

Grand Circle Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN VALUE AND WORLDWIDE DISCOVERY SINCE 1958

Your Grand Circle Travel Planning Guide



Ireland in Depth

2026

Grand Circle Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with Grand Circle Travel. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

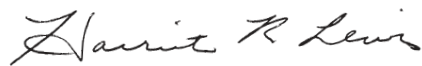
When you travel with us, you will enjoy a thoughtfully designed itinerary that balances unforgettable included discoveries with time for independent explorations. Your experience will be enriched by the company of like-minded American travelers and an **expert, local Program Director**. Assigned to a group of 30 travelers on average, these passionate leaders are ready and eager to share their homeland and insights as only a local can. Whether it is recommending their favorite restaurant, connecting travelers with people and culture, or providing the best regional maps to enhance your leisure time, your Program Director will be available to take care of all the details and ensure that you have a fun and carefree travel experience. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Throughout your explorations, you will experience Exclusive Discovery Series events designed to connect you with local people and culture. From sharing traditional fare and lively conversation during Home-Hosted Visits, to discussing Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, you'll gain an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE or low-cost Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-2610**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Grand Circle Travel

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Ring of Kerry, County Kerry

Ireland in Depth

Ireland: Dublin, Kilkenny, Cork, Killarney, Galway

15 days starting from \$4,395

including airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit

www.gct.com/eid2026pricing

Delve deep into the magic of the Emerald Isle, a land rich in history, romantic legend, verdant landscapes, and stirring music and song. From the natural splendor of the coastal Cliffs of Moher and the captivating Burren, to the celebrated blend of past and present on the streets of Dublin and Galway, the unforgettable heart of your journey is the warmth and charm of the Irish people.

IT'S INCLUDED

- Choose to **purchase Grand Circle's airfare**, and your airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges are included. Or, make your own air arrangements
- **Accommodations** for 13 nights in comfortable rooms with private baths
- **25 meals:** 13 breakfasts, 6 lunches, and 6 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch)
- **16 included features:** 12 guided tours and 4 exclusive Discovery Series events: Hurling demonstration • Home-Hosted Lunch • Irish history & culture discussion • Sheep farm experience
- Exclusive services of a local **Grand Circle Program Director** (assigned to no more than 42 travelers)
- **Gratuities** on your main trip for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- **Personal headset** for all included and optional tours on your main trip
- Private motorcoach land travel
- Baggage handling for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- **5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next trip**

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.



ITINERARY SUMMARY

1 • Depart U.S.

2-4 • Dublin, Ireland

Included Tours Dublin, Guinness Storehouse

5-6 • Kilkenny

Included Tours Avoca Handweavers, Glendalough, Kilkenny

7-8 • Cork

Included Tours Waterford Crystal factory, Cahir Castle, Cobh

9-11 • Killarney

Included Tours Blarney Castle, Ring of Kerry

12-14 • Galway

Included Tours Cliffs of Moher & the Burren, Galway

15 • Return to U.S.

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 2 3 4 5 Easy

Group Size

- A maximum of 42 travelers, led by a local Grand Circle Program Director

Pacing

- 5 locations in 14 days

Physical Requirements

- Walk 2 miles unassisted and participate in 1.5-2.5 hours of physical activities daily, including stairs
- Agility, balance, and stair-climbing are required to kiss the Blarney Stone
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them
- We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation,

or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

- Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

Terrain & Transportation

- Uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones
- Travel by 45-seat motorcoach, ferry, and boat

Climate

- Daytime temperatures range from 48-67°F during touring season
- June-August are the warmest months
- Weather in Ireland can be unpredictable and change quickly
- Rain is common and should be expected

MAXIMIZE YOUR DISCOVERIES & VALUE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

all with FREE Single Supplements

Northern Ireland

PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,595**

New! Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way: County Mayo & Sligo
POST-TRIP: 6 nights from **\$2,695**

Ireland in Depth

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR TRIP WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Northern Ireland*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive Belfast, Northern Ireland

Day 3 Explore Belfast

Day 4 Belfast • Explore Derry

Day 5 Derry • Ulster Scots optional tour

Day 6 Derry • Visit Belleek Pottery • Athlone

Day 7 Explore Athlone • Clonmacnoise Monastery • Lough Boora Discovery Park • Dublin • Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart from the U.S. today and travel to Ireland, arriving on Day 2. Please refer to your individual air itinerary for exact departure and arrival times.

Day 2 Arrive Dublin, Ireland

- Destination: Dublin
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Clayton Hotel Cardiff Lane or similar

Activity Note: Your Program Director may be traveling on the Northern Ireland pre-trip extension and will join you at the hotel mid-afternoon today.

Morning/Afternoon: Arrive in Dublin today and begin your Ireland tour. A Grand Circle representative will meet you at the airport and escort you to your hotel, where you'll meet your Program Director and your fellow travelers, including those returning from their *Northern*

Ireland pre-trip extension. You will have the opportunity for a vicinity walk around the area around your hotel, with suggestions on how to maximize your day and explore on your own.

Dinner: Get to know your fellow travelers over a Welcome Drink and briefing followed by a Welcome Dinner at the hotel's restaurant.

Evening: Tonight is yours to relax or explore independently.

Day 3 Explore Dublin

- Destination: Dublin
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Clayton Hotel Cardiff Lane or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Begin your discoveries of Dublin, Ireland's political and cultural center. Dublin is amazingly rich in literary history—Yeats, Shaw, Beckett, Joyce and other literary

immortals have walked its streets—and its architecture and museum collections are second to none.

Begin your discoveries with a guided panoramic tour of the city's sights, which will include a stop at EPIC, the Irish Immigration Museum. Set in Dublin's docklands, this was the original departure point for so many of Ireland's emigrants. Here, you'll be able to discover the stories of Irish emigrations around the world to modern day.

Lunch: At a local pub.

Afternoon: The remainder of the day is yours to do as you please. Your Program Director will be happy to recommend options for free time activities.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 4 Dublin • Visit Teeling Whiskey Distillery • Optional *Traditional Irish Night*

- Destination: Dublin
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Clayton Hotel Cardiff Lane or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll head over to Teeling Distillery for a behind-the-scenes tour of one of the only operational whiskey distilleries in Dublin. We'll learn all about the whiskey-making process on a tour that features the barrel rooms and distillery areas for insights into the single-malt, small-batch, and single-grain whiskeys produced here. After a sampling of the whiskeys produced at Teeling, the rest of the day is yours to spend discovering Dublin at your own pace.

After your tour, the rest of the day is yours to spend discovering Dublin at your own pace.

Lunch/Afternoon: Yours to do as you please. Your Program Director will be happy to recommend a spot for lunch and free time activities.

Perhaps you'll wander to St. Stephen's Green, a 22-acre public park designed in the Georgian era. Its history is as rich as its landscaping.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Or, join us for an optional *Traditional Irish Night*, for a hearty three-course meal accompanied by lively tunes from local musicians. Feel free to raise your voice and join in the chorus as the merriment takes you away into the evening.

Day 5 Dublin • Visit Glendalough • Avoca Handweavers • Kilkenny

- Destination: Kilkenny
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Kilkenny Ormonde Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart for Kilkenny, stopping along the way at Glendalough to tour the ruins of the monastery, founded in the sixth century by St. Kevin.

Among the monks' great achievements was manuscript writing and copying, including the creation of the spectacular *Book of Glendalough* around 1131. Now at the Bodleian Library at Oxford, the book—containing historical chronicles, genealogies, and religious poems—is one of the most important and beautiful Irish manuscripts from the pre-Norman period.

Then, continue on to the river town of Avoca, made famous by the Avoca Handweavers. This clothing manufacturer is Ireland's oldest line of business, active since the early 1700s. Here, you'll meet with some of the handweavers when you visit Avoca's mill, which happens to be the oldest of its class in all of Ireland.

Lunch: We'll head to the mill's café following our visit to savor an included lunch.

Afternoon: Continue on to Kilkenny, where you'll arrive later today and check into your hotel.

Dinner: Included at your hotel tonight.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 6 Explore Kilkenny • Visit Kilkenny Castle

- Destination: Kilkenny
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Kilkenny Ormonde Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Explore Kilkenny, a medieval city straddling the banks of the River Nore, on an included walking tour with your Program Director. Stroll the medieval lanes and “slips” (narrow connecting roads) as your Program Director points out the city's highlights, including bustling pubs filled with the sounds of traditional Irish music, and the Smithwicks brewery, the internationally-known beer brand that has its headquarters here.

