

DUBLIN

If you hear the word 'craic' (pronounced 'crack') in Dublin, know that it means 'good times' or 'fun' – often associated with drinking. The Irish are a complicated, but definitely craic-loving, people with a friendly approachability.

from staff reports

Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, and U-2 aren't the only reasons for things Irish to be in vogue. Drove of young people have been flocking to the Irish capital Dublin for years now since the "Celtic Tiger" euro-fueled economy began attracting so many ambitious Eastern Europeans who now call this home. They've been joined by other immigrants and visitors from all over the world who have come to enjoy the party, along with the saucy native Irish. Indeed, the majority of people in the central district appear to be from somewhere else judging by the melange of languages and accents other than Irish.

Irish brews and whiskies are famous worldwide, and many and varied are those centers of Irish social life, the pubs. Dubliners in particular have a well-deserved reputation for enjoying a drink. With every round, the brogues become more pronounced and a mischievous humor emerges; queer descendants of ancient Celts and Norsemen in this Emerald Isle can hold their own in sometimes raucous partying, almost any night.

Sexual liberation is still fresh in the collective memory here. Not long ago, condoms had to be smuggled across the border from Northern Ireland, divorce and abortion were illegal, and being gay practically was too (only decriminalized in

1993). But things have changed, and the scene has begun to move out of the clubs and into the mainstream. As a consequence, fewer bars are exclusively gay here now than in the "bad" old days.

Dublin's gay nightspots are easily walkable from one another, and on most evenings the streets are full of people crowding the sidewalks and pubs of the Temple Bar area along the River Liffey. There's plenty of live traditional music, as well as authentic Irish stew, to be found here. With smoking banned indoors, many people congregate outside, and conversations are easy with most anyone who catches your fancy.

Going Out

Front Lounge (33 Parliament Street), gay-owned-and-operated, is a unique, attitude-free club. Anyone – gay, straight, bi, lesbian, or whatever – is welcome, and celebrities the likes of Sinéad O'Connor and Elton John have been spotted here. The *Village Voice* called it "the most stylish, funky, and open-minded bar in Dublin." Front Lounge hosts special events and packs 'em in for a festive Karaoke Night on Tuesday with Dublin Diva Panti. Dine on freshly prepared tapas served all day and listen to live DJs spin a wide variety of good music. Known for great cocktails (such as the Appletini), the Front Lounge also serves a large selection of beers and wines from around the world, including

Bud from the U.S. and several Eastern European beers. Thursday nights here are popular for their 6-euro mojito drinks specials. The Front Lounge is an ideal place to begin your tour of the Irish capital's gay nightlife as it gets going early, and it's also the best (and only gay) place to catch all the big sports events.

Just around the corner there are two popular gay dance clubs, only a block apart on the same busy street. **The George** (89 South Great Georges Street) has been around so long that their pub, Bridie's, has been affectionately tagged the "Jurassic Room" by some. It opens at noon. There's a Wednesday-through-Sunday dance club here from 5 p.m. until 2:30 a.m., with many acts and shows. Wednesday nights it's Space N'vader, alternative drag with Vada Beau and Divina; on Fridays Annie Balls does the Missing Link game show; and on Saturday nights there's karaoke with Vada Beau. Sundays are the biggest show night of all, with jazz act Zrazy doing the Tea and Sympathy night from 4 to 7 p.m. Then from 8:30 to 11:30 p.m. Shirley Temple Bar emcees their big weekly lip-synch drag extravaganza – the line is out the door, so come early. There's dancing before and after the shows, with no cover before 10 p.m.; an upstairs lounge, the Loft, is open from 9 p.m. The George is open seven days, but closes early (11:30 p.m.) on Mondays and Tuesdays.

