



WELCOME TO IRELAND
Your pocket guide to the
emerald isle

Welcome to Ireland

Facts about Ireland

Ireland and its history

Irishisms

Irish food

Adaptation

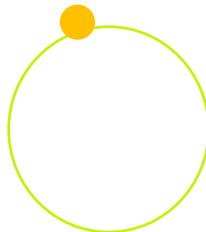
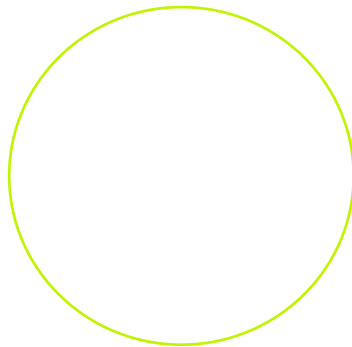
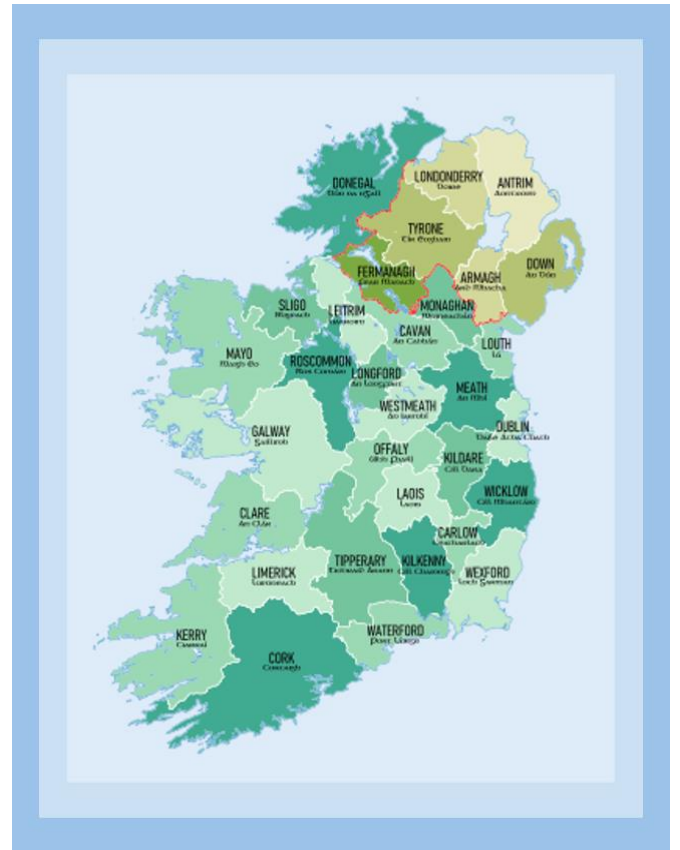
Safety tips

WELCOME TO IRELAND

C ad m ile f ailte, or a hundred thousand welcomes! We are looking forward to meeting and welcoming you to Ireland. This guide aims to walk with you through your stay - so be sure to keep it safe.

We hope this guide will give you a good insight into what life in Ireland is like; from locals with hospitality like no other to a rich culture and history known and adored by the rest of the world.

This is the beginning of a learning process that will become far more intense and fun once you arrive in Ireland. We hope you enjoy your time here!



FACTS ABOUT IRELAND

GEOGRAPHY

An island in the Eastern part of the North Atlantic directly west of the United Kingdom and on the continental shelf of Europe, Ireland covers an area of 70,280 sq km. The island's length is 486 km north/south and its width is 275 km East/West. Ireland's capital city, Dublin, is located on the Irish Sea coast.

The coastline, 1,448km long, is heavily indented along the south and west coasts where the regions of Donegal, Mayo, and Munster end in bold headlands and rocky islands, forming long, narrow fjordlike inlets or wide-mouthed bays. On the Southern coast, drowned river channels have created deep natural harbours. The east coast has few good harbours.

The most important of the many rivers is the Shannon, which rises in the mountains along the Ulster border and drains the central plain as it flows 370km to the Atlantic, into which it empties through a wide estuary nearly 110km long. Other important rivers are the Boyne, Suir, Liffey, Slaney, Barrow, Blackwater, Lee and Nore.

CLIMATE

The climate is mild with an annual temperature of around 10°C. The coldest months are January and February. During the summer, temperatures range from 14 to 30°C. The warmest months are July and August with the average temperature reaching over 30°C at times! There are about 18 hours of daylight during July and August and you will find it only gets truly dark after 11pm. The weather however is surprisingly variable.

