



SCOTLAND OFF THE BEATEN TRACK GLASGOW WEST END • 1 DAY ITINERARY

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Cover photo Kelvingrove, Glasgow West End



GENERAL INTRO


People make Glasgow has become the recent popular slogan for Scotland's largest city, again voted to be the world's friendliest in a 2021 survey by the travel publisher Rough Guides. That pesky capital and rival, Edinburgh, may be the more popular destination for tourists: "gritty" Glasgow can't compete for dramatic cityscapes, history or scenic beauty. But it really is the people that "make" Glasgow... along with Scotland's best shopping, best night scene, outstanding (and mostly free) museums, and the only place in the country with a big city feel.

ITINERARY INTRO

Unsurprisingly for a sizeable city, Glasgow's key visitor locations spread widely. Several clusters of attractions stand out, but attempting to visit them all in a single day is impractical. For a one-day snippet, I reckon (perhaps controversially) that you should spend your time in the West End instead of the true city centre. This rather fashionable neighbourhood boasts several leafy parks, the historic University of Glasgow and some of Scotland's very best museums. Byres Road runs through the heart of the district, bustling with students and well-heeled residents, and makes the perfect (late) lunch stop.

This is therefore an ideal itinerary for those into history, nature and good food – but is perhaps less suited to those hoping for quick, social-media worthy photo shots.

SCHEDULE

- 1 Kelvingrove Park
 - 2 Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum
 - 3 University of Glasgow & Hunterian Museum
 - 4 Ashton Lane
-  Lunch • somewhere on Ashton Lane / Byres Road
- 5 Glasgow Botanic Gardens

NEED TO KNOW

Mode of travel • Foot. There's a fair amount of walking involved in this itinerary, with occasional hillier sections.

You need • Comfortable shoes, and suitable clothing for Scotland's changeable climate!

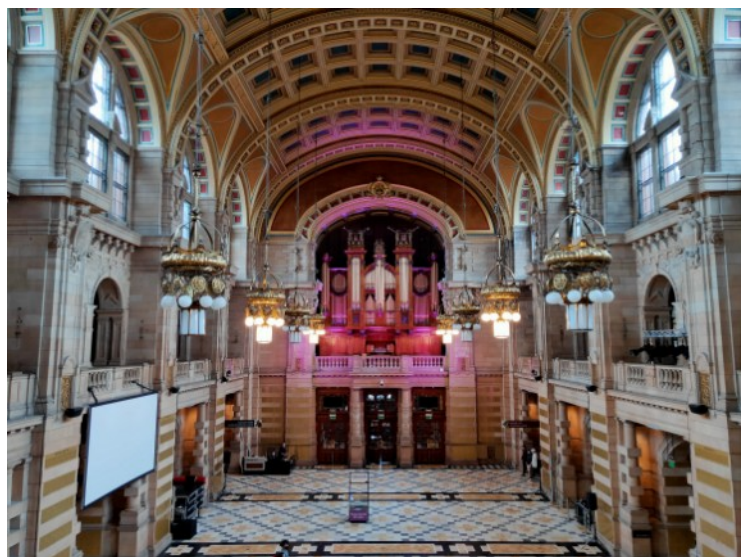
Budget • All the attractions are free, with donations accepted; £8-15 for lunch in a West End cafe / restaurant.

Start / finish • Kelvinbridge subway station (South Woodside Road exit), G4 9HJ. There are subway connections with the city centre, and buses stop on nearby Great Western Road.

Suggested start / finish time • 9am / 4.30pm

KEY

- ★★★★★ unmissable
- ★★★★ one of the best
- ★★★ very interesting
- ★★ interesting
- ★ minor site



Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum



Vaults at the University of Glasgow

SCOTLAND OFF THE BEATEN TRACK – THE HONEST ONLINE GUIDE

There isn't space here to include everything Scotland has to offer. For further inspiration, browse our free online travel guide to Scotland at sobt.co.uk, covering over 1,900 places throughout the country. With hundreds of walking routes, the most famous highlights and hidden gems, there's something for everyone!

5 min walk • Leave the subway station by the South Woodside Road (car park) exit. Head right, along the edge of the car park, beyond which a path leads through trees to quickly meet the Kelvin Walkway – this riverside path provides an 11-mile link from city to country. Turn left to follow the River Kelvin downstream, passing underneath a road bridge to enter Kelvingrove Park.

① KELVINGROVE PARK ★★★

Free attraction • (9.15am) Kelvingrove Park is one of Glasgow's largest and leafiest parks, partially designed by the famous gardener Sir Joseph Paxton on behalf of the council as a escape for Victorian city dwellers – a purpose it still serves today. Several grand statues, a memorial fountain and an ornamental pond are all worth visiting, as well as the famous museum described in the next section.

🕒 Allow 45 mins.



