

Ireland in Depth

May 2 - 14, 2009



4/15/09

Days 1 - May 2, 2009 - Saturday - Depart for Galway

- **The Trip over: depart from the U.S. for Galway**

Depart from the U.S. today at 12:55 PM on your flight to Galway, arriving on Day 2.

Day 2 - May 3, 2009 - Sunday - Arrive in Galway

- **Explore Galway on your own**

Arrive in Galway today at 12:15 PM. a Grand Circle representative will meet you at the airport and escort you to your hotel, where you'll meet your Program Director.

Galway is a bustling young city with a lively nightlife.

After your arrival your Program Director will provide suggestions on how to maximize your day and explore on your own.

Tonight, get to know your fellow travelers over a Welcome Drink followed by a Welcome Briefing. Then sit down for your first dinner together at your hotel.

Included Meal: Dinner

Day 3 - May 4, 2009 - Monday - Galway

- **Connemara & Kylemore Abbey**

Join us this morning for a journey through the Connemara region of Galway. Once home to over 2 million Irish, it still retains its regional heritage as you will discover while we ramble around its lakes, mountains and bog lands. We begin our day with a boat ride on Lough Corrib, Ireland's premier fishing lake. We'll visit the former gothic mansion of Mitchell Henry, now the home of Benedictine nuns and better known as Kylemore Abbey. After an included lunch you'll have time to wander both the mansion and the Victorian gardens. On your return we'll travel through the Inagh Valley to the coast, where we'll see the deserted village of Clough Na Mara and discover a sense of hardship the Irish experienced in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, only the shells of their house remain - set amidst hundreds of miles of stone walls. The price of this optional tour is approximately \$95 per person.

OR

Spend the day at leisure, exploring Galway on your own.

The city's compact center spans both sides of the River Corrib. In the center of Eyre Square stands the Quincentennial Fountain, constructed in 1984 to mark the 500th anniversary of the Royal Charter granted by King Richard III that created Galway as an independent city-state.

Nearby are some of the oldest streets in Galway, narrow winding lanes that curve in and around old wooden buildings, often meandering off toward the Corrib and the docks. Yet turn a corner and you will find modern Galway — certainly one of the liveliest cities in Europe. Artists and musicians crowd the sidewalks and almost every pub seems to offer live music.

There is a local bus stop located just outside the gates of the hotel.

Evening: This evening, enjoy dinner on your own.

Included Meal: Breakfast, lunch with Optional Tour

Accommodations: Courtyard by Marriott

Optional Tours: Connemara & Kylemore Abbey with Lunch

Day 4 - May 5, 2009 - Tuesday - Galway

• Local ways of living in Galway

This morning your PD will introduce you to the local ways of living in Galway on a short walk through the city. You have the remainder of the day at leisure to explore Galway on your own. This enchanting city is an amalgamation of narrow lanes, wood and stone shop fronts, and bustling restaurants and pubs. Originally presided over by the local O'Flahertys, Galway was taken over by Anglo-Normans and became a thriving center of trade and commerce by the 14th century. European galleons were a regular sight in the city, which was even "home" to the Spanish Armada during its western voyages. Galway declined after being damaged in battle with the forces of Oliver Cromwell in the mid-17th century, but regained its prosperity and vitality in modern times. Today Galway remains a merchant town, but it is also a burgeoning center for technology and a lively bohemian mecca.

Evening:

Enjoy a typical Irish Ceili, which is the celebration of the harvest and usually includes a hearty meal followed by song, stories and dance. Tonight you'll join The Byrne family as they explain this traditional Irish celebration. Feel free to join in song and dance with us as we watch the sun go down on Galway Bay. Your optional tour includes a three-course dinner with entertainment. The cost of this optional tour has is approximately \$95 per person.

OR

Tonight dinner is on your own.

Included Meal: Breakfast, Dinner with Optional Tour

Accommodations: Courtyard by Marriott

Included Tours: Galway

Optional Tours: Dinner & Ceili

Day 5 - May 6, 2009 - Wednesday - Moher

• Moher

This morning, you depart Galway for Killarney after a hearty breakfast. On the way, discover the intense natural beauty of Eire on an included excursion to The Burren and the Cliffs of Moher. The Burren's name is derived from a Gaelic word meaning "stony place," and it is like no other place in Ireland. Instead of peat bogs and pastures, you'll find a surreal moonscape full of huge limestone crags.

Despite this seemingly inhospitable setting, a diverse array of plant life—including wild orchids and rock rose—thrives here. Alpine plants nestle in crevices beside temperate species. The white, deeply crevassed limestone conceals "micro-environments" rich in potholes and hollows. The ample rainfall and strange topography have resulted in a paradoxical profusion of arctic and semi-tropical vegetation growing side by side.

The majestic Cliffs of Moher are precipitous rock formations—towering nearly 750 feet above the crashing ocean surf at their highest point—that offer breathtaking panoramic views of Ireland's Atlantic coast. These magnificent cliffs, provide nesting sites for tens of thousands of seabirds. If the wind is strong the sea foam and spray flies up and over the cliffs along with the rain, while on clear sunny days fantastic views can be seen from every angle.

