

* September Tour of Ireland / September 2–13, 2020 *

The Sights and Sounds of Western Ireland: Connemara, Mayo and Galway

*The Irish Cultural Center's John Tabb and Ellen Redman
host this musical trip! Please join us!*



Tour the wild and beautiful West Coast of Ireland! Embrace Ireland's distinctive culture, music, dance and poetry in County Mayo, the Connemara region, and Galway, on a leisurely paced late summer tour through gorgeous countryside, charming towns, and bustling cities. Enjoy summer weather without the usual crowds. Early September temperatures rival those of July and it's the driest month. Multiple night stays in Westport, Clifden and Galway allow you to immerse yourself in the beauty, hospitality, music, and culture of Ireland's Historic West Coast Towns.

Total Cost: \$3,295 per person / double room occupancy; \$3,850 single room occupancy (limited availability)

What You Need To Do! Deposits, Payments and Application:

- **Initial Deposit:** \$1,500 to reserve your seat on the trip (see forms of payment on page 4).
Tour is limited (42 passengers inc. 6 singles) and will be filled on a **first come, first serve basis**.
- **Application:** Your Initial Deposit must accompany a **completed reservation application** and **copy of your passport**.
- **Final Payment Due:** May 1, 2020. Balance due: \$1,795 per person / double room occupancy; \$2,350 single room.
- **Travel Insurance:** Information available upon request.

The Irish Cultural Center Tour Includes:

- Round trip bus coach transportation from the Irish Cultural Center to Boston's Logan Airport, including driver's tip
- Round trip airfare from Boston to Shannon, Ireland via Aer Lingus
- Ten (10) Nights Top Rated Hotel Accommodations
 - **Station House Hotel**, Clifden, Co. Galway: www.clifdenstationhouse.com
 - **Hotel Westport**, Westport, Co. Mayo: www.hotelwestport.ie
 - **Meyrick Hotel**, Galway, Co. Galway: www.hotelmeyrick.ie
- Full Breakfast and Dinner Meals included
 - Full Irish breakfast daily, including day of arrival at Temple Gate Hotel, Ennis
 - Seven (7) dinners
- Admission to: Kylemore Abbey, Killary Fjord Boat Tour, Westport House and Falconry Show, The Country Life National Museum of Ireland, The Yeats Experience in Co. Sligo, Knock Shrine, the Connemara Experience at Cnoc Suain, Galway Museum, Corrib River and Lake Cruise (including Irish Dance and Whiskey demonstration), Burren Center and the Cliffs of Moher. Traditional music concerts in Mayo and Galway, visits to the cities of Ennis (Co. Clare) and Sligo (Co. Sligo)
- Optional traditional music sessions at hotels and assorted pubs in each city
- Deluxe touring motor coach for all transportation and sightseeing with the services of a professional Irish driver/guide
- Portage of one (1) suitcase per person
- Tips & taxes while in Ireland (Note: Gratuity to the driver/guide in Ireland is included in tour cost)

