

TRAVEL: Seeing the sights on the Irish island

Continued from 1C

We wandered by the Spire, a pin-like monument that commemorates a pillar blown up by rebels in 1966. Nicknamed the Stiletto in the Ghetto, the Spire rises 398 feet into the sky and has ardent critics and fans.

Nearby a group of protesters gathered with signs and bullhorns to protest out-of-control housing prices, urging residents to take back the city from developers and condo people.

My traveling companions, Brigit Farley and Gabriele Sperling, both history instructors at Washington State University’s Richland campus, were magnets to steel when it came to historical sites such as the prison where leaders of the bloody 1916 Easter Rising were executed by firing squad. That rebellion eventually led to the creation of the Irish Free Republic in 1922, which became Irish Free State. We toured monuments, museums and cemeteries. I soaked in Irish history until filled to the brim.

That evening, we ducked into one of Dublin’s many pubs for dinner. The city’s oldest pub is the Brazen Head, dating back to 1198. Our chosen pub, Doheny & Nesbitt, offered shepherd’s pie, Irish stew, mussels, bangers and mash and an array of Irish beers. A mere youngster compared with the Brazen Head, it opened its doors in the 1840s.

After getting our fill of Dublin, we set out to visit the other Ireland — Northern Ireland. We rented a car and Brigit settled into the driver’s seat, looking nervous about driving on the left, though she’d done it before. I fingered my iPhone where I had downloaded an offline map of Ireland.

“Stay left my friend,” I said, uttering the words that would become our mantra.

Brigit pulled out of the lot and entered a roundabout. You will learn to love traffic circles if you visit Ireland. To our horror, a car, horn blasting, blurred by and exited the roundabout in front of us. When we finally pulled onto a main road, we exhaled as one. Brigit glanced into the rearview mirror at Gabriele in the back seat.

“How are you doing?” Brigit asked.

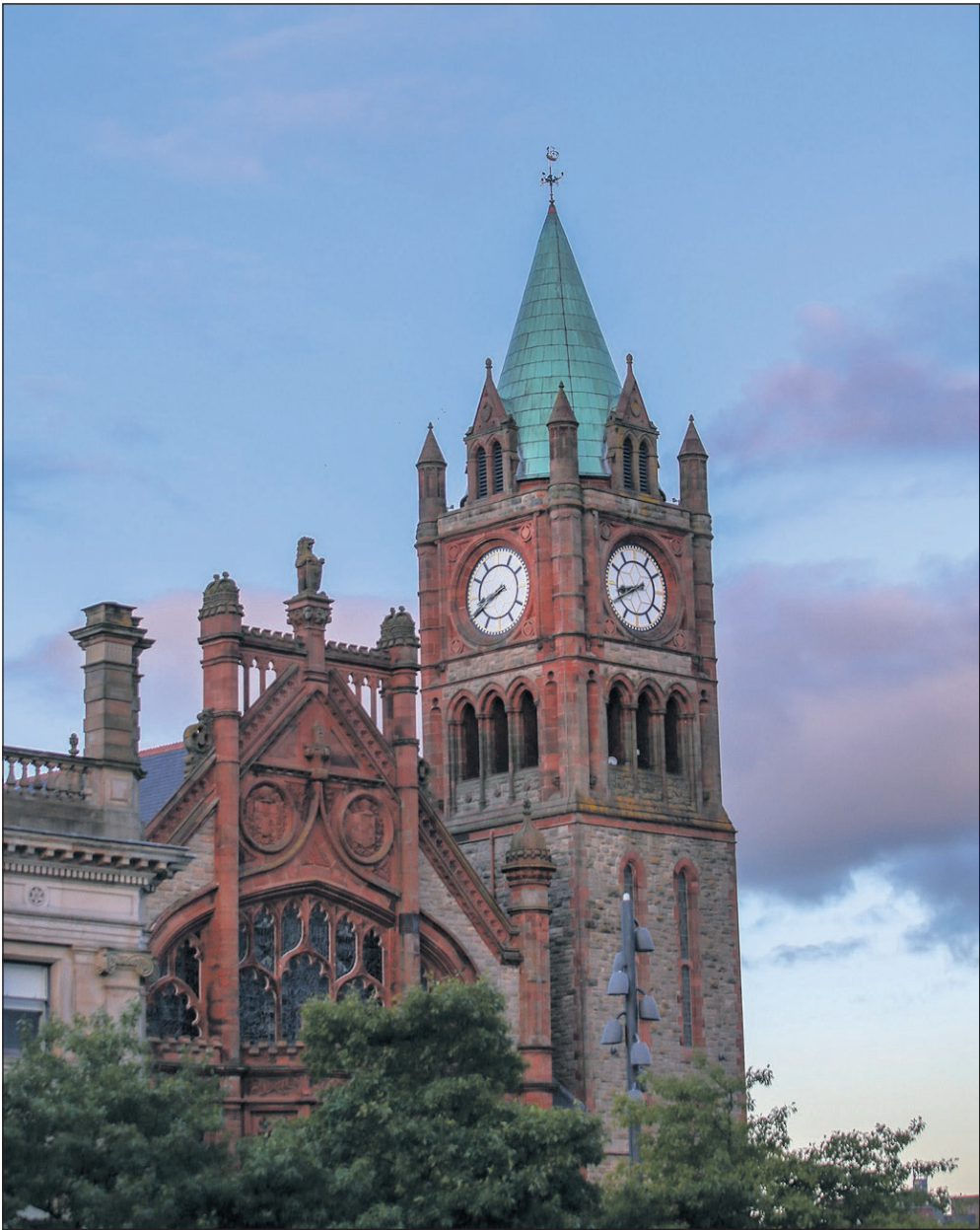
“I haven’t gotten my rosary out yet,” Gabriel replied.

