

**DriveAway
Holidays**
Your road to freedom

Ireland

Self-Drive Guide



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Take a Self-Drive Holiday in Ireland

With over 25 years experience and award-winning service, let DriveAway Holidays plan your next self-drive adventure. We offer an extensive range of vehicles to suit everyone's need and budget at over 8000 locations in 130 countries worldwide. Enjoy the freedom of having your own rental car and discover the world at your own pace.

Ireland's roads bring back the joy of touring by car – so close, so easy, so much to see and do. This guide is aimed at the travel enthusiast that wants to see all that Ireland has to offer, particularly with the comfort and freedom of your own vehicle. We've included all the information you'll need for a self-drive holiday in Ireland, from hiring a car, rules of the road, even signposting, to some great ideas for touring the different and unique regions of this wonderful Emerald Isle!

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Renting a Car in Ireland

When selecting a rental vehicle, take into consideration where you will be travelling, how many people will be travelling in the vehicle, luggage size and the kind of driving you intend to do. DriveAway Holidays offers a vast range of vehicles from small economy sizes to larger full-sized cars, 4WDs, convertibles and luxury vehicles. The ACRISS system on page 4 will help you find a car that suits your needs. This is internationally recognised code which will ensure you get the same standard of vehicle wherever you rent.

Automatic and Manual Transmissions

Yes, automatic cars are available in Ireland, however they will be more expensive than manual cars and not as readily available as manuals.

Do I need a Credit card?

Yes. A credit card will be needed when collecting, which will be used for a security bond. The deposit is generally the insurance excess of the rental car which depends on the category of vehicle you have booked and the rate type.

Collecting at an Airport in Ireland

At most airports you will find your rental company has a desk in the arrivals hall, with the rental cars being located within walking distance. However, at smaller airports you may be required to collect your vehicle from a downtown depot. A courtesy transfer will be provided from the airport to the depot in this instance. DriveAway Holidays offer all-inclusive prices which generally include any location / airport fees and charges that may otherwise apply. Remember to check at time of booking to ensure your rental will include all airport fees.

What are 'premium location' fees?

Premium location fees apply when a vehicle is collected from an airport, railway or selected downtown locations. DriveAway's car rental prices usually do include the airport or 'premium location' fees for car rental collections in Ireland. Check on your prepaid voucher to ensure that this included.

Rental Vehicle Insurance

Your car rental supplier should already have comprehensive insurance covering their cars. In the case of an accident it must be reported to the insurance provider immediately and an excess will be due.

Car Rental Companies in Ireland will normally include:

- **Third Party Insurance:** Compulsory insurance and will be included in your car hire price. This covers you for other people's injury and damage to their vehicle.
- **Collision Damage Waiver (CDW):** This limits your financial liability for damage to the rented vehicle and is normally included in prepaid car hire prices. Rentals are normally subject to liability excess, which can be reduced at the time you collect your rental car or by taking out **DriveAway Hire Car Excess Insurance**.
- **Theft and Loss Cover:** This limits your financial liability for the loss or theft of the rented vehicle and is generally included in the prepaid car rental price.
- **Fire and Liability:** Limits your financial liability for bodily injury or death, and is normally included in the prepaid car hire price.
- **Personal Accident Insurance:** This covers the driver for personal injuries and is generally not included in your car rental rate. It is considered an optional extra that you can take out upon collection of the car.

DriveAway Hire Car Excess Insurance

When renting a vehicle, the rental rates include basic insurance, however, in the event that the vehicle is stolen or accidentally damaged, there is usually an Insurance excess amount which the driver is liable to pay to the rental company. To avoid any unexpected costs opt for DriveAway Hire Car Excess Insurance which will offer a reimbursement for the supplier's damage and theft excess to a maximum for AU\$5,000. Simply add this onto your car rental booking prior to departure and you could save thousands of dollars in the long run! To find out more, simply call DriveAway Holidays on 1300 723 972 or visit the DriveAway website.



ACRISS System

Class	Fuel Capacity	Type	Transmission	Fuel/Air Cond.
M = Mini	0.8 - 1.0	B = 2 Door	M = Manual	R = Yes
E = Economy	1.0 - 1.4	D = 4 Door	A = Automatic	N = No
C = Compact	1.2 - 1.6	C = 2/4 door	N = Manual 4WD	D = Diesel Air
F = Full size	2.0 - 3.2	L = Limousine	C = Manual AWD	Q = Diesel No Air
P = Premium	2.0 - 4.2	S = Sports Car	B = Auto 4WD	H = Hybrid Air
L = Luxury	2.0 - 4.2	T = Convertible	D = Auto AWD	I = Hybrid No Air
X = Special	1.2 - 3.0	J = All Terrain	Examples: ECMN: E = Economy C = 2 or 4 door M = Manual N = No Aircon FDAR: F = Full Size D = 4 Door A = Automatic R = Aircon	E = Electric Air
	R = Recreational	C = Electric No Air		
	F = 4 Wheel Drive			
	X = Special			
	K = Commercial Van/Truck			
	P = Ute			
	X = Special			
	E = Executive			

The DriveAway Hire Car Excess Insurance is managed by Accident & Health International Underwriting Pty Limited, ABN 26 053 335 952, AFSL 238261 and underwritten by CGU Insurance Limited, ABN 27 004 478 371, AFSL 238291.

Driving In Ireland

Driving in Ireland is easy as you still drive on the left hand side of the road. There are a few simple rules to follow to enjoy your holiday, so when you collect your car hire, try to adhere to the following rough guide to make your driving holiday in the Emerald Isle as good as it should be.

