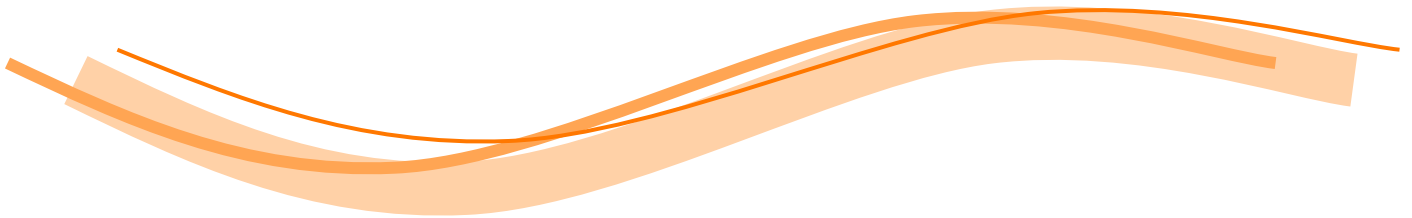




IRELAND & AER LINGUS





IRELAND

There is nowhere else on earth with a warmer welcome than Ireland - and now it's never been easier to get there, thanks to year round service to Dublin with Aer Lingus. Don't just think of Ireland as a summer destination – Ireland is always in season, and 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 the closest point in Europe, 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 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

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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 everywhere; incredible structures that catapult you right to the heart of the mythical land of Westeros.

Northern Ireland offers fans a self-drive tour through scene-stealing

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	<p>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 = \$1.50 Cdn (Sept 2017)</p> <p>In Northern Ireland, the British Pound is the currency; one Pound = \$1.62 (Sept 2017). This is a big improvement for Canadians as the Pound fell heavily after the Brexit vote.</p>
Tipping	<p>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 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%.</p>

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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: 20 degrees Centigrade with a sun and cloud mix (2nd September 2017)
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	
SPECIAL FEATURE – AER LINGUS	<p>Aer Lingus For choice, convenience, a seamless experience and great value – fly Aer Lingus to Ireland! Aer Lingus offers more connections from Canada to Ireland than any other airline with year round service from Toronto to Ireland. Service to Dublin is daily in the summer and there are 4 flights per week in winter. There is a convenient schedule of overnight flights to Ireland and Aer Lingus are now flying their new Airbus A330 aircraft on this route. In recognition of the consistent quality and excellent guest experience, Skytrax World Airline Awards has rated Aer Lingus "4-stars", making it the first and only Irish airline to receive such a prestigious rating.</p> <p>Aer Lingus can take you beyond Dublin itself with connections from Toronto via Dublin to the following cities around Ireland - Kerry, Donegal and Shannon. Aer Lingus has more flights between Ireland and Great Britain than any other airline with over 150 flights a day. Plus there are seamless onward connections from Canada and the U.S.A. – taking you</p>

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to over 80 destinations across Ireland, Great Britain, Continental Europe and the U.S.A.

Toronto to Dublin flying time is 6 hours.

Schedule

Aer Lingus offers year round service from Toronto to Ireland with daily service in the summer and 4 days in winter.

Toronto YYZ	5:55PM	Dublin DUB	5:30AM
Dublin DUB	1:50PM	Toronto YYZ	4:25PM

Connections

Connect via Toronto, Chicago, New York or Boston from the following Canadian cities:

Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Quebec, Regina, Saskatoon, St Johns NL, Vancouver, Victoria and Winnipeg.

Flights are operated by partner airlines Air Canada, United Airlines and British Airways.

Connections from Toronto via Dublin to the following cities:

Kerry; Donegal; Shannon

Travel via connecting service in Dublin, Ireland and may be operated by their partners Stobart Air (operating Aer Lingus Regional) and Flybe.

More information on routes can be found on www.aerlingus.com

The World's Newest 4-Star Airline

In recognition of their consistent quality and excellent guest experience, Skytrax World Airline Awards has rated Aer Lingus 4-stars, making them the first and only Irish airline to receive such a prestigious rating.

Economy Class

In economy class you have the choice of standard, choice or exit seats. There is FREE seat selection for standard seats on transatlantic flights. The superior Aer Lingus experience includes personal seatback screens for entertainment and complimentary headsets. There is a delicious complimentary meal or you can choose from a selection of tempting pre-order meal options. Treat yourself when you 'dine up' to a superior meal service by pre-ordering a gourmet meal to be served during your flight. Your taste buds will thank you as you savour the flavour of one of a premium three-course meal created by Irish chef Clodagh McKenna. These meals use only the best Irish ingredients, and represent fresh dining at its finest.

