

Ireland: Cork to Dublin

Bike Vacation Only

Ireland is a land of legend ... and you'll have a legendary time in its atmospheric south. Iconic castles, a medieval monastery and the Rock of Cashel mark your route as you roll through the countryside and into towns where a proud heritage is preserved. Magic awaits when sunset falls over an ancient fort or you view fairytale towers hidden in a forest. Prepare to be dazzled by the majesty of manicured gardens. And mingle with the spirited Irish people of today in fishing villages, pubs and a local manor home.

Cultural Highlights

Admire stunning views of the Comeragh Mountains on a reel along the majestic Dungarvan Bay.

Commemorate a national tragedy at the Famine Graveyard.

Have lunch with a family who can trace their ancestry back 800 years in this same home. Experience true rural Ireland by talking to the locals along the way.

Enjoy Irish music and dance during a private rendition by 3 of Ireland's best.

Experience the early days of the High King's of Ireland and early Christian period.

Enjoy a meal in a traditional Irish pub next to the open fire, surrounded by locals.

Cycle along quiet country lanes, passing green fertile fields dotted with sheep and cattle.

Explore the manicured gardens and art gallery of Lismore's Anglo-Norman castle.

Hike through the woods to see the fairytale Ballysaggartmore Towers in their magical setting.

Take a moment for quiet reflection at Holy Cross Abbey, a restored Cistercian monastery that is a medieval landmark.

Behold sweeping panoramic views from the Rock of Cashel, a stone fort shrouded in legend.

Explore Cahir Castle, one of Ireland's largest and best-preserved castles, on a guided tour.

What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills, mainly on quiet country roads.

Our VBT van support is always available for those who need assistance with the hills. Ideal for enthusiastic beginners to experienced cyclists.

Tour Duration: 7 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 16 - 36

Average Cycling Time: 01:15 - 04:00

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Apr 53°/41°, May 58°/45°, Jun 63°/50°, Jul 66°/53°, Aug 65°/53°, Sep 62°/50°, Oct 59°/46°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Apr 2.6, May 2.7, Jun 2.4, Jul 2.7, Aug 3.2, Sep 3.3, Oct 4.2

DAY 1: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Transfer to Dungarvan

VBT-Bicycle-Vacation-only guests: Plan to meet a VBT representative, who will be carrying a VBT sign, at the Imperial Hotel, Cork at 12:30 p.m. (address: South Mall Street, Cork, County Cork, Republic of Ireland; Tel: +353 21 427 4040). Please note: Plan to eat lunch or a snack on your own beforehand, as the next scheduled meal is dinner.

To reach the hotel, you can take a taxi from Cork airport into the city (approximately 20 euros), or travel on Bus Eireann, which provides frequent and direct coach service between Cork Airport, Cork City Center and Cork Bus Station (approximately 5 euros; travel time is approximately 25 minutes, depending on traffic; for more details go to www.buseireann.ie). Please note: If your arrival at the Imperial Hotel is scheduled for later than 12:30 p.m. or if you are delayed, you must transfer at your own expense to Dungarvan (approximately 15 euros for the Bus Eireann from Cork Bus Station - Parnell Place; travel time is approximately 90 minutes, depending on traffic). Please contact the Park Hotel, Dungarvan to advise them of any delays or changes, and the hotel staff will pass the message along to your VBT Trip Leaders.

Hotel: Park Hotel

Meals: B (for Air Package guests only), D

Daily Options: 8.6 miles (13.8 km)

DAY 2: Discover Dungarvan Bay

After breakfast, cycle along the majestic Dungarvan Bay, with the Comeragh Mountains rising in the background. Your ride explores a region where the first language is Irish. You'll see the road signs change as you ride.

After conquering the noteworthy hill of the tour, you explore quiet country roads in the Drum Hills. Ride along the plateau through forests and open heathland, and stop to walk around the 19th-century Famine Graveyard. A million Irish died of starvation and disease and 2 million emigrated to North America during the Great Famine, when successive blasts of potato blight and lack of governmental redress turned a

natural catastrophe into a national tragedy.

