



*Céad  
 míle  
 fáilte*

“A hundred thousand  
 welcomes”

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**IRELAND**

The country of Ireland is often referred to as the Emerald Isle. Ireland is situated in the North Atlantic Ocean and is divided from the country of Britain on the east by the Irish Sea. Ireland is an island and covers nearly 84,288 sq km. The Emerald Isle is divided into Northern and Southern Ireland. The geographical areas of the island of Ireland are north (Ulster), the east (Leinster), the west (Connacht) and the south (Munster). The entire island is divided into these four provinces which are further divided into 32 counties. The six counties in the northern region of Ireland are referred to as Northern Ireland or Ulster and belong to the United Kingdom. The remaining 26 counties are called the Republic of Ireland.

You can visit beautiful Northern Ireland on the northwest side of the island and still be in the Republic, or visit Northern Ireland and enjoy the beauty of the northeast part of the island. To confuse things a little more, the most northerly point of the island is part of the south (Republic) of Ireland.

The Republic of Ireland's flag has three vertical strips: green, white and orange: green stands for Catholics, orange for Protestants, and white for peace between them.

And the symbol of the Union Jack<sup>1</sup> represents three crosses: 1) St Andrews for Scotland; 2) St George for England, and; 3) St Patrick for Ireland. Wales is combined with that of England's St George.

Apart from the flag and the national anthem, no matter where in the world you could go there are some symbols that everyone knows. Ireland is associated with the humble little shamrock<sup>2</sup>. You will hardly find someone that could not name Ireland when shown this little trefoil of green<sup>3</sup>.

Ireland is the country of St Patrick, the shamrock, U2 and Sinead O'Connor, the *craic* (the Irish word for friendly good humour)...

If you are going to visit the Emerald State, you'll maybe find some **USEFUL INFORMATION** here:

- PLEASE be careful when crossing the streets!! Remember in Ireland they drive on the left side, so checking for oncoming cars when you are about to cross requires looking the opposite of the way you would in most places, like Spain. Luckily the Irish know this can be a problem, and reminders are often painted on the street at crossings to LOOK RIGHT.
- Time: Ireland is on the same time as Britain, or the Canary Islands, in Spain.
- Weather: in July and August, temperatures range from 15° to 20°C. Dublin is one of the drier parts of Ireland, but in a typical year it still rains on 150 days (dropping a total yearly average of 75cm). Summers are a meteorological lottery.
- You CAN drink the tap water! <sup>4</sup> The water is cold, sparkling clear, pure and tastes wonderful.
- If you are in a restaurant or in a public place, ask for the toilets - usually the bathroom is the room in a house where the bath tub is.

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<sup>1</sup> The Union Jack is the flag of the United Kingdom: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> Plant with three leaves on each stem (*tallo*), the national emblem of Ireland. *Trébol*.

<sup>3</sup> It is also said that the three leaves stand for the Father, the Son, and the Saint Spirit.

<sup>4</sup> *Puedes beber agua del grifo.*

- Ireland as a whole is one of the cleanest places you will ever see. The food handling practices are very strict and safe. Many of these people have University degrees in food handling and their health standards are very high. Restaurants are extremely clean; you will not see a dirty public toilet. The Irish people are extremely clean and are very proud of their country and do everything to ensure visitors have a pleasant and healthy stay.

- Tipping<sup>5</sup> is not required in Ireland, nor really expected.
- Money: Ireland's currency is the euro.
- Airlines and airport:

RYANAIR	01-609 7800	www.ryanair.com
AER LINGUS	01-886 8888	www.aerlingus.com
IBERIA	01-407 3017	www.iberia.com
<i>Airport</i>	www.dublinairport.com	<i>13km north of the city</i>

- Business hours: banks open from 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday (to 5pm Thursday); shops, 9am to 5.30pm or 6pm Monday to Saturday (until 8pm on Thursday and sometimes Friday), noon to 6pm Sunday in bigger towns only.

- Emergency: for emergency assistance, phone 999 or 112. This call is free and the operator will connect you with the type of assistance you need: fire, *Garda* (Police), ambulance...

- Pharmacies: all pharmacies in Dublin are clearly designed by a green cross. Most of them stay open until 7pm or 8pm.

- Tourist information: you'll find everything you need at Dublin Tourism Centre, [www.visitdublin.com](http://www.visitdublin.com)

- Transportation in Dublin: there is not underground system in Dublin. You can take the **local bus** ([www.dublinbus.ie](http://www.dublinbus.ie)); buses run from around 6am to 11:30pm; fares are calculated according to stages (zones); you must give exact change when boarding. Short-distance train: the *Dublin Area Rapid Transport (DART)* is excellent if you want to visit short-distance places, like Dun Laoghaire, for instance; Pearse Station is convenient for central Dublin south of the Liffey, and Connolly for north of the Liffey; there are services every ten or twenty minutes. **Tram** (*Luas*) [www.luas.ie](http://www.luas.ie): it only has two lines; there are ticket machines at every stop, or you can buy a ticket from newsagents at the city centre. **Irish Rail**: [www.irishrail.ie](http://www.irishrail.ie); the city has two main stations: Heuston Station and Connolly Station (connected with the DART). **Buses** [www.buseireann.ie](http://www.buseireann.ie). The bus station (*Busáras*) is just north of the river behind Custom House; there are buses to everywhere in the country and to Northern Ireland; you can also take the bus at street stops; all the information at the bus station, or on the internet site.

