

Gartan Outdoor Education Center

Ireland Trip

Packing and General Information

Faite ... or WELCOME! All of us at The Institute of Study Abroad look forward to your visit to Ireland. Here is some information to help you prepare for coming to Ireland.

Our Student Campus is located in County Donegal, on the Atlantic Coast. This area of Ireland is famous for breath-taking scenery, wonderful history, and the friendliest people in Ireland. Although we are based in Donegal, we travel to many other parts of Ireland, including Dublin City and the counties of Meath, Cavan, Fermanagh, Sligo, Leitrim, and Derry.

County Donegal is one of the most one of the most historic, beautiful, and scenic counties in the Republic. We are in the townland of Gartan, which is famous for history, outdoor activities and for a traditional Irish welcome. We are right by Gartan lake, in the heart of the mountains. Weather is usually a daily mix of sunshine, rain, and wind, and you need to bring appropriate clothing depending on the time of year.

Gartan is a purpose-built campus in the Glenveagh National Park, close to the Wild Atlantic Way. This lakeshore location is a beautiful, safe, scenic home for our students. Gartan Outdoor Education and Training Centre has been providing courses and training in adventure activities since 1988, and their instructors take care of all of the outdoor activities we will do.

Courses and programmes are coordinated and delivered by National Governing Body qualified instructors with a wealth of experience to draw upon when working with your institution. You can be assured that students and trainees are in safe hands when they step into our outdoor classroom.

If you need more information regarding Gartan's policies, please see their Child safeguarding policy here: <https://www.gartan.com/safeguarding-policy/>

Students share dorm rooms and eat together in our dining area. Students will be responsible for wash-up and for keeping their spaces clean and tidy. These light responsibilities are part of the experience.

What to Pack

Irish weather is never extreme- but it is very unpredictable, and very changeable. The norm is for rain at some part of the day, it can be blustery, especially along the Atlantic Coast where we are based.

This trip usually involves some walking, sometimes off-road across grass, bogland and beach areas. You should be able to walk moderate distances comfortably.

You need a sturdy waterproof jacket that is warm and comfortable. Rain boots are highly recommended. Bring at least two towels of your own. You should have comfortable waterproof shoes or rain boots for field trips and comfortable sneakers for indoors. Layers are always good: Irish weather can change a lot in one day! T-shirts, shorts, sweaters & comfortable pants are required April- September. October-March add extra layers please. Warm nightclothes (pyjamas) are advised.

Sunblock and sunglasses are recommended, but so is a woolly hat and plenty of socks! Irish summer weather can be quite warm, or quite chilly, (all in the same day). Irish winter weather can be chilly and windy and wet - Please also remember we are never far from stores where toiletries, clothes and other essentials can be easily acquired. We recommend a comfortable, casual wardrobe, suitable for outdoors.

We provide wetsuits & bootees for surfing and water sports.

ONCE AGAIN- PLEASE BRING

Warm loose clothing e.g. sweaters, fleece top, tracksuit bottoms or leggings

Swimming costume, your own towel for outdoor water events, shower toiletries for outdoors.

OLD spare sneakers or soft shoes (these will get wet!!) and if you have them, bring rain boots

Spare socks, boots or good walking shoes, plastic bag for taking home horrible, dirty, wet gear!

Useful items: Waterproof jackets/trousers, fleece jacket, rain boots

BRING INSECT REPELLENT PLEASE- SUMMER 'No see-ums' can be crazy!

All bed linen is supplied, but we recommend a comfortable pillow or neck support for travel. Sheets, duvets & towels are provided- please bring your own washcloth, shampoo & conditioner, and a UK-USA converter for any electric appliances you have.

COVID-19 Requirements

We recommend that all students are vaccinated against Covid-19.

Electrical Appliances

PLEASE NOTE- THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EUROPE CONVERTERS AND UK CONVERTERS. IT MUST BE A USA-UK CONVERTER. This includes chargers for laptops, phones, hairdryers etc. Converters can be purchased at the airport. You cannot plug US plugs into Irish sockets- the electrical current is stronger here and will damage your equipment. You can get a useful, cheap converter at the airport when you fly.

PLEASE be advised that we will not take responsibility for the LOSS or the THEFT of your belongings. We also recommend insuring any valuable items for loss, damage, or theft. Make sure that expensive items are tagged, marked, or photographed, with your name.

There is free Wi-Fi in the building. Feel free to bring your laptop or tablet, but please ensure you take care of your valuables, as we cannot take responsibility for your items.

