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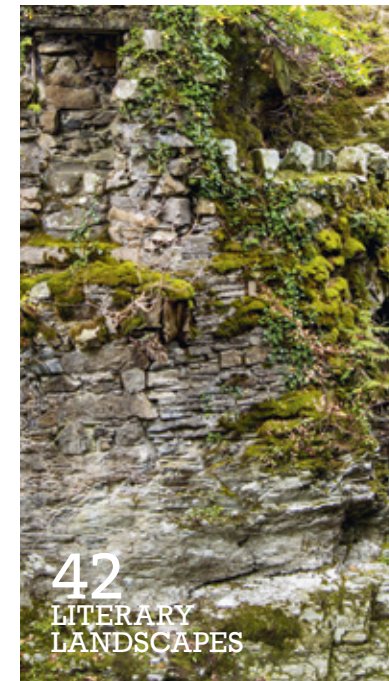
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WELCOME

So you want to get away from it all, try something new, shake things up a bit... well, the island of Ireland is just waiting for you. Waiting to blow you away with the captivating Wild Atlantic Way driving route, to grab your hand and pull you up to dance at a traditional céili, to thrill you with its incredible haunted castles and then to spoil you with its excellent culinary delights. Don't stand on the sidelines, come on...

Jump into  Ireland



42 LITERARY LANDSCAPES

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PICTURE THIS...

Crashing waves, jagged rocks shaped by time and the elements, and then, in the middle of all the drama, a small harbour offers a warm welcome. This is Ballintoy Harbour on County Antrim's rugged north coast, a place where land and sea collide to stunning effect. The beating heart of a small but vibrant fishing community, Ballintoy has recently found fame as a location in the fantasy television series Game of Thrones. Ireland's coastline is dotted with lots of small harbours like this, where people still make their living the traditional way and time seems to almost stand still.

Newgrange

Built as a passage tomb, Newgrange in County Meath is a grass-roofed testament to the skill of its ancient architects. Creep down into its Stone Age chamber and you'll be wowed by a structure that's older than the Pyramids. Simply incredible.

Hurling

Fast-paced, exciting and hugely enjoyable, hurling has been played in Ireland for over 2,000 years and is as popular now as it's ever been, with regular games happening all over the island. Of course, it took the Canadians to move the game onto the ice and unleash the mayhem known as ice hockey on the world!

DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT

In Ireland the magic is real. From ancient burial chambers to lunar landscapes, this is your chance to embark on the ultimate escape with mind-blowing adventures you won't forget

International Appalachian Trail

If you're looking for an international walking experience like no other, then this unique route that stretches from Donegal across Northern Ireland is a must. Expect inspirational scenery, friendly locals and an authentic edge-of-the-world feel.

The Burren

At first sight this limestone landscape in County Clare looks as barren as the moon's surface. But look closer and you'll see thriving flora and fauna, and lively villages such as Kilfenora and Kinvara. And when you hear the traditional music, you'll know you're in Ireland.

Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge

Take our word for it – the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge in County Antrim looks scarier than it is. Traditionally built by salmon fishermen, the heart-pounding crossing brings you over to a craggy island, where you can savour dramatic views while the waves crash below.



WATERFORD Ireland's Oldest City

It begins here...

Stroll through Waterford's picturesque streets, enjoy delicious Irish food and great shopping.

Take a guided tour of the world famous Waterford Crystal Factory where you can feel the heat of the furnace and marvel at the craftsmen.

Experience Viking, Medieval and Georgian Waterford at the Waterford Treasures Museums which tell over a 1,000 years of history in 1,000 paces.

Discover hidden gems in the Viking Triangle such as the Victorian Theatre Royal.

Begin your Waterford adventure at www.DiscoverWaterfordCity.ie



Distances to Waterford:
Dublin 1 hr 45 mins
Cork 1 hr 30 mins
Shannon 2 hrs 20 mins
Belfast 3 hrs 30 mins





Ballyvolane House, County Cork



Crom Castle, County Fermanagh



Coolanowle Country House, County Carlow



Dromoland Castle, County Clare



Blackhead Lightkeepers' House, County Antrim



No.1 Pery Square, Limerick

PHOTO BALLYVOLANE HOUSE: JAMES FENNEL

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Ross Castle, Killarney, Co. Kerry

STAY SOMEWHERE DIFFERENT

No matter what your tastes, Ireland has the perfect place for you to stay during your holiday, from cliff-edge lighthouses to gracious country castles

The Irish welcome is famous. And it's not a myth, either. Step inside a B&B on the island and you'll have smiling faces serving up your breakfast and ready to give you the inside track on local sightseeing.

A B&B stay is a great way to connect with Irish culture in affordable accommodation that ranges from historic country houses, such as Ballyvolane House in County Cork and Newforge House in County Armagh, to charming farmhouse B&Bs such as Coolanowle Country House in County Carlow. The one thing B&Bs have in common is the people: warm and full of character, they'll welcome you like one of the family, and ensure you have a holiday to remember.

If your idea of luxury is decadent drawing rooms and a spot of clay pigeon

shooting, then walk through the doors of a luxury Irish country house. Often owned by the original families, these grand houses specialise in old-fashioned, informal hospitality and usually have beautiful gardens to relax in, too. Marlfield House in County Wexford is a stunning Regency manor that feels like you're on a film set, or try the historic Beech Hill Country House Hotel in County Londonderry.

And while Ireland's beautiful mansions are a treat, castles offer something unique. From stunning self-catering properties to five-star castle hotels, these incredible places amp up the glamour factor. Just look at Dromoland Castle in County Clare, which has hosted many heads of state over the years, and Luttrellstown Castle near Dublin, where Victoria and David Beckham got married. Or why not check

into The West Wing, Irish-style? In Crom Castle, County Fermanagh, you can rent out the entire west wing of the castle.

Keep the historic theme going as you travel through Ireland's cities. Both Dublin and Limerick are known for their magnificent Georgian architecture, and boast gracious townhouse hotels such as No.1 Pery Square in Limerick and the architecturally dynamic Number 31 just off Dublin's Leeson Street.

Of course, if it's incredible views you're after, try an Irish lighthouse. Perched on the edge of precipitous cliffs, the views at Blackhead Lightkeepers' Houses in County Antrim, or Loop Head Lightkeeper's House in County Clare are simply unmissable!

For more information on accommodation on the island of Ireland, visit: ireland.com

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IRELAND › SCOTLAND › ENGLAND › WALES



Sally Gap, County Wicklow



Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, County Antrim

Sally Gap

Right at the heart of the heather-covered Wicklow Mountains lies the famous Sally Gap crossroads. This area is beloved by hill-walkers, with lots of trails to suit all abilities. If you do make it up this far, you'll be rewarded with wonderful views over Lough Dan and Lough Tay, with its dark waters and startling white sands.

Q&A
CATHERINE FULVIO

Catherine Fulvio is an Irish TV chef, food writer and proprietor of Ballyknocken House & Cookery School in County Wicklow. An advocate of local, seasonal Irish cooking, here Catherine shares with us her favourite things to see and do on the island of Ireland

What makes Ireland special?

The weather! Mild winters mean gorgeous greenery and all this great grass results in delicious beef, lamb and dairy products. Oh, and the people, of course.

What is your favourite place on the island?

Glendalough in County Wicklow without a doubt, it's magic. It's my favourite place early in the morning and late in the evening as the lake is always so still.

What is your favourite Irish dish?

My favourite would have to be a Baileys cream truffle torte – all that cream and Baileys. But is it traditional? Well, it is in my house anyway. Of course, in terms of a savoury choice it would always be Wicklow lamb, simply grilled with garlic and rosemary – delicious.

What is your favourite view on the island?

Sticking close to home I would have to say the view from Carrick Mountain at the back of the Ballyknocken Cookery School; from here you can see the Wicklow Mountains and even Snowdonia across the Irish Sea in Wales on a clear day. I have visited the Causeway Coast also, and the views there are amazing. When you see pictures of the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge and the Giant's Causeway, you can see why so many people are drawn to them.

What's your idea of a relaxing day out?

A picnic to Kilmaccurragh Gardens near our home village of Glenealy, County Wicklow. It is a slice of heaven especially when the hundreds of rhododendrons are in full bloom.

What are your favourite secret places?

I like to hike up the back of Powerscourt waterfall towards Djouce woods in County Wicklow. On a good day I might reach the top, but I always end up in Poppies in Enniskerry for a hot cup of tea and sometimes a deserved slice of cake.

What would be your one essential thing to do in Ireland?

A must-do on a visit to Ireland is visiting Sally Gap in the Wicklow Mountains, and enjoying the views over Lough Tay and Lough Dan.

How would you sum up Ireland in three words?

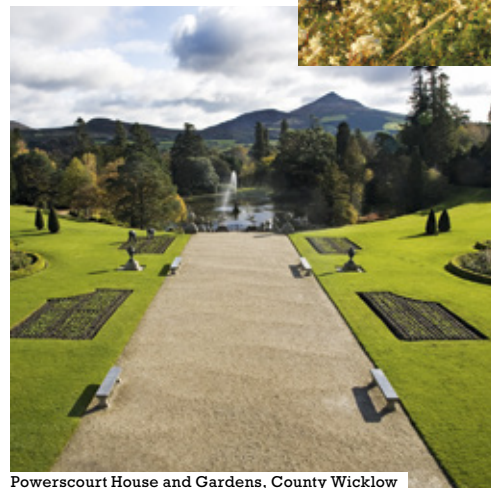
Magical, fun, delicious.

Whitepark Bay, County Antrim



Causeway Coast

As well as the Giant's Causeway and the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, the Causeway Coast has lots of gorgeous hidden gems, like Whitepark Bay, a sandy beach sheltered by limestone cliffs.



Powerscourt House and Gardens, County Wicklow



Poppies, Enniskerry



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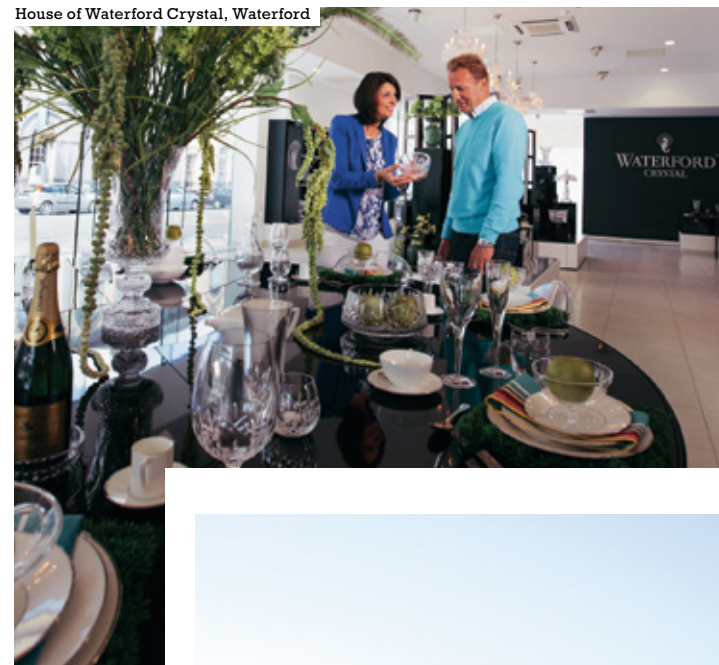
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The most important things in life are experiences.





Galway



House of Waterford Crystal, Waterford



Temple Bar, Dublin



St Stephen's Green, Dublin



The Mall, Armagh

URBAN LEGENDS

Each of Ireland's cities is a legend in its own right; an unforgettable collection of quirky characters, dramatic stories, historic buildings and the odd secret or two tucked away amongst the stones. So take the time to get to know these urban legends... whether you've got a few days or a few hours, you're sure to find something to surprise and delight, even if you think you've discovered it all before!



Ha'penny Bridge, Dublin

DUBLIN

It might be one of Europe's oldest cities, but Dublin flaunts its medieval and Georgian heritage alongside quirky modern cafés, innovative restaurants and traditional pubs

Start off with a trip back 1,000 years or so at the Dublinia exhibition, an interactive journey through Viking and medieval Dublin. History is hands-on here: you can try on Viking clothes, stroll down a noisy street and experience a very different Dublin. When you're done, leave via the archway to Christ Church Cathedral, founded around 1030AD.

A short walk down Dame Street will bring you to Dublin Castle, established in 1204. There are fascinating museums and architecture here. If you've time, visit City Hall and explore Dublin's past with the Story of the Capital exhibition.

Dublin's foodie scene is sizzling, with hip eateries serving Irish produce in innovative ways, as well as an abundance of lively little cafés. Take time out for a lazy lunch at Coppinger Row, The Exchequer Gastropub or Rustic Stone.

Detour through Trinity College towards one of Dublin's great Georgian spaces, Merrion Square, overlooked by 18th century townhouses. A short walk from here is St Stephen's Green and the Little Museum of Dublin, which tells the story of the modern city through a treasure trove of eccentric pieces donated by members of the public.

As Dublin moves from day to night, the area between South William Street and South Great George's Street buzzes with pubs, restaurants and cafés. After dark, the city lights up with showpiece buildings such as the Custom House, the former parliament on College Green and the Spire on O'Connell Street all beautifully illuminated. Finish the day with a wander through the cultural wonderland of Temple Bar before settling down in a traditional, well-worn Dublin pub.



Killiney Hill, County Dublin

Dublin Five to see

Book of Kells, Trinity College

This illuminated 9th century manuscript, consisting of the four Gospels in Latin, is arguably the most beautiful book in existence today.

Kilmainham Gaol

Experience this haunting tour of one of Europe's largest unoccupied gaols (jails), and learn about the dramatic role it has played in Irish history.

Guinness Storehouse

Discover the story of Guinness before heading to the Gravity Bar for great views of Dublin, and a pint of the "black stuff".

Jameson Distillery

Any questions you ever had about whiskey will be answered on the Jameson Distillery Tour. And yes... the tour ends with a wee dram!

National Museum

Marvel at one of western Europe's most exceptional collections of prehistoric gold artefacts, including the famous Tara Brooch.



River Lagan, Belfast



Guildhall, Derry-Londonderry



St Anne's Church, Cork



Trinity College Library, Dublin

Beyond the city

For an easy trip out of the city, jump on the Dart (Dublin's light rail) and escape to the coastal villages of Dalkey and Killiney in the south, and Howth and Malahide along the north County Dublin coast. Howth is particularly popular, with an attractive harbour, seafood restaurants and a friendly atmosphere. For a blast of fresh air, walk along sandy Dollymount Strand on the northern part of the city's coastline. Nearby is Bull Island Nature Reserve, a UNESCO biosphere reserve and bird sanctuary. About 90 minutes from Dublin, the city of Kilkenny offers a lively craft and gourmet food scene with a medieval backdrop. Don't miss the enjoyable Smithwick's Experience Kilkenny (open from March 2014).



Belfast Black Taxi Tour

BELFAST

If you want to discover the real Belfast, then hitch a ride with a Black Taxi Tour. It's fun, friendly and full of surprises, pretty much like the city itself

"She was fine when she left here," the cab driver quips as he drives towards the city's Titanic Quarter. He's talking about the ill-fated liner, of course. The crowning achievement of Belfast's famed Harland and Wolff shipyards is still a tangible presence in the city.

Opened in 2012, Titanic Belfast is the world's largest Titanic visitor attraction and is every bit as awesome as it sounds. Located in the newly developed Titanic Quarter, it's a bright light in a city fast becoming famed for its architectural prowess, contemporary music and critically acclaimed restaurants.

