

IRELAND TOURS

WICKLOW AND GLENDALOUGH

Monday, August 29th

Today we'll enjoy a wonderful scenic day starting with our drive from Dublin into the heart of Wicklow's stunning countryside

The stops on our tour will include the Powerscourt Estate where we will explore the gardens of the estate including the Italian gardens, Japanese gardens and pet cemetery. This is one of the most visited tourist destinations in Ireland. We will also visit Powerscourt Waterfall, the highest waterfall in Ireland.

We'll visit the pretty Wicklow village of Avoca (where the famous TV show, Ballykissangel was filmed). Leisure time at Avoca (60 minute stop) where you can drop into Fitzgerald's pub for a pint of Guinness. Visit the famous Handweaver's craft shop, considered the oldest weaving mill in Ireland

From there we'll visit the [6th century monastic settlement](#) in Glendalough (105 minute stop). Enjoy a guided tour of this mystical site. See the famous 10th century Round Tower and St Kevin's Kitchen. Enjoy the fresh country air of the Wicklow Mountains. Glendalough is famed for its beautiful scenery and historic monuments, but has also been a centre for pilgrims and visitors from the time of St. Kevin, (from whom the bus service took its name).

This is where St. Kevin, descendent of one of the ruling families in Leinster, founded his monastery in the sixth century. As a boy he studied while in the care of three holy men. During this time he went to Glendalough and lived, we are told, "in the hollow of a tree". He left the valley, only to return later with his small group of monks to found the monastery where, as the earliest versions of his life tell us, "the two clear rivers form a confluence". His fame as a holy man spread and he attracted numerous followers.

The valley of Glendalough contains a series of carved and plain stones and crosses, some of which have marked stations on the pilgrim's route.

COST: WITH BUS, GUIDE AND ADMISSION FEES: \$40

BOYNE VALLEY TOUR

Tuesday, August 30th

Today we will take a tour of Boyne Valley or [Brú na Bóinne](#) in County Meath, a site that is older than England's Stonehenge and Egypt's Giza Pyramids. This Neolithic site of henges, standing stones and burial chambers was built around 3,200 B.C., and is highlighted by several large passage tombs: We will visit Knowth (photo on right) which is a world heritage site and is listed as one the top ten historic sites in Ireland by National Geographic. Check out this [drone video](#).

Knowth consists of one large mound containing two passage tombs surrounded by eighteen smaller mounds. The largest of the



mounds is known as Site 1. This great monument covers about half a hectare (approx. 1.5acre) and is 95m across at its widest point. Around the entrances to the tombs are settings of unusual stones such as quartz, granite and banded stones. Smaller tombs, some of which are connected to the large tomb, cluster around the great mound.

On this tour we will also visit the Bective Abbey - Cistercian abbey founded in 1150. We'll have a photo stop at Trim Castle, enjoy some free time in the small old town of Slane before we take in a visit of Monasterboice where we can see the Round Tower, the magnificent High Crosses and the remains to two churches. The Vikings occupied the site for a period in 968. There are two of the finest High Crosses (Celtic Crosses) in Ireland. **COST WITH BUS, GUIDE AND ADMISSION FEES: \$50**

KILKENNY

Wednesday, August 31st

Once the capital of Ireland in the middle-ages, Kilkenny is renowned for its magnificent Norman Castle dating back to 12th century. With its narrow street and colorful shops and buildings, Kilkenny is unique as a city and a mecca for those who choose to visit. You will have plenty of time to enjoy a pint of Kilkenny in Kilkenny



Kilkenny's rich medieval heritage is evident in the city's treasure trove of historical buildings and landmarks, exemplified by the magnificent Kilkenny Castle. Kilkenny is arguably the pre-eminent medieval city in Ireland, with the current layout of the city clearly grounded in the city's medieval roots.

However, the city's origins predate the medieval landmarks existing today. Saint Canice founded a monastic settlement in Kilkenny in the sixth century, unfortunately the sole remaining landmark from this settlement is the round tower positioned alongside the cathedral.