- Computers and internet: if your computer is not equipped to handle 220 volts AC or a three-point socket, you will need a universal AC adapter and a plug adapter, which will enable you to plug in anywhere. Pin converters are available in all electrical suppliers.

- If you hear something you are uncertain about, ask!!! The Irish have a wonderful sense of humour and are very friendly and outgoing, and they are pretty much used to tourists asking all kinds of questions or directions.

- And be prepared to fall in love with Ireland and finding yourself a bit sad when it is time to go back home!

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<sup>5</sup> *Dar propina.*

## **A SHORT HISTORY OF IRELAND**

- CELTIC IRELAND – THE ORIGINS

The Irish are a Celtic people. Thousands of years ago, as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the Celts came to Ireland from Western France and Northern Spain. They brought with them the iron-age culture. The Irish Celts spoke the Irish language, believed in druidism, and obeyed the laws interpreted by early lawyers called *brehons*. They loved singing, horses, and stories, and they made beautiful gold and silver jewellery. Many men wore gold rings round their necks and arms.

Finn Mac Cool was a famous Celtic fighter. There are many stories about Finn and his men, the Fianna. When he was a boy, he cooked a salmon on a fire. This salmon knew everything about the world. Finn touched the hot fish with his finger, and put his finger in his mouth. Then he knew everything about the world too.

Another famous Celt was Cúchulainn. Cúchulainn's father had a brother called Conor, who was king of Ulster, in the north of Ireland. Conor had a big, dangerous dog which killed many men.

Cúchulainn liked to play a Celtic game called hurling<sup>6</sup>. One day, when Cúchulainn was a boy, Conor called everyone into his house to eat. But Cúchulainn and his friends wanted to finish their game of hurling, so they stayed outside. Conor's dog came out of the house, attacked the young boys and tried to kill them. But Cúchulainn hit the hurling ball into the dog's mouth, and then killed it with his stick. A big fighting dog is called a hound, and so after this, Cúchulainn was called "The Hound of Ulster."

Some people in Ireland speak the Celtic language called Irish. Irish is very different from English. But Celtic people in Wales, Scotland, western France and Basque Country have languages very like Irish.

- ST PATRICK, THE CHURCH AND THE VIKINGS

There are many arguments over whether St Patrick was born in Wales, England or Scotland but at the time of his birth these places did not yet exist, the country was called Briton and was under Roman rule, and Latin was the language. His parents were also Roman so his given name was really Patricus. In 401 some Irish pirates raided the place where Patrick was. They took many people back to Ireland and sold them. One of these people was Patrick, who was only sixteen. For six years, young Patrick worked as a slave with sheep in a farm.

Then, when he was twenty-two, he escaped and ran away to France. He learned about God from monks at a school in a French monastery. Pope Celestine then sent him back to Ireland in 432 as a missionary to preach the gospel and teach the Irish about God. Evidently he was a great traveller, especially in Celtic countries. The Irish kings listened to him, and he built an important church in Armagh. He brought Christianity to Ireland (and, it's said, chased away all the snakes). By the time he died all of Ireland was Christian. According to tradition St. Patrick died on 17 March in A.D. 493 and was buried in the same grave as St. Bridget and St. Columba, at Downpatrick, County Down

A hundred years later, Ireland was one of the most important Christian countries in Europe, with beautiful churches and monasteries everywhere. St. Patrick is also credited with bringing the Latin alphabet to Ireland, and founding many monasteries. By the 8<sup>th</sup> century the Irish monks had made great technical advances in the craft of making illuminated manuscripts. Irish writers wrote

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<sup>6</sup> In hurling, the players can carry a small hard ball in their hands and also hit it with a stick. Celtic games, like hurling, are very popular in Ireland today

famous, important books like the *Book of Kells*, which you can see in Dublin today, and there are pictures of St Patrick in many Irish churches. Irish monks in Europe brought enlightenment to Europe during the Dark Ages when barbarians descended on the Roman Empire, destroying European culture.

Another Irish churchman, called Brendan, sailed to Scotland, Iceland, Greenland, and America in a small leather boat. Some people said that this was not possible, but in 1976 an Englishman, Tim Severin, built a leather boat called *Brendan* and sailed it from Ireland to Iceland and America. You can see the *Brendan* at Craggaunowen in the west of Ireland.

The monks also worked elaborate ornamentation in bronze, enamel and gold, so there were many beautiful, expensive things in the Irish churches and monasteries. Rumours of these treasures brought on invasions by fleets of long boats carrying Danish and Norwegian Vikings, who came to Ireland to steal them and kill the monks. Because of this, the monks built tall round towers beside their monasteries. When the Vikings came the monks ran into the towers to hide. You can see these towers in Irish villages today.

