



# Life in Dublin for DISC Students

A Guide for International Foundation Year (IFY) Students



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# Life in Dublin Guide

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## Welcome

Welcome to Dublin and to your International Foundation Year at DISC. This guide is designed to help you settle quickly, understand Irish culture, and enjoy your time as a student here. It provides essential information on practical living, cultural experiences, and resources to help you feel at home in Dublin.

How to use this guide: Keep it handy during your first few weeks in Dublin. It will support you with day-to-day essentials, cultural integration, and opportunities for exploration.



## Arrival in Dublin

Arriving in a new country can be exciting but also overwhelming. Preparing in advance will make your first few days in Dublin smoother and less stressful.

- **Airport Transfers:** If possible, arrange your airport transfer in advance with the DISC CSS team. Dublin Airport is about 10 km from the city centre and is well connected by buses, taxis, and private shuttles. For those arranging their own travel, the Dublin Airport website provides information on bus and taxi services.
- **Essential Documents:** Keep important documents in your hand luggage rather than checked baggage. You will need your passport, student visa/immigration

documents, offer letter from DISC, and proof of insurance. It's also useful to have copies (digital and printed) stored safely.

- **Currency:** The currency in Ireland is the Euro (EUR). ATMs are widely available at the airport and throughout Dublin. Most shops, taxis, and restaurants accept debit/credit cards, and contactless payments (including Google Pay and Apple Pay) are very common. You do not need to carry large amounts of cash.
- **Getting to the City:** If you're travelling independently, the Aircoach <https://www.aircoach.ie/?c=1771410460> and Dublin Express [https://www.dublinexpress.ie/?gclid=aw.ds&gad\\_source=1&gad\\_campaignid=16609965989&gbraid=0AAAAA0PT8V7nx07A0p0BgdRQIKSxzlg0H&gclid=](https://www.dublinexpress.ie/?gclid=aw.ds&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=16609965989&gbraid=0AAAAA0PT8V7nx07A0p0BgdRQIKSxzlg0H&gclid=) buses run frequently between the airport and central Dublin. Taxi services are available directly outside the arrivals terminal and can be booked through apps such as Free Now <https://www.free-now.com/ie/>.
- **First Steps After Arrival:** Make sure you know where your accommodation is located and have the address written down. If you are arriving late at night, check that you have confirmed your check-in arrangements in advance. It's also a good idea to carry some small change in coins for public transport tickets or vending machines



## Getting Around

- **Leap Card (TFI Leap)**

Use a TFI Leap card to pay for buses, trams (Luas), and commuter rail. Student and young adult cards receive a 50 % discount. [Leap Card+2Transport for Ireland+2](#)

You can top-up your Leap card using the official Leap Top-Up app (Android/iOS) or at physical top-up machines. [Leap Card](#)

For more details (fare savings, zones, how to order): [Leap Card Official: About Leap Card+2Leap Card+2](#)



- **Public Transport Apps / Journey Planning**

The Transport for Ireland (TFI) app and website can help you plan journeys across bus, tram, and train networks — check timetables, routes, and alerts.

Use real-time journey planners to avoid long waits and see alternate routes in case of disruptions.

- **DublinBikes (Bike Sharing Scheme)**

DublinBikes is a self-service public bike rental system. [Dublin City+1](#)

Key features:

- Open to everyone aged 14 and above. [Dublin City](#)
- The first 30 minutes of each ride are free; after that, you pay incremental charges. [Dublin City+1](#)
- Bikes are available across many stations in central Dublin, typically from ~5:00 am to ~12:30 am daily. [Dublin City+2dublinbikes.ie+2](#)
- Use the RedClick dublinbikes app to unlock bikes and manage your trips. [Google Play](#)

[Google Play](#)

For more info: [DublinBikes Official dublinbikes.ie+1](#)

- **Walking & Exploring**

Walking is often the best way to appreciate Dublin's central areas; many attractions, shops, cafés, and university campuses are within walking distance of each other. It's also a great way to discover hidden lanes, historic architecture, street art, and local life at your own pace.

## Daily Essentials

Moving to a new country means getting used to how things work. Below is a guide to groceries, SIM cards, banking, and payment methods in Dublin:

### Groceries & Shopping

- Major supermarket chains include: Lidl, Aldi, Tesco, SuperValu, and Dunnes Stores.
  - Dunnes is Ireland-owned and often combines groceries with fashion/home goods.
- For smaller or convenience shopping, you'll also find local supermarkets, deli shops, and corner shops.
- Many of the larger chains offer online shopping and home delivery—great if you're busy starting classes.



