

Ireland



Shamrocks & Shenanigans

Ross Castle in the Killarney National Park in Ireland

July 13 to 25, 2024

From the Irish people's sparkling wit, hospitality and cozy pubs to the Isle's incredible emerald landscapes and spectacular coastlines, this small country packs quite a punch. See the history, experience the culture and Xplore Ireland's natural wonders as we travel from Dublin to Doolin and points beyond. Surprising moments, epic adventures and all that can happen in-between!

HIGHLIGHTS

Dublin City Tour
Trinity College Old Library Exhibit
Book of Kells
Welcome Dinner
Viking River Cruise
Clonmacnoise
Athlone Castle
Portumna Workhouse
Wild Atlantic Way
Galway Walking Tour
Kylemore Abbey & Victorian Gardens
Connemara National Park
The Burren
Aillwee Cave
Adare
Poul nabrone Dolmen
Guided Cliff Walk
Cliffs of Moher
Gus O'Connor's
Quaint Irish Villages
Gap of Dunloe
Boat ride on Killarney's Lakes

Kilkenny Walking Tour
Kilkenny Castle
Wicklow Gap
Glendalough Walking Tour
Dun Aonghasa

INCLUDES

Multi night stays in Doolin, Kilonan, Killarney
Gratuities: Irish Guides, Included meals
Ferry to/from Inishmore
Farewell Dinner
Porterage at most hotels (1 bag)



Day 1 – Dublin. Welcome to the Emerald Isle! Following arrival at Dublin Airport, met by a local driver/guide to escort you to your awaiting motorcoach. Xplore Dublin with a **City Tour**, enjoying the sites of **Ireland's capital city**.

See the **Georgian Squares** with their 18th Century houses, **St. Patrick's Cathedral**, **Phoenix Park** (the largest



town park in Europe), statue filled **O'Connell Street** and fashionable **Grafton Street**.



Stop at **Trinity College** to visit the **Old Library**, housing the 1,200-year-old medieval manuscript **Book of Kells**. Entering the **Long Room**, you might think you've entered one of J.K. Rowling's famous Harry Potter books. After checking into the hotel, the remainder of the afternoon is yours to rest or Xplore Dublin on your own. Spend time getting to know your fellow Xplorers this evening at the **Welcome Dinner**.

Day 2 – Dublin to Athlone. Depart Dublin this morning for Athlone, travelling through the **Irish midlands** to **Clonmacnoise**, a spectacular monastery on the banks of the River Shannon. Founded by Saint Ciarán in the 6th century, the monastery flourished and became a great seat of learning, a university of its time, with students from all over Europe in attendance.





Enjoy an audiovisual presentation at the **visitor's centre** where you can view the magnificent 10th century **Cross of the**

Scriptures. Followed by a **guided tour of the ruins**, including a cathedral, two round towers, three high crosses, nine churches and over 700 early Christian grave slabs. Then step back 1,200 years and join the Vikings aboard a **replica Viking Ship** for a **cruise on the River Shannon** to Athlone. Relax and observe the stunning nature and beauty of the river, listen to stories of the Vikings, how the river was the centre of trade and craftsmanship and learn about the flora and fauna as you journey north to the historic town of Athlone, arriving just like the Vikings did centuries ago. Steeped in history, culture and majesty, Athlone is a place where you can Xplore Ireland's ancient east and discover hidden gems with phenomenal stories of years gone by. Engage on a journey through 5,000 years of history on a **guided tour of Athlone Castle**, built in the 13th Century. You'll find yourself walking in the footsteps of kings, queens, and monks, listening to historic tales of the town, castle, and the lives of the townsfolk of Athlone.

Day 3 – Athlone to Galway City.

Departing Athlone, travel to **Portumna** for a **guided tour of Portumna**

Workhouse. The workhouse, one of many in Ireland, opened in 1852 and was used as a place of shelter for the poor and homeless during the great famine. Listen to stories of the famine and learn what life was like for the people forced by circumstance to seek shelter here. From here travel to **Galway City**, abandoning the coach to see Galway as it should be seen – on foot. Joined by a **local guide** for a fun and entertaining **walking tour**, wandering through the charming old, cobbled stone streets of Galway, your guide recounting tales of war and conquest, joy and tragedy, emigration and slavery, success, and folly. Followed by free time to explore the city on your own, to experience the blend of past and present housed in century old buildings in this lively city.



