

TOGETHER WE TRAVEL!



# solo connections



~ Best of Ireland & Scotland ~



**Best of Ireland & Scotland**  
**27 Days**  
**24 August – 19 September 2024**  
**Fully Hosted**

**ITINERARY HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Dublin Castle & St Patrick's Cathedral
- Trinity College & Kilkenny Castle
- House of Waterford Crystal & Blarney Castle
- Cliffs of Mohr Cruise & Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery
- Giants Causeway & Titanic Belfast
- Stirling Castle, Glen Ord Whiskey Distillery & Jacobite Steam Train
- Loch Ness Cruise & Skara Brae Neolithic village
- Edinburgh Castle & Holyrood Palace
- AND SO MUCH MORE!

**INCLUDES:**

- Return Economy Class International Flights including taxes departing Brisbane or Perth *ask us about departing from other capital cities and business class upgrades.*
- **Private Single Room** in superior hotel accommodations
- Meals as per the itinerary 24 Continental Breakfasts and 24 Dinners
- Sightseeing Tours, Entrance fees and Transfers\* as per itinerary
- **Tour Manager** – travels with group from/to Brisbane
- **Tour Coach Driver**
- Tipping for Tour Coach Driver and Local Guides

**EXCLUDES:**

- Any meals, tours, flights, excursions or transfers other than mentioned above or in the itinerary
- Items of a personal nature i.e. laundry, drinks, phone calls,
- Porterage, Tipping/Gratuities other than stated above
- Visas and Travel Insurance

**Priced from \$22,078\* per person**

Terms and Conditions apply. Price is per person Sole Use and subject to availability. Price is correct as at 06/12/23. Based on Economy class Emirates group airfare. Surcharges apply for Sydney & Melbourne departures. Further surcharges apply for Business Class upgrades. Flights cannot be removed from package. Frequent Flyer points cannot be used to upgrade. Tour requires minimum number of passengers to depart. Prices may fluctuate if surcharges, fees, taxes or currencies change. Solo Connections is constantly striving to improve our itineraries and inclusions. If such improvements can be made, or unforeseen circumstances beyond our control make changes necessary, we reserve the right at any time to vary itineraries and to substitute inclusions of equal value. Further booking conditions may apply, please check all prices, availability and other information at time of or before booking. Package cancellation fees apply. Denise Marie Falsay trading as Solo Connections. ATAS Accredited A11424. ABN 92 582 582 996

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**Day 1 & 2 – Saturday 24 & Sunday 25 August 2024**  
**Brisbane – Dublin via Dubai**

D

Today, passengers departing from Brisbane, you will meet your Tour Manager and fellow travellers at Brisbane International Airport for our flights to Dublin, transiting in Dubai on the way.

*Interstate passengers, you will meet the group in Dubai.*

We arrive at Dublin airport, on Sunday. After collecting our bags and clearing customs & immigration we will be transferred to our hotel to check in.

The afternoon is at our leisure to rest up and refresh after the long flight. Your Tour Manager will be on hand to accompany anyone that would like to take a walk.

We will meet early evening for a **Welcome Dinner** at the hotel.

**Accommodation: Jury's Inn Parnell Street or similar (3 Nights)**

**Day 3 – Monday 26 August 2024**  
**Dublin**

B-D

After breakfast this morning before we are joined by a local guide for a full day sightseeing tour of Dublin.

We visit the main sights of the city, such as **Dublin Castle** and **St. Patrick's Cathedral** and finish with a visit to the **Guinness Visitor Centre** where we all get to sample the Guinness!

This evening we go out to a local pub for dinner and enjoy some Irish music and dance.

**Day 4 – Tuesday 27 August 2024**  
**Dublin**

B-D

This morning after breakfast we take a guided tour of **Trinity College Old Library** and will have the opportunity to see the **Book of Kells** - Ireland's greatest cultural treasure.

We have the afternoon at leisure to rest or to explore further and your Tour Manager will be on hand for anyone that would like company.

We come together tonight for dinner in the hotel.



