

Traveling Matters

Journeys Connecting People and Place

Ireland • GALWAY, CLIFDEN & DONEGAL • Sept 12-24, 2011

This very special itinerary explores the beauty, history, Gaelic culture and folklore weaved with Irish myth and spiritual realms of the West of Ireland. We'll explore—from the artistic venues of music and dance, to the untamed landscape and ancient ruins.

The journey begins in the friendly walled city of **Galway**—heart of some of the best traditional Irish music and poetry—then reaches into the area known as **Connemara** with its luminous light that many an artist has tempted to capture, on the twelve mountains surrounding the valley—to far northwest shores of southern **Donegal** with its wild and pristine landscape, castles and Gaelic peoples. You will experience a vivid contrast during **twelve leisurely planned days**.

At the heart of each trip that **Traveling Matters** designs is the vision to have a special journey reach deep into your hearts and create lasting memories to take home to share. We are honored to be joined by world recognized author, speaker, and television host, **Phil Cousineau**, whose knowledge is matched by his unparalleled personal charm. His bestseller, “**The Art of Pilgrimage**” will be one of the books we refer to along our journey. Irish-born **Peadar Dalton** will join us at the beginning of the journey, while **Margarita Ramirez-Dalton** will manage and guide as well,

bringing to life the sense of place, history and spiritual content of Ireland. Phil was a featured guest with Traveling Matters in 2000 and 2002. He has lived in many areas of the world and lives his life through stories and myth. He adds lots of energy and fun to our trip leadership team.

Journey Highlights

- 11 nights in small towns and villages
- Walk among High Crosses of Clonmacnoise
- 3-night stay in the medieval city of Galway, 3 nights in Connemara- Clifden. Island visits to Aran Island and Inishbofin —Island of the White Cow
- Arts and Music Festival in Clifden
- Dancing with local set-dancers, special guests and local musicians
- 4 nights in Donegal with visit to Donegal Castle and Town
- Spend day at the ancient pilgrim site of Glencolmcille in Donegal area
- Visit ancient Passage Tombs of Newgrange, Co Meath

DAILY ITINERARY

September 12-24, Depart: Monday, September 12: Leave USA for Dublin

Day 1: Tuesday, September 13: Dublin/Galway (LL, D)

Welcome to Ireland. We'll meet you at Dublin Airport and begin our journey by coach to Galway. We travel through the heart of verdant landscape and fields of central Ireland. What better way to cross the threshold of time than to stand in the remains of the ancient monastic settlement of Clonmacnoise, the largest monastic settlement in Ireland and the City of High Celtic Crosses. It is here that St. Ciaran and his community flourished along a main artery of the Shannon River and founded this settlement. We arrive late afternoon to settle into our hotel. Welcome dinner and a good night's sleep.

Day 2: Wednesday, September 14: Galway (B, D)

We'll enjoy learning all about the City of Tribes with our very personal guide and friend who will embellish the best of Galway history and folklore. The cultural city of Galway is surrounded by Galway Bay and is the fourth largest city in the Republic of Ireland. It boasts the artistic, film and cultural center of the west. Galway is a fabulous small walled city to roam and shop, and on every corner, especially in the afternoon, we can avail of traditional Irish music in cozy pubs. Tonight we'll walk to a nearby dance center to admire or participate in Irish Set dancing.

Day 3: Thursday, September 15: Galway (B, L,D)

We have a great surprise in store for all of you. Put on your rugged walking shoes. We have an adventure planned to journey out closer to landscape and air along the Atlantic Ocean. We will follow the sunset this evening and have dinner in a nearby village.

Day 4: Friday, September 16: Connemara/Clifden (B, D)

We give you the morning free to explore your last

morning in Galway City on your own. It is a must to visit the world famous Kenny's Bookstore. Early afternoon we head further west into the capital of Connemara, Clifden, the last town to be built in Ireland during the mid 1800s. Situated in a sheltered harbour it created a rich fishing area along with wool and marble resources. This particular area was devastated during the famine years and we will learn much about the history and artistic community. We will be staying in Clifden during the vibrant annual Arts and Music Festival.

Day 5: Saturday, September 17: Clifden (B,D)

Today we enjoy a full day strolling and exploring the charming town of Clifden and the vibrant annual Arts and Music Festival. Perhaps we will be fortunate to attend a concert in the evening. We have many choices planned for our day.

Day 6: Sunday, September 18: Clifden/Inishbofin (D, LL,D)

Today, weather dependent, we cross the Atlantic to visit the nearby island of Inishbofin. We'll walk to the nearby remains of the 7th century St. Colman's Abbey and a 16th century castle. We also may opt to explore one of the nearby mountains in Connemara, Maam Turk. Our guides will educate us on the geology and geography of this area. Perhaps we can walk the pilgrim's path of St. Patrick and the stations of the cross. We'll return to Clifden and share stories over dinner.

