

# IRELAND

discovering Ireland by car – an independent adventure



## Celtic Tours

**VACATIONS**

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02 Getting to Ireland



There are four major airports in Ireland; Dublin, Shannon, Belfast, and Cork.

Dublin is a great hub for Ireland and even into Europe, with daily flights and great connections. Flights in/out of Shannon however, may not operate on a daily basis. Belfast Airport does not have direct flights to/from the U.S. and while there is an airport in Cork, you will only find domestic incoming flights.

Please check with your travel agent to see what will work with your desired routing. Many times, when planning a self drive vacation, people choose to fly into one city and return to another, typically Shannon and Dublin. The choice of carrier is up to you, with Ireland currently being serviced by Aer Lingus, Delta, United, American Airlines and Air Canada (subject to change and with seasonal availability).

# Getting to Ireland

Ireland is a wonderfully warm and welcoming country. No matter where you travel, you will find Irish hospitality in every part of the country. From the Giant's Causeway to the Dingle Peninsula, to the bustling city of Dublin, the friendliest of islands begins to work its magic the moment you arrive. Ireland, at 172 miles long and 302 miles wide, has many things to see and do. With unspoiled coastlines, spectacular scenery, a rich culture, and warm and welcoming people, you will soon find that you've come home again to Ireland!

The Emerald Isle is home to two countries; the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. However, it is seamless to the traveler, as there are no longer any borders, but there are two currencies, with the Euro in the Republic and British Pound Sterling in the north.



Choosing a self-drive vacation gives you the opportunity to create the perfect itinerary to suit your needs and what you want in your Ireland vacation.

A self-drive vacation is independent, and before planning, it is a good idea to do some research on Ireland to determine what you want to see and do.

Here is a brief outline of the regions of Ireland, which may help you in determining what route is best for you. We've also created a few sample itineraries to help you with your vacation planning.

You should also review the Celtic Tours brochure and tours online featuring coach tours which will give you an idea on what to see and how far you should drive in a day for comfort.



## Things to Know Before You Go



- You will need a valid passport to travel to Ireland, which should be valid or 6 months from your travel date
- Ireland is 5 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (keep this in mind when calling home)
- Ireland has a temperate climate; rarely freezing in the winter months, whilst not very hot in the summer months. Weather can alter dramatically from day to day; it can change from fair to showery and back again to fair in a matter of minutes – dress in layers and have an umbrella handy just in case.
- The electrical current in Ireland is 220 volts, 50 cycles alternating current (AC). Wall sockets take plugs with 3 flat-pins, as in the United Kingdom. To use American appliances both a converter and adapter are required except for dual voltage appliances, which need only an adapter, for example laptop computers.
- Ireland has two official languages; Irish and English, with dual-signage in place nationwide. English is spoken throughout and is the everyday working language, while Irish is generally confined to certain regions in the south-west, west, and north-west coastal areas, areas more commonly known as the Gaeltacht.
- In case of emergency dial 112 or 999 and ask the operator for the service required

- D**riving is on the left side of the road, and the steering wheel is on the "other" side
- Luggage capacity is limited! A car may have room for 5 passengers, but this **does not mean** it will have room for 5 large suitcases and carry-on bags as well. Check with your agent to make sure you are renting a car that will accommodate not only you, but your luggage!
  - Insurance is mandatory in Ireland for Celtic Tours rentals – either purchased in advance or at the car rental company.
  - Basic insurance coverage (Collision Damage Waiver – CDW), is basic insurance coverage and does carry a high deductible, up to €3,500. A hold is placed on your credit card for the duration of the rental.
  - You can buy (advance purchase or at rental counter) Super CDW which waives the deductible. However, drivers from 23–24 will still have a deductible.
  - Most credit cards DO NOT cover car rental insurance in Ireland. When checking with your credit card company, make sure you receive confirmation in writing and be sure to bring the document with you when you travel (World Master Card and Canadian Visa usually do cover insurance).
  - If your credit card does cover car insurance in Ireland, you will be required to sign extra documents to waive the rental company's insurance and will be required to leave a hefty deposit or a hold on your credit card when insurance is declined. This is a temporary hold until the car is returned undamaged.



## Currency

The Euro is the currency in the Republic of Ireland, and the Pound Sterling is the currency in Northern Ireland.

For cash purchases, you will need to exchange your US dollars to Euros or Pound Sterling. Foreign exchange bureaus are available throughout the country in banks, tourist information offices, and airports.

Major credit cards are accepted throughout Ireland and ATMs are readily available. Check with your bank regarding any additional fees they may have, as some cards charge an "International Transaction Fee". Your card(s) may also require a travel notice, check with your credit card company.

Also check out Revolut, where you can sign up for a free account and make foreign exchanges and payments super easy with a tap of your phone! <https://www.revolut.com/en-US/>

## Accommodations

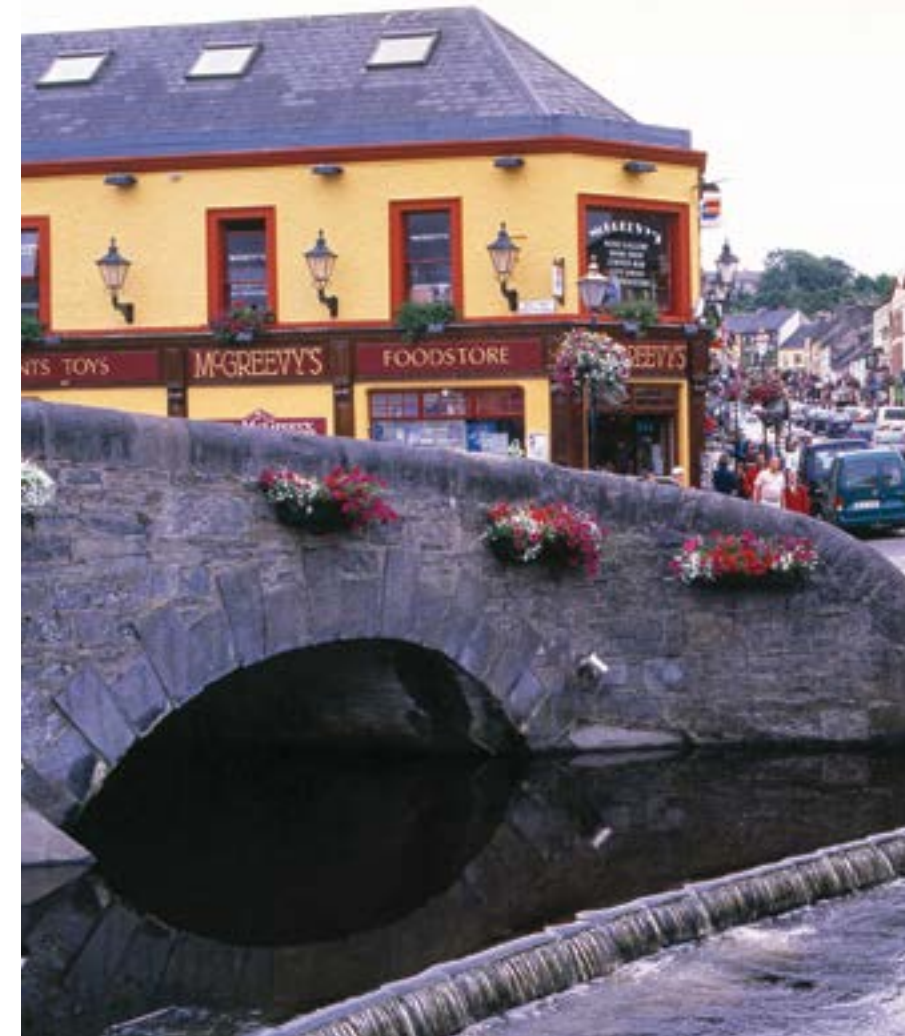
Ireland offers a wide range of accommodations for you to experience! From B&B's to Deluxe 5★ Castles and everything in between, Ireland offers an array of accommodation options for you to choose from to fit your taste and budget.

