

# Ireland

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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...*



THE GREAT GAME 38

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## Picture This

*Wild, astounding, inspirational – there are so many words to describe the awesome majesty of the Antrim Coast and Glens. But one thing's for sure: this place is pure magic. From Ballycastle in the north of County Antrim to Larne in the south, this stunning area includes the nine Glens of Antrim, renowned for their sylvan beauty, rich shades of green and individual character. Along the way, you'll find quiet villages, rugged mountain roads, tranquil rivers and mythical tales. And to finish? Just follow the Causeway Coastal Route to the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge and the Giant's Causeway.*

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IRELAND ESCAPE

Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, County Antrim



Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge

Cliff-edges, waves crashing on the rocks below, a tiny rope bridge. Get ready for one of the most exciting crossings in the world. The Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge in County Antrim sways almost 100ft over a 65ft-wide chasm. Walking it is unforgettable. Just don't look down!



Blasket Islands, County Kerry

## Wild Atlantic Way

A dramatic, rugged coastline that has been shaped by time and pounding waves, the Wild Atlantic Way is Ireland's epic 1,500-mile coastal touring route. Stretching along the west coast of the island from County Donegal to County Cork, this is where you can get in touch with the real Ireland. Our advice? Get on the road, meet the locals, listen to the music... and go a little wild!

## 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

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.

## St Patrick's Festival

March 17 is St Patrick's Day, and from Armagh to Waterford, the island of Ireland celebrates. But there's still one very special place to be at this time: Dublin city, where a four-day party ends with an extravagant parade.



St Patrick's Day Parade, Dublin

Causeway Coastal Route



Northern exposure

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 edge of the stunning cliffs, offering truly incredible views and old-world charm.





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## 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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Helen's Tower, County Down, Irish Landmark Trust



Castle Leslie, County Monaghan



The Merchant's House, Derry-Londonderry



Ballinkeele House, County Wexford



Bay Villas, Sheen Falls Lodge, County Kerry



Clare Island Lighthouse, County Mayo

# STAY SOMEWHERE DIFFERENT

From cozy 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 vacation.

And if it's style you're after, then why not try a castle? With blazing fires, drawing rooms and manicured gardens, they offer old-fashioned opulence on a grand scale. Enjoy indulgence at Ashford Castle in County Mayo; Castle Leslie in County Monaghan; and Ballygally Castle Hotel in County Antrim. Or opt for private luxury at Castle Oliver in County Limerick, overlooking the beautiful Ballyhoura Mountains.

Also rich with elegance and a sense of the past are historic country houses.

Here you can expect beautiful grounds, well-appointed bedrooms and personal attention. Try the Georgian style of Dean's Hill in County Armagh, the pretty Ballinkeele House in County Wexford, or the exquisite Victorian Italianate-style of Clonalis House in County Roscommon.

Looking for a good dose of family hospitality? A B&B should fit the bill perfectly. Offering warm, comfortable accommodation and a tasty breakfast, B&Bs are perfect for connecting with local people. And the choice out there is great, from the relaxed boutique coziness of Gallán Mór on the Sheep's Head Peninsula in County Cork, to an urban house of character, such as the Merchant's House in Derry-Londonderry.

For the quintessential "Irish" experience, look to a thatched cottage. The Bay Villas at Sheen Falls Lodge in

County Kerry offer a modern take on the traditional Irish 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 you like the sound of panoramic views, dramatic locations and historic interiors – you're sure to enjoy a stay in a lighthouse. Experience the "great escape" of Clare Island Lighthouse at Clew Bay, County Mayo; see the scenic east coast at the Wicklow Head Lighthouse; or experience the history of Blackhead Lightkeepers' Houses in County Antrim.

For more information on accommodation, visit: [ireland.com](http://ireland.com)



# DISCOVER ALL ABOUT... LITERATURE



C.S. Lewis statue "The Searcher," Belfast



Dublin Literary Pub Crawl



Davy Byrne's pub, Dublin



MAC, Belfast



Happy Days International Beckett Festival, Enniskillen



James Joyce



Dublin Writers Museum

### 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.

*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 out there. 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 (one of the earliest forms of writing in Ireland) 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. Dublin has produced three of Ireland's four Nobel Prize winners for literature, and 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 – immortalized in James Joyce's *Ulysses* – or join the Dublin Literary Pub Crawl. Next up, explore the Dublin Writers Museum at Number 18 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 some of the 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 image 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.

If you push out of Belfast into County Down, you'll come across the impressive Mourne Mountains, which are thought to have inspired Lewis to create the fantastical world of *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 see why.

Travel around the island of Ireland and you'll uncover endless places associated with playwrights, thinkers and poets, from small islands to vast 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 one of the city's most exciting literary 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, the Happy Days International Beckett Festival draws the crowds in August. And if you like to take things at a different pace, try the Cape Clear Storytelling Festival in September on a stunning island off the coast of County Cork.



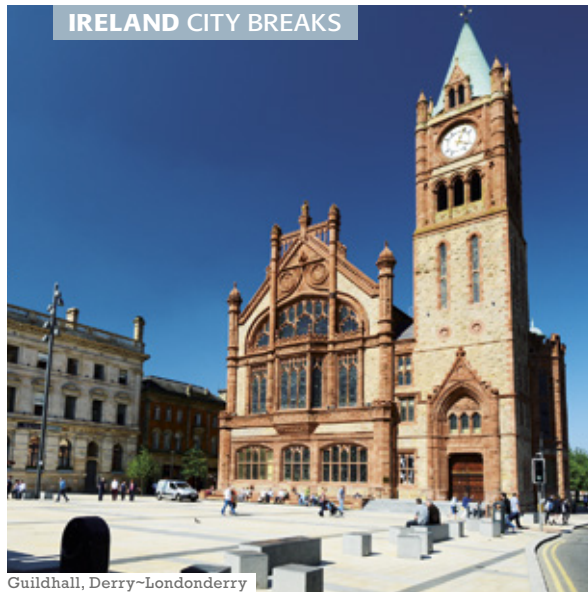
Dublin boasts an impressive theater scene with historic venues and world-class productions. Try the **Gate**, the **Abbey** and the **Gaiety**, as well as smaller spots such as the **Project Arts Centre**, **Smock Alley** and the **New Theatre**. In September, the city embraces festival season, with 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.

