



instant
escapes

Cosy Dublin

Embrace winter with the Fair City's prettiest walks and snuggest pubs

Glowing boozers bursting with live music every night, crisp riverside wanders and, of course, those welcoming tar-black pints: Dublin knows how to warm you up in winter. Cocoon yourself in the city's rejuvenated restaurant scene and cluster of new cocktail bars — and you won't even notice the chill. By **Helen Ochyra**





CUT-OUT-AND-GO GUIDE | COSY DUBLIN

SEE & DO

When in Dublin, you must hear some live music. In fact, you won't have much choice — it's the country's lifeblood, and you'll catch the rousing strains of folk and 'trad' tunes floating from pubs every night of the year, but with even more gusto in winter. Everyone flocks to Whelan's (25 Wexford St; whelanslive.com; ① on map), where there's nightly trad in the downstairs bar, but the most authentic 'all sitting around one bar table' feels at The Cobblestone (77 North King St; cobblestonepub.ie; ②), where sessions get going around 9pm.

Let's not pretend you don't have a mission. It's surely to find the perfect pint of Guinness, and it starts at the Guinness Storehouse, at St James's Gate Brewery (guinness-storehouse.com; £13; ③). Designed to feel like an ascent through a pint of the black stuff (yes, really), the tour ends with a pint and a cracking view from the seventh-floor Gravity Bar. But this glass-wrapped circle isn't exactly cosy, so continue your stout-savouring in the warm, woody snug at Kehoes (9 South Anne St; louisfitzgerald.com; ④), which serves arguably the city's best.

Grafton Street may be Dublin's fashion central, but go against the flow of shoppers by diving down the smaller streets to its west, and into the Creative Quarter, home to up-and-coming local designers. Here, the city's hippest shoppers browse beneath the all-white festive lights

of the LoftMarket (59 South William St; theloftmarket.com; ⑤), wrapping up in new merino scarves and contemporary knits by Irish label We Are Islanders.

STAR SPOT

Want to see the real-life Jedi Archive? Pop into the Long Room at the college's Old Library, which inspired the CGI archive in the Star Wars films

Too chilly to wander the grounds of architecturally lovely Trinity College (tcd.ie; free; ⑥)? Ireland's most prestigious university is the sort of place everyone will ask if you visited, but you can tick off the highlights — the Venetian-style Museum Building, the 1700s red-brick Rubric's dormitory and the elegant, stuccoed Examination Hall — in minutes. Now join students for what is rumoured to be Dublin's cheapest pint (£2.30) in the Pavilion Bar, overlooking the cricket pitch.

As temperatures drop, every city worth its salt installs an outdoor ice rink. While many have plasticky synthetic surfaces, Dundrum On Ice (dundrumonice.ie; £9; ⑦) is a 450sqm chunk of real ice, sheltered by a marquee in Pembroke Square. It's open every day bar Christmas from October 22 to January 10, and has fibreglass skating penguins for little ones to lean on, as well as 8pm sessions with disco lights.

NOT FOR TOURISTS

Several links pop up around Dublin come Christmas. The biggest is on the roof of Arnott's Department store, but smart locals happily take the 15-minute tram ride to Dundrum's, which shall the price of others

Sure, you can see the lions at Dublin Zoo (dublinozoo.ie; £12; ⑧), which is known for its breeding programme, but you'll be following the herd. It's far more fun — and free — to spot the resident fallow deer in neighbouring Phoenix Park (phoenixpark.ie; ⑨). Once kept here for hunting, they're now frolicking free in their hundreds. It's ideal for snapping the perfect wintry photo, antlers picked out against frosted-white grass. Squint a bit and they could even be reindeer.

Down star: the River Liffey, daubed in pinky hues; below left, service with a smile at Kehoes; the resident deer of Phoenix Park



Dublin knows how to throw a party, so expect plenty of action throughout the festive season. Pre-Christmas, everyone heads to I Believe at Custom House Quarter (ibelieveinchristmas.ie; Nov 26-Dec 23; ⑩), home to the city's largest tree, but the German-style Christmas Market on St Stephen's Green ⑪ is prettier and more authentic — look for locally made gifts, such as oak-hewn bowls, or hand-drawn cards. For more non-lucky festive cheer, it's worth making the half-hour drive to Farnleigh House (farnleigh.ie; ⑫), where a Festive Food Market runs every weekend up to Christmas. >



EAT

● Pastry pitstop

QUEEN OF TARTS (Mains about €7)

Because: Sisters Regina and Yvonne trained as pastry chefs in New York and you won't find better cakes anywhere in Dublin. Everything is baked fresh daily and breakfast is all-Irish, from the smoked salmon to the potato cakes.

