

ireland us experience



HINTS & TIPS FOR YOUR TRIP TO IRELAND

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SOME USEFUL TIPS WHEN PREPARING FOR YOUR TOUR WITH US

We often get asked lots of questions by our guests about how things work in Ireland. So here are just a few notes that might be of use to you when preparing for your trip.

First off, we are a young, dynamic and modern country so, sorry, you won't find pigs in the parlours, even in the wilds of the countryside! Instead you will find modern motorway systems linking the main cities, but lots of lovely old fashioned country roads once you leave the main arteries. You will also find modern hotels that match the best in the world, hospitals, cell phone coverage (except in some of the wildest parts of the countryside), and wifi everywhere, plus electronic banking and ATMs, and basically everything else you would expect to find at home in the US, but sometimes with an Irish twist.

CLOTHING

There is a reason why Ireland is green! We have a moderate climate, which means we rarely get too hot or too cold, particularly during the summer months, but we can have rain at any time of the year. As you are likely to be coming from the warmer parts of the US it might be useful to pack a light jumper or cardigan in case you find it cool over here in the evenings compared to at home. You might also find it useful to pack a light rain jacket, just in case! However, unless you are visiting us in the autumn there is no need to bring heavy winter clothing. The airlines normally limit you to one checked-in bag per person, but we won't be having any formal events that would require you to dress up, so just a few changes of casual clothing are all you require, and although we don't have any long treks, a comfortable set of shoes for walking could prove useful. And don't forget to leave room in your suitcase for your souvenirs on the way home!

FOOD

Your trip will normally include breakfast every morning, and, depending on your itinerary, may include meals on certain nights. On the other nights you will find that there is a wide variety of restaurants and eateries to suit all tastes and all pockets including Italian, Chinese, Indian, internationally ethnic, American (including McDonalds/BurgerKing/Starbucks etc) and, of course, Irish cuisine. Almost all menus will, by default, highlight details of any foods listed that are known to have potential allergy reactions. Because of European Food Safety Directives, the food you will eat here will tend to contain far fewer chemicals and additives than would be the case in the USA, so you should find eating a very pleasurable experience. Tap water is perfectly safe to drink everywhere.

Thank you for choosing to travel with Ireland US Experience. We look forward to welcoming you to Ireland and showing you around our beautiful country. We hope that we will provide you with many happy memories of your stay with us.

Pat, Alan & David
Ireland US Experience



LANGUAGE

We all speak English (as a matter of fact we have a higher concentration of language schools teaching foreign students English than they have in England!). There will be parts of the West of Ireland where they will speak Gaelic/Irish as their first language, but you don't have to worry, as they can all speak English too. You sometimes will find notices and signs written in both Irish and English, but one that causes a bit of confusion is that the Irish for 'Women' is 'Mna', so if you see it on a restroom door, don't assume that 'Man' is spelt incorrectly!

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Whenever you travel to foreign countries, it is always a good idea to take out some form of travel insurance. Plans are flexible, and cover can be arranged for a wide range of possibilities including flight cancellations or delays due to weather events, terrorist threats, volcanic eruptions, or sickness/family bereavement, plus lost or delayed baggage, medical emergencies, and personal accidents. You should talk to your insurance advisor for further information on the choices available.

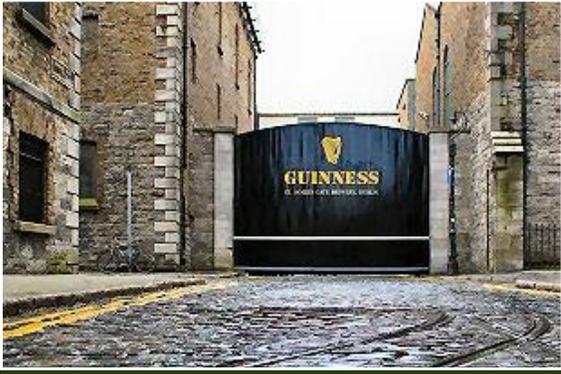


MONEY

Probably the most important hint we can give you is to contact your bank before you travel to tell them you will be visiting Ireland, or at the very least perhaps use your card for a minor purchase such as coffee while you are in the airport, so that if they see payment requests for your debit or credit cards coming from outside the US they won't immediately think they are fraudulent and lock your card account! Like most parts of Europe, we use Euro's in Ireland (the symbol for the Euro is €), and the US Dollar/Euro rate will change from day to day. This means that two payments for identical Euro amounts on different days could end up as slightly different dollar amounts when they arrive in your account. While there are 200 and even 500 Euro notes, the ones in common use are the 5, 10, 20 and 50 Euro denominations, pictured above. A Euro is made up of 100 cent (not cents!). Some larger department stores will accept payments in dollars. However we recommend that you don't use their facilities or the facilities of the various Bureau de Change to change dollar notes to Euro, as their rates can be a lot higher than the banks, plus there could be additional conversion charges.