Continue to the Marine Bar, a 300-year-old pub well known for its music and storytelling traditions. You will be served traditional fish pie with fish from the local fisherman of Dungarvan Bay. After lunch, your ride continues back around the bay to Dungarvan.

This afternoon, you have time to explore one of Ireland's picturesque seaside towns. Dungarvan dates to the 7th century, and you can walk along its pretty quays, browse the quaint shops, and see its castle and abbey ruins overlooking the bay. This evening, you can select from the town's host of eateries around the quay for dinner on your own.

Hotel: Park Hotel

Meals: B, L

Daily Options: 18.7 or 31.7 miles (30 or 51 km)

DAY 3: Lismore / Home-hosted lunch at Dromana House

Ride along quiet roads through Ireland's lush green countryside and past old stone walls. Your destination is Dromana House. For 800 years and 21 generations, the manor house has been the seat of one of the principal families of the South of Ireland: the FitzGeralds, Lords of the Decies, later Villiers-Stuart. The family now lives in the 17th-century house, which was built on medieval foundations and enjoys sweeping views over the River Blackwater to the Knockmealdown Mountains. One of the family members greets you upon arrival and guides you around their home. What a thrill to admire the family portraits and hear about famous visitors over the centuries—including Sir Walter Raleigh, who is said to have brought the first cherry tree in Ireland to this estate.

After a home-prepared lunch, you are free to wander the 30 acres of gardens and woodlands, part of the Waterford Garden Trail.

Your cycle route continues through rolling countryside, passing over the locally celebrated Dromana Bridge. Local tradition says it was erected as a temporary structure to welcome home Henry Villiers-Stuart after his honeymoon. The couple was so impressed that they had a permanent structure installed.

Shortly after crossing the bridge, you'll arrive at your home for the next two nights—the family-owned and -run Richmond House, built in 1704. You'll have time to relax or stroll through the private parkland before this evening's included dinner.

Hotel: Richmond House

Meals: B, L, D

Daily Options: 16.1 or 36.3 miles (25.9 or 58.4 km)

DAY 4: Ballyduff / Ballysaggartmore Towers / Free afternoon

Today leads you to Cappoquin, a renowned center for rowing and coarse angling, before arriving in Lismore.

Lismore's Anglo-Norman castle is the town's landmark. The 12th-century edifice, perched atop the hillside overlooking the Blackwater River was home for both Sir Walter Raleigh and Robert Boyle (the Father of Modern Chemistry). Currently, it's the Irish home of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. Though it is closed to visitors, the public can view the manicured gardens and art gallery.

Your route rolls gently along the Blackwater River valley. Shortly after leaving Lismore, you can stop for a short 1.5-mile walk through the woods to see the fairytale Ballysaggartmore Towers in their magical setting. These imposing gothic-style "follies" were considered too extravagant during the 19th century, while much of Ireland was starving.

Continue riding along the river valley to the fishing village of Ballyduff, crossing the valley by the red iron bridge (1887) and passing the former Garda Station (1869), a fine example of Scottish Baronial-style.

Back in Lismore, enjoy a free afternoon to explore the friendly town. Try one of the small cafés for lunch on your own before visiting the old court house, home to the Lismore Heritage Centre. Here, the Lismore Experience, an audio-visual program, charts the history of Lismore and highlights the town's interesting sites. If open, the gardens of Lismore Castle are worth exploring. There are several short marked walking trails around the town. Return to the hotel this evening for an included dinner. After dinner enjoy an evening of traditional Irish music and dance with 3 of the best student musicians and dancers in all of Ireland.

Hotel: Richmond House

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 16.8, 22.2 or 34.1 miles (27, 35.7 or 54.9 km)

DAY 5: County Tipperary / Holy Cross Abbey and Rock of Cashel

It's not "a long way to Tipperary" with an 80-minute shuttle to Thurles in County Tipperary. Surrounded by the Silvermine Mountains and the Slieveardagh Hills, you will ride from here to Holy Cross Abbey, one of Ireland's National Monuments. This restored Cistercian monastery is a medieval landmark on the River Suir that drew pilgrims during its heyday. Today, it is the perfect spot for quiet reflection. The ride continues through Tipperary's green agricultural plain, following farm roads.

