

Ireland

Heritage

Food & Drink

Culture

Outdoors

Landscapes

Fill your heart with **Ireland** 



KYLEMORE ABBEY
COUNTY GALWAY

HISTORIC LANDMARKS

Drama and romance in Ireland's castles

FABULOUS FOOD & DRINK

Delicious feasts to tempt the taste buds

IRELAND'S CULTURE

Urban escapes filled with warm welcomes

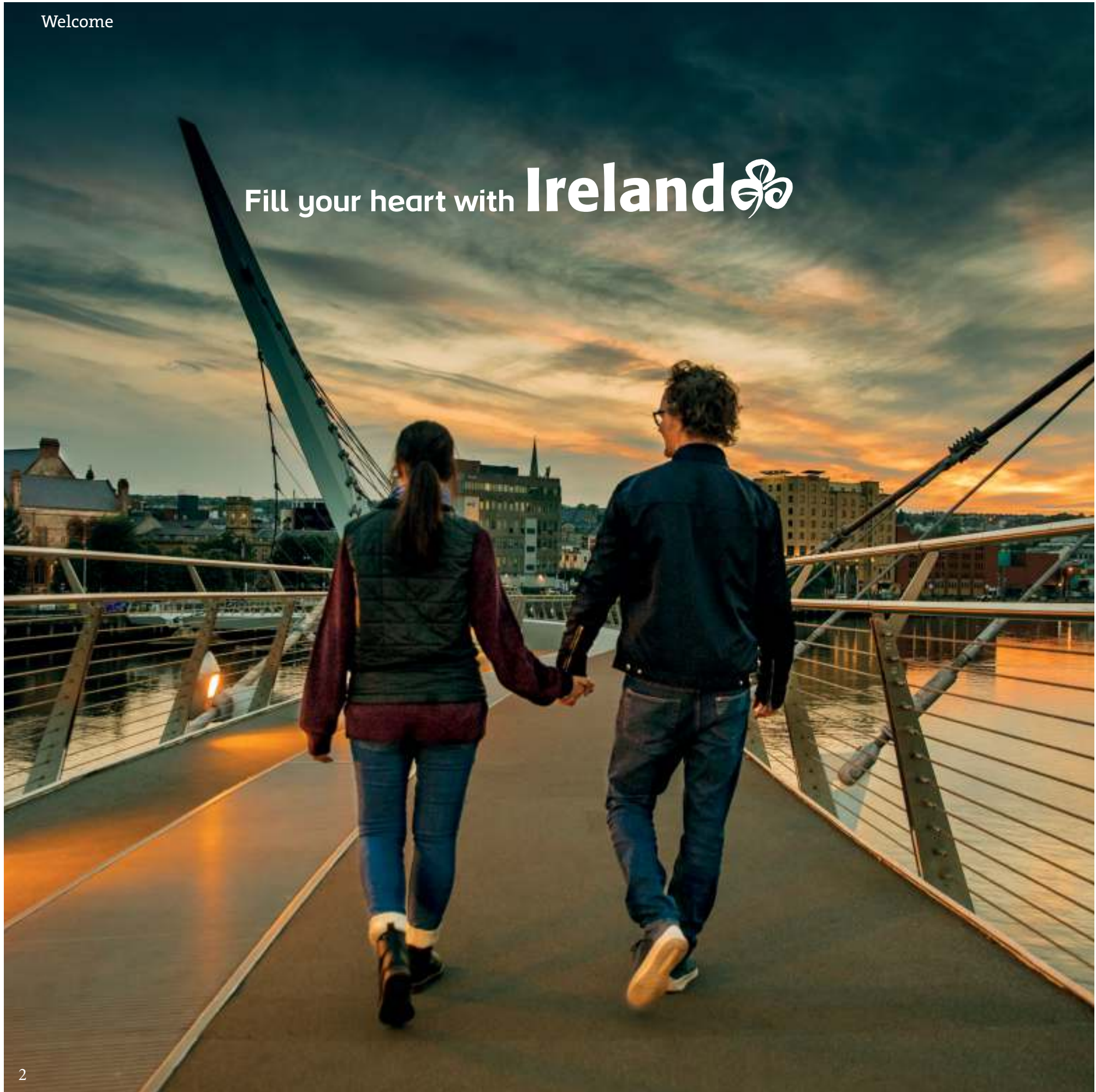
THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Walking Ireland's tracks and trails

AMAZING LANDSCAPES

Exploring Ireland's incredible scenery

Fill your heart with **Ireland**



WELCOME TO IRELAND

If modern life has left you yearning for more authentic experiences, then the island of Ireland is the perfect antidote. You see, Ireland is more than just a destination, it's a feeling...

It's the thrill of standing at the top of Donegal's Slieve League cliffs along the Wild Atlantic Way. It's the sensation you get at a traditional Irish music session, such as the ones that kick off in Matt Molloy's of Westport, County Mayo, or the House of McDonnell in Ballycastle, County Antrim.

It's the touch of the ancient stones that dot the islands of Lough Erne, County Fermanagh. The shipbuilding heritage of Belfast: the city that built the Titanic. And the chance to see the real-life locations for HBO's Game of Thrones® or the views from a Jedi knight's island hideaway, as seen in Star Wars Episodes VII and VIII. It's those 100,000 welcomes you get from the people.

They say you should always listen to your heart. Right now, Ireland can fill your heart with the good stuff. ♥

 **Ireland.com**

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Your essential guide to the island of Ireland



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HISTORIC LANDMARKS

Ireland's historic landmarks are not all about bricks and mortar. As you walk up the 800-year-old stone steps at Hook Head Lighthouse in County Wexford; wander through the 17th century pleasure gardens at Loughcrew in County Meath; or stare up at a round tower built nearly 900 years ago by monks at Devenish Island in Lough Erne, County Fermanagh – it's good to take some time to absorb the history embedded in these walls.

Nothing captures the imagination quite like a good story, and on the island of Ireland, you don't have to look far to find one. In towns and villages, on hillsides and cliff-edges – especially around Ireland's Ancient East – you'll find battlements, fortifications and historic mansions that fizz with tales of lavish parties, fascinating characters and even a ghost or two. Take the eerie 16th century Leap Castle in County Offaly, which claims to be the "world's most haunted location". Or Carrickfergus Castle, a Norman stronghold in County Antrim, which has been besieged by the Scots, Irish, English and French over its 800 year history. And just because the island's grand country houses look genteel, it doesn't mean they don't have their own tales of intrigue, like Westport House in County Mayo. Today, it may be the very picture of aristocratic elegance, but step down into the dungeons and you can see the remains of the castle that once belonged to the notorious 16th century pirate queen, Grace O'Malley.

