

## Early Fall Ireland Tour • September 13–24, 2026

### *The Sights and Sounds of the North* Westport, Donegal and Belfast



Join hosts Ellen Redman, David Clopp and John Tabb of the Irish Cultural Center on a tour of the wild and beautiful North of Ireland! Embrace Ireland's culture and history in Counties Mayo, Donegal and Antrim on a leisurely paced early fall tour through gorgeous countryside, charming towns and bustling cities. Enjoy the beautiful late summer weather without the crowds. Multiple night stays in Westport, Donegal and Belfast allow you to immerse yourself in the beauty, hospitality, music and culture and of Ireland's Historic North.

#### **Total Cost:**

**\$4,595 per person / double room occupancy; \$5,195 single room occupancy (limited availability)**

#### **Deposits, Payments and Application:**

- **Tour is limited** (42 passengers) and will be filled on a **first come, first served basis**
- **Initial Deposit** of \$2,000 p.p. must accompany a **completed reservation application** and **copy of your passport**
- **Final Payment Due July 9, 2026:** \$2,595 per person / double room occupancy; \$3,195 single room
- **Travel Insurance is required;** information available upon request
- **UK visa is required;** information given at time of registration

#### **The Irish Cultural Center Tour Includes:**

- Round trip bus coach transportation from the Irish Cultural Center to airport (Boston Logan/Hartford Bradley)
- Airfare from Boston to Shannon, Ireland and from Dublin to Hartford via Aer Lingus
- Ground transportation to all Irish destinations provided by Kennedy Coach; a deluxe touring motor coach company will provide for all transportation/sightseeing with the services of a professional Irish driver/guide throughout
- Ten (10) nights with top rated hotel accommodations: Westport Castle Court Hotel, Donegal Town Mill Park Hotel, Belfast Europa Hotel
- Full Irish breakfast daily, one (1) lunch and eight (8) dinners
- Admission to all events. Optional day trips (no extra cost): Visit Ennis, Kylemore Abbey, Killary Fjord Cruise, Country Life Museum of Ireland, Sligo, Slieve League Cliffs, Donegal Tweed Weaving in Ardara, Ulster American Folk Park, Omagh, Derry City, Glenshane Family Farm for lunch and sheep herding, Seamus Heaney Homeplace, Titanic Museum, The McConnell's Distillery and Crumlin Gaol, Belfast City tour, the Giant's Causeway, free days in Westport and Belfast.
- Portage of one (1) suitcase per person
- Tips & taxes while in Ireland and UK (Note: Gratuity to the driver/guide is included in tour cost)

