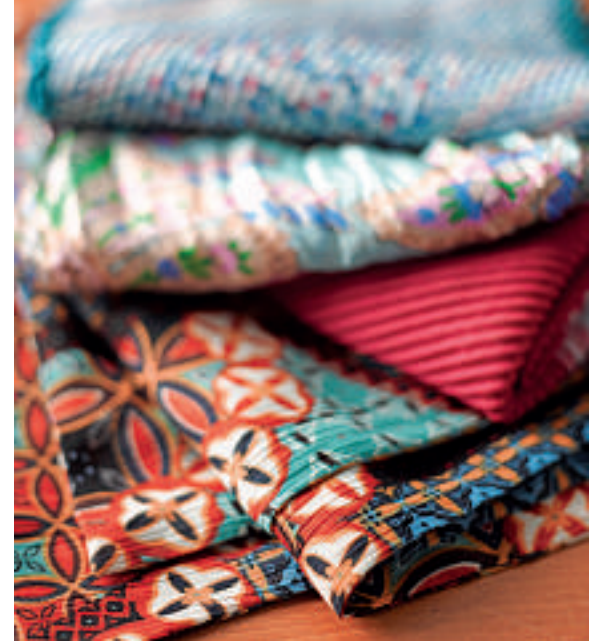


48 HOURS IN GALWAY

Cool and contemporary B&Bs, Michelin-star dining and incredible vintage finds – no wonder everyone wants to be a Galway girl.

WORDS **NATHALIE MARQUEZ COURTNEY**

Guests of The Herons Rest can enjoy scenic walks along the River Corrib. **OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Chunky chips and a juicy burger at EAT Gastropub; Aniar, the West's only Michelin-star restaurant; healthy pancakes at The Herons Rest; deputy editor Nathalie stops to Instagram a pretty Galway street; chunky knits in The Latin Quarter; pretty blooms festoon O'Grady's in the seaside town of Barna.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Just some of the eclectic vintage homewares at Astór; delicious pear tarts at Ard Bia at Nimmo's; Astór's collection of vintage fabrics.

Artsy, friendly and home to some of the most predictably unpredictable weather our island has to offer ... Up to now, we thought we knew what we were getting with Galway. A more modern mood has started to creep in, though, mixing hip new hotspots with all the boho charm we know and love. Vintage stores that wouldn't be out of place in Paris' Montmartre district can now be found alongside traditional old-school pubs, while cool and quirky restaurants nestle comfortably beside trad music-filled tourist hubs.

The city is still the real Gaelic deal, so make sure to soak all that in – the cobblestone streets, energetic buskers and friendly banter of The Latin Quarter are a good place to start, and they'll ease you into that jovial holiday feeling.

However, Galway is as much about the early bird as it is about night owls, and there are plenty of exciting places to see during the day. **Cupán Tae** is a great little spot to grab a slice of cake and enjoy a relaxing brew of herbal loose-leaf teas, 091 895000; cupantae.eu. Take a short stroll from here to the Spanish Arch and feed the ducks along the River Corrib.

The weather is certainly temperamental, but when the sun shines, there is nowhere nicer to be than in Salthill. A ten-minute walk from the city centre, this is one of the most beautiful seaside spots in Ireland. Enjoy an ice cream along the prom, or take a brave leap off the city's famous diving tower. A pretty ten-minute drive will then bring you to Barna, a small, postcard-perfect town with lots of character. Whatever you do, don't leave without popping into **O'Grady's**, a dinky restaurant perched right at the end of Barna's pier, and the perfect place for a glass of crisp white wine on a warm and sunny day, Seapoint, Barna, 091 592223; ogradysonthepier.com.

Back in the city, there's plenty of shopping to be had. Ethical boutique **Sirona** is the place to go for eco-luxe finds from a range of international designers, 11 Market Street, 091 563957; sironaboutique.com. **Public Romance** is good for inexpensive retro bargains, 52 Upper Abbygate Street, 091 568771; while **The Gaiety Antique and Vintage Store** is sure to win you over with its lovingly upcycled homewares, 3 Frances Street, 091 564966. Then there's **Astór**. Hidden away in the middle of an industrial

estate just outside the city is the kind of place that's kept in an A-list stylist's little black book. Enter Triona Lillis' carefully curated cave of designer vintage wonders and it will be difficult to emerge empty-handed. Her rails are packed with vintage couture from the likes of Versace and Mancini, while her homeware focus is on mid-century pieces, but you'll also find lots of rustic vintage fruit crates, antique accessories and even the odd bit of taxidermy, 24 Kilkerrin Park, 091 761757; astor.ie.

