

The North of Ireland

8-DAY SELF-DRIVE TOUR





Self-Drive Experience

Ireland is one of the world's most enchanting self-drive destinations, offering travellers the freedom to explore dramatic coastlines, storied landscapes, and vibrant cultural heartlands at their own pace. With its winding coastal roads, historic manor houses, boutique retreats, and world-class food scene, Ireland blends natural beauty.

A self-drive journey allows you to savour the country's most iconic regions while also discovering its quieter, more intimate corners—places where Irish hospitality, heritage, and storytelling come alive. From the rugged headlands of the Wild Atlantic Way to the serene lakelands and elegant Georgian towns, each day brings new vistas, new flavours, and new memories.

HIGHLIGHTS

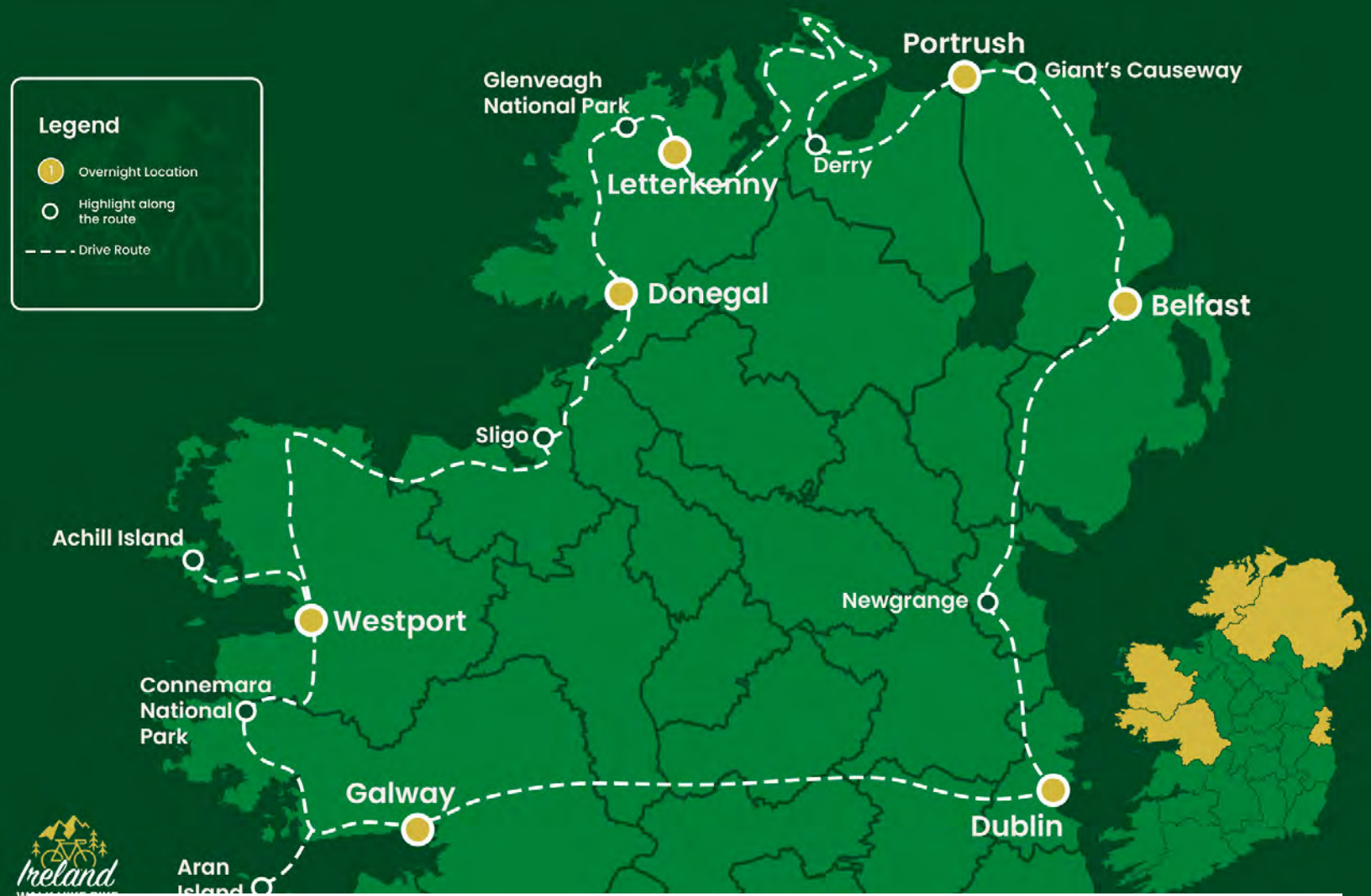
Scenic Coastlines & Mountain Passes: Ireland's coastal and mountain routes are among the most breathtaking in Europe. Picture yourself cruising along windswept headlands, secluded bays, and dramatic cliffs, or navigating iconic passes like Healy Pass or Conor Pass—each offering sweeping panoramas worthy of a postcard.

