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## DRINKING

### top picks

- Anseo (p163)
- Dice Bar (p171)
- Gravediggers (aka Kavanagh's) (p172)
- Grogan's Castle Lounge (p165)
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Simply put, the pub is the heart of Dublin's social existence and we're guessing the experience of it ranks pretty high on your list of why you're here. The pub is the broadest window through which you can examine and experience the very essence of the city's culture, in all its myriad forms. It's the great leveller where status and rank hold no sway, where generation gaps are bridged, inhibitions lowered, tongues loosened, schemes hatched, songs sung, stories told and gossip embroidered. It's a unique institution: a theatre and a cosy room, a centre stage and a hideaway, a debating chamber and a place for silent contemplation. It's whatever you want it to be, and that's the secret of the great Irish pub.

Talk – whether it is frivolous, earnest or incoherent – is the essential ingredient. Once tongues are loosened and the cogs of thought oiled, your conversation can go anywhere and you should follow it to its natural conclusion. An old Irish adage suggests you should never talk about sport, religion or politics in unfamiliar company. But just be mindful and you needn't restrict yourself too much. While it's a myth to say you can walk into any Dublin pub and be befriended, you probably won't be drinking on your own for long – unless that's what you want of course. There are few more spiritual experiences than a solitary pint in a Dublin pub in the midafternoon.

There are pubs for every taste and sensibility, although the traditional haunt populated by flat-capped pensioners bursting with insightful anecdotes is disappearing under a modern wave of designer bars and themed locales that wouldn't seem out of place in any other city in the world. All the while, of course, the Irish pub theme is being exported throughout the world like a McPub; if the trend continues Dublin might be the last place to come if you're looking for a spit-and-sawdust boozier.

It's not all doom and gloom, however; some truly great modern bars have opened in recent years to reassure the nostalgic among us that Dublin's reputation as pub capital of the world is in safe hands.

## PUB ETIQUETTE

The rounds system – the simple custom where someone buys you a drink and you buy one back – is the bedrock of Irish pub culture. It's summed up in the Irish saying: 'It's impossible for two men to go to a pub for one drink.' Nothing will hasten your fall from social grace here like the failure to uphold this pub law. The Irish are extremely generous and one thing they can't abide is tightfistedness.

Another golden rule about the system is that the next round starts when the first person has finished (preferably just about to finish) their drink. It doesn't matter if you're only halfway through your pint, if it's your round get them in.

Your greatest challenge will probably be trying to keep up with your fellow drinkers, who may keep buying you drinks in every round even when you've still got a clatter of unfinished pints in front of you and you're sliding face first down the bar.

Banter is the fibre of sociability. 'Slagging', or teasing, is the city's favourite pastime and a far more reliable indicator of the strength of friendship than virtually any kind of com-

pliment: a fast, self-deprecating wit and an ability to take a joke in good spirits will win you plenty of friends.

## IRISH DRINKS

You can get every conceivable international brew and distillation of booze that is made for export – and the vast majority of Dubliners are happy to declare a foreign tippale as their favourite, with one exception. You would be criminally negligent if you didn't wet your teeth with at least one local liquid, the black stuff that virtually symbolises the city.

## A Pint of Plain

They've been brewing beer in Ireland possibly since the Bronze Age and definitely since the arrival of Christianity. The most famous beer of all though, stout, was in fact brewed in Britain, and became known as porter because of its popularity among London market porters. A mere accident of geography, say Dubliners, all the while pointing to the very large Guinness brewery (p88) that has occupied the same premises at St James' Gate since 1759 and whose

product is as much a part of the furniture of the Dublin pub as the counter-top itself.

If you're looking for another taste and want to avoid the same beers you can get in any other city, seek out the blossoming micro-brews. In the following listings we have included pubs serving speciality beers on draught – proof that the pub is serious about their beers.

## Whiskey, not Whisky

Irish whiskey shares equal billing as the national drink, but in the home it is paramount and if your host produces their best bottle it means you're either very welcome, very wealthy or very lucky. Besides the spelling and the fact that it is distilled three times, Irish whiskey differs from its Scotch cousins in that Scottish malt barley is dried over peat fires, which gives the drink its smoky flavour, whereas Irish malt is dried in smokeless kilns. Finally, while most punters (including most Dubs) would be hard pressed to name more than a handful of Irish whiskeys, at last call there were almost 100 different types, albeit brewed by only three distilleries – Jameson's, Bushmills and Cooley's. If the history, creation (and the drinking) of whiskey is your bag, check out the Old Jameson Distillery (p106).

## WHERE TO DRINK

There are about 1000 pubs across the city, so there's bound to be one to suit every mood. Many visitors begin – and sadly end – their exploration of the city's pub scene within the cobbled confines of Temple Bar, the city's most frequented nightlife quarter. It's busy, sure, but the pubs here cater to out-of-towners rather than locals, frantically selling a plastic paddy version of the Dublin experience that most locals avoid like the plague. Still, if the 'Ibiza in the Rain' cheesefest is what you're looking for, you won't be disappointed.

## IRISH DRINK IS MADE TO MEASURE

When drinking stout, beer or ale, the usual measure is a 'pint' (568mL). Half a pint is called a 'glass' and these are generally drunk by women – or visitors from Italy and Spain, unless of course they buy one pint to share among the whole group. Sound sexist and chauvinistic? Truth is that even if they only want a half, and are in a rush, most Dublin males will buy a half-measure and pour into a pint glass rather than be seen drinking from the half-pint glass. That's not to say that the pint glass is the sole preserve of the Dublin male; many a member of the Fair City's fairer sex are equally comfortable with the bigger measure, without any eyebrows being raised.

If you come to Ireland via Britain and drink spirits (or 'shorts' as they're called here), watch out: the English measure is a measly 25mL, while in Dublin you get a whopping 35mL, nearly 50% more.

The pubs around Grafton St and St Stephen's Green are a mix of authentic Dublin boozers and stylish contemporary bars that cater to a broad range of punters, from penniless students cadging pints of cider off one another to moneyed execs buying rounds of Mojitos for the table. If the former is more your bag, stay west and southwest of Grafton St, especially along the newish corridor of cool that extends from Aungier St south to Wexford and Camden Sts. If a more designer drink is to your liking, Dawson St, east of Grafton St, and Ballsbridge and Donnybrook, beyond the Grand Canal, have plenty of bars to suit those tastes.

