



IRELAND



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	1	Contact Addresses
	2	General
	3	Passport
	4	Money
	5	Duty Free
	6	Public Holidays
	7	Health
	8	Accommodation
	9	Sport & Activities
	10	Social Profile
	11	Business Profile
	12	Climate
	13	History and Government
	14	Overview

1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: Europe, off the west coast of Britain.

Bord Fáilte Éireann
Baggot Street Bridge, Dublin 2, Ireland
Tel: (1) 602 4000. Fax: (1) 602 4100.
E-mail: fdowney@irishtouristboard.ie
Web site: <http://www.ireland.travel.ie>

Embassy of the Republic of Ireland
17 Grosvenor Place, London SW1X 7HR
Tel: (020) 7235 2171. Fax: (020) 7245 6961. Opening hours: Monday to Friday 0900-1700.
Passport and Visa office: Montpelier House, 106 Brompton Road, London SW3 1JJ.
Tel: (020) 7225 7700. Fax: (020) 7225 7777/8. Opening hours: 0930-1630 Monday to Friday.

Irish Tourist Board/Bord Fáilte
150 New Bond Street, London W1S 2AQ
Tel: (020) 7518 0800 or (0800) 039 7000 (travel enquiries). Fax: (020) 7493 9065. E-mail: info@irishtouristboard.co.uk
Web site: <http://www.irelandtravel.co.uk>

British Embassy
29 Merrion Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, Ireland
Tel: (1) 205 3700. Fax: (1) 205 3885.
E-mail: bembassy@internet-ireland.ie
Web site: <http://www.britishembassy.ie>

Embassy of the Republic of Ireland
2234 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008
Tel: (202) 462 3939. Fax: (202) 232 5993. E-mail: embirlus@aol.com
web site: <http://www.irelandemb.org>
Consulates in: Boston, Chicago, New York (tel: (212) 319 2555) and San Francisco.

Irish Tourist Board/Bord Fáilte
345 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10154
Tel: (212) 418 0800 (general enquiries) or (1 800) 223 6470 (toll free; consumers in USA and Canada only) or (1 800) 669 9967 (toll free; travel trade in USA and Canada only). Fax: (212) 371 9052 or (1 800) 748 3730 (travel trade in USA and Canada only). E-mail: info@irishtouristboard.com
Web site: <http://www.irelandvacations.com>
Also deals with enquiries from Canada.

Embassy of the United States of America
42 Elgin Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, Ireland
Tel: (1) 668 8777. Fax: (1) 668 9946.
Web site: <http://www.usembassy.ie>

Embassy of the Republic of Ireland
130 Albert Street, Suite 1105, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5G4

Tel: (613) 233 6281. Fax: (613) 233 5835.

E-mail: emb.ireland@sympatico.ca

Canadian Embassy

65 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland

Tel: (1) 478 1988. Fax: (1) 478 1285. E-mail: cdnembsy@iol.ie

Country dialling code: 353.

2 GENERAL

Area: 70,285 sq km (27,137 sq miles).

Population: 3,626,087 (1996).

Population Density: 51.6 per sq km.

Capital: Dublin. Population: 952,700 (1996).

Geography: The Republic of Ireland lies in the north Atlantic Ocean and is separated from Britain by the Irish Sea to the east. The northeastern part of the island (Northern Ireland) is part of the United Kingdom. The country has a central plain surrounded by a rim of mountains and hills offering some of the most varied and unspoilt scenery in Europe - quiet sandy beaches, semi-tropical bays warmed by the Gulf Stream, and rugged cliffs make up the 5600km (3500 miles) of coastline.

Government: Republic. Head of State: President Mary McAleese since 1997. Head of Government: Prime Minister Bertie Ahern.

Language: Irish (Gaelic) is the official language, spoken as a first language by about 55,000 people (mostly in the west). The majority speak English.

Religion: Roman Catholic 95%, Protestant 5%.

Time: GMT (GMT + 1 from last Sunday in March to Saturday before the last Sunday in October).

Electricity: 220 volts AC, 50Hz. 3-pin plugs are in use.

Communications:

Telephone: IDD is available. Country code: 353 followed by the area code, omitting the initial zero. Outgoing international code: 00.

Mobile telephone: GSM 900 networks cover the whole country. GSM 900/1800 network (operated by Meteor) covers approximately 60% of the country. Handsets can be hired. For further information, contact Eircell (web site: <http://www.eircell.ie>).

Fax: Facilities are widely available.

Internet/E-mail: Public access is available free in libraries. Cybercafés exist in nearly every town. ISPs include Ireland On-Line (web site: <http://home.iol.ie>).

Post: Post office hours: 0900-1730/1800 Monday to Friday; 0900-1300 Saturday. Sub-post offices close at 1300 one day of the week. The Central Post Office is in O'Connell Street, Dublin.

Press: There are several daily newspapers published in Dublin including The Irish Times, Evening Herald and the Irish Independent; and two in Cork. British dailies and Sunday papers are available.

BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies: From time to time these change.

BBC:

MHz12.109.4106.1950.648

Voice of America:

MHz9.7606.0401.5480.792

3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	1	No	No
Australian	Yes	No	No
Canadian	Yes	No	No
USA	Yes	No	No
OtherEU	2	No	No
Japanese	Yes	No	No

PASSPORTS: Valid passport required by all except:

- (a) 1. persons born in the UK travelling direct from the UK;
- (b) 2. nationals of Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and The Netherlands holding a valid national identity card; (it is, however, advisable to bring a valid passport).

VISAS: Required by all except the following:

- (a) nationals of countries referred to in the chart above;
- (b) nationals of Andorra, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, British Dependent Territories*, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Jamaica, Korea (Rep. of), Latvia, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Nauru, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Swaziland, Switzerland, Tonga, Trinidad & Tobago, Uruguay, Vatican City, Venezuela, Samoa and Zimbabwe.

Note*: (a) Anguilla, Bermuda, British Antarctic Territory (South Georgia, South Sandwich Islands), British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos Archipelago, Peros Banos, Diego Garcia, Danger Island), Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands & Dependencies, Gibraltar, Montserrat, Pitcairn (Henderson, Ducie & Onono Islands), St Helena & Dependencies (Ascension Island, Tristan da Cunha), Turks & Caicos Islands and British Virgin Islands. (b) Certain nationals do require a transit visa at all times. As this list is subject to frequent change, travellers should check with the

nearest Irish Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy) before departure. (c) Persons holding a Hong Kong Certificate of Identity require an entry visa.

Types of visa and cost: Single-entry: £20. Multiple-entry: £40. Transit: £8. Nationals of some countries receive visas free of charge. Enquire at Consulate/Consular section of Embassy for further details.

Application to: Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy); see address section for details.

Application requirements: (a) 1 completed application form. (b) Fee. (c) Letters to substantiate purpose of visit. (d) 3 passport-size photos. (e) Letter from place of employment/study.

Working days required: 10.

4 MONEY

Currency: Irish Punt (IR£) = 100 pence. Notes are in denominations of IR£50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of IR£1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 pence.

Single European currency (Euro): The Euro is now the official currency of 12 EU member states (including Ireland), although it is currently only used as 'written money' (cheques, bank transactions, credit cards, etc). The first Euro coins and notes will be introduced in January 2002; the Irish Punt will still be in circulation until July 1 2002, when it will be completely replaced by the Euro. 1 Euro = IR£0.787564.

Currency exchange: Available in banks, airports and in bureaux de change. Cash dispensers are widely available.

Credit cards: MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club and Visa are all widely accepted. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Travellers cheques: Accepted throughout Ireland. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in Pounds Sterling.

Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Irish Punt against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date Nov '99 May '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 £1.00 = 1.241.311.281.33 \$1.00 = 0.750.880.850.91

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Euro against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date May '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 Feb '01 1 Euro = £0.60 £0.62 £0.59 £0.62 1 Euro = \$0.89 \$0.93 \$0.86 \$0.92

Currency restrictions: There are no restrictions on the import of local and foreign currencies. The export of local currency is restricted to IR£150 and of foreign currency to the amount imported.

Banking hours: 1000-1600 Monday to Friday. In Dublin, banks stay open until 1700 Thursday; there are also late opening nights in other parts of the country, but the day will vary.

5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported by persons over 17 years of age without incurring customs duty if obtained duty- and/or tax-free outside the EU:

200 cigarettes or 100 cigarillos or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco; 1 litre of spirits (more than 22%) or 2 litres of other alcoholic beverages, including sparkling or fortified wine, plus 2 litres of table wine; 50g of perfume and 250ml of eau de toilette; goods to the value of IR£32.

Prohibited items: Meat, dairy products and raw vegetables.