Before making evening plans, make sure to check out what's going on at student haunt the **Róisín Dubh**, a great spot for gigs and comedy acts, Lower Dominick Street, 091 586540; roisindubh.net; and the **Galway Arts Centre**, with a regularly rotating roster of theatre, art, literature and performance events, 47 Dominick Street, 091 565886; galwayartscentre.ie.

INSIDER'S GUIDE

GALWAY FOR FOODIES

Restaurateur and chef JP McMahon is one of Galway's leading foodies, so who better to give us picks of the best local produce?

McCAMBRIDGE'S do a great deal of small artisan and local suppliers. They are a fine example of how a small shop can support our local environment and build trust between consumers and its own terroir (mccambridges.com). **SHERIDANS** has to be the best place to buy cheese in Galway – they carry every Irish cheese imaginable, while **LE PETIT DELICE** is a great place to get some chocolate and macaroons. **GANNET FISHMONGERS** on the Saturday market in St Nicholas Square is my favourite fishmonger. Other good local suppliers for chicken and pork are also on the same market – Ronan Byrne's, aka **THE FRIENDLY FARMER**, does the best chicken in Galway, if not Ireland. Day trip to Clare to see the **BURREN SMOKEHOUSE VISITOR CENTRE** and learn how the whole process of curing and smoking salmon works (burrensmokehouse.ie).

WHERE TO EAT

ÁRD BIA AT NIMMO'S A café, restaurant, bar, and shop, all nestled under the roof of this little stone house under the Spanish Arch, right by the River Corrib – it could only be Aoibheann McNamara's Árd Bia at Nimmo's, a beloved Galway treasure. The dishes are homemade and hearty with a fun, sometimes exotic, twist; the atmosphere is cosy, welcoming, with just the right amount of quirk; and the view is incredible. On an evening visit, we devoured the Irish hake with Sheridans chorizo, which was accompanied by a fragrant and subtle saffron-spiced stew of mussels, clams and chickpeas. Of course, one trip wasn't enough, and the next day we returned for a delicious lunch that included an unforgettable goat's cheese, almond and roast red pepper romesco open sandwich. If you fall in love with the place like we (and countless others) have, make sure to pick up a copy of the *Ard Bia Cookbook* (Cork University Press, €39), 091 561 114; ardbia.com.

ANIAR The West's only Michelin-starred restaurant is brought to you by the team behind Cava, one of Galway's most popular

eateries, so to say expectations are high would be a bit of an understatement. Aniar has reclaimed the wine term "terroir" and uses it to define its ethos of sourcing local ingredients and creating dishes that reflect the landscape and its distinct character. Of course, you don't need to know any of this – all that matters is how delicious each forkful is and how content you are after a meal here. Dishes arrive picture-perfect (cue lots of people whipping out their iPhones), and are returned almost completely clean. The minimalist menu features simple meats teamed with foraged favourites (think sorrell and nettle), paired with an incredibly fine-tuned selection of wines. The mood is relaxed and casual, the staff young and friendly – trust the west coast to deliver the most chilled-out Michelin-starred establishment in Ireland, 091 535947; aniarrestaurant.ie.

KAI In Kai, which is the Māori term for "food", New Zealand native Jess Murphy has created a unique eaterie with a cult following. Famed for bringing an exotic touch to local produce, the place is as packed on a Saturday night as it is on a Sunday afternoon – the chilled vibe makes



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Fresh fish and chips at Kettle of Fish; Kai's quirky interior; retro signage pulls the tourists in to one of Galway's many friendly pubs.

it perfect for either a celebratory dinner or a buzzy brunch.

The menu is an ever-changing merry-go-round of locally-sourced fare, the quirky décor (including a wall made out of remnants from Galway city's last thatched cottage) is fun and bohemian, and the glass ceiling floods the place with light, even on dull days – and when night draws near, the dangling jam jar lights add a festive feel, 091 526003; kaicaferestaurant.com.

