

IRELAND

Connemara & Galway Bay

A Guided Walking Adventure





Table of Contents

Daily Itinerary4

Tour Itinerary Overview 11

Tour Facts at a Glance..... 13

Traveling To and From Your Tour 15

Information & Policies 18

Ireland at a Glance20

Packing List25

Travel Style

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep in to the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.

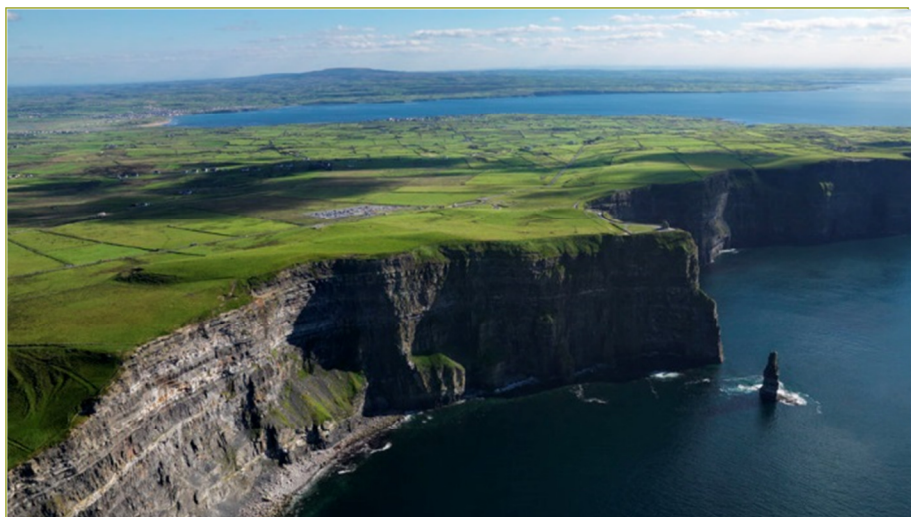
And, with our **optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **Cork Pre-tour Extension** to complement this destination, we take care of all the travel to simplify the journey. Refer to the attached itinerary for more details.



Overview

Lake-studded peat lands, emerald mountains, and unspoiled beaches render Ireland ideal for walking, especially in the Connemara region, which spans County Galway and County Mayo. This broad peninsula, surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean on three sides, offers a perfect setting for coastal explorations. From Ennis, you journey north to your first destination in Galway Bay and the heart of the bare karst landscape of the Burren. A walk along the Cliffs of Moher offers a dramatic introduction to the Irish shoreline, where verdant land meets the roaring ocean. On the northernmost point of your itinerary, you explore Killary Harbor, the island's only fjord. Island excursions complete your experience of the peninsula, and offer opportunities to admire the striking Irish coast from a new perspective. The country's topography, however, does not solely constitute the magnificence of this adventure. An Iron Age stone ring fort, Bronze Age burial sites, Celtic crosses, and early Christian monasteries are some of the historical sites that you encounter on the way.

Each evening, family-owned accommodations, one on stately grounds, as well as a tastefully renovated monastery, offer respite from the day's activities. Exquisite meals are prepared by your hotel's award-winning chef or you dine on fresh, local fare at favorite family-owned restaurants. The island's crowning glory is the Irish spirit: ebullient and witty, life-affirming, and infectious.



Daily Itinerary

DAY 1

Meeting in Shannon. Dysert O'Dea; 2 miles, easy. Cliffs of Moher; 4 miles, easy to moderate

Shortly after meeting your guide(s), you transfer north of Ennis. You are immediately taken back in time as you stroll to Dysert O'Dea, an 11th-century Hiberno-Norman tower and an 8th-century early Christian monastery founded by St. Tóla, with time to peek at the tower's eclectic little museum.

