

IRELAND PARK · TORONTO WATERFRONT

Where Toronto's Irish Story Comes to Life

A remarkable journey of survival, courage, compassion and new beginnings — on the shores of Lake Ontario, against the backdrop of Toronto's skyline.

Welcome to Ireland Park, where the history of Ireland and the history of Toronto come together in an extraordinary story that helped shape a nation.

The year that changed Toronto forever

In 1847, at the height of Ireland's Great Famine, approximately 38,500 Irish refugees arrived in Toronto — a city with a population of only about 20,000.

Imagine that for a moment. Nearly twice the city's population arrived in a single year, many aboard overcrowded ships after enduring weeks of hunger, disease and unimaginable hardship. They came seeking survival, safety and the promise of a better life.

Toronto faced an extraordinary humanitarian challenge. Medical workers, religious communities and ordinary citizens responded with compassion, caring for thousands of desperately ill newcomers. Tragically, many refugees and some of those who helped them lost their lives. Their sacrifice and resilience became part of Toronto's history.

A memorial that speaks without words

Today, Ireland Park's haunting bronze sculptures stand along Toronto's waterfront, honouring the men, women and children who escaped the famine and those who never lived to see their new homeland.

IRELAND PARK · THE FAMINE MEMORIAL

The Bronze Figures

Rowan Gillespie's sculptures welcome the 1847 famine refugees to Toronto's waterfront.



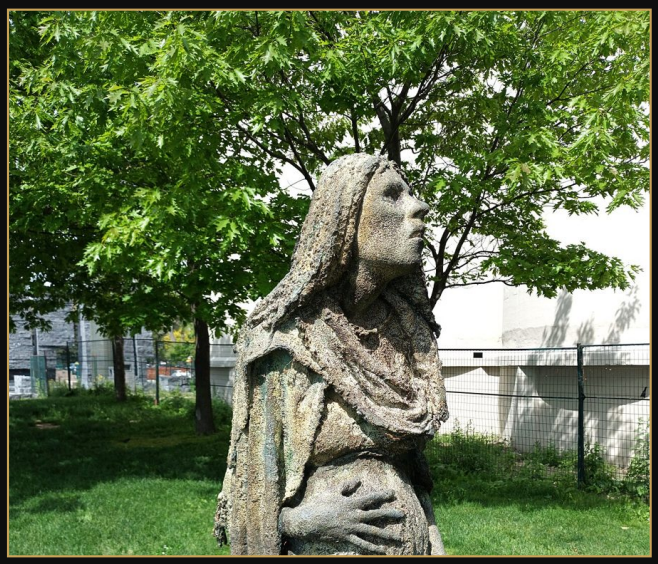
The Apprehensive Man
Photo: Maksim Sokolov, CC BY-SA 4.0



The Woman on the Ground
Photo: Maksim Sokolov, CC BY-SA 4.0



The Jubilant Man and the CN Tower
Photo: Maksim Sokolov, CC BY-SA 4.0



The Pregnant Woman
Photo: Acediscovery, CC BY 4.0

Photos via Wikimedia Commons. Licences: creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0 · /by/4.0

Created by Irish sculptor Rowan Gillespie, the memorial shares a powerful artistic connection with the Famine Memorial in Dublin, Ireland. Together, these monuments tell a story that stretches across the Atlantic — one of departure, loss, survival and hope.

For visitors of Irish ancestry, the experience can be deeply personal. For others, it offers a universal story of migration, compassion and the search for a better future.

The Irish legacy lives on

The Irish did not simply arrive in Toronto. They helped shape it. Generations of Irish immigrants and their descendants contributed to the city's neighbourhoods, institutions, businesses, public service, culture and community life. That legacy continues today.

- More than 460,000 people in the Greater Toronto Area reported Irish ancestry in Canada's 2021 Census.
- Approximately 4.4 million Canadians reported Irish ethnic or cultural origins in 2021.
- Approximately 30.5 million Americans reported Irish ancestry in 2023.

Across Canada and the United States, nearly 35 million people identify with Irish heritage. Behind those numbers are individual stories of families, sacrifices, dreams and new beginnings.

For cruise passengers and private travellers

For cruise passengers visiting Toronto, particularly those with Irish, Canadian, American or British ancestry, Ireland Park offers something far more meaningful than a traditional sightseeing stop — a chance to stand near the shores where thousands of Irish refugees arrived and reflect on the journeys that brought generations of families to North America.

Toronto Story Tours brings this history to life through engaging storytelling, historical interpretation and time to experience the memorial. The waterfront experience then continues onto Toronto Harbour, with a spectacular perspective of the modern city and the Toronto Islands.

It begins with remembrance and continues with a celebration of the city those early immigrants helped build.

Request your private Ireland Park experience

Tell us your date, party size and whether you're arriving by cruise ship, and we'll reply with a tailored proposal: torontostorytours.ca/ireland-park#request

Toronto's stories, told by the people who lived them.