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Ireland Welcome

The perfect escape? The city break you've been dreaming of? The cliff-path walk you'll remember forever? Well, Ireland has you covered. This magical island is just waiting to thrill you with its stunning windswept scenery along the Wild Atlantic Way, to capture you with its history from ancient sites such as Newgrange to the Walled City of Derry~Londonderry, and to entice you with its traditional music. The time is now.

Jump into Ireland

THE GREAT GAME 38

ON TOUR 34



CITY BREAKS 12



ANCIENT IRELAND 46

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Everything you need to know about organising a holiday to Ireland



Picture This

Its name in Irish means “rocky place”. This wild part of County Clare, edged by the Atlantic Ocean, feels unreal at times with its lunar stone, ancient dolmens, and unearthly landscapes. Walk some of the many trails here and the beauty of the Burren quietly reveals itself: pretty orchids, spring gentian and primroses colour the stone, all backed by views of the swirling Atlantic. Along the Burren’s edges lie charming little villages with lively traditional music pubs: Doolin, Fanore, Lisdoonvarna and lovely Ballyvaughan. From splendid isolation to spirited nights out, the Burren is one place you’ll fall in love with.



Poulnabrone Dolmen, County Clare



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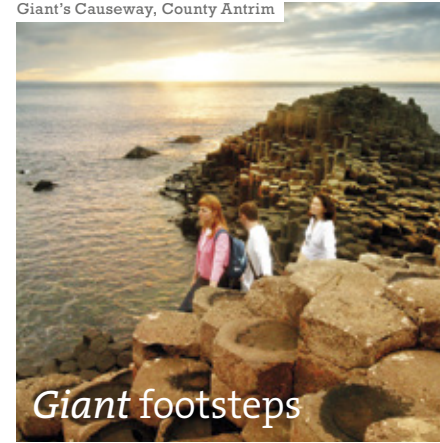
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Giant's Causeway, County Antrim



Giant footsteps

Mythology, geology and ancient volcanic activity come together with stunning effect at the Giant's Causeway in County Antrim. There's something magical about this UNESCO World Heritage Site, with its 40,000 hexagonal basalt columns and tales of warring giants. A true legend.



Rock of Cashel, County Tipperary

The Rock of Cashel

A dramatic silhouette looms over the town of Cashel in County Tipperary... it's the Rock of Cashel, an imposing group of medieval buildings perched on a massive limestone outcrop. Once the seat of the Kings of Munster, it was here that St Patrick is reputed to have converted King Aengus to Christianity. Today, one of the biggest attractions is the 12th century Cormac's Chapel, with its beautifully preserved frescoes and vast stone sarcophagus. Magical.

DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT

The island of Ireland has a unique appeal, with incredible escapes and epic adventures just waiting for you. Here are some to get you started

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Stena Line

Kilkenny Castle, Kilkenny



Medieval Mile
Kilkenny city

With its ancient castle, winding alleys and impressive abbey, Kilkenny has always been a medieval beauty, but now there's a new way to unlock its past: a stroll down the Medieval Mile. Stretching from Kilkenny Castle to St Canice's Cathedral, this walking route highlights the best of Kilkenny's heritage. From Rothe House, a 17th century merchant's townhouse and gardens, to Kyteler's Inn, a pub that dates back to 1263, it's the most enjoyable way to walk back in time.

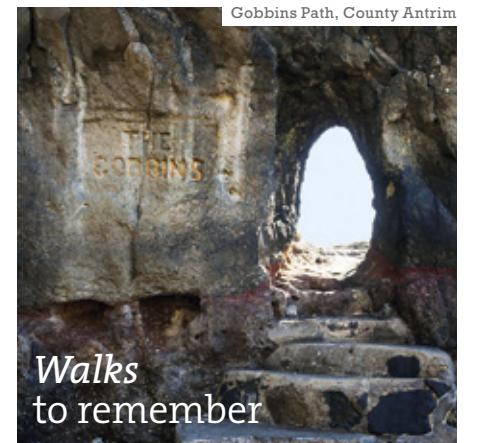
Wild Atlantic Way

A rugged coastline shaped by time and pounding waves, the Wild Atlantic Way is Ireland's epic 1,500 mile/2,500km coastal touring route. Stretching from County Donegal to County Cork, this is where you'll find the real Ireland.



Dingle Peninsula, County Kerry

Gobbins Path, County Antrim



Walks to remember

Get set for a new wave of walking trails along the island of Ireland's northern coast. The dramatic International Appalachian Trail stretches from County Donegal's Slieve League Cliffs to the lively seaport of Larne in County Antrim. You can even walk in the footsteps of the Edwardians along the coastal Gobbins Path, also in County Antrim. The newly restored walkway clings to the rugged cliffs, offering incredible sea views and lashings of old-world charm.

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Helen's Tower, County Down, Irish Landmark Trust



Clare Island Lighthouse, County Mayo



The Merchant's House, Derry-Londonderry



Clonalis House, County Roscommon



An Sean Teach, Cnoc Suain, Spiddal, County Galway



Castle Leslie, County Monaghan

IRELAND ACCOMMODATION

STAY SOMEWHERE DIFFERENT

From cosy B&Bs to some of the grandest buildings on the island, Ireland offers a wealth of wonderful places to stay, with charm, comfort and a warm Irish welcome

We like to do things a little differently in Ireland, and the Irish Landmark Trust and the National Trust are the perfect hunting grounds for some of our most intriguing properties. From tower houses to schoolhouses, a stay in one of these historic buildings will certainly add style to your self-catering holiday.

Blazing fires, grand drawing rooms and manicured gardens – surround yourself with old-fashioned opulence in an Irish castle, where you can do everything from taking tea in the library to learning the art of falconry. Enjoy indulgence at Adare Manor in County Limerick, Castle Leslie in County Monaghan, and Ballygally Castle Hotel in County Antrim. Or opt for private super-luxury at Castle Oliver in rural County Limerick, overlooking the beautiful Ballyhoura Mountains.

There's no better way to experience

Ireland's famous hospitality than with a bed & breakfast. Offering family-style accommodation and a tasty breakfast, B&Bs are perfect for connecting with local people. And the choice out there is great, from the boutique Gallán Mór on the Sheep's Head Peninsula in County Cork, to the Merchant's House, an urban house of character in Derry~Londonderry.

Beautiful grounds, well-appointed bedrooms and personal attention make historic country houses delightful places to stay. Try the Georgian elegance of Dean's Hill in County Armagh, the pretty Ballinkeeel House in County Wexford, or the Victorian Italianate style of Clonalis House in County Roscommon.

If you're looking for the quintessential "Irish" experience, you might enjoy a thatched cottage. The Bay Villas at Sheen Falls Lodge in County Kerry offer a modern

take on the traditional thatched cottage, while Bushmills Thatched Cottage in County Antrim mixes contemporary and old-world charm beautifully. Or go back in time at the 200-year-old An Sean Teach at Cnoc Suain in Spiddal, County Galway. It still retains some of its original features, including the fireplace and snug rooms.

And finally, if panoramic views, dramatic locations and cosy interiors are what you're after, a lighthouse is just for you. Enjoy the "great escape" of Clare Island Lighthouse at Clew Bay in County Mayo; see the scenic east coast and sleep with ghosts at the Wicklow Head Lighthouse; or experience the history and atmosphere of Blackhead Lightkeepers' Houses in County Antrim.

For more information on accommodation, visit: ireland.com

ireland.com

DISCOVER ALL ABOUT... LITERATURE



Cloughmore Stone, Mourne Mountains, County Down



Dublin Literary Pub Crawl



Cape Clear Storytelling Festival, County Cork

The award winners

Ireland's writers are not just beloved at home – they are celebrated abroad, with accolades and literary prizes coming thick and fast. There have been four Irish Nobel Laureates of Literature: Seamus Heaney, Samuel Beckett, W.B. Yeats and George Bernard Shaw. Paul Muldoon, born in County Armagh, won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 2003, while the Man Booker Prize for Fiction has been won by Roddy Doyle, John Banville and Anne Enright.



Davy Byrne's pub, Dublin



MAC, Belfast



Happy Days International Beckett Festival, Enniskillen



James Joyce



Gate Theatre, Dublin

PHOTO: DARAGH MCDONAGH

Ireland: land of literature. For centuries, this small island on the edge of Europe has inspired a host of poets, playwrights and dreamers to compose some of the best writing in the world. Come and explore a world of wonderful stories

What's it all about?

Ireland punches well above its weight when it comes to literature. The island resounds with a rich literary tradition that dates back to early tales of mythical heroes such as Cú Chulainn, and continues right up to prize-winning modern authors Colum McCann, Colm Tóibín, and Edna O'Brien. Literature is most definitely in our blood – Early Irish literature is thought to be the oldest vernacular literature in western Europe, and you can still see examples of Ogham inscriptions on stones in the counties of Kerry, Cork and Waterford. Wherever you go on the island, be it an Atlantic outpost or a thriving modern city, you can connect with plays, poetry and prose, as well as experiencing the landscape, culture and history that inspired the greats.

Where do I start?

Dublin is famous for its vibrant street life and quirky characters, and it has been home to some exceptional writers over the years. In this UNESCO City of Literature you can almost hear the words of Oscar Wilde, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett echo through the streets. The city has produced three of Ireland's four Nobel Prize winners for literature, and it continues to be a hotbed of creativity. Pull up a bar stool in one of the city's famous "literary" pubs such as Davy Byrne's – immortalised in Joyce's *Ulysses* – or join the Dublin Literary Pub Crawl. Explore the Dublin Writers Museum at Parnell Square, and visit the award-winning W.B. Yeats exhibition at the National Library, described by the *New York Times* as "dazzling". The 150-year anniversary of Yeats's birth is also set to be honoured in Sligo in 2015, with a year-long celebration of the poet's life and works.

Seeking out C.S. Lewis

Belfast's literary heritage reverberates through its historic streets – this grand Victorian city was the birthplace of *The Chronicles of Narnia* author C.S. Lewis. The C.S. Lewis Tour takes in key locations

in the author's life, as well as exploring some of the influences on his writing.

The landscapes that cradle the city are also a source of inspiration – Cave Hill is believed to have triggered the creation of the sleeping giant in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Swift was born in Dublin, but was a clergyman in the parish of Kilroot, County Antrim.

Push out into County Down and you'll come across the Mourne Mountains, thought to have inspired Lewis to create *Narnia*. In a letter to his brother, Lewis wrote: "That part of Rostrevor which overlooks Carlingford Lough is my idea of *Narnia*." Visit in winter, and you'll soon see why.

A trip around the island of Ireland uncovers endless places associated with playwrights, thinkers and poets, from small and captivating islands to craggy mountains. Who knows what this land might inspire in you?

What about festivals?

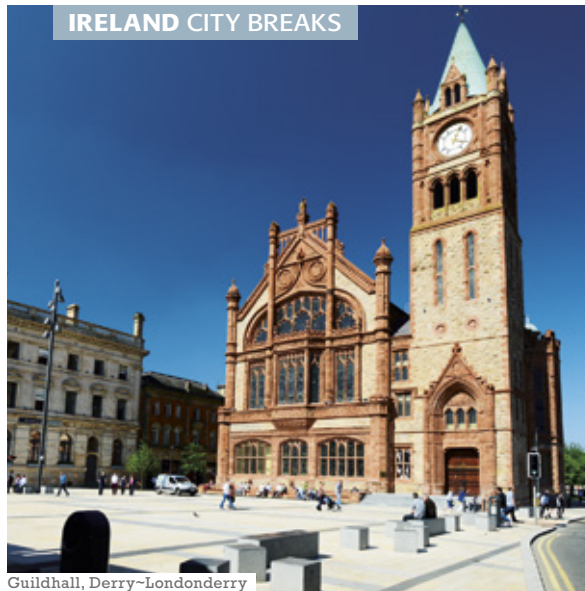
If there's one thing Ireland does well it's a festival, especially a literary one! Listowel Writers' Week Literary Festival (May/June) is now in its 44th year, and is one of the most acclaimed literary events on the island, with readings, lectures, workshops and exhibitions taking over this lively County Kerry town. Dublin makes the most of its literary culture with the Dublin Writers Festival (April) and the Dublin Book Festival (November), while the Belfast Book Festival (June) is fast becoming one of the city's most exciting events. Head to Bangor, County Down, and you'll find the Aspects Irish Literature Festival (September); while in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, where Samuel Beckett spent his late teens at school, the Happy Days International Beckett Festival draws the crowds in August. Of course, if you like to take things at a different pace, the Cape Clear Storytelling Festival, on a stunning island off the coast of County Cork, should fit the bill, with story swaps, heritage walks and concerts. Tall tales and good company – what's not to like?

DON'T MISS

Dublin boasts an impressive theatre scene with historic venues and world-class productions. Try the **Gate**, the **Abbey** and the **Gaiety**, as well as smaller spots such as the **Project Arts Centre**, **Smock Alley** and the **New Theatre**. In September, the city embraces festival season, with the **Dublin Theatre Festival** and the **Dublin Fringe Festival** bringing innovative and acclaimed productions to a variety of venues. The **Belfast Festival at Queen's** in October/November features a host of outstanding theatrical productions, while venues such as the **MAC**, the **Lyric** and the **Grand Opera House** stage everything from art-house plays to big-scale musicals.

Literary landscapes

Ireland's entrancing landscapes provide endless inspiration for writers. Ben Bulbin in County Sligo featured prominently in the poems of W.B. Yeats, and so moved the poet that he chose to be buried at the foot of the mountain. Seamus Heaney wrote eloquently about farming life in his birthplace, Bellaghy, County Londonderry, while the mystical Burren in County Clare is thought to have influenced Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.



Guildhall, Derry-Londonderry



St Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork



Ha'penny Bridge, Dublin



Long Room, Trinity College Dublin

CITY BREAKS

Unique attractions and a great atmosphere – no wonder Ireland's cities are so popular. Take time out and enjoy the very best that's on offer in Dublin, Belfast and Cork, as well as the eight other fabulous cities around the island. With a spirit that respects the past and is excited for the future, a city break in Ireland holds far more than the expected.

By Pól Ó Conghaile



At the Galway Market



Black Cab Tours, Belfast



Art on the Green, St Stephen's Green, Dublin

EXPLORING GEORGIAN DUBLIN

Think of Dublin, and hardy red brick buildings often spring to mind. This capital city owes its origins to the Vikings, but Georgian squares and townhouses are very much the postcard image of the city today. They flanked the finishing line for the 2014 Giro d'Italia's Big Start, formed the backdrop to the video for U2's Sweetest Thing, and continue to captivate people from all over the world.

Loosely speaking, Georgian Dublin describes the city during the reign of four different Georges, kings of Great Britain and Ireland between 1714 to 1830. The medieval city got a makeover, resulting in an architectural golden age. Early developments such as Henrietta Street led to elegant terraces, leafy squares and ambitious buildings, including Leinster House, King's Inns and the Hugh Lane Gallery. Today, Fitzwilliam Square, Merrion Square, St Stephen's Green and North Great George's Street are some of the city's most beautiful examples.

