Specialized Travel Services

SPECIALIZED
TRAVEL SERVICES

"Ireland is a country known for its stunning landscapes, vibrant colourful villages, ancient Celtic relics, lush green valleys and abandoned castles. As an ocean 'outpost' at the western edge of Europe, Ireland has a natural character quite different to the Continental landmass. Its geology is remarkably varied, with rocks that range back over 2,500 million years. Once, long ago, Ireland was covered by ice, and the track of the glaciers can be read in the dramatic shapes of the mountains and the little drumlin hills of the countryside."

VACATION HIGHLIGHTS

Relax and enjoy a fully customized tour with a private driver/guide service in a luxury touring vehicle

Discover Ireland's most famous attractions, cities and landscapes

Stay in centrally located hotels for easy access to the surrounding areas

DAY 1: Killarney

***Céad Míle Fáilte (a hundred thousand welcomes!)*.**

Meet your ***private driver/guide*** in the arrivals hall of Shannon Airport and begin your journey of the Emerald Isle. ***your driver/guide will be with you throughout your stay***

Travel to Killarney and enjoy a leisurely day – wander through ***Killarney's National Park*** or perhaps take in a visit to ***Muckross House*** (admission fee applies). A 19th century manor house, beautifully situated close to Muckross Lake, second largest of Killarney's three lakes. Now a major visitor centre, the House has two main themes, the environment of the National Park and the folklore of County Kerry in the 19th and 20th centuries. Skilled craft workers carry on some of the traditional crafts of Kerry as their predecessors did in bygone days. The gardens, informal in size, are noted for their fine collection of rhododendrons and azaleas, extensive water gardens and an outstanding rock garden of natural limestone.

Step back into the past on ***Muckross Traditional Farms*** and visit a very different Ireland – the Ireland of the 1930s and 1940s. When a trip to the well was still a daily chore for the housewife and electricity had yet to be introduced to the countryside. The horse reigned supreme - all farming activities were carried out using horsepower and traditional farm machinery. The rhythm of life followed a yearly cycle and the farmer's activities were governed by the seasons and the weather. Visit three separate working farms (small, medium and large), each complete with animals, poultry and machinery. The farm dwellings are furnished in traditional style, complete with dressers, settlebeds and mealbins. There is also a Labourer's Cottage, a Carpenter's Workshop and a Blacksmith's Forge.

Spend the next 3 nights in the ***Great Southern Hotel, Killarney***

DAY 2: Dingle Peninsula

Today you will explore the Dingle Peninsula.

The ***Dingle Peninsula***, which extends into the Atlantic Ocean. It is particularly notable in that apart from possessing the highest peak in the country after MacGillycuddy's Reeks and some of the most magnificent coastal scenery in Munster, it preserves an unequalled series of Early Christian monuments, Iron Age fortifications and bee-hive huts which are now under the care of the state. Also a very large portion of the peninsula is a native Irish speaking area noted for its purity of its idiom.

One of the highlights of the Wild Atlantic Way, the Dingle Peninsula (Corca Dhuibhne) culminates in the Irish mainland's westernmost point. In the shadow of sacred Mt Brandon, a maze of fuchsia-fringed boreens(country lanes) weaves together an ancient landscape of prehistoric ring forts and beehive huts, early Christian chapels, crosses and holy wells, picturesque hamlets and abandoned villages.

But it's where the land meets the ocean – whether in a welter of surf-pounded rocks, or where the waves lap secluded, sandy coves – that Dingle's beauty truly reveals itself.

Centered on charming Dingle town, the peninsula has long been a beacon for those of an alternative bent, attracting artists, craftspeople, musicians and idiosyncratic characters who can be found in workshops, museums, festivals and unforgettable trad sessions throughout Dingle's tiny settlements.

The town of Dingle enjoys a superb situation on its almost landlocked harbour, but the town itself has no traces of antiquity. However as one proceeds from the town of Dingle to Slea Head, the road commands fine views of the Atlantic and the Blasket Islands which are a group of iron-bound islands, uninhabited since 1953.

