

Interesting Facts about Ireland

1. Ireland's nickname is the **Emerald Isle** because the landscape is very green.
2. The **harp** is actually the official National Symbol of Ireland, not the shamrock! Ireland is the only country in the world to have a musical instrument as its national symbol.
3. **People wear green** on St. Patrick's Day but St. Patrick didn't! Historians think he wore light blue.
4. **The Wild Atlantic Way** is the longest coastal driving route in the world. It is 2,500km long and runs from County Donegal all the way to County Cork. It passes through nine counties and three provinces.
5. **Halloween** originated in Ireland over 2,000 years ago. It came from the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain. People would light bonfires and wear costumes to scare off unwelcome spirits.
6. **St. Valentine's ashes** are buried in a shrine inside Whitefriar Street Church, in Dublin city centre.
7. Ireland has won the **Eurovision Song Contest** seven times; more than any other country.
8. **The Cliffs of Moher** can be seen in the movies: *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*, *Princess Bride*, and *The Mackintosh Man*.
9. Ireland holds the **Guinness World Record** for:
 - Most cookies baked in an hour
 - World's largest tea towel
 - Most cups of tea made in 1 hour by a team of 12
 - Highest combined age
10. Ireland has the highest number of **red-haired people** per capita in the world. Over 10% of the population have red hair.

11. The Irish have an **incredible imagination**. There are so many amazing myths and legends in the Irish culture. There are many stories and superstitions regarding fairies and leprechauns.
12. Over 150 years ago, while cleaning the pipes in the crypt of Christ Church Cathedral, a perfectly preserved cast of a cat chasing a rat was found! You can still see them exhibited in a glass if you go there today. They are nicknamed **Tom & Jerry** after the cartoon.
13. The idea of **peaceful protests** originated in Ireland. Daniel O'Connell wanted the Irish to get their rights by protesting peacefully rather than using violence. Martin Luther King Jr and Gandhi both cited his concept as being their inspiration.
14. The **President of Ireland** has almost no power unlike countries such as France or the US. It is mainly ceremonial and symbolic role. The person who really has the power is the head of government, "The Taoiseach".
15. To date, Ireland has elected **two female presidents**: President Mary Robinson (1990) and President Mary McAleese (1997).
16. In 2011, President Mary McAleese invited **Queen Elizabeth** and her husband, the Duke of York, to Ireland. They accepted and had their first ever visit to Ireland after so many years!
17. Although the English language is spoken in Ireland, there are a lot of **slang words** used. The word "Craic" comes from Gaeilge and is used a lot. It means fun or to have a good time. "What's the craic?", "It was great craic!".
18. There is **no word for "no"** in the Irish language!
19. Immigration has always been important in Irish culture. Throughout the years, huge numbers of Irish people have gone to live in other countries. In fact, there are **more Irish people abroad** than in Ireland! It is estimated that 80 million people with Irish roots live outside of Ireland,

whilst 5 million live in Ireland! It is believed that 33 million Americans have Irish roots.

20. In terms of people coming to live in Ireland, the numbers were quite low although that has started to change. 20 years ago, only 2% of the population of Ireland was foreign-born. Now, much to our delight, **18% of the population** is. This diversity has enriched Irish society: Ireland is United in Diversity.

21. Dublin's original name was "**Dubh Linn**". It means Black Pool; a reference to a deep and dirty pool located in Dublin Castle. This is where the Poddle stream meets the river Liffey and where the Vikings would leave their ships.

22. **Trinity College Dublin** has many famous graduates such as Oscar Wilde, Jonathan Swift, Bram Stoker and Jack Gleeson.

23. **Hurling** is an ancient outdoor sport with Irish and Gaelic origins. It is said to be the fastest sport on Earth.

24. **Gaelic football** is the Irish version of football. Professional Gaelic football and hurling players do not get paid for playing.

25. While the Champs Elysees in Paris is the widest Avenue in Europe, **O'Connell Street** in Dublin is the widest street in Europe. It is 49 meters wide.

26. Did you know that **O'Connell Bridge** is actually wider than it is long?!