You can use your debit/credit card to make purchases in almost all pubs, stores and restaurants (either by tapping for small amounts or using a PIN for larger ones and even make payments via Apple Pay etc by tapping your phone in some places). If you prefer to use cash, the most convenient way to get it is to bring your US bank ATM debit card, as almost all the ATM's in the walls of the major banks accept international cards. Be aware that some generic ATM's that are not located in or outside a bank branch and not branded by a major bank, may add additional charges. (Many credit card providers will change your interest from the date the cash is drawn down, rather than giving you the usual days credit given on purchases, but some providers may allow you to avoid these interest charges if you pre-load funds into your card account). Using your cards means you don't have to carry around large amounts of Euro notes, and possibly end up having to re-convert a lot of it at the end of your vacation if you don't spend as much as you expected. Conversion to dollars will be at the exchange rate at the time of your transaction, although there might be small conversion charges applied by your bank/card provider, as the amount debited to your own bank account will be in dollars. Your bank can advise if your card can be used internationally and list any charges they might apply. American Express is not widely used in Ireland, but you can use your normal Mastercard and Visa credit/debit cards almost everywhere, and this can be a convenient way of making larger payments and holding on to your Euro cash for smaller ones.

If your trip involves a visit to Northern Ireland, the currency used there is Pounds Sterling as they are part of the United Kingdom. A pound is made up of 100 pence. Note that many ATM's in Northern Ireland issue bank notes drawn on their own local banks rather than the Bank of England, so while equivalent to Sterling, they are not normally accepted in other parts of the United Kingdom, although Bank of England notes can be used in Northern Ireland. Therefore if you may be continuing on to mainland Britain after your tour, make sure you get rid of your Northern Ireland bank notes before you leave there as they are unlikely to accept them in the rest of the UK. Coins are okay, as they are the same in all parts of the UK. Best advice is use your cards there.



QUICK FACTS

- ◆ When shopping, you pay the price on the label. We don't have additional hidden taxes that are applied at the till.
- ◆ We don't really have a tipping culture in Ireland. You may or may not feel like leaving a tip, but it's entirely up to you depending on your experience with the staff who looked after you. While no one is going to refuse if you leave something, no one will chase after you down the street asking if there was a problem with the service!
- ◆ There is no single Irish accent. You will encounter different ones in every part of the country as you travel around.
- ◆ Remember that there is a lot of history, heritage and tradition here. When you consider that places like Newgrange were built before the Pyramids in Egypt then a house that is 'only' 100-200 years old is not really considered to be historic!

Bits And Pieces That You May Or May Not Know About Ireland

You are permitted to drink alcohol in pubs and buy your own at 18. Don't be shocked if you see people drinking in public places. There are a few locations where it's banned, but in those cases then notices will be posted locally. You are allowed to drink at home under parental supervision, even if you are under 18. Also note that an Irish pint and an Irish measure of whiskey etc can often be larger than those you may be used to in the US, and most local Irish beers will tend to be stronger. Remember too that many pubs, especially smaller ones, do not have table service, so you will usually need to go up to the bar yourself to order your drinks, otherwise you could go home very thirsty!

You will be trusted to cross the road by yourself, wherever you feel it's safe to do so, even if you are not at a pedestrian crossing. But very important : remember that traffic drives on the left side of the road over here, so when you cross a street, the traffic is coming from your right, so check right before crossing.

You will find you have a lot more personal freedom here. Nobody will be alarmed if they see you walking down a street alone (although like every city/large town there are always some areas that are best avoided, but you are unlikely to be near any of them during your travels with us).

Ireland has free healthcare at the point of delivery. In the unlikely event that you have a medical emergency, we will ensure that you are looked after. But you will be transported by ambulance, assessed, cared for and operated on, if necessary, including all medications in hospital, to all intents and purposes, for free. If you turn up at an ER as a walk-in, you may be required to pay a nominal amount of around €100 (to prevent trivial attendances clogging up the system), but this will often be refunded if it is deemed that you were in need of urgent medical attention. You are unlikely to be billed, unless you opt for non-standard services such as a private room etc. The biggest complaint you are likely to hear from an Irish person is the cost of the parking in the hospital car park! While it is always a good idea to have travel insurance with health cover, you may also find that your normal US healthcare policy might cover you for medical services outside the US, so it is worth checking the policy details or chat with your insurance advisor. If you are covered, this could reduce the amount of travel insurance you need.

