



# Landscapes of Scotland & Ireland

15 days | 18 days with London extension

Centuries of history sprinkled across timeless landscapes? That's just part of Scotland and Ireland's allure. And from the rolling expanse of the Scottish Highlands to the wild, wave-lashed Irish coast, this comprehensive tour will show you just how easily these two countries sweep visitors off their feet. Breathe in sea breezes and grassy, fresh air as you zigzag from elegant Edinburgh to the Cliffs of Moher, even popping into Northern Ireland for a spell. (If you're interested in one more delightful detour, tack a pre-tour visit to London onto your itinerary for some cosmopolitan flavor.)



## Your tour package includes

- 13 nights in handpicked hotels
- 13 breakfasts
- 5 dinners with beer or wine
- 1 liquor tasting
- 1 food tasting
- 10 sightseeing tours
- Expert Tour Director & local guides
- Private deluxe motor coach
- 1 ferry transfer

## Included highlights

- Edinburgh Castle
- Inveraray Castle
- Western Highlands
- Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum
- Titanic Belfast Museum
- Irish Farm visit
- Cliffs of Moher
- Dingle Peninsula
- Blarney Castle
- St. Patrick's Cathedral

## Tour pace

On this guided tour, you'll walk for at least 1 hour daily across mostly flat terrain, including paved roads and cobblestone streets, with few hills or stairs.

## Group size

15-38

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## Overnight Flight → 1 night

### Day 1: Travel day

Board your overnight flight to Edinburgh today.

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## Edinburgh → 2 nights

### Day 2: Arrival in Edinburgh

*Included meals: welcome dinner*

Welcome to Scotland! Meet your Tour Director and fellow travelers at tonight's welcome dinner—and maybe ask those who took the pre-trip extension what they thought of their time in London.

### Day 3: Sightseeing tour of Edinburgh

*Included meals: breakfast*

Nestled between the rivers Almond and Esk, Edinburgh emerges from a series of hills and rocky ridges, earning its nickname “the Athens of the North.” Get to know the Scottish capital in all its medieval beauty on a tour led by a local expert.

- View the elegant neoclassical and Georgian architecture in New Town. The ornate sandstone and granite structures surrounding oasis-like gardens and green spaces became a model for European urban planning.
- Contrast New Town's grace with Old Town's rustic Royal Mile, which runs between Edinburgh Castle and Holyrood Palace—the official residence of British monarchs in Scotland. Here, you'll cross moody, narrow streets and alleys, known as “closes,” flanked by brooding stone buildings and timeworn cathedrals.
- Pass the towering Sir Walter Scott monument—paying homage to the Ivanhoe and Rob Roy scribe—one of the largest sculptural tributes to an author in the world.
- Ascend Castle Rock and enter Edinburgh Castle. Standing on an extinct volcano at the top of the Royal Mile, it houses the Scottish crown jewels and Stone of Scone—in use since the 13th century coronating the monarchs of England, Great Britain, and the United Kingdom.

Looking to be swept away by the wild romance of the Scottish Borders region? Add an outing to your itinerary and join fellow literature lovers for a quest to the home of Sir Walter Scott and the Gothic ruins of Melrose Abbey.

Prefer to see more of Edinburgh? Use your free afternoon in the city to go back and wander the winding streets of Old Town. If you're feeling adventurous, perhaps consider a spooky stroll through the tunnels that weave underneath the city. Of course, there's always tucking into a booth in a cozy cafe and lingering over tea and shortbread.

*Please note: The order of today's activities are subject to change.*

+ Abbotsford House & Melrose Abbey

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## Scottish Highlands → 2 nights

### Day 4: Transfer to the Scottish Highlands

*Included meals: breakfast, dinner*

From Edinburgh, head northwest into the famed Scottish Highlands, making a few stops as you go.

- Drive through The Trossachs, one of Scotland's two national parks, and pass by Loch Lomond—the largest lake on the island of Britain by surface area.
- Leave your bus at majestic Inveraray Castle, seat of the Duke of Argyll, leader of Clan Campbell, since the 18th century. Surrounded by gardens, this country estate was one of the first built in the Gothic Revival style, and you'll get to explore both with a local guide leading the way.

