

Ireland

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Ireland Welcome

The perfect escape? The city stay you've been dreaming of? The cliff-path walk you'll remember forever? Well, Ireland has you covered. This magical island is just waiting to thrill you with its stunning windswept scenery along the Wild Atlantic Way, to capture you with its history from ancient sites such as Newgrange to the Walled City of Derry~Londonderry, and to entice you with its traditional music. The time is now.

Jump into
Ireland

FAIRYTALE
ROMANCE
28

ON TOUR
34



CITY
STAYS
12



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Copy and design:
Maxmedia Ireland Limited
Printing:
Wyndham Group



CONTENTS

04 PICTURE THIS
Put yourself in the picture with one of Ireland's most exceptional visitor attractions

07 DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT
What's creating a buzz on the island of Ireland right now

09 STAY SOMEWHERE DIFFERENT
Inspirational places to lay your head for a holiday with a difference

10 DISCOVER ALL ABOUT
Explore Ireland's wonderful traditional culture, with music, food, language, literature and, of course, the pub...

12 CITY STAYS
From Georgian squares to buzzy seaside gems, Ireland's cities are the perfect mix of culture and entertainment

20 EXCITING THINGS TO DO
2015 is THE year to visit the island of Ireland, and we've got the pick of what's on, from a year of design to a cracking traditional music festival

22 FRESH FROM THE SEA
A seafood adventure around the island of Ireland with Irish TV chef Rachel Allen, from pubs to pretty harbour towns

28 FAIRYTALE ROMANCE
Love stories, romantic landscapes and dreamy castles in picturesque locations around the island

34 ON TOUR
From striking scenery to charming villages and ancient history, get on the road with these touring routes

38 IN SEARCH OF HISTORY
The essential information about tracing your roots. Consultant genealogist John Grenham shows you how to get started

42 THE PRACTICALS
Everything you need to know about organising a holiday to Ireland

Published by
Tourism Ireland
Marketing the island of Ireland overseas

Picture This

Standing in front of Titanic Belfast, it's impossible not to be awed by the architectural brilliance of this building. The shimmering scales, the vast ship-like angles that jut towards the sky, the waterside location. Inside, it just gets better; as director of the film Titanic, James Cameron, says: "It really is phenomenal." Nearby at Hamilton Dock is the S.S. Nomadic – the last remaining White Star Line Ship in the world. Walk on board and learn all about her history. After that, why not join a walking tour and visit the Titanic Dry Dock, Pump House, and the Harland and Wolff shipyard. It's the stuff of legends.

From cliffs to castles, discover the Emerald Isle.



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Giant's Causeway, County Antrim



Rock star

Mythology, geology and ancient volcanic activity come together with stunning effect at the Giant's Causeway in County Antrim. There's something magical about this UNESCO World Heritage Site, with its 40,000 hexagonal basalt columns and tales of warring giants. A true legend.



Dark Hedges, County Antrim

Game of Thrones

Three days, one magical landscape and a ton of Game of Thrones filming locations. Northern Ireland is THE place to be if you're a fan of the hit HBO series, Game of Thrones. Explore the real-life Westeros, with caves, castles, forests and the atmospheric Dark Hedges in Stranocum, County Antrim, used as the setting for the Kingsroad. This three-day self-drive itinerary features beautiful locations all over Northern Ireland.

DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT

The island of Ireland has a unique appeal, with incredible escapes and epic adventures just waiting for you. Here are some to get you started

Fanad Head Lighthouse, County Donegal



The Lighthouse Trail

Many of the most iconic images of Ireland feature a lonely lighthouse perched on the edge of a cliff, with the sea swirling below. Now a new All-Island Lighthouse Tourism Trail connects 20 of these structures, which have safeguarded Ireland's scenic coastline for centuries. Learn about their history, walk the peaceful trails that surround them, or stay the night and fall asleep to the sound of the waves – now that's a night to remember. cil.ie

Wild Atlantic Way

A rugged coastline shaped by time and pounding waves, the Wild Atlantic Way is Ireland's epic 2,500km coastal touring route. Stretching along the west coast from County Donegal to County Cork, it's a little slice of heaven.



Dingle Peninsula, County Kerry

Gobbins Path, County Antrim



Walks to remember

Get set for a new wave of walking trails along the island of Ireland's northern coast. The dramatic International Appalachian Trail stretches from County Donegal's awe-inspiring Slieve League Cliffs to the lively seaport town of Larne in County Antrim. You can even walk in the footsteps of the Edwardians along the coastal Gobbins Path, also in County Antrim. The newly restored walkway clings to the cliffs, offering incredible views and old-world charm.

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Ballinkeele House, County Wexford



Adare Manor, County Limerick



Clare Island Lighthouse, County Mayo

IRELAND ACCOMMODATION

STAY SOMEWHERE DIFFERENT

From cosy B&Bs to some of the grandest buildings on the island, Ireland offers a wealth of wonderful places to stay, with charm, comfort and a warm Irish welcome

We like to do things a little differently in Ireland, and the Irish Landmark Trust and the National Trust are perfect hunting grounds for some of the most intriguing and unique properties on the island. From tower houses to schoolhouses and from gate lodges to grand city apartments, a stay in one of these historic buildings will add style to your self-catering holiday.

For a classic road trip with a twist, get behind the wheel of a vintage campervan and discover Ireland at your own speed. From your VW van, you can get close to the countryside and go where you want, when you want – think winding roads, deserted beaches and spectacular sunsets. You can hire vans from Lazy Days (lazydays.ie) and Causeway Campers (causewaycampers.com).

Blazing fires, grand drawing rooms and manicured gardens – surround yourself

with old-fashioned opulence in an Irish castle, where you can do everything from take tea in the library to learn the art of falconry. Enjoy indulgence at Adare Manor in County Limerick, the award-winning Lough Eske Castle in County Donegal, and Ballygally Castle Hotel, County Antrim.

There's no better way to experience Ireland's famous hospitality than in a bed & breakfast. Offering warm, family accommodation and a tasty Irish breakfast, B&Bs are perfect for connecting with local people. Whether you choose the boutique cosiness of Gallán Mór on the Sheep's Head Peninsula in County Cork, or the urban elegance of The Merchant's House in Derry-Londonderry, you can be sure of a warm welcome.

Ireland's historic country houses bring a touch of old-school elegance to your holiday. With beautiful grounds,

well-appointed bedrooms and personal attention, they make delightful places to stay. Try the Georgian style of Dean's Hill in County Armagh; the pretty Ballinkeele House in County Wexford; or the Victorian Coolclogher House on the outskirts of Killarney, County Kerry.

And if you're looking for epic locations with crashing waves, cliff edges and panoramic views, lighthouses offer a breath-taking alternative to a hotel. Enjoy the "great escape" of Clare Island Lighthouse at the entrance to beautiful Clew Bay in County Mayo; see the scenic east coast and sleep with ghosts at the Wicklow Head Lighthouse; or experience the history and atmosphere of Blackhead Lightkeepers' Houses in County Antrim.

For more information on accommodation, visit: ireland.com



DISCOVER ALL ABOUT... TRADITIONAL CULTURE



Cape Clear Storytelling Festival, County Cork



Dublin Literary Pub Crawl



Dick Mack's pub, Dingle, County Kerry



Riverdance



Thatched cottage at Cnoc Suain, Spiddal, County Galway



Boxty served with smoked salmon



Dalriada Festival at Glenarm, County Antrim

Traditional food

Ireland is known for its hearty traditional cuisine. From tasty bacon and cabbage to warming stews, food is nourishing and homemade. Other traditional favourites include boxty (potato pancakes), coddle (stew) and smoked salmon. Once the staple of the Irish diet, the versatile potato can be eaten at breakfast, lunch or dinner. Brown bread is a favoured part of the diet, too, with simple recipes passed down from generation to generation.

Steeped in history and proud of its unique culture, Ireland's heritage is an integral part of its identity. From music and language to crafts and sports, we look at the traditions that have been passed down through the generations

What's it all about?

Being an island definitely has its advantages. As well as unique geography, it creates and nourishes a set of cultural traditions that you won't see anywhere else in the world. From the boisterous sound of traditional music to the spectacle of Riverdance, from high-speed Gaelic games to our storytelling heritage, there's no shortage of distinctive customs here. The people from the island of Ireland – and our extensive diaspora spread around the world – have a deep respect for this heritage and strive to pass it on to each new generation. No wonder these traditions are still seen and celebrated throughout the island.

Where do I start?

Ireland stands out. No, not the red hair or porcelain complexions, but the culture known around the world. Unique customs can be seen no matter where you travel on the island: thatched cottages, woollen sweaters and crumbling ruins are constant reminders of past lives. Even our pubs act as cultural museums, with timeworn relics such as stoneware jugs, old tin signs and oil lamps lining the walls. You can find warm conversation and hospitable locals here, as well as spontaneous music sessions where musicians gather to play traditional Irish folk songs.

Irish – or Gaelic – is the second language spoken in Ireland and championed in areas known as Gaeltachts. These Irish-speaking regions, mainly scattered along the rugged west coast and mostly clustered around County Galway, continue to preserve our ancient tongue. You'll find Gaeltacht areas in counties Donegal, Cork, Mayo, Meath, Kerry and Waterford, too, where you can overhear people of all ages chatting casually to each other in Irish – proof that this is very much a living language.

If you want to get to grips with Irish culture in its purest form, catch a ferry to one of Ireland's islands. Experience the literature of the Blaskets in County Kerry;

the yawl (fishing boat) races off Achill Island in County Mayo; the celebratory céilís thrown by Antrim's Rathlin islanders; and the island King of Tory, off County Donegal. Island life is very much a vibrant celebration of tradition.

Few aspects of Irish culture have brought the island of Ireland more acclaim than its literature. Known as the "Land of Saints and Scholars" for good reason, Ireland has produced some of the world's greatest writers. Joyce, Yeats, Beckett, Heaney and many others are revered, with celebrations – such as Bloomsday on 16 June – held in their honour.

In Northern Ireland, Ulster-Scots people also bring a unique set of traditions to bear on the cultural history of the island. In the 1600s, tens of thousands of Lowland Scots poured into Northern Ireland as part of the Ulster Plantations. Today, the heritage and traditions of these people live on with music, language (Ullans, a variant of Scots) and dance.

What about festivals?

Cultural festivals are a great way to learn about traditions in Ireland while having a lot of fun. Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (August), the world's biggest traditional Irish music festival, takes place in Sligo town, and is a must for lovers of rousing reels and heartfelt ballads. The Ould Lammas Fair (August) in County Antrim has been celebrating traditional culture since the 17th century, with local handmade crafts and livestock among the items traded on the streets.

One even older festival is Puck Fair (August) in the village of Killorglin, County Kerry. Since 1613, this cultural gathering (which legend has it was inspired by a heroic goat – the nominal Puck) has thrown a massive parade and gives onlookers "Kingdom of Puck" passports. And if you love a tall tale, head to the Cape Clear Storytelling Festival (September) on Ireland's southernmost island, with recitals from renowned orators set against an unspoiled backdrop of this County Cork gem.

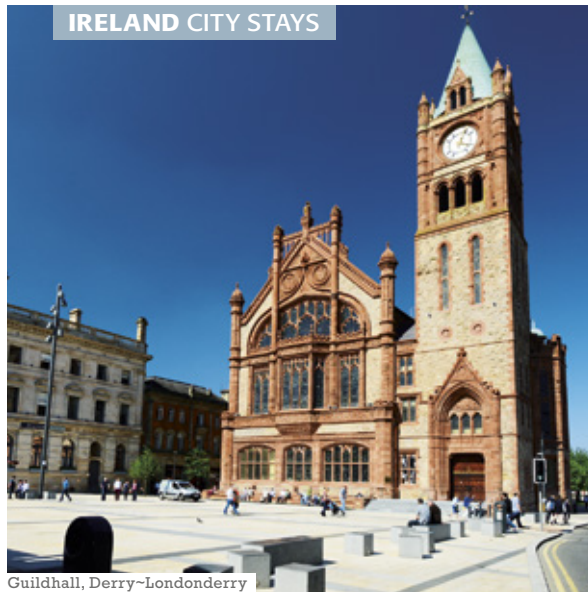
DON'T MISS Ireland claims an assortment of distinct indigenous sports called **Gaelic Games**. Gaelic football (similar to Aussie rules football but amateur rather than professional) and hurling (think hockey but with added chaos) are the most popular, but others such as **camogie** (women's hurling) attract plenty of followers, too. The hurling and football championships were established in 1887 with rival counties battling it out to be crowned victors. Stadiums such as **Casement Park** in Belfast and **Semple Stadium** in County Tipperary team with cheering fans at each game, and in September, the championships come to a dramatic close on the hallowed grounds of **Croke Park** in Dublin.

