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Backroads of Ireland

Discover the truly hidden gems of Ireland as we travel through both the Republic of Ireland & Northern Ireland, seeing such amazing places as Achill Island, Beara & Dingle Peninsulas as well as spending 2 nights on the isle of Inishbofin off the coast of Co. Galway!

April 24 - May 5, 2024

Wed, April 24– We are on our way!

Meet your tour directors Dea and Declan at the Saint Louis Airport for our flight to Dublin, the capital city of Ireland. We fly on Delta through the night, so try to get some sleep. We wake up in Ireland! **(Meals on Plane)**

Thurs, April 25– Titanic Museum and Giant's Causeway!

Céad míle fáilte, meaning “A hundred thousand welcomes” to Ireland. We arrive at the Dublin airport and meet our driver who will guide us through the backroads of Ireland. We depart the city and head north through the countryside on our way to **Northern Ireland**, which is another country and part of the United Kingdom, sometimes referred to as the “Wee North.” We first visit the **Titanic Belfast Museum**. Built at the nearby shipyards, the Titanic has captivated our hearts and imaginations for decades. Learn about what went into building such a ship, as well as what happened on that fateful night in April. The largest Titanic visitor attraction in the world, featuring nine state-of-the-art galleries, the museum has become one of the most popular attractions in Northern Ireland!





Next, we head further north to **Giant's Causeway**, one of the world's most famous natural wonders, featuring over 37,000 basalt columns, many in a hexagon shape. Giant's Causeway features prominently in Irish and Scottish Mythology and is one of the top natural wonders in the world. We then depart for **Derry City**, where we enjoy our welcome dinner at our home for the evening, the Ebrington Hotel. **(Meals on Plane, D)**

Fri, April 26 – A walk back in time and Yeats' Final Resting Place

This morning we will travel to Omagh where we will visit the **Ulster American Folk Park**, an outdoor museum of emigration history. The park has been designed so that as you walk along the path, you see what life was like in the 18th and 19th century in Ireland, from the thatched-roof cottages to the stately homes of the wealthy. They even have saved the childhood home of Robert Campbell, who became one of the richest men in America and whose downtown home in St. Louis has been fully preserved. As you stroll through the park, costumed interpreters are found in the buildings, sharing information about how hard life was in this era and why emigration was such a popular choice. As you make your way down the shop-lined street towards the docks, board the small replica "Coffin Ship" for your journey to America. After 12 weeks at sea (or when you exit the other side of the building), you find yourself in Baltimore in the United States. After stocking up in the general store, you head out into the frontier, and see what life was like in the United States at the time. They have brought authentic homes from America, from as far away as Tennessee to highlight what the Irish encountered when heading into the West. The museum also features a resource library, special exhibits and more!



After our time in the "Wee North," we cross back to the Republic, heading along the foothills of the Ben Bulbin Mountain Range stopping at **Drumcliffe**, in **County Sligo**. St. Colmcille (Columba) founded a monastery in the 6th century, and while only the high crosses and base of the tower remain, the site has remained a holy one, and is the final resting place of **William Butler Yeats**, one of the most famous poets produced by this small island.

Finally, we head to **Westport**, a charming town popular with Irish tourists and once home to the **Pirate Queen Grace O'Malley**. We spend the next two nights at the Clew Bay Hotel and enjoy dinner tonight at the hotel. **(B, D)**

Sat, April 27 – Achill Island & Tea in the Pirate Queen's Home

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before we head to Achill Island. Known for its rugged beauty, we travel along the **Wild Atlantic Way**, a scenic drive along the west coast of Ireland where the surf crashes upon the cliff side. Achill Island is the largest offshore island, and the views are breathtaking. We will have a photo stop at the **deserted village of Slievemore**, consisting of 80 - 100 stone cottages known as booley homes, perched on the southern slopes of the mountain.



