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NEGLECTED INDUSTRIAL SPACES GET A CULTURAL MAKEOVER BY SUPRIYA SEHGAL

Every city witnesses cycles of decay and resurgence. As neighbourhoods change with time, the glitzy sheen of an urban revamp can sometimes be distasteful. But some locales manage to retain a sense of history while becoming more welcoming to visitors. Here are five inspiring urban areas that have been successfully resuscitated from their cities' collective memories.



Once a neighbourhood with a dodgy reputation, The Rocks in Sydney is now filled with preppy pubs like The Argyle.

FRAU GEROLDS GARTEN, ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

Zurich's former industrial district was rezoned and redeveloped in the early 2000s. A decade later, Kreis 5 is the city's trendy epicentre, and Frau Gerolds Garten its hippest drinking haunt. Open-air, unhurried and effortlessly bohemian, the space consists of a jumble of colourful shipping containers in an open lot, overlooking railway tracks. Strings of light bulbs, graffiti by local artists, and wooden tables complete the eclectic look. Bag a spot below the white canopy

seating or on the tiered terrace and settle in for a long afternoon of drinking beer, sampling inventive cocktails, eating organic snacks, and listening to live music by local bands (*www.fraugerold.ch*; 043-960-3707; Mon-Sat 11 a.m.-midnight and Sun noon-10 p.m.; try the *Wiedikoner sausage with salad and beer*).

TEN DRUM CULTURAL VILLAGE, TAINAN, TAIWAN

It is hard to imagine that a composition nominated for a Grammy award

originated on the bleak outskirts of Tainan in Taiwan. Here the Ten Drum Cultural Village occupies a former sugar refinery, and is home to the percussion troupe Ten Drum Art, as well as its school. The metamorphosis of the complex, in 2005, involved turning 16 old warehouses, built under Japanese rule (between 1895 and 1945) into theatres, a café, a museum, a souvenir arcade and music practice rooms. Designer Liu Guocang gave the dilapidated buildings a new lease of life, and the Ten Drum group provides

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London's Clink 78 hostel (left) is in a 200-year-old courthouse building in King's Cross; The urban-chic Frau Gerolds Garten bar (right) in Zurich's Kreis 5 district makes the most of its industrial landscape.

its beating heart. The serenity of the complex and its museum, and a fun orientation session with a drum lead up to an energetic performance by the troupe. For about half an hour twice a day, eight performers fill the stage with the sounds of drums, bells, and gongs. Sporadic waterworks add some visual magic to the performance (www.ten-hsieh.com.tw; 886-6-2662225; Mon-Sun 9 a.m.-5p.m.; daily performance 10:30-11 a.m., 3-3:30 p.m.; 399 Taiwan dollar/₹4,084 per person).

CLINK 78, LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

London is a city well-acquainted with regeneration, in which historic buildings have often found unusual, new uses. The Clink 78 hostel, located in a 200-year-old courthouse, is one such building. The historic King's Cross area where it is located, has evolved from 19th-century industrial roots into a place of museums, shops, and eateries. Awnings of heritage buildings overlook the criss-crossing streets, sounds of familiar rock songs waft out of cosy pubs, bookshops advertise sales, and the glass windows of tattoo parlours provide a glimpse of the assorted fabric of the place. The Clink is a lively pad with a historic touch. Its Internet area recalls the erstwhile Victorian courtroom, and its guestrooms are called cells. Some of them have heavy metal doors with hatches, barred windows, benches and

steel toilets (for decorative purposes only). Clink 78 may not be the brightest or most spacious hostel in the area, but backpackers with a taste for history will appreciate the cheeky modern adaptation of this heritage building (www.clinkhostels.com; +44-20-71839400; rooms from £40/₹3,950).

THE ROCKS, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

The Rocks in Sydney was the site of the city's first European settlement, founded in 1788, adjacent to the Circular Quay of the Sydney cove. The original sandstone buildings, which inspired the name, are still the most prominent architecture on the street, with open baths and backyards. By the late 19th century, The Rocks was a murky locality dominated by a menacing gang called "Rocks Push." It was a hub for sailors and prostitutes, and subject to the bubonic plague. Today, souvenir shops, pubs, and a weekend flea market with 100 stalls entertain visitors. An organisation called the Sydney Living Museum organises an hour-long walk around the premises of the Susannah Place Museum, which gives tourists a glimpse into the lives of working class families that once lived here. The museum is a welcome bit of culture between The Rock's restaurants and shops (www.sydneylivingmuseums.com.au; +61-2-82392288; guided tour between 2-5 p.m.; adults AU\$8/₹375, children AU\$4/₹187).

BLUE FROG, MUMBAI, INDIA

Closer home, Mumbai's Lower Parel neighbourhood is built on the skeleton of the city's once successful textile industry. Stagnation in production first hit cotton businesses in the 1920s, ushering in a state of despair. After World War II, with competition from Japan growing, it was difficult to keep the mills chugging along, and eventually their machines came to a halt in the late 1950s. The Great Bombay Textile Strike of the 1980s was the final nail in the coffin. The mills remained largely neglected until the late '90s when Phoenix Mills opened up as a shopping mall and a clutch of large offices moved into the area followed by something of a cultural reimagining of the space. In 2007, Blue Frog, a state-of-the-art live music venue in Mathurdas Mills Compound, opened its doors, introducing the city to world-class acoustics and numerous international acts. But more importantly, it gave India's indie and folk artists a space to perform. Blue Frog is largely credited with transforming the city's music scene. Within a few months, other cafés, chic boutiques, designer stores, art galleries, restaurants and nightclubs mushroomed around the neighbourhood turning Lower Parel into a hotspot for entertainment (www.bluefrog.co.in; 022-6158 6158; Tue-Sat 6 p.m.-1 a.m., Sun noon-1 a.m.). ●

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