After a day full of sightseeing, stretch your legs at your hotel before rejoining your group in the evening for an included dinner.

*Please note: Entrance to Inveraray Castle is seasonal and only available from April–October. If it's closed, your group will instead visit nearby Ardkinglas House—a classy country estate built in the Scots baronial style on over 12,000 acres of park land.*

### Day 5: Sightseeing tour of the Western Highlands

*Included meals: breakfast*

Ready for even more scenery? Leave your hotel for a day of guided sightseeing across the Western Highlands.

- Begin with a stroll through Oban. Known as the seafood capital of Scotland, this harbor town of just over 8,000 people occupies a quiet, quaint stretch of shore along the Firth of Lorn. Together with your group, make the short hike up Battery Hill to McCaig's Tower—a Roman-style stone structure that envelops a well-tended lawn. (The real draw? Sweeping views of Oban Bay, beautifully framed by the tower's many arches.)
  - Roll past lochs, through glens, and over bens (as mountains are called in Scots Gaelic) en route to Glencoe. Stop in Glencoe—a village of fewer than 400 people and the site of a 1692 massacre of a Scottish clan by members of government forces. Learn about the area and the infamous ambush, and why Clan MacDonald was attacked by the Scottish army in the first place.
  - From the old battleground, make your way to the eco-friendly Glencoe Visitor Centre, a cultural history exhibit that's nestled in the breathtaking surroundings of the Glencoe Valley. Glean even more context about that infamous day in the 17th century and try to grasp how it could happen in such peaceful environs.
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## Glasgow → 1 night

### Day 6: Whiskey distillery, transfer to Glasgow & sightseeing tour

*Included meals: breakfast, liquor tasting*

Bid the Highlands farewell and head south, stopping at a local distillery along the way. Take a tour to learn about one of Scotland's greatest gifts to the world—whisky (without the “e”!)—and see how the good stuff's made. No visit to a distillery would be complete without a tasting, so before you go, sit down and sample some malted Scotch.

Then, continue to Glasgow—Scotland's biggest city and the U.K.'s cultural and creative capital. Before calling it a day, set off on a sightseeing tour of “the Dear Green Place” (a sobriquet drawn from the direct translation of the city's Gaelic name) with a local as your guide.

- Pass the Burrell Collection—a museum that boasts more than 9,000 pieces of medieval

art, ancient Chinese artifacts, and more—and admire the buildings of the University of Glasgow. Founded in 1451, it's the fourth oldest in the English-speaking world and one of four Renaissance-era universities still operating in Scotland today.

- Stop outside the city's medieval cathedral—the oldest cathedral on the Scottish mainland and the oldest building in all of Glasgow—for photos of its Gothic spires and facades.
- Visit the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. Opened in 1870 as Glasgow's first municipal museum, it features substantial exhibitions of everything from European portraiture to Egyptian antiquities.

*Please note: On some departures, the Whisky Tasting may take place on day 5 in the Scottish Highlands.*

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## Belfast → 2 nights

### Day 7: Ferry to Belfast

*Included meals: breakfast, dinner*

Make your way to the village of Cairnryan—a hamlet of just 142 residents on the shores of Loch Ryan—and board a ferry bound for the Northern Irish capital of Belfast. (Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom; the Republic of Ireland, with its capital in Dublin, is its own country.) Once you've crossed the Irish Sea, transfer to your hotel and get your land legs back under you. Then, sit down for an included dinner with your group before calling it a night.

### Day 8: Sightseeing tour of Belfast

*Included meals: breakfast*

Northern Ireland's largest city, seafaring Belfast possesses a long, proud history—one that you'll dip into today. With help from a local guide, take a tour and get to know it from a unique perspective.

- Glimpse the patinated domes and sculpted walls of Belfast's City Hall, where local leaders have met since the beginning of the 20th century. Then, move on to the Grand Opera House. Completely restored in the early 2020s, the almost 130-year-old building still hosts an assortment of performances, from ballet to comedy.
- As you walk Belfast's streets, let your guide

educate you on the city's past—from its origins in the Bronze Age and rise as an international seaport to its role in the vicious sectarian conflict known around the world as “the Troubles.”