But it's not all stately buildings and squares in this exciting capital city. Dublin sits at the very core of the island's cutting-edge food scene, with innovative restaurants such as Forest Avenue and The Greenhouse. There's a flourishing café culture thanks to buzzing spots such as The Fumbally, Hatch & Sons and Brother Hubbard, while the city is famed for its traditional, time-burnished and atmospheric old pubs including the Stag's Head, the Palace Bar, and the Long Hall.

Delve into the city's Viking heritage with a fun visit to Dublinia; explore Dublin Castle, which has been continuously occupied since 1204; or wander around the quirky shops of the Creative Quarter. Dublin's got it covered for a weekend break. Come and see why.

Dublin five to try

Experience the best the city has to offer

Phoenix Park

This beautiful green space is one of the largest city parks in Europe, and is home to Dublin Zoo, the President of Ireland's residence and a herd of fallow deer.

Trinity College and the Book of Kells

The Old Library is one of Dublin's star attractions, while the exquisite illustrated manuscript The Book of Kells is over 1,000 years old.

Guinness Storehouse

Learn how to pour the perfect pint before enjoying 360-degree views of Dublin at the home of the black stuff. Sláinte!

Temple Bar

Funky clothes shops, jewellery markets, cocktail clubs, galleries and bookshops stand alongside pubs and souvenirs in Dublin's most famous cultural hub.

National Gallery of Ireland

A collection of Italian baroque and Dutch Masters with distinguished Irish artists such as Jack B. Yeats. Free and fabulous.

Dublin's doorstep

Just a short distance from Dublin, you'll find... **Glendalough:** St Kevin's 6th century monastic site is the crown jewel of the **Wicklow Mountains National Park** with hiking trails to match. **National Stud and Japanese Gardens:** Veteran racehorses, St Fiachra's Garden, and the Irish Horse Museum in County Kildare. **Howth:** Waterside restaurants, cliff walks and beaches make this northside peninsula one of the city's most enjoyable escapes.

Dublin's hidden corners

Little Museum of Dublin: The devil's in the detail at this diminutive museum, which brings its exhibits to life by telling the tales behind them. **Iveagh Gardens:** Generations of Dubliners take pride in pointing out the city's best-kept secret: a gorgeous Victorian park off Clonmel Street. **George's Street Arcade:** This enclosed Victorian market is one of the oldest in Europe, and is filled with a bustle of shops, stalls, florists and cute cafés.



Little Museum of Dublin

Where Life Takes You...



Lough Eske Castle, a five-star castle hotel located on a secluded lakeside estate near the fabled Bluestack mountains, just outside Donegal Town in the Northwest of Ireland, has a rich history dating back to the 1400s. The Castle is an historic building set in a storybook location delivering superior hospitality and comfort.

Lough Eske Castle is the only five star hotel in Donegal. Winner of the World's Best Luxury Country Hotel for the past five consecutive years, Condé Nast Readers' Award 2013, Trip Advisor's Choice Award 2013 and Condé Nast Gold List for 2014. This lovingly restored castle hotel in Ireland blends its historic past with a dash of contemporary elegance.

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Titanic Belfast

TRAILING TITANIC BELFAST

It's all going on in Belfast! In recent years, the city has taken a huge step forward thanks to an exciting collection of great restaurants, shops and tours. Now is the perfect time to visit, whether your interest is in history or the here-and-now.

Titanic Belfast lies at the heart of the Titanic Quarter. R.M.S. Titanic was designed and built on Queen's Island over a century ago ("she was fine when she left here," as the locals like to quip). Today's immersive heritage attraction tells the ill-fated liner's story with high-tech highlights including a replica shipyard ride and an ocean exploration centre.

But Titanic Belfast isn't the only highlight on Belfast's ever-growing skyline. Think of places such as Victoria Square shopping centre, the Odyssey Arena or the towering "Spire of Hope" piercing the sky on top of St Anne's Cathedral. Visitors can drink cocktails at hip bars, wander through galleries or catch a show at one of the city's many acclaimed theatres.

Amidst all the change, the old fabric remains, and the originals are ever present: the Botanic Gardens with its Victorian Palm House, bustling St George's Market, the Edwardian City Hall and the Crown Liquor Saloon, a lovely Victorian pub. The Cathedral Quarter, meanwhile, is a perfect mix of cafés, cool bars and buzzing galleries set against a backdrop of historic buildings and old city streets.

Swing back to the Titanic Quarter, and stop at "Titanic's little sister", the S.S. Nomadic. Today, you can walk onto the actual ship that transferred passengers from Cherbourg dock to the Titanic. And for more maritime entertainment, don't miss the exciting Tall Ships Races from 2-5 July 2015.



Belfast City Hall

IRELAND CITY BREAKS

Belfast five to try

Don't miss the best of the Belfast buzz

Belfast Castle Estate

Set on the lower slopes of the scenic Cave Hill Country Park, the estate here includes an adventure playground, visitor centre and eco-trails.

Belfast Bike Scheme

A handy bike scheme offers the best way to get around on two wheels in this small and compact city.

St George's Market

Built between 1890 and 1896, this historic market space kicks into action every Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Ulster Folk and Transport Museum

This outdoor museum tells the story of life in 20th century Ulster, with a cool collection of vintage cars, buses and trains.

Black Cab Tours

One of the city's top attractions sees taxi drivers bringing visitors on a whistlestop tour of Belfast's political murals, "Peace Line", and other iconic sights.

Beyond Belfast

Giant's Causeway: Don't miss this unique basalt rock formation and UNESCO World Heritage Site in County Antrim. Its fascinating visitor centre makes an ideal day trip from Belfast.
Mourne Mountains: County Down's iconic mountains didn't just inspire C.S. Lewis's Narnia; they inspire walkers and nature enthusiasts, too.
Ards Peninsula: The finger-like peninsula separating Strangford Lough in County Down from the Irish Sea is a scenic gem.



Oh Yeah Music Centre, Belfast

Three music favourites

Oh Yeah Music Centre: This former whiskey warehouse has been transformed into a cool venue, rehearsal space, café and music exhibition.
Belfast Music Tour: Van Morrison, Snow Patrol and Therapy? are just some of the local legends whose lives and tunes are evoked on this rock 'n' roll tour.
The John Hewitt: Located in the Cathedral Quarter, this gastropub is renowned for its live music nights and great craft beers.

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Charles Fort, Summer Cove, Kinsale, Co. Cork



Donegal Castle, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal



Dunmore Cave, Castlecomer Road, Kilkenny



Reginald's Tower, The Quay, Waterford



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Cork cityscape

UNCOVERING CREATIVE CORK

Cork is known as Ireland's culinary capital, but it also has a captivating creative side. Visit its galleries, catch a show or feel the irresistible atmosphere of a summer festival, and you'll soon develop a whole new appetite for the city!

Cork packs a punch "by having one of everything a civilised person could want," as the Irish Times wrote some time ago. Its list? "One university, one opera house, one jazz festival, one film festival, one excellent summer arts festival, one school of music, one city-centre food market, and the sea on its doorstep." The result is a place that is thriving in all quarters.

Cork has always had an affinity with the arts, but its galleries have really come of age in recent years, buoyed by the success of University College Cork's Lewis Glucksman Gallery, among others. Bathed in natural light, this beautiful structure has been listed among Mark Irving's 1,001 Buildings You Must See Before You Die.

Cork has developed an impressive international reputation for its festivals, too. From Cork Pride and the Cork Film Festival to the globally renowned Guinness Jazz Festival, there's something for everyone in this southern gem. And if you visit the city in September, you're in for a treat – Culture Night is a night-time voyage of discovery, entertainment and adventure, where cultural institutions throw open their doors till late for various free events, and the city's streets hum with atmosphere.

Most of all, though, Cork's natural creativity comes through in everyday life. Think of the music pubs and literary traditions, or the clever transformation of an 18th century church into one of the city's most dynamic arts venues, Triskel.

Good ideas are second nature here.



St Anne's Church, Cork

Cork five to try

Cork's top sights will make you want to stay a while

Shandon Bells

St Anne's Church offers an experience unlike any other: the chance to ring the 18th century bells.

Cork City Gaol

Sightseeing and spectres combine in this impressively maintained Victorian prison. Thursday evening tours bring added atmosphere to this spine-tingling spot.

Crawford Art Gallery

Cork's art gallery houses a wonderful collection that includes Mainie Jellett, Paul Henry and Harry Clarke. Oh, and there's a tasty café, too!

Huguenot Quarter

Bookshops, bars, cafés and boutiques are crowded into this tight-knit quarter around French Church Street and Carey's Lane.

Sin É

This lively Coburg Street pub has been hosting traditional music sessions since the 1970s, and you'll find lots of musicians among the regulars.

Exploring the area

Cobh: This historic town in Cork Harbour was Titanic's last port of call. Sea views and a cracking heritage centre make for a great afternoon out. **Kinsale:** A must for foodies – this lively harbour town is THE place to come for the freshest seafood, prepared with a dash of real Cork style. **Jameson Experience, Midleton:** This historic distillery is set on 15 acres with buildings that date back to 1795. Guided tours last about an hour, and finish with a glass of Jameson!



English Market, Cork

Three foodie favourites

Food Trails Cork: See and taste the very best that foodie Cork has to offer on the Fabulous Food Trails walking tour. **English Market:** Cork's culinary centrepiece has been dishing up delicious food since 1788. Even Queen Elizabeth II has been a visitor. **Cork Butter Museum:** A keg of 1,000-year-old butter, medieval cattle raids and the story of the world's largest butter market – this quirky museum is full of surprises.



Cities to explore

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



GALWAY

Compact, historic and very friendly, Galway is known for its colourful streets filled with traditional Irish culture, and a love of art and music. Visitors are lured by its achingly lovely setting, atmospheric pubs, old alleys, medieval history and great summer festivals. A thriving food scene, quirky cafés and the little seaside suburb of Salthill seal the deal. And with a prime location on the Wild Atlantic Way, you couldn't base yourself anywhere better!

King John's Castle, Limerick



LIMERICK

Overlooking the sweeping River Shannon, Limerick is a city of surprises. Faded Georgian grandeur combines with set-pieces such as the People's Park and King John's Castle. There's a burgeoning festival scene (Limerick was National City of Culture in 2014) and fab galleries such as the Hunt Museum and the Limerick City Gallery of Art. Limerick is also home to Munster rugby and the Thomond Park Museum and Stadium Tour is a treat for fans.

WATERFORD

One of Ireland's oldest cities, in 2014 Waterford celebrated the 1,100th anniversary of its founding by the Vikings. Explore their legacy within the Viking Triangle, a historic quarter hosting the Waterford Treasures Museum and Reginald's Tower. Elsewhere, the House of Waterford Crystal gives a glimpse into the crystal's incredible production, while top festivals include the excellent Spraoi street party in August and Winterval in December.

Waterford



KILKENNY

Kilkenny's medieval character remains thrillingly intact, with Tudor inns, old merchant townhouses and centuries-old lanes all on the Medieval Mile, which stretches from Kilkenny Castle to St Canice's Cathedral. A visit is always infused with energy, thanks to an eclectic array of bars, restaurants, shops and festivals. Check out Trail Kilkenny for craft, food, walking and cycling trails, and the National Craft Gallery in the former castle stables.



Kilkenny

St Patrick's Cathedral (RC), Armagh



ARMAGH

Spirited and scenic, Armagh is one of a kind. The Georgian Mall (formerly a racecourse) is lined with elegant houses, and it's the only city in the world with two cathedrals dedicated to the same saint. St Patrick is said to have founded his first church on the hilltop site of the Church of Ireland Cathedral (Armagh is the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland). The County Museum and Navan Fort turn back the clock even further, boasting prehistoric artefacts and an ancient pagan ceremonial site. The city even has its own planetarium, so you'll always be reaching for the stars.

Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum



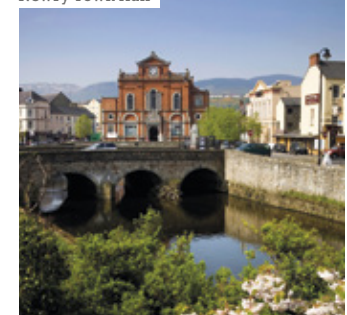
LISBURN

The capital of Lagan Valley is a baby in terms of its city status, which was awarded in 2002 as part of Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee celebrations. In terms of heritage, however, it goes way back, as you'll discover when you explore everything from the 18th century streetscapes to the Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum. Lisburn also boasts a thriving arts scene, a dynamic young population, and lots of shopping options – from small city boutiques and the pedestrianised Bow Street to larger retail developments such as Sprucefield Park.

NEWRY

Small and enjoyable, Newry makes a great stop-off point between Dublin and Belfast. In the 19th century, the city was a bustling trading port, a place of merchants, markets and noisy city quays. The heritage trail, City Hall, cathedral and the Newry & Mourne Museum in Bagenal's Castle all tell their stories, offering an interesting diversion before you relax in a lovely old traditional pub. Once you've explored what the city has to offer, take a trip to the nearby scenic village of Rostrevor, on the edge of Carlingford Lough and at the foot of Slieve Martin mountain.

Newry Town Hall



DERRY~LONDONDERRY

Gateway to the Causeway Coastal Route, Derry~Londonderry is the island's only surviving walled city. The pull of history and the push of youth gives this place an infectious appeal, visible in a great arts and music scene. At its heart you'll find the Guildhall, a magnificent 19th century building with 23 stained glass windows. Derry~Londonderry's cultural side is flourishing, and it was the UK City of Culture in 2013. Make sure to visit the Peace Bridge and the Bogside murals while you're here.



City walls, Derry~Londonderry

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Irish Design 2015

Get set to connect with Irish design. A new generation of exciting craftspeople and designers is shaking up the scene on the island of Ireland, mixing traditional techniques with a contemporary edge. 2015 is a year-long celebration of Irish design, which will showcase the very best from design, craft, fashion and architecture. So what's on offer? Well, how about a packed programme of exhibitions, lectures and other designer events across the island? Not to mention the chance to end the year with a perfectly crafted bang at the Dublin Design Festival in November. Also big for 2015 is the Économusée movement, where you can watch artisans at work and learn the history of crafts as diverse as pottery, hurl-making (the stick used in the sports of hurling and camogie), and salmon smoking. Game of Thrones fans may be particularly interested in Steensons Jewellery Économusée in the lovely Antrim village of Glenarm, where some of the jewellery featured in the hit HBO series was made.



Enignum Shelf XIII by Joseph Walsh Studio

EXCITING THINGS TO DO IN 2015

Ireland is full of surprises, and in 2015 the island is brimming over with fantastic things to experience. Time to start planning your trip



Cruising on the River Shannon

Exploring Ireland's waterways

Like the tranquillity of rivers and lakes? Ireland should fit the bill then! There are hundreds of lakes on the island, as well as a network of rivers and canals, all blissfully quiet but with great little pubs, golf courses, heritage sights and lively riverside villages to keep you entertained. That's not to mention nearby must-sees such as the ancient monastic site of Clonmacnoise in County Offaly, or the adrenaline-fuelled Lough Key Forest and Activity Park in County Roscommon. Ireland has seven main inland waterways to choose from – and you can walk alongside many of them, drive around the area, or even hire a boat and cruise them. For a truly epic journey, make sure to try the 250 miles/400km of navigable waters between Belleek, at the northern tip of Lough Erne in County Fermanagh, and Killaloe in County Clare, which takes in both the River Shannon and Lough Erne.



Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, Derry~Londonderry



Spraoi Festival, Waterford

Cultural highlights of the sunny southeast

Famed for its beaches, Viking heritage and grand historic houses, the "sunny southeast" is fast becoming known for its thrilling festivals, too. County Carlow's cultural side is well defined with the excellent Carlow Arts Festival (May 29 – June 7), which sees street carnivals, theatre and music set against the scenic backdrop of the magnificent Blackstairs Mountains. The glorious Borris House estate is a highlight of any visit to the county, and has been lived in by the same family, the MacMorrough Kavanaghs, for the past 500 years. Altamont Gardens in Tullow, meanwhile, are known as "the most romantic gardens in Ireland". Fuelled by creative energy, Waterford city's Spraoi in early August makes great use of its medieval setting with street theatre, music and, of course, the famous Spraoi parade. Make sure to take in the fascinating Viking Triangle tour while in town, before moving out into the county, which is known for its beaches and rolling green hills. The 18th century Georgian mansion of Cappoquin House is a real hidden treasure, while Lismore Castle Gardens, set within 17th century walls, are delightful.

Game of Thrones

Three days, one magical landscape and a ton of Game of Thrones locations, Northern Ireland is THE place to be if you're a fan of the hit HBO fantasy series. Explore the real-life Westeros, with caves, castles, forests and the famous Dark Hedges, used as the location for the Kingsroad. A three-day self-drive itinerary features beautiful locations all over Northern Ireland, including Ballintoy Harbour and Cushendun Caves.



Dark Hedges, County Antrim

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2015

Sometimes called the "Olympics of Irish music", the Fleadh (as it's affectionately known) is Ireland's biggest traditional music festival. In August, Fleadh fever moves into Sligo town and you can look forward to a rip-roaring week of song and dance, with lively street performances and seisiúns (live music sessions) everywhere. The Fleadh is more than just a party, though. What you'll hear is the sound of Ireland honouring its musical culture, and the talent on display will set your pulse racing. Time-honoured traditions such as liltling (think of an Irish version of scat singing) and sean-nós ("old style" singing) are performed by young and old alike. Away from the music, there are walking and historical tours, films, seminars and markets. Round off your day by nabbing a seat at a rousing sing-song in a traditional pub. Because when it comes down to it, it's all about the music.



St John's Point Lighthouse, Killoogh, County Down

Mourne Coastal Route

The journey from Belfast to Newry along the spectacular County Down coastline is one of Ireland's hidden gems. This is the Mourne Coastal Route, a beguiling mix of craggy mountains, swirling sea, legends and ancient heritage. On this 92 mile/148km route, you'll pass through two different Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: the Mournes, and Strangford and the Lecale coast, ending up on the doorstep of a third, the Ring of Gullion. Explore the stunning Ards Peninsula, take the Portaferry ferry across Strangford Lough, or follow in the footsteps of a saint on St Patrick's Trail. You can also delve into the heart of the Mournes with a series of scenic loops that bring you to spots such as the Silent Valley and the Mourne Wall. Finish your journey with a meal of fabulous local produce such as Carlingford Lough mussels or Graham's ice cream. The perfect end to a perfect trip.



Fresh steamed clams, Fishy Fishy Café, Kinsale, County Cork

FRESH FROM THE SEA

With pure waters, passionate producers and vibrant coastal communities, is it any wonder Ireland has become famous for seafood? TV chef, author and journalist Rachel Allen uncovers great dishes and fabulous pubs around the island



Rachel Allen

Ireland has a special relationship with the sea. And it's not surprising really, when you consider that the island is surrounded by miles and miles of bountiful and pristine waters. Countless songs and poems have been written about our seafood, not least the tragic tale of poor Molly Malone who wheeled her wheelbarrow through the streets of Dublin crying "cockles and mussels, alive, alive-oh!" If you like seafood, then you are, without a doubt, in the right place!

Seafood for the road

When I am travelling around the island, my route is often determined by my tummy. My love of good food will regularly see me veering off the beaten path to try something that's being produced, harvested or grown in a particular area. If you're planning a trip around Ireland, then I suggest you let your appetite lead the way. And the first place to start? It's got to be a market, of course. Farmers' markets have increased

Farmers' markets have increased



Carlingford Oyster Festival, County Louth



Deanes Love Fish, Belfast



English Market, Cork

Irish soul food

When the fish is this fresh it is often best served simply, which is where the humble yet sublime fish and chips come in. Served in a light batter with chunky chips and sprinkled with salt and vinegar, it's the perfect dinner. Try it at great little spots including Salt and Batter Takeaway in Rathmullan, County Donegal; Morton's in Ballycastle, County Antrim; and Leo Burdock's in Dublin city.



The tradition of smoking fish is something Ireland has become famous for worldwide, and you can experience it to the full with wonderful smokehouses dotted around the coast

enormously over the last few years, and now many small towns and villages have one. Here, amid the bustling farmhouse cheese stalls, the rich treacly breads and the handcrafted chocolates, there is usually a taste of the ocean to be found.

At the Temple Bar Food Market in Dublin, fresh oysters are served up with crisp glasses of white wine at little wooden tables; while the fish stalls at the Limerick Milk Market, St George's Market in Belfast and the English Market in Cork city showcase Ireland's exceptional seafood in all its glory.

What to eat

Having an abundance of seafood on our doorstep also means we are pretty creative when it comes to preparing and cooking it. And we're nothing if not diverse in our tastes. Just look at the northern European delicacy of pickled herring, which gets a fabulous treatment in Ireland courtesy of Silver Darlings. Want to try? Seek them out at Mahon



Seafood casserole, Mourne Seafood Bar, Belfast

Point Farmers' Market in Cork city, the Milk Market in Limerick city, and Dublin's fabulous food emporium, Fallon & Byrne.

If it's a smoky flavour you're after, then you're spoilt for choice. On the farm at Ballymaloe in County Cork where I live, Bill Casey produces a consistently delicious smoked salmon, using only organic Irish salmon. This tradition of smoking fish is something Ireland has become famous for worldwide, and you can experience it to the full with wonderful smokehouses dotted around the coast.

In County Cork, take a trip to see the traditional timber Belvelly Smokehouse, which is run by Frank Hederman – a second generation smoker. Hederman smokes mussels, salmon, mackerel, eel and haddock; not to mention cheese, oats, garlic and butter!

Other smokehouses that you should add to your culinary trail include the Burren Smokehouse in County Clare, >



Fresh lobster, sea bream and salted squid, Lough Erne Resort



Moran's Oyster Cottage, County Galway

In Belfast, Ox serves up seriously innovative, very pretty food, and it's absolutely delicious, too. I still have dreams about the sea trout with crab, olives and samphire

Ummera Smokehouse and Woodcock Smokery in West Cork, and the Connemara Smokehouse in County Galway.

Seaweed has been appearing on the menus of some of the island's most innovative restaurants of late, and the unpolluted waters mean there are lots of varieties to choose from and every single one of them is edible! Look out for those by Sea of Vitality and AlgAran at health food shops and on supermarket shelves – they make great snacks!

A seafood platter

It'll probably come as no surprise when I tell you that there are a myriad of wonderful restaurants where you can sample excellent seafood, including my home at Ballymaloe House. The menus are completely dictated by what is growing on the farm and what has come in from Ballycotton Bay that day, so expect an amazing array of seafood: hot buttered lobster; pan-fried scallops or boiled shrimps with homemade mayonnaise; sole a la meunière; pan-fried mackerel with herb butter; and baked baby plaice.

Head west from here to a much loved seafood restaurant, Fishy Fishy in Kinsale, County Cork. It's located in the busy little town on the south coast and it's a great place for a long, leisurely lunch.

Another part of the island that's enjoying an exciting time gastronomically

Fishy festivals

You'll find festivals dedicated to the scallop, the oyster and the mussel all over the island of Ireland. Some of the best-known are the Galway International Seafood and Oyster Festival in Galway city (Sept); the Hillsborough Oyster Festival in County Down (Sept); and the Kilmore Quay Seafood Festival in County Wexford (July). Fun, entertaining and delicious!



Fresh from the sea, Roundstone, County Galway

is the west of Ireland. "Aniar" is the Irish word for westerly – it also happens to be the name of one of Ireland's hottest restaurants, fresh from a Michelin star win for the second year running. Aniar is situated in the centre of Galway city and its menu changes daily, but expect to find anything from divine salmon confit to turbot with turnip tops.

While in Galway, try to fit in a visit to Jessica Murphy's Kai Restaurant, too. Her scallop ceviche with tiger's milk is to die for. As you leave the city behind and head for the coast, you'll find yourself on the Wild Atlantic Way, which runs along the shore from Cork up to Donegal. Kealy's Seafood Bar on the harbour in Greencastle, County Donegal, is a local gem. It's a low-key place where simplicity is valued: just taste Tricia Kealy's delicious Greencastle chowder and you'll understand the principle of taste above all else.

In Belfast, three wonderful spots spring to mind. One of the best is Ox: seriously innovative, very pretty food, and absolutely delicious, too. I still have dreams about the sea trout with crab, olives and samphire. Mourne Seafood Bar, located in a lovely old wood-panelled Victorian house, is a fishmonger-meets-restaurant, where you can try oysters five different ways. Deanes Love Fish, also in Belfast, serves an exceptional pickled crab salad with fennel and citrus fruit. >



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2nd - 4th July
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- GALWAY Summer Festival**
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13th - 16th August
- KILLARNEY August Festival**
19th - 22nd August
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13th - 19th September
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Frank Hederman, Belvelly Smokehouse, Cobh, County Cork



Catch of the day

If you have the time, then I highly recommend hopping on a boat and going on a Ballycotton Island Lighthouse Tour. Have a wander around this completely unspoilt and uninhabited island – save for a few gulls and goats – and see the only black lighthouse in Ireland, and the last Irish lighthouse to be manned before being computerised. Bring a fishing rod, you might even catch your own supper!

Tastes of the island

It's not just seafood that Ireland is famous for. From traditional tastes to new artisan foods, the flavours of the island will inspire and entice...

Food on the island of Ireland revolves around simple, pure flavours and honest dishes that have been passed down through the generations. The island is renowned for its dairy produce, and you'll find new producers such as **Aberneathy Butter Company** in County Down taking butter to a new level of deliciousness. Irish farmhouse cheeses are world famous, with an array of producers creating incredible flavours. Keep an eye out for **Milleens**, **Coolea**, **Cashel Blue** and **St Tola**. The green pastures that have fostered such quality dairy produce also result in some of the best beef and lamb in the world. **Kettyle beef** from County Fermanagh is a real treat, while **Connemara lamb** has European Protected Geographical Indication. And as for traditional dishes, you're spoiled for choice. Try some classic **Irish stew** (made with lamb and vegetables); savour a **soda farl** (a flattened dough bread) as part of your **Ulster fry** cooked breakfast; enjoy fresh brown **soda bread** with a bowl of seafood chowder; and check out the **Waterford blaa** (a lovely fresh white roll unique to the city).



Super-fresh scallops at Tedford's, Belfast

Countless songs and poems have been written about our seafood bounty, not least the tragic tale of poor Molly Malone who wheeled her wheelbarrow through the narrow streets of Dublin

On to Warrenpoint, County Down, and located along the glistening Carlingford Lough you'll find Bennetts. This is a stalwart of the fine-dining scene, and its catch is always fresh and local from Kilkeel Harbour. Move inland to the lush lakelands of Fermanagh, and you'll see why this region is creating such a buzz in foodie circles. At the Lough Erne Resort, Head Chef Noel McMeel has become a byword for culinary perfection. Try the baked Blackrock stone bass if you're in any doubt of the man's talents.

When in Dublin, I love eating at Caviston's in Glashule, in the south of the county. I can also pick up the catch of the day from its adjoining fish shop and deli – just jump on the DART (train) to get there. On a recent visit to Super Miss Sue in Dublin's city centre, I understood exactly why this is one of the city's most talked about new foodie openings. I adored the pan-fried mackerel with horseradish and pickled seaweed. Dublin's top fine-dining experience has to be the Michelin-starred Chapter One. On my most recent visit, the halibut with Dublin Bay prawns and courgette cream was perfection itself.

Around the coast again and into Wexford's Rosslare Harbour, home of the Lobster Pot. Expect super-fresh seafood and chowder to rival any on the planet. So there you have it: a whistlestop tour of some of the island's finest seafood haunts.



Aniar, Galway



FAIRYTALE ROMANCE

Whether you're looking for whimsical tales, dreaming of fantastical castles, or just want to visit some of the most romantic settings imaginable, the island of Ireland has something to suit every taste, writes Barbara Collins

Kylemore Abbey, County Galway



Hillsborough Castle, County Down

HILLSBOROUGH CASTLE County Down

The official residence of the Queen and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is possibly the smallest royal castle – but sometimes the best things come in small packages. Now part of the Historic Royal Palaces portfolio, this captivating Georgian mansion was built by Wills Hill, the first Marquess of Downshire in the 1770s, and is set in the cut-stone village of Hillsborough, County Down. Open for the first time to the public (previously you could only visit with a tour), Hillsborough is one of the most refined and interesting buildings on the island of Ireland. Despite the fact that the castle is still a “working” building, the romance comes with a touch of royalty and you can explore the State Drawing Room, the Red Dining Room and Candlestick Hall. Tickets for the Royal Garden Party every summer are extremely sought after, which is no wonder since the castle is surrounded by 96 acres of ornamental grounds. For true romantics, the castle and its surrounds are certain to delight. If those trees in the grounds could talk, they would perhaps whisper about the romance of Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson. Rumour has it the couple stayed in the castle, and sneaked down to the local pub. Sounds like a good idea!



Hillsborough Castle

KYLEMORE ABBEY County Galway

Connemara is a place of pure romance. Jutting out into the Atlantic, this wild, rugged land boasts some of the most dramatic scenery on the island of Ireland. It's easy to fall in love with the landscapes here, which is just what happened to Mitchell and Margaret Henry. In the 1860s, the couple were honeymooning at what was then Kylemore Lodge. They were so captivated by the beauty of the area, they decided they would make it their home. Practicalities brought them back to their native city of Manchester, but when Mitchell inherited his father's estate, he decided to build a fairytale castle in Connemara for his beloved wife. Over the following decades, the couple and their children lived happily at Kylemore, with Mitchell working on the glorious Victorian walled garden there. Tragically, Margaret died suddenly in 1874, leaving her husband and their nine children heartbroken. Distraught but resolute, Mitchell responded by building his wife one of the most elegant final resting places money can buy. Backed by craggy hills, surrounded by mature trees and overlooking the glassy lake, the stunning Gothic church at Kylemore still stands today as a testament to Mitchell's enduring love. The romance lives on in County Galway.



