

Shillelaghs & Shenanigans

Learn about Irish history, customs and culture

Yesterday, Scranton got its Irish on. Each year revelers descend on the city not just to celebrate Irish heritage but also to cast off winter. The downtown, and pubs up and down the valley, fill with green-clad celebrants spreading their wings after months of cold and gray.

Friday is St. Patrick's Day, and the celebrations will continue. The annual dinners of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick of Lackawanna County and the Society of Irish Women will bring out the area's well-heeled and wannabes, and the taverns most likely will be busier than a normal Friday night.

This area has a lot of people with Irish ancestry, and most of them like to have a good time. But drinking pints of Guinness and eating potatoes isn't all there is to being Irish. There's a lot of history, tradition and culture associated with the Emerald Isle.

If you want to learn more about the people and customs of Ireland, YourIrish.com is a good place to start. The website is a collection of articles and stories on Irish culture, traditions, folklore, food and history. It's richly illustrated with photographs, drawings and videos.



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InSites

The home page is a collection of photo galleries of various sizes that link to inside stories. A couple large photo links to the site's main feature stories anchor the page. To the right of them, a column of smaller images links to popular features. As you scroll down the page, there are more collections of images covering different subjects.

A navigation bar across the top of the page also provides links to the interior sections. Culture covers sports and music with articles, photos and videos on traditional Irish sports, such as handball, hurling, golf, soccer and Gaelic football, a cross between soccer and rugby.

The Music section covers contemporary and traditional subjects, including stories on musicians that made the big time — such as U2, Van Morrison and the Irish Rovers — and others on traditional Irish instruments, including the uilleann pipes, bodhrán drum and tin whistle.

The Traditions section explains how the Irish observe holidays, such as St. Patrick's Day and Christmas, and special events including weddings and funerals. Some Irish blessings and sayings also are featured, but this section could be expanded.

Folklore & Myths has lots of interesting stories about Irish legends and mythical creatures, from leprechauns to banshees. Food Recipes has traditional Irish fare, and the History section covers a span from ancient times to the 20th century, but the stories are more summaries of events than robust histories.

YourIrish is a fun little site to visit. It has more of a hobbyists feel than a professional one, but it's mostly well done. The writing is conversational but suffers from occasional typos. The design is organized and easy to use, but I wish the creators went with more classic Irish visuals. The site is festooned in bright green, orange and white with a cliché, fighting Irish-type leprechaun logo. A Book of Kells-style look or other Celtic designs would be an improvement.

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