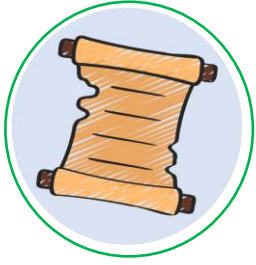
In the summer months, the days are long and relatively sunny but the evenings can be chilly. Rain is always lurking and there might be unexpected "showers" during even the sunniest day.

IRISH FLAG

The Irish flag is twice as wide as it is tall. The green side is by the flagpole. This flag was first used in 1848. The colours of the flag represent the native population and religious beliefs in Ireland.

- ◇ **Green:** Signifies the native people of Ireland.
- ◇ **Orange:** Represents the British supporters of William of Orange who settled in Northern Ireland in the 17th century.
- ◇ **White:** Occupies the centre of the flag and signifies peace between these two groups of people.





IRELAND AND ITS HISTORY

THE CELTS (500 BC)

About 2,500 years ago, the Celts invaded Ireland. They introduced many things that persist to this day, including their language (the Irish language, or Gaeilge, is an official language of Ireland), their games, their music, and a typically Irish attitude towards life.

It appears that they were seen from the outside as a scary group of people, because the Romans gave them a wide berth, despite their partial occupation of Britain during the 1st Century AD.

CHRISTIANITY (500 AD)

The influence of Roman Britain was to make its mark in a very different way. It arrived by means of a preacher called Patrick, and he brought Christianity with him. Very soon, the people of Ireland had taken the religion to their hearts.

Christianity became the dominant religion of the entire island, so much so, that it became the island's greatest export. Ireland became known as a land of "saints and scholars", a creative land with great relics, majestic books, and magnificent golden ornaments. In other words, a nice easy target for anyone with a bent for looting and plundering.

VIKINGS (800 AD)

Enter the Vikings. They were not educated in the niceties of Christian teaching, so for quite a few years they raided, burned, murdered and stole what they could until they started to fall for the island's charms. The Vikings, for their part, founded the cities of Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick and they were the first to introduce the concept of money to the island.

THE NORMANS (1200 AD)

By the turn of the first Millennium, Ireland was a heady mix of Celts and naturalised Vikings, when along came very heavily armed English warriors. They built imposing castles and constructed a few roads, but within a generation or so they too had fallen for the Irish lifestyle. One cannot help conjuring up the image of a Norman soldier, peering through a slitted window in his cold, wet, miserable castle and watching the Celts and Vikings having the "craic" (a common Irish word meaning a good time), singing, dancing and laughing, then promptly rushing out and joining in the fun, and successfully urging the others to do the same. Subsequently, things started to decline and the country was in total confusion for a long time.

THE RELIGIOUS WARS (1600 AD)

The confusion remained, until Henry VIII arrived on the throne in England, and began to stir things up a bit. Henry had found religion, in the form of Protestantism, and decided that if it was good for the king, it was good for everybody under the king. So, he set about changing carefree ways of the Irish with little success, as English influence had dwindled to an area surrounding Dublin, known as "the Pale". His daughter Elizabeth made more progress. Concerned that her enemies, the Spanish, would set up a base in Ireland, she sent armies of her soldiers in to 'sort the populace out', while at the same time supplanting the locals with British settlers. The Irish chieftains fought back, only to be vanquished by British forces in the Battle of Kinsale. By 1607 these chieftains had left the country for good, and England had won control of the entire island.

GREEN & ORANGE (1700 AD)

To consolidate its power, England started to move lots of people into Ulster, mainly thousands of poor Protestants from Scotland. This caused resentment among the locals, who organised a rebellion in 1641. This frightened the new settlers, who got their own back when the recently appointed Lord Protector of England, Oliver Cromwell, arrived in the autumn of 1649. Fuelled by religious zealotry and a bloodthirsty determination to eliminate all opposition to his rule, he succeeded in killing as many Catholic natives as possible before the year was out.

Subsequent events in England, where Catholic kings gained control, to be replaced once again by a Protestant Dutchman called William of Orange, ensured that Protestants and Catholics would fight until the end of the century. The fighting culminated in the Battle of the Boyne, a key event in Irish history, where the forces of William defeated the forces of the Catholic King, James.

