

BEM IRELAND



Beispielprogramm Kids & Adult

Céad Míle Fáilte!

PROPOSAL BY BEM IRELAND
SUITE 2090 FITZWILLIAM BUSINESS CENTRE
26 UPPER PEMBROKE STREET
DUBLIN 2

P: + 353 1 63 73922
F: + 353 1 662 0365

CORPORATE HOUSE
BALLYBRIT BUSINESS PARK
BALLYBRIT, GALWAY

P: + 353 91 77 38 33
F: + 353 91 77 38 44

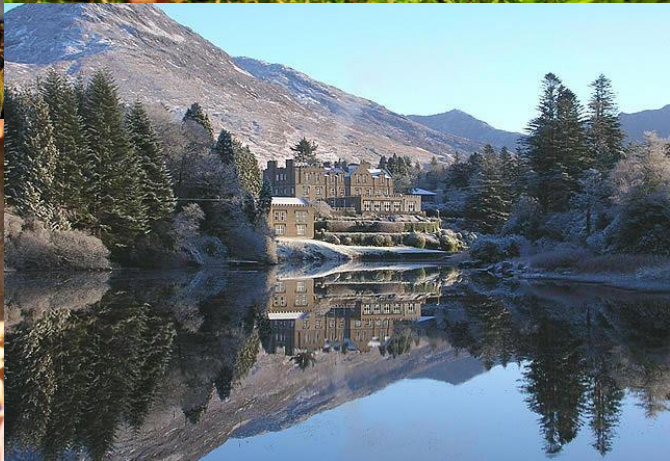


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Galway





Galway is a city situated in the west of Ireland and is the third largest and the fastest-growing city in the country. Located on the picturesque west coast of Ireland, it sits on the River Corrib between Lough Corrib and Galway Bay. The word *Gaillimh* means "stony" as in "stony river". Galway is known as **Ireland's Cultural Heart** (*Croí Cultúrtha na hÉireann*) and is renowned for its beautiful scenery, vibrant lifestyle and numerous festivals, celebrations and events. There are nearly 7000 Irish speakers in Galway city, nearly 10% of the population. Galway city has a reputation amongst Irish cities for being associated with the Irish language, music, song, and dancing traditions. It is sometimes referred to as the 'Bilingual Capital of Ireland', although like all other cities in the Republic of Ireland, the vast bulk of the city's inhabitant's converse mostly in English. The city is well known for its "Irishness", mainly due to the fact that it has on its doorstep the Galway Gaeltacht. An Gaeltacht covers all regions in Ireland which are officially recognised to be mainly Irish-speaking areas. More generally, *Gaeltacht* (plural *Gaeltachtaí*) is a word in the Irish language to describe any region where Irish (Irish Gaelic) is the main language. Enjoy the narrow medieval street with many cafes, bars, craft & artisan shops. Galway is also known as the **"City of Festivals"** and rarely a weekend goes by without some sort of event ranging from horse racing, food, arts and cultural festivals. You will also find nearby the **Cliffs of Moher**, one of Ireland's most famous tourist attractions, and the stunningly beautiful **Connemara**, which in the words of **Oscar Wilde**, one of Ireland's most famous Authors and Poets, **"Is a Savage Beauty"**.



Accommodation

Clayton Hotel



Clayton Hotel Galway is where you are guaranteed a warm welcome and professional service delivered with a friendly smile throughout your stay.

Only minutes from Galway city centre & Galway Airport, The Clayton offers free parking, free Wi-Fi and use of their leisure centre with 20m swimming pool, steam room and sauna. Children also have access to the Clayton Hotel Kids Club during School mid-tem breaks.

<http://www.claytonhotelgalway.ie/>

The Maldron Hotel



One of the best-known hotels in Galway, Maldron Hotel Galway has over 15 years' experience in delighting guests and exceeding their expectations. The hotel is family friendly and is only 10 minutes from the city centre. The village of Oranmore is a mere walk away. The superb leisure centre includes a 20-metre pool, hot tub, gym, steam room, sauna, solarium, kids' pool and a health and beauty salon. Adjacent to this Hotel is City Limits entertainment centre and a 6 screen Omniplex Cinema. Facilities include bowling, laser quest, a climbing wall, inflatable city, soft play area and snooker.

<http://www.maldronhotelgalway.com/>

The Harbour Hotel



Situated on Galway's picturesque waterfront, Harbour Hotel offers modern rooms include free Wi-Fi. Galway's lively centre is just a 5-minute walk away.

The Harbour Seafood Bar & Grill offers a contemporary space for homemade dining. With onsite parking and great location means guests can stroll to Galway city centre, Eyre Square and Shop Street in three minutes' walk from the hotel.

www.harbour.ie/

The Galway Bay Hotel



The award-winning, 4-star Galway Bay Hotel overlooks Galway Bay and is situated on Galway's Blue Flag beach. Guests can enjoy the hotel's swimming pool, hot tub, and its AA Rosette lobster restaurant.

Guests have free use of the leisure centre, which features a fully equipped, modern gym, and a steam room. Spa and beauty treatments are also available. Free parking is available, and Galway's lively centre and cathedral are just a 5-minute drive away.

