

# LIVING & WORKING IN IRELAND

## YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

### CONTENTS

- Why Ireland?
- Ireland at a glance
- History
- Work permits & visas
- Weather
- Accommodation
- Banking
- Tax & Social Services
- Healthcare
- Getting connected: internet and mobile
- Education
- Improving your English
- Holidays & paid leave
- Cost of living
- Shopping
- Public transport
- Driving in Ireland



# WHY IRELAND?



Ireland is one of the best places in the world to live. Perhaps the best country in the world to live. But don't just take our word for it.

Ireland came top in [The Good Country](#) Index which ranked 125 countries around the world "on what they contribute to humanity and the rest of the planet". Those behind the first global index say: "For the size of its economy, [Ireland's] combined global contributions to science and technology; culture, international peace and security; world order; planet and climate; prosperity and equality; and the health and wellbeing of humanity, outranks those of any other country." Ireland is a friendly and welcoming country with an internationalist outlook. Moreover, Ireland came top in the Index's "Equality and Prosperity" category. So the country is especially attractive to ambitious people who want to relocate from abroad and advance their careers.

Ranked by per capita GDP, Ireland is one of the top ten richest countries in the world.



## TOWN & COUNTRY

Another reason why you might find Ireland particularly attractive is its geography. Cities like Dublin, Cork and Galway are often found among the top best cities in the world in which to live and, as a result, are highly sought after as locations both by new businesses and by high quality, experienced and well trained people.

All of Dublin's major cities have an exciting artistic and cultural life, with museums, art galleries, cinemas and theatres. There is plenty going on in Ireland's cities for sports fans, too. Gaelic football and hurling, the national sports, are very popular across the country, as are football (soccer) and rugby union.

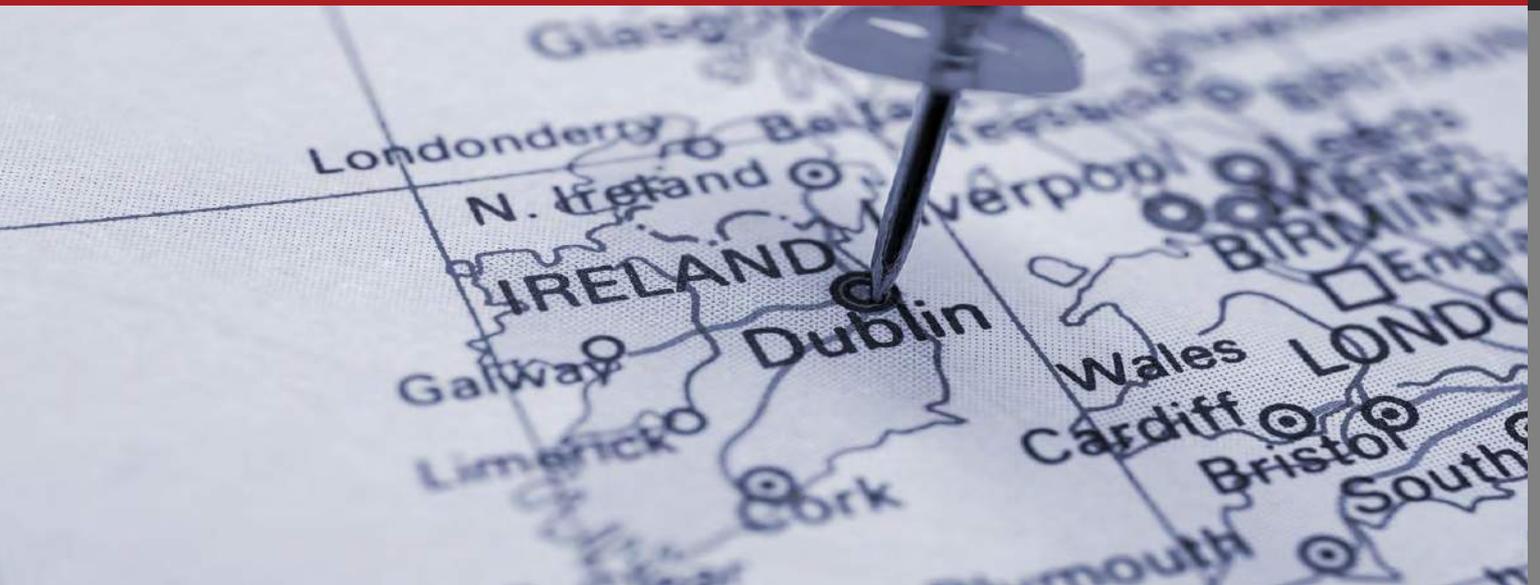
And yet, even in the capital city, Dublin, you are never far from the countryside and country pursuits. You are also never far from water: dramatic coastlines and beautiful lakes and rivers.

