

Seeing Ireland on Your Own

Compiled by Tom Quinn Kumpf

Introduction

So you've always wanted to visit Ireland and experience the best of what the country and its people have to offer. You've considered a number of tour methods but you're just not sure which one will best accomplish your goals. If you find yourself at this crossroad and you're not comfortable with the idea of spending your time with a group of strangers on a large bus, stuck with a fixed agenda that leaves you very little time for personal exploration, I invite you to read on.

This guide was designed in response to repeated requests for advice and direction from people interested in getting away from the standard tour circuit and experiencing a more open, intimate Ireland. It also grew out of my own concern for how isolated Irish-Americans traveling in large groups are from the natives. They all too often return home knowing very little that is real or personable about the people and land of their ancestors.

I must say, however, that while it might not seem a good choice for some, the Tour Bus circuit is a perfect option for many and the only way some people can travel at all. On the other hand, if you're someone who likes to "do it alone," especially at your own pace, the information and advice I offer in this guide may be just what you are looking for. Based on more than 40,000 miles of driving, exploring, and photographing in a country slightly larger than the state of Pennsylvania, what I know of Ireland comes from personal experience and countless conversations in pubs, sitting rooms, and farm kitchens. I hope what I offer here helps smooth the road and provides a much more interesting experience on the Emerald Isle.

—Tom Quinn Kumpf

Planning and Preparing for Your Trip

- **Guidebooks and maps:** Purchase guidebooks and maps well before departure. As the most complete, well-researched, and regularly updated source of information, the Lonely Planet's travel guide, *IRELAND*, should be your first consideration; any other guidebooks are welcome additions. Also, as the roads in Ireland are constantly under construction, including a number of major motorways and by-passes constructed in the past couple of years, a recently updated road atlas of Ireland is essential and will add detail to the maps found in any of the other guides. The Internet, too, is a very good source of information.
- **Why are you going?** Is your main reason for going to Ireland to find the old family homestead, to track the origins of your family name (and associated kings), or to experience the Irish countryside and its people? While a combination of all of these is feasible, it is best to choose your primary goals in advance and plan around those. My advice is that if you're more interested in homesteads or the family monarch, do all the research you can at home before you leave. Otherwise, a detailed search in Ireland means a lot of time spent within the confines of libraries and heritage centers instead of experiencing the countryside where your ancestors spent their lives. Develop a real feel for what you want to do with as much pre-trip research as possible.
- **How much time do you have?** Ireland is slightly larger than the state of Pennsylvania and to most Americans seems quite small when looking at a road map. That said, one should be aware that except for the major motorways, the roads are narrow and winding, and generally more time is needed to travel between points than in the States. Moreover, getting through large towns and cities often requires additional time and patience. On the other hand, adventuring via auto is what we're talking about here and more often than not getting lost or bogged down ends up being the best part of the trip. The key is to remain flexible. Interest and enjoyment should be the primary consideration. One can relax a little in the realization that it is rarely more than a long day's drive from one end of the island to another.
- **When do you want to go?** While Ireland is the first of the British Isles to catch the harsh blast of the wild Atlantic, it is also blessed with moderate temperatures carried north by the Gulf Stream. June, July, and August are considered the driest, warmest months and

represent the high season for tourism. Even so, bone-chilling wind and rain can strike at any time and, with the exception of January and February when temperatures often dip below freezing and snow is a possibility, there are some real advantages to visiting Ireland during the off-season months. Travelers able to book well in advance will often find airlines offering substantial discounts on airfares for the months of March, April, and May, and again in September and October. Likewise, car rental companies are more inclined to offer special rates. Hotels and B&Bs are generally less expensive and more open to negotiation than during the high season. Most attractions are still available to visitors but the roads are far less crowded with tour buses and other vehicles. Quite simply, there are fewer people traveling around and those who make a living in the tourist industry are generally more relaxed and eager to please than during the helter-skelter rush of high season. As for the weather, rarely does it rain more than a few days in a row and, for those days when it does, one can always find comfort in the Irish saying, "It never rains on the inside of a pub."

