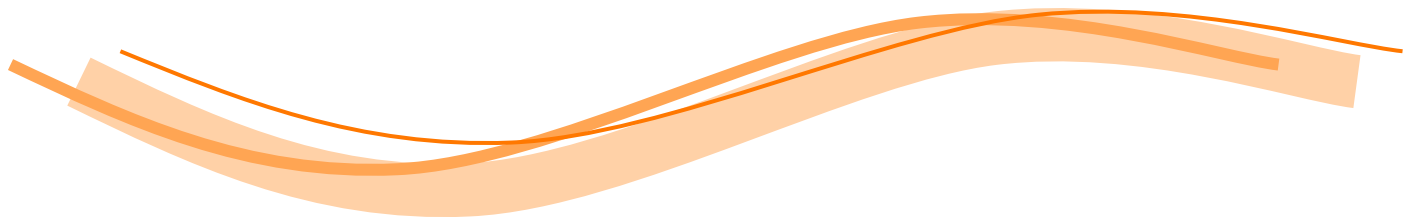




TRAFALGAR
&
IRELAND





TRAFALGAR

Trafalgar - the world's favourite touring company – has over 65 years of touring experience and worldwide itineraries for everyone. It's this dedication to taking their guests beyond the obvious sights that has helped them grow into one of the most trusted and successful international guided vacation companies in the world.

Trafalgar's 2018 program is marked by the large number of new itineraries and enhancements to current ones. Trafalgar work ever harder to delve deeper into each destination to provide travellers with a richer experience you will remember for a lifetime.

Trafalgar is the friend you'd wish for in every destination, providing a **unique insider's perspective** on the local people, places and cultures you encounter. They surprise you with hidden places only the locals know about and introduce you to the people you'd never meet if travelling on your own. And Trafalgar give you fascinating insights into local traditions and bring history to life in ways you simply can't get from a guidebook.

Trafalgar's **First Class** itineraries include exclusive Insider Experiences that provide an authentic and enhanced vacation experience you wouldn't have travelling any other way:

- **Be My Guest** – your exclusive invitation to dine with the locals
- **Local Experts** – specialists in the cultures and landscapes of the area you're visiting
- **Local Guides** – passionate locals who entertain you with stories of their hometown
- **Local Specialties** – visits to see locals at work, learn about their craft and sample their wares
- **Hidden Treasures** – surprise sights and experiences revealed by your Travel Director
- **Unique Insights** – visits to places of unique cultural significance in a particular area

Travel in comfort and style on board luxury coaches. Savour the flavours of each region with authentic local dining. Stay in ideally located hotels that perfectly complement your itinerary. Customize your vacation with a fantastic choice of Optional Excursions. And explore the famous sights you've dreamed of and beyond! From Europe to North America and South America to Asia - Trafalgar capture the true essence of each destination and help you see the world from the inside.

Since 1947 Trafalgar has been a global leader in escorted tours,

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vacation packages and dream holidays to favourite destinations in Europe, Britain, USA, Canada, South America, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Every year, over 50% of their passengers have travelled with Trafalgar once before and many return to travel with them again. Trafalgar's 65 years of escorted touring experience and over 200 worldwide itineraries mean something for everyone – travelling solo, as a group, with family or friends. Your experienced Travel Director takes care of everything – on a balanced holiday, with just the right amount of planned activities and free time.

Trafalgar is leading the evolution in guided holidays. Tours are yesterday's product. Today's Trafalgar guided holidays take you on unique local experiences. With their exclusive insider highlights, they'll show you the unexpected, provide local expertise and deliver unforgettable experiences you could not have on their own. Trafalgar's exclusive insider highlights will surprise you with Hidden Treasures and immerse you in local culture with Be My Guest dining experiences. Trafalgar show you the unexpected, provides local expertise and delivers unforgettable moments.

Trafalgar offers unbeatable value for your travel dollar and lots of free inclusions with your Trafalgar Vacation.

- Free Airport Transfers
- First Class Hotel Accommodations
- VIP Access to major attractions
- Breakfast daily & some meals included
- Included Be My Guest dining experience
- Free Welcome Reception
- Free sightseeing in every city
- Free audio headset for guided visits
- Free Local Guide in major cities
- Included Farewell Dinner on your final night on your trip
- Free Travel Wallet & Trip Souvenir Photo
- Transportation on modern, comfortable air-conditioned coach
- Plus, much more (hidden treasure & local specialists, experienced Travel Director)

In addition, Trafalgar offers unique itineraries and features: a vacation is about being immersed in a new culture - and some of the best experiences centre around food and family.

Trafalgar's exclusive "Be My Guest" feature brings you freshly prepared, traditional meals using local produce and wines – served in unforgettable, authentic settings such as family homes, wine estates,

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	<p>farms and chateaux.</p> <p>Over the years Trafalgar Travel Directors have discovered many European secrets. They know all the local sights and will reveal Europe's Hidden Treasures - be they concealed landmarks, monuments, excluded destinations or sights. Very few other travellers will get the chance to see these Hidden Treasures which are exclusively part of every Trafalgar itinerary. At the same time "At Leisure" tours offer effortless, guided holidays, but with more freedom to go your own way than ever before.</p> <p>Local experts –meet guides who really know the history and insider secretes about a destination you visit & are your private guide when you reach a historical or unique sights.</p> <p>If you want to see the world - but don't want to leave the rest of your family behind - Trafalgar "Family Experience" tours are the best choice. This range of fascinating tours allows you to spend quality time with the kids on fun adventures which family members of all ages will adore.</p> <p>Trafalgar's CostSaver program allows you to travel to the UK and Europe with the greatest flexibility, all for an unbeatable price! Each tour is carefully designed to include plenty of free time to experience each destination as you have always dreamed, but still with the peace of mind of being accompanied by Trafalgar's professional and experienced Tour Directors and Drivers throughout your entire journey. All this, for considerably less than you would pay on your own.</p>
<p>SPECIAL DEAL</p>	<p>Trafalgar has a special offer at the moment for Europe trips this year... It's Time to travel and save 5% on departures with Trafalgar's early payment discount.</p> <p>Save 5% early payment discounts on the land-portion of selected Trafalgar trips when paid in full by April 26, 2018. Discounts may be combinable with other brochure discounts where applicable. For full details please visit www.trafalgar.com .</p>
<p>Why Trafalgar Tours?</p>	<p>Here are 15 reasons for choosing Trafalgar:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Over 65 years of escorted touring experience 2. Over 200 worldwide itineraries to choose from 3. The world's most experienced Travel Directors 4. Great value - you'd pay close to 50% more if you planned the same holiday on your own 5. Hassle free holidays - you don't have to worry about car rentals or booking accommodation 6. No anxiety over hotel check-in or carrying heavy luggage 7. You'll experience all the 'must see' attractions without the long lines

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	<p>8. Conveniently located hotels 9. Perfectly balanced holidays, with just the right amount of planned activities and free time 10. Most breakfasts and many sumptuous dinners are included in the price of your tour 11. Travelling alone? Take advantage of their Room Mate Matching Service 12. Modern and comfortable fleet of coaches 13. Choose from a number of optional excursions to enhance your trip 14. Great special offers 15. 98% satisfaction rating from past guests and over 50% return, year after year</p>
<p>Be My Guest Dining Experience</p>	<p>Discover the true taste of Europe on a Trafalgar Be My Guest Dining Experience. It's your invitation to meet and dine with the locals. You'll be invited into family homes, working farms and unique venues to enjoy amazing regional food and wines prepared by your hosts. It's insider moments like these you won't find anywhere else.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make yourself at home at a family olive grove estate in Tuscany, where you'll savor authentic cuisine and local wine as the invited guest of Count Francesco Miari Fulcis at their 16th Century Estate. - Muckross Traditional Farms, Killarney, Ireland. Meet and chat with the farmers and their wives as they go about their daily work. You'll see how real butter is made and enjoy traditional music and storytelling with an old-fashioned dinner (including black pudding!) in Quilles Farmhouse. - Casa Esposito, Bay of Sorrento, Italy. A warm welcome awaits you at the Esposito family farmhouse. Enjoy a walk through the lemon groves and take a tour of the farm's wine cellar complete with wine tasting. Then sit down to a home-cooked Italian feast prepared using secret recipes from generations past. - L'Etape Gourmande, Villandry, France. Be welcomed by Béatrice de Montferrier and her daughter Alexandra to their 17th century farm. Admire the rich countryside while sipping on an aperitif and later make your way to the superbly renovated barn to enjoy an authentic meal made with regionally grown produce.
<p>At Leisure</p>	<p>This is the Trafalgar tour for those who like to relax and have an easy pace holiday and see Europe at their leisure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sleep in later - No start on travel days before 9 am

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	<p>- 2 to 3 night stays in each city you visit so relax and enjoy your first class accommodations</p>
<p>History</p>	<p>Trafalgar Tours started almost by accident and for the first 12 years of its existence was known by the name of Industrial Recreational Services. Through the 60 years following its inception, Trafalgar has become a world leader in travel by continually adapting to bring their guests better touring experiences.</p> <p>1947 - After leaving the army - where he had spent the war working in intelligence and personnel - Bill Nunn, Trafalgar's founding father sets up Industrial Recreational Services (IRS), organizing group travel and entertainment for industry.</p> <p>1949 - IRS offers trips to the London Palladium to see Harpo Marx. The cost includes return coach travel and a reserved seat at the show for 12 shillings! (about one dollar). IRS moves offices to 139 Grand Buildings in Trafalgar Square, the landmark which 10 years later would give the company its now familiar name.</p> <p>1957 - The leisure side of the business gains popularity, Mr. Nunn and Mr. Appelby sell some of their shares to the Overseas Visitors Club in London and to Mosenthal, a South African conglomerate. It is here that the strong links between South Africa and Trafalgar were made, and which still contribute to Trafalgar's success today.</p> <p>1958 - IRS starts operating European Coach Tours like the 21-day "Young Commonwealth Special". The Overseas Visitors Club (OVC) moves to Earls Court. For South Africans, the OVC in London becomes a home away from home in Europe.</p> <p>1959 - The company changes its name to Trafalgar Tours.</p> <p>1960's - At the height of the Cold War, Trafalgar organises tours to Moscow despite the difficulty in arranging visas.</p> <p>1961 - Trafalgar opens its first overseas office in the heart of Johannesburg, South Africa.</p> <p>1962 - Trafalgar charters Edinburgh Castle, a 1600 passenger ship, for a 14-day voyage from Cape Town to Southampton. The charter costs only £28, and the ship was double booked within a week. Several more charters follow over the next 3-years.</p> <p>1964 - Trafalgar expands into new areas and the original partners sell</p>