Dunnes Stores: One of Ireland's major supermarket chains.

## Banking & Student Accounts

Opening a bank account makes life much easier for paying rent, bills, and everyday spending.

- **AIB Student Plus Account** is designed for full-time third-level students. It offers no monthly maintenance fees on many services. [AIB+1](#)
- Many student accounts waive transaction fees, debit card charges, etc. [Wise+1](#)
- Other banks also offer student/graduate accounts—some with free ATM withdrawals and perks. [Switcher](#)
- **Revolut** functions more as a digital financial app than a traditional bank; depending on your needs, it can be useful for currency exchange, transfers, and eSIM/data plans.

Bank	Student Friendly Features	Status
<b>AIB (Allied Irish Banks)</b>	One of the biggest commercial banks in Ireland. They usually offer Student Plus accounts.	AIB is one of the major banking groups in Ireland. <a href="https://aib.ie/our-products/mortgages?gclid=aw.ds&amp;&amp;utm_medium=paidsearch&amp;utm_source=google&amp;utm_campaign=&amp;utm_term=&amp;utm_content=ai">https://aib.ie/our-products/mortgages?gclid=aw.ds&amp;&amp;utm_medium=paidsearch&amp;utm_source=google&amp;utm_campaign=&amp;utm_term=&amp;utm_content=ai</a>
<b>Bank of Ireland</b>	Also a very large bank network in Ireland, which offers many branches and a large ATM network.	A traditional option with good reach. <a href="https://personalbanking.bankofireland.com/save-and-invest/savings/fixed-term-savings-accounts/advantage-deposit-account/features-and-benefits/?gc">https://personalbanking.bankofireland.com/save-and-invest/savings/fixed-term-savings-accounts/advantage-deposit-account/features-and-benefits/?gc</a>
<b>Permanent TSB</b>	Offers competitive services	PTSB is a major Irish bank. <a href="https://www.ptsb.ie/everyday-banking/current-accounts/current-account/?utm_campaign=MMM-CA&amp;utm_medium=PPC&amp;utm_source=google&amp;gclid=aw.d">https://www.ptsb.ie/everyday-banking/current-accounts/current-account/?utm_campaign=MMM-CA&amp;utm_medium=PPC&amp;utm_source=google&amp;gclid=aw.d</a>



ATMs are widely available. Many banks offer student accounts.

## SIM Cards & Mobile / Data Options

Staying connected is essential. Here's how mobile / data works in Ireland:

- Providers you'll see commonly: Vodafone, Three, Lycamobile.
  - Lycamobile operates as a mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) in Ireland.
- Lycamobile's site offers prepaid "pay-as-you-go" and SIM-only plans for data, calls, and texts. <https://www.lycamobile.ie/en/>
- Revolut also supports eSIM plans—you can set up data plans in the app. [Revolut+1](#)
- If you plan to travel or move around Ireland, check for EU roaming and data allowances.

### **Tips for choosing a SIM / eSIM:**

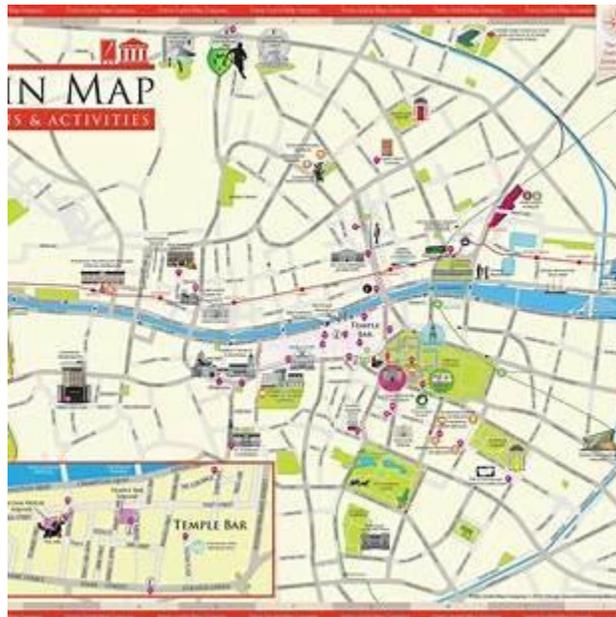
1. Decide whether you want prepaid (no contract) or monthly plans.
2. Check how much data you need (streaming, video calls, etc.).
3. Compare whether the provider includes EU roaming (important if you travel).
4. Get the SIM from official shops or kiosks. Take your passport/ID.