- Take a break from walking and talking to enter the Titanic Belfast museum. The infamous vessel was built in the city's shipyards by local manufacturers Harland & Wolff, and this exhibit highlights its history, from hopeful conception to doomed maiden voyage.

Catch a glimpse of geometric perfection this afternoon by adding an outing to the Giant's Causeway. Stepping down into the sea, this UNESCO World Heritage Site consists of some 40,000 interlocking basalt columns, the supposed remnants of an encounter between two mythical giants.

If you'd rather enjoy some alone time, pop into St. George's Market—the last surviving covered Victorian market in the city—and browse the wares of more than 300 vendors.

+ Giant's Causeway

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## Galway → 2 nights

### Day 9: Galway via County Meath

*Included meals: breakfast, tasting*

This morning, cross the land border into the Republic of Ireland and strike out for Galway. En route, pay a visit to a working farm for an in-depth look at Irish country life. Herding sheep, baking brown bread, preparing scones and tea: Enjoy a taste of some of these traditions before hitting the road again.

Arrive in Galway, Ireland's cultural heart, where your Tour Director will take the lead on a walking tour of the city's highlights.

- Stroll past a trio of Galwegian icons: Lynch's Castle, a castle-turned-bank that dates to the 16th century; the rustic home of “Ireland's most prestigious theatre (troupe),” the Druid Theatre Company; and John F. Kennedy Memorial Park, a popular greenspace better known to locals (and the world) as Eyre Square.
- Get a grasp of Galway's Norman history by viewing its medieval walls—12th-century fortifications that once encircled the city—and the Spanish Arch. First erected in 1584 as an extension of Galway's protective walls, its name alludes to the Spaniards who moored their ships and lived in the area.
- Peruse authentic Claddagh (said “CLA-da”)

rings in a local shop. Steeped in legend and symbolism, these pieces of jewelry have been produced in their current guise—two hands clasping a crowned heart—since at least 1700 and are inextricably linked to Galway.

Wrap up your day with a free evening in the city. Galway's famous for its traditional music scene; for a stomping, clapping good time, head to the nearest pub and let the sounds of Gaelic song wash over you.

### Day 10: Free day in Galway

*Included meals: breakfast*

Up next: a full day in Galway, all to yourself. Early risers should head for the Long Walk, a not-so-long row of color-blocked houses just past the Spanish Arch. Their seaside location and vibrant aesthetics make for a great photo op—especially at sunrise.

Then, enjoy the freedom of an unstructured schedule, or build out your day with your choice of two excursions. For architecture and vistas plucked out of a fantasy novel, you'll want to take up our visit to Kylemore Abbey and Connemara National Park. Alternatively, hang back in Galway proper and—if you added it to your itinerary—reconvene for a traditional dinner, served with a rousing step dance show. (Add either, neither, or both to your plans: It's up to you!)

*Please note: The Traditional Irish Music & Dance Show with Dinner excursion is only offered on certain days of the week and may not be available on some departures.*

+ Traditional Irish Music & Dance Show with Dinner

+ Kylemore Abbey & Connemara National Park

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## County Kerry → 2 nights

### Day 11: County Kerry via the Burren, Cliffs of Moher & Bunratty Castle

*Included meals: breakfast, dinner*

Resume your journey through the Emerald Isle today—but before going to County Kerry, redefine “taking the scenic route” and trace Ireland's Atlantic coast for a detour into County Clare.

- Pass through the Burren. Distinct from the lush greens that typify the rest of the Irish landscape, greys dominate this limestone plateau, punctuated by bursts of wildflowers. Botanists will surely delight in this journey: More than 70% of Ireland's flower species grow here.
- Walk along the Cliffs of Moher. Perched along Ireland's west coast, these weathered

promontories extend for about five miles and are marked by jagged rock formations and abundant birdlife. Walking close to the cliffs' edge can be a thrilling, if dizzying experience, but rest assured knowing that the views from their well-maintained walking paths are just as electrifying.

- Cut inland and visit the 15th-century Bunratty Castle tower house. Explore its grounds at your leisure during a self-guided tour and absorb all the medieval history you can.

