

# Ken O'Malley Ireland Tour 2020: The Ancient East April 4 - 13

**April 4th.** Arrival Dublin Airport, meet Ken in arrivals hall and board our luxury coach. Our drive through Dublin City will take us out to Co. Wicklow and visit the beautiful Powerscourt House and gardens. One of the finest gardens in all of Ireland we will enjoy lunch before driving on south to our hotel, the **Lyrath Estate** just outside the city of Kilkenny. Time to relax before dinner in our hotel.

**April 5th.** We will visit Kilkenny Castle, once the stronghold of the famous Anglo-Irish Butler family, now open to the public in all its splendor. After lunch we will drive out to Jerpoint Abbey, founded in the early 12th Century. Beautiful stonework and unique carvings in its tower and cloister. Return to our hotel for dinner.

**April 6th.** Our tour this morning will take us north to Co. Offaly and Birr Castle. The Award-Winning Gardens of Birr Castle Gardens and Science Centre in Ireland are both rich in amazing feats of science and engineering as well as rare trees and flowers, wonderful wildlife, and walks along peaceful rivers and the lake. The Parsons family invite you to explore one of the most extraordinary places in Ireland. Created over generations it is an environmental and scientific time capsule. Return to our hotel for dinner and a few songs by Ken.

**April 7th.** We will say goodbye to Kilkenny and head out to the coast to visit the Dunbrody Famine Ship in New Ross, Co. Wexford. This a truly remarkable experience of the devastation caused by the Famine and an example of many of the ships that brought the Irish to North America and other parts of the world. After lunch we will drive to the City of Waterford and visit the famous Waterford Crystal before driving on to the **Imperial Hotel** in Cork city. Our great hero Michael Collins stayed here the night before he was ambushed and killed during the Irish Civil war in 1922.

**April 8th.** We are now in the 'Rebel County', Cork where we will spend three nights. Our first day will take us around the town and we will visit the English Market, Blarney Woolen Mills and spend the afternoon at your own leisure around this lovely historic city. Dinner later in our hotel.

**April 9th.** We will take the short drive out to the town of Cobh, pronounced 'Cove' and visit the Titanic Experience. The Titanic picked up its last supplies, mail and passengers, mostly Irish people who had booked passage in the steerage level and sailed off into history on April 11th, 1912. The Cobh Heritage Center is a great representation of what the experience of leaving Ireland was like for the thousands of people who left for North America in the late 18th C and on up through the mid 20th C. Cobh was the main embarkation point for the emigrants.

We will head on down to Kinsale for lunch at one of the many popular eateries in this picturesque and major historic town. The Battle of Kinsale in 1601 ended the Nine Years War and the old Gaelic clans effort to take Ireland back from the English at that time and transformed Ireland forever. Subsequent rebellions never had the same impact. Return to our hotel for dinner.

**April 10th.** We now begin our third leg of the tour by visiting the Rock of Cashel on our way north to Dublin city. The Rock of Cashel is one of Ireland's most visited sites, and is a spectacular and archaeological site. A collection of medieval ecclesiastical buildings set on an outcrop of limestone in the Golden Vale in Co. Tipperary. The 12th-century round tower is the oldest surviving building on the Rock, also includes a high cross, and the ruins Romanesque chapel - Cormac's Chapel is one of the earliest and finest churches built in the Romanesque style. The 13th-century Gothic cathedral is a large cruciform Gothic church without aisles built between 1230 and 1270. Also a 15th-century castle and the Hall of the Vicars is the entry point to the ecclesiastical enclosure. The Hall houses the museum where the original Cross of St. Patrick can be found. After our visit we will drive to Dublin and check into the beautiful **Clayton Hotel** in Ballsbridge, in the perhaps, most affluent area of the city, surrounded by embassies and the Royal Dublin Society building. The rest of the afternoon is free to explore the city. Dinner in our hotel.

**April 11th.** We will visit Kilmainham Gaol. Reopened in 1966 on the 50th Anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising, it is one of our country's most solemn and historical destinations. Within days of the Irish surrender, fourteen of the Rebellion's leaders were executed here under martial law, with no fair trial. The leaders expected no mercy and gave their lives for Irish freedom. The rest of the afternoon is free to ramble around the city or jump on to a "Hop On, Hop Off" tour bus for a tour of the many sites. Dinner in our hotel.

**April 12th.** Newgrange is a Stone Age (Neolithic) monument in the Boyne Valley, County Meath, it is the jewel in the crown of Ireland's Ancient East. Newgrange was constructed about 5,200 years ago (3,200 B.C.) which makes it older than Stonehenge and the Great Pyramids of Giza. Newgrange is a large circular mound with a stone passageway and chambers inside. The mound is ringed by 97 large curbstones some of which are engraved with symbols called megalithic art. Archaeologists classified Newgrange as a passage tomb, however Newgrange is now recognized to be much more than a passage tomb. Ancient Temple is a more fitting classification, a place of astrological, spiritual, religious and ceremonial importance, much as present day cathedrals are places of prestige and worship where dignitaries may be laid to rest. We will enter the burial chamber inside. We will return to our hotel to relax before our final dinner and concert by Ken.

**April 13th.** Dublin airport departure, our coach will escort those returning to the US to the airport.