<http://www.galwaybayhotel.net/>

Sample Tour 1



The Burren and the Cliffs of Moher

Enjoy a day touring the Burren and the world famous Cliffs of Moher. The name Burren comes from the Irish name '*Bhoireann*', meaning 'the stony place'. It's geologically unusual formations have lain unspoiled since the ice-age, the largest area of such in Western Europe, occupying an area of approximately 300 sq. kilometers. While in the Burren, you can observe the typical limestone landforms like underground rivers, swallow holes, glacial erratic and closed depressions. The area has sufficient soil to grow a wide variety of the most unusual and rarest of plants. The area also has some of the finest tombs in Ireland, if not the whole of Western Europe. There are relics of humans living here dating back almost 6000 years.

Continue on to the Cliffs of Moher, one of the most spectacular sights in Ireland. At their highest the Cliffs reach 214 meters, rising from Hag's Head, just north of O'Brien's Tower. From the best vantage point you can see all the way to the Aran Islands and Galway Bay. Afterwards, enjoy a lunch stop in O'Connor's Pub in nearby Doolin.

There are also opportunities to join a public tour of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher.

Sample Tour 2



Day Trip to the Aran Islands

The three Aran Islands, **Inis Mór Island (Big Island)**, **Inis Meáin Island (Middle island)** and **Inis Oírr Island (East Island)** are situated in a north westerly, south-easterly direction at the mouth of Galway Bay, Ireland. They are famous for their geological formation, historical monuments and their linguistic and cultural heritage. The Irish (Gaelic) language is still spoken here and in the twenty first century all native born islanders are bilingual in both Irish and English.

Start your day with a short boat trip to the biggest of these Islands, Inis Mór. Upon arrival on the island, go to the famous Joe Watty's pub for a traditional Irish lunch. After lunch continue on to see some of the things that make the island so special. The Islands seem to defy their size by all they have to offer: breathtaking scenery, ecclesiastical ruins from early Christian times, medieval castles, cliffs, prehistoric stone forts including the famous Dún Aonghasa (Dun Aengus ring fort), sandy beaches, clean air, unique flora and fauna and a rich folklore that the islanders are proud to recount. You will also see

The Seven Churches, The Man of Aran Cottages, Kilmurvey Craft Village & the Native Seal Colony before boarding your boat and returning to Galway City.

There are also opportunities to join a public tour of the Aran Islands.

Sample Tour 3



Half Day Tour of Connemara

Today you will get the chance to discover the wonder of the Connemara region in the west of Ireland which in the words of Oscar Wilde "*Is a Savage Beauty*".

From the rugged Twelve Bens mountain range in the north through lake-rich Roundstone Bog to the golden beaches reaching out into the Atlantic Ocean, you'll know you're in Connemara by the light that constantly changes the mood and tone of the landscape. Connemara has long been regarded as the real emerald of Ireland. This natural terrain and unspoilt environment offers the visitor a wonderland of sights, experiences, adventure and activities. The people are warm, friendly and offer great hospitality, which is the essence of Ireland.

Start by transferring to the Connemara Heritage and History Centre. This centre is based around the restored pre famine cottage of Dan O' Hara who was forced to emigrate in the 1840's when he was evicted from his home. The history & artefacts room has articles and displays on Connemara through the Ages and many items of historical and cultural interest. Other items of interest at the Centre include reconstructions of a crannog, ring fort & Clochán. Here you will get to see many traditional

farming methods such as turf cutting and bread making and Martin, your guide at the centre, will take you back in time with stories and songs from the mid-1800's, in front of an open fire.

After your stop in the Heritage centre, enjoy lunch in Ballynahinch Castle. Ballynahinch Castle Hotel is one of the finest 4 star luxury castle hotels in Ireland. It is set in a private 450 acre estate of woodland, rivers and walks in the heart of Connemara Co. Galway. This luxury hotel stands proudly overlooking its famous salmon fishery, with a backdrop of the beautiful 12 Bens Mountain range.

After lunch continue onto the village of Roundstone. This Connemara village is beautifully set on one of the most spectacular coastal drives in Ireland overlooking the Atlantic at the foot of Errisbeg Mountain. Today Roundstone is a popular holiday resort renowned among artists and naturalists for the remarkable beauty of the surrounding mountains and seascapes. It has a traditional craft centre and local activities include Connemara Pottery, Connemara Jewellery and Connemara musical Instrument making. You will have some free time to see the town before a stop in a local pub where you can choose to sample a pint of the Black Stuff (Guinness) and soak up the Irish pub atmosphere, before returning to Galway City.



Sample Tour 4



Full Day Tour of Connemara and Ashford Castle

Today you will get the chance to discover the wonder of the Connemara region in the west of Ireland which in the words of Oscar Wilde "*Is a Savage Beauty*". From the rugged Twelve Bens mountain range in the north through lake-rich Roundstone Bog to the golden beaches reaching out into the Atlantic Ocean, you'll know you're in Connemara by the light that constantly changes the mood and tone of the landscape. Connemara has long been regarded as the real emerald of Ireland. This natural terrain and unspoilt environment offers the visitor a wonderland of sights, experiences, adventure and activities. The people are warm, friendly and offer great hospitality, which is the essence of Ireland.