The area around Merrion Square has pubs and bars that are popular with office workers winding down – but that's not nearly as unattractive a proposition as it might sound elsewhere. Most Dubliners like to leave work behind once they cross the pub's hearth and many a wild Friday night is regretted on a Saturday morning!

The quays north and south of the river, for so long in a state of perilous abandonment, have come to life in recent years and now play host to a number of excellent pubs well worth checking out. There are many unreconstructed boozers north of the Liffey, although O'Connell St and its environs are not particularly pleasant or safe places to hang around at night, and you should keep your wits about you when out and about.

But we won't leave this section on that note. From centuries-old taverns to slick DJ bars, there's plenty to please in Dublin these days whether you're supping Guinness, quaffing wine or sipping cocktails. While some still bemoan the loss of the traditional and the proliferation of slick designer bars, we've accepted the development now and like to think that it leaves more room for us in our favourite snugs.

Finally, if you're looking for traditional music pubs, you'll find them listed in the Night-life chapter, under Live Music Bars (p183).

## PRACTICALITIES

### Opening Hours & Licensing Laws

Last orders are at 11.30pm Monday to Thursday, 12.30am Friday and Saturday and 11pm Sunday, with 30 minutes drinking-up time each night. However, many central pubs have secured late licences to serve until 1.30am, 2.30am and – in the case of those with a super-special ‘theatre licence’ – until 3am. As part of the 2003 licensing laws, happy hours have been banned and pubs instructed to get tougher on underage drinkers (so if you look young, bring ID).

### Tippling

The American-style gratuity has never been a part of Irish drinking culture, mostly because hard-pressed drinkers in less prosperous times would have needed every penny to continue keeping reality at bay. At best, a regular may opt to leave coppers on the bar for the bartender to pick up, but this practice would only happen in quieter bars among locals.

Which of course doesn't mean that you *can't* tip. If you want to reward your hard-working barkeep for good service (watch them sweat on a busy night and you'll know how hard it is) feel absolutely free to do so. They'll probably look at you with bemused gratitude.

### Non-Smoking

Ireland went smoke-free in March 2004 (with smoking banned in all workplaces, including pubs). For more info, see the boxed text (p19).

## GRAFTON STREET & AROUND

Amid the designer shops and trendy eateries of the Grafton St area, a few top-notch Victorian pubs combine elegance and traditional style to pull in punters from far and near. Dawson St is popular with straight professional types, the area immediately west of Grafton St has something for everyone, and trendy Wexford and Camden Sts tick the arty, alternative box.

**BA MIZU** Map pp66–7 Contemporary Bar  
☎ 674 6712; [www.bamizu.com](http://www.bamizu.com); Powerscourt Townhouse Shopping Centre, South William St  
Tucked away beside the grand entrance to Powerscourt Townhouse is one of the

showiest feathers in South William St's well-plumed cap o' cool. Head downstairs to an intimate lobby dominated by a central square bar and surrounded by cosy nooks, perfect for ice breaking on first dates.

**BAILEY** Map pp66–7 Contemporary Bar  
☎ 670 4939; [www.baileybar.ie](http://www.baileybar.ie); 2 Duke St  
Perpetually popular with self-appointed shakers and movers – and a few frustrated office workers looking to shake and move – the Bailey has wall-mounted light boxes and comfortable seating, perfect for an evening schmooze. Outside gas braziers allow you to sit on the pavement and observe the street life by day. It also does a mean trade in continental lunches.

**BANK** Map pp66–7 Contemporary Bar  
☎ 677 0677; [www.bankoncollegegreen.com](http://www.bankoncollegegreen.com); 20-22 College Green  
This architecturally dazzling bar occupies the site of a former Victorian bank and has opulent decoration, including a stained-glass ceiling, hand-carved plasterwork and mosaic-tiled floors to occupy your eyes while you wait for your pint of Guinness to settle. The atmosphere is conversational, and the bar staff are excellent.

**CAFÉ EN SEINE** Map pp66–7 Contemporary Bar  
☎ 677 4369; [www.capitalbars.com](http://www.capitalbars.com); 40 Dawson St  
Dublin's 'in' bar when it opened in 1995, Café en Seine lost its place but was then overhauled into one of the most spectacular bars in the drinking world. It is decorated in an opulent, wildly extravagant 19th-century style, which includes glass panelling and real 12m-high trees! The highlight, though, is propping up the beautiful wood-and-marble bar and checking out the beautiful people.

**CARNIVAL** Map pp66–7 Contemporary Bar  
☎ 405 3604; 11 Wexford St; ☎ 2pm-midnight Sun-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat; ☎ 83, 123  
A party atmosphere and a candle-lit, down-at-heel room with lots of cosy corners makes Dermot Doran's latest bar venture, Carnival, a great place to meet people. Don't expect to chat though – the music from those DJs playing everything from Magic Numbers to Kraftwerk (Thursday to Sunday) will drown out those witticisms.

**DAKOTA** Map pp66–7 Contemporary Bar  
☎ 672 7696; 8 South William St  
Surprisingly chilled out for a superpub, Dakota is distinguished by dimmed lights, funky tunes, crafty cocktails and a slick modern layout. Unfortunately, we found the weekend bouncers to be goons, the beer patchy and the bar staff so frosty that if you stuck your tongue out at them it might stick.

**DAVY BYRNE'S** Map pp66–7 Contemporary Bar  
☎ 677 5217; [www.davybyrnes.com](http://www.davybyrnes.com); 21 Duke St  
The place where Leopold Bloom popped in for a Gorgonzola sandwich and a glass of burgundy. Davy Byrne's makes the most of its Joycean connection, but the contemporary version bears about as much resemblance to the boozier mentioned in *Ulysses* as it does a hole in the wall. It is popular with out-of-towners and gets especially packed on rugby weekends.

**HORSESHOE BAR** Map pp66–7 Contemporary Bar  
☎ 676 6471; Shelbourne Hotel, St Stephen's Green  
The refurb of the Shelbourne has brought us a brand new Horseshoe Bar, a thoroughly modern version of the old one beloved of politicians, hacks and journalists, where many an important decision was made, celebrated and even regretted around the horseshoe-shaped bar.

