



International Quilt Festival of Ireland 2013

Tour Dates June 6th – 14th 2013

\$1599.00 pp based on double occupancy | Single supplement \$400.00

"THE GATHERING" is an invitation to the world to come and join in Ireland's renewal. It's a yearlong program of events, happenings and gatherings in Ireland, driven by arts, sports, business and community groups. It is an invitation to enjoy Ireland's vibrant living culture, its entrepreneurial spirit and innovation in action and to celebrate a place steeped in natural beauty and history"

International Quilt Festival of Ireland 2013

From 7 to 9 June 2013 the second International Quilt Festival will take place in Galway City. This festival is completely outside the box in its design, as a traditional Irish Quilter's Village will be created especially for the event. As you walk around, you are sure to run into the village's very charming mayor and the town crier, who announces activities and events taking place throughout the day. You may even find Molly Malone pushing her cart and selling fat quarters

Day 1: Thursday 6th June 2013 - Arrival in Shannon

Arrive at Shannon Airport and meet with your driver/guide and depart for Galway
Continue to the coast where you will visit the Cliffs of Moher

Visit the Cliffs of Moher

Situated on the Atlantic Ocean and bordering the Burren Area, the Cliffs of Moher are one of Ireland's most spectacular sights. Standing 230 metres above the ground at their highest point and 8km long, the Cliffs boast one of the most amazing views in Ireland. On a clear day, the Aran Islands are visible in Galway Bay as well as the valleys and hills of Connemara. The cliffs reach their highest point just north of O' Brien's Tower built by Cornelius O' Brien, a descendant of Brian Boru, to entertain his lady friends.
Enjoy some free time for lunch at the Cliffs of Moher

Continue to Galway City and enjoy an Orientation Tour

Galway City at the mouth of Galway Bay is both a picturesque and lively city with a wonderful avant-garde culture. The city has many relics of its medieval past and is worth taking time to explore. It has changed considerably over the last number of years and features a fascinating juxtaposition of new and ancient architecture. The centre of the city is conveniently compact enough to ramble around comfortably.

Enjoy a visit to **Spiddal Craft Village**

Check into your hotel

Tonight enjoy a Welcome Dinner at your hotel

OR

Perhaps you may want to join **Grand Reception** at the International Quilt Festival of Ireland. Please note that tickets are priced at **Euro 125.00 per person**. For any bookings you wish to make through Abbey Tours a handling fee of Euro 4.00 per ticket will apply. Please note that these tickets are on a first come first serve basis and are subject to availability at time of booking.

Overnight, dinner bed and full Irish breakfast at your hotel in Galway or area

Day 2: Friday 7th June 2013 – International Quilting Festival or Connemara

Today enjoy a full day at leisure at the International Quilting Festival of Ireland - please note your **3 day pass is included** in the overall rate.

OR

Connemara is a land of lakes and rivers, bogs and mountains. A land of small villages where Gaelic is still the spoken language and where little has changed since the beginning of time. It is without a doubt the wildest and the most romantic part of Ireland. Connemara is a vast peninsula bordered by the arid and rocky coastline of Galway Bay in the south ~ a land characteristic for its stone walls and thatched cottages. On its northern shore the land is harsher and more secret, with spectacular views of the Ocean and the beautiful fjord of Killary Harbour, as well as the steep mountains overlooking numerous lakes and large bog areas. Connemara is a real paradise for Nature lovers and those in search of strong emotions.

Visit Kylemore Abbey

Kylemore Abbey is located in the Kylemore Pass in Connemara. A Mitchell Henry built the House in 1868, after having spent his honeymoon in the area. The architecture is best described as neo-gothic and the house still displays all the characteristics of that period. One of Kylemore Abbey's most famous features is its miniature cathedral, built in 1870 and known locally as the Gothic church. Today, the abbey is home to the Irish order of Benedictine nuns. They established a private school for young girls, which was the renowned Kylemore Abbey International School for young girls. The school closed in 2010.

Facilities at Kylemore include a visitor centre, an exhibition housed in the main reception rooms of the house and a video which takes the visitor through the history of the house and its occupants. The Gothic church is available to visit and as a venue for choir groups to sing in.

If time allows guests can also visit the Kylemore Abbey Victorian Walled Garden was laid out in 1867 and took three years to complete.

Return to Galway where you will enjoy the balance of the day at leisure to enjoy the **International Quilt Festival of Ireland** and all the activities it has to offer – please note your **3 day pass is included** in the overall rate.

Overnight, bed and full Irish breakfast basis at your hotel in Galway or area.

Day 3: Saturday 8th June 2013 – International Quilt Festival of Ireland

Today enjoy a full day at leisure at the International Quilting Festival of Ireland - please note your **3 day pass is included** in the overall rate.

