

Go North Tour Itinerary

Monday: Arrival in Dublin, Ireland

Welcome to Ireland! You arrive in Dublin and check in to your city center hotel overlooking the River Liffey. Nothing is planned for this day so you can relax and explore Dublin as you'd like. Then off to bed with you for a good night's sleep, for tomorrow begins what we hope will be one of your best experiences yielding a lifetime of happy memories!

Tuesday: Day 1 – Dublin to Carnlough

Highlights: Ancient Tomb, Medieval Carlingford Town, Belfast Wall Mural Tour, Harbor Town of Carnlough

Meet your guide and trip participants and begin your Irish adventure. You'll leave Dublin and follow a trail where myth and reality collide in great battles, ancient sites, and epic tales. Passing the lush green countryside of the Boyne Valley, your journey continues towards the ancient border of the Ulster province, the mountainous Cooley Peninsula. Winding through small back roads, you'll find a magnificent example of a Portal Dolmen. This megalithic tomb is a delicate balance of large stone boulders each weighing many tons and supporting a massive capstone. Legend has it that a giant carried the 35-ton capstone all the way from Scotland!

On the northern side of the peninsula, you'll come to the beautiful town of Carlingford. Home to a wealth of medieval structures including the imposing 12th Century King John's Castle whose panoramic views overlook oyster rich Carlingford Lough. You'll have plenty of time to explore the town and sample some of its fine cafes before you follow the lough inland and make your way towards Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland (UK).

Hit a bustling Belfast where you'll get a behind-the-scenes tour of Belfast's storied past and the inside scoop from a local cabbie. The large-scale murals and massive peace wall are amazing and not to be missed! Afterwards you'll journey to your final stop of the day - the beautiful harbor town of Carnlough. Here you'll spend the night in one of Northern Ireland's most historic hotels, once owned by Sir Winston Churchill.

Wednesday: Day 2 – Carnlough to Culdaff

Highlights: Antrim Coastline, Glacial Valley of Glenariff, Giant's Causeway, Country Town of Culdaff

After a great "Ulster fry" (a breakfast that will fill you for days!), you travel north along the amazing Antrim coast road. Considered one of the great scenic roads of the world, this winding route opened up Ireland's northern glens, which till its completion in 1842, were only accessible by sea.

First up, you'll wander through the Queen of Antrim's famed nine glens, beautiful Glenariff. Take a stroll in the heart of this magnificent glacial glen, along a waterfall walkway, flanked by lush ferns and mossy woodland. You'll then pass quirky coastal towns and ride high above the crashing waves, to grasp sight of Scotland on the fantastic Torr Head drive.

Then onwards to experience the Giant's Causeway and its weird geological landscape stacked with thousands of hexagonally shaped stone columns descending into the ocean. This natural wonder has attracted visitors for hundreds of years and its geological importance has made it a World Heritage site. You then head back into the Republic of Ireland to the lesser-known and amazing Inishowen Peninsula. Your overnight stay is in the quiet, country town of Culdaff.

Thursday: Day 3 – Culdaff to Rathmullan

Highlights: Inishowen Peninsula, Malin Head, Overnight at an Irish Country Manor House, Historic Town of Rathmullan

Leaving Culdaff, spend the morning exploring Inishowen which, while sparsely populated is Ireland's largest peninsula. Packed full of ancient relics, stunning vistas, deserted beaches, and thatch-roofed cottages, you'll head right up to the northernmost point of Ireland, Malin Head. After a tasty lunch, you'll continue your travels through beautiful Inishowen past small towns, unusual crosses and an ancient mountain pass with gorgeous views of the Lough Swilly fjord.

After a fun day of exploring, you'll head north to the historic town of Rathmullan on the shores of Lough Swilly. In 1607, after years of failing revolts against the English forces, the infamous Flight of the Earls took place. Signaling an end to the old Gaelic order, this event saw the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell boarding a ship, leaving Ireland forever.

You settle in to enjoy wonderful Rathmullan House, your home tonight. This beautiful, early 1800s country Manor House is set amidst mature trees on beautifully-tended grounds fringed by a two mile long sandy beach. Relax with in one of its elegant period parlors, play some tennis or even croquet on the front lawn. There's also a lovely indoor heated pool and steam room. It's a short stroll into town along the serene shoreline where you can enjoy traditional music and grab a pint or a bite to eat. You can also check out the House's excellent restaurant, which serves locally sourced produce (much from its walled garden) or sample a local craft beer in the House's own Tap Room bar.

Friday: Day 4 – Rathmullan to Arranmore Island

Highlights: Tour of the Fanad Head Lighthouse, Doe Castle, Carrigart, Overnight on Arranmore Island

After a relaxing night in Rathmullan, your journey takes you north along the wonderfully scenic shores of the Fanad Peninsula. This stunning coastline has an infamous maritime history and the setting for many a tale of tragic wrecks. Along twisting cliff top roads at the end of the headland, you'll find the Fanad Head Lighthouse. Set spectacularly on sheer cliff walls it silently guides ships in the thunderous North Atlantic. Enjoy a private tour, experience the wonderful history, and go up to the top for thrilling views from this historic lighthouse!

