

Travel: A tale of two cities in the Six Nations

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Over for the match

POL O CONGHAILE - 01 FEBRUARY 2014

The RBS Six Nations kicks off today, with Ireland's away games scheduled for London and Paris. Pól Ó Conghaile has the inside track for travelling fans

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LONDON

4pm at Twickenham on Saturday, February 22

England is the host nation for the Rugby World Cup 2015, so Ireland will be hoping to put a dent in Chris Robshaw and Co's preparations. But whatever happens on the pitch, London offers loads to do for rugby fans and phobes alike

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK:

Follow the herd

Just as rugby began with William Webb Ellis, rugby matches begin for countless supporters with a pint at the **William Webb Ellis pub** in Twickenham (24 London Road; [jdwetherspoon.co.uk](#)). Leicester Square is another option for sports fans seeking big screens - give the Zoo Bar or the Carlsberg Sports Bar a shot.

If you're looking for a nosebag, the **Big Easy Bar.B.Q & Crabshack** is opening a Covent Garden branch (12 Maiden Lane; [bigeasy.coventgarden.co.uk](#)) soon. A sister of the Chelsea institution, the new restaurant promises a serious evolution of the concept in a more urban, West End setting. Check it out for a reliable mix of American fresh-smoked barbecue fare, seafood, cocktails and drinks.

Dodge the crowds

Ziferblat (388 Old Street; [london.ziferblat.net](#)) is a cafe with a difference. The Shoreditch space opened in January and it charges by the minute, offering pretty much everything for free, except your time. Customers receive a clock when they arrive and can work, read, chat and drink as much tea and coffee as they want for 3p a minute. You are encouraged to wash your own dishes, however.

While Paul O'Connell and Co carve up Les Rosbifs at Twickenham, foodie fans can tuck into cutting-edge British cuisine at **St John** (26 St John Street; [stjohngroup.uk.com](#)). Fergus Henderson and Trevor Gulliver's Smithfield creation is famous for its nose-to-tail approach. While dishes such as grilled ox heart (£16.60), crispy pig's skin with dandelion (£7.20) and pheasant and trotter pie (£34.50, for two) won't be for everyone, this is still a seminal London restaurant.

Twickenham isn't just home to the English rugby team. It also has the **World Rugby Museum** ([rfu.com/microsites/museum](#); £15/£9) and its collection of memorabilia. Highlights range from historic caps, flags and match tickets to the original Calcutta Cup (it even has Mike Gibson's No 12 jersey), so a visit is bound to enhance your Ross O'Carroll Kelly-like reputation as a student of the game. Did you know that the USA is the reigning Olympic rugby champion, for instance? That's helped in no small part by the fact that rugby last featured as an Olympic sport in 1924.