You'll also enjoy a visit to one of Ireland's most iconic landmarks, Kilkenny Castle. Founded shortly after the Norman conquest of Ireland, the magnificent fortress on the banks of the River Nore has loomed over the

city for more than 800 years. Rebuilt many times over the centuries and with much of its former glory restored, the castle is filled with a treasure trove of paintings, tapestries, and furnishings. Your tour will also take you to the sprawling gardens of Kilkenny Castle, an 800-year-old stronghold that lords over the city center. Though originally designed to defend a crossing over the River Nore, the castle's grounds today provide a peaceful place for locals and visitors alike to stroll about and admire the impressive artisanal floristry on display.

Lunch: Conclude your tour of Kilkenny with an included lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 7 Kilkenny • Visit Waterford Crystal factory • Cahir Castle • Cork

- Destination: Cork
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Maldron Hotel South Mall or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Travel from Kilkenny to the city of Cork today, stopping en route to visit Waterford and Cahir Castle.

In Waterford, you'll tour the Waterford Crystal factory, prized the world over as the standard for the highest quality lead-cut crystal. Founded in 1783 by George and William Penrose, the Waterford branch of the company is now part of a worldwide operation that includes such notable brands as Wedgwood and Royal Doulton.

You'll learn about the organization's history, and witness a glassblowing demonstration before free time to explore further or shop their fine products. Then, depart for Cahir.

Lunch: On your own in Cahir. Your Program Director can offer a number of restaurants to choose from.

Afternoon: Enjoy a tour of Cahir Castle. In its time (13th–15th centuries), Cahir Castle featured a state-of-the-art defensive design, and is now one of Ireland's best-preserved castles. Situated on a rocky island in the River Suir, the castle still boasts its keep, tower, and much of its original structure. The last Lord Cahir died in 1961, at which point the castle came into state stewardship.

Arrive in Cork late this afternoon, where, after checking in to your hotel, you may choose to relax, explore independently, or join an optional orientation walk around the city with your Program Director.

Dinner: Enjoy an included dinner with your fellow travelers tonight.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 8 Cork • Explore Cobh • Home-Hosted Lunch

- Destination: Cork
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Maldron Hotel South Mall or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning, ride to Cobh (pronounced “cove”). This picturesque town long served as the main harbor for the city of Cork, and is dominated by the spire of St. Colman's Cathedral, which contains the largest

carillon in Ireland. A local historian will give you some insight into Cobh's history during an included tour this morning.

Cobh was a major emigration point for families who left the country during the Great Potato Famine, when some two-and-a-half million emigrants departed this port for North America. Here you'll discover the story of Irish emigration and the era of the great ocean liners, when Cobh was a very active port. This was the last place the RMS *Titanic* dropped anchor before heading across the Atlantic on her tragic journey in 1912.

Here you can also pay tribute to the victims of the RMS *Lusitania* at a quayside memorial. In 1915, this ship was sunk by a German submarine off the coast of Cobh, with a loss of 1,196 passengers, including 127 Americans. This action helped bring America into World War I.

Lunch: Learn about contemporary life in Ireland—and savor a traditional meal—during a Home-Hosted Lunch in a local home, an exclusive Discovery Series event.

Afternoon: In the late afternoon, return to Cork, where the rest of the day is yours to explore independently.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 9 Cork • Visit Blarney Castle • Sheep farm experience • Irish dancing demonstration • Killarney

- Destination: Killarney
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Killarney Towers or similar

Activity Note: Today's exclusive Discovery Series farm visit is an outdoor event and is weather-dependent. It will not be conducted in wet, muddy conditions.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Bid Cork farewell and begin your transfer to Killarney.

On the way, stop for a visit to Blarney Castle, where a 129-step staircase leads up a tower to the famed Blarney Stone. According to legend, anyone who manages the backward lean to kiss it receives the “gift of the gab”—a smooth, soothing way with words that at best mean nothing.

The word “blarney” was coined by Elizabeth I to describe her endless and fruitless discussions with Dermot McCarthy over his surrender of the castle to the Crown. The McCarthys built the present castle with its 85-foot-high keep in 1446, replacing an earlier castle.

Though the Blarney Stone gets all the publicity, the castle's tower house and surrounding gardens are superb in their own right. The castle's grounds also include caves, dungeons, and a rock garden of ancient trees and weathered stones.

Lunch: Arrive in Killarney and enjoy an included lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, you'll set off for an exclusive Discovery Series event at a working sheep farm, where you'll chat with the owner about rural life, and get a chance to

see Ireland's finest border collies in action. You'll have some free time to relax or explore independently in Killarney.

Before dinner, enjoy another exclusive Discovery Series event when you enjoy a visit from a local children's dance school to meet the next generation of traditional Irish dancers. You'll meet the instructors and students, and be treated to a performance, followed by an opportunity to converse with both generations about their passion and dreams for the future.

Dinner: Included at your hotel this evening.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 10 Killarney • Optional Dingle Experience tour

- Destination: Killarney
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Killarney Towers or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Or, join a full-day optional tour as we venture out along the Dingle Peninsula. You'll stop first at Tralee's Kerry County Museum, where you'll enjoy the fascinating experience of a recreated medieval street. Then follow the rugged Dingle Peninsula, tracing a path of wild mountains and some of the most spectacular coastline Ireland has to display.

On a clear day, you can see the famed Blasket Islands, rising like jewels from the Atlantic Ocean. One of Ireland's largest Irish-speaking areas, the peninsula has attracted many writers and artists for the inspiration the wild

landscape offers. The movies *Ryan's Daughter* and *Far and Away* were filmed here, as well as scenes from *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations. Or, if you've chosen to join our optional tour, you'll enjoy an included lunch during your day of discoveries.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. If you've chosen to explore the Dingle Peninsula today, you'll enjoy more of the Wild Atlantic Way's stunning scenery as you make your way back toward Killarney, arriving late this afternoon.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 11 Killarney • Explore Ring of Kerry • Optional Evening at Kate Kearny's Cottage tour

- Destination: Killarney
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Killarney Towers or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: On this morning's included tour, you'll discover the Ring of Kerry, a drive that traces the coastline of the Iveragh Peninsula and offers breathtaking views. There is always something new to appreciate in the combination of ocean, islands, mountains, light, and ever-changing weather patterns. We ride most of the way, making scenic stops.

The first town along the route is Killorglin, where an elegant eight-arched bridge crosses the River Laune. Then you'll follow the coastline, taking in panoramic views along the way.

Lunch: On the return to Killarney, your route takes you through the picturesque village of Sneem, and you'll have an included lunch.

Afternoon: Make your way back to Killarney, pausing along the way to enjoy the scenery of Ladies View, named after Queen Victoria's ladies-in-waiting. The vistas of lakes and mountains remain magnificent today.

Upon returning to Killarney, you'll have the rest of the day at leisure to explore independently. Perhaps you'll choose to ride on a jaunting car (a traditional Irish horse-drawn carriage) for a tour of the lush forested environs of Killarney National Park.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Or, join us for an optional visit to Kate Kearny's Cottage, a charming seventh generation family-run pub and restaurant where we'll enjoy some traditional music and songs, learn about traditional Irish musical instruments, and savor an included three-course dinner.

Day 12 Killarney • Visit Cliffs of Moher & the Burren • Galway

- Destination: Galway
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Maldron Hotel Sandy Road or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Bid farewell to Killarney and begin your transfer to Galway, stopping along the way to discover a few more treasures of the Emerald Isle.

First, ferry across the River Shannon and drive along the coast of County Clare to visit the majestic Cliffs of Moher. These precipitous rock formations—towering more than 700 feet above the crashing ocean surf at their highest point—offer breathtaking panoramic views of Ireland’s Atlantic coast, and provide nesting sites for tens of thousands of seabirds. If the wind is strong, the sea foam and spray flies up and over the cliffs along with the rain; while on clear sunny days, fantastic views can be seen from every angle.

