

British Isles Tour

***featuring the best of Dublin, Edinburgh,
Stratford & London***



DAY 1

Departure from the USA for our flight to Dublin. Dinner and breakfast are served on board.

DEPART USA

(meals aloft)

DAY 2

Upon arrival in Dublin, the capital of the Republic of Ireland, we are met at the airport and guided to our waiting coach. As we drive through the city we are introduced to Dublin's many elegant Georgian buildings, tranquil parks, and lively shopping streets. We first visit St. Patrick's Cathedral, founded in 1190 and restored in the 19th century. Jonathan Swift, dean from 1713 to 1745, and author of *Gulliver's Travels*, is buried in this Protestant cathedral. We then go to Christ Church Cathedral, the elder of the capital city's two medieval cathedrals. Founded in 1028 AD, it is the spiritual heart of the city and one of the top visitor attractions in Dublin. Step inside and you can enjoy the cathedral's beautiful interior and fascinating medieval crypt, the earliest surviving structure in the city. From there we proceed to St. Ann's Church of Ireland, where *Dracula* author Bram Stoker was married in 1878. We conclude our guided touring with a visit to Trinity College, Ireland's oldest university, where we view the extravagantly illustrated Book of Kells. From there we proceed to our hotel, where we check in and have the remainder of the afternoon at leisure. You may choose to take advantage of this free time to visit the National Archaeological Museum or the iconic Guinness Storehouse. Dinner is included at our hotel this evening, and then we are taken on a guided "literary pub crawl" to learn more about Ireland's wonderful literary history and traditions. Following the tour we return to our hotel for overnight.

(meals aloft,D)

ARRIVE DUBLIN**DAY 3**

Following a full Irish breakfast at our hotel, we go to the recently-opened Stoker *Dracula* Museum, located within the Bram Stoker Hotel along the Clontarf seafront promenade. Here we are treated to a video presentation and expert live commentary about Bram Stoker, and we see artifacts on display such as a First Edition of *Dracula* and notes in his own hand. We then proceed to Trim Castle, which played a role in the filming of Mel Gibson's *Braveheart*, for a guided tour. From there we continue to the Hill of Tara, an archaeological complex that contains a number of ancient monuments, found within County Meath, an area rich with Irish mythology and heritage that boasts some of the loveliest landscapes of the Emerald Isle. This afternoon we continue to Monasterboice, ruins of an early Christian settlement famous for its spectacular Muiredach's Cross, which dates back to the 10th century AD and stands some 16 feet tall and depicts a number of Biblical scenes. After our time here, we proceed to Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland and birthplace of C.S. Lewis. In the mid-19th century Belfast had the larg-

**DUBLIN/TRIM/TARA/
MONASTERBOICE/BELFAST**

est shipyards in the United Kingdom. It was here that the world's most famous ocean-going liner, the ill-fated *Titanic*, was built. We check into our hotel with dinner included this evening.

(B,D)

DAY 4

We depart Belfast early this morning and eat a boxed breakfast as we drive to the coast to board our ferry for the journey across the North Channel to Scotland. Upon arrival we drive to Aberfoyle for a guided walk to mystical Doon Hill, located at the edge of an extensive woodland in an area known as the "land of the fairies." We drive on to Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, the city of John Knox, Sir Walter Scott, William Wallace, and Robert Louis Stevenson, among many others. Upon arrival we check into our hotel with dinner on your own. This evening we experience some of Edinburgh's mysterious underworld on a "Ghosts and Ghouls" walking tour.

(B)

BELFAST/ABERFOYLE/EDINBURGH**DAY 5**

This morning we spend some time exploring Edinburgh. This lovely city is built on hills and is home to legendary Holyrood Palace where Mary, Queen of Scots lived. The area is dominated by lofty Edinburgh Castle sitting high on Castle Rock. We visit the castle and explore the Royal Mile, the succession of streets which form the main thoroughfare of the Old Town of the city. Then we depart Edinburgh, eating a boxed lunch as we drive to Roslin. There we visit unique Rosslyn Chapel, which serves as the setting for part of Dan Brown's 2003 novel "The Da Vinci Code." We continue on to Whitby to check into our hotel and have an early dinner. Then we embark on an evening Ghost Tour of Whitby.

