



Ireland

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HISTORY

HISTORY



Caught in the ebb and flow of the last Ice Ages over the previous 2-million-years, Ireland was at various times mostly glaciated and completely land-locked as a part of the continent of Europe. Ireland was an island about 125,000-years-ago when the sea level appears to have been very close to its present position. The sea level dropped 130-meters (426-feet) or more during the interval from around 30,000 to 15,000 years-ago when Ireland became part of continental Europe again. Sea levels have generally been rising ever since, albeit at a much slower rate.

In the Beginning

The first definite evidence of human settlement in Ireland dates from 8,000 to 7,000 BC. They are known from early archaeological findings to have made an appearance in the far north in the lower Bann valley near present-day Coleraine and in the southwest in the Shannonestuary. Later they are thought to spread northeast along the coast of Antrim and followed the Bann upstream to Lough Neagh.

They also settled down to an industrious existence on the shore of Larne Lough just north of present-day Belfast, where they chipped flints for implements. These people, Mesolithic hunter-gatherers without domestic animals or farming skills, huddled for the most part along the coasts and waterways. As a consequence, these early arrivals had little impact on the environment.

Saint Patrick

St. Patrick was a 5th-century missionary to Ireland and later served as bishop there. He is credited with bringing Christianity to parts of Ireland and was probably partly responsible for the Christianization of the Picts and Anglo-Saxons. He is one of the patron saints of Ireland.

His feast day is March 17.

There are many legends associated with the life of St. Patrick. According to one, he miraculously drove all the snakes of Ireland into the sea. He is said to have used the three leaflets of the shamrock to explain the concept of the Holy Trinity.

The Irish Potato Famine

The Irish Potato Famine, also known as the Great Hunger, began in 1845 when a fungus-like organism called *Phytophthora infestans* spread rapidly throughout Ireland. The infestation ruined up to one-half of the potato crop that year, and about three-quarters more over the next seven years. Because the tenant farmers of Ireland—then ruled as a colony of Great Britain—relied heavily on the potato as a source of food, the infestation had a catastrophic impact on Ireland and its population. Before it ended in 1852, the Potato Famine resulted in the death of roughly one-million Irish from starvation and related causes. At least another million were forced to leave their homeland as refugees.

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MONEY

MONEY



In the Republic of Ireland, the official currency is the euro. One euro consists of 100 cents. Notes are €5, €10, €20, €50, €100, €200 and €500. Coins are 1c, 2c, 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c, €1 and €2.

In Northern Ireland, the pound sterling is the local currency. One pound sterling consists of 100 pence. Notes are £5, £10, £20, £50, and £100. Coins are 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p, 20p, 50p, £1 and £2

Credit Cards

The main credit cards accepted are Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Eurocard are the most popular. Diners Club cards are less widely accepted, and you are likely to have problems using a Discover card as they are not really used in Ireland.

Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are widely accepted.

Visitors from the USA

Making purchases while traveling in Ireland is relatively easy. Cash is the most immediate form of payment and accepted everywhere, but major credit cards are quite common as well. Watch your currency closely since the island of Ireland is made up of two different countries.

Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK where they use pound sterling and The Republic of Ireland, which uses the euro. In the border regions, both currencies are often accepted. If you need currency when you arrive, you can exchange a small amount at the airport.

However, it's good to take note that the exchange rates at airports and hotels are generally higher than in other parts of town where there's more competition. While some travelers still prefer this route for security reasons, you should take into account the poor exchange rates. Many prefer to ditch the paper cheques these days, and, instead, rely on their plastic.



Debit Cards

Debit ATM card will work in cash dispensing machines in Ireland. However, it is still recommended to contact your bank to confirm if they offer said service, and to find out if they charge foreign transaction fees.

However, there's a catch. You must notify your bank before you travel. It's all part of your financial institution's efforts to protect you from fraud. If you don't call ahead, your transactions in Ireland may be flagged as "suspicious activity."

The situation can be remedied with a simple phone call, but since the 1-800 number you'd normally call won't likely work from Ireland, it might take some sleuthing to find the right number and reactivate your card.

ATM

Almost all ATMs in Ireland provide credit card withdrawals for Visa and Mastercard credit cards and ATM cards with the Cirrus or Plus logo. Amex and Link cards are also accepted at some ATMs, including AIB and Bank of Ireland, the two largest banks.

ATMs are usually located outside bank branches, but they can now be increasingly found in convenience stores, supermarkets, petrol stations, and even bars. Fees for using the ATM are dependent on the bank of the cardholder, so check before you travel to Ireland.

Also remember to check with your bank that your Credit Card, Debit Card, or ATM card is activated for use in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (United Kingdom). Otherwise, you may have problems withdrawing cash.