**MARKET BAR** Map pp66–7 Contemporary Bar  
☎ 613 9094; [www.marketbar.ie](http://www.marketbar.ie); 14a Fade St  
An architectural beauty, this giant redbrick and iron girder room that was once a Victorian sausage factory is now a large, breezy bar that stands as a far more preferable alternative to many of the city's superbars. Unlike virtually every other new pub in town, there's no music. It also does a roaring trade in Spanish-influenced pub grub (see p150).

**ODEON** Map pp66–7 Contemporary Bar  
☎ 478 2088; [www.odeon.ie](http://www.odeon.ie); Old Harcourt St Station, 57 Harcourt St  
This former train station is light, airy, and jam-packed with Art Deco elegance and Red Bull-loaded punters getting ready for a gig next door at Tripod. The comfy sofas are too scarce but this is the kind of place to be parading or standing along its impossibly long bar rather than sitting down

anyway. Sunday afternoons are all about indulgence and taking it nice and easy with Bloody Marys, the newspapers and comfort foods.

**RON BLACK'S** Map pp66–7 Contemporary Bar  
☎ 672 8231; [www.ronblacks.ie](http://www.ronblacks.ie); 37 Dawson St  
The youngest of the three superbars along this strip, along with **Samsara** (below) and **Café en Seine** (opposite), Ron Black's is packed with affluent young players who think that leisure time is cutting a deal with a drink in their hand. It's the Celtic Tiger love story in all its designer drama: budding business impresario spots young commercial property agent across the dark wood bar, glides across the floor and takes a seat next to her on the comfy couch...and it's love and planning permission for all eternity. We should be so lucky.

**SAMSARA** Map pp66–7 Contemporary Bar  
☎ 671 7723; [www.lastampa.ie](http://www.lastampa.ie); 35-36 Dawson St  
This huge Middle Eastern-themed drinking emporium is packed at weekends with gorgeous young things and thingies, air-kissing and comparing their designer ware. The seats are too uncomfortable and there's an overwhelming vibe of 'me, me, me!' but you can get through it by meditating on *samsara* – the endless cycle of suffering and reincarnation. Or just enjoy the eye candy.

**ANSEO** Map pp66–7 DJ Bar  
☎ 475 1321; 28 Camden St  
Unpretentious, unaffected and incredibly popular, this cosy alternative bar – which is pronounced 'an-shuh', the Irish for 'here' – is a favourite with those who live by the credo that to try too hard is far worse than not trying at all. Wearing cool like a loose garment, the punters thrive on the mix of chat and terrific DJs, who dig into virtually every crate to provide the soundtrack, whether it be Peggy Lee or Lee Perry.

**BIA BAR** Map pp66–7 DJ Bar  
☎ 405 3563; 30 Lower Stephen St  
In the last couple of years, this trendy watering hole has become massively popular. We thought at first it was to do with the excellent music policy that has brought some of the city's best DJs to exercise their craft at the decks. Sure, that helped, but then it dawned on us: it's the huge beer garden at

# top picks

## DJ BARS

- **Anseo** (p163) Old and new favourites.
- **Dice Bar** (p171) Dive bar with eclectic music.
- **Village** (right) Good music every night.
- **Hogan's** (p176) Contemporary dance music.
- **Sin É** (p171) Down-to-earth ambience and great music.

the back that really brings them in, for not only does it allow some al fresco drinking, but it's one of the few bars where you don't have to stand on the street to have a smoke.

**GLOBE** Map pp66–7 DJ Bar  
☎ 671 1220; [www.globe.ie](http://www.globe.ie); 11 South Great George's St

In 2007 the first of the city's wave of 'cool' bars changed hands after nearly 15 years of the same ownership; while the new crowd have promised not to mess with a winning formula, some change is inevitable, be it in the New York dive-style décor, the relaxed, friendly attitude or both. The bar doubles as a chill-out room for the excellent **Ri Rá** (p177).

**HOGAN'S** Map pp66–7 DJ Bar  
☎ 677 5904; 35 South Great George's St

Once an old-style traditional bar, Hogan's is now a gigantic boozier spread across two floors. Mid-week it's a relaxing hang-out for young professionals and restaurant and bar workers on a night off. But come the weekend the sweat bin downstairs pulls them in for some serious music courtesy of the usually excellent DJs.

**NO 4 DAME LANE** Map pp66–7 DJ Bar  
☎ 679 0291; 4 Dame Lane

This two-storey designer bar took forever to get going – one of the pitfalls of trying to manufacture cool – but once it did it really took off, especially at weekends, when clubby kids and young professionals dressed as clubby kids try to hold a conversation above the loud DJ-led music. Upstairs is even louder, but that's OK, because – judging by some of the conversations we eavesdropped on – the music is often better than the chat. It has a late licence, so you don't have to bother with a nightclub.

**SOLAS** Map pp66–7 DJ Bar  
☎ 478 0583; 31 Wexford St

Good DJs every night of the week are the primary attraction at this trendy little bar along trendy Wexford St; at weekends the music is loud and you'll most likely struggle to hear what's being said. Mid-week the place is quieter but you might find yourself stopping the conversation with a 'hold on a minute, I love this song!'

**SOUTH WILLIAM** Map pp66–7 DJ Bar  
☎ 679 3701; [www.southwilliam.ie](http://www.southwilliam.ie); South William St

The city's hippest new bar has it all behind its huge glass frontage: top class music, great DJs, a downstairs club with a rotating list of guest DJs from all over, and even pies created by Troy Maguire from **Lock's** (p147).

**VILLAGE** Map pp66–7 DJ Bar  
☎ 475 8555; [www.thevillagevenue.com](http://www.thevillagevenue.com); 26 Wexford St

Packed to overflowing every weekend, this large modern bar is where the lovely lads and gorgeous gals show off their plumage in a fun-time courting ritual that has the rest of them queuing up at the door to join in. There are live bands (see p183) and excellent DJs nightly, and Sunday night's Songs of Praise is the city's best karaoke night. The nightclub bit of the venue (see p177) opens Thursday to Saturday.