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	<p>their shares to Nick Tarsh. Mr. Tarsh, who had studied law and economics at Cambridge, sells Tan Travel and disbands the overseas sales offices.</p> <p>1966 - Rhodesia declares independence and Trafalgar loses money when charter flights between London and Salisbury come to an end. Mr. Tarsh flies to South Africa and introduces the concept of newspaper tours based on travel offers to readers and the first tour is a sell-out. Mr. Tarsh revives the Union Castle Line charters between Cape Town and Southampton.</p> <p>1967 - Newspaper tours are introduced to Australia. This market replaces South Africa as Trafalgar's most productive.</p> <p>1970's - The Tollman family becomes involved with Trafalgar and with their tremendous knowledge and experience in the travel industry, proceeded to take the company to new heights.</p> <p>1997 - New programs offer tours to a wider variety of destinations including North America, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, South Africa and the Far East.</p> <p>2004 - Trafalgar expands its European product with luxurious new "River Cruises" and revolutionary new products like experiences.</p> <p>2012 – Trafalgar's tours become "Guided Vacations", personalizing the holiday experience as never before.</p>
<p>Trafalgar Value</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pay 12 months in advance and save 10% of the tour cost 2. Trafalgar Travel Club for loyal customers: save 5% of coach tour 3. For groups of 5-8: save 5% of coach tour 4. For groups of 9 and more: save 50% off one person 5. Young travellers aged 5-17 save 10% 6. Book two tours and save 5% for one of the tours 7. Travel with three people sharing one room and each of you will receive a discount off the land-only portion 8. Share a room and save: Trafalgar will pair you with another traveler of the same gender to avoid single supplements 9. There are big savings when you travel as a family with Trafalgar and join one of their 3 new Family Experiences: when a child 14 years and under shares either a triple or quad room with 2 adults, you can save up to 40% on the adult price.
<p>Europe and Britain in 2018</p>	<p>Trafalgar boasts 3 brochures to discover Britain & Europe:</p> <p>- CostSaver Europe and Britain - They pass savings on to you, so you</p>

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	<p>enjoy a quality tour while benefiting from unbeatable value</p> <p>- Europe and Britain - Enjoy Trafalgar's tours with even more choice, and 8 travel styles from At Leisure to Hidden Journeys.</p> <p>- Family Experiences - vacations designed exclusively for families</p>
Travel Directors	<p>Trafalgar's Travel Directors are amongst the finest in the industry. They are experienced travellers, learned historians and culture buffs. Their expertise and years of travel make them the world's best travel professionals. They are the ideal personal guides and can be relied upon for their good humour and adventurous natures. Through their in-depth expertise, you'll discover the history and be immersed in cultures of the places you visit.</p> <p>Your Travel Directors can help interpret, steer you towards the best bargains and give you those pieces of information that can make your holiday truly memorable. Whether it's the best shops for watches in Switzerland or arranging a gondola ride in Venice, they can be relied upon to help. They are there to make things smoother, more interesting and ultimately more enjoyable.</p>
Fellow Travellers	<p>Trafalgar sells its tours in more than 38 countries around the world. It is therefore quite typical to find 6-10 different nationalities on any one tour. You'll forge new friendships with other Trafalgar guests from Australia, America, Canada, Europe, New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore, Japan, and the U.K.. There will be a maximum of 49 people on First Class tours throughout Europe.</p>
Accommodation	<p>A good night's sleep and a comfortable place to relax are invaluable when on holiday. All Trafalgar Hotels are carefully selected so you'll enjoy comfortable rooms and quality amenities. From arrival to departure, your Tour Director will take care of your check-in and check-out, as well as portage service for your luggage.</p> <p>To ensure you have complete peace of mind your travel documentation includes the contact details for each of your hotels, so friends and relatives can easily stay in touch.</p> <p>Trafalgar's First Class Hotels, Europe</p> <p>On a Trafalgar First Class holiday in Europe and you'll stay at some of the most respected hotel chains in the world, including Accor, Hilton, Westin, Marriott, Renaissance, Sheraton and Radisson. These hotels are rated First Class, Superior First Class or Deluxe. Convenient hotel locations put you close to shops, sights, restaurants and landmarks. Most of these hotels include satellite or cable TV, mini-bar, room service, concierge, restaurant and bar, swimming pool, laundry and dry-cleaning services.</p> <p>Trafalgar's First Class hotels include: Copthorne Tara, London - close to</p>

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	<p>Harrod's; Hilton, Paris - beside the Eiffel Tower; Mercure Colosseum, Rome - near the Colosseum; Intercontinental, Budapest; Panorama hotel, Amalfi Coast, Italy</p> <p>Trafalgar's CostSaver Hotels, Europe Enjoy a stay at one of Trafalgar's CostSaver hotels and you'll be guaranteed a stay at a Superior Tourist Class or First Class hotel. Trafalgar has recently enhanced its range of CostSaver hotels to include more First Class and Moderate First Class hotels. Your room will have a private bathroom or shower and many will also have sat TV.</p>
<p>Dining</p>	<p>Eating is one of the best parts of any holiday and Trafalgar makes sure that no matter which part of the world you're travelling to, your taste buds get the full culinary experience.</p> <p>Trafalgar's First Class, Europe While on tour in Europe you'll be treated to continental style buffet breakfasts with fruit juice, cold meats and cheese, cereals, bread rolls, preserves and tea or coffee. When making your way through the English or Irish countryside enjoy cooked breakfasts of bacon, sausage, egg, tomatoes, mushrooms and more. On some evenings you'll enjoy 3-course meals specially prepared by your hotel's Chef - all included in the tour price.</p> <p>Trafalgar's First Class, Exclusive Dinner Highlights If you are our guest on a tour for longer than a week, you'll be treated to specialty dinners at selected restaurants, featuring delicious regional cuisine. Enjoy a traditional 'roast beef and Yorkshire pud' in an English pub, sample a true Scandinavian smorgasbord or be served mouth-watering pasta dishes in an Italian trattoria. These exclusive Dinner Highlights are more than meals, they are unforgettable experiences.</p> <p>Trafalgar's CostSaver, Europe When travelling on a CostSaver tour through Europe, you will enjoy a cooked English breakfast in the UK & Ireland and a cold buffet breakfast in London and Europe. 50% of evening meals are also included. Included dinners are set 3-course menus planned by your hotel's Chef to reflect a taste of Europe.</p>
<p>Kids Discount</p>	<p>Share your holiday memories with your family and take advantage of a 10% discount on the land-only portion of your tour. Young travellers must be under the age of 18 years old on the tour departure date and be accompanied by an adult.</p> <p>On all escorted tours, children under 5 years old are not accepted.</p>

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Groups Discounts	<p>If a group of 5 - 8 people travel together a discount of 5% per person applies to the land-only portion of your tour. So, it pays to get together with your family and friends!</p> <p>Save even more for 9 or more - If you have a group of 9 or more people travelling together on the same scheduled tour, then you automatically qualify for more savings. Your savings will be determined by the number of people travelling. Ask your travel agent for details.</p>
Save on a 2nd Tour	<p>Book two Trafalgar holidays, each 8 days or longer, for a reduction of 5% off the land portion of the tour with the shortest duration. Take three tours and save on two; ask your travel professional for suggestions on your perfect tour combination.</p>
Last Minute Deals	<p>Check out this website page for the latest deals for Ireland: https://www.trafalgar.com/can/europe-and-britain-2018</p>
Tipping	<p>Tips are customarily given to your Tour Director, Driver and Local Guides at your discretion. The recommended amounts are: Travel Directors \$4 per day, Drivers \$2.50 per day and Local Guides \$1 per day.</p>
How to Book	<p>To book your Trafalgar vacation, simply visit your local travel agent. Your travel agent will answer your questions and assist you with choosing the perfect Trafalgar experience.</p> <p>There is a travel agent finder on their website at: http://www.trafalgar.com/CAN/How_To_Book</p>
Sustainable Travel	<p>Protecting the environment and the people and places their tours visit is a top priority for Trafalgar. They want to help ensure these remain for future generations to enjoy and are committed to ensuring they minimize the environmental impact of their operations around the world.</p> <p>Every time we travel, whether by car, train, plane or coach, we are burning fossil fuels and contributing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. And while there are many ways to travel while on holiday, they are pleased to advise that by choosing a Trafalgar escorted tour, you are opting for one of the most environmentally friendly ways to go. A grid on their website shows you the amount of carbon dioxide emitted per km for a passenger traveling on various forms of transport which clearly shows coach transport as emitting significantly less carbon dioxide than other forms of transport. With carbon dioxide being one of the main causes of global warming, it's good to know that buying an escorted tour holiday is a better way to travel.</p> <p>With constant improvements in technology newer engines offer greater fuel efficiency while also emitting less pollutants which is why Trafalgar is continually upgrading its motor coach fleet and are proud to have one of the best in Europe.</p>

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	<p>Trafalgar are reducing the carbon footprints and environmental impact of their offices by introducing recycling, energy reduction and waste minimisation projects as well as supporting local community projects where employees live and work. Staff are proud to be involved in making a difference and Trafalgar will be encourages staff to spend two working days a year volunteering for charitable projects.</p>
<p>For more information on Trafalgar Tours</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pick up a brochure at your local travel agent - Website: www.trafalgar.com - Pinterest: https://www.pinterest.ca/trafalgartravel/ - Videos: http://www.trafalgar.com/can/insider-experiences/watch-our-videos <p>Facebook: www.facebook.com/TrafalgarTravel Twitter: https://twitter.com/trafalgartalk</p>

<p>Tour Example: Irish Experience</p>	<p>IRISH EXPERIENCE: 11 DAYS 2 COUNTRIES 6 CITIES</p> <p>Dublin and Belfast feature in this Country Explorer trip with Trafalgar that journeys through the North and South of Ireland.</p> <p>With a spring in your step and a little Irish zest for life, this journey traversing north and south will introduce you to such natural wonders as Giant's Causeway and the Cliffs of Moher. Learn all about Belfast's tumultuous history from a local Cabbie, visit Ireland's most romantic castle, Kylemore Abbey, and travel through the lush Garden of Ireland, County Wicklow.</p> <p>DAY 1 ARRIVE DUBLIN AND AFTERNOON SIGHTSEEING Embrace your playful side and indulge in the allure of the lively Irish capital - a small city with a lot of heart and yours to explore before meeting your Travel Director and fellow travellers this afternoon for a sightseeing tour with your Local Specialist. View St. Patrick's Cathedral, the stately Georgian Squares and Trinity College. You spend this evening at the Glasnevin Trust for a Welcome Reception with a Local Specialist. Over drinks and canapés, hear about the brave characters from Ireland's recent history and toast to your upcoming journey through the Emerald Isle. HOTEL Mespil MEALS Welcome Reception</p> <p>DAY 2 DUBLIN – BELFAST Leaving the cosmopolitan streets of Dublin behind, travel to Northern</p>
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Ireland and the bustling city of Belfast, where you will have some free time to enjoy a spud for lunch or perhaps some fish and chips. Later, meet your Local Specialist 'Cabbie' for an insider view of the city's living history during a journey through its vibrant streets in a real Black Cab. You spend the rest of the afternoon at leisure, or perhaps join an Optional Experience.

HOTEL Park Inn By Radisson

MEALS Full Breakfast

OPTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Belfast Walk with Fish and Chips: What better way to soak up the atmosphere of this lively city than to join a local specialist for a stroll through its hidden side streets? You'll have an included drink in a historic pub and continue to a local restaurant for a quintessentially traditional meal; fish and chips. Adult Price: £39.00

DAY 3

BELFAST – GIANT'S CAUSEWAY – LONDONDERRY/DERRY (2 NIGHTS)

The tragic story of the Titanic and the thousands of passengers that lost their lives takes centre stage on this morning's Cultural Insight visit to the award-winning Titanic Belfast Visitor Centre. You leave the city behind, journeying through the beautiful Antrim coast road, past scenic glens and rugged beaches, arriving at Giant's Causeway to walk in the footsteps of Finn MacCool. Take some time to admire the natural spectacle of 40,000 interlocking basalt columns before journeying to Londonderry, your home for the next two nights.

HOTEL Everglades

MEALS Full Breakfast

OPTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Dinner and Drinks in Derry: Join the rest of the group for a cosy and relaxing evening of dinner and a drink in a locally-loved restaurant. Adult Price: £42.00

DAY 4

LONDONDERRY/DERRY SIGHTSEEING

Join your Local Specialist for a walk along the 17th century city walls and see the turbulent Bogside neighbourhood with its street murals depicting the history of the 'Troubles'. Spend the rest of the afternoon at leisure. Walk along the pretty River Foyle and across the Peace Bridge, or consider joining an Optional Experience to the beautiful Inishowen Peninsula with its rich history. This evening, dine at your hotel.

