

Dublin

NEIGHBOURHOODS

Find out where the craic's really at with Tamara Hinson's guide to the Irish capital



A city split in two by the River Liffey, Dublin is Ireland's wonderfully diverse capital, and there's no better time to visit. Since late last year, it's been the departure point for the Emerald Isle's first luxury sleeper train, the Belmond Grand Hibernian, and later this year, exploring the city itself will become even easier, when the two tram lines which operate on the north and south of the river will be connected by a third. Dublin has never been more accessible, which is why it's high time to discover its fantastic neighbourhoods.

▶ THE LIBERTIES

Why go? The Liberties is south of the river, slightly to the west of the city centre. It's a historic neighbourhood, something reflected in its name: in the 12th century, Dublin was made up of different areas with individual jurisdictions, or 'liberties'. The Guinness Storehouse is the district's most popular attraction, and the notorious Kilmainham Gaol is also nearby.

What to do? Most visitors come to visit the seven-storey Guinness Storehouse to learn about Ireland's favourite tittle. A recent addition is the advertising exhibit, where you'll be able to snap a selfie with Guinness's famous bicycle-riding fish. Other Liberties hotspots include Thomas Street's The Dublin Cookie Co, famous for the

award-winning cookies baked by Elaine Cohalan and Jenny Synnott, and The Riddler, a new restaurant serving breakfast, lunch and dinner – recommend the delicious smoked salmon and Guinness bread.

This part of Dublin also played a major role in the 1916 Easter Rising. Many of those involved were executed at Kilmainham Gaol, a couple of miles west of the Guinness Storehouse. The prison opened in 1796 and closed in 1924. Sign up for one of the guided tours of this beautiful Victorian building and you'll see the tiny cells, adorned with the scrawlings of their residents, and the courtyard where many met their deaths.

Where to stay? The Ashling Hotel – a four-star, 225-bedroom property – is an ideal base for those wishing to explore the Liberties area. The National Museum of Ireland's Decorative Arts and History museum, the Guinness Storehouse, Phoenix Park and Dublin Zoo are all within walking distance. Chesterfields is the hotel's 180-seat restaurant. Doubles from £93 per night. ashlinghotel.ie

▶ TEMPLE BAR

Why go? Temple Bar is the city's liveliest neighbourhood. Wedged between the river and the Grafton Street shopping area, it's where you'll find the highest density of pubs, clubs and restaurants.

What to do? Temple Bar is the beating heart of Dublin's nightlife, but it's also ideally located for a foray across the Liffey. Ormond Quay Lower is a riverside street where you'll find some of Dublin's best restaurants, including The Woollen Mills Eating House, famous for its chunky sandwiches – the shredded BBQ chicken, bacon, fennel and cabbage slaw on ciabatta is highly recommended.

Ormond Quay Lower is also where you'll find The Winding Stair, which is part-bookshop, part-restaurant. Its menu is a tribute to all things Irish, and must-try items include the locally produced mozzarella, steamed cockles and potted Dingle Bay crab. This restaurant is also a great example of how Temple Bar's best bits are found on its fringes.

"As a rule of thumb, you'll find the best restaurants if you stick to the outskirts of Temple Bar," explains Brian Walsh, manager at The Winding Stair. "The Ha'penny Bridge Inn is a good local boozier with great Guinness, and Piglet Wine Bar is a gem for small plates and a stellar wine list."

Where to stay? Between May and September, Trinity College's student accommodation is available to the public, and it's the ideal accommodation for those wishing to make the most of Dublin's nightlife. Options include single bedrooms and apartments with up to four

rooms. Accommodation is located in the heart of the city, just a short walk from Trinity College's main campus. One-bed (lockable) rooms in a four-bedroom apartment start from about £50 per night.

tcd.ie/summeraccommodation

▶ GRAFTON STREET & ST STEPHEN'S GREEN

Why go? If you're after some retail therapy, make a beeline for Grafton Street. You'll find everything here: souvenir shops overflowing with Guinness-infused chocolate and sheep-adorned socks, the upmarket Brown Thomas Dublin department store, high street brands and chain restaurants.

What to do? For independent shops, head to the Georges Street Arcade, originally known as South City Market, which dates back to 1881, and was Ireland's first purpose-built shopping centre. Today its Victorian style remains, and inside you'll find a wonderful selection of independent boutiques. If you've got a sweet tooth, head to Grafton Street's Butlers Chocolate Cafe – the brand is a Dublin institution and dates back to 1932.

Grafton Street also borders St Stephen's Green, a beautiful inner-city park famous for its rockeries and waterfalls – the perfect place to head for some post-retail time out.