In Ireland, you really can have the best of both worlds!

## FAMILY FRIENDLY

With plenty of high quality primary, secondary and pre-schools, and some of Europe's best universities and technical colleges, there are educational opportunities to suit all requirements. So it is a great country to raise a family.

# WHY IRELAND?



## LANGUAGE

English is one of the two official languages in Ireland, alongside Gaelic. However, English is the language that everyone uses not only in business but also in everyday life apart from in the “Gaeltacht” – the Gaelic-speaking areas to the west.

If you have visited or lived in other English-speaking countries, you will notice a difference in accent and you will pick up some phrases that are typically Irish. Often, this is because the English wording is a direct rendition of a Gaelic phrase or saying. In fact, many say that this is one of the most charming features of the country. Many of the greatest poets, dramatists, novelists and song-writers in the English language are Irish men and women.

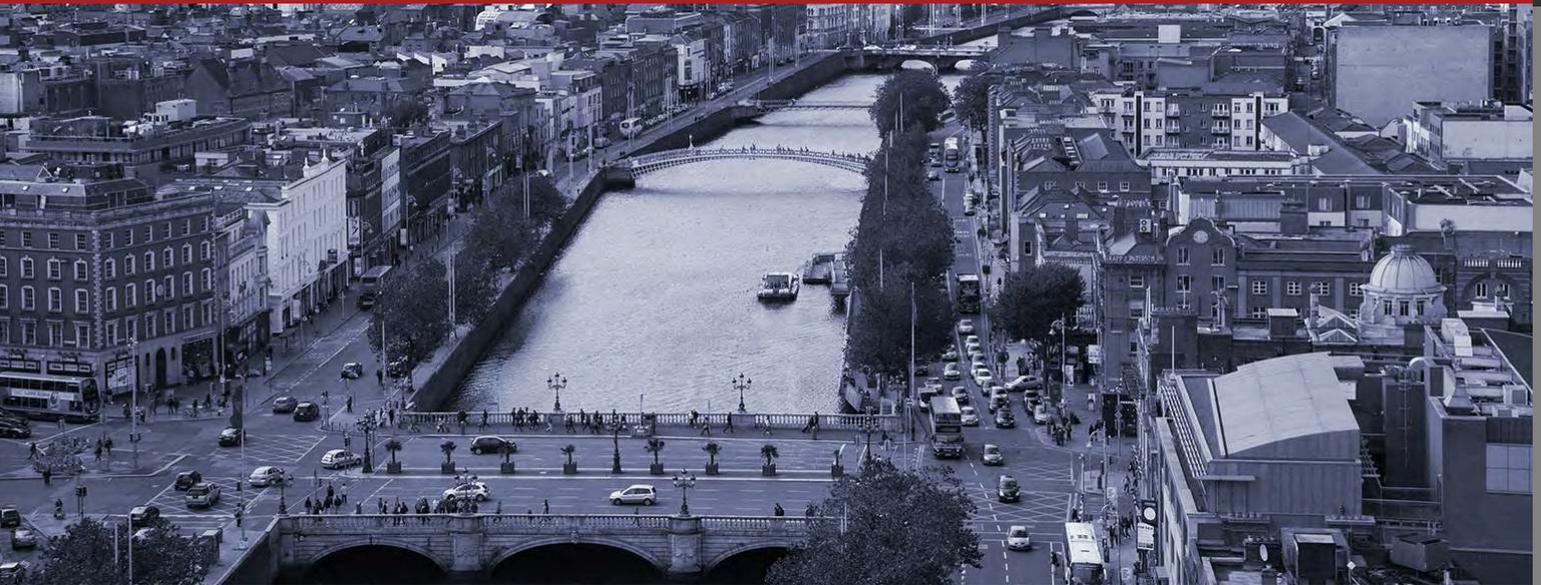
## OPPORTUNITIES FOR BILINGUAL TALENT

As Irish businesses reach out to European countries and beyond, there is a pressing need for people who combine knowledge of English with a foreign language, especially those who are fluent in languages such as German, French, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese and Arabic. For bilingual and multilingual talent, Ireland really is a land of huge opportunity.