Ireland's early Christian history is also packed with fascinating stories and beautiful settings. Dating from the mid-6th century, Clonmacnoise was established by St Ciarán on an idyllic site on the River Shannon – stroll around here and you're catapulted back to an age of "saints and scholars". At Gallarus Oratory on Sleah Head in County Kerry, you can still experience what drew monks here hundreds of years ago – heart-stirring views of the brooding Three Sisters coastal peaks and the picturesque bay of Smerwick Harbour. And on St Patrick's Trail, which weaves through key sites linked to Ireland's patron saint in counties Armagh and Down, beauty abounds, especially at tranquil Saul Church.

It's inevitable that a journey into Ireland's past will lead to Ireland's cities, whether it's the Viking history of Dublin and Waterford or Titanic-era Belfast. And, whichever one you visit, a compelling piece of history awaits. Walk the 400-year-old walls in Derry-Londonderry, where cannons roared during the 17th century. Travel back to the Middle Ages with a stroll along Kilkenny's Medieval Mile. Or imagine the life of a Norman soldier at the 13th century King John's Castle in Limerick. On the island of Ireland, you can experience history like never before. ♥



PHOTO: GARETH MCCORMACK

Heritage

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CASTLES OF DREAMS

Ireland's castles are set in some of the most beautiful parts of the island, from tranquil lakefronts to the edge of dramatic coastal cliffs. We look at three of the most captivating...

DUNGAIRE CASTLE COUNTY GALWAY

STEP INTO THE STORIES

Museums, galleries and visitor attractions on the island of Ireland bring the past to life, from the hopes and dreams of emigrants to the creativity of the Celts

1 THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND – ARCHAEOLOGY *Dublin*

The big draw at the National Museum is Ireland's Bronze Age jewellery. Exquisitely crafted between 2200BC and 500BC, it's one of the most important prehistoric gold collections in Europe. Within the museum, you'll also find remarkably preserved bog bodies from the Iron Age, an exhibition on Viking Ireland and the beautifully decorated 8th century Ardagh Chalice.

2 TITANIC BELFAST *Belfast*

This monumental museum stands at the head of the slipways where the "Ship of Dreams" was built. Inside, nine interactive galleries with original artefacts, dramatic recreations and interactive features allow you to fully immerse yourself in the history of the Titanic and the vibrant city that built her.

3 WATERFORD TREASURES *Waterford*

Reputed to be Ireland's oldest city, Waterford is packed with history and the best place to uncover it is in the trio of museums

called the Waterford Treasures. Here, the Medieval Museum, Bishop's Palace and Reginald's Tower (pictured) recount the story of the city, from its foundations 1,100 years ago by the Vikings to an era of Georgian opulence in the 18th century.

4 DERRYGLAD FOLK AND HERITAGE MUSEUM *County Roscommon*

Ireland's history is about big dramatic events, but it's also about the life and times of ordinary people. At this small family-owned museum you'll discover a trove of humble objects that show what life was really like not so very long ago. Examine horse-drawn farm machinery, browse the display of school life, and visit a reconstructed 1930s bar and grocery – the heart of every country town.

5 ULSTER AMERICAN FOLK PARK *County Tyrone*

Emigration to the New World is central to Ireland's story, and at this vast folk park you can walk into houses from the period, both Irish and American. The buildings were either moved from their original sites, or replicated, and show both what people left behind and the new lives they created. Costumed characters tell their stories and build a bridge to the past.

6 POWERSCOURT ESTATE *County Wicklow*

In the 17th and 18th centuries, a rich and lavish aristocracy sought to make their mark with huge houses and sprawling grounds – and they don't come much grander than Powerscourt. Located on a commanding hilltop position with views of the Great Sugarloaf Mountain, Powerscourt is a showstopper with exquisite gardens that unfold over 47 acres. Welcome to the age of elegance! ♥

Travel around Ireland and you'll quickly discover that castles here have the power to stop you in your tracks with their sheer good looks. Whether it's a crumbling 12th century pile overlooking a glassy lake, a gracious Baronial mansion set in glistening green fields or a dramatic cliffside ruin pounded by waves, these structures never fail to surprise and delight.

A good place to start is with Dunguaire Castle. Nestled on the south shore of Galway Bay, this 16th century tower house is built on the site of a 7th century fort. It's fairly modest – as castles go – but its history takes in the clans of Ireland, Queen Elizabeth I of England, the Celtic revival of the early 20th century and a divorce case so scandalous that it triggered a change in the law. With the waters of Galway Bay to the north, and the barren, rocky landscape of County Clare's Burren to the south, Dunguaire has one of the most scenic locations on the island. No wonder it's one of the most photographed castles in the west!

If it's pretty countryside replete with woods, fields and rivers you're after, head for Huntington Castle in County Carlow. This dramatic structure was built as a garrison in 1625, probably on the site of an abbey, which in turn replaced an ancient temple, so it's no surprise that it's filled with legends, including ghostly druids and weeping ladies. Take a tour around the castle with owner Alexander Durdin-Robertson, whose descendants have been living here since the 17th century, and you'll discover

“DUNGAIRE HAS ONE OF THE MOST SCENIC LOCATIONS ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND. NO WONDER IT'S ONE OF THE MOST PHOTOGRAPHED CASTLES IN THE WEST”

everything from the stories behind the portraits, to a remarkable temple in the basement that is devoted to the Egyptian goddess, Isis. And don't miss the gardens at Huntington – laid out in the 1680s, they're filled with lawns, ponds and beautiful woodland.

For a total contrast, go north as far as you can go, to Antrim on the rugged Causeway Coast, where you'll find the ruins of Dunluce Castle. Perched on a craggy outcrop that's pounded by the waves, Dunluce is accessible over a footbridge, with a stout heart and steady feet. It seems a remote and dangerous place to live – a ship from the Spanish Armada was wrecked on the rocks, and a pair of lovers met their end below the castle – yet this wild spot is enchanting. The Earl of Ulster built the first castle here back in the 13th century, on an old Viking fort, and by the mid 16th century, it was fought over by rival clans – it's even attracted the banshee (a mythical wailing female spirit), according to legend. And you can see why: this stretch along the cliffs of Antrim lifts the heart and refreshes the soul with some of the finest views around. ♥

FABULOUS FOOD & DRINK



Seafood chowder by the fire in a wind-whipped coastal pub. Traditional Irish stew in the surrounds of an 18th century market. Afternoon tea overlooking a misty lough. Food in Ireland isn't just about the taste; it's about the place, the experience, the land and sea, and the people who created it.

