

# Gardens of Northern Ireland

**24 May – 1 June 2023**

**From £1,595.00 per person (based on minimum 20 paying passengers)**

## Itinerary

### Day 1 – Wednesday 24 May 2023

Flights to Dublin under own arrangement.

We will meet at Dublin Airport at an agreed time. On our way North to our hotel we will visit **Malahide Castle**, one of the oldest and most historic castles in Ireland. From 1185 until 1975, it was the home of the Talbot family, a remarkable tenure by a single family and one of the longest in Ireland. The estate survived such losses as the Battle of the Boyne, when fourteen members of the owner's family sat down to breakfast in the Great Hall, and all were dead by evening, and the Penal Laws, even though the family remained Roman Catholic



until 1774. The interior is lavishly furnished with many antiques and paintings of interest. The ornamental gardens adjoining the castle cover an area of about 22 acres and were largely created by Lord Milo Talbot. He was an enthusiastic plant collector who brought specimens from around the world to create the gardens here. The gardens are best described as a small Botanic garden, with in excess of 5000 difference species and varieties of plants present. and its splendid botanic garden. We will enjoy a guided tour of the Castle and a self-guided tour of the gardens. Lunch is available here (not included).

Our next visit is to the private gardens of Mark and Olive Wilkinson at **Tyrrelstown House**. Here there is 2 walled gardens which are over 600 years old and included a wide range of plants, shrubs plus an organic vegetable garden. Refreshment will be included here.

We continue north to our hotel, the 4-star **Dunadry Hotel**. Dinner is served this evening.

## **Day 2 – Thursday 25 May 2023**

Following breakfast, we travel to the House and Gardens of **Mount Stewart**. The dazzling and idiosyncratic gardens bask in the micro-climate of low rainfall and humid coastal air that exists here. The Italian Garden south of the house is in the form of a giant parterre, edged in startling golden thuja or smouldering purple berberis and filled with plantings of carmine, yellow and scarlet on one side, with cooler blue, lavender and grey on the other. Elsewhere, there is a Spanish garden with huge eucalyptuses looming in the woods behind, and an exuberant and formal sunken garden surrounded by a fine pergola planted with clematis, honeysuckle and roses. The entrance façade of the house overlooks an entirely different landscape, a scene of serenity with noble trees leading gently uphill to a lake. East of the lake are blood-red and orange rhododendrons and the banks of the lake are planted with long drifts of arum lily. This is one of the most attractive and stimulating gardens, where traditional features are carried off with exuberance and panache, and we have allowed plenty of time here to take everything in. Entry to the house is included. Lunch facilities are available here (not included).



This afternoon we transfer to the gardens of **Grey Abbey House**, which is considered to be one of the finest Georgian country houses in Ireland and has remained in the possession of the Montgomery family since 1607. There is a walled garden, vegetable garden, shrub rose border, two Orchards with a collection of Victorian fruit trees and Irish apple trees, along with the Southern Hemisphere garden which includes part of the Chilean collection of seeds and plants from the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. A tour and afternoon tea is included.



Our final visit to day is **Ballywalter Park**, an Italianate palazzo mansion constructed by Charles Lanyon for Andrew Mulholland, great, great, great grandfather of the present owner. Through a careful process of restoration, dedication and enthusiasm Ballywalter Park is probably in as good a condition now as when it was originally built all those years ago and offers an opportunity to see how Victorian grandeur is matched with a contemporary twist. We are privileged to be joined here by

Lord and Lady Dunleath, who will give us a personal guided tour of the house.

We return to our hotel in time for dinner.

### Day 3 – Friday 26 May 2023



Following breakfast, we enjoy our first visit at **Rowallane Garden**. The first impression is one of mystery as you approach the house through a dark tunnel of conifers and rhododendrons, but this is quickly dispelled by the flower-filled spectacle which opens up before you. The liveliest gardening is to be found in the walled garden, where mixed borders are stuffed with big old shrubs and the occasional rare rhododendron animates the scene. Astilbes, hostas, meconopsis, primulas and much else form the underplanting. The walled garden has a kind of inner sanctum, where a lawn is planted with specimen trees and shrubs. Outside the walled gardens a walk through ramparts of rhododendrons leads to a naturalistic rock garden planted with azaleas, daphnes, olearias and pieris.

Later we move to the southern tip of Strangford Lough, where **Castle Ward** sits in a wooded valley with a memorable view towards the lough. Apart from some traces of 18<sup>th</sup> century woodland, the garden is chiefly Victorian in character. Close to the house is a walled terraced garden filled with exotic planting, *Acca sellowiana*, *Beschorneria yuccoides* and large old plants of cabbage palm. Behind a screen of Irish yews a rock garden with dwarf conifers runs along one side of a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century pinetum with immense Wellingtonias. Perhaps the best thing about Castle Ward, though, are the grand walks in the huge demesne, with delicious views of trees and the lough beyond. Lunch facilities are available here (not included).



