

Go West Tour Itinerary

Monday: 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 the tour's start date with your Dublin hotel details.

Tuesday: Day 1 – Dublin to Birr

Meet your guide and the rest of your trip participants and begin your Irish adventure. Leaving Dublin and heading inland, you trace a path along an ancient highway through the lush counties of Wicklow and Kildare. You'll discover the incredible Celtic carvings of a 17 foot stone cross, standing watch since the 8th Century.

Your course continues through one of the oldest car racing routes in the world. And here in the homeland of Antarctic explorer Ernest Shackleton, you'll find beautiful country towns like Athy and Abbeyleix.

You then head up and over the Slieve Bloom Mountains and onwards to the Georgian town of Birr, your home for the night. This wonderful market town is home to what was once the largest telescope in the world on the grounds of the fantastic Birr Castle! Enjoy a tour of the castle grounds, gardens, and be amazed at the 1800s Victorian telescope - Leviathan.

Day 1 Highlights: Celtic Stone Cross, Country Market Towns, Birr Castle & Gardens and its Great Telescope - Leviathan

Wednesday: Day 2 – Birr to Roundstone

You leave the lovely town of Birr and head westward toward the market town of Gort and the ancient monastic site at Kilmacduagh. This astonishing site has buildings spanning the 11th to the 13th Century including a 115 foot leaning Round Tower!

Your next port of call is Coole Park where Lady Gregory held council to Ireland's and the world's literary geniuses including Shaw, Yeats, and Joyce. On the grounds of the old estate, you'll find the autograph tree bearing the names of Ireland's scholarly heroes.

Then you're onto Galway City for lunch with plenty of time to explore its rich and vibrant downtown area. Your journey continues further into County Galway to the strongest bastion of the O'Flaherty clan, Aughnanure Castle. The boisterous and rebellious O'Flaherty's controlled most of the surrounding area from the six stories of this 15th Century tower castle.

From here you journey through Connemara's wild and beautiful landscape of lakes and bogland to your overnight town, Roundstone. This small fishing town is a great place to get in touch with truly rural Ireland.

Day 2 Highlights: Kilmacduagh Monastery, Coole Park, Galway City, Aughnanure Castle, Roundstone

Thursday: Day 3 – Roundstone to Westport

Leaving Roundstone, you set out to discover Connemara - an area of extraordinary natural beauty. Stopping frequently during the day, you'll get out and explore the many incredible sights and towns along the way.

We begin by navigating the headland and pass the landing site of the first transatlantic flight by Alcock and Brown in 1919. This area was also where Marconi sent the very first wireless radio transmission across the Atlantic!

Continuing north, you discover the colorful town of Clifden and then onto the amazing Connemara National Park flanked by the stark beauty of the Twelve Bens (or peaks). With luck, you'll see some wild Connemara ponies, known for their hardiness and kind nature and are Ireland's only native horse.

Your trip takes you on a wonderful loop through the Renvyle Peninsula and onto the majestic fjord of Killary Harbor. This 16 km sea-filled gorge has rich waters for salmon and mussels and its incredible scenery is further enhanced by the towering Mweerea, the highest mountain in the region. You'll pass into County Mayo and through the stunning area of Delphi and Doo Lough.

Further on you come to Croagh Patrick, Ireland's Holy Mountain. Every year its harsh and rocky slopes are climbed by thousands in pilgrimage, often walking barefoot to the summit. Then finally to your last stop for the day and our home for the next two nights, Westport. This laid back town is a fantastic place to unwind, spend time, and wander its many shops, bars, and restaurants. And those who are willing to stay up a little later will be rewarded with some fantastic local music!

Day 3 Highlights: Wild Ponies, Connemara, Renvyle Peninsula, Killary Harbor, Croagh Patrick, Westport

Friday: Day 4 – Westport

Your free day! Sleep in or take a trip to hike Croagh Patrick and avail of some of the most incredible views in the world. Take a walk to Westport harbor with several restaurants and pubs and you'll find the stately Westport house and grounds.

Alternatively you could simply meander through the town's bars, shops, and restaurants hours and become acquainted with some of the friendly locals. There is also a lot to do around the town such as biking, golfing, or fishing. Enjoy another great night in this fun town!

Day 4 Highlights: Wonderful Town of Westport...Free Time to Explore!

Saturday: Day 5 – Westport to Enniscrone

You set out today to explore the incredible Achill Island, Ireland's largest island and a culturally rich Irish speaking region. The splendor of Achill's scenery spans incredibly rugged towering sea cliffs to beautiful and remote sandy beaches. Fragments of Ireland's great history can be found all over the island from pirate castles to deserted famine villages. With a keen eye, you may even spy a basking shark often seen off the shore line.

After lunch on the island, you'll head back to the mainland and work your way north through County Mayo to the ancient site of the Céide Fields. Regarded as the most extensive Stone Age site in the world containing the oldest known field systems, it lay buried under a blanket of bog for over 5,500 years. You'll then continue your journey to Downpatrick Head whose sheer cliffs and giant solitary sea stack as well as an immense blowhole have fostered a variety of legends and folklore.

After your thrilling cliff edge experience, make your way to our final stop for the night, the beautiful town of Enniscrone. Set beside a long and beautiful Atlantic beach, the town is a favorite among the Irish themselves. For over a hundred years, people have come to relax at the local seaweed and steam baths or to view some of the best sunsets in Ireland!

Day 5 Highlights: Achill Island, Céide Fields, Downpatrick Head, Enniscrone

Sunday: Day 6 – Enniscrone to Oldcastle

On leaving Enniscrone, you carve a path through the Ox Mountains down to the fascinating town of Ballymote and the ruins of Ballymote Castle. The town also has intertwined history with the U.S. going back to the Civil War and formation of the Fighting 69th. It was also the home of Brother Walfrid, the founder of the Glasgow Celtic football team.

You'll continue on your trip through the north Midlands discovering an ancient tomb or a forgotten ring fort with a hidden secret underground passageway! Your journey then takes us to the mighty River Shannon, Ireland's longest river and a fantastic lunch stop in the lovely town of Carrick-on-Shannon.

After lunch, you make your way further east to what was once the forgotten fifth province of Mide. This area is steeped in folklore, magic, and myth and it was here on the mystical Lough Derravaragh that one of Ireland's great tales, The Children of Lir, finds its ending. Also here amongst the rolling drumlins, you'll find the tiny village of Fore and the intriguing "Seven Wonders of Fore." As your day winds to a close, you make your way to the small market town of Oldcastle. Explore the town's pubs and chat with the expressive locals or enjoy a wander down an old country road.

Day 6 Highlights: Ballymote, Ancient Ring Fort, Carrick-on-Shannon, Fore, Oldcastle

Monday: Day 7 – Oldcastle to Dublin

Your day begins just outside of Oldcastle on the wonderfully named Sliabe Na Caillighe -- the Hill of the Witch! It is here that 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 September equinox making this tomb possibly the oldest celestial calendar on earth!

Your route then takes you through the gentle rolling hills of the Boyne Valley. This area is rich with folklore and history. It was also the setting for the most decisive battle in Ireland, the "Battle of the Boyne" in 1690, the largest battle ever fought in Ireland or Britain.

Alas you 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 enjoy a lifetime of memories.

Day 7 Highlights: Loughcrew Cairns, Historic Boyne Valley, Dublin

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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