

# Ireland

It's about time...! reads a recent Dublin Tourism tagline, and nothing could be truer. Sure, at face value it's just another tourism bureau slogan, but looking deeper you realise that these three words illuminate much of what it means to be Ireland at the beginning of the 21st century. Thanks to a sky-rocketing economy, the Celtic Tiger has burst from the fog and rain of its battered history to become one of Europe's most prosperous countries. The land of Stone Age tombs, rolling green hills, medieval castles and towering cliffs that the word 'Ireland' conjures, still exists, but today it shares space with things of this century, like beachfront holiday homes and the M1 motorway.

The slogan is also indicative of who the Irish are as a people. Centuries of conquest, famine and emigration have left them surprisingly friendly yet expectedly cynical, a combination that makes for a wickedly dark sense of humour. If you ask the fellow sitting next to you at the pub what he thinks of the Celtic Tiger, or the staggering rate of new immigrants or the declining power of the Catholic Church in Ireland, he might just say, 'It's about feckin time!'

This sentiment rings just as true for Northern Ireland, which remains part of the UK. If you ask a person up North what she thinks about the new climate of peace, chances are she'll tell you...well, you know what she'll say.

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 84,421 sq km
- **Capitals** Dublin, Belfast (Northern Ireland)
- **Currency** euro (€), Republic/pound sterling (£) NI; €1 = £0.69; £1 = €1.44; A\$1 = €0.58/£0.40; ¥100 = €0.68/£0.47; NZ\$1 = €0.47/£0.33; US\$1 = €0.83/£0.54
- **Famous for** U2, St Patrick, Guinness, green hills
- **Official Languages** English, Irish Gaelic
- **Population** 3.9 million
- **Phrases** *craic* (good time); *bleedin'* (bloody); *sláinte* (cheers); *shorts* (shots); *deadly* (brilliant)
- **Telephone Codes** country code ☎ 353; Northern Ireland ☎ 44 28; international access code ☎ 00



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Gallivant through the many museums, pubs and literary haunts of frenetic **Dublin** (p652), and ask a local, 'Where's the *craic*'?
- Enjoy bohemian **Galway** (p683), with its hip cafés and live music venues.
- Walk along the walls of **Derry** (p698) and learn about the volatile history of Northern Ireland.
- Drive, cycle or hitch to haunting **Kells Priory** (p668) and hang out among the ruins and the sheep.

## ITINERARIES

- **One week** Spend a couple days in Dublin ambling through the excellent national museums, and gorging yourself on Guinness and other tourists in Temple Bar. Get medieval in Kilkenny before heading on to Cork and discovering why they call it 'The Real Capital'. Meander through lush, idyllic West Cork and take in the friendly spirit and melodious accents of its denizens.
- **Two weeks** Follow the one-week itinerary, then make your way from West Cork up to touristy Killarney and the Ring of Kerry on your way to bohemian Galway. Using Galway as your base, go and explore the alluring Aran Islands and the awesome Cliffs of Moher. Finally, allow yourself to be seduced by the mirror-like lakes, pale mountains and lonely valleys of the Connemara.

## HOW MUCH?

- **Cup of coffee** €2.50
- **Irish Times (newspaper)** €1.50
- **Umbrella** €10
- **Cinema ticket** €9
- **Aran sweater** €50+

## LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L petrol** €1.10
- **1L bottled water** €1.50
- **Pint of Guinness** €4
- **Souvenir T-shirt** €15
- **Pub sandwich** €4

## CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Ireland has a relatively mild climate. Average temperatures range from 4°C to 7°C in January and February, and from 14°C to 16°C in July and August. Snow is scarce, but rain is plentiful – about 1000mm annually.

The tourist season begins the weekend before St Patrick's Day (17 March) and is in full swing from Easter onwards. Crowds are at their biggest – and prices at their highest – in July and August.

## HISTORY

### Very Early Irish, Celts & Vikings

Our tale begins around 10,000 years ago, as the last ice caps melted and the rising sea level cut Ireland off from Britain. Hunter-gatherers may first have traversed the narrowing land bridge, but many more crossed the Irish Sea in small boats. Farming did not reach Ireland until around 4000 BC.

The Celtic warrior tribes who influenced Irish culture came from central Europe. They had conquered large sections of southern Europe and plundered Rome in the 4th century AD. Known as 'Galli' (Gauls) by the Romans and 'Keltoi' by the Greeks, they were feared by both.

The Celts probably reached Ireland from mainland Europe around 300 BC and were well ensconced by 100 BC. Christian monks, including St Patrick, arrived in Ireland around the 5th century AD and, as the Dark Ages enveloped Europe, Ireland became an outpost of European civilisation. A land of saints, scholars and missionaries, its thriving monasteries produced beautiful illuminated manuscripts, some of which survive to this day.

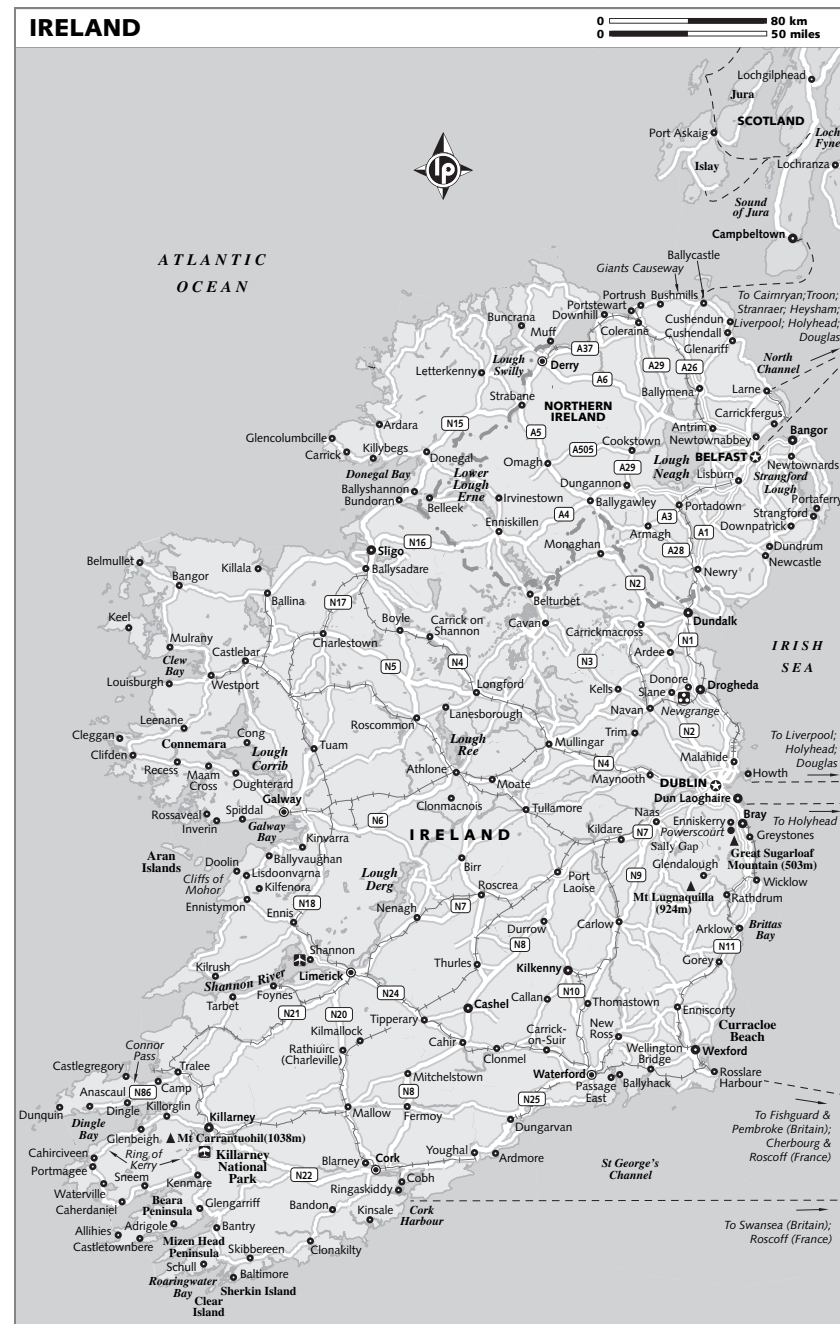
From the end of the 8th century the rich monasteries were targets of raids by Vikings. At the height of their power the Vikings ruled Dublin, Waterford and Limerick, but were eventually defeated by legendary Celtic hero Brian Ború, the king of Munster, at the Battle of Clontarf in 1014.

### The British Arrive

In 1169 the Norman conquest of England spread to Ireland when Henry II, fearful of the Irish kingdoms' power, dispatched forces to the island.

Oppression of the Catholic Irish got seriously under way in the 1500s when Elizabeth I gave loads of Irish land to Protestant

## IRELAND



settlers, sowing the seeds of today's divided Ireland.

In 1685 James II (a Scotsman) became king, but was forced to flee the country because of his outspoken Catholicism. He sought unsuccessfully to regain his throne, which had been handed over to the Protestant William of Orange (a Dutchman). William's victory over James at the Battle of the Boyne on 12 July 1690 is commemorated to this day by northern Protestant Orange Parades.

By the 18th century Ireland's Catholics held less than 15% of the land, and suffered brutal restrictions in employment, education and religion. The United Irishmen began agitating for Irish civil rights under the leadership of young Dublin Protestant and Republican, Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763–98). The group was dissolved in 1798 with Wolfe Tone's capture by the British and subsequent suicide.

Ireland's Protestant gentry, alarmed by unrest, sought the security of closer ties with Britain. In 1800 the Act of Union was passed, joining Ireland politically with Britain. The Irish Parliament voted itself out of existence and around 100 Irish MPs moved to London's House of Commons.

In the first half of the 19th century Daniel O'Connell (1775–1847) led Ireland towards greater independence by peaceful means, and won a seat in the British Parliament in 1828. Rather than risk a rebellion, the British Parliament passed the 1829 Act of Catholic Emancipation, allowing Catholics limited voting rights and the right to be elected as MPs.

O'Connell died as Ireland was suffering its greatest tragedy. The successive failures of the potato crop, caused by blight between 1845 and 1851, resulted in the mass starvation and emigration known as Ireland's Great Famine, or the Potato Famine.

Shamefully, during these years there were excellent harvests of crops, such as wheat and dairy produce. But while millions starved, Ireland was forced to export its food to Britain and overseas. About one million died from disease or starvation – some were buried in mass graves, others left where they had dropped. Another million emigrated, and migration continued to reduce the population during the next hundred years.

At the turn of the century the British Parliament began to contemplate Irish home rule, but WWI interrupted the process. Ireland might still have moved, peacefully, towards some sort of accommodation but for a bungled uprising in 1916. Though it is now celebrated as a glorious bid for freedom, the Easter Rising was heavy with rhetoric and light on planning on both sides. After the insurrection was put down, a series of trials and executions (15 in all) transformed the ringleaders into martyrs and roused international support for Irish independence.

### The Road to Independence

In the 1918 election Irish republicans stood under the banner of Sinn Féin ('We Ourselves' or 'Ourselves Alone') and won the majority of Irish seats. Ignoring London's Parliament, where they were meant to sit, newly elected Sinn Féin deputies declared Ireland independent and formed the Dáil Éireann (Irish assembly), led by Eamon de Valera. The British had not conceded and confrontation was inevitable.

The Anglo-Irish War (1919–21) pitted Sinn Féin and its military wing, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), against the British. The brutal responses of Britain's Black and Tans infantry further roused anti-British sentiment. This was the period when Michael Collins, a charismatic and ruthless leader, masterminded the IRA's campaign of violence (while serving as finance minister in the new Dáil).

After months of negotiations in London, Collins and Arthur Griffith led the delegation that signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty on 6 December 1921. The treaty gave 26 counties of Ireland independence, allowing six largely Protestant counties in Ulster the choice to opt out (a foregone conclusion).

The treaty was ratified by the Dáil in January 1922, but passions were so inflamed that within weeks civil war broke out. At issue was that the British monarch remained the (nominal) head of the new Irish Free State and Irish MPs were required to swear allegiance. To many Irish Catholics, this was a betrayal of republican principles. In the following violence Collins was assassinated in Cork by anti-Treaty forces, while the Free State government briefly imprisoned de Valera.

By 1923 the civil war had ground to a halt, and for nearly 50 years the Republic of Ire-

land was relatively peaceful. After boycotting the Dáil for a number of years, de Valera founded Fianna Fáil (Warriors of Ireland), which won a majority in the 1932 election. De Valera introduced a new constitution in 1937 that abolished the oath of British allegiance and claimed sovereignty over the six counties of Ulster. In 1948 the Irish government declared the country a republic and, in 1949, left the British Commonwealth.

### The Troubles

According to the Anglo-Irish Treaty, six counties in the North were to be governed by a Northern Irish Parliament sitting at Stormont, near Belfast, from 1920 until 1972.

The Protestant majority made its rule absolute by systematically excluding Catholics from power. This led to the formation of a nonsectarian civil rights movement in 1967 to campaign for fairer representation for Northern Irish Catholics. In January 1969 civil rights marchers walked from Belfast to Derry to demand a fairer division of jobs and housing. Just outside Derry, a Protestant mob attacked the mostly Catholic marchers. Further marches, protests and violence followed. Far from keeping the two sides apart, Northern Ireland's mainly Protestant police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), became part of the problem.

Finally, in August 1969 British troops were sent into Derry and (two days later) Belfast to maintain law and order. Though Catholics initially welcomed the army, it was soon seen as a tool of the Protestant majority. The peaceful civil rights movement lost ground and the IRA, which had been hibernating, found new, willing recruits for an armed independence struggle.

Thus the so-called Troubles rolled back and forth throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. Passions reached fever pitch in 1972 when 13 unarmed Catholics were shot dead by British troops in Derry on 'Bloody Sunday' (30 January). Then in 1981 IRA prisoners in Northern Ireland went on a hunger strike to demand the right to be recognised as political prisoners (rather than as terrorists). Ten of them fasted to death, the best known being an elected MP, Bobby Sands.

The waters were further muddied by the IRA splitting into 'official' and 'provisional' wings, from which sprang even more violent republican organisations. Protestant para-

military organisations, such as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), sprang up in opposition to the IRA and its splinter groups, and violence was met with violence.

### Giving Peace a Chance

The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement gave the Dublin government an official consultative role in Northern Irish affairs for the first time. The Downing St Declaration of December 1993, signed by Britain and the Republic, moved matters forward, with Britain declaring it had no 'selfish, economic or military interest' in preserving the division of Ireland.

In August 1994 a 'permanent cessation of violence' by the IRA, announced by Sinn Féin's leader Gerry Adams, offered the prospect of peace in Ulster. When Protestant paramilitary forces responded with their own cease-fire in October 1994, most British troops were withdrawn to barracks and roadblocks were removed.

In 1995 the British and Irish governments published two 'framework documents' to lay the groundwork for all-party peace talks. The subsequent negotiations stalled when Britain's Conservative prime minister John Major refused to allow all-party talks to start until the IRA decommissioned its weapons. An IRA bomb in the Docklands area of London shattered the negotiations in February 1996. In June, with the IRA's refusal to restore its cease-fire, 'all-party' talks on Ulster's future convened without Sinn Féin.

The peace process regained momentum with the landslide victory in May 1997 of Tony Blair's Labour Party, its massive majority enabling it to act with a freer hand than the previous Conservative government. In June 1997 Britain's new Northern Ireland secretary, Dr Mo Mowlam, promised to admit Sinn Féin to all-party talks following any new cease-fire, which the IRA declared on 20 July 1997.

These talks produced the Good Friday Agreement on 10 April 1998. This agreement allows the people of Northern Ireland to decide their political future by majority vote and commits its signatories to 'democratic and peaceful means of resolving differences on political issues'. It established a new Northern Irish Parliament and high-level political links between the Republic and Northern Ireland. In simultaneous

referendums in May 1998 the agreement was approved by 71% of voters in the North and 94% in the South. However, despite these moves towards peace, later that year a bomb planted by the 'Real IRA' killed 28 people in Omagh.

The IRA then volunteered to 'decommission' some of its weapons stockpiles, but deactivation was again suspended in October 2002 following allegations of spying by the IRA. November 2003 elections did not bode well for further negotiations, despite the IRA making peaceful steps by destroying even more weapons.

Then in 2004 a permanent peace agreement was just hours away when the negotiations fell apart due to lack of trust. Many people began to question the IRA's devotion to peace when they were fingered for both a £26.5 million bank robbery in December 2004 and a January 2005 killing.

Suddenly on 28 July 2005 the IRA had big news; they announced the official end to the armed campaign. Two months later the independent arms decommissioning body verified that the IRA had in fact destroyed all its weapons.

Today a cautious optimism prevails and, despite lingering animosity and occasional flare-ups, most agree that the 'war' is finally over.

## PEOPLE

Ireland's total population is around 5.6 million people: 3.9 million in the Republic and 1.7 million in Northern Ireland. Prior to the 1845–51 Great Famine, the population was around eight million; death and emigration reduced it to around six million, and emigration continued at high levels for the next hundred years. It wasn't until the 1960s that the population began to recover.

Thanks to the EU, Ireland has seen a modest influx of immigrants, mostly from Eastern Europe, within the past five years.

## RELIGION

Religion has played a pivotal role in Irish history. About 90% of residents in the Republic are Roman Catholic, followed by 3% Protestant, 0.1% Jewish and the rest with no preferred religious belief. In the North 53% are Protestant and 44% Catholic.

The Catholic Church has traditionally opposed attempts to liberalise laws gov-

erning contraception, divorce and abortion. Today condom machines can be found all over Ireland and divorce is legal, but abortion remains illegal in the Republic. Though still wielding considerable influence in the South, the Church has been weakened recently by drastically declining attendance at church services, falling numbers of people entering religious life and by paedophile sex scandals. It's now treated with a curious mixture of respect and derision by various sections of the community.

## ARTS Literature

The Irish have made an enormous impact on world literature. Important writers include Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, WB Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, James Joyce, Sean O'Casey, Samuel Beckett and Roddy Doyle, whose *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* won the Booker Prize in 1993. The Ulster-born poet Seamus Heaney was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995. Earlier Irish Nobel laureates include Shaw (1925), Yeats (1938) and Beckett (1969). Frank McCourt became a world favourite with his autobiographical *Angela's Ashes*, which won the Pulitzer Prize, and *Tis*.

## Music

Traditional Irish music – played on instruments such as the *bodhrán* (a flat, goatskin drum), *uilleann* (or 'elbow') pipes, flute and fiddle – is an aspect of Irish culture impossible to miss. Of Irish groups, perhaps the best known are the Chieftains, the Dubliners and the Pogues. Popular Irish singers/musicians who have made it on the international stage include Van Morrison, Enya, Sinéad O'Connor, Bob Geldof, U2, the Cranberries, The Corrs and Westlife.

## Architecture

Ireland is packed with archaeological sites that are reminders of its long and dramatic history. You may encounter the following terms:

**Cashel** A stone *ring fort* or *rath*.

**Dolmen** A portal tomb or Stone Age grave consisting of stone 'pillars' supporting a stone roof or capstone.

**Passage tomb** A megalithic mound-tomb with a narrow stone passage that leads to a burial chamber.

**Ring fort** or **rath** A circular fort, originally constructed of earth and timber, but later made of stone.

## THE GAELTACHT

Killarney was lovely, but it's time to move on, so you pack up the car and head out for Dingle, a town you've heard only great things about. As you drive along, you're thinking about how *Lonely Planet* said that in Dingle you can swim with a dolphin and about how cool that would be, when you look up to check the road sign and wonder, 'What the f\*ck does that say?'

Well my friend that sign says that you've officially entered the Gaeltacht, one of the Irish (or Gaelic as it is sometimes called) speaking regions in Ireland. But since the sign telling you this is in Irish, it could really say 'Swimming with dolphins prohibited', and you wouldn't know the difference.

Other than the Dingle Peninsula, the Aran Islands, the Connemara and Donegal are other areas where you may find the domination of the language in street signs less than romantic. A Celtic language closely related to Scottish Gaelic (and less so to Welsh), Irish is an attractive but difficult tongue with a unique orthographic system. For example, 'mh' is pronounced like 'v', 'bh' is a 'w' and 'dh' is like 'g'. In pockets of the Republic it remains, at least in theory, the first language of communication and commerce among the majority of the population.

Technically English and Gaelic are both the official languages of the Republic (even though Mandarin Chinese is actually the second most-spoken language), so children are required to study Gaelic for up to 12 years in school. Truthfully, though, most Irish citizens who don't live in the Gaeltacht can only speak it on a remedial level, and of the 90,000 people who do live there, only 55.6% of adults speak Irish on a daily basis.

So if you've got your heart set on swimming with Fungie the dolphin, just stop and ask for directions.

**Round tower** A tall tower or belfry built as a lookout and place of refuge from the Vikings.

## Theatre

Ireland has a rich theatrical history. Dublin's first theatre was founded in Werburgh St in 1637. The literary revival of the late 19th century resulted in the establishment of Dublin's Abbey Theatre, now Ireland's national theatre, which presents works by former greats – WB Yeats, George Bernard Shaw and Sean O'Casey – and promotes modern Irish dramatists. One of the most outstanding playwrights of the last two decades is Frank McGuinness (born 1956), whose plays explore the consequences of 1972's Bloody Sunday on the people of Derry. Other playwrights to watch out for are Martin McDonagh, Brian Friel (of *Dancing at Lughnasa* fame), Conor McPherson, Donal O'Kelly and Enda Walsh.

## ENVIRONMENT

Ireland is divided into 32 counties: 26 in the Republic and six in Northern Ireland. The island measures 84,421 sq km (about 83% is the Republic) and stretches 486km north to south and 275km east to west. The jagged coastline extends for 5631km. The midlands of Ireland are flat, rich farmland

with huge swathes of peat (which is rapidly being depleted for fuel).

Carrantuohill (1038m) on the Iveragh Peninsula, County Kerry, is the highest mountain on the island. The Shannon River, the longest in Ireland, flows for 259km before emptying into the Atlantic west of Limerick.

Ireland's rivers and lakes are well stocked with fish, and the island is home to some three-dozen mammal species. The Office of Public Works (OPW) maintains five national parks and 76 nature reserves in the Republic; the Department of the Environment owns or leases more than 40 nature reserves in Northern Ireland.

## FOOD & DRINK

In Irish B&B accommodation, breakfasts almost inevitably include 'a fry', a plate consisting of fried eggs, bacon, sausages, black pudding (a blood sausage) and tomatoes. Traditional meals (like Irish stew, often found in pubs) can be cheap and hearty. Potatoes are everywhere, colcannon and champ being two of the tastiest mashers. Seafood is often excellent, especially in the west, and there are some good vegetarian restaurants in cities and larger towns. The *panini*, an Italian type of sandwich, is so

popular here you would think it was a traditional dish.

In Ireland a drink means a beer, either lager or stout. Stout is usually Guinness, although in Cork it can mean a Murphy's or a Beamish. If you haven't developed a taste for stout, a wide variety of lagers are available, including Harp and Smithwicks (don't pronounce the 'w'!). Asking for a Guinness will get you a pint (570mL); if you want a half-pint, ask for a 'glass' or a 'half'.

If someone suggests visiting a pub for its good *craic*, it means a good time with convivial company. In the Republic, cigarettes are not part of the mix: smoking in all public places was banned in March 2004. The same ban will go into effect in the North soon after this book's publication.

## DUBLIN

☎ 01 / pop 1.1 million

Sitting in a tapas restaurant on Great Georges St, nursing a Guinness or a hang-over (or both), you think about what your favourite experience has been in Dublin so far. Was it drinking in Temple Bar with people from dozens of other countries or was it buying fresh veggies at the Asian food market? Was it admiring the Georgian houses along St Stephen's Green or was it wandering the grounds of Trinity College? You never come to an answer, but you do realise that, just as the waters on the banks of the Liffey River seem to rise every day, so does your affection for this city.

The roar of prosperity and the advent of the EU have made it so that all roads lead to Dublin. Visitors swarm in droves like moths to a light bulb – for the historic museums, top-class attractions and Georgian architecture, while immigrants from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa set up new lives for their families, thus adding even more depth and complexity to an already rich cultural tapestry. Add a hard partying nightlife to this mixture and what you get is a city that's constantly changing, and having a splendid time doing it.

### ORIENTATION

Dublin is neatly divided by the Liffey River into the more affluent 'south side' and the less prosperous 'north side'.

North of the river important landmarks are O'Connell St, the shopping thoroughfare, and Gardiner St, with its B&Bs and guesthouses. Henry St, the main shopping precinct, runs west off O'Connell. Busáras, the main bus station, and Connolly station, one of the main train stations, are near the southern end of Gardiner.

Immediately south of the river is the bustling, raucous, Temple Bar district, Dame St, Trinity College and, just below it, the lovely St Stephen's Green. Pedestrianised Grafton St and its surrounding streets and lanes are crammed with shops and are always busy. About 2km west is Heuston station, the city's other main train station.

### INFORMATION

#### Bookshops

**Easons** (Map p657; ☎ 873 3811; 40 O'Connell St) One of the biggest magazine stockists in Ireland.

**Hodges Figgis** (Map p657; ☎ 677 4754; 56-58 Dawson St) Offers a large selection of books on things Irish.

**Sinn Féin Bookshop** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 872 7096; 44 West Parnell Sq) The place to get items Sinn Féin-related.

### Internet Access

Dublin has more Internet cafés than you can shake a stick at; Talbot St and Cramp-ton Quay are lined with them. These are some of the better ones.

**Cyborg** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 855 3163; 44 Talbot St; per hr €1; ☎ 9am-11pm)

**Surf Centre One** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 855 2560; 43 Lower Gardiner St; per hr €1.50)

### Medical Services

**Eastern Regional Health Authority** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 679 0700; www.erha.ie; Dr Steevens' Hospital, 138 Thomas St) Opposite Heuston train station; can advise you on a suitable doctor from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

**Doctors on Call** (☎ 453 9333; ☎ 24hr) Request a doctor to come to your accommodation (€60 to €75).

**O'Connell's Pharmacy** (Map p657; ☎ 873 0427; 55-56 O'Connell St; ☎ 7.30am-10pm Mon-Fri, 8am-10pm Sat, 10am-10pm Sun)

**Well Woman Clinic** (Map p657; ☎ 872 8051, 688 3714; www.wellwomancentre.ie; 35 Lower Liffey St; ☎ Mon, Thu & Fri 9.30am-7.30pm, Tue & Wed 8am-7.30pm, Sat 10am-4pm, Sun 1-4pm) Handles women's health issues and can supply contraception.

### Money

The Dublin airport and Dublin Tourism Centre have currency-exchange counters,

and numerous banks around the city centre have exchange facilities. The central bank offers the best exchange rates, while the airport and ferry terminal bureaux offer the worst. ATMs are everywhere.

### Post

Dublin's famous **General Post Office** (GPO; Map p657; ☎ 705 7000; O'Connell St; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) is north of the river. South of the river are post offices on Anne St South (Map pp654-5) and St Andrew's St (Map p657).

### Tourist Information

All Dublin tourist offices provide walk-in services only.

**Dublin Tourism** (City Centre (Map pp654-5; 14 O'Connell St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat); Dun Laoghaire (Dun Laoghaire ferryport; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm)

**Dublin Tourism Centre** (Map p657; ☎ 605 7700; www.visitdublin.com; St Andrew's Church, 2 Suffolk St; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-3pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-3pm Sun Sep-Jun) A sort of tourist information complex. Services include accommodation bookings, car hire, maps, and tickets for tours, concerts and more. Ask about the Dublin Pass (www.dublinpass.ie), which allows entrance into over 30 of Dublin's attractions, as well as tours and special offers.

**Fáilte Ireland** (☎ 1850 230 330; www.ireland.ie; Baggot St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Less conveniently situated about 500m southeast of the city centre, but much less crowded than the other centres.

**Northern Ireland Tourist Board** (NITB; Map p657; ☎ 679 1977; www.discovernorthernireland.com; 16 Nassau St; ☎ 9.15am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) Offers information and free booking services.

**Temple Bar Information Centre** (Map p657; ☎ 677 2255; www.templebar.ie; 12 East Essex St; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, noon-6pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun Oct-May) Provides free maps, guides and information on sights within the Temple Bar district.

### SIGHTS

#### Trinity College & Book of Kells

Ireland's premier university was founded by Elizabeth I in 1592. Its full name is the University of Dublin, but **Trinity College** (Map p657; College Green) is the institution's sole college. Until 1793 the students were all Protestants, but today most of them are Catholic. Women were admitted in 1903.

**Walking tours** (per person €9) take place every 40 minutes from 10.45am to 3.40pm Monday to Saturday and 10.15am to 3pm Sunday from

mid-May to September. Departures are from College St, inside the main gate on College Green. The tour is a good deal since it includes the fee to see the *Book of Kells*, an elaborately illuminated manuscript dating from around AD 800, and one of Dublin's prime attractions. It's displayed in the East Pavilion of the **Colonnades** (Map p657; adult/concession €8/7; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat year-round, 9.30am-4.30pm Sun Jun-Sep, noon-4.30pm Sun Oct-May), together with the 9th-century *Book of Armagh*, the even older *Book of Durrow* (AD 675) and the harp of Brian Ború, who led the Irish against the Vikings in the Battle of Clontarf.

Trinity's other big attraction is the **Dublin Experience** (Map p657; ☎ 608 1688; admission €5, adult/concession incl Book of Kells €11/8.50; ☎ 10am-5pm mid-May-Sep), a 45-minute audiovisual introduction to the city.

### Museums

Among the highlights of the impressive **National Museum** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 667 7444; www.nationalmuseum.ie; Kildare St; admission by donation; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 2-5pm Sun) are the superb Bronze Age, Iron Age and medieval gold objects in the treasury, the skeleton of a once-tall, mighty Viking and the incredibly well-preserved 'Bog Body'. Other exhibits focus on the Viking period, the 1916 Easter Rising and the struggle for Irish independence. The nearby **Natural History Museum** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 677 7444; www.naturalhistorymuseum.ie; Merrion St; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 2-5pm Sun), aka the 'dead

### DUBLIN IN...

#### Two Days

Start by heading to **Trinity College** (left) where the tour allows you entrance to the Book of Kells. Afterwards window shop your way down Grafton St while en route to **Havana** (p660) for lunch. Walk off those tapas while marvelling at the Georgian architecture surrounding **St Stephen's Green** (p658) before you party your arse off in **Temple Bar** (p660). Then go sleep it off at the gorgeous **Grafton Guesthouse** (p659). Begin your next day with a hearty Irish breakfast before venturing off to view the fine art at the **National Gallery** (p656). Top off your visit by having the best beer of your life at the **Guinness Brewery** (p658).



