

The Celtic Nations Holiday/Short Break Guide



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Three Celtic Nations to Visit on Your Next Vacation;

A Celtic vacation can be a dream come true. The Celtic nations are areas where Celtic tribes lived and where a Celtic language is still spoken. These nations bring with them not only a rich history and mythology but also beautiful landscapes and unique cultures of their own. The Celtic nations include Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, Wales, Cornwall, and the Isle of Man. Let's take a short trip through three of these fantastic locales.

Scotland;

Scotland is one of the larger Celtic nations and it is part of the United Kingdom. While it shares a border with England, the majority of the country is bordered by water. Scotland has a varying geography with high mountainous regions, the Highlands, as well as lowlands. The variety of geography makes Scotland a visually stunning place to visit and it's ideal for nature lovers.

It's a modern country with fine dining, culture, and shopping. You can also enjoy the well-preserved history of the country, including a tour of the famous Edinburgh Castle. This ancient castle dates back as far as the 9th century BC. The citizens speak English so travelling is made easier. However, brace yourself for that thick Scottish accent as it can be difficult to get used to.

Cornwall;

Cornwall is one of the smaller of the Celtic nations. Cornwall has a population of 536,000 and covers an area of about 1,376 square miles. It is part of the United Kingdom and a ceremonial county of England. It borders England though the majority of the county is surrounded by water.

It has a deep and rich Celtic history including several ancient standing stone landmarks. One of the most famous of these ancient landmarks is the Mên-an-Tol, which features a standing stone with a hole in it. Because of its moderate climate and the miles and miles of scenic beaches, it's a popular vacation destination for England's residents. The strong seaside culture makes it a favorite destination. Combine that culture with unique foods, ancient landmarks, and beautiful castles and churches and Cornwall is an ideal Celtic destination.

Isle of Man;

The Isle of Man or Mann as locals call it is an island located in the Irish Sea between Ireland and Great Britain. The island is sparsely populated and one of the most beautiful areas in the world. It's home to around 80,000 people. The Manx, or people of Mann, have a strong tradition of myth and folklore. It's easy to see why. Many ancient landmarks are still scattered about the island. The Braaid is just one of these ancient remnants of Celtic-Norse tribes. It's located in the central Isle of Man and dates to around 650–950 AD.

Any of the half dozen Celtic nations will undoubtedly provide a spectacular and memorable vacation. If you want to take a step back in time, the three destinations highlighted here are ideal choices. A Celtic vacation creates memories of a lifetime.

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How to Choose the Best Celtic Nation for Your Vacation:

Planning a vacation can be both fun and frustrating. There are many destinations to choose from and many factors to consider. Not only do you need to choose a time and length for your vacation, you also have to identify an itinerary and a destination.

If you're planning a Celtic vacation then the challenges are abundant. There are six Celtic nations to consider. A Celtic nation is an area where a Celtic language is still spoken. The Celtic nations include Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, Wales, Cornwall, and the Isle of Man. If you have limited time and need to choose just one area to focus on, the following questions and tips will help you decide.

What Type of Traveller Are You?

When you travel do you prefer to stay in one location and explore the area to its fullest? Or do you prefer to hop in the car and explore as much as the area has to offer? If you prefer to stick to one main area then there you might want to consider visiting Ireland. Both Dublin and Cork County offer enough attractions and interests to keep a visitor busy for weeks. You won't have to get in the car and drive around the country of Ireland to have a great vacation.

If you prefer to hop in the car and explore, driving from point to point and never staying in one location for more than a day or so, then both Scotland and Ireland have the space and the destinations to keep an excited traveler busy.

Beach Bum or City Dweller?

Many of the Celtic nations are also common seaside destinations. Cornwall and Brittany are hot vacation spots for many Europeans. They have long expanses of scenic coastline and are havens for sunbathers and surfers alike. If you prefer an urban atmosphere then consider Dublin, Ireland or Edinburgh, Scotland. Both areas provide abundant opportunities for shopping, culture, and luxuries. Visitors can also rent a car and travel to more rural or scenic destinations.

Part of Your Trip or the Entire Stay?

If you're planning on making a visit to a Celtic nation a portion of a longer vacation then consider visiting the Isle of Man, Brittany, or Cornwall. The Isle of Man can be visited by boat as it's off the coast of England. Cornwall is on the south-western tip of England and Brittany is part of France. All three destinations can easily be included in a larger European trip or tour.