Heritage, Culture & Craft: Venture off the main routes into charming villages, medieval towns, and historic estates. Visit world-famous distilleries, artisan workshops, ancient castles, and early monastic sites that reveal the depth and richness of Ireland's cultural tapestry.

Food & Culinary Experiences: Indulge in Ireland's exceptional food scene—from Michelin-listed restaurants to coastal seafood shacks and farm-to-fork cafés. West Cork, Killarney, Galway, and Dublin offer outstanding culinary moments that elevate the entire journey.

Island Adventures & Hidden Gems: Take ferry trips to remote islands, wander through walled gardens, explore dramatic coastal trails, or simply enjoy a quiet moment overlooking the Atlantic from your luxury suite or private terrace.

A luxury self-drive tour through Ireland blends freedom, comfort, local connection, and unforgettable scenery. It's an immersive, elegant way to experience the essence of Ireland—one winding road, one warm welcome, and one spectacular view at a time.



Daily Itinerary

- 1 Arrive in Dublin - explore the city
- 2 Dublin to Galway
- 3 Galway to Westport
- 4 Westport to Donegal
- 5 Donegal to Derry or Letterkenny
- 6 Antrim's Causeway Coast
- 7 Causeway Coast to Belfast
- 8 Departure



The North of Ireland Self Drive Tour

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Dublin

Welcome to Ireland's vibrant capital city—Dublin! Upon arrival at the airport, you have the flexibility to collect your rental car today or wait until tomorrow before setting off on your first driving day. If you prefer a relaxed start without navigating city traffic, we recommend transferring directly to your centrally located accommodation and collecting your car the following morning.

After checking in, take some time to explore this historic and endlessly fascinating city. Wander Dublin at your own pace—strolling Georgian squares, crossing the River Liffey, or browsing lively neighbourhoods such as Grafton Street and Temple Bar. If you'd like a deeper introduction, you can join a privately guided walking tour to uncover the city's most iconic landmarks and colourful stories.

No visit to Dublin is complete without experiencing St. James's Gate and the world-famous Guinness Storehouse, where you can learn the story of Ireland's most iconic stout before enjoying a pint with sweeping panoramic views from the Gravity Bar.

Settle in and enjoy your first evening in Ireland, soaking up the culture, hospitality, and charm that make Dublin such a captivating beginning to your self-drive adventure.

MEALS

Dinner recommendations will be listed in your route notes.

OVERNIGHT

4* Hotel in Dublin City

RENTAL VEHICLE

Manual or Automatic Transmission rental car options available

TRAVEL TIME

20–45 minutes from the airport to your hotel



Day 2: Dublin to Galway

Today, your self-drive adventure truly begins as you leave Dublin behind and journey west toward Galway, Ireland's bohemian cultural capital. After breakfast, collect your rental car (if you have not already done so) and set out across the country, travelling through the rolling midlands and passing some of Ireland's most historic landscapes. This drive is both scenic and flexible, with wonderful optional stops along the way—allowing you to tailor the day to your own pace and interests.

One of the most remarkable detours is a visit to Newgrange, located in the Boyne Valley and recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Older than Stonehenge and the Pyramids of Giza, this 5,200-year-old passage tomb is a masterpiece of Neolithic engineering. A guided tour reveals the extraordinary history of the site and its famous winter solstice alignment, making it a deeply memorable cultural experience before continuing westward.

As you approach Galway, the atmosphere begins to change—the landscape becomes more rugged, the skies wider, and the Atlantic influence more present. Once you arrive in the city, take some time to stroll through its lively pedestrian streets, filled with musicians, boutique shops, and vibrant cafés. Highlights include the Latin Quarter, the Spanish Arch, and the medieval St Nicholas' Collegiate Church. Galway is known for its outstanding culinary scene, so be sure to sample fresh seafood, artisan desserts, or contemporary Irish cuisine from one of its many acclaimed restaurants.

