

Blarney Castle And The Gift Of The Gab [B2]

Costruito nel primo Medioevo, il Blarney Castle è uno degli edifici storici più famosi d'Irlanda. Il motivo per cui tanti visitatori si recano in questo romantico castello in rovina è che ospita la leggendaria Blarney Stone. Da secoli si crede che chiunque baci questa pietra riceva il dono dell'eloquenza.

Do you wish you were less **tongue-tied**, more eloquent, could find the right words for every occasion...? Possessing the '**the gift of the gab**' (an ancient idiom) is particularly prized in the Republic of Ireland, where storytelling is part of a centuries-old tradition. Just as old is the Blarney Stone, located at Blarney Castle in County Cork. This world-famous stone is said **to bestow** the gift of eloquence on anyone who kisses it. The castle, and its magical Blarney Stone, are located in the village of Blarney, eight kilometres from the city of Cork in the south of Ireland.

TOWER HOUSE

The medieval ruins of Blarney Castle **lie** on a 120-hectare private **estate**. Built in the 10th century by the McCarthy clan, **rulers** of Munster in Ireland's southwest and border regions, Blarney Castle was initially built of wood, until a stronger stone building was constructed in 1210. This was subsequently demolished to make way, in 1446, for a defensive structure known as a tower house. Blarney Castle is actually two stone tower houses joined together and took about forty years to complete.

STRONGHOLD

The solid, square structure of Blarney Castle **sits** on top of a **rocky outcrop** and offers panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. The walls are 5.5 metres **thick** at the base of the castle, which would have been very difficult to attack. This was especially important when Cormac McCarthy, the great 12th-century Irish chieftain, was in occupation. A round **watchtower** to the

side of the castle ensured that a close eye was kept on anybody approaching the stronghold.

GREAT HALL

Today, Blarney Castle is a roofless partial-ruin, surrounded by spectacular gardens, and filled with myths and stories. Beneath the castle is a labyrinth of mysterious tunnels and passages. Above is the Great Hall, with its large fireplace, which would once have held a roaring fire as the lord and lady of the castle hosted banquets for their guests.

GEOLOGY

There are many myths about the origins of the Blarney Stone, and few known facts. In 2014, geologists at the University of Glasgow tested a tiny fragment of the stone to reveal that it is carboniferous limestone, about 330 million years old, and local to the area. It is believed to be an altar stone that was given as a gift to the lord of the castle, who built it into the top of the tower. Some say that the rock was used as a pillow by Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, and Hebrew patriarch according to the Old Testament. Quite how his stone could possibly come to Blarney Castle, nobody can explain.

Others link the stone's history to the 16th century, when the English Queen Elizabeth I wanted Blarney Castle for herself. Cormac McCarthy proved such a skilful negotiator that he continually talked his way out of conceding it. The queen labelled his obfuscation "blarney", a word that has since come to mean talk that charms, flatters or persuades.

POISON

The extensive grounds surrounding Blarney Castle are a paradise for wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts. There is even a poison garden, housing seventy different types of poisonous plants. The most dangerous plants are kept in cages to prevent people from touching them. The Rock Close is around 250 years old and filled with unusual features. It has a mystical atmosphere and is said to be the site of an ancient druid settlement. The woodland

nearby includes a so-called 'witch's' [**yew tree**](#), which, at around eight hundred years old, is older than the castle itself. Although many visitors come here to find [**the gift of the gab**](#), Blarney Castle and gardens have enough to leave them [**speechless**](#). www.blarneycastle.ie If you want to know more about this topic, read the article Blarney Castle: Kissing The Stone

Glossary

- **features** = elementi
- **to bestow** = concedere
- **rocky outcrop** = sperone roccioso
- **thick** = spessi
- **roaring fire** = fuoco scoppiettante
- **charms** = ammaliare
- **flatters** = adulare
- **cages** = gabbie
- **speechless** = senza parole
- **tongue-tied** = impacciato, ammutolito
- **the gift of the gab** = il dono della parlantina
- **lie** = trovarsi
- **rulers** = governanti
- **limestone** = calcare
- **labelled** = etichettare
- **blarney** = lusinga
- **estate** = tenuta
- **sits** = trovarsi
- **a close eye was kept on** = tenere d'occhio
- **stronghold** = roccaforte
- **roofless** = senza tetto
- **talked his way out of** = tirarsene fuori parlando
- **settlement** = insediamento
- **watchtower** = torre di guardia
- **link** = collegare
- **yew tree** = tasso