

Tourism Ireland trade itinerary

Title: Golf on the island of Ireland

Strapline: Discover some of Ireland's most spectacular golf courses on this epic trip around the island.

In this itinerary, you'll find some of Ireland's best-known championship golf courses, spread across a large geographical area. It can be enjoyed in one trip via Belfast, or can be split up into shorter trips via main access points.

Whichever way you plan your itinerary, visitors will have the chance to see the places where the likes of Rory McIlroy, Darren Clarke, Padraig Harrington and Paul McGinley play. They'll tee off on greens that have challenged some of the greats, including Tiger Woods and Seve Ballesteros. And they'll get to enjoy what Ireland has to offer beyond the golf course.

Many of the courses on this itinerary have dress codes, will request a Certificate of Handicap, and can provide caddies – these details should be checked in advance to avoid disappointment, and all tee times should be reserved. For groups, it is advisable to reserve hotels, restaurants and attractions well in advance of travel time.

This is a sample itinerary to offer suggestions and ideas for planning trips. You can contact your local Tourism Ireland representative for further information.

Special theme: Golf on the island of Ireland

Duration: 15 days

The details

Nearest airports: Belfast International Airport, George Best Belfast City Airport, Dublin Airport, Cork Airport and Shannon Airport

Total distance: 1,952km

Day 1 [93km] Belfast to Derry~Londonderry

Morning

From Belfast, head north along the Causeway Coastal Route towards the seaside town of Portrush. It's time to tee off at the home of The 148th Open, [Royal Portrush](#) Golf Club in County Antrim. There are two courses: the famous Dunluce Links; and the Valley Course, situated in the historic War Hollow, where local lore has it that the Chief of Dunluce fought the King of Norway many centuries ago. At Dunluce, be warned: go long with your approach on the sublime 5th,

a dogleg 411-yard par 4, and your ball may one day wash ashore on nearby White Rocks Strand.

All visitors are expected to be members of a recognised golf club and to hold a bona fide current playing handicap. A Certificate of Handicap (maximum 18 for men and 24 for women) on the Dunluce Links must be presented prior to play along with a letter of introduction from a home club. Tour operators and larger groups must pre-book.

Lunch

[The Bushmills Inn](#) offers all-day dining – perfect for when your group finishes the 18th. Housed in an original 17th century stables and wine cellar, this is where the post-match analysis can begin in earnest. For groups, it's advisable to book ahead.

Afternoon

One of the few distilleries in the world to distill, blend and bottle whiskey under the same roof, the [Old Bushmills Distillery](#) is also the oldest working distillery on the island of Ireland. While you're nearby, it's well worth indulging in a guided tour. So historical is this place that it uses water from nearby Saint Columb's Rill – a river that's said to have been blessed by St Columcille. Maybe that's what makes the whiskey so sweet and smooth? Groups of 15+ can book in advance, subject to availability.

Overnight

Stay in the delightful [Shipquay Boutique Hotel](#) in Derry~Londonderry's Shipquay Street, close by the famous Guildhall and the river Foyle. You can eat there, or dine in the [Walled City Brewery](#), just a short walk across the Peace Bridge in Ebrington Square.

Images for Day 1

[Royal Portrush](#)

[Walled City Brewery](#)

Day 2 [253km] Derry~Londonderry to Lough Erne

Morning

After Northern Ireland hero Rory McIlroy became Irish Close champion for the second time, he prepared for his title defence by humbling a giant, his mentor Nick Faldo, on the windswept Old Links at [Ballyliffin](#) on County Donegal's Inishowen Peninsula. "Ballyliffin is a great golf course," says McIlroy, who shot a course record 67 to beat six-time major winner Faldo by a stroke in an exhibition match. Tee times for groups can be pre-booked and if you want to book buggies or other services (caddies, trolleys and restaurant), make sure to do so ahead of your arrival.

Lunch

Tuck into the award-winning seafood chowder at [Nancy's Barn](#) in Inishowen.

Afternoon

Play can continue into the early afternoon, but when you put away the clubs, head up to [Farren's Bar](#) on Malin Head for a pint in Ireland's most northerly pub. Don't forget to ask the staff about what happened when the cast and crew of Star Wars came to town.

