



CELTIC CLASSIC



DUBLIN

In the wake of a remarkable economic boom, Dublin's landscape has changed immeasurably over the past decade. These days Dublin ranks among the top tourist destinations in Europe, and this vibrant city hums with a palpable sense that it is creating a new cultural heritage.

Though most people don't schedule too much gallery time into the pub crawl, Dublin museums offer a wealth of collectables. From the proverbial pot of Irish gold to the artistic riches of the *Book of Kells* to a host of quirky 'objets d'religious', it's a city of archives and artefacts.

GALWAY

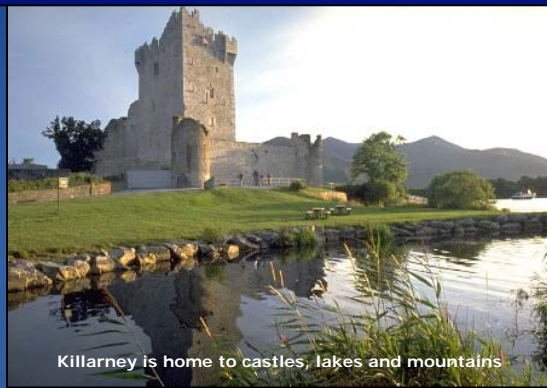
Galway (Gaillimh) is the administrative capital of County Galway. Its university attracts a notable bohemian crowd, and its boisterous nightlife and festivals fill the streets to bursting. Galway is also a departure point for the rugged Aran Islands.

Its tightly packed town centre lies on both sides of the fast flowing River Corrib; most of the main shopping areas are east of the river. Its many fine cultural festivals include the February Jazz Festival, the Easter Festival of Literature and the Galway Arts Festival in July.



9 DAYS

CELTIC CLASSIC



Killarney is home to castles, lakes and mountains

HIGHLIGHTS

- Connemara Region Tour
- Galway Walking Tour
- Cliffs of Moher
- The Burren
- Ring of Kerry Tour
- Traditional Sheep Farm
- Bog Village
- Blarney Castle
- St Patrick's Cathedral
- Trinity College
- Dublin City Tour

INCLUDED

- Return Flights
- Tour Director
- Sports Coordinator
- City sightseeing tours
- Licensed local guides
- Hotel accommodation
- Breakfast & dinner daily
- Private motor coach
- Entrance fees
- 2 Rugby games
- 1 Rugby practice
- Awards dinner

Day 1 > Fly overnight to Ireland

Mountain sheep have dotted the hills around Killarney for ages. Come face-to-face with these fluffy landmarks at a traditional Irish sheep farm.

Day 2 > Galway

Meet and greet the bayside city likened to San Francisco on a friendly foot tour led by your Tour Director. Discover a traditional Gaelic culture turned trendy with college students, artists and writers in the midst of a buzzing Bohemian culture of 50,000 people. The journey begins at the Spanish Arch (actually a pair of stone arches speckled with greenery) constructed to guard the quays where Spanish merchants docked their boats. Stroll along residential Quay Street into bustling High Street, a micro-shopping mecca lined with all kinds of shops, coffeehouses and outside eateries. Venture outside the buzz and discover a one-of-a-kind pyramid-shaped spire atop Ireland's second largest medieval parish house, St. Nicholas Church. Meander through Eyre Square's Kennedy Memorial Park, a green oasis where locals gather to lounge, socialize and attend musical performances. Bordering the lush grounds, find the 17th-century Brown Doorway, a real entryway transported in 1900 from its original location at the Brown Mansion.

□ EVENING RUGBY PRACTICE

Day 6 > Blarney Castle and the Rock of Cashel

On your journey to Dublin, stop for a visit to Blarney Castle, the medieval stone structure built on solid limestone around 1466. (The silvers of windows served as a defence, enabling Lord Blarney and his men to shoot arrows at invaders while staying protected from within.) Climb the spiral staircases to the top of the castle to kiss the Blarney stone. Legend promises that if you lean backwards and kiss the stone upside-down, you'll be granted the "gift of the gab" (the privilege of babbling questionable commentary for seven years). Before you leave, wander the path to Rock Close to ponder the druidic circle of mystical stones. Enter Lord Blarney's dungeon if you dare...

Day 7 > Game Day & post-game celebrations

Enjoy today's second exciting game against your host Irish team. Relax afterwards and learn how hard the Irish play off the field as they do on it!

□ INTERNATIONAL RUGBY GAME TWO

Day 8 > Dublin Sightseeing & Awards Dinner

Join a professional licensed tour guide on an adventure to Dublin's finest attractions. Pass the residence of Ireland's president, Mary MacAleese, along your journey through Phoenix Park. Within Europe's grandest enclosed park, encounter 1,760 undeveloped acres scattered with cricket pitches, grazing cows, and red deer. Stop to eye a stone phoenix rising from flames atop the Corinthian-style Phoenix Column. Ride along the River Liffey to 12th-century St. Patrick's Cathedral, the largest of its kind in all Ireland. View the crypt of literary great Jonathan Swift. Get a glimpse of the neighboring park where St. Patrick (who brought Christianity to Ireland in the 5th century) baptized converts. Continue on to Trinity College, the stone-clad sprawling campus where Oscar Wilde and Samuel Beckett studied. Stop by the Long Room in the Old Library for a zoom-view of the illuminated edition of four Gospels, the Book of Kells. Four Irish Monks who used multicolored ink from plants and bugs penned the original manuscript in Latin around AD 800. Take some time to study the brilliant latticework of curvy Celtic symbols woven with animal figures that enlivens the script.

This evening we celebrate the gamesmanship, talent and adventures we have encountered on this tour to Ireland at a special awards dinner and ceremony.

Day 9 > Fly home

Day 3 – Connemara Region

Venture outside city limits in search of Ireland's mystical nature. Visit the surreal town of Connemara where ancient Irish is softly spoken. Sense her haunting nature as you survey the jagged coastline of rocky beaches, twisting roads, rippled bogs and windswept heather. Next stop, Kylemore Abbey. Tucked inside a hidden valley along the lush banks of Lough Corrib Lake, it's like a vision from a fairytale dream. Outside you'll discover the look, feel and scent of a real Victorian garden. Inside, you'll find a larger-than-life residence run by an order of Benedictine nuns, and one of the most prestigious international schools in Europe. The infamous prose Yeats wrote while gazing at the river says it all, "peace comes dropping slow".

□ INTERNATIONAL RUGBY GAME ONE

Day 4 – Killarney via the Cliffs of Moher

Travel to Killarney via the impressive Cliffs of Moher and through the stunning natural limestone landscape called the Burren.

Day 5 > Ring of Kerry

Get a true feeling for Ireland's emerald beauty on an excursion around the Iveragh Peninsula on the panoramic coastal route, Ring of Kerry. Along 112 miles of breathtaking views, you'll spy 360 degrees of the vast Atlantic Ocean, Lakes of Killarney, Ireland's tallest mountains (Macgillycuddy's Reeks) and every shade of green known to the Emerald Isle. Save a few photos for a stop in Bog Village where a traditional Irish village (dating from the early 1800's) lives on in fantasy. Enjoy an enlightening performance by a costumed guide depicting rural Irish life back in the day.