



Ireland in Depth 2019

15-Day Grand Circle Tour

EXTEND YOUR TRIP

PRE-TRIP

Northern Ireland

POST-TRIP

Glasgow, Scotland

Your Day-to-Day Itinerary

GRAND CIRCLE TRAVEL

Grand Circle Travel, founded in 1958 to serve the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP), is the leader in international travel and discovery for Americans over age 50. Grand Circle vacations have been recommended by *The New York Times*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Travel + Leisure*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel*, and others. But our most impressive reviews come from our travelers. More than two million people have traveled with us, and the overwhelming majority say they'd gladly do so again.

YOUR GRAND CIRCLE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

During your Grand Circle vacation, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from an on-site local Grand Circle Travel Program Director throughout your trip. He or she is fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. You will also be supported along the way by local tour guides, who lead you expertly through particular sites and cities.

Many Program Directors are graduates of professional education programs for travel guides. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle, based on what we've learned from past travelers about how to make the trip most enjoyable. Your Program Director offers both a deep knowledge of the region and a commitment to make this a very pleasant, informative, and rewarding travel experience for you.

He or she will provide sightseeing trips, handle all travel details, reserve optional tours you choose to take, oversee your Discovery Series events, and provide any other assistance you may need.

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Choose to **purchase Grand Circle's airfare**, and your airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges are included. Or, make your own air arrangements
- » **Accommodations** for 13 nights in comfortable rooms with private baths
- » **22 meals:** 13 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 6 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch)
- » **16 included features:** 12 guided tours and 4 exclusive Discovery Series events: Hurling demonstration · Home-Hosted Lunch · Irish history & culture discussion · Sheep farm experience
- » Exclusive services of a local **Grand Circle Program Director** (assigned to no more than 42 travelers)
- » **Gratuities** on your main trip for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » **Personal headset** for all included and optional tours on your main trip
- » Private motorcoach land travel
- » Baggage handling for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- » **5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next trip—an average of \$263**

WHAT THIS TRIP IS LIKE

GROUP SIZE

- » A maximum of 42 travelers, led by a local Grand Circle Program Director

PACING

- » 5 locations in 14 days

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- » Walk 2 miles unassisted and participate in 1.5-2.5 hours of physical activities daily, including stairs
- » Agility, balance, and stair-climbing are required to kiss the Blarney Stone
- » Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- » Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them
- » We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- » Uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones
- » Travel by 45-seat motorcoach, jaunting car (horse-drawn carriage), ferry, and boat

CLIMATE

- » Daytime temperatures range from 48-67°F during touring season
- » June-August are the warmest months
- » Weather in Ireland can be unpredictable and change quickly
- » Rain is common and should be expected

Ireland in Depth

2019

As you travel through Ireland, delve deeply into a land rich in history, legend, stirring music, and verdant landscapes. Begin your journey in Dublin, Ireland's cosmopolitan capital, before continuing on to the historic city of Kilkenny. From there, you're off to Cork and its nearby seaport of Cobh, from which thousands of Irish emigrated during the Potato Famine. You'll also visit Killarney and the 110-mile Ring of Kerry, boasting some of Ireland's most astonishing scenery, before exploring the eerie landscape of the Burren and the captivating Cliffs of Moher. Finally, end your Ireland guided tour in lovely Galway, where there's a tune playing around every corner. This Ireland tour is an in-depth discovery of the Emerald Isle—its lore, its lands, and above all, the gregarious charm of its people. **NEW for 2019:** Enhance your journey with an **extra night in Dublin**, for more discoveries in the city, and gentler pacing at the start of your trip.

EXTEND YOUR TRIP

Northern Ireland

5 NIGHTS PRE-TRIP

Northern Ireland beckons with rich history and natural beauty. In a truly timeless extension, you'll gaze in wonder at the curious rock formation of the Giant's Causeway and bow your head in a rustic churchyard, pausing along the way to stroll the cobbled streets of Londonderry. You'll also tour historic Drogheda, the site of the Battle of the Boyne, and more.

