



The cobble streets of Temple Bar

SLINK INTO THE SECRETIVE DUBH LINN GARDENS BEHIND THE CASTLE – THE ORIGINAL LOCATION OF THE ANCIENT “BLACK POOL” THAT GAVE DUBLIN ITS ENGLISH NAME

DUBLIN

If you take one breather in Dublin city, between museum-hopping, window-shopping and pub-crawling, take it on the River Liffey. Pick a bridge, any bridge: Dublin's got plenty, from the sleek, harp-shaped Samuel Beckett to the elegant curve of the 19th century cast iron Ha'penny. From one of the river's majestic viewpoints, a quayside catwalk of shiny modern architecture stands shoulder to shoulder with some of Dublin's most historic structures. The 200-year-old Custom House wears its neoclassical façade unfazed by the shiny glass-front spectacle of the Convention Centre Dublin a few blocks down. And on O'Connell Bridge, with the modern gleam of the Spire piercing the clouds to your left, you can look out downstream and almost imagine, as Seamus Heaney described, “the Vikings coming sniffing up the Liffey”.

From there, you could always follow your nose to the aromatic source of one of Dublin's most famous institutions: the St James's Gate Brewery with the Guinness Storehouse and skyline-skimming Gravity Bar. But that would be cheating. First go back to the very start of the city's formation with a walking history lesson of medieval Dublin, an intimate knot of small alleys and broad streets south of the Liffey. Let the hulking Christ Church Cathedral, founded around 1030AD, set the tone before exploring the medieval undercroft at Dublin Castle.

It's typical of Dublin that some of its best bits are reserved for the most curious traveller. Slink into the secretive Dubh Linn Gardens behind the castle – the original location of the ancient “black pool” that gave Dublin its English name. Or drift up to Henrietta Street, the city's earliest Georgian Street – a cobbled cul de sac that was once home to the professional elite.

Dublin's architectural grace makes it a

rewarding city to explore on foot – but you may not get far. An attempt at a stroll in the tranquil public park of Merrion Square could be torpedoed by the enticing smells coming from the weekly canal-side market that takes place every Friday lunchtime, after all it's only a few minutes' walk away.

A wander from the lush lawns of St Stephen's Green to Trinity College and its cobblestoned courtyards could easily be interrupted by a curious sign for “Dublin's Smallest Pub” hanging just above a narrow doorway.

Dublin is most certainly a place of hidden corners, pop-up restaurants and, more officially, it's a UNESCO City of Literature. That's not just a title either – Dublin truly lives literature, from fabulous historic pubs where Brendan Behan and Flann O'Brien spoke immortal one-liners, to the real-life relic of Sweny's, the pharmacy featured in James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Legendary as being a city that knows how to kick up its heels, Dublin's buoyant shopping districts off the main thoroughfare of Grafton Street buzz with the clink and chat of morning coffee, while come evening people crowd into the pavement bars and cafés. Try the hipster enclave of South William Street for perky shops and super-cool restaurants; head to South Anne Street to explore one of Dublin's favourite time-burnished pubs, Kehoe's; or explore the faded beauty of the Victorian George's Street Arcade, the city's first purpose-built shopping centre.

Sharing a pint with a local has even become a formalised process – and must-do – through the innovative City of a Thousand Welcomes initiative.

Walk the quays, cycle the canal, or uncover the eclectic cultural enclave that is Temple Bar; the options unfurl like the streets stretching for kilometres north and south of the river. We warned you – you'll need a breather.

Dublin

CITY MAP: DUBLIN



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The Custom House on the River Liffey



The Ha'penny Bridge at twilight



South William Street shoppers



Traditional dish at The Pig's Ear



Café en Seine

THE EXPLORER:

TEN

ESSENTIAL THINGS TO DO

Uncover a history that bristles with intrigue or settle yourself down in one of the best pubs in the world. Whatever you choose to do in the city of Dublin, you can be sure you'll have a good time...

