INROADS IRELAND
TOURS OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

2023 Go West 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 wander 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 Lough Ree

Highlights: Megalithic Tombs, Celtic Crosses, The Corlea Iron-Age Oak Road, Lough Ree

Meet your guide and trip participants and begin your Irish adventure. First up you'll literally go west out of Dublin to the forgotten fifth province of Midhe and the Boyne Valley. Here, disciples of St. Columcille founded the medieval town of Kells. This monastic settlement produced highly ornate manuscripts like the famous Book of Kells now housed in Dublin's Trinity College. You'll visit the old churchyard of St. Columcille's to see the impressive medieval Round Tower and the incredible Celtic High Crosses carved from huge slabs of stone.

After Kells, you'll delve further into the Boyne Valley to unearth one of Ireland's finest treasures, the Loughcrew Cairns. These prehistoric tombs, containing passageways and inner chambers, were spiritual centers for Ireland's first farmers long before Egypt's great pyramids were built. Erected by Ireland's mysterious Neolithic people, the main tomb contains enigmatic carvings that are aligned and illuminated by the rising sun of the equinoxes. This ancient star-chart may be the oldest celestial calendar on earth!

Your journey continues through Ireland's mythical center and pastoral midlands to the mysterious Corlea Trackway. This Iron Age road, built of Irish oak through a dangerous bog and dense woodland, lay hidden for over 2,000 years. A large section has been preserved and housed to ponder this ancient road. Though its purpose remains unclear, its discovery provokes tantalizing parallels with old myths passed on for generations.

Winding down, your day ends on the quiet shores of Lough Ree. From earliest times, traders from northern France shipped wine up the mighty River Shannon to supply local monasteries and the tables of Ireland's nobility. Spend the night strolling the grounds and relaxing in your lakeside retreat. You'll enjoy sunset views from your room overlooking the lake.

Wednesday: Day 3 – Lough Ree to Clifden

Highlights: Loughrea, Monastery, Aughnanure Castle, Connemara, Clifden

Leaving Lough Ree, you cross the River Shannon to the charming town of Loughrea, a medieval market with remnants of the old town gate, Ireland's only working city moat and St. Brenden's Cathedral, a showcase of Celtic Revival Art.

Next, explore the ruins of a monastery from the 7th Century and the site of many battles throughout Ireland's history. These well-preserved collection of buildings includes a leaning Round Tower, Ireland's equivalent of Italy's leaning tower of Pisa.

After lunch, travel to magnificent Aughnanure Castle, the stronghold of the O'Flaherty clan and one of the Ireland's best-kept secrets. Living by the motto "Fortune favors the strong," the boisterous and rebellious O'Flaherty's controlled the surrounding area from this 15th Century Tower House Castle. Roam the castle and grounds as your local guide brings its fascinating history to life with tales of cattle raids and pirate queens.

Afterwards travel through Connemara's majestic mountain landscape by trout lakes and bogland. Keep a watchful eye for wild Connemara ponies, Ireland's only native breed and known for their kind and hardy nature. The day ends in the lovely coastal town of Clifden, the heart of Connemara. It's perfect place to get in touch with rural Ireland and sample great local seafood. The pretty setting of this lovely town is dominated by its two spires and traditional music and culture.

Thursday: Day 4 – Clifden to Inishbofin Island

Highlights: The Connemara Coastline, Overnight on the Remote and Picturesque Inishbofin Island

Leaving Clifden, your day starts by hugging the patchwork coastline of islands, isthmuses, and inlets. It was in this remote area that the first transatlantic flight by Alcock & Brown landed in 1919 and where Marconi sent wireless radio transmissions across the Atlantic.

Your next adventure awaits in the fishing town of Cleggan. Hop aboard a ferry and cruise to one of Europe's most westerly islands and the calm waters of the magical isle of Inishbofin - the Island of the White Cow. This remote Irish island is like a step back in time to a slower and simpler pace where you get to relax and do as little or as much as you want. The day is yours and the friendly locals will make you feel right at home.

There are easy looped walking trails where you can see massive blowholes, sea stacks, and the island of Inishark. Walk on deserted beaches, take a swim in the ocean, and gaze out on the endless horizon. You could also rent a bike, go horseback riding, visit the small Heritage Museum, or if the tide permits, cross the beach to Cromwell's Fort. Later there are several places to eat, sip a pint, and tap your toes to traditional Irish music.

