

The Jewish Traveler

By Maxine Silverstein

DUBLIN, IRELAND

Ireland has always been a country I have wanted to visit, but I had never had the right opportunity. This past July, Gary and I were invited to the American Express Representative Awards in Kenmare, Ireland. Our travel agency, Mann Travel and Cruises, was being presented with an award from American Express. We both felt that this was the perfect opportunity to travel to this beautiful country. Our fabulous trip lasted for two weeks. We started in Shannon and stayed in Dromoland Castle, and continued on to Kenmare for our meeting. From there, we went to Northern Ireland, staying in Derry and Belfast, and ended with a stay in Dublin. It was an incredible trip filled with wonderful sightseeing, delightful people and delicious gourmet meals (not just Irish stew and potatoes). This amazing country is definitely one of my top travel destinations. We thoroughly enjoyed every minute of this trip.

It's nearly impossible for first-time visitors to appreciate just how far Dublin has come in a very short time. Natives to the city who left years ago and have returned

great way to see the sights.

While Ireland is not an obvious destination for those interested in Jewish culture, the island does



Maxine, Gary and friends at a pub.



Irish Jewish Museum

offer a few surprises. Ireland's Jewish population has never been higher than 8000, which was in the late 1940s. Today, it is down to under 2000, of which 1500 are in the Republic of Ireland. Between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the start of the twentieth century, pogroms drove Jews to Ireland from Central Europe, especially from Lithuania. Some of those who did not continue on to the Americas settled in Irish towns, built synagogues, opened kosher butcher shops, and created close-knit communities. The most important of them was located around Dublin's South Circular Road. Jews became prominent in public life. A famous name in Dublin is the Herzog family. After occupying the highest religious positions in Ireland, Rabbi Isaac Herzog became the first chief rabbi of the fledgling state of Israel. His son Chaim, who was born in Belfast and raised in Dublin, became the sixth president of the Jewish state. Today, the Dublin rabbinate's offices are still at Herzog House, on Zion Road. We were able to visit the Irish Jewish Museum located in an old synagogue on Walworth Road. This place of worship was the center of Jewish life in the capital until the movement out to the suburbs. A gradual shrinking of the population led to the synagogue's closure in the 1970s. It houses archives and objects and depicts the distinctive characteristics of the community. On the first floor, visitors can admire a kitchen ready for a typical Shabbat at the turn of the twentieth century. On the second floor, one can admire the well-preserved synagogue. Three active synagogues remain in the Dublin area.

We loved exploring Dublin and

found Temple Bar to be our favorite place. This area is called Dublin's Left Bank and is filled with charming pubs, art galleries, music shops, vintage clothing stores, great restaurants and lots of interesting sights. It is very easy to get around and lots of fun to explore. We found some incredible restaurants located here. Eden was one of our favorites; it is one of Temple Bar's hippest eateries. Eden is a cool minimalist dining room with an open kitchen area. The food was international and tasted great. Jacob's Ladder was our other favorite restaurant. It is known for modern Irish cuisine, great value and terrific service. The seafood was fresh and delicious. The shopping in Dublin was wonderful, but expensive. Ireland is known the world over for its handmade products and fine craftsmanship. Dublin is a one-stop source for the country's best wares. The hub of shopping is Grafton Street crowned by the city's most fashionable department store, Brown Thomas. You must visit some pubs while in Ireland. The pub continues to be the mainstay of Irish social life. With more than 10,000 specimens throughout the country, there are pubs in every city, town and hamlet. Everyone has a favorite.

We're so glad that we got to visit this fabulous country, but by far the very best part of our trip was all the wonderful Irish people that we met. Now we can't wait to go back again. ☆



Maxine at Irish Jewish Museum

cannot believe their eyes. Their beloved, if slightly down-at-the-heels, hometown has changed into a place filled with trendy coffee shops and juice bars, fusion cuisine restaurants, minimalist interiors, designer boutiques and expensive car dealerships. In the late 1990s, Ireland had the fastest growing economy in the European Union and continues to thrive economically. Dublin, as the Republic of Ireland's capital, is the epicenter of the boom. Compared to other European capitals, Dublin is a relatively small metropolis, so it is very easy to get around. Public transportation is good and getting better; taxis are plentiful and reasonably priced. Central Dublin is quite walkable. In fact, with its current traffic and parking problems, we found walking to be a

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