DUBLIN

<b>INFORMATION</b>	<b>SLEEPING</b>	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>
An Oige.....1 E1	Abraham House.....20 G3	Forum Bar.....37 F2
Comhairle.....2 F2	Avalon House.....21 E6	Gaiety Theatre.....38 F5
Cyborg.....3 H2	Brewery Hostel.....22 B5	Savoy.....39 F2
Dublin Tourism.....4 F3	Castle Hotel.....23 F1	Whelan's.....40 E6
Eastern Regional Health Authority.....5 A4	Hazelbrook House.....24 G2	
Post Office.....6 F5	Isaac's Hostel.....25 G3	<b>TRANSPORT</b>
Sinn Féin Bookshop.....7 E2	Lyndon House.....26 F1	Bus Stop for Bus 44 to Powercourt.....41 H4
Surf Centre One.....8 G3	Marian Guesthouse.....27 F1	Bus Stop for St Kevin's Service to Glendalough.....42 F5
	Mount Eccles Court.....28 F2	Bus Éireann's Central Bus Station.....(see 43)
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>EATING</b>	Búsaras (Main Bus Station).....43 G3
Chimney.....9 C3	Alilang.....29 F2	Cycleways.....44 E3
Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane.....10 E2	Chapter One.....30 E2	Dublin Bus.....45 F2
Dublin Writers Museum.....11 E2	Govinda's.....31 E5	MacDonalds Cycles.....46 E6
Dublinia.....12 D5	Madina Asian Food Co.....32 F3	Malone Thrifty Car Rental.....47 H4
Guinness Storehouse.....13 B5	Metro Café.....33 F5	
Marsh's Library.....14 D6	<b>DRINKING</b>	
National Gallery.....15 G5	Café-en-Seine.....34 F5	
National Museum.....16 G5	Dice Bar.....35 C4	
Natural History Museum.....17 G5	Voodoo Lounge.....36 C4	
Old Jameson Distillery.....18 C3		
St Patrick's Cathedral.....19 D6		

zoo', has hardly changed since it opened in 1857, its Victorian charm even more beautifully preserved than the exhibits.

The **Chester Beatty Library** (Map p657; ☎ 407 0750; www.dbl.ie p657; Dublin Castle; admission free; ☞ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10-11am Sat, 10am-1pm Sun, closed Mon Oct-Apr) houses a breathtaking collection of more than 20,000 manuscripts, rare books, miniature paintings, clay tablets, costumes and other objects spread across two floors. The 270 illuminated Qur'ans are just one draw.

The **Dublin Writers Museum** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 872 2077; 18-19 Parnell Sq; adult/child €6.70/4.20; ☞ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat Sep-May, 10am-6pm Jun-Aug, 11am-5pm Sun year-round), north of the river, celebrates the city's long and continuing role as a literary centre, with displays on Joyce, Swift, Yeats, Wilde, Beckett and others.

## Galleries

The **National Gallery** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 661 5133; www.nationalgallery.ie; West Merrion Sq; admission & guided tours free; ☞ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, 9.30am-8.30pm Thu, noon-5.30pm Sun) has a fine collection, strong in Irish art. The Millennium wing has a small collection of contemporary Irish works. The gallery has wheelchair access. Guided tours are held at 2pm on Saturday, and 2pm, 3pm and 4pm on Sunday.

North of the river on Parnell Sq **Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 222 5550; www.hughlane.ie; admission free; ☞ 9.30am-6pm Tue-Thu, 9.30am-5pm Fri & Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) has works by French impressionists and 20th-century Irish artists, and is wheelchair accessible.

The **Irish Museum of Modern Art** (IMMA; ☎ 612 9900; www.imma.ie; admission free; ☞ 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sat, noon-5.30pm Sun), at the old Royal Hospital Kilmainham, is renowned for its conceptual installations and temporary exhibitions. It has wheelchair access. Bus 51 or 79 from Aston Quay will get you there.

In Temple Bar, around Meeting House Sq, are the **National Photographic Archives** (Map p657; ☎ 603 0374; www.nli.ie; admission free; ☞ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat), which has rotating exhibitions and 300,000 photo negatives, with a viewing room, and the **Gallery of Photography** (Map p657; ☎ 671 4654; www.irish-photography.com; admission free; ☞ 11am-6pm Tue-Sat, 1-6pm Sun), which exhibits contemporary local and international photographers. In and around Meeting House Sq is a feast of cultural activities. Temple Bar Information

Centre (p653) has free maps, guides and information on them all.

## Christ Church Cathedral & Around

The mother of all of Dublin's cathedrals is **Christ Church Cathedral** (Map p657; ☎ 677 8099; www.cccud.ie; Christ Church Pl; adult/concession €5/2.50; ☞ 9.45am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Jun-Aug, 10am-6.30pm Sat, 12.45-2.45pm Sun), a simple wood structure until 1169, when the present church was built. In the southern aisle is a monument to Strongbow, a 12th-century Norman warrior. Note the precariously leaning northern wall (it's been that way since 1562).

Next door, connected to the cathedral by an arched walkway, **Dublinia** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 679 4611; www.dublinia.ie; adult/child €6/3.75, incl cathedral €9.95/5.75; ☞ 10am-5pm Apr-Sep, 11am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sun Oct-Mar) is a lively attempt to bring medieval Dublin to life, with models of 10 episodes in Dublin's history. It has wheelchair access.

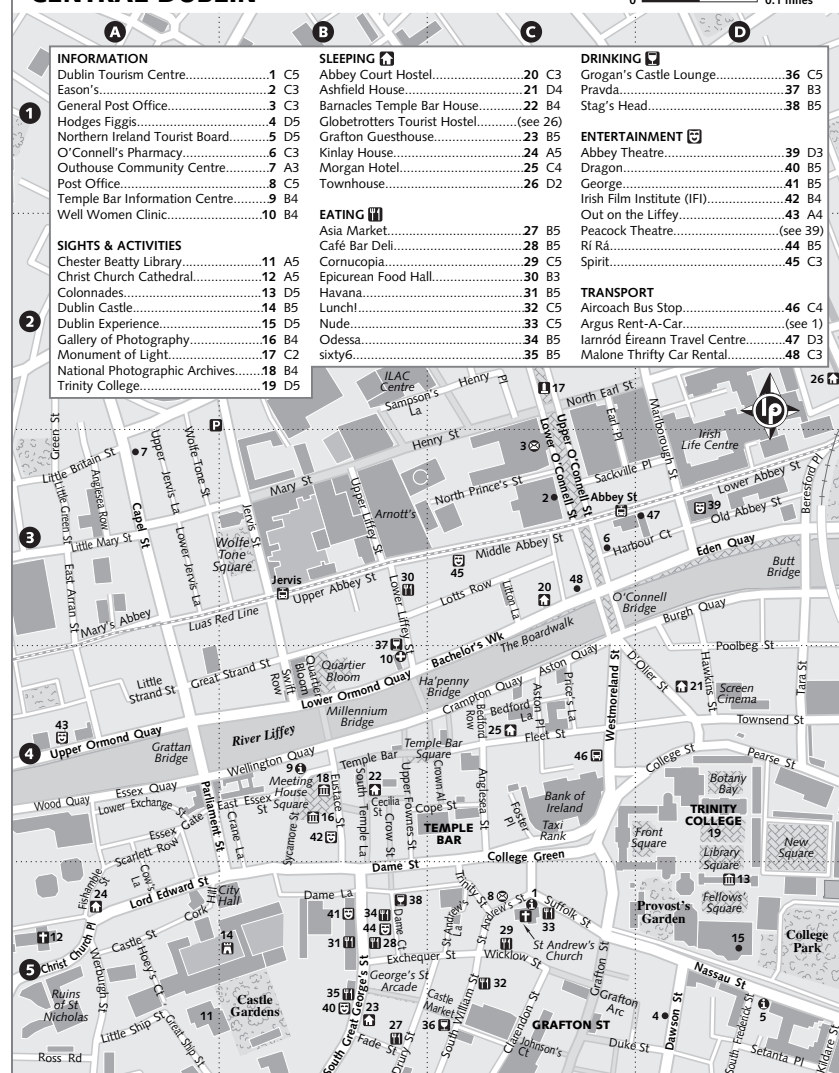
## St Patrick's Cathedral & Around

A church was on the site of **St Patrick's Cathedral** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 475 4817; www.stpatricks.cathedral.ie; St Patrick's Close; adult/concession €5/4; ☞ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9-11am, 12.45-3pm & 4.15-6pm Sun Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Sat, 10-11am & 12.45-3pm Nov-Feb, closed during times of worship) as early as the 5th century, but the present building dates from 1191. St Patrick's choir was part of the first group to perform Handel's *Messiah* in 1742, and you can hear their successors sing the 5.45pm evensong most weeknights. The oldest public library in the country, **Marsh's Library** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 454 3511; www.marsh.library.ie; St Patrick's Close; adult/concession €2.50/1.25; ☞ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sat), contains 25,000 books dating from the 16th to the early 18th centuries, as well as numerous maps and manuscripts.

## Kilmainham Gaol

The grey, threatening **Kilmainham Gaol** (☎ 453 5984; Inchicore Rd; adult/child €5/2; ☞ 9.30am-5pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Oct-Mar), 2km west of the city centre, played a key role in Ireland's struggle for independence and was the site of mass executions following the 1916 Easter Rising. An excellent audiovisual introduction to the building is followed by a thought-provoking tour. Arrangements can be made for a wheelchair-accessible tour with advance booking.

## CENTRAL DUBLIN



Buses 79, 78A, 51B and 51C from Aston Quay all pass by here.

## O'Connell St

The 1815 **General Post Office** (GPO; Map p657; ☎ 705 7000; O'Connell St; ☞ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) is an important landmark because, during the 1916 Easter Rising, the Irish Volunteers used it as

a base for attacks against the British army. After a fierce battle the GPO was almost totally destroyed. Upon surrendering, the leaders of the Irish rebellion and 13 others were taken to Kilmainham Gaol and executed.

The nearby **Monument of Light** (Map p657; O'Connell St), better known as 'The Spire', soars 120m over O'Connell St. The gigantic

knitting needle was erected here in 2003 in a flashy homage to that most humble of exports, the Aran sweater. The teeny 15cm tip is a beam of light.

### Guinness Brewery

The **Guinness Storehouse** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 408 4800; www.guinness-storehouse.com; Market St; adult/child €14/5; ☎ 9.30am-8pm Jul-Aug, 9.30am-5pm Sep-Jun) sits in the malty fug of the mighty **Guinness brewery** southwest of the city centre. The building is shaped like a pint glass and the best part of the unimpressive tour is getting the finest-tasting Guinness of your life for free at the end. It has wheelchair access; take bus 51B or 78A from Aston Quay, or bus 123 from O'Connell St.

### Other Sights

The centre of British power in Ireland and dating back to the 13th century, **Dublin Castle** (Map p657; ☎ 677 7129; www.dublincastle.ie; adult/concession €4.50/2; ☎ 10am-4.45pm Mon-Fri, 2-4.45pm Sat & Sun) is more higgledy-piggledy palace than castle.

Dublin's finest Georgian architecture, including its famed doorways, is found around **St Stephen's Green** (Map pp654-5) and **Merrion Sq** (Map pp654-5); both are prime picnic spots when the sun shines.

The **Old Jameson Distillery** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 807 2355; www.whiskeytours.ie; Bow St; adult/child €8.75/3.95) has tours (9.30am to 6pm) covering the entire whiskey-distilling process; tastings follow. At the back of the distillery is the **Chimney** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 817 3838; Smithfield Village; adult/concession €5; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat), an old distillery chimney converted into a 360-degree observation tower.

### TOURS

Tour companies **Gray Line** (☎ 872 9010; www.grayline.com), **Irish City Tours** (☎ 872 9010; www.irishcitytours.com) and **Dublin Bus** (☎ 873 4222; www.dublinbus.ie) run a variety of coach tours in and around Dublin, including hop-on hop-off services from €14 that complete 1½-hour city circuits with commentary.

It's worth considering one of the many walking tours and pub crawls of the city. Two of the best are the **Dublin Literary Pub Crawl** (☎ 670 5602; www.dublinpubcrawl.com), led by actors performing pieces from Irish literature, and the well-reviewed **1916 Rebellion Walking Tour** (☎ 086-858 3847; www.1916rising.com),

which visits key sites in the rebellion. Others include the **Musical Pub Crawl** (☎ 475 3313; www.discoverdublin.ie) and **Historical Walking Tours of Dublin** (☎ 878 0227; www.historicalinsights.ie). Each lasts about two hours and costs around €10. Bookings can be made with Dublin Tourism (p653), hostels or by calling direct.

### SLEEPING

Dublin is *always* bustling, so call ahead to book accommodation, especially on weekends. Don't forget that Dublin Tourism offices can find and book accommodation for €4, plus a 10% deposit for the first night's stay.

### North of the Liffey BUDGET

**Isaacs Hostel** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 855 6215; www.isaacs.ie; 2-5 Frenchman's Lane; dm from €18-25, s/d from €39/36; ☎) This busy, grungy hostel in a 200-year-old wine vault has loads of character. Summer barbecues and live music in the foyer are added features. A recent face-lift added a new hang-out area, Internet facilities and a disabled-access room.

**Globetrotters Tourist Hostel** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 878 8088; gtrotter@indigo.ie; 46-48 Lower Gardiner St; dm incl breakfast €21.50-24; ☎) This city-centre place has 94 beds in a variety of dorms, all with under-bed storage. Décor is funky, and there's a little patio garden to the rear for the elusive sunny day.

**Abbey Court Hostel** (Map p657; ☎ 878 0700; www.abbey-court.com; 29 Bachelor's Walk; dm €21-29, d €88; ☎) What this place lacks in physical beauty, it makes up for in *cratic*. Many of its residents are long-termers, giving the joint a community feel, and its two large common rooms and fantastic staff make this one of our favourite hostels in Dublin.

Also recommended:

**Abraham House** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 855 0600; www.abraham-house.ie; 83 Lower Gardiner St; dm €13-34, d €38-46, all incl breakfast; ☎) Friendly is an understatement at this large hostel, where every room is en suite.

**Mount Eccles Court** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 873 0826; www.ecclshostel.com; 42 Nth Great George's St; dm €13.50-26, d €33.50-35.50; ☎) The snack machines are almost as big as the TV room at this pristine place on a beautiful street.

### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Hazelbrook House** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 836 5003; www.hazelbrookhouse.ie; 85-86 Lower Gardiner St; s/d/tr €55/90/135; ☎) Situated in a fine grey Geor-

gian house, the basic but comfortable Hazelbrook serves a complete Irish breakfast that could keep a person full until dinner.

**Townhouse** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 878 8808; www.townhouseofdublin.com; 47-48 Lower Gardiner St; s/d from €67/110) Elegant without pretension, the Townhouse has all the hallmarks of a great guesthouse. With monikers like 'The Gambler's Secret', each of the individually designed rooms is named after plays by the famous playwrights who once occupied the houses, Dion Boucicault (1829-90) and Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904).

**Castle Hotel** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 874 6949; www.castle-hotel.ie; Great Denmark St; s/d €80/135; ☎) Established in 1809, this hotel claims to be Dublin's oldest. Many rooms are decent-sized, and retain their Georgian cornicing and proportions. The house, though rough around the edges, still feels like a 19th-century home.

Modest options in the Upper Gardiner St area (north of the city centre) include:

**Marian Guesthouse** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 874 4129; www.marianguesthouse.ie; 21 Upper Gardiner St; s/d from €35/60; ☎)

**Lyndon House** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 878 6950; www.lyndonhouse.net; 26 Gardiner Pl; s/d €50/100; ☎)

### South of the Liffey

#### BUDGET

**Avalon House** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 475 0001; www.avalon-house.ie; 55 Aungier St; dm/s/d from €17/37/70; ☎) A megahostel near St Stephen's Green, with four-, 12- and 20-bed mixed dorms on two levels, offering some privacy. There's a large kitchen, several lounges and a pool room.

**Barnacles Temple Bar House** (Map p657; ☎ 671 6277; www.barnacles.ie; 19 Temple Lane; dm/d from €17.50/78; ☎) Plenty bright and immaculately clean, Barnacles' location in the heart of Temple Bar makes it a great place to stay if you don't mind the sound of drunken revellers vomiting outside your window.

**Ashfield House** (Map p657; ☎ 679 7734; www.ashfieldhouse.ie; 19-20 D'Olier St; dm/d/q from €15/80/140; ☎) A stone's throw from Temple Bar and O'Connell Bridge, this modern hostel has one 14-bed dorm; its 25 other rooms include four-bed rooms and doubles. It feels more like a small hotel than a hostel.

Also recommended:

**Kinlay House** (Map p657; ☎ 679 6644; www.kinlayhouse.ie; 2-12 Lord Edward St; dm/d from €20/70; ☎) Huge, mixed 24-bed dorms and smaller rooms. Not for the faint-hearted.

**Brewery Hostel** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 453 8600; www.irish-hostel.com; 22-23 Thomas St; dm/d from €20/78; ☎) Small and family run, with a patio out the back.

### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Grafton Guesthouse** (Map p657; ☎ 679 2041; www.graftonguesthouse.com; 26-27 Sth Great George's St; s/d €75/120) An absolute find, this gorgeous guesthouse has 16 individually decorated rooms, and is perfect for a couple of nights with that special someone...wink, wink.

**Number 31** (☎ 676 5011; www.number31.ie; 31 Leeson Close; s/d/tr from €80/120/220; ☎) The coach house and former dwelling of architect Sam Stephenson (of Central Bank fame) still feels like a 1960s home, with sunken sitting room, leather sofas, mirrored bar and floor-to-ceiling windows. A hidden oasis of calm, five-minutes' walk from St Stephen's Green. Children under 10 are not permitted.

**Morgan Hotel** (Map p657; ☎ 643 7000; www.themorgan.com; 10 Fleet St; s/d from €140/295; ☎) Falling somewhere between *Alice in Wonderland* and a cocaine and hooker fuelled rock and roll fantasy, the Morgan is absolutely uber-cool. The sexy colour scheme of white floors and walls with dark blue and pink lighting extends into the bar, the rooms and even the cigar patio.

### EATING

Dubliners' recent increased spending power has encouraged many excellent new restaurants to take root, while the city's influx of immigrants has created a market for ethnically diverse eateries. The number of good restaurants and cafés north of the Liffey is growing. Many midrange options are concentrated around the southern side of the city centre, and Temple Bar is awash with eateries of mixed quality.

### North of the Liffey

**Madina Asian Food Co** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 087-925 2485; 20-21 Moore St; ☎ 9.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-7pm Sun) Located on diverse Moore St, this great little market is perfect if you're in the mood to cook food from India, Turkey, the Philippines or beyond. It even has a *halal* butcher.

**Epicurean Food Hall** (Map p657; Lower Liffey St; mains €4-15; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) You'll be spoilt for choice in this refurbished arcade that has almost every imaginable type of food stall. The quality varies, but good choices include Itsabagel, Kaffe Moka and Istanbul House.



**Alilang** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 874 6766; 102 Parnell St; mains €6-15; ☎ noon-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 5.30-11.30pm Mon-Thu, 5.30pm-midnight Sat & Sun) With Parnell St quickly becoming a Chinatown of sorts, Alilang's delicious mix of Chinese, Japanese and Korean cuisine gives it a leg up on the competition. Tasty dishes, like *padun* (seafood pancake), cod and tofu hotpot, or barbecued meats brought to your table with gas burner, skillet and spicy marinade, make the food a talking piece.

**Chapter One** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 873 2266; 18-19 Nth Parnell Sq; mains €30-34; ☎ 12.30-2.30pm Tue-Fri, 6-11pm Tue-Sat) Savour classic French cuisine, like foie gras, duck confit or rabbit cassoulet, to the tinkle of the grand piano in the vaulted basement of the Dublin Writers Museum. This is one of the city's top 10 restaurants. Get there before 7pm for the three-course Pre-Theatre Special (€32.50).

## South of the Liffey

### BUDGET

**Asia Market** (Map p657; ☎ 677 9764; 18 Drury St; ☎ 10am-7pm) Self-caterers should wander the aisles here and try to figure out what all the products are. You'll find heaps of fresh produce and stir-fry sauces, in addition to the usual Asian grocery stand-bys.

**Metro Café** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 679 4515; 43 Sth William St; mains €4-8; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon, Tue, Fri & Sat, 8am-9pm Wed, 8am-10pm Thu, 10.15am-7pm Sun) Funky music and cartoonish art make this bright café seem like it snuck out of Paris. The fresh food and daily quote board are enough to warrant regular visits, as is the friendly staff.

**Lunch!** (Map p657; ☎ 677 1546; 63 Sth William St; mains €5.80-6.15; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Wed, 8am-9pm Thu-Sat, 9am-9pm Sun) If you can handle the sea-green colour scheme, this 'calzone café' has a tasty menu, including a create-your-own sandwich option. Note the neat little fish tank above the door.

**Nude** (Map p657; ☎ 677 4804; 21 Suffolk St; snacks €5-8; ☎ 7.30am-9pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 7.30am-10pm Thu, 8am-9pm Sat, 10am-8pm Sun) This ultracool place (owned by Bono's brother) just off Grafton St is very popular, serving tasty wraps with all kinds of Asian fillings. You can eat in or take away, but be sure to try one of the freshly squeezed fruit juices.

**Govinda's** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 475 0309; 4 Aungier St; mains €5-9; ☎ noon-9pm Mon-Sat) The soup at this branch of the Hare Krishna chain is so subtle and flavourful you'll think Krishna

cooked it himself. The place is totally vegetarian, with a wholesome mix of salads and Indian-influenced hot daily specials.

**Cornucopia** (Map p657; ☎ 677 7583; 19 Wicklow St; mains €9.50-11; ☎ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, 8.30am-9pm Thu) For those escaping the Irish cholesterol habit, Cornucopia is a popular, mostly vegan café turning out scrumptious healthy goodies. There's even a hot vegetarian breakfast as an alternative to muesli.

### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Havana** (Map p657; ☎ 400 5990; Sth Great George's St; tapas €6.50-12.50; ☎ 11.30am-10.30pm Mon-Wed, 11.30am-11.30pm Thu & Fri, 1-11.30pm Sat, 3-10.30pm Sun) It always feels like a party in this lively tapas place across from Café Bar Deli. Stop in Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday when any two tapas cost just €12.

**Café Bar Deli** (Map p657; ☎ 677 1646; 12-13 Sth Great George's St; mains €9-13; ☎ 12.30-11pm Mon-Sat, 2-10pm Sun) Having to choose between fresh salads, giant bowls of pasta or pizza with imaginative toppings, like crab and buttered leek, is the only bad part of eating at Café Bar Deli. The rest of the experience is just divine.

**sixty6** (Map p657; ☎ 400 5878; 66-67 Sth Great George's St; lunch €10-15.50, dinner €11.50-20; ☎ 8am-10.30pm Mon-Wed, 8am-11pm Thu-Sat, 11am-10.30pm Sun) This excellent new kid on the block came on the scene packing a mighty punch. With a full veggie menu, extensive wine list and attached grocer, sixty6 is definitely one of the most comprehensive and tasty eateries in all of Ireland.

**Odessa** (Map p657; ☎ 670 7634; 13 Dame Ct; mains €15-25; ☎ dinner 6pm-late daily, brunch 11.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun) Just off Exchequer St, Odessa's lounge atmosphere with comfy sofas and retro standard lamps attracts Dublin's hipsters, who flock in for its brunch (€8 to €15), home-made burgers, steaks or daily fish specials. You might not escape the sofa after a few of Odessa's renowned cocktails, quaffed over a game of backgammon.

## DRINKING

Temple Bar, Dublin's 'party district', is almost always packed with obnoxious stag/hen parties, girls in very little clothing, and loud guys from Ohio wearing Guinness T-shirts. If you're just looking to get smashed and snog with someone from another country, there is no better place in Ireland. If that's not your style, there's plenty to do beyond

Temple Bar. In fact, most of the best old-fashioned pubs are outside the district.

**Grogan's Castle Lounge** (Map p657; ☎ 677 9320; 15 Sth William St) Grogan's has long been a favourite haunt of Dublin's writers and painters, as well as others from the bohemian, alternative set.

**Café en-Seine** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 677 4567; 40 Dawson St) The best way to describe Café en-Seine is faux-Parisian Left Bank Victorian decadence...seriously. The only thing missing is absinthe. Rumour has it that this posh, four-level nightspot cost around €17 million to renovate; it looks it, too.

**Stag's Head** (Map p657; ☎ 679 3701; 1 Dame Ct) Built in 1770, and remodelled in 1895, the Stag's Head is possibly the best traditional pub in Dublin (and therefore the world). You may find yourself philosophising in the ecclesiastical atmosphere, as James Joyce did. Some of the fitters that worked on this pub probably also worked on churches in the area, so the stained-wood-and-polished-brass similarities are no accident.

Hipster spots include **Dice Bar** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 674 6710; 79 Queen St), the decadent **Voodoo Lounge** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 873 6013; 37 Arran Quay), the hip-hop **Forum Bar** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 878 7084; 144 Parnell St) and the north side's USSR-style **Pravda** (Map p657; ☎ 874 0076; 35 Lower Liffey St).

## ENTERTAINMENT

For events, reviews and club listings, pick up a copy of the bimonthly freebie **Event Guide** (www.eventguide.ie) or the weekly *In Dublin*, available at cafés and hostels. Thursday's *Irish Times* has a pull-out section called 'The Ticket' that has reviews and listings of all things arty.

## Cinemas

**Irish Film Institute** (IFI; Map p657; ☎ 679 5744; www.irishfilm.ie; 6 Eustace St) The fantastic IFI has two screens showing classic and arthouse films. Wheelchair access is available.

**Savoy** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 874 6000; Upper O'Connell St) The Savoy, a traditional four-screen first-run cinema, has late-night shows on weekends.

## Gay & Lesbian Venues

Central Dublin has the feeling of a city just coming out of the closet – people are ready to party and they don't care who knows.

**George** (Map p657; ☎ 478 2983; 89 Sth Great George's St) An excellent cruising spot and the patriarch of Dublin's gay and lesbian clubs, the venerable George has different themes, including bingo and karaoke, most nights of the week.

**Dragon** (Map p657; ☎ 478 1590; 64-65 Sth Great George's St) Dublin's hottest queer nightspot is upscale and loungey, with giant booths, crazy lighting and a bouncing dance floor.

**Out on the Liffey** (Map p657; ☎ 872 2480; 27 Upper Ormond Quay) A 'harder' rough and ready pub, popular with the biker or butch set of both sexes.

Many other nightspots have weekly gay and lesbian nights.

**Rí Rá** (Map p657; ☎ 671 1220; www.rira.ie; Dame Ct; ☎ Mon-Sat)

**Spirit** (Map p657; ☎ 877 9999; www.spiritdublin.com; 57 Middle Abbey St)

## Nightclubs

**Whelan's** (☎ 478 0766; www.whelanslive.com; 25 Wexford St) A Dublin institution; there is almost no better place to see live music, especially singer/songwriters.

**Spirit** (Map p657; ☎ 877 9999; www.spiritdublin.com; 57 Middle Abbey St) Spanning three floors, this club-kid fantasy covers all the bases. One floor pounds out house music, while another bumps funky soul, and yet another acts as a chill-out room with a classical cello and massage therapists.

**Rí Rá** (Map p657; ☎ 671 1220; www.rira.ie; Dame Ct; ☎ Mon-Sat) One of the friendlier clubs in the city centre, Rí Rá is full nearly every night with a diverse crowd who come for the mostly funk music downstairs, or more laid-back lounge tunes and movies upstairs.

## Theatre & Classical Music

**Abbey Theatre** (Map p657; ☎ 878 7222; www.abbeytheatre.ie; Lower Abbey St) The famous Abbey Theatre is Ireland's national theatre, putting on new Irish works as well as revivals of Irish classics.

**Peacock Theatre** (Map p657; ☎ 878 7222; www.abbeytheatre.ie; Lower Abbey St) Part of the same complex as the Abbey Theatre, Peacock Theatre is committed to new plays and contemporary dramas.

**Gaiety Theatre** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 677 1717; www.gaietytheatre.com; Sth King St) This popular theatre hosts, among other things, a programme of classical concerts, opera and musicals.

**National Concert Hall** (☎ 417 0000; www.nch.ie; Earlsfort Tce) Just south of the city centre, Ireland's premier orchestral hall hosts a variety of concerts year-round, including a series of lunch-time concerts from 1.05pm to 2pm on Tuesday from June to August.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

About 13km north of the city centre, **Dublin airport** (DUB; ☎ 814 1111; www.dublinairport.com) is Ireland's major international gateway airport, with direct flights from Europe, North America and Asia. Budget airlines, like Ryanair and Flybe, land here. See p705 for more details.

### Boat

There are two direct services from Holyhead on the northwestern tip of Wales – one to Dublin Port and the other to Dun Laoghaire at the southern end of Dublin Bay. Boats also sail direct to Dublin Port from Liverpool and from Douglas, on the Isle of Man. See p706 for more details.

### Bus

**Busáras** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 836 6111; www.buseireann.ie; Store St), Dublin's main bus station, is just north of the Liffey. Standard one-way fares from Dublin include Belfast (€12, three hours, 16 daily), Cork (€10, 3½ hours, six daily), Galway (€14, 3¼ hours, 16 daily) and Rosslare Harbour (€15.50, three hours, 13 daily).

The private company **Citylink** (☎ 626 6888; www.citylink.ie) has daily services to Galway for €14.

**Aircoach** (Map p657; ☎ 8447118) offers a service that can be caught at the airport and will take you to Belfast for €7 to €12, depending on the day. It can also be caught from in front of Boyle Sports on Westmoreland St and will take you to Cork for the same price.

### Train

North of the Liffey is **Connolly station** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 703 2358), the station for Belfast, Derry, Sligo, other points north and Wexford. **Heuston station** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 703 3299), south of the Liffey and west of the city centre, is the station for Cork, Galway, Killarney, Limerick, Waterford, and most other points to the south and west. For travel information and tickets, contact the **Iarnród Éireann**

**Travel Centre** (Map p657; ☎ 836 6222, bookings 703 4070; www.irishrail.ie; 35 Lower Abbey St). Regular one-way fares from Dublin include Belfast (€34.50, two hours, up to eight daily), Cork (€54.50, three hours, up to nine daily) and Galway (€29, three hours, five daily).

## GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

A frequent Airlink Express service is available with **Dublin Bus** (Bus Átha Cliath; Map pp654-5; ☎ 873 4222; www.dublinbus.ie; 59 O'Connell St) to/from Busáras, Heuston train station and various points around the city (€5, 30 to 40 minutes from the stations). Alternatively, take the slower bus 41, 41B, 16 or 746 (€1.80, one hour). A taxi to the city centre should cost around €22. Some Dublin airport taxi drivers can be unscrupulous, so make sure the meter is on and mention up front that you'll need a meter receipt.

## To/From the Ferry Terminals

Buses 53 and 53A go to Busáras from the **Dublin Ferryport terminal** (☎ 855 2222; Alexandra Rd) after all ferry arrivals (€2.50). Buses also run from Busáras to meet Irish Ferries departures. To travel between Dun Laoghaire's ferry terminal and Dublin, take bus 46A to Fleet St in Temple Bar, bus 7 to Eden Quay, or the Dublin Area Rapid Transport (DART) train service to Pearse station (for south Dublin) or Connolly station (for north Dublin).

## Bicycle

Most bike-hire outlets open during the high season only, and daily hire costs can reach €25 per day. Try **MacDonalds Cycles** (☎ 475 2586; 38 Wexford St), south of the city centre, or **Cycleways** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 873 4748; 185-186 Parnell St).

## Car

All the major car-hire companies have offices at Dublin airport and in the city centre. See p707 for details.

## Public Transport

Dublin Bus local buses cost €0.95 for one to three stages, up to a maximum of €1.90 (23 or more stages). You must tender exact change when boarding; drivers can't give change.

One-day passes cost €5 for bus services (including Airlink), or €8.50 for travel on both bus and DART. Late-night Nitelink

(€4) operate from the College St/Westmoreland St/D'Olier St triangle, south of the Liffey, until 4.30am on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

**DART** (www.dart.ie) provides quick rail access as far north as Howth (€1.95) and south to Bray (€2.30). Pearse station is handy for central Dublin. Bicycles cannot be taken on DART, but may travel on suburban trains.