PHOTO: DARAGH MCDONAGH



Gate Theatre, Dublin



Guildhall, Derry-Londonderry



Kinsale, County Cork



Ha'penny Bridge



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 may owe its origins to the Vikings, but Georgian squares and townhouses are very much the postcard image of Dublin today. These magnificent townhouses were home to the city's professional elite in the 18th century, a time when grandeur reigned and Dublin was in a golden age of architecture.

Early developments such as Henrietta Street – one of the first and finest Georgian streets – led to elegant terraces, leafy squares and ambitious buildings, including Leinster House, King's Inns and the Custom House. These public buildings were designed by one of the greatest architects of the day, James Gandon, and they remain architectural masterpieces. To get a sense of the symmetry of the period, wander through Fitzwilliam Square, Merrion Square, St Stephen's Green and up to the very beautiful North Great George's Street.

One of the best things about Dublin's Georgian district is that it has a fun side, too. The Friday lunchtime food market on Percy Place sees tasty treats served up alongside the canal. You can eat and drink in grand Georgian buildings including Restaurant FortyOne and the Cliff Townhouse, or enjoy lunch and a craft beer in an old Georgian kitchen at Hatch & Sons. Want to take it easy? Go with the flow, rent a public Dublin Bike and take to the cycle path along the Grand Canal.

To learn more, visit Number 29 Fitzwilliam Street Lower, a museum highlighting life in Georgian Dublin. Or download one of Visit Dublin's free Georgian iWalk podcasts and go exploring.

Just think of it as a little bit of time travel in a busy modern age.

### Out of town

St Kevin's 6th century monastic site of Glendalough is the crown jewel of the Wicklow Mountains National Park with hiking trails to match. Veteran racehorses and newborn foals, St Fiachra's Garden, and the Irish Horse Museum combine in the perfect Kildare day trip at the National Stud and Japanese Gardens. Or head to Howth to enjoy a working harbor, waterside restaurants, cliff walks and hidden beaches on this beautiful northside peninsula.

### Dublin five to try

Experience the best the city has to offer

#### Phoenix Park

This beautiful park is one of the largest city parks in Europe. It 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, whilst the exquisite illustrated 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 stores, jewelry markets, cocktail clubs, galleries and book stores stand alongside pubs and souvenirs in Dublin's most famous cultural hub.

#### National Gallery of Ireland

A collection of Italian baroque and Dutch Masters alongside distinguished Irish artists such as Jack B. Yeats make this one of the best free things to do in the city.



Little Museum of Dublin

### Dublin's hidden corners

The devil's in the detail at the Little Museum of Dublin, which brings its exhibits to life by telling the incredible tales behind them. Generations of Dubliners take pride in pointing out the city's best-kept secret: Iveagh Gardens, a gorgeous Victorian park off Clonmel Street. In summer, it hosts festivals, too. The Dublin Science Gallery, meanwhile, is a superb space tackling scientific issues through wacky and fun exhibitions.

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Titanic Belfast

## TRAILING TITANIC BELFAST

**Belfast has rebooted.** In recent years, the city has taken a huge step forward thanks to a buzzing new wave of 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) and today's immersive heritage attraction tells the ill-fated liner's story, with high-tech highlights, including a replica shipyard ride and ocean exploration center.

But Titanic Belfast isn't the only modern addition to the city skyline. Think of developments such as Victoria Square shopping mall, the Odyssey Arena or the towering "Spire of Hope" piercing the sky above St Anne's Cathedral. Visitors can quaff cocktails at hip bars, wander through trendy galleries or explore W5, an interactive discovery center.

Amidst all the change, the old fabric remains, so make sure to check out the originals: the Botanic Gardens with their Victorian Palm House, the bustling St George's Market, the Edwardian City Hall and the dry dock where Titanic was fitted out. Or choose from several guided tours of Titanic sights, including one by Segway scooter, and one hosted by Susie Millar, the great-granddaughter of an engineer lost in the disaster.

Recently, "Titanic's little sister", the S.S. Nomadic, came home to Hamilton Dock. Today, you can walk onto the actual ship that transferred first and second-class passengers from Cherbourg dock in France to the Titanic. It's a living connection to the ship, and a highlight of any trip to this fascinating city.



Belfast City Hall

## 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 center 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.

## Out of town

Don't miss the Giant's Causeway, a unique basalt rock formation and UNESCO World Heritage Site in County Antrim. Its fascinating visitor center makes an ideal day trip from Belfast. County Down's iconic Mourne Mountains didn't just inspire C.S. Lewis's Narnia; they inspire walkers and outdoor enthusiasts, too. Like to get off the beaten track? The beautiful Ards Peninsula separating Strangford Lough in County Down from the Irish Sea is a scenic gem.



Oh Yeah Music Centre, Belfast

## Three Music Favorites

Oh Yeah Music Centre is a former whiskey warehouse that has transformed into a cool venue, rehearsal space, café and permanent music exhibition. Join the Belfast Music Tour to find out about some of the local legends whose lives and tunes are evoked on this rock 'n' roll tour. Located in the Cathedral Quarter, The John Hewitt bar and restaurant is renowned for its wonderful live music nights and great craft beers.

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## Visit Ireland's Heritage Sites



Aughnanure Castle, Oughterard, Co. Galway



Cahir Castle, Castle Street, Cahir, Co. Tipperary



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 dynamic 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!

Compact enough to explore on foot, Cork has all the intimacy of a small city mixed with big cultural attractions. The city's festivals have major pulling power and the famous Cork Guinness Jazz Festival, the Cork Film Festival and the Cork Midsummer Festival attract visitors from all over the world. Add to that an esteemed Opera House, a lively university and one of the best food markets in the world, the English Market, and you've got a city that is bustling at the seams with great things to do.