Your Black Taxi Tour will also take in other Belfast highlights such as City Hall, a beautiful Edwardian building right in the city centre, the city's Peace Line and historic political wall murals. The murals feel like a world away from the chic urban Belfast of today, which recently hosted the MTV Europe Video Music Awards, but this is Belfast 2014, and the city's flip sides are exactly what make it such a compelling place to visit.

Other highlights include the gorgeous Victorian-era Crown Liquor Saloon, surely the most famous pub in Belfast and undoubtedly the most beautiful; St Anne's Cathedral with its symbolic Spire of Hope; and Belfast Castle with Scottish Baronial turrets and unrivalled views of the city. That's not to mention the leafy University Quarter, home to Queen's University, the Botanic Gardens and the Ulster Museum.

The beauty of a Black Taxi Tour is that you're in your own private vehicle, driven by a guide who knows the city intimately. So sit back and enjoy the trip. From the back of a black taxi, the city is yours to discover, and it's quite a city.

Crown Liquor Saloon, Belfast



Beyond the city

About an hour from Belfast, the **Mourne Mountains** offer a magical escape and are one of Ireland's most scenic areas, with plenty of walking routes and forest parks. On the Ards Peninsula you'll find **Mount Stewart House and Gardens**, with a stunning variety of plants from all around the world, carefully collected by the late Lady Londonderry. Take to the water and enjoy a spot of kayaking on **Strangford Lough** or head to **Downpatrick**, where you'll find St Patrick's Grave in the grounds of Down Cathedral. Alternatively, go north and follow the slowly winding curves of the **Causeway Coastal Route** to the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, and on to the Giant's Causeway – a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



St Patrick's Grave, Downpatrick

Belfast Five to see

City Hall

Enjoy a free tour of this iconic Baroque-revival building, with its sleek Italian marbles and lavish vaulted ceilings.

St George's Market

As you wander through this charming Victorian market (Fri-Sun) you'll be munching on a Fermanagh Black Bacon roll and swooning over a box of chocolate truffles.

Botanic Gardens

Take time to potter through this horticulturist's dream, from the fragrant rose gardens, to the heady heat of the Tropical Ravine.

Titanic Belfast

Don't miss this stunning building and excellent Titanic exhibition. And while in the area, visit the newly restored SS Nomadic, the world's last White Star Line ship.

Ulster Folk and Transport Museum

Discover folk and transport history at this quirky museum, 15 minutes from Belfast.



Titanic Belfast



Cork by night

CORK

Compact and easy to explore, with a great mix of markets, galleries, shops and heritage attractions, Cork is crying out for the kind of immersion only a walking tour can offer

Patricia Schultz rates Culinary Cork as one of her 1,000 Places To See Before You Die, so start with brunch at the English Market. The tight-knit stalls, stuffed with everything from olives and artisan breads to shellfish and sushi, are right at the city's foodie heart. Queen Elizabeth II even dropped in on her State visit to Ireland in 2011.

After brunch, head north across the River Lee towards the Shandon district and St Anne's Church, also known as the "Four-Faced Liar" because each of the tower's four clocks used to tell a different time. This may be one of Ireland's most important early 18th century churches, but its real selling point is the chance to ring the centuries-old bells. As you climb the tower, look out for the instruction sheets inviting you to send tunes like You Are My Sunshine peeling over the city's rooftops.

Another quirky gem in Shandon is the Cork Butter Museum, which tells the story of Ireland's butter trade. It's another sign that in Cork you're in one of Ireland's gourmet hubs, a place famous for its seafood and exceptional cheese. Fancy some fresh hake or rainbow chard with anchovy butter? A beetroot and wild garlic risotto, perhaps? Or what about some ice cream flavoured with Beamish stout? Well then loosen that belt. It's time for lunch, and Cork's restaurants are waiting.

Later in the afternoon, walk back towards the city centre for an afternoon of indulgence in Cork's Huguenot Quarter – a buzzy matrix of streets and lanes breaking off French Church Street. The clutter of cafés, chocolatiers, boutiques and bookshops will keep you nicely entertained until it's time for an early evening tippie and a chance to enjoy some live traditional music. Putting one foot in front of the other was never so much fun.

English Market, Cork



Beyond the city

As the place of Titanic's final call on its tragic voyage, the fishing port of Cobh, about a 30-minute drive from Cork city, has written itself large in the archives of maritime history. The town boasts a Titanic Experience visitor centre, and you can walk amongst its multi-coloured houses with the Titanic Trail heritage tour. Fota Island Wildlife Park is a green island expanse with cheeky lion-tailed macaques, elegant cheetahs and the insatiably cute red panda. Perfect for kids. And make sure to take a trip to County Cork's elegant gourmet town of Kinsale. Locally caught seafood is the speciality here, and the picturesque little port has attracted visits over the years from seafood maestros Rick Stein and Keith Floyd.



Kinsale, County Cork

Cork Five to see

Crawford Gallery

The Crawford Gallery's vaulted rooms chart art history from the 17th to the 21st century; a great collection in a beautiful space.

English Market

This incredible food market wows visitors with its great sights, smells and excellent local produce.

Cork City Gaol

Cork's chunky Georgian/Gothic sandstone gaol (jail) housed prisoners in the 19th century, and featured heavily in the fall-out from the Irish Civil War.

Cork University

Don't miss the Stone Corridor scattered with ancient Ogham Stones. Find time, too, for a peek at the stars in the Crawford Observatory.

Walks along the River Lee

The River Lee Walkway slinks along the river, passing various points of curiosity including the urban oasis of Fitzgerald Park.



The River Lee Walkway, Cork



Galway

Four to explore

From bohemian beauty to medieval magic, the island of Ireland's cities are a fascinating mix of ancient intrigue and contemporary cool

GALWAY

Go boho

Galway dances to its own beat, and what a beat it is. This city revels in infectious creativity, with an artistic temperament and festival-filled character, and if you're after a good time, then Galway's pretty much guaranteed to deliver it. From the quirky little shopping alley of Kirwan's Lane to the cracking old pubs, this western beauty effortlessly blends tradition with contemporary cool. The past lingers in the air here, and traces of old Galway, including the city walls and the distinctive Spanish Arch, give the city an ancient atmosphere. To get a sense of Galway's unique personality, try the Tribes Alive walking tour, a dramatic take on the city's medieval streets. Or just relax, enjoy the city at your own speed, and settle down in a traditional pub.

DERRY~LONDONDERRY

Walled wonder

Ever met a walled wonder? Allow us to introduce you to Derry~Londonderry. Standing stoic and stern, these impressive 400-year-old walls are a rare breed in Europe and are the only example of their kind in Ireland. Think they're just bricks and mortar? Think again. Think dramatic 17th century sieges. Think huge roaring cannons watching over the River Foyle. Move beyond the walls, if you can, and you'll find a city that's big on culture (Derry~Londonderry was the UK City of Culture 2013), with excellent galleries, a rich heritage, bustling studios and buzzing theatre spaces. If you're looking for a lively time, Derry~Londonderry is definitely the place to come.

WATERFORD

Viking surprises

What's in a name? Well, in Waterford's case, it's the key to Ireland's Viking past. These Norse overlords may not have been the toast of Ireland when they arrived but we do have them to thank for founding the city of Waterford. Fancy seeing the oldest civic building on the island? We give you Reginald's Tower, whose history, as stated in the Irish Annals, stretches back to the rather incredible date of 1088. The warren-like layout of the city hints at medieval town planning that has been mercifully meshed with the busy city centre. Pop into the Waterford Crystal Visitor Centre and gaze on the famous cut glass pieces. And should you find yourself sharing the bar of Waterford's oldest pub, T.H. Doolans, with a Viking, don't be alarmed – the Vadrefjord Vikings are a local re-enactment group. Well, we never said they left, now, did we?



Peace Bridge, Derry~Londonderry



City walls, Derry~Londonderry



Waterford



The Frank McCourt Museum, Limerick

LIMERICK

City of Culture 2014

For millions of readers worldwide, Frank McCourt's childhood memoir, *Angela's Ashes*, was an engaging and poignant introduction to Limerick city. But now in 2014, Limerick is standing up as Ireland's first ever City of Culture. Why Limerick? Well, there are plenty of reasons. The Limerick Gallery of Art is packed with works from the greats of the Irish art world; acclaimed pieces by Jack B. Yeats, Paul Henry, Nathaniel Hone and Eva Hamilton are just some of the attractions here. The University Concert Hall's architectural lines have welcomed hordes of music lovers over the years while the Hunt Museum has a collection that ranges from Stone Age Ireland and Ancient Egypt to drawings by Picasso. With the wonderful 800-year-old King John's Castle at its heart, Limerick was always a city of culture – 2014 just makes it official.

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THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY

At the very edge of Europe, on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, the landscape has been shaped by the sea into something truly epic and unforgettable, as Pól Ó Conghaile discovers



Garnish Island, West Cork

Imagine driving along the absolute edge of western Europe. Imagine exploring a 2,500km-long coastline dotted with beaches, harbours, headlands and over 150 stunning viewing points, as it nips and tucks from Cork to Donegal. Imagine stopping your car, feeling the salt spray on your face and getting stuck into the Atlantic surf. Imagine peering over the sheerest of cliffs, discovering Ireland's oldest traditions, boarding its only cable car and learning the secrets only the locals know.

You can do it all – and more – on the Wild Atlantic Way. This is one of the world's great long-distance driving routes, and it can be driven in whole or in part, dipped into for a few hours or a few weeks, enjoyed as a once-in-a-lifetime experience, or revisited again and again. Its scenic highlights are spectacular, but it gets under Ireland's skin, too – bringing you up close and personal with a unique culture and people as it travels through Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) areas.

The route begins (or ends, depending on your direction) in West Cork, weaving its way through lively towns such as Clonakilty and Baltimore. Whale and dolphin watching are popular in these waters from May to November, with plenty of opportunity for trips to the islands of Roaring

Water Bay. Seafaring traditions are very much alive along the Mizen, Sheep's Head and Beara Peninsulas. These areas are rich with natural wonders, fishing villages, walking trails and clues to past ways of life, such as deserted mining posts and old milk churn collection points. The Beara Peninsula is also where Cork leads into Kerry, with the Ring of Kerry the best-known coastal loop here, combining awesome scenery with ancient heritage, super-fresh seafood and exciting towns and villages as it circles the Iveragh Peninsula.

Continuing north, Kerry's Dingle Peninsula was home to the Antarctic explorer, Tom Crean, who retired to run the South Pole Inn in the village of Annascaul after adventuring with Scott and Shackleton. Modern-day explorers can find the same hostelry on a peninsula defined by its mountain ranges, heritage treasures and a famous dolphin named Fungie.

Dingle is the peninsula's biggest town – a cosmopolitan and festival-rich hotspot with acclaimed seafood restaurants and traditional grocery-pubs where you can buy everything from a pair of wellies to a pint. The town is a gateway to the historic Sleah Head Drive to Coumeenole, a fantastic sweep of beach bounded by craggy rocks and overlooking the romantic Blasket Islands, which have been uninhabited since 1953.

From here, the Wild Atlantic Way edges along the north Kerry coast, crossing the River Shannon to enter west Clare. Loop Head is breathtaking, a compilation of cliff-craggy coastline, churning surf, dramatic sea arches and isolated structures – a lighthouse here, a 15th century tower house there. So memorable is it that it ranks as a European Destination of Excellence.

West Clare's coastline continues past beaches such as Spanish Point, the surfing and golfing hub of Lahinch and the Cliffs of Moher towards the Burren National Park. And as you see the ancient limestone formations of the Burren's Atlantic coast, you may feel that you're looking at a moonscape rather than a landscape.

Hugging Galway Bay, the coastline continues



Inisheer, County Galway

Take it further

The Wild Atlantic Way is so good you might never want it to stop. And the good news is that it doesn't have to. As you travel along County Donegal's magnificent coastline, you come to another great driving route: the famous Causeway Coastal Route (193km). Start off in the culture hub of Derry~Londonderry, and explore its ancient city walls. Then head for the



Whiterocks Beach, Antrim coast



Coumeenole Beach, County Kerry



The Giant's Causeway

UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Giant's Causeway, and on to the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge. Explore the Glens of Antrim, with their undulating green valleys that dip and peak through charming towns and villages. The Gobbins Path is a cliff-hugging path, built in 1902 and due to be restored in fall 2014. The route culminates in Belfast, a fitting end to a monumental journey with sights such as Titanic Belfast, and an acclaimed bistro scene.

into Galway city, a buzzing urban interlude along the Wild Atlantic Way. Why not break your journey here, and enjoy time-out at the Galway Arts Festival (July), the Galway Races (July/August) and the famous Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival (September) before easing out along the Connemara coast?

It's hard to tell where the mainland stops and the islands start along the raw seascapes of Galway and Mayo, but highlights range from Irish-speaking enclaves such as Spiddal to remote beaches like Dog's Bay, the jaw-dropping majesty of Kylemore Abbey and the cone of Croagh Patrick overlooking Clew Bay. It was on this mountain that St Patrick is said to have banished snakes from Ireland, and pilgrims still climb its paths today.

Continuing north, you'll pass through the windswept Mullet Peninsula, before veering back east towards Killala Bay, where General Humbert launched the first French battle of the 1798 Rebellion. Killala is said to have been where St Patrick first arrived in Ireland, and the local diocese – the highlight of which is a beautiful round tower – dates back to the 5th century.

The next stretch of the Wild Atlantic Way skirts around Sligo Bay, a landscape dominated by Ben Bulbin mountain. The surfing village of Strandhill, the court tomb (megalithic chamber tomb) at Creevykeel and a walk around Mullaghmore Head, are all must-dos in these parts.

Donegal is the final (or first!) county on the Wild Atlantic Way. Its long and indented coastline swings around the northwestern corner of the island, throwing up adventures and challenges at every turn. It's an area that has a remote aspect, with edge-of-the-world highlights such as the Slieve League Cliffs (Sliabh Liag in Irish), the highest accessible sea cliffs in Europe. Walks around the peninsula here offer magical views.

Wherever you start, whenever you finish, Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way is an unforgettable long-distance driving route, a thrilling trip along the line where the island of Ireland meets the ocean and the epitome of the waters and the wild.



Slieve League Cliffs, County Donegal



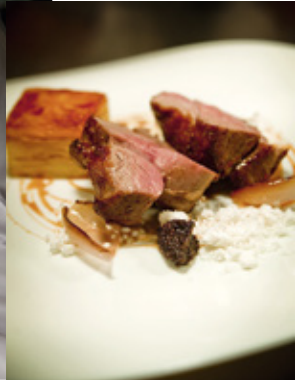
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The Greenhouse, Dublin



The Cliff House Hotel, County Waterford

Lough Erne Resort, County Fermanagh



Frank Hederman

LOCAL HEROES

Created out of exceptional artisan produce, using the very best ingredients from the land and sea and drawing on respected traditions, a new style of Irish cooking has been born. By Aoife Carrigy

Smoke signals
Smoked fish is just one of the local delicacies the island of Ireland excels at producing. Acclaimed smokehouses such as The Burren Smokehouse in County Clare, The Connemara Smokehouse in County Galway, and Frank Hederman's Belvelly Smokehouse in Cobh, County Cork, provide smoked mackerel and salmon to some of the most prestigious restaurants in Ireland.

Surrounded by rich greenery in the tiny West Cork village of Ballylickey is a little deli that typifies what Irish food is all about right now. Sit outside Manning's Emporium in the late afternoon sunshine and life feels pretty good. In the warm summer breeze, you can tuck into a platter of local artisan produce: Gubbeen oak-smoked cheese, a sweet pepper relish from Janet's Country Fayre in County Wicklow, fresh crusty breads from The Breadcrumb in County Kerry. And to drink? An ice-cold Irish apple juice from The Apple Farm in County Tipperary.