**DRAGON** Map pp66–7 Gay Bar  
☎ 478 1590; [www.capitalbars.com](http://www.capitalbars.com); 64 South Great George's St

High-concept, high-octane and simply loaded with attitude, the Dragon is the slightly trendier alternative to the long-established George down the street (George and the Dragon; get it?). But neon lighting, loud music and drunken couples slobbering all over each other do not a memorable bar make. Next.

**GEORGE** Map pp66–7 Gay Bar  
☎ 478 2983; [www.capitalbars.com](http://www.capitalbars.com); 89 South Great George's St

The purple mother of Dublin's gay bars is a long-standing institution, having lived through the years when it was the only place in town where the gay crowd could, well, be gay. There are other places to go, but the George remains the best, if only for

tradition's sake. Shirley's legendary Sunday night bingo is as popular as ever.

**BRUXELLES** Map pp66–7 Traditional Pub  
☎ 677 5362; 7-8 Harry St

Although it has largely shed its heavy metal and alternative skin, Bruxelles is still a raucous, fun place to hang out and there are different music areas. It's comparatively trendy on the ground floor, while downstairs is a great, loud and dingy rock bar with live music each weekend. Just outside, a bronze Phil Lynott is there to remind us of Bruxelles' impeccable rock credentials (see the boxed text, p182).

**DAWSON LOUNGE** Map pp66–7 Traditional Pub  
☎ 677 5909; 25 Dawson St

To see the smallest bar in Dublin, go through a small doorway, down a narrow flight of steps and into two tiny rooms that always seem to be filled with a couple of bedraggled drunks who look like they're hiding. Psst, here's a secret: a certain sun-glassed lead singer of a certain ginormous Irish band is said to love unwinding in here from time to time.

**GROGAN'S CASTLE LOUNGE** Map pp66–7 Traditional Pub  
☎ 677 9320; 15 South William St

This place is known simply as Grogan's (after the original owner), and it is a city-centre institution. It has long been a favourite haunt of Dublin's writers and painters,

as well as others from the alternative bohemian set, most of whom seem to be waiting for the 'inevitable' moment when they are finally recognised as geniuses. A peculiar quirk of the pub is that drinks are marginally cheaper in the area with a stone floor than in the carpeted lounge, even though they are served by exactly the same bar!

**INTERNATIONAL BAR** Map pp66–7 Traditional Pub  
☎ 677 9250; [www.international-bar.com](http://www.international-bar.com); 23 Wicklow St

This tiny pub with a huge personality is a top spot for an afternoon pint. It has a long bar, stained-glass windows, red velour seating and a convivial atmosphere. Some of Ireland's most celebrated comedians stutted through their first set in the **Comedy Cellar** (p178), which is, of course, upstairs.

**KEHOE'S** Map pp66–7 Traditional Pub  
☎ 677 8312; 9 South Anne St

This is one of the most atmospheric pubs in the city centre and a favourite with all kinds of Dubliners. It has a beautiful Victorian bar, a wonderful snug, and plenty of other little nooks and crannies. Upstairs, drinks are served in what was once the publican's living room – and looks it!

**LONG HALL** Map pp66–7 Traditional Pub  
☎ 475 1590; 51 South Great George's St

Luxuriating in full Victorian splendour, this is one of the city's most beautiful and

## MARC BEREEM, PUBLICAN

'The days of the traditional Dublin pub, where all they do is serve a good pint of Guinness are gone. The contemporary bar has to offer more, but it can't lose sight of the past either.' A bold statement, but Marc Bereem knows a thing or two about the city's bars. As one of the two brothers who own arguably Dublin's coolest bar, the **South William** (opposite), Bereem (early 30s) believes that the essence of a great Dublin pub is not the old-fashioned look but the personality behind the bar.

'If the staff feel a sense of ownership of the place and are to serve and entertain the clientele, then you have the makings of a great bar.' Marc is pretty adamant as to why so many other modern bars are so infinitely forgettable: 'Most of them are owned by companies who don't care about anything other than the bottom line.'

This is hardly the case with the South William, lovingly designed by Marc and his younger brother Conor in a style influenced as much by their extensive travels as their love of the simple lines of a traditional boozier. 'We wanted to create a simple space where young creative people would feel inspired... by the food, the music and the décor, which has lots of little things we collected over the years.'

The South William opened its doors in December 2006 and so far, so very good. Its mix of New York bar, trendy Parisian café and Dublin boozier hits the spot just right and manages to avoid the label of trying too hard. But where does Marc go when he wants a night off? 'My favourite pub is Peter's, which is conveniently just up the street!' Why aren't we surprised that he's chosen such a quiet and classy pub as his favourite?

best-loved pubs. Check out the ornate carvings in the woodwork behind the bar and the elegant chandeliers. The bartenders are experts at their craft, an increasingly rare attribute in Dublin these days.

**MCDALD'S** *Map pp66–7* Traditional Pub  
☎ 679 4395; 3 Harry St

One of Dublin's best-known literary pubs, this classic boozier was Brendan Behan's 'local' (until he was barred) and it still oozes character. The pints are perfect, and best appreciated during the day when it's not full of our type. Thankfully, there's no music – just conversation and raucous laughter.

**NEARY'S** *Map pp66–7* Traditional Pub  
☎ 677 8596; 1 Chatham St

One of a string of off-Grafton St, classic Victorian boozers once patronised by Dublin's legless literati, Neary's is a perfect stop-off day or night. It combines great service, a bohemian atmosphere and attractively worn furnishings, and is popular with actors from the nearby *Gaiety Theatre* (p186).

**OLD STAND** *Map pp66–7* Traditional Pub  
☎ 677 7220; 37 Exchequer St

Refreshingly unreconstructed, this is one of the oldest pubs in Dublin and seems to be just sauntering along at the same pace it was 10 years ago, as if the whole Celtic Tiger thing never happened. It's named after the old stand at Lansdowne Rd Stadium, and is a favourite with sports fans and reporters.

**O'NEILL'S** *Map pp66–7* Traditional Pub  
☎ 679 3671; 2 Suffolk St

This rambling old pub near Trinity College has plenty of nooks and crannies, as well as punters to fill them. The odd combination of students and stockbrokers lends the place a chaotic atmosphere. There are also hefty portions of decent pub grub.