Whether you're enjoying beautifully crafted dishes of local, seasonal produce in Wine & Brine, Moira, County Armagh, or savouring a bowl of Killary Harbour mussels at the Misunderstood Heron food truck in the wild surrounds of County Galway's Killary Fjord, it's bound to be memorable.

To get to the heart and soul of food on the island of Ireland, a farmers' market is a good place to start. Here, busy stalls laden with artisan cheese, local charcuterie, beech-smoked Irish salmon, soda breads and mountain lamb reflect the richness and variety of what's on offer. Farmers' markets take place all over the island, usually – but not exclusively – on the weekend. Some to look out for include the Midleton Farmers' Market in County Cork, Kilkenny Farmers' Market in the medieval city of Kilkenny, and the Walled City Market in Derry-Londonderry.

Occupying a special place in the hearts of Cork city locals, the English Market has been around since 1788 and is a great place to pick up traditional specialties such as drisheen (blood sausage) and pigs' trotters, as well as freshly baked bread, fish, cheese and the Cork favourite – spiced beef. In Belfast, foodies favour the historic surrounds of the 19th century St George's Market (Fri-Sun) for everything from wild venison to fudge.

Beyond the markets, the island is packed with pubs, restaurants and cafés where you can taste traditional Irish food. Order a glass of Guinness and settle down to centuries of tradition with an Irish stew at Hargadon's grocery-pub in Sligo or an Ulster fry at Maggie May's in Belfast. And keep your eye out on menus for boxty (a potato pancake), coddle (a Dublin dish of bacon, sausage and potato), a Waterford blaa (a soft, floury bread roll unique to the city), and, of course, Irish whiskey, Irish stout, local craft beers and artisan gins.

Travel around and it's not hard to see the excitement surrounding the food scene right now, from food festivals to restaurant-packed city streets. But visit during autumn, and you'll be treated to a whole three months of culinary celebrations with the Taste the Island series of events. Taking in a range of food and drink experiences like distilleries and breweries, food trails, festivals, cookery classes and even a bit of foraging... it's a great way to experience local culture, through your taste buds! ♥

GREAT FOOD TOURS

Food tours are the perfect way to experience the pure flavours and traditional foods of each locality on the island of Ireland...

Ireland is undergoing a food revolution as the farmers, fishermen, producers and chefs realise that their green isle boasts some of the purest, richest flavours in the world. And food tours have become a popular way for locals and visitors alike to experience the best of each locality.

“People always tell us they wish they had done the tour at the start of their trip,” says Caroline Wilson, who runs *Taste & Tour NI*'s food and drink-focused walking tours of Belfast city. “They’re amazed at the variety on offer – and they love that they’re getting to meet locals and not just other tourists.”

Each tour has its own distinct personality, too. About an hour and a half down the road from Belfast, *Enniskillen Taste Experience* uncovers several sides to this historic town’s food – from local butcher Pat O’Doherty’s Fermanagh Black Bacon, reared on the peaceful pastures of Lough Erne’s Inish Corkish island, to contemporary fine-dining at 28 Darling Street.

Want to find out more about the foodie city of Cork? The knowledgeable guides of *Fab Food Trails* will give you the inside story on Cork’s historic English Market, where products such as tripe carry a piece of local history within them. Galway Food Tours’ *Around the Marketplace* starts with Atlantic oysters

and Irish farmhouse cheese at the medieval city’s beloved farmers’ market before you get to meet the producers and taste the flavours of award-winning restaurants and cafés. And in Derry~Londonderry, the *Made in Derry Food Tour* takes in street food, craft beers and local cheese on a four-hour stroll to discover over 25 local food and drinks in the surrounds of this historic walled city.

Alternatively, you could dive deep into Ireland’s fertile landscape. *Taste Wexford’s Flour, Feathers and Fruit* tour takes you to a traditional stone-ground mill, a strawberry farm and an organic pig and chicken farm in one afternoon; while a foraging tour with *Wild Food Mary* in the heart of County Offaly might yield hedgerow herbs, fruits and flowers or autumnal berries and chanterelles, depending on the season.

But what all these tours have in common is this: the chance to mingle with local people for a few memorable hours, while joining them in rediscovering their ancient food heritage and creating a place for it in the island’s identity. ♥

“PEOPLE ARE AMAZED AT THE VARIETY OF FOOD ON OFFER, AND LOVE THAT THEY’RE GETTING TO MEET THE LOCALS AND NOT JUST OTHER TOURISTS”

FORAGING
COUNTY LEITRIM



Ireland.com



TASTE THE WILD
ATLANTIC WAY



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- 1 Pyke 'N' Pommies Derry~Londonderry
- 2 Sheridans Cheesemongers Galway
- 3 Harry's Shack County Londonderry
- 4 Glenarm Shorthorn County Antrim

IRELAND'S NATURAL FLAVOURS

Great flavours, passionate producers and traditions handed down through generations: there's never been a better time to enjoy a true taste of Ireland

With bountiful oceans and fertile fields, Ireland’s produce translates into pure deliciousness on the plate. Take beef for starters... Rich green pastures and small-scale farming make grass-fed beef the standard on the island of Ireland. Want to try it for yourself? Check out the Wagyu beef burgers at Derry~Londonderry’s Pyke ‘N’ Pommies food truck, or Hannan’s Glenarm Shorthorn Himalayan salt-aged sirloin at Balloo House in County Down.

Lamb is the bedrock on which one of Ireland’s most famous dishes, Irish stew, is built. This casserole of lamb, potatoes, onions and carrots might be simple, but it’s enduringly popular and reflects a culinary tradition of cooking over an open fire.

From its origins in the late 1970s, Ireland’s farmhouse cheese scene has grown into one of the most exciting in Europe, with punchy new styles, including Young Buck raw milk blue cheese and well established favourites such as Durrus, Killeen and St Tola. A visit to a cheesemaker, such as Cashel Farmhouse Cheese in County Tipperary, is a great way to find out more about the cheese-making process, and farmers’ markets are ideal for meeting local producers and tasting artisan products.

The flavours of the shoreline are showcased on the Taste the Atlantic trail along the Wild Atlantic Way, with tours of smokehouses, seafood producers and oyster farms. Keep your eye out in restaurants all along the island’s coastline for smoked Atlantic salmon, oysters, mussels and crab.

It’s not just the fine-dining restaurants or traditional pubs where you can sample the ocean’s bounty, either. Enjoy fish fresh off the boat at Harry’s Shack on Portstewart Strand in County Londonderry or award-winning chowder at Killybegs Seafood Shack, overlooking the fishing port of Killybegs in County Donegal. For something a little different, make sure to try some of the island’s seaweeds, such as dulse or carrageen moss from the Antrim coastline.