Not all accommodations can be booked through a tour operator. Air BnB's and house rentals are generally booked directly. In 2025, B&B's will not still be bookable in Ireland, be it pre-booked or open voucher. However, we strongly recommend you have your accommodations secured before arriving in Ireland.

Celtic Tours will gladly put together a package that has a fine mix of properties to meet your needs and budget. We work with excellent hotels, inns, manor homes and castles throughout Ireland.



**Hotels, Manor House and Castle properties:** Ireland offers a wide range of hotel classes, manor houses and castles to overnight in throughout the country. Celtic Tours is pleased to work with the hotels in Ireland, and are happy to pre-book the style of your choice and budget. Take advantage of our Mix-n-Match vacation option, and select a combination of properties that suit your needs and stay within your budget. Consider a castle stay for one night, especially on your first visit. It is a once in a lifetime experience. We also offer a small handful of self-catering properties that are great for families and small groups.



## Weather

Ireland has a temperate climate. The westerly winds, that prevail from the warm waters of the Atlantic, soothe the heat in the summer and soften the severity of the weather in the winter. While summers may experience some hotter days, the general daytime average in the summer months is around 65°F, with the colder winter months in the average of 40-45°F during the daytime. However, these are just guidelines and temperatures and conditions can and do change. One should always prepare for rain in Ireland. Rainfall varies throughout the year and also throughout the country, with the Southeast region being the driest. The length of a day – from sunrise to sunset, varies considerably throughout the year as well. This may be a factor when planning your vacation, with the most daylight generally in July.

## Sightseeing

A self-drive vacation gives you the opportunity to independently tour Ireland. With that, we generally do not pre-book touring and sightseeing arrangements so that you can go at your own pace and are not stuck to a set schedule, however you can pre-book some touring with us, such as; Dublin Hop-on Hop Off, Ghost Tour of Dublin, Guinness Storehouse, Jameson's, Evenings in Dublin with dinner and entertainment, Bunratty Banquet, Ring of Kerry Tour, Dingle Peninsula Tour, Jaunting Carts in Killarney, Ferry to Aran Island and the Aran Island Tour. Some coastal sightseeing we recommend leaving the car for the day and going by bus, such as the Ring of Kerry or Dingle Peninsula. This allows the driver to relax and enjoy the sightseeing. If there is a site you do want to look into pre-booking. Just let us know and we can make the arrangements.

## Touring Ireland

**A**lthough Ireland is relatively a small country, don't try to see the whole country in a week's time. There is too much to see and do and you don't want to spend endless days driving from one location to the next. Plan your itinerary based on one or two regions of the country and focus on what those regions have to offer.

Plan to stay two nights in each location if at all possible to get the most out of where you are staying and to fully rest and enjoy Ireland. Choose you touring "hub" and then decide on the type of accommodation you would like to explore while there. Talk with your travel agent to plan what you want to see, how long you want to stay and what type of accommodations would work best for you... from there, the perfect self-drive vacation can be arranged for you.

## Dublin & The East

For those that love history, architecture and culture, be sure to include Dublin on your vacation. Make sure to visit Trinity College, the Irish History Museum and also enjoy the many restaurants, theater, and shopping Dublin has to offer. Also in this region is the Hill of Tara, Newgrange and the Boyne Valley. The beautiful Wicklow Mountains are a short distance from Dublin, with the ancient monastic city of Glendalough. Kildare is also a close ride and is famous for the thoroughbred horses, the Curragh, The Irish National Stud Farm, the Japanese Gardens, and the holy wells and monastic sites of St. Brigid. Dublin's Temple Bar is an area on the south bank of the River Liffey. Temple Bar has retained its medieval street pattern, with many narrow cobbled stoned streets. It has a lively night life and is popular with tourists. There are hotels to choose from in this area, but keep in mind of the elevated noise level at night due to the pubs and crowds that flock here. Check out The Porterhouse, with traditional sessions on Sundays and entertainment other nights of the week, The Foggy Dew; a lively traditional bar, and The Quays, which offers music all hours of the day.



The Dublin Hop-on Hop-off tour is highly recommended and can be pre-purchased before your trip. It's a great way to see and get around the city. Passes are available for either 24 or 48 hours. There are many stops along the way to enjoy Dublin's historical and cultural sites. If you are planning on including many of the iconic sights, consider the Go City pass to save! There are many museums to choose from in Dublin, including the Kilmainham Gaol Historical Museum, National History Museum, Trinity College, National Gallery, plus numerous cathedrals to visit as well. Outside the city, why not drive or take the DART (Dublin Area Rapid Transit) to Howth, a fishing and yachting port with spectacular views of the sea and excellent restaurants.

Need a day of stretching your legs? One of the best walks is out to Howth Head. Grab the DART in city center (from the Tara Street Station on the Liffey, just east of O'Connell Bridge) and head to Howth. Walk to the end of Howth along the waterfront following the road up and to the right at the end of the harbor. Continue on, following the coast, you will make your way on the path that runs right around Howth Head; simply beautiful! Make your return back the way you came, when you have had enough or walk the entire way to Sutton (approx 2-3 hours), where you can catch a DART back to Dublin's city center. This is an amazing walk with great sea views. Before returning to Dublin, enjoy a fabulous seafood dinner in Howth! The East Coast is definitely a cultural hub of Ireland, where ancient history blends with the modern day. This region offers up an endless stream of attractions to choose from. Only a hour from Dublin by car, you will find beautiful Glendalough. Here you will find ruins of the 8th century monastic settlement founded by St. Kevin. The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Newgrange in the Boyne Valley is a Stone Age Passage Tomb that predates the Egyptian pyramids dating back to 3200BC. The passage tomb can be visited by guided tour through the Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre, and the nearby battlefield at the Boyne, just outside the town of Drogheda in Louth, is the site of a pivotal battle in Irish history dating back to 1690. With so much in and around Dublin, it is a good location to include as one of your touring "hubs".