The nearby **Dragon** (64-65 South Great



Security at The George



Dolores of The George



At The George



At Front Lounge



At The George



Peter & Walid of
Basic Instincts



At Front Lounge



At The George



At The George



Chris & Ian at The George



Joe



Angie & Anna of Front Lounge



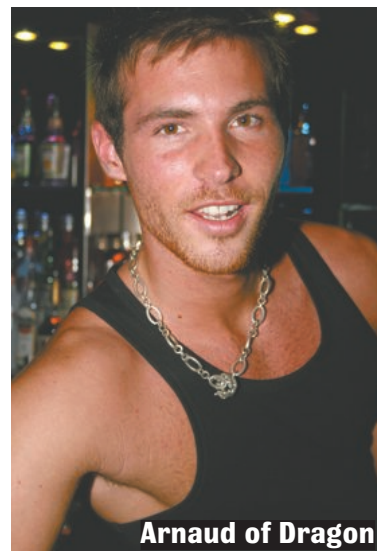
Parisian visitors at Dragon



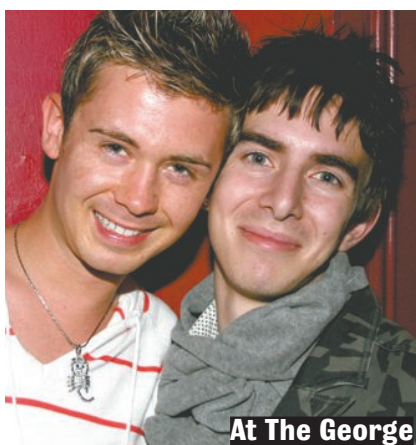
At The George



Divina & Vada of The George



Arnaud of Dragon



At The George



At Dragon

Georges Street) is a lavish cocktail bar and dance nightclub on two floors. Open daily from 5 p.m., they also have occasional shows, usually without cover charge. It's quite packed on the weekends with a young, stylish crowd of guys, and also women, who like to play until 2:30 a.m. on Thursdays through Saturdays, but not so late Sunday through Wednesday.

Glitz is the Tuesday night gay dance event at **Break for the Border** (2 Johnstons Place, Lower Stephens Street) from 11 p.m., while Eyecandy is a Sunday night gay-friendly dance event at **Spirit** (57 Middle Abbey).

Earlyhouse at **White Horse** (Georges Quay) is a 7 a.m. to noon Friday/Saturday late, late after-hours shindig with a gay streak. **Spice at Spy** (Powerscourt Townhouse, South Williams Street) is gay-friendly on Saturdays, and Bukkake at **Purty Kitchen** (34-35 East Essex Street) is a Sunday night queer and alternative, late event on four floors.

Queer & Alternative (www.Gay-ireland.com/QA) is a popular quarterly dance event that's moved recently. Their latest venue (on October 19) was at the **Vaults** (Thevaults.ie) behind Connolly Station; check online for their next date. Website Queerid.com can keep you updated about this very changeable dance night line-up.

Getting in

The Boilerhouse (12 Crane Lane), a popular men's sauna and social club also in Temple Bar. Billed as "Dublin's best and biggest sauna," it's a treat to explore, with colorful and cavernous cruisy areas, a cafe, and two steam rooms. Private rooms are also available where you can let off some steam with one of the many loyal regulars who keep this place busy, especially on weekends. The Boilerhouse is open 1 p.m. to 6 a.m. Monday-Thursday, and non-stop from 1 p.m. Friday to 6 a.m. on Monday morning.

The other sauna in town, the **Dock** (21 Upper Ormond Quay), has a steam-room, dry sauna, video and dark rooms, internet access, snacks and refreshments. Their B&B above the bathhouse, **Inn on the Liffey** (21 Upper Ormond Quay) overlooks the River Liffey just across from the old city. With accommodations here come free admission to the Dock. Ask to see the

room before you pay, as the amenities here may be too basic for some.

The Clarence Hotel (6-8 Wellington Quay; TheClarence.ie) is a local general public hotel also beside the Liffey, and **Basic Instincts Suite Accommodations** (56 South William Street or 8 Eustace Street; Basic-Instincts.com) will be opening soon with full-floor all-amenity apartment suites above the store of the same name. See details on their website.

Four and six person dormer beds go for as little as 26 euros a night at **Barnacles** (19 Temple Lane; Barnacles.ie), a comfortable hostel at the center of Temple Bar. They also have private rooms with double beds, *en suite* bathrooms, and balconies for under 90 euros. The international backpacker mix is informal, they have a communal kitchen you can use, and reception is open 24 hours. The drawback here is you can't bring in newly-met friends.