MEALS Full Breakfast, Dinner

OPTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Experience the Inishowen Peninsula: Enjoy a guided visit to the

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Inishowen Peninsula. This spectacular circuit will take you on a journey to the most north-western tip of Ireland. Here you'll visit Grianan Aileach, a circle stone fort which was the royal seat of the O'Neill clan, situated amongst spectacular views. Adult Price: £19.00

DAY 5

LONDONDERRY/DERRY – BELLEEK – GALWAY (2 NIGHTS)

You meander through the lush countryside to Belleek Pottery where you'll enjoy a Cultural Insight demonstration and watch talented craftsmen create exquisite collectables that have graced homes since the mid-19th century. Arrive in Galway later enjoying free time to explore its imposing stone Cathedral or stroll through Eyre Square, which John F. Kennedy visited in 1963.

HOTEL Maldron/Connacht

MEALS Full Breakfast

OPTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Galway Castle Banquet: Drive to Galway Castle where you'll begin your evening of medieval entertainment. This will be accompanied by a delicious dinner where wine will flow, and you'll be treated to songs and the marvellous Irish art of story-telling. Adult Price: €67.00

DAY 6

CONNEMARA EXCURSION

The rugged beauty of Connemara was captured in the film 'The Quiet Man' with John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara, and its loughs and mountains are yours to explore today during a scenic drive. You arrive at Kylemore Abbey later to visit the country's most romantic castle and ramble through the hidden nooks of its Victorian walled garden before returning to Galway for dinner at your hotel tonight.

MEALS Full Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7

GALWAY – CLIFFS OF MOHER – SHANNON ESTUARY FERRY – CO. KERRY (2 NIGHTS)

See the imposing sheer Cliffs of Moher rise up 700 feet from the pounding sea below and learn about the history of these natural phenomena with a visit to the 'Atlantic Edge' exhibition. You join Oonagh and scavenge for ingredients that will be used to create your unique Be My Guest lunch at the O'Brien's homely Barrtra Seafood restaurant along the world famous Wild Atlantic Way. Enjoy spectacular views of the dramatic coastline before boarding a ferry across the tranquil River Shannon estuary. Then continue through beautiful County Kerry to your hotel in Killarney, where you'll have an evening at leisure to soak up the craic at a traditional Irish ceilidh.

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HOTEL Killarney Towers/Ashe
MEALS Full Breakfast. Be My Guest Dining
OPTIONAL EXPERIENCES
Irish Ceilidh Evening - The Irish Ceilidh epitomises how music and dance were enjoyed in rural Ireland, especially on festive occasions. The craic - welcoming, jolly, fun and informal - is accompanied with plenty of food and drink. There's no more enjoyable way to understand Irish culture. Adult Price: €65.00

DAY 8

RING OF KERRY EXCURSION

The breathtaking landscapes of Iveragh Peninsula provide a mesmerising backdrop for our scenic coastal drive around the 'Ring of Kerry' - an unimaginably beautiful natural setting that is among Ireland's most magical and memorable. En route you will see Killorglin, which was immortalised in the film, Ryan's Daughter, as well as Daniel O'Connell's Cahirciveen, the fishing village of Waterville, the Black Valley and Moll's Gap.

MEALS Full Breakfast, Dinner

OPTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Experience a Jaunting Cart Ride - Enjoy a traditional pony and trap ride through the beautiful Bourn-Vincent National Park. During your journey, your Local Specialist will share fascinating anecdotes about the area and Ireland. Adult Price: €21.00

Visit Muckross House and its Gardens - Come to Muckross House and its beautiful gardens. With a backdrop of oak-clad mountains, enjoy taking in the towering azaleas and rhododendrons as you meander along the shores of the lakes. The 18th century house contains some wonderful examples of furniture and paintings, including a portrait of King James VI, for whom Shakespeare wrote Macbeth. Adult Price: €21.00

DAY 9

CO. KERRY – BLARNEY – WATERFORD – KILKENNY

Today you acquire the 'gift of the gab' bending over backwards to kiss the Blarney Stone before you travel to Waterford via Youghal. Admire the delicate creations of fine crystal during a visit to the House of Waterford Crystal where you will enjoy a Cultural Insight demonstration by master craftsmen and see their talents transformed into the exquisite pieces that have enticed buyers for centuries. This evening you arrive in Kilkenny, the picturesque lakeside village with its imposing 12th century castle, once the seat of the Butlers of Ormonde.

HOTEL Hotel Kilkenny

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	<p>MEALS Full Breakfast OPTIONAL EXPERIENCES Sports and Music - Irish Style: Take advantage of this opportunity to learn about the ancient sport of hurling at a local pub. Moving outside, you'll enjoy a live demonstration by village locals and even have a chance to try your hand at this game, said to be the oldest and fastest field sport in the world. Later, live music will greet you on returning to the pub. Adult Price: €27.00</p> <p>DAY 10 KILKENNY – NEW ROSS – CO. WICKLOW – DUBLIN Your first stop today is in New Ross, where you'll see the monument to John F. Kennedy, who visited his ancestral family hometown in 1963. The tragic plight of Irish emigrants during the potato famine of the 1800s is explored during a Cultural Insight at the nearby three-masted Famine Ship Dunbrody. Journey through the lush Irish countryside of County Wicklow, the Garden of Ireland, and back to Dublin where you'll spend your final evening with your travel companions sharing stories of your memorable journey through Ireland at a Farewell Dinner. HOTEL Ballsbridge MEALS Full Breakfast, Farewell Dinner</p> <p>DAY 11 DEPART DUBLIN It's time to say a fond farewell to Ireland and newfound friends as you prepare to end your wonderful Irish experience. Transfers are available. Conditions apply. MEALS Full Breakfast</p>
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<p>IRELAND</p>	<p>Ireland is one of the top destinations for Canadians. The last few years have seen huge growth in travel to the Emerald Isle - and for good reason! Ireland is just a short 6-hour flight from Ontario and Quebec - not that different to a flight to Vancouver, for example - and Ireland is the closest point to Canada in Europe.</p> <p>Getting to Ireland has never been easier with year-round direct access and direct flights in 2018 from Toronto to Shannon and Montreal to Dublin. Once you arrive in Ireland there is no language barrier, and you will find the warmest welcome on the planet from the friendly, laid back people.</p>
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Ireland's popularity also springs from the wide variety of experiences on offer - visitors delight in the spectacular scenic landscape, off the beaten path destinations, vibrant cities, a wealth of heritage, cultural attractions and an exciting festival and events calendar that entertains 365 days a year! Any time is a great time to visit as festivals and attractions are open year-round. Savvy travelers may want to consider the Spring and Fall as they are often less crowded, great value and the mild Irish climate can be lovely at these times of year.

Fall is a particularly lovely time. Did you know that the average temperature in Ireland in September ranges between 10 and 18 degrees? In September there is an average of over 4 hours sunshine per day and less rainfall than in the peak month of August. Compare the mild winter temperatures in Ireland to Canada and it's a no brainer!

Not only is the weather in the Fall often very pleasant – Ireland is less crowded and better value in the off-peak months. It is a good time to enjoy a city break in Dublin or Belfast and Ireland's excellent restaurants, accommodations and tours are open all year round. It is safe, English-speaking and with great tourism infrastructure that makes it easy to see the sights. And the fabulous history, culture, festivals, stunning scenery - and golf - are waiting for you 12 months of the year.

In Ireland you can discover history that goes back earlier than the pyramids, and marvel at some of the most stunning coastal scenery you will find anywhere.

The awe-inspiring Wild Atlantic Way

The Wild Atlantic Way, stretching all the way from the Inishowen Peninsula in Co. Donegal to Kinsale in Co. Cork is amongst the world's best driving tours. It stretches along 2,500 km of the wildest, most captivating scenery found anywhere - with lots to do and see along the way. Go whale watching and then enjoy an amazing seafood dinner in County Cork; take a walk along the dramatic Cliffs of Moher and stop for homemade ice cream. Or see the Northern Lights along the Donegal coastline.

Northern Ireland's Causeway Coastal Route

As well as the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland has more than its fair share of stunning coastal scenery. In Northern Ireland the majestic Causeway Coastal Route, famed for its dramatic landscapes, is counted as one of the world's great road journeys. Not to be missed is the famous Giant's

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Causeway, but there is also a new addition to the coastal experience that allows you to walk along the very edge of the Irish Sea.

The Gobbins coastal path was originally created as a tourist attraction for the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway Company in 1902, with visitors paying 6d to enjoy a 'perfect marvel of engineering'. Now the path has been reopened to provide an unexpected white-knuckle walk which will thrill those with a sense of adventure and delight those who are looking to experience the coast up close.

Ireland's Ancient East

Ireland's Ancient East represents a wonderful opportunity to experience 5,000 years of European history in a compact area. The Ancient East area allows visitors to get off the beaten track to see, hear, touch and feel the imprints made over millennia by the settlers in this beautiful landscape.

Ancient Man, Early Christians, Medieval Lords, Colonial Settlers and their descendants have all been seduced by Ireland's lush, green and fertile lands. And it's easy to explore as visitors can go at their own pace to discover tombs older than the pyramids, a Viking settlement or castles and fortresses. And, as everywhere else you go in Ireland, there are stories from the friendly locals who are some of the best story tellers in the world.

Not to be missed is the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Newgrange - a Stone Age monument in the Boyne Valley, County Meath. Newgrange was constructed about 3,200 B.C., which makes it older than both Stonehenge and the Great Pyramids of Giza. It is a large circular mound with a stone passageway and chambers inside. The mound is ringed by 97 large kerbstones, some of which are richly decorated with megalithic art.

Setting for Films and TV Series

The Irish countryside is so beautiful that it is becoming a movie star in its own right!