## The Sunny South East

**T**he picturesque south is known for its relaxed pace, natural beauty and sun! With rolling hillsides and idyllic farms, you will find a peaceful and beautiful countryside. Here you will find medieval castles and manor houses oozing with history. Explore the wild and rugged mountains and frolic on the sandy beaches that sprawl across the coastline. The South offers endless opportunities for exceptional landscapes and mouthwatering gourmet delights, with food as fresh as the clear south air! Including the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford, the region promises a wealth of variety whether you want to enjoy delectable local dishes, tee off at some of the best links courses or take some precious pampering time in a world-renowned spa. The south has gained a fabulous reputation for being one of Ireland's top gourmet spot. You can enjoy farmer's markets throughout this region, where you will find fine foods that have a well-deserved reputation for excellence, such as soda breads, smokehouse specialties, mouthwatering cheeses and an abundance of fresh fish and seafood!

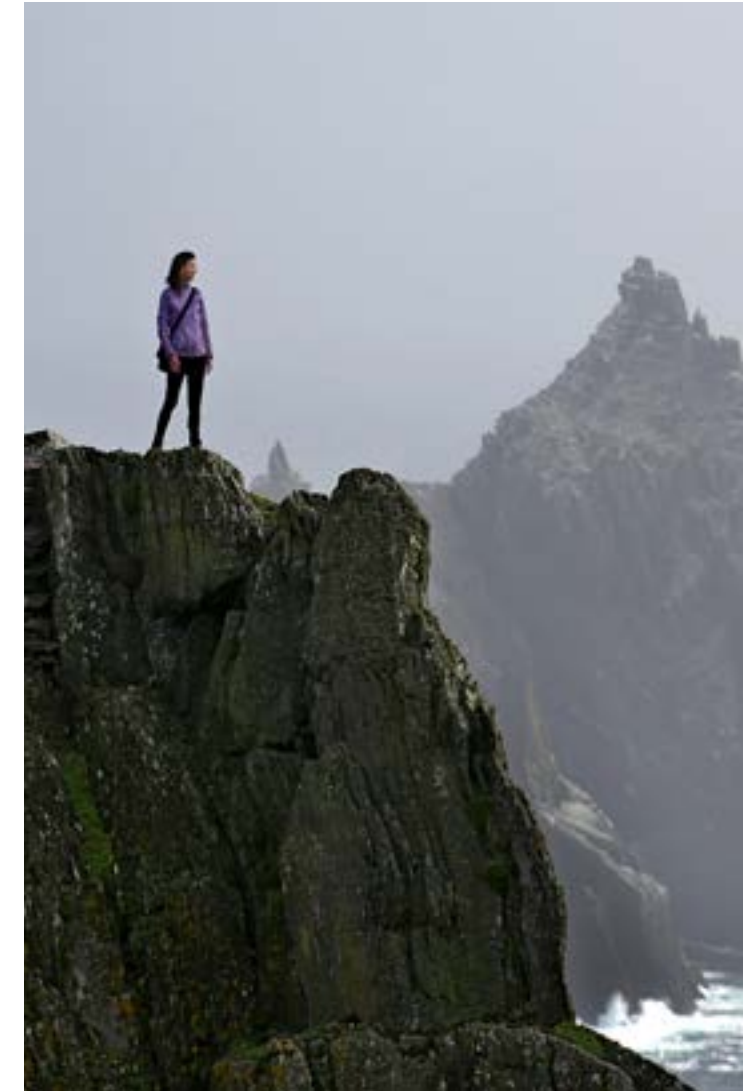


Each county offers up its own special magic! Take Carlow for example, where the pace of life is unhurried in its countryside towns and villages, or the vibrant city of Kilkenny where visitors can enjoy contemporary art in its many galleries, sample good food and experience Irish music in its traditional pubs. Tipperary, a tranquil and unspoiled countryside, perfect for walking and fishing holidays. From there, you can continue on to the lively destination of Waterford, the maritime county where the coast is noted for shore fishing and sunny beaches. And Wexford, a heritage town, prides itself on its award winning quay front. The quay is also center stage for all of the towns' festive activities. With ancient heritage, endless festivals, cracking pubs and peaceful river ways – you can't go wrong with the Sunny Southeast. You will be thrilled with endless opportunities for sightseeing, exceptional landscapes, great shopping, and some real gourmet delights, of course!

### Must See Attractions:

- **Blarney Castle:** site of the famous Blarney Stone
- **The Ring of Kerry :** Coach from Killarney can be pre-booked
- **Killarney National Park:** View the famous Lakes of Killarney
- **The Dingle Peninsula:** Coach tour from Killarney can be pre-booked
- **The Cobh Heritage Center:** A memorial to the millions of Irish emigrants
- **Muckross House and Gardens:** One of the most popular attractions in Ireland
- **Ross Castle:** An imposing building dating from the 15th Century
- **Inch Strand:** more than a mile of golden sand
- **Fota Wildlife Park:** A place to observe animals in their natural habitat
- **Beara Peninsula:** an area of outstanding unspoiled beauty
- **Skellig Michael:** this island monastery is a World Heritage Site
- **Ilacullen Gardens:** an enchanted garden island in a sheltered inlet of Bantry Bay
- **Kenmare:** a beautiful haven of tranquility, gourmet food and unspoiled scenery
- **Crag Cave:** Ireland's leading show cave, thought to be over one million years old
- **Charles Fort, Kinsale**
- **Crawford Art Gallery, Cork**
- **Mizen Head, Cork**

## The South West



Southwest Ireland features some popular visitor destinations, including Cork and Killarney, in Co. Kerry. This region is filled with both coastal and scenic mountain beauty. The south is famous for its beautiful, scenic fingers – The Beara Peninsula, The Dingle Peninsula and the Iveragh Peninsula (Ring of Kerry) landscapes that rival any in Western Europe for beauty. Cork, is renowned for friendly and accommodating locals, is Ireland's second largest city. The city center is an island bordered by the Lee River – it is compact, with most attractions within walking distance. Also located in Southwest Ireland is the world-renowned Blarney Castle, where visitors can kiss the Blarney Stone and receive the "Luck of the Irish." Killarney is southwest of Cork city. Tours are offered through various operators. Those departing from Killarney pass by many of Southwest Ireland's greatest features including the Ring of Kerry, the Dingle Peninsula, Muckross House and the Gap of Dunloe.

## The West

If you love a wild landscape relatively untouched by development with archeological wonders, the west beckons you. From the Burren with the ancient Poulnabrone dolmen, to the hills and bogs of Connemara. Splendid Galway and Westport, offering the literary paths of W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory. The Aran Islands, the sheer cliffs of Achill Island, the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock, and pubs full of traditional Irish music, with the best of Irish music in Co. Clare as well as the Cliffs of Moher. Come to the west of Ireland and you won't be disappointed.

