## Éireann

Solo Journey to the Emerald Isle

## Video Journal



https://youtu.be/LoZw7YbHYzc

## Field Notes from the Emerald Isle

I'm sitting in my favorite blue dress, the one I recently thrifted for \$20 and wear twice every week, on a stone block overlooking the Corrib, watching it rush over the slippery, algae-stained riverbank. Dingy boats rock back and forth in the wind under a blanket of hazy grey clouds. The air is slightly briny, and my coffee warms my fingers. It's the morning of my fifth day in Ireland, and Galway had already become a second home. A few years have passed since my last solo trip, and I've forgotten how luxurious solitude can feel. It affords a way to be fully present in a way that traveling with friends or family can't. Solo travel hands me the potent pleasures of fresh attention and an expanded imagination. Digital disconnection grants deeper intimacy with the breathtaking creation before me.





En route to Connemara National Park







The Wild Atlantic Way



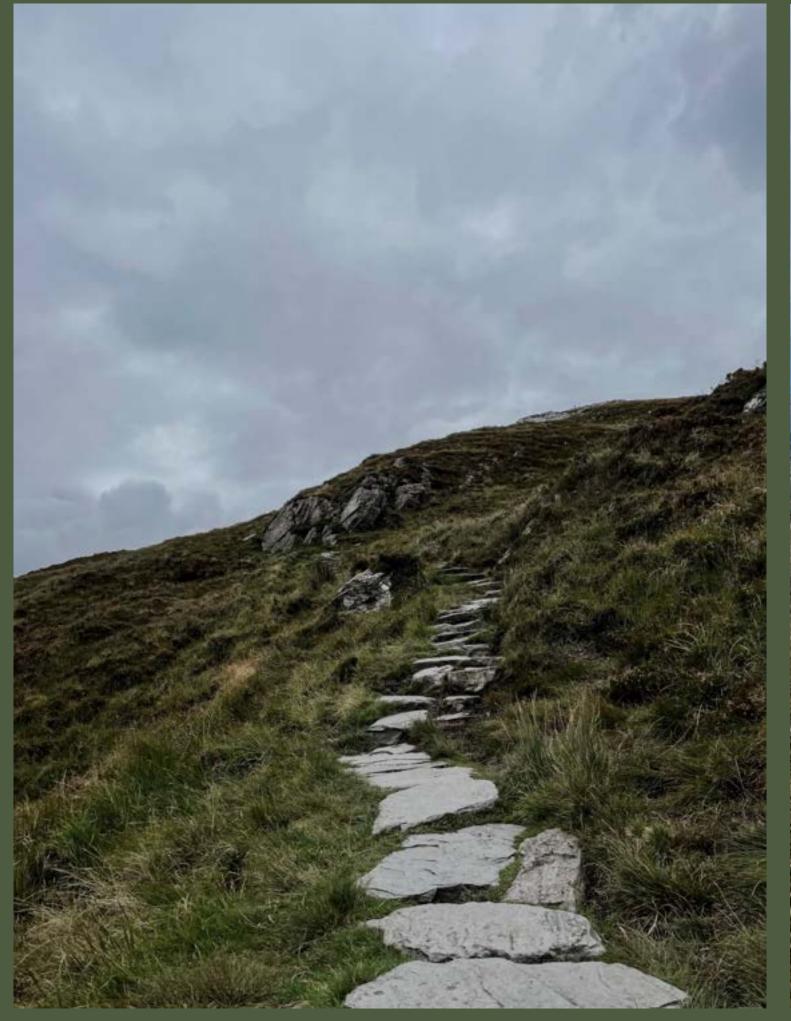


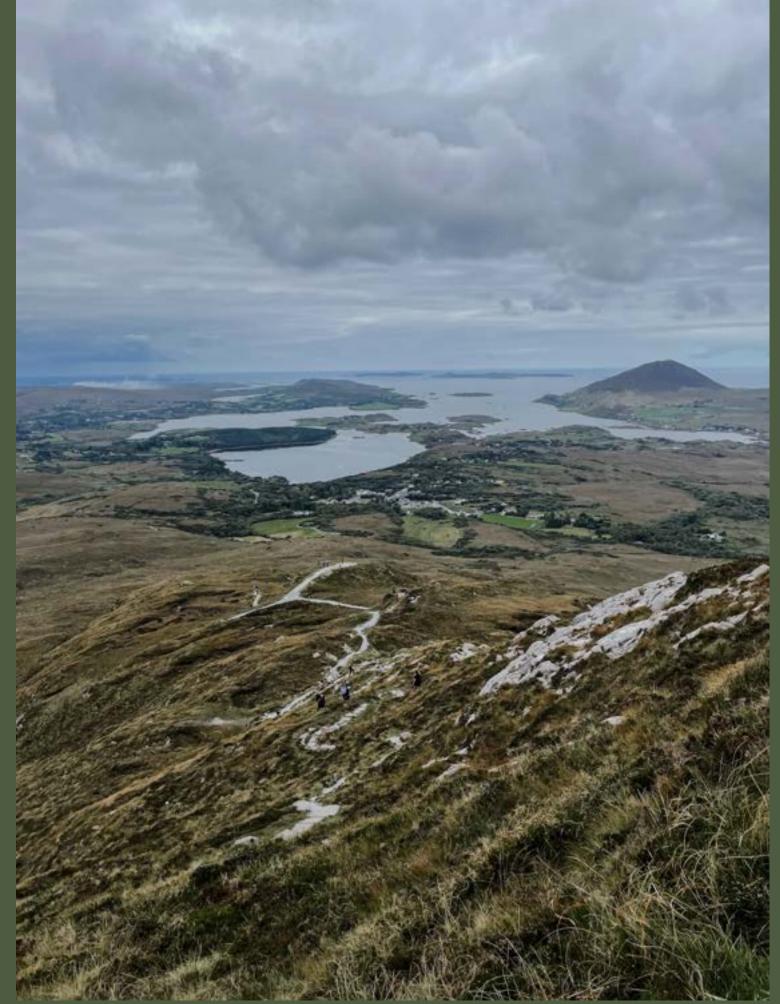






Diamond Hill ("Hill" is a euphemism for mountain when you're carrying a heavy tripod and Sigma zoom lens.)



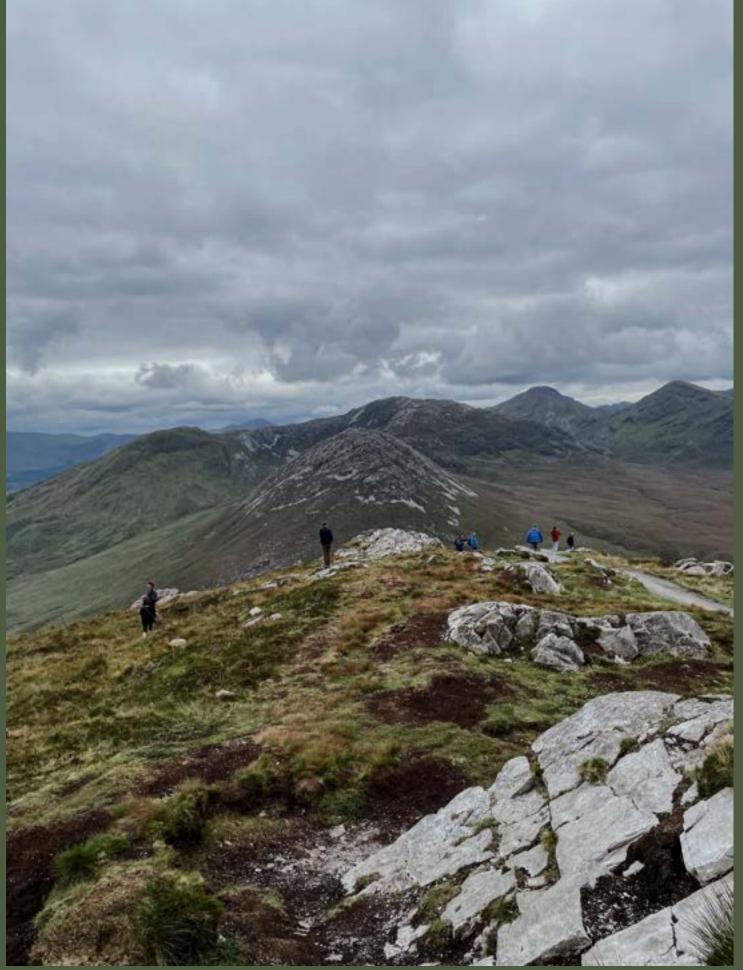






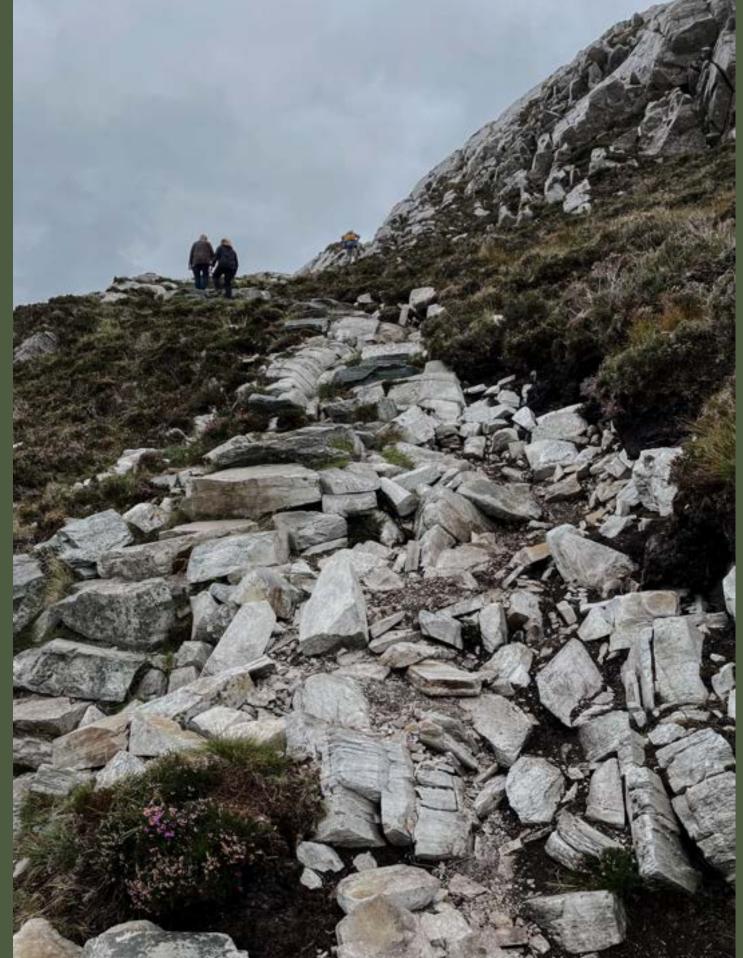


















Kylemore Abbey





Patrick (Paddy) & Jack

## On Solo Travel

While independent, I never felt alone. The Irish people were rich in love, generous in their hospitality, warm in their welcome. Fellow visitors, too, exuded a refreshing spirit of openness.

I befriended older Valencian women who greeted me in Spanish after noticing me carry my brother's FCB bag; they were attending a week-long English class in Galway and decided to kick off the week at Connemara. At Tigh Chóilí, I met Dario from Croatia ("It's like Mario, but with a D"), who extended an invitation to a silent disco that night, and Yottam from Israel by way of San Jose, who was spending a few weeks during his gap year after high school to volunteer on a farm. My French seatmate, Sabrina, made me laugh when she expressed her confusion about the pronunciation of "beach" and another b-word.

I ended up running into the little one who cried on our flight to Dublin, in Galway; her family and I lit up when we recognized one another, as if we offered one another pieces of home. Strolling down the streets of Galway with my AirBNB host, as he greeted friends passing by, made me wonder if I was walking with royalty.