We ask all participants to only use their laptop or iPhone (etc.) during free time, and when it is not antisocial. Please be appropriate and kind in your use of social media.

Money

The currency in Ireland is the EURO. Most USA debit and credit cards work in Irish ATMS (if they have the maestro logo). The exception is American Express- not widely accepted here. Visa and Mastercard are fine. Revolut is fine and recommended. Check with your bank and ask them to make sure your card is valid for international use. Credit and debit cards are the most convenient way to manage your money. Almost everywhere we go has a cashless option, but it is good to have some euro cash for tips and incidentals. It is difficult to change cash dollars to euro once you leave the airport, so if you are planning to convert cash dollars to cash euro, do it in advance in your bank, or at Dublin Airport when you arrive.

Health and Medication

Also recommended for all travellers are the routine immunizations (i.e., MMR, IPV, influenza, etc.) and your Tetanus/diphtheria booster within the past ten years.

Please do get your meds together and make sure you have a supply for your trip- there are meds available to you that may not be available here. Take your meds with you in your carry-on luggage, with glasses, lenses, inhalers, epi-pens etc. Please bring a prescription for your meds with you, also in your carry-on luggage. Please do bring an inhaler / epi-pen with you if you suffer from asthma or allergies. We advise you bring a small kit of meds for yourself for sniffles,

sore throat, cough, travel sickness if you suffer from it. Sometimes, a combination of the recycled air on the long flight and the change of climate can cause you to have a day or two of what feels like a cold.

Travel Insurance

You must have a personal travel insurance to come to ISA Ireland. This may have been arranged by your school or college or university if you are travelling as a group, - check with your group leader – but you must include details of this insurance policy on your application paperwork.

A personal travel insurance is a smart move because it will protect you against any costs you might have in the event of a delay, a cancellation, illness or accidents, early travel home, and lots of other things. You should always have travel insurance, but ESPECIALLY for transatlantic travel, where delays are not unusual, but alternatives can be very expensive.

You will be asked to give the details of your insurance policy on your application form. It usually costs from about \$50-\$80, but it can vary; but it is money so wisely spent, and it is compulsory for this trip. Trust us- this will be the smartest eighty bucks you will spend; get as much included as you can, and then you have the peace of mind of knowing that in the unlikely event of anything going wrong, your insurance is set up to take care of it. A visit to the doctor alone here would cost as much as a policy – protect yourself.

You can purchase a travel insurance policy from your own insurance provider, and airlines usually offer you a travel policy when you book flights. There are also many online sellers. If you are a frequent traveller, you may have an annual travel insurance policy, or have a family policy. Please check your cover includes Ireland and includes trip cancellation or trip disruption.

ISAI does not endorse any insurance provider, but the following links are for popular choices for insurance which have been used by previous participants.

<https://www.consumersadvocate.org/travel-insurance>

<https://www.worldnomads.com/usa/travel-insurance>

<https://www.inext.com>”

Please note- if you have to cancel your trip for any reason or emergency, or if you miss part or all of your trip due to airline delays, weather, personal circumstances, ISAI will not be able to refund you or compensate you; we will refer you to your travel insurance policy.

Customs Letter

PLEASE NOTE – Participants must have an invitation from ISAI for Customs in Ireland. We will send this to you by email. You need to have this with you when you enter Ireland. Print it off, carry it with you, and keep a version of it with you on your phone.

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Printing and Scanning Documents

It is not unusual for people to have boarding passes, custom letters, and other important info like phone numbers saved on your phone. That's great – until your phone battery dies, and then you can't access it. So, make yourself a wallet with the following documentation – your passport, your customs letter, this phone number INSTITUTE OF STUDY ABROAD IRELAND 011 353 87 2941232 (if in Ireland when you call this number it will be 0872941232) the address of the place you will be staying
Gartan Outdoor Education Center Gartan County Donegal
A copy of any prescriptions you use, including meds & glasses.

What to take photographs of before you leave

Your passport.

Your luggage – try to make sure you know the size and make of your suitcase, put some original identifiers on it if it's not distinctively patterned, - make sure you have your name label well secured to your luggage, and photos of a few angles on your phone.

Prescriptions of meds that you might need, dated for the duration of your stay, by your pharmacist.

A prescription for eyeglasses if you wear glasses or lenses and might need to replace.

