

IRELAND TOURISM

Irish tourism continues to grow in a very positive way. In 2006, the number of overseas visitors increased to 7.4 million, with a substantial growth in visitor numbers from both mainland Europe and the USA. Although Dublin continues to attract the largest percentage of visitors, due to its many and varied attractions, tourists are to be found all over the island, and as many of the most popular attractions are in more remote areas, this has a very beneficial effect on the local economies.



The Giant's Causeway is a UNESCO World Heritage site in the care of the National Trust, and the top tourist attraction in Northern Ireland, with over 700 000 visitors in 2007. It consists of thousands of layered basalt columns, mostly hexagonal, stretching for almost 1 km into the ocean and resulting from the cooling of molten lava about 60 million years ago. Legend tells it was built by the giant Finn MacCool to enable him to cross to Scotland.

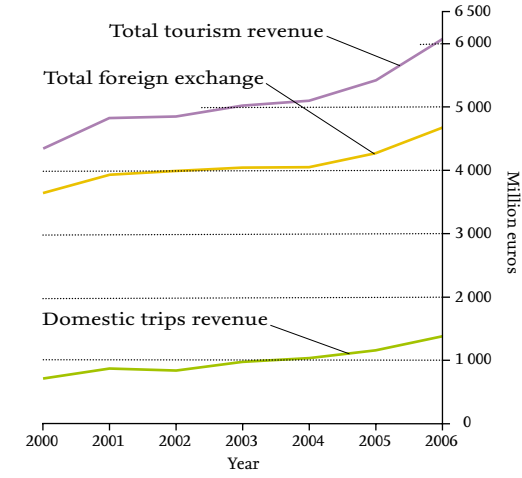
TOP TOURIST SITES

In Ireland, as in Northern Ireland, the top visitor attraction is on the coast. The Cliffs of Moher had over 900 000 visitors in 2006, attracted by the spectacular cliffs, the seabirds and the many activities on offer. Meanwhile, the top fee charging attraction is the Guinness Storehouse in Dublin. It tells the story of the company from 1759, including those famous adverts, and boasts a pint glass shaped atrium which is capable of holding 10 000 pints.

THE TOURISM SEASON

Ireland is an all-year-round destination for tourism. The statistics show that short stay visitor numbers are steady in all four seasons, with longer stays concentrated in the summer. Short breaks, especially to Dublin by visitors from the UK, are popular and have been increasing steadily over the past five years. Both tourist numbers and revenue show a steady increase since 2000. Visitors from mainland Europe increased by 8 per cent between 2003 and 2006, and the positive effect of this can be seen in tourist revenue.

TOURIST REVENUE 2000-2006



Blarney Castle was originally built over 600 years ago by Cormac MacCarthy, who is said to have supplied 4000 men from Munster to Robert the Bruce at the battle of Bannockburn in 1314. Most visitors come to the castle to climb up the steps to kiss the Blarney Stone, which according to legend bestows the kisser with the gift of eloquence.

TOP TOURIST SITES

Venue	Location
Blarney Castle	Co. Cork
Lakes of Killarney	Co. Kerry
Cliffs of Moher & The Burren	Co. Clare
Trinity College (Book of Kells)	Dublin
Fota Island & C�obh	Co. Cork
Kinsale	Co. Cork
Ring of Kerry	Co. Kerry
Bantry Bay	Co. Cork
Dingle Peninsula	Co. Kerry
Rock of Cashel	Co. Tipperary
Connemara	Co. Galway
Phoenix Park	Dublin
Powerscourt House	Co. Wicklow
Glendalough	Co. Wicklow
Wicklow Mountains	Co. Wicklow
Kilkenny Castle	Co. Kilkenny
Newgrange	Co. Louth
Aran Islands	Co. Galway
Donegal Atlantic Coast	Co. Donegal
Giant's Causeway	Co. Antrim
Guinness Storehouse	Dublin

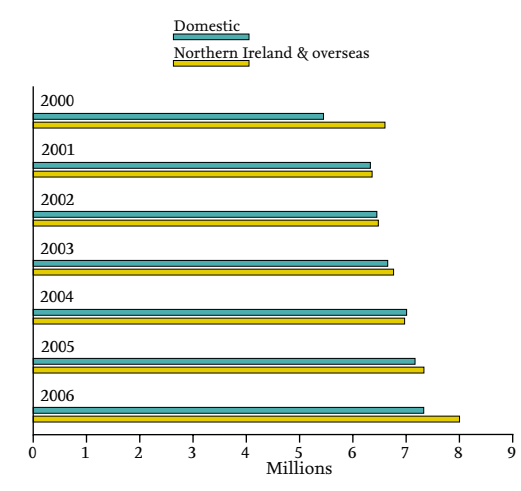


Kilkenny Castle is built on a strategic location at a bend in the river Nore. Originally it was the castle of the local kings, before a Norman tower was built in 1172. Construction on the first stone castle started twenty years later and three of the towers of that castle are still part of the present building, although there have been many changes over the centuries.



Newgrange Megalithic Passage Tomb is part of the UNESCO World Heritage site known as the Br  na B inne which is situated on the north bank of the River Boyne 50 km north of Dublin. The mound is more than 5000 years old and was built by Neolithic farmers to have a clear alignment with the winter solstice sunrise.

TOURIST NUMBERS 2000-2006



TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

