

Picture Perfect In Ireland

When it comes to spectacular photo ops, the Emerald Isle delivers something to delight your camera around every corner. But the weather, the landscape and the sites in Ireland present some very specific challenges. We've got our list of photo tips especially for your travels around Ireland.

CARRY THE CAMERA EVERYWHERE

The camera is no good to you if it's stuffed in the glove compartment of your rental car. Make a point to take out the camera anywhere you go, including restaurants, shops and roadside stops.

GET TO KNOW YOUR CAMERA

New digital cameras have added several features that can dramatically improve your photos. Get to know your device's scene features and be sure you figure out how to turn the flash on and off as well as quickly preview and delete photos.

Thatched Roof

GET CLOSER

Is there a reason you keep taking photos of people who look like specks in the distance? Get up close and fill the frame with people, architectural details whatever you are trying to capture.

BEAT THE CLOUDY SKIES

Light rain and overcast skies appear regularly in the Irish forecast and can make your photos look dull and grey. Plus, many digital cameras have a hard time focusing in cloudy or foggy conditions. To combat this, take fewer wide shots and concentrate on close ups and details. Also, before you snap, look for shapes and colors that show contrast between light and dark, bright and dull. And if all else fails, use editing software (which often comes with a new camera) and try adjusting the saturation and contrast.

castle

CAPTURE THE CASTLE

With the number of castles in Ireland, you are certain to add a few to your photo collection. From the outside, try photographing the fortress from an angle rather than straight on and attempt to squeeze in a patch of grass, sky or gardens to counter the castle's dark grey stones. From inside, it is often difficult to capture the space without a wide angle lens, the best alternative is to photograph from a doorway or whenever possible from a perch above.

BRING ALONG A WEATHER-PROOF CASE

Digital cameras tend to be more sensitive to water, sand and rough handling than traditional cameras, so a good weather-proof case can protect it from the elements and provide some extra cushioning. When in Ireland, go to great lengths to keep your camera dry, and if it does get seriously wet, turn off the camera, remove the battery and let it air dry.

BUY THE POSTCARD

Postcards usually capture a landmark better than most novice photographers or provide an angle the average visitor isn't able to get. Buy a postcard with the view you want and then use your own camera to take photos of your favorite details or of your family. Be sure to buy postcards that will fit in your photo album...jumbo and panoramic postcards sometimes just don't fit.

ROUND UP THE LIVESTOCK

Be it on a farm, in a field or in the middle of a country road, farm animals are a common sight in the Irish countryside. If you come upon an Irish traffic jam (cows or sheep), stay in the car and take photos through the window. Baby animals are extraordinarily cute, but remember their parents are exceptionally

protective, so beware! Use your zoom to get up close and personal rather than approaching animals and never get close to an animal without its owner present.

THINK ABOUT LIGHTING

The best natural lighting tends to be when the sun is lower at around sunrise and sunset. Faces tend to glow in this kind of light and squinting eyes tend to be less of a problem. If you're lucky enough for sunny skies, watch out for dark shadows on faces; turning on your flash in these situations can help fill in those shadows. When indoors try the shot with and without flash.

STOP THE CAR AND GET OUT

If you're in too much of a rush to get out the car to take a photo, you're probably traveling at a faster pace than you should. Don't hesitate to cautiously pull over or turn around and go back to capture a great shot. While you're stopped, carefully wander over to the other side of the road and see if there is anything noteworthy on that side as well.

STOP POSING AND START DOING SOMETHING

Oh look, there's a photo of the family standing and smiling at the Cliffs of Moher. Here's the same pose in front of Dublin's Molly Malone statue. Oh and again at the Rock of Cashel. Try getting pictures of people doing things...inspecting the Liscannor stone on the walk at the Cliffs, climbing Croagh Patrick or sharing a latte at Bewley's Cafe. You'll find such photos tell the story of your vacation much better than a forced smile in the usual pose.