**LUAS** (www.luas.ie), from the Irish word for 'light', is a light rail system that is currently running on two (unconnected) lines; the green line runs from the eastern side of St Stephen's Green southeast to Sandyford, and the red line runs from Tallaght to Connolly station, with stops at Heuston station, the National Museum and Busáras. Single fares range from €1.25 to €1.90 depending on how many zones you travel through.

Taxis in Dublin are expensive, and flag fall costs €2.75. For taxi service, call **National Radio Cabs** (☎ 677 2222).

## AROUND DUBLIN Dun Laoghaire

### ☎ 01

Dun Laoghaire (pronounced dun-leary), only 13km south of central Dublin, is a popular resort and busy harbour with ferry connections to Britain. The B&Bs are slightly cheaper than in central Dublin, and the fast and frequent train connections make it a convenient stay.

On the southern side of the harbour is the **Martello Tower**, where James Joyce's epic novel *Ulysses* opens. It now houses the **James Joyce Museum** (☎ 280 9265; adult/child €6.50/4; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun Mar-Oct, by arrangement only Nov-Feb). If you fancy a cold salt-water dip, Dun Laoghaire's **Forty Foot Pool** is the place.

The Rosmeen Gardens area south of the ferry pier is packed with B&Bs. To get there, walk south along George's St, the main shopping strip; Rosmeen Gardens is the first street after Glenageary Rd Lower.

Bus 7, 7A or 46A or the DART rail service (€3.50 return, 20 minutes) will take you from Dublin to Dun Laoghaire. For information on Dun Laoghaire ferries, see p706.

## Malahide Castle

### ☎ 01

Despite the vicissitudes of Irish history, the Talbot family managed to keep **Malahide Castle** (☎ 846 2184; adult/child €6.50/4; ☎ 10am-5pm

Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun Apr-Sep, 11am-5pm Sun Nov-Mar) from 1185 through to 1973. The castle is packed with furniture and paintings, and Puck, the family ghost, is still in residence. The extensive **Fry Model Railway** (☎ 846 2184; adult/child €6.70/4.20; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 2-6pm Sun Apr-Sep, closed Oct-Mar) in the castle grounds covers 240 sq metres and re-creates Ireland's rail and public transport system (it's actually better than it sounds). Combined admission tickets and wheelchair access are available.

To reach Malahide from Dublin, take bus 42 from beside Busáras, or a Drogheda-bound suburban train or DART from Connolly station. Malahide is 13km northeast of Dublin.

## Brú na Bóinne

### ☎ 041

A thousand years older than Stonehenge, the extensive Neolithic necropolis known as Brú na Bóinne (Boyne Palace) is one of the most extraordinary sites in Europe. Its tombs date from about 3200 BC, predating the great pyramids of Egypt by some six centuries. The complex, including the Newgrange and Knowth passage tombs, can only be visited on a tour run by the **Brú na Bóinne visitor centre** (☎ 988 0300; Donore; adult/student visitor centre only €2.75/1.50, visitor centre & Newgrange €5.50/2.75, visitor centre & Knowth €4.25/1.50; ☎ 9.30am-7pm May-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Oct & Mar-Apr, 9.30am-5pm Nov-Feb). At 8.20am during the winter solstice the rising sun's rays shine directly down Newgrange's long passage and illuminate the chamber for a magical 17 minutes. Arrive early in the summer months as tours tend to fill up.

Day tours run by **Mary Gibbons** (☎ 01-283 9973; www.newgrangetours.com; tour & admission fees €35; ☎ Mon-Fri) are stellar.

Bus Éireann's service to Donore (via Drogheda; €16 return, 1½ hours, five daily) stops at the gates of the visitor centre.

# THE SOUTHEAST

Simply put, the southeast is a hell of a lot sunnier and dryer than the rest of Ireland. It's probably why the Vikings settled here, and certainly a reason why people love to visit. But the weather isn't the only reason people come in droves to the southeast – the

area is littered with early-Christian ruins like Glendalough and impressive castles like Powerscourt. There's also the Wicklow Way, one of many rugged hiking trails which allow you to explore the region's plentiful waterfalls, beaches and mountains. Combine this with artsy towns like medieval Kilkenny and seaside Wexford, and you have a region not only diverse, but also bathed in sunlight and warmth, by Irish standards at least.

## COUNTY WICKLOW

County Wicklow, less than 20km south of Dublin, has three contenders for the 'best in Ireland': best garden (at Powerscourt), best monastic site (at Glendalough) and best walk (the Wicklow Way). Pleasant seaside resorts and beaches sit between Bray and Arklow, especially at Brittas Bay. West towards Sally Gap and due south from here is a sparsely populated mountainous wasteland, which includes the black waters of Lough Tay.

### Powerscourt

☎ 01

In 1974, after major renovations, the 18th-century mansion at **Powerscourt Estate** (☎ 204 6000; www.powerscourt.ie; house & gardens adult/child €9/5; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mar-Oct, 9.30am-dusk Nov-Feb) burned to the ground when a bird's nest in a chimney caught fire. One wing of the building remains, now revamped with an exhibition room, café and shop, but people come for the 19th-century, 20-hectare formal gardens with views east to the Great Sugar Loaf Mountain (575m).

The estate is 500m south of Enniskerry's main square and about 22km south of Dublin, and is wheelchair accessible. Dublin Bus 44 runs regularly from Townsend St in Dublin to Enniskerry (€2, one hour, every 20 minutes).

From the estate, a scenic 6km trail leads to **Powerscourt Waterfall** (☎ 204 6000; adult/child €4.50/4; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Mar-Oct, 10.30am-dusk Nov-Feb), at 121m the highest in Ireland. You can reach the waterfall by road (5km), following signs from the estate entrance.

### Glendalough

☎ 0404 / pop 280

Nestled between two lakes, haunting Glendalough (Gleann dá Loch, pronounced

glen-da-lock) is one of the most historically significant monastic sites in Ireland and one of the loveliest spots in the country.

It was founded in the late 6th century by St Kevin, a bishop who established a monastery on the Upper Lake's southern shore and about whom there is much folklore.

During the Middle Ages, when Ireland was known as 'the island of saints and scholars', Glendalough became a monastic city catering to thousands of students and teachers. The site is entered through the only surviving monastic gateway in Ireland.

The **Glendalough Visitor Centre** (☎ 45325; adult/child €2.90/1.30; ☎ 9.30am-5.15pm mid-Mar-mid-Oct, 9.30am-4.15pm mid-Oct-mid-Mar), opposite the Lower Lake car park, overlooks a round tower, a ruined cathedral and the tiny Church of St Kevin. It has historical displays and a good 20-minute audiovisual, and staff can help plan half-hour to half-day hikes. From the visitor centre a trail leads 1.5km west to the panoramic Upper Lake, with a car park and more ruins nearby.

Visitors swarm to Glendalough in summer, so it's best to arrive early and/or stay late, preferably on a weekday, as the site is free and open 24 hours. The lower car park gates are locked when the visitor centre closes.

### SLEEPING

**Glendalough Hostel** (☎ 45342; glendaloughyh@ireland.com; dm/d €22.50/50; ☎ ☎) Lying just 600m west of the visitor centre this modern and pristine hostel can sleep up to 118 people. Because of its location, it attracts interesting outdoorsy types from all over the world, especially during summer. It has great wheelchair accessibility.

**Glendalough Hermitage** (☎ 45777; www.hermitage.dublindioocese.ie; St Kevin's Parish Church; s/tw bungalows €45/65, minimum 2 nights; ☎) Designed for contemplation, these modest, self-catering dwellings are open to people of all faiths.

The Glendalough area also has plenty of moderately priced B&Bs.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Daily services are available with **St Kevin's Bus Service** (☎ 01-281 8119) to Glendalough (one-way/return €11/18, 1½ hours) from outside the Mansion House on Dawson St in Dublin. Buses leave Monday to Saturday

at 11.30am and 6pm (11.30am and 7pm on Sunday), returning to Dublin at 7.15am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday (9.45am and 4.30pm on Saturday and 9.45am and 5.30pm on Sunday).

### The Wicklow Way

Running for 132km from Marlay Park, Rathfarnham, in southern County Dublin through to County Carlow, the Wicklow Way is the oldest and most popular of Ireland's long-distance walks. The route is clearly signposted and is documented in leaflets and guidebooks; one of the better ones is *The Complete Wicklow Way* by JB Malone. Much of the trail traverses countryside above 500m, so pack boots with grip, a walking stick and clothing for Ireland's fickle weather.

The most attractive section of the walk is from Enniskerry to Glendalough (three days). Camping is possible along the route, but you'll need to ask permission from local farmers. An **Oíge's Knockree Hostel** (☎ 01-276 7892; dm €15; ☎ closed 10am-5pm; ☎) is a tranquil farmhouse with lovely views, 7km west of Enniskerry. The village of Roundwood, a good stopover, has a camp site and some B&Bs.

## WEXFORD

☎ 053 / pop 9443

A fine example of Ireland's new prosperity, Wexford's tiny streets sit lined with a mixture of old-time pubs, modern boutiques and an ever-increasing number of upscale restaurants. The town's rich and bloody history includes being founded by the Vikings, and being nearly obliterated by Oliver Cromwell.

Wexford is a convenient stopover for those travelling to France or Wales via the Rosslare Harbour ferry port, 21km south-east of town. Wexford's more colourful draw, though, is its world-famous opera festival, held every October (see right).

### Orientation & Information

The train and bus stations are at the northern end of town, on Redmond Pl. Follow the Slaney River 700m south along the waterfront quays to reach the **tourist office** (☎ 23111; www.southeastireland.com; The Crescent; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat May-Sep, 9am-5pm Oct-Apr). The curiously tight North Main and South

Main Sts are a block inland and parallel to the quays.

The main post office is northwest of the tourist office on Anne St. Internet access is available in the youth centre at the **Mega-bytes** (☎ 23262; Francis St; per hr €3; ☎ 9am-9.30pm Mon-Thu, 9am-5pm Fri, noon-4pm Sat).

### Sights

Of the six original town gates, only the 14th-century **West Gate** (Slaney St) survives. Nearby is **Selskar Abbey**, founded by Alexander de la Roche in 1190 after a crusade to the Holy Land. Its present ruinous state is a result of Cromwell's 1649 visit. The **Bull-ring**, on the corner of Cornmarket and Nth Main St, was the site of one of Cromwell's massacres, but it gets its name from the now-defunct sport of bull-baiting. Today a **market** is held here on Friday and Saturday mornings.

About 4km northwest of Wexford, on the Dublin-Rosslare (N11) road at Ferrycarrig, the **Irish National Heritage Park** (☎ 20733; www.inhp.com; adult/concession €7.50/6; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm) is a theme park that re-creates dwellings and life from the Stone Age to the early Norman period. Last admission is 1½ hours before closing. Taxis from town cost about €6.

### Festivals & Events

Wexford hosts the **Wexford Festival Opera** (☎ 22400; www.wexfordopera.com; Theatre Royal, 27 High St) in late October. The 18-day extravaganza presents rarely performed operas and shows to packed audiences.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Ferrybank Camping & Caravan Park** (☎ 42611; info@wexfordcorp.ie; camp site €12; ☎ May-Oct; ☎) Location and luxury, this campground is right across the river from the town centre.

**Westgate House** (☎ 22167; www.wexford-online.com/westgate; s/d €45/75; ☎) With Selskar Abbey and West Gate right across the road you won't lack for a good view from this refurbished family guesthouse.

**Cappuccino's** (☎ 23669; 25 North Main St; mains €5-12; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6.30pm Sat, 10am-6.30pm Sun) The hot food in this three-level eatery, with exposed bricks, is mouth-watering.

**South 51** (☎ 74559; 52 South Main St; mains €10-19; ☎ 10.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-7pm Sat, 12.30-6pm Sun) A California-style bistro, South 51 has

enough different menus to please anyone with an appetite.

### Drinking

**Sky & the Ground** (☎ 21273; 112-113 South Main St) A popular place to eat and drink, this family establishment has traditional music nightly.

**Thomas Moore Tavern** (☎ 24348; Cornmarket) Locals call this an 'old man's pub', meaning it's good for a quiet drink and a chat.

### Entertainment

**Wexford Arts Centre** (☎ 23764; www.wexfordartscentre.ie; Cornmarket) Theatre and dance productions are put on here year-round.

### Getting There & Away

On the Dublin–Rosslare line is Wexford's **O'Hanrahan train station** (☎ 22522), which is served by three trains daily in each direction. The three-hour trip to Dublin costs €21 (more on weekends); to Rosslare Harbour (30 minutes) it's €5.50. **Bus Éireann** (☎ 23939, 051-879000) runs from the train station to Rosslare Harbour (€4.30, 30 minutes, approximately hourly Monday to Saturday, 10 on Sunday), Dublin (€12, 2¼ hours, 13 Monday to Saturday, 10 on Sunday) and beyond.

## WATERFORD

☎ 051 / pop 44,504

Waterford (Port Láirge) is a busy port and commercial centre, retaining vestiges of its Viking and Norman past in its narrow streets and town walls. Today Waterford is famed for its crystal but little else, apart from a few lively pubs. Despite a recent face-lift, it's an unlovely town with little to offer beyond a couple of mildly interesting heritage sites. Budget travellers, beware: Waterford has no hostels.

### Orientation & Information

The main shopping street runs directly back from the Suir River, beginning as Barronstrand St and changing names as it runs south to intersect with Parnell St, which runs northeast back up to the river and becoming The Mall on the way.

The very helpful **tourist office** (☎ 870 800; www.southeastireland.com; The Granary, 41 Merchant's Quay; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat May-Sep, 11am-5pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.15am-5pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr) is near the river.

### Sights & Activities

**Waterford Crystal Factory Visitor Centre** (☎ 373 311; www.waterfordvisitorcentre.com; ☎ 8.30am-4.15pm Mar-Oct, 9am-3.15pm Nov-Feb) is 2km out along the road to Cork (N25). A tour (adult/student €9/6.50) will take you through the factory to see glass blowers and fragile exhibits. Bus 3 runs from the Clocktower to the Waterford Crystal Factory every 15 minutes (€2.50 return).

### Sleeping & Eating

**Mayor's Walk House** (☎ 855 427; mayorswalkband@eircom.net; 12 Mayor's Walk; s/d €27/48) This quiet B&B serves up big welcomes and bigger breakfasts. It's near the police station, about a 10-minute walk out of town.

**Rice Guesthouse** (☎ 371 606; www.riceguesthouse.com; 35-36 Barrack St; s/d/tr €55/100/120) Located just minutes from the town centre, this guesthouse has remarkably comfortable beds, especially if you've been on the road for a while.

**Haricot's Wholefood** (☎ 841 299; 11 O'Connell St; mains €8-10; ☎ 9am-8pm) Haricot's serves generous portions of vegetarian and meat dishes. The chocolate cake is a gooey delight.

**47 The Bistro** (☎ 844 774; 47 Patrick St; mains €7-13; ☎ 11.30am-9.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-9pm Sun) With delightful food and a sharp interior, this place could easily be passed off as a Manhattan bistro. Its homemade desserts are superb.

### Getting There & Around

Seven kilometres south of the city at Killoven, **Waterford airport** (☎ 875 589) has daily flights with Aer Arann to Luton airport, outside London, Manchester and Lorient in France. See p705 for contact details.

The **train station** (☎ 873 401) is across the river from the town centre. Trains run regularly to Dublin (€23, three hours, five daily), Rosslare Harbour (€14.50, 1½ hours, two daily), Kilkenny (€9.50, 45 minutes, five daily) and Cork (€28.50, three to five hours, four daily), via Limerick Junction.

From the **Bus Éireann** (☎ 879 000) depot, opposite the tourist office, plenty of buses run daily to Dublin (€11, three hours), Wexford (€12, 1½ hours), Rosslare Harbour (€14, 1½ hours), Kilkenny (€19, one hour) and Cork (€14, 2¼ hours). **Rapid Express Coaches** (☎ 872 149; Parnell St) runs several services daily to Dublin (€11) and Dublin airport (€15).

**BnB Cycles** (☎ 870 356; 22 Ballybricken), up Patrick St and past the police station, rents bikes for €15 per day.

## KILKENNY

☎ 056 / pop 18,696

Beautiful Kilkenny (Cill Chainnigh) is impossible to forget once you've seen its medieval streets. Nestled in lush grounds overlooking the river, Kilkenny Castle will imprint itself upon your mind, while the town's excellent selection of pubs and eateries will make you wish your taste buds had a memory as well. Kilkenny is also renowned for its devotion to the arts, and hosts several world-class festivals throughout the year.

### Orientation & Information

Most places of interest can be found on or close to Parliament St and its continuation (High St), which runs parallel to the Nore River, and along Rose Inn St, which becomes John St, as it leads away from the river to the northeast. The **tourist office** (☎ 775 1500; www.southeastireland.com; Rose Inn St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat May-Sep, 11am-5pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.15am-5pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr) is a short walk from the castle. Internet access is plentiful; the **Kilkenny ecentre** (☎ 776 0093; 26 Rose St; per hr €5; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-7pm Sun) is comfy and central.

### Sights & Activities

#### KILKENNY CASTLE

Stronghold of the powerful Butler family, **Kilkenny Castle** (☎ 772 1450; adult/child incl tour €5/2; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Jun-Aug, 10am-6.30pm Sep, 10.30am-5pm Apr-May, 10.30am-12.45pm Oct-Mar) has a history dating back to 1172, when the legendary Anglo-Norman Strongbow erected a wooden tower on the site.

The **Long Gallery**, with its vividly painted ceiling and extensive portrait collection of Butler family members, is quite remarkable.

The castle hosts contemporary art exhibitions in the **Butler Gallery** (☎ 776 1106; www.butlertgallery.com; admission free).

#### ST CANICE'S CATHEDRAL

The approach on foot from Parliament St leads over Irishtown Bridge and up **St Canice's Steps**, which date from 1614. Around the **cathedral** (☎ 776 4971; www.cashel.anglican.org; adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun

Jun-Aug, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun Apr-May & Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-4pm Mon-Sat, 2-4pm Sun Oct-Mar) is a wheelchair-accessible **round tower** (which you can climb – if you're over 12 – for €2). Although the present cathedral dates from 1251, it has a much lengthier history.

### OTHER ATTRACTIONS

**Rothe House** (☎ 772 2893; Parliament St; adult/child €5/3; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 3-5pm Sun Apr-Oct, 11am-4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) is a restored 1594 Tudor house. Original owner, wealthy John Rothe, lived here with his wife and 12 children.

**Tynan walking tours** (☎ 087-265 1745; www.tynantours.com; adult/student €6/5) conducts hour-long tours of Kilkenny, departing from the tourist office several times a day (weekends only November to March).

### Sleeping

**Tree Grove Caravan & Camping Park** (☎ 777 0302; www.camping-ireland.ie; camp site €15; ☎ Mar-mid-Nov) You can walk into town along the river from this full-facilities park. By car, it's 1.5km south of Kilkenny on the New Ross (R700) road.

**Kilkenny Tourist Hostel** (☎ 776 3541; kilkenny.hostel@eircom.net; 35 Parliament St; dm/tw €16/40) This central, creaky hostel has loads of character and a turf fire. Check the information board for happenings.

**Bregagh Guesthouse** (☎ 772 2315; www.bregagh.house.com; Dean St; s/d €45/90) Funky bedspreads and a hearty breakfast are two of the many enjoyable things about this centrally located spot.

**Lacken House** (☎ 776 1085; www.lackenhouse.ie; Dublin Rd; s/d €140/250; ☎) Just out of town, this beautiful 1847 Victorian guesthouse is absolutely luxurious and the breakfast is superb. Make sure to try its stellar restaurant as well (p668).

### Eating

**Halal Center** (☎ 778 6389; 6 Irishtown; mains €5.50-12; ☎ 10am-11pm Sun-Wed, 10am-midnight Thu-Sat) Boasting a menu of over 100 items, including veggie options, this tandoori takeaway/delivery joint is one of the best and most slept-upon places in town. It also doubles as a newsagent/corner store.

**Marble City Bar** (☎ 776 1143; 66 High St; lunch €6.50-9.50, dinner €10.50-14.50; ☎ 10am-9pm) The



food is impeccably presented in this slick Gotham-esque bar that looks more expensive than it is.

**Lacken House** (☎ 776 1085; Dublin Rd; mains €25-30, 5-course menu €50; ☎ 6.30-10pm) The celebrated Lacken House dishes out such appetising original creations as pork with cider potato, and ostrich fillet with caviar.

**Gourmet Store** (☎ 777 1727; 56 High St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat) A good option for classy picnickers and hostellers.

## Drinking & Entertainment

**John Cleere's** (☎ 776 2573; 22 Parliament St) Cleere's often has good alternative bands – and the occasional poetry reading – in its theatre out the back.

**Kyteler's Inn** (☎ 772 1064; 27 St Kieran's St) The old house of Dame Kyteler (aka the Witch of Kilkenny) is a tourist magnet, but atmospheric all the same.

**Watergate Theatre** (☎ 776 1674; www.watergatelilkenny.com; Parliament St) The Watergate hosts musical and theatrical productions throughout the year.

## Getting There & Away

The **McDonagh train station** (☎ 772 2024; Dublin Rd) is east of the town centre via John St. At least four trains daily travel from Dublin's Heuston station to Kilkenny (€21.50) and then on to Waterford (€9). Fares are higher on Friday and Saturday.

**Bus Éireann** (☎ 776 4933, 051-879 000) operates from the train station. There are six buses a day to Dublin (€10.50, 2¼ hours), three to Cork (€16, two on Sunday), and a couple to Wexford, Waterford and Rosslare Harbour.

## AROUND KILKENNY

### Kells Priory

Kells Priory might be one of the neatest off-the-beaten-path attractions in Ireland. Only 13km south of Kilkenny, this awe-inspiring monastic site sits among rolling fields and beside a babbling brook. Since these 12th- and 15th-century ruins have no admission fee and there are no set opening hours, you may find yourself completely alone here (except for the sheep), making it a fine place for howling at the moon. The site is difficult to get to, so unless you have a car, you'll have to take a taxi (about €20 from Kilkenny) or thumb it.

# THE SOUTHWEST

The southwest is the part of Ireland people fantasise about. Strewn with remnants of Ireland's many different pasts, its verdant hills and fields stretch out towards the ocean, where small towns dot the seaside like the jewels of a crown. Alternatively, Cork city buzzes and whirs with the kind of energy and cultural cool that's just shy of being considered a renaissance. From Kinsale's culinary zeal to the Ring of Kerry's beauty to Glengarriff's rustic appeal, the southwest encapsulates all the lustre that draws people to Ireland.

## CORK

☎ 021 / pop 123,062

There's a reason the locals call Cork (Corcaigh) 'The Real Capital' or 'The People's Republic of Cork'; something special is going on here. The Irish Republic's second-biggest city has transformed itself into a place humming with the type of cultural currency found only in cities with art and music scenes as vibrant as this one. While Dublin may still be the actual capital of the Republic, at least Cork spent all of 2005 as Europe's Capital of Culture.

Cork has long been a significant city in Ireland, not least during the Anglo-Irish War. The Black and Tans were at their most brutal in Cork. The city was also a centre for the civil war that followed independence (Irish leader Michael Collins was ambushed and killed nearby). Today Cork is noted for its sports teams and, of course, its rivalry with Dublin.

## Orientation & Information

The city centre is an island between two channels of the Lee River. Oliver Plunkett St and the curve of St Patrick's St are the main shopping/eating/drinking areas. The train station and several hostels are north of the river; MacCurtain St and Glanmire Rd Lower are the main thoroughfares there.

Send emails at the **Webworkhouse.com** (☎ 427 3090; www.webworkhouse.com; 8a Winthrop St; per hr €1.50-5; ☎ 24hr) or snail mail at the **main post office** (Oliver Plunkett St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm). There are also plenty of other Internet cafés all over Cork.

The **tourist office** (☎ 425 5100; www.corkkerry.ie; Grand Pde; ☎ 9.15am-5pm Sep-May, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat Jun, 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3.40pm Sun Jul-Aug), awash in souvenirs, has plenty of brochures, books and maps about the city and county.

## Sights

Housed in a building combining the 18th-century Cork Customs House with 21st-century Dutch design, the **Crawford Municipal Art Gallery** (☎ 490 7855; www.crawfordartgallery.com; Emmet Pl; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat) is a must see for anyone who enjoys art, architecture or both. Pieces by Irish artists like Jack Yeats and Cork's James Barry sit among a fine permanent collection that includes artists from Continental Europe as well. The museum has wheelchair access.

Just south of the city centre sits the Protestant **St Fin Barre's Cathedral** (☎ 496 3387; www.cathedral.cork.anglican.org; Bishop St; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri Apr-Sep, 10am-12.45pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar). Built in 1879, this beautiful Gothic Revival structure has a multitude of notable features, including a Golden Angel who sits on the eastern side of the cathedral, and whose job it is to blow her horn at the onset of the Apocalypse.

Structurally less impressive but with a fantastic moniker, 'The Four Faced Liar' or **St Anne's Church** (☎ 450 5906; www.shandonbells.org; John Redmond St; adult/student €6/5; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat) sits perched upon a hill a little north of the river. Admission lets you climb the tower, ring the Shandon Bells (which aren't always in tune) and watch an audiovisual presentation about the Shandon area.

The **Cork Public Museum** (☎ 427 0679; museum@corkecity.ie; Fitzgerald Park; admission free; ☎ 11am-1pm & 2.15-5pm Mon-Fri, 3-5pm Sun Sep-May, 3-6pm Sun-Fri Jun-Aug) has a fine collection of artefacts that trace Cork's history from pre-history to the present, including the city's role in the fight for independence. Bus 8 goes to the University College Cork (UCC) main gates nearby.

Originally serving as a jail from the years 1824-1923, the **Cork City Gaol** (☎ 430 5022; www.corkcitygaol.com; adult/child €6/3.50; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mar-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) is now a terrific museum about a terrifying subject. Restored cells, mannequins representing both prisoners and guards, and an impressive

35-minute taped tour make this attraction intriguing. Also housed in the same location is the **National Radio Museum** (adult/child €6/3.50), which details the history of broadcast radio in Cork. The jail is off Sunday's Well Rd.

## Festivals & Events

The **Cork International Jazz Festival** (www.corkjazzfestival.com) and the **International Film Festival** (www.corkfilmfest.org) both take place in October.

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Kinlay House Shandon** (☎ 450 8966; www.kinlayhouse.ie; Bob & Joan's Walk; dm €13-17, s/d with shared bathroom incl breakfast €38/48, d €52; ☎) This hostel has loads of personality. The kitchen and dining room are both big, and if you're around on a sunny day, it has great barbecues.

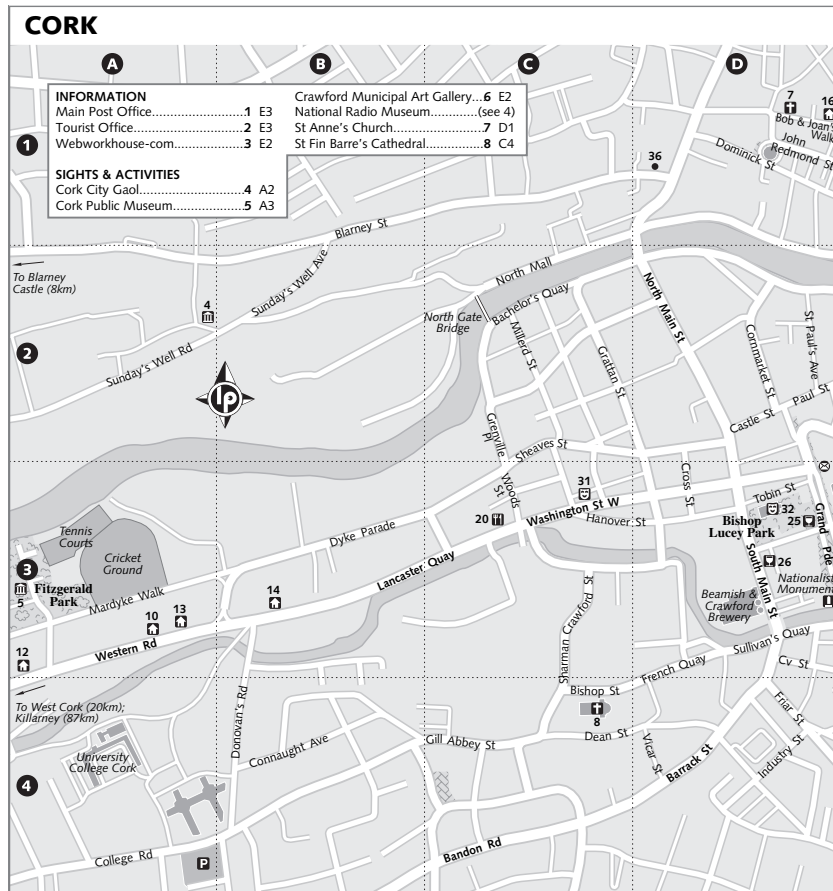
**Cork International Hostel** (☎ 454 3289; corkyh@gofree.indigo.ie; 1-2 Redclyffe, Western Rd; dm €15-19, tw €42; ☎) The cheerful staff at this bright and busy An Óige hostel do a great job coping with the flow of young travellers and lively groups. Bus 8 stops outside.

**Bru Bar & Hostel** (☎ 455 9667; www.bruhohostel.com; 57 MacCurtain St; 6-/4-bed dm €16.50/21, d €50; ☎) Cork's newest and funkiest hostel also has a bar and an Internet café on the premises. This clean and friendly triple treat can be a rocking good time, especially on the weekends, so be sure to make reservations as the place gets packed. It's wheelchair accessible.

**Sheila's Hostel** (☎ 450 5562; www.sheilashostel.ie; 4 Belgrave Pl; dm €15-17, s €30-32, d €46-52; ☎) Sheila's sauna, cinema room and super-friendly staff make up for its occasional dinginess. It's also a great place to meet travellers from all over the world.

## AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Garnish House** (☎ 427 5111; www.garnish.ie; Western Rd; s €60-80, d €90-140; ☎) With charming rooms (think flowers and fresh fruit), gourmet breakfasts and hosts who are eager to please, Garnish House is possibly the perfect B&B. From the moment you arrive and are greeted with tea and goodies, until the moment you leave, you will experience nothing short of absolute attentiveness. There is no mistaking that the secret ingredient here is love.



## MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Victoria Hotel** (☎ 427 8788; www.thevictoriahotel.com; St Patrick's St; r per person €38-75) Boasting such esteemed former guests as Charles Stuart Parnell and James Joyce, the independently owned Victoria is one of Cork's oldest hotels, as well as one of its most centrally located. Its modest rooms are comfortable, and some of them sleep a family of up to six.