Abolition of duty free goods within the EU: On June 30 1999, the sale of duty-free alcohol and tobacco at airports and at sea was abolished in all 15 EU member states. 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.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Mar 17 St Patrick's Day. Apr 13 Good Friday. Apr 16 Easter Monday. May 7 Bank Holiday. Jun 4 Bank Holiday. Aug 6 Bank Holiday. Oct 29 Bank Holiday. Dec 25-28 Christmas. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Mar 17 St Patrick's Day. Mar 29 Good Friday. Apr 1 Easter Monday. May 1 Bank Holiday. Jun 3 Bank Holiday. Aug 5 Bank Holiday. Oct 28 Bank Holiday. Dec 25-26 Christmas.

7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
Yellow Fever	No	No
Cholera	No	No
Typhoid and Polio	No	-
Malaria	No	-
Food and Drink	No	-

Health care: There is a reciprocal health agreement with the UK. However, health care in Ireland is not normally free and health insurance is advisable. Local Health Boards arrange consultations with doctors and dentists. Evidence of residence in the UK is required, for example an NHS medical card or a driving licence, to take advantage of the agreement. Visitors should make it clear before treatment that they wish to be treated under the EU's social security regulations; it may be necessary to complete a simple statement to this effect. Visitors from other EU and EEA member states are entitled to urgent medical treatment without charge, provided that they present form E111, which should be obtained before departure.

Travel - International

AIR: The Republic of Ireland's national airline is Aer Lingus (EI). Aer Lingus provides a service from Los Angeles to Shannon and Dublin. Delta Air Lines operates a service from New York's JFK Airport to Shannon and Dublin. Services to London are frequent and moderately priced. There is a wide range of promotional air fares to Ireland from main cities in the UK, and an ever increasing number of airlines connect regional UK airports with Ireland.

APPROXIMATE FLIGHT TIMES: From Dublin to London is 50 minutes; from Dublin to New York is 5 hours.

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS: Dublin Airport (DUB) (web site: <http://www.dublin-airport.com>) is 8km (5 miles) north of the city. The 41A city bus leaves Abbey Street at regular intervals (travel time - 35 minutes). Airport express coaches and taxis are available to the city centre. Airport facilities include airside duty-free shop, car hire, bank, bureau de change, bar, restaurant, tourist information centre and chemist. Opening hours vary throughout the year.

Shannon Airport (SNN) (web site: <http://www.shannonairport.com>) is 26km (16 miles) west of Limerick (travel time - 25 minutes). Bus services are available to and from both Limerick and Clare, approximately every hour. A daily express coach travels between Limerick and Shannon and between Galway and Shannon. Taxi service is available to Limerick. Airport facilities include outgoing duty-free shop, bank, bureau de change, bar, restaurant and tourist information centre.

Cork Airport (ORK) (web site: <http://www.cork-airport.com>) is 8km (5 miles) southwest of the city. Buses travel between the city centre and airport (travel time - 25 minutes). Airport facilities include outgoing duty-free shop, car hire, bar and restaurant. Facilities are open during operational hours.

Knock International Airport (NOC) is 11km (7 miles) north of Claremorris (Co Mayo) and receives international flights from the UK only. Taxi services are available to Claremorris, where onward rail and bus connections are available to the rest of the country. Airport facilities include duty-free shop, bar, restaurant and car hire (pre-booking advised).

SEA: In addition to conventional ferry crossings, many ferry companies now offer high-speed services as well as upgraded, state-of-the-art craft on many Irish sea routes. Fares will vary by season and promotional offers are available. For information on routes, fares and reservations, contact one of the following: Brittany Ferries (tel: (0990) 360 360; web site: <http://www.brittany-ferries.com>); Irish Ferries (tel: (08705) 171 717 (UK office) or (1) 638 3333 (Dublin office); web site: <http://www.irishferries.com>); Isle of Man Steam Packet (tel: (01624) 661 661; web site: <http://www.steam-packet.com>); P&O Irish Sea (tel: (0870) 242 4777; web site: <http://www.poirishsea.com>); Stena Line (tel: (08705) 707 070; web site: <http://www.stenaline.co.uk>); and Swansea-Cork Ferries (tel: (01792) 456 116; web site: <http://www.swansea-cork.ie>). Most ferry companies now also offer an online booking facility on their web site.

Routes from Britain include:

FROM ENGLAND: Liverpool-Dublin (crossing time - 8 hours); Liverpool - Larne (Northern Ireland, seasonal); Fleetwood-Larne (Northern Ireland, crossing time - 8 hours).

FROM THE ISLE OF MAN: Douglas-Dublin (travel time - 2 hours and 45 minutes, summer only).

FROM SCOTLAND: Cairnryan-Larne (Northern Ireland, crossing time - 1 hour on fast ferries and 1 hour and 45 minutes on conventional ferries); Stranraer-Belfast (105 minutes on fast ferries and 3 hours 15 minutes on a conventional ferry); Stranraer-Larne (Northern Ireland; crossing time - 2 hours and 10 minutes on conventional ferries).

FROM WALES: Holyhead (Isle of Anglesey)-Dublin (1 hour and 49 minutes on fast ferries and minimum 3 hours and 15 minutes on conventional ferries); Holyhead (Isle of Anglesey)-Dun Laoghaire (99 minutes on fast ferries); Fishguard-Rosslare (99 minutes on fast ferries and 3 hours and 30 minutes on conventional ferries); Swansea-Cork (seasonal, 10 hours); Pembroke-Rosslare (3 hours 45 minutes).

Routes from continental Europe include:

FROM FRANCE: Irish Ferries operate at least four direct ferry crossings a day between France and Ireland. The routes are Cherbourg-Rosslare (18 hours); Roscoff-Rosslare (16 hours); and Roscoff-Cork (24 hours).

RAIL: Rail links serve Ireland from all the above ferry ports, as well as from Northern Ireland.

Travel - Internal

AIR: Aer Lingus (as well as several other carriers) operates services throughout the country. Charter flights are also available. The Aran Islands are served by Aer Aran via a 15-minute flight from Connemara Regional Airport (located 27km/17 miles west of Galway city).

DOMESTIC AIRPORTS: Galway (GWY) is approximately 8km (5 miles) from the city centre.

Bus and taxi services available into Galway centre.

Sligo (SXL) is 8km (5 miles) from Sligo. Essential facilities only. Taxis need prior booking. Bus and taxi services are available into Sligo.

Carrickfinn (CFN) is in Co Donegal.

Kerry (Farranfore) (KIR) in Co Kerry is 19km (12 miles) from both Killarney and Tralee. Taxi services are available to both these towns and to the nearby railway station. Car hire is also available.

As well as the airports listed above (and in Travel - International), there are various small licensed airstrips which receive passenger services; enquire at the Irish Tourist Board for details of operators and routes.

SEA: Ferry services run to the various west coast islands. Enquiries should be made locally.

RAIL: Rail services in the Republic are owned by Iarnród Éireann (Irish Rail) (web site: <http://www.irishrail.ie>) and express trains run between the main cities. There are two classes of accommodation, with restaurant and buffet cars on some trains. Children under five travel free. Children aged 5-15 pay half fare. A range of rail-only and combined rail and bus tickets is available for unlimited travel within the Republic of Ireland or all Ireland. The Eurorail card system is valid in Ireland.

ROAD: The network links all parts of Ireland; road signs are international. Traffic drives on the left. Bus: Internal bus services are run by Bus Éireann (Irish Bus) (web site: <http://www.buseireann.ie>) which has a nationwide network of buses serving all the major cities and most towns and villages outside the Dublin area. Bus services in remote areas are infrequent. An 'Expressway' coach network complements rail services. The central bus station is in Store Street, Dublin. A variety of special passes are available, including the Irish Rambler, which offers unlimited travel for 3, 8 or 15 days. Several independent bus companies, which are often cheaper, faster and more frequent than Bus Éireann, operate regular, scheduled services to and from Dublin; local papers carry advertisements and details of these. Coach tours: Many companies offer completely escorted coach tours, varying in length and itinerary. Full-day and half-day guided tours are organised from the larger towns and cities. These run from May to October. Full details are available from CIE Tours International office. Taxi: Service is available in major cities. Cruising taxis are infrequent. Places to get taxis are at hotels, rail and bus stations

or taxi stands. Car hire: Available from all air and sea ports as well as major hotels. All international hire companies are represented in Ireland, as well as local operators. Age requirements vary from a minimum of 21 to a maximum of 75 years. A full licence from the driver's home country is required, and the driver will normally be required to have had at least two years' experience. Bicycle hire: Ask for a Tourist Board leaflet. Documentation: EU nationals taking cars into the Republic require: motor registration book (or owner's authority in writing); full EU driving licence or International Driving Permit; nationality coding stickers; and insurance cover valid for the Republic. A Green Card is strongly recommended, as without it, insurance cover is limited to the minimum legal requirement in Ireland - the Green Card tops this up to the cover provided by the visitor's domestic policy.

URBAN: Extensive bus services operate in Dublin. There is a new, fast suburban rail service (DART), connecting Howth and Bray, including a link to Dun Laoghaire (the ferry port). The Dublin Explorer ticket is valid for four days on all Dublin buses and DART suburban trains. This ticket may not be used before 0945, but there are no evening restrictions.

