

## Go South Tour Itinerary

### **Tuesday: Arrival in Dublin, Ireland**

Welcome to Ireland! You arrive in Dublin and check in to your first night's accommodation\*.

If you have time, check out some of the excellent tours of the city and sample some of 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!

\* We will contact you prior to your departure date with your Dublin hotel details.

### **Wednesday: Day 1 – Dublin to Dungarvan**

Meet your guide and the rest of your trip participants and begin your wonderful and exciting travels in Ireland. Leaving Dublin and heading south, we navigate the rugged and wild beauty of the Wicklow Mountain's peat bogs, lakes, and valleys along the old and twisty military road. For years, early rebels evaded British troops and monks founded places of learning and worship over a thousand years ago. After many stops to enjoy the sights, we'll stop for lunch with time to explore on your own.

In the afternoon, we head further south through Counties Carlow and Kilkenny to visit an amazing medieval monastery. We'll discover forgotten 1,300 year old stone crosses intricately carved with complex Celtic designs and an ancient stone tomb ~6,000 years old. Onwards to County Waterford and our final stop for the night, the lovely harbor town of Dungarvan on Ireland's southern Atlantic shore. The night is yours to relax, eat, drink, and be merry!

**Day 1 Highlights:** Wicklow Mountains, Medieval Monastery, 7<sup>th</sup> Century Stone Crosses, Ancient Stone Tomb, Dungarvan

### **Thursday: Day 2 – Dungarvan to Baltimore**

Great views as we drive the scenic southern coast to see Ireland's finest example of a medieval Round Tower. Multi-story stone towers like this were built over a thousand years ago by pious monks and endured a long and turbulent history. We move onto the coastal town of Kinsale and explore the nearby "Charles Fort" to see its impressive 17<sup>th</sup> Century ramparts and bastions. We stop for lunch in Kinsale, known for its many restaurants and excellent food.

Continuing on, we find a mystifying solar alignment held within a tranquil Stone Circle. This secluded site was of great importance to the early Irish and was timed to the setting sun of the winter solstice. We then head to our final stop for the night, the colorful town of Baltimore, one of the southernmost towns in Ireland! Enjoy this wonderful small town, take a walk to the solitary and enigmatic beacon tower on the end of the headland, or take in the great views of the harbor right from your room.

**Day 2 Highlights:** 9<sup>th</sup> Century Round Tower, Charles Fort, Kinsale, Ancient Stone Circle, Baltimore

### **Friday: Day 3 – Baltimore to Kenmare**

A magnificent day as we drive through some of the most visually stunning parts of Ireland. First, we head to the Mizen Head Peninsula and Ireland's most southerly point via a beautiful, slender arched bridge spanning a deep ravine.

Moving on northwards we come to the fantastic town of Bantry and enjoy its eclectic open air market. Locals from near and far bring their wares to sell on its large square where you'll find anything from chickens to crepes to medieval swords! As we leave, we'll have fine views of the beautiful bay and then continue on through the unusually tropical town of Glengarriff.

We then follow an amazing route through the Beara Peninsula to County Kerry over the countless switchbacks of the Healy Pass and down to the town of Kenmare. This magical and festive town is full of quaint shops, lively bars, and great traditional music. It also features a host of good restaurants and we stay here for two nights so cozy in and relax!

**Day 3 Highlights:** Mizzen Head, Bantry, The Beara Peninsula, Kenmare

#### **Saturday: Day 4 – Kenmare and the Skellig Islands**

Today we'll take a boat ride to one of the most amazing places in Ireland and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Skellig Michael Island. In the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, devoted monks braved treacherous waters to this exposed rocky outcrop towering amidst the open Atlantic. Climbing the 650 steps to over 200 meters, we'll discover a small group of beehive shaped stone huts. Set ingeniously into the side of the rock face, this small monastery has withstood centuries of Atlantic storms. Up to 12 to 15 monks lived in this austere location till the 12<sup>th</sup> Century and it remained a place of pilgrimage right up to the 1800s. This incredible cathedral like isle is also home to puffins, storm petrels, and gannets. As part of our trip, we'll also ride the waves up close to the Little Skellig Island to see upwards of fifty thousand gannets circling and diving for fish.

\*\* With as much effort as we put in to planning our trips, there are times when we must bow to the greater force of nature so trips to the Skelligs are subject to fair weather conditions to ensure a safe crossing.

