Set beside the shores of curving Dublin Bay, Ireland’s capital city, Dublin, is a thrusting, dynamic place, which despite its size remains utterly beguiling and an essential part of any visit to the country. Much of Dublin’s centre has been redeveloped over the last few decades, leaving a wag to comment that “the city’s only sights are building sites”. So, alongside the city’s historic buildings – its cathedrals and churches, Georgian squares and townhouses, castles, monuments and pubs – you’ll discover grand new hotels and shopping centres, stunning new street architecture and a state-of-the-art tramway system. Continue reading to find out more about... Brief history of Dublin Accommodation in Dublin Eating in Dublin Dublin drinking and nightlife Dublin music Theatre, culture and entertainment in Dublin LGBT Travel Information for Dublin Shopping in Dublin Dublin's National Museum Dublin's National Gallery Merrion Square St Stephen’s Green O’Connell Street and around Parnell Square and around Collins Barracks West of Dublin's Center Dublin's Northern Suburbs South along the Coast from Dublin Festivals and events More than a third of the Republic of Ireland’s population of almost four and a half million lives within the Greater Dublin area. Intensely proud of their city, Dubliners seem to possess an innate sense of its heritage and powerful literary culture, and can at times exhibit a certain snobbishness towards those living in Ireland’s rural backwaters (people often termed “culchies”). Locals are noted for their often caustic, but engaging, brand of humour, as shown in the numerous and sometimes bawdy nicknames given to many of the city’s landmarks (the Millennium Spire, for instance, has all manner of sobriquets including “the eyeful tower” and “the stiffy by the Liffey”), but there is also a warmth in their welcome – it’s easy to find yourself drawn into conversation or debates in bars and cafés (or, if you smoke, outside them). Dubliners are also increasingly style-conscious; where once the city looked inwards for inspiration, today it glances both east and west, to Europe and America, catching new trends and bringing a decidedly Irish slant to bear upon them. Most of Dublin’s attractions are contained within a relatively compact area, spreading either side of the many-bridged River Liffey, which divides the city between its Northside and Southside. These have very distinct characters, defined over the city’s historical development: stereotypically, the south is viewed in terms of its gentility while the north is seen as brash and working class, home of the true Dub accent. Pre-eminent among the city’s historic sights is Trinity College, whose main draw for visitors is the glorious Book of Kells. From here, the city’s main commercial street, Grafton Street, marches off towards St Stephen’s Green, home to the rococo splendours of Newman House. Among the stylish Georgian streets to the east of Grafton Street, meanwhile, you’ll find the compelling displays of the National Gallery and the National Museum. On the west side of Trinity begins Temple Bar, which somehow manages to remain the city’s hub for both carousing and art, overlooked sternly by Dublin Castle, British headquarters in Ireland until 1921 and now home to the glorious collections of the Chester Beatty Library. Dublin’s two historic cathedrals, Christ Church and St Patrick’s, stand to the west of here. North of the river runs the wide boulevard of O’Connell Street, where the GPO, resonant site of the 1916 Easter Rising, is now complemented by the soaring modern beauty of the Spike. At the top of the street, Parnell Square is home to the Dublin Writers Museum and the Hugh Lane Municipal Art Gallery, while to the west lie the Old Jameson Distillery, in the historic Smithfield area, and Collins Barracks, home to the National Museum’s collection of decorative arts. West of the centre is the green expanse of Phoenix Park, while across the river to the south lie the grim memorial of Kilmainham Gaol and, to the east, the more obviously appealing Guinness Brewery and Storehouse. In the city’s suburbs, the attractions of the Northside have a definite edge over those to the south of the river: most compelling are the national cemetery at Glasnevin; the splendid stadium home of the Gaelic Athletic Association, Croke Park, containing a fine museum; and the architectural wonders of the Casino at Marino. For a scenic breather from the city, take the southerly branch of the DART to panoramic Dalkey and Killiney Hills. **Brief history of Dublin** Dublin’s origins date back to ninth-century Viking times when the Norsemen saw the strategic potential of Dublin Bay and established a trading post on the Liffey’s southern bank at the point where the ancient royal road from Tara to Wicklow forded the river. They adopted the location’s Irish name, Dubh Linn (“dark pool”), for their new home, soon amalgamating with an Irish settlement on the northern bank called Baile Atha Cliath (“place of the hurdle ford”), which remains the Irish name for the city. The twelfth century saw Dublin conquered by the Anglo-Normans when Dermot McMurrough, the deposed King of Leinster, sought help from Henry II to regain his crown. In return for Dermot’s fealty, Henry sent Strongbow and a contingent of Welsh knights to restore MacMurrough’s power. Strongbow conquered Dublin in the process and, concerned at this threat to his authority, Henry came over to Ireland to assert control, establishing Dublin as the focus for British sway over Ireland. This became the centre of the “English Pale” (from the Latin palum, meaning originally a “stake”, though later a “defined territory”), ruling over the areas of Anglo-Norman settlement in Ireland; since Irish resistance to conquest was so strong in other parts of the country, the pejorative phrase “beyond the pale” evolved as a means of signifying (at least in English terms) a lack of civilized behaviour. Only a few buildings have survived from before the seventeenth century, mainly in the area encompassing Dublin Castle and the two cathedrals, and much of the city’s layout is essentially Georgian. During this period, Dublin’s Anglo-Irish nobility and its increasingly wealthy mercantile class used their money (often, in the aristocracy’s case derived from confiscated land granted as a reward for services to the Crown) to showcase their wealth in the form of grandiose houses, public buildings and wide new thoroughfares. Wealthy members of the elite revelled in their new-found opulence, filling their houses with works by the latest artists and craftsmen, and seeking to enhance their own cachet by patronizing the arts; Handel conducted the first performance of his Messiah in the city, for example. Increasing political freedom resulted in demands for self-government, inspired by the American and French revolutions. The legislative independence achieved during “Grattan’s Parliament” in 1782 was to be short-lived, however, and the failure of the 1798 Rebellion, led largely by members of the Protestant Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, inevitably led to the 1801 Act of