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Backroads of Ireland

Our longest tour to the Emerald Isle yet! With visits to both the Republic and Northern Ireland, you will truly get a feel for the hidden gems of Ireland.

April 14-25, 2018

Saturday, April 14, 2018 – We are on our way!

Meet your tour directors Dea and Declan at the Saint Louis Airport for our flight to Dublin, the capital city of Ireland. We fly through the night, so try to get some sleep. We wake up in Ireland! **(Meals on Plane)**

Sunday, April 15, 2018 – Titanic Museum and Giant's Causeway!

Céad míle fáilte, meaning “A hundred thousand welcomes” to Ireland. We arrive at the airport and meet our driver who will guide us through the backroads of Ireland. We head north through the countryside on our way to **Northern Ireland**, sometimes referred to as the “Wee North.” We first visit the **Belfast Titanic Museum**. Built at the nearby shipyards, the Titanic has captivated our hearts and imaginations for decades. Learn about what went into building such a ship, as well as what happened on that fateful night in April. Featuring nine state of the art galleries, the museum has become one of the most popular attractions in Northern Ireland!

Next, we head further north to **Giant's Causeway**, one of the world's most famous natural wonders. Featuring over 37 thousand basalt columns, many in a hexagon shape, Giant's Causeway features prominently in Irish and Scottish Mythology. We then head to our hotel in Limavady, the Radisson Roe Park, where we enjoy our welcome dinner. **(Meals on Plane, D)**



Monday, April 16 2018 – Ulster-American Folk Park and Yeats' Final Resting Place

After a full Irish breakfast this morning, we head to one of our favorite places in Northern Ireland – the **Ulster American Folk Park** in Omagh. Wander through structures from all over Ireland as you learn about some of the emigrants that made their mark in American business and culture, including St. Louis' own Robert Campbell as well as Thomas Mellon, who founded the banking dynasty. Then head down a recreated street on the way to the docks, where you board a full size replica of a ship that immigrants would sail upon to the new world. As you exit, you find yourself transported to America, with homes from Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Tennessee carefully dismantled and re-assembled in Ulster.



After our time at the Folk Park, we head back to the Republic, stopping at **Drumcliffe**, in **County Sligo**. St. Colmcille (Columba) founded a monastery in the 6th century, and while only the high crosses and base of the tower remain, the site has remained a holy one, and is the final resting place of **William Butler Yeats**, one of the most famous poets produced by this small island. Our destination is **Westport**, a small town popular with Irish tourists and once home to the **Pirate Queen Grace O'Malley**. We spend the next two nights at the Hotel Westport and enjoy dinner tonight at the hotel. **(B,D)**

Tuesday, April 17, 2018 – Achill Island, Foxford Woolen Mills, and the Pirate Queen's Home

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before we head to Achill Island. Known for its rugged beauty, we travel along the **Wild Atlantic Way**, a scenic drive along the west coast of Ireland where the surf crashes upon the cliff side. Achill Island is the largest off-shore island, and the views are breathtaking. You will definitely want your camera fully charged for this trip!



On the way back to Westport, we stop at the **Foxford Woolen Mills**, in the town of Foxford. The Sisters of Charity founded their convent here in 1891, and it was the business acumen of Mother Morrogh-Bernard that founded the woolen mill that kept the town alive. We tour the visitor center, watching as the vignettes come alive to tell the story of the town and the mill. And don't worry, we'll have time in the gift shop to purchase the high quality wares.

When we return to Westport, we visit **Westport House**. While the main house dates back to the 18th century, the foundations stretch back 200 years earlier, and were the same foundations upon which **Grace O'Malley** built her castle. Tonight enjoy dinner on your own at the hotel, in a local pub or pop into the grocery store to get a snack and explore the live music venues, sidewalk by the water and relax like a local. **(B)**

Wednesday, April 18, 2018 – Inishbofin – the Isle of the White Cow



After breakfast, we head down the coast towards County Galway. Along the way we have a photo stop at **Kylemore Abbey**, built along the lake and nestled in the trees. We then head to the dock and set sail for **Inishbofin Island**, which lies 7 miles off the coast and has been inhabited since Stone Age tribes built a fort on the tip of the island. The Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney immortalized the island in his poem *Seeing Things* with the opening stanza “Inishbofin on a Sunday Morning / Sunlight, turf smoke, seagulls boa tslip, diesel.” With a full time population of only 160 residents, Inishbofin is famed for its natural beauty and nesting area for birds. Our hotel this evening is the **Doonmore Hotel**, one of Dea and Declan’s

favorite places to stay. The charming hotel is built around Andy Murray’s grandfather’s cabin, and he, his wife and their sons all lend a hand in operating this welcoming space. If we’re lucky, he might even arrange some local entertainment to play after dinner! **(B, D)**

