



EXPERIENCES IN IRELAND



WELCOME TO BELMOND GRAND HIBERNIAN

Browse this guide to discover exciting and enriching activities you can incorporate into your train journey through Ireland. From an art-themed tea in Dublin to a foraging tour in Kinsale, paddleboarding in Clew Bay or stargazing in Kerry, there's plenty to appeal to all interests.

Please speak to our team for prices and any further information about the experiences.

Please note, some activities may only be available on select journeys due to the train's location and all are subject to availability.

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CATEGORIES

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| | ACTIVE |
| | ART & CRAFT |
| | CULINARY |
| | FESTIVAL |
| | HISTORY |
| | NATURE |
| | CHILD-FRIENDLY |





Dublin



Dublin

Ireland's handsome Georgian capital exudes character and charm. Legends in literature and art once strolled its elegant streets; outside the city, the Wicklow Mountains beg to be explored. These activities are best experienced before or after your train journey.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND & ART TEA

Discover masterpieces by Jack B Yeats, Caravaggio, Monet, Turner and many more among the collection of over 12,000 works. Enjoy a private guided tour of the highlights before sitting down to a lavish Art Tea at The Merrion Hotel. Indulge in exquisite sweet creations inspired by the work of celebrated Irish artists, such as William Scott and Louis Le Brocquy, served on delicate china. Add a glass of champagne for an extra treat.



Guided tour of the Gallery lasts 45-60 minutes. The walk to the Merrion Hotel takes 3 minutes. The experience can be tailored to each guest – for example, if you wish to add a visit to the Irish Museum of Modern Art, or other galleries in Dublin, just ask. Please book 4-6 weeks in advance.



MUSEUM OF LITERATURE IRELAND

Explore Ireland's rich literary heritage from past to present at MoLi, Dublin's new cultural landmark on St Stephen's Green. Experience immersive exhibitions, view treasures from the National Library – including the very first copy of James Joyce's *Ulysses* – and relax in the tranquil gardens and café. Enjoy a unique 50-minute tour of the museum with one of their expert guides. Afterwards, meet a local guide to take a stroll around Leopold Bloom's Dublin; visit St Patrick's Cathedral where *Gulliver's Travels* author Jonathan Swift was once Dean, and enter Trinity College to see the iconic Book of Kells.



A private chauffeur can be arranged if you prefer not to explore on foot. Tour includes entrance to MoLi and private guide, local guide afterwards for a walking tour and fast-track entrance to Book of Kells. Please book 4-6 weeks in advance.



DUBLIN HORSE SHOW

In its 146th year, this top equestrian event effortlessly combines world-class sport with spectacular fashion and socialising. Running from 15-19 July 2020, the Longines FEI Jumping Nations Cup draws thousands of visitors for a five-day celebration of Ireland's affinity with the horse. Superb steeds are just one of the reasons to attend a show that is equally celebrated for style, shopping and family fun, including dedicated children's entertainment and pony rides. Combined with an array of browsing opportunities, quality restaurants, bars and cafés, live music and daily entertainment, the Dublin Horse Show is where summer memories are made.



The Dublin Horse Show takes place within the 42-acre showgrounds of RDS Ballsbridge. A private driver can be arranged to take you to and from the venue. Dublin Horse Show tickets are available in January 2020. We advise you to book as soon as possible.

IRISH NATIONAL STUD & GARDENS

Why not combine the Dublin Horse Show with a visit to the Irish National Stud & Gardens, located 45 minutes outside of Dublin? Within its leafy grounds, discover the world-famous Japanese Gardens, Horse Museum and St Fiachra's Garden, created to celebrate the Millennium.



A private driver can be arranged to take you to and from the venue. Public guided tours of the venue and its gardens are available or you can simply explore at your leisure. Please book 2 weeks in advance.



