



# Ireland



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## PLAN YOUR TRIP

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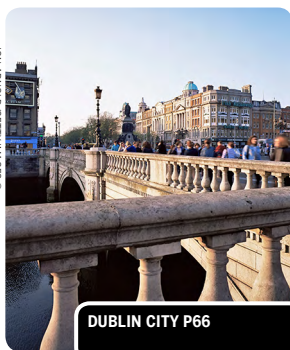
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**Brú na Bóinne.....**

**Belfast Murals .....**

**Causeway Coast.....**

# Welcome to Ireland

*Ireland, a small island with a memorable punch, has breathtaking landscapes and friendly, welcoming people, that will leave visitors floored but looking for more.*

## Ireland of the Postcard

Everything you've heard is true: Ireland is a stunner. The locals need little prodding to proclaim theirs the most beautiful land in the world, and can support their claim with many examples. Everyone will argue over the must-sees, but you can't go wrong if you put the brooding loneliness of Connemara, the dramatic wildness of Donegal, the majestic mountains of Mourne, the world-famous scenery of counties Kerry and Cork, and the celebrated Causeway Coast in Northern Ireland on your to-visit list.

## Tread Softly...

History is everywhere, from the breathtaking monuments of prehistoric Ireland at Brú na Bóinne, Sleat Head in Kerry and Carrowmore in Sligo, to the fabulous ruins of Ireland's rich monastic past at Glendalough, Clonmacnoise and Cashel. More recent history is visible in the Titanic Experience in Cobh and the forbidding Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin. And there's history so young that it's still considered the present, best experienced on a black-taxi tour of West Belfast or an examination of Derry's colourful political murals.

## A Cultural Well

It's become almost trite to declare that Ireland operates a cultural surplus. Its main strengths are literature and music, where Ireland has long punched above its weight, but it is well represented in most other fields, too. Wherever you go you will discover an abundance of cultural expression. You can attend a play by a literary great in Dublin, toe-tap your way through a traditional-music session in a west-of-Ireland pub, or get your EDM on at a club in Belfast. The Irish summer is awash with festivals celebrating everything from flowers in bloom to high literature.

## Tá Fáilte Romhat

On the plane and along your travels you might hear it said: *tá Fáilte romhat* (taw fall-cha row-at) – you're very welcome. Or, more famously, *céad míle fáilte* (kade meela fall-cha) – a hundred thousand welcomes. Irish friendliness is an oversimplification of a character that is infinitely complex, but the Irish are nonetheless genuinely warm and welcoming, and there are few more enjoyable ways of gaining a greater understanding of the island's inhabitants than a chat with a local.



## Why I Love Ireland

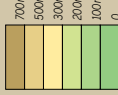
By Fionn Davenport, Writer

I have always cherished Ireland's unvarnished informality, whose primary measure is friendliness. It's the casual encounters that spark conversation; the unprompted offers of assistance to those who appear lost or in need of help; the warm welcome that most visitors are greeted with. Whether you're north or south, in Dublin or in the deepest countryside, Irish informality dictates that your comfort trumps other social conventions. Cross an Irish hearth and straight away you'll most likely be offered tea...or something stronger. Don't even think about refusing.

**For more about our writers, see p736**

# Ireland

## ELEVATION



### Wild Atlantic Way

Coves, cliffs and stunning scenery (p55)

### Derry (Londonderry)

Walled city featuring music and art (p617)

### Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery

Stone Age monuments (p451)

### Causeway Coast

Fitting backdrop for *Game of Thrones* (p639)

### Titanic Belfast

Museum of the world's most famous ship (p564)

### Connemara

Brooding and beautiful landscape (p408)

### Brú na Bóinne

Outstanding Neolithic passage tombs (p524)



### Galway City

City that epitomises Irish hedonism (p383)

### Clare Coast

Iconic cliffs and surf beaches (p356)

### Dingle

Beautiful, Irish-speaking fishing town (p304)

### Ring of Kerry

Ireland's most famous panoramic loop (p287)

**Dublin**  
Pulsating and manageable capital city (p66)

**Glendalough**  
Ancient monastic site in stunning setting (p155)

**Kilkenny City**  
A regal medieval city (p211)

**Rock of Cashel**  
Breath-taking ancient fortress atop rock (p336)

**Cork City**  
Superb restaurants in Ireland's second city (p223)



# Itineraries



## Iconic Ireland

This 300km tourist trail takes you past some of Ireland's most famous attractions and through spectacular countryside.