One of the most interesting Irish monasteries is on Skellig Michael. It is an island in the Atlantic sixteen kilometres south-west of Ireland. It is a beautiful, windy place. The island is 240 metres high, and in bad weather no boats can get there. "There is no danger here," the Irish monks thought; but they were wrong. In 824, Vikings came in their long ships to attack Skellig Michael too.

But some Vikings came to Ireland to stay. They built towns by the sea – Dublin, Cork, Waterford, and Limerick. The Celts liked to live in the country, but the Vikings lived in towns. Some of the Vikings married Celts, and learned the Celtic language. They deployed fortified settlements and built towns. In the year 841 they founded Dublin. (*Dubh Linn* meaning *Black Pool*).

The Vikings came to the north of Ireland too. One day two different Viking ships came to a beautiful place in Ulster. Both groups of Vikings wanted to stay there and build a town, but there were too many of them. The two groups of Vikings looked at each other angrily.

"We must fight," said a Viking from the first ship. "The winners will live and keep the land, and the losers will die." "No," said a man from the second ship. "I have a better idea. Let's race to the beach in our ships. The first man who holds the land in his hand can keep it. His people can stay, and the others must leave."

So the two ships raced towards the beach. One man stood at the front of each ship, ready to jump down to the beach. Then one ship went in front of the other. The man in the first ship looked back at the second ship and laughed. "We are going to win," he said. "This land will belong to us." "No, it won't," said the man in the second ship angrily. "You will never win. Never!" Suddenly, he took out his sword, and cut off his hand with it. Then he threw the hand over the heads of the men in the first ship. The hand fell on the beach, and its bloody fingers closed on the land. "This is our land," said the man with one hand. "It will never belong to you. Never, never, never!"

That is the story of the Red Hand of Ulster. You can see the Red Hand on the flags of Northern Ireland.

- THE NORMANS (THE ENGLISH) COME TO IRELAND

The Normans, led by William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, had taken over England after winning the Battle of Hastings in 1066. (You can say that Normans became English not before the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when they started thinking of themselves as distinct from their Norman, that's to say, French, origins).

At that time, Ireland had many kings and they often fought each other. In 1152 one Irish king, Dermot MacMurrough, attacked another Irish king, Tiernan

O'Rourke, and took his wife. Tiernan O'Rourke was the friend of a third king, Rory O'Connor. In 1166 Rory O'Connor was made king of all Ireland. At this time, Tiernan and Rory attacked Dermot MacMurrough, but Dermot escaped to England. Dermot then asked the king of England, Henry II, the first English Angevin King, to help him to fight Rory and Tiernan.

So in 1169 Henry's men, the first Normans from England and Wales, landed in Wexford, Ireland, and fought Rory and Tiernan, but they did not go home again. They conquered the disunited Irish using armour, horses and fortified castles. The Normans brought with them the tradition of Common Law, based upon the personal ownership of property, in contrast with life under Irish Brehon Law, where ownership was based in the extended family or clan. However, the newcomers quickly adopted the Irish language, married into Irish families, and "it was said of them that they became more Irish than the Irish themselves."

They took more and more of the land for themselves. They built cities by the sea, and big castles. Henry called himself King of England and Ireland. But not all the Irish were happy about this.

For the next four hundred years, English kings tried to rule Ireland from Dublin. But it was very difficult. The Irish did not listen to the King of England – he was too far away. The English crown wished to preserve the racial purity and cultural separateness of the colonizers. They instituted the Statutes of Kilkenny. These statutes decreed that the two races, Norman and Gaelic (Irish), should remain separate. Marriage between races was made a capital offense.

Being Henry VIII King of England (House of Tudor, Elizabeth II's father), in 1536 the English Church changed from Catholic to Protestant. So England was a Protestant country, while Ireland was still Catholic. For the Protestant English, their king was the most important man in the Church, but for the Catholic Irish, the most important man was the Pope in Rome, the leader of the Catholic Church. In 1601, at the battle of Kinsale, the Irish armies and their Spanish allies were defeated. For the first time all Ireland was governed by a strong English central administration based in Dublin.

The kings of England took more land from the Catholic Irish, and gave it to English Protestants and Scottish Presbyterians. This plan was called the *Plantation of Ulster*, in the north of Ireland. Englishmen from London built a new town in a place called Derry, and called it Londonderry.

The Catholic Irish were angry about this and wanted their land back. In 1641 the Catholics attacked the Protestants in Ulster. They took their houses and clothes and killed thousands of people. This way they were immediately involved in the English civil war between Parliament and king. Oliver Cromwell, the leader of the English after the death of King Charles I, took an English army to Ireland. The English soldiers killed thousands of Catholics in a town called Drogheda.

In 1685 the people of England and Scotland got a new king – James II of England, and James VII of Scotland (House of Stuart). He was a Catholic, and he was not very popular. Many people wanted a different king, and in 1688 William of Orange, a Dutch<sup>7</sup> Protestant, came to England. He was married to James's daughter Mary, and he wanted to be king of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

In those three countries people who wanted James to be king fought against people who wanted William to be king. Most of James's friends were Catholics in Ireland. With this help, they tried to get their land back again. They got most of it, but they could not get Londonderry. When they attacked it, the Protestants ran inside the city walls and closed the gates. For 105 days, the Catholic soldiers try to get inside and killed them. The Protestants were cold and afraid and

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<sup>7</sup> Dutch → from Holland.

hungry. They ate cats and dogs and horses but they did not open the gates. 15,000 people died during this time, which was called the Siege of Derry.