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Follow this by continuing onto the town of Clifden where you will get to enjoy lunch. Nestled amidst breath-taking mountain scenery and beautiful rugged coastline, Clifden is one of Ireland's most loved towns. Located in the West of the county, it is the largest town in Connemara. After lunch you will take a scenic drive along the Sky Road with breath-taking views of the Atlantic Ocean before continuing on to Kylemore Abbey for a tour. Originally built in 1867 as a romantic gift and a unique part of Ireland's history, Kylemore Abbey and the surrounding mountains and lakes are steeped in history.

Continue on from Kylemore Abbey to the Village of Cong, Enroute taking in Loch na Foey. Loch na Foey near Finney is located in a remote area of Connemara near the border with neighbouring County Mayo. The small loch is surrounded by nearby hills and has a spectacular amphitheatre atmosphere coupled with wonderful scenery. Cong is well known as it was the backdrop and set for the world famous movie, *The Quiet Man*, starring John Wayne & Maureen O'Hara and there is a *Quiet Man Museum* to be found in the village which you will get to visit. There is also a fine example of a ruined medieval abbey, where Rory O'Connor, the last high king of Ireland, is reputedly buried.

There are also opportunities to join a public tour of Connemara.



Family Tour 1

Day Tour of the Burren

Tour Highlights

- Tour of The Burren
- Ailwee Caves
- Hawk Walk experience
- Surfing Lessons
- Tour of The Cliffs of Moher

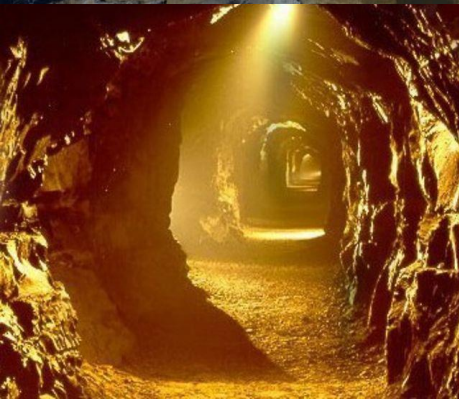
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You can visit the Ailwee Caves. The tour consists of a 30 minute stroll through the beautiful caverns – over bridged chasms, under weird formations and alongside the thunderous waterfall which sometimes gently sprays the unsuspecting visitor! Marvel at the frozen waterfall and explore the now extinct brown bears bones (*ursos arctos*). You can also enjoy a hawk walk, a once in a life time opportunity to interact with one of nature's top predators. On arrival, you will be greeted by your instructor and given a brief but informative introduction to falconry and the Harris Hawks that you will be handling. Once comfortable with your hawk, you will set off to the Hazel Woods and into the depths of the spectacular Burren region. Your instructor will coach you on

how to release and call your hawk back. You will then walk through the woodland paths for an unforgettable 45 minutes of wonder and exhilaration as the hawk flies to and from you, demonstrating its mastery of the air, it's thrilling manoeuvrability and its dashing speed.

Continue from here to the Sea Side town of Lahinch where you can enjoy a surfing lesson in some of Ireland's best surfing conditions, or go rock climbing in the nearby rock climbing school. During your rock climbing lesson you will get a number of climbs in, be introduced to and taught how to use the climbing gear and ropes, and get an abseil or two in as well.

Continue on to the Cliffs of Moher, one of the most spectacular sights in Ireland. At their highest the Cliffs reach 214 meters, rising from Hag's Head, just north of O'Brien's Tower. From the best vantage point you can see all the way to the Aran Islands and Galway Bay. Finally, return to Galway City after your day in the outdoors.



Family Tour 2

Tour of Connemara and Ashford Castle

Tour Highlights:

- Brigit's Garden
- Maam Valley
- Boat Trip
- Visit Joyce Country Sheepdogs
- Nature Walk in Clonbur Woods



Start your day with a visit to Brigit's Garden. Brigit's Garden takes you on a magical journey through the sacred spiral of the seasons into the heart of Celtic heritage and mythology, making it one of the truly outstanding environmental and cultural heritage centres in Ireland. Start by enjoying the Children's Discovery Trail. A simple trail leaflet invites children to look for things at each number post along the trail and guess the identity of the mystery animal. A great way to engage with nature and have lots of fun! Afterwards enjoy the Living Willow Play area. Have fun exploring the tunnels and play domes, all woven from living willow trees.

Follow this stop with a drive through the Maam Valley, one of the most beautiful stretches in Ireland. You can stop at Killary Harbour. This long inlet that runs right up to Aasleagh Lodge is the only natural fjord in Ireland, created by glacial activity over many ice ages. Its steep sides lead into very deep water, and form a natural harbour that offers sanctuary to boats on the west coast.

Offshore the sea is dotted with islands rich in wildlife and the scenery has to be seen to be believed.

Enjoy a guided boat trip that runs every day from March to October from Leenane on a custom-built catamaran cruiser. Seals, otters, sea birds and dolphins can all be viewed during the trip. Continue on to Joyce Country Sheepdogs, which is part of a family run farm located in Connemara. Joyce Country Sheepdogs offers you the opportunity to visit a working hill sheep farm and watch the Border Collie sheepdogs herding Connemara Blackface sheep.