Thursday, April 19, 2018 – Galway, Connemara, the Cliffs of Moher and the Burren

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before we take the ferry back to the mainland. We are heading through Connemara, a region full of boglands, mountains and lakes. It is the scenery that most people imagine when they think of Ireland, and has served as the background of many films such as *The Quiet Man* and *The Field*, starring Richard Harris. Connemara is also famous for being the source of **Connemara Marble**, a unique marble that has featured prominently in churches and city halls across Ireland and the US. We visit a workshop where Dea and Declan have been going for years, meeting the Joyce family who have quarried and created jewelry for generations. (Declan has been visiting there since he was a teenager!) After a break for **tea and scones** we head to **Galway City**. You may have heard the song Galway Girl by Steve Earle and now you can see the place that inspired his lyrics. Enjoy a guided tour of both the city and a stop at the cathedral filled with Connemara Marble, as well as the surrounding areas such as Claddagh, where the famous “Crown, Hands, Heart” ring was created.



After lunch on our own, we travel through **The Burren**. A rugged landscape of limestone jutting through the fields, it is evocative of a lunar landscape. Our destination is the **Cliffs of Moher**, the tallest cliffs that face the Atlantic, towering over 600 feet above the waves. They were prominently featured in the movie *The Princess Bride*. A visitor center built into the hillside provides insight on the cliffs themselves, as well as a spectacular video that provides both a birds-eye as well as a whales-eye view of the cliffs.



Tonight we check into the Temple Gate Hotel in Ennis and we enjoy a feast at an Irish *Ceili* or party. With good food, great music and incredible dancing, it will be a night to remember! **(B, D)**

Friday, April 20, 2018 – Dingle Peninsula and Killarney

After breakfast, we depart and head across the Shannon Estuary, winding through small towns such as **Tralee**, the capital town of County Kerry and world-renowned for its **Rose of Tralee Festival**. Then it’s over the Brandon Mountains to the **Dingle Peninsula**, once described as ‘the most beautiful place on Earth’ by National Geographic. Home to some of the earliest monastic settlements often called **Beehive Huts** due to their shape, the Dingle Peninsula is the most westerly point in Ireland, containing over a thousand years of history in a landscape that has hardly changed. Films such as *Ryan’s Daughter* and *Far and Away* have been filmed here, taking full advantage of the amazing scenery.



After enjoying some free time in Dingle Town, we head to Killarney, where we spend the next two nights at The Killarney Plaza Hotel. **(B, D)**

Saturday, April 21, 2018 – The Best Kept Secret in Ireland

After breakfast, we head over the Caha Mountains, overlooking Bantry Bay in the distance. We stop in Glengarriff for a break before heading down the southern side of the Beara Peninsula, extending between Bantry Bay and the Kenmare River. This is the best kept secret in Ireland, as it is not as frequently traveled as the other scenic drives. We travel over Healy Pass, which rises over 1,000 ft above sea level and provides unrivaled views of the surrounding area. We continue to **Kilmackilloge Harbour** where we stop for lunch before returning through Kenmare on the way back to Killarney. **(B)**



Sunday, April 22, 2018 – Blarney Castle, Charles Forth, and Cork City

After breakfast, we check out from the hotel before heading to the most famous of castles in Ireland, **Blarney Castle and Woolen Mills**. For those who brave the multiple flights of stairs and lean out above the ramparts to kiss the Blarney Stone, you will be rewarded with the Gift of Eloquence. There is also a fine shop area for those who have been to Blarney before or do not wish to challenge the castle. With Irish products such as sweaters, crystal and china, you can have them shipped right to your door, avoiding the VAT tax and, for the more delicate items, possibly breakage in your bag.

Our next stop is **Charles Forth**, a 17th century fortification along the approach to Kinsale Harbour. A guided tour provides insight about how the fort was built, its successes, and its downfall. We then continue to **Cork City** where we have our two night stay at the **Imperial Hotel**, where Irish Patriot Michael Collins spent his last night. **(B, D)**

Monday, April 23, 2018 –Cobh, Spike Island, and *The Queenstown Story*



Enjoy breakfast before we begin our day in **Cobh**, one of the deepest natural harbours in Ireland and famous for being both the main point of emigration from Ireland as well as the last port of call before the Titanic sank beneath the waves. We explore ***The Queenstown Story***, which traces the journey across the Atlantic by sea, from the earliest days to the Titanic. There is also the statue of **Annie Moore**, the first emigrant to be processed in Ellis Island, where a matching statue is located.

