

# GLASGOW

↑ SOUNDING OUT

## GOING TRAVELLING?

Check out [www.songlines.co.uk/musictravel](http://www.songlines.co.uk/musictravel) for our bespoke tours. *Songlines* has now profiled the world music scene in 40+ cities. See the archive at [www.songlines.co.uk](http://www.songlines.co.uk)



## From ceilidhs to congas, Scotland's most populous city is a hub for all things musical, as Lisa Hiller discovers



Royal Exchange Square

Thank heavens for the drizzle that never seems to stop falling on the sandstone tenements, fashionable residents and tower blocks of Glasgow. Musicians joke that it's responsible for encouraging punters to take refuge in the welcoming pubs, historic venues and bohemian cafés that are the backbone of this city's vibrant musical life. But the lively scene probably owes more to the creative energy and opportunities that attract artists from all over, including the Highlands and far-flung islands, to Glasgow – the heart of the Scottish music industry.

Fanning out on both sides of the River Clyde, Glasgow was once a great European engineering and trading centre. The Victorian era buildings, which still form the city centre, are a silent reminder of this grand past. Since then, Glasgow has survived a long decline that finally gave way in the 1980s when the city reinvented itself as a provider of financial services and a tourist destination.

Promoting culture – and Scottish music in particular – has been an important part of revitalising Glasgow. Over the past decades, government and business have fostered major festivals to showcase Celtic music and turned some of Glasgow's most significant buildings, such as a 19th century fruitmarket, into top performance venues. The council estimates that music now generates about £75 million towards Glasgow's economy every year.

Glaswegians are accustomed to high-quality shows, but there is still room for up-and-coming musicians and it is this space that has continued to attract artists from across Scotland since the folk revival first made the city a popular destination, especially for traditional and roots musicians during the 1960s. Most evenings there's at least one pub hosting an 'open mic night,' encouraging new performers to take to the stage with anything from a guitar or banjo, to a full band. In the city centre and nearby Merchant City area, you'll find folk, roots, Latino

and Eastern European cafés and clubs showcasing legends alongside new talent. Meanwhile, down in the bohemian West End, you'll find venues that cater for those who enjoy avant-garde or fusion music. A typical week in Glasgow will see more than 120 music events taking place.

Increasingly venues are catering to a growing interest in world music, which draws its influences from the South Asian, Eastern European and South American communities that are an integral part of this culturally diverse place. Big names are also performing more regularly. Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Buena Vista Social Club are among those set to headline later this year, while Edinburgh-based Salsa Celtica recently raised the vaulted roof of the Old Fruitmarket with their hypnotic blend of Cuban *charanga* and Highland pipes at Celtic Connections Festival. It is during the major festivals that Glasgow comes to life and this is the best time to visit – no matter what the weather is doing.

## FESTIVALS

### Celtic Connections

Now in its 16th year, Celtic Connections has grown to become one of Europe's biggest winter music festivals. Celebrating folk, roots, traditional and fusion music, the festival takes over Glasgow for several weeks in January, showcasing more than 1,500 artists from every continent. Increasingly the festival is attracting internationally renowned artists, which this year included Youssou N'Dour and Mariza. [www.celticconnections.com](http://www.celticconnections.com)

### Glasgow Mela

Organised by the Academy of Asian Arts, this annual mela celebrates the many cultures that make up Scotland. Usually

held in June, it offers music ranging from Russian folk and reggae to Bollywood and, of course, *bhangra*.

June 21 2009, [www.glasgowmela.com](http://www.glasgowmela.com)

### West End Festival

Usually kicking off with a colourful Mardi Gras (pictured left), this two-week event features a wide range of world music acts. June 13-28 2009, [www.westendfestival.co.uk](http://www.westendfestival.co.uk)

### Glasgow International Piping Live

Showcasing new talent alongside established musicians from around the world. Held at venues and on streets across the city, the festival also offers everyone the opportunity to get involved with workshops



The West End Festival's Mardi Gras parade

## CLUBS AND VENUES

### Glasgow's Concert Halls

Made up of the spectacular City Hall (Candleriggs, Merchant City), the much-loved Old Fruitmarket (Candleriggs, Merchant City), and the Royal Concert Hall (Buchanan Street). The various concert halls host most of Celtic Connections' concerts. +44 (0)141 353 8000, [www.glasgowconcerthalls.com](http://www.glasgowconcerthalls.com)

### ABC

This distinctive art deco building offers two live music and club spaces. Often showcasing the best of local talent. 300 Sauchiehall Street, +44 (0)141 3322232, [www.abclglasgow.com](http://www.abclglasgow.com)

### The Arches

Hailed as Glasgow's 'coolest arts venue,' The Arches takes up the cavernous space underneath the city's central station, hosting hip club nights, live music, theatre and visual art exhibitions. 253 Argyle Street, +44 (0)1413574524, [www.thearches.co.uk](http://www.thearches.co.uk)