Over the centuries, people have also made their mark with towers, quarries, and well-worn paths, but they’re almost lost in the scale and grandeur of the sea cliffs. One that does stand out is O’Brien’s Tower, a huge structure built to house the guests of Cornelius O’Brien, County Clare’s legendary Member of Parliament from the 1830s until he died in 1857.

Lunch: You’ll have time for lunch on your own at the Cliffs of Moher.

Afternoon: Depart the cliffs and travel along a scenic coastal road to discover another natural Irish wonder, the Burren. Its name is derived from a Gaelic word meaning “stony place,” and it is like no other place in Ireland. Instead of peat bogs and pastures, you’ll find a surreal moonscape full of huge limestone crags.

Despite this seemingly inhospitable setting, a diverse array of plant life—including wild orchids and rock rose—thrives here. Alpine plants nestle in crevices beside temperate species. The white, deeply crevassed limestone conceals “micro-environments” rich in potholes and hollows. The ample rainfall

and strange topography have resulted in a paradoxical profusion of arctic and semi-tropical vegetation growing side by side.

Finally, you’ll arrive in Galway later today, and check in to your hotel.

Dinner: Included at a local restaurant with your fellow travelers.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 13 Galway • Optional Connemara & Kylemore Abbey tour

- Destination: Galway
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Maldron Hotel Sandy Road or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Spend the day at leisure, exploring Galway on your own. The city’s compact center spans both sides of the River Corrib. In the center of Eyre Square stands the Quincentennial Fountain, constructed in 1984 to mark the 500th anniversary of the Royal Charter granted by King Richard III that created Galway as an independent city-state.

Nearby are some of the oldest streets in Galway, narrow winding lanes that curve in and around old wooden buildings, often meandering off toward the Corrib and the docks. Yet turn a corner and you will find modern Galway—certainly one of the liveliest cities in Europe. Artists and musicians crowd the sidewalks and almost every pub seems to offer live music.

Or, join us for an optional full-day journey through the Connemara region of Galway. Once home to more than two million Irish, it still retains its regional heritage, as you will

discover while we ramble around its lakes, mountains, and bogs. During today's optional tour, you will also travel through the Inagh Valley, made famous by the beloved 1952 film *The Quiet Man*, starring John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara. You'll also visit the former Gothic mansion of Mitchell Henry, now the home of Benedictine nuns and better known as Kylemore Abbey. You'll have time to wander both the mansion and the Victorian gardens. Then cruise Killary, a charming fjord.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations. Or, if you've chosen our optional tour, you'll enjoy an included lunch and Irish coffee during your fjord cruise.

Afternoon: Those participating in the optional tour will return to Galway late this afternoon.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 14 Explore Galway

- Destination: Galway
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Maldron Hotel Sandy Road or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Join your Program Director on a walking tour through Galway. This enchanting city is a medley of narrow lanes, wood and stone shop fronts, and bustling restaurants and pubs. Originally presided over by the local O'Flahertys, Galway was taken over by Anglo-Normans and became a thriving center of trade and commerce by the 14th century.

Spanish galleons once regularly called Galway Bay "home" during their western voyages. Galway went into decline after being damaged

in battle with the forces of Oliver Cromwell in the mid-17th century, but regained its prosperity and vitality in modern times. Today, Galway remains a merchant town, but it is also a burgeoning center for technology and a lively bohemian mecca.

Lunch: On your own. Your Program Director can recommend a café or restaurant.

Afternoon: Yours to spend in Galway as you please. Your Program Director will be happy to recommend free time activities.

Dinner: Gather with your Program Director and fellow travelers at your hotel for an included Farewell Dinner.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 15 Galway • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight home, or begin your post-trip extension to *Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way: County Mayo & Sligo*.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Program Director. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases. We do not accept American Express.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: *Optional tour prices include gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers, are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication, and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

Traditional Irish Night

(Day 4 \$105 per person)

Enjoy a night of *craic* (a ubiquitous Irish word with no real English equivalent, loosely translated to “having a good time”) at a local restaurant as you savor a hearty three-course dinner, followed by an evening of lively entertainment. A group of local musicians takes the stage after dinner to play some traditional Irish music into the night.

Dingle Experience

(Day 10 \$95 per person)

Venture out along the Dingle Peninsula, stopping at Tralee’s Kerry County Museum, where you’ll experience a re-created medieval village. Then follow the rugged peninsula, tracing a path of wild mountains and some of Ireland’s most spectacular coastline. One of Ireland’s largest Irish-speaking areas, the wild landscapes continue to inspire writers and artists. We’ll stop in the fishing port of Dingle, to enjoy locally caught fish (and chips) for lunch.

Evening at Kate Kearney’s Cottage

(Day 11 \$105 per person)

Enjoy an evening at Kate Kearney’s Cottage with dinner and traditional Irish entertainment: *craic*, *ceol*, and *agus bia* (fun, music and food). Kate Kearney’s is a charming seventh generation family-run pub and restaurant located at the entrance to The Gap of Dunloe. Here we’ll enjoy some traditional music and songs, learn about traditional Irish musical instruments, and learn some dance steps.

Connemara & Kylemore Abbey

(Day 13 \$105 per person)

Once home to more than two million Irish residents, Connemara retains its regional heritage, as you will discover while rambling around its lakes, mountains, and bogs. Visit the former Gothic mansion of Mitchell Henry, now the home of Benedictine nuns and better known as Kylemore Abbey. You will have time to wander both the mansion and the Victorian gardens. Then enjoy lunch as you cruise Killary Harbor, a charming fjord-like inlet.

Lastly, we'll stop in the picturesque village of Cong, setting of the beloved 1952 film *The Quiet Man*, starring John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara.

PRE-TRIP

Northern Ireland

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » **Accommodations** for 5 nights
- » **6 meals:** 5 breakfasts and 1 dinner
- » **6 included tours:** Belfast, Giant's Causeway, Londonderry, Belleek Pottery, Clonmacnoise monastic site, Lough Boora Discovery Park
- » Exclusive services of a local Grand Circle Program Director
- » **Gratuities** on this extension for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Northern Ireland beckons with rich history and natural beauty. In a truly timeless extension, you'll gaze in wonder at the curious rock formation of the Giant's Causeway and bow your head in a rustic churchyard, pausing along the way to stroll the cobbled streets of Londonderry. You'll also tour historic Athlone, Lough Boora Discovery Park, and more.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart from the U.S. today on your flight to Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Day 2 Arrive Belfast, Northern Ireland

- Destination: Belfast
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Europa Belfast or similar

Morning/Afternoon: Arrive in Belfast today. You'll be met at the airport by a Grand Circle representative who will assist you with the transfer to your hotel.

Belfast is a robust northern metropolis of nearly half a million people. This is a scenic city, situated between the waters of Belfast Lough, the Belfast Hills, and the forested slopes of Cave Hill. Belfast was the catalyst of the industrial revolution in Ulster, and specialized in the development of industries like linen,

rope-making, and shipbuilding, with the world's largest dry dock. The city's Victorian heritage can be seen in the stately buildings of this area and at Belfast's Grand Opera House.

This afternoon, get acquainted with the area around your hotel on an orientation walk. The balance of the day is free for you to relax after your overseas flight. Gather in the late afternoon with your fellow travelers for a Welcome Drink and briefing from your Program Director, followed by a Welcome Dinner.

Dinner: Enjoy a Welcome Dinner this evening.

Evening: Tonight is yours to relax or explore independently.

Day 3 Explore Belfast

- Destination: Belfast
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Europa Belfast or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: On a panoramic city tour with a local guide, you'll see Belfast's compact center in Donegall Square, which is dominated by the elaborate City Hall.

You'll also drive through West Belfast's Protestant neighborhood of Shankill Road, and the Catholic neighborhood of Falls Road, where large, vivid murals painted on the sides of buildings express the feelings that still run deep on both sides. Though the names of these areas were much in the news during "the Troubles," the gate in the Peace Wall between them now stands open.

Lunch/Afternoon: Yours to do as you please. Your Program Director will be happy to recommend a spot for lunch and free time activities. Perhaps you'll top for lunch at Brannigans or The Oval Bar for traditional Irish pub fare.

