



# Holiday

## FREE FACTFILE

July 2009



# Cork

Planning a short break that doesn't involve a long journey? Here's a lovely little European city to consider...

## WHY GO?

**The second largest city in the Republic of Ireland, and a former European Capital of Culture, Cork is a cocktail of delights – a mix of continental charm, with a distilled blend of Irish flare.**

**Visitors will find a safe, laid-back vibe, as well as plenty of cafés, restaurants and bars. Those after some retail therapy will enjoy pedestrianised shopping and unique stores. Others interested in Cork's past can also indulge themselves wandering through its historic quarters.**

## WHEN TO GO

Cork is often wet with a mild but changeable climate. Temperatures gradually rise between May and September. There are many festivals throughout the year, notably the St Patrick's Festival in March and the Guinness Jazz Festival in October – these months tend to be popular and may be somewhat busier times to visit.

## GETTING THERE

### By air

There are a number of airlines serving Cork International airport from the UK: Aer Arann ([www.aerarann.com](http://www.aerarann.com)) flies from Belfast, Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Southampton; Aer Lingus ([www.aerlingus.com](http://www.aerlingus.com)) flies from Birmingham, Heathrow and Manchester; Air Southwest ([www.airsouthwest.com](http://www.airsouthwest.com)) flies from Newquay and Plymouth; BMI ([www.flybmi.com](http://www.flybmi.com)) flies from Manchester;

Jet2 ([www.jet2.com](http://www.jet2.com)) flies from Newcastle; and Ryanair ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)) flies from Gatwick, Liverpool and Stansted.

### By ferry

The long-established ferry link with Swansea is currently out of service, but is anticipated to be reinstated in the near future.

## GETTING FROM THE AIRPORT

### By bus

[www.buseireann.ie](http://www.buseireann.ie)

[www.skylinkcork.com/links.htm](http://www.skylinkcork.com/links.htm)

Bus Éireann and Skylink operate a shuttle bus service connecting the airport terminal with the main city centre bus garage (and travel to a few central city hotels). Adult return €7-€8 (£6.50), adult single journey ticket €4-€5 (£3-£4). Check the websites for advance booking discounts.

### By taxi

Taxis are €14 (£13) for the 15-minute journey.

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

This vibrant city is so compact it doesn't take long to get your bearings as the River Lee meanders through Cork.

### ■ Cork City Gaol

Cork City Gaol, to the west of the city centre, is a 19th-century castle-like prison, offering a fascinating insight into the harsh realities of bygone convict life. You can pass along the upper prison tier, among the lifelike 'inmates' and prison guards watching your every move, or lock yourself in a cell and decipher the graffiti that is visible on some of the walls. Adult €7 (£6.50), concession discount available (including 'walkman' audio tour and audiovisual show finale). The adjoining radio museum is located in the former governor's house and explores the early days of radio broadcasting. Adult €4 (£3).

### ■ Try your hand at bell-ringing

Tel 00353 021450 5906

[www.shandonbells.org](http://www.shandonbells.org)

Carefully climb the narrow stone and rickety wooden stairwell to the top of St Anne's Church bell tower in Shandon. The 360° views of the city are well worth the 132-step climb, along with the fun of picking a tune and ringing the famous eight bells. Try *Abide With Me* – just follow the easy number guide (no previous bell-ringing experience required!). Adult €6 (£5.50), discounts available.

■ The two-tone church dominates the north city skyline, the west and south sides are white from the use of limestone (the predominant local stone), the north and east sides both red from the use of sandstone (from the original Shandon Castle). The clock tower is known as 'The Four Faced Liar' as each clock face appears to show a different time from the base of the building.

■ The small Cork Butter Museum, near the church, is well worth a visit, with two floors depicting the history of the country's most important 'golden' export. Adult €4 (£3). Also pop into the oldest sweet shop in Ireland, Shandon Sweets, and try some of their clove rock.

■ Wander through Fitzgerald's Park, to the west of the city, where you'll find the public museum (free entry), with its collection of locally made silver and glassware. The River Lee flows through the tranquil wooded grounds.



Blarney Castle, where you might be bestowed with the gift of the gab (see 'Kiss the Blarney Stone')

### ■ Kiss the Blarney Stone

[www.blarneycastle.ie](http://www.blarneycastle.ie)

Take a 20-minute bus ride to Blarney Castle – Éireann bus route 224, €6.90 (£6) adult return, exact fare required. Then lean back, headfirst, over the edge of this 600-year-old castle to reach the stone of eloquence, reputed to bestow the gift of the gab! Castle entrance is adult €10 (£9), concession discount available. The castle is closed on Sundays.

