Castles of Ireland - 8 day self-drive tour

Castle’s of Ireland

Traditions, history, heritage, breath taking scenery and the friendliest nation you’ll ever meet. This is the Best of Ireland Tour with an emphasis on the castles of Ireland. Staying in a combination of castle accommodation and hotel accommodation, you will experience all the best Ireland has to offer!

Your visit to Ireland may be a once in a lifetime opportunity, so make sure you get to see everything this small but extraordinary isle has to offer on our 8 day (7 nights) self-drive tour of Ireland.

Starting in Dublin and exploring the Midlands, West and South coasts of Ireland you’ll get to visit all the places you’ve heard and dreamt about. Drink a pint of the “black stuff” in Dublin, kiss the Blarney Stone, explore the Ring of Kerry and feel the wind on your cheeks atop the Cliffs of Moher.

Over the course of your tour, you’ll be visiting some of the best castles that Ireland has to offer from Dublin to Blarney, Bunratty to Kilkenny. Packed full of highlights but maintaining a perfect pace, you’ll never feel under pressure. The adventure that is Ireland awaits you.

Tour Highlights

- Dublin Castle
- Fitzpatrick Castle
- Connemara Region
- Kylemore Abbey
- Ring of Kerry
- Buratty Castle

Itinerary in Brief

Day 1: Arrival in Dublin
Day 2: Galway via Clonmacnoise
Day 3: Connemara Region
Day 4: The Burren and the Cliffs of Moher
Day 5: The Ring of Kerry
Day 6: Killarney and Blarney
Day 7: Dublin via Cashel and Kilkenny
Day 8: Departure from Dublin

Overnights for this Tour

- Dublin for 1 Night
- Galway for 2 Nights
- Kerry for 2 Nights
- Cork for 1 Night
- Dublin for 1 Night

What’s included in this Tour

- 7 nights accommodation based on your chosen package
- Full Irish breakfast each morning
- Car rental (automatic compact car, insurance and all taxes)
Day 1: Dublin City

Take a deep breath as you leave the terminal at Dublin airport and breathe in the fresh Irish air for the first time. You’re in the capital of Ireland and this veritable melting pot of culture and tradition is a joy to explore. Busy streets packed with Dubliners from all over the world show that the “Céad Míle Fáilte” (“a hundred thousand welcomes”) is still strong here. You know you’re in Ireland when you pass by homely Irish pubs adorned with the artistic handiwork of John Gilroy – creator of the iconic 1930/40’s Guinness adverts. “My Goodness my Guinness”, you’ll have to fit in a pint or two of the “black stuff” while you’re here.

It can be hard to know where to start, but luckily there are plenty of ways to see the best of Dublin. The Dublin Bus Hop On Hop Off tours are the perfect way to make sure you fit in as much of this bustling city as possible. They’ll bring you to all the major attractions and once you’ve gotten your ticket you can come and go as you please.

The Viking Splash Tour is a twist on your run of the mill expedition. On land and in water you’ll see the highlights of Georgian Dublin, Christchurch and St. Patrick’s Cathedral and you’ll even wade by a recording studio where the likes of U2 have laid down tracks.

Or if you prefer to ditch the wheels and wander around the old fashioned way, the Dublin Tourist Board have a whole range of free iWalks (guided tours recorded as podcasts) available for download so you can ramble around the city while the soothing voice of author Pat Liddy fills you in on the history of Dublin.

Make sure to schedule in a visit to Trinity College Dublin on your first day in Ireland. This is one of Dublin’s premier visitor attractions and not without reason. Within the grounds of Ireland’s first ever college (established in 1592) you’ll find stunning architecture, The Douglas Hyde Gallery, The Oscar Wilde centre, “The Book of Kells” and arguably the “greenest grass in Ireland”.

There are also regular walking tours around the campus where you'll discover all the history and intricacies of this esteemed university. “The Book of Kells” resides in Trinity’s Old Library. This book, which is a 9th Century gospel manuscript contains lavish illustrations and is accompanied in the library by an exhibition – “Turning Lightness into Dark”.