Start with a whistle-stop tour of **Dublin**, including visits to Trinity College and the Book of Kells, then enjoy a sample of Guinness in its home town. The next day head west to **Galway**, from where you should take a drive through stunning, brooding **Connemara National Park** (which can be driven in a nice loop) before heading south through the moonlike landscape of **The Burren**. Take a detour to the **Cliffs of Moher**, then head to **Ennis**, a good spot to enjoy a bit of traditional Irish music. Keep going south through **Connor Pass** into County Kerry, stopping for a half-day in **Dingle**, then set out to visit its peninsula, taking in the views and prehistoric monuments of **Slea Head**. Via the ferry, continue on to **Killarney**, the perfect base from which to explore the famous **Ring of Kerry**, a much-trafficked 179km loop around the Iveragh Peninsula.



## Best of the West

The west of Ireland is where you'll find the best scenery and the best traditional music pubs.

Start in County Sligo, where prehistory and panorama combine to wonderful effect at **Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery**. Wind your way south along the coast, stopping at some of Ireland's best surf beaches such as **Strandhill** and Enniscrone. Continue south to the pub-packed heritage town of **Westport**. Southwest of here is magnificent **Croagh Patrick**, worth a climb if only to feast your eyes on island-studded Clew Bay from a height. Go west to Louisburgh, from where you can head offshore to craggy **Clare Island** (home of the pirate queen Grace O'Malley), before turning south along the beautiful Doolough Valley to **Leenane**, situated on Ireland's only fjord. This is the northern gateway to **Connemara National Park**, which you can explore via the beautiful coastal route, passing Kylemore Abbey, venturing onto Clifden's scenic Sky Road and then winding your way around the coast through pretty **Roundstone**. Alternatively you could savour the stunning wilderness of the inland route to **Galway**, where you should devote at least a day to exploring the city's colourful streets and wonderful pubs.

South of Galway the fishing villages of **Kinvara** and **Ballyvaughan** are at the edge of the strange, karst landscape of **The Burren**, home to all manner of flora and fauna, as well as big-ticket attractions such as the ancient **Aillwee Cave** and the **Cliffs of Moher**. Going south sample some of Ireland's traditional music by attending a session in one of the pubs in **Miltown Malbay**. Beach lovers should also stop in **Kilkee**, a favourite with surfers.

The easiest way to cross into County Kerry is via the ferry at Killimer. Take a day to explore the **Dingle Peninsula** with its rich menu of ancient sites and stunning views, before overnighting in **Dingle** – one of the prettiest towns along the entire west coast. Take another day to explore the world-famous **Ring of Kerry**, ending in **Killarney National Park**, right on the edge of **Killarney** itself. Take the scenic route across the middle of the **Beara Peninsula** and make your way to the Italianate **Ilnacullin** with its exotic flowers. Then follow the coast through Castletownshend and the fishing village of **Union Hall** to the city of **Cork**.

3  
WEEKS**Coastal Tour**

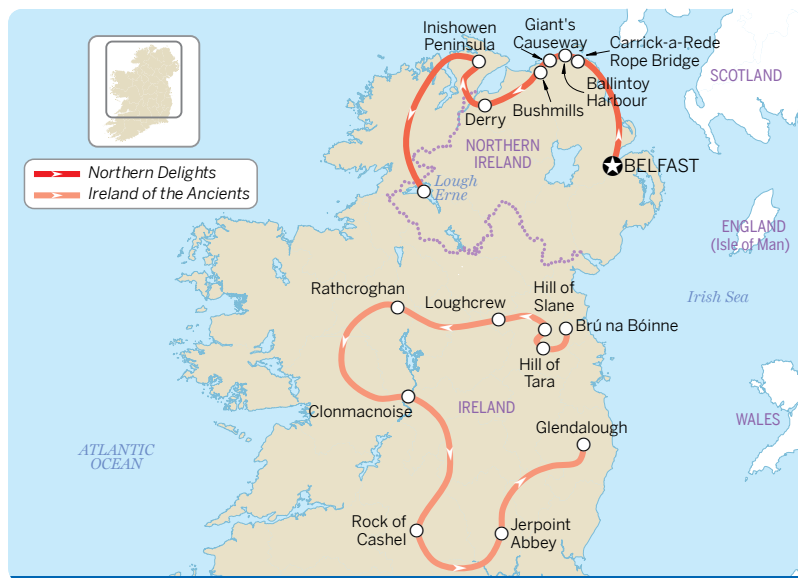
This round-the-island tour takes in some of Ireland's scenic and heritage highlights.

