



Ireland in Depth 2019

EXTEND YOUR TRIP

Northern Ireland

Glasgow, Scotland

Your Travel Handbook

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PASSPORT, VISAS & TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit their website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

- **Main trip only:** 2 blank “Visa” pages.
- **Optional pre-trip extension to Northern Ireland:** 1 additional page, for a total of 3.
- **Optional post-trip extension in Scotland:** 1 additional page, for a total of 3.
- **Both a pre- and a post-trip extension:** A total of 4 pages.

No Visas Required

Travelers with a U.S. passport do not need any visas for this vacation, including the optional trip extensions.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Traveling with a minor may require certain documentation for border crossings. For further detail on the required documentation, please contact the local embassy or state government.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

HEALTH

Keep Your Abilities In Mind

Please review the information below prior to departing on this trip. We reserve the right for our Program Directors to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home if their limitations are impacting the group's experience.

GROUP SIZE

- A maximum of 42 travelers, led by a local Grand Circle Program Director

PACING

- 5 locations in 14 days

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Walk 2 miles unassisted and participate in 1.5-2.5 hours of physical activities daily, including stairs
- Agility, balance, and stair-climbing are required to kiss the Blarney Stone
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them
- We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones
- Travel by 45-seat motorcoach, jaunting car (horse-drawn carriage), ferry, and boat

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 48-67°F during touring season
- June-August are the warmest months
- Weather in Ireland can be unpredictable and change quickly
- Rain is common and should be expected

Health Check

Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential to fully enjoy your trip. If you have ongoing medical conditions or concerns about your health, we highly recommend that you schedule a checkup with your personal physician at least six weeks in advance of your departure date.

- Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your itinerary that may affect your health and be guided by his or her advice. (You can use the “Keep Your Abilities in Mind” on the previous page as a guideline to discuss with him or her.)
- You may want to have a dental exam before your trip. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling.
- If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition.

No Vaccines Required

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages.html>. (Pick the country and then follow the links to “Local Laws & Special Circumstances”; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.

- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Traveler Support team at **1-800-321-2835**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water is safe to drink on this trip; however, it may be processed differently than your tap water at home, so you might not like the taste or it may feel “heavy” in your stomach.
- Bottled water is widely available for sale.

MONEY MATTERS

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip;** you will need local currency.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Euro Countries

The euro is the official currency in many member countries of the European Union. Unless otherwise listed, the countries you will be visiting will use the euro. Euro banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500 euros
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 cents; 1 and 2 euros

Northern Ireland

As part of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland's official currency is the pound sterling (GBP). As a reminder, banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 5, 10, 20, and 50 pounds
- Coins: 1 and 2 pence (copper); 5, 10, 20, and 50 pence (silver); 1 and 2 pounds (silver/gold)

Tip: *In Northern Ireland, you may find bank notes in circulation that were issued by the Bank of Northern Ireland, Bank of England, Bank of Scotland, or the Bank of Wales. These notes are typically accepted throughout Northern Ireland. However, only bank notes issued by the Bank of England are accepted in England.*

United Kingdom

The official currency of the United Kingdom is the pound sterling (GBP). One pound (£1) is divided into 100 pence (100p). This legal tender is used throughout Scotland, England, and Wales. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 5, 10, 20, and 50 pounds

- Coins: 1 and 2 pence (copper); 5, 10, 20, and 50 pence (silver); 1 and 2 pounds (silver/gold)

You may want to avoid 50 pound notes as these are not always accepted at smaller restaurants, cafes or shops.

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you’ll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$5 each time you use an out-of-network ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don’t forget to memorize the actual digits of your card’s PIN number (many keypads do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

Ireland: ATMs are common throughout Ireland so ATM cards will give you a reliable payment method and ready access to local currency.

United Kingdom: ATMs are common throughout the United Kingdom so ATM cards will give you a reliable payment method and ready access to local currency.

Credit & Debit Cards

Even if you don’t plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although the Discover card is accepted in some countries outside the U.S., it is not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

Ireland: Visa and MasterCard credit cards are readily accepted (and American Express to a lesser extent), but you should always inquire if your type of credit card is accepted before deciding on your purchase.

United Kingdom: Visa and MasterCard credit cards are readily accepted (American Express is not commonly honored), but you should always inquire if your type of credit card is accepted before deciding on your purchase.

Chip Cards

Many countries have adopted a new type of credit card that has an embedded computer chip. These cards are inserted into the reader instead of swiped. The card owner then authorizes the purchase using a PIN instead of signing.

This new technology is only now gaining traction in the U.S., so occasionally there are machines in other countries that can't read U.S. cards. Or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn't happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don't speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) If you are not able to sign for a purchase, such as at an automated ticket booth, you can use another form of payment, such as a debit card that has a PIN.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines. To make it easy for you to budget, we have quoted the amounts in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars.

- **GCT Program Director:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your GCT Program Director at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$6–\$8 per traveler for each day their Program Director is with them. *Please note that tips for your Program Director can only be in the form of cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Program Director during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*

- **Hotel Housekeeping:** Many travelers will leave the equivalent of \$1-\$2 per day, per room for the hotel housekeeping staff. *Please note: Because of the difficulty in exchanging a small amount of dollars, it would be easier for the housekeeping staff if you left their tips in local currency.*
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Personalized Air:** You booked international air with us, and have customized it in some way. If you have customized your trip's dates to arrive early, stay longer, or stop on your own in a connecting city, airport transfers will NOT be included. You must also arrange your own accommodations for any additional nights. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Account at www.gct.com/myaccount under "My Reservations".