## **Culture & Safety**

Dublin is a vibrant city steeped in history, arts, and friendly communities. Overall, it is considered quite safe for residents and visitors. However, as with any urban area, basic precautions help keep you secure and confident as you explore.

## Safety Tips & Guidelines

- Ireland ranks very highly on global peace indexes, but in Dublin you should remain alert in busy areas and after dark. [Under30Experiences+2Lonely Planet+2](#)
- In crowded settings (public transport, markets, festivals), keep your phone, wallet, and passport secure. Avoid displaying large amounts of cash. [touristsos.ie](#)
- Plan your routes in advance; checking maps on the street can make you appear vulnerable. [touristsos.ie](#)
- If you walk at night, stick to well-lit, populated streets. Avoid isolating yourself in poorly lit lanes or parks alone. [Under30Experiences](#)
- Some local sources suggest avoiding areas such as Talbot / Sheriff Street late at night.
- Stay aware of your surroundings, especially when using headphones or looking at your phone.
- For emergencies in Ireland, dial 112 or 999 (the national emergency numbers).
- Keep a copy (digital and physical) of your passport, student ID, and emergency contact info.



## Places to Visit & Explore

Dublin offers a rich tapestry of cultural and historical attractions. Here are some must-see sites and neighborhoods to include in your guide:

- **Dublin Castle** — seat of historic governance, with medieval, Georgian and Victorian layers of architecture.
- **Phoenix Park** — one of Europe's largest enclosed parks, home to Dublin Zoo, Áras an Uachtaráin (the President's residence), walking trails, and deer herds.
- **National Gallery of Ireland** — features Irish and European art, with free entry to permanent collections.
- **Trinity College & Book of Kells** — view the ancient, illuminated manuscript and explore the Old Library.
- **Little Museum of Dublin** — a local gem that tells the 20th-century social history of Dublin through everyday artifacts.
- **EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum** — located in Dublin's Docklands, this museum explores the diaspora and Irish migration history.
- **Irish Film Institute (IFI)** — screening independent, Irish, art-house and foreign films; a good way to experience Irish cinema culture.
- **Places to wander:**
  - Temple Bar — known for live music, cafés, and cultural energy
  - Grafton Street / St. Stephen's Green — shopping, street performers, Georgian architecture
  - Howth — a coastal village on the outskirts of Dublin with scenic walks, seafood, and cliff paths.



**The Spire on O'Connell Street - an iconic Dublin landmark.**



## Irish Weather: What to Expect & How to Prepare

Ireland has a mild climate, meaning it experiences relatively mild to cold winters, cool summers, and frequent rain. The weather tends to change quickly, so layering is your best friend.



### Climate Facts & Averages

- The average temperature in Ireland is about 9.8 °C, based on the 1991–2020 climate averages published by Met Éireann.
- In Dublin specifically, summer high averages reach around 15–18 °C, while winter lows average 4–6 °C. (Temperatures can dip a bit lower on colder nights.)



### What to Wear & Carry

Because the weather can shift quickly, a “one-size-fits-all” outfit rarely works. Here are tips for staying comfortable:

- Dress in layers: start with a breathable base layer, add a warm mid-layer (e.g. fleece), then a waterproof outer shell.
- A waterproof jacket (with a hood) is essential.
- Waterproof shoes or boots are a good idea.
- An Umbrella is handy.
- Extras: a lightweight scarf or hat, and gloves.

# What to Wear



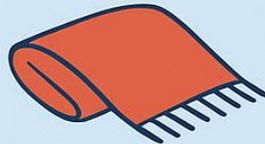
**Waterproof  
jacket  
with hood**



**Umbrella**



**Waterproof  
boots or shoes**



**Scarf and hat**

## Practical Tips

1. Check local forecasts daily — apps like Met Éireann (the national meteorological service) help with hourly updates.
2. Plan around rain windows — mornings or early afternoons often have lighter showers.
3. Indoor backup — always have a list of museums, cafés, or indoor venues in case the rain gets heavy.
4. Laundry and drying — allow time for drying between rainy spells; dorms and flat-sharing kitchens sometimes lack fast dryers.

Ireland's culinary tradition is grounded in hearty, simple, and comforting foods. Especially historically, cuisine evolved around staple ingredients like potatoes, milk, cabbage, and meat. Today in Dublin you'll find those traditions alongside a wide range of international options.



Here are some classic recipes you can try, plus tips.