At last, three Protestant ships came to Londonderry with food and soldiers, and the siege was over. After that the new Protestant English King, William of Orange, won two very important battles against the Catholics: the battle of the Boyne in 1690, and the battle of Aghrim in 1691. The Catholic Irish didn't fight a big battle again for one hundred years.<sup>8</sup>

So for the next hundred years life was very difficult for the Catholic Irish. Keeping their land or going to Catholic schools or Catholic churches was very difficult and they could not speak or vote in Parliament. All the important people in Ireland were Protestants, and all the big, beautiful houses and the best farms belonged to Protestants.

In 1795 and 1798 the Irish, with the help of French ships and soldiers, fought the British. But the British won, and many Irishmen – mostly Catholics – were killed. Three years later, in 1801, the Act of Union made Ireland and Britain one country, with one Parliament, in London. For a hundred years after this, Catholic Irishmen – called Nationalists – wanted to change the Act of Union, and Protestants – called Unionists – wanted to keep it.

- THE GREAT FAMINE AND AMERICA (1845-51)

At this time, in the west of Ireland, many poor Catholics lived on very small farms. In addition to that, poor farming methods reduced the yields from crops. They had very little money, and often they had only potatoes to eat. The poor, stony land was not good for many things, but it was good for potatoes. But in the 1840s something killed the potatoes. One day they were fine, and then suddenly they were black and dead. The poor Irish farmers and their families had nothing to eat. Thousands of them died, and many more went on ships for a new and better life in Canada<sup>9</sup> and the United States. Between 1845 and 1855, nearly two million people had emigrated from Ireland to America and Australia, and another 750,000 to Britain.

Some rich Protestants were happy when the poor farmers started to leave. They wanted to keep cows on their land, so they asked the ships to take the poor people away from Ireland to America. But hundreds of people died on the ships as well. When the Irish people came to America, they lived in big cities, like New York or Boston<sup>10</sup>.

Many Irish people who remained in their island died as well, and the Irish language nearly died with them. Most Catholic churchmen spoke English, and the government told Irish teachers to use English in school. Only poor people spoke Irish.

But in 1893 a group of Irish writers tried to help the Irish language, and a lot of people agreed with them. These people called themselves Sinn Fein, which is Irish for "We Ourselves." At first, the people in Sinn Fein were only interested in Irish language, music and games. But later, they also began to show interest in politics: they wanted Ireland to become an independent country.

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<sup>8</sup> Every year, Protestants in Londonderry march to remember 1688. In Belfast, on 12 July, Protestant Orangemen march with music and songs about King William of Orange – often called "King Billy" – and the Battle of the Boyne.

<sup>9</sup> Canada was then called British North America.

<sup>10</sup> Every year on St Patrick's Day thousands of Americans march through New York, and remember how Irish people died of starvation. It's the biggest St Patrick's Day parade in the world, because so many Irish people live in America.

- THE FIGHT FOR THE INDEPENDENCE

By 1900, life had improved for Catholics in Ireland: they could vote and speak in Parliament in London and they had Catholic schools and churches. But most Catholics remained being very poor, and every year, thousands of them kept going to America or Britain to look for work.

Catholic Irish Nationalists wanted to put an end to the Union Act. They wanted an Irish Parliament to decide about Irish matters. But the Protestants did not want to give it to them – and, not for the first time, they were ready to fight for the things they wanted.

In 1914, the British government decided to grant their own Parliament to Ireland. The Irish Parliament was going to decide on Irish issues, like schools, roads or police. This decision made most Nationalists happy; but on the other hand, the Protestants were angry.

Most of them lived in Northern Ireland, called Ulster, near Belfast. Very soon the Protestant Unionist army began marching through the town streets with their leader, Sir Edward Carson. They wanted to keep the Act of Union, and to fight for it, if necessary.

The British government didn't know how to react. They wanted to give Ireland a Parliament, but they didn't want to fight the Unionists. But then, in 1914, the First World War broke up. Most of the Protestants, and many thousands of Irish Catholics joined the British Army to fight the German *Reich*.

But some Irish Nationalists stayed in Ireland and decided that the war was a good opportunity they couldn't miss. Their leader, Patrick Pearse wanted the independence of Ireland from the British Empire.

In 1916 they bought guns and ammunition in Germany and tried to bring them to the Irish coast in a German ship. On Easter Monday 1916, Pearse and his men went into the Dublin Post Office and declared the Republic of Ireland.<sup>11</sup>

The British reacted and for six days there were battles in Dublin, and many men died. After having won the battle, and with the failure of the uprising, the British condemned Pearse and other fourteen important Irish leaders to death. Nearly two thousand other Sinn Fein men were sent to prison.

