

Slick and hip, Seattle throbs with excitement

With Galway and Seattle about to celebrate the 20th anniversary of their sister city relationship, Galway-based journalist CHRISTINA MCDONALD LEGG extols the virtues of her hometown on the north west seaboard of the United States.

So you want to drink some stronger coffee, eat some sweeter salmon or see some striking scenery? To lie on the beaches or ski in the mountains, visit a rainforest or see the scene where a movie or TV show was filmed? Well, maybe it's not as big as London, or as throbbing as New York, but Seattle, perched on the North Western coast of America just an hour and a half from the Canadian border, is the place to hit for a taste of everything your heart desires.

Nestled between the jagged Olympic Mountains to the west, the volcanic Cascade Mountains to the east, majes-

tic evolved to become more of an 'experience' than a 'destination'. People across the world come to enjoy the picturesque scenery, the vibrant nightlife, the relaxed atmosphere and the liberal attitude.

"This is a city where a lot of the problems that have plagued America, and continue to – problems of race, problems of dying industries – just aren't here. We don't have to think about it anymore, and we're surprised anybody still is." David Horsey said on Open Source Radio in Seattle.

Seattle, named after Noah Squalmish, chief of the local Siquamish Native American tribe, is a thriving city on the edge of flawless wilderness, abundant in green hills, rain forests and recreational activity; Ski Crystal Mountain's sophisticated ski resort at Mount Rainier in the same day as attending the Nutcracker ballet at the Seattle Opera House. Kayak on one of Seattle's many river rapids before going downtown to catch a gig at the soul of grunge music, the Crocodile Cafe. Sail on the Puget Sound's pristine waters before heading for a midwest vacation



Olympic Mountains to the west, the volcanic Cascade Mountains to the east, majestic Mount Rainier towering high above and perched on the waters of the Puget Sound, Seattle is a sophisticated, liberal city that literally thrives on a plethora of vibrant music, theatre and art. Mild winters and beautiful summers have blessed Seattle with an abundance of green, rolling hills and crystal blue lakes and waters, earning Seattle its well-known nickname, the 'Emerald City.'

Seattle is the sister city of Galway, celebrating the 20th anniversary of their sister relationship this month. To celebrate this relationship, Galway boasts a stone monument that was unveiled in 1993 near the Spanish Arch with a bronze marker bearing the geographical data of Seattle and an arrow pointing towards the shortest direction from Galway to Seattle. In Seattle, near Pier 66, a similar monument was unveiled in 2000 that points to Galway. Over the years of economic growth, artistic boom and musical influence, Seattle has

When it was built, the Space Needle required a 120-foot-square underground foundation and 467 cement trucks spent an entire day filling the hole.

gauge music, the Crocodile Cafe. Sail on the Puget Sound's pristine waters before heading for a mouthwatering meal at Saly's on the shores of Seattle's breathtaking Alki Beach.

Sailing, rowing, kayaking, scuba diving, roller-blading, swimming, bicycling and golf are all available within the city limits and less than an hour's drive will take you to whale-watching, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing and skiing. Where else in the world would you find a taste of the great outdoors within such easy reach?

There is a wealth of sights to see, places to go and things to visit in Seattle. Seattle's crowning landmark is the Space Needle, famously portrayed in the popular sitcom 'Frasier.' Originally built for the 1962 World's Fair in Seattle, this 184 metre local landmark attracts over 10 million visitors every year. It was originally meant to be reminiscent of a flying saucer, although the top of the Space Needle could more pass for a royal crown. When it was built, the Space Needle required a 120-foot-square underground foundation and 467 cement trucks spent an entire day filling the hole.

The Space Needle is located in the Seattle's popular 'Seattle Centre,' an 87-acre landscaped area that brings together cultural diversity, educational activities and recreational entertainment for the entire city. The Seattle Centre hosts sporting events, concerts, cultural programmes and much more, making it an arts, sports and cultural hub



Boats move in and out of the Bell Harbor Marina, with the Seattle skyline as a backdrop.

for the city.

Also well known in Seattle is the Pike Place Market. The market is America's oldest continually operating farmer's market, open since 1907, and has evolved to be a huge hub of market activity, occupying nine acres of land. Overlooking the Elliott Bay waterfront, Pike Place Market was the location of the world's first Starbucks, back when it was a small coffee café and before it became an international conglomerate. The upper street level features fishmongers, fresh produce stands, innovative arts and craft stalls, antique dealers, as well as cow-ered restaurants, cafés and wine markets. One of the best attractions in the Pike Place Market is Pike Place Fish.

The employees here throw the fish to each other rather than passing from hand to hand, hollering out 'fish!' before each throw. Seattle's Pioneer Square is the heart of the city. History blends with entertainment here; Pioneer Square is the oldest area of Seattle, but also the centre of many of the city's bars and clubs. Featuring sidewalk cafés, art galleries, and trendy shops and boutiques in red brick buildings, Pioneer Square oozes warmth and character. Don't miss the popular Underground Tour, which takes visitors on a tour of ground-level Pioneer Square before the Great Fire of 1889. As with so many fires that destroyed cities during this period, this fire wiped out the entire city, and yet it is unclear how it started.

The people of Seattle rebuilt on top of the ashes of their burned city, leaving behind a ghost of a structure beneath the towering skyscrapers that now grace Seattle's skyline. With 3.2 million people living in the Great Seattle Area, Seattle's pubs, bars and clubs are first class. In fact, Seattle has the highest per-capita music and dance attendance in the country, with 80 live music clubs. Grab a cocktail at classy, sophisticated Jazz Alley, number one for up and coming artists with sultry voices and jazzy style. Have a bit of a boogie at the Baltic Room in Seattle's Capital Hill

district. Or grab a cold one at the Pink Door in Post Alley, just up the street from the Pike Place Market. Music fans have an abundance of choice for live gigs, all of which helped create Seattle local bands such as Pearl Jam, Nirvana, Soundgarden, Alice in Chains, Sir Mix-a-Lot (I know you remember Baby Got Back!), Foo Fighters, Jimi Hendrix and Modest Mouse, just to name a few.

For the nature lover, mountains and valleys are aplenty. Visit the Hoh River Rain Forest, where spruce and hemlock trees soar to heights of more than 200 feet. Alders and big-leaf maples are so densely covered with mosses they look like shaggy animals. Elk and deer browse the cool glens and trout and salmon are available for fishing in the local lakes. But be prepared for rain, while Seattle is known for its rainfall, the rainforest region receives 140 inches a year!

For something in the city districts, visit the Japanese Gardens in the Washington Park Arboretum. The Japanese Gardens are 5.5 acres of

formal Japanese garden designed and constructed by world-renowned fuki iida in 1960. Chado (The Way of Tea) demonstrations are offered in the traditional tea house for those lucky enough to catch the periodic displays.

If you fancy a look at real wealth, take a drive to Lake Washington's richest area, Medina, and see Bill Gates' house. Designed by James Cutler and covering 66,000 square feet, the Gates' house is a true feat of the imagination. Nestled between the Puget Sound and 18-mile long Lake Washington and surrounded by majestic mountains, Seattle is a city not to miss as your travel destination. Contrasting geography and an abundance of activities for everyone, this is a city offering something for everyone. Your heart will melt over the abundance of friendly people, the endless options for entertainment and the plethora of activities. It is a city with soul, a city for your heart, one in a million. Seattle will tempt your tastes and entice your desires.