And with a new generation of well-travelled chefs eager to explore the island’s extraordinary natural larder, enjoying the great tastes of Ireland has never been easier! ♥



TASTE & TOUR
BELFAST



IRELAND'S CULTURE

Ireland's spirit can't be captured; it has to be experienced. The stories, scenery, songs and special atmosphere are what bring people back here, time and again.

With over 3,000km of coastline, the ocean has an inescapable influence on Ireland's culture, especially in the towns and villages scattered along its shores. From the currach boats unique to the west of Ireland to the lighthouses that stand on rocky headlands, the way of life here is dominated by the ocean. Ireland's coastal communities play a huge part in keeping the Irish language alive, with many speaking their native tongue every day, in areas that are known as Gaeltachtaí. Visit Achill Island in County Mayo, or the western parts of the Dingle Peninsula in Kerry and you'll hear locals using Irish. Further north in County Antrim and along the Ards Peninsula, the same is true for speakers of Ulster-Scots (Ullans), whose vibrant traditional music and dance traditions keep the culture alive.

For a small island, Ireland's contribution to world literature is immense. From playwrights to poets, songwriters to storytellers, Ireland's literary heritage takes in four Nobel prizewinners (George Bernard Shaw, WB Yeats, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney), and continues to thrive today with Pulitzer prizewinning poet Paul Muldoon, and award-winning novelists such as Eimear McBride, Emma Donoghue, Colm Tóibín and Anna Burns. These writers follow a historic tradition of storytelling across the island of Ireland, which once took the form of folklore, heroic tales and myths passed down by people known as *seanchaí*. The ancient art of storytelling is today celebrated at events such as the Cape Clear Island Storytelling Festival in County Cork (Sept), as well as popular literature festivals such as Listowel Writers' Week, County Kerry (May); Dalkey Book Festival, County Dublin (June); and the Hillsborough Festival of Literature and Ideas in County Down (April). And in Dublin – a UNESCO City of Literature – you can get the whole story at the new Museum of Literature Ireland, which boasts multimedia exhibitions and priceless artefacts.

Of course, while many a story has been told in the firelit, stone-floored surrounds of a traditional Irish pub, they're more famous as places to hear a spot of music. Dotted around the island, from the cosmopolitan cities of Cork and Waterford to quiet rural spots such as the 17th century thatched cottage of Crosskeys Inn, County Antrim, you'll find hundreds of traditional pubs with a weekly roster of in-house musicians and guest performers. Drop in, sit back and enjoy the tunes. And if you've got the know-how, pull up a stool and join in... the more the merrier. ♥



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- 1 Music session Galway
- 2 Sawers Belfast
- 3 Museum of Literature Ireland Dublin
- 4 Galway Oysters
- 5 Big Fish Belfast
- 6 Ha'penny Bridge Dublin

THREE CITIES

With 11 cities all boasting great food, easy-going locals and lots of culture, you're sure to be busy on the island of Ireland. We've got three to get you started

GREAT FOR ATMOSPHERE: GALWAY

Big-hearted, bohemian and brimming with energy, Galway is packed with the best of the west. Known as the "City of Tribes" – after the 14 medieval tribes who once ruled it – the people here have cultivated a culturally diverse haven that remains true to its traditional roots. The streets of this city sing with an upbeat spirit... literally! Galway is famed for its buskers, with Shop Street, William Street and the historic Spanish Arch often alive with music. Come evening time, traditional Irish music pours from the doorways of many a pub, with Tig Cóilí, Taaffes Bar and The Crane Bar all famed for their great tunes. Add in Galway's status as a UNESCO City of Film, its designation as European Capital of Culture in 2020, and the fact that it's been named as one of Lonely Planet's top ten cities to visit in their Best in Travel 2020 guide, and you've the perfect city break sorted.

GREAT FOR FOOD: BELFAST

It may be famous for building the Titanic, but right now, Belfast's food scene is flourishing with award-winning restaurants, trailblazing chefs and great local produce. Wondering where

to start? Head to St George's Market (Fri-Sun) for fresh flavours followed by the John Hewitt pub for a taste of Irish craft beers. You can sample the best innovative cooking at Michelin-starred restaurants Ox and Eipic; enjoy seafood at the Mourne Seafood Bar and John Long's – famous for its fish and chips; or try big bowls of ramen, Irish-style, at Bia Rebel. Fancy something a little different? The Titanic Belfast Sunday Afternoon Tea serves up tasty treats by the "Grand Staircase".

GREAT FOR CULTURE: DUBLIN

Dublin welcomes every visitor with a smile and the promise that no trip will end without a story or two. It's easy to see how this Viking city has inspired so many artists of every calling – and it loves to celebrate them, too, with free entry to the National Gallery, the National Museums, the Hugh Lane Gallery and the Irish Museum of Modern Art. The city's political history is best appreciated with a tour of Dublin Castle, fascinating Glasnevin Cemetery or spooky Kilmainham Gaol, while Trinity College Dublin is home to the 9th century illuminated manuscript, The Book of Kells. Dublin is a UNESCO City of Literature and for a fun experience, join the Dublin Literary Pub Crawl around the watering holes of the city's literary greats. And the best thing about Dublin? You never know what's waiting around the corner... After all, Bono has been known to busk on Grafton Street almost every Christmas Eve – no ticket required. ♥

FESTIVAL ISLAND

Come rain or shine, festival season never stops in Ireland, where there's always something to celebrate and everyone loves a good party

SPRING

The island of Ireland springs to life with *St Patrick's Day* on the 17th March. Kicking off with the earliest festival at 6am in Dingle, County Kerry, the festivities and parades spread around the island from Dublin's carnival-style party to the *Home of St Patrick Festival* in County Armagh and Down. April is when the *Galway Food Festival* makes its tasty mark on the west; while the super-fun *Star Wars Day* on May 4th celebrates some of the finest Star Wars locations on the Wild Atlantic Way. Still have room for more? Try the *Belfast Maritime Festival* along the city's quays with Tall Ships, nautical fun and great food.

SUMMER

Celebrating summer vibes, *Sea Sessions* is the biggest surf and music festival in Ireland, bringing thousands to Bundoran in County Donegal. *The Ould Lammas Fair* sees traditional music, dancing, horse trading, artisan markets and more take over the seaside town of Ballycastle, County Antrim. And if it's culture you're after, you're spoiled for choice with *Bloomsday* in Dublin; the *Dalriada Festival* in Glenarm Castle, County Antrim; and the acclaimed *Carlow Arts Festival* in Carlow town.