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as Grand Circle travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Traveler Support team at **1-800-321-2835**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: www.rome2rio.com.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with Grand Circle Travel, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more Grand Circle travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have a Grand Circle Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.

- **Overseas Arrival:** Once you arrive overseas, you'll need to collect your luggage and clear customs. A Grand Circle Representative will meet you outside of customs and assist you with your transfer to the hotel or ship. Important note on porters: Airport porters are NOT allowed in the baggage claim area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a cart, which you will then move through customs. When you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your transfer vehicle. Your driver will load your luggage into the transfer vehicle.
- **Flight Delays:** Grand Circle Travel is not responsible for flight delays or cancellations. In the unfortunate circumstance that your flight is delayed or changed, please try to reach the regional GCT office (their number will be in your Final Documents) in order to make new arrangements for your transfer. Due to airline regulations our staff is not notified of flight rerouting, and our local representative won't necessarily be aware of your new arrival time. In these cases you will need to arrange your transfer by taxi to your hotel.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more Grand Circle travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, a Grand Circle Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our Grand Circle Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.
- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your vacation by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Program Director can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)

- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as “OPT Boston”.
- Your Program Director will give you details on the optional tours while you’re on the trip. But if you’d like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Account at www.gct.com/myaccount).

Communications

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype or FaceTime. These services are usually less expensive than making a traditional call, but you’ll need a Wi-Fi connection and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Ireland: +353

United Kingdom: +44

United Kingdom: +44

PACKING

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags.
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (length+width+depth). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.

TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS
Same as the main trip.

REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS
<p>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.

- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price**; they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

Your Luggage

Checked Luggage

Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Portage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.

Carry-on Bag

You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.

Locks

For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions

Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Pack casual clothes:** Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. At dinner, you will not need to don “dressy” clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it’s completely up to you.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.

- **Plan to dress in layers.** Weather in Ireland is unpredictable, and can feature warm and cold temperatures at any time of the year. The most practical travel wardrobe consists of items that you can wear in layers. Then you can easily add or remove a layer according to any fluctuations in temperatures.
- **Bring rain gear:** Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.
- **Good walking shoes are critical.** This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes. Aboard ship, you'll want non-slip shoes with rubber soles.

What to Bring

We have included suggestions from Program Directors and former travelers to help you pack. These lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. You may also want to consult the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

What not to pack: Do not pack aerosol cans, as they tend to leak during air travel. Leave behind any credit cards that are not essential for your trip, valuable jewelry, and anything that you would hate to lose.

Your accommodations will supply soap, body wash, and shampoo/conditioner. If you prefer a certain brand you may want to bring your own, but otherwise you can rely on what they provide.

Recommended Clothing

- Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- Sleepwear
- Socks and undergarments
- A jacket or sweater, depending on the time of year

Essential Items

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, sunscreen, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- Sunglasses with a neck strap
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- Compact umbrella
- Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- Travel money bag or money belt
- Camera, spare batteries, and memory cards

Medicines

- Your own prescription medicines
- Vitamins
- Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

Optional Gear

- Travel alarm
- Compact binoculars
- Hanging toiletry bag with pockets

- Washcloth
- Travel-size tissues
- Basic sewing kit
- Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- Electrical transformer and plug adapter
- Reading materials
- Travel journal/note pad
- Swimsuit, if your ship/hotel has a pool or whirlpool
- Addresses for postcards
- Photos, small gift for Home-Hosted visit
- Phrase book
- Pocket-size calculator for exchange rates
- Travel hair dryer: Many hotels will provide hair dryers, but not all. If a hair dryer is essential to you consider a travel-size version.

Home-Hosted Visits

It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all Grand Circle vacations include a home-hosted visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity at hotels in Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Scotland is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, MP3 players, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Although you are only traveling in one country on this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

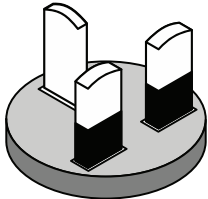
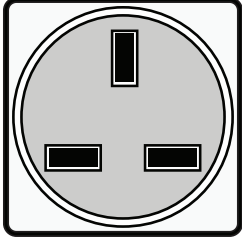
Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Ireland: G

United Kingdom: G

United Kingdom: G

Type G



CLIMATE

Ireland: Irish weather is traditionally fickle, even in summer—when temperatures usually range from the low 50s to the upper 60s, though over the last decade, the spring and summer seasons were often glorious with many sunny days in the 70s. Nonetheless, chilly east winds may blow through, so come prepared for anything. Except for a strip along the east coast, the country receives some rain at least 200 days a year. This wet climate is responsible for Ireland’s verdant beauty.

Scotland: The variable climate of Scotland is infamous for its consistent ability to change from day to day. Cool, mild weather, accompanied by frequent cloud cover and rain, is the norm. But on occasion, and at any time of year, a stint of foul weather can settle in. In Scotland’s lowlands (the Edinburgh region), temperatures average in the low 50s during spring and fall, and in the low 60s during summer. At any time, temperatures could drop and the weather become chilly.