## 1. Irish Soda Bread

### Ingredients (basic version):

- 500 g plain (all-purpose) flour
  - 1 tsp salt
  - 1 tsp baking soda
  - 400 ml buttermilk

### Method:

1. Preheat oven to 200 °C.
2. Mix flour, salt, and baking soda in a bowl.
3. Add buttermilk and stir until you have a soft dough (do not overmix).
4. Shape into a round loaf and score a deep "X" on top.
5. Bake for about **35–40 minutes**, or until the crust is golden and a skewer comes out clean.

### Notes & variations:

- Traditional soda bread uses only flour, salt, baking soda, and buttermilk. Adding butter, sugar, or raisins creates sweeter or "tourist" versions.
- The "X" cut helps the loaf cook evenly and has folklore roots in warding off bad spirits.
- For a softer crumb, you could replace some of the buttermilk with milk or use a mix of whole wheat and white flour.

- Serve fresh with salted butter, jam, or alongside stews.

## 2. Colcannon

### Ingredients (typical):

- 1 kg potatoes
- ~300 g cabbage or kale (or mix)
  - Butter
  - Milk or cream
  - Salt & pepper

### Method:

1. Peel and boil potatoes until tender; drain and mash with butter and milk.
2. In a separate pan, sauté chopped cabbage or kale (you can also add onion or scallions).
3. Mix the greens into the mashed potato. Adjust seasoning, add extra butter if desired.

### Cultural note:

- The name *colcannon* comes from the Gaelic *cal ceannann*, meaning “white-headed cabbage.”
- It’s sometimes associated with Halloween traditions—small coins or charms were hidden in the dish for fortune telling.
- Colcannon is especially popular as a side dish, often served with meat, but it can also stand alone as a filling meal.

## 3. Irish Stew (Student-Friendly Version)

### Ingredients (base recipe):

- 500 g lamb or beef (cubed)
  - 1 kg potatoes
  - 3 carrots
  - 2 onions
- Stock (beef or vegetable)
  - Thyme (or rosemary)
  - Salt & pepper

### Method:

1. Brown the meat lightly in a pot.

2. Add diced onions and carrots, and cook briefly.
3. Add potatoes, herbs, and enough stock to cover ingredients.
4. Simmer for 1.5–2 hours until meat is tender.
5. Adjust seasoning and serve.

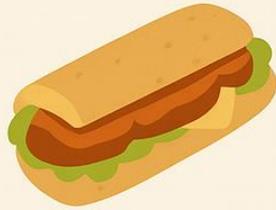
#### **Tips & variations:**

- Use cheaper cuts of meat, as the slow cooking softens them.
  - Add optional vegetables like peas, turnips, or parsnip.
- For a vegetarian version, use beans or lentils plus extra vegetables and stock.
  - Serve with soda bread or colcannon for a traditional combo.

### **Other Popular / Quick Irish Foods**

- **Chicken Fillet Roll** – A deli favourite: a baguette filled with breaded chicken fillet, salad, and sauces. Affordable and hugely popular among students.
- **Fish & Chips (“Chipper”)** – Takeaway staple served with mushy peas, curry sauce, or tartar sauce.
- **Coddle** – A traditional Dublin dish made from sausages, bacon, onions, and potatoes, all slow-cooked together in one pot. It’s simple, filling, and was often made to use up leftovers.
  - Recipe: Bord Bia Coddle
- **Leek & Potato Soup** – Creamy and comforting, made from potatoes, leeks, onions, and stock. Often served with soda bread or brown bread.
  - Recipe: BBC Good Food – Irish Potato & Leek Soup
- **Champ** – Mashed potatoes mixed with scallions (spring onions), butter, and milk. Similar to colcannon, but lighter and simpler.
- **Boxty** – A traditional Irish potato pancake, either fried or baked, made with grated raw potato and mashed potato combined.
- **Irish Breakfast** – A “full Irish” typically includes sausages, bacon, eggs, black pudding, white pudding, baked beans, tomato, and toast. Students may find cheaper versions in cafés (“mini breakfasts”).
- **Shepherd’s Pie / Cottage Pie** – Minced lamb (or beef) cooked with vegetables and stock, topped with mashed potato and baked. Comfort food that can be made in bulk.
- **Brown Bread (Irish Wheaten Bread)** – A wholemeal soda bread, slightly denser and more savoury, often served with soup or smoked salmon.

