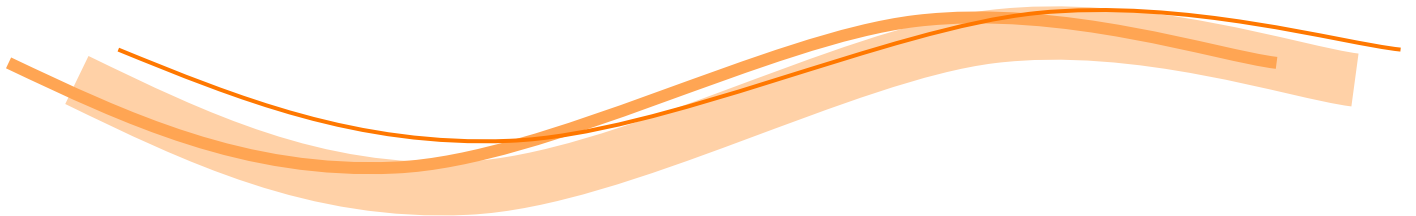




DESTINATION Ireland





IRELAND	
Location	Western Europe, between the UK and the Atlantic Ocean
Geography	Ireland is divided into 4 provinces: Ulster, Connacht, Leinster, and Munster With a landmass of approximately 84,434 sq. km (32,929 sq. miles), it is at most 484 km (300 miles) north to south, and 274km (170 miles) east to west. No point in Ireland is farther than 113 km (70 miles) from one of its encircling waters: the Atlantic Ocean, the Irish Sea, or the St. George and North channels.
Name	From Irlanda, meaning the land of Ir, who was the son of Mile, the first man of that clan to be buried on the island.
Population	6 million
Language	English and Gaelic, road signs are bilingual
Currency	In the Republic of Ireland the currency is the Euro; one Euro = \$1.54 Cdn (March 10, 2007) In Northern Ireland, the British Pound is the currency; one Pound = \$2.26 (March 10, 2007)
Tipping	Most hotels and guesthouses add a service charge to the bill, usually 12.5% to 15%, although some smaller places add only 10% or nothing at all. Always check to see what amount, if any, has been added to your bill. For porters or bellhops, tip around \$1.50 per piece of luggage. For taxi drivers, hairdressers, and other providers of service, tip as you would at home, an average of 10% to 15%.
Government	Republic of Ireland is a parliamentary democracy headed by a President; Northern Ireland is part of United Kingdom.
Documentation	A valid Canadian passport is needed to visit the island of Ireland. If traveling on a Canadian passport, no visa is required.
Time zone	5 hours ahead of EST
Health	No health documents or vaccinations are required to enter Ireland or Northern Ireland from Canada, but you should ensure that you have adequate travel insurance for your trip
Safety tips	Advice is standard for travel anywhere: don't leave cars unlocked or cameras, binoculars, or other expensive equipment unattended. Be alert and aware of your surroundings, and do not wander in lonely areas alone at night. Other than that, Ireland is one of the safest destinations for visitors to Europe.

CLIMATE	
General climate	January and February bring frosts but seldom snow, and July and August are very warm, but rarely hot. Summer temps are 15-20 C, with rain at any time!
Today's weather	Ten degrees Centigrade and sunny periods