When we return to Westport, we visit **Westport House**. While the main house dates to the 18th century, the foundations stretch back to the 1500s, and were the same foundations upon which **Grace O'Malley**, known as the **Pirate Queen**, built her castle. After the tour, we partake in **Victorian Afternoon Tea in the gorgeous formal Drawing Room**. You will feel like you have stepped into the world of Downton Abbey! Tonight, you are free to do as you please. Enjoy dinner on your own at the hotel or in a local pub. Westport is famous for its live music, including a pub owned by Matt Molloy of the Chieftains. He has been known to sit in on music sessions from time to time! **(B, Tea)**

Sun, April 28 – Inishbofin – the Isle of the White Cow

This morning we depart Westport on our way to County Galway. Along the way we catch glimpses of **Croagh Patrick**, the tallest mountain in Ireland, the quaint town of **Louisburg**, and the scenic **Doolough Valley**, including a stretch of road known as the **Famine Walk**. Every May, hundreds of people commemorate the lives lost during what the Irish call *an Gorta Mór*, or **The Great Hunger**, following in the footsteps of the thousands of people who left their home in search of food during the famines and blights of the 1840s.

As we continue on our way, we have a photo stop at **Kylemore Abbey**, built along the lake and nestled in the trees. We then head to the town of **Cleggan** and set sail for **Inishbofin Island**, which lies 7 miles off the coast and has been inhabited since Stone Age tribes built fortifications on



the tip of the island. Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney immortalized the island in his poem **Seeing Things** with the opening stanza "Inishbofin on a Sunday Morning / Sunlight, turf smoke, seagulls, boat slip, diesel." Our hotel for the next two nights is the **Doonmore Hotel**, one of Dea and Declan's favorite places to stay. The charming, rustic hotel is built around Andrew Murray's grandfather's cabin, and he, Donna and his sons all lend a hand in operating this welcoming space. And while he doesn't brag about it, Andy Murray was part of a famous Irish band that travelled the world, and he has a Platinum Record on the wall of the pub! **(B, D)**

Monday, April 29 –A taste of the island life in Inishbofin

This morning after enjoying a leisurely breakfast, we enjoy a bit of the island life with a full day on Inishbofin. Our friend Pat, who has driven for us in Ireland for the last 8 years, once told us that he really enjoys our trip to Inishbofin, as it reminds him of the Ireland in which he was raised. Our day starts with a **walking tour of Inishbofin**. With only **160 residents**, Inishbofin is famed for its natural beauty and is a breeding ground for many species of birds. We learn about the history of this island as well as its sister community in Inishark, which was abandoned in 1960 due to dwindling population and lack of access during the stormy winter months. We walk to the site of the Stone Age fortifications and learn about how humans have come to this place for centuries. The rest of the day is yours to enjoy. **This evening following dinner in our hotel we will enjoy a traditional Irish music session in Murray's Bar. (B, D)**



Tuesday, April 30 – Connemara, Galway, the Cliffs of Moher and the Burren

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before we take the ferry back to the mainland. We head through Connemara, a region full of boglands, mountains and lakes. It is the scenery that most people imagine when they think of Ireland and has served as the background of many films such as ***The Quiet Man*** with John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara, and ***The Field***, starring Richard Harris. Connemara is also famous for being the source of **Connemara Marble**, a unique marble that has featured prominently in churches and city halls across Ireland. Our destination is **Galway City**, where we enjoy a windshield tour of both the city as well as the surrounding areas such as Claddagh, where the famous “Crown, Hands, Heart” ring was created. After lunch on our own, we travel through **The Burren**. A rugged landscape of limestone jutting through the fields, it is



evocative of a lunar landscape. Our destination is the **Cliffs of Moher**, the tallest cliffs that face the Atlantic, towering over 600 feet above the waves. They were prominently featured in the movie ***The Princess Bride***. A visitor center built into the hillside provides insight into the cliffs themselves, as well as a spectacular video that provides both a birds-eye as well as a whales-eye view of the cliffs. This evening we check into the Old Ground Hotel in Ennis and we enjoy a feast at an Irish *Ceili* (party). With good food, great

music and incredible dancing, it will be a night to remember! **(B, Tea and Scones, D)**