Here, surrounded by the dramatic West Cork landscape, it's easy to see where Ireland's appreciation of artisan food comes from – the pure countryside, respect for tradition and slower pace of life are perfectly tailored to a more measured, artisan-inspired approach, from the traditional smokehouses of Connemara to the cider makers

of County Armagh. The Slow Food Movement in Ireland, with its emphasis on counteracting fast food and fast life, has helped to drive this ethic of good, clean food. It chimes perfectly with an island where taking it easy is a national sport.

But you don't have to go foraging for seaweed on Irish beaches or rustle through the woodlands for wild fruit to appreciate the island's natural bounty. You only have to visit a deli, take a food trail, go to a market or enjoy a food festival.

In pubs around the island, menus reflect the emphasis on fresh local food with smoked fish platters and local cheese plates that match up nicely with craft beers such as Belfast Ale or Galway Hooker. Meanwhile, in top restaurants, dynamic chefs are pushing the creative boundaries of how local produce can be used, and dishes at hotspots such as The Greenhouse, Dublin, The Cliff House Hotel in Waterford and Michael Deane's in



In pubs around the island, menus reflect the emphasis on fresh local food, with smoked fish platters and local cheese plates that match up nicely with craft beers such as Belfast Ale or Galway Hooker

Roundstone Harbour, County Galway

Belfast have been known to leave customers lost for words. A bit of an achievement on an island where people love to talk.

Stefan Matz of Ashford Castle, has been based in Connemara since the early 90s and believes that the food culture in Ireland has been transformed over the past 20 years: "I don't think the same passion levels for producing the best quality possible exist in other countries the way they do here," he says.

Ross Lewis of Dublin's Michelin-starred Chapter One couldn't agree more. Chapter One built its stellar reputation and, no doubt, achieved its coveted star by seeking out the best of Irish produce for its diners. A meal here might start with carpaccio of Tom Durcan's spiced beef – a cured meat beloved in the southwest of Ireland from where Lewis hails – and finish with a characterful Cashel Blue cheese from County Tipperary.

This search for the best produce possible is by no means unique to Chapter One. Around the island, you'll find chefs with a similarly strong commitment to quality local ingredients and a love of "cooking through an Irish prism," as Lewis describes it.

Stephen Toman, head chef at one of Belfast's hottest restaurants, Ox, has been clocking up the critical acclaim and is equally passionate about what's available. "The quality and choice of Irish food is amazing," he enthuses. "We're serving Mourne Mountain lamb, which is fed on heather, and it's world class. We have outstanding dairy, amazing shellfish and the meat here is second to none; you're actually proud to work with it." From Ox's homebaked bread with local Abernethy Butter through to dessert of Bushmills' whiskey jelly and Armagh kemp apples, the local accent rings true.

"We do have something special in terms of our produce," says Paul Flynn of The Tannery Restaurant, guesthouse and cookery school in Dungarvan, County Waterford. "I've always tried to look at vegetables like turnips in soft focus; >

Craft beers & whiskey tours

The island of Ireland is in the midst of a craft beer revolution, and if you're looking to get acquainted with what's out there, then you should pay a visit to Dublin's *L. Mulligan Grocer*, *The Black Sheep* and the *Against the Grain* pubs; all with fantastic local brews. Cork city, meanwhile, holds dear its *Franciscan Well Brewery and Brew Pub*. The stout is piped straight from the brewery, while hulking, holding tanks of ale glimmer behind the bar.



Balloo House, County Down

Ard Bia Café, Galway



From the relaxed, boho vibe of the Ard Bia Café in Galway city to Balloo House, a 19th century coaching inn in County Down, you'll find dishes on the menu that reflect traditional flavours



Ireland is famous for its fresh local produce



Old Jameson Distillery, Dublin

Northern Ireland's largest microbrewery, *Whitewater* in Killeel, County Down, runs the *White Horse Inn* in the area, as well as supplying casks to the likes of *Belfast's Crown Liquor Saloon*. This Victorian pub is an incredibly elegant place to taste one of *Whitewater's* or *Hilden's* latest brews. *Molly's Chocolate Stout* is one for the adventurous though, and is best experienced at *Molly's Yard* pub next to Belfast's *College Green* microbrewery.

If whiskey is more your thing, then a visit to a distillery is a must, and there are plenty around the island to keep you interested. The *Old Bushmills Distillery* on the north Antrim coast, the *Old Jameson Distillery* in Dublin, and the small, traditional *Kilbeggan Distillery* in County Westmeath are three essentials.



St George's Market, Belfast

to take hearty, staple veg and do something exciting with them. It's all about how you do it."

This simplicity is at the heart of cooking in Ireland, as Flynn explains: "The thing I love about Irish food is that it doesn't have to be expensive. We're on a journey to learning to appreciate our simple food traditions."

And it definitely looks that way. From the relaxed, boho vibe of the *Ard Bia Café* in Galway city to *Balloo House*, a 19th century coaching inn in Killinchy, County Down, you'll find dishes on the menu that reflect both local and traditional flavours: treacle soda bread and seafood chowder, bacon and cabbage, smoked salmon. You can try a "blaa" (a soft white roll) in Waterford; feast on the legendary *Ulster fry* for breakfast in Belfast; and snack on *dulse* (salty seaweed) in coastal areas. Then there's Irish stew, award-winning black pudding, crab claws, and a staggering range of chutneys, relishes and jams. And let's not forget the humble potato...

"People sometimes make fun of the fact that we are still so obsessed with the potato," says chef *Liz Moore*, formerly of *Belle Isle Cookery School* in County Fermanagh. "But look at the amount of amazing dishes that are derived from it: champ (oniony, buttery, pure comfort food), fadge (potato cakes), boxty (potato pancake), colcannon (mashed potato with creamed kale) and more."

And while colcannon would traditionally have been eaten by families at Halloween, it's now on the menu at fashionable urban restaurants, such as Dublin's *Fade Street Social*. Nip into *Gallagher's Boxty House* in Temple Bar, meanwhile, and you'll find a veritable altar to the potato, with light potato pancakes cooked on a hot griddle. Delicious.

This traditional and local trend has been given a very contemporary twist in some of the island's coolest eateries. Downstairs in the Georgian "Irish >

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IRELAND FOOD



Johnnie Fox's pub, County Dublin

kitchen" of Hatch & Sons on Dublin's St Stephen's Green, hip city locals and relaxed families enjoy velvety beef and Guinness stews, smoked fish boards, and Waterford "blaas" filled with Kettle bacon from County Fermanagh. While in Galway's only Michelin-starred restaurant Aniar, you can enjoy the fruits of foraging, with starters of wild asparagus, nettle, goat's curd and hen egg, as well as desserts garnished with sorrel.

And what happens in the big cities always filters across the island because – put simply – good taste spreads. Take the likes of The Moody Boar in Armagh's Palace Stables; its home-cured beetroot with salmon and hot creamed leeks on wheaten bread has to be tasted in person for the full range of sensory appreciation.

From small, local villages with thriving markets to the hippest sections of the island's cities, tradition and a commitment to quality are alive and well. And in a world where food trends are becoming homogenous, it's good to know Ireland is keeping it authentic.

Foods to look out for

Country butter

The island of Ireland is famous for its superlative dairy, and producers such as the Abernethy Butter Company in County Down are exploring this new potential.

Fermanagh Black Bacon

Try this delicious traditional dry-cured bacon from rare-breed pigs, which roam free on a small herb-heavy island on Lough Erne in County Fermanagh.

Irish stew

A tasty bowlful of slow-cooked Irish lamb, potato, carrot and barley goodness is like a hearty hug from an Irish mammy. Try it in The Brazen Head, Dublin's oldest pub.

Milleens cheese

Produced in County Cork today by the son of pioneer Veronica Steele, this original Irish farmhouse cheese remains one of the best around.

Seafood chowder and fresh soda bread

You'll find versions of Ireland's take on seafood chowder in most coastal towns, but McGann's in Doolin, County Clare, nailed it as the standard to beat by blog site Irish Fireside. It's essential to enjoy chowder with traditional brown bread.



Smoked fish platters

Sally Barnes's Woodcock Smokery in County Cork is one of the finest of Ireland's fish smokers, featuring wild salmon, mackerel, haddock and tuna.

Spiced beef

Traditionally served at Christmas or New Year, spiced beef is an Irish favourite. Try it at Tom Durcan's stall in Cork's English Market.

Blaa

This fresh white bread roll is unique to Waterford and is best eaten mid-morning filled with bacon.

Soda farl

This flattened dough bread can be eaten fresh from the griddle with butter and jam or cooked until golden and served alongside the traditional full Northern Irish breakfast, the famous Ulster fry. Truly delicious whatever way you choose to eat it.



Irish farmhouse cheeses



Harlem, Belfast



Belfast Taste & Music Fest

Food Festivals

Nothing quite beats an Irish food festival for atmosphere, taste and downright good fun.

Belfast Taste and Music Fest

Set in Belfast's Botanic Gardens in August, this festival brings together two of the city's great loves: music and food.

The Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival

Seafood and fun come together each September at this Galway classic with seafood trails, oyster hotspots and oyster shucking championships.

Kinsale Gourmet Festival

The gourmet town of Kinsale in County Cork comes alive every October with a massive celebration of all things foodie. A beautiful setting for a great festival.

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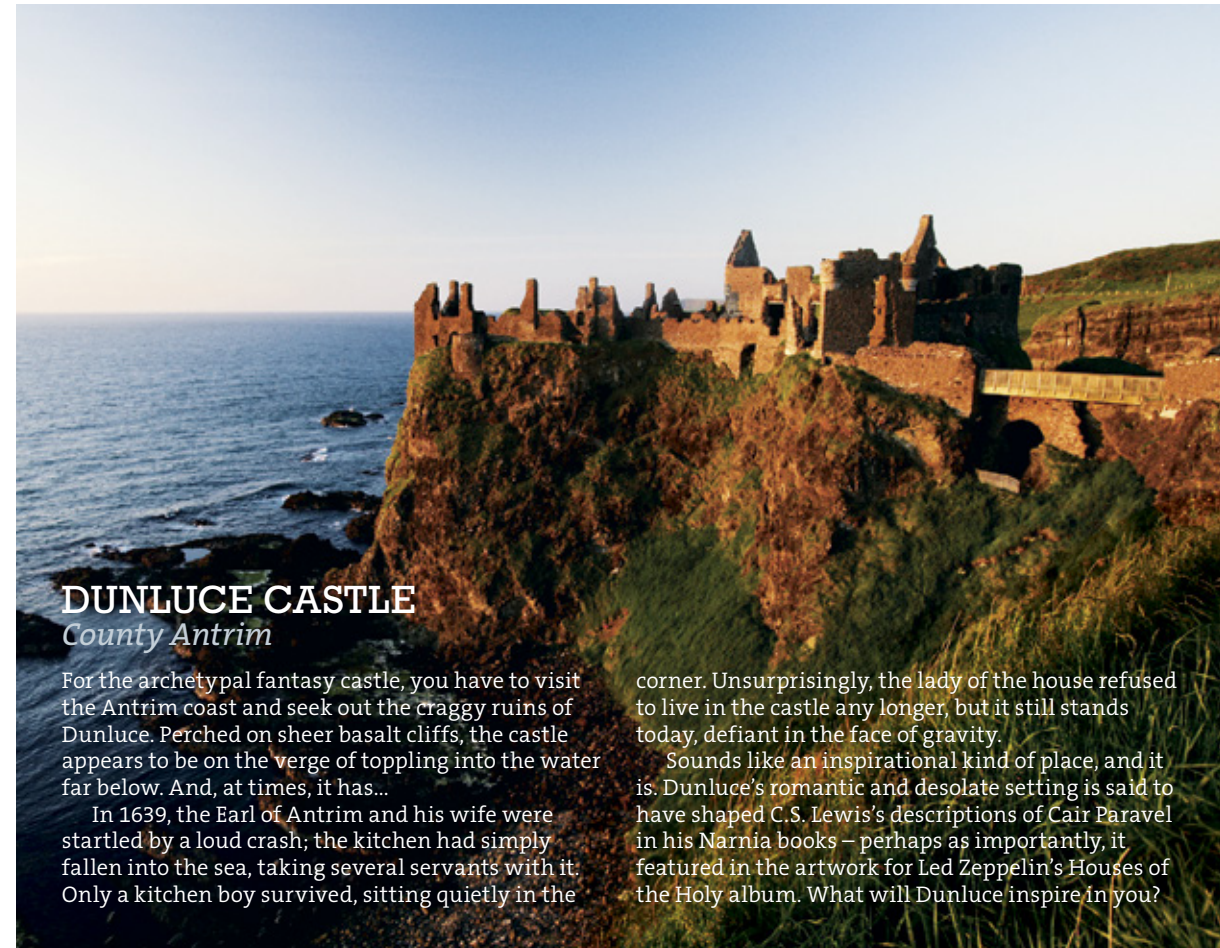


GREAT TALES

From wild fairy tales and blood-soaked battles to Titanic-era glamour, Ireland's great castles are straight out of a fantasy novel, while the island's handsome manor houses and their grand gardens reveal an aristocratic age of elegance, says **Vanessa Harriss**



Blarney Castle, County Cork



DUNLUCE CASTLE

County Antrim

For the archetypal fantasy castle, you have to visit the Antrim coast and seek out the craggy ruins of Dunluce. Perched on sheer basalt cliffs, the castle appears to be on the verge of toppling into the water far below. And, at times, it has...

In 1639, the Earl of Antrim and his wife were startled by a loud crash; the kitchen had simply fallen into the sea, taking several servants with it. Only a kitchen boy survived, sitting quietly in the

corner. Unsurprisingly, the lady of the house refused to live in the castle any longer, but it still stands today, defiant in the face of gravity.

Sounds like an inspirational kind of place, and it is. Dunluce's romantic and desolate setting is said to have shaped C.S. Lewis's descriptions of Cair Paravel in his Narnia books – perhaps as importantly, it featured in the artwork for Led Zeppelin's Houses of the Holy album. What will Dunluce inspire in you?

BLARNEY CASTLE

County Cork

One of the most famous castles on the island, Blarney is a romantic partial ruin set in glorious County Cork countryside. Built on the site of a 10th century wooden structure, the castle grounds are filled with wooded hollows, strange rock formations and a sleepily flowing river. Croften Clark, a 19th century writer, described it as “indeed a fairy scene... I know of no place where I could sooner imagine these little elves holding their moon-light revelry”.

At the heart of Blarney Castle lies one of its quirkiest attractions. Kissed by world statesmen, literary giants and famous film stars, the huge Blarney Stone is said to impart the gift of eloquence or, as we say in Ireland, “the gift of the gab”. Thankfully, these days you don't have to be held by the ankles and lowered over the battlements to plant your lips on this legendary piece of rock, as happened in the past. A gentle lean backwards assisted by a trusty guide will do the trick just as well. Promise.

When it comes to the stone's origins, the debate rages... some say it was a pillow for a saint; others that it was a chunk of Scotland's Stone of Destiny brought back to Ireland by Cormac McCarthy, King of Munster. Go ahead and kiss it – see what stories you come up with.



RUSSBOROUGH HOUSE

County Wicklow

Near the Blessington Lakes in County Wicklow stands Russborough House, one of the island of Ireland's most beautiful manor houses. Built in the 18th century, the house entered its own age of elegance in the mid-20th century when Sir Alfred Beit bought it after spotting an ad in Country Life magazine. Beit – heir to a South African mining fortune – liked the look of Russborough so much he didn't even visit before he signed the deal. And in 1953, once he had moved in, he set about installing a phenomenal art collection, including works by Vermeer, Rubens and Gainsborough. Despite no less than four dramatic (if botched) robberies, the collection remains largely intact. There's no doubt that Lord and Lady Beit brought glamour to the house – the wide circle of friends they hosted at Russborough included Jackie Onassis, Fred Astaire and the Guinnesses. To enjoy it to the full, book an overnight stay in its West Wing.