Glasgow, Scotland

5 NIGHTS POST-TRIP

Experience the warmth and charm of Glasgow, Scotland's largest city. Study its contrast of modernist chic and old-fashioned Victorian elegance, and expand your Scottish discoveries with day trips to peaceful Loch Lomond, the largest lake in all of Great Britain, and the birthplace of Robert Burns, one of Scotland's national heroes.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart from the U.S. today and travel to Ireland, arriving on Day 2. Please refer to your individual air itinerary for exact departure and arrival times.

Day 2 Dublin, Ireland

- Accommodations: Clayton Hotel Cardiff Lane or similar

Arrive in Dublin today and begin your Ireland tour. A Grand Circle representative will meet you at the airport and escort you to your hotel, where you'll meet your Program Director and your fellow travelers, including those returning from their *Northern Ireland* pre-trip extension. After your arrival, your Program Director will take you for a vicinity walk to explore the area around your hotel, and 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. The rest of the evening is yours to spend as you please, with dinner on your own.

Please note: Your Program Director may be traveling on the Northern Ireland pre-trip extension, in which case you will be assisted by a Grand Circle hotel representative until your Program Director arrives with the rest of your group.

Day 3 Dublin

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Clayton Hotel Cardiff Lane or similar

After breakfast today, you'll begin your discoveries of Dublin, Ireland's political and cultural center. Dublin is amazingly rich in

literary history—Yeats, Shaw, Beckett, Joyce and other literary immortals have walked its streets—and its architecture and museum collections are second to none.

Begin your discoveries with a guided panoramic tour of the city's sights, which will include a stop at Trinity College to view the ancient *Book of Kells*. Believed to have been crafted in AD 800, the *Book of Kells* is a stunningly illustrated collection of the four Gospels of the New Testament.

After your tour, you'll have the afternoon to spend in Dublin as you please, and enjoy lunch on your own. Your Program Director will be happy to give you suggestions on how to make the most of your time in the city.

This evening, join your fellow travelers for an included Welcome Dinner at your hotel.

Day 4 Dublin • Guinness Storehouse • Optional *Traditional Irish Night*

- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Clayton Hotel Cardiff Lane or similar

This morning, learn about the history of Ireland's famous brew during a tour of the Guinness Storehouse, a seven-story museum located in a former brewing factory inside the St. James's Gate Brewery. You'll also have a chance to observe the technique behind pouring a perfect glass of "the black stuff" during a pint-pulling demonstration, and enjoy a glass on the house at the Storehouse's Gravity Bar at the top level, which features 360-degree panoramic views of Dublin.

After your tour, the rest of the day is yours to spend discovering Dublin at your own pace, with lunch and dinner on your own. Perhaps

you'll wander to St. Stephen's Green, a 22-acre public park designed in the Georgian era. Its history is as rich as its landscaping. Among many points of interest, a memorial garden to W. B. Yeats features a Henry Moore sculpture. Or maybe you'll visit the National Library of Ireland, whose collection includes manuscripts spanning a thousand years. The library regularly exhibits selections from its archive of historic and modern Irish photographs, prints, and drawings. You could also choose to follow the enlightening route walked by Leopold Bloom in Joyce's *Ulysses*, including Eccles Street and Bachelor's Walk.

This evening, you may choose to join us for an optional *Traditional Irish Night*, featuring a hearty three-course meal accompanied by lively tunes from local musicians. Feel free to raise your voice and join in the chorus as the merriment takes you away into the evening.

Day 5 Dublin • Glendalough • Avoca Handweavers • Kilkenny

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Pembroke Hotel or similar

This morning, depart for Kilkenny, stopping along the way at Glendalough, where you'll tour the ruins of the monastery, founded in the sixth century by St. Kevin. Among the monks' great achievements was manuscript writing and copying, including the creation of the spectacular *Book of Glendalough* around 1131. Now at the Bodleian Library at Oxford, the book—containing historical chronicles, genealogies, and religious poems—is one of the most important and beautiful Irish manuscripts from the pre-Norman period.