Situated in the mid-west region of Ireland, County Clare boasts truly breathtaking scenery and a wonderfully warm, charming and welcoming people. Clare is a magical county, full of surprise and contrast. In Clare, you will find the Cliffs of Moher, Doolin (a find for Irish music), the lunar landscape of the Burren, Lough Derg and the beautiful Loop Head Drive. In the middle and east of the county, you will find a patchwork of fishing lakes teeming with game and coarse fish, to the north and west you will find magnificent resorts and beaches all along our Atlantic Ocean coastline.



So if it's walking, cruising, golfing, eating out, fishing, horse riding, flying, surfing, dolphin watching or just enjoying the music in the local village pub – County Clare has it all. You will find the recently renovated King John's Castle in the medieval city of Limerick. The castle overlooks the majestic Shannon River. While in Limerick, why not partake in a Ghost Walk – or visit the Milk Market, one of Ireland's foremost farmer's markets! Galway is a lively city that will not disappoint. Galway's famous Spanish Arch is located on the left bank of the Corrib, where Galway's river meets the sea. The Spanish Arch was originally a 16th century bastion, which was added to Galway's town walls to protect merchant ships from looting. At this time, it was known as Ceann an Bhalla (Head of the Wall). Its current name "Spanish Arch" refers to former merchant trade with Spain, whose galleons often docked here.

While in this bustling city, be sure and check out the Spanish Arch, St. Nicholas' Cathedral, Lynch Castle, Galway Cathedral, and Galway Museum. Also home to the Galway Races and the Galway Oyster Festival – where hotels book out well in advance. Make sure you plan your vacation accordingly. Home to the Aran Islands, here you will find peat farmers and friendly fishermen with spectacular scenery. You can pre-book the ferry ride over, along with a ½ day tour of the Island. Be sure to include a visit to Kylemore Abbey in your Connemara travels. Kylemore Abbey and Victorian Walled Garden is known as Ireland's most romantic castle. Located in the heart of Connemara, Co. Galway, set in the most idyllic location, Kylemore Abbey is one of the top places to visit in Ireland.

## The North West

The North West of Ireland is a region of infinite variety, a paradise for hill-walkers, hikers and sporting enthusiasts. Coming down from the northernmost tip of the island in Donegal to the counties of Leitrim and Sligo, you will experience the idyllic Ireland with towns and villages, foregoing the large bustling cities. Sligo is linked in the minds of many first and foremost with one of Ireland's most famous sons, W B Yeats. Yeats, winner of a Nobel Prize for Literature is one of the most important and most popular Irish poets ever to break onto the international stage. The rugged beauty and untamed landscape of Sligo is a recurring theme of his work and it was his love for the county that led him to instruct he be buried there. The Yeats Summer School provides tours of the parts of Sligo that feature in Yeats' poetry.



The beauty that inspired Yeats is still there today. Despite its small size Sligo has a wide variety of scenery from the Atlantic battered coastline to the Ox Mountains towering over the county in the west. Along the coast the seaside resort of Rosses Point is highly recommended and there's plenty for the visitor to do. Golf, angling, cruises and hill walking are all popular elements of any holiday in the area. Sligo Town itself is a lively seaside town with good restaurants and pubs to cater to every taste. The narrow sloping streets of the town provide it with a character and charm not to be found in the big cities of the east and provide a gentle, cozy atmosphere unique to the northwest. Leitrim is one of Ireland's most sparsely populated and hence most unspoiled counties. Dominated by water whether in the form of the might River Shannon, the stunning Lough Allen or the spectacular Glencar Waterfall that inspired Ireland's greatest poet, Leitrim's quiet waterways and unmarred beauty will delight the most jaded of visitors.



With such beautiful waterways it is hardly surprising that waterborne tourism is the most popular in Leitrim. Donegal, situated in the beautiful rugged mountain landscape of Ireland's North West is one of the most popular holiday destinations in the country. This huge county's supreme appeal lies in the natural beauty of its coast, with windswept peninsulas, precipitous cliffs and a host of golden beaches that rival any in Europe. With 9,000 years of history behind it any trek through the furrowed countryside will bring the traveler on the sites of monastic settlements, traces of the Vikings in Donegal town and ancient pre-Christian forts of the High Kings of Ulster. And along your way you are bound to come across some of what makes Donegal so unique. Irish culture has survived and thrived here in a way it has failed to do elsewhere. Language and culture are still vibrant throughout the Gaeltacht areas of the county and foremost among these traditions is the one of welcoming strangers. If you long to get away from it all, then Donegal is the perfect spot. With soaring sea cliffs that plummet 300 meters, deserted white sandy beaches, jaw-dropping landscapes, excellent seafood and quiet cozy pubs, Donegal forces you to sit back, slow down and admire the view. Take a day and venture out to the Slieve League Cliffs; which offer a serious up-hill hike with spectacular scenery. The North has the hills of Donegal (one could spend a week here and never run out of things to see).

## The Midlands

Not to be forgotten are the Midlands of Ireland. The Midlands is a thriving, vibrant region of Ireland, encompassing the counties of Laois, Offaly, Westmeath, Longford and Roscommon, there is much to see and do in this region.

In addition to the many waterside towns offering loads of family friendly fun to part take in, you will find the Slieve Bloom Mountains, Birr Castle, Clonmacnoice Monastic Site, Kilbeggen Distillery and Tullamore Dew Visitor Center to name a few. A county of rich contrast, Laois is a meeting point for ancient heritage and contemporary culture. Perfect for rural tranquility but also brings you busy towns and villages, for sophisticated luxury and rustic simplicity, Laois will bring you an authentic Ireland experience. Many beautiful heritage sites have been restored for the public to enjoy such as Emo Court and Gardens, Timahoe Round Tower, Aghaboe Abbey and Heywood Gardens. If you love nature, you'll love Laois. A perfect county for walking, cycling, horse-riding, golfing, fishing, polo, trekking and canal-cruising, it's all to be discovered in the beautiful and peaceful countryside. The Slieve Blooms are undoubtedly one of Ireland's most extraordinary mountain walking experiences. This mountain range, teeming with wildlife and fascinating ecology, offer a range of activities.

Fishing is one the best kept secrets in Laois. The rivers Nore and Barrow run through Laois as well as the Grand Canal and the many lakes dotted throughout the county. Take a visit to the Irish Fly Fishing and Game Shooting Museum in Attanagh which is the only one of its kind in Europe. In lovely county Longford the visitor is never far from water, cruise the River Shannon, Lough Ree and the Royal Canal, or enjoy the finest fishing on the River Inny, Lough Gowna and other watercourses. The "hot water" stretch at Lanesborough is famous among anglers. In Ardagh, visit the heritage center in the old schoolhouse, which dates back to 1898. The exhibition outlines the history of the village which includes myth and literature. The village also played host to writers and musicians like Oliver Goldsmith, Sir Walter Scott and Turlough O'Carolan. Longford is a haven for outdoor activities! The county has a vast array of walking and cycling routes and provides activities such as fishing, golf, archery, go-carting, horse riding and bowling.

