

IRELAND

An everyday guide to expatriate life and work.



Together, all the way.®



IRELAND COUNTRY GUIDE

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Quick facts¹

Capital: Dublin

Population: 4.7 million

Major languages: English and Irish

Major religions: Christianity

Currency: Euro

Time zone: GMT +1 (GMT +2 from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October)

Emergency number: 999 or 112

Electricity: 230V, 50Hz. Three-pronged plugs with flat blades are standard.

Drive on the: Left

¹ <http://www.expatarrivals.com/ireland/essential-info-for-ireland>

Overview

Known as the Emerald Isle, Ireland is a proud and beautiful land. Flat green plains are found within a rocky and rugged coastline, flourishing beneath abundant rainfalls from moody grey skies.



A country steeped in history, there's a strong focus on religion, more specifically the dominant Catholic faith, as well as a desire to maintain folk traditions and legacies. Pub culture also forms a core part of society.

Expats can look forward to an excellent standard of living in Ireland; but this doesn't come cheap, with the country being one of Europe's most expensive destinations for expats. Nevertheless, well-qualified expats will likely earn high salaries, especially in Ireland's booming tech industry.

This guide will help expats get to grips with life in Ireland, providing insight into visas, business and social etiquette, accommodation and school. It also explains languages, taxes, the cost of living and healthcare.



Getting started

Climate and weather



The weather in Ireland is quite temperate, meaning it's neither too hot, nor too cold. It has an oceanic climate which is damp and generally cloudy. While Ireland does experience rain throughout the year, this doesn't stop it from enjoying cool yet often sunny summers. Winters are colder, with temperatures occasionally dropping below freezing and accompanied by persistent rainfall. Ireland's reputation as being a lush and green land isn't for nothing.¹

¹ <http://www.climatestotravel.com/climate/ireland>



Visas

Citizens of Switzerland and EEA or EU countries don't need a visa to enter Ireland, and there are also visa waiver programs for a number of other countries. For visits of up to 90 days, one can apply for a short-stay or multiple-entry visa.¹

For longer stays and permanent settlement, expats will need a residence permit and a long-stay visa. They're also required to register with immigration, after which a Certificate of Registration will be issued to indicate their legal presence in Ireland.²

Most expats need a work visa before earning income in Ireland. In order to get one, there needs to be an offer of employment. For this reason, many employers do much of the administration and paperwork for potential workers.³

Accommodations

In the more popular cities of Dublin and Cork, expats will find plenty of apartments and semi-detached houses. Naturally, rent gets cheaper the further out one goes from the city, with standalone housing available mostly in smaller villages and towns.⁴

Accommodation is usually furnished, with standards fairly good across the country. House hunting can be tough, with many choosing to enlist the help of a real estate agent.⁵ While rent increases are listed in the lease agreement, there are certain areas, called Rent Pressure Zones, where increases are capped.⁶

Most landlords charge one month's rent as a deposit. The tenant usually pays the water bill, while other utility costs (such as heating, electricity or gas) are subject to the agreement between the tenant and the landlord.⁷

1 http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving_country/moving_to_ireland/coming_to_live_in_ireland/visa_requirements_for_entering_ireland.html

2 http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving_country/moving_to_ireland/rights_of_residence_in_ireland/registration_of_non_eea_nationals_in_ireland.html

3 <http://www.expatarrivals.com/ireland/work-permits-for-ireland>

4 <http://www.expatarrivals.com/ireland/accommodation-in-ireland>

5 <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Ireland/Ireland-Guide/Housing-Rentals/Introduction>

6 http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/housing/renting_a_home/rent_increases.html

7 http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/housing/renting_a_home/tenants_rights_and_obligations.html

Schools

Children in Ireland must attend school from the age of six to 16. The public school system, which holds high standards, consists of primary education and second-level education, which is itself divided into junior and senior cycles.

There are four different types of schools in second-level education: secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Secondary schools exist under private ownership and vocational schools are run by the state, while both community schools and comprehensives are managed by composite management boards.⁸

Public school is free for both local and expat kids, and proves a popular choice with foreign parents. A number of international schools are on offer too, teaching curricula from all over the globe, including those of France, Germany and Japan, as well as the International Baccalaureate. Tuition fees are high, though, with a lot of competition for places.⁹



8 http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the_irish_education_system/overview_of_the_irish_education_system.html

9 <http://www.expatarrivals.com/ireland/education-and-schools-in-ireland>



Culture

While Dublin is quite a cosmopolitan city, there's still a large amount of regional variation throughout the land. Ireland has a rich folk history, with a strong focus on maintaining traditions like dance, music and storytelling. Pub culture is central to many villages and towns, serving as a constant gathering point for social occasions, while religion and family remain central pillars of Irish society.¹