Spend the remainder of your evening soaking in the city's easygoing charm—whether enjoying traditional music in a snug pub or simply wandering along the waterfront at dusk. Settle into your accommodation and prepare for the adventures that await along Ireland's spectacular west coast.

MEALS

Only Breakfast included.
Dinner recommendations will be listed in your route notes

OVERNIGHT

4* Hotel in Galway City

TRAVEL TIME

Dublin to Galway will take 2.5–3 hours without allocating time for stops.



Day 3: Galway to Westport

Today your journey carries you northwest into the rugged, untamed beauty of Connemara National Park, one of Ireland's most striking wilderness regions. Leaving the lively streets of Galway behind, the landscape soon transforms into a tapestry of shimmering lakes, peat bogs, rocky hillsides, and sweeping Atlantic views. The drive itself is a highlight—quiet winding roads, sheep-dotted hills, and mountains rising dramatically on all sides.

Your first major stop is Connemara National Park, where you have the option to hike the iconic Diamond Hill loop. This beautifully maintained trail leads steadily upward through heathland and open mountainside, offering increasingly expansive views across the Twelve Bens mountain range, the Atlantic coastline, and the tranquil valleys below. Reaching the summit is incredibly rewarding, providing one of the best panoramas in the west of Ireland.

After your hike, continue onward to the magnificent Kylemore Abbey, one of Ireland's most photographed and romantic landmarks. Set beside a glassy lake and backed by forested mountains, the abbey's fairy-tale façade is truly captivating. Here you can enjoy lunch in the café, stroll through the beautifully restored Victorian walled gardens, or explore the Abbey's history, which spans stories of love, tragedy, spirituality, and resilience.

From Kylemore, your journey brings you deeper into Mayo as you approach the colourful and welcoming town of Westport, your home for the night. Known for its vibrant traditional music scene, tree-lined streets, and lively pubs, Westport is one of Ireland's most charming towns. Whether you relax over a hearty meal, enjoy an evening stroll along the Carrowbeg River, or listen to live trad music drifting from a cosy pub, Westport offers a perfect blend of culture, atmosphere, and warm Irish hospitality.

MEALS

Only Breakfast included. Dinner recommendations will be listed in your route notes

OVERNIGHT

4* Hotel in Westport.

TRAVEL TIME

2.5–3 hours through the National Park or 1.5–2 hours if you want to drive direct to Westport.

Both the above do not allocate time for stops.



Day 4: Westport to Donegal Town

This morning, set out west to experience one of Ireland’s most enchanting coastal landscapes—the Dingle Peninsula, the westernmost point in Europe and a region steeped in myth, history, and breathtaking scenery. As you leave your accommodation and follow the winding coastal roads, you’ll discover a landscape shaped by ocean winds, ancient settlements, and the rich traditions of the Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking region).

Your journey takes you to remarkable historic sites including the Gallarus Oratory, one of Ireland’s best-preserved early Christian churches, and the famous clocháns (beehive huts), whose dry-stone architecture has endured for over a thousand years. Along the route, dramatic views of the Blasket Islands unfold—rugged, uninhabited islands renowned for their wild beauty and literary heritage.

Continue your drive along the world-famous Sleat Head, one of the most scenic stretches on the Wild Atlantic Way. Here, steep cliffs plunge into turquoise waters, sandy coves appear between rocky outcrops, and every bend in the road reveals another postcard-perfect vista. Take time to stop at viewpoints, artisan craft shops, or local cafés to truly savour the charm and authenticity of this extraordinary peninsula.

After completing the loop, arrive in the colourful seaside town of Dingle, your home for the night. Known for its friendly pubs, incredible seafood, and vibrant music scene, Dingle offers the perfect balance of lively atmosphere and coastal tranquillity. Enjoy a stroll around the harbour, explore the town’s boutiques and galleries, or settle into a cosy restaurant for a memorable evening meal.

MEALS

Only Breakfast included.
Dinner recommendations will be listed in your route notes

OVERNIGHT

4* Hotel or Guesthouse in Donegal.