**PAVILION** *Map pp66–7* Traditional Pub  
☎ 896 1000; Trinity College

One of the most enjoyable drinking experiences in town can be had on a pleasant summer's day on the balcony of the Pav, the cricket pavilion overlooking Trinity's playing fields. Grab a beer and a sandwich before settling down to enjoy the spectacle on display: a cricket match or just the other

punters getting drunk and trying to play Frisbee.

**PETER'S PUB** *Map pp66–7* Traditional Pub  
☎ 677 8588; 1 Johnston Pl

A pub for a chat and a convivial catch up, this humble and friendly place is more like Peter's Living Room, and is one of the few remaining drinking dens in this area that hasn't changed personality in recent years, or gone chasing the new money.

**STAG'S HEAD** *Map pp66–7* Traditional Pub  
☎ 679 3701; 1 Dame Ct

The Stag's Head was built in 1770, remodelled in 1895 and sold in 2004. Fortunately, the new owners knew better than to change one bolt of this superb pub, so picturesque that it often appears in films and also featured in a postage-stamp series on Irish bars. While you're waiting for your steak and chips you may find yourself philosophising in the ecclesiastical atmosphere, as James Joyce did. It's probable that some of the fitters that worked on this pub would have also worked on churches in the area, so the stained-wood-and-polished-brass similarities are no accident. A bloody great bar, no doubt.

**SWAN** *Map pp66–7* Traditional Pub  
☎ 647 5272; 70 Aungier St

John Lynch's pub (known to all as the Swan) is home to two kinds of punter: the in-for-a-pint-and-a-chat tippler that doesn't venture far from the Victorian front bar; and the more animated younger person, who finds solace and music in the side bar. A beautiful marriage that works because neither troubles the other.

**WHELAN'S** *Map pp66–7* Traditional Pub  
☎ 475 8555; [www.whelanslive.com](http://www.whelanslive.com); 28 Wexford St

The traditional pub attached to the popular live music venue (see p183) was one of the best places to wind down a week over a pint and a chat, until it closed its doors for a major refurb. What it'll become is anyone's guess – we just hope that it keeps its old-fashioned ambience.

**OLESYA'S WINE BAR** *Map pp66–7* Wine Bar  
☎ 672 4087; 18 Exchequer St; ☎ noon-midnight  
With over 100 different wines available by the glass and about 400 by the bottle, this

lovely wine bar is perfect if you fancy a liquid evening but want to avoid a crowded pub. Take a seat, order some wine and wash it down with something from the accompanying menu, even though we were disappointed with the size of the cheeseboard.

## MERRION SQUARE & AROUND

Away from the city centre there are a number of fine pubs that are worthy of the trek. Many fill up with office workers straight after (or just before) clocking-off time and then get quieter as the night progresses.

**WHITE HORSE INN** Contemporary Bar  
*Map pp78–9*

☎ 672 7597; 1 George's Quay  
This excellent quayside bar has been re-invented in recent times as a cool spot for the clubby crowd, thanks largely to the A: M Club, an early morning party that starts at 7am every Saturday for those who don't want to say goodnight just yet. At more sociable hours, the bar dances to a soulful, jazzy soundtrack Thursday to Saturday night.

**DOHENY & NESBITT'S** Traditional Pub  
*Map pp78–9*

☎ 676 2945; 5 Lower Baggot St  
A standout, even in a city of wonderful pubs, Nesbitt's is equipped with antique snugs and is a favourite place for high-powered gossip among politicians and journalists; *Leinster House* (p82) is only a short stroll away.

**HARTIGAN'S** *Map pp78–9* Traditional Pub  
☎ 676 2280; 100 Lower Leeson St

This is about as spartan a bar as you'll find in the city, and is the daytime home to some serious drinkers, who appreciate the quiet, no-frills surroundings. In the evening it's popular with students from the medical faculty of University College Dublin (UCD).

**JAMES TONER'S** *Map pp78–9* Traditional Pub  
☎ 676 3090; 139 Lower Baggot St

Toner's, with its stone floors and antique snugs, has changed little over the years and is the closest thing you'll get to a country pub in the heart of the city. The shelves and drawers are reminders that it

# top picks

## TOP-SHELF HOTEL BARS

You don't have to be a high-paying guest to enjoy the luxury of a fancy hotel bar. The following are the best places in town to be seen with a drink in hand.

- **Central Hotel** (p200) The 2nd-floor Library Bar is a genuine Victorian/Edwardian drawing room.
- **Four Seasons Hotel** (p204) A must for anyone aspiring to be a part of the Dublin scene.
- **Dylan Hotel** (p204) The Dylan Bar is the latest place to schmooze over a Bellini.
- **Shelbourne** (p198) Politicians and journo trade tales and secrets in the Horseshoe Bar.
- **Westbury Hotel** (p198) Strangely ignored by most, which is probably why visiting celebs feel comfortable relaxing in this large and beautiful bar.

once doubled as a grocery shop. The writer Oliver St John Gogarty once brought WB Yeats here, after the upper-class poet – who only lived around the corner – decided he wanted to visit a pub. After a silent sherry in the noisy bar, Yeats turned to his friend and said, 'I have seen the pub, now please take me home.' We always suspected he was a little too precious for normal people, and he would probably be horrified by the good-natured business crowd making the racket these days too. His loss.

**KENNEDY'S** *Map pp78–9* Traditional Pub  
☎ 677 0626; 10 George's Quay

Not to be confused with the home of the terrific underground nightclub on Westland Row (see p176), this is a proper traditional pub where literally nothing has changed in 50 years, including some of the clientele. Tread softly and speak even quieter so as not to disturb the contemplative atmosphere of a bar that seems oblivious to what's happened to Dublin in the last 20 years.

**MULLIGAN'S** *Map pp78–9* Traditional Pub  
☎ 677 5582; 8 Poolbeg St

This brilliant old boozier was established in 1782 and has barely changed over the years. In fact, the last time it was renovated was when Christy Brown and his rowdy clan ran amok here in the film *My Left Foot*. It has one of the finest pints of Guinness in Dublin and a colourful crew of regulars. It's

just off Fleet St, outside the eastern boundary of Temple Bar.

