

5,000 years in five days

For those who love to peel back the layers of time, Ireland's Ancient East is a wonderful opportunity to experience 5,000 years of European history in a compact area. Get off the beaten track to see, hear, touch and feel the imprints of the millennia of settlers in this land. Ancient Man, Early Christians, Medieval lords, colonial settlers and their descendants have all been seduced by these most lush, green and fertile lands. Hear their stories for yourself. Take your time to discover it all – the Stone Age art, the monasteries, the castles and fortresses.

There's an engaging authenticity to life in the local, bustling towns and villages. Take in a festival; try local fresh produce or tasty local specialties, many of which trace their roots to ancient times. Drive leafy roads through lush rolling valleys. Explore meandering rivers or the mountains that once protected the original inhabitants.

You will leave not only refreshed but illuminated by these many ancient wonders and the stories of how they came to this rich land and how Irish life today has been shaped by their immensely powerful influence.

Time	Accommodation/Activity/Attraction	Details
Day 1		
AM	<p>Depart Dublin early morning for the Boyne Valley which was once Ireland's ancient capital and its most sacred and mythical landscape.</p> <p>First stop should be at the Hill of Tara, located between Navan and Dunshauglin. What better way to get a view of the country as it is said that a quarter of the landscape of Ireland can be seen from this hill? Though best known as the seat of the High Kings of Ireland, the Hill has been an important site since the late Stone Age when a passage-tomb was constructed, but Tara was at the height of its power as a political and religious centre in the early centuries after Christ.</p> <p><i>Travel distance & time: 45 minutes/c. 30km</i></p>	<p>Hill of Tara Address: Hill of Tara, Co. Meath Email: hilloftara@opw.ie www.heritageisland.ie Direct Tel: 00353 46 9025903 (when visitor centre open). Out of Season contact: (Brú na Bóinne) 00353 41 9823071</p> <p>FIT rate: €4 Group Rate: €3 Coach parking: Y</p>
AM	<p>Continue north east to the Valley's most famous attraction Brú na Bóinne, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and Newgrange being the most famous of its megalithic tombs. But go off the beaten track and find yourself interweaving and being surrounded by the tombs at Knowth and Dowth which are equally impressive. Take time to wonder at how they could have been engineered and constructed, based on the surrounding landscape, sun and stars.</p> <p><i>Travel distance & time: Brú na Boinne to Slane: 19 mins/8.4 km</i></p>	<p>Brú na Bóinne Address: Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre, Donore, Co Meath Email: brunaboinne@opw.ie www.heritageisland.ie Direct Tel: 00353 41 9880300</p> <p>FIT rate: €5 Do they offer group rates: Y Group rate available on request: Y Coach parking: Y</p>

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Day 1		
AM	<p>Stop off for lunch in the Conyngham Arms Hotel, in the picturesque village of Slane before continuing west to the Loughcrew Cairns.</p> <p><i>Travel distance & time: Slane to Loughcrew: 60 mins/50 km</i></p>	<p>Conyngham Arms Hotel Address: Slane, Co Meath Email: info@conynghamarms.ie www.conynghamarms.ie Direct Tel: 00353 41 9884444</p> <p>Can the restaurant cater to Groups: Y Group rate available on request: Y Coach Parking: Free on-street</p>
PM	<p>After lunch, continue west to the Loughcrew Cairns, also known as the Hills of the Witch, which are a group of Neolithic passage tombs dating to 3000 BC. It is possibly the oldest cemetery in the world. It contains some of the most beautiful examples of Neolithic art in Ireland. During the Vernal and Autumn equinoxes, people gather at dawn in Cairn T to watch sunlight enter the chamber and illuminate the inside of the tomb. But it's also a lovely place from which to sit and watch either the sun rise or set over the lush green landscape and to imagine what life was like for Ireland's forefathers.</p> <p><i>Travel time and distance: Loughcrew to Athlone: 1 hr 45 mins/80 km</i></p>	<p>Lough Crew Cairns Address: Corstown, Oldcastle, Co. Meath Email: brunaboinne@opw.ie www.heritageisland.ie Direct Tel: June-August 00353 49 8541240</p> <p>FIT rate: Admission is free Group rate available on request: Admission is free Coach parking: Y Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: Open all year round – free guided tours June, July and August.</p>
Overnight	<p>Travel to Athlone to overnight. For food have a look at the Left Bank Bistro. Afterwards, visit Sean's Bar which is the oldest bar in Ireland and also provides musical entertainment.</p>	<p>Left Bank Bistro Address: Fry Place, High St, Athlone, Co. Westmeath Tel: 00353 90 6494446 www.leftbankbistro.com</p> <p>Sean's Bar Address: 13 Main Street, Athlone, Co. Westmeath www.seansbar.ie/home Tel: 00353 90 6492358</p>



