



Antrim, Northern Ireland

June 11 - 18, 2023

The trip to Northern Ireland begins and ends in Belfast, Ireland. We will be met at The Flint hotel in downtown Belfast—on the morning of June 11 and transferred by mini bus to Antrim, Northern Ireland. I advise you to arrive in Belfast at least 24 hours before our trip start day. Even better, by arriving on June 8 you would have two full days to explore the city on your own before our June 11 morning departure for Antrim North Coast. After a minimum of 10 reservations is reached, we will advise you to make your air travel plans.

Trip Start: June 11, 2023 – Flint Hotel – Belfast, No Ireland – 9:00AM
Trip Finish: June 18, 2023 – Belfast Train Station – 9:00AM
Trip Length: 8 days, 7 nights
Trip Cost: \$3,100 per person sharing a room
\$3,500 for a single room

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

Day by Day Overview

Sunday, June 11 – We will meet at The Flint hotel in downtown Belfast. We then drive north, about 2 hours, to [Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge](#) where we will meet our guide, Paul Quinn. The Carrick-a-Rede bridge is a National Trust site. The bridge is about 65 feet long and 100 feet high and connects the mainland to the tiny island of Carrick-a-Rede. The bridge was originally built by fishermen so they could check their salmon nets on the island. The trail total is 1.5 miles return from the ticket office to the island. Some picnic tables near the ticket office offer a lunch spot. Then our walk continues to Ballintoy Harbor where we meet our bus. We will be driven to [Benvardin Gardens](#), described as one of the finest and best maintained gardens in Northern Ireland. Following the garden visit we will drive west to the [Royal Court Hotel](#), our hotel for the week, on the coast near the village of Portrush.

Hiking distance: 5 miles. Elevation gain: minimal. Total Drive Time: 2.5 hours.

- Picnic lunch - (bring your own sandwich from Belfast)
- Dinner together at our hotel.

Monday, June 12 – 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 200 feet elevation to 850 feet. 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. On our way back to the hotel we will stop for a visit at Chestnutt Farm, an interesting local dairy farm.

Hiking distance: 8.5 miles. Elevation gain: 800 ft. Total drive time: 2 hours.

- Packed Lunch.
- Dinner together.

Tuesday, June 13 – We will drive to Ballycastle to take the morning [ferry](#) (45 mins ferry journey) out to Rathlin Island (population 150). We will take a short bus ride to the island's [seabird center](#). Our lunch today is hosted by a local family in their home! Following lunch our guide will take us around the bay past the kelp store and seal colonies then heading south towards Rue Point Lighthouse. 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. Elevation gain: 500 ft. Total drive time: 1 hour.

- Lunch together.
- Dinner on your own.

Wednesday, June 14 - Today is officially a “free day”. Options for this day include taking a train to the historic walled city of [Derry](#), visiting the [Bushmills Distillery](#) in Bushmills or walking the beach 2 miles to the small village of Portrush. There is a cafe at the Distillery if you wish to have lunch. Otherwise, there are a couple of cafes in Bushmills village itself as well as Portrush.

- Lunch & Dinner on your own.

Thursday, June 15 – 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 and Scotland. This is a linear hike: you will be collected in the bus at the end of the hike at the harbor at Dunseverick.

Hiking distance: 7 miles. Elevation gain: 300 ft. Total drive time: 40 mins.

- Packed lunch.
- Dinner together--our hotel.

Friday, June 16 – Today we will drive to the pretty seaside village of Waterfoot, close to Glenariff where we hiked previously. The bus will drop us off at a pull-out “layby” on the famous Antrim Coast Road. We then hike the short distance to an abandoned 19th century village or “clachan”. Our guide will tell us of the lives of the village people from the 1840's to 1950's...farming, no tractors then, eating limpets (snail variety) and working in a quarry. Our return is via Cushendall, walking on its lovely beach. A final brief stop is to check out an authentic Round Tower. We will return to the hotel to freshen up for our dinner. Tonight we have dinner in a private 19th century residence in the village of Ballymoney.

Hiking distance: 4-5 miles. Elevation gain: 300 ft. Drive time: 3 hours over the course of the day.

- Packed lunch.
- Dinner together.

Saturday, June 17 – We'll begin the day at Castlerock Promenade. We'll walk by The Twelve Apostles where our guide will share a background story. We'll then walk through Black Glen and on to Mussenden Temple <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/mussenden-temple-and-downhill-demesne>. We'll end the walk at Lion's Gate where we'll re-board the bus and if time permits, we'll make a brief stop at the scenic Downhill Beach before returning to the hotel.

Hiking distance: 4 – 5 miles. Elevation gain: 100 ft. Total drive time: 1.5 hrs.

- Packed lunch.
- Farewell Dinner at our hotel.

Sunday, June 18 - After breakfast we will drive 60 miles to Belfast to arrive at the train station by 9:00AM.

KDavis Travels – July 2022

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. From Dublin city (Dublin-Connolly train station) take a 2 hour train to Belfast. There is also the option of taking a very comfortable 2 hour bus ride directly from the Dublin airport to downtown Belfast. This is the easiest option. The bus stop in Belfast is in the city center and easy walking distance to The Flint hotel; the Belfast train station is a taxi ride to city center and hotels.

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 50F.

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>
Carrick-a-Rede Bridge www.nationaltrust.org.uk/carrick-a-rede

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
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
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