Much of the Fantasy blockbuster TV series "Game of Thrones" is filmed on location in Northern Ireland. If you are a fan – Northern Ireland is the epicentre of all things Game of Thrones. Aside from the landscapes that evoke true fantasy - there's a good reason why Northern Ireland was picked by Game of Thrones location scouts. There are castles

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	<p>everywhere; incredible structures that catapult you right to the heart of the mythical land of Westeros.</p> <p>Northern Ireland offers fans a self-drive tour through scene-stealing locations along the Causeway Coast and Glens. And the Titanic Studios in Belfast are also frequently used for filming.</p> <p>Star Wars: The Force Awakens sent the global box-office into hyper drive. Since 1977, the record-breaking movie franchise has travelled through more than a few galaxies. This time around the cast and crew jetted into a little town called Portmagee, County Kerry, on Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way, to discover a dream filming location. The heart stopping scenery of Skellig Michael was depicted as the hideout of Luke Skywalker in the movie. Skellig Michael, a remote island in Co Kerry, housed a monastery from around the 6th to the 12th century, and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.</p> <p>In addition the popular TV series "Vikings" on the History Channel is filmed in Co Wicklow. This is a very appropriate setting as Viking heritage runs deep in Ireland's Ancient East.</p>
Location	Western Europe, between the UK and the Atlantic Ocean
Geography	<p>Ireland is divided into 4 provinces: Ulster, Connacht, Leinster, and Munster</p> <p>With a landmass of approximately 84,434 sq. km, it is at most 484km north to south, and 274km east to west. No point in Ireland is farther than 113km from one of its encircling waters: the Atlantic Ocean, the Irish Sea, or the St. George and North channels.</p>
Name	From Irlanda, meaning the land of Ir, who was the son of Mile, the first man of that clan to be buried on the island
Population	6.4 million, with 4.6 in Eire and 1.8 in Northern Ireland.
Language	<p>English and Gaelic; road signs are bilingual.</p> <p>One of the most important elements in Irish culture is the Irish language. Ireland's West is fortunate to have Gaeltachts, or Irish-speaking areas, in both Galway and Mayo. In these areas, you will notice the Irish language on signs and shop-fronts as well as in everyday speech. Here, people still play music, sing and dance in the old traditional manner.</p>
Currency	<p>In the Republic of Ireland the currency is the Euro; one Euro = \$1.54 Cdn (March 2018)</p> <p>In Northern Ireland, the British Pound is the currency; one Pound = \$1.75 (March 2018).</p>
Tipping	Most hotels and guesthouses add a service charge to the bill, usually 12.5% to 15%, although some smaller places add only 10% or nothing at all. Always check to see what amount, if any, has been added to your

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	bill. For porters or bellhops, tip around \$1.50 per piece of luggage. For taxi drivers, hairdressers, and other providers of service, tip as you would at home, an average of 10% to 15%.
Government	Republic of Ireland is a parliamentary democracy headed by President; Northern Ireland is part of United Kingdom
Documentation	A valid Canadian passport is needed to visit the island of Ireland. If travelling on a Canadian passport, no visa is required, but ensure that your Passport expiry date is a minimum of three months beyond your planned stay in Ireland.
Time zone	5 hours ahead of EST
Health	No health documents or vaccinations are required to enter Ireland or Northern Ireland from Canada, but you should ensure that you have adequate travel insurance for your trip
Safety tips	Advice is standard for travel anywhere: don't leave cars unlocked or cameras, binoculars, or other expensive equipment unattended. Be alert and aware of your surroundings, and do not wander in lonely areas alone at night. Other than that, Ireland is one of the safest destinations for visitors to Europe.

CLIMATE	
General climate	Ireland's climate is influenced most by the Atlantic Ocean. As a result, it doesn't have the extreme temperatures that other countries at similar latitude would have. The average temperature is a mild 10°C.
Today's weather	Dublin: 15 degrees Centigrade with a sun and cloud mix (17 th March 2018)
Best time to visit	Perhaps the best time to visit is in spring and fall, when weather falls somewhere in between bad and good, and you still get winter prices and no crowds. And of course, St Patrick's Day in March is always special!

GETTING THERE	
Flights	First and foremost - getting to Ireland has never been easier. Aer Lingus and Air Canada route are now flying year-round from Toronto to Dublin, and Air Transat will continue their seasonal service from Toronto and Montreal to both Dublin and Shannon. WestJet will also fly seasonally from Toronto/St. John's to Dublin. And ASL airlines, formerly Europe Airpost also provide seasonal service Toronto to Dublin.
Cities	Dublin Elegant, sophisticated, historic and hip, Dublin is one of Europe's brightest capitals, with a youthful vibe and infectious energy. From its origins as a prosperous, multi-cultural modern city, Dublin's history spans more than 1,000 years. Explore its many historical and cultural hot-spots, lounge in cool bars or traditional pubs, enjoy the breathtaking

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	<p>scenery of the Dublin Mountains and the rugged Atlantic coastline, or transport yourself into the lively arts, music, theater and dance scene. Visit Dublin and make the city your own.</p> <p>Be enchanted by Dublin, a city of elegant Georgian boulevards and pulsating night life that is both cosmopolitan and intensely Celtic. Take in the Book of Kells at Trinity College, learn about the City's great literary tradition at the Dublin Writers Museum, enjoy a whiskey tasting at the Old Jameson Distillery, or sip a free pint of "Ireland's national drink" at the Guinness Storehouse which boasts one of the best panoramas of the bright city lights.</p> <p>Dublin attractions: Trinity College, Phoenix Park, Dublin Castle, Old Jameson Distillery, James Joyce Tower and Museum, Dublin Zoo, The Guinness Storehouse (in 1759 original brewery, Ireland's no 1 visitor attraction)</p> <p>With 40% of the Republic's population living within 100km of Dublin, the capital is the centre of the profound, high-speed changes that have been transforming Ireland into an increasingly European country, and it has been changed the most. Within an hour's drive of Dublin are Dalkey, Dún Laoghaire, and many other engaging coastal towns, the rural beauty of the Wicklow Mountains, and the prehistoric ruins in County Meath.</p> <p>Belfast is the capital of Northern Ireland and the north's major city. Start your travel research at the city website: www.GoToBelfast.com Belfast is now a must-see destination and has experienced a large growth in visitor numbers over the last few years; it's been voted as 'city on the rise' by Lonely Planet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Luxury Belfast hotels and restaurants • New Ulster Scots attractions • Exciting times for Belfast – historic past with a vibrant new future • New CS Lewis trail • The new Titanic Quarter is ready to receive visitors • The range and quality of accommodation, food, place to see and things to do (festivals and events each month throughout the year) is now amazing. • The two yellow Harland & Wolff cranes that dominate the Belfast skyline are nicknamed 'Samson (1974) and Goliath (1969) after the two Biblical figures – each crane has a span of 140 metres and can lift loads of up to 840 tonnes to a height of 70 metres, making a combined lifting capacity of over 1,600 tonnes, one of the largest in the world.
City Breaks	Dublin and Belfast City Breaks are always in season!

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	<p>The shoulder season is a great time for city breaks. Whether in the vibrant city of Dublin taking in the Temple Bar Tradfest in January, visiting Trinity College and the Book of Kells, touring the Jameson Distillery or discovering a hidden gem – the Little Museum of Dublin...</p> <p>In just a two hour drive you can experience Belfast with a visit to Titanic Belfast Visitor Centre– recently named the best group visitor attraction in Europe. And you can always extend your golf season at one of the many beautiful courses in Northern Ireland. Ireland is a great year-round destination.</p>
Distances	<p>Cork to Dublin: 256km Belfast to Dublin: 165km</p>
Ferries	<p>Fishguard in Wales to Rosslare in Ireland is just 1hr 39min on Stena Lynx Fast Craft across the Irish Sea.</p> <p>Aran Islands, County Galway: Crossing the choppy waters to the remote Aran Islands by ferry is an experience in itself. Once you get there you're free to explore the island's patchwork fields, quiet pace of life, ancient monuments, awesome cliffs and crystal-clear waters. Or you can marvel at the storytellers in the local pubs!</p>
Trains	<p>8 trains daily Belfast to Dublin; express in 2 hours; Irish Rover Rail Pass - 5 out of 15 days rail travel throughout Ireland Cost: €143. Children are discounted.</p>
Car Rental	<p>All major car rental companies are represented; renting is fairly expensive as is gas.</p> <p>Driving is on the left and most cars are manual.</p>
Buses	<p>Buses link towns and cities by convenient frequent service all across Ireland north & south. The Dublin - Belfast Express coach service operates 7 times daily Monday - Saturday</p>
Passes	<p>Dublin Pass: provides discounts at over 30 attractions plus Aircoach from Dublin Airport; go to http://www.dublinpass.ie</p>

ACCOMMODATION TYPES	<p>Castles and manor houses; hotels and guesthouses; B&B; Farmhouses; Hostels; Cottages and holiday homes; castle hotel such as: Ashford Castle, co Mayo; Dromoland Castle, Co Clare</p> <p>One personal favourite of mine: Malmaison Hotel in Belfast was originally two seed warehouses belonging to two rival firms, McCausland and Lytle. Look at Lytle's (on the left) for its fantastic stonework friezes of nut-crunching squirrels, exotic birds and plants; and at McCausland's for heads illustrating five continents, Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Now one of Belfast's most prestigious hotels, with an inviting bar and superb French Brasserie Restaurant.</p>
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	<p>Castle Hotels Imagine having an entire castle just for yourself and your family and friends, without having the bother of marrying into royalty. Ireland's castles can offer such an experience in sumptuously decorated places. Some even with a few ghosts roaming the corridors. Mingle with nobility at Crom Castle, which has self-catering apartments in its West Wing and an actual Lord (Erne) living in the other wing. Lovingly restored Cloghan Castle will transport you back 800 years for a party your friends and family will never forget. What better way to spend an evening than to be wined and dined in a magical castle? Throw on an apron and cook for your guests or be treated like royalty with a helping hand. Crack open the mead (or red wine) in Killiane Castle and party like it's 1699! Glin Castle, County Limerick Glin Castle, home of the Knight of Glin and his wife Madam FitzGerald, stands on the banks of the River Shannon amidst a 500-acre demesne. The castle is open to visitors from March to November and is a spectacular place to stay with seriously luxurious rooms and an authentic castle atmosphere. Kinnitty Castle Hotel, County Offaly Kinnitty Castle offers old world elegance, luxury and comfort. On top of that, you can enjoy friendly ghosts, a dungeon bar, hot stone massage at the first-rate spa and a spot of clay pigeon shooting.</p>
<p>Bed and Breakfast</p>	<p>Consider a B&B for some or your entire trip, to connect with the real Irish people and experience Irish family life. B&B Ireland has over forty years' experience in the promotion of bed and breakfast properties in Ireland and represent over nine hundred B&Bs throughout Ireland in urban, coastal, farm and countryside locations. Guests will enjoy comfortable surroundings, wonderful hearty home-cooked breakfasts and the opportunity to see inside an Irish home and meet the locals – your hosts. All B&B's offer "The Welcome" – guests staying in all family homes are greeted by their host on arrival. They are offered hospitality in the form of a cup of tea or coffee and home-baking. Their host will take time to enquire about their trip and offer tips, advice and assistance with their plans during their stay. You can also find Pet-Friendly B&Bs throughout Ireland - ensuring a warm welcome for your four-legged best friend as well. www.bandbireland.com</p>

<p>TARGET GROUPS</p>	
<p>Kids</p>	<p>The Irish love kids, and Ireland is a wonderfully welcoming place to visit for families with children. Most public places and visitor attractions cater for those children, with changing facilities, children's menus, high chairs and ramps for strollers. Child-friendly activities available in Ireland's</p>

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	<p>West include pony trekking, sandcastles, swimming, sailing, adventure centres, boat rides, canoeing, learning music.</p> <p>The Odyssey Complex in Belfast is great for kids and is home to W5 Interactive Discovery Centre, the IMAX Cinema, Hard Rock Café and the Odyssey Arena – home of the Belfast Giants Ice Hockey Team. Experience exotic animals at close range in Belfast Zoo, built into towering Cave Hill, or get a more ‘hands-on’ experience at Streamvale Open Farm.</p> <p>Here’s some suggestions for Western Ireland: Aillwee Caves, County Clare Spooky and atmospheric, the Aillwee Caves make a great place to bring kids who aren’t afraid of the dark. Formed by the melt-waters of a prehistoric ice age, the caves are labyrinthine and dramatic. Ards Forest Park, County Donegal This 1,200-acre park is the perfect spot for a family outing. Situated on the shores of Sheephaven Bay on the rugged Donegal coastline, it’s filled with woodland, rivers, picnic areas, sandy beaches, and play areas. Atlantaquaria, County Galway Kids can explore the deep with Ireland’s largest aquarium, which houses 170 species of marine and freshwater life including stingrays, seahorses and the angel shark. There are sleepy starfish to hold, a load of fish to feed and a lot to learn about Bradán, the salmon, King of Fish! Birr Castle Demesne and Ireland’s Historic Science Centre Birr Castle is the private home of the Parsons family and the stunning demesne has become famous for its exotic collection of trees and plants. The Science Centre is filled with 19th-century astronomical instruments, cameras, photographs and photographic equipment. The Blue Flag Beaches The West enjoys a dramatic Atlantic coastline dotted with gorgeous villages and stunning beaches. The Blue Flag Award confirms good environmental standards, good sanitation and safety facilities of these beaches. Boat cruises on Lough Corrib, County Galway Relax with a wonderful boat cruise on the pretty Lough Corrib. Bunratty Castle and Folk Park, County Clare This 15th-century castle has been restored to its full glory and is one of the finest surviving examples of an Irish tower house. The Folk Park is a living museum that aims to show what life was like in rural Ireland 100 years ago, with authentic reconstructions of farmhouses, cottages and shops.</p>
<p>Teens</p>	<p>Lots of outdoor activities; the Clarence Hotel in Dublin – owned by U2; castles galore; and the music scene is fabulous. The ‘Belfast Eye’. Belfast has its own ‘Belfast Eye’ giving panoramic views of the city. Operated by World Tourist Attractions</p>