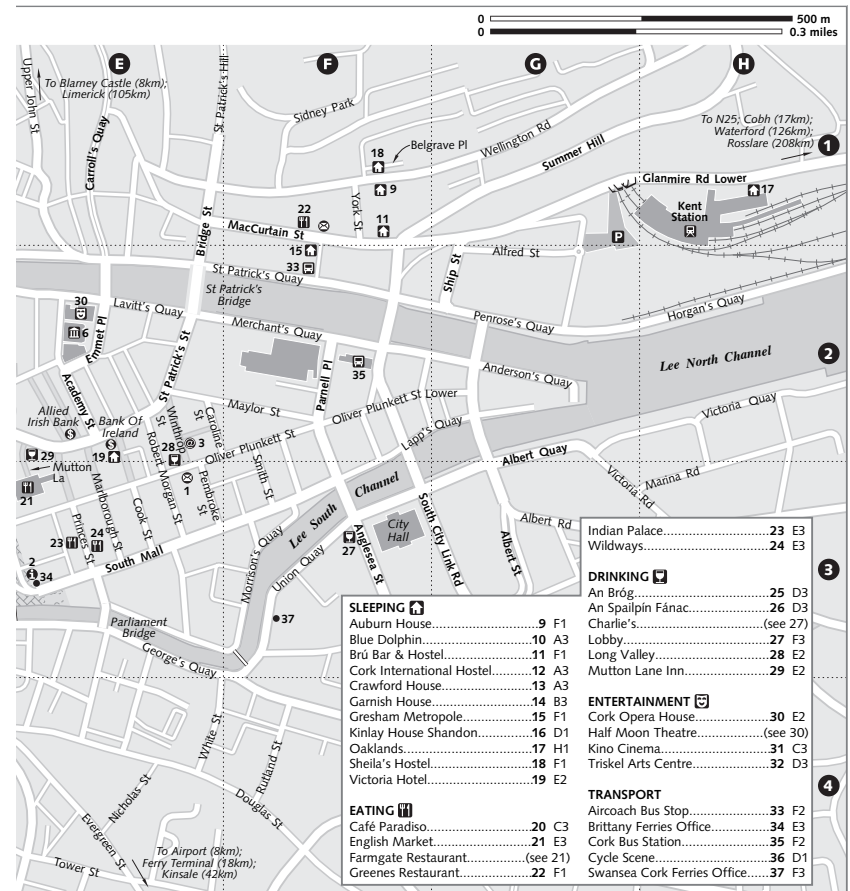
**Gresham Metropole** (☎ 450 8122; www.gresham-hotels.com; MacCurtain St; s/d €110/140; (P) (Q) (R)) Following a total refurbishment, the Metropole allows you to pad around on lush carpets and feel comfortably corporate in the lavish rooms, swimming pool, health club, and elegant bars and restaurant. One room is wheelchair accessible.

Close to the train station at the north-eastern end of town there is a handful of quite basic but perfectly fine B&Bs, including:

**Oaklands** (☎ 450 0578; oaklandsbandb@o2.ie; Glanmire Rd lower; s/d €40/64)

**Auburn House** (☎ 450 8555; auburnhouse@eircom.net; Wellington Rd; s/d €50/74, with shared bathroom €40/66; (P)).

Over at the other end of town is a string of high-quality B&Bs along Western Rd, leading towards the university. Some of the better ones are **Crawford House** (☎ 427 9000; crawford@indigo.ie; Western Rd; s/d €65/90), which has great Jacuzzis, and the very crisp and clean **Blue Dolphin** (☎ 427 4908; www.bluedolphin.ie; 3 College View, Western Rd; s/d €50/70).



## Eating

**Wildways** (☎ 427 2199; 21 Princes St; snacks €3-7.50; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4.30pm Sat & Sun) Cork's first organic soup and sandwich bar serves such a variety of delicious and healthy food that even the pickiest of eaters can find something scrumptious. If you're around for breakfast, make sure to try the excellent chocolate-chip pancakes.

**Farmgate Restaurant** (☎ 427 8134; English Market; mains €8.50-12; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat) An unmissable Cork experience at the heart of the English Market. Filling breakfasts, coffee and lunches draw a regular Cork clientele to the Farmgate's balcony, which overlooks the market below, source of the food on your plate.

**Indian Palace** (☎ 427 3690; 31 Princes St; mains €8.50-18.50; ☎ 12.30-2.30pm & 5pm-midnight Mon-Sat, 4pm-midnight Sun) If you like incredible Indian food, superb service and an interesting ambience, Indian Palace isn't for you...just kidding! This place is excellent, especially if you want a romantic candlelit dinner.

**Café Paradiso** (☎ 427 7939; 16 Lancaster Quay; mains €16-22; ☎ 12.30-3pm & 6.30-10.30pm Tue-Sat) Top-class vegetarian dishes that will seduce the most committed carnivore make this cheerful restaurant a busy place. Creativity maintains the standard of dishes, and the wine list is terrific.

**Greenes Restaurant** (☎ 455 2279; 48 MacCurtain St; lunch €10-13, dinner €18-33; ☎ noon-5pm & 6-10pm

Mon-Thu, noon-5pm & 6-10.30pm Fri & Sat, noon-5pm & 6-9.30pm Sun) Through a stone archway and situated next to a glorious waterfall, Greenes is a luxurious restaurant with unbeatable food. The menu is changed seasonally to appease Cork's genuine foodies, and if you arrive from 6pm to 7pm, you can catch Greene's three-course Early Bird menu (€25).

For self-catering, head for the well-stocked food stalls inside the **English Market** (☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat).

## Drinking

Cork's pub life is brimming. Locally brewed Murphy's is the stout of choice here, not Guinness.

**Mutton Lane Inn** (☎ 427 3471; 3 Mutton Lane) With Victorian wallpaper, rock and roll posters, and a covered outdoor area for drinking and smoking, Cork's oldest pub is the type of place that you wish existed in your home town.

**An Spailpín Fánach** (☎ 427 7949; 28 5th Main St) The 'wandering labourer' hosts trad sessions almost nightly.

**Lobby** (☎ 431 9307; 1 Union Quay; admission upstairs €5-15) The Lobby gets traditional on weekends and has an upstairs space that hosts a range of performers. Tuesday is jazz night.

**Charlie's** (☎ 496 5272; Union Quay) Next door to the Lobby and its sister pub, Charlie's has music nightly.

**Long Valley** (☎ 427 2144; Winthrop St) This Cork institution has been going strong more or less since the mid-19th century.

**An Bróg** (☎ 427 0074; 72 Oliver Plunkett St) This is the spot for Cork's 20-something crowd, with excellent live indie music and/or DJs nightly.

## Entertainment

Cork's cultural life is generally of a high calibre. To see what's happening grab *WhazOn?* or *Totally Cork*, which are free monthly publications available from the tourist office, newsagencies, shops, hostels and B&Bs.

**Cork Opera House** (☎ 427 0022; www.corkopera.com; Emmet Pl) Staging everything from opera to stand-up, the Opera House productions vary from the vibrant African singer Oumou Sangaré to *Carmen* and the *Vagina Monologues*. It has wheelchair access.

**Half Moon Theatre** (☎ 427 0022; Emmet Pl) Located behind Cork Opera House, this theatre hosts live bands and DJs.

**Triskel Arts Centre** (☎ 427 2022; www.triskelarts.com; Tobin St) This is an important venue for contemporary art, film, theatre, music and other media arts.

**Kino Cinema** (☎ 427 1571; www.kinocinema.net; Washington St) The very cool Kino is Cork's only independent arthouse cinema.

## Getting There & Away

Eight kilometres south of the city centre on the N27, **Cork airport** (ORK; ☎ 431 3131) has direct flights into many major cities, including Dublin, Edinburgh, London, Manchester, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Milan, Paris, Warsaw and Prague. The airport is serviced by 10 different airlines, including budget options like Ryanair, easyJet and Jet2. See p705 for contact details.

The **Cork bus station** (☎ 450 8188; cnr Merchants Quay & Parnell Pl) is east of the city centre. You can get to almost anywhere in Ireland by bus from Cork: Dublin (€10, 4½ hours, six daily), Killarney (€14.50, two hours, 15 daily), Waterford, Wexford and more. For direct service to Dublin, catch Aircoach from St Patrick Quay, right behind the Gresham Metropole hotel (€15 return Monday to Thursday, €18 return Friday to Sunday, four hours, eight daily).

Cork's **Kent station** (☎ 450 4777; Glanmire Rd lower) is across the river. Trains go to Dublin (€50, three hours, nine daily), Limerick (€22, 1½ hours, seven daily) and Killarney (€20, 1½ hours, five daily).

Cork's ferry terminal, with regular boats to Swansea and Roscoff (France), is at Ringaskiddy, about 15 minutes by car southeast of the city centre along the N28. **Swansea Cork Ferries** (☎ 483 6000; 14 Union Quay) and **Brittany Ferries** (☎ 427 7801; 42 Grand Pde) both have city-centre offices. See p706 for more details.

## Getting Around

Frequent buses head from the bus station to the airport (€3.70, 25 minutes) from April to September (fewer in the low season). Otherwise, a taxi costs around €15. Buses also run fairly often to the ferry terminal (€5.50, 40 minutes).

Parking discs are sold at newsagencies for €1.80 per hour.

**Cycle Scene** (☎ 430 1183; 396 Blarney St) has bikes for hire from €16/80 per day/week. Return them almost anywhere in the country for another €25.

## AROUND CORK

### Blarney

☎ 021 / pop 2146

Lying just northwest of Cork, the village of Blarney (An Bhlarna) receives a *bazillion* visitors a year, for one sole reason, **Blarney Castle** (☎ 438 5252; www.blarneycastle.ie; adult/child €8/2.50; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-5.30pm Sun Jun-Aug, 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat May & Sep, 9am-6pm or to sunset Mon-Sun Oct-Apr). If you're not germaphobic and don't mind putting your lips where millions of others have (and where locals are rumoured to urinate), you can kiss the castle's legendary **Blarney Stone** on the battlements and get the 'gift of the gab'. Queen Elizabeth I, exasperated with Lord Blarney's ability to talk endlessly without actually agreeing to her demands, invented the term. Bending over backwards to kiss the rock requires a head for heights, although there's someone there to hold you in position. Getting there at opening time is one way to beat crowds.

B&Bs surround the castle, including the **White House** (☎ 438 5338; www.thewhitehouse.com; s/d €50/70; ☎), which tends to fill up quickly. The upscale **Blarney Woollen Mills Hotel** (☎ 438 5011; www.blarneywoollenmills.com; s/d €70/140; ☎), almost directly in the centre of town, has a pub, restaurant, work-out room and multiple shops, all on the premises.

Buses run regularly from the Cork bus station (€4.90 return, 30 minutes).

### Cobh

☎ 021 / pop 6762

The pretty town of Cobh (pronounced cove) is a day trip with your sweetie type of place, where you can go for a walk, snog a little and take photos for your holiday snaps. Its picture-perfect looks and rich maritime history make it enjoyable for the rest of us, too. Be sure to visit the excellent **Cobh, The Queenstown Story** (☎ 481 3591; www.cobhheritage.com; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 9.30am-6pm May-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Nov-Apr) heritage centre in the town's old train station. It tells the story of the migrants who sailed from here, and of the town's links with the *Titanic* and the

*Lusitania*. Last admission is one hour before closing, and the centre has wheelchair access.

Cobh is 24km southeast of Cork via the N25. Hourly trains (€5.10 return, 30 minutes) also connect with Cork.

### Kinsale

☎ 021 / pop 2257

Beautiful and scenic, Kinsale (Cionn tSáile) is one of the many gems that dot the coastline of County Cork. Its reputation as a gourmet paradise is deserved, but a word to the wise: watch where you walk, the locals are far from diligent with regards to cleaning up after their dogs.

The **tourist office** (☎ 477 2234; www.corkkerry.ie; 1 Pier Rd; ☎ 9.15am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10.15am-5pm Sun Jul-Aug, 9.15am-6pm Mon-Sat Jun & Sep-Oct, 9.15am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-May, 9.15am-5pm Tue-Sat Jan-Mar & Nov-Dec) is in the centre of town.

Southeast of Kinsale, a scenic 2.5km walk from the town centre, stand the stout ruins of **Charles Fort** (☎ 477 2263; www.heritageireland.ie; adult/student €3.70/1.30; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-Mar-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-mid-Mar). Built in the 1670s, and with lovely views, This is one of the best-preserved star forts in Europe.

## SLEEPING

**Guardwell Lodge** (☎ 477 4686; www.guardwelllodge.com; Guardwell; dm €17-19, s/d €29/55; ☎) Guardwell Lodge is a great place to stay, with hardwood floors, a comfy lounge and a clean kitchen. It's the only budget option around the town centre.

**White House** (☎ 477 2125; www.whitehouse-kinsale.ie; Pearse St; s/d €65/130, breakfast per person extra €10) A solid guesthouse in the town centre, the White House has spacious rooms and lovely giant beds. The attached restaurant is also quite delectable and not to be missed.

**Pier House** (☎ 477 4475; www.pierhousekinsale.com; Pier Rd; s/d €100/150) This immaculate B&B sits among a well-manicured garden, and has big rooms, luxurious bathrooms, a sauna and a hot tub. It also serves a gallery space for a few local artists. Combine all that with friendly hosts, and you have yourself a fantastic place to stay.

## EATING

**Patsy's Corner** (☎ 086-865 8143; Market Sq; snacks €3-7; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Serving home made

soups and pastries alongside fresh sandwiches and salads, Patsy's holds its own as a great corner café in a town full of gourmet restaurants.

**Man Friday** (☎ 477 2260; www.man-friday.net; cnr River & High Rds, Scilly; mains €19.50-28.50; ☎ 6.30-10.15pm Mon-Sat) A five-minute walk east of the town centre brings you to this well-respected, tropically themed restaurant with a view. Bring a big appetite because the portions are heaping and the food is excellent.

**Vintage Restaurant** (☎ 477 2502; www.vintage-restaurant.ie; 50 Main St; mains €30-40; ☎ 6.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat) One cannot talk about Kinsale's gourmet food scene without discussing the Vintage Restaurant. Easily one of the town's best and most creative places, it specialises in seafood dishes so good that you won't regret forking over a fistful of euros.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses connect Kinsale with Cork (€6.90 return, 45 minutes, 10 daily Monday to Saturday, five on Sunday) and stop near the tourist office. To head west by bus you'll have to go back to Cork, from where there are plenty of connections (see p672).

#### WEST CORK

Travelling west by public transport from Cork can be tough. There are at least two daily bus services in summer connecting towns, but some routes are not serviced at all during the rest of the year. The trick is to plan ahead at Cork, have the timetables committed to memory, and be prepared to change buses and backtrack. Make friends with **Bus Éireann** (☎ in Cork 021-450 8188; www.buseireann.ie). If you're so inclined, hitchhiking is another lovely way to get around West Cork.

#### Baltimore

☎ 028 / pop 383

Just 13km down the Ilen River from Skibbereen, sleepy Baltimore has a population of around 380 that swells enormously during summer. Its main attraction is its proximity to Sherkin and Clear Islands. The **tourist office** (☎ 21766; skibbereen@skibbereen.corkkerrytourism.ie; ☎ 9.15am-5.15pm Mon-Fri Oct-May, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat Jun & Sep, 9am-7pm Jul & Aug) in Skibbereen can handle questions about the area. The **Baltimore Diving Centre** (☎ 20300; www.baltimorediving.com; Harbour Dr) arranges diving expeditions (€90 for two dives, including gear).

Baltimore has plenty of B&Bs, plus the excellent and gay-friendly **IHH Rolf's Hostel** (☎ 20289; www.rolfsholidays.com; dm €13-15, d €40-60; ♿); follow the signs up a hill about 1km east of town. Whether or not you're staying, Rolf's café/restaurant/wine bar/art gallery (mains €8.50 to €21, open 8.30am to 9.30pm, closed Monday and Tuesday in winter) is a terrific place to grab a bite.

#### Clear & Sherkin Islands

☎ 028

Clear Island, or Cape Clear as the locals call it, is the most southerly point of Ireland (apart from Fastnet Rock, 6km to the southwest). Clear Island is a Gaeltacht area, with about 120 Irish-speaking inhabitants, one shop, three pubs and its own website, **Oileán Chléire** (Cape Clear Island; www.oilean-chleire.ie). There's also a wonderful **storytelling festival** each year in early September.

The **camping ground** (☎ 39119; per person €7; ☎ Jun-Sep) is signposted from the shop. An Oíge's basic **Cape Clear Island Hostel** (☎ 41968; anoige@fenlon.net; dm €17; ♿) is a short walk from the pier. **Cluain Mara** (☎ 39153; www.capeclearisland.com; Nth Harbour; s/d €30/60; ♿) and **Ard Na Goithe** (☎ 39160; The Glen; s/d €30/60; ♿) are both amazingly friendly places in typical island houses. They can be reached by taking the 'bus', a silver minivan, from the pier for €2.

The ferry **Naomh Ciarán II** (☎ 39159; www.capedearferry.info) sails between Baltimore and Cape Clear (weather permitting) three to four times daily in summer and less frequently in the low season. The trip takes 45 minutes and costs €12 return (bikes go free). In summer boats to Clear Island also leave from Schull (opposite).

If Cape Clear seems a long ride, consider heading to tiny Sherkin Island, its friendly neighbour, with a couple of convivial pub/restaurants, several decent B&Bs and a few good beaches. Sherkin is known for its delicious oysters.

The homy **Horseshoe Cottage B&B** (☎ 20598; chris@sherkintefi.com; s/d €35/70) has bay views and one wheelchair-accessible room, and does summer boat trips on a 45ft schooner. Try the **Jolly Roger Tavern** (☎ 20379) for fresh mussels and a great atmosphere.

**Ferries** (☎ 20218) sail from Baltimore nine times daily in summer and reasonably frequently in winter (€7 return, 10 minutes).

#### Mizen Head Peninsula

☎ 028

Mizen Head is an alternative to the better known and more touristy Ring of Kerry and Dingle Peninsula to the north.

At least two buses a day leave Cork (via Skibbereen) for the small village of **Schull** at the foot of Mt Gabriel (407m). In summer Schull's pubs and restaurants are packed with tourists, but the rest of the year it's blissfully quiet.

**Schull Backpackers' Lodge** (☎ 28681; www.schullbackpackers.com; Colla Rd; camp site per person €10, d €48, dm/s/d with shared bathroom €15/20/44; ♿) is excellent and has wheelchair access. It rents bikes (€11), and organises diving, kayaking and horse-riding trips. **Glencairn** (☎ 28007; susanglencairn@yahoo.ie; Ardmanagh Dr; s/d €40/70), on a cul-de-sac just 100m off Main St, serves up a mighty Irish breakfast.

During July and August **boats** (☎ 28138) leave from Schull's pier for Clear Island at 10am, 2.30pm and 4.30pm, returning at 11am, 3.30pm and 5.30pm. In June and September one boat leaves at 2.30pm and returns at 5.30pm. The one-way/return fare is €8/13.

The road south from Schull leads to **Mizen Head** and its 1910 **signal station**, now a **visitors centre** (☎ 35115; www.mizenhead.net; adult/child €6/4.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Jun-Sep, 10.30am-5pm mid-Mar-May & Oct, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-mid-Mar), which is on a small island connected to the mainland by a 45m-high suspension bridge. From here you can look down on pounding sea, striking rock formations and maybe the odd seal.

#### Beara Peninsula

☎ 027

Via Bantry, the N71 follows the coast northwest to Glengarriff, from where the R572 runs southwest to the Beara Peninsula, a wild, handsome, rocky landscape that's ideal for exploring by foot or bike. It's possible to drive the 137km 'Ring of Beara' in one day, although that would be missing the point. It's also possible to thumb-it around the Ring, which will definitely take more than a day. If you're driving or cycling (leg power permitting), don't miss the beautiful Healy Pass.

Walkers might like to tackle the ruggedly beautiful Hungry Hill, made famous by Daphne Du Maurier's book of the same

name, just outside the pleasant fishing town of Castletownbere, itself a good place to stop for a bite or a pint.

**Murphy's Village Hostel** (☎ 63555; murphyshostel@eircom.net; Main St; dm/d €17/40; ♿) in the heart of Glengarriff is cheerful, bright and wheelchair accessible. The **Cottage Bar & Restaurant** (☎ 63226; www.cottagebar.com; Main St; s/d €50/90) is a quiet and comfortable place which includes breakfast, dinner and a glass of wine in its rates.

**Garranes Hostel** (☎ 73147; dm/s €14/19) between Castletownbere and Allihies has a breathtaking location high above Bantry Bay. The atmosphere is quiet and meditative here, appropriately so as it's run by the **Dzogchen Buddhist Retreat Centre** (☎ 73032; www.dzogchenbeara.ie) next door. Guests can join daily meditation sessions. Given the atmosphere, this isn't a place to party. Inquire first by phone.

Among the copper mines surrounding the village of **Allihies** is the newly remodelled **Village Allihies Hostel** (☎ 71307; allihieshostel@eircom.net; dm/s/d €18/25/45; ♿ ♿). Also in Allihies is the welcoming **Sea View Guesthouse** (☎ 73004; www.seaviewallihies.com; s/d €35/70; ♿).

Bus Éireann's bus 46 runs from Cork to Castletownbere, via Bantry, Glengarriff and Adrigole, once or twice a day. Bus 282 serves Castletownbere and Kenmare with a stop at Lauragh twice a day, Monday to Saturday, from mid-June to August only. Though most people walk or hitch to Allihies, it's served by the privately run **O'Donoghue bus company** (☎ 70007).

#### KILLARNEY

☎ 064 / pop 12,087

Though its tourist trade is healthy all year, Killarney becomes a strange orgy of hyper-tourism and over-the-top 'Irishness' during summer. Unlike most tourist traps, however, Killarney's popularity is justly deserved. Not only is it a lovely town, but it also has a national park and three lakes at its doorstep, providing endless escapes for walkers and cyclists. It's a convenient base for touring the Ring of Kerry (p678) and also a transport hub for the area.

#### Information

*Guide Killarney* (€5) is a good monthly 'what's on' guide, available at B&Bs, hostels and the tourist office.



**Killarney Library** (☎ 32655; Rock Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat, 10am-8pm Tue & Thu) Internet access is free, but you should book ahead.

**Main Post Office** (☎ 31461; New St)

**Ri Rá** (☎ 38729; 3 Plunkett St; per hr €2.95; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat Mar-Oct, 9am-9pm Mon-Sat Nov-Feb, noon-9pm Sun year-round) Offers the cheapest Internet access.

**Tourist Office** (☎ 31633; www.corkkerry.ie; Beech Rd; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Jul-Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Sep & Jun, 9.15am-5pm Mon-Sat Oct-May) Killarney's tourist office is busy.

## Sights

### WITHIN KILLARNEY

Most of Killarney's attractions are just outside the town, not actually in it. The 1855 **St Mary's Cathedral** (☎ 31014; Port Rd) is worth a look, as is the **Museum of Irish Transport** (☎ 34677; Scott's Gardens, East Ave Rd; adult/child €5/2; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, 11am-4pm Sep-Oct), which has an interesting assortment of old cars and bikes, and is wheelchair accessible.

### KILLARNEY NATIONAL PARK

The backdrop of mountains (well, big hills) beyond town are part of Killarney's huge 10,236-hectare national park. Within the park are beautiful Lough Leane, Muckross Lake and Upper Lake. There's a pedestrian entrance opposite St Mary's Cathedral, and a drivers' entrance off the N71.

Besides ruins and ex-gentry housing, the park also has much to explore by foot, bike or boat – plenty of options to last a day or longer. The *Killarney Area Guide* (€1.90 at the tourist office) has some ideas.

The restored 14th-century **Ross Castle** (☎ 35851; www.heritageireland.ie; adult/concession €5/2; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Jun-Aug, 10am-6pm Sep & May, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Oct, 10am-5pm Apr) is a 2.5km walk from St Mary's Cathedral. Hour-long **crises on Lough Leane** (adult/child €8/5) leave the castle daily in summer; make bookings at the tourist office. From late September to May boats depart only on demand.

**Inisfallen Island**, Lough Leane's largest, is where the 13th-century *Annals of Inisfallen* were written. The annals, now in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, remain a vital source of information about early Irish history. From Ross Castle you can hire a boat and row to the island to inspect the ruins of a 12th-century **oratory**. Alternatively, boatmen charge around €8 per person for the trip.

The core of Killarney National Park is **Muckross Estate** (☎ 31440; www.muckross-house.ie; adult/child €5.75/2.35; ☎ 9am-6pm), donated to the government in 1932. You can walk around the estate's rooms and view the 19th-century fittings free of guided tours. The estate is 5km from central Killarney, set in beautiful gardens; in summer a tourist bus (€8) leaves for the house at 1.45pm from O'Connor's pub (High St), returning at 5.15pm.

### GAP OF DUNLOE

In summer the Gap, a heather-clad valley at the foot of Purple Mountain (832m), is Killarney tourism at its ugliest. Rather than following the hordes on one-hour horse-and-trap rides through the Gap (about €50), consider hiring a bike and cycling to Ross Castle. From there take a boat across to Lord Brandon's Cottage and cycle through the Gap and back into town via the N72. This should cost about €25, including bike hire.

## Sleeping

Wherever you stay, book ahead from June to August. Hostels often hire bikes and offer discounted tours.

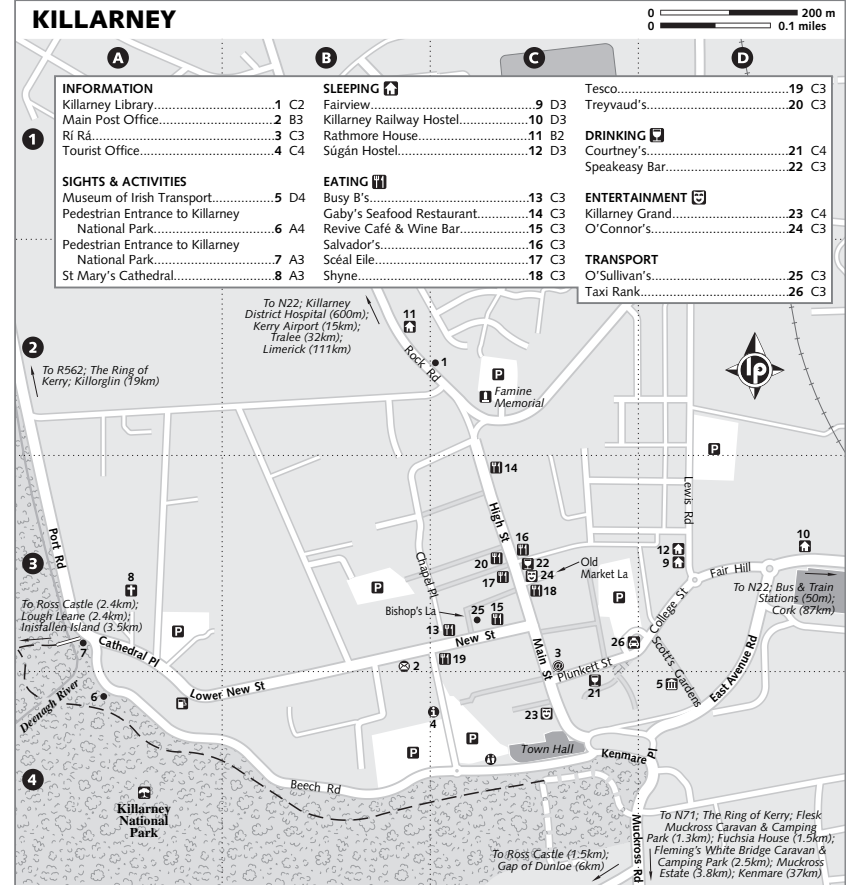
### BUDGET

**Fleming's White Bridge Caravan & Camping Park** (☎ 31590; www.killarneycamping.com; White Bridge, Ballycasheen Rd; camp site €19; ☎ Apr-Oct) This camping ground is about 2.5km from town on the banks of the Flesk River. To get here, head south out of Killarney along Muckross Rd and turn left at Woodlawn.

**Flesk Muckross Caravan & Camping Park** (☎ 31704; www.campingkillarney.com; Muckross Rd; camp site €19; ☎ mid-Apr-Sep) About 1.5km from the town centre on Kenmare road (N71), this campground has great views of the mountains and an on-site supermarket.

**Súgán Hostel** (☎ 33104; www.killarneysuganhostel.com; Lewis Rd; dm/d €16/35) Resembling a hobbit hole, this homy hostel has warm hosts and an equally warm fire. The atmosphere is nothing short of familial, which makes leaving a hard task. Bicycle hire is €12 a day.

**Killarney Railway Hostel** (☎ 35299; railwayhostel@eircom.net; Fair Hill; dm/s/d €16/30/38; ☎) This bright, clean hostel is conveniently located near the train and bus stations, and the town centre. It has a good kitchen and a lounge full of leather chair comfy-ness, and has wheelchair access.



### MIDRANGE & TOP END

Finding a room can be tricky during the high season, so it may be worth the €4 fee to have the tourist office do the hunting.

**Rathmore House** (☎ 32829; rathmorehousek@iol.ie; Rock Rd; s/d €42/70; ☎) There's a real Irish welcome at this long-established, family-run B&B at the entrance to town.

**Fuchsia House** (☎ 33743; www.fuchsiaguesthouse.com; Muckross Rd; s/d €65/110; ☎) Rooms are huge, with plush carpets, sparkling bathrooms (with towel warmers), antique furniture and elegant, original décor. Some look out over the back yard, a lush garden in rich greens and pinks.

**Fairview** (☎ 34164; www.fairviewkillarney.com; Lewis Rd; s/d €130/180; ☎) Having received

more awards than humanly imaginable, the incredible Fairview has been wooing visitors for the past 25 years. The lavish interior is enhanced by luxurious little touches, like plasma TVs and Jacuzzis in most of the rooms. The host, James, is possibly the most attentive in Killarney. Rates are substantially discounted in the low season, and wheelchair access is available.

## Eating

### BUDGET

**Shyne** (☎ 32686; 1 Old Market Rd; smoothies €3.60-5, snacks €3-8; ☎ 9.30am-10pm Jun-Sep, 9.30am-6pm Oct-May) Feel like a healthier alternative to all the crap food and booze you've been consuming? Drop by Shyne and get a delicious

smoothie or a freshly cut sandwich and home-made soup.

**Busy B's** (☎ 31972; 15 New St; mains €3.50-11; ☎ 11am-10.30pm) Feeling more like a country diner than a bistro, this refreshingly unhip eatery serves breakfast all day, alongside veggie burgers, spaghetti and pita sandwiches. It also boasts a calorie-counter menu.

**Revive Café & Wine Bar** (☎ 266519; New St; snacks €4-8; ☎ 9.30am-6pm) This well-lit bistro serving Illy-brand Italian espresso and unique sandwiches may be an indicator that café culture is taking root in Killarney.

**Scéal Eile** (☎ 35066; 73 High St; mains €3.50-11; ☎ 9.30am-10pm Jun-Sep, 9.30am-6pm Oct-May) A busy and super-friendly two-storey establishment, Scéal Eile serves a wide variety of food, including home-made baked goods. If you happen to fall in love while in Killarney, it makes darling wedding cakes, too!

For self-caterers, there is a **Tesco** (☎ 28530; New St; ☎ 8.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-7pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) across from the tourist office.

#### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Salvador's** (☎ 32816; 9 High St; mains €12-18; ☎ 11am-10pm) The glow of the candles creeping off red and cream painted walls makes the atmosphere of this mix-and-match Italian eatery perfect for everyone. The big portions, nice staff and full bar help, too.

**Treyvaud's** (☎ 33062; 62 High St; mains €15-24; ☎ noon-10.30pm, closed Mon-Tue low season) With very modern and upscale décor, this award-winning restaurant specialises in wildly exotic meats such as kangaroo, alligator and ostrich.

**Gaby's Seafood Restaurant** (☎ 32519; High St; mains €24.50-48; ☎ 6-10pm Mon-Sat) Gaby's is the place to go if someone else is footing the bill. Its sophisticated yet unpretentious nautical theme fits perfectly, allowing you to sit back, relax and enjoy the delicious lobster or steak that (hopefully) someone else is paying for.