- **Clothing:** Ireland is a place of extreme wind and wetness, and waterproof is the only term worth mentioning when shopping for outdoor gear. Unless you are staying indoors or in the car most of the time, water resistant offers little real comfort in Ireland. Visitors should consider investing in a high-quality waterproof rain parka with a hood. Here, I might recommend waiting until you arrive and buying what the natives wear at one of the local shops. Not only will you have something designed to actually work well in Ireland, you'll have a great, practical souvenir to wear once you're back home. Many of these come with removable liners, a feature that has proved invaluable in Ireland. You might also consider buying waterproof pants, especially if you expect to spend time slogging around bogs and fields. Shoes and boots should be as waterproof as possible. For those seriously considering visits to farms or extended walks through bogs and other wetlands, knee-high rubber boots popularly known as "wellies" can be purchased at just about any hardware store once you get to Ireland.

Otherwise, pack so you can dress in layers, adding or removing items of clothing as the weather and environment dictate. As for the hand-made wool sweaters everyone raves about, wait until you've actually arrived in Ireland to buy yours. You'll find them in many different colors and styles, but look around and spend some time in the smaller, local shops. More often than not you'll find the quality far superior and prices lower than what is available in the large tourist outlets.

- **Making reservations:** I begin shopping for airfares as soon as I have a fairly good idea when I want to leave and how long I want to stay. This, for me, is usually six weeks to several months in advance. Go to Orbitz, Expedia, or one of the other Internet companies, but don't book until you're absolutely sure of your itinerary as these fares are usually non-refundable and even minor changes can carry stiff penalties. Compare prices directly from your home port to Dublin, Shannon, and Belfast, but also consider flights to London with a connecting flight to your Irish destination. Many airlines offer non-stop flights, and the savings one can experience when flying directly to London can be quite substantial, especially in the off season.

When those reservations are confirmed, I then focus on reserving a car for the entire trip, and lodging for at least the first night or two, especially if I am arriving late in the day or plan to stay in a major city for a day or two (more details below). As with airfares, I generally use on-line agencies for the car reservation. This is a quick and convenient way of comparing prices and specials offered by the various local agencies. The number of people in your party and where you plan on driving are important when considering the size car to rent. Ireland is a place where bigger and roomier is not necessarily better as the roads are narrow and fuel is expensive. Even standard-sized cars can create problems when driving down those picturesque country lanes, especially when you need to turn around and all you have is a few feet between your doors and two very high, stone fences. Mini or compact cars are better suited for most roads and are much more fuel efficient. Whatever model you select, make sure you have the maximum insurance coverage possible. I know this hurts if you have to purchase it but, unless you have some special provision on your home policy or credit card, you are saving yourself a lot of grief by getting the best coverage the agent offers. Check to see if you have those special provisions, but make sure you read the fine print on the agreement that came with the policy or card because often you'll find that they cover just about every country in the world except Israel and Ireland. From the Irish point of view, there is good reason for this and, while I provide some handy driving tips later on in this guide, believe me when I say that your US driver's license is considered little more than a learner's permit in the Irish courts. Since joining the EU, the Irish have been forced to suffer more and more drivers from Europe who are accustomed to driving on the same side of the road as we do in the US. But driving in Ireland, North or South, is done on the "other" side of the road and accidents have become all too common among those who do not take care to keep their minds on the task at hand.

While I may occasionally use the Internet booking companies for hotel reservations, the Lonely Planet guidebook, *IRELAND*, is much more practical when looking for a hotel or B&B. My advice is to follow the guidebook recommendations and the limits of your pocketbook. Many hotels and nearly all B&Bs include a standard Irish breakfast, called “a fry,” with the room. This generally includes cereal followed by fried eggs, sausages, bacon, toast, brown bread, and coffee or tea, and is usually enough food to send you happily down the road and keep you that way until dinnertime. The only time I book in advance is if my arrival time is later in the day or if I plan on spending a number of days in one of the urban centers. Otherwise, I trust my luck, the guidebooks or, as a last resort, the local pub for information on renting a place for the night. Start looking for a B&B about an hour before you plan to stop for the day, but especially if it's getting on 6 or 7 p.m. Stopping early allows you to decompress, to clean up a bit before going out to dinner or the local nightlife. If you find yourself in an area where B&Bs seem scarce, stop by the local pub and ask the folks there for any local addresses. Quite simply, there are so many B&Bs available in Ireland, especially in the off season, that I've never had to check more than a few places to find what I wanted at the price I was prepared to pay. Be aware, however, that most B&Bs are owned and operated by working couples or families and, while more and more are accepting credit cards, many of them, especially in the countryside, are set up to accept cash only.

