

Tourism Ireland trade itinerary

Title: Ireland's islands

Hero Image: <https://www.irelandscontentpool.com/media/?mediaId=1051D259-2FFB-46A5-AE85F6658B933C49> Dún Aonghasa, Inis Mór, Aran Islands

Strapline: Uncover mystery and legend scattered along the coast in Ireland's best-kept secrets: its islands.

Monastic marvels, traditional charm and wildlife up close and personal – Ireland's many islands offer a unique adventure for any traveller. Inhabited or abandoned, far-flung or a stone's throw away from the shore, these islands remain relatively untouched by time, giving a great insight into a way of life distinct from anywhere else in the world. Venture out beyond the coast and you won't be disappointed: you'll find our islands are worth the wander.

In this itinerary, you'll visit some of Ireland's most beautiful islands, both inland and off the coast. These can be enjoyed in one trip via Dublin, or can be split up into shorter trips via main access points.

This is a sample itinerary offering suggestions and ideas for planning trips. Please contact your local Tourism Ireland representative for further information.

Theme: Islands

Duration: 4 days

The details

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

Total distance: 857km

Day 1: Dublin's islands

Morning

Our tour of Ireland's islands starts just a short drive from Dublin Airport, in the beautiful coastal village of Malahide. Here, you can hop on a boat to **Lambay Island** with Skerries Sea Tours [<http://www.skerriesseatours.ie>], or take a private tour led by Lambay experts

[\[https://www.lambayisland.ie/tours\]](https://www.lambayisland.ie/tours). Once on the island, you'll discover a wild wonderland of red-necked wallabies straight from Down Under. The colony was introduced by previous generations of the island's current owners, the Baring family, and a walk will see you coming across wallabies... as well as seabirds, grey seals and deer.

A little further south is the pretty harbour town of Howth. From here, you're just 15 minutes away (via Island Ferries [\[https://www.islandferries.net/\]](https://www.islandferries.net/)) from **Ireland's Eye**. Stepping onto this tiny, uninhabited island is like stepping onto another planet. With the ruins of a Martello tower and an 8th century church the only trace of habitation, the island is overrun with birds, butterflies and seals and is a beautiful spot for adventure.

Lunch

In Howth, you'll have the pick of some of the finest seafood restaurants in Dublin. **Octopussy's** [\[http://octopussys.ie\]](http://octopussys.ie) delicious seafood tapas will let you sample the best fresh local fish prepared with an innovative Mediterranean flair.

Afternoon (29km, 61 min)

After lunch, head south on the Dart (Dublin's coastal rail line) and take in the stunning Dublin Bay views as you travel to another cosy seaside village, Dalkey. From here it's just a five-minute boat ride to **Dalkey Island**. Take a ferry from Coliemore Harbour with Ken the Ferryman [\[http://kentheferryman.com/\]](http://kentheferryman.com/), who will tell you all you need to know about the island's history. While now uninhabited, it was once an important site of pilgrimage. Visit St Begnet's church and the Martello tower, keep watch for wild rabbits and goats, and then settle down for a picnic and enjoy the views of seals on the rocks beneath you. You may even spot a bottle-nosed dolphin if you're lucky.

Overnight

Finish your Dublin adventure in style with a night at **Fitzpatrick Castle Hotel** [\[https://www.fitzpatrickcastle.com/\]](https://www.fitzpatrickcastle.com/) in Killiney, County Dublin, and dinner in the hotel's **Mapas Restaurant**.

Images for Day 1

Ireland's Eye: <https://www.irelandscontentpool.com/media/?mediaId=FA293420-4886-489B-9BB97C8D4E0ECEB3>

Dalkey island: <https://www.irelandscontentpool.com/media/?mediaId=4120C79D-A3FF-4A0C-9B6BA3AB28003A28>

Day 2: The islands of Lough Erne

Morning (215km, 2h 45min)

For a landlocked county, Fermanagh is a water wonderland. It's filled with mysterious islands to explore. **Boa island** is connected by road to the mainland and is one of the more haunting of Lower Lough Erne's many islands. A highlight of any visit here is coming upon the intriguing Janus figure, a 2,000-year-old stone carving created by the Celts. Walk full circle around it to see its two faces – a man's and a woman's – thought to represent a Celtic deity. Many people leave small mementos by the statue, hoping that good luck will be bestowed upon them.

Lunch

The Happiness Trap [<https://thehappinesstrapenniskillen.com/>] is an innovative vegetarian restaurant that has crowds flocking to it every lunchtime. There is a changing daily lunch menu that serves up everything from Sri Lankan curry to Spanish vegetable paella, almost all made with local, organic produce.

Afternoon (31km, 30min)

History buffs simply can't leave the Fermanagh Lakelands before visiting the historic **Devenish Island**. The island is only accessible by water, so take the ferry from Brook Park with Erne Tours [<http://ernetours.com/tours-to-devenish-island/>]. A walk around Devenish takes you on a journey through time, from the establishment of a monastic settlement here by St Molaise in the 6th century, to Viking raids in 837 and its burning in 1137, and its flourishing in the Middle Ages as a parish church.

Overnight

Spend the night at the **Lusty Beg** resort [<https://www.lustybegisland.com>] and get a sumptuous meal at the **Island Restaurant** [<https://www.lustybegisland.com/en/bar-and-restaurant/>], the perfect place to relax and unwind by the lakeside woods.