JOURNEY TIMES: The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Dublin to other major cities/towns in Ireland.

Air	Road	Rail
Cork	0.40	3.00
Galway	0.35	2.45
Limerick	3.30	3.00
Shannon Airport	0.35	--
Waterford	0.30	2.30
Kilkenny	2.00	1.45
Killarney	3.00	3.30

8 ACCOMMODATION

There are many forms of accommodation in Ireland, ranging from hotels and guest-houses to farmhouses, town and country homes, holiday hostels, youth hostels, holiday centres and self-catering. Prices vary according to location, type of accommodation, facilities and season. Bord Fáilte (Irish Tourist Board) can provide information on published accommodation guides, although it no longer publishes its own. For details, apply to Bord Fáilte (Irish Tourist Board); see address section.

HOTELS: There are 668 hotels inspected, approved and graded by Bord Fáilte and prices are fixed by the Tourist Board. Most hotels belong to the Irish Hotels Federation, 13 Northbrook Road, Dublin 6 (tel: (1) 497 6459; fax: (1) 497 4613; e-mail: info@ihf.ie; web site: <http://www.beourguest.ie>).

Grading: The Irish Tourist Board registers and grades hotels as follows:

5-star: Top grade of hotel. All rooms have private bathroom, many have suites. Dining facilities include top-class à la carte.

4-star: All provide a high standard of comfort and service. All have private bathrooms.

3-star: Medium-priced. Comfortable accommodation and good service. All have private bathrooms.

2-star: Likely to be family operated with a limited but satisfactory standard of food and comfort. Most rooms will have a private bathroom.

1-star: Hotels that are clean and comfortable with satisfactory accommodation and service.

GUEST-HOUSES: Guest-houses are smaller, more intimate establishments often under family management. There are over 209 guest-houses registered and inspected by the Irish Tourist Board. These range from converted country houses to purpose-built accommodation. Meals range from bed & breakfast to full board. The minimum number of bedrooms is five and the availability of meals is not a requirement.

Grading: The Irish Tourist Board registers and grades guest-houses as follows:

4-star: Guest-houses which provide a very high standard of comfort and personal service. In most cases 4-star guest-houses provide a good quality evening meal, hot and cold running water in all bedrooms. All premises have rooms with private baths.

3-star: Guest-houses which provide a high standard of comfort and personal service. Hot and cold running water in all bedrooms. All premises have rooms with private baths.

2-star: Guest-houses that are well furnished, offering very comfortable accommodation with limited, but good standard of food and service. Hot and cold running water in all bedrooms.

1-star: Guest-houses that are clean and comfortable. Hot and cold running water in all bedrooms. Adequate bathroom and toilet facilities.

Ungraded premises: Hotels and guest-houses not sufficiently long in operation are left ungraded.

FARMHOUSES/TOWN & COUNTRY HOMES: There are 2853 town or country homes and 517 farmhouses offering bed & breakfast on a daily or weekly basis with other meals often provided.

Irish Homes: This informal type of accommodation gives visitors the opportunity to share in the life of an Irish family in an urban or country setting. They may live in a Georgian residence, a modern bungalow or a traditional cottage. A farmhouse holiday again gives scope for meeting the people and is especially suitable for children. Visitors can forget about city life and enjoy the everyday life of the farm. Either way it will be a relaxing and friendly holiday.

All homes and farmhouses that have been inspected and approved by the Irish Tourist Board are listed in the official guide, available from the Tourist Board. In addition to this, the Town and Country Homes Association and Fáilte Tuaithe (pronounced Foil-tya Too-ha), the Irish Farmhouse Association, produce their own annual guides to their members' houses. These are also available from the Irish Tourist Board in Britain and from tourist information offices throughout Ireland. For **more information, contact Fáilte Tuaithe (Irish Farm Holidays), 2 Michael Street, Limerick (tel: (61) 400 700; fax: (61) 400 771; e-mail: farmhols@iol.ie; web site: <http://www.irishfarmholidays.com>);** or the Town and Country Homes Association, Belleek Road, Ballyshannon, Co Donegal (tel: (72) 22222; fax: (72) 22207; e-mail: tchal@iol.ie; web site: <http://www.townandcountry.ie>).

SELF-CATERING: There are over 2507 self-catering establishments scattered throughout Ireland, listed by the Irish Tourist Board. Self-catering holidays are available for those who like to come and go as they please without any restrictions. There is self-catering accommodation to suit all tastes, including houses, self-contained apartments, cottages and caravans. There are

even traditional-style thatched cottages which are fully equipped and located in carefully selected beauty spots. Further details can be obtained from Irish Cottages and Holiday Homes Association, 4 Whitefriars, Aungier Street, Dublin 2 (tel: (1) 475 1932; fax: (1) 475 5321; e-mail: margaret@irishwelcometours.ie; web site: <http://www.ichh.ie>).

CAMPING/CARAVANNING: Ireland's caravan and camping parks are inspected by the Irish Tourist Board. Those that meet minimum requirements are identified by a special sign and listed in an official guide which shows the facilities at each park. Firms offering touring caravans, tents and camping equipment for hire are included in the listing. There are 125 caravan and camp-sites. The majority are open from May to September. Further details are available from Irish Caravan and Camping Council, PO Box 4443, Dublin 2 (fax: (98) 28237; e-mail: info@camping-ireland.ie; web site: <http://www.camping-ireland.ie>).

Youth Hostels: 48 youth hostels are operated by An Oige (Irish Youth Hostel Association), 61 Mountjoy Street, Dublin 7 (tel: (1) 830 4555; fax: (1) 830 5808; e-mail: muilbon@anoige.ie; web site: <http://www.irelandyha.org>). They provide simple dormitory accommodation with comfortable beds and facilities for cooking one's own meals. Usage is confined to members of An Oige or other youth organisations affiliated to the International Youth Hostel Federation. Non-members can buy stamps at hostels entitling them to further hostel use.

HOLIDAY HOSTELS: 150 registered holiday hostels offer privately owned accommodation at reasonable prices. Dormitory-style sleeping accommodation and/or private bedrooms are available, with fully-equipped kitchens. No membership is required. Some provide meals, others breakfast only. For further information, contact the Irish Tourist Board.

HOLIDAY CENTRES: These centres offer a comprehensive holiday with a wide variety of amenities and facilities including self-catering units, indoor heated swimming pool and restaurant facilities. The centres are registered with the Irish Tourist Board.

The East & Southeast Coast

Ireland's coastline is 2200km (3500 miles) long, offering an astonishing variety of scenery and conditions, from the long, gently sloping strands of the east coast to the wild rocky headlands of the west. There are a number of well-equipped, popular resorts, but Ireland is still unspoilt by over-commercialisation. The majority of resorts - including some of the loveliest - are peaceful, unpretentious places ideal for family holidays. Some of the most spectacular beaches are uncrowded, even at the height of summer. Indeed, the whole country is noted for its relaxed pace of life. Amongst the many attractions are several pre-Christian sites dotted all over the country.

There are over 50 Tourist Information Offices throughout the country who will be able to offer help, advice and suggestions regarding all aspects of holidays and travel in their regions. Offices are normally open 0900-1800 Monday to Friday and 0900-1300 Saturday, but these may vary according to local custom and circumstance. Offices at seaports and airports will generally keep extended hours during the summer months.

REGIONS: For the purpose of this survey the country has been divided into the following four regions:

The East Coast: The East Coast: Counties Dublin, Louth, Meath, Kildare, Wicklow, Wexford, Carlow, Waterford and Kilkenny.

The Southwest: The Southwest: Counties Cork, Kerry, Clare, Limerick and Tipperary.

The West: The West: Counties Galway, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal.

The Lakelands: The Lakelands: Counties Monaghan, Cavan, Longford, Westmeath, Roscommon, Offaly and Laois.

This coast was, owing to its geographical situation, the region which felt the effects of colonisation most strongly, both by the Vikings from the 9th century onwards and by the English after the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1170. It is a rich and varied area with woods, beaches, cliffs, stately homes and ruined castles.

Dublin: Dublin, the capital city of Ireland, is spread over the broad valley of the River Liffey around Dublin Bay in a great sweep of coast from the rocky brow of Howth in the north to the headland of Dalkey in the south, and sheltered by the Wicklow Hills. In addition to its imposing public buildings, Dublin is particularly rich in architecture of the 18th century with fine Georgian mansions, wide streets and spacious squares. There are fashionable shopping centres and a range of cultural and sporting entertainments. From the city it is just a short journey to the Dublin Mountains or to one of the beaches.

