



DUBLIN

Is everything pretty in Dublin's fair city asks Roger Wheeler?

Dublin, a great city by any standards, capital of the Republic of Ireland since independence from Britain in 1922 and heart of the Celtic tiger economy. Not so anymore, the economy is almost in ruins, although not as bad as Greece, it's close, but this is no reason not to go there. It really is a great place and was for a time the second city of the British Empire and the fifth largest city in Europe. People settled here in the first century BC and they are still coming, and so should you if not for: the restored beautiful Georgian architecture, the huge number of bars, the hundreds of excellent places to eat, or lots of shopping; then it has to be a visit to the **Guinness Storehouse** and the **Jamieson Distillery**.

Dublin is vibrant and exciting but not very gay place despite Oscar Wilde being born there. There aren't that many gay bars, **The George** on South Great Georges Street is recognised as being the most popular. There are a couple of saunas, **The Boilerhouse** and **The Dock**. This lack of a large gay scene is surprising for a city with a very youthful population; it has two universities including



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Trinity College, one of the leading places of education in the world. The gay magazine **GCN** (*Gay Community News*) is quite useful. There is a lot to see and do in Dublin, it is easily walkable, but the tour buses are one of the best ways to see the sites. In keeping with many other major cities they now have 450 bikes you can rent from 40 stations in the centre.

The major attractions are **O'Connell Street** with its 120m **Millennium Spire**, across the river to **Trinity College**, **Dublin Castle** and then up through **Grafton Street** with the major stores ending up at **St Stephens' Green** a really lovely park which is in fact just a large square. Back on the river you will find **Temple Bar**, a warren of cobbled streets, this is the cultural centre of the city. There are bars and restaurants to suit everyone. This is where you will find the 'craich' that Ireland is so famous for.



TEMPLE BAR

You have to go to the **Guinness Storehouse**, as it's called; in fact it is the place where they brew the country's national drink. This really is one of the best tourist attractions that I've ever visited; in fact we went twice. It's housed in the huge building which was the actual brewery (they now brew in a new more modern building opposite), you wander round at will, even visiting a 'tasting lab', the tour culminates on the top floor **Gravity Bar** and the best view of the city you can have. Plus the price of admission includes a pint of the black stuff and even if you don't like Guinness they say you will like it here. I did.

There are dozens of very good hotels, we stayed at **The Clarence**, a lovely building right on the **River Liffey** now owned by Bono and The Edge of U2 fame. They bought it back in the 1980s and have spent a fortune restoring it in a very understated way. It's a really cool hotel, not full of the usual frills and fluffy cushions, but quietly comfortable and restrained. No hotel of any style in any

THE CLARENCE HOTEL



major city is going to be cheap and neither is The Clarence. The rooms are large, the beds huge and the breakfast great, plus its right in Temple Bar. Never pay the price you see on the website, ring them and ask for **Column Fleming**, the very friendly sales manager. Tell him you read about him in *Gscene* and get the best deal possible.

Summing up a city like Dublin in a few hundred words is impossible, I haven't even mentioned **The James Joyce Museum** which is fascinating, the **Ha'penny Bridge**, **Phoenix Park**, and what must be the most unusual restaurant we have ever eaten in – **The Church**. A converted gothic church now housing a great restaurant, bar and nightclub right in the centre. The shops of **Mary Street** and **Henry Street**, the **Irish Parliament** at **Leinster House** are only a few of the places you should see. The **Dublin Tourism Centre**, just off **Dame Street** is a site worth seeing in itself.

All of this can be done in a long weekend and getting there is easy, BA, Aer Lingus and Ryanair all fly from Gatwick. We are indebted to **Visit Ireland** and **Visit Dublin** for all their help in organising our trip. The slogan thought up by the tourist board is **Truly, Madly, Deeply – Dublin** and by that they mean that you will fall in love with Dublin and its true.

We're off to Gay Pride in Amsterdam next month, it's a real gay event, and, sorry to say this, but it makes our current efforts here in Brighton look very sad. We're staying at The Bridge Hotel, our favourite place, right on the river so you can watch the parade, which takes place on the river, from your room. Now that's what I call luxury!

www.visitdublin.com
www.guinness-storehouse.com www.gcn.ie
www.theclarence.ie
www.thebridgehotel.nl



MILLENNIUM SPIRE

THE CHURCH RESTAURANT