The bartender at O'Connell's, Daithi, urged me to stand behind the counter for a photo and wouldn't take no for an answer. There, someone attempted to practice their Korean with me (fun fact: I don't speak Korean) and welcomed me to join a conversation with his friend, a professor who had just moved back to Ireland from Maryland.

Bert, the bartender at Monroe's, had spent a few years in NY and introduced me to the whiskey rep as his "friend from Jersey" with an accent that made me light up and question whether he had ever met anyone from NJ.

My plan to read on the train to Dublin was wonderfully interrupted by a 1.5-hour conversation with Jerry, a retired social worker who was born in Belfast and has lived in NJ, Munich, and California. He approved of how I curated my itinerary, focusing on Galway and Dublin this trip and saving Ireland's other riches for a future visit – validation is a hymn to an overthinker's ears.

Just as we disembarked, Patrick, another retiree whose 90-day trip to Taiwan became 7 months due to COVID-19, and whose Mandarin is better than mine, was waiting by the door to chat some more. He's studying to become a health coach and was delighted to discover I'm a dietitian. He flipped through the vitamin K lecture notes he was reading, "Natto is an excellent source of vitamin K, too!" I loved how he said that with his Irish brogue, almost as much as I loved his love for natto.

Ireland was a dream. Besides the nurturing rest of a holiday, there was something about Ireland that reenergized my soul, something I still struggle to put my finger on. For now, I'll attribute it to the magic of leprechauns and fairies, a magic that's drawing me back, and hopefully soon.





The Cliffs of Moher



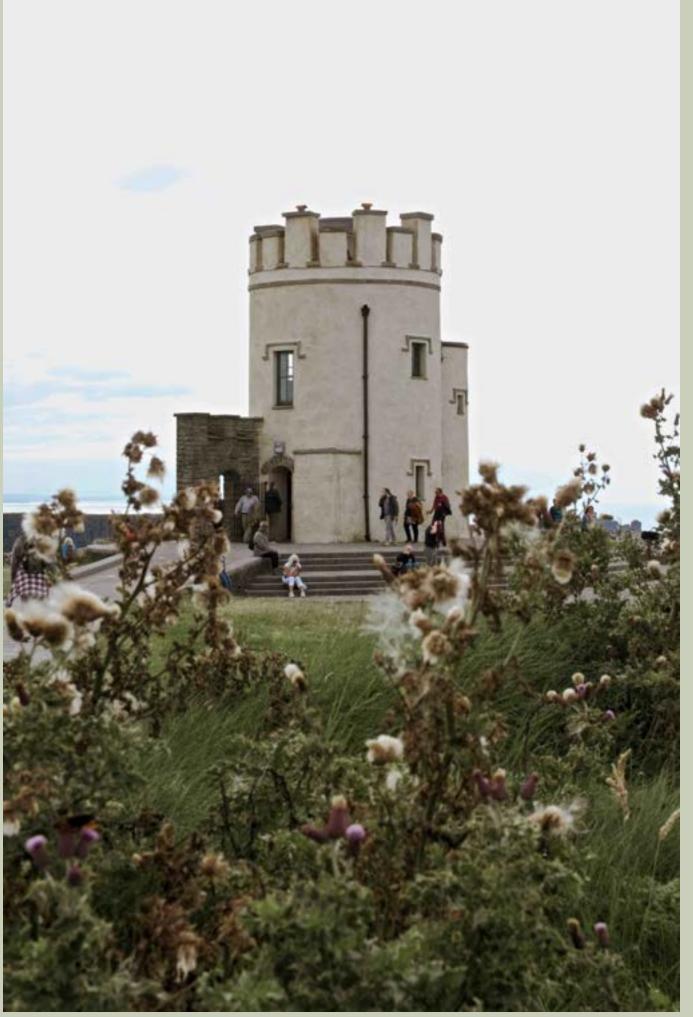


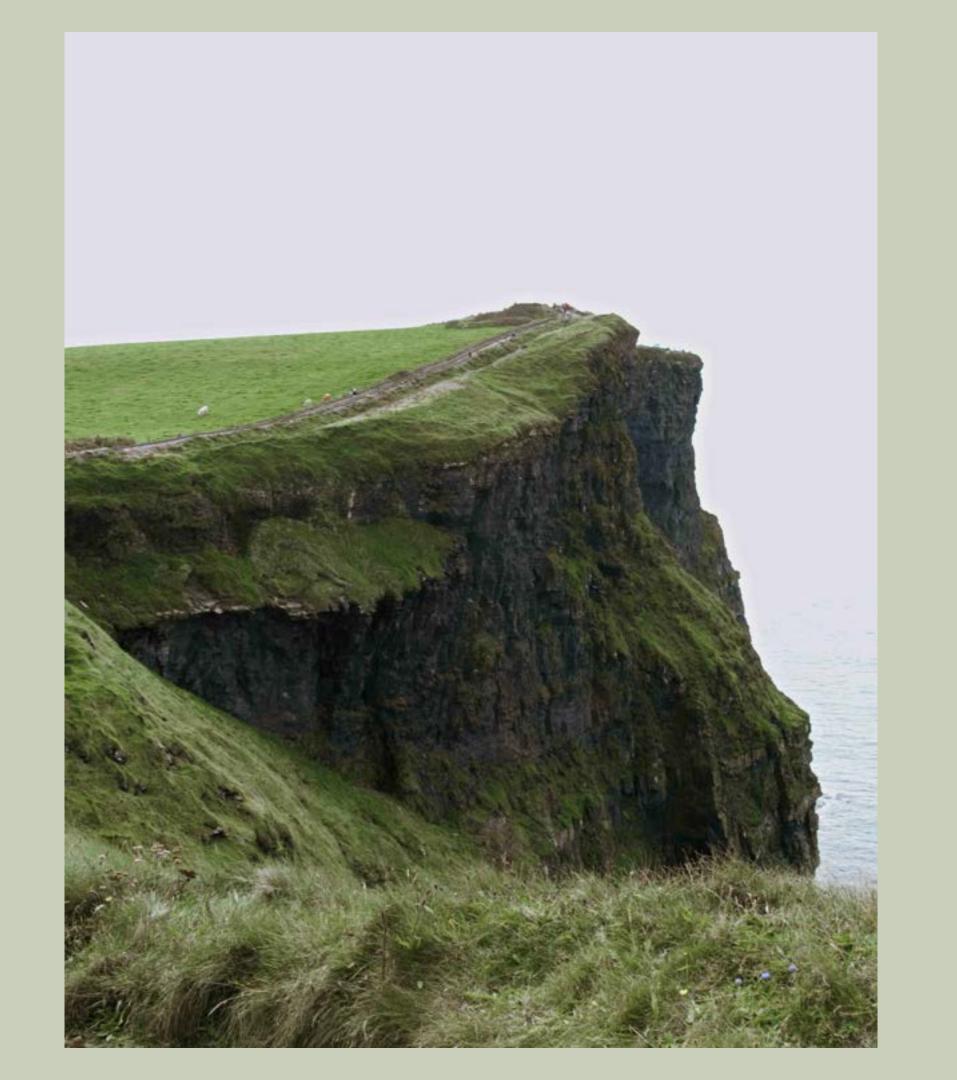
"It's as close as you'll get to walkin' on the moon." - Garry