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Day 2		
AM	<p>Experience what it must have been like to be a Viking with Viking Tours and travel by boat up river through the Irish landscape and come upon the sacred site of Clonmacnoise. This settlement was a major centre of religion, learning, trade, craftsmanship and politics, thanks in large part to its position at the major crossroads of the River Shannon (flowing north-south) and the gravel ridges of the glacial eskers (running east-west). It is also where Pagan Ireland met Christian Ireland with High Crosses depicting stories of both. It was also once the home of 1,500 monks who prayed, studied and crafted great treasures such as the Crozier which is visible today in the National Museum.</p>	<p>Viking Tours Address: 7 St. Mary's Place, Athlone, Co. Westmeath Email: vikingmike@vikingtoursireland.ie www.vikingtoursireland.ie Direct Tel: 00353 86 2621136</p> <p>Lough Ree Adults: €10 Children: €5 Families: €30 (2 adults & 4 children) Clonmacnoise (Not Daily) Includes bus fare return (30 mins) Adults: €16 Children: €8 Families: €50 (2 adults & 4 children) Do they offer group rates: Y Group rate available on request: Y Coach parking: Y Time needed to engage with the experience: 75-90 minutes Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: Runs from Easter to the End of October</p> <hr/> <p>Clonmacnoise Address: Clonmacnoise, Shannonbridge, Athlone, Co. Offaly Direct Tel: 00353 90 9674195 www.heritageisland.ie</p> <p>FIT rate: Adult: €7 Group/Senior: €5 Child/Student: €3 Family: €17 Do they offer group rates: €5 Coach parking: Y Time needed to engage with the experience: 1.5 hours. Guided Tours: Max No: 60. Duration: 30 minutes. Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: Open all year</p>
AM	<p>Lunch Stop: Ballinahown tea rooms</p> <p>10kms away from Clonmacnoise is the small village of Ballinahown where you'll happily replenish for your journey south. The tea rooms are situated above the Core Crafted Design gallery in the village. Helen Conneely, proprietor is an Irish bog wood artist who also runs the Ballinahown Design Shop and Celtic Roots art studio just across the road.</p>	<p>Ballinahown Tea Rooms Address: Athlone, Co Westmeath Sales manager: Helen Conneely Email: helenconneely@gmail.com Direct Tel: 00353 906 430404</p>



