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We Didn't Invent Ireland,
We Just Made it Fun.



15 night Self-Drive Tour of Ireland

Day 1 – Saturday – US to Dublin

Cead Mile Failte! One hundred thousand welcomes! Upon clearing customs take the shuttle to your airport hotel where you can relax for the evening.

Overnight & Breakfast: Carlton Hotel Dublin Airport

Day 2 – Sunday – Dublin to Belfast

After breakfast, pick up your car rental and travel north on the M1 to Junction 10, take N51 towards Slane and follow signs to Newgrange. To Bru Na Boinne. Brú Na Bóinne Visitor Centre interprets the Neolithic monuments of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. The extensive exhibition includes a full scale replica of the chamber at Newgrange as well as a full model of one of the smaller tombs at Knowth. The Great Mound at Knowth was built over 5000 years ago, probably after the construction of Newgrange and before the construction of Dowth. The Great Mound at Knowth is similar in size to Newgrange and is surrounded by 18 smaller satellite mounds. The Great Mound has two passages with entrances on opposite sides, the western passage is 34 metres long and the eastern passage is 40 meter long, ending with a cruciform chamber. After your visit travel back to the M1 North. This road will take you across the border. The M1 will become the A1 in Northern Ireland – the road to Belfast is straightforward. Once you arrive into the city I suggest you use the McCauselands Car Park (27-31 Grosvenor Road, Belfast, County Antrim BT12 4GR), which is £16 for 24 hours. I have been advised from the hotel that the concierge can valet park the car for you.

Suggested visits in Belfast:

- Titanic Visitor Centre
- Carrickfergus Castle
- City Hall
- Botanic Gardens

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- Walled murals

NB. You will need Euro currency for the toll booth which is situated on the M1 near Drogheda, County Louth. They will accept Euro notes at the attended booths if you do not have the correct change. The charge is €1.90.

Overnight & Breakfast: Europa Hotel, Belfast

Day 3 – Monday – Belfast to Portrush via Antrim Coastline

This morning if you want a direct route, travel on the M2/M22 until junction 1 where you pick up the A26 heading towards the North Coast. Alternatively if you would prefer, you could travel on the coastal route via Larne & Carnlough which would allow for a more scenic drive along the beautiful Antrim coastline.

Suggested visits:

- Glenarm Castle & Gardens
- Giant's Causeway
- Carrick-A-Rede Bridge
- Bushmills Distillery

Overnight & Breakfast: Shola Coach House, Portrush

Day 4 – Tuesday – Bushmills to Donegal Town via Derry City

Today you will leave Bushmills and travel through to Donegal. Leave the North coast via Limavady and join the A2 which will lead you straight to Derry City. This city has been through so much, especially since the troubles of Northern Ireland, which lasted over 30 years. The murals (*street art*) expressed by the community are personal memories and depictions of recent and past events in the city's political and social history. This is a great opportunity to take a Walking Tour of Derry to hear the history from someone who has lived there through the troubles and to also find out about the medieval history behind the walls of Derry. You continue on to Donegal town & your stunning Hotel where you could visit **Donegal Castle**, a medieval fort built by the O'Donnell Clan.

Overnight & Breakfast: Solis Lough Eske Castle

Day 5 – Wednesday – Day touring Co. Donegal

After a leisurely breakfast at your hotel, you could start your day touring Donegal Town. Donegal means "Fort of the Foreigners", after the Vikings who built a garrison here. You could take the coast road to **Killybegs**, one of Ireland's biggest fishing ports. From here you may drive along **Slieve League** to take in some more of Ireland's beautiful coastline and also bear witness to some of the highest cliffs in Ireland. Slieve league is almost three times higher than the Cliffs of Moher although they are not as famous. From here you can continue up the coastline and visit **Glenveagh National Park**. This national treasure lies in the heart of the Derryveagh Mountains in the north-west of Co. Donegal. It is a remote and hauntingly beautiful wilderness of rugged mountains and pristine lakes. The park is divided into three areas. Browse the walled gardens and enjoy the historic grandeur of the well maintained historic estate home.

