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travelamos/Shutterstock.com



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Ponderful Pictures/Shutterstock.com

Otherworldly landscapes and a strong sense of tradition — it's no wonder these islands have inspired so much folklore. Dotted with remnants of prehistoric, early Christian, Viking, and medieval settlements, these lands are steeped in tradition and are often Irish-speaking. Daring adventurers won't be bored as many of the islands offer unique diving or water sports experiences. A remote island escape is often accessible by bridge, tidal causeway, or a short ferry journey.

Events

Top 5



THE ISLANDS



Iuliia Laitinen/Shutterstock.com

Otherworldly landscapes and a strong sense of tradition combine in the remote islands of Ireland's coast. It is no wonder these places have inspired so much folklore and poetry - the islands are a place of phenomenal natural, as well as culture. The remnants of settlements created by Prehistoric settlers, early Christian monks, Vikings, pirates, pilgrims, farmers and fishermen preserve a sense of the country's dramatic history.

Revel in the lively traditional music and crafts culture in the Irish-speaking islands. Daring adventurers won't be bored - many of the islands offer unique diving or water sport experiences.

Often deserted or very sparsely populated, naturalists have long treasured these islands - the expanse of the Atlantic offers a rare opportunity to see birds, whales and other marine life up close in the wild.

Although remote, an island escape is more more accessible than you may think. Some can be driven onto via bridge or tidal causeway; many others are just a short ferry journey away.

NORTH WEST (DONEGAL)



alexilena/Shutterstock.com

Abandon the mortal world and embrace the magical, creative spirit of the North West Islands. These timeless Irish-speaking (Gaeltacht) islands are a window on to the past, to the Ireland of yore which has all but disappeared. The distinctive rocky Atlantic landscape reigns: sea birds perched on rugged cliffs, dramatic sea caves, spectacular ocean views and an overwhelming natural beauty which inspired so much folklore, lyric and song. The country's most remote inhabited island, Tory Island is found here, interestingly, this island is presided over by its own elected king!

Tory Island - Toraigh



Until the 16th century, Colmcille's monastery defined the island. In Toraigh, the most remote of all the inhabited Irish isles, tradition and high spirits abound. A Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking region), this island is fiercely proud of its folklore, music and dance. A haven for artists, the beauty of this small island has inspired the imagination for generations. Other landmarks of note include the Lighthouse, the Wishing Stone, and Balor's Fort. An interesting fact is that this island traditionally elects its own king - the only place in Ireland to do so.

Photo: Julianne Forde/Wiki Commons(image cropped)

Address: Tory Island, Co. Donegal

Phone: +353 871993710

Internet: www.toryferry.com

Email: contact@toryferry.com

Gola Island - Gabhla



Gabhla is one of the lesser-known islands.

Long uninhabited, interest was revived recently, particularly among rock climbers and

birdwatchers. An off the beaten track walk brings visitors to a lake with abundant bird life; cormorants, razorbills, guillemots as well as gannets and kittiwakes. Somewhere this peaceful, you may feel as though you've been transported to another world - but the island is in fact only 2km from Gweedore, with ferries departing from Magheragallan (Machaire Gathlan). Note: during low season, booking is required.

Photo: Rwx/Wiki Commons(image cropped)

Address: Gola Island, Co. Donegal

Phone: +353 87 224 5881

Internet: www.golaferry.com

Arranmore - Árainn Mhór



Arranmore is the biggest inhabited island in County Donegal. A Gaeltacht region, many mainlanders cherish memories of visiting this

island to participate in Irish-language summer schools as teenagers. Outdoor and aquatic activities are popular here, such as birdwatching, rock climbing, diving, sailing, kayaking, but most of all angling, as the sea and freshwater lakes here are rich in fish. This is the perfect place to get acquainted with the Islander

spirit.

Photo: Patrick Mangan/Shutterstock.com

Address: Arranmore, Co. Donegal

Phone: +353 749542233 or +353 749520532

Internet: www.arranmoreferry.com

Email: arranmoreferry@gmail.com

Inishfree - Inis Fraoigh



Inishfree (or Inis Fraoigh) is a small island 5km off the coast of Donegal. In the 4th and 5th century, this remote island was the domain of Niall of the

Nine Hostages, future king of Ireland. Today, pristine nature and the tranquility of a simpler time await those visitors who wander off the beaten path. The island's few inhabitants organise activities for visitors involving local culture, music, art, crafts, poetry, angling, boating and more.