We also will have reservations to visit the Dunmore Caves. For some cultures, caves are the gateways to the Underworld, while others believed that supernatural beings dwelled in these subterranean areas. Dunmore Cave of Ireland is one such place where stories both of real events and the supernatural can be found.

Dunmore (meaning 'great fort' in Irish) Cave is a limestone cave located about 11 kilometers (6.8 miles) to the north of Kilkenny City, near Castlecomer. Within the cave, there is around 300 meters (99 feet) of known passages and caverns. Dunmore Cave also has its share of fantastical stories. According to a 12th century tale, this cave was the site where Aithbel, an Irish warrior woman, fought and killed a cat-like monster called Luchtigen, the "Lord of the Mice". Another legend relates to the Fairy Floor, an area where there are no fallen stones from the partially collapsed ceiling above. It is said that fairies sweep the stones away so that they may continue with their dancing.

Dunmore Cave is also said to be the hiding place of Dame Alice Kyteler, a 14th century woman who was accused of witchcraft and sentenced to death, but managed to escape. After seeking refuge in Dunmore Cave, it is claimed that Kyteler managed to flee to England.

On this tour we will make visits to Kilkenny Castle, St Canice's Cathedral and the Dunmore caves

COST, WITH BUS, GUIDE AND ENTRY FEES: \$40

SCOTLAND TOURS

EDINBURGH CASTLE

**Friday, September
2nd**

Our hotel is an easy 15 minute walk to this iconic castle which is a must see. We will not need a bus or a guide. I have set up a reservation for our entire group for this morning.

Entrance fee is 16.50 gbp (about \$22) but we will get a 10% discount. [click for more info](#). I will collect the fee for this tour the day of.



ST ANDREWS & THE HIGHLANDS

Saturday, September 3rd



Today we will visit Highlands, featuring Scotland's most characteristic and romantic scenery.

Visit the university town of St Andrews on this private trip. Famous for being the 'home of golf,' St Andrews is known for attractions like the Old Course and Swilcan Bridge, part of St Andrews' prestigious golf legacy and not to be missed. which you'll see on this tour with a private guide. Walk around town and enjoy time to buy lunch and shop a bit, if you like.

We are setting up options to play a round on the [Putting Club Course](#), probably better known to visitors from around the world as **The Himalayas** which is an apt description for this unique facility found in St Andrews, the home of golf. We are also setting up a [50 minute guided walk](#) of the Old Course. There is the option to have your photo taken on the Swilcan

Bridge. You can also visit the British Golf Museum or the Castle ruins and Cathedral (own expense). Before stopping at the Old Course you will be given a short driven tour around St Andrews to get your bearings. For those not interested in Old Course there is an option to stay in town and shop.

From there we will venture further into the highlands with a visit to [Glamis Castle](#). Glamis has been the family home of the Earls of Strathmore since 1372 when Sir John Lyon was granted the thaneage by King Robert II. In 1376 Sir John married the King's daughter and since then Glamis has been visited and lived in by many members of the Scottish and British Royal Families. The present owner is Simon Patrick Bowes Lyon, 19th Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne who succeeded his late father on the 27th of February 2016. The castle is famed as being the childhood home of [Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother](#), birthplace of HRH The Princess Margaret and the setting for Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. It is situated in the fertile valley of Strathmore, only 5 miles from Forfar and 12 miles from Dundee.

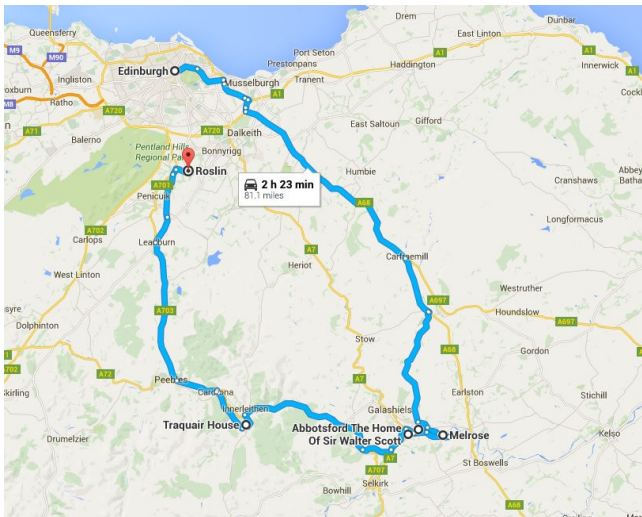


COST: With bus, guide and golf tour and whiskey tour: \$65. Deduct \$13 without the St. Andrews Golf Tour

