

Our Favorite Memories

Ireland

By Tour Leader Lida Clinton

OUR group arrived in Shannon to beautiful landscapes of every color of green. They say that Ireland has 40 shades of green-we all agreed. Travelers that arrived early visited Bunratty Castle that was first occupied by Viking Traders in 970. Around the castle are historical cottages, gardens and shops complete with thatched roofs.

Off to Galway, we enjoyed a scenic drive with grazing sheep and rock walls throughout the countryside. We acquainted ourselves with Galway



with a walking tour visiting Eyre Square, Lynches Castle, The Church of St. Nicholas, the Spanish Arch and the Cathedral. The Galway Music Festival was in town so several of the group enjoyed music from early Irish times.

The scenic drive to the Connemara region took us past lakes, bogs, mountains, and lots of sheep (we loved them!). We stopped at Kylemore Abby, the oldest of the Irish Benedictine Abbeys. It is set in the hills surrounded by trees with a lake in the front. It is

a beautiful building with gray stone turrets. We visited the Gothic chapel and gardens. Stopping briefly in Cong, we enjoyed the town where the John Wayne movie, *The Quiet Man* was filmed.

A ferry ride took us to the Aran Islands. We hiked the long trail to the top of Dun Aengus and were amazed at the fort and circular stone wall that encloses a space that drops 300 feet off the cliff. We shopped and bought beautiful wool sweaters and scarfs.

We next visited the Burren with its moon-like landscape of limestone. The Cliffs of Moher was one of the group's favorite stops. The spectacular cliffs rise almost 400 feet above the Atlantic Ocean with the best views in Ireland. We took lots and lots of pictures to remember the beauty of the cliffs.



Burren's moon-like landscape

Dublin was just a short train ride from Galway with more beautiful landscapes to enjoy. Our city tour took us to Trinity College where we viewed the Book of Kells and the main chamber of the old library. We walked through St. Patrick's Cathedral and past the Irish Parliament. We found lots to fill our free time including museums, art and history galleries and exploring the charming shops.

We were lucky to be able to tour Newgrange, a megalithic passage tomb that was built before the pyramids. Admission is limited to this World Heritage Site.

Dining in Ireland was exceptional. We sampled all the Irish specialties including Irish Stew, Shepard's Pie, and seafood chowder.

And of course, we had potatoes (often several kinds) with every meal—even with lasagna! We loved it all including their wonderful scones that we sampled all along the trip. Dublin had so many exciting and interesting things to do. We just needed more time... ah, the next trip. ❖



Kylemore Abby



The prehistoric burial mounds of Newgrange



Oscar Wilde statue, Dublin