

SIMPLY THE FEST

If you're thinking of heading to Edinburgh for the festival, we show you what else the city has to offer

WORDS JO CAIRD



The Royal Mile: street entertainment



Historic city: the view from Calton Hill

Edinburgh SCOTLAND

More than half a million visitors, artists and performers arrive in Scotland's capital each August for the Edinburgh Fringe and the city's other festivals, and with 1000-plus performances each day, you can understand why. But there's far more to Edinburgh than just its festivals.

KING OF THE CASTLE

To get a sense of the city's rich history, head to Edinburgh Castle, the austere fortress perched atop the crag in the centre of town. The castle has changed hands between the Scottish and the English many times and the free guided tours that take place throughout the day are useful when it comes to understanding this

important relationship. Don't miss the beautiful St Margaret's Chapel, the oldest part of the castle, or the gritty and engaging Prisoners of War Exhibition in the dungeons.

OLD AND NEW

Beneath the castle to the south is Edinburgh's medieval Old Town, a jumble of steep streets and cobbled lanes. To its north is the elegant New Town, built in the 18th century to provide modern housing for Edinburgh's grander residents.

Each half has its own bustling high street. In the Old Town, the Royal Mile connects Edinburgh Castle with Holyrood Palace, the official Scottish residence of the monarch. Busy all year round, at festival

Camera Obscura: vortex fun



EAT, DRINK, SLEEP

WHERE TO EAT

- Generous portions of modern European cuisine and awesome views of the castle at The Outsider (15 George IV Bridge; +44 (0)131 226 3131).
- Seadogs is known for its seafood and vegetarian options, and is refreshingly inexpensive (seadogsonline.co.uk).
- Nile Valley specialises in budget African food. There's no alcohol licence, but you can bring your own (6 Chapel St; 0131 667 8200).

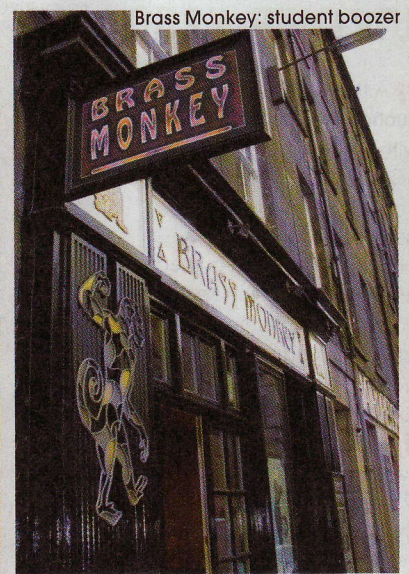
WHERE TO DRINK

- Thistle Street Bar is a tiny boozier with a top range of whiskeys and an atmosphere to make you feel like a local (39 Thistle Street; +44 (0)131 478 7029).

- Sip a cocktail as you gaze out over the Firth from the funky bar at Forth Floor at Harvey Nichols (harveynichols.com).
- The Brass Monkey is the pub of choice for Edinburgh's students (14 Drummond Street; 0131 556 1961).

WHERE TO SLEEP

- Hotel Missoni only opened 18 months ago but this bright, luxurious hotel is now Edinburgh's hottest place to stay. (hotelmissoni.com).
- Aonach Mor is a charming, family-run guesthouse that is only a 10-minute bus journey from the city centre (aonachmor.com).
- Castle Rock Hostel offers cheap and cheerful dormitory accommodation in a super central location (astlerockedinedinburgh.com).



Brass Monkey: student boozier

time the Mile goes nuts, but there's still plenty to do if you're not interested in street performance.

The petite Writers' Museum, dedicated to Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson, is a good spot for literature buffs; the interactive Camera Obscura, Edinburgh's oldest tourist attraction, won't fail to impress; and St Giles' Cathedral boasts some stunning stained glass windows.

In the New Town, Princes Street is Edinburgh's top shopping destination, as well as being home to the Scottish National Gallery. And for an artistic treat that's not even on most locals' radar, visit the Mansfield Traquair Centre to see its series of lovely frescoes by Phoebe Anna Traquair, the leading artist of the Arts and Crafts movement in Edinburgh.



Victoria Street: shop 'til you drop

Meadows, a short walk through the Old Town from the Royal Mile.

Edinburgh's ultimate green space, however, is Arthur's Seat, the long extinct volcano that soars to 251 metres over the city and its estuary, the Firth of Forth. It's about a 20-minute walk to reach the summit, but the views once you get there are unparalleled. As you gaze out over the city, listening to the roar of the crowds from the nearby Meadowbank Stadium, it's hard not to agree with the proud locals that Edinburgh is the world's most beautiful Gothic city.

PARK LIFE

The city's weather is notoriously unpredictable, even at the height of summer, but if you find yourself with a fine day, there's nothing nicer than relaxing in one of Edinburgh's parks, from Princes Street Gardens, to the

NEED TO KNOW

WHEN TO GO The Edinburgh Festival Fringe runs from August 5 to 29 (edfringe.com).

GETTING THERE By train, fares start at £16.50 single or £33 return for London King's Cross to Edinburgh with East Coast Trains (eastcoast.co.uk). EasyJet flies from London Gatwick to Edinburgh, from £28.99 one way, inclusive of taxes (easyjet.com). Return flights with British Airways from £77 (ba.com).



Friendly faces: meet the locals