Union and the removal of Dublin’s independent powers. With Ireland now governed by a British vice-regent, Dublin sank into a period of economic decline, brought about by its inability to compete with Britain’s flourishing industries. The city remained the focus of agitation for self-rule, and by the end of the nineteenth century had also become the centre for efforts to form a sense of Irish national consciousness via the foundation of the Gaelic League in 1893. This sought to revive both the Irish language and traditional culture, and set the scene for the Celtic literary revival, led by W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, who established the Abbey Theatre in 1904. The political struggle for independence remained a live issue and events came to a head with the Easter Rising of 1916. The city’s streets saw violence again during the civil war, which followed the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921. Austerity and much emigration followed Independence and it was not until the 1950s that Dublin began to emerge from its colonial past. The city’s infrastructure was ravaged by ill-conceived redevelopment in the 1960s which saw the demolition of many Georgian edifices, as well as the creation of poorly-planned “sink” estates to replace dilapidated tenements. A couple of decades later city planners began to address the issue of inner-city depopulation, constructing apartment blocks to house Dublin’s wealthy middle classes, and the numerous cranes on the city’s skyline demonstrate the continuing activity of the regeneration process, not least in the former docklands. The most obvious evidence of reinvigoration in the city centre is the Temple Bar area, though the original intention to develop a Parisian-style quarter of ateliers and arts centres soon fell foul of the moneygrubbers, while east of the centre, reconstruction continues in the city’s docklands, though much has been stalled by the severity of Ireland’s ongoing economic crisis. Today, the arrival of migrants, particularly from Africa and Eastern Europe, together with the city’s longer-standing Chinese community, has seen Dublin gradually inch towards multiculturalism. The effects of these changes are most visible in the city’s restaurants, shops and street markets, broadening native Dublin tastes and introducing locals to all manner of culinary and fashion delights. **Accommodation in Dublin** The growth in visitor numbers over the last decade or so has had a positive effect on the variety of accommodation available in Dublin, and there is plenty to choose from for all budgets, with the Northside and suburbs generally cheaper than the centre. Hotels in the city centre tend to be expensive, though many offer discounts midweek or outside the high season (especially via Web bookings), while B&Bs usually provide a very welcoming and comfortable alternative. If money is comparatively tight and you want to be near the action, hostels are the best option and almost all have private rooms. Booking in advance is always highly advisable, and essential around major festivals such as St Patrick’s Day, in July and August, and on weekends all year round, especially when major concerts or sporting events are taking place. There is one campsite on Dublin’s outskirts. Many of the city’s top-range hotels are located around Temple Bar and St Stephen’s Green, though the Northside also has some chic options. Dublin has a staggering number of B&Bs and you’ll find economically priced options on the Northside’s Gardiner Street or in the pleasant Southside suburbs of Ballsbridge, Donnybrook and Rathmines, which are all within easy reach of the centre. Numerous hostels offer both dormitory accommodation (€12–25 per person, depending on the season) and private rooms, usually sleeping between two and four people (€30–60 per person). Most rooms are en suite and the standard of private rooms is often as good as at B&Bs. Several Dublin hostels belong to the IHH though a few are members of the IHO. Many hostels offer free breakfast and provide internet access. **Eating in Dublin** It’s fair to say that no one comes to Dublin just for the cuisine, but the last twenty years has seen a remarkable growth in the variety of places to eat, from Lebanese to Nepalese. The consequent rise in both standards and expectations looks set to continue – especially in the area of modern Irish cooking – though prices can be off-putting. Many restaurants, however, offer lunchtime or early-bird (typically before 7pm) set menus of two or three courses, sometimes for as little as half the cost of their regular evening fare. Some cafés and restaurants, catering to a crowd who have spent their money carousing late into the previous night, also provide good-value weekend brunch. In addition, plenty of pubs dish up decent, reasonably priced, hearty food, with more ambitious menus available at gastropubs like The Exchequer and The Odeon. Dublin has long had a thriving café scene, strongly supported by the widespread temperance movement and the churches. Nowadays you’re almost as likely to find baklava as traditional brack, accompanied by a speciality tea or a frothy cappuccino. For a splurge with a difference, “Art Tea” at the Merrion Hotel is a lot of fun: delicious afternoon tea in the drawing rooms, with cakes that creatively reflect the surrounding paintings from the hotel’s excellent collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century, mostly Irish, art (€36, including the catalogue of the collection). The majority of Dublin’s restaurants are on the south side of the river in the city centre, with a tight concentration in Temple Bar. It’s generally worth booking ahead if you can, especially in the evenings. **Dublin drinking and nightlife** *Good puzzle would be cross Dublin without passing a pub* - James Joyce, Ulysses Not known for their understatement, Dubliners boast that their city possesses the finest pubs in the world. They’re probably right too, but with over seven hundred watering holes to choose from, forming the backbone of the capital’s social life, there’s no harm in checking out their assertion. Along the way, you’ll also be able to test out competing claims about the hometown drink, Guinness: that it tastes better here is not open to doubt, but locals argue about exactly which pub pours the best drop (is the travel-shy liquid better at Ryan’s, just across the river from the brewery, than downstream at Mulligan’s?). In general, the stout is best in the characterful and sociable historic pubs, many of which retain their cut-glass screens, ornate wood-carving and cosy snugs, often with a private hatch to the bar. In recent years, a plethora of cosmopolitan, youth-oriented bars have come onto the scene, the best of which have forged a style and character of their own, be they cavernous microbrewery-pubs, studenty DJ bars or chic designer lounges. Plenty of these bars have late licences, as noted in the reviews below, which allow them to stay open until 2.30am or so, usually from Thursday to Saturday. **Dublin music** Dublin’s music scene is thriving but ever-changing, so it’s always wise