Then, continue on to the river town of Avoca, made famous by the Avoca Handweavers. This clothing manufacturer is Ireland's oldest line of business, active since the early 1700s. Here,

you'll meet with some of the handweavers when you visit Avoca's mill, which happens to be the oldest of its class in all of Ireland.

You'll then have time to enjoy lunch on your own before traveling on to Kilkenny, where you'll arrive later today and check into your hotel before an included dinner with your fellow travelers.

Day 6 Kilkenny • Hurling demonstration

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Pembroke Hotel or similar

This morning, partake in an exclusive Discovery Series event as you learn about hurling, an energetic and uniquely Irish sport, similar to field hockey or lacrosse, with traditional Gaelic roots. The Irish have been playing the game since the Celts invented it 2,000 years ago, and take an immense amount of pride in the game. You'll learn all about the game as a former player demonstrates his skillful moves, and you'll watch as an expert craftsman masterfully transforms a plank of ash into a hurley (the stick used to play the game) in his workshop.

Then, explore Kilkenny, a medieval city straddling the banks of the River Nore, on an included walking tour with your Program Director. Your tour will take you to the sprawling gardens of Kilkenny Castle, an 800-year-old stronghold that lords over the city center. Though originally designed to defend a crossing over the River Nore, the castle's grounds today provide a peaceful place for locals and visitors alike to stroll about and admire the impressive artisanal floristry on display.

Your tour concludes with an included lunch. The rest of the day is yours to spend at leisure. Dinner is on your own tonight.

Day 7 Kilkenny • Waterford Crystal factory • Cahir Castle • Cork

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Maldron Hotel South Mall or similar

Travel from Kilkenny to the city of Cork today, stopping en route to visit Waterford and Cahir Castle.

In Waterford, you'll tour the Waterford Crystal factory, prized the world over as the standard for the highest quality lead-cut crystal. Founded in 1783 by George and William Penrose, the Waterford branch of the company is now part of a worldwide operation that includes such notable brands as Wedgwood and Royal Doulton. You'll learn about the organization's history, and witness a glassblowing demonstration before free time to explore further or shop their fine products.

Then depart for Cahir, where you'll have time for an independent lunch upon arrival, followed by a tour of Cahir Castle. In its time (13th–15th centuries), Cahir Castle featured a state-of-the-art defensive design, and is now one of Ireland's best-preserved castles. Situated on a rocky island in the River Suir, the castle still boasts its keep, tower, and much of its original structure. The last Lord Cahir died in 1961, at which point the castle came into state stewardship.

Arrive in Cork late this afternoon, where, after checking in to your hotel, you may choose to relax, explore independently, or join an optional orientation tour around the city with your Program Director. Dinner is included tonight.

Day 8 Cork • Cobh • Home-Hosted Lunch

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Maldron Hotel South Mall or similar

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. A local historian will give you some insight into Cobh's history during an included tour this morning.

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 the RMS *Titanic* dropped anchor before heading across the Atlantic on her tragic journey in 1912.

Here you can also pay tribute to the victims of the RMS *Lusitania* at a quayside memorial. In 1915, this ship was sunk by a German submarine off the coast of Cobh, with a loss of 1,196 passengers, including 127 Americans. This action helped bring America into World War I.

After your tour, you'll have some time at leisure, followed by an opportunity to learn about contemporary life in Ireland—and savor a traditional meal—during a Home-Hosted Lunch in a local home.

In the late afternoon, return to Cork, where the rest of the day is yours to explore independently.

Day 9 Cork • Blarney Castle • Sheep farm experience • Irish history & culture discussion • Killarney

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Killarney Towers or similar

After breakfast this morning, bid Cork farewell and begin your transfer to Killarney.

On the way, stop 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.

