



## Botanizing Ireland's Burren

May 4-7, 2021

\$840 per person double occupancy or \$960 single occupancy

### Summary

The NARGS Tours and Adventures Committee has planned a tour of the Burren on the west coast of Ireland for May 4-7, 2021. The tour is immediately prior to the Scottish Rock Garden Club's (SRGC) International Rock Garden Conference in Perth, Scotland that starts on May 8. A tour overview and more detailed itinerary are provided below.

Covering more than 250 square kilometers (60,000 acres), the Burren is a natural rock garden composed of fractured limestone overlaid in areas by soil, peat, shale, and seasonal lakes that benefits from the tempering winds of the



Atlantic Gulf Stream to provide a home to over 700 species of wild flowers and endemic plants. Perhaps most amazing is the diversity of flowering plants, such as *Gentiana verna* (spring gentian) normally found in alpine areas, *Dryas octopetala* (mountain avens) found in Arctic areas, and *Neotinea maculata* (dense-flowered orchid) from the Mediterranean. The Burren is also noted for its orchids with 24 of Ireland's 28 species located there. The Burren is in bloom from April thru September, and peaks in May and June. During the tour, we will also visit the majestic Cliffs of Moher. The cliffs rise by over 200 meters (700 feet) above the Atlantic Ocean and are the highest such cliffs in Europe. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher are listed as a Global Geopark by UNESCO.

The tour will be limited to 20 participants and will be led by Tony Kirby, a naturalist who has been leading tours of the Burren for almost 20 years (see [www.heartofburrenwalks.com](http://www.heartofburrenwalks.com)), and Dr. Micheline Sheehy Skeffington, retired lecturer in plant ecology at National University of Ireland Galway, who has botanized and lead field courses in the Burren for over 40 years.

### Tuesday, May 4

Tour participants should arrive at the Dublin airport by not later than 9:30 am. They will be picked up by chartered bus and transferred to our hotel in Doolin. After making a short stop at the hotel to meet Tony, we will visit the Cliffs of Moher and the adjacent visitor center. We will then drive back to the hotel to check in. After dinner at the hotel, Tony will provide a talk on the geology, history, and flora of the Burren and review the scheduled activities for the next two days.



### Wednesday, May 5

Breakfast will be served at the hotel. We will depart at 8:30 for two hikes, each of which will be approximately 2.5 hours long. For each hike, we will divide into two smaller groups with one group going with Tony and the other with Micheline to separate locations for botanizing. The hike locations will be selected based on the diversity of plants that are in bloom and weather conditions, but will probably be near the townlands of Ballyryan and Fanore near the coast. The terrain is generally uneven but walking is at a leisurely pace. Plants that we are likely to see include *Gentiana verna*, *Euphrasia salisburgensis* subsp. *hibernica*, *Limonium recurvum* ssp. *pseudotranswallianum*, *Adiantum capillus-veneris*, *Dryas octopetala*, and *Dactylorhiza occidentalis*. We will get together for lunch at a local pub or café and then divide up again for afternoon hikes, but swapping guides and locations. Following the afternoon hikes, we will return to the hotel around 5:00.



We will go to dinner at a pub in Doolin and should be back to the hotel by around 8:00 unless you want to stay longer to listen to Irish music or look around town.

### Thursday, May 6

The schedule on Thursday will be similar to Wednesday, but with the hike locations being in the central Burren near Mullaghmore and Slieve Carron. The terrain is uneven but walking is at a leisurely pace. We are likely to see *Gentiana verna*, *Dryas octopetala*, *Potentilla fruticosa*, *Ophrys insectifera*, *Neotinea maculata* (if lucky) and many more. The hike locations will be selected based on the diversity of plants that are in bloom and weather conditions. Following the afternoon hikes, we will return to the hotel around 5:00. We will go to dinner at a pub in Doolin and should be back to the hotel by around 8:00.



### Friday, May 7

Breakfast will be served at the hotel. Participants planning to go the [SRGC International Rock Garden Conference](#) will depart by chartered bus for the Dublin Airport at approximately 8:00 am. From there, non-stop flights are available to Edinburgh that will arrive by mid-afternoon. Private and public transportation is available for getting to your hotel in Perth. The only scheduled conference activity on Friday is a social gathering that evening.

#### What is included in the tour price:

- Lodging: Rooms are reserved at the highly rated Aran View Country House in Doolin, Ireland. Single participants may be asked to share room if necessary for all participants to stay at the same location.
- Meals: The tour price includes breakfast on all three days, lunch on Wednesday and Thursday, and dinner on Tuesday. We will provide transportation to local pubs and cafes in Doolin for dinner on Wednesday and Thursday nights, but each participant will be responsible for selecting and paying for these two meals.
- Transportation: Air conditioned buses driven by professional driver from and to the Dublin Airport and during the Burren hikes. Water will be available on the buses.
- Guide and Entrance Fees: Guide and entrance fees to all tour sites are included.

#### What is NOT included in the tour price:

- International Flights (this exclusion includes the flight from Dublin to Edinburgh; we will be happy to provide information on flight options and transportation from EDI to Perth, but it is more cost efficient to leave the actual booking up to each participant).
- Alcoholic beverages (except during the dinner on Tuesday) and personal items
- Travel Insurance
- Tips: Tour guide and driver costs are included in the tour price; however, tips of 1-2 euro per day are always welcome. A tip of 10-15% (depending on the service) is customary in restaurants, but is generally not required for drinks or at pubs.

#### Other Information

- Hikes: Tour participants should be in reasonable shape and able to traverse uneven terrain. Weather conditions in the Burren can be highly variable. Participants should bring waterproof clothing in case it is windy and rainy.
- Group Size and Price: The tour price is based on 20 participants. If there are fewer than 15 participants, NARGS may need to cancel the tour or increase the price.
- Safety during the tour is important. We will be using licensed hotels, restaurants, drivers, and vehicles throughout the trip. However, there is always a risk of an accident. All participants will be required to sign a "Participant Waiver and Release of Liability" form. The form covers both release of NARGS from liability if an accident occurs and permission to use photos taken during the tour.
- If you would like more information about the flora of the Burren, [The Wild Plants of the Burren and the Aran Islands, a Field Guide](#) by Charles Nelson is suggested.
- If there is enough interest, we may arrange a 1-2 day pre-tour to visit Dublin and learn about Ireland's past and present. If you would be interested in such a tour, please indicate so on the registration form.