O'Brien's Tower

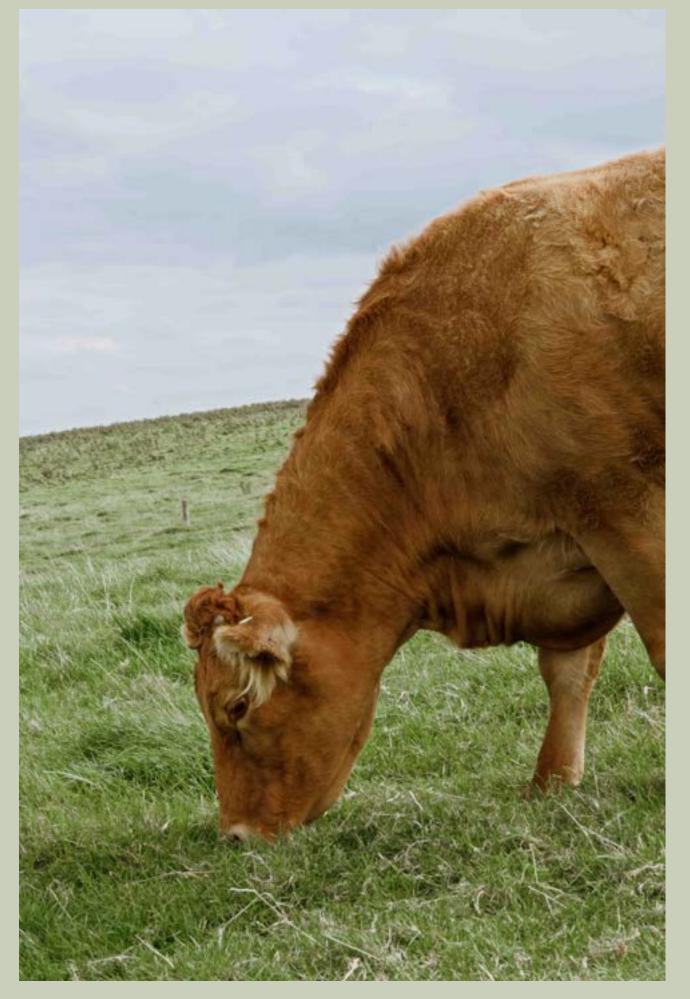


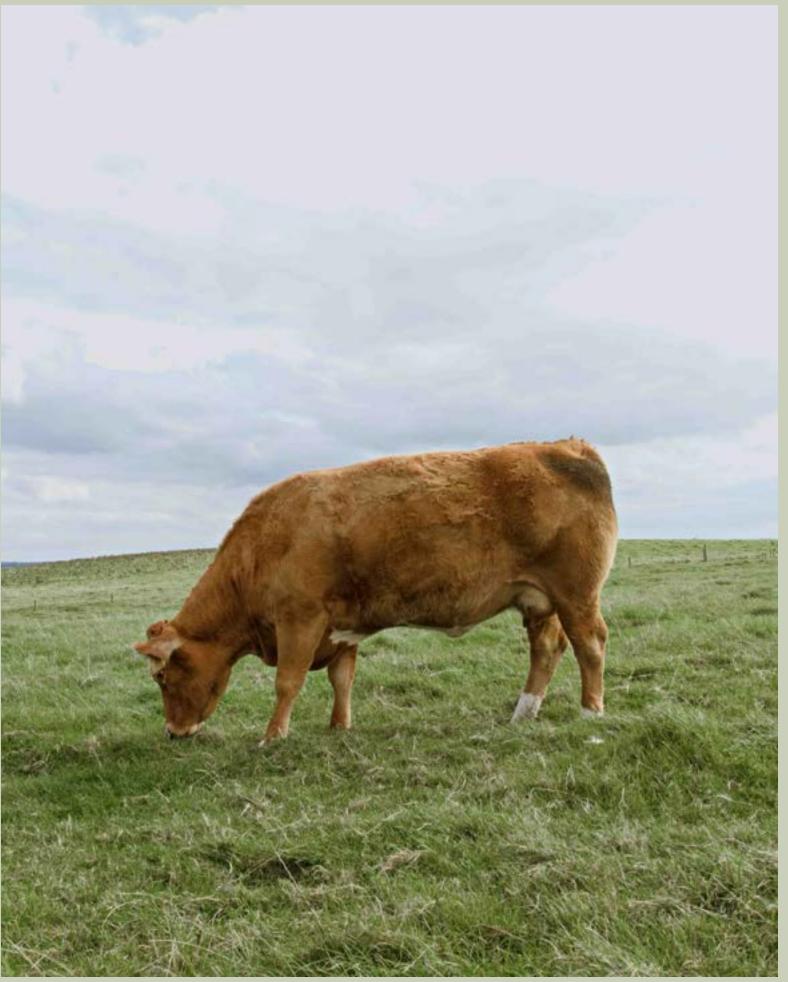




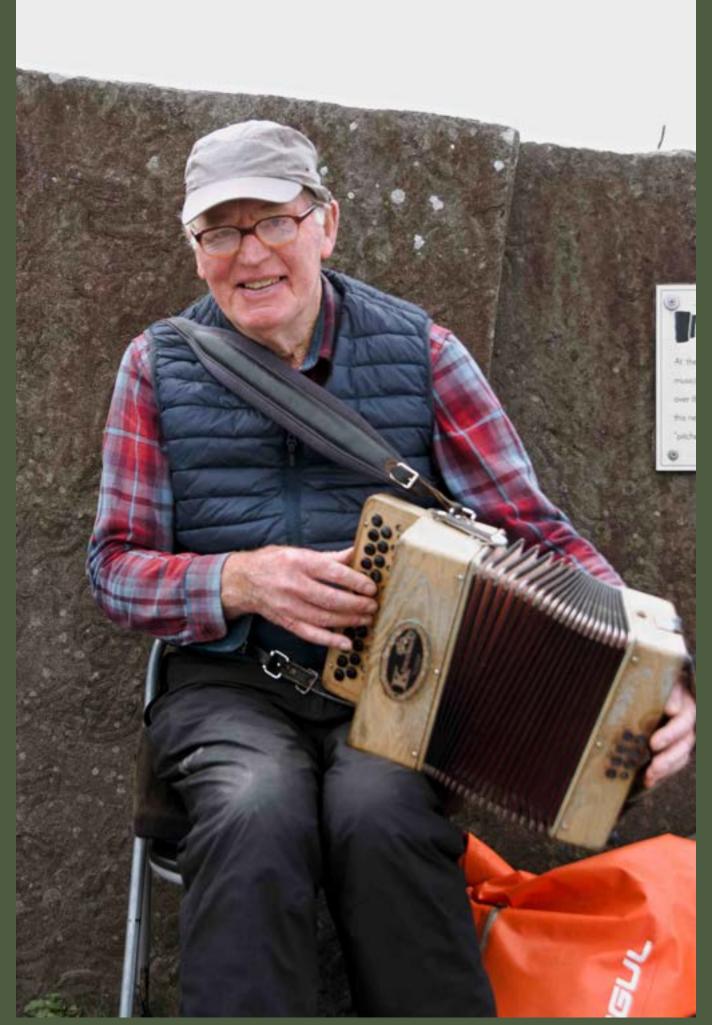








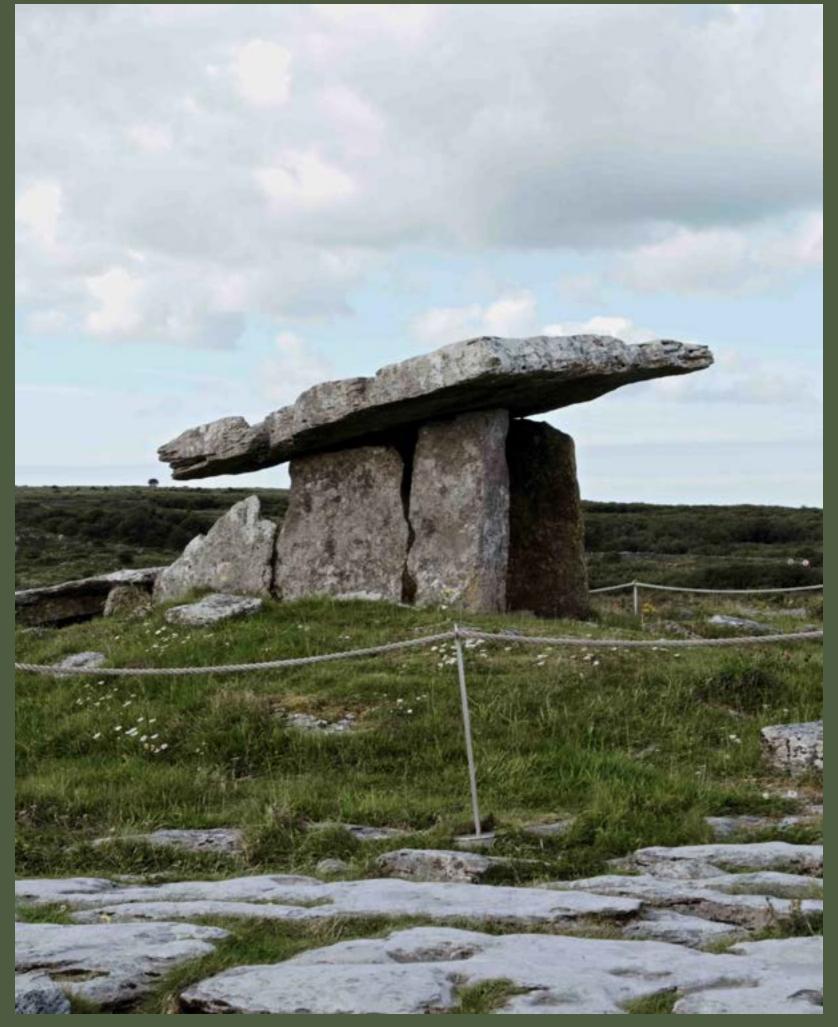




Knoll



Black Head



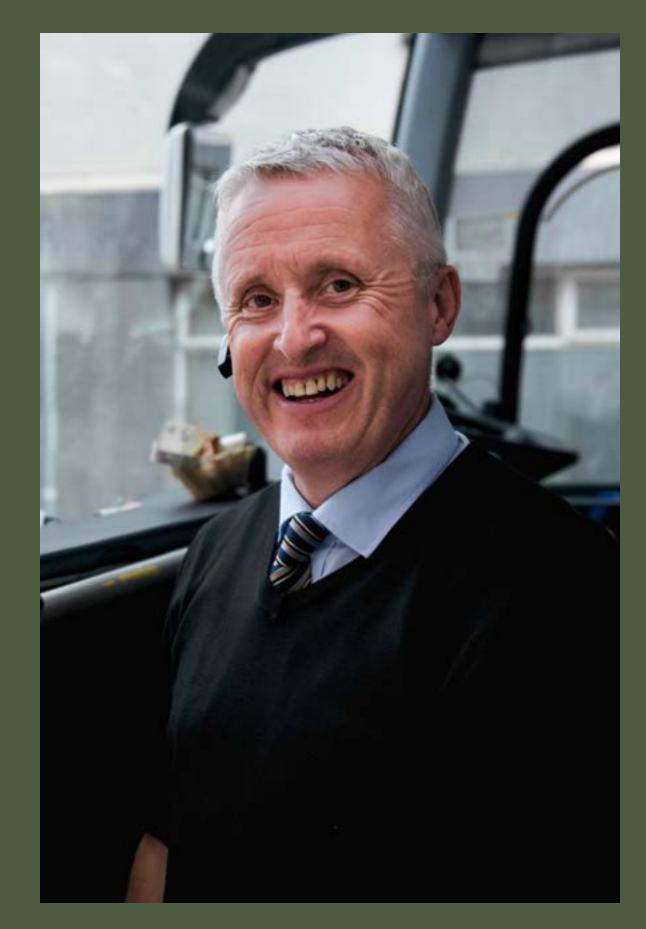
Poll na Brón

## Meet Garry

"What made you come to Ireland for your holiday?" Garry asked. I was drawn to Ireland for its rugged beauty and our day seeing the Cliffs of Moher and The Burren didn't disappoint. When Garry asked, "What was your favorite part of your day?", the first thought that honestly came to mind was "YOU."

"My job today is to take care of you," Garry promised, and true to his words, he delivered, giving us 110%. When our day wrapped up, Garry and I shared what I call a moment of infinity, a wrinkle in time during which I'm acutely aware of my heart's fullness and the precious nature of a fleeting moment, leaving me with the resolve to be as present as humanly possible. Garry told me about his life as he asked about mine. I wish I could bottle up his passion and positivity, his Irish-isms, and his reminders throughout the day to "keep smiling." Before we parted, he gave me a big birthday hug, something I didn't realize I was missing but needed.

If I could love my work half as much as Garry loves his, I'd count myself so lucky. *Go raibh míle maith agat*, sweet friend.