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to go online to www.gct.com/myaccount for your 10-day forecast.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	DUBLIN, IRELAND			CORK, IRELAND		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	47 to 36	87 to 81	2.5	47 to 37	90 to 84	20
FEB	47 to 36	87 to 76	1.9	47 to 38	89 to 79	17
MAR	50 to 38	84 to 71	2.1	50 to 39	88 to 76	19
APR	54 to 40	80 to 68	2.1	53 to 41	83 to 71	16
MAY	59 to 44	77 to 68	2.3	58 to 45	81 to 71	15
JUN	64 to 49	77 to 68	2.6	63 to 50	81 to 72	14
JUL	67 to 53	79 to 69	2.2	66 to 53	83 to 73	15
AUG	67 to 53	81 to 69	2.9	65 to 53	85 to 73	15
SEP	63 to 50	83 to 72	2.3	62 to 51	88 to 75	16
OCT	57 to 45	86 to 75	3.1	59 to 46	90 to 80	19
NOV	51 to 40	89 to 80	2.9	51 to 41	91 to 83	19
DEC	47 to 37	88 to 83	2.9	47 to 39	91 to 85	19

MONTH	GALWAY, IRELAND			BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	45 to 37	89 to 83	25	46 to 36	84	14.7
FEB	46 to 37	88 to 77	22	47 to 36	81	11.4
MAR	49 to 39	89 to 75	27	50 to 38	78	13.8
APR	53 to 41	90 to 68	21	54 to 41	75	11.4
MAY	58 to 46	89 to 68	23	60 to 44	73	11.8
JUN	61 to 51	90 to 73	24	64 to 50	74	11.2
JUL	65 to 55	91 to 72	24	68 to 53	76	12.1
AUG	64 to 54	91 to 75	26	67 to 53	77	13.4
SEP	61 to 51	90 to 76	26	63 to 49	79	12.3
OCT	56 to 46	90 to 79	26	57 to 45	82	14.4
NOV	50 to 41	90 to 82	23	51 to 40	84	14.5
DEC	47 to 40	90 to 86	27	47 to 36	86	14.4

MONTH	GLASGOW, SCOTLAND			EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	44 to 35	88 to 83	25	44 to 34	86 to 80	14
FEB	45 to 35	86 to 75	22	45 to 34	86 to 75	10
MAR	49 to 37	87 to 70	23	48 to 37	86 to 68	12
APR	55 to 41	87 to 62	22	53 to 39	87 to 65	10
MAY	61 to 45	87 to 60	19	58 to 44	87 to 65	11
JUN	65 to 50	87 to 63	20	63 to 48	86 to 64	10
JUL	68 to 54	88 to 66	21	67 to 52	88 to 66	10
AUG	67 to 53	91 to 66	21	66 to 51	90 to 66	11
SEP	62 to 50	90 to 71	20	62 to 49	89 to 69	10
OCT	55 to 44	89 to 75	24	55 to 43	88 to 74	13
NOV	49 to 39	88 to 80	24	49 to 39	87 to 79	13
DEC	44 to 35	88 to 85	22	44 to 34	87 to 82	13

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

Your Program Director

During your exclusive Grand Circle vacation, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from an on-site Grand Circle Travel Program Director. Your Program Director is fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. He or she is supported along the way by local tour guides, who guide you expertly through particular sites and cities.

Many Grand Circle Program Directors are graduates of professional education programs for travel guides. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle, training that is based on what we've learned from thousands of past travelers about how to make the trip most enjoyable. Your Program Director offers both a deep knowledge of the region and a commitment to make this a very pleasant, informative, and rewarding travel experience for you.

Your Program Director will provide sightseeing trips, handle all travel details, reserve optional tours you choose to take, oversee your Discovery Series events, and provide any other assistance you may need. You will be in the company of a Program Director throughout your vacation.

During Your Trip

Accommodations

As is common with hotels in Ireland, none of our hotels feature air conditioning, though all feature heating. In general you'll also find that most European hotel rooms are smaller than what you may be used to in the U.S. Finally, ice machines may not be available at all hotels, but ice is usually available at the bar.

Laundry Service

Most hotels in Ireland offer send-out laundry service (as opposed to self-service machines). The price varies according to the hotel, but your Program Director can advise you on the best place to have laundry done.

Language Barrier

You can have some great "conversations" with local people who do not speak English, even if you don't speak a word of the local language. Indeed, this non-verbal communication can be a highly rewarding part of travel. To break the ice, bring along some family photographs, or a few postcards of your hometown. If you want to meet kids, bring a puppet or other interactive toy. Keep in mind, however, that it is always good form to know at least a few words in the local language.

Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing most people in Europe is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash in your pocket. Carry most of your money, and your passport, in a travel pouch or money belt under your shirt. Replenish your pocket supply when you are in a safe and quiet place, or in our vehicle. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize them.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful. Con artists sometimes target travelers.

Cuisine in Ireland

There are many Irish dishes involving potatoes, such as champ, which is a combination of mashed potato into which chopped scallions (spring onions) are mixed.

Other examples of simple Irish meals are Irish stew, and also bacon and cabbage (boiled together in water). Boxty is another traditional dish. Ireland is famous for the Irish breakfast, consisting mainly of pork, and, particularly in Ulster, soda bread farls.

Seafood has never been a mainstay of the Irish diet, despite the country being an island, but many dishes have developed nonetheless, and it has gained popularity, especially due to the high quality of shellfish--e.g. Dublin Bay Prawns, Galway Oysters (an oyster festival is held in Galway every September where oysters are often served with Guinness). Salmon and cod are perhaps the two most common types of fish used. Hotels might also serve oysters and mussels.

Traditional Irish breads include brown bread, soda bread, wheat bread, and soda farls.