There are many public parks in Dublin, the most famous of which is Phoenix Park at the western edge of the city. Originally priory land, it became a royal deer park in the 17th century. It is home to the Irish President and the US ambassador to Ireland. The park is noted for the Viceroy Lodge and a 61m (200ft) obelisk erected in tribute to the Duke of Wellington in 1817. The park, with a circumference of 11km (7 miles), has a network of roads and many quiet walks running through it. There is a zoo near the main entrance and an area known as The Fifteen Acres (but actually covering about 200), once the old duelling grounds, but now used as playing fields. A full programme of sightseeing tours of Dublin (all year) and surrounding areas (in summer) is operated by Bus Eireann. Walking tours or 'Tourist Trails' are signposted in the city centre. These tours are contained in a special booklet giving maps and background information on points of interest along the routes and details of approved Dublin and national guides; for details of these and the many evening entertainments, see the daily newspapers or enquire at the Tourist Information Office.

Housed in the west wing of Leinster House, The National Gallery has over 2000 paintings. The National Museum has a collection of Irish antiquities from the Stone Age to medieval times. The most famous exhibits include the 8th-century Ardagh Chalice and Tara Brooch and the 12th-century Cross of Cong. There is also a room devoted to the Easter Rising and War of Independence. Other museums worth visiting include the Dublin Civic Museum; the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art; the National Library of Ireland and the Royal Irish Academy Library. Trinity College Library houses the 8th-century Book of Kells and the finest collection of early illuminated manuscripts in Ireland.

Trinity College is the city's most famous landmark. Founded by Elizabeth I in 1591, it is noted for its cobbled stone quadrangles and imposing grey college buildings. Dublin Castle, the seat of British administration from the 12th century to the 1920s, can be found on high ground west of Dame Street and Christ Church Cathedral, one of the city's finest historical buildings, located at the end of Lord Edward Street.

Dublin has facilities for most major sports. The national hurling and Gaelic football finals (September) and the Dublin Horse Show (August) are outstanding among the city's sporting events. There is horseracing at two suburban courses and at other venues within easy reach, rugby at Landsdowne Road and greyhound racing for most of the year on six evenings a week at one of the two Dublin tracks. The golfer has about 30 excellent courses to choose from. Sea bathing is available at nearby resorts, and there are municipal indoor heated swimming pools in the city and suburbs.

Theatre is always available in Dublin. The principal theatres are the Abbey, Peacock, Gate, Gaiety, Olympia and New Eblana. During the summer the Gaiety and the Olympia provide a season of variety and revue with well-known Irish and visiting artists, and occasional weeks of

light opera and drama presented by first-class performers. The Gate is concerned mainly with producing the internationally recognised classics, and has a special feeling for the work of Irish writers of sophisticated comedy - such as Goldsmith, Sheridan, Wilde and Shaw. The New Eblana is a small theatre which has been acclaimed for its productions of modern plays.

The National Theatre of Ireland is the Abbey, where the programme consists almost entirely of new plays by Irish authors interspersed with revivals from the repertoire, which includes Yeats, Synge, O'Casey, Boucicault, Behan and Beckett. In the same building, the smaller Peacock Theatre provides the Abbey Players with an opportunity for experimental work.

The shows of Lambert Mews Theatre are directed and produced by the famous Lambert puppeteers. The theatre seats 100 people and is 10km (6 miles) from the city centre.

Performances are nightly with two matinées weekly for children.

All these theatres perform Monday to Saturday; bookings should be made in advance.

The Projects Arts Centre presents drama, poetry readings and recitals at lunchtime and in the evening. These are very popular with student visitors (also open Sunday).

The National Concert Hall, Earlsport Terrace, provides high-quality concerts throughout the year.

South of Dublin, Waterford is a bustling maritime county, dotted with small fishing villages, beaches and numerous well-developed resorts along its scenic coastline. Waterford is perhaps best known for its world-famous hand-cut crystal and the Waterford Crystal Visitor Centre, the region's most visited tourist attraction, offers a range of tours to provide visitors with an insight into local crystal art. Other attractions in Waterford City include the City Heritage Museum, the Lismore Heritage Centre, Reginalds Tower Museum as well as two cathedrals, exhibitions in the city hall and some interesting glassworks. The burial place of Richard Strongbow and his Irish wife Eva can be found here. A special Waterford City Tour is available from the tourist information centre. A short distance from the city is the village of Passage East, where Richard landed in 1170, an event which was to bind together the fortunes of England and Ireland. Nearby Lismore, a designated Heritage Town, contains a double 7th-century monastery, a cathedral dating from 1633 and the Ballysaggatmore Towers, which are imposing Gothic buildings located in pleasant woodland, a popular destination for picnics. Other historic buildings in the vicinity include a monastery at Ardmore and an Augustinian Abbey in Dungarvan.

Further north, Meath and Louth (the smallest of the 32 counties), between Dublin and the border, are lush and wooded counties with many fine beaches and, particularly in Louth, rugged cliffs rising out of the sea. The Cooley Peninsula in Louth has a beautiful coastline and is the setting of one of the oldest legends of Irish literature, the Táin Bó Cuailnge (the Cattle Raid of Cooley). Meath contains the greatest wealth of historical remains in the country including Tara, the seat of Celtic Ireland, 10th-century high crosses, and the largest Norman fortress in Ireland at Trim. Wicklow, south of the capital, is known as 'the Garden of Ireland'. It is also rich in stately homes and in reminders of Ireland's early medieval Christian heritage. In the hinterland of County Wicklow and County Dublin are the Wicklow Mountains. Further south from Wicklow is Wexford, also a fertile farming region, surrounded by hills and rivers and is famous for its Opera Festival.

EXCURSIONS: Newgrange,: EXCURSIONS: Newgrange, Dowth, Knowth and Meath are the most important of the group of around 40 Stone Age monuments known as the Brú Na Bóinne. These burial chambers, known as passage graves, predate the pyramids. The Cooley Peninsula (Louth) is good for hill walks. In the Dublin environs Howth Castle and Malahide Castle, Dun Laoghaire (pronounced 'Dun Leary'), Russborough and Castletown House and the Archbishop's ruined castle at Swords are all worth seeing.

RESORTS: RESORTS: The eastern seaboard has some 400km (250 miles) of fine, silvery sand beaches running from the Mountains of Mourne to the port of Waterford.

Duncannon: Duncannon is a pleasant holiday town with a good beach and a rocky coast to the south. There is good walking and little traffic to the end of the peninsula. The area is ideal for

those looking for isolated spots. The two finest sandy beaches are Booley Strand and Dollar Bay. Fethard-on-Sea is a quiet village on Hook Peninsula with a good beach. Rosslare is best known for its 10km (6-mile) beach backed by dunes and pleasant countryside. Curracloe has a very long beach backed by interesting countryside. Kilmuckridge is known for its excellent beach with fine sand backed by Old World Village. Blackwater is a picturesque village with a sandy beach. Ballymoney is situated 5km (3 miles) north of Courtown. There is a good beach backed by dunes here. Arklow, a seaport town, has safe bathing on fine sandy beaches at North and South Strands. Johnstown Strand and Ennereilly Strand are also good bathing places. It has an amusement centre with swimming pool. Brittas Bay has an excellent beach of fine sand. Dun Laoghaire is a large, residential town with bathing, yachting, etc. There is a beach at Seapoint and outdoor pool open from May-August. The famous 'Forty-Foot' swimming place is at Sandycove. The beach at Sandycove Harbour is also popular. Howth is a fishing village. There is good bathing from Balscadden Beach (shingle) and Claremont Strand (sand). Ireland's Eye, a little island 2km (1 mile) offshore, has some delightful bathing coves. There is also an old stone church here on the site of a 6th-century monastery and an 18th-century Martello tower. Portmarnock: Popular seaside resort with an excellent beach. Malahide: Popular seaside area with a good sandy beach. Skerries is a well-known north Dublin bathing place with a good beach and island rocks of that name. Balbriggan is a coastal town with a good beach. Blackrock in County Louth has a wide shallow beach and no cliffs. Carlingford has a small shingle and sand beach on Carlingford Lough. Nearby is the scenic village of Omeath with a shingle beach. Donabate has a ruined castle and safe sandy beaches and leads to Lambay Island, the scene of the first Viking raid in 795. Rush: Seaside resort with safe sandy beaches. Clogher Head has outstanding views of the Mountains of Mourne and Skerries. There is also a wide sandy beach safe for bathing. Ardmore is a charming resort with an extensive sandy beach. There is a medieval cathedral and round tower with spectacular views over Ardmore Bay. Tramore, a busy seaside resort, has a 5km (3-mile) beach and excellent entertainment facilities. Dunmore East has an attractive harbour, headlands, cliffs and coves.

The Southwest

The counties of the southwest (Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Tipperary) comprise all of the ancient Kingdom of Munster and part of Connaught. This region includes the River Shannon, an area of great natural beauty and excellent fishing, countless lakes (including Lough Derg), ranges of rugged mountains such as the Knockmealdowns, the Galtees and rich fertile plains, as well as a staggering variety of historical and prehistoric remains.