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ireland/Daily-life-and-social-customs>

Language

Nearly everybody in Ireland speaks English, with a small minority speaking Irish, the native language. A region with Irish being the primary language is called a Gaeltacht. While mostly used in ceremonial contexts, Irish enjoys a symbolic role in state affairs and is also the country's first official language.¹

Social Etiquette & Cultural Faux Pas

Those moving to Ireland from Western countries will experience little to no culture shock. With a few tips for those first social situations, settling down should be easy.²

- Shaking hands with men, women and children is customary, as is eye contact and a firm grip denoting trust. This is applicable both when arriving and leaving.³
- The Irish are quite informal, friendly and have a relaxed sense of humor. So it's nothing out of the ordinary to be playfully teased, or even give a bit back. They call it "having the craic", and it's often self-deprecating.⁴
- Bringing along a gift when visiting someone's home is normal, with chocolates, wine or flowers all acceptable gifts for the host. But remember that lilies are used at religious festivals and white flowers at funerals, so they shouldn't be given as gifts. The poppy should also be avoided as it's the symbol of remembrance for soldiers who died during wartime.⁵
- While perhaps not as important today as it was in the past, religion remains an integral part of Irish identity. Handle these conversations with tact and realise that a great deal of conflict in the country's past has been based on religious differences, particularly between Catholics and Protestants. It's also worthwhile not bringing up the divisions between Ireland and Northern Ireland, as this conflict too has a history of violence.
- Tips aren't given at bars but they're expected in restaurants, with 10 to 15% of one's bill considered an acceptable amount.⁶

¹ <http://www.commisceo-global.com/country-guides/ireland-guide>

² <http://www.commisceo-global.com/country-guides/ireland-guide>

³ http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/ce_ie.htm

⁴ http://guide.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?id=8&CID=100

⁵ http://guide.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?id=8&CID=100

⁶ <http://www.whototip.net/tipping-in-ireland>

Eating

Irish food has evolved to use simple and available ingredients, partly due to the country's history of being a poor and working class population. Rich and hearty dishes almost always make use of meat of some kind, as well as potatoes and cabbage, with stews being commonplace.⁷

Some local favorites include champ, which is mashed potato with spring onions, and boxty, an Irish potato pancake. Coddle is a broth that makes use of leftover pork and potatoes, sometimes with an added touch of barley or Guinness.

Restaurants are expensive, so most make use of the wide prevalence of supermarkets and farmers markets. Most pubs offer lunches of typically substantial stews and carvery dishes, so that might be the best bet for expats looking for a cheap bite to eat. If price isn't an issue, Ireland has a varied selection of eateries, from old-school hotels to trendy bistros and quaint cafes to upmarket fine dining establishments.⁸

Drinking

As mentioned, pubs are an integral part of Irish life and society. Home to Irish whiskey (the Irish spell it with an "e") and the dark, unmistakable Guinness stout, there's a strong drinking culture and identity present in the country, with ales, ciders and lagers all popular choices. And, just like its neighbors across the Celtic Sea, tea is consumed en masse.⁹

Holidays

Ireland's public holidays mainly celebrate special days of national or religious significance. The religious occasions are based on the dominant Catholic faith. Bank holidays, such as those found in May, June, August and October, hold no particular significance. Schools, banks and companies are usually closed on these days.¹⁰

New Year's Day - 1 January

St Patrick's Day - 17 March

Easter Monday - March/April

May Holiday - First Monday of May

June Holiday - First Monday of June

August Holiday - First Monday of August

October Holiday - Last Monday of October

Christmas Day - 25 December

St Stephen's Day - 26 December

⁷ <https://wikitravel.org/en/Ireland#Eat>

⁸ <http://www.frommers.com/destinations/ireland/tips-on-dining>

⁹ <https://wikitravel.org/en/Ireland#Eat>

¹⁰ <https://publicholidays.ie/>

Getting in touch

Communications infrastructure is strong in Ireland, as one can expect from what's fast becoming a global tech hub. While fixed lines are expensive, standards remain high and there's healthy competition amongst mobile and internet providers.

Telephone

For landlines, eir Mobile owns a huge majority of the market, with Vodafone next in line, and its line rental is some of the most expensive in Europe.¹ eir Mobile offers a minimum six-month contract but its coverage is excellent and clear while its service is efficient.