Finally enjoy a nature walk in the Clonbur woodlands. There are many different trails to choose from for people of all ages and fitness. These woodlands are unique in that they are linked by viaducts or tunnels under the public roads. They were built by Guinness Family who are more famous for their brewing skills! Complete your tour by returning to Galway



Adult Attractions

Walking Tour of Galway City: Embark on a walking tour of the city with a local guide. Galway is the liveliest, most populated city on Ireland's west coast and the capital of Gaelic Ireland. The city streets are narrow and lined with old stone façade shops. Pubs are swarming with adventurers, musicians, artists and intellectuals and the main shopping area, Eyre Square, is the heart of the city. There are many intriguing stone buildings to see, including the Spanish Arch, which is the last remainder of the stone walls used to protect the quays in the 16th century. You can also see Lynch's Castle on Market Street, a part of which dates back to the 14th century. Galway is also the Bilingual capital of Ireland where many people are fluent in the Irish (Gaelic) and English languages. Listen and you will be sure to hear people conversing freely and passionately in our mother tongue. Your local guide will walk you through the city pointing many of the other places of interest such as Lynch's Window, St Nicholas' Church, Norah Barnacles House, The Kings Head Pub, Quay Street, Neachtain's Pub, The Cladagh, a river walk to Galway Cathedral, the Salmon Weir Bridge, The National University of Galway, The Town Hall and Red Earls Hall.

Trad on the Prom: Trad on the Prom celebrates the passion of Ireland's past with a contemporary production, of world class music, song and dance derived from the pulsating energy that has survived from the dawn of Celtic mysticism to become the record breaking phenomenon it is today. Performers who have captivated audiences in such extraordinary productions as 'Riverdance', 'The Chieftains', 'Lord of the Dance' and 'Feet of Flames' have now gathered together on one stage for an unforgettable entertainment experience in the City of the Tribes.

Moran's on the Weir: Moran's Oyster Cottage is a traditional thatched cottage that dates back over 250 years. Today Moran's is run by the 7th generation of the Moran family in the business. It is renowned the world over for its superb seafood which attracts people from the five continents. Visitors throughout the years have included; The Emperor and Empress of Japan, Roger Moore, Pierce Brosnan, Eddie Jordan, Julia Roberts and Woody Allen. It has also produced numerous national and world champion Oyster Shuckers and was the inspiration for the Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney's poem, Oysters. Michael Moran, the proprietor, is the world Oyster Shucking Champion!

Traditional Irish Pubs: Galway is packed full of authentic Irish pubs and the city is synonymous with the best of traditional Irish Music and dancing. There is no better way than to spend the evening walking from pub to pub, sampling some of the best guinness and fresh sea food in the land, and listening to a traditional Irish "Session".

Activities for Families

The Corrib Princess Cruise: The Corrib Princess sails from Woodquay in the heart of Galway City along the famous Steamers Line, which is the lakes traditional trade route. The journey takes passengers along the majestic River Corrib and onto the lake, providing visitors with unsurpassed views of the historic monuments and natural amenities that make this the most spectacular waterway in Ireland. The Corrib Princess takes you past castles and various sites of both historical interest and natural beauty. There is an abundance of wildlife and the Corrib has a peace and tranquillity all of its own.

Pure Skill: Pure Skill is the first of its kind in the world. Spanning over 25, 000 Sq. Ft the facility offers you a wide selection of sports from all around the world for everyone to enjoy. Come into the sports arena which is split into two main sections, the Pure Skill Circuit and the Pure Skill Interactive Sports room. In the main Circuit area, you compete over a selection of 10 sports from around the world including, Gaelic, Soccer, Hurling, Rugby, Tennis, Cricket, Baseball, Basketball, Golf Putting and Golf Chipping. Using fully automated technology via your own swipe card, you can gear up for over an hour of non-stop action! Upon arrival you receive your own scorecard so you can keep a tab on how well you are doing!

Turoe Pet Farm: Turoe Pet Farm is home to a wide variety of animals including pigs, cockerels, ponies, rabbits, donkeys, goats, ducks, Scottish highland cows, lamas and many more. The Farm offers many opportunities for people to enjoy a fun-filled day out. No matter what the weather conditions are, there is always something to do! One can take a leisurely walk around the 14 acre farm and enjoy the beautiful tranquil setting, fresh country air and the delightful sound of birdsongs. Or go indoors to experience the excitement of children of all ages bouncing their way around the “Inflatable City” – one of Europe’s largest bouncing castles.

Segway Tours: Your Segway adventure will take you through the heart of this lively, bustling and historic Gateway to the West - Galway City. Eyre Square, Spanish Arch, Corrib River, The Docks, Shop Street and Galway Bay are among the places you will discover. You will also visit



the less travelled paths for a unique experience of this beautiful city. This eco-friendly motorised tour is one you will never forget.

Pallas Karting: Pallas Karting is an outdoor activity adventure centre based in Galway. The Hairpin Bend, the thrill of sliding sideways in full control, and overtaking at breath-taking speed, before accelerating into the straight and heading for the chequered flag.....Dream on. Take a spin to Pallas Karting. Here you can be in the driving seat, jostling for pole position in one of the fastest and most exhilarating sports in Ireland today on Europe's largest Karting Centre. Pallas Karting has the green light for an action packed non-stop race programme for everyone.

