

Ireland Travel Journal

Monday, June 9, 2025 – Dublin, Ireland

Hello from Dublin, the capital of the Republic of Ireland and home to more pubs than you can shake a pint of Guinness at. My daughter Julia and I arrived this morning. She's a flight attendant with a layover here, and I tagged along since Lori had other plans. Julia's stay is just one day, while I'm here for three, unless I can't get a standby seat home on Thursday, in which case this three-day journal may get longer.

In 1921, the Anglo-Irish Treaty gave dominion status to twenty-six of the thirty-two Irish counties, creating the Irish Free State. Then, in 1949, Ireland went full independent republic and split from the British Commonwealth. The remaining six counties became Northern Ireland, and tensions between Protestants and Catholics there have run high ever since, rivaling the conflict in the Middle Eastern in terms of violence and persistence.



After dropping our bags at the hotel, we headed to Howth, a charming fishing village a half-hour from Dublin. From the pier, we hopped on a boat tour around Ireland's Eye, a small, uninhabited island teeming with seabirds and seals. We followed it up with a seafood lunch and a couple of pints of Guinness, because when in Ireland, you hydrate the local way.

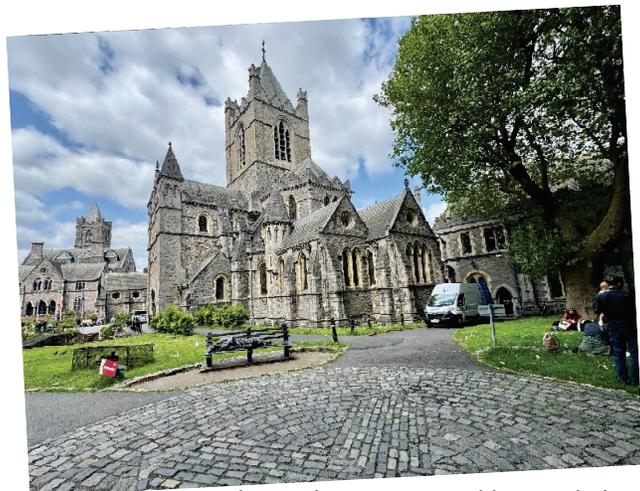
Back in Dublin, we wandered the city center before sitting down to dinner at a Szechuan restaurant, because nothing says "Welcome to Ireland" like Chinese food and chopsticks.

Tuesday, June 10, 2025 – Dublin

Dublin is famous for its pub culture, powered primarily by Guinness Stout and Jameson Whiskey, essential components of a balanced Irish diet.

Julia went to the airport, and I kicked off the morning with a visit to the Guinness Storehouse, formerly the fermentation plant and now the city's top tourist attraction. It's seven floors of history, brewing science, and enough beer tastings to make you forget what time zone you're in.

Breakfast of champions? In Ireland, absolutely!



Next, I wandered over to Christ Church Cathedral. Nearly a thousand years old, it has the largest underground crypt in Europe and even an original copy of the Magna Carta.

After lunch, I joined a walking tour of Dublin's historic landmarks, including Dublin Castle, which has been around since the 13th century, and learned about the humble beginnings of local rock legends U2.

Later in the day, I toured Kilmainham Gaol, a former prison now serving as a museum. Many Irish revolutionaries, including the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising, were held and executed here. It's grim, sobering, and deeply moving, and an essential stop to understanding Ireland beyond the stout and soda bread.

Meanwhile, Julia's return flight was canceled after she spent all day at the airport, so she came back into the city. We had dinner together in a beautifully restored Victorian bank building, now a pub/restaurant, because in Dublin, every building eventually becomes a drinking establishment.



Wednesday, June 11, 2025 – Northern Ireland

Today was a day trip to Northern Ireland, because why not visit another country when it's so close?

First stop: Belfast. I toured the areas at the heart of "The Troubles" with a local who lived through them. There's still a physical wall dividing the Protestant and Catholic communities, with murals, memorials, and Protestant militias on one side and the Irish Republican Army on the other side.

Next up: the ruins of Dunluce Castle, perched on the edge of a cliff and dating mostly from the 16th and 17th centuries. It's so iconic, parts of "Game of Thrones" were filmed there.



Finally, I hit Giant's Causeway, home to some 40,000 interlocking basalt columns formed by ancient volcanic activity, or, according to legend, by a giant named Finn. Either



way, it's stunning. It's officially the fourth-greatest natural wonder in the UK. I don't know what the top three are, but they probably got there by bribing the judges with Guinness on tap because this site seems hard to beat.



Thursday, June 12, 2025

I got a seat on a flight from Dublin to Atlanta, so I'm on my way home. I enjoyed my quick visit to Ireland and hope to return soon to see more of the country. Unfortunately, I didn't get to see any leprechauns, as they became extinct around 1969. I also didn't see many red heads besides myself. On the positive side, Guinness is available worldwide. Love, Stephen