

Merrion Square & Around

Neighborhood Top Five

1 Merrion Square (p89)
Exploring this oasis of calm steeped in Irish history and flanked by a handful of heavyweight museums.

2 National Gallery (p88)
Perusing the collection at Ireland's pre-eminent gallery, packed with art from eight centuries of European tradition.

3 Museum of Natural History (p90)
Visiting this antiquated museum, which has changed little since it was opened in the middle of the 19th century.

4 National Museum of Ireland – Archaeology (p84)
Uncovering the fascinating treasures of the most important repository

of Irish culture, from finely worked gold to prehistoric bodies.

5 O'Donoghue's (p95)
Enjoying a night of music and beer in the very epitome of an Irish traditional pub.



For more detail of this area see Map p248 →

Explore Merrion Square & Around

Ireland's national collections of art, history and natural history are to be found in the imposing neoclassical buildings that line the elegant Georgian streets and parks of the city's best-maintained 18th-century neighbourhood. Depending on your level of interest you'll need to devote as much as half a day to each, or just an hour or two if you're only interested in an overview. You'll also want to spend some time looking at the private residences that line Merrion and Fitzwilliam Sqs – the many plaques on these Georgian buildings remind us that it was behind these brightly coloured doors that the likes of Oscar Wilde and William Butler Yeats hung their hats. These streets also house the offices of some of the country's most important businesses, so when there's even a hint of sunshine, workers pour out into the various parks, or follow the lead of poet Patrick Kavanagh and lounge along the banks of the Grand Canal. When they clock off, these same workers head to the wonderfully atmospheric and historical pubs of Baggot St and Merrion Row for a couple of scoops of chips and some unwinding banter. There are also some smart restaurants, including several of Dublin's best.

Local Life

- ➔ **High Art** The Jack B Yeats collection in the National Gallery (p88) soothes a Dubliner's troubled soul, while the Royal Hibernian Academy (p91) is an excellent showcase of contemporary art. For something a little more affordable, the weekend art market (p95) along the railings of Merrion Sq displays surprisingly good-quality work.
- ➔ **Beer Power** Follow the power-brokers, politicians and business crowd as they unwind in some of the city's best traditional boozers: James Toner's (p95) and Doheny & Nesbitt's (p95) are established favourites, but O'Donoghue's (p95) of Merrion Row is in a league of its own.
- ➔ **Fine Dining** The critics regularly praise Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud (p94) as the best in the country; whatever debate there is exists as a result of restaurants like L'Ecrivain (p94), but there's also a bunch of less exalted spots worth checking out, like Etto (p92).

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Bus** Most cross-city buses will get you here (or near enough).
- ➔ **Train** The most convenient DART stop is Pearse St, with the station entrance on Westland Row.
- ➔ **On Foot** Merrion Sq is less than 500m from St Stephen's Green (and Grafton St).

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

The Vaughan Collection of watercolours by JMW Turner at the **National Gallery** (p88) is only displayed during the month of January, when the light is just right to appreciate the delicacy and beauty of these masterpieces.

Best Examples of Irish Art

- ➔ Yeats Room, National Gallery (p88)
- ➔ Treasury, National Museum of Ireland – Archaeology (p84)
- ➔ Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) Gallagher Gallery (p91)

For reviews, see p84 ➔

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud (p94)
- ➔ L'Ecrivain (p94)
- ➔ Xico (p92)
- ➔ Etto (p92)

For reviews, see p92 ➔

Best Drinking & Nightlife

- ➔ O'Donoghue's (p95)
- ➔ James Toner's (p95)
- ➔ Doheny & Nesbitt's (p95)

For reviews, see p95 ➔