



the CRAIC

{Irish for fun, laughter and letting it all rip}

Monday, August 31 to Sunday, 13 September - 2020

**THE BACKROADERS
SING IRELAND**



the CRAIC

Development & Concept

It's been a good while in the development, but the Irish trip is ready for release. The painstaking research yielded a wonderful Irish partner - Celtic Horizons Tours. In conjunction with their product development team I travelled Ireland for 6 weeks, researching the suggested itinerary with my own discoveries, the ones you only find in conversation with local people. Each hotel, cultural engagement and physical landscape suggested by Celtic Horizons has been visited and researched.

As with all the Backroaders tours, the aim is to create a seamless mix of travel, singing and culture. In this program I have sought to factor in more free time that allows people to wander into towns and explore the pubs and music. Each hotel is within walking distance to the heart of the community. I have tried also to style the performances as interactions with locals rather than as formal shows. Hence we will sing in pubs, and with other choirs, and to groups of people that I won't disclose, because some things should be left to delight and surprise.

Ireland is a magnificent place. It is beautiful, ancient, historic and cultural. But that is not what I have focused on as the central feature of The Craic. What is at the heart of this tour is THE PEOPLE, the Irish themselves, who have a wonderful openness and willingness to engage in conversation and story. At the core of their hearts is an implicit understanding of music as a pathway to joy and life.

Ireland is the world's soul, a place where love, culture and mysticism intersects with the practical world. Our aim over two wonderful weeks is simple, to sing with Irish people, not just to them.



THE ITINERARY - 2020

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Just the bare bones! This program will evolve and any change will be designed to make the experience a deeper and more powerful one. I have left many interactions and pop-up gigs out of this list, preferring to keep them as an organic surprise.

9am - Monday morning, 31 August: Depart Central Dublin - Pickup TBA. Head to Kinsale, Co Cork via the medieval Rock of Cashel set on an outcrop of limestone including 12th century round tower, High Cross and Romanesque chapel.

Monday - Friday morning: 31 August to 4 September. 4 days and nights in Kinsale. Kinsale is the perfect place for our mini-residency as we rehearse and explore the local pubs and beautiful seaside town. We stay at the Trident Hotel with a brilliant rehearsal space overlooking the harbour just minutes from the centre of town. Singing will be interspersed with visits to Blarney Castle, kissing the Blarney Stone and the emigration town of Cobh with historian Dr Michael Martin, on the trail of the Titanic. Be prepared for some heart-wrenching stories. Performance in a selected local pub on the last night, together with local Irish musicians.

Friday to Monday - 4 -6 September: - Travel to Killarney along the beautiful West Coast, travelling through Bantry, Kenmare and the Black Valley. The 3 days and nights in Killarney, staying in the wonderful Dromhall Hotel, will feature an interaction with a local traditional dancing/singing collective - *Ceoltoiri Sliabh Luachra*. On that same day we visit a small town to give a very special surprise performance. *Nope won't tell you any more*. Add horse and buggy rides to the local castles and a final performance in St Mary of the Sloes, a beautiful church with wonderful acoustics in the centre of town.

Monday to Thursday - 7 - 10 September -4 Days & Nights - We are taking over the Merriman Hotel in Kinvarra, Co Galway. The traditional hotel, with its enormous thatched roof, is all ours and you will love it. It becomes our base for a session with an a Cappella choir from Galway, a trip to the Connaught West country and the beautiful Westport, a journey to Inis Oirr, Aran islands via the Cliffs of Moher. Then there are profound interactions with a local folk historians to some ancient Celtic and pre-Celtic sites. Our last night will be a gig in the hotel, with all of Kinvarra invited to the CRAIC.

Friday 11 September - Check out of the hotel and head to the Sheraton Hotel in Athlone, a fascinating town on the Shannon. We will sing to a school on the way before performing a pop-up gig in Athlone Castle that night.

Saturday 12 September - Travel to Dublin and a perfect afternoon interaction with the *Forget Me Not Choir* in North Dublin, followed by a celebratory meal that evening. Accommodation in the extremely cool Wilder Hotel, Dublin centre.

Sunday 13 September - Check out.



THE TEAM

Tony Backhouse

Composer • Vocal Arranger • Singer • Author • Choir Director • Workshop Leader

Tony Backhouse, BA, BMus, is one of the leaders in the Australasian a cappella movement. He founded Australia's foremost a cappella gospel choir Café of the Gate of Salvation in 1986, and directed it for 21 years. He arranged and composed the bulk of their repertoire and still writes music regularly for them. He founded a cappella choir the Honeybees and has directed and sung with reclusive male a cappella trio Heavenly Lights since 1996. In demand for his inspiring teaching style, Tony has run more than 2000 vocal workshops throughout the world for the public, for festivals, schools, universities, churches, organisations and corporate training events. He currently lives in Napier, New Zealand.

www.tonybackhouse.com.au



Raymond Hawkins - Tour Leader

Raymond Hawkins - owner of SOUND TRACKS TRAVEL - has operated eclectic tours all over Australia for decades. He toured with some of Australia's greatest bands - Midnight Oil, Cold Chisel and The Angels as tour manager, lighting designer and/or production manager. He has worked with Opera Australia, The Sydney Dance Company and ran the Audio/Visual Department at the Sydney Opera House.

Raymond created the Burra Gospel & Soul Festivals, operates and designed the BackRoaders tours and ran the Desert Choir program with Tony Backhouse for almost a decade.

www.soundtrackstravel.com.au



The backend of our journey will be provided by Celtic Horizon Tours, specialists in bringing performing artists to Ireland. As such they are a perfect fit for the Backroaders, able to understand our intention to sing in beautiful places and to connect to audiences through singing.