SCOTTISH BORDERS

Sunday, September 4th

Journey through the majestic Scottish Lowlands on this 7.5-hour tour that will

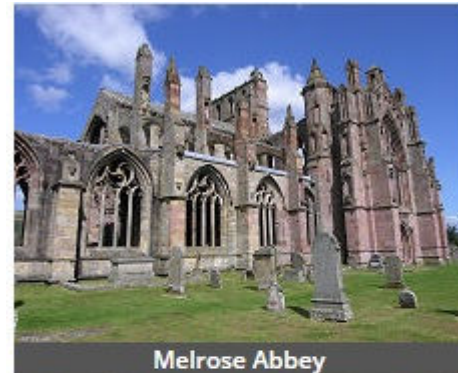


View

The triple peaks of the Eildon Hills are the most distinctive single landmark in the Scottish Borders. At their feet in the valley of the Tweed lies [Melrose](#). From the rolling hills and moorland in the west to the gentle valleys and picturesque Berwickshire coastline in the east, it is easy to see why Sir Walter Scott was so enamored with this peaceful region that he chose to build his beloved house, [Abbotsford](#) here which we will visit. Here at Abbotsford he worked tirelessly, writing book after book in his wood-panelled study. Scott looked far and wide across Scotland

for decorative elements to embellish his house; he rescued architectural fragments from houses, and took casts from existing houses to create copies that reflected Scotland's architectural heritage. The result was a very 'Scottish' building, inspired by Scotland's heritage and containing pieces from a variety of dwellings across

include Melrose, Abbotsford House, Traquair House and Roslyn Chapel. Take a scenic route along Scotland's border to Melrose Abbey — believed to be the burial site of King Robert the Bruce's heart — and enjoy lunch at your leisure. Admire panoramic views over the Scottish countryside and the Tweed River from Scott's



Melrose Abbey



the country. This very nationalistic pride in Scottish heritage was typical of Scott and his work. The result was almost universally popular, and Abbotsford became a very popular place for sightseers almost immediately.

On our way back to Edinburgh we will make a stop at [Roslyn Chapel](#). One of Scotland's most remarkable buildings, Rosslyn Chapel has been in the ownership of our family since its foundation in 1446 and is still used today as a place of worship. I did not want to include this stop in the package as it's at the end of the day and I wanted to see how many people were interested in a visit first Cost: £9 per adult, £7 per concession (+60, student).

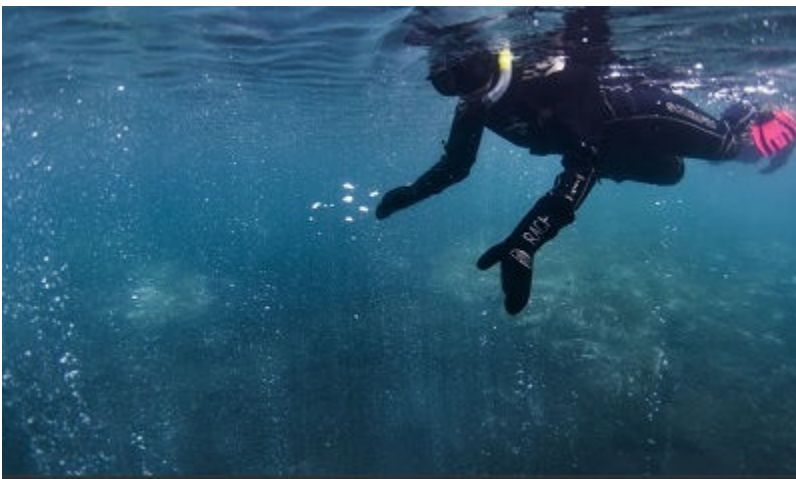
COST: With guide, bus and admission fees - \$55