Over the centuries, people have also made their mark, with towers, quarries, and well-worn paths, but they're almost lost in the scale and grandeur of the sea cliffs. One that does stand out is O'Brien's Tower, a huge structure built to house the guests of Cornelius O'Brien, County Clare's legendary Member of Parliament from the 1830s until he died in 1857.

You continue on to Killarney to spend the next three nights. This market town is known for its verdant, rolling hills and glittering loughs (lakes). You'll enjoy a brief panoramic tour of the town before arriving at your hotel.

Evening:

Dine with your fellow travelers at your hotel this evening. Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodations: Killarney Towers

Meals: 1B, 1D

Included Tours: Burren & Cliffs of Moher

Day 6 - May 7, 2009 - Thursday - Ring of Kerry

• Ring of Kerry

All Day:

You'll enjoy a shopping opportunity this morning as we stop at a local woolen mill at the Gap of Dunloe.

On this morning's included tour, you'll discover the Ring of Kerry, a 110-mile route that traces the coastline of the Iveragh Peninsula and offers breathtaking views. There is always something new to appreciate in the combination of ocean, islands, mountains, light, and ever-changing weather patterns. We ride most of the way, making scenic stops.

The first town along the route is Killorglin, where an elegant eight-arched bridge crosses the River Laune. Further on, the road descends from high above the bay to the water's edge at Kells, an attractive fishing village with panoramic viewing points.

We will stop for an included lunch at the famous Huntsman restaurant in Waterville where we will enjoy breathtaking views of the broad Atlantic.

The next stretch is one of the highlights of the Ring, with outstanding views of the Blasket Islands and the Dingle Peninsula. On the return to Killarney, the route takes you through Moll's Gap and Ladies View, named after Queen Victoria's ladies-in-waiting. The vistas of lakes and mountains remain magnificent today. We'll continue on and return to Killarney where we'll arrive in the late afternoon.

Evening:

Dinner tonight is on your own.

OR

Join us for an optional performance of Siamsa Tíre—the National Folk Theatre of Ireland, and the country's only repertory company. Using the disciplines of traditional Irish music, dance, storytelling and mime, Siamsa Tíre offers a cultural experience dramatizing the essence of Irish culture. A siamsa show presents the myths, legends, lore, language, folkways and folk life of a bygone era. The cost of this optional performance is approximately \$80 per person.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Killarney Towers

Included Tours: Ring of Kerry

Optional Tours: Siamsa Tíre Performance

DISCOVERY HIGHLIGHTS Ring of Kerry

Day 7 - May 8, 2009 - Friday - Dingle Peninsula

• Dingle Peninsula

All Day:

Join us today as we venture out along the Dingle Peninsula. You'll stop first at Tralee's Kerry the Kingdom Museum where you'll enjoy the fascinating experience of a recreated medieval village. Then follow the rugged Dingle Peninsula with its wild mountains and some of the most spectacular coastline Ireland has to display. You'll view the famed Blasket Islands, the most westerly point of Europe, and their pre historic ring forts and Beehive huts. One of Ireland's largest Irish speaking areas, the peninsula it has attracted many writers and artists for the inspiration the wild landscape offers. The movies Ryan 's Daughter and Far and Away were made here. We will stop in the fishing town of Dingle, to enjoy locally caught fish (and chips) for lunch. The cost of this optional tour is approximately \$95 per person.

OR

Your day is at leisure to pursue your own interests.

Included Meal: Breakfast

Accommodations: Killarney Towers

Optional Tours: The Dingle Experience

Day 8 - May 9, 2009 - Saturday - Blarney Castle

• Blarney Castle

Morning:

After breakfast, we will stop at a working sheep farm and see Ireland's finest Border Collies in action at a sheep dog demonstration. (Please Note: this is an outdoor event and is weather dependent. It will not be conducted in wet, muddy conditions.)

Afternoon:

Next, you'll transfer to Cork, stopping for a visit to Blarney Castle, where a 129-step staircase leads up a tower to the famed Blarney Stone. According to legend, anyone who manages the backward lean to kiss it receives the "gift of the gab" — a smooth, soothing way with words that at best mean nothing.

The word "Blarney" was coined by Elizabeth I to describe her endless and fruitless discussions with Dermot McCarthy over his surrender of the castle to the Crown. The McCarthys built the present castle with its 85-foot-high keep in 1446, replacing an earlier castle. Though the Blarney Stone gets all the publicity, the castle's tower house and surrounding gardens are superb in their own right. The castle's grounds also include caves, dungeons, and a rock garden of ancient trees and weathered stones.

Continue on to historic Cork, Ireland's second-largest city. A walk through this island city takes you into the famous "English Market" noted for its wide selection of Irish fresh produce. Discover the rebel city of Cork through its many medieval lanes and back streets. Your hotel is centrally located within the commercial district of Cork city. It is an early 19th century historical building with comfortable compact rooms. The hotel has links to many famous events and people in Irish history.

