

IRELAND: KISSING THE BLARNEY STONE



The cliffs of Moher



Clanmacnoise Monastery

Are you a smooth talker? Watch out, because since I kissed the Blarney Stone this month, I will be able to convince you all that hamburgers really are fine cuisine and that ice hockey is a sport of grace and beauty (although every Canadian knows these things to be true!).

The Blarney Stone is a stone set in the wall of the Blarney Castle tower (in the picture below) in the Irish village of Blarney. Kissing the stone is supposed to bring the kisser the gift of persuasive eloquence (blarney). The castle was built in 1446 by Cormac Laidhiv McCarthy-- its walls are 18 feet thick. Thousands of tourists visit the castle each year.

The origins of the Blarney Stone's magical properties aren't clear, but one legend says that an old woman cast a spell on the stone to reward a king who had saved her from drowning. Kissing the stone while under the spell gave the king the ability to speak sweetly and convincingly. It's tough to reach the stone -- it's between the main castle wall and the parapet. Kissers have to stretch to their back and bend backward (and downward), holding iron bars for support. Great orators such as Winston Churchill have kissed the stone.

Wondering who that is in the corner? Well that's my brother... he's a rock climber and decided he would give it a try! Fortunately, using my new gift of eloquence, I convinced him that going any higher was a bad idea!



For more info on Irish customs and culture, visit: <http://www.irishcultureandcustoms.com/>