Later, you arrive at the 9th-century Rock of Cashel, also known as St. Patrick's Rock, built atop a limestone outcropping with panoramic views. This Caiseal, or stone fort, is shrouded in legends and is the original residence of the Kings of Munster. The Rock of Cashel is one of Ireland's most spectacular archaeological sites. Within its sturdy walls, explore the round tower, a 13th-century Gothic cathedral and Cormac's Chapel, the finest 12th-century Romanesque chapel in Ireland and home to some of the Emerald Isle's oldest frescoes. These frescoes were whitewashed during the Reformation and remained hidden until the 1980s! The Queen of England visited this sacred site during her historic Ireland tour in 2011. Your hotel is a short walk from the Rock of Cashel, so you can return and visit at your leisure. Tip: A sunrise or sunset visit is truly magical.

After check-in, the day is yours. Walking is the best way to discover Cashel. Visit the Georgian St. John's Cathedral and the Bolton Library, view the impressive city walls, and stop at the former Deanery (Archbishop's Palace). The Cashel Folk Village is an open-air museum featuring replicas of early Irish life including the old public house, butcher's shop, farmhouse, travelers' caravan, and chapel.

This evening, enjoy dinner in one of the local pubs or restaurants where Guinness is always on tap.

Hotel: Baileys Hotel

Meals: B

Daily Options: 21.3 miles (34 km)

DAY 6: Cahir

Cycle Tipperary's quiet backroads and along a part of the Tipperary Heritage Way. Green fields and stone walls lead to colorful Cahir, with its imposing medieval castle on the River Suir. This is one of Ireland's largest and best-preserved castles, once the stronghold of the powerful Butler family. The local guided tour is a definitive history lesson. Enjoy free time in town for lunch on your own.

After, you pedal back to the hotel at your own pace before a festive farewell dinner in Chez Hans, one of

Tipperary's best restaurants for more than 50 years.

Hotel: Baileys Hotel

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 16.8 or 31.4 miles (27 or 50.5 km)

DAY 7: Transfer to Dublin / Free time / VBT Bicycle Vacation Only ends

VBT-Bicycle-Vacation-only guests: Say farewell to your Trip Leaders and depart by coach at 9:00 a.m. for Dublin and the Schoolhouse Hotel (approximately 2 hours). The tour ends here. Or you may wish to make your own departure arrangements from Cashel.

Meals: B

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Baileys Hotel (Days: 5,6)

Baileys Hotel Cashel occupies a beautifully restored Georgian building on Main Street in historic Cashel, nestled in Tipperary's Golden Vale. Its 4-star rating promises a memorable stay that is rich in old world ambiance and modern amenities. This cozy boutique property charms its guests with 20 rooms, the setting promises an intimate experience. The legendary Rock of Cashel is a short walk away and town is just around the corner. Each room provides plush amenities, including an en-suite bathroom with heated floors and luxury bathrobes. Free Wi-Fi is available throughout.

The Park Hotel (Days: 1,2)

Set on five acres of beautifully landscaped grounds in County Waterford, the 3-star Park Hotel offers a peaceful location in seaside Dungarvan, just a five-minute walk from the town center. you will appreciate a warm Irish "welcome home" after each day of invigorating cycling. The guest rooms are modern and comfortable with free Wi-Fi available throughout. Start your day with breakfast in the Garden Room restaurant. The health club has a swimming pool, therapeutic whirlpool, sauna and steam room. Sample the pub-style Meladon Bar for a varied menu prepared from fresh, local produce.

Richmond Hotel (Days: 3,4)

The Earl of Cork built Richmond House in 1704. Refurbished and restored, each of the 9 bedrooms features period furniture and spacious comfort. All rooms are ensuite (private bathrooms) and feature views of the extensive grounds. The Richmond House breakfast is a pleasant surprise. Each room offers tea making facilities. Free Wi-Fi is available throughout.