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Best time to visit	Perhaps the best time to visit is in spring and fall, when weather falls somewhere in between bad and good, and you still get winter prices and no crowds.
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GETTING THERE	
Flying time	Toronto to Dublin: 6 hours
Cities	Dublin attractions: Trinity College, Phoenix Park, Dublin Castle, Old Jameson Distillery, James Joyce Tower and Museum, Dublin Zoo, The Guinness Storehouse (in 1759 original brewery, Ireland's no 1 visitor attraction) With 40% of the Republic's population living within 97 km of Dublin, the capital is the center of the profound, high-speed changes that have been transforming Ireland into a prosperous and increasingly European country, and it has been changed the most. Within an hour's drive of Dublin are Dalkey, Dún Laoghaire, and many other engaging coastal towns, the rural beauty of the Wicklow Mountains, and the prehistoric ruins in County Meath. Dublin is now #3 in Europe for visitor bed-nights.
Distances	Cork to Dublin: 256 km Belfast to Dublin: 165 km
Ferries	Fishguard to Rosslare: 1hr 39min Stena Lynx Fast Craft
Trains	8 trains daily Belfast to Dublin; express in 2 hours; Irish Rover Rail Pass - 5 out of 15 days rail travel throughout Ireland Cost: £99 / €142. Children discounted
Car Rental	All major car rental companies are represented; renting is fairly expensive as is gas. Driving is on the left and most cars are manual.
Buses	Buses link towns and cities by convenient frequent service all across Ireland north & south. The Dublin - Belfast Express coach service operates 7 times daily Monday – Saturday.
Passes	Dublin Pass: 30 attractions, cost 1 day: 29 euros adult, 17 child plus Airccoach from Dublin Airport

ACCOMMODATION TYPES	Accomm types: castle and manor houses; hotels and guesthouses; B&B; Farmhouses \$60pp/per night; Hostels; Cottages and holiday homes; castle hotel eg's: Ashford Castle, co Mayo; Dromoland Castle, Co Clare Be our Guest Guide: over 1000 hotels and guesthouses, 1-5 stars, from 22 Euros pp B&B, 500 pages, irelandhotels.com – many bookable on-line Bed and Breakfast Guide to Ireland 2006
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TARGET GROUPS	
Kids	The Irish love kids, and Ireland is a wonderfully welcoming place to visit for families with children. Most public places and visitor attractions cater for those children, with changing facilities, children's menus, high chairs and ramps for strollers. Child-friendly activities available in Ireland's West include pony trekking, sandcastles, swimming, sailing, adventure centres, boat rides, canoeing, learning music.
Teens	Lots of outdoor activities; the Clarence Hotel in Dublin – owned by U2; castles; music scene
Romance	A lovely people and country to spend time together...
Honeymoons & Weddings	Great venues – including castle hotels and dramatic scenery – help make Ireland a good destination to make these arrangements.
Genealogy	Church and civil records throughout Ireland computerised: Irish Gen Project; Tourism Ireland: "Tracing your Ancestors in Ireland" www.irishgenealogy.ie ; www.familyrecords.gov.uk for NI
Seniors	The gentle pace of the countryside and the easy availability of coach touring options makes Ireland a good choice for seniors.

UNIQUES	<p>"Craic", pronounced "Kraik" means good music, good story telling, conversation and drink in Gaelic.</p> <p>"May the roof above us never fall in. And may the friends gathered below it never fall out".</p> <p>"May the saddest day of your future be no worse than the happiest day of your past".</p> <p>"May you live as long as you want. And never want as long as you live".</p>
Surprising	<p>Smoking is now prohibited in public areas within the Republic of Ireland – this includes all bars, nightclubs and restaurants.</p> <p>The longest formal debate on record anywhere in the world was conducted at University College Galway in 1995. The motion debated -- for 28 days -- read as follows: "This house has all the time in the world."</p>
History	<p>Ireland is thought to have been inhabited from around 6000 BC by people of a mid-Stone Age culture. And about 4,000 years later, tribes from Southern Europe arrived and established a high Neolithic culture. The best-known Neolithic sites in Ireland are the megalithic passage tombs of Newgrange and Knowth in County Meath. Both were built around 3200 BC, making them older than Stonehenge in England, and the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt.</p>