to check listings in the Event Guide or The Ticket, or the fortnightly rock-and-style magazine Hot Press. Ticket prices are dependent on the venue’s size and the performers’ status, usually costing €8–30, although major gigs can be as much as €110. There are also a number of open-air events during the summer, including one-off gigs by major acts at places such as Croke Park and Marlay Park in Rathfarnham. Traditional music is flourishing in the city with a number of pubs offering sessions, usually commencing at around 9.30pm. Listings of these can be found at wwww.thesession.org/sessions. **Theatre, culture and entertainment in Dublin** Drama played a pivotal role in Ireland’s twentieth-century cultural revival and Dublin’s theatres continue to act as a crucible for innovation, alongside staging a range of Irish classics. Highlights include the Dublin Theatre Festival (late Sept to mid-Oct) and the Dublin Fringe Festival (mid-Sept). Ticket prices vary, and you should expect to pay €10–20 per ticket for fringe shows, €20–40 for mainstream. Advance bookings can be made at the venues or through [Ticketmaster](https://www.ticketmaster.com/). If you’re budget-conscious, it’s worth enquiring about low-cost previews and occasional cut-price Monday- and Tuesday-night shows, while students (with ID) and OAPs can sometimes find good concessionary rates. **LGBT Travel Information for Dublin** As attitudes to homosexuality in Dublin have become increasingly liberal over the last two decades, so the capital’s gay community has grown in confidence, and a small but vibrant scene has established a niche in the city’s social life. The latest information on gay events and venues in Dublin is provided by [Outhouse](https://outhouse.ie/), 105 Capel St,a gay and lesbian resource centre with a café and a small library, or from Gay Switchboard. The free magazine GCN (Gay Community News) has detailed listings of upcoming events and can be found in the gay-friendly Books Upstairs, 17 D'Olier St, or in clubs and bars. Useful websites include [www.queerid.com](http://www.queerid.com) for events and news and [www.gaire.com](http://www.gaire.com) for information, message boards and online chat. **Shopping in Dublin** The Southside is the most fruitful hunting ground for shoppers, offering Irish and global designer clothes around Grafton Street, and more alternative boutiques in the Market Arcade and Temple Bar. Also south of the river, you’ll find an attractive and eclectic range of artisan products gathered from around the country, from cheeses and whiskey to ceramics. Despite a recent revamp, Dublin’s most extensive shopping boulevard, O’Connell Street, is likely to hold little of interest for the visiting consumer, though the raucous Moore Street market, off Henry Street, is always entertaining. The majority of shops in Dublin are open Monday to Saturday only. **Dublin's National Museum** The National Museum on Kildare Street is the finest of a portfolio of jointly run museums – including Collins Barracks, which focuses on the decorative arts, and the National Museum of Country Life in Castlebar – and a must-see for visitors to Dublin. Undoubted stars of the show here are a stunning hoard of prehistoric gold and a thousand years’ worth of ornate ecclesiastical treasures, but the whole collection builds up a fascinating and accessible story of Irish archeology and history. The shop in the beautiful entrance rotunda sells a range of high-quality crafts inspired by works in the museum, and there’s a small café. Prehistoric gold, much of it discovered during peat-cutting, takes pride of place on the ground floor of the main hall. From the Earlier Bronze Age (c. 2500–1500 BC) come lunulae, thin sheets of gold formed into crescent-moon collars. After around 1200 BC, when new sources of the metal were apparently found, goldsmiths could be more extravagant, fashioning chunky torcs, such as the spectacular Gleninsheen Collar and the Tumna Hoard of nine large gold balls, which are perforated, suggesting that when joined together they formed a huge necklace. Further prehistoric material is arrayed around the walls of the main hall, including the fifteen-metre-long Lurgan Logboat, dating from around 2500 BC, which was unearthed in a Galway bog in 1902. The adjacent Treasury holds most of the museum’s better-known ecclesiastical exhibits, notably the ornate, eighth-century Ardagh Chalice, the Tara Brooch, decorated with beautiful knot designs, and the Cross of Cong, created to enshrine a fragment of the True Cross given to the King of Connacht by the Pope in 1123. Also on the ground floor is Kingship and Sacrifice, showcasing the leathery bodies of four Iron Age noblemen that were preserved and discovered in various bogs around Ireland. Upstairs, Viking-age Ireland (c.800–1150) features models of a house and the layout of Dublin’s Fishamble Street, while Medieval Ireland (1150–1550) moves on to cover the first English colonists, their withdrawal to the fortified area around Dublin known as “the Pale” after 1300, and the hybrid culture that developed all the while – you can listen to recordings of poetry written in Ireland in Middle Irish, Middle English and Norman French. Unmissable here is a host of strange, ornate portable shrines, made to hold holy relics or texts, including examples for all three of Ireland’s patron saints: the Shrine of St Patrick’s Tooth, the Shrine of St Brigid’s Shoe and the Shrine of the Cathach, containing a manuscript written by St Colmcille (St Columba), legendary bard, scholar, ruler and evangelizer of Scotland. **Dublin's National Gallery** The National Gallery hosts a fine collection of Western European art dating from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, which will happily engage you for several hours. The gallery’s old building, divided into Beit, Milltown and Dargan wings and entered from Merrion Square West, has now been joined by the Millennium Wing, giving access from Clare Street, which hosts major temporary exhibitions around its striking, sky-lit atrium. The resulting layout of the gallery, however, can be confusing, especially after a recent rehang, so the first thing to do when you go in is pick up a free floor-plan leaflet. In a prime location under the Millennium Wing’s glass roof, there’s a good self-service café, with a restaurant upstairs serving lunch and afternoon tea. The gallery also offers classical and contemporary concerts, lectures and workshops, which are detailed in the quarterly Gallery News (available in the foyer). Level 1 is chiefly given over to Irish art from the seventeenth century onwards, including a large gallery in the Millennium Wing devoted to the twentieth century. The real stand-out in the Irish collection, however, is the Yeats Museum (Level 1, Beit Wing), which traces the development of Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957), younger brother of the writer W.B. Yeats, from an unsentimental illustrator of everyday scenes to an expressive painter in abstract, unmixed colours. It’s also worth looking in on the National Portrait Gallery (Level 1, Dargan Wing), a chronological