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Ireland's Copper Coast and Scenic Southwest

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Day 1



Overnight flight to Dublin

Ah, the transatlantic flight to Ireland! While it's tempting to think of it as just a means to an end, your journey can be the start of your Irish adventure. Here's how to make the most of your travel day:

Embrace the Anticipation: That feeling of excitement as you board the plane? That's pure magic! Settle in with a good book about Ireland, perhaps a classic novel by Yeats or Joyce, or maybe a travel memoir to inspire your explorations.

Inflight Entertainment: Most airlines offer a great selection of movies and TV shows, including Irish films and documentaries. Why not get a head start on your cultural immersion? And of course, there's music! Create a playlist of traditional Irish tunes or contemporary artists to set the mood for your trip.

Dream of Emerald Isles: Close your eyes and imagine the landscapes you'll soon be exploring. Picture the rolling green hills, the rugged cliffs, the charming villages. Let your mind wander and anticipate the adventures to come.

Rest and Recharge: It's important to arrive in Ireland feeling refreshed and ready to go. Try to get some sleep on the plane, even if it's just a few hours. Drink plenty of water and avoid caffeine and alcohol.

A Taste of Ireland: Many airlines now offer Irish-inspired meals and snacks. Treat yourself to a taste of what's to come!

Day 2



Arrival in Dublin

You'll arrive at Dublin Airport, a major hub with modern facilities and plenty of transportation options. After clearing customs, you can easily hop on a bus, taxi, or pre-booked private transfer to reach your accommodation in the heart of Dublin.

After a hearty Irish breakfast at your hotel, I recommend hopping on one of Dublin's excellent hop-on hop-off bus tours. These tours offer a fantastic way to get acquainted with the city's layout, major landmarks, and hidden gems at your own pace.

Find a comfortable seat on the open-top deck and let the knowledgeable guides regale you with fascinating stories and historical insights as you pass by iconic sights like Trinity College, Dublin Castle, St. Patrick's Cathedral, and the Guinness Storehouse. You can stay on for the entire loop or hop off at any attraction that piques your interest.

This leisurely orientation will give you a good overview of Dublin and help you decide which places you'd like to explore further in the coming days. Plus, it's a relaxing way to ease into your Irish adventure after your journey.

Recommended Hotels:

The Shelbourne Dublin

The Merrion Hotel Dublin

Stauntons on The Green



Day 3



A day dedicated to Dublin's iconic landmarks!

Morning: Trinity College and its Treasures

Begin your day with a visit to Trinity College, Ireland's oldest university. Wander through its historic campus and be sure to pre-book your entry to the Long Room, part of the Old Library, and home to the magnificent Book of Kells, a beautifully illuminated manuscript from the 9th century. The Long Room itself is an awe-inspiring sight, lined with towering oak bookcases and marble busts of famous philosophers and writers.

Midday: Dublin Castle and Viking History

Next, head to Dublin Castle, a captivating blend of architectural styles reflecting its rich history. Explore the State Apartments, wander through the medieval Undercroft, and discover the remnants of the Viking settlement that once stood on this site. The Chester Beatty Library, located within the castle complex, houses a fascinating collection of manuscripts and art from around the world.

Afternoon: A Pint of Guinness at the Storehouse

No trip to Dublin is complete without a visit to the Guinness Storehouse. Learn about the brewing process of this iconic stout, from its humble beginnings to its global fame. The highlight is the Gravity Bar on the 7th floor, where you can enjoy a complimentary pint of Guinness with panoramic views of the city.

Evening: Temple Bar and Traditional Flavors

As evening descends, make your way to the lively Temple Bar district. This cobblestone quarter is brimming with traditional pubs, each with its own unique character and atmosphere. Settle into a cozy corner, soak up the lively ambiance, and enjoy a delicious Irish dinner accompanied by live music. Try some classic dishes like Irish stew, coddle (a hearty sausage and bacon stew), or colcannon (mashed potatoes with cabbage or kale).