Wednesday, May 1 – Dingle Peninsula and Killarney

After breakfast, we head across the Shannon Estuary, winding through small towns such as **Tralee**, the capital town of County Kerry and world-renowned for its **Rose of Tralee Festival**. Then it's over the Brandon mountains to the **Dingle Peninsula**, once described as **'the most beautiful place on Earth'** by National Geographic. Home to some of the earliest monastic settlements often called **Beehive Huts** due to their shape, the Dingle Peninsula is the most westerly point in Ireland, containing over a thousand years of history in a landscape that has hardly changed. Its amazing scenery has served as the backdrop for many films, from classics such as *Ryan's Daughter* and *Far and Away*, to modern films such as *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and *The Last Jedi*. If the day is particularly clear, you may even see **Skellig Michael**, home to monastic settlements and filmed as the planet Luke Skywalker was on in the above Star Wars movies. After enjoying some free time in Dingle Town for lunch on your own (and possibly the best ice cream in the world at Murphy's!), we head to Killarney, where we spend the next two nights in the heart of the town. Following dinner in our hotel we will enjoy **Gaelic Roots**, an exciting full stage production bringing together the traditions of music, song and dance. **(B, D)**



Thursday, May 2 – Beara Peninsula, The Best Kept Secret in Ireland



After breakfast, we head over the **Caha Mountains**, overlooking **Bantry Bay** and the **Kenmare River** in the distance. We stop in **Glengarriff** for a break before heading down the southern side of the **Beara Peninsula**, extending between Bantry Bay and the Kenmare River. This is the best kept secret in Ireland, as it is not as frequently traveled as the other scenic drives. We travel over **Healy Pass**, which was built during the worst year of the *An Gorta Mór*, or the Great Famine in 1847. It was built in the attempt to provide work for those who were starving and alleviate the worst of the conditions, but due to the laws at the time, there were limits on how much the workers could be paid, which limited the amount of aid provided. The road itself is named after Tim Healy, a politician from County Cork who served as the first governor general of the Irish Free State and was the force behind upgrading the pass. Rising over 1,000 ft above sea level, the pass provides unrivaled views of the surrounding area. When we depart you will have a better understanding of life in the rural areas. We continue to **Kilmackilloge Harbour** where we stop for lunch on our own at **Teddy O'Sullivan's Pub** before returning through Kenmare on the way back to Killarney. This evening enjoy yourself in town where pubs and restaurants abound. **(B)**

Friday, May 3 – Blarney Castle, Cobh's *Queenstown Story* and Clonmel



After breakfast, we check out from the hotel before heading to the most famous of castles in Ireland, **Blarney Castle and Woolen Mills**. For those who brave the multiple flights of stairs and lean out above the ramparts to **kiss the Blarney Stone**, you will be rewarded with the Gift of Eloquence. There is also a fine shopping area for those who have been to Blarney before or do not wish to challenge the castle. With Irish products such as sweaters, crystal and china, you can have them shipped right to your door, avoiding the VAT tax and, for the more delicate items, possibly breakage in your bag.

Then it is off to **Cobh**, one of the deepest natural harbors in Ireland and famous for being both the main point of emigration from Ireland as well as the last port of call before the Titanic sank beneath the

waves. We explore *The Queenstown Story*, which traces the many Irish journeys across the Atlantic by sea, from the earliest days of explorers and pirates to immigrants and large ships such as the *Titanic*. There is also the statue of **Annie Moore**, the first emigrant to be processed in Ellis Island, where a matching statue is located. We continue to Clonmel where we will check into the **Hotel Minella**. Located on the banks of the River Suir and across from the Clonmel and Tipperary racecourses, we enjoy dinner at the hotel **(B, D)**