EXCURSIONS: The Burren: EXCURSIONS: The Burren, a vast limestone plain, of great interest to botanists and archaeologists; hundreds of castles, ranging from the immaculate to the dilapidated; Limerick, Ireland's fourth-largest city, with Georgian buildings; the 13th-century King John's Castle and the 12th-century St Mary's Cathedral; Bunratty Castle, a few miles from Limerick, with its famous folk museum and medieval-style banquets; Cashel, one of the most important historical sites in the country; the beautiful countryside of the Dingle Peninsula, the westernmost point of Europe; the 'Ring of Kerry' road, taking in such places as Killorglin (with the Puck Fair in August), Killarney, Valentia, Lough Currane, the Staigue Fort and the Standing Stones at the Shrubberies near Kenmare; Blarney Castle and the Blarney Stone, near Cork; the city of Cork with St Finbarr's Cathedral, Fota Island on the edge of the city, the old town, many churches, museums and art galleries; many quiet towns ringed with hills, such as Bandon and Macroom; Tralee, an attractive town with a good shopping centre and annual international 'Rose of Tralee' festival, and a good base for excursions to the west coast. Bantry and the remote Beara Peninsula offer stunning coastal scenery and many good guest houses.

RESORTS: Beal: RESORTS: Beal: Long sandy beach on the Shannon estuary near Ballybunion, a leading holiday resort. A fine stretch of sand fronts the town, affording good and safe bathing.

Good sporting and recreational facilities. Ballyheigue: Quiet village, miles of sandy beach on a low lying peninsula. Cloghane: Fine beach situated beneath the eastern slopes of Brandon Mountain. Ballyferriter/Dunquin: Magnificent scenery of sandy coves among rocky cliffs overlooking the Blasket Islands. Ventry: Long, safe sandy, beach 8km (5 miles) from Dingle. Inch: 6.5km (4-mile) strand on Dingle Peninsula. Ballymona: Sandy beach 5km (3 miles) from Ballycotton. Glenbeigh: 3km (2 miles) from Glenbeigh is Rosdsbeigh Strand. Extensive sandy beach. Good bathing. Valentia Island: Situated less than a quarter of a mile offshore. Striking cliff scenery. Bathing and good sea fishing. Bridge from Portmagee. Beginish Island: In Valentia Harbour; has a fine strand. Ballinskelligs: Fine strand just outside the village. Attractions include boating, bathing, fishing and striking coastal scenery. Waterville: Good sandy beaches near the village. Reenore: Sandy beach within a few miles of Waterville. Kells: Pleasant sandy cove within easy reach of Waterville. Castlecove: Sandy beach situated amid rugged romantic scenery. Sneem: 15-minute drive to safe sandy beaches. Parknasilla: Good bathing in nearby coves. Boating facilities. Tahilla: Secluded village in Coongar Harbour. Kenmare: Beautifully situated and good bathing. Ballydonegan: Fine beach with good bathing. Castletownbere: Sheltered harbour. Small shingle beach nearby. Glengariff: Pleasant coastal resort. Ballylickey: Secluded sea inlet; fine scenery. Bantry: Well situated, sheltered by a background of hills. Kilcrohane: Secluded spot on Dunmanus Bay. Ahakista: Good bathing at coves and little strands nearby. Barleycove: Fine sandy beach. Crookhaven: Charming harbour. Goleen: Secluded sandy beach. Schull: Sea and mountain scenery. Excellent for bathing, boating and rambling. Ballydehob: Small village with a quaint harbour. Baltimore: Shingle beach. Sailing and boat trips. Castletownshend: Pretty village in a secluded haven. Union Hall: Quaint fishing village. Shingle beach. Glandore: Attractive little resort popular for bathing. Rosscarbery: Quiet spot for a holiday. Good bathing. Owenahincha Strand: A favoured bathing place near Rosscarbery. Castlefreke: Safe sandy beaches in the area of Castlefreke. Inchadoney: Situated 5km (3 miles) from Clonakilty. Offers good bathing from a sandy beach. Clonakilty: Many good places for swimming within easy reach of here, such as Harbour View, Broad Strand, Inchadoney, Dooneen, Long Strand, Dunworley and Dunneycove. Courtmacsherry: A favourite seaside resort. Attractions include bathing, boating and tennis. Garrettstown Strand: Sandy beach. Kinsale: Good bathing nearby at Summer Cove. Oysterhaven: Small pebble beach. Ballycotton: Fishing harbour. Garryvoe: Quiet spot with a fine stretch of sand. Youghal: Popular resort with 8km (5 miles) of sandy beach. Crosshaven: Popular seaside resort.

The West Coast

The western and northwestern counties (Galway, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal) are the least anglicised parts of the country, a land of thatched cottages and peat fires, limestone plains and steep craggy cliffs, and of Connemara, a region of stark beauty which has long fired the imaginations of writers, poets and painters. The area is dominated by two spectacular mountain ranges, the Twelve Bens and Maam Turks. The northwest in particular consists of a rugged landscape of steep cliffs, often overlooking lonely islands, interspersed with sandy beaches. Inland the scenery is varied, ranging from the bleak mountains of Donegal to the lakes of Leitrim. The landscape is broken up by fertile valleys and dotted with ancient churches, prehistoric tombs and crumbling ruins. In County Mayo, the upland stretches from Lough Corrib and Killary Harbour in the south to the Mullet Peninsula in Killala Bay in the north. Traditional Ireland is very much in evidence here and the scenery is spectacular. The Holy Mountain of Croagh Patrick forms a mysterious conical shape and dominates the surrounding countryside for miles. The mountain is the place where St Patrick reputedly threw the reptiles out of Ireland and is now a place of pilgrimage; many thousands of people climb the mountain every year. There are spectacular views from the mountain and on a good day the Twelve Bens mountain range and Achill Island can be seen. Achill is the largest off the Irish coast and has a beautiful 2km (1-mile) beach with fantastic rock formations at one end. The poet W B Yeats was a native of County Sligo, and his writings - which are commemorated annually in Sligo - provide the most

eloquent and lyrical descriptions of this part of the country, with its mountains, lakes and golden coastal scenery. Yeats is buried in Drumcliff churchyard. Sligo is also, however, an area of outstanding archaeological interest. In the Bricklieve Mountains (at Carrowkeel, northwest of Ballinafad) is a Stone Age passage-grave cemetery. The Stone of Cu is a vast megalithic tomb to be found north of Lough Gill near Fermoy. Cormac MacAirt, famous King of Ireland, was reputedly born and raised by a she-wolf in the Caves of Kesh in Keshcorran Hill. The city of Galway, itself containing many examples of English, Spanish and French-influenced architecture, makes a convenient starting point for explorations in the west.

EXCURSIONS: The Aran Islands - Inishmore, Inishmaan and Inisheer - are accessible by air or boat from Galway, or short boat crossing from Rossaveal. They are Gaelic speaking and distinctive for the limestone rock similar to that found on the The Burren. Some of the earliest surviving examples of prehistoric fortifications are to be found here, together with many early Christian monastic settlements and a Folk Museum. The west coast is a particularly beautiful area of the country. Westport, one of the most attractive towns in the area, is unusual in that it was planned by the architect James Wyatt in the late 18th-century, and its most famous attraction is Westport House, a superb stately home situated by a lake. 1620 ha (4000 acres) of Connemara have been designated as a national park. The principal attractions in this area include the Maam Turk Mountains; Kylemore Abbey and Lough Mask Abbey. Lough Mask House was notorious as the former home of one Captain Boycott, a man so unpopular with his tenants that nobody could work with him - hence the word 'boycott'.

Between Lough Corrib and Lough Mask is Cong, where the film *The Quiet Man* was filmed. It is also the site of The Cross of Cong, a 12th-century Celtic cross made for Cong Abbey, a ruined Augustinian Abbey also dating back to the 12th century. Inishmurray Island, 6.5km (4 miles) offshore has a 6th-century monastery and some well-preserved early Christian gravestones. W B Yeats was buried in the grounds of the 19th-century church at Drumcliff, once a monastic settlement founded by St Colomba, a stone's throw from Benbulbin, one of the most spectacular mountains in the country. Standing at 527m (1730ft), the mountain changes its face as you walk around it. Lissadell House, a typical aristocratic country home of the last century, is famous for its associations with Yeats.

