17 August
Arrive in Ireland – Tour of Dublin
On arrival in Dublin you will be met by your guide, and will be transferred by coach to Dublin. You will get a guided tour of Dublin City. Check into hotel after 3pm, free afternoon to relax. 6pm evening meal and overview of our itinerary Overnight in Dublin.

18 August
Book of Kells/National Museum of Ireland
The National Museum of Ireland – explore Ireland’s ancient history from its Stone Age culture, early Christian artwork, through the Viking era and right up to the coming of the Normans in the 12th Century. This museum gives a wonderful foundation to understanding the history of Ireland. Trinity College – Book of Kells. The Book of Kells is a 9th century illuminated manuscript of the four Gospels and one of Ireland’s most valued treasures. The manuscript is part of the Columban
foundations, believed to have been started in Iona, and completed at Kells. If time allows, Visit Christ Church Cathedral founded early in the 11th century, in the heart of Viking Dublin.
Overnight in Dublin

19 August
Kells, Monasterboice/Hill of Slane/Newgrange

Kells Monastery - established by St Columba (or Colm Cille as he’s known in Ireland) in the mid-6th Century. Though not a great deal remains, the monastery is famous for the book that came out of it, The Book of Kells, as well as its numerous High Crosses (Celtic Crosses). Monasterboice- is one of Ireland’s oldest monasteries; St Buithithe founded it in the 5th Century. It contains three of the finest High Crosses in Ireland. Lunch provided at Monasterboice Inn In order to understand Christianity in Ireland, you have to understand pre-Christian Ireland. We will visit the Boyne Valley Region where many of the mythological stories of Ireland originated. In the afternoon we visit either Newgrange/Knowth or Dowth – These ancient passage tombs were built during the Stone Age and date between 3,500 BC to 2,700 BC. From Newgrange we travel to the town of Slane to see Hill of Slane, where St Patrick lit the Pascal Fire ushering in a new kind of light into Ireland.
Overnight in Belfast

20 August St. Patrick: The Man, the Myth, the Legend

Discover the ancient sites and monuments linked to the life and legacy of Ireland’s Patron Saint. Saul Church – the place where St. Patrick built his first church in Ireland. Inch Abbey, where the story of the St. Patrick and the snakes was first recorded. The pre-Christian wells at Struell has been a place of healing for over 15 centuries. Down Cathedral, where St Patrick is buried. Free evening
Overnight in Belfast

21 August
Giant’s Causeway/Dunluce Castle & Bushmills Distillery/William Butler Yeats’ Grave

This morning we leave Belfast and travel through the “Nine Glens of Antrim” before stopping at the picturesque ruins of Dunluce Castle, situated on the high cliffs above the Sea. Nearby is The Giant’s Causeway, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It’s unique basalt columns, primarily hexagonal in shape are over 50 million years old. No tour of Ireland would be complete without a visit to a distillery. Bushmills Distillery dates to 1608 and is Ireland’s oldest licensed distillery. We leave County Antrim behind and head West to County Sligo. Before we arrive in Sligo, we will stop off at Drumcliff to see the grave of Irish writer and Nobel Laureate, William Butler Yeats.
Overnight in Sligo
22 August
Inishmurray*/Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery

This morning we will travel from Sligo to Mullaghmore, where we will board a boat for a trip to Inishmurray Island, which is an almost barren area of 1 mile by a ½ mile wide. The main attraction today is the island’s remarkable collection of antiquities. The great Cashel – a wall of un-cemented stones – encloses a group of ruins that are the most characteristic example of primeval Irish monastic establishment. The foundation of the monastery on the remote island is also attributed to that lover of hermitical life – St. Molaise. The repentant St. Colmcille, another famous Irish Saint came here after victory in the infamous “Battle of the Books” to confess his sins to St. Molaise. The destruction of the monastery by the Vikings in the ninth century was fatal, but the island remained a pilgrimage destination until very recent times. The last inhabitants of the island –fishermen, left for the mainland in the 1940s. As we journey further south, in the afternoon we will stop off at Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery. This is the largest cemetery of megalithic tombs in Ireland and is also among the oldest in the country. There are over 60 tombs (30 visible), the oldest pre-dating Newgrange by 700 years to 3,700 BC.

Dinner and overnight in Galway

*Visit to Inishmurray is a subject of pending confirmation, as during the 2018 season all travelled there was suspended by the Marine authority. We hope that by the time of our visit, site will be reopened. If we will be unable to visit Inishmurray, a viable alternative to that visit will be provided.

23 August
Sunday Liturgy/
Tour of Clonfert & Clonmacnoise/Galway

We will start the morning with a Divine Liturgy at the local Orthodox Church (Moscow patriarchate). The road eastwards leads to Clonfert. Clonfert – is a small village in County Galway. It once had a thriving monastery founded by St. Brendan the Navigator in 563 AD. The Cathedral there has one of the finest Hiberno-Romanesque doorways in Ireland. The local Catholic Parish nearby houses a wooden statue of the Mondona and Child, which dates back to the 14th Century. The statue was hidden in a tree during the Reformation for safekeeping, and was discovered in the 18th Century when the tree was cut down. Onwards to nearby Clonmacnoise, founded by St. Ciaran in 548AD. Clonmacnoise- An Early Christian site founded by St. Ciarán in the mid-6th century and is situated on the border of three Irish provinces, Leinster, Munster and Connaught. Often called the crossroads of Ireland, it is strategically located along the River Shannon, which flows north-south, and the Esker Ridge, which runs east-west. Being an important pilgrim destination and under the patronage of various kings, Clonmacnoise became the most important of Ireland’s monastic cities. Despite many attacks, it flourished until the mid 16th century when it was finally destroyed by English forces. The site includes the ruins of a cathedral, seven churches (10th-13th century), two round towers, three high crosses and the largest collection of Early Christian grave slabs in Western Europe. The original high crosses and a selection of grave-slabs are on display in the visitor centre.