Both prepaid and contract packages are available when it comes to signing up with a mobile network. The three main service providers are also the fastest: eir Mobile, Three and Vodafone. Other options include iD, Lycamobile, Tesco Mobile and Virgin Mobile. All offer competitive rates and packages.²

Internet

Vodafone, Digiweb and Virgin Media Ireland provide home broadband services, with Virgin Media Ireland, Sky, Pure Telecom and Magnet, among others, all having upgraded to offer the fast speeds of fiber optic cable. Companies offering mobile broadband are eir Mobile, Vodafone and Three.³

Postal services

While other providers operate in Ireland, An Post functions as the country's universal postal service and is considered a reliable choice. Aside from regular mail and parcel delivery, An Post offers express post, passport express and courier post.⁴

1 <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Ireland/Ireland-Guide/Telephone-Internet/Getting-connected>

2 <https://switcher.ie/mobiles/guides/switching-mobiles/best-mobile-phone-coverage-in-ireland/>

3 <https://switcher.ie/broadband/guides/broadband/what-is-an-internet-provider/>

4 http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/consumer_affairs/telecommunications_and_postal_services/postal_services_in_ireland.html

Transport

As a result of scattered rural communities, Ireland's road system is large, well-developed and safe. While drivers are polite, newcomers may have to navigate very narrow roads bordered by thick hedgerows as they travel further into the countryside. A foreign driving license lasts for 12 months, after which expats must

apply for an Irish one.¹

In major cities, cars aren't needed. The public transport systems are more than adequate, with trains and buses making commuting easy in places like Cork and Limerick. This is naturally the case for Dublin, too, although it also enjoys a functioning tram system. Taxis are quite expensive, with ride-hailing applications like Uber and MyTaxi providing more competitive rates.²

There is also the DART in Dublin, a rail system that runs along the city's coast and city center. It covers an entire distance of 53km (33 miles) and serves 31 stations.³

Employment

The job market

Despite troubles in many European markets, Ireland's economy has experienced healthy growth in recent years. Sectors experiencing the biggest growth include finance, digital marketing, pharmaceuticals, construction and technology.⁴ The information technology industry is booming, acting as perhaps the greatest draw for job-seeking expats, with tech giants like Google, Apple, IBM, Microsoft, Intel, Facebook and Twitter all basing their European headquarters in Dublin.⁵

Income tax

Income tax is charged at 20% up to a certain amount, with anything else earned then being charged at 40%.⁶ Non-residents pay tax only on local income while residents pay tax on both local and international income. Expats are residents for tax purposes if they stay in Ireland for 183 days or more in a year or 280 days or more in two consecutive years.⁷

Business etiquette

Business etiquette in Ireland isn't much different from most Western countries. Informal and good-natured, the Irish usually move on quickly to first names. Using one's own titles regularly could be interpreted as boasting.⁸ Greetings in the corporate world reflect those in everyday society, with handshakes the norm across all genders and positions.

1 <http://www.expattarrivals.com/ireland/transport-and-driving-in-ireland>

2 <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/ireland/transport/getting-around/local-transport>

3 <http://www.irishrail.ie/about-us/dart-commuter>

4 <https://www.cpl.ie/Blog/finding-your-next-job/2016/Which-sectors-are-booming-in-Ireland>

5 <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/working-abroad/work-in-ireland>

6 http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/money_and_tax/tax/income_tax/how_your_tax_is_calculated.html

7 <http://www.expattarrivals.com/ireland/banking-money-and-taxes-in-ireland>

8 <https://www.communicaid.com/country/ireland/>

While business hierarchies retain a traditional top-down structure, most people don't appreciate overt displays of superiority. Arrogance and bravado are looked down upon, with both maligned as rude and suspicious.

Don't chat about religion or politics, and take particular care not to make the mistake of referring to Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. Instead, focus on building personal relationships by making small talk about sport and culture. Expect these conversations to happen in casual settings, such as on the golf course, and in cafes, coffee shops or pubs.

In general, punctuality is pretty relaxed in the business environment. But to avoid making bad impressions and to show respect, expats should always make sure to be on time. Lastly, gift giving is not part of Irish corporate culture, but a small gift is appreciated if invited over for dinner.⁹

Retirement

For those who enjoy the clouds and the rain, lush Ireland might be the perfect place to end an innings. Expats retiring to Ireland must prove that they have health insurance and sufficient resources to support themselves. This is particularly important when it comes to the housing market, as accommodation isn't cheap, regardless whether one is renting or buying.¹⁰ Indeed, according to Numbeo, Ireland is ranked as the 15th most expensive country in which to live.¹¹

Finance

Currency

The official currency is the Euro (EUR), which is divided into 100 cents.