Unlike other quilt festivals and conventions held around the world, where all the functions take place in an enormous convention hall, the festival will be located on the beautiful NUI campus in **Galway, Ireland**, where there will be a special **Quilter's Village** on the banks of the *River Corrib*. Here you'll be able to walk around and enjoy all the special attractions this village has to offer. There will be a Quilter's Market where you can buy everything from Irish crafts to traditional Irish Brown Bread, the Fat Quarters Chocolate Shop, a School House for hands-on quilting classes, a Quilter's Canteen that seats over 800 people, over a dozen special quilt exhibits on display in various buildings throughout the village, and the Town Hall, where you will find over 50 vendors who have created booths to tease you with their latest state-of-the-art products and services!

Take part in an optional Craft or Quilting Workshop - supplements may apply

Overnight, bed and full Irish breakfast basis at your Galway hotel

Day 4: Sunday 9th June 2013 – Galway to Kerry

Today travel to Killarney via Limerick

Stop off at **Ballycasey Crafts Centre**

On arrival in Limerick enjoy a panoramic city tour

The Vikings founded Limerick in the 9th century as a base for raiding local monasteries and Celtic settlements. It was later colonised by the Anglo-Norman who built the castle in 1210. The City at that time was divided into Irishtown and Englishtown and life was seldom calm between the two groups. Today Limerick is the main city of County Limerick and is Ireland's third largest city with a population in excess of 80,000. It is often referred to as the sporting capital of Ireland because of its excellent sports facilities and passionate devotion to rugby. The city has recently achieved fame as the setting for Frank McCourt's best-selling autobiography 'Angela's Ashes'.

Enjoy a visit to King John's Castle

King John's Castle is situated on 'King's Island' in the heart of medieval Limerick City. The Castle overlooks the majestic river Shannon. It was built between 1200 and 1210 and was repaired and extended many times in the following centuries. The interpretative centre at the Castle contains an imaginative historical exhibition which tells the story of the Castle. Archaeological excavations have revealed pre-Norman settlements and evidence from the traumatic siege of 1642. The courtyard and the Castle display some of the trades and traditions of the 16th Century. The Castle offers panoramic views of Limerick City and the surrounding countryside. The sights, scenes and sounds of the Castle and its environs all combine to recreate the atmosphere of the era.

Continue to the beautiful town of **Adare**

Adare, regarded as one of Ireland's most picturesque villages, is a small village with thatched cottages dotted throughout the town. These were created by the 3rd Earl of Dunraven in the 1820's for his estate workers. Today they are mostly used as craft shops or restaurants. A small town it offers a lot. The village has a Desmond castle and a Manor, once the home of Lord Dunraven ~ today it is the 5-star Adare Manor Hotel. The heritage site in the centre of town is a useful source of information.

Enjoy some free time in Adare for lunch under own arrangements

Travel to Killarney

Overnight, bed and full Irish breakfast at your hotel in Killarney or area.

Day 5: Monday 10th June 2013 – Ring of Kerry

Today enjoy a tour of the most famous coastal road in Ireland

The Ring of Kerry (166km) is the most famous and panoramic route in Ireland. The astonishing beauty of this large peninsula, Iveragh, comes from the great diversity of its scenery, which offers incessant contrasts. En route around the Ring, take in spectacular scenery - mountains, peat bogs, lakes and magnificent views of the Atlantic Ocean as one travels along the coast road. Leaving Killarney pass through Killorglin, famous for its Puck Fair, then to Glenbeigh where the cliff road affords panoramic views of the Dingle Peninsula and Dingle Bay. Continuing to Cahirciveen, you'll pass the birthplace of our National hero, Daniel O'Connell. Next, continue on through peat bogs to the town of Waterville. Continue to Sneem Village, famous for its brightly coloured houses. The road then continues through the mountains to Molls Gap and Ladies View with superb views of the famous Lakes of Killarney.

Why not enjoy an optional visit to Muckross House and Gardens

Muckross is a magnificent Victorian mansion built in 1843 and is one of Ireland's leading stately homes. Built on the shores of Muckross Lake, it is beautifully situated amidst the spectacular scenery of Killarney National Park. The elegantly furnished rooms portray the life style of the landed gentry, while downstairs in the basement area one can experience the working conditions of the servants employed in the house.

The Gardens of Muckross House are famed for their beauty worldwide. In particular they are noted for their collections of azaleas and rhododendrons. However the extensive water garden, the children's sunken garden and the outstanding rock garden, hewn out of natural limestone, are just some of the features to be discovered. Access for visitors with disabilities, including platform lifts and elevators.

OR

Enjoy an optional Jaunting Car Ride [Horse and carriage ride] in Killarney National Park

Step aboard a jaunting car and discover areas of the National Park that you might not otherwise visit. Relax aboard a jaunting car as your *Jarvey* [driver] takes you through the magnificent scenery of Killarney National Park. The scenery is stunning and the trap will stop as often as you wish to facilitate your taking photographs.