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

Trip Details and Itinerary

- Day 1:
Wednesday, Sept. 2 Depart by coach from the Irish Cultural Center in West Springfield, MA to Boston's Logan Airport. Leave Logan at 7:20 pm aboard Aer Lingus Flight EI 134.
- Day 2:
Thursday, Sept. 3 Arrive at Shannon Airport at 6:20 am local Irish time. Board bus coach for land transportation. 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 Clifden, stopping in An Spidal, Co. Galway, to stretch your legs. Arrive at Station House Hotel around 1:30 pm. We will conduct a short walk to familiarize you with the town upon our arrival. Unpack and relax or freshen up before a welcome get-together drink in the Signal Bar along with traditional music at 6:00 pm followed by dinner at 7:00 pm in the Station House restaurant. Ellen and John will be participating in a traditional music session this evening if you (or they) have any energy left.
- Day 3:
Friday, Sept. 4 After breakfast this morning, the bus will depart at 9:30 am and head to 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! Enjoy wholesome food and delicious home-baking in the Café or Garden Tea House. Browse the shop for unique gifts including Kylemore Abbey Pottery and award-winning chocolates handmade by the Benedictine nuns. The ride to and from the abbey will provide you with views of Connemara, which is renowned for its picturesque setting and beautiful scenery. There are scenic mountains, expanses of bogs, heaths, grasslands and woodlands. Connemara has been chosen as the site for many famous movies as well as several Irish TV shows. We will return mid-afternoon so you can enjoy the picturesque town of Clifden. Enjoy dinner at the hotel tonight and some wonderful craic at one of the local pubs.
- Day 4:
Saturday, Sept. 5 After our Station House breakfast, we will begin our journey to Westport and County Mayo. 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 Maam Turk 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 lunch or snack on the ride back at the wonderful onboard galley. Next on our agenda is 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 to the Hotel Westport where we will enjoy dinner this evening. Matt Molloy, one of the amazing members of The Chieftains and the Bothy Band, owns a world-famous music pub in town. Be sure to check it out.
- Day 5:
Sunday, Sept. 6 After breakfast at Hotel Westport, we are off to Achill Island. First inhabited 5,000 years ago, Achill Island is the largest of all islands off the coast of Ireland and is accessible by bridge. With majestic mountains, breath-taking landscapes and miles of unspoiled Blue Flag beaches, Achill Island is a paradise for lovers of outdoor pursuits, and history lovers will find the imprint of past generations in everything on Achill Island, from megalithic tombs to ancient forts, and historic churches to deserted villages, including the famous site of the Deserted Village. These crumbling stones are all that remains of more than 80 houses that were abandoned in 1845 due to the famine. Visitors can explore the homes, as they are open to the public. You can have lunch while we are on the island at one of the beachside pubs. We will return to Westport and enjoy a tour of Westport House. Here we 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. Also we will enjoy a

show about falconry and learn all about these amazing birds – owls, falcons and maybe even an eagle – and their flying and hunting habits. Watch them fly overhead and perhaps get your picture taken with them. Then we are back to the hotel for dinner and a traditional music concert featuring an All-Ireland champion harpist.

Day 6:
Monday, Sept. 7

After our hotel breakfast we are off to Co. Sligo. The ride will take us along some of the most beautiful scenery available on the Wild Atlantic Way. We will stop in the City of 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 Yeats Experience. The president of the William Butler Yeats Society will board the bus and guide us through the surrounding countryside which provided the backdrop for so many of the poems and fairy stories penned by Yeats. We will learn about the man, the country and the poetry that influenced him and why poetry is such an important part of the Irish culture. After our visit in Sligo we head back for dinner at the Westport Hotel. Enjoy some tunes at one of the local pubs with Ellen and John.

Day 7:
Tuesday, Sept. 8
FREE DAY!

After the hotel breakfast the rest of the day is available for you to enjoy. Perhaps you may travel to Croagh 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 Burren 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 the 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 Grainuaile’s Castle; it is said that the Pirate Queen’s head is buried near this castle. Dinner is on your own this evening, and Ellen and John will be playing nearby later.

Day 8:
Wednesday, Sept. 9

After breakfast, we will depart the hotel bound for Galway. Our first stop on the way will be the famous Knock Shrine, which is a pilgrimage site in the village of Knock, Co. Mayo. It is stated that as many as 25 observers saw an apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, Saint John the Evangelist, several angels and a lamb meant to signify Jesus in the year 1879. The site holds the original church, the new and majestic Basilica, and a museum depicting life in the year of the apparition. You can have a snack or lunch during our stop. Then we are off for the Connemara Experience at Cnoc Suian. Our destination will be a beautifully restored hill village that sits on layers of Irish history; Cnoc Suian offers a thorough immersion into local culture. The group will split into two, each experiencing an intimate setting where we will learn about the vibrant living culture; customs and practices, the Irish Gaelic language, uses of wild herbs and seaweeds and a demonstration of brown soda bread baking on a fire and insights into the wild Connemara landscape, explaining the roles of peat/turf in the culture, and end in strange tales of bog bodies and bog pools! The groups will then combine and enjoy music, dance and fun in the Meeting House - live traditional music and song with guests taking to the floor for an Irish Céilí (folk) group dance. Then we are off to the Meyrick Hotel where we will check in and have dinner this evening. Ellen and John will be playing in one of the many music pubs in this vibrant city.

