



Explore Ireland

12 days

Tour Description

This tour of Ireland has something for everyone. Beautiful scenery greets visitors in County Wicklow, Kerry, Connemara and Donegal, each offers something different from mountains views and glens to lovely lakes and wild coastlines. Literature enthusiasts will get to see the countryside that inspired the poetry of William Butler Yeats and the lively city of Dublin which inspired so many of Ireland's literary giants. Shoppers will enjoy visiting the town known for fine crystal Waterford, and the opportunity to visit woolen mills. Everyone will be fascinated by the varied history explored from Viking invasions, to Cobh, emigration point during the Famine and the Medieval monasteries and castles dotted throughout the country.

Highlights

- ❖ Explore the monastic history and Celtic crosses of beautiful Glendalough
- ❖ Kiss the Blarney Stone
- ❖ Shop for treasures at Blarney Woolen Mills
- ❖ Tour the Ring of Kerry
- ❖ Explore Dromoland Castle
- ❖ View the famous Cliffs of Moher
- ❖ Explore Yeats country
- ❖ Enjoy Irish music night at Abbey Tavern

Sample Tour Itinerary

Dublin – 1 night

Day 1: Arrive Dublin

Upon arrival, clear customs and immigration and then be met by your escort and transferred to your hotel. Tucked away to the west of mainland Europe, Dublin is probably one of the world's best-kept secrets. Medieval and Georgian architecture provides a stern backdrop to the bustling and lively streets filled with street entertainers of all kinds. The aroma of freshly brewed coffee mingles with the distinct smell of hops from the nearby Guinness brewery drawing visitors indoors. Welcome dinner in the evening.

Waterford – 1 night

Day 2:

We leave Dublin this morning and drive south to Enniskerry, a secluded hillside village and the gateway to County Wicklow, the Garden of Ireland. Continue through the mountains via Roundwood, the highest village in Ireland, then Glendalough, a scenic glen between two lakes that once held St. Kevin's 6th-century monastic city. Walk among the ruined churches, round tower, and Celtic crosses, and savor Glendalough's story at the visitor center.

Continue this afternoon to Wexford, an ancient town with rich Viking/Norman traditions. Begin an unforgettable journey through 9000 years of Irish history at the Irish National Heritage Park. Next, arrive in the ancient city of Waterford. Take time this afternoon to slowly wander the streets. This evening you will meet your local Irish hosts at your accommodations for the night. Overnight Waterford



Killarney – 2 nights

Day 3:

This morning journey to Cobh, the 19th century point for many Irish emigrants. From 1848 - 1950, over 6 million adults and children emigrated from Ireland - over 2.5 million departed from Cobh. Visit the Victorian railway station in which you see "The Queenstown Story" which tells the story of this exodus from Ireland. Next we travel on to the village of Blarney to visit the Blarney Castle, an impressive baronial mansion with formal gardens and woodland walks. Here you can see its fabled stone, which gives the gift of eloquence with a kiss! There is time for you to go to the famous Blarney Woolen Mills, where you can buy everything from Irish sweaters to Waterford Crystal. Enjoy scenic views on the way to Killarney.

Day 4:

Tour the Ring of Kerry today, a panorama of mountains, lakes, valleys, seacoast and bog land, interspersed with colorful villages. Without doubt however the most impressive feature of the Ring of Kerry is probably the Macgillycuddy's Reeks with the highest mountain (Carrantoohill) in Ireland. Kerry offers a rich diversity of wildlife and flora that has evolved due to its unique location on the Gulf Stream. Returning to Killarney, enjoy the highlights of the town and the gardens and walking trails of Killarney National Park.

Limerick – 1 night

Day 5:

Travel to Limerick this morning with a stop in the picturesque village of Adare, considered to be the prettiest village in Ireland with its thatched cottages. Continuing north, stop at Bunratty, famous for its 15th century castle & park, to learn about the Ireland of Medieval times. This afternoon arrive at Dromoland Castle, dating back to the 16th century it is one of the most famous baronial castles in Ireland.