**For more information or to make reservations please contact:**

**Ellen Redman at [ellen.redman1@gmail.com](mailto:ellen.redman1@gmail.com) / 617-515-3510**

## Trip Details and Itinerary

- Day 1:  
Sunday, Sept 13
- Depart by coach from the ICC in West Springfield at 12:30 pm to Boston's Logan Airport. Leave Logan at 6:35 pm aboard Aer Lingus Flight EI 134.
- Day 2:  
Monday, Sept 14
- Arrive at Shannon Airport at 6:00 am local Irish time. We'll meet our driver/guide and board the coach. Stop at Temple Gate Hotel in Ennis, Co. Kerry for tour-sponsored full Irish breakfast. While in Ennis we will conduct a short walking tour of the city. You can tour the Clare County Museum and visit the ATM to get your Euros. We will then leave for Connemara, and the beautiful Kylemore Abbey. Kylemore Castle was built in the late 1800s by Mitchell Henry MP, a wealthy businessman, and liberal politician. Inspired by his love for his wife Margaret and his hopes for his beloved Ireland, Henry created an estate boasting 'all the innovations of the modern age.' An enlightened landlord and vocal advocate of the Irish people, Henry poured his life's energy into creating an estate that would showcase what could be achieved in the remote wilds of Connemara. Today Kylemore Abbey is owned and run by the Benedictine community who have been in residence here since 1920. While there we will experience woodland and lakeshore walks, magnificent buildings, and Ireland's largest walled garden! Upon arrival at the Westport Castle Court Hotel, unpack and relax or freshen up before a welcome get-together drink along with traditional music at 6:00 pm followed by dinner at 7:00 pm in the restaurant. Ellen, David and John may be participating in a traditional music session this evening if you (or they) have any energy left.
- Day 3:  
Tuesday, Sept 15
- After hotel breakfast, the bus will depart at 9:30 am. We will stop to take a cruise on the Killary Fjord, the only fjord in Ireland. The cruise offers a great way to take in the dramatic sweep of the landscape as you pass between the Twelve Bens and the Maamturk mountains to the South in Co. Galway; and the Mweelrea mountains to the North in Co. Mayo, as well as the views out to the Atlantic at the mouth of the fjord. The fjord's sheltered waters are perfect for mussel farming, and you will see the ropes at several points on the fjord. You will also see some circular salmon farms, closer to the shore. Sheep dot the hills and towards the mouth of the fjord is a small island, which has a Victorian range marker on it. This is the point at which dolphins typically emerge if they are in the vicinity and they like to swim alongside the ship. You can partake of a snack on the ride back at the wonderful onboard galley. Then we are off to Leenaun, a quiet village at the head of the fjord where you can get a bite to eat and maybe try the mussels fresh out of the fjord. We will return to the hotel in Westport for dinner and maybe a session tonight at the famous Matt Molloy's pub.
- Day 4:  
Wednesday, Sep 16  
**FREE DAY!**
- After hotel breakfast the rest of the day is available for you to enjoy. Perhaps you may travel to Crough Patrick. Have you climbed it yet? No trip to Westport is complete without climbing The Reek. Even though locals say it only counts if you do it in your bare feet!!! Perhaps you might want to escape the hustle and bustle of urban life on the Great Western Greenway, the longest off-road cycling and walking trail in Ireland. Stretching 42 km from Westport to Achill. Maybe Burrishoole Abbey and Rockfleet Castle will draw your attention both are steeped in history and have strong family ties to Grainuaile (Grace O'Malley), they are still standing and look over Clew Bay in a majestic manor. Or perhaps you will want to take a ferry to Clare Island, the largest of Clew Bay's Islands. Clare Island has been inhabited for 5,000 years. It boasts dramatic coastal cliffs and spectacular views of the surrounding bay. Ferry services from Roonagh Pier take 15 minutes. A notable site on the island is Granuaile's Castle, it is said that the Pirate Queen's head is buried near this castle. Maybe you will visit Westport House here you will step back into the 18th century with a visit to the home of Grace O'Malley. The house was designed by the famous architects Richard Cassels and James Wyatt in the 18th Century and enjoys a superb parkland setting with lake, terraces, wonderful grounds, and magnificent views overlooking Clew Bay, the Atlantic Ocean, Achill, Clare Island and Ireland's holy mountain, Croagh Patrick. There are opportunities to enjoy art, activity, history, and culture in this beautiful historic house showcasing with over 30 rooms open to the public with original antiques, architecture and artwork. Dinner is on your own this evening, and Ellen, David and John will be playing nearby later.
- Day 5:  
Thursday, Sept 17
- After breakfast we will depart the hotel bound for counties Sligo and Donegal. Our first stop on the way will be the Country Life Museum, the only National Museum outside of Dublin. The award-winning Museum is all about discovering the story of Irish country life between 1850 and 1950; find out about the lives of our very recent ancestors through agriculture, fishing and hunting, clothing and textiles, furniture and fittings, trades and crafts, transport, calendar customs, leisure, and religion. Also on the grounds are the historic Turlough House and its historic gardens. Then we are off for the town of Sligo. Sligo, (in Gaelic meaning "abundance of shells") which has been an important site since the earliest times of man. The city was the port which provided escape to many

of those suffering from the famine. It is also the home of many literary greats, including Yeats. After some free time in the city for shopping and lunch, we will embark on the last leg of the day, arriving in the town of Donegal. Donegal Town is a vibrant, historic hub located in South Co. Donegal, at the mouth of Donegal Bay and the foot of the Bluestack Mountains. Known for its scenic harbor, the iconic 15th-century Donegal Castle, and the central triangular "Diamond," it serves as a premier stop on the Wild Atlantic Way. Our home here will be the Mill Park Hotel. Dinner will be at the hotel this evening and the town is a short 10–15 minute walk.

