

Which little known city do you think should appear in the City Profile?

We posed this question in Hungary and England.



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“Cultural memory is flourishing in Pécs and monuments from various epochs and cultures exist side-by-side within a constantly changing synthesis.”

www.minusplus.hu

The first thing you see on approaching Pécs is the television tower that currently dominates the city skyline. As a child I used to think that the tower showed where north was (as the city is situated on the southern slopes of the Mecsek mountain range). Of course, I now know that this is merely a Pécs thing.

Both the Latin name (Quinque Ecclesiae – five churches) and the German name (Fünfkirchen) allude to the many distinctive towers that characterise the city. Dating from 1780, the Pécs coat of arms is a clever representation of the city morphology at that time: a crowned mountain with a walled city at its foot, surrounded by hillside vineyards for as far as the ‘Tükék’, as the locals call themselves, could see. A ‘Tüke’ is a citizen whose family has owned a vineyard for more than three generations. Although such conditions may seem ideal for creating a closed society, the membership is actually extremely cosmopolitan.

The structure of the city largely developed spontaneously and organically into its current form; whereby, due to the lack of rivers, lakes and a sea, two dozen districts with different names and, for the greater part, different characters sprung up along the ‘waves’ and surrounding slopes of the Mecsek mountains. This undulating configuration is such an integral part of the cityscape that even the main square (Széchenyi tér) is sloping. At the elevated end of the square is the Dschami, a monument to the Ottoman Empire, with the Mecsek mountain range in the background and the equestrian statue of János Hunyadi in the foreground. Such a cultural blend is fairly typical of the city. Cultural memory is flourishing in Pécs and monuments from various epochs and cultures exist side-by-side within a constantly changing synthesis. An exciting melange has emerged,

not only on the basis of the Roman and early Christian structures, medieval city walls, Turkish mosques, Swabian houses and twentieth-century buildings, but also as a result of planning in connection with the city’s designation as a European Capital of Culture in 2010. The unique Mediterranean climate in Pécs simply cannot be captured on photos: and the same can be said for the opulent natural surroundings, which encompass and are at one with the urban core embedded into the mountain slopes, effectively amalgamating the city with the mountain and the mountain with the city.



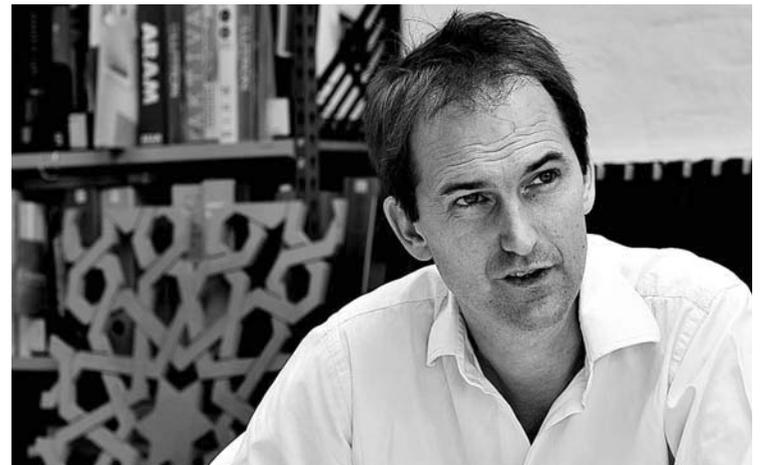
Minusplus was awarded the fff Young Architects’ Generation Prize for its design of the ‘Bigfish Bistros’ in Budapest.

Photo: Barnabás Imre

Angus Morrogh Ryan, De Matos Ryan, London, UK

“I fell in love with York not only because of the city’s intricate history, but also due to the communal spirit of its inhabitants.”

www.dematosryan.co.uk



In the last three years I have travelled regularly on the 7 a.m. train from London to York, which is around two hours from London by train and about half-way to Edinburgh. Our work involved the renovation of the city’s Theatre Royal and Mansion House. The city of York itself is one of the most historically and culturally important cities in Great Britain on account of its Roman, Viking, mediaeval and industrial history. Seven million visitors flock to the city every year, that’s 35 tourists per resident, and generate half-a-billion pounds in sales.



Within the scope of renovating the Theatre Royal the architects closed off the colonnades to create a public cafe.

Photo: Hufton+Crow

The city’s geography is distinguished by its location on the confluence of the rivers Ouse and Foss, which once formed part of its ancient defences. York developed progressively within its city walls, which were built during a variety of eras, before then expanding way beyond the walls in more recent times. York Minster towers above the historic centre and indeed all other buildings in the city. As for myself, I fell in love with York not only because of the city’s intricate history, but also due to the communal spirit that it evoked in its inhabitants, who are intensively supportive of localism, tremendously hospitable and very proud of their heritage. This is reflected in the way the city’s cultural institutions and council work together to create a mutual vision for York. They recognise that they have an extremely valuable brand to uphold. Perhaps a commensurately descriptive résumé in this respect is that of Ridsdale Tate’s twentieth-century vision of a fifteenth-century panorama illustrating the city and all its landmarks.

At the Theatre Royal we discover a refreshingly appealing and open style of spatial use. Unlike many other theatres, the doors remain open all day regardless of the performance schedule and people are encouraged to use the foyer as a public space, a kind of living room as it were, or as a starting point for a tour of the city. As visitor numbers and the time they spend in the foyer increases, so does the income, which benefits the theatre and consequently provides greater scope for creativity in terms of the theatre performances.