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	<p>(www.worldtouristattractions.co.uk) the 60m high 365 tonne observation wheel has 42 capsules seating up to 6 adults and it gives unique 360 degree views of the city, its hills and the lough. The 'big wheel' is situated in the grounds of City Hall and reaches over the height of its dome.</p> <p>Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge: a scary swinging rope bridge to a sea stack off the North Antrim coast. Been there, done that: it's great!</p>
Romance	A lovely people and country to spend time together...How about a horse-drawn Romany caravan along the country lanes of Ireland?
Honeymoons & Weddings	Great venues – including castle hotels and dramatic scenery – help make Ireland a good destination to make these arrangements
Genealogy	<p>There are approx. 70 million people around the world who claim Irish ancestry and close to 5 million of them are right here in Canada - so it's no surprise many Canadians look to explore their Irish ancestry. There are many resources in place to help explore.</p> <p>Tracing your Roots To begin your research here are three useful websites:</p> <p>A useful first step is the Irish Government website Irish Genealogy: www.irishgenealogy.ie</p> <p>Early 20th-century census returns can be perused at the National Archives website: www.nationalarchives.ie</p> <p>The Irish Family History Foundation has a website run on behalf of county-based genealogy centres: www.familysearch.org</p> <p>Once you get to Ireland there is lots of help is available to trace your roots. Throughout Ireland there are numerous centres for genealogical research. Every county in Ireland has a genealogy centre manned by professional genealogists and many churches have records too. So, if you find out which town your ancestors come from, be sure to visit the local parish.</p> <p>In Dublin, the National Library, National Archives and General Register Office are all key sources, with the National Library and National Archives both providing free advice from trained staff. In Belfast, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland holds a treasure trove of records, returns and registers from the province of Ulster. The General Register Office and Ulster Historical Foundation are also great resources.</p> <p>An additional option is to commission a member of the Association of</p>

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	<p>Professional Genealogists in Ireland to help speed things up. They can help find ancestors and living relatives.</p> <p>Heritage Attractions It's no surprise that there are people all around the world with Irish heritage because there has been such a history of emigration from Ireland. And now there is a new attraction in Dublin that charts some of this powerful history. EPIC Ireland is Dublin's dramatic new visitor attraction, telling the stories of 10 million journeys and the Irish roots of 70 million people. It explains how this small Island has profoundly influenced and changed the world. This world-class exhibition tells the story of the Irish people around the world using state-of-the-art technology with incredible visual stories and lots of interactivity.</p> <p>As well as the high tech interactive exhibition, Epic Ireland will also offer a state-of-the-art Irish Family History Centre genealogy centre. Here you can sit with a genealogy expert for a 15-minute consultation or purchase a Family Tree DNA Kit. Workstations allow you to sign up to the Irish Family History Centre website and join the online community at www.FindMyPast.ie where you will be able to search through the largest number of Irish family history records such as: Birth, Marriage and Death records, Census records, Parish records, travel and migration records</p>
Zoomers	<p>The gentle pace of the countryside and the easy availability of coach touring options make Ireland a good choice for seniors.</p>
UNIQUES	<p>Strangely, Ireland is the only country in the world where windmills turn clockwise!</p> <p>“Craic”, pronounced “Kraik” means good music, good story telling, conversation and drink in Gaelic.</p> <p>Here are some very Irish blessings: “May the roof above us never fall in. And may the friends gathered below it never fall out”. “May the saddest day of your future be no worse than the happiest day of your past”.</p> <p>“May you live as long as you want. And never want as long as you live”.</p>
Surprising	<p>There are several haunted castles in Ireland – here is a list for those who do not fear a spooky experience:</p> <p>Ballygally Castle is 32 kms from Belfast on the Antrim coast</p>

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	<p>Charleville Castle in Tullamore, County Offaly</p> <p>Clonony Castle in Birr, County Offaly</p> <p>Carrickfergus Castle is just east of Belfast in County Antrim</p> <p>Huntington Castle in Clonagal, County Carlow</p> <p>Killua Castle, located in County Westmeath</p> <p>Castle Leslie in County Monaghan, Northern Ireland</p> <p>Gormanston Castle in County Meath</p> <p>Kinnitty Castle in Country Offaly</p> <p>Wilton Castle in County Wexford, is in Ireland's Southeast Region.</p> <p>Leap Castle in County Offaly</p>
<p>History</p>	<p>Ireland is thought to have been inhabited from around 8,000BC by people of a mid-Stone Age culture. And about 4,000 years later, tribes from Southern Europe arrived and established a high Neolithic culture. The best-known Neolithic sites in Ireland are the megalithic passage tombs of Newgrange and Knowth in County Meath. Both were built around 3,200BC, making them older than Stonehenge in England, and the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt. The Vikings first launched their attack on Ireland in 795AD. And in 837AD, 60 Viking Dragon warships appeared at the mouth of the River Liffey. Five years later, Dublin was taken under force, but the Vikings were attacked by the local Irish and fled. They returned 17 years later under Olaf the White and made a permanent settlement at Dyflinn (later to be Dublin). The King's Palace stood on the present Dublin Castle site and part of the town's defenses can still be seen at the Undercroft in Dublin Castle. The latter half of the 19th century was a period of tragedy in Irish history. Ireland was struck by the Great Famine caused by a potato blight that struck crops over a four-year period from 1845-49. Over a million of the population died from starvation, with many more falling prey to diseases such as typhus.</p>

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	<p>Over two million people emigrated to countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, and from 1848-1950 over six million Irish fled the land. Now the Irish diaspora is thought to contain over 80 million people scattered all over the globe.</p>
Books	<p>“Ireland” by Dervla Murphy, photos by Klaus Franke</p> <p>“The Princes of Ireland” The Dublin Saga by Edward Rutherford</p> <p>Lonely Planet’s Ireland is an excellent guide book</p>
1000 Places to see before you die	<p>Dromoland Castle Hotel; Cork Jazz Festival; Kinsale; Assolas Country House; Longueville House, CorkGlenveagh National Park, Donegal Bloomsday in Dublin; The Book of Kells, Dublin; St Patrick’s Festival; Aran Islands; Connemara, Galway; Galway; Dingle Peninsula; The Ring of Kerry; Killarney National Park, Kerry; Ashford Castle Hotel, Mayo; Waterford Castle Hotel; Giant’s Causeway; Mourne Mountains</p>
Must Sees	<p>Giant’s Causeway on the North Antrim Coast in 1986 became Ireland’s first UNESCO World Heritage Site. It was likely molten lava, cooled during the early Tertiary period some 62 - 65 million years ago into some 40,000 hexagonal dark stone steps, a few million years ago, which produced the famous basalt columns. But some prefer the other version of events: the one about a Celtic warrior who got too big for his boots and went a-knockin’ on the wrong giant’s island. Legend goes that Finn MacCool built the basalt highway to Scotland to challenge rival giant, Benandonner, to a fight. But Finn’s wide-eyed glimpse of the enormous Scot sent him scurrying back to Ireland and to his quick-witted wife, Oonagh. As Benandonner thundered down the highway after him, Oonagh disguised the quavering Finn as an infant. “Don’t wake the baby” she scolded the giant Scot as he burst in the door. “If that’s the kid, I don’t want to meet the father”, thinks Benandonner, turning tail for Scotland and ripping up the basalt paving stones behind him.</p>

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	<p>Ireland's West is a region known as 'The Cultural Heart of Ireland'. Magical, romantic, dramatic and utterly memorable, the West of Ireland has landscapes that will be etched in your memory forever. People flock to Galway City to experience a slice of its magic and its festivals – including the world-famous Oyster Festival at Clarenbridge. For the finest gourmet sea food, live music and the best Guinness in town it has to be the Galway Oyster Festival! This thriving city enjoys a strong artistic heritage and a flourishing arts, music, theatre and film scene. It also plays host to the renowned Galway Arts Festival. Relax in Galway's atmospheric pubs, stroll through its pretty medieval streets and soak up its lively weekend markets.</p> <p>Mayo has the dramatic splendour of the Atlantic Ocean, and boasts the glorious Island of Achill, the award-winning town of Westport and Ireland's holy mountain Croagh Patrick among its many sights. Unchanged for millennia the landscape of the Cliffs of Moher in County Clare will leave you awestruck. Towering 214 metres over the waters of the Atlantic Ocean - let your senses be arrested with the sheer drop of these imposing sea cliffs.</p> <p>The Ring of Kerry</p> <p>It may not fit on your finger or come in gold or silver, but this Ring is studded with gems. Skirting Ireland's most western point, hogging an obscene amount of beauty and cute-as-can-be villages – The Ring (as it's known down there) is just a bit special. The circular loop starts and ends in Killarney (they could have called it 'The Circle of Kerry' but it wouldn't have had the same 'ring' to it!) Undisputedly one of Ireland's most scenic drives, it also provides the backdrop to the renowned Kerry Way walking trail. Pedal power will get you around the 216km too, on a wind-in-your-hair cycle route. However you travel, keep your camera handy every step of the way.</p>
<p>UNESCO World Heritage</p>	<p>There are three World Heritage Sites on the island: the Brú na Boinne, Skellig Michael and the Giant's Causeway.</p> <p>Brú na Bóinne in County Meath, is the largest and one of the most important prehistoric megalithic sites in Europe. The site is a complex of Neolithic chamber tombs, standing stones, henges and other prehistoric enclosures, some dating from as early as 35th century BC - 32nd century BC. The site predates the Egyptian pyramids and was built with sophistication and a knowledge of science and astronomy, which is most evident in the passage grave of Newgrange. The site is often referred to as the "Bend of the Boyne".</p> <p>Skellig Michael (from Sceilig Mhichíl in the Irish language, meaning</p>