PHOTO: JAMES FENNEL

Rhythm of life

Irish dancing might be famous around the world thanks to Riverdance, but it has many different styles. The céilí is a popular social dance event, while sean-nós (literally meaning "the old way" and also applied to singing) is a freeform solo style featuring improvised movements. Irish dancing is usually social and energetic, and no celebration in Ireland is complete without a seisiún (session) – a social gathering driven by song and dance.

PHOTO RIVERDANCE: CLARK JAMES MISHLER



Guildhall, Derry-Londonderry



Kinsale, County Cork

CITY STAYS

Unique attractions and a great atmosphere – no wonder Ireland's cities are so popular. Take time out and enjoy the very best that's on offer in Dublin, Belfast and Cork, as well as the eight other fabulous cities around the island. With a spirit that respects the past and is excited for the future, a city stay in Ireland holds far more than the expected.
By Pól Ó Conghaile



At the Galway Market



Black Cab Tours, Belfast



Art on the Green, St Stephen's Green, Dublin



Ha'penny Bridge

EXPLORING GEORGIAN DUBLIN

Think of Dublin, and hardy red brick buildings often spring to mind. This capital city owes its origins to the Vikings, but Georgian squares and townhouses are very much the postcard image of the city today. They flanked the finishing line for the 2014 Giro d'Italia's Big Start, formed the backdrop to the video for U2's Sweetest Thing, and continue to captivate people from all over the world.

Loosely speaking, Georgian Dublin describes the city during the reign of four different Georges, kings of Great Britain and Ireland between 1714 to 1830. Early developments such as Henrietta Street led to elegant terraces, leafy squares and ambitious buildings including Leinster House, King's Inns and the Hugh Lane Gallery. The medieval city got a makeover, resulting in an architectural golden age. Today, Fitzwilliam Square, Merrion Square, St Stephen's Green and North Great George's Street are some of Dublin's most beautiful examples.

But it's not all stately buildings and squares, Dublin's Georgian district has a fun side, too. The Friday lunchtime food market on Percy Place sees tasty treats served up alongside the Grand Canal. You can eat and drink in gracious Georgian buildings including Restaurant FortyOne and the Cliff Townhouse, or enjoy lunch and a craft beer in a Georgian basement kitchen at Hatch & Sons. And for the perfect day out, rent a Dublin Bike and take to the cycle path that flanks the canal.

To learn more, visit Number 29 Fitzwilliam Street Lower, a museum highlighting life in Georgian Dublin. Or download one of Visit Dublin's free Georgian iWalk podcasts and go exploring.

Just think of it as a little bit of time travel in a busy modern age.



Long Room, Trinity College Dublin

Dublin five to try

Experience the best the city has to offer

Phoenix Park

This beautiful park is one of the largest city parks in Europe. It is also home to Dublin Zoo, the President of Ireland's residence, and a herd of fallow deer.

Trinity College and the Book of Kells

The Old Library is one of Dublin's star attractions, while the exquisite illustrated manuscript The Book of Kells is over 1,000 years old.

Guinness Storehouse

Learn how to pour the perfect pint before enjoying 360-degree views of Dublin at the home of the black stuff. Sláinte!

Temple Bar

Clothes shops, cocktail clubs, galleries and bookshops stand alongside pubs and souvenirs in Dublin's cultural hub.

National Gallery of Ireland

A collection of Italian baroque and Dutch Masters alongside distinguished Irish artists such as Jack B. Yeats make this one of the best free things to do in the city.

Out of town

Glendalough: St Kevin's 6th century monastic site is the crown jewel of the Wicklow Mountains National Park, with hiking trails to match. National Stud and Japanese Gardens: Veteran racehorses and newborn foals, St Fiachra's Garden, and the Irish Horse Museum combine in the perfect Kildare day trip. Howth: A working harbour, waterside restaurants, cliff walks and hidden beaches make this northside peninsula one of the city's most enjoyable escapes.



Little Museum of Dublin

Dublin's hidden corners

Little Museum of Dublin: The devil's in the detail at this small museum in a grand Georgian building, which brings its exhibits to life by revealing the incredible tales behind them. Iveagh Gardens: Generations of Dubliners take pride in pointing out the city's best-kept secret: a gorgeous Victorian park off Clonmel Street. Dublin Science Gallery: A superb space tackling scientific issues through wacky exhibitions such as Fat: It's Delicious!

Where Life Takes You...



Lough Eske Castle, a five-star castle hotel located on a secluded lakeside estate near the fabled Bluestack mountains, just outside Donegal Town in the Northwest of Ireland, has a rich history dating back to the 1400s. The Castle is an historic building set in a storybook location delivering superior hospitality and comfort.

Lough Eske Castle is the only five star hotel in Donegal. Winner of the World's Best Luxury Country Hotel for the past five consecutive years, Condé Nast Readers' Award 2013, Trip Advisor's Choice Award 2013 and Condé Nast Gold List for 2014. This lovingly restored castle hotel in Ireland blends its historic past with a dash of contemporary elegance.



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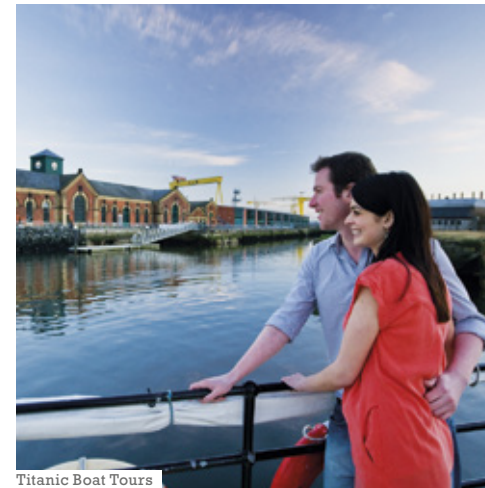
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Titanic Boat Tours

TRAILING TITANIC BELFAST

Belfast has rebooted. In recent years, the city has taken a huge step forward thanks to a buzzing new wave of restaurants, shops and tours. Now is the perfect time to visit, whether your interest is in history or the here-and-now.

Titanic Belfast lies at the heart of the new city. R.M.S. Titanic was designed and built on Queen's Island over a century ago ("she was fine when she left here," as the locals like to quip) and today's immersive heritage attraction tells the ill-fated liner's story with high-tech highlights including a replica shipyard ride and an ocean exploration centre.

But Titanic Belfast isn't the only modern addition to the city skyline. Think of developments such as Victoria Square shopping centre, the Odyssey Arena or the towering "Spire of Hope" piercing the sky on top of St Anne's Cathedral. Visitors can quaff cocktails at hip bars, wander through galleries or let the kids run wild at W5, an interactive discovery centre.

Amidst all the change, the old fabric remains, though. You can still check out originals: the Botanic Gardens with its Victorian Palm House, the bustling St George's Market, the Edwardian City Hall and the dry dock where Titanic was fitted out. Or you can choose from several guided tours of Titanic sights, including one by Segway scooter, and one hosted by Susie Millar, the great-granddaughter of an engineer lost in the disaster.

Recently, "Titanic's little sister", the S.S. Nomadic, came home to Hamilton Dock. Today, you can walk onto the actual ship that transferred first and second-class passengers from Cherbourg dock to the Titanic. It's a living connection to the historic liner, and a highlight on any trip to this fascinating city.



Belfast City Hall

IRELAND CITY STAYS

Belfast five to try

Don't miss the best of the Belfast buzz

Belfast Castle Estate

Set on the lower slopes of the scenic Cave Hill Country Park, the estate here includes an adventure playground, visitor centre and eco-trails.

Belfast Bike Scheme

A handy public bike scheme offers the best way to get around on two wheels in this small and compact city.

St George's Market

Built between 1890 and 1896, this historic market space kicks into action every Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Ulster Folk and Transport Museum

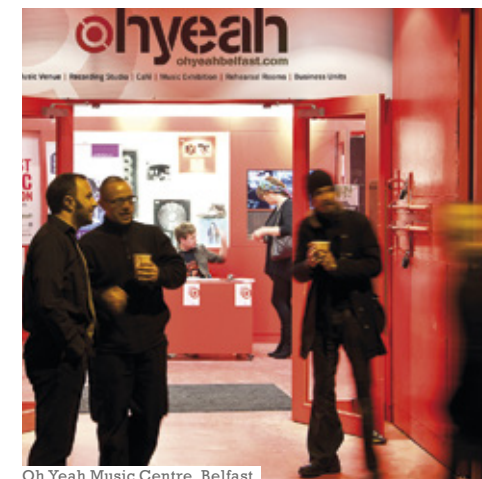
This outdoor museum tells the story of life in 20th century Ulster, with a cool collection of vintage cars, buses and trains.

Black Cab Tours

One of the city's top attractions sees taxi drivers bringing visitors on a whistlestop tour of Belfast's political murals, "Peace Line" and other iconic sights.

Out of town

Giant's Causeway: Don't miss the unique basalt rock formation of this UNESCO World Heritage Site in County Antrim. The visitor centre is equally fascinating. **Mourne Mountains:** County Down's iconic mountains didn't just inspire C.S. Lewis's Narnia; they inspire hikers and adventure sports enthusiasts, too. **Ards Peninsula:** The beautiful peninsula separating Strangford Lough in County Down from the Irish Sea is a scenic gem.



Oh Yeah Music Centre, Belfast

Three Music Favourites

Oh Yeah Music Centre: This former whiskey warehouse has transformed into a cool venue, rehearsal space, café and permanent music exhibition. **Belfast Music Tour:** Van Morrison, Snow Patrol and Therapy? are just some of the local legends whose lives and tunes are evoked on this rock 'n' roll tour. **The Limelight:** A legend in the Belfast music scene, this venue has hosted everyone from Arctic Monkeys to Manic Street Preachers and Oasis.



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Cork cityscape

UNCOVERING CREATIVE CORK

Cork is known as Ireland's culinary capital, but it also has a dynamic creative side. Visit its galleries, catch a show or feel the irresistible atmosphere of a summer festival, and you'll soon develop a whole new appetite for the city!

Cork packs a punch "by having one of everything a civilised person could want," according to the Irish Times newspaper. Its list? "One university, one opera house, one jazz festival, one film festival, one excellent summer arts festival, one school of music, one city-centre food market, and the sea on its doorstep." The result is a place that is thriving in all quarters.

Cork has always had an affinity with the arts, but its galleries have really come of age in recent years, buoyed by the success of University College Cork's Lewis Glucksman Gallery, among others. Bathed in natural light, this beautiful structure has been listed among Mark Irving's 1,001 Buildings You Must See Before You Die.

Cork has developed an impressive international reputation for its festivals too. From Cork Pride and the Cork Film Festival to the globally renowned Guinness Jazz Festival, there's something for everyone. And if you visit the city in September, you're in for a treat – Culture Night is a night-time voyage of discovery, entertainment and adventure, where cultural institutions throw open their doors till late for various free events and the city's streets hum with atmosphere.

Most of all, the creativity comes through in everyday life. Think of the musical pubs and vibrant literary traditions, or the clever transformation of an 18th century church into one of the city's most dynamic arts venues, Triskel.

Good ideas are second nature here.

 ireland.com



St Anne's Church, Cork

Cork five to try

Cork's top sights will make you want to stay a while

Shandon Bells

St Anne's Church offers a visitor experience unlike any other: the chance to ring its 18th century bells.

Cork City Gaol

Sightseeing and spectres combine in this impressively maintained Victorian prison. Thursday evening tours bring added atmosphere to this spine-tingling spot.

Crawford Art Gallery

Cork's art gallery houses a wonderful collection that includes Mainie Jellett, Paul Henry and Harry Clarke. Oh, and there's a tasty café, too!

Huguenot Quarter

Bookshops, bars, cafés and boutiques are crowded into this tightknit quarter around French Church Street and Carey's Lane.

Sin É

This lively Coburg Street pub has been hosting traditional music sessions since the 1970s, and you'll find lots of musicians among the regulars.

Out of town

Cobh: This historic town in Cork Harbour was Titanic's last port of call. Harbour views and a cracking heritage centre make for a great afternoon out. **Kinsale:** A must for foodies – this lively harbour town is THE place to come for the freshest seafood, prepared with a dash of real Cork style. **Bantry:** This coastal spot is a gateway to West Cork – an old fishing port, thriving market town and heritage gem; as suited to a quick cuppa as it is to a longer stay.