Day 5 – Wednesday 28 August 2024  
Dublin - Cork

B-D

Enjoy breakfast this morning before we check out and board our touring coach as we depart Dublin and travel to Cork, with stops in Kilkenny and Waterford.

**Kilkenny Castle** dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and it will be the first stop of the day. After taking a guided tour of the castle, we will have some free time for lunch (at own expense) in the city

We then continue for a visit to the **Waterford House of Crystal** factory located in Waterford, a Viking city built in 914 AD. This esteemed factory is the beating heart of the world's luxury crystal manufacturers and is where the most intricate, authentic and masterful crystal pieces come to life. The factory is situated at the centre of the Viking Triangle, a cluster of museums which detail the proud history of this great city.

Later we make our way to Cork.

After we have checked in to the hotel and freshened up, we will meet and go out to a local pub for dinner.

**Accommodation: Hotel Isaacs Cork or similar (1 Night)**

Day 6 – Thursday 29 August 2024  
Cork - Killarney

B-D

This morning after breakfast we check out, board the coach and head to Blarney Castle.

**Blarney Castle** is a medieval stronghold in Blarney, North West of Cork. Though earlier fortifications were built on the same spot, the current keep was built by the MacCarthy of Muskerry dynasty, a cadet branch of the Kings of Desmond, and dates from 1446.

We then travel to **Glengarriff** to visit **Inacullin** gardens in **Garinish Island**. The island extends to 15 hectares and is renowned for its gardens which flourish in the mild, humid, micro-climate of Glengarriff harbour.

Continuing on to **Killarney**, we arrive with time to check in and freshen up before going out to a local restaurant for dinner.

**Accommodation: Scotts Hotel or similar (2 Nights)**



Day 7 – Friday 30 August 2024  
Killarney

B-D

Today after breakfast we have a full day tour of the **Ring of Kerry**, a scenic drive through the rugged coastal landscapes and rural seaside villages. Make sure to have your cameras!

As part of the tour, we will visit the **Skellig Experience Visitor Centre** to learn about the abandoned monastery, and **Muckross House Garden & Traditional Farm**.

Located approximately 6km (3.6 miles) from Killarney town centre, Muckross House and Gardens represent the focal point and nucleus of Killarney National Park. This is Ireland's oldest National Park and it includes the world famous Lakes of Killarney, as well as the mountains and woodlands that surround them.

We return this afternoon to our accommodation and will have dinner in the hotel tonight.

Day 8 – Saturday 31 August 2024  
Killarney - Galway

B-D

This morning enjoy breakfast before we check out and depart Killarney as we travel to **Limerick**.

A local guide will join us on a short walking tour of the city. Its old town is known for the medieval-era **St. Mary's Cathedral** and **St. John's square**, which is lined with Georgian townhouses.

We will enjoy some time at leisure for lunch (*own expense*) before we continue to **Doolin** to board a public cruise to see the Cliffs of Moher.

The **Cliffs of Moher** (Aillte an Mhothair) are one of Ireland's most popular visitor attractions. However until you see them from the sea, you haven't really seen them at all. These amazing sea cliffs are named from the ancient Gaelic word 'Mhothair' (Moher) which means ruined fort. They rise to a jaw dropping height of over 214 metres (700ft) at their highest point. Our cruise sails right beneath this point just north of O'Brien's Tower. The furthest point of the cliffs from Doolin is Hags Head in Liscannor. Here you can find the 1st century fort, Moher Tower, which it is named after. It is hard to take in their magnificent heights until you see them from sea level. The people walking along the trail high above appear no larger than ants!

Once we are back on land we reboard the coach and will continue to Galway,

Upon arrival we will check into our accommodation and freshen up before this evening's **medieval banquet** at **Dunguaire Castle**.

**Accommodation: Jury's Inn Galway or similar (2 Nights)**



Day 9 – Sunday 01 September 2024  
Galway

B-D

After breakfast we take a morning tour of Galway with a local guide, exploring the medieval city.