- Familiarise yourself with the rental car and controls
- Drive on the left side of the road.
- Get a good map or a GPS with appropriate MAP.
- Get to know the road signs.
- Respect the right of way.
- Check your fuel gage! In rural areas, few petrol stations exist and are distant between each other, so try to keep the tank full.
- Avoid illegal parking. There are particularly 'efficient' parking control companies in Ireland that are more than happy to clamp or even tow your illegally parked car, only to be released with rather hefty fines. Any fees or damage will most often not be covered by insurance, so make sure your car is parked legally.
- Expect the unexpected. The majority of driving you'll do in Ireland is in rural countryside, so don't be surprised by the unexpected farm machinery or herd of sheep on the road. Remember to drive cautiously.
- Try and avoid driving in Dublin. Traffic can be heavy and parking can be expensive.

Ireland Driving Laws

- Driving in Ireland is on the left-hand side of the road and seat belts must be worn at all times in the front and the back of the vehicle.
- Motorcyclists and their passengers must wear helmets.
- There are very strict laws on drinking and driving and those found to be contravening these laws will be heavily penalised. Drive with blood alcohol level of over 0.08% and you could face imprisonment. So don't drink and drive.
- In both the Republic and Northern Ireland, speed limits are 30mph/50kph in built-up areas, 60mph/100kph on the open road and 100mph/110kph on the motorway.
- Children under 12 cannot ride in the front seat.
- Horns are not to be used between 11.30pm and 7.00am.
- Do not use your mobile phone when driving – it is illegal and unsafe.
- Cars already on a roundabout always have the right of way. At unmarked crossings, give way to vehicles approaching from the right.
- In the Republic of Ireland yellow signs with black markings will give instructions at marked crossings - a graphic approximation of the layout with thick lines denoting the right of way, thinner lines representing roads that have to give way.

Licence Requirements

Australian drivers do not require an international driver's licence to drive in the Republic and Northern Ireland. Car rental companies will require that drivers have held a full licence for at least one year.

Min & Max Age Requirements

Min Driving Age: Generally 25 years but some suppliers may allow younger drivers for an additional fee.

Young Driver's Surcharge: Drivers under 25 years may be charged an additional fee.

Max Driving Age: There is no maximum driving age in Ireland with most car rental suppliers; however the max driving age for some car hire companies is 75 years. In these cases, aged drivers may be required to hold a letter from their GP stating they are healthy and fit to drive. Check with DriveAway Holidays for further details.

Road Tolls & e-Tags

Tolls are payable at two points in the Dublin area – M50 Ring Road between the N4 and N3 interchanges only and on the R131 East Link Bridge. Tolls are being introduced on some new motorways, e.g. the E1 (M1) route which connects Dublin and Belfast. Expect to pay anywhere from €1.00 to €2.70 for tolls, so keep some spare change handy on the major routes.

Parking in Ireland

Yellow lines indicate parking restrictions:

Double yellow lines means no parking at any time.

Single yellow line means no parking from 8.00am to 6.30pm Monday to Saturday.

Broken yellow lines means there are few restrictions, so check the nearest sign for details.

Pay-and-Display - normally found in major towns and cities: enter the money for the required amount of time, collect the ticket and display the ticket clearly on the dashboard.

Do you have car hire depots at the ferry ports?

Yes, you can collect your car from Dun Laoghaire ferry port.

Child Seat Regulations

Type of Restraint	Weight	Approx Age
Group 0: forward facing seat	>10kg	Birth to 6-9 months
Groups 0+ : rearward facing seat	>13kg	Birth to 12-15 months
Group 1: forward facing seat	9-18kg	9 months—4 years
Group 2 : booster seat	12-25kg	4-6 years
Group 3 : booster cushion	22-36kg	6-11 years



Travelling between Republic of Ireland & Northern Ireland

Depending on the supplier, car rental companies will sometimes charge a **Cross Border Fee** to travel from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland. Some companies require drivers attain written permission from the hire company to travel into Northern Ireland, as well as Wales, England and Scotland and may face substantial fines to travel to other countries without permission. The cost to travel from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland will vary depending on the car hire supplier and often depends on the length of the time spent abroad. Check the details of your car rental before you book to ensure that you are aware of any additional charges.

One Way Car Rentals

There may be additional charges to collect from one city and drop off in another within the same country. Some companies will not permit one way rentals from Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland, and for one way rentals from Northern Ireland to Republic of Ireland fees vary anywhere from £100-£300, so before you book find out any other additional charges from your car rental supplier.

Remember that you may not be covered by insurance if you travel to another country without the car rental company's permission.

Car Ferry Tolls

With many rivers winding across Ireland, there are a few car ferry crossings that you'll come across. Expect to pay anywhere between €4 and €35 for foot passengers, cyclist and cars.

Road Sign Definitions

- Direction signs will be in blue for Freeways/Motorways, green for national roads and white for local roads.
- Tourist drives and places of interest are signposted in brown with white writing.
- Traffic calming – speed bumps ahead.
- In the Republic, signposts denoting distance are now in kilometres per hour. All signposts and place names are displayed in both Irish (Gaelic) and English. In Northern Ireland all signposts and limits are in miles per hour and place names are displayed in English.