English Market, Cork

Three Foodie Favourites

Food Trails Cork: See and taste the very best that gourmet Cork has to offer on the Fabulous Food Trails walking tour. **English Market:** Cork's culinary centrepiece has been dishing up delicious food since 1788. Even Queen Elizabeth II has been a visitor. **Cork Butter Museum:** A keg of 1,000-year-old butter, medieval cattle raids and the story of the world's largest butter market – this quirky museum is just full of surprises.

Cities to explore

A quick city trip or a longer urban getaway? You'll find that each city on the island of Ireland boasts unique opportunities



GALWAY

Galway is never far from a festival (arts, film, horse racing and oysters are all celebrated in quick succession during summer). This gives the feeling of a rolling street party. A super little museum, a thriving food scene (from acclaimed fine-dining restaurants to traditional pubs) and the small seaside suburb of Salthill seal the deal. And with Connemara National Park a short trip west, you couldn't locate yourself anywhere better!

King John's Castle, Limerick



LIMERICK

Overlooking the sweeping River Shannon, Limerick is a city of surprises. Faded Georgian grandeur combines with set pieces such as the People's Park and King John's Castle. There's a burgeoning festival scene (Limerick was National City of Culture in 2014) and fab galleries such as the Hunt Museum and the Limerick City Gallery of Art. Limerick is also home to Munster rugby, and the Thomond Park Museum and Stadium Tour is a treat for fans!

WATERFORD

One of Ireland's oldest cities, in 2014 Waterford celebrated the 1,100th anniversary of its founding by the Vikings. They left quite a legacy, which is revealed within the city's Viking Triangle, a historic quarter hosting the Waterford Treasures Museum and Reginald's Tower. Elsewhere, the House of Waterford Crystal gives a glimpse into the crystal's intricate production, while top festivals include the Spraoi street party in August and Winterval in December.

Medieval Museum, Waterford



KILKENNY

Kilkenny's medieval character remains thrillingly intact, with Tudor inns, old merchant townhouses and ancient little lanes all dotting the Medieval Mile that stretches from Kilkenny Castle to St Canice's Cathedral. A visit is always infused with energy, thanks to an eclectic array of bars, restaurants, shops and festivals. Check out Trail Kilkenny for its craft, food, walking and cycling trails, and the National Craft Gallery in the former castle stables.



Kilkenny

St Patrick's Cathedral (RC), Armagh



ARMAGH

Armagh exudes heritage. The Georgian Mall (formerly a racecourse) is lined with elegant houses, and it's the only city in the world with two cathedrals dedicated to the same saint. St Patrick is said to have founded his first church on the hilltop site of the Church of Ireland Cathedral (Armagh is the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland). The County Museum and Navan Fort turn back the clock even further, boasting prehistoric artefacts and an ancient pagan ceremonial site. The city even has its own planetarium, so you'll always be reaching for the stars.

Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum



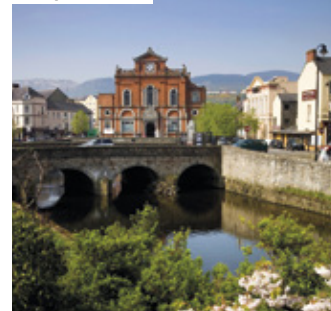
LISBURN

The capital of Lagan Valley is just a baby in terms of its city status, which was awarded in 2002 as part of Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee celebrations. In terms of heritage, however, it goes way back, as you'll discover when you explore everything from the 18th century streetscapes to the Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum. Lisburn also boasts a thriving arts scene, a dynamic young population, and lots of shopping options – from small city boutiques and the pedestrianised Bow Street to larger retail developments such as Sprucefield Park.

NEWRY

If you like to shop, you'll love Newry. This is one of Ireland's best retail destinations, with a host of on-street shopping alongside The Quays and Buttercrane Centres. But it's not just about the credit card. There's a lot of "past" on offer, too. In the 19th century, Newry was a bustling trading port, a place of merchants, markets and noisy city quays. The town's heritage trail, City Hall, cathedral and the Newry & Mourne Museum in Bagenal's Castle all tell their stories, offering a rich diversion before you relax in the many buzzing bars, clubs and restaurants.

Newry Town Hall



DERRY~LONDONDERRY

The island's only surviving walled city, Derry~Londonderry is also home to the island's youngest population. The pull of history and the push of youth gives this city an infectious vibe, which is visible in a thriving arts and music scene (the Undertones, Phil Coulter and Nadine Coyle all hail from here). It pushed the cultural envelope with a wildly successful stint as UK City of Culture in 2013. A visit to the Peace Bridge and the Bogside murals are essentials, if only to see how much this place has changed recently.



City walls, Derry~Londonderry

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Irish Design 2015

Get set to connect with Irish design. A new generation of exciting craftspeople and designers is shaking up the scene on the island of Ireland, mixing traditional techniques with a contemporary edge. 2015 is the year of Irish design, which will showcase the very best from design, craft, fashion and architecture. So what's on offer? Well, how about a packed programme of exhibitions, lectures and other designer events across the island? Not to mention the chance to end the year with a perfectly crafted bang at the Dublin Design Festival in November. Also big for 2015 is the Économusée movement, where you can watch artisans at work and learn the history of crafts as diverse as pottery, hurl-making (the stick used in the sports of hurling and camogie), and salmon smoking. Game of Thrones fans may be particularly interested in Steensons Jewellery Économusée in the lovely Antrim village of Glenarm, where some of the jewellery featured in the hit HBO series was made.



Enignum Shelf XIII by Joseph Walsh Studio

EXCITING THINGS TO DO IN 2015

Ireland is full of surprises, and in 2015 the island is brimming over with a vast array of things to do and see. Time to start planning your trip



Cruising on the River Shannon

Cruising Ireland's waterways

Look at a map of Ireland and you'll see just why the island has a reputation as a playground for boating enthusiasts. There are hundreds of lakes here, as well as a network of rivers and canals, all blissfully free of commercial traffic and easy to navigate, even as a novice. All you have to worry about is gliding through the countryside, stopping off for a round of golf here, a cosy pub lunch there, and maybe a trip to some must-sees, such as the ancient monastic site of Clonmacnoise in County Offaly, or the adrenaline-fuelled Lough Key Forest and Activity Park in County Roscommon. Ireland has seven main inland waterways to choose from, but for a truly epic journey, try the 400km of navigable waters between Belleek, at the northern tip of Lough Erne in County Fermanagh, and Killaloe, in County Clare, which takes in both the River Shannon and peaceful Lough Erne.



Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, Derry~Londonderry



Spraoi Festival, Waterford

Festival fever in the sunny southeast

Famed for its beaches, Viking heritage and grand historic houses, the "sunny southeast" is fast becoming known for its thrilling festivals, too. Start off your festival extravaganza in Kilkenny, where you can laugh your socks off at the Sky Cat Laughs Comedy Festival (28 May-1 June). Then head to Carlow town, where the Carlow Arts Festival (29 May-7 June) offers street carnivals, theatre and music, all against the scenic backdrop of the magnificent Blackstairs Mountains. Each year, the Clonmel Junction Festival (3-12 July) sets this County Tipperary town humming with live music, dance and comedy. Fuelled by creative energy, Waterford city's Spraoi in early August makes great use of its medieval backdrop with free street theatre, music and, of course, the famous Spraoi parade. Also in August is one of Ireland's oldest festivals, the Kilkenny Arts Festival, where creativity takes over this medieval city (one of the friendliest in Europe, according to readers of Condé Nast Traveller). Finally, go highbrow with the Wexford Festival Opera in October – a highlight of Ireland's cultural calendar centred around the Wexford Opera House.

A taste of Fermanagh

The beautiful pastures of Ireland's "Lakeland" district have given rise to pure flavours that define this county. There's dry-aged Kettyle beef, grass-fed Lough Erne lamb, sublime ice cream from Tickety-Moo, and Pat O'Doherty's incredible Black Bacon from pigs reared on their very own island. Like the sound of that? Enjoy the tasty treats at the Watermill Lodge in Lisnaskea, and Leslie's Home Bakery in Enniskillen. Delicious doesn't do this county justice!



Lough Erne Resort, County Fermanagh

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2015

Sometimes called the "Olympics of Irish music", the Fleadh (as it's affectionately known) is Ireland's biggest traditional music festival. In August, Fleadh fever moves into Sligo town and you can look forward to a rip-roaring week of song and dance, with lively street performances and seisiúns (live music sessions) everywhere. The Fleadh is more than just a party, though. What you'll hear is the sound of Ireland honouring its musical culture and the talent on display will set your pulse racing. Time-honoured traditions such as lilting (think of an Irish version of scat singing) and sean-nós ("old style" singing) are performed by young and old alike. Away from the music, there are walking and historical tours, films, seminars and markets. Round off your day by nabbing a seat at a rousing sing-song in a traditional pub. Because when it comes down to it, it's all about the music.



St John's Point Lighthouse, Killough, County Down

Mourne Coastal Route

The journey from Belfast to Newry along the spectacular County Down coastline is one of Ireland's hidden gems. This is the Mourne Coastal Route, a beguiling mix of craggy mountains, swirling ocean, fantastic legends and ancient heritage. On this 148km route, you'll pass through two different Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: the Mournes, and Strangford and the Lecale coast, ending up on the doorstep of a third, the Ring of Gullion. Explore the stunning Ards Peninsula, take the Portaferry ferry across Strangford Lough, follow in the footsteps of a saint on St Patrick's Trail, or delve into the heart of the Mournes with a series of scenic loops that bring you to spots such as the Silent Valley, the Mourne Wall and Bloody Bridge. Finish your journey with a meal of fabulous local produce such as Carlingford Lough mussels or Graham's ice cream; the perfect end to a perfect trip.



Fresh steamed clams, Fishy Fishy Café, Kinsale, County Cork

FRESH FROM THE SEA

With pure waters, passionate producers and vibrant coastal communities, is it any wonder Ireland has become famous for seafood? TV chef, author and journalist Rachel Allen uncovers great dishes and fabulous pubs around the island



Rachel Allen

Ireland has a special relationship with the sea. And it's not surprising when you consider that the island is surrounded by bountiful and pristine waters, including the Atlantic and the Celtic Sea. Countless songs and poems have been written about our seafood, not least the tragic tale of poor Molly Malone, who wheeled her wheelbarrow through the streets of Dublin crying "cockles and mussels, alive, alive-oh!" If you like seafood, then you are, without a doubt, in the right place!

Seafood for the road

When I am travelling around the island, my route is often determined by my tummy. My love of good food will regularly see me veering off the beaten path to try something that's being produced, harvested or grown in a particular area. If you're planning a trip around Ireland, then I suggest you let your appetite lead the way. And the first place to start? It's got to be a market, of course.

Farmers' markets have increased



Carlingford Oyster Festival, County Louth



Deanes Love Fish, Belfast



English Market, Cork

Irish soul food

When the fish is this fresh it is often best served simply, which is where the humble yet sublime fish and chips come in. Served in a light batter with chunky chips and sprinkled with salt and vinegar, it's the perfect dinner. Try it at great "chippies" including Salt and Batter Takeaway in Rathmullan, County Donegal; Morton's in Ballycastle, County Antrim; and Leo Burdock's in Dublin city.



The tradition of smoking fish is something Ireland has become famous for worldwide, and you can experience it to the full with wonderful smokehouses dotted around the coast

enormously over the last few years, and now many small towns and villages have one. Here, amid the bustling farmhouse cheese stalls, the rich treacly breads and the handcrafted chocolates, there is usually a taste of the ocean to be found.

At the Temple Bar Food Market in Dublin, fresh oysters are served up with glasses of crisp white wine at little wooden tables; while the fish stalls at the Limerick Milk Market, St George's Market in Belfast and the English Market in Cork city showcase Ireland's exceptional seafood in all its glory.

What to eat

Having an abundance of seafood on our doorstep also means we are creative when it comes to preparing and cooking it. And we're nothing if not diverse in our tastes. Just look at the northern European delicacy, pickled herring, which gets a fabulous treatment in Ireland courtesy of Silver Darlings seafood company. Want to try? Seek them out at Mahon Point



Seafood casserole, Mourne Seafood Bar, Belfast

Farmers' Market in Cork city, the Milk Market in Limerick city, and Dublin's wonderful food emporium, Fallon & Byrne, in the heart of the city.

