



## 11: CROKE PARK

A self-guided walking tour

# iwalk!



*Truly Madly Deeply*  
**Dublin**

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## WELCOME TO THE CROKE PARK IWALK

WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL ENJOY THIS WALK FROM THE CITY CENTRE, OVER THE RIVER LIFFEY AND ALONG THE CAPITALS MAIN BOULEVARD INTO THE HISTORICAL NORTHSIDE TO CROKE PARK, THE HOME OF GAELIC GAMES.

DUBLIN'S REAL APPEAL IS HER PEOPLE, SO DON'T BE AFRAID TO STOP AND ASK FOR DIRECTIONS ALONG YOUR WALK - DUBLINER'S HOSPITALITY AND WIT WILL CAPTIVATE YOU!

[WWW.VISITDUBLIN.COM/IWALKS](http://WWW.VISITDUBLIN.COM/IWALKS)



**iWalk**  
CROKE PARK

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**Dublin Tourism**  
DUBLIN REGIONAL TOURISM AUTHORITY

# iWalk - Dublin and Croke Park



Dublin Tourism Centre

01

**Dublin Tourism Centre:** The tour commences from outside the Dublin Tourism Centre on Suffolk Street. If you are wondering why the offices of Dublin Tourism are situated in a former church it is because the decline of the local population in the second half of the 20th century forced the closure of St Andrew's Church. In 1996 it was beautifully refurbished and re-opened as a tourism centre by its new owners, Dublin Tourism.



Trinity College

02

**Trinity College/ College Green:** To start our walk to Croke Park, walk along Suffolk Street towards Grafton Street. When you come to the junction with Grafton Street and Nassau Street bear left and pause at the statue of a lady pushing a cart. The shapely figure is that of the legendary fish-seller, Molly Malone, celebrated in the 19th century song of the same name that has since become a virtual anthem of the city of Dublin. As you continue down the street, directly across the road and behind its walls is No. 1 Grafton Street, the elegant 18th century house of the Provost of Trinity College. Straight ahead of you is College Green, obviously named after Trinity College, but in medieval days it was known as Hoggen Green. The building which housed the Irish Parliament is situated ahead of you across the road. Commenced in 1729, this wonderful classical building was the first legislature in the world to be erected specifically to house two chambers; the House of Commons and the House of Lords. On your right is Trinity College. In 1591 Archbishop Adam Loftus persuaded the city council to grant this site for the formation of the city's first permanent university.



O'Connell Bridge

03

**O'Connell Bridge:** Use the traffic lights to cross over to the central island and continue across to the pavement on the far side. Walk around by the curving wall of the Bank of Ireland and enter Westmoreland Street. Continue along this street and cross over to O'Connell Bridge. The pedestrian bridge nearest to you is the famous Ha'penny Bridge, dating from 1816 and so-called because it used to cost a half penny to cross it. Now one of the oldest cast-iron bridges in the world it has become one of the enduring symbols of Dublin. The first O'Connell Bridge, which was then called Carlisle Bridge, was completed in 1795 to the designs of James Gandon, the famous architect who also designed the Custom House. This first bridge was found to be too steep and narrow for the increased traffic of the 1870s so a new bridge was commissioned. Copying Gandon's original architectural details, the replacement was flat and as wide as O'Connell Street. In fact, today's bridge is fairly unique in that its width is greater than its length.



Daniel O'Connell

04

**O'Connell Monument:** Cross to O'Connell Street and then continue across to the central mall and stand in front of the tall monument called the O'Connell Monument. John Henry Foley designed the memorial to Daniel O'Connell and it was unveiled on 15th August 1882. O'Connell, known as the Liberator, had achieved religious freedom in Ireland through his 1829 Act of Emancipation. Study all the statues closely on all sides and you will discover that each of the winged Victories and many of the higher statues display occasional small round holes. These are bullet holes from the Rising of 1916 when O'Connell Street was occupied by rebels who were fired on from both ends by British troops.