MOUNTAIN BIKING

Explore the stunning panoramic scenery of the Wicklow Mountains on two wheels. You'll be guided, with a full backup service, through rolling mountainous landscapes, visiting iconic spots such as the 'Guinness Lake' at Lough Tay with views over Vartry Reservoir. The duration of the tour depends on riders' ability – activities are tailored to the needs of the group to ensure everyone has a great day out. The region provides some of the best mountain biking terrain in Ireland, with a perfect mix of wide forest paths and exhilarating single tracks.



This tour is suitable for novice and expert bikers alike. The experience includes a welcome introduction with complimentary tea/coffee, high-performance front-suspension mountain bikes, fitting of safety helmets, fully-qualified professional mountain bike guide(s), mechanical assistance and first aid support. For inexperienced riders, a basic introduction talks you through the fundamentals, including gears, brakes, body position, balance and cornering. The activity takes place at 10:00 or 13:00 with a 90-minute transfer from Dublin to the Wicklow Mountains. Please book 3-4 weeks in advance.





Cork



Cork

This verdant county sprawls across Ireland's southwest, home to legendary castles, rich military history and colourful fishing villages. Cork has also built up a reputation for fantastic food, offering great restaurants, buzzing markets and culinary festivals.

BLARNEY CASTLE

Perhaps Cork's best-known attraction, Blarney Castle is where the legendary Stone of Eloquence is concealed. Wedged high in the walls of the medieval fortress, the stone is said to give anyone who kisses it – by turning upside down – the gift of the gab. On this excursion, you gain access to the castle before it opens to the public. Your guide will meet you at the entrance and give you a detailed map of the grounds before escorting you to the stone. Those who prefer not to climb up to the stone can visit the Poisonous Garden instead. Afterwards, gather at the Stable Yard Café for morning coffee, tea and scones, before heading off to explore the grounds independently or visit the nearby Blarney Woollen Mills shop.



Depart in the morning from Charleville Train Station for the 45-minute journey by road to Blarney Castle. Return to the train after midday. Blarney Castle is wheelchair accessible, however to kiss the Blarney Stone there are 128 narrow steps up to the top. Warm clothing and a raincoat is advised. Please book 3-4 weeks in advance.



CHARLES FORT

One of Europe's best-preserved star-shaped artillery forts, this vast 17th-century fortification affords breathtaking views over Kinsale town and harbour. As one of the largest military installations in the country, Charles Fort has been associated with momentous events in Irish history, including the Williamite War of 1688-91 and the Civil War of 1922-23. Let your guide take you on a 60-minute tour around the vast structure; there's a tea room for refreshments if wished. Afterwards, explore the pretty port of Kinsale at your leisure. Alternatively, visit the beautiful Garden of Remembrance, dedicated to the memory of Friar Mychal Judge, Chaplain to the New York Fire Department, and to the 343 brave firefighters who lost their lives in New York on September 11, 2001.



Depart in the morning from Cork Kent Train Station for the 45-minute journey by road to Charles Fort in Kinsale. Return to the train after midday. Warm clothing and good walking shoes advised. Some cobbled, uneven surfaces are not suitable for people with limited mobility. Please book a month in advance.



KINSALE FOOD & FORAGING TOURS

Embark on a gentle stroll through colourful Kinsale, stopping at a number of enticing eateries and meeting local producers. Discover their passions, their stories and their culinary creations and learn more about the history of this unique part of Ireland. For outdoor enthusiasts, combine a food tour with a foraging experience. Travel to the coast to identify and forage for edible wild shellfish, seaweed and plants. A third option, if you fancy a tipple or two, is to meld the food tour with a choice of mead or whiskey tastings.



Depart in the morning from Cork Kent Train Station for the 45-minute journey by road to Kinsale. Return to the train after midday at Cork Kent Station. Tours take place come hail, rain or shine and last between 2.5 and 3.5 hours. All food tastings and one hot drink are included. The foraging experience is dependent on the tide. A private driver and guide will take you to the coast. You then return to the train in Killarney (90-minute transfer). Warm clothing and comfortable shoes are advised. Please book 6-8 weeks in advance.





