

## Inspired by Ireland

If you've never been to Ireland, you're missing out.

My first trip to Ireland was in 2017 after I was accepted into an international summer school for Irish music and dance, and the trip changed the trajectory of my life. I've always loved writing, but I never planned on writing anything worthy of actually publishing. It was a passive hobby, and I ended up setting it down for a few years due to a lack of inspiration. Enter Ireland.

I taught Irish dance at a school in Utah, and after my own dance teacher suggested I apply to this summer program, she and I went to Ireland. Our days were packed with Irish culture, music, language, and of course, dance, and our nights were filled with more music, more dancing, and new friends from all around the world. We saw Dublin, Limerick, Giant's Causeway, the Dark Hedges. We shopped, we drank, we saw a show, and when I got home, I had the first draft of *Mother of the River* aching to be put down on the page.

These are the eight places in Ireland that inspired *Mother of the River*.

### 1. Dublin Castle



This was the first place that truly made my jaw drop, and my childhood wish of becoming a princess was reignited. The stone walls, wooden doors, the ironwork everywhere... Dublin Castle is straight out of a fairytale.

## 2. The Brazen Head Pub



Established in 1198, The Brazen Head Pub is the oldest pub in Dublin. Not only was the atmosphere as lively and lovely as you would imagine an Irish pub to be, but the food was fantastic! A quote on the menu has stuck with me ever since. “There are no strangers here, only friends who have never met.” And all I can say is I miss my old friends.

## 3. The Gaiety Theatre



My friend and I were lucky enough to see the spectacular production of Riverdance at the Gaiety Theatre while we were in Ireland. The theater is stunning with red velvet and gold accents, making even a poor kid from Utah feel like old money.

## 4. The Dark Hedges



If you're a fan of Game of Thrones, you know this road, but unless you've seen these trees in person, you can't understand the magnificence of them. Walking under the canopy feels like walking down a magical road toward a magical land. They're truly inspiring for any fantasy writer.

#### **5. The Atlantic Coast**



The way the ocean hits the Ireland cliffs inspired a very specific (and rather important) aspect of my story. Unfortunately for my readers, that particular plot point doesn't happen until book two. But without this sight, a major theme of the book could not have been born.

#### **6. Giant's Causeway**



Giant's Causeway is another place that inspired a major plot point of the book. This location might be my favorite spot visited on this trip. Something about jumping from rock to rock made me feel like a kid again. I'm definitely going back there next time I'm in Ireland. Plus, I seem to remember a cozy blanket in the gift shop that I regret not buying.

#### 7. Carrick-a-Rede Bridge



The Carrick-a-Rede bridge was a lot of fun to cross, though it's shorter than I imagined (in length, not height). This was one of the things that made me feel like an adventurer! It lit some sort of excitement that fueled the creation of my characters. I felt like I needed a sword and a mission. I didn't have one though, so I wrote someone who did!

## 8. Really, anywhere at all



Driving through the countryside, along the coast and cliffs, through the forests, over the emerald hills, seeing the city, the castles, the real-life characters, every aspect of Ireland gave an air of magic. Even the coffee tasted better! Which makes sense because they use Irish cream, and it completely ruined coffee back home for me for several months. I think it would be very difficult for a writer to go to a place like Ireland without being inspired. I also think it would be very difficult for a writer to go back to where their ancestors came from without being inspired. For this Irish author, Ireland was just the ticket to inspire my debut novel, and I cannot wait to go back.



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