Cuisine in Great Britain

The area is traditionally known for 'meat, potatoes and two veg', meals but these days people in the UK are just as likely to eat Italian, Chinese, Thai, Indian, or junk food (including hamburgers and döner kebabs). Vegetarian is normally available. Fish and chips is another well-known meal and is usually bought from special shops (chippies) where the cooked food is

wrapped and sprinkled with salt and vinegar. There are lots of traditional regional specialties, including haggis, the Scottish national dish which is made of sheep's stomach stuffed with oatmeal and spices. Haggis is eaten with 'neeps and tatties' (turnips and mashed potatoes).

Other regional dishes include Yorkshire pudding (made with flour and water) and roast beef, toad in the hole (sausages in Yorkshire pudding), cream scones served with jam and clotted cream, Cullen Skink (fish soup) in Scotland, and a meat or vegetable soup called cawl, which is eaten in Wales.

Dublin in Brief

City Layout and Details

Compared to other European capitals, Dublin is a relatively small metropolis and easily traversed. The city center -- identified in Irish on bus destination signs as AN LAR -- is bisected by the River Liffey flowing west to east into Dublin Bay. Canals ring the city center: The Royal Canal forms a skirt through the north half, and the Grand Canal the south half. True Dubliners, it is said, live between the two canals.

The focal point of Dublin is the River Liffey, with 17 bridges connecting its north and south banks. The most famous of these is the O'Connell Bridge. The Millennium Bridge is a footbridge erected in 1999 to link Temple Bar with the Northside. The newest bridge, the Samuel Beckett Bridge, opened in December 2009.

On the north side of the river, the main thoroughfare is O'Connell Street, a wide, two-way avenue that starts at the riverside quays and runs north to Parnell Square. On the south side of the Liffey, Grafton Street is Dublin's main shopping street. It is home to Ireland's most exclusive department store, Brown Thomas. Restricted to pedestrians, Grafton Street is the center of Dublin's up market shopping area, surrounded by a maze of small streets and lanes that boast a terrific variety of shops, restaurants, and hotels. At the south end of Grafton Street is St. Stephen's Green, the city's most beloved park and an urban oasis ringed by rows of historic Georgian town houses, fine hotels, and restaurants.

At the north end of Grafton Street, Nassau Street rims the south side of Trinity College. The street is noted for its fine shops and because it leads to Merrion Square, another fashionable Georgian park surrounded by historic brick-front town houses. Merrion Square is also adjacent to Leinster House, the Irish House of Parliament, the National Gallery, and the National Museum.

Local Transportation

Bus: Dublin Bus offers public transportation services within the Dublin city limits, as well as in the surrounding area. Several routes are available throughout the city. Daily, weekly, monthly and annual passes are available for purchase. Service generally runs from 6am to 11:30 pm (10 pm on Sundays) and later on weekends.

Tram: The LUAS is a tram system with two main lines in Dublin, referred to as the Green Line and the Red Line. The LUAS runs from approximately 5:45am–midnight. Weekly or daily passes are available, or you can purchase a single fare based on the length of your ride. A single fare ranges from 2.10–3.20 euros or a round trip fare costs 3.70–5.50 euros.

Belfast in Brief

City Layout and Details

Donegall Square, dominated by the landmark of Belfast’s grand City Hall, is at the heart of the city’s compact historic center. Fine buildings from the city’s prosperous Victorian Era surround the square. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board has an office here with ample information on the city and all of Ulster. Belfast’s main shopping area is an easy walk north from Donegall Square along Donegall Place and Royal Avenue.

Great Victoria Street, where the Grand Opera House and Crown Liquor Saloon are located, is a short walk to the west from Donegall Square. Within walking distance to the northeast, narrow allies called “The Entries” run off High and Anne Streets in a pedestrian-only shopping district. Here you can find a number of interesting pubs at which to share food and drink with the famously friendly local people.

To the south of the Donegall Square area, Great Victoria Road and Dublin Road lead to University Road and the area called the Golden Mile. The Ulster Museum, Queen’s University, and the city’s Botanic Gardens are in this area, as well as many restaurants and the city’s best nightlife.

Local Transportation

Bus: Getting around Belfast by public transportation is relatively easy. The Metro is the name of the city’s bus service with routes that run from the city center outward along the spine roads. The system operates more than 12 busy arterial routes, in addition to branch routes in and around the capital and nightlink services from Donegal Square West.

For shorter stays the **Metro Day Ticket** may be the best bet. It costs approximately £3.50 and allows you to travel anywhere, anytime on the Metro network for one day, Monday through Saturday. Belfast has three main bus stations located at Europa Buscentre at Great Victoria Street, Laganside Buscentre and Newtonabbey.

The city also launched a new bus rapid transit system in 2018 called the Glider. The Glider has two lines (G1 & G2) which connect East and West Belfast and the Titanic Quarter with the city center. The Glider runs from approximately 5:30am–11:00pm and arrives every 5–7 minutes. It costs approximately £4 for a day pass or £1.60 for a single ride.

Taxis: There is a plating scheme that helps visitors recognize legitimate companies. Yellow license plates identify public hire in the city; white identifies outside the city; private hire is green; and blue identifies bus taxis.

Glasgow in Brief

City Layout and Details

The city of Glasgow sits alongside the River Clyde in Scotland's western Lowlands. As the largest city in Scotland, you'll find abundant restaurants, shops, museums, musical performances, and nightlife. The city lives up to its name (which translates to "dear green place") and features more than 90 parks and gardens, including Kelvingrove Park to the northwest of the city center and Glasgow Green to the southeast.

The streets are typically laid out in a grid with the River Clyde running through the middle of the city. The city center is very walkable or you may opt to explore the city by one of the many local transit options.