Killarney



Killarney

Killarney National Park, in County Kerry, is a magical wilderness of loughs, mountains, forests and waterfalls. For lovers of the great outdoors – and the great night sky – it offers a wealth of exhilarating experiences.

SUNSET KAYAK TOUR

Team up with a highly qualified and experienced instructor for a private, three-hour kayak tour. Watch the sun set in the west over Killarney National Park and Dingle. Paddle silently past rustling islands and sleepy swans. From the water, see the mystical sixth-century abbey ruins on Innisfallen Island and perhaps glimpse some of Ireland's last native red deer. Return by kayak to Ross Castle in the twilight, and even moonlight, as darkness creeps over the oak and yew woods.



Activity lasts from 18:00-21:00. No previous kayaking experience needed. One kayak per person and all equipment provided. Wear warm clothing and practical footwear; swimsuit for under wetsuit. A taxi to Ross Castle from Killarney takes 5 minutes. Please book 3-4 weeks in advance.



KAYAK TOUR

Spend a relaxing afternoon exploring the sparkling Lakes of Killarney by kayak with an expert guide. Beginning at 15th-century Ross Castle, paddle into Lough Lein, discovering wooded islands, limestone caves and local history. Learn the skills to master your kayak as you look out for white-tailed sea eagles soaring above the National Park. Land at the ancient ruins of Innisfallen Abbey, once a leper colony, now a refuge for native red deer.



Activity lasts from 15:00-18:00. No previous kayaking experience is needed. One kayak per person and all equipment provided. Wear warm clothing and practical footwear; swimsuit for under wetsuit. A taxi to Ross Castle from Killarney takes 5 minutes. Please book 3-4 weeks in advance.



HIKING

Scale Ireland's tallest mountain, the 1039-metre-high Carrauntoohil. You'll be accompanied by a highly experienced mountain guide, who will share a wealth of information on the slopes' history, geology, flora and fauna, along with entertaining tales from the mountains. With all assistance, encouragement and guidance given, and no navigational worries, you're free to absorb the scenery and embrace the challenge.



Climb lasts around 6 hours. A good level of fitness is required to hike the mountain terrain. Wear suitable footwear and warm clothing for changeable weather. The train's chef will provide a packed lunch.

90-minute transfer to Killarney from Cork, departing in the morning. Return to the train in Killarney from late afternoon onwards. Please book 2-3 weeks in advance.

STARGAZING

Experience the Kerry Dark Sky Reserve, the only Gold-Tier reserve in the whole of the Northern Hemisphere. Meet your expert astronomer, who has over 30 years' experience as a Stargazing and Tourist Guide, to learn all about the constellations and how to spot them. Discover popular stars, planets, nebulae, clusters and other galaxies, using telescopes or high-powered binoculars for a truly awe-inspiring view of the firmament. Leave with a complimentary Evening Sky Map and some unforgettable memories.



Private transfer from Killarney Station to the site takes 90 minutes by road. Stargazing activity lasts 60-90 minutes. Return to the train at Killarney. All equipment provided. Please, no phones or white lights as they impact on your vision. Layers of warm clothing advised. Maximum 12 guests per group. Please book 2-3 weeks in advance.



Galway



Galway

The buzzy, cosmopolitan city on the west coast is known for its thriving food scene. Long famed for its oysters (and annual festival), it's now a place where everything from craft gins to sushi and doughnuts can be savoured.

MICIL DISTILLERY

Galway's first distillery to open its doors in over 100 years is headed up by Pádraic Ó Griallais, a sixth-generation distiller passionately continuing a 170-year-old family tradition. The distillery traces its roots back to 1848, when Pádraic's great-great-great grandfather, Micil Mac Chearra, began producing poitín from a small stillhouse in Connemara. Today, as well as a range of poitín products made from 100% Irish grain, they create award-winning Micil Gin crafted from local botanicals. During a tour, you'll experience the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of a working distillery, learn the real history of whiskey, poitín and gin, and discover what makes these particular products unique. Hear interesting, funny and daring stories and taste for yourself the time-honoured tipples – spirits steeped in heritage, yet very now.