Victorian Walled Garden, Kylemore Abbey



BLARNEY CASTLE
County Cork

One of Ireland's most famous castles, Blarney was built nearly 600 years ago by the great chieftain Cormac "The Strong" MacCarthy, and while much of the structure is in ruins, you can still explore the dungeon and the battlements. Blarney fires the imagination and still manages to capture the spirit of the time – standing in the roofless family room, you can't help conjuring up images of medieval nobles and servants. Lots of honeymooners come here to kiss, but it's a historic stone they come for, not their beloved's lips. The Stone of Eloquence, or the Blarney Stone, is said to give you what the Irish call "the gift of the gab" – otherwise known as "good speaking skills". You have to hang upside down to kiss the stone, but that's all part of the fun. And once you've gained a new fluency of speech, head out to explore the incredible grounds. Set amongst the huge landscaped gardens is Rock Close – a romantic part of the grounds that enchants visitors. The Fern Garden, with its mini waterfalls, is also a delightful spot for a walk, while the owners positively encourage you to take a picnic and spend a few stolen hours in the woods.



Glenveagh Castle, County Donegal

GLENVEAGH CASTLE
County Donegal

Glenveagh is the epitome of a storybook castle, with its crenellated towers and heavy-set battlements. John George Adair, who built it, wanted a structure that would stand out amongst the jaw-dropping scenery surrounding it. In fact, his ambitions were so grand that he hoped it would surpass the beauty of Queen Victoria's castle at Balmoral in Scotland. Did he achieve his dream? You might even say he surpassed himself. Here, amidst some of the island's most dramatic scenery stands a majestic stronghold adorned with ramparts, turrets and round towers. It's so impressive that it has even been dubbed "Donegal's Camelot". Swathed in colour, the lakes, glens and woods are teeming with wildlife, including red deer and golden eagles, and the castle sits within 40,000 acres/16,000 hectares of national park. At one point, Glenveagh was owned by American socialite and philanthropist Henry McIlhenny. Stars such as Marilyn Monroe, Clark Gable, Charlie Chaplin and Greta Garbo would escape to this exceptional corner of the world to enjoy a lavish whirl of dinner parties, picnics and afternoon teas. These days, the stars may have left, but the castle still has a gloriously cinematic appeal.



The gardens at Blarney Castle



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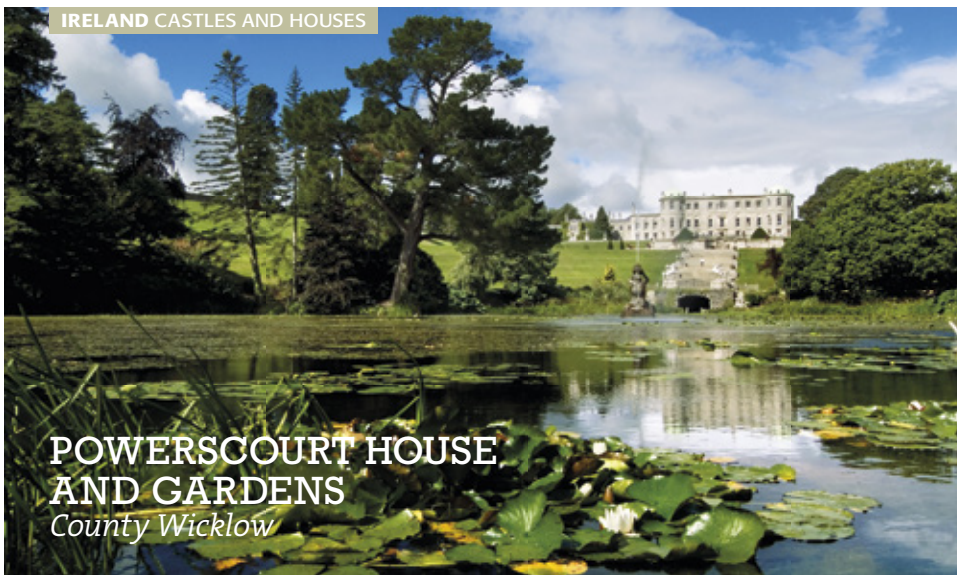
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POWERSCOURT HOUSE AND GARDENS
County Wicklow

Romance seems to run in the very water at Powerscourt. This gracious County Wicklow estate, set in the shadow of the Sugarloaf Mountain, is achingly beautiful – whether you're gazing at the lily pads drifting on the ornamental lake, strolling through the Japanese gardens or wandering along the avenue of beech trees. With scenery like this, it's no wonder that Powerscourt is a favourite place for couples to tie the knot. But for those who aren't getting married, it still offers a gorgeous sylvan escape just a short distance from Dublin. The estate itself dates back to the 1300s, but the current Palladian house was completed in 1741. Commissioned by the 1st Viscount Powerscourt, the mansion was described by a historian at the time as possessing "the massive dignity of a great Italian Renaissance villa". The gardens, with their cascading green terraces, magnificent statues and manicured lawns have been voted number three in the world's Top 10 Gardens by National Geographic. After a romantic walk, there are few better places to relax than on the outdoor terrace overlooking the fountain where you can enjoy some afternoon tea. And if you feel like wandering farther afield, you'll find Powerscourt Waterfall, Ireland's highest, about 3 miles/5km away. The perfect spot for summer picnics? We think so!



Powerscourt Gardens, County Wicklow



Florence Court, County Fermanagh

FLORENCE COURT
County Fermanagh

Naming your grand Palladian mansion after the woman you love – now that's a romantic gesture. At the foothills of Cuilcagh Mountain stands Florence Court, once the home of the Earls of Enniskillen. The Florence in question was the wife of John Cole, the man who built this impressive home around 1718. Florence was an aristocrat from Devon, England, with a fondness for the finer things in life, and her doting husband made sure the house more than matched her expectations. Famed for its exquisite interiors, fine furniture and Rococo plasterwork, Florence Court is also renowned for its setting amongst abundant woodland. The impressive Florence Court yew tree also draws visitors to this part of County Fermanagh, as it's believed to be the source of most modern Irish yews. It's a real pleasure to amble through the extensive grounds here, with their pretty walled garden, ice house and summer house. Away from all the hustle and bustle of modern life, you can almost imagine John and Florence strolling together through what they described as their "majestic wilderness".

Castles and houses
Unforgettable experiences

Ireland's houses, castles and gardens are imbued with a real sense of "living history" and many of them offer something extra special, from summer festivals to archery. These are not just places to admire, they are places to enjoy and experience



Birr Castle
County Offaly
Vintage shows, arts festivals, outdoor theatre and country fairs: Birr Castle itself isn't open to the public, but visitors are welcomed to the demesne each summer for a packed programme of events. August is definitely the month to go!

Castle Ward
County Down

The hit HBO series Game of Thrones is partly shot in Northern Ireland. And at Castle Ward on Strangford Lough, you can feel like a true Westerosi when you pick up your bow for archery practice in one of the show's filming locations.



Dromoland Castle
County Clare
Learn the ancient art of falconry on one of the most beautiful castle estates on the island. Experiencing one of these magnificent birds landing on your glove is a real rush, and there are few better surrounds in which to do it.

Dunguaire Castle
County Galway

Get in touch with your inner aristocrat and experience a medieval banquet at Dunguaire Castle in the pretty town of Kinvara, County Galway. Join other diners at long oak tables and enjoy a traditional feast in a genuine 16th century castle.



Glenarm Castle
County Antrim
This 17th century castle is the family home of Viscount and Viscountess Dunluce and their family. It's also a gardener's paradise. The walled garden is one of the oldest on the island and is famed for its unusual flowers and specimen plants.

Westport House
County Mayo

This beautiful private home is open to the public, and boasts wonderful interior features and a delightful parkland setting. The dungeons of the original 16th century castle can still be visited today. Fascinating.



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Clogher Head, County Kerry

ON TOUR

From charming coastal villages to spectacular natural wonders, taking to the road on the island of Ireland reveals surprises at every turn

THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY

By Pól Ó Conghaile

My car is covered in salt spray. I'm smiling. An hour ago, I parked up near Mizen Head Signal Station – a lighthouse and heritage attraction clinging to the tip of Ireland's most southwesterly peninsula. I took a bridge across a surf-thrashed chasm dotted with seals. I was pummelled by wind. I gulped down lungfuls of fresh air, and felt the salty sea spray on my face. I guess the Wild Atlantic Way isn't named for its gentle nature.

At 1,500 miles/2,500km this is the world's longest defined coastal touring route; it can be driven in sections or in its entirety. Starting at Kinsale in County Cork and weaving right up to the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal, the route passes through small villages, by



Fanad Head Lighthouse, County Donegal

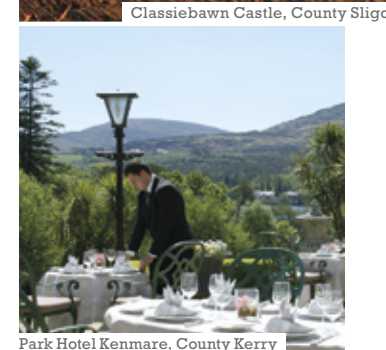


Classiebawn Castle, County Sligo

Distance	1,500 miles/2,500km
Time	Up to 20 days

Map labels: Malin Head, Fanad Head, Slieve League, Mullaghmore Head, Downpatrick Head, Keem Strand, Killybegs Harbour, Derrigimlagh, Cliffs of Moher, Loop Head, Blaskets View, Skelligs Viewpoint, Dursey Island, Mizen Head, Old Head of Kinsale.

WILD ATLANTIC WAY



Park Hotel Kenmare, County Kerry

Along the way

Visit
Skellig Michael in County Kerry, is home to an Early Christian monastery and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Cyclists will love the **Great Western Greenway**, a 26 mile/42km off-road cycling trail from Westport to Achill Island in County Mayo. And don't miss Ireland's only cable car, which connects **Dursey Island** to the Beara Peninsula in County Cork.

Eat
 At **Vasco Restaurant** in Fanore, County Clare, you can enjoy the freshest fish and foraged foods. **Murphy's** in Dingle, County Kerry, has some of the best ice cream around, and **Eithna's by the Sea** serves up great seafood in Mullaghmore, County Sligo. You won't go hungry on this trip!

Sleep
 Accommodation along the Wild Atlantic Way ranges from the unusual, such as **Loop Head Lighthouse** in County Clare, to five-star hotels such as **Park Hotel Kenmare** in County Kerry. You can also enjoy elegant guesthouses, such as the **Quay House** in the town of Clifden, County Galway.

vast beaches, and alongside golf courses shaped by nature. From scenic set-pieces, such as the Cliffs of Moher in County Clare, to hidden gems such as Valentia Island in County Kerry, it follows every twist and turn of the western seaboard.

But it's not just about spectacular scenery. Driving the route, I've eaten Michelin Star food at Aniar in Galway city, and tucked into fish fresh off the boats at Castletownbere, County Cork. I've met big-wave surfers, traditional musicians, foragers, fishermen and fascinating local historians. I've visited Foynes in County Limerick, where the first ever Irish coffee was made, and wondered at the mystery of the Gallarus Oratory – believed to be an Early Christian church – on the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry.

This is a route you can drive in a couple of weeks, or dip into for a day. In County Clare, I swapped four wheels for two on a cycling tour of Loop Head Peninsula.

I parked up for cliff walks along the Slieve Leagues in County Donegal (the highest accessible sea cliffs in Europe), took the ferry to the Aran Islands in County Galway, and marvelled at the Galway Hooker sailing boat in the city's museum.

With 159 Discovery Points and hundreds more spontaneous stops, every time I got back to the car, it felt like the adventure was starting all over again. Wiping the salt off my windscreen, I drove on, with new adventures waiting for me.



Causeway Coastal Route

THE CAUSEWAY COASTAL ROUTE

By Alan Morrow

It's official: the Causeway Coastal Route is one of the world's top road trips. Driving this route, I came across an ever-changing tapestry of sweeping strands, picturesque harbours and lovely villages. I drove along by the crashing ocean, saw views that remind me why I so love Ireland, and ate fresh seafood plucked from the deep-blue Irish Sea.

The 120 miles/193km of the Causeway Coastal Route starts sedately enough, following the motorway from Belfast along the broad northern shore of Belfast Lough. But it quickly opens up into something spectacular. Soon Carrickfergus Castle looms into view, before the road follows through to the busy port of Larne. Beyond this point, the route starts in earnest, narrowing as it hugs this coastline, filled with fossils and flanked by steep cliffs.

It may have plenty of hidden gems and quiet beauty spots, but this is a road that is famously packed with incredible sights. These locations are iconic, and they wear it well. Nothing can quite prepare you for the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, though. There it sits, swinging and swaying over a 100ft/30m-deep chasm beckoning you to cross. It's one of a kind. Onwards to the Giant's Causeway, which was created by warring giants, or so the legend goes. You can find out all about it at the excellent visitor centre – a fitting tribute to this awesome natural phenomenon.

Bushmills Inn, close to the Old Bushmills Distillery, makes a great stopping place for the night, before the road beckons again. This time it takes me to Dunluce Castle – a fairytale ruined castle that sits on the edge of a cliff. Rumour has it that during a wild sea



Giant's Causeway, County Antrim



Distance 120 miles/193km
Time 1-3 days

storm in 1639, parts of it plunged into the sea! Of course, this coastline isn't just about sightseeing – there are vast sweeps of sandy beach, cliff walks, hidden coves and great little restaurants.

On the final leg of my journey towards Derry~Londonderry city, the road widens. I'm treated to views of Mussenden Temple – originally built as a library – hugging a cliff edge 120ft/37m above Downhill Strand. Finally, as the Maiden City comes into view, my epic tour ends.



Lost and Found, County Londonderry

Along the way

Visit

Enjoy stunning views from the cliffs above **Kinbane Castle** and take care; the path down is steep and narrow. **St Gobban's Church**, allegedly Ireland's tiniest church, is set in the village of Portbraddan. **Ballintoy Harbour**, where HBO's *Game of Thrones* has been filmed, is definitely one for fans.

Eat

For great food in the heart of the nine Glens of Antrim, try **Harry's**, in Cushendall. Sample local ingredients with a continental twist at **The French Rooms** in Bushmills. Stop off at **Lost and Found** in Coleraine for lunch with a great cup of coffee, and finish the journey with a fine-dining treat at **Browns** in Derry~Londonderry.

Sleep

Enjoy all the charm of a real Irish castle with a resident ghost at **Ballygally Castle** in County Antrim. Or book into the **Fullerton Arms**, a family-run guest house, bar and restaurant in Ballintoy, near the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge. And for stunning views, there's the **Bayview Hotel** in Portballintrae.



Hill of Slane, County Meath

THE BOYNE VALLEY

By Emer Taaffe

The light creeps slowly along the floor of the stone passageway. I'm in Newgrange, UNESCO World Heritage Site. This passage tomb is older than the pyramids, and I'm getting a glimpse of just what happens here on the winter solstice when the rising sun illuminates the burial chamber. It's eerie and extraordinary, and it leaves you feeling that you can just reach out and touch history.

But then, this is the Boyne Valley, and you *can* actually reach out and touch history here. At 140 miles/225km, it's an easy drive (and a nice one to cycle) but with 29 historic sites along the way, it's a journey rich with heritage. Just look around you and you'll see the legacy of every big player in Ireland's history, from ancient pagans to High Kings, Early Christian monks to Vikings, and Normans to Anglo-Irish aristocrats.

