



Poems, Prayers & Promises

A Journey to the Land of Saints & Scholars

Created for the St. Charles Congregational UCC

May 24 - June 5, 2010

From the Rose of Tralee to Dublin's fair city, Ireland is an almost mythic land of lyrical folk song, romantic poetry, turbulent history and deep green fields. It is as beautiful as it is proud and its religious backdrop is as disturbing as it is hopeful.

This spring, join us for a meaningful experience of the Emerald Isle. From the pre-Celtic hillforts punctuating the island to her dramatic seascapes and fabulous formal gardens, Ireland is a land of gracious discoveries. Our itinerary offers an introduction to Ireland, both north and south, for travellers who want to see beyond the tourist façade and explore the deeper issues that face this small and complex island.

We begin in Dublin, where the city is introduced in panoramic sightseeing. Free time allows you to explore one of its superb museums, or wander through Temple Bar and the revitalized riverfront. An excursion to Powerscourt House and Glendalough, one of the most beautiful and important of the ancient Irish monasteries, is the perfect conclusion to a stay in the capital.

Our circuit of the island starts toward the southwest with visits to the Dingle Peninsula and the Ring of Kerry. This is the region that hosted the "Golden Age" of Ireland, when the religious communities kept the flame of knowledge alight while the rest of Europe was plunged into the Dark Ages.

We then discover the extraordinary flora of The Burren, a unique landscape of geological wonder, and visit the dramatic cliffs of Moher. We continue northwest through the legendary beauty of Connemara. We'll pause at the grave of WB Yeats, in the shadow of Benbulbin Mountain, and explore "Yeats Country" from our castle hotel.

And as we cross the border into Northern Ireland, we'll stand in awe at the Giant's Causeway on the north coast. The recent "troubles" in Ulster have eclipsed the realities of her warm and welcoming people, dramatic Gaelic history and spectacular countryside.



Glendalough's Round Tower



Ireland's West Coast

The cost of this itinerary, per person, double occupancy is:

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| Chicago, O'Hare departure: | \$3790 |
| Land only (no airfare included): | \$2990 |
| Single supplement: | \$650 |

The following services are included:

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| Airfare: | Round trip air on Aer Lingus from Chicago to Dublin, All taxes, customs fees, etc. included. |
| Hotels: | 11 nights accommodation in first-class hotels. All hotel taxes and service charges included. |
| Coaching: | All ground transportation as detailed in the itinerary. |
| Meals: | Full breakfast daily, 8 dinners (2 with traditional music) |
| Guides: | Discover Europe tour director throughout. Local guides in Belfast and Dublin. |
| Expenses: | Porterage of one large suitcase per person. All tips to guides and bus drivers. |
| Entrances: | Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary. |
| Insurance: | Complete travel insurance including cancellation coverage. |





Monday, May 24th. Evening departure from Chicago aboard Aer Lingus' flight to Dublin.

Tuesday, May 25th. Morning arrival at Dublin Airport, where we will be met by our guide. A short drive brings us to our hotel in the center of the city. If our rooms are not ready on arrival, we will store the luggage and our guide will lead a short walking tour of the neighborhood. The rest of the day is free to unpack, relax and begin exploring the neighborhood. This evening we gather at our hotel for a welcome dinner. **(D)** **Overnight: Dublin**

Wednesday May 26th. A morning sightseeing tour with a local guide introduces us to the city. We'll visit Christ Church, St. Patrick's Cathedral and drive through Phoenix Park, ending at Trinity College to view the Book of Kells. The afternoon is free to see the botanical gardens or maybe to do some shopping along fashionable Grafton Street. This evening we'll drive north of the city, along the coast to the fishing village of Howth, where we'll have dinner and traditional Irish entertainment at the famous Abbey Tavern. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Dublin**

Thursday May 27th. The day begins with a drive south to Powerscourt Gardens, then through the wooded slopes of the Wicklow Mountains to the monastic site of Glendalough, founded by St. Kevin in the 6th AD. A free evening in Dublin, perhaps a play at the Abbey Theatre. **(B)** **Overnight: Dublin**