AUTUMN

Festival season seriously heats up in autumn, with the *Dublin Theatre Festival* – 18 days of drama and delight – and the *Belfast International Festival*, with theatre, dance and visual arts. In Cork, the famous *Guinness Cork Jazz Festival* takes centre stage, with internationally acclaimed blues and brilliance. But it's the spookiest celebration that steals the show every autumn: *DerryHalloween* is billed as the greatest Halloween party in the world, featuring haunted houses, ghost walks and spectacular costumes. Hot on its heels is the *Púca Halloween Festival* in counties Meath and Louth. Named after the Irish word for "ghost", this fiesta takes scaring seriously!

WINTER

Voted best opera festival in the world, *Wexford Festival Opera* brings 12 whole days of operatic majesty to the southeast. Music of a totally different kind can be enjoyed at the *Atlantic Sessions* in Portrush and Portstewart with concerts in restaurants, hotels, bars and cafés along the Causeway Coast. Things get festive in Dublin with both the *Docklands Christmas Festival* and the *New Year's Festival*, and as a new year unfolds, *TradFest* in the city's Temple Bar area is the place to be, with traditional music concerts and gigs. ♥

ST PATRICK'S FESTIVAL
DUBLIN



PHOTO: STPATRICKSFESTIVAL

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

A kayaking trip down a glassy canal draped in greenery. A cycle around a lake overlooked by grand country houses and soaring forests. A walk along a windswept coastal trail by marram grass-tufted sand dunes and crashing waves. Visiting Ireland is all about getting outdoors and getting active.

When it comes to adventures on two feet, Ireland serves up a vast array of trails, paths, routes and even walking festivals for both the novice and the experienced walker. You can enjoy edge-of-the-world views and blasts of salty sea air on cliff-edge paths around Slieve League in County Donegal, the Causeway Coast in Northern Ireland and Loop Head in County Clare. You can escape into the rich green beauty of undulating valleys such as the Glen of Aherlow in County Tipperary. And you can weave around the remarkable granite outcrops of the Mourne Mountains in County Down. There are vast walking routes around Atlantic Ocean headlands and short jaunts through ancient woods, and there's always a warm welcome. Writer Christopher Somerville has walked all over Europe but has a particular soft spot for Ireland. "I like walking here because the people are lovely, everything is very manageable, and there's a sense that you're walking where not many outsiders do," he explains. "There's a weight of history on every field and hillside."

And it's not just walking that will allow you to uncover that history. Ireland's waterways have witnessed everything from huge battles on the River Shannon to horse-drawn commercial barges on the canals. Today they are places of pure beauty, edged with an abundance of ferns and reeds and humming with birds and wildlife. Try a slow adventure on a paddleboard down the Lough Allen Canal in County Leitrim. Head out into the dark on a night kayaking trip on Lough Hyne, County Cork, where bioluminescence lights up the water like an explosion of stars. Or explore the maze of bays, narrow channels and islands around both Upper and Lower Lough Erne in County Fermanagh.

If you want to cover miles of landscape without too much effort – a bicycle trip is most definitely the way to go. Take a guided tour along the Wild Atlantic Way with your baggage transferred each time you change location; self tour the charming towns and villages of Ireland's Ancient East on a rented bike; or test your limits on the 480km-long Kingfisher Trail around Leitrim, Cavan, Fermanagh, Donegal and Monaghan.

With cycling routes to suit any level – from casual sightseer or intrepid road racer to mountain biking enthusiast – all you have to do is strap on your panniers, put on your helmet and go. ♥



CYCLING BLISS

Quicker than walking but slow enough to allow you to soak up the sights and atmosphere of the countryside, Ireland's Greenways are the perfect trails for a holiday without cars

KILMACTHOMAS VIADUCT
WATERFORD GREENWAY

If you haven't heard of a Greenway before, the clue is in the name. This is a network of off-road trails for cyclists and walkers that often follows the course of Ireland's old railways. Having kicked off with the stunning Great Western Greenway in County Mayo, the concept has grown to take in all parts of the island, from quiet rural trails to windswept coastal routes. And it's easy to see why. This truly is an elemental way to travel; you'll feel the mountain breeze on your face, smell the sea and breathe in the scent of meadowsweet. The countryside really comes alive when you're on a bike, and you can stop to take it in at your leisure.

So where to start? Well, if you're looking for a great adventure, east coast-style, the Waterford Greenway is ideal. This route crosses 11 bridges and three impressive Victorian viaducts before arriving at Dungarvan Bay. On the way, you'll encounter many of the nooks and crannies of Irish history. Castle ruins, 18th century paper mills, historic viaducts and welcoming villages — they're all part of the rich tapestry of this region.

Long before the coming of the railways this was Viking territory so you'll come across traces of their ancient settlements, and will probably be struck by how much those Norse people liked a good view. Ireland is sometimes wet, it's true; so if the weather isn't going your way, nip into a cosy pub and listen as the gentle drizzle turns the Greenways even greener.

“ THIS IS A TRULY ELEMENTAL WAY TO TRAVEL. YOU'LL FEEL THE MOUNTAIN BREEZE ON YOUR FACE, SMELL THE SEA AND BREATHE IN THE SCENT OF MEADOWSWEET ”

These routes cross extraordinarily beautiful countryside all around the island. The Boyne Greenway begins in Dominic's Park on the south bank of the River Boyne in Drogheda, County Louth, and ends at the Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre in Oldbridge, County Meath. It's a short one, at only 1.9km but has a lovely section along the Boyne Canal.

Taking in aspects of Belfast's unique history is the Comber Greenway, which goes off-road close to the old Harland & Wolff shipyard (which built Titanic) and runs along an old railway line. A tranquil green corridor through the city eventually reaches open countryside, where you can spot Scrabo Tower in the distance. In case you're wondering — it was built in honour of a local man who fought in the Napoleonic Wars. You're never very far from history here.

No matter where you cycle on Ireland's Greenways you'll be assured of a gentle way of seeing dramatic sights. And the great thing about going by bicycle is that you always get a seat with a good view. ♥

THE SPERRINS
COUNTY TYRONE



HORSE RIDING
LOUGH DERG, COUNTY CLARE

GRAIGUENAMANAGH
COUNTY CARLOW



OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

All over the island of Ireland, you'll find secret corners that are perfect for walking, cycling, horse riding and kayaking... All you have to do is look

In the uplands of counties Tyrone and Londonderry, the wind whips across the time-weathered stones of the Sperrin Mountains. Bog cotton, heather and wild orchids dance in the breeze across bogland, quiet valleys and undulating hills. This is walking country — where civilisation drifts away and mountain summits beckon. The Sperrins is one of the island of Ireland's largest upland areas, but the landscape feels undiscovered, with ochre-coloured moorlands that go on for miles. At the western gateway to the mountains and close to the friendly town of Omagh is Gortin Glen Forest Park, which offers walking of a different kind over trails through beautiful woodland.

