

Q: WHERE CAN I GET LOST FOR UNDER A\$6,500?

A: IRELAND

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Here's the heads-up on a fourteen-day trip to the Emerald Isle for under A\$6,500.

IRELAND: LAND OF SAINTS AND SCHOLARS, Gaelic games, Guinness and forty shades of green. Boasting bog landscapes, exposed mountains, swirling loughs, remote islands and a jagged coastline. Staked out by stone structures stretching back centuries and populated by people of an ancient pedigree famed for their hundred thousand welcomes.

OUR TIPS FOR A TWO-WEEK TRIP (FOURTEEN NIGHTS, FOURTEEN DAYS)

• DUBLIN – THREE NIGHTS

The Celtic tiger may be a tamer beast these days, but Dublin remains abuzz with energy, ideas and ideals. Get walking: hit the trail of literary pubs and cafés, explore the cobbled alleys and galleries of Temple Bar, wander past neoclassical buildings and Georgian terraces, and feast on fine cheeses and olives at George's Street Arcade. Thirsty? Gulp down a Guinness at the Guinness Storehouse and immerse yourself in the history and making of the black stuff.

Rewind time at the National Museum of Archaeology: come face-to-face with Celts and Vikings, monks and bog bodies; the real deal is one hour south at Glendalough, a monastic settlement with some great scenic walks and a round tower Rapunzel would approve of.

Flex your muscles kitesurfing on the city strand, try keeping up with a hurling match at Croke Park, or go to the dogs at Shelbourne Park Greyhound Stadium. Be part of the living culture of Dublin's pubs: you're guaranteed lively conversation and great Guinness in Mulligan's – just don't be short of an opinion or two when you get there.

• BELFAST – TWO NIGHTS

Rent a car and point your wheels north. There's one compulsory stop en route to Belfast: at Newgrange prehistoric site; its enormous Neolithic

tomb predates the pyramids and stepping inside the cruciform chamber will give you the spooks.

The best way to see Belfast is on a Black Taxi Tour. Your driver/tour guide gives a running commentary as he whisks you around sites of historic importance during The Troubles, such as the political wall murals. Stay at the stylish Radisson Blu Hotel: choose from Cool Nordic and Funky Urban themed rooms, and don't leave this vibrant city without checking out its trendy bars and exciting club scene.

Stagger across thousands of basalt columns, every one a polygon, at the Giant's Causeway,



and indulge the local legend that an Irish hero built it to pursue a giant to Scotland. Wet the back of your throat afterwards with a whiskey at the Bushmills Distillery.

• THE WEST – FIVE NIGHTS

Go west for varied and unrivalled landscapes. Scale the sacred 765m mountain of Croagh Patrick for splendid views over the island-infested waters of Clew Bay and across higgledy-piggledy fields penned in by stone walls. After surfing the Atlantic breakers, why not succumb to the hypnotic notes of a traditional Irish music session in Westport?

The bustling, arts-obsessed city of Galway deserves at least two nights of your time. Buy a Claddagh ring for that someone special

(yourself) and spare some of the change for the buskers. If you're here during the International Oyster Festival, tilt your head back to a dozen; only Guinness neutralises their salty tang, or so they'll tell you.

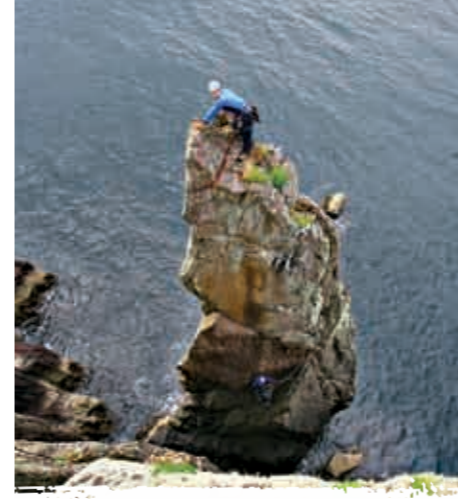
Get off-grid at the cliffs of Slieve League in Donegal, the highest sea cliffs in Europe, and on Inisheer; spend an evening in the island's only pub and warm to the charms of your intimate, authentic audience. In the morning, see the impressive stone fort of Dún Aengus on Inishmore, the largest of the Aran Islands.

