

The Republic of Ireland And Northern Ireland

Until 1921, the entire island was unified under the British Commonwealth. The native Irish lived this way for a very long time, ever since the 12th century.

Now, in the 21st century, there are practically no problems with the storied “troubles” between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

If traveling to the north, the only difference you’ll notice is the change in currency (the British Sterling Pound), higher prices, and a British feel and presence.

Whether in the Republic or the North, the scenery and experience is beautiful.

Ireland...

Celtic tribes arrived on the island between 600-150 BC. Invasions by Norsemen that began in the late 8th century were finally ended when **King Brian BORU** defeated the Danes in 1014. **English invasions** began in the 12th century and set off more than seven centuries of Anglo-Irish struggle marked by fierce rebellions and harsh repressions. A failed **1916 Easter Monday Rebellion** touched off several years of guerrilla warfare that in 1921 resulted in independence from the UK for 26 southern counties; six northern (Ulster) counties remained part of the UK.

In 1949, Ireland withdrew from the British Commonwealth. The Republic of Ireland joined the European Community in 1973. Irish governments have sought the peaceful unification of Ireland and have cooperated with Britain against terrorist groups. A peace settlement for Northern Ireland is gradually being implemented despite some difficulties. In 2006, the Irish and British governments developed and began to implement the St. Andrews Agreement, building on the Good Friday Agreement approved in 1998.

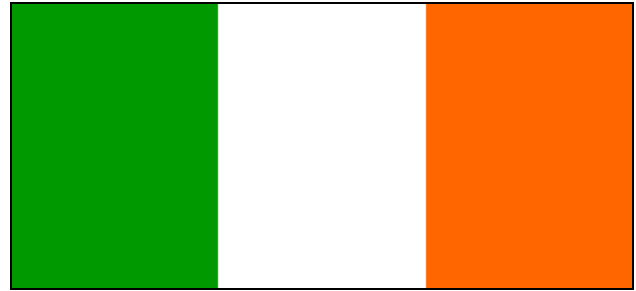
Dublin AIRPORT

Upon arrival, you will make your way through several checkpoints before venturing out into Ireland.

FIRST STOP—PASSPORT CONTROL: Have your passport ready for inspection. Wait in line. DO NOT take photos or use your cell phone.

When asked, approach the officer, greet him/her. The officer will scan and maybe stamp your passport.

SECOND STOP—BAGGAGE CLAIM: Look on the TV monitor and find the baggage carousel which corresponds to the flight on which you arrived. Go to that baggage belt and claim your baggage (if you checked no luggage you can skip this part). There are toilets in this area. Use the toilets here where it is relatively quiet, as opposed to the public areas beyond the customs portal.



In the event of missing items, the “Lost Baggage” help window is nearby.

THIRD STOP—CUSTOMS AND SECURITY PORTAL: Normally you will have “nothing to declare,” so exit through the green lane and sliding glass doors into the main arrivals terminal.

Normally, there will be a railed barrier with lots of people standing around waiting for their friends.

You should visit an ATM cash machine here in the airport. ATM machines are located at both ends of the arrival concourse.

Travel Hints:

- Wear a watch so you will arrive on time.
- Wear a hidden money belt so your important items will be safe and secure.
- Always carry your passport, credit cards, and cash in your money belt.
- Bring an umbrella so you can stay dry when it rains. In Ireland, showers can come and go in moments.
- Wear comfortable, well broken-in shoes.
- On the bus, practice courtesy and try to rotate your seats to give everyone an opportunity to “sit up front.”
- Layer your clothing and always bring a jacket or sweater.
- It is a good idea to pack a “bus bag” in which to keep books, snacks, and items you will need on your journey throughout the day. Your main suitcase goes under the bus in the safe and secure storage area.

Ireland (the Republic of Ireland) is an independent nation off the coast of Western Europe. The island is shared with Northern Ireland (United Kingdom) which occupies one-sixth of the land in the northern part of the island. The Republic is small, just slightly larger than our state of West Virginia. It has a population of 4,722,028 (July 2012 est.). Over 40% of all Irishmen live within sixty miles of Dublin!

The Irish People —

With 87% of the Irish professing to be Roman Catholic, they do a pretty good job of keeping the island populated. The median age is 35 years with an average life expectancy of 78.25 years. There is a one-to-one ratio of males to females for those 15-65 years. 87% of the country are pure Irish. Ethnic groups are small, ranging from less than two percent per group.

HIV/AIDS is not common in Ireland (only .2% of adults are diagnosed with the problem).

English is the official language, although Irish is spoken in some concentrated regions of the island. The Irish language is taught in public school. 99% of the population over age 15 are literate (can read and write).