We then take a boat excursion ourselves, though only a short way to **Spike Island**, which features a 24-acre star shaped fortress that was used as a convict depot. Holding over 2,300 prisoners, it was the largest convict depot in the world during the Victorian era. We then return to Cork City for free time to explore as well as experience some incredible restaurants and pubs. It's one of our favorite places in Ireland, with plenty to do but less busy than Dublin. **(B)**

Tuesday, April 24, 2018 – Rock of Cashel and Irish National Stud Farm & Japanese Gardens

After breakfast, we check out of our hotel before heading to the **Rock of Cashel**. The seat of the Kings of Munster from 370 – 1101 AD, it was turned into a Christian site by St. Patrick when he converted the Kings. The buildings include a Round Tower built in the 12th century, a 13th century Gothic Cathedral, and a 15th century High Cross and Romanesque Chapel.

Then we head to County Kildare and tour the **Irish National Stud Farm**. Producing numerous champion racehorses, we will learn about these majestic creatures and how highly in-demand they are. Some of them are even flown off to as far away as Australia to breed! Also on the grounds are the **Japanese Gardens**. Steeped in symbolism surrounding the life of man, the gardens are home to the **St. Fiacre Commemorative Garden**. We then continue to Dublin where we check into The Camden Court Hotel for our last night in Ireland. **(B)**



Wednesday, April 25, 2018 – Return home

After breakfast, we check out of our hotel before heading to the airport for our flight back to Saint Louis, arriving back in the US on the same day. Thank you for traveling with us! **(B)**

This is a 4 Sneaker Tour, which we have defined as “Periods of intense pace, uneven terrain.”

Please see our *Passport To Fun!* for more details on the sneaker activity levels.

Tour includes:

- ✓ Round trip airfare from St. Louis to Dublin
- ✓ Wonderful accommodations across Ireland
- ✓ Local guides in each city
- ✓ 16 Meals (10 Breakfasts and 6 dinners) including a Irish Ceili Dinner Show
- ✓ Visits to the Titanic Museum, Giant’s Causeway and the Ulster American Folk Park in Northern Ireland
- ✓ Sightseeing along Achill Island, Dingle and Beara Peninsulas, Cliffs of Moher, Healy Pass and The Burren
- ✓ Visit to Connemara Marble, where the Joyce family has been crafting jewelry for generations!
- ✓ Visits to Foxford Woolen Mills & Blarney Woolen Mills and the Irish National Stud and Japanese Gardens
- ✓ Tour Westport House, built by the descendants of Grace O’Malley the Pirate Queen
- ✓ Overnight on Inishbofin Island, now home to only 160 full time residents!
- ✓ Tour Spike Island, Charles Forth, The Queenstown Story, Blarney Castle and Rock of Cashel
- ✓ All other Activities as indicated
- ✓ Baggage Handling
- ✓ Professional Tour Directors Dea Hoover and Declan Rutan
- ✓ All gratuities including step-on guides, included meals, driver and director

Please note: Any notice of fuel surcharges imposed by carriers and/or attractions will be disclosed at least 30 days prior to tour departure.

\$3,645 per person, double occupancy \$3,943 per person, single occupancy
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Make your reservation with a \$500 deposit per person. This is an Are We There Yet? Select Tour. We will take no more than 30 travelers. Once this tour fills, a wait list will be formed. Please send a check, or call with a credit card along with your name, address, phone number, and all roommates' names if you are sharing a room and any dietary or walking restrictions.

We encourage all travelers to purchase travel protection and pay with initial deposit. Please remember that certain benefits are time sensitive. Plans help provide coverage for unexpected circumstances and help protect your trip and your investment.

Please insure that you have a valid passport for this tour. You will not be allowed to fly without the proper documents, nor enter Ireland or return to the USA. Travel protection will not cover any expenses due to not having valid travel documents.

Balance on base tour price is due January 10, 2018, and no refunds will be given after that time. If you purchase Travel Protection and need to cancel after January 10, 2018, you must file a claim. If you attempt to book after this date, there may be a substantial increase in price or you may have to arrive on a separate flight.