Choose from a private experience for up to eight people or a public tour. Tours lasts 45-60 minutes. The transfer to Galway from Westport or Limerick is 90 minutes by road. Please book 2 weeks in advance.

GALWAY FOOD TOUR

Enjoy a delicious saunter around Galway's gourmet haunts, including vibrant Galway Market and award-winning restaurants and cafes. On this wonderful culinary walking tour, led by local foodie Sheena Dignam, you'll be invited to sample popular and secret specialities ranging from oysters to cheese, sushi to crab and doughnuts to strawberry tarts – not forgetting the odd local beer.



Morning tour lasts 2.5 hours and takes place in all weathers. Includes 7-8 stops and a goody bag. Vegetarian-friendly, allergy/dietary requirements need to be advised beforehand. Minimum of four people. Please book 3-4 weeks in advance.



Limerick



Limerick

Rolling farmland dotted with archaeological ruins and a history dating back to the Vikings characterise this lush county and city, set around the Shannon Estuary. Medieval strongholds, atmospheric towns and a vibrant music scene add to the allure.

BUNRATTY CASTLE & FOLK PARK

Arguably Limerick's star attraction, Bunratty Castle is the most complete and authentic medieval castle in Ireland. Built in the 15th century by the MacNamaras, in 1954 it was restored to its former splendour, with furnishings, tapestries and works of art capturing the mood of the Middle Ages. The adjacent Folk Park recreates a rural Irish village at the end of the 19th century. Stroll from house to house soaking up the sights and sounds of yesteryear and visit the school, post office, doctor's house, hardware shop and pub. Meet village characters, sample freshly baked bread and, for little visitors, explore the quaint fairy village and adventure playground, including a small petting farm.



Leave the train at Limerick Station in the morning. Return mid-afternoon. A private driver will take you to the castle, 20 minutes away. Explore the sites at your leisure. A guided tour of the castle is included in your admission ticket. Refreshments are available on site. Lunch can be included at landmark pub, Durty Nelly's. Please book 1-2 weeks in advance.



Westport

Westport

An elegant 18th-century layout of tree-lined avenues bordering the Carrowbeg River defines this County Mayo town, which prospered as a result of the cloth and slate trades. Just west, the tranquil, island-dotted waters of Clew Bay stretch towards distant mountains.

PADDLEBOARDING ON CLEW BAY

Make the most of Clew Bay's calm waters to try stand-up paddleboarding, a popular sport where you stand on a surfboard and use a long, one-handed paddle to propel yourself forward. Guided by an experienced, qualified instructor, hone your balance and strengthen core muscle groups as you enjoy a fun and original way to admire your natural surroundings.



2-hour experience. From Westport, it's a 25-minute coastal drive to Old Head Beach. All levels are welcome and all equipment and wetsuits provided. Guests need to bring swimwear, towel, appropriate footwear, warm clothes to change into, and sunscreen. Sessions available at 11:00, 13:00 and 15:00. Please book 4-6 weeks in advance.

CARROWHOLLY HORSERIDING

Saddle up for a unique opportunity to ride in one of the most natural, unspoilt coastal areas of Ireland. For beginners, a beach ride is ideal for those with little or no experience. You'll receive instruction in the arena before setting out on a gentle walk on the quiet roads of Carrowholly leading to Clew Bay. Enjoy magnificent views of the bay and its enchanting islands with Croagh Patrick in the background. Spot seals basking on the rocks and Dora Inch Island, formerly owned by John Lennon. For advanced riders, prepare to canter in open spaces, along the strands of Clew Bay and across hilly terrain towards Rose Hill Castle. Once owned by Gráinne Uaile, the great seafaring pirate queen, it offers unsurpassed views of the bay and offshore islands.



From Westport railway station, it's a 10-minute drive to the stables. A private driver can be arranged. Please wear warm clothing and suitable footwear. Helmets are provided. Rides last 1 or 2 hours and are accompanied by a professional instructor. Suitable for children from 5 years and up. Please book 4-6 weeks in advance.