### King Tut's Wah Wah Hut

Renowned for supporting emerging performers, this venue is well worth a visit. 272A St Vincent's Street, +44 (0)141 221 5279, [www.kingtuts.co.uk](http://www.kingtuts.co.uk)



Uzbek folklore group Ofarin at Café Cossachok

### CCA

Dedicated to fostering creativity and new talent across all the arts, the Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA) is a cutting-edge performance and workshop space. The Fallen Angels Club, a club dedicated to promoting roots music, regularly hosts performers at this venue. 350 Sauchiehall Street, +44 (0)141 352 4900, [www.cca-glasgow.com](http://www.cca-glasgow.com)

### The Barrowlands Ballroom

A buzzing market for all things plastic by day and home to one of Glasgow's most loved music venues by night. It started life as Scotland's most popular dancehall and today it's still loved by musicians and audiences for its excellent acoustics. Björk, Blazin' Fiddles and Bob Dylan have all performed here. 244 Gallowgate, +44 (0)141 552 4997, [www.glasgow-barrowland.com](http://www.glasgow-barrowland.com)

### Òran Mór

In Gaelic, this means 'the great melody of life,' which can be enjoyed at this converted church in Glasgow's West End almost every night of the week. On Tuesday nights it's worth checking out the open mic session. Top of Byres Road, +44 (0)141 357 6200, [www.oran-mor.co.uk](http://www.oran-mor.co.uk)

### Tchai-Ovna

This charming 'house of tea' (they serve over 80 different teas) in Glasgow's bohemian West End is a popular hang-out for musicians of all genres. 42 Ottago Lane, +44(0)141 357 4524, [www.tchainovna.com](http://www.tchainovna.com)

### St Andrews in the Square

A beautiful 18th-century restored church and Glasgow's centre for traditional Scottish music and dance. 1 St Andrew's Square, Calton, +44 (0)141 559 5902, [www.standrewsinthesquare.com](http://www.standrewsinthesquare.com)

### Russian Café Cossachok

With its folk-art ceiling and warm lighting, this friendly restaurant and performance venue is the home of Eastern European music in Glasgow, showcasing the best of local talent alongside visiting artists most Sunday evenings. 38 Albion Street, Merchant City, +44 (0)141 553 0733, [www.cossachok.com](http://www.cossachok.com)



Revamped Victorian splendour at the Old Fruitmarket

and traditional dances or *ceilidhs*. August 10-16 2009, [www.pipingfestival.co.uk](http://www.pipingfestival.co.uk)

### Other Piping Festivals

Other piping extravaganzas this year include the European Pipe Band Championships on July 25 and the World Pipe Band Championships, which usually attracts hundreds of bands and this year, on August 15, is expected to see 8,000 pipers and drummers battle it out on the Glasgow Green. [www.theworlds.co.uk](http://www.theworlds.co.uk)

### Merchant City Festival

An annual event that attracts thousands to see cutting-edge acts performing in and around the charming Victorian-era buildings found in this part of town. The festival delivers an array of traditional, world and fusion music. September 24-27 2009, [www.merchantcityfestival.com](http://www.merchantcityfestival.com)

## LISTINGS

For fortnightly listings and reviews see **The List**, available at newsagents and online ([www.list.co.uk](http://www.list.co.uk)), or pick up a free copy of **The Glasgow Diary** at major venues and public buildings, or download a copy: [www.seeglasgow.com/seeglasgow/whatson](http://www.seeglasgow.com/seeglasgow/whatson), or check out local newspapers including **The Glasgow Herald** or **The Evening Times**.

## Competition

WIN A TRIP TO GLASGOW



We have a weekend in Glasgow to give away, including train tickets, two nights accommodation in a five-star hotel, plus bus tour tickets

To enter, simply answer the following question:

Which river runs through Glasgow?

Terms & conditions: Accommodation is subject to availability and based on two people sharing a standard room (twin/double) for two nights bed & breakfast at the Radisson, Glasgow over any weekend (Friday to Sunday) until December 31 2009. The hotel is the first in the city to be presented with a gold award under the Green Tourism Business Scheme, which recognises businesses who meet required standards in environmental awareness. Train transport is two standard class returns to Glasgow with National Express and the journey must originate in the UK on the National Express network. Transport must be used by December 31 2009 and seven days notice needs to be given prior to booking. National Express East Coast operates 137 weekday train services along the East Coast Main Line, linking London King's Cross, the East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside, North East England and Scotland, carrying 18.7 million passengers in 2008, up from 18.1 million in 2007. This prize and the tickets are non-transferable, cannot be re-sold to another party and no cash alternative can be offered. See p5 for *Songlines* competition rules and address. Closing date June 26 2009.

[www.seeglasgow.com](http://www.seeglasgow.com)