HUNTINGTON CASTLE *County Carlow*

It seems a little unfair to have to share your 17th century family home with a pack of lively ghosts, but that's exactly what the Durdin-Robertson family endures. Besides a sprinkling of monks who date back to the 13th century Franciscan monastery, the Durdin-Robertsons' Huntington Castle is also frequented by the spirit of Aoife Esmonde, who fled an unhappy marriage with her son, only for her husband to replace her speedily (and bigamously) with wife number two.

The family also has to endure a Bishop of Limerick who died in 1770, and a 17th century spy whose disguise proved so successful a colleague shot him by mistake.

Beyond the ghosts, Huntington is a treasure trove of oddities – and that's without counting the temple to the Egyptian goddess Isis in the basement. Don't forget to wander around the grounds where you can enjoy the formal Italian gardens, water features and the 600-year-old yew tree walk.



PHOTO: THE NATIONAL TRUST/BERNIE BROWN

CASTLE WARD *County Down*

When it comes to quirkiness, you can't get much more unique than Castle Ward in Downpatrick. This is one of the instances where "castle" actually refers to a large house, but whether it is Palladian or Gothic depends on your point of view. Literally. Set in a stunning location on the edge of Strangford Lough, and boasting spectacular gardens, this 18th century house was commissioned by Lord Bangor and his wife, who accommodated their very different taste by making one side of the house classical, all columns and pediments, and the other side crazily Gothic with battlements, finials and pointed arches.

The same rules apply inside. The house is split down the middle lengthways – one side filled with Gothic twiddles; the other ruled by classical austerity. Elegant, exciting and rich with imaginative eccentricities – if this is what the house is like, it must have been quite a marriage.

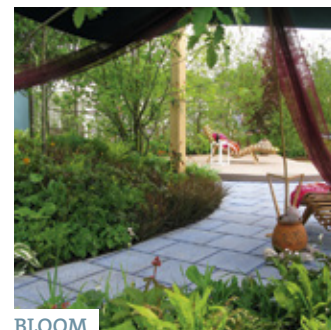
Garden events

Ireland enjoys a wealth of garden events throughout the year, from fabulous festivals in the stunning grounds of country houses and castles to the prestigious International Rose Week at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park in Belfast held in July every year. Here are three to get you started



**GARDEN FESTIVAL
HILLSBOROUGH CASTLE**
County Down

The official residence for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, this 18th century Georgian country house hosts Northern Ireland's largest garden event in May. It's also home to Europe's largest rhododendron bushes, an extensive rose garden and wonderful lakeside walks.



BLOOM
Dublin

One of the most popular garden events on the island of Ireland, Bloom is a veritable extravaganza of flowers and greenery with a pure festival atmosphere. Located in Dublin's Phoenix Park in May/June, it boasts over 70 acres of blooms, blossoms and spectacular show gardens.



**TRALEE GARDEN
FESTIVAL**
County Kerry

A midsummer festival celebrating all things horticultural set over 30 acres around the hub of Tralee town every June. Accompanying gorgeous gardens and beautiful displays of flowers are music recitals, workshops and experts on hand for all green-fingered queries that you might have.

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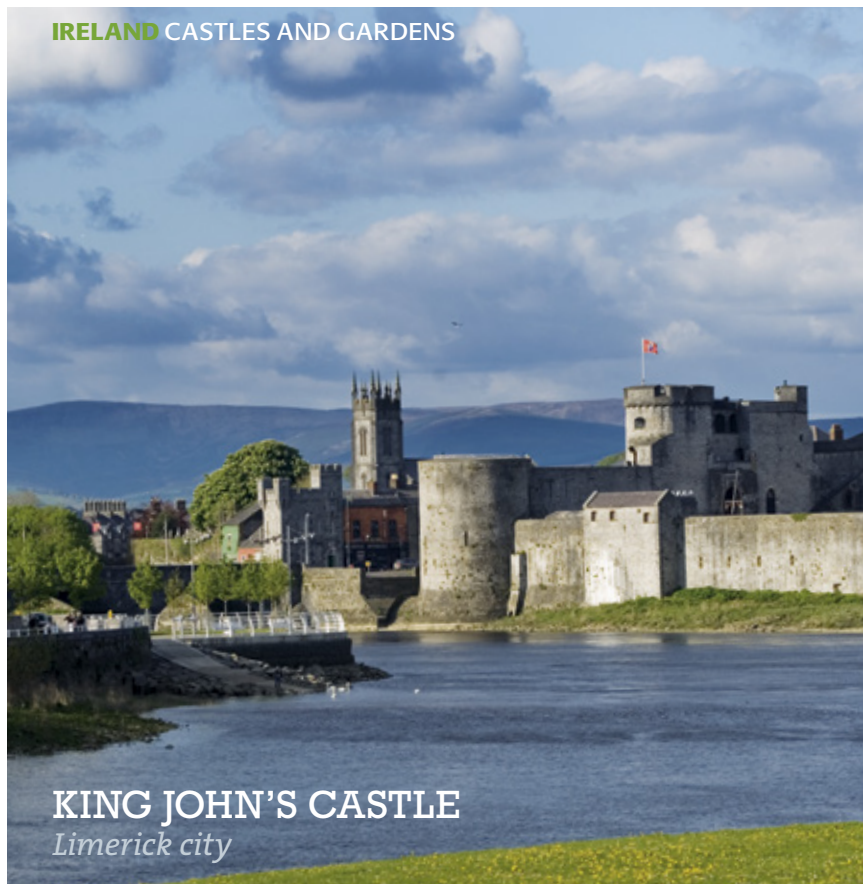


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KING JOHN'S CASTLE
Limerick city

If you believe all history is living, then head for Limerick city's King John's Castle on the banks of the River Shannon, and you can practically live through its 800 years of drama. This mighty fortress at the heart of medieval Limerick is wired for 21st century technology with a stunning new visitor centre. Handy touch-screen points will bring to life tales of torrid sieges and warfare, along with ghostly projections to make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up!

Move out into the courtyard where you can discover the castle's remarkable archaeology and wander through scenes from a 17th century siege, while costumed guides reveal the secrets and scandals of castle life.



TRIM CASTLE
County Meath

Trim Castle, an imposing Norman stronghold on the banks of the River Boyne, has been glowering out at the surrounding landscape for almost 800 years, ever since it was built on the land awarded to Hugh de Lacy, Lord of Meath, by Henry II of England.

The Irish, headed by their high king, Ruadri Ua Conchobair (Rory O'Connor), burned down the original wooden fortifications. But De Lacy was not easily deterred. He simply switched

to building with stone and his handiwork, completed by his son in 1224, still stands as the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Ireland.

De Lacy's high opinion of himself was not always shared by those around him. He irritated Henry II by marrying without permission, and was finally finished off by an axe in the back, wielded by an aggrieved mason on his next building project, another castle at Durrow in County Laois. Several centuries later, Trim was sold by one Arthur Wellesley, better known as the Duke of Wellington, and eventually its austere beauty served as a backdrop for Mel Gibson's 1995 film, *Braveheart*. If you're looking for a castle with cinematic quality, this is most definitely it.

Mount Stewart House and Gardens, County Down



Gardens to enjoy

The island's castles and manor houses boast stunning gardens that whisk you away into a luscious otherworld. From herbs to flowers and from manicured formality to natural-style planting, the escape starts here

True romance

The wild and romantic gardens at **Mount Usher** in County Wicklow are home to a vast collection of plants including azaleas, camellias, magnolias and rhododendrons and are crisscrossed by both the Rivers Vartry and Killiskey. They make a truly beautiful place to while away an afternoon, and there's a lovely café here, which encourages you to linger even longer.

Grand designs

Compared with the natural style of Mount Usher, the grandeur of the gardens at **Curraghmore** in County Waterford is a world away, but the formality complements the 18th century classical architecture of the house. Ancient oak forests, an ornamental lake and pristine lawns carry an air of manicured perfection, but the scale is breathtaking.

Literary vision

Home of the talented literary Pakenham family, **Tullynally Castle** in County Westmeath offers a walled flower garden, a grotto, a Chinese plant collection, woodlands full of exotic trees and a vast kitchen garden with two Regency hothouses – and some llamas to keep the grass under control. Adorably eccentric.

A lady's delight

The mild climate beside Strangford Lough in County Down, the imaginative planting of Edith, Lady Londonderry and her remodelling of the grounds throughout the 1920s and 30s have produced an astonishingly varied garden at **Mount Stewart**, which is now being proposed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Wild at heart

Also in County Down is the informal **Rowallane Garden**, planted by Reverend John Moore with exotic species that date right back to the 1860s. Truly spectacular rhododendrons and azaleas along with wildflower meadows, a rock garden wood for shade-loving plants and a walled garden mean there is something here for all seasons.

Walled wonder

Similarly informal, mature trees, winding paths and unfussy lawns give a relaxed, slightly haphazard air to the gardens at **Florence Court** near Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, in perfect keeping with the mountain views. The three-acre walled garden and famous yews are a draw, and make sure to leave some time for exploring the lovely 18th century house.



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Dungarvan Tradfest, County Waterford

FACE THE MUSIC

*From high-kicks and high-jinks to the best places to enjoy Irish traditional music, **Jonny Lucey** delves into the world of fiddles, bodhráns and up-tempo tunes*

We all remember our first time. The first time you hear the beat, the first time you watch the musicians' hands moving at the speed of light, the first time you get swept up in it all. As experiences go, our first introduction to a real traditional Irish music session is one to remember. The place was Sherkin, a small island with an artistic character, off the west coast of County Cork. Three of us headed off, bags packed and hopped on the ferry for the short trip from Baltimore to enjoy a weekend of camping.

Sherkin is the kind of place where you should expect the unexpected; the weather changes quickly here and a dramatic sunrise can often be interrupted by a swirl of dark clouds. This is not the kind of place you want to discover that someone has forgotten the tent poles. And as a light drizzle started to descend on us, it seemed only natural that we moved our "debate" over whose fault it was inside to the local pub, Murphy's at The Islander's Rest.

Rich with an amber glow, flickering candles and low lighting, Murphy's feels like a typical Irish pub, the kind of place that fuels your imagination. As we walked through the door, people were dancing, laughing and swirling around a group of musicians

playing fiddles, guitars, bodhráns (hand-held Irish drums), banjos, concertinas and tin whistles. From that point on, it was clear we were going nowhere. Local islanders, Americans, Germans and Swedes chatted, danced and clapped; the music never stopped, one song racing into the next as the tempos got faster and faster. The jumpy, vibrant melodies put a flutter in the feet of everyone in the pub, and we lost ourselves in the music and the people. Truth be told, we forgot all about our dire sleeping situation.

Therein lies the magic of traditional Irish music. Though its origins are distinctly Irish, it has the ability to cross cultural borders with its spirit. No one in the pub knew the right dance steps to the jigs being played that night, and no one cared. It was just about joining in.

But Irish music is more than just something to enjoy with abandon. Within its lyrics and notes lie Ireland's aural traditions and culture. For the most part, the ancient Irish didn't write things down, but they did put their stories into song. These songs evolved over the years, rolling like tumbleweeds from one generation to the next, picking up new characteristics and styles. >



Learning by ear
Irish traditional music has always been part of the country's rich aural culture. Music was rarely written down. Instead it was taught by ear and passed down from one generation to the next.

IRELAND MUSIC



Musicians at a traditional music festival



The John Hewitt Bar, Belfast

**Trad music pubs:
Six to try**

A mini guide to some of the island of Ireland's favourite trad music pubs

**THE JOHN HEWITT BAR
Belfast city**

Named for a local legend, the John Hewitt Bar is the place to go for trad music in Belfast city. With great food, as well as local craft beers, it's an ideal spot to spend an evening. The bar rocks to the sounds of trad every Wednesday and Saturday night and there's plenty of space for dancing, too.

**AN SPAILPÍN FÁNACH
Cork city**

An Spailpin Fánach in Cork city has earned a reputation for legendary trad sessions. Although right in the heart of the city, this feels like a typical country pub. Nip in for one of the nightly music sessions, grab a seat by the open fire and treat yourself to a creamy pint of Murphy's.

**MONROE'S
Galway city**

With the musical heritage of the Connemara Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking region) flowing into this small medieval city, Galway is a must for trad seekers. There's no shortage of pubs in the city, but twist our arms and we'd recommend Monroe's. Cosy and atmospheric, you'll find open fires, stained glass windows and wooden flooring well-worn from decades' worth of céilís (traditional dance events). Trad is played every night.



**O'DONOGHUE'S
Dublin city**

For Dublin's take on the trad session, it has to be O'Donoghue's, where the walls are covered with photos and drawings of the well-known musicians who have played there. This was where traditional Irish music icons The Dubliners used to play regularly, and the pub still attracts musicians from all over Ireland and abroad.

**CROTTY'S BAR
Kilrush, County Clare**

Relaxed, welcoming and full of curiosities, Crotty's is the ideal place to enjoy a quiet pint. But when the music starts, it's time to dance! You'll find live music here from June to September.

**THE HOUSE
OF MCDONNELL
Ballycastle,
County Antrim**

Established in 1766, The House of McDonnell in Ballycastle is one of County Antrim's oldest and most charming pubs and began life as a grocery shop. The interior is original 1870s in style, with tiled floors, wooden bar counters and nostalgic ornaments on the wall. Every Friday and Saturday night local musicians make their weekly pilgrimage here to let loose some serious trad.

There's an old expression that goes "As fast as a fiddler's elbow". And if you're ever at a trad session in Sligo, you'll soon see where the phrase came from

You may not know it, but the term "trad music" (traditional music) is an umbrella phrase. Each corner and county of Ireland has developed its own indigenous style of playing. Similar to accents, regional trad styles have their own little inflections and characteristics that define them.

Take County Clare, for example. The drama of the Cliffs of Moher aside, things are actually quite relaxed in Clare. This is reflected in the type of trad music flowing from the region. In this pocket of the west, they're famed for their flute and fiddle playing. Renowned local fiddler Martin Hayes sums it up nicely: "We take things a little slower here, our music, too."

The free-flowing style of Clare can be heard all year round in pubs such as O'Donoghue's in Fanore and Minogue's in Tulla. Towns such as Doolin and Lisdoonvarna offer up pub trad sessions every night of the week. For those in the know, Clare is a trad music haven.

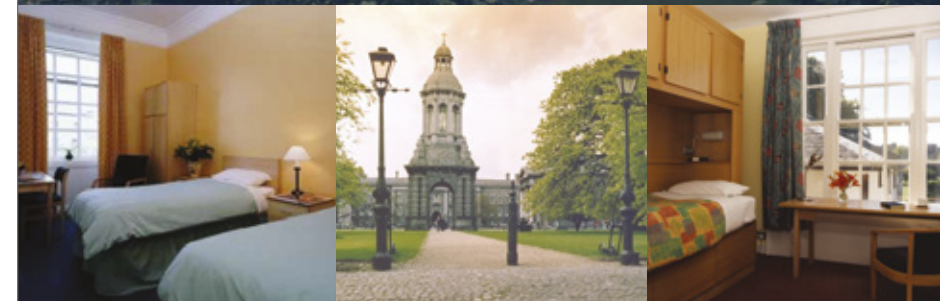
Move north up to County Sligo, and you'll soon learn that here the fiddle is king. There's an old expression that goes "As fast as a fiddler's elbow". And if you're ever at a trad session in Sligo, you'll soon see where the phrase came from. The style of fiddle-led trad music in Sligo is bouncy, fast and intricate. The melodies dip and twist, >



St Patrick's Day
The St Patrick's Festival in Dublin city (14th-17th March 2014) offers an ideal introduction to traditional music, with lots of exciting events and performances both on the street and in pubs and venues around the city.