survey of Irish worthies that includes a rather sci-fi head of Bono from 2003 by Louis le Brocquy. In the mezzanine Print Gallery (Beit Wing), as well as temporary exhibitions throughout the year, watercolours by Turner are exhibited every January, when the light is low enough for these delicate works. Highlights of Level 2 include Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus, the earliest known picture by Velázquez (c.1617–18); Vermeer’s Woman Writing a Letter, with her Maid, one of only 35 accepted works by the artist, with his characteristic use of white light from the window accentuating the woman’s heated emotions (both Milltown Wing); Caravaggio’s dynamic The Taking of Christ, in which the artist portrayed himself as a passive spectator on the right of the picture, holding a lamp (Beit Wing); and the “Grand Tour in Rome” room in the Dargan Wing: among some diverting views of Rome and various Irish gentlemen who had themselves immortalized in the Eternal City, don’t miss Reynolds’ fascinating Parody of Raphael’s “School of Athens”, which purveys some familiar Irish stereotypes to ridicule the Grand Tourists. **Merrion Square** Begun in 1762, Merrion Square represents Georgian town planning at its grandest. Its long, graceful terraces of red-brown brick sport elaborate doors, knockers and fanlights, as well as wrought-iron balconies (added in the early nineteenth century) and tall windows on the first floor, where the main reception rooms would have been; the north side of the square was built first and displays the widest variety of design. The broad, manicured lawns of the square’s gardens themselves are a joy, quieter than St Stephen’s Green, and especially agreeable for picnics on fine days. Revolutionary politician Michael Collins is commemorated with a bronze bust on the gardens’ south side, near a slightly hapless stone bust of Henry Grattan, while writer, artist and mystic George Russell (“AE”) stands gravely near the southwest corner and his former home at no. 74. But the square’s most remarkable and controversial statue is at the northwest corner, where Oscar Wilde reclines on a rock facing his childhood home at no. 1 (now the American College Dublin), in a wry, languid pose that has earned the figure the nickname “the fag on the crag”. In front of him, a male torso and his wife Constance, pregnant with their second child, stand on plinths inscribed with Wildean witticisms: “This suspense is terrible. I hope it will last,” “I drink to keep body and soul apart.” Nearby on the railings around the square’s gardens, dozens of artists hang their paintings for sale every Sunday (and some Sats, depending on the weather). The Merrion Square South terrace has the greatest concentration of famous former residents, giving a vivid sense of the history of the place: politician Daniel O’Connell bought no. 58 in 1809; the Nobel Prize-winning Austrian physicist, Erwin Schrödinger, occupied no. 65; Gothic novelist Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu died at no. 70, which is now the Arts Council; and W.B. Yeats lived at no. 82 from 1922 to 1928. At no. 39 stood the British Embassy, burnt down by a crowd protesting against the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry in 1972. **St Stephen’s Green** St Stephen’s Green is central Dublin’s largest and most varied park, whose statuary provides a poignant history lesson in stone, wood and bronze. The main sightseeing draws in the area date from the Georgian period: the splendid stuccowork of Newman House and the elegant streets and squares to the east of the Green. St Stephen’s Green preserves its distinctive Victorian character with a small lake, bandstand, arboretum and well-tended flower displays. It was originally open common land, a notoriously dirty and dangerous spot and the site of public hangings until the eighteenth century. In 1880, however, it was turned into a public park with funding from the brewer Lord Ardilaun (Arthur Guinness), who now boasts the grandest of the Green’s many statues, seated at his leisure on the far western side. Over at the northeast corner, a row of huge granite monoliths – nicknamed “Tonehenge” – has been erected in honour of eighteenth-century nationalist Wolfe Tone, behind which stands a moving commemoration of the Great Famine. Meanwhile, on the west side of the central flower display, a tiny plaque inlaid in a wooden park bench commemorates the so-called “fallen women” – mostly unmarried mothers or abused girls – who were forced to live and work in severe conditions in Ireland’s Magdalen laundries; the last of them, in Dublin, wasn’t closed down until 1996. From the Green’s northwest corner, by the top of Grafton Street, you can hire a horse and carriage, either as a grandiose taxi or for a tour of the sights, which will typically set you back €40–50 for thirty minutes. Termed in the eighteenth century “Beau Walk”, St Stephen’s Green North is still the most fashionable side of the square. The Shelbourne Hotel here claims to have been “the best address in Dublin” since its establishment in 1824 (see The Inner Southside). Beyond the hotel at the start of Merrion Row, the tiny, tree-shaded Huguenot Cemetery was opened in 1693 for Protestant refugees fleeing religious persecution in France. A large plaque inside the gates gives a roll call of Huguenot Dubliners, among whom the most famous have been writers Dion Boucicault and Sheridan Le Fanu. **George Bernard Shaw** Born in Dublin in 1856, George Bernard Shaw grew up among a Protestant family fallen on hard times. His father was an unsuccessful grain merchant and alcoholic – prompting Shaw to become a lifelong abstainer – and there was no money to pay for his education. At 15 he started work as a junior clerk for a land agency, but five years later went to London to join his mother who had moved there to further the musical career of one of his sisters. Reliant on what little income his mother earned as a music teacher, Shaw set about educating himself by spending his afternoons in the reading room of the British Museum. He hoped to become a novelist, but, following the rejection of no fewer than five novels, turned his hand to journalism instead, contributing music and drama criticism to London newspapers. Shaw was a devout socialist, joining the Fabian Society in 1884, writing pamphlets and gaining a reputation as a natural orator. He espoused numerous causes, including electoral reform, vegetarianism and the abolition of private property. His theatrical career began in the 1890s when, influenced by Ibsen, he began to compose plays focusing on social and moral matters, rather than the romantic and personal subjects which then dominated British theatre. In 1898 he married the heiress Charlotte Payne-Townshend and the same year saw the production of his first successful play, Candida. A stream of equally lauded comedy-dramas followed – including The Devil’s Disciple, Arms and the Man, Major Barbara and Pygmalion – though he later turned to more serious drama, such as Heartbreak House and Saint Joan. Simultaneously, he maintained an active career as a critic, journalist and