Tonight why not enjoy optional dinner & entertainment at Kate Kearney's Cottage

Nestled at the entrance to the world famous Gap of Dunloe lies Kate Kearney's Cottage, a 150-year-old family-run pub and restaurant. At "Kate's" you can now enjoy a traditional Irish night. Join in a night full of entertainment, music and song all presented after an excellent meal. All who come will enjoy excellent food and the best of music and dance. The musicians will introduce you to some of their unique instruments while the dancers will set you toes and hands tapping. Guests are encouraged to join the dancers who are pleased to pass on some of basic steps of a good Irish jig or hornpipe.

Overnight, dinner bed and full Irish breakfast at your hotel in Kerry or area.

Day 6: Tuesday 11th June 2013 – Kerry to Waterford

Visit Blarney Castle

Attracting visitors from all over the world, Blarney Castle is situated in Blarney 8 km from Cork City. An ancient stronghold of the McCarthy's, Lords of Muskerry, it is one of Ireland's oldest and most historic castles, and indeed one of the strongest fortresses in Munster. Built in 1446, Blarney Castle is famous for its Blarney stone - The Stone of Eloquence, which is traditionally believed, to have the power to bestow the gift of eloquence on all those who kiss it. Many legends tell the story of the Stone, but why not kiss it and find out the truth behind the legend.

Stop at Blarney Woollen Mills

The presence of the Woollen Mills during the famine shielded Blarney from the worst effects of the famine, due to its employment of local workers. The success story at the mills continued until a disastrous fire in 1869. By August 1871, the mill was once again operational with a labor force of 222. In 1976 Chris Kelleher, himself a mill worker, bought the old mill property. Within a short period of time Chris and his family transformed the mill into what is perhaps the largest quality craft shop in Ireland.

Continue to Waterford

On arrival enjoy a visit to Waterford Crystal Visitor Centre

The Waterford Crystal visitor centre has moved in 2010 to a magnificent new home in the heart of Waterford City. A unique highlight of a visit is the factory tour which gives an up close insight into the centuries-old tradition of Waterford Crystal making. Feel the heat of the furnace and marvel at the skills of the craftsmen. The factory tour includes the following traditional production areas; wooden mould making, crystal blowing and furnace, crystal cutting and quality inspection and finishing. After the tour visitors can browse the world's most famous crystal in a lavish retail store, which houses the largest collection of Waterford Crystal found anywhere in the world.

Enjoy a walking tour of Waterford City

Overnight, dinner bed and full Irish breakfast at your hotel in Dublin or area.

Day 7: Wednesday 12th June 2013 – Waterford to Dublin

Today travel to Dublin

Enjoy a stop in Kilkenny City

Capital of County Kilkenny, the town of Kilkenny is often referred to as “the Marble City”. It is the most interesting and best preserved of the medieval Irish cities. It owes its immense charm to the various impressive historical monuments. A medieval city of 24,000 people it is characterized by many beautifully restored buildings and winding slipways ~ it is small and compact (best explored on foot), yet full of fascinating historical buildings and contemporary shops, design galleries and restaurants. The ancient city of Kilkenny was named after a 6th century monk St Canice. A native of the area, St Canice built a monastic enclave on the site where today we find the beautifully restored 13th St Canices Cathedral. The town is dominated by 12th century Kilkenny Castle, built by the Normans on their arrival in this part of Ireland

Just outside the town of Kilkenny enjoy a visit to Maeve Coulter or Cushendale Woolen Mills

Continue to the National Stud

Established in 1946, the Irish National Stud combines an active role in the development and promotion of Irish bloodstock with its role as one of the country's major tourist attractions and it is the only Stud farm in Ireland open to the public.

Within the same site, the magnificent Japanese Gardens of Tully were created between the years 1906 and 1910. Devised by Colonel William Hallwalker, a wealthy Scotsman of a famous Walker brewery family, the gardens were laid out in their paths of beauty by the Japanese Eida and his son Minoru. Planned to symbolize the life of Man, the landscapes are now of international renown and are acclaimed as one of the finest gardens in Europe. The path through them is arranged by theme and leads one on a symbolic journey from birth to death. The garden's features include a Zen rock garden and a variety of exotic plants, trees and sacred bamboo. Visitors can also see St. Fiachra's garden which seeks to capture the power of the Irish landscape in its rawest state, that of rock and water. It is within a natural setting of woodlands, wetlands, lakes and islands. The visitor attraction also incorporates the Horse Museum which tells the story of man and horse uniting for sporting competition and more specifically, the story is of Ireland's long love affair with horse racing, and horse racing's love affair with Ireland. There is also a café within the grounds.