Photo: Kwiatek7/Shutterstock.com

Address: Inishfree, Co. Donegal

More Info: The ferry to Inishfree can be taken from Burtonport Harbour.

Island Roy - Oileán Ruaidh



Island Roy is a 90-acre little-known island with few inhabitants, mostly farmers. Its Irish name, Oileán Ruaidh, means "red island" and refers to

the vibrant red hue of the vegetation in winter - the island has even been symbolically "twinned" with the Red Planet, Mars! A calm place of retreat, explore the sand dunes and hills at your leisure. The island is accessible from the mainland by road - but only during low tide.

Photo: Ponderful Pictures/Shutterstock.com

Address: Island Roy, Co. Donegal

SOUTH WEST (CORK)



Fabian Walden/Flickr (image cropped)

Hundreds of tiny gems of islands dot Cork's battered and rocky coast, which has nurtured resilient Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) cultures and rich ecosystems. Reaching the islands is an adventure in itself: keep an eye out for seals on the journey to Garinish Island, enjoy the views from the ferry as you travel to Cape Clear, or take a swinging ride on the cable car across Dursey Sound.

Sherkin Island



One of Carbery's hundred isles, Sherkin Island is a small place (only 5km x 3km!) bursting with character. In summer, its sandy beaches and fuschia-lined lanes are a perfect retreat. The ancestral home of the infamous O'Driscoll clan, one can visit the clan castle and an old Franciscan Abbey. Events of note include the Sherkin Regatta and local fair, which takes place every year in the 3rd weekend of July.

The island can be reached by ferry from the small fishing village of Baltimore, and the journey only takes 10 minutes.

Photo: spectrumbblue/Shutterstock.com

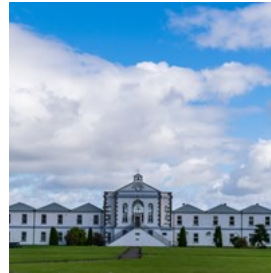
Address: Sherkin Island, Co. Cork

Phone: +353 0879117377

Internet: www.sherkinisland.eu

Email: info@sherkinisland.eu

Spike Island



Spike Island was named Ireland's leading tourist attraction in 2017.

Located in lower Cork Harbour, its entrance is dominated by an 18th

century star-shaped military fortress called Fort Michael. The island is also home to a historic monastery and prison. A must-see for history buffs, this island features more buildings than others, and is easily accessed by taking a ferry from the picturesque town of Cobh.

Photo: Riekelt Hakvoort/Shutterstock.com

Address: Spike Island, Co. Cork

Phone: +353 021 237 3455

Internet: www.spikeislandcork.ie

Email: admin@spikeislandcork.ie

Inish Beg



Inish Beg is an enchanting private island in beautiful West Cork, connected to the mainland by road bridge. One of the island's three

farms is the award-winning Inish Beg Estate Gardens, open to the public all year round. Trails and woodland walks offer a chance to reconnect with nature before moving on to aquatic activities such as sea kayaking and scuba diving.

Photo: mikemike10/Shutterstock.com

Address: Inish Beg, Co. Cork

Phone: +353 2821745

Internet: www.inishbeg.com

Email: bookings@inishbeg.com

Bere Island



Bere Island, located between Bantry Bay and Berehaven Harbour, is the perfect vantage point to take in beautiful views of the Beara Peninsula, in particular of the Slieve Miskish and Cahah Mountain ranges. Discover the island's history at the Heritage Centre, or follow the island's trails, passing by old archaeological and military sites.

Bere Island lies only 2 km away from the mainland and can be reached by ferry.

Photo: Timaldo/Shutterstock.com
Address: Bere Island, Co. Cork
Phone: +353 027 75099
Internet: www.bereisland.net
Email: bereconservation@gmail.com

Dursey Island



Reaching Dursey Island is an adventure in itself - glide 250 metres above the sea in Ireland's only cable car! The island itself is a haven of peace and pristine nature. Dotted with crumbling ruins, you won't find any shops, bars or restaurants here - make sure to bring a picnic to enjoy while taking in the beautiful, wild views of the Beara Peninsula.