essayist, his often bitterly ironic wit (“England and America are two countries separated by a common language”) becoming legendary. In 1925 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, but initially rejected the honour before relenting and giving his prize money to a newly established Anglo–Swedish Literary Foundation. Shaw’s attitude to Ireland was ever ambivalent – he once commented “I am a typical Irishman; my family came from Yorkshire” – and, though he remained interested in Irish affairs and became a personal friend of Michael Collins, his brand of democratic socialism would have been antipathetic to the austere Catholic and anti-British state that emerged post-independence. Shaw died in 1950 at Ayot St Lawrence, Hertfordshire. **Newman House** Newman House at 85–86 St Stephen’s Green South boasts probably the finest Georgian interiors in Dublin, noted especially for their decorative plasterwork. The place is named after John Henry Newman, the famous British convert from Anglicanism, who was invited to found the Catholic University of Ireland here in 1854 as an alternative to Anglican Trinity College and the recently established “godless” Queen’s Colleges in Belfast, Cork and Galway. James Joyce and Éamon de Valera were educated at what became University College Dublin (UCD), which now occupies a large campus in the southern suburbs. Newman House began life as two houses. No. 85 is a Palladian mansion built by Richard Castle in 1738 and adorned with superb baroque stuccowork by the Swiss Lafranchini brothers, notably in the ground-floor Apollo Room, where the god himself appears majestically over the fireplace, attended by the nine muses on the surrounding walls. The much larger no. 86, with flowing rococo plasterwork by Robert West, the notable Dublin-born imitator of the Lafranchinis, was added in 1765. On the top floor of the latter are a lecture room, done out as in Joyce’s student days (1899–1902), and the bedroom of the English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. Having converted from Anglicanism, Hopkins became a Jesuit priest and then Professor of Classics here in 1884; after five wretched years in Dublin, he died of typhoid and was buried in an unmarked grave in Glasnevin Cemetery. **O’Connell Street and around** Running due north from O’Connell Bridge, broader than it is long, to Parnell Square, O’Connell Street is the main artery of Dublin’s Northside. Lined with numerous impressive memorials, as well as the historic GPO and the remarkable four-hundred-foot-high stainless steel “Spike” sculpture, this bustling thoroughfare was originally laid out in the fashion of the grand Parisian boulevards. Poorly redeveloped since the damage caused by the 1916 Easter Rising, nowadays the street is very much a mishmash of modern shop frontages, though glancing at the upper storeys reveals some of its former glory. The streets around, however, represent a consumer’s paradise and, particularly on Liffey Street Lower and in the burgeoning Italian quarter centred on Bloom Lane (the result of a local developer’s fascination with all things Tuscan), you’ll find plenty of stylish bars and cafés. Notable cultural landmarks east of O’Connell Street include the Abbey Theatre, centre of the twentieth-century revival in Irish theatre, and, along The Quays, the opulent eighteenth-century Custom House. **The "Spike"** By the junction with O’Connell Street and Earl Street North, stands the Northside’s most remarkable landmark on the spot where Nelson’s Pillar stood until it was blown up by Republicans in 1966 – the frankly astonishing Dublin Spire or “Spike” as it’s colloquially known. Designed by Ian Ritchie, this 120m-high stainless-steel needle, surmounted by a beacon, is easily the tallest structure in the city centre. Just over a metre wide at its base, it tapers to a mere fifteen centimetres at its summit. In the early morning or at dusk its surface takes on an ethereal blue colour while at night it seems to loom ominously over the city. What the ghost of James Joyce, whose adjacent and somewhat rakish statue stands just down Earl Street North, would make of it all is open to question. **The General Post Office** Just to the left of the “Spike” stands one of O’Connell Street’s few remaining buildings of major historical importance, the General Post Office, whose significance lies in its role as the rebels’ headquarters during the Easter Rising of 1916. The building was constructed in 1818 but only its Ionic portico survived the fighting – and still bears the marks of gunfire. Following restoration, the GPO reopened in 1929 and inside its marble halls you’ll find Oliver Sheppard’s intricately wrought bronze statue The Death of Cúchulainn, representing a key moment in the Irish legend Táin Bó Cúailnge. **Parnell Square and around** Parnell Square might lack the allure of its Southside Georgian equivalents, but it still has a certain grace. The Square’s north side hosts one of Dublin’s premier galleries, the Hugh Lane, as well as the Dublin Writers Museum, an excellent place to learn about the city’s literary history, while nearby is a centre devoted to the works of the acclaimed writer James Joyce. **Dublin City Gallery – The Hugh Lane** The elegant, Georgian, stone-clad Charlemont House, with its curved outer and inner walls and Neoclassical interior, has provided a permanent home for the Hugh Lane gallery since 1933. Sir Hugh, a nephew of Lady Gregory, wanted Dublin to house a major gallery of Irish and international art. He amassed a considerable collection by persuading native artists to contribute their work and purchasing many other paintings himself, particularly from the French Impressionist school and Italy. The gallery holds around half of the Lane collection (the rest is in London’s National Gallery) and only a fraction is on display here at any one time, though you’re likely to see works by Renoir, Monet and Degas, as well as Pissarro and the Irish painters Jack B. Yeats, Roderic O’Connor and Louis le Brocquy, as well as stained-glass pieces by Evie Hone and Harry Clarke. Simultaneously, there are usually other temporary exhibitions of more modern artworks. Part of the gallery is devoted to a recreation of Dublin-born painter Francis Bacon’s studio, transported from its original location at Reece Mews in South Kensington, London, where the artist lived and worked for the last thirty years of his life. After his death in 1992, his studio was donated to the gallery by his heir, John Edwards, and reconstructed here with astonishing precision – more than seven thousand individual items were catalogued and placed here with verisimilitude in the reconstruction. The studio can only be viewed through the window glass but amongst the apparent debris are an old Bush record-player, empty champagne boxes and huge tins of the type of matt vinyl favoured by Bacon, the fumes of which exacerbated his asthma. The surrounding rooms hold displays of memorabilia, such as photographs and correspondence, as well as a detailed database of every item found in the studio (accessible via touchscreen consoles) and large canvases from