Local Transportation

Subway: Nicknamed "the Clockwork Orange," the city's subway system creates a large loop around the city center, covering areas on both sides of the River Clyde (a complete circuit on the subway takes about 25 minutes). The subway runs Monday-Saturday from 6:30am-11:40pm and Sundays from 10:00am-6:12pm. There are various ticket options including single ride tickets or passes for 1, 4, or 10 weeks. For more information, please visit www.spt.co.uk.

Bus: There are over 100 bus routes which extend from the city center to the outer zones of the city.

Taxi: Glasgow Taxis are the official taxi company for the city. They are easily recognizable as black cabs with a yellow flag reading "Glasgow Taxis" on the top of the vehicle. Each taxi is licensed to carry 5 passengers. To take a taxi, either flag down a cab if their yellow light is on, or call (+44) 0141-429-7070.

Shopping

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your vacation. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. Grand Circle is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly. If the shop is outside the country, you should expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from the standards you are used to, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Ireland

One of the most popular Irish souvenirs is the highly prized white wool Aran sweaters and hats. Other commonly sought items include hand-woven Tweeds, knitwear, linen, earthenware and pottery, porcelain, glass and handmade jewelry (often in Celtic motifs), pearly Belleek china, luminous Waterford crystal, and Irish lace.

Scotland

Scotland has many fine local products to choose from, including shortbread, handmade soaps, Celtic jewelry, and bagpipes. There's all manner of souvenirs with the Scottish flag, golf symbols (the game as invented in Scotland) and Nessie, the Loch Ness monster. And of course, there's whisky (without an "e"), which is so synonymous with Scotland that many Americans call it "scotch".

Many of the best souvenirs are wearable, which makes sense as Scotland is known for its fabrics—stout tweeds, quality woolens, and colorful tartans. Although most people think of the kilt as the be-all of traditional Scottish garments, the full outfit for a man actually has many elements, including a sporran (pouch), sgian-dubh (small ceremonial knife – which might be hard to get back to the U.S. in your luggage), and jaunty knee-high socks. Although women did not wear kilts, they did wear tartan skirts and specialized shoes known as ghillie boots. If you don't feel like an all-out traditional outfit, then smaller items in tartan, like scarves, are a nice alternative.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & BACKGROUND

Europe

Ireland

Facts & Figures

- **Area:** 27,136 square miles
- **Capital:** Dublin
- **Location:** Ireland is situated in the Atlantic Ocean and separated from Great Britain by the Irish Sea. Half the size of Arkansas, it occupies the entire island except for the six counties that make up Northern Ireland.
- **Geography:** The ocean is responsible for the rugged western coastline, along which are many islands, peninsulas, and headlands. The main geographical features of Ireland are low central plains surrounded by a ring of coastal mountains. The highest peak is Carrauntuohill (Irish: Corrán Tuathail), which is 1041 m (3414 ft). There are a number of sizable lakes along Ireland's rivers, with Lough Neagh the largest in Ireland and Great Britain. The island is bisected by the River Shannon, at 259 km (161 miles) with a 113 km (70 miles) estuary the longest river in Ireland (and the longest in the British Isles if the estuary is included), which flows south from County Cavan in the north to meet the Atlantic just south of Limerick.
- **Languages:** English, Irish Gaelic
- **Population:** 5,068,050
- **Religions:** Roman Catholicism 78.3%, Church of Ireland 2.7%, other Christian 1.6%, Orthodox 1.3%, Muslim 1.3%, other 2.4%, none 9.8%, unspecified 2.6%
- **Time zone:** Ireland is five hours ahead of Eastern Time: when it is 6 am in New York, it is 11 am in Ireland.

National Holidays: Ireland

In addition to the holidays listed below, Ireland celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and the June, August, and October Bank holidays. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day
03/17 St. Patrick's Day
05/01 May Day
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Historic Overview of Ireland

Celts are traditionally thought to have colonized Ireland in a series of waves between the 8th and 1st centuries BC, with the Gael, the last wave of Celts, conquering the island and dividing it into five or more kingdoms.

History maintains that in AD 432, St. Patrick arrived on the island and, in the years that followed, worked to convert the Irish to Christianity. The druid tradition collapsed in the face of the spread of the new faith. Irish Christian scholars excelled in the study of Latin learning and Christian theology in the monasteries that flourished, preserving Latin learning during the Early Middle Ages. The arts of manuscript illumination, metalworking, and sculpture flourished and produced such treasures as the Book of Kells, ornate jewelry, and the many carved stone crosses that dot the island. This era was interrupted in the 9th century by 200 years of intermittent warfare with waves of Viking raiders who plundered monasteries and towns. Eventually they settled in Ireland and established many towns, including the modern day cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford.

In 1172, King Henry II of England gained Irish lands by the granting of the 1155 Bull Laudabiliter to him by then English Pope Adrian IV, and from the 13th century, English law began to be introduced. English rule was largely limited to the area around Dublin, known as the Pale, and Waterford, but this began to expand in the 16th century with the final collapse of the Gaelic social and political superstructure at the end of the 17th century, as a result of the Tudor re-conquest of Ireland and English and Scottish Protestant colonization in the Plantations of Ireland, which established English control over the whole island. After the Irish Rebellion of 1641, Irish Catholics were barred from voting or attending the Irish Parliament.

In 1800 the Irish Parliament passed the Act of Union which, in 1801, merged the Kingdom of Ireland and the Kingdom of Great Britain to create the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The whole island of Ireland became part of the United Kingdom, ruled directly by the UK Parliament in London.