Tips for your Day:

- **Pre-book tickets:** Especially for Trinity College Library and the Guinness Storehouse, to avoid potential queues.
- **Pace yourself:** These are all substantial attractions, so allow plenty of time for each.
- **Embrace the pub culture:** Temple Bar is a great place to experience traditional Irish hospitality and music.
- **Consider a walking tour:** To delve deeper into the history and stories behind these landmarks.

Enjoy your exploration of Dublin's highlights!



Day 4



Monastic Ruins, Viking Treasures, and Coastal Wonders

Morning: Glendalough – A Glimpse of Early Ireland

Your first stop will be Glendalough, a monastic site nestled in a glacial valley in the Wicklow Mountains. Founded by St. Kevin in the 6th century, Glendalough was once a thriving center of learning and spirituality. Explore the well-preserved ruins, including the iconic round tower, the cathedral, and St. Kevin's Kitchen. Take a leisurely walk around the Upper Lake, enjoying the tranquility and breathtaking scenery.

Midday: Waterford – Crystal and Viking History

Continue your journey south to Waterford, Ireland's oldest city. Here, you can delve into the world of Waterford Crystal, renowned for its exquisite craftsmanship. Visit the House of Waterford Crystal to witness the creation of these masterpieces and browse the impressive collection. Afterwards, explore the Viking Triangle, the historic heart of Waterford, and discover its fascinating past at Reginald's Tower, a 13th-century fortification.

Afternoon: The Copper Coast Scenic Drive

From Waterford, embark on a memorable drive along the Copper Coast, a UNESCO Global Geopark renowned for its dramatic cliffs, hidden coves, and charming coastal villages. Stop at picturesque spots like Dunmore East, a fishing village with colorful houses and a lively harbor, or Tramore, a popular seaside resort with a long sandy beach. Keep an eye out for the remnants of copper mines that once dotted this coastline.

Evening: Arrival in Cork

As the day draws to a close, arrive in Cork, Ireland's second-largest city, and check into your accommodation. Take a stroll along the River Lee, admire the city's vibrant atmosphere, and enjoy a delicious dinner at a local restaurant.

Tips for your Journey:

- **Pack for all weather:** Irish weather can be unpredictable, so be prepared for rain or shine.
- **Allow ample time:** This is a full-day itinerary, so start early and don't rush.
- **Embrace the scenic route:** The Copper Coast drive is best enjoyed at a leisurely pace.
- **Sample local delicacies:** Waterford is known for its blaas (a soft white bread roll) and Cork for its spiced beef.

Enjoy your journey south and the diverse experiences that await you!

Hotel Suggestions:

Hayfield Manor

The River Lee Hotel



Day 5



Ah, Cork! A city brimming with character, history, and culinary delights.

Morning: The English Market and Cork's Soul

Start your day with a visit to the English Market, a covered market that has been the heart and soul of Cork for over 200 years. Wander through the stalls overflowing with fresh produce, artisan cheeses, locally caught seafood, and tempting baked goods. Engage with the friendly vendors, savor the sights and smells, and perhaps gather some ingredients for a picnic lunch later.

Midday: History and Heritage

Next, delve into Cork's rich history. Explore the imposing Cork City Gaol, a 19th-century prison that now offers fascinating insights into the city's past. Alternatively, climb St. Fin Barre's Cathedral, a masterpiece of Gothic architecture with stunning stained glass windows and intricate carvings. For a unique perspective, take a boat trip on the River Lee, admiring the city from a different angle.

Afternoon: Blarney Castle and its Eloquent Stone

No visit to Cork is complete without a trip to Blarney Castle, a medieval fortress steeped in legend. Climb to the top of the castle and kiss the Blarney Stone, said to bestow the gift of eloquence. Wander through the extensive gardens, discover hidden grottoes, and enjoy the panoramic views from the battlements.

