



# Ireland

Green hills, ancient stories, music in the pubs and a famous welcome, on the western edge of Europe.

## AT A GLANCE

## Facts to know

### CAPITAL

Dublin

### POPULATION

About 5.5 million (CSO estimate for April 2025: 5,458,600)

### OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Irish (Gaeilge), the national and first official language, and English, the second official language

### CURRENCY

Euro, since 1999 (notes and coins since 2002); before that, the Irish pound (punt)

### AREA

About 70,300 km<sup>2</sup>, about five sixths of the island of Ireland

### GOVERNMENT

Parliamentary republic (constitution of 1937). The President is head of state and the Taoiseach leads the government

### HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Carrauntoohil, about 1,039 m, in County Kerry, also the highest peak on the whole island

### LONGEST RIVER

The Shannon, about 360 km including its estuary, the longest river in Ireland and in Britain and Ireland

### NEIGHBOURS

The United Kingdom, its only land neighbour, along the border with Northern Ireland. Great Britain lies across the Irish Sea, and France across the Celtic Sea

### DRIVES ON THE

Left

### CALLING CODE

+353

# A 45-minute trip to Ireland

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

**0 to 5 min** Welcome. Show the map page and find Ireland together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there?

**5 to 15 min** Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: 3100 BC: Newgrange is built; 1845: The Great Famine begins; 1998: The Good Friday Agreement.

**15 to 25 min** At the table: talk about Irish stew and Soda bread. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help.

**25 to 30 min** Say it like a local: practise "Dia duit" (Hello (literally 'God be with you')), "Dia is Muire duit" (Hello in reply (literally 'God and Mary be with you')), "Maidin mhaith" (Good morning). Everyone says them together.

**30 to 40 min** Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at <https://worldstroll.com/countries/ireland/group>. No scores needed.

**40 to 45 min** Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page.

## You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

# Ireland and its cities



- Dublin (Leinster): Trinity College and the Book of Kells, Guinness at St James's Gate, Temple Bar and the Ha'penny Bridge, Writers such as James Joyce and Oscar Wilde
- Cork (Munster): The English Market, a covered food market, The bells of Shandon, Nickname 'the Rebel City', The harbour town of Cobh nearby
- Galway (Connacht): Nickname 'the City of the Tribes', The Spanish Arch, Galway Bay oysters, European Capital of Culture in 2020
- Limerick (Munster): King John's Castle, built around 1210, The Treaty Stone, Ireland's first National City of Culture, in 2014, Rugby
- Waterford (Munster): Reginald's Tower, Waterford Crystal, first made here in 1783, The blaa bread roll, The Viking Triangle
- Kilkenny (Leinster): Kilkenny Castle, St Canice's Cathedral and its round tower, Hurling,

### Arts and comedy festivals

- Killarney (Munster): Killarney National Park and its lakes, Jaunting cars (horse-drawn carriages), Muckross House and Ross Castle, The Ring of Kerry
- Sligo (Connacht): 'Yeats Country', Benbulbin, Sligo Abbey, Knocknarea and its ancient cairn
- Dingle (Munster): Irish-speaking Gaeltacht area, Fungie the dolphin, who lived in the bay from 1983 to 2020, Music pubs, The Slea Head drive
- Drogheda (Leinster): St Laurence's Gate, The shrine of St Oliver Plunkett, Newgrange nearby, The Boyne Valley
- Donegal (Ulster): Donegal Castle, Donegal tweed, The Diamond, the town square, The Blue Stack Mountains

# A short history of Ireland

From Stone Age tomb builders and early Christian monks to Vikings, Normans, famine, rebellion and independence, Ireland's story is long and often hard, and its people carried it all over the world.

## **3100 BC**      **Newgrange is built**

Around 3100 BC Stone Age farmers built the great passage tomb of Newgrange in the Boyne Valley. It is about 500 years older than the Great Pyramid of Giza, and on the shortest days of the year the rising sun still shines along its passage into the inner chamber.

