

Blarney Castle was originally a wooden structure built sometime prior to 1200 AD. It was subsequently burned down and a stone structure was erected in 1210. This stone structure was subsequently destroyed and used for the foundation of the current castle built in 1446. It is in a state of partial ruin; however, you can explore the castle's many curving staircases and rooms, along with its lush grounds.



While visiting the castle, you don't want to miss out on the Blarney Stone. There are several legends surrounding the origin of the stone. One is that Cormac Laidir MacCarthy, who built the castle in 1446, was involved in a law suit. He asked the goddess Cliodhna for assistance to ensure his win, who told him to kiss the first stone he found in the morning on his way to court. When pleading his case, he was able to persuade the court with such flattery and charm that he won. MacCarthy then used the stone in the parapet of the castle.

Another story is that Queen Elizabeth I was requesting an oath of loyalty from Cormac Teige McCarthy in order for him to keep his lands. McCarthy gave that loyalty to the queen without actually giving in and she proclaimed that he was giving her a "lot of blarney." The Blarney Stone supposedly gives the kisser the gift of "blarney" or the ability to speak so eloquently that even a lie sounds like the truth!

Follow the marked pathway in the castle to kiss the Blarney Stone. You will travel up through several narrow winding staircases. Once you get to the top, be careful! You have to hang upside down to plant your lips on the stone as it juts out of the castle below the parapet. Don't worry, they currently have a grate underneath the spot where you will hang and an assistant to help you lie down on your back and then get back up. Think about all those lips that have touched the stone!

You will also want to wander the beautiful gardens surrounding the castle. Take your time and enjoy the lush Irish countryside! Here you'll find lots of photo ops.

## Blarney Woolen Mills

Right outside the castle and across the street is the Blarney Woolen Mills. This is where we will park our bus. You will find pretty much anything Irish you could wish to buy here. They have linens, sweaters, jewelry, Waterford crystal, and lots of other items. There is also a cafeteria upstairs which serves quite a good variety. If you have time, you might want to purchase your lunch here.