1 FIND OUT ABOUT LIFE ON A VIKING WARSHIP

Catapult yourself back to medieval Dublin at the entertaining and interactive Dublinia & the Viking World. And if you've kids with you, then they'll particularly enjoy finding out what life was like on a Viking longboat. Young ones – and the young at heart – can explore the excavation site, try on Viking clothes and put their head in the stocks. Models of a cobbler's shop and a medieval quayside help bring alive the world of Scandinavian invaders and the city they built in the 9th and 10th centuries.

While you're here, cross over the covered bridge into Christ Church Cathedral, founded by Sitric, the Danish King of Dublin, around 1030AD. Around 6pm, you can catch a performance of evensong (check christchurchdublin.ie for details).



Christ Church Cathedral

In the crypt, track down the delicate mummified figures of a cat and rat who seem caught in a permanent cartoon chase and are known to Dubliners as "Tom and Jerry".

2 EXAMINE THE "MOST BEAUTIFUL BOOK IN THE WORLD"

One of Ireland's most stunning treasures, The Book of Kells is the artistic star of an exhibition in the Old Library of Trinity College. This lavish masterpiece, often called "the most beautiful book in the world", is an illuminated copy of the gospels in Latin and is famous for its workmanship. The book is a marvel of early Christian art dating from around the 9th century and is believed to have been produced by monks on a remote Scottish island.

Make your way upstairs to the Long Room Library, which was the inspiration for the computer-generated imagery of the Jedi Archive in Star Wars Episode II. After you have finished your tour, spend a few minutes wandering around the college grounds. The Oregon maples with their huge girths are the oldest trees in this beautiful green space.

3 FIRE YOUR IMAGINATION WITH AGE-OLD ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES

Awaken your mystical spirit with a look at the stunning gold collars in the ground floor of the National Museum of Archaeology. Dating from the Bronze Age, the Gleninsheen collar is the most beautiful of them and was worn by chiefs for important occasions. It was found by a farmer



Trinity College Library, home to the Book of Kells

THE BOOK OF KELLS IS A LAVISH MASTERPIECE OFTEN CALLED "THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BOOK IN THE WORLD". IT'S A MARVEL OF CHRISTIAN ART CREATED BY MONKS AND DATING FROM THE 9TH CENTURY

in 1932 and is in the Ór: Ireland's Gold collection. Ancient discoveries made in bogs during turf cutting are displayed in the Treasury and reflect 15 centuries of artistic achievement. The magnificent 8th century Ardagh Chalice, a silver cup, is the greatest example of Celtic art ever found. You will also see the Tara Brooch and the Clonmacnoise Crozier. It's no surprise the museum boasts the largest collection of Celtic antiquities in the world.

4 PULL A PINT AND RAISE YOUR GLASS TO THE CREAMY "BLACK STUFF"

A brilliant way to take in the layout of the city is from the glass-enclosed Gravity Bar in the Guinness Storehouse. Panoramic views open up before you in Dublin's highest bar; from this elevated spot the city is surrounded on one side by water and on the other by mountains. In the old grain storehouse you can touch, taste and smell the creation of the world's most famous stout, a dark brew made with roasted malt. Audiovisual and interactive displays outline the fascinating brewing process in the exhibition area and you even have the chance to pull your own pint – a delicate art that requires practice



The Shelbourne Hotel

to make perfect. Don't forget to sample a complimentary pint in the bar – it's free with your admission ticket. Connoisseurs say the Guinness here is the best tasting anywhere in the world since it hasn't had to travel.