## **AD 432**      **Saint Patrick begins his mission**

Patrick was born in Britain and, at 16, was captured by Irish raiders and kept as a slave in Ireland for six years. He escaped, but later returned as a Christian missionary. Tradition dates his arrival to 432. He became Ireland's patron saint, remembered on 17 March.

## **AD 841**      **Vikings found Dublin**

Viking raiders began attacking Irish monasteries in the 790s. Around 841 they built a fortified base beside a dark pool, in Irish 'Dubh Linn', where the Poddle stream met the River Liffey. It grew into a busy trading town, and later into Ireland's capital.

## **1014**      **The Battle of Clontarf**

On Good Friday 1014, the army of Brian Boru, High King of Ireland, defeated an alliance that included the King of Leinster and Viking forces at Clontarf, near Dublin. Brian's side won the battle, but he was killed. He is remembered as one of Ireland's greatest kings.

## **1169**      **The Normans arrive**

In 1169 Norman knights landed in County Wexford, invited by the deposed King of Leinster, Diarmait Mac Murchada. Strongbow followed in 1170, and in 1171 King Henry II of England came himself. It was the start of more than 750 years of English, and later British, rule in Ireland.

## **1607**      **The Flight of the Earls**

In September 1607 the last great Gaelic lords of the north, Hugh O'Neill and Rory O'Donnell, sailed from Rathmullan in County Donegal for mainland Europe, with about 100 followers. Their lands were taken by

the Crown and settled by Protestants from Britain in the Plantation of Ulster.

### **1690**      **The Battle of the Boyne**

On the River Boyne near Drogheda, the Protestant King William III defeated the Catholic King James II, whom he had replaced on the English throne. The victory secured Protestant rule in Ireland, and it is still remembered, very differently, by different communities.

### **1801**      **Ireland joins the United Kingdom**

On 1 January 1801 the Act of Union came into force. The Irish Parliament in Dublin was abolished, and Ireland became part of the new United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, governed from London.

### **1845**      **The Great Famine begins**

In 1845 a disease called potato blight destroyed the potato crop on which about a third of the people depended. During the famine, from 1845 to 1852, about one million people died and more than a million emigrated. Ireland's population fell by a fifth to a quarter and has never returned to its level of the 1840s.

### **1916**      **The Easter Rising**

On Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, Irish republicans took over buildings in Dublin, and Patrick Pearse read the Proclamation of the Irish Republic outside the General Post Office. The rising was defeated in six days, but the execution of its leaders turned many people towards the cause of independence.

### **1919**      **The War of Independence begins**

On 21 January 1919 Irish members elected to the British Parliament met in Dublin instead, as the first Dáil, and declared independence. On the same day the first shots of the War of Independence were fired. The fighting ended with a truce in July 1921.

### **1922**      **The Irish Free State is founded**

Under the Anglo-Irish Treaty, 26 of Ireland's 32 counties became the self-governing Irish Free State on 6 December 1922, while Northern Ireland stayed in the United Kingdom. The treaty split the independence movement, and a civil war was fought over it from June 1922 to May 1923.

**1937**

### **A new constitution is adopted**

Voters approved a new constitution, Bunreacht na hÉireann, on 1 July 1937, and it came into force on 29 December 1937. It gave the state the name Éire, or Ireland in English, and created the office of President. It is still in force, changed many times by referendum.

**1949**

### **Ireland becomes a republic**

The Republic of Ireland Act came into force on Easter Monday, 18 April 1949. It declared the state a republic and ended its last ties to the British Crown, and Ireland left the Commonwealth.

**1973**

### **Ireland joins the EEC**

On 1 January 1973 Ireland joined the European Economic Community, today's European Union, on the same day as the United Kingdom and Denmark. Membership brought new markets, new roads and, in time, great economic change.

**1998**

### **The Good Friday Agreement**

The Troubles, a conflict in Northern Ireland from the late 1960s, cost about 3,500 lives. On 10 April 1998, Good Friday, the British and Irish governments and most Northern Ireland parties signed a peace agreement. Voters on both sides of the border approved it in May 1998.