Brigit navigated the skinny Irish roads like a pro. Shoulders were narrow or nonexistent. We puzzled over signs. “Traffic calming” meant “Reduced speed ahead.” “Overtaking lanes” were passing lanes. Another sign proclaimed, “Oncoming traffic in the middle of the road.” Yikes.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Just off the Inishowen Head Trail in County Donegal, sheep graze at the edge of the sea.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

The setting sun casts a glow on Guildhall in Londonderry.

Crossing into Northern Ireland was a non-event. No sign that we noticed proclaimed the crossing. We realized we had arrived,

however, when we started seeing Union Jack and Ulster flags. Because of Brexit, the invisible 310-mile meandering border-

line may someday become a hard dividing line between the Republic of Ireland and the six counties that comprise Northern Ireland.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

A bartender listens to a patron at a pub in Londonderry in Northern Ireland.

My history-and-politics-loving travel companions asked people’s opinions of Brexit wherever we went. Every reply was negative.

“The whole Brexit thing,” said one woman. “It’s mad.”

“We’re in a political wilderness,” said another person.

In Derry, we found a city full of murals depicting the 30-some years dubbed “The Troubles” that started in the late ’60s. The 14 victims of Bloody Sunday looked out from one painting. They died in 1972 when British soldiers opened fire on civil rights marchers protesting treatment by the British military. A man wearing a gas mask holds a petrol bomb in another painting. The images are sobering. The city, which once saw violence between Catholics and Protestants, seems to be forging peace as evidenced by the Peace Bridge that spans the River Foyle, joining Protestant and Catholic

sectors of Derry.

Breaking away from history, we took day trips to marinate in Ireland’s natural beauty. We headed to the coast to visit Giant’s Causeway, Malin Head and the Slieve League Cliffs where Gabriele stepped hip deep into a boggy patch. At night, we listened to traditional Irish music in yet another pub.

Before heading home, we drove back south to County Wicklow where we saw pastures filled with sheep, Kilkenny Castle, the forests of the Wicklow National Forest and an early medieval settlement called the Glendalough Monastic City.

