

## Travel

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To see the real Ireland, you must get out of the city. My suggestion is to jump on a backpacker's tour, an adventure guaranteed to amaze you - much like a sober Irishman. The west is dotted with desolate land transformed by countless centuries of blood, sweat, and beers. Property is divided by rock walls which curve over the hills and glens that shine in their green wonder. The trees are gone - all of 'em. For heat, locals burn logs of peat moss. To stay warm, they drink. I tested this theory on a number of occasions. It works. Homes are built from rock - clearly the smart little piggy was Irish. But above all, the most amazing wonders of the west coast, or even the

country as a whole, are their fabulous roads.

On a map it's a highway. On a sign it's a highway. From a car it's a goat path. Paved shoulders, lanes wider than a vehicle, and even painted lines are a luxury when traveling on the national road system. Our driver politely pointed out how to spot a tourist, and it was rather easy after awhile. The Irish don't even blink when a bus passes their vehicle with less than an inch of clearance, but tourists close their eyes and pray to God while swerving into the hedgerows - quite amusing. While in the west, do not miss Dingle, Kerry, or Doolin - the home of Irish music. Pop into one of their three pubs, they're always busy, and set down next to the musicians table - you'll never forget

it.

The south is a land of mysteries. To explain the mysterious, the highly fabled culture of the Irish blame everything on the fairies. It must be the work of fairies which ensures every pub is always busy - day or night all week. Of course, it has nothing to do with alcoholism or boredom. Fairies...right. It must be the fairies, or the fact that men in the south-west outnumber women by 5 to 1, that making going out such an interesting experience for ladies. Clubs there make our Myrons meat-market look like an over 60's social at the Legion (minus the bingo). Who can blame them, when the only alternative are the millions of sheep - pays to be aggressive I guess.

On to the Blarney Stone. Fabled to give you the 'gift of the gab', this was an opportunity that could not be missed. Once I climbed to the top of Blarney castle, I was able to watch the kissing process. Seems that in the old days people who kissed the Blarney Stone were simply hung by their heels over the edge of the parapet - a nice view of the 200 foot drop. Seems one measly death changed all this, nowadays bars are fitted to the inside of the parapet for the kisser to hold on to and thus be saved from the risk of falling down through the gap. Each person has to lie on his or her back and bend backward over a large gap. However, this is obviously not considered safe enough. Strict Irish safety standards mandate that an assistant is provided. His job is to hold you by the waist as you bend over.

Interesting. It's not exactly the most romantic of professions. Or is it? I suppose it depends on whose legs he's holding. I wondered if one man was solely employed for this purpose? What would his title be? "Luckiest Man in the World" perhaps. Ah shit, the men outnumber women...

Anyway, I kissed the stone and judging by the length of this article, it seems the gift of the gab has set in. But for those of you who have partaken of this Irish tradition, I know you walked away wondering..."How many people need to kiss a stone until it has become as smooth as an opal?" I doubt they wash it. I only fear that the Irish may be playing a joke on their English neighbours, cleverly smearing facial herpes all over it every morning. I'll let you know in 2 to 4 weeks. The fairies would do it.

In all fairness, I did not want to come home. Luckily, the fairies brewed up White Juan for me and I got an extended vacation. Thanks guys. But seriously, my pointless rant does not do justice to the amazing country which is Ireland. Next to Scotland, (note obvious obligations indicated by last name) Ireland is the most beautiful place in the world - you just have to get there. Or fly to Red Deer, your choice.

Note: For those offended by my horrible humour, I'm sorry. It's either the fairies talking or the hundred pints of Guinness still rotting my liver.

Irish National Highway System - Sheep and All 2 lane highway on the edge of a cliff!

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