Admire the views across Lough Ree, the second largest lake on the River Shannon. Pay a visit to Clondra, a quaint little village with the magnificent cut stone Richmond Harbor, the terminus of the Royal Canal where it flows into the River Shannon. The flat bogland of south Longford and the rolling hills and drumlins of north Longford offers unique habitats for the finest flora and fauna for the eco tourist to admire. In County Offaly, Tullamore is the county town and the Tullamore Dew Heritage Centre provides an interesting introduction to the towns distilling, canal and urban past. Throughout the county cruising, equestrian, golfing, walking and fishing enthusiasts are well catered for. The Grand Canal transverses the county from Edenderry and joins the River Shannon at Shannon Harbor. Edenderry is a noted angling center. The monastic ruins of Clonmacnoice are world famous and one of Ireland's greatest treasures. Less known, but of significant importance are Lemanaghan Monastic site, Seir Kieran, Rahan, Durrow and Birr. Cycle the Pilgrims Way, travelling from Ballycumber to Clonmacnoice with a spur to Lemanaghan from Boher.

Walking is also a major feature within the county. Choose between the Slieve Bloom Way, the Grand Canal Way, the Offaly Way and the Pilgrims Path route or a number of shorter looped walks. Offaly boasts five peatland nature reserves, among them Clara Raised Bog, which can be viewed on the road between Clara and Rahan. A trip through the peatlands should include a visit to the Lough Boora Parklands, which was once a working bog, is now regenerated into an amenity and wildlife sanctuary. Birr was designated a heritage town for its Georgian architecture, it also has an interesting early Christian monastic site and a medieval story to tell. Visit the formal gardens, science center and the restored telescope all at Birr Castle, Gardens and Demesne, Seat of the Earls of Rosse. Call into Birr library, a converted Pugin Church, to view a unique copy of the ninth century Mac Regol Gospels originating from the early Christian site at Birr. Westmeath, famous for its rivers and lakes, from the Shannon and Lough Ree to the Mullingar lakes and the Royal Canal. Numerous watersports can be enjoyed in the county as well as some of the finest golf and equestrian facilities in the country.



Tyrone is one of the country's most beautiful inland counties. The largest county in the North it is overflowing with a variety of scenery from the majestic Sperrin Mountains that reach 2,000 foot to the gentle hills and river valleys of the plains. This sprawling hilly county is replete with ancient forests and unspoiled scenery but also boasts busy market towns like Omagh and Dungannon.

In Omagh, you will find the Ulster American Folk Park. Located four miles north of Omagh, the Folk Park initially began by the donation of a cottage by the Mellon family in 1818. The park is an outdoor museum that tells the story of emigration in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of these emigrants went on to achieve great things and several of the signatories of the US Constitution were from Tyrone.

Derry / Londonderry: A picturesque county in the north west of Northern Ireland, Derry/ Londonderry is famed for its tranquility, scenic beauty, lovely beaches and the lively university town of Coleraine. The city, Derry/Londonderry, was voted #4 in Lonely Planet's "Best in Travel Guide 2013" to visit. It is an ancient yet contemporary city. It also received this year the prestigious title of "UK City of Culture 2013". It remains the only city in the UK and Ireland whose ancient walls are intact, uncovering over 1450 years of history while embracing a modern day pulse.

Armagh, is steeped in history and folklore, the ancient city of Armagh is a fascinating place combining the best of both contemporary and historical Ireland. The ancient capital of Ulster, Armagh is also known as the City of St. Patrick, and was the birthplace of Brian Boru as well as being the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland. Modern Armagh City now offers the visitor a whole host of attractions from historical sites to contemporary and very lively pubs. Nestled in the heart of the Orchard County the city itself blossoms throughout the year and is packed full of National Trust Properties, kids' attractions, museums and fulfilled cultural events. One of Ireland's oldest cities, Armagh has a rich and unique heritage, with wonderful archaeological sites reflecting over 6,500 years of the island's history. A glorious place to discover, Armagh will delight and inspire visitors of all ages.

Down: With a history that covers over 7,000 years, Down is blessed with a wealth of heritage sites, but the most famous of all is Downpatrick, where Ireland's patron saint is reputed to be buried. County Down is a picturesque spot filled mostly with low, rolling hills that contrast spectacularly with the rugged Mountains of Mourne and Slieve Donard, which rise dramatically to a height of 848 meters. Strangford Lough, meanwhile, is an abundant nature reserve with seals, geese, terns and wild fowl nestling amidst its peaceful shores.

Antrim: Belfast may grab much of the attention, but while the Northern Irish capital is now one of the top city break destinations in Europe, with the amazing Titanic exhibit, cool boutiques, hip bars and stunning Victorian architecture, there's a lot more to Northern Ireland's County Antrim than just the urban buzz of its biggest city. With one of the most awesome sights in the world – the Giant's Causeway – an exceptionally beautiful coastline, historic castles and nine sublimely scenic glens, Antrim will win you over with its many charms. Or dare if you must, include the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge; this famous rope bridge near Ballintoy in County Antrim, Northern Ireland, links the mainland to the tiny island of Carrickarede. It spans 20 meters and is 30 meters above the rocks below. Another site not to be missed if you travel to Antrim, would be Titanic Belfast. Besides the building itself being a magnificent building, the Titanic Experience immerses you, tying the past and present together over 9 floors of incredible exhibits.

## Northern Ireland

**N**orthern Ireland is a unique location. What makes it even more special is that it's all so accessible. Every corner of the country is within a two hour drive so exploring our distinctive landmarks couldn't be easier. There are six counties in Northern Ireland, which are part of the United Kingdom. Traveling between counties of the Republic and the North is seamless as there are no longer borders between the countries. From Saint Patrick to the birthplace of the Titanic, from the Giant's Causeway to the Mountains of Mourne and the Walled City of Derry, there are unique stories to tell.

**Fermanagh:** Take to the water in Northern Ireland's Lakeland County Fermanagh. The silent waters of the Fermanagh Lakelands have a romantic beauty that has captivated generation after generation of visitors.

Tranquil, glassy and utterly beautiful, Lough Erne and the surrounding lakes are Fermanagh's star attraction, but the flat green patchwork of fields that makes up much of the county's countryside equally deserves a look. Fermanagh also has a trail for every interest. This is excellent cycling country with routes of varying lengths and difficulties through stunning lakeland scenery. Perhaps the most well-known is the 230 mile cross-border Kingfisher Trail, named after the bird synonymous with the area.

With forests, beautiful vistas, old country houses, excellent restaurants, intriguing caves, castles and canoeing, Fermanagh is one of Northern Ireland's best-kept secrets.

# Planning Your Itinerary

Things to consider when planning your trip:

Decide when you would like to go, the Ireland travel season follows this guideline:

**Land:**

Low Season - January to March, November to December.  
Shoulder Season - April, October  
High Season - May to September

**Air:**

Low Season - January to March  
Shoulder Season - April to May  
High Season - June to August



Once you have a plan in mind, have your travel agent give us a call and we will be delighted to make your arrangements for you. We've put together some suggested itineraries below that may help in planning your perfect Self-Drive Vacation.

