

Coasting Along Dublin

THE CAPITAL CITY'S SEASHORE IS ITS BEST-KEPT SECRET.

BY YVONNE GORDON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD JAMES TAYLOR

Clifftop views on the coastal walk from Howth village to Baily Lighthouse.



Howth Harbour's restaurant row.

BIRDS CIRCLED and hovered over the sea stack, a square-shaped outcrop just off the island of Ireland's Eye. As our group approached on a small ferry, we could hear the screeches of hundreds of gannets, stationed on every crag of the rock.

Less than a mile from the fishing port of Howth on Dublin's north coast, this tiny, uninhabited isle is home to thousands of seabirds, as well as seals, who lounge on seaweed-covered rocks at low tide as if guarding the shore. Brown-and-white guillemots bobbed up and down on the steel-gray sea, disappearing under the water as we approached, while black cormorants perched on rocks to spread their wings to dry.

Many people don't realize Dublin is a coastal city, but with the new Dublin Coastal Trail, it's easy to explore the seashore that's right on

In less than 30 minutes from Dublin Castle by rail or road, you can be visiting small islands by ferry, sailboat, or sea kayak.

Outdoors

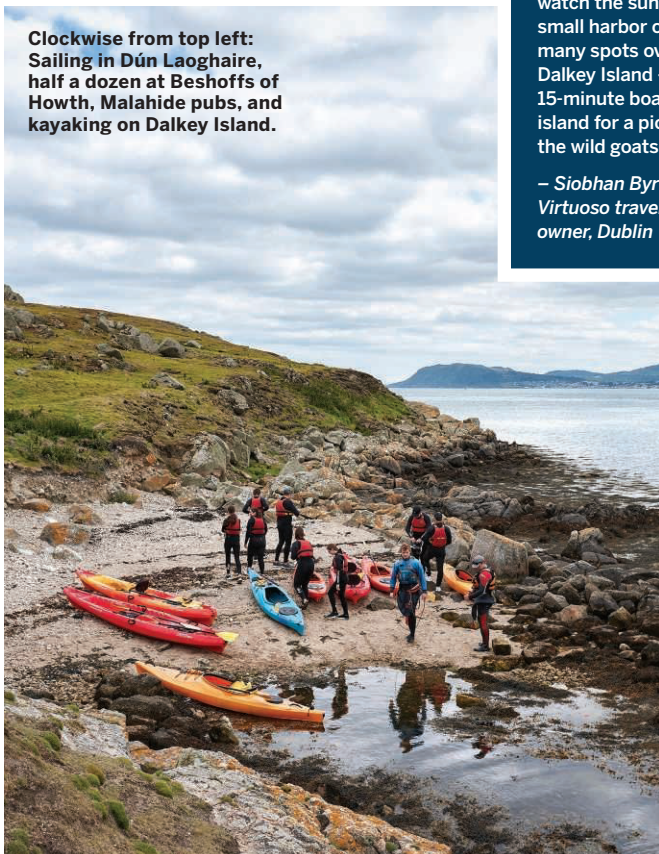


FYI

"If you go to Dalkey, drop by Finnegan's pub for a bite and a pint of Guinness, then watch the sunset from the small harbor or one of the many spots overlooking Dalkey Island – or take a 15-minute boat ride to the island for a picnic alongside the wild goats."

– Siobhan Byrne Learat, Virtuoso travel agency owner, Dublin

Clockwise from top left: Sailing in Dún Laoghaire, half a dozen at Beshoffs of Howth, Malahide pubs, and kayaking on Dalkey Island.





Killiney Hill, Dublin Bay's southern boundary, is less than ten miles from the heart of the city.

its doorstep. In less than 30 minutes from Dublin Castle by rail or road, you can be worlds away from the capital's buzz and pub crawls, visiting small islands by ferry, sailboat, or sea kayak; strolling beaches; or exploring cliffs, piers, lighthouses, and historic round towers. As someone who has lived on Dublin Bay for years and gotten to know its coves and coastline by paddleboard, tall ship, hiking boot, and more, it's exciting to see travelers discover it.

"The bay is where true Dubliners learned to sail and fish," says Virtuoso travel agency owner and Dublin native Siobhan Byrne Learat. "It's where you snuck out for your first date and kiss."

Officially, the trail runs roughly 68 miles from the fishing port of Skerries in the north to posh Killiney in

the south. The northern stretch winds among sandy beaches and dunes that lead to villages such as Malahide, with its castle, pubs, and cafés, and Howth, a town of harborfront seafood restaurants that's steeped in thousands of years of history and folklore.

To the south, the harbor town of Dún Laoghaire and its two long piers are primed for leisurely weekend outings, with guided motorboat and sailing tours, paddleboard rentals, and four yacht clubs filling the bay with watercraft of all sizes. Hardy locals take to the sea for brisk morning swims year-round in Sandycove. Around the point at Dalkey's Bulloch Harbour, kayaking guides lead paddles along the rocky coastline among porpoises and arctic terns to Lamb Island's seal colony.

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“On weekends, Dalkey has always been the posh place to visit,” Learat says of the village Bono now calls home and where Matt Damon holed up with his family during the pandemic lockdown. “It feels like you’re in the heart of a French fishing village, with foodie spots and cozy pubs to chat in for hours with friends.” Plan to play it loose with the schedule, though: “Lunches have a way of turning into relaxed, boozy evenings,” she says. “Dalkey does that to you.”

As our ferry rounded the back of Ireland’s Eye, I still hadn’t spotted the one bird that had lured me out on the bay: the elusive puffin, with its multicolored beak, which migrates here in March to breed and raise its young through the summer. Then, as if on cue, a single puffin appeared, floating on the sea with his guillemot cousins. Moments later, another one perched on the rocks. It was proof that even for someone who lives on the bay, Dublin’s coast has many more jewels to reveal.

Where to Stay in Dublin

Encompassing four restored Georgian town houses with eighteenth-century marble fireplaces and period furniture throughout, the 142-room **Merrion** presides across from the Edwardian Government Buildings, just a few minutes’ walk from the National Gallery of Ireland and Irish Museum of Modern Art. Its two-Michelin-starred Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud has been one of the city’s top tables for decades. *Doubles from \$490, including breakfast daily and one lunch or dinner for two.*

The 265-room **Shelbourne** dates to 1824 and has the grand reception rooms, chandeliers, soaring ceilings, portraits, and prime position across from Saint Stephen’s Green to show for it. Drop by the snug 1824 Bar for a whiskey from one of the city’s best collections. *Doubles from \$590, including breakfast daily and one lunch or dinner for two.*

Set in the heart of Grafton Street’s buzzing shopping, cafés, and nightlife, the 205-room **Westbury** is a stylish sanctuary. Its art deco-themed Gallery and Sidecar bar are popular with locals for afternoon tea and pre- or post-theater cocktails. *Doubles from \$442, including breakfast daily and one lunch or dinner for two.* 📍

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