

Go North Tour Itinerary

Monday: Arrival in Dublin, Ireland

Welcome to Ireland! You arrive in Dublin and check in to your hotel in the heart of the city center.

If you have time, check out some of the excellent tours of the city and sample Dublin's unique bars and restaurants. 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 your 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, Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge, Giant's Causeway, Country Town of Culdaff

After a great "Ulster fry" (a breakfast that will fill you for days!), you travel the amazingly scenic Antrim coastline famed for its nine glens, quirky coastal towns, and on a clear day - great views of Scotland!

Along the way, take a short cliff top walk along the spectacular Larrybane headland to the Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge. This precarious rope suspension bridge spans the mainland to tiny Carrick Island, where thousands of kittiwakes, fulmars, guillemots, and razorbills nest.

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. Enjoy a ferry ride across Lough Foyle and come back into the Republic of Ireland and the lesser-known, amazing Inishowen Peninsula. Here you'll find your overnight stay in the quiet, country town of Culdaff.

Thursday: Day 3 – Culdaff to Rathmullan

Highlights: Inishowen Peninsula, Malin Head, Glenveagh Castle and Gardens,
Spend the Next Two Nights at an Irish Country Manor House, Historic Town of Rathmullan

Leaving Culdaff, spend the morning exploring back roads on the sparsely populated Inishowen 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.

You'll continue your travels through beautiful Inishowen past beaches and small towns on your way 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!

Next 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 for the next two nights. On the shores of Lough Swilly, this beautiful, early 1800s Country Manor House is set amidst mature trees on beautifully-tended grounds fringed by a two mile long sandy beach. Enjoy the indoor heated swimming pool and steam room, have fun on the tennis courts, play croquet on the lawns, or relax in one of its elegant parlors.

You can stroll into town along the beautiful 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 – Free Day

Sleep in or relax with a book or enjoy the daily papers in one of the beautiful period lounges. Walk on the beach, have a swim in the indoor pool, explore the town, or check out a nearby golf course. Enjoy your second night at this beautiful Irish Manor home.

Saturday: Day 5 – Rathmullan to Ardara

Highlights: Fanad Head Lighthouse, Doe Castle, Horn Head, Two Nights of Music and Fun in Ardara Town

After your relaxing nights in Rathmullan, your journey takes you north along the wonderfully scenic shores of the Fanad Peninsula. Along twisting cliff top roads at the end of the headland, you find the Fanad Head Lighthouse spectacularly set on sheer cliff walls guarding ships in the thunderous North Atlantic.

Your adventure continues over a beautiful bridge to the Rossguill Peninsula and the lovely town of Carrigart for elevenses (coffee or tea around eleven o'clock). Your journey then takes you to 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.

The route then takes you to the magnificent Horn Head. This sheer cliff spectacle will be a sight to remember, swarmed by seabirds, hillsides of purple heather, and stunning views of beaches and neighboring peninsulas.

As lunch calls, you'll arrive into picturesque Dunfanaghy. This local hub has some fine eateries and splendid ocean vistas. Afterwards 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 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 – Explore Donegal & Night Two in Ardara

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

Your Sunday drive on Donegal's Glencolumcille 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 Glencolumcille. 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 coffee and 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, which changes its name six times!

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!

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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