

Ireland Retreat

JUNE 19TH-27TH, 2024
KILKEEL & CULTRA,
NORTHERN IRELAND

A FEAST FOR THE SENSES AND NOURISHMENT FOR THE SOUL, LED BY FRIENDS WHO ARE EAGER TO SHARE THEIR STORIES WITH YOU, AND INVITE YOU INTO A NEW WAY OF TELLING YOUR OWN STORY.

You're warmly invited to join us on a journey of hope, healing, creativity and community - staying in historic restored rural accommodation including cottages in lovely natural surroundings and a retreat centre on the grounds of a converted country house by the sea on the edge of Belfast with a group of friends old and new.

We'll enjoy the landscape on amazing walks, hear music and story, meet locals, experience the peace process in encountering people directly involved in activism and change, and get to know the culture of northern Ireland, immersed in a community rooted in the depths and creativity of Celtic spirituality.

Good food, inspiring art, and beautiful journeys on foot will form the heart of this soulfully unique and transforming experience. Led by warm-hearted and thoughtful guides including northern Irish writer and peace activist Gareth Higgins, with special guests beloved Americana duo Karin Bergquist and Linford Detweiler, Over the Rhine, this will be weeklong experience - for around 25 guests only - that might just last for the rest of your life.

Read on for more information on how you can join us!

AN INVITATION FROM OUR HOSTS BRIAN AMMONS & GARETH HIGGINS

Many people have taken trips to Ireland, but few have wandered off the beaten path, forming communities of pilgrims who wanted to experience Ireland in authenticity rather than the more antiseptic/corporate tourist trip where feet don't touch the ground and souls might as well have stayed on the plane. Growing up in northern Ireland I (Gareth) often wished I could share with folks the beauty of our landscape, and the depth of our stories, not to mention the hard and rewarding task of peace-building.

We've been privileged to co-lead a few similar trips in the last couple of years in Gareth's home of northern Ireland, with the amazing musicians, writers and spiritual teachers Kathleen Norris, David Wilcox, Karen Moore, Brian McLaren, David LaMotte, and Eric Elnes. We're delighted to be joined on this upcoming trip next June once more with our great friends Karin Bergquist and Linford Detweiler whose gifts for expanding our stories, cherishing community, and walking through difficult journeys will animate us beautifully.

Our trip is full of surprises, but we can tell you that mornings will often feature gathered conversations, afternoons we will explore the landscape, and in the evenings there might be music, storytelling, and maybe even a touch of mischief! You'll meet friends and colleagues with whom we have been honored to travel some of the journey, peacemakers and poets and politicians, you'll walk by the sea and on mountains, and there'll be plenty of time to take by yourself to seek whatever you need.

**A Note on our Special Guests: Linford and Karin will be with us for the duration of the retreat, participating along with the rest of our community. They will participate in a community conversation early in the retreat, and later give a special public concert in an intimate venue with front row seats reserved for retreat participants.*

STORYTELLING, MUSIC, ART AND PEACE OUR SPECIAL GUESTS: OVER THE RHINE



Karin Bergquist and **Linford Detweiler** are the core of the beloved and award-winning Americana band **Over the Rhine**. For over thirty years, Over the Rhine has embodied what *Rolling Stone* calls, "restoration and perseverance". Since 2016 Linford & Karin have curated and hosted the *Nowhere Else* festival, a unique weekend of music, story and connection. Their music is adored, their concerts renowned for an ineffable sense of presence, exquisite lyrics and sonic landscapes, and a community of fans who treat an Over the Rhine experience as an extended family reunion.

[Learn more of Over the Rhine here.](#)

OUR HOSTS

Gareth Higgins, Ph.D. is a writer, storyteller, and community leader who grew up near Belfast during the northern Ireland Troubles, and now lives in North Carolina. Author of *How Not to be Afraid and Cinematic States*, and co-author of *The Seventh Story: Us, Them, and the End of Violence* and *Religion, Civil Society and Peace in Northern Ireland*, he writes and speaks about connection to the earth, storytelling and the power of dreams, peace and making justice, and how to take life seriously without believing your own propaganda. He was co-founder of the Wild Goose Festival, [The Porch Magazine](#), and www.moviesandmeaning.com. Gareth leads trips to his native Ireland every year, inviting participants to go beyond the beaten track, to experience the landscape and history through the lens of a story about people learning to live at peace with one another. You can find more about Gareth's work at www.garethhiggins.net



OUR HOSTS



Brian Ammons, M.Ed., M.Div., Ph.D. is an educator, spiritual director, coach, writer and ordained minister. A former faculty member in Duke University's Program in Education and for over eight years Chaplain & Director of Spiritual Life at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, NC, Brian was named Interfaith Youth Core Outstanding Educator in 2017. Brian holds a PhD in Education with a certificate in Women's and Gender Studies from UNC-Greensboro, and is a minister in the Alliance of Baptists tradition. Brian is trained as coach in an International Coaching Federation accredited program jointly sponsored by Pinnacle Leadership and The Center for Congregational Health and formed as a spiritual director through Shalem Institute's spiritual guidance program.