Overnight in Galway
24 August
Inis Mór, Aran Islands

10am Boat - From Galway we drive west and board a ferry to Inis Mór. Bus tour of island. St Enda established a monastic settlement on the island in the early 6th century. He is known as father of Irish monasticism and his settlement on Inis Mór became a key foundation for the key training centre for the next generation of Irish saints.

**Dún Aonghasa** is a prehistoric hill fort, dating back to 1100 BC. A 14-acre site the fort consists of three terraced walls surrounding an inner enclosure containing a platform on the edge of a three hundred foot high cliff. The views from it are breathtakingly spectacular.

5pm Return sail
Overnight in Galway

25 August
Cliffs of Moher/Dingle Peninsula

On our way south to Dingle in Co Kerry, we will stop off in County Clare the picturesque **Cliffs of Moher**. The jagged sandstone cliffs continue for 5 miles and stretch out of the sea and offer an impressive 670 ft drop (not for the faint hearted) into the wild Atlantic foam. From here we will continue to **Craggaunowen**, an archaeological open air museum, very unique and the only one of its kind in Ireland. It shows what an early medieval crannog – natural or artificial and often fortified island - might have looked like. At the local Craggaunowen Castle that is adjacent to the site there is a museum with various exhibits. On one of them is a replica of the currachs – the leather boat that was most probably used by St. Brandon the Navigator in his voyages across North Atlantic. The boat in the museum collection is the one that belonged to the team of the famous Tim Severin in his expedition of 1973, which attempted to repeat the journey of St. Brandon as described in the Latin text dating from the ninth century titled “Voyage of Saint Brendan the Abbot”

Overnight in Dingle of Killarney

26 August
Skellig Island/ Portmagee, Experience and Visitor Centre

We drive south on the Ring of Kerry to the seaside village of Portmagee. Here we will visit the Skellig Experience Visitor Centre and weather permitting, take a boat to visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the island of **Sceilg Mhichíl (Great Skellig Island)**. For the more adventurous among the group and subject to suitable weather conditions, we travel
12km by boat to the Skellig Mhichíl. This journey is not for the faint hearted, the boat trip can be rough and once you reach the island, there are 600 steps up to the summit. The monks of St. Fionán’s monastery led simple lives and lived in stone, beehive shaped huts. They would spend most of the day praying in the church, tending to their gardens and studying. These huts, which were round on the outside and rectangular on the inside, were carefully built so that no drop of rain ever entered between the stones. The island inhabited as a monastery/hermitage from the 6th to the 12th centuries by Irish monks – you will find it a unique and spiritual experience. (More recently it was a filming location for Star Wars ‘The Force Awakens’.) We will also pass one of the world’s largest gannetries (Little Skellig Island).

Please note: Landing on the Great Skellig is weather-dependent. If that does not prove possible, an alternative cruise will be arranged on the day. *Free day for those who wish not to come along (please note that you do need to be physically fit to visit the Skellis, as a stone staircase of some 800 stairs is leading to the site of the monastery). Overnight in either Dingle or Killarney

27 August
Tour of Dingle Peninsula

On our drive from Killarney to the Dingle Peninsula, we retrace the footsteps of St. Brendan the Navigator. We will spend the day on the stunning Dingle peninsula exploring the wealth of ancient and early Christian archaeology that this corner of the world has to offer. And it has a lot: Dingle’s archaeology, Christian heritage and the area’s folklore and mythology. Follow old pilgrimage pathways to Mount Brandon that reflect the strong Christian heritage of the local population through the centuries, in sites such as Kilmalkedar, Riasc and Gallarus. The Blasket Island Center – tells the story of island life on the Blasket Islands, where language and culture flourished and gave birth to an extraordinary corpus of literature on island life.

Free evening to explore Dingle or Killarney.

28 August
Rock of Cashel/Glendalough Monastic Site

The Rock of Cashel, also known as St. Patrick’s Rock is a spectacular monastic site. Once the seat of the Kings of Munster, it became a monastery when St. Patrick baptized the King in the 5th century. It houses a spectacular group of Medieval buildings set on an outcrop of limestone in the Golden Vale including the 12th century round tower, High Cross and Romanesque Chapel, 13th century Gothic cathedral, 15th century Castle and the restored Hall of the Vicars Choral. Glendalough, meaning “valley of the two lakes” dates back to St Kevin’s monastic settlement there in the 6th century. It is one of Ireland’s best-preserved monastic settlements with its remaining buildings and impressive round tower. The site stretches between the two lakes (upper and lower). St Kevin came to the valley seeking solitude and built a hermitage on the site, but his fame as a holy hermit soon spread and he was joined by many seeking to live an ascetic way of life.

Overnight in Dublin area
29 August
Fly back to US

TECHNICAL INFORMATION:

We kindly invite you to pin the dates of the travel and inform us if you are planning to attend, as the size of the group will be limited.

We are working on the final price and the rest of the technical date. We hope that it will be available soon, but for sure we will have all of the details on our website www.ortodoxtours.com by mid/late summer of 2019.