THE FAMINE (1800 AD)

In 1801, Ireland became part of the United Kingdom. Restrictions on Catholic practice were eased, and relations began to normalise. However, events were to take place that would shake the relationship between both countries to their foundations. In 1845, a potato disease hit the country, causing all the crops to fail. This would not have been a problem, only for the fact that a substantial proportion of the population ate little else but potatoes. They simply could not afford anything else. People began to starve.

Over the following four years, the potato crop failed completely each time. Starvation and disease took a grip over the country. The English government was so slow to react to the crisis that by the time the famine was over, an estimated one million people had died, and a further one million had left Ireland, arriving in the US and Britain, penniless and desperate. The Irish potato famine created a legacy of emigration from Ireland that did not stop until the late 20th Century. By 1960, the population of Ireland had dwindled to 4.3 million from an 1841 population of over eight million. The Dunbrody "Famine" Ship that took many Irish people to the Americas in the 1840s.

THE LATE 19TH CENTURY

Following the famine, strong, highly organised Irish political movements were born, some violent, some democratic: some (the Nationalists) agitating for greater rights and greater autonomy from Britain; others (the Unionists) vehemently arguing for greater integration into the Union. Despite Britain's growing status as a world power during the latter part of the 19th Century, the 'Irish Question' was rarely far from the top of the agenda. Britain considered giving Ireland autonomy many times, but, partially as a result of Ulster Protestant concerns, they always stopped short of making it a reality.

PARTIAL INDEPENDENCE

In 1912, a bill to permit Home Rule in Ireland was passed in the British Parliament, but before it could be enacted, Europe was plunged into the nightmare of the First World War and Irish autonomy was deferred. While the war was still raging in Europe, a relatively small group of Irish republicans opportunistically attempted to seize power in Dublin in the Easter of 1916.

This rebellion was suppressed very quickly, but it was to re-open many of the old wounds between Britain and Ireland. Within a short period, the Irish population outside of Ulster were actively demanding full independence from Britain, and a vicious guerrilla war ensued when a government, openly republican, was elected in 1919.

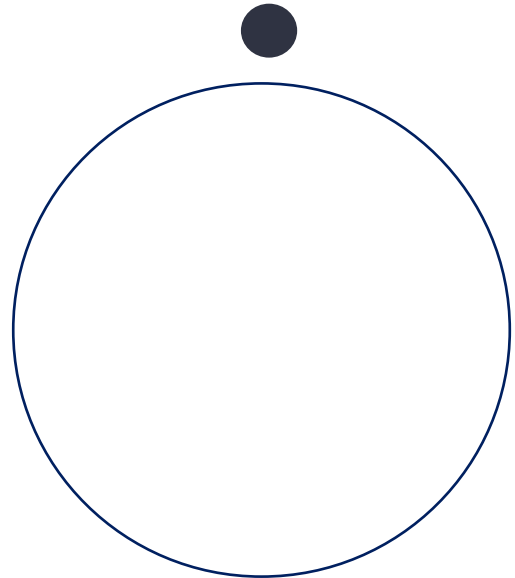
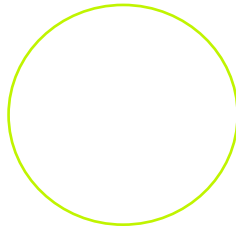
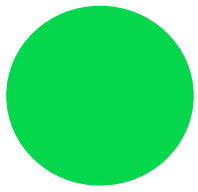
Britain's attempts to fight the war through crude means of suppression only made matters worse. British counter-insurgency forces, known locally as the Black and Tans, fought a bitter war of attrition with the Irish forces, resorting at times to attacks on the civilian population. In this increasing climate of violence, Britain decided to press ahead with Irish Home Rule.

Ireland signed a treaty allowing for limited independence, but with some strings attached. One of those strings was that the country would be split in two - the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. The limitations of the treaty were hugely controversial (the negotiator for the Irish side, Michael Collins, announced after signing the Treaty, that he had signed his death warrant), and in the Free State it led quickly to a vicious civil war between both sides; those who agreed with the Treaty, and those who disagreed. The Irish Civil war accounted for 3,000 deaths on both sides.

Most of today's political parties of the Irish Republic originate from this deeply divisive political split.

THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND SINCE THE SPLIT

Eventually things settled down, and the Irish Free State became an independent republic in 1948. Since this time, the newly-born Republic of Ireland (Éire) has moved slowly from an inward-looking, church-dominated, impoverished state to an outward-looking, open, relatively prosperous, democratic economy. Éire joined the EEC (now the EU) in 1973, and over the past few years, it has integrated further into the European Union.