TRAVEL TIME

2–4 hours, depending on the route chosen, not allowing for stops.



Day 5: Donegal to Letterkenny or Derry

After breakfast, your journey continues east into the heart of Donegal, where one of Ireland's most beautiful and unspoiled landscapes awaits—Glenveagh National Park. This vast, remote wilderness stretches across nearly 16,500 hectares of rugged mountains, shimmering lakes, deep glens, and rolling woods. As you enter the park, you'll immediately feel the sense of peace and wildness that makes this region so special.

Begin your visit with a scenic walk or leisurely exploration of Lough Veagh, a long, narrow lake framed by steep slopes and dramatic peaks. Keep an eye out for the park's famed red deer herd, often seen grazing quietly in the open valleys or moving gracefully along the hillsides—the largest population of red deer in Ireland.

A short stroll brings you to the enchanting Glenveagh Castle, a 19th-century romantic mansion built in the style of a Scottish baronial estate. Its granite towers and ivy-draped walls overlook the still waters of the lake, creating one of the most picturesque castle settings in the country. Take time to wander through the beautifully restored interiors and explore the immaculate gardens, where exotic plants thrive in the sheltered microclimate of the valley.

When you have finished exploring Glenveagh, continue your drive toward your overnight destination, one of the following based on availability:

Option 1 – Derry:

Arrive in one of Ireland's most historic and culturally rich cities, known for its intact medieval walls, vibrant arts scene, and fascinating history. Enjoy an evening strolling its riverside walkways or sampling its excellent pubs and restaurants.

Option 2 – Letterkenny:

Alternatively, settle into Letterkenny, known as the "Cathedral Town." It offers an energetic blend of shops, cafés, heritage sites, and friendly local charm, providing a welcoming base for the night.

MEALS

Only Breakfast included.
Dinner recommendations will be listed in your route notes

OVERNIGHT

4* Hotel or in Derry or Letterkenny.

TRAVEL TIME

1.5–2 hours, not allocating time for stops.



Day 6: Letterkenny or Derry to Causeway Coast

After breakfast, depart Derry or Letterkenny and begin a spectacular day of exploration along the Inishowen Peninsula, one of the most dramatic and lesser-travelled regions of the Wild Atlantic Way. This unforgettable route combines sweeping ocean views, rugged headlands, and rich cultural heritage, making it one of the most rewarding coastal drives in Ireland.

As you make your way north, the landscape quickly opens into wide, windswept scenery where mountains meet the Atlantic. Your journey takes you along quiet coastal roads, through charming villages, and past ancient sites that tell the story of Ireland's northernmost frontier.

One of today's major highlights is Malin Head, Ireland's most northerly point. Famous for its soaring cliffs, distinctive rocky formations, and uninterrupted sea views, Malin Head offers a perfect opportunity for photographs, short walks, and fresh Atlantic air. On a clear day, you can see as far as Scotland and the Western Isles.

Continue along the coast to Inishowen Head Lighthouse, perched high above the sea with panoramic views across the northern coastline. This is an ideal stop to stretch your legs and appreciate the drama of the landscape, shaped over millennia by wind and waves.

The drive also passes other points of interest including secluded beaches, historic forts, and scenic lookouts—plenty of opportunities to pause, explore, and absorb the atmosphere of Donegal's wild beauty.

In the afternoon, travel southeast toward the seaside resort towns of Portrush or Portstewart, your base for the night. Both towns offer stunning coastal views, sandy beaches, and a range of excellent dining options—perfect for unwinding after a remarkable day on the peninsula.

MEALS

Only Breakfast included.
Dinner recommendations will be listed in your route notes

OVERNIGHT

4* Hotel or B&B on the Causeway Coast.

TRAVEL TIME

2–3 hours to Belfast, not allowing for stops.



Day 7: Causeway Coast to Belfast

Today you will journey along one of the most spectacular stretches of coastline in Ireland—the breathtaking Causeway Coast. This scenic route is packed with dramatic cliffs, sweeping bays, ancient ruins, and world-famous landmarks, offering countless opportunities to pause, explore, and admire the rugged beauty of Northern Ireland.

As you travel east, your first highlights may include the hauntingly beautiful Dunluce Castle, perched dramatically on a cliff edge above the Atlantic. Its crumbling walls and striking position make it one of the most atmospheric medieval ruins in Europe. Continuing along the coast, you have the option to walk the iconic Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge, suspended nearly 30 metres above the sea—an exhilarating crossing once used by local salmon fishermen.

