

Come feel your spirit soar as we travel along the rugged shores of Celtic Ireland, savoring rich traditions of music, dance, food and endless spraoi mór! (Large Fun). Our past groups couldn't get enough of the Emerald Isle. It's our 11th AFS trip and possibly our best ever as we take in the most iconic sites, explore some uncharted territory, connect with locals and have heaps of fun along the way. Been here before? Not like this. With each visit, Ireland becomes more beautiful and more a part of your soul. With "Luck of the Irish", the tourism board expects this to be a record-breaking year for visitors.

*From County Clare to County Meath and parts in between, you'll get amazing photos of sweeping green landscapes. Take in the haunting beauty of the pure, unspoiled landscapes and enjoy new friendships with a people who share thousands of years of culture. Travel along the dramatic Wild Atlantic Way to experience the real Ireland! Feel the thrill of standing on top of towering sea cliffs of Moher. Sense the warmth of pubs in Killarney where locals beckon you to dance. And mingle in **Dingle** while tasting artisan foods that melt in your mouth. On this new AFS Itinerary, we feature a full day to indulge yourself at the Dingle Food Festival tagged by locals as "The Best Weekend of the Year!"*

*The adventure begins with an epic time in Dublin's new Epic Museum of Immigration. Then, get down with the locals at a true Irish **House Party** and kiss the **Blarney** stone! Our path on the **Wild Atlantic Way** takes us along the iconic **Ring of Kerry**, through the Dingle Peninsula, past the **Cliffs of Moher**, the bogs of **Connemara**, the **Burren**, and to stunning **Galway Bay**. And no trip is complete without a full-on farm experience and Hen Party at **Causey Farm**. Get an "Irish pedi" as we walk barefoot through a mossy forest along with some farmyard antics you won't forget.*

We've booked charming hotels for you throughout. Airfare is affordable because it's shoulder season and it's a short hop across the pond. Ireland is more than a destination, it's a feeling. Satisfy your wanderlust in pure Ireland, a country that never fails to surprise. The tea kettles are on with a warm welcome to capture your heart and make some Irish eyes smile.

Sept 28 – Leave the U.S. Full details soon in AFS Trip Tips.

Head out from home and make your way to Dublin

Day 1 - Sept 29 - Arrive Dublin **D**

Céad míle fáilte go héireann- a hundred thousand welcomes to Ireland!

Arrive in Ireland's capital city and make your way to the Brooks Hotel Dublin in the heart of Dublin, 62 Drury St. You should be able to store your luggage if your room isn't ready.

The group meets in the lobby for a 2pm afternoon of touring, starting with the appropriately named Epic Museum. Epic recounts the story of Ireland itself and how

immigrants made their way across the globe. Located on the docks, it has interactive displays as well as personal histories to help tell the story of Ireland's immigrants.

Afterward, even those without Irish roots will be transformed to true native with our Welcome Dinner and shindig at the Irish House Party. Located in a beautiful 18th Century townhouse, The Irish House Party features traditional Irish music and Irish dancing at its very best, performed by All Ireland champion musicians, dancers and entertaining presenters.

Overnight: Brooks Hotel Dublin (1 night)

Day 2 - October 1 - Blarney to Kinsale, County Cork (B)

Prepare yourself for some of Ireland's most picturesque farmlands as we travel through the midlands to make our way south to **Cork**. Known as the Rebel County, Cork has always been an important seaport. It was founded on an island in the swampy estuary of the River Lee, but over the centuries has grown to spread far beyond

We pass through on our way to explore the famous Blarney Castle and those who dare, can kiss the famous "Stone of Eloquence" found in the upper levels of the fortress. There's time for some serious shopping at the famous **Blarney Woolen Millen**, known for its wool sweaters and Irish heritage items.

Our next stop is the incredibly scenic fishing village of **Kinsale**. Soak up the salt air in this postcard-perfect village and take time to sample some of the local cuisine during free time for lunch.

We return to Cork for the evening where we stay in the centrally located and appropriately named Imperial Hotel. It's located on the island in the River Lee where Cork had its beginnings. Your evening is free to wander the quaint city streets or venture to the nearby shopping and restaurant district.