Discover more about Ireland on the pages ahead. They cover most of the questions people ask when coming to work here, but if you have additional questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.



# IRELAND AT A GLANCE



Here are a few quick facts and figures about Ireland to get you started. As Ireland is a full member of the European Union, if you have the right of citizenship in any EU or EEA country (plus Switzerland) you are free to live and work in Ireland. If you are from outside these countries, please take a look at the section on work permits and visas.

The facts and figures below refer explicitly to the Republic of Ireland. The six counties of Northern Ireland are part of the United Kingdom.

<b>GOVERNMENT:</b>	Republic, parliamentary democracy
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS:</b>	26 counties, 5 cities
<b>AREA:</b>	70,280 sq. km
<b>POPULATION:</b>	4.5 million
<b>LEGAL SYSTEM:</b>	Common law system based on the English model, modified by customary law
<b>CAPITAL:</b>	Dublin
<b>DIALLING CODE:</b>	+353
<b>TIME ZONE:</b>	GMT (UTC+0)
<b>LANGUAGES:</b>	English, Irish (Gaelige)
<b>CURRENCY:</b>	Euro (EUR)
<b>PER CAPITA INCOME:</b>	\$53,313.6 (Intl. \$, 2014)
<b>LIFE EXPECTANCY:</b>	Male: 78.28, Female: 82.97
<b>PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:</b>	January 1 (New Year's Day); March 17 (St Patrick's Day); Easter Monday; first Monday in June; first Monday in August; last Monday in October; December 25 (Christmas Day); December 26 (St Stephen's Day/Boxing Day).

# HISTORY



In December 1921 an Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed and 26 counties gained independence as the Irish Free State. Six Ulster counties had been granted their own parliament in Belfast in 1920 and still remain within the United Kingdom.

A new constitution was introduced in 1937 and Ireland remained neutral during the Second World War. In 1949 the Irish Republic was established. Ireland was admitted to the UN in 1955 and acceded to the European Economic Community in 1973, together with the United Kingdom and Denmark.



# WORK PERMITS & VISAS



## WORK PERMITS FOR NON EU - OR EEA NATIONALS

Generally speaking, non-EU and non-EEA nationals must have a permit to work in Ireland. EEA (European Economic Area) and Swiss nationals do not need an employment permit.

Since 1 October 2014, the Employment Permits (Amendment) Act 2014 has changed the previous employment permits system. There are now 9 different types of employment permit with new application forms for each type and changes to the criteria for issuing employment permits. The Act also provides that a foreign national without an employment permit, who took all reasonable steps to get one, can take civil action against their employer to compensate them for work done or services rendered.

### The main types of work permit are:

**General Employment Permit.** This is the primary vehicle to attract foreign nationals for occupations which are experiencing a labour or skills shortage. All occupations are eligible unless specifically excluded. A General Employment Permit may also be obtained with respect to a 12-month contract.

**Critical Skills Employment Permit.** This is designed to attract highly skilled people with the aim of encouraging them to take up permanent residence in Ireland. Occupations such as ICT professionals, professional engineers and technologists are catered for under this type of employment permit.

**Dependant/Partner/Spouse Employment Permit.** The objective of this type of employment permit is primarily to support the attractiveness of Ireland as a location of employment for potential and current Critical Skills/Green Card Employment Permit holders and Researchers. Eligible dependents such as unmarried children, civil partners, and spouses, who have been admitted to the State as family members of holders of these categories of Employment Permits and Researchers may apply.

You can find full details about work permits, including eligibility criteria and how to apply, at [the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation website](#).

