle won't lift? Maroon yourself in one of Glasgow's fabulous pubs or clubs.

Jun The West End Festival and the Glasgow Jazz Festival make the city music heaven.

Aug Glasgow is friendly at any time, but when the sun is shining there's no happier city in Britain.

History

Glasgow grew around the cathedral founded by St Kertigan, later to become St Mun-go, in the 6th century. Unfortunately, with the exception of the cathedral, virtually nothing of the medieval city remains. It was swept away by the energies of a new age – the age of capitalism, the Industrial Revolution and the British Empire.

In the 18th century, much of the tobacco trade between Europe and the USA was routed through Glasgow, providing a great source of wealth. Even after the tobacco trade declined in the 19th century, the city continued to prosper as a centre of textile manufacturing, shipbuilding and the coal and steel industries. The outward appearance of prosperity, however, was tempered by the dire working conditions in the factories.

In the first half of the 20th century Glasgow was the centre of Britain's munitions industry, supplying arms and ships for the two world wars, in the second of which the city was carpet-bombed. Post-war, however, the port and heavy industries began to dwindle, and by the early 1970s the city looked doomed. Glasgow became synonymous with unemployment, economic depression and urban violence, centred around high-rise housing schemes such as the infamous Gorbals. More recently, urban development and a booming cultural sector have injected style and confidence into the city; though the standard of living remains low for Britain and life continues to be tough for many, the ongoing regeneration process gives grounds for optimism. The successful hosting of the 2014 Commonwealth Games highlighted this regeneration to a wide global audience.

Sights

Glasgow's major sights are fairly evenly dispersed, with many found along the Clyde (the focus of a long-term regeneration program). Many museums are free.

City Centre

The grid layout and pedestrian streets of the city centre make it easy to get around, and there are numerous cafes and pubs that make good pit stops between attractions.

★ **Glasgow School of Art** HISTORIC BUILDING
(Map p106; ☎0141-353 4526; www.gsa.ac.uk/ tours; 167 Renfrew St; adult/child £9.75/4.75; ☉9.30am-6.30pm Mar-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) Charles Rennie Mackintosh's greatest building – extensively damaged by fire in 2014, so access may be limited by renovation works – still fulfils its original function, so just follow the steady stream of eclectically dressed students up the hill to find it. It's one of Glasgow's architectural showpieces and has now been joined by Steven Holl's spectacular glacial, green School of Design (the Reid Building) right opposite. A risqué combination, but it works.

Visits are by excellent hour-long guided tours (roughly hourly in summer; 11am, 1pm and 3pm in winter, multilingual translations available) run by architecture students. These leave from the new building; book online or by phone at busy times.

Particularly impressive is the thoroughness of the design; the architect's pencil seems to have shaped everything inside and outside the building. The interior is strikingly austere, with simple colour combinations (often just black and cream) and the uncomfortable-looking high-backed chairs for which Mackintosh is famous. The library, designed as an addition in 1907, is a masterpiece.

There's a Mackintosh shop at the end of the tour. If you liked the visit, the same folk run recommended architecturally-minded **walking tours** of central Glasgow: see the website for details.

Willow Tearooms HISTORIC BUILDING
(Map p106; www.willowtearooms.co.uk; 217 Sauchiehall St; ☉9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) **FREE** Admirers of the great Charles Rennie Mackintosh will love the Willow Tearooms, an authentic reconstruction of tearooms Mackintosh designed and furnished in the early 20th century for restaurateur Kate Cranston. You can relive the original splendour of this unique tearoom while admiring the architect's distinctive touch in just about every element; he had a free rein and even the teaspoons were given his attention. Reconstruction took two years and the Willow reopened as a tearoom in 1980 (having been closed since 1926).