Australia 1300 888 225
New Zealand 0800 440 055
info@odysseytraveller.com



From
£6,535 GBP

Single Room
£7,895 GBP
Twin Room
£6,535 GBP

Prices valid until
30th December 2024

18 days
Duration

Ireland
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

Small Group tours exploring the Treasures of Ireland

Apr 16 2024 to May 03 2024

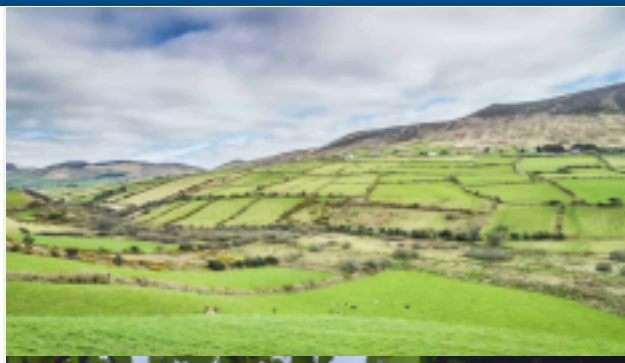


Treasures of Ireland | Ireland Small Group Tours

Odyssey offers easy, convenient, and relaxed escorted small group tours across Ireland and beyond. We explore Ireland's natural beauty, its ancient Roman, and Imperial heritage, its World Heritage Sites, and world famous cities, all with some truly spectacular scenery along the way. This and more is all waiting to be explored on one of Odyssey's small group tours of Ireland, designed for the senior traveller, and led by

experienced, and enthusiastic like minded people.

This small group tour of Ireland series for 2024 and 2025, explores the country's history and culture. Nowhere else in the world is so much tragedy, exaltation, hope, and disappointment quite so compressed as they are in Ireland. Nowhere else are these historic trials, tribulations, and triumphs such a part of contemporary events and so integrated via song and words into daily life. In Ireland, the past is the present and the present is the past. In this small group tour taking in the history of ancient Ireland and contemporary Ireland, we step out into the evocative land itself, and absorb the poignant history and culture that the country has to offer.







These escorted small group tours of Ireland explore the treasures of Ireland. A popular Ireland vacation program for the couple or the single traveller interested in this style of small group travel. It is a trip designed especially for senior travellers seeking to move beyond the beaten track for the tourist and the usual destinations advertised by other tour companies to experience real Ireland. As we travel on our guided tours, our experienced local tour guide and tour operator share their own stories and knowledge of Ireland, the emerald isle, with you on this small group adventure that takes you to Southern Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Our tour itinerary

Our tour begins in Dublin and takes you clockwise around Ireland to finish in Belfast, Northern Ireland. On the way, we take in quaint villages, stunning scenery, and hidden gems. Our tour takes you to the Cliffs of Moher, Giant's Causeway, and other UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Some of our key stops include:

Dublin:

The capital of Ireland, Dublin, is home to around a quarter of the nation's population, and is a character-filled city of poets, playwrights

and pubs. Our tour explores the history of Ireland at medieval landmarks such as Dublin Castle and St. Patrick's Cathedral, and soaks up the city's legendary literary history, from the ancient Book of Kells to the city streets that inspired Oscar Wilde, W.B. Yeats, and James Joyce.







Cork:

Ireland's second city, Cork, is a charming cathedral city with a laid-back vibe, while the surrounding county – Ireland's largest – is the quintessential Ireland of green hills and villages. En route to the city we visit the ancient royal site of the Rock of Cashel and Blarney Castle – where a kiss to the famous Blarney Stone will endow the visitor with the gift of eloquence!

Kerry:

In the south-west corner of Ireland, County Kerry is home to some of the island's most spectacular scenery. The Ring of Kerry has been a tourist destination for centuries thanks to its stunning and windswept landscape of Atlantic coast, lakes, and mountains. The nearby Dingle Peninsula is home to ancient Celtic forts, Christian sites, and the charming fishing village of Dingle.

Galway:

On Ireland's west coast, County Galway is home to stunning scenery – white sandy beaches, charming villages, and looming mountains. The capital, Galway, is a historic medieval city with a large student population, where streets and pubs heave with live 'trad' music.