Highlights of the tour today may include Eyre Square, Spanish Arch and Kirwans Lane along with a photo stop at **Galway Cathedral**.

The Cathedral of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven and St Nicholas, commonly known as Galway Cathedral, is a Roman Catholic cathedral, and one of the largest and most impressive buildings in the city. Construction began in 1958 on the site of the old city prison. It was completed in 1965, lending it the designation of being "the last great stone cathedral to be built in Europe".

Returning to our accommodation the afternoon is free at leisure to rest up or explore further.

We will meet early evening for dinner.

Day 10 – Monday 02 September 2024  
Galway - Donegal

B-D

Checking out today following breakfast, we begin travelling north, and stop at **Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery**, a spectacular Bronze Age graveyard of some 60 graves.

Next we enjoy a visit to **Sligo Abbey**. This Dominican friary has dominated Sligo town centre since the mid-thirteenth century, when it was created by Maurice FitzGerald, the founder of the town itself. Some of the building from that period has survived the next nine centuries of turmoil.

The abbey was partially destroyed by fire in 1414, when it fell foul of an unattended candle, and suffered further mutilation following the Rebellion of 1641. According to legend, worshippers salvaged the abbey's silver bell at that time and threw it into Lough Gill. Despite the ravages of history, the abbey contains a great wealth of carvings, including Gothic and Renaissance tomb sculpture, a well-preserved cloister and a sculptured fifteenth-century high altar – the only such altar to survive in an Irish monastic church.

After some free time for lunch (*own expense*) we continue our journey to **Donegal**.

We will check into our rooms and then meet for dinner within the hotel tonight.

**Accommodation: Abbey Hotel or similar (2 Nights)**



Day 11 – Tuesday 03 September 2024  
Donegal

B-D

Enjoy breakfast before we are joined by a local guide for a morning tour of Donegal, including a photo stop at Donegal Castle.

In the very heart of this county town, towering over the River Eske, stands **Donegal Castle**. Red Hugh O'Donnell himself built it as his personal fortress in the fifteenth century. It is said that, leaving to seek succour in Spain in the wake of the Battle of Kinsale, Hugh determined to make sure his castle would never ever fall into English hands – by setting it on fire. But he was to be disappointed.

English captain Sir Basil Brooke became the castle's new lord in 1616. As part of a massive programme of improvements, Brooke built a handsome manor house beside the tower. He also commissioned the magnificent chimney-piece, finely decorated with carved fruit and his own imperious coat of arms. The building complex fell into ruin in the twentieth century, but was brought back to its former glory in the 1990s.

Returning to our accommodation the afternoon is free at leisure to rest up or explore further. We meet early evening tonight to enjoy dinner in the hotel.

Day 12 – Wednesday 04 September 2024  
Donegal - Belfast

B-D

Following breakfast and check out, our first stop of the day is **Mussenden Temple**, a small circular building perched dramatically on a 120ft cliff top, high above the Atlantic Ocean and offering spectacular views. The temple, built in 1785, was constructed as a library and modelled from the Temple of Vesta in the Forum Romanum in Rome. It is dedicated to the memory of Bishop Lord Bristol's niece, Frideswide Mussenden. The walls were once lined with bookcases and a fire was kept burning constantly in the basement. This and its enclosed flue meant that, even in this very exposed location, the books never got damp!

We continue to **Port Stewart** where we will have some free time to explore the seaside town, before visiting one of Ireland's most visited attractions, Giant's Causeway.

**The Giants Causeway** comprises around 40,000 thousands of mostly hexagonal basalt columns descending gently into the sea. Depending on who you believe, the stones were formed either by an underwater volcano's geological actions or by a giant named Finn McCool, who lived and battled along the north Antrim Coast. For centuries countless visitors have explored the Giant's Causeway and marveled at its unique rock formations, situated on one of World's most spectacular coastlines for nearly sixty million years. It has stood as a natural rampart against the unbridled ferocity of the North Atlantic storms. The rugged symmetry of the columns never fails to intrigue and inspire visitors. **Please note:** *the shuttle bus has not been included as it is not currently operational. Should it become available at the time of tour and you wish to use it, this will be at own expense on the day.*

After the visit, continue to Belfast to check into our accommodation before coming together for dinner.