The above may be good news for those driving to a new location every day or so, but there are also holiday or vacation home rentals available that can be booked in advance over the phone or the Internet. These are usually offered to those wanting to stay in one area for several days or longer and, like everything else in the industry, price and length of stay are more open to negotiation during the off season. A word of warning, however: most of these rentals are designed to accommodate families or groups and you may think you're getting a real deal renting a place with four bedrooms, four baths, and a large open kitchen and sitting room. However, heating such a place to the comfort level to which most Americans are accustomed (often an add-on part of the rental fee) can not only prove frustrating but can really dig into your pocket book. If you have a chance to visit the average Irish home, you will see that little of the house is actually heated beyond the confines of a small, snug, and cozy sitting room. Look carefully and you may indeed find comfortable, affordable digs.

Before Leaving for Ireland

- Check your passport to make sure it's current, that you've signed it, and that your home address is correct. Conflicting information can cause problems with customs officials both in Ireland and the US.
- Make two sets of photocopies of all the important documents you're taking on the trip. These include your passport, driver's license, credit cards, etc. Keep your passport with you at all times. Keep one set of photocopies in one of your carry-on bags and leave the other at home.
- Make a list of all camera, video, or computer equipment you are taking on your trip including serial numbers and any other information that might help identify the items. This is invaluable if something is lost or stolen and also acts as proof of ownership should there be any questions with customs. As with the above documents, make two copies—keep one with you and the other at home.
- Keep all your important items in your carry-on bag, especially prescription drugs and anything you can't easily replace if one of your check-in bags is lost. Be aware of the ever-changing rules US Homeland Security imposes on travel, especially where it concerns what you can put in your carry-on bags.
- Make sure you have extra batteries for your camera, video cam, or other battery-powered equipment. Ireland is not third world, but it is not America either. You don't want to waste valuable time running around trying to find a match for your particular piece of gear.
- For those of you still shooting film, take twice as much film as you think you will need. The Irish landscape is amazingly scenic and it seems like every new turn in the road reveals another castle, church ruin, ancient monument, or other scene worthy of a shot. Film is getting harder and harder to find there and the prices may be substantially higher. You may not be able to find the particular brand or type of film you prefer. Likewise with your digital gear: if you're thinking a 2-GB memory card will handle the job, spend the extra money and buy an 8-GB card. Better yet, buy two 8-GB cards in case one is lost or damaged. As a professional, I carry four 8-GB

memory cards, one in the camera and three in the bag, and a 500-GB storage drive. At the end of the day, I slip the memory card into the drive, which automatically downloads, files, and dates the day's shoot. You are then free to erase and reuse the memory card. This convenient little device is about the size and weight of a TV remote and holds the equivalent of 250 thirty-six-exposure rolls of film.

- Pack all photographic gear and film in your carry-on bags only. Discard the cardboard containers and pack the film in clear zip-lock bags. The X-ray machines used for carry-on bags are safe for most photographic films. Film stored in your check-in luggage, however, can be seriously damaged by the extreme level of X rays they are subjected to even if they are in lead bags. Although I no longer think they're worth the expense or trouble, lead film bags are still available for carry-on. However, you will undoubtedly be asked to open the bag for visual inspection if you use one. For speeds over 1600 ISO, you may want to inform the security people that you have high-speed film.
- Take a credit card or two as backup even if only for a guarantee at the car rental agency. Ireland has experienced both a boom and bust economically in recent years and this, combined with the devaluation of the US dollar, makes visiting Ireland a fairly expensive proposition for Americans. I generally allot myself the equivalent of a hundred US dollars per day for every day I'm on the ground. This covers fuel, lodging, meals, and most incidentals. Those accustomed to traveling as a couple or with family will probably have a better idea about how much to take along.