Ireland's Regions

DUBLIN: Dublin

NORTHERN IRELAND: Belfast

IRELAND'S WEST: Galway

IRELAND'S SOUTH: Cork

IRELAND'S EAST: Kilkenny



Dublin

Situated on Ireland's east coast of Ireland, Dublin lives on the banks of the River Liffey. The capital of Ireland, Dublin is a vibrant and cosmopolitan city, full of trendy bars, luxury hotels, fine restaurants and high street shopping, yet still maintains the unique, down-to-earth spirit and friendliness in its people. Dublin is home to some of Europe's most remarkable historical sites and heritage, and boasts some of Ireland's best Georgian architecture. This fantastic blend of modern, energetic lifestyle, culture and history mixed along with a good dose of Irish *craic* make Dublin one of the world's most visited and enjoyed cities.

Attractions

The National Gallery, Library & Gallery – See fine Irish art, works by Yeats, bounty of relics & treasures from the Bronze Age, Vikings and ancient Egypt.

The Dublin Writer's Museum – Huge collection of books, poetry and portraits for Ireland's literary greats.

Trinity College – Built in 1592, Ireland's oldest university and home to the Book of Kells.

Dublin Castle – Originally built in 1204, now houses the Major Irish governmental complex with only the Record Tower surviving the original building.

Malahide Castle – Beautiful castle set on 260 acre estate.

St Patrick's Cathedral – Visit one of Ireland's earliest Christian sites, built in 1191, and home to the Living Stones.

The Temple Bar – Meander the cobbled streets of Dublin's Cultural Quarter, and visit the myriad of pubs, bars, street markets and restaurants.

The Guinness Storehouse – Take a tour of the brewery that produces Ireland's signature drink.

Croke Park – See a game of Hurling and get a taste of traditional Irish sport.

Phoenix Park – Take a break from the buzz of the city and visit Phoenix Park, 12 hectares of landscaped gardens and nature trails is also home to Dublin Zoo.

Events

January

Temple Bar Traditional Festival - Irish Music and Culture.

March

St Patrick's Festival - On and around 17 March.

April

Colours Boat Race - Rowing race between Trinity College and University College Dublin.

June

Dublin Writer's festival.

September

Dublin Fringe Festival.

The Liffey Swim - Swimmers race from Rory O'More Bridge to Customs House.

Dun Laoghaire

Self-Drive Tours around Dublin

Midlands Historic Houses and Castles

To see the best historic houses, castles and religious foundations, travel from Dublin along the N4 to the beautiful university town of Manooch. Continue onwards on the N4 to Mullingar where you can visit Belvedere House and Gardens. Then travel further on to the bustling town of Althone on the banks of the River Shannon. Visit the ancient Celtic foundations of Clonmacnoise, and see interesting ruins from the 13th Century.

Drive along the N6 to Moate, join the N80 to Tullamore and visit the home of the famous Whiskey Tullamore Dew. Head south along the N52 to the heritage town of Birr and visit its enchanting castle and then stop off at the castle in Kinnitty. Drive through the Slieve Bloom Mountains onto the gorgeous town Portlaoise where you can see an 800 year old castle at Dunamase. Visit the Irish National Stud and Gardens on the return to Dublin via the N8.



Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly



Coastal Route: North and South Coast

Take the Navan Road out of Dublin and head northwest for Tara, the site of a former royal acropolis in an area that is rich in ancient monuments. Continue north to Navan and Slane, and visit the Bronze Age cemeteries of Bru na Boinne, Kings William Glen, Melifont Abbey and Monasterboice. Drive through Drogheda to Dunleer and Dundalk, where you can explore the surrounding countryside. Head further north and drive a loop along the rugged Carlingford Peninsular around Omeath, Carlingford and Ballymascanlon, and back down to Dundalk.

Head back south, through Castlebellingham, Clogher and Baltray, with great beach and golf course, and on to Drogheda on the River Boyne. Follow the coast road and enjoy a pleasant drive through Balbriggan, Skerries, Rush, Lusk, and detour to Newbridge House in Donabate. Stop by at Howthe and take in the magnificent views from the rocky Hill of Howthe. Drive back to Dublin via Sutton.

Head south from Dublin toward the Wicklow Mountains, and stop at the pretty village of Enniskerry. See the highest waterfall in Ireland at the Powerscourt Estate and Gardens. Drive through the Sally Gap towards Glendalough, one of the most picturesque valleys in county Wicklow, then through Rathdrum and Avoca towards the resort town of Arklow. From here, head north towards the town of Wicklow where you can enjoy great views of the bay, then stop by at Mount Usher Gardens near Ashford just north of Wicklow. Drive on to Greystones and Bray and through the rugged Devils Glen and the Great Sugar Loaf Mountain. On your return into Dublin, drive through Kilkee and Dalkey to enjoy the views of Dublin Bay and the city beyond.

Belfast

This beautiful Victorian city is a city reborn; where old and new stand proudly side by side creating a charm and character that is truly unique. Belfast's areas can be divided into quarters: the Cathedral quarter is the oldest part of Belfast, with cobbled streets, historic pubs and fantastic restaurants; the Titanic Quarter has an incredible maritime & industrial history and is home to the magnificent Belfast Waterfront Hall; the Gaeltacht Quarter where you'll see the city's descriptive wall murals and is home to Irish language and culture; and finally the Queen's Quarter that houses some of the best eateries and pubs in Belfast.

Attractions

St Anne's Cathedral – This magnificent cathedral was built in 1776, with an incredible black & white marble maze inside.

Belfast City Hall – This is the home of Belfast City Council from Portland Stone, and is also home to the Belfast Wheel, offering fantastic views across the city.

Belfast Castle – Belfast Castle is located 400 feet above sea level and offers breathtaking views of the Belfast Lough from its position on top of Cave Hill.

