

Good Times in Galway

Musicians tune up as the sun goes down in the most Irish of cities. BY WENDY O'DEA

One by one, local men stroll leisurely into The Crane Bar, just across the River Corrib from Galway's more popular Latin Quarter. They sink into a corner of the small pub, as if meeting for a pint after a long workday. But they're not here for the drink, they're here for the music. (Well, maybe both.) Each pulls out an instrument and begins to play. Magically, toes are tapping and the nighttime atmosphere throughout the historic pub becomes uniquely Irish.

The Crane is one of a handful of traditional Irish pubs that business travelers seek out to hear live music, meet the locals or just experience some good old-fashioned Irish *craic* (fun). Galway, considered by many to be Ireland's most Irish city and cultural heart, has a consistently vibrant nightlife, particularly in warmer months. In fact, the city was recently awarded a "Purple Flag" for its safe, vibrant and diverse nighttime scene.

In the Latin Quarter, along the pedestrian-only Quay, High and Cross streets, other pubs get in on the action. Taaffes Bar and Tig Cóilí also offer music nightly while visitors and locals mingle at The Quays Bar, Tig Neaátain and The Front Door, to name a few. The bar scene at The g Hotel is also worth a visit.

If you're in a dancing mood, there are a few nightclubs (Halo Nightclub, Central Park and Karma), most attracting the younger university crowd. Other live music venues include The Róisín Dubh and Monroe's Live, the latter offering lively Irish set dancing every Tuesday.

Gay travelers generally mingle at the same pubs, although those seeking a like crowd may want to stop by The Pub (formerly G Bar) on Dominick Street or schedule business during Galway's August Pride Festival, the longest-running Pride parade in Ireland that attracts throngs of locals and visitors alike.

The foodie scene is also alive and well despite the recession that followed the Celtic Tiger economy of 10 years ago. Just a few doors from The Crane lies the critically acclaimed Kai Café + Restaurant, which uses local, sustainable food sources to create a new menu daily. Another that doesn't disappoint is Ard Bia at Nimmos, housed in a stone boathouse alongside the Spanish Arch where the original Claddagh village once stood.

If you visit in summer, hit one of Galway's many festivals. Some of the more popular include the International Arts Festival and Galway Races, both in July, and the Oyster Festival in September.



SUMMER NIGHT: Crowds gather in the Latin Quarter to celebrate Independence Day during the Volvo Ocean Race.

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Ard Bia at Nimmos
ardbia.com

The Crane Bar
thecranebar.com

The Front Door
frontdoorpub.com

The g Hotel & spa
theghotel.ie

Galway Pride
galwaypride.com

Halo Nightclub
halonightclub.com

Kai Café + Restaurant
kaicaferestaurant.com

Karma Nightclub
karma.ie

Monroe's Live
monroes.ie

The Róisín Dubh
roisindubh.net

Tig Neaátain
tighneachtain.com

Tourism Ireland
ireland.com