Day 9:
Thursday, Sept. 10

After breakfast at the Meyrick, the bus will depart (or walk with the hosts) to the Galway museum. This museum covers the history of Galway from prehistoric times to the present. You can view medieval Galway and compare it to the streets you will be walking on today. Features examples of the Galway Hooker – the fishing boats common to the area – as well as the contributions of the people of Galway to the Revolution. When you complete your tour, step outside to view the Spanish Arch built in 1584, and take a walk across the Wolfstone Bridge to see the mouth of the Corrib and climb the Fisheries Watchtower for an even better view. Return to the hotel on your own via the pedestrian walkways of High, Market and Shop street or enjoy lunch downtown in the vicinity of the Spanish Arch. (The walk to the hotel is ½ mile.) The bus will depart the hotel at 3:00 pm and travel to Woodquay in the heart of Galway City for 90-minute guided cruise along the majestic River Corrib and on to Lough Corrib, Ireland’s second largest lake, providing unsurpassed views that make this the most spectacular waterway in Ireland. Our journey will take us past castles and various sites of historical and cultural interest. There will be an Irish Dance demonstration as well as a discussion of Irish Whiskey and demonstration of the perfect Irish Coffee, samples included. The Corrib River cruise is sure to delight! Return to the hotel this evening and again enjoy dinner. Tonight, join Ellen and John at the famous Crane Pub for some tunes.

Day 10:
Friday, Sept. 11

After breakfast at the hotel we depart at 9:00 am and travel south through Co. Clare to visit the Burren region. We will stop at the Burren Center where we will view a film produced and narrated by world renowned environmentalist Mr. Eamonn de Buitlear, introducing the visitor to this unique and fascinating region. Then tour the exhibition area and experience the development of the Burren and its civilization from formation 320 million years ago to how the Burren is today. This unique area is made of limestone and provides habitat for both Arctic Tundra and Mediterranean species as well. Next door you can visit the famous Kilfenora Cathedral and also visit the Kilfenora café and learn about the area's famous Céilí Band. Next we are off to the famous Cliffs of Moher. These spectacular cliffs will take your breath away. See where the puffins nest, O'Brien's tower at the highest point, and the famous sea stack that featured in the movie 'Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince.' When complete we will head for the quaint village of Doolin where you can do a bit of shopping, and enjoy lunch on your own here at one of the many pubs. We then continue along the coast of Clare and stop at St. Bridget's well – said to have miraculous healing powers – before returning to Galway for the evening. Tonight, dinner is on your own and you have a chance to sample one of the many spectacular dining opportunities in the area. John and Ellen will let you know where to find the *craic* if you are at a loose end.

Day 11:
Saturday, Sept. 12
FREE DAY!

After the hotel breakfast the rest of the day is available for you to enjoy. Enjoy a free day in Galway City to shop and independently explore the 'City of the Tribes.' Galway is a delightful city with narrow streets, old stone and wooden shop fronts, bustling restaurants and busy pubs. You may also choose to take a tour to the nearby Aran Islands or visit the village of Cong (home of the 'Quiet Man'), or perhaps take a train to the town of Athlone to visit Ireland's Oldest Pub. Dinner is on your own tonight. We will make recommendations for you to enjoy the amazing restaurants this city has to offer. John and Ellen will be playing tunes at one of the local pubs this evening.

Day 12:
Sunday, Sept. 13

After breakfast, we depart at 8:30 am for Shannon Airport. Enjoy last minute shopping at Shannon's Duty-Free Shop. Our Aer Lingus Flight EI 135 departs at 12:00 pm, arriving in Boston's Logan Airport at 1:50 pm local time. We will arrive by coach back at the ICC in West Springfield in the late afternoon.

Forms of Payment:

- Check: made payable to the Irish Cultural Center or Cash.
Mail payment, Reservation Application and copy of passport to the Irish Cultural Center at 429 Morgan Road, West Springfield, MA 01089.
- Credit Card: visit the September Tour page on our website at www.IrishCenterwne.org to pay online with a credit card through PayPal. A charge of 2.2% plus transaction fee will be added to credit card payments. Mail Reservation Application and copy of passport to the Irish Cultural Center at 429 Morgan Road, West Springfield, MA 01089.
- Patrons in good standing of the Irish Cultural Center are entitled to a refund of €20 to be provided by the tour hosts upon arrival in Ireland.

For more information or reservations:

Email Ellen.Redman1@gmail.com or cobh5@cox.net

Call 617-515-3510 or 413-887-9291 and leave a message

Visit the ICC website at www.irishcenterwne.org or contact the ICC office at 413-333-4951 or irishcenterwne@gmail.com



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