

**Small Ship Adventure Co.**

Specialising in Small Ship Cruising Worldwide



# IRELAND & THE BRITISH ISLES

*Aboard the Clipper Odyssey*

**May 22 – June 4, 2012**

## ITINERARY

*Tuesday, May 22, 2012*

**Depart / London, England**

Depart on your independent flight to London.

*Wednesday, May 23*

**London**

After checking in to our hotel, explore the city at your leisure. This evening gather for a welcome reception, followed by dinner, staff introductions, and a briefing.

*Thursday, May 24*

**London / Plymouth / Embark *Clipper Odyssey***

After breakfast we depart via train for Plymouth. Enjoy lunch in town before a tour of Plymouth including a visit to an Elizabethan house built in 1631 and the City Museum and Art Gallery. Birders visit Dartmoor National Park, known for its blanket bogs and upland heath. This afternoon we board the *Clipper Odyssey* and begin our voyage.

### ***Friday, May 25***

#### **Isles of Scilly**

The Isles of Scilly, 150 or so granitic isles, are known for their lovely beaches, rocky promontories, and ideal climate. Warmed by the North Atlantic Drift, the Isles of Scilly have given their fortunate inhabitants the luxury of turning a passion for growing flowers into a major industry. This morning we board local boats and cruise to Tresco. Here we visit the ruins and exquisite subtropical gardens at the medieval Tresco Abbey.

### ***Saturday, May 26***

#### **Saltee Islands, Ireland / Dunmore East / Waterford**

This morning we anchor off the privately-owned Saltee Islands, which attract a variety of birds to their craggy masses. On Great Saltee Island we search for puffins, murrelets, razorbills, gannets, and more of the 47 bird species known to inhabit the island.

Later this morning, the ship docks in the charming fishing village of Dunmore East. A drive to the House of Waterford Crystal allows us to witness the creation of exquisite crystal ware—from blowing to cutting and engraving—and a visit to the local museum provides enlightenment on the history and archaeology of the area. Or, choose to tour the classical gardens of Mount Congreve, a 700-acre estate with a celebrated collection of rhododendrons and azaleas.

### ***Sunday, May 27***

#### **Cork / Blarney / Kinsale**

In the morning enjoy your choice of tours. A Cork city drive takes us past St. Fin Barre's Cathedral, then through lovely countryside to Blarney town. At legendary Blarney Castle, you may wish to kiss the famed Blarney Stone, reportedly guaranteeing the gift of gab. Or, explore University College Cork, with its splendid Gothic revival-style buildings and the Honan Chapel, which showcases every aspect of the Irish intellectual, arts, and crafts movements of the early 20th-century Celtic revival period. At the Crawford Gallery we discover why Cork was named the European Capital of Culture in 2005.

After lunch aboard, join a countryside journey to picturesque Kinsale. The dramatic 17th-century Charles Fort presides over the harbor entrance; the *Lusitania* was torpedoed by a German submarine in WWI within sight of the ramparts. Enjoy the superb views and take a stroll among Kinsale's many galleries and shops before we return to the ship.

### ***Monday, May 28***

#### **Sneem / Killarney / Caherciveen (Ring of Kerry)**

This full-day excursion encompasses some of the world's finest scenery as we drive east from Sneem to the market town of Kenmare. The circular route then climbs through Moll's Gap, revealing an idyllic lake and mountain panoramas. We visit Muckross House in Killarney National Park, a restored 19th-century Elizabethan-style manor house and gardens, where artisans ply their traditional trades and craftwork in the Kerry Folklife Centre. After lunch in nearby Killarney, we continue along the northern route, through Killorglin with its grand land- and seascapes. We pass along the shores of Dingle Bay en route to re-embark the ship in Caherciveen.

*Tuesday, May 29*

**Skellig Rocks / Great Blasket Island**

At dawn we approach the remote and precipitous Skellig Rocks. Little Skellig is home to the second-largest colony of gannets in the world; thousands upon thousands of birds greet our arrival. Permission pending, we visit nearby Skellig Michael, the craggy site of an important 9th-century Christian monastic settlement. This afternoon enjoy a nature walk to explore the Blasket Islands, an archipelago off the Dingle Peninsula populated by numerous seabirds and seals.

*Wednesday, May 30*

**Dingle Peninsula**

The Dingle Peninsula is Ireland's most westerly outpost—the views from Sleah Head over the seacoast and off-lying islands are dramatic. We continue to Dunquin's Blasket Centre, which offers insights into the isolated island communities. We also visit the unusual Gallarus Oratory, a very early 9th-century church, built without mortar, to resemble an upturned boat. Enjoy free time in the small fishing town of Dingle to stroll and explore craft shops, or raise a pint at one of the lively, local pubs.

*Thursday, May 31*

**Cliffs Of Moher / Inishmore, Aran Islands**

Be on deck early this morning as our ship cruises by the seabird-studded Cliffs of Moher. We arrive at Inishmore, largest of the three Aran Islands and an outpost of Gaelic culture, where Irish-speaking residents live in traditional stone cottages. Our morning tour brings us to 5th-century Dún Aengus Fort, dramatically situated at the edge of 300-foot cliffs. Stop to enjoy a pint in the pub, before re-boarding the ship.

*Friday, June 1*

**Donegal**

Today choose a full- or half-day tour of charming Donegal Town. Both tours visit Donegal Castle and the remains of a Franciscan monastery that date to the 15th century. After lunch at Donegal Pub the full-day tour continues to Belleek Pottery for a chance to see potters at work and view the delicate, slightly iridescent final product.

*Saturday, June 2*

**Portrush, Northern Ireland / Giant's Causeway / Islay**

This morning we pass the dramatic landscape of the North Antrim Coast. Our ship docks at Portrush and we travel overland to the World Heritage Site of Giant's Causeway. This three-mile section of coastline is a geological masterpiece—some 40,000 closely-packed hexagonal columns of varying heights line the coast and descend like a staircase into the sea. In the afternoon we tour the Lagavulin Whisky Distillery. Founded in 1816, whisky is still produced, matured, and bottled on-site. Learn about the colorful history of the company and enjoy a sample of the intoxicating result.

***Sunday, June 3***

**Sanda Island, Scotland / Ailsa Craig**

Sanda is a privately owned island that hosts a variety of nesting and migratory seabirds. Step ashore to explore with our naturalists and stop for refreshments at the small restaurant. After lunch on board we make an expedition stop on Ailsa Craig, the volcanic plug of an extinct volcano. This uninhabited island is a bird sanctuary that provides a home for puffins and huge numbers of gannets.

***Monday, June 4***

**Greenock / Disembark / Glasgow / Onward arrangements**

After breakfast on board, disembark in Greenock and transfer to the Glasgow airport for your independent flight.