

IRELAND

Irish Wonderland

Dublin, Kilkenny, Killarney, Cliffs of Moher

11 Days

September 3 (4) – 13, 2009

Dublin to Shannon

Price: \$2495

Tour Highlights

- **Dublin**, including Trinity College & the Book of Kells, O'Connell & Grafton Streets, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Georgian Dublin, and Dublin Castle
- **Enniskerry**, including Powerscourt and the Crystal Visitor Centre
- **Waterford**, including the Monastery
- **Kilkenny**, including Kilkenny Castle
- **Killarney**, including Muckross House & Farm
- **Ring of Kerry & the Cliffs of Moher**
- **Connemara**, including Kylemore Abbey
- **Shannon**, including Bunratty Castle and Folk Park
- Accommodations for 7 nights in 3- and 4-star, centrally located hotels
- Daily breakfast and 3 dinners
- Services of a Hermes Tours escort
- Services of an expert, local guide in all cities

Trip Info

Dates: Sept 3 – 13, 2010.

Group Size: Maximum of 20.

Grade: Leisure

Transport: Aircon mini-bus.

Accommodation: 7 nights in 3- and 4-star hotels.

Meals: Breakfast daily and 3 dinners (D).

Prices (USD): \$2495.

Single supplement: \$750. Or Hermes Tours can match you with another traveller and waive the single supplement.

Includes: All accommodation as listed, activities and meals as listed.

Not Included: International air/ from Dublin/Shannon, visas if required, transfers to/from airport on designated days. Meals and activities not specifically included in itinerary. Any items of a personal nature such as telephone, laundry, alcohol as well as customary tips to your driver and tour guides and Hermes Tours escort.



\$100 per person savings if you reserve 5 months before departure!

Those who work the land of Eire might tell you that the land dances. Gentle breezes kiss the earth and set grasses swaying until entire patches turn new shades of green. In our Hermes small group, we'll journey on a castle-dotted route to experience Ireland's many shades – cultural, historic, and natural. From Dublin to Killarney and along the dramatic Cliffs of Moher, we'll discover that Celtic legends live large here.

Day 1 – Friday, Sept 3 – Depart
Fly overnight to Dublin.

Day 2 – Saturday, Sept 4 – Dublin (D)

Meet in Dublin at our hotel? today. This afternoon, get acquainted with Oscar Wilde's home city during a sightseeing tour. We'll visit Trinity College and see the beautiful, illuminated Book of Kells, explore a little of O'Connell and Grafton Streets, and tour St. Patrick's Cathedral, Georgian Dublin, and Dublin Castle. This evening Hermes hosts a welcome dinner so we can get to know each other.

Day 3 – Sunday, Sept 5 -- Dublin (B, D)

Today we journey through the beautiful mountains of Wicklow, known as the "Garden of Ireland" for its pastoral beauty. In the heart of its gently rolling hills rests Enniskerry, a picturesque village and home to Powerscourt House and Gardens. We'll stroll these magnificent aristocratic gardens, designed in the 1860s and 1870s with inspiration from Versailles. This afternoon we visit Glendalough Monastic settlement, founded in the sixth century by St. Kevin, a hermit priest.

Tonight, we dine at the quaint Johnnie Foxes Pub, the highest pub in Ireland, in the Dublin Mountains. This is a truly authentic Irish night out: sawdust blankets the floor and bric-a-brac hangs from the walls. We'll enjoy some foot-stompin' Irish entertainment with our traditional meal.

Day 4 – Monday, Sept 6 -- Kilkenny (B)

After breakfast we travel southwest to Kilkenny. Known as the "marble city," it is without doubt Ireland's prettiest inland city. In the 13th century it rose to prominence when the Irish Parliament met at Kilkenny Castle, which we will also visit.

Day 5 – Tuesday, Sept 7 – Waterford (B)

We venture south to Waterford today. This is Ireland's oldest city, founded by Vikings in A.D. 914. Today, it is known for its world-famous crystal. We'll see master craftsmen as they blow and cut crystal goblets, bowls, and other ornamental glassware. Sample one of the city's inviting cafes for lunch on your own. We return to Kilkenny for a free afternoon.

Day 6 – Wednesday, Sept 8 – Killarney (B)

We get an early start to Killarney today. Along the way we stop in Blarney. By now, you've experienced the Irish love of conversation in pubs, shops and restaurants. At the historic Blarney Castle, you just might acquire that "gift of gab" yourself when you kiss the famed stone. It's not as easy as you think!

In Killarney, we visit Muckross House. This beautiful 65-room Victorian mansion was built in the Tudor style in 1843. Period furnishings decorate the interior. We'll have time to stroll the landscaped gardens or walk the short distance to Muckross Farm, a working farm that honors traditional farming techniques still today.

Day 7 – Thursday, Sept 9 – Ring of Kerry (B)

Today the beauty of Eire unfolds before us in all its glory as we drive onto the Iveragh Peninsula, famously known as the "Ring of Kerry." We see all shades of green here, from patchwork farmlands to gentle dales laden with wildflowers to hills that spill into the sea. Our day includes a stop for lunch on your own.

Day 8 – Friday, Sept 10 – The Burren & Cliffs of Moher (B)

Continue north through the Irish countryside. After lunch on our own, we'll enter The Burren. This stark region is one of Europe's largest karst landscapes. Though few trees survive here, its unique landscape and climate are varied enough to support Arctic, Mediterranean, and Alpine plants side by side. Derived from the Gaelic word *boireann*, which means "rocky land," Burren is an apt name for this vast limestone plateau.

In the southern part of The Burren, limestone gives way to the black shale and sandstone that form the dramatic Cliffs of Moher. We'll stop here to marvel at their breathtaking heights of 650 feet. We end our day in Galway, a lively university city. We'll have time to explore the city this evening.

Day 9 – Saturday, Sept 11 – Connemara (B)

Today we continue our scenic discoveries in the Connemara. This wild region in the west of Galway is home to bogs, mountains, and a rugged coastline. We'll stop at Kylemore Abbey, a Benedictine monastery originally built in the 19th century for a wealthy English businessman. With its setting on the strikingly beautiful Kylemore Lake, this magnificent white granite and grey limestone building is one of the most photographed houses in Ireland. After lunch on your own here, return to Galway via the quaint seaside town of Clifden.

Day 10 – Sunday, Sept 12 – Shannon (B, D)

After breakfast, we head south to Shannon and visit Bunratty Castle and Folk Park. On these grounds you'll walk through a microcosm of Irish history. The site has been occupied since Vikings set up camp here in A.D. 970. The first structures were built 300 years later and the property has evolved and changed hands during conflict and intrigue countless times since. We'll also visit Bunratty House, home to the Studderts who once occupied the castle, and stroll through the charming Folk Park, a recreated 19th century village.

For our farewell dinner, we enjoy a medieval banquet at Bunratty Castle, a dagger our only utensil! Join the Earl of Thomond for a glorious four-course feast accompanied by music and song.

Day 11 – Monday, Sept 13 -- Depart (B)

This morning is the end of our tour. You are free to make your return flight for any time today.