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. Bathed in natural light, this beautiful structure has been listed among author Mark Irving's 1,001 Buildings You Must See Before You Die. Walk around the city and you'll also find smaller galleries such as the Lavit and the Vanguard showing contemporary Irish artists with changing exhibitions.

Most of all, the creativity comes through in everyday life. Think of the musical pubs and vibrant literary traditions, or the clever transformation of an 18th century church into one of the city's most interesting arts venues, Triskel. Think of the lyrical Cork way of speaking and the sense of humor that crackles with a touch of dark wit. Think of the atmosphere around the city, and the thrum of energy through the streets.

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 a visitor experience unlike any other: the chance to ring its 18th century bells.

### Cork City Gaol

Sightseeing and specters 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

Book stores, bars, cafés and boutiques are crowded into this tightknit 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.

## Out of town

The historic town of Cobh in Cork Harbour was Titanic's last port of call. Sea views and a great heritage center make for a fun day out. A must for foodies, Kinsale, a lively seaside port town, is THE place to come for the freshest seafood served up in pubs, cafés and restaurants. The coastal town of Bantry is a gateway to West Cork. This thriving market town has great places to eat, while the delightful Bantry House shouldn't be missed here – it's a historic gem.



English Market, Cork

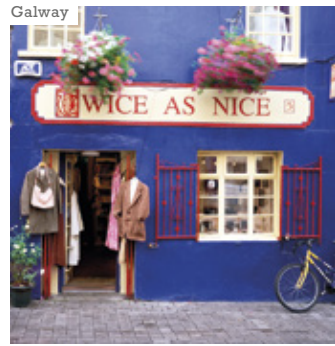
## Three Foodie Favorites

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



## Cities to explore

A quick city trip or a longer urban getaway? You'll find that each city on the island of Ireland boasts unique opportunities



### GALWAY

Galway is never far from a festival: arts, film, horse racing and oysters are all celebrated in quick succession during summer. This gives the feeling of a rolling street party. A super little museum, thriving food scene (from fine dining restaurants to hearty seafood pubs and lively food markets) and the little seaside suburb of Salthill seal the deal. And with Connemara National Park only a short trip west, you couldn't locate 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 Spraoi parade in August, with its carnival atmosphere, and Winterval in December.

Medieval Museum, Waterford



### KILKENNY

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



Kilkenny

St Patrick's Cathedral (RC), Armagh



### ARMAGH

Armagh exudes heritage. 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, with 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 just a baby in terms of its city status, which was awarded in 2002. 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 enjoyed a thriving linen industry in the past; look closely and you'll still be able to see remnants of this prosperous history in the redeveloped linen mills around town. Lisburn also boasts an interesting arts scene, and great little boutique stores.

### NEWRY

Like to shop? You'll love Newry. This is one of Ireland's best retail destinations, after all. But beyond the impressive shopping malls, there's a whole lot of "past" on offer, too. In the 19th century, Newry was a bustling trading port, a place of merchants, markets and noisy city quays. The canal is one of the oldest in the British Isles, with pleasant towpath walks, while the city's heritage trail, City Hall, and the Newry & Mourne Museum in Bagenal's Castle all tell their stories. Afterwards, relax in the city's many buzzing bars, clubs and restaurants.

Newry Town Hall



### DERRY~LONDONDERRY

The island's only surviving walled city, Derry~Londonderry also has Ireland's youngest population. The pull of history and the push of youth gives this city an infectious appeal, and is visible in its exciting arts and music scene (the Undertones and Phil Coulter all hail from here). It also pushed the cultural envelope with a wildly successful stint as UK City of Culture in 2013. A visit to the Peace Bridge and the Bogside murals are essential on any visit to Derry~Londonderry. And as for the city walls? Amazing.

