

The Essence of Ireland

8-DAY LUXURY SELF-DRIVE TOUR





Luxury Self-Drive Experience

Ireland is one of the world's most enchanting luxury 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 with refined comfort in a way few places can match.

A premium 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.

Boutique & Luxury Accommodation: Stay in beautifully restored manor house and designer hotels where comfort, service, and atmosphere take centre stage. These exclusive properties offer a warm welcome, gourmet dining, and the chance to unwind in style after a day of exploration.

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 - overnight in the 5* St. Helen's Hotel
- 2 Dublin Free Day - overnight in the 5* St. Helen's Hotel
- 3 Dublin to Cork via the Rock of Cashel - overnight in the 5* Hayfield Manor
- 4 Cork Free Day - overnight in the 5* Hayfield Manor
- 5 Cork to Killarney via the Wild Atlantic Way - overnight in the 5* Great Southern Hotel
- 6 Ring of Kerry - overnight in the 5* Great Southern Hotel
- 7 Killarney Free Day - overnight in the 5* Great Southern Hotel
- 8 Departure



The Essence of Ireland Self Drive Tour

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Dublin

Welcome to Ireland's capital—Dublin, a city where Georgian elegance, cultural vibrancy, and warm hospitality blend seamlessly. After collecting your high-end rental car at the airport, take a leisurely drive south to the magnificent 5* St. Helen's Hotel, your luxurious base for the night. This historic property—once an 18th-century mansion—offers refined comfort, landscaped formal gardens, and exceptional service from the moment you arrive.

Once checked in, you may wish to relax and unwind after your travels. Wander through the beautifully manicured gardens, enjoy a quiet coffee on the terrace, or simply settle into the elegance of your room and savour the tranquillity. If you prefer to explore, you're perfectly placed to enjoy some of Dublin's highlights. Discover the city's vibrant cultural quarter, stroll the grand Georgian streets, or visit world-famous attractions such as Trinity College, St Stephen's Green, or the National Gallery.

For a coastal alternative, take a short drive to Dún Laoghaire, where you can enjoy a refreshing walk along the historic pier, browse boutique shops, or take in the sea views as yachts drift across Dublin Bay.

In the evening, return to your hotel and indulge in a memorable dining experience at Talavera Restaurant, known for its elegant atmosphere and beautifully crafted dishes inspired by the flavours of Italy and Ireland.

A restful night awaits in one of Dublin's finest hotels, setting the tone for the luxurious journey ahead..

MEALS

Dinner in the Talavera Restaurant, St. Helen's Hotel.

OVERNIGHT

5* St. Helen's Hotel, Dublin

RENTAL VEHICLE

Automatic Transmission
BMW 5 Series or similar

TRAVEL TIME

30-45 minutes from the airport to your hotel



Day 2: Free Day in Dublin

Today is yours to enjoy at your own pace, with a choice of exceptional experiences designed to ease you into your Irish journey in true luxury. After a delicious breakfast at St. Helen's Hotel, choose from one of three carefully curated options—each offering a different way to embrace the charm, culture, and tranquillity of Dublin and its surroundings.

1. Relax at St. Helen's Hotel

If you prefer a slower start to your holiday, simply settle into the elegance of your 5* surroundings. Enjoy a peaceful morning wandering the formal gardens, relax in one of the hotel's beautifully appointed lounges, or take full advantage of your spa voucher, allowing yourself to unwind completely before the days of touring ahead. This is the perfect option for guests who enjoy calm, comfort, and restorative luxury.

2. Golf at Druids Glen

For golf enthusiasts, a short drive south brings you to the world-renowned Druids Glen Golf Course—often described as the “Augusta of Ireland.” This premier parkland course delivers immaculate greens, sweeping fairways, and breathtaking views across the Wicklow countryside. Whether you're a seasoned golfer or simply enjoy a memorable round in spectacular scenery, Druids Glen offers an unforgettable experience.

3. Explore Dublin City

If cultural discovery is calling, head into the heart of Dublin for a privately guided tour. Your expert local guide will bring the city to life as you explore its elegant Georgian squares, historic cathedrals, lively markets, and iconic sites such as Trinity College, Dublin Castle, and Grafton Street. This immersive experience offers a fascinating window into Ireland's history, literature, and contemporary culture.

After your chosen experience, return to St. Helen's for another restful evening in luxurious surroundings.