There's no shortage of casual eats in Galway. For an upgrade on the pub grub experience, head to **EAT**, where you can nibble on "little eats" like butternut squash and goat's cheese croquettes, tuck into traditional tapas like chorizo in oloroso sherry, or heartier fare, like their homemade pizzas (try the serrano ham manchego and rocket combo) 091 582239; eatgastropub.com. Alternatively, throw on some heels and head to The g Hotel for their **PINK AFTERNOON TEA**, which is packed with delicious girly treats. After a night popping in and out of the city's pubs, make like the locals and hit up **KETTLE OF FISH**, a slightly posh chipper that will provide plenty of tasty soakage for the breezy walk home, 4 Cross Street Galway, 091 569881.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP RIGHT The view from Salthill; evidence of a busy night at Eat Gastropub; restaurateur JP McMahon.



INSIDER'S GUIDE

GALWAY FOR KIDS Emer Hart and Russell Fitzpatrick run **The Stop B&B** and enjoy exploring Galway with their three young sons. They share their tips on their favourite things to do in Galway as a family. On Saturdays, we all head to the **GALWAY MARKET** by St Nicholas' Church, which always includes a visit to the doughnut guy, who cooks them up fresh and will only serve the boys if they say please and thank you (galwaymarket.com). Then it's on to Charlie Byrne's bookshop for a browse before heading home with all our goodies (charliebyrne.com).

Walking the promenade in **SALTHILL** is always a treat. The boys scoot or cycle too, and if it's sunny, we pop down to the most sheltered beach in front of the Salthill Hotel to make a few sand castles. Blackrock is best for swimming – dive from the boards on the tower and swim out to the float, keeping an eye out for jellyfish and crabs. Then head down to **GOURMET TART COMPANY** for some lovely fresh, local food (galwaytartco.com) or make a picnic with a selection of gourmet treats from Morton's in lower Salthill.

If the weather is bad, we often duck into **GALWAY ATLANTAQUARIA**, the aquarium by the promenade. The boys never fail to enjoy stroking the ray fish, and if we're there for feeding time, the friendly staff let you hold the giant crabs (nationalaquarium.ie). Another option for bad weather – we get a lot of rain in Galway! – is to go to Leisureland. The kids love their pirate ship, inflatable obstacle course, and the big slide, which you can enjoy at the weekend (leisureland.ie).

Further afield, **BRIGIT'S GARDEN** is fantastic. It's set within 11 acres of native woodland and wildflower meadows and it's just a joy to spend an afternoon out there. The garden is landscaped around the Celtic seasons, and they often have special events throughout the year to mark these. We start with some delicious homemade cake, or the boys might have ice cream, and then it's off to walk the nature trail. They give you a map and sometimes a little quiz to fill out, and the boys love it. There's a little lake, a living willow play area, and a calendar sundial (brigitsgarden.ie).



WHERE TO STAY

THE STOP This B&B is a total find. Russell and Emer have transformed a simple semi-detached house into a bright and airy space filled with contemporary art and lovely homely touches. The couple used to work at IMMA, and their eye for clean design and fun touches is clear. Don't leave without trying one of Emer's homemade chocolate chip biscuits or Russell's basil and chilli oil, which is drizzled over some of the breakfast dishes, 38 Father Griffin Road, Galway, 091 586736; thestopbandb.com.

THE HERONS REST This boutique B&B boasts some of Galway's prettiest views over the River Corrib. Owner Sorcha has created a comfy and cosy abode that's packed with thoughtful touches – there are vintage decanters containing fine port

in every room, as well as organic teas and coffee. Breakfast is a delight (Sorcha is both a nutritionist and a great cook), and you can also get a personalised gourmet picnic basket to go, packed with foodie delights from local suppliers, 16a The Long Walk, Galway, 091 539574; theheronsrest.com.

THE TWELVE HOTEL A cool and quirky boutique hotel located in the seaside village of Barna, The Twelve is the perfect long weekend hideaway. Try the gourmet food in The West, delicious artisan pizzas in The Pins Gastrobar, or get stuck into their Electric Picnic-inspired Indie Wine Weekend, which runs on select weekends throughout the year and features a wine-themed silent disco that matches music and merlot in a fun and delicious way, Barna Village, 091 597000; thetwelvehotel.ie.



CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE LEFT A view into the breakfast room of The Stop; a nourishing breakfast at The Herons Rest; a blooming window at O'Grady's. Pink Afternoon Tea at The g Hotel.