



# PROGRAM COUNTRY: IRELAND



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Few places in the world have so much proof of their long history as Ireland! Everywhere you look, you'll see old castles, forts, monuments and ruins, some even older than the pyramids in Egypt. In Ireland the past is very much part of the present, its residents and its vibrant culture. The Atlantic Ocean's powerful waves have excavated secret caves and high cliffs, leaving a magnificent coastline with long fine sandy beaches. The

strong winds of the Atlantic and the warm water of the Gulf current influence the climate, making it temperate with nearly the same temperatures everywhere in the country.

## COUNTRY INFORMATION

**Country:** Republic of Ireland (Eire)

**Capital city:** Dublin

**Area:** 27,130 square miles / 70,280 square km

**Population:** 3,900,000

**Language:** English and Irish (Gaelic)

**Currency:** Euro (EUR)

**Time:** GMT / UTC

**Electricity:** 220 volts, 50 cycles alternating current (AC) – wall outlets take plugs with three prongs

**Country dialing code:** +353

**Religion:** mainly Roman Catholic

Ireland consists of two countries – Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Ireland. The Republic of Ireland has a long and rich heritage and visitors to Ireland will enjoy an array of historic places to visit that include Christ Church Cathedral, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin Castle, Malahide Castle, Ardgillan Castle and Domesne.

Dublin, Ireland's capital city, lies on Dublin Bay and overlooks the Irish Sea that divides Ireland and Great Britain. The city of Dublin ranks among the top tourist destinations in Europe and has an abundance of tourist attractions. Other interesting places to visit in the Republic of Ireland include Cork, Derry, Limerick, Tipperary, Galway and Waterford – famous for its glass-making industry.

From bizarre lunar landscapes and the mighty Atlantic to labyrinthine caves and crystal clear waterways, discover Ireland's breathtaking beauty.

The lunar landscape of the Giant's Causeway may have been caused by volcanic eruptions and cooling lava, but legend tells a different story. The Causeway (A UNESCO World Heritage Site) is a mesmerising collection of tightly packed basalt columns that run from the cliffs of the Antrim Plateau right down to the sea. Similar stones on the island of Staffa in the Scottish Hebrides led the ancients to believe that it was the work of giant Finn MacCool, who made County Antrim's Causeway as a pathway to Scotland, where a rival giant lived.

Ireland enjoys over 1,448 km of spectacular coastline, surrounded by the mighty Atlantic on the west and the Irish Sea on the east. As well as towering cliffs, clear fresh waters, pristine sandy beaches, and an abundance of opportunities for the watersports enthusiast, the coastline enjoys lively fishing villages with some of the best seafood in the world.

At 344 km in length, the River Shannon is the longest river in the British Isles and one of the finest in Europe. Winding through an area of outstanding natural beauty, this unspoilt waterway flows from the Shannon Pot on the slopes of the Cuilcagh Mountains in County Cavan to Loop Head in County Clare, where it meets the Atlantic. Rich in glorious scenery, filled with prolific wildlife, and dotted with pretty villages, the Shannon Erne Waterway is the longest navigable waterway in Europe, and is a paradise for nature lovers, boating enthusiasts and those who prefer the quiet life.

The Irish culture has taken thousands of years to develop, so cherish every moment of your cultural discovery. Did you know that the Irish love traditions? So much so, in fact, that the country is full of them – from eating colcannon (a mixture of cabbage and mashed potatoes) on Halloween, to wearing something green on St Patrick's Day. Two of the most enduring and internationally famed, however, are traditional music and Irish dancing. Traditional music can be heard all over the country from city centre pubs to rural festivals.

The bodhrán, which is like a hand-held drum, is one of the most popular instruments in Irish music, along with the fiddle and the tin whistle. Irish dancing is fiercely competitive and taken very seriously with provincial, national and international champion-



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ships. If you want to have a go yourself, catch a céili, where everyone joins in together.

95 % of Irish people are Roman Catholic. Henry VIII of England declared himself 'King of Ireland' in 1541. This meant the Irish chiefs had to obey English laws, but the Irish people never accepted Henry's break with the Pope – they held on to their customs, their language, and their faith.

Hurling, Gaelic football and camogie are the national sports of Ireland. Gaelic football is best described as a mixture of soccer and rugby that produces a historic game unique to Ireland. Hurling can be described as Gaelic football, but played with sticks and a smaller ball. These sports have played an important role in maintaining Irish culture over many years, and it is as a result of this importance that they are played in one of the biggest and most modern stadia in Europe – Croke Park.

## SCHOOL LIFE

The student will attend the local high school in the area where they will be living. They will attend the school in exactly the same way as the Irish students. Schools usually only accept students from EU countries. Other nationalities may be accepted, and will be decided on a case-by-case basis. Due to new visa regulations, non-EU applicants to Ireland can now be accepted by Irish public schools. Non-EU applicants wishing to attend private fee-paying schools can be placed, but will be liable for these costs.

There are three terms in the school year: Autumn, Spring and Summer. The school year starts at the beginning of September. There is a two-week holiday at Christmas, and usually two weeks at Easter. There is a two to three days holiday halfway through each term. The school year ends between the end of June and the middle of July. Students who do not enter end of year exams will go home when the exams start as normal lessons cease for this period. This can mean returning home in May rather than June or July. The school day at most Irish schools starts at 9.00 am and finishes around 3.45 pm. Lessons are on Monday to Friday only.

School uniform is recommended in most schools and compulsory in others. Packed lunch is provided by the host family on school days. Books, other learning material, uniform, hot school lunches, general pocket money and transportation costs are at the student's expense.

Each student has an area representative allocated to them for the duration of their stay. The area representative will arrange an individual meeting with each student on a regular basis and an orientation meeting at the start of the programme for all high school students in the area. The student should turn to the area representative as the first point of contact in the case of any problems with the host family.

## HOST FAMILY LIFE

Our host families receive payment for board and lodgings. Our area representatives carefully select the host families. Host families are accepted on the basis of a careful procedure which, among other things, include an interview and a home visit. The student will be a new member of the host family and is therefore required to participate fully in family life. The student may have to share a room with a host sibling or another high school student. The student will have a quiet place in the house where he or she can study.

Students must remember that staying with an Irish host family means being part of a family; it not like staying in a hotel. The family will welcome the student into their home, but they will not rearrange their lives completely around the student's needs; they need to fit in with the host family's lifestyle. In many cases both parents work, and will have other commitments at the weekend as well. The student will need to be independent and outgoing, so that they can build up a network of friends and make arrangements to fill their spare time – this is very much their responsibility, and will be a key factor in making the time in Ireland a success.

## PROGRAM EXTRAS

### London weekend

Students will have the chance to spend an exciting weekend with other high school students in London. The weekend includes three nights' accommodation in central London with breakfast included, dinner at Planet Hollywood, sightseeing cruise on River Thames and entrance to Madame Tussauds. In addition, an optional visit to a famous musical can be arranged. The weekend is accompanied by an LSC coordinator, who also provides a walking tour of the city centre of London.

### EUROPEAN TOUR

In the end of June, STS Head Office offers an amazing three-week bus tour around Europe. You get to visit 10 countries together with students from all over the world. The price includes accommodation, half board, sightseeing, most entrances and activities, Disneyland in Paris etc. Please see separate sheet for more detailed information regarding this tour.



*All information is subject to change.*