We later return to Belfast for a **short city tour** and a visit to **Titanic Belfast**, a state-of-the-art, six storey living monument to Belfast's moving maritime legacy, built at the head of the slipways from which Titanic was launched. The stories of the two great sister ships built and launched here, RMS Olympic and RMS Titanic, are told in a series of displays, including a 'Titanic Experience' exhibition and an 'immersive theatre', which simulates diving underwater to explore the wreck. Learn about the men who built the ship that was hailed as the "new wonder of the world" and gain an insight into their daily lives during the construction.

We return to the hotel where dinner is served in the evening.

#### **Day 4 – Saturday 27 May 2023**

After breakfast, we travel to **Ballyrobert Cottage Garden & Nursery**, Ballyclare, Co Antrim. Maurice and Joy Parkinson work this six acre garden and provide an exquisite display of cottage garden plants. The garden is sub-divided into themes or individual garden areas and includes the lakeside garden; the front cottage garden; the formal cottage border; the sheltered garden; and a woodland and wildlife haven. Despite the heavy clay soil, and being located in a frost pocket, a wide range of plants flourish including phlox, hosta, rudbeckia, rogersia and ornamental grasses.



We continue north on the scenic Antrim Coast Road to the gardens at **Glenarm Castle**, the 400 year-old home of the Viscount and Viscountess Dunluce and their family. Originally created to supply the Castle with its fruit and vegetables, the Walled Garden is now filled with herbaceous borders, colourful flowers and beautiful water features, with exciting new features added each year. At the top of the Walled Garden, you can enter a doorway through to the Woodland Walk where you can enjoy the calming green scenery and panoramic view over the garden.

Dinner is served at our hotel this evening.

#### **Day 5 – Sunday 28 May 2023**

Following breakfast, we check out of our hotel. On the way to our next hotel, we will stop at **Benvardeen Walled Garden**, owned by the Montgomery family since 1798. The garden is one of the finest in the North of Ireland. Most of the landscaping and tree planting was carried out by the Montgomery family at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.



We continue to the World Heritage site at the **Giant's Causeway**, where an impressive National Trust visitor centre has enhanced this famous beauty spot. The 37,000 hexagonal basaltic columns were created by ancient volcanic eruptions some 60 million years ago, along the same chain of seismic activity that created Fingal's Cave on Staffa, a hundred miles or so to the north. Of course, there is also a more romantic explanation – that it was built by the giant Finn McCool, as the consequence of a gargantuan spat with a Scottish adversary, although another version of the legend has it that he was merely

trying to reach his girlfriend. Either way it is an impressive sight. Lunch is available here (not included).

Later we arrive in Derry and check-in to the 4-star **Maldron Hotel** where we will stay for three nights. Dinner will be served this evening.

### **Day 6 – Monday 29 May 2023**

After breakfast we enjoy a visit to **Glenveagh Castle Gardens**, regarded as one of Ireland's outstanding horticultural masterpieces. The gardens were created in the mid-1880s and the original Victorian Garden layout remains intact. The most recent owner, Mr Henry McIlhenny, started to develop the gardens in the late 1940s with the help of garden design consultants. Today, it is well-known for its southern hemisphere species of trees and shrubs and a diverse Rhododendron collection which are at their best from late March to late May.



We will enjoy a **pub lunch** in Letterkenny, before we visit **Oakfield Park**, covering 100 acres. The upper gardens include the walled garden, wildflower meadows, glasshouses and sculptures. The lower garden has around 50,000 native trees, laes and streams to provide peaceful pleasure.

We return to our hotel in time for dinner.

### **Day 7 – Tuesday 30 May 2023**

After breakfast, we will enjoy a walk around the 400-year old **City Walls of Derry**, full of history and heritage. It is the only remaining completely walled city in Ireland and one of the best examples of Walled Cities in Europe. The Walls are approximately 1.5km in circumference.

Later we will visit the private garden of Liam and Nora Greene at **Hampstead Hall**, situated in the suburbs of Derry. This city garden comprises of an Italian garden, a Japanese style garden and a formal garden situated in front of the elegant Georgian House.

Our final visit today is **Brook Hall Estate & Garden**, owned by the Gilliland family. The Estate covers Woodlands, a walled garden and an Arboretum, known to be one of the top private arboretums in Ireland.

Dinner will be served at our hotel this evening.