After your tour, you’ll set off for an exclusive Discovery Series event at a working sheep farm, where you’ll chat with the owner about rural life, and get a chance to see Ireland’s finest border collies in action. **Please note:** *This is an outdoor event and is weather-dependent. It will not be conducted in wet, muddy conditions.*

Then, continue your transfer to Killarney, arriving in the afternoon in time for an independent lunch. This evening, enjoy an exclusive Discovery Series discussion with a local resident on rural Irish life and growing up on a small farm in the 1950s. Dinner is included at your hotel tonight.

Day 10 Killarney • Optional Dingle Experience tour

- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Killarney Towers or similar

Your day is at leisure to pursue your own interests.

Or, join us on an optional tour as we venture out along the Dingle Peninsula. You’ll stop first at Tralee’s Kerry County Museum, where you’ll enjoy the fascinating experience of a recreated medieval street. Then follow the rugged Dingle Peninsula with its wild mountains and some of the most spectacular coastline Ireland has to display. On a clear day, you can see the famed Blasket Islands, rising like jewels from the Atlantic Ocean. One of Ireland’s largest Irish-speaking areas, the peninsula has attracted many writers and artists for the inspiration the wild landscape offers. The movies *Ryan’s Daughter* and *Far and Away* were filmed here, as well as scenes from *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*. We will stop in the fishing town of Dingle to enjoy locally caught fish (and chips) for lunch, included with the cost of the optional tour.

Day 11 Killarney • Ring of Kerry • Optional National Folk Theatre performance

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Killarney Towers or similar

On this morning’s included tour, you’ll discover the Ring of Kerry, a drive 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. Then you'll advance to the water's edge at Kells, an attractive fishing village with panoramic viewing points.

The next stretch is one of the highlights of the Ring, with outstanding views of the coastline. On the return to Killarney, the route takes you through the picturesque village of Sneem, where you'll have an included lunch, and Ladies View, named after Queen Victoria's ladies-in-waiting. The vistas of lakes and mountains remain magnificent today.

Upon returning to Killarney, you'll have the rest of the day at leisure to explore independently, and dinner is on your own. Perhaps you'll choose to ride on a jaunting car (a traditional Irish horse-drawn carriage) for a tour of the lush forested environs of Killarney National Park.

Or, join us for an optional performance by the National Folk Theatre, the country's only repertory company, with an included three-course dinner. Using traditional Irish disciplines, the group offers a cultural experience dramatizing the essence of Irish culture. **Please note:** *This optional tour is available on late May-early September departures only.*

Day 12 Killarney • Cliffs of Moher & the Burren • Galway

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: The Galmont Hotel or similar

After breakfast, bid farewell to Killarney and begin your transfer to Galway, stopping along the way to discover a few more treasures of the Emerald Isle.

First, ferry across the River Shannon and drive along the coast of County Clare to visit the majestic Cliffs of Moher. These precipitous rock formations—towering more than 700 feet above the crashing ocean surf at their highest point—offer breathtaking panoramic views of Ireland's Atlantic coast, and 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.

Then travel along a scenic coastal road to discover another natural Irish wonder, the Burren. Its 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.

Finally, you'll arrive in Galway later today, where, after checking into your hotel, you may choose to join your Program Director on

an optional orientation walk and sightseeing tour around the city. This evening, join your fellow travelers for an included dinner.

Day 13 Galway • Optional Connemara & Kylemore Abbey tour

- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: The Galmont Hotel or similar

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.

Or, join us for an optional journey through the Connemara region of Galway. Once home to more than two million Irish, it still retains its regional heritage, as you will discover while we ramble around its lakes, mountains, and bogs. We'll visit the former Gothic mansion of Mitchell Henry, now the home of Benedictine nuns and better known as Kylemore Abbey. You'll have time to wander both the mansion and the Victorian gardens. Then cruise Killary, a charming fjord. You'll enjoy lunch while cruising. 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 homes remain—set amidst hundreds of miles of stone walls.

Dinner is on your own this evening.

Day 14 Galway

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: The Galmont Hotel or similar

This morning, your Program Director will introduce you to Galway on a walking tour through the city. You have the remainder of the day at leisure to explore Galway on your own. This enchanting city is a medley 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.