The 19th century saw the Great Famine of the 1840's, a tragedy caused by the mis-administration of the British Government of the time, in which one million Irish people died and over a million were forced to emigrate. The pre-famine population of over 8 million was reduced by half as a result.

The late 19th and early 20th century saw the survivors of the famine mount a vigorous but unsuccessful campaign for Irish home rule, which was brutally suppressed. This resulted in the eclipse of moderate nationalism by militant separatism. In 1922, following the Irish Rising of 1916, and the subsequent Anglo-Irish War, twenty-six counties of Ireland won freedom from the United Kingdom as the Irish Free State. The remaining six, in the north-east, remained within the Union as Northern Ireland. This British-backed partition of Ireland led directly to the Civil War, as militant nationalists who favoured a united Ireland fought with moderates who were willing to accept the establishment of the Irish Free State as a stepping-stone to the eventual goal of a completely free Ireland.

It is worth noting that throughout its long history, Ireland has never declared war on any other nation or people.

The state was neutral during World War II but offered some assistance to the Allies, especially in Northern Ireland. In 1949 the state declared itself to be a republic and that henceforth it should be described as the Republic of Ireland. The state was plagued by poverty and emigration until the mid-1970's. The 1990's saw the beginning of unprecedented economic success, in a phenomenon known as the "Celtic Tiger". By the early 2000's, it had become one of the richest countries (in terms of GDP per capita) in the European Union, moving from being a net recipient to a net contributor and from a population with net emigration to one with net immigration.

However, with the worldwide recession in 2007 and 2008, the economy of Ireland slumped dramatically. The initial impact was on the national banks, such as Anglo Irish Bank, Bank of Ireland, and Allied Irish Bank—all of which needed an influx of cash from the Ministry of Finance, known as "recapitalization". This in turn led the Irish government to ask for a bailout from both the European Union and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2010.

But despite the financial hard times—and the skyrocketing unemployment (nearly 15% at the worst of the recession)—there have been encouraging signs of improvement. Ireland was the first country to exit the EU's bailout program, which it did at the end of 2013; unemployment has been dropping; and there have been talks recently about the country paying back its loan to the IMF early.

Northern Ireland

Facts & Figures

- **Area:** 5,450 square miles
- **Capital:** Belfast (regional); Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, whose national capital is London
- **Location:** Consists of the six counties of Ulster, occupying the northeastern corner of the island of Ireland.
- **Languages:** English
- **Population:** 1,862,100
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 40.8%, Presbyterian 19.1%, Church of Ireland 13.7%, Methodist 3%, none or unknown 23.5%
- **Time Zone:** Same as the rest of Ireland, five hours ahead of Eastern Time

National Holidays: Northern Ireland

In addition to the holidays listed below, Northern Ireland celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and the Spring and Summer Bank holidays. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day
03/17 St. Patrick's Day
07/12 Battle of the Boyne
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26 Boxing Day

Historic Overview of Northern Ireland

From its creation in 1921 until 1972 Northern Ireland enjoyed limited self-government within the United Kingdom, with its own parliament and prime minister. However the Protestant and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland each voted almost entirely along sectarian lines, meaning that the government of Northern Ireland (elected by "first past the post") was always controlled by the Ulster Unionist Party. Consequently, Catholics could not participate in the government, which at times openly encouraged discrimination in housing and employment.

Nationalist grievances at unionist discrimination within the state eventually led to large civil rights protests in 1960s, which the government suppressed heavy-handedly, most notably on "Bloody Sunday". It was during this period of civil unrest that the paramilitary Provisional IRA, who favoured the creation of a united Ireland, began its campaign against what it called the British occupation of the six counties. Other groups, legal and illegal on the unionist side, and illegal on the nationalist side, began to participate in the violence and the period known as the "Troubles" began. Owing to the civil unrest the British government suspended home rule in 1972 and imposed direct rule.

In 1998, following a Provisional IRA cease-fire, the Good Friday Agreement was concluded and attempts began to be made to restore self-government to Northern Ireland on the basis of power sharing between the two communities. Violence has greatly decreased since the signing of the accord.

In 2001 the police force in Northern Ireland, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, was replaced by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. On July 28, 2005, the Provisional IRA (PIRA) announced the end of its armed campaign and on September 25, 2005 international weapons inspectors supervised the full disarmament of the PIRA.

United Kingdom

Facts & Figures

- **Area:** 94,525 square miles
- **Capital:** London, with a separate parliament in Edinburgh for Scotland, a National Assembly in Cardiff for Wales, and a National Assembly for Northern Ireland in Belfast.

- **Government:** Constitutional monarchy
- **Languages:** English, Welsh, Gaelic
- **Location:** Situated off the northwest coast of Europe, the island of Britain is occupied by England, Wales, and Scotland—collectively called Great Britain. Together with Northern Ireland, Great Britain makes up the nation officially called the United Kingdom (UK). England, in the southern part of Britain, is separated from Scotland on the north by the granite Cheviot Hills. To the west along the border of Wales—a land of steep hills and valleys—are the Cambrian Mountains. To the south of England is the English Channel and to the east is the North Sea, which also washes the eastern coast of Scotland. To the west of England is the Irish Sea, mixed to the north with the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Population:** Entire UK 65,105,246 (estimate): England - 55,268,100, Scotland - 5,404,700, Wales - 3,113,200, Northern Ireland - 1,862,100
- **Religions:** Christian (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, etc.) 59.5%, Muslim 4.4%, Hindu 1.3%, other 2%, unspecified 7.2%, none 25.7%
- **Time zone:** Great Britain is five hours ahead of Eastern Time: when it is 6 am in New York, it is 11 am in Wales, England, and Scotland.