Framed by its fishing port, the Dingle peninsula's charming little 'capital' manages to be quaint without even trying. Some pubs double as shops, so you can enjoy Guinness and a singalong among hats and hardware, horseshoes and wellies. It has long drawn runaways from across the world, making it a cosmopolitan and creative place. In summer its hilly streets can be clogged with visitors; in other seasons its authentic charms are yours for the savouring.

You could stop at ***Dingle Sheepdogs*** to watch a local sheep farmer herd sheep in the old traditional manner with his team of well-trained Border Collies. Here you could also visit the ***Famine Cottages***. Dating back to the early 1800's, the ancestral home of the Kavanagh family remains as it would have appeared during the Irish Potato Famine. You can also meet and greet with the friendly ***ponies***, ***donkeys, goats and llamas.***

You might like to visit ***Gallarus Oratory***, one of the most perfect relics of early Irish Christianity probably constructed around the year 800.

Kilmalkedar where there is an interesting 12th century church consisting of a roofless nave with a good doorway and ornamented arch. In the churchyard there is an Ogham stone and an ancient sundial.

Dunmore – this headland was once a great fort and some of the earthwork defences can still be seen today. A pillar stands on the summit and has the name Dovinia inscribed in Ogham script. Dovinia gave her name to the peninsula, Corca Dhuibhne, according to one legend. There are magnificent views of the Blasket Islands from here.

Return to Killarney for overnight again in the ***Great Southern Hotel, Killarney***

DAY 3: Ring of Kerry
This morning after a hearty Irish breakfast continue to explore County Kerry by taking a tour of the Ring of Kerry.

The ***Ring of Kerry***, this is the name given to the scenic coastal drive around the Kerry peninsula, along the base of the highest mountain range in Ireland. Don't panic about the narrow roads along

the way – the general unwritten rule of the Ring of Kerry is that all coaches travel around in only one direction – starting in Killarney.

The 100-mile journey takes you through villages and towns depicting typical rural life in Ireland.

The Kerry Bog Village, located just before the town of Glenbeigh gives you a fascinating insight into how people lived and worked in Ireland in the 18th-19th Century. The village is the only one of its kind in Europe and is a heritage award winner. It was extensively researched prior to being recreated. Great care was taken to ensure the dwellings are exact replicas of those used in Ireland in the 1800's. One of the houses was moved from North Kerry and rebuilt within the Bog Village. The village is located in vast Bog land, visitors will learn about the bog, its wildlife, and equipment used to extract the turf.

Kissane Sheep Farm at Molls Gap is a traditional, working sheep farm with approximately 1.000 mountain sheep and hundreds of lambs. The farm is run by John Kissane and his son, Sean, as it has been run by the family for the last 150 years. In May 2005, the farm was opened for visitors to enjoy and to learn about sheep farming in Ireland.

As you descend into Killarney, you have a lovely view of the 3 Lakes of Killarney from ***'Ladies View'*** passing Killarney's National Park and the Muckross House Estate.

Return to Killarney for overnight again in the ***Great Southern Hotel, Killarney***

DAY 4: Clare
Today you will travel to Clare County via the Cliffs of Moher.

Depart Killarney, taking the ***ferry at Tarbert to Killimer***, enjoy the wonderful scenery of the coast of Clare.

You visit the ***Cliffs of Moher;*** Ireland's most visited natural attraction with a magical vista that captures the hearts of up to one million visitors every year. Standing 214 metres (702 feet) at their highest point they stretch for 8 kilometres (5 miles) along the Atlantic coast. From the Cliffs of Moher on a clear day one can see the Aran Islands and Galway Bay, as well as the Twelve Pins and the Maum Turk mountains in Connemara, Loop Head to the south and the Dingle Peninsula and Blasket Islands in Kerry. O'Brien's Tower stands near the highest point and has served as a viewing point for visitors for hundreds of years.

Overnight at the ***Falls Hotel, Clare County***

DAY 5: Galway
This morning, you will travel to Galway City.

Pass through ***Doolin,*** a charming small seaside village on the northwest coast of County Clare. Set against the rugged Atlantic Ocean and surrounded by the spectacular bare limestone landscape of the Burren, Doolin is a place of breathtaking beauty. Traditionally a fishing village, Doolin is now renowned world-wide as the traditional music capital of Ireland. Home to thousands of international

visitors each year, Doolin is many things to many people. For some it is a place to experience rousing music sessions nightly in the pub and for others it is a place of solitude and tranquility where one can refresh their spirits away from the everyday hustle and bustle of life.

Continue via ***The Burren.*** There is no front gate that says you have arrived at The Burren. Instead you move slowly from being surrounded by green fields, to being immersed in a sea of limestone paving, framed only by the ocean. The Burren is a region that encompasses 360km2 of gently inclined plateau with a further 200km2 of lowland to the east of the plateau. The limestone is deeply fissured and most of the rivers have gone underground creating an extensive cave system. Four thousand years of farming has largely denuded the country of trees and vegetation but the Burren is noted for the "opposite" contrasts of its flower population with Mediterranean and Alpine species flourishing side by side. More than 700 different flowering plants and ferns have been recorded in the Burren. The Burren may look rugged, but it is also a fragile place and is always under threat from increased human activity.

The coast road south of Black Head provides a fine view of the huge boulders, deposited at the end of the Ice Age which rest on the bare limestone pavement in fine weather the Aran Islands are visible offshore. Some of the many megalithic tombs in the Burren lie on the east side of the road between Aillwee and Leamaneh. Over the ages running water burrowing through the soft limestone of the Burren has created miles of dark caves and underground passages.

Overnight at the ***Park House Hotel, Galway City***

After checking into your accommodation, you can take a stroll around Galway city visiting such areas as ***Eyre Square, Lynch's Castle, St. Nicholas' Church, O'Brien's Bridge, Spanish Arch, the Famous Claddagh, beautiful Galway Bay, Salthill Promenade, University College, Salmon Weir Bridge, Court House and the Municipal Theatre***

DAY 6: Galway
Today, you will explore Galway City at your leisure before enjoying a walking food tour.

Galway City is the focal point of Co. Galway and the west of Ireland. It nestles at the neck of Galway Bay and is reputed to have been Columbus' final point of departure on his voyage of discovery. See St Nicholas Church, the Spanish Arch and Eyre Square. ***St Nicholas Church*** is a medieval church, which is dedicated to the patron saint of sailors. ***The Spanish Arch*** is a reminder of the city's trading links with Spain. Part of the medieval town wall is visible on the south side of the arch. ***Eyre Square*** is the focal point of the modern city between the old town and the docks and it centres on a small park, named after John F Kennedy.

In the afternoon, you will embark on a guided ***Galway Food Tour,*** bringing you to try produce from Oysters to Cheese; Sushi to Crab and Doughnuts to Strawberry Tarts, Local Beers and more.

Galway's famous food culture is explored over a morning and takes in some of the city's best known and secret food haunts with Sheena taking you on a food journey that is simply delish! Sheena will lead food enthusiasts around Galway's finest food destinations. The tour will include an unforgettable trip to the now famous Galway Market and visits to award-winning restaurants and cafes.

Overnight at the ***Park House Hotel, Galway City***

DAY 7: Connemara & Kylemore
Today, you will enjoy a day tour to Connemara & Kylemore.

Connemara, made famous by a number of well-known movies – such as the John Wayne movie – "The Quiet Man", and more recently "The Field". Connemara is a wild and beautiful region of mountains, lakes, tumbling streams, undulating bog, unspoilt beaches and panoramic views. It is a Gaelic speaking region.

The centre of Connemara is composed of mountain peaks, the ***Twelve Bens*** or Pins, which culminate in ***Benbaun***.