The Odyssey Arena – This is fast becoming Belfast's premier entertainment and leisure venue for international artists and exhibitions.

The Zoological Gardens – Belfast Zoo is home to over 1,200 animals, where the focus is on conservation and education.

Belfast Botanic Gardens – These gardens were established in 1895 next to the Queen's University, and are home to Belfast's most historical landmark, the Great Palm House.

St George Market – Operating as Friday market since 1604, the markets running at the St George site where you can taste & buy almost any local or regional produce.

Titanic Boat Tour – Take a tour of the shipyard of Harland & Wolff, which is the birthplace of the infamous Titanic.

The Crown Liquor Saloon – Enjoy a Pint of Guinness in the National Trust-owned Crown Liquor Saloon.

W5 – A science and information attraction where you can partake in interactive exhibits to learn about science and animation.

Events

April

Titanic Made in Belfast – The week long festival that celebrates the majestic Titanic and the craftsmen of Belfast that helped to create her.

May

10 Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival – Held over two weeks, this is a celebration of life and art.

July

Rose Week – Held in Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park, this is an amazing horticultural showcase.

August

Belfast Maritime Festival – This is a festival for all the family, including music, children's exhibitions, boat tours and water sports.

Belfast

Self-Drive Tours around Belfast

Belfast to Dublin

Drive from Bangor near Belfast along the A2 coast road to the seaside town of Ballywater, head west to Greyabbey, then south on the A20 to Portaferry. Take the car ferry over Strangford Lough to Downpatrick to visit St Patrick's grave on Cathedral Hill.

Drive through Clough and on to Newcastle where the Mourne's 'sweep down to the sea', then on to the fishing port of Kilkeel. Follow the A2 along the coast to Rostrevor, Warrenpoint and along to Newry. From Newry, travel south toward Dublin, through Dundalk and stopping off at Drogheda to see the prehistoric tombs at Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. You can see where St Patrick lit the first paschal fire at Slane before returning on to Dublin.



St Patrick's Grave, Co Down



The Causeway Coastal Route

This is rated as one of the top 5 scenic drives in the world, running from Belfast Lough to Londonderry with an incredible mosaic of fishing villages, quiet beaches, rugged coastlines, mountains and magnificent scenery. Leave Belfast and join the Causeway Coastal Route at Newtownabbey. Enjoy the view of Belfast Lough to the right as you head further west toward the seaside town of Carrickfergus, which is home to the well-preserved 12th century Norman castle. Drive on through Kilroot and to Larne, the gateway to the beautiful Glens of Antrim, and follow the Antrim Coast Road where you can enjoy the breathtaking scenery. Take time to explore any of the nine glens, particularly Glenarm with its fabulous walled garden and beautiful harbour.

Drive on through to the lovely town of Cushendun and Torr Head, along to Ballintoy where you can walk across the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge spanning a 24 metre chasm. If you veer inland you can visit the world's oldest licensed distillery in the village of Bushmills. From there you can head back to the coast to the UNESCO World Heritage listed site of the Giant's Causeway, which are 40,000 interlocking basalt columns that, according to folklore was created by legendary giant Finn McCool as a causeway to Scotland.

See the romantic ruins of Dunluce Castle near Bushmills, and drive on to Portrush and Portstewart, lively seaside resorts, then to the beautiful Bann Valley and market town of Ballymoney. Visit Mussenden Temple along by Castlerock towards Limavady, then take a walk on the remote beaches at Benone or Downhill. You can then travel on through the lovely Roe Valley, through Limavady and on to Londonderry, which is the only completely walled city in the British Isles.



Carrick-a-Rede Bridge, Co. Antrim

Northern Ireland

Be welcomed into Northern Ireland by some of the most charming and friendly people in the world. Discover the delights of Northern Ireland, with its unique blend of ancient heritage, unspoilt landscapes and cosmopolitan cities. From the famous Giant's Causeway, the birthplace of the Titanic, the rivers, loughs and majestic coastlines that decorate the landscape, to the small, quaint villages and cosy pubs – there is something in Northern Ireland to see and do, for the young and the young-at-heart.

Counties: Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone.

Attractions

Belfast City – see Belfast guide.

The Giant's Causeway, Co. Antrim – One of Northern Ireland's most famous landmarks, the Giant's Causeway is made up of thousands of interlocking basalt columns, the result of an ancient volcanic eruption.

The Walled City of Derry, Co. Londonderry – Situated on the banks of the River Foyle, Derry is the only fully walled city in Ireland.

Ulster American Folk Park, Co. Tyrone – An open air museum illustrating the story of emigration from Ulster to the US during the 18th & 19th Centuries.

The Causeway Coastal Route, Co. Antrim – See the Belfast Guide

The Lakelands, Co. Fermanagh – The Lakelands are a haven for both wildlife and sports enthusiasts, and offering spectacular scenery & woodlands.

Discover the Mourne Mountains, Co. Down – Believed to be the inspiration behind CS Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia, Majestic mountains, natural beauty and native wildlife.

Round of Golf, Co.'s Antrim & Down – Pack the clubs and take a swing on such famous fairways as Royal Portrush, Co.

Antrim and Royal County Down, Co. Down.

The Bushmills Distillery, Co. Antrim – Built in 1608, this is Ireland's oldest operating distillery.

Events

May

Carnival of Colours, St Columb's Park - Co. Derry.

July

Lady of the Lake Festival - Co Fermanagh.

August

Hillsborough International Oyster Festival - Co Down.