Also consider the time of year that you'll be travelling. Many of the areas have a moderate climate. However, some like Scotland can be quite cold and wet during the winter season. Many areas of Ireland completely close down during the winter as well. Choose wisely, plan your trip well and enjoy your Celtic vacation.

Three Places to Consider When Taking a Celtic Vacation:

There are many different types of vacations to take. You can take a beach vacation, a wilderness camping vacation or even a skiing vacation. You can also take a Celtic vacation. It's an opportunity to explore nations with an ancient past, strong traditions, vibrant folklore and landscapes that are often beautiful beyond imagination.

There are more than a handful of potential areas to visit when considering a Celtic vacation. Let's take a quick look at the strong points of each three popular Celtic nations.

Ireland

Ireland is one of the most popular Celtic nations. It is a culture that is rich with folklore. When visiting Ireland, travellers are exposed to a wide variety of options. Fine dining and culture in Dublin makes way for ancient ruins like the Uragh Stone Circle, a Neolithic stone circle in Gleninchaquin Park, County Kerry. Cork County hosts fine festivals and the lighthouses around the country's rugged shore are a delight. From castles to leprechauns, there's something for everyone in Ireland.

Wales

Wales is part of the United Kingdom and the isle of Great Britain. It's a mountainous country that's embraced by a rugged shoreline with the Celtic Sea and the Irish Sea bordering it. There are three national parks in this small country, making it a nature lover's delight. Visitors can enjoy the urban delights of Cardiff and Swansea and then partake in the beauty of this Celtic country.

Brittany

This area is found on the north-west peninsula of continental Europe in north-west France. It's bordered by the English Channel, The Celtic Sea and the Bay of Biscay. Visitors can enjoy ancient French architecture and prehistoric remnants like the Carnac Stones. These stones were erected around 3300 BC and contain more than 3000 standing stones – it's the largest collection in the world. This small nation is also home to lighthouses, a strong maritime culture and an area with unusual pink granite around the city of Trégastel.

There are common attractions in many Celtic nations including lighthouses,

rugged coastlines, a strong maritime culture and ancient castles and artifacts. Some have their own currency and government, which means it pays to do your research before you go.

With so much to do and see in any Celtic nation, a well-planned itinerary is a must. If you enjoy nature and adventure, Wales may be the ideal location for your next trip. If you have a strong appreciation for culture, architecture, and ancient ruins then consider Ireland or Brittany. The good news is that there's no wrong choice. All three places promise a wonderful visit.

Three Castles to Visit in Ireland:

There are an abundance of activities and sights to enjoy in Ireland. From lighthouses to pubs, there's something for everyone. Castles are often at the top of the sightseeing list and there are many to choose from in this magical country. If you enjoy castles or want to include them on your Ireland visit, add the following three castles to your list.

Dublin Castle

This castle is on the list for a number of reasons. The first is that it may be the most accessible. You'll probably fly into Dublin on your stay and Dublin Castle can be on your first day's itinerary. However, convenience isn't the only reason this castle is mentioned. Built in the early 13th century, it also houses some of the area's oldest architecture. In addition, it's quite accessible to tourists and offers guided tours throughout the day. There is also a craft store, heritage center, and a restaurant.

Kilkenny Castle

Kilkenny castle is one of Ireland's largest castles. It's also one of the oldest. The beginnings of the castle began in 1172 and the castle was finished in 1260. It's been owned and lived in by many prestigious families and has a distinct look, making it one of the most recognizable castles.

Many of the rooms are open to visitors. In addition to the architecture and portrait collection, you can often find an art exhibition in the Butler Gallery. There's a fine dining restaurant and a conference centre as well. Don't forget to walk around the grounds where you'll find a rose garden,

parks, and a fountain.

Blarney Castle

Blarney Castle is in Cork County. Yes, it is where the phrase “Kiss the Blarney Stone,” originated. This castle is perhaps the most beautiful and certainly one of the most picturesque castles in Ireland. It was originally built in the 11th century and the wooden structure was replaced with stone in the 1200s.

The castle has been rebuilt many times and today most of it stands in ruins. You can still visit some of the rooms and you can most certainly kiss the Blarney Stone. The stone is said to give “the gift of the gab”, or the gift of eloquent speech, to everyone who kisses it.