- When planning your trip it is important to keep in mind that Holidays will affect rates and availability.
- Create a "must-see" list, and plan your vacation accordingly. Keep in mind that you may not be able to do everything you would like in one visit.
- Check current airfare for when you want to travel. Unexpected and higher airfare costs may affect your budget; affecting how long you are able to stay and what type of accommodations that will be in your budget.
- Decide on the type of accommodations you wish to pre-book, or consider going with Open B&B vouchers. Remember you can mix-n-match the accommodation type with Celtic Tours.

Keep in mind that with Open Vouchers, areas can book out due to festivals, sporting events and Holidays. Make sure you check current events for your travel time to see what may affect your stay. In Ireland. It is recommended to avoid weekends (Fri/Sat) in larger or busy cities such as Dublin and Galway as rates are generally higher and crowds are the biggest.

- Don't try and drive to see too much in one day. Plan your itinerary accordingly. If you must travel far on any given day, try for a less hectic day before or after. Remember, after all, you are on vacation.
- The Motorways and National road of Ireland are excellent and get you from point A to point B in no time, but consider getting off the beaten path every now and again, to travel through some great spots of Ireland the larger roads may miss.
- If you fly into Dublin, but wish to start your journey on the west coast, no problem. The motorway from Dublin to Galway will get you there in just 2 ½-3 hours.
- Consider Open B&B vouchers for part of your vacation. These give you the freedom to move about the country and are handy when you plan changes en-route.



## Itinerary Suggestions:

### Southern Route:

Probably the most popular route for the first time traveler to Ireland or those looking to see what they missed the first time.

You can run this route from Dublin to Dublin, Dublin to Shannon or in reverse Shannon to Dublin. It's an easy route for a 6 or 7 night stay in Ireland. Keep in mind, these are just suggestions and you can alter the route based on your needs.

#### Brief itinerary:

- Day 01 – Arrive Dublin (1 nt)
- Day 02 – Dublin to Waterford (1 nt)
- Day 03 – Waterford via Cork/Blarney to Killarney (2 nts)
- Day 04 – Ring of Kerry Tour (or Dingle Peninsula Tour)
- Day 05 – Cliffs of Moher – Galway (2 nts)
- Day 06 – Aran Island & Touring
- Day 07 – Galway to Dublin (1 nt)
- Day 08 – Fly home

**Travel Tip!**  
Hotel Check in is generally between 2:00pm-4:00pm. Please keep this in mind with early morning flights. Your room may not be ready on arrival.

**Day 01:** Arrive Dublin, the Capital City of Ireland. After baggage collection it's a good idea to exchange some money for the road. Depending on your day of arrival, you can later stop at a bank to exchange more as needed. Celtic Tours recommends not collecting your car until you are ready to leave Dublin. Celtic Tours can arrange a transfer from the airport to your first nights hotel or use the Aircoach bus from the airport to many city locations. Keep in mind – hotel check-in can be as late at 4:00 pm. Be prepared to leave your luggage with the concierge, have a refreshment and do some Dublin City touring – before getting into your room. Dublin is full of sites to see...from Trinity College, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Kilmainham Jail, Dublin Zoo, Guinness Storehouse, Jameson's Distillery, Stephen's Green, National Gallery, Dublin Castle, National Museum and the Dublin's Writer's Museum just to name a few. We recommend the Dublin Hop-On Hop-Off bus to see the many sites of Dublin. Once in your hotel room, rest up and acclimate to Ireland time. Tonight why not enjoy one of the many dinner shows Dublin has to offer. Celtic Tours can arrange a night at many of the venues in Dublin – that include dinner and entertainment. Overnight in Dublin.

**Day 02:** After a hearty Irish breakfast, check out of your Dublin hotel and collect your car rental. (You can choose to return to the Airport to collect the car or collect at the convenient Hertz Dublin location). Travel south out of Dublin, leaving the bustling city behind you. Just past Enniskerry is elegant Powerscourt Estate with beautiful gardens and the highest waterfall in Ireland. Then make your way through the Wicklow Mountains to the monastic site of St. Kevin, Glendalough. Continue your journey south through Avoca, and the sea and holiday resort of Arklow, towards Enniscorthy, perhaps stopping for a bite to eat along the way. Why not plan your route to include beautiful Wexford or perhaps a visit to the John F. Kennedy Arboretum, before making your way to the historic and Viking city of Waterford, a name now synonymous with crystal.

**Day 03:** In the morning, why spend some time in Waterford with its splendid wide bridge and mile-long quay fronting the medieval center. Waterford was a Viking stronghold, and later a Norman town second only to Dublin in importance. Be sure and visit Reginald's Tower, the Medieval Museum and the Bishop's Palace. Traveling west towards Cork, take the coastal drive through Tramore, Dungarvan and the seaside town of Youghal. Youghal has some of the finest seafood restaurants and pubs to choose from in Ireland. Choose from The Coachouse Bar and Bistro or Ahearn's Seafood Bar and Townhouse or The Bistro (at the Old Imperial Hotel). Depending on your time, you may also opt to stop at the Ballymaloe House Hotel in Shanagarry, Co. Cork for a lovely lunch (served at 1:00 pm). Continue on through Cork to Blarney – and a stop at the famous castle to "kiss" the stone, said to bestow eloquence on all who dare. Blarney offers lovely grounds as well for a delightful stretch of the legs. Making your way to Killarney for the next two nights. Why not enjoy a Jaunting Cart ride through Killarney National Park this afternoon.

**Day 04:** Today your day is free to either enjoy Killarney or opt to take a tour of either the Ring of Kerry or the Dingle Peninsula tour. Each of these are offered as a coach tour right from Killarney town and give you the opportunity to "see" these beautiful drives, without being distracted by driving them yourself.

**Day 05:** Today you will make your way from Killarney to Galway via the majestic Cliffs of Moher. Heading north out of Killarney, stopping in Tralee and Listowel, before boarding the Shannon Ferry at Tarbert. Then taking the coastal road via Kilkee, Doonbeg, and Lahinch to the Cliffs of Moher. Departing the cliffs, make your way to the City of Tribes; Galway for 2 nights.

**Day 06:** Today opt to take the ferry out to the beautiful Aran Island and spend the afternoon touring or opt to drive the picturesque Connemara region. There are many routes to take when touring the Connemara, but none will take you the wrong way. You will enjoy scenic beauty and lakes abound. Fisherman will be delighted in Connemara, which is known as the Fisherman's paradise. Walkers will also delight with some of the best walking and hiking in Ireland. Alternatively – you want to leave the car for the day – take a drive to Rossaveel, and catch the ferry to the magnificent Aran Islands. Celtic Tours can arrange both the Ferry and a ½ day tour of the Island for you.