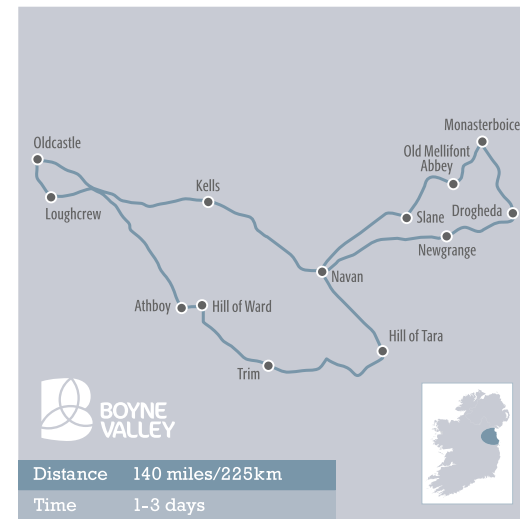
So far I've climbed past bemused sheep to reach the top of the Hill of Ward, near Athboy, site of an Iron Age fort, and the place where the wild, pagan festival of Samhain or Halloween was celebrated. To this day, pagans congregate on Tlachtga (to give the hill its Irish name) to welcome the Celtic new year. According to the locals, it's quite a spectacle.

I've touched the massive stone crosses at Monasterboice, Mellifont Abbey and Kells, and wondered just how the monks who lived in these Early Christian settlements managed to clamour into the round towers carrying all their valuables, when the doorways are a good 12ft/3.5m off the ground. One can only assume that pursuit by a marauding Viking adds a spring to one's step.

I've wandered through stately homes and heard tales of their scandalous



Newgrange, County Meath



Distance 140 miles/225km
Time 1-3 days



Tankardstown House, County Meath

Along the way

Visit

Trim Castle, a 12th century Anglo-Norman stronghold and star of Mel Gibson's *Braveheart*; the Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre in the elegant Georgian **Oldbridge House** near Slane; and **Loughcrew** near Oldcastle, a megalithic cemetery containing around 30 passage tombs.

Eat

Tankardstown House near Navan offers everything from afternoon tea to a seven-course tasting menu. **The Forge** in Carnaross serves the best local produce in a converted 18th century forge (naturally); and in **George's Patisserie** in Slane you'll find some of the best pastries and cakes you'll ever taste.

Sleep

Enjoy quirky luxury in **Bellinter House**, a boutique hotel on the banks of the River Boyne. The quiet elegance of **Rosnaree House** overlooking Newgrange makes for a restful place to stay, or go for cosy quaintness in **Clonleason Gate Lodge**, near Kells, a pretty Georgian cottage nestled in lush countryside.

THE GREAT GAME

Ireland, Home of Champions, a place where land, sea and sky come together in perfect harmony. Brian Keogh explores some of the courses that have made this incredible island one of the top places in the world to play golf

THE DESIGNER CHOICE

Trump International Golf Links Ireland

Doonbeg, County Clare

It's a credit to Greg Norman that he could earn such praise for a links course built just minutes away from the legendary Lahinch Golf Club – the links created by the Augusta National designer, Dr Alister MacKenzie. "It took someone as courageous as Greg to design Doonbeg," Pádraig Harrington said of the incredible course. "He has designed a phenomenal golf course. It's unlikely you'll get to see the likes of it anywhere else in the world. It's a fun golf course to play... how golf was designed to be played 150 years ago." No wonder businessman Donald Trump swooped in to buy it in 2014, renaming it Trump International Golf Links Ireland. Good news for golfers who fell in love with its dramatic setting.

More to explore:

Mount Juliet, County Kilkenny: Jack Nicklaus's parkland course constantly ranks as a must-play. **Tralee Golf Club, County Kerry:** Arnold Palmer's first European design in a beautiful corner of Ireland. **Lough Erne Golf Club, County Fermanagh:** Sir Nick Faldo's course is host to The Irish Open 2017.



Royal County Down, County Down

THE IRISH OPEN 2015

Royal County Down Golf Club
County Down

Old Tom Morris laid out Royal County Down where "the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea". The course has been refined since, but it's still so stunning that Golf Digest rates it as the best on the planet outside the US, and number four on their Top 100 Courses of the World. Rory McIlroy, winner of both The Open and the USPGA Open in 2014, can't wait to return for the Irish Open (28-31 May). "Royal County Down is one of my favourites," McIlroy said. "The more you play it, the more you recognise it for the class place it is." One of golf's finest chroniclers, Peter Dobereiner, once wrote: "The essence of golf is to say that it enhances the feeling that it's good to be alive. That's the first priority and absolute justification. The links of Royal County Down are exhilarating even without a club in your hand."

More to explore:

Portmarnock, County Dublin: Home to the Irish Open and the Walker Cup, amongst others. **Killarney Golf Club, County Kerry:** The incredible setting for two Irish Opens. **Warrenpoint Golf Club, County Down:** Where Christy O'Connor Snr won the Irish Professional Championship in 1960 and 1966.



Trump International Golf Links Ireland, County Clare

THE HISTORICAL GEM

Killeen Castle Golf Club

County Meath

For over 800 years, Killeen Castle has stood as a silent sentinel at the heart of Royal Meath, just a short distance from the Hill of Tara, ancient home of the High Kings of Ireland. Now it is the centrepiece of one of Ireland's great golf destinations, designed by 18-time major winner Jack Nicklaus, with a little help from the fairies. Only in Ireland would the "Golden Bear" be forced to redesign a golf hole for mystical reasons. When planning the 12th, Nicklaus wanted to tuck the green further in to the left, but that would have meant cutting down a hawthorn tree, considered by the Irish to be a fairy tree. The great man was taken aback when workmen told him it was bad luck to remove the tree, so he reworked his plans and the result is beautiful: a big drive leading to a small green protected on the right by the Rock River. This is where the magic happens.

More to explore:

Ballybunion, County Kerry: In view of a 15th century castle, it's a links on a jewel of a bay. **Carton House, County Kildare:** Where the World Amateur Championships will be held in 2018. **Royal Belfast, County Antrim:** Celebrated its first 18-hole competition all the way back in 1881.



Killeen Castle, County Meath



Royal Portrush, County Antrim

Need to know the essential information

There are fewer than 200 true links courses on the planet. Ireland has 50 of them.

Nothing's more beautiful than a sunny day, but always pack waterproofs just in case.

Golf Digest magazine ranks six of Ireland's courses in its Top 100 in the World: Royal County Down (4th), Royal Portrush (16th), Ballyunion Old Course (27th), Lahinch (64th), Portmarnock (83rd) and Waterville (93rd).

The advantage of living on a small island at the edge of Europe? The summer days are long. At the height of the season, it's light by 6.30am and doesn't get dark until after 10pm.

Playing that dream course just means a green fee, but book ahead for the top courses.

You won't need your tuxedo in Ireland but there's a strict dress code at most clubs – on and off the course. Smart casual works well.

Don't be afraid to mix. Invite a member or two to join your group and have a fun fourball. Loser buys the drinks at the 19th hole.

Invest in a caddie. If you're going to be on some of the famous championship courses, a good caddie will save you plenty of shots and make that dream round even more enjoyable.

For more information, visit ireland.com/golf

THE STAR ATTRACTION

Royal Portrush Golf Club County Antrim

Just a few minutes' drive from the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Giant's Causeway, the Dunluce Links at Royal Portrush is a giant of Ireland's golf in every sense: towering dunes, sweeping valleys and rough so thick that only the greats of the game can conquer it. With the R&A inviting Royal Portrush to return to The Open Championship rota (earliest available slot is 2019), Royal Portrush's status as one of the great golf courses of the world is cemented. "If you play really good golf, you get rewarded around Royal Portrush," says Rory McIlroy. "It's very fair. But if you hit shots that you shouldn't, you're going to get punished."

More to explore:

County Louth Golf Club, County Louth: Rising star Shane Lowry won the Irish Open as an amateur here in 2009. **County Sligo Golf Club, County Sligo:** A firm favourite of two-times Masters winner Bernhard Langer. **Hollywood Golf Club, County Down:** Rory McIlroy was its youngest member at the tender age of 16.



Rosapenna, County Donegal

THE WILD ONE

Rosapenna Golf Resort County Donegal

Located in the village of Downings in the wilds of County Donegal, this excellent resort is bounded by the Atlantic on one side with rolling hills on the other. Golf has been played at Rosapenna for more than 120 years and while the forces of nature have shaped the land, golfing giants have left their mark here, too. Old Tom Morris, the pioneering professional golfer and course designer, first set eyes on Sheephaven Bay in 1891 when invited by Lord Leitrim to design the links course there. Today, Rosapenna is the oldest golf resort in Ireland, boasting two superb links courses. Whether you play the Old Tom Morris Links or the Sandy Hills Links – both ranked among Ireland's Top 50 courses by Golf Digest Ireland – you'll need to navigate your way through sand dunes cloaked in marram grass. The golf is riveting, but the landscape is a glorious backdrop, with sandy strips of beach, and green and purple-hued mountains, caressed by those eternal Atlantic winds. Wild and wonderful.

More to explore:

Lahinch Golf Club, County Clare: Designed by MacKenzie, Phil Mickelson is a member here. **The European, County Wicklow:** A beauty ranked in the Top 100 Courses of the World. **Portstewart Golf Club, County Londonderry:** On the Causeway Coastal Route, it includes the aptly named Thistly Hollow!



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THE BEAUTY

The Old Head of Kinsale Golf Links

County Cork

From the scampering hares and swooping sea birds to that pod of humpback whales frolicking in the Celtic Sea, the Old Head of Kinsale has it all. No wonder it's regarded by many of the game's greats as one of the most spectacular golfing locations on earth. Situated on an isthmus that protrudes into the sea, the view from the 15th tee simply blew Tiger Woods away. "Wow," he said as the early morning fog cleared to reveal the challenge. "Well worth the wait. This has to be one of the most spectacular sights I have ever seen in golf." Former Masters and The Open winner Mark O'Meara was with Woods that day: "Anyone who has a love of golf and scenic beauty should make a point of playing here, it's as simple as that."

More to explore:

Carne Golf Links, County Mayo: A glorious 18-hole course along the Wild Atlantic Way. **The Island Golf Club, County Dublin:** Just 15 minutes from Dublin Airport, this natural wonderland is a real gem. **Ardglass Golf Club, County Down:** The Mourne's backdrop gives this a wow factor.

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GET ACTIVE

There is so much to do on the island of Ireland that it's hard to know where to begin, but with everything from surfing and kayaking to cycling, you can start your holiday with a dose of adrenaline

At the Cliffs of Moher, County Clare

WALKING THE CLIFFS OF MOHER CLIFF PATH County Clare

In the early morning sunlight, with the seaside village of Doolin at your back, there are few better places to be than on the Cliffs of Moher Cliff Path. Reaching all the way from Doolin to Liscannor, the entire walk stretches for 12.5 miles/20km, but a good starting point is the section from Doolin to the cliffs themselves, with a distance of about 5 miles/8km. Just past the village, the track starts amid scenery that is perfectly in keeping with this part of County Clare: dry-stone walls creep over the landscape; the sea swirls at the shore; small cottages dot the rolling hills. It's beautiful, yes, but it's nothing compared to what's to come, because the further you walk, the more striking the panoramas. Precipices are slashed through the rock as the coastline dips and soars like a rollercoaster, providing you with scenery that can only be described as breathtaking. This is not an easy walk – there are ascents, there are cliff-edges and the path is uneven – but as the cliffs loom into sight, the views make every single step worth the effort.



Ballynahinch, Connemara

ANGLING IN CONNEMARA County Galway

Bordered by Lough Corrib to the east and the North Atlantic to the west, Connemara in County Galway is a landscape of bogs, mountains, loughs, ocean views and traditional dry-stone walls. And there couldn't be a better place to mix magnificent views with excellent angling. Here, interconnected lakes and rivers are hopping with resident trout and seasonal Atlantic salmon. Lough Corrib – the second largest lough on the island – is home to some of the best wild brown trout fishing in Europe. It certainly provides a great challenge, whether you use the dry fly, wet fly, or if you prefer to dap the natural fly! And it doesn't stop there: Connemara is also a world-class destination for coarse fishing, particularly pike, which can be found in the Corrib and the lakes around Moycullen. The Connemara coastline abounds with little islands, inlets and rocky bays, which are great for shore angling or exploring by boat. And with a landscape that boasts white sandy beaches, scenic spots such as Ballynahinch, and sheltered forests, you can just enjoy the quiet beauty around you as you wait for your rod to dip.



Cliffs of Moher Cliff Path, County Clare



Cruising the Fermanagh Lakelands

CRUISING THE FERMANAGH LAKELANDS County Fermanagh

Sunlight sparkling on the water, waves lapping at your cruiser, nothing to do but watch the lush countryside glide by. This idyllic scene is just a normal afternoon cruising the Fermanagh Lakelands. A natural, unspoiled landscape that has barely changed in thousands of years, you can see evidence of its rich history everywhere: the 12th century church on Lower Lough Erne's White Island with its eerie stone figures; the strange two-faced Janus stone on Boa Island. Cruise past the island town of Enniskillen down towards the Upper Lough, and you can explore a maze of forested islands. The splendid Victorian mansion Crom Castle is nestled among ancient woodlands that include some of the oldest yew trees in Ireland (reputedly more than 800 years old). And the best parts? You don't need a licence, and there's no commercial traffic. All you have to do is take the helm.



Enniskillen Castle, County Fermanagh



Sheep's Head Peninsula, County Cork

CYCLING THE SHEEP'S HEAD CYCLE LOOP County Cork

There are parts of Ireland that seem tailor-made for exploring by bike. The Sheep's Head Peninsula in County Cork is just one of them. Tranquil and unspoiled, with winding roads that are generally free of traffic, the peninsula appears untroubled by the stresses of modern life; it's a place where you can just switch off. Part of the Wild Atlantic Way, it juts out into the ocean and is tipped by a dramatically placed lighthouse. This rugged landscape can feel primeval and remote at times; gentle, soft and welcoming at others. It's perfect cycling territory – allowing you to stop off and admire views over to the Beara Peninsula, break for seafood at Arundels by the Pier in Ahakista, or seek out dolphins in the waters off the peninsula's westernmost tip. The route starts at Ballylickey and ends 75 miles/120km later in Roaring Water Bay, with a mix of heathery hills, field paths, quiet lanes and old boreens (small roads) along the way. As cycling experiences go, it's one of a kind.



Sea kayaking on the Copper Coast, County Waterford

KAYAKING ON THE COPPER COAST County Waterford

Right now, the Copper Coast on the island of Ireland's east side is THE place to go kayaking. Previously undiscovered, this little spot is still far from the bustling crowds, but word is quickly catching on thanks to its unique combination of sheltered sandy coves, caves, inlets and cliffs. This special slice of County Waterford is a UNESCO Global Geopark, with fascinating geological remnants from the last Ice Age. And if you're wondering where it picked up its name – you can look to the metal-mining industry of the 19th century, which thrived here. But it's from the waters that you can really appreciate this beautiful coastline to the full, with its rocky inlets, extinct volcanoes and the remains of copper mineshafts hidden in the cliffs. Seapaddling.com organises Copper Coast kayaking tours in the area, and also to other gorgeous east coast locations. And after a long day kayaking, why not rest up in Waterford city with its Viking heritage, great pubs and gastro food scene.



