

# Getting to Ireland and Back! - The Arrival and Departure Experience

For newbie or occasional travelers, arriving at a new airport is discombobulating (yes, that's a real word). Arriving at a new airport after a 6-9 hour flight, and with a 5-8 hour time zone shift is confusing to almost everyone. This blog attempts to walk you through a Dublin airport experience and help you persist through the fog. In the process, I'll discuss a little bit about passports, customs and immigration, and a strategy for the first and last 24 hours of your trip.

If you have a direct flight to Dublin from North America, and don't have a stop in the EU, you will probably be arriving at Dublin Airport at Terminal 2. I will first give directions for T2 followed by some brief modifications for arrivals at T1 (probably means you first stopped at another airport in Europe like Heathrow).

## Arriving in Terminal 2

The first thing you should do after getting off the airplane is find a toilet (it's not a bathroom here 😊), before a 10-15 minute walk to immigration. At the end of your walk you will come to the Border Patrol lines. This will be a 0-60 minutes wait. For the real newbies ... yes, you need a passport for entry to Ireland, and it must be more than 6 months from expiring before your planned departure. When you arrive at the front of the line a border guard may ask a few questions like "the reason for your visit?" or "Where are you staying?" .... after your presumably satisfactory answer, he/she will stamp your passport, the border guard will wave you through to baggage pick-up and customs. BTW, don't try the "EU Only" line unless you have a European Union passport. I've tried this twice with a permanent resident stamp on my passport, and I was growled at twice ... but it was probably worth it. 😊

Baggage pickup will look like any other airport, except a little larger. There are plenty of "free" luggage carts, so take one if you need one. But, you shouldn't need a cart since you have read my blogs, have taken my advise, and you only have one medium sized rolling suitcase and a backpack. 😊 Pick up your bags from the carousel and proceed to Customs. Almost everyone

should take the Nothing to Declare or "Green" Lane through customs. If you have something to declare then take the appropriate lane through Customs. You may have something to declare if you are bringing in lots and lots of cash, or lots and lots of expensive electronics or other stuff. If you are not sure, here is a guideline of what to declare. You will then exit customs into the Arrivals Hall... it will NOT be calm.

If you need coffee to continue to function, or you didn't take my advice about the toilet, this is the time to recover. Just to the right of the exit from customs is a Spar, a convenience store chain in Ireland and the UK. They will have coffee, tea, diet coke, bottled water .... and they take credit cards.

To the right and almost behind you are toilets and a Bank of Ireland ATM machine. A good place to get some cash.

If you need a full meal, there are restaurants to the far left in the arrivals hall. You can get take away (it's not "to go" here) food at the Spar, but I have another suggestion later in the blog.

When you are ready to proceed, you will exit the building through the door that was directly in front of you when you walked into the Arrivals Hall.



The Exit Door



Pedestrian Bridge

This door will take you across a bridge over the busy Dublin airport traffic. At the end of the bridge on your left is a bank of lifts (elevators) and an escalator in both directions. Proceed to the ground floor (not the 1st floor ... In Ireland you are already on the 1st floor). When you exit the lift, buses to Dublin City Center will be in front of you or to your right. A taxi stand will be further to your right.

There are two bus lines to downtown

Dublin. The [AirCoach](#) services the main hotels for €8.50. The [AirLink](#), Dublin Bus 747, terminates at [Heuston Station](#) and stops at Connolly Station and hotels and businesses up and down the Liffy River for €6. Just ask if it is not clear what bus you should take. Heuston Station is the train station that will get you to the West or South of Ireland. Connolly Station has trains that service the Northern routes and the Dublin regional trains. It's about a €30 taxi ride to downtown Dublin.

If you disregarded my advice about rental cars, then look for the rental car shuttle for the offsite companies. The main car rental companies are actually in the T2 Car Park, the same building you entered through the pedestrian bridge from the airport.

For buses to other parts of Ireland take a left from the lift. If you take the escalator, remember you want to take a left with your back to the terminal. Walk a few hundred yards toward Zones 13 & 14 where you will see several buses on your left. Some are Bus Éireann and some are private. You can take a bus to Galway, Cork, and many other cities. A ticket to Galway costs about €18. The two private bus companies that I have used are [Go Bus](#), and [CityLink](#). The front seat of a double-decker bus gets rave reviews, but it is probably not a good idea if you are susceptible to motion sickness. The views through Dublin are fantastic.



Covered walkway to Buses

My advice for the first twenty four hours is to “plow through it”. As one friend puts it, “you need to stay up until a respectable bedtime for a small child”. This assumes you slept some on the overnight flight to Ireland. This is partly why I suggest that you start your vacation in the West of Ireland. By the time you get to Galway, you will be ready for a walk, a beer, a meal, and then bed.

