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The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names

Ireland

Country name for HMG purposes	Ireland
State title	Ireland[1]
Country name in official languages	Ireland (*eng*); Éire (*gle*)[2]
State title in official languages	Ireland (*eng*); Éire (*gle*)
Name of citizen	Irish
Official languages	English (*eng*) and Irish Gaelic[3] (*gle*)
Script	Roman
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	IE / IRL
Capital	Dublin (*eng*); Baile Átha Cliath *(gle)*
Population/Area	5.255 million (UN data, 2024) / 70,273km²

Introduction

Ireland lies to the northwest of continental Europe. Characterized by its rolling green landscapes, rugged coastlines, and abundant lakes, Ireland's geography is shaped by a temperate maritime climate and a rich network of rivers.

Ireland's cultural heritage reflects a blend of Gaelic traditions and anglicized influences, evident in its place names, languages and historical sites.

Geographical names policy / recommended sources

The principal authoritative repository for Irish-language and English-language place names in Ireland is the Placenames Database of Ireland: https://www.logainm.ie/ga/. The map portal within this website shows a single language form that changes according to the interface language chosen (though these remain Gaelic in the Gaeltacht areas, and occasionally elsewhere (e.g. Dún Laoghaire)); the text-based database results show both language variants.

The official national mapping agency is Tailte Éireann (replacing Ordnance Survey Ireland in 2023).

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[1] Though "Republic of Ireland" is sometimes used to refer to the country, the state title is simply Ireland. The term "Republic of Ireland" is the state's description, a legal designation from the Republic of Ireland Act, and is largely used to distinguish the independent country from the whole island of Ireland (which also incorporates Northern Ireland, part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

[2] ISO 639 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

[3] Also referred to simply as *Irish* or *Gaelic* and sometimes seen in its Irish Gaelic form in an English context: *Gaeilge.*

Road signs across Ireland are bilingual[4], with the exception of the Gaeltacht[5] where they are usually in Gaelic only.

For HMG use it is recommended that products from either the Placenames Database of Ireland or Tailte Éireann be used to establish the appropriate form of place names. English forms may be used preferentially (e.g. Dublin), but the Gaelic form may also be given parenthetically or as a variant, if desired for a particular product e.g. Dublin / Baile Átha Cliath. Where Gaelic forms are used, diacritical marks should be preserved, e.g. Tír Chonaill. Gaelic names should be used within the Gaeltacht areas: as described above, the English-language interface of the Placenames Database of Ireland map portal will show the appropriate names for use by HMG.

Languages

English and Irish Gaelic are the official languages of Ireland and both are written in Roman script. Gaelic, a Celtic language, is considered by the Constitution as the first official language, though English dominates daily life, education, business, and media. The state actively promotes Gaelic through education, broadcasting, and cultural initiatives, and the language is maintained as a community language in Gaeltacht regions in the west of the country. Despite these efforts, fluent Gaelic speakers remain a minority[6], and the language is often symbolic of national identity more than everyday communication. Recent years have seen renewed interest, with younger generations embracing Gaelic in creative, digital, and social spaces, revitalizing its role.

Common name elements and their meanings:

Irish element	Meaning	Common anglicised forms	Examples (common English form)	Examples (accurate Gaelic form)
abhainn	river	avon, owen	Avonmore Owenmore	Abhainn Mhór An Abhainn Mhór
baile	homestead, town, settlement	bally	Ballymore	An Baile Mór
carn	cairn, heap of stones	carn	Carndonagh Carnmore	Carn Domhnach An Carn Mór
cill	church	kil, kill	Kildare Kilkenny	Cill Dara Cill Chainnigh
dún	fort	dun, doon	Dundalk Doonbeg	Dún Dealgan An Dún Beag
garbh	rugged	garv	Garvagh	Garbhach
glas	stream	glas, glass	Glasnevin Douglas	Glas Naíon Dúglas

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[4] Gaelic names generally appear first, in mixed case and in a smaller type; English names appear in uppercase only.
[5] Areas which are recognised by the Irish government as being predominantly Gaelic speaking.
[6] The Irish Central Statistics Office reporting around 70,000 home language users. UNESCO's Atlas of World Languages describes Gaelic as "definitely endangered".