IRISHISMS

“PLEASE”, “THANK YOU”, “YOU’RE WELCOME”

You will often hear these words during your time in Ireland. The Irish use the word “please” when they express any type of request and they say “thank you” or “thanks” when someone responds to that request or when the article request is presented. Finally, use “you’re welcome” as a polite response when someone thanks you for something. Using the words “please” and “thank you” is considered polite. Trying to use these words naturally in your everyday conversation will help you make new friends and make a good impression on the people you meet.

“SORRY”

In Ireland, you will soon learn that 'sorry' often means 'excuse me'. It is not always an actual apology, but can be calling the other persons' attention to the situation. Saying 'sorry' is considered polite.

OPENNESS

You are in Ireland to learn the language and something about the culture. Listen, listen and... listen. Take in all impressions and information you can. Do not hesitate to ask for advice from your teachers at school, host family or classmates and do not be afraid to be corrected. There is so much to learn and there is no such thing as a stupid question. If you feel uneasy about something, talk to our Student Support team.

ACCEPTING DIFFERENCES

Not right, not wrong, just different! Heard that before? If we place values on the customs and traditions of others, we miss out on important learning. Many things are different without being better than the other. You need to see things from another viewpoint and not your own if you want to be able to hear what the other person is really saying. Sometimes, always comparing the Irish customs to your own can be misunderstood as saying “my way is better”, and after all – to truly learn about Irish culture you also have to accept the differences.

HUMOUR

A laugh, a smile – they are an international means of communication. This includes laughing at funny situations you might get into due to misunderstandings. Being able to laugh at your own shortcomings and mistakes is vital when you are an exchange student – because you will make some funny mistakes! A good laugh will give you the strength to correct a mistake, and it is a lot more enjoyable than getting upset with yourself.



IRISH FOOD

BIA

For most of the last two centuries, Irish cooking has been dominated by one terrible event: the dreadful famine of the mid-1840s, when the failure of the potato crop, on which the peasant population depended, led to a savage death toll and a global diaspora of Irish people. After this experience, traditional staples came to be regarded as famine food: a necessity, and nothing more. The idea of an indigenous fine cuisine seemed ridiculous, and the country's native ingredients were held in low regard.

For thousands of years before the potato famine, however, Ireland's people enjoyed an atmosphere of bounty. According to the folklorist Brid Mahon, the first settlers "hunted and trapped the red deer and wild pig; they fished the rivers for salmon, trout and eels, and snared pigeon, duck, and grouse". When agriculture began, farmers exploited a benign climate where grass grew year-round and farmers could grow wheat, barley, oats and rye. Cows, sheep and goats grazed and produced superior dairy products. Throughout the Middle Ages, Ireland's population exploited this land of plenty. A traveller crossing the country could expect to be welcomed with food and lodging at every farmstead he passed, but then everything changed.

Introduced from the New World in the 17th century, the potato became not just food but the staff of life itself. Easily grown, it enabled a population explosion, as Irish food writer Darina Allen writes, "With only an acre or two of land a farmer could grow enough potatoes to support his whole family." When, for a series of reasons, the potato crops failed year after year a pall was cast over Irish attitudes toward food. For the lower classes, traditional recipes were eaten and enjoyed, but never discussed. For the bourgeoisie, "fine dining" meant imitating French cooking, a habit that remained until the latter part of the 20th century.

Attitudes have changed now. While Ireland still does not have a food culture comparable to those of Italy or France, home cooks are starting to give greater value to their culinary heritage. It helps that Irish cooking never became as industrialised as in, for instance, England, where some products such as artisanal cheeses nearly disappeared during the 20th century. In Ireland, traditional dishes such as roast leg of lamb still form the centrepiece of weekend family dinners.

Chefs still combine simple ingredients such as mashed carrots and parsnips and rich, golden butter to produce wholesome, delicious dishes free of elaborate sauces or exotic spices. And now, more and more people are concentrating on those simple ingredients, shopping at farmers' markets for top-notch dairy products and rediscovering forgotten native specialities such as venison.



ADAPTATION

OUR TOP TIPS

Here are some of our top tips on how to adapt to a different culture.

Though many hidden factors can make it difficult to get insight into another culture, it is not impossible. The following tips may help you better understand and adapt to a new culture.