**Accommodation: Hampton by Hilton Belfast City Centre or similar (2 Nights)**



Day 13 – Thursday 05 September 2024  
Belfast

B-D

Enjoy breakfast this morning before we take guided tour of Belfast.

This tour will include a visit to the **Titanic Belfast**, a world-leading visitor attraction which tells the story of RMS Titanic, which opened in 2012, as a monument to Belfast's maritime heritage on the site of the former Harland & Wolff shipyard in the city's Titanic Quarter where the RMS Titanic was built. This award-winning attraction tells the story of Titanic, from her conception in Belfast in the early 1900s, through her construction and launch, to her maiden voyage and subsequent place in history.

Returning to our accommodation the afternoon is free at leisure to rest up or explore further.

We'll meet early evening for dinner tonight.

Day 14 – Friday 06 September 2024  
Belfast - Glasgow

B-D

Checking out after breakfast we prepare for a travel day as it's time to journey to Scotland!

A local coach will take us to **Larne**, where we board a ferry for the 2 hour crossing to **Cairnryan**. Upon arrival, a touring coach will pick us up and we will be taken to **Glasgow**.

Once we have checked in there will be some time at leisure before we meet early evening to go out to a local restaurant for dinner.

**Accommodation: Holiday Inn Glasgow City Centre or similar (2 Nights)**

Day 15 – Saturday 07 September 2024  
Glasgow

B-D

Following breakfast we are joined by a local guide for a half day tour of Glasgow, including the main city sights.

**Glasgow** is a port city on the River Clyde in Scotland's western Lowlands. It's famed for its Victorian and art nouveau architecture, a rich legacy of the city's 18th–20th-century prosperity due to trade and shipbuilding. Today it's a national cultural hub, home to institutions including the Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet and National Theatre of Scotland, as well as acclaimed museums and a thriving music scene.

This afternoon is free at leisure to explore further or rest.

Early evening we enjoy dinner at the hotel.





Day 16 – Sunday 08 September 2024  
Glasgow – Fort William

B-D

After breakfast, check out and board the coach as we first travel to **Stirling Castle**, one of Scotland's grandest castles due to its imposing position and impressive architecture. The scenery will take your breath away.

We then stop to view the **Bridge of Orchy**, a small village named after the crossing over the River Orchy, which was constructed by the British Army during the pacification of the Highland Clans following the Battle of Culloden in 1746.

Proceeding to Fort William, we will get to enjoy a whiskey distillery tour and tasting at **Ben Nevis Whiskey Distillery**.

Once we've checked into our accommodation we will be taken out for dinner to a local restaurant.

**Accommodation: Alexandra Hotel or similar (2 Nights)**

Day 17 – Monday 09 September 2024  
Fort William

B-D

This morning after breakfast we will catch the **Jacobite steam train**, described as the greatest railway journey in the world!

The train stops at the village of **Glenfinnan**, before arriving in Mallaig, where we will enjoy some free time. The bustling and thriving port of **Mallaig** is situated on the North West coast along the famous **Road to the Isles**. The town is a fascinating place where you can soak up the atmosphere of a working fishing port and at the same time enjoy the remote location that makes this a great place to relax.

At our designated time we board the train again and return to Fort William where we will enjoy dinner this evening in the hotel.

Day 18 – Tuesday 10 September 2024  
Fort William - Inverness

B-D

Check out after breakfast this morning before we take a full day excursion to explore the **Isle of Skye**, starting with a visit to the 13<sup>th</sup> century castle of Eilean Donan Castle.

**Eilean Donan Castle** is one of the most recognised castles in Scotland, and probably appears on more shortbread tins and calendars than any other. It is, without doubt, a Scottish icon and certainly one of the most popular visitor attractions in the Highlands. When you first set eyes on it, it is easy to understand why so many people flock to its stout doors year after year. Strategically located on its own little island, overlooking the Isle of Skye, at the point where three great sea-lochs meet, and surrounded by the majestic splendour of the forested mountains of Kintail, Eilean Donan's setting is truly breath-taking.