Visit Dublin Castle, which dates from 1204 on an earlier Viking settlement. With over 800 years of history resounding it its walls, the castle has seen a tumultuous history and has been at the very heart of the Irish politics and history for centuries. It has had many functions over the years, from prison and treasury to the seat of English control, today the building is still in governmental use with state receptions and presidential inaugurations held there. There is a guided tour where you can visit the Chapel Royal and the State Apartments with a heritage centre and restaurant also on site. An important symbol of English control for some 7 centuries, and an even more important symbol for the new Ireland for just under 100 years, this is a must see visit!

As you journey from one highlight to the next, immersing yourself in the electric atmosphere of Dublin you’ll find yourself in need of crossing over the River Liffey. So why not take a walk over the Ha’penny Bridge (or the Liffey Bridge as it is sometimes referred to), which has been aiding pedestrians over the river since 1816.
Two hundred years ago you would have paid your dues (a ha’pennies worth to be exact) to William Walsh, who built the bridge when his ferries went into disrepair, but nowadays you’re free to come and go as you please. It’s also a great place to whip out your camera and get snap happy with stretching views down the river that are just begging to be captured on film.

Taking a break from sight-seeing, Grafton Street (Dublin’s favourite shopping district) has everything you need to relax. Visit Bewley’s Café and enjoy an Irish coffee in a favourite venue of many of Dublin’s literary greats. Venture down Wicklow Street to find quaint bistros and the Powerscourt Shopping Centre, which boasts the perfect combination of variety and a stunning setting or maybe go alfresco with a picnic in St. Stephen’s Green. Once you’re refreshed, it’s back on the trail again seeking out all that Dublin has to offer.

As the day draws on, you might find yourself hankering for that pint of Guinness, but fear not because the Guinness Storehouse has got you covered. During the tour you’ll discover all the history behind this famous brand and get an insight into the magic behind the “black stuff”. Or maybe you’d prefer a hot drop of Whiskey? The Jameson Distillery has got just what you need. Learn about John Jameson and the inspirational story behind his world-renowned whiskey, topped off with a tasting session.

Although a little further out from the city centre on the north side of Dublin, the Butlers Chocolate Experience is a must see for anyone with a sweet tooth. It’s the ultimate chocolate discovery tour where you can see the Butlers factory in operation – home to Ireland’s favourite chocolatier. If you don’t have the time to make it out to the factory, don’t worry, as there are several Butlers chocolate shops in the city centre if you want to have a taste!

The sun may begin to dim as it tucks in for the night, but that doesn’t mean your fun has to end there. In fact for the full Dublin experience you have to witness the thrilling ambience of its nightlife. So it’s off to Temple Bar - often referred to as Dublin’s cultural hub. As you walk around the narrow cobbled streets (a feature which has been preserved from medieval times), lilting Irish melodies will waft through the air beckoning you into one of the many Irish pubs with regular sessions.

Or maybe you’ll get a sniff of some steaming fresh Irish grub. Either way, Temple Bar is a great place to while away the evening whether you’re in The Old Storehouse at one of their daily sessions or sharing a pint and a story with one of the friendly locals.

Your visit to Dublin will be packed with fond memories, unforgettable sights and sounds. Tonight you’ll be staying in the Fitzpatrick Castle Hotel, just outside the city in the coastal town of Killiney, where you will have the treat of a full Irish breakfast ahead of you in the next morning. You’ve seen the best of Dublin and tomorrow you will continue on your trip to see the Best of Ireland.

Optional Activities/Tours/Entertainment:
- Kilmainham Jail
- Phoenix Park
- Dublinia
- Experience Gaelic Games
- Dublin City Pub Crawl
Day 2: Galway via Clonmacnoise

Your full Irish breakfast will have you fuelled and ready to go in the morning. If you missed anything on your first day you may decide to prolong your departure from Dublin, but you’ll still have plenty of time to make your way across the country to the west of Ireland and Galway. Once you’ve decided to hit the road, you’ll have a choice of routes. Heading to Galway directly may only take you a couple of hours, but travelling along the scenic route there’s a number of different attractions to stop off at, not to mention the added bonus of luscious landscapes, vast rolling pastures and warm country villages along the route.