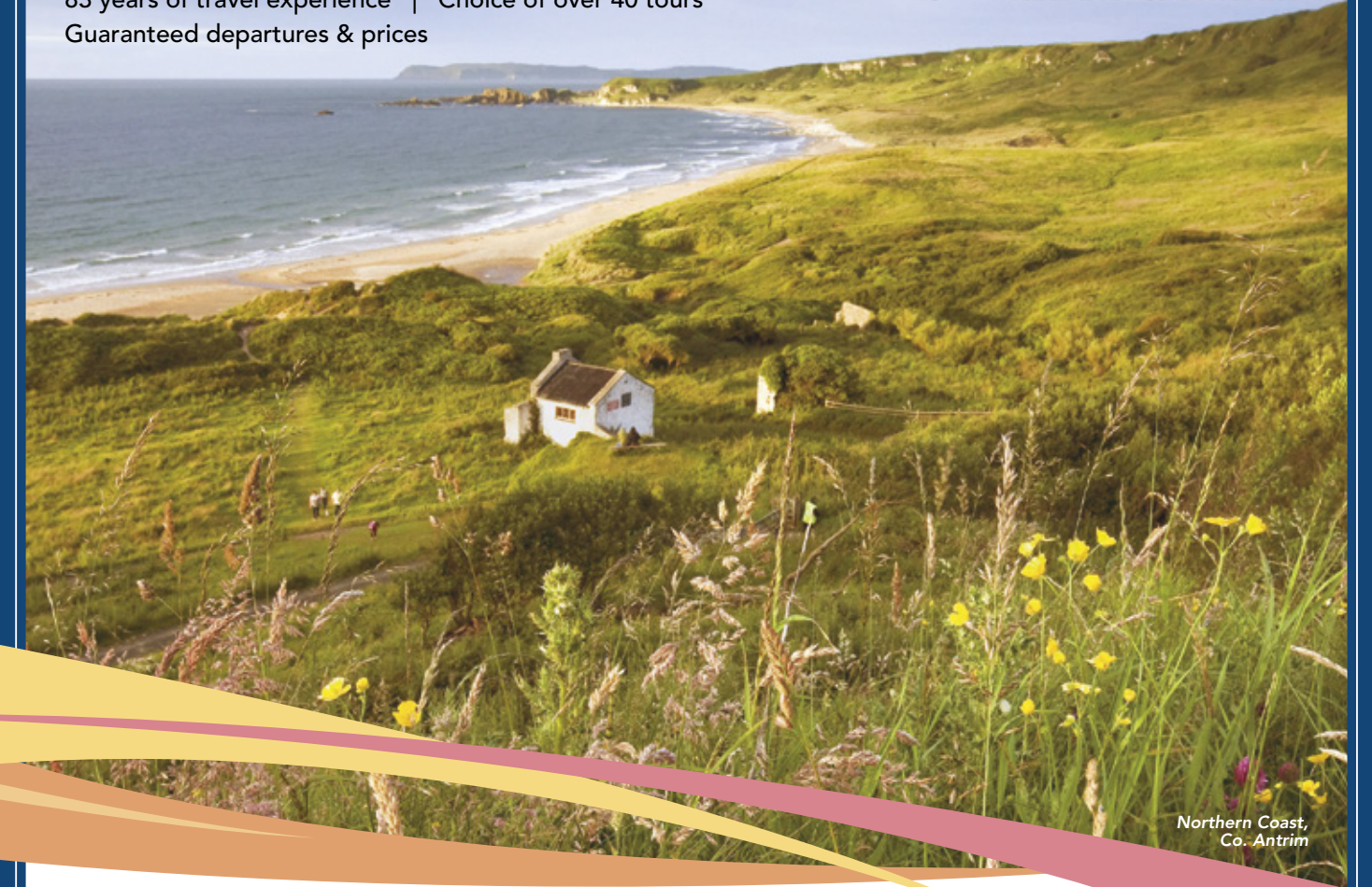


City walls, Derry~Londonderry

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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 program 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 Ireland's national 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 jewelry featured in the hit HBO series was made.



Enignum Shelf XIII by Joseph Walsh Studio

PHOTO: ANDREW BRADLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

# EXCITING THINGS TO DO IN 2015

*Ireland is full of surprises, and in 2015 the island is brimming over with a vast array of things to do and see. Time to start planning your trip*



Trinity College, Dublin

## Walking Dublin's heritage trail

**Dublin is a city** full of compelling stories. Around every corner, down every lane you'll find a piece of the past just waiting to be discovered. And now, the city's rich tales are unlocked with a heritage trail that stretches from Trinity College to Kilmainham. Along the Dublin Discovery Trail you'll pass through the 1,000 years of Dublin's history, through the ancient Viking settlement, the medieval district, through the city's Norman and Anglo-Irish past. The route takes you into the very heart of Dublin, past off-the-beaten track spots known only to the locals, alongside foodie gems and by vibrant traditional music pubs. Take it at your own speed, do it your own way, taste the velvety Guinness, sample the artisan food and meet the incredible characters that make Dublin one of the most engaging, exciting and energetic cities in Europe right now.



Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, Derry~Londonderry



Reginald's Tower, 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, theater 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, while Altamont is known as "the most romantic garden in Ireland". Fueled by creative energy, Waterford city's Spraoi in early August makes great use of its medieval setting with free street theater, 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 a county 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

Charming seaside villages, mysterious landscapes 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. You'll find a three-day self-drive itinerary on Ireland.com featuring 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 honoring its musical culture, and the talent on display will set your pulse racing. Age-old traditions such as lilting (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, movies, 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, Killough, 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 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, and follow in the footsteps of a saint on St Patrick's Trail. You can also delve into the heart of the Mourne Mountains 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. It's 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 its 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 traveling 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 go? It's got to be a market, of course.

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 "chippies" 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 glasses of crisp 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, 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 wonderful food emporium, Fallon & Byrne.

If it's a smokey flavor you're after, then you're spoiled 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, which you can buy from the Farm Shop at Ballymaloe Cookery School. 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 >



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

the Burren Smokehouse in County Clare, 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 our 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 AlgArán at health food stores 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 à 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 heart of this busy seaside town, and is a great place for a long, leisurely lunch.

Another part of the island that's

**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

enjoying an exciting time gastronomically 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 center of Galway city and its menu changes daily, but you might 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 Café and 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 harbor in Greencastle, County Donegal, is a local gem. It's a relaxed place where simplicity is valued: try 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 wood-paneled Victorian house, is a fishmonger-meets-restaurant, where you can try your 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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**Tastes of the island**

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

Food on the island of Ireland revolves around simple, pure flavors 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 **Abernethy Butter Company** in County Down elevating butter to something truly delicious. Irish farmhouse cheeses are world famous, with an array of producers creating incredible flavors. 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. **Kettle 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); savor 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). Delicious.



Super-fresh scallops at Tedford's, Belfast

**Five seafood pubs**

Dine on fresh, locally smoked salmon at O'Neill's The Point Seafood Bar, Cahersiveen, County Kerry. At Tedford's, Belfast, the curry roast monkfish with coconut rice is a firm favorite. Cronin's, Crosshaven, County Cork has great fresh fish and a fine rum selection. Tuck into native clams in white wine at Moran's Oyster Cottage, The Weir, County Galway, or try the 2014 World Seafood Chowder winner at The West Bar, Westport, County Mayo.

Dublin's top Michelin-star fine-dining experience has to be Chapter One. On my most recent visit, the halibut with Dublin Bay prawns and courgette cream was perfection itself

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 – jump on the DART (train) to get there. On a recent visit to Super Miss Sue in Dublin's city center, I understood exactly why this is one of the city's most talked about new foodie openings. The pan-fried mackerel with horseradish and pickled seaweed here was delicious. However, Dublin's top Michelin-star fine dining experience has to be 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 elegant and interesting structures on the island of Ireland. Despite the fact that the castle is still a “working” building where royal and state functions are held, 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. They make a great place to explore, even if you don't get party tickets. If those trees could talk, mind you, they would perhaps whisper about the romance of Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson. Rumor 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.** Located at the very edge of Europe, 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 on holiday in Egypt, 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 little spot that really enchants visitors. The Fern Garden, with its mini waterfalls, is also a delightful place 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 Balmoral Castle 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 color, the lakes, glens and woods are teeming with wildlife, including red deer and golden eagles, and the castle sits within 40,000 acres 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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# Legendary Scenic Beauty of Ireland

From green pastures to deep mystical lakes and wild rolling hills, a vacation to the Emerald Isle is one of the world's spectacular travel destinations. Experience unbelievably friendly people and renowned cities in Dublin, Galway, Killarney, Waterford, Cork, Belfast & more.