5 LISTEN TO YEATS READ HIS POETRY

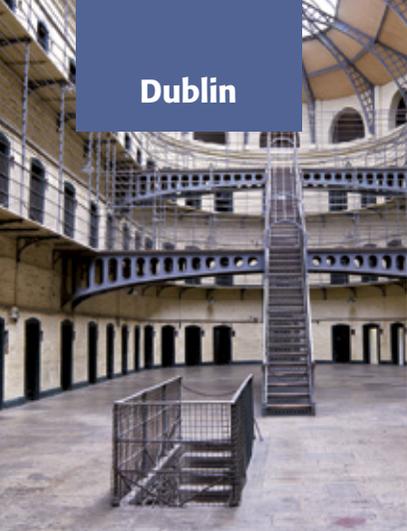
Celebrate the life and work of Ireland's most illustrious poet, W.B. Yeats, at the National Library. Yeats's papers and letters give an insight into his unrequited love for Maud Gonne. Through the wonders of technology you can browse digitally and turn the pages of a notebook that Gonne gave to Yeats in Paris in 1908. It is known as the "PIAL Notebook" from Per Ignem Ad Lucem (Through Fire to Light). You can hear Yeats reading his poetry and watch short films about his writing life.

While you're here, savour the atmosphere by peering into the main reading room with its dramatic sky blue dome ceiling.

For a complete contrast, Marsh's Library, small but perfectly formed, is the oldest public library in Ireland and is situated adjacent to St Patrick's Cathedral. Its oak bookcases hold 25,000 printed books mostly relating to the 16th and 17th centuries. If you love the smell of old books and maps, this is the place for you, and children are particularly welcome.

The library hasn't changed since it opened more than 300 years ago and is one of the few places in Dublin still used for its original purpose. And if you're feeling in need of a break, or just want to sit down and flick through a tome, there's no better place. >

Dublin



Kilmainham Gaol



The Cake Café

6 GET UP CLOSE TO A CARAVAGGIO

The dramatic moment from the Passion when Christ is betrayed by Judas is the big attraction at the National Gallery. The Taking of Christ by Caravaggio was produced when he was at the peak of his career and is believed to include a self-portrait of the artist. The list of canvasses in residence here is outstanding: more than 3,000 paintings including 17th century French, Dutch, Italian and Spanish schools, as well as Van Gogh and Claude Monet. Highlights include works by Titian, Rubens, Van Dyck and J.M.W. Turner. For more artistic nourishment make your way to the unforgettable Jack B. Yeats watercolours, especially The Liffey Swim, which typifies his enthusiastic recording of Dublin life. Pick out the character in the brown fedora, thought to be Yeats himself, and the woman in a yellow hat, his wife Cottie. The gallery's Millennium Wing stages international exhibitions and has an excellent shop for books on art and gifts, as well as a large children's section.

7 TASTE THE CODDLE AND COLCANNON IN TEMPLE BAR

Don't miss a walk or even an aimless wander through Temple Bar. Artists, musicians and writers have made this bohemian part of the city their home since the 1980s. With its warren of car-free cobbled streets, alternative culture, and vast range of activities, the area throws up many diverse possibilities: art-house cinema, film archive, galleries, music and arts centres, a Saturday morning farmers' market – never mind the biggest collection of restaurants and bars in

one area. This is THE place for a revitalising lunch of freshly made soup, crunchy salads, crêpes or inventive sandwiches, and it buzzes with excitement and music at night. Want to try some genuine Dublin food? Look out for the spicy local speciality Gur cake or traditional fare such as Dublin coddle (sausage, bacon, onion and potato stew), colcannon (bacon and cabbage) or boxty (a potato and flour pancake).

There's plenty to amuse kids, too, since they have their very own excellent cultural centre, The Ark. Drop into the National Photographic Archive for changing exhibitions about Irish life and an amazing collection of half a million photos. Next door, the Gallery of Photography shows a roster of photographic exhibitions.

8 BE MOVED BY KILMAINHAM GAOL

Chilling cells and eerie corridors bring history to life at Kilmainham Gaol, the largest unoccupied building of its kind in Europe. Built in the 1790s, the prison is closely connected with Ireland's struggle for independence and reflects painful periods from the past. Browse the museum and join a guided tour to make the most of your time. In the prison chapel there's an audiovisual summary of the Nationalist struggle. The 1916 corridor contains cells that housed the captured commanders of the Easter Rising and leads to the atmospheric stone-breakers' yard where 14 of them were executed.

