

Land of Legends

Architectural Wonders of Ireland

September 23–30, 2026

Tour Leaders: Sinéad Walshe and Curt DiCamillo



Above: Russborough House. Photo by Niamh McCabe / Flickr.

Itinerary



Wednesday, September 23

Arrive in Dublin and transfer independently to the five-star **Marker Hotel**, a sleek, contemporary building that overlooks the waterfront of Grand Canal Square. This new square, designed by American landscape artist Martha Schwartz in 2008, is famous for its “red carpet” paving made of bright red resin-glass. Rooms will be available for check-in after 3:00 PM.

In the afternoon we'll set forth on a **guided walking tour of Dublin's Docklands**, the new and vibrant Dublin neighborhood where our hotel is located. A local historian will tell us about the remarkable 21st century rebirth of this former industrial zone into a dynamic hub for business, culture, and innovation. On our walk to visit the **Custom House** (designed by the important 18th century architect James Gandon) we'll see contemporary architecture by renowned architects such as Daniel Libeskind and the Irish-born U.S. architect Kevin Roach. We'll then cross the River Liffey on Santiago Calatrava's sleek Samuel Beckett Bridge to look at the exterior of the *Jeanie Johnston*. Completed in 2000, the *Jeanie Johnston* is a replica of the 1847 three-masted ship of the same name that carried thousands of Irish citizens to North America during the Great Famine.

We'll end our first day with a celebratory dinner at **Forbes Street**, the award-winning gourmet restaurant in our hotel.



Samuel Beckett Bridge and the Dublin Docklands.



Custom House, Dublin.



Top: Russborough House. Photo by Niamh McCabe / Flickr. Bottom: Casino Marino.

Thursday, September 24

We start our second day together with a drive through the Wicklow Mountains to **Russborough House**, often called the most beautiful house in Ireland. Built in the 1740s for the 1st Earl of Milltown, the Palladian style house sits within a 200-acre park that still contains many of its original 18th century follies. The 700-foot-long house is noted for its lavish and witty plasterwork by the Lafranchini brothers and the important collection of European fine and decorative arts, including paintings, furniture, porcelain, and silver, formed by Sir Alfred Beit, who purchased Russborough in 1952.

Next we'll visit **Lodge Park**, where owners Sarah and Robert Guinness will host us for a tour and lunch. Overlooking a stretch of the River Liffey, the late 18th century house features a central block with curved quadrants that lead to a pair of two-story wings—one of the most perfect examples of the Irish Palladian style. Owned by the Guinness family since 1948, Lodge Park is famous for its walled garden.

We will end our day at the **Casino Marino**, one of the finest Neoclassical buildings in Europe. Designed by Sir William Chambers and built between 1758 and 1776 as a folly for the 1st Earl of Charlemont, the casino was called "... one of the most exquisite miniature 18th century buildings in Europe" by the late architectural historian Mark Bence-Jones. Here we'll have a guided tour of the casino, which appears to be a small building on the exterior ("casino" in this usage means "little house"), but which on the inside contains 16 richly decorated Neoclassical rooms spanning three floors.

You will have the rest of the afternoon and the evening on your own.



Friday, September 25

This morning we'll check out of the Marker Hotel and board the coach to begin the 100-mile journey westward to Cashel in Co. Tipperary. We will break the drive with two stops, the first of which will be the 18th century **Burtown House**. After a guided walk through the beautiful woodland gardens, we'll explore the Georgian house with the owners and learn about Burtown's artistic history. The Walsh family, who own the estate today, have produced generations of artists, including a botanical painter, a portraitist, and a photographer. Their work can be seen in the gallery at the Green Barn, which is where we will have a delicious farm-to-table lunch.