After Arriving In Ireland

- After proceeding through customs, exchange enough money at the airport to last a couple of days. As mentioned above, this will vary according to how many people you are traveling with, but I usually start with three or four hundred dollars. ATMs at the airport may offer you the best rate, depending on what card you use. The exchange rates at the airport are comparable, if only slightly higher, than the banks. Most banks and money exchanges accept credit cards as well as traveler's checks and cash. If you fly into the Republic of Ireland, you receive currency in Euros. This is different if you land in Belfast, where the six counties that make up Northern Ireland remain part of the UK, which still uses the British pound. Because The Troubles in the North have cooled, the checkpoints

that once marked the border crossings have been removed and the only way to tell when you're about to leave one political domain for the other is when you begin to spot money exchange shops. Very few businesses will accept anything but their own currency, so stop and take the time to make the exchange.

- Advice on driving in Ireland: Don't allow fear, beyond a healthy regard for the task at hand, to become a factor in your driving. Rather than confusing yourself by thinking that everything is backwards or opposite, simply concentrate on keeping the center line on the driver's side of the car—the same as in this country. Because the driver's side in Ireland is on the right, the center line should be kept to your right. Likewise, when passing a vehicle ahead of you, always pass on the right after checking the lane for oncoming traffic. You will be shifting with your left instead of your right hand, but you will be surprised how quickly you develop a smooth technique. On major motorways, the far left lane is for slower traffic and, as said, you will pass slower vehicles on the right.

When turning left at a junction, you turn into the left-hand lane. When turning right at a junction, you turn right and assume the left-hand lane. Just remember: keep the center line on the driver's side. Drive at a speed that feels safe, but as you relax into the drive and begin to pick up speed, keep in mind that behind the next blind corner may be a cyclist, someone walking a dog, or one or all of Mrs. Kelly's cows. The bottom line is to stay alert, in the countryside for sure but especially when approaching the scariest of all road inventions, the roundabout. Found primarily in and around urban areas, the roundabout is designed so that drivers veer to the left and follow the circle around until its time to assume their chosen exit by again veering left. The roundabout is amazingly efficient and easy to read after you've been through one or two, but the most important thing to remember here is that everyone already in the circle has the right-of-way over those approaching from the converging roads. Always approach with caution, stop if there is traffic coming at you in the circle or if there are traffic lights telling you to do so, but do not stop if the right-of-way is clear and there is no one in the circle approaching from the right.

- The last bit of advice I offer on driving is that you make sure you pick up and place securely in the trunk any and all parts you might accidentally knock off the rental car during your Ireland adventure. There's nothing worse than chrome bumpers, plastic mirrors, and door trim littering the lovely Irish countryside, and the agents, though most of them do have a sense of humor about such things,

are much more understanding if you return the broken pieces along with the car. It is when you're dealing with the agent that you'll thank me for suggesting the additional auto insurance.

- Don't be reluctant or hesitant to enter a pub anywhere in Ireland. It amazes me how many people are stuck on the idea that violence, hot temperedness, alcoholism, and an inability to forgive others for injustices of the past are the true marks of an Irishman. I understand how ridiculous that may sound, but I am constantly frustrated with the number of Americans who express concern over entering pubs because they believe this to be true. The facts are that most publicans will not tolerate shouting let alone fighting in the pub, and not only is Ireland's rate of alcoholism the lowest in Europe, it's ten times lower than that of the US. An Irish pub is a place where the entire family socializes and, despite what might otherwise be said about them, that is the real reason why even the smallest village or town has one. The local pubs provide food, drink, and entertainment and are places where neighbors, including the children, meet for sport, gossip, and banter. You'll find pub food to be some of the best fare you'll ever eat, the prices are generally less than in restaurants, and the people are the 'real' Irish you're looking for.

A Short Do Not Do List

- After ordering a pint of Guinness in a pub or other establishment that serves this wonderful potion, do not get fidgety if it seems to take forever for the publican to get it to your table. Guinness is unlike most other brews and must settle for a time if it is to be experienced at its best. Do not embarrass yourself by letting everyone in the pub know you are ignorant and impatient. Trust your publican and his timing; he is really trying to get you the most for your money.
- Don't take photos of locals without first asking their permission. Some may seem shy while others may simply ignore you. Then again, others may have real and genuine concerns about being photographed. In any event, personal dignity is important to respect no matter where you are. It is never a good policy to offend, so always ask first.
- The Irish are an extremely generous, proud people. Treat them with respect and you will receive the same in return. Don't hesitate to ask directions, or to strike up a conversation. When trying to

get a discount or hotel or B&B accommodations, do not badger or try to strong-arm them into a cut rate. Simply ask, "Do you offer a discount during the off season?" And if someone is introduced to you as the man or the woman of the house, believe it and act accordingly. Until a decade or so ago, Ireland was a relatively poor, impoverished country, and owning a home in Ireland is still considered an accomplishment. Being the woman of the house still means something—it is her home and she has final word.