Photo: Fabian Walden/Flickr(image cropped)
Address: Dursey Island, Co. Cork
Internet: www.durseyisland.ie
Email: durseyislandfeedback@gmail.com

Cape Clear - Oileán Chléire



Cape Clear is Ireland's most southerly island and part of an Irish-speaking Gaeltacht region. Visit in summer to take a tour of Fastnet Rock Lighthouse, known as "Ireland's Teardrop" - this was the last thing generations of migrants saw when departing for America, often never to return. Here you'll find a Heritage Centre, a picturesque harbour, some walking trails, a bird observatory and many opportunities for aquatic activities.

The ferries to Cape Clear depart from Baltimore and Schull and take around 40 minutes to reach the destination. During the journey, keep an eye out for dolphins, whales and sharks.

Photo: Superbass/Flickr(image cropped)
Address: Cape Clear, Co. Cork
Phone: +353 28 39159
Internet: www.capeclearferries.com
Email: info@capeclearferries.com

Garinish Island - Inacullin



Plant lovers flock to Garinish Island's beautiful gardens to admire the profusion of rare species. Designed at the beginning of the 20th century by Harold Peto for Annan and Violet Bryce, the gardens also feature a Grecian Temple, a Martello Tower, a clock tower and an Italian tea House.

Ferries depart from Glengarrif Harbour - keep an eye out for the seal colony while passing the aptly named Seal Island!

Photo: Carmen Cris/Shutterstock.com

Address: Garinish Island, Co. Cork

Phone: +353 27 63116

Internet: www.harbourqueenferry.com

Email: info@harbourqueenferry.com

More Info: Opening hours vary according to the season. The gardens are closed in winter.

Heir Island



Heir Island, or Hare Island, is a rugged and wild haven at the centre of Roaringwater Bay. Small and peaceful, it is dotted with quaint island cottages as well as wildflower fields. Landmarks include the sailing school, a holistic centre, a restaurant and an art gallery.

GET THERE: Ferry from Cunnamore pier

Photo: Corey Macri/Shutterstock.com

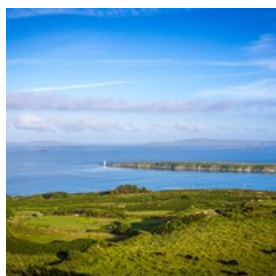
Address: Heir Island, Co. Cork

Phone: +353 086 8092447

Internet: www.heirisland.ie

Email: info@heirislandsailingschool.com

Long Island - Inishfada



Long Island's name explains itself: the island is 4.8km long and only 0.8km wide. The perfect escape from the hustle and bustle of the city,

visitors immerse themselves in the tranquil atmosphere, beautiful nature and landscapes. The journey from Colla pier to Long Island only takes 5 minutes.

Photo: Johannes Rigg/Shutterstock.com

Address: Long Island, Co. Cork

Phone: +353 861721254

Internet: www.longislandferry.org

Whiddy Island



Whiddy Island in the heart of Bantry Bay has a long naval and military history, with relics dating from as far back as the Viking era. Ruins include

the medieval Reenavanny Castle, as well as a 6th century holy well, church, and graveyard.

The island's trails are part of the Sheep's Head Way, a popular walking route and a European Destination of Excellence. The trails are a profusion of colour in summer, with red and purple fuschia characterising the landscape. Cycling, kayaking and paddling are also possibilities.

You can reach Whiddy Island by taking a ferry from Bantry Town.

Photo: Ben Brooksbank/Wiki Commons(image cropped)

Address: Whiddy Island, Co. Cork

Phone: +353 86 862 6734

Internet: www.whiddyferry.com

Email: whiddyferry@gmail.com

SOUTH WEST (KERRY)



Stefano_Valeri/Shutterstock.com

A UNESCO World Heritage site, the islands off the coast of Kerry are a haven of remote wilderness. An ancient and undisturbed place, the islands have preserved tracks of 350 million

year old creatures, and a flourishing sense of tradition. Towering cliffs, sandy beaches, windswept hills and rare flora and fauna combine to create some of Ireland's most postcard-perfect landscapes.