Evening:

This evening you'll enjoy dinner at your hotel with your fellow travelers.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodations: Imperial Hotel Cork

DISCOVERY SERIES EVENTS: Sheepdog Demonstration

Included Tours: Blarney Castle Visit

Day 9 - May 10, 2009 - Sunday - Cobh (pronounced "Cove")

• Cobh (pronounced "cove")

Morning:

This morning, ride to Cobh (pronounced "cove"). This picturesque town long served as the main harbor for the city of Cork, and is dominated by the spire of St. Colman's Cathedral, which contains the largest carillon in Ireland. This morning a local historian will give you some insight into Cobh's history of as a point of emigration to America for over two and a half million people.

Cobh was a major emigration point for families who left the country during the Great Potato Famine, when some two-and-a-half million emigrants departed this port for North America. Here you'll discover the story of Irish emigration and the era of the great ocean liners, when Cobh was a very active port. This was the last place that the Titanic docked before heading across the Atlantic on her tragic journey.

Here you can also pay tribute to the victims of the Lusitania at a quayside memorial. In 1915 this ship was sunk off the coast of Cobh by a German submarine, with a loss of 1196 passengers, including 127 Americans. This action helped bring America into World War I. Then, enjoy a short, leisurely walk around Cobh accompanied by our local historian. You'll have some free time afterward for your own explorations.

Afternoon:

Learn about contemporary life in Ireland and savor a traditional meal during a Home-Hosted Lunch with a local family.

Evening:

In the late afternoon, return to Cork and enjoy dinner on your own.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Imperial Hotel Cork

DISCOVERY SERIES EVENTS: Home-Hosted Lunch in Cobh

Included Tours: Cobh

Day 10 - May 11, 2009 - Monday - Waterford

• Waterford

Morning/Early Afternoon:

This morning you'll transfer from Cork via the coast road to the historic port city of Waterford—renowned for its exquisite crystal craftsmanship—via the Coast Route. Vikings settled in Waterford in the eighth century and bestowed the name "Vadrafjord," while proceeding to exact tribute from the native Celtic tribes of the area for over 200 years. Anglo-Normans brought English rule in the 12th century, and under King John, Waterford became Ireland's most prominent city.

Late Afternoon/Evening:

Arrive in Waterford in the early afternoon. Today you'll enjoy a visit to the Waterford Crystal Visitor Centre, with time for shopping and lunch at your leisure. Fine cut glass was first manufactured here from 1783 to 1851, but then production ceased when the British government, which ruled all of Ireland at that time, imposed heavy taxes. The business was revived in 1947, and now employs many artisans who take up to ten years to learn the crafts of glass blowing, cutting, and engraving.

Later, enjoy free time to make your own discoveries. You can stroll The Mall, a broad 18th-century street leading into town from the waterfront, past City Hall and Ireland's finest 18th-century Theatre. The neo-classical Christ Church Cathedral is nearby. The city's shopping district is just a few blocks away, along John, Michael, Broad, and Barronstrand Streets. Or, you can stroll out to see Reginald's Tower, a stone tower built by the Normans in the early 13th century on the site of an even older Viking tower. It is Ireland's oldest civic building. The Half Moon Tower and Beach Tower are other remnants of medieval fortifications.

Tonight, join your fellow travelers for dinner at your hotel.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodations: Fitzwilton Hotel

Included Tours: Waterford Crystal Center

Day 11 - May 12, 2009 - Tuesday - Waterford

• Waterford

All Day:

You'll have a day at leisure to investigate Waterford on your own. OR

Join an optional Waterford tour and journey through the years of Irish history with a visit to the Irish National Heritage Park. As you explore its 35 acres of heritage trail you'll experience a recreation of Ireland's 9000-year heritage. Homesteads, ritual sites, historical artifacts and even ancient breed animals—still roaming the farmlands—illuminate the origins of today's Ireland. After lunch, you'll travel to the Dunbrody Famine Ship. Used mainly to carry bulk cargo from the Americas, this ship was fitted out to carry desperate passengers outbound to Canada and the U.S. The cost of this tour is about \$95.

Included Meal: Breakfast

Accommodations: Fitzwilton Hotel

Optional Tours: Waterford

Day 12 - May 13, 2009 - Wednesday - Dublin

• Dublin

Morning:

This morning we leave Waterford for Dublin. Along the way we travel through Carlow and Kildare and arrive in the late morning.

Afternoon:

This afternoon, get to know Dublin on an included city tour. You'll stop by Trinity College (officially the University of Dublin), which was established by Queen Elizabeth I in 1592. Here you'll view the famous Book of Kells, an elaborate illuminated manuscript of the Four Gospels. Created by the monks of St. Columba on the Isle of Iona around 800 A.D., the book contains lavishly illustrated transcriptions of the four Gospels. This is one of the oldest surviving books in the world, and the quality of its artwork is the epitome of medieval craftsmanship and devotion.

Afternoon & Evening:

You have the afternoon free for relaxation or personal exploration. This evening, enjoy a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodations: Camden Court Hotel

Included Tours: Dublin

Day 13 - May 14, 2009 - Thursday - Depart for the U.S.

• We Leave For Home

After breakfast, depart for the airport to catch your flight at 11:50 AM back to the U.S.. Arrive in Kansas City at 7:56 PM

Included Meals: Breakfast