Kelvingrove Park

5 min walk • The next attraction is at the west, downstream end of the park, on the same side of the river as you entered by. The towering, red sandstone profile should be obvious as you approach.

② KELVINGROVE ART GALLERY & MUSEUM ★★★

Free attraction • (10am) Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum is one of Glasgow's most popular tourist attractions. Housed in an enormous Victorian building, the interior underwent a massive restoration between 2003 and 2006 following its 100th anniversary. It now claims to have 22 separate galleries, including excellent natural history, armour and continental art collections – a fascinating mix. You could fill several hours here, but unfortunately time on this itinerary is limited! A unique feature is the daily 1pm organ recital in the Main Hall, on an instrument as old as the building itself – if you fancy it, you could skip a sit-down lunch later and scurry back to listen.

🕒 Allow 1.5 hours. Opening times:

glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/venues/kelvingrove-art-gallery-and-museum



Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum

15 min walk • Leave the Kelvingrove by the southwest (main road) entrance, and turn right along wide Argyle Street. Just after crossing the River Kelvin, pass through a red arch on the right into the University of Glasgow campus. Founded in 1451, the university is the fourth oldest in the English-speaking world. Follow the lane uphill, keeping left at a fork; another road joins in from the left. Behind trees on the left is the university's Zoology Museum – worth a detour if you have a special interest. Otherwise continue ahead, instead taking the next road on the left. If you've kept on track you'll enter Professors' Square, with the university chapel on the right up stairs (worth a look if open). Leave the square by the corner diagonally opposite to the one you arrived by, keeping right to pass in front of the main façade. The Hunterian Museum is at the heart, and well signposted from this point.

③ UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW & HUNTERIAN MUSEUM ★★★

Free attraction • (11.45am) The superb Hunterian Museum is the biggest and best of several museums on campus, built upon collections once belonging to founder Dr William Hunter. Art buffs may prefer to visit the Hunterian Art Gallery nearby. The university's public areas around the museum are also well worth exploring, including the atmospheric undercroft.

🕒 Allow 1.5 hours. Opening times:

gla.ac.uk/hunterian/visit/ourvenues/hunterianmuseum



Hunterian Museum

15 min walk • Leave the university by the front gates, pausing to admire the view of the buildings behind. Turn left along University Avenue, but almost immediately fork right onto the upper level of University Gardens. Ignore the loop back around to the left, continuing ahead between ugly blocks. As the tarmac curves right in front of the Gregory Building, take a set of steps on the left (easily missed), hugging the right hand wall of the building. The unlikely path suddenly ends at a cobbled wynd; turn right to enter the contrasting surroundings of Ashton Lane.

4 ASHTON LANE

Photo stop • (1.30pm) Cute Ashton Lane simply oozes with character: a popular student street lined by bars and restaurants. Perhaps surprisingly, the area was rather run-down until the 1970s when the Ubiquitous Chip restaurant relocated here, ushering in a more fashionable era. One street further over to the left, wider Byres Road is less photogenic but offers further eateries at all price points.

LUNCH TIME

(1.30pm) Pick a spot on Byres Road or Ashton Lane.




Ashton Lane

5 min walk • Walk north on Byres Road (passing Hillhead subway station on the right), soon reaching the busy intersection with Great Western Road – the main traffic artery from this side of town into the city centre. Cross using a pedestrian crossing; the Botanic Gardens are through a gateway on the opposite side.

5 GLASGOW BOTANIC GARDENS ★★★★★

Free attraction • (3pm) The Botanic Gardens have occupied the tight spot between Great Western Road and a meander on the River Kelvin since 1873. At the heart of the West End, they're predictably busy on sunny summer weekends; this is also the time of year when the colourful rose garden reaches its best. It's perhaps inevitable that they'll be compared to their verdant counterpart in Edinburgh. Do they measure up? Certainly not in absolute size, but in beauty? Very nearly. And unlike in the capital, the extensive glasshouses – the gardens' highlight – are free to visit.

 Allow 1 hour.



Glasgow Botanic Gardens

TIME'S UP!

20 min walk • Facing the front of the Kibble Palace (the easternmost glasshouse, with the two circular domes), head left, keeping right to pass between the tearoom and the glasshouse. Turn left at the public toilets to descend a long flight of steps, with the River Kelvin flowing serenely through trees at the bottom. Cross the footbridge and turn right on the far side. You're now back on the Kelvin Walkway used this morning. Follow the left bank of the river downstream, soon passing under a road bridge and then crossing back to the right bank after a further 400 metres. Pass under a second road bridge and continue along the river bank as it curves to the right. Eventually a third road bridge is reached; soon after, cross the river for a final time. On the other side, the Kelvin Walkway branches right, but continue ahead, keeping left at the next junction to arrive back at Kelvinbridge subway station.



Inside the glasshouses