# What people eat in Ireland

Irish cooking is plain, hearty and built on excellent ingredients: grass-fed beef and lamb, rich butter and cream, fresh fish and shellfish from the Atlantic, and, above all, potatoes. A traditional day starts with a big cooked breakfast, the main meal is meat or fish with potatoes and vegetables, and there is always bread on the table and a pot of tea to finish.

## Irish stew (Stobhach Gaelach)

All of Ireland

Lamb or mutton slowly simmered with potatoes, onions and parsley until the potatoes break down and thicken the broth. It is often called the national dish.

## Soda bread (Arán sóide)

All of Ireland

A quick bread made with flour, buttermilk, salt and bread soda (baking soda) instead of yeast. Brown soda bread, made with wholemeal flour, is served with soup, smoked salmon or simply butter.

## Colcannon (Cál ceannann)

All of Ireland

Creamy mashed potatoes mixed with buttered cabbage or kale and spring onions, served with a pool of melting butter in the middle. It goes well with ham or bacon.

## Boxty (Bacstaí)

The north midlands and northwest, such as Leitrim, Cavan, Sligo and Mayo

A potato pancake made from grated raw potato mixed with mashed potato, flour and buttermilk, fried on a griddle or pan until golden. It can be a side dish or a breakfast.

## Dublin coddle

Dublin

Pork sausages and rashers (thin slices of bacon) slowly cooked with potatoes, onions and herbs in a covered pot, so everything steams and simmers in its own stock. It is served with soda bread to mop up the broth.

## Bacon and cabbage

All of Ireland

A thick piece of boiled bacon (similar to ham) served in slices with cabbage cooked in the bacon water, boiled potatoes and a white parsley sauce. It is a classic Sunday or family dinner.

## Full Irish breakfast

All of Ireland

A big cooked breakfast of rashers, sausages, fried or scrambled eggs, black and white pudding, grilled tomato and mushrooms, with brown soda bread and a pot of tea.

## Seafood chowder

The coasts, especially the west and southwest

A creamy soup of fish such as salmon, cod and smoked haddock, often with mussels or prawns, potatoes and vegetables, served with brown bread. Almost every coastal pub has its own version.

## Galway Bay oysters

Galway Bay

Native flat oysters from Galway Bay, eaten raw with lemon, brown bread and butter, and traditionally a pint of stout. Raw shellfish is best avoided by pregnant women, older people and anyone with a weakened immune system.

## Irish smoked salmon

The west and southwest coasts

Salmon, cured with salt and slowly cold-smoked, often over oak. It is served in thin slices on brown soda bread with butter, lemon and black pepper.

## Barmbrack (Bairín breac)

All of Ireland

A lightly sweet bread full of raisins and sultanas, which are often soaked in cold tea before baking. It is served in slices, toasted and buttered, with a cup of tea.

## Waterford blaa

Waterford

A soft, square, floury white bread roll, eaten at breakfast with butter or filled with rashers or sausages.

## Irish coffee

Foynes, County Limerick

Hot coffee sweetened with brown sugar, with a measure of Irish whiskey, topped with a layer of lightly whipped cream that floats on top. You drink the coffee through the cream.

## Guinness

St James's Gate, Dublin

A dark, creamy stout made with roasted barley, poured slowly in two stages so that it settles with a thick white head. It is brewed in Dublin at the St James's Gate Brewery.

## At the table

- Visitors to an Irish home are almost always offered a cup of tea, and it is friendly to accept.
- In a pub, friends usually take turns to buy a 'round' of drinks for the whole group. If someone buys you a drink, you are expected to buy the next round.
- When raising a glass, say 'Sláinte' (SLAWN-cheh), which means 'health'.
- In most pubs you order and pay at the bar, and you do not tip for each drink.
- In restaurants, a tip of about 10 to 15 percent is usual for good service, unless a service charge is already on the bill.

# Irish stew

Lamb or mutton slowly simmered with potatoes, onions and parsley until the potatoes break down and thicken the broth. It is often called the national dish.