If it's a smokey flavour you're after, then you're spoiled for choice. On the farm at Ballymaloe in County Cork where I live, Bill Casey produces a consistently delicious smoked salmon, using only organic Irish salmon, which you can buy from the Farm Shop at Ballymaloe Cookery School. This tradition of smoking fish is something Ireland has become famous for worldwide, and you can experience it to the full with wonderful smokehouses dotted around the coast.

In County Cork, take a trip to see the traditional timber Belvelly Smokehouse, which is run by Frank Hederman – a second generation smoker. Hederman smokes mussels, salmon, mackerel, eel and haddock; not to mention cheese, oats, garlic and butter!

Other smokehouses that you should add to your culinary trail include >



Fresh lobster, sea bream and salted squid, Lough Erne Resort



Moran's Oyster Cottage, County Galway

In Belfast, Ox serves up seriously innovative, very pretty food, and it's absolutely delicious, too. I still have dreams about the sea trout with crab, olives and samphire

the Burren Smokehouse in County Clare, Ummera Smokehouse and Woodcock Smokery in West Cork, and the Connemara Smokehouse in County Galway.

Seaweed has been appearing on the menus of some of the island's most innovative restaurants of late, and the unpolluted waters mean there are lots of varieties to choose from and every single one of them is edible! Look out for those by Sea of Vitality and AlgAran at health food shops and on supermarket shelves – they make great snacks!

A seafood platter

It'll probably come as no surprise when I tell you that there are a myriad of wonderful restaurants where you can sample excellent seafood, including my home at Ballymaloe House. The menus are completely dictated by what is growing on the farm and what has come in from Ballycotton Bay that day, so expect an amazing array of seafood: hot buttered lobster; pan-fried scallops or boiled shrimps with homemade mayonnaise; sole a la meunière; pan-fried mackerel with herb butter; and baked baby plaice.

Head west from here to a much loved seafood restaurant, Fishy Fishy in Kinsale, County Cork. It's located in the heart of this busy little coastal town, and is a great place for a long, leisurely lunch.

Another part of the island that's

Fishy festivals

You'll find festivals dedicated to the scallop, the oyster and the mussel all over the island of Ireland. Some of the best-known are the Galway International Seafood and Oyster Festival in Galway city (Sept); the Hillsborough Oyster Festival in County Down (Sept); and the Kilmore Quay Seafood Festival in County Wexford (July). Fun, entertaining and delicious!



Fresh from the sea, Roundstone, County Galway

enjoying an exciting time gastronomically is the west. "Aniar" is the Irish word for westerly – it also happens to be the name of one of Ireland's hottest restaurants, fresh from a Michelin star win for the second year running. Aniar is situated in the centre of Galway city and its menu changes daily, but expect to find anything from divine salmon confit to turbot with turnip tops.

While in Galway, try to fit in a visit to Jessica Murphy's Kai Restaurant, too. Her scallop ceviche with tiger's milk is to die for. As you leave the city behind and head for the coast, you'll find yourself on the Wild Atlantic Way, which runs along the shore from Cork up to Donegal. Kealy's Seafood Bar on the harbour in Greencastle, County Donegal is a local gem. It's a relaxed place where simplicity is valued: just taste Tricia Kealy's Greencastle chowder and you'll understand the principle of taste above all else.

In Belfast, three wonderful spots spring to mind. One of the best is Ox: seriously innovative, very pretty food, and absolutely delicious, too. I still have dreams about the sea trout with crab, olives and samphire. Mourne Seafood Bar, located in a lovely wood-panelled Victorian house, is a fishmonger-meets-restaurant, where you can try your oysters five different ways. Deanes Love Fish, also in Belfast, serves an exceptional pickled crab salad with fennel and citrus fruit. >



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Frank Hederman, Belvelly Smokehouse, Cobh, County Cork



Tastes of the island

It's not just seafood that Ireland is famous for. From traditional tastes to new artisan foods, the flavours of the island will inspire and entice

Food on the island of Ireland revolves around simple, pure flavours and honest dishes that have been passed down through the generations. The island is renowned for its dairy produce, and you'll find new producers such as **Abernethy Butter Company** in County Down elevating butter to something truly delicious. Irish farmhouse cheeses are world famous, with an array of producers creating incredible flavours. Keep an eye out for **Milleens**, **Coolea**, **Cashel Blue** and **St Tola**. The green pastures that have fostered such quality dairy produce also result in some of the best beef and lamb in the world. **Kettyle beef** from County Fermanagh is a real treat, while **Connemara lamb** has European Protected Geographical Indication. And as for traditional dishes, you're spoiled for choice. Try some classic **Irish stew** (made with lamb and vegetables); savour a **soda farl** (a flattened dough bread) as part of your **Ulster fry** cooked breakfast; enjoy fresh brown **soda bread** with a bowl of seafood chowder; and taste the **Waterford blaa** (a lovely fresh white roll unique to the city).



Super-fresh scallops at Tedford's, Belfast

Five seafood pubs

O'Neill's The Point Seafood Bar, Cahersiveen, County Kerry: Dine on fresh, locally smoked salmon. **Tedford's**, Belfast: Curry roast monkfish with coconut rice is a firm favourite here. **Cronin's**, Crosshaven, County Cork: Fresh fish and a fine rum selection. **Moran's Oyster Cottage**, The Weir, County Galway: Tuck into wild native clams in white wine. **The West Bar**, Westport, County Mayo: World Seafood Chowder winner, USA, June 2014!

Countless songs and poems have been written about our seafood bounty, not least the tragic tale of poor Molly Malone who wheeled her wheelbarrow through the narrow streets of Dublin

On to Warrenpoint, County Down, and located along the glistening Carlingford Lough you'll find Bennetts. This is a stalwart of the fine-dining scene, and its catch is always fresh and local from Kilkeel Harbour. Move inland to the lush lakelands of Fermanagh, and you'll see why this region is creating such a buzz in foodie circles. At the Lough Erne Resort, Head Chef Noel McMeel has become a byword for culinary perfection. Try the baked Blackrock stone bass if you're in any doubt of the man's talents.

When in Dublin, I love eating at Caviston's in Glashule, in the south of the county. I can also pick up the catch of the day from its adjoining fish shop and deli – just jump on the DART (train) to get there. On a recent visit to Super Miss Sue in Dublin's city centre, I understood exactly why this is one of the city's most talked about new foodie openings. The pan-fried mackerel with horseradish and pickled seaweed here was delicious. Dublin's Michelin-star fine dining experience has to be Chapter One. On my most recent visit, the halibut with Dublin Bay prawns and courgette cream was perfection itself.

Around the coast again and into Wexford's Rosslare Harbour, home of the Lobster Pot. Expect super-fresh seafood and chowder to rival any on the planet. So there you have it: a whistlestop tour of some of the island's finest seafood haunts.



Aniar, Galway



FAIRYTALE ROMANCE

Whether you're looking for whimsical tales, dreaming of fantastical castles, or just want to visit some of the most romantic settings imaginable, the island of Ireland has something to suit every taste, writes Barbara Collins

Kylemore Abbey, County Galway



Hillsborough Castle, County Down

HILLSBOROUGH CASTLE County Down

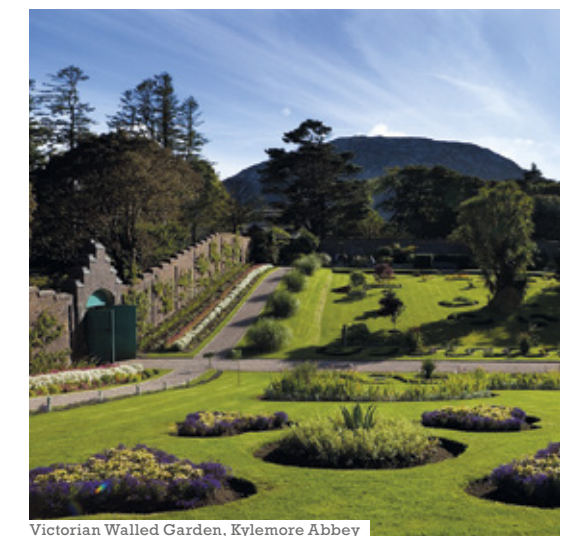
The official residence of the Queen and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is possibly the smallest royal castle – but sometimes the best things come in small packages. Now part of the Historic Royal Palaces portfolio, this captivating Georgian mansion was built by Wills Hill, the first Marquess of Downshire in the 1770s, and is set in the cut-stone village of Hillsborough, County Down. Open for the first time to the public (previously you could only visit with a tour), Hillsborough is one of the most refined and interesting structures on the island of Ireland. Despite the fact that the castle is still a “working” building where royal and state functions are held, you can explore the State Drawing Room, the Red Dining Room and Candlestick Hall. Tickets for the Royal Garden Party every summer are extremely sought after, which is no wonder since the castle is surrounded by 96 acres of ornamental grounds. They make a great place to explore, even if you don't get party tickets. If those trees in the grounds could talk, they would perhaps whisper about the romance of Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson. Rumour has it the couple stayed in the castle, and sneaked down to the local pub. Sounds like a good idea!



Hillsborough Castle

KYLEMORE ABBEY County Galway

Connemara is a place of pure romance. Located at the very edge of Europe, this wild, rugged land boasts some of the most dramatic scenery on the island of Ireland. It's easy to fall in love with the landscapes here, which is just what happened to Mitchell and Margaret Henry. In the 1860s, the couple were honeymooning at what was then Kylemore Lodge. They were so captivated by the beauty of the area, they decided they would make it their home. Practicalities brought them back to their native city of Manchester, but when Mitchell inherited his father's estate, he decided to build a fairytale castle in Connemara for his beloved wife. Over the following decades, the couple and their children lived happily at Kylemore, with Mitchell working on the glorious Victorian walled garden there. Tragically, Margaret died suddenly in 1874 on holiday in Egypt, leaving her husband and their nine children heartbroken. Distraught but resolute, Mitchell responded by building his wife one of the most elegant final resting places money can buy. Backed by craggy hills, surrounded by mature trees and overlooking the glassy lake, the stunning Gothic church at Kylemore still stands today as a testament to Mitchell's enduring love. The romance lives on in County Galway.



Victorian Walled Garden, Kylemore Abbey



BLARNEY CASTLE
County Cork

One of Ireland's most famous castles, Blarney was built nearly 600 years ago by the great chieftain Cormac "The Strong" MacCarthy, and while much of the structure is in ruins, you can still explore the dungeon and the battlements. Blarney fires the imagination and still manages to capture the spirit of the time – standing in the roofless family room, you can't help conjuring up images of medieval nobles and servants. Lots of honeymooners come here to kiss, but it's a historic stone they come for, not their beloved's lips. The Stone of Eloquence, or the Blarney Stone, is said to give you what the Irish call "the gift of the gab" – otherwise known as "good speaking skills". You have to hang upside down to kiss the stone, but that's all part of the fun. And once you've gained a new fluency of speech, head out to explore the incredible grounds. Set amongst the huge landscaped gardens is Rock Close – a romantic part of the grounds that enchants visitors. The Fern Garden, with its mini waterfalls, is also a delightful spot for a walk, while the owners positively encourage you to take a picnic and spend a few stolen hours in the woods.



Glenveagh Castle, County Donegal

GLENVEAGH CASTLE
County Donegal

Glenveagh is the epitome of a storybook castle, with its crenellated towers and heavy-set battlements. John George Adair, who built it, wanted a structure that would stand out amongst the jaw-dropping scenery surrounding it. In fact, his ambitions were so grand that he hoped it would surpass the beauty of Queen Victoria's castle at Balmoral in Scotland. Did he achieve his dream? You might even say he surpassed himself. Here, amidst some of the island's most dramatic scenery stands a majestic stronghold adorned with ramparts, turrets and round towers. It's so impressive that it has even been dubbed "Donegal's Camelot". Swathed in colour, the lakes, glens and woods are teeming with wildlife, including red deer and golden eagles, and the castle sits within 16,000 hectares of national park. At one point, Glenveagh was owned by American socialite and philanthropist Henry McIlhenny. Stars such as Marilyn Monroe, Clark Gable, Charlie Chaplin and Greta Garbo would escape to this exceptional corner of the world to enjoy a lavish whirl of dinner parties, picnics and afternoon teas. These days, the stars may have left, but the castle still has a gloriously cinematic appeal.