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	<p>The Vikings first launched their attack on Ireland in 795 AD. And in 837 AD, 60 Viking Dragon warships appeared at the mouth of the River Liffey. Five years later, Dublin was taken under force, but the Vikings were attacked by the local Irish and fled. They returned 17 years later under Olaf the White and made a permanent settlement at Dyflinn (later to be Dublin). The King's Palace stood on the present Dublin Castle site and part of the town's defences can still be seen at the Undercroft in Dublin Castle.</p> <p>The latter half of the 19th century was a period of tragedy in Irish history. Ireland was struck by the Great Famine caused by a potato blight that struck crops over a four-year period from 1845-49. Over a million of the population died from starvation, with many more falling prey to diseases such as typhus. Over two million people emigrated to countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, and from 1848-1950 over six million Irish fled the land. Now the Irish diaspora is thought to contain over 80 million people scattered all over the globe.</p>
Books	<p>Frommer's Ireland 2007 "Ireland" by Dervla Murphy, photos by Klaus Franke "The Princes of Ireland" The Dublin Saga by Edward Rutherford</p>
1000 Places to see before you die	<p>Dromoland Castle Hotel; Cork Jazz Festival; Kinsale; Assolas Country House; Longueville House, Cork Glenveagh National Park, Donegal: Bloomsday in Dublin; The Book of Kells, Dublin; St Patrick's Festival; Aran Islands; Connemara, Galway; Dingle Peninsula; The Ring of Kerry; Killarney National Park, Kerry; Ashford Castle Hotel, Mayo; Waterford Castle Hotel; Giant's Causeway; Mourne Mountains</p>
Must Sees	<p>Dublin, Belfast, Cliffs of Moher, Fermanagh Lakes, Giant's Causeway, Ring of Kerry</p>

SPORTS ACTIVITIES	<p>Boating: Shannon-Erne System, Europe's longest leisure waterway at 500 miles, takes 12 days, self-skippered cabin cruise; also the Grand Canal from Dublin to Waterford; see Exclusive Tours and NavTours</p>
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Golf

Ireland is a natural golfing country and is recognised as a world-class golfing destination. With more than 400 golf courses to choose from, the island of Ireland offers the Canadian golfer a challenging and memorable golfing experience. Home to more than one-third of the world's true links courses, Ireland offers four distinct golfing regions which can be explored individually or as part of a more extended itinerary. All around the island, world-famous championship links courses rub shoulders with lesser-known yet spectacular hidden gems. What's more, tee times can be booked easily and green fees are moderate (from \$40 to \$185 for signature championship courses). Green fees for parkland courses are approximately £6.00 - £40.00 or €10.00 - €60.00 on weekdays and £8.00 - £50.00 or €12.00 - €80.00 on weekends.

Green fees for links courses are approximately £40.00 - £95.00 or €50.00 - €150.00 in the winter or £60.00 - £100 or €50.00 - €240 in the summer.

The following list highlights some of the 'must play' courses in each region:

Dublin area - Portmarnock, the European, the K Club (venue of the 2006 Ryder Cup)

Northern Ireland - Royal County Down, Royal Portrush, Ardglass, Portstewart, Royal Belfast

The West - Ballyliffin, Carne, Enniscrone, Rosses Point/Sligo

The South West - Ballybunion, Doonbeg, Lahinch, Waterville, Old Head

The South East - Mount Juliet, Druids Glen

The 36th Ryder Cup Matches was staged at the magnificent Kildare Golf and Country Club in Ireland – affectionately known as the K Club in Sept 2006.

The 2011 Solheim Cup will take place at Killeen Castle, County Meath, Ireland. Killeen Castle's bid to host the women's game's equivalent to the Ryder Cup, successfully beat off rival bids from courses in England, Italy, Norway, Scotland and Spain.

Killeen Castle, the ancestral home of the Earls of Fingal, sits in a wooded estate in 500 acres in Dunsany, Co. Meath.