About 10 minutes by bus from city center in a quiet neighborhood overlooking a park, you'll find a decidedly comfortable option: **Nua Haven Bed & Breakfast** (087-686-7062; Nua.cc). Owners Bruno and Mike can be friendly and helpful without being intrusive. The buffet breakfast is a gourmet, do-it-yourself affair, and available to you anytime between 8 a.m. to noon, so late sleepers won't go hungry. Rooms are comfortable and include TV/VCRs and *en suite* bathrooms, plus they have broadband internet access.

Eating out

Dublin is blessed with an amazing variety of restaurants with authentic cuisines from all over the world, as well as basic home-grown offerings. Many of the pubs have daily lunch specials, too.

Juice (73-83 South Great Georges Street) is an innovative and stylish vegetarian restaurant between the George and the Dragon, with natural and organic food at reasonable prices. Besides the many freshly prepared juices and smoothies, they offer delicious vegan and veggie lunches and dinners daily till 10 p.m. Juice also offers a great selection of organic wines and beers, as well as exotic teas, organic coffees, and guilt-free desserts.

The gay-owned **Gruel** (68a Dame Street) and its sister restaurant **Mermaid Cafe** (69/70 Dame Street) are two must-try

dining choices conveniently located between the two principal gay streets in town. Owners Ben and Mark started the upscale-but-funky Mermaid Cafe 11 years ago, and then Gruel followed on the Mermaid's success five years later as a more economical way to enjoy the great culinary creations of cooks devoted to naturally delicious, wholesome, and hearty grub. Open daily serving lunch and dinner, Gruel, as its name suggests, offers simple but tasty fare: a cornucopia of delightfully under-processed victuals, including naturally raised meats, fresh soups, daily specials, as well as lots of great teas and coffees.

Lemon Jelly (10/11b Essex Street), is loved for their wholesome bagels, panini, and stuffed crepes in both savory and sweet varieties. Other gay-friendly Temple Bar restaurants include: **Chameleon** (1 Lower Fawne's) for Indonesian fare; **Trastevere** (1 Temple Bar Square) for "New York-style Italian"; **Monty's** (28 Eustace), an award winning Nepalese restaurant; and the **Tea Room** (6-8 Wellington Way) at the Clarence Hotel.

Other restaurants a little further out include: **Trocadero** (3 St. Andrews Street), a theater-inspired restaurant with highly-rated food near St. Stephen's Green; **Odessa** (13-14 Dame Court), with simple but tasty food, comfortable atmosphere, and reasonable prices; **Saba** (26-28 Clarendon), serving traditional Thai and Vietnamese food with rich authentic flavors; and **L'Ecrivain** (109a Lower Baggot), for fine dining that's popular enough to require reservations most nights. You can check out web links for most of these on our website at Guidemag.com (see Dublin) for menus and more information.

For an inexpensive nibble while listening to the street musicians play at Temple Bar Square, or just watching the river and the people flow by, there's a multitude of take-outs, from kababs to burgers, in the area. Three good-quality fast food locales with decent prices include: **Burdock's** (Epicurian Hall, 13 Liffey Walk), Dublin's most experienced fish and chip shop (since 1913!), just across Ha'Penny Bridge; **Di Fontaine's Pizza** (3 Crown Alley), beside the famous **Eamonn Doran** bar and music venue on the square, offering big, American-style slices; and **Heavenly Hot Dogs** (3 Temple Bar Square), with tables

**On the bar at
The George**



Basic Instincts



on the square and a fun international staff.

The Saturday market stalls at Meeting House Square are a good place to get fresh produce, local cheese, fresh baked goodies, and various kinds of other finger-food snacks, too.

Shopping

Before a rowdy all-nighter at one of those wild Dublin dance parties, get a makeover from someone who understands the beauty needs of the body-conscious male, and who offers exfoliation, waxing, massage, facials, and more. **Stephen Thomas** (Coghills Court, top floor, Temple Bar; 01-672-9444) will set you up for the runways of Milan – or at least the back-alleys of Dublin – looking your jaw-dropping best.