(B,L,D)

EDINBURGH/ROSLIN/WHITBY**DAY 6**

Today we explore Whitby, a beautiful fishing town on the North Yorkshire coast of England. Whitby plays an important role in *Dracula*, as it is where the Russian ship "Demeter" comes ashore and is the location of the first encounters between Dracula and Lucy. A highlight found in Whitby is the Bram Stoker Memorial seat. It was the view from this spot that inspired Stoker's Whitby scenes. One can look straight across the harbor and can see the ruins of the Abbey, the Church, and the stone steps. A local guide joins us this morning for a walking tour on which we view the Captain Cook Monument, which depicts the great man looking out to sea. Whitby also possesses more historical and religious importance than its size and semi-remote location might suggest. It was here, at the Synod of Whitby in 664, that the Saxon Christians decided to adopt the customs of the Roman Catholic church instead of the Celtic Church. The council was held in Whitby Abbey, an important double monastic settlement, where men and women served God together, with the leadership of Abbess Hilda. Today we climb the 199 steps leading up to the abbey, taking our time in order to absorb the grand views that unveil themselves

WHITBY/STRATFORD

along the way. We tour the abbey and see Caedmon's Cross, honoring the poet Caedmon, one of Whitby's most famous ancestors. This afternoon we drive to Stratford-upon-Avon, best known as the birthplace of William Shakespeare. Dinner is on your own this evening. (B)

DAY 7 STRATFORD/OXFORD/LONDON

This morning we have a guided tour of William Shakespeare's birthplace and Anne Hathaway's lovely thatched cottage, preserved just as it was in Elizabethan times. Then we continue to the world-famous university city of Oxford and explore some of its many wonders. We also view Christ Church Cathedral, the smallest of England's ancient cathedrals. All of the colleges have exquisite gardens, lovely and interesting chapels, stunning architecture, quiet walks and gardens, great traditions and history, and famous graduates. Oxford itself, "the city of dreaming spires", is full of old and new shops, wonderful restaurants and pubs such as the "Eagle and Child", a favorite of both Lewis and Tolkien. We tour Trinity College, one of the most beautiful and visited colleges in all England, which boasts grand and stunning architecture. Founded in 1555, Trinity has produced three British prime ministers. Following our tour, we drive on to London and check into our hotel with dinner on your own this evening. (B)

DAY 8 LONDON

From a small Roman settlement housed within stout fortifications, London has steadily grown to become one of the world's greatest capital cities. As we explore the city these next few days, we will see many famous places -- Marble Arch, Mayfair, Piccadilly, the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, Buckingham Palace, Hyde Park, and London's Tower Bridge. Today we visit Hampton Court Palace, which along with St. James's Palace is one of only two surviving palaces out of the many owned by King Henry VIII. Visitors are fascinated by the celebrated maze and the giant grapevine, thought to be the largest in the world. The palace was used in the motion picture *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides* (2011) and was also the venue for the Road Cycling Time Trial of the 2012 Summer Olympics. After exploring the majestic palace and its exquisite gardens, we return to our hotel with the remainder of the day at leisure for independent sightseeing or shopping. You may choose to visit St. Paul's Cathedral, site of many famous state occasions, including the funeral of Winston Churchill in 1965 and the wedding of the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1981. Or perhaps board the iconic London Eye, located on the south bank of the River Thames, and be transported over 400 feet up for a birds-eye view of the city. Dinner is on your own this evening. (B)

DAY 9 LONDON

Today we visit the Tower of London, of all buildings in England the one which carries the heaviest burden of history. Here the visitor is reminded of a succession of horrors which have gone to make up the history of England. Here also are the Crown Jewels. Among the finest items are St. Edward's Crown, of pure gold, which is still used in the coronation of British monarchs; and the Imperial State Crown, set with 3000 diamonds, which is worn by the Queen on important occasions. Then we have a guided tour of the British Library, which houses more than 150 million items in a myriad of languages and formats. Second in size only to the American Library of Congress, the British Library must automatically receive a copy of everything that is published in the United Kingdom. From here we continue to the British Museum, home to more than seven million objects comprising one of the most comprehensive collections worldwide and spanning the entire breadth of human history and culture. The British Museum has treasures from around the world including the Rosetta Stone (which helped archaeologists to interpret Egyptian hieroglyphics), the magnificent Elgin Marbles (sculptures that formerly decorated the Parthenon in Athens) and a copy of the Magna Carta (the charter signed by King John in 1215 to which is ascribed the origins of English liberty). Dinner is on your own this evening, and then we take in a performance at the storied Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. (B)

DAY 10 LONDON

Today we visit famed Westminster Abbey, home to many coronations and royal weddings. Nearby we view the iconic Houses of Parliament and Big Ben. This afternoon we view Trafalgar Square, located in the heart of London, featuring Nelson's Column and the four lion statues that guard it. The Square serves as a social and political gathering place for visitors and Londoners alike. On the north side of the Square sits the National Gallery, where we spend some time. From its humble beginnings - 38 paintings purchased by the British government from a banker in 1824 - today it boasts a rich collection of over 2,300 paintings spanning six centuries. This evening we walk to a local restaurant for a farewell dinner and then return to our hotel for overnight. (B,D)

DAY 11 LONDON/USA

Following breakfast we transfer to the airport for our return flight to the USA. (B,meals aloft)

All sites listed in the itinerary will be seen but the sequence and days may be altered to adjust to religious holidays, special closings of sites, air schedule changes, hotel confirmation, etc.