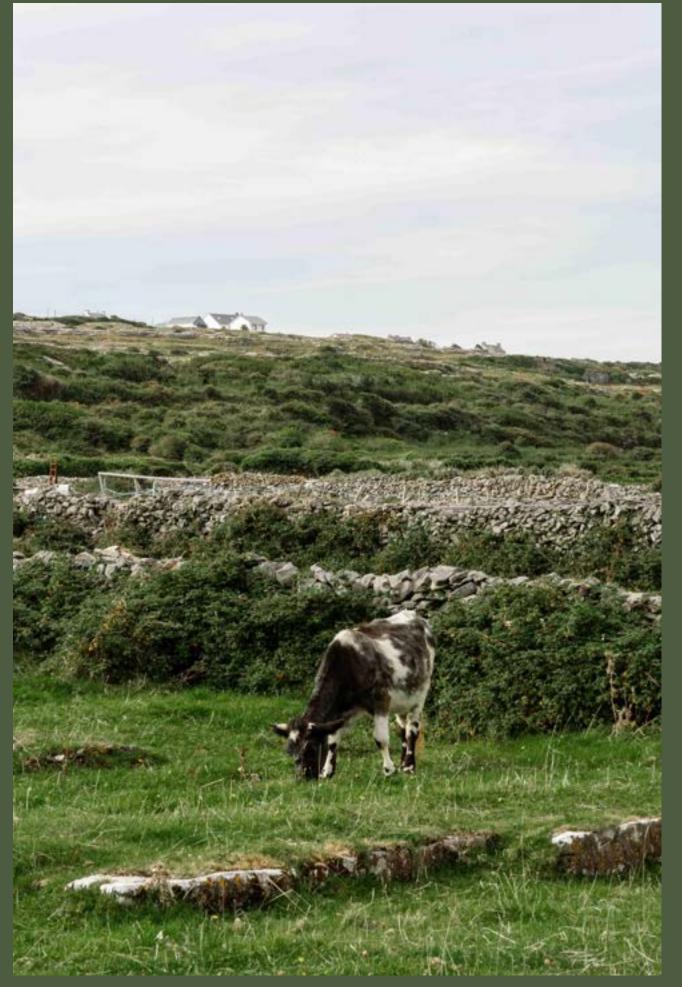




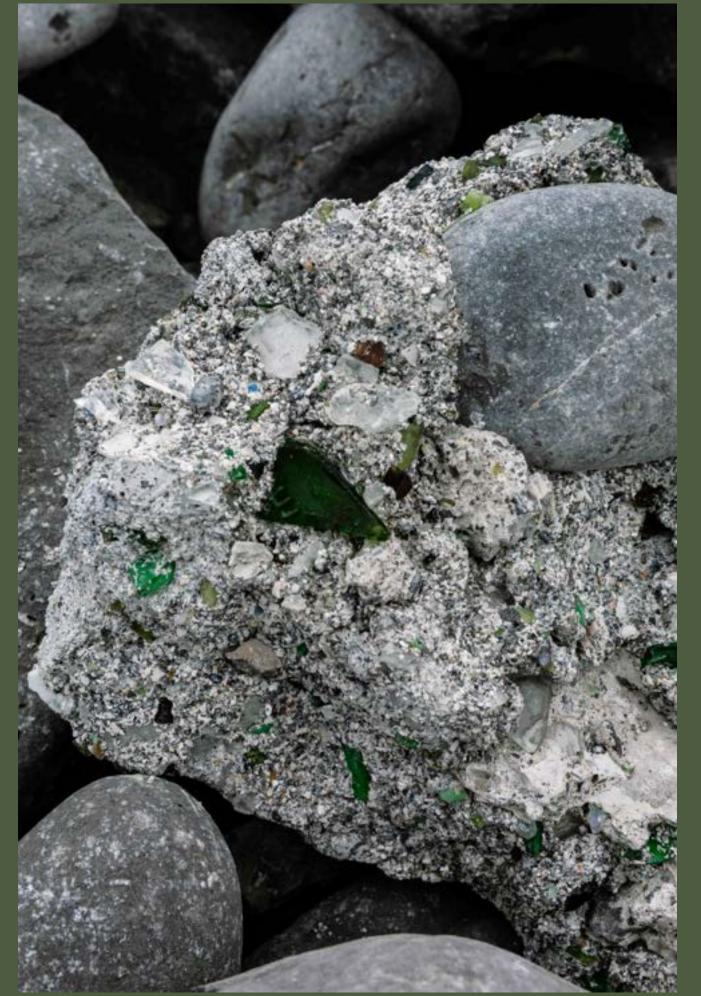
Inis Mór

















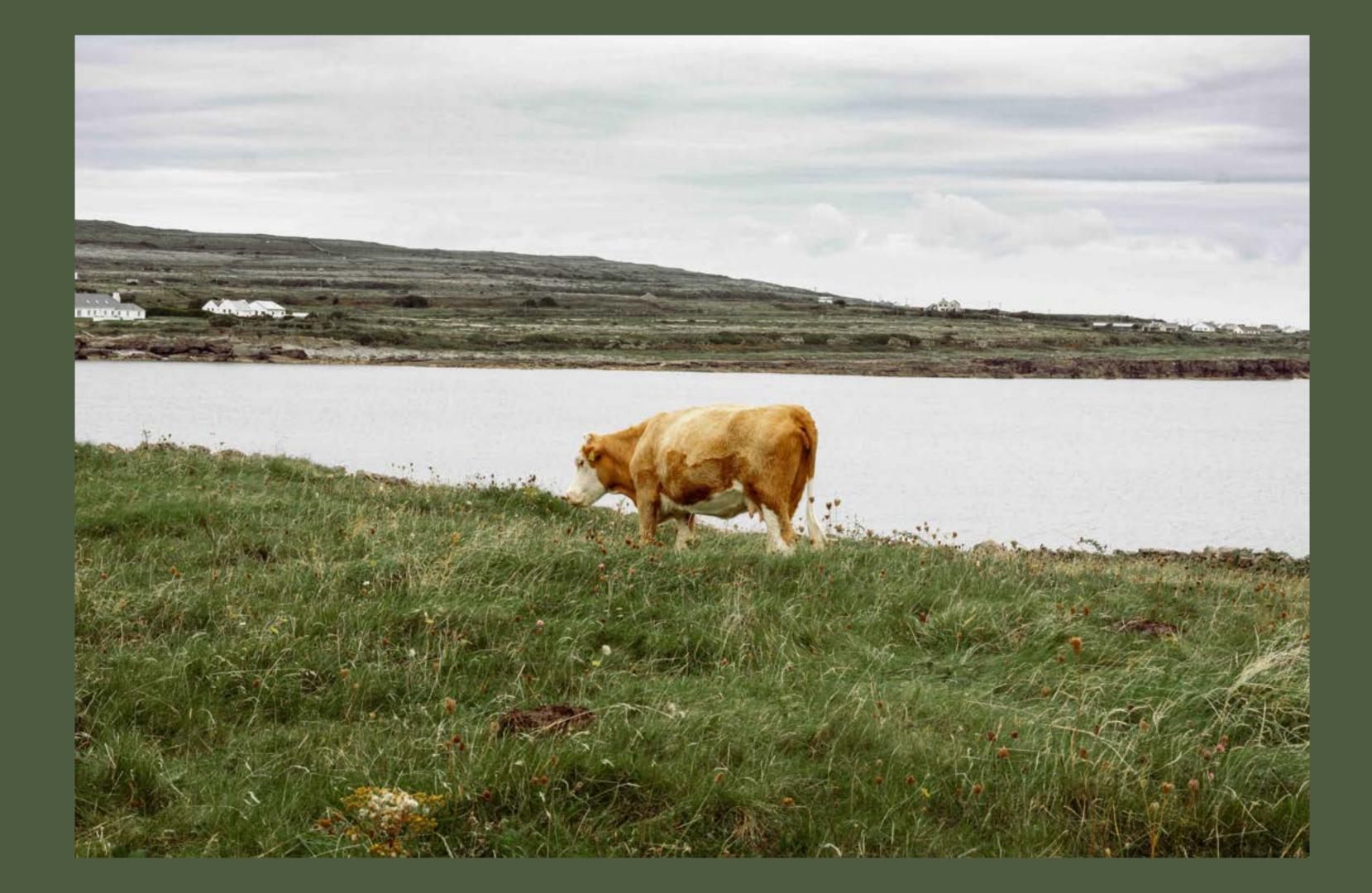






Dún Aonghasa







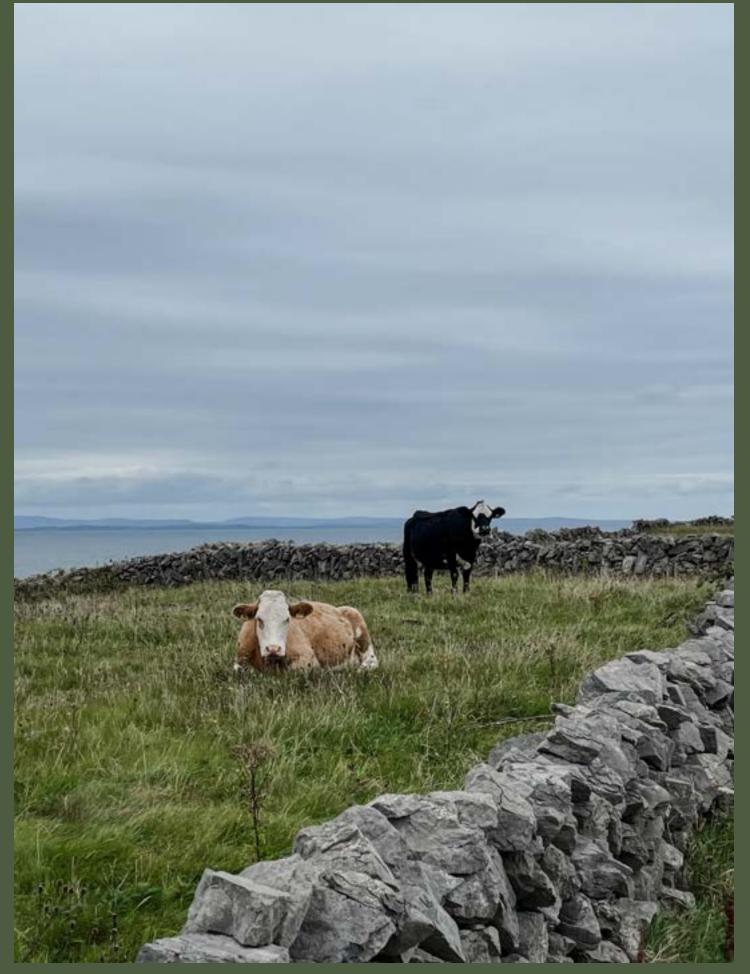
Vince & Paddy























Hag's Head





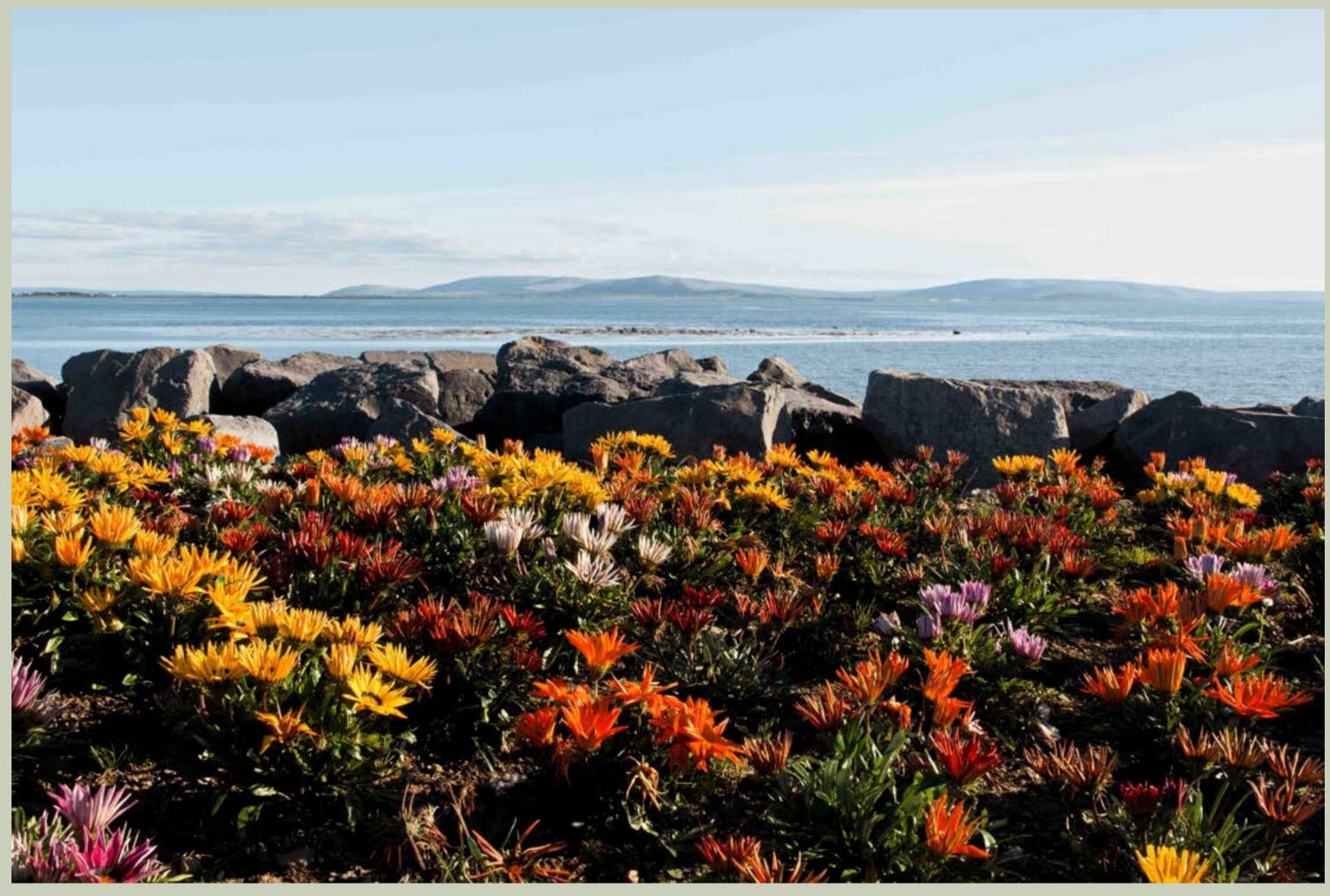


## My Guide to Traveling Alone

"Travel gives us new settings for our mind's activity to take place, outside of ourselves... I pay a lot of attention to the way that a new setting might influence my thinking and feeling, and I seek out places that I hope will reshape my mind by either opening my opinions, softening my preoccupations, or narrowing my focus... The greatest gift of solo travel is sharpened observation."

