

### IRELAND POLITICAL

Ireland is the second largest island in the British Isles after Great Britain. It is politically divided into two parts: the Republic of Ireland occupies most of the south and the northwest, while Northern Ireland in the northeast is part of the United Kingdom. The map here shows the four Irish provinces of Connaught, Leinster, Munster and Ulster. There used to be five provinces, but Meath was gradually incorporated into Leinster in the post-Norman period. The map also shows the traditional six counties of Northern Ireland. They do not have any administrative status but are still in wide usage.

#### FACTS

- In the seventh century, Ireland was divided into 150 units of government each called a tuath.
- The Irish word cúige means fifth and/or portion. The five ancient political divisions of Ireland were referred to as the fifths of Ireland and it was only later they became known as provinces.
- The present system of counties as political units in Ireland developed after the Norman occupation in the twelfth century.

CONNAUGHT	Area (sq km)
Galway	6151
Mayo	5588
Roscommon	2548
Sligo	1837
Leitrim	1589

LEINSTER	Area (sq km)
Wexford	2365
Meath	2335
Kilkenny	2071
Wicklow	2033
Offaly	1990
Westmeath	1825
Laois	1719
Kildare	1694
Longford	1091
Dublin	921
Carlow	898
Louth	832

MUNSTER	Area (sq km)
Cork	7508
Kerry	4735
Tipperary	4304
Clare	3442
Limerick	2760
Waterford	1859

ULSTER	Area (sq km)
Donegal	4860
Tyrone	3266
Antrim	3098
Down	2486
Derry	2119
Cavan	1932
Fermanagh	1852
Armagh	1326
Monaghan	1296

#### CONNAUGHT



Population (2006) 503 083  
Largest city: Galway

The flag of Connaught represents the counties of Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo. These are the most westerly counties in Ireland and it is one of the areas where spoken Irish is most common. The arm and the sword on the province flag are said to come from the O'Connor clan who ruled before the Norman invasion.



The Spanish Arch, on the banks of the River Corrib in Galway, was built in 1584 as an extension of the city walls and was designed to protect the quays. In the past it was known as The Blind Arch and it is located on the site known as Ceann na Bhalla (The Head of the Wall).

#### LEINSTER



Population (2006) 2 292 939  
Largest city: Dublin

The Leinster flag represents the counties of Carlow, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Longford, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath and Wicklow. These are the most populated eastern counties of Ireland. This flag was used by the United Irishmen in 1789 and is also known as the Arms of Ireland.



The Custom House, which was built in 1791, is a famous landmark in Dublin on the north bank of the River Liffey. As the port moved down river it became obsolete for its original purpose, and today it is in use as the home of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

#### MUNSTER



Population (2006) 1 172 170  
Largest city: Cork

The three crowns on the Munster flag represent the three kingdoms of Thomond, Desmond and Ormond. It represents the counties of Clare, Cork, Kerry, Tipperary and Waterford in the south of Ireland. The Munster flag is quite similar to the flag of Dublin, which has three castles instead of the three crowns.



The River Lee flows through Cork, where the majority of the city centre is on an island in the river. St Patrick's Bridge is one of the main bridges on the north side of the island. As a major Irish port, quays and docks are found all along the river on the east side of the city.

#### ULSTER



Population (2006) 1 993 918  
Largest city: Belfast

The Ulster flag represents the original nine counties of ancient Ulster, however, it should not be mistaken as the flag of Northern Ireland. The flag is taken from the crest of the O'Neill's of Ulster. Six of the original counties which made up Ulster are now in Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom.



The second largest city in Ireland is situated at the western end of Belfast Lough and at the mouth of the River Lagan. Queen's University opened in 1845 but has its roots in the Belfast Academical Institution. The new college buildings were designed and built by Charles Lanyon.

#### IRELAND COUNTIES

scale 1:1 800 000

- International boundary
- County boundary
- Capital city
- Principal city
- County town
- Other town