Hike a section of The Western Way in Connemara, home to some of Ireland's most spectacular scenery, and don't miss the unreal and eerie karst area of the Burren.

• THE DINGLE PENINSULA – FOUR NIGHTS

Pubs double up as shoe repair shops, hardware stores, or grocers and Gaelic is spoken in abundance in the colourful town of Dingle.

Rent a bike to explore the peninsula. Pass thatched cottages, remote pubs and camp out overnight in Gallarus, at Europe's most westerly campsite.



Rock-climbing lost its thrill? Bet you've never tried this: clambering up a sea stack. Do look down! The churning waters of the Atlantic will have that adrenalin back pronto. If you fancy something tamer, grab a paddle and go sea kayaking for an afternoon.

For a day off the peninsula, tickle your tastebuds in Kinsale, the gourmet capital of Ireland. Dine out on prime Irish beef, succulent lamb and the finest seafood cuisine. Go home astounded by the range of attractions and activities within Ireland's green shores.

COSTS

• FLIGHTS

Etihad Airways offer return flights from Sydney and Melbourne for approximately A\$2,408.

• ACCOMMODATION

Dublin

- Bewley's Ballsbridge: a beautifully restored 19th century building, spacious rooms from approximately A\$85 a night.
- The Clarence Hotel: rooms in Dublin's premier boutique hotel start at approximately A\$200 a night.

Belfast

- Radisson Blu Hotel: bed down in style at this design-led hotel. Prices start at approximately A\$150 a night.

- The Bushmills Inn: luxury 4-star hotel near the Giant's Causeway. Rooms from approximately A\$244 a night.

The West

- Gyreum: award-winning ecolodge in Sligo's mountains, beds from approximately A\$26 a night.
- Woodside Lodge: cosy bed and breakfast in Westport from approximately A\$54 a night.
- Abbeyglen Castle Hotel: rooms with a classic feel in this historic Connemara hotel start at approximately A\$125 a night.

The Dingle Peninsula

- Dingle Activities Centre: tent it at this campsite in Gallarus. Sites from approximately A\$12 a night.
- Quayside: rooms in this friendly bed and breakfast in Dingle start at approximately A\$46 a night.
- Dingle Skellig Hotel: with spa and leisure facilities. One night stays from approximately A\$92 a night.

TOTAL ACCOMMODATION = A\$1,275

• FOOD AND DRINK

Food prices in Ireland range from cheap eats to gourmet fare. Drink prices are lower in rural areas. Set aside A\$70 a day for both.

TOTAL FOOD AND DRINK = A\$980

• TRANSPORT

- Twelve day car rental costs approximately A\$192, tag on A\$280 for fuel expenses.
- A return ferry fare to the Aran Islands costs approximately A\$39.

TOTAL TRANSPORT = A\$511



• TOURS AND ACTIVITIES

- Guinness Storehouse: A\$21
- National Museum of Archaeology: FREE
- Kitesurfing: A\$210 for a half-day course
- Hurling ticket: A\$31
- Shelbourne Park Greyhound Stadium: A\$15
- Belfast Black Taxi Tour: A\$22
- Sea kayaking: A\$116
- Rock climbing: A\$116
- Full-day surfboard and wetsuit hire: A\$46
- Bicycle rental: A\$12 per day.
- Extra collateral: A\$500

TOTAL TOURS, ACTIVITIES AND SPENDING = A\$1,101

* All prices are per person based on twin share. Prices are approximate and based on the exchange rate at the time of printing.

TOTAL = A\$6,275

GET PLANNING

Flights

www.etihadairways.com

Information and bookings

www.discoverireland.com

www.discovernorthernireland.com

www.outdoorsireland.com