

12 DAY GREAT IRISH ADVENTURE

SAMPLE ITINERARY ANTI-CLOCKWISE

IMPORTANT: Please note that this itinerary is a framework for the tour. The overnights are pretty much set in stone and then we base each tour on the items in the list below. Your guide will discuss the options with you throughout the tour and plan from there. This gives us flexibility to adapt each tour to suit you and fit in with the weather conditions. This of course means that some things may not be included in your tour, but if there is something that you particularly want to do or see on your tour, mention it to your guide and he or she will see if it can be included.

HIGHLIGHTS:

REVEL AT SOME OF EUROPE'S VERY BEST SCENERY:

- Ireland's highest mountain range "The Macgillycuddy Reeks"
- The green fields and stone walls of Dingle
- Connemara mountains, lakes, beaches and rivers
- Ireland's wild and rugged Atlantic coastline
- Walk in the Mourne Mountains (Slieve Gullion)
- The Burren Limestone Plateau
- The Cahal Mountains of the Beara Peninsula
- The green inland scenery of areas such as the Golden Vale in Tipperary
- The Glens of Antrim
- The Wild Moorlands and Mountains of County Mayo

ENJOY SOME OF IRELAND'S MOST POPULAR AND WORTHWHILE TOURIST DESTINATIONS:

- Blarney Castle and gardens
- Killarney National Park
- The Cliffs of Moher
- The Giant's Causeway

EXPLORE THREE OF IRELAND'S MOST DIVERSE SOUTH WESTERN PENINSULAS:

- The majestic Iveragh peninsula (better known as the Ring of Kerry)
- The rugged Beara Peninsula (also known as the 'undiscovered peninsula')
- The rolling hills of the Dingle Peninsula

ENJOY SOME FANTASTIC ACTIVITY OPTIONS:

- Walking and hiking through some of Ireland's best scenery
- Horse-riding on the Dingle Peninsula
- Sea-kayaking in Dingle Bay
- Try your hand at surfing an Atlantic Wave
- Cycle in Killarney National Park
- Learn the ancient arts of Gaelic football or hurling

WONDER AT SOME OF IRELAND'S HISTORICAL TREASURES:

- Explore the cliff-top ruins of Dunluce Castle

- Climb Knocknaree Mountain to Queen Maeve's tomb
- Visit The Rock of Cashel
- Optional trip to the Skellig islands, one of Ireland's UNESCO World Heritage sites
- Optional cruise around the Skellig Islands
- Ancient Neolithic stone circles, Celtic ring forts, Castles, Monastic sites and Burial tombs
- Take a Black cab tour of the fascinating Belfast city or visit the Titanic Experience
- A walking tour of Londonderry/Derry city
- The lunar limestone landscape of the Burren, County Clare

SOME FUN LITTLE SIDE TRIPS:

- Relax in a hot, rejuvenating Seaweed bath
- Visit a working sheep farm for a sheep herding and shearing demonstration
- Take a boat trip to spot Dingle's most friendly occupant – Fungi the Dolphin

AND AT NIGHT:

- Live music and excellent food in some of Ireland's best pubs and restaurants
- Overnight in quality, locally owned guesthouse and small hotel accommodation in small, friendly local communities
- Live like a Lord or Lady in a quality Irish Castle for a night

DAY 1

Dublin to Antrim

We're off and we're going north! We will be crossing the border into Northern Ireland and making for the historic and fascinating city of Belfast.

Meet at reception of the Grand Canal Hotel, Dublin 4 at 08.10am.

Cross over the border and walk to the summit of Slieve Gullion Mountain for great views over South Armagh.

Average Walk Duration: up to 1 hour 30 minutes

Terrain: Path uphill to summit.

Drive into Belfast, the capital city of Northern Ireland for lunch and then choose from the following options:

1. Optional Black Cab tour of the city. This tour is very highly recommended as it gives visitors an incredibly close hand experience of the city and its turbulent past. (Cost: GB£10 per person)
2. Take an optional trip to the newly opened £100 million Titanic Experience visitor centre (GB£18.00 pp £14.50 seniors)

Follow the coast road out of Belfast and around the base of the Glens of Antrim - you might well see Scotland on a clear day

(Average driving time: 4 hours 30 minutes)

ACCOMMODATION:

Overnight in the Londonderry Arms Hotel in County Antrim.