TAKE THREE; SAVE ONE

The biggest advantage of digital cameras is the fact that you can take more photos without having to pay for developing, so take more shots than you'll ever need. Be sure to try different angles and camera modes and keep only your best images. Saving redundant images clogs memory and can make your photo album a drag to look through.

CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

For some people, turning the camera from horizontal to vertical is a pretty radical move, but get more variety by trying the same shot from very high and very low angles. That might mean standing on a chair or lying on the ground to get the perfect shot. Also don't be afraid to turn the camera on an angle; canted or diagonal shots can be quite interesting.

CARRY A SPARE BATTERY

Don't be caught without power. Be sure to have an extra battery charged and ready to go. Look at the specifications printed on your charger. If it says AC Input: 100-240V, it can handle Ireland's 220 volt outlets and all you need to bring along is a plug adapter that will allow you to plug it in to the wall at your B&B.

ENJOY THE CRAIC!

The word "CHEESE!" causes some people to contort their faces into an almost frightening, tooth-bearing expression. A gentle laugh tends to look more natural in photos.

PASS THE CAMERA

There's one thing missing from vacation photos with a designated photographer...the person behind the lens. Let everyone in the family take photos, ask fellow travelers to snap a pic of your group or use your camera's self-timer to get everyone in the shot.

KEEP IT SAFE

Whether your camera or the memories it contains are more valuable to you, keep your camera secure. Pack it in your carryon luggage (airport x-ray equipment will not damage your digital camera or the

information on your memory card). If you need to leave it in the car, b&b or hotel, keep it out of sight or ask your host for their recommendation.

LOOK AROUND

Taking a moment to stop thinking about what you're looking at and start noticing what you're seeing can completely change your photographic style. Look for shadows and reflections and be sure to look up...the ceilings and sky reveal often-missed wonders.

STOP THE CHURCH BLUR

The low-light conditions in churches and other buildings can result in blurry photos and the flash tends to eliminate any sense of mood. Use your camera's museum or low-light settings and lean your camera against a column, pew or other steady object to avoid camera shake.

SNAP YOUR SUITCASE

Before you leave, snap a photo of the contents of your suitcase. In case something goes missing, you'll have documentation.

FIRE UP YOUR "DIGITAL COPY MACHINE"

Use your digital camera to take photos of information signs, posted maps, train schedules and passports. You'll have information handy without having to carry extra hard copies.

CAPTURE THE GOOD WITH THE BAD

Just because it's pouring rain, your luggage is missing and you just found out your self-catering cottage is missing a roof, doesn't mean you should stop taking pictures. Documenting the entire trip will tell the whole story. Plus, the photos might come in handy for refunds and insurance purposes, and maybe, just maybe, you'll be able to look back on those moments and laugh.

BULK UP ON MEMORY

The memory card that comes with most cameras simply isn't big enough to accommodate an entire Irish holiday. Get a card that will hold at least 100 photos at a high setting - which still might not be enough memory! Remember, higher megapixel cameras need larger memory cards. If you find yourself running low on memory, stop by a one-hour photo store and clear your memory card by having your images put on a CD or purchase another memory card while on the road.

USE THOSE MEGAPIXELS

You paid for those extra megapixels, so why aren't you using them? Keeping your photo size set at "basic" or "low" means you probably won't be able to enlarge your photos beyond 4"x6" and you likely paid for a bigger camera than you needed.

CHOOSE A CLOSING SHOT

Before you end your visit to any site, stop and think about a closing shot...something that sums up the visit and captures your mood. These images often make the best additions to your Irish photo album.

PUBLISH THOSE MEMORIES

Photo albums are great, but new technology makes it easy to turn your digital photos in to books, cards and stickers. Online services such as Flickr, Moo, Shutterfly, Kodak and Apple's iLife make it easy to produce amazing products. And remember, be ruthless in your editing - only include your very best images or the photos that best tell a story; it'll save on printing costs and keep your collection interesting.

You can visit the Irish Fireside PHOTO ALBUMS by visiting www.irishfireside.com/photo.html