

Edgworth and District Horticultural Society

4-Day Holiday 2017

GARDENS OF NORTHERN IRELAND

This year we are being a little more adventurous by going overseas (the Irish one!!) The Irish destination has taken a lot of planning by Jean & Phil in conjunction with Brightwater Holidays with a careful eye on the price. Inevitably this is rather more than previous years. As usual we will meet our coach in Edgworth / Bromley Cross and this will take us all the way to our Northern Ireland destinations (hotel and gardens) without disembarking with our luggage.

Once again we have planned a busy itinerary with 3 visits on both of our full days in Ireland and one each on the outward and return journeys. Our hotel has a pool and gymnasium in case any of us feels like a work-out at the end of each day!! There are other more relaxing offers! The plan of visits may need adjustment if any garden / owner develops a problem (usually a smaller garden). If this happens there are many beautiful substitutes.

Please also bear in mind that our aim is always to select beautiful and varied gardens /visits and these, like gardens in previous years, may include uneven surfaces, slopes and steps.

Phil Broughton and Jean Turner

Full itinerary and details follow...

Northern Ireland

23 – 26 July 2017

from £455.00 per person



Itinerary

Sunday 23 July 2017

This morning, we depart by coach from our local pick-up points and journey north towards Cairnryan, stopping en-route for refreshments (not included) for our afternoon ferry to Larne. Upon arrival, we will transfer to Antrim for the first visit of our trip to **Antrim Castle Gardens** - an absolute historical gem. These unique gardens recently underwent a major restoration on many of the key features which date back to the late 17th century. The site features a number of notable new, restored and ornamental gardens which retain a strong sense of history and intimacy.



We then continue to our comfortable hotel for the next three nights - the **4* Dunadry Hotel & Country Club**, in County Antrim. All bedrooms are en-suite with satellite television, hairdryer and tea/coffee making facilities. The hotel has an indoor swimming pool, spa pool, steam room, gymnasium and beauty salon.

Dinner will be served in the hotel this evening.

Monday 24 July 2017

Following a full breakfast this morning, we depart for the first of three visits today. We begin our morning with a visit to the gardens of **Grey Abbey House** where we will see mature woods, borders and a southern hemisphere collection along with parkland meadows and fields. Part of the Chilean collection of plants and seeds from the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh is held in the southern hemisphere garden, together with plants from Tasmania, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina and Brazil, some of which have been collected by the present owners on their travels.



The Walled Garden has been restored over the last twelve years, with a vegetable garden, late summer border and shrub rose border. The curved wall has been restocked with fan-trained fruit trees. The two orchards contain a collection of Victorian fruit trees, and a recently-planted collection of Irish apple trees.

Monday 24 July 2017 – cont.

From here, we continue to our next visit to **Mount Stewart**, the former home to a fascinating array of political leaders and society figures, which re-opened in April 2015 following a three year £7 million restoration programme. We will explore the house at leisure, where the story of Edith, Lady Londonderry and the Londonderry family will be interpreted, allowing us the opportunity to view a unique collection of national and international significant family portraits, stunning silver collections and other family treasures including antique furniture such as the 22 chairs used at the landmark Congress of Vienna, called to redefine Europe's frontiers after the fall of Napoleon.



Mount Stewart is also famous for its dazzling and idiosyncratic gardens which bask in the micro-climate of low rainfall and humid coastal air that exists here. The Italian Garden south of the house is in the form of a giant parterre, edged in startling golden thuja or smouldering purple berberis and filled with plantings of carmine, yellow and scarlet on one side, with cooler blue, lavender and grey on the other. Elsewhere, there is a Spanish garden with huge eucalyptuses looming in the woods behind, and an exuberant and formal sunken garden surrounded by a fine pergola planted with clematis, honeysuckle and roses. The entrance façade of the house overlooks an entirely different landscape, a scene of serenity with noble trees leading gently uphill to a lake. East of the lake are blood-red and orange rhododendrons and the banks of the lake are planted with long drifts of arum lily. This is one of the most attractive and stimulating gardens, where traditional features are carried off with exuberance and panache, and we have allowed plenty of time here to take everything in. Lunch is available here today (not included).



