

IRELAND TOURS

WICKLOW AND GLENDALOUGH

Monday, September 18th

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

KILKENNY

Tuesday, September 19th

This tour is included in your package. 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.

[Kilkenny castle](#) stands dramatically on a strategic height that commands a crossing on the River Nore and dominates the 'High Town' of Kilkenny City. Over the eight centuries of its existence, many additions and alterations have been made to the fabric of the building, making

Kilkenny Castle today a complex structure of various architectural styles.

The original Anglo-Norman stone castle was built for William Marshal, 4th Earl of Pembroke (c.1146-1219) during the first decade of the thirteenth century. Kilkenny Castle later became the principal Irish residence of the powerful Butler family for almost 600 years.

After our time in Kilkenny we will head over to the town of Lisdoonvarna for the next 2 nights.

CLIFFS OF MOHRE

Wednesday, September 20th



Today we will offer a bus tour to visit The Cliffs of Moher, Ireland's most visited natural attraction with a magical vista that captures the hearts of up to one million visitors every year. Standing 214m (702 feet) at their highest point they stretch for 8 kilometres (5 miles) along the Atlantic coast of County Clare in the west of Ireland. From the Cliffs of Moher on a clear day one can see the Aran Islands and Galway Bay, as well as the Twelve Pins and the Maum Turk mountains in Connemara, Loop Head to the south and the Dingle Peninsula and Blasket Islands in Kerry.

O'Brien's Tower stands near the highest point and has served as a viewing point for visitors for hundreds of years. We will be working on today's itinerary but basically we will be viewing the cliffs and surroundings from the 3 different platforms - [read more](#).

We'll also fit in a tour of Limerick where we'll see Bunratty Castle, walk through the charming Folk Park, admire the Burren and drive along Galway Bay.

COST: \$40 for bus and guide.

TITANIC TOUR

Thursday, September 21st

Today we depart Lisdoonvarna for Belfast. One of the most popular attractions there is the Titanic Experience. Belfast is where the Titanic was built. Located at the heart of Titanic Quarter - only a short walk from Belfast's city centre, is not only an architectural triumph for the city, but it houses the world's largest Titanic visitor experience. The iconic six-floor building, featuring nine interpretive and interactive galleries that explore the sights, sounds, smells and stories of Titanic, as well as the City and people which made her, is an amazing experience which brings history to life in an unforgettable

way. Titanic Belfast tells the story of the Titanic, from her conception in Belfast in the early 1900s, through her construction and launch, to its maiden voyage and subsequent place in history. The self-guided **Titanic Experience** extends over nine interpretive and interactive galleries, which explore the sights, sounds, smells and stories of RMS Titanic, as well as the city and people who made her.

After we check in to our hotel we will see who wants to go and we will share taxi's. The entry fee is 18gbp (about \$23) or 14gbp (about \$18) for 60+. They also have a 9gbp ticket if you go from 5-6 for just one hour.

SCOTLAND TOURS

EDINBURGH CASTLE

**Saturday,
September 23rd**

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 17 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

Sunday, September 24th



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'll have time to take photos and 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. 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 putting on the 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.

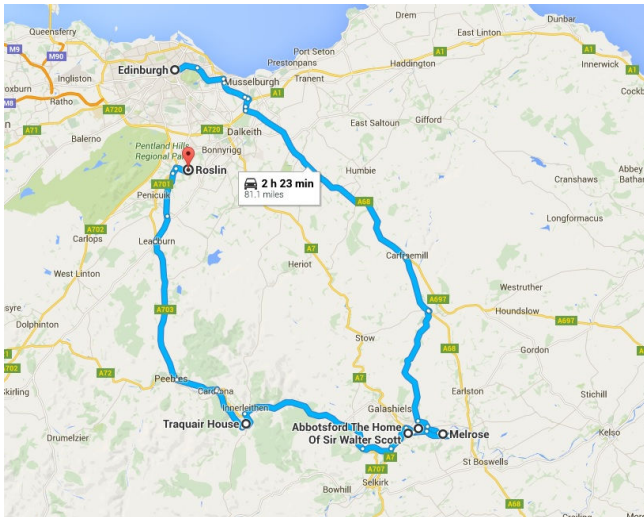


COST: With bus, guide and admission fee: \$40.

SCOTTISH BORDERS

Monday, September 25th

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



include Melrose, Abbotsford House, Traquair House and Roslyn Chapel.

Our first stop is [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.

Rosslyn Chapel came to worldwide prominence

through *The Da Vinci Code*, a novel written by Dan Brown, which was published in 2003. In the story, the main characters, Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu, investigate a murder in the Louvre and, in doing so, follow a set of clues to unravel a mystery, taking them to London and then to Rosslyn Chapel. *'When I decided to write The Da Vinci Code, I knew that its finale would have to take place at the most mysterious and magical chapel on earth — Rosslyn.'* Dan Brown

From 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 View





Next up on this tour is a visit to Traquair,, Scotland's Oldest Inhabited House. Visited by 27 Scottish Kings and Queens Traquair dates back to 1107 and has been lived in by the Stuart family since 1491.

Originally a royal hunting lodge, Traquair played host to Mary Queen of Scots and later as staunch Catholics they supported the Jacobite cause without counting the cost.

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 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.

COST: With guide, bus and admission fees - \$60

ICELAND TOURS

GOLDEN CIRCLE TOUR WITH SECRET LAGOON Wednesday, Sept 27th

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 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.

Finally we will end our day with a soak in the thermal waters of the Secret Lagoon. Secret Lagoon natural hot springs are located in the small village called Fludir and are in the Golden Circle area. We have kept it natural and unique for our guests so they can get the true Icelandic feeling. The pool’s natural surroundings and steam rising into the air gives the place a magical feeling. The warm water stays at 38-40 Celsius all year. In the whole area there are several geothermal spots and a little Geysir which erupts every 5 minutes, showing off for the guests relaxing in the hot spring. During winter, the northern lights often give a great lightshow above Secret Lagoon.

COST WITH BUS, GUIDE AND SECRET LAGOON ENTRY FEE: \$80 ([comparable at \\$135](#))

THE BLUE LAGOON & RAYKJANES PENINSULA

**Thursday, September 28th,
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.

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.



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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: \$105 (this is based on a smaller bus and group.

[Compare at \\$135!](#)

SOUTH SHORE TOUR

Friday, Sept 29th

This was one of the best days on our 2016 trip. 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, Hjørleifshöfði 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 [Vík](#). 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: \$70** [Compare at \\$149!](#)



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](#)