Money is available in the following denominations:

- Coins: 1c, 2c, 5c, 10c, 20c and 50c, and EUR 1 and EUR 2
- Notes: EUR 5, EUR 10, EUR 20, EUR 50 and EUR 100

Cost of living

As is usually the case around the world, accommodation closer to the city centers in Ireland sees rent and property prices sky rocket. Because of the high prices, most people choose to rent. Thankfully, this burden on the bank account is offset by a brilliant public school system, free for both locals and expats. Tuition fees at international schools remain very high, however.

⁹ <http://www.expattarrivals.com/ireland/doing-business-in-ireland>

¹⁰ http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving_country/moving_to_ireland/coming_to_live_in_ireland/retiring_to_ireland.html

¹¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/maps-and-graphics/mapped-the-cheapest-and-most-expensive-countries-to-live-in/>

Grocery prices fluctuate depending on one's location. But if one is smart about where they shop, food shouldn't be a problem. Look for local, seasonal produce instead of browsing the aisles of high-end supermarkets. Public healthcare is free or subsidized. Yet expats mostly still choose private healthcare, meaning they will need to invest in healthcare insurance to cover high fees.

Eating out is another matter, with maintaining a social life and experiencing city entertainment quite tough on the budget.

Banking

The standards and infrastructures of banking in Ireland are good, replete with efficient automated services, internet banking and fairly favorable charge rates compared to the rest of Europe.

Opening an account and managing it is simple, with customers requiring photographic identification and proof of address. The latter can be in the form of a letter from an employer confirming one's residence in Ireland. Some of the biggest banks in Ireland include Bank of Ireland, Allied Irish Bank, KBC Bank and Ulster Bank.¹²

Banks often close on weekends, with standard opening hours during the week being 9.30am to 4pm.¹³

Health

The standard of Ireland's healthcare is excellent, with both its public and private services thought to be among the best in the world. The public system functions on two tiers, with expats having lived in Ireland for at least a year considered eligible for either. Category 1 applies to those with medical cards, receiving service free of charge dependent on age, illness or income, while Category 2 allows access to medical services either for free or at subsidized rates.¹⁴

Those from an EU or EEA country carrying a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) may also receive treatment in Ireland. GPs must be contracted to the Primary Care Reimbursement Service in order to treat patients on the state health scheme. Many practitioners operate both in public and private capacities, so costs for expats may vary depending on whether they're treated as a public or private patient.¹⁵

¹² <https://techlifeireland.com/irish-society/banking-and-finance/>

¹³ <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Ireland/Ireland-Guide/Money/Banks>

¹⁴ https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find_a_Service/eligibility.html

¹⁵ http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/schemes/EHIC/visitors/Visitors_to_Ireland.html

Private Medical Insurance

While there isn't a huge difference in quality between public and private healthcare, those who can afford it often choose the latter. This means almost immediate access to private practitioners as well as avoiding bureaucratic nightmares, affordable use of private institutions and long queues. If wanting to access private healthcare, expats should ensure they have comprehensive health insurance, which should be arranged prior to arriving in the country. Expats should check their contracts as employers often pay for private health insurance for their expat employees.¹⁹

Emergencies

One can dial 999 or 112, the emergency number for anywhere in Europe. It will be helpful to the operators for expats to learn their area code, known as their eircode, in order to assist emergency services like ambulances, police or the fire brigade.²⁰

Health Risks

There are no significant health risks in Ireland.

Vaccinations

Expats should be up to date with all routine vaccinations, including measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, chickenpox, polio and a yearly flu shot. Some may need shots for hepatitis A, hepatitis B and rabies.²¹

Pharmacies

Pharmacies in Ireland don't usually operate 24/7, but many remain open late into the night.

While those with medical cards receive prescription drugs for free, citizens on the Drugs Payment Scheme can limit the amount they pay for drugs in a calendar month, with the government covering any medication expenses once the limit has been reached. This includes expats. There are similar setups to cover the elderly, those with chronic illnesses and patients in need of certain high-tech drugs.²²

16 https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/country_result.jsp?country=Ireland

17 <https://www.expatistan.com/cost-of-living/country/ireland> 18 <https://www.daft.ie/report/ronan-lyons-2017q1-rental>

19 <http://www.expatriates.co.uk/destinations/ireland/health-and-medical-care.html>

20 https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/child/childsafety/999_112.html

21 https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/ireland?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001

22 <https://ipu.ie/home/pharmacy-in-ireland/>