

## 2024 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. 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 inspiring.

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, Derry, Stone Ringfort, 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.

From natural history to more modern history, you'll next head to Derry, the only remaining completely walled city in Ireland and one of the finest examples of walled cities in Europe. Built in 1613, the walls have become synonymous with Northern Ireland history. As you walk through the compact city, you can discover Old Town and Free Derry corner, or the Bogside murals outside the city walls. You'll have time to explore and plenty of options for lunch from tapas, to pubs to Michelin recommended restaurants.

Following lunch, climb to a Neolithic ringfort sitting on the summit of a mountain in County Donegal. Overlooking Lough Foyle and Swilly, it commands a stunning view of 3 counties. With origins dating back to 1700 BC, the fort and hill are steeped in history from pre-Celtic times, through the Bronze age and St. Patrick's visit in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century.

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 Dunfanaghy**

**Highlights:** Malin Head, Ferry Crossing, Fanad Head Lighthouse, Dunfanaghy

After a relaxing night in Culdaff, 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.

Next, you'll journey over to Buncrana where you'll take the ferry across Lough Swilly into the historic town of Rathmullan. 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.

Your journey continues 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.

Wind your way for the night to the picturesque village of Dunfanaghy. Situated on the Wild Atlantic Way, Dunfanaghy has tasty eateries and overlooks the beautiful shores of Sheephaven Bay. Relax at many of its Blue Flag beaches or hit the town (um, village), known for one of the liveliest music scenes in County Donegal!

#### **Friday: Day 5 – Dunfanaghy to Ardara**

**Highlights:** Glenveagh Castle and National Park, Traditional Irish Music in Ardara

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!

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. Ardara is filled with lively pubs, chatty locals, talented musicians, and even a distillery. Enjoy your hotel at the edge of town with its lovely grounds and cozy bar. Settle in as you'll spend the next two nights here at your country hotel.

#### **Saturday: Day 6 – Day Trip on the Glencolmille Peninsula, 2<sup>nd</sup> Night in Ardara**

**Highlights:** Gaelic Speaking Glencolmille, 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 Glencolmille 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 Monaghan**

**Highlights:** The Slieve League Cliffs, Donegal Town & Donegal Castle, Boa Island Statues, Monaghan

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 border town of Monaghan, the county seat of County Monaghan and one of the three counties of the province of Ulster that sits in the Republic of Ireland. This authentic off-the-beaten path town sits among hills and drumlins and is the home of the Irish poet Patrick Kavanaugh. Staying in the center of town, you can sample great food and chat with locals, then hit one of the many pubs around town.

### **Monday: Day 8 – Monaghan to Dublin**

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

You'll leave Monaghan 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 for your overnight accommodations, you depart your Go North tour with new friends, great tales of history, astonishing beauty, and memories to last a lifetime! Your tour ends after breakfast the next morning.

### **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. © 2024 Inroads Ireland