An Art Deco Society Self-Guided Walking Tour

Glasgow



ART DECO SOCIETY UK

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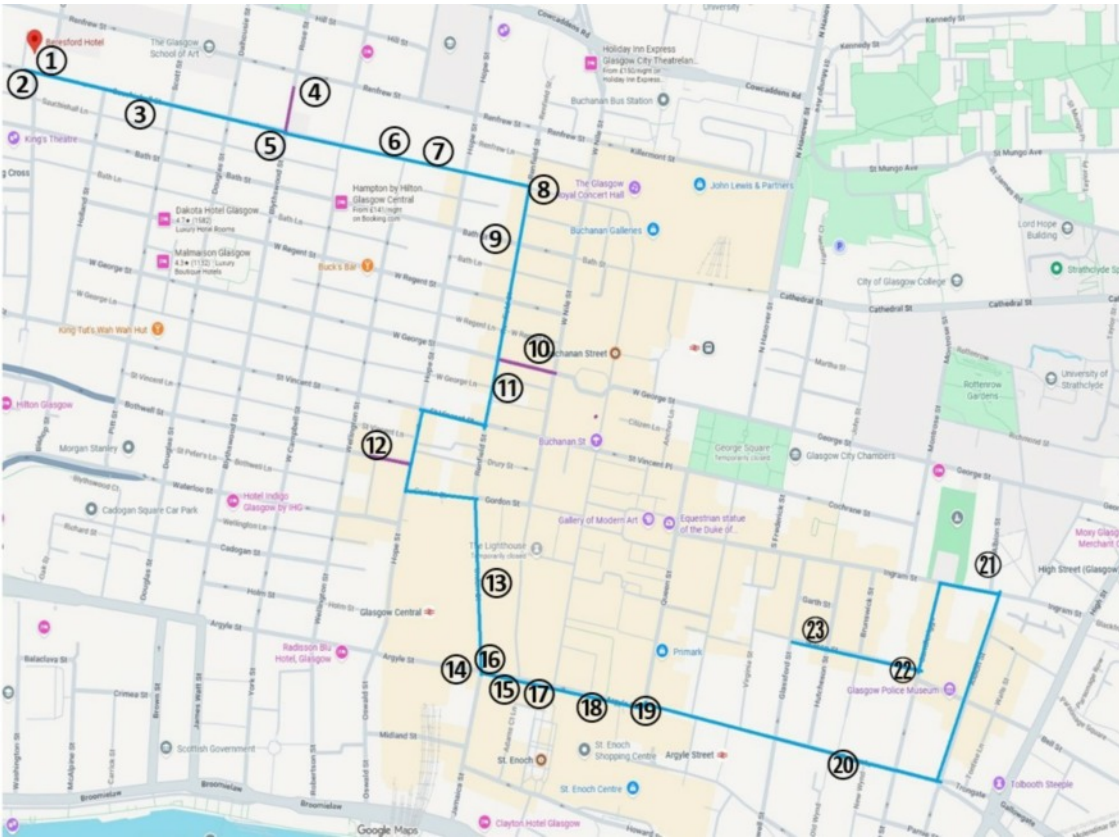
Glasgow

Welcome to our series of self-guided walking tours from the Art Deco Society UK. This walk is approximately 2 miles long and will cover central Glasgow with 23 Art Deco sites including former banks, hotels, cinemas and department stores amongst others.

The main bus station and Glasgow Central station are a 15 minute walk from the starting point at The Beresford Building and a 10 minute walk from the last stop, Merchant City, Wilson Street.

Follow the route on Googlemaps by clicking on these links. The walk is split into three sections.

