

A day in Dublin

Must-see sights in Ireland's bustling capital

By Laura Hampton

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Warm, friendly and full of colorful tales both mythical and real, Dublin's character is much like the people who inhabit this European capital.

Visitors spend weeks exploring Dublin's medieval buildings, charming pubs, world-class museums and rich literary heritage, but in just one day you can discover why Ireland's largest city is famous around the world.

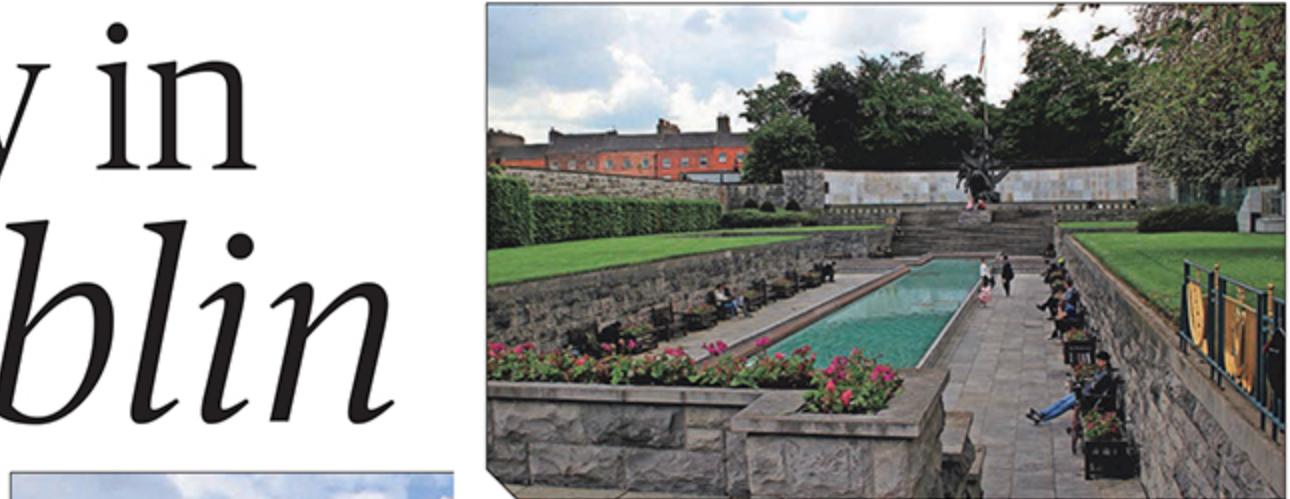
As the bustling center of Dublin, O'Connell Street is a must-see for the first-time visitor. The street's median is lined with monuments dedicated to notable figures in Ireland's history and is flanked by chic boutiques, restaurants, theaters, music halls and hotels.

Before you head out for a full day of sightseeing, however, stop at Murrays Bar & Grill, 33 O'Connell St., for a traditional Irish breakfast. The hearty, old-school hot meal includes rashers (Irish bacon), link sausages, black and white puddings (a type of sausage made from meat, oats and spices), eggs, toast, potatoes, mushrooms and tomatoes.

Across the street from Murrays, Parnell Square is home to the Garden of Remembrance, a memorial dedicated to those who gave their lives for Irish freedom. The garden was constructed in 1966, on the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising. Though Irish independence was won from Britain through several rebellions beginning in 1798, the events of 1916 are credited with rallying public opinion in favor of independence.

In addition to the memorial garden, a permanent exhibit at the General Post Office, also on O'Connell Street, tells the story of the Easter Rising and modern Irish history.

O'Connell Street ends at the picturesque River Liffey, which runs through the entire city. Several bridges provide access to the south side of Dublin, but the one-block detour to the Ha'penny Bridge is worth the extra steps.



Officially named the Liffey Bridge, the pedestrian-only structure was built in 1816. Made of cast iron, the bridge became known as the Ha'penny Bridge because it was originally a toll bridge, and the charge to cross it was a half penny.

Once on the south side, complete your morning with a 40-minute guided tour of Trinity College, Ireland's oldest university founded in 1592. History buffs and literature lovers will enjoy fascinating tales of the college's 400-year legacy and the writers who attended the school, most notably Jonathan Swift ("Gulliver's Travels"), Bram Stoker ("Dracula") and Oscar Wilde ("The Importance of Being Earnest").

In addition, the tour includes admission to the Old Library, which is home to the "Book of

Kells." A manuscript of the Bible produced by Irish monks around 800 A.D., the lavishly decorated pages include colorful illustrations, which made the Gospel accessible to a largely illiterate population.

Instead of lunch, act like a local and take tea. Located on Dame Street in the trendy Temple Bar neighborhood, the Queen of Tarts serves traditional Irish tea with sandwiches, cakes, cookies (called biscuits in Ireland) and quick breads.

After re-energizing, spend your afternoon immersed in one of Ireland's most popular exports — beer.

Part chemistry lesson and part happy hour, a self-guided tour of the Guinness Storehouse, St. James Gate Dublin 8, takes between three and four hours and covers more than 250

Top: A memorial garden dedicated to those who gave their lives for Irish Freedom, the Garden of Remembrance is located in Parnell Square at the northern end of O'Connell Street. Center: Built in 1816, the Ha'penny Bridge is officially the Liffey Bridge. Dubliners deemed it the Ha'penny Bridge because, originally a toll bridge, the charge was a half penny to cross. Left: The four-hour self-guided tour of the Guinness Storehouse includes a stop at the Guinness Academy, where visitors learn how to pour the perfect pint of Guinness.

[LAURA HAMPTON PHOTOS]

years of beer-making. Exhibits include the history of Guinness, the brewing process and eight decades of advertising.

In addition to several cafes and a restaurant, the facility also houses the Guinness Academy, where visitors learn the proper way to pour the perfect pint. The tour ends at the seventh floor Gravity Bar, where visitors enjoy a pint of Guinness and a panoramic view of Dublin.

After dinner at one of the European-chic restaurants surrounding the urban park St. Stephens Green, finish your perfect day in Dublin by taking a stroll in the 22-acre park or enjoy traditional Irish music at one of the city's many cozy pubs.