

TRAVEL  LEADERS®

Postcards

FALL 2012

ISTANBUL RISING

Explore this dynamic city
where east meets west

Ireland,
Scotland
& Wales

NEW YEAR'S
EVE FROM LOS
ANGELES TO
NEW YORK CITY





THREE

Jessica Colley wanders through Ireland, Scotland and

Standing 700 feet above the Atlantic, I noticed something unusual: There were no fortified fences, no rails promising safety. Grass was growing straight up to the edge of the Cliffs of Moher, Ireland's dazzling sea cliffs on the country's west coast in County Clare. In fact, you can creep as close to the edge as you dare and peer off in both directions to see cliffs curve along the coast and waves crash below.

This was just one action-packed day in a tour of Ireland, Scotland and Wales. These countries are full of iconic sights, but with only a short time to devote to each it can be hard to know where to start. I set out to see the best, the attractions that thrill and surprise, and once I touched down in Dublin I was off to a running start.

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The Best of Ireland

No trip to Ireland would be complete without seeing one of the country's finest treasures: the Book of Kells, a collection of Gospels written in Latin. I examined this manuscript, created by Celtic monks around 800 A.D., up close at Trinity College in Dublin. Afterwards, I climbed the stairs to the Long Room, a two-story library filled to the ceiling with 200,000 books in oak cases. One final Dublin stop was the Guinness-owned St. James's Gate Brewery: I couldn't leave without tasting its famed draft straight from the rooftop bar.

With only time to see one major historic site, I set out for the most spectacular archeological attraction in the country: the



View over Edinburgh from Calton Hill

FOR ALL

and Wales to find the very best each country has to offer.

Rock of Cashel. Medieval buildings, stone towers, a chapel and a castle make up this fascinating complex. Towering 200 feet over the town of Cashel, this is the perfect vantage point to take in the famous green hills of the Emerald Isle.

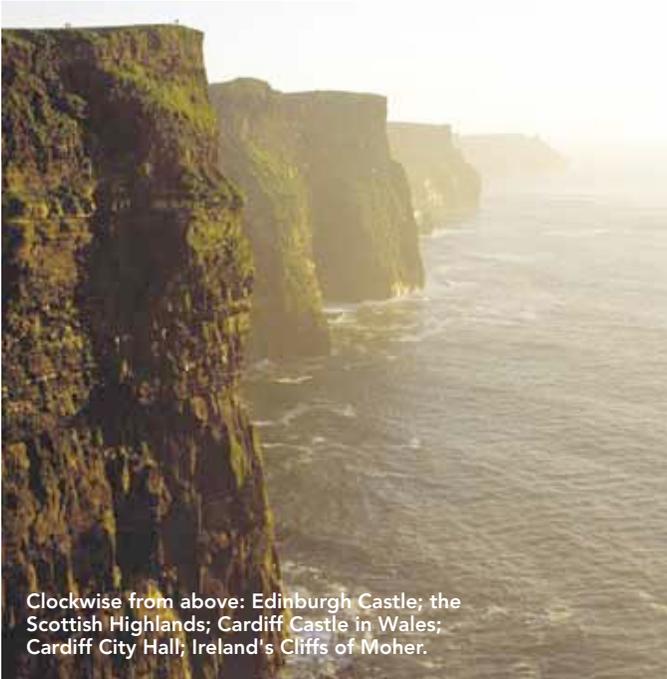
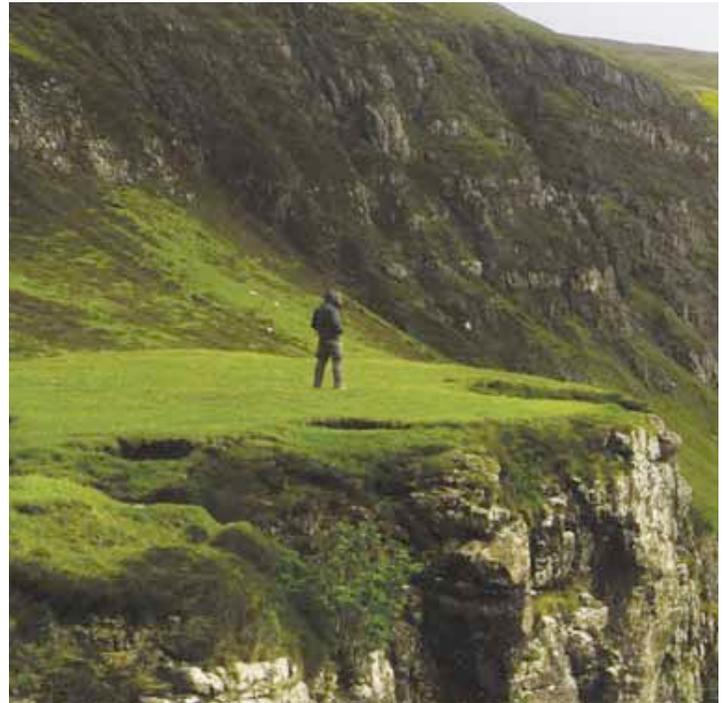
It was then time to venture further west, to the Ireland of wild landscapes and soaring sea cliffs. One attraction embodies all the dramatic scenery that Ireland is renowned for: the Cliffs of Moher. Standing near the edge of these cliffs is one of the most awe-inspiring views in the entire country.

