

INSPIRE LEARNING



About Ireland



A Practical Guide

From Geography, to Visas and Currency, this practical guide has all the practical information that you will need to for your stay in Ireland.

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Geography, Demographics & Climate

Geography

Ireland is 385 kilometres/300 miles at its longest; 304 kilometres/190 miles at its widest.

Ireland is divided into four provinces – Ulster, Munster, Leinster and Connacht, which make up 32 counties.

The Republic occupies 26 counties and its capital city is Dublin.

Northern Ireland is part of the UK and its capital is Belfast.

The Republic is a constitutional democracy and a member of the European Union.

Demographics

The population of the island is currently approximately six million, with approximately 4.2 million living in the Republic and 1.8 million living in Northern Ireland. The island of Ireland enjoys a rich diversity of ethnic groups and cultures.

Climate

The climate is mild and temperate (showers can occur any time of the year).

Summer temperatures range 15-25 degrees Celsius (60-75 Fahrenheit).

Spring and autumn temperatures average around 10+ degrees Celsius (50+ Fahrenheit).

Winter is 0 to 10 degrees Celsius (30 to 50 Fahrenheit).

Accommodation

Accommodation in Ireland ranges from ultra-modern boutique hotels to elegant castles. Castles and privately-owned estates can be hired complete with staff and a programme of outdoor activities for an all-encompassing stay.

Hotel Classifications

Classifications include stately country houses, luxurious castles and modern premises.

Five Star

At the top end of the scale are luxurious hotels with spacious guest accommodation and suites available. These fine hotels boast some of the country's best restaurants and offer

table d'hôte and/or á la carte lunch/dinner menus. Exceptional service and a personalised welcome are standard.

Four Star

Four-star properties comprise contemporary hotels of excellent quality and charming period houses renovated to a very high standard complete with all modern comforts. All guest accommodation is of high standard and half suites are usually available. Table d'hôte and/or á la carte lunch and dinner menus are available.

Three Star

These range from small, family-operated premises to larger, modern hotels. Guest rooms are well decorated with the emphasis on comfort and all have private bathrooms with a bath and/or shower. Table d'hôte and/or á la carte dinner menus are available.

These hotels offer a range of services making them ideal for the cost-conscious traveller seeking comfort.

Currency & Banks

The Republic of Ireland uses the Euro, the common European currency, while Northern Ireland uses UK Sterling. However, most large stores in Northern Ireland accept Euro as well. Bank opening times are generally: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday banks are open 10am-4pm. Thursdays 10am-5pm in Dublin (and some other regions).

Banks in smaller towns generally open until 5pm one day a week. In small towns and rural areas, banks may close for lunch between 12.30pm and 1.30pm.

In Northern Ireland, most banks open 9.30am-4.30pm Monday-Friday, with some opening longer hours and on Saturday.

Any credit cards that bear the Visa or MasterCard logo will be widely accepted in Ireland. Visitors with other cards, including ones with the American Express symbol, should ask in advance if it will be accepted.

Customs

Visitors to Ireland from European Union countries are not required to make a declaration to customs at their place of entry. However, certain goods are prohibited or restricted to protect health and the environment; restricted goods include meat and poultry. Customs operate green and red channels at most ports and airports. If you need to declare goods over the duty and tax-free allowances for non-EU visitors, you must use the red channel. Pass through the green channel if you have nothing to declare.

Goods Obtained Within the EU

Although there are now no limits imposed on importing tobacco and alcohol products from one EU country to another, travellers should note that they may be required to prove at customs that the goods purchased are for personal use only.

Goods Obtained Outside the EU

The following goods may be imported by persons over the age of 17 without incurring customs duty:

- 800 cigarettes or 400 cigarillos or 200 cigars or 1kg of tobacco.
- 10l of spirits or 20l of intermediate products (e.g. port, sherry, etc, but not sparkling wine not exceeding 22% volume)

or

- 90l of wine (of which only 60L can be sparkling) or 110l of beer

Electric Current

The standard voltage in Ireland is **240 volts AC**. Sockets in Ireland and the UK differ from the US and mainland Europe.