#### Drinking & Entertainment

**Killarney Grand** (☎ 31159; Main St) A great place for authentic music, if you can hear it over the boisterous crowd, the Grand has interesting takes on the traditional thing from 9pm. At 11pm modern bands take over (€6 cover).

**O'Connor's** (☎ 30200; 7 High St) Reliable O'Connor's puts on a mix of trad, stand-up comedy, readings and pub theatre.

**Courtney's** (☎ 32689; Plunkett St) With a few nice fireplaces, barrels used as tables and nearly everything made from wood, Courtney's offers the ultimate Irish pub atmosphere.

**Speakeasy Bar** (☎ 32540; High St) This place gets lively during summer, but otherwise is filled with old men watching horse races who snicker at you if your mobile rings.

#### Getting There & Around

Operating from the **train station** (☎ 31067), **Bus Éireann** (☎ 30011) has regular services to Cork (€14.50, two hours, four daily), Dingle via Tralee (€13, 2½ hours, five daily), Galway via Limerick (€20.50, five hours, eight daily), Dublin (€22, six hours, five daily) and Rosslare Harbour (€22, seven hours, one to two daily). Travelling by train to Cork (€24, 2¼ hours, three daily) or Dublin (€57, six hours, three daily) usually involves changing at Mallow.

Taxis cost roughly €2.50 per kilometre and can be caught at the taxi rank.

**O'Sullivan's** (☎ 22389; Bishop's Lane) hires bikes for €12/70 per day/week.

#### THE RING OF KERRY

☎ 066

The Ring of Kerry, a 179km circuit around Iveragh Peninsula with dramatic scenery, is one of Ireland's top tourist attractions.

Most travellers tackle the Ring by bus on guided day trips from Killarney. The tourist buses approach the Ring in an anticlockwise direction, and in summer it's hard to know which is more unpleasant – driving or cycling behind the buses or travelling in the opposite direction and meeting them on blind corners.

Eliminate some of these frustrations by leaving the main highway. The **Ballaghbeama Pass** cuts across the peninsula's central highlands, and has spectacular views and little traffic.

The shorter **Ring of Skellig**, at the end of the peninsula, has fine views of the Skellig Rocks and is less touristy. You can forgo roads completely by walking the **Kerry Way**, which winds through the Macgillicuddy's Reeks mountains past Carrantuohill (1038m), Ireland's highest mountain.

#### Sights

Daniel O'Connell (see p646) was born near **Cahiriveen**, one of the Ring's larger towns. The excellent, wheelchair-accessible **Barbarks Heritage Centre** (☎ 947 2777; adult/student €4/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun May-Sep) off Bridge St occupies what was once an intimidating Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) barracks. Exhibits focus on O'Connell and moving material on the famine's local impact. From here you can follow signs to see a couple of impressive **ring forts** and the dilapidated **Ballycarbery Castle**. All three are on private land, but there are many gaps in the fences.

South of Cahiriveen the R565 branches west to the 11km-long **Valentia Island**, a jumping-off point for an unforgettable experience: the **Skellig Rocks**, two tiny islands 12km off the coast. The vertiginous climb up uninhabited Skellig Michael inspires an awe that monks could have clung to life in the meagre beehive-shaped stone huts that stand on the only flat strip of land on top.

Calm seas permitting, boats run from spring to late summer from Portmagee, just before the bridge to Valentia, to Skellig Michael. The standard fare is around €35 return. Advance booking is essential; contact **Joe Roddy & Sons** (☎ 947 4268; www.skelligtrips.com) or **Des Lavelle** (☎ 947 6124; lavelles@indigo.ie).

The **Skellig Experience** (☎ 947 6306; www.skelligexperience.com; adult/child €4.40/2.20; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-May & Sep-Nov, 10am-7pm Jun-Aug), on Valentia Island across from Portmagee, has exhibits on the life and times of the monks who lived on Skellig Michael from the 7th to the 12th centuries. It is wheelchair accessible.

#### Sleeping

There are scores of hostels and great B&Bs along the Ring. It's wise to book your next night as you make your way around, as some places are closed out of season and others fill up quickly.

**Cáitín Hostel** (☎ 947 7614; Kells; dm €13) A no-frills hostel in the middle of nowhere.

**Royal Pier** (☎ 947 6144; dm €18-25, d €45-50) This large Victorian hotel/hostel in Knightstown, on Valentia Island, once actually hosted Queen Victoria. It was in the process of changing hands and being renovated at the time of research.

**Riverside House** (☎ 976 1184; www.riversidehouse.bnb.com; Killorglin; s/d €43.50/65; ☎ Mar-Nov; Ⓟ) This gorgeous B&B has panoramic gardens, a patio balcony, and a dining room that overlooks the river.

**O'Shea's B&B** (☎ 947 2402; osheasbnb@eircom.net; Church St; s/d €35/70; Ⓟ) Directly in the centre of Cahiriveen, across from the bus stop, O'Shea's is a friendly B&B, with a nice view from the back of the house.

**Ballinskelligs Inn** (☎ 947 9106; www.ballinskelligsinn.com; Ballinskelligs; s/d €35/70; Ⓟ) Hosting people for over 100 years, this seaside inn is a comfortable place to spend the night after a long day of cycling, hiking or driving. The attached pub/restaurant is rip-roaring fun during summer.

#### Getting There & Around

If you're not really up to cycling, **Bus Éireann** (☎ 064-30011) has a Ring of Kerry bus service daily from late May to mid-September. In June buses leave Killarney at 8.30am and 1.45pm, and stop at Killorglin, Glenbeigh, Kells, Cahiriveen, Waterville, Caherdaniel and Sneem, before returning to Killarney (the 3.45pm service terminates at Waterville).

Travel agencies in Killarney, including **Destination Killarney Tours** (☎ 064-32638; Scott's Gardens) and **O'Connor's Tours** (☎ 32456; 7 High St), offer daily tours of the Ring for about €20. Hostels in Killarney arrange tours for around €18.

#### THE DINGLE PENINSULA

☎ 066

The Dingle Peninsula is far less crowded and just as beautiful as the Ring of Kerry, with narrow roads that discourage heavy bus traffic.

The region's main hub, Dingle Town (An Daingean), is a workaday fishing village with some of Ireland's most interesting pubs. The western tip of the peninsula, noted for its extraordinary number of ring forts and high crosses, is predominantly Irish-speaking.

The **tourist office** (☎ 915 1188; www.corkkerry.ie; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Jun-Aug, 9.15am-1pm & 2-5.15pm Tue & Thu-Sat Sep-May) is at the Dingle Town pier. **Dingle Internet Café** (☎ 915 2478; Lower Main St; per hr €5; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 1-6pm Sun, closed Sun Nov-Feb, 10am-10pm Mar-Oct) also offers cheap international calling.

## Dingle Town

pop 1647

In the winter of 1984 fisherfolk noticed a bottlenose dolphin that followed their vessels and sometimes leapt over their boats.

**Dingle Boatmen's Association** (☎ 915 2626) leaves Dingle's pier for one-hour trips to find Fungie the dolphin. The cost is €12 (or free if Fungie doesn't show, but he usually does). You can swim with him for €25; wetsuit hire is extra. The **Peig Sayers** (☎ 915 1344; www.greatblasketisland.com) also leaves from the harbour for the Blasket Islands (€30 return).

**Dingle Oceanworld** (☎ 915 2111; www.dingle-oceanworld.ie; adult/child €10.50/6.25; ☎ 10am-6pm, 10am-8.30pm in summer), opposite the harbour, has a walk-through tunnel and touch pool, and it's wheelchair accessible. It was renovated in 2005 and is now a top-notch experience.

Ride a horse through the peninsula for €20 per hour with **Dingle Horse Riding** (☎ 915 2199; www.dinglehorseriding.com), or learn to surf by contacting Jamie at **Westcoast Surf School** (☎ 086-306 7053) for €30/25 per adult/child, including equipment.

## East of Dingle

From Tralee the N86 heads west along the coast. The 'quick' route to Dingle Town is southwest from Camp via Anascaul and the N86. The scenic route follows the R560 northwest crossing the wildly scenic **Connor Pass** (456m).

## West of Dingle

From Dingle follow signs for the 'Slea Head Drive', a scenic coastal stretch of the R559. To the southwest, **Slea Head** offers some of the peninsula's best views.

**Ferries** (☎ 915 6422, 915 4864) run from Dunquin to the bleak, uninhabited (since 1953) **Blasket Islands** (€20 return, 20 minutes), off the tip of the peninsula. Subtly powerful exhibits at Dunquin's excellent, wheelchair-accessible **Blasket Centre** (☎ 915 6444; adult/child €3.50/1.25; ☎ 10am-7pm Jul-Aug, 10am-6pm Apr-Jun & Sep) feature the lives of the islanders, many of them celebrated musicians, storytellers and writers.

## Sleeping

**Grapevine Hostel** (☎ 915 1434; Dykegate St, Dingle Town; dm €15-17, d €40-45) On a small street in the centre of town, the Grapevine is a well-

run hostel, whose lack of TV encourages guitar singalongs around the fireplace.

**An Capall Dubh** (☎ 915 1105; Green St, Dingle Town; s/d €70/90; ♿) Sitting on a cobbled courtyard and accessed through a 19th-century stone-built coach entrance, this delightful B&B is a great place to relax after a long day in the outdoors, or a long night at the pubs.

**Dingle Bay Hotel** (☎ 915 1231; www.dinglebayhotel.com; Strand St, Dingle Town; s/d €90/180; ♿) An upscale, modern place on the water, the Dingle Bay has all the amenities a hotel of this calibre should have, including Internet access for your laptop. It's also wheelchair accessible.

Hostels east of Dingle include the IHH **Dingle Gate Hostel** (☎ 915 7150; fuchsia@eircom.net; camp site per person €5, dm/s/d €12/17/34), in Anascaul, and the IHH **Connor Pass Hostel** (☎ 713 9179; dm €14; ☎ Apr-Oct) in Stradbally.

West of Dingle, in Dunquin, look for the following recommended options:

**Black Cat Hostel** (☎ 915 6286; dm/d €12/24) An IHO hostel in Ballyferrier.

**Ballybeag Hostel** (☎ 915 9876; dm/d €15/30; ♿) In Ventry, this fantastic hostel offers bike hire, cheap laundry facilities, wheelchair access and a swing in the garden.

**Dun Chaoin Hostel** (☎ 915 6121; dm €13-16, d €34; ☎ closed 10am-5pm; ♿) An Óige's hostel, across from the Blasket Centre.

## Eating

**An Café Liteártha** (☎ 915 2204; Dykegate Lane, Dingle Town; snacks €3-7; ☎ 9am-6pm) Allow the spirit of literary Dingle to engulf you as you eat your soup in this café, nestled at the back of an excellent bookshop that specialises in local history and Irish-language books.

**Homely House** (☎ 915 2431; Dick Mack's Yard, Green St, Dingle Town; snacks €4-9.50; ☎ noon-5pm Mon-Sat) Owned by an expat from Los Angeles, this tiny restaurant is probably the closest thing you'll get to authentic Mexican food in all of Ireland. Also note that the back of the menu is laugh-out-loud funny.

**Blue Zone** (☎ 915 0303; Green St, Dingle Town; mains €6-16; ☎ 6pm-1am Tue-Sat) Chill out to some Miles Davis and enjoy a Thai-tingered chicken and lime pizza with a glass of California Pinot Noir in Dingle's only 'Jazz, Pizza & Wine Bar'.

## Drinking

**An Droichead Beag** (☎ 915 1723; www.thsmallbridge.com; Main St, Dingle Town; ☎ 10am-11.30pm Mon-Thu, 10am-12.30am Fri & Sat, noon-11pm Sun) Now this is a

pub! Filled with snugs, odd woodwork and a couple of bars, this great cavernous place has 'mighty' trad sessions nightly.

**Foxy John's** (☎ 915 1316; Main St) Half hardware store, half old-school pub, stop into Foxy John's for a pint, some nails and some good *craic*. You can also hire a bike here for €10 a day.

**Dick Mack's** (☎ 915 1960; Green St) Vestiges of its previous incarnation as a pub and cobbler line the walls, while drunken revellers sing songs and pat each other's backs. Although shoes are no longer repaired here, rumour has it that belts still are.

## Getting There & Around

Bus stop outside the car park at the back of the Super Valu store in Dingle Town. Killarney–Tralee–Dingle buses run four times daily Monday to Saturday (€13, 2½ hours). Dingle has several bike-hire places. **Paddy Walsh** (☎ 915 2311; Dykegate St), near the Grapevine Hostel, has bikes for €12/70 per day/week.

## LIMERICK

☎ 061 / pop 54,023

Trying to shake off both the dubious nickname 'Stab-City' and the backlash from the squalor depicted in Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*, Limerick (Luimneach) finally seems to be getting its act together. With a growing number of good restaurants and a lively music scene, Limerick might be as cool as Cork or Galway if you give it a few years.

## Orientation & Information

The main street through town changes name from Rutland St to Patrick St, then O'Connell St, The Crescent and Quinlan St as it runs south. The train and bus station are to the southeast, off Parnell St. The **tourist office** (☎ 317522; www.shannonregiontourism.ie; Arthur's Quay; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5.30pm Sat & Sun Jul-Aug, 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat Nov-Apr, 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat May-Jun & Sep-Oct) is near the Shannon River.

## Sights

The fascinating **Hunt Museum** (☎ 312833; www.huntmuseum.com; Rutland St; adult/child €7.20/3.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun) has contemporary art shows, and a superb collection of Bronze Age, Celtic and medieval artefacts.

Half the fun of this museum is opening the drawers, where much of the collection is kept, to discover random treasures within. It's also wheelchair accessible.

The lofty, echoing rooms of the restored **Georgian House** (☎ 314130; 2 Perry Sq; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm) are charmingly eerie. The back garden leads to a coach house that contains a photographic memoir of Limerick and a small but evocative **Ashes Exhibition**, including a reconstruction of Frank McCourt's childhood home.

Across the Shannon is the sturdy but underwhelming **King John's Castle** (☎ 360788; Nicholas St; adult/child €7.95/4.75; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm Nov-Mar, 10am-5.30pm Apr-Oct). Limerick's oldest building, **St Mary's Cathedral** (☎ 310293; admission €2; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sat Jun-Sep), was founded in 1168; parts of the original survive.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Cherry Blossom** (☎ 469449; www.cherryblossomlimerick.com; 3 Alexandra Tce, O'Connell Ave; dm/s/d/q €20/30/50/72) Your best budget option in town is small and friendly, and has only one dorm room, a single-sex six-bedder.

**Railway Hotel** (☎ 413653; www.railwayhotel.ie; Parnell St; s/d €45/90) This is something classic and lean about this hotel, like you could imagine a horror film taking place here, in a good way (if that makes any sense). The Irish breakfast is great after a long night on the town, and the attached bar is a nice place to meet other travellers. It's opposite the bus and train station.

**Java's Café & Wine Bar** (☎ 418077; 5 Catherine St; mains €6-8; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-8pm Sun) Stylish Java's has loads of teas and coffees and fresh wraps and salads at good prices. The walls are red, and it's all very hip and busy.

**Aubars** (☎ 317799; 49-50 Thomas St; mains €8.50-24; ☎ 8pm-midnight Sun-Thu, 8pm-2am Fri & Sat) The coloured lighting, mirrored walls and Continental Europe and bistro fare of this bar/restaurant are definite signs that Limerick is pulling itself out of its mired past.

## Getting There & Around

Twenty-four kilometres from Limerick, **Shannon airport** (SNN; ☎ 712000) handles domestic and international flights. Some budget airlines that land here are Ryanair and easyJet. See p705 for contact details.

**Bus Éireann** (☎ 313333) services operate from Colbert train station, with hourly connections to Dublin (€12, 1¼ hours), Cork (€14.60, two hours) and Galway (€14.60, 2½ hours). Direct buses also run from the airport to Dublin, Cork and Killarney. By **train** (☎ 315555) it costs €41.50 to Dublin (10 daily) and €22 to Cork (seven daily). Hourly buses connect Shannon with the bus and train station (€5.70).

**Emerald Alpine Cycles** (☎ 416983; 1 Patrick St) hires bikes for €20/80 per day/week. For an extra €25, return or pick up the bike in any other town nationwide.

## THE WEST COAST

There's an ineffable, almost magic quality that draws us to Ireland's west coast. It could be the way that Galway so unexpectedly sweeps us off our feet, or the way that the Burren looks like a large lunar landscape littered with flowers. Some might say that it's the solemn Aran Islands that pull us in, or those ancient fortresses that call out to us. Regardless of its source, there's no denying that something is there, and it keeps pulling millions of us to it year after year.

## THE BURREN

The harsh and haunting Burren stretches across west County Clare like a time capsule melted into magma. *Boireann* is Irish for 'Rocky Country', and the name is no exaggeration. Unwelcoming from the surface, the Burren transforms upon entering into a complex landscape littered with ancient dolmens, ring forts, round towers, high crosses and a surprisingly diverse range of flora, while rocky foreshores and splendid cliffs line its coast.

Tim Robinson's excellent *Burren Map & Guide* is available at bookshops or tourist offices. If you're stuck for transport, a number of bus tours leave the Galway tourist office every morning for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher, including **O'Neachtain Tours** (☎ 091-553188; www.oneachtaintours.com). They all cost around €25. A much better way to explore the Burren, however, is on foot: **Burren Hill Walks** (☎ 065-707 7168) based in Ballyvaughan and **Burren Wild** (☎ 087-877 9565; www.burrenwalks.com) near Kinvara both offer half-day guided walks for €20 per person.

## Doolin

☎ 065 / pop 200

Tiny Doolin, famed for its music pubs, is a convenient base for exploring the Burren and the awesome Cliffs of Moher. It's also a gateway for boats to Inisheer, the easternmost and smallest of the Aran Islands. In summer it can be difficult to get a bed in Doolin, so book ahead. Some of the hostels hire bikes for around €10 a day, plus deposit.

Doolin's reputation for topnotch traditional Irish music has spread like wildfire; summer nights find the three pubs packed with an appreciative cosmopolitan crowd.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Aille River Hostel** (☎ 707 4260; www.esatclear.ie/~aillerver; dm/d/tr €14/33/52.50; ☹ closed Jan; (P) (Q)) In a picturesque spot by the river in the upper village this converted 17th-century farmhouse is the best budget choice. It has turf fires, hot showers, free laundry facilities and good company.

**Daly's House** (☎ 707 4242; www.dalys-doolin.com; s/d €30/60; (P)) What makes B&Bs special is that someone is bringing you into their home, and here Susan Daly makes you feel truly welcome. Situated 100m off Fisher St, Daly's House has panoramic views of the Cliffs of Moher, a comfy lounge area and even babysitting options.

**Doolin Cafe** (☎ 707 4795; Roadford; lunch €3.50-9.50, dinner €17-22.50; ☹ noon-3pm & 6-10pm) There's great atmosphere – homy but elegant – at this friendly café. With the fantastic food, from steaks to veggie options, it could be pretentious, but chooses not to be.

**Lazy Lobster** (☎ 707 4390; Roadford; mains €15.50-25; ☹ 5-10pm Thu-Sat, noon-3pm & 5-9pm Sun) Considering Doolin's proximity to the sea, this award-winning restaurant is hard to resist. Ummm...fresh lobster!

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are direct buses to Doolin from Limerick, Ennis, Galway and even Dublin; the main Bus Éireann stop is across from Paddy Moloney's Doolin Hostel. For information on ferries to and from the islands, see p686.

### Cliffs of Moher

About 8km south of Doolin are the towering 203m Cliffs of Moher, one of Ireland's

most famous natural features. In summer the cliffs are overrun by day-trippers, so consider staying in Doolin and hiking or biking along the Burren's quiet country lanes, where the views are superb and crowds are never a problem. Either way, be careful along these sheer cliffs, especially in wet or windy weather.

Near the **Cliffs of Moher tourist centre** (☎ 065-708 1171; ☹ 9.30am-5.30pm May-Sep) is **O'Brien's Tower**, which you can climb for €1. Apparently, local landlord Cornelius O'Brien (1801-57) raised it to impress 'lady visitors'. From the tower walk south or north and the crowds soon disappear. You can also avoid the crowds – and the €5 charge for the car park – by visiting after the tourist centre closes.

## GALWAY

☎ 091 / pop 65,832

Galway glows. Hip, happening, there's something going on here; you don't walk down Shop St, you glide. There's an energy here that you can feel and you just know there is no place like it in the rest of Ireland. As you creep through medieval streets, bouncing between pubs, restaurants and shops, the city seems to whisper, 'Whatever it is that you want, we've got it baby'. Galway also acts as a gateway for the Aran Islands.

### Orientation & Information

Galway's tightly packed city centre is spread evenly on both sides of the Corrib River. The bus and train stations are within a stone's throw of Eyre Sq.

The **tourist office** (☎ 537700; www.irelandwest.ie; Forster St; ☹ 9am-5.45pm Jun-Oct, 9am-5.45pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.45pm Sun Jan-May & Nov-Dec) is a short way off Eyre Sq. In summer there can be a long wait to make accommodation bookings.

Send mail at the **main post office** (Eglington St) and email at **net@ccess** (☎ 569 772; Old Malt Shopping Arcade, High St; per hr €2.50; ☹ 9am-11pm).

### Sights

Set to be finished with restoration by the time you read this, **Eyre Sq**, the city centre's eastern focal point, will be a fine place for people-watching. In the centre of the square is **Kennedy Park**, honouring a visit by John F Kennedy in 1963. Southwest of the square, the **Collegiate Church of St Nicholas of Myra** (Shop St) dates from 1320 and has several tombs.

Also on Shop St, parts of **Lynch Castle**, now a bank, date back to the 14th century. Lynch, so the story goes, was a mayor of Galway in the 15th century who, when his son was condemned for murder, personally acted as hangman. The stone façade that is the **Lynch Memorial Window** (Market St) marks the spot of the deed.

Across the road, in the Bowling Green area, is the **Nora Barnacle House Museum** (☎ 564743; www.norabarnacle.com; 8 Bowling Green; admission €2.50; ☹ 10am-5pm mid-May-mid-Sep or by appointment), the former home of the wife and lifelong muse of James Joyce. The small museum is dedicated to the couple.

Little remains of Galway's old city walls apart from the **Spanish Arch**, right beside the river mouth. The **Spanish Arch Museum** (Spanish Pde) is set to open by this book's publication and will house, among other things, the controversial statue of Galway-born writer and hell-raiser Pádraic O'Conaire (1883-1928), which was previously in Eyre Sq.

Feel like petting slimy sea creatures? Stop by the **Atlantiquaria** (☎ 585100; www.nationalaquarium.ie; Salthill Promenade; adult/child €8/5; ☹ 10am-5pm Wed-Sun Oct-Mar, 9am-6pm Apr-Sep) and see the hands-on exhibit at Ireland's National Aquarium. It's roughly 2km from the city centre.

### Festivals & Events

In July the **Galway Arts Festival** (www.galwayartsfestival.com) is a big event. The **Galway Oyster Festival** (www.galwayoysterfest.com), going strong for 50 years, draws thousands each autumn.

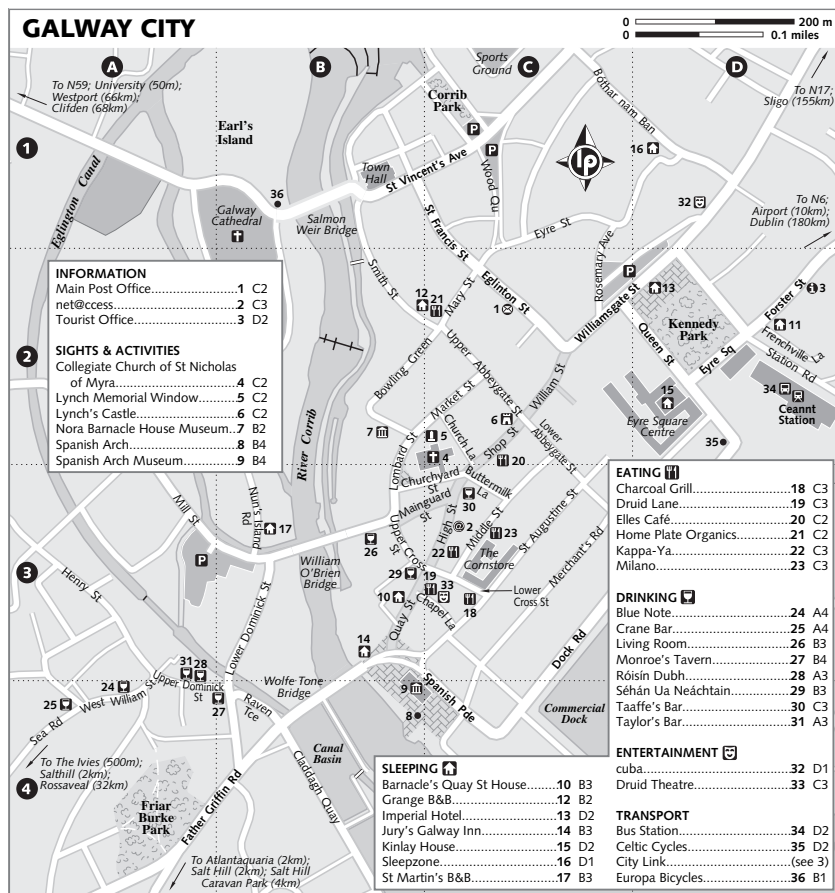
### Sleeping BUDGET

**Salthill Caravan Park** (☎ 523972; www.salthillcaravanpark.com; camp site per person €8; ☹ Apr-Sep; (P)) Just west of Salthill, off Salthill Rd, is this scenic spot right on the water. A bus runs the 4km into the city centre every half-hour.

**Barnacle's Quay Street House** (☎ 568644; www.barnacles.ie; 10 Quay St; dm €16.50-23, d €56; (Q)) In a repurposed 16th-century townhouse, Barnacle's is at the heart of the action, surrounded by all the pubs, cafés and restaurants you came to Galway for. Unfortunately, this also makes it very loud, especially when the 7am street sweeper cleans up the previous night's *craic*.

**Kinlay House** (☎ 565244; www.kinlayhouse.ie; Merchant's Rd; dm €17.50-26, d €52-57; (Q)) The modern,





large, wheelchair-accessible Kinlay House is a convenient base half a block off Eyre Sq. It has clean, spacious rooms and a huge eating/lounge area, which can see all-night revelry. You can book discounted bus tours and Aran Islands ferries at reception.

Also recommended:

**Galway Hostel** (☎ 566959; [www.galwaycityhostel.com](http://www.galwaycityhostel.com); Frenchville Lane; dm €18-23, s/d €60/62; 📺)

Newly refurbished, the Galway Hostel is a no-frills, but friendly, place to stay, right across from the bus station.

**Sleepzone** (☎ 566999; [www.sleepzone.ie](http://www.sleepzone.ie); Bóthar nam Ban, Wood Quay; dm €19.50-25, s/d €50/64; 📺) This very large, clean hostel is painted in bright pastels and has large kitchen and dining areas, where all the action happens. Make sure to look at the whiteboard to see what's going on in Galway when you visit.

## MIDRANGE & TOP END

**St Martin's B&B** (☎ 568286; 2 Nun's Island Rd; s/d €37.50/75) St Martin's is in an ideal spot, with back-window views overlooking the William O'Brien Bridge and a simple garden on the banks of the Corrib. It's in a well-kept, older townhouse, and the home cooking, comfortable rooms, friendliness and central location put it above everything else.

**Grange B&B** (☎ 530160; Smith St; s/d €43/65) Nestled nicely above a Mexican food joint and just two minutes' walk from both Shop St and Eyre Sq, Grange's prime location is perfect for anyone who plans on cavorting around Galway.

**Jury's Galway Inn** (☎ 566444; [www.bookajuryinn.com](http://www.bookajuryinn.com); Quay St; r €112; 📺) Overlooking the Corrib

and Wolfe Tone Bridge, this is a completely modern, full-service hotel. Rooms can accommodate three adults or a family of four at no additional charge. It's also wheelchair accessible.

**Imperial Hotel** (☎ 563033; [www.imperialhotelgalway.ie](http://www.imperialhotelgalway.ie); Eyre Sq; s/d €90/150; 📺) Sitting right on Eyre Sq, this delightful three-star hotel has everything you might need during your stay, including a bar/restaurant on the premises. It also has incredibly comfortable beds.

## Eating

**Home Plate Organics** (☎ 561475; 13 Mary St; mains €5-10; 📺 noon-8pm) Home Plate is smart and homy, and serves high-quality meals in heaping quantities. It's the best deal in town, whether you crave roasted meat, a ciabatta sandwich or a veggie omelette.

**Kappa-Ya** (☎ 086-354 3616; 4 Middle St; mains €5-15; 📺 11am-5pm) A welcome addition to an already fine culinary scene, Kappa-Ya is Galway's first sushi restaurant. The service is as friendly as the food is good.

**Milano** (☎ 568488; Middle St; mains €8-13; 📺 noon-10.30pm) This classy place offers a good variety of dishes, including exquisite salads, gourmet pizza and plenty of veggie options.

**Druid Lane** (☎ 563015; 9 Quay St; mains €14.95-24; 📺 5-10.30pm, lunch 12.30-3pm Jun-Aug) Druid Lane's unique menu, coupled with its extensive wine list, make chef/owner Camilla Cutler seem like a culinary genius. The tasteful decorations and loquacious staff only add to the enjoyment of the meal.

Also recommended:

**Elles Café** (☎ 569585; 12 Shop St; snacks €3.50-8; 📺 8am-6pm) Smart café selling tasty smoothies, sandwiches and fair-trade coffee.

**Charcoal Grill** (☎ 087-683 8367; Lower Cross St; snacks €1.70-10; 📺 noon-3am Sun-Thu, noon-4am Fri-Sat) A fantastic late-night Turkish chipper whose creamy garlic sauce you'll taste halfway through the next day.

## Drinking & Entertainment

The free *Galway Advertiser* includes listings of what's on in the city. It's available on Thursday at the tourist office and newsstands around town.

## LIVE MUSIC

**Blue Note** (☎ 589116; 3 West William St) Do you like soul music? How about funk or Afro-beat? Rather, do you like music so good, you can't help but move? We thought so.

The Blue Note has different DJs playing excellent music nightly. If that weren't enough, it also has an outside heated smoking area, and serves free hot dogs on Tuesday, Wednesday and Sunday.

**Róisín Dubh** (☎ 586540; [www.roisindubh.net](http://www.roisindubh.net); Upper Dominick St) Appearing like a reliable local boozier, Róisín Dubh is better known as *the* place to see top rock and roll talents before they get too big.

**Séhan Ua Neachtain** (☎ 568820; 17 Upper Cross St) Known simply as Neachtains, this dusty old pub has a truly fabulous atmosphere and attracts an eccentric, mixed crowd.

Good spots to hear trad sessions include **Monroe's Tavern** (☎ 583397; Upper Dominick St), which has set dancing on Tuesday, **Taaffe's Bar** (☎ 564066; 19 Shop St), **Taylor's Bar** (☎ 587239; Upper Dominick St) and the **Crane Bar** (☎ 587419; 2 Sea Rd).

## NIGHTCLUBS

**Living Room** (☎ 563804; [www.thelivingroom.ie](http://www.thelivingroom.ie); Bridge St) Hip, cool and funky, if this place could walk, it would swagger. Its 1970s-style wallpaper, couches and low, coloured lighting make it virtually irresistible.

**cuba** (☎ 565991; [www.cuba.ie](http://www.cuba.ie); Eyre Sq) Exuding Latin swank and attracting exuberant crowds, cuba has three cavernous floors with soulful DJs and live bands, often going simultaneously.