- One would swear that Ireland gave birth to the qualities of trust, honesty, and hard work. These are especially evident in the countryside, but a note of warning is warranted when it comes to large urban centers. While the rate of serious and petty crime is still one of the lowest in Europe, a growing economy has caused crime rates to rise and one should remain alert and use the same precautions when parking the car, walking the streets, or storing valuables as you would in the US.
- If visiting Belfast or traveling through other parts of the North, don't discuss the sectarian violence that is still so much a part of their history lightly or question folks about their religious backgrounds. The events and emotions that fed The Troubles these past three decades are complex, sensitive, and have damaged far too many lives. Most people will let you know who they are and how they feel about things if you treat them with respect, but I would recommend that you take a Black Taxi Tour around Belfast if you're really interested in the history of the conflict.
- Never, ever make light of or tease the native Irish about fairies or the wee folk. Nothing drives the Irish crazier than an American babbling on about Leprechauns and lucky charms. Irish mythology is still taught in the schools as a very real part of history, and the creatures we in the US think of as cute, flirtatious little beings are actually the descendants of the Tuatha de Danann, a race of giant warriors and wizards with the power to help or hinder humans even to the point of death. If a native is the first to initiate such a conversation, especially in a pub, they may be doing so in an attempt to get to know you and perhaps score a free pint or two. On the other hand, the "Fairy Faith" is still alive in many parts of Ireland and, even if the person you're speaking to does not believe in fairies, respect for the Other World still runs strong. Making light of such things is commonly considered insulting and will make you appear a fool.

Well Worth a Visit

The following locations and attractions are places I would recommend visiting if and whenever they lie within reach of your planned route. They are what I consider some of the overall best of what Ireland has to offer. Lacking further explanation, I suggest that you look them up in your Ireland guidebook as they certainly offer more detail than I've room for here. I also suggest choosing the attractions offered in the larger cities with care, remembering that the true heart and soul of Ireland is found in the countryside.

Newgrange and Knowth, Co Meath
Hill of Tara, Co Meath
Hill of Slane, Co Meath
Kells, Co Meath
Wicklow Mountains National Park, Co Wicklow
Glendalough, Co Wicklow
The Wicklow Gap, Co Wicklow
Baltinglass, Co Wicklow
Youghal Bay, Co Cork
Blarney Castle, Co Cork
Kinsale, Co Cork
Cork City, Co Cork
Kilnaruane Pillar Stone, Co Cork
Bantry, Co Cork
Clonakilty Bay, Co Cork
Mizen Head, Co Cork
Drumbeg Stone Circle, Co Cork
Beara Peninsula, Co Cork
Lisnagun Ring Fort, Co Cork
Skellig Michael, Co Kerry
Ballinskelligs Monastery, Co Kerry
Valencia Island, Co Kerry
Ring of Kerry, Co Kerry
Killarney, Co Kerry
Dingle Peninsula, Co Kerry
Dingle Town, Co Kerry
Gallarus Oratory, Co Kerry
Connor Pass, Co Kerry
Rock of Cashel, Co Tipperary
Ennis Town, Co Clare
Cuchulainn's Leap, Loophead, Co Clare
Kilkee, Co Clare
Cliffs of Moher, Co Clare
Quin Abbey, Co Clare
Craggaunowen Project, Co Clare
Bunratty Castle, Co Clare

