

● What general facts do you know about Ireland?

Ireland is the name for the island where the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (part of the UK) are found. The Republic of Ireland comprises / covers about eighty per cent of the island. About 4.4 million people live there. It is a republic, with a bicameral parliament. The head of state is the president and the head of government is the prime minister (called Taoiseach in Gaelic). There are two official languages: English and Irish Gaelic. English is the most widely spoken. Gaelic is a compulsory subject at schools.

● What do you know about Irish history?

The first settlement on the island of Ireland can be traced back to 8000 BC. In the 5th century AD, Christian missionaries (including Saint Patrick) brought Christianity there, which replaced the old Celtic religion. In the Middle Ages, the island faced Viking and Norman invasions, and later the English tried to take it under their control. In 1801, the Act of Union made Ireland a part of the United Kingdom. In the 19th century, Ireland experienced a devastating famine, known as the Irish Potato Famine (caused by a disease killing the potato crops). About a million people died and even more emigrated. Irish history is marked with rebellions against British rule, but attempts at regaining independence were successful only in 1922 when 26 counties formed an independent state. The 6 counties in the north (Northern Ireland) remained a part of the UK.

● Can you tell me something about Ireland's geography?

Ireland has a temperate, wet climate with warm / pleasant summers and mild winters. The land is quite flat, covered by fields and grass. It gets a lot of rain, so the grass keeps its green colour, earning Ireland the nickname 'The Emerald Isle'. There are also large bogs, from which peat is extracted. The coastline of Ireland is very rugged with many cliffs and peninsulas. The longest river is the River Shannon, which is 386 km long.

● What do you know about Dublin?

Dublin is the Irish capital. It is situated on the east coast of the island. There are many traditional pubs, music and other forms of entertainment (especially in the Temple Bar district). Famous buildings include the medieval Dublin Castle and St. Patrick's Cathedral, the largest church in Ireland. It is also the birthplace of many famous Irish people (Joyce, Beckett, Wilde...).

● What are some other famous places to visit in Ireland?

Kilkenny and Limerick are famous medieval towns with many historical buildings. The Cliffs of Moher

are spectacular cliffs on the south-western coast. Blarney Castle is a medieval castle where the famous Blarney Stone can be found. (Legends say that a person who kisses it will get the gift of eloquence.) There are many other castles, churches, high crosses and picturesque villages.

● Who are some famous people from Ireland?

Famous Irish writers include Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Bram Stoker, Brendan Behan and Seamus Heaney. Irish music is popular all over the world, with bands playing traditional music (The Dubliners, The Chieftains...) as well as bands and singers playing pop and rock (U2, Sinéad O'Connor, Thin Lizzy, The Cranberries, Ash, Snow Patrol...) Famous Irish actors include Colin Farrell, Liam Neeson, Pierce Brosnan, Daniel Day-Lewis and Cillian Murphy.

● What foods do you associate with Ireland?

Irish stew is a dish / very thick soup made from lamb, mutton or beef and carrots, potatoes, onions and parsley. Boxty is an Irish potato pancake. As Ireland is an island, its cuisine includes fish, oysters and mussels. A traditional Irish breakfast consists of bacon, sausages, eggs, fried potatoes and fried tomatoes. Irish beer (especially Guinness) and whiskey are known all around the world.

● What are some well-known Irish holidays, symbols and traditions?

St. Patrick's Day, on March 17, is the most famous Irish holiday. Originally a religious holiday celebrating St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, it is now often viewed as a chance to celebrate Irish culture. It is celebrated by visiting / hanging out in Irish pubs, parades and music. Typical Irish symbols are the harp, which is the national emblem, and a shamrock (a three-leafed clover), which was allegedly used by St. Patrick to explain the Holy Trinity. Ireland has a rich mythology and some mythological creatures even entered popular culture – for example a leprechaun (a little old man hiding pots of gold underground) or a banshee (a fairy whose harsh crying / screaming predicts that somebody is going to die).

● Why would you like to go to Ireland?

I'd like to go to Ireland because... it has a long and interesting history and many old buildings... I think the scenery must be really beautiful... I like Irish music and would love to hear it played live... it offers me the chance to speak English and hear the exotic-sounding Gaelic... Irish people are said to be very friendly.

Bridge



img 01



img 02



img 03



img 04



img 05



img 06



img 07



img 08

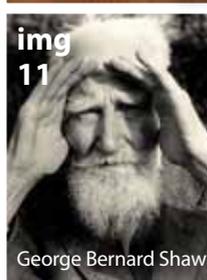


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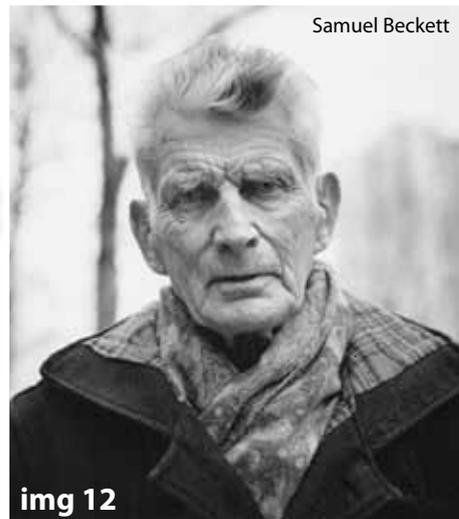
Sinéad O'Connor

img 10



George Bernard Shaw

img 11



Samuel Beckett

img 12