Time	Accommodation/Activity/Attraction	Details
Day 2		
PM	<p>The road from Ballinahown to Cashel wanders through the heritage towns of Birr (home to Birr Castle), Roscrea with its Cistercian abbey and also Thurles, the reputed home of hurling which is the fastest field sport in the world.</p> <p><i>Travel time & distance: Ballinahown to Holycross: 1 hour 25mins/c.90km</i></p> <p>Just outside Thurles, Holycross Abbey was founded in 1168 for the Benedictines by the King of Munster, Donal O'Brien. A particle of the True Cross was enshrined (and still remains) in the abbey, and subsequently Holycross became one of the most frequented places of pilgrimage in Ireland. It was a very prosperous abbey and several of the Abbots were peers of Parliament. In the 1970s, the Abbey was restored and a local guide will bring you around the abbey and explain how today it still plays such an important part in local life.</p> <p><i>Travel time & distance: Holycross to Cashel: 25mins/14kms</i></p>	<p>Holycross Abbey Address: Holycross Abbey, Thurles, Co. Tipperary Sales manager: John Bourke Email: holycrossabbeytours@gmail.com www.heritageisland.ie Direct Tel: 00353 86 1665869</p> <p>FIT rate: €4 Do they offer group rates: N Group rate available on request: N Coach parking: Y Time needed to engage with the experience: 1 hour Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: Service available all year round; subject to religious ceremonies (which take precedence over tours)</p>
PM	<p>Only a short distance from Holy Cross is the impressive Rock of Cashel which stands on a rocky outpost surveying the land which surrounds. Powers, be they royal or religious, ruled here for 1,200 years which demonstrated the importance of this site and from where the spiritual life of the south of the country was overseen. A short stroll from the Cathedral is the Bolton Library with its impressive Cathedral Chapter House which has early copies of Dante and Machiavelli, presumably for the Archbishop to consult.</p> <p>Stay locally in the area in either Cashel or Clonmel. If in Cashel, do spend the evening at Brú Boru situated at the foot of the Rock, where there are summer shows of traditional music and song and in winter, music classes and other events.</p>	<p>Rock of Cashel Address: St Patrick's Rock of Cashel, Cashel Email: rockofcashel@opw.ie Direct Tel: 00353 62 61437 www.heritageisland.ie</p> <p>FIT rate: Adult: €6 Sen/Group: €4 Child/Student: €2 Family: €14 Do they offer group rates: Y Group rate available on request: Y Coach parking: Y Time needed to engage with the experience: 1-1.5 Hours Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: Please note due to restoration work, access to Cormac's chapel will be by guided tour only from May to September each year, until the works are complete</p>



Time	Accommodation/Activity/Attraction	Details
Day 3		
AM	<p>Begin your day by travelling along the Butler Trail which traverses the winding River Suir valley, through the towns of Cahir and Clonmel. Tales of romance, intrigue, frolics and fun featuring kings and queens, dukes and earls can be heard. Spot the cannonball in the walls of Cahir Castle, and a romantic stroll along the river leads you to the hidden gem of Swiss Cottage. If you're feeling peckish, call into Hickey's Bakery & Coffee Shop in Clonmel before heading to Carrick on Suir to view the house built for a queen at Ormond Castle.</p> <p><i>Travel time & distance: Cashel to Waterford: 1 hour 10mins/79kms</i></p>	<p>Cahir Castle Address: Castle St., Cahir, Co. Tipperary Email: cahircastle@opw.ie Direct Tel: 00353 52 7441011 www.heritageisland.ie</p> <p>FIT rate: €4 Do they offer group rates: €3 Coach parking: Y Time needed to engage with the experience: 1 to 1.5 Hours Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: Possible restrictions due to on-going essential works</p> <hr/> <p>Swiss Cottage Address: Kilcommon, Cahir, Co. Tipperary Email: swisscottage@opw.ie www.heritageisland.ie Direct Tel: 00353 52 7441144</p> <p>FIT rate: €4 Do they offer group rates: €3 Coach parking: Y Time needed to engage with the experience: 1 hour Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions; Late November – re-opening of Cahir Castle 17th March then 2nd April to 28 October Daily 10–6.</p> <hr/> <p>Hickey's Bakery Address: West Gate, Clonmel, Co Tipperary Email: info@hickeysbakery.com www.hickeysbakery.com Direct Tel: 00353 52 6121587</p> <hr/> <p>Ormond Castle Address: Castle Park, off Castle Street, Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary Email: ormondcastle@opw.ie www.heritageisland.ie Direct Tel: 00353 51 640787</p> <p>FIT rate: No admission charge Coach parking: Y Time needed to engage with the experience: 1 Hour Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: Please note due to essential refurbishment works, the castle will be closed to the public for 2015.</p>
AM	<p>Travel on to Waterford and call into Granville's Thomas Meagher Bar for lunch.</p>	<p>Granville's Thomas Meagher Bar Address: Meagher Quay, Waterford Tel: 00353 51 305555 www.granville-hotel.ie/en/hotel-waterford</p>