Your tour will also take you to Galway bay, which once was regularly "home" to Spanish galleons during their 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.

This evening, gather with your Program Director and fellow travelers at your hotel for an included Farewell Dinner.

Day 15 Galway • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight home. Or cross the sea to join our NEW optional post-trip extension in *Glasgow, Scotland*.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Program Director. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: *Optional tour prices include gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers, are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication, and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

Traditional Irish Night

(Day 4 \$105 per person)

Enjoy a night of *craic* (a ubiquitous Irish word with no real English equivalent, loosely translated to “having a good time”) at a local restaurant as you savor a hearty three-course dinner, followed by an evening of lively entertainment. A group of local musicians takes the stage after dinner to play some traditional Irish music into the night.

Dingle Experience

(Day 10 \$95 per person)

Venture out along the Dingle Peninsula, stopping at Tralee’s Kerry County Museum, where you’ll experience a re-created medieval village. Then follow the rugged peninsula with its wild mountains and some of Ireland’s most spectacular coastline. One of Ireland’s largest Irish-speaking areas, the wild landscapes continue to inspire writers and artists. We’ll stop in the fishing port of Dingle, to enjoy locally caught fish (and chips) for lunch.

National Folk Theatre performance

(Day 11 \$95 per person)

Enjoy a performance of *Siamsa Tíre*—the National Folk Theatre of Ireland, and the country’s only repertory company. Using traditional disciplines, *Siamsa Tíre* offers a cultural experience dramatizing the essence of Irish culture. You’ll also enjoy a three-course dinner before the show.

Please note: *This optional tour is available on late May–early September departures only.*

Connemara & Kylemore Abbey

(Day 13 \$95 per person)

Once home to more than two million Irish residents, Connemara retains its regional heritage, as you will discover while rambling around its lakes, mountains, and bogs. Visit the former Gothic mansion of Mitchell Henry, now the home of Benedictine nuns and better known as Kylemore Abbey. You will have time to wander both the mansion and the Victorian gardens. Then cruise Killary Harbor, a charming fjord-like inlet. You will enjoy lunch while cruising. Lastly, you’ll see the deserted

village of Clough Na Mara, where only shells of 18th- and 19th-century houses remain—set amid hundreds of miles of stone walls.

PRE-TRIP

Northern Ireland

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » **Accommodations** for 5 nights
- » **6 meals:** 5 breakfasts and 1 dinner
- » **7 included tours:** Belfast, Giant's Causeway, Londonderry, Ulster American Folk Park, Monasterboice, Drogheda, Battle of the Boyne site
- » Exclusive services of a local Grand Circle Program Director
- » **Gratuities** on this extension for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Northern Ireland beckons with rich history and natural beauty. In a truly timeless extension, you'll gaze in wonder at the curious rock formation of the Giant's Causeway and bow your head in a rustic churchyard, pausing along the way to stroll the cobbled streets of Londonderry. You'll also tour historic Drogheda, the site of the Battle of the Boyne, and more.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart from the U.S. today on your flight to Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Day 2 Belfast, Northern Ireland

- Accommodations: Europa Belfast or similar

Arrive this morning in Belfast. You'll be met at the airport by a Grand Circle representative who will assist you with the transfer to your hotel. Belfast is a robust northern metropolis of nearly half a million people. This is a scenic city, situated between the waters of Belfast Lough, the Belfast Hills, and the forested slopes of Cave Hill. Belfast was the catalyst of the industrial revolution in Ulster, and specialized in the development of industries like linen, rope-making, and shipbuilding, with the world's largest dry dock. The city's

Victorian heritage can be seen in the stately buildings of this area and at Belfast's Grand Opera House.

This afternoon, get acquainted with the area around your hotel on an orientation walk. The balance of the day is free for you to relax after your overseas flight. Gather in the late afternoon with your fellow travelers for a Welcome Drink and briefing from your Program Director. Then enjoy an evening at leisure, and dinner on your own.