## VISAS

People from certain countries need a visa in order to enter Ireland and should obtain one before they travel. Visa applications should be made to the Irish Embassy or Consulate in, or accredited to, your country of permanent residence or home state. If there is no Embassy or Consulate in your home state, you may make the application to your nearest Irish Embassy or 'consulate or direct to the Visa Office, Department of Foreign Affairs, 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2.

You should prepare your visa application well in advance and allow 6-8 weeks for your application to be approved if you are applying from abroad.

You will find full details on the [visa page](#) of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

# WEATHER



Ireland receives generally warm summers and mild winters. It is considerably warmer than other areas on its latitude, because it lies in the north-eastern Atlantic Ocean, and as a result is warmed by the North Atlantic current all year.

The coldest months are January and February with average daily air temperatures of between 4°C and 7°C, while July and August are the warmest (14°C to 16°C on average).

Inland areas are a little cooler in winter and warmer in summer than their coastal counterparts, but extreme temperatures are rare.

On the other hand the weather is moist and changeable for most of the year. As you probably know, Ireland does get a lot of rainfall but it tends to be light rain and showers.

## LEARN TO FIT IN

The Irish have lots of colourful phrases to describe their weather, especially different types of rain. One you will hear a lot is “a soft day”, which means cloudy weather with soft mist or drizzle. A “grand soft day”, on the other hand, is humid with a fine, light drizzle. “Dry rain” means that technically speaking, it is raining, but not enough to get you wet.

You are better off taking an umbrella (or staying indoors) if people say it is “lashing it down”!

The sooner you learn to talk about the weather, the sooner you’ll fit into Irish society!



# ACCOMMODATION



## FINDING SOMEWHERE TO LIVE

The cost of renting and buying accommodation in Ireland can vary greatly depending on where you are based. Rent for a single room in the suburbs starts at around €350 per month excluding utility bills. Rent for a two-bedroom apartment outside Dublin and Cork ranges from €450 - €700 per month. In both Cork and Dublin you can expect to pay anywhere between €900 and €1,600 per month for something similar, with Dublin at the more expensive end of this bracket. Rent is usually payable a month in advance and with an initial deposit of one or two months.

The asking price of a three-bedroom house ranges from €120,000 to €200,000 outside County Dublin. Entering into the greater Dublin area prices increase to approximately €200,000 to €350,000. City centre prices still remain extremely high with apartments pricing between €300,000 and €800,000.

The following websites are best for finding a place to either rent or buy.

[www.daft.ie](http://www.daft.ie)

[www.myhome.ie](http://www.myhome.ie)

[www.gumtree.ie](http://www.gumtree.ie)

[www.irishpropertywatch.com](http://www.irishpropertywatch.com)

Estate agents and newspapers in your locality are also worth a look.

## BILLS AND EXPENSES

Electricity and gas are supplied by the **ESB**, **Bord Gais** and **Aircity**, all of whom can provide advice on setting up or transferring accounts. Cable television is provided by NTL and Sky. You will also need a television licence, which costs €160 per year and can be obtained from any post office.



# BANKING



You will want to be paid ... and you will need to pay your bills. So set up a bank account when you arrive in Ireland.

In accordance with EU policy, banking regulations are the same for both resident and non-resident EU citizens. Non-resident EU citizens may therefore open an Irish bank account.

In order to open a bank account you need to provide your PPSN (Personal Public Service Number – the unique reference number that helps you access social welfare benefits in Ireland, see the section on Tax and Social Services) plus two forms of identification, at least one of which must include a photograph (such as a passport).

Proof of residence, e.g. a utility bill, is also required.

You can also apply to open a current account online.

Major banks include:

**Allied Irish Bank**

**Bank of Ireland**

**Ulster Bank**

Your own local bank may also have branches in Ireland and/or have an arrangement with an Irish bank, so it is worth checking before you leave.



# TAX & SOCIAL SERVICES



## INCOME TAX

Before you start working in Ireland, it's essential that you get a Personal Public Service (PPS) number, which will register and identify you on the tax system. To obtain your PPS number you will need to visit your local Social Welfare branch and take with you proof of your address. You will also need identification. Visit

[www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)

Employees in Ireland pay tax through the PAYE (Pay As You Earn) system. This means that your employer deducts the tax you owe directly from your wages, and pays this tax directly to the Revenue Commissioners. The amount of tax you pay depends on a variety of factors including your marital status, whether you have children, and whether you are in rented accommodation.