Images for day 2

Boa Island: <https://medialibrary.tourismni.com/asset-bank/action/viewAsset?id=19169&index=11&total=21&view=viewSearchItem>

Devenish Island:

<https://medialibrary.tourismni.com/asset-bank/action/viewAsset?id=35700&index=6&total=22&view=viewSearchItem>

Day 3: Aran Islands – Inis Mór

Morning (233km, 3h 30mins)

A trip to the Irish-speaking Aran Islands is a quintessential Ireland experience. Known for their iconic knitted jumpers, pretty thatched cottages and dramatic Atlantic Ocean backdrop, each of these islands brings its own incredible experience and a serene feeling that time is standing still. Take a passenger ferry from Rossaveal in County Galway [<http://www.aranislandferries.com>] to the largest island, Inis Mór (Inishmore), and the port village of Kilronan. From here you can begin to explore the island, with hired bikes, horse and cart, or just on your own two feet.

Inis Mór is full of spectacular beaches. Kilmurvey Beach lies in a sheltered cove, and has the calmest waters in the island. Stroll along the soft white sand or take a dip in the bracing sea. Make sure to visit the local craft shops dotted around the island. Traditional crafts from this part of the world are something unique in this age of modern mass production. Hand-knits, carved stonework and local arts and crafts are on display at the **Kilmurvey Craft Village** [<http://www.aranlands.ie/kilmurvey-craft-village-2/>].

Lunch

Touring the Aran Islands is hungry work, so make sure you fuel up! **Teach Nan Phaidi** [<http://www.ireland-guide.com/establishment/teach-nan-phaidai.3506.html>] near Kilmurvey beach is a charming traditional thatched cottage that serves up delicious local food. Warm scones, hearty Guinness stew and freshly caught fish will set you up for the day and see you coming back for more.

Afternoon

Inis Mór has more than 50 different monuments from Christian, pre-Christian and Celtic eras, but for many **Dún Aonghasa** (the fort of Aonghas, in Irish), is the showstopper. A prehistoric hill fort perched precariously on a 100m cliff over the harsh Atlantic Ocean, Dún Aonghasa is estimated to be more than 3,000 years old. Standing here is a little like teetering on the edge of the world. And as the strong sea winds blow around you and the waves crash below, you'll feel at one with the heartbeat of Celtic Ireland.

Another must-see ancient feature is **Dún Dúchatair**, also known as the Black Fort. It gets its rather ominous name from the dark colour of the limestone that characterises this part of the

island. Erosion from the ocean has left the fort on a thin platform over the water so peek over the edge at your own risk!

Overnight

For good food and great music, head to **Joe Watty's Bar** [<https://www.joewattys.ie/>]. The atmosphere is friendly so you can get to know your fellow travellers and the locals over a drink. Stay the night in **Kilmurvey House** [<http://www.aranislands.ie/kilmurvey-house/>], a stately 18th century guesthouse with lashings of vintage charm and an idyllic beachside location.

Day 3 images

Aran Islands: <https://www.irelandscontentpool.com/media/?mediaId=6810F599-8CF8-410C-AA4E1477FBFEF42B>

Aran Islands: <https://www.irelandscontentpool.com/media/?mediaId=9BFC5C52-2AFF-4FD6-897A51FC538044A3>

Day 4: County Cork's islands

Morning (237km, 3h 35mins)

It takes a lot to tempt visitors away from the charming town of Glengarriff in West Cork but just a few minutes' ferry ride from the pier (<http://www.harbourqueenferry.com/>) is **Garnish Island**, a little slice of heaven on earth. Home to a series of gorgeous ornamental gardens, Garnish's sheltered position and almost subtropical climate has resulted in a magnificent variety of blooms, and also attracts basking seals to chill out on its southern rocks! Take a break, sit amongst the flowers and trees on this otherworldly island and simply lose yourself in nature. Secluded at the heart of Garnish sits the only house on the island, where the family who created these lush gardens once lived. Only 10 visitors are allowed entry at a time, making this an exclusive experience and one that you'll remember long after you've left.

Lunch

Head back to Glengarriff and stop at **The Park Bistro** at the Glengarriff Park Hotel [<https://glengarriffpark.com/dining/the-park-bistro/>] for a delicious lunch made with the best local produce from West Cork.

Afternoon (112km, 1h 40mins)

On the other side of Cork city, off the coast of the picturesque harbour town of Cobh, is **Spike Island** [www.spikeislandcork.ie]. Take a ferry from Kennedy Pier in Cobh and in just 10-20 minutes you'll arrive at the island's impressive star-shaped Fort Mitchel. Used as a prison, fortress, monastery and home, the fort now hosts visitors who come to see where captains, convicts, sinners and saints lived and died over the course of the island's history. Visitors can explore the prison cells and deep tunnels, wander the island walks and delve into the past in multiple museums. The Spike Island visitor experience allow you to explore the 'Irish Alcatraz' via a guided tour and hear stories of daring escapes, political rebels and some of Ireland's most notorious criminals.

Overnight

Once you're back in Cobh, fill up of traditional Irish fare at **The Quays** restaurant (<http://www.thequays.ie>), and enjoy the breathtaking view of Cobh harbour from its private marina and outdoor seating area, before settling in for a well earned rest at the **Bella Vista Hotel** (<https://www.bellavistahotel.ie/>).

Day 4 images

Garnish Island: <https://www.irelandscontentpool.com/media/?mediaId=F5B9946D-3560-43A8-8586A0C300AAFC79>

Spike Island: <https://www.irelandscontentpool.com/media/?mediaId=AC8E034A-9C5A-46C1-9426C7BBB3C1D4CC>