Throughout the development of The Craic, they have been active partners as each stage of the journey was created on the ground. Their recommendations have been instrumental in constructing a beautiful program, with fantastic accommodation and tour guides.

Celtic Horizons Tours are members of the Irish Travel Agents Association and are fully licensed to uphold the highest industry standards.



A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

On my research trip to Ireland to develop The Craic, I found the first few days unsettling. My Australian travel is always informed by a deep desire to connect to something real, to transact with people, write about the experience, to photograph images that hopefully go beyond happy snaps. Here, uncomfortably, I felt like a disembodied tourist: looking at castles; visiting museums; ticking places off; surrounded by other tourists who were also ticking things off. We were like a giant organism that sustains its ever-dimishing life-force by ticking things off. I even found myself on a guided tour of the Guinness factory in Dublin. What the F...k!

*So I got myself sorted. I have developed enough wonderful programs to know the chemistry and magic of the singing process. Now I was in the mind of **you**, imagining you singing with an old man called Jack who will join us with his accordion in Corcomroe Abbey, County Clare. I was at the back of the pub in Kinsale as the Backroaders start performing on our first gig. I was in the very church in Cobh where the steerage class Irish emigres sang before they boarded the Titanic, and in my mind I was singing those same songs, as you will be, and probably through tears as I was. Everywhere I went; to schools, pubs, old peoples homes and monasteries; I envisaged the extra dimension in the equation, good spirited people singing with love.*

To design THE CRAIC I had to inhabit the tour from the inside, to imagine the Backroaders in song, providing that protective canopy under which so many emotions and nuances and experiences can bloom.

From then on, Ireland buzzed. Characters emerged like enchantments to enrich and inform my experience. I fell in love with the country and the people. I can almost hear you all singing now!

Best come for the Craic. It's going to be grand!

Raymond

NOTICEBOARD

CHOIR & GIG NOTES

The tour is for people who want to sing. There is no requirement for people to be professional singers. The attitude of the Choir is an immensely supportive one where practiced choristers and novices sing happily side-by-side.

The CRAIC will feature relaxed performances as we integrate with people in choirs and pubs and in places of cultural significance. Any monies raised will go entirely to local causes.

ACCOMMODATION NOTES

Great hotels, mostly 4 star. There are limited single supplements available at \$2000 per person.

COACH & LUGGAGE NOTES

The Irish countryside can involve narrow winding roads. For that reason we need to insist that you restrict your wardrobe so as to fit into the trailer. An overnight bag is preferable to a suitcase. There will be opportunities to do laundry. We just have to travel light on this Backroaders trip.

Also, again because of winding roads, onboard toilets are replaced by frequent comfort stops.

FOOD NOTES

Cooked breakfasts and three x 3 Course evening meals are provided. All other evening meals and lunches at participants' expense. This gives a chance for people to be a little independent and will allow quicker food preparations.

Whats In and whats Out!

IT INCLUDES:

- Tony Backhouse as full time choir leader.
- Bus driver, Gig Tour Manager and Interpretative Tour Guide
- Integrated choral experience that includes rehearsals, performances, flash gigs and collaborations with local choirs and musicians.
- Twin share 13 nights hotel accommodation with private w.c bath shower facilities based on sharing twin or double rooms {see Accommodation notes for single supplement}.
- Travel and transfers by luxury touring coach .
- Full Irish cooked & buffet breakfast daily in hotels.
- Three x 3 course evening meals served in hotels.
- Day trip to and from the Aran Islands Inis Oir by ferry from Doolin back via the Cliffs of Moher.
- Admissions to: Rock of Cashel, Blarney Castle, historic walking tour of Cobh the Titanic Trail.
- A welcome address on the history of Cork and Kinsale by local historian Mr Michael Martin.
- Hire of the Harpoon Room as Rehearsal space in The Trident Hotel, Kinsale for 4 days.
- Tips and gratuities to the driver; all local taxes and service charges.
- surprises you will just have to take my word for.

It EXCLUDES:

- Alcohol, lunches, dinners except as noted above
- all accommodation and travel transfers before 9 am on the first day and after 10 am on the final day.

BOOKING & PRICE OPTIONS

Over 100 people have made formal Expressions of Interest for the Craic. In the interests of fairness, we will be offering spaces to the first 50 pax initially, and then to the second 50 people.

If you are in either of those lists you will be sent an offer directly by email before the program goes public.

1. PRICE - \$6,390 AU p.p. Non-refundable DEPOSIT of \$1,500 AU
2. LIMITED SINGLE SUPPLEMENTS AVAILABLE - \$2,000 p.p.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

1. NON-REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT OF \$1500 AU TO SECURE YOUR PLACE.
2. ONGOING PAYMENT SCHEDULE:
 - By Dec 1st - 2019 - \$1200 AU
 - By Feb 1st - 2020 - \$1200 AU
 - By April 1st - 2020 - \$1200 AU
 - By June 1st - 2020 - \$1290 AU

** AFTER THE PAYMENT OF THE DEPOSIT, PAYMENTS WILL BE MADE DIRECTLY TO CELTIC HORIZON TOURS. PAYMENT DETAILS WILL BE SENT WELL BEFORE FIRST DUE PAYMENT.

** SINGLE SUPPLEMENTS DUE ON LAST PAYMENT - June 1st - 2020.

**BOOKING LINK SENT
TO WAIT LIST**

CONTACT DETAILS

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