With some photo-stops along the way on to **Dunvegan Castle and Gardens**. Any visit to the Isle of Skye would be incomplete without enjoying the wealth of history on offer at Dunvegan Castle & Gardens, the ancestral home of the Chiefs of Clan MacLeod for 800 years.

We will then have some free time in Portree before travelling to Inverness to check into our accommodation for the night. After refreshing we will meet for dinner.

**Accommodation: Holiday Inn Express Inverness or similar (1 Night)**

Day 19 – Wednesday 11 September 2024  
Inverness - Thurso

B-D

We will enjoy breakfast before checking out and travelling to **Drumnadrochit**. Here we visit **Loch Ness**, home to the famous lake monster! We take a one hour cruise on the loch before having some free time to relax and to purchase lunch (*own expense*).

Our afternoon will be spent travelling en route to **Thurso**. Upon arrival we check in, freshen up and meet for dinner within the hotel.

**Accommodation: Station Hotel or similar (2 Nights)**

Day 20 – Thursday 12 September 2024  
Thurso

B-D

After breakfast this morning we board the coach and are taken to **Scrabster**. Here we embark on the ferry, crossing to Stromness, in **Orkney Islands**. On arrival to **Stromness**, a local guide will join us for a full day tour of the island.

We first visit the **Standing Stones of Stenness**. This may be the earliest henge monument in the British Isles. The enormous Stones of Stenness are all that remains of a great stone circle on an ancient ceremonial site. Today the sites consists of four upright stones up to 6m in height in a circle that originally held 12 stones. The focus of the interior was a large hearth. The stones were encircled by a large ditch and bank, the form of which has been lost over time by ploughing.

Then we travel to **Kirkwall** for a walking tour, which includes **St Magnus Cathedral** and the **Bishop's Palace**. Later we drive south over **the Churchill Barriers** and visit the **Italian Chapel** before viewing the **Ring of Brodgar** and a visit to **Skara Brae Neolithic Village**.

The Neolithic village of Skara Brae was discovered in the winter of 1850. Wild storms ripped the grass from a high dune known as Skara Brae, beside the Bay of Skaill, and exposed an immense midden (refuse heap) and the ruins of ancient stone buildings. The discovery proved to be the best-preserved Neolithic village in the UK. And so it remains today.

We return to Stromness for the return ferry crossing to Scrabster and then back to Thurso so we can freshen up before meeting for dinner this evening in the hotel.



Day 21 – Friday 13 September 2024  
Thurso - Inverness

B-D

We will check out after breakfast and begin our travels back to Inverness with a couple of stops to break the journey.

First up will be **Helmsdale**, a riverside village worth the stop, where we will have some free time to explore.

We then travel to **Golspie** to visit **Dunrobin Castle** which includes entry to the falconry display, museum and gardens. The Castle, which resembles a French château with its towering conical spires, is the most northerly of Scotland's great houses and the largest in the Northern Highlands with 189 rooms. Dunrobin Castle is also one of Britain's oldest continuously inhabited houses dating back to the early 1300s, home to the Earls and later, the Dukes of Sutherland.

Upon arrival in Inverness we have time to check in and freshen up before meeting to go out for dinner at a local restaurant.

**Accommodation: Holiday Inn Express Inverness or similar (2 Nights)**

Day 22 – Saturday 14 September 2024  
Inverness

B-D

After breakfast this morning we are joined by a local guide for a half day walking tour of Inverness, including visits to the grounds of Inverness Castle and to the Scottish Kiltmaker Visitor Centre Exhibition.

**Inverness Castle** sits on a cliff overlooking the River Ness. A succession of castles have stood on this site since 1057, although the present structure dates from 1836. The castle is still in use today, as a Sheriff's Court and for government purposes so only one tower is open to visitors. The tower, known as Inverness Castle Viewpoint, gives wonderful 360-degree views over Inverness and the River Ness. Even if you don't ascend the tower though you can still get outstanding views across the river to Inverness Cathedral on the far bank.