Day 4 – Galway City to Inishmore, Aran Islands. Depart this morning for a tour of the quiet wilderness and vast panoramic views of Connemara, a magical region, with captivating landscapes, heather covered mountains, beautiful lakes and bogs. Oscar Wilde described Connemara as “a place of savage beauty” and has been a prime location of many films. Stopping for lunch at one of the most photographed former Estate homes in Ireland – **Kylemore Abbey**. Built in 1866, as a private residence



until 1920 when it became home to the Benedictine Nuns. Visit the Abbey with its beautifully restored period rooms,

learn about its history of tragedy, romance, education, and spirituality. Xplore the 6-acre **Victorian Walled Garden** with its delightfully restored garden buildings and formal flower gardens. Discover woodland and lakeshore walks that will take you on a beautiful journey through the 1,000-acre estate. The next stop is **Connemara National Park and Visitor Centre**. With 7000+ acres of scenic landscape complete with its own herd of Connemara ponies! Keep your eyes open, perhaps you'll catch a glimpse of them. From here, travel to **Rossaveal** to board the ferry to Inishmore, the largest of the three Aran Islands and one of the highlights of the Wild Atlantic Way.

Upon arrival, check into your hotel for a two-night stay. It's a short walk to the local pub for dinner and an evening of Irish entertainment...Guinness anyone?!



Day 5 – Inishmore. A full day Xplore **Inishmore on bicycles**. The island is only 12km in length and 3km wide, with narrow winding roads, quaint shops, Irish hospitality, and **breathtaking costal views**. Infused with history the island resembles an outdoor museum with over 50 different monuments of Christian, pre-Christian and Celtic mythological heritage. Take a 1km walk to the world-renowned **fort of**



Dun Aonghasa. One of Ireland's most ancient features estimated to be more than 3000 years old. A prehistoric hill fort perched precariously on a 330-foot cliff over the harsh Atlantic Ocean. Standing in Dun Aonghasa feels a little like teetering on the edge of the world.



Day 6 – Inishmore to Doolin.

Leaving Inishmore on the mid-morning ferry to the quaint and colourful village of **Doolin**. Following lunch, travel along the shores of Galway Bay and through the lunar landscape of the **Burren to Aillwee**

Cave. Led by a **local cave expert** Xplore the beauty beneath the Burren, caverns with frozen waterfalls and ancient stalactites and stalagmites. A visit to the gift shop is a must before leaving. Winding around the limestone mountain stop at the 6000+ year old **Poul nabrone Dolmen**, one of the most famous landmarks in the Burren. From here, return to Doolin for a two-night stay. This evening experience **Dinner at Gus O' Connors Pub** established in 1832, known world-wide for its toe taping, knee slapping, sing along, traditional Irish music.

Day 7 – Doolin. Joined this morning by a **local guide** for an exciting and rewarding **cliff walk to the majestic Cliffs of Moher**.



Cross through farmlands that have been handed down through generations. Learn the history of the area and the rural lifestyle enjoyed by the local people. Following the cliff edge offering stunning views, arrive at the highest point of the cliffs standing 702 feet above sea level. Waves crashing against the cliffs, puffins in their natural habitat and waterfalls, the walk offers the best and most remarkable views of the cliffs. Following some free time to appreciate the awe-inspiring views, before boarding the coach back to Doolin. A stop at the local pub for a well-deserved bevy may be in order before heading out to Xplore the village and its charming shops on your own.



Day 8 – Doolin to Killarney. Leaving a little piece of your heart in Doolin, travel along the Wild Atlantic Way, past castle ruins, country cottages and through picturesque villages to the charming town

of **Adare**, with leisure time for lunch and time Xplore charming main street, punctuated by beautiful stone buildings, thatched cottages, medieval monasteries, and a picturesque village park. The mix of centuries is blended into everyday life as some of the thatched cottages are home to arts and crafts shops.