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	<p>Michael's rock), also known as Great Skellig, is a steep rocky island in the Atlantic Ocean about 14.5 kilometres from the coast of County Kerry, Ireland. It is the larger of the two Skellig Islands. After probably being founded in the 7th century, for 600 years the island was a centre of monastic life for Irish Christian monks. The Gaelic monastery, which is situated almost at the summit of the 230-metre-high rock became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996. It is one of Europe's better known but least accessible monasteries. Since the extreme remoteness of Skellig Michael has until recently discouraged visitors, the site is exceptionally well preserved. The very spartan conditions inside the monastery illustrate the ascetic lifestyle practiced by early Irish Christians. The monks lived in stone 'beehive' huts (clochans), perched above nearly vertical cliff walls. The latest Star Wars movies feature scenes from here.</p>
<p>Titanic Belfast Experience</p>	<p>Belfast's notable ship-building heritage includes the design, building and launch of the most famous ship ever built – the Titanic. The new Titanic Belfast experience is the world's largest Titanic visitor attraction and is twice the size of Belfast's City Hall. The six-storey attraction is filled with exhibitions uncovering the story of Titanic – its origins, construction, launch and history. It is quite simply, superb.</p>
<p>South East Ireland</p>	<p>Occasionally overshadowed by its popular South Western cousin, don't neglect the region of Ireland in the South East - comprising the five counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford. It is often called the hidden treasure of Ireland, with an evocative patchwork of fertile valleys and plains contrasted by extended beaches and rugged coastlines. Down through the centuries the Celts, Vikings, Anglo-Saxons and Normans have landed and passed through these valleys, leaving behind a landscape rich in history. Countless castles, abbeys, fortresses and ancient settlements remain to mark their passage. And large rivers criss-cross the area, meandering under old stone bridges, around magical mountains, through picturesque villages and past neatly thatched cottages before finally entering the sea at scenic and peaceful seaside towns. The region not only boasts old favourites such as Waterford Crystal, Kilkenny Castle and Rock of Cashel, but also the Dunbrody Emigration Centre, Irish National Heritage Park, Kilkenny's Medieval Miles and Waterford's Viking Triangles.</p> <p>http://www.southeastirelandhotels.ie</p>

<p>SPORTS ACTIVITIES</p>	
<p>Outdoors Ireland</p>	<p>Ireland offers many outdoor experiences that will plug you right into the most beautiful scenery, history and culture. From heavenly hikes and adventurous cycling routes, to horse riding trails and stunning golf courses, Ireland has something to please every traveller. As the old</p>

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	Irish saying goes, “Your feet will bring you to where your heart is”.
Boating	Shannon-Erne System, Europe’s longest leisure waterway at 800 kms, takes 12 days, self-skipped cabin cruise; there is also the Grand Canal from Dublin to Waterford.
Golf	<p>With over 400 golf clubs including a third of the world’s natural links courses, and a selection of exceptional championships courses in pretty amazing locations, over 240,000 golfers from all over the world come to our greens to experience our impressive but unforgiving fairways. Ireland is a natural golfing country and is recognized as a world-class golfing destination. The island of Ireland offers the Canadian golfer a challenging and memorable golfing experience. Home to more than one-third of the world's true links courses, Ireland offers four distinct golfing regions which can be explored individually or as part of a more extended itinerary. All around the island, world-famous championship links courses rub shoulders with lesser-known yet spectacular hidden gems. What's more, tee times can be booked easily and green fees are moderate.</p> <p>The following list highlights some of the 'must play' courses in each region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dublin area - Portmarnock, the European, the K Club (venue of the 2006 Ryder Cup) - Northern Ireland - Royal County Down, Royal Portrush, Ardglass, Portstewart, Royal Belfast - The West - Ballyliffin, Carne, Enniscrone, Rosses Point/Sligo - The South West - Ballybunion, Doonbeg, Lahinch, Waterville, Old Head - The South East - Mount Juliet, Druids Glen <p>The 19th hole - Part of the pleasure of golfing in Ireland is the warm welcome and the good "craic" (fun) after a round. From a trad music session in a rural pub to top gourmet grub in a gastropub, you'll find the "if only" shots take on a life of their own when retold. The clubhouse itself (or the nearest watering hole) is a great place to trade victories or horror stories about tricky dog legs and high winds with other players.</p>
Fishing	<p>Salmon, brown, rainbow and sea trout in Cork/Kerry – State license and day permits; Coarse: roach, dace perch, pike, rudd, bream; deep sea: Pollock, skate, ray, turbot, blue shark</p> <p>The great Western lakes of Galway and Mayo are recognised as the greatest wild brown trout fisheries in the world, while Lough Corrib in Galway is a mecca for game fishermen and is famous for its exciting Mayfly season.</p> <p>The rivers of Ireland’s West offer everything from big salmon to wild browns and, in Roscommon and Galway East, some of the best coarse</p>

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	<p>fish stocks in Ireland. Shore fishing from rock, pier or beach is second to none, and deep-sea fishing around the Galway and Mayo coasts is nothing short of spectacular.</p>
<p>Horse riding</p>	<p>Ireland is often called “The Land of the Horse”. Companies offering riding vacations include Bonaventure tours.com; HiddenTrails.com. There are 40 equestrian centres in Cork/Kerry alone; horse racing is part of Irish life e.g. Mallow, 35km north of Cork</p> <p>Equestrian Holidays Ireland is a selection of Ireland’s top horseback riding establishments, each with its own individual character and style. Every centre is Irish Tourist Board listed and Association of Irish Riding Establishments approved.</p> <p>I recently visited the Irish National Stud near Kildare where Queen Elizabeth spent some time on her historic tour in 2011. An Irish mist made the blossoms smell more fragrantly as we met mares and their foals, the highly prized stallions and learnt about Irish Bloodstock Industry. All the horses and foals appeared to be in seventh heaven in their verdant pastures.</p> <p>Here also is a delightful surprise: the Japanese Gardens where the paths lead through grottoes besides streams and lakes to tea houses and arched bridges.</p>
<p>Hiking</p>	<p>Hill-walking: waymarked ways, Ulster Way – Europe’s longest marked footpath at 560 miles, Wicklow Way, Dingle Way 179km – Ring of Kerry; Hollywood Hills – inspiration for CS Lewis’ Narnia; Hidden Trails, Active Journeys, Bonaventure Tours.</p> <p>Long distance trails include the Foxford Way in Mayo, the Galway section of The Western Way, The Suck Valley Way in Roscommon and Galway, and the Arigna Miners Way and Historical Trail in Roscommon and Leitrim.</p> <p>Croagh Patrick, County Mayo: St Patrick spent 40 days and nights fasting on this 765-metre high sacred mountain near Westport, and banishing dragons, snakes and demonic forces from the site. Today, pilgrims follow in the footsteps of the saint and on “Reek Sunday”, the last Sunday in July, over 25,000 people ascend towards the summit.</p> <p>There is a new addition to the spectacular Causeway Coastal Route that glories in the name of the Gobbins.</p> <p>The Gobbins was originally created by an Irish railway engineer called Berkeley Deane Wise. He designed and built the path as a tourist attraction for the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway Company. The path first opened to the public in 1902, with visitors paying 6d to enjoy a ‘perfect marvel of engineering’. The Gobbins drew worldwide acclaim, with newspapers declaring that ‘the varied beauty of this cliff path baffles all description’.</p> <p>Now the path has been reopened after being closed for over a half a</p>

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	<p>century and it is a spectacular new adventure—a Cliff Path walk along the very edge of the Irish Sea, located about 30 km’s north of Belfast. The modern cliff path is sure to be an unexpected white-knuckle walk which will thrill those with a sense of adventure and delight those who are looking to experience the coast up close.</p>
<p>Cycling</p>	<p>715 kms cycling routes in Cork and Kerry e.g. The Sheeps Head Way; Connemara Trail, Donegal Trail – rugged coastline and mountains. Cycle the River Lagan towpath in Belfast or the Kingfisher Cycle Trail – 370 kms through the lakes of County Fermanagh; Cycling companies – check out G Adventures, Randonnee Tours, Butterfield and Robinson.</p>
<p>CULTURE</p>	<p>There’s a new and particularly exciting development on the other side of the country called Ireland’s Ancient East. Ireland’s Ancient East offers a wonderful opportunity to experience 5,000 years of European history in a compact area. The Ancient East area allows visitors to get off the beaten track to see, hear, touch and feel the imprints of the millennia of settlers in this land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ancient Man, Early Christians, Medieval Lords, Colonial Settlers and their descendants have all been seduced by these most lush, green and fertile lands. - It’s easy to take it all in.....and visitors can go at their own pace to discover tombs older than the pyramids, explore a Viking settlement or castles and fortresses. Plus hear stories from the friendly locals who are some of the best story tellers in the world. You can take in a festival or try tasty local specialties many of which trace their roots to ancient times. <p>The UNESCO World Heritage Site at Newgrange stirs the imagination...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newgrange is a Stone Age monument in the Boyne Valley, County Meath.. It was constructed over 5,000 years ago (about 3,200 B.C.) during the Neolithic period, which makes it older than Stonehenge and Great Pyramids of Giza. It is a large circular mound with a stone passageway and chambers inside. The mound is ringed by 97 large kerbstones, some of which are richly decorated with megalithic art. Newgrange was built by a farming community that prospered on the rich lands of the Boyne Valley. The 19 metre long inner passage leads to a cruciform chamber with a corbelled roof. The amount of time and labour invested in construction of Newgrange suggests a well-organized society with specialised groups responsible for different aspects of construction. - Knowth and Dowth are similar mounds that together with Newgrange have been designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. But throughout the region there are as many as 35 smaller mounds.

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	<p>- Archaeologists classified Newgrange as a passage tomb, however Newgrange is now recognised to be much more than a passage tomb. Ancient Temple is a more fitting classification, a place of astrological, spiritual, religious and ceremonial importance, much as present day cathedrals are places of prestige and worship where dignitaries may be laid to rest.</p>
<p>Arts</p>	<p>Literary Ireland abounds in famous names: Joyce, GB Shaw, Oscar Wilde, WB Yeats, Walter Scott, Anthony Trollope, Seamus Heaney.</p> <p>Dublin – City of Living Culture Home to some of the world’s best-known authors, playwrights and musicians, Dublin truly is a city of living culture. Recently voted one of the world’s top literary destinations, Dublin has so much to offer the culture-seeking visitor. With its Viking remains, atmospheric cobbled alleys and Georgian squares, it’s easy to absorb Dublin’s thousand years of history. Step back in time in this city full of literary landmarks, from the James Joyce Tower and the Writers Museum to the famous Gate and Abbey theatres and historic Trinity College, alma mater of many of Ireland’s greatest writers.</p> <p>The Saint Patrick Centre is in Downpatrick, just 30 minutes from Belfast: Ego Patricius Exhibition: new 21st century interactive experience telling story of patron saint. There is a Cathedral Garden Restaurant and Art Gallery Craft Shop.</p>
<p>Music</p>	<p>Traditional Irish Music- Trad Session Traditional Irish music is a full body experience: the upbeat tempos compel you to dance a jig, clap your hands and join in. And that's what trad music is all about, joining in and having the craic (fun). A trad music seisún (pronounced: seh-shoon) can best be described as an informal gathering of musicians. Often, it'll kick off with just a guitar. But before long you've got a whole group of fiddlers, flutists, banjos and bodhrán (drum) or Lambeg drum players belting out the tunes. You can expect a bit of dancing at seisúns, too. People clap along to the beat as dancers twirl and skip around. Don't be afraid to join in, no one minds if you don't know the steps. And before you know it, you'll be a jiggling pro. There are five traditional music instruments in Ireland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Bodhrán o Uilleann pipes o Celtic Harp o Fiddle o Irish Bouzouki <p>http://www.ireland.com/en-us/ireland-stories/unique-and-alternative-accommodation/articles/traditional-irish-music-instruments/</p>