Aran Islands:

Off Ireland's west coast, the remote Aran Islands are wild and windswept, a place where traditional Irish culture and Irish language live on in daily life. With the help of a local historian, we will explore these fascinating islands, including the spectacular Bronze Age fort of Dun Aengus, the most impressive in Europe, and the Christian ruins of the 'Seven Churches', dating from the 8th to the 11th centuries.

Donegal:

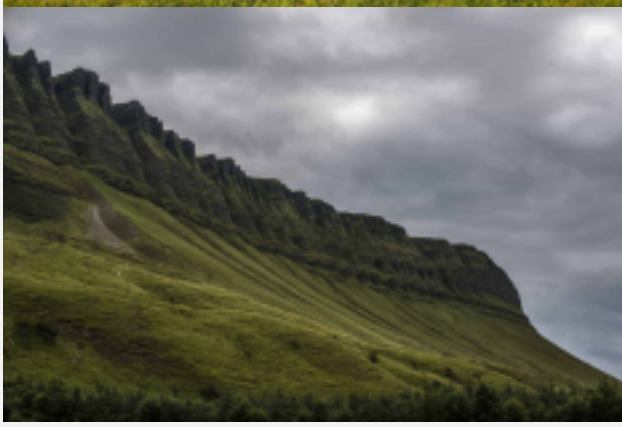
Long left off the tourist trail, remote Donegal is home to some of Ireland's most spectacular scenery: remote mountain passes, vivid blue lakes, and the northern beginnings of Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way. Proudly independent from the rest of Ireland (the county only barely shares a border with the rest of the Republic), Donegal is over 1/4 Gaeltacht (Irish speaking), and home to a rich local tradition of weaving, known as donegal tweed (which is always written with a small 'd').

Belfast:

Our tour ends in the Northern Ireland city of Belfast, a city that will likely surprise you with its beautiful natural setting and grand Victorian architecture. On our visit, we learn about the city's troubled history from locals on a tour of the evocative and colourful murals of West Belfast, and explore the tragic sinking of the Titanic, which was built in the city's shipyards.







Highlights of Treasures of Ireland tour

The fabulous landscape and the visit to the Aran Islands will create memories that will last well beyond your trip. These memories are paired with the locals stories heard and enjoyed over a meal or drink. Senior travellers joining us on this tour will enjoy the opportunity to spend time at each destination. The Treasures of Ireland tour is a combination of day tour and long-staying dream vacation. This time is spent learning and sharing in a country that has experienced one of the largest historic migrations of its people, and one that touches so many today.

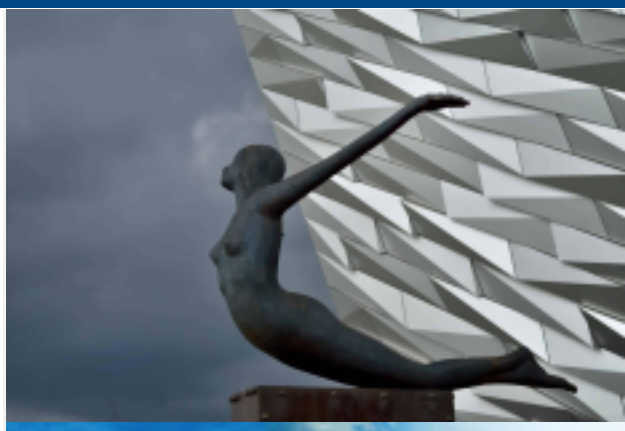
Highlights of our tour of Ireland include a stop in Belfast to learn the history of the area, including a visit to the famous political murals. We also visit the Harland Wolff shipyard. During the tour, we also enjoy a performance the National Folk Theatre (Siamsa Tire) in Tralee and you'll have free time to enjoy a performance at Abbey Theatre (own cost). We experience a walking tour of Powerscourt Manor in the