One of the things our American guests find fascinating is that the ordinary police officers who you will see patrolling the streets are not armed. In fact, the Guards, as they are locally known (short for 'Garda Siochana' which translates as 'Guardians of the Peace') were only issued with pepper spray for the first time a few years ago. But this leads to a much more relaxed relationship between the police and the community. We do, of course, have armed response units (the equivalent of SWAT teams) who respond to major crimes that might involve dangerous criminals, but they are specifically called to crime scenes. Don't hesitate to ask a police officer for help if you feel you need it, for example to ask for directions if you find yourself lost. So long as you stay within the law, the police are there to help you. If you do end up breaking a law, they will tend to deal with you respectfully if you also show them respect.

PLACENAMES

All road signs in Ireland feature the placenames in both English and Irish (Gaelic). Usually the English version is a 'mispronunciation' or a phonetic version of the original Irish name. And sometimes there can be even more than one name. For example, Dublin, Ireland's capital city was originally called 'Dubh Linn' (which translates as 'Black Pool'), but is now known in Irish as 'Baile Atha Cliath' which translates as 'Town of the Ford with the Hurdles', as it used to be the location of a ford across the River Liffey. 'Bally' at the start of a name, usually means it was 'the town of' or 'the home of', so Ballymahon would have been located at the home of the Mahons. Knock in a name, like Castleknock comes from 'Cnoc' the Irish for a hill, and 'Kil', in a name as in Kildare, comes from 'Cill' the Irish for a woodland, while those starting with 'Clon' like Clonmel means it was the location of a meadow. (Not all road signs are as confusing as the one below!)



We use British English spelling, rather than American English, so many words will be similar but not identical and are therefore not typos or a failing in the Irish education system! (e.g. realise/realize, centre/center etc). In addition we often use different words than you would for the same thing (e.g. lift instead of elevator, motorway instead of highway, car boot instead of trunk, shop instead of store, sweets instead of candy, shopping centre instead of mall, crisps instead of chips - chips in Ireland are like large French fries - jam instead of jelly etc). We have always found it kind of quaint, for example, that in the USA you drive on a parkway, and park on a driveway!

Irish dates are usually written in dd-mm-yyyy format rather than the usual American format of mm-dd-yyyy. So 06-08-202x is the 6th August in Ireland, not the 8th of June, as it would be in the USA. That is why in our correspondence we usually spell out the full month, rather than use month numbers. In addition, when calling home, don't forget that Ireland is five hours ahead of Eastern Time, so that call you make to your family at home while you are having breakfast at 9.00am here might not be appreciated !! This five hour difference also explains why the travel time on your ticket coming over seems so long, while the flight time home seems so short, as your arrival time in both cases is the local time.

We too have a president but unlike in the US (but similar to the King in the UK), he is a figure head who represents the country, but does not have any political power as such (although he does have to officially sign all legislation for it to become law and can refuse to sign or send for review if he doesn't approve it). The Taoiseach (Prime Minister), nominated by the political party with the most elected representatives at the time, is the official head of the Irish government.

Unfortunately, your 2nd Amendment rights do not apply in Ireland, but that is not a major problem as no one else is allowed carry firearms either, which overall leads to a lot less complications all round. Only a limited number of people such as farmers etc are allowed to hold licenced weapons, with police vetting and strict controls and testing in place before a gun licence will be issued, plus the licences need to be renewed on a regular basis..

If you can't make out the pronunciation of some of the place names, listen to how the locals say it. It can also be considered bad manners to ask someone about their politics or religion. Talking about the weather is probably the most common conversation starter, as we can, on occasions, have all four seasons in one day!



QUICK FACTS

- ◆ St Patrick wasn't actually Irish. He was born in Wales around 386 AD, kidnapped as a boy and brought to Ireland as a slave.
- ◆ Halloween originated in Ireland and traces back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain which marked the end of the harvest season. On a similar note, Bram Stoker, the author of Dracula was born in Dublin in 1847.
- ◆ The story that there are no snakes in Ireland is actually true, although this is more likely due to being an island rather than because they were banished by St Patrick.
- ◆ The native Irish sport of Hurling is considered to be the fastest field game in the world (with only ice-hockey said to be faster) and has been played for over 3,000 years. It is a grass-roots sport, where you play for your town/village then progress to play for your county and the counties play against each other

TRAVEL AUTHORIZATIONS FOR US VISITORS TO UK AND EUROPE

You may have heard about new regulations and procedures for US visitors arriving into Europe, and separate ones for US visitors to the United Kingdom. These are similar to the ESTA's that Irish and other non-USA nationals complete when entering the USA where they are not required to apply for a full US visa.

The good news is **none of these apply to visitors to the Republic of Ireland**, as we are an island and therefore not part of the Schengen Area that includes European countries with physical borders. However, if your tour includes a visit to Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK, as many of our tours do, or you will be continuing on to the mainland UK or Europe after your tour with us, then the regulations will apply to you, so we have summarized the procedures below.