The city's main shopping district is just north of Donegall Square along several pedestrian-only streets. Belfast's most famous historic pub, the Crown Liquor Saloon, is also in this area (it's always packed, but worth a look for its gaslit Victorian architecture even if you can't get a seat). Or, perhaps you'll visit the city's historic Cathedral district.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 4 Belfast • Explore Derry

- Destination: Derry
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Maldron Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today, we travel from Belfast to Londonderry, or simply Derry as the locals refer to it. On the way, we'll stop to view the Giant's Causeway, an amazing geological formation of approximately 40,000 basalt stones—some as tall as 130 feet, and mostly hexagonal in shape.

As Northern Ireland's premiere landmark, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, you'll be free to decide for yourself whether the Causeway is a result of accelerated cooling of lava outflows 60 million years ago. Or is it the work of the legendary Irish giant, Finn MacCool, in his attempts to a) woo a distant lady giant, or b) meet a Scottish giant in battle to determine who was the stronger giant?

Lunch: On your own at Giant's Causeway.

Afternoon: You'll arrive in Derry in the afternoon, where you'll set off on a guided walk atop the city's walls, which have stood around the city since the 17th century.

Dinner/Evening: The remainder of the day is yours to spend at leisure. Dinner will be on your own.

Day 5 Derry • Ulster Scots optional tour

- Destination: Derry
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Maldron Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today is yours to spend in Derry at leisure. You might visit the Tower Museum, with exhibits illustrating the maritime history of Derry, or the Guildhall built in 1890 and in

the Gothic architectural style, similar to its London counterpart. Today, it's the seat of the local government.

Or, join an optional excursion to the footsteps of the Ulster Scots. First, you'll visit the Monreagh Heritage Centre, a small museum whose artifacts and exhibits tell the story of the Ulster Scots, who migrated from Great Britain during the Plantation of Ulster in the 17th century.

Then you'll travel to Ulster American Folk Park and spend some time walking the grounds. This fascinating facility tells the story of emigration from Ulster to America in the 18th and 19th centuries and provides visitors with a "living history" experience on its outdoor site. In the Folk Park, costumed guides and craftspeople recreate the past in an outdoor museum that includes a weaver's cottage, forge, schoolhouse, log cabin, church, and a 19th-century Ulster street. The Ship and Dockside Gallery features a full-size reconstruction of an early 19th-century sailing ship of the type that carried thousands of emigrants across the Atlantic. A major indoor exhibition, "Emigrants," complements the outdoor site.

Lunch: On your own for those who don't take the optional tour—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations. If you're on the optional tour, you'll enjoy an included lunch at American Folk Park.

Afternoon: At leisure in Derry for those who did and did not join the optional tour.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 6 Derry • Visit Belleek Pottery • Athlone

- Destination: Athlone
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Sheraton Athlone Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Set off on your day-long drive to the picturesque town of Athlone, first stopping at Belleek Pottery near the coast of the River Erne. A world-renowned brand established in 1857, Belleek Pottery is known for the production of unique, intricately decorated china.

After the visit, continue your journey with a stop at Creevykeel, a cluster of neolithic monuments in County Sligo.

Lunch: You'll have time for a light lunch at some point during our journey. Your Program Director will provide options for local fare.

Afternoon: After lunch, continue to follow the River Shannon as you depart for the remainder of the journey to Athlone. This region is full of hidden gems, as we'll discover during tomorrow's activities.

Upon arrival in Athlone, we'll have a brief vicinity walk of the area. Then, the rest of your afternoon is at leisure to settle in or explore the surrounding area.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 7 Explore Athlone • Clonmacnoise Monastery • Lough Boora Discovery Park • Dublin • Join main trip

- Destination: Dublin
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Set off on your discoveries of Athlone today. First, you'll head to the ruins of Clonmacnoise Monastery. You can feel the history in what remains of the monastery's very walls; the building itself was founded by Saint Ciarán in the year 544. In its centuries of existence, and largely due to its ideal location along the River Shannon, the monastery

functioned as a center for learning, religious worship, and even artisan crafting. Today, the ruins serve as a reminder of the monastic practices that were a crucial part of Irish religious life until the twelfth century.

Then, experience a fusion of the natural and the man-made at Lough Boora Discovery Park. The verdant park itself is home to unique flora, as well as a slew of birds and fish who thrive in marshland habitats.

Lunch: On your own in Lough Boora.

Afternoon: Transfer to Dublin to begin your main *Ireland in Depth* tour.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Ulster Scots

(Day 5 \$80 per person)

Walk in the footsteps of the Ulster Scots, starting at the Monreagh Heritage Centre, which tells the story of the Gaelic immigrants who came from Great Britain during the Plantation of Ulster in the 17th century. Then, set off for your next destination, Ulster American Folk Park, where you'll witness a tribute to the history of Irish emigration to America. Finally, explore the Grianan of Aileach, a hilltop stone ringfort whose origins trace back to the Iron Age. You'll tour the fort and admire the views from atop the high hill.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

- **Main trip only:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Northern Ireland:** You will need an additional passport page, for a total of 3.

Entry Requirements

A detailed instruction packet and fees will be available on your My Planner about 100 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **United Kingdom:** The United Kingdom requires an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) for entry. This includes entry to England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. You will need an ETA if the UK is your final destination. The ETA will be valid for 2 years.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Traveling with a minor may require certain documentation for border crossings. For further detail on the required documentation, please contact the local embassy or state government.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Keep Your Abilities In Mind

Please review the information below prior to departing on this trip. We reserve the right for our Program Directors to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home if their limitations are impacting the group's experience.

GROUP SIZE

- A maximum of 42 travelers, led by a local Grand Circle Program Director

PACING

- 5 locations in 14 days

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Walk 2 miles unassisted and participate in 1.5–2.5 hours of physical activities daily, including stairs
- Agility, balance, and stair-climbing are required to kiss the Blarney Stone
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them
- We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones
- Travel by 45-seat motorcoach, ferry, and boat

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 48–67°F during touring season
- June–August are the warmest months
- Weather in Ireland can be unpredictable and change quickly
- Rain is common and should be expected

Health Check

Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential to fully enjoy your trip. If you have ongoing medical conditions or concerns about your health, we highly recommend that you schedule a checkup with your personal physician at least six weeks in advance of your departure date.

- Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your itinerary that may affect your health and be guided by his or her advice. (You can use the “Keep Your Abilities in Mind” on the previous page as a guideline to discuss with him or her.)
- You may want to have a dental exam before your trip. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling.
- If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition.

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: travel.state.gov (Select “Find International Travel Information” then select “Country Information”; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Your Health Abroad” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.

- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-321-2835**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water is safe to drink on this trip; however, it may be processed differently than your tap water at home, so you might not like the taste or it may feel “heavy” in your stomach.
- Bottled water is widely available for sale.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip;** you will need local currency.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Republic of Ireland: European Euro (€)

Northern Ireland: Pound Sterling (GBP)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

Northern Ireland: ATMS are common throughout Northern Ireland so ATM cards will give you a reliable payment method and ready access to local currency.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Northern Ireland: Credit cards are readily accepted in most hotels and restaurants, but you should always inquire if your type of credit card is accepted before deciding on your purchase.

Chip Cards

Many countries have adopted credit cards that have an embedded computer chip. These cards are inserted into the reader instead of swiped. The card owner then authorizes the purchase using a PIN instead of signing.

Though this technology is common in the U.S., occasionally there are machines in other countries that can't read U.S. cards, or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn't happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don't speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) If you are not able to sign for a purchase, such as at an automated ticket booth, you can use another form of payment, such as a debit card that has a PIN.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines. To make it easy for you to budget, we have quoted the amounts in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars.

- **Grand Circle Program Director:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your GCT Program Director at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$7–\$10 per traveler for each day their Program Director is with them. Please note that tips for your Program Director can only be in the form of cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Program Director during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip. **Hotel Housekeeping:** Many travelers will leave the equivalent of \$1–\$2 per day, per room for the hotel housekeeping staff. *Please note: Because of the difficulty in exchanging a small amount of dollars, it would be easier for the housekeeping staff if you left their tips in local currency.*
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Customized Air:** You booked international air with us, and have customized it in some way. If you have customized your trip's dates to arrive early, stay longer, or stop on your own in a connecting city, airport transfers will NOT be included. You must also arrange your own accommodations for any additional nights. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.gct.com/myplanner under "My Reservations".

