

# Ireland

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Farmgate Café (p679)
- » Chapter One (p669)
- » Fishy Fishy Cafe (p684)
- » Ard Bia at Nimmo's (p697)
- » Barking Dog (p709)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Isaacs Hostel (p667)
- » Number 31 (p668)
- » Garnish House (p679)
- » Kinlay House (p669)
- » Old Rectory (p708)

## Why Go?

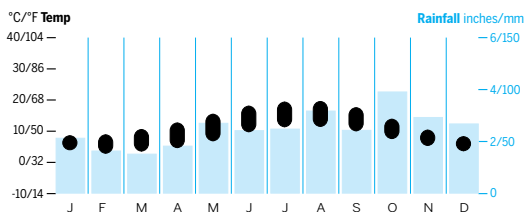
Few countries have an image so plagued by cliché. From shamrocks and shillelaghs (walking sticks) to leprechauns and lovable rogues, there's a plethora of platitudes to wade through before you reach the real Ireland.

But it's well worth looking beyond the tourist tat, for the Emerald Isle is one of Europe's gems, a scenic extravaganza of lakes, mountains, 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

### Dublin



**Late Mar** Spring has sprung, landscape is greening, St Patrick's Day festivities beckon.

**Jun** Best chance of dry weather, long summer evenings; opera in Wexford, Bloomsday in Dublin.

**Sep-Oct** Summer crowds thin, autumn colours reign, surf's up on the west coast.

## AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** euro (€) in Republic of Ireland, pound sterling (£) in Northern Ireland
- » **Languages** English, Irish Gaelic
- » **Money** ATMs widespread
- » **Visas** Schengen rules do not apply.

## Fast Facts

- » **Area** 84,421 sq km
- » **Capitals** Dublin (ROI)/ Belfast (NI)
- » **Country code** 2353 (ROI)/ 244 (NI)
- » **Emergency** 112

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.82/ UK£0.68
Canada	C\$1	€0.77/ UK£0.64
Euro Zone	€1	UK£0.84
Japan	¥100	€0.83/ UK£0.70
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.65/ UK£0.55
UK	UK£1	€1.18
USA	US\$1	€0.78/ UK£0.65

## Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** €60
- » **Two-course meal** €25
- » **Pint of beer** €4–6
- » **Dublin tram ticket** €2–5

## Resources

- » **Faite Ireland** ([www.discoverireland.ie](http://www.discoverireland.ie))
- » **Northern Ireland Tourist Board** ([www.nitb.com](http://www.nitb.com))

## 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. After exploring Ireland you can continue your travels via one of the many ferries linking Ireland with Great Britain: from Rosslare to Fishguard and Pembroke (both in Wales); from Cork to Swansea (Wales); from Dublin or Dun Laoghaire to Holyhead (Wales); from Dublin or Belfast to the Isle of Man and Liverpool (England); from Belfast to Cairnryan (Scotland); and from Larne to Troon (April to October only) or Cairnryan (both Scotland).

You can travel direct by coach (via a ferry crossing) from Dublin or Belfast to London and several other UK cities. Budget airlines fly direct from Dublin and Belfast to London, Cardiff, Edinburgh and other UK destinations.

## 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, 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 mashed potatoes with spring onions (scallions).
- » **Colcannon** Mashed potatoes with cabbage and fried onion.
- » **Farl** Triangular flatbread in Northern Ireland and Donegal.
- » **Irish stew** Lamb stew with potatoes, onions and thyme.
- » **Soda bread** Wonderful bread – white or brown, sweet or savoury – made from very soft Irish flour and buttermilk.
- » **Stout** Dark, almost black beer made with roasted barley; famous brands are Guinness in Dublin, and Murphy's and Beamish & Crawford in Cork.
- » **Irish whiskey** Around 100 different types are produced by only four distilleries: Jameson, Bushmills, Cooley and recently reopened Kilbeggan.