Suggested visits:

- Slieve League Cliffs
- Glenveagh National Park – Castle & Gardens

Overnight & Breakfast: Solis Lough Eske Castle

Day 6 – Thursday – Donegal to Westport

After breakfast today leave Donegal town and head towards Ballyshannon which will allow you to pick up the N15 towards Sligo town. Continue through County Sligo and stop along the way at Drumcliff, where you have the opportunity to visit the burial place of W.B Yeats set at the foothills of Ben Bulbin Mountain. As you drive through County Sligo you may wish to visit some of the sights you had picked out including Innismurray or the cemetery's you had highlighted. Arrive in Westport in the late afternoon and enjoy this wonderful town base for the next two nights from which to explore the beauty and historic sites the West of Ireland has to offer.

Suggested visits in County Sligo:

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- Inishmurray, near Grange
- Carrowkeel Passage Tomb Cemetery
- Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery
- Cairn of Knocknarea

Overnight & Breakfast: Castlecourt Hotel, Westport

Day 7 – Friday – Touring County Mayo

After a restful sleep you are free to explore Westport & County Mayo. I would recommend that you enjoy time up near Ballina where you can visit the Ceide Fields near Ballycastle and enjoy time in and around Westport town.

Suggested visits:

- Westport House & Gardens
- Croagh Patrick

Overnight & Breakfast: Castlecourt Hotel, Westport

Day 8 – Saturday – Westport to Ennis

Today you will leave Westport and travel to Ennis. There are a variety of routes and sights you can take in on your journey. If you have not yet been to Connemara then I would suggest you travel on the N59 into the heart of Connemara and visit Kylemore Abbey and then continue on to Galway City for a late lunch. Then take the direct road, N/M18 to Ennis for your overnight. Alternatively travel straight to Galway city and spend the day in this fascinating city before travelling on to your hotel.

Suggested visits:

- Galway Cathedral
- Galway Bay
- The Claddagh
- Spanish Arch

Overnight & Breakfast: Old Ground Hotel, Ennis

Day 9 – Sunday - Touring County Clare & the Burren

An exciting day awaits as you tour around the Burren Region. The word "Burren" comes from an Irish word "Boíreann" meaning a rocky place. This is an extremely appropriate name when you consider the lack of soil cover and the extent of exposed Limestone Pavement. However it has been referred to in the past as "Fertile rock" due to the mixture of nutrient rich herb and floral species. You will get a truly unique perspective of the Burren, if you choose to enjoy a hike with local, John Connolly at Wild Burren (www.burrenwalks.com). Travel on in the afternoon to view the awesome & mighty Cliffs of Moher. Enjoy one of the most outstanding coastal features of Ireland and biggest tourist attraction. Rising sheer above the sea to nearly 700 feet and extending along the coast for nearly five miles.

Suggested visits:

- Poul nabrone Dolmen
- Cahercommaun Stone Fort

Overnight & Breakfast: Old Ground Hotel, Ennis

Day 10 – Monday – Ennis to Killarney

Your journey today takes you through Limerick and possibly a stop in the beautiful village of Adare. If time allows you could tour the Dingle peninsula and Sleah Head today which would leave more time tomorrow for the Ring of Kerry. Travel back along the coastal road and pick up signs for Killarney where you will spend the next 2 nights on your Ireland adventure.

Overnight & Breakfast: Cahernane House Hotel

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Day 11 – Tuesday – Day touring County Kerry

After leisurely breakfast you have another exciting day of touring as you experience one of the most scenic drives in all of Europe around the famous *Ring of Kerry*. We would recommend, if you would prefer to take a guided tour of this part of the country as you will be able to enjoy it so much more (Wild Kerry Day trips - www.oconnorautotours.ie). You will head along the coastline of the Iveragh Peninsula through the towns of Glenbeigh, Cahirciveen, Waterville and Sneem and enjoy the spectacular views as you circle the mountainous MacGillycuddy Reeks. You complete the tour via the Ladies View back to Killarney. This is Ireland as you have always imagined it!

Suggested visits:

- Skellig Michael

Overnight & Breakfast: Cahernane House Hotel

Day 12 – Wednesday – Killarney to Ardmore

This morning travel from Killarney along the N22 towards Cork city where you have a fantastic choice of visits on your way to Ardmore. You will pass through the village of Blarney where you will be able to stop and visit Blarney Castle. *Blarney Castle*, one of the oldest landmarks in Co. Cork, is best known for the famous “Blarney Stone” which as tradition dictates confers the gift of eloquence upon all those who kiss it. If time allows you could visit the beautiful harbor village of Cobh. Tour the *Cobh Heritage Museum* located at the Victorian Railway Station. Cobh is where the Titanic made its last port of call before its one and only voyage. Continue along the N25 through Youghal before taking the turn off for Ardmore on the R73.