Alive Surf School, Portrush, County Antrim

SURFING IN PORTUSH County Antrim

The North Atlantic might not seem like the most ideal place for a surfing beginner, but with words of encouragement from Ricky Martin of Portrush's Alive Surf School, even the swells start to look warm. "We'd be telling a lie if we said our waters were of tropical temperatures; however, modern wetsuits allow us to surf all year round without getting cold!" says Ricky. "And in the summer, our beautifully clear waters attract dolphins and porpoise that regularly pop up to say hello to their neighbours on the boards!" Portrush is currently the epicentre of the surf scene in Northern Ireland, and this bustling seaside town attracts experienced surfers, as well as those keen to get started. According to Ricky, the most commonly surfed beaches around here are White Rocks, West Strand and East Strand in Portrush, as well as Portballintrae near the Giant's Causeway. And if you want to mix a little sightseeing with your surfing, you're in the right place: located on the Causeway Coast, Portrush is a great base for exploring the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, Dunluce Castle and the Old Bushmills Distillery.

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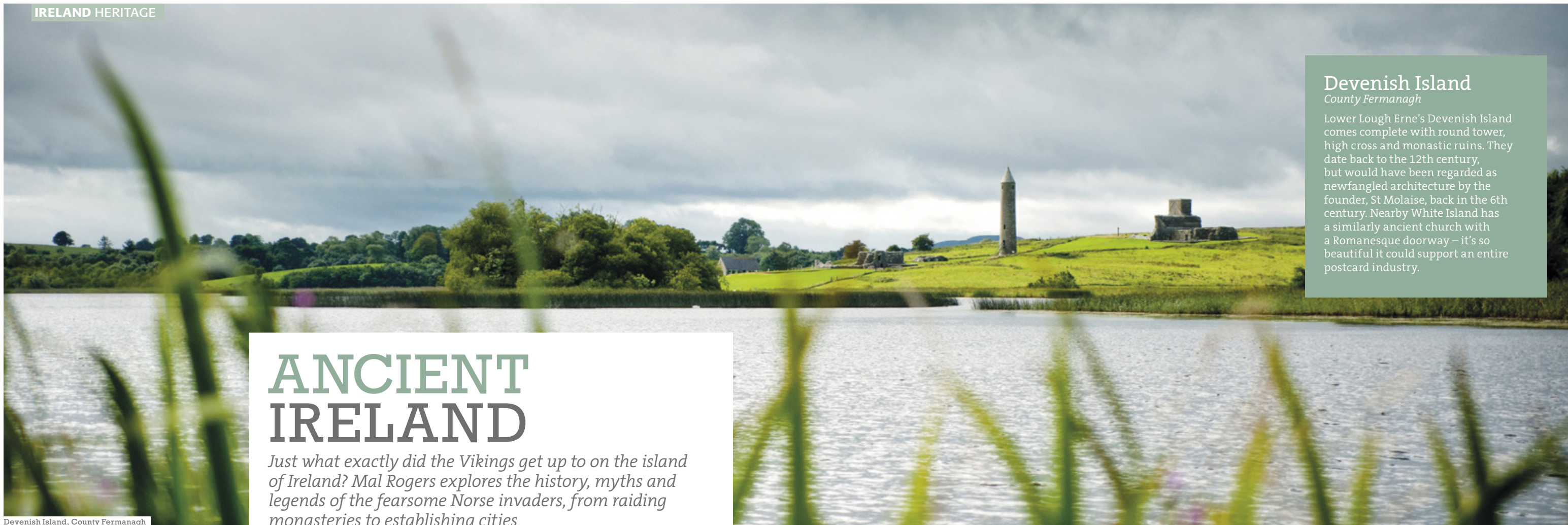
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Devenish Island

County Fermanagh

Lower Lough Erne's Devenish Island comes complete with round tower, high cross and monastic ruins. They date back to the 12th century, but would have been regarded as newfangled architecture by the founder, St Molaise, back in the 6th century. Nearby White Island has a similarly ancient church with a Romanesque doorway – it's so beautiful it could support an entire postcard industry.

ANCIENT IRELAND

Just what exactly did the Vikings get up to on the island of Ireland? Mal Rogers explores the history, myths and legends of the fearsome Norse invaders, from raiding monasteries to establishing cities

Devenish Island, County Fermanagh

It was once the very centre of Europe with its great teaching monastery and missionary abbey. Today, Armagh bustles with all the energy of a modern city. This ancient place, still serene and beautiful, remembers its glory days – back when St Patrick established his mission here in the 5th century. Books, schools and libraries flourished, a formidable literary elite emerged, and the island of saints and scholars was born.

This turned out to be very good news for the rest of the world. Rome lay sacked; London was a muddy backwater;

Goths, Visigoths, Vandals and assorted barbarians were trashing Europe. But back in Ireland, life for monks before the Vikings saw the holy men busy saving Christian civilisation, working to protect precious manuscripts: poetry, history, social law, and literature of all sorts.

Abbeys and monasteries, such as Glendalough in the Wicklow Mountains, and Clonmacnoise, built on a bend in the mighty River Shannon, sent out missionaries to reintroduce the Gospel and educate Europe. These sites are ruins today, but with the help of their innovative interpretive centres, you can imagine pious monks hard at work creating beautifully illustrated manuscripts, golden croziers and some of the most enduring artworks the world has seen – objects that would be deemed very attractive to future invaders.

Celtic Christianity may have thrived here but its peaceful endeavours would soon be interrupted. The reason? Some very unwelcome guests were about to descend on the island of Ireland.

The Vikings made their first appearance in Ireland when they landed on picturesque Rathlin Island off the County Antrim coast in 795AD. Today, the island is a peaceful haven for the

area's birdlife, a tranquil place that is the northernmost point of Northern Ireland. A church now sits on the former site of the Early Christian monastery on the island, and in the National Museum of Ireland, you can see a beautiful silver embossed brooch that was found in a Viking grave here.

Shortly after attacking Rathlin, the Vikings turned to the monastery on the Scottish island of Iona. Terrified monks escaped from there to Ireland, taking with them the priceless illuminated manuscript known today as the Book of Kells – named after the Meath town where the Iona monks fled. This incredible must-see is now on view in Trinity College Dublin, where visitors can gaze at its intricately decorated pages.

From Rathlin, these Scandinavian scoundrels, dressed in animal skins and with swords in hands, headed down the coast and attacked the locals in a display of shocking debauchery. It's this penchant for violence that has given them such a notorious reputation.

They discovered monasteries were the richest sources of booty and took aim. This perhaps accounts for two features of the Irish landscape still standing today: round towers and high crosses.



Clonmacnoise, County Offaly

They soon discovered monasteries were the richest sources of booty and took aim. This perhaps accounts for two features of the Irish landscape: round towers and high crosses

looking for stock and provisions but gradually the attractions of actually living in Ireland dawned. The Vikings wintered for the first time on Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland, and established bases in County Louth, near the village of Annagassan, and in the city of Dublin – the watery artery of the River Liffey providing a sheltered route for the Vikings who rowed in here all those years ago. These days, you can pop into Dublinia and imagine yourself as a Viking warrior setting forth into a new world.

The Norse seafarers – sometimes accompanied by women from back home – had grown tired of harassing the natives, and began to settle down. But despite founding great cities such as Limerick, Cork, Waterford and Dublin, the Vikings left behind little material evidence of their sojourn in Ireland. Except for one >

Round towers like those at Antrim, County Antrim and Ardmore in County Waterford would have acted as lookout posts, doubling as safe places for monks to store their valuables. Hefty high crosses can be explained, too: they simply couldn't be stolen as easily as works of art. This is why you can still see many fine examples around the country: the West Cross at Monasterboice, County Louth, for example, is the tallest high cross in Ireland, at 23ft/7m.

From the 830s, much larger bands of Vikings came calling. They were mostly



Medieval Museum, Waterford



Skellig Michael, County Kerry



Legananny Dolmen, County Down

thing: place-names. It's certainly a way of remembering them every day, and is how their legacy endures.

A scattering of towns and islands have Norse origins, including the Skelligs, County Kerry; Howth and Dalkey in County Dublin; Leixlip in County Kildare; Wicklow; and the Saltee Islands, County Wexford. For that matter, "ford", as in Wexford, Carlingford and Strangford – is derived from the Norse "fjord".

In areas such as the Waterford Viking Triangle, the streets follow a 1,000-year-old Norse street plan. A tour takes in over 1,000 years of history in 1,000 paces, and includes Waterford's Medieval Museum, Greyfriar's House, 12th century Reginald's Tower (the only monument named in honour of a Viking) and Bishop's Palace.

Viking personal names didn't become as popular, although this may be understandable with names such as Magnus Barelegs and Sigtrygg the Squint-Eyed. Some family names did survive though, including MacAuliffe, "Son of Olaf", and Doyle, an Anglicisation of Ó Dubhghaill, "son of the evil foreigner".

Despite this new family-orientated emphasis, it wasn't all domestic bliss. The Vikings were inevitably drawn into Ireland's internal wars – getting along with your neighbours was still something of an exotic concept. Time, ultimately, was up for the invaders. Their shifting alliances with Irish tribal factions eventually led them into the Battle of

Some Viking family names did survive in Ireland including MacAuliffe, "Son of Olaf", and Doyle, an Anglicisation of Ó Dubhghaill, "son of the evil foreigner"

Clontarf in 1014 (an event important enough to be remembered in Icelandic poetry). Today, Clontarf is a seaside suburb of Dublin, but the battle was a decisive victory for the Irish. Brian Boru, the heroic Irish victor, however, suffered a terrible death at the hands of the Vikings. His body was taken to Swords Abbey on the day he died and on to Armagh, where he was buried in the west wall of St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh. A granite slab marks its place.

And so, in a few short decades, Viking rule was over and Ireland settled down to a tranquil future – just as other Norsemen were moving into France to become the Normans. And they had some very definite plans for Ireland.



Dun Aengus, Inishmore, County Galway

Back in time
Ireland's culture may be old, but its presence is still felt with an incredible collection of passage tombs, round towers and prehistoric forts that are still standing tall today

Mountsandel
County Londonderry
The oldest archeological site in Ireland is near the town of Coleraine, and dates back an incredible 9,000 years. It's the earliest known human settlement on the island. In the woods here, remains of flint tools were found, and today you can join a forest walk down from the fort with views of the woods below and the glistening River Bann.

Clonmacnoise
County Offaly
At the crossroads of ancient Ireland some 1,500 years ago, St Ciarán founded the monastery of Clonmacnoise. Several high crosses remain. Try to visit in the evening with the sun sinking beyond the broad sweep of the River Shannon. Enough to make even an ardent non-believer momentarily reconsider.

Dun Aengus
Inishmore, County Galway
The fort of Dun Aengus, perched on a crag above the Atlantic Ocean as it crashes into Inishmore's coastline, is often used as a film location. In fact, the island may well be typecast for the rest of its career as a spectacularly striking, prehistoric fortress clinging perilously to the Old World.

Skellig Michael
County Kerry
Nobody knows for certain what drew Early Christian monks to build stone beehive huts on an island at the edge of the known world. Maybe they were just zealous guys. See what you think yourself: a 1,000-year-old set of stone steps takes you up to the monastic settlement, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, at the top.

Legananny Dolmen
County Down
The Legananny Dolmen in County Down is a 4,500-year-old megalithic portal tomb that looks suspiciously like a Stone-Age bus shelter – but is more likely the burial site of an important chieftain. This elegant tripod of stones also has links with the pagan goddess Áine, who is said to haunt the area. Nonsense? Probably.

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Traditional music session at Doheny & Nesbitt's pub, Dublin

A PASSION FOR MUSIC

Martin Hayes has turned fiddle playing into a true art form. Tony Clayton-Lea meets the County Clare maestro who has brought his inventive brand of traditional Irish music to the world stage

PHOTO: DEREK SPEIRS



Martin Hayes

You don't have to be an expert in Irish traditional music to hear the truly unique sound that Martin Hayes creates. When he starts to play, the effect on the audience is palpable – such is the power of his style and technique.

This traditional music virtuoso has been the All Ireland Fiddle Champion six times (before the age of 19), has recorded numerous albums, and is a member of acclaimed contemporary Irish trad music group, The Gloaming. As fiddle players go, Hayes is a master craftsman.

Hayes grew up in County Clare, a place that is synonymous with traditional music. Lisdoonvarna made rock stars out of its trad musicians, Kilfenora is renowned for its céili band (the simply titled Kilfenora Céili Band), and the corner of the county near Kinvara has more musicians per square foot than anywhere

else on the island. You need to be pretty remarkable to stand out against this crowded backdrop, but according to Hayes, music is simply a way of life here.

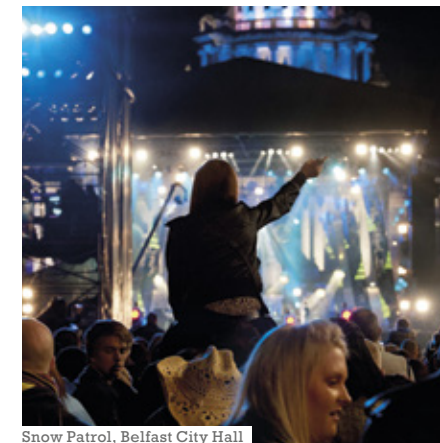
"Being a musician wasn't considered to be in any way extraordinary," Hayes says. "It was very much a normal thing. I developed an interest by proximity and exposure." When you grow up in east Clare, the son of a famous musician (Hayes's father was a member of the Tulla Céili Band) that may be true. But it doesn't take away from what an extraordinary experience it is to visit this wildly beautiful region where you can almost hear music in the wind.

Every town you pass through, every tiny pub you enter echoes with the relaxed, lyrical strains of east Clare's particular brand of traditional music. This isn't the place to come to if you're in

a hurry, and the music takes its cue from the pace of life. As Hayes puts it: "we take things a little slower here, our music, too".

Drop into a music pub such as Shortts and Pepper's of Feakle (Hayes's home town), or Minogue's in Tulla, and you'll see a side of Ireland that feels truly special. Here, the connection to the music is deep, and it unites the rural community with an atmosphere that makes these pubs legendary.

The abundance of festivals in Clare is also testament to the social and cultural importance of music in the county. One of the highlights comes in August with the Feakle International Traditional Music Festival. Hayes usually comes home every year bringing a crowd of great players with him. The masterclasses are raved about across counties, but technique has never been the main focus for Hayes –



Snow Patrol, Belfast City Hall

Contemporary sounds

U2, Sinéad O'Connor, Van Morrison, Enya... Ireland has a pretty good reputation when it comes to contemporary music. And with the likes of Snow Patrol and Imelda May making waves across the world, that looks set to continue. Of course, if there's one Irish name on the lips of international record companies, it's that of County Wicklow musician, Andrew Hozier-Byrne. Known as Hozier, the singer-songwriter is set to take the world by storm. You can enjoy all sorts of contemporary music at great venues around the island, including the Empire Music Hall in Belfast, a Victorian-era church; the Rococo plushness of the Olympia in Dublin; and the Cork Opera House.