Our next stop is **Emo Court**, a stunning estate rich in history and natural beauty. Once the largest country estate in Ireland, the domed house was built in the 1790s for the 1st Earl of Portarlington. Designed by James Gandon (who also designed the Dublin Custom House), Emo Court is famous for its Pantheon-like rotunda. A grand space with a coffered ceiling topped by a clear glass oculus, the room is encircled by Siena scagliola pilasters with gilded Corinthian capitals. Emo's last private owner, Major Cholmeley Dering Cholmeley-Harrison, fell in love with the estate on a visit to Ireland in 1969 and dedicated his life to restoring the house. In 1994 he gifted Emo Court to the Irish nation.

After we leave Emo we'll head to Cashel, a historic town in Co. Tipperary. Upon arrival we'll check into the five-star **Cashel Palace Hotel**, a magnificent Palladian country house that was built in the 18th century as a bishop's palace.

Tonight we'll have a causal dinner at a nearby restaurant.



Top: Emo Court. Photo by An Tuiseal Ginideach / Wikimedia.
Bottom: Cashel Palace. By kind permission of Cashel Palace Hotel.

Saturday, September 26

Saturday begins with a coach journey south to the heritage town of Cahir and a visit to **Cahir Castle**, one of Ireland's largest and best-preserved castles. Set on a rocky island on the River Suir, the castle was built in the 13th century and served as the stronghold of the powerful Butler family for centuries. At the time of its building Cahir Castle was at the cutting edge of defensive castle design. So effective was its layout and design that it was believed to be impregnable; it finally fell to Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, in 1599, when heavy artillery was used against the castle for the first time.

Next we'll take a short drive through luscious woodlands to the **Swiss Cottage**, a beautiful cottage orné ("decorated cottage" in French) set in idealized countryside. Popular in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, cottages orné were rustic picturesque buildings on the outside with surprisingly grand interiors. Swiss Cottage, built in the early 19th century, possibly to the designs of the famous Regency architect John Nash, contains exquisitely decorated rooms and a graceful spiral staircase.

Next we'll have tea and freshly baked scones at the 16th century **Killenure Castle**. After learning about the history of the castle and its residents over the years, we'll have a tour of the romantic ruins. Eavaun and Emmet purchased the castle in 2007 and have lovingly restored a house next to the castle as their home.

Our final excursion today will be an optional afternoon visit to one of Ireland's most recognizable sites—the **Rock of Cashel**. An extraordinarily impressive archaeological site that sits dramatically on top of a limestone outcrop, the rock possesses the most impressive cluster of medieval buildings in Ireland. Those not going to the Rock of Cashel can take the time to shop, relax, or explore the town of Cashel.

You will have the rest of the afternoon and the evening on your own.



Top: **Cahir Castle**. Photo by Robert Linsdell / Flickr. Bottom, left: **Killenure Castle**. Photo by Mike Searle / Wikimedia. Bottom, right: **Rock of Cashel**. Photo by Kent Wang / Flickr.



Sunday, September 27

After breakfast we'll drive an hour southwest to **Fota House, Arboretum & Gardens** in Co. Cork, today owned and cared for by the Irish Heritage Trust. We'll have a tour of the house, considered one of Ireland's finest examples of Regency architecture, learn about the Smith-Barry family, who owned and lived in Fota for 200 years, and tour the grounds. Famous for its extensive and important collection of rare and exotic trees and shrubs, the 27-acre garden was laid out by James Hugh Smith-Barry in the 19th century and is today internationally renowned.

Following a delicious local lunch, we'll visit **Doneraile Court**, another of Co. Cork's magnificent country houses. Built by the St. Leger family around 1645 on the site of a ruined castle, the house towers over its 400-acre park. An 18th century rebuilding campaign left Doneraile as one of the finest examples of Georgian architecture in Ireland. The house, which was lived in by the St. Legers until the mid-20th century, is today owned and operated by the Irish Office of Public Works.



Fota House. Photo by Caroline Gethings / Wikimedia.

Tonight we'll have a gourmet dinner at **The Bishop's Buttery**, a Michelin-starred restaurant in Cashel Palace. Located in the hotel's brick and stone vaulted cellars, the atmospheric restaurant is famous for its glowing fires, sumptuous furnishings, and astonishing food.



