

Detroit: The Motor City rises from the ashes to become America's hot new destination

08:00, 20 JUN 2015 | UPDATED 12:12, 24 JUN 2015 | BY [AIDAN MCGURRAN](#)

The town was scarred by industrial decline but now it is using its iconic Motown music heritage and stunning architecture to usher in an exciting rebirth

    **46990**
SHARES

Enter your e-mail for our daily newsletter

Subscribe



Revival: Detroit's nighttime skyline

Picture post-industrial devastation and you may think of Detroit. The Motor City was a symbol of the economic havoc wreaked by the 2008 credit crunch – but its residents remain unbowed.

The locals couldn't be prouder of the D – and the talk now is all about the resurgence of this amazing city.

They insist Detroit is back on the up. New businesses are moving in, restaurants and bars open up every week and many of Downtown's former abandoned skyscrapers are under restoration.

My hotel, the Aloft, is a classic example. It also contains some of Detroit's smartest apartments, but for more than 16 years this incredible building stood idle.

But to be fair even when you know this city's **turbulent recent past** – bankruptcy and

★ Recommended In USA & Long Haul



[CHINESE NEW YEAR](#)
[Chinese New Year: The best travel deals to visit Asia in 2016 as we ring in the year of the Monkey](#)



[CUBA](#)
[Cuba insider travel tips - 7 ways to ensure Havana great time as island opens up](#)



[TOKYO 2020 OLYMPICS](#)
[Tokyo 2020: Start saving for your Olympic Games trip - the host city is well worth a visit](#)



[CHEAP HOLIDAYS](#)
[Best hotels in New York: 10 cheap hotels in the city that never sleeps](#)



[LUXURY HOLIDAYS](#)
[Dubai's Atlantis. The Palm is a real taste of the high life - sometimes literally](#)

[X FACTOR](#)
[Spectacular 3D water projection steals show at opening of Sensatori resort in Jamaica](#)

[LUXURY HOLIDAYS](#)

an unprecedented urban flight away from the city – the sights that await you on arrival are still a shock to the system.

It's not just huge former industrial premises lying empty and derelict, but whole neighbourhoods have been abandoned. Family homes that were once well maintained are deserted – some burnt out – others stripped of whatever the occupants had left behind.

In truth Detroit's problems started well before the sub-prime mortgage-fuelled recession of 2008. For years there had been a migration away from the city to the more distant suburbs – ironically driven by the motor car, the very industry the city's success had been based on.



But the recent recession seemed like the final nail in the coffin. In 2013 the city filed the largest municipal bankruptcy case in US history and was declared bankrupt with debts of \$18.5 billion. The city's population has shrunk from almost two million at its peak in 1950 to just 700,000 and it seemed Detroit had simply had its day.

But optimism is returning. There's faith Detroit still has a future and that faith was underlined with **Virgin Atlantic** launching a new route from Heathrow.

Perhaps it is not surprising the city that gave the world some of its most uplifting, optimistic and inspirational music is looking forward.

And no one should visit Detroit without calling at Hitsville USA – the home of Motown records. Don't be fooled by the plain exterior of 2648 West Grand Boulevard. It's the real deal.

This was home to the young Berry Gordy and his family. But more importantly it was home to the legendary Studio A – where Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, The Temptations, The Four Tops, The Supremes, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, **Stevie Wonder** and Marvin Gaye recorded some of the finest tunes ever made.



Cancun five-star resort is hot stuff in every way you can think of



BLACK FRIDAY Hit the sales in the US for less and save more on flights as well as shopping



LUXURY HOLIDAYS Malaysian resort Pangkor Laut is a slice of paradise - on stilts



WINTER SUN HOLIDAYS Pick the right date to book a winter holiday and you can save a small fortune

★ Promoted Stories

The 10 best balance transfer credit cards of 2016

NextAdvisor

Michigan Drivers With No Tickets In 3 Years Should Read This

Provide-Savings Insurance Quotes

Following Jesus - 5 Most Important Sites any Christian Should Visit in Israel

Holy Land Pilgrimage

Dr. Ron Paul: "Crisis Bigger Than 2008 Is Coming"

Stansberry Research

Sponsored Links by Taboola

Most Read In Lifestyle



After Motown moved to Los Angeles in 1972 the studio was left behind, but it has been preserved and turned into a museum.