Start in **Dublin**, then head north to the Neolithic necropolis at **Brú na Bóinne**. Continue on to the atmospheric **Old Mellifont Abbey** before crossing the border and heading to **Belfast**. Go along the Antrim coast to the **Giant's Causeway**. Continue around the coastline and head into Sligo to climb the Stone Age passage grave at **Carrowkeel** for views of Lough Arrow. Make your way to the southwest via **Connemara National Park**, one of Ireland's scenic highlights. Wonder at **The Burren** and check out traditional music in **Doolin** before delving into the music, scenery and heritage on the **Dingle Peninsula**. Explore the scenic wonderland of the **Ring of Kerry**. Discover more gorgeous landscapes on the **Beara Peninsula**, then visit Ireland's second city, **Cork**. Become acquainted with seaside **Ardmore**. Visit **Dungarvan** and its castle, and the Museum of Treasures in **Waterford**. Go through medieval **Kilkenny** and then check out handsome **Castletown House** in County Kildare. Cut east to see the monastic site at **Glendalough**. Finally, head back to Dublin.

2  
WEEKS**Tip to Toe**

The full range of Ireland – from north to south – is on the menu in this itinerary.

Begin in Northern Ireland's second city, **Derry**, walking the city walls and exploring the Bogside district. Then cross into County Donegal and explore the **Inishowen Peninsula** before overnighing in **Dunfanaghy**. As you move down the coastline, visit the monastic ruins of **Glencolumbkille** and the sea cliffs at **Sliabh Liag**. Cross into County Sligo and visit the **Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery**. The next day treat yourself to a round of golf at the County Sligo Golf Course at **Rosses Point**, or a seaweed bath in **Enniscrone**. You'll skirt the eastern edge of **Connemara National Park** as you travel south to **Galway**, from where you should strike out for **Clonmacnoise**. Move through the heart of the Midlands to another monastic gem, the **Rock of Cashel**. Medieval **Kilkenny** is only an hour away – visit its stunning castle before exploring nearby **Thomastown** and Jerpoint Abbey. Using **Wexford** as a base, explore **Curraclloe Beach** and visit **Enniscorthy** and the excellent National 1798 Rebellion Centre. Or you could chill out and watch the fishermen draw in their lines in **Kilmore Quay**.

1  
WEEK

## Northern Delights

Explore the gorgeous landscapes and discover the fascinating history of this much-misunderstood province.

Start in **Belfast**, where you should visit Titanic Belfast and take a black-taxi tour, before heading north towards the Antrim Coast and the **Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge**. Head west towards the World Heritage-listed **Giant's Causeway**, a highlight of any trip to Northern Ireland; along the way, *Game of Thrones* fans can check out **Ballintoy Harbour**, which stood in for the Iron Islands' Lordsport Harbour in the TV series. The causeway coast finishes in the fascinating village of **Bushmills**, home to the famous distillery. **Derry** is worth a day – walk the city's walls and explore its more recent past in the Bogside district, and then cross the invisible border into the Republic by visiting the **Inishowen Peninsula** in County Donegal. Back in the North, finish your visit in **Lough Erne**, taking in White Island and the carved stones of Devenish Island.

1  
WEEK

## Ireland of the Ancients

The majesty and mystery of Ireland's ancient history are yours to discover on this route.

Begin at the stunning Neolithic tombs of Newgrange and Knowth in County Meath, in the heart of **Brú na Bóinne**. Nearby stand at the top of the celebrated **Hill of Tara**, a site of immense folkloric significance and seat of the high kings of Ireland until the 11th century. Across the plain is the **Hill of Slane**, where St Patrick lit a fire in 433 to proclaim Christianity throughout the land. To the west is the Neolithic monument of **Loughcrew**, a quieter alternative to Brú na Bóinne. Keep going west to County Roscommon. Just outside Tulsk village is **Rathcroghan**, the most important Celtic site in Europe. Head south to **Clonmacnoise**, the 6th-century monastic site in County Offaly, then continue through the heart of the country to the impressive **Rock of Cashel** in County Tipperary. Turn east and head through County Kilkenny, stopping at the Cistercian Jerpoint Abbey in the pretty village of **Thomastown**. From here travel northeast to Wicklow and magnificent **Glendalough**, where the substantial remains of a monastic settlement linger by two beautiful lakes.