After lunch at a pub in the market town of Kilfenora, your afternoon walk takes place at one of Ireland's most dramatic natural phenomena, the Cliffs of Moher. Stretched over almost 5 miles, these cliffs rise precipitously from the Atlantic Ocean to a vertiginous 700 feet and, on a clear day, you can enjoy views of the Aran Islands in Galway Bay, as well as the verdant hills and valleys of Connemara. The cliffs are not only home to an estimated 30,000 birds of 29 different species—Atlantic puffins, hawks, gulls, guillemots, shags, ravens, and choughs—but also contain evidence of river channels cutting through the shale and sandstone beds dating back 300 million years. A spectacular start to the week, you walk along the top of the Cliffs of Moher, at a safe distance from the actual precipice. On your right is lush farmland, while the Atlantic shimmers to your left with the Aran Islands below. Seabirds swoop overhead, with ground

orchids growing along the side of the path. The walk concludes at the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre.

An approximate 20-minute drive brings you to your home away from home for the next two nights, Sheedys Hotel and Restaurant. After meeting the owners, there is time to relax before indulging in the first night's feast.



Sheedys Hotel and Restaurant, Lisdoonvarna

Sheedy's Country House has been in the family since the early 1700's – a much-loved home that has been passed down the line of four generations, from great grandfather to son, John Sheedy, and his wife Martina. They immediately make you feel like family guests in their special home and are on hand at all times to make your stay the best it can be.

DAY 2

The Burren; 6 miles, easy to moderate. Optional afternoon walk; 3 miles, easy

Today you venture into the heart of the Burren. Here, the shapes and textures of the bare limestone that give this site its Gaelic name (meaning “a rocky place”) make for fascinating walking. The thin soil hosts unusual and diverse flora, in which plants from the high Arctic and Alpine regions of Europe bloom alongside those from the Mediterranean region. Your guides engage the group with their knowledge of history, geology, and plant life—as the Burren is rich in all these subjects.

You travel along the Burren Way on foot, following a trail from Ballinalacken to the abandoned Formoyle Chapel. Lovely views of the sea appear along this ancient path that was once a cattle-driving trail. The walk circles back to Ballyvaughan, where you enjoy a midday lunch.

The afternoon is filled with short journeys into prehistory. Visits to an Iron Age stone ring fort, a Neolithic burial site, and a Celtic high cross transport you through thousands of years in a few short hours. Your guides will offer an easy afternoon walk for guests looking for an additional opportunity to stretch their legs. Once again you retire to Sheedys Hotel and reunite for a sumptuous dinner created with organic ingredients produced and harvested locally.



Sheedys Hotel and Restaurant, Lisdoonvarna

DAY 3

Colman Kilmacduagh; 2-6 miles, easy to moderate

Today's walk through the verdant Irish countryside takes you to the relatively unknown ruins of Kilmacduagh, an early

Christian monastery established by Saint Colman in the 7th century. You take time to explore this mystical setting and stroll around the monastery, including its holy well, which is still honored today.

Lunch is in Galway, the third-largest city in the Republic of Ireland and nicknamed "Ireland's cultural heart" for its full calendar of festivals and events and numerous dance and musical organizations, theater companies, visual arts, writers, and film groups, as well as over 50 event venues. In recent years, Galway was named the second-best destination in Ireland and was ranked ahead of most European capitals. Following this city break, you board the coach and transfer to a more rural setting in the westernmost part of the Connemara region. Gaining altitude, the road reaches 900 feet at the top of the Mám Éan pass in the Mamturk Mountains. From this vantage point, you enjoy panoramic views of the lake-studded peat lands that make up south Connemara.

Your hotel for the next two nights is a first-class 19th-century country house in Letterfrack, set amidst 30 acres of peaceful private woodland on the shores of the natural Ballinakill Harbor. Dinner this evening is in the hotel's beautiful dining room, perhaps with the sound of a crackling open wood fire in the background.

Rosleague Manor Hotel, Letterfrack

A meticulously renovated manor house built in the early 1800s, filled with antiques and boasting a superb dining room. Spacious guest rooms are individually decorated plush retreats.

DAY 4

Killary Harbor; 6 miles, easy to moderate. Optional afternoon walk, Connemara National Park, 4 miles easy to moderate

Following a hearty breakfast and energized by a freshly brewed cup of coffee or tea, you set out for another day admiring the contrasting sceneries of the emerald green hills and deep blue waters. Today's walk explores the country's only fjord: Killary Harbor, which lies on the border between County Galway and County Mayo. The 10-mile-long fjord reaches a 150-foot depth at its center.