Overnight

Get on the road from Inishowen to the [Lough Erne Golf Resort](#) in County Fermanagh. Dine at the 3AA Rosette-winning Catalina Restaurant, with food lovingly prepared by acclaimed Executive Head Chef Noel McMeel and his team and check in for the night. Alternatively, before you get to Lough Erne, book a table at [Harvey's Point](#) just across the border in County Donegal.

Images for Day 2

[Ballyliffin Golf Club](#)

[Lough Erne Resort](#)

Day 3 [85km] Lough Erne to County Sligo

Morning

Stay where you are and enjoy a round in [Lough Erne](#). Described by Rory McIlroy as "a great place to stay, a great place to play", the Faldo Championship Course, designed by Nick Faldo, stretches over 600 acres of green; while the Championship Castle Hume Course is famous for its pristine fairways – and for hosting the Ulster PGA Championships for over 10 years. The Faldo Championship Course is an exciting challenge, with 14 of the holes having water in play. Maybe take up the challenge with a dedicated PGA professional, where help with tricky shots will always be at hand. Pre-booking is essential for groups.

Lunch

Reserve tables for your group at [The Loughside Bar & Grill](#), where the menu composed by Chef Noel McMeel showcases an eclectic mix of time-honoured golfers fare with an Irish twist, and uses the very best of local produce.

Afternoon

Fermanagh's lakes have more aquatic activities on offer than you can shake a golf club at. Take a cruise with [Lough Erne Boat Tours](#) – they can provide private boat hire for up to 56 people, and can arrange catering on board.

Overnight

Head to Sligo town and check into [The Glasshouse Hotel](#) before dining at [Eala Bhán](#).

Images for Day 3

[Lough Erne Golf Resort](#)

[Relaxing on Lough Erne](#)

Day 4 [147km] Sligo town to Ballina

Morning

Tee off to the sounds of the Wild Atlantic Way at the [County Sligo Golf Club](#) in Rosses Point. A traditional links, it was originally designed by Harry Colt who used the landscape's natural contours to reveal a course that is filled with dramatic undulations, elevated tees and raised plateau greens. Tee times are available each day and may be booked on an individual or group basis. Special rates are available for societies and corporate outings.

Lunch

A modern take on a traditional pub, [Hargadons Bros Pub](#) is a wonderful spot for lunch after an outing on the fairways. Try the Lissadell chowder, with ingredients straight from the Wild Atlantic Way.

Afternoon

Once you've finished on the fairways, you can explore County Sligo, the homeplace of poet WB Yeats. The Nobel Laureate's memory is honoured in many places here: you can take a walk beneath Ben Bulbin, visit the poet's grave at Drumcliffe, or explore [Lissadell House](#), ancestral home of his great friend Constance Gore-Booth, later Countess Markievicz. Tickets should be booked ahead.

Overnight

Stay in [The Ice House](#) in Ballina, County Mayo – you can dine here, too, before heading to [The Auld Shebeen](#) for a nightcap.

Images for Day 4

[County Sligo Golf Club](#)

[Dining at The Ice House](#)

Day 5 [158km] Ballina to Westport

Morning

Leave County Sligo behind and head for an Eddie Hackett gem. Hackett is regarded as the father of Ireland's golf architecture, with more than 100 designs to his credit – including [Carne Links Golf Club](#), County Mayo. It was Hackett's last links course – and is believed by many who have played it to be his greatest design. Fans come from far and wide to play here, including Tom Coyne – author of A Course Called Ireland – who said: "Carne is absolutely brilliant. Front nine, back nine, every hole, every hill, every inch of the place is simply special." Tee times can be booked ahead.

Lunch

After all that fresh sea air, you'll have worked up an appetite, so settle down to lunch in the club's restaurant. Food is served from 12 noon and the restaurant caters for individuals, groups and societies with a range of options for breakfast, lunch and evening meals.

Afternoon

Play continues at Carne Golf Links, before leaving for Westport town, where you can get a guided tour of [Westport House](#), or book a hawk walk at the [Birds of Prey Centre](#). Enjoy pre-dinner drinks at [Matt Molloy's pub](#), or if you can't find a space within this cosy bar, try [Hoban's](#), [McGing's](#) or [The Big Tree](#) instead.