Clonmacnoise, located in county Offaly is an early Christian site which was founded by St. Ciarán in the mid 6th Century. Here you’ll walk through the ruins of a cathedral and seven churches (10th – 13th Century), gaze up at two imposing round towers; and admire the intricate stone sculptures that are high crosses.

Just a short 35 minutes drive away you’ll find Kilbeggan Distillery in Westmeath. This is Ireland’s last remaining example of a small pot distillery. It may have shut down in 1957, but today visitors are invited to watch the restored machinery at work and learn the secrets behind Kilbeggan Distillery’s 200 years of triple distilled whiskey.

As you edge ever closer to Galway City (the City of Tribes) you’ll see fields with stone ruins – signs of a time long past, when chieftains and high kings ruled the land or thatched cottages harking back to Ireland’s traditional roots – when news was spread by word of mouth and those who could wield a fiddle were the mightiest warriors around.

The west of Ireland is steeped with rich heritage and for proof of this you need only visit the Galway Irish Crystal Heritage Centre. On the shores of Galway Bay, the master craftsmen of Galway Crystal continue to produce beautifully detailed crystal, which has been long known as one of the world’s favourite Irish brands. Gathering inspiration from the lush countryside that surrounds them and the folklore and traditions passed down through generations in Galway. At the heritage centre the whole range of crystal ware is available so you can take home your very own piece of Galway.

Finally you’ll arrive at Galway City and the cultural heart of Ireland. This charming city is brimming with heritage, culture and folklore. Weaving through the side streets browsing the hand crafted wares on offer, you’ll be in awe of the rich architecture and medieval nuances. Friendly faces greet you around every corner and a magical spirit lingers in the air. The mysteries of the Claddagh Ring are rooted in this very region. From where the iconic symbol of two hands clutching a crowned heart originated people can only speculate, but the tradition remains true. Just make sure you show your true feelings in the way you wear your ring:

When worn on the right hand with the crown turned inwards tells that the wearer’s heart is yet unoccupied, but when worn with the crown turned outward this reveals that love is being considered. Worn on the left hand with the crown turned outwards shows all that the wearer’s heart is truly spoken for.
Within the City you can check out the Galway City Museum, which contains two major exhibitions. One explores the rich heritage of Galway and the other displays works of art from prominent Irish artists from the second half of the 20th Century. Add to this the Spanish Arch, Galway Cathedral, and you’ll start to get an idea of just how varied and wonderful a place Galway City is.

Your accommodation for the next two nights is the Carlton Galway, situated in the heart of the city. With everything on your doorstep, you can enjoy all that this wonderful city has to offer. With a plethora of restaurants and pubs, enjoy Galway and all her delights from the live music found in nearly every pub and club to the delicious seafood this region is renown for. After a night of food and fun, make you way back to your accommodation where the beauty of all you’ve seen in the west of Ireland will drift through your dreams. Tomorrow, the “savage beauty” that is Connemara awaits you!

Optional Activities/Tours/Entertainment
- Eyre Square
- Connemara Marble Factory

Day 3: The Connemara Region

Today you will be visiting Kylemore Abbey the jewel in the crown of the spine-tingling Connemara region. Take the Sky Road, as you leave Galway behind you and be astounded by your exquisite natural surroundings – breath taking views of the islands Inishturk and Turbot along the coastline; the moss covered walls of the Old D’Arcy Castle and the towering Twelve Bens.

