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BALBRIGGAN • FINGAL • IRELAND

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Balbriggan

Balbriggan is a seaside town on the Belfast-Dublin corridor with a population of **24,000** people. It's the youngest and one of the most culturally diverse towns in Ireland. Like most Irish towns, it is not Irish speaking and the locals here speak English.

Rich with its history and natural vistas, Balbriggan has plenty attractions to offer such as;

- **Balbriggan Beach** is a local landmark and a favourite recreation spot for generations of Dubliners.
- The area features a working **fishing harbour** where you can watch the trawlers go by and take in the seaside air.
- **Ardgillan Castle and Demesne** consists of a beautiful castle along with 194 acres of grassland, woodland and gardens overlooking the Irish Sea with views of the Mourne Mountains and Lambay Island.
- Dedicated to the memory of Irish musician, folklore and music collector, Séamus Ennis, **The Séamus Ennis Cultural Centre** promotes and develops music and the Arts in the region.



With its roots dating back over 5000 years ago, Balbriggan's history comes alive through archaeological discoveries like the Neolithic house, offering a glimpse into the lives of early tomb builders and farmers who once called this place home.

One of the town's prominent landmarks is the Balbriggan lighthouse, erected in 1769 under the Hamilton family's supervision. This maritime beacon stands tall, guiding ships along the coastline and representing Balbriggan's important role in navigation during the 18th century. Initially illuminated by candles, the lighthouse keeper George Hamilton later introduced oil lamps, a significant advancement in its history.

Balbriggan's historic harbour, dating back to 1761-1765, remains a testament to the town's maritime heritage. Once a crucial hub for trade, fishing, and transportation, the harbour played a vital role in the town's growth and prosperity.

Today, Balbriggan continues to thrive as a vibrant community, blending its rich history with modern amenities. Explore the quaint streets, appreciate the coastal beauty, and immerse yourself in the echoes of the past that make Balbriggan a captivating destination in Ireland.



Man O'War Public House

Situated on a hill on the original Dublin to Belfast Road, the **Man O'War Public House** has been recorded in deeds dating back to 1595. In 1732 an Act of Parliament established the tolled Coach Road called the Dublin to Dunleer Turnpike (1732—1855) and a turnpike (toll booth) was situated at the Man O'War Pub. Weary travellers stopped at the Man O'War for refreshments as it was halfway along the turnpike route. Wolfe Tone had his breakfast here in July 1792. Other famous visitors include Dr. John Gamble and Austin Cooper who both wrote about their stay at the Man O'War. Various highwaymen plied their trade along the route, the most famous of these being "Collier the Highway man" (1780—1849).



The origin of the name "Man O'War" is the subject of much speculation. Its location on a hill (mean bharr, meaning "middle height") is an obvious answer, but more romantic views have been put forward. One is that the area was once covered by trees which were felled and used to construct British Man O'War ships. Another theory is that the name arose because of the cavalry barracks which was situated at nearby Malhenry. However, the most popular story concerns the "Turks Head" — a massive wooden carving depicting a Turks Head which for ages adorned the pillar outside the pub. It was thought that this unusual figurine which came from a shipwrecked Man O'War ship, may have lent its name to the area. 2014, marked the four hundred and nineteenth year of the Man O'War Pub serving fine food and beverages in a lively and traditional Irish atmosphere.

The Séamus Ennis Arts Centre

The Séamus Ennis Arts Centre (TSEAC) is an award-winning performance arts venue, that offers the opportunity to immerse in a diverse range of cultural experiences including, live music performances, cinema, comedy, and cultural events whilst also working to develop the artistic talents of others through our range of workshops and thriving music school.

Steeped in Irish history, The Séamus Ennis Arts Centre's unique and intimate performance space is regarded by many as 'A hidden Gem' in the Irish culture scene, offering the opportunity to fully experience every show in a way that maintains the historic culture and delivery of traditional folklore and storytelling, earning us the name 'Ireland's Biggest Little Arts Centre'.

A vibrant cultural hub of visual and performance art, education and more, The Séamus Ennis Arts Centre is a charity organisation owned and funded by Fingal County Council and gratefully receive additional supports from the Arts Council of Ireland as well as donations from our members, friends, patrons and visitors, which we use to continue to enrich people's lives through art, culture, education and creativity whilst commemorating the work and life of the late Séamus Ennis without whom, our stories would be lost.