You walk six miles along a harborside trackway, passing the deserted village of Foher and its evocative famine graveyard. The deep bay affords views of inland mountains and magical islands. Lunch is at a pub in Letterfrack, founded by the Quakers in the mid-19th century. Later you can browse among the town's displays of hand-woven arts and crafts. This afternoon, you may choose to enjoy the grounds at your manor hotel, or an optional walk departs from the Connemara National Park visitors' center, gently rising to Diamond Hill, where spectacular views unfold.

There is time before dinner to relax in the hotel's Victorian conservatory with a cup of tea or to take a stroll on the hotel's private estate. You gather with your traveling companions and guides in the hotel's dining room for another sumptuous dinner of local specialties such as Connemara lamb or wild Renvyle salmon.

Rosleague Manor Hotel, Letterfrack

DAY 5

Inishbofin Island; 5-6 miles, easy to moderate

Following a satisfying (and award-winning) buffet breakfast in the hotel's conservatory, you depart for a 20-minute drive to the picturesque little fishing town of Cleggan, with its pier and colorful fishing boats. You then catch the ferry to Inishbofin—"the island of the white cow," according to its Irish name—a serene place with a breathtaking coastline which lies 7 miles off Galway's coast. Occupied since the Bronze Age, the island is one of a handful of shipping ports on the West Coast of Ireland which thrived in the 17th century. It is also the location chosen by Ireland's legendary pirate queen, Grace O'Malley, to build her fort. Inishbofin has since become a popular destination for local writers and



artists. You explore the island's golden beaches and grassy paths before resting on the boat ride back to the mainland.

This evening you retire to your family-owned hotel, and Clifden's oldest building, dating from approximately 1820. Overlooking the harbor, you are only a few minutes' walk to the town center, where dining options abound.

The Quay House, Clifden

Built in 1820 as the harbormaster's house, this family-run inn is the town's oldest building, formerly also a Franciscan monastery and a convent before becoming a boutique guesthouse. Stylish rooms are individually decorated with period furniture and original artwork, while elegant living rooms with fireplaces are perfect to relax in after a day of walking. Breakfast is served in a light- and flower-filled conservatory.

DAY 6

Roundstone Bog; 4 miles, easy. Omev Island; 4 miles, easy

As your Irish adventure draws to a close, you depart for one last inspiring day on the trail. Today's walk is only a short distance from your hotel and introduces you to a fascinating ecosystem. Roundstone Bog is one of the largest examples of a western-blanket bog in the world. Starting out following a little-used road, the route takes you on a wild trail and sheep paths, until you reach the bog proper, if the weather has been dry for the previous few days. Here your guides point out the flora specially adapted to living in wet acid soils: heather-clad outcroppings of rock, insectivorous plants, and sedges. In summer, the eerie cries of breeding golden plover and merlin drift overhead.

This afternoon, an island visit is on the agenda. You reach Omev Island on foot along a causeway cut off by high tide. This low-lying island of pink granite is covered by sand dunes. Recent excavations have provided anthropologists with a wealth of new information on the customs of early Christian monasteries in Ireland.

You return to your hotel in the quaint town of Clifden, referred to as "the capital of Connemara" because of its size. Tonight's farewell dinner is at a favorite local

restaurant owned by your hosts' extended family. Now a connoisseur of the local delicacies, you may choose your favorite from the creative offerings listed on the menu while toasting the week's accomplishments and discoveries.

The Quay House, Clifden

DAY 7

Departure from Ennis

After a hearty Irish breakfast, you transfer to Ennis, bidding farewell and continuing your onward or homeward travels.

ITINERARY CHANGES

Please bear in mind that this is a typical itinerary, and the actual activities, sites, and accommodations may vary due to season, special events, weather, or transportation schedules. We reserve the right to alter the itinerary, since tour arrangements are made up to a year in advance and unforeseen circumstances may arise that mandate change. Itinerary changes are made to improve the tour and your experience.

