



Ireland: Belfast, Derry, Donegal and Galway

8 days

Tour Description

Experience the diverse and mysterious landscape of Northern Ireland and the west coast of the Republic. Ireland is a land steeped in a brew of rugged beauty, ancient traditions and modern culture. Your adventure begins in Belfast, once the largest city in Ireland due to its industrial boom in the late 19th century. Walk through the volcanic rock formations of the nearby Giants Causeway. Sample genuine Irish whiskey. Travel north to Derry to see the ancient city walls and hear the tale of tragic “Bloody Sunday.” Continue to Donegal where you will stay overnight in a 15th century castle. Head south down the coastline to Galway, stopping in Yeats country and Knock, a historic place of religious pilgrimage. From the City of Tribes, you will venture into Connemara, where chances are you will hear some Irish spoken by the locals. Stop in at Kylemore Abbey, home of a Community of Benedictine nuns since 1920. Shop for Irish hand knits and other regional specialties in a quaint market town.

Highlights

- ❖ **Panoramic Tour of Belfast City, the birthplace of the Titanic**
- ❖ **See the unforgettable Giants Causeway**
- ❖ **Walking Tour of Derry and its ancient city walls**
- ❖ **Castle stay near Donegal**
- ❖ **Explore the lively city of Galway**
- ❖ **See the famous Connemara region where a John Wayne movie was filmed**

Sample Tour Itinerary

Belfast – 2 nights

Day 1: Arrive Belfast

Arrive at Belfast Airport where your Irish Driver Guide will meet you and escort you to your luxury motor coach. On your way to the hotel enjoy a panoramic sightseeing tour of Belfast City, the birthplace of the Titanic. Rich in history and culture, today’s Belfast is as famous for its stylish shops, gourmet restaurants and nightlife as it is for its troubled past. Some of the notable sights you will see are Belfast City Hall, Linen Hall Library, Stormont House, Grand Opera House, St. Anne’s Cathedral, Ulster Museum and the Botanic Gardens. At the end of your tour you may wish to visit one of the city’s fine art galleries or museums. Tonight, gather with your fellow travelers for a welcome dinner at your hotel.

Day 2:

After breakfast board your coach, driving north along the magnificent coastal road through Larne, Carnlough, Cushendall and Cushendan. Travel through the nine green Glens of Antrim on the way to the Giant’s Causeway, often described as the “Eighth Wonder of the World”. Stop in at the Visitors Center and enjoy a short audio-visual presentation before beginning the circular walk around the spectacular rock formations, formed by an ancient volcanic eruption. Then it’s on to the small town of Bushmills, where you will visit the world’s oldest whisky distillery. Return to Belfast where you are free for the balance of the day.



Derry – 2 nights

Day 3: Arrive Derry

This morning after breakfast, travel to Derry. Along the way you will stop to visit the Ulster American Folk Park, an open air museum that tells the story of emigrants who left for a different life in America. Continue past the standing stones in Strabane and arrive at Derry in the afternoon where you will be free for the rest of the day. Dinner will be at the hotel tonight.

Day 4:

Londonderry, also known as Derry, has a long and fascinating history. A city of many contrasts, ancient and modern sights sit alongside one another: You could be sipping a cappuccino in the middle of a 21st century shopping center, and a few minutes later you might be standing beside a 1595 cannon on ancient ramparts looking over streets and buildings that have survived for centuries. The Gateway to Ireland's northwest, the city is most famous for its historical walls. This morning, enjoy a walking tour. This afternoon you will be free to enjoy all that this city has to offer. Socializing is never a problem in Derry as there is a huge variety of pubs and clubs and an unequalled selection of live music.

Donegal – 1 night

Day 5: Arrive Donegal

Today after breakfast, a drive through beautiful and rugged country awaits you enroute to Donegal. Drive through Letterkenny and north to the coastal town of Dunfanaghy, where Killyhoey Beach fringes the Atlantic Ocean. Continue south through the charming towns of Glenties and Ardara, to the fishing village of Killybegs and along Donegal Bay. You will see wild mountains that flow down to the sandy coast and through the patchwork glens, dotted with stone walls and small cottages. It is here that every field, path and ruin has its memories and every last corner has its own story. There will be time to shop for the famous tweeds that are hand-woven in this area. Tonight, stay in a magnificent 15th century castle where you will enjoy 5-Star service and dinner with views of the lake.

Galway – 2 nights

Day 6: Arrive Galway

This morning, you will leave Donegal and head south to Galway, known as the "City of Tribes" after the fourteen most prominent families that settled this area. Travel through Donegal Bay, through Bundoran and Sligo, passing Drumcliffe Churchyard where William Butler Yeats, one of Ireland's finest poets, is buried. Onwards through the market towns of County Mayo and the village of Knock, Ireland's place of pilgrimage, arriving in Galway in the afternoon. Before checking into our hotel, you can enjoy a tour of the city visiting the new Cathedral and the Old Claddagh area.

Day 7:

This morning, after a hearty Irish breakfast, you will head out to explore the rugged, yet serene, Connemara area which John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara made famous in the classic, "The Quiet Man." This rocky land of broad-backed mountains and pearl-like lakes is the largest Irish-speaking section of the country and a place where the old traditions and way of life can still be experienced. Drive along the shores of Lough Corrib and then west through Maam Cross to Leenane and Kylemore. Here visit Kylemore Abbey, the only Irish home of the Benedictine Nuns.



Built originally as a Castle, it is one of the best examples of Irish neo-gothic architecture. The estate's features include a Victorian Walled Garden, restored Abbey reception rooms, Gothic Church, tranquil walks, craft shop, potter, and restaurant. Return to Galway via the coastal route, stopping at Spiddal, a market town where you can explore Staunton's Shoppe, which offers a wide selection of Irish hand knits and other regional products.

Day 8:

After breakfast, bid farewell to Galway as you board your coach for your transfer to Shannon Airport. There will be ample time to browse and shop in the Duty Free Store before boarding your return flight. Then, it's on board leaving behind the "Land of a Thousand Welcomes", sparkling in a setting of silver coastline and a patchwork of emeralds.

INCLUSIONS

- Accommodations: Belfast 2 nights, Derry 2 nights, Donegal 1 night, Galway 2 nights
- Meals: Full Irish breakfast daily, dinner as noted in itinerary
- Ground transportation via air conditioned luxury coach
- English speaking assistants and guides
- Admission tickets as outlined in the itinerary