

NEIGHBORHOOD  
WATCH

## West End, Edinburgh, Scotland

Blending charming architecture with a dash of rebellion, this diverse neighborhood is the center of Scotland's new gin craze

By Sarah Gillespie



ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL PARKIN



REMOVED FROM THE TARTAN AND shortbread of the Old Town, Edinburgh's West End has always gone its own way. After all, this was the home of artist Samuel John Peploe, who held his own exhibition after his art dealer rejected his new work.

It's appropriate then that the spirit injecting new life into these cobbled streets is not whisky, but gin, and the area maintains a commitment to keeping things home-grown. "Most of our bars and restaurants are independent," says Sophie Robertson, co-organizer of the West End Gin Festival. "They're passionate about supporting Scottish brands."

This has led to some unusual pairings: Florist Rogue Flowers ran a "Flower ArranGIN" workshop in collaboration with Glasgow maker The Garden Shed Drinks Company, and boutique distiller Edinburgh Gin worked with students from local university Heriot-Watt to create their best-selling Seaside Gin, made from foraged shoreline botanicals. Here, a few gin joints.







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BOTTOM RIGHT: TILL BRITZE



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**1. Angels Share**

Set in a converted 18th-century post office, the rooms of this stylish four-star hotel are splashed with photographs of Scottish celebrities and a scene from *Trainspotting*. The speakeasy-style bar offers Scottish gins and cocktail-making masterclasses. [angelssharehotel.com](http://angelssharehotel.com)

**2. Edinburgh Gin distillery**

Established in 2010, this small-batch distillery offers tours, tastings and the chance to design your own gin using a miniature copper still. Their permanent selection of gins incorporates milk thistle, samphire and hand-picked herbs from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Seasonal offerings showcase fruity notes in summer and spices in winter. [edinburghgin.com](http://edinburghgin.com)

**3. Heads & Tales**

Two working Edinburgh Gin stills are on display at this softly lit cocktail bar using bespoke syrups

made from local ingredients. Delectable dim-sum snacks are served amongst exposed-brick walls laced with copper plumbing. Gin tasting and pairing classes are offered throughout the week. [headsandtalesbar.com](http://headsandtalesbar.com)

**4. The Jolly Botanist**

This bar opened in 2015 and serves Scottish classics—including haggis Scotch egg and Angus beef burgers—in a stylized Victorian setting with nods to Edinburgh’s literary heritage. Their 76-strong world gin menu pairs each tittle with a recommended tonic and garnish. [thejollybotanist.co.uk](http://thejollybotanist.co.uk)

**5. One Square**

Refurbished in 2012, the Sheraton Hotel’s swanky restaurant has views over Edinburgh Castle and offers fresh seafood and homegrown vegetables. Their custom gin blend combines citrus with heather and is served with tonic water from the Cairngorm mountain range in the Scottish Highlands. [onesquareedinburgh.co.uk](http://onesquareedinburgh.co.uk)