Continuing on your expedition around Connemara, at the foot of the Druchruach Mountain (529m/1,736ft), in the very heart of the Connemara Mountains, you’ll find Kylemore Abbey & Walled Gardens. An aura of romance surrounds the estate. Explore the illustrious and spectacular grounds, which were originally built in 1867 by Mitchell and Margaret Henry as a means to fulfil their wish to someday live in Connemara (which they visited numerous times after their honeymoon there). Ramble through the same beautiful grounds, which stand as a testament to the couples’ love for each other and the beauty of the region; and discover its rich history involving tragedy, gambling debts, royal visits and engineering initiatives.

Kylemore Abbey is open to visitors all year round and within its confines you can enjoy the Abbey itself, pottery studio, the Gothic Church, restaurant, the Victorian Walled Gardens and a selection of lake and woodland walks. There’s also a craft shop if you feel like getting a memoir of your visit and your very own reminder of this stunning region.

In the Connemara region you’ll also find Connemara National Park – a captivating expanse that covers some 2957 hectares (that’s roughly the same surface area as 7,304 American football fields). You’ll find mountains, heaths and woodlands in this scenic domain, alongside megalithic court tombs, a 19th Century graveyard and Tobar Mweelin - a well which was Kylemore Castles main source of water in the 1800’s.

Discover the flora and fauna of this spectacular park or venture up to the heights of the mountains with the four walking trails on offer. Learn about this vast and beautiful area In the Connemara Landscape exhibition or just breathe in the nature and relax in one of the parks many picnic areas.
Time will stand still as you enjoy this immersive expanse.

From here you can visit Maam Valley. In the shadow of the Maamturk Mountains, Maam is a quaint wooded townland which is beside some great fishing lakes. Dotted around the area you’ll find many pre-historic and early historic sites and Killary Fjord – the only one in existence in Ireland. The Western Way is the prefect way to soak up all the area has to offer as this walking trail takes you from the southern end of the Maam Valley right up to the ancient site of Mámean. Around this area you’ll also find “Leaba Pháirc” (Patrick’s bed), a rock recess and “Tobar Pháraic” (Patrick’s well), which mark a place of pilgrimage. The latter of which, was once believed to cure livestock and some human ills.

It’s back to Galway for the night. If you haven’t already enjoyed the traditional Irish music this city has to offer, now will be your last chance or maybe stop in one of the numerous seafood restaurants and find out why Galway is the host to the Annual Oyster Festival. As the sun sets on your third day in Ireland, approaching the halfway point of your adventure, have a thought back to all you’ve experienced in such a short time as you rest up in the Carlton for the night.

Optional activities/tours/entertainment
- Connemara Smokehouse
- Killary Cruises

Day 4: The Burren & the Cliffs of Moher

Rejuvenated and raring to go, it’s time to bid adieu to the “City of Tribes.” So after your hearty breakfast, pack up the car and get back on the road, because it’s time to explore the Clare and the Burren region.

This truly unique area of limestone rock covers mountains, valleys and stream, each as awe-inspiring as the last. There is a beautiful contrast between the natural flora and fauna and the ancient man made megalithic tombs, which predate the Roman and even Egyptian civilizations. Before you trek out into the unknown, you can visit the Burren Visitors Centre in nearby Kilfenora, where you’ll get an introduction to the many secrets of the Burren.

The Burren Smokehouse is just a ten minute drive down the road from Kilfenora so drop in and sample some of their acclaimed smoked salmon, see the original kiln used at the smokehouse and browse their range of products, which include various crafts and delicacies from the Clare region.

From the Burren to the Cliffs of Moher your trip today is packed full of scenic eye-candy. Atop the cliff, the panoramic views of the Aran Islands, The Twelve Pins, The Maum Turk Mountains and Loop Head will take your breath away. The visitors’ centre, which has been aptly named Atlantic Edge, can be found close to the cliffs within an underground building. Various studies of the cliffs are on display here focusing on four main themes: Ocean, Rock, Nature and Man.