For more information about taxation in Ireland visit [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie)

Once you have a PPS number you will need to apply for a Certificate of Tax Credits. The best way to do this is either to download form 12A from the website or go to a local Revenue office and pick one up. A Certificate of Tax Credits will ensure that you are taxed at the correct rate and your employer can calculate your take-home pay.

The PPS system in Ireland consists of a series of tax brackets, which determine the rate of tax you pay on your annual salary. It is likely that until the paperwork is sorted out you will be placed in the Emergency Tax bracket.

If your earnings have been relatively low you may be entitled to a tax rebate before you leave Ireland. To claim this you will need a P60 (outlining your exact salary and tax details) and/or a P45 form (which you get when you leave a job).

## SOCIAL SERVICES

The **Department of Social Protection** is responsible for the administration of social security and benefits (e.g. child benefit and state pensions) in Ireland.

If you are an EU citizen you will find information on your social security rights in Ireland, in your own language, [here](#).

Your PRSI contribution also goes towards state healthcare, but provision is limited (see the section on healthcare).

# HEALTHCARE



If you are an EU/EEA or Swiss national and are travelling or staying in Ireland you are entitled to receive free maintenance and treatment in public beds in Health Service Executive (HSE) and voluntary hospitals should you become ill or have an accident.

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) makes it easier for you to get medical care quickly and easily. It is evidence that you are part of a health insurance scheme administered by another state in the EU/EEA or Switzerland.

Out-patient services in public hospitals are also free of charge but some people may have to pay an initial charge if they have not been referred by a doctor (GP – General Practitioner). If you are in a private hospital or in a private bed in a public hospital, you must pay for both maintenance and treatment. If you have private health insurance this may cover some or all of the costs.

For comprehensive information on hospital services in Ireland have a look at [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)

## Visiting a doctor

A visit to a General Practitioner will cost approximately €50-€60. The GP may then refer you to a specialist. Visits to specialists typically cost at least €120.

## PRIVATE HEALTHCARE

Because public healthcare provision is limited, it is highly advisable to obtain private healthcare in Ireland. Private healthcare is available to anyone provided they can pay for it or are covered by an appropriate health insurance scheme. Some employers offer private healthcare as part of their employment offer. The main private insurers are:

### VHI

Aviva Health

Quinn Healthcare

These companies also offer dental insurance. If you take out private healthcare you will be entitled to tax relief on it at the standard rate. Most people who take out private healthcare pay for it on a monthly basis to spread the cost over the year.

## ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY

Most general hospitals and some specialist hospitals have accident and emergency or casualty departments which patients may attend without being referred by a GP. If you attend without a GP referral, you may be charged. However, if you have to return for further visits in relation to the same illness or accident, you do not have to pay the charge again.

# GETTING CONNECTED: INTERNET AND MOBILE



Getting connected to the Internet in Ireland is fairly easy. Options include: dial-up, DSL, Satellite, 3G mobile and cable. Broadband is largely available in Irish cities, but much of the countryside is not yet very well covered.

Broadband service providers include:

[Eircom](#)

[Vodafone](#)

[3 network](#)

[Meteor](#)

All of these provide bundled broadband and mobile packages.

These providers have high street stores in most cities where you will get personal support and advice on the full range of mobile and internet connections.

You can also obtain pre-paid mobile SIM cards at stores and supermarkets such as Tesco and Aldi.



## FIXED TELEPHONE CONNECTIONS

There are also many options for fixed telephone connections. Eircom, which was until 1999 a state company, is the major network provider.

Bear in mind that your relationship with a telephone service provider is based on a consumer contract. When shopping around it is important to compare the different terms and conditions which apply in different contracts. So take into account the likely length of your stay in the country before committing to a contract. Other considerations include, for example, prices for line rental and calls.

Before you change contracts, it is wise to know the specific terms and conditions of your current contract so that you can compare them to the terms and conditions of a new contract.

You can find further information and advice on the [\*\*Citizens Information Board website\*\*](#).