The gardens at Blarney Castle

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POWERSCOURT HOUSE AND GARDENS
County Wicklow

Romance seems to run in the very water at Powerscourt. This gracious County Wicklow estate, set in the shadow of the Sugarloaf Mountain, is achingly beautiful – whether you're gazing at the lily pads drifting on the ornamental lake, strolling through the Japanese gardens or wandering along the avenue of beech trees. With scenery like this, it's no wonder that Powerscourt is a favourite place for couples to tie the knot. But for those who aren't getting married, it still offers a gorgeous sylvan escape just a short distance from Dublin. The estate itself dates back to the 1300s, but the current Palladian house was completed in 1741. Commissioned by the 1st Viscount Powerscourt, the mansion was described by a historian at the time as possessing "the massive dignity of a great Italian Renaissance villa". The gardens, with their cascading green terraces, magnificent statues and manicured lawns have been voted number three in the world's Top 10 Gardens by National Geographic. After a romantic walk, there are few better places to relax than on the outdoor terrace overlooking the fountain where you can enjoy some afternoon tea. And if you feel like wandering farther afield, you'll find Powerscourt Waterfall, Ireland's highest, about 5km away. The perfect spot for summer picnics? We think so!



Powerscourt Gardens, County Wicklow



Florence Court, County Fermanagh

FLORENCE COURT
County Fermanagh

Naming your grand Palladian mansion after the woman you love – now that's a romantic gesture. At the foothills of Cullcagh Mountain stands Florence Court, once the home of the Earls of Enniskillen. The Florence in question was the wife of John Cole, the man who built this impressive home around 1718. Florence was an aristocrat from Devon, England, with a fondness for the finer things in life, and her doting husband made sure the house more than matched her expectations. Famed for its exquisite interiors, fine Irish furniture and Rococo plasterwork, Florence Court is also renowned for its setting amongst abundant woodland. The impressive Florence Court yew tree also draws visitors to this part of County Fermanagh, as it's believed to be the source of most modern Irish yews. It's a real pleasure to amble through the extensive grounds here, with their pretty walled garden, ice house and summer house. Away from all the hustle and bustle of modern life, you can almost imagine John and Florence strolling together through what they described as their "majestic wilderness".

Castles and Houses
Unforgettable Experiences

Ireland's houses, castles and gardens are imbued with a real sense of "living history" and many of them offer something extra special, from summer festivals to archery. These are not just places to admire, they are places to enjoy and experience



Birr Castle
County Offaly
Vintage shows, arts festivals, outdoor theatre and country fairs: Birr Castle itself isn't open to the public, but visitors are welcomed to the demesne each summer for a packed programme of events. August is definitely the month to go!

Castle Ward
County Down

The hit HBO series Game of Thrones is partly shot in Northern Ireland. And at Castle Ward on Strangford Lough, you can feel like a true Westerosi when you pick up your bow for archery practice in one of the show's filming locations.



Dromoland Castle
County Clare
Learn the ancient art of falconry on one of the most beautiful castle estates on the island. Experiencing one of these magnificent birds landing on your glove is a real rush, and there are few better surrounds in which to do it.

Dunguaire Castle
County Galway

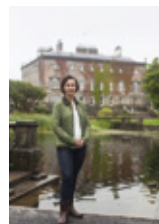
Get in touch with your inner aristocrat and experience a medieval banquet at Dunguaire Castle in the pretty town of Kinvara, County Galway. Join other diners at long oak tables and enjoy a traditional feast in a genuine 16th century castle.



Glenarm Castle
County Antrim
This 17th century castle is the family home of Viscount and Viscountess Dunluce and their family. It's also a gardener's paradise. The walled garden is one of the oldest on the island and is famed for its unusual flowers and specimen plants.

Westport House
County Mayo

A perfect spot for family fun, the grounds of Westport House are something very special. There are beautiful gardens here, a Pirate Adventure Park, and an adventure centre – you can even glide across the lake on your very own swan boat!



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Clogher Head, County Kerry

ON TOUR

From charming coastal villages to spectacular natural wonders, taking to the road on the island of Ireland reveals surprises at every turn

THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY

By Pól Ó Conghaile

My car is covered in salt spray. I'm smiling. An hour ago, I parked up near Mizen Head Signal Station – a lighthouse and heritage attraction clinging to the tip of Ireland's most southwesterly peninsula. I took a bridge across a surf-thrashed chasm dotted with seals. I was pummelled by wind. I gulped down lungfuls of fresh air, and felt the salty sea spray on my face. I guess the Wild Atlantic Way isn't named for its gentle nature.

At 2,500km this is the world's longest defined coastal touring route; it can be driven in sections or in its entirety. Starting at Kinsale in County Cork and weaving right up to the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal, the route passes through small villages, by vast



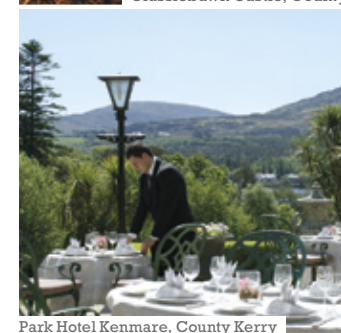
Roundstone, County Galway



Classiebawn Castle, County Sligo

Distance	2,500km
Time	Up to 20 days

WILD ATLANTIC WAY



Park Hotel Kenmare, County Kerry

Along the way

Visit
Skellig Michael in County Kerry is home to an Early Christian monastery and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Cyclists will love the **Great Western Greenway**, a 42km off-road cycling trail from Westport to Achill Island in County Mayo. And don't miss Ireland's only cable car, which connects **Dursey Island** to the Beara Peninsula in County Cork.

Eat
 At **Vasco Restaurant** in Fanore, County Clare, you can enjoy the freshest fish and foraged foods. **Packie's** in Kenmare, County Kerry, is one of Ireland's best bistros. **Eithna's by the Sea**, meanwhile, brings new meaning to the phrase "sea to fork" in Mullaghmore, County Sligo.

Sleep
 Accommodation along the Wild Atlantic Way ranges from the unusual, such as **Loop Head Lighthouse** in County Clare, to five-star hotels such as **Park Hotel Kenmare** in County Kerry. There's also elegant, period guesthouses such as the **Quay House** in the town of Clifden, County Galway.

beaches, and alongside golf courses shaped by nature. From scenic set-pieces, such as the Cliffs of Moher in County Clare, to hidden gems such as Valentia Island in County Kerry, it follows every twist and turn of the western seaboard.

But it's not just about spectacular scenery. Driving the route, I've eaten amazing food in Gregan's Castle, County Clare, and tucked into fish fresh off the boats at Castletownbere, County Cork. I've met big-wave surfers, traditional musicians, foragers, fishermen and a Sligo historian who remembers his baby cot being made from driftwood. I've visited Foynes in County Limerick, where the first ever Irish coffee was made, and wondered at the mystery of the Gallarus Oratory on the Dingle Peninsula.

This is a route you can drive in a couple of weeks, or dip into for a day. In County Clare, I swapped four wheels for two on a cycling tour of Loop Head Peninsula.

I parked for cliff walks along the Slieve Leagues in County Donegal (the highest accessible sea cliffs in Europe), took the ferry to the Aran Islands in County Galway, and marvelled at the Galway Hooker sailing boat in the city's museum.

With 159 Discovery Points and hundreds more spontaneous stops, every time I got back to the car, it felt like the adventure was starting all over again. Wiping the salt off my windscreen, I drove on, with new adventures waiting for me.



Causeway Coastal Route

THE CAUSEWAY COASTAL ROUTE

By Alan Morrow

It's official: the Causeway Coastal Route is one of the world's top road trips. Driving this route, I came across a changing tapestry of sweeping strands, picturesque harbours and lovely villages. I scaled vertiginous roads, saw views that remind me why I so love Ireland, and ate delightfully fresh seafood plucked from the deep-blue Irish Sea.

The 193km of the Causeway Coastal Route starts sedately enough, following the motorway from Belfast along the broad northern shore of Belfast Lough. Soon the hulk of Carrickfergus Castle looms into view, before the road follows through to the busy port of Larne. Beyond this point, the route starts in earnest, narrowing as it hugs this Jurassic coastline, packed with fossils and flanked by steep cliffs. There's no doubt about it – the Causeway Coastal Route is a massive engineering achievement. Along the way you can stop and view a plaque commemorating the engineers who built it in the 1830s.

It may have plenty of big sights, but the journey here is just as packed with hidden gems. Just between Waterfoot and Red Bay Pier are sea-eroded caves, one of which once served as a school. A mile or so beyond the village of Cushendall, I take the road less travelled, negotiating the scenic route to Ballycastle along a tight country track. It takes me through quaint Cushendun village, past rocky Torr Head, Murlough Bay and magnificent Fair Head.

Clinging precariously to the steep slopes, this section of the route is a great test of driving skills, and the awesome views over the swirling waters of the North Channel across to the purple hue of Scotland are unforgettable.



Giant's Causeway, County Antrim



Distance 193km
Time 1-3 days

After a night at the Bushmills Inn, close to the Old Bushmills Distillery, I head off to the Giant's Causeway and experience my first visit to the Causeway Visitor Centre. I'm impressed; it's a fitting tribute to this awesome natural phenomenon.

On the final leg of my journey towards Derry~Londonderry city the road widens. I'm treated to views of Mussenden Temple, hugging a cliff edge 37m above Downhill Strand. And as the Maiden City heaves into view, my epic tour ends.



Lost and Found, County Londonderry

PHOTO: GILLIAN HIGGINS

Along the way

Visit
Enjoy stunning views from the cliffs above **Kinbane Castle** and take care – the path down is steep and narrow. **St Gobban's**, allegedly Ireland's tiniest church, is set in the village of Portbraddan. **Ballintoy Harbour**, where HBO's *Game of Thrones* has been filmed, is definitely one for fans.

Eat
For great food in the heart of the nine Glens of Antrim, try **Harry's**, in Cushendall. Sample Irish ingredients with a continental twist at **The French Rooms** in Bushmills. You may have a short wait for a table, but the **Ramore Wine Bar** in Portrush is a great find. And for lovely coffee and cake, stop off at **Lost and Found** in Coleraine.

Sleep
Enjoy all the charm of a real Irish castle with a resident ghost at **Ballygally Castle**. Book into the **Fullerton Arms**, a family-run guest house, bar and restaurant in Ballintoy, near the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge; and for stunning views, there's the **Bayview Hotel** in the seaside village of Portballintrae.



Hill of Slane, County Meath

THE BOYNE VALLEY

By Emer Taaffe

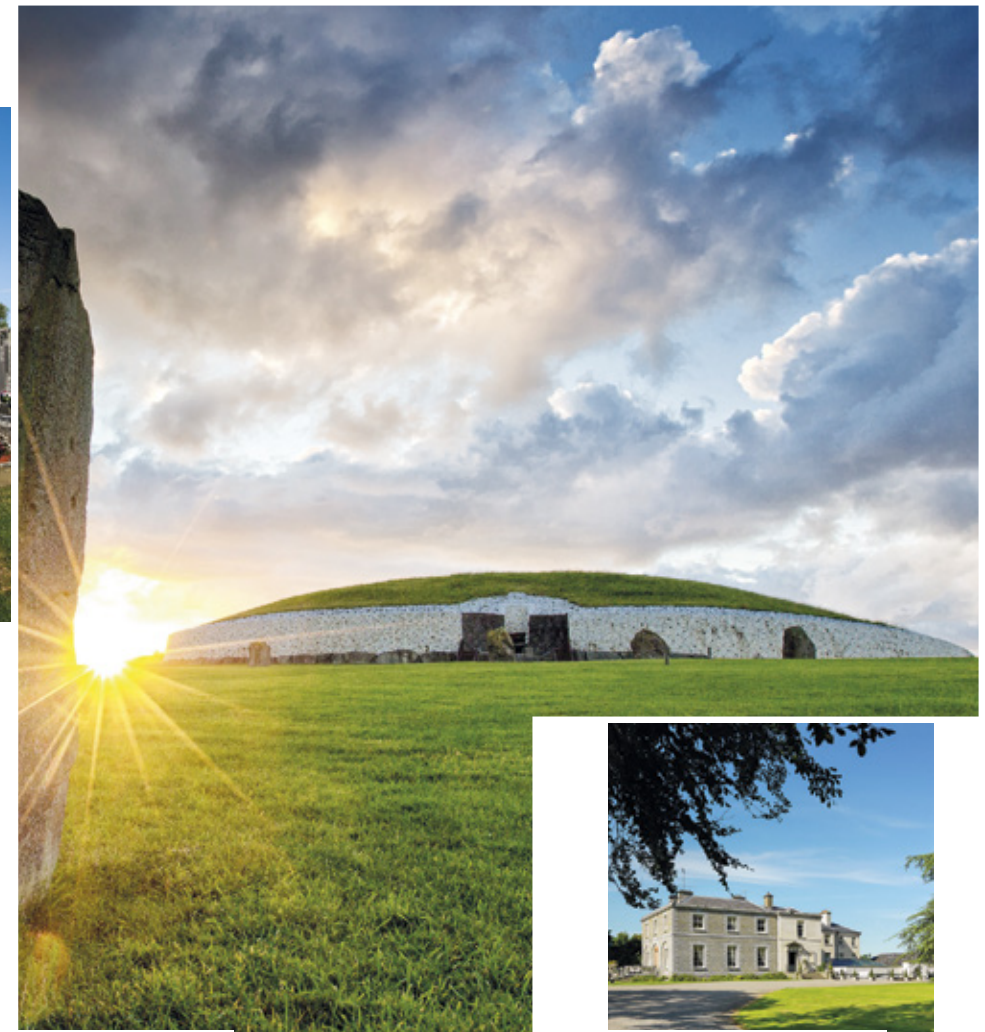
The light creeps slowly along the floor of the stone passageway. I'm in Newgrange; UNESCO World Heritage Site, a passage tomb older than the pyramids, and I'm getting a glimpse of just what happens here on the winter solstice when the rising sun illuminates the burial chamber. It's eerie and extraordinary, and it leaves you feeling that you can just reach out and touch history.