While you’re in the area, why not pop into Doolin Cave. Less than ten minutes drive up the coast from the Cliffs of Moher you’ll find this fascinating cave, which is home to the longest stalactite in the northern hemisphere, measuring 6.54m (20 ft).
Also along the coast is Lahinch. If you’re up for a spot of water sports or just a stroll on the beach, a visit to Lahinch is a great way to take in Clare’s beautiful coastline. Every year, budding surfers visit Lahinch’s golden sands to catch some waves, so whether you’re there to join in or just spectate, there’s definitely fun to be had. The town also boasts two golf courses (Lahinch Championship Course and Lahinch Castle Course). On both you’ll find yourself teeing off with a backdrop of stretching coastal scenery, so if you have the time a quick round is a must.

Continuing to explore Clare you’ll find Bunratty Castle – a 15th century castle, which is the acclaimed setting for the 19th century Bunratty Folk Park. Built in 1425 and restored to its former medieval glory in 1954, Bunratty Castle is the ultimate medieval fortress in Ireland. Within the castle hang many 15th and 16th century tapestries, furnishings and works of art, which really create a sense of authenticity. You will feel transported as you wander around the vast castle halls and for a truly unique experience you can also attend the Medieval Banquet - a night of rich food and entertainment.

The Bunratty Folk Park will see you surrounded by 19th century living. You’ll be interacting with all the locals - the Bean an Ti (Woman of the House), the Policeman, and Schoolteacher as you discover the ins and outs of their daily routines. As you walk from house to house you’ll be immersed in a wonderful bubble of sights sounds and senses, making this a truly enchanting experience for all ages.

Weary from your travels you may want to pop into Durty Nelly’s (just beside the castle) for a pick me up. The history and heritage surrounding Durty Nelly and her pub date back to 1620 and include: a toll bridge, an Irish wolfhound and a miracle cure. For years travellers have enjoyed the hospitality and warmth of this one of a kind pub and now with live Irish music seven days a week, you can’t help but be lured into Nelly’s cozy welcome.

As you make your way towards Killarney where you will stay the night, the quaint village of Adare is definitely worth a visit. Hailed as “Ireland’s prettiest village” you will be astounded at how much there is to do in this most picturesque of rural settings.

The locals have a strong tradition of Irish music and live music can be found in the various pubs around the village on different nights of the week and during the summer months, The Adare Heritage Centre hosts their very own live sessions. The Heritage Centre is also the place to go if you need any information or assistance, and you can rest assured that all help comes with a complimentary smile.

Nearby to the village you’ll find Curraghchase Forest Park, Stonehall Visitor Farm, the Hunt Museum, Lough Guy Heritage Centre and Carrigogunnell Castle. It’s hard to know where to start with so much to see, but the calming atmosphere of this beautiful village will guide you as you take in all the stunning scenery the area has to offer.

The Ring of Kerry with all its secrets and beauty await you after one more sleep and the fresh country air will ensure you ease into a slumber that night. What’s more you'll be staying in the luxurious Ballyseede Castle - a magnificent castle grounds set amidst the Lakes of Killarney and The MacGillycuddy Reeks.

Optional activities/tours/entertainment
- Caherconnell Stone Fort
Day 5: The Ring of Kerry

Full after another morning of a full Irish breakfast; the wonderful town of Killarney is calling to you. This picturesque town surrounded by greenery and buzzing with cheerful locals is the perfect place to take a stroll and explore all that Killarney has to offer. Refreshed and eager to explore more of Kerry, you'll be back on the road and this time you're bound for the famous Ring of Kerry.

Every visitor to Ireland’s south-west talks about The Ring of Kerry but this attraction is really one that must be seen to be believed. You’re best to dedicate a whole day to exploring the Ring of Kerry (or the Iveragh Peninsula) and all it has to offer because there is just so much to do and see. This beautifully natural and somewhat magical area of Ireland features expansive beaches, sites dating back to ancient Ireland, and some truly moving landscapes.

Take in the views of the sublime MacGillycuddy’s Reeks (Ireland’s highest mountain range) from Moll’s gap, traverse the Gap of Dunloe and admire its majestic lakes or maybe you’ll find yourself at Ladies View staring out over the horizon. These are just snippets of what the Ring of Kerry has to offer that may leave you lost for words.