GREENWAY BICYCLE HIRE

Pedal off on the Great Western Greenway, Ireland's longest dedicated walking and cycling trail. Stretching along the Wild Atlantic Way, in County Mayo, the trail brims with spellbinding views. The 43km traffic-free track from Achill to Westport passes through picturesque Newport, the tranquil village of Mulranny, Achill Sound and breathtaking Clew Bay. Choose your own self-guided route: Newport to Mulranny is 18km (taking 2-2.5 hours), Newport to Achill is 31km (3-3.5 hours). With Greenway's shuttle services you can cycle as much or as little as you like and free trailside assistance is provided.



Transfer time 15 minutes by road from Westport Train Station to the bicycle hire venue. Included in each hire is bicycles for adults and children, helmets, hi-vis vests, security lock and ample local knowledge. Warm clothing, a rain jacket and practical footwear recommended. Please book 4-6 weeks in advance.

KYLEMORE ABBEY

This lakeside Gothic Revival castle was built by Galway MP Mitchell Henry as a present for his wife, Margaret. After she died, the building was converted into an abbey for Benedictine nuns fleeing Ypres during World War I. For many years it was also a prestigious girls' boarding school – actress Anjelica Huston was a student. Visit the abbey's beautifully restored rooms and learn about its history of romance, tragedy and spirituality. Explore the spectacular, six-acre Victorian Walled Garden and its enchanting woodland and lakeshore walks.



Depart from Westport in the morning for a 1-hour journey to the Abbey. A private driver and guide can be arranged. Morning tea/coffee, scone/pastry are included. After your visit, proceed to the award-winning Tavern Bar & Restaurant in Murrisk for lunch after midday before returning to the train. Please book 2 weeks in advance.

FOXFORD WOOLLEN MILLS

The market town of Foxford is known for its luxurious woven rugs and tweeds, still crafted today in the 125-year-old woollen mills. Visit the site to witness the milling process in action and see master craftspeople creating contemporary designs that are coveted around the world. Explore the history of milling and learn about the techniques that have been passed down through generations.



Tours available Fridays, 10:15-12:00. Foxford is a 35-minute journey by road from Westport Train Station. A private return transfer will be arranged. Please book 2-3 weeks in advance.



Belfast



Belfast

Northern Ireland's capital has emerged as a lively hub for culture and entertainment. In particular, the cobbled streets of the rejuvenated Cathedral Quarter are home to bustling bars, contemporary arts venues and thought-provoking street art.

BELFAST STREET ART WALKING TOUR

Join a gently paced walk to discover the ever-changing face of Belfast street art. Images of the city's paramilitary walls have flashed across TV screens worldwide for decades. But now a new mural tradition is emerging, centred around the Cathedral Quarter. This art speaks of love, laughter, anger, beauty and defiance, but most of all it speaks of Belfast and the city it's becoming. Enjoy a walking tour, devised and led by local artists, that gives you the inside story on the street art scene and the walls that bring people together, rather than keeping them apart.



A taxi can be arranged to take you to the meeting point in the city. Walks last 2 hours. Casual clothing and comfortable shoes advised. Please book 4 weeks in advance.

BLACK CAB TOUR & WHISKEY TASTING

Visit some of Belfast's iconic sights on an acclaimed Black Cab Tour. Learn about The Troubles and the vibrant city Belfast has become today. Visit the Falls Road and Shankill Murals and the peace wall, where you can sign your name. Afterwards, unwind at the Cocktail Bar in the luxurious Merchant Hotel. The Redbreast Whiskey Tasting Flight offers four of Ireland's top tipplables, with knowledgeable bartenders on hand to offer tasting notes and insights.



Leave the train at Belfast Central Station late afternoon and meet your local driver who will be your guide for the Black Cab Tour. Later, enjoy a whiskey tasting experience at the Merchant Hotel. Return to the train in the evening. Please book 1 month in advance.