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Day 3		
PM	<p>Fully replenished, wander around Waterford's Viking Triangle, look at the vaults beneath and wonder at the treasures overhead in the Museum of Treasures. Or you could also take a one- or two-hour cruise along the River Suir and see, among other things, the quay which was once dubbed the 'noblest quay in Europe'.</p>	<p>Museum of Treasures Address: The Mall, Waterford Email: bookings@waterfordcouncil.ie www.waterfordtreasures.com/medieval-museum Direct Tel: 00353 51 304500</p> <p>FIT rate: Various combination options. Admission to Museum only €7 Do they offer group rates: Y Group rate available on request: Y Coach parking: N Time needed to engage with the experience: +45 minutes Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: N</p> <hr/> <p>River Suir Cruises Address: The Clock Tower, Marina, Waterford City Sales manager: Skipper: Vincent Email: info@suirrivercruises.com www.suirrivercruises.com Direct Tel: 00353 87 2807563</p> <p>FIT rate: I hour €20 pp; 2 hr €30 pp Coach parking: Y Nearby Time needed to engage with the experience: 1 or 2 Hr Trips available Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: Y</p>
PM	<p>At night, the well-known Tannery Restaurant is always an option, or you could try the Bodega Restaurant & Wine Bar. For groups, there's The Munster which is possibly Waterford's oldest pub as there has been a tavern on this site for the past 350 years.</p> <p>Afterwards, if you're looking for traditional music, The Reg has music most evenings.</p>	<p>The Reg Bar/Restaurant 2 The Mall, Waterford www.thereg.ie Tel: 00353 51 583000</p> <hr/> <p>Bodega Restaurant & Wine Bar 54 Johns Street, Waterford Tel: 0353 51 844177 Email: info@bodegawaterford.com www.bodegawaterford.com Contact: Cormac Cronin – Owner Aneta – Restaurant Manager. Opening Hours: Mon-Sat. Serving Noon to 10pm. Closed Sundays</p> <hr/> <p>The Munster Bar Baileys New Street, Waterford Email: info@themunsterbar.com www.themunsterbar.com Tel: 00353 51 874656 Contact: The Fitzgerald Family Opening Hours: Lunches seven days a week. Bar food – Tues to Sunday.</p>