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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 favorite 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 afternoon tea. And if you feel like wandering farther afield, you'll find Powerscourt Waterfall, Ireland's highest, about three miles 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 Cullcagh 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 Irish 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 theater and country fairs: Birr Castle itself isn't open to the public, but visitors are welcomed to the demesne each summer for a packed program 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

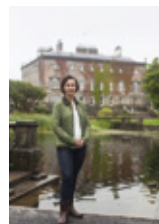
Get in touch with your inner aristocrat and experience a medieval banquet at Dunguaire Castle in the pretty town of Kinvara, County Galway. Join other diners at long oak tables and enjoy a traditional feast in a genuine 16th century castle.



**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 O'Malley 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 pummeled 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 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 vast



Fanad Head Lighthouse, County Donegal

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 amazing food in Gregan's Castle, County Clare, and tucked into fish fresh off the boats at Castletownbere, County Cork. I've met big-wave surfers, traditional musicians, foragers, fishermen and a Sligo historian who remembers his baby cot being made from driftwood. I've visited Foynes in County Limerick, where the first ever Irish coffee was made, and wondered at the mystery of the Gallarus Oratory on the Dingle Peninsula.

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.



Classiebawn Castle, County Sligo

Distance	1,500 miles
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 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. **Packie's** in Kenmare is one of Ireland's best bistros, and **Eithna's by the Sea** brings new meaning to the phrase "sea to fork" 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. Or try an elegant guesthouse such as the **Quay House** in the lively town of Clifden, County Galway.



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 harbors and lovely villages. I scaled vertiginous roads, saw views that remind me why I so love Ireland, and ate super fresh seafood plucked from the deep-blue Irish Sea.

The 120 miles of the Causeway Coastal Route start sedately enough, following the motorway from Belfast along the broad northern shore of Belfast Lough. Soon the hulk of craggy 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 Jurassic coastline, packed with fossils and flanked by steep cliffs. There's no doubt about it – the Causeway Coastal Route is a massive engineering achievement. Along the way you can stop and view a plaque commemorating the engineers who built it in the 1830s.

It may have plenty of big sights, but the journey here is just as packed with hidden gems. Just between Waterfoot and Red Bay Pier are sea-eroded caves, one of which once served as a school. A mile or so beyond the village of Cushendall, I take the road less traveled, negotiating the scenic route to Ballycastle along a tight country track. It takes me through quaint Cushendun village, past rocky Torr Head, Murlough Bay and magnificent Fair Head.

Clinging precariously to the steep slopes, this section of the route is a great test of driving skills, and the awesome views over the swirling waters of the North Channel and across to the purple hues of Scotland are unforgettable.



Giant's Causeway, County Antrim



After a night at the Bushmills Inn, close to the Old Bushmills Distillery, I head off to the Giant's Causeway and experience my first visit to the Causeway Visitor Centre. I'm impressed; it's a fitting tribute to this awesome natural phenomenon.

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



PHOTO: GILLIAN HIGGINS

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**, allegedly Ireland's tiniest church, is set in the village of Portbraddan. Or head to **Ballintoy Harbour**, where HBO's *Game of Thrones* has been filmed – definitely one for fans.

### Eat

For great food in the heart of the nine Glens of Antrim, try **Harry's** in Cushendall. Sample Irish ingredients with a continental twist at **The French Rooms** in Bushmills. You may have a short wait for a table, but the **Ramore Wine Bar** in Portrush is a great find, or stop at **Lost and Found** in Coleraine for really great coffee and locally sourced ingredients.

### Sleep

Enjoy all the charm of a real Irish castle with a resident ghost at **Ballygally Castle**. 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, a passage tomb 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 into the past.

But then, this is the Boyne Valley, and you *can* actually reach out and touch history here. At 140 miles, it's an easy one to 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 scramble into the round towers carrying all their valuables when the doorways are a good 12ft off the ground. One can only assume that being chased by a marauding Viking adds a spring to one's step.

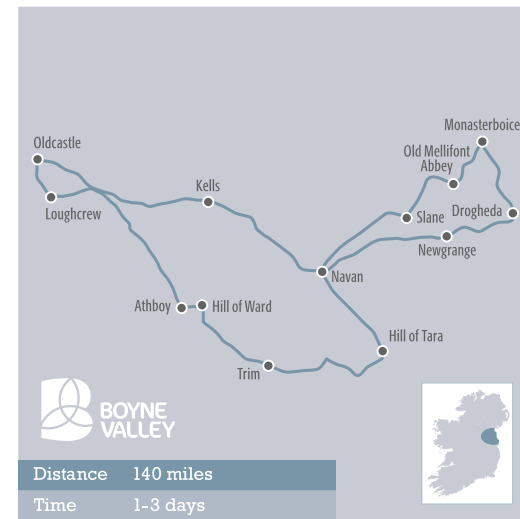
I've wandered through stately homes and heard tales of their scandalous



Newgrange, County Meath



Tankardstown House, County Meath



histories. The road from Dublin to Slane was said to be one of the straightest in Ireland to ensure King George IV could visit his mistress, Elizabeth, Marchioness Conyngham of Slane Castle, without having to slow down for the bends.

I finish my day much as I started it – gazing at the sun. It's setting this time, and from my vantage point on top of the Hill of Tara, I can see for miles. As inspirational panoramas go, I couldn't ask for better.

## Along the way

### Visit

**Trim Castle** is 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 is fascinating, or visit **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 cozy quaintness in **Clonleason Gate Lodge**, near Kells, a pretty Georgian cottage nestled in the 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 famous 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.