There's also an absorbing exhibition on the history of the prison and its restoration. It closed when the last prisoner, Éamon de Valera, was

PHOTO FAR LEFT: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



The National Gallery of Ireland

BEWLEYS ATTRACTS MANY BRANDS OF CAFÉ-SITTERS: NOVELISTS IN SEARCH OF MATERIAL, NEWSPAPER READERS, PHONE TEXTERS AND SOLO THINKERS

released in July 1924. He later went on to be President of Ireland. Spend some time in this thought-provoking place full of resonance and you'll understand why Kilmainham is etched into the memory of the city.

9 SINK INTO A SOFT SEAT IN A CAFÉ

For a multi-sensorial experience, soak up a blend of hand-roasted coffee or try the Dublin Morning Tea in Bewley's café on Grafton Street. It's all part of the education of a good nose, so sink into a comfy red velvet seat and drink in the ambience of marble sculptures and six glorious stained-glass windows by the 20th century artist Harry Clarke. Bewley's feels like it's been around since time immemorial but, in fact, it traces its history to the 1840s. The poet Brendan Kennelly describes Bewley's as "Dublin in miniature, a coffee capital within the Capital of Ireland". It attracts many brands of café-sitters: novelists in search of material, newspaper readers, phone texters and solo thinkers. At lunchtime, actors perform readings upstairs in the café theatre.

Dublin is awash with blissful cafés and traditional Irish tea rooms, from the Cake Café and the Queen of Tarts to the Silk Road Café at the Chester Beatty Library. Fancy a

decadent afternoon tea? If you want to mix with high society, head for the glamorous Lord Mayor's Lounge in the Shelbourne Hotel with its blazing fires and glittering Waterford Crystal chandeliers. Sit up straight, pour the Earl Grey from a china pot and select finger food from a three-tiered silver tea stand. The hotel was used for the drafting of the Irish Constitution in 1922.

10 TRACE THE FOOTSTEPS OF JAMES JOYCE

They've named a handsome bridge after him, his debonair statue stands near O'Connell Street, and a pub and study centre both bear his name. Of course it's James Joyce, author of Ulysses. Joyce's famous novel was set in the city on the day of his first date with Nora Barnacle, 16 June 1904. It's known as Bloomsday after the character Leopold Bloom, whose strolls trace Joyce's map of the city. Dublin celebrates the date every year with special events, walking tours and a pilgrimage to Davy Byrne's pub for a Gorgonzola cheese sandwich and glass of Burgundy. Liam Proud's murals of Joycean Dublin grace the pub's walls.

At any given lunchtime in Sweny's shop – the pharmacy mentioned in the book – you can hear live readings from Dubliners and other Joyce works. Run by volunteers, the shop retains the original front and still stocks lemon-scented soap – an ideal present for literary souvenir-hunters. Groupies will also want to check out the James Joyce Centre as a starting point for guided tours, or follow the Ulysses trail marking the route of Leopold Bloom, with Robin Buick's 14 bronze relief pavement plaques.

Dublin

MY CITY:

HELEN BEAUMONT

"One of the things I love about Dublin is our wonderful bay – we're surrounded by water from Howth all the way round to Dalkey, Killiney and beyond. I grew up near Sandymount and still live within walking distance of Sandymount Strand – it remains one of my favourite places in Dublin. I cross the River Liffey – another of Dublin's superb water features – twice a day and love Grattan Bridge with its outlandish half-fish, half-horse lamp standards. I'm a huge fan of the Luas, Dublin's tram service, which I catch to the National Museum of Decorative Arts and History at Collins Barracks, where I work. I'll fully admit to bias, and to being lucky enough to work in one of the most fantastic environments in Dublin – Collins Barracks, the building and museum, is one of Dublin's unmissable sights. On nights out I still love the fact that I can walk to most places in Dublin – one of my favourite public spaces is Hanover Quay with its amazing red sculptures that light up after dark."