**Day 07:** Today you will venture across the midlands of Ireland. Travel via Loughrea, where you can stop to see St. Brendan's Cathedral, which has beautiful works of stained glass. Continue on via Ballinasloe, Athlone and Kilbeggan, 'til you return to the capital city of Dublin. You can once again opt to keep the car until you depart in the morning – or drop the car on arrival in Dublin (to avoid parking charges and driving in the city). You will need to avail of a taxi if you drop the car earlier. Back in the Capital City – it's time to take in the sites you missed on arrival or simply take it easy, and enjoy a few pints on your last night in Ireland.



## In The Area:

RESTAURANTS

### Dublin

- [3★ Buswells Hotel](#)
- [3★ Academy Plaza Hotel](#)
- [4★ Temple Bar Hotel](#)
- [4★ Davenport Hotel](#)
- [4★ Brooks Hotel](#)
- [4★ Camden Court Hotel](#)
- [4★ Ashling Hotel](#)
- [5★ Shelbourne Hotel](#)
- [5★ The Westbury Hotel](#)
- [5★ The Merrion Hotel](#)
- [5★ Dylan Hotel](#)



### Waterford

- [3★ Dooley's Hotel](#)
- [4★ Granville Hotel](#)
- [4★ Faithlegg House Hotel](#)
- [5★ Waterford Castle Hotel](#)

### Killarney

- [3★ Hotel Killarney](#)
- [4★ International Hotel](#)
- [4★ Arbutus Hotel](#)
- [4★ Killarney Towers Hotel](#)
- [4★ Killarney Avenue](#)
- [4★ Killarney Plaza](#)
- [5★ The Europe Hotel & Resort](#)

### Galway:

- [3★ Imperial Hotel](#)
- [3★ Hyde Hotel](#)
- [4★ Menlo Park Hotel](#)
- [4★ Harbor Hotel](#)
- [5★ The G Hotel & Spa](#)



ACCOMMODATIONS

### Dublin

- [The Bull & Castle - 5-7 Lord Edward St. Dublin 2](#)
- [Ryleigh's Rooftop Grill - 81/82 North Wall Quay, Dublin 1](#)
- [Fish Shop - 76 Benburg St. Smithfield, Dublin 1](#)
- [Chapter One - 18-19 Parnell Sq, Dublin 1 \(\\$\\$\\$\\$\)](#)

### Waterford

- [Bodega - 54 John Street, Waterford, Ireland](#)
- [The Granary Cafe - Hanover Street, Waterford, Ireland](#)
- [Sheehan's - 40 Merchants Quay, Waterford, Ireland](#)

### Killarney

- [Kitty O'Se's Seafood and Grill - College St., Killarney](#)
- [Rossers Restaurant - Aghadoe, Lakes of Killarney \(Killeen House\)](#)
- [Bricin - 26 High Street, Killarney](#)
- [Porterhouse - 26 Plunkett Street](#)

### Galway

- [Oscar's Seafood - Dominick Street Lower](#)
- [The Pie Maker - 10 Cross Street Upper](#)
- [The Quay Street Kitchen - Unit B The Halls, Quay Street](#)



## Itinerary Suggestions:

### Rugged West Coast

If you get an opportunity to tour this rugged, yet beautiful part of the country, you won't be disappointed. The magnificent coastlines, awe inspiring cliffs and the welcome of the people will bring you a wonderful Irish holiday.



#### Brief Itinerary:

- Day 01 – Arrive Shannon to Galway (2 nts)
- Day 02 – Aran Island or Connemara Touring
- Day 03 – Galway to Westport, Co. Mayo (1 nt)
- Day 04 – Westport to Donegal (2 nts)
- Day 05 – Tour the Slieve League
- Day 06 – Donegal to Dublin (2 nts)
- Day 07 – Day Trip to Glendalough
- Day 08 – Fly home

**Day 01:** Day 01: Arrive Shannon (note, due to fewer flights into Shannon, you may need to fly into Dublin. But not to worry – the motorway from Dublin to Galway takes only approx. 2.5 hours, and is quite an easy drive.) Make your way to the City of Tribes; Galway, your home for 2 nights. Galway is a bustling city with lots of pubs, restaurants and entertainment to enjoy!

**Day 02:** Today opt to take the ferry out to the beautiful Aran Island and spend the afternoon touring or opt to drive the picturesque Connemara region. There are many routes to take when touring the Connemara, but none will take you the wrong way. You will enjoy scenic beauty and lakes abound. Fisherman will be delighted in Connemara, which is known as the Fisherman's paradise. Walkers will also delight with some of the best walking and hiking in Ireland. Alternatively – you want to leave the car for the day – take a drive to Rossaveel, and catch the ferry to the magnificent Aran Islands. Celtic Tours can arrange both the Ferry and a ½ day tour of the Island for you.

**Day 03:** After breakfast, you will head north to Co. Mayo. Perhaps a stop at Knock Shrine en-route. Then make your way to Westport via Castlebar. Westport is a lively town, with plenty of restaurants and great pubs with lots of music! You may also want to take a trek out to Achill Island, with five Blue Flag beaches and breathtaking mountain landscape, Achill provides an unrivaled arena for outdoor activities and watersports of all types.

**Day 04:** Another breathtaking day in Ireland as you make your way from Mayo to Donegal. Your drive today takes you through Ballina, Sligo and Bundoran before reaching Donegal town. Why not take the day and relax in lovely Donegal Town. Perhaps take the Donegal Bay Waterbus. Cruise around Donegal Bay in their state of the art 160 seater Waterbus. View the seal colony on Seal Island, The Bluestack Mountains and Donegal Bays many islands with full commentary. There is a fully stocked bar and you will enjoy our cabaret show on the return leg of the trip. There will be no shortage of excellent Irish music in Donegal town for you to enjoy in the evening.

**Day 05:** Today is a spectacular days drive to the magnificent Slieve League Cliffs, one of the highest in Europe! Wear a good pair of hiking shoes, as you may have to trek up to the cliffs (There is a bus option available most of the year). Rising almost 2000 ft from the Atlantic, one of the highest sea cliffs in Europe and twice as high as the cliffs of Mohar, at the base of the cliffs is the "Giants Desk and Chair". but just as amazing as this view, is the history we can see here. Over there is Benbulbin with megalithic tombs and mythical links to Finn McCool and the Fiona of old.

**Day 06:** Leaving the scenic beauty of Donegal behind us, we travel south east to the capital city of Dublin. Our route today takes your through counties Fermanagh, Cavan and Meath. On arrival in Dublin, you can opt to drop the car, as parking and driving in Dublin can be a challenge. Opt to take in dinner and a show tonight at one of the many venues in Ireland

**Day 07:** Celtic Tours offers many day tours from Dublin...perhaps a day tour to Glendalough, or enjoy the Dublin Hop-on Hop-off Bus pass for the day, or a bus tour to Powerscourt Gardens and more. Dublin is also an excellent shopping city for those needing to get their retail fix on.



**Have more time to spend in Ireland? Why not include Derry/Londonderry and Belfast onto your journey?**

**Day 06:** Travel east to the City of Culture Derry, and overnight in this great walled city for the night.

**Day 07:** A splendid day touring from Derry to Belfast. There is much to see and do along this coastal route. See Dunluce Castle, Giant's Causeway, Carrick-A-Rede Rope Bridge and more...before making your way to Belfast for a night or two...it's up to you.