Further along, you can explore the sweeping sands of Portstewart Strand or the photogenic clifftop Mussenden Temple, both offering unforgettable coastal vistas. Another superb stop is Fair Head, Northern Ireland’s tallest sea cliffs and a favourite filming location for major productions.

Of course, no visit to the Causeway Coast would be complete without experiencing the Giant’s Causeway, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and geological wonder. Formed by an ancient volcanic eruption nearly 60 million years ago, its roughly 40,000 interlocking basalt columns create an otherworldly landscape that has inspired myths, legends, and travellers for centuries. Take your time exploring the stones, coastal paths, and Visitor Centre before continuing your journey.

In the late afternoon, travel onward to Belfast, the vibrant capital of Northern Ireland. Settle into your accommodation and enjoy the evening at leisure in this dynamic city known for its history, hospitality, and lively food and music scene.

MEALS

Only Breakfast included.
Dinner recommendations will be listed in your route notes

OVERNIGHT

4* Hotel in Belfast.

TRAVEL TIME

N/A.



Day 8: Depart Belfast

This morning, savour one last delicious Irish breakfast before departing for the airport or starting your next adventure.

The drive from Belfast to Dublin Airport takes approx. 1.5-2 hours and we recommend being at the airport at least 3 hours before your departure.

If you have an early flight we recommend adding an extra day to overnight in Dublin before your flight or travelling to Dublin following your time in Belfast on Day 9.

MEALS

Only Breakfast included.
Dinner recommendations will be listed in your route notes

TRAVEL TIME

1.5-2 hours

What's Included:

- 4* Hotel & Boutique Guest House accommodation
- Complimentary access to our app, tailor-made for your tour, containing all your documents, Google Map Links for navigation & points of interest
- Emergency telephone support
- Detailed, easy to read, digital Route Suggestions
- Extra days/ nights booking on request
- Full pre-departure information to help you get the most from your Irish experience
- Holiday Specialist to assist with planning any additional days, additional activities, travel, airport transfers, etc.

What's Excluded:

- Airfare
- Meals not mentioned as included
- Travel insurance
- Medical costs, personal expenses, gratuities
- Items of a personal nature
- Any items not specifically listed as included in the programme
- Extra hotel nights before or after the tour

“ We gave Ireland Walk Hike Bike our itinerary and they planned everything for us - accommodations were excellent, the hire car was great, the private experiences were fabulous, the routings were well-planned. All-in-all a really great trip!! ” — **NICOLEL.**



Accommodation



We partner with a carefully curated selection of 4* hotels and boutique guest houses, chosen for their exceptional comfort, warm hospitality, and distinctive local character. Each property offers a stylish and welcoming retreat at the end of your touring day, blending high-quality service with the unique charm that makes Irish accommodation so memorable.

Our 4* hotels provide an elevated level of comfort, featuring thoughtfully designed rooms, excellent on-site dining, quality leisure facilities, and attentive professional service. These properties often sit in prime locations—close to historic towns, coastal viewpoints, or national parks—allowing you to enjoy both convenience and elegance throughout your stay.

Complementing these are our handpicked boutique guest houses, where intimate scale and personal attention create a truly special atmosphere. Often family-run or owner-managed, these charming properties showcase the best of Irish hospitality. Expect beautifully styled rooms, character-filled interiors, and a warm, genuine welcome from hosts eager to share local knowledge, dining recommendations, and hidden gems you might otherwise miss.



Culinary Delights

Ireland's culinary offerings are a well-kept secret, providing hearty and abundant fare—a perfect reward after a satisfying hike through the hills. Breakfast is served daily at your accommodation. Vegetarian and gluten-free options are available with advance notice. If you have specific medical dietary needs, please inform us in advance to arrange suitable meals. Recommendations for dinner spots are provided for your leisure on your free evenings.



Upgrade Options

For those seeking a more luxurious stay during your holidays we can offer upgraded accommodations in some locations. These provide additional amenities and a higher level of service, ensuring guests enjoy a more indulgent experience while still being immersed in the beauty of Ireland's landscapes.

