



*The Traveling Professor Presents*

## DUBLIN AND THE GEMS OF IRELAND

**DUBLIN • BELFAST • DONEGAL • GIANTS CAUSEWAY • WILD ATLANTIC WAY •  
CONNEMARA • WESTPORT • CLIFFS OF MOHER • DOOLIN • KILKENNY • DINGLE •  
KILLARNEY**

### TENTATIVE ITINERARY

Be a part of a small group of 10-16 travelers on a delightful visit to Dublin and a ramble through the Gems of Ireland from top to bottom and east to west. Forget those big bus Ireland tours, get the real Irish experience on this small group tour. Get out into the countryside, stay in charming B&B's, guest houses, and lodges full of Irish spirit and friendliness.

The only way to see the true beauty of Ireland is to go to those remote places the big bus tours cannot get to. We travel there and stay at the small but elegant family-owned inns and hotels for the full Irish treatment. Here's the itinerary overview of our small group Ireland tour.

**Day 1:** Arrive in Dublin and check in at the fabulous Brooks Hotel. This evening, meet our guide, Mark Doherty, the leader of our small group Ireland tour.

**Day 2:** In the morning, meet our professional guide for a fun and interesting walking tour. He provides an overview of Dublin and show where all the great sites are, helping you to plan visits on your own. The rest of the day is on your own with plenty to do. We highly recommend the absolutely amazing **EPIC Irish Emigration Museum**. Perhaps a visit to the **Guinness Storehouse** is your preference. There are museums, shopping, traditional pubs, all over town.

**Day 3:** Depart Dublin and go north to cross the border into Northern Ireland. In Belfast. A local Taxi Tour will be waiting to give us a tour of 'The Troubles' of Belfast. It's a sobering but insightful tour of murals, peace walls and bloody civil war, fought between a Republican Catholic community and a Loyalist Protestant community. After lunch in Belfast, visit Titanic Belfast - the very place where Titanic was designed, built and launched. Learn of her maiden voyage and subsequent place in history. The first night's accommodation is the luxury Strangford Arms Hotel.

**Day 4:** Today is truly magical. After a wonderful breakfast, follow in the footprints of Ireland's great mythological Giants. Visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Giants Causeway - 40,000 hexagonal columns formed over 60 million years ago. Have lunch in a former schoolhouse and stop for photos at the stately ruins of Dunluce Castle. A local guide walks us through the murals of the 'Derry Bogside'. Afterwards, continue through the striking Barnesmore Gap to Donegal. Our hotel is in the centre of Donegal Town -

within walking distance of Donegal Castle, the harbour and an array of great restaurants and pubs in the old-world town of Donegal in North West Ireland. We stay in this hotel for 2 nights.

**Day 5:** After breakfast, venture further west. We take our group on a boating excursion (weather permitting) around the Slieve League Cliffs. Wildlife spotting in the shadows of highest accessible sea Cliffs in Europe. From here we drive way off the beaten path, through the Glen of the Swans, into the heritage village of Ardara. Maybe lunch and a pint in the old-world pub of Nancys - a unique traditional Irish pub that specialised in local produce and is owned by the McHugh family for 7 generations. After lunch, visit one of the local weavers to learn about this ancient craft with quality woolen products that Donegal is particularly famous for. In the afternoon, return to Donegal town for free time to explore this unique town. Stay another night in Donegal.

**Day 6:** Travel further down the Wild Atlantic Way, a spectacular coastal route. Depart Donegal and travel further down the Wild Atlantic Way - Ireland's spectacular coastal route. Visit a farm to enjoy a sheep demonstration. Watch this amazing team of one man with his dog and a field full of sheep against a backdrop of the imposing Benbulbin mountain. Then it's up to Glencar lake and Waterfall to experience the landscape immortalized by William Butler Yeats, the national poet of Ireland. Sligo town is so special - we pause for lunch and a pint in one of the old world pubs. Later travel through the scenic Mayo countryside to the Museum of Country Life - immerse yourself in Ireland's rural past and an almost vanished but recent way of life. Conclude another great day in Westport. The people of Ireland voted Westport as their favorite town in Ireland. Our next 2 nights are spent in this truly incredible town. Great food, super pubs filled with traditional Irish music are all on the doorstep of our Westport hotel for the next 2 nights.

**Day 7:** Another day of magic and a particularly short driving day - Today we journey through Connemara. Kylemore Abbey is possibly the finest mansion in all Ireland. Explore the house, gardens and neo gothic church. After Kylemore Abbey, circle the dramatic landscape of Killary Fjord. From here, we go way off the beaten path to discover Aasleagh falls - a hidden gem waterfall. We continue around to Delphia and the Doo Lough Valley. An astonishing area of beauty with a dark history from 19th Century Famine Times. Stop at Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holiest mountain and visit the 15th century ruined Murrisk Abbey. Return to Westport in the late afternoon, where the rest of the day is free for sightseeing, shopping, food, drink and traditional Irish music.