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased air with Grand Circle Travel, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Arrival:** Once you arrive, you'll need to collect your luggage and clear customs. A Grand Circle Representative will meet you outside of customs and assist you with your transfer to the hotel or ship. Important note on porters: Airport porters are NOT allowed in the baggage claim area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a cart, which you will then move through customs. When you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your transfer vehicle. Your driver will load your luggage into the transfer vehicle.
- **Flight Delays:** Grand Circle Travel is not responsible for flight delays or cancellations. In the unfortunate circumstance that your flight is delayed or changed, please try to reach the regional Grand Circle office (their number will be in your Final Documents) in order to make new arrangements for your transfer. Due to airline regulations our staff is not notified of flight rerouting, and our local representative won't necessarily be aware of your new arrival time. In these cases you will need to arrange your transfer by taxi to your hotel.
- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.

- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45–30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as GCT travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-321-2835**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: **www.rome2rio.com**

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your vacation by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Program Director can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Program Director will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at **www.gct.com/myplanner**).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

We recommend you use WhatsApp while abroad to communicate home and with your Program Director while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Ireland: +353

Northern Ireland: +44

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags.
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (length+width+depth). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights. Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.

- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc.—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Pack casual clothes:** Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. At dinner, you will not need to wear “dressy” clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it's completely up to you.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.
- **Plan to dress in layers.** Weather in Ireland is unpredictable, and can feature warm and cold temperatures at any time of the year. The most practical travel wardrobe consists of items that you can wear in layers. Then you can easily add or remove a layer according to any fluctuations in temperatures.
- **Bring rain gear:** Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.

- **Good walking shoes are critical.** This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes. Aboard ship, you'll want non-slip shoes with rubber soles.

What to Bring

We have included suggestions from Program Directors and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

Your accommodations will supply soap, body wash, and shampoo/conditioner. If you prefer a certain brand you may want to bring your own, but otherwise you can rely on what they provide. **And don't forget a reusable water bottle**—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- ☐ Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Sleepwear
- ☐ Socks and undergarments
- ☐ A jacket or sweater, depending on the time of year

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, sunscreen, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- ☐ Sunglasses with a neck strap
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- ☐ Compact umbrella

- ☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- ☐ Travel money bag or money belt
- ☐ Camera, spare batteries, and memory cards

Medicines

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Vitamins
- ☐ Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- ☐ Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- ☐ Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- ☐ Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- ☐ Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- ☐ Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- ☐ Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

Home-Hosted Visits

It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all Grand Circle vacations include a home-hosted visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity at hotels in Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Scotland is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner's

guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

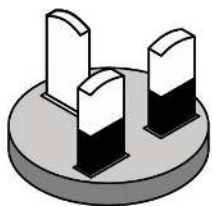
The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Although you are only traveling in one country on this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Ireland: G

Northern Ireland: G

Type G



CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Ireland: Irish weather is traditionally fickle, even in summer—when temperatures usually range from the low 50s to the upper 60s, though over the last decade, the spring and summer seasons were often glorious with many sunny days in the 70s. Nonetheless, chilly east winds may blow through, so come prepared for anything. Except for a strip along the east coast, the country receives some rain at least 200 days a year. This wet climate is responsible for Ireland's verdant beauty.

Northern Ireland: With the Atlantic front sweeping over Northern Ireland, weather in the region tends to be unstable, with frequent winds and near constant clouds. A completely clear sky is a rarity, a grey sky a more common sight. Winters are cold and rainy, with an average of mid 40s during the day and a chance of a wind storm. Snow is rare. Summers are cool and rainy, with an average of mid 60s during the season. The mild weather and frequent rain has led to Northern Ireland's picturesque green scenery.

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	DUBLIN, IRELAND			CORK, IRELAND		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	47 to 36	87 to 81	2.5	47 to 37	90 to 84	20
FEB	47 to 36	87 to 76	1.9	47 to 38	89 to 79	17
MAR	50 to 38	84 to 71	2.1	50 to 39	88 to 76	19
APR	54 to 40	80 to 68	2.1	53 to 41	83 to 71	16
MAY	59 to 44	77 to 68	2.3	58 to 45	81 to 71	15
JUN	64 to 49	77 to 68	2.6	63 to 50	81 to 72	14
JUL	67 to 53	79 to 69	2.2	66 to 53	83 to 73	15
AUG	67 to 53	81 to 69	2.9	65 to 53	85 to 73	15
SEP	63 to 50	83 to 72	2.3	62 to 51	88 to 75	16
OCT	57 to 45	86 to 75	3.1	59 to 46	90 to 80	19
NOV	51 to 40	89 to 80	2.9	51 to 41	91 to 83	19
DEC	47 to 37	88 to 83	2.9	47 to 39	91 to 85	19

MONTH	GALWAY, IRELAND			BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	45 to 37	89 to 83	25	46 to 36	84	14.7
FEB	46 to 37	88 to 77	22	47 to 36	81	11.4
MAR	49 to 39	89 to 75	27	50 to 38	78	13.8
APR	53 to 41	90 to 68	21	54 to 41	75	11.4
MAY	58 to 46	89 to 68	23	60 to 44	73	11.8
JUN	61 to 51	90 to 73	24	64 to 50	74	11.2
JUL	65 to 55	91 to 72	24	68 to 53	76	12.1
AUG	64 to 54	91 to 75	26	67 to 53	77	13.4
SEP	61 to 51	90 to 76	26	63 to 49	79	12.3
OCT	56 to 46	90 to 79	26	57 to 45	82	14.4
NOV	50 to 41	90 to 82	23	51 to 40	84	14.5
DEC	47 to 40	90 to 86	27	47 to 36	86	14.4

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

Your Program Director

During your exclusive Grand Circle vacation, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from an on-site Grand Circle Travel Program Director. Your Program Director is fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. He or she is supported along the way by local tour guides, who guide you expertly through particular sites and cities.

Many Grand Circle Program Directors are graduates of professional education programs for travel guides. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle, training that is based on what we've learned from thousands of past travelers about how to make the trip most enjoyable. Your Program Director offers both a deep knowledge of the region and a commitment to make this a very pleasant, informative, and rewarding travel experience for you.

Your Program Director will provide sightseeing trips, handle all travel details, reserve optional tours you choose to take, oversee your Discovery Series events, and provide any other assistance you may need. You will be in the company of a Program Director throughout your vacation.

Irish Culture

Ireland has a rich cultural heritage of traditional music, dance, literature, language, and more, that stretches back thousands of years. It was only about a century ago when Irish culture and society began to diverge. The catalyst was the Irish War of Independence (1919–1921), a time when the island separated into two regions. By far the largest region (occupying about five-sixths of the island) is the Republic of Ireland, which is predominantly Catholic Christian. The remaining sixth of the island—Northern Ireland—remained part of the United Kingdom and is primarily Protestant Christian. Despite these political and religious differences, Irish culture is defined by a number of cherished traditions shared by all who make their home on the Emerald Isle.

Even if you are not Irish, you probably know someone who is: More than 10% of Americans claim Irish ethnicity. That's about 33 million people—more than actually *live* on the island of Ireland (6.8 million). And while you are likely familiar with some of the common cultural markers of Irish identity, the richness of Irish culture can only be fully appreciated when you experience it back on the “*auld sod*,” as some Irish like to call their homeland.

Ireland has been inhabited for at least 9,000 years, by dozens of different tribes that were Celtic or Gaelic in origin. About 1,200 years ago, Viking, Norman, Scottish, Flemish, Welsh and English people began settling here, mixing in with the original population and influencing the culture. Today, most people consider themselves to be ethnically Irish, but in Northern Ireland especially, those who claim some British descent may refer to themselves as “Anglo-Irish” or “West Britons.” Another distinct ethnic minority are the semi-nomadic “Travellers”. For hundreds of years, they have been itinerant metal workers, horse traders, artisans, and entertainers. Much like the Roma of southern and eastern Europe, Travellers have historically suffered discrimination and ostracization. Though they are of Irish extraction, they are genetically distinct from the settled Irish population, due to years of separation.