Overnight - Imperial Hotel Cork (1 Night)

Day 3 - October 2 - Kerry to Killarney (B)

Today, you will experience one of Ireland's most stunning scenic drives as we make our way along the famous **Ring of Kerry**. Inhale the breathtaking sights of the **Macgillycuddy's Reeks** as well as coastal views of beaches and cliffs which line the Iveragh Peninsula. This unspoiled region is the heart of what Ireland calls the Wild Atlantic Way. We'll stop along our journey to allow you to take photos of the rugged coast and even take some time to walk around **Killarney National Park**.

In late afternoon, we'll check into **Killarney's** International Hotel. This hotel is truly and old-world gem, steeped in history. You'll fall in love with Killarney itself and its nearby pubs and shops where locals will welcome you as their own.

Your evening is free, and we are offering an option to step back in time and tour the region in a manner which has been used for centuries – Jaunting cars or horse-drawn carriages to show you the hidden delights of Killarney, the National Park & the famous **Lakes of Killarney**.

Overnight: Fairview Hotel Killarney (2 nights)

Day 4 - October 3 - Dingle Food Festival (B)

It's all about food as we spend our day at the **Dingle Food Festival!!** This lively event takes part on the nearby Dingle Peninsula in the beautiful fishing town of the same name. This little village on the Wild Atlantic Way is worth a visit on its own but this festival makes it even more fun. Organized for and by the locals the entire town comes alive for the festival with cookery demonstrations, over 50 market stalls, workshops, street entertainment, children's events, wine tastings, whiskey tastings and much, much more.

In conjunction with all of the street activities, Dingle offers a "Taste Trail" to the local restaurants. The 9 ticket book costs about \$25 and allows you to also visit over 70 venues around the town offering tastings of the best food and drink the Peninsula has to offer.

Overnight: Fairview Hotel Killarney

Day 5 - October 4 - Galway (B)

After breakfast, we continue our coastal trek to County Clare and the port of Tarbert where we take a short ferry ride across the wide **River Shannon Estuary**. The Shannon is the longest river in the entire United Kingdom. We then head along the Clare coast to the towering **Cliffs of Moher**. This spectacular wall of sandstone that reaches to almost 700 feet above the Atlantic Ocean and runs for more than eight and a half miles. Stand near the edge and watch the sea crash below. You can also climb the small fortress called O'Brien's Tower for spectacular views.

We then make our way to the harbor city of Galway on Ireland's west coast where we'll overnight at the Galmont Hotel, not far from where the River Corrib meets the Atlantic Ocean. The city's hub is 18th-century Eyre Square, a popular meeting spot surrounded by shops and traditional pubs that often offer live Irish folk music. Nearby, stone-clad cafes, boutiques and art galleries line the winding lanes of the Latin Quarter, which retains portions of the medieval city walls.

We'll take some free time for lunch and then explore the area, visiting the **Benedictine Abbey of Kylemore** on the grounds of **Kylemore Castle**. We also hope to be able to cross the rugged boglands of **Connemara**. The entire region is stunning with its coastline of tiny coves, bays and fishing villages.

The evening is free to explore the buzzing nightlife of Galway City where live music fills the pubs!

Overnight: Galmont Radisson Hotel

Day 6 - October 5 – County Meath

B/L/D

Our day will take us back east across Ireland to County of Meath, north of Dublin. Known as the Royal County, it derives its name from the Second Century AD as a territory for the High Kings of Ireland.

We will have a lively day at **Causey Farm**, where we'll get the full experience of what it's like to be on a real working farm. Begin by making your own Irish soda bread for your lunch, see a sheepdog demonstration and then ride on bales of hay on the back of a trailer to the local bog where you will learn how to foot turf. You'll totally earn your lunch of your homemade bread and Irish stew while competing against one another to see to can do the best Irish Jig.

We end the day at the luxurious Trim Castle Hotel. Located on the grounds of a historic Norman castle, the Trim is the perfect place for us to end our journey with a scrumptious AFS Farewell Dinner to toast each other on a vacation well done.

Overnight: Knights Brooke Golf Resort (1 night)

Day 7 – Oct 6- Back to the U.S

(B)

Following breakfast, its time to head back to the Dublin airport for flights back to the U.S. (You may want to add a couple of days here pre or post-trip because there's so much fun to be had in Dublin: Guinness Brewery, GoT Tour, Wicklow Mountains Day, shopping Gafton St., new foodie tours, Trinity Collage, Jameson Distillery, musical pub crawls and more.)