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<p>Fishing</p>	<p>Salmon, brown, rainbow and sea trout in Cork/Kerry – State license and day permits; coarse: roach, dace perch, pike, rudd, bream; deep sea: pollock, skate, ray, turbot, blue shark</p> <p>The great Western lakes of Galway and Mayo are recognised as the greatest wild brown trout fisheries in the world, while Lough Corrib in Galway is a mecca for game fishermen and is famous for its exciting Mayfly season.</p> <p>The rivers of Ireland’s West offer everything from big salmon to wild browns and, in Roscommon and Galway East, some of the best coarse fish stocks in Ireland. Shore fishing from rock, pier or beach is second to none, and deep sea fishing around the Galway and Mayo coasts is nothing short of spectacular.</p>
<p>Horse riding</p>	<p>Ireland is often called “The Land of the Horse”. Companies offering riding vacations include Bonaventure tours.com; HiddenTrails.com. There are 40 equestrian centres in Cork/Kerry alone; horse racing is part of Irish life e.g. Mallow, 35km north of Cork.</p> <p>Equestrian Holidays Ireland is a selection of Ireland’s top horseback riding establishments, each with its own individual character and style. Every centre is Irish Tourist Board listed and Association of Irish Riding Establishments approved.</p>
<p>Hiking</p>	<p>Hill-walking: waymarked ways, Ulster Way – Europe’s longest marked footpath at 560 miles, Wicklow Way, Dingle Way 179km – Ring of Kerry; Hollywood Hills – inspiration for CS Lewis’ Narnia; Hidden Trails, Active Journeys, Bonaventure Tours</p> <p>Long distance trails include the Foxford Way in Mayo, the Galway section of The Western Way, The Suck Valley Way in Roscommon and Galway, and the Arigna Miners Way and Historical Trail in Roscommon and Leitrim.</p>
<p>Cycling</p>	<p>715 km cycling routes in Cork and Kerry e.g. The Sheeps Head Way; Connemara Trail, Donegal Trail – rugged coastline, mountains; Cycling companies – check out GAP Adventures, Randonnee Tours, Butterfield and Robinson</p>
<p>CULTURE</p>	<p>One of the most important elements in Irish culture is the Irish language. Ireland’s West is fortunate to have Gaeltachts, or Irish-speaking areas, in both Galway and Mayo. In these areas, you will notice the Irish language on signs and shop-fronts as well as in everyday speech. Here, people still play music, sing and dance in the old traditional manner.</p>
<p>Arts</p>	<p>Literary Ireland abounds in famous names: Joyce, GB Shaw, Oscar Wilde, WB Yeats, Walter Scott, Anthony Trollope, Seamus Heaney.</p>

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Music	Two of the most enduring and internationally famed traditions, however, are Irish traditional music, and Irish dancing. Traditional music can be heard all over the country from city centre pubs to rural festivals. The bodhrán, which is like a hand-held drum, is one of the most popular instruments in Irish music, along with the fiddle and the tin whistle.
Films	Michael Collins (Neil Jordan, 1996) is a fine biopic about the Irish rebel, filmed largely on location. Nora (Pat Murphy, 2000) is a good biographical film about James Joyce's fascinating and long-suffering wife. Veronica Guerin (Joel Schumacher, 2003) is a dark, fact-based film with Cate Blanchett about a troubled investigative reporter. Bloom (Sean Walsh, 2004) is a brave adaptation of Ulysses, with Stephen Rea. Intermission (John Crowley, 2003) has Colin Farrell talking in his real accent, in this Irish romance.
Museums	The Writers Museum and Natural History Museum in Dublin are two of my favourites.
Festivals	<p>St. Patrick's Day: 17 March – couldn't agree if he died 8 or 9 March, so added together!</p> <p>Born in Roman Wales; kidnapped at 16 by Irish marauders under Niall of the Nine Hostages; shepherd in Co Antrim 6 yrs; angel visit: 200 mile walk to boat to France; 20 yrs monk; 432 AD came to Ireland with 24 followers to High King of Tara: converted and supported; banished snakes and pagans.</p> <p>Nearly 100 parades worldwide eg London, New York, Paris, Chicago, public holiday in Montserrat</p> <p>St. Patrick's Festival Dublin: March 15th-19th; St Patrick's Day Parade ; Skyfest (Europe's single biggest fireworks display); The Big Day Out (clowns, castles, face painters, music in Georgian City centre square); Treasure Hunt (on foot around Dublin's historic buildings); Ceili Mor ("Big Gathering", uniquely Irish, positively epic); The Music Village (only one that costs, Mundy, Paddy Casey, The Hothouse); Irish Visions (series of exhibitions all over the place!)</p> <p>In the West:</p> <p>Arts Festivals: Galway Arts Festival (July) Galway Film Fleadh (July) Clifden Arts Week (September)</p> <p>Cultural Festivals: Ballina Street Festival (July) Clarenbridge Oyster Festival (September) Galway Oyster Festival (September) Castlebar International 4 Day Walks Festival (June) Curragh Racing Inis Oirr (August)</p>