Irish element	Meaning	Common anglicised forms	Examples (common English form)	Examples (accurate Gaelic form)
gleann	valley	glen	Glendalough	Gleann Dá Loch
inis	island	inis, inch, inish, ennis	Inish Samer Inch Ennis	Inis Samhaoir An Inis Inis
maigh	plain, field	moy, magh	Moy, Mogh	Maigh
mór	great, large	more	Ballymore	An Baile Mór
ráth	ringfort, earthwork	rath, rah	Rathmines Raheny	Ráth Maonais Ráth Eanaigh
ros	wood, promontory	ros, rush	Roscommon Rush	Ros Comáin An Ros

Inventory of Characters (and their Unicode encodings)[7]

Irish Gaelic contains the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script:

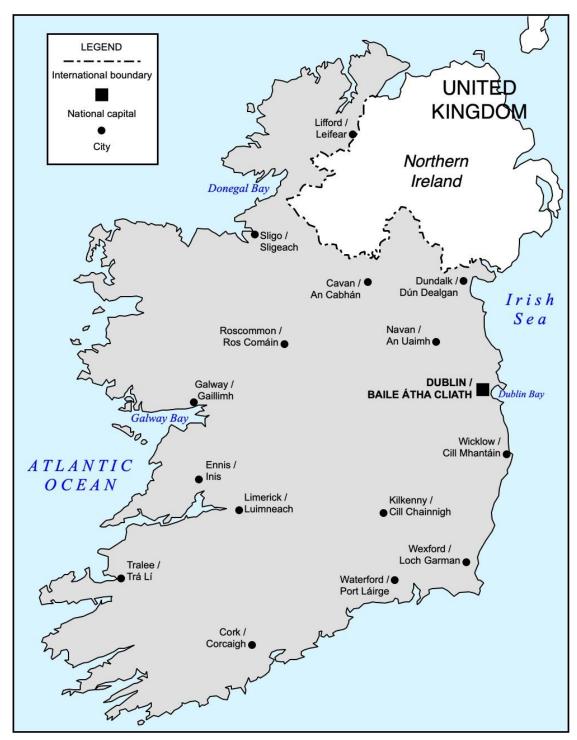| Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Á	00C1	á	00E1
É	00C9	é	00E9
Í	00CD	í	00ED
Ó	00D3	ó	00F3
Ú	00DA	ú	00FA

Traditionally, an 'overdot' was also employed but this is now unlikely to be encountered (its use has been replaced with a /h/ following the consonant – e.g. /ḃ/ is represented /bh/ and /ḋ/ is /dh/).

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[7] See www.unicode.org

Map of Ireland

LEGEND

— · — · — · — International boundary

■ National capital

● City

UNITED KINGDOM

Northern Ireland

Lifford / Leifear ●

Donegal Bay

● Sligo / Sligeach

Cavan / ● An Cabhán

Dundalk / ● Dún Dealgan

Irish Sea

Roscommon / Ros Comáin ●

Navan / ● An Uaimh ●

Galway / ● Gaillimh

DUBLIN / BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH ■ *Dublin Bay*

Galway Bay

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Ennis / ● Inis

Wicklow / Cill Mhantáin ●

Limerick / ● Luimneach

Kilkenny / ● Cill Chainnigh

Wexford / Loch Garman ●

Tralee / ● Trá Lí

Waterford / ● Port Láirge

Cork / Corcaigh ●

Map produced by PCGN for illustrative purposes only, and is not to be taken necessarily as representing the views of the UK government on boundaries or political status.

Administrative structure

Administratively, Ireland consists of 26 *counties* (*gle*: *contae*), 3 *cities* (Dublin, Galway and Cork; *gle*: *cathair*) and 2 *cities and counties* (Limerick and Waterford). Galway and Cork are each separate cities and counties, with the city serving as the administrative centre for both. Limerick and Waterford have combined this approach into a single division. The former county of Dublin is now separated into 3 administrative counties (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin).

As described above, for HMG purposes names can appear in English alone or with the Gaelic form.

The traditional counties of Ireland, grouped into 4 provinces, are also used sometimes for reference purposes. These 32 counties include the area of Northern Ireland and therefore do not form part of the administrative structure of Ireland. The counties within the republic form the basis of the administrative counties today (with the changes, e.g. the division of Dublin, as described above).

The four traditional provinces (*gle*: *cúige*) are Connacht, Leinster, Munster and Ulster. Ulster is composed of nine historical counties, of which six are in Northern Ireland and three in Ireland.

Administrative division (English / Gaelic)	*ISO 3166-2 code[8]*	*Administrative centre (English / Gaelic)*	*Centre location*
Clare / An Clár	IE-CE	Ennis / Inis	52°50'34"N 08°59'24"W
Cavan / An Cabhán	IE-CN	Cavan / An Cabhán	53°59'42"N 07°21'37"W
Cork / Corcaigh [city]	-	Cork / Corcaigh	51°54'03"N 08°28'21"W
Cork / Corcaigh [county]	IE-CO	Cork / Corcaigh	51°54'03"N 08°28'21"W
Carlow / Ceatharlach	IE-CW	Carlow / Ceatharlach	52°50'28"N 06°55'33"W
Dublin / Baile Átha Cliath [city]	-[9]	Dublin / Baile Átha Cliath	53°21'00"N 06°15'37"W
Donegal / Dún na nGall	IE-DL	Lifford / Leifear	54°49'55"N 07°29'01"W
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown / Dún Laoghaire–Ráth an Dúin	-	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown / Dún Laoghaire–Ráth an Dúin	53°17'33"N 06°07'43"W
Fingal / Fhine Gall	-	Swords / Sord	53°27'35"N 06°13'09"W
Galway / Gaillimh [city]	-	Galway / Gaillimh	53°16'18"N 09°03'22"W
Galway / Gaillimh [county]	IE-G	Galway / Gaillimh	53°16'18"N 09°03'22"W
Kildare / Cill Dara	IE-KE	Naas / An Nás	53°12'51"N 06°39'56"W
Kilkenny / Cill Chainnigh	IE-KK	Kilkenny / Cill Chainnigh	52°39'17"N 07°15'37"W
Kerry / Ciarraí	IE-KY	Tralee / Trá Lí	52°16'22"N 09°42'23"W