Saturday, May 4 – Rock of Cashel and Irish National Stud Farm & Japanese Gardens

After breakfast, we check out of our hotel before heading to the **Rock of Cashel**. The seat of the Kings of Munster from 370 – 1101 AD, it was turned into a Christian site by **St. Patrick** after he successfully converted the population. The buildings include a Round Tower built in the 12th century, a 13th century Gothic Cathedral, and a 15th century High Cross and Romanesque Chapel. Then we head to County Kildare and tour the **Irish National Stud Farm**, producing numerous champion racehorses, we will learn about these majestic creatures and how highly in-demand they are. Some of them are even flown off to as far away as Australia to breed! Also on the grounds are the **Japanese Gardens**. Steeped in symbolism surrounding the life of man, the gardens are also home to the **St. Fiacre Commemorative Garden**, featuring traditional monastic structures. We then continue to Dublin where we check into our hotel for our last night in Ireland. **(B)**



Sunday, May 5 – Return home

After breakfast, we check out of our hotel before heading to the airport for our flight back to Saint Louis, arriving back in the US on the same day. Thank you for traveling with us! **(B)**

Tour includes:

- ✓ Round trip airfare from St. Louis to Dublin on Delta Airlines
- ✓ Wonderful accommodations across the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland
- ✓ 17 Meals (10 Breakfasts and 7 dinners), High Tea in Westport
- ✓ Visits to the Titanic Museum, Giant's Causeway & Ulster American Folk Park in N. Ireland
- ✓ Scenic drives of Achill, Dingle & Beara Peninsulas, Cliffs of Moher, Healy Pass & The Burren
- ✓ Visit Rock of Cashel, Blarney Castle & Woolen Mills the Irish National Stud & Japanese Gardens
- ✓ Tour and Tea at Westport House, built by the descendants of Grace O'Malley the Pirate Queen
- ✓ **Spend 2 nights on Inishbofin Island**, a place that feels like Ireland of days gone by
- ✓ Tour The Queenstown Story, tracing the journey of Irish emigrants over the centuries
- ✓ Gaelic Roots Music and Dance Show, plus a special music session at Murray's Pub in Inishbofin
- ✓ All other Activities as indicated
- ✓ Baggage Handling
- ✓ Professional Tour Directors Dea Hoover and Declan Rutan
- ✓ All gratuities including step-on guides, waitstaff at included meals, driver and director

Please note: Any notice of fuel surcharges imposed by carriers and/or attractions will be disclosed at least 30 days prior to tour departure.

This is a 4 Sneaker Tour. Please see our *Passport To Fun!* which explains activity levels on our tours.

\$5,051 per person, double occupancy (2 per room)

\$5,686 per person, single occupancy (private room)

Save 3% on this tour! Discover the backroads of Ireland and a stay on Inishbofin for \$4,899 pp, double occ when you pay with check or money order!

\$5,515 per person, single occupancy

*These prices reflect 3% savings by paying with check or money order

Make your reservations today with a \$1,000 deposit, including trip cancellation and interruption insurance if desired. By purchasing Travel Protection at time of deposit, you will be covered for all pre-existing conditions as well as protected if something happens on the tour. This is an **Are We There Yet? Select Tour**. We will take no more than 30 travelers. Once this tour is filled, a wait list will be formed. Please send a check or call with a credit card along with your name, address, phone number, and all roommates' names if you are sharing a room and any dietary or walking restrictions.

Please ensure that you have a valid passport for this tour. You will not be allowed to fly without the proper documents, nor enter Ireland or return to the USA. Travel protection will not cover any expenses due to not having valid travel documents.

Balance on base tour price is due January 10, 2024, and no refunds will be given after that time. If you purchase Travel Protection and need to cancel after January 10, 2024, you must file a claim. If you attempt to book after this date, there may be a substantial increase in price, or you may have to arrive on a separate flight. There still may be a price increase before final payment if the airline incurs a fuel surcharge.

Ask about our special hotel rates at St. Louis airport hotel, including Park'n'Fly (You have the parking included in our special hotel rate.) before and/or after the tour. We also offer parking coupons at SkyPark if you leave your car at the airport.