## iWalk - Dublin and Croke Park



O'Connell Street

05

**Opposite GPO:** Walk up the mall passing the statue of an oversized figure with outstretched arms. This is to James Larkin, a great trade union leader who was prominent in the Great Lock-out strike of 1913 when transport workers and other tradesmen were locked out from their jobs after they sought wage increases. Stop when you reach the colonnaded portico of the General Post Office. The GPO is the most important building historically on O'Connell Street. It was designed by Francis Johnston in 1812, and the neo-classical building cost £50,000 at the time to build. It opened in 1818.

Looking across at the GPO it is hard to believe that this splendid building was once just a smouldering ruin after it was reduced to virtual rubble in the rebellion of 1916. In 1917 a link between the GAA (**Gaelic Athletics Association**) and the 1916 Rebellion was created when the rubble from O'Connell Street and the GPO was brought to Croke Park. It was used to create a mound at the northern railway end of the stadium for viewing purposes. This mound affectionately became known as Hill 16. When the stadium was redeveloped this was renamed Dineen Hill 16 and remains a terrace for spectators.



General Post Office

06

**Inside the GPO:** To get a sense of that tragic week in Irish history, you can, if you wish, cross over to the GPO and enter the building by the left-hand door. First stand outside the large centre window underneath the portico. In front of the centre window stands the statue, by sculptor Oliver Sheppard, of Cúchulainn, an Irish mythological hero. His name in Irish means the Hound of Cualann but his original name was Sétanta. According to Irish legend, Sétanta gained his better-known name as a child after he killed local chieftain Cualann's fierce guard-dog in self-defense using his hurling stick and sliotar. Sétanta then offered to take the dog's place as protector of Cualann. He is equally famed in Irish legend for his prowess and skill on the hurling field as he is as a warrior. This statue, unveiled on Easter Sunday, April 21st, 1935, is a memorial to those who participated in the 1916 Rising. Inscribed underneath are the names of the seven signatories of the Proclamation of the Republic, who were executed when the rebellion failed. **Hurling is an outdoor team sport of ancient Gaelic origin played with a stick (hurl) and a hard leather ball (sliotar). Hurling is arguably the world's fastest field team sport.**



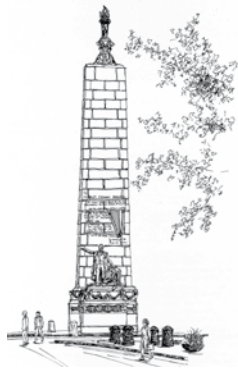
The Spire

07

**The Spire:** Exit the GPO and cross again to the central mall and stop just beyond the tall-needle-like monument. Named The Spire it soars and tapers to an elegant point 120 m high and was erected in sections between December 2002 and January 2003. The Spire symbolizes the new millennium and the renewal of O'Connell Street.



The Gresham



Parnell Monument



The Gate Theatre



Garden of Remembrance

08

**The Gresham Hotel:** Continue the stroll up the central pathway until you reach a point opposite the Gresham Hotel. The Gresham Hotel was first built in 1817 by Thomas M. Gresham. Over time, the reputation of the hotel grew and it was patronised by the visiting nobility and gentry of Europe. During the hostilities of 1916 the guests were trapped in the hotel for the whole week but the building itself escaped damage. Six years later it was not so lucky and was reduced to rubble, as was the entire block, during the Irish Civil War. Every summer the GAA's hurling and Gaelic football championships culminate with the All Ireland finals staged on two Sundays in September. On the morning of each of these matches, O'Connell Street is awash with GAA fans supporting their county. Indeed the Gresham and the Royal Dublin Hotels are prominent meeting points for fans lucky enough to have secured match tickets.