A plug adaptor may be required for small appliances to work in the standard flat three-pin/round two-pin sockets here. Visitors bringing electrical appliances should ask an electrician or appliance dealer if it is possible to use a transformer.

Shopping

Monday-Saturday 9am-6pm in most towns and cities.

Thursdays – Dublin and Belfast have late-night shopping to 8pm/9pm.

Thursday and Friday – late night shopping in most malls/shopping centres.

Sunday – many shops are open 12pm-6pm.

Duty-free shopping is available at all the international airports.

VAT (Tax)

Value Added Tax is chargeable on most items purchased in Ireland. The good news is that VAT is usually included in the price you will be given, and is not usually an extra charge. Price of most goods includes Value Added Tax (VAT @ 23%).

Smoking Ban

The Republic of Ireland has a blanket ban on smoking in all places of work to protect public health and reduce the incidences of smoking-related illness. Smoking is prohibited in public areas within the Republic of Ireland – this includes all bars, nightclubs and restaurants. Although hotel bedrooms may be exempt from the ban, it is applied to all other areas within hotels.

Telecommunications

Only digital mobile/cell phones with GSM subscriptions and a roaming agreement will work on the island of Ireland. Visitors should consult with their supplier before departure.

Time Zone

Ireland is on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and, in accordance with daylight saving, clocks are put forward one hour in late March and back one hour at the end of October. In summer months, it stays light until as late as 11pm but by mid-December, it can be dark by 4pm.

Visa, Passport and Embassies

US citizens do not require a passport or visa to enter Ireland, but most carriers by air or sea now require some form of identification with photograph (usually either a passport or driving licence with photo).

Visitors are advised to check what form of ID is required with the individual airline, tour operator or travel agent before travelling. Visitors from other countries do require a passport, and it is wise to check with your travel operator whether your originating country requires a visa.

[View the list of countries whose passport holders do not require visas to enter Ireland](#). Please note that a Schengen or UK visa or residence permission is NOT valid for travel to Ireland. If you are a national of a visa-required country, you will need to [apply for an Irish visa](#) in advance of travel to Ireland.

[Find out if you require a visa to enter Northern Ireland](#) . If you intend to travel to the UK prior to visiting Ireland you may be able to avail of the [Short-stay Visa Waiver Programme](#).

Regional Tourism Authorities

Within each area of Ireland, you will find a regional tourism authority, which will look after your every need at a local level. For information on how to locate these offices, see below:

<http://www.ireland.com/>

<http://www.discoverireland.ie/>

Fáilte Ireland South West

Áras Fáilte, Grand Parade, Cork

Tel: + 353 21 425 5100

Email: corkkerryinfo@failteireland.ie

Web: www.corkkerry.ie

Dublin Tourism

Dublin Tourism Centre, Suffolk Street, Dublin 2

Tel: + 353 1 6057700

Email: information@dublintourism.ie

Web: www.visitdublin.com

Fáilte Ireland East Coast & Midlands

Clonard House, Dublin Road, Mullingar, County Westmeath

Tel: + 353 44 9348761

Email: eastandmidlandsinfo@failteireland.ie

Web: www.eastcoastmidlands.ie

Fáilte Ireland West

Áras Fáilte, Forster Street, Galway

Tel: + 353 91 537700

Email: info@irelandwest.ie

Web: www.irelandwest.ie

Fáilte Ireland North West

Áras Redden, Temple Street, Sligo

Tel: + 353 71 9161201

Email: northwestinfo@failteireland.ie

Web: www.irelandnorthwest.ie

Ireland's Shannon Region

Shannon Town Centre, County Clare

Tel: + 353 61 361555

Email: tourisminfo@shannondev.ie

Web: www.shannonregiontourism.ie

Fáilte Ireland South East

4th Floor, Wallace House, Maritana Gate, Canada Street, Waterford

Tel: + 353 51 312700

Email: southeastinfo@failteireland.ie

Web: www.failteireland.ie

For travel and tourism information: www.discoverireland.ie/southeast

Northern Ireland Tourist Board

59 North Street, Belfast BT1 1NB

Tel: + 44 028 9023 1221

Email: businesstourism@nitb.com

Web: www.discovernorthernireland.com/convention