Monday, September 28

After breakfast we'll take the scenic drive to **Shankill Castle**, where we'll be hosted by the owners for a tour of their Queen Anne house, followed by a casual lunch prepared with delicious organic produce from Shankill's gardens and farm. The castle, purchased in 1991 by Elizabeth and Geoffrey Cope for use as a family home, is today filled with antiques and artifacts collected by Geoffrey and paintings created by Elizabeth.

We'll see beautiful countryside scenery on the drive through the Barrow Valley in Co. Carlow on our way to the privately-owned **Borris House**, one of Ireland's most picturesque country houses. Constructed in the Tudor style, Borris House was built in 1731 for Morgan Kavanagh, a descendant of the ancient Celtic kings of Leinster. Here a member of the Kavanagh family will host us for a tour of their history-filled house.

On our way back to Cashel, we'll stop for a tour at a forgotten gem: **Knockelly Castle**, a privately owned 15th century tower house surrounded by ancient meadows and an intact bawn (a fortified enclosure wall). Jeremy Emmet-Booth, who purchased the castle in 2020, has converted Knockelly into a family home and a living conservation project.

You will have the rest of the afternoon and the evening on your own.

Top: **Shankill Castle**. Photo by Sarah777 / Wikimedia.

Bottom: **Borris House**. Photo by Curt DiCamillo.



Tuesday, September 29

Today we venture into delightful Co. Waterford, where our first visit will be to **Cappoquin House**, a charming Georgian courtyard mansion perched on a high position overlooking the River Blackwater and the town of Cappoquin. Today the seat of Sir Charles Keane, 7th Baronet (whose family has been here for over 200 years), the 18th century house, which was built on the site of a medieval castle of the FitzGerald family, is celebrated for its delicate Adam style plasterwork. The large garden, famous for its stunning views of Lismore Castle, features ancient trees, a sunken formal flower garden, and terraces with azaleas, rhododendrons, magnolias, and camellias.

Next we're off to **Dromana House**, where we will have a home-cooked lunch with owner Barbara Grubb, a member of the Villiers-Stuart family, who have owned land here since 1215. Dromana House was mostly built in the 17th century and then enlarged in the 18th and 19th centuries. By the 1960s the Villiers-Stuarts had fallen on hard times; they sold the house, while most of the estate (once one of the largest in Ireland) was seized and liquidated by the Irish government. In 1965 most of the house was demolished, leaving just the 17th century wing. In the early 1990s the family bought back a small bit of land and the house, where they live today. Dromana is most famous for its unique gatehouse, the only Hindu-Gothic style building in Ireland. Spanning the River Finisk, the gatehouse was created in 1826 of wood and papier-mâché to celebrate the wedding of Henry Villiers-Stuart; it was rebuilt in stone circa 1830.

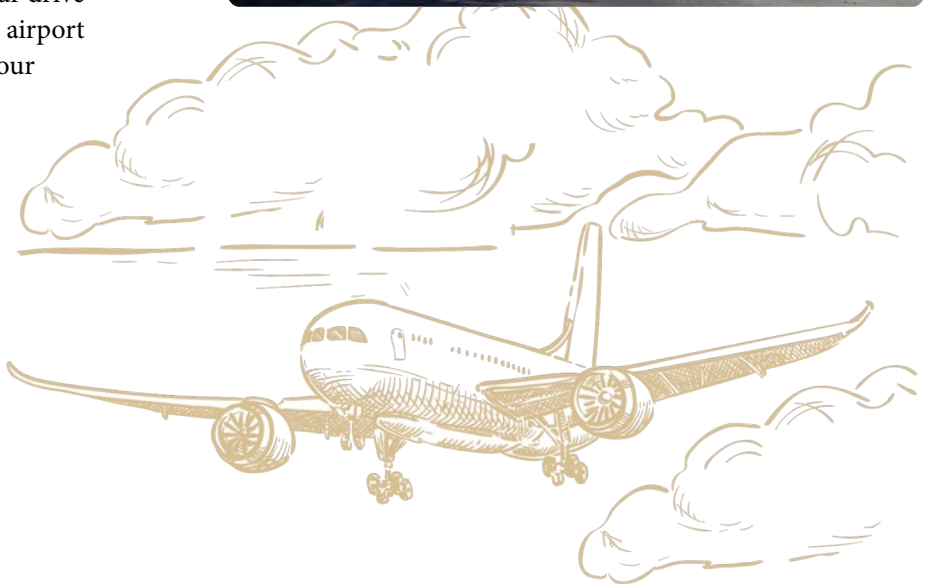
Tonight we'll have a festive farewell dinner to celebrate our time together in magical Ireland.