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	<p>Temple Bar TradFest – January TradFest offers concert goers unique opportunities to experience live music in some of Dublin’s most historic places. From the breathtaking nave of St. Patrick’s Cathedral to the grandeur of City Hall, this is the difference between memorable and unforgettable. January 24-28, 2018.</p> <p>Belfast – Van Morrison Belfast isn’t just a place to listen to great music; it’s a place that’s creates it too. Van Morrison is arguably the city’s biggest star but Belfast natives Ash and Snow Patrol have made it on the international stage.</p>
<p>Films</p>	<p>Game of Thrones – HBO’s award-winning hit series is filmed at Paint Hall Studios in Belfast in the Titanic Quarter, and on location elsewhere in Northern Ireland including Sandy Brae in the Mourne Mountains (standing in for Vaes Dothrak), Castle Ward and Doune Castle (Winterfell), Saintfield Estates (the Winterfell godswood), Tollymore Forest (outdoor scenes), Cairncastle (the execution site), the Magheramorne quarry (Castle Black) and at Shane’s Castle (the tourney grounds). Its cast is mainly British and Irish.</p> <p>Michael Collins (Neil Jordan, 1996) is a fine biopic about the Irish rebel, filmed largely on location. Nora (Pat Murphy, 2000) is a good biographical film about James Joyce’s fascinating and long-suffering wife.</p> <p>Veronica Guerin (Joel Schumacher, 2003) is a dark, fact-based film with Cate Blanchett about a troubled investigative reporter.</p> <p>Bloom (Sean Walsh, 2004) is a brave adaptation of Ulysses, with Stephen Rea.</p> <p>Intermission (John Crowley, 2003) has Colin Farrell talking in his real accent, in this Irish romance.</p>
<p>Museums</p>	<p>The Writers Museum and Natural History Museum in Dublin are two of my favourites in the capital. The Dublin Pass is great value (see above for details)</p> <p>Ulster Museum: a truly great museum and art gallery that deserves a full day. Rich displays of archaeology, ethnography, art, history and natural sciences. Award-winning Early Ireland gallery and the Made in Belfast exhibits are outstanding. Don’t miss Treasures of the Armada, featuring intriguing and spectacular items recovered from the Spanish galleass Girona.</p> <p>Ulster Folk and Transport Museum at Cultra brings history to life, with exhibit buildings including furnished houses, mills, shops, schools and churches which illustrate how people in Northern Ireland lived in the past.</p>
<p>Festivals</p>	<p>Some countries have seasons dedicated to festivals. Ireland has an entire calendar. Kicking off in January and packing the months until</p>

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December, festivals in Ireland are in the hundreds, and know exactly how to catch our attention. Below are just a few examples:

Temple Bar TradFest – January

A festival of mostly free events showcasing the entire spectrum of traditional and folk music in iconic locations around Dublin.

Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival

Matchmaking is one of Ireland's oldest traditions and, for the last couple of hundred years; a good deal of it has taken place in Lisdoonvarna during September and early October. The Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival is one of the world's biggest singles festivals and attracts up to 60,000 people every year. At 160 years old and 5 weeks long, it is one of Ireland's longest and most traditional festivals.

New Year's Eve Festival Dublin

A 3-day city wide festival celebrating the best of contemporary Irish talent in Arts, Music, Culture and Live Entertainment. Spanning the New Year period from December 30th – January 1st, NYF celebrates a multi-platform experience inspired by the diversity and complexity of Ireland's contemporary culture. NYF showcases the evolution of its shining talent in music, dance, design, art, and spoken word.

Electric Picnic - September

An annual music and arts circus that is big on imagination

Galway Oyster and Seafood Festival – September

The Galway International Oyster & Seafood Festival is held on the very last weekend in September to celebrate Galway's rich annual oyster harvest (in season from September – April). Deemed one of Europe's longest-running food extravaganzas, the Galway International Oyster & Seafood Festival was launched in September 1954.

The Banks of the Foyle Halloween Carnival – October

Halloween originated in Ireland from the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain. Towns and cities across Ireland celebrate Halloween, but it's Derry~Londonderry that really does it in style.

The Banks of the Foyle Halloween Carnival is the largest Halloween celebration in Europe, attracting up to 25,000 enthusiasts from across the globe who flock to the city to take part. USA Today named it the Best Halloween destination in the world

<http://www.ireland.com/en-ca/articles/events/festivals/>

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And let's not forget:

St. Patrick's Festival: March

www.stpatricksfestival.ie

Celebrated all over Ireland but especially in Dublin, this festival has to be experienced to be believed – and I talk from personal experience!

Galway Arts Festival: July

www.galwayartsfestival.com

Galway, the most westerly city in Europe enjoys a strong artistic heritage and a flourishing arts, music, theatre, and film scene. Move to the beat of the Galway Arts Festival – an eclectic mixture of theatre, spectacle, dance, visual arts, music, literature & comedy involving hundreds of artists and performers.

Wexford Opera Festival: October

www.wexfordopera.com

From its early Celtic and Nordic beginnings Wexford has become a thriving cosmopolitan hub, excellent for shopping and dining out, yet steeped in heritage and history. Re-live nine thousand years of history at the Irish National Heritage Park or experience the World-famous Wexford Festival Opera this fall. Enjoy much-loved operas including Rimsky-Korsakov's 'The Snow Maiden' and Pedrotti's 'Tutti in Maschera' in one of Ireland's most picturesque coastal settings.

Belfast Festival at Queens: October /November

www.belfastfestival.com

Belfast, Northern Ireland's capital city is steeped in culture. Find out where great ships like the Titanic were built, marvel at the architecturally impressive City Hall or take a trip around its historic pubs by joining a Baileys Historical Pub Walking Tour. Be enthralled by The Belfast Festival at Queens and immerse yourself in the best of Irish theatre, dance, music, visual arts, and literature.

Dublin Events:

Dublin's famous spirit of fun infuses over one hundred wonderful festivals and events throughout the year, from the spectacular St. Patrick's Festival to the colourful Street Performance World Championships. Events such as Bloomsday, Bloom and Festival of World Cultures are excellent events.

Dracula and Halloween Festivals

Believe it or not – Ireland is the home of Dracula! Bram Stoker, the

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author of “Dracula” was an Irishman who was born on in 1847 in Clontarf, on the north side of Dublin. Some historians have suggested that Stoker did not receive the inspiration for his dark and twisted tale of Dracula from the brutal life of Vlad the Impaler, but rather developed his ideas from Irish folklore. Irish fables tell the story of Abhartach, a 5th century chieftain known for his bloodsucking habits. After they killed him he rose from the grave and demanded a bowl of blood from the wrists of his subjects to sustain his energy.

The Irish have embraced the author and his ghoulish creation and also Halloween – which is said to have originated in Ireland from the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain.

Bram Stoker Festival (October)

The festival celebrates the Dublin-man behind Dracula with films, talks, readings, and a scare or three. It takes place every year during Dublin Festival Season (1 September - 31 October), when the city hosts more festivals than any other time of the year.

Banks of the Foyle Halloween Carnival (October)

Towns and cities across Ireland celebrate Halloween, but it's Derry-Londonderry that really does it in style. The Banks of the Foyle Halloween Carnival is the largest Halloween celebration in Europe, attracting up to 25,000 enthusiasts from across the globe who flock to the city to take part in the festival each October.

Food Festivals

The food and craft beer scene alone is a great reason to visit Ireland. It is blossoming right now with new microbreweries, gastro-pubs, craft distilleries and artisan eateries serving the freshest local ingredients. And what better experience than to sit by a turf fire in a traditional pub, where you'll eat the freshest seafood and hear the Irish language, songs and stories. Plus, there are many festivals celebrating Irish cuisine.

The Irish Craft Beer & Cider Festival (September)

Ireland's largest and best craft beer festival takes place in Dublin with over 50 Brewers featuring 300+ beers. Cidermakers and Distillers also form part of this festival.

Galway Oyster and Seafood Festival (September)

The Galway International Oyster & Seafood Festival is held on the very last weekend in September to celebrate Galway's rich annual oyster harvest (in season from September – April). Deemed one of Europe's longest-running food extravaganzas, the Galway International Oyster &

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Seafood Festival was launched in September 1954!

Balmoral Show (16-19 May, 2018)

The Balmoral Show in association with Ulster Bank is Ireland's largest agri food event that entertains and educates the entire family. NI's largest agricultural event.

Taste of Dublin (14-17 June, 2018)

Over four indulgent days the city's latest, greatest and hottest restaurants will each fashion together exquisite signature dishes, allowing you to create your dream tasting menu at the ultimate foodie festival.

Christmas Markets

Belfast Christmas Market

This award-winning market in the grounds of Belfast Hall. Local producers make up over 40% of the market, selling a variety of tasty treats and products.

Galway Christmas Market

Ireland's longest running Christmas Market with over fifty traders from all over Ireland and Europe selling a host of crafts, festive food, treats and Christmas gift ideas

Waterford Winterval Christmas Festival

Ireland's premier Christmas Festival and now in its 6th year Winterval attracts around 500,000 people to Ireland's oldest city over the 6 weeks of the festival.

Other Festivals

Over the next few months alone there are an incredible variety of exciting festivals.

Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival (September/October)

Matchmaking is one of Ireland's oldest traditions and, for the last couple of hundred years; a good deal of it has taken place in Lisdoonvarna during September and early October. The Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival is one of the world's biggest singles festivals and attracts up to 60,000 people every year. At 160 years old and 5 weeks long, it is one of Ireland's longest and most traditional festivals

Electric Picnic (September)

An annual music and arts circus that is big on imagination!

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	<p>Wexford Festival Opera (October) Since the first 'Festival of Music and the Arts' took place in October 1951, Wexford Festival Opera has grown into one of the world's leading opera festivals. Right from the beginning, the Festival made a name for itself by introducing audiences to unjustly neglected works. For 64 years the Festival has breathed new life into forgotten masterpieces, establishing a reputation for high-quality productions that, every year, bring thousands of opera-lovers flocking to Wexford from all over the world.</p> <p>New Year's Eve Festival Dublin A 3 day city wide festival celebrates the best of contemporary Irish talent in Arts, Music, Culture and Live Entertainment. NYF celebrates a multi-platform experience inspired by the diversity and complexity of Ireland's contemporary culture. NYF showcases the evolution of Ireland's shining talent in music, dance, design, art, and spoken word.</p> <p>Temple Bar TradFest (January) A festival of mostly free events showcasing the entire spectrum of traditional and folk music in iconic locations around Dublin.</p>
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ATTRACTIONS	<p>Blarney Castle, Cork, bestows the gift of eloquence to those willing to bend over backwards from the battlements.</p> <p>The Waterford Crystal Factory and Gallery. The tour of the factory is fascinating and yes – I fell for the gorgeous work and purchased a set of wine glasses which I keep for prized guests!</p>
Beaches	Beaches abound on this island – from long glorious deserted strands to the popular beaches close to Dublin and Belfast; there's a beach for everyone...even if the sea temperature may be a little chilly!
Wildlife	Bird watching is wonderful and in the National Parks you can see deer...but there are no snakes, thanks to St Patrick!
Parks	<p>Ireland has 6 national parks: The Burren NP in Co Clare; Connemara NP in Galway; Glenveagh NP in Co Donegal; Killarney NP in Co Kerry; Mayo NP; Wicklow Mountains NP.</p> <p>There are also 12 Forest Parks and 71 National Nature Reserves</p>
Gardens	<p>National Trust gardens in Northern Ireland: Gosford, Castlewellan; roses, daffodils, wild bluebells, primroses. Also: Mount Stewart (agapanthus display) and Rowallane (blue Himalayan poppies)</p> <p>Ardnamona Gardens, Lough Eske, County Donegal A wilderness</p>