Day 3 Belfast

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Europa Belfast or similar

On a panoramic city tour this morning, you'll see Belfast's compact center in Donegall Square, which is dominated by the elaborate City Hall. We will drive through West Belfast's Protestant neighborhood of Shankill Road,

and the Catholic neighborhood of Falls Road, where large, vivid murals painted on the sides of buildings express the feelings that still run deep on both sides. Though the names of these areas were much in the news during “the Troubles,” the gate in the Peace Wall between them now stands open.

Spend the remainder of the day exploring Belfast on your own. The city’s main shopping district is just north of Donegall Square along several pedestrian-only streets. Belfast’s most famous historic pub, the Crown Liquor Saloon, is also in this area (it’s always packed, but worth a look for its gaslit Victorian architecture even if you can’t get a seat).

Or you might head for Belfast’s Golden Mile neighborhood or the beautiful Botanic Gardens, with the campus of Queen’s University nearby.

This evening, join your fellow travelers at your hotel for an included Welcome Dinner.

Day 4 Belfast • Derry

- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: City Hotel Derry or similar

Today, we travel from Belfast to Londonderry, or simply Derry as the locals refer to it. On the way, we’ll stop to view the Giant’s Causeway, an amazing geological formation of approximately 40,000 basalt stones—some as tall as 130 feet, and mostly hexagonal in shape.

As Northern Ireland’s premiere landmark, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, you’ll be free to decide for yourself whether the Causeway is a result of accelerated cooling of lava outflows 60 million years ago. Or is it the work of the legendary Irish giant, Finn MacCool, in his

attempts to a) woo a distant lady giant, or b) meet a Scottish giant in battle to determine who was the stronger giant?

You’ll arrive in Derry in the afternoon, where you’ll set off on a guided walk atop the city’s walls, which have stood around the city since the 17th century.

The remainder of the day is yours to spend at leisure. Dinner will be on your own this evening.

Day 5 Derry • Optional Inishowen Peninsula tour

- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: City Hotel Derry or similar

Today is yours to spend in Derry at leisure. You might visit the Tower Museum, with exhibits illustrating the maritime history of Derry, or the Guildhall built in 1890 and in the Gothic architectural style, similar to its London counterpart. Today, it’s the seat of the local government.

Or, join an optional full-day excursion to the Inishowen Peninsula, a peaceful place of pastoral solitude jutting out into the Atlantic on Ireland’s northern edge. First, you’ll visit the Monreagh Heritage Centre, a small museum whose artifacts and exhibits tell the story of the Ulster Scots, who migrated from Great Britain during the Plantation of Ulster in the 17th century.

Next, discover the Grianan of Aileach, an Iron Age stone ring fort resting atop a high hill. You’ll learn about the origins of the structure, which dates back to 1700 BC, and admire the views from the hilltop vantage.

Then you’ll travel to Fort Dunree, where you’ll enjoy lunch—included in the cost of your optional tour—before touring the

coastal fortification. Situated on top of a cliff, Fort Dunree has protected Lough Swilly (a glacial fjord leading to the Atlantic) from invaders over the centuries. The fort boasts one of Ireland's largest collections of coastal artillery, as well as breathtaking panoramic views over the water.

Return to your hotel in Derry later this afternoon, where the rest of the day is yours to do as you please. Lunch and dinner are on your own today.

Day 6 Derry • Ulster American Folk Park • Monasterboice • Drogheda

- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: The d Hotel or similar

After breakfast today, set out to discover the Ulster American Folk Park on an included, self-guided tour. This fascinating facility tells the story of emigration from Ulster to America in the 18th and 19th centuries and provides visitors with a “living history” experience on its outdoor site. In the Folk Park, costumed guides and craftspeople recreate the past in an outdoor museum that includes a weaver's cottage, forge, schoolhouse, log cabin, church, and a 19th-century Ulster street. The Ship and Dockside Gallery features a full-size reconstruction of an early 19th-century sailing ship of the type that carried thousands of emigrants across the Atlantic. A major indoor exhibition, “Emigrants,” complements the outdoor site.