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[8] ISO maintains codes for the traditional counties of Ireland, so not all the modern administrative divisions have codes.

[9] Though the code IE-D exists, this encodes the former County Dublin, an area which now comprises the city of Dublin plus the administrative counties: Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin.

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Administrative division (English / Gaelic)	ISO 3166-2 code[8]	Administrative centre (English / Gaelic)	Centre location
Limerick / Luimneach	IE-LC	Limerick / Luimneach	52°39′27″N 08°37′44″W
Longford / An Longfort	IE-LD	Longford / An Longfort	53°43′25″N 07°47′46″W
Louth / Lú	IE-LH	Dundalk / Dún Dealgan	54°00′00″N 06°24′46″W
Leitrim / Liatroim	IE-LM	Carrick on Shannon / Cora Droma Rúisc	53°56′49″N 08°05′34″W
Laois / Laoise	IE-LS	Portlaois / Port Laoise	53°02′01″N 07°18′10″W
Meath / An Mhí	IE-MH	Navan / An Uaimh	53°33′20″N 06°47′29″W
Monaghan / Muineachán	IE-MN	Monaghan / Muineachán	54°14′45″N 06°58′16″W
Mayo / Maigh Eo	IE-MO	Castlebar / Caisleán an Bharraigh	53°50′57″N 09°18′11″W
Offaly / Uíbh Fhailí	IE-OY	Tullamore / Tulach Mhór	53°16′32″N 07°29′16″W
Roscommon / Ros Comáin	IE-RN	Roscommon / Ros Comáin	53°38′02″N 08°10′55″W
South Dublin / Átha Cliath Theas	-	Tallaght / Tamhlacht	53°17′18″N 06°20′20″W
Sligo / Sligeach	IE-SO	Sligo / Sligeach	54°16′31″N 08°28′42″W
Tipperary / Tiobraid Árann	IE-TA	Nenagh / An tAonach *and*	52°51′46″N 08°11′58″W
		Clonmel / Cluain Meala	52°21′17″N 07°42′30″W
Waterford / Port Láirge	IE-WF	Waterford / Port Láirge	52°15′26″N 07°06′41″W
Westmeath / An Iarmhí	IE-WH	Mullingar / An Muileann gCearr	53°32′04″N 07°21′04″W
Wicklow / Cill Mhantáin	IE-WW	Wicklow / Cill Mhantáin	52°58′51″N 06°02′49″W
Wexford / Loch Garman	IE-WX	Wexford / Loch Garman	52°20′02″N 06°27′30″W

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Other Significant Locations

Name[10]	Location	Feature Type
Carrauntoohil / Corrán Tuathail	51°59'58"N 09°44'34"W	Mountain (Ireland's high point, 1039m)
Lough Corrib / Loch Coirib	53°26'35"N 09°14'01"W	Lake
Macgillycuddy's Reeks / Na Cruacha Dubha	52°00'36"N 09°42'00"W	Mountain range
River Liffey / An Life	53°20'44"N 06°13'01"W	River
River Shannon / An tSionainn	52°334'55"N 09°40'54"W	River
Wicklow Mountains / Sléibhte Chill Mhantáin	53°05'02"N 06°22'43"W	Mountain range

Useful references

- BBC Ireland Country Policy: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17473476 (no longer updated)
- CIA World Factbook: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/ireland/
- Ethnologue: www.ethnologue.com (for information on languages)
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP) entry for Ireland: IE - Ireland
- Ireland's official place names database and map portal: https://www.logainm.ie/ga/
- Ireland's official national mapping agency: Tailte Éireann
- Omniglot: www.omniglot.com (for information on languages and scripts)
- PCGN Country Names list: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/country-names
- Unicode: www.unicode.org
- US Board on Geographic Names Geographic Names Server: https://geonames.nga.mil/geonames/GNSHome/index.html

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[10] As noted above, for HMG products, names can be shown in English only, or including the Gaelic form, as desired.

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