Cooles Park: The seven woods celebrated by W.B. Yeats are part of the 6 kilometres of nature trails taking in woods, river, turlough, bare limestone and Coole Lake. Coole Park was once the home of Lady Augusta Gregory, dramatist, folklorist and co-founder of the Abbey Theatre with Edward Martyn of Tullira Castle and Nobel prize-winning poet William Butler Yeats. It was the centre of the Irish Literary Revival. Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, John Millington Synge and Sean O' Casey all came to experience its magic. They and many others carved their initials on the Autograph Tree, an old beech still standing today. Although the house no longer stands, one can still appreciate the surroundings that originally drew so many here. Enjoy a walk on "The Family Trail", which is an easy 1.75 km walk, taking you past the deer pen, the site of the house and into the walled garden to see the Autograph Tree.



Busy Bees: Busy Bees activity centre is packed with play areas for children between the ages of 6 months and 10 years. With a large play structure where children can climb, navigate and explore, slides, ball pools, mazes, bouncing castles and much more, children are sure to have a fun filled time!

The National Aquarium: Galway Atlantaquaria, National Aquarium of Ireland seeks to present a comprehensive view of the world of water through clear and interesting displays, exciting live presentations and animal interaction sessions. This is achieved through accurately displaying aquatic life in a manner that reflects their natural habitats, providing an enjoyable and educational environment to learn about the diverse marine ecosystem of Ireland. A visit to Ireland's largest aquarium is full of wonder for visitors of all ages. See the Ray Pool, Ocean Tank and the eerie Fin Whale Skeleton!

Paddle Boarding: Try out the World's fastest growing water sport. Sessions will take you through the basics in the safe environs of Rusheen Bay. Following this, get ready for some longer trips out into Galway Bay.

Hiking Diamond Hill: Diamond Hill, an outlier of the Twelve Bens mountain range, stands 500 Meters and towers above the small Quaker village of Letterfrack, which was founded by an English family during the Great Famine (1846-53) to relieve distress. The Diamond Mountain located in the Connemara National Park is one of the finest hikes in the country, with a multitude of route options. It commands huge ocean, island and mountain views. To the west you can see the islands of Inishbofin and Inishshark, and to the north you can see Inishturk, Clare Island and Achill (Co. Mayo) – once ruled over by the powerful O'Malley clan. It has been a favourite climb since the mid-19th century, when it was first described by an American female traveller and Evangelist, A. Nicholson. From its sharp edge summit it looks down on Kylemore Abbey and Gardens, and deep into the Twelve Bens mountain range and the Maam Turk Mountains beyond. On the slopes of the mountain are the remains of an abandoned 19th century Famine settlement, and buried in the surrounding bogs are the remains of a 5,000 year old megalithic tomb and the remains of a drowned bronze-age (4,000 years ago) forest. The wild valleys are home to large herds of native red deer and wild mountain goats. Its rivers have rich stocks of salmon and trout which are hunted by Connemara's secretive and



beautiful otters. This mountain trek is suitable for anyone who is reasonably fit and who does not suffer from vertigo.



Cycling Tours: Rent some bikes and enjoy a family cycle through some of Galway’s and the surrounding countryside’s most beautiful environs, be it around Galway City, through the rugged beauty of Connemara, or the Karst wonder that is the Burren. There are cycling tours to suit all ages and fitness levels in and around Galway.

Cnoc Suain: As Irish/Gaelic speakers, musicians, natural scientists, teachers and owners of Cnoc Suain, the owners Dearbhaill Standún and Charlie Troy invite you to join them in their restored 17th century hill-village - ‘Connemara *Clochán*’ - set on 200 acres of stunningly beautiful ancient landscape, overlooking mountains, lake, bog and sea. Enjoy a captivating introduction to local Irish culture & nature in this international award winning Connemara hill-village. Here you can enjoy 200 acres of magnificent wilderness, a sense of timelessness and history and a magical feast for the senses. As part of your visit you can enjoy Irish music, song and story, Gaelic language & poetry and learn some Céilí (Traditional Irish) Dancing. You will also learn of Connemara’s ancient bog land, landscape and nature. Hear the stories of the “Bog Bodies” and learn something about bog skincare! Finally you will immerse yourself in old Irish Thatched cottage traditions and customs, learning how to make Irish Soda Bread by an open fire.





Galway, the City Of Festivals

The Galway Arts Festival: The Galway Arts Festival takes place in Galway, Ireland every July. It first began in 1978 and since has grown into one of the biggest arts festivals in Ireland. Each year over 100,000 people attend the festival, with hundreds of writers, artists, performers and musicians creating theatre, spectacle, street art, music, comedy, literature and music to produce a stunning fortnight of cultural activity and celebration. Galway Arts Festival is the defining cultural expression of Galway and is at the heart of all aspects of life in the city. Over its 3 decade history the Galway Arts Festival has become a vital showcase for Irish arts and international arts and is now firmly established as Ireland's leading arts festival. Over the years it has developed a reputation to rival the near-hedonistic atmosphere which envelopes the city of Galway during those weeks. Highlights of the festival tend to be Macnas and Druid performances, two large local performance groups. <http://www.galwayartsfestival.com/>

