



Antrim, Northern Ireland

June 13 - 20, 2020

The trip to Northern Ireland begins and ends in Belfast, Ireland. You can fly from the US to Belfast. We will be met at a downtown Belfast Hotel—to be chosen—on the morning of June 13 and transferred by mini bus to Northern Ireland. I advise you to arrive in Belfast at least 24 hours before our trip start day. Even better, by arriving on June 10 you would have two full days to explore the city on your own before our June 13 early morning departure for North Coast. After a minimum of 10 reservations is reached we will advise you to make your air travel plans.

Trip Start: June 13, 2020 – Belfast Hotel (tbd) – 8:30AM
Trip Finish: June 20, 2020 – Belfast International Airport – 10:00AM
Trip Length: 8 days, 7 nights
Trip Cost: \$3500 per person sharing a room
\$4100 for a single room

(Trip cost does not include airfare, meals indicated as on your own, beverages and tips.)

Day by Day Overview

Saturday, June 13 – We will be met at a hotel in Belfast then journey 60 miles north to the North Coast of Ireland and County Antrim. Our first hike will take us along the Causeway Coast path to Ballintoy Harbor (eastern approach) then the Fair Head and Murlough Bay area. Our hiking day will conclude with a walk across the Carrick a Rede Rope Bridge—a National Trust site (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/carrick-a-rede). The bridge is about 65 feet long and 100 feet high and connects the mainland to the tiny island of Carrickarede. We will then check into our hotel: Bayview Hotel in Portballintrae. Distance: 5-6 miles, elevation gain 800ft. Total drive time: 2 hr. 30 min

- Picnic lunch
- Dinner together at our hotel.

Lodging: Bayview Hotel - <http://www.bayviewhotelni.com/>

Sunday, June 14 - We will hike directly from the door of the hotel to Dunseverick Castle. (www.castles.ni/dunseverick-castle) The Antrim Coast path is widely considered one of the best coastal walks in Europe. We begin by crossing the River Bush at Bushfoot Beach. Incorporated in this day of hiking is the World Heritage site of the Giant's Causeway. (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/giants-causeway) The landscape around the coast here is breath taking, with unparalleled views of the Atlantic Ocean from the cliff path, and fine views to Scotland and the Scottish Islands of Islay and Jura. Closer in is Rathlin Island, Northern Ireland's only inhabited island. This is a linear hike: we will be collected in the bus at the end of the hike at the harbour at Dunseverick. Distance: 7 miles; Elevation gain: 300'. Total drive time: 30 min

- Packed Lunch
- Dinner together

Monday, June 15 - Today we pick up where we left off at Dunseverick Harbour and hike on to Ballintoy harbor (western approach). We will have clearer views today of Rathlin Island. Leaving Dunseverick Harbour we will hike through the tiny village of Portbraddan (the Port of the Salmon). The route follows the sweeping sand beach of White Park Bay, then around a headland of jumbled rocks and sea stacks to the very scenic harbour of Ballintoy - a hidden gem with a small beach. If you need refreshment, Roark's cafe is right there at the beach. In recent times, the harbour has been used as a location for the TV series Game of Thrones.

Distance: 5 miles; Elevation gain: 200'. Total drive time: 40 min

- Packed lunch
- Dinner together--our hotel

Tuesday, June 16 - Today is officially a "free day". Option of walking one mile into Bushmills to visit the Bushmills Distillery (www.bushmills.com/distillery). (£9 per person entry includes a free whiskey sample). There is also a cafe at the Distillery if you wish to have lunch. Otherwise, there are a couple of cafes in Bushmills village itself.

- Lunch & Dinner on your own

Wednesday, June 17 - We will drive to Ballycastle to take the morning ferry (45 mins ferry journey) out to Rathlin Island (population 75). <https://rathlinballycastleferry.com> Our guide, Paul, will take us out around the bay and along by the kelp factory heading south towards Rue Point Lighthouse. We head out from the main village of Rathlin passing seal colonies on the way and taking cliff paths and inland paths. We will enjoy great views looking back to the mainland and the coast of the Mull of Kintyre in Scotland 11 miles away.

Distance: 6 miles; Elevation gain: 500'. Total drive time: 1 hr

- Packed lunch
- Dinner on your own

Thursday, June 18 - Our hike today is at the Glens of Antrim at Glenarriff Forest Park (a 2928 acre forest in County Antrim). There are nine glens (valleys) in Antrim, and Glenarriff is known as the "Queen of the Glens". Part of the hike today will feature the Waterfall Walkway: a 3-mile trail which passes through a National Nature Reserve. The rest of the hike takes you down the Inver River gorge in mature woodland. Once you cross the river at the bottom of the trail, there is a winding climb from about 200' elevation to 850'. From this point there are views of the Glens and of the Mull of Kintyre across the sea in Scotland. Finally we trek across moorland returning with spectacular views down the Glen to the coast beyond.

Distance 8.5 miles; Elevation gain 1200'. Total drive time: 1 hr 40 min

- Packed lunch
- Dinner together

Friday, June 19 - Our first stop this morning will be Dunluce Castle, just a couple of miles west of Portballintrae. This castle was occupied by the McDonnell clan and ruined in 1639 when the kitchen and all its staff fell into the sea! The remains are at a magnificent location on the edge of a cliff. After the visit to Dunluce we head over to Limavady for a 7 mile hike at Roe Valley Country Park: a route along the banks of the River Roe through woodland.

Distance 7 miles; Elevation gain 300'. Total drive time: 2hrs.

- Packed lunch
- Farewell Dinner at our hotel.

Saturday, June 20 - After breakfast we will drive 60 miles to Belfast Airport to arrive there by 10:00AM.

Please Note: The above schedule is subject to change due to weather or other circumstances beyond our control.

Flight and Airport Info

Getting to Belfast: Fly from the U.S. to Belfast, Northern Ireland airport. Take a taxi or city shuttle bus to the hotel.

Meals

Packed lunches will be provided on our hiking days and dinners as indicated on the itinerary.

Weather: Mild spring weather with some rain/wind likely. Average temps: day 65F and night 50F.

Helpful Websites:

Portballintrae Hotel: <http://www.bayviewhotelni.com/>
Belfast Titanic Museum <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDMoUHsWAYY>
Belfast: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/01/travel/what-to-do-36-hours-in-belfast.html>
County Antrim: <https://www.visitcausewaycoastandglens.com/>
Giants Causeway: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/giants-causeway>

Reading:

Say Nothing—Patrick R Keefe (non-fiction)—2019
Making Sense of the Troubles—David McKittrick (non-fiction) - 2000
Milkman- Anna Burns (fiction) - 2018— Man Booker prize for fiction
Reading in the Dark—Seamus Deane (fiction) - 1996
Cal—Bernard MacLaverty— (fiction) –1983
Watch House—Bernie McGill (fiction) set on Rathlin Island

Movies/TV (may be found at your library or on Netflix)

Game of Thrones - various
Titanic – 1997
In the Name of the Father—1993
My Left Foot---1989
Some Mother's Son---1996
Hunger...2008
Michael Collins...1996
'71.....2004