

THE TRAVELLER IN THE PERFECT CITY

Geoff Nicholson

WELCOME TO PERFECTION:

The perfect city is well within sight, well within reach, and well within your budget.

The perfect city is easily accessible by train, plane, charabanc, amphibious landing craft, armoured car, overloaded ferry, by pony or indeed Shanks's pony. Make sure your passport, visa, medical documents, right to reside papers, are all in order, submit to a short but thorough interview, a few background checks and security clearances, and we'll welcome you with open arms.

The perfect city teems with life and possibility. It is a city that gives and gives back. The smell of history is in the air. The perfect city is a city on the move. Development and redevelopment are the watchword. And demolition. Our bridges, skyscrapers, monorails, moving walkways, underpasses, tenements, mean streets, skid rows and gasoline alleys are second to none. And we intend to keep it that way. Our architecture is timeless. We have mid-century buildings from almost every century. Our abandoned industrial zones have been described as "chic."

Here in the perfect city we are all conservationists now. Pollution is a thing we simply don't worry about. We are saving the planet one dirty towel and one power outage at a time. The city is green, the city is verdant. Spillages of toxic materials are rare, and our environmental remediation units are top notch. Our air quality is officially classified as "acceptable." Our water is perfectly drinkable and many have described its taste as "pleasantly earthy."

ARE THE NATIVES FRIENDLY?

Yes. As with any city, it's the people who make it what it is. The perfect city is full of locals eager to point you in the right direction. Our taxi drivers are prepared to drive to almost any part of the city. Our tradesmen, tinkers, pedlars, costermongers, are as honest as any, likewise our financial analysts, our money changers, and our sex professionals. Of course there are a few aliens and predators out there, but they're nothing if not colourful.

The perfect city prides itself on its diversity - all classes and types, races, tribes and sub-cultures rub along together. In any of the city's many watering holes you'll find former liberals, conservatives, champagne socialists, champagne Falangists, radicalized youth, one-time anarchists, Nazis and neo-Nazis, all getting along splendidly. Heterogeneity is the name of the game. Why spoil it for the sake of ideology?

IS THE PERFECT CITY PICTURESQUE?

You bet. And scenic. Photo opportunities abound. However please note that the photographing of civic buildings, monuments, military installations, schools, hospitals, housing developments, power stations, telephone exchanges, sports arenas, and prisons (whether state or private) is strictly forbidden.

Personal cell phone ownership is impractical in the perfect city and the taking of selfies is severely frowned upon. Nude photography of any kind whatsoever is forbidden within the boundaries of the perfect city.

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FOOD?

Yes we usually do have food in the perfect city. The periods of food shortages are well behind us, and were in any case, much exaggerated.

Bistros. Tavernas. Smorgasbords. Cantinas. Soup kitchens. Gruel houses. These are just some of the establishments that have opened and closed in recent years.

Are there affordable, high-quality restaurants using organic, farm-fresh ingredients? Well, we're working on it. Our cooks and waiting staff put in long hours for low wages, and are rarely as resentful as they seem. Tipping is permitted but seldom deemed appropriate.

IS THERE CULTURE IN THE PERFECT CITY?

How could there not be? Performances featuring folk music, sword dancing, and trained animals are our forte. Tickets are easily obtained - terms and conditions (and certain restraints and legal waivers) do apply.

There are museums too - of abnormal psychology, taxidermy, ventriloquism, eugenics, and of course childhood deformity. The Museum of Tolerance is shuttered until further notice.

WILL I HAVE A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE IN THE PERFECT CITY?

No you will not. Religious worship was outlawed over fifty years ago. There are still the remains of churches, cathedrals, temples, mosques, sepulchers, holy sites, shrines, sweat lodges, open air altars, sites of propitiary offerings and sacrifice dotted throughout the city, but they are for entertainment purposes only.

IN CONCLUSION?

The perfect city is a peaceful city. The air raid and fallout shelters are there if you need them, but chances are you won't. War is a thing of the past. There isn't even a war on drugs. Ask your concierge for details.

Of course this is a metropolis, not toy town. There are pickpockets, muggers, footpads, white slavers, multicultural slavers: most are not unduly vicious, unless the victim attempts to fight back.

The perfect city is above all a safe city. Our police, security forces, national guards, and well-regulated private militias have the public good at heart. As do we all. Our surveillance systems are state of the art.

Protests, marches, riots, political gatherings of all kinds, are very rare but have been known to escalate into deadly violence. The traveler is advised to avoid such activities and to obey all instructions given by officials whether uniformed or not. Do not be lured into conversations about regime change, and under no circumstances resist arrest. Our legal system is scrupulous and thorough, if slow-moving. Allegations of torture remain unsubstantiated.

So what are you waiting for? Aren't you ready for the perfect city? It's certainly ready for you? Come as you are, stay as long as you like, but chances are you won't be quite the same person when you leave, and maybe you never will/

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