

Speaking Card 59

Ireland

January-February 2020

Geography: Ireland is an island in the north-west of Europe. The small northeast part of the island is a separate country called Northern Ireland and it is a part of the UK. The rest of the island is called the Republic of Ireland and it is an independent country. Ireland is quite flat in the centre with mountains near the coast. The highest mountain is in the southwest of the country and is called Carrauntoohil (1,038m). Ireland's longest river is the Shannon, and there are many lakes, or loughs. The largest is Lough Corrib in the west of the country.

Political System: Ireland is a parliamentary republic with a president and a prime minister (the Taoiseach). The president does not have any real power and the role is mainly a ceremonial position. The Taoiseach is the head of the government. Parliament is split into two houses, a lower house and an upper house.

History: Celtic people came to Ireland from Europe in the Iron Age and brought their own language and culture. Ireland had many rulers: the Vikings, the Normans and then the English. Henry VIII called himself King of Ireland. This Kingdom of Ireland lasted until 1801 when it joined with the Kingdom of Great Britain to make the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Between 1845 and 1849 there was a terrible famine in Ireland during which one million people died and another one million left the country. The actions of the government in London made the situation worse, and Ireland began to fight for independence.

Ireland vs Northern Ireland: The Irish War of Independence started in 1919 and was won in 1922 when the Irish Free State was established. Most of Ireland became independent, except for the counties of Northern Ireland, which voted to stay part of the UK. Not everyone in Northern Ireland wanted to stay, however. Republicans, who were mostly Catholics, wanted to be part of Ireland, while unionists, who were mostly Protestants, wanted to remain part of the UK.

This led to violence between republican military organisations and the British army and unionist military organisations. There were even bombings in the Republic of Ireland and England. The violence ended in 1998 with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement.

Places: One of the most visited places in Ireland is Dublin, which is the capital and Ireland's largest city. Tourists can admire St Patrick's Cathedral, from the 12th century, and explore the Temple Bar area, known for its cosy pubs and restaurants. Other famous Irish towns include the cultural heart of Ireland, Galway, and the university town Cork. The number one natural landmark is the Cliffs of Moher on the west coast of the island, which offer beautiful views of the Atlantic Ocean.

People: The population of Ireland is around 4.8 million people. Around a million of those live in Dublin. Although Irish is the official language, English is the dominant language. Around 40% of people speak some Irish, but it is only spoken as a first language in a few places in the south and west of the country. Because of the people who emigrated from Ireland, there are Irish communities all over the world, especially in the United States and Britain.

Famous Irish People: Famous Irish people include the writer Oscar Wilde, musicians Bono and Niall Horan, actors Colin Farrell and Saoirse Ronan and mixed martial artist Conor McGregor.

Culture: Ireland has a strong national culture and it is known for its music, language, dance and food. Pubs are a big part of life in Ireland and Irish people love to get together for a pint of Guinness and a song.

SOLUTIONS

Photos: 2 a street in Dublin, 3 The Cliffs of Moher, 4 Irish musicians in a pub; **Task 3:** A St Patrick, B leprechaun, C shamrock, D Irish harp

Discussion

What can you see in the pictures?
What do they tell you about Ireland?

Have you ever been to Ireland? If you have, what did you see there? If not, what would you like to see there?

What is Ireland famous for? Do you know any famous people from Ireland?

What are Ireland's national colours?

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Task 1 You are going on a school trip to Ireland for one week. Prepare an itinerary for your trip. What places would you like to see?

Task 2 Compare Ireland and the UK. How are they different and how are they similar (weather, history, religion, language)? What connects them?

Task 3 Can you recognize the Irish icons?



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