DAY 2

Antrim to Derry

Today we continue North around the coastline for a really active day on a section of coastline that the locals will tell you is the most beautiful in Ireland.

1. Test your head for heights at the Carrick a Rede rope bridge (weather permitting – Entrance fee: GB £7)
2. Possible lunch or coffee stop at the tiny Ballintoy harbour – one of the ‘Game of Thrones’ filming locations
3. Self-guided walk along a section of the famous Antrim Coastline to arrive at the Giant's Causeway

Average Walk Duration: 2 hours 30 minutes – 3 hours
Terrain: Undulating path walk along cliff top

4. Experience the natural phenomenon of the Giants Causeway
5. Optional visit to Bushmills Whiskey distillery. The oldest whiskey distillery in the World (entrance fee: GB£7pp)
6. Explore the historic village of Bushmills
7. Visit the ancient McDonald Stronghold of Dunluce Castle (Entrance fee: GB£3) or simply take photos from outside

(Average driving time 3 hours 30 minutes)

ACCOMMODATION:

Overnight in Beech Hill House Hotel, Derry.

DAY 3

Derry to Donegal

Before leaving Northern Ireland, we head into Derry city for the highly-acclaimed walking tour. It's then time to cross back into the Republic and County Donegal, one of the least touristy and wildest parts of Ireland. Voted the coolest place in the world by National Geographic in 2017.

1. Optional walking tour of the city including the Bogside area synonymous with the tragic events of Bloody Sunday (highly recommended - GB£4 per person)
2. Cross the border from Northern Ireland to Donegal in the Republic of Ireland
3. Stop at the ancient stone fort of Grianán of Aileach and enjoy views of the sea and the Inishowen Peninsula
4. Visit and walk through the Glenveagh National Park

Average Walk Duration: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Terrain: Mostly flat gravel path

(Average driving time 3 hours 15 minutes)

ACCOMMODATION:

Overnight in The Nesbitt Arms Hotel in the cultural village of Ardara

DAY 4

Donegal to Sligo

Europe's highest sea cliffs, a traditional weaver and horse-riding on the beach - some of the great options today before arriving at your beachside hotel in Enniscrone.

1. A visit to a traditional weaver to see how handmade Donegal tweed is still made.
2. Possible time to walk and explore the caves on the amazingly remote Mahares Beach
3. Drive through the scenic Granny pass to west Donegal
4. Visit the stunning Slieve League - the highest sea cliffs in Europe

Options at the cliffs include:

- Walk to the 2000 ft Slieve League sea cliffs with your guide.
Average Duration: 1 hour - can be made longer
Terrain: Well surfaced path to start and becomes more rocky and rough as you leave viewing area
 - Or take a boat trip around the base of the cliffs (€20 per person, summer only)
5. Head into Donegal town to visit Donegal Castle or explore the town and enjoy lunch
 6. Go horse-riding along a stunning beach in Sligo (€28 for an hour) or go for walk on the beach. Your guide may decide to take you horse riding on a Dingle beach later in the tour
 7. Visit the grave of WB Yeats in Drumcliffe Cemetery
 8. Walk to Queen Maeve's tomb atop Knocknaree with amazing views of the Sligo coastline (depending on time)
Average Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes
Terrain: Loose rough stone path steep near summit
 9. Option to take a fantastically relaxing hot seaweed bath, with mysterious healing properties in Enniscrone (Price €25pp).