Beal Boru, Co Clare
The Burren, Co Clare
Poulnabrone Dolmen, Co Clare
Kilfenora, Co Clare
Ballyvaughan, Co Clare
Blackhead, Co Clare
Kilmacduagh Round Tower, Co Galway
Turoe Stone, Co Galway
Connemara Peninsula, Co Galway
Aran Islands, Co Galway
Clifden Bay, Co Galway
Cleggan, Co Galway
Kylemore Abbey, Co Galway
Leenane, Co Galway
Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo
Cong, Co Mayo
Ceide Fields, Co Mayo
Achill Island, Co Mayo
Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery, Co Sligo
Knocknarea, Co Sligo
Donegal Town, Co Donegal
The Rosses, Co Donegal
Beltany Stone Circle, Co Donegal
Boa Island, Co Fermanagh
Devenish Island, Co Fermanagh
Derry, Co Londonderry
Bloody Sunday Memorial, Co Londonderry
Portrush, Co Antrim
Giant's Causeway, Co Antrim
Benbane Head, Co Antrim
Glens of Antrim, Co Antrim
Belfast City, Co Antrim
Legananny Dolmen, Co Down
Giant's Ring, Co Down
St. Patrick's Grave, Co Down
Dublin Town, Co Dublin

Example Itineraries

I offer these itineraries as examples of what you can see in the time here allotted. They are designed to fit an eight- or ten-hour day with adequate time to visit the listed sights at a relatively leisurely pace. You may want to skip or substitute certain locations with others after reading your guidebook, and I would suggest that you do. Pick up the pace or slow it way down as you move, but in any and all events, enjoy the ride. Ireland is waiting and I promise you won't be disappointed.

Ten-Day Trip

- Day one – Arrive Shannon Airport, spend night in Ennis Town, lodging prearranged.
- Day two – Spend the entire day exploring The Burren, night in B&B in Lisdoonvarna, Ballyvaughan, or Kilfenora.
- Day three – Drive down coast to Cliffs of Moher, Malbay, to Ennis and Limerick Town. Night in B&B in Limerick or further south.
- Day four – Drive south to Tralee and Dingle Peninsula via Connor Pass. Return via Inch and Castlemaine to Kilorglin and B&B.
- Day five – Drive Ring of Kerry in counter-clockwise direction. Evening in Kenmare or on the road to Bantry.
- Day six – Drive from Bantry to Skibbereen and the southern coast, then to Glandore, Clonakilty, Kinsale, and on to a B&B in Cork City or Blarney.
- Day seven – Visit Blarney Castle and kiss the stone. Drive north to Fermoy and Michelstown, then on to Cahir and B&B in Cashel.
- Day eight – Visit Rock of Cashel, Drive to Thurles and Roscrea, B&B near Clonmacnois.
- Day nine – Visit Clonmacnois, drive to Athlone and follow N6 south to Balinasloe and Loughrea. Follow N66 to Gort and N18 to prearranged B&B in Ennis or Shannon.
- Day ten – Relax until returning to the states.

Fourteen-Day Trip

- Day one – Arrive Dublin Airport, spend night in prearranged lodging in Dun Laoghaire or preferably, to the north near the DART station in Malahide or Skeeries.
- Days two and three – Use the DART (train) or other public transportation to see the sights in Dublin. Do not ruin your time or temper trying to drive in the city.
- Day four – Up early and drive the N2 to Slane and the amazing Boyne Valley Complex. Visit Newgrange and Knowth as early as possible. These are the true jewels of Ireland and shouldn't be missed. B&B in Slane.
- Day five – Drive to and visit Hill of Tara. Drive back to Navan (or Kells for a wee look) and follow N52 to Mullingar, and south to Kilbeggan, Portlaoise, and Kilkenny. B&B along the way.
- Day six – Drive to Clonmel, then side trip to Rock of Cashel for visit. Drive south again to Fermoy and B&B in Blarney or Cork City.
- Day seven – Visit Blarney Castle and kiss the stone. Drive south to Kinsale and Clonakilty, follow coast road to Skibbereen, and Bantry. B&B between Bantry and Kenmare.
- Day eight – Drive the Ring of Kerry in a clockwise direction, take side trip to Valencia Island and check on chances of visiting Skellig Michael next morning. If so, evening in Portmagee, if not, in Killarney.
- Day nine – Visit Skellig Michael by sea, or drive north to Killorglin, Castlemaine, and the Dingle Peninsula. Time will be short if you've done the Skelligs but Dingle is worth seeing even if you feel a little rushed.
- Day ten – Finish visiting Dingle Peninsula leaving Via Connor Pass between Dingle and Kilcummin. Drive to Tralee, Tarbert, Limerick, and Ennis. B&B along the Limerick/Ennis road.
- Day eleven – Drive early to Ennistimon, Leinch, and the Cliffs of Moher. Drive to Lisdoonvarna and spend the rest of the day exploring The Burren. B&B early in Doolin.
- Day twelve – Drive coast highway north Craggagh, Fanore, and around Blackhead to Ballyvaghan. On to Kinvarra and Kilcogan. Jog south to Ardrahan then east to Craughwell and Loughrea. B&B along the way.
- Day thirteen – Drive to Athlone, Kilbeggan, and on towards Dublin. Do not drive into the city, but instead get a B&B near airport.
- Day fourteen – Relax until your flight departs.