From Grafton Street it's

RIGHT:
Liffey boardwalk

FAR RIGHT:
Glasnevin
Cemetery



➔ also just a short walk to Trinity College, where you can sign up for a student-led tour of this historic campus. The National Museum of Ireland's natural history and archaeology branches, on Merrion Street and Kildare Street respectively, are also nearby.

Where to stay? The Westbury Hotel is a five-star affair, with 178 rooms and 27 suites. There's a gorgeous cocktail bar and two restaurants, including the recently opened Wilde, a beautiful spot with a covered terrace. Doubles from €221 per night.

doylecollection.com/westbury

▶ **STONEYBATTER**

Why go? Stoneybatter, an area north of the river and slightly to the west of the city centre, is Dublin's up-and-coming, hipster neighbourhood. "It's got a real community feel and has a mix of artists, creatives and actors – some call it Loveybatter," says Nicky Higgins, Stoneybatter local and manager at Liffey Street's The Yarn restaurant.

What to do? Stoneybatter is a great place to get to know Dublin's locals – who are also great sources of information about the neighbourhood's hotspots.

"My favourite places are Lilliput Stores for charcuterie and cheese, Love Supreme for coffee and Cotto for fab brunch and pizza. And sometimes I'll head further north to



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The Washerwoman in Glasnevin for breakfast," says Higgins.

Glasnevin, which borders Stoneybatter, is home to Dublin's National Botanic Gardens, as well as Glasnevin Cemetery, which opened in 1832. Today there are more Dubliners buried here than are currently alive in the city. Book a place on one of the daily guided tours to learn about how the high walls – complete with watch towers – were built to deter bodysnatchers, and about the 'fallen women' buried there.

Where to stay? Maldron Hotel Smithfield, a 92-room, three-star hotel, is on the north side of the river and within walking distance of both Stoneybatter and Dublin city centre. Doubles from €76 per night.

maldronhotelsmithfield.com

▶ **RANELAGH**

Why go? A 20-minute walk south from Dublin city centre takes you to the suburb of Rathmines, a

neighbourhood where house prices are booming. It's also where you'll find Ranelagh, best described as an urban village. This popular area has a high street lined with quirky coffee shops and independent boutiques. It's a great place to experience a warm Dublin welcome without the crowds.

What to do? Most of the action revolves around Ranelagh's high street. A sign outside vintage clothing store Deja Vu describes its treasures as 'gently worn' rather than second-hand, while the flower-filled outside seating area of Nick's Coffee Company is brightened by a huge mural of Frida Kahlo, beneath her famous quote: "I paint flowers so they will not die."

An equally tempting cafe can be found just a few doors along. The Natural Bakery's deliciously fresh bread is all made with wholemeal flour sourced from a nearby farm in Newcastle, County Dublin.

Grab a sandwich and enjoy it in nearby Ranelagh Gardens, which date back to the 18th century and were modelled on the gardens which Irish Lord Ranelagh once had by the River Thames in London. They were also the launching site for Ireland's first hot-air balloon flight.

Where to stay? The luxurious, five-star Conrad Dublin recently underwent a €6 million refurbishment. It's near St Stephen's Green, so both the city centre and Ranelagh, to



SuperBreak offers a two-night break at the three-star Temple Bar Hotel on a B&B basis with flights from Manchester in early May, from £369. superbreak.com/agents

Osprey Holidays offers two nights' B&B at the three-star Arlington Hotel from £229, including flights from Stansted, based on a weekend stay departing May 18. ospreyholidays.com



ABOVE: The Royal Marine hotel

→ the south, are within walking distance. Dining and drinking options include Lemuel's, a lounge bar, The Coburg Brasserie and Alfie Byrne's, where there are 33 Irish and American craft beers on tap. Doubles from £233 per night.

conradhotels.com

► **DUN LAOGHAIRE**

Why go? Technically a seaside town, Dún Laoghaire (pronounced Dun Leery) can be found to the south of Dublin city centre, and is part of Dublin county. There's a fantastic maritime museum, and it's a great base for explorations along the coastline or to Dublin's coastal suburbs like Glasthule and Dalkey, both of which are within walking distance. Dún Laoghaire is also easily accessible – to get there, simply hop on one of the Dart trains.

What to do? To find out more about its history, visit the waterfront National Maritime Museum of Ireland. The museum is housed in the 180-year-old Mariners Church and has sections of stone fortifications dating back to the fifth century. Dalkey is one of Dublin's wealthiest suburbs (Bono and Enya are just two of the celebrities who live nearby) but it's also rich in history: its high street has two Norman castles and a 10th-century church.

Where to stay? The Royal Marine, on Dún Laoghaire's seafront, has 228 rooms. The gym boasts state-of-the-art cardio and resistance equipment, and there's an 18-metre indoor pool. The spa has nine treatment rooms along with a sauna, mud room and aroma steam room. Doubles from £85 per night.

royalmarine.ie 

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