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

Country Walkers is a leader in active travel with responsible tourism an integral part of our core values. Our tours reflect our dedication to best travel practices—and to the preservation of indigenous cultures and the environment. Country Walkers has made a donation on behalf of every traveler to the CW Travelers Fund, which supports designated projects in the communities and habitats in which we travel. We invite you to learn more about our efforts and initiatives for giving back.

Here's just one example that highlights our sustainable practices:

Galway Mountain Rescue Team: Country Walkers have made a donation on behalf of every tour participant to the Galway Mountain Rescue Team. There are 12 local teams operating in Ireland, all staffed by volunteers. They are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, ensuring walkers in the fells are able to call upon their skills should they encounter difficulties. To find out more about the valuable work of mountain rescue teams in this part of Ireland, visit gmrt.ie.

Tour Itinerary Overview

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Old Ground Hotel (lobby), Ennis, Ireland, 9:00 a.m.

Ennis, Co. Clare, Ireland

Tel: 011 353 65 682 8127

Email: reservations@oldgroundhotel.ie

flynnhotels.com/Old_Ground_Hotel_Ennis

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

NIGHTS 1 & 2

Sheedys Hotel and Restaurant

Lisdoonvarna, Co. Clare, Ireland

Tel: 011 353 65 707 4026

Email: info@sheedys.com

Sheedys.com

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

NIGHTS 3 & 4

Rosleague Manor Hotel

Letterfrack, Ireland

Tel 011 353 95 41101

Email info@rosleague.com

rosleague.com

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

NIGHTS 5 & 6

The Quay House

Clifden, Ireland

Tel 011 353 95 21369

Email res@thequayhouse.com

thequayhouse.com

Wireless Internet and hair dryers available. Laundry service unavailable.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Old Ground Hotel, Ennis, 12:00 p.m.

TRAVEL DELAY AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

If you are delayed while traveling, or experience any unforeseen situation en route to your tour, assistance is only a few, easy steps away:

As a Country Walkers guest, you benefit from 24-hour, toll free access to One Call Emergency Hotline and Travel Assistance. Call the numbers below from anywhere in the world to get immediate assistance (regarding everything from lost luggage, to missed connections, to health concerns or notifying your guides or our local partners of a delayed arrival).

To contact One Call, please use one of the following methods:

By Email: mail@oncallinternational.com

By Text: 603.945.0103

By Phone:

If calling from within the USA: 800.555.9095

If calling from outside the USA: 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710

When calling from outside the USA, you will need to dial the access code for the country you are calling from (a complete list of access codes, provided by AT&T, can be found on the Country Walkers website under Travel Planning and Travel Resources: AT&T International Access Codes. If you receive an automated response, when prompted, you can then enter either of the numbers above; One Call accepts collect calls 24/7.

In the unlikely event you are unable to connect by phone with One Call, or the region you are calling from does not have an access code, you should speak with a live international operator and ask them to place a collect call to **800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710**.

Should there be any problems placing a collect call (as is occasionally the case depending on the country), dial, email, or text One Call directly and ask them to return your call immediately to minimize any out of pocket costs.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We offer guests the opportunity to purchase a Travel Protection Plan. Please contact us for details.

Tour Facts at a Glance

TOUR LENGTH (WITHOUT FLIGHT PACKAGE)

7 days, 6 nights

DEPARTURE DATES AND PRICE

Please refer to our website for the most current list of departure dates, scheduled group tour and private tour prices.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Old Ground Hotel (lobby), Ennis, Ireland, 9:00 a.m.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Old Ground Hotel, Ennis, Ireland, 12:00 pm.

ACTIVITY LEVEL

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 4 to 6 miles per day and options on some days. There are rocky sections on walks as well as 4- to 5-foot-high stile crossings. The terrain is often uneven and can be slippery when wet. Walks are on wide paths along coastal cliffs and a fjord, rocky trails, and through peat lands, pastures, farmland, and bogs. Walking sticks are highly recommended. The pace on this tour is leisurely to allow time to learn about the area's unique geology, plant life, and the ruins encountered on the trail. One day features a ferry ride and island exploration off the Atlantic Coast.