Continue to the vibrant town of **Killarney** for a three-night stay. Surrounded by beautiful countryside, Killarney is a very special place indeed. Brim full of history, heritage, activities, and of course wonderful Irish hospitality.

Some of which you will experience this evening while enjoying **Dinner in a local pub** with your fellow Xplorers.



Day 9 – Killarney. Today's adventure begins with a short drive to Kate Kearney's Cottage, well-known to be one of Ireland's oldest 'An Sibin' and the starting point for a beautiful walk through a pass in the mountains known as the **Gap of Dunloe**. Walk through the mountain pass, enjoy spectacular scenery while winding your way around numerous lakes and between the steep slopes of **Purple Mountain** and the **Mac Gillycuddy's Reeks**



to **Killarney's Upper Lake**. After enjoying some refreshment, board a traditional style boat. Captained by a local Irishman sharing the history and stories of the area, certainly one of the many highlights of the day's adventure. Gently making way, across the glassy surface of the three Lakes of Killarney, gliding under old stone bridges and ending at beautiful **Ross Castle**. Today's amazing journey is something you won't soon forget!

Day 10 – Killarney. The day is yours to Xplore beautiful Killarney on your own. Perhaps you will Xplore the jaw-dropping beauty of Killarney National Park with a gentle horse ride. Take a swing or two on the links, visit Muckross House and Gardens, or simple venture out on the town with its many shops and relax with an afternoon Irish Coffee or pint! There is no shortage of options available, your guide will have plenty of suggestions for you.

Day 11 – Killarney to Kilkenny. Bidding farewell to wonderful Killarney, and hello to **Kilkenny City**, home of the **Medieval Mile**

on the banks of the River Nore. During the **walking tour with a local guide**, hear the history and tales recounted and learn what makes Kilkenny so unique. Following hotel check-in, the remainder of the day is free to explore the medieval city of Kilkenny on your own. This evening you may wish to visit one of Kilkenny's local pubs for dinner and local Irish entertainment. Who will say they enjoyed a Kilkenny in Kilkenny!

Day 12 – Kilkenny to Dunbooyne. A visit to Kilkenny would not be complete without visiting impressive **Kilkenny Castle**, remodeled



in Victorian times, decorated in 1830's splendor and set in extensive parklands a beautiful and impressive structure not to be missed. After lunch, depart Kilkenny, travelling over the scenic **Wicklow Gap** to **Glendalough**. An early Christian

ecclesiastical settlement founded by St. Kevin in the 6th century. Set in a peaceful glaciated valley with two lakes, the monastic remains include a superb round tower, stone churches and decorated Celtic crosses. Following an **audiovisual presentation at the Visitors Centre** and a **guided**

tour of the site with time to enjoy the scenic **Green Road Walk** to impressive and serene **Upper Lake**. From here continue to the sleepy village of Dunbooyne, checking into your hotel with a history. Enjoy the evening with your fellow Xplorers at the **Farewell Dinner**.



Day 13 – Depart Dublin. Transfer to Dublin Airport for your flight home with fond memories, new friends, newly acquired accents and many stories to share with your friends and family at home!

 **Go n-éirí an t-ádh leat**
(May the Luck of the Irish be with you).

PRICING

DOUBLE \$6,455.25

GUARANTEED \$6,455.25
SHARE

SINGLE \$8,165.25

All prices are per person LAND ONLY.
Not included in price: International airfare, Airline baggage fees for additional or over-sized luggage taxes & fees. Airline fuel surcharges if there is a change in fuel prices, Gratuities for Tour Director and Driver, Meals and activities not specified in the itinerary, Any personal expenses, Travel Insurance, Pre or post tour arrangements, Pre or post tour arrangements

Total meals included: 12 Breakfasts, 4 Dinners



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Deposit: A deposit of \$700 per person is due at the time of booking to secure your space. This is fully refundable up to 121 days prior to tour start date.
Final Payment: Is due 120 days prior to tour start date. Cancellation penalties will apply. See our Terms & Conditions for full details