## THEATRE

**Druid Theatre** (☎ 568660; Chapel Lane) The long-established Druid is famed for its experimental works by young Irish playwrights.

## Getting There & Around

The **bus station** (☎ 562000) is just behind the Great Southern Hotel, off Eyre Sq, and next to the **Ceannt train station** (☎ 561444). Bus Éireann operates services to Doolin (€13, 1½ hours, seven daily Monday to Saturday in summer, twice on Sunday), Dublin (€14, 3¾ hours, 15 daily), Killarney (€20.50, 4¾ hours, three daily), Limerick, Sligo and beyond.

Private bus companies, generally a bit cheaper than Bus Éireann, also operate from Galway. **Citylink** (☎ 564163; [www.citylink.ie](http://www.citylink.ie)) runs 17 buses daily to Dublin airport (€19) via the city centre (€14).

Four or more trains run to and from Dublin (€29, €40.50 on Friday and Sunday,

2¾ hours, six daily). You can connect with other trains at Athlone.

**Celtic Cycles** (☎ 566606; Queen St), a Raleigh rent-a-bike outlet, hires bikes for €20/80 per day/week. **Europa Bicycles** (☎ 563355), on Earl's Island opposite Galway Cathedral, charges €10/50 per day/week.

## ARAN ISLANDS

☎ 099

In recent years the windswept Aran Islands have become one of western Ireland's major attractions. Apart from natural beauty, the Irish-speaking islands have some of the country's oldest Christian and pre-Christian ruins.

On tiny **Inisheer**, the abundance of stone walls is almost absurd, with countless kilometres of them separating every patch of rocky land. Though seemingly inhospitable, the islands were actually settled much earlier than the mainland, since agriculture was easier to pursue here than in the densely forested Ireland of the pre-Christian era.

There are three main islands in the group, all inhabited year-round. Most visitors head for long and narrow (14.5km by a maximum 4km) **Inishmór** (or Inishmore). The land slopes up from the relatively sheltered northern shores of the island and plummets on the southern side into the raging Atlantic. **Inishmaan** and **Inisheer** are much smaller and receive far fewer visitors.

The islands can get crowded at holiday times (St Patrick's Day, Easter) and in July and August, when accommodation is at a premium and advance reservations are advised.

## Orientation & Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 61263; ☎ 10am-5pm Easter-1 Jun & Oct, 10am-6pm Jun & Sep, 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 11am-5pm Mon-Thu, 10am-5pm Fri-Sun Nov-Easter) operates year-round on the waterfront at Kilronan, the arrival point and major village of Inishmór. You can leave your luggage and change money here. Around the corner is Spar Supermarket, which has an ATM, and about 150m to the north is a small post office. The Ionad Árann heritage centre has Internet access.

JM Synge's *The Aran Islands* is the classic account of life on the islands and is readily available in paperback. A much less acces-

sible (but more recent) tribute to the islands is map-maker Tim Robinson's *Stones of Aran*. For detailed exploration, pick up a copy of his *The Aran Islands: A Map and Guide*.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

If time is important or if seasickness is a concern, you could fly to the islands and back with **Aer Arann** (☎ 091-593034; www.aerarann.islands.ie) for €45. Flights operate to all three islands at least seven times daily (less in the low season) and take less than 10 minutes. The mainland departure point is Connemara regional airport at Minna, near Inverin, 38km west of Galway. A connecting bus from outside the Galway tourist office costs €3 one-way.

### BOAT

All three islands are served year-round by **Island Ferries** (☎ 091-568903; www.aranislandferries.com); the trip takes around 40 minutes (adult/child €25/13 return). Unfortunately the boat leaves from Rossaveal, 37km west of Galway. It's an extra €6 to catch an Island Ferries bus from outside the tourist office in Galway. Buses leave 1½ hours before ferry departure times and are scheduled to meet arriving ferries. If you have a car, you can go straight to Rossaveal and leave it in the car park there for free.

**InisMór Ferries** (☎ 091-566535; www.queenofaran2.com), billed as the islanders' ferry company, runs a nearly identical operation.

Another option is to leave from Doolin in County Clare. **Doolin Ferries** (☎ 065-707 4455, 091-567676; www.doolinferries.com) runs to Inishmór (55 minutes) and Inisheer (40 minutes) for €35 from Doolin.

Inter-island services are very limited in winter.

## Getting Around

Inisheer and Inishmaan are small enough to explore on foot, but on larger Inishmór bikes are definitely the way to go. **Aran Cycle Hire** (☎ 61132), just up from Kilronan's pier, is one of many bike shops that hire bikes for €10 per day. The islands are tough on bikes, so check your cruiser carefully before hiring.

Plenty of small operators offer island bus tours for around €10.

## Inishmór

The 'Big Island' has four impressive stone forts thought to be 2000 years old. Halfway down the island and about 8km west of Kilronan, semicircular **Dún Aengus** (☎ 61008; adult/child €2.10/1.10; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Feb), perched on the edge of the sheer cliffs, is the best known of the four. It's an amazing place, but take great care near the cliff edge as there are no guard rails.

About 1.5km north is **Dún Eoghanachta**, while halfway back to Kilronan is **Dún Eochla**; both are smaller, perfectly circular ring forts. Directly south of Kilronan and dramatically perched on a promontory is **Dún Dúchathair**, surrounded on three sides by cliffs.

**Ionad Árann** (☎ 61355; www.visitaranislands.com; adult/child €3.50/2, incl film €5.50/4; ☎ 10am-7pm Jun-Aug, 10am-5pm Apr-May & Sep-Oct), just off the main road leading out of Kilronan, introduces the geology, wildlife, history and culture of the islands. Robert Flaherty's 1934 film *The Man of Aran* is shown five times daily.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**An Aharla** (☎ 61305; dm/d €12/34) In a laid-back former farmhouse, positioned in a grove of trees (a rarity on these islands), An Aharla has three four-bed dorms and lots of good vibes.

**Mainistir House** (☎ 61169; www.mainistirhouse.aran.com; dm/s/d €15/20/35; ☎) This colourful 60-bed hostel is in a scenic spot on the main road north of Kilronan. The shuttle from the pier costs €2.50. Book ahead for the great-value organic, largely vegetarian buffet dinners (€15; served 8pm to closing in summer, from 7pm in winter).

**Lios Aengus** (☎ 61030; snacks €5-8; ☎ 9.30am-5pm) A simple coffee shop with OK soups and sandwiches.

**Man of Aran Cottage** (☎ 61301; lunch from €6, set dinner €35; ☎ 11.30am-7.30pm Mar-Oct) Serves fresh fish and organic veggies and herbs from the owners' garden. Bookings are essential.

## Inishmaan

The least visited of the three islands is Inishmaan (Inis Meáin, or 'Middle Island'). High stone walls border its fields, and it's a delight to wander the lanes, taking in some of the tranquillity. The main archaeological site is **Dún Chonchúir**, a massive oval-shaped

stone fort built on a high point and offering views of the island.

There are no hostels on Inishmaan, but B&Bs are relatively cheap, at about €35 per person.

## Inisheer

The smallest island, only 8km off the coast from Doolin, is Inisheer (Inis Oírr, or 'Eastern Island'). The 15th-century **O'Brien Castle** (Caisleán Uí Bhriain) overlooks the beach and harbour.

**Brú Radharc Na Mara** (☎ 75024; maire.serraigh@oceanfree.net; dm/d €15/40; ☎ Mar-Oct) is an IHH hostel near the pier with ocean views. Also near the pier, **Ard Mhuire B&B** (☎ 75005; s/d €30/60) has home-baked goods, a lovely garden and a comfy sitting room.

## CONNEMARA

☎ 095

Between placid, mirror-like lakes, pale mountains, lonely valleys and more than occasional rainbows, the northwestern corner of Galway, called the Connemara, is so gorgeous that it hurts your brain. Connemara's isolation has allowed Irish to thrive and the language is widely spoken here; the lack of English signposting can be confusing at times.

The most scenic routes through Connemara are Oughterard-Recess (via the N59), Recess-Kylemore Abbey (via the R344) and the Leenane-Louisburgh route (via the R335). From Galway, **Lally Tours** (☎ 091-562905; www.lallytours.com) and **O'Neachtain Tours** (☎ 091-553188; www.oneachtaintours.com) run day-long bus trips through Connemara for roughly €25.

## Sights & Activities

**Aughnanure Castle** (☎ 091-552214; adult/child €2.75/1.25; ☎ 9.30am-6pm 31 Mar-30 Sep), 3km east of Oughterard, is a 16th-century tower house overlooking Lough Corrib.

Just west of **Recess** (Straith Salach) on the N59, the turn north at the R334 takes you through the stunning Lough Inagh Valley. At the end of the R334 is the equally scenic **Kylemore Abbey** (☎ 41146; www.kylemoreabbey.com; adult/child €11/free; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm mid-Mar-Nov, 10.30am-4.30pm Nov-mid-Mar) and its adjacent lake. The neo-Gothic abbey is run by nuns.

From Kylemore, take the N59 east to Leenane (An Líonán), then detour north

on the R335 to Louisburgh and onwards to Westport (below); or travel 17km south-west along the N59 to **Clifden** (An Clochán), Connemara's largest town. Like many small west Irish towns, Clifden has recently seen amazing growth, and now has loads of art galleries among its pubs and restaurants. The **Connemara Walking Centre** (☎ 1850 266 636; www.walkingireland.com; Island House, Market St) runs guided walking trips from €20.

## Sleeping

**Ben Lethery Hostel** (☎ 51136; www.anoige.ie; Ballinafad; dm €12-15.50; ☹ Mar-Nov; ♻) Sitting in the heart of Connemara's wilderness, this excellent and super-friendly An Óige hostel is on the N59 halfway between Recess and Clifden.

**Clifden Town Hostel** (☎ 21076; Market St, Clifden; dm/d €16/36; ♻) The friendly Clifden Town Hostel has a lovely view of the river, two clean kitchens and is in the centre of town.

**Canrawer House Hostel** (☎ 091-552 388; www.ouughterardhostel.com; Oughterard; dm/d €17/38; ☹ Feb-Oct; ♻) This attractive place at the Clifden end of town is just over 1km down a sign-posted turning. It offers fishing trips for those who stay.

**Central Hotel** (☎ 21430; centralhoteldifden@hotmail.com; Main St, Clifden; s/d €30/60) This homy hotel/B&B is obviously loved and well taken care of, since each room is individually decorated. The pub downstairs has music nightly.

## Getting There & Away

Galway–Westport buses stop in Clifden, as well as Oughterard, Maam Cross and Recess; a few lines also stop in Cong and Leenane. There are four express buses daily between Clifden and Galway (two on Sunday).

## WESTPORT

☎ 098 / pop 5314

The beautiful town of Westport (Cathair na Mairt) is a popular stop on the way to/from Sligo or Donegal. It has a tree-lined mall running along the Carrowbeg River, handsome Georgian buildings and a few good pubs.

North over the Carrowbeg is a small **tourist office** (☎ 25711; www.irelandwest.ie; James St; ☹ 9am-6pm Jul-Aug, 9am-5.45pm Mon-Sat May-Jun & Sep, 9am-5.45pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat Oct-Apr).

## Sights

Westport's major attraction, **Croagh Patrick**, 7km west of the town, is the hill from which St Patrick performed his snake expulsion (Ireland has been serpent-free ever since). Climbing the 765m peak is a ritual for thousands of pilgrims on the last Sunday of July.

## Sleeping

**Old Mill Hostel** (☎ 27045; www.oldmillhostel.com; dm €16.50-17.50, d €22.50) In a courtyard off James St sits the 18th-century former brewery that now houses the Old Mill Hostel. The friendly staff, relaxed atmosphere and comfortable beds make it a lovely stay.

**St Anthony's** (☎ 28887; www.st-anthonys.com; Distillery Rd; s €50, d €75-80; ♻) Simplicity is the theme at this cosy B&B, where breakfast is delicious and the hosts are gracious. All six rooms have a classic feel, but only two have Jacuzzis.

**Olde Railway Hotel** (☎ 25166; www.anu.ie/railwayhotel; The Mall; s/d from €100/180; ♻) Chock-full of various antiques and bric-a-brac, the Olde Railway doesn't seem much changed since English novelist William Thackeray stayed here in 1834.

## Getting There & Away

Buses depart from Mill St for just about everywhere, including Cork (€24, six hours, two daily), Dublin (€17, four hours, six daily), Galway (€14.50, two hours, six daily) and Sligo (€15.50, two hours, two daily), where there are connections to Belfast (€27.50). Bus Éireann has a counter at the tourist office. The **train station** (☎ 25253; Altamount St) is southeast of the town centre. Rail connections to Dublin (€28, €44 on Friday and Sunday, 3½ hours) go via Athlone.

# THE NORTHWEST

Way under the tourism radar, Ireland's northwest is a veritable paradise for anyone seeking to get off the beaten path. WB Yeats' poetry still echoes through the sleepy towns and prehistoric sites of rustic County Sligo, while the wild and remote beaches of County Donegal reign as some of the best surf spots in Europe. It's only a matter of time before the crowds descend on the northwest, but for now, it's our little secret.

## SLIGO

☎ 071 / pop 18,473

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) was born in Dublin and educated in London, but his poetry is infused with the landscapes, history and folklore of his mother's native Sligo (Sligeach). He returned many times, and reminders of his presence in this sweet, sleepy town are plentiful.

The **North West Regional Tourism office** (☎ 916 1201; www.irelandnorthwest.ie; Temple St; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat Jun-Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Sep-May) is just south of the town centre. The **main post office** (Wine St) is east of the train and bus station. **Café Online** (☎ 914 4892; Stephen St; per hr €3; ☹ 10am-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-1pm Sun), across from the library, has Internet access.

Sligo's two major attractions are outside town. **Carrowmore**, 5km to the southwest, is the site of a **megalithic cemetery** (☎ 916 1534; carrowmoretomb@duchas.ie; adult/child €2/1; ☹ 10am-6pm Easter-Oct), with more than 60 stone rings, passage tombs and other Stone Age remains. It's one of the largest Stone Age necropolises in Europe.

Don't miss the hilltop cairn-grave **Knocknarea**, a few kilometres northwest of Carrowmore. About 1000 years younger than Carrowmore, it's said to be the grave of the legendary Maeve, 1st century AD Queen of Connaught. Several trails lead to the 328m summit, which commands unrivalled views over the surrounding country and shore.

The shabby but convenient **IHH White House Hostel** (☎ 914 5160; Markievicz Rd; dm €14; ♻) is just north of the town centre. The excellent **Eden Hill Holiday Hostel** (☎ 914 3204; http://homepage.eircom.net/~edenhill; Perse Rd; dm €13-15, d €36-40; ♻) is about 1.5km from the train station and is the best hostel in Sligo. Pick-up can be arranged. **Clarence Hotel** (☎ 914 2211; fax 914 5823; Wine St; s/d €65/115; ♻) is one of Sligo's best, even though the rooms are decorated in standard business-hotel style.

**Café Bar Deli** (☎ 914 0100; 15-16 Rear Stephen St; mains €6.50-15; ☹ 6-10pm Wed-Sun), a popular pasta-and-pizza place, is upstairs from the equally popular music venue **Left Bank** (www.leftbank.ie; mains €4-10; ☹ food served noon-5pm), which serves food from upstairs or outside on the river if the weather agrees. **Bistro Bianconi** (☎ 914 1744; 44 O'Connell St; mains €9-30; ☹ noon-2.30pm & 5.30-11.30pm Mon-Sat) serves pizza from its wood-fired oven, as well as fresh pasta and steak dishes.

## Getting There & Around

Flights to Dublin run from **Sligo airport** (☎ 916 8280). **Bus Éireann** (☎ 916 0066) has six services daily to/from Dublin (€17, four hours). The Galway–Sligo–Donegal–Derry service runs five times daily; it's €14 and 2½ hours to Galway, and €16.50 and 2½ hours to Derry. Buses operate from below the **train station** (☎ 916 9888), which is just west of the town centre along Lord Edward St. Trains to Dublin (€25, three hours, three daily) pass by Boyle, Carrick-on-Shannon and Mullingar.

## DONEGAL Bundoran

☎ 071 / pop 1678

Heeding the siren's call of some of Europe's most perfect waves, surfers from all over the world have made Bundoran (Bun Dobhráin) a bona fide beach town. If you don't plan on surfing though, bring a pocket full of change because Bundoran's streets are lined with kitschy casinos, tacky rides and enough crappy arcades to make Coney Island blush.

The seasonal **tourist office** (☎ 984 1350; bundoran@irelandnorthwest.ie; Main St; ☹ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat Jun-Aug, 11am-3pm Sat & Sun Sep-May) is opposite the Holyrood Hotel. The post office is a further 120m south.

If outdoor activity is what you crave, the **Donegal Adventure Centre** (☎ 984 2418; www.donegal-holidays.com; Bay View Ave) can sort you out with kayaking, ropes courses and surf lessons. Surf lessons cost €35/25 for an adult/child, while kayak lessons cost €40. Those interested in riding pretty ponies should contact **Donegal Equestrian Holidays** (☎ 984 1288; www.donegalequestrianholidays.com; Bayview Ave); you can trot along trails by day, and stay at either its hostel or four-star accommodation by night.

Once the holiday home of Viscount Enniskillen, the nearly 300-year-old building housing the **Homefield Hostel** (☎ 984 1288; homefieldhouse@eircom.net; Bayview Ave; dm/d €20/40; ♻) now hosts world travellers year-round. A lovely B&B option is the **Setanta House** (☎ 984 1599; www.setantahouse.com; Drumacrin Rd; s/d €37/60; ♻), whose location 450m from the main street makes it an easy amble after a day of surfing or gambling.

Main St has no shortage of greasy diners and pubs, but for a better bite, venture into **La Sabbia Restaurant** (☎ 984 2253; Homefield Hostel,

Bayview Ave; mains €10-20) for impeccable Italian food, or the **Central Bar** (☎ 984 2722; Grand Central Hotel, Main St; mains €7-14) for sensational pub grub.

**Bus Éireann** (☎ 074-912 1309) buses stop on Main St. There are direct daily services to Sligo (€8.20, 45 minutes), Galway (€18, 2¼ hours), Donegal (€6.80, 40 minutes) and more. **Ulsterbus/Translink** (☎ 028-9066 6630; [www.ulsterbus.co.uk](http://www.ulsterbus.co.uk)) has one daily service Monday to Friday to Belfast via Enniskillen. **Feda O'Donnell** (☎ 074-954 8114) buses stop two to three times daily, en route to Galway, at the Holyrood Hotel.

## Donegal Town

☎ 074 / pop 2453

Donegal Town (Dún na nGall) is not the major centre in County Donegal, but it's pleasant and well worth a visit.

The triangular Diamond is the centre of Donegal; a few steps south along the Eske River is the **tourist office** (☎ 972 1148; [www.ireland.northwest.ie](http://www.ireland.northwest.ie); Quay St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat Jun-Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Sep-May).

**Donegal Castle** (☎ 972 2405; [donegalcastle@duchas.ie](mailto:donegalcastle@duchas.ie); adult/child €3.50/1.25; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-Mar–Oct, 9.30am-4.30pm Fri-Sun Nov-Dec), on a rocky outcrop over the Eske River, stands in ruins but is impressive all the same. About 2.4km out of town is the unique **Donegal Craft Village** (☎ 972 2225; [donegalcraftvillage@eircom.net](mailto:donegalcraftvillage@eircom.net); Ballyshannon Rd; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun), where you can purchase everything from metalwork to hand-blown glass, all made on the premises.

The comfortable IHH/IHO **Donegal Town Independent Hostel** (☎ 972 2805; [www.donegalhostel.com](http://www.donegalhostel.com); dm/d €13/31; ☐) is 1km northwest of town on the Killybegs road (N56). The three-star **Abbey Hotel** (☎ 972 1014; [www.whites-hotelsireland.com](http://www.whites-hotelsireland.com); the Diamond; s/d €90/150) doesn't have a whole lot of personality, but does sit right in the centre of town.

Busy **Blueberry Tearoom** (☎ 972 2933; the Diamond; mains €6.50-9; ☎ 9am-7pm) has substantial sandwiches, excellent baked goods, and home-made jams and marmalades. The **Famous Donegal Chipper** (☎ 972 1428; Upper Main St; fish & chips from €7; ☎ 12.30-11pm Mon-Tue, 12.30-11.30pm Thu-Sun) isn't kidding: it's well known throughout the area for its fabulous fish and chips.

**Bus Éireann** (☎ 972 1101) goes to Derry (€12.50, 1½ hours, seven daily), Enniskillen (€9.70, 1¼ hours, six daily), Sligo (€12, one

hour, five daily), Galway (€18, four hours, five daily) and Dublin (€17.50, 4¼ hours, five daily). The bus stop is on the Diamond, outside the Abbey Hotel.

## Around County Donegal

The awe-inspiring cliffs at **Slieve League**, dropping 300m straight into the Atlantic Ocean, are absolutely recommended. To drive to the cliff edge, take the Killybegs–Glencolumbcille road (R263) and, at Carrick, take the turn-off signposted 'Bunglas'. Continue beyond the narrow track signposted for Slieve League (this trail is good for hikers) to the one signposted for Bunglas. Starting from Tee-lin, experienced walkers can spend a day walking via Bunglas and the somewhat terrifying One Man's Path to Malinbeg, near Glencolumbcille.

IHH's **Derrylahan Hostel** (☎ 973 8079; [derrylahan@eircom.net](mailto:derrylahan@eircom.net); camp site per person €6, dm/s/d €12/16/36; ☐), on a working farm 2km southeast of Carrick and 3km northwest of Kiltcar, is a convenient base for walkers. Call for free pick-up from Kiltcar or Carrick.

Daily Bus Éireann coaches (three daily in summer) stop in Kiltcar and Carrick on the Donegal–Glencolumbcille route.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

☎ 028 / pop 1.7 million

When you cross from the Republic into Northern Ireland you immediately notice two big differences; the street signs are in miles and the roads are well maintained. Soon enough though, you find that these aren't the only differences; the accent here is distinctly different, the currency is pounds sterling (making everything more expensive) and you remark once more about how nicely maintained the roads are. Yes, you are now in the UK.

From the looming city walls of Derry to the breathtaking scenery along the Causeway Coast to the architecture in Queen Victoria's pet city of Belfast, Northern Ireland has always had a bevy of things to attract visitors. Unfortunately, decades of guerrilla warfare deterred most tourists and it wasn't until within the past five or 10 years that they finally started to return.

Today Northern Ireland seems rejuvenated. Belfast is a happening place with a stellar nightlife and an excellent culinary scene, while Derry appears to be coming into its own as a cool, artistic city. The stunning Causeway Coast and its namesake, the geologically anomalous Giant's Causeway, get more and more visitors each year, while lesser-known towns like Enniskillen are suddenly finding that they have a decent tourist trade, too.

That's not to say that the scars of the Troubles have healed, but at least people are getting along, which at this point in time is all that anyone can ask for.

## BELFAST

pop 277,390

It's a new era in Belfast. Optimism floats through this marvellous Victorian city like a virus you can't help but catch; the peace process has finally bore its fruit and the war is officially over.

Each time you go out to the university pubs on Botanic Ave, the posh shops along Donegal Sq or the fine restaurants on Great Victoria St, you can feel the exuberance of a city on the rise, literally. Just look east towards the river and you can see all the new structures, built or being built, that suggest a cultural reawakening of a city long in slumber.

That being said, Belfast's harsh past isn't one that can ever be forgotten; reminders like the 'Peace Wall' that divides the city are everywhere. But maybe it's these reminders of the past that will keep the people of the present pushing towards a very bright future.

## Orientation

The city centre is compact, with the imposing City Hall in Donegal Sq as the central landmark. Belfast's principal shopping district is north of the square. North of that, around Donegal St and St Anne's Cathedral, is the bohemian Cathedral Quarter.

South of the square lies the Golden Mile, a restaurant- and pub-filled stretch of Dublin Rd, Shaftesbury Sq, Bradbury Pl and Botanic Ave. To the east, most of Belfast's smart new hotel, leisure and arts developments line the banks of the Lagan. East of the river rise the huge yellow cranes of the Harland & Wolff shipyards.

## Information

**Belfast Welcome Centre** (☎ 9023 9026; [www.gotobelfast.com](http://www.gotobelfast.com); 47 Donegal Pl; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun Oct-May) Efficient and extremely helpful.

**Fáilte Ireland** (☎ 9026 5500; [www.ireland.ie](http://www.ireland.ie); 53 Castle St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri year-round, 9am-12.30pm Sat Jun-Aug) Has information on the Irish Republic.

**Hostelling International Northern Ireland** (HINI; ☎ 9032 4733; [www.hini.org.uk](http://www.hini.org.uk); 22-32 Donegal Rd) At the Belfast International Youth Hostel.

**Internet Café** (☎ 9043 4058; per hr £3; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun Oct-May) Send email and have a coffee; next to the Belfast Welcome Centre.

**Main Post Office** (Castle Pl) There is also a smaller branch at the top end of Botanic Ave by Shaftesbury Sq, and a branch on University Rd.

## Sights

### CITY CENTRE

The wheelchair-accessible Renaissance-style **City Hall** (☎ 9027 0456; Donegal Sq; admission free; ☎ guided tours 11am, 2pm & 3pm Mon-Fri & 2.30pm Sat Jun-Sep, 11am & 2.30pm Mon-Fri & 2.30pm Sat Oct-May), completed in 1906, is a testament to the city's Industrial Revolution success. At the northeastern corner is a statue of Sir Edward Harland – the Yorkshire-born engineer who founded Belfast's Harland & Wolff shipyards – whose famous yellow twin cranes **Samson and Goliath** tower above the city. The yards' most famous construction was the *Titanic*, the 'unsinkable' ship that sank in 1912. A memorial to the disaster stands on the eastern side of City Hall.

City Hall is fronted by an especially dour statue of Queen Victoria. To the northeast – between High St and Queen's Sq – the queen's consort, Prince Albert, also makes his Belfast appearance at the slightly leaning **Albert Memorial Clocktower** (1867).

Across from the Europa Hotel, the famed **Crown Liquor Saloon** (☎ 9027 9901; 46 Great Victoria St; ☎ 11.30am-11pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-10pm Sun) was built by Patrick Flanagan in 1885 and displays Victorian architecture at its most extravagant. The snugs are equipped with bells that once connected to a board behind the bar, enabling customers to order drinks without leaving their seats. The Crown was lucky to survive a 1993 bomb that devastated the (now fully restored) **Grand Opera House** (☎ 9024 1919; [www.goh.co.uk](http://www.goh.co.uk); Great Victoria St) across the road.



## MUSEUMS & GARDENS

Belfast's biggest tourist attraction, the **Ulster Folk & Transport Museums** (☎ 9042 8428; www.magni.org.uk; adult/child 1 museum £5/3, both museums £6.50/3.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 11am-6pm Sun Mar-Jun, 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun Jul-Sep, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun Oct-Feb), one of Northern Ireland's finest museums, is 11km northeast of the city centre beside the Bangor road (A2) near Holywood. The 30 buildings on the 60-hectare site range from urban terrace homes to thatched-roof farm cottages. A bridge crosses the A2 to the Transport Museum, a sort of automotive zoo, which contains various Ulster-related vehicles, including a prototype of the vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft. From Belfast take Ulsterbus 1 or any Bangor-bound train that stops at Cultra station.

The excellent **Ulster Museum** (☎ 9038 3000; www.magni.org.uk), in the **Botanic Gardens** (☎ 9032 4902; admission free; ☎ 8am-sunset) near the university, is being renovated and will reopen in 2008. The gardens themselves are well worth a wander, though.

**W5** (☎ 9046 7700; www.w5online.co.uk; 2 Queen's Quay; adult/child/concession £6/4/4.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Thru, 10am-6pm Fri & Sat, noon-6pm Sun Sep-Jun, 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun Jul-Aug), aka the *whowhatwherewhenwhy*, is an interactive science centre with fun exhibits, such as a laser harp, a lie detector and a wind tunnel. The centre is wheelchair accessible.

## FALLS & SHANKILL RDS

The Catholic Falls Rd and the Protestant Shankill Rd have been battlefronts since the 1970s. Even so, these areas are quite safe and worth venturing into, if only to see the large **murals** expressing local political and religious passions. King Billy riding to victory in 1690 on his white steed and hooded IRA gunmen are two of the more memorable images.

If you don't fancy an organised tour (see right), the best way to visit the sectarian zones of Falls and Shankill Rds is by what is known locally as the 'people's taxi'. These black former London cabs run a buslike service up and down their respective roads from terminuses in the city. Shankill Rd taxis go from North St, and Falls Rd taxis from Castle St. The Falls Rd taxis occupy the first line at the Castle St taxi park, with signs in Gaelic. Taxis depart when full, dropping

off and picking up passengers as they go; fares on both services cost £1 per person.

## Tours

Both **Black Taxi Tours** (☎ 9064 2264; www.belfasttours.com) and **Original Belfast Black Taxi Tours** (☎ 0800-032 2003) offer organised 'people taxi' tours. An even-sided account of the Troubles is given in a refreshingly down-to-earth way. Running daily, prices are £8 per person based on a group of four sharing, and pick-up can be arranged.

**Mini Coach** (☎ 9031 5333; www.minicoachni.co.uk; 22 Donegall Rd) conducts two-hour city tours (£8 per person) that include Falls and Shankill Rds, St Anne's Cathedral and Harland & Wolff shipyards. Tours leave at 10.30am daily and 12.30pm Monday to Friday from the Belfast International Youth Hostel (p694).

There are a number of walking tours available, including the two-hour **Bailey's Historical Pub Tour** (☎ 9268 3665). It costs £6, and begins at Flanagan's (above the Crown Liquor Saloon on Great Victoria St) on Thursday at 7pm and Saturday at 4pm.

The Belfast Welcome Centre also hands out maps for the **Titanic Trail** and **In the Footsteps of C.S. Lewis**, both of which are self-guided walking tours. The doomed ship *Titanic* and famed author CS Lewis are both products of Belfast.

## Festivals & Events

**Belfast Film Festival** (☎ 9032 5913; www.belfastfilmfestival.org) This festival shows a wonderful variety of independent and classic films at the end of March each year.

**Between the Lines** (www.crescentarts.org) This literary festival takes place each March at the Crescent Arts Centre.

**Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival** (☎ 9023 2403; www.cqaf.com) This fantastic festival, in early May, attracts pioneering writers, comedians, musicians and artists, and theatre productions.

**City Dance** (www.crescentarts.org) This dance festival occurs each June at the Crescent Arts Centre.

**Festival at Queen's** (☎ 9066 7687; www.belfastfestival.com) For three weeks in late October and early November, Belfast hosts this arts festival, the second largest in the UK, in and around Queen's University.