But then, this is the Boyne Valley, and you *can* actually reach out and touch history here. At 225km, it's quite an easy drive (and a nice one to cycle) but with 29 historic sites along the way, it's a journey rich with heritage. Just look around you and you'll see the legacy of every big player in Ireland's history, from ancient pagans to High Kings, Early Christian monks to Vikings, and Normans to Anglo-Irish aristocrats.

So far I've climbed past bemused sheep to reach the top of the Hill of Ward, near Athboy, site of an Iron Age fort, and the place where the wild, pagan festival of Samhain or Halloween was celebrated. To this day, pagans congregate on Tlachtga (to give the hill its Irish name) to celebrate the Celtic new year. According to the locals, it's quite a spectacle.

I've seen the massive stone crosses at Monasterboice, Mellifont Abbey and Kells, and wondered just how the monks who lived in these Early Christian settlements managed to clamour into the round towers carrying all their valuables when the doorways are a good 3.5m off the ground. One can only assume that pursuit by a marauding Viking adds a spring to one's step.

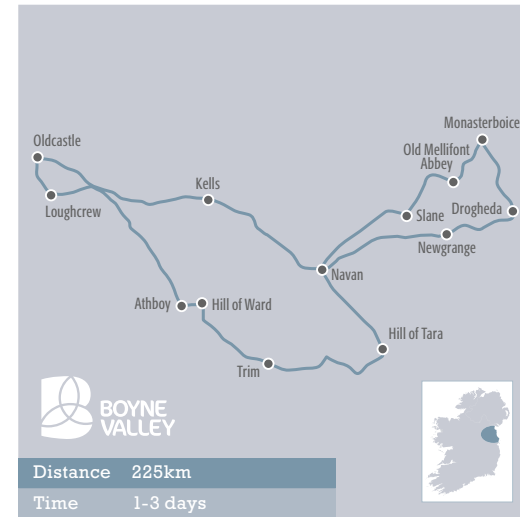
I've wandered through stately homes and heard tales of their scandalous



Newgrange, County Meath



Tankardstown House, County Meath



Distance 225km
Time 1-3 days

Along the way

Visit
Trim Castle is a 12th century Anglo-Norman stronghold and star of Mel Gibson's *Braveheart*. The Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre in the elegant Georgian **Oldbridge House** near Slane is fascinating; or visit **Loughcrew** near Oldcastle, a megalithic cemetery containing around 30 passage tombs.

Eat
Tankardstown House near Navan offers everything from afternoon tea to a seven-course tasting menu. **The Forge** in Carnaross serves the best local produce in a converted 18th century forge (naturally); and in **George's Patisserie** in Slane you'll find some of the best pastries and cakes you'll ever taste.

Sleep
Enjoy quirky luxury in **Bellinter House**, a boutique hotel on the banks of the River Boyne. The quiet elegance of **Rosnaree House** overlooking Newgrange makes for a restful place to stay; or go for cosy quaintness in **Clonleason Gate Lodge**, near Kells, a pretty Georgian cottage nestled in the lush countryside.

histories. The road from Dublin to Slane was said to be one of the straightest in Ireland to ensure King George IV could visit his mistress, Elizabeth, Marchioness Conynham of Slane Castle, without having to slow down for the inconvenient bends.

I finish my day much as I started it – gazing at the sun. It's setting this time, and from my vantage point on top of the Hill of Tara, I can see for miles. As inspirational panoramas go, I couldn't ask for better.

Blasket Islands, County Kerry



IN SEARCH OF HISTORY

Tracing your ancestry can be one of the most rewarding journeys you ever take. Consultant genealogist John Grenham gives expert advice on how to do it, both before you travel to the island of Ireland, and when you get here



Linen Hall Library, Belfast

If you're thinking about embarking on a journey back to your past, the news is good: genealogy in Ireland is quite straightforward. And with more and more records now easily searchable online, there's no excuse for not starting.

The only cast-iron rule is that you begin from what you know and use it to find out what you don't know. So if your surname is Kelly, do not presume that you must be connected to the Gaelic aristocrats, the O'Kellys of Uí Máine, and then try to stretch their pedigree forward to fit your family. Start from Grandpa Pat Kelly and work backwards. "Interview the elder members of your family," advises historian Turtle Bunbury. "Gather whatever information you can, irrespective of quality. A detail that may seem trivial at the start could prove the key to a whole episode."

It is true that the Public Record Office

Dunbrody Famine Ship, New Ross, County Wexford



in Dublin was destroyed during the Irish Civil War in 1922, and all the documents it held were burned, but with a little effort (and some rose-tinted spectacles), the glass can be half-full: the range of records you have to think about is all the simpler.

Only four sets of records are absolutely essential for everyone doing Irish research: census returns; state registration of births, marriages and deaths; church registers; and property tax listings.

Censuses

The earliest surviving full censuses for the entire island of Ireland are for 1901 and 1911 and they are freely searchable online at genealogy.nationalarchives.ie. For the descendants of the millions who fled Ireland during the Great Famine of 1845-1852 or immediately afterwards, these censuses might seem too late. But everyone who emigrated left behind a network of extended family, and that network almost certainly survived in some form up to the start of the 20th century. So start with the online censuses; at the very least, they will give you a sense of the scale of the research. And they are simple and addictive to use: every item on every household census return is searchable.

Vital records

State registration of all Irish births, deaths and marriages began in 1864, under the charge of the General Register Office. In theory at least, every event after that year is recorded. Again, 1864 can seem very late, but these records are indexed for the whole island and can be extremely informative. If you have to start with a grandnephew of your direct line and work back, so be it.

The only place to search all pre-1922 records is in the GRO Research Room in Werburgh Street in Dublin.



PRONI, Belfast

Online research is still a little fragmented, but there are some very useful sites. For Northern Ireland, all registered events going back to 1864 are fully searchable for a small fee at geni.nidirect.gov.uk. The GRO indexes (but not the registers) for the entire island up to 1922, and the Republic of Ireland up to 1958, are transcribed and free to search on familysearch.org. Familysearch.org also has transcripts of the birth registers up to 1881. Rootsireland.ie has excellent pay-per-view transcripts of the registers up to 1900, but only for some counties.

Church registers

The three major Christian denominations in Ireland are Roman Catholicism, Church of Ireland and Presbyterianism.

The Church of Ireland (in North America the Episcopalian Church) was the "established" or state church in Ireland until 1870. This meant that its pre-1870 records were regarded as state or public records, so most Church of Ireland registers dating from before 1870 were in the Public Record Office in 1922 and were destroyed. However, not everything was



Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin

lost and many transcripts of those that were destroyed have since emerged. The best collections are in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast (for the historic nine counties of Ulster) – proni.gov.uk, and the Representative Church Body Library (for the Republic of Ireland) – ireland.anglican.org

Presbyterians have only ever made up a sizeable portion of the population in the northeast Ulster corner of the island, but before partition in 1922 there were many congregations scattered throughout Ireland. When both of the states created in that year took on clearer religious identities, many of these southern congregations withered away. In general, their records ended up in PRONI in Belfast.

A large majority of the population (more than 80%) belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, and Roman Catholic records are the single most important

The only cast-iron rule with Irish genealogy is that you begin with what you know, and use it to find out what you don't. Start from Grandpa Pat Kelly, and work backwards

source of family information before the start of civil registration in 1864. The National Library of Ireland on Kildare Street, Dublin, has microfilm copies of almost all surviving Catholic registers before 1880 and these are freely searchable by anyone on a walk-in basis.

A good selection of online copies of Church records is available, though scattered over a number of different websites including rootsireland.ie; irishgenealogy.ie and ancestry.com >

Further resources

Ireland Family History on Facebook

This page holds expert sessions and enables you to connect with a community of people embarking on the journey. [Facebook.com/IrelandFamilyHistory](https://www.facebook.com/IrelandFamilyHistory)

Ireland Reaching Out

This volunteer-led research project will connect you with distant relatives at the parish level. irelandxo.com

National Library and National Archives

Both have excellent free, walk-in advisory services, while you can search census records of 1901 and 1911 online at the National Archives website. nli.ie and census.nationalarchives.ie

The Irish Times

The last name search on this website is a gem of a resource. irishtimes.com/ancestor

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) and General Register Office for Northern Ireland (GRONI)

All public records from Northern Ireland are stored at PRONI. There's a huge range of material including records of historical, social and cultural importance that can be accessed for free. GRONI, meanwhile, registers all births, deaths, marriages and adoptions in Northern Ireland. proni.gov.uk; nidirect.gov.uk; gen.nidirect.gov.uk

Ulster Historical Foundation

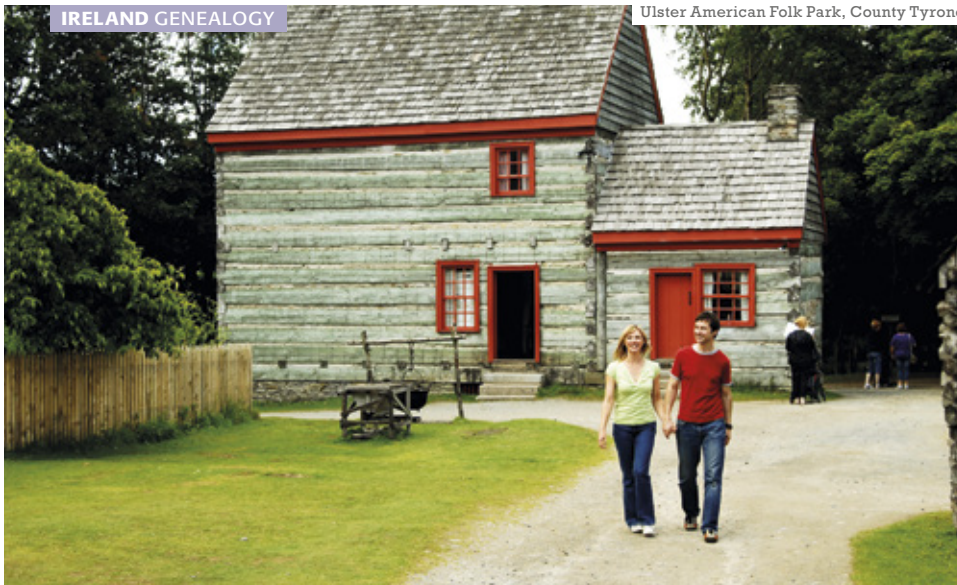
This family history research foundation has been helping people trace their Scots-Irish and Irish roots for more than 50 years. There are over 200 family records, as well as a free Ulster-Scots app. ancestryireland.com

Military archives

A diverse body of information for the Republic of Ireland is held on this site. militaryarchives.ie

County Genealogy Centres

Many counties in Ireland boast their own county genealogy centre and the level of local knowledge there can be useful. There's a list of the individual centres on rootsireland.ie



Property taxes

The only all-inclusive record of who was living where in 19th century Ireland is Griffith's Valuation, a county-by-county listing taken between 1847 and 1864 in order to impose a property tax. From the humblest mud-walled cabin to the grandest of Georgian mansions, every single property on the island is listed, along with the name of its occupier.