The Galway Races: The Galway Races is a Horse-racing festival that takes place for a week starting on the last Monday in July. The races are held at Ballybrit race course and are the only seven-day race meeting in Ireland. The main days of the festival are on Wednesday, when the Galway Plate is held and Thursday when the Galway Hurdle and Ladies' Day take place. It has become the greatest of all Irish Racing Festivals and probably one of the most lavish, colourful and sociable fixtures in the Irish Racing World. It is not only a great sporting event, but also a unique social occasion filled with atmosphere, passion and craic, and attracts both the true race goer and socialites alike. The Galway races festival has become a meeting point for several years for people from all over Ireland. The excellent racing, oyster bars, champagne and beer tents, jazz bands, trade stands, race card competitions and even a best-dressed lady competition on Thursday combine to ensure there is something for everyone. Be part of what is truly an unforgettable experience. <http://www.galwayraces.com/>



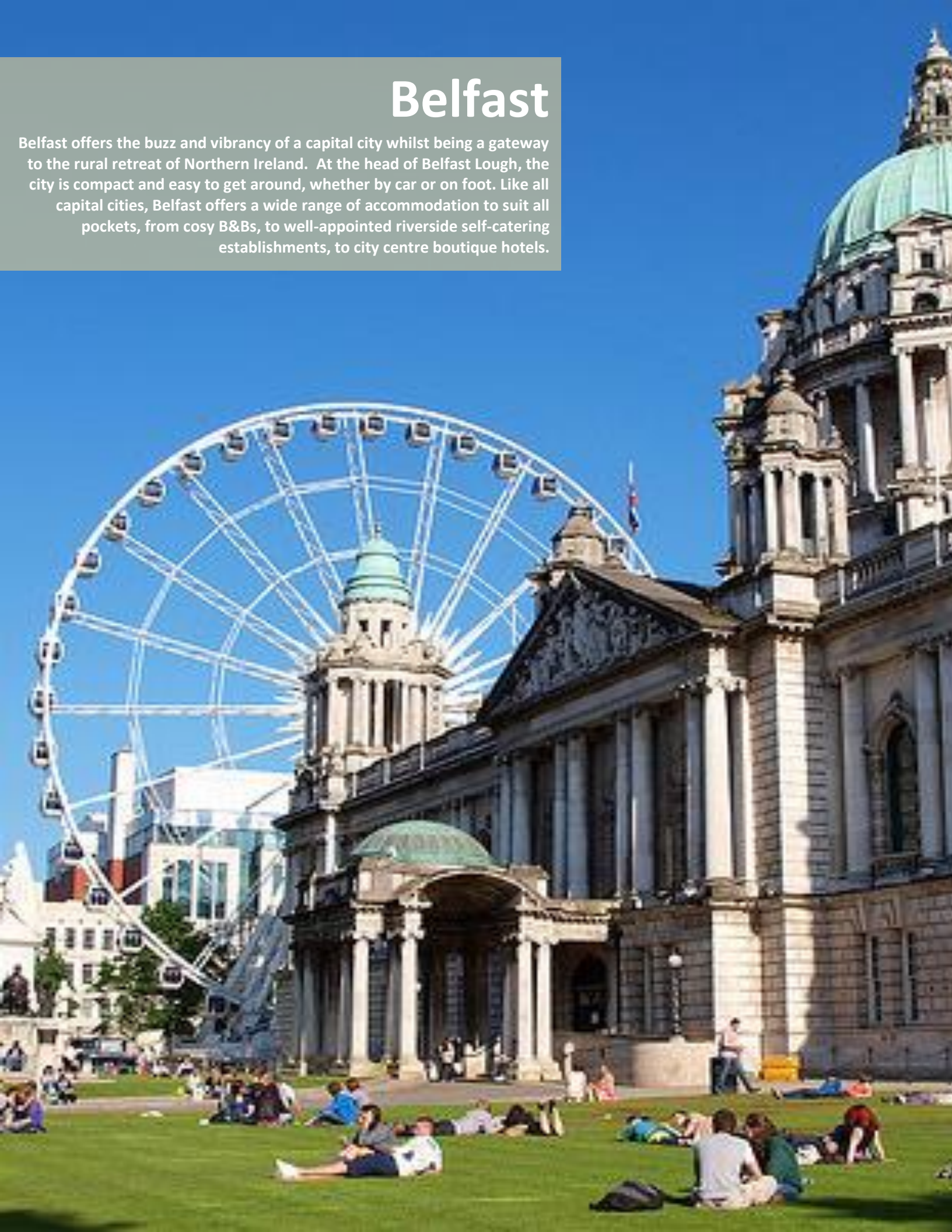
Baboró International Arts Festival: Each October the popular Baboró International Arts Festival brings a riot of sound and colour to Galway at this event dedicated to children. Aimed at school groups, there is an incredible choice of performances by production companies from around the world with shows covering a wide range of art forms including puppetry, music, theatre, storytelling and juggling. Baboró International Arts Festival for Children is recognised as the leading Irish arts festival devoted exclusively to children and fittingly takes place in Galway the festival capital of Ireland. <http://baboro.ie/>

Cúirt International Literature Festival: This festival consists of a variety of events taking place over the course of a week each April, with attendances and contributions from Irish and international authors. It includes readings of poetry and fiction, discussions, poetry slams, book launches, master classes, spoken and musical performances, multimedia events, theatre, and visual art. It has been running since 1986 and every year goes from strength to strength. www.cuirt.ie