Friday May 28th. Leaving Dublin, we head southwest, arriving at Cashel in the late morning. The Rock of Cashel is like the Acropolis of Athens, dominating the surrounding countryside and supporting important religious structures: the cathedral, a round tower, and Cormac's Chapel, the supreme masterpiece of Irish Romanesque architecture. After lunch we continue our journey westwards past Cork, stopping at Blarney Castle, before arriving at our hotel in Killarney. There will be time to freshen up before dinner at the hotel. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Killarney**

Saturday May 29th. A full day excursion today around the scenic Dingle Peninsula that will blend magnificent views of coastal scenery with fascinating antiquities ranging from Iron Age stone forts to inscribed stones, early Christian oratories and beehive huts. We'll head straight out to Sleah Head for the magnificent views over to the Blaskets and continue around, to visit the Oratory of Gallarus. We'll stop for lunch in the town of Dingle and then cross over to the north coast of the peninsula. We visit the largest working windmill in Europe at Blennerville and return to our hotel via Tralee. This evening is free to sample local nightlife. **(B)** **Overnight: Killarney**



The Burren

Sunday, May 30th. Today, from Killarney, we drive the Ring of Kerry, 112 miles of the most spectacular coastal scenery in the world. The road runs around the edge of the Iveragh Peninsula passing through little villages and hugging the cliffs giving fabulous views over the Atlantic Ocean. Return to Killarney for free time – perhaps a visit Muckross House, a Victorian mansion built in 1843. Dinner at the hotel is included this evening. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Killarney**

Monday, May 31st. This morning we depart for a day exploring North Clare. We'll drive through Limerick and stop first at the Craggaunowen Project, where we will see a replica of a Bronze Age crannog, and the coracle that Tim Severin sailed from Ireland to Newfoundland in 1976, imitating the fabled sixth-century voyage of St. Brendan. After a stop for lunch, we continue through Corrofin and Kilfenora, with its 12th-century cathedral and high crosses, to visit the Cliffs of Moher. From here we explore "The Burren", including several megalithic sites. This is an area of strange limestone scenery that was described in frustration by one of Cromwell's generals as having "neither wood to hang a man, water to drown him nor earth to bury him in." Our final visit of the day will be to Corcomroe Abbey (St. Mary of the Fertile Rock), founded in 1194 and notable for carvings that reflect flowers of the Burren. We continue to our hotel in Galway for dinner **(B, D)** **Overnight: Galway**

Tuesday, June 1st. We drive north today, through County Galway and County Mayo to Yeats country. We'll first visit the Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery, in the shadow of Knocknaree and see Queen Maeve's Grave dominating the skyline. From here we'll head into town and have lunch. Then we'll visit the County Art Gallery to see several works by Jack Yeats and the Yeat's Memorial Building with its exhibition about this remarkable family. Leaving Sligo, we'll stop in Drumcliff to pay our respects at W.B. Yeats' grave and then head for our castle hotel where dinner awaits us. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Collooney**

Wednesday, June 2nd. We'll cross into the Six Counties of Northern Ireland at Belleek and drive along the north side of Lower Lough Erne across Boa Island. Here we'll stop and visit the Caldragh cemetery with its wonderful pre-Christian Janus figures. Then an inland drive north brings us to the Giant's Causeway with its bizarre basalt columns that recede into the ocean which gave rise to the legend of the giant, Finn Mac-Cool, who is said to have laid out the steps to reach his lady love in Scotland. We arrive at our hotel in Belfast in the late afternoon. Dinner at the hotel this evening. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Belfast**

Thursday, June 3rd. Our first visit this morning is to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, one of the finest collections of vernacular architecture and historic transport in the world. We'll have time for lunch here before visiting nearby Mount Stewart House, now owned by the National Trust, to explore its magnificent gardens. The rest of the afternoon and evening are free. **(B)** **Overnight: Belfast**



Newgrange

Friday, June 4th. We head south today back into the Republic. En route we'll turn west at Drogheda and journey along the Boyne Valley, past the site of the battle of 1690, to Newgrange Necropolis. The three passage tombs of Dowth, Knowth and Newgrange together form what is probably the most significant and impressive Neolithic site in Europe. From here we continue to our nearby hotel with time to relax before a farewell dinner. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Malahide**

Saturday, June 5th. This morning there will be time for a leisurely breakfast before the transfer to Dublin Airport for the return flight to Chicago. **(B)**