MEALS

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

OVERNIGHT

5* St. Helen's Hotel, Dublin

TRAVEL TIME

Depends on activity chosen



Day 3: Dublin to Cork

After breakfast, you begin your journey south from Dublin into the heart of Ireland, travelling at your own pace along a route rich in history, culture, and scenic beauty. Today is designed to be flexible, allowing you to explore the places that inspire you most as you make your way toward Cork.

Your first major highlight is the magnificent Rock of Cashel, one of Ireland's most celebrated heritage sites. Rising dramatically from the Tipperary landscape, this ancient limestone outcrop is crowned with medieval towers, a soaring cathedral, and the beautifully preserved Cormac's Chapel with its remarkable stone carvings. Take your time exploring the ruins, enjoying both the sweeping views across the Golden Vale and the extraordinary history embedded in every wall.

From Cashel, you may choose one or more of several optional detours—each offering its own charm:

Cahir Castle

One of Ireland's best-preserved castles, set on a rocky island in the River Suir. Its towering walls and atmospheric halls offer a vivid look into medieval life.

Kilkenny City

A vibrant medieval town known for its winding streets, artisan shops, and the elegant Kilkenny Castle. Ideal for lunch, a stroll, or a deep dive into Irish craftsmanship.

Blarney Castle

Explore beautiful gardens, woodland walks, and the famous Blarney Stone—said to bestow the “gift of eloquence” upon all who kiss it.

After a day rich in discovery, continue to Cork, Ireland's culinary capital. Arrive at the exceptional 5* Hayfield Manor, your luxurious haven for the next two nights. Settle into your room, relax in the peaceful gardens, or head into the city to enjoy Cork's vibrant dining scene at your leisure.

MEALS

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

OVERNIGHT

5*Hayfield Manor Hotel, Cork.

TRAVEL TIME

Dublin to Cork via the Rock of Cashel will take 3–3.5 hours without allocating time for stops.



Day 4: Cork Free Day

Today is yours to enjoy at your own pace, with three exceptional experiences designed to showcase the very best of Cork and to suit a variety of interests. After a relaxed breakfast at Hayfield Manor, choose the option that best reflects how you'd like to spend your day—whether immersed in leisure, luxury, or local culture.

1. Golf at Cork Golf Club

Golf enthusiasts can set off for a memorable round at Cork Golf Club, a prestigious championship course set along the banks of the River Lee. Known for its stunning limestone quarry features, tree-lined fairways, and immaculately maintained greens, the course provides both challenge and charm. With sweeping views and world-class design, this is one of Ireland's finest parkland golf experiences.

2. Spa Day at Hayfield Manor

For those seeking tranquillity, indulge in pure relaxation with a luxurious spa experience at The Beautique Spa. Enjoy soothing massages, revitalising facials, and calming thermal suites in beautifully serene surroundings. This is the perfect way to unwind, recharge, and savour the elegant comforts of one of Ireland's premier five-star hotels.

3. Private Tour of Cork City

If culture and history inspire you, embark on a privately guided tour of Cork City, affectionately known as the "Rebel City." Discover its rich heritage through visits to Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral, the English Market, the Shandon Bells, and its vibrant riverside quays. With your expert guide, explore artisan food stalls, local stories, Georgian architecture, and the lively character that defines Ireland's southern capital.

In the evening, return to Hayfield Manor for a memorable dining experience at Orchids Restaurant. With refined ambience, impeccable service, and exceptional cuisine crafted from the finest local produce, this is a perfect way to end your day in Cork.

MEALS

Breakfast & Dinner in the Orchid Restaurant included.

OVERNIGHT

5* Hayfield Manor Hotel, Cork.

TRAVEL TIME

Depends on activity chosen



Day 5: Cork to Killarney

After breakfast, begin your journey west from Cork and follow one of Ireland's most iconic touring routes—the spectacular Wild Atlantic Way. This scenic coastal drive offers the perfect blend of dramatic seascapes, historic towns, and rolling countryside, allowing you to enjoy the freedom and elegance of a true luxury self-drive experience.

Your first stop is the picturesque harbour town of Kinsale, widely regarded as the gourmet capital of Ireland. Its colourful streets, elegant waterfront, and vibrant café culture make it a delightful place for a morning stroll. Continue along the coast through Skibbereen and toward Bantry, where rugged headlands and sweeping bays reveal the wilder side of West Cork. Along the way, you'll find countless opportunities to pause for views, coastal walks, artisan food producers, or craft shops—perfect for sampling the character and creativity of the region.