Part 1
Part 2
Part 3



1 The Beresford Building, 460 Sauchiehall Street, G2 3JU

The former Beresford Hotel was designed by William Beresford Inglis of Weddell & Inglis, who also owned and was managing director of the hotel, for £170,000 (roughly £14 million today) and was opened in 1938 to coincide with the Empire Exhibition. It was Glasgow's tallest building when it was built. A newspaper at the time reported it had 198 rooms; 12 single rooms and 21 double rooms with twin beds (presumably to discourage 'weekenders' using Glasgow for illicit hanky panky!) on each floor. It also had an entire floor of kennels to pamper well-heeled visitor's canine companions. Build using reinforced concrete, the original faience tiled façade was in a red, black and mustard colour scheme. A 22 year old John F Kennedy gave his first public speech in this building, to survivors of the torpedoing of the Govan built passenger liner Athenia. It's time as a hotel was short lived, being requisitioned to house British and American soldiers during WWII and then converted to offices in the early 50's, becoming referred to as the ICI Building. It was then bought by the University of Strathclyde in the 60's and used as Baird Hall student accommodation. In 2004 it was converted to private flats. The original light well feature Beresford Inglis designed to light the interior was converted into a courtyard. It's category B-listed. If you can get inside, the foyer still has some lovely original features.



2. Variety Bar, 401 Sauchiehall (corner with Elmbank Street).
Look across the road to the Variety Bar. This was refurbished the 1980's by the same firm that refurbished Regano's, with an excellent Art Deco frontage. This was sadly altered in the 1990's, and returned to an approximation of the 1980's frontage in the 2000's.

Carry on walking down Sauchiehall Street. Developed in the 1860's as one of Glasgow's most famous shopping streets., you'll see a wide range of architectural styles, including several Art Deco frontages added in the late 20's and 30's. Most of Sauchiehall street is looking quite sorry for itself, but there is a regeneration plan and planning permission has been granted, or is in the process of being granted, for the development of several of the buildings you will see.

3. Former Art Fabrics store (now Mango), 373 Sauchiehall Street (E Pollard & Co and Archibald McEwan Ltd, 1935).
Little remains of the Art Deco frontage other that 4 chamfered window/door openings. The upper windows have been replaced by black plate glass.

Turn left and detour a short way up Rose Street to admire the Glasgow Film Theatre



4. Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT), 12 Rose Street, Glasgow G3 6RB.

The GFT was designed by James McKissack, and originally opened as the Cosmo, the first purpose-built art house cinema in Scotland and only the second in the UK. Opened in 1939, it was the last cinema to be built before WWII and focused on Art and Foreign Language films. As befitted a building with an international focus, the design was inspired by Dutch Modernist architecture and the building materials included black Swedish granite. It was a small cinema by 30's standards, with a seating capacity of only 850. and Foreign Language films. As befitted a building with an international focus, the design was inspired by Dutch Modernist architecture and the building materials included black Swedish granite. cont…

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The Cosmo survived until the 1970's when it briefly closed and was bought by the Scottish film Council, who split the building into a smaller auditorium and a conference/exhibition space, renaming it the Glasgow Film Theatre. In 1986 the GFT became a registered charity and continued to expend. Architects James Doherty oversaw the sympathetic development using Art Deco elements to redesign the foyer.

Return to Sauchiehall street, and continue in the same direction.

5. The Macintosh (Willow) tea Rooms, 217 Sauchiehall Street, G2 3EX (Charles Rennie MacIntosh, 1903)

Now owned by the National Trust for Scotland. Although not strictly Art Deco, this is an excellent example of the early development of the style, and worth a visit in its own right. The tour is well worth doing, as is enjoying a cup of tea! Some of Rennie MacIntosh's later work in the adjoining museum shows that he was developing towards classic Art Deco in the 20's.

6. Former C&A/Dunnes store, 218 – 224 Sauchiehall/corner with Cambridge Street (North, Robin & Wilsdon, 1931).
An extremely light, airy linear art deco design, this building has just received planning permission to be redeveloped into a hotel. The intention is to retain and restore the Art Deco frontage. Plant growth obscures a lot of the detailing, but if you look there are beautiful geometric designs at the top of the building and over some of the windows.