## Arriving in Terminal 1

If you arrive at Terminal 1, the customs and immigration is similar but much more relaxed since you probably came from an EU country and were supposed to have already cleared customs and immigration.

When you exit customs and immigration you will be on the ground floor. The [Airlink/747](#) to downtown and other local buses will be well marked and out the door to your left. For taxis and the long distance buses exit the door to your right. For the long distant buses, you will need to walk across the street and through the parking structure in front of you, through the mini-mall of restaurants and stores on the ground floor of the parking structure to the same bus area I described in the T2 directions.

BTW, this mini-mall is a great place to pick up a cup of coffee, pastry, or sandwich if you change your mind about eating while waiting for the bus to depart.

## Departing Ireland

For your last twenty-four hours in Ireland, I recommend that you stay at a hotel on the airport grounds unless you have a late morning or afternoon flight (unusual). There are three hotels ([Maldron](#), [Carlton](#), and [Radisson Blu](#)) and they are all reasonably priced compared to downtown Dublin. Unlike some US airports, you can actually walk to the terminal, but all have a shuttle to the terminals. Shannon has a single hotel (Park Inn by Radisson).

Several International Hotel Groups are not quite on the airport grounds but offer shuttle service to/from the airport. This includes hotels like [Hilton](#) (my favorite) and Holiday Day Inn Express. These shuttles drop you off at departures for T1 and T2. If you are taking a shuttle *to* the hotels, follow the signs to Zone 16 to catch the next bus (also follow the signs to the Dublin Airport Church to get close).

Now for the best part: if you have a direct flight to the US from Ireland, you will clear US customs and immigration in Ireland, and you will be disembarking from the plane at a "domestic" gate in the US, rather than landing at an International terminal and transferring between terminals to your next flight (and possibly going through security again) This alone is worth paying a little more to fly directly out of Ireland to the US. The lines at the US airports can be long. I had one experience of over 2 hours in a passport check line in DFW.

The lines for check-in at some of the airlines can be very long, so you will need to arrive 2+ hours before your flight. I would recommend that you

arrive early and plan on a leisurely breakfast in the Departures Hall (or the airline lounge).

After you check in with your airline, you will head to EU/Irish Security. The rules are almost identical to the US TSA rules except you keep your regular shoes on (boots may still need to be removed), and take your belt off. After EU/Irish Security you will arrive at the Departures Hall that contains several restaurants, shops, and Duty Free Stores. There are plenty of restaurants and bars to choose from for those who don't have access to an airline lounge.

A little more than an hour before your flight you will proceed to the US Pre-Clearance. ... follow the American flags to the TSA security check point .... yes a 2nd security check point, but this one is manned by US employees that follow the standard US rules ... belts on ... shoes off. After TSA security is US passport control. For those travelers with Global Entry, you can speed through the line, otherwise you will present your passport and answer questions from US immigration officers. They will likely show you a picture of your suitcases and "is this your suitcase". You will need to declare ANY food and "over the limit" alcohol(1 liter per adult). There are only one or two restaurants or bars on the other side of US Pre-Clearance, so it is best to eat before.

In the Departures Hall, you will also take care of your VAT (Value Added Tax) reimbursement. Ireland has a VAT tax that is similar to a sales tax but is included in the price of items you buy. If you buy non-consumable items during your trip, you can get a portion of this tax reimbursed by collecting your receipts or having your purchases recorded on a Horizon Card. You may have to ask but there will be a kiosk or a window to file your claim. The VAT reimbursement can really add up if you buy a few sweaters, a few pieces of jewelry, a few pieces of leather ....

You will find Duty Free Stores in both the Departure Hall and after US Pre-Clearance. Duty Free Stores allow you to buy items tax free. For instance, it is cheaper to buy Irish Whiskey in the US, rather than Ireland, and it is cheaper still to buy Irish Whiskey in the Duty Free Store (most of the time). This is all due to alcohol taxes. You are allowed 1 liter of alcohol per person, but we have declared two 700 ml bottles each and have been "waved through". Alcohol is the only thing we've found that is cheap enough at the duty free stores to make it worth the hassle. BTW, you will receive the liquor in a sealed bag that will allow you to go through US Pre-Clearance or TSA security in the US.

I have not mentioned Shannon Airport. It is small enough and low-key enough that finding your way should not be a problem. The only public transit to/from Shannon is Bus Éireann, number 51, and it is about €10 to Galway. A taxi to Galway is about €100. It will be considerably cheaper to get a taxi to the Ennis or Limerick train stations and then take a train to your final destination.

See You in The Pub!

Jet Lag Jack