For those who decide they'd rather stay ashore, this is your free day! Sleep in, relax, or explore the many fun and interesting things do in and around the town such as biking, golfing, shopping, fishing, horseback riding, and hill walking. Enjoy another great night in this enchanting town!

**Day 4 Highlights:** Skellig Islands, Kenmare...Free Time to Explore!

#### **Sunday: Day 5 – Kenmare to Dingle**

Saying goodbye to Kenmare, our route takes us to the MacGillycuddy's Reeks, the largest mountains in Ireland, and home to the spectacular Killarney National Park. A photographer's dream...you may well wish for an extra pair of eyes! We'll make our way over the pass at Moll's Gap and work our way down by Killarney's captivating lakes, waterfalls, and panoramic vistas.

The views keep coming along coastal roads and sandy beaches flanked by green hills as we make our way to the Dingle Peninsula and Dingle town for lunch. After lunch, we take a trip round the dramatic landscape of the Sleat Headland. This Irish speaking area is rich in archeological sites and is Ireland's most westerly shore. Afterwards, we'll make our way back to town for a fun-filled night. This charismatic fishing town is filled with colorful buildings and many great places to dine or shop and you'll have fun discovering bars that double as hardware or shoe stores. You could even go for a stroll along the bay where you're likely to spot Dingle's local hero, a wild bottle nose dolphin called Fungi who has adopted the bay as his home!

**Day 5 Highlights:** Killarney National Park, Sleat Head Drive, Dingle Town, Fungi the Dolphin

### **Monday: Day 6 – Dingle to Ballyvaughan**

We depart Dingle heading over the Slieve Mish Mountains through northern Kerry and onto Ireland's largest river, the Shannon. This wide and navigable river has been an import trade route for thousands of years. At the small town of Tarbert, we'll hop aboard a ferry for a ride across the breadth of the river and arrive on the other side in the geological wonder of County Clare.

Stopping along the way in wonderful towns like Lahinch, where surfers and horses share its grand beach, we'll head to one of the world's most spectacular sights, the "Cliffs of Moher." Looming over 700 feet above the smashing force of the Atlantic Ocean, these sheer and majestic cliffs are simply not to be missed!

From the cliffs heading north, we pass through the amazing Burren landscape, designated a Special Area of Conservation. Often likened to lunar rock, the Burren's large and seemingly barren area is remarkably full of life and has an impressive cache of archeological sites. Once a seabed of carboniferous limestone, it rose up and eroded over thousands of years to form a vast array of cracks and fissures. These provide hidden shelter for a unique range of flora, with Alpine and Arctic plants living alongside Mediterranean plants.

Moving north, we'll arrive at the small town of Ballyvaughan. Set amongst the Burren's rocky rolling hills, this harbor town is our home for the night. Try their renowned local chowder or sample one of the many varietals of whiskey to be found at O'Loclainn's bar.

**Day 6 Highlights:** The Slieve Mish Mountains, River Shannon, Cliffs of Moher, The Burren, Ballyvaughan

### **Tuesday: Day 7 – Ballyvaughan to Dublin**

We'll start our day following the coast road to the town of Kinvarra and Dunguaire Castle stunningly set within the natural moat of Kinvarra's shallow bay. This medieval castle gets its name from the ancient King Guaire whose right arm grew longer out of generosity.

We continue on and again meet up with the River Shannon and make our crossing at the aptly named town of Shannonbridge. From here we work our way through the extensive peat bogs of the area to Clonmacnoise, Ireland's most important early Christian site. Set serenely along the banks of the River Shannon, it holds some of the finest examples of Celtic crosses in the country in addition to the fine carvings on a 15<sup>th</sup> Century gothic doorway.

Afterwards we continue to follow the Shannon north to lunch in the city of Athlone. Located on a strategic crossing of the river for over a thousand years, it has endured many battles and sieges. Wander along the river bank and explore its many cafes and restaurants. And no trip to Athlone would be complete without a visit to Sean's Bar, founded in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century making it Ireland's oldest pub!

Alas we head back to Dublin and your last night in the Emerald Isle. Enjoy a meal in one of the many fine restaurants, walk the busy streets, and savor your final hours and a lifetime of memories.

**Slan Beo!! Irish for "Goodbye, live life!"**

**Day 7 Highlights:** Clonmacnoise, Athlone, Dublin

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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