From Bantry, the landscape becomes increasingly mountainous as you travel toward the beautifully preserved heritage town of Kenmare. Nestled between the Beara and Iveragh peninsulas, Kenmare marks your gateway into County Kerry. Take time to wander its pretty streets, browse its boutiques, or enjoy a mid-day coffee before continuing your final stretch toward Killarney.

Arrive in Killarney—a lively and historic town surrounded by lakes, mountains, and parkland—and check into the landmark 5* Great Southern Hotel, your luxurious base for the next stage of your journey. With its grand Victorian architecture, elegant interiors, and leafy grounds, the Great Southern offers an inviting place to unwind after a beautiful day of coastal discovery.

MEALS

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

OVERNIGHT

5* Great Southern Hotel, Killarney.

TRAVEL TIME

3.5–4 hours drive time if you follow the coastal route, with no time allocated for sightseeing. 1.5–2 hours if you want to travel direct to Killarney to allow you the day to explore the area there.



Day 6: Ring of Kerry

Today you embark on one of Ireland’s most celebrated scenic journeys: the world-famous Ring of Kerry. Renowned for its sweeping coastal views, rugged mountains, golden beaches, and timeless rural charm, this iconic route offers an unforgettable immersion into the wild beauty of the southwest.

As you travel through this storied landscape, the scenery shifts constantly—from the vast, open Atlantic to sheltered bays dotted with islands, from dramatic cliffs to tranquil lakes. Charming villages such as Glenbeigh, Cahersiveen, Waterville, and Sneem invite you to pause, stroll, and soak up the warmth of local life. Along the way, you’ll discover ancient stone forts, hidden beaches, and scenic lookouts that showcase the very best of County Kerry.

Optional stops include the striking Kerry Cliffs, offering towering views over Puffin Island and the Skelligs; the historic Skellig Ring extension with its rugged, remote character; or a visit to Derrynane House, home of famed statesman Daniel O’Connell, surrounded by lush parkland and beaches. With complete flexibility, you can tailor the day to your interests—photography, heritage, gentle walks, artisan cafés, or simply enjoying the freedom of the open road.

As you return to Killarney, the mountains of the MacGillycuddy’s Reeks rise dramatically around you, completing a circle of some of Ireland’s most breathtaking landscapes.

This evening, enjoy an elegant four-course dinner in The Garden Room at the Great Southern. With refined cuisine crafted from the finest local ingredients, attentive service, and a beautifully atmospheric setting, it’s the perfect conclusion to a remarkable day on the Ring of Kerry.

MEALS

Breakfast and Dinner in the Garden Room Restaurant included.

OVERNIGHT

5* Great Southern Hotel, Killarney.

TRAVEL TIME

3.5–4 hours with no time allocated for stops



Day 7: Free Day Killarney

Your final day on the Beara Way begins with a transfer from Lauragh to Drombohily, where you rejoin the trail for a spectacular finish to your journey. Today's route carries you eastward over two impressive mountain passes, offering some of the most panoramic and rewarding scenery of the entire peninsula. With wide-open views, deep glacial valleys, shimmering lakes, and one of Ireland's most atmospheric ancient sites, this final stage captures the very essence of Beara's wild beauty.

The hike begins with a steady ascent onto the first pass, where the rugged ridgelines of the Slieve Miskish and Caha Mountains unfold around you. As you climb, each turn reveals fresh perspectives across remote uplands and the winding valleys below. Descending gently, the trail brings you into the dramatic sweep of the Gleninchaquinn Valley, a place of cascading waterfalls, quiet farmland, and expansive views over the Cloonee Lakes.

A short detour leads you to the magnificent Uragh Stone Circle, one of the true archaeological treasures of southwest Ireland. Set on a small promontory between lakes and surrounded by towering mountains, this Bronze Age circle is both intimate and grand, its solitary standing stone framed by one of the most photogenic backdrops in the country. It's a place that invites a moment of stillness before you continue your journey.

Leaving Uragh, the trail climbs once more to a second high pass, offering sweeping views across the vast landscape that stretches toward the Ring of Kerry. From here, a gentle descent leads you toward the welcoming town of Kenmare, a vibrant heritage centre known for its colourful streets, artisan shops, and excellent food.

