



GEOGRAPHY

Ireland is an island nation on the westernmost edge of Europe. It is the continent's second largest island (after Great Britain).

Brief History of Ireland:

The Irish people are mainly of Celtic origin. The Celts arrived in the 4th century BC. In 432 AD St. Patrick arrived on the island and began to work to convert the locals to Christianity. Monasteries were built where Irish scholars studied Latin and Greek as well as developed the arts of manuscript, metalworking, and sculpture. Starting in the 9th century, the Vikings invaded Ireland and then, the Normans.

FAST FACTS

Official Name: Éire, Republic of Ireland
Form of government: Constitutional Democracy
Population: 4,109,086
Capital: Dublin
Monetary unit: Euro
Official languages: Irish/English
Area: 26,592 square miles (68,890 square kilometers)
Major mountain ranges: Macgillycuddy's Reeks, Wicklow Mountains

Ireland became part of the United Kingdom in 1800 with the signing of the Act of Union. In 1846 Ireland was hit with a *great famine*. The potato crop failed and millions died of starvation. Millions more left the country and many Irish emigrated to the United States.



In the late 1800s and early 1900s the Irish began to want their independence from the United Kingdom and from 1919-1921 Ireland and England went to war. At the end of the war the Irish Free State was formed. Ireland is divided into Ireland, which is an independent country, and Northern Ireland, which is still a part of the UK.

Today in Ireland, English is the common language, but Irish (Gaelic) is also an official language and is taught in schools.



PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Ireland is a nation of storytellers. The tradition dates back to Celtic bards, who would record and act the country's history. Many famed writers come from Ireland, including four

winner of the Nobel Prize for literature. The Irish also excel in music and sports.

Curiosities:

- Ireland is known for its wide expanses of lush, green fields. In fact, its nickname is the Emerald Isle.
- The Irish have a great affection for nature and rural life. The country's first coins even featured pictures of animals.
- Did you know that there are no wild snakes in Ireland? The sea has stopped many animals common on mainland Europe from reaching the island.
- The flag of the Republic of Ireland has three colours: green, which represents the majority Catholic residents; orange, which represents the minority Protestant; and white, which represents peace.
- The two main symbols of this country are the shamrock and the harp.
- Guinness is the most popular beer in Ireland. And it's gorgeous!