# Behind the Scenes

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## Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

## Activities, Courses & Tours

- Body surfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

## Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

## Eating

- Eating

## Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

## Entertainment

- Entertainment

## Shopping

- Shopping

## Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

## Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

## Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

## Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- S-Bahn/Subway station
- Taxi
- T-bane/Tunnelbana station
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- U-Bahn/Underground station
- Other Transport

## Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

## Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

## Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

## Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



### **Belinda Dixon**

**Counties Mayo & Sligo; County Clare; County Galway** Only happy when her feet are suitably sandy, Belinda has been (gleefully) travelling, researching and writing for Lonely Planet since 2006. It's seen her navigating mountain passes and soaking in hot-pots in Iceland's Westfjords, marvelling at Stonehenge at sunrise; scrambling up Italian mountain paths; horse riding across Donegal's golden sands; gazing at Verona's frescoes; and fossil hunting on

Dorset's Jurassic Coast. Then there's the food and drink: truffled mushroom pasta in Salo; whisky in Aberdeen, Balti in Birmingham, grilled fish in Dartmouth; wine in Bardolino. And all in the name of research. Belinda is also a podcaster and adventure writer and helps lead wilderness expeditions. See her blog posts at <https://belindadixon.com>.

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**Counties Meath, Louth, Cavan and Monaghan; the Midlands; Counties Wicklow and Kildare; Counties Wexford, Waterford, Carlow and Kilkenny** Catherine's wanderlust kicked in when she roadtripped across Europe from her Parisian base aged four, and she's been hitting the road at every opportunity since, travelling to some 60 countries and completing her Doctorate of Creative Arts in Writing, Masters in Professional Writing, and postgrad qualifications in Editing and Publishing along the way. Over the past decade-

and-a-half she's written scores of Lonely Planet guides and articles covering Paris, France, Europe and far beyond. Her work has also appeared in numerous online and print publications. Topping Catherine's list of travel tips is to travel without any expectations.



## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Neil Wilson

**Counties Limerick & Tipperary; County Cork; County Kerry** Neil was born in Scotland and has lived there most of his life. Based in Perthshire, he has been a full-time writer since 1988, working on more than 80 guidebooks for various publishers, including the Lonely Planet guides to Scotland, England, Ireland and Prague. He has climbed and tramped in four continents, including ascents of Jebel Toubkal in Morocco, Mount Kinabalu in Borneo, the Old Man of Hoy in

Scotland's Orkney Islands and the Northwest Face of Half Dome in California's Yosemite Valley. Like most Lonely Planet writers, Neil fell into the guidebook-writing business by accident. He began by producing articles for a Scottish magazine, but was soon off to photograph Corfu for a guidebook. Neil also contributed to the Plan, Understand and Survival Guide chapters.

### Isabel Albiston



**Belfast; Counties Down & Armagh, Counties Derry & Antrim; Counties Fermanagh & Tyrone; County Donegal** After six years working for the *Daily Telegraph* in London, Isabel left to spend more time on the road. A job as writer for a magazine in Sydney, Australia was followed by a four-month overland trip across Asia and five years living and working in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Isabel started writing for Lonely Planet in 2014 and has contributed to 12 guidebooks. She's currently based in Ireland. Isabel also contributed to the Plan, Understand and

Survival Guide chapters.

### Fionn Davenport



**Dublin** Irish by birth and conviction, Fionn has spent the last two decades focusing on the country of his birth and its nearest neighbour, England, which he has written about extensively for Lonely Planet and others. In between writing gigs he's lived in Paris and New York, where he was an editor, actor, bartender and whatever else paid the rent. He moved to Manchester a few years ago where he lives with his wife, Laura, but he commutes back and forth to Dublin, only 40 minutes away. He posts his travel shots on instagram – @fionndavenport. Fionn

also contributed to the Plan, Understand and Survival Guide chapters.

OVER MORE  
PAGE WRITERS

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