Stops completed, continue your southwesterly drive into County Kerry, where you'll check into your hotel and settle in for the night.

### Day 12: Dingle Peninsula & Killarney National Park

*Included meals: breakfast*

From your base in County Kerry, depart on a drive over the dramatically rugged terrain of the Dingle Peninsula—the westernmost region of the country and a stronghold of Irish language and culture. Soak in the scenery as you go, making some stops along the way.

- Motor down Sleah Head Drive, a ring road that's part of Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way tourism trail. Bask in the power of the crashing ocean as you pause for photo ops at Coumeenoole Beach, Sleah Head, and Dunbeg Fort.
- Enter the Gallarus Oratory: Overlooking the harbor at Ard na Caithne (a beautiful bay pronounced "ARD-na-CAHN-ya"), this early-Christian chapel catches the eye with its unique slanting form.

After free time for lunch in the town of Dingle, head to vast, lake-filled Killarney National Park for a photo stop at Ross Castle—the 15th-century ancestral home of Clan O'Donoghue. (Yes, there are clans in Ireland, too!)

Finally, end your epic journey by returning to your hotel and resting up for tomorrow's trip to Dublin.

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## Dublin → 2 nights

### Day 13: Dublin via Blarney Castle

*Included meals: breakfast*

Leave County Kerry behind, rumbling toward the capital city of Dublin. But before you arrive, you'll make a pit stop at yet another Irish icon on the drive there.

Now one of the country's most famous tourist sites, Blarney Castle was first built in 1210, then rebuilt in 1446 as a stronghold of the local MacCarthy of Muskerry dynasty. Today, you'll set

foot within this famed fortress, exploring its dungeon, court, and battlements—and completing a popular quest. Originally added as a defensive structure, the mythical Blarney Stone supposedly grants all who kiss it "the gift of gab." Stretch out over the parapet, give this limestone slab a smooch, and see if the stories are true.

### Day 14: Sightseeing tour of Dublin

*Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner*

Settled by the Gaels and disputed over centuries by the Vikings and Anglo-Normans, Dublin traces its history back more than 1,300 years. Today, you'll peel back some of its layers on a comprehensive tour, led by a local expert.

- Stop in Phoenix Park, the largest enclosed public park in any European capital city. First established as a royal hunting ground by government decree in 1662, this 1,750-acre greenspace today houses the country's presidential residence.
- Pass by St. James's Gate Brewery, the legendary 260-year-old brewery behind Guinness dry stout. More than 50 million barrels ship out of the plant each year, making it the world's most prolific producer of stout-style beers.
- Walk through Old Dublin, then step into St. Patrick's Cathedral, the country's largest church. Founded in 1191, it serves as the national cathedral for the Church of Ireland, and its arresting Gothic architecture befits a building of its stature.
- Traverse Dublin's city center, passing 17th-century St. Stephen's Green as you go. Afterward, take some time to admire the Georgian architecture of Merrion Square. Another garden area in the heart of Dublin, it's been called home by some of Ireland's foremost writers—Oscar Wilde and W.B. Yeats among them.
- See the dignified facade of Trinity College—Ireland's oldest university—and embark on a walking tour of its hallowed grounds.

Fill your afternoon with an excursion out into County Wicklow and pay a visit to gorgeous Glendalough, the well-preserved ruins of a once-influential abbey. Or, if you'd prefer some free time, head down to the shores of the River Liffey and breathe in the ambiance of the lively Temple Bar district.

This evening, celebrate your trip during a farewell dinner.

+ Glendalough

## Flight Home

### Day 15: Departure

*Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)*

Transfer to the airport for your flight home and reminisce with new friends one last time.

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## + London extension

Mind the gap, get in the queue, ask for bangers with your mash—now you're ready for London! Before heading to Edinburgh for the main tour, experience England's bustling capital from a local's perspective. Want to see even more of the region's regal history, as well as a certain world-famous megalith? Our two excursions to Windsor and Stonehenge have you covered.

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## Overnight Flight → 1 night

### Day 1: Travel day

Board your overnight flight to London today.