Here's a steam train that will take you from Edinburgh to the town of Tweedbank. Great Scott! <http://www.scotrail.co.uk/scotland-by-rail/steam-train-trips>

ICELAND TOURS

GEOTHERMAL SNORKEL TOUR

Tuesday, Sept 6th, 9:00 am



Here's a very unique tour to start the Iceland portion of our trip off with. Snorkeling in bubbling hot springs is usually impossible as the water is far too hot, but the hot springs at the bottom of Lake Kleifarvatn provide us with the opportunity to do just that! Lake Kleifarvatn is hidden within a stunning volcanic landscape just 30 minutes outside of Reykjavík. Standing at the lake shore and changing into your dry suit, you will probably catch a whiff of the sulfur emitted from nearby hot springs and the total silence will let you forget that you are anywhere near civilization. The underwater hot springs in lake Kleifarvatn have only recently

been discovered and are about a 50 meter swim from the shore. Upon entering the lake you can see the white and yellow sulfur deposits on the lake floor. When we swim closer, you'll begin to sense the environment around you changing as you approach the gas emanating from below the lake's floor. We've heard this sensation described as similar to 'snorkeling in a glass of Champagne'—the fact that you are snorkeling in a caldera is also impressive enough!

When back on land we will enjoy some refreshments at the shore before moving on to Seltún, a nearby high temperature geothermal area on land. In Seltún we will walk along the boiling mud pots and colorful sulfur deposits. We will then make our way back to Reykjavík. It will be possible to do this and also the afternoon tour to the Blue Lagoon. **COST with transportation: \$145 (reg \$203).**

QUAD TOUR – TWIN PEAKS

Tuesday, Sept 6th, 9:00 am

The beauty of Reykjavik is how close we are to nature. We pick you up from your hotel and have you at our base camp within 15 minutes – amazing! And once we've given you all the safety and driving instructions you'll need, the mountain trails start calling. The Twin Peaks quad bike tour takes you off the beaten track. From asphalt and gravel roads to mountain tracks, rocky paths to steep slopes, you'll get the thrill of quad biking on a

range of terrains. And all surrounded by stunning scenery. Your destinations are two stunning mountains: Hafrafell and Úlfarsfell. First you have to get up them – a thrilling quad bike experience, as you take incredible mountain trails to the peaks. Your reward? Unbelievable views across the Reykjavik area and the Reykjanes peninsula. It really is twice as nice. We'll have 2 full hours on the trails. Overalls, helmets, balaclavas and gloves are provided. Our special group pricing is \$185 (reg \$240) for your own quad or \$149 to share. Check out [this video](#) to get a good idea of what the ride will be like. We will be back to the hotel by 11:30. In time to participate in the afternoon tour.

THE BLUE LAGOON & RAYKJANES PENINSULA

Tuesday, Sept 6th, 1:00 pm

This is a half-day tour that we'll start at 1 pm. On our way the famous Blue Lagoon we will visit the Raykjanes Peninsula. There you can see beautiful small fishing town, a lighthouse, old stone built church, Gunnuhver (Geyser), Krýsuvík, Kleifarvatn and of course the Blue Lagoon. Here can find more about [Reykjanes](#).

Then, we'll head to Iceland's famous Blue Lagoon for otherworldly dip in its geothermal waters.



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This spa is based around the unique properties of the geothermal seawater in the lagoon and they claim to be in the 25 natural wonders of the world. The Blue Lagoon was formed in 1976 during operation at the nearby geothermal power plant. In the years that followed, people began to bathe in the unique water and apply the silica mud to their skin. Those with psoriasis noticed an incredible improvement in their condition. Over the years, Blue Lagoon has been innovative in harnessing this gift of nature to develop different spa services and products. Today, Blue Lagoon is recognized as one of the wonders of the world.

The geothermal water originates 2,000 meters below the surface, where freshwater and seawater combine at extreme temperatures. It is then harnessed via drilling holes at a nearby geothermal power plant, Svartsengi, to create electricity and hot water for nearby communities.