An earlier tax survey, which was much less comprehensive, is found in the National Archives of Ireland's Tithe Books. Tithes were payable by all rural dwellers, regardless of religion, to the local Church of Ireland clergy. This was not a recipe for inter-faith harmony, but the assessments drawn up between 1824 and 1838 are very often the only surviving records from the period.

Griffith's and the Tithe Books are both free to search online, Griffith's at askaboutireland.ie and the Tithes at genealogy.nationalarchives.ie

From the humblest mud-walled cabin to the grandest Georgian mansion, every single property on the island is listed in Griffith's Valuation (1847-1864) along with the name of its occupier

Along the way

As a general rule, the limit for research is the start date of the relevant parish registers. This varies, with records beginning in the late 1700s in Dublin and some of the more prosperous parts of the east of Ireland, but not until the 1840s or 1850s in many places in the west.

The glory of family history is that families don't obey the laws of history or statistics, so there's always an element of surprise – you can't say what you might find until you start looking. Good luck!



Cobh, County Cork

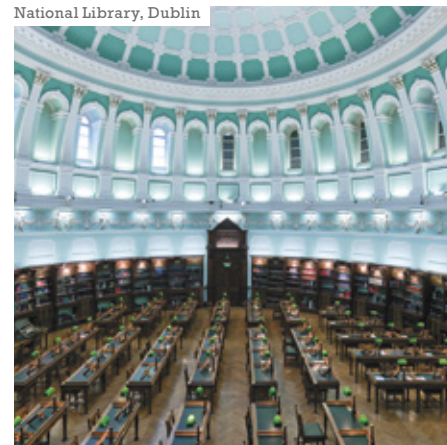
Did you know?

In 1841, the population of Ireland was 8.25 million. By 1861, it was less than 6 million. Over those 20 years, more than a million died and more than a million fled the island.

It's believed that 30% of the Australian population can claim some degree of Irish ancestry.

According to the Ulster Scots Agency, 17 of the 44 US presidents have Ulster-Scots ancestry.

National Library, Dublin



Ancestry experiences
Where to visit

National Library (Kildare Street, Dublin 2; nli.ie) and **National Archives** (Bishop Street, Dublin 8; nationalarchives.ie) in Dublin are the two major record repositories. Both provide walk-in genealogical advisory services. While at the National Library, make sure to visit the very beautiful Reading Room, with its impressive grand domed ceiling.

For a sense of how the Great Famine impacted on Irish communities, the **Irish National Famine Museum** (Strokestown, County Roscommon; strokestownpark.ie) is unmatched.

The Country Life National Museum of Ireland (Turlough, County Mayo; museum.ie) vividly represents and celebrates traditional rural life in Ireland.

Cobh, County Cork (formerly Queenstown), was the main point of embarkation for Irish emigrants to North America in the late 19th century. **The Cobh Heritage Centre** (cobheritage.com) tells their story with a unique multimedia experience in the town's restored Victorian railway station.

It can be hard for us today to grasp just what our emigrant ancestors had to endure. **Dunbrody Famine Ship** (New Ross, County Wexford; dunbrody.com) hosts a uniquely hands-on interpretation of the Famine emigrant experience.

The Ulster American Folk Park (Omagh, County Tyrone; nmni.com) follows the Irish emigrant story from the cottages of Ulster to the log cabins of the American Frontier. It's a fascinating journey.

The Jeanie Johnston (jeaniejohnston.com) was a three-mast sailing ship that made 16 transatlantic voyages carrying emigrants between 1847 and 1854. A fully working replica is docked at Dublin's Custom House Quay and is one of the city's most popular attractions.

Glasnevin Cemetery (Finglas Road, Dublin 11; glasnevintrust.ie) holds burial records for 1.5 million people. Its award-winning museum tells their story and holds a Genealogy Research Centre.



For further information please contact
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Unit 20, Lakeside Retail Park,
Claremorris, Co. Mayo, Ireland
Tel: +353 1 6476000
email: info@heritageireland.ie



For further information on the OPW Heritage Card please contact Tel: +353 1 6476592
email: heritagecard@opw.ie

Images courtesy
Dept of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht

Visit Ireland's Heritage Sites



Aughnanure Castle, Oughterard, Co. Galway



Cahir Castle, Castle Street, Cahir, Co. Tipperary



Charles Fort, Summer Cove, Kinsale, Co. Cork



Donegal Castle, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal



Dunmore Cave, Castlecomer Road, Kilkenny



Reginald's Tower, The Quay, Waterford

Full details www.heritageireland.ie



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CONTENTS

-  42 GENERAL INFORMATION & KEY TRAVEL FACTS
-  44 TRAVELLING TO IRELAND BY AIR
-  46 TRAVELLING TO IRELAND BY SEA
-  48 AUSTRALIA TOUR OPERATORS
-  49 NEW ZEALAND TOUR OPERATORS
-  50 TRAVELLING AROUND IRELAND
-  51 MAP OF IRELAND



IRELAND GENERAL INFORMATION & KEY TRAVEL FACTS

PASSPORT/VISA REQUIREMENTS

Australia and New Zealand citizens are simply required to show a valid passport. If you wish to work in Ireland, you may apply for an authorisation permit to do so. However, there are certain criteria you will need to meet for a permit to be considered and strict rules apply. Working permits must be granted prior to arrival in Ireland.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Embassy of Ireland – Australia

20 Arkana Street, Yarralumla, ACT 2600
Tel: (02) 6273 3022
Email: canberraembassy@dfa.ie

The Consulate General of Ireland – Sydney

Level 26, 1 Market Street, Sydney NSW 2000
Tel: (02) 9264 9635; Fax: (02) 9264 9740
Email: sydneycongen@dfa.ie

The British High Commission – Australia

Commonwealth Avenue, Yarralumla, ACT 2600
Tel: (02) 6270 6666
gov.uk/government/world/australia

Consulate General of Ireland – New Zealand

Level 3, Tower One, 205 Queen Street, Auckland City 1140
Tel: (09) 977 2252
Email: consul@ireland.co.nz
ireland.co.nz

The British High Commission – New Zealand

44 Hill Street, Thorndon, Wellington 6011
Tel: (04) 924 2888
gov.uk/government/world/new-zealand

VISITORS WITH DISABILITIES

Ireland extends a warm welcome to visitors with disabilities. Australian & New Zealand Disability Parking Permits can be used in Ireland and allow parking in areas reserved for people with disabilities, or longer parking periods or exemption from charges. Many public places and visitor attractions are accessible to wheelchair users, and an increasing number of hotels and restaurants are well equipped to accommodate guests who have any kind of disability.

Useful contacts include:

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

National Disability Authority

Tel: +353 1 608 0400; nda.ie

NORTHERN IRELAND

Adapt NI

Tel: +44 28 9023 1211; adaptni.org

Disability Action

Tel: +44 28 9029 7880; disabilityaction.org

CURRENCY

The euro is the currency of the Republic of Ireland. One euro (€) consists of 100 cent. In Northern Ireland, the currency is pound sterling (£). There are 100 pence to each pound sterling.

ELECTRIC CURRENT

The standard electricity supply on the island of Ireland is 230 volts AC, the same as in the UK. Visitors from elsewhere may require a transformer and plug adaptor (to convert 2-pin plugs to the standard 3-pin plugs), which can be bought at airports or electrical suppliers.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 2015

New Year's Day Holiday	1 Jan
St Patrick's Day Holiday	17 Mar
Good Friday (NI only)	3 Apr
Easter Monday	6 Apr
May Bank Holiday	4 May
Spring Bank Holiday (NI only)	25 May
June Bank Holiday (ROI only)	1 June
July Holiday (NI only)	13 July
August Bank Holiday (ROI only)	3 Aug
August Bank Holiday (NI only)	31 Aug
Oct Bank Holiday (ROI only)	26 Oct
Christmas Day	25 Dec
St Stephen's Day (ROI)/Boxing Day (NI)	28 Dec

Good Friday is not an official public holiday in the Republic of Ireland, although most shops and businesses, and all pubs, are closed.



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Book online at www.malahidecastleandgardens.ie
or call + 353 1 8169538

On Ireland's West Coast visit Bunnratty Castle & Folk Park, King John's Castle and other great attractions!



www.shannonheritage.com 

Discover Lough Derg Lakelands

Experience the hidden treasures of Lough Derg Lakelands. Located between counties Clare, Tipperary and Galway in the Mid-West of Ireland, Lough Derg is an area of scenic beauty, full of character and adventure!

Lough Derg Lakelands has everything you need for a break away – heritage, culture, water & land activities, food, music and a friendly welcome.

Just 50km from Shannon International Airport, Lough Derg Lakelands awaits you!

 www.discoverloughderg.ie 



TRAVELLING TO IRELAND BY AIR

AIRPORTS

The island of Ireland is easily accessible by air, with over 30 airlines flying routes from more than 70 destinations to Ireland's international and regional airports. Both Emirates and Etihad offer one-stop services with direct access to Ireland from Australia, via the Middle East (Emirates offering two-stop services from New Zealand). Both airlines also operate codeshare partnerships with Emirates/Qantas and Etihad Airways with Virgin Australia and a number of other partners, offering a wide choice of one-stop services from Australia (and two-stops from New Zealand). A large number of airlines offer fares to Dublin as a continuation of their one-stop services to the UK and continental Europe. "Open-jaw" airfares are also commonly available (i.e. fly into London and out of Dublin or vice versa, or fly into Paris and out of Dublin or vice versa). From Auckland, travellers can fly to Dublin via San Francisco with Air New Zealand and Aer Lingus.

AIRLINE CONTACT DETAILS

AUSTRALIA

AIRLINE	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Aer Lingus	1300 304 016	aerlingus.com
Air France	1300 390 190	airfrance.com/au
Austrian Airlines	1300 655 727	austrian.com
British Airways	1300 767 177	britishairways.com.au
Cathay Pacific	131 747	cathaypacific.com.au
Emirates	1300 303 777	emirates.com
Etihad Airways	1800 998 995	etihadairways.com
Finnair	1300 132 944	finnair.com/au
Japan Airlines	1800 802 228	au.jal.com
KLM Royal Dutch Airlines	1300 392 192	klm.com.au
Lufthansa	1300 655 727	lufthansa.com
Malaysia Airlines	132 627	malaysiaairlines.com.au
Qantas Airways	131 313	qantas.com.au
Scandinavian Airlines	1300 727 707	flysas.com
Singapore Airlines	131 011	singaporeair.com.au
Thai Airways International	1300 651 960	thaiairways.com.au
Virgin Atlantic	1300 727 340	virginatlantic.com.au
Virgin Australia	136 789	virginaustralia.com.au

NEW ZEALAND

AIRLINE	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Aer Lingus	(09) 308 3351	aerlingus.com
Air France KLM	(09) 921 6040	klm.com/home/nz/en
Air New Zealand	0800 737 000	airnewzealand.co.nz
Austrian Airlines	0800 945 220	austrian.com
British Airways	(09) 966 9777	ba.com
Cathay Pacific	0800 800 454	cathaypacific.co.nz
Emirates	0508 352 436	emirates.com/nz
Etihad Airways	(09) 977 2207	etihadairways.com
Finnair	-	finnair.com
Lufthansa & Swiss	0800 945 220	lufthansa.com/swiss.com
Malaysia Airlines	0800 777 747	malaysiaairlines.com
Qantas Airways	0800 808 767	qantas.co.nz
Scandinavian Airlines	(09) 977 2214	flysas.com
Singapore Airlines	0800 808 909	singaporeair.com
Thai Airways International	0800 100 992	thaiairways.co.nz
Virgin Australia	0800 670 000	virginaustralia.com

REGIONAL AIRPORTS

The following internal flights are available within Ireland:

DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Dublin	Donegal	Flybe operated by Loganair	+44 139 268 3152	flybe.com
	Kerry	Aer Lingus Regional	+353 818 365 000	aerlingus.com



EUROPEAN

AIRLINE	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Aer Lingus	+44 871 718 5000	aerlingus.com
British Airways	+44 844 493 0787	britishairways.com
CityJet	+44 871 666 5050	cityjet.com
Citywing	+44 871 200 0440	citywing.com
easyJet	+44 843 104 5454	easyjet.com
Finnair	+358 600 140 140	finnair.com
Flybe	+44 139 268 3152	flybe.com
Linksair	+44 844 800 2411	linksair.co.uk
Loganair	+44 371 700 2000	loganair.co.uk
Ryanair	+44 871 246 0002	ryanair.com

TRAVELLING FROM DUBLIN AND BELFAST AIRPORTS INTO CITY CENTRES

DUBLIN

On arrival in Dublin Airport, you can take a bus or a taxi into Dublin city centre. Buses and taxis are located just outside the arrivals hall. Dublin Airport is north of the city so a taxi to the north side will normally be cheaper than one to the south side. Dublin Bus Airlink operates direct buses to the city centre, bus and train stations; €6* single and €10* return. Children travel half price.