These three castles are just a few of the more than a dozen castles on the island of Ireland. They’re widespread throughout the country and can make the foundation for a wonderful and adventurous vacation.

When Is the Best Time to Visit Ireland?

Thinking about visiting Ireland but not sure when to go? It’s true that there are drastic differences between the seasons. Summer in Ireland is distinctly different than the wintertime. However, when you go also depends on your travel personality and your reasons for visiting this beautiful country.

Visit in the Summer

Most travel guides recommend visiting Ireland in the summertime. In the summer the days are not only warmer, they’re also longer. If you are a traveller who enjoys packing your visit from sun-up to sun-down, then these long days are invaluable. The country is in full swing and everything from bed and breakfasts to wacky attractions are open.

The downside is that because summer is such a pleasant time to visit Ireland, it’s peak travel season. You’ll be amongst the many other tourists. You won’t have much luck finding cheap airfare or hotel stay.

Spring and Fall

During the spring and fall you're likely to find wet weather. You'll also find some deals on travel and thinner crowds. It's also the prime festival season. Let's not forget that St Patrick's Day is in March and there are wonderful fall festivals to consider including the Folk Festival in Cork and the Fringe Festival in Dublin. Many travel experts strongly recommend visiting Ireland during the spring or fall. Bring a raincoat and a smile for a lovely stay.

Winter

Winter is generally considered the least desirable time to visit Ireland. It's cold and wet, and the sun may not shine as often as you'd like. Additionally, many attractions including hotels and restaurants are closed during the winter – this is particularly true in the more rural areas. However, it's also the cheapest time of the year to visit Ireland. You'll be able to find good airfare prices as well as reasonable hotel rates. And you won't have to fight the crowds.

The Bottom Line

If you plan to visit Ireland to explore nature and take in the coastline then winter is a time to avoid. However, if you plan on heading to a large city and checking out every pub within walking distance then winter may be a perfect acceptable and certainly more affordable option. The cities are abundant with opportunities for culture, dining, shopping and theatre all year around.

If you're not on a tight budget, then any other time of the year provides more benefits. You'll have more options in terms of hotels, dining, and attractions. Identify your reason for visiting Ireland and establish a budget. Those two factors will lead you to the best time for you to visit Ireland.

Sights to See in Wales:

There aren't too many countries where you can ride a Ferris wheel right next to an ancient castle. Yet, Wales offers this unique experience and many more. Wales is one of the six Celtic nations meaning that some residents still speak the ancient language of the Celtic tribes.

Like many Celtic nations Wales has a rugged coastline, as well as ancient architecture and artifacts that just can't be missed. Couple the traditions of the old with the new modern conveniences and you have the making of a dream vacation. If you're heading to Wales, the following are some sights not to be missed.

Conwy Castle

There are dozens of ancient castles to visit in Wales. However, Conwy is often at the top of the list. It's a massive castle. It has two fortified gateways, eight towers and a long, central complex. You can see it rise above the landscape for miles. Constructed in 1283, this amazing castle is quite picturesque as well, as you can see the mountains of Snowdonia and the River Conwy beyond the castle gates. Visit Conwy Castle and you'll immediately be transported back in time.

Snowdonia National Park

Nature lovers rejoice in Wales. The Welsh countryside is vast and diverse. While the country has more than 100 lakes and 37 miles of coastline, it's also home to 90 mountain peaks - including the tallest mountain in Wales, Mt Snowdon. Snowdonia National park is the largest national park in Wales and offers hiking, horseback riding, and white water rafting. If you're looking for a break from the traditional sightseeing and castle wandering, consider a day or two in Snowdonia National Park.

St Fagans National History Museum

Celtic history is fascinating and there's no better place to explore the history of these ancient tribes and the history of Wales than St Fagans. But this isn't your typical history museum where visitors walk by display after display of artifacts behind glass. No, St Fagans highlights historic buildings from all over the country. More than 40 buildings have been dismantled and re-erected.

The buildings include farmhouses, watermills, chapels and a school. Visitors can also view circular Celtic houses based on the archaeological remains of actual buildings. The grounds are beautiful and not to be missed. You'll find livestock grazing adjacent to formal gardens.

Finally, don't leave Wales without experiencing a Rugby tournament at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff. You can take a tour of the stadium before the game and then enjoy this popular sport in the third largest stadium in Britain.