How-to-Visit Tip: Globus offers a number of tours in Ireland, including a basic introduction and options based on scenery or Irish heritage.

The Best of Scotland

Familiar tales of Scotland come to life in the capital city of Edinburgh. The highlight of the Old Town is the mighty 12th-century Edinburgh Castle, built on top of a dormant volcano, where you can peek inside to see the nation's crown jewels or sign up for a guided tour to learn all of the castle's secrets. Edinburgh also has a haunted reputation, and like untold brave souls before me, I descended into the vaults beneath Mary King's Close for step after unsettling step of a very spooky tour.

Back above ground, I was eager to see the untamed Scottish countryside. My taste buds tempted me north into the Highlands, where a tour and tasting at the Glenfiddich Distillery was



Clockwise from above: Edinburgh Castle; the Scottish Highlands; Cardiff Castle in Wales; Cardiff City Hall; Ireland's Cliffs of Moher.

in store. As I inhaled the scent of this single-malt whiskey, I learned that Scottish mothers have often soothed their teething babies by rubbing whiskey on their gums. From a young age, it seems, the Scots develop a taste for single malt.

The Scottish also have a rich history when it comes to golf. One of the single largest attractions in the country is the birthplace of the sport, St. Andrews, where golf has been played for more than 600 years at the links course. For many golfers, swinging a club in the birthplace of their favorite game is a lifelong dream. This is also home to the oldest university in Scotland, the University of St. Andrews, dating back to 1413. Get a bird's-eye view of this coastal city from St. Rule's Tower, looking over the grounds of the Cathedral of St. Andrew and the red rooftops beyond.

How-to-Visit Tip: Trafalgar offers Best of Scotland tours or options focused on heritage and scenery.

The Best of Wales

Wales is sometimes overlooked in favor of its neighbors, but don't be fooled—this small country offers just as much history. After all, this is the land of castles (641 to be exact), and one of its most famous is located right in the capital city of Cardiff. Dating back to

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the Roman times, the Cardiff Castle boasts more than 2,000 years of history. After exploring the castle, I completed my tour of the capital with a stop at City Hall and the recently restored Cardiff Bay.

Castles aren't the only popular historic landmarks in Wales. In fact, one of the best-known attractions in the country achieved worldwide fame thanks to a little poem by William Wordsworth. Tintern Abbey, dating back to the early 12th century, was an ongoing project for more than 400 years. Today you can step through the ruins to see exactly what inspired writers and artists over the centuries.

Beyond history, the allure of Wales is its lush countryside. All eyes were on Wales in May 2012 when it became the first nation to complete a formal trail along its entire coastline. The Wales Coast Path is 870 miles long, stretching through towns, across cliff tops and along sandy beaches, and is one of the best places in all of Europe to stretch your legs for a scenic hike along the coast.

How-to-Visit Tip: For an authentic Wales experience, ask your Travel Leaders agent to find the right tour of Cardiff and the countryside for you with CIE Tours International. TL

Ready to experience the best Ireland, Scotland and Wales have to offer? Contact your Travel Leaders agent today.