Travel's tip: Have a lie-in. Breakfast is served until 1pm on Saturdays and 2pm on Sundays. Cork Hill, Dame St; 00 353 1670 7499, queenoftarts.ie; @

● Take-it-easy tapas

PAPILLON (Small plates about €7)

Because: Sometimes neighbourhood restaurants are the best. Papillon, in village-like Clontarf, mixes smiley local service with zesty tapas. **Travel's tip:** Bring a group and order the entire menu — saves deciding between prawn pilpil, fried squid, pork belly, stuffed courgette, halloumi and fillet steak. 324 Clontarf Rd; 00 353 1805 4877, papillondublin.ie; @

● The steak star

FADEST SOCIAL (Mains about €18)

Because: It's simply the best steak in Dublin, the daily cuts chalked up on a blackboard and served with sides such as chips with truffled goat's cheese or blackened cauliflower with hazelnuts.

Travel's tip: Skip the starters in favour of those sides. 4-6 Fade St; 00 353 7604 0066, jadestreetsocial.com; @

● The watery wonder

AQUA (Mains about €22)

Because: Seafood is best devoured by the sea, and this light-filled place at the end of Howth pier serves up oysters, calamari, crab, sea bass and monkfish.

Travel's tip: Grab a table by the window after you've picked your lobster from the tank. You'll eat it overlooking the very waters it came from. 1 West Pier, Howth; 00 353 1832 0690, aqua.ie; @

● Michelin magic

THE GREENHOUSE (Menus from €40)

Because: Dublin's newest Michelin-starred restaurant makes full use of the superb local produce. Scallops, duck or lamb are presented with a minimalist nod to chef Viljanen's Finnish roots. **Travel's tip:** Order the soufflé, no matter what flavour it is.

Dawson St; 00 353 1676 7075, thegreenhouserestaurant.ie; @

INSIDE ADVICE

Book ahead and ask for the four-seater table in the window — it's the only one with a sea view

WRITER'S TIP

On Fridays and Saturdays, only the five-course 'surprise' tasting menus served. But you won't complain — it's spectacular, and good value at €56

DRINK

● Booze and browse

MARY'S BAR & HARDWARE STORE

Because: Nowhere is quite like Mary's, a city-centre boozier that also operates as a hardware store. **Travel's tip:** Stick to pints — this isn't the place to ask for a Prosecco. 8 Wicklow St; marysbar.ie; @

● Whiskey business

PERUKE & PERIWIG

Because: Beer-swillers and cocktail-sippers can unite here — though they may argue over which floor to sit on. Downstairs is saloon-style; upstairs is all pink velvet and antique portraits. **Travel's tip:** Winter means whiskey — try it in the Fashioned by Age (with maple syrup, bitters, water and smoke). 31 Dawson St; peruke.ie; @

● The honest-to-goodness pub

THE TEMPLE BAR

Because: This 175-year-old proper 'Oirish' pub has fresh local oysters, Guinness and Ireland's largest whiskey collection (more than 450 bottles). **Travel's tip:** Head outside to Temple Bar's only licensed beer garden and cosy up under the heaters. 47/48 Temple Bar; thetemplebarpub.com; @

ASK THE LOCAL



Conor Irwin is a news and sports presenter for Radio Nova, and lives in Dublin with his partner, Ciara, and son, Harry

“We love a jaunt around Dublin Bay on the DART coastal railway (Irishrail.ie; €8 return; one hour). We start with a warming breakfast of Power! Porridge in Avoca Handweavers' cafe (avoca.com; @) at Malahide Castle, then stop in the city to check out the Christmas lights (hop off at Tara St; @). On weekends we break the journey in Blackrock to visit Dublin's oldest market (blackrockmarket.com; @), with its vintage teacups, bric-a-brac and secondhand books. Then it's on to the old-school seaside town of Dun Laoghaire @. We wrap up for a walk along the coast to Sandycove @, to watch mad swimmers plunging in from the rocky Forty-Foot promontory



STAY

● The posh hostel

GENERATOR DUBLIN (Doubles from €28, room only)

Because: This is one classy hostel, all exposed brick, large windows and reclaimed furnishings (ie, Jameson-bottle chandeliers). Wifi is free and breakfast (€3) is served until noon.

