Landscapes

Are you maybe planning to enjoy a few days in the countryside this summer? ANNA HOCHSIEDER presents language used to talk about landscapes.

The Emerald Isle

Ireland is famous for its beautiful scenery. The Irish mainland is surrounded by dozens of smaller islands, most of which are uninhabited. Its coastline is characterized by numerous bays and inlets, headlands and peninsulas, as well as some of the highest and most spectacular cliffs in Europe.

The central lowland plain is ringed by mountain ranges. Ireland’s mountains are not very high. Only three peaks rise above 1,000 metres.

Ireland’s longest river is the Shannon. It flows 370 kilometres from its source in County Cavan to its mouth near Limerick, where the Shannon Estuary meets the Atlantic Ocean. Along the way, it is joined by numerous tributaries and widens into four lakes (known as loughs in Irish).

There are no active volcanoes in Ireland, but the Giant’s Causeway, a dramatic rock formation on the north coast of Northern Ireland, is proof of former volcanic activity. There are no deserts, either; instead, there is a massive karst landscape known as the Burren. At first sight, this seems as bare and lifeless as the moon. In fact, it supports a highly diverse ecosystem, including many rare species of flora and fauna.
PRACTICE
Now, try the following exercises to practise talking about landscapes.

Exercise 1

Underline the correct answer to each question below.

A. Which is greener — a desert or a meadow?
B. Which has salt water — the sea or a lake?
C. Which is higher — a hill or a mountain?
D. Which is narrower — a bay or an inlet?
E. Where does a river start — at its source or its mouth?

Exercise 2

Complete each sentence below with one word from the text on the opposite page.

A. The island has been__________ since the last family left, in 1992.
B. The Rhine__________ through several countries.
C. The Rhine’s main__________ are the Neckar, the Main and the Moselle.
D. Ireland has no__________ volcanoes, but Italy has three.
E. Above the treeline, the mountainside is completely__________ .

Exercise 3

Study the picture and read the text. Then match the words on the left to their definitions on the right.

A. A "stream" — 1. is the wide part of a river where it flows into the sea.
B. A "bay" — 2. is a small forest.
C. A "wood" — 3. is a low area of land between hills or mountains.
D. A "valley" — 4. is a narrow, high area of land that sticks out into the sea.
E. A "plain" — 5. is a part of the coast where the land curves inwards.
F. An "estuary" — 6. is a small, narrow river.
G. A "peak" — 7. is a large area of flat land.
H. A "headland" — 8. is the pointed top of a mountain.

“Landscape”, “scenery”, “countryside”
The countable noun landscape describes an area of land that has a particular appearance:
- The Burren is a karst landscape.
The uncountable noun scenery describes the natural features of an area, such as hills, lakes, and forests, and almost exclusively refers to attractive landscapes:
- Ireland has some spectacular scenery.
The uncountable noun countryside (or country) describes land outside towns and cities:
- I’d rather live in the country (side) than in a city.