Killarney National Park is a favourite feature for many along the Ring of Kerry - home to Ireland’s only native red deer and the idyllic setting for Muckross House and Gardens. This delightfully restored Victorian house dates back to 1843 and has a total of 65 rooms.

Within the Muckross estate, you’ll also find a sunken garden, rock garden, stream garden and Arboretum. If you’re visiting during the months of April to July you can look forward to blossoming red and pink Rhododendrons to compliment the already stunning gardens. Right next to Muckross house is Muckross Traditional Farms where you can witness what it was truly like to live and work in a rural community in the 1930’s through the ingenious working recreation on display here.

Bikes can be rented so you can whisk around the park, from one lush setting to the next. Or if you’re feeling romantic, hop into a jaunting car and take a horse and trap tour of the park, followed up with a picnic surrounded by truly wonderful scenery and nature.

Veer slightly off the Ring of Kerry route you’ll find the heritage town of Kenmare. Bright shop fronts line the streets and a variety of restaurants offering gourmet foods will get your taste buds going. Here the spirit of Kerry’s favourite Antarctic explorer lives on in Tom Crean’s Fish and Wine Restaurant. This lovely spot offers up a sumptuous (but reasonable) meal and is run by Aileen d’Arcy (Tom Crean’s Granddaughter). The recently opened Tom Crean room is decorated with memorabilia and photographs from Tom’s life and adventures.

As you head back to your luxurious accommodation for the night you should have plenty to talk about. So settle in and prepare for the drive to Cork in the morning.

Optional tours/activities/entertainment
- Kate Kearney’s Irish Night
- Listowel Castle
- Ross Castle Killarney
- Muckross Friary
Day 6: The Blarney Stone

The Rebel County awaits your arrival, so it’s time have a look around Cork. You’re sure to have heard of the Blarney Stone and that’s where you’re headed next. Legend has it that planting a wet one on the Stone of Eloquence will endow you with the gift of the gab and you’ll never again be lost for words. Millions of visitors have flocked to Blarney to do just this, but you’d be foolish to think that Blarney is a one trick pony.

Built nearly 600 years ago by one of Ireland’s greatest chieftains, Cormac Mac Carthy, the castle contains many attractions aside from the famous stone. The Battlements View, the Wishing Steps, the Witches Stone, Rock Close and Badgers Cave are some of the other attractions for you to explore at Blarney that will give you plenty to talk about with your new found gift of eloquence.

Blarney is also famed for its woollen mills, which is now home to Ireland’s largest gift store, stocking the best of the best in quality Irish gifts, stocking Waterford Crystal, Belleek China, Aran Sweaters, Celtic Jewellery, and Irish linen and lace. So if you’re looking for some gifts to bring home or even a souvenir or two for yourself, it’s the perfect one stop shop for all things Irish.

Next it’s off to see Cork City where you’ll be settling into your accommodation for the night. The city dates back to the 7th Century and was founded by St. Finbarr. The place is literally teeming with fine examples of centuries old architecture including the 300 year old tower of St. Anne’s Church (home to the Shandon bells) and St. Finbarr’s Cathedral.

At Cork City Gaol you will find two of Cork’s most memorable tourist attractions. The building is a castle like structure and once acted as a prison back in the 19th Century. Today this unique heritage centre allows visitors to step back in time to experience what life was like in Cork from both sides of the prison walls.

The second attraction you’ll find here is the Radio Museum. Situated in the former Governor’s House, this unique experience incorporates a restored 6CK Radio Broadcasting Studio along with a plethora of archived reels from the RTÉ Collection (Radio Telefís na hÉireann – Ireland’s national television and radio broadcaster).

After taking in some of the history of Cork, why not visit Fota Wildlife Park which is just fifteen minutes outside of Cork City, nestled in the heart of Cork harbour. The park is a mixture of free roaming animals and birds from all over the world and highly endangered species such as the European Bison, so every trip is sure to conjure new and fond memories.