BELFAST

Belfast International Airport
Belfast city centre is just 29km from the airport and can be accessed by bus and taxi. Airport Express 300 now

operates a 24-hour service between the airport and the city centre with buses departing regularly throughout the day; £7.50* single and £10.50* return. The bus leaves from the bus stop located opposite the terminal exit. A taxi fare to the city centre is approximately £30*.
George Best Belfast City Airport
Airport Express 600 into the city centre runs on the hour (every 20 minutes during peak time); £2.40* single and £3.60* return. Taxi fare to the city is approximately £10*. Trains run from adjacent Sydenham station to Belfast and beyond.

*Prices are subject to change.

AIR ROUTES

DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE
Aberdeen	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
Birmingham	Belfast International	easyJet
	Cork	Aer Lingus
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Flybe
	Shannon	Aer Lingus Regional
	Waterford	Flybe
Blackpool	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional
Bournemouth	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional
Bristol	Belfast International	easyJet
	Cork	Aer Lingus Regional
	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Ryanair
	Shannon	Aer Lingus Regional
Cardiff	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
Doncaster Sheffield	George Best Belfast City	Linksair
East Midlands Nottingham	Cork	Ryanair
	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Ryanair
Edinburgh	Belfast International	easyJet
	Cork	Aer Lingus Regional
	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Flybe, Ryanair
	Shannon	Aer Lingus Regional
Exeter	Dublin	Flybe
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
Glasgow International	Belfast International	easyJet
	City of Derry	Ryanair
	Cork	Aer Lingus Regional
	Donegal	Flybe/Loganair
	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
	Shannon	Flybe
Glasgow Prestwick	Ireland West Airport Knock	Ryanair
Inverness	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
Isle of Man	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional
	George Best Belfast City	Citywing
Jersey	Belfast International	easyJet
	Cork	Aer Lingus Regional
	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
Leeds Bradford	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
Liverpool	Belfast International	easyJet
	City of Derry	Ryanair
	Cork	Ryanair
	Dublin	Ryanair
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Ryanair
	Shannon	Ryanair
London City	Belfast International	Flybe
	Dublin	British Airways, CityJet, Flybe



DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE
London Gatwick	Belfast International	easyJet
	Cork	Ryanair
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
	George Best Belfast City	Aer Lingus
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Aer Lingus
	Shannon	Ryanair
London Heathrow	Cork	Aer Lingus
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, British Airways
	George Best Belfast City	British Airways
	Shannon	Aer Lingus
London Luton	Belfast International	easyJet
	Dublin	Ryanair
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Ryanair
	Kerry	Ryanair
London Southend	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional
	Belfast International	easyJet
London Stansted	Belfast International	easyJet
	City of Derry	Ryanair
	Cork	Ryanair
	Dublin	Ryanair
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Ryanair
	Kerry	Ryanair
	Shannon	Ryanair
Manchester	Belfast International	easyJet
	Cork	Aer Lingus Regional
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Flybe
	Shannon	Aer Lingus Regional
	Waterford	Flybe
Newcastle	Belfast International	easyJet
	Cork	Aer Lingus Regional
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
Newquay	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
Southampton	Dublin	Flybe
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe

All direct routes/information correct at time of going to press but may be subject to future operator changes. Airlines may also operate connecting/change codesharing and operator franchise agreements. Please see websites for details as routes may be subject to change. Calls to airlines may incur local or national call charges.



TRAVELLING TO IRELAND BY SEA

FERRY PORTS

The island of Ireland has 6 main ferry ports – Belfast, Cork, Dublin, Dun Laoghaire, Larne and Rosslare.



SEA ROUTES

DEPART	ARRIVE	CARRIER	VESSEL	DURATION
Cairnryan	Larne	P&O Ferries	Express Superferry	1hr 1hr 45mins
	Belfast	Stena Line	Superfast VII/VIII	2hrs 15mins
Fishguard	Rosslare	Stena Line	Stena Express Superferry	2hrs 3hrs 30mins
Holyhead	Dublin	Irish Ferries	Cruise Ferry	3hrs 15mins
		Irish Ferries	Dublin Swift	1hr 49mins
	Stena Line	Superferry	3hrs 15mins	
	Dun Laoghaire	Stena Line	HSS Fast Craft	2hrs
Isle of Man	Belfast	Steam Packet Company	Fastcraft	2hrs 55mins
	Dublin	Steam Packet Company	Fastcraft	2hrs 55mins
Liverpool	Dublin	P&O Ferries	Irish Sea Ferry	7hrs 30mins
Liverpool (Birkenhead)	Belfast	Stena Line	Stena Lagan	8hrs
			Stena Mersey	8hrs
Pembroke	Rosslare	Irish Ferries	Cruise Ferry	3hrs 45mins
Troon*	Larne	P&O Ferries	Fastcraft	1hr 49mins

* Mar-Oct. All information correct at time of going to press.

FERRY AND COACH OPERATORS CONTACT DETAILS

FERRY COMPANY	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Irish Ferries	+44 871 730 0400	irishferries.com
P&O Ferries	+44 871 702 3477	poferies.com
Steam Packet Company	+44 872 299 2992	steam-packet.com
Stena Line	+44 844 770 7070	stenaline.co.uk
Eurolines	+44 871 781 8181	eurolines.co.uk

* All direct routes/information correct at time of going to press but may be subject to future operator changes. Please see websites for details. Calls to operators may incur local or national call charges.

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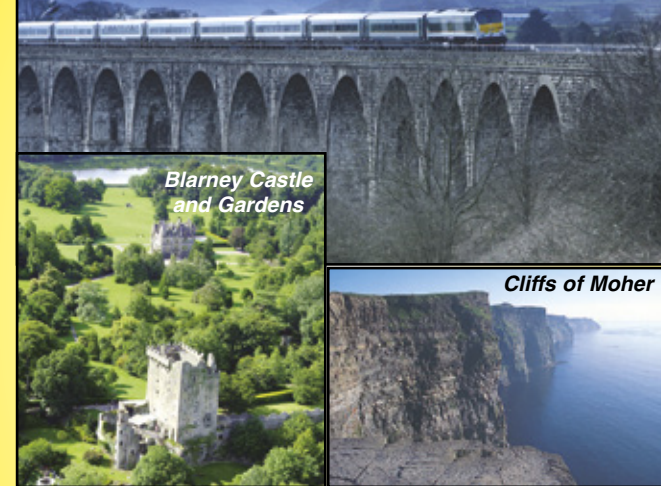
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GO RACING IN IRELAND 2015

Wherever you are in Ireland, you're never far from a race meeting and if you want to understand one of our country's great passions and meet the Irish at play, choose from over 300 race meetings at any of the 26 racecourses around the country and have a day you'll always remember.



2015 RACING FESTIVALS

- LEOPARDSTOWN BHP Irish Champions Hurdle**
25th January
- CORK Easter Festival**
4th - 6th April
- FAIRYHOUSE Easter Festival**
5th - 7th April
- PUNCESTOWN National Hunt Festival**
28th April - 2nd May
- KILLARNEY Spring Festival**
10th - 12th May
- CURRAGH Guinness Festival**
23rd - 24th May
- CURRAGH Irish Derby Festival**
26th - 28th June
- BELLEWSTOWN July Festival**
2nd - 4th July
- KILLARNEY July Festival**
13th - 16th July
- GALWAY Summer Festival**
27th July - 2nd August
- TRAMORE August Festival**
13th - 16th August
- KILLARNEY August Festival**
19th - 22nd August
- LEOPARDSTOWN & CURRAGH Irish Champions Weekend**
12th - 13th September
- LISTOWEL Harvest Festival**
13th - 19th September
- DOWN ROYAL Northern Ireland Festival of Racing**
30th - 31st October
- FAIRYHOUSE Premier Jumps Weekend**
28th - 29th November
- LEOPARDSTOWN Christmas Festival**
26th - 29th December
- LIMERICK Christmas Festival**
26th - 29th December



HORSE RACING IRELAND

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facebook.com/goracing twitter.com/@goracing goracing.ie



best advice is simply "don't drink and drive". There is barrier-free tolling on certain motorways in the Republic of Ireland – visit eflow.ie for more information.

SPEED LIMITS

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Speed limits are in kilometres per hour km/h.

Towns and cities: 50

Regional/country roads (displayed by white signs): 80

National roads (displayed by green signs): 100

Motorways (displayed by blue signs): 120

Special speed limits: 30 and 60

NORTHERN IRELAND

Speed limits are in miles per hour mph.

Towns and cities: 30

Regional/country roads: 60

Motorways: 70

Don't forget the change in driving laws when you cross the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

RENTING A CAR

You'll find car hire companies in airports, ferry ports, and sometimes in train and bus terminals. In many cases, the car hire company will have a city-centre base. Most rental cars are standard shift but automatic cars are available for an additional charge, if you book them in advance. Child seats should also be booked in advance.

For insurance reasons you should advise the car rental company if you intend travelling between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

It is also recommended that you check the detailed terms and conditions of your rental booking in advance. Even if you book through a third party (broker, agent, tour operator), you will be required to sign a rental agreement with the car rental company, so spend some time in advance selecting the various insurances, waivers and other options appropriate to your needs and understanding the costs involved.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Car Rental Council

carrentalcouncil.ie

NORTHERN IRELAND

British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association

bvrla.co.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND

Translink (Northern Ireland Railways, Ulsterbus, Metro – Belfast's bus service)

Tel: +44 28 9066 6630; translink.co.uk

BIKE

If you are travelling around Dublin, the Dublin Bike Sharing Scheme is a good option. dublinbikes.ie Cork, Galway, Limerick and Belfast (from February 2015) also have bike schemes. ireland.com

INLAND FERRIES AND ISLAND BOAT SERVICES

Whether you're visiting the offshore islands or travelling around the island, the ferry is a fun way to get around. Just make sure you check out timetables in advance, and again before travelling, since changes in the weather can affect services. Ferries are operated by different providers; for more details log onto ireland.com

DRIVING

If you're planning to drive in Ireland, bring a valid national driving licence with you. You are legally required to carry your driving licence with you at all times when driving in the Republic of Ireland.

Driving in Ireland is on the left and seatbelts must be worn at all times, in the front and back of the vehicle. Motorcyclists and their passengers must wear helmets. There are very strict laws on drinking and driving and the

TRAVELLING AROUND IRELAND

BUS AND RAIL

The island of Ireland has a comprehensive bus and rail system that links towns and cities, as well as ferry ports and airports. A selection of private coach services also operate between the main airports and cities all over the island.

DART:

The Dart (Dublin Area Rapid Transit) rail line runs along the Dublin coast; from Howth and Malahide in north County Dublin to Greystones in County Wicklow, via the city centre and Dun Laoghaire.

LUAS:

The Luas light rail services the south and west of Dublin city, including the city centre.

There are various discount tickets available, giving unlimited travel on bus and rail services, which offer good value for travellers. The Leap Visitor card offers 72 hours unlimited travel on Airlink, Dublin Bus, Luas, DART and Commuter Rail services. It is available for purchase at Dublin Airport only, and costs €19.50 for 72 hours. For more details on getting around the island of Ireland, visit ireland.com

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Irish Rail – Iarnród Éireann

Tel: +353 1 836 6222; irishrail.ie

Irish Bus – Bus Éireann

Tel: +353 1 836 6111; buseireann.ie

Dublin Bus – Bus Átha Cliath

Tel: +353 1 873 4222; dublinbus.ie

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MAP & ROUTE MILEAGE PLANNER

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- Motorway
- Primary road
- Secondary road
- Mainline Train
- Ferry
- Airport
- Tourist Information (Year round)
- Tourist Information (Seasonal)
- Beach

Available on the App Store

To view or download a copy of the 'Great Irish Road Trips' guide, visit ireland.com

Our free Great Irish Road Trips app is available on the App Store: now there really is no such thing as a wrong turn in Ireland!

0 20 40 60 80km
0 10 20 30 40 50miles

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Distances to Waterford:
Dublin 1 hr 45 mins
Cork 1 hr 30 mins
Shannon 2 hrs 20 mins
Belfast 3 hrs 30 mins



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