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Playing the bodhrán



The Lambeg drum

Sounds of Northern Ireland

When it comes to trad music, the six counties of Northern Ireland have a mix of cultural influences

Ulster-Scots, Irish, Scottish and English traditions combine to create a distinct northern style with a spirit entirely its own.

Northern Ireland has its own signature instruments, too. The uilleann pipes were once used to rattle the nerves of the enemy in battle. These days, they rattle the rafters of many a pub session. They can create a sombre, droning air or a vibrant, lively tune.

If you want to catch some world-class piping while you're in Northern Ireland, check out the William Kennedy Piping Festival in Armagh city in November. Pipers from every corner of the globe are invited to revel in a huge piping party, it's an unforgettable event.

In terms of percussion in Northern Irish music, there's only one contender. The undeniable king of the drums: the Lambeg. Lambeg drums are truly massive two-headed drums that are played with a baton-like drumstick. Think of the bass drum on its side and strapped to the chest.

Some accounts trace its origins to Lambeg in County Antrim; others claim the drum was brought over from Holland by King William's troops during the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Either way, you really should catch some drumming first-hand at the Clady Day competition (late July) in the village of Markethill, County Armagh.

inducing fast-paced, lively dancing. If you happen to be in the area in August, check out the James Morrison Traditional Music Festival. Taking place in Riverstown, the festival honours the famous musician credited with creating the "Sligo style" of fiddle playing. It's a genuine slice of traditional Irish festival fun.

Back at the southern tip of the island in County Cork, particular pride is taken in the bodhrán, a one-sided handheld drum, played with a cipín (wooden stick). Bodhráns provide the essential percussion in a trad session. Due to their one-sided construction, they're surprisingly versatile in sound.

One man who plays a mean bodhrán is Dan Sullivan of Inchigeelagh, County Cork. Dan is a regular player in the Briar Rose Pub session there. "A session without a bodhrán is like a trailer missing a wheel, it just doesn't drive right," he says. "The bodhrán is an ancient instrument. It developed from a farm tool used to separate grain from the chaff." The bodhrán gives a pulsing yet lively beat. And the mark of a truly great trad session is a pounding bodhrán solo.

It's hard to think of anything more "Irish" than a good old-fashioned traditional music session. Pints of stout wobble precariously next to musicians, knees are slapped in time to the beat, and an air of hushed reverence descends as an elder member of the community begins to sing.

Our trip to Sherkin was long ago, and we can't remember who did forget the tent poles. But what we do know is that what started out as a camping trip became a musical adventure that's engrained in our minds forever.



Festivals to watch out for...

Ireland's cultural calendar is lit up with exciting music events throughout the year. Try some music or dance classes at the Willie Clancy Summer School in Miltown Malbay, County Clare in July; or how about the Féile an Phobail traditional festival in West Belfast in August, a week-long event of music and "craic" (fun). And the highlight for 2014? It has to be the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Sligo town, the biggest traditional Irish music festival of them all.



Enjoying the Fleadh (traditional music festival), Cavan town

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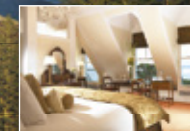
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MAGICAL DRIVES

A big part of Ireland's appeal is that it is so small, making it perfectly suited to driving tours. You can go from mountains to sea within minutes, stopping off at all sorts of exceptional places along the way. *Pól Ó Conghaile* selects some to get you started

THE RING OF KERRY

County Kerry

It's hard not to fall in love with the Ring of Kerry. This is a driving route with a big personality, after all. Don't believe us? Well, your first stop after leaving Killarney is the town of Killorglin. Located on the River Laune, the town is certainly a pretty one, but the statue of a goat on the approach gives a hint to its quirky side. Every August, Killorglin celebrates Puck Fair, said to be one of the world's oldest festivals, and surely the only one that crowns a mountain goat during its three days of entertainment. You might want to stay here a while, the place has a definite charm, but this is just the start of what has to be one of the world's great driving routes.

Taking in great little towns such as Cahersiveen, Waterville and Glenbeigh, it's the incredible mix of scenery along the Ring of Kerry that has made it so famous. From the stunning white sands of Rossbeigh Beach to the dramatic hulk of MacGillycuddy's Reeks mountain range, this is a route that demands you slow down and take it all in. Towards the tip of the peninsula, things get really interesting... the Skellig Ring loops off the main route and is the staging post for trips to the Skellig Islands, a pair of jagged rocks punching out of the ocean. Back in the 6th century, monks lived here in tiny beehive huts and today local boats take visitors out to explore this incredible place for themselves.

As you near the end of the drive, you'll find

The Ring of Kerry

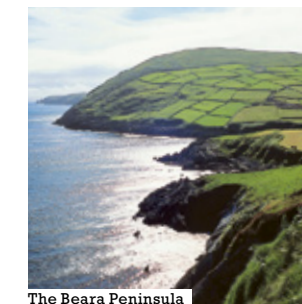
yourself wanting to linger in Kenmare, a lively town that offers everything from luxury five-star hotels to buzzy little seafood eateries. From here, you can expect to be wowed by some truly exceptional scenery. Along the N71 towards Killarney, the road winds through valleys and dramatic mountain passes, most famously Moll's Gap – an unforgettable beauty spot with views over MacGillycuddy's Reeks. And the highlight? It has to be the famous Lakes of Killarney, best seen from the Ladies View (named after Queen Victoria's ladies-in-waiting who visited here in 1861). Finish up with a visit to the splendid 19th century Muckross House and Gardens.

Distance: 180km

Time: 1-3 days



Like that? Try this:



The Beara Peninsula

The Ring of Beara Cork and Kerry

The Beara Peninsula lies just south of the Ring of Kerry, and its driving route is just as sublime, connecting Kenmare to Glengarriff (or vice versa) via a 110km loop. Highlights range from fishing towns such as Castletownbere to mind-blowing mountain passes. Once you get to what feels like the ends of the earth, go even further and take the cable car that connects the peninsula with Dursley Island (estimated population: six).

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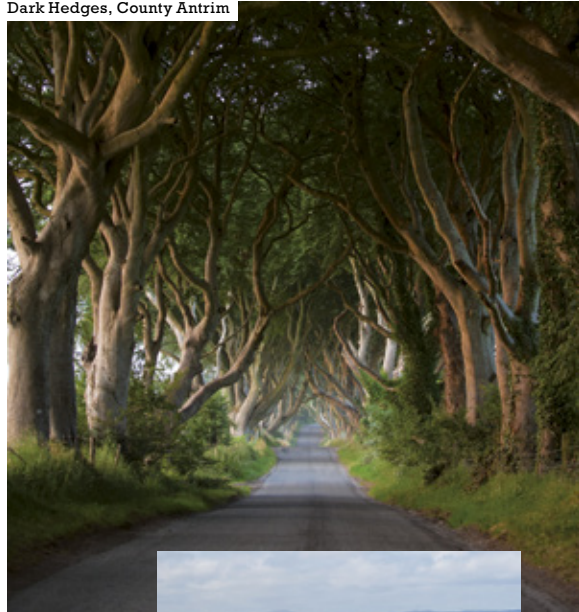
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THE GAME OF THRONES TOUR

Northern Ireland

Dark Hedges, County Antrim



Causeway Coastal Route, County Antrim



Cushendun, County Antrim

Route of the A2, you'll find Larrybane, AKA Storm's End, while a detour south from Ballycastle brings you to Gracehill House, an 18th century pile best known for its Dark Hedges. This eerie avenue of beech trees was planted over 200 years ago, and is said to be haunted by a mysterious Grey Lady...

Head back north to Ballintoy and Antrim's Causeway Coast. The approach from Ballycastle boasts sensational views – some of which you may recognise as Pyke and the Iron Islands from the fantasy series. Along the route, you can overnight in Belfast where much of the filming for Game of Thrones takes place in Titanic Studios. Then continue back to fantasyland the next day with a visit to the eccentric 18th century Castle Ward overlooking Strangford Lough, and the fantastical Tollymore Forest Park with its follies and grottoes. To finish, take the car ferry from Strangford to Portaferry and return along the lakeshore towards Belfast via Newtownards... another magical landscape and a perfect way to finish.



Distance: 174km
Time: 2 days

When it comes to fantasy, Ireland's landscapes are picture perfect. After all, this is an island that has inspired some of the world's most famous novels. J.R.R. Tolkien was reputedly influenced by County Clare's incredible Burren, while C.S. Lewis found his inspiration for The Chronicles of Narnia in the Mourne Mountains. But sometimes, Ireland's landscapes end up being the star of the show themselves, rather than just the inspiration. And if you've seen the HBO series Game of Thrones lately, then chances are some of the landscapes you've been looking at are actually Northern Ireland.

In fact, Northern Ireland has provided so many landscapes for the seven kingdoms of Westeros that there's now a driving route through some of the top locations, with mystical scenery, crumbling castles and dramatic cliff edges at every turn.

Starting in Belfast, the route takes in the 400-million-year-old caves at Cushendun, where a shadow was born amidst dramatic scenes in season two. Along the magical Causeway Coastal

Like that?
Try this:



Quiet Man Cottage, Cong

Connemara Film Trail Galway and Mayo

Ireland's Atlantic coast is as wild as any mythical landscape, so perhaps it's not surprising that car touring in Connemara throws up so many movie locations. Cong (The Quiet Man, 1952) may be the most famous, but there are plenty of hidden gems, too – did you know Owen Wilson and Jennifer Aniston had their car blocked by sheep at Lough Na Fooye (Marley and Me, 2008)? The Connemara Film Trail is a chance to follow in the footsteps of screen legends such as John Wayne, Meryl Streep and even Ireland's own Brendan Gleeson. All from the comfort of your car!



Dungarvan, County Waterford

The Copper Coast

THE COPPER COAST County Waterford

Distance: 42km
Time: 1 day



The island of Ireland packs a lot into a small space. And the Copper Coast in Ireland's southeast is a perfect example. Connecting the towns of Tramore and Dungarvan, this fabulous drive serves up pristine beaches, pretty villages and deliciously fresh seafood. Begin with a stroll through Tramore, a Victorian seaside resort full of surf schools, nostalgic amusement parks and the vinegary whiff of fish 'n' chips. And make sure to take a walk along the town's 5km-long, sandy beach.

From Tramore, continue west along the coast road as it skirts around Newtown Head. There are off-beat little scenic spots along the way, such as Guillamene Cove, a great place for strong swimmers, and traditionally a "men only" bathing spot. These days, everyone is welcome.

The Copper Coast, a European Geopark named for its 19th century mining heritage, comes into its own as you drive along the R675. Villages such as Fenor, Annestown and Stradbally are ridiculously photogenic, and pretty much any left turn delivers

you down to hidden beaches lined with sea stacks. Crumbling cliffs, ancient smugglers' coves, road bowlers, and, in winter, even the odd passing whale mark a coastline that feels like you're far away from life's hustle and bustle.

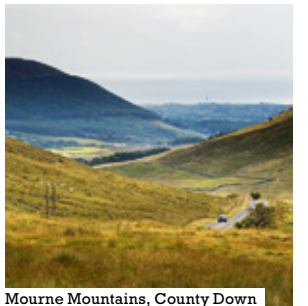
And there are so many places you can choose to stop. Stradbally Cove is a great spot for families, surrounded by a thatch of oak, hazel and alder trees; go surfing at Bunmahon, and visit the pristine beach at Clonea, where you'll find a lovely little family-run shop.

Dungarvan marks a natural end to the Copper Coast. With several restaurants and cafés deeply involved in west Waterford's foodie scene, you'll find lots of local ingredients on the menu. Depending on how your day is panning out, you could overnight in the town, continue west towards Ardmore, or circle back towards Waterford city on the N25 via the Comeragh Mountains.



Dunmore East, County Waterford

Like that?
Try this:



Mourne Mountains, County Down

The Kingdom of Mourne County Down

As you drive south from Belfast, the majestic Mourne Mountains emerge before you in all their glory. This Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has been shaped by ice and steeped in legend. Continuing along the stunning coast, stop off to explore pretty seaside towns such as Warrenpoint and Newcastle. Go inland and you'll discover the hidden secrets of the Mournes. Don't miss the Cloughmore Stone, a 40-tonne granite boulder resting above the charming village of Rostrevor. The stone is said to have been thrown by the giant Fionn mac Cumhaill (Finn McCool) at his enemy.

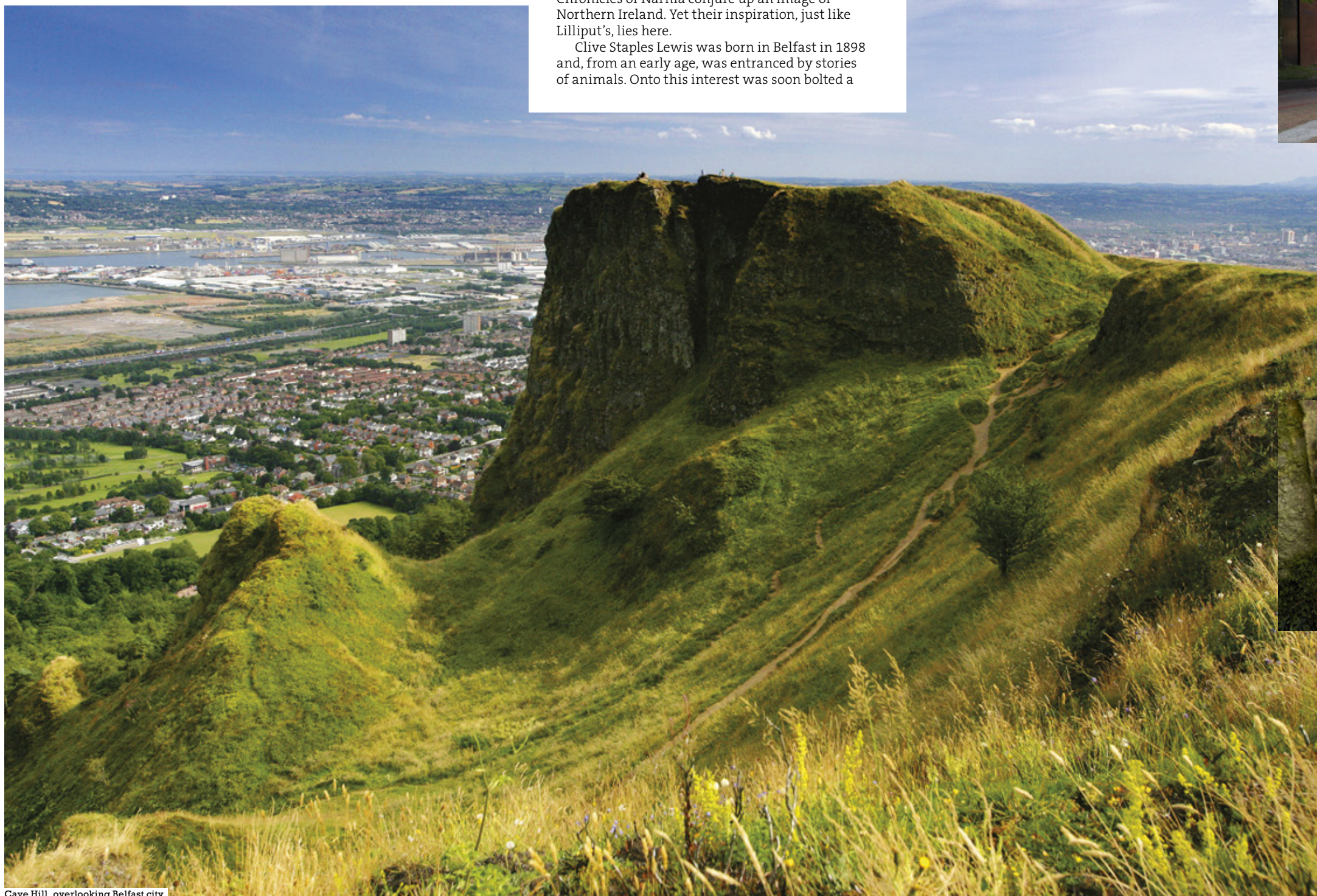
LITERARY LANDSCAPES

Mal Rogers enters a magical kingdom filled with incredible stories, and home to landscapes so stunning they will send your imagination soaring

Belfast is no stranger to legends. After all, this is a city that has given us iconic footballer George Best, musical genius Van Morrison and the ill-fated luxury liner, Titanic. It has also nurtured one of literature's most famous travellers, Jonathan Swift, vicar and writer, who regularly passed Cave Hill en route to his parish on the northern shore of Belfast Lough. This huge volcanic outcrop resembles a sleeping giant, and we may assume Swift looked up, jotted down a few notes, and Gulliver's Travels was duly born.