Traditional music at Causey Farm, County Meath

County Clare isn't the place to come if you're in a hurry; the music takes its cue from the pace of life. As Hayes puts it: "we take things a little slower here, our music, too"

his aim is to create "good sounds" and get the melodies flowing as serenely and beautifully as possible. "I learnt that expressing a feeling in music and not playing wild or crazy all of the time was a more desirable path to take," he says.

This emotional connection with the music is what gives it its intense character. Whether it's the poetic quality of County Clare's lilting style, the bouncy and intricate fiddle playing so familiar in Sligo – 2015 host town of the All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil in August – or the up-tempo

beats of County Donegal, there's nothing quite like seeing it performed live, and the lack of strict rules makes it that much more spontaneous. From Matt Malloy's in Westport, County Mayo, McGrory's and Teac Jack in Donegal, to Cleary's and Ciaran's Bar in County Clare, what these venues have in common is community, inclusiveness and atmosphere.

Moving beyond the fiddle, the bodhrán, the jigs and the reels, sean-nós reveals a more reflective side to Irish traditional music. This haunting style of unaccompanied Irish-language singing is rooted in the Gaeltacht regions, and developed as a way to tell the stories of everyday life. According to author Tomás Ó Maoldomhnaigh, "Songs were made to accompany the work inside and outside the home, to express the many emotions, love and sadness of daily existence >



Fleadh Cheoil, Cavan town

At times something quite special can emerge from the session. "People can unite around this simple idea of the melody," Hayes explains, "and there are moments when everybody locks in together"

and to mark the loss of family and friends, whether by death or by emigration."

You might also get to see a sean-nós dance at a traditional music festival or competition. This free-form style breaks from the structure of Irish step-dancing and is compelling to watch.

Don't worry if your visit doesn't coincide with a festival; there is a much easier way to enjoy Irish music – a session. Taking place in pubs all around the island, the session (or seisiún to give it its Irish term) is a relaxed gathering of musicians. And, says Hayes, "There's no limit to the amount of people that can sit in."

The sessions are not the reserve of rural communities, either. Aside from Dublin's celebrated TradFest, held in January every year, head for O'Donoghue's, the pub where The Dubliners used to play a regular slot. Belfast's John Hewitt is the ideal spot to spend an evening of music, while tasting its lovely craft beers. Monroe's in Galway is adored for its open fires, stained glass windows and well-worn floors thanks to decades of céilís (traditional dance events). While in Cork, An Spailpín Fánach has earned a reputation for its legendary trad sessions – and for its local stout, Murphy's.

At times something special and, as Hayes reflects, quite unexplainable can emerge. "People can unite around this very simple melody, and there are moments in a session when everybody locks in together."

The combined energy of the musicians can become a powerful entity. "This doesn't happen all the time," admits Hayes. "As they say, sometimes people don't always skate in the same direction. But those moments when it does coalesce? They are quite magical."



Ulster-Scots dancing, Glenarm Castle, County Antrim



Lambeg drum

Ulster-Scots music

With a history that goes back 400 years, Ulster-Scots music continues to flourish. Influenced by a folk repertoire that developed up until the end of the 18th century, the likes of jigs (of Irish origin), reels (from Scotland), and hornpipes (which originated in England) combine with a traditional dance that was linked with marching tunes played by military bands. Many decades later, such tunes are still to be heard, along with the vibrant sounds of pipes, fiddles, flutes, accordions and the mighty Lambeg drum.

Valerie Quinn is Musical Director of the Ulster-Scots eXperience, a band of musicians who perform music from the Ulster-Scots tradition. They are part of a wider revival of Ulster-Scots culture that developed during the 1990s, but for Valerie, this music is not a new thing. In fact, she has been involved in Ulster-Scots music from when she was a toddler, soaking up Scottish traditional and

ceilidh music that her mother played. "My father's family was very musical," she explains, "and my parents were keen to get me trained, so from the age of five I was classically trained on the piano; at 15 I was presented with an accordion."

It was during her teens that Valerie began to notice the differences between Scottish and Irish traditional music. "The latter is quite smooth," she explains, "whereas the former has what I'd call a snap or a kick. What I discovered, however, was that there were very similar tunes shared, with no definition of what was Irish and what was Scottish."

Valerie says that what highlights the unique spirit of the music isn't necessarily the repertoire, but how it's played and phrased in a musical context. "Irish music is played with very little accents, whereas Ulster-Scots and Scottish music has more."

Every August, the Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh comes alive with strumming on the porches of log cabins, dancing in the cobbled streets and jamming outside the General Store at the Annual Bluegrass Music Festival. In Armagh, catch some world-class piping at the William Kennedy Piping Festival in November. Pipers from every corner of the globe are invited to revel in a huge, piping party, and it's an unforgettable event.

As for the Lambeg Drum, some accounts trace its origins to the townland of Lambeg in County Antrim; others claim that it 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 town of Market Hill, County Armagh.

ANCHORS AWEIGH FOR BELFAST TALL SHIPS SPECTACLE



One of the highlights of the annual international maritime calendar, the spectacular Tall Ships Race, will next year set sail from Belfast, Northern Ireland.

The city that is synonymous with the world's most famous ship, the RMS Titanic, is expected to host 80 magnificent tall ships and their 1,000 crew for four days before the race officially begins.

The arrival of the ships in Belfast Lough will mark the beginning of the annual Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival, which will run from 2 to 5 July 2015.



SS Nomadic and Titanic Belfast

The four-day, family-friendly festival promises to create an amazing carnival atmosphere on the quayside with street theatre, live music, funfairs, a continental market and, of course, a chance to visit the splendid rigged and masted vessels.

The ships will be berthed in and around Belfast Harbour, alongside the iconic Titanic Belfast visitor attraction, the Titanic Quarter area and Samson and Goliath, the distinctive yellow cranes of Belfast's renowned Harland and Wolff shipyard.

Among the fleet will be 15–20 Class A vessels (more than 40 metres long) and a number of South American military vessels.

On 5 July, Belfast will wave goodbye to the tall ships as they set sail for the Scandinavian cities of Alesund and Kristiansand, finally arriving in Aalborg on 4 August when the race ends.

Belfast has a strong maritime heritage and much to interest seafaring enthusiasts at any time of year.

The award-winning Titanic Belfast, the



Titanic Belfast Exhibition

world's largest Titanic exhibition housed over six floors, has nine interpretive and interactive galleries that explore the sights, sounds and stories of the famous liner.

Visitors to the city's docklands can also explore the SS Nomadic, Titanic's little sister ship, which once ferried first and second class passengers to the opulent liner from Cherbourg.

There are also a number of maritime related guided tours including one of the Thompson Dry-Dock and Pump-House, once the beating heart of Harland and Wolff during the construction of the great White Star Liners, and today an interpretive centre giving insight into the engineering brilliance that built the Titanic and her sister ships.



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GENERAL INFORMATION & PLANNING YOUR TRIP

GEOGRAPHY, POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

304 miles/486km long and 172 miles/275km wide, the island of Ireland is divided into 4 historic provinces – Ulster, Munster, Leinster and Connacht – and 32 counties, of which 26 are in the Republic of Ireland and 6 are in Northern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland is a parliamentary democracy headed by the President of Ireland; Northern Ireland has its own regional/local government and is part of the United Kingdom. The population of the island is approximately 6 million, with over 4.3 million living in the Republic of Ireland and 1.7 million in Northern Ireland.

LANGUAGE

Irish (Gaelic) and English are the official languages of the Republic of Ireland; street and road signs are all bilingual. In Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) areas, road signs may only be displayed in Irish and Irish is spoken daily, though everyone speaks English as well. In Northern Ireland, English is the official language. The Irish language is also taught in many schools and summer schools. Ulster-Scots, spoken in Northern Ireland, is also on the increase.

PASSPORT/VISA REQUIREMENTS

While UK citizens do not require a passport or visa to enter Ireland, most air and sea carriers require some form of photographic identification (ID), such as a passport or driving licence. Visitors are advised to check which form of ID is required with the individual airline, ferry company, tour operator or travel agent before travelling. Non-UK nationals must have a valid passport or national ID card as appropriate. Visitors of other nationalities should contact their local Irish Embassy/Consulate or their local British Embassy, High Commission or Consular Office in Northern Ireland with any queries.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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For a list of Irish Embassies, visit dfa.ie and dfa.ie/irish-embassy/great-britain

NORTHERN IRELAND

Further information is available from your local British Embassy or Consulate.
 For details contact:

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office; gov.uk

MEDICAL

Vaccines are neither compulsory nor necessary unless you are travelling from an infected country. British visitors to the Republic of Ireland are covered under an agreement with the Department of Health, but some form of identification or a European Health Insurance Card (which has replaced the E111 form) is necessary. British visitors to Northern Ireland require no documentation and will receive treatment as they would in Britain.

Visitors from all other EU countries travelling to Ireland should obtain a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) prior to departure. Visit ehic.org.uk for further information. For visitors from non-EU countries travelling to Ireland, private medical insurance is highly recommended.

VISITORS WITH DISABILITIES

Ireland extends a warm welcome to visitors with disabilities. Many public places and visitor attractions are accessible to wheelchair users, and an increasing number of hotels and restaurants are well equipped to accommodate guests with disabilities.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

National Disability Authority
 Tel: +353 (0) 1 608 0400; nda.ie

NORTHERN IRELAND

Adapt NI
 Tel: 028 9023 1211; adaptni.org
Disability Action
 Tel: 028 9029 7880; disabilityaction.org

PETS

There are no restrictions on pet cats, dogs or ferrets being brought into Ireland from Britain or vice versa. Pets entering the UK from the EU can travel into Ireland without quarantine, provided they satisfy the requirements of the UK Pet Travel Scheme and are cleared on arrival in the UK. Tel: 0870 241 1710 or visit gov.uk/take-pet-abroad for more information.

Pets entering Ireland from countries other than the UK must comply with Ireland's requirements under the EU Pet Passport System to avoid quarantine.

For further information contact:

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
 Tel: +353 (0) 1 607 2000; agriculture.gov.ie

NORTHERN IRELAND

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
 Tel: 028 9049 5780; dardni.gov.uk

CURRENCIES

In the Republic of Ireland the currency used is the euro (€) and in Northern Ireland the currency used is the pound sterling (£).

VAT AND TAX REFUNDS

As the UK is part of the EU, residents are not entitled to any VAT or tax refunds.

TELEPHONE

Mobile phones

Only digital phones with GSM subscriptions and a roaming agreement will work on the island of Ireland. Visitors should consult with their supplier before travelling.

Pay phones

Easy-to-use country calling cards are widely available at many outlets.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

If calling the Republic of Ireland from the UK, all telephone numbers must be prefixed with +353 (remove the first 0). goldenpages.ie




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 DANCE- the night away in Tigerlily nightclub
 SLEEP- in our contemporary accommodation, Lord Edward

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10% off your bill*

*Offer valid from Oct. 2014-Dec. 2015. Valid on food & accommodation bill.

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 email sales@clanardcourt.ie



PERSONAL SAFETY

Though the general level of personal safety is high, should you be unfortunate enough to be a victim of crime, contact:

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Irish Tourist Assistance Service

(Mon-Fri), 6-7 Hanover Street East, Dublin 2

Tel: +353 (0) 1 661 0562

Email: info@itas.ie; itas.ie

Store Street Garda Station

(Weekends and public holidays), Dublin 1

Tel: +353 (0) 1 666 8000

NORTHERN IRELAND

Contact the local police station where support will be available.

Tel: 0845 600 8000

Email: info@psni.pnn.police.uk; psni.police.uk

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Emergency Services (Police, Fire, Ambulance, Coastal & Mountain Rescue)

Tel: 112 or 999

NORTHERN IRELAND

Emergency Services (Police, Fire, Ambulance, Coastal & Mountain Rescue)

Tel: 999

PUBS

The legal drinking age is 18 years. Some pubs will insist patrons are over 21 years and carry some form of identification. Legislation in the Republic of Ireland stipulates that children under 18 years are not allowed in premises that serve alcohol after 21.00hrs.

SMOKING RESTRICTIONS

Smoking is not allowed in public areas and workplaces including pubs, restaurants, hotels and taxis, in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 2015

New Year's Day	1st Jan
St Patrick's Day Holiday	17th Mar
Good Friday (NI only)	3rd Apr
Easter Monday	6th Apr
May Bank Holiday	4th May
Spring Bank Holiday (NI only)	25th May
June Bank Holiday (ROI only)	1st June
July Holiday (NI only)	13th July
Aug Bank Holiday (ROI only)	3rd Aug
Aug Bank Holiday (NI only)	31st Aug
Oct Bank Holiday (ROI only)	26th Oct
Christmas Day	25th Dec
St Stephen's Day (ROI)	28th Dec
Boxing Day (NI)	28th Dec

Good Friday is not an official public holiday in the Republic of Ireland, although most shops and businesses are closed.



TRAVELLING TO IRELAND BY AIR



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AIR ACCESS & ROUTES TO IRELAND

DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE	
Aberdeen	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional	
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe	
	Birmingham	Belfast International	easyJet
		Cork	Aer Lingus
		Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
George Best Belfast City		Flybe	
Blackpool	Ireland West Airport Knock	Flybe	
	Shannon	Aer Lingus Regional	
	Waterford	Flybe	
	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional	
	Bournemouth	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional
		Bristol	Belfast International
Bristol	Cork	easyJet	
	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional	
	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair	
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Ryanair	
	Shannon	Aer Lingus Regional	
Cardiff	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional	
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe	
	Doncaster Sheffield	George Best Belfast City	
Doncaster Sheffield	George Best Belfast City	Linksair	
	East Midlands Nottingham	Cork	
East Midlands Nottingham	Dublin	Ryanair	
	George Best Belfast City	Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair	
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Flybe	
	Ryanair	Ryanair	
Edinburgh	Belfast International	easyJet	
	Cork	Aer Lingus Regional	
	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair	
Exeter	George Best Belfast City	Flybe	
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Flybe, Ryanair	
	Shannon	Aer Lingus Regional	
	Glasgow International	Belfast International	
	Belfast International	easyJet	
Glasgow International	City of Derry	Ryanair	
	Cork	Aer Lingus Regional	
	Donegal	Flybe/Loganair	
	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair	
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe	
	Shannon	Flybe	
	Glasgow Prestwick	Ireland West Airport Knock	
Ireland West Airport Knock	Ryanair		
Inverness	George Best Belfast City		
Flybe	Flybe		
Isle of Man	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional	
	George Best Belfast City	Citywing	
Jersey	Belfast International	easyJet	
	Cork	Aer Lingus Regional	
	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional	
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe	
	Ryanair	Ryanair	
Leeds Bradford	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair	
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe	
Liverpool	Belfast International	easyJet	
	City of Derry	Ryanair	
	Cork	Ryanair	

DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE
Liverpool (continued)	Dublin	Ryanair
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Ryanair
	Shannon	Ryanair
London City	Belfast	Flybe
	Dublin	British Airways, CityJet, Flybe
London Gatwick	Belfast International	easyJet
	Cork	Ryanair
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
	George Best Belfast City	Aer Lingus
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Aer Lingus
London Heathrow	Shannon	Ryanair
	Cork	Aer Lingus
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, British Airways
	George Best Belfast City	British Airways
London Luton	Shannon	Aer Lingus
	Belfast International	easyJet
	Dublin	Ryanair
London Stansted	Ireland West Airport Knock	Ryanair
	Kerry	Ryanair
	Dublin	Ryanair
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Ryanair
London Southend	Kerry	Ryanair
	Shannon	Ryanair
	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional
Manchester	Belfast International	easyJet
	City of Derry	Ryanair
	Cork	Ryanair
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
	Ireland West Airport Knock	Flybe
	Shannon	Aer Lingus Regional
Waterford	Flybe	
Newcastle	Belfast International	easyJet
	Cork	Aer Lingus Regional
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe
Newquay	George Best Belfast City	
Southampton	Dublin	Flybe
	George Best Belfast City	Flybe

AIRLINE CONTACT DETAILS

AIRLINE	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Aer Lingus	0871 718 5000	aerlingus.com
British Airways	0844 493 0787	britishairways.com
CityJet	0871 405 2020	cityjet.com
Citywing	0871 200 0440	citywing.com
easyJet	0843 104 5000	easyjet.com
Flybe	0371 700 2000	flybe.com
Linksair	0844 800 2411	linksair.co.uk
Loganair	0371 700 2000	loganair.co.uk
Ryanair	0871 246 0000	ryanair.com

All direct routes/information correct at time of going to press but may be subject to future operator changes. Airlines may also operate connecting/change code sharing and operator franchise agreements. Please see websites for details. Calls to airlines may incur local or national call charges.



