

Travel

Whiskey

is back in high spirits

Before lockdown *Yvonne Gordon* toured the thriving new distilleries in the Liberties area of Dublin – and learnt more than a grain of truth about the drink's past

YVONNE GORDON; CHRIS CLOR; AICO LIND / STUDIO AICO



The copper pot stills at Teeling's, above, which can be seen during tours of the distillery, left, in Newmarket

15

PAST PLEASURES
BEHIND THE SCENES
OF AN ENTICING NEW
HISTORICAL TV SERIES

There is a somewhat dubious old Dublin saying that goes: "Whiskey when you're well makes you sick, but whiskey when you're sick makes you well." The Irish whiskey production business is in rude health, with a full-blown global revival in the drink's popularity under way. One vital line in its complex cash-flow system, however, has the valve switched firmly to the "off" position: distillery tours. In normal times you could visit each distillery for a guided tour and tasting.

To give you an idea of how important this revenue stream is, the Teeling distillery generated €13 million from its visitor centre in the four years after it opened in 2015. We cannot visit in person

during lockdown, of course, but as the economy reopens, the distilleries will look to local "tourists" to fill the gap while waiting for global tourism to return.

The Liberties in Dublin was once the hub of Ireland's whiskey production, with about 35 licensed distilleries operating during the golden age of whiskey in the 1800s. Many were in the Golden Triangle, home to three distilling heavyweights – Jameson, Powers and Roe – plus numerous breweries including Guinness.

It was here that up to 70 per cent of the world's whiskey was made and exported. However, from the 1920s, whiskey distilling went into decline, after Prohibition in America, trade embargoes during the Irish war of independence,

Continued on page 12 →

Sunday Travel

→ Continued from page 11 and the invention of a whiskey still that brought competition from Scotland.

By the 1970s all of the Dublin distilleries had gone, but a revival of distilling nationwide and the worldwide boom in Irish whiskey sales have resulted in new distilleries open in the Liberties: Teeling six years ago, Pearse Lyons in 2017, and the Dublin Liberties and Roe & Co, both in 2019. This part of the capital is once again at the epicentre of production of the spirit – and it is as good a place as any to start an exploration of the country’s resurgent whiskey scene.

THE DUBLIN LIBERTIES DISTILLERY 33 MILL STREET

Best for: Stories and legends
This distillery says its whiskey is for “rebels, rascals and raconteurs” and is inspired by local legends. Single malts such as Copper Alley and Murder Lane, named after a once dangerous unmarked alleyway in the area, add to their character. The distillery is set in a 300-year-old building that was once a tannery and a mill. This corner of the Liberties has been undergoing regeneration and the old stone building contrasts with a row of newbuilds nearby, including the Aloft Dublin City hotel.

A tour starts with a welcome drink of honeycomb whiskey liqueur, made with Dubliner whiskey and honeycomb syrup, while guide Niall explains how the Liberties area got its name. In medieval times Dublin city was walled; in the area outside the walls people were at liberty to do as they pleased, free from the city’s rules, taxes and tariffs. The area became known as the Liberties, where blacksmiths, tanners, brewers and distillers set up – and along with the drinking came taverns, gambling houses and brothels. The area soon had the reputation as being “the place you go in Dublin if you want to do something illegal”, says Niall.

The tour explores the working part of the distillery, and Niall talks through the stages of making whiskey, starting with how it is made from grain, water and yeast – the grain in this case being malted barley. The barley is milled into a flour called grist and sent to a mash tun where



water is added. Something unique to the area is that the distillery has its own water source: part of the River Poddle.

The next step is for the liquid wort to go to the fermenters, where yeast is added and a wash is created, which is sent on to the three gleaming copper pot stills. It is an Irish tradition to name the stills after women, often family members. The ones here are Lucy, after Lucy Finch, who once owned the building; and Darkey, after Dorcas “Darkey” Kelly, a brothel keeper and one of the city’s first recorded serial killers, who was burnt at the stake in 1761. Legend has it that her ghost haunts the Forty Steps at Kilmainham. The final still is named after Molly Malone.

We hear more stories on the tour, such as the great whiskey fire of Dublin in 1875, which caused rivers of the burning spirit to run through the Liberties’ streets. The tour ends with a tasting in the distillery’s Tannery Bar.

PEARSE LYONS DISTILLERY 121-122 JAMES STREET

Best for: Local history
A church is an unusual setting for a whiskey distillery, and our tour starts in



the graveyard. The first St James’s Church opened here in 1196 and its graveyard, where soldiers and revolutionaries are buried, tells some of its long and turbulent history.

St James’s closed in the 1960s and fell into disrepair, having lost its spire in a lightning strike. However the distillery’s founder, Pearse Lyons, restored it with a new glass spire that lights up at night. During the restoration work, a team of archaeologists found that 100,000 people had been buried in the graveyard. The deconsecrated church now deals with a different type of spirit: the property reopened as distillery four years ago.