Boutique Hotels: These are carefully selected hotels offering a blend of contemporary luxury and traditional Irish charm. They typically feature stylish, well-appointed rooms, fine dining options, spas, and additional amenities such as lounges and on-site bars. Many boutique hotels are located in scenic settings or within walking distance of popular hiking routes.

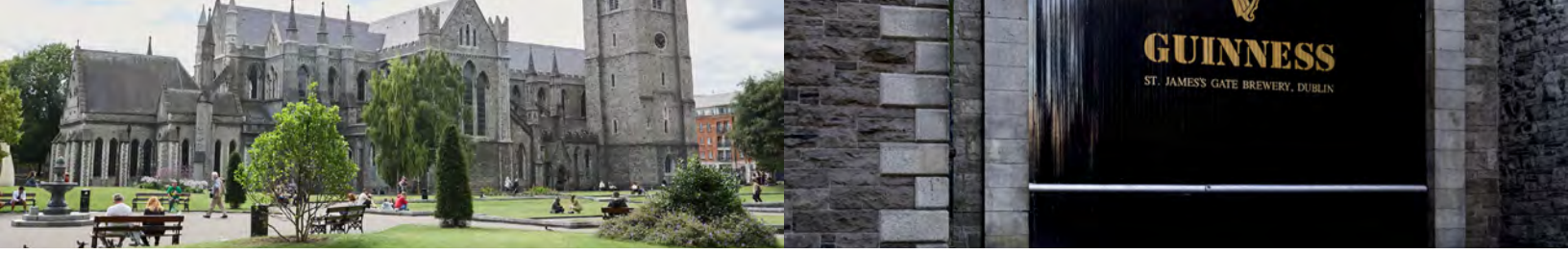
4 or 5-Star Hotels: These hotels offer a higher level of comfort and service, with spacious, well-designed rooms, gourmet restaurants, fitness centers, and sometimes pools or wellness facilities. The emphasis is on premium quality and attentive service, creating a relaxing environment after a day of hiking.

Country Houses and Manor Hotels: Set in tranquil rural locations, these stately homes and country houses offer a more peaceful, refined experience. They often come with lush gardens, elegant dining rooms, and a welcoming atmosphere. Staying in a country house can feel like being a guest in a grand private estate, with the charm of old-world Ireland.

Highend Guesthouses: These upgraded guesthouses offer a more intimate setting than hotels but still provide higher levels of comfort and service. Rooms may be more spacious with added amenities such as premium bed linens, complimentary refreshments, and en-suite bathrooms with higher-quality toiletries.

These upgraded accommodation options are ideal for those who want to combine outdoor adventures with a touch of luxury, offering guests a perfect balance of relaxation, comfort, and access to the natural beauty of Ireland.

“ Everything was perfect! Great personalized service; knowledgeable, very nice and very experienced guides. Great choice of walks, accommodations, restaurants, side visits and excellent recommendations. They treat their walkers as special guests. I have used many walking companies in Europe and I know I am a tough, demanding customer. They are in the top 1%, they excel in every area. ” — **ROSA G.**



Exploring Dublin

Pre-Tour Recommendations

If you plan to arrive a few days early before beginning your adventure, Dublin is the perfect base. Ireland's capital blends rich history, lively culture, and warm hospitality, offering endless ways to immerse yourself in the country before you set out into the peaceful landscapes of Wicklow. With world-class museums, iconic landmarks, and a vibrant food and music scene, Dublin sets the tone for an unforgettable Irish journey.

Things to See and Do in Ballycastle

Trinity College & the Book of Kells

Walk through Ireland's oldest university, famed for its cobbled courtyards and historic library. The 9th-century Book of Kells is one of the country's greatest artistic treasures.

Dublin Castle & Chester Beatty

Explore centuries of Irish history at Dublin Castle, then wander next door to the Chester Beatty Library—an award-winning museum housing rare manuscripts, artworks, and global artefacts.

Kilmainham Gaol

A powerful and moving museum offering insight into Ireland's struggle for independence, housed within a former 19th-century prison.

St Stephen's Green & Grafton Street

Enjoy a relaxed stroll through this elegant city park, then wander nearby Grafton Street, known for its boutique shops, cafés, and talented street musicians.

The Guinness Storehouse

Discover the story of Ireland's most famous stout across seven interactive floors, finishing with panoramic views over the city from the Gravity Bar.