Evening: Cork's Culinary Delights

Cork is renowned for its vibrant culinary scene. For dinner, choose from a range of options, from traditional pubs serving hearty Irish fare to Michelin-starred restaurants showcasing innovative cuisine. Enjoy a pint of Murphy's stout, a local favorite, and savor the lively atmosphere of Cork's pubs and restaurants.

Beyond the City:

- **Cobh:** Take a short trip to Cobh, the last port of call for the Titanic, and visit the Titanic Experience Cobh museum.
- **Kinsale:** Explore the charming coastal town of Kinsale, known for its colorful houses, historic fort, and excellent seafood restaurants.
- **Fota Wildlife Park:** Encounter exotic animals from around the world at Fota Wildlife Park, a spacious park with a focus on conservation.

Remember, this is just a suggestion, feel free to tailor it to your interests and pace. Enjoy your exploration of Cork and its surroundings!

Recommended Hotels:

River Lee Hotel

The Imperial Hotel

Hayfield Manor



Day 6



From Cork to Kenmare via the Wild Atlantic Way

Today's journey takes you from the vibrant city of Cork to the charming town of Kenmare, via the scenic and dramatic Sheep's Head peninsula. Begin your day with a leisurely start from Cork, perhaps enjoying a final stroll through the English Market or a visit to a favorite attraction before hitting the road. The drive to the Sheep's Head will take you through picturesque countryside and coastal villages. As you approach the peninsula, prepare for breathtaking views of the Atlantic Ocean, rugged cliffs, and hidden coves. The Sheep's Head Loop is a must-do, offering a looped walking trail (or drive for some) with stunning panoramic vistas. Pack a picnic to enjoy at one of the scenic viewpoints along the way.

Continue your drive towards Kenmare, a charming town nestled at the head of Kenmare Bay. Upon arrival, check into your chosen accommodation and take some time to explore the town's colorful streets, browse the local shops, and perhaps enjoy a pre-dinner drink at a cozy pub. Kenmare offers a delightful selection of restaurants for your evening meal, from traditional Irish fare to more contemporary cuisine.

For a luxurious stay in Kenmare, consider the Park Hotel or Sheen Falls Lodge.



Day 7



Today's Journey: A Glimpse of the Ring of Kerry's Magic

Today, we embark on a captivating journey along the Ring of Kerry, one of Ireland's most celebrated scenic drives. This 111-mile route winds its way around the Iveragh Peninsula, revealing breathtaking coastal vistas, charming villages nestled amidst rolling hills, and glimpses into Ireland's ancient past.

Our adventure begins with a leisurely drive towards the picturesque town of Kenmare, our gateway to the Ring of Kerry. Here, we'll pause to soak in the ambiance of this colorful town, perhaps browsing the local shops for unique crafts or enjoying a cup of coffee with a view.

From Kenmare, the landscape unfolds in a panorama of mountains and valleys. We'll make our way to Moll's Gap, a renowned viewpoint where the scenery is truly breathtaking. Feel free to wander along the trails, breathe in the fresh air, and capture the beauty of the landscape with your camera.

As we continue our journey, the charming village of Sneem awaits. This idyllic village, with its brightly painted houses and welcoming atmosphere, is the perfect place to savor a delicious lunch of fresh, local ingredients.