The tour guides are proud and passionate about the musical legacy delivered by the label and our guide Betty even managed to get something resembling a song out of a reserved and jet-lagged group of Brits.

But there must be something in the air in Detroit because few other cities can boast such a rich musical heritage. As well as the Motown stars the city was also home to MC5, Iggy and the Stooges, Alice Cooper, **Eminem**, **Madonna** and The White Stripes. And in the 1980s it gave birth to the techno dance scene.

And the rich musical tradition shows no sign of abating. Some of the present day luminaries of the city's music scene joined forces to **record Light Up Detroit** - celebrating Detroit's comeback.

But Detroit isn't just famous for music – it is effectively the birthplace of the car industry. Ford's Piquette Avenue Plant was where Henry and his team of engineers developed and built the first Model T.

Cars created a boom in Detroit – and some of the richest families in the US. They were soon trying to outdo each other by building the most lavish skyscrapers.



1 DEMENTIA

Cancer drug could prevent Alzheimer's and dementia as scientists announce major breakthrough

2 NEUROSCIENCE

Mini human brains that can think for themselves could help find cures for dementia and autism

3 HEALTH

What's behind that bloated belly? 5 common causes... and how to treat them

4 RELATIONSHIPS

9 superstitions about romance from around the world that could change your love life

5 INSOMNIA

Unable to sleep? Eleven ways you can trick yourself into dozing off

★ **Recommended On The Mirror**

STEPHANIE DAVIS
Stephanie Davis
snogs Jeremy
McConnell as they



The Fisher family were motor industry pioneers and the Fisher Building gives some idea of what this city must have been like during the boom years.

There are regular tours and it's a great way to get a sense of Detroit's history. It also provides one of the best views of the city and beyond, across the river to Canada.

One tour any visitor to Detroit really shouldn't miss is a city tour.

If you are feeling energetic you can do it by bicycle in what has become a popular local attraction known as the Slow Roll, but if like me you are feeling a little more lazy you can enjoy some of the sights by bus.

Kim, our guide on the Show Me Detroit Tour, could hardly have been a more passionate supporter of the city.

One of the first stops was Michigan Central Station in the Corktown district. This once majestic building has been empty since 1988 – and time and the activities of looters and vagrants have taken their toll.

There is talk of a redevelopment project but no one seems sure what the present owner intends doing with the building.



[go on yet](#)
[ANOTHER date](#)



[LIVERPOOL FC](#)
[Luis Suarez finally reveals why he felt he HAD to leave Liverpool for Barcelona](#)



[DAN WALKER](#)
[New BBC Breakfast presenter Dan Walker says his devout Christianity won't affect his work](#)



[ADAM JOHNSON](#)
[Adam Johnson: Read 31 WhatsApp messages heard in Premier League footballer's child sex trial](#)



[KANYE WEST](#)
[Kanye West insists he did pay the extras at his show after one claims he didn't get a penny](#)



[EMMERDALE](#)
[Emmerdale spoilers: Scorned Rhona set for explosive love triangle that will be a "roller coaster of emotions"](#)



[STEVE BROOKSTEIN](#)
[Steve Brookstein gets caught in another Twitter storm after Top Gear 'male hosts comment'](#)



[LEICESTER CITY FC](#)
[Leicester boss Claudio Ranieri claims it will be a "disaster" if Arsenal don't win](#)



In contrast, the fortunes of the Indian Village area have picked up in the last few years and it boasts swanky properties.

Even swankier is the Grosse Pointe suburb. In the aftermath of the recession some of its incredible mansions were selling for less than \$200,000. Prices have recovered since then but are still well short of what would be expected.

After seeing one of Detroit's most exclusive neighbourhoods it was time to see one of its more challenged communities.

The Heidelberg district had been in decline ever since the 1967 Detroit riots. By the 80s it was plagued by poverty and crime with many homes simply abandoned.

Then local artist Tyree Guyton decided to take a stand against the decay.



He took discarded everyday objects and created a series of art installations that have been described as "Ghetto Guggenheim".

Tyree also used some of the many deserted houses and used them as his canvas. The

Premier League title



LEE NOLAN

'Body in the boot' killer Lee Nolan on police bail for TWO rapes when he murdered tragic woman



FOOD

Asda's £3.50 wonky veg is cheap, tasty and fed my family all week - but there's one problem

Like Us On Facebook

house he grew up in and where his mum still lives is known as Dotty Wotty House and is one of Detroit's most well known sights. It's covered in polka dots.