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	<p>until the 19th century, Ardnamona Gardens is now thriving with an exceptional collection of trees, shrubs and rhododendrons. In 1991, Ardnamona was declared a National Heritage Garden.</p>
<p>Historical Buildings</p>	<p>The GPO in Dublin GPO Witness History is a brand new permanent visitor attraction in the iconic GPO building on O'Connell Street, Dublin. This highly immersive and engaging exhibition puts you right inside the GPO during Easter Week in 1916. History will come to life as you experience events from both sides of the conflict and through the eyes of bystanders caught in the crossfire through electronic touch screens, video, audio visual booths, sound and authentic artefacts – many previously unseen. You'll be immersed in the action as you compose newspaper reports, examine the original copy of the Proclamation and send Morse code to declare the Irish Republic by radio. After the exhibition, you can relax and reflect in the café and retail store overlooking the courtyard. The courtyard is also home to a commissioned sculpture called 'They are of us all', commemorating the forty children who died during the Easter Rising. http://www.gpowitnesshistory.ie/the-gpo-building/</p> <p>Dunluce, 16th century stronghold of MacDonnells, teeters on a cliff edge and has a secret entrance through a sea cave.</p> <p>Ennislillen was the medieval home of the Maguires of Fermanagh.</p> <p>Navan Centre and Fort: Armagh in Northern Ireland. This was the royal seat of the Kings of Ulster and the province's ancient capital. Start your tour in the 'Vanished World' of lost myths, travel into the 'Real World' of archaeology and then enter the 'Other World' to hear the legends of the Ulster Cycle. Visit the Iron Age/Early Christian period dwelling and, through Living History interpretation, learn about that way of life. Finally, walk the path of history to the great Ancient Seat of Kings, Navan Fort.</p> <p>Derry is the only walled city in Ireland and the walls date from 1613-18, with 4 original gates and bastions intact; the Tower Museum presents the city's history; St Columb's Cathedral is 17th century.</p>

<p>OTHER ACTIVITIES</p>	
<p>Shopping</p>	<p>In the west, traditional knitwear (and not so traditional high fashion knitwear too), pottery, decorative items, handmade bellows, trendy fleece-wear, musical instruments, jewellery and basketry. And of course, Waterford Crystal.</p>
<p>Markets</p>	<p>St Georges Market in Belfast is an over 100 years old covered market with over 230 stalls ranging from zips to shark meat. It was recently voted one of the top three markets in the UK.</p>

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<p>Arts and Crafts in Dublin</p>	<p>If you're after modern Irish design, then try Whichcraft (5 Castlegate) in Old City, Temple Bar for a mix of Irish art and jewellery. Kilkenny (Nassau Street) shop is also a fantastic spot for Irish homeware and design, with pottery and glassware alongside jewellery and clothing. Blarney Woollen Mills (Nassau Street) and Dublin Woollen Mills (41 Lower Ormond Quay) are good for traditional sweaters, scarves, cardigans and gloves. Avoca Handweavers (Suffolk Street) is a good spot for designer and children's clothing with a quirk, and you can also pick up renowned cookbooks from the much-loved Avoca café.</p>
<p>Nightlife</p>	<p>Everything under the sun – but perhaps the quintessential evening is spent in a warm Irish pub with the locals experiencing the camaraderie and craic that is so unique to the Irish people.</p> <p>Here's a quote from the Tourism Ireland website that eloquently pens a picture:</p> <p><i>“So you're sitting on a stool, swishing your whiskey and watching the syrupy liquid run down the glass in little delicious rivulets. But suddenly, you're jerked out of your daydream by a bearded fellow in an Aran sweater sitting beside you with a guitar followed by a young woman with a fiddle and an elderly man holding a flute. Within seconds, you're front row at your first traditional music session and you didn't even buy a ticket! Hours later as you wave goodbye and shut the pub door behind you, you say to yourself – 'I'm not sure what just happened, but I liked it'. And whether your session occurred in a shibeen in Dingle, County Kerry or the Feakle Festival, County Clare, it is totally acceptable to dance all the way back to your hotel. In fact, that's kind of the point!”</i></p> <p>In Belfast, the Crown Liquor Saloon is my favourite pub: Great Victoria St. 1839-1840; The Crown is owned by the National Trust. Drinkers of the city know well its opulent marble, brilliant Italian tilework, fine glass engraving, embossed ceiling, and cosy booths bedecked with gryphons and lions. Panels in the restaurant on the first floor were meant for the Britannic, Titanic's sister ship.</p>
<p>CUISINE</p>	<p>Food in Ireland is fresh, tasty and served with a contemporary twist. The cuisine and craft beer scene in Ireland is going from strength to strength and are a great reason to visit. It is blossoming right now with new microbreweries, gastro-pubs, craft distilleries and artisan eateries serving the freshest local ingredients. Awaiting you are artisan cheese, exceptional beef and lamb and fresh-off-the-boat seafood, sublime smoked salmon and the creamiest butter imaginable!</p> <p>When it comes to food on the island of Ireland, you need to start at the</p>

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	<p>very beginning with the purity of the natural produce. The green pastures, deep valleys and abundant waters surrounding the island have helped create outstanding natural flavours that you won't get everywhere else. Ireland's food boasts an impeccable provenance and can be best enjoyed here – in the very place it comes from.</p> <p>There's nothing quite like following a food journey from producer to plate – and Ireland is peppered with opportunities to get more involved with your food. What better experience than to sit by a turf fire in a traditional pub, where you'll eat the freshest seafood and hear the Irish language, songs and stories. Plus look at some of the excellent markets such as The English Market in Cork, the Temple Bar Food Market in Dublin and the St George's Market in Belfast. And for the chance to get your hands on raw ingredients and craft some magic of your own, you can take your pick of working farms, cosy cookery schools, and food festivals.</p> <p>Festivals can be a great way to find out about that fantastic food and drink....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Irish Craft Beer & Cider Festival in Dublin - Galway Oyster and Seafood Festival in September - It has been described by the Sunday Times as "one of the 12 greatest shows on earth" and was listed in the AA Travel Guide one of Europe's Seven Best Festivals. - National Oyster Opening Championship, international food village, live music and celebrity guests, Masquerade 'Mardi Gras' as a carnival of masked revellers are led by a lively band through the pedestrian streets of Galway.
Food	<p>Ulster Fry: potato bread fried with local-cure bacon, Moira pork and apple sausages, free-range eggs, Almargh mushrooms, bunch of dulse (edible seaweed); breads: afternoon tea: soda farls, treacle farls; pubs: locally harvested oysters with glass of Guinness; beef fillet flamed in Bushmills whiskey</p>
Wine and spirits	<p>Irish whiskey and Guinness are justifiably world famous!</p> <p>Guinness: During the middle ages, St. James's Gate was western entrance into the city of Dublin. Later, the brewery was built at the site, and it was here at the St. James's Gate Brewery in 1759, that Arthur Guinness began brewing ale. Arthur's result is what is now known all over the world as Guinness Stout. The production of Guinness was moved to London between the 1930's to 2005 but has returned to its original site at St. James's Gate Brewery, which is also called the Guinness Storehouse and is Dublin's most visited attraction.</p>

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	<p>Bushmills Distillery: At the top of the village you will find what Bushmills has become known worldwide for - the famous Old Bushmills Whiskey Distillery. The Victorian architecture of the Distillery dates from 1885 when it was rebuilt due to a fire. It is located on the on the banks of St. Columb's Rill and reputed to be the oldest licensed Distillery in the world - being given legal status in 1608 when King James 1st granted a license to local landowner Sir Thomas Phillips. The process of illegal distillation in the village goes back even further than 1608. Local folklore tells of whiskey being made illegally in the 1400's, there are also records of a Sir Robert Savage enjoying the 'aqua vitae' (whiskey) with his troops in 1276 and the drink is even mentioned in the Book of Leinster. The company itself was founded in 1783 and in 1800's we find records of the S.S. Bushmills, a large sailing ship own by company which transported whiskey across the Atlantic.</p>
<p>Restaurants</p>	<p>Ireland has an admirable range of restaurants in all price categories. The settings range from old-world hotel dining rooms, country mansions, and castles to sky-lit terraces, shop-front bistros, riverside cottages, thatched-roof pubs, and converted houses.</p> <p>The Merchant Restaurant in Belfast is a wonderful example of the resurgence of top notch cuisine in Belfast.</p>

<p>MORE INFO</p>	
<p>Brochures</p>	<p>Call 1-800-SHAMROCK for Tourism Ireland to request brochures</p>
<p>Websites</p>	<p>For everything Irish: www.ireland.com Newsletter Sign Up: https://www.ireland.com/en-ca/core/ezine/?utm_source=chrisrobinson&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=crshow Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Ireland Twitter: https://twitter.com/search?q=Tourism%20ireland&src=typd</p>

<p>PERSONAL EXPERIENCES</p>	<p>Here are a couple of Travel Show Magic Moments from recent trips to Ireland:</p> <p><i>"We are walking through verdant landscaped grounds laced with sparkling streams towards a sturdy square tower rising 25 meters above the gardens and woodland. Ahead of us is the famous Blarney Castle and of course we have come to kiss the Blarney Stone! To do so, we have to climb up a claustrophobic circular stone tower to the top of the tower, walk nervously along the tower's edge and then lean over the parapet backwards to kiss the stone of eloquence. A local holds on to you, so it's perfectly safe and as you regain your feet you can feel the gift of the gab giving voice to your experience! As one notable said:</i></p>
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“Baloney is flattery laid on with a trowel. Blarney is flattery laid on with the lips – that’s why you have to kiss a stone to get it!” “

“I am in the heart of Dublin City. I have walked through the cobbled stones of Trinity College...back in time to the 18th century, when the magnificent Old Library building was constructed. Now I am inside, waiting my turn to see one of the great cultural icons of Europe: the Book of Kells. Around the year 800 AD the four Gospels were written in Latin on calf skin and decorated lavishly to create a work of art that has no peer. Shortly afterwards, the Vikings raided the monastery on the remote Scottish island of Iona where it was likely created and the surviving monks fled with the Book of Kells to a monastery at Kells in County Meath. It has been on display here in the Old Library at Trinity College Dublin from the mid-19th century, and attracts over 500,000 visitors a year. And now it my turn to stand beside this resplendent echo of the Dark Ages in Europe, an echo that proves civilization still flickered here in Ireland. It’s important, it is beautiful and it is essential viewing on any Dublin visit.”

See my Pinterest board of my photos of Ireland at:

<http://www.pinterest.com/TravelShow/ireland>

Southern Ireland - March

Dublin: Burlington Hotel; St Patrick’s Day Parade; Ceili Mor; Luminarium; Donal Shiel interview; Literary Pub Walking Tour; Trinity College and the Book of Kells; The Writers Museum; Temple Bar Area and the Clarence Hotel (U2); St Stephen’s Green and the Georgian Squares;
The Guinness Storehouse (1759); St Patricks Cathedral; The Dublin Pass.com; double decker bus tour; Kilmainham Gaol; Natural History Museum; Custom House; Phoenix Park; O’Connell Street

South to Rock of Cashel; Old Jameson Distillery in Midelton (world’s largest pot still) 1796; Gresham Hotel in Cork; Cork walking tour; covered market; Blarney Castle (1446), kissing the Blarney Stone

Killarney: Randles Court Clarion Hotel; Ring of Kerry (166km or 5hr route), MacGillycuddy Reeks, Irelands highest peak, mountain passes, beaches, hikes

Northern Ireland - April

Belfast: Belfast City Hall, St Georges Market (over 100-year-old covered market);

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Giant's Causeway: North Antrim Coast, 40,000 stone columns
Carrick-a-Rede: rope bridge across scary gap to fishermen's island
'rock of the casting'
Derry: walls of Derry, 1613-18, 4 original gates and bastions intact;
Tower Museum, history; St Columb's Cathedral
Bushmills Distillery
Dunluce Castle

Ireland Tour and Belfast – April

Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Waterford, Youghal, Cork, Killarney, Ring of Kerry
Belfast: Titanic Belfast

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