the painter’s last years. **Dublin Writers Museum** The Dublin Writers Museum aims to illuminate Ireland’s literary history, featuring not just giants such as Wilde, Shaw, Joyce and Beckett, but also lesser-known figures like Sheridan Le Fanu and Oliver St John Gogarty. The ground floor contains a plethora of displays on particular writers or literary schools, and it is well worth picking up the free and entertaining guide-tape to receive background information on the authors. The hall downstairs, hung with modern paintings of writers, leads to an outdoor Zen garden where you can contemplate works you’ve purchased in the museum’s bookshop or, alternatively, head for the café at the rear. On the first floor is the Gallery of Writers, an elegant salon with plasterwork by Michael Stapleton, which features James Joyce’s piano and more paintings, of which the most impressive is John B. Yeats’s portrait of George Moore. Beside this is the Gorham Library, which features numerous rare editions. The museum’s basement houses one of the Northside’s best restaurants, Chapter One. **The James Joyce Centre** The James Joyce Centre occupies a grand eighteenth-century townhouse, restored in the 1980s. The centre aims to illuminate the work of perhaps Ireland’s most imaginative yet most complex writer, who spent part of his life living in the inner Northside, and drew upon his experiences in the creation of his characters and the settings for his works. The building features decorative stucco mouldings by Michael Stapleton. The ground floor houses a small shop full of Joyceiana, such as books and prints, and an airy courtyard which includes the actual period door of 7 Eccles Street, the fictional home of Leopold and Molly Bloom, two of the main protagonists in Ulysses, as well as a somewhat enigmatic, modernist Joyce-inspired sculpture of a cow. The building’s upper floors house a recreation of the tiny room occupied by Joyce in Trieste, featuring various books, pianola music-rolls and a splendid collection of hats, as well as photographs of people and places associated with Ulysses, and touchscreen consoles tracing the development of the novel’s plot and its variety of characters. Three short documentary films on the writer’s life can also be viewed. **Collins Barracks** West of Smithfield on Benburb Street is the National Museum’s Decorative Arts Collection, housed in the eighteenth-century Collins Barracks, which surrounds Europe’s largest regimental drilling square. The buildings set around this quadrangle contain a wonderful series of galleries devoted to the fine arts of Ireland and selections from abroad. Unquestionably, the best of these is Curator’s Choice, on the first floor of the west block, which is selected by museum curators from all over Ireland. Among its draws are a medieval oak carving of St Molaise; the extravagant cabinet presented by Oliver Cromwell to his daughter Bridget in 1652; and the remarkable fourteenth-century Chinese porcelain Fonthill Vase. The Out of Storage section is another highlight, bringing together everything from decorative glassware to a seventeenth-century suit of Samurai armour, while others focus on Celtic art, coinage, silverware, period furniture, costumes and scientific instruments, and there are usually plenty of temporary exhibits. On the ground floor is a chain of thematically interconnected galleries, Soldiers and Chiefs, devoted to almost five hundred years of Irish military history. Apart from an array of helmets and weaponry, there’s the remarkable Stokes tapestry, created by one Stephen of that ilk, a British soldier who devoted his spare time to the depiction of contemporary garrison life and was honoured to have his work shown to Queen Victoria on a royal visit to Ireland in 1849. Other exhibits trace the Irish involvement in the US Civil War and World War I with later examples of tanks and a de Havilland Vampire fighter plane while, contrastingly, there’s the 200-year-old Bantry Boat, captured from the French frigate La Résolue during the abortive invasion of 1796. **West of Dublin's Center** Unless you’re a keen walker, you’ll want to take a bus or LUAS tram to reach some of the city’s western attractions. Highlights on the north side of the river include the vast grounds of Phoenix Park, with the dazzling interiors of Farmleigh mansion lying just beyond. Across the Liffey, the area west of the old city is dominated by the mammoth Guinness Brewery, whose wares are celebrated by the Guinness Storehouse. Further west lies the suburb of Kilmainham, home to the impressive Irish Museum of Modern Art and the forbidding Kilmainham Gaol, where the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising were executed. **The Guinness Storehouse** South of the Liffey, much of James Street, west of the old city, is centred around the colossal complex of the Guinness Brewery. Founded by Arthur Guinness in 1759, the Guinness Brewery initially manufactured ale, but in the 1770s started making porter, a drink so named because of its popularity with the porters of London’s markets. Arthur’s new brew, whose distinctive black colouring derived from the addition of roasted barley to the brewing process, found such favour that by 1796 it was being exported to London, and three years later ale production ceased altogether. From that point, Guinness and his successors never looked back and, at its peak in the middle of the twentieth century, their brewery produced some 2,500,000 pints of their now eponymous product a day. The brewery is sadly not open to the public, but instead you can visit the seven-storey Guinness Storehouse, signposted from Crane Street, a high-tech temple to the black stuff. Its self-guided tour kicks off with the brewing process – a whirl of water (not from the Liffey, despite the myth) and a reek of barley, hops and malt – before progressing to the storage and transportation areas. A huge barrel dominates the section on the lost art of coopering, and nearby there’s an engine from the brewery’s old railway system. The remainder of the tour consists of an array of marketing memorabilia, supported by plenty of facts and figures about the Guinness empire, and there’s a gallery on John Gilroy, an esteemed painter who designed many of the company’s advertisements. Right at the top of the tower is the Gravity Bar, where you can savour your complimentary pint of perhaps the best Guinness in Dublin while absorbing the superb panorama of the city and the countryside beyond. **Dublin's Northern Suburbs** You’ll want fine weather for a trip north to the beautiful Botanic Gardens and the adjacent Glasnevin Cemetery, last resting-place for the major figures in Irish history since 1832, which is best appreciated on a guided tour. To the east lie Croke Park, a major sports arena and home to the innovative GAA Museum, the exquisite Georgian Casino at Marino and, at the end of the DART line, Howth, an attractive seaside village with a fine cliff walk. **The National Botanic Gardens** The National Botanic Gardens on the south bank of the River Tolka in Glasnevin are a great place to wander on a fine day, while their