## Ingredients

- 1 kg lamb neck or shoulder, cut into large chunks
- 1 kg floury potatoes, peeled
- 2 large onions, sliced
- 2 carrots, cut into chunks (optional)
- 750 ml lamb or chicken stock, or water
- A few sprigs of thyme
- A handful of chopped parsley
- Salt and black pepper

## Method

1. Cut half the potatoes into thin slices and the other half into large chunks.
2. In a heavy pot, layer the sliced potatoes, the lamb, the onions and the carrots, seasoning each layer with salt, pepper and thyme.
3. Pour in the stock, bring it slowly to a simmer and skim off any foam.
4. Cover and cook very gently for 1 hour.
5. Add the potato chunks on top, cover again and cook for another 45 minutes to 1 hour, until the meat is tender and the thin potatoes have thickened the broth.
6. Taste, season, stir in the parsley and serve in deep bowls with buttered bread.

# Soda bread

A quick bread made with flour, buttermilk, salt and bread soda (baking soda) instead of yeast. Brown soda bread, made with wholemeal flour, is served with soup, smoked salmon or simply butter.

## Ingredients

- 250 g wholemeal flour
- 200 g plain white flour, plus a little for dusting
- 1 level teaspoon bread soda (baking soda), sieved
- 1 teaspoon salt
- About 400 ml buttermilk

## Method

1. Heat the oven to 220 °C and dust a baking tray with flour.
2. Mix the flours, bread soda and salt in a large bowl and make a well in the middle.
3. Pour in most of the buttermilk and mix quickly with your hand or a spoon to a soft, slightly sticky dough, adding more buttermilk if it is dry. Do not knead.
4. Turn it out onto a floured surface, shape it gently into a round about 4 cm high and put it on the tray.
5. Cut a deep cross over the top with a floured knife.
6. Bake for 15 minutes, then lower the oven to 200 °C and bake for about 25 minutes more. The loaf is done when it sounds hollow when tapped underneath. Cool on a rack under a clean tea towel.

# Colcannon

Creamy mashed potatoes mixed with buttered cabbage or kale and spring onions, served with a pool of melting butter in the middle. It goes well with ham or bacon.

## Ingredients

- 1 kg floury potatoes, peeled and cut into even pieces
- 300 g green cabbage or kale, finely shredded
- 4 spring onions, finely sliced
- 150 ml milk
- 60 g butter, plus more to serve
- Salt and black pepper

## Method

1. Boil the potatoes in salted water for about 20 minutes, until soft, then drain well.
2. Meanwhile, boil or steam the cabbage for 3 to 5 minutes until just tender, drain and squeeze out the water.
3. Warm the milk with the spring onions for 2 to 3 minutes.
4. Mash the potatoes with the butter, then beat in the warm milk and spring onions until smooth.
5. Fold in the cabbage and season with salt and pepper.
6. Serve hot with a knob of butter melting in a hollow on top.

# Boxty

A potato pancake made from grated raw potato mixed with mashed potato, flour and buttermilk, fried on a griddle or pan until golden. It can be a side dish or a breakfast.

## Ingredients

- 250 g raw floury potatoes, peeled
- 250 g cold mashed potato
- 150 g plain flour
- 1 level teaspoon baking powder
- About 150 ml buttermilk
- Salt and black pepper
- Butter for frying

## Method

1. Grate the raw potatoes finely, put them in a clean tea towel and squeeze out as much liquid as you can.
2. Mix the grated potato with the mashed potato, flour, baking powder, salt and pepper.
3. Stir in enough buttermilk to make a thick batter that drops from a spoon.
4. Melt a little butter in a heavy frying pan over medium heat and drop in tablespoons of the batter, flattening them slightly.
5. Fry for about 4 minutes on each side, until golden and cooked through. Keep them warm while you cook the rest.
6. Serve hot with butter, or with bacon and eggs.

# Dublin coddle

Pork sausages and rashers (thin slices of bacon) slowly cooked with potatoes, onions and herbs in a covered pot, so everything steams and simmers in its own stock. It is served with soda bread to mop up the broth.