Following your tour, head south to Drogheda, your next destination, stopping on the way for a visit to Monasterboice for an included tour. Monasterboice is an important Irish spiritual site dating back to the 5th century AD, founded by Saint Buithe, a disciple of Saint Patrick. The holy grounds were an important place of congregation for local Christians for more than 500 years.

As you tour the ruins of the monastic site, take note of its magnificent high crosses, carved with biblical images depicting scenes from both the Old and New Testaments. The crosses combine form and function—in addition to being beautiful works of art, they allowed contemporary worshippers who could not read to follow along with the Bible's stories.

Later today, you'll arrive at your hotel in Drogheda, where the rest of the day is at leisure. Dinner is on your own tonight.

Day 7 Drogheda • Battle of the Boyne site • Dublin

- Included Meals: Breakfast

After breakfast, set off on a walking tour of Drogheda. As you stroll the lanes of this old fortified town on the banks of the River Boyne, you'll learn about the triumphs and tragedies it experienced throughout history, including two devastating sieges in the 17th century—first at the hands of Oliver Cromwell during his Irish conquest in 1649, and then again in 1690 following the Battle of the Boyne, which you'll learn more about later today on another included tour.

Following your tour, you'll have some free time to spend in the city and seek an early lunch on your own.

This afternoon, travel to the battlefield where the historic Battle of the Boyne was fought. Here on the banks of the river, the forces of the Netherlands' William of Orange and England's James II did battle for the throne of England, Scotland, and Ireland, in a fierce melee which would see the Protestant William emerge the victor over the James' Catholic forces. You'll tour the battlefield and the visitor's center, learning more about

how the epic battle unfolded, and how its consequences affect the fate of Ireland to this day.

After your tour, you'll transfer to Dublin to begin your main *Ireland in Depth* tour.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Inishowen Peninsula

(Day 5 \$60 per person)

Tour the peaceful Inishowen Peninsula, starting at the Monreagh Heritage Centre, which tells the story of the Ulster Scots—Gaelic immigrants who came from Great Britain during the Plantation of Ulster in the 17th century. Then, explore the Grianan of Aileach, a hilltop stone ringfort whose origins trace back to the Iron Age. You'll tour the fort and admire the views from atop the high hill, before setting off for your next destination, Fort Dunree, where you'll enjoy an included lunch. Here, from a high cliff overlooking Lough Swilly, you'll tour one of Ireland's finest collection of coastal artillery, and take in the view of the sea below.

POST-TRIP

Glasgow, Scotland

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » **Accommodations** for 5 nights
- » **10 meals:** 5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 2 dinners
- » **3 included tours:** Glasgow, Loch Lomond, Robert Burns Museum
- » Exclusive services of a local Grand Circle Program Director
- » **Gratuities** for motorcoach drivers on your extension
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Experience the warmth and charm of Glasgow, Scotland's largest city. Study its contrast of modernist chic and old-fashioned Victorian elegance, and expand your Scottish discoveries with day trips to peaceful Loch Lomond, the largest lake in all of Great Britain, and the birthplace of Robert Burns, one of Scotland's national heroes.

Day 1 Galway, Ireland • Glasgow, Scotland

- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel Glasgow or similar

Fly to Glasgow today, arriving in the late afternoon. Check into your hotel and take a quick vicinity walk of your surroundings. Tonight get a taste of Glasgow's history—literally—during an included dinner at one of the city's oldest restaurants.

Day 2 Glasgow

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel Glasgow or similar

Tour Glasgow this morning, the largest city in Scotland. Glasgow's incredible collection of museums, theaters, and performance halls and seamless blend of Victorian and art nouveau architectural styles set the city apart

as one of the UK's most refined destinations. Its famously friendly people and wealth of welcoming parks ensure a hospitable atmosphere. You'll witness Glasgow's many highlights this morning on an included city tour with your Program Director, using a hop-on/hop-off bus service.