Arriving in Kenmare marks a fitting end to your Beara Way adventure — a final stage rich in history, natural drama, and unforgettable mountain scenery, all culminating in one of Ireland's most charming towns.

MEALS

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

OVERNIGHT

5* Great Southern Hotel, Killarney.

TRAVEL TIME

Depends on the activity selected.



Day 8: Depart Killarney

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

The drive from Killarney to Dublin Airport takes approx. 3.5-4 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.

MEALS

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

TRAVEL TIME

3.5-4 hours to Dublin Airport from Killarney.

What's Included:

- 5* Hotel accommodation
- 3x Fine Dining Experiences at your overnight locations
- 3 high-end experiences - 1 in each overnight location
- 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 the Hayfield Collection, some of Ireland's finest 5-star hotels, each offering exceptional comfort, refined elegance, and warm Irish hospitality. These luxurious properties have been chosen not only for their superb service and amenities but also for their historic character, beautiful surroundings, and convenient access to nearby touring routes and cultural attractions.

5* St. Helen's Hotel – Dublin

St. Helen's is one of Dublin's most distinguished hotels—an exquisite 18th-century mansion set within landscaped gardens overlooking Dublin Bay. Inside, you'll find elegantly appointed rooms featuring plush furnishings, marble bathrooms, and a classic, sophisticated design. Exceptional dining, tranquil gardens, and impeccable service create a serene retreat just minutes from the city centre.

5* Hayfield Manor – Cork

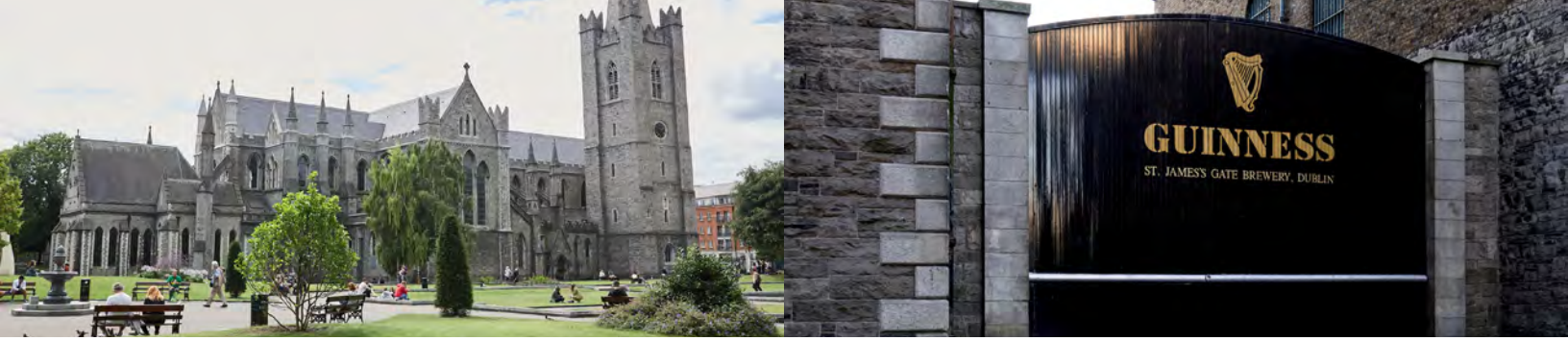
Nestled quietly within Cork City, Hayfield Manor offers the charm of a country house with all the luxuries of a world-class hotel. Expect spacious, individually decorated rooms, fine art, antique furnishings, and lush private grounds. The hotel features an award-winning restaurant, a relaxing spa, and a level of personalised hospitality that makes every stay feel special.

5* Great Southern Hotel – Killarney

A landmark property since 1854, the Great Southern combines grand Victorian architecture with contemporary luxury. Situated in the heart of Killarney, its stately rooms, elegant lounges, and expansive gardens provide the perfect blend of historical charm and modern comfort. With exceptional dining, attentive service, and easy access to Killarney National Park, it offers a memorable stay in one of Ireland's most scenic towns.

Across all three properties, guests can expect superb comfort, exceptional cuisine, thoughtful amenities, and a consistently high level of service, ensuring every evening of your journey is as memorable and indulgent as the days spent exploring Ireland.





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. .

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

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