Twenty-One Day Trip

- Day one – Arrive Dublin Airport, spend night in prearranged lodging in Dun Laoghaire or preferably, to the north near the DART station in Malahide or Skeeries.
- Days two and three – Use the DART (train) or other public transportation to see the sights in Dublin. Do not ruin your time or temper trying to drive in the city.
- Day four – Up early and drive the N2 to Slane and the amazing Boyne Valley Complex. Visit Newgrange and Knowth as early as possible. These are the true jewels of Ireland and shouldn't be missed. B&B in Slane.
- Day five – Drive to and visit Hill of Tara, drive east to Drogheda then north to Newry and take the A25 to Downpatrick. Visit St. Patrick's Grave and Inch Abbey and B&B for the night.
- Day six and seven – Take the A7 north to Belfast City visiting The Giant's Ring along the way. Take a Black Taxi ride around the city and enjoy the many other sights.
- Day eight – Leave early and follow the A2 coast road north through the Glens of Antrim to Ballycastle, Benbane Head, and the Giant's Causeway. B&B between Portrush and Derry.
- Day nine – Drive to Derry, visit the Walled City and Bloody Sunday Memorial. Follow the A2 to Letterkenny and the N13 to a B&B and Donegal Town.
- Day ten – Follow the N15 to Ballyshannon and Sligo. Visit Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery and if you have a few extra hours, climb Knocknarea mountain to the tomb of Queen Medb. B&B along the N59 to Ballina and N26 to Castlebar and Westport.
- Day eleven – Leave Westport and follow the R335 west to Croagh Partick, Louisburgh, and down to Leenaun. Follow the N59 around to Clifden and head east towards Galway City. B&B along the way or in the city.
- Day twelve – Take the ferry for a day on Inishmore and the Aran Islands. B&B around Galway.
- Day thirteen – Drive the N18 to Kilcolgan, Kinvara, and Ballyvaghan. Follow the coast road around Blackhead and spend the rest of the day and night in Doolin.
- Day fourteen – Spend the entire day exploring The Burren, night in B&B in Lisdoonvarna, Ballyvaghan, or Kilfenora.
- Day fifteen – Drive down coast to Cliffs of Moher, Malbay, to Ennis and Limerick Town. Night in B&B in Limerick or further south.

- Day sixteen – Drive south to Tralee and Dingle Peninsula via Connor Pass. Return via Inch and Castlemaine to Kilorglin and B&B.
- Day seventeen – Drive Ring of Kerry in counter- clockwise direction. Evening in Kenmare or on the road to Bantry.
- Day eighteen – Drive from Bantry to Skibbereen and the southern coast, then to Glandore, Clonakilty, Kinsale, and on to a B&B in Cork City or Blarney.
- Day nineteen – Visit Blarney Castle and kiss the stone. Drive north to Fermoy and Michelstown, then on to Cahir and visit the Rock of Cashel. B&B in Cashel.
- Day twenty – Take the N8 and N7 north to Portlaoise, Kildare, and on to Dublin. Do not drive into the city, but instead get a B&B near airport.
- Day twenty-one – Relax until your flight departs.

Example Equipment List

Nikon D-100 – #US45657

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Nikor AF 80-200mm Zoom f2.8 Lens #254647

Nikor AF 20-35mm Zoom f2.8 Lens #334779

Sigma AF 28-70 f2.8 Lens #20109

Sigma AF 90mm Macro f2.8 lens #269366

Nikon SB-25 Speedlight #3092

Mamiya 6x7 Body #PE10498

Mamiya 80mm f4 lens #PJ13489

Laptop Computer #1VBFP4K2NY