RESORTS: RESORTS: The Aran Islands: Long sandy beaches at Kilmurvey, Killeaney and Kilonan. Inisheer: Fine sandy beaches. Spiddal: Four safe sandy beaches near Spiddal. Inverin: Seven sandy beaches within 5km (3 miles). Carraroe: Four sandy beaches nearby. Lettermore: Lettercallow Beach and other small sandy beaches within driving distance. Lettermullen: Coral beach, 3km (2 miles) from Lettermullen and a 2km-long (1-mile) sandy beach at Dynish (5km/3 miles). Carna: Long sandy beaches at Callowfeanish, Mweenish and Moyrus. Short sandy beach at Ardmore. Roundstone: Fine strands at Gurteen, Dog's Bay, Murvey Beach, Dolin Beach, Bunowen Beach, Aillebrack Beach, Dunloughan Beach, Mannin Beach and Coral Beach composed of fragments of coralline with smooth rocks. Cleggan: Six safe sandy beaches close by, two within walking distance. Clifden: Holiday resort, excellent beaches close to town and at Leagaun (11km/7 miles). Letterfrack: Safe bathing at Renvyle, Tullybeg and Lettergesh. Salthill: Popular resort with many holiday amenities and good strands within 3km (2 miles). Kinvara: 6km-long (3.5-mile) sandy beach Traught Strand. Achill Island: Safe sandy beaches at Keel, Dooagh, Keem and Dugort. Ballina: Long sandy beaches at Bertragh, Carrowmore-Lackan, Ross Strand and Bunatrahair Strand. Belmullet: Nine safe sandy beaches within easy driving distance. Mulrany: Good bathing strand. Louisburgh: 3km (2-mile) beach at Old Head and five more sandy beaches within driving distance. Westport: Bathing at Bertra, Lecanvey and Kilsallagh. Lahinch: Popular resort for bathing. Entertainment centre. Good recreational facilities. Spanish Point: A good sandy beach situated 3km (2 miles) west of Milltown Malbay. Recreational facilities. Doolin: Small village with thriving folk music events and a small sandy beach. Silver Strand: At Freagh, 3km (2 miles) north of Milltown Malbay, is a good, safe bathing place. Kilkee: Lovely resort built around a semi-circular bay; excellent bathing facilities; recreational facilities include golf, skindiving and sea

fishing. Moville: Family resort by the shores of Lough Foyle on the Inishowen Peninsula. Fine coastal scenery. Greencastle: On Lough Foyle, 5km (3 miles) from Moville; good bathing beach. Culdaff: Secluded resort with a fine beach. Many beaches and cliffs along the coast. Malin/Malin Head: 6.5km (4 miles) north of Cardonagh, Malin Head is 14km (9 miles) further on. Malin Head is the most northerly point of Ireland affording superb coastal views. Ballyliffen: Secluded resort in beautiful surroundings. Bathing on the Pollan Strand. Clonmany: Village between hills and the sea. Fine coastal scenery. Buncrana: Well-developed holiday resort; fine scenery and recreational facilities. Rathmullan: Good bathing beach on the shore of Lough Swilly. Portsalon: On western shore of Lough Swilly near Fanad Head. Bathing, and fine cliff scenery. Rosapenna: Between Carrigart and Downings on Rosguill Peninsula. Ideal centre from which to tour. Downings: Quiet little resort with superb beaches and coastal scenery. Carrigart: On Mulroy Bay at foot of Rosguill Peninsula; beach surrounded by sandhills. Dunfanaghy: Well-equipped resort at Sheephaven Bay; splendid cliff scenery at Horn Head. Portnablagh: 2.5km (1.5 miles) from Dunfanaghy; excellent beach and bathing facilities; also beach at Marble Hill. Gortahork: Irish-speaking village under Muckish Mountain; departure point for Tory Island. Derrybeg: Secluded little resort with fine coastal scenery. Bunbeg: Peaceful resort sheltered by cliffs, within easy reach of many beauty spots; excellent sea bathing. Burtonport: Sheltered harbour; ideal for boating trips to nearby islands; rugged, rocky scenery. Strand at Keadue (5km/3 miles). Aranmore Island: 5km (3 miles) from mainland on rugged and complex coastline; cliff scenery, sea caves, bathing; may be reached by boat from Burtonport. Dungloe: Interesting geological curiosities; bathing in Mahory Bay. Maas: Conveniently situated between Narin and Glenties; ideal centre from which to tour the 'Highlands of Donegal'. Narin and Portnoo: Overlooking panoramic Gweebarra Bay; magnificent strand at Narin. Rosbeg: On the rugged shore of Dawros Bay; excellent beach and pleasant scenery. Ardara: Charming resort situated in a deep valley on Loughros Mor Bay; good touring centre. Malinmore: Pretty holiday resort with strand, 11km (7 miles) west of Carrick; impressive cliff scenery. Carrick: Ideal centre for boating and climbing; startling panoramic views from Slieve League seacliff (602m/1973ft). Killybegs: Fine natural harbour; fish-curing centre. Inver: On mouth of Eany River (Mountcharles - 6.5km/4 miles); good beach and bathing. Mountcharles: Overlooking Donegal Bay with charming scenery; sandy beach nearby. Rossnowlagh: Situated on Donegal Bay with excellent strand backed by gentle hills. Bundoran: One of Ireland's chief seaside resorts; on southern shore of Donegal Bay; lovely strand and all holiday amenities. Mullaghmore: Sheltered little resorts with superb bathing beach; sandhills. Rosses Point: Mainly noted for its championship golf course; fine strand. Strandhill: Popular resort at the foot of Knocknarea Mountain. Enniscrone: Popular family resort; excellent beach, surf, bathing, salt-water baths.

The Lakelands

The Lakelands (Monaghan, Cavan, Longford, Westmeath, Roscommon, Offaly and Laois) are to be found in central Ireland, and the landscape ranges from fertile limestone plains and brown peat bogs to gently rolling hills and towering mountains which slope down to winding wooded valleys, moorlands and glens. Many of the counties can point to a turbulent past, owing to their geographical situation on the frontiers of the Pale (the area around Dublin) which made them a battleground for the recurring conflicts between the Irish clans and their English rulers. Nowadays, this mainly agricultural part of the country is considerably more peaceful, although Ireland's colourful, tempestuous and often tragic past is recalled here as elsewhere in the country in song, poetry, myths, legends and history. There are also several more concrete reminders, in the buildings and ruins which are dotted across the landscape, ranging from prehistoric burial mounds to 19th-century manor houses.

EXCURSIONS: Dun a Ri Forest Park, Kingscourt; Killykeen Forest Park and Cuilcagh Mountain (Cavan), source of the Shannon; The Rock of Dunamase and Emo Court Gardens near Portlaoise; old monastic settlement at Fore, and Athlone Castle, Co Westmeath; Goldsmith Country, Co

Longford; Patrick Kavanagh Country, Co Monaghan; Birr Castle and old monastery at Clonmacnois, Co Offaly; Lough Key Forest Park and Boyle Abbey (both near Boyle), and Roscommon Castle, Co Roscommon; the 19th-century Cathedral at Longford; the city of Kilkenny, with its castle, museums, cathedral, a perfect Tudor merchant's house, and many other survivals from the city's influential past; the ruins of Jerpoint Abbey near Thomastown; Dunmore Cave; Carton House at Maynooth (Kildare), and the obelisk Connolly's Folly nearby; White's Castle at Athy, overlooking the River Barrow; the many lakes and rivers, offering possibilities for boating, fishing or merely a beautiful setting for a relaxing holiday.

9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Horseriding: Horseriding: Equestrianism is one of Ireland's principal tourist attractions and facilities for horseriding are found all over the country. A full list of stables and riding holidays is available from the Irish Tourist Board (see address section). The principal racecourses are at Leopardstown, Fairyhouse (Irish Grand National every year), The Curragh (Irish Sweeps Derby) and Punchestown (an international cross-country and 3-day-event riding course).

Hiking: Hiking: Ireland's sparsely populated countryside makes it ideal for walkers of all inclinations. The mild climate means that the mountains are accessible all year round. The more mountainous areas are towards the coast, which makes for dramatic seascapes, especially by the Atlantic Ocean. More adventurous walkers may want to tackle Ireland's highest peak, Carrauntoohil (1041m/3415ft) in Macgillycuddy's Reeks, in the far southwest of the country. Other notable mountains include Croagh Patrick (765m/2510ft) near Westport in Co Mayo, a holy mountain and, on the last Sunday in July, a place of pilgrimage. Its distinctive conical summit is silhouetted against the horizon for miles, acting as a beacon to pilgrims. St Patrick is supposed to have driven all the snakes out of Ireland from this mountain. The 12 Bens in Connemara offer lovely hill walking, with views over towards the jagged coastline. The beautiful scenery of the Wicklow Mountains is barely an hour's drive from Dublin. There are 28 national waymarked ways in the country, including the Kerry Way, the Beara Way and the Wicklow Way, and these are inspected annually. Tailor-made tours with a local guide can be arranged through Walking Cycling Ireland (tel: (1) 668 8278; fax: (1) 660 5566; e-mail: wci@kerna.ie; web site: <http://www.kerna.ie>). There are many gentle walks for the less energetic. The guidebook, 'Walking Ireland - The Waymarked Ways', available free of charge from the Irish Tourist Board, gives more information.