magnificent Victorian wrought-iron glasshouses offer diversion and shelter whatever the weather. Laid out between 1795 and 1825 with a grant from the Irish parliament, the gardens were, in 1844, the first in the world to germinate orchids from seed successfully, and in August of the following year, the first to notice the potato blight that brought on the Great Famine. Nowadays, a total of around twenty thousand species and cultivated varieties flourish here, including an internationally important collection of cycads, primitive fern-like trees. Highlights include the rose garden, collections of heather and rhododendrons, the Chinese shrubbery and the arboretum. **Glasnevin Cemetery** Founded as a burial place for Catholics by the nationalist political leader Daniel O’Connell in 1832, Glasnevin Cemetery is now the national cemetery, open to all denominations and groaning with Celtic crosses, harps and other patriotic emblems. It’s well worth timing your visit to coincide with one of the fascinating ninety-minute guided tours, which includes access to the newly renovated crypt of O’Connell. O’Connell himself is commemorated near the entrance by a fifty-metre-high round tower, which managed to survive a Loyalist bomb in the 1970s. His corpse was interred in the tower’s crypt in 1869, having been brought home from Genoa where he died (in fact, not all of his body is here: his heart was buried in Rome). To the left of the round tower, O’Connell’s political descendant, Charles Stewart Parnell, who asked to be buried in a mass grave among the people of Ireland, is commemorated by a huge granite boulder from his estate at Avondale, County Wicklow. Other notable figures among the 1.2 million dead at Glasnevin – most of them gathered around O’Connell’s tower – include Countess Markiewicz, Éamon de Valera, prime minister, president and architect of modern Ireland, and his old rival Michael Collins, the most charismatic leader of the successful independence struggle; from the arts, there’s Gerard Manley Hopkins (unmarked, in the Jesuit plot), W.B. Yeats’s muse Maud Gonne MacBride, writer, drinker and Republican Brendan Behan, and Alfred Chester Beatty. To the right of the tower is the Republican plot, with a memorial to hunger strikers, from Thomas Ashe who died in 1917 to Bobby Sands in 1981, while in front of the tower lie the recent graves of 18-year-old Kevin Barry and eight other Volunteers hanged by the British during the War of Independence; originally buried in Mountjoy Prison, their bodies were moved here with the full honours of a state funeral in October 2001. For refreshment after your visit, call in at nearby Kavanagh’s (aka The Gravediggers), a particularly atmospheric old pub. **Croke Park and the GAA Museum** Three kilometres northeast of O’Connell Street, Croke Park is the home of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), a magnificent, much redeveloped and now very modern stadium whose capacity of 82,000-plus puts it amongst the largest in Europe. Situated under the Cusack Stand is one of Dublin’s finest museums, the GAA Museum, whose creatively designed exhibits provide an enthralling account of not only the sports of hurling and Gaelic football, but also lesser known games such as camogie (the women’s version of hurling) and handball. Historical and political contexts are explored in a thoroughly engaging manner – since its foundation in 1884 the GAA has always been irrevocably linked with Irish Nationalism. Thus the museum does not shirk from recounting key, politically sensitive events such as the first Bloody Sunday, when British troops fired on the crowd attending a match in 1920, killing twelve people in the process. On a lighter note, upstairs you can have a go at whacking a hurling ball or test your balance and reactions via various simulations. **The Casino at Marino** Sited in the now unpromising suburb of Marino, the Casino is probably the finest piece of Neoclassical architecture in Ireland. It’s located on Cherrymount Crescent, just off the Malahide Road. The building was commissioned by James Caulfield, the first Earl of Charlemont, shortly after returning from eight years on the Grand Tour. Seeking to recreate an Italianate park with a casino (“little house” in Italian) as its focus, emphasizing the fine views of Dublin Bay that his estate then enjoyed, Charlemont turned to Sir William Chambers, the architect of Somerset House in London (Chambers also designed the earl’s new townhouse at around the same time, now the Hugh Lane Gallery). Started in 1757, construction of the Casino lasted nearly twenty years and cost £20,000 sterling (equivalent to about €5 million today), depleting the estate to such a degree that the second Earl was obliged to sell off his father’s precious library and collection of art and antiquities. **Dalkey and Killiney hills** A walk up adjoining Dalkey and Killiney hills, before descending to Killiney DART station, offers panoramic views of the city and its environs, and can all be done in an hour and a half from Dalkey DART station at a moderate pace. From Dalkey, head southeast on Sorrento Road, and then either take the easier route to the right up Knocknacree and Torca roads, or continue along cliffside Vico Road, from where steps and a path ascend steeply. On Torca Road, Shaw fans might want to track down privately owned Torca Cottage, where GBS lived for several years as a boy and where he occasionally returned to write in later years. On the way to Dalkey Hill’s summit, with its crenellated former telegraph station and fine views over Dublin Bay, you’ll pass Dalkey quarry, which provided the granite blocks for the massive piers of Dún Laoghaire harbour below. From here, follow the partly wooded ridge up to Killiney Hill, where a stone obelisk, built to provide work during the severe winter of 1741, enjoys even more glorious views, north to Howth and south to Killiney Bay and the Wicklow Mountains. From the obelisk, you can quickly descend to the park gate on Killiney Hill Road and refreshment at the cosy Druid’s Chair pub directly opposite; from here it’s a fifteen-minute walk down Victoria Road and Vico Road through the leafy and exclusive borough of Killiney, to the DART station by the beach. **South along the Coast from Dublin** A ride on a DART train south along the coast, as well as giving access to Sandycove’s James Joyce Museum and the charming, historic neighbourhood of Dalkey, is a scenic attraction in itself, displaying the great sweep of Dublin Bay before dramatically skirting Dalkey and Killiney hills and arrowing off towards Bray and Greystones. Now a pretty seaside suburb set against the tree-clad slopes of Dalkey Hill, in medieval times Dalkey prospered as a fortified settlement and the main port of Dublin, until the dredging of the River Liffey in the sixteenth century took away its business. Nowadays, with the building of the railway, Dalkey’s characterful old houses and villas are much sought after by well-to-do commuters, as well as celebrities seeking privacy. **Festivals and events January** Temple Bar Trad Festival t01/677 2397, [www.templebartrad.com](http://www.templebartrad.com). Five