(Average driving time: 4 hours 30 minutes)

ACCOMMODATION:

Overnight in the scenic Waterfront House Guest house inn the seaside village of Enniscrone in Sligo

*check cost of horse riding

DAY 5

Sligo to Connemara

Today we visit one of Ireland's national museums, one of the world's holiest mountains and Ireland's only fjord. Today's options:

1. Visit the excellent Museum of Country Life in Castlebar (free entry)
2. Croagh Patrick - St Patrick's Reek - from where the snakes were banished. Take a stroll up this epic pilgrimage mountain and lose a sin with every step
Average Duration: Depends on time and weather, average 1 hour
Terrain: Rough mountain walk on well defined trail. Difficult footing. Steep and uphill at times
3. Picnic on the slopes and look down upon the panorama of Clew Bay
4. Head south into the Connemara region, famous for its wild and rugged landscape and stunning scenery
5. Leenane- Quick pints in 'The Field Pub', named after the movie which was filmed here, at the head of Killary Harbour
6. Killary Harbour - drive along the shore of Ireland's only fjord
7. Option to visit a sheep farm today, if you don't visit today your guide will take you later in the tour
8. Kylemore Abbey - Photo stop at one of Ireland's most beautiful buildings

(Average driving time: 3 hours 30 minutes)

ACCOMMODATION:

Overnight in Abbeyglenn Castle Hotel, Connemara, Co. Galway

DAY 6

Connemara to Clare

A very flexible day on tour starting with a drive around Galway Bay. Later we venture into Galway City and south through County Clare.

1. Visit the restored Aughnanure Castle, ancestral home of the 'Ferocious' O'Flaherty clan for the excellent guided tour
2. Visit the vibrant Galway city for lunch and soak up the atmosphere
3. Quick stop at Kinvara village with Dungaigue Castle – ancient seat of the High Kings of Munster and Hookers
4. Drive down and through the Burren Region, and its Limestone Lunar landscape
5. Visit Poul nabrone Dolmen, an ancient Megalithic tomb and one of Ireland's greatest treasures
6. A tour highlight, it's off to the Cliffs of Moher – 700 ft sea cliffs (entrance fee included in tour price)

Average Walk Duration: 2 hours 30 minutes

Terrain: Well defined, eroded, cliff edge path

(Average driving time: 3 hours 45 minutes)

ACCOMMODATION:

Overnight in Spanish Point House, Clare

DAY 7

Clare to Kerry

Lots to see and do today as we travel through the greenest, least mountainous section of Ireland's west coast, through south County Clare, across the mighty River Shannon and through north County Kerry, before the mountains of the Dingle Peninsula loom into sight.

1. Take a walk along the Cliffs of Kilkee or Lahinch Beach or even catch a wave with a surf lesson
2. Take the ferry across the River Shannon into County Kerry (ferry ticket included).
3. Stop in the pleasant market town of Listowel and possible free tour of Listowel castle (subject to availability)
4. Drive through Tralee town, home of the Rose of Tralee festival
5. Option of watersport in Castlegregory
6. Enjoy a walk in the glacial valley of Lough Annascaul

Average Walk Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

Terrain: Road and eroded boggy mountain path

7. Cool down after your walk in the South Pole Inn

(Average driving time: 3 hours 30 minutes)

ACCOMMODATION:

Overnight in The Dingle Bay Hotel in the heart of Dingle Town – a town of 2500 people and 54 pubs

DAY 8

Dingle Day

A great day spent enjoying Dingle town and the Peninsula. You can do as much or little as you like on day eight as we spend two nights here in the town. At some stage while we are in Dingle we normally take the group out on a tour of the Peninsula to the most westerly point in Ireland that you can drive to and a selection of the stops we see along the way are below. Plus, we can also organise other options for you if you would like something more active, or relaxing.

The Dingle Peninsula Tour out to Sleah Head:

Head out along the Sleah Head Drive past Ventry beach. Stop at ancient Beehive Huts – once the dwellings of 5th Century Monks. Enjoy a scenic stop at Europe's most westerly point with views over the Blasket Islands. Walk down to Coumeenoole Beach (Film set of Ryan's Daughter). Photo stop at Smerwick Head – views back up the Dingle Peninsula and of Mount Brandon. Visit Louis Mulcahy Pottery or a local crystal cutter and see some of Ireland's most skilled craftspeople at work.