## Ingredients

- 8 good pork sausages
- 8 rashers of back bacon, cut into pieces
- 1 kg potatoes, peeled and thickly sliced
- 2 onions, sliced
- 500 ml chicken stock or water
- A handful of chopped parsley
- Black pepper

## Method

1. Heat the oven to 160 °C.
2. Brown the sausages and bacon lightly in a frying pan. Cut the sausages in half if you like.
3. In a heavy ovenproof pot with a lid, layer the potatoes, onions, sausages and bacon, sprinkling parsley and plenty of pepper over each layer.
4. Pour in the stock, cover tightly and cook in the oven for about 1 hour, until the potatoes are soft.
5. Take off the lid for the last 15 minutes if you want the top to brown a little.
6. Serve in bowls with the broth and soda bread.

# Useful phrases

## Dia duit

DEE-uh gwitch · Hello (literally 'God be with you')

## Dia is Muire duit

DEE-uh iss MWIR-eh gwitch · Hello in reply (literally 'God and Mary be with you')

## Maidin mhaith

MAD-jin WAH · Good morning

## Oíche mhaith

EE-heh WAH · Good night

## Conas atá tú?

KUN-us uh-TAW too · How are you?

## Tá mé go maith

TAW may guh MAH · I am well

## Go raibh maith agat

guh rev MAH AH-gut · Thank you

## Le do thoil

leh duh HULL · Please

## Ná habair é

naw HAB-er ay · Don't mention it, you're welcome

## Gabh mo leithscéal

GAW muh LESH-kayl · Excuse me, sorry

## Is mise ...

iss MISH-eh · I am ..., my name is ...

## Cén t-ainm atá ort?

kayn TAN-im uh-TAW urt · What is your name?

## An bhfuil Béarla agat?

un will BAYR-luh AH-gut · Do you speak English?

## **Ní thuigim**

nee HIG-im · I don't understand

## **Cá bhfuil an leithreas?**

kaw will un LEH-rus · Where is the toilet?

## **Céad míle fáilte**

kayd MEE-leh FAWL-cheh · A hundred thousand welcomes

## **Slán go fóill**

slawn guh FOYL · Goodbye for now

## **Go n-éirí an t-ádh leat**

guh NY-ree un TAW lat · Good luck

## **Nollaig shona duit**

NUL-ig HUN-uh ditch · Happy Christmas

## **Lá fhéile Pádraig sona duit**

law AY-leh PAW-drig SUN-uh ditch · Happy St Patrick's Day

## Things you might not know

- 1.** Ireland has no native snakes. Legend says Saint Patrick drove them into the sea, but scientists say snakes never reached Ireland after the last Ice Age.
- 2.** The harp is the official emblem of the Irish state. It appears on Irish euro coins, passports and state seals, and is based on a medieval harp kept at Trinity College Dublin.
- 3.** Halloween has its roots in the old Irish festival of Samhain. In Ireland people once carved lanterns from turnips, and Irish and Scottish emigrants brought the custom to America, where pumpkins took over.
- 4.** On 29 March 2004 Ireland became the first country in the world to ban smoking in all enclosed workplaces, including pubs and restaurants.
- 5.** The Titanic's last port of call was Cobh, then called Queenstown, in Cork Harbour, on 11 April 1912. 123 passengers boarded there.
- 6.** As of 2026, Ireland has won the Eurovision Song Contest seven times, and it is the only country to have won three years in a row, in 1992, 1993 and 1994.
- 7.** The first recorded St Patrick's Day parade was held in 1601 in St. Augustine, in today's Florida. The first parade in Ireland was held in Waterford in 1903, about 300 years later.
- 8.** Four Irish writers have won the Nobel Prize in Literature: W. B. Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney.
- 9.** Every 16 June, fans of James Joyce celebrate 'Bloomsday' in Dublin, the day in 1904 on which his novel 'Ulysses' takes place, often dressed in Edwardian clothes.
- 10.** Gaelic football and hurling, run by the Gaelic Athletic Association since 1884, are the most watched sports in Ireland, yet the players are amateurs. Croke Park in Dublin holds 82,300 people.
- 11.** If the Irish and English texts of the Constitution ever disagree, the Irish text wins.
- 12.** Irish has no single words for 'yes' and 'no'. People answer by repeating the verb of the question, a habit that shows up in Irish English too: 'Are you

coming?' 'I am.'