At a new location, **Basic Instincts** (8 Eustace Street) is Dublin's only gay-owned store of its kind, with a great selection of leatherwear, PVC, rubberwear, and intimate lingerie. They also carry a full section of adult magazines, greeting cards, and DVDs, plus gifts for all kinds of kinky occasions, including items from Mr. B of Amsterdam. The all-natural Chinese Viagra they carry comes highly recommended. A new basement cruising and cinema complex with private cabins, glory holes, and day passes is planned to open here by November 1.

Condompower (57 Dame Street) is another nearby shop, billed as the “complete adult store” right where and when you need them, open seven days a week.

Beginning just outside the gates of Trinity College is the pedestrian shopping district at Grafton Street. Its broad expanse

is packed with people and lined with every kind of shop and cafe you could imagine, large and small, and spilling off along adjacent streets. There are indoor arcades and malls here too, including the giant **Stephen's Green Centre**. Nearby Dawson Street has lots of bookshops, stylish cafes, and restaurants. At the top end of Grafton Street is St. Stephen's Greens, Dublin's large city park, with gardens, fountains, and lakes.

Resources and events

Gay Community News, or GCN (Gcn.ie) is the informative free gay monthly magazine that's distributed throughout Ireland.

The **International Dublin Gay Theatre Festival** (Gaytheatre.ie) is set for May 1 to 14, 2008, the fifth year for this event.

Dublin Gay Pride (Dublinpride.org) is scheduled for a week of celebrations in June each year, with a Saturday parade.

Fringefest (Fringefest.com) is a festival of contemporary arts, an annual platform for the most innovative theater, dance, music, and more. The 2007 festival just happened in September, so check their website for 2008 dates and other information.

The Irish Film Institute (6 Eustace Street; Irishfilm.ie) screens rare cinematic gems, and film festivals in Temple Bar. **The Alternative Miss Ireland Pageant** (Alternativemissireland.com) is an annual expansion of “all known definitions of beauty.” Catch them in 2008 for their “21st Trans-iversary” spectacular – see details online.

The Outhouse (105 Capel Street;

www.Outhouse.ie) is a fantastic building that now houses Dublin's GLBT community center as well as a cafe, meeting rooms for Belong, the gay youth group; and the **Gay Men's Health Project**. It's a great place for local information and the opportunity to meet local activists.

The **Irish Queer Archive** (35a Patrick Street; Irishqueerarchive.com) is a Dublin area non-profit group that collects all things Irish relating to homosexuality.

Beyond Dublin

Within an hour of Dublin there are extraordinary countryside areas to see such as the Glendalough lakes (one hour south), or near Newgrange, on the way to Drogheda and Belfast, there are prehistoric ruins, not unlike Stonehenge, that may be the world's oldest surviving man-made structure.

There are other Irish towns, each with its own gay community, and Belfast, to the north in British Ulster, also has a gay scene.

For listings in Belfast, Derry, and Galway browse Ireland on Guidemag.com.

Dublin is the gateway to many European destinations. With discount airlines such as Easyjet and Ryanair, there's a wide choice of cities beyond at a fraction of bigger carriers' rates. The beautiful countryside and Dublin's fun-loving city pleasures are good reasons for a stop-over and a romp in Ireland's mystical landscape with people just waiting to charm the pants off you! ▼



Ha'Penny Bridge on the River Liffey



Lemon Jelly at Temple Bar



Looking up South Great Georges Street

**Catch a piece of the action...
Rugby World Cup 2007**

THE FRONT LOUNGE

- Fri 7th Sept
France v Argentina
- Sun 9th Sept
Ireland v Namibia
- Sat 15th Sept
Ireland v Georgia
- Fri 21st Sept
Ireland v France
- Sun 30th Sept
Ireland v Argentina

**See Emerald Warriors rugby
at the Front Lounge**



Temple Bar Square by day

CORK

Ireland's second city

Ireland's second largest city is situated on the banks of the River Lee in the south of the County Cork. This was originally a port town built on canals and river channels that are now filled in. Cork is more laid-back than Dublin. There's a large artistic community here, with music, dance, theater, and visual arts in abundance. The gay scene is small but tight-knit and the divisions and cliques of larger cities are absent here, with ages and genders mixing more freely. It's been a more old-fashioned, less "out" gay community with an underground, tucked-out-of-sight feel.