## Sleeping BUDGET

**Linen House** (Paddy's Backpackers; ☎ 9058 6400; www.belfasthostel.com; 18-20 Kent St; dm £6.50-10, tw £24; ☎ ☎ ☎) In a former linen factory in the

## BELFAST

INFORMATION	
Belfast Welcome Centre.....	1 B2
Fáilte Ireland.....	2 A2
Hostelling International Northern Ireland.....	(see 14)
Internet Café.....	(see 1)
Main Post Office.....	3 B2
Post Office.....	4 A6
Post Office.....	5 A4

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	
Albert Memorial Clocktower.....	6 C2
Botanic Gardens.....	7 B6
City Hall.....	8 B3
Crown Liquor Saloon.....	(see 36)
Falls Rd People's Taxis.....	9 A2
Grand Opera House.....	(see 40)
Shankill Rd People's Taxis.....	10 A1
Ulster Museum.....	11 A6
W5.....	12 D1

SLEEPING	
Arnie's Backpackers.....	13 A5
Belfast International Youth Hostel.....	14 A4
Botanic Lodge Guesthouse.....	15 B5
Jury's Inn.....	16 A3
Kate's B&B.....	17 B5
Linen House.....	18 A1
Madisons Hotel.....	19 B5
Merchant Hotel.....	20 B2
TENsq.....	21 B3

EATING	
Archana.....	22 A4
Ba Soba.....	23 B1
Café Paul Rankin.....	24 B2
Café Paul Rankin.....	25 B3
Café Paul Rankin.....	26 B2
Cayenne.....	27 A4
Clements.....	28 B5
Clements.....	29 B3
Clements.....	30 A6
Clements.....	31 B2
Pizza Express.....	32 B3
Renzo's.....	33 B3
Speranza.....	34 A4
White's Tavern.....	35 B2

DRINKING	
Crown Liquor Saloon.....	36 A3
Empire Music Hall.....	37 B5
Irene & Nan's.....	38 A3

ENTERTAINMENT	
Crescent Arts Centre.....	39 A5
Grand Opera House.....	40 A3
Milk.....	41 C1
Queen's Film Theatre.....	42 A5
Sheridan Imax Cinema.....	(see 12)
Warner Village Cinema.....	(see 12)
Waterfront Hall.....	43 C2

TRANSPORT	
Europa Bus Centre.....	44 A3
Laganside Bus Centre.....	45 C2
McConvey Cycles.....	46 C5
NIR Travel Shop.....	47 A3



Cathedral Quarter, the slightly dingy Linen House has wheelchair access, but lacks the cosy feel of Arnie's.

**Arnie's Backpackers** (☎ 9024 2867; [www.arniesbackpackers.co.uk](http://www.arniesbackpackers.co.uk); 63 Fitzwilliam St; dm £7-9.50; ☒ ☑) The moment you enter Arnie's you realise that you've made the right choice. The small hostel has a relaxed, down-home vibe, and Arnie manages to have a kindly disposition even when faced with an Estonian football fan club who've been drinking vodka for 12 hours straight.

**Belfast International Youth Hostel** (☎ 9032 4733, 9031 5435; [www.hini.org.uk](http://www.hini.org.uk); 22-32 Donegall Rd; dm £9.50-12.75, s £18-24, d £26-34; ☐ ☒) HINI's sterile 112-bed Belfast International is conveniently sited on the Golden Mile, which means it can be a bit noisy at night when the pubs and clubs empty. It has a billiards room, a TV lounge and a café, but the staff is lukewarm at best.

Camping options include **Jordanstown Lough Shore Park** (☎ 9034 0000; camp site £9), 8km north of town on Shore Rd (A2) in Newtownabbey, and **Dundonald Touring Caravan Park** (☎ 9080 9100; [www.theicebowl.com](http://www.theicebowl.com); 111 Old Dundonald Rd; camp sites £9-16; ☒ Apr-Sep) in a park next to the Dundonald Icebowl, 7km east of the city centre (take bus 21 from the Lagside Bus Centre).

## MIDRANGE

Many B&Bs are in the pleasant university area, which is well stocked with restaurants and pubs. Midrange hotels can also be found in this area, as well as in the city centre.

**Botanic Lodge Guesthouse** (☎ 9032 7682; 87 Botanic Ave; s/d £30/50) The rooms are quirky in this university-district guesthouse; rooms 7 and 13 don't exist but 2b does, and the décor is a mix of Victorian-era furniture/wallpaper and 1940s water fixtures. Most bathrooms are shared.

**Kate's B&B** (☎ 9028 2091; [katesbb127@hotmail.com](mailto:katesbb127@hotmail.com); 127 University St; s/d £30/60) Clean and friendly Kate's, in a lovingly restored 1860 townhouse, will make you feel right at home. Kate advertises her breakfast fry with 'go on - kill yourself!' Discounted weekly rates are available.

**Madisons Hotel** (☎ 9050 9800; [www.madisonshotel.com](http://www.madisonshotel.com); 59-63 Botanic Ave; s/d £70/80; ☒) Swanky Madisons isn't just a hotel, it's also a café, bar, bistro and nightclub, and there's wheel-

chair access. The décor is crisp and modern and the nightclub is sexy. What more could you ask for?

**Jury's Inn** (☎ 9053 3500; [www.bookajurysinn.com](http://www.bookajurysinn.com); College Sq; r £75-85; ☒) Jury's bland modernity is more than made up for by its location (three minutes' walk from City Hall) and excellent value - room rates include anything up to three adults or two adults and two kids. Some rooms are wheelchair accessible.

## TOP END

**TENSq** (☎ 9024 1001; [www.tensquare.co.uk](http://www.tensquare.co.uk); 10 Donegall Sq; r £165-250; ☒) The chichi 'Ten square' (*not* 'Tensq') aspires to old Shanghai. The former bank building across from City Hall has been given a feng shui-like makeover with dark lacquered wood, cream carpets and low-slung futon-style beds. It has wheelchair access.

**Merchant Hotel** (☎ 9023 4888; [www.themerchanthotel.com](http://www.themerchanthotel.com); 35-39 Waring St; r £220-600; ☐ ☒) Housed in the former Ulsterbank building, and decadent as all hell, the Merchant is worth every penny (if you can afford it). Each room has more individual touches than a strand of DNA, plus the topnotch restaurant and cellar nightclub (occupying the old vault) make the Merchant probably the most spectacular hotel in Northern Ireland. There are two wheelchair accessible rooms, and the entire hotel has wi-fi.

## Eating

Belfast has a plethora of choices for all wallets. We've made it easier to find which fits you by breaking them down into sections based on the average price of mains: budget (up to £8.50), midrange (between £8.50 and £11) and top end (over £11).

## BUDGET

**Clements** (☎ 9033 1827; 62 Botanic Ave; snacks £1.50-5, drinks £1.50-3; ☒ 7.30am-10.30pm) With long rows of couch seating and excellent cappuccinos, Clements is the beginning of true café culture in Belfast. Other branches are located on Donegall Sq West, Rosemary St and Stranmillis Rd.

**Café Paul Rankin** (☎ 9031 5090; 27-29 Fountain St; snacks £2.30-6; ☒ 7.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 7.30am-7.30pm Thu; ☒) Owned by Northern Ireland's top celebrity chef, this café serves quality cakes, focaccia, soups and salads,

with comfy benches and sofas for lounging on. Other branches are at 12 Upper Arthur St (☎ 9031 0108) and the Castle Court Centre.

**Pizza Express** (☎ 9032 9050; 25-27 Bedford St; mains £5.15-8; ☒) noon-11pm Mon-Wed, noon-11.30pm Thu-Sat, noon-10.30pm Sun) With flowers on all the tables and a wide open kitchen, Pizza Express looks a lot more expensive than it actually is. The food is very good and the staff is exceptionally accommodating.

**White's Tavern** (☎ 9024 3080; 1-4 Wine Cellar Entry; mains £6-7; ☒) food served noon-6pm Mon-Sat) Historic White's, on a cobbled alley off High St, is a popular lunch-time meeting spot, serving down-to-earth pub food, such as baked potatoes, fish dishes, Irish stew, and sausage and champ.

**Thai-Tanic** (☎ 9066 8811; 2 Eglantine Ave; mains £6.50-8.50; ☒ 5-11pm Tue-Sun) Despite the cheesy name, tiny Thai-Tanic serves killer food and does deliveries within a 5km radius.

## MIDRANGE

**Ba Soba** (☎ 9058 6868; 38 Hill St; mains £6-10; ☒) noon-3pm Tue-Fri, 5.30-10pm Mon-Thu, 5.30-11pm Fri & Sat) This bright and breezy Asian noodle bar dishes up fragrant bowls of Japanese *ramen* (noodle broth), prawn tempura, Thai warm salad and a host of other Asian dishes.

**Archana** (☎ 9032 3713; 53 Dublin Rd; mains £6-11; ☒) noon-2pm & 5.30-11pm Mon-Fri, 5-11pm Sat & Sun) It's actually disturbing how good Archana is. There is plenty to choose from, whether you eat meat or not, and the lunch specials are unbeatable at only £5 to £7.50. Seriously, do yourself a favour and eat here.

## TOP END

**Speranza** (☎ 9023 0213; 16-19 Shaftesbury Sq; mains £9-13; ☒) 5-11.30pm Mon-Sat, 5-11pm Fri & Sat, 3-10pm Sun; ☒) A local institution - it's been around for more than 20 years - Speranza is a buzzing Italian restaurant that complements traditional pastas with more sophisticated dishes.

**Reno's** (☎ 9031 1026; 34-36 Bedford St; lunch £5-10, dinner £9-15; ☒) 8am-9.45pm Mon-Fri, 11am-9.45pm Sat, noon-6pm Sun, bar until 1am Mon-Sat) Billing itself as a 'food & entertainment emporium', Reno's serves fine food all day long. Stop in on weekend nights for live music, or drop by earlier for its pre-theatre menu.

**Cayenne** (☎ 9033 1532; 7 Ascot House, Shaftesbury Sq; mains £13-19; ☒) noon-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 6-10.15pm Mon-

Thu, 6-11.15pm Fri & Sat) Behind an anonymous frosted-glass façade lurks this award-winning restaurant serving quality Irish produce prepared with an Asian or Mediterranean twist. Cayenne is owned by TV celebrity chef Paul Rankin. Reservations recommended.

## Drinking

Pubs are generally open until 11pm Monday to Saturday, though pubs with an entertainment licence stay open to 1am or 1.30am and until 11pm Sunday.

**Crown Liquor Saloon** (☎ 9024 9476; 46 Great Victoria St) Beautiful enough to bring a drunk from any era to tears, Belfast's most famous bar has a wonderfully ornate Victorian interior with discreet panelled snugs.

**Irene & Nan's** (☎ 9023 9123; 12 Brunswick St) Although no one is quite sure where the name came from, there's no mistake that Irene & Nan's 1950s retro theme is dripping with designer chic. It's a laid-back place though, and its in-bar bistro will tempt your taste buds.

**Empire Music Hall** (☎ 9024 9276; 42 Botanic Ave) Residing in a converted Victorian church, the epic Empire has three floors of entertainment, including a basement jazz club, and has a weekly stand-up comedy night.

## Entertainment

The Belfast Welcome Centre issues *What-about?*, a free monthly guide to Belfast events. Another useful guide is **wheretotnight.com** ([www.wheretotnight.com](http://www.wheretotnight.com)).

## CINEMAS

**Queen's Film Theatre** (QFT; ☎ 9097 1097; [www.queensfilmtheatre.com](http://www.queensfilmtheatre.com); 20 University Sq) The QFT is a two-screen arthouse cinema, close to the university, and a major venue for the Belfast Film Festival in March.

The Odyssey Complex has two monster cinemas:

**Sheridan Imax Cinema** (☎ 9046 7000; [www.belfastimax.com](http://www.belfastimax.com)) This is Ireland's only 3D and 2D large-format cinema.

**Warner Village Cinemas** (☎ 0871-224 0240; [www.theodyssey.co.uk](http://www.theodyssey.co.uk)) Belfast's biggest multiplex, with 12 screens and stadium seats throughout.

## LIVE MUSIC & NIGHTCLUBS

**Crescent Arts Centre** (☎ 9024 2338; [www.crescentarts.org](http://www.crescentarts.org); 2 University Rd) The Crescent puts on fine concerts, from New York jazz to top-rate

Irish music. It also stages a literary festival called *Between the Lines* each March, and the *City Dance* festival in June.

**Waterfront Hall** (☎ 9033 4455; www.waterfront.co.uk; Lanyon Pl) The impressive 2235-seat Waterfront is Belfast's flagship concert venue, hosting local, national and international performers from pop stars to symphony orchestras.

**Milk** (☎ 9027 8876; www.clubmilk.com; 10-14 Tomb St; admission £2-10) Milk is one of Belfast's hottest and most sophisticated clubs. Monday is gay night, with cabaret acts hosted by Baroness Titty Von Tramp.

## THEATRE

**Grand Opera House** (☎ 9024 1919; www.goh.co.uk; 2-4 Great Victoria St) This grand old venue plays host to a mixture of opera, popular musicals and comedy shows.

**Lyric Theatre** (☎ 9038 1081; www.lyrictheatre.co.uk; 55 Ridgeway St) The Lyric, south of the city, stages serious drama; Hollywood star Liam Neeson first trod the boards here.

## Getting There & Away

For all Ulsterbus, Northern Ireland Railways (NIR) and local bus information call **Translink** (☎ 9066 6630; www.translink.co.uk). The **NIR Travel Shop** (☎ 9024 2420; Great Victoria St station; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat) can book and provide information on trains, buses and ferries.

## AIR

There are flights from some regional airports in Britain to the convenient **Belfast City Airport** (BHD; ☎ 9093 9093; www.belfastcityairport.com; Airport Rd), 6km northeast of the city centre, but everything else, including flights from the Republic, Britain, Amsterdam, Brussels and New York, goes to **Belfast International Airport** (BFS; ☎ 9448 4848; www.belfastairport.com), 30km north of the city in Aldergrove by the M2. Some of the budget airlines that land at these airports are Ryanair and Flybe. For more information, see p705.

## BOAT

For details on ferries to/from Northern Ireland, see p706. Four main ferry routes connect Belfast to Stranraer, Liverpool and the Isle of Man.

**Steam Packet/SeaCat** (☎ 0870 552 3523; www.steam-packet.com) catamaran car ferries dock

at Donegall Quay, a short walk north of the city centre. **P&O European** (☎ 0870 242 4777; www.poirishsea.com) ferries travelling to and from Scotland dock at Larne, 30km north of Belfast.

**Norfolkline Irish Sea Ferries** (☎ 0870 600 4321) to Liverpool leave from Victoria terminal, 5km north of central Belfast; take a bus from Europa Bus Centre or catch a taxi (£5). **Stena Line** (☎ 0870 570 7070; www.stenaline.co.uk) services to Stranraer leave from Corry Rd, near the city centre.

## BUS

Belfast has two separate bus stations. The smaller of the two is the **Laganside Bus Centre** (Oxford St), near the river, with bus connections to Counties Antrim, Down and Derry. Buses to everywhere else in Northern Ireland, the Republic, Belfast International Airport and the Larne ferries leave from the bigger **Europa Bus Centre** (Glengall St). Regional bus timetables are free at the bus stations.

Ulsterbus has hourly Belfast–Dublin buses that take about three hours and start at £8.30 one-way. The service to Derry (£9.40, 1¾ hours) is even more frequent.

Depending on the day, **Aircoach** (☎ 0870 225 7555; www.aircoach.ie) leaves *Jury's Hotel* hourly for Dublin airport (£7 to £12, 2½ hours). At the airport you can catch a local bus into town.

## TRAIN

Belfast has two main train stations: Great Victoria St, next to the Europa Bus Centre, and the **Belfast Central** (East Bridge St), east of the city centre.

Destinations served from Belfast Central include Derry and Dublin. Belfast–Dublin trains (£24/35 one-way/return, two hours) run up to eight times daily (five on Sunday). From Belfast Central, a free (with your bus or train ticket) Centrelink bus to Donegall Sq in the city centre leaves every 10 minutes. A local train also connects with Great Victoria St.

Great Victoria St station has services to Derry (£9.80, 2¼ hours, about every two hours) and Larne Harbour (£4.70, one hour, hourly).

## Getting Around

Airbus buses link Belfast International Airport with the Europa Bus Centre every half-

hour (£6, 30 minutes). Alternatively, a taxi costs about £25.

The Belfast City Airport is only 6km northeast of the city centre. Take a shuttle bus from the terminal to the Sydenham Halt station, from where trains (£1.30, every half-hour) run to Belfast Central station, Botanic station or Great Victoria St station. The taxi fare is about £8.

A short trip on a bus costs £1 to £1.60. Most local bus services depart from Donegall Sq, near the City Hall, where there's a ticket kiosk.

If you're driving, be fastidious about where you park; car theft is a serious problem here. The tourist office has a free leaflet showing all the multistorey car parks.

**McConvey Cycles** (☎ 9033 0322; www.mcconveycycles.com; 182 Ormeau Rd) hires bikes for £15/60 per day/week. A deposit is required.

## THE BELFAST–DERRY COASTAL ROAD

Ireland isn't short of fine stretches of coast, but the Causeway Coast stretching from Portstewart in County Derry to Ballycastle in County Antrim, and the Antrim Coast stretching from Ballycastle to Belfast, taking in the striking rock formations of the Giant's Causeway, are as magnificent as they come.

From late May to late September Ulsterbus' Antrim Coaster bus 252 operates twice daily (except Sunday) between Belfast and Coleraine (four hours), stopping at all the main tourist sights. An open-topped Bushmills Bus (bus 177) runs from the Giant's Causeway to Coleraine seven times daily in July and August. The trip takes just over an hour. Bus 172 runs year-round along the coast between Ballycastle and Portrush. **Translink** (☎ 9066 6630; www.translink.co.uk) handles all bookings and inquiries.

## Carrickfergus

pop 28,000

Only 13km northeast of Belfast is Carrickfergus and its impressive Norman **castle** (☎ 9335 1273; adult/child £3/1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun Jun-Aug, 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun Apr-May & Sep, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 2-4pm Sun Oct-Mar), which was built in 1180 by John de Courcy and overlooks the harbour where William III landed in 1690. A small museum documents the castle's long history (it was occupied until 1928).

There are no hostels in Carrickfergus; a fine B&B is **Langsgarden** (☎ 9336 6369; 72 Scotch Quarter; s/d £23/48; ☎ ☒).

## Glens of Antrim

Between Larne and Ballycastle, the nine Glens of Antrim are extremely picturesque stretches of woodland and downland where streams cascade into the sea. The port of **Cushendall** has been dubbed the 'Capital of the Glens', while **Glenariff**, a few kilometres to the south, is 'Queen of the Glens'. Between Cushendun and Ballycastle, eschew the main A2 road for the narrower and more picturesque B92, and take the turn-off down to sweeping Murlough Bay.

A good bet for a budget bed, and possibly a bedtime story, is at the modern **Ballyeamon Camping Barn** (☎ 2175 8699; www.taletam.demon.co.uk; dm £8; ☎ ☒ ☒) near Cushendall on the B14. The proprietor is a professional storyteller.

## Ballycastle

pop 4000

Ballycastle, where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Irish Sea, is a quiet harbour town and a natural base for exploring the coasts to the west or south.

The IHH/IHO **Castle Hostel** (☎ 2076 2337; www.castlehostel.com; 62 Quay Rd; dm/d £9/24; ☎ ☒) is just past the Marine Hotel. It's clean, welcoming and spacious, with wheelchair access. The IHO **Ballycastle Backpackers** (☎ 2076 3612; www.bcbackpackers.com; 4 North St; dm £8, d £20-30; ☎ ☒) is near the waterfront and the main bus stop.

## Carrick-a-Rede Island

The 20m - **rope bridge** (☎ 2076 9839; adult/child £2/1; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Sep), connecting Carrick-a-Rede Island to the mainland and swaying some 25m above pounding waves, is fun to stagger across. The island is the site of a salmon fishery and a nesting ground for gulls and fulmars. It's a scenic 1.25km walk from the car park to the bridge. Note that the bridge is closed in high winds.

## Giant's Causeway

Chances are you have seen pictures of the Giant's Causeway (Clochán an Aifir), Northern Ireland's main tourist attraction. The hexagonal basalt columns, all 38,000 of them (counting the ones underwater),

are amazingly uniform. Legend has it that the giant in question, Finn McCool, built the Causeway to get to Scottish rival giant Benandonner on the Scottish island of Staffa (which has similar rock formations).

The more prosaic explanation is that lava erupted from an underground fissure and crystallised some 60 million years ago. The phenomenon is explained in an audiovisual (£1) at the **Causeway Visitors Centre** (☎ 2073 1855; www.giantscausewaycentre.com; 🕒 10am-5pm Mar-Jun & Sep-Oct, 10am-6pm Jul-Aug, 10am-4.30pm Nov-Feb).

It costs nothing to visit the site, but car parking is an exorbitant £5. It's an easy 10- to 15-minute walk downhill to the Causeway itself. A better approach, though, is to follow the cliff-top path northeast for 2km to the Chimney Tops headland, which has excellent views of the Causeway and the coastline. For the less mobile or the downright lazy, a minibus shuttles from the visitors centre to the Causeway for £1.60 return.

Bus 172 runs about four times daily (more often in summer and fewer on Sunday) between Portrush and Ballycastle, passing by the Giant's Causeway. If you can, try to visit the Causeway midweek or out of season to avoid the crowds and experience it at its most evocative.

### Bushmills

Bushmills, 4km southwest of the Giant's Causeway, is a small town off the A2 between Portrush and Ballycastle. The town makes a good base for visits to the Causeway Coast, but its real attraction is the **Old Bushmills Distillery** (☎ 2073 3218; www.bushmills.com; adult/child £5/2.50; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-5.30pm Sun), 500m south of the main square. After a noisy tour of the industrial process (it's quieter on weekends, when production is halted), there's a whiskey-tasting session. Tours are held at 10.30am, 11.30am, 1.30pm, 2.30pm and 3.30pm Monday to Friday, and 1.30pm, 2.30pm and 3.30pm Saturday and Sunday from November to March; the last tour is at 4pm from April to October.

The excellent **HINI Mill Rest Hostel** (☎ 2073 1222; 49 Main St; dm/s/tw £13/18.50/33; 🕒 closed 10am-5pm Sep-Jun; ♿) has small dorms and one wheelchair-friendly twin room (reserve in advance).

### Dunluce Castle

Abandoned in 1641, the ruins of 14th-century **Dunluce Castle** (☎ 2073 1938; adult/child £2/1; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4.30pm Oct-Mar), between Bushmills and Portrush, are dramatically sited right on the cliff edge – so close, in fact, that the castle's kitchen once collapsed into the sea. Perched 30m above the sea, the castle was of obvious military value, and the extensive remains inside the walls give a good idea of what life was like here.

### Portstewart & Downhill

These seaside resorts are only a few kilometres apart. Pleasant Portstewart has a slightly decayed, early-20th-century feel to it, while Downhill has a lovely long stretch of beach.

Portstewart's friendly **Causeway Coast Hostel** (☎ 7083 3789; 4 Victoria Tce; dm/d £9/28; ♿) is at the eastern end of town, and is wheelchair accessible. The Belfast–Portrush bus 218 stops about 100m away.

Harder to get to, but well worth the effort, is the **Downhill Hostel** (☎ 7084 9077; www.downhillhostel.com; 12 Mussenden Rd; dm/d £9/30; ♿), a lovely converted period house on the beach, with open fires and a good library of books and vinyl. Pick-up can be arranged from Castlerock train station. The Coleraine–Limavady bus 134 also passes nearby.

### DERRY

pop 107,000

Derry. Londonderry. The name you use for Northern Ireland's second-largest city can be a political statement, but today most people just call it Derry, whatever their politics. The 'London' prefix was added after settlers from London Guilds built the city walls and were granted much of the land in the area by James I.

In the '60s resentment at the long-running Protestant domination of the city council boiled over in the (Catholic-dominated) civil rights marches of 1968. In August 1969 fighting between police and local youths in the poor Catholic Bogside district prompted the UK government to send British troops into Derry. In January 1972 'Bloody Sunday' resulted in the deaths of 13 unarmed Catholic civil rights marchers in Derry at the hands of the British

army, an event that marked the beginning of the Troubles in earnest. Inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday is still continuing in Derry's Guildhall.

Today Derry is as safe to visit as anywhere else in Northern Ireland, while the Bogside and the inner city have been redeveloped. The city's long, dramatic history is still palpable – in the 17th-century city walls, in the captivating Bogside murals – but it's also a laid-back place with a well-founded reputation for musical excellence, from traditional to cutting-edge contemporary, and a lively arts scene that thrives in the city's many innovative venues.

### Orientation

The old centre of Derry is the small, walled city on the western bank of the Foyle River. The heart of the walled city is The Diamond, intersected by four main roads: Shipquay St, Ferryquay St, Bishop St Within and Butcher St. The Catholic Bogside area is below the walls to the northwest. To the south is a Protestant estate known as the Fountain. The Waterside district across the river is mostly Protestant.

### Information

**Central Library** (☎ 7127 2310; 35 Foyle St; per hr £3; 🕒 9.15am-5.30pm Tue, Wed & Fri, 9.15am-8pm Mon & Thu, 9.15am-5pm Sat) Internet access is available.

**Claude's Café** (☎ 7127 9379; 4 Shipquay St; per hr £5; 🕒 9am-5.30pm) Offers Internet access.

**Derry Visitor & Convention Bureau** (☎ 7126 7284; www.derryvisitor.com; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat mid-Mar–Jun & Oct, 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Jul-Sep, 9am-5pm Nov–mid-Mar) Handles all of Northern Ireland and the Republic, as well as Derry. The office may be relocated in the next couple of years.

**Main Post Office** (Custom House St) Just north of the Tower Museum.

### Sights

Derry's magnificent **city walls**, built between 1613 and 1618, were the last to be constructed in Europe, and are Ireland's only city walls to survive almost intact. They're about 8m high, 9m thick and encircle the old city for 1.5km. The walls make for a fantastic walk, and the gates give an excellent overview of Bogside (itself worth a closer look on foot) and its defiant **murals**, one notably proclaiming 'You Are Now Entering

Free Derry'. From the city walls between Butcher's Gate and the army barracks you are able to see many of the darkly beautiful building-side murals.

Just inside Coward's Bastion to the north, O'Doherty's Tower is home to the excellent **Tower Museum** (☎ 7137 2411; tower.museum@derrycity.gov.uk; admission £3; 🕒 10am-4.30pm Mon-Sat), which traces the story of Derry from the days of St Columbcille to the present. The newly renovated museum was expanded to include an interactive Spanish Armada exhibition. The **Harbour Museum** (☎ 7137 7331; Harbour Sq; admission free; 🕒 10am-1pm & 2-4.30pm Mon-Fri) has interesting displays on Derry's maritime tradition and Victorian past. The deeply moving **Museum of Free Derry** (☎ 7136 0880; www.museumoffree.derry.org; 55-61 Glenfada Park; 🕒 9.30am-4pm Mon-Thu, 9.30am-3pm Fri, 1-4pm Sat) exhibits all things related to The Troubles, Civil Rights, Bloody Sunday and everything in between. It screens an excellent 45-minute film about Bloody Sunday. At the time of research no fees had been set.

The fine red-brick **Guildhall** (☎ 7137 7335; admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri), just outside the city walls, was originally built in 1890 and is noted for its stained-glass windows. Guided tours are available in July and August.

Austere **St Columb's Cathedral** (☎ 7126 1033; requested donation £1; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, 9am-4pm Nov-Mar) dates from 1628 and stands at the southern end of the walled city, off Bishop St Within.

### Tours

Both **Derry Visitor & Convention Bureau** (☎ 7126 7284; www.derryvisitor.com; 44 Foyle St; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat mid-Mar–Jun & Oct, 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Jul-Sep, 9am-5pm Nov–mid-Mar) and **City Tours** (☎ 7127 1996; www.irishourguides.com; 11 Carlisle Rd) offer walking tours of the city walls for around £4. **Free Derry Tours** (☎ 0779 328 5972; www.freederry.net) also does a fantastically informative tour and its founder, Ruairi O'Heara, might very well be Derry's most fascinating tour guide.

### Sleeping

**Derry City Independent Hostel** (☎ 7128 0542; www.derryhostel.com; 44 Great James St; dm/d incl breakfast £11/32; ♿) Every hostel should strive to engender the warm atmosphere that Steve

and Kylie have created at Derry City Independent. It is a little cramped but it's funky and fun, with an eating nook covered in Indian paintings and pillows. There's free Internet access, no checkout time and the fifth night is free.

**Saddler's House** (☎ 7126 9691; [www.thesaddlershouse.com](http://www.thesaddlershouse.com); 36 Great James St; s/d £30/45; (P) (X)) Everything in this centrally located Victorian townhouse, from the sharp-witted hosts to their bulldog Bertie, is absolutely lovable. It's almost worth visiting Derry just to stay here or at its sister B&B, Merchant's House.

**Merchant's House** (☎ 7126 9691; 16 Queen St; s £20-30, d £45-50) A Georgian-style townhouse around the corner from Saddler's House. The marble fireplace, antique furniture and home-made marmalade are just a few of the little touches that make a stay here utterly enjoyable.

**Tower Hotel** (☎ 7137 1000; [www.towerhotelderry.com](http://www.towerhotelderry.com); Butcher St; s/d £89/125; (P) (X)) The Tower is the only hotel within the city walls, with plush wheelchair-accessible rooms, a fitness centre and a good restaurant.

## Eating

**An BÁCús** (☎ 7126 4678; 37 Great James St; snacks £2-4; ☎ 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat) The bilingual menu at this Irish-language café is a little confusing to read, but you will learn the Irish words for egg (*ubh*) and Coke (*Cóca*). It's a cute place for a coffee and a pastry or sandwich.

**Flaming Jacks** (☎ 7126 6400; 29-35 Strand Rd; lunch £5-6, dinner £7-14; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 5-10.30pm Mon-Thu, noon-4.30pm Fri & Sat, noon-4pm Sun) It could be the sultry modern interior or the extensive wine list that brings droves of people to Flaming Jacks, or it could be the fact that it's probably the only place in Ireland that gives free soft drink refills. You be the judge.

**Mange 2** (☎ 7136 1222; 2 Clarendon St; lunch £7, dinner £10-16; ☎ noon-2.45pm & 5.30pm-late daily, breakfast from 10.30am Sat & Sun) The fine food and service in this candlelit, Georgian-style dining room make it a nice place to drop a few pounds, sterling that is. The interesting fusion menu includes a handful of good veggie options.

For self-caterers, **Tesco** (Strand Rd) has a large supermarket in the Quayside Shopping Centre.

## Drinking

**Peadar O'Donnell's** (☎ 7126 2318; 63 Waterloo St) Peadar's goes for traditional music sessions nightly from around 11pm.

**Sandino's** (☎ 7130 9297; 1 Water St) This alternative Latin American-themed venue (named after Nicaraguan guerrilla leader Augusto Sandino) is popular with up-and-coming bands and visiting musicians. It hosts regular theme nights, and various fund-raising and political events.

## Entertainment

**Millennium Forum** (☎ 7126 4455; [www.millenniumforum.co.uk](http://www.millenniumforum.co.uk); New Market St) Ireland's biggest theatre auditorium has wheelchair-accessible spaces for dance, drama, concerts, opera and musicals.

**Nerve Centre** (☎ 7126 0562; [www.nerve-centre.org.uk](http://www.nerve-centre.org.uk); 7-8 Magazine St) The ever-expanding Nerve Centre is a multimedia venue for music, and has an arthouse cinema, café and bar. It also has workshops and studios for animation, film and music.

## Getting There & Away

About 13km east of Derry along the A2, the **City of Derry airport** (LDY; ☎ 7181 0784; [www.cityofderryairport.com](http://www.cityofderryairport.com)) has direct flights daily to London Stansted, Dublin, Glasgow, Manchester and Birmingham. Some of the budget airlines that land here are Ryanair and Aer Arann. See p705 for contact details.

