

Below is the proposed itinerary for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

DAY 1

Arrive Shannon, visit Caherconnell Fort

Arrive in Shannon airport by 12 p.m. today where we'll meet our Irish guide and be whisked away to Doolin and the Cliffs of Moher! Along the way, we'll visit Caherconnell Fort. If energy allows, we'll take a short walk to breathe in that wonderful Irish air before checking into our hotel for the evening. Next on the agenda - a delicious Irish dinner, the first of many, and perhaps even a visit to a local Irish bar with a bit of music and a good night's sleep!

Driving: 1 hour. Overnight: County Clare. (D)

DAY 2

Hike in Burren National Park, visit Bunratty Castle

We'll spend today in an area of Ireland known for its limestone, the karst limestone landscape of the Burren, one of the largest in Europe. The Burren is truly an amazing place: in these 100 square miles of jagged limestone, Arctic, Mediterranean, and Alpine plants all live side by side. In fact, 70% of all of Ireland's flora can be found here. After a morning hike in the Burren, we'll explore a different part of Ireland, its past, and its culture, with a visit to Bunratty Castle and Folk Park. We'll conclude the evening tasting medieval foods with a four-course meal at the Bunratty Medieval Banquet. The setting will be in an historical castle whilst being entertained by world famous Bunratty Castle Singers. Driving: 1 hour. Hiking: 2 - 3 hours. Overnight: County Clare. (B, D)

DAY 3

Hike on Cliffs of Mohr, visit Burren Perfumery

Morning brings a fabulous Irish breakfast - black pudding anyone? Our morning stretches ahead of us, filled with ocean breezes and wonderful vistas. We're hiking today from Doolin to the Cliffs of Moher. Our trail traverses one of the most outstanding landscapes of Ireland, running along top the cliffs from Doolin to the Cliffs of Mohr visitor center. The path closely follows the edge of the cliffs offering incredible views of both the rocks and surrounding sea.

Once reaching the Visitors Center, we'll take full advantage of their exhibits before boarding our shuttle and finding lunch. Our afternoon adventure offers us a glimpse into one of Ireland's well-known family run businesses: The Burren Perfumery. The Burren Perfumery is a family company that is run on a small scale with local staff. You'll have a chance to visit and enjoy their blending rooms, herb garden and their tearoom and perhaps you'll choose to sample their wonderful organic cakes. Overnight: County Clare. (B)

DAY 4

Spend day in the Aran Islands

After another hearty Irish breakfast, we'll catch a ferry in Doolin to Inis Mor, one of the Aran Islands. These islands are also made of karst limestone where people have eked out a living from fishing and farming their rocky fields for 5000 years. The islands are a Gaeltacht region, where Irish (which is different from Gaelic) is spoken as a first language. The ferry ride over is about 45 minutes and once here you can rent a bike and ride around the island or see the island by foot, walking out to an old shipwreck, a Medieval church ruin, and a three-story tower house built within a Stone Fort. And of course, the local pub offers an Irish welcome of food and drink. After a few hours enjoying the island and relishing the remoteness, we take a highspeed ferry to the town of Rossaveal, where once again we meet up with our Irish guide and vehicle, and anyone who decided not to go to the island. We'll continue to Clifden and if arriving in time can enjoy a pleasant walk around this quaint little village.

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Driving: 2 hours. Hiking: varied depending on activity choices on island. Overnight: Clifden (B, D)

DAY 5

Visit Connemara National Park and Kylemore Abbey

We're in for a treat today with a visit to Connemara National Park at the foot of Diamond Hill. Connemara is the home of the Twelve Bens, a mountain range of rocky peaks. We will have a few options today but one we love is a walk up Diamond Hill. It has 2 loops so those who want a rewarding challenge can tackle the upper, steeper loop and enjoy the 360-degree views at the top, looking over the ocean to nearby Inishturk and Inishbofin and across the dramatic Connemara landscape to the iconic Twelve Bens. Others can take the shorter, less strenuous lower loop and enjoy the nature walk and the tearoom in the lovely Visitor Center. After our walk followed by a short drive, we will visit Kylemore Abbey, known as one of the most romantic places in all of Ireland. The chapel on the grounds is a miniature replica of Norwich Cathedral and the gardens are immaculately kept.

Driving: 2 hours. Hiking: 3 hours Overnight: Clifden (B, D)

DAY 6

Famine Walk along the shores of Killary Harbour

Today, we start the day with a sheepdog herding demonstration on a working sheep farm. These highly intelligent dogs are trained from birth and we'll have a chance to see them in action in a picturesque setting.

Next, we'll delve into the history of this magnificent landscape as we follow the Famine Walk that runs along the shores of Killary Harbour. Part of our walk will be along a famine relief road, constructed by the starving Irish during the great famine of 1845-1849 in return for food. Along the way we'll clearly see the ruins of famine villages and old 'Lazy Beds', an ancient practice of building ridges for planting potato crops. While the potato blight that was the immediate cause of the great famine ravaged crops throughout Europe, its most devastating impact was in Ireland where the impoverished population was heavily dependent on potato crops for survival. The severe economic conditions were inherently interwoven with the policies of British governance at the time and soured the already strained relations between these countries. The magnitude of the famine indelibly changed Ireland and became a rallying cause for the Home Rule movements that eventually led to independence. We'll end today's memorable walk with a cruise through the Killary Fjord where we'll see dramatic sweep of the landscape, as you pass between the Twelve Bens and the Maam Turk mountains to the South, in County Galway and the Mweelrea mountains to the North in County Mayo. The shelter of the fjord is home to both mussel and salmon farming and toward the mouth of the fjord is a small island where dolphins traditionally like to make an appearance!

Driving: 1.5 hours. Hiking: 2 - 4 hours. Overnight Clifden (B)

DAY 7

Visit Clonmacnoise, hike and overnight in Athlone

Leaving Clifden, we'll make our way to Cong. We will visit Cong abbey and take a walk through the forest on Ashford castle grounds. After our walk group will have time to explore the town and have some lunch in one of the local pubs or cafes.

After lunch, we will continue to Clonmacnoise, an ancient monastic site founded by St Ciaran in the mid-6th century that includes a cathedral and 7 churches. It was a great center of religion and learning, visited by scholars from all over the ancient world. Afterwards, we'll have a bit of free time before meeting back up for dinner.

Driving: 2 hours. Hiking: 1- 2 hours. Overnight: Athlone (B, D)

DAY 8

Final Hike, Free Afternoon in Dublin

This is the day everyone dreads, the finish of our trip as we return to Dublin - but before we go, let's do a bit more hiking and sightseeing! Yes, we have to pack up and leave Athlone but one last walk before returning to the city still awaits and our guide will surprise us with her choice! Once arriving in Dublin, our Irish guide will bid us farewell and we'll check into our hotel. The rest of the afternoon is free to enjoy Dublin - your AGC guide will help you figure out what you want to do and get you oriented to the city. We'll meet back at our hotel in the evening and head out for our last dinner together in Ireland.

Driving: 1 hour. Hiking 2 hours. Overnight: Mullingar (B, D)

DAY 9

Departure for Home or Your Next Adventure

This morning it's time to say goodbye to Ireland as we depart for the airport or on to our next adventure. You are free to make your return flight arrangements any time for today. Or if you think another day in Dublin is a good idea, there is so much to see and do. (B)