September

Appalachian and Bluegrass Music Festival - Co. Tyrone.

Self-Drive Tours around Northern Ireland



The Inishowen, Co. Derry

Discover the beauty and charm of the northern most peninsular in Ireland. Begin your tour at Buncrana with its long sandy beach and ruins of Buncrana Castle that dates back to the 16th Century as well as Doherty Castle. Head north along the R238 to Mamore Gap and take in the magnificent view of the steep, northerly coastline, and onto the seaside town of Dunaff. Here you can see the Fort Dunree Military Museum that overlooks Lough Swilly, as well as the Old Fort Hospital. Driving east, you'll see fantastic beaches, and stunning scenery as you travel through Clonmany and Ballyliffin, where there is a unique outdoor museum showcasing life in the area from 1840-1970.

Further on the R238 you'll come to reach Carndonagh with its great ancient monuments, including the 10 arch stone bridge that crosses Trawbrega Bay in Malin. Stand on Ireland's most northerly point at Malin Head, and further east you'll find the Wee House of Malin, a hermit's rock cell cut into a cliff beside a cottage ruin. Drive further south east to the resort village of Culdaff, and enjoy the seascape as you head along down to Greencastle, home to the Inishowen Maritime Museum and Planetarium. Follow the R241 onto Moville, then through Redcastle, Muff and down to the walled city of Londonderry.



St Patrick's Tour, Co.'s Down & Armagh

Delve deep into Ireland's history and Saint Patrick. Begin the tour in the city of Armagh, and see both the Anglican and the Roman Catholic St Patrick's Cathedrals, the County Museum and Saint Patrick's Trian. Take the Darkley Road through 'the Fews' and scenic woodlands of Keady and Newtownhamilton to Newry, where you can visit Bagenal's Castle, the Killeevy Old Churches founded in 517AD and Kilnasaggart Stone.



Follow the Newry Road through Rathfriland, Castlewellsan and Clough, through to the town of Downpatrick. Here you'll find the Struell Wells, the first holy wells in Ireland, the remains of the Inch Abbey that date back to 1180, the Saul Church, Down Cathedral and St Patrick's grave. Head to Strangford and take the car ferry to Portaferry, then follow the Portaferry Road to Greyabbey where you'll find the splendid ruins of a Cistercian Abbey. Heading north drive on to Newtownards and see the Movilla Abbey, then follow the N21 for Bangor where you can visit the north Down Museum and Bangor Abbey.



Armagh City, Co. Armagh

Ireland's West

The west of Ireland is a unique and enchanting place, facing the Atlantic Ocean with wild landscapes, charismatic towns and villages, long stretches of coastline, rugged sea cliffs, and rough barren landscapes with heritage and history in spades.

Counties: Clare, Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Limerick, Mayo, Offaly, Roscommon, Sligo and Tipperary

Attractions

Cliffs of Moher, Co Clare - These amazing cliffs rise 214 meters above the Atlantic Ocean and stretch 8km across the Clare Coast.

The Burren, Co Clare - Stretching over 160km, you'll find amazing treasures, such as megalithic tombs, ancient Celtic crosses, and a wide variety of native wild flowers.

The Connemara National Park, Co Galway - Consists of forests and heath lands and great areas of blanketing bogs, alongside the Twelve Pins (or Bens) and mountain ranges of the Maumturks.

Glenveagh National Park, Co Donegal - This beautiful area covers over 14,000 acres and houses Glenveagh Castle with its fabulous park and gardens.

King John's Castle, Co Limerick - Located on the banks of the River Shannon, this incredible building was built around 1200.

County Galway, Galway City - Said to be Ireland's fastest growing city, Galway is a lively, arty city partly populated by university students and filled with great pubs, clubs and plenty of famous Irish *craic*!

Climb Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo - Ireland's Patron Saint spent 40 days and nights fasting and praying on the conical shaped mountain of Croagh Patrick, and today its one of the most climbed mountains in Ireland.

Visit Knock Shrine, Co Mayo - This is the sight of the apparition of St John the Evangelist and St Joseph in August 1879, and is visited by over half a million visitors each year.

Visit Achill Island, Co May - This is the largest island off the coast of Ireland and is linked to the mainland via a bridge, and is worth seeing for its wild, rugged and windswept beauty.

Ballyhoura Mountains, Co Limerick - Discover the Stone Age monuments, museums, parks and gardens in the beautiful Ballyhoura Mountains.

Events

May

Volvo Ocean Race, Co Galway - Vessels competing in the Volvo Ocean Race, the Premier Round-The-World yacht race

July

Galway Arts Festival, Co Galway - Artists and musicians from all across Ireland converge on Galway for its annual arts festival.

August

Galway Race Festival, Co. Galway - One of Ireland's premier horse racing events, fun for punters and non-punters alike.

September

Galway International Oyster Festival, Co Galway - Galway City comes alive as thousands of people flock in from all over the globe to celebrate the oyster, known for its luxury and passion.

Matchmaking festival, Lisdoonvarna, Co Clare - Annual festival held to find that perfect match for the lovelorn.

Galway

Self-Drive Tours around Ireland's West

Coast and Country Tour

Begin your tour from Galway city toward Connemara on R336 West, driving through towns of Spidda, Inverin, Costello Cana and Clifden. From there, head north on N59 to Leenaun in Co. Mayo at the head of the Killary harbour and the Fjord. Enjoy the mountains, Doolough Lake and the Delphi Valley as you head further north to the town of Louisburgh. On the road east to Westport, make sure you stop at Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holy mountain and place of Christian pilgrimage.

