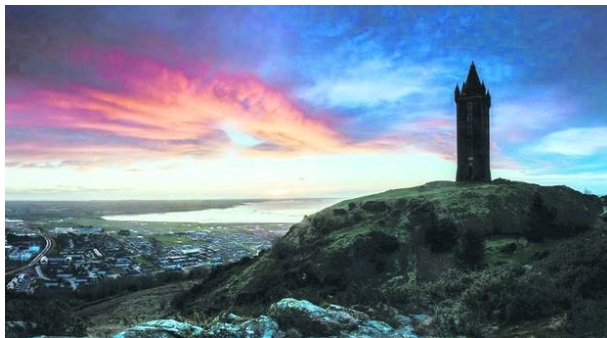


Ards Peninsula Tour

0900

Depart Belfast Hotel and drive to Newtownards Co Down for the start of the drive along the Ards Peninsula.

Driving through Newtownards we will see Scrabo Tower



At the top of Scrabo Hill, overlooking Strangford Lough and the whole of North Down, is Scrabo Tower. The tower, which was built in 1857, is one of Northern Ireland's best known landmarks and the views from the top are spectacular. Inside the tower you can see an exhibition and short video detailing its history.

Scrabo Country Park is centred at the top of Scrabo Hill near Newtownards and boasts incredible views over Strangford Lough and the surrounding countryside. There are plenty of paths through the fine beech woodlands of Killynether Wood and around the disused quarries allowing visitors many opportunities to enjoy the quiet and peaceful countryside.

Universal Pictures filmed several scenes of the new Dracula Untold film at Scrabo Country Park & Killynether Wood. This was one of many of the locations used for filming across Northern Ireland.

Arrive Mount Stewart



Mount Stewart is a 19th-century house and garden in County Down, Northern Ireland, owned by the National Trust. Situated on the east shore of Strangford Lough, a few miles outside the town of Newtownards and near Greyabbey, it was the Irish seat of the Vane-Tempest-Stewart family, Marquesses of Londonderry. The house and its contents reflect the history of the Vane-Tempest-Stewart family, who played a leading role in British and Irish social and political life.

The National Trust took over the gardens in 1957. The last chatelaine of the house (and the last surviving child of the 7th Marquess), Lady Mairi Bury (née Vane-Tempest-Stewart, Dowager Viscountess Bury), gave the house and most of its contents to the Trust in 1977. The Trust operates the property under the name "Mount Stewart House, Garden & Temple of the Winds". Lady Mairi was the last Londonderry family member to live at Mount Stewart, and the last member of this Anglo-Irish family to live in Ireland. She died at Mount Stewart on 18 November 2009, at the age of 88. On her death her daughter Lady Rose Lauritzen, wife of the American art historian, became the live-in family member; she lives also in Venice.

In 1999, the Mount Stewart Gardens were added to the United Kingdom "Tentative List" of sites for potential nomination as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In 2015, the National Trust completed an extensive restoration of the house and its contents as well as the purchase of the wider estate re-uniting it and plan to open for visitor access.

The Echlinville Distillery



Echlinville Estate was founded by the Echlin family in the 1730's, a notoriously influential and powerful family in Ireland at this time. Most notably Bishop Robert Echlin who was the guardian and implementer of the new reformed church in the counties of Down & Connor. Robert settled in the Ards peninsula around 1612 becoming the founder of the Echlins in the area.

It was his great grandson Charles Echlin who bought the two story property in Rubane in the early 1700s and renamed it the Echlinville House & Estate. It may have changed down through the years but the majestic house still provides the perfect backdrop to exciting new times for the Echlinville Distillery.

“At the Echlinville distillery we see huge importance in paying tribute to the sites past in creating a new and exciting future.”

Short 20 minute drive to Portaferry for Ferry Crossing to Strangford – short 7 minute journey.



Lunch at The Cuan in Strangford is highly recommended - we can make the booking for you if you wish us to.



The “Dire Wolves” from the Game of Thrones are regularly on view in The Square just outside The Cuan – hopefully we will be in luck.



After lunch drive 5 minutes to Castleward - otherwise known as “Winterfell” in Game of Thrones



Castle Ward’s historic farmyard is the location of Winterfell, the backdrop for the series pilot and much of season one. It’s also where you will find the Whispering Wood and key scenes including Robb Stark’s Camp, the Baelor battle and when Brienne confronts the Stark men.

HBO's Game of Thrones® spent eight weeks at Castle Ward building the set of Winterfell ahead of the pilot episode and hundreds of actors and crew worked on the filming here.

Castleward Demesne



Castle Ward has been the home of the Ward family since ca. 1570. Known originally as *Carrick na Sheannagh* and owned by the Earls of Kildare, it was bought by Bernard Ward, father of Sir Robert Ward, Surveyor-General of Ireland. The 850 acre walled demesne also dates from the 16th century. The Ward family built a succession of homes in their estate; Old Castle Ward, built about 1590 near to Strangford Lough, still survives, but a mansion built about 1720 by Judge Michael Ward was demolished about 1850, although some of the associated landscaping remains.

The architect of the current building, built during the early 1760s for Michael Ward's son Bernard Ward, 1st Viscount Bangor is unknown, although he may have come from the Bristol area, with which the Ward family had associations. It may have been James Bridges who practiced in Bristol between 1757 and 1763 and whose work there has some similarity to Castle Ward.

The property was inherited by a settlement made during 1748 by Bernard Ward's eldest son, Nicholas, 2nd Viscount Bangor, who was clearly insane. When his younger brother, Edward, died during 1812 leaving a young son, the youngest brother Robert took the opportunity to relocate the insane Nicholas into a smaller house in Downpatrick and strip Castle Ward of everything valuable. The house stood empty until the death of Nicholas during 1827, when it was inherited by Edward's son, now the 3rd Viscount. He and his descendants restored the building and its furnishings, but on the death of the 6th Viscount during 1950 the house and estate were given in lieu of death duties to the Government of Northern Ireland, who presented the house and its gardens to the National Trust during 1952.

Tour Ends and we arrive back to Belfast hotel for circa 1700.