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What to Do in Cornwall:

Cornwall is a small ceremonial county of England. It's recognized as a Celtic nation which means that Celtic language is still spoken there. It sits at the south-west tip of England and is bordered by the Celtic Sea and the English Channel. If you're taking a Celtic vacation, it's one of the popular stops. Additionally, it tends to be a popular vacation spot for folks from the United Kingdom.

When visiting Cornwall there are a number of attractions and activities to consider. Let's take a look at some of the more popular things to see and places to visit in Cornwall.

Prehistoric Sites of Bodmin Moor

In Cornwall and any Celtic nation you'll undoubtedly find a number of ancient and prehistoric sites. It's not uncommon to find standing stone collections as well as ancient homes. The area of Bodmin Moor is home to a number of prehistoric sites in Cornwall. One such site is near the village of Minions. It's called The Hurlers and is a collection of double stone circles. Folklore tells a story of men who were turned to stone for playing the game of hurling on a Sunday.

Beautiful Beaches

Looking for an opportunity to enjoy the seaside? Gwithian Towans Beach is a favourite destination for surfers, sea-birds and seals. It's a wonderful place for both adults and children. With sand dunes at your back and rock pools near the shore, children can enjoy discovering wildlife. Adults will appreciate the nearby shops and restaurants.

The beach is accessed by walking a short trail from a parking lot. Dogs are welcomed on the beach and there is a lifeguard on duty during peak season. Gwithian Towans Beach provides visitors the opportunity to enjoy a beautiful seaside experience with the many conveniences and comforts.

Castle Tours

There are five castles in Cornwall. The castles of Cornwall have a rich history. On your castle tour, check out Pendennis Castle which is said to be one of the sturdiest fortresses built by Henry VIII. St Mawes Castle is one of his most decorated castles. Launceston Castle is an excellent stop for history buffs who can enjoy an exhibition covering more than 1000 years of history. Restormel Castle is one of the most scenic castles in Cornwall.

If you only have time to visit one castle in Cornwall, consider making it Tintagel Castle, which is said to be the birthplace of King Arthur. Merlin's cave is nearby and another fun attraction to visit.

There are an abundance of interesting activities in Cornwall. One can easily spend the day shopping and eating or enjoying nature and learning about the history of the area. Be sure to make Cornwall a stop on your next Celtic Vacation.

What to Pack for a Trip to Scotland:

If you're headed to Scotland for a Celtic vacation then it's essential to make sure you pack well. There are a lot of varied activities to enjoy in Scotland, from touring ancient castles to enjoying a night on the town. Scotland is a geographically diverse region which brings with it unique packing challenges. As with any coastal country, the weather can change quickly which means it's important to be prepared.

The following list of items will help you make sure to enjoy your trip to Scotland without worrying about whether you've packed accordingly.

Outerwear

Whether you're in Scotland during the summer or winter, it's always important to have a coat. The weather is often damp and humid which can make the air temperature feel a bit colder. In the summertime make sure to have a windbreaker and/or a jacket. In the spring, fall, and winter the temperatures can dip quite low. Winter weather gear is essential.

Rain Gear

If you're in Scotland, expect rain. It rains often and sometimes with ferocity. This doesn't seem to bother the people of this great country at all. In fact, they tend to be outdoorsy folks. While you can undoubtedly find rain gear to purchase on your trip, it makes financial sense to bring your own. Bring a rain jacket and boots. If you want to make sure to stay dry, consider rain pants and an umbrella as well.

Clothing

Layers are the way to go in Scotland. You may find that during the day you're peeling off layers and down to a t-shirt by midday, and by the end of the evening you're wearing a sweater and a coat. Pack long pants as well, and if you're hiking then don't forget to pack appropriate clothing and shoes. For any traveling excursion, good walking shoes are a must. This is particularly true in Scotland where you may be hiking or walking through ancient ruins and castles.

The Extras

Be sure to pack a camera. Scotland is one of the most beautiful countries in the world and you'll want to capture every moment. If you're bringing electronic devices that need to be plugged in, you'll also want to pack an adaptor or buy one when you arrive. You'll need a three rectangular pin adaptor. Don't forget toiletries and any medicines you'll need when you're there. If you're camping then you'll want to bring your camping supplies as well.

Enjoy your time in Scotland. Pack for wet weather and be prepared for anything. Preparation will ensure an enjoyable trip and memories of a lifetime.