09

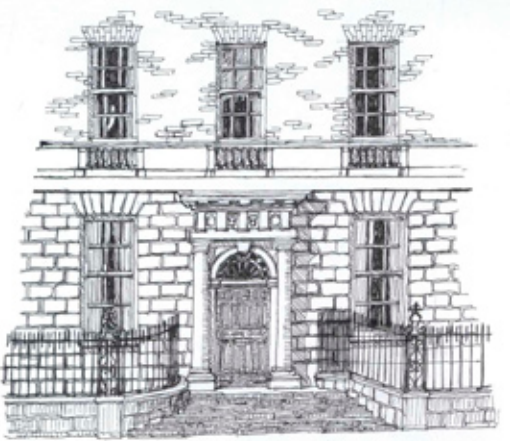
**Parnell Monument:** Walk up a bit further and pause again near to the end of the central pathway in front of the next major monument, a figure on a plinth standing in front of an obelisk-shaped column. This is the Parnell Monument. Charles Stewart Parnell was a hero to the Irish people in the 1870s and 80s when through political non-violent means he forced the British Government to introduce land reform and almost achieved Home Rule for Ireland. Such was Parnell's popularity that in 1884 an invitation was extended to Parnell to act as patron of the newly formed GAA. Upon his death in 1891 such was his popularity that over 200,000 people followed his funeral to Glasnevin Cemetery. Members of the GAA honored the politician by forming a guard of honor with their hurling sticks draped in black.

10

**The Gate Theatre:** Continue your walk along what is now Cavendish Row. You will quickly reach the entrance to the Gate Theatre where you should stop again. In 1928 the Gate Theatre was founded in the former Grand Supper Room of the Rotunda Hospital's Assembly Rooms, originally built in 1786 to gain extra revenue for the hospital. Famous film actors, Orson Welles and James Mason, cut their acting teeth during the early 1930s on the stage of the Gate. The theatre, which is rather small and intimate, regularly presents classic plays.

11

**Garden of Remembrance:** From the Gate Theatre walk up the slight gradient of Parnell Square until you reach the top of the square and enter the memorial park on your left which is known as the Garden of Remembrance. The garden was laid out in 1966, the golden jubilee of the 1916 Rising, to commemorate all those who died for Irish freedom. The floor of the pool displays a mosaic of weapons from Ireland's Heroic Age, that is, from 300 BC to 300 AD. The spears are shown as broken, reflecting the Celtic custom of throwing weapons into rivers when hostilities between factions had ended. The bronze statue group at the far end of the garden, called "The Children of Lir", is an impressive focal point.



Belvedere College



Dergvale Hotel



Croke Park

12

**Parnell Square North:** Leave the park through the main gate and walk a few metres to stand in front of the church with the tall spire. This is the Abbey Presbyterian Church. To its left is the Dublin Writers' Museum. Starting life as an 18th century Georgian townhouse Dublin Tourism converted the building in 1991 to the Writers' Museum. A couple of doors away from the Writers Museum, set back from the street and flanked by curved screen walls, is Dublin City Gallery, the Hugh Lane, which was designed by Sir William Chambers and built between 1762 and 1765 as the townhouse for James Caulfeild, 1st Earl of Charlemont.

13

**Belvedere College:** It is now time to commence the final leg of the journey to Croke Park. Cross over to Great Denmark Street at the pedestrian lights and continue your journey until you come to a former Georgian mansion on your left which faces down into another 18th century thoroughfare called North Great George's Street. The mansion, with its lofty steps and impressive doorway, was built as Belvedere House in 1786 for George Augustus Rochfort, 2nd Earl of Belvedere. It was then sold in 1841 to the Jesuits who renamed it Belvedere College and the order has used it as a primary and secondary school ever since. One of its most celebrated students was James Joyce, who attended the college from 1893 until 1898.

14

**Dergvale Hotel:** Continue your stroll until you come to the next crossroads with Temple Street on your left and Hill Street on your right. On the way, on your left at number 4 Gardiner Place, you will pass what is now the Dergvale Hotel. This is another popular meeting place for supporters before and after matches in Croke Park. The house has another, perhaps more important, connection with the stadium. In the 1880s it was the home of Michael Cusack, one of the founders of the Gaelic Athletic Association. Walk now into Mountjoy Square, still heading in the same direction. Next cross into Fitzgibbon Street and walk to the end of the road passing the Garda Station on your right.

15

**Croke Park / GAA:** Cross over the North Circular Road and walk onto Russell Street. You will, at last, be greeted by the impressive sight of Croke Park. Continue in the direction of the stadium, first crossing the Royal Canal and a railway line. The Royal Canal has a sister canal on the Southside going roughly in the same direction and it is said that to be a true Dubliner you have to be born in that part of the city situated between the canals. Stop in front of the main entrance to Croke Park, preferably on the opposite side of the road so that you get a better overall view.

