



WORDS ELISABETH KING

GIN THE NEW TONIC FOR ADVENTUROUS SCOTS

LIKE most historic European cities, Edinburgh tourism centres on a grab bag of well-known attractions. The Royal Mile, the castle, the Tattoo, the statue of Greyfriars Bobby and the souvenir shops flogging bagpipes, shortbread and DVDs of Braveheart. The Scots also have a long tradition of being masters of the slap down.

I'll never forget the time I was on a media trip to the Scottish capital and we were taken to the venerable Clarinda's Tea Room, whose founder was a friend of the national poet Robert Burns. At the bottom of the menu was the legend - "Please refrain from writing postcards if the tea room is busy". Who were the main culprits, we asked. "New Zealanders" came the tart reply. The 195cm Kiwi in our party teared up, not so much because of the waitress's retort but because she reminded him of his no-nonsense Scottish grandmother.

There's plenty of similar nostalgic incidents awaiting those tracing their Caledonian bloodline, but Edinburgh has a raft of more modern treats. The city has gone gin mad, for starters. The best place to kick off the juniper trail is a visit to the Edinburgh Gin Distillery. Three tours are on offer - The Gin Discovery Tour for neophytes, the Gin Making Experience if you fancy yourself as a distiller and the Gin Connoisseurs Tour for sophisticated palates. You are also invited to design your own gin cocktail and sample one-off novelties like the elderflower gin liqueur.

Pickering's is the first new gin distillery to open in Edinburgh for 150 years. It's worth the detour for its address alone,

next door to a hip bar/cafe called The Royal Dick. The guides are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and regular tastings punctuate the 50-minute tour. Still in the mood for Scottish gin? Head to the Stane Bar in the stylish The Dunstane Hotel, Heads & Tales for creative cocktails and 56 North, a cosy bar specialising in gin (more than 200) and gourmet burgers.

The best place to kick off the juniper trail is a visit to the Edinburgh Gin Distillery.

Craft beer is also on a roll in the city of Sir Walter Scott and Olympic cyclist Chris Hoy. But homage must be paid at The Sheep Heid Inn, Edinburgh's oldest pub. With a history stretching back 600 years, it's the whole tartan dream - log fire, old beams and traditional Scottish pub games like skittles. The Angus Beef Pie tops the hearty nosh menu.

Two years ago, The Bow Bar won Dram Magazine's Whisky Bar of the Year award. But there's a huge bottled beer menu, including many of Belgium, Germany and Sweden's finest brews. A row of cask pumps also deliver frothy glasses of Alechemy Bowmania Pale and Happy Chappy, Cromarty's "new wave" pale ale. The retro decor of vintage ads and pub trade knick-knacks dovetail perfectly with the trend-setting amber ales.

Usher's of Edinburgh's moniker is a tribute to a famous clan of brewers and distillers, and the huge underground space lays claim to the title - "Speciality Purveyor of Mankind's Greatest Creation". In addition to the well-edited bottle selection, notably Sierra Nevada Torpedo Extra IPA. While 20 keg and cask pumps serve up draught beer, including five made on the premises.

The Hanging Bat is widely recognised as Edinburgh's top craft beer destination. Take a close look at the line-ups dubbed "strange brews" and "farmhouse ales", many of which are lambic and seasonal beers. Over 100 bottled brews are up for your delectation, as well as deeply satisfying draught beers from the Kernel and Thornbridge breweries. The men's urinals are crafted from old beer kegs which adds to the fun of a night here.

The Guildford Arms has a lock on the title most atmospheric Victorian pub in Edinburgh - a vision of etched glass, ornate cornice work and a polished mahogany bar. Order a traditional favourite such as a Well's Bombardier Glorious English or an on-trend Great Heck. Don't leave without a swig of Orach Slie, a lager from Clackmannanshire matured in whisky casks.

Many Scots are proud of their Viking heritage and Edinburgh has a liberal smattering of Scandinavian bars and eateries. Peter's Yard bills itself as a fine Swedish bakery and its crisp breads are in hot demand in restaurants and supermarkets throughout Britain. Pop in for an open sandwich in the true smorgasbord tradition. The Boda Bar looks like a Swedish granny's sitting room - floral wallpaper and

comfy sofas - and adheres to the Nordic saying that the weather is never too cold, you are just wearing the wrong clothes. Even on a chilly Scottish night, the outdoor tables are full of happy diners eating Scandinavian food and enjoying cocktails.

In fact, it's tough to find Scottish food at all. The Edinburgh Larder, just off the Royal Mile, is famous for its baps, the famously soft breakfast rolls. But there's nothing old-fashioned about the deli offerings and bistro menus which use the finest Scottish produce from local ewe's milk cheese to smoked fish in inventive contemporary dishes.

Eager to try something you won't find elsewhere? The Haggis Burrito at Los Cardos (Spanish for thistles) has built up a cult following, but don't order it too late at night if you want to sleep soundly. For fine dining that takes a lot of beating, make a beeline for Aizle - pronounced like hazel - it's an old Scots word for spark or ember. There's no menu, you get what the chef fancies cooking that day. No bad thing when its wild bream with sea spaghetti, wild leeks and a beurre blanc sauce.

Edinburgh has made an art of transforming its glorious Georgian and Victorian townhouses into boutique hotels. Channings Hotel occupies five townhouses, once the home of the great Antarctic explorer, Sir Ernest Shackleton. Located in the gentrified suburb of Stockbridge, where scenes from The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie were filmed, it's great value, too - from \$160 per double. A true Scottish virtue. 

WINESTATE

M A G A Z I N E

SEPTEMBER 2016

ADELAIDE - Winestate 'Wine of the Year 2016'
National Wine Centre Adelaide - Subscribers Tasting
2 September 2016 - 6pm - 8.30pm
(Tickets available June 2016)

NOVEMBER 2016

QUEENSTOWN NZ - Wine of the Year Awards Lunch
18 November 2016 - Gantleys of Queenstown (NZ)
Winestate Subscribers - NZD\$95 p/p, Non-Subscribers
- NZD\$180 p/p

ADELAIDE - Wine of the Year Awards
24 November 2016 - Adelaide Convention Centre
(Trade only)

JANUARY 2017

PERTH - Best of the West
Friday 20th January, 2017 - Perth Hyatt Regency Hotel,
Riverside Ballroom
(Tickets available late 2016)

APRIL 2017

ADELAIDE - Cabernet & Bordeaux tasting
Friday 7th April 2017 - National Wine Centre Adelaide
(Tickets available early 2017)

ITALY - Wines of Australia - Vinitaly
9 -12 April, 2017 - Veronafiere, Verona, (Italy)
Contact sales@winestate.com.au regarding tickets
(Tickets available early 2017)

MAY 2017

ADELAIDE - World's Greatest Shiraz Challenge XII
Friday 26th May 2017 - National Wine Centre Adelaide
(Tickets available early 2017)

SEPTEMBER 2017

ADELAIDE - Winestate Wine of the Year
Australia & NZ
Friday 1st September 2017
National Wine Centre Adelaide
(Tickets available mid 2017)

www.winestate.com.au