The Galway Oyster Festival: Each year, on the last weekend of September, Galway City comes alive with seafood & oysters as it celebrates the Galway International Oyster & Seafood Festival, the most internationally recognised Irish festival after St Patrick's Day and the world's longest running Oyster Festival. Throughout the Irish food festival, there are lots of tantalising events for all to enjoy; seafood trails, oyster hot spots, oyster opening (shucking) championships including the Oyster 'Olympics' or World Oyster Opening Championship, foodie talks & tasting events in some of Galway's best restaurants, historic tours, an intimate Food village at The Festival Marquee and a Mardi Gras style Gala Event through the streets of Galway! www.galwayoysterfest.com

Belfast

Belfast offers the buzz and vibrancy of a capital city whilst being a gateway to the rural retreat of Northern Ireland. At the head of Belfast Lough, the city is compact and easy to get around, whether by car or on foot. Like all capital cities, Belfast offers a wide range of accommodation to suit all pockets, from cosy B&Bs, to well-appointed riverside self-catering establishments, to city centre boutique hotels.





Sample Tour

The W5 Interactive Centre & Titanic Boat Tour

Tour Highlights;

- W5 Science and discovery centre
- Titanic Boat Tour

Start your day with a trip to the **W5**, Ireland's award winning science and discovery centre at Odyssey, Belfast.

Located a short walk from Belfast city Centre, W5 provides a unique experience as well as fantastic fun for visitors of all ages. You will find something for children of all ages: you can Build a house, sail your own boat, explore the castle, take the tug of war challenge, explore space, fly your own plane, build and race your own K'nex car, touch the sound wall, peer into professional microscopes, light up lasers and boggle your mind with optical illusions, design and build structures, watch a tornado form, study nature's shapes, star in your own weather report and produce your own animated film. These are just some of the many activities in which to take part. There is also a coffee shop and picnic area if you want to bring your own lunch.

Follow this morning of activities with a Titanic Boat Tour. Scheduled, guided Titanic tours take in the historic Harland & Wolff shipyards and the famous Titanic sites around Belfast Harbour. Although many of the riverside Harland & Wolff sheds were demolished in early 2002 and those sites/sights are now gone, their demolition has actually provided a much better view of the Titanic slipways which were previously hidden by these same sheds. The Harbour area itself has always been a romantic and mysterious place, full of interesting sights, sounds and history, an exciting place which reeks of adventure and far off places! As a busy working port, most of it has been inaccessible to the public for many years unless you were employed in the shipping or shipbuilding industries, or were a passenger aboard an incoming or outgoing ferry or liner.



Sample Tour

Lisburn; the Fabric of Northern Ireland

Tour Highlights:

- Visit to the Irish Linen Museum
- Photo stops at St Patrick's Church & Lisburn Cathedral
- Tour, Tasting and lunch at the Hilden Brewery

Start your day with a trip to the **Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum**. **The Irish Linen Centre** showcases one of Ireland's best known industries. This award-winning museum in Lisburn's 17th century Market House offers a perfect outing, which brings the history of linen to life. Visitors can see the heritage of craft skills in the daily demonstrations of spinning and hand loom weaving and can admire the treasures of costume and damask linen. This centre also showcases events and exhibitions which recreate and honour Lisburn's rich local history such as the **Flax to Fabric Exhibition** which describes how Irish Linen was famed throughout the world for its elegance and quality. Follow the story of linen and trace its world-wide connections. Situated in Lisburn's 17th century Market House, this permanent exhibition features the story of the Irish linen industry from earliest times and includes skilled demonstrations of hand spinning of flax and hand loom weaving of fine linen cloth on original looms. Visitors can see the finest costume, dress and household linens dating from a past when Irish linen from Lisburn was known world-wide.

Armagh is known as the **Ecclesiastical Capital of Ireland** and with this in mind you can visit **Lisburn Cathedral** and **St Patrick's church** for photo stops, before continuing on to the **Hilden Brewery**. Hilden Brewery is a family run microbrewery located in Hilden outside the City of Lisburn, Co. Antrim. The brew house was once the stables of Hilden House, the former residence of the Barbour family. The brewery is situated behind the old Barbour Threads Linen Mill, one of the last surviving working linen mills in Northern Ireland, an industry that N. Ireland is renowned for, and it only recently stopped production in 2006. Visitors to the brewery can discover the magic of brewing and learn about this ancient craft from the master brewer and share in his enthusiasm for the process which converts malt and hops into traditionally brewed beer. Afterward, they can sample the subtleties of flavour and character of Hilden's finest beers.



Adult Attractions

The Black Taxi Tour: On this tour of the much rejuvenated and thriving city of Belfast, you will see fine architecture that includes the neoclassical City Hall, built on Portland Stone and completed in 1906 as a symbol of Belfast's new city status. There is also the modern glass structure of the Waterfront Hall Arts Venue to be seen and the Linen Hall Library. In the centre of town you will also see the Albert Memorial Clock – Belfast's very own leaning tower! See the Titanic Quarter and see where the famous ship was built before it left on its fateful maiden voyage. You will also learn all about the history of the Troubles in Northern Ireland as well as seeing the famous "Peace Wall".