# TRADITIONAL IRISH FOODS



Chicken Fillet



Fish & Chips



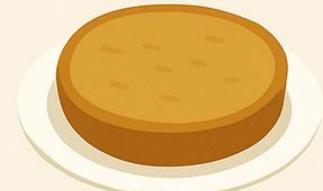
Coddle



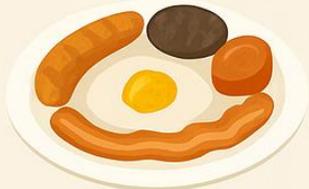
Leek & Potato  
Soup



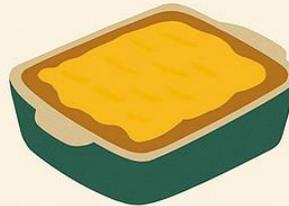
Champ



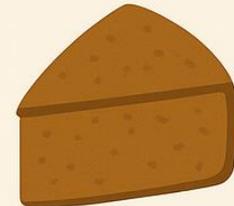
Boxty



Irish Breakfast



Shepherd's Pie /  
Cottage Pie



Brown Bread  
(Irish Wheaten  
Bread)

## Irish Music & Festivals

Traditional Irish music is alive and well, and Dublin is a hub for it. You'll hear live performances in pubs, at festivals, and in informal sessions. The music often features instruments such as the fiddle, tin whistle, bodhrán (Irish drum), uilleann pipes, concertina, and flute.

Irish music is not just performance — it's participatory. Many pubs host “session nights” where musicians (and brave beginners) play together casually. Places like The Cobblestone and O'Donoghue's are well-known for authentic traditional music sessions in Dublin.



## Major Festivals & Cultural Events

Here are some of the key festivals and cultural events in Dublin and across Ireland worth adding to your calendar:

Festival	Date	What Happens	Highlights
<b>St. Patrick's Day</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> March	National holiday, parades, music, street performances.	Celebrated all over Ireland. In Dublin, the festival has parades, concerts, fireworks, family events. <a href="#">Wikipedia+1</a>
<b>Bloom's Day</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> June	Celebrates Ulysses by James Joyce	People often dress in Edwardian costume, read from the novel, visit key locations in Dublin (Davy Byrne's Pub, Joyce's tower, etc.). <a href="#">Ireland+3Bloomsday Festival+3Ireland.com+3</a>
<b>Trad Fest (Temple Bar, Dublin).</b>	January	Five days of traditional music, street performances and workshops.	Held across venues in Dublin (including Dublin Castle, St. Patrick's Cathedral). Recently held Jan 22–26. <a href="#">Ireland.com+4Visit Dublin+4Ireland.com+4</a>

### Useful Links

- Official TradFest website: [tradfest.com](http://tradfest.com) [Tradfest](#)
- TradFest on Visit Dublin (info & guide): [visitdublin.com](http://visitdublin.com) – [TradFest guide](#) [Visit Dublin](#)
- Bloomsday Festival official site: [bloomsdayfestival.ie](http://bloomsdayfestival.ie) [Ireland.com+1](#)
- More on Bloomsday (Ireland.ie): [ireland.ie](http://ireland.ie) – [Bloomsday info](#) [Ireland](#)



The bodhrán – a traditional Irish frame drum used in folk music.

## ♥ Wellbeing & Support

Moving abroad can be exciting, but it can also feel overwhelming at times. At DISC, your wellbeing is a priority, and a wide range of supports are in place to help you stay healthy, connected, and on track with your studies.



## 👤 Welfare & Health Support

- The Welfare Team is available to provide confidential advice and guidance on health and welfare concerns.
- They can support you with everyday challenges as well as more serious personal issues, and will help you access external health services if needed.

## 🎓 Academic Support

- Your academic tutors are available to guide you with subject-specific learning and coursework.

- A dedicated Progression Coach works with you on study skills, motivation, and long-term progression planning, helping you prepare for university entry.

## Digital Wellbeing: The Wisdom App

- All DISC students have access to the Wisdom App, a digital wellbeing tool that provides:
  - Hints and resources for maintaining optimum mental health
  - Guidance on healthy eating habits and lifestyle
  - Access to online counselling services if you need additional support
- The app is designed to give you tools “in your pocket” to stay balanced and resilient during your studies.

## Staying Connected

- Join student societies, sports teams, or interest clubs to make friends and feel part of a community.
- Take part in local cultural activities and events — getting involved helps you feel at home more quickly.
- DISC staff and student support services are always available if you are unsure where to turn.

## Emergencies

- For urgent medical or safety situations in Ireland, call 112 or 999 (both numbers connect to police, fire, and ambulance).
- Keep a list of emergency contacts, including your welfare officer and accommodation provider.