From Westport you can take a trip out to Achill Island by driving through Newport then Keel and then up to Dooagh. After you've explored the island, head back towards Mulranny and drive north to Bangor Erris to visit Ballycroy National Park. Visit the picturesque Erris peninsular in the Mayo Gaeltacht.

Take the coastal road R314 towards Ballycastle and admire in the wild coastal views to Sligo and Donegal. Visit the Céide Fields in Co. Mayo, a five thousand year old farm settlement. On the return trip, drive through the towns of Castlebar, Claremorris and Tuam, and enjoy the views over Lough Conn.



Achill Island, Co



Lough Derg Drive, Co Clare

This is one of Ireland's less travelled routes, a 95-mile circuit around the largest lake of the River Shannon. The drive passes an assortment of charming marina villages and scenic delights along the way. Travel through twin towns Ballina and Killaloe at the southern tip of the lake, on to Scarriff Bay, then to Mount Shannon, one of the busiest yachting centres on Lough Derg. Stop by at Portumna at the very north of the lake to see the palatial 17th Century castle that overlooks the lake.

From there, head to the lovely village of Terryglass, and then south towards the fishing and boating centre of Dromineer. On the way to Nenagh, visit the castle remains that date back to 1217 and the demolished county gaol. From Nenagh, head west to Portroe for the best viewing points of the Lough Derg. Enjoy the final leg of the journey on the gentle road back to Ballina.



The Wild Atlantic Way

Discover Ireland's newest self-drive experience the Wild Atlantic Way, one of the world's longest driving routes, stretching a total of 2,500 kilometres along the west coast of Ireland from Donegal to the Cork. Along this captivating coastal route, meander through secluded villages and towns snuggled into the coastline, discovering delightful cafes and restaurants along the way where you can experience at first hand the true warmth and craic of the Irish people.



The magnificent coast of Donegal and Sigo are both perfect for experiencing the Atlantic's surfing beaches. Take time to discover the historic ruins of the 6th Century monastic settlement on Skellig Michael in Kerry.

Explore the scenic Ards Forest Park in Donegal and watch the weather change from the historic Clare Island Lighthouse in Mayo.

This sign-posted route will take you off the beaten track towards more authentic discoveries, magnificent landscapes and quaint hidden gems which Ireland is renowned for!



WILD ATLANTIC WAY



Legend:

- Wild Atlantic Way
- - - Ferry Route to Island
- - - Flight Route to Island
- Signature Discovery Point
- Discovery Point
- Road (Motorways / National Road)
- City / Town

Note: Not all of the route is fully accessible by coach traffic.
 For a suggested coach route, please see www.foiteireland.ie/wildatlanticway

Ireland's South

Often described as 'The Irish Riviera', the South coast of Ireland has been a favourite holiday destination for both local and overseas travellers for years. This is a land of unparalleled beauty, with spectacular coastline that's warmed by the Gulf Stream, with a culture steeped in tradition.

Counties Carlow, Cork, Kerry, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford

Attractions

Dingle Peninsular, Co Kerry – This is the most westerly point of Ireland with unsurpassed history and heritage to be explored in a wild and beautiful landscape.

St Finbarre's Cathedral, Co. Cork – This beautiful French-Gothic cathedral was consecrated in 1870 and built on the site of where Christian worship has been offered since the 7th Century.

The Rock of Cashel, Co Tipperary – A spectacular group of medieval buildings set on an outcrop of limestone, including towers, a cathedral, chapel and high cross dating back to the 13th Century.

John F Kennedy Park and Arboretum, New Ross, Co Wexford – Located on the slopes of Slieve Coillte, this incredible plant collection and garden is a tribute to the late JFK.

Ross Castle, Killarney, Co. Kerry – Situated in the banks of Lough Leane, this 15th Century tower house was built by the O'Donohue Ross clan.

Youghal, Co. Cork – Pronounced 'yawl', this ancient town is situated on the estuary where the River Blackwater meets the sea, and is one of Ireland's remaining medieval walled towns.

Kinsale, Co. Cork – A popular holiday resort for both Irish and foreign tourists, which is renown for its gourmet restaurants and holiday activities, including yachting, fishing and golf.

The Blarney Stone at Blarney Castle, Co Cork – Kiss the famous Blarney Stone and acquire the gift of the Irish gab!

Skellig Rocks, Co Kerry – These islands are listed as UNESCO world heritage sites. On Skellig Michael you'll see Gallarus Oratory, a monastic settlement of six beehive shaped huts dating back to the 6th Century.

Mount Brandon, Co. Kerry – This is one of Ireland's highest mountains and provides magnificent views of the Atlantic ocean and countryside.

Events

August

Waterford Spraoi, Co Waterford – 3 day festival incorporating stage acts, music and fun from all over the world.

Rose of Tralee Festival, Tralee, Co. Kerry – A weeklong festival incorporating the young women of Irish ancestry from all over the world.

Puck Fair, Killorglin, Co Kerry – Dating back to 1603, this three day festival is the oldest fair in Ireland.

Cobh Peoples Regatta, Co Cork – one of the oldest Regattas in Ireland with sailing, rowing and watersports.

October

Guinness Cork Jazz Festival, Cork City – Cork's annual jazz festival, a celebration of music and performance.