Wednesday, September 30

After our final breakfast, we'll check out of the hotel and board the coach for the approximately 2 ½-hour drive to Dublin Airport. The coach will arrive at the airport by 12:00 PM. We recommend that you book your flights for a 2:00 PM, or later, departure.

Top: **Cappoquin House**. Photo by Gregory Keane / Wikimedia. Bottom: **Dromana House Hindu Gatehouse**. Photo by Curt DiCamillo.



Tour Leaders

Sinéad Walshe

Tour manager Sinéad Walshe is senior program manager at International Seminar Design, Inc. (ISDI). Her family emigrated from Co. Cork, Ireland, to Washington, D.C., when she was ten. Sinéad has lived and traveled extensively throughout the world, including Latin America, Europe, Southeast Asia, and East Africa. Upon completion of her undergraduate degree from McGill University, she earned her TESL certificate and taught English as a second language in Spain. Before joining the ISDI staff Sinéad was an elementary school teacher and a real estate appraiser in Washington, D.C. An avid folk dancer, she served on the board of the Folklore Society of Greater Washington. Sinéad has been leading educational tours for non-profit organizations for more than 25 years and is particularly fond of accompanying groups in Ireland.

Curt DiCamillo

Curt is the curator of fine art at American Ancestors. Before he came to American Ancestors he worked for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the National Trust for Scotland. Curt is a noted historian and a recognized authority on the British country house, about which he has written, lectured, and taught in the U.S. and abroad. Since 1999 he has maintained an award-winning database on the web, TheDiCamillo.com, which seeks to document every English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish country house ever built, standing or demolished. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, is listed in *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in the World*, and is a member of the Council of the American Museum in Britain.



Accommodation

Dublin Anantara The Marker Dublin Hotel

The Marker is a sleek, contemporary luxury landmark hotel located in the Docklands close to chic restaurants, world-class theatres, and the city's main tourist attractions. The hotel features a restaurant that showcases the best of modern Irish cuisine, a rooftop bar with spectacular 360° views of the mountains and sea, an award-winning spa, and an indoor pool.

Cashel Cashel Palace Hotel

Set within a magnificent 18th-century country house in the heart of Ireland, the Cashel Palace Hotel is a luxury hotel and spa in the charming town of Cashel. Meticulously restored, this five-star property offers elegant bedrooms and public areas complemented by expansive gardens, a world-class spa, a Michelin star restaurant, and a convivial Guinness bar.

Above: Cashel Palace. By kind permission of Cashel Palace Hotel.

**For more information, please contact Curt DiCamillo at
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American Ancestors is America's founding genealogical organization, the most respected name in family history, and one of the leading non-profit organizations in the field. We create enriching opportunities for members and the public to research their family history, attend educational programs and tours, exhibitions, and other inspirational experiences that communicate the power and importance of family history.

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Terms & Conditions

TOUR COST

Land Package: \$10,495

Single Supplement (*Classic Room in Cashel*): \$1,695

Single Supplement (*Deluxe Room in Cashel*): \$2,395

Tour price is per person, based on double occupancy, with a minimum of 15 paying participants.

A limited number of single rooms—3 Classic rooms and 3 Deluxe rooms at the Cashel Palace Hotel—are available on a first-come, first-served basis. (Singles and doubles will be in Deluxe category rooms at the Marker Dublin Hotel).