INCLUSIONS

- » Two expert, local guides (for groups of 8 or more), with you 24/7
- » All meals except for two lunches and one dinner; local wine or beer included with dinners
- » All accommodations while on tour
- » Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point
- » Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary

- » Destination information (weather, visa requirements, etc.) and other travel assistance available 24/7 provided by One Call International
- » The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN

Prior to your adventure you will be asked to sign a Passenger Participation Agreement and you will receive:

- » Luggage tags
- » List of travel companions and guide biographies

GRATUITIES

Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers. Should you wish to tip your Country Walkers guide(s), the standard in the industry ranges from \$10 to \$15 per person, per guide, per day (or \$20 to \$30 per couple, per guide, per day), and can be paid in USD or local currency.

Traveling To and From Your Tour

If you are interested in reserving the **optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **pre- or post-tour extensions**, please refer to the attached itinerary for more details.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Old Ground Hotel (lobby), Ennis, Ireland, 9:00 a.m.

Your guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for walking.

MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORT

Shannon International Airport (SNN), Shannon, Ireland
shannonairport.com

GETTING TO THE MEETING POINT

Several airlines offer direct flights from the East Coast of the U.S. to Shannon International Airport.

Taxis are readily available at the Shannon Airport, and the journey to the Old Ground Hotel, the meeting point, takes about 25 minutes and costs approximately 50 euros. The Shannon Airport is small and well-marked so you may choose to use the convenient network of local public transportation. Buses depart from the airport and stop in Ennis and costs around 8 euros per person. For more information on schedules and fares, please visit **buseireann.ie**

If you arrive more than one day before your tour, you may choose to spend pre-tour time in the nearby town of Limerick (30 minutes from the airport) and take a taxi to the meeting point on the first morning of the tour (from 65 euros).

Another option is to fly into Dublin International Airport (DUB):

dublinairport.com. Airlink shuttles depart the airport for the central bus station (Busaras) every 10 minutes. For more information on schedules and fares, please visit **dublinbus.ie**, and in Timetable Options select dropdown option Airport Services. From the Dublin central bus station (Busaras), you can take a bus to Ennis. For more information on schedules and fares, please visit **buseireann.ie**. However, from Dublin it's more convenient to travel by train to Ennis. Take the Airlink shuttle or a taxi from the airport to Dublin Heuston train station. The train journey to Ennis takes around 3 hours (usually with a change in Limerick)

. Taxis may easily be hired at the Ennis train station for the Old Ground Hotel and cost approximately 5 euros (5 minutes).

For the most current rail information including reservations, schedules, and fares, please call Rail Europe at 800.438.7245 or consult their website:

raileurope.com. More information and schedules for the Irish rail system, Iarnrod Eireann, may be found at **irishrail.ie**. Please note that you might obtain better rates by booking directly with Iarnrod Eireann rather than through Rail Europe.

PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are not reserving our optional Flight + Tour Combo, you may wish to stay at the Old Ground Hotel in Ennis, the tour meeting point, located just 25 minutes from the Shannon International Airport. To make a reservation, please contact the hotel directly.

Old Ground Hotel,

Ennis, Co. Clare, Ireland

Tel: 011 353 65 682 8127

Email: reservations@oldgroundhotel.ie

flynnhotels.com/Old_Ground_Hotel_Ennis

Room rates start around 150 euros (double occupancy), including breakfast.

DELAYS AND LATE ARRIVALS

If you are delayed or miss the scheduled group meeting point for any reason, we kindly request that you contact our emergency assistance provider, One Call International. This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week to assist you with any type of travel delay. Please refer to the Emergency Contact details on your Tour Itinerary Overview page for One Call International contact details.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Old Ground Hotel, Ennis, Ireland, 12:00 p.m.

Since we travel approximately three hours from the final hotel, it is not possible to reach the Old Ground Hotel earlier than 12:00 p.m. We strongly suggest you do not book flights departing from Shannon International Airport earlier than 4:00 p.m. Please contact your airline directly for specific check-in requirements.

If you need to depart the tour early, taxis may be arranged from the front desk at the Quay House, our last hotel on tour. A transfer to Shannon International Airport costs approximately 200 euros and takes 2½ hours.