Day 6:  
Friday, Sept 18

After hotel breakfast we are off to see the cliffs of Slieve League. Slieve League (Sliabh Liag) Cliffs in Co. Donegal are among the highest sea cliffs in Europe, plunging nearly 600 meters (1,969 ft) into the Atlantic, roughly three times higher than the Cliffs of Moher. Known for dramatic, rugged scenery, they offer panoramic views of Donegal Bay. We will go to go to the Slieve League Center for some info on the wildlife, local history and heritage and we will board shuttle busses for a ride to the viewing point. Afterwards you can get lunch at the Tí Linn Cafe and warm up over a pot of tea and a bowl of locally sourced Donegal chowder. Slieve League Cliffs Centre is a family owned business run by the Mulherns. After lunch we are off to the town of Ardara. Ardara has been long associated with the tweed and knitwear industries. From the 1870's this trade became a cottage industry with home spun and hand dyed woollen and tweed items being created. The Ardara Heritage Centre, formally the town Courthouse, profiles the development of the tweed industry. The famine cleared millions of people from the Irish landscape. In an attempt to improve the lot of the people of southwest Donegal, the Donegal industries Fund was started with a grant from the English Parliament, promoting local crafts and skills which could improve the economy of the area. In 1893 an improvement scheme was started in Ardara, to help to make the production of Donegal Homespun into a marketable commodity. Improved methods of yarn spinning, hand weaving and inspection of the finished tweed soon elevated Donegal Homespun to the International Fashion markets of the world. This was a very successful Enterprise for the Ardara area and every second home in the parish had a hand weaver working. The tweed was exported by local firms Molloy & Company, Mc Nelis & Company and Magee & Company. We will visit a weaver and see how the tweed is made. We return to the hotel for dinner. You can visit Magee in Donegal town for fine tweed products.

Day 7:  
Saturday, Sept 19

After breakfast at the hotel we travel east and enter the UK for the first time and Co. Tyrone. Our destination is the Ulster American Folk Park. Established in 1976, Ulster American Folk Park tells the story of Irish emigration to North America over two centuries. Comprising of over 30 original buildings lovingly moved and restored in situ from across Ulster and North America to create the journey through time and locations, including a full-size replica of a migrant ship marking the crossing between the Old and New Worlds. The Park was originally developed around the Mellon House, the birthplace of Thomas Mellon, the founding father of the Mellon banking dynasty. Experience live interpretation across the site including demonstrations of heritage crafts skills such as linen weaving, blacksmithing, candle-making, printing and open-hearth cooking. We will have tour guides in period dress take us from the rural countryside of Ireland to America all in a few hours. We will then travel to the town of Omagh for lunch. Omagh, is a historic market town known for its scenic location near the Sperrin Mountains, and a vibrant town center. With a population of over 20,000, it offers rich cultural history, traditional pubs, and a welcoming atmosphere. It is also our first stop involving the troubles. A car bombing took place in the town on 15 August 1998. It was carried out by a splinter group who opposed the ceasefire and the Good Friday Agreement, signed earlier in the year. The bombing killed 29 people and injured about 220 others, making it the deadliest incident of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and the second deadliest incident of the conflict. We return to the hotel for dinner this evening.

Day 8:  
Sunday, Sept 20

We check out of the hotel following breakfast and start our jam-packed journey for a Sunday. Our first stop is Derry, the second-largest city in Northern Ireland. Located in Co. Derry, the city now covers both banks of the River Foyle. Cityside and the old walled city are on the west bank and Waterside is on the east, with two road bridges and one footbridge crossing the river in-between, known as the peace bridge. The Battle of the Bogside was a large three-day riot that took place from 12 to 14 August 1969 and is generally thought to be the start of the Troubles. Derry was also the site of Bloody Sunday, or the Bogside Massacre, occurring on 30 January 1972 when British soldiers shot 26 unarmed civilians during a protest march in the Bogside area of Derry. We will pass through the bogside area and view the large number of murals which depict famous events of the troubles. We will visit the statue called "Hands across the Divide" as well as the Derry Girl Mural. Derry Girls is a TV comedy following a group of teenage girls in the final years of the Troubles. Next, we are in for lunch and a show. We will visit the Glenshane Family Farm where the family will treat you to soup and sandwiches and an amazing sheep herding demonstration. Glenshane Farm is a working sheep farm owned by James McCloy. Four generations of James's family have been sheep farmers, each

more determined than the last to preserve the epic landscape around them. Smart, skilled and very sweet - Moss, Tess and Jess show the sheep who is boss. Final stop for the day will be the Seamus Heaney Homeplace in Bellaghy. Seamus Heaney Homeplace takes you on an inspiring journey through the life and work of one of Ireland's greatest writers. It's a place where you can sense the warmth of Heaney's relationships with local people and landscapes, where you can immerse yourself in the Nobel Laureate's literature. If you think you don't enjoy poetry this place may just change your mind. Finally, we arrive at the Europa Hotel in Belfast, our home for the next four nights. Dinner is at the hotel this evening. You will sleep soundly knowing you are staying at the most bombed hotel in Europe.