Dingle Activity Options:

1. Go horse riding on Ventry Strand (Price: €35pp)
2. Rent Bikes and explore the area (Price: TBC €pp)
1. Dingle Brewing Company – visit one of Ireland's leading craft breweries (Price: €7 including a pint of beer), or, Dingle Distillery (€15pp). Both options do, of course, include mandatory tasting! (15/20 minute walk)
3. Boat trip to see Fungie the Dolphin (Price: €16pp)
4. Kayaking in Dingle Bay – maybe even with Fungie the Dolphin (price €45pp)
5. Take out a traditional Naomh Og boat and row with some of Dingle's finest (Price: €25pp)
6. Golf – Play a round on The Dingle Golf Links (fees would apply and there may be a transfer fee one way by taxi if the guide and vehicle are busy with other group members)
7. Visit Louis Mulcahy Pottery or a local crystal cutter and see some of Ireland's most skilful craftsmen at work.

Chill out in Dingle:

1. Go for a walk along the Dingle Way from the centre of Dingle town up into the hills
2. Wander the picturesque town of Dingle, with its brightly coloured street, numerous shops, excellent galleries, numerous local craftspeople, restaurants and of course pubs

(Average driving time: 1 hour 30 minutes)

ACCOMMODATION:

Overnight in The Dingle Bay Hotel in the heart of Dingle Town – a town of 2500 people and 54 pubs

DAY 9

Dingle to Portmagee

It's time to say goodbye to Dingle and head for the Ring of Kerry. Today we weave our way around Dingle Bay, exchanging the gently rolling mountains of the Dingle Peninsula for the majesty of McGillicuddy's Reeks - the highest mountains in Ireland. We join the Ring half way through the day, when all the coaches have gone, so we will have it to ourselves.

1. Drive along Inch Strand for fun and games
2. Take a guided cycling tour of Killarney National Park (optional extra: €30)
Duration: 3 hours
Terrain Road and forest path
3. Head for Iveragh Peninsula via Killorglin (Goat Fair) and Castlemaine (Wild Colonial Boy)
4. Join Ring of Kerry scenic route on the Iveragh Peninsula
5. Off-road to our secret picnic spot looking back across to the Dingle Peninsula
6. Clamber around a castle ruin or visit a stone fort

(Average driving time: 3 hours 30 minutes)

ACCOMMODATION:

Overnight in The Moorings Guesthouse in Portmagee

DAY 10

Portmagee to Kenmare

It's our second day on the Ring of Kerry, as we follow the route around the southern half of the Iveragh Peninsula to Kenmare. Not forgetting the option of a boat trip to the incredible Skellig Islands, which are truly breath-taking - though not for the faint hearted! There are beaches, walks and stunning views across to the Beara Peninsula.

Option 1: Skellig Island Trip:

Depart Portmagee at 9:00, after an hour at sea arrive at the Islands and climb the 600 steps to the ancient monastery. Arrive back at Portmagee at 14:15.

Please note that the boat trip to the Skellig Islands is very weather dependent and also seasonal (open between mid-May and September) The trip to the Islands costs €75 or €80 in July and August.

OR

A two & half hour cruise out to and around Skellig Michael with views up to the ancient monastery. A commentary of the islands, their amazing birdlife and fascinating history is given during the cruise. (€35pp)

Option 2: Non-island Options:

1. Walk to Bray Head on Valentia Island
Average Walk Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes
Terrain: Farm track and open boggy hillside
2. Visit the Skellig Experience Centre for a taste of life out on the Skellig Islands (entrance fee: €4)
3. Visit the Skellig Chocolate Factory for a free tasting!

After leaving Portmagee:

(Please note that if we visit the Skellig Islands today than it affects the activities and itinerary for the rest of the day). The trip takes until about 2.15pm in the afternoon and we then have to drive around the southern half of the Ring of Kerry, so it does mean that activities like walking on the Old Kenmare Road or visiting the sheep farm may not be possible.