- ◇ Be cautious. Don't always think you understand everything – remember that you are among new rules and customs that may be unfamiliar to you.
- ◇ Improve your command of the language and use it. Even though you cannot speak perfectly, the fact that you try to speak will be appreciated. Making an effort shows people that you really try to adapt.
- ◇ Don't judge situations too early. Avoid value judgements: The natural tendency to right away label everything you see as "good" or "bad" may be a serious obstacle to understanding a new culture. Observe and describe, and most importantly accept other people on their own terms.
- ◇ Show empathy. To show empathy means to identify you with somebody else's feelings. It is to put yourself emotionally in the place of a different person, and see the situation from their point of view. Remember that there are different ways of seeing the same situation.
- ◇ Learn to express yourself correctly. Communication happens on many levels, it is necessary to be aware that every culture has its own pattern for expressing thoughts and feelings. Try to adapt to this pattern – both verbally and non-verbally.
- ◇ Check meanings: If you are in doubt double-check that you have understood correctly. Both words and body language can have different meanings in different cultures.
- ◇ Accept that it is natural to be insecure.
- ◇ Share with others as much as you can. Show your ability to participate, to try out new things and to learn about your hosting community and the culture there.



SAFETY TIPS

OUR SAFETY TIPS

Uncomfortable social situations can occur in any society. Such situations are less common among young adults or adults. It can be difficult to handle a new situation within your home society but, in a culture that is new to you, such a situation can seem even more confusing. By presenting you with some legal and cultural rules in Ireland, we hope to help you make informed decisions when confronted with sexual harassment, alcohol and other drugs.

In any situation you may encounter during your stay in Ireland, it is important to keep in mind that you should not compromise your personal moral values or do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable while you are here on the exchange programme.

While it is important for an exchange student to be open-minded, adventurous and accepting of the host culture, this does not mean you should ignore everything you have learned in your home culture. It is always a good idea to observe the behaviour of those around you then follow what your inner voice tells you about what you have learned concerning what is right and what is wrong.

The best general advice regarding issues of personal safety is as follows:

- ◇ Get to know the host culture through questions, dialogue and discussion with your host family, peers and local contacts.
- ◇ Take any concerns expressed by your host family, host family coordinator or student support seriously and follow their advice.
- ◇ Do not ignore your own instinct in any given situation or feel you have to compromise your own personal behavioural values and beliefs.

Contact your Student Support if you experience any problems and difficulties.

Remember that it is strictly forbidden also by the laws in Ireland to possess or use illegal drugs and substances. Use and abuse of alcoholic beverages or drugs on school premises could be cause for dismissal from the programme.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

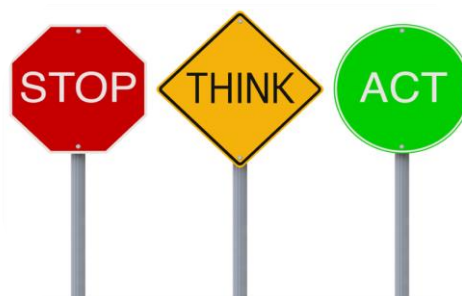
Cultures differ in their views of appropriate sexual behaviour and practices between young people. Often clarification of attitudes may be necessary and, here again, the advice of people you have come to know and trust is very valuable. Knowledge about the people you socialise with is important, and this is acquired best through increasing knowledge of the culture. Equally important are your own values and beliefs regarding your behaviour. In societies where some young people are sexually active, there are also many who are not.

You should not compromise your own personal values and beliefs regarding sexual behaviour. You may be unsure in some situations if you are being sexually harassed or if a particular person's behaviour would be considered normal or just friendly. An important source is your own instinct.

Sexual harassment is likely to happen in any country. Females especially are subject to harassment. For example, if a man or a group of young men whistle at a female student, she should avoid contact with them, she should ignore them and walk away. If a car pulls up on the curb alongside a female student, she should carry on walking and not get in. Also wear discreet clothing and do not go to isolated places with people that you don't know well.

During your exchange experience, you'll have many new and different experiences. Yet there are things that remain the same:

- ◇ Your body is always yours.
- ◇ You always have the right to say no.
- ◇ If something does not feel right to you, it's probably not!



EMERGENCIES

The role of the police - the Irish Police is called Garda
- varies from country to country.

In case you are stopped for any reason, you may not understand everything you are being told. In this case, it is very important to reply with as much respect as possible and to cooperate, even if you are not sure of exactly what is going on. Always identify yourself as an exchange student. Should the situation become more complicated, inform the school and your student support. Always keep their numbers to hand.

To call the Police (Garda), the Ambulance Service or the Fire Brigade the number is **999** or **112**.





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