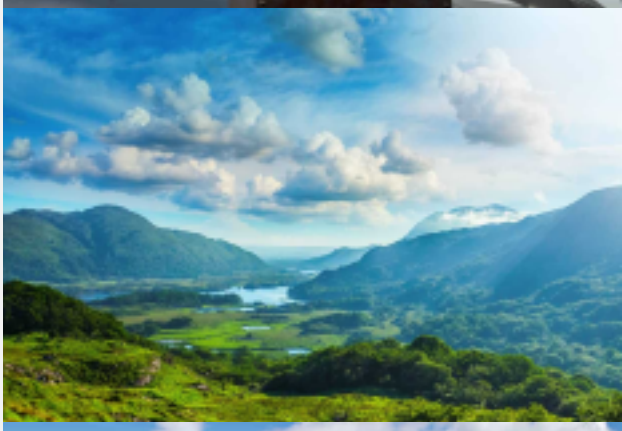
Wicklow Mountains, taking in its glorious gardens and grounds.

We also have an article on the History of Ireland and Ireland's Gems, which you may find helpful.

This small group escorted tour exploring the treasures of Ireland is an 18-day program. This multi day tour is paired with our Scottish Isles program, should you wish to continue your travels with us afterwards. We also offer a short tour of Belfast city. All of our tours to Ireland can be found here. All of our tours to Europe can be found here.

If you are a senior or mature-aged traveller with a thirst for knowledge and an open inquisitive mind, we would love to have you on board for our next departure. For more details, click the 'Top 5' or 'Itinerary' buttons above! If you're keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.







History of Ireland

Ireland (Irish: *Éire*) is an island carved into two after centuries of subjugation, foreign domination, and various conflicts that lasted through the 20th century. Though Ireland had been home to peoples since the late Neolithic, Celtic culture arrived in Ireland during the Iron Age. During this period, Ireland was divided into a number of small kingdoms or clans (*tuatha*), surrounded by a landed aristocracy whose wealth was primarily in cattle (*airi aicme*); with the island finally unifying under the one king in the 10th century AD. There were no urban centres, and the population was primarily based around agriculture, cattle, and rural industries, such as dairying, weaving, and spinning.

Though Ireland was never under the dominion of the Roman Empire, Christianity nonetheless reached the island through trade with Rome. Tradition holds that the 5th century St Patrick converted the population from Celtic paganism. Following Patrick, Ireland became a centre of Christian life. Irish missionaries became major proselytisers of Christianity, converting pagan tribes in Scotland, the north of England,

and what is today northern France and western Germany. In a time when Europe was barely literate, Irish monasteries became centres of classical and religious learning, and produced the beautiful illuminated manuscripts of which *The Book of Kells* is the most famous.

From 795 through to the early 11th century, Ireland became the victim of extensive Viking raiding. Eventually the Norse seized territory, establishing the capital of Dublin, and became trading partners of the Irish. In 1014, the Norse were defeated by the Irish High King Brian Boru at the Battle of Clontarf.

In the 12th century, Anglo-Norman adventurers began to conquer territories on the east coast of Ireland, paving the way for the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland under Henry II, in 1171. Though technically under English rule, the Middle Ages would see Ireland essentially ruled by a mix of local Irish and Anglo-Norman aristocrats – who increasingly adopted Irish culture and intermarried with the Irish population.

Though England would soon be swept up in the Protestant Reformation, Ireland remained Catholic. The reign of Elizabeth I and her Stuart successors saw the crown reestablish control over the population of Ireland. Significant population transfers occurred, including the Plantation of Ulster, which brought Protestants from England and the Scottish lowlands to settle in the north of Ireland.

The nadir of Irish control over Ireland came in the 18th century with the Protestant Ascendancy, in which the Anglican elite monopolised political rights. Irish culture and language virtually died out, except among the starkly impoverished peasantry of the island's west coast.

However, the subsequent century would see movements for Irish independence re-emerge. The French and American Revolutions inspired the formation of the Society for United Irishmen in the 1790s, whose rebellion was brutally suppressed in the absence of promised French support, while the early 19th century saw the struggle for

Catholic emancipation succeed in 1829.

The 19th century would also be defined by poverty and tragedy. Ireland's population, mostly subsistence farmers, would be plunged into famine when the potato became blighted in the mid-1840s. Roughly a million people died of starvation, and more fled abroad to the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Australia. Emigration continued through the 19th century, and by 1911, Ireland's population was half what it had been before the Famine.