Information & Policies

GUARANTEED DEPARTURES

Country Walkers guarantees the departure of every tour*—no exceptions and no disappointments! From the moment you make your deposit, you can start preparing for your adventure. We take care of all the details to ensure a seamless, small-group experience (with an average of 6 or 7 guests per guide). For best availability, reserve your trip today!

**except in cases of force majeure*

GUEST RESPONSIBILITIES

Each guest has the responsibility to select a trip appropriate to his/her abilities and interests and to prepare for the trip by carefully reading the confirmation materials. To join this trip, you must be in good health and capable of completing activities as described in the day-to-day itinerary. Our in-house experts welcome the opportunity to discuss the tour in more detail. In order to meet your needs, we ask that you please share any relevant physical limitations or health conditions when you make your reservation.

SCHEDULED GROUP INDIVIDUAL RESERVATIONS

Reservations for this tour may be made by calling Country Walkers at 800.464.9255 and providing a \$350 per person deposit. The Balance of your payment (final tour cost) is due 90 days prior to the tour departure date.

SCHEDULED GROUP CANCELLATION POLICY

Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150; cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. Up to 91 days prior to departure, you may transfer your reservation, depending on availability, from one departure to another in the same calendar year at no cost*. Please notify us in writing.

**One transfer per year; afterwards a modest per person transfer fee will apply. Please note that tours with seasonal prices may involve a higher price.*

PRIVATE ADVENTURE RESERVATION & CANCELLATION POLICIES

If you are booking a Private Adventure, a \$500 nonrefundable group deposit is required to secure hotel reservations and guides. Once these arrangements are confirmed, the deposit will be applied as the provider's deposit for the trip. If we are unable to secure the hotel and/or guides for your requested dates, this deposit will be refunded.

Once your Private Adventure is confirmed, your individual \$350 per person deposit is required within 14 days. The balance of your payment (final tour cost) is due 90 days prior to the tour departure date. Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150 (plus the nonrefundable group deposit of \$500); cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. **Please note that Private Adventure tour pricing is based on a guarantee of a specified number of guests. Should the group decrease in size, we reserve the right to alter the per person price, if necessary.**

Ireland at a Glance

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

U.S. citizens: Passports are required and must be valid for at least three months beyond the dates of travel. Visas are not required for stays of up to 90 days.

For more information, see travel.state.gov.



Travel Tip

Have a variety of options to start your trip: ATM card(s), credit card(s), some dollars to exchange, and some euros (and pounds) in small denominations.

CURRENCY

The Republic of Ireland uses the euro (EUR). For up-to-date exchange rates, see oanda.com.

Many businesses in Europe will no longer accept credit cards without PIN numbers (chip and pin cards).

Always contact your bank or your credit-card company for details on fees and card use when traveling.

TIME ZONE

Ireland is in the Greenwich Mean Time Zone, Eastern Standard Time plus five hours. For more information on worldwide time zones, see worldtimezone.com.

PHONE & INTERNET

Republic of Ireland country code: +353

Cell phone coverage throughout Ireland is extensive, but cannot be guaranteed to be accessible on all American mobile carriers or to function at all times while on the trail or in remote areas. For more information regarding international phone use, please refer to countrywalkers.com/phones.

Internet access is generally very good in towns and villages; however, it is not guaranteed at all of the hotels used on the tour. For more details regarding Wi-Fi availability, please refer to the Tour Itinerary Overview.

LANGUAGE

While Irish (Gaelic) is the official language of the Republic of Ireland, the everyday language of most citizens is English, which is recognized as the



country's second language. You will see many public signs written in both languages. The most important Irish words you will probably need to know are *Fir* and *Mná*, used frequently outside public restrooms: *Fir* is “Men” and *Mná* is “Women.”

ELECTRICITY

Alternating current of 230V and 50Hz is used in Ireland. Plugs have three flat blades arranged in a triangular formation. For a full listing of electrical outlets worldwide, see electricaloutlet.org.