As gay people are more open and visible, the general public pubs and nightclubs have become gay-friendlier of late.

Nightlife

Instinct Bar (Sullivan's Quay, opposite Grande Parade) is Cork's biggest, most popular gay nightclub, with lots of events such as the recent Mr. Gay Instinct, emceed by April Showers, and an upcoming Mardi Gras bash. Instinct now has a late-night license, so many people don't go anywhere else.

Flux! (56 MacCurtain Street) is a stylish but comfortable video bar and lounge for meeting, chatting, drinking, and watching must-see television events. There's also wi-fi internet.

Loafers (26 Douglas Street) is Ireland's oldest gay pub. It's quieter than the big and cruisy crowd at Instinct, with more women joining in the mix too. As the place is up for sale, consult local guides for updates.

The Other Place (7-8 Augustine Street), a late cafe and bar, has special-event weekend club nights.

The gay-friendly **Chambers Bar** (Washington Street across from Courthouse) looks like an old haberdashery store, with mannequins and patterns around. Thursdays are gayest when the

emphasis is on stylish appearances, but it's gay-friendly every night.

Climax is at the **Liquid Lounge** (29-31 Marlborough Street, above Clancy's Bar) and is a gay monthly nightclub event, usually on third Saturdays. Check Gaycork.com for precise dates and times. They have a pretty roof garden, a plush interior, and a big crowd.

Freakscene at the **Qube** (Oliver Plunket Street) is an every Wednesday alternative club night getting started around midnight. There's dancing upstairs to indie/alternative and soul, funk, motown, and R&B downstairs.

Cork Sauna (36 Lower John Street) is the local tubs. It's hard to find, but being the only such place in town, it's quite popular despite the minimal creature comforts.

Food

Proby's Bistro (Proby's Quay) is a local favorite bistro and bar next to St. Finbarre's Cathedral.

Quay Co-op (26 Sullivan's Quay), a workers' cooperative vegetarian and vegan restaurant, is oft cited as Cork's best of its genre. They have a wide variety of meals (from snacks to three-course) and organic wines; also they serve breakfast from 9 a.m. to noon. Their organic and whole food store and bakery downstairs sells supplements, herbal remedies, and essential oils.

Cafe Paradiso (16 Lancaster Quay) is a vegetarian restaurant with a lively atmosphere and food to tempt even the most skeptical meat-eater.

Grub Cafe at the **Other Place Cafe** (8

South Main Street) is at the Cork Gay Community Development Project, with a healthy selection of soup, panini, wraps, crepes, beverages, and breakfast too. They provide free internet access for customers as well.

Down on the coast just to the south of Cork, the **Bulman** (Summercove, Kinsale) is a gay-friendly 200-year-old pub and Mediterranean/Asian restaurant. Their tables overlook a peaceful scene of the sea and boats in the harbor.

Events and information

Useful local websites include: Gaycork.com, with directories and an online gay map; Gayprojectcork.com; and Peoplesrepublicofcork.com.

The **Alternative Miss Cork Pageant** takes place in February. "Contestants must be special and their allure must be

of a rarer sort," say promoters, and the winner goes to Dublin for the Miss Alternative Ireland contest.

Cork Gay Pride activities span a week as May slides into June each year. See Corkpride.com for details on next years celebrations.

Outlook is the local gay and lesbian film festival. It's a part of Murphy's Cork Film Festival, the biggest of its kind in Ireland.

This year's is October 14 to 21. See Corkfilmfest.org for future dates.

Accommodations

Emerson House (2 Clarence Terrace; Emersonhousecork.com) is a year-round bed and breakfast not far from the train station, with *en suite* rooms and wi-fi internet access from 40 euros per person (sharing).

Roman House (3 St. Johns Terrace; Interglobal.ie/romanhouse) is a gay and lesbian bed and breakfast with five *en suite* rooms from 55 to 75 euros.

The Clarion (Lapps Quay; Clarionhotelcorkcity.com) is a large modern hotel with 160 rooms and a gay-friendly bar called Kudos. ▼