days and nights of traditional-music pub sessions, concerts, instrument workshops and more in the heart of the city. **February** Jameson Dublin International Film Festival t01/687 7974, [www.dubliniff.com](http://www.dubliniff.com). Held at cinemas and other venues across the city centre for eleven days in mid-February. While screening the latest in new Irish cinema, the festival also has a decidedly international flavour and its hundred or so films include special themes and retrospectives. **March** Easter Rising Commemorations take place on Easter Sunday, featuring speeches and a march from the General Post Office to Glasnevin Cemetery. St Patrick’s Festival t01/676 3205, [www.stpatricksfestival.ie](http://www.stpatricksfestival.ie). Running for six days on and around St Patrick’s Day (March 17), this city-wide festival includes a parade, light shows, concerts, funfair, films, exhibitions and a céilí mór (thousands of locals and visitors fill the streets in a traditional danceathon). Poetry Now Festival t01/231 2929, [www.poetrynow.ie](http://www.poetrynow.ie). A major four-day event, held over the last weekend in March at The Pavilion Theatre, Dún Laoghaire, the festival features readings by well-known Irish and international poets, master classes, exhibitions and children’s events. **May** Absolut Gay Theatre Festival t01/677 8511, [www.absolutgaytheatre.ie](http://www.absolutgaytheatre.ie). A fortnight of LGBT-focused drama, comedy, cabaret and musical theatre with international and Irish casts taking place at a variety of city-centre locations. **June** Dublin Writers Festival t01/222 7848, [www.dublinwritersfestival.com](http://www.dublinwritersfestival.com). Major Irish and international writers and poets take part in six days of readings, discussions and other events around the city centre in early June. Docklands Maritime Festival t01/818 3300, [www.dublindocklands.ie](http://www.dublindocklands.ie). Tall ships open their decks to visitors over the first weekend in June at North Wall Quay, plus there’s a market, street theatre, trips along the Liffey and a variety of events for children. Bloomsday t01/878 8547, [www.jamesjoyce.ie](http://www.jamesjoyce.ie). The James Joyce Centre organizes a week of events in mid-June, culminating in Bloomsday itself (June 16), the day on which Joyce’s Ulysses is set. Dublin Pride [www.dublinpride.ie](http://www.dublinpride.ie). A week of celebration by the city’s gay, lesbian, bi-and transsexual communities, featuring all manner of events, culminating in a vibrant and entertaining street parade. **July** The Summer Sensation [www.templebar.ie](http://www.templebar.ie). Five days of film, music, street theatre and other events in Temple Bar early in the month. Dún Laoghaire Festival of World Cultures t01/231 2929. Late July sees three days of (mostly free) events spread over various venues around the town, featuring major international acts and a host of lively outdoor activities. Dublin Lesbian and Gay Film Festival [www.gaze.ie](http://www.gaze.ie). A strong bill of Irish and international films screened over five days towards the end of the month at the Light House Cinema in Smithfield. **August** Dublin Horse Show t01/485 8010, [www.dublinhorseshow.com](http://www.dublinhorseshow.com). Five-day festival of equestrian events in early August at the RDS arena in Ballsbridge, featuring major international showjumpers participating in the Nations’ Cup. Dublin Viking Festival t01/222 2242. The last weekend in August sees a recreated Viking village established off Wood Quay, featuring plenty of wandering inhabitants and the chance to watch reenacted combats. **September/October** All-Ireland Senior Hurling and Gaelic Football finals Two of Ireland’s major sporting events are staged at Croke Park in September: The hurling final on the first or second Sunday and the football final on the third or fourth. Dublin Fringe Festival t1850374643, [www.fringefest.com](http://www.fringefest.com). Ireland’s biggest performing-arts festival takes place over more than two weeks from mid-September and features all manner of music, dance, street theatre, comedy and children’s events. Dublin Theatre Festival t01/677 8899, [www.dublintheatrefestival.com](http://www.dublintheatrefestival.com). A major celebration of theatre, held during the last few days of September and the first two weeks in October, this includes performances of new and classic drama at various city-centre venues. Dublin City Marathon t01/623 2250, [www.dublinmarathon.ie](http://www.dublinmarathon.ie). Featuring 10,000 entrants, the race takes place on the last Monday in October and involves a roughly circular course starting from Fitzwilliam Street Upper, heads north across O’Connell Bridge, and takes in Phoenix Park and some southern suburbs before terminating at Merrion Square North. **The Easter Rising** The initial impact of some historical events often runs counter to their long-term effects and such was the case with the Easter Rising of 1916. Truth be told, this inherently idealistic rebellion was a bungled affair from start to finish, and it was only the repressive response of the British Army, whose political overlords were unsurprisingly sidetracked by the seemingly more pressing affairs taking place in the fields of Flanders, that gave the event its pivotal role in attaining Ireland’s independence. The Rising was organized by the Irish Republican Brethren (IRB), a Republican grouping that had been founded in 1858, and was now led by educationalist and Gaelic cultural revivalist Patrick Pearse and Scots-born socialist and trades union activist James Connolly. Impelled by the continuing failure of democratic means to achieve the goal of independence, they concocted a plan to take over by force, aided by the much larger Irish Volunteers, a Nationalist corps founded in 1913, and using arms acquired from Germany. The armaments were however intercepted by the British, and though the Volunteers’ leader withdrew his support, the rising still went ahead. On the morning of Easter Monday, the rebels took control of a number of key buildings in the city centre and further afield. They made the General Post Office on O’Connell Street their base, and it was from here that Pearse emerged to make his Proclamation of the Irish Republic. The British response was initially guarded, but a full-scale battle soon ensued, destroying much of the surrounding area and heavily damaging rebel-held buildings elsewhere in the city. It took five days for the rebellion to be suppressed and its leaders captured. Dubliners decried the uprising at its outset, dismayed by the devastation ravaged upon their city by the fighting. Had the British simply imprisoned the IRB’s leaders, it’s extremely unlikely later political developments would have occurred as quickly as they did, but the draconian decision was made to execute all of them (with the exception of Éamon de Valera, who had US citizenship). In the process, the British created national martyrs, transforming the situation irrevocably and ultimately leading to a bitter war of independence.