



Antrim, Northern Ireland **July 30 – August 6, 2021**

The trip to Northern Ireland begins and ends in Belfast, Ireland. We will be met at a downtown Belfast Hotel (tbd)—on the morning of July 30 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 July 27 you would have two full days to explore the city on your own before our July 30 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: July 30, 2021 – Belfast Hotel (tbd) – 8:30AM
Trip Finish: August 6, 2021 – Belfast (tbd) – 10:00AM
Trip Length: 8 days, 7 nights
Trip Cost: \$3,000 per person sharing a room
\$3,300 for a single room

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

Day by Day Overview

Friday, July 30 – We will meet at a downtown hotel (tbd) in Belfast. We then drive north to Fair Head and Murlough Bay where we will meet our guide, Paul Quinn, for a hike of around 4 miles. In the afternoon we will hike 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. The trail total is 1.5 miles return from the ticket office to the island. Then we will gather again to hike along the Causeway Coast path and we approach Ballintoy Harbour from the eastern side. After the hike we will drive west to the Royal Court Hotel, our hotel for the week, on the coast near the village of Portrush: <https://royalcourthotel.co.uk/>. Hiking Distance 6.5 miles, Elevation gain 500 ft. Total Drive Time 2 hours.

- Picnic lunch
- Dinner together at our hotel.

Saturday, July 31 – We will drive to Portballintrae. The Antrim Coast path is widely considered one of the best coast 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. 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 offshore island. This is a linear hike: you will be collected in the bus at the end of the hike at the harbour at Dunseverick. Hiking Distance 7 miles, elevation gain 300 ft. Total Drive Time 40 mins.

- Packed Lunch

- Dinner together

Sunday, August 1 - Today we pick up where we left off at Dunseverick Castle and hike on to Ballintoy harbour. 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. Hiking Distance 5 miles. Elev gain 180 ft. Total Drive Time 40 mins.

- Packed lunch
- Dinner together--our hotel

Monday, August 2 - Today is officially a "free day". An interesting option for this day is to visit the Bushmills Distillery (www.bushmills.com/distillery) in Bushmills. 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

Tuesday, August 3 - We will drive to Ballycastle to take the morning ferry (45 mins ferry journey) out to Rathlin Island (population 150). <https://rathlinballycastleferry.com>. Our guide will take us out around the bay and along 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. Hiking Distance 6 miles. Elev gain 500 ft. Total Drive Time 1 hour.

- Packed lunch
- Dinner on your own

Wednesday, August 4 - We drive east to hike 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 Scenic Trail. 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 60 meters elevation to 260 meters. From this point there are views of the Glens and of the Mull of Kintyre across the sea in Scotland. Finally you trek across moorland returning with spectacular views down the Glen to the coast beyond. Hiking Distance 8.5 miles, elevation gain 800 ft. Total Drive Time 2 hours.

- Packed lunch
- Dinner together

Thursday, August 5 - Our first stop this morning will be at Dunluce Castle, just a mile from the hotel. 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. Our walk will be circular, going first to a quaint and lonely church still in use. We keep the River Roe in sight for most of this walk. Hiking Distance 7 miles, elevation gain 300 ft. Total Drive Time 2 hours.

- Packed lunch

- Farewell Dinner at our hotel.

Friday, August 6 - After breakfast we will drive 60 miles to Belfast to arrive there by 10:00AM.

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

Flight and Airport Info

Getting to Belfast: The best option from the U.S. is to fly to Dublin, Ireland and take a 2 ¼ hour train ride to Belfast. Take a taxi to your hotel.

Meals

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

Weather: Mild weather with possible showers/some wind; Average temps: day 65F and night 55F.

Helpful Websites:

Portrush Hotel: <https://royalcourthotel.co.uk/>
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 MacLaverly— (fiction) –1983
Watch House—Bernie McGill (fiction) set on Rathlin Island
Books by Adrian McKinty - award winning mystery writer

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