Kilkenny



Kilkenny

Picturesque Kilkenny is a delight to explore. Known as the marble city – for much of it is built in black limestone – its ‘medieval mile’ joining the castle and cathedral is one of Southeast Ireland’s biggest draws. The riverside town is also home to a thriving arts and crafts scene.

CYCLING TOUR

A great way for all the family to explore Kilkenny’s main attractions and hidden gems is on two wheels. Enjoy a fun, relaxed, yet educational circuit of the medieval town, pedalling along cycle paths lining the River Nore and traffic-free backstreets. This guided private tour, which covers around 10km in total, can be tailored to suit all abilities. Spanish, German, French, English or Gaelic Irish speaking guides are available.



Leave the train in the afternoon for the coach transfer to Kilkenny (already included in your Belmond Grand Hibernian itinerary). Meet at Sullivan’s Taproom (just behind the Wine Centre). Tour duration is 2 hours but can be shorter if needed. Bike and safety equipment included. Child seats and tow bikes available. Please book 2 weeks in advance.

JERPOINT GLASS STUDIO

Visit this acclaimed, family-run glassblowing studio, established in 1979, to witness the exciting spectacle of glass being blown by hand. From the viewing area, observe skilled artisans perform their magic as they turn red-hot molten glass into beautiful Jerpoint shapes, right before your eyes. Take time afterwards to browse the inviting shop and gallery.



A private driver will take you from Thomastown Station to Jerpoint Glass Studio, a 10-minute journey. An alternative option is to visit the studio after your afternoon tea in Butler House, Kilkenny, then return direct to the train at Waterford Station. Or, you can leave the train at 12:30, visit Jerpoint Glass and return to Kilkenny to rejoin the group or explore at leisure. Please book 2-3 weeks in advance.



HORSE RIDING AT MOUNT JULIET

Mount Juliet, in Thomastown, is a lavish Irish country estate, steeped in heritage. Its grounds are a playground for outdoor activities, including horse riding. Enjoy a lesson, ride a trail, jump in the school or attend an equestrian clinic. Afterwards, indulge in afternoon tea in the beautiful surroundings of the Manor House.



A private driver will take you from Thomastown Station to Mount Juliet, a 10-minute journey. Rejoin the train at Waterford Plunkett Station, 30 minutes away. The riding school needs to know your height and weight before confirming. Riding equipment provided. Please wear suitable footwear and warm clothing. Please book 6-8 weeks in advance.

NICHOLAS MOSSE POTTERY

Nicholas Mosse's earthenware is made from Irish clay, fired with homegrown Irish waterpower and decorated with traditional motifs inspired by old Irish spongeware. Its universal charm and appeal have made it loved around the world. Visitors can browse a huge selection of pottery, linen and glass set over three floors. Tours offered by pottery staff members take 30-40 minutes (advance booking required). End your visit in the upstairs café of the attractive mill, enjoying splendid views of the River Nore and the magnificent multi-arched bridge from which the town gets its name.



A private driver will take you from Thomastown Station to Nicholas Mosse Pottery, a 15-minute journey. An alternative option is to visit the pottery after your afternoon tea in Butler House, Kilkenny, then return direct to the train at Waterford Station. Or, you can leave the train after midday, visit Nicholas Mosse and return to Kilkenny to rejoin the group or explore at leisure. Please book 2-3 weeks in advance.





FISHING AT MOUNT JULIET

Enjoy a spell of relaxation at Mount Juliet's large, private estate, where there are two fully stocked fishing lakes – the first with rainbow and brown trout (May onwards), the second with rudd, roach, bream, chub and orfe. Angling tuition is available, should you wish to learn the craft of fly or lake fishing. Available all year round on a catch and release basis. A 2.5-mile stretch of the River Nore is also available for private fishing.



A private driver will take you from Thomastown Station to Mount Juliet, a 10-minute journey. Rejoin the train at Waterford Plunkett Station, 30 minutes away. Fishing rod licence must be obtained in advance. Equipment will be provided. Please wear suitable footwear and warm clothing. Please book 6-8 weeks in advance.