**The Scottish Kiltmaker Visitor Centre** is Scotland's only visitor attraction devoted to their famous national dress. We'll enjoy a fascinating insight into the history, tradition and culture of the kilt – from its origins through to the present day. Set within the kiltmaking workshop, the Centre creates a colourful, authentic and memorable experience, brought to life with audio-visual, costume and tartan displays in all their brilliance. We will see kilts being made for export all over the world and kilts being made for their own retail shops in Inverness. We discover a traditional dress that dates back hundreds of years – and still has cultural resonance today!

This afternoon we travel a short distance to **Culloden** to visit the **Culloden Moor Battlefield Visitor Centre**. Marking the spot of the last major battle on British soil, the wild moor at Culloden is the resting place of 1,500 Jacobite and 50 Government soldiers who fought and died here in 1746. Today, you can walk along the battle lines and see the graves of the soldiers beside the memorial cairn in the centre of the battlefield. Flags represent the front lines of both armies and show the vast scale of the battle, whilst in the centre clan markers indicate the graves of the fallen.

Returning to our accommodation we have time refresh before meeting for dinner.



Day 23 – Sunday 15 September 2024  
Inverness - Edinburgh

B-D

We say goodbye to Inverness after breakfast today, and start on our way to Edinburgh.

We will first stop in **Aberdeen**, where a local guide will give us a brief city tour, before our journey takes us to **St. Andrews**, the last stop before the Scottish capital.

Enjoy some free time to explore in St. Andrews and we'll then reboard the coach and continue to Edinburgh.

We check into our accommodation and enjoy dinner in a local pub on arrival.

**Accommodation: Motel Royal One or similar (3 Nights)**

Day 24 – Monday 16 September 2024  
Edinburgh

B-D

Today we will be joined by a local guide after breakfast for a full day tour of Edinburgh.

After viewing some of the main sights we make a visit to **Edinburgh Castle**, one of the most exciting historic sites in the United Kingdom.

Edinburgh Castle is one of the oldest fortified places in UK. With a long rich history as a royal residence, military garrison, prison and fortress, it is alive with many exciting tales. When you climb Castle Hill, you will walk in the footsteps of soldiers, kings and queens – and even the odd pirate or two. Though parts of it remain in military use, the castle is now a world-famous visitor attraction. It's also an iconic part of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site.

We will stroll the **Royal Mile** and stop to view **St Giles' Cathedral** before visiting the **National Museum of Scotland**. Explore the diversity of the natural world, world cultures, science and technology, art, design and fashion, and Scottish history, all under one roof.

Returning to the hotel there will be time to freshen up before we venture out for this evenings dinner show - **Spirit of Scotland**. The show is a rip roaring evening of traditional Scottish song and dance accompanied by a great selection of quality Scottish food to delight your pallet. The resident band and traditional Scottish Dancers provide breathtaking performances for their audience and never fail to entertain.



Day 25 – Tuesday 17 September 2024  
Edinburgh

B-D

This morning after breakfast our local guide joins us for a tour to Holyrood Palace, the Kings official residence in Edinburgh.

Open throughout the year, the **Palace of Holyroodhouse** stands at the end of Edinburgh's Royal Mile. Explore the Palace's close associations with some of Scotland's most well-known historic figures such as Mary, Queen of Scots and Bonnie Prince Charlie, and learn how today it is used by The King when carrying out official engagements in Scotland.

The afternoon is at our leisure to explore further or get ready for tomorrows departure.

This evening we will come together for a **Farewell Dinner**.

Day 26 & 27 –Wednesday 18 & Thursday 19 September 2024  
Edinburgh – Glasgow – Brisbane via Dubai

B

We enjoy a final breakfast together before we check out and transfer to Glasgow airport in time for our flights.

We return home with amazing memories of times spent with newfound friends whilst seeing the best of Ireland & Scotland.