**O'DONOGHUE'S** Map pp78–9 Traditional Pub

☎ 661 4303; 15 Merrion Row  
Once the most renowned traditional music bar in all Dublin, this is where the world-famous folk group the Dubliners refined their raspy brand of trad in the 1960s. On summer evenings a young, international crowd spills out into the courtyard beside the pub. It's also a famous rugby pub and the Dublin HQ for many Irish and visiting fans.

## TEMPLE BAR

Temple Bar's loud and busy pubs are a far cry from authentic, but they're undoubtedly fun – that is if your idea of fun is mixing it with a bunch of lads and lasses from the North of England, egging each other on to show off their family jewels and daring one another to drain 10 Fat Frogs in a row, all in front of a bemused audience of Spanish and Italian tourists, all sharing three glasses of Guinness. You've been warned!

**AULD DUBLINER** Map p85 Contemporary Bar

☎ 677 0527; 17 Anglesea St  
Predominantly patronised by tourists, 'the Auld Foreigner', as locals have dubbed it, has a carefully manicured 'old-world' charm that has been preserved – or refined – after a couple of renovations. It's a reliable place for a singsong and a laugh, as long as you don't mind taking 15 minutes to get to and from the *jax* (toilet).

**BOB'S** Map p85 Contemporary Bar

☎ 677 5482; 35 East Essex St  
This used to be known as Bad Bob's, but after a 2000 renovation the owners went on the straight and narrow, which in this case meant chasing the new money. It's a typical Dublin superpub, with three floors, bland modern décor, young groups and shirty security staff.

**FRONT LOUNGE** Map p85 Contemporary Bar

☎ 670 4112; 33-34 Parliament St  
The unofficially gay 'Flounge' is a sophisticated and friendly bar that is bright and airy during the week and positively mobbed on weekends. It's by no means an

exclusive place, but its clientele is predominantly gay and preposterously handsome.

**MESSRS MAGUIRE** Map p85 Contemporary Bar

☎ 670 5777; 1-2 Burgh Quay  
This uber-bar and microbrewery is spread across three levels, connected by a truly imperious staircase, and is a disconcerting mix of young and old, intimate and brash. Its own beers are worth contemplating, but not on the weekend when the place is absolutely jammers.

**OCTAGON BAR** Map p85 Contemporary Bar

☎ 670 9000; Clarence Hotel, 6-8 Wellington Quay  
Temple Bar's trendiest watering hole is where you'll find many of Dublin's celebrities (including mates of the owner's, U2) and their hangers-on, swaggering and sipping expertly made cocktails in front of stylish wood paneling and amid perpetual daylight. Drinks are expensive, but if such things concern you, don't even try getting past the bouncers.

**PORTERHOUSE BREWING COMPANY**

Map p85 Contemporary Bar

☎ 679 8847; 16-18 Parliament St  
The second-biggest brewery in Dublin, the Porterhouse looks like a cross between a Wild West bar and a Hieronymus Bosch painting – all wood and full of staircases – on the fringe of Temple Bar. We love it, and although it inevitably gets crowded, this pub is for the discerning drinker and has lots of its own delicious brews, including its Plain Porter (some say it's the best stout in town) as well as unfamiliar imported beers.

**TEMPLE BAR** Map p85 Contemporary Bar

☎ 677 3807; 48 Temple Bar  
The most photographed pub façade in Dublin, perhaps the world, the Temple Bar (aka Flannery's) is smack bang in the middle of the tourist precinct and is usually choc-a-bloc with visitors. It's good craic though, and presses all the right buttons, with traditional musicians, a buzzy atmosphere and even a beer garden. It's also one of the most expensive pubs in Dublin.

**THOMAS READ'S** Map p85 Contemporary Bar

☎ 670 7220; 1 Parliament St  
The clientele at this spacious and airy bar, spread across two levels, seems to favour a selection of wine and coffee over beer.

## OUR THREE FAVOURITE PUB JOKES

- A man walks into a pub with a roll of tarmac under his arm and says, 'Pint please, and one for the road.'
- A duck walks into a bar. The barman says, 'Hey, your pants are down.' (Think about it.)
- A white horse walks into a bar and orders a drink. The barman says 'Hey! We've a whiskey named after you!' The horse looks confused and replies, 'You've a whiskey called Dobbin?'

During the day, it's a great place to relax and read a newspaper. For a more traditional setting its annexe, the *Oak*, is still a great place for a pint.

**TURK'S HEAD** Map p85 Contemporary Bar

☎ 679 9701; 27-30 Parliament St  
This superpub is decorated in two completely different styles – one really gaudy, the other a re-creation of LA circa 1930 – and is one of the oddest and most interesting in Temple Bar. It pulsates nightly with a young pumped-up crowd of mainly tourists, out to boogie to chart hits. Be mindful of hidden steps all over the place.

**BROGAN'S** Map p85 Traditional Pub

☎ 679 9570; 75 Dame St  
Only a couple of doors down from the *Olympia Theatre* (p182), this is a wonderful old-style bar where conversation – not loud music – is king. The beer is also pretty good.

**OLIVER ST JOHN GOGARTY**

Map p85 Traditional Pub

☎ 671 1822; 58-59 Fleet St  
You won't see too many Dubs ordering drinks in this bar, which is almost entirely given over to tourists, who come for the carefully manufactured slice of authentic traditionalism...and the knee-slappin', toe-tappin' sessions that run throughout the day (see p184). The kitchen serves up dishes that most Irish cooks have consigned to the culinary dustbin.

**PALACE BAR** Map p85 Traditional Pub

☎ 677 9290; 21 Fleet St  
With its mirrors and wooden niches, this is one of Dublin's great Victorian pubs and used to be the unofficial head office of the

*Irish Times*. Throughout the 1990s it steadfastly refused to accommodate the cubs of the Celtic Tiger and has always had a reputation as a place where yuppie bullshit is barred. While the Temple Bar vibe is encroaching on it a little, the staff's razor-sharp sarcasm can still bring uppity patrons down the required peg or two. Upstairs is where you'll hear some of the city's best traditional music (see p184).