Deposit & Final Payment: A deposit of \$2,000 per person is required to reserve a spot on the tour. Deposits are payable by check or credit card (MasterCard, Visa, or American Express). Final balance will be invoiced and is due on, or before, May 26, 2026. Final balance payments are payable by check, bank wire, or ACH transfer to International Seminar Design, Inc. Registrations will be accepted beyond this date on a space-available basis.

Activity Level: Moderate to strenuous; good walking ability is advised. Many visits require the use of staircases and a moderate amount of walking on uneven and sometimes wet ground. Comfortable shoes are essential.

Flights: Airfare is not included in the tour price. Participants are responsible for all aspects of their round-trip air arrangements to Dublin, Ireland. Please do not purchase airline tickets until the operation of the tour is confirmed.

Terms & Conditions: Upon receipt of registration, ISDI will send registrant a Participant Tour Agreement that details the full terms and conditions for this tour. This document must be signed and returned to ISDI before participant's registration is considered complete and any arrangements can be confirmed.

COVID-19 Policy: American Ancestors and ISDI follow guidelines and mandates issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Tour participants are no longer required to wear face coverings during the tour. Proof of vaccination status is not required, nor is social distancing mandated. In line with CDC guidance, we advise anyone who is unvaccinated (and encourage anyone who feels more comfortable) to continue wearing a mask. We appreciate your adherence to this policy.

Travel Insurance: Travel Insurance is not included in the tour cost, but participants are strongly encouraged to purchase a travel protection plan in conjunction with this tour, including

coverage of trip cancellation, trip interruption, emergency evacuation/repatriation, medical expenses, lost or damaged baggage, and other expenses and/or losses incurred due to unexpected situations. Should a participant cancel at any time after registering for the tour, American Ancestors and ISDI must strictly abide by the cancellation policy outlined herein. Travel insurance information will be sent upon tour registration.

Tour Price Inclusions: Two nights' accommodation at the Marker Dublin Hotel in Deluxe rooms; five nights' accommodation at the Cashel Palace Hotel (*doubles in Garden Wing Superior rooms; singles in either Main House Avenue View Classic rooms or Main House Rock View Deluxe rooms*); breakfast daily at the hotels, five lunches, four dinners, one tea reception; water, non-alcoholic beverages, and wine with all included lunches and dinners; land transportation by private coach; one group transfer from Cashel to Dublin Airport on September 30; entrance fees to sites and visits listed in the itinerary; leadership of Curt DiCamillo for the duration of the tour; services of an ISDI tour manager; expert local guides for all touring; gratuities for guides and drivers and at included meals; handling of two pieces of luggage per person upon arrival and departure from the hotels; bottled water on coach; service charges and taxes.

Tour Price Exclusions: Airline tickets, airline taxes and surcharges, and baggage fees; airport portorage; airport arrival transfer; passport, visa, or ETIAS fees; meals, other than those specified in the itinerary; gratuities for hotel housekeeping; personal items such as telephone calls, room service, valet service, à-la-carte orders, specialty wines and liquors, laundry charges, travel extensions, or tour deviations; entry or departure fees levied by local governments; travel insurance; any other items not specifically included in the itinerary.

Cancellations & Refunds: Cancellation by participant must be made in writing to American Ancestors and is effective only upon acknowledged receipt by American Ancestors. There is a non-refundable registration and planning fee of \$1,000 per person, regardless of cancellation date. Written cancellation received by American Ancestors on or before May 26, 2026: full refund, minus \$1,000 per person registration and planning fee. Written cancellation received by American Ancestors between May 27 and August 6, 2026: full refund, minus \$5,250 per person cancellation fee (includes registration and planning fee). Written cancellations received by American Ancestors on or after August 7, 2026: no refund.

**For more information, please contact Curt DiCamillo at
curt.dicamillo@americanancestors.org.**

This tour is operated by International Seminar Design, Inc. for American Ancestors.