# EDUCATION



Full-time education is compulsory from the age of 6 to 16 and there is no nationwide subsidised pre-school system. The Department of Education and Skills is responsible for the educational system in Ireland.

The Irish government provides free education at both primary and secondary level. The schools are of very high quality compared with other European countries.

In recent years there has been a growth in the number of private schools, especially in south Dublin. The Department of Education funds teacher salaries so the schools are economically feasible for many parents at a cost typically between €5,000 and €8,000 per student per year.

The other major category of private schools is the Gaelscoileanna or Irish language high schools. At these schools all subjects are taught using Irish/Gaelic language. In recent years, there has been increased interest in these all-Irish schools and they're a growing part of the educational mix.

## TERTIARY EDUCATION

Third-level education is made up of a number of sectors. The university sector, the technological sector and the colleges of education are substantially funded by the State (some registration fees apply). In addition there are a number of independent private colleges. Entry to approved third level courses is extremely competitive and places are allocated on the grades achieved in the Leaving Certificate – the final secondary level school exam.



IMPROVING YOUR ENGLISH

# ENGLISH



If you are a new arrival in Ireland or are thinking of moving to Ireland to work, you may be interested in exploring opportunities to improve your English. There are plenty of language schools offering a range of courses from basic to advanced, as well as specialist courses in business English or focusing on Irish culture.

For example, Dublin City University offers a range of courses:

<http://www.english.dcu.ie/>

You will also find a comprehensive listing of accredited schools across Ireland at the ACELS website:

<http://www.acels.ie/>

Bear in mind also that there are ex-pat communities from most European countries, many of whom make their own private and informal arrangements for improving their English – as well as meeting people with whom they share the same language.



# HOLIDAYS & PAID LEAVE



Your entitlement to annual leave or holidays from work is set out in legislation and in your contract of employment. Legislation gives various entitlements to leave from work. These include annual leave, public holidays, maternity leave, adoptive leave, carer's leave, parental leave and other types of leave from work. It is important to note that the periods of leave provided for by legislation (the Organisation of Work Act 1997) are the minimum entitlements only; you and your employer may agree to additional entitlements.

The basic legal minimum is four weeks' paid holiday.

You will find a listing of public holidays under "Ireland at a Glance".

In the case of agency employees, the party who pays your wages (the employment agency or client company) is the employer for the purposes of the Act and is responsible for providing the entitlement.

You can find more information on holidays and paid leave at the **Citizens' Information Board website**.



# COST OF LIVING



Ireland ranks as the 11th most expensive country to live in, just behind the United Kingdom, according to data compiled by **Numbeo**. Ireland has a Consumer Price Index of 92.09, meaning the cost of living here is just under 8 per cent less than in New York (CPI=100). This index takes account of all the main components of the cost of living, such as accommodation, utilities, groceries, eating out, clothing and transport.

Of course all things are relative, and your real cost of living will depend on your own personal lifestyle choices: such as where you choose to live (central Dublin obviously being the most expensive; where and how often you eat out; where you shop (Ireland offers a range of supermarkets from upmarket to discount, as in most European countries).

However, Ireland has a high per capita GDP and most ex-pats are on relatively high salaries so you should find the cost of living easily manageable.



# SHOPPING



You really can shop until you drop in Ireland. While there are many independent retailers on high streets across the country, Ireland now boasts some of the largest and most modern shopping malls in Europe, such as The **Blanchardstown Centre** outside Dublin, the **Dundrum Centre** on Dublin's south side, and the **Merchants Quay Centre** in downtown Cork.

Grafton Street is Dublin's best-known shopping thoroughfare, with beautiful historic buildings housing iconic Irish businesses such as Brown Thomas, Weir & Sons and Bewley's Grafton Street Café.

"Under Clery's clock" on O'Connell Street remains a typical starting point for shopping trips (as well as romances) though the shop itself closed recently.

Looking for a covered market offering a wide range of tasty delicacies? Then head for The English Market – it's in Cork, not England.

And shopping opportunities aren't hard to find in Galway either – just ask your way to Shop Street!

## SUPERMARKETS & CONVENIENCE STORES

Ireland has an abundance of supermarkets to suit all needs and budgets. The top names (by number of stores) are Supervalu, Lidl, Tesco, Dunnes Stores, Aldi, Eurospar and M&S Food Halls.