FALCONRY AT MOUNT JULIET

Experience the thrill of handling magnificent hawks, letting them fly from your gloved hand and returning to feed. Our falconer will brief you on the 5,000-year history of this ancient art before you set off on a walk, your hawk watching your every move. In this 60-minute experience, you'll learn how to recall the bird from the tree tops and send him back again as your falconer captures fantastic photos and videos. To finish the private experience, meet an owl. Fly him and learn about his species and habitat. The owls are super-photogenic and love to take selfies with guests.



A private driver will take you from Thomastown Station to Mount Juliet, a 10-minute journey. Rejoin the train at Waterford Plunkett Station, 30 minutes away. Please wear suitable footwear and warm clothing. For falconry, long-sleeved tops are advised and children must be over 7 years old to participate. Please book 6-8 weeks in advance.



Waterford



Waterford

Many people associate Waterford with the crystal – which is indeed its most famous export. But Ireland's oldest city, founded in 853, boasts other lustrous treasures, including a dynamic young opera festival set in a fairytale castle.

LISMORE CASTLE AND THE BLACKWATER VALLEY OPERA FESTIVAL

Taking place from May 26-June 1, 2020, the Blackwater Valley Opera Festival has only been running for 10 years, but has built up a sterling reputation in the international music world. Staged in the breathtaking setting of Lismore Castle and Gardens, on the shores of the Blackwater River, the festival aims to introduce audiences to emerging classical talent as well as world-renowned stars. The main event this year is a double bill of *Gianni Schicchi* (Puccini) and *Pagliacci* (Leoncavallo). Adding to the magic is a series of recitals in the Great Houses of the Blackwater Valley, making this an unmissable summer festival in Ireland's Ancient East.



Lismore Castle is 60 minutes by road from Cork Kent Station or Waterford Plunkett Station. Tickets and information available early 2020. Please book 4 months in advance.



Golf



Golf

With its swathes of endless greenery and dramatic coastal scenery, it's no surprise that Ireland is a top golfing destination. The Emerald Isle is home to a quarter of the world's natural links courses. We've handpicked some great places to tee off, both for the views and the challenge. Choose to play a round either before, during or after your journey aboard Belmond Grand Hibernian.

DUBLIN

One of Ireland's oldest and most prestigious clubs, the **Royal Dublin Golf Club** was founded in 1885. This classic golf links is located just north of Dublin city centre on the famous Bull Island nature reserve. It plays in the traditional links manner of nine holes out and nine holes back. The outward half plays towards the northeast and has the advantage of being downwind for most of its holes. The opposite is true for the closing nine, eight of which play almost directly southwest and into the teeth of the wind. Famous golf architect Harry Colt was enlisted to design the course following its destruction during the First World War. His work brought a measure of fame to the Club and the course has been sought out for prestigious golfing events ever since. It hosted the Irish Open from 1983-1985.



Portmarnock Golf Club is universally acknowledged as one of the truly great links courses, steeped in tradition and history. Within a picturesque curve of coastline, 10 miles to the north of Dublin city, Portmarnock sits majestically on a narrow tongue of shallow duneland. Its quality and location have made it a splendid venue for some of the game's great events. There's the charm of its delightful turf, the wildness, the solitude of the sandhills and the sea, and the ever-present challenge of the wind. This is where Arnold Palmer and Sam Snead successfully followed the serpentine route through classic linkland on their way to victory in the 1960 Canada Cup. And where another generation of Americans, including Phil Mickelson and David Duval, secured a memorable Walker Cup triumph in 1991. These events, along with 19 stagings of the European Tours Irish Open Championship, reflect the quality of play across the links' 27 holes.

KILLARNEY

Killarney Golf & Fishing Club is located beside Lough Leane on the famous Ring of Kerry. The fantastic experience here is made up of many factors: the enchanting setting, the first-class condition of the courses, the variety of the holes and the warmth of the local welcome. Accuracy is vital on the club's flagship Killeen course, venue for the Irish Open in 2010 and 2011, with its tight, tree-lined fairways; fast, undulating greens, and water on practically every hole. Keeping the ball in play is the order of the day. More forgiving is Mahony's Point with its wider fairways and large, flat greens, although well-positioned bunkers and water hazards ensure enough danger to spoil a good round.