The Blasket Islands - Na Blascaodai



Marvel at nature in its purest state in the deserted and wild Blasket Islands. Bird, seal and whale watchers are particularly fond of this wildlife-rich place. Don't miss the 3.5km loop walk, which takes in spectacular views at the mountain's summit. Visit the Blasket Centre to learn more about the island's unique history and culture. The islands are a must-see on any Kerry itinerary: take the ferry from Dunquin on the Dingle Peninsula.

Photo: Bildagentur Zoonar GmbH/Shutterstock.com
Address: Blasket Islands, Co. Kerry
Opening hours: End of March-end October: 10am-6pm (Blasket Centre)
Phone: +353 66 9156444
Internet: www.blasket.ie
Email: blascaod@opw.ie

The Skelligs - Na Scealga



The Skellig Islands are world renowned for their ornithological, archaeological and cultural significance. A distinctly rocky landscape ("Skeilig" means rock in the ocean!), Little Skellig is a birdwatcher's paradise with 27,000 pairs of gannets, while Skellig Michael is the home of the early Christian St. Fionan's Monastery - a UNESCO world heritage site. Make sure to visit the curious and unique

Beehive huts - iconic, rocky huts built by Augustinian monks on what was then believed to be the edge of the world.

Bonus fact: Star Wars fans will delight in the fact that this island is featured in Episode VII: The Force Awakens!

GET THERE: Reach the Skelligs by taking the ferry from Portmagee, Ballinskelligs or Caherdaniel.

Photo: Stefan Missing/Shutterstock.com
Address: Skellig Islands, County Kerry
Phone: +353 66 947 6306
Internet: www.skelligexperience.com
Email: info@skelligexperience.com

Valentia Island



Valentia Island is worth a full day's visit. Hike to the top of the beautiful Geokaun Mountain and admire the near Fogher Cliffs, visit the lighthouse at Cromwell Point or the quaint village of Knightstown. Unique attractions include the Tetrapod Trackway is a beach featuring preserved dinosaur footprints - one of only 4 examples in the world. Visit The Skellig Centre, a distinctive building with a turf-covered roof, to learn about the monastic and maritime life on this one-of-a-kind island.

Photo: mikemike10/Shutterstock.com
Address: Valentia Island, Co. Kerry
Phone: +353 066 947 6985
Internet: www.valentiaisland.ie
Email: info@valentiaisland.ie
More Info: Ferries from Portmagee and Cahersiveen.

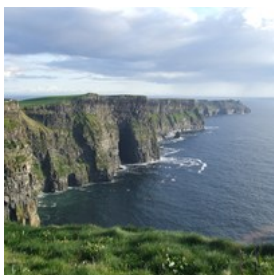
WEST (GALWAY & MAYO)



Gerard Duffy/Shutterstock.com

The West of Ireland is a place of great natural beauty and serenity. Explore peaceful monastic remains and archaeological sites, as well as the living culture of the Irish-speaking (Gaeltacht) communities. Don't miss the famed Aran Islands, one of Ireland's most-visited locations, and Achill Island, the largest Irish isle. Escape the hustle and bustle by visiting one of the smaller islands, many of which offer unique cultural experiences, interesting historic landmarks, and jaw-dropping views.

The Aran Islands



The famous Aran Islands are three: Inishmore (Árainn), Inishmaan (Inis Meáin) and Inisheer (Inis Oírr). Rocky terrain, deserted beaches and

impressive cliffs characterise this otherworldly landscape. As Irish-speaking islands, traditional culture lives on - Aran sweaters, a traditional craft, have become world famous, long-lasting souvenirs.

THINGS TO SEE: Dún Aonghasa, a cliff-top prehistoric stone fort, the oasis of calm that is Inisheer beach, the unique Ruins of Inishmaan, and Dún Dúchathair, an impressive Iron Age fortress.

GET THERE: Drive/take the bus from Galway to Rossaveal, where a ferry will bring you to The Aran Islands.

Photo: Irish Welcome Tours/Flickr(image cropped)

Address: Aran Islands, Co. Galway

Phone: +353 91 568903

Internet: www.aranislandferries.com

Email: info@aranislandferries.com

More Info: Drive/take the bus from Galway to Rossaveal, where a ferry will bring you to The Aran Islands.

Achill - Acaill



Ireland's largest island, Achill Island, is a lively place close to the heart of many Irish adventurers. Outdoor activities such as biking, hiking and surfing

are available - this is said to be the surfing capital of Ireland!

