



Ireland



All about Ireland

- Geography
- People
- Traditions, cultures
- Food
- It is separated from Great Britain to its east by the North Channel, the Irish Sea, and St George's Channel. Ireland is the second-largest island of the British Isles, the third-largest in Europe, and the twentieth-largest on Earth.



Geography

- Many Irish people view themselves and others in terms of what part of Ireland they are from. Ireland is divided into 32 counties. This is most evident during inter-county GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) matches, where fans dress in the specific colors of their county. The Republic of Ireland consists of 26 counties, and Northern Ireland of six. It is also traditionally divided into the four provinces of Connaught, Leinster, Munster and Ulster. Ulster contains 9 counties, 6 of which are in Northern Ireland and 3 of which are in the Republic of Ireland.



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Republic of Ireland: Northern Ireland

- Dublin
- Wicklow
- Wexford
- Carlow
- Kildare
- Meath
- Louth
- Monaghan
- Cavan
- Longford
- Westmeath
- Offaly
- Laois
- Kilkenny
- Waterford
- Cork
- Kerry
- Limerick
- Tipperary
- Clare
- Galway
- Mayo
- Roscommon
- Sligo
- Leitrim
- Donegal
- Fermanagh
- Tyrone
- Derry
- Antrim
- Down
- Armagh

People

The **Irish people** are a Celtic nation and ethnic group who originate from the island of Ireland and its associated islands. Ireland has been inhabited for about 9,000 years according to archaeological studies. For most of Ireland's recorded history, the Irish have been primarily a Gaelic people (see Gaelic Ireland). Anglo-Normans conquered parts of Ireland in the 12th century, while England's 16th/17th century (re)conquest and colonization of Ireland brought a large number of English and Lowland Scots to parts of the island, most notably Northern Ireland, where they form a separate and distinct ethnic group.



There have been many notable Irish people throughout history. The 6th-century Irish monk and missionary Columbanus is regarded as one of the "fathers of Europe", followed by Kilian of Würzburg and Vergilius of Salzburg. The scientist Robert Boyle is considered the "father of chemistry". Famous Irish explorers include Brendan the Navigator, Robert McClure, Ernest Shackleton and Tom Crean. By some accounts, the first European child born in North America had Irish descent on both sides; and an Irishman was the first European to set foot on American soil in Columbus' expedition of 1492.



The population of Ireland is about 6.3 million, but it is estimated that 50 to 80 million people around the world have Irish forebears. Historically, emigration from Ireland has been the result of conflict, famine and economic issues. People of Irish descent are found mainly in English-speaking countries; especially Great Britain, the United States, Canada and Australia. There are also significant numbers in Argentina and Mexico. The United States has the most people of Irish descent, while in Australia those of Irish descent are a higher percentage of the population than in any other country. Many Icelanders have Irish and Scottish Gaelic forebears.



Food



Soda bread



Irish stew



Boxty



Irish salmon and smoked salmon

Irish coddled pork with cider



Traditions and cultures

- Popular culture in Ireland is very similar to many other Western countries in terms of TV, cinema and popular music and literature. However, one aspect of popular culture in Ireland that makes it somewhat different to other cultures is pub culture.
- The term 'pub' refers to a 'public house' or bar. While there is a recognized issue of over-consumption of alcohol in Ireland, pub culture is about more than just drinking.

Typically pubs are important meeting places, where people can gather and meet their neighbours and friends in a relaxed atmosphere. The character of pubs varies widely according to the customers they serve, and the area they are in. Since 2004 it is illegal to smoke in an enclosed place of work in Ireland, including



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About the traditional Christmas day swim

The Christmas swim is renowned for its fund raising for charities with each event nominating the proceeds to their own worthy charity. Mostly held in coastal areas the Christmas day swim is however held in rivers and some of the loughs although its advisable to only attend a well organised swim.

With the risks involved from swimming in the cold water most organisers will notify the local Coast Guard and the Garda ahead of the event. Strict rules are usual set in place for the safety of participants.



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Preparing for the traditional Christmas swim

Never mind swimming cold water, standing out on Christmas day in Ireland is cold enough. It's a must to bring along plenty of warm clothing and you can never have enough.

Some organisers will provide hot beverages and Christmas mince pies but if a tipple is a must for the Christmas Day swim it should only be taken afterwards. It's always a good idea to make up your own flask of hot tea, coffee, or even soup.

As aside from the clothing to wear when out of the water, what to wear going into the water is equally important.

Swimmers don't want to wear any type of clothing that becomes heavy when wet, like woolly jumper. Proper swimwear is usually the best choice on what to wear for the Christmas swim although some events do require participants to wear sponsored charity t-shirts and such.