Following the Famine, the independence movement split between the revolutionary Fenian secret society, and the more moderate movement for home rule and land reform. By the late 19th century, however, young Irish men and women had become frustrated with the slow pace of the home rule movement. A cultural nationalist movement emerged, devoted to the renewal of the Gaelic language and traditional Irish theatre, music, and sport.

On Easter Monday 1916, around a thousand nationalists occupied key spots in Dublin, proclaiming an Irish Republic. Street fighting continued for around a week, until the Republican leaders were forced to surrender. Their execution by the British government galvanised popular support for independence.

1919 saw the outbreak of the Irish War of Independence, which ended in 1921 with the establishment of the Irish Free State, which, notably, included the southern counties but not the north. The treaty divided the independence movement, leading to the Civil War of 1922-1923. In 1949, the southern part of Ireland became the independent Republic of Ireland, while the north remained part of the United Kingdom.

Once among the poorest and most socially conservative countries in Europe, the Republic of Ireland became economically prosperous and socially liberal over the course of the 20th century. Northern Ireland, however, remained ravaged by conflict between the IRA and unionist paramilitaries. The 'Troubles' raged through the 1970s and 1980s, finally ending with the Good Friday Agreement, which saw power shared between the Catholic and Protestant communities of Northern Ireland.

Articles about Ireland published by Odyssey Traveller:

- History of Ireland
- Ireland's Gems
- Learning about Ireland for Seniors
- How The Atlantic Ocean Shaped Early Life in Europe

For all the articles Odyssey Traveller has published for mature aged and senior travellers, click through on this link.

External articles to assist you on your visit to Ireland:

- An alternative road trip in County Kerry, Ireland
- Visitor Attractions: The Book of Kells
- The Rock of Cashel
- Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geo Park
- Ancient Ireland
- The Best of Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way
- Exploring Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way

Tour Notes

- Group size limited to 16.
- Itineraries may change if flight schedules, site availability, and other inclusions have to be amended prior to departure.

Highlights

1. Tour a country so steeped in history that relics from its antiquity are part of the everyday landscape.
2. Visit Powerscourt Manor in the Wicklow Mountains to see its glorious gardens and the picturesque house of Kylemore in Connemara.
3. Enjoy a performance at the National Folk Theatre (Siamsa Tire) in Tralee.
4. Spend 2 nights on the Aran Island of Inis M'hor with its ancient pilgrimage churches and the prehistoric promontory fort of Dun Aonghus.
5. Visit Belfast to learn the history of the area and see the famous political murals, as well as the Harland Wolff shipyard.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Dublin

Overview:

Upon arrival in Dublin, the capital of Ireland, we will arrive individually to the Camden Court Hotel and meet for an introductory meeting and a welcome dinner.

(D)

Accommodation:

4 nights at Camden Court Hotel or similar

Day 2

Locations: Dublin

Overview:

During the next 2 days we will enjoy guided tours of the city of poets, playwrights, and brewing. First we will head to Trinity College, established by Queen Elizabeth I in 1592, where we will meet with a graduate for a tour of the grounds and explanation of the universities

history . Here we will also view the ancient Book of Kells, one of Ireland's most treasured works. The book has been dated to around the 9th century, and though it details the four Gospels in Latin text with elaborate detailing, the ink with which it was written has been traced to northern Afghanistan, offering an intriguing insight into the globalism of the medieval era. In the afternoon we are treated to an expert-led literary walking tour of Tara, site of the High Kings of Ireland. After dinner, we will have a lecture on the history of the country at the hotel.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

Camden Court Hotel or similar

Day 3

Locations: Dublin

Overview:

After breakfast, we will enjoy a guided tour of Dublin. Highlights include St. Patrick's Cathedral and Dublin Castle. After some free time for lunch, we will take a literary walking tour of the city, then enjoy dinner at a local restaurant. Depending on availability, there may be a chance to see a performance at the Abbey Theater at your own expense.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

Camden Court Hotel or similar

Day 4

Locations: Dublin

Overview:

Today we will drive south to County Wicklow to visit Powerscourt House and Demesne (domain) at Enniskerry. Where Powerscourt House stands today there was once a 13th century medieval castle, owned by the Le Power Family from which "Powerscourt" takes its name. Powerful Irish families including the O'Tooles and the Fitzgeralds battled for possession of the castle and its lands over the succeeding centuries.