HELPFUL INFO

Climate

The climate of Ireland can be described as maritime influenced, mild and humid weather. May to mid-September is by far the warmest, and generally the drier time of year relatively speaking. In the summer, temperatures usually fall in a range of 15°C to 20°C, but sometimes they can reach up to 25°C or even higher. Winter days can be drizzly, cold and short (the sun sets around 4 pm), but because of the Gulf Stream, the temperature seldom falls below freezing, averaging about 7°C.

Snow is very infrequent, but more common in the mountainous regions of Ireland. Rain falls throughout the year, and the weather in Ireland can often change very quickly. In fall and winter, Strong Atlantic lowpressure systems can bring gales and uncomfortable weather with showers, thunderstorms and heavy rain, especially in the western coastal parts and the mountainous regions of Ireland.

Electricity

In Ireland the power plugs and sockets are of type G. The standard voltage is 230-V, and the standard frequency is 50-Hz.



TELEPHONE

The Nook
at
The Giant's Causeway

Technology & Communication

WiFi in Ireland is quite excellent in hotels and B&Bs across the country. In addition to your lodging, you'll find complimentary WiFi at many cafés, pubs, and tourist attractions. For many travelers, this is more than enough connectivity. If you want to be connected more than that, you have a couple of options. Wireless carriers are always updating their international plans, so it's good to check with your provider before your trip. But if you want limitless connectivity, your best option is to rent a personal WiFi unit.

Just so you know: Even the most thorough data plans just won't work in some of Ireland's most remote locations. You might experience connectivity issues with all carriers in places like West Cork, the Burren, Connemara, and the farthest reaches of Donegal. The infrastructure just isn't in place to support a wireless signal.

The three network providers are Eir Mobile, Vodafone Ireland and Three Ireland.

Infrastructure & Transportation

Though vastly improved during the 1990s by grants of I£6-billion in European structural funds, the infrastructure of the Republic of Ireland is still struggling to cope with the country's unprecedented economic growth. Long traffic delays and below-average roads linking major business centers around the country are a potential threat to continued expansion. A late 1990s report commissioned by the Irish Business and Employers Association (IBEC) estimated that a further I£14-billion would have to be spent to raise the quality of the country's infrastructure to generally accepted European levels.

Ireland's share of European structural funds for 2000 to 2006 has decreased to approximately I£3-billion, but increased government spending and planned joint public-private funding of projects should make up the shortfall. Ireland has the most car-dependent transportation system in the EU, with roads carrying 86% of freight traffic and 97% of passenger traffic. Yet full inter-city motorways are not in place, making the links between Dublin and other major cities subject to heavy traffic and delays. Economic growth and increased consumer spending have pushed up car ownership levels dramatically, which, together with increased commercial traffic on the roads has offset the considerable improvements of the 1990s.

The road network is estimated to total 87,043-kilometers (54,089-miles) of paved roads and 5,457-kilometers (3,391-miles) of unpaved roads (1999).

Long rush hours and traffic gridlock occur in the major cities and gridlock in Dublin are estimated to cost the national economy around I£1.2-billion every year. Policies aiming to attract more daily users to the public transport system might take effect over the next decade. Following much debate and deliberation, the current government has commenced the implementation of a light rail system (3 lines) to cover some crucial routes into the capital, most importantly a link to the airport.

This will add to the "Dart," Dublin's existing, relatively efficient suburban rail service, which consists of 5 lines covering 257-kilometers (160-miles) and 56 stations. The railway linking Dublin to 2 major cities on the island, Belfast (Northern Ireland) and Cork, has been vastly improved over the last few years.

However, recent reports by external consultants have highlighted the poor, even dangerous, state of much of the rest of Ireland's 1,947-kilometer (1,210-mile) railway infrastructure. Ireland has three international airports—at Dublin (east), Shannon (southwest), and Cork (south)—and six independent regional airports. Air traffic increased dramatically during the 1990s, with the number of passengers up from 6.8-million (1992) to 12.1-million (1997), while annual air freight traffic also doubled. Inevitably, these increases have led to congestion, especially at Dublin airport.

A significant capital investment program launched by the government is nearing completion, with similar projects to follow in Cork and Shannon. Cargo traffic is similar, with increases of up to 50% in cargo tonnage and passenger traffic passing through the main ports over the 1990s. The government recognizes that capacity must increase to resolve congestion.



In Case Of An Emergency

There are two emergency numbers in Ireland: 112 and 999.

Both are free of charge to call. Call the emergency services by dialing 112 or 999 from a mobile or fixed phone line.



Language

English and Irish are the most widely spoken languages of Ireland, with the former being spoken by 94% of the population.

