Ireland is known as the Emerald Isle because it’s very green. It’s green because it rains a lot. It’s warm and wet in the summer and cold and wet in the winter! It’s the 3rd largest island in Europe – 84,421 km.

Ireland is in fact two countries: Northern Ireland, in the north east, is part of the UK, and the Republic of Ireland, in the south, is independent. The Republic of Ireland covers 80% of the island and it became independent from the UK in 1919.

Both countries are separated from Britain by the Irish Sea. The nearest major English city is Liverpool, 217 km away from Dublin, the capital of the Republic of Ireland. It’s easy to travel there from Britain. For example, you can catch a plane from Liverpool, in England, and Glasgow, in Scotland, or you can take a ferry from Holyhead, in Wales.
The total population of the Emerald Isle is 6.4 million, with 4.6 million people living in the Republic of Ireland. That’s more than twice as many people as in Northern Ireland. English is the first language for most of the population of both countries. Only a minority of Irish people speak Gaelic – the traditional language of Ireland – as a first language, although quite a few people still speak it as a second language.