The friendliness of the Irish people is not just a stereotype, it has been borne out in survey after survey. For instance, in a 2019 *Condé Nast Traveler* Readers' Choice survey, Dublin and Galway ranked among the world's top ten most friendly cities. Strangers on the street will look you in the eye and say "good day," drivers will wave at you, and shopkeepers will engage you in conversation. In general, Irish culture is relaxed, informal, and open. Geniality, literacy, and eloquence are valued, and if a person commits a social faux pas, the usual correction would be sarcasm and good-humored teasing. A popular saying explains the rationale: "to make a friend, you must be a friend."

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the pubs. The pub is not just a place for drinking, it's where the village meets to socialize. In the Republic of Ireland alone, in 2019 there were 7,193 pubs—and that figure does not even include the bars in hotels and restaurants, or any drinking establishments in Northern Ireland. That would make for a very, very long pub crawl. If you are standing at the bar, you will likely be engaged in conversation, and may even be treated to a round of drinks (and also expected to reciprocate). What would you be drinking? Irish whiskey or a pint of Guinness, first brewed in 1859 and now a symbol of Irish culture. Based on statistics around consumption, the Irish do like to drink, but they describe that penchant with another saying: *galor gan náire*, which means, "an affliction without shame."

The Irish are said to have the "gift of gab," and their eloquence is reflected in the disproportionate number of world-class writers Ireland and Northern Ireland have produced compared to their small populations. Four Irishmen have won the Nobel Prize in Literature (William Butler Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett, and Séamus Heaney), and other literary giants include James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, Bram Stoker, Jonathan Swift, C.S. Lewis, Maeve Binchy, Frank O'Connor, Flann O'Brien, Roddy Doyle, and John Banville. So there is much truth to the old Irish saying, "If wars were fought with words, Ireland would rule the world."

Ireland is also known for its long musical heritage. Even prior to medieval times, early Gaelic culture had ten known musical instruments. Modern performers such as The Chieftains, The Clancy Brothers, Tommy Makem, and the Irish Rovers revitalized the form in the 1960s. Today, traditional music is wildly popular and you will hear it played in local pubs and musical *seisún* ("sessions"). But the Irish have had a major impact in other musical genres, including classical music and popular music, with notable rock performers that include Van Morrison, Sinéad O'Connor, U2, The Cranberries, The Boomtown Rats, Hozier and many, many more. With so much talent and conviviality gracing Ireland's cultural scene, your visit will surely include plenty of *craic* (fun).

Accommodations

As is common with hotels in Ireland, none of our hotels feature air conditioning, though all feature heating. In general you'll also find that most European hotel rooms are smaller than what you may be used to in the U.S. Finally, ice machines may not be available at all hotels, but ice is usually available at the bar.

Laundry Service

Most hotels in Ireland offer send-out laundry service (as opposed to self-service machines). The price varies according to the hotel, but your Program Director can advise you on the best place to have laundry done.

Language in Ireland

English is the official language in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and is spoken by nearly everyone. Additionally, in parts of Northern Ireland, Ulster Scots, a dialect of Scots, is sometimes spoken as a second language. In Ireland, a second official language is Irish or *Gaelige*. It is a Gaelic language but is separate and distinct from Scots Gaelic. Though most people know some Irish phrases and some signs are translated into this ancient tongue, it is very rarely spoken conversationally.

Useful Phrases

Since everyone speaks English you should have no trouble communicating with your Irish hosts. And in a land where the spoken word is so highly valued, there is a rich and colorful catalog of vernacular and slang phrases. Here are few to help you get started:

- *Craic* is a catch-all word that means any manner of fun. It is social in nature something you'd enjoy at parties, in the pubs and anywhere people gather together.
- When something is on the tip of your tongue but you can't quite muster the actual word you need, *yoke* is a common Irish substitute (like thingamajig in English). "Would you hand me that yoke over there?"
- You may know it as the restroom or toilet, but in Ireland the bathroom facilities are called "the jacks". If you need to use one, ask someone "Where are the jacks?" and they'll point you in the right direction.
- The official name for the police is the *Gardai*, and an individual police officer is a *Gard*. But most often they are referred to as the "guards," as in "Slow down your driving, or the guards will be on us."
- "Aw, sure look it" is very widely used, with different connotations. It can be an answer to a rhetorical question, as in "Isn't it a rotten day out there? Ah, sure, look it." It is also used to tack onto the end of a sentence for emphasis, or in response to something when you don't know what to say.
- "Was it any use?" is an inquiry that means, "was it any good?"
- The national drink, Guinness, is sometimes called "the black stuff" or "a pint of Gat."
- If you are out and about exploring, you may be walking along a footpath (sidewalk), and you may be wearing runners (sneakers). If it's cool, you may be wearing a jumper (sweater). You might also be carrying your belongings in a bum bag. Do not call it by its American name, fanny pack, because here, "fanny" is something altogether different (and crude).

Irish Cuisine

If you come to Ireland expecting mostly mundane meat and potatoes, you will be surprised. Talented chefs have inspired a burgeoning food culture that continues to reinvent itself all over the island, fed by a steady supply of local ingredients fresh from the farms, fields and sea. There are also plenty of options for international fare, thanks to the growing immigrant population. Start your day right with **an Irish breakfast**. Hearty doesn't begin to describe it, a plateful of some or all of the following: baked beans, broiled tomatoes, eggs, bacon, sausages, kippers, toast (made with soda bread and butter and marmalade), a potato dish, and tea. In Northern Ireland, this breakfast banquet goes by the name of an "**Ulster fry**." But if it is traditional you're after, look for these dishes:

- **Black and white pudding:** This is not puddings in the American sense but casings filled with a mixture of pork, oats, seasonings and pig's blood. They are then sliced and fried—and said to be very tasty. (The white pudding omits the blood.) They are often served alongside traditional pork link sausages.
- **Colcannon:** A mix of mashed potatoes with cabbage or kale, butter, and scallions.
- **Champ:** The North Ireland variant of *colcannon* is made with just scallions and creamy potatoes.
- **Bubble and squeak:** A fritter of mashed potatoes mixed with vegetables and beef.
- **Irish stew:** This is comfort food at its best. Inexpensive ingredients such as mutton, potatoes, and carrots are slow-cooked with herbs such as bay, parsley and thyme create the Irish stew. Nowadays, you are more likely to have your stew made with lamb or even beef. Carnivores might also try **Dexter beef**, which is native to the island and known for its sweet, nutty flavor.
- **Dubliner cheddar, Cashel Blue cheese, and Wicklow Farmhouse (a type of brie):** A variety of fine cheeses that come from Irish cows who produce some of the finest milk in the world and the richest butter.
- **Cockles and mussels:** This Dublin specialty (immortalized in the song Molly Malone) can be enjoyed all over the island.
- **Blaa:** A soft, puffy yeast roll that is a specialty of Waterford and a popular bread used for sandwiches or breakfast.
- **Soda farl:** A type of quick flat bread from Ulster.
- **Barmbrack:** This special bread is made with raisins and candied peel (often steeped in tea and whiskey).
- **Irish Apple Tart:** A family favorite dessert served with cream or creamy custard.

Dublin in Brief

City Layout and Details

Compared to other European capitals, Dublin is a relatively small metropolis and easily traversed. The city center -- identified in Irish on bus destination signs as AN LAR -- is bisected by the River Liffey flowing west to east into Dublin Bay. Canals ring the city center: The Royal Canal forms a skirt through the north half, and the Grand Canal the south half. True Dubliners, it is said, live between the two canals.

The focal point of Dublin is the River Liffey, with 17 bridges connecting its north and south banks. The most famous of these is the O'Connell Bridge. The Millennium Bridge is a footbridge erected in 1999 to link Temple Bar with the Northside. The newest bridge, the Samuel Beckett Bridge, opened in December 2009.

On the north side of the river, the main thoroughfare is O'Connell Street, a wide, two-way avenue that starts at the riverside quays and runs north to Parnell Square. On the south side of the Liffey, Grafton Street is Dublin's main shopping street. It is home to Ireland's most exclusive department store, Brown Thomas. Restricted to pedestrians, Grafton Street is the center of Dublin's up market shopping area, surrounded by a maze of small streets and lanes that boast a terrific variety of shops, restaurants, and hotels. At the south end of Grafton Street is St. Stephen's Green, the city's most beloved park and an urban oasis ringed by rows of historic Georgian town houses, fine hotels, and restaurants.