Friday: Day 5 – Inishbofin to Westport

Highlights: Sheep Dog Demo, Cong, Killary Harbor, Connemara Mountains, Irish Music & Westport Town

After a quiet night's sleep on the island, you'll take the morning ferry to the mainland and travel through the Connemara landscape flanked by the serene beauty of the Twelve Bens (mountain peaks). Your trip takes you to the majestic fjord of Killary Harbor. This 16 km sea-filled gorge has rich waters for salmon and mussels and the towering Mweerea, the highest mountain in the region, further enhances its incredible beauty.

You're next stop is at a remote mountain farm where you'll meet a local farmer who'll delight in showing off his cherished border collies. These spirited dogs will enchant you with their joy and skill at herding sheep, all the while faithfully obeying the farmer's directions via a series of calls and whistles.

Skirting mountain lakes, the day continues to the pretty village of Cong for lunch and free time. Once the setting for the John Ford movie "The Quiet Man," this colorful town has abundant charms, including the ruins of an Augustinian Abbey and its woodland paths.

The route then makes inroads into County Mayo through the stunning scenery of Delphi and Doo Lough. You'll come upon Croagh Patrick, Ireland's Holy Mountain, said to be where Saint Patrick cast the snakes from Ireland's shores. Then finally to your last stop for the day and your home for the next two nights, Westport. This laid back town is a fantastic place to unwind and wander its many shops, pubs, and restaurants. Traditional Irish music sessions (or as the locals say 'trad sessions') are plentiful. Stop by Matt Molloy's Bar – started by The Chieftain's flutist who has been known to stop by and join a session.

Saturday: Day 6 – Free Day in Westport

Sleep in, shop or head out to explore the gorgeous surrounds. Hike Croagh Patrick for some of the most incredible views in the world. Rent a bike or go for a walk along the "Great Western Greenway," a bucolic trail starting in Westport. Within a short walk is Westport House, one of Ireland's grand period homes, built upon the castle ruins that once housed the infamous pirate queen, Grace O'Malley. Golfing, fishing, and a cruise of Clew Bay are all available. Enjoy another night in this vibrant town!

Sunday: Day 7 – Westport to Sligo City

Highlights: Harry Clarke Stained Glass, Franciscan Friary, Yeats' Grave, Celtic High Cross, Sligo

Saying goodbye to Westport, your route winds north to the rural town of Newport to take a peak inside its local church. This grand hilltop house of worship contains magnificent stained glass windows. Created by Harry Clarke, one of Ireland's most accomplished artists, these beautiful windows were his last and perhaps finest works.

After ducking down narrow country lanes, discover a 600 year-old Franciscan Friary. Having stood the test of time, enjoy exploring its cloisters, fascinating carvings, and glorious Gothic arches.

You'll travel next to County Sligo and spend the afternoon exploring this county with the high plateau of Benbulben's mountaintop never far from sight. Often called Yeats Country, it was Sligo where the venerable poet, W.B. Yeats, was laid to rest and along the way you'll stop and visit his famous gravestone in the old cemetery of Drumcliff, also known for its impressive Celtic High Cross.

Further north is the wonderfully rugged headland of Mullaghmore whose windswept cliffs are often eclipsed by the eye-catching silhouette of the Classiebawn, a private baronial style castle. Flanked by the mystical mountain Benbulben, you return to Sligo City and check into your hotel beside the Garavogue River. Just steps outside your hotel await lively pubs, restaurants, and traditional Irish music.

Monday: Day 8 – Sligo City to Dublin

Highlights: Anglo-Norman Castle, Ancient Tomb, Carrick-on-Shannon, Dublin

Rising to a tasty breakfast, you can cast an eye to graceful swans gliding along the riverfront. Saying farewell to Sligo City, you'll journey to County Sligo's overlooked southern gems to visit the ruins of an Anglo-Norman castle that played a part in the history of the invasions of Ireland. Further on, you will visit the remains of an ancient tomb. The impressively balanced capstone will boggle your mind as to how the prehistoric Irish raised such massive stones.

Continue onto the town of Carrick-on-Shannon nestled on Ireland's longest and mightiest waterway, the River Shannon. Take a peek at one of Ireland's smallest churches or stroll the banks of the Shannon alongside house-barges and riverboats. Have fun meandering by the local shops and cafes to find a delicious lunch.

After a fun-filled week discovering Ireland's wonderful west, it's back to lively Dublin and your last night on the Emerald Isle. Enjoy a meal in one of the many fine restaurants, savor the final hours of your Go West Tour, and cherish a lifetime of amazing memories!

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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