Three Reasons to Travel to the Isle Of Man:

If you're looking for a unique travel destination the Isle of Man may be your ideal location. Located in the Irish Sea between Great Britain and Ireland, the Isle of Man is part of the British Isles. It's not part of the UK which means it has its own government and currency (although pounds sterling are also used).

A Step Back in Time

Miles and miles of rugged coastline give the Isle of Man an almost exotic appeal. You feel as if you've stepped back in time to a land that is new and undiscovered. Yet the horse-drawn carriages found in some quaint seaside villages portray a different era. 19th century buildings can be found lining the shore where you can enjoy the unique variety of boutiques and high end shops.

You can visit ancient castles, explore labyrinths, and even hang out with ghosts with a Castle Rushen ghost tour. If you enjoy ghosts and all things un-dead you might also enjoy Meayll Hill. There you'll find the site of twelve burial chambers and the largest Neolithic tomb in the British Isles at Cashtal yn Ard.

Nature in Abundance

More than 40% of the land on the Isle of Man is unpopulated. There is abundant opportunity to enjoy nature. Glen Maye provides an enjoyable hike to picturesque waterfalls. The hike then ends at a secluded beach. Glen Maye is just one of eighteen national glens. They provide visitors the opportunity to enjoy both the beaches and the mountains.

If you are an animal lover then you'll enjoy the Calf of Man nature reserve and bird observatory. Visitors can often see seals basking in the sun on the rocks. The Ayres is an internationally renowned wildlife area where animal lovers are often able to enjoy a varied scene of birds, seals and sharks.

Dark Sky Locations

The Isle of Man has been identified as one of the best places in the world to enjoy the night sky. The absence of surrounding lights and light pollution combined with their location means that visitors can often enjoy unaided and detailed views of galaxies far away.

Bring a telescope and you can see even more.
It's not uncommon for people to be able to enjoy the Northern Lights.

In addition to a wealth of opportunities to experience a unique and ancient island, the Isle of Man is also rich with hotels, restaurants, and an opportunity to learn, enjoy, and embrace culture. If you're looking for a special vacation, you can't go wrong with a trip to the Isle of Man.

Brittany Highlights for your Celtic Vacation:

Brittany, France is a unique Celtic nation. True, all of the Celtic nations have a rich history. You can find ancient castles, ruins, rock formations and amazing architecture in Celtic lands. However, Brittany offers something special. If you're taking a vacation to France or exploring the Celtic nations then consider stopping by Brittany and enjoying some of the area's finest highlights.

The Pink Granite Coast

The coastline of Brittany between Perros-Guirec and the port of Ploumanac'h exhibits some of the most unique rocks. They're pink. It's called the Pink Granite coastline and the rock formations are something that must be experienced. You can add to the day by enjoying the sandy beaches in the area, which Brittany is famous for. You can also enjoy bird watching and watersports in the area.

Carnac Stones

The city of Carnac is famous for one thing, the standing stone structures. The standing stones, also known as menhirs, were made from local rock and built by the pre-Celtic people of the area. The area is the largest collection of standing stones; there are more than 10,000 of these Neolithic structures.

Legend says that the statues, where are erected in straight lines, are the remnants of a Roman legion that was turned to stone by Merlin the great wizard. Another theory on the presence of the stones is that each stone was erected to honour a family member that has passed - much like gravestones today.

St Malo

This city is a destination all by itself. It's a port city in Brittany that is walled off. It was fortified during the middle ages and has a history of piracy.

Destinations to note include:

- * The château of Saint-Malo; be sure to visit the museum
- * The Cathedral of St. Vincent
- * The Great Aquarium Saint-Malo
- * The Labyrinthe du Corsaire
- * The Pointe de la Varde, a park
- * Fort National and Fort de la Conchée

Outside the walled city you can take a night-time hike known as the du Clair de Lune or the moonlight promenade. The hike is a two-hour guided walk along a seaside trail. In addition to views of the Rance River estuary and the walled city, you'll learn about the city's great history.

It's quite easy to feel overwhelmed by all there is to do and see in the beautiful Brittany countryside. You can tour castles, enjoy rugged shoreline, shop and eat from sunup to sundown. If you have the great pleasure to visit this lovely Celtic nation, be sure to stop by and enjoy the highlights of St Malo, the Pink Granite Coast and the Carnac Stones.

OK - That's it Folks.

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