

Go North Tour Itinerary

Tuesday: Arrival in Dublin, Ireland

Welcome to Ireland! You arrive in Dublin and check in to your first night's accommodation*.

If you have time, check out some of the excellent tours of the city and sample some of Dublin's unique bars and restaurants. Then off to bed with you for a good night's sleep, for tomorrow begins what we hope will be one of your best experiences yielding a lifetime of happy memories!

* We will contact you prior to the tour's start date with your Dublin hotel details.

Wednesday: Day 1 – Dublin to Carnlough

Meet your guide and the rest of your trip participants and begin your Irish adventure. Leaving Dublin and heading north, we make our way towards Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland (part of the U.K.). En route, we meander through the lush green countryside of the Boyne Valley past the Cooley Mountains where myth and reality collide in great battles, ancient sites, and epic tales.

We hit a buzzing Belfast city center with time to explore on your own or to simply relax in one of the many wonderful downtown bars and restaurants. Later we meet up for an unforgettable experience as we ride black cabs to the heart of Belfast's once troubled past. You get the inside scoop from a Belfast born cab driver as he takes you behind the scenes through divided Protestant and Catholic communities. The large scale protest murals are amazing and not to be missed!

Afterwards we'll venture across town to Queens Island and the Harland & Wolf dry ship yard and its immense dry dock, the birth place of the ill-fated Titanic.

Upon leaving Belfast, we make our way towards our final stop for the day - the beautiful harbor town of Carnlough. Here we'll spend the night in one of Northern Ireland's most historic hotels once owned by Sir Winston Churchill!

Day 1 Highlights: Boyne Valley, Belfast, Personal Tour with a Belfast Cabbie, Titanic Dry Dock, Carnlough

Thursday: Day 2 – Carnlough to Moville

After a great northern Irish breakfast (the "Ulster Fry" will fill you for days!), we travel the amazingly scenic Antrim coast line pausing to take in its nine glens, quirky coastal towns, and on a clear day - great views of Scotland! Along the way we take a short cliff top walk along the spectacular Larrybane headland to the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge. This precarious rope suspension bridge spans the mainland to tiny Carrick Island, where thousands of kittiwakes, fulmars, guillemots, and razorbills nest.

Then onwards to experience the Giant's Causeway and its weird geological landscape stacked with thousands of hexagonally-shaped stone columns descending into the ocean. This natural wonder has attracted visitors for hundreds of years and its geological importance has made it a World Heritage site.

In the afternoon we'll head for Derry. This ancient city is distinguished by its massive defensive walls which bear huge cannons and surround the historic city center. A walk atop these aged walls will grip your imagination as right from their inception in the early 1600's, they've seen centuries of sieges, civil unrest, and encouraged unlikely unions. Much of Derry's turbulent path to peace can be seen depicted in the many remarkable murals found throughout the city, in particular the Bogside - an area just below the imposing city walls. From Derry, we say goodbye to the U.K. side of Ireland and cross back into the Republic and County Donegal.

Our journey today takes us a little further north to one of Ireland's overlooked gems, the amazing Inishowen Peninsula. Here we find our base for tonight in the town of Moville. Perched on the banks of Lough Foyle, many Irish immigrants traveled to New York and Canada from here in the late 19th Century.

Day 2 Highlights: Antrim Coastline, Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge, Giant's Causeway, Walled City of Derry

Friday: Day 3 – Moville to Rathmullan

Leaving Moville, we'll spend the morning exploring the undeveloped back roads and sparsely populated Inishowen Peninsula. Packed full of ancient relics, stunning vistas and deserted beaches, we'll head right up to the northernmost point of Ireland, Malin Head. The scenery at the top of Ireland is awe-inspiring and it's one of the few places you can hear the endangered corncrake in the summer.

We'll continue our travels to the mountain top Grianán Ailigh, the "Fort of the Sun." This ancient ring fort was once an important seat of power and a religious and mythological focal point. High above the surrounding countryside, it commands one of the best views of the north from Derry and Lough Foyle to Lough Swilly, the Lake of the Shadows.

Heading to the far side of Lough Swilly, our trip takes us to the historically significant town of Rathmullan. In 1607, after years of failing revolts against the English forces, the infamous Flight of the Earls took place. Signaling an end to the old Gaelic order, this event saw the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell boarding a ship, leaving Ireland forever.

We settle in early for the rest of the day to enjoy the wonderful Rathmullan House, our home for the night. On the shores of Lough Swilly, this beautiful, early 1800s country manor house is set amidst mature trees on beautifully-tended grounds fringed by a two mile long sandy beach - a few short paces from the front door! Enjoy the indoor heated swimming pool and steam room, or try the massage and beauty treatments. Have fun on the tennis courts, play croquet on the lawns, or relax in the parlor.