TRAVELLING FROM DUBLIN AND BELFAST AIRPORTS INTO CITY CENTRES

DUBLIN

Arriving in Dublin Airport, the options to get into the city centre are by bus or taxi. Buses and taxis are located just outside the arrivals hall. A taxi can cost between €15-25* depending on where you are travelling within the city. Dublin Airport is located on the north side of the city so fares to this part of Dublin will normally be cheaper than if you were taking a taxi to the south side. 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.

BELFAST

Belfast International Airport
The airport is situated just 18 miles/29km outside Belfast city centre and you can take a bus or taxi into the city. Airport Express 300 now operates a 24-hour service between the airport and Belfast

city centre with buses departing regularly throughout the day; £7.50* single and £10.50* return. The bus leaves from the bus stop located opposite the terminal exit. A taxi fare to the city centre is approximately £30*.

George Best Belfast City Airport
Airport Express 600 into the city centre runs on the hour (every 20 minutes during peak time); £2.40* single and £3.60* return. A taxi fare to the city is approximately £10*. Trains run from adjacent Sydenham station near the airport to Belfast and beyond.

*Prices are subject to change.

For information on access to and from airports and ferry ports throughout the island of Ireland, log on to ireland.com

REGIONAL AIRPORTS AND FLIGHTS

The following internal flights are available within Ireland.

DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Dublin	Donegal	Flybe operated by Loganair	0371 700 2000	flybe.com
	Kerry	Aer Lingus Regional	+353 (0) 818 365 044	aerlingus.com

Please check website for details, as air routes are subject to change.



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FREE ADMISSION
Open Tuesday to Saturday 10-5

a: Pearse Street, Ballina, Co. Mayo, Ireland
w: www.clarkecollection.ie
t: +353 (0)96 73508
e: clarkecollection@mayococo.ie



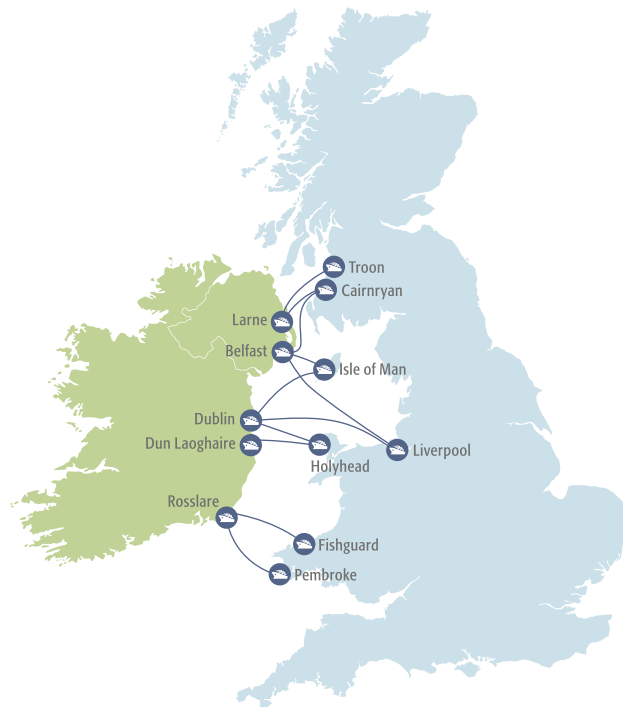
TAYTOPARK

WWW.TAYTOPARK.IE
CO. MEATH - IRELAND



TRAVELLING TO IRELAND BY SEA

The island of Ireland has 5 main ferry ports – Belfast, Dublin, Dun Laoghaire, Larne and Rosslare.



SEA ROUTES

DEPART	ARRIVE	CARRIER	VESSEL	DURATION
Cairnryan	Larne	P&O Ferries	Express	1hr
			Superferry	1hr 45mins
Fishguard	Rosslare	Stena Line	Superfast VII/VIII	2hrs 15mins
			Stena Express Superferry	3hrs 30mins
Holyhead	Dublin	Irish Ferries	Cruise Ferry	3hrs 15mins
			Dublin Swift	1hr 49mins
		Stena Line	Superferry	3hrs 15mins
			HSS Fast Craft	2hrs
Isle of Man	Belfast	Steam Packet Company	Fastcraft	2hrs 55mins
			Dublin	Fastcraft
Liverpool	Dublin	P&O Ferries	Irish Sea Ferry	7hrs 30mins
Liverpool (Birkenhead)	Belfast	Stena Line	Stena Lagan	8hrs
			Stena Mersey	8hrs
Pembroke	Rosslare	Irish Ferries	Cruise Ferry	3hrs 45mins
Troon*	Larne	P&O Ferries	Fastcraft	1hr 49mins

*Mar-Oct. All information correct at time of going to press.

FERRY AND COACH OPERATORS CONTACT DETAILS

FERRY COMPANY	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Irish Ferries	0871 730 0400	irishferries.com
P&O Ferries	0871 702 3477	poferries.com
Steam Packet Company	0872 299 2992	steam-packet.com
Stena Line	0844 770 7070	stena.com
Eurolines	0871 781 8181	eurolines.co.uk

All information correct at time of going to press but may be subject to future operator changes. Calls to sea/coach operators may incur local or national call charges. Please see websites for details.

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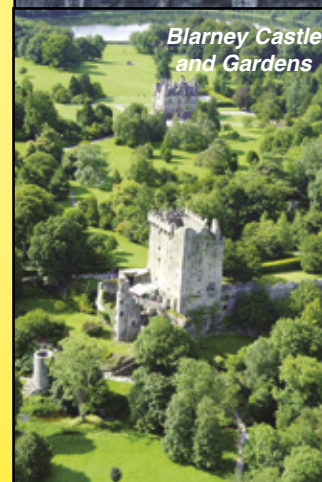


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UK TOUR OPERATORS (Continued)

COMPANY	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE	Accommodation	Angling	Coach	Cruising	Culture/heritage	Cycling	Equestrian	Gardens	Golf	Motoring	Self-catering	Short breaks	Spa	Walking	Watersports	Other
Imagine Ireland	01756 707 720	imagineireland.com																
In the Saddle	01299 272 997	inthesaddle.com																
Irish Ferries Holidays	08717 300 400	irishferries.com																
Just Go! Holidays	08432 244 244	justgoholidays.com																
Kings Angling and Activity Holidays	01708 453 043	kingsanglingholidays.co.uk																
Kirker Holidays	0207 593 2288	kirkerholidays.com																
Lastminute.com	+353 818 300 064	lastminute.com																
Laterooms	0844 774 1001	laterooms.com																
Leger Holidays	08445 046 251	leger.co.uk																
Leisure Link Golf Holidays	01708 339 300	leisurelinkgolf.com																
Links Golf St Andrews	01334 478 639	linksgolfstandrews.com																
McKinlay Kidd Ltd	0844 804 0020	seeirelanddifferently.co.uk																Wildlife & whiskey tours
National Holidays	08444 779 990	nationalholidays.com																
On Course Travel	01372 451 910	ireland-oncourse.co.uk																Horse racing
Opodo	0871 277 0090	opodo.co.uk																
Osprey Holidays Ltd	0131 243 8098	ospreyholidays.com																
PAB Coach Holidays	+353 1 871 9819	pabtours.com																
Parrys International Tours	01922 414 576	parrys-international.co.uk																
Pitchup.com	-	pitchup.com																Camping & caravanning
Rambler's Worldwide Holidays	01707 331 133	ramblersholidays.co.uk																
Responsible Travel.com	01273 823 700	responsibletravel.com																Adventure, eco breaks
Saga Holidays Ltd	0800 096 0074	saga.co.uk																
Shearings Holidays	0844 824 6351	shearings.com/ireland																
Spabreaks.com	0800 043 660	spabreaks.com																
Skills Holidays	0845 666 5544	skillsholidays.co.uk																
Stena Line Holidays	08445 768 889	stenaline.co.uk																
Superbreak	0871 2213344	superbreak.com																
Take the Family	-	takethefamily.com																
Tangney Tours	01732 886 666	tangney-tours.com																Pilgrimages
Tayleur Mayde Golf Tours	0131 524 9554	tayleurmayde.com																
The Camping & Caravanning Club	024 7642 2024	campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk																Camping & caravanning
The Caravan Club	01342 318 813	caravanclub.co.uk																Camping & caravanning
Titan Travel Ltd	0800 988 5823	titantravel.co.uk																
Travel Republic	0208 974 7200	travelrepublic.co.uk																
Travelling the Fairways	01334 460 789	tffgolf.com																
Travelzoo	-	travelzoo.co.uk																
Wilkinson Golf & Leisure	01383 629 940	wilkinsongolf.com																

For the most up-to-date list of operators visit ireland.com/touroperators. All information correct at time of going to press but may be subject to future operator changes.

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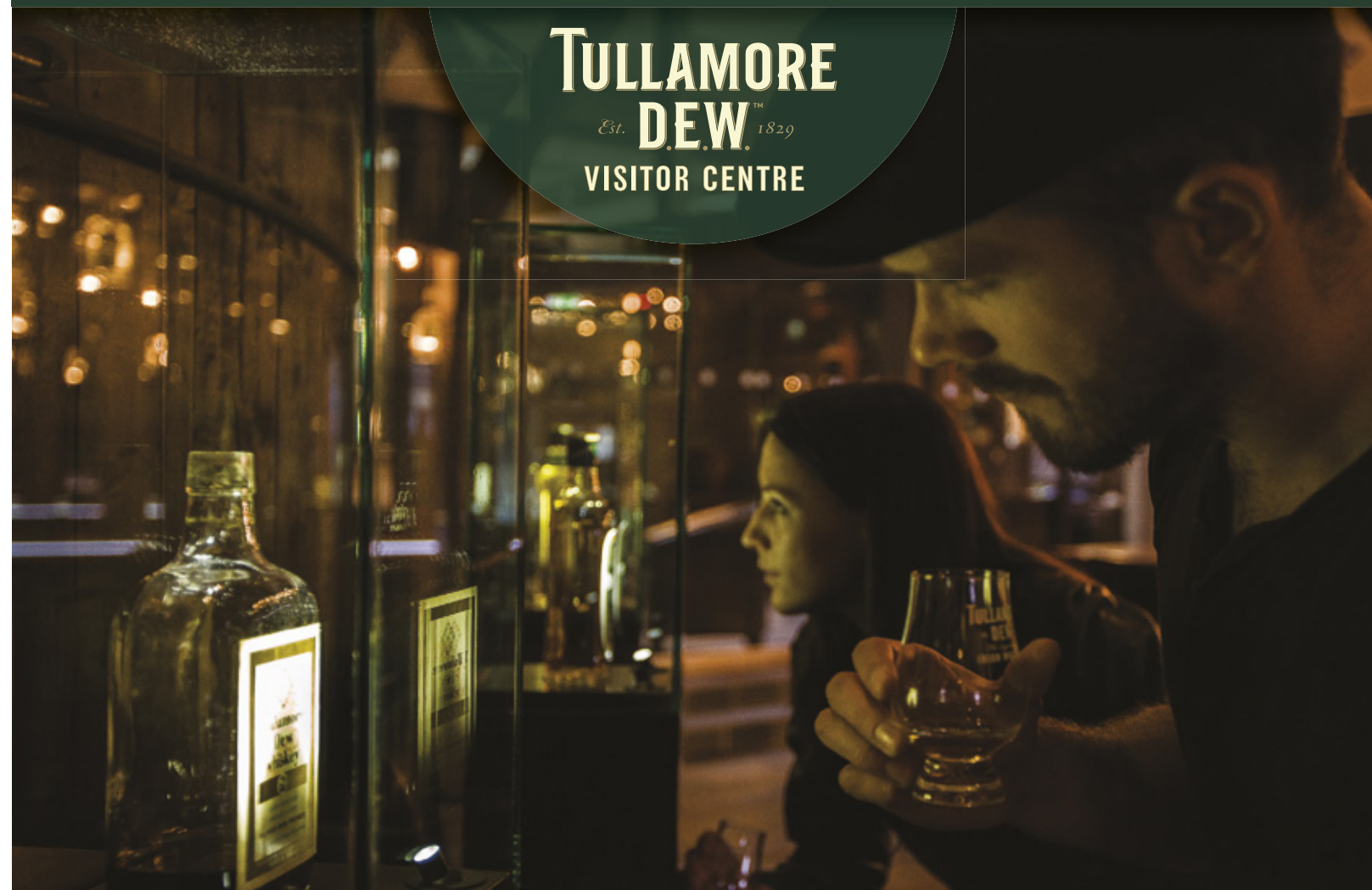
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MAP & ROUTE MILEAGE PLANNER

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- Motorway
- Primary road
- Secondary road
- Mainline Train
- Ferry
- Airport
- Tourist Information (Year round)
- Tourist Information (Seasonal)
- Beach

Available on the App Store

To view or download a copy of the 'Great Irish Road Trips' guide, visit ireland.com

Our free Great Irish Road Trips app is available on the App Store: now there really is no such thing as a wrong turn in Ireland!

0 20 40 60 80km
0 10 20 30 40 50miles

Whilst every care has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this map, Tourism Ireland cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions. Due to the small scale of this map, not all holiday centres can be shown. The information on this map is correct at time of going to press. © 2015 Tourism Ireland. Map creation by Michael Schmeling. www.maps.aridocean.com | Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, CC BY-SA



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Distances to Waterford:

- Dublin 1 hr 45 mins
- Cork 1 hr 30 mins
- Shannon 2 hrs 20 mins
- Belfast 3 hrs 30 mins