Plus you will find many local convenience stores such as SPAR, Centra and Londis.

As well as the supermarkets, you will find excellent local butchers and grocers who offer a more personal service as well as lively street and farmers' markets.

## HOURS OF BUSINESS

Shopping hours vary from shop to shop so the following are guidelines only. Department stores, bookshops and record shops are generally open from 09:30 to 19:00 Mon-Sat, except Thursdays when they open until 20:00 or 21:00. On Sundays they typically open 12:00 to 18:00. Smaller shops (clothing boutiques, speciality food stores, etc.) are typically open from 09:30 to 18:00 Mon-Sat, except Thursdays when most open until 20:00. On Sundays some open 12:00 to 18:00.

Supermarkets keep longer hours, typically from 08:00 to 21:00, or later. On Sundays supermarkets typically open from 12:00 to 19:00.

Convenience stores are often open 24 hours or at least from about 07:00 to 23:00.

# PUBLIC TRANSPORT



## URBAN

Traffic tends to be heavy, and parking limited, in Ireland's major cities so you are advised to use public transport when possible, especially for commuting to work.

All cities well served by public bus services. The main operator is the state-owned Coras Iompair Éireann (CIE). CIE also operates a late night bus service to Dublin airport. For detailed timetables visit

[www.dublinbus.ie](http://www.dublinbus.ie)

In addition Dublin has a suburban railway service, the DART (Dublin Area Rapid Transport), which runs along the east coast all the way from Malahide, north of Dublin, to Greystones in County Wicklow to the south.

Some Dublin suburbs also benefit from a modern tram service to the centre, the Luas.

Cork City likewise has a modern bus system serving the city and suburbs. The city's railway hub is based at Kent station towards the east end of the city, giving access to the national and county network. There are two local lines serving the county: one for Cobh in east Cork and one serving Mallow, Charleville and Millstreet in north Cork.

More information on **Cork public transport** is available [here](#)

You will find details of other urban bus services at : [www.buseireann.ie](http://www.buseireann.ie)

## COUNTRYWIDE

Bus Éireann runs a network of bus and coach services across the country.

**Irish Rail** (Iarnród Éireann) runs the national rail network and jointly runs, with Northern Ireland Rail, the Enterprise high-speed rail connection with Belfast.

## CYCLING

Dublin has a well-established bike sharing scheme and in 2015 similar schemes were unveiled in Cork, Galway and Limerick. **Dublin Cycling** provides advice on cycling in the city and campaigns for cyclists.

## TAXIS

Getting home late at night would be a challenge were it not for the many taxis that you will find in designated taxi ranks. A typical 5 km journey from Dublin city centre to a suburb such as Clontarf will cost you €12-15.

# DRIVING IN IRELAND



## KEEP LEFT!

If you come from continental America or continental Europe you may be put off driving by the fact that the Irish drive “on the wrong side of the road”. Don’t be! You will get used to it in no time.

## DRIVING LICENCES

It is possible to transfer or exchange a licence from most EU countries and some others (notably Australia, Japan, South Korea, Switzerland and South Africa) for an Irish one – but you must do this within one year of arrival in the country.

On the other hand U.S. and Canadian drivers must apply for a full Irish licence, which means first obtaining a provisional licence. To do this you will need to take a theory test and an oral one. You can get more information from the Vehicle Licensing (Motor Tax) office on +353 61 365000. It may be possible for you to drive in Ireland for a limited period with an international driver’s licence from abroad.

## BRINGING A CAR FROM OVERSEAS

If you bring a car to Ireland from overseas, there are three things you must do:

First, pay Vehicle Registration Tax. You can find details on [VRT here](#).

Second, get motor insurance. This is compulsory in Ireland. If you have a no-claims bonus from the EU or other countries with similar insurance laws, this may be transferable to Ireland.

Third, pay Motor Tax. Rates vary depending on the size of the vehicle and can be paid quarterly, half-yearly or annually.

Vehicles that are more than four years old must be tested for roadworthiness when you arrive and again every two years before they can be driven on public highways. For details contact your local National Car Test Centre.