The interior of the church is bathed in the warm light from stained-glass windows that show barley growing and reflect images of the whiskey stills. The focal point on the former altar is the two large copper pot stills, which are so big part of the roof had to be removed so they could be lifted in by crane. The stills are called Mighty Molly and Little Lizzie, after Lyons’s grand-aunts Margaret Dunne, the first female cooper in Ireland, and her sister Elizabeth. The church’s transept is the perfect setting to taste blended and single-malt whiskeys, and the distillery’s Ha’penny Dublin Dry Gin.

TEELING WHISKEY DISTILLERY 13-17 NEWMARKET

Best for: The history of making whiskey
The tour here starts with an exhibition, an introduction to the history of Irish whiskey, and a short video. As we move into the distillery the air becomes warm and rich with smells from fermentation, with a background hum of machinery.

We move up a bridge and stop beside the massive wooden and stainless steel fermenters and learn more about the processes that go into whiskey-making and how the barley is malted. Yeast is added at the fermenting stage and the liquid wash is then sent to the first of the three copper pot stills, named Alison, Rebecca and Natalie, after the daughters of Jack Teeling, who founded the distillery

with his brother, Stephen. Their whiskey roots run deep: in the 1700s their ancestor Walter Teeling had a distillery in nearby Marrowbone Lane.

There are three pot stills, as one characteristic of Irish whiskey is that it is triple-distilled, giving the drink its characteristic smoothness. The final stage is that it is matured in wooden barrels, often casks that have been used to make rum or wine. It must age for a minimum of three years on the island of Ireland to legally be considered whiskey. During this process a small amount of whiskey evaporates through the wood and into the atmosphere – this is known as “the angels’ share”.

ROE & CO DISTILLERY 92 JAMES STREET

Best for: A cocktail masterclass
Set in the former Guinness power station, completed in 1948, Roe & Co has massive windows and pipes running along the ceilings, giving it an industrial feel. Here, the whiskey process is explained with a view over the beautiful copper stills, which are sometimes bathed in sunlight.

The Thomas Street Distillery, run by George Roe, was once Ireland’s largest. During the tour, we hear about its history and the painstaking process the master blender took to create the perfect new whiskey for Roe & Co. It had to be enjoyable neat and over ice and would

also shine through in cocktails. Part of the tour includes exploring a Sensory Box to learn the taste and aromas of malted barley, the sweet notes of pear and sour apple, and the spiciness of clove.

At the end of the tour the fun starts when we “clock in” and put on aprons for a cocktail workshop. Set up at a workbench full of bottles, measures and stainless steel utensils, we learn about how we perceive flavours such as sour, sweet, bitter, umami and salt, and how cocktail ingredients such as sherry, cordial and soda water can create and modify the flavours of a drink.

The tour ends with a (professionally made) seasonal cocktail at the Power House Bar. With a view through the glass to an untouched part of the old power station, it is the perfect place to contemplate this exciting new chapter for whiskey distilling in the Liberties. *All tours were done before Covid restrictions*

LOWDOWN FOR FUTURE VISITS

In line with government restrictions these distilleries are closed to visitors at present. The Dublin Liberties Distillery, tours from €16, thedld.com; Pearse Lyons Distillery, tours from €18, pearselyonsdistillery.com; Teeling Whiskey Distillery, tours from €17, teelingwhiskey.com; Roe & Co Distillery, tour and cocktail workshop €25, roeandcowhiskey.com

GET THE MEASURE OF THESE TOO

There are whiskey visitor centres across the island of Ireland. Here are some worth checking out when restrictions ease

Bushmills — This distillery near the coast in Co Antrim (bushmills.com) has had a licence since 1757, making it one of Ireland’s oldest distilleries. Take a tour to hear how the distillery was saved from closure, and to see the old pot still and warehouse.

Jameson — When whiskey distilling moved out of Dublin in the 1970s it came to the Jameson distillery in Midleton, Co Cork (jamesonwhiskey.com), which became Ireland’s largest distillery. It also made Jameson the world’s bestselling Irish whiskey. You can tour the old

buildings. Jameson also has visitor centre tours in Bow Street in Smithfield, Dublin.

Kilbeggan — This distillery situated in Westmeath (kilbegganwhiskey.com) has had a licence since 1757, making it one of Ireland’s oldest distilleries. Take a tour to hear how the distillery was saved from closure, and to see the old pot still and warehouse.



Kilbeggan dates from 1757

Dingle — Dingle Distillery in Co Kerry (dingledistillery.ie) is a small working distillery. During a visit, you can learn how the Irish climate helps to make tasty single malt and how the distillery produces gin and vodka.

Connacht — A tour of Connacht Distillery in Ballina, Co Mayo (connachtwhiskey.com) takes you behind the scenes to the making of its hand-crafted, single-malt pot still Irish whiskeys, plus shares the secrets of the distillery’s other spirits such as Irish poitin, gin and vodka.

You can also take a tour of the Irish Whiskey Museum in Dublin (irishwhiskeymuseum.ie) to get the full history of whiskey distilling in Ireland and to learn about and taste the various Irish whiskeys.