National Holidays: United Kingdom

National holidays can vary depending on which part of the country you're in; please refer to the section for the specific area that you'll be visiting. The United Kingdom also celebrates a number of national holidays

that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

Historical Overview of the United Kingdom

The nation officially known today as the “United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland” is home to the four distinct cultures of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They are intertwined in a rich pageant of history that has been filled with conflict, but has also produced cultural and political legacies that have had lasting effects far beyond the boundaries of Britain.

England was home to Celtic peoples in prehistoric times, then was ruled by the Roman Empire from about A.D. 43 to A.D. 410. After the fall of Rome, Jutes, Angles, and Saxons established small kingdoms, and Anglo-Saxon fiefdoms whose names still endure, such as Wessex, continued for centuries. King Alfred the Great of Wessex unified much of England against Viking invaders in the late 9th century.

Among the monarchs who have ruled England in the centuries since, some are particularly notable for their lasting impacts on history. William the Conqueror brought Norman rule to England in 1066. Richard the Lionheart embarked on the Third Crusade in 1189. King John was compelled to sign the Magna Carta in 1215, laying the foundation for constitutional monarchy.

English King Edward I conquered Wales in 1283 and sought to rule Scotland as well. The relationship between England and Scotland took many twists and turns over the centuries, with Scottish King James VI becoming King James I of England in 1603 (succeeding Queen Elizabeth I). The United Kingdom came into being with the 1707 Act of Union between the parliaments of England and Scotland.

In the meantime, England under Edward III had fought the Hundred Years' War with France between 1337 and 1453, with England ultimately losing its possessions on the French side of the Channel. Then, between 1455 and 1485, York and Lancaster battled on English soil in the Wars of the Roses. Henry VIII ruled in the 1530s, and his daughter Elizabeth later became the first Queen Elizabeth, who presided over the cultural flowering of the Elizabethan era (1558–1603).

England fell into civil war between 1642 and 1649, when Oliver Cromwell executed King Charles I and briefly replaced the monarchy with a republic. The monarchy was restored in 1660 with the enthronement of Charles II, though royal power was restored with limitations. The monarchy's power became even further restricted during the reign of William and Mary, which began in 1689. The first of four King Georges ascended the English throne in 1714, beginning the Georgian Era during which England laid the groundwork for Empire. In the 19th century, the Victorian Era brought the globe-girdling ascendancy of the industrialized British Empire under the long reign of Queen Victoria, from 1837 to 1901.

During the 19th century, the entire island of Ireland was part of the United Kingdom, having been incorporated into the UK in 1801. The Irish however, sought independence, and in 1921, all but the six northern counties of Ulster became the Republic of Ireland—leaving the UK in its present form. In recent years, the desires of the Scots and Welsh for greater autonomy within the UK have led to the process called “devolution.” In 1999, Scotland regained its own parliament (in Edinburgh) and Wales established its own National Assembly in Cardiff.

The United Kingdom General Election held on May 6, 2010 resulted in a hung parliament after the Conservative Party failed to win the 326 seats required for an overall majority, despite having won the largest number of seats. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats formed the first coalition government since WWII with David Cameron as Prime Minister, serving from 2010–2016.

In 2007, the pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP) gained traction in the Scottish Parliament elections and formed a minority government with plans to further their goal towards Scottish independence. With continued momentum, the SNP was greatly successful in 2011 election and formed the majority government in the Scottish Parliament. On September 18, 2014, a referendum was held in Scotland to vote on Scottish independence from the United Kingdom but was defeated with 55% of the vote to remain in the United Kingdom.

Prime Minister David Cameron introduced a referendum to vote on the United Kingdom's continued membership in the European Union, also known as the “Brexit Referendum,” to fulfill a pledge, though he actively campaigned to remain in the EU. On June 23, 2016, the referendum passed with 51.9% of the vote in favor of leaving the European Union. In response, David Cameron resigned and was succeeded by Theresa May, a member of the Conservative

Party and second female Prime Minister after Margaret Thatcher, who continues to serve as Prime Minister today. Brexit negotiations are ongoing as the UK Parliament works to pass a withdrawal agreement.

Scotland

Facts & Figures

- **Area:** 30,918 square miles
- **Capital:** Edinburgh (regional); Scotland is part of the United Kingdom, whose national capital is London
- **Location:** Consists of 32 council areas, occupying the northern part of Great Britain and islands
- **Languages:** English, Scots, Scottish Gaelic
- **Population:** 5,404,700
- **Religions:** None 49.4%, Church of Scotland 24.1%, Roman Catholic 14.5%, other Christian 7.8%, Other 2.3%, Muslim 1.6%, Unknown 0.3%
- **Time Zone:** Same as the rest of the United Kingdom, five hours ahead of Eastern Time

National Holidays: Scotland

In addition to the holidays listed below, Scotland celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/02 2nd January Holiday

1st Monday in May Early May Bank Holiday

Last Monday in May Spring Bank Holiday

First Monday in August Summer Bank Holiday

11/30 St. Andrew's Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

RESOURCES

Suggested Readings

Ireland

Atlas of Irish History by Sean Duff (History) From Celtic times to the Viking Wars to Cromwell to the Great Famine, Ireland's distinctive past is summarized in this 144-page book with period art, photos, and maps. Published as a companion to a past PBS series on Ireland.