■ Pubs and bars are the heart and soul of Cork city centre. Le Chateau is one of the oldest bars in Cork (circa 1790). It occupies a central position, and is a great place to sample the local tippie.

## GOOD PLACES TO STAY

Prices listed here are for the cheapest double en-suite room, with breakfast and taxes, for an overnight stay in July 2009.

### ■ Anam Cara B&B

Western Road

Tel 00353 21427 1617

[www.guesthousescork.com/home.html](http://www.guesthousescork.com/home.html)

Poised among the many city centre B&Bs along the Western Road (a five-minute walk from Grand Parade city centre), this triple-fronted property has nine rooms with en suite showers, (one with a bath).

Double room B&B from €70 (£64)

### ■ Hayfield Manor

Perrott Avenue

Tel 00353 1864 4066

[www.hayfieldmanor.ie](http://www.hayfieldmanor.ie)

More like staying with a friend than in a hotel, the warm welcome, butler 'tour' and beautiful antique furniture throughout really made our stay memorable.

Double room B&B from €190 (£176).

Online deals available for multi-night stays



### ■ Imperial Hotel

South Mall

Tel 00353 21427 4040

[www.flynnhotels.com/Imperial\\_Hotel](http://www.flynnhotels.com/Imperial_Hotel)

This is reputedly the oldest hotel in Cork, with a grand marble entrance, and a colourful past (the famous Irish political leader and Cork MP, Michael Collins, spent his last night here). Double room B&B from €115 (£106)

### ■ Isaacs Hotel

MacCurtain Street

Tel 00353 21450 0011

[www.isaacs.ie/isaacs-cork-hotel/home.aspx](http://www.isaacs.ie/isaacs-cork-hotel/home.aspx)

Charming, centrally located hotel. Entrance through the cobbled courtyard garden (and its floodlit waterfall).

Double room B&B from €96 (£88)

## GOOD PLACES TO EAT

### ■ Crawford Art Gallery Café

Emmet Place

There's something charming about eating in an art gallery – here the menu changes daily, with a wide selection of wholesome food. The building, previously the Cork Customs House, was built in 1724, and now houses a small collection of casts of classical Greek and Roman statues, along with temporary and travelling exhibitions, and 18th-century Irish and European paintings. Entrance is free to see the gallery's exhibitions.

### ■ English Market

Princes Street entrance (but accessible off the Grand Parade, Patrick Street and Oliver Plunkett Street).

You'll be spoilt for choice at this indoor food market, one of the oldest in Ireland. The origins of the English Market can be traced back to 1610, yet the present building dates from 1786. If people-watching and Irish stew is on your

agenda, try the busy Farmgate Café, which offers a great vantage point.

Weather permitting, you may wish to opt for a takeaway – Joup and the Chicken Inn were our choices. Sit outside in the tiny Bishop Lucey Park, with its fountain of eight swans – each one representing 100 years of Cork.

### ■ Greenes Restaurant, MacCurtain Street

Tel 00353 21455 2279

[www.isaacs.ie/isaacs-cork-hotel/restaurant\\_bar.aspx](http://www.isaacs.ie/isaacs-cork-hotel/restaurant_bar.aspx)

Greenes has a delicious choice of European cuisine. Try and get a seat next to the waterfall for the best view, though it is advisable to book beforehand, as the restaurant can get very busy. Early bird two-course menu €22 (£20).

### ■ Perrotts Garden Bistro

Perrott Avenue

Tel 00353 21484 5900

[www.hayfieldmanor.ie/perrotts-bistro](http://www.hayfieldmanor.ie/perrotts-bistro)

One of Cork's newer restaurants offering a wonderful selection of Mediterranean fare and excellent service. We found dining here, in beautiful surroundings, a real treat. Two-course theatre menu €25 (£23).

## RECOMMENDED GUIDEBOOK

### ■ Cork Brandt Travel Guides,

£6.99 (ISBN 9781841621968).

A good guide, but could do with some updating. The global recession has had a mild impact in Cork, with a few places now closed, such as the famous Beamish and Crawford brewery.



## Which? Holiday TOP TIPS

### Look out for early bird menus

Many restaurants offer an early bird discount menu of two to three courses from around €22 (£20). Check when booking as time restrictions may apply, typically between 6-7pm.

### Buy a city tour ticket

- You can purchase a ticket for the Cork City Bus Tour for €14 (£13).
- The tour takes about an hour and a half to do the round trip of the city – you can hop on and off as many times as you like throughout the day.
- Another advantage with this ticket is that you can visit many of the recommended attractions highlighted in this factfile.

### Keep cash for entrance fees

- The majority of tourist attractions will not accept debit or credit cards, and ATMs are not always close by.



For the full magazine report on Cork, see p43 of the July 2009 issue of Which? Holiday