Mari Andrew



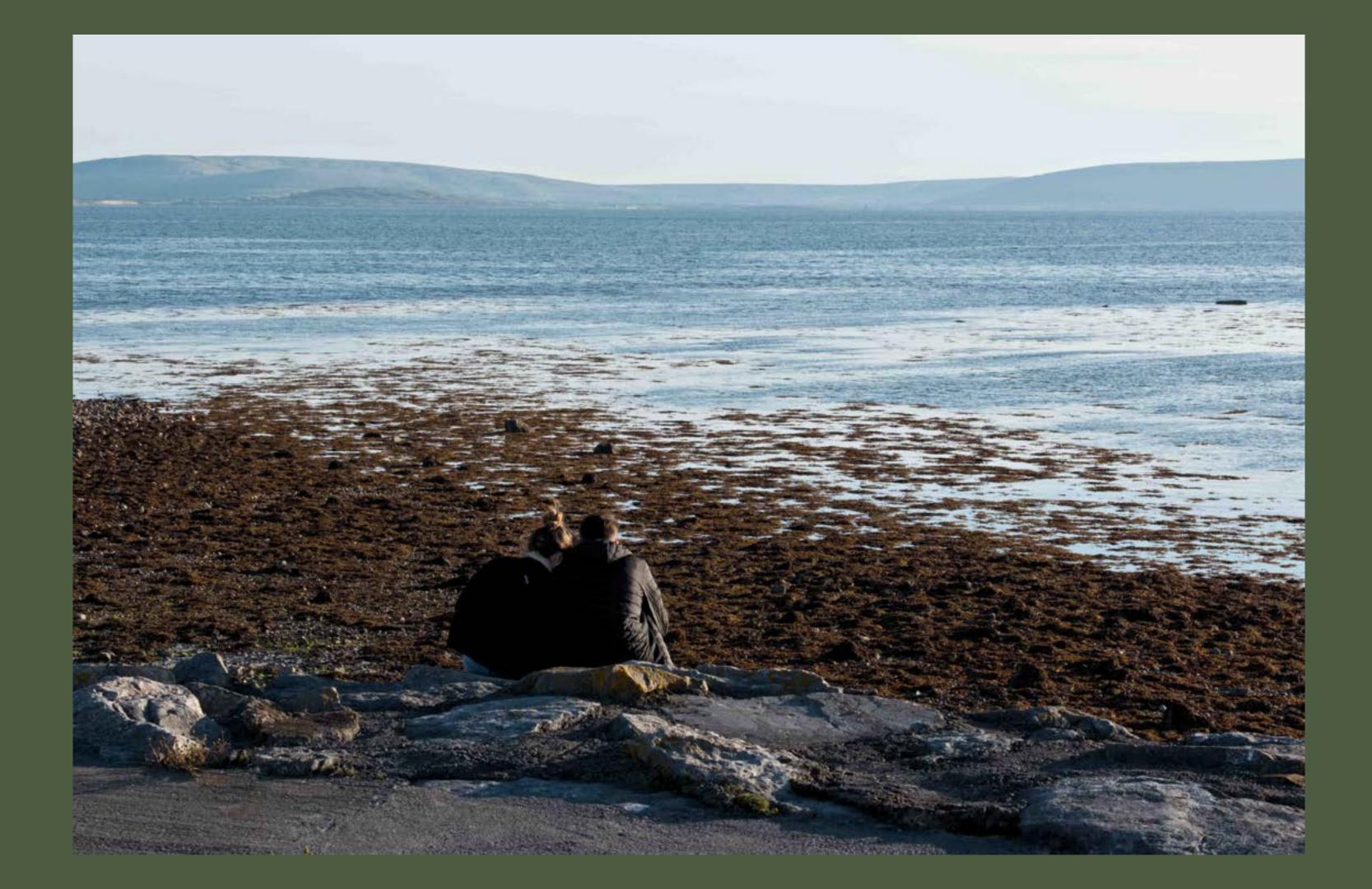


Salthill Prom

















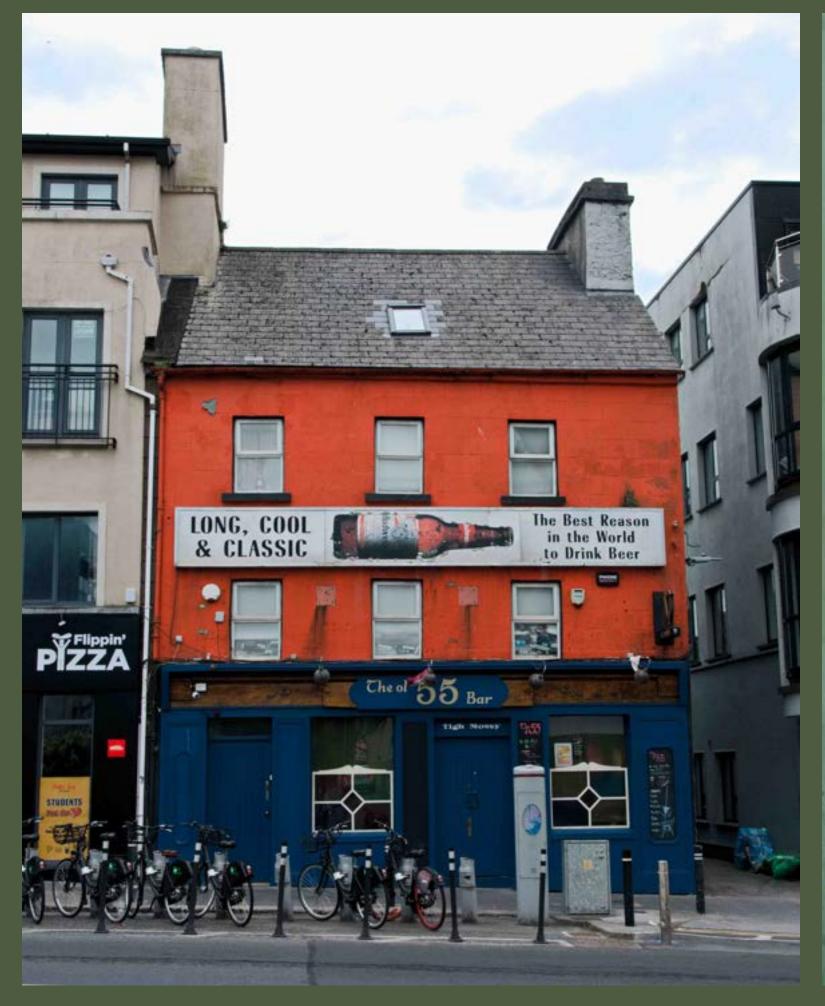
Galway City



















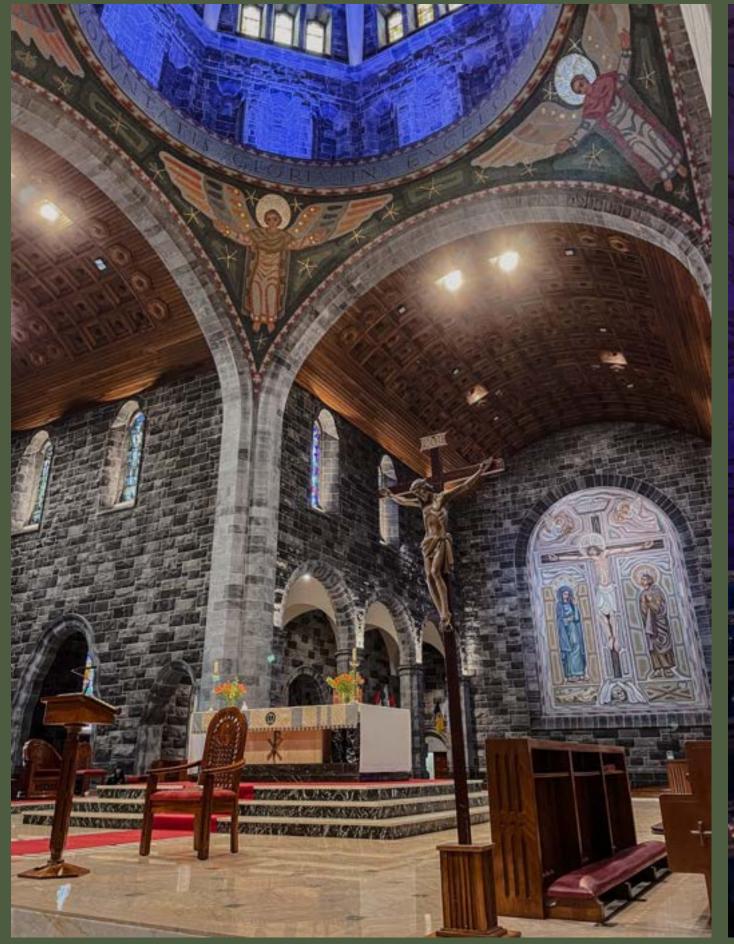


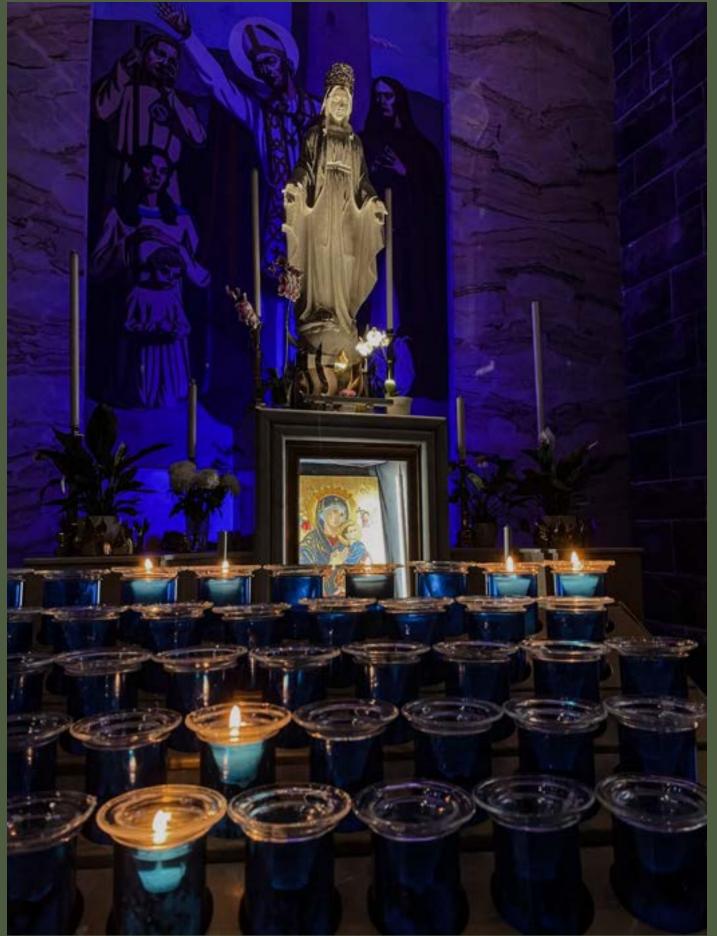






Galway Cathedral



































