

Paula
LAVIGNE

St. Patty's Day proper

Greenhorn's guide to Emerald Isle



AARON STECKELBERG/DN

La breia feile Padraic boibh. That's about the most traditional Gaelic Irish greeting you can get, but I doubt most of you running out tonight to celebrate an adopted Irish tradition know what the saying means.

Irish Americans and Americans alike really should know that their St. Patrick's Day is 100 percent different from St. Patrick's Day in the land of St. Patrick.

One year ago, I was celebrating St. Patrick's Day on the crowded streets of Dublin. (Kind of like going to Bethlehem for Christmas.)

You'd be hard-pressed to find corned beef in Ireland, and the only stuffed leprechauns are stocked in souvenir stores for American tourists. The only time the beer is green is when it's on its way back up. The Liffey River that runs through Dublin is green, but it's sure not from FDA-approved dye as it probably is in Chicago.

So if you're looking for a real dose of traditional Irishness, burn the green polyester blazer and toss the plastic shamrock earrings. Read my "Ulysses."

It's a holiday, so everyone is off work and few places are open — except for the pubs (not bars). While the Irish don't drink green beer, they do drink beer — Guinness, and lots of it.

About 10 a.m., you should be strolling in for your first Guinness. (Here's a little secret: Don't order Harp. It's the Pabst Blue Ribbon of Dublin.) If you're a newcomer to the art of Guinness guzzling, you'll need a fork. It's thick. For a good pint, make sure you go to a good pub where the pints are pulled slowly.

Wait. You must wait. If you drink the Guinness before it's settled, you've just committed your first major non-Irish faux pas.

Your Guinness is ready. It's time for an Irish toast. I know you can get books of those sappy Irish toasts, but you'll never hear those in Dublin. You may hear some football (a.k.a. soccer) reference that I can't print here, but, to be on the safe side, just

say "Slainte" (Schloin-tuh). It's Gaelic for "health," and a common toast.

Now it's noon, and you're hungry. Like I said, no corned beef and cabbage. If you were really in Ireland, you could go to Leo Burdock's Fish and Chips to get a big, greasy slab (and I mean slab) of fried fish and chips, not the Ruffles kind, but chunks of fried potatoes, which are like french fries but much thicker. (And Bono reportedly eats there.)

Another drink, perhaps? How about Irish coffee, a nice mix of coffee and Irish whiskey? About mid-March, in Ireland, you'll need it; it's "pissing rain" and cold.

At some point in time, you could wade through the tourists gathered to watch the St. Patrick's Day run, where you might catch sight of St. Patrick jogging in full robe and sandals.

For some solitude and a reversal from killing your brain cells, you should drop by Trinity College, the Harvard of Ireland. Chances are, you'll run into the orange- and white-striped Trinity Cat. He's a mean tabby, and a very bold cat. I almost left my right hand in Ireland because of him. Anyhow, he may not seem important, but he's always sitting by the pitch (field) unless it's really raining.

If that's the case, drop into the old library to see the illuminated manuscripts of the Book of Kells. It's a nice biblical reminder that you shouldn't be this drunk at 2 p.m.

You've got the rest of the afternoon to kill, so wander over to St. Stephen's Green. You'll be walking down the tourist-trap

Grafton Street, where you can window shop. Drop into Bewley's for some coffee and a scone, but stay away from the blood pudding.

St. Stephen's Green is pretty peaceful, until you get to the crazy guy by the duck pond. If he jumps up behind you, cackles and says, "Eh, yeah, I coulda pushed ya in," just smile, nod and keep checking out the ducks.

As evening approaches, there's only one place to go: the pubs. A few more pints of Guinness, and you can relax to some starving Irish band trying to be the next U2.

Speaking of Bono and friends (who are probably in Las Vegas), fans should drop by the new Kitchen, the disco owned by The Edge and Bono himself. Disco in Ireland doesn't mean John Travolta and white, sequined jumpsuits. It's retro dance music, ecstasy (hey, it's true), neon spandex and neon lights.

It's 2 a.m. You've never needed the blessing of St. Patrick as much as you do now. You think you see a giant potato swimming in the Liffey River, but you're just stoned.

Some scary-looking guy in a balaclava comes up to you smelling of gunpowder. He mumbles something about joining the IRA and you (as a dumb American) think it'd be nice to invest in your retirement account so early, so you agree.

But then he hears your American accent, steals your wallet and lurks off into the night.

Happy St. Patrick's Day. Slainte.

Lavigne is a senior news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan managing editor.

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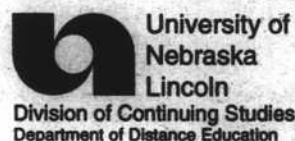
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