WEATHER

Although Ireland lies on the same northerly latitude as Newfoundland, it has a mild and moist climate year-round, which is due to the prevailing southwesterly winds and the influence of the Gulf Stream. Any given point in Ireland is never more than 70 miles from the sea or ocean, therefore, temperatures are uniform throughout the country. It actually does not rain all the time in Ireland; showers can occur frequently, but tend to pass quickly.

Temperatures range from the low to mid-60s in May and June to the mid- to high 60s in July and August, July being the warmest month on average. The pleasant summer days are long, with daylight lasting until 10:00 p.m.

For up-to-date forecasts, see qwikcast.com. For historical average temperatures and rainfall, see weatherbase.com.

FOOD & DRINK

The lands and seas of Ireland are the most unspoiled in Europe, and seafood and beef of the highest quality are exported worldwide. In the last 20 years, a style of Irish cuisine has evolved well beyond Irish stew and champ (mashed potatoes with spring onions), based on superb raw materials and an eclectic mix of international styles.

Appetizers and entrées may feature locally caught fish (salmon or trout) and seafood (prawns, mussels, and oysters) accompanied by elaborate salads. Fine beef and lamb are widely available, and sometimes served with a decadent sauce

Travel Tips

- Bringing your own hair dryer or other electrical device? You'll need a travel converter, available at most hardware, travel, or consumer electronic stores.
- For laptops or an electronic device with a dual voltage switch, you'll need the adapter plug but not a converter.



of whiskey and cream. The use of potatoes, cabbage, and soda bread is still widespread; however, innovative chefs serve them in new and exciting ways. Desserts are rich and varied, incorporating seasonal fruit with melted chocolate, toffee, or vanilla custard.

Travel Tip

The Irish Pub

It seems that the traditional Irish pub is an endangered species, with one closing almost every day. However, in many places it is still the center of social life with all ages gathering for drink, food, singing, and *craic* (pronounced “krack” and basically meaning a good time). Like so many things in travel, there are many unwritten rules governing pub etiquette—catching the bar tender’s eye without wild gesticulation, not ordering an American-style cocktail, and paying immediately in cash for your drinks are just a few. A range of beers, whiskey, and non-alcoholic drinks are available at a pub. Draft beer is served in a pint or a half-pint glass, and comes in two basic varieties—lager or ale. Guinness stout is actually a type of ale, made from roasted barley, and it takes about 3 to 4 minutes to pour properly. What about Irish whiskey? It’s best drunk “neat” or straight, and its smooth quality is due to triple distillation in closed kilns, avoiding the smoky flavor of Scotch whisky. Food in an Irish pub may consist of sandwiches and soup at lunchtime, and in the evening, sausages, meat pies, and baked (jacket) potatoes.

Pub hours

Monday–Saturday: 10:30 a.m.–11:30 p.m.*

Sunday: 12:30 p.m.–2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.–11:00 p.m.*

**Some pubs may have a late drinking license and be open until midnight or 2:00 a.m.*

LIFE IN IRELAND

Shopping and banking hours

Shops and stores are generally open Monday to Saturday between 9:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. and on Sundays from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Most department stores and some supermarkets are open all day, every day of the week, from 9:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.



Banks are open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday (with some branches open on Saturday mornings).

Meal times

Breakfast is served at hotels from 7:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. In restaurants and pubs, lunch is served from noon to 2:00 p.m. and dinner is usually served from 6:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. (but verify locally). Afternoon tea is usually taken around 4:00 p.m.

Tipping

If service is not included at a restaurant or pub (check your bill), it is customary to leave 10 to 20 percent of the total. Taxi drivers receive 10 to 15 percent of the fare. For luggage assistance, a small tip is appropriate, at your discretion.

TRAVEL RESOURCES

National Irish tourist board official site
ireland.com

Public holidays

To assist in travel planning, it may be helpful to be aware of Irish public holidays, festivals, or calendars of events. Visit the Irish tourist board's website for a list of public holidays under ireland.com/en-us/about-ireland/must-know-information/public-holidays-in-ireland.

TRAVEL IN IRELAND



Airports

The majority of international flights arrive at Dublin or Shannon airports. Ireland's national airline is Aer Lingus: aerlingus.com.