### Other Designer Choices:

**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 the holes of Royal County Down where, as Percy French sang, "the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea". They've been refined since, but this course is still so stunning that Golf Digest rates it as the best on the planet outside the United States. Rory McIlroy, winner of The Open and USPGA Open in 2014, grew up nearby and can't wait to return this year for the Irish Open (28-31 May). "Royal County Down is one of my favorites in Ireland," McIlroy said. "The more you play it, the more you recognize 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. The links of Royal County Down are exhilarating even without a club in your hand."

### Other Championship Courses:

**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.

## 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 centerpiece 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.

### Other Historical Gems:

**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



Trump International Golf Links, Doonbeg, County Clare



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 is more beautiful than a sunny day in Ireland, but it's best to be prepared – pack a windcheater and waterproofs.

Golf Digest magazine ranks six of Ireland's courses in its Top 100 in the world: Royal County Down (4th), Royal Portrush (16th), Ballybunion 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 is just a matter of paying your green fee, but don't forget to book ahead, especially 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](http://ireland.com/golf)

### 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, you'll need to navigate your way through sand dunes cloaked in marram grass. The golf is riveting, but the landscape makes a glorious backdrop, with sandy strips of beach, and green and purple-hued mountains, caressed by those eternal Atlantic winds. Afterwards, enjoy views of Sheephaven Bay and the beautiful sunsets from the restaurant. Perfect.

#### 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 Golf Courses of the World.  
**Portstewart Golf Club, County Londonderry:** On the Causeway Coastal Route, it includes the aptly named Thistly Hollow!

### 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 favorite of two-times Masters winner Bernhard Langer.  
**Holywood Golf Club, County Down:** Rory McIlroy was its youngest member at the tender age of 16.



Rosapenna, County Donegal

### THE BEAUTY The Old Head of Kinsale Golf Links County Cork

From the scampering hares and swooping sea birds to a 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."

#### Other Beauties:

**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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Traditional music session in Galway

## 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 county that is synonymous with traditional music. Lisdoonvarna made rock stars out of its trad musicians, Kilfenora is renowned for its céilí band (the simply titled Kilfenora Céilí Band), and the corner of the county near Kinvara has more musicians per square foot than

anywhere else in 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.

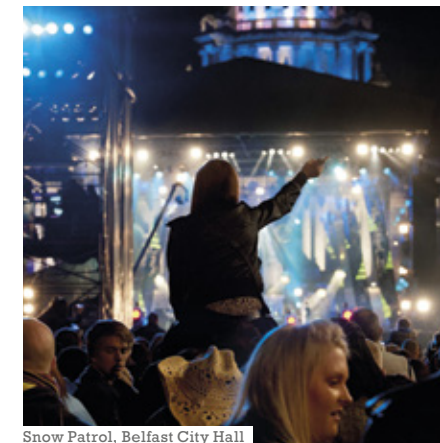
"Being a musician wasn't considered to be in any way extraordinary," Hayes says. "It was very much a normal thing. I developed an interest by proximity and exposure." When you grow up in east Clare, the son of a famous musician (Hayes's father was a member of the Tulla Céilí Band) that may be true. But 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 picturesque 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



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 and music promoters, 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 church; the Rococo plushness of the Olympia in Dublin; and the Cork Opera House.



Set dancing, County Limerick

**County Clare isn't the place to come to 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"**

never been the main focus for Hayes – 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 >



Temple Bar TradFest, Dublin

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"

emotions, love and sadness of daily existence... and to often 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 dance 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 – a shared experience rather than a performance; spontaneous rather than strictly organized.

"There's no limit to the amount of people that can sit in," explains Hayes. "The music is circular, there isn't a lead instrument; generally speaking, it's non-hierarchical – although some people might dominate the session. And because there isn't a divide between the professional and non-professional, there's an innate sense of egalitarianism to it."

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

Because of this fusion of music and mindset, the combined energy of all 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."



Belfast Ulster-Scots Festival



Lambeag drum

### Ulster-Scots music

With a history that goes back 400 years, Ulster-Scots music continues to flourish. Influenced by the folk music that developed up until the end of the 18th century, the likes of jigs (of Irish origin), reels (from Scotland), and hornpipes (which originated from England) combined with a traditional dance repertoire that was linked with marching tunes played by military bands.

Many decades later, such tunes are still to be heard all over Northern Ireland, along with the vibrant sounds of pipes, fiddles, flutes, accordions and the mighty lambeag 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 ceildh music that her mother played in their house. "My father's family was very musical," she explains, "and my parents were keen to get me professionally 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, which was something I personally preferred. What I discovered, however, was that there were very similar tunes shared, with no definition of what was Irish and what was Scottish."

Migration between countries would be a reason for that, of course. "And then you'd have music from America coming back to Ireland. With the traveling of that music back and forth, and with Ireland and Scotland being so close geographically, the lines have become blurred as to what is Irish and what is Scottish. To my mind, Ulster-Scots folk music isn't really a separate genre."

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." And so the music and the traditions continue? Absolutely, according to Valerie, the future is looking bright.

"My eight-year-old son is now in the marching band that my father, grandfather and great-grandfather were in," she says proudly, "so all of those tunes are second nature to him."

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## Devenish Island

County Fermanagh

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

# THE VIKINGS

*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 center 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 civilization, working away to save 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 centers, 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 endeavors 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. Shortly after, they attacked 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 horned helmets, headed down the coast and attacked the locals in a display of shocking debauchery.

Or so we are led to believe, because throughout the centuries, the Vikings have been demonised and romanticised in equal measure. But what do we actually know about them?

History is usually written by the victors, but in the case of the Vikings, this is not so. The men from the north were pagan illiterates, so their story has largely been told by those they conquered – Christian literates – with a predictable degree of bias.

Firstly, they probably didn't wear those horned helmets, which are a pretty modern invention. Secondly, a lot of them were just as interested in trading as terrorising, and although the Irish kings



Clonmacnoise, County Offaly

They soon discovered monasteries were the richest source of booty and took aim for the source; perhaps accounting for two features of the Irish landscape: round towers and high crosses

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 7m.