**Day 8:** After breakfast, leave Westport and visit Cong - this beautiful quaint town, made famous by 'The Quiet Man' movie. Enjoy the scenery as we head to vibrant Galway - lunch and free time through this city's historic heart. Galway is a true jewel of the West of Ireland. It marks the halfway point on our tour. This bohemian city is full of culture, street music and exceptional food. It is always a joy to explore its wonderful cobbled streets and colorful shops. Drive around the majestic Galway Bay and pause for photos at the 15th Century Dunguaire Castle. Experience the 5,500 year old Poulnabrone Dolmen. Tonight we base ourselves in the 'Traditional Music Capital of Ireland' - Doolin. Great food and incredible music opportunities are all within a short stroll of tonight's hotel.

**Day 9:** First stop today is the towering Cliffs of Moher. Visiting this unique attraction before the crowds arrive, adds so much to the natural beauty and unique landscape of the Cliffs. After the Cliffs of Moher, leave County Clare via the Shannon ferry. Step 'Off the Beaten Path' to explore the rarely visited Carrigafoyle Castle. After lunch in the heritage town of Listowel, go to the very edge of Europe, as far west as you can go in Ireland, to the breath-taking Dingle Peninsula. It was once described by National Geographic as "the most beautiful place on earth". It's here that you'll find the real Ireland. Dingle is arguably the best town in Ireland. Fill your heart with music, story-telling and real Irish craic and fill your tummy with some of the best food in Ireland.

**Day 10:** Today is all about Dingle. Explore Dingle at your own leisure on foot. Dingle offers endless opportunities to suit all tastes. Dingle has hidden shopping opportunities in the back streets and quirky pubs with colorful locals and traditional Irish music. While everything is on your doorstep, you may also wish to use this downtime to have a round of golf at the Dingle Links course. Or maybe taking a boat trip out around Dingle bay. You have opportunities to visit a local artisan brewery or distillery or see the crystal cutters at Dingle Crystal. In the afternoon, experience some of the best scenery in Ireland on the 'Slea Head Drive'. Dingle inspires, it connects, it "catches the heart off guard", and it stays with you.

**Day 11:** After breakfast, bid farewell to Dingle. In Killarney, we enjoy a jaunting cart ride (horse and carriage ride) around Killarney National Park. This allows us to experience Muckross Abbey, Torc Waterfall and the majestic gardens and lake around Ireland's first national park. After lunch we experience the magic of Muckross House - Ireland's finest stately home with many famous guests including Queen Victoria. This stop is always particularly appreciated by fans of Downton Abbey. We close another great day in Cobh, County Cork. This gorgeous seaport town is known for its rich history, beautiful buildings and warm welcoming people to make this vibrant coastal town so special.

**Day 12:** Depart Cobh and go north to Tipperary. Visit the 13th century Cahir Castle - one of the largest (but least visited) castles in Ireland. It stands proudly on a rocky island on the River Suir. The next stop is the Rock of Cashel - one of Ireland's key sites of historical importance. According to legend, St. Patrick himself came here to convert the Kings of Munster to Christianity 1500 years ago. The Rock of Cashel is one of Ireland's most spectacular tourist attractions. Today is culture overload - arrive in Kilkenny, the Medieval Capital of Ireland, in the afternoon. Loads of time to check out the grounds of Kilkenny Castle, or walk the "Medieval Mile" or maybe just an early check in at our city centre hotel. Another spectacular day in Ireland..

**Day 13:** Say goodbye to Kilkenny and venture north towards Dublin. Stop at the mysterious and majestic 5,000-year-old Brownshill Dolmen. The capstone on this rarely visited megalithic tomb is believed to be the largest in Europe. We cross over into County Wicklow to visit Glendalough - a 6th century monastery hidden deep in the "Garden of Ireland". With a 1000-year-old round tower and ancient Celtic crosses this valley of 2 lakes could just be one of the most idyllic places in Ireland. Arrive back in Dublin in the evening. Mark bids you farewell after a wonderful adventure around Ireland. Drop-off is at the Clayton Dublin Airport Hotel.

**Day 14:** After breakfast, a complimentary hotel shuttle will bring you to the Dublin airport. And that wraps up our brilliant small group tour of Ireland.

### ABOUT OUR SMALL GROUP TOURS

We travel with a small group of 12-16 active adults. This offers the flexibility to do what we want to do, on our own schedule. Transportation on excursions is by private van with our group and our group only.

Breakfast is included each day of the tour. As noted on the itinerary, some lunches and dinners are included. All other meals are not included.

Well in advance of departure date, each traveler is supplied with a "final" detailed itinerary along with a complete and detailed information packet. It has advice on packing, money matters, passports, weather, etc. We make sure travelers are well-prepared. And of course, we are always available to personally answer any questions you may have.