



A Literary Tour of Dublin

Visit important places in the lives of James Joyce, George Bernard Shaw, William Butler Yeats and other great Irish writers.

By Nancy Dickinson



Double-decker tour buses take riders to Dublin's key attractions involving Irish authors.

Dublin Tourism

"Ireland is where strange tales begin and happy endings are possible."

Charles Haughey, Daily Telegraph, London, July 14, 1988

The mere mention of Ireland is often met with awe and wonderment. Ireland, and Dublin in particular, has long been known as the land of fairies, leprechauns, magic and some of the greatest writers in history. If an interesting and historical tour of Dublin entices, there are sites in abundance in a city that prides itself on being one of the most walkable cities in the world. Scattered about the city are buildings and landmarks related to such writers as George Bernard Shaw, Bram Stoker, Jonathan Swift, Brendan Behan, William Butler Yeats, Patrick Kavanagh and James Joyce, to name only a few of Ireland's literary greats.

As the birthplace of several recipients of the Nobel Prize for literature, Dublin embraces its native children and has many sites related to their books, stories, lives and deaths. Getting to them all might seem daunting, but with a good map, comfortable shoes and a few days, visitors will depart with a sense of amazement that remains long after returning from the Emerald Isle.

A Good Beginning

A good first stop for visitors is the Dublin Tourism Centre, opened in 1996 in the former St. Andrew's Church, built during the 17th century. Here, guests can purchase tickets for dozens of attractions as well as the hop on/off bus tour, which takes visitors to more than 30 attractions for one low price.

In addition, the Tourism Centre sells the Dublin Pass, which provides discounts at many shops and restaurants and entrance to more than 25 of the city's most popular attractions, including Dublin Castle; Abbey Theater, the brainchild of W.B. Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory; the James Joyce Center, the new Leprechaun Museum; and the Dublin Writer's Museum.

Maps of Dublin are liberally handed out to guests. Initially, Dublin's size might seem formidable, but the city is one of the most navigable cities in the world. Dubliners offer directions not in blocks or miles but in the number of minutes it takes to walk there.

Two walking tours whet the appetite for literary history. The first and most raucous is the Literary Pub Crawl,



offered by the group of the same name, which begins at the Duke Pub. Tour guides dressed as characters from Irish literature act out scenes from various books with a bit of comedy thrown in. The Pub Crawl is a fun way to see the city and learn its literary history. For a more sedate but equally interesting literary tour, Paddy Liddy's Walking Tours of Dublin and the Historical Walking Tours of Dublin are just as much fun in a family-friendly way.



Bram Stoker once occupied an office inside Dublin Castle when he worked for the government.

Dublin Tourism

A Walk in Their Steps

Strolling across the River Liffey over the Ha'penny Bridge will have visitors doing that which it is rumored William Butler Yeats avoided most. The bridge was so named due to the half-penny toll pedestrians were required to pay; Yeats would walk a half-mile out of his way to another bridge to circumvent paying the toll.

The Dublin Writer's Museum has hundreds of artifacts, paintings and death masks representing writers such as George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett, Oscar Wilde and Bram Stoker. Also on display are books, letters, personal artifacts and portraits.

The influence of Jonathan Swift, writer of *Gulliver's Travels*, is evident in a number of places around Dublin. During a tour of Trinity College, guests learn Swift was once the institution's dean and had a profound influence on the educational system. Another site related to "Dean Swift," as the Irish sometimes call him, is St. Patrick's Cathedral, the church where he was once minister and is now entombed.

Brendan Behan—playwright, poet, novelist and member of the Irish Republican Army—is better studied by visiting the pubs. After being released from an English prison following a general pardon for IRA members, Behan began writing to further the cause for Irish independence. Much of his work was written in Dublin's pubs, and he once described himself as "a drinker with a writing problem."

Pubs such as Davy Byrnes and McDaid's figure prominently in both the literary and historical life of Dubliners. Kavanagh's Pub is located outside the former main gate of Glasnevin's Cemetery in a suburb of the same name. A stop at the establishment, mentioned in James Joyce's *Dubliners*, a collection of short stories, for a pint of Guinness is a must. Buried at the cemetery are a number of literary and historical figures such as Behan, Michael O'Collins and Constance Georgine Markiewicz, known as Countess Markiewicz, who participated in the Easter Uprising of 1916.



A Church, a Tower, a Home

The Dublin of Bram Stoker, the writer of *Dracula*, is best seen through visits to St. Anne's Parish located on Dawson Street, the Dublin Castle in the City Centre or his former home on Kildare Street. Stoker married his bride.



These Literary Pub Crawl tour guides begin their walk outside Dublin's Duke Bar.

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Florence Balcombe, at St. Anne's Parish after having "stolen" her from Oscar Wilde, a fact which had Stoker and Wilde at odds for some years. Additionally, prior to becoming a published writer, Stoker was employed as a clerk and worked for the Irish government, and his office was located in Dublin Castle. While the parish doesn't offer any formal tours, Dublin Castle does. The tour guides are well-versed in the history of the castle.

James Joyce is omnipresent in and around Dublin. The James Joyce Center

gives visitors a deeper understanding of the writer through special events, symposiums, walking tours, workshops and exhibitions. Another important Joyce-related site, in addition to the Writer's Museum, is the Joyce Tower in Sandy Cove, located in Dun Laoghaire, a suburb of Dublin. A steep, narrow staircase takes guests to the top of the tower. There is the room in which Joyce slept while he was tenanted there. Joyce also used the tower as the setting for the first act of *Ulysses*. The view from the top is magnificent.

As a productive playwright, poet and novelist, George Bernard Shaw left an indelible mark on Dublin. His former Dublin residence has been restored to its Victorian roots and is now a museum honoring Shaw's life. Carefully furnished, the home appears as if the family has just stepped out. There is also a row house once owned by Shaw that is now part of a set of homes that has been turned into The Harcourt Hotel on Harcourt Street.

The National Gallery of Ireland, which received a large bequest at Shaw's death, is home to more than 14,000 works of art dating from the 13th century to present day. Among the museum's holdings are works by Shaw, Yeats and other Irish writers. Also, there are several sites in Dublin's Dalkey neighborhood that pertain to Shaw and many other Irish writers.



A Memorable Side Trip

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Though Dublin has plenty to keep visitors busy for several days, literary devotees might desire a trip to “Yeats’ country” on the northwest coast of Ireland in County Sligo, a region Yeats dearly loved and about which he wrote a great deal.

Also in County Sligo is Lissadell Estate, the home of Yeats’ childhood friends Eva Gore-Booth, Josslyn Gore-Booth and Countess Marckievicz. The gardens are being privately restored and the magnificently renovated stables are now home to a tearoom and restaurant, with a table and seating in each stall.

It was Yeats’ last wish to be buried “... at the base of Ben Bulbin”—taken from one of his famous poems, *Under Ben Bulbin*. He is buried in the graveyard at Drumcliffe Church, a former sixth-century abbey where his great-grandfather, John Yeats, was once the rector.



Tributes to James Joyce pop up everywhere around Dublin.

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For more information on Ireland, go to www.discoverireland.com/us. To learn more about visiting Dublin, visit Dublin Tourism at www.visitdublin.com. For help planning a vacation to Ireland, contact your AAA Travel agent or log on to AAA.com/travel.

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