Enjoy a guided tour of historic Glasgow University, whose halls of learning have produced such luminaries over the centuries as Adam Smith and John Baird. On your tour, you'll admire the stunning Gothic architecture of the campus, including the renowned cloisters, an undercroft of fluted columns and soaring arches.

After your tour, you'll enjoy an included lunch and then have the remainder of the day free to explore Glasgow independently. Dinner is on your own tonight.

Day 3 Glasgow • Optional Edinburgh tour

- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel Glasgow or similar

Enjoy a full day to explore Glasgow at leisure. Perhaps you'll visit its Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum, a Victorian Cathedral featuring a stunning variety of exhibits, or stop into a tea shop to sample the locals' favorite drink.

Or, enjoy an optional tour of Edinburgh, Scotland's bustling capital. You'll start with a visit to the Royal Yacht *Britannia*. Commissioned by Queen Elizabeth II in 1954, the vessel was perhaps most famously used by Prince Charles and Lady Diana for their honeymoon cruise.

After an included lunch aboard the ship, you'll set off on a panoramic tour of the city's sights, followed by a free afternoon to explore independently. You might choose to visit Edinburgh Castle, which overlooks the city from a perch atop a long-extinct volcano. A royal dwelling has been located here since the twelfth century, and the castle's St. Margaret's Chapel—the oldest surviving building in the city—dates to this time. Perhaps you'll browse the shops and pubs of the Royal Mile, the city's main thoroughfare. Or, pay a visit to Holyrood Palace, whose carefully designed additions over the centuries have made it one of the most admired buildings in the British Isles. The palace was completed in 1501 and was the site of the marriage of Mary, Queen of Scots and Lord Darnley in 1565, and of much subsequent intrigue.

Later today, return to Glasgow where dinner is on your own tonight.

Day 4 Glasgow • Loch Lomond

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel Glasgow or similar

Head out of the city into the countryside today, stopping for a visit to a family-owned distillery, where you'll meet the workers and learn about the production of a famous local expert—scotch whisky.

Then, continue to the “bonnie banks and bonnie braes” of Loch Lomond, the largest loch in Scotland. This scenic body of water, located in the heart of Scotland's first national park, is a tranquil space where Glaswegians go to get away from it all.

The loch features a diverse array of geological features to catch the eye. In the north, the water narrows into a glacial trench, flanked by towering snowcapped peaks. In the south, the lake broadens, its shores fringed by lush woods, carpeted with a layer of bluebells in the spring.

You'll arrive at the eastern bank of the loch, where you'll board a ferry for a cruise to the village of Luss on the opposite side of the water. Here, you'll enjoy an included lunch, followed by free time to stroll around the picturesque village on your own.

Return to Glasgow later today, where dinner is included at your hotel in the evening.

Day 5 Glasgow • Robert Burns Museum

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel Glasgow or similar

Learn about one of Scotland's national heroes today during a visit to the birthplace of Robert Burns, the celebrated author and poet who penned *Auld Lang Syne*, among other renowned works. The humble cottage where he was

born is now a museum dedicated to his life, featuring his handwritten manuscripts along with other historical artifacts. Delve into Burns' legacy during a tour, followed by an included farewell lunch.

Then, enjoy some free time to continue exploring the museum and its scenic gardens on your own, before returning to Glasgow, where the rest of the day is at leisure. Dinner is on your own tonight.

Day 6 Glasgow • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

This morning, transfer to the airport for your flight home.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Edinburgh

(Day 3 \$105 per person)

Tour Scotland's lively capital city today, starting with a visit to the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, where Princess Diana and Prince Charles once honeymooned. After a lunch aboard the yacht, you'll explore the city further on a panoramic tour, and then have an afternoon at leisure to explore independently. Edinburgh boasts a number of delightful options for discovery, from its imposing hilltop castle, to the bustling shops and cafes of the Royal Mile, to glamorous Holyrood Palace.