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Day 4		
AM	<p><i>Travel time & distance: Waterford to New Ross: 25mins/23kms</i></p> <p>Rather than travelling via motorway to medieval Kilkenny, travel through New Ross and look at the 1840s Dunbrody emigrant ship with its costumed animators and theatrical style interpretation of Ireland's famine story.</p> <p>Via the pasturelands of the valleys which surround the River Nore, travel through picturesque villages of Inistioge and Thomastown. Stop off in Inistioge for a cuppa in the Circle of Friends Café (made famous by the film) and if time permits, visit Tunde Toth Papermaker to learn about the art of papermaking (by appointment only).</p> <p><i>Travel time & distance: New Ross to Kilkenny: 55mins/68kms</i></p> <p>Lunch options in Kilkenny include the Pembroke or Kilkenny Design Centre for both FIT and groups.</p>	<p>JFK Trust, Dunbrody Famine Ship Experience South Quay, New Ross. Co. Wexford Sales manager: Sean Connick Email: info@dunbrody.com www.dunbrody.com Direct Tel: 00353 51 425239</p> <p>FIT rate: €8.50 Do they offer group rates: Y Group rate available on request: Y Coach parking: Y Time needed to engage with the experience: 45mins Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: N</p> <hr/> <p>Tunde Toth – Artist Tel: 00353 87 2543362 Email: tundetune@gmail.com www.tundetoth.com</p>
PM	<p>There are only two round towers in the country that you can climb and one is at St Canice's Cathedral. Take in the view of this compact city and, having looked inside the cathedral, walk up the Medieval Mile passing the sights of the Smithwicks Experience, Rothe House and numerous small and enticing coffee shops. At the top there's Kilkenny Castle and opposite that is Kilkenny Design Centre where you can see local craftspeople at work. For the more active, you could either rent a bike or go on the Medieval and guided cycle tour of Kilkenny which will bring you along the back, slips and side streets of this wonderful city.</p>	<p>St Canice's Cathedral Address: St Canice's Cathedral and Round Tower, Coach Rd, Kilkenny Sales manager: Elizabeth Keyes Email: bookings@stcanicescathedral.com www.stcanicescathedral.ie Direct Tel: 00353 56 7764971</p> <p>FIT rate: €4 Combination rates available for Cathedral & Tower Do they offer group rates: €3 Coach parking: Only at the nearby Castle Time needed to engage with the experience: 40 mins approx. Cathedral: 20 mins approx. Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: The Cathedral and Round Tower is open all year round. However in the winter months the Round Tower may be closed subject to weather and staffing conditions. Booking essential.</p> <hr/> <p>Smithwicks Experience Address: 44 Parliament Street, Kilkenny Sales manager: Mark McGovern Email: mark.mcGovern@diageo.com www.smithwicksexperience.com Direct Tel: 00353 56 778637/87 7173138</p> <p>FIT rate: €12 Do they offer group rates: 15+ €10.50 16th person goes free Time needed to engage with the experience: 45 minutes plus time to enjoy a complimentary pint of Smithwicks or soft drink Coach Parking: Not at the moment. Suggest Dunnes Stores or the Castle Car Parks.</p>



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Day 4		
PM		<p>Rothe House Address: Parliament Street, Kilkenny Sales manager: Grace Fegan Email: manager@rothehouse.com www.rothehouse.com Direct Tel: 00353 86 2321275</p> <p>FIT rate: €5.50 Do they offer group rates: €3.50 Coach parking: Coach parking within 10min walk, car parking nearby Time needed to engage with the experience: 45 mins to 1 hour Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: No</p> <hr/> <p>Kilkenny Castle Address: The Parade, Kilkenny City Sales manager: John Burke Email: john.burke@opw.ie; izabel.pennec@opw.ie www.heritageisland.ie Direct Tel: 00353 56 7704100</p> <p>FIT rate: €7 Do they offer group rates: 20+ €5 Group rate available on request: Y Coach parking: Public car park near site Time needed to engage with the experience: 45 mins Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: February 1st to October 31st, self-guided visit and last admission 30 minutes before closing. November 1 to January 31, visit by guided tour only and last admission 45 minutes before closing. Arrangements may be subject to change, please check with site.</p> <hr/> <p>Kilkenny Design Centre Address: Castle Yard, Kilkenny Sales manager: Deirdre Mackey Email: deirdre@kilkennydesign.com www.kilkennydesign.com Direct Tel: 00353 56 7722118</p> <p>FIT rate: Y On request Do they offer group rates: Y On Request Group rate available on request: Y Cater for groups of up to 100 people Coach parking: In bus bay across the road at Kilkenny Design Centre Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: No</p>