**Day 08:** Make your way from Belfast to Dublin – spending your last night in the Capital of Ireland before departing in the morning.

## In The Area:

### Dublin

- [3★ Buswells Hotel](#)
- [3★ Academy Plaza Hotel](#)
- [4★ Temple Bar Hotel](#)
- [4★ Davenport Hotel](#)
- [4★ Brooks Hotel](#)
- [4★ Camden Court Hotel](#)
- [4★ Ashling Hotel](#)
- [4★ Hyatt Centric](#)
- [5★ Shelbourne Hotel](#)
- [5★ The Westbury Hotel](#)
- [5★ The Merrion Hotel](#)

### Westport

- [3★ Clew Bay Hotel](#)
- [4★ Castlecourt Hotel](#)
- [4★ Westport Plaza hotel](#)
- [4★ Westport Coast Hotel](#)

### Donegal

- [3★ Abbey Hotel](#)
- [3★ Aarnold Hotel](#)
- [4★ Jackson's Hotel](#)
- [4★ Mill Park Hotel](#)
- [4★ Harvey's Point](#)
- [5★ Lough Eske Castle](#)

### Derry/Londonderry:

- [3★ Holiday Inn Express](#)
- [4★ Maldron Hotel Derry](#)
- [4★ City Hotel Derry](#)
- [5★ Shipquay Hotel](#)

### Belfast:

- [4★ Titanic Hotel](#)
- [4★ Hastings Stormont Hotel](#)
- [4★ Europa Hotel](#)
- [5★ Grand Central Hotel](#)
- [5★ The Merchant Hotel](#)



### Dublin

- [The Bull & Castle - 5-7 Lord Edward St. Dublin 2](#)
- [Ryleigh's Rooftop Grill - 81/82 North Wall Quay, Dublin 1](#)
- [Fish Shop - 76 Benburg St. Smithfield, Dublin](#)
- [Chapter One - 18-19 Parnell Sq, Dublin 1 \(\\$\\$\\$\\$\)](#)

### Westport

- [Cobblers Bar - 10 Octagon, Cahernamart, Westport](#)
- [Cornin's Sheebeen - Rosbeg, Westport](#)
- [An Port Mor - 1 Brewery Place \(Adjacent to Bridge Street\)](#)

### Donegal

- [The Harbour Restaurant & Bar - Quay St, Donegal Town](#)
- [Quay West Restaurant - Quay Street](#)
- [The Restaurant at Harvey's Point - Tawnyvorgal, Donegal Town](#)
- [Mill Park Hotel Cafe Bar - The Mullins](#)

### Derry/Londonderry

- [Fitzroys - 2-4 Bridge Street](#)
- [Shipquay Restaurant 15-17 Shipquay St.](#)
- [Brickwork - 12-14 Castle Street](#)
- [The Scooty Olive - 162 Spencer Road](#)

### Belfast

- [James St - 19 James St S. Belfast](#)
- [Fish City - 33 Ann Street](#)
- [The Muddlers Club - 1 Warehouse Lane](#)

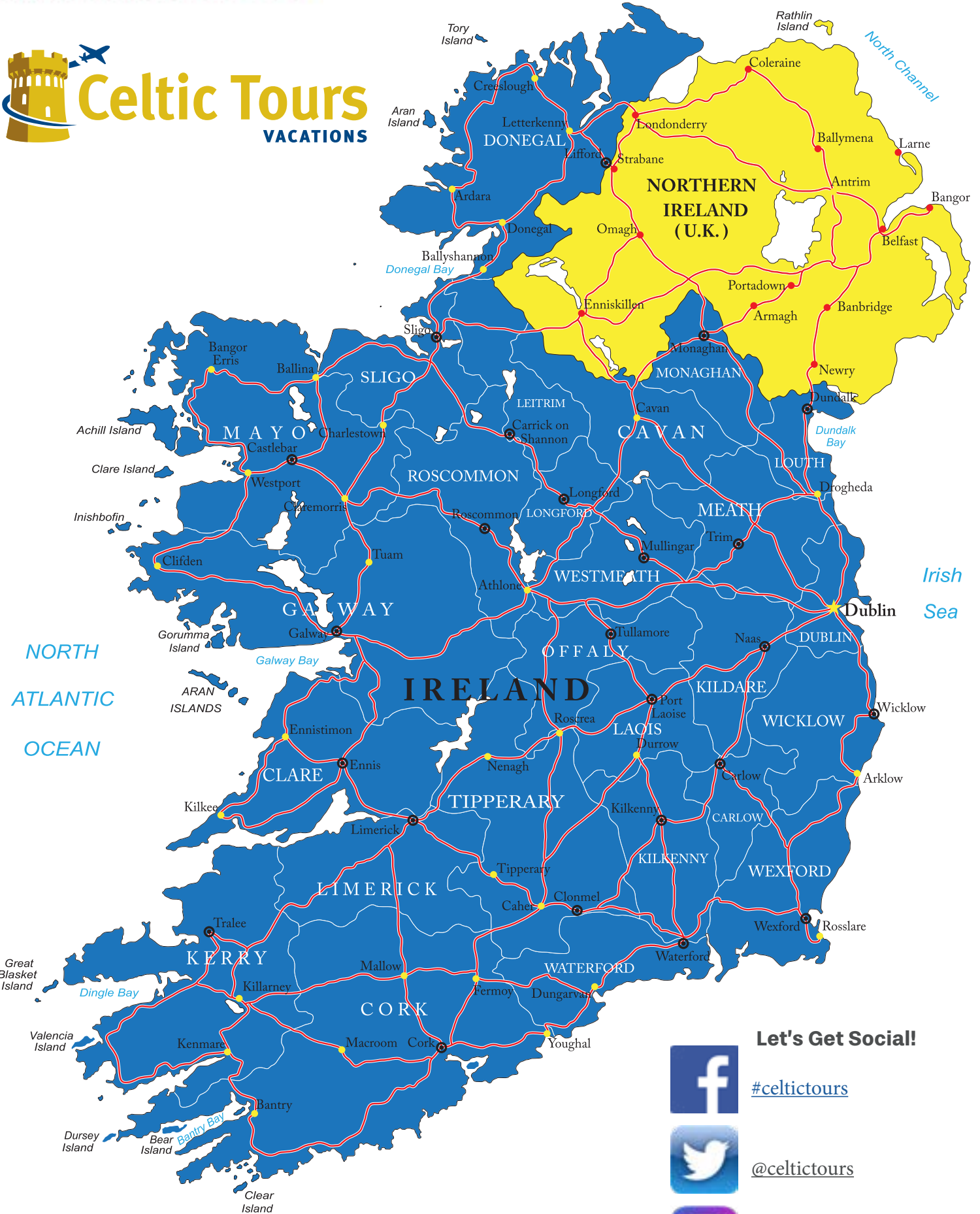


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VACATIONS



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