Easter Monday 1916 was a very important day in Irish history. In his poem *Easter 1916* the Irish writer William Butler Yeats<sup>12</sup> wrote:

*All changed, changed utterly.  
A terrible beauty is born.*

In 1919, Sinn Fein started to fight the British again. The Sinn Fein army was called the Irish Republican Army, or IRA. From 1919 to 1921 the IRA killed hundreds of policemen and soldiers, and the police and soldiers killed hundreds of IRA men as well. The IRA leader's name was Michael Collins.

In 1921, two years after the end of the First World War, and the victory over Germany, the British government started to talk to Sinn Fein and the IRA, and finally, most of Ireland had an Irish government with an Irish president in

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<sup>11</sup> Easter = *Semana Santa*

<sup>12</sup> W B Yeats (1865–1939) was a leading Irish writer of poetry, plays and stories. His best-known works of poetry include *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917), *The Winding Stair* (1933) and *Collected Poems* (1933). His plays include *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894) and *The Green Helmet* (1910), and several were written to be performed at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, which he helped to establish. His book of stories, *The Celtic Twilight*, created a lot of interest in traditional Irish stories. Yeats was also much involved in politics as a nationalist and became a Senator in the Irish parliament (1922–8). He received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1923.

Dublin. But the Irish Republic is only three quarters of the island. The fourth quarter is the Ulster, in the north, and has remained British, with Belfast as its most important city.

- THE ULSTER

From 1921 to 1971 Northern Ireland had a Parliament at Stormont. In 1921, about 60% of the people of Northern Ireland were Protestant, and about 40% were Catholic. Protestants had the best jobs and the best dwellings. Today the figures are about 53% and 40%. Most of the Protestants want to remain British, while most of the Catholics want to become Irish citizens.

In 1968 Catholics started to ask for a better life. They marched through the streets and Belfast and (London)Derry, asking for better jobs and houses, but they were attacked by the Protestants, and the Ulster spiralled into violence. In 1969 British troops were sent to Northern Ireland to try to stop the fighting between the two parties and restore order. And at first the Catholics were happy to see them but the IRA, converted into a terrorist mob, started to kill policemen<sup>13</sup> and soldiers. A war had started!

Over the next thirty years, many terrible circumstances happened. On "Bloody Sunday" – 13 January 1972 – British soldiers killed fourteen marches in Derry. On "Bloody Friday" – 21 July 1972 – the IRA put twenty-two bombs in Belfast, at all the same time: nine people were killed and one hundred and thirty were hurt, Protestant and Catholic, British and Irish.

By 1979 hundreds of IRA terrorists were in prison, although they were considered as political prisoners, being allowed to wear ordinary clothes, or not being forced to work. But the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, decided to put an end to this situation. Some prisoners decided to went on hunger strike. After sixty-six days, the first prisoner, Bobby Sanders, died. He wouldn't be the only one; they were ten of them.

In 1998, the British Government, headed by the Prime Minister Tony Blair, met Sinn Fein and the Ulster Unionist. They reached the "Good Friday Agreements," by which Catholics and Protestants have to work together in the government of Northern Ireland.

One of the most important stories in Irish history isn't really about Ireland at all. It's about the people who left. By the end of the twentieth century between 70 and 90 million people around the world were estimated to be able to claim an Irish ancestry. For an island that doesn't even house six million people, that's an impressive diaspora!

Irish people started leaving early on. Some of the first emigrants were travelling monks, and they were followed by people who joined the British army and helped establish the British Empire and a host of people who travelled across the Irish Sea in search of work.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was famine that drove people out of Ireland. Also, the world had got bigger, and places as far away as America and Australia were open for business and ready to receive the Irish.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the population of Ireland continued leaking, with hundreds of thousands of them packing their bags and leaving.

In the twentieth century it was little better. Economic downturns in the 1920s, 1950s, and 1980s convinced whole new generations to try their luck someplace else. The fighting in Northern Ireland from the 1960s also persuaded many people that their future was of Ireland.

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<sup>13</sup> The police force in the Ulster is called the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)

## **DUBLIN AND OTHER IMPORTANT CITIES**

### **DUBLIN**

Dublin is Ireland's capital and the most important city in the Republic of Ireland. Its population is approximately half a million, and 40% of the Republic's population live within 97 km (61 miles) of Dublin, in the Greater Dublin. The River Liffey goes through the centre of Dublin, and this river has divided the city into north and south for more than 1,000 years, as it once divided Viking from Celt and Norman from Norse. It's said that Ireland's famous beer, Guinness, is water from the river.

Dublin's architectural apogee can be placed in the period of the rule of the four English Georges, between the accession of George I in 1714, and the death of George IV in 1830.

On the Liffey's north bank, one of the city's most beautiful buildings beside the river is the Custom House, a fine Georgian building. There is a nice walk along the Liffey from the Custom House to the O'Connell Bridge. North of the bridge is O'Connell Street, once a fashionable area, although now it has lost much of its charm and importance. Dubliners are now mixing here with non-national communities, creating multicultural neighbourhoods.