## KILMAINHAM & THE LIBERTIES

Like what's happening in the rejuvenated Smithfield across the river, some of the pubs in Dublin's oldest area are now being rediscovered by new crowds jaded with the superpub phenomenon.

**BRAZEN HEAD** Map pp90–1 Traditional Pub

☎ 679 5186; 20 Lower Bridge St  
Reputedly Dublin's oldest pub, the Brazen Head has been serving thirsty patrons since 1198 when it set up as a Norman tavern. Though its history is uncertain, the sunken level of the entrance courtyard clearly indicates how much street levels have altered since its construction. It's a bit away from the city centre, and the clientele is made up of foreign-language students, tourists and some grizzly auld locals. Robert Emmet was believed to have been a regular visitor, while in *Ulysses*, James Joyce reckoned 'you get a decent enough do in the Brazen Head'.

**FALLON'S** Map pp90–1 Traditional Pub

☎ 454 2801; 129 The Coombe  
Just west of the city centre, in the heart of medieval Dublin, this is a fabulously old-fashioned bar that has been serving a great pint of Guinness to a most discerning clientele since the end of the 17th century. Prize fighter Dan Donnelly, the only boxer ever to be knighted, was head bartender here in 1818. It's a genuine Irish bar filled with Dubs.

## BEYOND THE GRAND CANAL

Southern suburban bars are among the most popular in town, especially those in the chi chi Dublin 4 area, where the bold and the beautiful swap tales of new cars bought with

## LAZING ON A SUNNY AFTERNOON

Good weather needn't spoil your drinking in Dublin: there are plenty of terraces and beer gardens to lap up the rays while downing the pints. **Bruxelles** (p165), **Café en Seine** (p180), the **Bailey** (p162) and **Ely HQ** (p155) have good terraces, while there's outdoor imbibing at **Grogan's Castle** (p165), **Toner's** (p167) and **O'Donoghue's** (p168). For a beer garden, try to squeeze into the **Temple Bar** (p168) or the **Brazen Head** (p169), or alternatively get your drinks at the **Pavilion** (p166) and stretch out on the cricket oval.

old money over vodka gimlets and gin and tonics.

### ICE BAR Map p99 Contemporary Bar

☎ 665 4000; **Four Seasons Hotel, Simonscourt Rd** Not to be confused with the **Dice Bar** (opposite) in a taxi – practise your elocution because the bars are worlds apart in every sense. Young, single 20-somethings with infinite disposable incomes come here to see and be seen, making this either the most sought-after destination in town or somewhere to avoid like a bad dose of plague. Flash your convertible-beemer car keys at the door for speedy access. The all-white chichi interior with central chrome and marble bar is softened by some lovely, specially commissioned wall hangings by Irish artists. Vodka-based cocktails are the house speciality.

### KIELY'S Map p99 Contemporary Bar

☎ 283 0209; **22 Donnybrook Rd** Fans of satirist Paul Howard's lovable D4 monster Ross O'Carroll Kelly will instantly recognise the favourite hangout of the rugby-loving southsider, where the fortunes of Drico, Shaggy and the Darce are discussed in earnest by hardbodies wrapped in Leinster jerseys...and that's just the girls. If you're going to the next-door Donnybrook Rugby Ground, this is the perfect pre- and post-match place to be.

### O'BRIEN'S Map p99 Traditional Pub

☎ 668 2851; **8-9 Sussex Tce, Upper Leeson St** The unofficial HQ of media types and advertising execs, old-fashioned O'Brien's is the embodiment of all the aspirations of the Celtic Tiger, a place where prosperity and forward-thinking can flourish amid the powerfully nostalgic reminders of a time gone by. Which pretty much means that

O'Brien's hasn't changed its décor all that much, but the bathrooms are absolutely spotless.

### SEARSON'S Map p99 Traditional Pub

☎ 660 0330; **www.searsons.ie; 42-44 Upper Baggot St**

What could easily be dismissed as yet another characterless superpub, with the warmth and ambience of a train station, is actually a pretty decent bar with the option of Old Man pub at the front and trendy, modern bar at the back. Something for everyone then: lunchtimes it's packed with office workers, weekend nights it's packed with the same crowd in jeans and designer shirts and, when the rugby's on, the Irish green. Two Havana Clubs and Coke, please.

## NORTH OF THE LIFFEY

The northside's pubs just don't get the same numbers of visitors as their southside brethren, which just means that if you're looking for a truly authentic pub experience, you're more likely to get it here. Around O'Connell St you'll also get the rough with the smooth, and we suggest you keep your wits about you late at night so as to avoid the potential for trouble that sadly besets the city's main thoroughfare after dark.

### FLORIDITA Map pp102-3 Contemporary Bar

☎ 878 1032; **www.floriditaireland.ie; Irish Life Mall, Lower Abbey St**

Ernest Hemingway's favourite Havana bar is now a multinational chain, and the newest branch of the super-slick bar-club-restaurant opened in the distinctly uncool Irish Life Mall in 2007. Real live Cuban musicians provide the backbeat to a night of rum, cigars and Latin American cuisine.

### MORRISON BAR Map pp102-3 Contemporary Bar

☎ 878 2999; **Upper Ormond Quay** This is the north side's version of the **Octagon Bar** (p168), only far more difficult to get into if you don't look the part. If you haven't spent a fortune on your outfit (or managed to fake it), forget it. You wouldn't have enjoyed the luxurious John Rocha-designed dark-oak and cream interior, the views over the Liffey, the suave and sophisticated clientele. Nah, you didn't miss much.

### PRAVDA Map pp102-3 Contemporary Bar

☎ 874 0076; **www.pravda.ie; 35 Lower Liffey St** As un-Irish as you could probably get, this huge, multilevel Russian-themed bar was all the rage when it opened a few years ago. It has got a party atmosphere and is a great pick-up joint for young tourists, but you can forget about conversation at night (because the music is so loud) and the bouncers seem especially dim-witted.

### SHAKESPEARE Map pp102-3 Contemporary Bar

☎ 878 8650; **160 Parnell St**

This marvellous bar is a great example of the meeting of two very different worlds, in this case a traditional old Dublin bar and the Korean love of all things karaoke and contemporary. We can't think of a more successful and enjoyable example of Dublin's new multicultural identity.

