



TRAVEL

The Homecoming Tour with...

THE CELTIC TENORS

JUNE 5-13, 2017

Monday 5th June: Welcome to Ireland

This morning we land in Dublin Airport. Once you go through passport control, you will collect your bags and head out into the arrivals area where your representative from Travel Concepts will meet you. Once aboard the coach, we will be transferred to our first destination of the trip, Co. Meath. The rich soil here was laid down during the last ice age, drawing settlers as early as 8000 BC who



worked their way up the banks of the River Boyne, transforming the landscape from forest to farmland. We travel into Co. Meath, the home of **Matthew Gilenan**, where his



classical training started in the Sisters of Mercy Convent in Kells at the age of 10. We will visit the Monastic Town of Kells best known for the magnificent illuminated manuscript that bears its name, and which visitors queue to see at Trinity College in Dublin. Although the great book wasn't created here, it was kept in Kells, one of the leading monasteries in the country, from the end of the 9th century until 1541, when it was removed by the Church. Kells is considered by many historians to be one of the most important monastic sites in Ireland. Uniquely, Kells, a living town over one thousand years old, has its ancient and medieval remains everywhere in evidence.

We will take a walking tour through the town to uncover the physical treasures within the monastic layout of the town, the Monastic enclosure with the High Crosses, Round Tower, St. Colmcille's House, the famous Scriptural Market Cross and much more. With a wealth of history and heritage, it is no wonder that so many tourists come to Kells in search of the secret of Kells!

Afterwards, we will attend the first performance by The Celtic Tenors – which is sure to top off a great day. We will head for our hotel, The Johnstowns Estate, a 1750's Georgian Rural Residence set on 120 acres of parkland which overlooks the river Blackwater nestled between the villages of Johnstownbridge and Enfield. We will enjoy dinner together tonight and toast to our first evening in Ireland.

Dinner & Overnight: The Johnstowns Estate, Co. Meath

Tuesday 6th June: Unique Experiences in County Meath

After breakfast this morning, we will head out for a day of touring of majestic sites at The Boyne Valley, which is a World Heritage Site – a property inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List because of its respective outstanding universal value. Boyne Valley is an area within the bend of the River Boyne which contains some of the world's most important prehistoric landscapes. The archaeological landscape within Boyne Valley is dominated by the well-known large passage tombs, Newgrange, Knowth and Hill of Tara, all of which we will explore today.



The Megalithic Passage Tomb at Newgrange was built about 3200 BC. The kidney shaped mound covers an area of over one acre and is surrounded by 97 kerbstones, some of which are richly decorated with megalithic art. The 19 metre long inner passage leads to a cruciform chamber with a corbelled roof. The Great Mound at Knowth was built over 5000 years ago, probably after the construction of Newgrange. It is similar in size to Newgrange and is surrounded by 18 smaller satellite mounds. It has two passages with entrances on opposite sides, the western passage is 34 metres long and the eastern passage is 40 metres long, ending with a cruciform chamber. The megalithic passage tomb called the Mound of the Hostages (Duma na nGiall) is the oldest monument on the Hill of Tara dating back to between 2500 B.C. and 3000 B.C. The passage, 4m in length and 1m wide, was subdivided by sill stones into three compartments each containing cremated remains. Following this day of unique lessons, we will return to the hotel and share dinner together, with the rest of the evening to spend as you wish. **Dinner & Overnight: The Johnstowns Estate, Co. Meath**

Wednesday June 7th: Welcome to Northern Ireland



This morning, refuel on breakfast as we prepare to bid farewell to Co. Meath and begin to travel across the border into the heather-clad hills of Co. Tyrone in Northern Ireland, part of the United Kingdom. There are no customs checks and the main difference to note will be the change in road signs and we change currencies from the (€) Euro to (£) GBP pounds sterling. We will arrive in Omagh, the county town of Co. Tyrone and hometown of **Daryl Simpson** who grew up and developed his love of music in the local high school, Omagh Academy. We will hear the history of this town and the tragedy which occurred there in 1998 which received international attention. We will then visit The Ulster American Folk Park, a colorful indoor and outdoor museum exploring the story of Irish emigration to the New World.

Highlights will include reconstructed streets, log cabins and costumed characters as well as a special performance later by The Celtic Tenors.

Later, we will check into our hotel, The Silver Birches, where we will spend the next two nights. After sharing dinner tonight, we will enjoy the remainder of our evening.

Dinner & Overnight: The Silver Birches, Co. Tyrone



Thursday June 8th: Day Tripping to Belfast

Fill up on breakfast this morning as we get ready for a day trip to the hometown of the Titanic and the capital of Northern Ireland. We will enjoy a sightseeing tour of Belfast, taking in all the areas of interest in this fascinating city. We will see Belfast's compact center on Donegal Square, which is dominated by the elaborate City Hall, which was



officially reopened in October 2009 following its £11m, two year refurbishment. The US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton performed a ribbon cutting ceremony and unveiled a plaque to mark the reopening. We will drive through West Belfast's Protestant neighborhood of Shankill Road and the Catholic neighborhood of Falls Road, where large vivid murals painted on the sides of buildings express the feelings that still run deep on both sides. Though the names of these areas were much in the news during 'The Troubles', the gate in the Peace Wall between them now stands open. We end our tour with a visit to the Titanic Belfast, a state of the art interactive museum that provides an unforgettable visitor experience. It tells the story of

the RMS Titanic, from her conception and launch into the River Lagan in 1911, to the tragic end of her maiden voyage a year later. It was here at Titanic Quarter (the former Queen's Island) in Belfast Harbor, where the ship was built. Enjoy the exhibits at your own pace. After that exciting day, we will return to Omagh to share dinner and the rest of the evening together.