Galway – 2 nights

Day 6:

Drive through the winding streets of Ennis, setting of an impressive 13th century friary. See the famed and dramatic Cliffs of Moher, rising 700 ft. above the Atlantic Ocean. Then drive north through the bare limestone region known as the Burren to Ballyvaughan, where the Burren Exposure complex tells the story of its unique landscape and flora. Stop at Rauthbaun Farms in County Galway for a home cooked lunch and enjoy a tour of this Irish working farm. Next, arrive in Galway, City of Tribes, which is the capital of the West of Ireland. Visit the Galway Cathedral & the Church of St Nicholas, where Columbus is reputed to have prayed before sailing to America. Our next 2 nights are at an abbey converted into a wonderful 4-star hotel.

Day 7:

Relax this morning at your hotel before we depart through the wild and scenic coast of Connemara. Here the mountains of Galway & Mayo drop down to meet the rugged coastline. Stop at the famous Knock Shrine. On the 21st of August 1879, Our Lady, St. Joseph & St. John the Evangelist appeared at the south gable of Knock Parish Church. Fifteen people, young & old witnessed the apparition. This afternoon return to your hotel & enjoy Galway's quaint city highlights. You will want to take time to visit the Spanish Arch, Eyre Square, and the Galway Crystal Heritage Center or just find a small pub to relax, enjoy a traditional Irish lunch and of course a pint of the local specialty.



Enniskillen – 2 nights

Day 8:

This morning we head northeast to Sligo, homeland of poet William Butler Yeats. We visit his quiet churchyard grave at Drumcliffe. We then continue through the villages and towns of Donegal. The area offers a rugged beauty and mystique that you are unlikely to find anywhere else in the world! Donegal Town itself would be regarded as a town of great historical interest, for it was the family seat of the O'Donnells, chieftains of Tirconail in 1474. Some 178 years later, Brother Michael O'Cleary, together with three laymen wrote one of the seminal texts of Irish history, The Annals of the Four Masters, which has been described as "the most remarkable collection of National tradition in all Christendom." Enjoy the rest of the day in the peaceful surroundings of the Manor House Hotel near Enniskillen.

Day 9:

The first outing this morning is a leisurely cruise on the lovely lake around Devenish Island to view their early monastic ruins.. Ballycassidy is on the north of Devenish Island on the eastern shore of the lake. The ruins of a monastery, two churches, an oratory and one of the finest round towers in Ireland occupy a sloping hillside on the southeast tip of Devenish. St. Molaise founded a monastery on Devenish Island. The story is told that St. Molaise, resting from his labors, listened spellbound to bird song that was the Holy Spirit communicating. The reverie lasted a hundred years, and then St. Molaise looked around after the interval and the monastery had been built.

Dublin – 2 nights

Day 10:

Today we follow the road south to Dublin. Along the way we make little stops in small villages along the way. One such village, Lisburn, is famous for its Irish Linen Centre. Continue to Armagh, the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland and home of two St. Patrick's Cathedrals plus a heritage center devoted to Ireland's patron saint. Tonight in Dublin we enjoy a festive and lively dinner at Abbey Tavern. The food is delicious and the traditional Irish music is top class - a blend of fiddles, concertinas, tin whistles, pipes, spoons and lots of hand clapping.

Day 11:

Street-side cafes and pubs are always buzzing with animated conversations and it is interesting to note that it was in many of these same cafes and pubs that the literary giants such as Joyce, Kavanagh and O'Casey discussed the topics of the day over a thick creamy pint of Guinness. In the city there are a variety of museums, art galleries and visitor attractions to suit every taste. You can ask your tour director to point out the off the beaten track areas of Dublin, or you can find yourself immersed in shopping in the best shops in the country. Tonight join your fellow travelers for your Farewell Dinner, where you can trade the Irish limericks you have learned over a pint of Guinness.

Day 12:

This morning we transfer to Dublin International Airport with ample time to check your luggage and board your flight back to the USA.



INCLUSIONS

- Accommodations: Dublin 1 night, Waterford 1 night, Killarney 2 nights, Limerick 1 night, Galway 2 nights, Enniskillen 2 nights, Dublin 2 nights
- Meals: Continental breakfast daily, lunch and dinner as noted in itinerary
- Ground transportation via air conditioned luxury coach
- English speaking assistants and guides
- Admission tickets as outlined in the itinerary