Overnight

Stay the night at [Knockranny House](#) in Westport, and dine in La Fougère Restaurant there. Or reserve tables at [An Port Mór](#), which serves up favourites such as marinated rump of Mayo lamb, west coast crab salad and smoked Connemara salmon.

Images for Day 5

[Westport town](#)

[Matt Molloy's Pub](#)

Day 6 [260km] Westport to Adare

Morning

Leave Westport and head south to [Lahinch Golf Club](#) in County Clare, via Galway city.

Lunch

Doors open at noon, so you can stop for an early lunch at [Tigh Neachtain](#) in Galway city, with a lunch menu that includes Flaggy Shore oysters and the "Lovely Things Plate" – a mix of local artisan favourites that your group will adore. Tables should be booked for larger groups.

Afternoon

Arriving in the early afternoon, you'll soon understand why the idyllic links at [Lahinch Golf Club](#) was chosen to host The Irish Open in 2019. Known far and wide as the St Andrews of Ireland, Lahinch is steeped in golfing history and is the pride of County Clare. The course has been altered many times since Old Tom Morris first laid it out in 1894, but its essence is very much intact and the club remains central to daily life in this small seaside town. Enjoy the 19th hole in Lahinch's legendary [Frawley's](#) bar before taking to the road again for your overnight destination.

Overnight

The [Killimer-Tarbert](#) car ferry not only cuts down travelling time, it straddles the counties of Clare and Kerry, taking in some terrific scenery all the way, so make sure to take this route on your journey to [Adare Manor](#) in County Limerick. Dine at [The Oak Room](#) or The Tack Room in Adare Manor.

Images for Day 6

[Lahinch Golf Club](#) or [Lahinch Golf Club 2](#)

[Adare Manor](#)

Day 7 [112km] Adare Manor to Killarney

Morning

Start your day with a round of golf at [Adare Manor Golf Club](#) where the course meanders through 230 acres of lush parkland. The last major golf course designed by celebrated architect Robert Trent Jones Senior and opened in 1995, Adare Manor has undergone a complete revamp in recent years. Alternatively, drive to [Ballybunion's Old Course](#), which winds through huge sand dunes in north County Kerry, and was described by Tom Watson as "a true test of golf". Prepayment of green fees is required for all reservations.

Lunch

Enjoy a hearty lunch at [Heather Restaurant](#) at the scenic Gap of Dunloe near Killarney, County Kerry.

Afternoon

Enjoy the sights and sounds of Killarney National Park before rounding off your day at [The Laurels](#), a charming traditional pub in Killarney town.

Overnight

Stay overnight at [Cahernane House Hotel](#), where you can reserve tables in the hotel's Herbert Restaurant.

Images for Day 7

[Adare Manor Golf Course](#)

[Cahernane House Cellar Bar Food](#) and [Cahernane House](#)

Day 8 [217 km] Killarney to Kinsale

Morning

Set off early from Killarney for [Waterville Golf Links](#). Bordered on one side by the majestic Kerry Mountains and on the other by Ballinskelligs Bay, it features some of the most breathtaking holes you are likely to face anywhere on the planet. Course designer Tom Fazio says: "Everything at Waterville is spectacular – the setting is one of the best that I have ever seen anywhere in golf."

Lunch

Break for lunch in the clubhouse at Waterville.

Afternoon

Continue play at Waterville before leaving for Kinsale, a fishing town in west Cork with a seriously gourmet reputation.

Overnight

Book into the 16-room [Blue Haven Hotel](#) in the heart of Kinsale. [The Old Bank Guesthouse](#) is another option for relaxing old-style glamour. Dine out at [Fishy Fishy](#) or for elegant fine dining, make reservations at [Finn's Table](#).

Alternatively, you can arrive at the next day's golf course, [Old Head of Kinsale](#), by helicopter at the helipad close to the opening hole and stay in the on-site luxury suites. For more information, contact the [Golf Club](#).