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Day 4		
PM		<p>Medieval and Guided Cycle Tour of Kilkenny Address: The Old Tea House, Bateman Quay, Kilkenny Sales manager: Jason Morrissey Email: info@kilkennycyclingtours.com www.kilkennycyclingtours.com Direct Tel: 00353 86 8954961</p> <p>FIT rate: Rates for Treasure hunt: €15 per adult, €10 per child Rates for guided cycling tour: €20 per adult, €10 per child Do they offer group rates: 20% discount for treasure hunt. Guided Cycling Tours group rate: €12.50 per adult, €8 per child Group rate available on request: Y Coach parking: Y A bus parking space at our front door which can be reserved. Time needed to engage with the experience: up to 2 hours Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: operate all year around and rarely have to cancel because of bad weather.</p>
PM	At night, there are so many good restaurants that it could be difficult to choose. For fine dining there's Zuni's and for groups there's Kyteler's and The Marble bar at Langtons . Both also offer traditional music at night.	<p>Zuni's Restaurant Address: 26 Patrick Street, Kilkenny Email: info@zuni.ie www.zuni.ie Direct Tel: 00353 56 7723999</p> <p>Kyteler's Inn Address: St. Kieran's Street, Kilkenny City Email: info@kytelersinn.com www.kytelersinn.com Direct Tel: 00353 56 7721064</p> <p>Marble City Bar & Tea Rooms at Langtons Address: 67 John Street, Kilkenny Email: reservations@langtons.ie www.langtons.ie/bars/marble-city-bar/ Direct Tel: 00353 56 7765133</p>



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Day 5		
AM	<p><i>Travel time & distance Kilkenny to Emo: 60mins; 63kms</i></p> <p>After an early morning stroll along the river Nore, drive 60km or so north to Emo Court, in Co. Laois. The house is a magnificent example of the neo-classical style and is surrounded by beautiful gardens and parkland which were first laid out in the eighteenth century and comprise formal lawns, a lake and woodland walks with many very fine trees and shrubs. It also has a lovely coffee shop – perfect for a mid-morning snack after wandering around the grounds.</p> <p><i>Travel time & distance Emo to National Stud: 25mins/26kms</i></p>	<p>Emo Court Address: Emo, Co Laois Email: emocourt@opw.ie www.heritageisland.ie Direct Tel: 00353 57 8626573</p> <p>FIT rate: €4 Do they offer group rates: €3 Coach parking: Y Time needed to engage with the experience: 1 hour</p>
AM	<p>In nearby County Kildare is the Irish National Stud and Japanese Gardens. The land of the horse has long been associated with Ireland and the country prides itself on a history of world famous thoroughbred breeding. Come and see some of the stars of this world; the stallions who can be admired alongside protective mares, frolicking foals and athletic yearlings.</p> <p><i>Travel time & distance National Stud to Ballymore Eustace; 42mins; 33kms</i></p>	<p>Irish National Stud and Japanese Gardens Address: Tully, Kildare Sales manager: Frieda O'Connell Email: friedaconnell@instourism.net www.irishnationalstud.ie Direct Tel: 00353 45 520001</p> <p>FIT rate: €11.50 Do they offer group rates: Upon enquiry Coach parking: Y Time needed to engage with the experience: 2+ Hours Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: N</p>
PM	<p>Under an hour's drive from the National Stud is Russborough House in Ballymore Eustace, in the garden county of Wicklow. Before visiting the house, you could stop off for lunch at the Ballymore Inn in the village or alternatively head to the Tea Rooms in the house.</p> <p>As well as beautiful grounds, a maze, sheep dog demonstrations and horse and carriage rides, Russborough house offers a wonderful and fun insight into the lives and stories of the aristocrats who came to party, hide and hang out in these beautifully furnished rooms.</p> <p>Return to Dublin that evening after your time journey through Ireland's Ancient East.</p> <p><i>Travel time & distance: Ballymore Eustace to Dublin: 40mins/38kms</i></p>	<p>Russborough House & Tea Rooms Address: Russborough, Blessington, Co Wicklow Sales manager: Audrey Mc Creery Email: audrey@russborough.ie www.russboroughhouse.ie Direct Tel: 00353 45 865239</p> <p>FIT rate: Adult €12, Student/Oap €9 Do they offer group rates: Y Group rate available on request: Y Coach parking: Y Time needed to engage with the experience: 2+ hours Is the experience seasonal or subject to weather conditions: N</p> <hr/> <p>Ballymore Inn Address: Main Street, Ballymore Eustace, Co. Kildare Email: theballymoreinn@eircom.net www.ballymoreinn.com Direct Tel: 00353 45 864585</p>