- 13.** Since 1 January 2022, Irish has been a full official language of the European Union, with EU laws translated into it.

**TALK ABOUT IT**

## Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Ireland, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Irish stew or Soda bread? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- Ireland joins the EEC (1973). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- The Good Friday Agreement (1998). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen Newgrange (Brú na Bóinne), in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Ireland, which would it be and why?

## QUIZ

# How well do you know Ireland?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

### 1. What are the police called in Ireland?

- A) The Gardaí
- B) The Fáilte
- C) The Taoiseach
- D) The Ceol

### 2. People say 'Sláinte!' when they raise a glass. What does the word mean?

- A) Water
- B) Health
- C) Goodbye
- D) Welcome

### 3. In 2004 Ireland became the first country in the world to ban smoking in enclosed workplaces nationwide, including pubs.

- A) True
- B) False

### 4. Ireland joined the European Economic Community on the same day as the United Kingdom, 1 January 1973.

- A) True
- B) False

### 5. How do you say 'thank you' in Irish?

- A) Slán go fóill
- B) Go raibh maith agat
- C) Dia duit
- D) Le do thoil

**6. What is the longest river in Ireland?**

- A) The Liffey
- B) The Lee
- C) The Shannon
- D) The Boyne

**7. What was the Titanic's last port of call before it crossed the Atlantic in April 1912?**

- A) Cobh (then Queenstown)
- B) Dún Laoghaire
- C) Waterford
- D) Galway

**8. What makes Irish soda bread rise, instead of yeast?**

- A) A sourdough starter
- B) Beer
- C) Whisked egg whites
- D) Bread soda and buttermilk

**9. What happens at Newgrange at dawn around the winter solstice?**

- A) The tomb floods with sea water
- B) Sunlight shines down the passage into the inner chamber
- C) The stones ring like bells
- D) Bonfires are lit on its roof

**10. White pudding, part of a full Irish breakfast, is made with blood.**

- A) True
- B) False

**11. Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Ireland.**

- A) True
- B) False

**12. Under the Constitution, Irish is the first official language of Ireland and English is the second.**

- A) True
- B) False

# Quiz answers

## 1. A) The Gardaí

The Gardaí are the police, and one officer is a Garda. The Taoiseach is the head of government.

## 2. B) Health

Sláinte means health, so it is like saying 'to your health'.

## 3. True

True. The ban began on 29 March 2004 and covers enclosed workplaces such as pubs, restaurants and offices.

## 4. True

True. Ireland, the United Kingdom and Denmark all joined on 1 January 1973.

## 5. B) Go raibh maith agat

Go raibh maith agat means thank you. Dia duit is hello, slán go fóill is goodbye for now and le do thoil is please.

## 6. C) The Shannon

The Shannon, about 360 km long including its estuary, is the longest river in Ireland and in Britain and Ireland.

## 7. A) Cobh (then Queenstown)

Cobh (then Queenstown), in Cork Harbour, was the last stop on 11 April 1912. 123 passengers boarded there.

## 8. D) Bread soda and buttermilk

Bread soda and buttermilk react together and make the dough rise, so soda bread needs no yeast and no waiting.

## 9. B) Sunlight shines down the passage into the inner chamber

Sunlight shines down the passage into the inner chamber for about 17 minutes, as its builders planned more than 5,000 years ago.

## 10. False

False. Black pudding contains blood. White pudding is made in a similar way with oatmeal and pork, but without blood.

## 11. False

False. Patrick was born in Britain. At 16 he was captured by Irish raiders and kept as a slave in Ireland, and he later returned as a missionary.

## **12. True**

True. Irish (Gaeilge) is the national and first official language, and English is the second official language, although most people speak English every day.

# Ireland visa page

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Next stops

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