

HIDDEN IRELAND: LOUGHS AND ISLES OFF THE BEATEN PATH

8 Days | Expeditions in: |

A rare opportunity to circumnavigate Ireland, encountering breathtaking cliffs topped with ancient ruins, rugged islands peppered with puffins, and fishing villages where Irish traditions hold strong. Get immersed in the Gaeltacht in Dingle and the Aran Islands. Then venture to lesser-known sites in County Sligo and County Donegal and explore the fascinating shores of Northern Ireland.



DAY 1: Dublin, Ireland/Embark

Arrive in Dublin, Ireland and embark *National Geographic Orion*. After lunch, explore the Kilmainham Gaol (jail) for great insight into the course of Irish history during the centennial year of the Easter Rising. Sail south from Dublin. (L,D)



DAY 2: Ballycotton/Kinsale

Set out for tiny Ballycotton in County Cork this morning for a walk around a working farm. Continue to Kinsale, a picturesque fishing town with a fascinating history: the Battle of Kinsale in 1601 marked the collapse of Gaelic power in Ireland. Local scholars take us for a guided walk before free time to wander the quaint streets, galleries and shops. (B,L,D)

Tonight we are joined by National Geographic grantee Michelle Cronin, who has studied puffins and gannets in the Skelligs and 'wrestled' seals in the Basket Islands.



DAY 3: Skellig Michael/Dingle

Explore the dramatic Skellig Islands, where monastic ruins dating as far back as the sixth century perch high atop a rocky peak jutting out from the sea. Circle Skellig Michael in Zodiacs if weather permits, or, if you wish, hike to the top to view the beehive-shaped stone huts. Spend the rest of the day in delightful Dingle: enjoy a walking tour, explore the archaeology and intriguing history of the area, visit a local distillery, or explore on your own. Shackleton aficionados will want to visit Tom Crean's Pub; Crean accompanied "The Boss" on the *Endurance* in Antarctica. (B,L,D)

Dingle is the largest Irish-speaking community in the southwest, and we'll have a chance to meet them: drop in on artists and craftspeople in their homes, or breathe in the salt air and beachcomb with a seaweed forager!



DAY 4: Aran Islands/Cliffs of Moher

Wake up in the Aran Islands, a hub of Gaelic language and culture. On the main island of Inishmore, see the mystical ring fort of Dun Aengus, poised on steep cliffs above the crashing Atlantic, and pop in to the 18th-century stone Kilmurvey House for scones. Enjoy lunch as we sail to the Cliffs of Moher. If conditions permit, get a spectacular and rare perspective of the cliffs, gliding beneath them in a Zodiac. (B,L,D)





DAY 5: Connemara

The tranquil and starkly beautiful region of Connemara is a great place to wander—the ultimate fulfillment of travelers' romantic dreams of Ireland. Hiking with our naturalists (gentle walks or energetic hikes) or cycling on the quiet back roads—many of which were built to provide employment during the Famine—is probably the best way to get to know the area. Perhaps launch a kayak or even try your hand at fly fishing. Gather for an authentic Irish dinner and a performance of traditional Irish music ashore.



DAY 6: Donegal

Dock at the fishing harbor of Killybegs in County Donegal, a wild, windswept peninsula. Coastal walks and rural life in this traditional Gaelic-speaking area will be our focus. This afternoon photograph the spectacular Slieve League cliffs, the highest in Europe, or learn more about the historical heritage of the region at nearby Stone Age and early Christian sites. Or hit the streets of the lively town of Donegal for some independent exploration. (B,L,D)

Cycling is a great way to absorb the landscape. We've set up an optional cycling tour of the Glencolmcille region, riding over a high boggy plateau, through remote glens and along Atlantic bays to the colorful village of Ardara, with stops at the homes of traditional hand-knitters, and tweed weavers.



DAY 7: Northern Ireland

Enter Northern Ireland today. Discover the wonders of County Antrim: visit a clifftop Gaelic castle, see the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge stretching between high seaside bluffs, call at Bushmills, the oldest distillery in the world, and explore the incredible hexagonal basalt columns at Giant's Causeway, a UNESCO site. Meander among the columns as a guide explains the myths and scientific theories behind this intriguing geology. This afternoon, visit Belfast and explore the Titanic Museum, and cap off the evening with a civic reception in this Northern Ireland capital. (B,L,D)



DAY 8: Dublin, Ireland/Disembark

After breakfast, disembark in Dublin and transfer to the airport for your flight home, or remain in Dublin for an added stay. (B)

Cost Includes:

All accommodations aboard ship, meals as indicated, alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages aboard ship, excursions, sightseeing and entrance fees, special access permits, transfers to and from group flights, use of kayaks and snorkeling equipment, services of Lindblad Expeditions' Leader, National Geographic photographer, naturalist staff and expert guides, services of a ship physician, all gratuities, and all port charges and service taxes.

Note: All departures include alcoholic beverages and tips to the ship's crew.

Cost Not Included:

Air transportation, extensions, passport, visa, immigration fees, travel protection plan, internet, and laundry.