Greater Dublin Area

Dublin city is approximately 34km south of Balbriggan. Dublin is Ireland's capital and largest city, and the city centre is one of Europe's most vibrant cities filled with so much rich Irish culture and festivities. It was voted Europe's fourth most popular city break destination, behind London, Paris and Rome and is one of the friendliest capital cities in the world. Since it's a relatively small and accessible city, it's small enough and safe enough to get around on foot, while the Luas tram system and the suburban rail system, the DART, provide the transport links throughout the city.

Dublin is framed by mountains, centered on a river and edged by a beautiful bay, the city's streets and alleys are filled with vibrant art and historic buildings, hip cafés and traditional "old man" pubs, as Dubliners call them. Walk the streets and you'll feel the energy of over 1,000 years of history, as echoes of the Vikings mix with buzzing boutiques, cobbled streets reverberate with the sounds of buskers, and 18th century parks play host to festivals, film and food markets. The City Centre is also where our famous St. Patrick's parade takes place every year, with hundreds of thousands of visitors flying in annually to celebrate.



Travelling back to the outskirts of Dublin you will find many more of Dublin's popular coastal towns similar to Balbriggan and very close in distance. Notably, Skerries, Malahide, Donabate and Howth.

Founded by Vikings in the 9th century, Dublin quickly flourished as a key maritime centre, strategically located along the River Liffey. The city's name "Dublin" originates from the Irish Gaelic "Dubh Linn", meaning "black pool", referring to a dark tidal pool where the River Poddle met the Liffey.



Throughout the medieval period, Dublin thrived as a bustling trade hub, attracting merchants from all corners of Europe. The city's prosperity led to the construction of defensive walls and fortifications, which helped shape its character and laid the foundation for its continued growth. Dublin's significance extended beyond commerce; it became a centre of learning, culture, and religious influence, boasting grand cathedrals and historic monastic settlements.



The 17th century marked a golden age for Dublin, witnessing the introduction of elegant Georgian architecture. The city's streets and squares, exemplified by Merrion Square and Fitzwilliam Square, showcased its newfound prosperity and cultural sophistication. By the 18th century, Dublin entered a period of wealth and enlightenment that earned it the moniker "City of Literature," as it became home to renowned writers like Jonathan Swift, Bram Stoker, and Oscar Wilde, leaving an indelible mark on world literature.

However, Dublin's history also saw its share of challenges. In the 19th century, Ireland faced the devastating Great Famine, a period of mass starvation and emigration that profoundly affected the nation. The early 20th century brought a renewed struggle for Irish independence, culminating in the Easter Rising of 1916. This pivotal event set Ireland on the path to sovereignty, leading to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 and the eventual creation of the Republic of Ireland.

Despite economic struggles and social changes through the 20th century, Dublin's resilience and spirit prevailed. Today, the city stands as a modern European capital, known for its dynamic cultural scene, cutting-edge technology industry, and warm hospitality. As you explore Dublin's streets, you'll discover a harmonious blend of its historical heritage and contemporary energy, making it an unforgettable destination that embraces both the past and the present.



Accommodation

Bracken Court Hotel

Bridge Street, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin

- The **Bracken Court Hotel** is a family run business located in the heart of Balbriggan. It's a 30 minutes' drive from Dublin's city centre. It offers free parking, free Wi-Fi, and free newspapers, as well as spacious rooms with marble bathrooms and power showers. All rooms include free Wi-Fi, cable TV, ironing equipment, tea/coffee making facilities and a 24-hour room service menu.
- Balbriggan Beach and its traditional fishing harbour is just a 5 minutes' walk from the hotel.



Irish Institute of Music and Song – IIMS

Church St, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin

- Located behind the Bracken Court hotel, the Irish Institute of Music and Song is home to two of Balbriggan's most historic homes, **Bedford House** and **Bedford Hall**, as well as the modern **Bedford Quarters**. Bedford House and Bedford Hall date back to 1750 and 1830. The Georgian and Victorian homes are treasures from Balbriggan's past when the town was known all over the world by the quality of its hosiery with the Empress of Austria, the Czarina and Queen Victoria among their customers.
- Bedford Quarters is lined with interactive display boards where guests can learn about the history of the most famous Irish rock bands while listening to their best hits at the same time. Located in the centre of the campus, this self-catering facility provides ease of access to the canteen, amphitheatre, the beautiful guitar garden and The La-La café and restaurant.
- Bedford Hall is located at the heart of the IIMS campus where guests can expect to interact with artists, writers, composers and occasionally hear impromptu concerts from Broadway stars staying at the Institute as part of the Artist in Residence Programme. Choirs, concert bands and orchestras can regularly be heard around the campus using the purpose-built spaces for rehearsals.