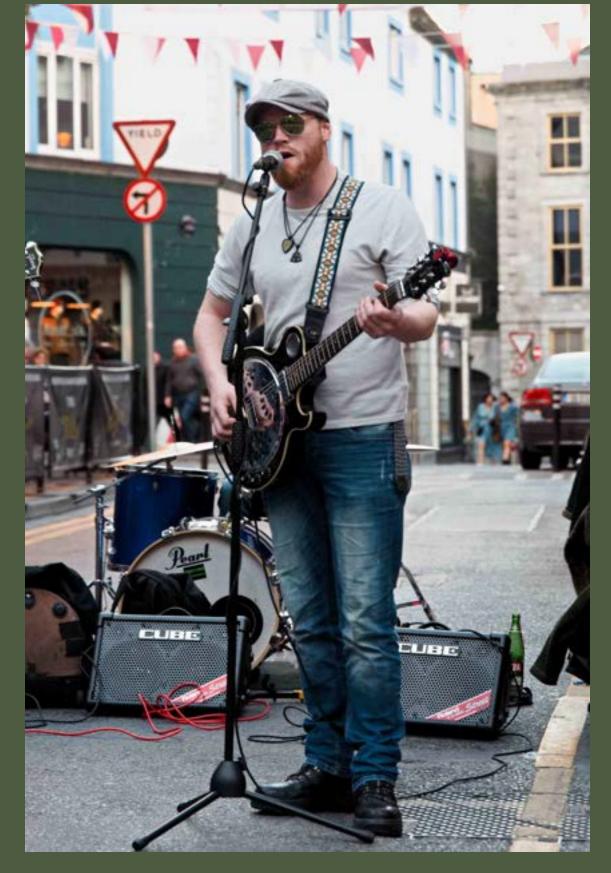






















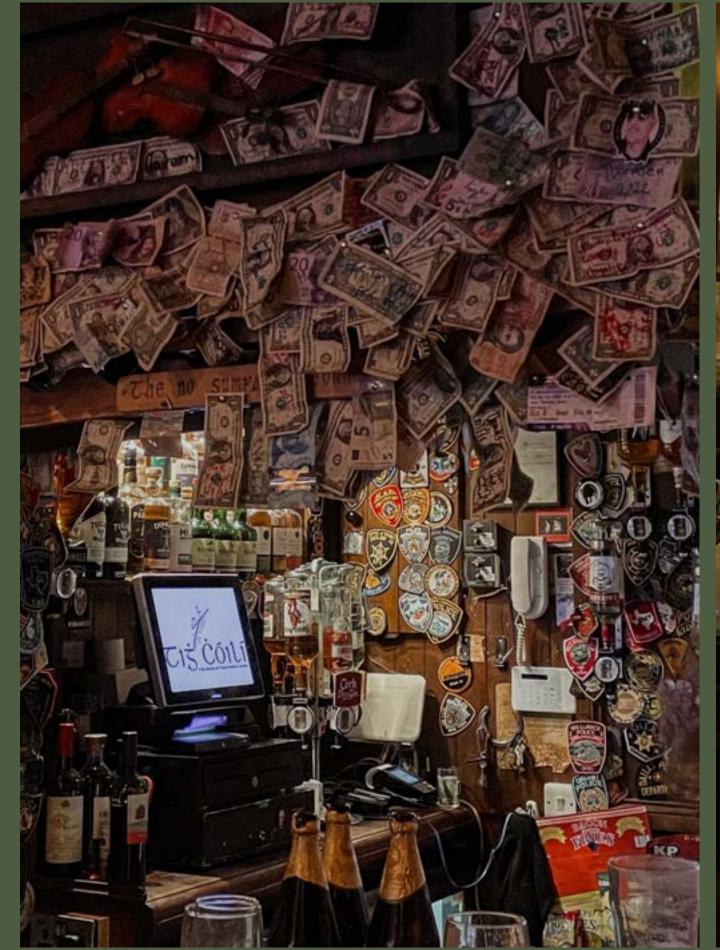


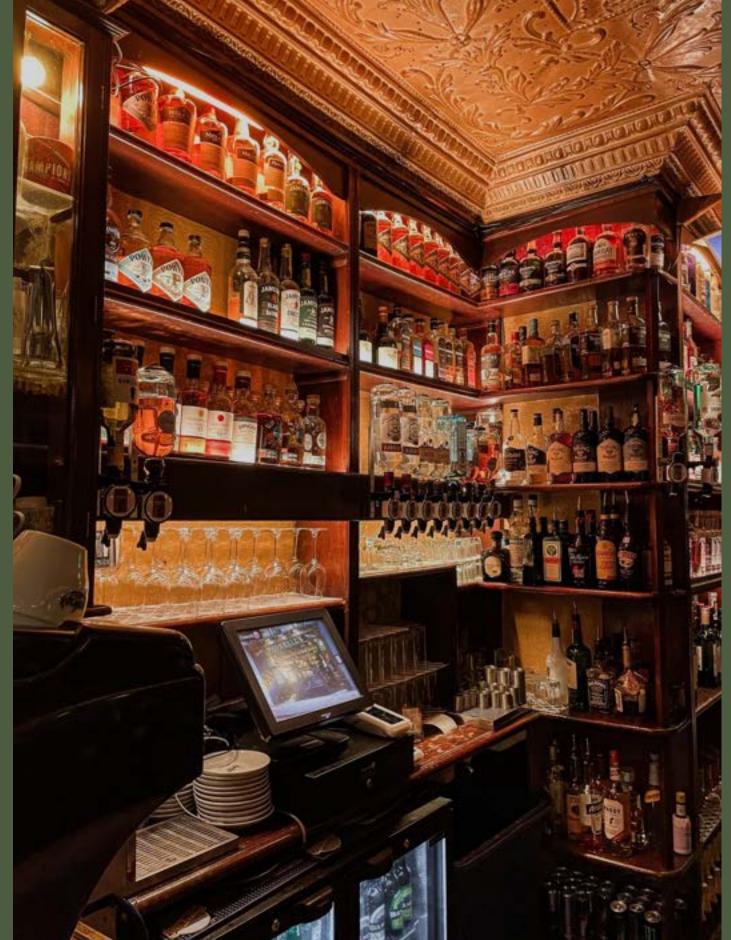








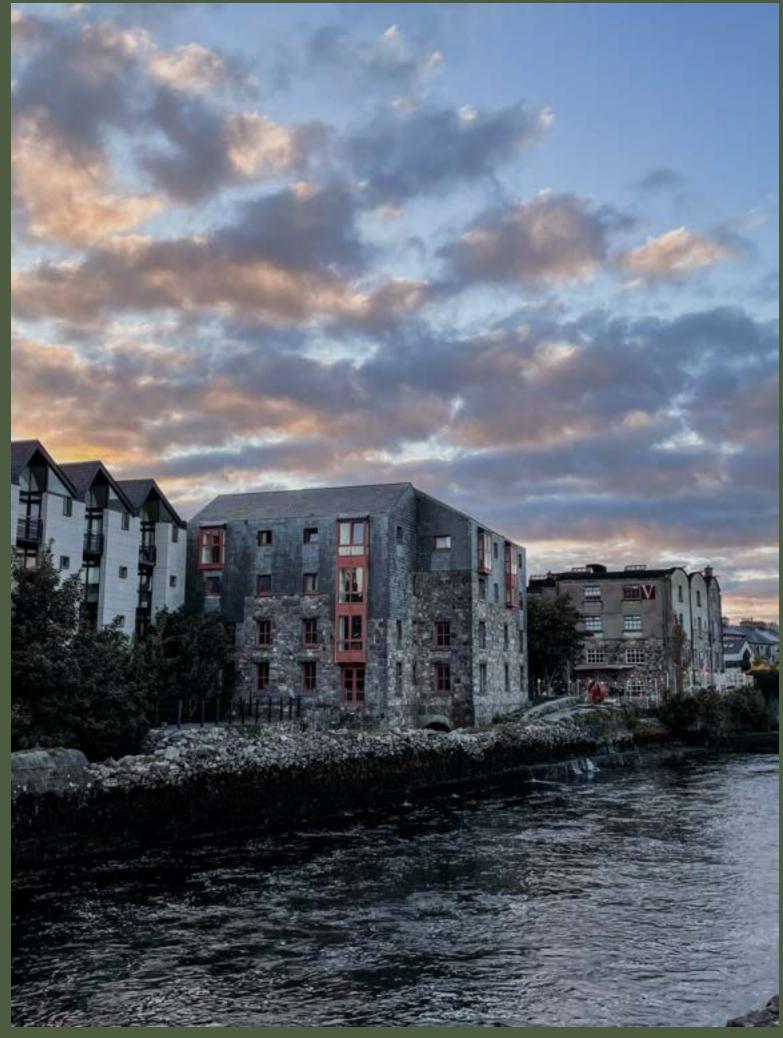


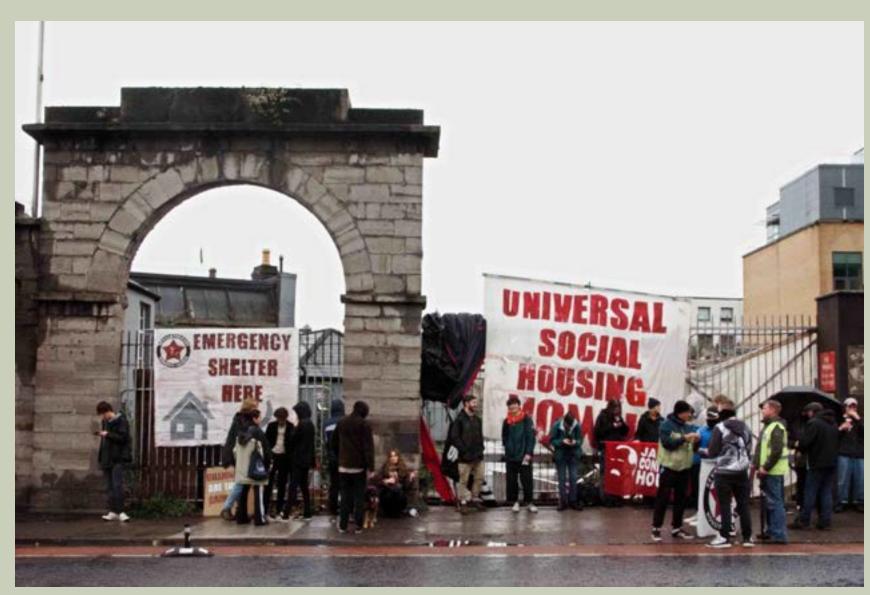










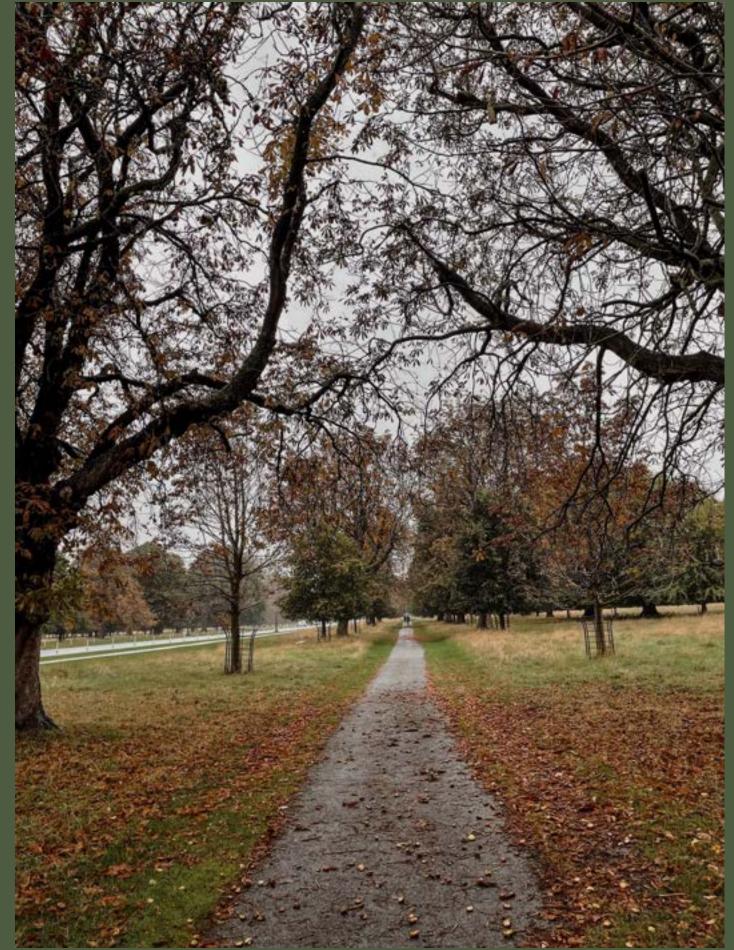




Dublin