Temple Bar

The cultural heart of Dublin, filled with traditional pubs, live music, colourful murals, and a buzzing atmosphere day and night.

Phoenix Park

One of Europe's largest enclosed city parks—home to Dublin Zoo, sweeping lawns, woodland trails, and a resident herd of wild fallow deer.

Why Ireland Walk Hike Bike?

For more than 25 years, Ireland Walk Hike Bike has been crafting journeys that reveal the heart and soul of Ireland. Our founder, Linda Woods, built the company on a simple belief: travellers deserve the time and space to truly connect with Ireland—its landscapes, its people, and its stories. Rather than rushing from place to place, our tours are designed to help you slow down, savour every moment, and experience the country in a more meaningful, immersive way.

A luxury self-drive tour with us blends freedom and flexibility with the reassurance of expert local planning. Whether you're travelling for scenic exploration, cultural discovery, or pure relaxation, our team of travel specialists is here to ensure your holiday is seamless, personal, and unforgettable..

- Irish Owned & Operated
- More Than 25 Years in Business
- Highly Knowledgeable Local Guides
- 4.9 Stars on Google Reviews
- Exceptional Customer Service
- Handpicked Accommodations

We've designed our Tours to maximize every moment of your holiday. Every detail is taken care of so you can just show up, unplug and relax.

- **Tailormade app** with all your documents included along with Google Maps integrated into each day of your Route Suggestions.
- With our Self-Guided Tours you can book your tour **start date to match your travel plan** (subject to accommodation availability)
- **Select accommodations** with genuine local hospitality
- An expert, local **holiday specialist** during the planning process to help with any questions you may have in the build up to your trip
- **Pre-Tour briefing**, in person to go through the entire itinerary and fit you on your bike
- **Emergency contact** number for any issues while you are on the routes



Travel Insurance

We highly recommend that you obtain suitable travel insurance before your departure date to protect yourself throughout your trip. This coverage should include comprehensive medical insurance for illness and injury, trip cancellation, and should cover for your other travel arrangements such as flights, pre and post-tour arrangements and your personal possessions.

Our travel insurance partners are World Nomads.

Visit www.irelandwalkhikebike.com/questions/travel-insurance-partner to get a quote, or you can contact your own insurance provider.

Getting to Dublin

There are four primary international airports in Ireland: Dublin, Shannon, Cork, and Belfast (Aldergrove) International. Several smaller regional airports—Kerry, Knock, Donegal, and Belfast City (George Best)—also provide convenient access from mainland Europe and the UK.

For tours beginning in Dublin, Dublin Airport is by far the most convenient arrival point. It is Ireland's busiest and best-connected airport, served by hundreds of international flights daily. We recommend arriving at least one day before your tour begins to allow time to relax and enjoy the city before heading south toward the Wicklow Mountains.

Dublin Airport (www.dublinairport.com)

Located just 10 km from the city centre, Dublin Airport offers excellent transport links. Over 1,000 buses operate daily to Dublin City and beyond, with direct services stopping right outside the arrivals area. Taxis and car-hire options are also readily available. .

Booking Details

ENQUIRIES

For questions about this hiking tour, reach out to our Ireland Travel Specialists at info@irelandwalkhikebike.com.

RESERVATIONS

To book your tour, sign up online [HERE](#) or email us at info@irelandwalkhikebike.com

PAYMENT CONDITIONS

A deposit of €150.00 per person is required at the time of booking. Balancing payments are then required no less than 8 weeks prior to the tour start date.

Our full terms and conditions can be found at www.irelandwalkhikebike.com/terms-conditions

CANCELLATIONS

Should you need to cancel, cancellation charges will apply. These are calculated from the day written notification is received by the company or our agent as a percentage of the total tour price, including surcharges as follows:

More than 56 days from start date: Deposit only

35 to 55 days from start date: 30%

15 to 34 days from start date: 50%

14 days to departure day: Nil Refund

To book your place, sign up online [HERE](#) or email us at info@irelandwalkhikebike.com.

We look forward to helping you plan an amazing adventure in Ireland — one you'll remember for years to come!

—Ireland Walk Hike Bike

Interested in exploring Ireland beyond your chosen hiking tour?

Ask us about our cycling and self-drive tours. Book two tours back to back, or add a pre or post-tour adventure.

Ireland Walk Hike Bike has got you covered!

Ireland Walk Hike

Bike

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