Travel's tip: Don't expect free mini-shampoos — they only come with premium rooms (where you'll also get a late checkout). Smithfield Sq; 00 353 1901 0222, generatorhostels.com; @

● The trendy crashpad

THE DEAN (Doubles from €72, room only)

Because: It's very possibly Dublin's coolest hotel, with retro record players in the rooms, original contemporary Irish art on the walls and a lobby that's more cosy bar than hushed atrium.

Travel's tip: This is one of the city's most raucous areas after dark and the hotel makes no promises about keeping the noise down. 33 Harcourt St; 00 353 1607 8110, deandublin.ie; @



● The glam rocker

THE CLARENCE (Doubles from £79, room only)

Because: Shaker oak, crisp white linen and the sort of carpets that invite a toe wriggle put The Clarence's rooms a cut above the usual four-star, and the Temple Bar location is great for night owls (though not light sleepers).

Travel's tip: You can even have a night 'out' without leaving the hotel — the trendy Liquor Rooms bar is in the basement. 6–8 Wellington Quay, 00 353 1407 0800, theclarence.ie, @

● The modern base

RADISSON BLU ROYAL HOTEL (Doubles from £114, B&B)

Because: Great value room rates needn't mean scrimping on style: here, sleek lines and the odd bright accent colour keep things fresh and chic. It's right by Dublin Castle and Trinity College, and has a pool and a chichi lounge bar.

Travel's tip: Book online, in advance (at least 21 days ahead) to save 20 per cent on the room rate. Golden Lane, 00 353 1898 2900, radissonblu.com, @

ART DECO DRINKS

Hole up by the fire in the original Octagon Bar, the heart of the hotel and a favoured haunt of local celebrities

Pillar talk: clockwise from top left, five-star style at The Merrion; hip sips at Peruke & Periwig; The Dean — retro and raucous; Fade St Social's perfect push; live gigs at The Temple Bar

● The fail-safe five-star

THE WESTIN (Doubles from £133, room only)

Because: The elegant 19th-century facade of the former Allied Irish Bank belies the modern American-style rooms inside. Retreat to Champagne-coloured walls and Westin's trademark, ridiculously comfortable 'Heavenly' beds. **Travel's tip:** Spend the extra £15 on a Deluxe room for exterior views (Classics look over the atrium). College Green, Westmoreland St, 00 353 1645 1000, thewestin.com, @

● The glossy townhouse

THE MERRION (Doubles from £154, B&B)

Because: This sumptuous five-star manages to squeeze the city's largest private art collection, a two-Michelin-starred restaurant and an 18m pool into four Georgian townhouses. **Travel's tip:** Come for afternoon tea in the Drawing Rooms: £28 buys you delectable pastries, sandwiches and scones by the roaring fire. Upper Merrion St, 00 353 1603 0600, merrionhotel.com, @

GET ME THERE GO INDEPENDENT

BA (ba.com) flies to Dublin from London City and Heathrow from £41 one way. **Ryanair** (ryanair.com) flies from Luton, Stansted and seven other UK airports from £10 one way. **Aer Lingus** (aerlingus.com) flies from London City, Edinburgh and seven other UK hubs from £56 one way. Don't want to fly? **P&O** (poferry.com) has ferries from Liverpool from £59 one way, including two meals during the 7hr 30min crossing. **Irish Ferries** (irishferries.com) and **Stena Line** (stenaline.co.uk) operate ferries from Holyhead (from 1hr 50min), from £34 one way.

GO PACKAGED

Thomas Cook City Escapes (08/1895 0045, thomascook.com) has two nights' B&B at a four-star hotel in Dublin from £195pp, including flights from Manchester. Or try **Expedia** (0330 123 1235, expedia.co.uk).

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more on Dublin, see ireland.com ■