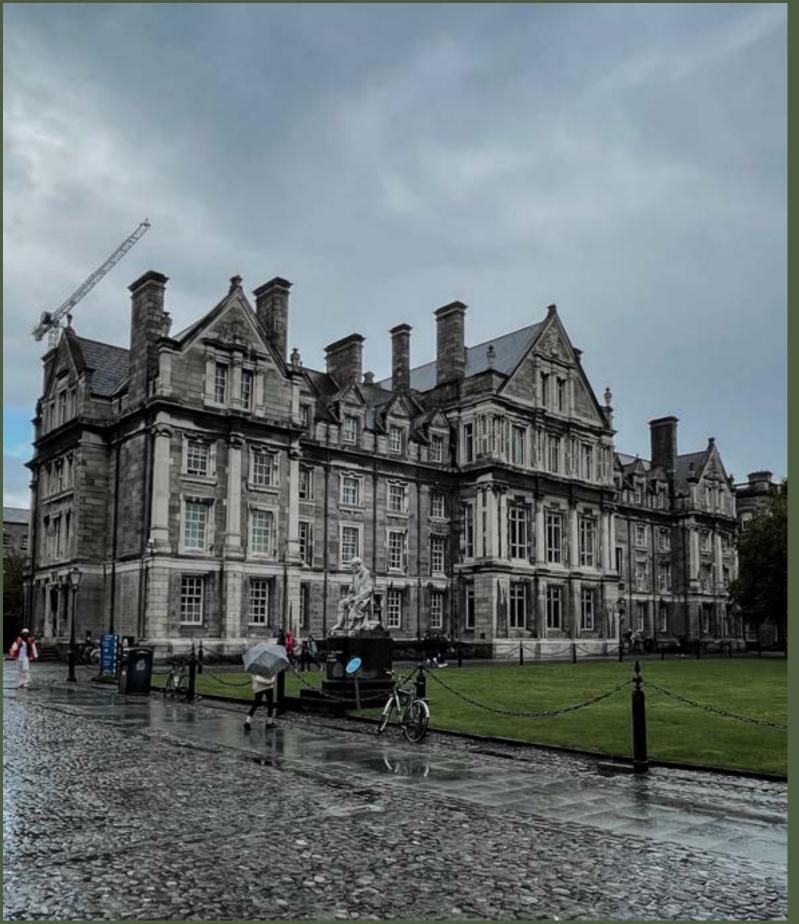


Phoenix Park

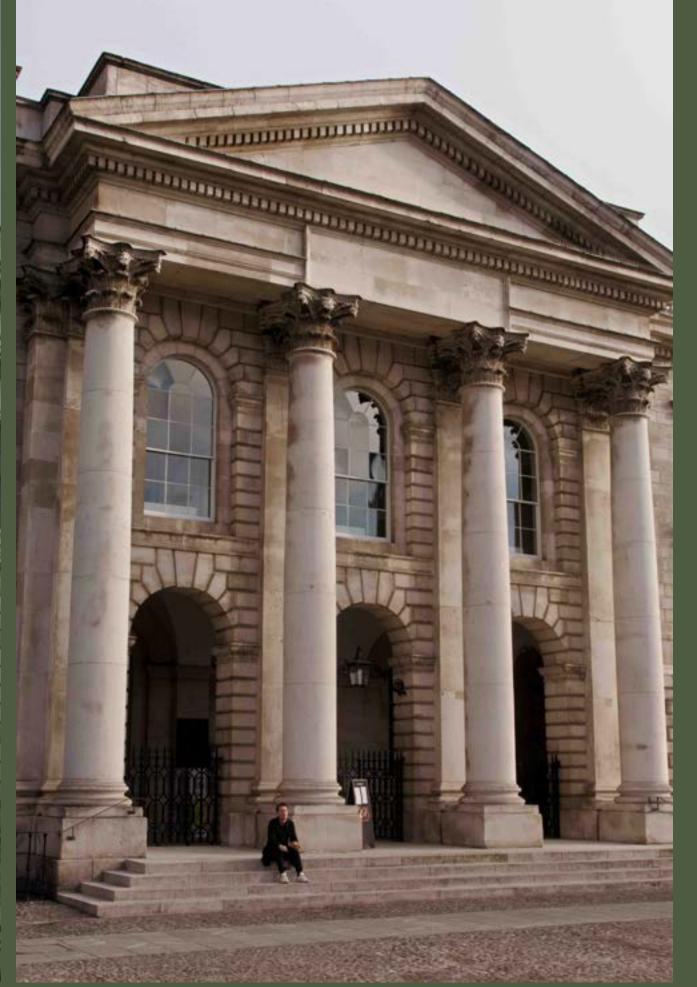


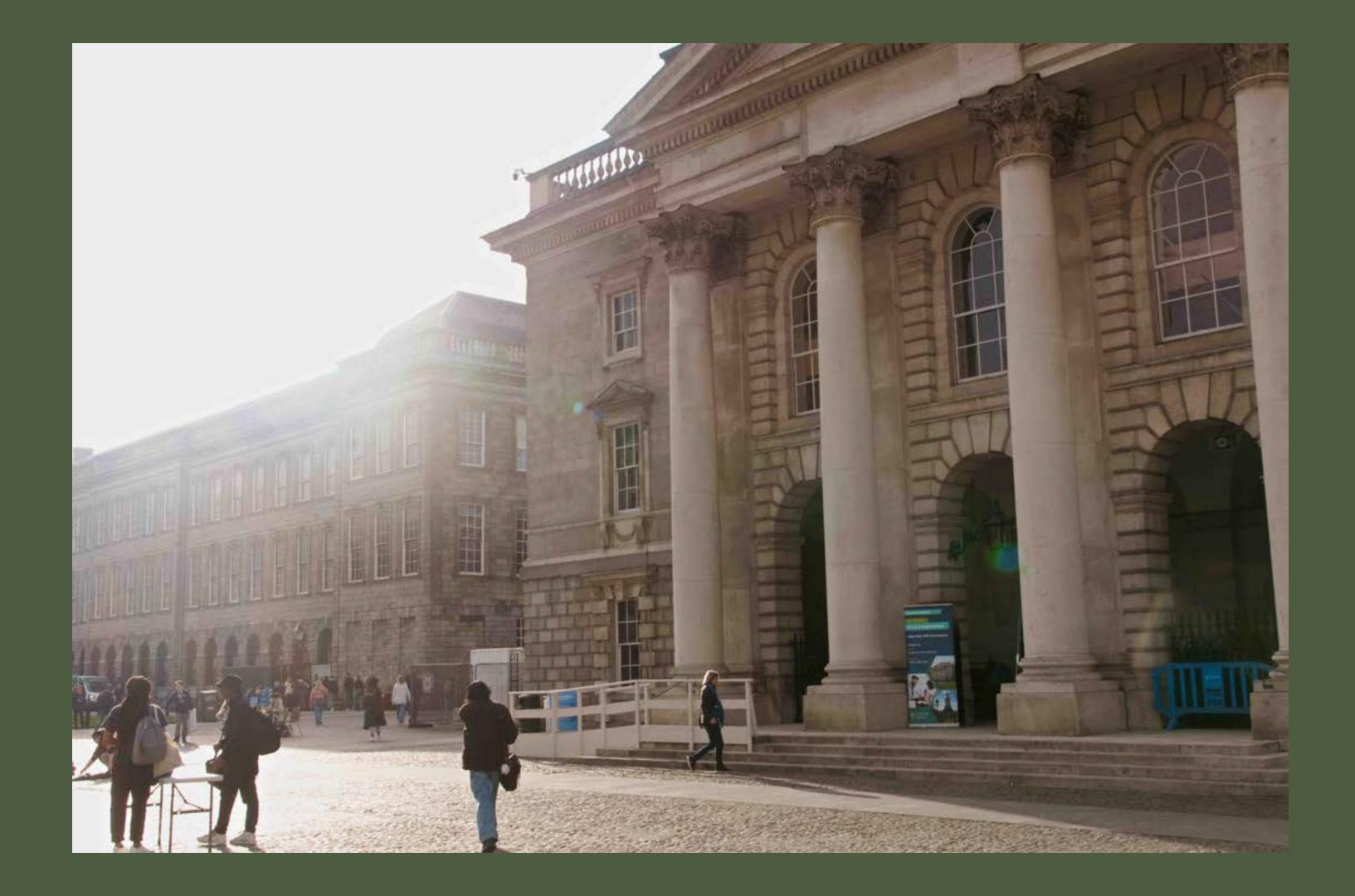


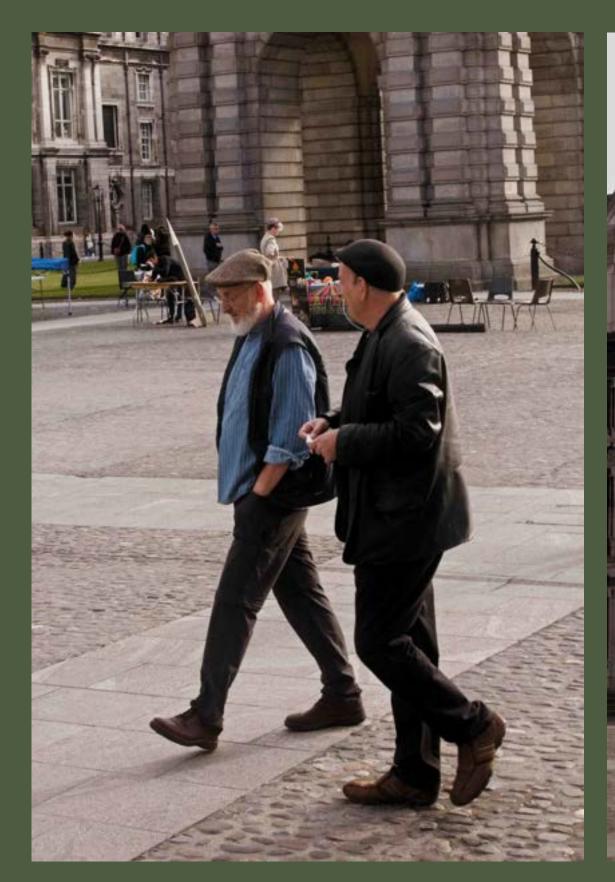














Trinity College



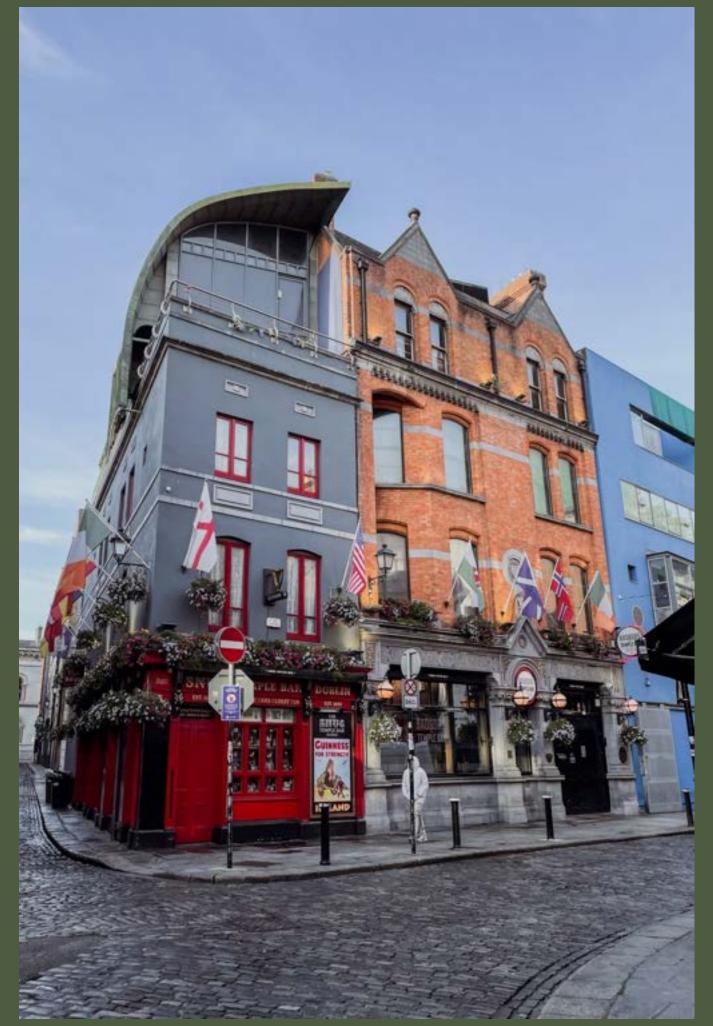
The Book of Kells & The Library of Trinity College