For some gourmet seafood grub that night head to the seaside towns of Kinsale or Cobh (both of which are roughly a half an hours drive from the city. Whichever you choose you’re guaranteed some quality seafood, both towns feature a whole host of restaurants catering for whatever you’re in the mood for seafood or not! Take an after dinner stroll and you’ll be sure to fall in love with these two towns as the gentle sound of waves whipping the shores punctuate the peaceful ambience.

You’ll be curling up in Cork City that night at the Maldron Hotel - again ideally located in the heart of Cork City and providing all the comforts you come to expect from a top class hotel. Tomorrow begins your journey back towards Dublin, but there may still be a few surprises around the corner.
Optional activities/tours/entertainment

- The Jameson Experience
- Mizen Head
- Cobh Titanic Trail

Day 7: Dublin via Cashel and Kilkenny

Dublin may not be far off, but there’s still much more to see before you arrive back in the Capital. The town of Cahir, Co. Tipperary is your next port of call - home to the iconic Cahir Castle.

Often used as a film set, this formidable fortress dates from the 13th century and is one of Ireland’s largest and best preserved castles. Built on a rocky island on the River Suir, the Butler family were given the barony of Cahir in the 14th century, and the castle remained in their hands until the mid 1960's. Over the centuries, several renovations have been done, with architecture from the 15th, 16th and 19th centuries still visible today. A guided tour and audio-visual are available to visitors and as you wander through the site, you can only dream what it would have been like in its heyday.

Just over 20 minutes away is the Rock of Cashel a towering complex of 12th and 13th century buildings featuring a combination of Celtic and medieval architecture. Formally known as St. Patrick’s Rock or The Rock of Kings, this was a site long held in revere as the seat of the High Kings of Munster. In the town of Cashel you’ll also find a Georgian Cathedral, a 21st century library and the Bolton Library, which holds the quirky claim to fame of housing the smallest book in Ireland.

With the Rock of Cashel fading in the distance you’ll be on your way to Kilkenny (the medieval capital of Ireland). Historic buildings lie in wait around every corner and culture thrives through the many artisans’ workshops operating from the city. The presence of Kilkenny Castle really dominates the city and is really a great place to start your Kilkenny adventure. Built in the early 1200's and remodelled in 1830 a castle has stood on this site for some 9 centuries – a testament to the both the power and the influence of her residents. A visit takes around an hour (including a short audio – visual presentation) but it is a popular attraction, so do allow time to fully enjoy and appreciate this amazing castle – one of the best of its kind in Ireland.

If you missed out on the Blarney Woollen Mills in Cork, fear not, because the Kilkenny Design Craft Centre stocks an equally impressive array of Irish handcrafted gifts. The centre also prides itself on showcasing emerging talent from the Irish craft world, proving that the creativeness of the Irish nation has never waned.

The Smithwick’s Brewery Tour in St. Francis Abbey Brewery is another highlight in this exciting and varied city, where you can enjoy the perfect blend of historical wonders and new age creativity.

Arriving back in Dublin that evening, you may even have time to do another spot of sight-seeing and fit in anything you might have missed on your first day in the city. And of course, if you’re looking to kick back, there’s an endless list of pubs that have regular live music sessions.
The Brazen Head’s “Food, Fairies and Folklore” night is a particular favourite with candlelit dinners accompanied by a good ‘old fashioned storytelling and music session so you’ll have gentle Irish melodies and legends easing you to sleep that night, arriving back at the Clontarf Castle Hotel.

Optional activities/tours/entertainment
- Newbridge Silverware Visitor Centre
- Kilfane Glen and Waterfall
- Kilkenny Traditional Irish Music Trail

Day 8: Departure from Dublin

It's time to finally drop your car back and head home. You'll have seen it all – the very best of what Ireland has to over - so take a moment and embrace the fact that you've done it, as you feel that Irish breeze ruffle your collar one last time, bidding you a safe journey on your return home.

Call us, Toll-Free today

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