

PETERGREENBERG.COM

An Insider's Guide to Travel: News, Tips, Information & Inspiration

SIGN UP

for more news, tips and exclusive content in our free newsletter.

TRENDING NOW: [Soft vs. Hard Luggage](#) [MH17](#) [Flying Over Conflict Areas](#) [Travel Gear](#) [Hidden Oahu](#) [Save on International Calls](#) [Ice Cream](#)

[HOME](#) [ABOUT PETER](#) [TRAVEL TOPICS >](#) [VIDEOS >](#) [RADIO](#) [STORE](#) [ISRAEL: THE ROYAL TOUR >](#)

[BRITISH ISLES](#) / [CULINARY TRAVEL](#) / [CULTURAL IMMERSION](#) / [CULTURE](#) / [ECO TRAVEL](#) / [ENTERTAINMENT](#) / [EUROPE](#) / [ROMANTIC TRAVEL](#) / [TRAVEL AND MUSIC](#)

Exploring Ireland's 'Wild West': Galway, Connemara and Inis Mór

Posted by [PeterGreenberg.com](#) on February 28, 2013 at 10:00 am

Share on: [f](#) [t](#) [g+](#)

Many a visitor heads home from Ireland after sampling the sights—and the Guinness—in Dublin, Kerry and Cork. Ask the Irish though and they will tell you not to miss West coast: the Celtic culture of Galway city, the romantic moors of Connemara, the fierce cliffs of the Aran isles. In honor of the [Gathering](#) and upcoming Saint Patrick's Day celebration, Lynn Langway reports on the splendors of Ireland's less-traveled shore.

You may also like:



[Ask the Locals Travel Guide:](#)



[Radio Guests – Ashford Castle,](#)



[St. Patrick's Day](#)



[Radio Guests –](#)

If you've suffered through too many ragged renditions of "Galway Bay," you may think you're immune to the charms of Irish music. But when confronted with the real deal, prepare to be captivated. On a Tuesday night in Galway's [Crane Bar](#), my husband and I were swept away by the lilting fiddles, booming Bodhran drums and transcendent tin whistle played by the gifted circle of musicians who gathered to jam. The infectious tunes—performed that session by traditional music fans from the National University of Ireland-Galway—were impossible to resist. Soon the whole pub was engaged in an uproar of aerobic approbation, feet stamping and tapping, hands clapping and thumping the tables in time.



It's no wonder that Galway boasts about being Ireland's cultural heart, the most Irish city in the land. It's as Celtic as a Claddagh ring, the hands-clasping-heart circlet that was supposedly created here in the 17th century, and named for the local fishing enclave. Even a three-day stay will immerse you in Celtic music, theatre, and language; an estimated 10 percent of the city's population of 75,000 speaks Gaelic, and the National Irish Theatre stages productions here in the ancient tongue. Galway treasures its 800+ years of recorded history. While developers in Dublin were

allowed to demolish one ancient site to build a parking garage, city authorities here turned the 13th century town hall that was unearthed during construction into an eye-catching archeological display.

Far from being frozen in amber, fast-growing Galway has turned into one of Europe's liveliest towns, celebrating anything from art to oysters with citywide festivals. Visit in spring or fall, when 15,000 or so students seem to be everywhere, but the tourists are more scarce, and you'll discover the old and new sections of the city buzzing with creative restaurants, adventurous museums and galleries, and world-class productions by the acclaimed [Druid Theatre Company](#) and several other troupes. Yes, you may well encounter a daily mix of rain showers, clouds and sun—but August tends to be wetter.

[Travel: Images Of](#)

[Dromoland Castle,](#)

An advertisement for Kingsmill Resort. The background shows a lush green golf course with trees. Text on the right side reads: "PLAY ALL THE GOLF YOU WANT", "UNLIMITED Golf Package from \$219 per person/night", "KINGSMILL Resort", "Williamsburg, Virginia", and a yellow "Book Now" button with a right-pointing arrow.

An advertisement for MedjetAssist eNewsletter. The background is a light purple/pink color. Text reads: "MedjetAssist. eNewsletter", "Travel News from Travel Experts", and "www.medjet.com". There is a small airplane icon. At the bottom, there is a white "Sign Up Here" button.

An advertisement for Travel Tips eNewsletter. The background is light purple/pink. Text reads: "Travel Tips" and "Free Travel eNewsletter Sign Up Here". There is a small "Tips" icon.

Compact and artfully restored, Galway is a walker's paradise. The medieval core, walled off by Norman merchants from the "wild Irish" natives about 1270, is less than 20 blocks square, and most major sights are less than a 15-minute walk away. We got our bearings with a witty walking tour, [Galway on Foot](#), led by schoolteacher Sean Leonard, who pointed out details we might not have noticed: the grotesque gargoyle on the façade of one mansion-turned-bank; the "smug angel" in the Church of St. Nicholas that was the only one to escape defacement when Cromwell's troops sacked the sanctuary in 1652.



We stayed at the stylish, comfortable House Hotel right downtown near the iconic Spanish Arch, which made it easy for us wander the stone-paved streets of the old quarter at will, pausing to applaud the better buskers. We started our ramble at the [Galway City Museum](#), a striking architectural combo of soaring space and ancient stone, where exhibits range from historic finds to modern art.

Our favorite shopping stop among many intriguing possibilities was [O' Maille House of Style](#), where the proprietor knows the life story of every hand-knitter who fashions her chic caps and mohair capes. Across the River Corrib you'll find the handsome central quadrangle of the National University campus and the imaginative contemporary art showcased in an elegant townhouse at the Galway Arts Center. And if you keep hiking—or give in and grab a taxi—two miles farther west, you'll hit the white beaches and sweeping promenade of Salthill, where you can join the locals for a jog beside the fabled Galway Bay.

[more>>](#)

Comments

2 comments



Add a comment...

Comment



Lynn Langway · Northwestern University

thanks for reading, Julia, and hope you have a wonderful time!

Reply · Like · 1 · July 5, 2013 at 7:54am



Julia King-smith · Bradley University

Thank you so much for this charming and insightful look at Galway and surrounding areas. I am making my 3rd trip there in Aug/Sept but going with a friend who has never experienced Ireland. You have helped me greatly and put my mind at ease, knowing that my thoughts about the trip are spot on! Thanks so much.

Reply · Like · June 10, 2013 at 2:00pm

Facebook social plugin

You may also like:



Ask the Locals
Travel Guide:



Radio Guests –
Ashford Castle,



St. Patrick's Day
Travel: Images Of



Radio Guests –
Dromoland Castle,

PAGES: 1 2

Tweet 0

Like 20

0

Cover Your Trip With
Travel Insurance!

LEARN MORE >

TRAVEL GUARD



**Worldwide
Partners
Directory**



Medjet Assist. | eNews
Travel, Destinations, Health & Safety

Free Subscription



[CONTACT US](#)

[SIGN UP FOR DAILY OR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER](#)

[READ PETER GREENBERG'S ORIGINAL TRAVEL DETECTIVE® BLOGS](#)

[RSS FEED](#)

Copyright © 2014 — Peter Greenberg Travel Detective. All Rights Reserved.