Cycling: Cycling: Although some of Ireland's coastal parts are mountainous, the sheltered valleys and the gently undulating central plain are excellent for easy cycling. Roads are well maintained and most are very quiet. Inland, the landscape is dotted with small farms, and one is never too far away from some form of civilisation if one requires it. There is a surprisingly high number of pre-celtic monuments in lonely places; owing to old Irish superstitions, these were not cleared away when the land was farmed. The Boyne Valley alone contains over 300.

Fishing: Fishing: Being blessed with miles of rivers and streams and over 5500km (3500 miles) of coastline, Ireland offers excellent fishing. There is no closed season for freshwater angling, but March to October are the most suitable months for bream, rudd, roach, dace and perch. For coarse angling there are new regulations regarding share certificates; further details can be obtained from the Irish Tourist Board (see address section). Game fishing requires a licence and, generally, also a permit. The brown trout season is usually from mid-February or March until September 30. Open salmon season is January 1 to September 7, according to district. The best sea trout period is from June to September 30-October 12 in some areas. Salmon

licences/permits also cover sea trout. Along the Atlantic coast, sea angling is possible from piers, rocks, in the surf or during a day's boat fishing excursion (which can be organised locally).

Golf: Golf: There are 350 golf courses run by the Golfing Union of Ireland, and many people come to Ireland specifically for a golfing holiday, where the course rates are relatively cheap compared with the UK. The courses are set both by the sea and inland - two-thirds are 18-hole.

Other activities: Other activities: For those travelling in pursuit of culture or in order to discover their roots, Ireland has much to offer. There are summer schools all over the country, where it is possible to learn Gaelic and to pursue other courses in Irish culture. Courses available include archaeological walks around Celtic sites, classes in traditional Irish music, courses on literary figures such as Oscar Wilde, W B Yeats and Gerard Manley Hopkins, and on popular culture and storytelling. A list is available from the Irish Tourist Board. Accommodation can be arranged with local families, and programmes of entertainment are laid on for the evening. These courses attract participants from all over the world. Genealogical centres exist widely, and will help those who come to trace their family history. The Irish Tourist Board (see address section) publishes a free booklet called 'Tracing your Ancestors'. They can put visitors in touch with the appropriate centre. The National Library of Ireland offers a genealogy advisory service run by a panel of genealogists and an expert member of staff, which provides visitors with an overview of genealogical records and gives advice on specific family research. For further information, contact (tel: (1) 603 0203).

The national sports are Gaelic football and hurling.

10 SOCIAL PROFILE

Food & Drink: Ireland is a farming country noted for its meat, bacon, poultry and dairy produce. The surrounding sea, inland lakes and rivers offer fresh fish including salmon, trout, lobster, Dublin Bay prawns, oysters (served with Guinness and wholemeal bread), mussels and periwinkles. Dublin has a wide selection of restaurants and eating places to suit every pocket, as do the other major towns. Table and self service are both common. The most typical Irish dishes will usually be found in a country restaurant, and include corned beef and carrots, boiled bacon and cabbage and Irish stew. Other local delicacies are crubeens (pigs trotters), colcannon (a mixture of potatoes and cabbage cooked together), soda bread and a soufflé made with carrageen (a variety of seaweed). Visitors should note that 'tea' is often almost a full meal with sandwiches and cakes.

Drink: Pubs, of which Ireland has plenty, are sometimes called 'lounges' or 'bars' and there is often a worded sign outside the premises rather than the traditional painted boards found in Britain. Pubs and bars have counter service. The measure used in Ireland for spirits is larger than that used in Britain - an Irish double is equal to a triple in Britain.

Irish coffee is popular (glass of strong black coffee, brown sugar and whiskey with cream). Almost any drink is imported but the two most internationally distinctive products are whiskey (spelt with an 'e') and stout. Irish whiskey has a uniquely characteristic flavour and is matured in a wooden barrel for a minimum of seven years. Amongst the most popular brands are Jamesons and John Powers Gold Label, but others include Paddy, Tullamore Dew, Old Bushmills, Midleton, Reserve and Hewitts. Certainly as popular as whiskey is stout which is bottled or served from the tap. Guinness, one of the most famous, popular and distinctive drinks in the world, is found everywhere and Murphy's is almost as widely available. One of the most popular of lighter ales is Smithwick's or Harp Lager, also available everywhere. Liqueurs such as Irish Mist and Bailey's are both made from a base of Irish whiskey.

Licensing hours: are 1030-2300 (2330 in summer) Monday to Saturday and 1230-1400 and 1600-2300 on Sundays.

Nightlife: Most towns have discotheques or dancehalls and many bars and pubs have live music and folk-singing, with professional ballad singers and groups who are often highly accomplished. Medieval castle banquets (such as those at Bunratty Castle) are very popular with visitors and there is a good choice of theatres and cinemas.

Shopping: Special purchases include hand-woven tweed, hand-crocheted woollens and cottons, sheepskin goods, gold and silver jewellery, Aran knitwear, linen, pottery, Irish crystal and basketry. Shopping hours: 0900-1730/1800 Monday to Saturday. Many towns have late night opening until 2000/2100 Thursday or Friday and smaller towns may have one early closing day a week.

Note: Under the 'Retail Export Scheme', it is possible to claim VAT back on goods bought in Ireland on leaving the EU. For further information, contact the VAT Administration Branch, Stamping Building, Dublin Castle, Dublin 2 (tel: (1) 679 2777 ext 48861; fax: (1) 679 5236; e-mail: info@indirect-taxes.revenue.ie; web site: <http://www.revenue.ie>).

Special Events: For full details, contact the Irish Tourist Board (see address section). The following are some of the main festivals and events held in Ireland in 2001: Feb 4-10 2001 All Ireland Dancing Championships, Ennis, Co Clare. Mar 16-19 St Patrick's Festival, Dublin. Mar 18-19 Limerick International Band Festival. Mar 27-Apr 1 Irish Masters Snooker Tournament, Kill, Co Kildare. Mar 29-Apr 8 Dublin Film Festival. Apr 7-15 World Irish Dancing Championship, Limerick. Apr 17-22 Pan Celtic International Festival, Tralee, Co Kerry. May 1-12 All Ireland Drama Festival, Athlone, Co Westmeath. May 24-28 Fleadh Nua, Ennis, Co Clare. May 31-Jun 4 Murphy's Cat Laughs Comedy Festival, Kilkenny. Jul 17-29 Galway Arts Festival. Aug 24-29 Rose of Tralee Festival, Co Kerry. Aug 31-Sep 2 The Cape Clear Island International Storytelling Festival, Co Cork. Sep 27-30 Galway International Oyster Festival. Oct 18-Nov 4 Wexford Festival Opera.

Social Conventions: The Irish are gregarious people, and everywhere animated craic (talk) can be heard. Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills (better known as Oscar Wilde) once claimed: 'We are the greatest talkers since the Greeks.' Close community contact is very much part of the Irish way of life and almost everywhere there is an intimate small-town atmosphere. Pubs are often the heart of a community's social life. Visitors will find the people very friendly and welcoming no matter where one finds oneself in the country. A meal in an Irish home is usually a substantial affair and guests will eat well. Dinner is at midday and the evening meal is known as tea. Even in cities there is less formal wear than in most European countries and casual dress is widely acceptable as in keeping with a largely agricultural community. Women, however, often dress up for smart restaurants and social functions. Handshaking is usual, and modes of address will often be informal. Smoking is acceptable unless otherwise stated. Tipping: The customary tip in Ireland is 10-12%. Many hotels and restaurants add this in the form of a service charge indicated on the menu or bill. It is not customary to tip in bars unless you have table service when a small tip is advised. Tipping porters, taxi drivers, hairdressers, etc is customary but not obligatory.

11 BUSINESS PROFILE

Economy: Ireland was not industrialised to the same degree as the rest of Europe, and only in the last few years has agriculture been overtaken as the largest single contributor to national product. Agriculture remains a key sector, however, and the Government is seeking to

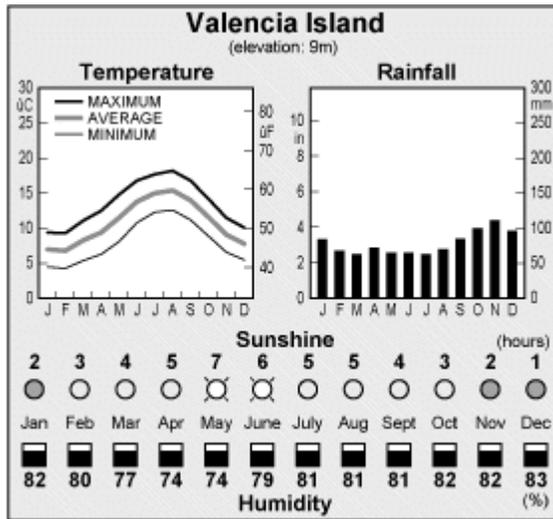
consolidate its role within the economy by modernisation and expansion of food-processing industries. Beef and dairy dominate the sector, but there is also large-scale production of potatoes, barley and wheat. Ireland's recent industrial development has been achieved by a deliberate policy of promoting export-led and advanced technology businesses, partly by offering attractive packages for foreign investors. Textiles, chemicals and electronics have performed particularly strongly. Promising oil and gas deposits have been located off the southern coast. Much of Ireland's economic development in the 1990s, however, has been in the service sector. Banking and finance have grown to the extent that Dublin now supports a sizeable international financial centre, while tourism has become a substantial foreign exchange earner. The performance of the Irish economy during the 1990s has been one of the best in Europe: GDP growth was 7% by 1996 and has remained close to that level ever since, while inflation and unemployment have been kept to low levels. The Irish are famously enthusiastic about Europe and there is little of the scepticism so prevalent in Britain. Ireland joined European Monetary Union among the majority of EU members in the first wave at the beginning of 1999, despite some concern about the consequences of Britain's non-membership. Government policies to offer financial incentives to foreign-owned enterprises have produced a massive increase in direct foreign investment, particularly in the financial services and electronics industries. Irish trade remains dominated by the UK, which provides 35% of total imports and takes 25% of Ireland's exports, but the proportion is declining gradually as other EU countries assume greater importance.