Powerscourt remains the archetypical example of the “Big House” of Ireland. The Palladian-style manor overlooks immense terraced gardens which are also in the Italianate style. The estate now belongs to the Slazenger family of tennis racquet fame. Light lunch is included today. Our excursion continues to Glendalough, or the “Glen of Two Lakes.” Founded in the 7th century AD by St. Kevin, this site is regarded as one of the most important monastic sites in Ireland. The evening is at leisure to explore the local fare.

(B,L)

Accommodation:

Camden Court Hotel or similar

Day 5

Locations: Cork

Overview:

En route to Cork in County Kerry, we visit the famous Rock of Cashel – an outcrop of limestone dominated by a group of buildings; the 12th century round tower, a Romanesque chapel, the 13th century cathedral, the 15th century castle and a restored Hall of Vicars Choral. We then continue to Blarney Castle in County Cork where we can (should you wish!) kiss the world-renowned Blarney Stone at the top of the Castle. Tradition dictates that the gift of eloquence will be bestowed on all those who kiss the Stone! Dinner tonight is at our hotel.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

1 night at Clayton Silver Springs Hotel or similar.

Day 6

Locations: Co.Kerry

Overview:

Accompanied by a local guide and storyteller, we depart on an excursion around the Ring of Kerry, often considered the world’s single most picturesque drive. Running through an area of outstanding natural

beauty, the circuit takes in the towns of Killorglin, Glenbeigh, Cahersiveen, Waterville, Caherdaniel and Sneem. We return to the hotel for an early dinner before attending a performance of *Celtic Steps*, a spectacular evening of Irish song and dance, at the Killarney Racecourse.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

Ballyroe Heights Hotel or similar

Day 7

Locations: Co.Kerry

Overview:

Today we continue our journey to the picturesque town of Dingle and the Dingle Peninsula, exploring the area's rich archaeological heritage and unique culture, including the beehive huts, Celtic 'Ringforts' which have stood for over 4,00 years, and the tiny Gallarus Oratory. In Dunquin (Dun Chaoin) we stop for free time and a visit to the Blasket Centre where we discover the history, culture, language and unique literary achievements of the island writers. We return to the hotel for dinner.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

Ballyroe Heights Hotel or similar

Day 8

Locations: Galway

Overview:

En route to County Galway we experience a guided visit to Bunratty Castle followed by free time for lunch and exploration of the Castle's Folk Park to learn to learn about rural life in Ireland during the last century. Our transfer continues via The Burren, a vast limestone plateau featuring the "Poulnabrone Dolmen" and the Cliffs of Moher, one of Ireland's West Coast's most dramatic landforms. Dinner is included

tonight in the hotel.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

Loughrea Hotel & Spa or similar

Day 9

Locations: Inishmore

Overview:

Early morning we will transfer to Rossaveal for our ferry to Inis Mor, the largest of the Aran Islands, to enjoy an overnight stay. A local hisatorian will welcome us to this unique place – a remnant of authentic Gaelic civilisation, where Christian ruins stand side by side with remarkable Pagan relics, and where the Irish language and Irish traditions live on in daily life. The afternoon and evening is free to explore at leisure.

(B)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Aran Island Hotel or similar.

Day 10

Locations: Inishmore

Overview:

After breakfast we meet our local guide and tour Inishmore, as well as exploring the spectacular Bronze Age promontory fort of Dun Aengus. The afternoon is at leisure and dinner will be at the a local pub this evening.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

1 night at Aran Island Hotel or similar.