What to bring in your Hand Luggage

Anything you cannot do without: Meds, glasses, phone chargers, cosmetic kit, customs letter, passport, and ticket, kindle, [electronic cigarettes must be carried in hand luggage], your outdoor coat, shoes for outdoors, a change of underwear, wipes, hand sanitiser, a couple of masks. (Mandatory mask-wearing is required in retail and indoor areas at present.

A USA-UK converter for all electronics – please ensure it is USA-UK and not USA-Europe, that's different. Nothing made to plug in in the USA will work in Ireland without a converter. As the voltage is higher here than in the USA, there's a chance you will damage your equipment if you try to plug it in here, without using the correct converter. You can buy a converter in the airport. You will need it for phone chargers, laptops, hair irons and hairdryers, it is essential.

Laundry

There are laundry facilities on site – a charge is payable locally.

What to expect in Ireland

Ireland is a friendly country, and American visitors of all backgrounds, ethnicities and cultures are most welcome. We extend a very warm welcome to all our guests, and we create an inclusive atmosphere, which we expect all will respect.

Dublin is a busy, modern city, and especially busy in the summer. Like every city, there are people who will target tourists, with their wallets, phones, cameras etc. Participants should not carry all of their money, passports, cards in one place, and a waist-bag or inside pocket is recommended for money.

The same caution that applies to talking to strangers, making sure you are always with the group, and behaving in a safe and responsible manner applies as much in Ireland as it does anywhere else.

Smoking is banned indoors in all public venues and areas but is more prevalent outdoors and in public areas. The ISAI campus is strictly non-smoking, and there is no smoking on group activities or tours. If you smoke cigarettes, please ask about designated smoking areas and do not smoke in front of non-smoking participants or on the group field trips, or anywhere where smoking is banned. Drugs are illegal and use thereof is forbidden. Participants who are in possession of or consume any illegal drugs will be immediately expelled from the program, without refund.

Ireland is different. You cannot travel to an alternative culture and expect that things will be exactly as they are at home. Part of the experience is enjoying – maybe sometimes enduring- these differences! We will always do our best to help you have a wonderful time, but there are things you should know- yes, it rains a lot in Ireland, things work to “Irish time”, buildings are older, so showers, plumbing, heaters, and electrical systems can be full of surprises. Come prepared for difference and bring a positive attitude:)

Social Media

Our Facebook page is INSTITUTE OF STUDY ABROAD IRELAND

Twitter is @isaireand and @findmyireland

Instagram @studyabroadireland and @findmyireland

Our website is www.isaireland.com

We blog about our trips – if you'd like to see our posts and blogs, visit us on any of these platforms

Please follow us & share your social media posts with us.

We post on our social media platforms. We assume your permission to use photographs taken during the trip for our blog, and social media platforms. We do not post detailed names, addresses or personal information. *If you would prefer not to be photographed or videoed, please advise us of same in writing.*

Group Contact Info

If your family need to get in contact with you urgently and cannot get through to you on your cell phone, here are some contacts. Please only use in emergency.

Business Office Manager Maureen McGowan admin@isaireland.com

ISA OFFICE NUMBER (in Ireland) 011 353 7198 41205

ISA email info@isaireland.com

JOIN THE WHATSAPP GROUP PLEASE!

Please join this WhatsApp Group. You will need to have the WhatsApp app on your phone – please do this, if even just for the duration of the trip.

Text us as soon as you read this at + 353 87 294 1232 and tell us your first and last name, and the group you are travelling with. We will include you in the group. We can then communicate and address any questions you have before or during the program.

What to expect in Ireland

Finally- this program is one in which everyone is respected and included. We encourage laughter, teamwork, kindness, and fun. We do not tolerate discrimination or bullying of any kind.

If you need to ask any questions or discuss any concerns in advance of the program, please email Niamh at info@isaireland.com

There is no question too 'silly', and we know many people can have anxieties about issues that can be easily accommodated, so talk to us if you have any worries.

If you have particular requests re rooming that you have not already said to your group leader, - friends you want to share with, etc, you can let us know on Whatsapp.

QUICK CHECKLIST

- Fill out this online paperwork - <https://www.isaireland.com/student-trip-waiver>
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- Print and save your Customs letter, attached to the email this paperwork came with.
- Double check passport, vaccine proof, flight tickets, customs letter, any prescriptions
- Photograph your luggage, documents, and passport
- Have a hard copy of this, and your vaccine cert and your customs letter
- Text 011 353 87 294 1232 with your full name and school
- Read this whole document again and double check everything!

Safe travels, and feel free to email us if you need us info@isaireland.com

Niamh & John