The Titanic Pump House: Titanic's Dock and Pump-House comprises a 7-acre scheduled monument site which includes the Thompson Dry Dock and its associated Pump-House. The Pump-House was once the beating heart of Harland & Wolff's operation during the construction of the great White Star Liners - Britannic, Olympic and most famously the RMS Titanic. The Thompson Dock itself is the footprint of Titanic and provides an amazing representation of the scale of the ship. Today the Pump-House comprises of a Visitor Centre & Café. Tours of the Pump House are available all year round and include an interactive audio visual display. The tour guide will give visitors an in-depth understanding of the story of the dock, having special access inside the Pump-House to meet the 'Apprentice', and will walk along the full length of the dock to truly capture the size and scale of the Titanic, where they can also view the caisson gate. You will also get to see an audio visual presentation in the visitor's centre where you can learn more about the history of the famous vessel.

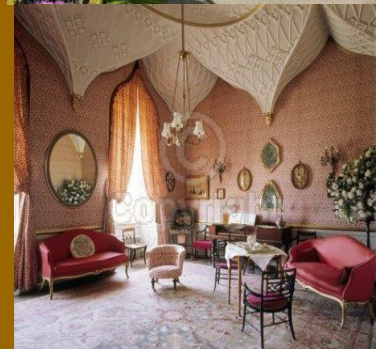
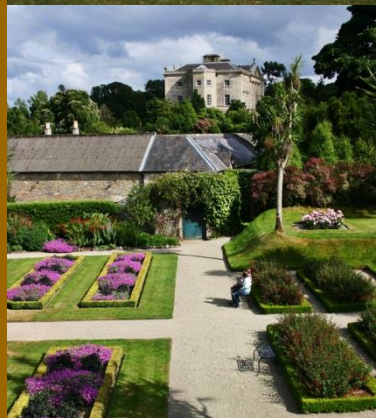
Activities for Families

Belfast Zoological Gardens: Belfast Zoo is home to more than 1,000 animals and 150 species. Many of the animals are under threat in their natural habitat and include: Barbary Lions, Red Kangaroos, Spider Monkeys, Moloch Gibbons, Rothschild's Giraffes, Asian Elephants and Malayan Sun Bears. Other highlights include; the recently renovated Bird Park, containing exotic and endangered birds; The Elephant and Giraffe enclosure which is also home to Meerkats and Giant Zebras; The plants and gardens set over 55 acres and the beautiful lake side, complete with a play park, farm and picnic tables.

Ulster Museum: Come face to face with dinosaurs, meet an Egyptian Mummy and see modern masterpieces with a visit to the Ulster Museum. As Northern Ireland's treasure house of the past and present, the museum is home to a rich collection of art, history and natural sciences and free to all visitors. From Ireland to the South Pacific, ancient relics to hands on activities, the museum offers something for everyone from the simply curious to the enthusiast.

Castle Ward: Castle Ward will take you on a journey of discovery. The 18th-century eccentric house with two distinctly different styles, classical and Gothic, will entice you to explore further. This truly beautiful 332-hectare (820-acre) walled demesne with walking trails, exotic garden, stunning vistas and picturesque farmyard, will unlock your imagination through family history, leisure pursuits, events and industrial heritage. A children's pastimes centre and laundry are a short walk from the house in the stable yard, alongside a gift shop, second-hand bookshop and tea-room. Children can enjoy the adventure and woodland playground and the Victorian past times centre with toys and clothes for dressing up. There are also beautiful walks and cycle route. This has something to suit all tastes.

Castle Espie: Castle Espie Wetland Centre can provide a memorable day out for people of all ages and interests, from keen wildlife enthusiasts to those just wanting a nice afternoon tea in pleasant surroundings. There are beautiful walks around the reserve with good viewing facilities over Strangford Lough. Children will be delighted by how close they can get to the ducks, geese and swans and all visitors will be entranced by the beauty and tranquillity of the



reserve. Some of these animals will nibble grain from your hand offering an inspiring up-close wildlife experience. There is also Stroat Town, Castle Espies woodland natural play area which is a dream come through for children.

The Ark Open Farm: At The Ark Open Farm there are lots of baby animals to cuddle, pony rides for all ages, lambs & kid goats to bottle feed as well as hand feeding at any time to chicks, rabbits & guinea pigs. There is also an indoor play area with pedal ride on tractors, diggers, dumpers and sandpit, outdoor adventure play area, picnic sites, cottage cafe/restaurant and a pedal go kart track.

The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum: Step back in time in and uncover a way of life from 100 years ago. Discover cottages, farms, schools and shops as you wander through the beautiful parkland of the Folk Museum chatting to costumed visitor guides demonstrating traditional crafts. Climb on and off majestic steam locomotives or experience the sensation of flight in the Transport Museum bursting with horse drawn carriages, electric trams, motorbikes, fire-engines and vintage cars.

Delamont Country Park: This Park's relaxing atmosphere makes it a place to dream and settle into the slow rhythm of the countryside...However it has the biggest playground in Ireland, Ireland's Longest Miniature Railway and boat trips around Strangford Lough making it an ideal place to visit for families.





BEM IRELAND



PROPOSAL BY BEM IRELAND

SUITE 2090 FITZWILLIAM BUSINESS CENTRE
26 UPPER PEMBROKE STREET
DUBLIN 2

P: + 353 1 63 73922

F: + 353 1 662 0365

CORPORATE HOUSE
BALLYBRIT BUSINESS PARK

BALLYBRIT, GALWAY

P: + 353 91 77 38 33

F: + 353 91 77 38 44