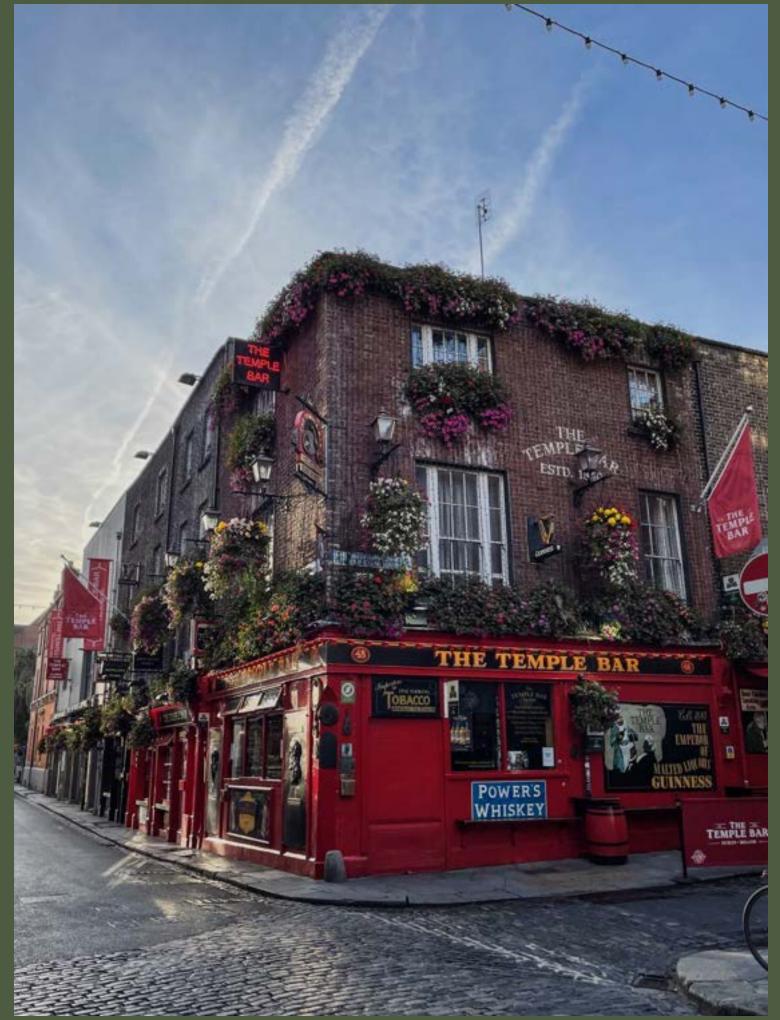






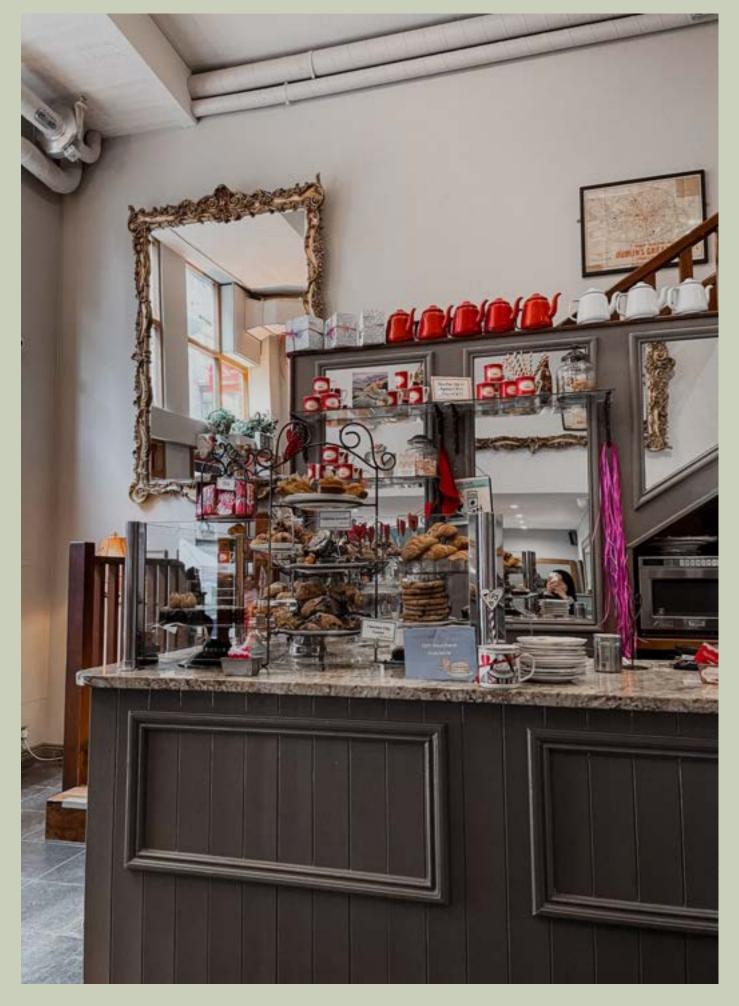








Temple Square





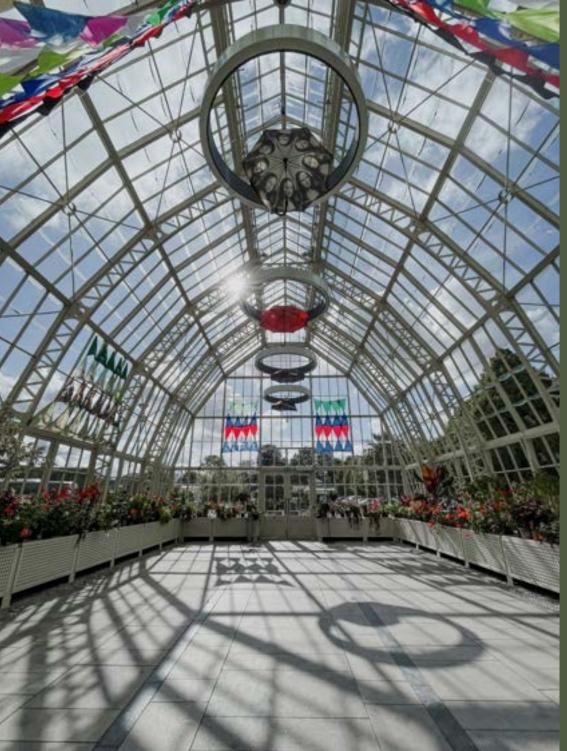
Queen of Hearts

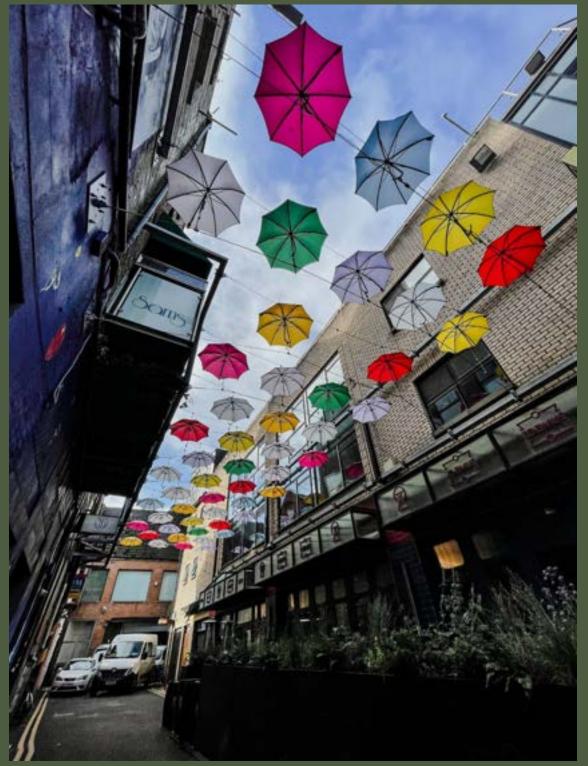
















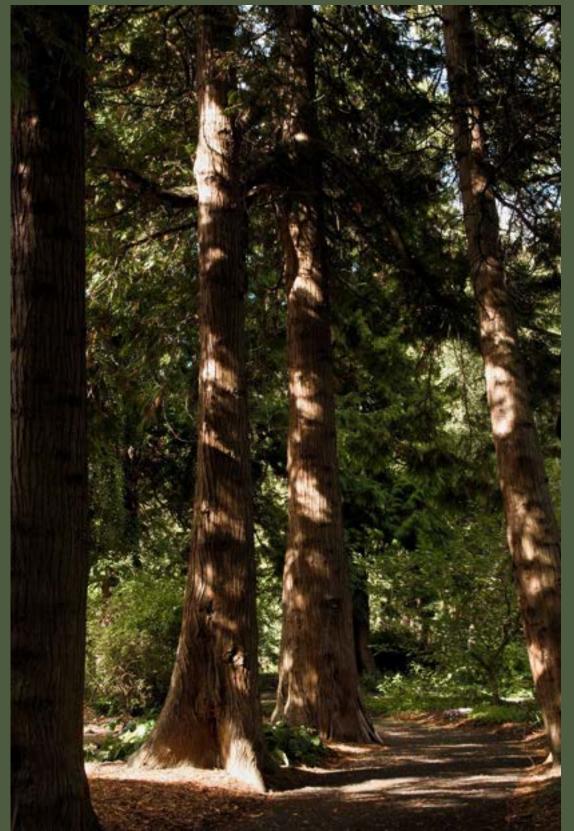


National Botanic Garden



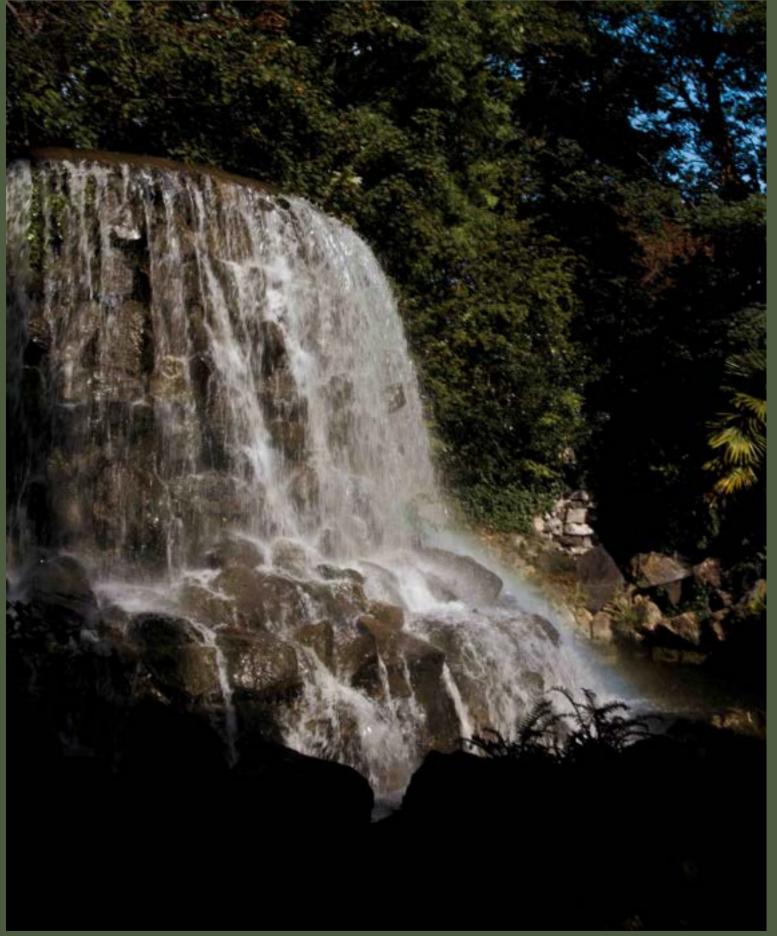












Iveagh Garden





Shane











## Go raibh míle maith agat, Éireann. Thanks a million, Ireland.