*This article is about the island. For the sovereign state of the same name, see*[*Republic of Ireland*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Ireland)*. For the part of the United Kingdom, see*[*Northern Ireland*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland)*. For other uses, see*[*Ireland (disambiguation)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ireland_(disambiguation))*.*

[Coordinates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[53°20′N 08°00′W](http://toolserver.org/~geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Ireland&params=53_20_N_08_00_W_type:country_scale:2500000)

**eland** (local pronunciation: [[ˈaɪrlənd]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:IPA) ([http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/21/Speaker_Icon.svg/13px-Speaker_Icon.svg.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:En-us-Ireland.ogg) [listen](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3c/En-us-Ireland.ogg)); [Irish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_language): [*Éire*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89ire) [[ˈeːɾʲə]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:IPA_for_Irish) ([http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/21/Speaker_Icon.svg/13px-Speaker_Icon.svg.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Eire_pronunciation.ogg) [listen](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e0/Eire_pronunciation.ogg)); [Ulster-Scots](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulster_Scots_dialects):*Airlann* or *Airlan*) is an [island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Island) to the north-west of [continental Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_Europe). It is the [third-largest island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_European_islands_by_area) in [Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe) and the [twentieth-largest island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_islands_by_area) on Earth.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ireland#cite_note-unep-4) To its east is [the larger island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_islands_of_the_British_Isles)of [Great Britain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Britain), from which it is separated by the [Irish Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Sea).

Politically, [Ireland is divided](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partition_of_Ireland) between the [Republic of Ireland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Ireland), which covers just under five-sixths of the island, and [Northern Ireland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland), a part of the [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom), which covers the remainder and is located in the north-east of the island. The population of Ireland is approximately 6.4 million. Just under 4.6 million live in the Republic of Ireland and just under 1.8 million live in Northern Ireland.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ireland#cite_note-2011population-2)

Relatively low-lying mountains surrounding a central plain epitomise Ireland's geography with several navigable rivers extending inland. The island has lush vegetation, a product of its mild but changeable oceanic climate, which avoids extremes in temperature. Thick woodlands covered the island until the 17th century. Today, it is one of the most deforested areas in Europe.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ireland#cite_note-guardexa-5)[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ireland#cite_note-6) There are twenty-six extant [mammal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mammal) species native to Ireland.

A [Norman invasion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_invasion_of_Ireland) in the Middle Ages gave way to a [Gaelic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaels) resurgence in the 13th century. Over sixty years of [intermittent warfare in the 1500s](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tudor_conquest_of_Ireland) led to English dominance after 1603. In the 1690s, a system of [Protestant English rule](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Ascendancy) was designed to materially disadvantage the Catholic majority and [Protestant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant) [dissenters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dissenters), and was extended during the 18th century. In 1801, Ireland became [a part of](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Countries_of_the_United_Kingdom) the [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_of_Great_Britain_and_Ireland). A [war of independence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_War_of_Independence) in the early 20th century led to the [partition of the island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partition_of_Ireland), creating the [Irish Free State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Free_State), which became increasingly sovereign over the following decades. Northern Ireland remained a part of the United Kingdom and saw much [civil unrest from the late 1960s until the 1990s](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Troubles). This subsided following [a political agreement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_Friday_Agreement) in 1998. In 1973, both parts of Ireland joined the [European Economic Community](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Economic_Community).

[Irish culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_culture) has had a significant influence on other cultures, particularly in the fields of[literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature) and, to a lesser degree, [science](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science) and [education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education). A strong indigenous culture exists, as expressed for example through [Gaelic games](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaelic_games), [Irish music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_music) and the [Irish language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_language), alongside mainstream [Western culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_culture), such as [contemporary music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemporary_music) and[drama](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drama), and a culture shared in common with Great Britain, as expressed through sports such as [soccer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soccer), [rugby](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rugby_union), [horse racing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horse_racing), and [golf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golf), as well as the [English language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language).