Helen Beaumont
Education Officer at the National Museum of Ireland



Killiney Bay



A view from Grattan Bridge



From historical walking tours to the elegance of a horse-drawn carriage or a cruise on the river, the city has a large variety of guided tours covering a range of themes

The best way to get the hang of the sights is on a [hop-on/hop-off tour](#) run by Dublin Bus and City Sightseeing Dublin, where the guides provide an entertaining commentary that'll have you laughing your way around the city. Dublin Bus Tours offers a variety of tours including a Dublin City Tour and Ghost Bus Tour.

Dublin is a walker's city par excellence and there are many tours with erudite and jovial guides. [The Dublin Literary Pub Crawl](#), running since 1988, is one of the best to learn about the list of authors who have left their mark on the life of this most writerly of cities. Taken by actors, it is a hilarious romp through the work of, amongst others, Joyce, Beckett, Wilde and Behan. It evokes their work and their lives, and at the same time manages to squeeze in a drink in a couple of great pubs.

Pat Liddy – author, artist and historian – is no stranger to the [Dublin walks scene](#). One of

the highlights of his tour is an extraordinary photographic wall mural featuring Dublin's remake of Da Vinci's The Last Supper. You can also download Liddy's excellent iWalks on your MP3 player.

Ireland is going through a decade of anniversaries and if you want to brush up on history, then sign up for the [1916 Rebellion Walking Tour](#). It's an absorbing walk taking in

YOU CAN TAKE YOUR OWN TOUR BY RENTING ONE OF THE DUBLINBIKES – HEAD FOR THE CANAL, OVER BRIDGES, OR PEDAL YOUR WAY THROUGH LEAFY PARKS AWAY FROM TRAFFIC

the events of the Easter Rising. [Dublin Footsteps](#), meanwhile, mixes the architecture of the Georgian city with literature.

[Dublin by Numbers](#), run by Ingenious Ireland, organises puzzling pathway trails for children from age six. Download the activity sheet from the website, bring chalk, pencil and string for

measuring. The trail starts at the main entrance to St Stephen's Green.

Wander the streets and you will hear the unmistakable "Viking Roar" coming from the [Viking Splash Tours](#). Get on board with a Viking helmet and roar like a pillager as you pass landmark sites. The tours are held in amphibious World War II vehicles and plunge into the water at Grand Canal Dock.

If you want serious exercise then Dublin by Bike holds a three-hour tour as well as a 90-minute one that takes in all the main sights; or try [Dublin City Bike Tours](#) whose motto we like: "Let the wheels do the walking". You can also take your own tour by renting one of the dublinbikes (there are multiple stations around the city) and escaping on two wheels. Head for the canal, over bridges, or pedal your way through leafy parks away from traffic. There are three-day tickets available.

Sports fans are well catered for, too. You can tour the impressive [Aviva Stadium](#), home of international rugby

matches. While few sports in Ireland can rival the intensity of a Gaelic football final, you will only get a ticket if you have the right contacts. If you can't get to a match, the next best thing is to join a tour of the [Croke Park Experience](#). Here, uncover the fascinating history of the organisation, which traces its roots to the 1890s.

FIVE FOR FREE

For a major European capital, Dublin has an astonishing amount of things to do that don't bust the budget. Here are five free city favourites...

1 SIDESTEP THE CROWDS AT THE SECRETIVE IVEAGH GARDENS

Bypass the crowds in the city centre and head for the park. St Stephen's Green and the tranquil Merrion Square are recommended. Wander into Phoenix Park, the largest public park in Europe, and you will come across fallow deer. To really avoid the crowds, make your way to an extra special secret walled place, Iveagh Gardens, with its cascade fountain, statues, woodlands and a sunken lawn. The waterfall has rocks from each of Ireland's 32 counties. Immerse yourself in the box-hedges, soft grass and blissful silence, always keeping an eye out for cheeky squirrels or arrogant foxes.

2 ABSORB THE BANTER OF A SLICE OF STREET LIFE

For a true flavour of quintessential Dublin life, Moore Street market is a fine example of a typical outdoor fruit, vegetable and flower market. It has been part of the fabric of the city for years and tourists love the vendors' wit. From early morning, the stalls are piled high with apples, oranges, pears and bananas, so take an appreciative stroll through it to hear the good-humoured haranguing of street traders.