At the north end of Grafton Street, Nassau Street rims the south side of Trinity College. The street is noted for its fine shops and because it leads to Merrion Square, another fashionable Georgian park surrounded by historic brick-front town houses. Merrion Square is also adjacent to Leinster House, the Irish House of Parliament, the National Gallery, and the National Museum.

Local Transportation

Bus: Dublin Bus offers public transportation services within the Dublin city limits, as well as in the surrounding area. Several routes are available throughout the city. Daily, weekly, monthly and annual passes are available for purchase. Service generally runs from 6am to 11:30 pm (10 pm on Sundays) and later on weekends.

Tram: The LUAS is a tram system with two main lines in Dublin, referred to as the Green Line and the Red Line. The LUAS runs from approximately 5:45am-midnight. Weekly or daily passes are available, or you can purchase a single fare based on the length of your ride. A single fare ranges from 2.10-3.20 euros or a round trip fare costs 3.70-5.50 euros.

Belfast in Brief

City Layout and Details

Donegall Square, dominated by the landmark of Belfast's grand City Hall, is at the heart of the city's compact historic center. Fine buildings from the city's prosperous Victorian Era surround the square. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board has an office here with ample information on the city and all of Ulster. Belfast's main shopping area is an easy walk north from Donegall Square along Donegall Place and Royal Avenue.

Great Victoria Street, where the Grand Opera House and Crown Liquor Saloon are located, is a short walk to the west from Donegall Square. Within walking distance to the northeast, narrow allies called "The Entries" run off High and Anne Streets in a pedestrian-only shopping district. Here you can find a number of interesting pubs at which to share food and drink with the famously friendly local people.

To the south of the Donegall Square area, Great Victoria Road and Dublin Road lead to University Road and the area called the Golden Mile. The Ulster Museum, Queen's University, and the city's Botanic Gardens are in this area, as well as many restaurants and the city's best nightlife.

Local Transportation

Bus: Getting around Belfast by public transportation is relatively easy. The Metro is the name of the city's bus service with routes that run from the city center outward along the spine roads. The system operates more than 12 busy arterial routes, in addition to branch routes in and around the capital and nightlink services from Donegal Square West.

For shorter stays the **Metro Day Ticket** may be the best bet. It costs approximately £3.50 and allows you to travel anywhere, anytime on the Metro network for one day, Monday through Saturday. Belfast has three main bus stations located at Europa Buscentre at Great Victoria Street, Laganside Buscentre and Newtonabbey.

The city also launched a new bus rapid transit system in 2018 called the Glider. The Glider has two lines (G1 & G2) which connect East and West Belfast and the Titanic Quarter with the city center. The Glider runs from approximately 5:30am-11:00pm and arrives every 5-7 minutes. It costs approximately £4 for a day pass or £1.60 for a single ride.

Taxis: There is a plating scheme that helps visitors recognize legitimate companies. Yellow license plates identify public hire in the city; white identifies outside the city; private hire is green; and blue identifies bus taxis.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your vacation. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. Grand Circle is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly. If the shop is outside the country, you should expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from the standards you are used to, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Ireland

One of the most popular Irish souvenirs is the highly prized white wool Aran sweaters and hats. Other commonly sought items include hand-woven Tweeds, knitwear, linen, earthenware and pottery, porcelain, glass and handmade jewelry (often in Celtic motifs), pearly Belleek china, luminous Waterford crystal, and Irish lace.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Ireland

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 27,136 square miles
- **Capital:** Dublin
- **Location:** Ireland is situated in the Atlantic Ocean and separated from Great Britain by the Irish Sea. Half the size of Arkansas, it occupies the entire island except for the six counties that make up Northern Ireland.
- **Geography:** The ocean is responsible for the rugged western coastline, along which are many islands, peninsulas, and headlands. The main geographical features of Ireland are low central plains surrounded by a ring of coastal mountains. The highest peak is Carrauntuohill (Irish: Corrán Tuathail), which is 1041 m (3414 ft). There are a number of sizable lakes along Ireland's rivers, with Lough Neagh the largest in Ireland and Great Britain. The island is bisected by the River Shannon, at 259 km (161 miles) with a 113 km (70 miles) estuary the longest river in Ireland (and the longest in the British Isles if the estuary is included), which flows south from County Cavan in the north to meet the Atlantic just south of Limerick.
- **Languages:** English, Irish Gaelic
- **Population:** 5,068,050
- **Religions:** Roman Catholicism 78.3%, Church of Ireland 2.7%, other Christian 1.6%, Orthodox 1.3%, Muslim 1.3%, other 2.4%, none 9.8%, unspecified 2.6%
- **Time zone:** Ireland is five hours ahead of Eastern Time: when it is 6 am in New York, it is 11 am in Ireland.

National Holidays: Ireland

In addition to the holidays listed below, Ireland celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and the June, August, and October Bank holidays. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day
03/17 St. Patrick's Day
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Ireland: A Brief History

Human history in Ireland dates back 10,500 years, but the first identifiable people to settle here were the Celts, who came in waves between the 8th and 1st centuries BC. They were organized in various groups, the last of which, the Gaels, conquered the island and divided it into five tribes. The language they spoke, Q-Celtic, was the precursor of the Irish language, *Gaelige*.

Contrary to popular belief, St. Patrick did not introduce Christianity to Ireland's pagan people. The religion was already present here. But Patrick and other priests spread the faith even beyond Ireland's shores, and built great monasteries that became bastions of Latin learning. The monks created illuminated manuscripts such as the *Book of Kells*, and were engaged in sculpture and metalwork. This heritage has led to Ireland being called the "island of scholars and saints."

By the 8th century AD, Vikings began raiding Irish settlements. Though often depicted as violent marauders, in some cases the Vikings arrived as traders and intermingled with the Irish. They established many towns, including Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford. By 1014, Viking power was in decline when the Irish king Brian Bóru defeated the Vikings at the Battle of Clontarf.

New raiders came in 1172 with the Norman King Henry II of England. This began England's 800-year struggle to dominate Ireland. English law was introduced, but the Irish did not accept it. The Normans were able to control four "obedient shires," including the area around Dublin known as the Pale. Anything "beyond the Pale" was said to be savage and lawless. The Tudors brought systematic repression, encouraging Scottish Protestant colonization, and taking farms from Irish landowners and giving them to English nobles. In 1649 Oliver Cromwell launched a violent anti-Catholic campaign that bordered on genocide. By 1801 the Act of Union merged Ireland with Britain as the United Kingdom, with direct rule by Parliament in London.

What Cromwell was unable to accomplish, the Great Famine of 1845-49 nearly did. A blight infecting Ireland's potato crops caused starvation and reduced the population by a third. The term "famine" is a misnomer: There was plenty of food, but it was exported by the English or used by Irish tenants to pay exorbitant rents to British landlords. Failure to pay meant eviction, and eviction meant death. The population further declined with mass emigration.

The late 19th and early 20th century saw vigorous but doomed campaigns for Irish home rule. After many brutal repressions, their moderate nationalism became militant separatism. In 1922, following the Irish Rising of 1916 and the bloody Anglo-Irish War, twenty-six counties of Ireland won freedom from the United Kingdom as the Irish Free State. The remaining six, in the province

of Ulster, remained within the United Kingdom as Northern Ireland. The struggle continued throughout the 1990s with “the Troubles” of Northern Ireland, where those who favored a united Ireland fought with unionists who wanted to stay within the United Kingdom.

For Ireland, the 1990’s ushered in an era of prosperity known as the “Celtic Tiger.” By the early 2000’s, Ireland was one of the richest countries in the EU, moving from being a net recipient to being a net contributor. Ireland rode the Celtic Tiger until the worldwide recession of 2008. In 2010 Ireland’s banks required bailouts from the European Union and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Since then, Ireland has repaid its IMF loan ahead of schedule, in 2017.

The country’s difficult history proves that there is no such thing as “the luck of the Irish.” But there is pluck, endurance, and hope.