### **Day 8 – Wednesday 31 May 2023**

Following breakfast, we check out of our hotel and begin our journey south. We will stop for a visit to **Hillsborough Castle**, King Charles III official residence in Northern Ireland. It is not strictly speaking a castle but a Georgian country house, built in the 18th century for the Hill family, Marquesses of Downshire, who owned it until 1922. The 6th Marquess sold the mansion to the British government and it became the official residence of the Governor of the newly created province of Northern Ireland and later the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Since 2014 it has been managed by Historic Royal Palaces who commissioned a £16m restoration programme which has breathed new life into this historic building.



Following our visit, we continue to Dublin and our comfortable hotel. This evening is free at leisure.

### **Thursday 1 June 2023**

Following breakfast, we will return to Dublin airport in time for our return flight (flights under own arrangements). Alternatively for those guests joining our **Gardens of Dublin extension** we will depart from our hotel after breakfast for Huntington Brook.

#### **Included in the price (per person):**

- 8 night's accommodation: Four nights' dinner, bed & breakfast at the 4-star Dunadry Hotel; three nights' dinner, bed & breakfast at the 4-star Maldron Derry Hotel; 1 night bed and breakfast in Dublin
- One lunch in Letterkenny
- Afternoon tea at Grey Abbey House
- Refreshments at Tyrrelstown House
- Entry to Mount Stewart, Giant's Causeway and Hillsborough Castle; the gardens of Rowallane, Castle Ward, Ballyrobert Cottage, Glenarm Castle, Benvardeen, Glenveagh Castle, Oakfield Park, Hampstead Hall and Brook Hall Estate; walking tour of Derry City Walls
- Guided tours of Tyrrelstown, Grey Abbey House Gardens, Ballywalter Park and Malahide Castle
- Comfortable coaching throughout
- Services of Trevor Edwards as Brightwater Holidays Tour Manager

#### **Not Included (per person):**

- Single supplement £400.00
- Gardens of Dublin extension £595.00
- International Flights

# Gardens of Dublin Extension

1 – 3 June 2023

From £595.00 per person (based on min 12 paying guests)

## Itinerary

### Day 1 – Thursday 1 June 2023

This morning following breakfast we visit **Hunting Brook**, home of renowned plantsman Jimi Blake. Hidden in the foothills of the Wicklow Mountains, near Blessington, the garden is a plantsman's paradise with contemporary borders, creating a fusion of prairie and tropical planting in a natural setting. There is something for everyone here, from lazy woodland walks through the ancient glacial valley to the remains of a 7<sup>th</sup> century ring fort, where an extensive range of woodland plants are grown, many of which were collected on various trips around the world. Hunting Brook is now home to Ireland's largest collection of ornamental grasses with over 200 different species and cultivars.

Following our visit, we continue to Jimi's sister's garden at **June Blake's Garden and Nursery**. June is a passionate plantswoman who grows from seeds sourced all over the world. Her garden is extensive and sits in the old cut granite farmyard of Tinode House. It is surrounded by majestic old beech and chestnut trees which provide a sheltered environment in which she grows a unique mix of bamboos, ornamental grasses and perennials with many plants offered for sale in her nursery.

This evening is free at leisure. Alternatively, you may want to join our **optional excursion** to the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin to see the courtroom thriller, **The Verdict**.

### Day 2 – Friday 2 June 2023

After breakfast we travel to **Powerscourt Gardens**, Ireland's most famous gardens which first began to take shape over two and a half centuries ago. Enjoy the charming walled garden, the striking terraces, fine statuary and varied trees which are linked by carefully designed walks and are all set in the magnificent surroundings of the Wicklow mountains.

This afternoon we visit the gardens of **Killruddery**. The gardens are among the oldest in Ireland, providing the perfect destination for relaxing and leisurely walks. Nestled between the mountains and the sea and just a stone's throw away from Dublin, Killruddery is a great historic house of Ireland. The magnificent 800-acre estate includes flowering woodland, painterly formal 17th century gardens, a high-hedge sylvan theatre, long ponds and a walled garden.

This evening is free at leisure. Alternatively, you may want to join our **optional excursions** to a **Celtic Night** featuring *Live Music, Traditional Irish Dance and 3-course dinner*.

### Day 3 – Saturday 3 June 2023

After breakfast you are **free to explore Dublin** at leisure. At an agreed time we will transfer back to Dublin airport for the groups onward flight (under own arrangements).

## Included in the price (per person)

- Two nights' bed & breakfast at a hotel in Dublin
- Entry to the gardens of Hunting Brook, June Blake, Killruddery and Powerscourt
- Comfortable coaching throughout
- Services of Trevor Edwards as Tour Manager

## Not Included (per person)

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|--|-----------------------|
| • Single supplement                        | £150.00               |
| • Optional Excursion to the Gaiety Theatre | Price to be confirmed |
| • Optional Excursion – Celtic Night        | Price to be confirmed |