3 PEEK AT THE CHAOTIC GLORY OF AN ARTIST'S STUDIO

Call in and see the amazing studio of the artist "superstar" Francis Bacon – it's exactly how he left it. After his death it was brought from London to the Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane, where it was reassembled. Bacon, who was born in Dublin, spent his working life in London and is regarded as one of the 20th century's greatest artists. The Irish Museum of Modern Art, also free, showcases the work of Irish artists such as Sean Scully, Louis le Brocqy and Dorothy Cross. And you'll also find Picasso, Miró and Damien Hirst pieces.

4 BE DAZZLED IN A CHAPEL

Walk along Dame Street to City Hall for the Story of the Capital exhibition and do two things: look down at the beautiful mosaic floor and read the official Dublin city motto: Obedientia Civium Felicitas Urbis (Obedient citizens make a happy city), and then look up at 12 frescoes on the rotunda above depicting legends and historical scenes.

Beside Dublin Castle, the Chapel Royal next to the Record Tower is where the Irish crown jewels were once kept. It's a must-visit for every tourist. The interior is a heady combination of richly detailed Gothic, 15th century French stained-glass alongside wood carved pillars, and the expressive figures of Faith, Hope and Charity.

5 GAZE AT A STUFFED SHARK

Want to see some stuffed animals? Known affectionately to Dubliners as The Dead Zoo, the Museum of Natural History is a fabulous place. Packed with tigers, hippos, dinosaurs, birds, and, most intriguingly, stuffed sharks, it houses two million specimens. Children – as well as parents – can happily spend hours here.



Samuel Beckett Bridge



Powerscourt Townhouse Centre



Art on St Stephen's Green



The Natural History Museum



Iveagh Gardens

OUT AND ABOUT

There are many tempting one-day coach excursion destinations from Dublin, so if it takes your fancy get beyond the city and experience everything from heritage to country walks



Powerscourt House and Gardens



Japanese Gardens

GLENDALOUGH

Glendalough in the Wicklow Mountains evolved from a hermitage founded by St Kevin 1,400 years ago, and is still a revered place set in a stunning steep-sided valley between two lakes. It's a beautiful location for picnics and gentle walks along the boardwalks and trails that twist around the grounds. If you're feeling energetic, head for the surrounding steep hills and winding paths.

IRISH HORSE MUSEUM

We Irish love our horses and at the informative Irish Horse Museum at the Irish National Stud in County Kildare, you can see recordings of both flat and national hunt races. If you are here in spring, then the beautiful foals may be prancing around the paddocks.

JAPANESE GARDENS

Near the stud, the Japanese Gardens, created in the early 20th century, are recognised as among the finest Asian gardens in the world. A series of landmarks runs along a path symbolically charting the human progression from birth to death.

NEWGRANGE

A trip to Newgrange in County Meath should be on every visitor's itinerary. The excellent Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre is the starting point for tours of Newgrange, Europe's most important Neolithic burial mounds. Built around 3200BC, it is several hundred years older than the Pyramids and is the site of Ireland's most visited

passage grave. We love the enigmatic side to it. The Celts left no written records so no one can say with any certainty how the people who built it transported the huge stones to the spot.

JOHNNIE FOX'S

A mountain road in south County Dublin will take you to, reputedly, Ireland's highest pub – Johnnie Fox's in Glencullen. Overflowing with bric-a-brac, the pub has featured prominently in the social evolution of Ireland and can trace its origins to 1798.

POWERSCOURT HOUSE AND GARDENS

County Wicklow's Powerscourt House and Gardens is one of the grandest and most beautiful 18th century estates in Ireland. The house was restored in the 1990s and the gardens are considered among the finest in Europe. The Italianate landscape designed in the mid-19th century survives while the nearby Powerscourt waterfall, at 398ft or 121m, is the tallest in Ireland.



The passage tomb at Newgrange