

Welcome to Ireland

A small country with a big reputation, helped along by a breathtaking ancient landscape and fascinating, friendly people, whose lyrical nature is expressed in the warmth of their welcome.

A Scenic Wonderland

Don't think the Ireland of postcards is just a two-dimensional fiction: it very much exists. You'll find it along the peninsulas of the southwest, in the brooding loneliness of Connemara and the dramatic wildness of County Donegal. It can be uncovered in the lakelands of Counties Leitrim and Roscommon and the undulating hills of the sunny southeast ('sunny' of course being a relative term). Brave the raging Atlantic on a crossing to Skellig Michael or spend a summer's evening in the yard of a thatched-cottage pub and you'll experience an Ireland that has changed little in generations.

A Rich Historical Heritage

History presents itself everywhere: from the breathtaking monuments of prehistoric Ireland at Brú na Bóinne, Sleat Head in Kerry and Carrowmore in Sligo, to the fabulous ruins of Ireland's rich monastic past at Glendalough and Clonmacnoise. More recent history is visible in the *Titanic* museum in Cobh and the forbidding Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin. And there's history so young that it's still considered the present, best experienced on a black-taxi tour of West Belfast or an examination of Derry's colourful political murals.

A Cultural Well

You will be overwhelmed by the cultural choices on offer in Ireland – see a play by one of the theatrical greats in Dublin, experience a traditional music 'session' in a west Ireland pub or attend a rock gig in a Limerick saloon. The Irish summer is awash with festivals celebrating everything from flowers in bloom to high literature.

A Warm Welcome

On the plane and along your travels you might hear it said: *tá fáilte romhat* (taw fall-cha row-at) – 'You're very welcome'. Or, more famously, *céad míle fáilte* – a hundred thousand welcomes. Irish friendliness is a tired cliché, an over-simplification of a character that is infinitely complex, but the Irish are nonetheless warm and welcoming. Wherever you meet them there's a good chance a conversation will begin, pleasant-ries will be exchanged and, should you be a stranger in town, the offer of a helping hand extended. But, lest you think this is merely an act of unfettered altruism, rest assured that the comfort they seek is actually their own, for the Irish cannot be at ease in the company of those who aren't. A hundred thousand welcomes. It seems excessive, but in Ireland, excess is encouraged, so long as it's practised in moderation.



Why I Love Ireland

By Fionn Davenport, Writer

There's an unvarnished informality about Ireland that I cherish, based on an implied assumption that life is a tangled, confusing struggle that all of us – irrespective of who we are and how we worship – have to negotiate to the best of our abilities. We're all in this together, come hell or high water, so we may as well be civil and share a moment when we can.

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