Day 11

Locations: Galway

Overview:

After breakfast, we return to the mainland. On arrival we make our way to Galway. On our way we stop to we visit Kylemore Abbey and its delightful, extensive gardens where lunch is included. Nestled on the lake shore in the heart of the Connemara Mountains, and originally built in 1867 as a romantic gift, Kylemore Abbey is regarded as one of Ireland's most romantic buildings. We then continue travelling to Connemara National Park. A broad peninsula between Killary Harbour and Kilkieran Bay in the west of County Galway, Connemara has long been regarded as the real emerald of Ireland. Connemara National Park covers some 2,957 hectares of scenic mountains, expanses of bogs, heaths, grasslands and woodlands. Much of the present National Park lands formed part of the Kylemore Abbey Estate and the Letterfrack Industrial School, the remainder having been owned by private individuals. The southern part of the Park was at one time owned by Richard (Humanity Dick) Martin who helped to form the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals during the early 19th century.

(B,L)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Clayton Ballybrit Hotel or similar.

Day 12

Locations: Galway

Overview:

We begin our day with an expert led walk of Galway city during which we will see Galway Cathedral, the Spanish Arch and part of the original city wall. Later, there will be free time for lunch and to explore Galway city in the afternoon. Dinner this evening will be at the hotel

(B,D)

Accommodation:

Clayton Ballybrit Hotel or similar.

Day 13

Locations: Donegal

Overview:

We depart for County Donegal, undoubtedly one of Ireland's most untouched and ruggedly beautiful counties. Donegal's striking landscape has remained relatively unaffected by the passage of time. In Sligo, we will be joined by a local expert, for a lecture at the Yeats Society in Sligo. We continue our journey to Drumcliffe, the final resting place of the famed Irish poet, WB Yeats, under the majestic mountain of Ben Bulben. We arrive in Donegal late afternoon.

(B)

Accommodation:

1 night at Abbey Hotel or similar

Day 14

Locations: Donegal

Overview:

Today, we enjoy a heritage walk of Donegal town and a guided visit of the 15th century Donegal Castle. We also visit Magee Tweed where we witness a weaving demonstration. We then travel to Slieve League, home to the tallest sea cliffs in Europe and then drive back to our hotel via the spectacular Glengesh Pass.

(B)

Accommodation:

Abbey Hotel or similar.

Day 15

Locations: Derry

Overview:

We transfer to Derry and enjoy an expertly-led historical guided walking tour of Derry's walls. There will be some free time for our own exploration this afternoon. Derry-Londonderry made history in July 2010

when it was awarded the inaugural UK City of Culture designation for 2013. The journey towards City of Culture is both compelling and ambitious and will help unlock creativity and generate new connections to shape the new story of our city's vibrant future. The City has been rapidly developing its tourism offer and its exceptional assets include the most complete walled city in Europe, its peace making history and the lively youth culture make it a "cultural powerhouse."

(B)

Accommodation:

Derry City Hotel or similar

Day 16

Locations: Belfast

Overview:

En route to Belfast via the North Coast, we will visit the famous Bushmills Whisky Distillery, the world's oldest licensed whisky distillery and then continue on to the spectacular formations of the Giant's Causeway, a UNESCO World Heritage site. A natural amphitheatre made up of hexagonal shaped basalt rocks. Our final destination is Belfast where we will stay for the final 2 nights.

(B)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Ramada Wyndham Hotel or similar

Day 17

Locations: Belfast

Overview:

After breakfast we enjoy a lecture from a local expert followed by some free time. In the afternoon we depart for our Black Taxi tour of Belfast, visiting the colourful and evocative murals of West Belfast. It has been said that a city can be defined by its taxi drivers and nowhere is this truer than in Belfast. We visit the Titanic Quarter of Belfast & the Titanic Experience Exhibition. We will enjoy a farewell dinner at a local

restaurant.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

Ramada Wyndham Hotel or similar

Day 18

Locations: Belfast

Overview:

Our tour will conclude today after breakfast.

(B)

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 17 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 17 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 10 dinners
- Transport in comfortable and modern coaches.
- Services of a tour leader for the duration of tour.
- Ferry services.
- All excursions, entrance fees, and local guides.
- Service charges and gratuities.

What's not included in our Tour

- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- International airfares and departure taxes.
- Items of a personal nature such as telephone calls and laundry.

Level 2 - Moderate

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.