



Ireland

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Why Go?

Few countries have an image so plagued by cliché. From shamrocks and shillelaghs to leprechauns and lovable rogues, there's a plethora of platitudes to wade through before you scramble ashore on the real Ireland.

But it's well worth looking beyond the tourist tat, for the Emerald Isle is one of Europe's gems, a scenic extravaganza of lake, mountain, sea and sky. From wind-lashed Donegal to picture-postcard County Cork, there are countless opportunities to get outdoors and explore, whether surfing the beach breaks of Bundoran, cycling the coast of Antrim or hiking the hills of Kerry and Connemara.

There are cultural pleasures too in the land of Joyce and Yeats, U2 and the Undertones. Dublin, Cork and Belfast all have party-on pubs and foot-stomping live-music scenes, while you can enjoy traditional music in the bars of Galway, Doolin and Killarney. So push aside the shamrocks and experience the real Ireland.

When to Go

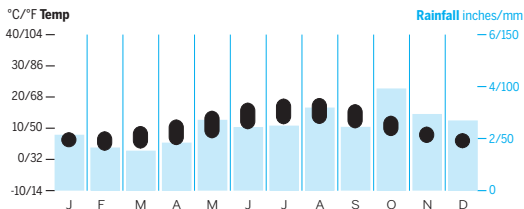
Best Places to Eat

- » Farmgate Café, Cork (p657)
- » L'Gueuleton, Dublin (p651)
- » Winding Stair, Dublin (p651)
- » Café Sol, Kilkenny (p656)
- » Vanilla Pod, Killarney (p660)

Best Places to Stay

- » Isaacs Hostel, Dublin (p650)
- » Garnish House, Cork (p659)
- » Kinlay House, Galway (p662)
- » Saddler's House, Derry (p674)

Dublin



Late Mar Spring is under way, landscape is 40 shades of green, St Patrick's Day beckons.

Jun Best chance of dry weather, long summer evenings, Bloomsday in Dublin.

Sep-Oct Crowds have thinned, autumn colours the countryside, surf's up on the west coast.

AT A GLANCE

» **Currency** Euro (€) in Republic of Ireland, pound (£) in Northern Ireland

» **Languages** English, Irish Gaelic

» **Money** ATMs widespread; credit cards widely accepted

» **Visas** Non-Schengen rules (see p678)

Fast Facts

» **Area** 84,421 sq km

» **Capitals** Dublin (Republic of Ireland), Belfast (Northern Ireland)

» **Country codes** Republic of Ireland ☎353, Northern Ireland ☎44

» **Emergency** ☎112

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.74/ UK£0.65
Canada	C\$1	€0.74/ UK£0.63
euro zone	€1	€1/ UK£0.87
Japan	¥100	€0.87/ UK£0.76
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.56/ UK£0.49
UK	UK£1	€1.16/-
USA	US\$1	€0.72/ UK£0.62

Set Your Budget

» **Budget hotel room** €60/£75

» **Two-course evening meal** €25/£25

» **Museum entrance** free

» **Pint of beer** €4-
€5/£2.50

Connections

Ireland is just about as far west as you can go in Europe – next stop, North America. But the Emerald Isle can serve as a stepping stone between mainland Europe and the UK. Ferry services run from Roscoff and Cherbourg in northern France to Rosslare (near Wexford) in southeast Ireland, from where you can continue your trip from Dublin to Wales, or from Belfast or Larne to Scotland or the Isle of Man. For more info, see p679.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Spend a couple of days in Dublin ambling through the excellent national museums and gorging yourself on Guinness and good company in Temple Bar. Get medieval in Kilkenny before heading on to Cork and discovering why they call it the 'Real Capital'. Meander through lush, idyllic West Cork and take in the friendly spirit and melodious accents of its denizens.

Two Weeks

Follow the one-week itinerary, then make your way from West Cork up to touristy Killarney and the Ring of Kerry on your way to bohemian Galway. Using Galway as your base, go and explore the alluring Aran Islands and the hills of Connemara. Finally, head north to experience the newly optimistic vibe in fast-changing Belfast.

Essential Food & Drink

» **Champ** Northern Irish dish of potatoes mashed with spring onions (scallions).

» **Colcannon** Mashed potato, milk, cabbage and onion fried in butter.

» **Farl** General name for triangular flat bread (often made with mashed potato mixed with flour) common to Northern Ireland and Donegal.

» **Irish stew** Quintessential stew of mutton (preferably lamb), potatoes and onions, flavoured with parsley and thyme and simmered slowly.

» **Soda bread** Wonderful bread, white or brown, sweet or savoury, made from very soft Irish flour and buttermilk.

» **Guinness** Synonymous with stout the world over, but there are two other major producers: Murphy's and Beamish & Crawford, both based in Cork city.

» **Irish whiskey** There are almost 100 different types of Irish whiskey, brewed by only three distilleries – Jameson's, Bushmills and Cooley's. A visit to Ireland reveals a depth of excellence that will make the connoisseur's palate spin, while winning over many new friends to what the Irish call *uisce beatha* (the water of life).