Croke Park is the home of Gaelic Games and headquarters of the Gaelic Athletic Association, otherwise known as the GAA or "An Cumann Lúthchleas Gael" in Irish. This site has been home to the GAA for over a hundred years.

## iWalk - Dublin and Croke Park



### History of Croke Park and the Gaelic Athletic Association:

In the 1870s, this site was known as the "City and Suburban Racecourse". Once the GAA was founded in 1884, they became the grounds most frequent user. The six hectare site was purchased by the GAA in 1913 and was immediately renamed Croke Park in honour of one of the association's first patrons, Archbishop Croke of Cashel.

Down through the years the spectator stands were named in honour of those involved with the association. **The Cusack Stand** on the east of the stadium is named in honour of the association founder, Michael Cusack. **The Davin Stand** on the south of the stadium is named in honour of Maurice Davin, the first president of the association. As previously mentioned, the north terrace or **Dineen Hill 16** is named after the 1916 rising in Dublin and Frank Dineen who purchased Croke Park in 1908 when the GAA could not afford to do so and later sold it to the Association in 1913. He remains the only man to have served as both President and Secretary of the Association. And finally, the west stand is named the **Hogan Stand** after Michael Hogan, a young Tipperary footballer who was shot in **Croke Park** on Bloody Sunday in 1920.

**Croke Park** is truly a historical stadium and holds a special place in the hearts of Irish people. Since 1913 it has been developed and redeveloped in an ad hoc manner as finances allowed. The most recent redevelopment commenced in 1993 and was completed in 2005. The stadium was not closed down during the redevelopment but taken down and rebuilt stand-by-stand. The project was a huge undertaking for an amateur sporting organization but has been a fantastic success. This redeveloped Croke Park is one of the largest stadia in Europe with capacity for 82,300 people.

**Croke Park** has been an inspirational venue not only for GAA supporters and players but also for other spectacular sporting events including when Muhammad Ali fought here in 1972 and when it hosted the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games. Top artists have performed here including U2, Robbie Williams and The Police. History was made in 2007 when the home of Gaelic Games hosted international rugby and soccer fixtures for the first time.

### GAA Museum / Croke Park Experience:

With the redevelopment of the stadium the **GAA Museum** was opened in 1998. The museum celebrates the rich history of Gaelic games and houses a vast collection of historical objects, flags, jerseys and audio visual shows which bring to life the unique moments that make up the heritage of the GAA. The museum is the starting point for your participation in the **Croke Park Stadium Tour**. The tour and the museum visit will give you an in-depth look at the stadium, the association that built it and the world of Gaelic games.

See [www.crokepark.ie](http://www.crokepark.ie) for more details.

# iWalk - route map

- Croke Park
- Dergvale Hotel
- Belvedere College
- Parnell Square North
- Garden of Remembrance
- The Gate Theatre
- Parnell Monument
- The Gresham
- The General Post Office
- The Spire
- O'Connell Monument
- O'Connell Bridge
- Trinity College/College Green
- Dublin Tourism Centre



**iWalk**  
CROKE PARK



Bus routes returning to O'Connell Street:  
3, 11, 11A, 16, 16A, from Drumcondra Road, 46A from Mountjoy Square,  
123 Ballybough

We hope that you enjoyed this walk which was narrated by Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh, scripted by Pat Liddy and brought to you by Dublin Tourism and Croke Park Stadium.

For the latest updates on walking tours of Dublin, check out our website:

[www.visitdublin.com/iwalks](http://www.visitdublin.com/iwalks).

To learn more about Croke Park Stadium, Gaelic Games and the GAA see:

[www.crokepark.ie](http://www.crokepark.ie) and [www.gaa.ie](http://www.gaa.ie)

Dublin Tourism offices are located at:

Suffolk Street, Dublin 2

14 Upper O'Connell Street, Dublin 1

Arrivals Hall, Dublin Airport, County Dublin

Dun Laoghaire Harbour, County Dublin.

Thank you for visiting our city.