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## London → 3 nights

### Day 2: Arrival in London

Welcome to England! Meet your Tour Director and fellow travelers as you enjoy a welcome drink this evening.

### Day 3: Sightseeing tour of London

*Included meals: breakfast*

London's been settled for almost 2,000 years, and its history winds through Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Viking rule. Your guided tour will take you through the relics, landmarks, and stories of this vibrant city of contrasts.

- Pass grand Trafalgar Square—named in honor of the Royal Navy's decisive triumph over Napoleon Bonaparte's fleet—and Baroque St. Paul's Cathedral. Perched atop Ludgate Hill, at the highest point in London's historic center, this Anglican church is recognizable by its soaring dome.
- View the city's defining landmarks, including Big Ben—the Great Bell of the clock at the north end of the Palace of Westminster and London's unofficial calling card. You'll also pass the Tower of London—home to the Crown Jewels of England, but also lions and a polar bear during its time as a menagerie of exotic wild animals.

- Stop by Buckingham Palace, the official residence and administrative headquarters of King Charles III. If you're lucky, you might catch the Changing of the Guard. (Just look for the distinctive red tunics and tall bearskin caps.)

Can't get enough of castles and kings? Add the excursion to Windsor Castle for a fascinating peek into the royal goings-on at the world's longest-inhabited castle.

Not joining the excursion? Enjoy a free afternoon in London to shop and dine in the posh Covent Garden in the West End or head to Shoreditch for its vibrant art and street food scene. Your Tour Director is also your go-to source for recommendations.

+ Windsor Castle

#### **Day 4: Free day in London**

*Included meals: breakfast*

For your last free day in London, add the excursion to Stonehenge and Salisbury to your itinerary. (It's a truly monumental way to spend a few hours.) Or, take some time for yourself and maybe visit a stadium or two: Wembley, Twickenham, and dozens more call the city home.

+ Stonehenge & Oxford

#### **Day 5: Train to Edinburgh**

*Included meals: breakfast, welcome dinner*

This morning, transfer to King's Cross Station and board a train to Edinburgh, Scotland. Then, meet up with the rest of your tour group and get to know them during tonight's welcome dinner. (To plot out the rest of your trip, begin on day two of the regular itinerary.)

*Please note: Porterage isn't included on the train ride from London to Edinburgh. Travelers must be comfortable lifting and carrying their bags over steps, onto platforms, and into storage.*



# Customize your experience

Customize your tour by adding excursion options. Excursions offered on the same day will occur at different times, so there's no need to choose. Save \$10 when you book your excursion up to three days before your tour departs.\* Excursions requiring advance reservation only list this discounted price. Call or go online to customize your tour: [goaheadtours.com/SIR](https://goaheadtours.com/SIR) | 1-800-597-0350

## Day 3: Abbotsford House & Melrose Abbey

\$109/\$119\* (5 hours, departs in the afternoon with lunch)

Travel through the Scottish Borders region to Abbotsford, where you'll enjoy an included lunch. Continue on to Abbotsford House, the 19th-century estate of Sir Walter Scott. The poet designed his home in the Romantic style to imitate the elaborate baronial estates of British aristocrats. Today, it serves as a museum for Scottish memorabilia and artifacts that Walter Scott collected throughout his lifetime. Later, visit the ruins of Melrose Abbey, one of the most impressive of the four Borders abbeys. Please note: Some areas of the abbey are closed off due to masonry and damage repairs.

## Day 8: Giant's Causeway

\$95/\$105\* (6 hours, departure time varies)

Pay a visit to the rugged Giant's Causeway, a series of naturally formed basalt columns. The hexagonal columns, which you can walk on, are 60 million years old and originated as volcanic lava. A colorful local legend says that mythical giant Finn McCool built the walkway so that he could cross the sea to Scotland. Please note: Raingear is recommended for this excursion.

## Day 10: Traditional Irish Music & Dance Show with Dinner

\$109/\$119\* (5 hours, departs in the evening, dinner included)

Enjoy a three-course dinner served with beer or wine at a restaurant in Galway. Then, attend a performance of Trad on the Prom at a local venue. The show is filled with live music and performances by World Champion Irish stepdancers. The dancers have been featured in notable productions such as Riverdance, The Chieftains, and Lord of the Dance. Sit back and listen to Gaelic tunes as you watch this mesmerizing traditional Irish dance show. Please note: This excursion is seasonal and runs from May 1 through September 30 only and is only offered on Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday.