Business Class - Luxury in the Skies

New Airbus A330 planes and the Revival Lounge in Dublin allows transatlantic Business Class guests to refresh on arrival

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	<p>Dedicated check-in area & priority baggage delivery plus three complimentary check-in bags.</p> <p>Aer Lingus work with top chefs to bring you a fusion of the finest modern and traditional Irish food.</p> <p>Guests will now be able to work, relax, dine or sleep in the new Business Class lie flat sleeper seats - which are a fully flat 2 metre bed that is 22 inches wide.</p> <p>The configuration is 4 single seats with double sided stowage.</p> <p>Custom-designed storage means you can keep your laptop, phone, tablet and bags within reach without feeling crowded. You'll also find built-in power and charge points.</p> <p>Wi-Fi is free in the business class cabin on board all of the A330 aircraft and will work with any of your Wi-Fi enabled devices</p> <p>With so much comfort, storage and space to stretch out in, really it's more of a hi-tech lounge/bed/office/dining room than a simple 'seat.'</p> <p>With so much comfort, storage and space to stretch out in, really it's more of a hi-tech lounge/bed/office/dining room than a simple 'seat.'</p> <p>Travel the Atlantic in 40 winks: Lie-Flat Comfort - A good night's sleep is vital to staying healthy and alert, so their new seat transforms into a fully lie-flat 6.5ft long bed. And with a width of 22 inches, you'll have plenty of room to stretch out as you dream your way across the Atlantic.</p> <p>Custom-designed storage means you can keep your laptop, phone, tablet and bags within reach without feeling crowded. You'll also find built-in power and charge points with universal sockets and a USB power outlet, so you can stay fully charged for the entire flight.</p> <p>Aer Lingus Revival Lounge</p> <p>The new Revival Lounges in Dublin and New York (JFK) invite transatlantic Business Class guests to refresh on arrival. The Dublin Revival Lounge is located beside baggage belt six in the arrivals hall in Terminal 2, and in New York (JFK) you'll find it just beside Gate 26. Your shirt or suit can be collected and steam pressed while you shower. Fresh towels and amenity kits are provided. Enjoy a coffee, juice and croissant before starting your day. TV/newspapers in the exclusive waiting area are also available to bring you up to speed on all the latest news.</p>
<p>Aer Lingus Packages</p>	<p>Aer Lingus Vacation Store</p> <p>Aer Lingus Vacation Store offer vacation packages make it easy for guests to come over and experience the warm Irish welcome for themselves! Aer Lingus Vacation Store will help you with all your vacation needs. They can customize your vacation, they have some great packages and deals and they can help you with all different types of vacation. Whether you are looking for B&Bs, Escorted Tours, Self</p>

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drive tours, Golf vacations, City breaks or more.
For information and pricing contact Aer Lingus Vacation Store at 800-495-1632 and you can also check out www.aerlingusvacationstore.com .

Here are just a few of the wonderful vacation options available:

Discover Ireland's Ancient East: Self-drive through Dublin, Kilkenny, Waterford, Cork & Wicklow

Ireland's Ancient East has an engaging authenticity as you visit the local towns and villages. With this 6 or 8 night vacation you can indulge in the local produce in Kilkenny, discover the wealth of history in Waterford and relax in luxury at the 5-star Powerscourt Hotel.

What's Included: Round-trip economy class airfare to Dublin, 6 nights hotel, car rental for duration plus Tours & sightseeing

Highlights:

Discover the heart of Ireland's Ancient East- Kilkenny.

Tour the Waterford Treasures Viking Triangle and discover the city's rich history.

The 5-star Powerscourt Hotel is set in Wicklow, the Garden of Ireland. Kilkenny Castle is the perfect place to bring a picnic lunch.

Journey along the Wild Atlantic Way from Clare to Limerick for 6, 7 or 8 nights.

What's Included: Round-trip economy class airfare to Dublin, 6 nights hotel, car rental for duration

Highlights:

Visit Clare, Killarney, Cork and Limerick.

Take a day-trip to the Cliffs of Moher, a top natural attraction in Ireland.

Enjoy accommodations in some of the most beautiful areas in Ireland.

Shannon is a great hub for accessing the west coast. You'll be 20 minutes from Limerick.

Visit Bunratty Castle and the Burren.

Ireland East and West Golf Vacation

This 6 or 7 night vacation will take you to the east and west coasts of Ireland with incredible rounds of golf along the way. Enjoy tee times at Lahinch, Druids Glen and Portmarnock.

What's Included: Round-trip economy class airfare to Dublin, manual full size car for duration, 6 nights hotel, 3 rounds of golf.

Highlights:

Discover the beautiful Irish greens from the west coast to the east coast.

The 4-star Old Ground Hotel in Ennis is an 18th century manor house.