The current unemployment rate is 24% for those 15 years and older. Currently the unemployment rate in the United States is about 17%.

Ireland is a Republic with a parliamentary democracy form of government based on the model provided by the United Kingdom. Its capital city is Dublin and contains twenty-six administrative districts, known as counties. They are: Carlow, Cavan, Clare, Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Leitrim, Limerick, Longford, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly, Roscommon, Sligo, Tipperary, Waterford, Westmeath, Wexford, and Wicklow.

The government is headed up by President Michael D. Higgins (since November 11, 2011) and Prime Minister Enda Kenny. The president is elected for a seven-year term. The prime minister is nominated by the House of Representatives and appointed by the president.

There are several political parties, due mostly to Ireland's constant struggle for independence. I've listed the most important along with their party leaders. Fianna Fail [Michael MARTIN]; Fine Gael [Enda KENNY]; Green Party [Eamon RYAN]; Labor Party [Eamon GILMORE]; New Vision; Sinn Fein [Gerry ADAMS]; Socialist Party [Joe HIGGINS]; The Workers' Party [Michael FINNEGAN]

The Economy —

Ireland is a small, modern, trade-dependent economy. GDP growth averaged 6% in 1995-2007, but economic activity dropped sharply in 2008 and Ireland entered into a recession for the first time in more than a decade with the onset of the world financial crisis and subsequent severe slowdown in the property and construction markets. Agriculture, once the most important sector, is now dwarfed by industry and services. Although the export sector, dominated by foreign multinationals, remains a key component of Ireland's economy, construction most recently fueled economic growth along with strong consumer spending and business investment. Property prices rose more rapidly in Ireland in the decade up to 2006 than in any other developed world economy. Per capita GDP also surged during Ireland's high-growth years, and in 2007 surpassed that of the United States. The Irish Government has implemented a series of national economic programs designed to curb price and wage inflation, invest in infrastructure, increase labor force skills, and promote foreign investment. In 2008 the COWEN government moved to guarantee all bank deposits, recapitalize the banking system, and establish partly-public venture capital funds in response to the country's economic downturn. Ireland joined in circulating the euro on 1 January 2002 along with 11 other EU nations. — CIA World Factbook



€ The EURO

On January 1, 1999, one of the largest steps toward European unification took place with the introduction of the euro as the official currency in eleven countries (Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain). However, residents of the first European Union countries that adopted the euro didn't begin using euro banknotes and coins until January 1, 2002. Today, the euro is the world's most powerful currency, used by more than 320 million Europeans in twenty-two countries. The countries currently using the euro are: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Portugal, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Vatican City, Lithuania, and Estonia.



The Euro to dollar exchange rate changes on a daily basis. In 2014, we Americans are enjoying a stronger dollar than in past years. Consequently, you can expect an exchange rate of approximately \$1.00= €1.11 .

The euro currency is distributed in the form of bills and coins. For practical purposes the bills/notes are offered in the following denominations: € 500, €200, €100, €50, €20, €10. Coins are used more often than in the United States and when receiving change from a vendor you will often get many coins and few bills. Coins come in the following denominations: €2, €1, .50, .20, .10, .05 and .01.

Folk History, Legend and Lore

For many centuries the Irish people have passed down stories, legend, music, and lore through an oral tradition. The “gift of gab,” which we tend to relate to “kissing the Blarney Stone,” is in the Irish blood. The next time you are in a pub, give it a try... order your drink at the bar counter, strike up a conversation with the person standing next to you and you'll get an earful of whatever is on their mind.

What about all the stories we hear about FAIRIES, LEPRECHAUNS, SWANS, STONE FORTS, BANSHEES, and CELTIC LORE? Apparently there is some degree of truth in all of them, at least when you hear about it over a pint or two! It's a good topic for conversation.

Irish Literature

Jonathan Swift—William Butler Yeats—George Bernard Shaw—
Samuel Beckett—Oscar Wilde—Bram Stoker—James Joyce—
Frank McCourt—Frank Delaney—and many more

The people of Ireland had no written language until the introduction of Christianity in the 4th century. Before that time, ancient Celtic societies kept their traditions alive through an oral tradition carried out by druidic priests and bards. In the Middle Ages, saints and scholars thrived in Ireland, while the rest of Europe went into survival of the fittest mode. Later, Charlemagne imported Irish monks to Europe to re-educate the Europeans.

This rich tradition of WORD, both spoken and written, has always played an important role in the Irish Celtic societies. Since the 18th century, Ireland has turned out more than its fair share of writers who will long live in history as some of the best in the world.