From its source in County Laois's Slieve Bloom Mountains, the River Barrow flows 192km to Waterford Harbour. But one of the most beautiful sections is the Barrow Navigation in counties Carlow and Kilkenny. Bordered by gentle woodland, grassy towpaths and rolling green fields, it's tailor-made for off-grid adventures. "Undiscovered is an understatement for the Barrow", says Martin O'Brien of the Mullichain Café in the

scenic waterside hamlet of St Mullins, "glide along these waters and you'll pass through farmland, gurgling lock gates and old villages — it's like a glimpse of times gone by." There are plenty of places to rent kayaks and canoes to explore this pretty slice of the island, including Go with the Flow River Adventures, but there's lots to do for walkers and cyclists, too. Rent a bike from the Waterside Guesthouse or pull on your hiking shoes and walk the towpath from the town of Graiguenamanagh to St Mullins (7km). You'll soon be into a wonderland of wildlife, where otters and kingfishers dart from the riverbanks.

Lapping the shores of Tipperary, Galway and Clare are the waters of Lough Derg. On the lough's northerly shores, the wildlife sanctuary of Portumna Forest Park is threaded with quiet cycling and walking trails — keep your eye out for the fallow deer that call the park home, along with fox, badger and even a white-tailed sea eagle. As well as activities such as horse riding, which you can enjoy in the hills around Mountshannon, Lough Derg offers plenty of hikes, from waterside strolls to heart-pumping climbs. For a walk into Irish mythology, head for Tountinna and the Graves of the Leinsterman. Tountinna means "hill of the waves" and legend has it that when the great flood came, the only people who survived were on this hill... Get to the top and you'll see why — as the entire Lough Derg valley tumbles out before you. ♥

AMAZING LANDSCAPES

Dramatic, impactful, inspirational – the scenery on the island of Ireland encourages you to be at one with it, to stand on a wind-whipped beach and feel the transformative beauty of the Atlantic Ocean. To experience the poetry of the heather-flecked Wicklow Mountains sculpted over millennia and dotted with shaggy white sheep. To sit and gaze at a night sky that dances with swirling lights in one of the most remote parts of Europe, the Inishowen Peninsula.

From the jagged northern tip of Malin Head in County Donegal to the safe southern haven of Kinsale Harbour in County Cork, the Wild Atlantic Way will wow you with its cliffs and coves, and charm you with the warmth of its people. There are quiet islands where hardy communities continue age-old traditions; remarkable peninsulas surrounded by surging seas; and friendly towns and villages where traditional pubs boast roaring open fires and nightly music sessions. Northeast of Donegal, the Wild Atlantic Way meets the Causeway Coastal Route – one of Northern Ireland's greatest adventures. Here, the road hugs the coastline around craggy headlands, past sandy beaches and gorse-covered valleys. You can lunch at the pretty harbour of Ballintoy, walk the historic Gobbins Cliff Path and explore its charming villages, such as Glenarm.

And while Ireland may not have the highest peaks in Europe, the tobacco-colored boglands, heathery ridges and rich green glens of the mountains here are filled with fascinating myths, legends and ancient tales. There's Croagh Patrick in County Mayo, where St Patrick spent 40 days in the year 441, and Slieve Gullion in County Armagh, where legendary hero Cú Chulainn received his name. In County Down, you'll find Northern Ireland's largest mountain range, beloved of hillwalkers. It's said that the wintry snow-dusted peaks of the Mourne Mountains inspired Belfast-born author C.S. Lewis to create the icy wonderland of Narnia. Come here in winter, and it's easy to see why.

Looking for somewhere to nourish your spirit? You wouldn't be the first to fall in love with the inky blue waters of Ireland's inland lakes, canals, and rivers. Ancient Celts, Christian monks and marauding Vikings have all left their mark here, with pagan rocks and crumbling churches charting their journeys over the centuries. Today, their quiet, off-the-beaten track charm will win you over, whether you're following the flow of the mighty River Shannon or exploring the castle-laden shores of Lough Erne in County Fermanagh. There's nothing quite like the amazing landscapes of Ireland. ♥



THE ANCIENTS

On the island of Ireland, it pays to look closely. As you stand gazing out on a beautiful view, keep your eye out for some dramatic reminders of the island's ancient past

NEWGRANGE
COUNTY MEATH



GREAT BLASKET ISLAND
COUNTY KERRY



RATHLIN ISLAND
COUNTY ANTRIM



DALKEY ISLAND
COUNTY DUBLIN

For a relatively small island, Ireland boasts an astounding number of Neolithic passage tombs, ancient burial grounds, and mysterious stone circles. These structures contain the secrets to the island's early history, and often sit within intensely dramatic locations, such as Céide Fields in the wild boglands of north County Mayo – a field system that's thousands of years old; and the Legananny Dolmen, a 5,000-year-old portal tomb on the slopes of Slieve Croob in County Down.

Considering the fact that some of these sites date back thousands of years, the condition in which they stand is remarkable. Take Newgrange, for example. Built around 3200BC, the passage tomb is older than both Stonehenge and the Great Pyramids of Giza, yet it's perfectly intact – its grassy mound unchanged for millennia; its stones still etched with rock art.

Just up the road is the Hill of Tara, where the ancient High Kings of Ireland would have been inaugurated. Visit on a clear day, and you can stand upon the hill, gaze out upon the endless green fields of County Meath and see for miles – some even say you can see half the counties of Ireland.

One of the best things about these sites is their accessibility. Rather than being shielded behind ropes and walkways, they are out in the open countryside. Like the stone circles at Beaghmore in County Tyrone, which were only discovered during peat cutting in the 1940s – these Bronze Age structures aren't kept at

“ BUILT AROUND 3200BC, NEWGRANGE IS OLDER THAN BOTH STONEHENGE AND THE PYRAMIDS OF GIZA, YET IT IS PERFECTLY INTACT ”

the other side of a visitor centre, but are free to access among the hills of the Sperrins.

Over in County Clare is one of the island's most iconic ancient monuments – the Poulgabrone Dolmen. This portal tomb is found in the depths of the Burren, where limestone plateaus are dotted with wildflowers and clumps of moss.

But sometimes you have to know where to go. Deep in County Fermanagh in the scenic waters of Lough Erne sits Boa Island. You can drive onto the island, but once there keep an eye out for signs for the Boa Figures. Down a little country lane, hidden in an old cemetery you'll find the Boa Island Figures – intricately carved Celtic figurines that have an almost totem-pole look to them, as they stand silently among crumbling tombstones.