CLARE

Situated on the rugged coast of County Clare, in northern Munster, **Lahinch Golf Club** is consistently rated among Ireland's top three golf courses. Old Tom Morris, who was commissioned to make enhancements to the course in 1894, claimed this to be the finest natural links he had ever set eyes on. Golfers flocked here in the 1890s when the West Clare Railway provided direct access. With its traditional out-and-back layout bordering the beautiful, wild beach of Liscannor Bay, Lahinch is an enthralling place to play golf; an absolute gem – unusually varied and immensely entertaining.

CORK

Old Head Golf Links is set on a 220-acre diamond of land jutting out into the Atlantic Ocean. The promontory is almost an island, with numerous caves running beneath your feet as you play the course. The links and practice area occupy 180 acres and the remaining 40 acres of unspoilt cliff frame the course. Many a golfer and visitor pinch themselves as they drive through the ancient gateway, hearing the crashing waves of the Atlantic Ocean some 300 feet below. Nine holes play along the cliff tops, with all 18 holes affording unsurpassed ocean views. With the ever-changing sea breezes, the course provides a stern but fair test to the touring pro and the high handicapper alike.

LIMERICK

Set in the beautiful parkland of **Adare Manor Resort in County Limerick**, this dramatic course, which hosted the Irish Open 2007-2009, bears all the hallmarks of its designer. World-renowned golf architect Tom Fazio and his team are hard at work creating the latest addition to their portfolio of incredible golf courses. Every green and tee is being rebuilt and redesigned from scratch, while every bunker is being replaced with the latest Capillary Concrete drainage technology. Golf at Adare Manor will also be among just a handful of courses worldwide to benefit from SubAir technology, as well as Pure Distinction bentgrass to ensure the finest putting surfaces available.

WESTPORT

Carne Golf Links in North Mayo lies in magnificent, unspoilt sand dunes overlooking Blacksod Bay and the wild Atlantic Ocean. This area is famed all over the world for its white sandy beaches that stretch for miles, its bountiful wildlife and warm welcome. Carne was the last links course to be designed by the late Eddie Hackett and is now believed by many who have played it to be his greatest design. It is ranked as the 10th best course in Ireland and among the top 50 in Britain and Ireland.

KILKENNY

Designed by Jack Nicklaus, **Mount Juliet Parkland Golf Course** first opened in 1991 with a friendly match between Jack Nicklaus and Christy O'Connor Snr. Since then, the course has established itself as a premier venue for top professional and leisure golfers from around the globe. This was highlighted when Mount Juliet played host to golfing legends Tiger Woods, Ernie Els, Sergio Garcia and Pádraig Harrington for the WGC American Express Golfing Championship in September 2002 - and again in 2004. Set in the rolling pastures and woodland of Ireland's sunny southeast, the course is both captivating and memorable. Tiger Woods' declaration that Mount Juliet presented 'perfect fairways' and the 'best greens we've putted on all year' was a rich tribute to the stature of this lush parkland course.

BELFAST

Located in Newcastle, **Royal County Down Golf Club** opened in 1889, making it one of the oldest golf clubs in Ireland. It occupies a beautiful site in Murlough Nature Reserve with the Mountains of Mourne as its backdrop. The links stretches along the shores of Dundrum Bay, zigzagging back and forth to provide a different vista from virtually every hole. The ninth is one of the most photographed holes in world golf. A 486-yard par 4, it is played from one side of a huge mound down to a fairway some 60 feet below and 260 yards from the tee. From the bottom of the slope the second shot is played over two bunkers to a raised green. The course record of 66, set in 1939 by Ireland's first golfing superstar, Jimmy Bruen, has not been beaten to this day.



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Overnight destinations

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Excursion points

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Taste of Ireland
(2 nights)

Legends and Loughs
(4 nights)

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Province division



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