THINGS TO SEE: Croaghun cliffs, some of the highest sea cliffs in Europe, and Keem Strand, a peaceful sandy beach surrounded by rolling green hills.

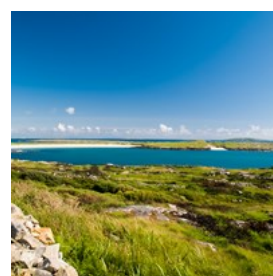
GET THERE: connected to the mainland by bridge. Take the bus direct from Westport or Castlebar.

Photo: scimmery/Shutterstock.com

Address: Achill Island, Co. Mayo

Internet: www.visitachill.com

Ceantar na nOileán



Ceantar na nOileán is a group of Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) linked to mainland Galway. The best-known islands are Lettermore, Gorumna and

Lettermullan - many mainlanders enjoyed summers here as teenagers attending one of the three Irish language summer-schools. Famous for its seaweed, the islands have become known as a place of healing and self-discovery.

THINGS TO SEE: The Millenium Garden, Maumeen Abbey, and secluded beaches.

GET THERE: Connected to the mainland and to each other.

Photo: LUKinMEDIA/Shutterstock.com

Address: Ceantar na nOileán, Co. Galway

Internet: www.cnnoilean.ie/bearla/index.html

Inishbofin - Inis Bó Finne



Crystal clear water easily lends itself to snorkelling, kayaking or angling, while the island's three hiking trails cry out to be explored. The island is

home to a large conservation area which boasts rare flora and fauna, as well as heavenly, secluded sandy beaches. The island is also known for its lively traditional music scene, and often hosts international music events.

GET THERE: Ferries operate 3 times daily from the mainland (Cleggan).

Photo: Drow69/ Wiki Commons(image cropped)

Address: Inishbofin Island, Co. Galway

Phone: +353 95 45819 or +353 86 171 8829 or +353 87 366 7185

Internet: www.inishbofinislanddiscovery.com

Email: info@inishbofinferry.ie

Clare Island



Clare Island is one of the Clew Bay's legendary 365 islands - one for every day of the year! A mountainous island, this is a place of epic natural

beauty: explore dramatic sea cliffs and numerous hiking and cycling paths. The island was the home of the infamous 16th-century "pirate queen" Grace O'Malley, whose castle still stands on a rocky headland. The island is also prized by filmmakers - it even hosts a Film Festival each year.

Photo: Roberto Serrini/Flickr.com(image cropped)

Address: Clare Island, Co. Mayo

Phone: +353 98 23737 or +353 86 8515003 or +353 87 9004115

Internet: www.clareislandferry.com

Email: bookings@clareislandferry.com

More Info: Ferries to Clare Island depart from Roonagh Pier.

Inishturk



This tiny, rugged island is composed of steep hills and cliffs. Situated between Inishbofin and Clare Island, this island is a refuge of Sandy

beaches and offers two loop walks, one short and one more challenging. Ruins include an old signal tower built during the Napoleonic wars. With a population of just 58, it is no wonder that the island community centre doubles as a library and pub.

Photo: Maria_Janus/Shutterstock.com

Address: Inishturk, Co. Mayo

Phone: +353 098 25045 or +353 086 887 0814 or +353 087 660 0409

Internet: www.inishturkisland.com

Email: enquiry@omalleyferries.com

More Info: Ferries to the island depart from Roonagh pier.

Inishbiggle - Inis Bigil



Inishbiggle (Vigil Island), is truly a hidden corner of Ireland. As its name would suggest, the island is a haven of serenity and idyllic, unspoiled nature.

Reach Inishbiggle by boat from Achill Island and follow the 5km walking loop, or rent a bike. The island's only shop closed years ago - so make sure to bring a picnic!

Photo: Frank Bach/Shutterstock.com

Address: Inishbiggle, Co. Mayo

Phone: +353860612482

Internet: www.inishbiggleferry.com

Email: inishbiggleferry@gmail.com

TOURIST INFORMATION



Gabriela Insuratelu/Shutterstock.com

Passport / Visa



Citizens of the European Union, the European Economic Area (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) and Switzerland can enter Ireland without a

visa. Citizens of a further 56 countries, including many in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and more are also visa-exempt.