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

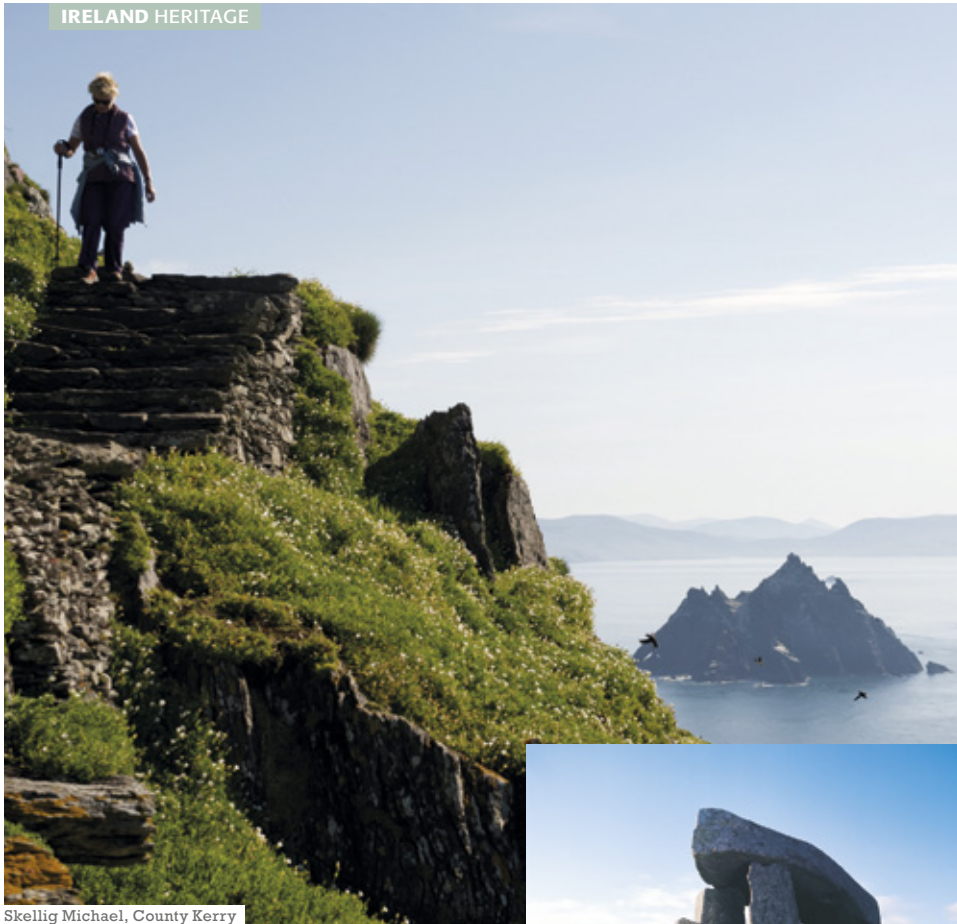
did fight back along the way, Norse-Irish alliances soon became commonplace. Horned helmets aside, there is little disguising the fact that the Vikings had a penchant for violence. At least to begin with. They soon discovered monasteries were the richest source of booty and took aim for the source. Perhaps accounting for two quintessential features of the Irish landscape still standing today: round towers and high crosses.

Round towers like those at Antrim, County Antrim and Ardmore in County Waterford would have acted as lookout



Medieval Museum, Waterford





Skellig Michael, County Kerry



Legananny Dolmen, County Down

Pop into Dublinia Viking Experience and imagine yourself as a Viking warrior setting out 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 thing: place-names.

A scattering of towns and islands have Norse origins, including the Skelligs, County Kerry; Howth and Dalkey, County Dublin; Leixlip, 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 and Bishop’s Palace.

Viking personal names didn’t become quite as popular, although this may be understandable with titles such as Magnus Barelegs, Sitric Silkbeard and Sigtrygg the Squint-Eyed. Some family names did survive, including MacAuliffe, “Son of Olaf”, and Doyle, an Anglicization of Ó Dubhghaill, “son of the evil foreigner.”

Despite this new family-orientated

**Some family names did survive, though, including MacAuliffe, “Son of Olaf”, and Doyle, an Anglicization of Ó Dubhghaill, “son of the evil foreigner”**

emphasis, it wasn’t all domestic bliss. The Vikings were inevitably drawn into Ireland’s internal wars – getting along with your neighbors 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 Clontarf in 1014 (an event important enough to be remembered in Icelandic poetry) and hastened the end for the Northern adventurers.

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 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; the remains of flint tools were found in the woods here. Take a walk down from the fort, where you can enjoy views of the woods and river below.

**Clonmacnoise**

County Offaly

At the crossroads of ancient Ireland some 1,500 years ago, St Ciarán founded the monastery of Clonmacnoise. You can still see several high crosses here. Try to visit in the evening with the sun sinking beyond the broad sweep of the River Shannon. Enough to make even an ardent atheist 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 movie 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 at the top.

**Legananny Dolmen**

County Down

The Legananny Dolmen in County Down is a 4,500-year-old megalithic portal tomb that looks 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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Dunbrody Famine Ship, New Ross, County Wexford

Blasket Islands, County Kerry



# IN SEARCH OF HISTORY

Tracing your ancestry can be one of the most rewarding journeys you ever take. Consultant genealogist John Grenham gives expert advice on how to do it, both before you travel to the island of Ireland, and when you get here



Linen Hall Library, Belfast

**If you're thinking** about embarking on a journey back to your past, the news is good: genealogy in Ireland is quite straightforward. And with more and more records now easily searchable online, there's no excuse for not starting.

The only cast-iron rule is that you begin from what you know and use it to find out what you don't know. So if your surname is Kelly, do not presume that you must be connected to the Gaelic aristocrats, the O'Kellys of Uí Máine, and then try to stretch their pedigree forward to fit your family. Start from Grandpa Pat Kelly and work backwards. "Interview the elder members of your family," advises historian Turtle Bunbury. "Gather whatever information you can, irrespective of quality. A detail that may seem trivial at the start could prove the key to a whole episode."

