



# IRELAND

TOP SIGHTS, AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

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## Welcome to Ireland

***Ireland may be a small country but it deserves its big reputation: breathtaking landscapes and fascinating, friendly people, whose lyrical nature is expressed in the warmth of their welcome.***

Everything you've heard is true: Ireland is a stunner. The Irish need little prodding to proclaim theirs the most beautiful land in the world, and will support their claim with examples, from the brooding loneliness of Connemara to the world-famous scenery of counties Kerry and Cork. Northern Ireland might be a different country, but it's very much the same land and you'll find its own scenic star turn along the Antrim Coast.

History is everywhere, from the breathtaking prehistoric monuments of Brú na Bóinne to the fabulous ruins of Ireland's rich monastic past at Glendalough and Cashel. More recent history is visible in the Titanic Quarter in Belfast 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.

On the plane and along your travels you might hear it said: *tá Fáilte romhat* – you're very welcome. Or, more famously, *céad míle fáilte* – a hundred thousand welcomes. Irish friendliness is an oversimplification of a character that is infinitely complex, but the Irish are famously warm and welcoming. A hundred thousand welcomes; it seems excessive but, in Ireland, excess is encouraged.

“ *Breathtaking,  
fascinating and friendly.* ”

Connor Pass (p217), County Kerry  
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Christ Church Cathedral (p63), Dublin

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# Plan Your Trip

## Ireland's Top 12

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## Dublin

### *Capital city and the home of Guinness*

Ireland's largest city (p34) by some stretch is the main gateway into the country, and it has enough distractions to keep visitors engaged for at least a few days. From world-class museums and entertainment, superb dining and top-grade hotels, Dublin has all the baubles of a major international metropolis. But the real clinchers are Dubliners themselves, who are friendlier, more easygoing and welcoming than the burghers of virtually any other European capital.

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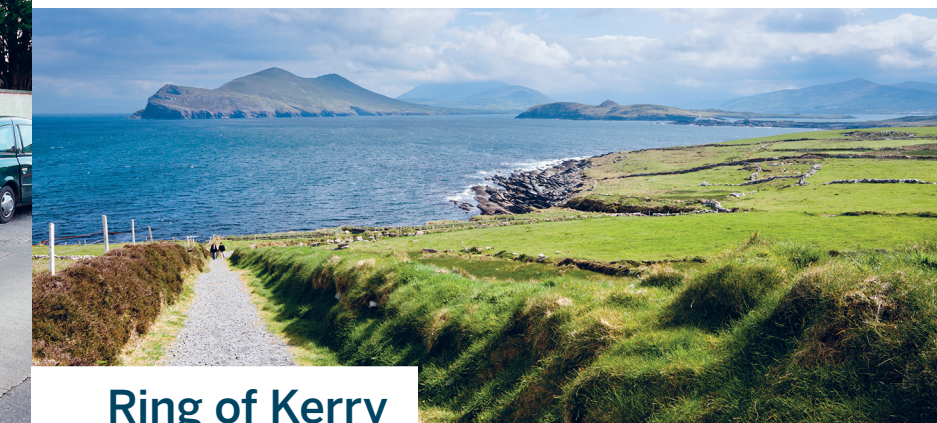
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## Kilkenny City

### *Arts, crafts and medieval monuments*

From its regal castle to its soaring medieval cathedral, Kilkenny (p238) exudes a permanence and culture that makes it an unmissable stop. Its namesake county boasts scores of artisans and craftspeople and you can browse their wares at Kilkenny's boutiques. Chefs eschew Dublin to be close to the source of Kilkenny's wonderful produce and you can enjoy the local brewery's beer at scores of delightful pubs.

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## Ring of Kerry

### *Classic road trip through spectacular scenery*

Driving around the Ring of Kerry (p200) is an unforgettable experience, but you don't need to limit yourself to the main route – there are countless opportunities for detours. Near Killorglin, it's a short hop up to the little-known Cromane Peninsula. Between Portmagee and Waterville, you can explore the Skellig Ring. The peninsula's interior offers mesmerising mountain views, so don't forget your camera!

Above: Valentia Island (p200), Ring of Kerry

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