Few people, however, when reading The Chronicles of Narnia conjure up an image of Northern Ireland. Yet their inspiration, just like Lilliput's, lies here.

Clive Staples Lewis was born in Belfast in 1898 and, from an early age, was entranced by stories of animals. Onto this interest was soon bolted a



Cave Hill, overlooking Belfast city



C.S. Lewis, Centenary Sculpture, Belfast

Is this Aslan?

It's not known what C.S. Lewis's exact influences were for the character of Aslan in The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, but clues are dotted around. Could it be he got the idea from this stone lion, which is part of a fountain in the Tollymore Forest Park in County Down?



Linen Hall Library, Belfast



dimension of mysticism and spirituality: he was equally fascinated by the Icelandic sagas, Greek mythology and Irish folklore. From this literary and supernatural cauldron emerged the fantasy land of Narnia, first encountered in the book The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe.

Lewis was deeply proud of the city he grew up in, and today the author is honoured with the C.S. Lewis Tour, which begins at the Linen Hall Library, home to a unique archive of Lewis material. His statue, The Searcher, outside Holywood Road Library on the city's east side, is similarly a place of pilgrimage, while Campbell College, his old school, which still operates as a post-primary boys' school, can be visited by arrangement. >

Linen Hall Library

Founded in 1788, the Linen Hall Library in Belfast is a centre of literary history in the heart of the city. The C.S. Lewis Tour begins here and the library has a unique collection of the author's material.



Tollymore Forest Park, County Down



C.S. Lewis Tour, Writer's Square, Belfast

There are many things around Belfast that may have influenced the young Clive Staples to create his infamous kingdom. The rectory near to St Mark's Church, Dundela, where he was baptised, has a doorknob shaped like a lion. But Lewis's inspiration for Aslan may just lie a little further south than his home city of Belfast.



St Mark's Church, Belfast

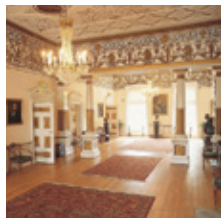
Tollymore Forest Park in Castlewellan, County Down, stands on the southerly slopes of the Mourne Mountains, an estate packed with horticultural A-listers — think of dawn redwoods, black junipers and magnificent cork oaks. Scattered throughout the estate are Gothic extravagances, grottos, obelisks and barbicans,

along with pretend sentry boxes and faux hermitages. The whole park is like one big folly, and it brims over with romance, beauty and plenty of natural curiosities for the inquiring mind to enjoy.

From the edge of the arboretum here, an astounding view of the Mourne Mountains leads the eye to Dundrum Bay, the Irish Sea and on towards the Isle of Man. From this viewpoint you can also glimpse the Horn Bridge straddling the Azalea Walk, which leads down into the forest. With its tiny turrets, crenellations and pretty shamrock-shaped embrasures, the bridge does an uncanny impersonation of an overgrown toy castle.

It's not too much of a stretch to imagine Lewis gazing down at this fantastic structure, set against a stunning background of exotic trees and towering mountains, and pausing for thought. Then his attention will have been drawn to the small, classical fountain set into the wall. On it is an almost life-sized head of a stone lion, through which water spouts — according to local legend, this is Aslan. >

Six Literary Experiences



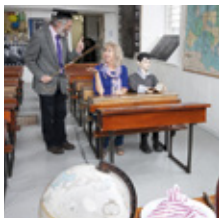
Dublin Writers Museum
Dublin

See memorabilia from Bram Stoker (Dracula) and Jonathan Swift (Gulliver's Travels), as well as the island of Ireland's four Nobel Literary Prizewinners: W.B. Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney.



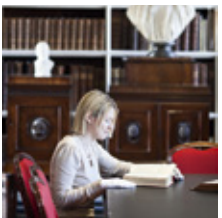
James Joyce Centre
Dublin

Dedicated to all things Joycean, this little museum in Dublin city centre has the original door from 7 Eccles Street on show. This was Leopold Bloom's home in the novel Ulysses; sadly the house itself was demolished last century.



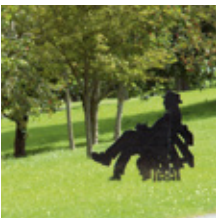
Frank McCourt Museum
Limerick

This museum focuses on the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Angela's Ashes, Frank McCourt. Situated in the writer's former school in the Georgian Quarter of Limerick city, it contains photos, manuscripts and memorabilia.



Armagh Public Library
Armagh

In leafy Armagh city, you'll find one of the oldest public libraries in Ireland. Established in 1771, the library is also a museum, which houses a fine collection of first editions and beautifully illustrated manuscripts.



Patrick Kavanagh Rural & Literary Resource Centre
County Monaghan

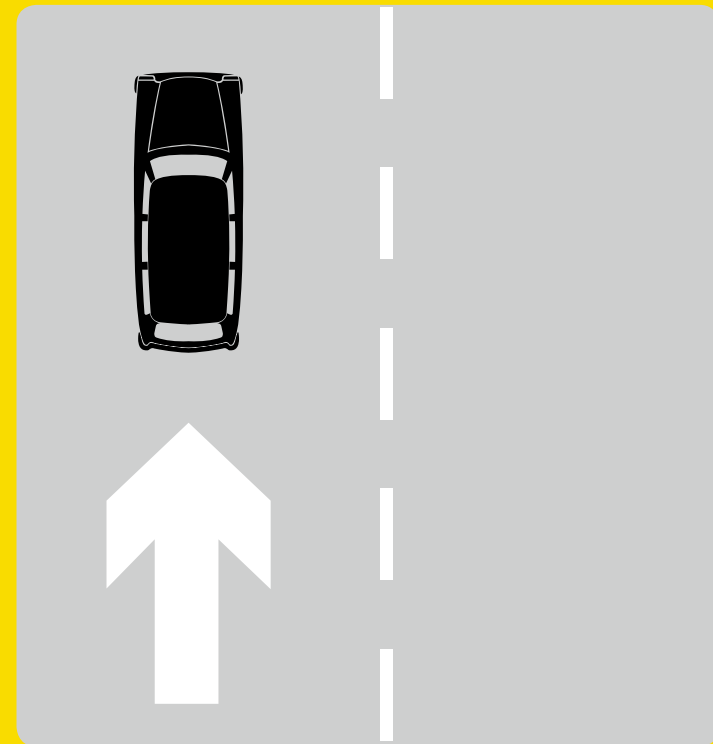
The Patrick Kavanagh Centre can be found in the historic St Mary's Church, next to the cemetery where the beloved Irish poet is buried. It contains an interesting archive on Kavanagh's life and work.



Kerry Writers Museum
County Kerry

Kerry has produced an abundance of world famous writers — from J.B. Keane to Maurice "Quiet Man" Walsh. The museum honours over 80 Kerry-based writers, as well as many national and international figures in the world of literature.

ATTENTION / ACHTUNG



Drive on left Conduire à gauche Links fahren



The Cloughmore Stone, Rostrevor, County Down

In a letter to his brother, Lewis wrote: "That part of Rostrevor which overlooks Carlingford Lough is my idea of Narnia"

supported. Turn around, though, and you'll see an incredible view across the glacial fjord of Carlingford Lough – it was this panorama that particularly attracted the interest of the author. In a letter to his brother, he wrote: "That part of Rostrevor which overlooks Carlingford Lough is my idea of Narnia."

Looking south across the waters, he'll have seen the Cooley Mountains of County Louth—themselves major players in the most ancient of Irish sagas, The Cattle Raid of Cooley. And small wonder that this place has spawned so many incredible tales.

It doesn't matter what the weather is like, the land around here is ethereal, with mountains rising out of the sea and rock formations creating images of hags and giants. No wonder it has taken its place in one of the world's most famous works of fantasy; when you visit the Mourne, there's magic about.

Finding Narnia

A view of the Mourne is something to behold, but to truly experience the landscape you need to enter this mystical territory itself. Along the journey here, past the Tollymore Forest Park, several more unusual curiosities appear – the tiny Foley's Bridge, which crosses a torrential waterfall; a stone chair engraved with Alexander Pope poetry; a glacial erratic (a huge split boulder) with biblical text inscribed.

Onwards, and soon the open mountain appears before you. C.S. Lewis said of the area in his essay On Stories: "I have seen landscapes, notably in the Mourne Mountains and southwards, which under a particular light made me feel that at any moment a giant might raise his head over the next ridge."

And that's certainly the impression you get as you gaze at this behemoth. Part of the area's alluring appeal has to do with the incredible geology that exists here. Mighty battlements of solid granite rising around you, and crags twisted into fantastic shapes by millions of years of heavy weather seem to appear at every turn. It feels like a place perfectly made for a fantasy novel. And everywhere you look, you'll find something that seems to ignite the imagination.

It's pretty obvious that the Cloughmore Stone, a 40-tonne granite boulder standing on a mountain ridge over 300 metres above Rostrevor, must have arrived there through the work of a giant. It was probably thrown at Fionn mac Cumhaill (Finn McCool), hero of the Ulster sagas, during an argument with another giant. Giants, it seems, were always prone to fighting with each other.

Of course, there are always a few doubting Thomases around – in this instance the entire scientific community – who describe the stone as a deposit from the ice age. Deep down, we know which theory C.S. Lewis was likely to have

Ireland's Literary Locations

Dublin

UNESCO City of Literature

Dublin has given us some of the world's most celebrated writers and playwrights: Bram Stoker, author of Dracula; Oscar Wilde; Brendan Behan; Nobel prizewinner Samuel Beckett; and creator of Pygmalion, George Bernard Shaw. Most famously, the city is the setting for James Joyce's Ulysses. On 16th June 1904, the hero of the book, Leopold Bloom, wanders through the city meeting some of its extraordinary characters. Joycean fans regularly retrace Bloom's footsteps and in Davy Byrne's pub on Duke Street they will partake of some gorgonzola cheese – just like Leopold did. It's traditional to order a glass of burgundy with your gorgonzola; but nobody will mind if it's a Guinness.

Sligo

W.B. Yeats Country

William Butler Yeats – even his name sounds like a piece of poetry – is strongly associated with the grandeur of the Sligo landscape. W.B. Yeats and his brother Jack described this corner of Connacht, their childhood home, in literature, poetry and painting. Mrs Yeats's two lads did so well in this endeavour that W.B. won a Nobel Prize for Literature, and Jack, back in the days when such a thing existed, picked up an Olympic medal for painting.

Ben Bulbin, the Curlew Mountains and the surrounding landscape all cast their spell on the poet W.B., awakening



Ben Bulbin, County Sligo

an interest both in old Irish legends and the occult. His sublime poem The Lake Isle of Innisfree was inspired by the sparkling waters of Lough Gill, which Yeats described as a paradise where he could "live alone, in the bee loud glade".

The Aran Islands

John Millington Synge

Ringed by great cliffs, the mystical Aran Islands greatly influenced the work of John Millington Synge, one of Ireland's greatest playwrights. Synge contributed to island legend in his own inimitable way; the legend of Aran sweaters having a distinctive pattern as a means of identification in case of drowning probably originated from his play Riders to the Sea. A drowned fisherman is recognised by his sister because of a dropped stitch in the socks she knitted for him. The myth soon became part of folklore.



Explore Ulster the Cradle of American Presidents

No fewer than 17 US presidents have been elected with Ulster-Scots/Scotch-Irish roots, reflecting the huge impact of the Scotch-Irish on American society.

Visit Ulster and see the heartlands of the Ulster-Scots/Scotch-Irish people, and explore the places that have such resonance in the story of America. Wander through the picturesque village of Ramelton, Co. Donegal, which was home to the family of President James Buchanan, who famously said, "My Ulster blood is a priceless heritage."

Explore the ancestral home of President Chester A. Arthur at Cullybackey, Co. Antrim, which will reopen in 2014 following extensive refurbishment; and follow in the footsteps of one of the greatest Presidents, Ulysses S. Grant, who visited his own ancestral home in Co. Tyrone in 1878.

To find out more visit www.ulsterscotsagency.com

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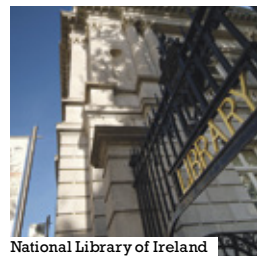
Dunbrody Famine Ship, New Ross, County Wexford



Statue of Annie Moore
Annie was the first immigrant to be processed through Ellis Island on 1st January 1892. She left Cobh, County Cork (known at the time as Queenstown), at just 14 years of age and travelled to the US with her two brothers, Anthony (11) and Phillip (7).

FAMILY TIES

Seeking out your family's links and visiting the place where it all started is a life-changing experience. And with a vast diaspora now settled in Canada, **Vanessa Harriss** speaks to the experts about what to expect along the way



National Library of Ireland

When it comes to the reason so many people decide to trace their family roots, the answer seems simple. "I think people like to see themselves as being part of history," explains historian Turtle Bunbury. "They like to know where they came from and how they fit into the past."

Lesley Anderson, family historian and content specialist for Ancestry.ca, believes it's more personal than that. "I was the firstborn Canadian in my family and I wanted to see if an ancestor shared any traits. Sometimes people are interested for health reasons, or they want to connect with living relatives and travel to the land where their ancestors lived."

Of course, while shows such as *Who Do You Think You Are?* have popularised the subject, Lesley explains that it is technology that has really opened up the world of ancestry, making it more



Linen Hall Library, Belfast

accessible than ever before. "We have the internet and companies such as Ancestry.com, which make it easier than ever to access historical documents. You can see a parish register from the 1800s while sitting in your pyjamas."

And from a humble mouse and screen to travelling across oceans: the most rewarding journeys end with a poignant visit to the place where it all began.

Getting started

"It's all about narrowing the search," says Megan Smolenyak, the American genealogist who uncovered Barack Obama's Irish roots. "The key is identifying a town of origin, then you've got a shot at learning more, but it can take some digging."

Ireland's paper trail, while fascinating, can at times result in unexpected twists and turns. But these challenges ultimately turn to positives and uncovering the past and visiting the birthplace of your Irish ancestors brings a satisfaction that takes many by surprise.

Tracing Ulster-Scots roots

Researching an Ulster-Scots background faces similar challenges and rewards, says Boyd Gray, an amateur family historian who works for the West Ulster Genealogy Society. He notes that church records can be useful in your hunt. "Most of the Presbyterian churches kept records from around 1830," Boyd says. "The Church of Ireland started decades before that and often included Catholic and Presbyterian baptismal records. This is because it was the only church by law allowed to record baptisms, marriages or burials."

