



Terrific Trivia Tidbits

Did you know the island of Ireland is actually home to two separate nations? The majority of the island is known as the Republic of Ireland and is its own sovereign country. A smaller section to the northeast is called Northern Ireland and is part of the United Kingdom.

Use this and the following trivia tidbits (also available on the [Resource Download](#)) to start thinking about our fun theme—Ireland—as well as our spiritual theme—Psalm 23. These fun facts can be shared ahead of time at staff meetings with adults and teens or during the week of VBS with the kids. Use them at arrival and dismissal times or during any downtime between rotations.

Part 1: General Information

- Fashion-forward: Celtic people, who arrived in Ireland centuries before Christ's birth, were known for their love of colorful clothes, which they dyed bright colors. It's also believed they were some of the first people in Europe to wear pants instead of tunics!
- Rhyme time: The phrase *Emerald Isle* was penned in 1795 by Irishman William Drennan in a poem that encouraged unity between opposing religious groups. Since then, the term has become so popular it can be used interchangeably with the word *Ireland*.
- Strum, strum, strum! The harp is the national symbol of Ireland. There is even a bridge shaped like a harp called the Samuel Beckett Bridge.
- Wham! The Irish sport of hurling is considered the oldest and fastest field sport in the world. In this fast-paced game that's a combination of baseball, hockey, and lacrosse, players hit the ball up to 100 mph!
- In Cork, Ireland, a butter museum houses a 22-pound slab of 2,000-year-old butter found in a peat bog in 2016. Experts say it is still edible. Would you try it?
- Afraid of heights? The Cliffs of Moher are one of Ireland's most visited natural attractions. Their sheer vertical drops measure over 700 feet tall at the highest point.
- Road trip: The Wild Atlantic Way is the longest coastal route in the world, stretching over 1,600 miles. In 2017, a 65-year-old man walked the whole road in 103 days.
- Potato, po-tah-to! Before the Irish Potato Famine, a grown Irishman would eat up to 14 pounds of potatoes a day.
- Did you know potatoes have more potassium than bananas and are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber? *Bon appétit!*
- Gingers unite! Roughly 10% of Ireland's population has red hair, the highest per capita percentage of redheads (aka gingers) in the world.
- Ooh-la-la! Did you know having red hair and blue eyes is the rarest hair/eye combination possible?
- Shamrock ceremony: The Irish prime minister visits the United States each year around St. Patrick's Day and presents the president with a crystal bowl filled with shamrocks.
- In the 1800s, Ireland was considered the butter capital of the world, exporting butter to countries all over the globe. Yum!
- Got milk? Ireland produces enough dairy products each year to feed 52 million people.
- Did you know there are over 30,000 castles in Ireland? Interestingly, Dunluce Castle in Northern Ireland is believed to have been the inspiration for Cair Paravel in C. S. Lewis' series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*.
- Claim to fame: The *Titanic* was built in Belfast, Northern Ireland. When it left the dock on April 2, 1912, over 100,000 people gathered to witness the massive ship embark on its voyage.
- An unlikely royal: At Ireland's annual Puck Fair Festival, a feral domestic goat is caught and crowned king as part of the festivities.
- Try saying this Irish location three times really fast (pronounced "muck-an-UH-ee-DARE-da-HAUL-yuh"): Muckanaghederdauhaulia, Muckanaghederdauhaulia, Muckanaghederdauhaulia. In English, it roughly means "pig marsh between two seas."
- Test your abilities further by pronouncing these unusually named Irish locations: Illaungrafranavrankagh, Glassillaunvealnacurra, Ballywinterourkewood, Sruf-faunoughterluggatoora Stream, and Corragunnagallighdoo Island.
- Roll the cameras! During the filming of the *Star Wars* movie *The Last Jedi*, storm troopers and the *Millennium Falcon* made appearances on Malin Head, a rugged peninsula in County Donegal.