7. Former Marks & Spencer store, 172 Sauchiehall Street (J M Monro & Son and Robert Lutyens, 1935).
This was one of M&S's flagship stores, and the first in Scotland to have a café. Only the facia remains, supported by scaffolding. The rear of the shop has been demolished as part of a plan to develop the site as student flats and shops, retaining the original façade.

8. Former Watt Bros store 119-121 Sauchiehall Steet/corner with Hope and Bath Streets. (Keppie & Henderson, 1930). Image below

This iconic Glasgow independent department store moved into this location in 1915 and was located here for 104 years, until it went into administration in 2019. It has recently been granted planning permission to turn it into a boutique hotel with retail and restaurant space on the ground floor.



Leave Sauchiehall street and turn right down Hope Street to Renfield Street, admiring the Hope street frontage of the Watt Bros store. Walk down Renfield Street.

9. Former Ross's Dairies, 32 Bath Street/corner with Renfield Steet. (Possibly Frank C Petrie, c1930)

Little now remains of the Art Deco frontage, but you can see the alternations made to the building in the 30's. You can see where the parapet was added to build up the roof line and create a flat roof streamline shape.

Detour right on West George Street. Stop at corner of West George Street and West Nile Street.

Turn left on to West George Street. Stop at corner of West George Street and West Nile Street.

10. Former Commercial Bank of Scotland, 92 – 98 West George Street. (James Miller and Richard Gunnin 1931)

This classically inspired Art Deco building was previously a bank, built of Portland stone, with marble-clad plinth, and magnificent bronze relief frieze and door piece. It has been recently redeveloped by Jestico + Whiles Architects to restore the original height and unveil the original coffered ceiling and windows inside. The original vaults in the basement have been repurposed to house the pub toilets.



Walk back to Renfield street and continue to walk in the same direction

11. Former Paramount Theatre/Odeon, 52 – 56 Renfield Street. (Frank T Verity and Samuel Beverley, 1934) - image below

With a white granite and neon frontage and five 2 storey finned windows, this palatial cinema/theatre opened on Hogmanay 1934. The Theatre's auditorium could seat over 2,700 people in its two levels and although was built primarily as a cinema, in common with other designs of the time it could also operate as a theatre, with a large fully equipped stage and performer dressing rooms. It had a Compton organ, a colour scheme of copper, silver and green, and housed a restaurant and tea-room. It was bought by the Odeon chain in 1939 and remained in its original state until the late 60's when it was split into a 3 screen cinema, with the almost entire destruction of the original Art Deco interior. Perhaps fortunately, the façade was covered in corrugated iron, which preserved it. This was removed during redevelopment work in 1999 and the original façade restored. The original auditorium was eventually demolished and turned into a hotel and offices, with only the original exterior remaining.



Turn right on to St Vincent Street, walk one block and turn right on to Hope Street. Detour right on to Bothwell Street

12. Former Commercial Bank of Scotland, 30 Bothwell Street (James Miller and Richard Gunn, 1935)

Now a category B listed building, the friezes by Gilbert Bayes that decorate the building are the highlight of the building, and illustrate Commerce, Industry, Contentment, Wisdom, Prudence and Justice. The building is faced in Portland stone, and sits on a granite plinth. Two storey giant order fluted Corinthian columns dominate the Bothwell Street entrance. The entrance doors are bronze, as are the panels between ground and first floor

Walk back to Hope Street , cross the road and turn onto Gordon Street, then right on to Union Street.

13. Former Peacock Tea rooms, 28-38 Union Street, (Whyte & Galloway, 1929-31)

This 5-storey building is a former tea room, restaurant and shop. The original planned layout of the building show a smoke room in the basement, a shop on the ground floor, tea room and restaurant on the 2nd and 3rd floors and a kitchen on the 4th floor. Some of the art deco interior decoration is still in place although hidden in part by shop fittings.

Walk to the end of Union Street, and on to Argle Street.