1. Visit one of the many Celtic ring forts found on the Iveragh Peninsula, including: Staigue Fort or Loher Fort
2. Detour down to Derrynane Beach for a game of Gaelic Football or Hurling.
3. Tide permitting you can walk across to the ruined church and graveyard on 'Abbey Island'
4. See the running of a real Irish sheep farm if not already done
5. Leave the Ring of Kerry scenic route on the Iveragh Peninsula

(Average driving time: 3 hours)

ACCOMMODATION:

Overnight in Coachman's Townhouse Hotel, Kenmare

DAY 11

Kenmare to Gougane Barra

An action-packed day as we journey out onto the 'undiscovered' Beara Peninsula. It is an amazing coastline, wild, rugged and extremely scenic. While we are here we have the option of some great walks, castles and lunch in one of Ireland's most famous pubs. There is also the option of some free time in the morning in Kenmare.

1. Shopping in picturesque Kenmare
2. Head out onto Beara Peninsula, the undiscovered Peninsula
3. Great views of the Caha Mountains and Sheepshead Peninsula
4. Visit the ancient Uragh Stone Circle
5. Take the Healy Mountain pass, Ireland's bendiest road with great scenery north and south
6. Quick pint at MacCarthy's Bar in Castletownbere
7. Special Vagabond shortcut over the mountains and through the old copper mines
8. Arrive in the stunningly located village of Allihies and pick up lunch
9. Walk the Bullig bay loop and see the ancient ruins of Dunboy Castle

Average Walk Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

Terrain: Mixed trail following sea shore, forestry pathways, open boggy terrain, some public road

10. Bantry Bay Seal Spotting in Glengarriff

(Average driving time: 3 hours 30 minutes)

Overnight in Gougane Barra Hotel or the Castle Hotel, Macroom

DAY 12

Gougane Barra to Dublin

Sadly, it's the last day of the adventure and time to head home to Dublin, but first we have some major attractions to see! You can kiss the world-famous Blarney Stone and visit the iconic Rock of Cashel.

1. Depart hotel after breakfast before heading east and northeast through Counties Cork, Limerick, Tipperary, Kildare and Dublin
2. Follow the River Lee down towards Cork
3. Kiss the World Famous Blarney Stone or get away from the crowds and explore the extensive grounds and gardens (Included in tour price)
4. Visit the magnificent Rock of Cashel – one of Ireland's greatest historical sites (included in tour price)
5. Drive through the Curragh – once used as the Braveheart film set

(Average driving time: 4 hours 30 minutes)

Arrive back in Dublin between 5 and 6pm. Drop off at the Grand Canal Hotel, Dublin 4.

Tour Price: €2,769

Single Supplement: €465

Whats included:

Off the beaten track adventure in a Vagabond 4X4 tour vehicle
Services of highly trained professional Vagabond tour guide
12 full days on tour
11 nights' accommodation
11 Full Irish breakfasts
Most daily activities and visits
Entrance fees to Blarney Castle, the Rock of Cashel, A Working Sheep Farm and the Giant's Causeway, Aughnanure Castle or Donegal Castle
Shannon Ferry Tickets
All relevant taxes
Guaranteed departure and tour price from the moment you make your deposit
Loads of laughs

Optional Extras: Prices are correct at time of publication of Itinerary

Black Cab tour of Belfast City	GB £10
Titanic Experience visitor centre	GB £18.00 - £14.50 seniors
Carrick a Rede Rope Bridge – Summer only	GB £7
Bushmills Whiskey distillery	GB £7
Dunluce Castle	GB £3
Walking tour of Derry	GB £4
Dingle Distillery	€15pp or €13 group rate
Boat trip to see Fungi the Dolphin	Adult € 16 Child (under 12) € 8
Dingle Brewing Company	€7
Sliabh Liag Cliffs by boat	€20
Horse Riding in Sligo	€28
Hot Seaweed Bath	€25
Surfing	€30
Surfing in Inch Strand	€35
Horse riding on Ventry Beach	€35
Kayaking in Dingle Bay	€45
Guided cycling tour of Killarney National Park	€30
Skellig Island Boat Trip	€75 + €80 in July & August
Skellig Island Cruise	€35
Skellig Experience Centre	€4
Naomh Óg rowing	€25