Now his Heidelberg Project is a community based organisation that aims to improve the lives of people and neighbourhoods through art. The area is now almost crime free and one of the city's most popular tourist destinations.

Tyree is an incredible character. In a sense both he and the project he created sums up Detroit – unpredictable, inspirational – and although in the past it's often been down, it's most definitely not out.

Dance and drink with Sir Richard Branson

It's not every day that passengers jump to their feet, burst into song and dance down the aisles on a transatlantic flight – but then again not every flight is a Virgin Atlantic inaugural flight to Detroit.

So who better to keep the passengers and crew entertained than the cast of Motown the Musical?

And sure enough **Sir Richard Branson**, never a man to miss a PR trick, was up on his feet clapping and singing along to Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours.



The not so impromptu tribute to Motown set the tone for the entire trip.

Virgin Atlantic has a reputation for doing things differently and its first direct flight from Heathrow to Detroit was certainly that. As always the emphasis was on fun backed up by top quality service and Giles the mixologist got us in the party mood by shaking up cocktails.

Being from St Helens on Merseyside I don't regard myself as a cocktail man. But Giles persevered and converted me with an amazing whiskey-based St Lawrence.

With the cocktails flowing the party was soon in full swing. As it was a celebration flight the passengers were a mix of media, competition-winning Virgin employees, entrepreneurs and members of Virgin's frequent flyers club.

Virgin had also arranged for Britain's Got Talent runner-up Jamie Raven to amaze passengers with a range of tricks.

It was the most amazing flight I have experienced. But as Kid Rock insists – Ain't No Party like a Detroit Party.

Getting there

- Virgin Atlantic flies daily from Heathrow to Detroit from £737 return. virginatlantic.com 0844 2092 770.
- Rooms at the The Aloft Detroit start at £115pn. aloftdetroit.com
- Slow Roll bike tours are free slowroll.bike Rent a bike from Wheelhouse Detroit for 2hrs from £10. wheelhousedetroit.com
- Show me Detroit city tours from £38 showmedetroittours.com
- Motown Museum £10. motownmuseum.org
- Ford Piquette Avenue Plant tours from £6. fordpiquetteavenueplant.org
- Tourist info: visitdetroit.com michigan.org

TIME ZONE UK -5hrs

CURRENCY US\$ £1 = 1.53

BEST TIME TO GO Get Ready to see Motown this summer and autumn



★ Promoted Stories

Sponsored Links by Taboola

Simple But Powerful 2 Step Method Eliminates Credit Card Debt

LendingTree

Michigan Drivers With No Tickets In 3 Years Should Read This

Provide-Savings Insurance Quotes

Tale of a place where women were forced to be naked

Times of India

Following Jesus - 5 Most Important Sites any Christian Should Visit in Israel

Holy Land Pilgrimage

Dr. Ron Paul: "Crisis Bigger Than 2008 Is Coming"

Stansberry Research

There Are 7 Types of Irish Last Names - Which One Is Yours?

Ancestry

Morning Routine for Better Knees - Age 55+

Instaflex Advanced

Top 7 cards for people with excellent credit

NextAdvisor

Your Cable Company Doesn't Want You To Know This

The Motley Fool

RECENTLY PUBLISHED

[Holiday deals of the week: Bargain USA, British and European breaks](#)



Sunday Mirror Travel brings you the best late deals and last minute holiday bargains from around the web

- ▶ [Manchester airport shortlisted for queue-busting United States immigration clearance scheme](#)
- ▶ [Holidaymaker banned from flight and removed from airport after getting 'too drunk' at 10.30am](#)

PREVIOUS ARTICLES

[Watch Sir Richard Branson dancing in the aisles as Virgin Atlantic puts on Motown medley at 38,000ft](#)



'Get Ready' to see airline boss throwing some shapes in the skies as passengers on first Heathrow-Detroit flight are treated to a surprise show by Broadway stars

- ▶ [Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic to launch new NY-LON lounge bar at London's O2](#)

RELATED TAGS

ORGANISATIONS

[VIRGIN ATLANTIC](#) [HOLIDAYS](#)