### VOODOO LOUNGE

Map pp102-3 Contemporary Bar

☎ 873 6013; **37 Arran Quay**

Run by the same crew as **Dice Bar** (below), the Voodoo Lounge is a long, dark bar with decadent, Gothic Louisiana-style décor, great service, a friendly atmosphere and loooo-uud music, just the way the fun-lovin' crowd likes it.

### DICE BAR Map pp90-1 DJ Bar

☎ 674 6710; **79 Queen St**

Co-owned by Huey from the Fun Lovin' Criminals, the Dice Bar looks like something you might find on New York's Lower East Side. Its dodgy locale, black-and-red painted interior, dripping candles and stressed seating, combined with rocking DJs most nights, make it a magnet for Dublin's beautiful beatnik crowds. It has Guinness and local microbrews.

### SIN É Map pp102-3 DJ Bar

☎ 878 7009; **14-15 Ormond Quay**

Phew. This quayside bar opened just in time, just before the essential ingredient of all great Dublin bars was abandoned in favour of whatever designer gimmickry was all the rage that month. Well done for remembering that ambience is the key, not fancy mirrors where pretentious gobshites can keep an eye on their oh-so-important look. This place has no real décor, but who cares? It buzzes almost nightly with a terrific

mix of students, professionals, the hip and the uncool. The DJs are uniformly excellent.

### FLOWING TIDE Map pp102-3 Traditional Pub

☎ 874 0842; **9 Lower Abbey St**

This beautiful, atmospheric old pub is directly opposite the **Abbey** (p184) and is popular with theatre-goers – it can get swamped around 11pm, after the curtain comes down. They blend in with some no-bullshit locals who give the place a vital edge, and make it a great place for a drink and a natter.

### GILL'S Map pp102-3 Traditional Pub

☎ 855 4128; **555 North Circular Rd; ☎ 10, 38 or 122**

Just a stone's throw from Croke Park, this unashamedly old-fashioned boozier was one of Brendan Behan's favourites and the place where his friends chose to wake his passing when he died. If you're on your way to Croker for a match, or just want to try out a good old-style pub, there are few better.

### GLIMMER MAN Map pp102-3 Traditional Pub

☎ 677 9781; **14-15 Manor St, Stoneybatter; ☎ 38, 39 or 39A**

It's slightly out of the way, to the west of Smithfield, but this is a terrific neighbourhood bar that has benefited from the influx of foreign nationals to the area in recent years. In warm weather, the beer garden out the back is a great place to enjoy a pint.

### NEALON'S Map p85 Traditional Pub

☎ 872 3247; **Capel St**

The warm and cosy décor of this traditional pub is matched by the exceptionally friendly staff. It's a bit of old Dublin on a street getting ready to take off, so catch it while you can. There's live jazz on Sunday.

### OVAL Map p85 Traditional Pub

☎ 872 1259; **78 Middle Abbey St**

This is a great little pub, where young and old come together in conversation and rich, creamy pints go down a treat. The Tardis effect is evident once you walk through the door: it is much bigger than it looks from the outside, spreading over three floors.

### PATRICK CONWAY'S Map pp102-3 Traditional Pub

☎ 873 2687; **70 Parnell St**

This gem of a pub has been lining up drinks since 1745 and joyous fathers – including

Colm Meaney's character in *The Snapper* (see p43) – have been skulling celebratory pints at its bar since the day the Rotunda Maternity Hospital opened across the road in 1757. Upstairs is the fantastic **Boom Boom Room** (p182), one of the best places in the city for good live music.

### SACKVILLE LOUNGE

Map pp102–3

Traditional Pub

☎ 874 5222; Sackville Pl

This tiny 19th-century one-room, wood-panelled bar lies just off O'Connell St and is popular with actors from the nearby Abbey and Peacock theatres (see p184), as well as a disproportionate number of elderly drinkers. It's a good pub for a solitary pint.

### SEAN O'CASEY'S

Map pp102–3

Traditional Pub

☎ 874 8675; 105 Marlborough St

The antithesis of the Dublin superpub, this is the kind of place where the male drinkers (and there seems to be *only* male drinkers) look up and grunt when you walk through the door. It's a Kerry pub, decked out in the county's Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) colours, and is particularly lively when Kerry are playing in Croke Park.

### WELCOME INN

Map pp102–3

Traditional Pub

☎ 874 3227; 93 Parnell St

This musty, scruffy, wonderful bar has been a favourite with the city's college slackers for a couple of generations. They love the oversized lounge and its assorted cast of characters, which these days include groups of Spanish and Italian tourists looking to check out Dublin alcoholics up close.

### ENO WINES

Map pp102–3

Wine Bar

☎ 636 0616; Irish Financial Services Centre, Mayor Sq

A wine bar in a financial services centre sounds like a formula for insufferable pre-

tentiousness, but this remarkable venture is unique to the city so we thought we'd give it a try – and we weren't disappointed. Basically, this is a wine-tasting centre where you buy a card for whatever amount you like and are then free to try any of the 60-plus wines that are available, deducting the cost of it from your card as you go along. The Shiraz is to die for, darling.

## BEYOND THE ROYAL CANAL

It is just beyond the north side's canal that you can find some of the best traditional pubs in Dublin, and these places are highly recommended.

### GRAVEDIGGERS (AKA KAVANAGH'S)

Off Map p118

Traditional Pub

☎ 830 7978; 1 Prospect Sq, Glasnevin; ☎ 13

The gravediggers from the adjacent **Glasnevin Cemetery** (p118) had a secret serving hatch so that they could drink on the job – hence the pub's nickname. Founded in 1833 by one John Kavanagh and still in the family, this pub is one of the best in Ireland, virtually unchanged in 150 years. In summer time the green of the square is full of drinkers basking in the sun, while inside the hardened locals ensure that ne'er a hint of sunshine disturbs some of the best Guinness in town. An absolute classic.

### RYAN'S

Map pp62–3

Traditional Pub

☎ 677 6097; 28 Parkgate St; ☎ Heuston

Near Phoenix Park, this is one of only a handful of city pubs that has retained its Victorian décor virtually intact, complete with ornate bar and snugs. An institution among Dublin's public houses, this is truly worth the trip.

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