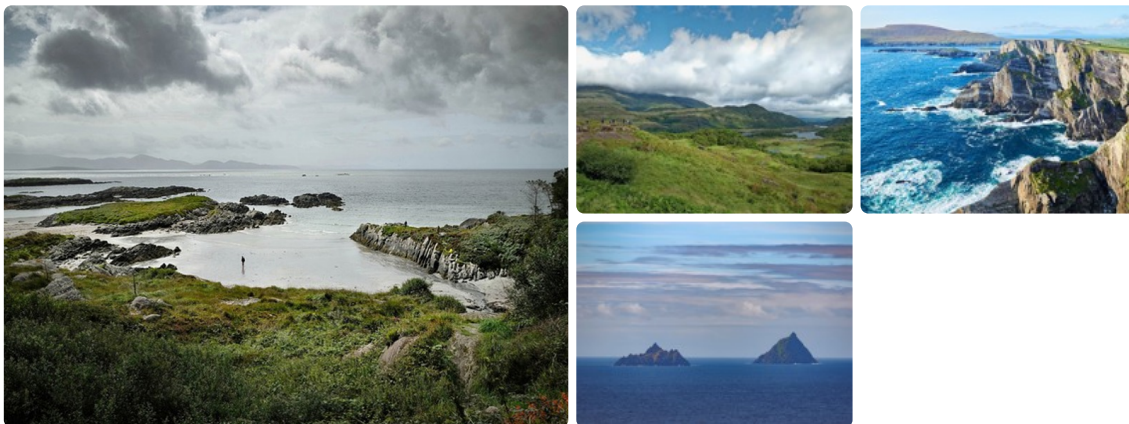
Next, we'll step back in time with a visit to Staigue Stone Fort, a remarkable prehistoric structure that has stood for centuries. Imagine the lives of those who built and inhabited this fort as you explore its impressive walls and take in the panoramic views of the surrounding countryside.

The afternoon brings us to the heart of Killarney National Park, a haven of natural beauty. We'll pause at Ladies View to admire the stunning vista of the Lakes of Killarney, nestled amidst the mountains. (If time and interest permit, we can also make a short detour to Ross Castle, a 15th-century tower house steeped in history).

Our final stop will be the elegant Muckross House and Gardens, where you can wander through meticulously manicured gardens and explore the opulent rooms of this Victorian mansion. Perhaps we'll even indulge in a traditional afternoon tea, surrounded by the beauty of this historic estate.

As evening descends, we'll enjoy a farewell dinner in the lively town of Killarney, savoring the flavors of local cuisine and perhaps tapping our toes to some traditional Irish music. Then, we'll make our way back to Kenmare, our hearts full of the beauty and charm of the Ring of Kerry.

This itinerary is designed to be flexible and cater to your interests. Feel free to linger at any stop that captures your imagination, and don't hesitate to ask if there's something else you'd like to see or do along the way. The Ring of Kerry is full of hidden gems, and I'm here to help you discover them!



Day 8



From Kenmare to the Majestic Cliffs of Moher

A fantastic day awaits, journeying from the charming town of Kenmare to the majestic Cliffs of Moher, with a captivating exploration of the Burren region.

Your day begins in Kenmare, perhaps with a leisurely breakfast overlooking the bay. As you set off, the drive itself is a treat, winding through scenic landscapes. Your destination: the awe-inspiring Cliffs of Moher. These dramatic cliffs, rising hundreds of feet above the Atlantic, offer breathtaking panoramic views. Take your time to walk along the cliff path, breathe in the fresh sea air, and capture some memorable photos.

From the Cliffs, you'll venture into the unique and otherworldly landscape of the Burren. This karst region, with its distinctive limestone pavement, is home to a surprising array of flora and fauna. Explore the ancient Poul nabrone Dolmen, a Neolithic tomb that stands as a testament to Ireland's rich history. Wander through the lunar-like landscape, discovering hidden valleys and perhaps spotting some of the Burren's unique wildflowers.

Hotel Recommendations:

Gregans Castle Hotel

Dromoland Castle Hotel

Falls Hotel and Spa



Day 9



A Fond Farewell to The Emerald Isle

Your Irish adventure concludes with a final, leisurely morning in the Burren region. After a delicious breakfast at your chosen accommodation, perhaps enjoying a final taste of Irish soda bread or a full Irish breakfast, take a moment to savor the peaceful surroundings and reflect on the incredible experiences of your journey. Depending on your flight schedule, you might have time for a short, final exploration of the Burren. Perhaps revisit a favorite spot, take a last walk amidst the unique landscape, or browse for souvenirs in a local craft shop. Then, it's time to make your way to Shannon Airport, a convenient and well-organized airport that offers a smooth departure experience. As you board your flight home, carry with you the memories of stunning landscapes, warm hospitality, and the magic of Ireland, already dreaming of your return.