Business: Business people should wear formal clothes for meetings. Local business people are very friendly and an informal business approach is most successful. However, it is advisable to make prior appointments and to allow enough time to complete business matters. Avoid business visits in the first week of May, during July, August and at Christmas or New Year.

Commercial Information: The following organisation can offer advice: Chambers of Commerce of Ireland, 22 Merrion Square, Dublin 2 (tel: (1) 661 2888; fax: (1) 661 2811; e-mail: info@chambersireland.ie; web site: <http://www.chambersireland.ie>).

Conferences/Conventions: For more information, contact the Irish Tourist Board or the Convention Bureau of Ireland, Bord Fáilte, Baggot Street Bridge, Dublin 2 (tel: (1) 602 4000; fax: (1) 602 4100; e-mail: jocallaghan@irishtouristboard.ie; web site: <http://www.ireland.travel.ie>).

12 CLIMATE



The temperate climate is due to mild southwesterly winds and the Gulf Stream. Summers are warm, while temperatures during winter are much cooler. Spring and autumn are very mild. Rain falls all year.

Required clothing: Lightweights during summer with warmer mediumweights for the winter. Rainwear is advisable throughout the year.

13 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: The history of Ireland is, by any standard, a troubled and often tragic one. The two most enduring features of it are the unswerving commitment to Catholicism on the part of the majority of the population, the origins of which can be traced back to the pioneering monastic orders of the 5th and 6th centuries; and the frequent uncertainty and instability governing Anglo-Irish relations: Ireland was never so fully conquered that it absorbed the culture and way of life of its larger neighbour. There followed after the monastic age a long struggle against the Viking invaders who sought to use Ireland as a base for trade with continental Europe. The Vikings built heavily fortified ports, thereby laying the foundations of some of Ireland's major cities, including Dublin, Limerick and Waterford. It was a war between the Irish chieftains and the Vikings which first led to the involvement of the English. Richard of Clare, Earl of Pembroke (nicknamed Strongbow), was invited by one chief to support his claims, but instead Strongbow conquered almost the entire country with only a tiny force of archers and mounted knights in 1169-70. A stream of Norman families moved across the Irish Sea, effectively colonising the country and coming into conflict with the Irish tribal system. Repeated and largely unsuccessful efforts from the 14th century onwards were made to bring the island under control. The turbulent and increasingly polarised political life of Ireland took a new and bitter twist after the English Civil War, when the Irish rose in favour of the deposed monarchy in 1649. The victorious Oliver Cromwell led an army across the Irish Sea and the rebellion was ruthlessly put down. Over the next few years all Catholic land was expropriated and given to a new wave of Protestant immigrants. The subsequent Act of Union, passed in 1801, incorporated the whole of Ireland, along with England, Scotland and Wales, into the United Kingdom. However, the grossly inadequate response of the Government to the potato famine of 1845/6, which decimated the

Irish population through death or emigration, highlighted its lack of interest in the welfare of the Irish people. Various independence movements pursued an almost continuous struggle against the Government until Home Rule was granted in 1920. (The Easter Rising of 1916, centred on the Main Post Office in Dublin, was a particular landmark.) The terms of independence stipulated that Ireland be partitioned into two parts. The reason was that in the northern provinces, where most Protestants had settled three centuries earlier, there was fierce opposition to the prospect of being ruled by a government drawn from the country's Catholic majority. Six of the nine counties of the historic province of Ulster therefore remained in the United Kingdom. The other 26 counties became the Irish Free State. The ensuing civil war in the south between supporters and opponents of the agreement gave rise to the country's two main political parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. In 1937 the Irish Free State was given full sovereignty within the Commonwealth, a new constitution having been adopted, and remaining links with Britain dissolved. In 1949 the 26 counties became a republic and formal ties with the Commonwealth were ended. In 1973, at the same time as Denmark and the UK, Ireland became a member of (as it then was) the EEC. European membership has proved to be of huge economic benefit to Ireland. Since the 1970s, Ireland has been governed alternately by Fianna Fáil and a coalition of Fine Gael and the smaller Labour Party. Ireland's spectacular economic growth in the last twenty years has been accompanied by a new element of graft in Irish politics. The career of Charles Haughey ('The Boss'), who was Taoiseach (premier) on several occasions during the 1980s and early 1990s was typical of this trend. At the most recent elections to the Dáil in June 1997, once again no single party secured an overall majority; the FG increased its representation to 54 seats while the FF secured 77 seats. (Sinn Féin also won its first ever seat in the Dáil.) John Bruton couldn't form a majority coalition and Bertie Ahern, leader of the FF, took on the task of forming a new government in alliance with the PD and other independents. Ahern's new administration officially took office at the end of June with Mary Harney of the PD as Deputy Prime Minister (Tánaiste), the first woman ever to hold the position. In September 1997 Ireland's first female State President, Mary Robinson resigned in order to take up a post with the United Nations. The subsequent election the following months was won by Fianna Fail candidate, Dr Mary McAleese, who thus became the first president hailing from Northern Ireland. In early November, Dick Spring resigned from leadership of the LP, following his party's poor performance; he was replaced by Ruairi Quinn, a former Minister of Finance. Under Ahern's government, Ireland has undergone a remarkable economic boom which has seen annual growth of Asian tiger proportions (around 7-8%) (see ECONOMY). The political agenda in Ireland has been dominated by two sets of issues throughout the 1990s. The first is the challenge to the orthodox morality of the Catholic Church, especially on the contentious issues of abortion and divorce. Successive governments have consigned both matters to referendum, occasioning bitter national debates. Abortion remains illegal for the time being, but divorce was finally legalised after a referendum in November 1995 delivered a vote in favour. Equally contentious is the other main issue: the future of Northern Ireland. Dublin was largely excluded from any official role until the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985 which allowed Dublin consultative status over the future political development of the north. From this starting point, and working closely with the principal ally in the north, the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the Irish government contributed substantially to the ceasefires in 1994 and 1997. A notable characteristic of the process is the painful and laborious manner in which each step in the process is achieved. Since the new Labour government of Tony Blair took office after the United Kingdom General Election of 1997, more substantial progress has been made than at any stage since the start of the latest phase of the northern 'Troubles' in 1969. (See Great Britain for more detail).

Government: Since 1949 Ireland has been a republic with a bicameral legislature: the lower house, the Dáil, has 166 members and is directly elected by universal adult suffrage every five years; the 60-strong Senate has 49 directly elected members with the balance made up of political appointees. Executive power is vested in the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) who presides over a Cabinet of Ministers. The cabinet is responsible to the Dáil for its actions.

14 OVERVIEW

Country Overview: Long gone are the days when Ireland was one of the poorest countries in Europe and its natives fled to all corners of the globe in search of refuge. Today it is cool to be Irish and thanks to the likes of the Corrs, Boyzone and U2, evocative images of Ireland now pervade popular culture across the globe. The Ireland of the new millennium is a modern, progressive European nation whose 'Celtic Tiger' economy is booming, but it is not only Irish eyes that are smiling as more and more tourists discover Ireland for themselves.

Dublin is undoubtedly the spiritual and cultural heart of the Emerald Isle. Crowding around the banks of the murky River Liffey the city, like the country, is bound in rich layers of history, back to the days when Celtic tribes wandered the peat bogs, to the present that sees the city overflowing with trendy bars and nightclubs. Elsewhere, the cities of Cork, Galway and Limerick boast their own charms, but it is out in the rolling countryside that you can unearth the idyllic Ireland of the movies. Here in the atmospheric old pubs you can experience the legendary 'craic' where music and song lead the course of an evening. Alternatively, ramble over the hills of Glenmalure or sail through the mist shrouded Pater-Noster Lakes, places that seem a million miles away from the tourist maelstrom of Dublin.

More countries : <http://www.umzugs.com>