The **bus station** (☎ 7126 2261) is just outside the city walls, on Foyle St near the Guildhall. Ulsterbus' bus 212, the *Maiden City Flyer*, is the fastest service between Belfast and Derry (£9.40, 1¼ hours, every half-hour, less on Sunday). Bus 234 runs to Portrush and Portstewart in July and August (£6.50, 1½ hours, four daily). Five buses daily (four on Sunday) go to Dublin (£12.80, 4¾ hours).

**Lough Swilly Bus Service** (☎ 7126 2017), with an office upstairs at the Ulsterbus station, serves County Donegal across the border.

**Air Porter Buses** (☎ 7126 9996; [www.airporter.co.uk](http://www.airporter.co.uk)) runs 13 daily services (six on weekends) between Belfast International Airport, Belfast City Airport and Derry's Quayside Shopping Centre for £15.

Derry's **Waterside train station** (☎ 7134 2228) lies across the Foyle River from the city centre, but is connected to it by a free

Linkline bus that leaves the bus station 15 minutes before each train departure. Nine trains run daily (four on Sunday) to Belfast (£9.40, three hours) via Portrush.

## ENNISKILLEN & LOUGH ERNE

Enniskillen, the main town of County Fermanagh, is handy for activities on Upper and Lower Lough Erne. Enniskillen itself has only one notable sight, **Enniskillen Castle** (☎ 6632 5000; [www.enniskillencastle.co.uk](http://www.enniskillencastle.co.uk); adult/child £2.50/1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 2-5pm Sat-Mon, closed Sun Sep-May, closed Sat Oct-Apr), home to the Fermanagh County Museum, with displays on the county's history and landscape, and the Museum of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

The town centre is on an island in the Erne River, which connects the upper and lower lakes. The very helpful **tourist office** (☎ 6632 3110; Wellington Rd; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri Jul-Aug, 9am-5.30pm Sep-Jun, 10am-6pm Sat & 11am-5pm Sun Easter-Sep) is about 100m from the town centre.

Between May and September – from the Round 'O' Jetty at Brook Park – the **MV Kestrel waterbus** (☎ 6632 2882) operates 1½-hour tours (£8) of the lower lough, which include a visit to **Devenish Island**, with its 9th-century church and one of the best round-towers in Ireland.

White Island, close to the eastern shore of the lough, has a line of six mysterious statues, dating from around the 6th century. On weekends from April to September, and daily in July and August, a ferry runs across to White Island from the Castle Archdale marina, 20km north of Enniskillen on the Kesh road. The return fare is £4. Contact the tourist office for bookings.

The modern and spotless **Bridges Hostel** (☎ 6634 2806; Belmore St; dm/tw £13/26; (X) (P)) is part of the Bill Clinton Peace Centre in central Enniskillen. Two twin rooms are wheelchair accessible. Roughly 3km down the A4 sits the lovely **Dromard House B&B** (☎ 6638 7250; [www.dromardhouse.com](http://www.dromardhouse.com); Tamalght; s/d £25/50), a traditional Ulster farmhouse on a working farm.

## Getting There & Around

Enniskillen's **Ulsterbus station** (☎ 6632 2633; Shore Rd) is across from the tourist office. There are up to 10 services daily (fewer on weekends) to Belfast via Dungannon (£9.40,

2½ hours). Buses also run to Derry (£13, 2½ hours, once daily Monday to Friday) via Omagh. Bus Éireann has services to Dublin via Ballygawley (£17.60, three hours, three daily, fewer on weekends).

# IRELAND DIRECTORY

## ACCOMMODATION

Sleeping listings in this chapter include the high-season price. Low-season rates are 15% to 25% less. Most budget listings in this chapter are under €30 per person, while midrange options are generally under €65. Top-end places range upwards of €65.

Booking ahead is essential in peak season. Fáilte Ireland (Irish Tourist Board) will book accommodation for a 10% room deposit and a fee of €4. The **Northern Ireland Tourist Board** (NITB; [www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com)) books accommodation at no cost with a 10% room deposit. This is handy when it may take numerous calls to find a room. Accommodation for the Republic and the North may also be booked online, via the **Gulliver booking service** ([www.gulliver.ie](http://www.gulliver.ie)). A deposit of 10% and a €4 fee is payable.

## B&Bs

Bed and breakfasts are as Irish as it gets. It sometimes seems that every other house is a B&B, and you'll find them in the strangest locations. Typical costs are around €35 per person a night, though more-luxurious B&Bs can cost upwards of €55 per person. Most B&Bs are small, so in summer they quickly fill up.

## Camping & Hostels

Commercial camping grounds typically charge €12 to €18 for a tent and two people, and some hostels have space for tents. Unless otherwise indicated, prices given in this chapter for 'camp site' are for a tent plus two people.

Hostels in Ireland can be booked heavily in summer. An Óige (meaning 'youth') and Hostelling International Northern Ireland (HINI) are branches of Hostelling International (HI); An Óige has 33 hostels in the Republic, while HINI has seven in the North. Other hostel associations include Independent Holiday Hostels (IHH), a cooperative group with about

120 hostels throughout the island, and the Independent Hostels Owners (IHO) association, which has over 100 members around Ireland.

From June to September nightly costs at most hostels are €15 to €20, except for the more expensive hostels in Dublin, Belfast and a few other places.

**An Óige** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 01-830 4555; www.anoige.ie; 61 Mountjoy St, Dublin 7)

**Hostelling International Northern Ireland** (HINI; ☎ 028-9032 4733; www.hini.org.uk; Belfast International Youth Hostel, 22-32 Donegall Rd, Belfast BT12 5JN)

**Independent Holiday Hostels** (IHH; ☎ 01-836 4700; www.hostels-ireland.com)

**Independent Hostel Owners in Ireland** (IHO; ☎ 074-973 0130; www.holidayhound.com/ih; Dooney Hostel, Glencolumbkille, County Donegal)

## ACTIVITIES

Ireland is great for outdoor activities, and tourist boards put out a wide selection of information sheets covering bird-watching (County Donegal and County Wexford), surfing (great along the west coast), scuba diving (West Cork), rock climbing, fishing, horse riding, sailing, canoeing and many other activities.

Walking is particularly popular, although you must come prepared for wet weather. There are now well over 20 way-marked trails throughout Ireland, one of the most popular being the 132km Wicklow Way.

## BOOKS

Lonely Planet's *Ireland, Dublin, Cycling Ireland, Walking in Ireland* and *World Food Ireland* guides offer comprehensive coverage of the island and its most-visited city.

*McCarthy's Bar* by Pete McCarthy is laugh-out-loud funny and a must-read for anyone travelling in Ireland.

## BUSINESS HOURS

Offices are open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, shops a little later. On Thursday and/or Friday shops stay open later; although the closing time varies from shop to shop, they would be unlikely to be open after 9pm. Many shops also open on Saturday. In winter tourist attractions are often open shorter hours, fewer days per week or may be shut completely. In Northern Ireland some tourist attractions are closed on Sunday morning.

Restaurants north and south tend to close around 9pm or 10pm. In the Republic pubs close at 11.30pm Monday to Thursday, 12.30am Friday and Saturday, and at 11pm on Sunday; some pubs have licences allowing them to stay open until 2.30am Thursday to Saturday. In Northern Ireland pubs close at 11pm Monday to Saturday and 10pm on Sunday; those holding late licences generally stay open until 1am Monday to Friday and until midnight on Sunday.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

### Irish Embassies & Consulates

Irish diplomatic missions overseas include the following:

**Australia** (☎ 02-6273 3022; irishemb@cyberone.com.au; 20 Arkana St, Yarralumla, ACT 2600) There is also a consulate in Sydney.

**Canada** (☎ 613-233 6281; embassyofireland@rogers.com; Suite 1105, 130 Albert St, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5G4)

**France** (☎ 01 44 17 67 00; paris@iveagh.irlgov.ie; 4 rue de Paris, 75116 Paris)

**Germany** (☎ 030-220 720; Friedrichstrasse 200, D-10117 Berlin)

**Netherlands** (☎ 070-363 09 93; www.irishembassy.nl; Dr Kuypersstraat 9, 2514 BA The Hague)

**New Zealand** (☎ 09-977 2252; consul@ireland.co.nz; 6th fl, 18 Shortland St, 1001 Auckland)

**UK** (☎ 020-7235 2171; 17 Grosvenor Pl, London SW1X 7HR) There are consulates in Edinburgh and Cardiff.

**USA** (☎ 202-462 3939; 2234 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008-2849) Boston, Chicago, New York and San Francisco have consulates.

### Embassies & Consulates in Ireland

The following countries have diplomatic offices in Dublin:

**Australia** (☎ 01-676 1517; www.australianembassy.ie; 2nd fl, Fitzwilton House, Wilton Tce, Dublin 2)

**Canada** (☎ 01-478 1988; www.canada.ie; 4th fl, 65-68 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2)

**France** (☎ 01-277 5000; www.ambafrance.ie; 36 Ailesbury Rd, Dublin 4)

**Germany** (☎ 01-269 3011; www.germanembassy.ie; 31 Trimleston Ave, Booterstown, Co Dublin)

**Netherlands** (☎ 01-269 3444; www.netherlandsembassy.ie; 160 Merrion Rd, Dublin 4)

**New Zealand** (☎ 01-660 4233; 37 Leeson Park, Dublin 6)

**UK** (☎ 01-205 3700; www.britishembassy.ie; 29 Merrion Rd, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4)

**USA** (☎ 01-668 7122; www.dublin.usembassy.gov; 42 Elgin Rd, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4)

In Northern Ireland, nationals of most countries should contact their embassy in London. Consulates in the North include:

**Germany** (☎ 028-7034 0403; Hillman's Way, Ballycastle Rd, Coleraine)

**Netherlands** (☎ 028-9037 0223; fax 9037 1104; 14-16 West Bank Rd, Belfast BT3 9JL)

**New Zealand** (☎ 028-9264 8098; The Ballance House, 118A Lisburn Rd, Glenavy BT29 4NY)

**USA** (☎ 028-9038 6100; www.americanembassy.org.uk; Danesfort House, 223 Stranmillis Rd, Belfast BT9 5GR)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

St Patrick's Day is a cacophony of parades, fireworks and light shows for three days around 17 March in Dublin; Cork, Armagh and Belfast also have parades. The All-Ireland hurling and football finals both take place in Dublin in September. There are great regional cultural events around the island, like the Galway Arts Festival (p683) in late July and the Kilkenny Arts Festival in late August. In Dublin, Leopold Bloom's Joycean journey around the city is marked by various events on Bloomsday (16 June). The Dublin International Film Festival in April is also a highlight. In Northern Ireland July is marching month and every Orangeman in the country hits the streets on the 'glorious 12th'. Other events include the Galway Oyster Festival in September and the Belfast Festival at Queen's in November.

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Despite the decriminalisation of homosexuality for people over 17 years of age (Northern Ireland in 1982 and the Republic in 1993), gay life is generally neither acknowledged nor understood. Only Dublin and, to a lesser extent, Belfast, Cork, Galway, Waterford and Limerick have open gay and lesbian communities. The monthly **Gay Community News** (www.gcn.ie), available at bars and cafés, is a free publication of the **National Lesbian & Gay Federation** (☎ 01-671 9076; Unit 2, Scarlet Row, West Essex St, Dublin 8). Information is also available from **Outhouse Community Centre** (Map p657; ☎ 01-873 4932; www.outhouse.ie; 105 Capel St, Dublin 1), a gay, lesbian and transgender community centre.

## HOLIDAYS

Following is a list of the main public holidays in the Republic, Northern Ireland or both:

**New Year's Day** 1 January

**St Patrick's Day** 17 March

**Easter** (Good Friday to Easter Monday inclusive) March/April

**May Holiday** 1 May

**Christmas Day** 25 December

**St Stephen's Day** (Boxing Day) 26 December

## NORTHERN IRELAND

**Spring Bank Holiday** Last Monday in May

**Orangemen's Day** 12 July

**August Bank Holiday** First Monday in August

## REPUBLIC

**June Holiday** First Monday in June

**August Holiday** First Monday in August

**October Holiday** Last Monday in October

## INTERNET RESOURCES

Ireland is well wired, so there's a lot of useful information available online. **CIE Group** (www.cie.ie) and **Translink** (www.translink.co.uk) are handy for planning transport in the South and North, respectively.

**Entertainment Ireland** (www.entertainmentireland.ie) Countrywide listings for clubs, theatres, festivals, cinemas, museums and much more.

**Irish Times** (www.ireland.com) Get up to speed on the latest news before you leave home with Ireland's largest daily newspaper.

**Irish Tourist Board** (www.ireland.ie) The Republic's tourist information site has heaps of practical information. It features a huge accommodation database with photos.

**Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com) Comprehensive travel information and advice.

**Northern Ireland Tourism** (www.discovernorthernireland.com) Northern Ireland's official tourism information site is particularly strong on activities and accommodation.

**Office of Public Works** (www.heritageireland.ie) The Republic's heritage sites – castles, churches and abbeys, parks, cemeteries and the like.

## MAPS

Good-quality maps of Ireland include Lonely Planet's *Dublin City Map*, Michelin *Ireland Motoring Map* No 923 (1:400,000) and Ordnance Survey's (OS) four Ireland *Holiday Maps* (1:250,000). The more-detailed OS *Discovery* series (1:50,000) covers the entire country with 89 maps.

## MONEY

The Irish Republic uses the euro, while Northern Ireland uses the British pound sterling (£). Banks offer the best exchange



rates; exchange bureaus, open longer, have worse rates and higher commissions. Post offices generally have exchange facilities and are open on Saturday morning.

In Northern Ireland several banks issue their own Northern Irish pound notes, which are equivalent to sterling but not readily accepted in Britain. At the time of research ATMs in Northern Ireland were not accepting certain debit/credit cards from the USA.

Ireland is expensive, marginally more than Britain, but prices vary around the island. Prices for sites and museums are usually 20% to 50% lower for children, students and senior citizens (OAPs).

For budget travellers, €65 per day should cover hostel accommodation, getting around, a restaurant meal and just enough for a pint.

Fancy hotels and restaurants usually add a 10% or 15% service charge onto bills. Simpler places usually don't add service; if you decide to tip, just round up the bill (or add 10% at most). Taxi drivers do not have to be tipped, but if you do, 10% is more than generous.

## POST

The post offices (An Post) throughout the Republic are generally open 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday, and 9am to 1pm Saturday; smaller offices close for lunch.

Letters weighing less than 50g cost €0.60 to Britain and €0.65 to Continental Europe and the rest of the world.

Post-office hours and postal rates in Northern Ireland are the same as Britain. Mail can be addressed to poste restante at post offices, but is officially held for only two weeks. Writing 'hold for collection' on the envelope may help.

## TELEPHONE

Local telephone calls from a public phone in the Republic cost €0.50 for three minutes (around €0.60 to a mobile). In Northern Ireland a local call costs a minimum of €0.30. Some payphones in the North take euros. Prepaid phonedcards by Eircom or private operators, available in newsagents and post offices, work from all payphones and dispense with the need for coins.

To call Northern Ireland from the Republic, you do not use 0044 as for the

rest of the UK. Instead, dial 048 and then the local number.

You can dial direct to your home-country operator and then reverse charges (collect) or charge the call to a local phone-credit card. From the Republic dial the following codes, then the area code and the number you want. Your home-country operator will come on the line before the call goes through.

**Australia** ☎ 1800 550061  
**France** ☎ 1800 551033  
**New Zealand** ☎ 1800 550064  
**UK (BT)** ☎ 1800 550044  
**USA (AT&T)** ☎ 1800 550000  
**USA (MCI)** ☎ 1800 551001  
**USA (Sprint)** ☎ 1800 552001

Reverse-charge calls can also be made from the North using the same numbers as from the UK.

## Mobile Phones

The mobile (cell) phone network in Ireland runs on the GSM 900/1800 system compatible with the rest of Europe and Australia, but not the USA. Ireland's three service providers are Vodafone (087), O2 (086) and Meteor (085). A new SIM for your mobile will cost from around €10, but may be free after the standard phone-credit refund. Pay-as-you-go phones cost from €100.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

The Irish tourist board, **Fáilte Ireland** (www.failteireland.ie), and the **Northern Ireland Tourist Board** (NITB; www.discovernorthernireland.com) operate separate offices. Both are well organised and helpful, though Fáilte Ireland will not provide any information on places (such as B&Bs and camping grounds) that it has not approved. Every town big enough to have half-a-dozen pubs will have a tourist office, although smaller ones may close in winter. Most will find you a place to stay for a fee of €2 to €4.

**Tourism Ireland** (www.tourismireland.com) handles tourist information for both tourist boards overseas.

## Tourist Offices Abroad

Following are overseas offices of Tourism Ireland:

**Australia** ☎ 02-9299 6177; 5th fl, 36 Carrington St, Sydney, NSW 2000

**Canada** ☎ 1 800 223 6470; Ste 3403, 2 Bloor St W, Toronto M4W 3E2

**New Zealand** ☎ 09-977 2255; Level 6, 18 Shortland St, Private Bag, 92136 Auckland

**UK** ☎ 0800 039 7000; Nations House, 103 Wigmore St, London W1U 1QS

**USA** ☎ 1 800 223 6470; 345 Park Ave, New York, NY 10154

## TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Guesthouses, hotels and sights throughout Ireland are increasingly being adapted for people with disabilities. In Northern Ireland this became compulsory under the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995, and service providers across the North worked to make the necessary adjustments by the 2004 deadline. Fáilte Ireland's various accommodation guides indicate which places are wheelchair accessible, and the NITB publishes *Accessible Accommodation in Northern Ireland*. Comhairle publishes detailed accessibility information in the Republic and the North. Travellers to Northern Ireland should also check out **All Go Here** (www.everybody.co.uk).

**Comhairle** (Map pp654-5; ☎ 01-605 90 00; www.comhairle.ie; 7th fl, Hume House, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4)

**Disability Action** ☎ 028-9029 7880; www.disabilityaction.org; Portside Business Park, 189 Airport Rd West, Belfast BT3 9ED

## VISAS

Citizens of the EU, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US don't need a visa to visit either the Republic or Northern Ireland. EU nationals are allowed to stay indefinitely, while other visitors can usually remain for three to six months. UK nationals born in Britain or Northern Ireland don't need a passport, but should carry some identification.

# TRANSPORT IN IRELAND

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

The Fáilte Ireland **online tourist office** (www.ireland.ie) has information on getting to Ireland from a number of countries. International departure tax is normally included in the price of your ticket.

There are nonstop flights from Britain, Continental Europe and North America to Dublin and Shannon, and nonstop connections from Britain and Europe to Cork.

International airports in the Republic include the following:

**Cork** (ORK; ☎ 021-431 3131; www.corkairport.com)  
**Dublin** (DUB; ☎ 01-814 1111; www.dublinairport.com)  
**Kerry** (KIR; ☎ 066-976 4644; www.kerryairport.ie; Farranfore)  
**Knock** (NOC; ☎ 094-67222; www.knockairport.com)  
**Shannon** (SNN; ☎ 061-712000; www.shannonairport.com)  
**Waterford** (WAT; ☎ 051-875589; www.flywaterford.com)

International airports in Northern Ireland include the following:

**Belfast City** (BHD; ☎ 028-9093 9093; www.belfastcityairport.com) Serves Britain.  
**Belfast International** (BFS; ☎ 028-9448 4848; www.belfastairport.com) Serves Britain, Europe and the USA.  
**Derry** (LDY; ☎ 028-7181 0784; www.cityofderryairport.com) Serves Britain.

For a comprehensive list of airlines serving Ireland from outside Western Europe, see p112. Airlines flying to and from Ireland include the following:

**Aer Arann** (code RE; ☎ 01-814 5240; www.aerarann.ie) A small carrier that operates flights within Ireland and also to Britain.  
**Aer Lingus** (code EI; ☎ 01-886 8844; www.aerlingus.com) The Irish national airline, with direct flights to Britain, Continental Europe and the USA.  
**Air France** (code AF; ☎ 01-605 0383; www.airfrance.com)  
**Alitalia** (code AZ; ☎ 01-844 6035; www.alitalia.com)  
**American Airlines** (code AA; ☎ 01-602 0550; www.aa.com)  
**BMI British Midland** (code BD; ☎ in the UK 01332-854 854; www.flybmi.com)  
**British Airways** (code BA; ☎ in the UK 0845 773 3377; www.ba.com)  
**Continental Airlines** (code CO; ☎ 1890 925 252; www.continental.com)  
**Delta Airlines** (code DL; ☎ 1800 768 080; www.delta.com)  
**easyJet** (code EZY; ☎ 048-9448 4929; www.easyjet.com)  
**Finnair** (code AY; ☎ 01-844 6565; www.finnair.com)  
**Flybe** (code BEE; ☎ in the UK 0870-567 6676; www.flybe.com)  
**Iberia** (code IB; ☎ 01-407 3017; www.iberia.com, in Spanish)

**EMERGENCY NUMBERS**

These numbers apply in both the Republic and Northern Ireland:

- Ambulance ☎ 999
- Fire ☎ 999
- Police ☎ 999

**Jet2** (code LS; ☎ 0818-200 017; www.jet2.com)

**KLM** (code KLM; ☎ 01-663 6900; www.klm.nl)

**Lufthansa** (code LH; ☎ 01-844 5544; www.lufthansa.com)

**Ryanair** (code FR; ☎ 01-609 7800; www.ryanair.com) Ireland's budget carrier, flying to Britain and Continental Europe.

**Scandinavian Airlines** (code SK; ☎ 01-844 5888; www.scandinavian.net)

**US Airways** (code US; ☎ 1890 925 065; www.usairways.com)

**Land**

Because of cheap flights, getting to Ireland by land is not very popular. National Express and Bus Éireann's Eurolines operate services direct from London and other UK centres to Dublin, Belfast and other cities. For details in London, contact **National Express** (☎ 0870-514 3219; www.nationalexpress.com); in Dublin contact **Bus Éireann** (☎ 01-836 6111; www.buseireann.ie). London to Dublin by bus takes about 12 hours and costs £28/41 one-way/return (more for the evening bus). To Belfast it takes 13 hours and costs £29/42.

**Sea**

There's a variety of ferry services from Britain and France to Ireland. Prices vary depending on season, time of day, day of the week and length of stay. One-way fares for an adult foot passenger can be as little as £20, but can exceed £60 in summer. For a car plus driver and up to four adult passengers, prices can cost £130 to £250.

Keep an eye out for special deals, discounted return fares and other money savers. And plan ahead – some services are booked up months in advance.

**BRITAIN**

Regular ferry services run to ports in the Republic and Northern Ireland from Scotland (Cairnryan–Larne, Stranraer–Belfast, Troon–Belfast and Troon–Larne), England

(Heysham–Belfast, Liverpool–Belfast and Liverpool–Dublin), Wales (Fishguard–Rosslare Harbour, Holyhead–Dublin, Holyhead–Dun Laoghaire, Pembroke–Rosslare Harbour and Swansea–Cork) and from the Isle of Man (Douglas–Dublin and Douglas–Belfast).

**Irish Ferries** (☎ 0818-300 400, 01-638 3333, in the UK 0870 517 1717; www.irishferries.com) For ferry and fast-boat services from Holyhead to Dublin (two or 3¼ hours), and ferry services from Pembroke to Rosslare Harbour (3¾ hours).

**Isle of Man Steam Packet Company/Sea Cat** (☎ 1800-805 055, in the UK 0870 552 3523; www.steam-packet.com) Ferry and fast-boat services from Douglas (Isle of Man) to Belfast (2¼ hours, Easter to September) and Dublin (2¾ hours, Easter to September); Liverpool to Dublin (3¾ hours, February to October); and Troon to Belfast (2½ hours).

**Norfolkline Irish Sea Ferries** (☎ 01-819 2999, in the UK 0870 600 4321; www.norfolkline-ferries.co.uk/en/is-passenger/) Ferries from Liverpool to Belfast (eight hours), and from Dublin to Liverpool (seven hours).

**P&O European Ferries** (☎ 01-407 3434, in the UK 0870 242 4777; www.poirishsea.com) Ferry and fast-boat services from Cairnryan to Larne (one or 1¼ hours), Troon to Larne (1¾ hours, March to October) and Liverpool to Dublin (eight hours).

**Stena Line** (☎ 01-204 7777, in the UK 0870 570 7070; www.stenaline.co.uk) Ferry and fast-boat services from Holyhead to Dublin (three hours) and Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire (1¾ hours); Fishguard to Rosslare Harbour (1¼ or 3½ hours); and Stranraer to Belfast (1¼ or 3¼ hours).

**Swansea Cork Ferries** (☎ 021-427 6000, in the UK 01792-456116; www.swansea-corkferries.com) Ferry services from Swansea to Cork (10 hours).

**FRANCE**

Ferries run between Roscoff and Cherbourg to Rosslare Harbour and Cork.

**Brittany Ferries** (☎ in Ireland 021-427 7801, in France 02 98 29 28 00; www.brittanyferries.com) Services from Roscoff to Cork once weekly (13 hours, April to September).

**Irish Ferries** (☎ in France 01 43 94 46 94) Ferries from Roscoff/Cherbourg to Rosslare Harbour (17½ or 20½ hours, April to December).

**P&O European Ferries** Services from Cherbourg to Rosslare Harbour (19 hours).

**GETTING AROUND**

Travelling around Ireland looks simple, as the distances are short and there's a dense network of roads and railways. But in Ireland, from A to B is seldom a straight line, and public transport can be expen-

sive (particularly trains), infrequent or both. For these reasons having your own transport – either car or bicycle – can be a major advantage.

**Air**

There are flights within Ireland between Dublin and Belfast, Cork, Derry, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Shannon and Sligo, as well as a Belfast–Cork service. Most domestic flights take 30 to 50 minutes. For the list of airlines, see p705.

**Bicycle**

Ireland is a great place for cycling, despite inconsistent roads and inclement weather. You can either bring your bike with you on the ferry or plane, or hire one in Ireland. Typical hire costs are €10 to €20 per day or around €50 to €100 a week. Bags and other equipment can also be hired. Raleigh Rent-a-Bike agencies are all over Ireland. Contact them at **Eurotrek** (☎ 01-465 9659; www.eurotrekraleighgroup.com). Like many local bike shops, they offer one-way hire for an extra charge.

Bicycles can be transported by bus if there is enough room onboard; it usually costs €10 per trip. On trains, costs start at €2.50 for a one-way journey, but bikes are not allowed onboard on certain routes, including the Dublin Area Rapid Transit (DART).

**PASSES & DISCOUNT**

Eurail passes are valid for train travel in the Republic of Ireland but not in Northern Ireland, and will get you a 50% discount on Irish Ferries crossings to France. InterRail passes give you a 50% reduction on train travel within Ireland and on Irish Ferries and Stena Line services. Both Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann offer discounts to ISIC holders.

Britrail has an option to add on Ireland for an extra fee. The pass also covers ferry transit.

Irish Rambler tickets are available from Bus Éireann for bus-only travel in the Republic. They cost €53 (for travel on three out of eight consecutive days), €116 (eight out of 15 days) or €168 (15 out of 30 days). The similar Open Road pass costs €45 for travel on three out of six consecutive days and is extendable.

Irish Rover tickets combine services on Bus Éireann and Ulsterbus. They cost €70 (for three days' travel out of eight consecutive days), €158 (eight out of 15 days) and €235 (15 out of 30 days).

For train-only travel within the Republic, Iarnród Éireann Explorer tickets cost €127 (five days' travel out of 15). It costs €157 (five days' travel out of 15) to include Northern Ireland.

Irish Explorer Rail and Bus tickets (€194) allow you eight days' travel out of 15 consecutive days on trains and buses in the Republic.

In Northern Ireland the Freedom of Northern Ireland ticket is good for unlimited travel on Ulsterbus and Northern Ireland Railways for one day (£14), three days' travel out of eight (£34) or seven consecutive days (£50).

**Bus**

The Republic of Ireland's national bus line, **Bus Éireann** (☎ 01-836 6111; www.buseireann.ie), operates services all over the Republic and into Northern Ireland. Fares are much cheaper than train fares. Return trips are usually only slightly more expensive than one-way fares, and special deals (eg same-day returns) are often available. Most intercity buses in Northern Ireland are operated by **Ulsterbus** (☎ 028-9066 6630; www.translink.co.uk).

**Car & Motorcycle****AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATIONS**

Automobile association members should ask for a Card of Introduction entitling you to services offered by sister organisations, usually free of charge.

**Automobile Association** (AA; www.aaireland.ie) Northern Ireland (☎ 0870-950 0600, breakdowns 0800-667 788); The Republic (☎ 01-677 9481, breakdowns 1800-667 788)

**Royal Automobile Club** (RAC; www.rac.ie) Northern Ireland (☎ 0800-029 029); The Republic (☎ 1800-483 483)

**HIRE**

Car hire in Ireland is expensive, so you're better off booking a package deal from home. In the high season it's wise to book ahead. Extra fees may apply if you cross the North–South border. Automatic cars are more expensive.

People under 21 cannot hire a car; for most hire companies you must be at least 23 and have had a valid driving licence for one year. Some companies will not hire to those aged over 70 or 75. Your own local licence is usually sufficient to hire a car for up to three months.

In the Republic typical weekly high-season hire rates – with insurance, VAT, unlimited distance and collision-damage waiver – cost €300 for a small car to €450 for a larger one. **Nova Car Hire** (www.rentacar-ireland.com) acts as an agent for Alamo, Budget, European and National, and offers greatly discounted rates.

The international hire companies and the major local operators have offices all over Ireland. Recommended Dublin-based operators:

**Argus Rent-A-Car** (Map p657; ☎ 01-490 4444, 862 3811; www.argusrentals.com; Dublin Tourism Centre, Suffolk St)

**Malone Thrifty Car Rental** (☎ 01-874 5844; www.thrifty.ie) Dublin (Map pp654-5; 26 East Lombard St); Central Dublin (Map p657; 33 Bachelors Walk)

**Murrays Europcar** (☎ 01-614 2800, 812 0410; www.europcar.com; Baggot St Bridge) Just southeast of the city.

### ROAD RULES

Driving is on the left-hand side and you should only overtake (pass) to the right of the vehicle ahead of you. The driver and passengers must wear safety belts, and children under 12 cannot sit in the front. Motorcyclists and passengers must wear helmets; headlights should be dipped.

Minor roads can be potholed and narrow, but the traffic is rarely heavy, except

through tourist or commercial towns. Speed limits in both Northern Ireland and the Republic appear in kilometres, miles or both: 112km/h (70mph) on the motorways, 96km/h (60mph) on other roads and 48km/h (30mph) or as signposted in towns. On quiet, narrow, winding rural roads it's foolish to speed. Ireland's blood-alcohol limit is 0.08% and strictly enforced.

Car parks and other specified areas in Ireland are regulated by 'pay and display' tickets or disc parking. Available from most newsagencies, discs are good for one hour and cost around €1.50 each. In Northern Ireland beware of Control Zones in town centres where, for security reasons, cars must not be left unattended. Double yellow lines by the roadside mean no parking at any time, while single yellow lines indicate restrictions (which will be signposted).

### Train

The Republic of Ireland's railway system, **Iarnród Éireann** (☎ 1850-360 222, 01-836 6222; www.irishrail.ie), has routes fanning out from Dublin. Tickets can be twice as expensive as the bus, but travel times may be dramatically reduced. Special fares are often available, and a midweek return ticket sometimes costs just a bit more than the single fare; the flip side is that fares may be significantly higher on Friday or Sunday. A 1st-class ticket costs an extra €10. **Northern Ireland Railways** (☎ in Dublin 028-9066 6630, 01-679 1977; www.translink.co.uk) has four routes from Belfast, one of which links up with the Republic's rail system.

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