Your adventure continues over a beautiful bridge to the Rosguill Peninsula and the lovely town of Carrigart for lunch. Next stop – the enchanting Doe Castle. Flanked by water on three sides and a moat in the front, this shining, white castle was the stronghold of Clan Suibhne, the Sweeneys.

Your journey then takes you by the mighty Donegal mountains of Muckish and Errigal and down through coastal towns to Burtonport. Here you board a ferry and sail through a narrow passage and out to the Gaelic speaking island of Arranmore, your home base tonight.

The island holds a community of around 500 people and in summer, many students visit to practice their Gaelic language skills. In the mid 1800s, many of the islanders were evicted and eventually settled on Beaver Island in Lake Michigan (USA) creating a lasting bond between the two isles. Have fun exploring the beach and quiet rural byways and then head to one of the local pubs for some food and the chance to mingle with the locals over tasty brews and cheery ballads.

Saturday: Day 5 – Arranmore Island to Ardara

Highlights: Glenveagh Castle and Gardens, Two Nights of Music and Fun in Ardara Town

Say farewell to lovely Arranmore Island and enjoy another pleasant ride on the ferry to the mainland. You then travel south of Mount Errigal for inspiring views of the Poisoned Glen. From here you set out for to Glenveagh National Park, a place of spectacular natural beauty and the setting for the fantastic Glenveagh Castle. Built in the 1870s as an idyllic Victorian retreat, it hosted a variety of celebrities from the 1940s to the 1980s before being donated to the Irish people. Enjoy a tour of the castle and wander through the enchanting network of formal gardens displaying a multitude of exotic plants and watch the skies for golden eagles!

Wandering Donegal's quiet country roads past waterfalls and picture perfect towns, takes you to one of the finest examples of a Portal Dolmen in Ireland. Megalithic burial sites like this have left many to wonder about the ancient Irish who walked this land over 5000 – 6000 years ago.

For your overnight stay, you arrive in the town of Ardara (pronounced Ar-drah). This Donegal treasure is set near the sea, flanked by mountains and famed for its traditional tweed weavers, woolens, and talented musicians. With Ardara's great bars and chatty locals, you won't have far to go to sample delicious local food and lively Irish music. Cozy in as you'll spend the next two nights at your country hotel in the heart of the village.

Sunday: Day 6 – Glencolmcille Peninsula & Night Two in Ardara

Highlights: Donegal Mountain Passes, Gaelic Speaking Glencolmcille, Standing Stones, Amazing Beaches

Your Sunday drive on Donegal's Glencolmcille Peninsula stops by a magnificent waterfall and onto one of Ireland's most beautiful beaches. With huge sand dunes and ancient sea caves, it has a rich history of smuggling, tragedy, and romance.

Traveling on a forgotten access road through a breathtaking Donegal valley and mountain pass, you'll dodge sheep and mountain goats down to the Irish cultural hotspot of Glencolmcille. Famed for its Gaelic speaking community and early Christian standing stones, it is surrounded by megalithic tombs, incredible beaches and awe-inspiring landscapes.

Onwards to the tip of the peninsula and a hidden cove enclosing an impossibly pretty beach. Enjoy sweeping views to Rathlin O'Birne Island, a bird sanctuary whose lighthouse was once the most powerful light in the world. Along the way you'll stop for refreshments with a chance to peruse some of the great local crafts produced from Donegal artisans. After a fun-filled day, you return to Ardara to enjoy the delights of this lovely town.

Monday: Day 7 – Ardara to Dublin

Highlights: Boa Island Statues, Ancient Passage Tombs, Vibrant Dublin City

Say farewell to festive Ardara as you head once more over the Irish / UK border to an island on Lough Erne. Here in a forgotten cemetery you'll find strange pre-Christian stone figures whose enigmatic forms may be related to the Celtic goddess of war. Leaving the island you'll hug the lakeshore to lunch in the wonderful town of Enniskillen. Placed strategically at the joining of upper and lower Lough Erne, this medieval town has great bars and cafés along the length of its vibrant main street.



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After exploring Enniskillen, you'll head back over the border to the Republic and go to Sliabh Na Caillighe – the Hill of the Witch. Here you find one of Ireland's greatest treasures, the Loughcrew Cairns – a range of ancient tombs rarely visited by foreigners. These ancient passage tombs were spiritual centers for Ireland's first farmers and are older than the Egyptian pyramids. Within the main tomb are astonishing carvings showing an alignment to the equinoxes making this tomb possibly the oldest celestial calendar on earth!

As you leave with thoughts of incredible Stone Age builders, your trip takes its last ride towards Dublin. You depart your Go North tour with new friends, great tales of history, astonishing beauty, and memories to last a lifetime!

Slan Beo!! Irish for "Goodbye, live life!"

While it is our intention to adhere to the route described above, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion, it may be necessary, or desirable, to make alterations. The information in the itinerary has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However, it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Inroads Ireland.
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