



Ireland Tours – The Hidden Heartlands

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Many visitors to Ireland arrive in Dublin and head to the coast but this strategy misses the magical Irish Midlands where there is so much to see! On this unique and intimate excursion, group size is limited to a maximum of 16 persons. We explore the Irish Midlands, also known as the Hidden Heartlands. Our tour starts with a driving tour of Dublin before settling into our home base near Mullingar.

This tour is a perfect option for those wishing to extend their stay in Ireland a few days, as well as for those with only a few days to visit.

Day 1 – Dublin and the sacred center of Ireland

Uisneach is the mythological and sacred centre of Ireland and is said to be the home of the sovereignty goddess, Ériu, after whom Ireland is named. Ériu, according to legend, rests under the Catstone. It is at the Catstone, or Aill na Mireann, where the five provinces of Ireland meet. Uisneach is also linked with the Sun God, Lugh. It is said that Lugh, who gave rise to harvest celebration Lunasa, was drowned in a lake on the Hill and rests beneath an adjoining tumulus. According to one theory, the God Lugh, with his 'long arm trailing behind him' and his face too bright to look at, was actually a comet. Every year during the first week of May, the Bealtaine fires are lit atop the hill and when seen, people on the surrounding hillsides also light bonfires as it has been done since ancient times. Bealtaine celebrates the beginning of the summer season. This is a private tour for your group and is always a special experience. After the tour, we stop at the Visitor Centre for a cup of tea and a chat.

Venturing from Uisneach, we next head to three ridges known as the "Witches Hops" where we find Loughcrew. (Seasonal) We walk to the central summit to explore Cairn T, the largest of the passage tombs. As seen from Uisneach, Cairn T will align with the midsummer sunrise.

Extending the same radial line from Uisneach another 65 kilometres, we would be inline with Slieve Gullion in County Armagh which connects sacred Uisneach with both Leinster and Ulster.

The midwinter sunset also aligns, reversed back through Uisneach completing the 180 degree cycle from midsummer sunrise to midwinter sunset.



After exploring the mythology and archaeology of Uisneach and Loughcrew, you will be transported to a welcome dinner at [Weirs award winning Bar and Restaurant](#) in the charming little village of Multyfarnham. Here, we share tales, yarns, truths and your Guide is available to answer the many questions provoked by today's activities.

Weirs Bar & Restaurant, Multyfarnham, in County Westmeath is a charming old world, family run pub that serves some of the best food and drink in Ireland in a relaxed, family friendly atmosphere. All of their food is home made on the premises, from their soups and sauces right through to their delicious desserts. They also have available specialty coffees and a full range of liqueurs.

After your Angus beef steaks, the night warms up with a little lesson in Úisce Beatha, better known as whiskey - single malt, blended, aged, Irish and Scottish. You will sample the delights and may quickly come to recognise what you like and want out of any whiskey. Ferried back to your accommodation, your first night's sleep beckons.

Day 2 – Athlone

After a good night's rest and a hearty breakfast, we hop on our transport for a short, 40-minute drive to Athlone. Situated on the mighty River Shannon, Athlone serves as the gateway between Ireland's Ancient East and the West.

Our first stop will be Athlone Castle. Experience a magnificent journey through history at the Athlone Castle Visitor Centre. Climb the steps to the Castle Keep and enjoy the views across the majestic River Shannon or climb higher still to the Castle battlements and look across the town's rooftops. Take a step back in history through playful interactive exhibits, touch screen animations and an immersive 360-degree cinematic experience that brings the Great Siege of Athlone to life.

Swords, cannon balls and stunning sculptures give these ancient stories great depth. Vibrant displays with historic artifacts will lead you along a 3D timeline that illustrates Athlone's last

200 years. Enjoy the wonderful voice of John Count McCormack in a display dedicated to the memory of the world-famous Athlone tenor. Rain or shine, this is a Castle with a story to tell.

Afterwards we pause for lunch before heading over to Ireland's oldest bar, [Seáns Bar Athlone](#). When you walk into Sean's Bar, you are in the oldest pub in Europe, never mind Ireland! You join the uncountable number of visitors who have been stopping here for a drink, a chat and maybe a bit of music for more than a thousand years and they have the distinctions to support it.

There is ample free time in Athlone for you to explore this charming Irish town. Take in the Luan Museum where there is always interesting art to be found, do some shopping or take one of the river cruises on the Shannon.

After exploring Athlone, we head to Kilbeggan where we take a distillery tour and see the oldest, still operating single pot still in Ireland. We are back at our base in Mullingar for exploring the local pubs and a good night's rest.



Day 3 – The Wonders of Westmeath

After another serious breakfast you will be collected and brought to the heritage village of Fore Co. Westmeath. [Fore Village](#) is off the beaten track but is wedged with rewards for the people who visit her; from the Stories of the Seven Wonders of Fore to the ancient Benedictine Monastery that will have you walking through its cloisters in the footsteps of the original French speaking monks. French Monks in Westmeath, you ask? Come and walk in their wake and all questions will be answered such as why some locals hadn't much time for the Benedictines, who was St. Feichin of Fore, what's an anchorite in a cell and what are The Seven Wonders of Fore.

Lunch will be in the [Village of Castlepollard](#)

It is here that we encounter the famous story of the Children of Lír and visit Lough Deravarragh, where legend has it they lived for 300 of their 900 cursed years.

Next port of call will be to visit a graveyard of An Górtá Mór, sometimes known as The Great Irish Famine. A reflective and oft too forgotten chapter in Irish history.

Next up, we explore all about love! We are going to [Belvedere House](#) and Gardens where love and jealousy collided amongst family to a legacy that lasts to today.

Dinner will be overlooking during your meal Lough Ennell where the last High King of Ireland An Ard Rí Máelacháir II lived. The restaurant will be in [The Bloomfield House Hotel](#).



Day 4 – Slán Abhaile!

We start our day with a full Irish breakfast and then gather our things as we board our transport to the airport. At the airport, your guide will bid you farewell and your trip to Ireland concludes as you embark upon your journey home, full of memories and anticipating your next visit to this magical land.

What is Included in the package?

- Full and Hearty Irish breakfast each day (except day of arrival)
- Welcome dinner on Day 1
- Professional and knowledgeable Irish Guide
- Airport transfers to and from Dublin Airport
- Three nights hotel accommodation based upon double occupancy (Single rooms available for additional charge)
- Loads of fun and treasured memories!

Tour Map:

