



# *Mystic Isles Tour*

With Aurora Juliana Ariel PhD

## **Day One, May 9th: Arrive in Dublin, Capital City of Ireland**



**Activities/Visits:** Recommended walking tour (on your own) of the Temple Bar and Trinity College areas, where there is a wide range of restaurants, shops and interesting sites to see.



**Temple Bar:** Temple Bar is a medieval C quarter and has a lively nightlife that is popular with tourists. Popular venues include The Palace Bar, The Temple Bar Pub, Oliver St. John Gogarty's and The Auld Dubliner (fine boys bar).



**Trinity College area:** The college was founded in 1592, and over the centuries became a centre of learning renowned across the world. Its library contains many ancient Irish texts, including the world famous book of Kells, a masterpiece of medieval monastic illumination; moreover it is a stunningly beautiful site to explore by foot and is open to the public.

## Day Two, May 10<sup>th</sup>

### Glendalough, Wicklow Mountains & Kilkenny

**Activities/visits:** We will drive south to the early Christian (6th century) monastic site at Glendalough, exploring the sites there and then lunch in the scenic Wicklow Mountains, heading to the historic town of Kilkenny in the afternoon.



#### Glendalough

Glendalough is an Early Medieval monastic settlement founded in the 6th century by St Kevin, set amongst the beautiful Wicklow Mountains. Glendalough is an ancient Irish site, which owes its medieval importance to pre-existing druidic sites of worship appropriated by the Early Christians. It is truly a site full of spiritual power.



#### Wicklow Mountains

The Wicklow Mountains form the largest continuous upland area in Ireland; renowned for their natural beauty, they draw walkers from across the world.



#### Kilkenny Castle

Kilkenny was founded as a Norman stronghold in Ireland in the twelfth century, and grew to become one of the most important cities in Ireland during the Medieval period, and is the site of the stunning Kilkenny Castle.

## Day Three, May 11<sup>th</sup>

### South to Cahervagliar and Ancient Stone Circles – Drombeg and Uragh

**Activities/visits:** Visit to three important ancient sites, Cahervagliar, Drombeg stone circle, my personal favorite, the Uruagh stone circle. The photos here aren't amazing but believe me, they're all incredibly beautiful and powerful sites.



**Cahervagliar:** Cahervagliar is a bivalent ringfort, built in the fifth century, with a lintelled stone entrance to the east. The name means "stone ringfort of sons of Lóegaire"; it was the fortress of the Cenél Lóegaire, kings in central Ireland. Steeped in Faerie lore, Cahervagliar is a site also associated with the mystical Tutha dé Dannan, a race of otherworldly people who live under the earth and who are said to have great sway over ours.



**Drombeg Stone Circle:** Drombeg stone circle (also known as The Druid's Altar), is a Recumbent stone circle located 2.4 km (1.5 mi) east of Glandore, County Cork, Ireland. Drombeg is one of the most visited megalithic sites in Ireland.



**Uragh Stone Circle:** Uragh Stone Circle is one of the most beautiful places I have ever come across on all of my travels throughout Ireland over the last eight years. Our ancestors certainly knew what they were about when they chose this mystical places between two lakes, surrounded by a natural amphitheatre of volcanic mountains facing the sea on the Northern shore of the fabulous Beara Peninsula.



**Day Four, May 12<sup>th</sup>**

## **Ring of Kerry and Sceiligs Mhór**

**Activities/Visits:** Sceilig Mhór is an incredible site. An ancient mystic site and early Christian site, it is shrouded in history and made completely from stone. The boat trip and access to the island is very worthwhile. Boats operate from mid-May. This route will be incorporated into a trip around the Ring of Kerry and the scenic village of Dingle in West Kerry.

**Ring of Kerry:** The Ring of Kerry is a road that takes you through 5,000 years of dramatic history. It's a road that takes you from deep forest to the crashing waters of the wild Atlantic. It's a road through rugged, majestic landscapes: where wild stag roam and where tumbling waterfalls crash into crystal streams teeming with wild salmon.



**Sceilig Mhór:** Rising majestically from the sea, Skellig Michael towers 714ft. (218 metres) above sea level. On the summit of this awe-inspiring rock you will find a remarkably well preserved sixth century monastic settlement. Monks were attracted to this stark and isolated setting to live as holy hermits; the islands also feature in the recent Star Wars films as the site of the original Jedi Temples. On the

spectacular Small Skelligs 23,000 pairs of gannet nest on every available ledge making it the second largest gannet colony in the world.

**Dingle:** Dingle is a small port town on southwest Ireland's Dingle Peninsula, known for its rugged scenery, trails and sandy beaches. A statue of long-time harbour resident Fungie the dolphin is by the waterfront. To the northwest, Gallarus Oratory is an ancient dry-stone church with sloping sides. Clifftop Dún Beag is a prehistoric promontory fort to the southwest.

## Day Five, May 13<sup>th</sup>

### Into the West

**Activities/Visits:** From Dingle, we'll go into the West, stopping at the Cliffs of Moher. Departing in the morning at Dingle, we can head to the village of Doolin; taking a boat, we can get the best views of the Cliffs of Moher, and then head to the ancient settlement of Dún Aonghasa on Aran Mhór a beautiful Island off the West coast. We can then return to stay in Doolin that evening. WE NEED TO START VERY EARLY from Dingle to make the 10:00 sailing at Doolin, but this is the best way to see the cliffs and Aran Mhór.



**Cliffs of Moher:** At Cliffs of Moher you will encounter nature in its wildest, purest form – see the rugged cliffs facing the mighty ocean, taste the salt air, hear the birds cry, feel the ancient rocks beneath your feet, smell the wind. One of the most famous sites in Ireland.



**Doolin:** A quaint fishing village in County Clare, West of Ireland.

**Árainn Mhór** is the largest of the Aran Islands, three stunning Islands off the West coast of Ireland in the Atlantic Ocean.



**Dún Aonghasa** is one of Ireland's most visited attractions. Located on a 300ft cliffside, southside of Inismór, it is a semi circular stone fort overlooking the Atlantic with daunting and dramatic views that stretch the length of the Island. The fort is of archeological and spiritual significance, having been inhabited thousands of years ago. Dun Aonghasa is deemed to be one of the best preserved examples of its kind in Europe.

## Day Six, May 14th: Connemara



**Activities/visits:** We drive from Doolin through the Burren into Connemara, visiting Kylemore and a Faerie fort in Connemara. Stop for Lunch in Galway city.

**Connemara:** Connemara is a famous area of rugged natural beauty, lakes, mountains and sea shore on the western seaboard of Ireland. Relatively unpopulated, it is a place to experience the raw beauty of Ireland in its purest form.



**Kylemore:** Kylemore Abbey (Irish: Mainistir na Coille Móire) is a beautiful Benedictine monastery founded in 1920 on the grounds of Kylemore Castle, in Connemara, County Galway, Ireland. The abbey was founded for Benedictine Nuns who fled Belgium in World War I.



**Galway City:** One of the most beautiful cities in Ireland, it is also the largest in the West.

**The Delphi Hotel and Spa:** The entire experience at Delphi Spa in Connemara is one of tranquillity and relaxation with a focus on natural healing and rejuvenating practices.

Delphi Spa is surrounded by some of Ireland's most inspirational landscape, set within the 300 acres of forest at Delphi Resort.



Nestled at the foot of the majestic Mweelrea mountain range, it is truly a unique place where you can escape, unwind and let yourself drift into a state of serenity within the tranquil surroundings.

## Day Seven, May 15<sup>th</sup>

### Midlands to Cooley

**Activities/Visits:** Visit to the Clonmacnoise, an early Christian monastic site on the banks of the river Shannon (the longest river in Ireland).

Ending up in Cooley (our base for the next few days), in North County Louth.



### Clonmacnoise

The monastery of Clonmacnoise is situated in County Offaly, Ireland on the River Shannon south of Athlone.

Clonmacnoise was founded in 544 by St. Ciarán, a young man from Rathcroghan, County Roscommon.

## Day Eight, May 16th

### The North

**Activities/Visits:** On this day we will go North. Our first stop will be a visit to the Seamus Heaney Homeplace. From there we will head to the Giant's Causeway, then stopping at Bushmills to tour the oldest whiskey distillery in the world, before taking the stunning coastal route to Belfast.

#### Seamus Heaney Homeplace

Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney's impressive body of published work spans over 50 years, from his first major work, *Death of a Naturalist* in 1966 to *Aeneid Book VI* published posthumously in 2016. His life and work are preserved and celebrated at this unique site.



#### The Giant's Causeway

According to legend, the columns are the remains of a causeway built by a giant. The story goes that the Irish giant Fionn mac Cumhail, from the Fenian Cycle of Gaelic mythology, was challenged to a fight by the Scottish giant Benandonner. Fionn accepted the challenge and built the causeway across the North Channel so that the two giants could meet. Fionn realises that his foe is much bigger than he is and so his wife, Oonagh, disguises him as a baby. When Benandonner sees the size of the 'baby', he reckons that its father, Fionn, must be a giant among giants. He flees back to Scotland, destroying the causeway so that Fionn would be unable to follow.

#### Old Bushmill's Distillery

Old Bushmills distillery, founded at the beginning of the seventeenth century is the oldest whiskey distillery in the world, still producing fine Irish whiskey.



## Day Nine, May 17<sup>th</sup>

### Carlingford, Cooley Mountains

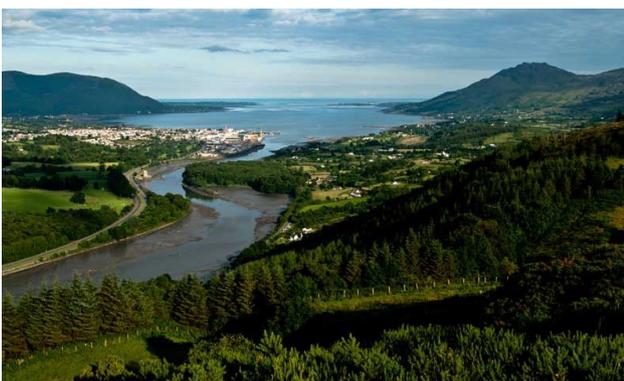
Visit to the medieval village of Carlingford, and the scenic Cooley Mountains, festive music and storytelling session.

**Activities/Visits:** The Cooleys were the site of the Táin, the most important saga of ancient Irish mythology. Visit to a fairy fort and standing stones.

Evening session to include; a traditional Irish dinner, whiskey tasting, and private song and story (seanacháí) session. Guests then to be escorted to Bellurgan Park manor house for a session involving theatre and live music will be presented (exposition of Irish culture).



**Carlingford:** Founded as a Viking outpost, Carlingford was developed into an important trading centre under the Normans in Ireland; the charming village prospered during the middle ages and is home to several important historical sites



**Cooley Mountains,** aside from their natural beauty, are the site of the Táin Bó Chulainge, the most important ancient Irish epic, which recounts the tale of Cú Chulainn, defender of Ulster.



**Experience a Seanacháí!** A Seanacháí is a traditional Irish storyteller, who typically has a wide repertoire of songs and stories to recount at the drop of a hat.

## Day Ten, May 18th

### Ireland's Ancient East - Part 1

**Activities/Visits:** We will be heading south to Newgrange, Knowth & Dowth, Indeed, Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth were all built in the same period, around 5,000 years ago and pre-date the pyramids. They were built to catch the sunlight on the winter equinox, an incredible feat of ancient engineering.

**Newgrange** is a 5,200 year old passage tomb located in the Boyne Valley in Ireland's Ancient East. Newgrange was built by Stone Age farmers, the mound is 85 meters (93 yards) in diameter and 13.5 meters (15 yards) high, an area of about 1 acre. A passage measuring 19 meters (21 yards) leads into a chamber with 3 alcoves. The passage and chamber are aligned with the rising sun at the Winter Solstice.



**Knowth:** The 5000 year old main mound at Knowth, known as Knowth Site 1 is contemporary with the mounds at Newgrange and Dowth. The mounds are classified as Passage Tombs by archaeologists and are collectively known as of Brú na Bóinne, they are situated in the valley of the River Boyne in Ireland.

**Dowth:** Dowth together with Newgrange and Knowth are the three principal megalithic passage tombs of the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site. The mound is 90 metres in diameter and 15 metres high and surrounded by kerbstones, some of which are decorated.



## Day Eleven, May 19<sup>th</sup>

### Ireland's Ancient East - Part 2

**Activities/Visits:** On to the Hill of Tara, and the Loughcrew Cairns. Again in County Meath. Loughcrew is another ancient site based in a stunning setting on the central plane of Ireland. The Hill of Tara is important both in Irish antiquity as the crowning place of kings, and Irish spirituality.

#### Hill of Tara

(Irish: Cnoc na Teamhrach, Teamhair or Teamhair na Rí), located near the River Boyne, is an archaeological complex that runs between Navan and Dunshaughlin in County Meath, Ireland. It contains a number of ancient monuments and, according to tradition, was the seat of the High King of Ireland.



Clusters of Megalithic Cairns are dotted around the Slieve na Caillaigh hills at Loughcrew, the main concentrations are on Carnbane East where Cairn T is the centrepiece and Carnbane West where Cairn L is located. The illumination of the passage and chamber at the Winter solstice sunrise in Newgrange is world famous. Less well known is the Equinox illumination at sunrise in Cairn T at Loughcrew. The backstone of the chamber is illuminated by a beam of light at sunrise on the Spring and Autumnal Equinoxes.

## Day Twelve, May 20th

### Dublin: Day of Departure



**Activities/Visits:**

Morning Completion Circle with Aurora if Everyone is Available before flights

Walk in central Dublin enjoying the sites, restaurants