Overnight & Breakfast: Cliff Town House, Ardmore

Day 13 – Thursday – Ardmore to Wicklow

Today you have 2 route options to decide upon on your journey to Wicklow. Choose to travel North and you will be able to visit the Rock of Cashel & the town of Kilkenny before travelling east to Wicklow. Alternatively, continue along the coast via Waterford, Enniscorthy and Arklow before arriving in the Garden County of Wicklow. Your accommodation tonight is just north of Wicklow town in Rathnew.

Suggested visits:

- Rock of Cashel
- Glen of Aherlow
- Kilkenny Castle

OR

- Waterford Town
- Dunbrody Abbey

Overnight & Breakfast: Tinakilly House Hotel

Day 14 – Friday – Wicklow to Dublin – Hire Car drop off

After a leisurely breakfast, and hotel check out you will make your way to Dublin. But first you must spend time exploring beautiful County Wicklow and all it has to offer. Head for the heathery hills of the Wicklow Mountains, springing up at the edge of Dublin’s southern suburbs. Drive through the county and visit *Glendalough "the glen of the two lakes"*. It is a truly spellbinding place - an ancient monastic settlement and two clear water lakes beneath the sheer cliffs of a deep valley which was carved out by glaciers during the Ice Age. The monastic settlement has been a center for pilgrims and visitors since its foundation by St. Kevin in the 6th century. Continue your tour with a visit to the quaint village of *Avoca*, home to the original Avoca hand weavers. After a brief stop at the Visitor Centre which tells the story since 1723, shop and sample some delightful food at their café if you choose. Avoca is also home to making of the popular Ballykissangle television series. At your leisure travel North to Dublin Airport where you can drop off your hire car and take a short journey into the city to your hotel. From Wicklow, travel on the N11 which becomes the M11 and join the M50. This motorway circles Dublin city and will take you North to Dublin airport.

NB. You will pay a toll on Dublin’s M50 motorway of €3.10. This is not a manned tolling booth, it simply makes a note of your car registration and you will have until 8pm the next day (13th June) to make the

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payment. You can pre pay this but I understand you will not know your car reg until you arrive in Ireland. I suggest you either pre pay once you have good wi-fi signal in one of the hotels you stay in before you reach Dublin or once you have dropped the car back at the airport you can pay in one of the retail outlets that have the Payzone Sign in Dublin City centre. Website is www.eflow.ie.

Overnight & Breakfast: Trinity City Hotel

Day 15 – Saturday – Dublin City touring

All that Dublin City has to offer is on your itinerary for your final full day. Enjoy highlights such as Trinity College, O'Connell Street, Molly Malone, the River Liffey, Ha'Penny Bridge, Christchurch Cathedral and St Patrick's Cathedral. You may choose to shop on Grafton or Henry Street, or enjoy a pint or two at one of the famous pubs in Dublin.

Suggested visits:

- Dublin Castle
- Kilmainham Gaol
- Jameson Distillery
- Guinness Storehouse
- Trinity College & the Book of Kells

Overnight & Breakfast: Trinity City Hotel

Day 16 – Sunday 14th June

After a leisurely breakfast, and hotel check out you will make your way to Dublin Airport for your flight home. It has been my sincere pleasure in designing your suggested, customized itinerary for you. I hope you have a wonderful trip to Ireland.

Slainte!

A few things to remember

- Please check that you hold a valid passport for travel to Ireland.
- Recommended check-in for international flights is 3 hours, Baggage allowance – Please check with your airline and re-confirm your flight times before day of departure.
- Passengers please be advised - all hotel taxes, and service charges are included
- Some banks will not accept \$100 bills
- When travelling in Northern Ireland you will need £ sterling currency. In Southern Ireland € Euro is required.

NOT INCLUDED

- Ferry crossings, attraction entrance fees, parking or tolls.
- Porterage at hotels.

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