- Day 9:  
Monday, Sept 21
- After our breakfast at the Europa, we will spend the day in Belfast starting with a drive around town. We will cover the famous peace wall. Belfast's peace walls are a series of, now mostly permanent, separation barriers built from 1969 onwards to divide Nationalist/Catholic and Unionist/Protestant communities during "The Troubles." There are around 100 barriers stretching 21 miles, with major walls still standing, such as at Falls Road and Shankill Road. They are now significant tourist attractions featuring murals and messages of peace. Then we are off to the *Titanic* Slipways, the Harland & Wolff Drawing Offices and Hamilton Graving Dock – the very place where *Titanic* was designed, built and launched. Titanic Belfast tells the story of *Titanic* from her conception, through her construction and launch, to her maiden voyage and subsequent place in history. The immense museum contains nine interpretative and interactive galleries, covering the following themes: *Boomtown Belfast*, *The Shipyard* which includes a ride, *The Launch*, *The Fit-Out*, *The Maiden Voyage*, *The Sinking*, *The Aftermath*, *Myths & Legends*, and *Titanic Beneath* in the cold and dark basement you will think you are on the bottom looking at the wreck. There are a number of places to get a snack or lunch today. Next, we are off to North Belfast. McConnell's Distillery has transformed the old Victorian Crumlin Road Gaol into a modern world class distillery to bring distilling back to the heart of Belfast. A 'must see' for visitors to the city. Come learn more about Belfast's celebrated whisky past and taste award-winning whisky. Dinner will be at the hotel tonight and don't forget to experience The Crown Liquor Saloon, located right across the street from our hotel, is a world-renowned Victorian gin palace built in 1826 and famed for its elaborate, ornate interior.
- Day 10:  
Tuesday, Sept 22  
**FREE DAY!**
- After breakfast at the hotel, the remainder of the day is yours to enjoy on your own. If murals are your thing, one of the best ways to see Belfast's famous wall art is to sign up for a Black Taxi Tour. Knowledgeable drivers supply an informative history lesson peppered with local tidbits, which reflects on both the city's intrinsic traditions and tells the story of the Troubles. The Ulster Museum and Botanic gardens are a must. The City Hall is practically next door and has beautiful stained-glass window. Or you can return to the Crumlin Road Gaol and see things we missed like the flogging and execution rooms...they also have a paranormal tour. If you like Game of Thrones, you can book a tour downtown. There are restaurants and shopping all near the hotel and don't forget the traditional music scene as well. Dinner is on your own this evening.
- Day 11:  
Wednesday, Sept 23
- At breakfast this morning, don't forget to try some Bushmills Whiskey on your porridge, a tradition in the north. Today we are off for the Giant's Causeway along the north coast. Formed by volcanic activity over 60 million years ago, the Giant's Causeway is made up of over 40,000 perfectly shaped basalt columns. Legend has it the stones were part of a pathway built by Finn McCool, the Irish giant, to face his Scottish rival in battle. You can explore the story and the landscape through interactive exhibitions at the Visitor Centre, guided tours and stunning coastal walking trails. There is a shuttle available for a nominal price and the center is a nice place to get a snack. Afterwards, we will travel along the coast to Portrush. Portrush is a vibrant seaside resort town located on a mile-long peninsula in County Antrim, Northern Ireland, renowned for its golden beaches and world-class golf at Royal Portrush. Back to the hotel for dinner tonight.
- Day 12:  
Thursday, Sept 24
- After breakfast, we depart at 8:30 am for Dublin Airport. Enjoy last minute shopping at Dublin's Duty-Free Shop. Our Aer Lingus Flight EI 131 departs at 2:10 pm, arriving in Hartford Airport at 4:30 pm local time. We will arrive by coach back at the ICC in West Springfield in the early evening.

**The ICC reserves the right to make changes to the itinerary as needed, due to weather or other circumstances.**

**For more information or to make reservations please contact:  
Ellen Redman at [ellen.redman1@gmail.com](mailto:ellen.redman1@gmail.com) / 617-515-3510**

**Irish Cultural Center of Western New England / [www.iccwne.org](http://www.iccwne.org)**