A short-stay visa waiver programme allows visitors of certain nationalities to enter Ireland visa-free if they are in possession of a UK type "C" visa, and have gone through initial immigration clearance in the UK.

Holders of a Residence Card of a family member of a Union citizen, or of a red United Nations laissez-passer also enjoy a visa exemption.

For those who do need a visa, one should be applied for in advance via an Irish embassy or consulate closest to them. Some nationalities also require a transit visa, even if they do not plan to leave the airport en route to their final destination. Check whether you need a visa, and what prerequisites and fees may apply: www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/check-irish-visa

Photo: TukTuk Design/Shutterstock.com

Best Time to Visit



Some of the islands can be very busy during summer, which is high season (July and August in particular). The best time to visit in order to

find decent weather and fewer crowds is during late spring and late autumn, but it has to be noted that the Irish Islands are beautiful all year round.

Photo: VectorA/Shutterstock.com

General Advice



The islands are fully exposed to all of nature's elements, so their terrains are mostly rugged and the seas surrounding them can

sometimes be wild. Always take the greatest care during your excursions. Also, wear layered clothing and sensible shoes and prepare for the particular island journey you are planning. For instance, while some of the islands are populated, easy to reach and have a full range of services from accommodation to catering facilities, others are uninhabited and remote with no services. Generally, if travelling to an island with little or no services you should bring your own food and necessary supplies. Your licensed boat operator will be your best source of information and advice.

Finally, please leave the islands as you have found them, taking nothing but photographs and leaving nothing but footprints. Respect monuments, habitats, dwellings, stone walls, plant and wild life. Dispose of any litter in bins or bring it with you from the islands.

Photo: Aldiki Gustiyani/Shutterstock.com

Airports



Depending on which islands you want to visit and whether you don't mind a long journey, you can arrive at one of the following

airports:

Donegal Airport (CFN), County Donegal
www.donegalairport.ie

Dublin Airport (DUB), Dublin
www.dublinairport.com

Shannon Airport (SNN), County Clare
www.shannonairport.ie

Ireland West International Airport at Knock (NOC), County Mayo
www.irelandwestairport.com

Cork Airport (ORK), County Cork
www.corkairport.com

Kerry Airport (KIR), County Kerry
www.kerryairport.ie

All the airports are served by Bus Éireann. For more information, check on www.buseireann.ie

Taxis and car rental are also usually available at the airports.

Photo: Juan Garces

Ferries



It is always advisable to check sailing times with the ferry or boat operator before travelling and to book your journey in both directions in advance, or as advised by the boat operator. All sailings are weather dependent and often subject to demand.

Photo: M-O Vector/Shutterstock.com

Pharmacy



You should be able to find pharmacies on bigger islands, but sometimes it might be necessary to move to the mainland.

There, pharmacies can be found in every town and they are usually marked by a brand logo. General working hours are from 9am to 17.30pm, but they can change according to the pharmacy. You can use the link below to locate a pharmacy in your area.

Photo: Gemma Garner
Internet: bit.ly/2vayplM

Driving



If you intend to rent a car in Ireland, make sure to familiarise yourself with the Irish road rules. In particular, pay attention to the speed limits:

120km on motorways; 100km on national roads; 80km on regional and local roads; 50km in a built-up area. Also remember that, unlike in other countries, you'll be driving on the left-hand side of the road.

However, when going to an Irish Island, note that most ferries don't take cars and, considering how small most of the islands are, you won't need one there anyway.

Photo: Kanunnikov Pavlo/Shutterstock.com

Post



Postal services in Ireland are provided by An Post. Many islands have at least one post office, but sometimes it might be necessary to move to the

mainland. You can use the link below to locate the nearest post office. General post office hours are from 9am to 5.30 pm during weekdays and from 9am to 1pm on Saturday. Larger towns might have extended hours.

Photo: Andy Fuchs
Internet: www.anpost.ie/AnPost/at+your+local+Post+Office.htm

Telephone

Country code: +353



Photo: Jardson Almeida

Electricity

230v/50Hz Socket type: G



Photo: Stirling Tschan

Currency
Euro, 1€ = 100 cent

Newspapers
Irish Times — www.irishtimes.com
Irish Independent — www.independent.ie
Irish Examiner — www.irishexaminer.com

Emergency numbers

The national emergency numbers are 999 and 112