Images for Day 8

[Waterville Golf Club](#)

[Kinsale Harbour](#)

Day 9 [54km] Kinsale to Cork City

Morning

Tee off at [Old Head of Kinsale Golf Links](#), just over 20 minutes south of the town. Perhaps one of the most exhilarating golf courses in Ireland, this links is laid out atop cliffs 300 feet high in the shadow of the Old Head of Kinsale lighthouse. Located at the southwestern tip of the Wild Atlantic Way, few courses will distract you as much as this one – particularly the sheer drop down to crashing waves just metres from the edge of the fairway.

Lunch

Enjoy lunch in the clubhouse's De Courcey restaurant, with lobster, scallops, oysters and the finest cuts of meat on the menu. For larger groups (up to 50), the Hibernian Suite overlooking the 18th green and the ocean is available, subject to booking and minimum spend.

Afternoon

Continue playing Old Head of Kinsale, before enjoying the hospitality of the club's Lusitania Bar, which takes its name from the original artefacts you'll see displayed from the ill-fated ship.

Overnight

Check into [Hotel Isaacs Cork](#) in Cork city, before eating out at [Elbow Lane Brew and Smokehouse](#) in the heart of the city.

Images for Day 9

[Old Head of Kinsale Golf Links](#) or [option 2](#)

[4 Plays at the Old Head of Kinsale](#)

Day 10 [159km] Cork city to Kilkenny

Morning

Drive to [Mount Juliet](#) in County Kilkenny. Jack Nicklaus is regarded by many as the greatest golfer in the history of the game, with 18 major championship victories. His first design in Ireland was the parkland course at Mount Juliet, which went on to host The Irish Open and two World Golf Championships. Tiger Woods is a fan, too, as he explained when describing his visit: "Perfect fairways...and the best greens we have putted on all year." It also hosts Ryder Cup-winning golfer Paul McGinley's Golf Academy. For tee times, contact the club directly.

Lunch

Enjoy a lunch of seafood chowder, steak sandwich or potato gnocchi at the [Mount Juliet Club House](#).

Afternoon

Play continues in Mount Juliet, but there are plenty of things to do on the estate for those who have finished. Under the supervision of expert falconers, you can meet the resident Harris hawks, enjoy a little archery, or head to the treatment suites to relax.

Overnight

Leave Mount Juliet behind and drive to the medieval city of Kilkenny to check into [Butler House](#). Reserve a table at [Campagne Restaurant](#) or [Ristorante Rinuccini](#) for dinner.

Images for Day 10

[Mount Juliet](#)

[Campagne Restaurant](#)

Day 11 [135km] Kilkenny to Dublin

Morning

Leave Kilkenny for County Kildare and The K Club – or [The Kildare Country Club](#), to give it its full name. It hosted the 2006 Ryder Cup on its Palmer Course, which was created by Arnold Palmer in 1991. The River Liffey is an ever-present danger here, and the closing holes are memorable, especially the tight fairways and risk-reward temptation of the 16th and 18th – as the Ryder Cup stars of Europe and America will recall.

Lunch

Satisfy appetites at the Legends Restaurant in the K Club, which is located in the Arnold Palmer Clubhouse.

Afternoon

Play continues at the K Club, with opportunities to explore more of Kildare for those who have finished their round, including a trip to the [Irish National Stud](#) or shopping at [Kildare Village](#), a designer retail outlet.

Overnight

Head to Dublin city to check into [The Dean Hotel](#). Dine at [Delahunt](#), which serves traditional cuisine using only the best local ingredients, or [The Woollen Mills](#), overlooking the city's iconic Hapenny Bridge. Booking in advance is essential for these and most eateries in the city centre.

Images for Day 11

[The K Club](#)

[The Woollen Mills](#)

Day 12 [61km] Dublin to Drogheda

Morning

Just north of Dublin city is [Portmarnock Golf Links](#). Founded in 1894, it is a purely natural course offering superb views of the Hill of Howth and Dublin Bay. Along with architect Stan Eby, [Bernhard Langer](#) chose this magnificent setting to design his first links course. It has since hosted 12 Irish Opens as well as the Walker Cup and the Canada Cup – now the World Cup of Golf – and its finishing holes are regarded as some of the best to be found anywhere in the world.