Here you can see the Post Office, famous for being the headquarters in the Easter Monday 1916's uprising. Within walking distance of O'Connell Street you can find some theatres, the Moore Street open markets, the Henry Street pedestrian shopping area, the Central Bus Station, and the catholic church of St Mary's.

But, the lively, prosperous hub of Dublin has lay mostly south of the Liffey. This is a small, well-defined area that can be easily visited on foot in an hour. The river also serves as the traditional social divide of Dublin: working class and poor north of the Liffey, posh and wealthy south of it.<sup>14</sup>

The most famous bridge across the river is O'Connell Bridge. It was originally made of rope and could only carry one man and one donkey at a time. It was replaced with a wooden structure in 1801. The present concrete bridge was built in 1863, and as a curiosity, is wider than it is long.

South of O'Connell Bridge lays the Trinity College, Ireland's oldest and most famous university. The Trinity College complex lies in a 17-hectare area in the heart of the city. In here you can see Ireland's oldest books, like *The Book of Kells*, which is a thousand years old. The beautiful Bank of Ireland, which held the Ireland's first Parliament, is opposite the Trinity College.

Grafton Street, named after the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Duke of Grafton, is Dublin's main shopping street. Restricted to pedestrians, Grafton Street is the centre of Dublin's commercial district, surrounded by a labyrinth of small streets and lanes that show off a terrific variety of shops and restaurants. In this street, you can listen to a pop guitarist, to young conservatory students playing Mozart, or laugh at a brilliant street comedian.

Near the Trinity College you can see the famous statue of Molly Malone. People say that she was a poor but beautiful girl, who sold fish called cockles and mussels on the streets to make money. But sadly, she died when she was still young.

Some of Ireland's best houses are in Merrion Square, the most prestigious of Dublin's squares. Many of Ireland's most famous writers, soldiers and leaders lived here (like Yeats, Wilde or O'Connell). They walked and talked in the small park in the square, or in the 9-hectares St Stephen's Green, not far away. St

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<sup>14</sup> Please note that in Gaelic language, city centre is *AN LAR*.

Stephen's Green is beautifully landscaped and dotted with statuary that provides a veritable who's who of Irish history. It is the city's most beloved park and an urban oasis ringed by rows of historic Georgian town houses. Between Merrion Square and Stephen's Green is Leinster House, the home of the Irish Parliament today.

In the older section of the city, High Street is the gateway to medieval and Viking Dublin. The Old City, dating from Viking and medieval times, includes Dublin Castle, the remnants of the city's original walls, and the city's two main cathedrals, Christ Church and St. Patrick's.

Temple Bar, between the Trinity College and the Old City, was transformed in the 1990s into the city's cultural and entertainment hub. This area offers a vibrant array of cafes, unique shops, art galleries, theatres, trendy restaurants and pubs. It's very popular among young people. Every weekend there are two markets: a book one – old and new titles, classic and contemporary novels... - and a food one: everything is organic, from fruits and vegetables to delicious homemade cheeses, breads...

Going back north across the Liffey, in the north-west, Dublin also has the Phoenix Park, one of the largest parks in Europe, and not far away from it you can visit the old Kilmainham Prison, where many famous Irish people were sent.

The pubs: it is just impossible to walk through the city and not to come across a pub. They are the centre of Dublin's social life. There you can drink, eat, talk, and listen to music... Dublin is the home of Bono's U2 and many other bands.

And within an hour or slightly more north and south of Dublin (by car or public transportation) lie a handful of charming coastal towns, the desolate beauty of the Wicklow Mountains, some of the most important prehistoric and early Christian ruins of Europe in County Meath, Kildare's pure-bred country, and the splendid mansions and verdant gardens of County Wicklow.

### **PLACES WELL WORTH TO VISIT IN DUBLIN**

- Trinity College: [www.tcd.ie](http://www.tcd.ie)

It is Ireland's oldest and most prestigious university. It reminds of those far-off days when a university education was only for a very small elite who spoke passionately of the importance of philosophy and the need for empire.

The college was established by Elizabeth I in 1592, in order to stop the brain drain of young Protestant Dubliners, who were going to continental Europe for an education and were becoming "infected with popery". It remained completely Protestant until 1793, when the university began to admit Catholics. But then the Church forbade it; until 1970, any Catholic who enrolled here could consider himself excommunicated. Now most of its 15,000 students are Catholics and it is also a very popular choice for British students.

The elegant Regent House entrance, in front of the Bank of Ireland, was built between 1752 and 1759, and is guarded by statues of the writer Oliver Goldsmith (1730-74) and the orator Edmund Burke (1729-97). Through the entrance, past the Students Union, you can see the 30m-high Campanile. According to superstition, students who pass beneath it when the bells toll will fail their exams. In the Old Library is the astonishing Book of Kells. This famous treasure and other early Christian manuscripts are on permanent public view at Trinity College.

- The Book of Kells.

It is a large-format magnificent manuscript of the four Gospels in Latin, from around A.D. 800. One of the oldest books in the world, it was probably produced by monks at St Colmcille's Monastery on the remote island of Iona, off the western coast of Scotland. With an amazing and elaborated scripting and

illumination, it has often been described as “the most beautiful book in the world”.

