

Facts about Ireland

IRELAND → Ireland is a small country in Europe. It is an island, which means it's surrounded by sea.

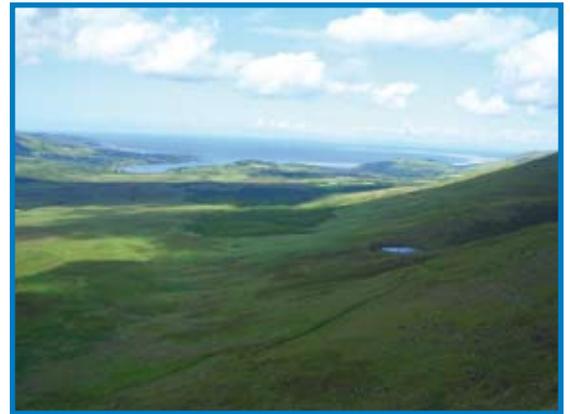
The nearest land to the west of Ireland is America. America is 3000 miles away. The nearest on the east is Scotland. Scotland is only about 13 miles away!

RAIN → Ireland has a mild climate with a lot of rain. This makes umbrellas very popular in the winter – and sometimes in the summer too!

THE IRISH FAMINE → About 150 years ago in Ireland people had very tiny farms, but they all grew their own food. That food was the potato and it was the only food that most people had. Then a terrible disease attacked the potatoes. When the farmers dug them up from the ground, the potatoes were black and rotten. Nobody could eat them. People were poor and could not buy any other food. A lot of people died. Others went on ships to England, America, Canada and Australia. There are now a lot of people in these countries with Irish connections. Are you one of them?

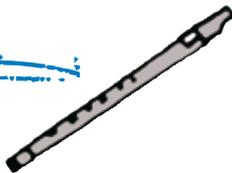
IRISH TIN or PENNY WHISTLE *music*

IRISH MUSIC → From the days of the early Celts to the present day, music has been very important in Irish life. Lots of people play, from young children, to old people. You can see some of them playing on the streets in Irish towns.



THE HARP

The harp is the official symbol of the Irish nation. It has been used on Irish coins since the year 1526 A.D.



THE TIN WHISTLE

The tin whistle is a small, simple wind instrument. A lot of people play it because it is very cheap to buy and fairly easy to play. Nowadays, most children begin to learn Irish music on the tin whistle.



THE UILLEANN PIPES

These are another wind instrument, but they are very different to the tin whistle. They are very difficult to learn.



THE BODHRAN

The bodhran is a small drum which is made by stretching a piece of goatskin over a round frame. It is used very widely in Irish music.



THE FIDDLE

The fiddle is the same as a violin, but traditional music players always call it the 'fiddle'. It has four strings and is played with a bow. It takes a long time to learn how to play the fiddle well. It is the most popular instrument of all Irish music players.



THE LEPRECHAUN

The leprechaun is a tiny shoemaker, known in the stories for his mischievous nature. He has a pot of gold which he keeps buried in the ground. He hides it at the end of the rainbow! The leprechaun is dressed in green, so it is very hard to spot him in the green grass. It also makes him very hard to catch. But if you are lucky enough to catch one, be careful! Leprechauns can never be trusted. They always try to get away before you find out where their pot of gold is hidden, and they play all kinds of tricks to catch you out.