Clifden can be found about 50 miles NorthWest of Galway city. This diamond shaped town is the largest town west of Galway, making it the capital of the Connemara region. Set against a backdrop of mountains and ocean, this colourful and lively town is brimming with boutiques, gift and souvenir shops, cafes, fine restaurants and lots of quaint Irish pubs.

You should not miss the opportunity to visit Kylemore Abbey. ***Kylemore Abbey*** is the only home of the Benedictine nuns in Ireland. It was originally built by Mitchell Henry, M.P. for County Galway, (a native of Manchester city) 1864-1868 as a gift for his wife, who fell in love with the site overlooking Loch Na Coille Moire (the lake of the big wood) when they came here on their honeymoon in 1860s. The Gothic Church, set in the grounds of the Abbey, is the jewel in the crown of Kylemore. It has been lovingly restored and any visit would not be complete without seeing it. You can avail of the nun's excellent home cooking for lunch if desired, or alternatively bring a picnic and take your picnic on the shores of the loch.

Killary Fjord, located in Leenane, is Ireland's only fjord. It forms a partial border between counties Galway and Mayo. It is 15 kilometres (9 miles) long and in the centre it is over 45 metres deep. From Nancy's Point, just west of Leenane Village you can take a 90 minute cruise with ***Killary Fjord Boat Tours*** (operates April – October. Please check in advance for sailing times) on their all-weather purpose built vessel, the Connemara Lady. It allows uninterrupted views of the spectacular scenery which make Killary Fjord such a unique place. Setting off towards the west you cruise 45 minutes to the mouth of the Fjord, before turning to make your way back to Nancy's Point. The cruise offers a great way to take in the dramatic sweep of the landscape, as you pass between the Twelve Bens and the Maam Turk mountains to the south, in County Galway; and the Mweelrea mountains to the north in County Mayo, as well as the views out to the Atlantic at the mouth of the fjord. The fjord's sheltered waters are perfect for mussel farming and you will see the ropes at several points on the fjord. You will also see some circular salmon farms, closer to the shore. Sheep dot the hills. Towards the mouth of the fjord is a small island, which has a Victorian range marker on it. This is the point at which dolphins typically emerge if they are in the vicinity. They like to swim alongside the ship, offering spectacular views. Prebooking is strongly recommended.

You will spend your final night in the ***Park House Hotel, Galway City***

DAY 8: Shannon Airport

This morning, you will meet a private driver in the lobby of your hotel, from here you will be taken to ***Shannon Airport*** for your return flight home.

Slán Abhaile! (Safe Home!)

SPECIALIZED
TRAVEL SERVICES

What's included:

Transport:

- 7 days private chauffeur service for touring daily in a luxury vehicle, includes driver's expenses, fuel & road tolls and a daily allowance of 250 kms (155 miles). Gratuity is not included. Drivers are based on a maximum touring day of 9 hours daily & must have 11 consecutive hours at rest daily, as per European Union law regulations.

Accommodation:

- 3 nights: Great Southern Hotel, Killarney - Classic room
- 1 night: Falls Hotel, Clare County - Superior room
- 2 nights: Park House Hotel, Galway City - Superior room

Activities:

- Entrance to Muckross House & Traditional Farms
- Ferry crossing from Tarbert to Killimer
- Entrance to the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre
- Walking Food Tour Galway City
- Entrance to Kylemore Abbey

Meals:

- Full Irish breakfast daily (except on day of arrival)

Total package price is based on 2 adults sharing a double room

From $4,935.00 per person sharing

Cliffs of Moher, Clare County

Muckross House, Killarney

Kylemore Abbey, Galway County

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

*A **non-refundable deposit of 10%** is due at time of booking [note: all credit card payments are processed in our Cork office in Ireland]. **Full payment is due 45 days prior to travel.***

Documentation including vouchers & itinerary are mailed a month prior to your trip.

Entrances suggested in the itinerary are not included unless noted in Inclusions above.

Optional Trip Insurance is recommended – details of inclusions can be found: www.special-ireland.com