Day 7: Monday, September 19: Donegal (B, D)

We say farewell to Clifden and travel further north to Donegal, enjoying on the way a visit to Sligo Town and the gravesite of W. B. Yeats at Drumcliff. On to the wild county of Donegal - a place of rich authentic Gaelic culture, incredible history, and ancient landscapes of ocean, mountain, beaches, fertile valleys, sea cliffs, bogs and a very proud people. It is said this part of Donegal was home of the dispossessed Celts. This is the largest

Gaeltacht (Irish speaking) region in all of Ireland, and has an extraordinary number of pre-historic sites and ancient monuments. We settle in to our lovely countryside hotel in Donegal for the evening.

Day 8: Tuesday, September 20: Donegal (B, LL)

What if you lived in a town surrounded by an imposing castle? Welcome to Donegal town. We have a wonderful tour of the 17th century Donegal Castle and Heritage Center. The rest of the day is yours to explore this charming town — which is of course home to the exquisite Donegal tweed. The Donegal people will immerse your heart and soul with music and the ruggedness of a town that surely endured some of the worst times during the famine years. If we are lucky we'll join a country *ceili* (dance and music concert) this evening and enjoy the richness of Donegal music.

Day 9: Wednesday, September 21: Donegal (B, D)

Today we venture to a further corner of Donegal and the edge of the Atlantic to visit the sacred valley of Glencolmcille, wedged between two sea-cliffs at the northwestern tip of the Slieve League peninsula. We will travel through the village of Adara, home to the weaving mills of Donegal tweed and an annual international bluegrass festival. Glencolmcille, is actually a small parish consisting of several tiny Irish-speaking villages and affectionately named after St. Colmcille, who founded a monastery here. This was also an ancient pilgrimage route. During the 1950s, to support the community's existence, Fr. James McDyer brought electricity to the village and founded the folk village that we will visit. Through our guides we will learn to appreciate even more the importance of this part of Ireland, which is preserving its roots in Gaelic language schools—worldwide attended. And perhaps we'll learn about the distillation of poitin (pah Cheen), an ancient recipe.

Day 10: Thursday, September 22:

Donegal (B, D)

Donegal is one of those wonderous places—rugged and steeped in so much unspoiled beauty. We will see an aspect of Ireland that is rarely visited by groups. The people of Donegal are delighted to welcome the curious traveler. We have a beautiful day planned as our last day in Donegal area. We will have our farewell dinner and engage in sharing our stories that we will take home.

Day 11: Friday, September 23: Donegal/Dublin overnight (B, LL,D)

Morning departure to Co Meath. We began our journey crossing the threshold of monastic life and conclude the journey taking you into County Meath—the royal seat of the High Celtic Kings. Numerous remains of castles and burial mounds surround the rural countryside. We will visit the most noted: Newgrange and Knowth. These passage tombs, believed to be older than the Pyramids of Egypt and Stonehenge, were first discovered in 1699. The communities of people who lived here and the burial mounds remain a mystery. The most impressive aspect of Newgrange is the roof box over the entrance into the tomb. It is perfectly aligned for every December 21st winter solstice to catch the first rays of the rising sun casting the light directly in the center of the tomb. We will gather for a departure chat and all settle in to collect our selves for our journeys home. An overnight stay at a hotel near Dublin Airport. Evening free to prepare for departing home.

Day 12: Saturday, September 24: Depart home.

Morning group transfer to Dublin, Airport.

COST: \$3,850 (based on double occupancy) Single Room occupancy, add an additional **\$350.00**

Note: The price is calculated on the prevailing euro as of December 1, 2010. We reserve the right to adjust should the rate change significantly. Single hotel room occupancy is available with an additional cost calculated by each hotel property. The total cost will be added to the journey price. The cost is based on minimum of 20 travelers. If the group size falls below, the price may be adjusted. Costs are based on contracts with coach and hotel services.

INCLUDED:

- Roundtrip ground transportation to and from Dublin airport within guidelines of arrival times
- Private coach throughout the journey
- Eleven (11) nights at 3 or 4-star hotel
- Group lectures by scholars and guides
- Expert trip leaders and trip management throughout journey
- Daily full breakfast; many lunches, dinners and special food tastings and small treats. Many dinners will include wine and beverages
- Entrance fees to all historical sites
- Bottled water on coach during travel days
- All required gratuities to guides, driver, porters
- Pre-trip materials, packing lists, luggage tags

NOT INCLUDED:

International air; trip cancellation insurance; personal items; alcohol and other beverages not included in meals; laundry service; internet fees if charged at hotels; discretionary gratuities for daily maid service in hotel rooms.