Kerry

Self-Drive Tours around Ireland's South

Surf and Turf Route

This route will take you along the beautiful coastline south of Wexford and into the marvellous countryside of Carlow. Begin at Wexford, the town that was originally founded by Vikings in the 800 AD. Here you will see Johnstown Castle, Wexford Bullring and the Selskar Abbey. Drive north along R672 coastal road to the beaches at Curracloe and Courtown, and then on to Gorey. From there, head back south toward Enniscorthy on the banks of the River Slaney, where you'll find The Enniscorthy Castle, St Aidan's Cathedral and the National 1798 visitor centre.



Return 8km back to take the N80 to the market town of Bunclody. Drive on to Kiltalea and the Georgian city of Borris, then east along to Graiguenamanagh at the foot of Brandon Hill in the beautiful Barrow Valley, and home to the 13th Century Duiske Abbey.



Continue through St Mullins to the port town of New Ross, where you can see the Dunbrody Famine Ship, and the Hook Lighthouse, that has been a beacon as early as the 5th Century. From New Ross, head back to Wexford via the N25.



Ring of Kerry and Skellig Ring

This circular route is Ireland's most popular and scenic drives. Beginning at Killarney, take the N70 to Killorglin along the banks of the River Glenbeigh. Follow this cliff section of road, offering unmatched views of the Dingle Peninsular, to the town of Cahersiveen, where you can see the Old Barracks Heritage

Centre. Further on, head to Renard where in summer you can take the ferry to Valentia Island, or continue along the way to the magnificent gardens at Glanleam. Take the coastal road to Portmagee, and from here you can take a boat trip and tour to discover the World Heritage listed Skelligs Islands. You can enjoy the panoramic view of the Skelligs from Baile an Sceilge at the top of Coomanaspig.

Start heading east on the R567 to the lovely village of Waterville, which is home to one of Ireland's top 5 golf courses. Stop off at the Coomakesta Pass for brilliant views of Kenmare Rover, Scariff and Deenish Islands. Further east on the N70, drive through the Derrynane National Park and Staigue Fort, the remains of a circular stone fort that remains within the national park. Stop at the picturesque village of Sneem, and further along to the Heritage town of Kenmare. On the final leg of the Ring of Kerry, keep driving north, via Moll's Gap and Ladies View for great vistas of the Lakes of Killarney, and at the sixty foot Torc waterfall, before returning to Killarney.

Kerry

Ireland's East

Discover the spectacular sights, breathtaking scenery, unsurpassed history and heritage on the beautiful east coast of Ireland. Skirting the capital of Dublin, the east of Ireland is the ideal area to get a taste of both new and old Ireland. With natural attractions, cosmopolitan cities, rich culture and sunny and temperate climate, this region of Ireland is surely one not to be missed.

Counties: Cavan, Kildare, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly, Westmeath & Wicklow.

Attractions

Dublin – See Dublin guide.

Newgrange, Boyne Valley, Co. Meath – Visit the Neolithic monuments in Knowth and Dowth that are a Stone Age Passage Tomb that date back to 3200BC.

Trim Castle, Co. Meath – Trim Castle is the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Ireland that was constructed in 1172 under the order of Hugh de Lacy. This is also the site where many scenes from the 'Braveheart' movie were shot.

Russborough House, Co. Wicklow – Located near the lovely lakes in Blessington, Russborough has often been described as the most beautiful house in Ireland.

Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly – The Lost City of Clonmacnoise is located on the banks of the River Shannon. Founded in 545AD, it is Ireland's most renowned monastic site, and boasts some of the most enchanting remains from Ireland's sacred past.

Boyne Valley, Co. Meath – Visit the site of the Battle of the Boyne, just outside the town of Drogheda in Louth, the site of an important battle in Irish history dating back to 1690.

Glendalough, Co. Wicklow – Tour this majestic valley of two lakes, where it's said that St Kevin spent his days in quiet contemplation, and is today a popular area for walkers and hikers.

The Irish National Stud, Co. Kildare – Home to Ireland's premier racing thoroughbreds, the Irish National Stud houses the stud, a horse museum, Japanese gardens and St Fiachra's Garden.

Visit Carlingford, Co. Louth – This charming harbour village is nestled between Slieve Foy, Carlingford Lough and the Mourne Mountains.

Visit Jonnie Fox's Pub & Restaurant, Co. Dublin – Located in Glencullen at the top of the Dublin Mountains, Johnnie Fox's is one of Ireland's oldest and highest traditional Irish pubs.

Events

April

The Irish National Hunt Festival, Co. Kildare – A five day Irish National Racing festival that is buzzing with Irish and international racegoers.

May

Sleive Bloom Festival, Co.'s Laois & Offaly – Walking festival through the magnificent Bloom Mountains, combined with evening entertainment with music, singing and storytelling.

September

Irish Bog Snorkelling, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan – As the name suggests, watch the competitors snorkel along flooded bogs. Lots of fun and good day's craic!

Newgrange, Meath

Driving Tour Ideas for Ireland's East

Wicklow Mountains, Co. Wicklow



The Braveheart Drive

This drive takes you through beautiful Co. Wicklow, through wooded glens and marvellous countryside. Here you'll see where some scenes from the movie 'Braveheart' were shot. Ironically, this tour begins in the tiny village of Hollywood on the N81, roughly 30kms south west of Dublin, and sets off in the direction of the Wicklow Gap. Follow the R756 to the junction with R758 and head towards the small towns of Ballyknocken and Lacken, which are both on the edge of the lovely Blessington Lakes, following the lakes onto the town of Blessington. Here you'll also see Russborough House, the magnificent 18th Century mansion that is definitely worth a visit.