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ATTRACTIONS	Blarney Castle, Cork – the gift of eloquence Waterford Crystal Centre has the world’s largest display, factory tours, restaurant, two centuries, all seconds destroyed, Times Square Millennium Ball 6 ft across!
Beaches	Beaches abound on this island – from long glorious deserted strands to the popular beaches close to Dublin and Belfast; there’s a beach for everyone...even if the sea temperature may be a little chilly!
Wildlife	Bird watching is wonderful and in the National Parks you can see deer...but there’s no snakes, thanks to St. Patrick!
Parks	Ireland has 6 national parks: The Burren NP in Co Clare; Connemara NP in Galway; Glenveagh NP in Co Donegal; Killarney NP in Co Kerry; Mayo NP; Wicklow Mountains NP. There are also 12 Forest Parks and 71 National Nature Reserves.
Gardens	National Trust: Gosford, Castlewellan; roses, daffodils, wild bluebells, primroses
Castles/Forts	Dunluce, 16c Stronghold of MacDonnells, teetering on cliff edge, secret entrance through sea cave; Ennislillen, medieval home of the Maguires of Fermanagh

OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	In the west, traditional knitwear (and not so traditional high fashion knitwear too), pottery, decorative items, handmade bellows, trendy fleecewear, musical instruments, jewelery and basketry
Markets	
Nightlife	Everything under the sun – but perhaps the quintessential evening is spent in a warm Irish pub with the locals experiencing the camaraderie and craic that is so unique to the Irish people.

CUISINE	
Food	Food: Ulster Fry: potato bread fried with local-cure bacon, Moira pork and apple sausages, free-range eggs, Almargh mushrooms, bunch of dulse (edible seaweed); breads: afternoon tea: soda farls, treacle farls; pubs: locally harvested oysters with glass of guinness; beef fillet flamed in Bushmills whiskey
Wine and spirits	Irish whiskey and Guinness are justifiably world famous.
Restaurants	Ireland has an admirable range of restaurants in all price categories. The settings range from old-world hotel dining rooms, country mansions, and castles to sky-lit terraces, shop-front bistros, riverside cottages, thatched-roof pubs, and converted houses.

MORE INFO	
Brochures	Call 1-800-223-6470 for Tourism Ireland to request brochures or go to www.shamrock.org

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Website	www.discoverireland.com
HOTEL PRIZE PARTNER	Town and Country Homes Website: www.townandcountry.ie
Location	Town & Country Homes Association, the "Irish Bed and Breakfast Experience" has over 1,100 Irish Tourist Board approved homes in every town, city and country-side location throughout Ireland.
Facilities	Vary according to each B&B – 336 page guide to all the B&B's
Accommodation	Bed and Breakfast in Ireland is a unique experience where you can enjoy a warm welcome and a relaxed pace of life, something you will want to repeat again and again.
AIRLINE PRIZE PARTNER	Air Canada and bmi
Flight details	Seasonal daily service from Toronto to Dublin and year-round service to Dublin via Heathrow through Star Alliance partner bmi

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