New family, new friends

While you can learn a lot from the internet, once you have established a foundation, there's no substitute for actually visiting the island of Ireland in person, and finding out for yourself where it all began. Lesley Anderson combined a business trip with a holiday and some genealogical research to make a truly memorable family history experience.

"I took a lovely train ride from Dublin up to



Murrisk Famine Memorial, County Mayo

Belfast and spent a week there at a B&B. I'd have a full Irish breakfast with black pudding and bacon and eggs every day, then take a bus to PRONI (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland) and bury myself in boxes of paper and books and lists. I could have stayed a month!" she says.

While researching her family history was the main point of her trip, Lesley also felt as if she was making new friends. "The people at PRONI knew I was only there for a short time and they helped me get through a lot of material. But even when I went outside or waited for the bus I would be greeted with a smile from a passerby and they would immediately hear that I had a Canadian accent and start talking to me. They were all very friendly and interested in why I was visiting and wished me well in my research. I loved it and I've already decided I'm going back."



Did you know?

An incredible 70 million people worldwide are said to claim Irish ancestry (4.7 million of them in Canada), and while some of them are obvious, others might take you by surprise – Che Guevara, George Clooney and Muhammad Ali, for instance, whose great-grandfather left Ireland for the United States in the 1840s. Even Shania Twain, Johnny Depp, Tom Cruise and Barack Obama claim Irish ancestry.

The essentials

Ireland Family History on Facebook

This page was created to help people on their Irish genealogy adventure. It aims to help join the dots and reveal long-lost relatives. It shares interesting stories, alerts you to new resources that are available, and offers a platform where you can share your experiences with others. [facebook.com/IrelandFamilyHistory](https://www.facebook.com/IrelandFamilyHistory)

Ireland Reaching Out

Ireland Reaching Out (also known by its nickname Ireland XO) is a volunteer-led "reverse genealogy project", which aims to connect the 70 million people of the Irish diaspora. Rather than letting the ancestor hunters come here, Ireland XO is reaching out. They have genealogists in most districts across the island and can put you in touch with people who are tracing your family tree. irelandxo.com

National Library and the Irish Times

There are few finer resources than Dublin's National Library or the Irish Times Ancestry project. The National Library outlines the basics well. Meanwhile, the Irish Times last name search is a gem of a resource. nli.ie and irishtimes.com

Census records

Ireland's 1901 and 1911 census records are easily searchable online and should be a touchstone in any ancestral search. census.nationalarchives.ie



PRONI, Belfast

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

This is the official place where all public records from Northern Ireland are deposited and stored so people now and in the future can enjoy reading about past generations. Its huge range of material comprises records of historical, social and cultural importance, all of which are available to the general public for free. The General Register Office for Northern Ireland registers all births, deaths, marriages and adoptions in Northern Ireland. proni.gov.uk and nidirect.gov.uk

Ulster Historical Foundation

This non-profit family history research foundation has been helping people trace their Scots-Irish and Irish roots for more than 50 years.

There are over 200 family history records, as well as a free Ulster-Scots app. ancestryireland.com

Griffith's Valuation

It's doubtful that Sir Richard Griffith, the Irish baron in whose name Griffith's Valuation was carried out, could have guessed how essential this record would be to ancestral researchers some 160 years later. Should your query lie between 1860 and 1900, this is your ticket. askaboutireland.ie

Military archives

The Military Archives and the newly launched records website host an astoundingly rich and diverse body of information. militaryarchives.ie

County Genealogy Centres

Many counties in Ireland boast their own county genealogy centre and the level of local knowledge found there can be highly useful in breaching any brick walls your search may have thrown up. Thankfully the National Archives has a list of each of the individual centres. nationalarchives.ie

Glasnevin Cemetery

At Glasnevin Cemetery's genealogy centre in Dublin you can delve into over 1.2 million burial records, while tracing your ancestry. glasnevintrust.ie



OLD HEAD
County Cork



THE EUROPEAN
County Wicklow



Darren Clarke

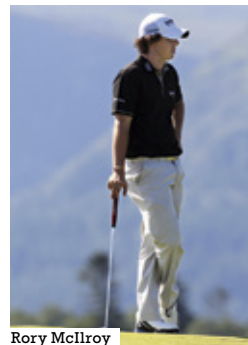


ROYAL COUNTY DOWN
County Down

Over the course of his many visits, Tiger Woods has played the famous Royal County Down course at the foothills of the Mourne Mountains



ROYAL PORTRUSH
County Antrim



Rory McIlroy

PLAYING THE GREATS

For a small island, Ireland packs a mighty punch when it comes to golf, with some of the finest links courses on the planet. **Brian Keogh** looks at the natural powerhouses shaped by nature and adored by the professionals

Top shots

Rory McIlroy perfected his swing on some of the island's top golf courses, including his home club at Holywood, County Down, and the mighty links courses at Portrush, Rosses Point and The European.

Ireland is the world's smallest golfing superpower. The island has claimed seven of golf's Major titles over the last few years, and boasts some of the greatest courses – and golfers – in the world. This isn't some idle claim either: there are little more than 150 links courses on the planet, and Ireland has over a third of them, making a trip to the island a must for any golfer who's looking for a combination of primeval terrain, world-class golf and, even better, fun.

Great courses produce great players and none more so than Royal Portrush on the rugged north coast of County Antrim, just a stone's throw from the iconic Giant's Causeway. It was here that 2011 US PGA champion Keegan Bradley let himself get swept away in the emotion and power of it all. Originally from Vermont, but with ancestors from County Cork, Keegan made the trip "home" for the Irish Open at Royal Portrush in 2012, and the experience made a big impression.

"Hundreds of people have told me 'welcome home', which gives me chills almost every time they say it," said Keegan at the time. And he made sure he also got in a trip to the Giant's Causeway and the Old Bushmills Distillery on his visit. "Everybody has just been so great. The area is unbelievable and the people are extraordinary."

No wonder 2010 US Open champion Graeme McDowell, and 2011 British Open winner Darren Clarke are proud to call the small coastal town of Portrush their home. "People should come and play in Ireland because we have a lot of the best courses in the world, not just up here near Portrush, but all over Ireland," says Clarke. Originally from Dungannon in County Tyrone, Clarke moved from London to the picturesque north Antrim seaside town in 2009 and won the Open soon afterwards. "The Irish are a friendly and welcoming people," Clarke explains. "You'd go a long way around the world to find people better than the Irish."

It's a fact that's not lost on some of the game's legends, many of whom have been coming here for years – both for the quality of the courses and the unrivalled atmosphere. Tiger Woods has frequently touched down at the island's best links courses to practice for the British Open (and get in a little fishing in his spare time). Over his many visits, Woods has played the famous Royal County Down course, voted Ireland's top course in the 2013 Golf Digest Ireland Top 100. Created by the legendary architect Old Tom Morris at the foothills of the beautiful Mourne Mountains, neither Jack Nicklaus nor Tom Watson managed to conquer its majestic, savage beauty. Royal County Down is a unique test in the game with its myriad blind shots, subtle run-offs and fringe-topped bunkers in a picture postcard setting.

Heading south from Royal County Down, you come to the hidden gem of the County Louth Golf Club, or "Baltray" as it's known, arguably the

friendliest club in Ireland. If you're in any doubt, ask the visitors who once teed off there and ended up finishing their round on neighbouring Seapoint Golf Links. They had inadvertently crossed the boundary wall at the 14th tee, and continued their game on the fine course next door. The group didn't realise the mistake until heading to the car park to search, in vain, for their hire car. But they were soon fed, watered and taken back to Baltray by the Seapoint folks, where they continued on their way.

Of course, if they had kept going south along the east coast, they would have soon reached County Dublin and some of its great links courses including The Island at Donabate, world-famous Portmarnock and its next-door neighbour Portmarnock Links. Further down the coast at Brittas Bay in County Wicklow, The European Club awaits in all its splendour. Framed by sand dunes on the edge of the Irish Sea, The European is where three-time major winner Pádraig Harrington >

Natural beauty

Situated on the stunning north Antrim Causeway Coast, the Royal Portrush Golf Club is the only club on the island of Ireland to have hosted The Open Championship. The club welcomes visitors all year round to play the Dunluce Links and Valley Links courses.



WATERVILLE
County Kerry

Don't be surprised when you see a statue of the late US Open winner Payne Stewart at Waterville on the Ring of Kerry

Beyond the course

Golf with a side order of pampering
Who could say no to a round of golf followed by a gorgeously relaxing deep-tissue massage? If that appeals, make your way to the **Lough Erne Resort** just outside Enniskillen in County Fermanagh, where you can enjoy two world-renowned championship courses and a luxurious spa with indulgent treatments and a stunning infinity pool.

Golf with a spot of whiskey tasting
The Old Bushmills Distillery, County Antrim, is a must-visit on the northern coastline, which also sports the sightseeing highlights of the **Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge** and **Giant's Causeway**. A tour of the distillery takes you through the process from



Bushmills Distillery

the sourcing of water through to the bottling. There are also eight golf courses in the area including **Royal Portrush**, **Portstewart** and **Ballycastle**.

Golf for gourmets
Old Head Golf Links, County Cork, is one of the most dramatic links courses the island has to offer and is located just outside the gourmet town of **Kinsale**. Famed for its fantastic seafood, Kinsale also hosts a food festival in October, and one of the pleasures of a visit to the town is to just perch yourself on the pier and watch the catch of the day glide in.

it to be the perfect place for that other great Irish golfing tradition: the 19th hole knees-up. "We get into the pub and get round a piano," Stewart said of his post-round routine. "I bring out my harmonica and the next thing you know it's about 4am."

You'll make friends as easily as a double bogey in Ireland, where you should expect the unexpected as readily as a bad bounce. "That's links golf," says Harrington with a laugh. "You hit it and it's still a mystery until you actually find your golf ball. It's the same thing when you travel around the country – it looks small on a map but get out there and explore; you're always discovering new places to go, new people to meet."

Drive north through Limerick into County Clare and you have the new and the old side by side with Greg Norman's modern Doonbeg links less than 33km from storied Lahinch, home of the late, great amateur golfer John Burke. Winner of no fewer than 26 amateur championships, nine of them at

the national level, he was a true character with a typical Irish sense of humour.

Given the golf, the scenery and the people, it's no wonder that many find it a wrench to head back home. Two-time Masters champion Bernhard Langer had just that experience when he stopped off to practice in County Sligo on the country's wild west coast; he ended up staying for a week at Enniscrone. He could easily have spent his time at County Sligo Golf Club's famous Rosses Point links, home of the West of Ireland Championship, which Rory McIlroy won as a teenager. Or he could have stopped along the way there to see the dunes at Carne Links in County Mayo or the lilting charms of Connemara Golf Club in County Galway.

If you think that's all the island has to offer, keep heading north along the Atlantic coast for the pristine beaches of County Donegal and the ultimate links experience at Ballyliffin, Rosapenna, Narin and Portnool, Dunfanaghy or little Cruit Island, the nine-hole course you reach by boat.

Most visitors travel from one great place to the next by car, but not American author Tom Coyne, who one day realised that Ireland was ringed with golf holes and set off to play every single seaside course he encountered – on foot. Coyne, whose hilarious and uplifting book *A Course Called Ireland* was an international bestseller, explains that many people who have played in Ireland several times write to him asking where they should go next.

"I tell them to go up into the northwest, to Mayo and up to Sligo and Donegal. Those are places that I really loved. It's like you're going back in time..."

Need to know the essential information

The inside track on how to make your golfing holiday as smooth and enjoyable as possible

Plan ahead

Going where the road takes you is part of the beauty of a trip to the island of Ireland. Still, a bit of planning is always a good idea. Check out the courses in the county-by-county list provided by the Golfing Union of Ireland gui.ie. Be sure to ask about special offers for visitors and groups from the club or your tour operator. For more information, check out ireland.com/golfnow for the lowdown on golf in the Home of the Champions.

If you haven't brought your own clubs, you can rent them at many clubs or hire them before you fly and pick them up at the airport through European Ryder Cup captain Paul McGinley's clubstohire.com service.

Be prepared

The Irish weather might be unpredictable but that



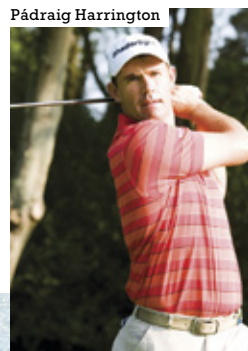
doesn't mean you can't play all year round, especially on a links. April to October is the best time and with those long summer evenings, you can play until 10pm and make it to the 19th hole for post-game relaxation.

Dress to impress

Most golf clubs on the island of Ireland are relaxed and informal, but

there is usually a basic dress code that visitors are asked to follow. Jeans, shorts and trainers are generally frowned upon, while some clubs might insist on a jacket and tie for the dining room. The safest bet is smart-casual, with waterproof gear and sunscreen at hand just in case. Many clubs will only allow soft spikes, so do check in advance.

DOONBEG
County Clare



Pádraig Harrington



STRANDHILL
County Sligo

Links challenge

The Atlantic winds blowing in from Sligo Bay make Strandhill a great place to hone your shot-making skills. A successful round here is something to boast about.

honed his game for those back-to-back wins in the British Open, and it presents a test that has flummoxed Tiger Woods, who's played it twice.

Perfectly suited to the cerebral golfer, there are a few quirky little additions here, such as the famous "Cursing Stone" not far from the 10th tee. According to local legend, you can curse a person or thing if you rotate the seven small stones on the top of the rock in an anti-clockwise direction. Head southwest along the coast and you can stop to play at Rosslare in County Wexford, where generations of visitors have witnessed the sea in all its turbulent majesty, or travel on to Kerry in the far southwest to the dunes of Waterville, Tralee or Ballybunion.

Don't be surprised when you see a statue of the late US Open winner Payne Stewart at Waterville on the Ring of Kerry. Stewart stayed in Waterville with Tiger Woods and Mark O'Meara on a memorable golfing trip in the late 90s, and found

IRELAND FESTIVALS

FEAST OF FESTIVALS

The island of Ireland offers a packed calendar of festivals, fairs, shows, pageants and markets that will thrill, entertain and electrify



Festival Planner 2014

All year
Limerick City of Culture 2014

January
Temple Bar TradFest Dublin

February
Dublin International Film Festival

March
St Patrick's Festival Dublin

April
Cúirt International Festival of Literature Galway

May
Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival Belfast

Balmoral Show Lisburn

Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival

May/June
Listowel Writers' Week County Kerry



Cat Laughs Comedy Festival Kilkenny

June
Bloom Garden Festival Dublin

July
Galway Arts Festival

August
Féile an Phobail Community Festival Belfast

Waterford Spraoi Festival

Puck Fair Killorglin County Kerry

Ould Lammas Fair Ballycastle, County Antrim

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann Sligo

September
Hillsborough Oyster Festival County Down

GAA All-Ireland Hurling and Football Finals Dublin

Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival

Dublin Theatre Festival

October
Belfast Festival at Queen's

Cork Jazz Festival

Hallowe'en Derry~Londonderry

October/November
Wexford Opera Festival

November
Foyle Film Festival Derry~Londonderry

December
New Year's Eve Festival Dublin



Derry~Londonderry

IRELAND INFORMATION

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IRELAND GENERAL INFORMATION

CLIMATE

Ireland has a mild, temperate climate with summer temperatures generally ranging from 60°F/15°C to 70°F/20°C. Temperatures in spring and autumn are generally 50°F/10°C, and in winter between 40°F/5°C and 46°F/8°C. Snow is rare but rain showers can occur at any time of the year. For up-to-the-minute weather reports visit met.ie

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Canadian Embassy in Dublin
canadainternational.gc.ca/ireland-irlande
British High Commission
gov.uk/government/world/canada
Irish Embassy in Canada
embassyofireland.ca

PASSPORT/VISA REQUIREMENTS

A valid Canadian passport is required to visit the island of Ireland and no visa is required. However, if you are travelling on a passport issued by another country (although a resident in Canada), please check visa requirements with the embassy.