“It is an Irish tradition to name the stills after women, often members of the family

SANCTUARY’S TREASURE (BLOOD TOO BUBBLE)

Cocktail recipe from The Dublin Liberties Distillery

What you will need

Pinch of black Hawaiian salt
A Flavour Blaster smoking gun (if you don’t have one, a few drops of frangelico will achieve the hazelnut flavour)
45ml/1½fl oz Liberties’ Keeper’s Coin whiskey
15ml/½fl oz Kina L’Avignon D’or
15 ml/½fl oz Suze herbal liqueur
2 dashes Bitter Truth peach bitters
Hazelnut oil aroma
Garnish: caramel fudge with black Hawaiian salt



How to prepare:

Place your glass in the centre of a wooden coaster and surround it with the caramel blocks. Sprinkle black salt on top of the caramel. Add all of the cocktail ingredients except the aroma to a mixing glass and stir until chilled. Strain into the glass.

To garnish, use the flavour gun to add an aromatic bubble on top of the drink. To do so, place the tip of the gun into the bubble liquid and fill it with the aroma, then drop the bubble on top of the drink.

TRAILFINDERS

THE TRAVEL EXPERTS

TAILORMADE TRAVEL WORLDWIDE

01 881 4953

CRUISE TRAILFINDERS

01 881 4948

FIRST & BUSINESS CLASS TRAVEL

01 881 4954

SETTING THE STANDARDS IN TRAVEL SINCE 1970 – CALL TODAY!

...that is the question on the minds of so very many people, deprived of their essential travel fix for a year now, with no immediate end in sight. There are a number who have already got their future holiday in place to look forward to, stretching even into 2022. However, there are many more reluctant to take what they perceive as a risk.

So what are the risks? If you arrange your travels through Trailfinders, you can take advantage of the great bargains on offer right now, which will dry up when restrictions lift. With our unblemished record for immediate refunds or rearranging travel plans (at no cost to you), there is no risk other than missing out. So get that holiday in your diary and have that so very needed R&R to look forward to.

Remember, TF pays for your holiday and only draws your money from Trust after you are safe back home.

creditsafe¹⁰⁰

TRAILFINDERS HAS A 100/100 CREDIT RATING

TF TRUST

Luxury Maldives

7 nights from **€2,699**[‡]

Flights, 5★ **all inclusive** island resort and seaplane transfers

• Over 30 dive sites • Incredible house reef teeming with sealife

• Marine lab focusing on conservation

Includes a booking discount

– saving over €2,350 per couple

Cruise Exotic Asia

14 nights from **€2,699**

Flights, full board cruise with Celebrity Cruises and private transfers

• Hong Kong • Halong Bay • Hue • Ho Chi Minh City • Bangkok • Singapore

Includes a Classic Drinks Package for two, tips & wi-fi

Priced for January 2022

Tantalising Thailand

14 nights from **€1,649**[‡]

Flights, 5★ Phuket beach resort, breakfast and private transfers

• Swim in crystal clear waters

• Relax on a superb stretch of beach

• Beachfront infinity pool with stunning views

Includes a booking discount

– saving over €800 per couple

Lanzarote Villa Escape

7 nights from **€449**[‡]*

Direct flights, 3 bedroom villa with private pool and private transfers

• Short walk from the restaurants, shops & bars of Puerto del Carmen

• Fantastic sea views

• Built in barbeque

Italy's Amalfi Coast

8 nights from **€1,349**[‡]

Direct flights, car hire, 4★ to 4★+ hotels and breakfast

• Naples, Sorrento & Amalfi town

• Scenic walking trails • Vesuvius views

Includes a booking discount

– saving over €75 per couple

All Inclusive Antigua

7 nights from **€1,699**[‡]

Flights, 4★ **all inclusive** beach resort and private transfers

• Secluded peninsula with two white sand beaches • Six pools • An array of restaurants & bars to choose from

Includes a booking discount

– saving over €800 per couple

Classic California

13 nights from **€2,249**[‡]

Flights, fully inclusive car hire and 3★ to 4★ hotels

• Drive the Big Sur • Carmel • Santa Barbara • Los Angeles • Huntington Beach • San Diego

Includes a booking discount

– saving over €150 per couple

BEST SELLING AIRFARES – INCLUDING AT LEAST 20KG BAGGAGE

	Economy	Business
Dubai	€439 [‡]	€1,545 [‡]
South Africa from	€469 [‡]	€2,389 [‡]
New York	€475 [‡]	€1,519 [‡]
Bangkok	€519 [‡]	€1,935 [‡]
San Francisco	€545 [‡]	€1,585 [‡]
Delhi	€575 [‡]	€2,249 [‡]

★Trustpilot ★★★★★

"Truly excellent: patient, friendly, helpful and a mine of knowledge, tips and advice."

TRUST TRAILFINDERS – NO ONE LOOKS AFTER YOU BETTER

All prices on this advert are 'from' prices, are per person based on twin share, are subject to availability & valid for selected departures in the next 6 weeks except: *1-31 Aug †1 Sep - 31 Oct ‡1-30 Nov Δ 1-15 Dec

*Based on 6 people travelling together and sharing the villa. Correct at time of going to print on 18 Feb 21. Trailfinders is licensed by the Commission for Aviation Regulation, IA0542.

IATA

ITAA

High Quality Agents Association

www.trailfinders.ie