Malachy McCourt's History of Ireland by Malachy McCourt (History) This New York Times best seller offers a unique glimpse into Ireland's rich history by weaving together myth, folklore, culture, music, cuisine and more from the country's past and present.

The Great Hunger by Cecil Woodham-Smith (History) The authoritative book on Ireland's potato famine during 1845-1849.

The Big Fellow by Frank O'Connor (Literature) A classic on the life of Michael Collins, a key figure in the fight for independence and in treaty negotiations.

Irish Sagas and Folk Tales by Eileen O'Faolain (Folk Tales) The most comprehensive one-volume collection of Irish mythology.

Angela's Ashes by Frank McCourt (Literature) McCourt's Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir about his impoverished childhood in Limerick, Ireland. Basis for the 2000 film.

44: Dublin Made Me by Peter Sheridan (Memoir) Theater director Peter Sheridan—brother of film director Jim Sheridan (*My Left Foot*, *In the Name of the Father*)—offers a bracing, lyrical memoir about growing up in Dublin amidst a boisterous family.

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce (Literature) Joyce is Dublin's most famous writer. A semi-autobiographical work of fiction that offers a portrait of the coming of age of a young man surrounded by an Irish upbringing, the Catholic Church, Irish politics, and problems with art and morality.

Dubliners by James Joyce (Literature) For a more accessible James Joyce read, try this acclaimed collection of his short stories.

Trinity by Leon Uris (History) A mighty saga of glories and defeats, triumphs and tragedies, which re-creates the Emerald Isle's fierce struggle for independence.

Circle of Friends by Maeve Binchley (Fiction) A coming-of-age novel set in 1950s rural Ireland. Most of the book centers on the lives of three friends—gentle Benny, bravely honest Eve, and class-conscious Nan—as they grow up and enter college. The book was made into a film starring Chris O'Donnell and Minnie Driver.

Scotland

The Scottish World: History and Culture of Scotland by Harold Orel, et al (Culture) Ten essays seek to show that Scottish culture is distinctly different from English (in its art, architecture, literature, music, and history).

Complete Poems and Songs of Robert Burns by Robert Burns (Poetry) A collection by the famous Scottish poet who is known for writing in the Scots language, including the famous *Auld Lang Syne*.

44 Scotland Street series by Alexander McCall Smith (Fiction) Alexander McCall Smith, also known for the bestselling *No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* series, depicts the lives of colorful residents in an Edinburgh apartment building.

Suggested Movies

Ireland

The Secret of Roan Inish (1994, Drama) A charming fairytale about family and homeland, Secret follows 10-year-old Fiona's quest to return her family to their home on Roan Inish, an island off the coast of Ireland. But will she find her missing baby brother, who some say was stolen by Selkies (magical beings who sometimes appear as people, and sometimes as seals)?

In the Name of the Father (1994, Biography) The true-life story of Gerry Conlon, one of the "Guildford Four"—four Irish youths who were falsely convicted of blowing up an English pub in the 1970s. Although only partly set in Ireland (the trial and jail time are in England), the film does a good job at exploring the tensions between the Irish and the English at the time.

Circle of Friends (1995, Romance) Set in the 1950s, this film follows three friends—smart but self-conscious Benny, feisty Eve, and beautiful social climber Nan—as they start their university studies in Dublin. Based on a Maeve Binchy novel by the same name.

My Left Foot (1989, Biography) A true tale about a man who becomes a painter, poet and writer. It documents the life of Christy Brown, a working class Irishman born with cerebral palsy. With the help of his mother he learns to write and draw with his one working limb - his left foot.

Waking Ned Devine (1998, Comedy) Set in a tiny rural Irish town, this is the tale of lottery winner Ned Devine - who is found dead, with a winning ticket in his hand. The townsfolk ban together to fool the authorities into thinking Ned is still alive so they can cash the ticket in and share the prize.

Scotland

Chariots of Fire (1981, Drama) Based on a true story, this award-winning film follows two athletes who face many challenges as they pursue competitive running careers and go on to represent Great Britain in the 1924 Olympics. Filmed in St. Andrews, Scotland.

Braveheart (1995, Drama/Action) A historical drama starring Mel Gibson as William Wallace, a 13th-century Scottish warrior, as he leads the Scots in the First War of Scottish Independence against England.

Skyfall (2012, Action) Starring Daniel Craig as James Bond, this action film follows the secret agent as he returns to his Scottish roots with many scenes filmed in the Scottish Highlands.

Mary Queen of Scots (2018, Historical Drama) When Mary Stuart returns to Scotland in the early 1560s following the death of her husband, her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I, is threatened by her possible claim to the throne.

Brave (2012, Animated) A family-friendly mother/daughter tale about a princess in the Scottish Highlands as she struggles to conform to age-old customs, causing a rift between her and her mother.

Scottish TV Shows

- *Outlander* – (Drama) A historical time-travel series about a WWII nurse who visits Inverness, Scotland and is transported in time to the 18th century.
- *Shetland* – (Crime Drama) This series is filmed in Scotland and follows detectives in the Shetland police.

Useful Websites

Grand Circle Forum (tips from previous travelers)

www.gct.com/forum

Grand Circle Shop

www.grandcircleshop.com

Grand Circle Frequently Asked Questions

www.gct.com/faq

**International Health Information/CDC
(Centers for Disease Control)**

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>

Electricity & Plugs

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/
plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security

Administration (TSA)
www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

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