You can stroll into town along the beautiful shoreline where you can enjoy traditional music and grab a pint or a bite to eat. You can also check out the House's excellent restaurant, which serves locally sourced produce, much from its own walled garden, or settle down in the cellar bar!

Day 3 Highlights: Inishowen Peninsula, Malin Head, Fort of the Sun, Rathmullan House

Saturday: Day 4 – Rathmullan to Ardara

After a relaxing night in Rathmullan, our journey takes us north along the wonderfully scenic shores of the Fanad Peninsula. Along twisting cliff top roads at the end of the headland, we find the Fanad Head lighthouse spectacularly set on sheer cliff walls guarding ships in the thunderous north Atlantic.

Continuing west to the heart of Donegal, we visit Glenveagh National Park, a place of spectacular natural beauty and the setting for the fantastical Glenveagh Castle. Built in the 1870s as an idyllic Victorian retreat, it hosted a variety of movie stars and celebrities from the 1940s to the 1980s before being donated to the Irish people. Wander through the enchanting network of formal gardens displaying a multitude of exotic and delicate plants from as far afield as Chile and Tasmania and watch the skies for golden eagles!

Afterwards we make our way past the arresting peak of Mount Errigal, the highest point in Donegal, and part of the Seven Sisters range. Wandering Donegal's quiet country roads past waterfalls and picture perfect towns, we arrive at our final stop for the day in the town of Ardara (pronounced Ar-drah). This Donegal treasure is set near the sea and flanked by mountains. You won't have to go far to sample delicious local food and great traditional music. We stay here for two nights so cozy in and relax!

Day 4 Highlights: Fanad Head Lighthouse, Glenveagh Castle and National Park, Donegal, Ardara

Sunday: Day 5 – Ardara

Your free day! The day is yours for whatever takes your fancy, be it great pubs, shopping, golfing, biking, walking, or horseback riding. The town is a center for tweed, one of the hallmarks of Donegal. A visit to the local historical center tells the tale of the area and its cloth from the shearing of sheep to the weaving of tweed. Enjoy another fun-filled night in this great town!

Day 5 Highlights: Ardara...Free Time to Explore!

Monday: Day 6 – Ardara to Sligo

We say farewell to Ardara for a morning drive passing a magnificent waterfall and onto one of Ireland's most beautiful beaches, Maghera Strand, whose huge dunes and ancient sea caves have a rich history of smuggling, tragedy, and romance. From here the road takes us through a steep run of switchbacks, dodging sheep along the way through the breathtaking Glengesh Valley.

After elevenses (a mid-morning break), we take an incredibly beautiful walk, meandering along dramatic gorges and spectacular coastal views. The path leads us by fields of heather and wild flowers to the Bunglass sea cliffs. Some of Europe's highest, they loom high atop the Slieve League Mountains at almost 2,000 feet!

Making our way back east, we stop to explore and have lunch in Killybegs, home to the largest fishing fleet in Ireland - a great place for fresh fish and a chance to talk with some old sea dogs.

Our stop for tonight is the lively town of Sligo, below the giant flat-top mountain Benbulbin which set the stage for many epic and heroic tales. It was this land that inspired Ireland's great poet, William Butler Yeats, and the fiery revolutionist, the Countess Markievicz. This vibrant and colorful town has many opportunities for shopping, pubs with traditional music, and chatting with the charming Irish!

Day 6 Highlights: Maghera Strand, Bunglass Sea Cliffs, Slieve League Mountains, Killybegs, Sligo

Tuesday: Day 7 – Sligo to Dublin

In the morning (weather permitting), we'll head a bit beyond town to Knocknarea Hill. Often called Queen Maeve's Hill, a 40 minute hike along its rocky slope takes us to an ancient tomb. At 180 feet wide, it's the largest such tomb in Ireland and reputedly the burial place of the legendary Queen Maeve, one Ireland's most infamous characters.

Afterwards we travel through Ireland's north Midlands, passing along a prehistoric drumlin trail left over from the last Ice Age and once used by the ancients to navigate across the country. In some of these little known hills, we'll hike a trail for an incredible experience - a chance to see the Carrowkeel burial tombs. These ancient, megalithic passage chambers are some of the oldest manmade structures on earth and pre-date the ancient Egyptian pyramids.

After the tombs, we'll stop along the banks of the River Shannon to relax and have lunch. Then sit back and enjoy a scenic drive as we return to Dublin and your last night on the Emerald Isle. Enjoy a meal in one of the many fine restaurants, walk the busy streets, savor your final hours, and enjoy a lifetime of memories.

Slan Beo!! Irish for "Goodbye, live life!"

Day 7 Highlights: Knocknarea Hill, Carrowkeel Ancient Burial Tombs, Dublin

While it is our intention to adhere to the route described above, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion, it may be necessary, or desirable, to make alterations. The information in the itinerary has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However, it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Inroads Ireland.

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