After 18-holes, you can relax at your lovely accommodations or venture out into the scenic west coast. Take a trip over to the Cliffs of Moher or

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	<p>the Burren National Park! The 5-star Druids Glen Resort is perfect for golfers. You have two rounds of golf in the east of the country plus you are staying close enough to be able explore Dublin.</p>
<p>Cities</p>	<p>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 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 panorama’s 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) 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, Dùn 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

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	<p>things to do (festivals and events each month throughout the year) is now amazing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<p>Dublin and Belfast City Breaks are always in season!</p> <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. 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>
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	<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 nutcrunching 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> <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</p>

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warm welcome for your four legged best friend as well.
www.bandbireland.com

TARGET GROUPS	
<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 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:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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!</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Boat cruises on Lough Corrib, County Galway Relax with a wonderful boat cruise on the pretty Lough Corrib.</p> <p>Bunratty Castle and Folk Park, County Clare This 15th-century castle</p>

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	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.
Teens	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 (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. Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge : a scary swinging rope bridge to a sea stack off the North Antrim coast.
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	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. Tracing your Roots To begin your research here are three useful websites: A useful first step is the Irish Government website Irish Genealogy: www.irishgenealogy.ie Early 20th-century census returns can be perused at the National Archives website: www.nationalarchives.ie The Irish Family History Foundation has a website run on behalf of county-based genealogy centres: www.familysearch.org 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. In Dublin, the National Library, National Archives and General Register Office are all key sources, with the National Library and National

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	<p>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 Professional Genealogists in Ireland to help speed things up. They can help find ancestors and living relatives.</p> <p>Heritage Attractions</p> <p>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:</p> <p>“May the roof above us never fall in. And may the friends gathered below it never fall out”.</p> <p>“May the saddest day of your future be no worse than the happiest</p>
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	<p>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> <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 Clonegal, 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>
History	<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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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. 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>

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<p>1000 Places to see before you die</p>	<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>
<p>Must Sees</p>	<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 hexagonals of 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> <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</p>

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	<p>soak up its lively weekend markets. 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 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 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</p>

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	Christians. The monks lived in stone 'beehive' huts (clochans), perched above nearly vertical cliff walls. The latest Star Wars movies feature scenes from here.
Titanic Belfast Experience	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.
South East Ireland	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. http://www.southeastirelandhotels.ie

SPORTS ACTIVITIES	
Outdoors Ireland	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 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-skippered cabin cruise; also the Grand Canal from Dublin to Waterford.
Golf	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

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	<p>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>
<p>Fishing</p>	<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 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</p>

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	<p>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. 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 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;</p> <p>Cycling companies – check out G Adventures, Randonnee Tours, Butterfield and Robinson.</p>

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<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. The UNESCO World Heritage Site at Newgrange stirs the imagination... - 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. - 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>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</p>

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	<p>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> <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</p>

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

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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/>

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.

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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 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 (27-30 October, 2017)

The festival celebrates the Dublin-man behind Dracula with films, talks, readings, and a scare or three. It takes place every year during Dublin

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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 (28-31 October, 2017)

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 (7-9 September, 2017)

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 (22-24 September, 2017)

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!

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.

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Christmas Markets

Belfast Christmas Market (18 November – 19 December, 2017)

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 (24 November -22 December 2017)

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 (17 Nov - 23 Dec 2017)

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 (1 Sept- 8 Oct 2017)

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 (1-3 September, 2017)

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

Wexford Festival Opera (19 October - 5 November, 2017)

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.

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	<p>New Year's Eve Festival Dublin (30 December 2017 - 1 January 2018) 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 (25-29 January, 2017) 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; Glencolumbkille 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, Castlewellingan; 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 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>
Historical Buildings	<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</p>

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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/>

Dunluce, 16th century stronghold of MacDonnells, teeters on a cliff edge and has a secret entrance through a sea cave.

Ennislillen was the medieval home of the Maguires of Fermanagh. 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.

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.

OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	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.
Markets	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.
Arts and Crafts in Dublin	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.
Nightlife	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.

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Here's a quote from the Tourism Ireland website that eloquently pens a picture:

“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!”

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.

CUISINE

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!

When it comes to food on the island of Ireland, you need to start at the 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.

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.

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	<p>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.
<p>Food</p>	<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>
<p>Wine and spirits</p>	<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> <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</p>

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	whiskey across the Atlantic.
Restaurants	<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>

MORE INFO	
Brochures	Call 1-800-SHAMROCK for Tourism Ireland to request brochures
Websites	<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>For Aer Lingus: Website: www.aerlingus.ca Telephone: 1-800-474-7424 Latest Offers: http://www.aerlingus.com/travelinformation/weboffersfromcanada/flights-toeurope/ Newsletter Signup: http://www.aerlingus.com/cgi-bin/obel01im1/bookonline/emailSubscription.do Facebook: www.facebook.com/aerlingusNA?brand_redir=356935764395976 Twitter: https://twitter.com/aerlingus</p>

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	<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: “Baloney</i></p>
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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>

See my Travel Blogs on Ireland at:

<http://www.chrisrobsontravelshow.ca/Blog/tabid/400/EntryId/73/Ireland-with-Trafalgar.aspx>

<http://www.chrisrobsontravelshow.ca/Blog/tabid/400/EntryId/74/Titanic-Belfast.aspx>

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

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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);

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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