Northern Ireland

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 5,450 square miles
- **Capital:** Belfast (regional); Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, whose national capital is London
- **Location:** Consists of the six counties of Ulster, occupying the northeastern corner of the island of Ireland.
- **Languages:** English
- **Population:** 1,862,100
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 40.8%, Presbyterian 19.1%, Church of Ireland 13.7%, Methodist 3%, none or unknown 23.5%
- **Time Zone:** Same as the rest of Ireland, five hours ahead of Eastern Time

National Holidays: Northern Ireland

In addition to the holidays listed below, Northern Ireland celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and the Spring and Summer Bank holidays. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year’s Day
03/17 St. Patrick’s Day
07/12 Battle of the Boyne
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26 Boxing Day

Northern Ireland: A Brief History

The arc of history followed a similar curve in Northern Ireland as it did in the southern island until the 20th century. In the 1600s, northern Ireland (which lies in the province of Ulster) was a bastion of resistance against the forces of King Henry VII, who was instituting widespread

programs of colonization by taking Irish lands and giving them to English and Scottish Protestant settlers. Key leaders of the anti-British forces were from the Ulster county of Tyrone, but many of them fled to Europe after being defeated at the Battle of Kinsale in 1601.

The Protestant colonization program, called the “Ulster Plantation,” continued until another rebellion broke out in 1641. Many Protestant settlers were massacred, but when the New Model Army of Oliver Cromwell arrived from England in 1649, four years of bloody anti-Catholic reprisals followed and land ownership reverted to the Protestants. Over the next several hundred years, there were Irish revolts, but the Protestant population grew into a majority.

Fast forward to 1921, after the island had been ripped by three years of guerilla warfare. A truce was reached between Irish republican and British forces, which resulted in the Anglo-Irish Treaty creating the Irish Free State. Under its terms Northern Ireland would be part of the Free State unless its parliament opted out. The parliament was controlled by the (Protestant) Ulster Unionist party and as expected, it chose to remain as part of the United Kingdom.

For the next 50 years, Northern Ireland enjoyed limited self-government within the UK. But since its parliament was controlled by the Ulster Unionist Party, the large Catholic minority had little participation in the government, which at times openly encouraged discrimination against Catholics. This led to large civil rights protests in the 1960s, which the government brutally suppressed, most notably on “Bloody Sunday.” During this time the paramilitary Provisional IRA, who favored the reunification of Ireland, began its campaign against what it called the British occupation of the six counties. Other splinter groups began to participate in the violence.

The Northern Irish government’s inability to manage the conflict prompted the British government to suspend home rule in 1972 and impose direct rule. The British tried to portray themselves as neutral peacekeepers, but British officers often colluded with illegal loyalist paramilitaries, were involved in murders, and obstructed justice when their crimes were investigated. Irish nationalist and republican groups further fragmented and also committed violence against civilians, as the so-called “Troubles” rolled on for 30 years.

In 1998, following a Provisional IRA cease-fire, the Good Friday Agreement restored self-government to Northern Ireland on the basis of power sharing between the two communities. Violence greatly decreased since the signing of the accord. In 2001, the police force in Northern Ireland, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, was replaced by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. On July 28, 2005, the Provisional IRA (PIRA) announced the end of its armed campaign and that September, international weapons inspectors supervised the full disarmament of the PIRA.

The elections of 2017 marked the first time since partition that the Unionists did not win a majority of seats. The opposing Sinn Féin party has stated its main goal is the reunification of Ireland. After three years of political deadlock, a power-sharing deal was reached in 2020. In 2024, the Sinn Féin party became the largest party in representing Northern Ireland in Westminster. Considering shifting demographics and the fact that the majority of voters in Northern Ireland were opposed to Brexit and wanted to remain within the European Union, maybe reunification with the Republic of Ireland (which is an EU member state) is not a far-off dream.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Ireland

Malachy McCourt's History of Ireland by Malachy McCourt (2008, History) If you like your history with a dose of wry humor, this New York Times best seller may be for you. It is more a series of biographical vignettes than an academic history, but it weaves together myth, folklore, culture, music, cuisine and more from the country's past and present.

Normal People by Sally Rooney (2018, Fiction) This popular best seller (long-listed for the Man Booker Prize) explores the intense love between two west Ireland teens who end up at college in Dublin, and move on to navigate adulthood. It's a witty look at contemporary Irish life, and a love that is muddled by secrecy, social class, and the characters' own complicated personalities.

Angela's Ashes by Frank McCourt (1996, Autobiography) This Pulitzer Prize-winning book recounts the author's youth in Depression-era Limerick. Through harrowing poverty, punishing schools, his father's alcoholism, searing loss, and the casual cruelty of friends and relatives, the author still manages to retain his love for storytelling, for humor, for the mother who could not protect him, and for life itself.

TransAtlantic by Colum McCann (2014, Historical Fiction) Three iconic crossings between Ireland and New World are retold—the 1845 visit to Ireland by Frederick Douglass; the first non-stop transatlantic flight in 1919; and a senator's involvement in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

Circle of Friends by Maeve Binchley (1990, Fiction) A coming-of-age novel set in 1950s rural Ireland. Most of the book centers on the lives of three friends—gentle Benny, bravely honest Eve, and class-conscious Nan—as they grow up and enter college. The book was made into a film starring Chris O'Donnell and Minnie Driver.

Northern Ireland

Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland by Patrick Radden Keefe (2019, Nonfiction) In 1972, 38-year old Jean McConville, a widowed mother of eight, was abducted from her Belfast home and murdered. What would otherwise be a gripping true crime story is revealed to be part of a web of other stories, which altogether provide an epic portrait of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Suggested Films & Videos

Ireland

The Commitments (1991, Comedy/Drama) Based on a novel by Roddy Doyle, this musical follows the travails of working-class youth in 1980s Dublin, who think their ticket to fame lies in forming a band dedicated to American soul music. A cast of young, inexperienced actors play the musicians with heart and passion (and offer up a truly knockout version of Mustang Sally).

Ryan's Daughter (1970, Drama) Imagine *Madame Bovary*—set against the sweeping beauty of the Dingle Peninsula. This David Lean epic tells the story of a young, unfulfilled married woman's affair with a traumatized British officer during World War I. The all-star cast includes Sarah Miles, John Miles, Robert Mitchum, Trevor Howard, and Leo McKern.

Michael Collins (1996, Drama) Directed by Neil Jordan, this fine biopic stars Liam Neeson as the hero of the Irish Civil War, who helped negotiate the creation of the Irish Free State.

Brooklyn (2015, Drama) is a touching drama about a young Irish woman who emigrates to New York in the 1950s. Though much of it takes place in Brooklyn, the heroine Eilis (Saoirse Ronan) returns to Ireland to make an important choice. Nominated for three Academy Awards in 2016.

Waking Ned Devine (1998, Comedy). Set in a rural Irish town, this is the tale of lottery winner Ned Devine—who is found dead, with a winning ticket in his hand. The townsfolk try to fool the authorities into thinking Ned is still alive so they can cash the ticket in and share the prize.

Northern Ireland

'71 (2014, Drama) During the height of The Troubles, a British soldier becomes separated from his unit after a riot breaks out in a mixed Belfast neighborhood. Suspense and compassion mix as the film explores the humanity of all the characters, regardless of their sectarian roles.

Derry Girls (2018, TV Show). This acclaimed sitcom follows the lives of high school girls in Northern Ireland during the end of the Troubles in the 1990s. Enjoy the dark humor, raw writing and irrepressible cast.

In the Name of the Father (1994, Biopic) The true-life story of Gerry Conlon, one of the “Guildford Four”—four Irish youths who were falsely convicted of blowing up an English pub in the 1970s. Although only partly set in Northern Ireland (the trial and jail time are in England), the film does a good job at exploring the tensions between the Catholics and Protestants at the time.

Useful Websites

Grand Circle Forum (tips from previous travelers)

www.gct.com/forum

Grand Circle Frequently Asked Questions

www.gct.com/faq

**International Health Information/CDC
(Centers for Disease Control)**

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/
plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security

Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps or Maps.me

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber or Bolt or Grab

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App or Skype or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

TripWhistle

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



Arrival/Departure 

Nights at destination **2**

Included Tour 

Optional Tour 

Motorcoach Route 



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from Mt. Sterling, KY



Submitted by David Woods, first-time
traveler from Rockport, TX



Created by Barbara Werren, 31-time traveler
from Lakewood, CO



Created by Sharon Fleury, 8-time traveler
from Poughkeepsie, NY



Created by Susan Karski, 5-time traveler
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