On its way to the surface, the water picks up silica and minerals, before emerging at a soothing 38°C (100°F). Perfect for a relaxing and re-energizing bathe.

WHY IS IT BLUE?

The geothermal water has a unique composition, featuring three active ingredients – Silica, Algae & Minerals. The blue color comes from the silica and the way it reflects sunlight. During summer there can also be a hint of green in the water. This is the result of the algae, which multiplies quickly when exposed to direct sunlight. However, and this might come as a surprise to you, the water is actually white. If you pour it into a transparent cup, it will always have a milky white color. The sun simply makes it look blue!

GOOD-TO-KNOW

- The water temperature is 37-40°C (98-104°F), year-round.
- The lagoon contains 9 million liters of water.
- The water is self-cleansing – it renews itself every 40 hours.
- Blue Lagoon is mostly ca. 0.8-1.2 meters deep. Its deepest point is 1.6 meters.

Feel free to opt for one of many [spa packages](#) and upgrades. A standard bathing experience is included. Bring your own towel to avoid paying for a rental. Bring a towel.

COST WITH BUS AND BLUE LAGOON ADMISSION: \$60

GOLDEN CIRCLE TOUR

Wednesday, Sept 7th

The Golden Circle is a must-do day tour out of Reykjavik. It offers you the opportunity to discover some of the highlights of south-west Iceland. It also provides you with a general insight into the Icelandic history, geology, its people and its rich cultural heritage.

We start the tour by driving to Iceland's first national park, the Thingvellir National Park. This is the birth place of a nation as well as of the first Icelandic democracy, when the Viking chieftains decided to establish their first parliament (Althingi) or "general assembly" in 930 AD. Many events took place in the area, including the introduction of Christianity in the year 1000 AD, the declaration of independence from the Danish kings on June 17, 1944.



Besides its historical and cultural importance, the park displays a unique geology and natural landscapes. There, one can learn and understand the tectonic activity or the so-called the continental drift, the boundary between North American and Eurasian plate tectonics. Thingvellir is one of the only sites on Earth where the effects of two major tectonic plates drifting apart can be observed.

Notorious for its outstanding natural beauty, Thingvellir National Park served as one of the main filming locations of Game of Thrones in Iceland. There, you can experience the site the same way encountered or seen by the cast of the White Walkers and the trail of the Wildlings from North of the Wall.

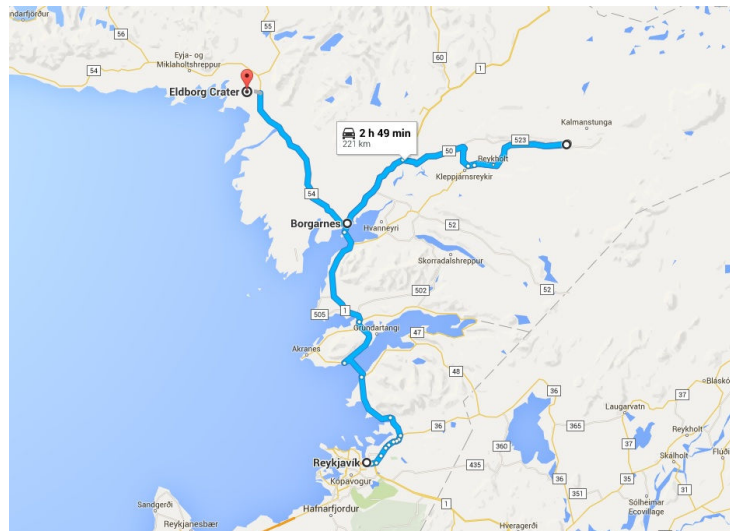
After a short walk through the area, we continue towards the Geyser geothermal area. There, you have enough time to discover Strokkur, one of the most active geysers in the world. It spouts hot water and steam at a height of 20 – 25 meters every 5 – 8 minutes.

