

Go North Tour Itinerary

Monday: Day 1 - 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 2 – Dublin to Ballycastle

Highlights: Belfast City & Mural Tour, The Antrim Coast Drive – Waterfalls, Glens, & Villages, Waterfront Stay in Ballycastle

Meet your guide and trip participants and begin your Irish adventure. You'll leave Dublin and go north towards Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland (UK). Here, in the ancient province of Ulster, the Irish Highlands begin and even the brogue accent nods to our Scottish neighbors, a mere stone's throw to the east.

Early on you'll hit a bustling Belfast where you'll get the inside scoop on Belfast's massive murals and fascinating history with a captivating local. The large-scale murals and massive peace wall are exceptional and not to be missed.

Afterwards you'll journey along the gorgeous Antrim coast road, past the beautiful harbor towns of Carnlough and Cushendun. Considered one of the great scenic roads of the world, this winding route opened up the nine glens of Antrim, which until its completion in 1842, were only accessible by sea. Along the way, you head inland to the "Queen of the Glens," the magical glacial valley of Glenariff. In the heart of the glen, you'll find a botanical oasis set amidst cascading waterfalls in a clover covered gorge.

Your journey continues along this stunning coastline to grasp sight of Scotland, Ireland's closest neighbor before pausing for a night's rest in the lovely seaside town of Ballycastle. The night is yours to stroll the beach, sip a pint, or simply savor the views of Rathlin Island flanked by Scotland's peninsulas.

Wednesday: Day 3 – Ballycastle to Culdaff

Highlights: Giant's Causeway, Inishowen Peninsula, Malin Head, Town of Culdaff

Awakening refreshed by the sea air, you'll hit the ground running to beat the crowds and experience the amazing Giant's Causeway. Descending into the ocean, its weird geological landscape is stacked with thousands of hexagonally shaped stone columns. This natural wonder has attracted visitors for hundreds of years and its geological importance has made it a World Heritage site. Step, skip and ponder this whimsical geology, laid out as if carved by the hands of giants.

Striding onwards, the route leads to Lough Foyle where you'll cross by ferry back to the Republic of Ireland. After a tasty lunch, spend the rest of your day exploring the lesser-known and truly wonderful Inishowen Peninsula. While sparsely populated, it is Ireland's largest peninsula and is packed full of ancient relics, extraordinary vistas, deserted beaches, and thatch-roofed cottages.

You'll head right up to the northernmost point of Ireland, Malin Head. This wild and rugged headland has set the scene for ancient myths of gods and heroes. Its dramatic shores continue to create epic tales, even providing the

backdrop for the recent Star Wars movies. Continue your travels through beautiful Inishowen past small towns to your overnight stay in the charming beachside town of Culdaff.

Thursday: Day 4 – Culdaff to Rathmullan

Highlights: Glenveagh Castle and National Park, Overnight at an Irish Country Manor House, Historic Rathmullan Town

Today you'll make tracks to the heart of County Donegal to spend the day at Glenveagh National Park. A place of spectacular natural beauty, it is 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 gardens displaying a multitude of exotic plants, stroll along the lakeshore, and watch the skies for golden eagles!

After a fun day of exploring Glenveagh, 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 splendid 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 in one of the elegant period parlor rooms, enjoy a swim in the indoor pool, or play croquet on the front lawn. It's a short stroll into town along the serene shoreline where you can enjoy the local chat 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 Tap Room bar.

Friday: Day 5 – Rathmullan to Ardara

Highlights: Fanad Head Lighthouse, Dunfanaghy Village, Traditional Irish Music in Ardara

After a relaxing night in Rathmullan, your journey takes you 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 tumultuous history, and go up to the top for thrilling views from this historic lighthouse.

Your adventure continues to the picturesque village of Dunfanaghy. Situated on the Wild Atlantic Way, Dunfanaghy has tasty eateries and overlooks the beautiful shores of Sheephaven Bay. After lunch, you make your way past the Seven Sisters mountain range and the highest point in Donegal, the arresting peak of Errigal.

Wandering Donegal's quiet country roads past waterfalls and picture perfect towns, you arrive at your final stop in the town of Ardara (pronounced Ar-drah). This Donegal treasure, set amidst mountains and farmlands, is famed for its traditional weavers, who enjoy great renown for their exceptionally fine tweeds and woolens. With Ardara's lively pubs, chatty locals, and talented musicians, just step out your hotel's front door to find delicious food and traditional Irish music. Cozy in as you'll spend the next two nights here at your country hotel.

Saturday: Day 6 – Day Trip on the Glencolmcille Peninsula, 2nd Night in Ardara

Highlights: Gaelic Speaking Glencolmcille, Christian Standing Stones, Amazing Beaches & Waterfalls

Enjoy free time in the morning to sleep in, relax, or stroll about Ardara discovering its delightful local craft shops and eateries. In the afternoon, you'll set out on Donegal's Glencolmcille Peninsula 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 as you head down to the Irish cultural hotspot of Glencolumbkille. Famed for its Gaelic speaking community and early Christian standing stones, it is surrounded by megalithic tombs, gorgeous beaches, and awe-inspiring landscapes. After a fun-filled day, you return to Ardara for a second night to enjoy this fun town.

Sunday: Day 7 – Ardara to Belturbet

Highlights: The Slieve League Cliffs, Donegal Town & Donegal Castle, Boa Island Statues, Charming Rural Town of Belturbet

Saying farewell to festive Ardara, you head to some of the highest sea cliffs in Europe, the Slieve League. Locally known as the Bunglass Cliffs, these imposing crags, set atop Slieve League Mountain, rise to the precipitous trail, "One Man's Path," almost 2,000 feet above the crashing waves! Meander along dramatic gorges and enjoy spectacular coastal views at these incredible cliffs.

Lowering your gaze, you'll continue along the coast past Killybegs, home to Ireland's largest fishing fleet and set your sights for Donegal town. You'll explore Donegal Castle with its fine fortified tower, built in the 1400s as the stronghold of the O'Donnell clan. Enjoy free time to roam this small town's cafes, craft shops, and pubs.

After lunch you head inland to lovely Lough Erne and a narrow island spit. 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 back to finish your day in the rural town of Belturbet in lovely County Cavan. The ancestral stronghold of the O'Reilly's is strategically set on the Erne waterway and enticed warring Irish chieftains till the English colonized it in the 1600's. Staying in the town's historic hotel, you can sample great food and chat with locals under the wonderful, wicker basket ceiling in its famed bar. Then cross the street and tap your toes to a great traditional Irish music session.

Monday: Day 8 – Belturbet to Dublin

Highlights: Ancient Portal Tomb, Medieval Carlingford Town, Cooley Peninsula, Vibrant Dublin City

You'll leave Belturbet 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.

As you return to Dublin, you depart your Go North tour with new friends, great tales of history, astonishing beauty, and memories to last a lifetime!

Slán 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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