We conclude today at the Richardson's Walled Garden, set in the tranquil landscaped grounds of **Greenmount Campus**. The garden has a dramatic, formal framework with softer planting within. Intricate Celtic knot gardens and a small maze throw a wonderful contrast to the colourful mixed borders and rose beds. Pleached lime trees, formal yew hedges and a large trellis clad pergola contrast with the informal potager planting of fruit and vegetables amongst ornamental plants.

We return to our hotel where once again dinner will be served this evening.

Tuesday 25 July 2017

This morning following breakfast, we begin our day at **Glenarm Castle**, the 400 year-old home of the Earls of Antrim. Originally created to supply the Castle with its fruit and vegetables, and one of the oldest in Ireland, the Walled Garden is now filled with exciting flowers and specimen plants with rich displays of herbaceous plants. There is also a wonderfully scented herb garden, surrounded by a circular yew hedge, which features four stone capitols which came from the Earl-Bishop's palace at Downhill in Co Derry.



Following our visit, we continue along the beautiful Antrim coast to the **Giant's Causeway**, where an impressive new National Trust visitor centre has enhanced this famous beauty spot.



The 37,000 hexagonal basaltic columns were created by ancient volcanic eruptions some 60 million years ago, along the same chain of seismic activity that created Fingal's Cave on Staffa, a hundred miles or so to the north. Of course, there is also a more romantic explanation – that it was built by the giant Finn McCool, as the consequence of a gargantuan spat with a Scottish adversary, although another version of the legend has it that he was merely trying to reach his girlfriend. Either way it is an impressive sight. Lunch is available here (not included).



In the afternoon, we will head back inland for the gardens at **Benvarren** in Ballymoney. Like Glenarm, this garden has been in the same family for centuries and it too boasts a fine walled garden. There is also a rose garden, a box and lavender parterre, a well-stocked kitchen garden with hot houses; a vinery, melon house and espalier-trained apple trees against the high curved brick walls.

We return to our hotel where we will enjoy our final dinner and evening together.

Wednesday 26 July 2017

Sadly our time in Northern Ireland has come to an end and following breakfast, we must check-out of our hotel. We will have time for one final visit this morning to the **Ballyrobert Cottage Garden & Nursery** in nearby Ballyclare. Maurice and Joy Parkinson work this six acre garden and provide an exquisite display of cottage garden plants. The garden is sub-divided into themes or individual garden areas and includes the lakeside garden; the front cottage garden; the formal cottage border; the sheltered garden; and a woodland and wildlife haven. Despite the heavy clay soil, and being located in a frost pocket, a wide range of plants flourish and includes phlox, hosta, rudbeckia, rodgersia, hellebore and ornamental grasses.



Following our visit, we transfer back to Larne for our early afternoon ferry to Cairnryan, where we then continue our journey back to our original pick-up points, stopping en-route for refreshments (not included) with arrival expected in the evening.

Included in the price

- Three nights' dinner, bed and full breakfast basis at the 4* Dunadry Hotel, Dunadry
- Scheduled return ferry crossings between Cairnryan and Larne
- Comfortable coaching throughout
- Entry to the gardens of Antrim Castle, Grey Abbey House, Greenmount Campus, Glenarm Castle, Benvariden, Ballyrobert Cottage and a visit to the house and gardens of Mount Stewart and the Giant's Causeway
- Services of a Brightwater Holidays tour manager

Not included (per person)

- Single room supplement £90.00
- Insurance £21.00 (under 65); £42.00 (65-74); £63.00 (75-90)

Please note, the running order of the tour may be subject to change depending on availability and opening times for 2017