

BCD Travel Recommends: Dublin

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In honor of St. Patrick's Day, In Motion takes you to Dublin, the Irish capital, for the wearing of the green and the drinking of the Guinness.

Dublin ranks among the top tourist destinations in Europe, and this vibrant city hums with a palpable sense that it is creating a new cultural heritage. Cuisine and fashion now reflect Mediterranean influences. Young Dubliners flock to salsa lessons, wear Italian suits and snack on olives before dinner. Asian and Eastern European immigrants have spiced up old neighborhoods. And it's now impossible to cross town without hearing a foreign language.

Orienting Yourself

The city is split - physically and psychologically - by the river Liffey; the north has traditionally been poorer and the south wealthier. Two canals - the Grand Canal in the south and the Royal Canal in the north - form semi-circular arcs around the center. North of the river, the most important streets for visitors are O'Connell Street, the major shopping thoroughfare that leads to Parnell Square, and Gardiner Street, a B&B and hostel hotspot. To the west, the Smithfield area is emerging as a tourist magnet. Busáras, the main bus station, and Connolly station, one of the two main train stations, are near the southern end of Gardiner Street.



Immediately south of the river is the hub of Dublin, Temple Bar, where you'll find a concentration of pubs, restaurants, shops and a number of art galleries. Nearby Trinity College is at the southern end of Grafton Street, the city's most exclusive shopping street. On the south side you'll also find the best examples of Georgian Dublin, with stately houses and elegant parks.

Don't Miss

Chester Beatty Library

Ship St

This extraordinary museum is breathtakingly beautiful and virtually guaranteed to impress. Only one percent of the collection is on display at any one time and exhibits are rotated every six months. The ground floor contains breathtaking works from the Western, Islamic and East Asian worlds, including perhaps the finest array of Chinese jade books in the world. The European texts feature exquisite calligraphy, equal to that in the Book of Kells. The second floor has what is considered to be the best example of illuminated Islamic texts in the world.

Guinness Storehouse & St James' Gate Brewery

James St

Housed in an old grain storehouse, this is an impressive enterprise that milks the worldwide fame of Guinness for all it's worth. More multimedia installation than provincial beer museum, the Storehouse uses high-tech audio and visual displays to tell the Guinness story.

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St Patrick's Cathedral

St Patrick's Close

This is one of Dublin's earliest Christian sites and hallowed ground. Although a church stood on the site from the fifth century, the present building dates from 1191.



Trinity College

College Green

Ireland's premier university is both a tranquil retreat from the bustle of the city and the home of Dublin's biggest attraction, the Book of Kells. Established by staunchly Protestant Elizabeth I in 1592 in an effort to stop "popery," the university's ancient ivy-covered walls crawl with history and a sense of occasion.

Trinity College has played host to some top-drawer scholars including Edmund Burke, Wolfe Tone, Douglas Hyde, Jonathan Swift, Samuel Beckett, Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde.

Where to Lift a Pint

While Dublin's nightlife now includes a dizzying array of trendy bars, cafes and clubs, the local pub still exerts a centrifugal pull on fun. The pub is a meeting point for friends and strangers alike, the place where Dubliners are at their most convivial. Here's a four-leaf clover's worth of Dublin's most atmospheric pubs:

Brazen Head

20 Lower Bridge St 8

Reputed to be Dublin's oldest pub, the Brazen Head was founded in 1198, but the present building is a young thing, dating from only 1668. It's popular with foreign students, tourists and some grizzly locals.

International Bar

23 Wicklow St

A fantastic old pub adorned with stained glass and mirrors, it's famous for its long-running comedy nights, and live jazz and blues sessions on Tuesday.

Kehoe's

9 S Anne St

This is one of the most atmospheric pubs in the city, with a beautiful Victorian bar, a comfy snug and plenty of other little nooks and crannies. Upstairs, drinks are served in what was very obviously once the publican's living room. Grab a comfy couch and lap up the Guinness and Dublin charm.

O'Neill's

2 Suffolk St

A labyrinthine old pub near Trinity College, O'Neill's dates from the late 19th century, though a tavern has stood on this site for more than 300 years. The odd combination of students and stockbrokers lends a pleasantly chaotic air.

Feeling a Bit Peckish?

Long gone are the days when "Irish cuisine" was seen as something of an oxymoron, when gray mutton stew and boiled potatoes reigned supreme. Irish chefs are now making the most of sparkingly fresh raw materials, from succulent seafood to farmhouse cheeses, making Dublin a truly exciting gastronomic destination.

Chapter One

18-19 Parnell Sq

Arguably the city's most atmospheric restaurant, this remarkable eatery fills the vaulted basement space of the Dublin Writers Museum. Artfully lighted and tastefully decorated, it's one of the best restaurants in town. Meals are prepared with local, organic ingredients, all cleverly used in remarkable dishes like the ravioli with Irish goat cheese and warm asparagus, and the Irish beef with shallot gratin.

Ely

22 Ely Place (off Merrion Row)

This cosmopolitan, clever place does everything right. The owners get all the organic produce from their family farm in County Clare, so everything is fresh as it possibly can be. The food is simple but expertly prepared, the crowd enthusiastic, the service attentive. Think fantastic "bangers and mash" (sausages and mashed potatoes), delicious Clare oysters, superb Irish stew, and a great selection of cheeses from Sheridan's. Factor in a smashing wine list and you've got a winner.

Govinda's

4 Aungier St

The motto here is healthy square meals on square plates for very good prices. The meals are generous, belly-warming concoctions of vegetables, cheese, rice, and pasta. Every day, ten main courses are offered cafeteria-style. Some are always Indian, others are a variety of simple European staples such as lasagna or macaroni and cheese. Veggie burgers are prepared to order. For dessert, try a rich wedge of carrot cake with a dollop of cream or homemade ice cream.

Looking for Souvenirs?

Kilkenny

5-6 Nassau St 2

A large, long-running repository for contemporary, innovative Irish crafts, including multicolored, modern Irish knits, designer clothing, Orla Kiely bags and some lovely silver jewelry. The glassware and pottery is beautiful and sourced from workshops around the country.

Avoca Handweavers

11-13 Suffolk St 2

Combining clothing, homewares, a basement food hall and an excellent top-floor cafe, Avoca promotes a homey but stylish brand of modern Irish life. Many of the garments are woven, knitted and naturally dyed at the company's Wicklow factory. The children's section is magic, with unusual knits, fairy outfits, theatrical capes, bee-covered gumboots, and toys.