TRAVEL TO EUROPE

From October 2025, travellers from the US to 29 countries in mainland Europe will be processed via the new European Entry/Exit System (EES) border control system, which replaces the manual passport stamping process for non-EU nationals. This will include the collection of biometric data upon entry (i.e. fingerprint scanning and facial image capture), similar to the process when foreign visitors enter the US. It will also electronically register entry and exit dates to improve border security and migration control and 'speed up' border crossings (or so they say!). For further details see: [EES - European Union](#)

In addition, from late 2026 the European ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorization System) will be in place for USA travellers to Europe countries. However, Ireland is one of only two European countries (the other currently being Cyprus) where an ETIAS is not required, so you don't need to apply for an ETIAS if you are only visiting Ireland, and are not then transiting to somewhere else in Europe. For further details see: [ETIAS - European Union](#)

TRAVEL TO THE UNITED KINGDOM (INCLUDING NORTHERN IRELAND)

The UK ETA (Electronic Travel Authorization) system, which is in place since early May 2025, is slightly more complicated because it was brought in by the UK government without thinking through the ramifications for people flying into the Republic of Ireland, who then cross the border by road into Northern Ireland, as under the rules of The Good Friday Agreement that ended 'The Troubles' in the North, there can be no border posts between the two. A further complication is that Irish nationals, who make up 95% of the people travelling from the Republic to the North are exempt from requiring an ETA under separate agreements, so there are currently no formal checks in place except at airports and ports. However the advice we have received from our colleagues in Tourism Northern Ireland is that all visitors to 'The North' should ensure they apply for an ETA as if they have an accident or an interaction with the police that there are serious financial fines in place for anyone who should have one but doesn't.

The current cost of an ETA is Sterling £16 per person (including children), and it can officially take up to two or three days to process. The ETA is normally valid for up to two years, but because it is linked to your passport, rather than a separate document, it will also expire if your passport expires within that time. You can apply and pay online, or download the ETA app or find out additional information from the ETA website: [Apply for an electronic travel authorisation \(ETA\) - GOV.UK](#)

ELECTRICITY

There are two major differences between the Irish electricity system and that in the US. The first is that we use three-pin square plugs and sockets, and the second is that the voltage is 240 volts instead of 120. This means that most US electrical appliances won't work (and might burn out) unless they contain, or you use, a voltage regulator. Most electronic devices such as laptops and mobile phones will have their own built-in regulators so can usually be used without any problems, provided you use a two-pin (US) to three-pin (Irish) adaptor, which can be found in most supermarkets (note: unless they say otherwise, these simply allow you to use a two-pin US plug in an Irish three-pin socket, and don't do any voltage conversion). If you use a smartphone, then it will most likely use a USB charger, and many hotel rooms will have a USB port that you can use to charge your phone provided you have a USB cable compatible with your phone (different phone brands and even specific models can use different cables). USB plugs and cables are freely available in most stores, should you need them. Most hotels supply hair-dryers and kettles for tea/coffee, so you can save some luggage space by not packing your own. Although some hotels will feature a 120-volt two (round) pin socket in their bathrooms, these are only really suitable for low-power appliances such as shavers, and not for higher-rated appliances. Different phones have different battery capacities, and not all the transportation we use can be guaranteed to have USB charging facilities when in transit, so we always try to ensure that we have a portable USB charger with us so you don't miss that 'once in a lifetime' photo op, but if you have your own, it could be worth bringing it with you (or you can purchase one locally here).

DEALING WITH JET LAG ON THE FLIGHT OVER

Ireland is five hours ahead of Eastern time, and the majority of flights arrive in Ireland early morning Irish-time, meaning it is after midnight or very early hours of the morning in the US. Everybody has their own way of dealing with the time difference and the resulting jet-lag, from setting their watches to Irish time when they board the plane, to a range of different techniques. The ideal solution is to try and get some real sleep on the plane and then power through the first day, stay awake and get acclimated to the time change. Professional travellers tend to bring noise-cancelling headphones, neck-pillows, and eye-masks to help them get a bit of shut-eye while they are on the transatlantic part of their journey. If you can get some serious sleep in on the flight (ideally 4 hours or more) you will feel more lively over the entire first day of your tour. But we do tend to take it reasonably easy during the initial days of your trip, so we won't excessively tire you out! The initial check-in time in most Irish hotels is usually 3.00pm on the day you arrive at them (and even 4.00pm in some cases), but don't forget you can always take a nap on the bus, although by doing so you might miss out on some of the fun and excitement!

If you have any questions about the above, or anything else relating to the trip, please let us know at :

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