- St. Patrick’s Cathedral.

It is said that St. Patrick baptized converts on this side, and consequently a church has stood here since A.D. 450, making it the oldest Christian site in Dublin. The present cathedral dates from 1190, but because of a fire and a 14<sup>th</sup>-century rebuilding, not much of the original foundation remains. It is mainly early English in style, with a square medieval tower that houses the largest ringing tolling bells in Ireland, and an 18<sup>th</sup>-century spire staircase. The 90m-long interior makes it the longest church in Ireland. St. Patrick’s is closely associated with Jonathan Swift<sup>15</sup>, who was dean from 1713 to 1745 and whose tomb lies in the south aisle.

- Christ Church Cathedral.

This cathedral is one of the city’s finest historical buildings. It dates from 1038 when the Danish King of Dublin built the first wooden Christ Church here. In 1171 the simple original building was extended into a cruciform and rebuilt in stone. The present structure dates mainly from 1871 to 1878. Highlights of the interior include magnificent stonework and graceful pointed arches, with delicate supporting columns. The Treasury in the crypt is open to the public.

- Dublin Castle.

Built between 1208 and 1220, this complex is part of the oldest surviving architecture in the city. It was the centre of the British power in Ireland for more than seven centuries, until 1922. It encloses the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Record Tower, the only surviving part from the original Anglo-Norman fortress; the State Apartments, once the residence of English viceroys; and the Chapel Royal, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Gothic building decorated with more than ninety heads of various Irish personages and saints.

- Dublin Writers Museum.

Housed in a spectacular 18<sup>th</sup>- century Georgian mansion on Parnell Square, the museum is in itself a remainder of the grandeur of the Irish literary tradition, and a treasure in itself. A fine collection of personal manuscripts and mementos that belonged to John B. Yeats, James Joyce, Samuel Becket, Behan, Shaw, Oscar Wilde, Swift, and Sheridan are among the items that celebrate the written world.

- James Joyce Centre.<sup>16</sup>

Near Parnell Square and the Dublin Writers Museum, the Joyce Centre is in a restored 1784 Georgian town house, once the home of Dennis J. Maginni, a dancing instructor who appears briefly in *Ulysses*. You can find here a fascinating collection of photographs and drawings of characters from *Ulysses* who had a real life outside the novel. There are talks and audiovisual presentations daily and guided walking tours through the neighbourhood streets of “Joyce Country”. However, it is today more of a study centre than a museum. You can find here,

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<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Swift (1667-1745). The greatest Dublin writer of the early Georgian period and is most famous for *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), a savage social satire that became a children’s favourite.

<sup>16</sup> James Joyce (1882-1941) is one of the most famous Irish writers: *Ulysses*, *Dubliners* (a collection of 15 short stories), *Finnegans Wake*... *Ulysses* is a chronicle of the city in which Joyce tried to give a complete picture of Dublin. It is set on 16 June 1904 – the day of Joyce’s first date with Dora Barnacle, his future wife – and follows its characters as their journeys around town parallel the voyage of Homer’s *Odyssey*.

for instance, computers that allow you to explore the content of *Ulysses* episode by episode and trace Joyce's life year by year.

**Bloomsday Festival:** This unique day of festivity commemorates 24 hours in the life of Leopold Bloom, the central character of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Every aspect of the city, including the menus at restaurants and pubs, seeks to duplicate the aromas, sights, sounds, and tastes of Dublin on 16 June 1904. Special ceremonies are held at the James Joyce Tower and Museum, and there are guided walks of Joycean sights. [www.jamesjoyce.ie](http://www.jamesjoyce.ie)

- Kilmainham Gaol Historical Museum<sup>17</sup>.

Unavoidable for those interested in Ireland's fight for independence from British rule. Within these walls political prisoners were incarcerated, tortured, and killed from 1796 until 1924, when future President Eamon de Varea left as its final prisoner. It is such an experience to walk along the corridors, through the execution yards, or into the main compound, visiting former cells of famous inmates.

- General Post Office (GPO)

This is much more than a post office; it is the symbol of Irish freedom. It was the main stronghold of the Irish Volunteers in 1916. Set afire, the building was devastated and abandoned after the surrender and execution of many of the Irish rebel leaders. It reopened as a post office in 1929 after the formation of the Irish Free State. In memory of the building's dramatic role in Irish history, was erected an impressive statue of Cuchulainn, the legendary Irish hero. And if you look carefully at the pillars outside, you will see bullet holes from the siege.

- National Library of Ireland.

It is particularly important for its collection of first editions and the papers of Irish writers and political figures, such as W.B. Yeats, Daniel O'Connell, and Patrick Pearse.

- National Gallery of Ireland.

Here you can find the Ireland's national art collection, as well as a European collection of art covering from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Every major European school of painting is represented, including fine selections by Italian Renaissance artists (especially Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ*), French Impressionists, and Dutch 17<sup>th</sup>-century masters.

- National Museum.

Established in 1890, this museum has many of the country's greatest historical finds from 2000 B.C. to the present, including the Treasury exhibit.

- Phoenix Park.