Our senses were overloaded with emerald green. The lilting Irish language, even the thickest brogue, got easier to understand. I resisted the natural inclination to slip into this enchanting language, remembering a story Gerry McDonald told aboard the tour bus.

AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN

Crispy potato pancakes make great toppings base

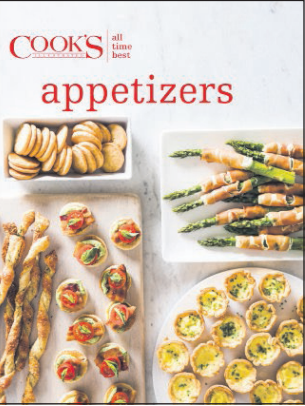
These perfectly crispy potato pancakes are the ideal vehicle for all manner of toppings, making them a super-versatile appetizer pick.

We kept our latkes light and crisp by removing as much water as possible from the shredded potatoes.

First, we wrung them out in a dish towel and then we microwaved the shreds, which caused the starches in the potatoes to form a gel. This took care of any remaining water.

This also meant that our latkes absorbed minimal oil, so they didn’t get greasy.

We prefer shredding the potatoes on the large holes of a box grater, but you can also use the large shredding disk of a food processor; cut the pota-



America's Test Kitchen via AP

This image provided by America's Test Kitchen in August 2018 shows the cover for the cookbook "All-Time Best Appetizers." It includes a recipe for potato latkes.

atoes into 2-inch lengths first so you are left with short shreds.

Serve with apple-sauce, sour cream, smoked salmon, or caviar.

POTATO LATKES

Servings: 4-6
Start to finish: 45 minutes
2 pounds russet potatoes, unpeeled, scrubbed, and shredded
1/2 cup grated onion
Salt and pepper
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
2 teaspoons minced fresh parsley
Vegetable oil

Adjust oven rack to middle position, place rimmed baking sheet on rack, and heat oven to 200 F. Toss potatoes, onion, and 1 teaspoon salt in bowl. Place half of mixture in center of dish towel. Gather ends together and twist tightly to drain as much liquid as possible, reserving liquid in liquid measuring cup. Transfer drained mixture to second bowl and repeat process with remaining mixture. Set potato liquid aside and let stand so starch settles to bottom, at least 5 minutes.

Cover mixture and microwave until just warmed through but not hot, 1 to 2 minutes, stirring with fork every 30 seconds. Spread mixture evenly over second rimmed baking sheet and let cool for 10 minutes. Don’t wash bowl.

Pour off water from reserved potato liquid, leaving potato starch in measuring cup. Add eggs and stir until smooth. Return cooled potato mixture to bowl. Add parsley, 1/4 teaspoon pepper, and potato starch mixture and toss until evenly combined.

Set wire rack in clean rimmed baking sheet and line with triple layer of paper towels. Add oil to 12-inch skillet until it measures about 1/4 inch deep and heat over medium-high heat until shimmering but not smoking (350 F). Place 1/4-cup mound of potato mixture in oil and press with nonstick spatula into 1/3-inch-thick disk. Repeat until 5 latkes are in pan. Cook, adjusting heat so fat bubbles around latke edges, until golden brown on bottom, about 3 minutes. Turn and continue cooking until golden brown



AP IMAGE

Potato latkes

on second side, about 3 minutes longer. Drain on paper towels and transfer to baking sheet in oven. Repeat with remaining potato mixture, adding oil to maintain 1/4-inch depth and returning oil to 350 F between batches. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve immediately.

To Make Ahead

Cooled latkes can be covered loosely with plastic wrap and held at room temperature for up to 4 hours, or frozen on baking sheet until firm, transferred to zipper-lock bag, and frozen for up to 1 month. Reheat latkes in 375-degree oven until crisp and hot, 3 minutes per side for room-temperature and 6 minutes per side for frozen.