After lunch break in the area, we head towards [Gullfoss](#) “Golden Waterfall”, Europe’s second most powerful waterfall. It is located on the Hvítár “White River”, one of Iceland’s major glacier rivers. The gorgeous waterfall is one of the most popular attractions in the country. Located in the canyon, which forms three step terraces, river Hvítá plunges creating a powerful stream and Gullfoss. There are no rails – just a natural surroundings.
COST WITH BUS & GUIDE: \$45

BORGARFFJORUR VALLEY , SAGAS AND WATERFALLS TOUR

Thursday, Sept 8th

We start by driving out of Reykjavík and head north. We stop in Borgarnes for coffee and take a little detour in the village to see the old part and get introduced to some of the „characters“ that lived here before.



We will pay a visit to the cultural center in Borgarnes called the Settlement centre. We’ll visit the homestead of the first Viking settler in the area (nothing to see from that time only the place and modern sculpture depicting one of the scenes in the saga. Then to see two waterfalls which are in the same place - Hraunfossar and Barnafoss. Hraunfossar has water coming from underneath the lava field. The area is characterized by forests and rocky islands, or bluffs, that rise from the vast, flat wetlands, as well as lava fields covered with moss.

Then back to Reykjavik but visit Reykholt, the place where Snorri Sturluson chieftain and author of Egil's saga lived (museum visit possible), then to see the most prolific hot spring in Europe which supplies hot

water to thousands of people in the area. Return to Reykjavik via Whale fjord which is a scenic drive and has a lot of WWII history. **COST, WITH GUIDE AND BUS: \$50**

SOUTH SHORE TOUR

Friday, Sept 9th

In this tour we will take in the scenery of the South Coast and go as far as Vík. Vík is Iceland's most southerly village and one of the most popular tourist sites in Iceland. Although this community of about 450 inhabitants faces the open Atlantic, Vík is the only seaside settlement in Iceland left without a harbour due to natural circumstances. We will see

The [Black Sand Beach](#), (Reynisfjara) a beautiful basalt-lava rock formations and sea-made caves. The historical palagonite mountains of Pétursey, Hjórléifshöfði and Hafursey stand towering over the surrounding black expanse., [Dyrhólaey](#), where the unique rock arch is found, is a 120-m-high promontory in the western part of the Mýrdalur district. Dyrhólaey is Iceland's most southerly tip. [Skogafoss Waterfall](#), which rivals



[Gullfoss](#) as Iceland's most famous waterfall. [Seljalandsfoss Waterfall](#) one of the best known waterfalls in Iceland. It's possible to walk behind the waterfall so bring a raincoat as you will get wet from the drizzle. It's awesome especially on a sunny day when one can catch a rainbow. And of course the beautiful town of [Vik](#). On the way there they will see The Eyjafallajökull eruption museum, Mýrdalsjökull glacier, [Skogar waterfall](#) and much more. It is a great tour. It is usually around 11-12 hours. **COST, WITH BUS AND GUIDE: \$60**

OTHER ICELAND TOURS

There are certainly a lot of adventure tours in Iceland and we've done plenty of research. We are offering the bus tours so you can see the highlights of the country. You may however be interested in some of these other tours. We may have offered some of them but they are all very pricey and I was not confident we would get big numbers to qualify for a group discount.

<http://www.viator.com/tours/Reykjavik/Snorkeling-in-Thingvellir-National-Park-from-Reykjavik/d905-5590AAITB>

<http://www.viator.com/tours/Reykjavik/Day-Trip-from-Reykjavik-Cave-Exploring-in-Gjabakkahellir-and-Snorkeling-in-Silfra/d905-5590LAVA>

ADVENTURE TOURS: <https://www.adventures.is/iceland/day-tours/>

<https://www.extremeiceland.is/en/activity-tours-iceland>

NORTHERN LIGHTS: See this website: <http://www.igtours.is/en/winter-201617/northern-lights-tour-from-reykjavik-by-minibus> We will do this if it turns out that they are happening.

ICE CLIMBING AND HORSEBACK RIDING: <http://www.mountainguides.is/>

[Sólheimajökull Glacier Walk and Ice Climbing - IMG16](#)