Sites like this can look out of place, plonked seemingly inexplicably within valleys or in the middle of tiny islands. But the more you familiarise yourself with Ireland, you'll see that these structures, soaked in history and witness to thousands of years gone by, are exactly where they should be. ♥

IRELAND'S ISLANDS

From day trips to longer stays, and from traditional culture to wildlife-watching, you'll find beauty, mystery, legend, and more scattered amongst Ireland's many islands

Scattered all along the weather-beaten coast of Ireland are some of our best-kept secrets: the islands. Here, you'll encounter some truly exceptional landscapes – white sand beaches, clear blue waters, and untouched countryside – as well as a way of life that is distinct from anywhere else in the world.

Take the Aran Islands, for example. From what Oscar Wilde described as the “savage beauty” of Connemara, you can make the short ferry hop to Inis Mór, Inis Meáin, and Inis Oírr (or as an alternative, the aeroplane crossing takes just ten minutes from the Connemara Regional Airport in County Galway, and gives you incredible views of the coastline). These three islands all share an inimitable terrain, with giant flat slabs of rock stretching towards cliff tops, stone walls interweaving on rolling fields, and small thatch cottages overlooking the sea.

Kerry's uninhabited Blasket Islands mark the most westerly point in Ireland (and the winding, zig-zagging pathway to the ferry at Dunquin has to be one of the most photographed spots on the island of Ireland). Though the sea-crossing can sometimes

be a little rocky, Great Blasket Island is well worth the trip and has barely changed in hundreds of years. Stroll around these rolling hills and you'll see abandoned cottages, some of which you can peek inside. The island was inhabited until 1953, when the population declined to just 22 and it was officially evacuated.

Unsurprisingly, given their unspoiled natural environments, Irish islands are magnets for wildlife. Nowhere is this more apparent than on Rathlin Island. Just six miles off the coast of County Antrim, the island is such an integral part of bird conservation that the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) has its own seabird center on the cliffs. From there, you'll see rare and beautiful birds, including guillemots, razorbills, and puffins, as well as some of the most beautiful views on the island of Ireland.

GETTING THERE

Accessing Ireland's islands is easy... Some you can drive to (Achill Island is connected to the mainland by landbridge); some are tidal (Coney Island, County Sligo) meaning that you can walk across at low-tide; and some you can reach by local boat (Devenish Island, County Fermanagh). But for most islands, a ferry is the way to go. With smaller and uninhabited islands, sailings may be seasonal, but larger islands will be accessible all year round, weather dependent. ♥

Accommodation



ADARE MANOR
COUNTY LIMERICK



1



2



3



4



5



6

- 1 Clare Island County Mayo
- 2 Finn Lough Bubble Domes County Fermanagh
- 3 Breakfast is served at a B&B County Sligo
- 4 Renvyle beach County Galway
- 5 River Erne Cruising County Fermanagh
- 6 Ballyvolane House County Cork

PLACES TO STAY

Ever slept in a lighthouse? Or how about a medieval castle? Whether you're after cool camping or a cosy B&B, Ireland has something to suit

B&BS

The Irish welcome is famous. And it's not a myth, either. Step inside a B&B on the island of Ireland, and you'll have friendly smiles at breakfast, a sociable atmosphere and the inside track on where to eat, drink and visit in the area. A B&B stay is a great way to connect, first-hand, with Irish culture. Ranging from cottages in the heart of the countryside to smart city guesthouses, they deliver relaxed, affordable accommodation in warm and welcoming family homes.

ECO-FRIENDLY SLEEPS

Ireland's green accommodation options are growing all the time, with yoga retreats on quiet islands; low impact self-catering cottages; and sustainable hotels and guesthouses. Check out Gregan's Castle in the Burren area of County Clare, a founding member of The Burren Ecotourism Network for special ecotourism packages. Delphi Resort in County Galway, which is a member of Green Hospitality Ireland, and The Salthouse in Ballycastle, County Antrim – a luxury sustainable hotel powered by wind turbines and solar energy.

CASTLES

Peat-scented whiskeys by crackling log fires, magnificent medieval interiors and an old-world ambience... a castle stay is the ultimate in style. Luxurious and indulgent – but friendly and relaxed, too – castle hotels generally sit on vast estates where you can enjoy walks into woodland, go clay-pigeon shooting, try a spot of falconry or enjoy a traditional boat trip along gentle rivers. Super-elegant five-star castle hotels can be found all over the island, from the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East to the Causeway Coast. You can even rent entire castles just for you, your friends and family, with staff who will look after your every need. There are some more affordable offerings around, too, with self-catering castles available to rent for groups both big and small.

LIGHTHOUSES

Tales of shipwrecks, adventure and tragedy swirl in the waters surrounding the beacons that are Ireland's lighthouses. Perched on cliff edges, keeping a watchful eye over the turbulent seas, these lighthouses are unique places to stay, whether you're cosying up in a lightkeeper's house or spending a few nights in the lighthouse tower. And the great thing about a lighthouse stay? It's a year-round affair; in winter, light the fire, make yourself at home and gaze at the wild seas below; in summer, enjoy late sunsets and sublime ocean views.

HISTORIC HOUSES

If your idea of relaxation is 19th century drawing rooms, book-laden libraries and breakfasts around grand dining tables, then walk through the doors of a historic Irish country house. Often owned by the original families, these beautiful houses sit on tranquil estates and offer old-fashioned informal hospitality, blazing fires, antique furnishings and candlelit dinners.

FARMHOUSES

An Irish farmhouse stay offers up a slice of authentic rural life – enjoy fresh farm produce for breakfast, great walking routes and a real sense of getting away from it all. Lots of farms offer extra activities, so you can saddle up on a pony, have a go at milking cows, or learn the art of baking Irish soda bread.

UNIQUE PLACES TO STAY

Looking for accommodation with a twist? You've come to the right place... Stay in a transparent bubble dome underneath the starry skies at County Fermanagh's Finn Lough. Give your stay in Dublin a twist by renting an early 19th century Martello Tower in Dublin Bay, originally built to defend against Napoleonic invasion. Bed down on a converted double-decker bus along the Wild Atlantic Way in Lough Corrib, County Galway, or try a traditional "gypsy caravan" at the Tepee Valley Campsite in County Armagh.

CAMPING

Breathtaking camping spots beside the crashing ocean, eco farms with spacious bell tents and bohemian glamping surrounded by ancient woods and rippling streams – camping in Ireland delivers everything from the unique to the quirky. After all, there's nothing quite like waking up in a forest or beside the beach with the sound of the sea crunching over the pebbles, the sizzle of sausages and a mind-blowing sunrise!