Brian has written and spoken widely on themes of vocational discernment; interfaith work in higher education; and the intersections of gender, sexuality, and spirituality.

Find out more about Brian's work here: <https://www.theporchmagazine.com/coaching-spiritual-direction>

What People Say

"I am so grateful for the incredible experiences of our Ireland Retreat. It was a deep, rich, educational, spiritual, and personally challenging time that I will hold dear for life. It was a true delight!" - *Donna, Arizona*

"Words can't express my gratitude for the experience you provided for all of us. What a gift to the world." - *Sharon, Nebraska*

"It was a lovely, valuable, very interesting adventure. I look forward to next time."
- *TG, North Carolina*

"This retreat was a beautiful, creative, and transformative experience. The leaders and participants were some of the loveliest people I have had the opportunity to know. In my own nation of many divisions, it was good to hear stories of peace-making, transformation, and hope. Thank you for these meaningful, powerful, and playful days." - *Michael, Pennsylvania*

"This trip was **on the short list for best experiences of my life**. I will never forget the beauty, love, joy, and acceptance I found here."

"The **perfect combination** of vacation, retreat, education and sight-seeing."

"The Ireland Retreat is a unique and transforming travel experience. The retreat offers plenty of important Irish sights and places but the retreat gets you closer to the land and lives of "real" (not just tourist) Ireland through a well crafted balance: breathtaking nature, and powerful learning from voices and places shaped in the crucible of struggle and turmoil in Northern Ireland. The retreat brings new awareness of our common humanity and creates friends out of strangers."

"Impressed by how affordable this trip was compared to others I have looked at. Thank you for building community, feeding us, transporting us - all without any glitches and making this spiritually rich and soul relaxing!" - *Susan, Illinois*

"The spiritual immersion in Ireland was sublime. Ancient Celtic spirituality, local culture and beauty, and the combined wisdom of the leaders was soulfully transformative. I highly recommend!"

"The experience opened doorways to find my spiritual anchors at this stage of life. I discovered myself through the eyes of other loving attendees and was able to return that gift to others."

"Seekers of mystery, magic, beauty, and uncertainty... This is for you. But for those who are cynical, it's especially for you."



Silent Valley



Tropical Ravine, Botanic Gardens



"This is a fabulous opportunity to experience the physical beauty, the political culture and history and the warm, friendly people of Ireland. Also an opportunity to slow down, reflect and connect with interesting, diverse people in substantive, heart-level ways."

Trip Details

The trip takes place Wednesday, June 19th - Thursday, June 27th, 2024. The retreat ends in time to return to the US by the evening of June 27th, although many of our previous guests have extended their stay in Ireland before or after the retreat - we're happy to advise on itinerary.

Applications are open now, and places are strictly limited - we can accommodate approximately 25 guests, and expect the trip to be over-subscribed. If you're interested and ready to apply, or have any questions, visit us at irelandretreats.com. We are eager to welcome you to Belfast in June!

Cost (excluding airfare) of \$3400 per person* includes:

- The services of all guides and retreat leaders, support staff, and guests from the world of arts, politics and peacemaking.
- Four nights in historic restored rural accommodation including cottages in exquisite natural surroundings
- Four nights in a retreat centre in the grounds of a converted old country house by the sea on the edge of Belfast.
- Breakfast (including traditional Irish options) every day, and lunch or dinner most days.
- Transport from Belfast hubs to accommodation, and on organized trips throughout the tour.
- All admission fees to sites such as cultural centers, museums, etc.
- The use of all accommodation facilities including lounges, gardens, etc.
- A life-changing experience of spirit, imagination, and community.

When You Apply with a Friend or Family Member, Full Registration is discounted to \$3,225 per person.

Learn More & Apply at irelandretreats.com



Wandering the North Coast



Retreat Group at CS Lewis Square, Belfast



Belfast Peaceline





"This retreat truly was magnificent. Beautifully planned, it filled both mind and soul with beauty, historical context and perspective and rollicking good times. It was a prescient reminder of why we must all remain vigilant and committed to respectful dialogue across seemingly unbridgeable gaps in our own lives and in our country." -
David, Nebraska



A final note: In order to make the tour widely accessible, we're glad to help people raise financial support to join the retreat, including folk with continuing education and sabbatical funding. If the cost of the tour is a stretch, please let us know, we'd love to hear from you! We'd be glad to help you find ways to join us if we can. **Just visit irelandretreats.com to be in touch or to apply.**

Landscape photos taken on Ireland Retreat courtesy of Scott Griessel & Creatista



www.irelandretreats.com