Argyle Street

14. Former Arnott's Department Store. 167 – 201 Argyle Street/St Enoch's Square (Gordon Jeeves, 1960).

The original store was destroyed in a fire and was quickly rebuilt using modified plans building originally designed in the 1930's but which was never built. This explains the deco outline of a 1960's building!

15. Former Montague Burton store, 122 - 132 Argyle Street/corner with Buchanan street (Harry Wilson, 1929)

This Burton store was built in 1929 and was designed by Burton's in-house architect Harry Wilson, with later changes made by N Martin in 1938. Harry Wilson had become the company architect by the early 1920s, and was responsible for developing Burton's house style. Montague Burton, however, maintained a close personal interest. By 1932, architecture had become so important to the firm that they set up the an entire Department devoted to it, all managed by Wilson.

16. Former Lewis's Polytechnic store, 65 Argyle Street / St Enoch's Square (George Walter Atkinson, 1929).

Now B listed, 'the Polly' was built of Ashlar Portland stone with polished granite aprons to shop windows.

17. Buck's head building, 63 Argyle street/Dunlop street (Alexander 'Greek' Thompson, circa late 1800's) - above



This building was built 70 years before Art Deco arrived on the scene, but the Egyptian detailing on it predates the Art Deco fascination with anything Egyptian. The architect of the building was nicknamed "The Greek" for his use of classical influences. The name comes from the sculpture of a deer buck on top by John Mossman.

18. Former F W Woolworth & Co., 36 – 38 Argyle Street (Bruce Campbell Davidson, circa 1922)

Known as Woolworths store number 118, this was the one-hundred and eighteenth branch to open in the British Isles. It was also the second branch to open in Glasgow. Sadly the original building which was built in 1922 no longer exists as it was burnt down in a huge fire in 1960. The Glasgow Herald reported that "The street was closed for six hours as the spectacular blaze showered embers on a large area of the city centre, and caused an explosion. In all, 80 firemen worked to stop the blaze spreading and six later needed hospital treatment for burns. The fire began in the basement where stocks included fireworks and Christmas decoration." The store was rebuilt in 1963.

19. Former Marks & Spencer store, 18 - 26 Argyle Street (J M Monro & Son, 1930)

This category B-listed building retains many original Art Deco details such as the chamfered corner and parapet detailing creating a corner tower. 16-32 Argyle Street was constructed to replace Marks and Spencer's nineteenth century premises at 32 Argyle Street. The design of the stores reflects Marks' new retail ideology through the use of large open floorspaces devoted to retail and large panes of plate glass to provide better light and display the goods for sale.



Continue along Argyle street until it turns into Trongate

Merchant City and Trongate

20. Former Peacock's Bakery, 147 Trongate

The Trongate tearoom was part of a successful bakery chain with several outlets. Now one of the most at risk buildings in Glasgow, due for demolition to be replaced by Student accommodation.

Turn left on to Albion Street.

21. The Herald Building, 145 – 195 Albion Street, Merchant City

(Owen Williams, 1937) - below left

Grade-A listed building, this was the flagship building of the Daily Express newspaper and is the sister building to the Daily Express buildings in London and Manchester. This is Machine Age style deco, a cantilevered reinforced concrete frame covered in black vitrolite, steel and glass. It originally had a large glowing radio mast on the roof, adding to the futuristic effect. It was operational as the Glasgow Herald headquarters from 1980 – 2001, when it was converted into flats.

Turn left on to Ingram Street and take 1st left on to Candleriggs

22. Former Commercial Bank of Scotland Building, 125 – 127 Candleriggs

(F.A. MacDonald & Partners, designed in 1937, built 1948) - below right

Turn on to Wilson Street





23. Warehouse 51 Wilson Street (Thomson, Sandilands and MacLeod, 1935-6)

We finish the tour in the heart of Merchant city, with the warehouse conversions on Wilson Street and surroundings. There are beautifully preserved warehouses on the street dating from the mid 1800's through to the 1930's. Finish your tour with a well-deserved coffee in one of Merchant City's many cafes!





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