Just 3.2 kilometres west of the city centre, it is the largest urban park in Europe. Phoenix Park covers 704 hectares. Livestock graze peacefully on pasturelands, deer wander the forested areas and horses romp on polo fields. The Dublin Zoo is also here.

- Guinness Storehouse.

Founded in 1759, the Guinness Brewery is one of the world's largest breweries, producing the famous beer. The Guinness Storehouse, in the heart of the St James's Gate Brewery, is the city's most visited touristic attraction.

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<sup>17</sup> Gaol (British) = jail (American) = prison  
*Gaol* and *jail* have the same meaning and are pronounced the same way.

## OTHER IRISH CITIES

### CORK

Cork is the second largest city in the republic of Ireland, with a population of over 100,000 (185,000 including environs). What is better, Dublin or Cork? For any Corkonian, Cork is simply superior to Dublin, because it has all the conveniences of a big city and, at the same time, retains its small-town peaceful life.

In 820 the Vikings attacked a Christian monastery here, and then stayed to build a town by the River Lee. Cork is in the south-west of Ireland and it has a wonderful harbour for ships. Many poor Irish people sailed from Cork to America at the time of the Great Hunger. Cork is also called "The Rebel City" because it was a centre of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Fenian movement<sup>18</sup> and played an active part in the Irish struggle for independence. In fact, you can visit the City Gaol (1.6km west of the city centre), where many of the Ireland's great patriots were imprisoned.

Today Cork is a city famous for music, dancing, theatre and film. In 2005 Cork was the European Capital of Culture.

### GALWAY

Galway (population 70,000) is in the west of Ireland, at the mouth of the River Corrib. In this part of the country the Irish language is very strong, and you will see it and hear it everywhere. It is a centre for Irish music, singing and dance, and there is an Irish Language theatre in Galway too.

As home to many artisans, writers, and artists, and because it has so many art galleries, Galway has the reputation of the unofficial arts capital of Ireland.

Like most ancient cities, Galway was founded because of its strategic access to water. Galway is known as the "Gateway to the west": from Galway you can visit the gigantic, melancholy solitude of Connemara, with its beautiful wild lakes and mountains. The Aran Islands are close by too, 48km out at sea, and are an outpost of Gaelic culture and language.

### WATERFORD

Waterford (population 45,000) is in the south-east of Ireland, only 11 kilometres from the Atlantic. Three rivers meet the sea at Waterford (the Rivers Barrow, Nore and Suir) – and there are fine mountains and beaches to visit in this part of Ireland.

It was Ireland's first city; the Vikings came here in the 850s, and they came back in 914 to build up the city. In fact, Waterford is older than any of the major Nordic capitals of modern Europe, including Oslo, Stockholm, and Copenhagen.

The city is a commercial centre, dominated by its busy port; and it is also famous for its glass (people have made glass here since 1783) and for the ships which were built here.

### BELFAST

The province of Ulster comprises the six counties of Northern Ireland and Donegal. Ireland won its independence from Britain in 1929. During the negotiations, it was decided that the island would be divided in two: twenty-six Irish counties would form an independent, free state (later the Republic of Ireland), while six counties in the Ulster province would become Northern Ireland and remain a part of the United Kingdom. This was because their population

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<sup>18</sup> The secret society called the *Fenian Brotherhood* took its name from band of warriors led by the legendary Gaelic hero, Finn Mac Cool, and the name Fenians came to be used for the whole body of revolutionary conspirators.

were mainly Protestant, while the vast majority of the island was, and still is, Catholic.

With a population of nearly 275,000 people, Belfast, 166km north of Dublin, is the biggest city in Northern Ireland. The city's most important places are on the west bank of the River Lagan, and Donegal Square is the city centre.

Belfast is a vibrant, fast-moving place, and a wonderful place to eat, drink, and stay; it is also an arts hub; and a pleasant walkable city: you can cross the city in one hour on foot.

Belfast has a large port. The *Titanic* was built here in the Harland and Wolff shipyard. In 1912 the *Titanic* was the biggest, fastest, most expensive ship in the world. But it went to sea for the first time, it sank, and about 1,500 people died. Many of them were poor Irish people who wanted to start a new life in America. Now this part of the city is called the *Titanic Quarter*.

At Victoria Square, in the centre of Belfast, there are new shops, restaurants and cinemas. You can also find fine old buildings to see – City Hall, the Custom House with its wonderful statues, the Ulster Bank, and McHugh's Bar, by the Belfast River – the oldest building in town.

### **(LONDON)DERRY**

Derry (118km north-west of Belfast, 232km north-west of Dublin), with a population over of 100,000, is the second city of Northern Ireland, or Ulster. Protestants call it Londonderry, because in 1600 English Protestants from London built a city here, but Catholics call it Derry.

There was a small monastery here, beside the River Foyle, in the time of the Vikings, but the great walls of Derry were built in the 1600s. You can walk around these walls today: they are one and a half kilometres long and nearly six metres wide. The old guns from the Siege of Derry are still there on the walls. They make Derry one of the finest examples of a walled city in Europe.

Derry is very close to many of the major sights of Ireland's northwest corner, as the Giant's Causeway.