From Blessington, head along the R759, through the breathtaking West Wicklow Mountains and past the peat bogs at Sally's Gap, to the quiet town of Laragh. Follow the R756 from Laragh to the town of Glendalough where you can see the 6th Century St Kevin's Monastic City, which is one of the best preserved round towers in Europe. Head back through the Wicklow National Park along the R756, enjoying the scenery along the way, and finishing off back in Hollywood.



Tour the Boyne Valley

Begin this tour at Donore, just off the N51 outside of Drogheda at the Bru na Doinne Visitors Centre. Here you can visit the burial mound at Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth, and explore the Battle of Boyne site. Then take the R163 through Slane and onto Kells, which was the original home of the Book of Kells. Drive on through to Oldcastle where you'll see ancient burial mounds. Then back on to the N51, and drive toward the agricultural town of Athboy, enjoying the wooded countryside and the lovely Yellow Ford River.

Head toward Navan and explore the Hill of Tara, an archaeological site that houses ancient monuments and was once the seat of the High King of England. Further east along the N51 is the Georgian town of Slane on the River Boyne, where you'll find Slane Castle and the Hill of Slane that contains the ancient cemetery, the ruins of the friary church and gothic tower. Follow the N51 to return back to Drogheda.



Hill of Tara, Co. Meath

Climate and Weather

Ireland has a mild, temperate climate, with an average annual temperature of 10 °C. Although it does have its fair share of sunshine, Ireland is famous for its rain, resulting in the many shades of green within the countryside and earning the title of The Emerald Isle. So for any season it's best to be prepared for any weather regardless of the season.

Summer temperatures generally range from 15°C to 20°C. The weather is warmest in July and August with an average temp of 16°C. Summer days in Ireland are long, with daylight hours from 6am to 10pm. Temperatures in spring (March-May) and autumn (September-November) are generally around 10°C. April and May are the driest months however they can be quite cool (12-14°C). Winter temperatures range between 5°C and 8°C. Snow is rare, but showers can occur at any time of the year. The coldest months are January and February with an average temperature of 7°C. The winter sun sets in winter at around 4pm.

Stay Healthy

Your comprehensive travel insurance will cover any medical costs including medical evacuation, make sure that your insurance covers you for the whole time you'll be away and be clear on what is not included. The Australian Government has signed a

reciprocal health care agreement with the Government of the Republic of Ireland that gives Australians access to emergency medical services but does not provide for any ongoing treatment of existing health conditions.

Ireland does have excellent health care; however you should plan the care of pre-existing conditions before you leave. Bring your medications in their original and clearly labelled containers with a declaration from your doctor describing your medical conditions and medicines needed. If you wear contacts or glasses, bring a spare pair or bring a copy of your prescription.

Pharmacies are known as 'chemist shops' and are found right across Ireland. To find a chemist in Ireland, look under 'Chemists- Pharmaceutical' in the local Golden Pages, or for Northern Ireland look under 'Chemist - Dispensing' in the local Yellow pages.

Stay Safe

Travelling in Ireland is not dangerous, but a level of caution should always be taken when touring in any foreign country. The majority of crimes tend to occur in the larger cities, such as Dublin, where tourists can be targeted for crimes such as bag snatching and pick-pocketing. The best advice is to keep your valuables close to your body and out of reach from potential thieves, avoid lonely streets out of hours and don't flash your wealth and make yourself an obvious target.

Car break-ins, theft, smash and grab and vandalism on tourists vehicles can occur, but can be prevented by keeping valuables or bags out of sight, securely locking cars or using off-street supervised parking. Car-jacking in Ireland is still very rare. As a precaution lock your doors when driving in the larger towns, especially after dark.

Northern Ireland is currently as safe as the Republic of Ireland; however there are areas where the sectarian divide is still prominent, particularly in some parts of Belfast. Try to avoid Northern Ireland around 12 July, which is the climax of the Orange marching season, and has been known to bring tension and disruption.

In the unlikely event of theft or loss, be sure to inform all your credit card companies as soon as you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen. Most credit card companies have toll free numbers to call if your cards are lost or stolen, and they may be able to issue an emergency replacement card or wire you an immediate cash advance.

Money matters

Republic of Ireland

The Euro is the local currency of the Republic of Ireland. EURO (€) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and €1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Northern Ireland

Sterling is the local currency of Northern Ireland. One Pound Sterling (£) = 100 pence. Notes are in denominations of £50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of £2 and £1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 pence (p).

Currency Exchange

Available in airports, banks and bureaux de change.

Banking – hours of operation

Banks are open 10am to 4pm Monday to Wednesday and Friday, and 10am to 5pm on Thursday. In Northern Ireland bank hours are 9.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday

ATMs

ATMs (automatic teller machines) are located at most banks and accept most credit and debit cards.

Credit & Debit Cards

Any credit cards that bear the Visa, MasterCard or American Express symbol will be widely accepted in Ireland. Most ATMs allow cash withdrawals on major credit cards and internationally branded debit cards.

Travellers Cheques

Traveller's cheques are accepted throughout Ireland. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, it's best to take traveller's cheques in Euros or Pounds Sterling. Eurocheques can also be cashed in Ireland.

Tax

Sales tax is called VAT (value-added tax) and is most often included in the price shown on goods. In the Republic of Ireland, the general rate of VAT is 21%, but there are rates of 13.5% for hotels, restaurants and car rentals. In Northern Ireland the VAT is 17.5% across the board.

Tipping

Tips of around 10-15% in restaurants and metered cabs are expected, unless it's already included in the total



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