

Dublin's delights

Ancient cathedrals and cobbled streets, museums, theatres and annual festivals, as well as a lively pub and music scene make Dublin a firm favourite for all language travellers, as GILLIAN EVANS reports.

According to Aoife Govern at International House Icon, Ireland's capital city is fast becoming one of the trendiest cities in Europe. 'With a young population and lively atmosphere, Dublin has become one of the most exciting destinations in Europe,' she says, adding, 'There is so much to discover here.'

Dublin is relatively small - 'Once in the city centre, you can walk everywhere,' says Justin Quinn, Managing Director of the Centre of English Studies - but there is plenty to do. Trinity College, Dublin Castle and Christchurch Cathedral are just a few of the historical attractions, while the cobbled streets of Temple Bar and the shopping area around Grafton Street are both popular student haunts.

There are plenty of museums that give an insight into Dublin's interesting past, such as Dublinia, which takes visitors back to Dublin in the 12th and 13th centuries, and the Old Jameson Distillery, which tracks the history of Irish whisky and includes a tasting bar for visitors to sample this popular liquor. Dublin also has a rich literary history. 'Some of the greatest [20th century] writers have come from Dublin,' says Quinn.

Most schools aim to incorporate the city's attractions into their programmes. 'We have designed [courses] so the students can learn something about Ireland, its culture and its people,' says Quinn. At Berlitz Language Centre, Manager, Mary Fitzpatrick, says, 'Many of the city's museums and art galleries produce worksheets which we have our students com-



Edge [from U2]. They were flabbergasted - but actually most Dubliners spend their time trying to avoid such celebrities!'

Most pubs offer live entertainment and the city buzzes with a youthful vibrancy both day and night. 'Dublin boasts a diverse range of restaurants, cafés, bars, pubs, clubs, theatres and cinemas,' says Fitzpatrick. 'Add to this the literary pub crawls, musical pub

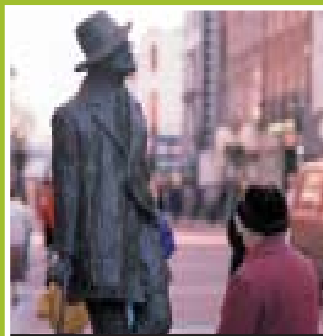
plete after visiting the appropriate collections [with their classmates].'

Both modern and traditional music play an important role in Dublin, and traditional Irish dancing continues to be a popular pastime for Dubliners.

Along with the works of author James Joyce and the internationally popular Guinness beer, the city's other famous export is the rock band, U2. In fact, says John Poole from Aisling, 'A few weeks ago, three of our students found themselves queuing up [to pay at the local supermarket] behind Bono and the



Musicians, Grafton Street
Live music is a tradition in Ireland and in central Grafton Street, buskers often entertain the crowds of shoppers. Traditionally, live music in Ireland would include violin (fiddle) or flute playing



James Joyce Statue
James Joyce is one of Dublin's most famous citizens, celebrated each year on Bloomsday on June 16. His statue is one of many in and around Dublin celebrating some of the city's famous residents

crawls, greyhound [dog] racing and various gigs and concerts, and you have something for practically everybody.'

Despite its popularity with tourists, Dublin has retained its cultural charm, yet at the same time it is an important commercial centre. 'People who have not been to Dublin previously are surprised by the modern atmosphere in this ancient city,' asserts Govern. 'We have succeeded in evolving as a nation without losing our cultural identity.'

Another major draw of Dublin for overseas visitors is its 'special brand of Irish hospitality', as Quinn puts it. Govern agrees.

'Students can extend the learning experience outside the classroom through interaction with local

people in our traditional but funky bars, pubs and restaurants,' she says. 'This is where the famous 'Irish welcome' comes into play.'

As example of the friendliness of the people, Kevin Kelly, Operations Manager at Annalivia School, says, 'In the run up to the World Cup [football tournament], a number of our students who were staying with families in the same housing estate organised a friendly [football] match, Spain versus Ireland, with some local children.'

Agent viewpoint

'Most students tend to choose Dublin [rather than any other cities and towns in Ireland] because it is the capital and the largest city in Ireland. They feel that they have more at hand in a large city. In their free time, students tend to go to the pubs, go to the movies, have dinner at one of the local restaurants or visit historical sites. At the weekends, they go on excursions to discover [the rest of] Ireland. The main and only disadvantage of Dublin is that the traffic is so bad that 90 per cent of our students who are staying with families - all located in nice suburban areas - complain bitterly about the travel time it takes them to get to and from school, mainly in the morning. We have somehow solved the problem by sending our students to schools located in the suburbs, but that formula does curtail our choice. Ireland is getting more and more popular and most students really enjoy their stay with an Irish family. Our volume of students going to Ireland is increasing year after year and the quality of teaching in Ireland is altogether very good.'

Pierre Richaud, Formalangues, France

'Dublin is very popular among young and senior students. A general opinion is that Irish people are more friendly and it's cheaper to study in Ireland than in the UK - the euro helps. [Advantages include] host families, which are more friendly and take more care of students. Also Dublin is a capital but it's not as big as London and easier to visit.'

Stefania Vettori, School and Vacation, Italy

'Students choose Dublin because it is a famous city in Europe which is [well marketed]. It is also cheaper than destinations [in the UK]. Popular tourist attractions for students in Dublin are Trinity College, Dublinia and the Guinness Store House.'

Valerie Aron, Envol Espace, France

St Patrick's Cathedral stands on the oldest Christian site in Dublin (main picture)

Quinn tells of two junior students who had missed their stop on the bus when they were on their way home. The driver turned the bus around and drove them right to their front door.

'Another quality of the city is the relative ease with which one can come into contact with others,' says Fitzpatrick. 'This is a result of the easygoing nature of the city which manages to combine a hectic business

core with a lighter approach to enjoying what life has to offer.'

In keeping with the population's friendly, fun-loving nature, it is no surprise that Dublin has several festivals during the year. As Govern says, 'The Irish are known as experts at organising festivals to celebrate almost anything under the sun!' □



Trinity College, The Long Room, Old Library
Trinity College, founded in 1592, is the oldest university in Ireland. In the Long Room, 200,000 of the library's oldest books are on display along with marble busts