Dinner & Overnight: The Silver Birches, Co. Tyrone

Friday June 9th: Famous Landmarks in Co. Donegal



Finish up breakfast this morning as we depart Omagh and Co. Tyrone for scenic Co. Sligo, famous for its poetry, myth and folklore and hometown of **James Nelson** who writes his own column 'Nelson's Column' for local newspaper 'The Sligo Weekender'. We will transfer back to the Republic of Ireland where we will use Euro for the remainder of the trip. On route, we will stop at



the spectacular sea cliffs of Slieve League which are among the highest in Europe, plunging some 600m to the sea. Slieve League Cliffs are situated on the south west coast of County Donegal and offer terrific views of the Atlantic Ocean, the Sligo Mountains and Donegal Bay. There is much to know about Slieve League, like the monks who went to Iceland or the story of "the eagle and the baby". To learn more, we will visit the award-winning Slieve League Cliffs Centre which is all about local culture, food and crafts served with a real warm Donegal welcome and sense of humor.

Later on, we will arrive at The Sligo Clarion Hotel, situated in an idyllic scenic location on the Atlantic coast and overlooked by the spectacular Benbulbin Mountain. We will meet for dinner at the hotel and spend the rest of the evening as you wish. **Dinner & Overnight: The Clarion Hotel, Co. Sligo**

Saturday June 10th: Sights and Sounds of Co. Sligo

Enjoy breakfast this morning as afterwards, we will head out on a day of touring local sites in an area known as 'Yeats Country' after the Irish poet William Butler Yeats, who spent large parts of his childhood in this area. Yeats died in France in 1939 and according to his wishes he was buried after a discreet and private funeral service at Roquebrune-Cap-Martin – *"If I die bury me up there and then in a year's time when the newspapers have forgotten me, dig me up and plant me in Sligo"*. Our first stop today will be the beautiful and romantic Glencar Waterfall and Lake. Afterwards, we will head for a drive to Mullaghmore, a charming seaside village, to visit Mullaghmore Beach and Harbor and Mullaghmore Head. Bunduff Strand is a pure white beach popular with surfers. As you walk, you'll enjoy excellent views



of Slieve League, Benbulbin and Benwisquin whereas the walk around Mullaghmore Head leaves only Inishmurray Monastic Island between you and America. From here we will make our way to Drumcliffe Church. Drumcliffe is set against the striking backdrop of the Benbulbin Mountains, undoubtedly Ireland's most distinctive mountain. Enjoy a performance by The Celtic Tenors in this majestic setting which was founded by St Colmcille founded in the 6th Century. Although the monastery seems to have been well known from the 9th to the 16th century, the only remains today are three High Crosses and the stump of a round tower. The crosses are in a graveyard on the grounds of a former abbey. Adjacent to the ancient graveyard is a road leading to the early 19th century St. Columba's Church of Ireland and the final resting place of Yeats (1865–1939). We will then return to Sligo Town for our hotel dinner and enjoy the rest of the evening together.

Dinner & Overnight: The Clarion Hotel, Co. Sligo

Sunday June 11th: Heading for Ireland's Capital

This morning after breakfast, we will bid farewell to Co. Sligo as we head east towards Co. Dublin. Before we reach this small capital with a huge reputation, we will detour to Co. Westmeath and visit 'the home of traditional Irish Whiskey', Kilbeggan Distillery. From the creaking timber water wheel to the giant steam engine, you will be transported back two centuries to hear, see, smell and taste Ireland's oldest distillery still producing their world famous Kilbeggan Whiskey. Afterwards, we will travel to Dublin and arrive at our hotel, The Gibson, where we can enjoy free time before dinner together in the evening.

Dinner & Overnight: The Gibson Hotel, Co. Dublin



Monday June 12th: Dublin's Fair City



Once breakfast is finished up this AM, we will set out on a panoramic sightseeing tour of Dublin City. As we drive through the main thoroughfare we see historic buildings like the GPO (General Post Office) on O'Connell Street and Trinity College which houses the Book of Kells. We will see the vast Georgian Squares, such as Merrion Square where Oscar Wilde's house can still be found (today owned by the American College) and St. Patrick's Cathedral. We also visit Phoenix Park, the largest public park in Europe and home to Aras an Uachtarain (the Irish President's Residence) as well as the American Ambassador's Residence. Afterwards, we will take a magical journey deep into the heart of the world famous Guinness Storehouse. This

historical site is central to Dublin's and Ireland's heritage, and has been continually updated to create a blend of fascinating industrial tradition with a contemporary edge. The seven floors bring to life the rich heritage of Guinness, telling the story from its origins at St. James's Gate in Dublin to its growth as a global brand, known all around the world. When you reach the 7th floor enjoy a pint of the 'Black Stuff' in the Gravity Bar while taking in the breath-taking panoramic 360° views of Dublin city and beyond. Following this, we will return to the hotel to get ready for a special evening in Dublin. Enjoy a farewell dinner with the final performance by our excellent hosts, The Celtic Tenors. Toast to a successful trip with new memories, experiences and friendships to always remember. **Dinner: Gala Dinner / Overnight: The Gibson Hotel Dublin**



Tuesday June 13th: Homeward Bound...

Pack your bags as we head for the airport where you will board your flight for home. Carry on your photos and memories and bring a bit of the Emerald Isle home with you. 'The Land of One Hundred Thousand Welcomes' will be expecting you again soon!

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