ACTIVITIES

WALKING

Along spectacular coastline, over dramatic mountain scenery or by tranquil lakes, walking in Ireland is a joy. Look out for a whole network of Waymarked Ways, walking holidays and special festivals throughout the year. For more information visit ireland.com/walking

CYCLING

A hugely popular sport in Ireland (which has produced several of the world's leading cyclists), cycling is a marvellous way to tour the country. A number of companies provide guided and self-guided cycling tours,

and you can hire bicycles throughout Ireland. For more information on cycling around Ireland please visit ireland.com/cycling

GAELIC FOOTBALL/HURLING

The unique Gaelic sports of football and hurling are as exciting as any sport in the world to watch and can be seen at stadiums throughout Ireland as well as at Croke Park in Dublin, home of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA); gaa.ie

RUGBY

All four provinces in Ireland have strong rugby teams and the national team, composed of players from each of the provinces, is one of the best in the world. For further information contact the Irish Rugby Football Union; irishrugby.ie

SOCCER

Soccer is widely played and followed throughout the island of Ireland.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Football Association of Ireland; fai.ie
NORTHERN IRELAND
Irish Football Association; irishfa.com

For more detailed information on activities in Ireland, visit ireland.com/activities

WHERE TO STAY

Hospitality comes naturally in Ireland, and the island boasts a wonderful range of places to stay – from the friendliest bed & breakfasts in the world to 5-star hotels. For fantastic accommodation offers and inclusive packages visit ireland.com/hotoffers

Choose from hotels or guesthouses, elegant country homes, luxury castles, village pubs, Georgian manors, budget hotels and Victorian houses. You'll find

welcoming bed & breakfasts throughout Ireland, even in the most remote areas, with friendly personal service and delicious full Irish or Ulster fry breakfasts. To feel part of the countryside, nothing compares to a farmhouse holiday, but book early as they are very popular – it's a great way to get to know local people.

Ireland's large network of hostels gives budget travellers great independence. Facilities vary so check in advance.

HOTELS & GUESTHOUSES

Irish Hotels Federation
irelandhotels.com
Northern Ireland Hotels Federation
nihf.co.uk
Ireland's Blue Book
irelands-blue-book.ie
Good Food Ireland
goodfoodireland.ie
Manor House Hotels and Irish Country Hotels
manorhousehotels.com
irishcountryhotels.com

BED & BREAKFASTS

B&B Ireland
bandbireland.com

COUNTRY HOUSES

The Hidden Ireland Guide
hiddenireland.com

HOSTELS

An Óige – Irish Youth Hostel Association
anoige.ie
Independent Holiday Hostels
hostels-ireland.com
Hostelling International Northern Ireland
hini.org.uk
Independent Hostels of Ireland
independenthostels.com

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- The Aran Islands



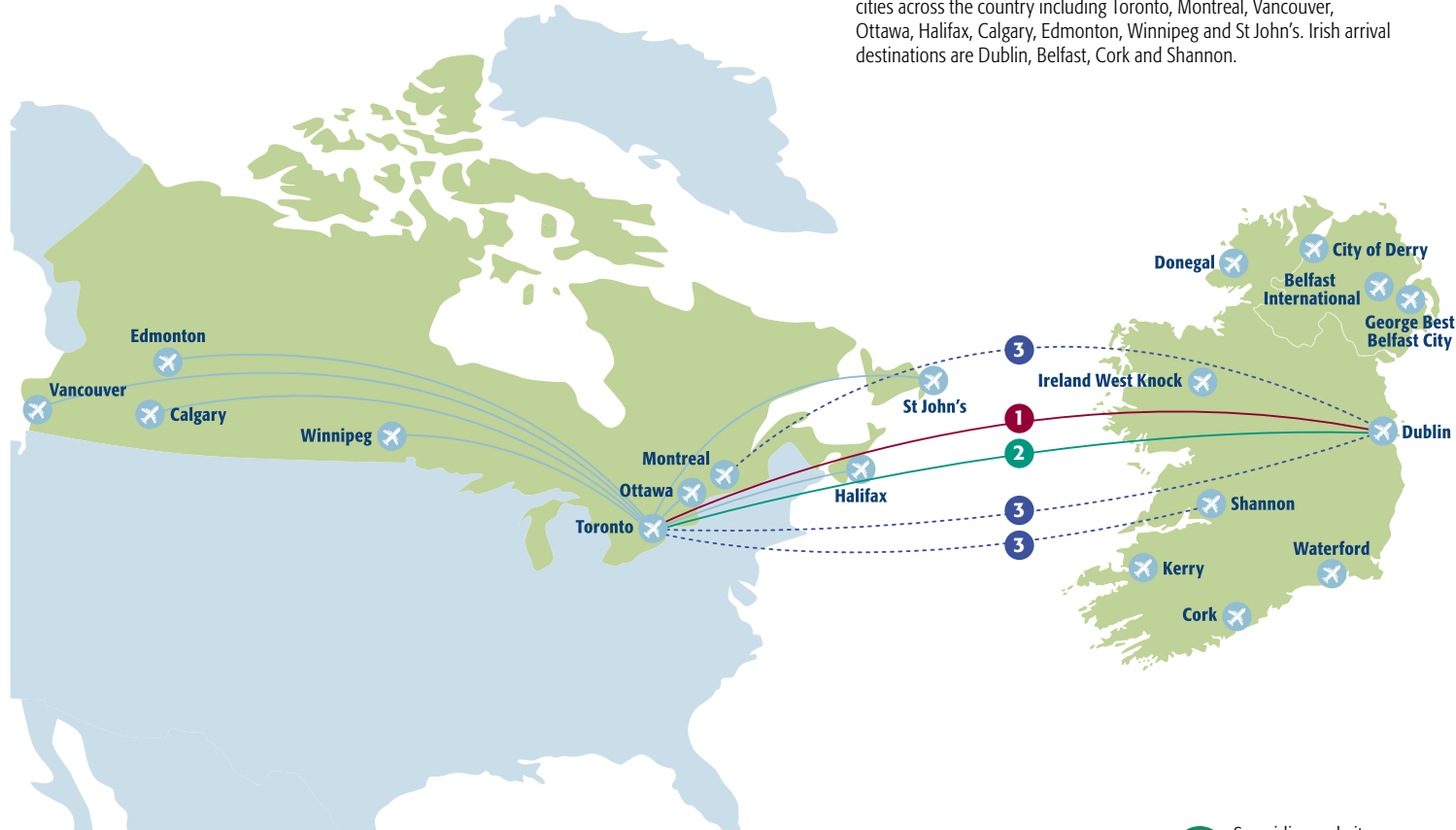
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TRAVELLING TO IRELAND BY AIR

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You can fly direct from Canada to Ireland at any time of the year. A number of airlines service Canada to Ireland from major departure cities across the country including Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa, Halifax, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg and St John's. Irish arrival destinations are Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Shannon.



See airline websites or visit ireland.com for further information.

AIR SERVICES FROM CANADA

AIRLINE	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Air Canada	888 247 2262	aircanada.com
Air Transat	866 847 1112	airtransat.ca
Aer Lingus	800 474 7424	aerlingus.com
American Airlines	800 433 7300	aa.com
British Airways	800 247 9297	ba.com
Delta Air Lines	800 221 1212	delta.com
United Airlines	800 864 8331	united.com
US Airways	800 622 1015	usairways.com
Virgin Atlantic	800 862 8621	virgin-atlantic.com

CARRIER	CONTACT	ROUTE
1 AIR CANADA rouge	aircanada.com	TORONTO - DUBLIN <i>(from May 2014)</i>
2 Aer Lingus	aerlingus.com	TORONTO - DUBLIN <i>(from Apr 2014)</i>
3	airtransat.ca	TORONTO - DUBLIN <i>(May-Oct)</i> TORONTO - SHANNON <i>(May-Oct)</i> MONTREAL - DUBLIN <i>(May-Oct)</i>

Note: Dotted line indicates seasonal service. Information correct at time of printing. Map not to scale.

TRAVELLING FROM DUBLIN AND BELFAST AIRPORTS INTO CITY CENTRES



DUBLIN

BUS: Direct buses to the city centre, and bus and train stations are available from Dublin Bus Airlink; €6* single and €10* return. Children travel half price.

TAXI: Taxis cost between €15-25* depending on where you are travelling within the city.

BELFAST

BELFAST INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

BUS: The 24-hour Airport Express 300 to and from Belfast city costs £7.50* single and £10.50* return.

TAXI: Fares to the city are about £30*.

GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT

BUS: Airport Express 600 into the city centre runs on the hour (every 20 minutes during peak times); £2.20* single and £3.30* return.

TAXI: Fares to the city centre are about £10*.

TRAIN: Trains run from Sydenham station near the airport to Belfast and beyond.

*Prices are subject to change.



CANADIAN TOUR OPERATORS

COMPANY	WEBSITE
ESCORTED TOURS & INDEPENDENT VACATIONS	
Air Canada Vacations	aircanadavacations.com
ATOURZ/Airliners	atourz.ca
CIE Tours	cietours.com
CIT Tours	cittours.ca
Collette Vacations	collettevacations.com
Contiki Holidays	contiki.com
Cosmos	cosmosvacations.ca
Craig Travel	craigtravel.com
Denure Tours	denuretours.com
DH Tour	dhgrouptours.com
Ellison Travel and Tours	ettravel.com
Globus	globusjourneys.ca
Horizon & Co	horizon-co.com
Insight Vacations	insightvacations.com
Irish Travel Bureau	irishtravel.ca
Merit Travel Group	merit.ca
Monograms	monogramtravel.ca
NAVTOURS	navtours.com
Romantic Planet	romanticplanet.ca
Rostad Tours	rostad.com
Royal Irish Tours	royalirishtours.com
Tauck	tauck.com
Tours Chanteclerc	tourschanteclerc.com
Trafalgar Tours	trafalgartours.com
Transat Holidays	transatholidays.com
Travel Only	travelonly.ca
Senior Tours	seniortours.ca
Vacances Ideals	vacancesideal.com

COMPANY	WEBSITE
GOLF	
Golf-Away Tours	golfawaytours.com
Golf the World Vacations	golftheworldvacations.com
Gryphon Golf Tours	gryphongolf.com
Merit Golf Vacations	meritgolfvacations.com
Strider Golf Adventures	strider.ca
ACTIVE VACATIONS	
Active Journeys	activejourneys.com
The Adventure Travel Company	theadventuretravelcompany.com
Butterfield & Robinson	butterfield.com
Comfortable Hiking Holidays	letshike.com
Freewheeling Adventures	freewheeling.ca
G Adventures	gadventures.com
Great Explorations	great-explorations.com
Hidden Trails	hiddentrails.com
Randonee Tours	randoneetours.com
The Vacation Station	thevacationstation.com
World Expeditions	worldexpeditions.com
YOUTH & EDUCATIONAL TOURS	
Celtic Learning	celticlearning.com
Connaissance Travel and Tours	connaissancetravel.com
EF Educational Tours	eftours.ca
Explorica	explorica.ca
Georgia Hardy Tours	ghardytraveltours.com
Languages Abroad	languagesabroad.com
Travelcuts	travelcuts.com

A packaged vacation offers a variety of choices including a range of fully escorted coach tours, self-drive vacations, golf, cycling, walking, horse riding and fishing. Packages, including pre-paid vouchers, can be booked before departure from a Canadian tour operator. For details of packages, please visit ireland.com/hotoffers or call your travel agent. All information correct at time of going to press.



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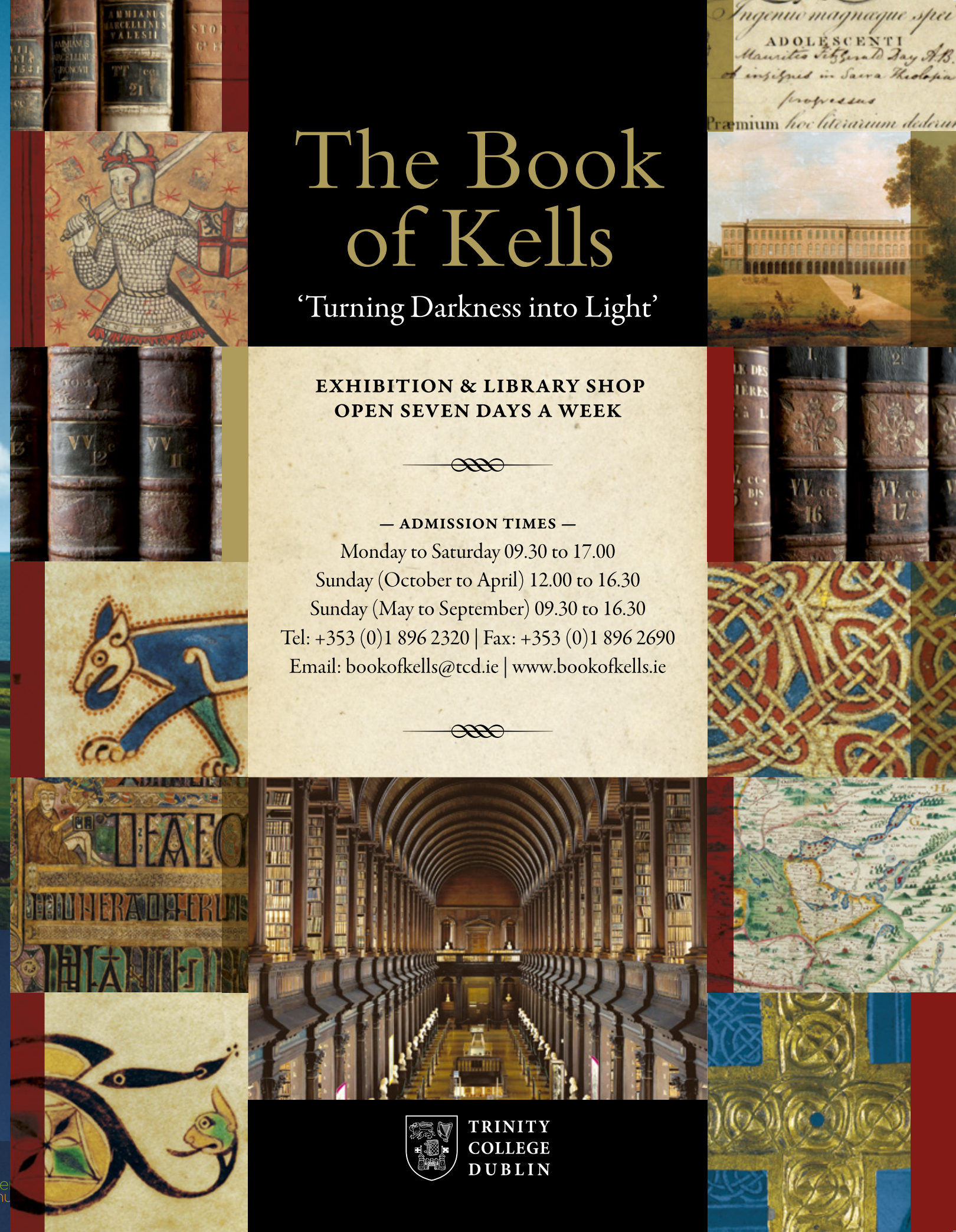
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