

## **Irish Cultural Center of Western New England**

### **\* October Tour of Ireland / October 17–26, 2024 \***

### **The Sights of Western Ireland – Dingle and Westport**

*Tour the wild and beautiful West Coast of Ireland! Embrace Ireland's distinctive culture, music and history in County Mayo, County Clare and County Kerry, on a leisurely paced fall tour through gorgeous countryside, charming towns, and breathtaking scenery. Multiple night stays in Dingle and Westport allow you to immerse yourself in the beauty, hospitality, music and culture of Ireland's Historic West Coast Towns.*

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**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:  
Thursday, Oct 17                      Depart by coach (approx. 1:30 pm) from the ICC in West Springfield to Boston's Logan Airport. Leave Logan at 6:35 pm aboard Aer Lingus Flight EI 134.
- Day 2:  
Friday, Oct 18                        Arrive at Shannon Airport at 5:35 am local Irish time. Board bus coach for land transportation. Stop at Temple Gate Hotel in Ennis, Co. Clare for tour-sponsored full Irish breakfast. While in Ennis you can tour the Clare County Museum and visit the ATM to get your Euros. We will then leave for Dingle, stopping in Tralee, County Kerry to stretch your legs. Arrive at Dingle Skellig Hotel around 2:00 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 Blasket Bar at 6:00 pm followed by dinner at 7 pm in the Coast Guard restaurant.
- Day 3:  
Saturday, Oct 19                     After Dingle Skellig Hotel breakfast, depart at 9:00 am for tour around the scenic Dingle Peninsula. We will drive past little harbors and wide stretches of sandy beaches, leading southward to Sleah Head. This is the most westerly point in Europe, "Next Parish America," and off this coast many an Armada was lost. The awe-inspiring beauty of this particular area is unmatched. We are off to see how the locals lived during the years of the Famine and also observe sheep herding techniques by a local herder. We will make a stop (weather permitting) to visit an ancient Celtic settlement dating back to 500 B.C. along the Sleah Head drive. We will also enjoy a visit to the Blasket Centre where you will learn about life on the Blasket Islands, inhabited until 1953, and about the families who immigrated directly to Springfield, MA. You are on your own for lunch at the Blasket Centre. We will then visit Kilmalkedar Church, a spectacular early-Christian and medieval ecclesiastical site. See if you can fit through the eye of the needle and guarantee your entry into heaven. Dinner will be at the Dingle Skellig Hotel. Check out the local traditional music scene tonight in town.

- Day 4:  
Sunday, Oct 20  
**FREE DAY!**
- After Dingle Skellig Hotel breakfast, the day is free to relax or explore Dingle and the surrounding area. Tour hosts will provide suggestions to make sure you experience the best of Dingle. You can catch a boat to the Blaskets, visit the penguins and otters at the local Aquarium or stroll around town and enjoy one or more of Dingle's 52 pubs. If you are interested in crystal, go to Sean Daly's crystal store across from St. Mary's Church on Green Street. Sean is a former Waterford Master Cutter who does beautiful work. Your choices are many as you savor your time in this colorful and charming harbor town. Dinner is on your own tonight. Enjoy one of the many fine restaurants in Dingle and sample the local fare. We will be glad to make recommendations. Nelligan's pub or the Little Bridge are great music venues as well as the Dingle Pub owned by world champion dancer David Geaney.
- Day 5:  
Monday Oct 21
- After Dingle Skellig Hotel breakfast, the morning is yours to relax and enjoy the town. Later this morning we will visit the Dingle Distillery around 11:30 am/12:00 pm. See how they make Irish Whiskey as well as their award-winning Gin. This afternoon the group will take a bus ride to the Conor Pass which provides a breathtaking view of Dingle on one side and the Northern side of the peninsula from the other. This has always proven to be a great photo sight and we will probably take a group photo as well. Then we will take a tour of Dingle Bay by boat and learn about the local history and observe wildlife. Dinner will be at the Dingle Skellig Hotel.
- Day 6:  
Tuesday, Oct 22
- After breakfast, we will depart the hotel bound for Westport and County Mayo. We will make a stop at the beautiful village of Adare where you can enjoy the thatched cottages, cathedral and catch a quick bite. Then we are off to the Westport Coastal Hotel in Westport where you can enjoy a walk along the water after unpacking. Dinner this evening at the hotel and be sure and visit Matt Molloy's, the world-famous music pub in town owned by one of the amazing members of The Chieftains and the Bothy Band.
- Day 7:  
Wednesday, Oct 23
- After our breakfast at Westport Hotel, 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 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 in the mid afternoon and dinner will be at the Hotel this evening.
- Day 8:  
Thursday, Oct 24  
**FREE DAY!**
- After the 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, or 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), and they are still standing, looking over Clew Bay in a majestic manner. 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 – check out the local cuisine and fresh seafood in town.

Day 9:  
Friday, Oct 25

After breakfast we are off 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. Then we are off to Cong, the village which was the site for the movie The Quiet Man. We will stop for a bit so you can experience the town. Today's ride will provide you with views of Connemara which is renowned for its picturesque setting and beautiful scenery. There are 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 Westport where you can enjoy dinner at the hotel tonight and some wonderful craic at one of the local pubs.

Day 10:  
Saturday, Oct 26

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 1:45 pm, arriving in Boston's Logan Airport at 3:45 pm local time. We will arrive by coach back at the ICC in West Springfield in the early evening.

**Price per person: \$3,575 (double) or \$4,000 (single) includes airfare, 8 nights lodging, 6 dinners, 9 breakfasts, and all trips, admissions, transfers and gratuities.**

### **For more information or reservations**

Visit the ICC website at [www.irishcenterwne.org](http://www.irishcenterwne.org) or contact:

**Sean Cahillane:** [scahillane2515@gmail.com](mailto:scahillane2515@gmail.com) / 413-348-5849

**Conor Driscoll:** [icceventcoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:icceventcoordinator@gmail.com) / 413-342-4358