Lunch

Traditional Irish food, including fish landed daily at Dublin's Howth Pier, is served at the Portmarnock Golf Links Clubhouse.

Afternoon

Finish up play, before heading to Drogheda, County Louth for the evening. If you arrive before 3.30, those with extra energy can take in a walking tour from Drogheda's [Millmount Museum and Martello Tower](#), enjoy a tour around [Beaulieu House & Gardens](#), or pay a visit to Saint Oliver Plunkett's preserved head in St Peter's Church – rumour has it Plunkett's ghost haunts the church.

Overnight

Stay at the [D Hotel](#) in Drogheda and dine at [Scholars Townhouse](#), an award-winning restaurant decorated with ceiling frescos and murals depicting the Battle of the Boyne – a 17th century battle that took place nearby.

Images for Day 12

[Portmarnock Golf Links](#)

[Beaulieu House and Gardens](#)

Day 13 [78km] Drogheda to Carlingford

Morning

Founded in 1892, [County Louth Golf Club](#), or Baltray as it is more commonly known, has established itself as one of the island's finest links courses and has hosted two Irish Opens. Ryder Cup-winning golfer, Paul McGinley, is a fan: "Baltray is probably my favorite links course in Ireland... It's just a great test. All the holes run in different directions so you have a different exam paper on each hole." Whilst the championship course is one of the purest tests of golf, a variety of teeing options are available to ensure enjoyment for golfers of all levels.

Lunch

Enjoy a light lunch at the clubhouse where seafood from the nearby fishing village of Clogherhead features heavily. The Clogherhead scampi is always a firm favourite.

Afternoon

Continue on to Carlingford, where you can take a [walking tour](#) of this historic town, enjoy stories of its Viking settlers and, of course, soak up the panoramic views of Carlingford Lough.

Overnight

Check into [Ghan House](#) in Carlingford before dining in its [restaurant](#), or enjoy the casual atmosphere of [PJ's](#) gastropub.

Images for Day 13

[County Louth \(Baltray\) Golf Club](#)

[Views of Carlingford Lough](#)

Day 14 [89km] Carlingford to Belfast

Morning

Golf Digest's World Number 1 course outside of the US, [Royal County Down Golf Club](#) is a thinking man's links, but even the shrewdest players ever to play the game were flummoxed by the guile of what is, arguably, our island's finest course. It has been the venue for many top events, including the Irish Amateur Open, the Irish Open, the Irish Professional Championship, the Walker Cup, the Curtis Cup, the Amateur Championship, the Home Internationals, the Ladies' British Open Amateur Championship and the Senior Open Championship. Play on the Championship Links is in four-ball groups and any group booking less than four players will likely be joined by other golfers to make up numbers.

Lunch

After players finish their rounds, everyone can relax in the Murlough Room, which has views over the 18th green, the 10th tee and the Mourne Mountains.

Afternoon

Experience the real Westeros with a visit to [Castle Ward](#), a beautiful 1,000 acre sprawling demesne used as a filming location for HBO's hit show, Game of Thrones®.

Overnight

Onto Belfast and stay overnight in the [Grand Central Hotel](#) or the [Europa](#), both at the heart of the city centre. You can enjoy a drink in Victorian splendour at the Crown Liquor Saloon before dining out at [Ox](#), [James Street & Co](#) or [Deanes Love Fish](#).

Images for Day 14

[Royal County Down](#)

[Ox in Belfast](#)

Day 15 [51km] Belfast to Belfast International Airport

Morning

If flights home allow, you can round off your journey with a trip to the course where champion Rory McIlroy first honed his skills. Along with its 18 holes, [Holywood Golf Club](#) boasts sweeping views over Belfast Lough and the promise of a full game in under three hours. Holywood is also a lovely course for younger golfers, hosting the Irish Junior Open Ulster Series – and, of course, this is where Rory became the youngest member at the age of eight.

Lunch

If time allows, enjoy a delicious seafood lunch at the [Mourne Seafood Bar](#). Booking a few weeks in advance for prime times is advisable.

Images for Day 15

[Holywood Golf Club](#)

[Mourne Seafood Bar](#)