LGBT Travel

Ireland is a generally tolerant place for the LGBTQ community. Bigger cities such as Dublin, Galway, and Cork have well-established gay scenes, as do Belfast and Derry in Northern Ireland. Same-sex marriage has been legal in the Republic since 2015; Northern Ireland is the only region of the United Kingdom where it is not.

While the cities and main towns tend to be progressive and tolerant, you'll still find pockets of homophobia throughout the island, particularly in smaller cities and rural areas.

Religion

Today, approximately 87% of Irish people living in the Republic of Ireland identify themselves as Roman Catholic. The second largest religious group is that of the Church of Ireland (Anglican), with approximately 3% of the population. Other religious groups include Muslim (0.8%),

Christian (unspecified, 0.7%), Presbyterian (0.6%), and those that describe themselves to have 'no religion' (6%).



Getting There

The Republic of Ireland has three international airports — Dublin, Cork, and Shannon — while Northern Ireland has one in Belfast. Dozens of European airlines offer direct flights to Ireland from European countries including Aer Lingus, Air France, British Airways, Virgin Atlantic and Lufthansa; from the United States, Aer Lingus, American Airlines, and United are some of the major airlines with flights from Ireland.

Driving

Driving in Ireland takes a certain amount of skill. For Americans and Canadians, there's the whole other-side-of-the-car, other-side-of-the-road thing to contend with — just remember to stay left, and you'll be all right. On highways, there are typically two to three lanes; rarely will you find monster four- or five-lane thoroughfares in Ireland. As on most European highways, the fast lane — which is always on the right — is used solely for passing slower traffic.

Be aware that speed limits vary widely on highways; it may be 120-kilometers per-hour (approximately 75-m.p.h.) in parts and then suddenly change to 80-kilometers per-hour (50-m.p.h.), so always keep an eye out for the number inside the round signage on the side of the highway.

When planning your trip, check to see if your route has any toll requirements. Toll charges are based on the size of your vehicle.

THE EXPERIENCE

Culture

Music, dance, sport, drinking, and poetry all combine to create a heady cultural concoction in Ireland. Known for their hearty cheer, the Irish combine the best of their Celtic and Viking roots and modern influences and habits. Irish traditions are commonly known around the globe, and Irish blessings find their way to the lips of foreigners many countries away.

James Joyce is probably the most influential writer to have emerged from Ireland. His novel, *Ulysses*, is considered the most significant work in Modern literature. Ireland has also produced as many as four Nobel prize winners for literature: George Bernard Shaw, William Butler Yeats, Samuel Beckett, and Seamus Heaney. Irish poetry is the oldest vernacular poetry in Europe with the earliest examples dating from the 6th century including works by Jonathan Swift.

Ireland is known for its Irish traditional music but has produced many other internationally influential artists in different musical genres, such as The Pogues, the alternative rock group The Cranberries, Blues guitarist Rory Gallagher, folk singer Christy Moore, The Chieftains and singer Sinéad O'Connor.

The Irish play a variety of sports including Gaelic football, soccer, snooker, golf, and Irish hurling. Boxing and fishing are also popular pastimes.



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Family Travel Highlights

Cliffs of Moher

Killarney

Lough Gur / Ballyhoura

Kylemore Abbey

Dingle Peninsula

Giant's Causeway

Lough Boora Parklands

Clifden / Sky Road

Bunratty Castle

Phoenix Park / Dublin Zoo

Tourism Authority

The National Tourism Development Authority – Fáilte Ireland – was established under the National Tourism Development Authority Act 2003.

Fáilte Ireland's role is to support the tourism industry and work to sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourism destination. It provides a range of practical business supports to help tourism businesses better manage and market their products and services.

Foods To Try

Full Irish Breakfast

Irish stew

Galway Oysters

Colcannon

Cockles and Mussels

Soda bread

Barmbrack

Boxty

Coddle

Drinks To Try

Guinness

Irish Whiskey

Tea

Irish Coffee

Miwadi

Bulmers Cider

TK Red Lemonade

Baileys Irish cream

Club Rock Shandy

Poitín



Photography Hot Spots

Fanad Head Lighthouse

Giant's Causeway

Downpatrick Head

Dark Hedges

Bittles Bar, Belfast

The Worm Hole – Aran Islands

Shimna River Stepping Stones – Tollymore National Park

The Trinity Library

Cobh, Cork

Cliffs of Moher

Souvenirs To Buy

Irish Chocolate

Claddagh Ring

Irish Aran Wool Knits

Avoca Woollen Throws

Irish Pottery and Ceramics

Irish Whiskey

Irish Books

Irish Leather Goods

Newbridge Silver

Irish Crystal

Irish Art

Irish Musical Instruments

Irish Linen





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425-361-5212



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