COTTAGE STAY

Whether you're after an extraordinary adventure on the Wild Atlantic Way, an unforgettable tour through Northern Ireland, or a farm stay in the historic pastures of Ireland's Ancient East, you're guaranteed to find a lovely little self-catering cottage to suit your needs. Cottages on the island really do spring up everywhere – on remote headlands, on the edge of vast beaches and in busy cities where everything is right on your doorstep.

CRUISERS

A great way to enjoy Ireland's unspoiled waterways is by modern cruiser or traditional barge. Ideal destinations for cruising include the vast River Shannon, which weaves through the heart of the island; tranquil Lough Erne, famed for its castles, food and golf; and the angler's paradise of Lough Derg, between the counties of Clare, Tipperary and Galway. ♥

IRELAND INFORMATION

So you're coming to the island of Ireland and want to know how to get here, how you'll get around when you arrive and even what currency to bring? We've got the lowdown on all you need right here.

TRAVELLING TO IRELAND

By air
The island of Ireland is easily accessible by air, with over 30 airlines flying routes from more than 70 destinations. One-stop services from Australia to Ireland include Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways through the Middle East, while Cathay Pacific also offers one-stop services from Australia to Ireland via Hong Kong. One-stop options from New Zealand include Cathay Pacific, Emirates and Qatar, as well as an Air New Zealand/Aer Lingus partnership via San Francisco, Los Angeles and Chicago.

Many 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 Belfast or vice versa). This can take advantage of Ireland's zero/reduced departure tax, saving hundreds of dollars.

By sea
Dozens of ferries enter Ireland's ports every day from Britain. There are six international ports on the island, granting easy access to your preferred destination.

Eurolines
eurolines.co.uk

Irish Ferries
irishferries.com

P&O Ferries
poferries.com

Steam Packet Company
steam-packet.com

Stena Line
stenaline.co.uk

THE BASICS

The island is about 486km long and 274km wide, and covers approximately 32,600 square miles. The island of Ireland has 32 counties; there are 26 in the Republic of Ireland and six in Northern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland is a parliamentary democracy with a president as head of state. Northern Ireland has its own regional government, but is part of the United Kingdom. There are about 6 million people living on the island – 4.3 million people live in the Republic of Ireland and 1.7 million in Northern Ireland. One third of the population is under 29.

PASSPORTS

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 gained prior to arrival in Ireland.

GETTING AROUND

The island is quite small so whether you're travelling by air, road or rail you'll find it easy.

By road

Ireland's roads are generally of a high standard, although if you venture into the countryside they can be narrow and winding. You will find car rental services at airports and ports and in city centres. Drivers require a full, valid driving license or international driving permit. If you're travelling in your own car, or renting a vehicle, it's important to know the following: as in Australia and New Zealand, cars drive on the left-hand side of the road; signposts in Gaeltacht (Irish



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- 1 Waterford Greenway County Waterford
- 2 Mount Errigal County Donegal
- 3 Erne Water taxi County Fermanagh

speaking) areas are written in Irish (Gaelic); Northern Ireland uses miles per hour, while the Republic of Ireland uses kilometres; and passengers are required by law to wear seat belts at all times in the front and back of the vehicle. There are no tolled roads in Northern Ireland but you'll find tolls on a number of roads in the Republic of Ireland (disabled drivers are not charged). These are managed by the National Roads Authority and Dublin City Council. Generally tolls are paid at the barrier of the toll booth, however, there is one exception: M50 eFlow Barrier System. For more information visit: etoll.ie

By air

Considering the small size of Ireland, there isn't much need for internal flights – the main one is the Dublin-Kerry route, which takes approximately 40 minutes, as well as flights to all three of the Aran Islands.

Public transport

Rail networks run all over the island with **Irish Rail** in the Republic and **Northern Ireland Railways** in Northern Ireland. The **Dart** (Dublin Area Rapid Transit) serves Dublin's coast and city area, while the **Luas** (a light rail service) has two main lines that serve the city centre.

Travelling around by coach or bus is economical and relaxing. **Bus Éireann** in the Republic

of Ireland and **Translink** in Northern Ireland run coach tours all around the island. There's also a huge selection of private coach tour operators, airport transfers, city-to-city trips, and golf trips.

By bicycle

You can bring your bicycle with you to Ireland, but you might find that it's cheaper and easier to rent a bike when you arrive. There are plenty of bike hire shops around, and rental fees are reasonable. Most bike shops will let you rent your bike in one location and drop it off at another for a small fee. Rental price generally includes lock, pump, puncture repair kit, mudguards and carrier; insurance cover is given with all bicycles hired.

By water

Most of Ireland's islands can be reached by ferry with numerous ferry companies providing local services. Many crossings will be subject to weather conditions, so keep an eye on local weather reports via **Met Éireann** (Republic of Ireland) and the **Met Office** (Northern Ireland). In some cases, ferry companies will only operate seasonally, normally peak season (June to August approximately). Always check sailing times in advance. Along with numerous islands, Ireland is home to various beautiful rivers, lakes and canals, many with potential to

be experienced by boat or barge. You don't need a license to operate a cruiser or barge on the island of Ireland and you don't need experience – you'll get full training and teaching sessions along with navigational charts and a captain's handbook.

CURRENCY & MONEY

In the Republic of Ireland, the official currency is the euro. In Northern Ireland, it's the £ sterling. Credit cards that have the Visa and Mastercard symbol are widely accepted. American Express is accepted in some places but not all. Visitors with other cards should check before they use them. ATM (cash) machines are located at most banks and in towns and city centers and accept most credit and debit cards.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

We hope you won't need any emergency numbers during your visit, but just in case, here they are:
Emergency Police, Fire, Ambulance:
Republic of Ireland (ROI) Tel: 112 or 999
Northern Ireland (NI) Tel: 999

SMOKING

There is a smoking ban in Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It is illegal to smoke in an enclosed place of work – everywhere from pubs and restaurants, to shops, offices and on public transport. There

are exceptions, including some hotels and guesthouses that provide smoking rooms. Pubs, nightclubs and hotels usually have a designated smoking area outside on the street or in a garden. Always put your cigarette butt in the ashtrays provided or you could face a €100 fine for littering.

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:

National Disability Authority (ROI): +353 (0) 1 608 0400
Disability Action (NI): +44 (0) 28 9029 7880









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.

Ireland



25 Kilometers
25 Miles

-  Motorway
-  Primary road
-  Mainline Train
-  Airport
-  Ferry
-  Island ferry
-  Tourist Information (Year round)
-  Tourist Information (Seasonal)

Whilst every care has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this map, Tourism Ireland cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions. Due to the small scale of this map, not all holiday centres can be shown. The information on this map is correct at time of going to press.
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