Enjoy lunch under own arrangements

On route to Dublin visit Russborough House

Situated in the beautiful surroundings of the Wicklow countryside, Russborough House is proudly one of Ireland's finest stately homes. It was built in 1741 for Joseph Leeson the first Lord Milltown who later became Lord Russborough. It has remarkable plasterwork by the Francini brothers and the ceilings were richly decorated by the Lafranchini brothers. In 1952 it was sold to the late Sir Alfred Beit and Lady Beit (of the de Beers diamond mining company in South Africa). He had an impressive art collection, some of which is on display in Russborough house while others were moved to the National Gallery following three art robberies at the house. The tour of the house takes approximately 45 minutes. In 2011 an extensive self-guided exhibition was opened in the basement and includes interactive touch screens, audio listening handsets, slideshow presentation and cinema projections and films in the original Beit cinema. It Includes photos and mementos of the visits of famous people like Jackie Onassis, Fred Astaire and Mick Jagger. It also features photos and stories from the local area about the Blessington reservoir and the Blessington Tramway.

Overnight, bed and full Irish breakfast at your hotel in Dublin or area.

Day 8: Thursday 13th June 2013 – Dublin's Fair City

Enjoy a **panoramic tour of Dublin**, discovering the north side of the River Liffey. This area offers great striking monuments such as the GPO (General Post Office) on the city main thoroughfare, O'Connell Street, or the Custom House along the quays, as well as the Phoenix Park, the largest public park in Europe.

The south side appears more sophisticated with its vast Georgian squares, such as Merrion Square, where Oscar Wilde's House can still be found (today owned by an American College), its colorful doors, along with Grafton Street and its quality shops. Not so far from St. Stephen's Green, in Kildare St., you will see the house of Bram Stoker, the author of Dracula. This part of the city is also dominated by the students of Trinity College, where the famous book of Kells is permanently exhibited in its library. The university is facing the medieval district where Dublin Castle and the two Anglican Cathedrals can be found.

Visit St. Patrick' Cathedral

St Patrick's is the National Cathedral of Ireland and is built on the site where St Patrick preached. There was a small church on the site which was still in existence when the Anglo-Normans arrived. This church was replaced with a stone church in 1191 and it was further remodelled in 1225 to the same design as Salisbury Cathedral. Ireland's first university was founded at St. Patrick's in 1320 and intermittently operated for 200 years. St Patrick's is Gothic in style and its splendid interior, is adorned with funeral monuments, such as The Boyle Family Memorial and the grave of Dean Jonathan Swift. Swift was dean here until his death in 1745. The Chancel has ornate stained-glass windows, and spectacular choir stalls, once used by the knights of St Patrick adjoin the Altar. The massive west towers, houses a large peal of bells whose ringing tones are so much part of the character of Dublin. **Marvel at the quilted patterned floors within the cathedral**

Visit Trinity College

Thomas Burgh built the Old Library building in the 18th century. Today it houses one of Ireland's most illustrious books, the 9th century "Book of Kells". Before viewing the famous book visitors pass through an excellent exhibition based on the book of Kells and other important books written in monasteries around Ireland from the 9th century. After viewing the book of Kells visitors are invited to visit the long room built in 1745. Once the principal library of the University, it now contains over two hundred thousand books and manuscripts of the Trinity's oldest volumes. Brian Boru's harp said to be the "oldest harp in Ireland" and a copy of the 1916 proclamation, one of the most important documents relating to Irish history are also on display in the long room.

Free time for lunch under own arrangements – here we would like to recommend the Kilkenny Design Centre!

After lunch enjoy a visit to the Old Jameson Distillery

The Old Jameson Distillery in Smithfield Village is located in the heart of Old Dublin. This old barley storehouse, once the centre of Distilling in Dublin, was renovated in 1998 and converted into a museum where all the secrets of Irish whiskey's distillation will be revealed. An audio-visual show will introduce the history of this spirit and it is followed by a guided visit which will take you through the various stages of whiskey distilling from grain intake to malting, mashing, fermentation, distillation, maturation and finally bottling. The visit culminates in the Jameson bar with an opportunity for all to taste the signature Jameson drink. During the visit a number of volunteers are selected to take part in a tasting session to compare a Jameson whiskey with a Scottish Whisky and American bourbon. Participants will receive a Diploma for their achievement!!! It is possible for the whole group to participate in the whiskey comparison tasting. (An extra charge applies)

Tonight you will enjoy farewell dinner and entertainment at The Merry Ploughboys Pub

This is a state-of-the-art music venue open seven nights a week, all year round. Their lively show features contemporary Irish dancing and well-known guest artists. Fine food is a very important element. At Merry Ploughboy's Pub, youthful vibrancy has successfully combined with traditional craftsmanship to provide an excellent evening entertainment

Day 9: Friday 14th June 2013 – Farewell

This morning transfer to Dublin Airport for your return flight home