- One of the longest free-hanging stalactites in the world is in Ireland, measuring 23 feet long!
- During Ireland's Great Famine of 1845–1852, it's estimated that nearly a quarter of Ireland's population emigrated to flee disease and starvation. Many immigrants ended up in America. Today, nearly 10% of the American population claims to be of Irish descent!
- If you're traveling to Ireland, make sure to pack for all kinds of weather! Though Ireland has a temperate climate, it's common to have rain, then sunshine, then rain again within the same day or even the same hour.
- Lambay Island, a privately owned island that lies four miles off the coast of Dublin, is believed to be an early destination of Viking raiders. Today, it is home to an entire colony of—wait for it—Bennett's wallabies.
- St. Patrick is credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland, but did you know St. Patrick wasn't actually Irish? He came to Ireland under force after being kidnapped at the age of 16.
- Party time! St. Patrick's Day is a public holiday in Ireland, meaning that schools and most businesses are closed in celebration of this special day. Festivities include enjoying parades, feasting with friends and family, and (for some) watching Irish sports.
- Do you like languages? Irish and English are the two official languages of Ireland, though English is much more commonly spoken.
- Did you know Irish is one of the world's oldest languages? Its beginning extends back long before Jesus' birth, but after the event at Babel.
- Want to greet someone in Irish? Try saying this common greeting: *Dia duit* (pronounced "dee-uh-gwit"). It means "God be with you."
- Did you know that Ireland is home to one of the oldest tourist destinations in the world? Newgrange Tomb is a grave that was built thousands of years before Jesus was born!
- The most beautiful book in the world? One of Ireland's greatest cultural treasures is the Book of Kells, a manuscript of the four Gospels that was copied by monks over 1,200 years ago. It has been preserved so well that vivid colors can still be seen in the illustrations drawn on its pages!
- Guess how old the oldest company is in Ireland? Rathbornes, a candle-making company, was started in 1488—over 500 years ago—and is still operating today!
- The Connemara pony is the only horse breed native to Ireland. It's known for its gentle, hardworking ways and for being the largest breed of pony in the world. Giddyup!
- Did you know that hedgehogs, despite their adorable appearance, are actually fierce predators? Their diet includes worms, bugs, small birds, and even snakes.
- Small, but mighty: The Irish stoat, an animal similar to a weasel, is a fierce hunter, often taking down animals up to 10 times its size! It aims for a quick kill by biting its prey's neck.
- Watch out! A grown hedgehog has around 5,000 spines on its back.
- Irish wolfhounds are known as the tallest dogs in the world, measuring up to seven feet tall when standing upright on two legs. Despite their size, they are gentle creatures that typically don't make good guard dogs due to their love of people—whether strangers or long-time owners.
- Giant Bambi? It's believed that the Irish elk was the largest deer to ever exist. Its fossilized remains were discovered in Ireland. At its shoulders, it could be over seven feet tall, and its antlers could grow over 12 feet across!
- One of the smallest mammals in Ireland is the Eurasian pygmy shrew, which grows to be about two inches long and has a one-and-a-half-inch long tail. It lives a fast-paced life with a heart that beats up to 1,200 times a minute and a body that needs to eat 125% of its weight each day to survive. The pygmy shrew is almost constantly hunting to keep up with its hunger!
- Open wide and say ahhh! The basking shark is the second-largest shark in the world. To get food, basking sharks keep their mouths wide open as they swim, allowing thousands of gallons of water to filter into their mouths and through their gills. God gave them special gill structures that look like combs. These help catch plankton, krill, and fish to eat, while letting the rest of the water pass through.
- Sheep have rectangular pupils that give them a wide field of vision, even while their heads are down during grazing. This helps alert them to any predators that may be lurking nearby.
- Smelly signals: Sheep have special scent glands in front of their eyes and between their toes that release scents, allowing them to communicate with each other.
- Border collies are known to gaze intensely at stock, such as sheep, to get them to do various actions during herding. Would you be intimidated?
- Dog or cat? Border collies' bodies are designed to move quickly and easily in a crouched-down position, similar to how a cat stalks its prey. This allows them to herd groups of animals efficiently and effectively.
- A group of ravens is called an "unkindness of ravens." Do you think they live up to their name?

Part 2: Irish Animal Information

- Sssssss! There are no snakes in Ireland. They do have an animal called a slow worm that resembles a snake but is actually a type of legless lizard.
- One of the European badger's favorite meals is worms. In fact, these badgers are capable of eating several hundred worms a day. Yum?

- Ravens have a nictitating membrane which is a translucent inner eyelid that acts like a windshield. It protects the eye from dust and debris as the raven flies, while still allowing the raven to see. God thought of everything!
- Flying fuzz balls: The “wool” on a woolly aphid is actually wax that makes it resemble a little ball of fuzz.
- Short-lived: The typical lifespan for a woolly aphid is 30 days. Unlike most insects which produce eggs, most woolly aphids give birth to live young.
- Watch out! Highland cows occasionally use their horns to defend themselves but mostly use them to forage for food on the ground.
- A cute lawn mower: Highland cows eat about 150 pounds of grass each day!