Train

Irish Rail: irishrail.ie, the national railway company site with schedules, fares, and pass options.

Raileurope: raileurope.com or 800.622.8600, a U.S.-based company that provides schedules, reservations, and ticketing for all European train networks (their multi-day/-week/-month passes in one country or combinations of countries may be an economical and convenient choice for European train travel.)

Travel Tip

If you rent a car in Ireland, remember to drive on the left side of the road and to pass on the outside right lane — also important to keep in mind when crossing busy city streets! Tourism Ireland provides a downloadable guide to driving in Ireland ebstudio.net/irelandbycar/.

OTHER LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

In addition to rail and airlines, Ireland also has an extensive bus (or “coach”) network that, for some towns and cities, may be more convenient and affordable than the train, see Irish Bus, buseireann.ie, as well as Dublin bus for traveling in and around Dublin, dublinbus.ie.

Most major car rental agencies are available at airports and train stations. Taxis are available at all major airports, train stations, and in smaller towns, and can be reserved in advance (your hotel can usually provide

assistance). For more information go to ireland.com/en-us/about-ireland/travelling-within-ireland.

Packing List

PACKING TIPS

Pack light! Keep in mind there will be times you may have to carry your own luggage short distances, especially before and after your Country Walkers tour. Due to space constraints, we require you to limit your luggage to one medium piece (approximately 18x15x29 inches or 8,000 cu. in.) and one small carry-on, per person. We recommend packing any personal necessities, medications, your hotel itinerary/emergency contact information, your hiking boots (or shoes), and extra clothes in your carry-on luggage in the event that your baggage is delayed. We suggest leaving valuable jewelry at home. A copy of your passport or other important documents should be kept in a separate area of your luggage. Always be alert when carrying a purse, camera, money belt, or backpack in busy cities, airports, and train stations.

FOOTWEAR

- » Waterproof hiking boots or walking shoes. There are many brands to choose from. Proper fit is crucial, so try on new boots while wearing socks you plan to use on tour. Be sure to break in new footwear well before your tour begins. By the time you're ready to join your walking tour, you should be able to complete 5-8 miles of walking without discomfort. We require lightweight boots or shoes with proper ankle support and good tread to ensure stability on all types of terrain. Waterproof footwear keeps feet dry in heavy rain and water resistant footwear keeps feet dry in heavy dew. Country Walkers reserves the right to deny participation to any guest not wearing appropriate footwear.
- » Wool or synthetic, moisture-wicking socks (cotton socks are not recommended for walking as they will quickly cause blisters)
- » Blister remedy

CLOTHING

- » Lightweight, wash-and-wear long pants
- » Long-sleeved, wash-and-wear shirt
- » T-shirts and shorts
- » Polar fleece or light wool pullover (it will keep you warm even when wet)
- » Dinner attire: dress is smart casual.

OUTERWEAR

- » Waterproof rain gear: jacket, pants, hat, or hood
- » Windbreaker with hood (your rain gear may be suitable)
- » Hat with a broad brim or visor
- » Lightweight or wool hat and gloves

EQUIPMENT

- » Pack (minimum size of 25L): large enough to carry water, extra clothing, rain gear, and personal items (camera, etc.)
- » Waterproof cover for pack
- » Telescopic walking stick(s) (Please note that while telescopic walking sticks are recommended for this tour, they are not provided by Country Walkers. Therefore, please plan on bringing your own should you wish to use them.)
- » Water bottle, canteen, or CamelBak-type water reservoir or hydration pack to carry your own water while walking (equivalent of one liter)
- » Sunblock and lip balm
- » Insect repellent
- » Sunglasses
- » Toilet kit for when facilities are not available on the walks. Include zip-lock baggies, tissues, and moist towelettes, which can be disposed of at the hotel.
- » Personal first-aid kit including any medications you ordinarily take (in their original containers)

OPTIONAL

- » Binoculars
- » Camera and charger and/or extra batteries
- » Zip-lock bags (to keep camera and valuables dry)
- » Small notebook and pen
- » Field guides
- » Bandana
- » Alarm clock
- » Folding umbrella
- » Washcloth (many European hotels do not have them)