## Day 10: Kylemore Abbey & Connemara National Park

\$89/\$99\* (9 hours, departs in the morning)

Make your way to the island village of Cong, situated on the border of counties Galway and Mayo. Here, enjoy free time to stroll through the town's charming streets, catching glimpses of the nearby Ashford Castle. Then, continue on to Kylemore Abbey, a Benedictine convent founded in 1920 on the grounds of Kylemore Castle. Here, you'll have time to explore the abbey's interior and walled Victorian gardens. After free time for lunch on your own, take a scenic drive through the Irish countryside, passing Connemara National Park, one of the country's most beautiful and unspoiled places. Make photo stops in the Inagh Valley and at the Maam Cross before returning to Galway.

## Day 14: Glendalough

\$55/\$65\* (5 hours, departure time varies)

County Wicklow has some of the wildest and most spectacular mountain scenery in Ireland, as well as many of the country's most important historic sites. Journey through Wicklow's captivating landscapes to Glendalough, which became famous throughout Europe as a center of Christian learning. Saint Laurence O'Toole became the Abbot of Glendalough in 1154 and worked to bring the Irish Church closer to the Roman Church. You'll learn more about O'Toole, who went on to become the Archbishop of Dublin, and his work in Glendalough as you visit St. Kevin's Cross, the remains of the sixth-century cathedral, and the remarkable Round Tower. Your Tour Director will lead you on a tour of the site, and then you'll enjoy free time.

booked at least 20 days prior to departure.

## Extension excursion options

### Day 3: Windsor Castle

\$125 (5 hours, departs in the afternoon)

Led by a Blue Badge Guide, you'll travel to Windsor for a guided tour of the world's largest and longest-inhabited castle. Founded by William the Conqueror in 1070, Windsor has been the British Royal Family's preferred retreat for the past 900 years. Step inside the State Apartments and St. George's Chapel, where knighting ceremonies of the Most Noble Order of the Garter take place. View the exhibit of royal treasures within the castle. You'll then have time to stroll through the town of Windsor and have a look at Eton College, a prestigious prep school attended by Princes William and Harry. Please note: When the Windsor Castle excursion falls on a Wednesday, entrance will be replaced by an excursion to Hampton Court. For any departures where the Windsor Castle excursion falls on a Tuesday, the excursion will be moved to another day on tour or cancelled. Additionally, St. George's Chapel is closed to the public on Sundays. This excursion requires advance reservation and must be booked at least 20 days prior to departure.

### Day 4: Stonehenge & Oxford

\$145 (9.5 hours, departs in the morning)

Pay a visit to Oxford, home to one of the most prestigious universities in the world. You'll admire the charming city's spire-studded architecture and learn more about its academic legacy during a visit to New College at Oxford University. Founded in the 14th century, this college is one of the oldest institutions in the city, and you'll discover its extensive history during your visit. Then, enjoy free time for lunch before continuing on to Stonehenge, perhaps England's most mysterious landmark. The origin and purpose of this ring of stones, which dates back an estimated 5,000 years, is unknown, though most believe it was a temple and observatory. Take some time to explore the intriguing stone formations and visit the newly opened exhibition and visitor center before heading back to London. This excursion requires advance reservation and must be

\*Optional excursions may be purchased up to three days prior to departure or while on tour. Pre-purchased optional excursions cannot be canceled within three days prior to departure or while on tour. Select optional excursions require advance booking and cannot be purchased or canceled after the advanced reservation deadline. GAT accepts payment by cash, Visa or MasterCard for optional excursions purchased on tour. Additional fees may apply for optional excursions purchased on tour. Excursions require a minimum number of participants to operate. Details and prices are subject to change. Due to seasonal hours of operation and availability, some excursions may not operate. If this occurs, you will be refunded any payments made for that excursion post-tour. Learn more at [goaheadtours.com/terms](https://goaheadtours.com/terms)