It is true that the Public Record Office

in Dublin was destroyed during the Irish Civil War in 1922, and all the documents it held were burned, but with a little effort (and some rose-tinted spectacles), the glass can be half-full: the range of records you have to think about is all the simpler.

Only four sets of records are absolutely essential for everyone doing Irish research: census returns; state registration of births, marriages and deaths; church registers; and property tax listings.

### Censuses

The earliest surviving full censuses for the entire island of Ireland are for 1901 and 1911, and they are freely searchable online at [genealogy.nationalarchives.ie](http://genealogy.nationalarchives.ie). For the descendants of the millions who fled Ireland during the Great Famine of 1845-1852 or immediately afterwards, these censuses might seem too late. But everyone who emigrated left behind a network of extended family, and that network almost certainly survived in some form up to the start of the 20th century. So start with the online censuses; at the very least, they will give you a sense of the scale of the research. And they are simple and addictive to use: every item on every household census return is searchable.

### Vital records

State registration of all Irish births, deaths and marriages began in 1864, under the charge of the General Register Office. In theory at least, every event after that year is recorded. Again, 1864 can seem very late, but these records are indexed for the whole island and can be extremely informative. If you have to start with a grandnephew of your direct line and work back, so be it.

The only place to search all pre-1922 records is in the GRO Research Room in Werburgh Street in Dublin.



PRONI, Belfast

Online research is still a little fragmented, but there are some very useful sites. For Northern Ireland, all registered events going back to 1864 are fully searchable for a small fee at [geni.nidirect.gov.uk](http://geni.nidirect.gov.uk). The GRO indexes (but not the registers) for the entire island up to 1922 and the Republic of Ireland up to 1958 are transcribed and free to search on [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org). This website also has transcripts of the birth registers up to 1881. [Rootsireland.ie](http://Rootsireland.ie) has excellent pay-per-view transcripts of the registers up to 1900, but only for some counties.

### Church registers

The three major Christian denominations in Ireland are Roman Catholicism, Church of Ireland and Presbyterianism.

The Church of Ireland (in North America the Episcopalian Church) was the "established" or state church in Ireland until 1870. This meant that its pre-1870 records were regarded as state or public records, so most Church of Ireland registers dating from before 1870 were in the Public Record Office in 1922 and were destroyed. However, not everything was



Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin

lost and many transcripts of those that were destroyed have since emerged. The best collections are in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast (for the historic nine counties of Ulster) – [proni.gov.uk](http://proni.gov.uk), and the Representative Church Body Library (for the Republic of Ireland) – [ireland.anglican.org](http://ireland.anglican.org)

Presbyterians have only ever made up a sizeable portion of the population in the northeast Ulster corner of the island, but before partition in 1922 there were many congregations scattered throughout Ireland. When both of the states created in that year took on clearer religious identities, many of these southern congregations withered away. In general, their records ended up in PRONI in Belfast.

A large majority of the population (more than 80%) belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, and Roman Catholic records are the single most important

**The only cast-iron rule with Irish genealogy is that you begin with what you know, and use it to find out what you don't. Start from Grandpa Pat Kelly, and work backwards**

source of family information before the start of civil registration in 1864. The National Library of Ireland on Kildare Street, Dublin, has microfilm copies of almost all surviving Catholic registers before 1880 and these are freely searchable by anyone on a walk-in basis.

A good selection of online copies of Church records is available, though scattered over different websites including [rootsireland.ie](http://rootsireland.ie); [irishgenealogy.ie](http://irishgenealogy.ie) and [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com) >

## Further resources

**Ireland Family History on Facebook**  
This page holds expert sessions and enables you to connect with a community of people embarking on the journey. [Facebook.com/IrelandFamilyHistory](https://www.facebook.com/IrelandFamilyHistory)

**Ireland Reaching Out**  
This volunteer-led research project will connect you with distant relatives at the parish level. [irelandxo.com](http://irelandxo.com)

**National Library and National Archives**  
Both have excellent free, walk-in advisory services, while you can search census records of 1901 and 1911 online at the National Archives website. [nli.ie](http://nli.ie) and [census.nationalarchives.ie](http://census.nationalarchives.ie)

**The Irish Times**  
The last name search on this website is a gem of a resource. [irishtimes.com/ancestor](http://irishtimes.com/ancestor)

**Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) and General Register Office for Northern Ireland (GRONI)**

All public records from Northern Ireland are stored at PRONI. There's a huge range of material including records of historical, social and cultural importance that can be accessed for free. GRONI, meanwhile, registers all births, deaths, marriages and adoptions in Northern Ireland. [proni.gov.uk](http://proni.gov.uk) and [gen.nidirect.gov.uk](http://gen.nidirect.gov.uk)

**Ulster Historical Foundation**  
This family history research foundation has been helping people trace their Scots-Irish and Irish roots for more than 50 years. There are over 200 family records, as well as a free Ulster-Scots app. [ancestryireland.com](http://ancestryireland.com)

**Military archives**  
A diverse body of information for the Republic of Ireland is held on this site. [militaryarchives.ie](http://militaryarchives.ie)

**County Genealogy Centers**  
Many counties in Ireland boast their own county genealogy center and the level of local knowledge there can be useful. There's a list of the individual centers on [rootsireland.ie](http://rootsireland.ie)



### Property taxes

The only all-inclusive record of who was living where in 19th century Ireland is Griffith's Valuation, a county-by-county listing taken between 1847 and 1864 in order to impose a property tax. From the humblest mud-walled cabin to the grandest of Georgian mansions, every single property on the island is listed, along with the name of its occupier.

An earlier tax survey, which was much less comprehensive, is found in the National Archives of Ireland's Tithe Books. Tithes were payable by all rural dwellers, regardless of religion, to the local Church of Ireland clergy. This was not a recipe for inter-faith harmony, but the assessments drawn up between 1824 and 1838 are very often the only surviving records from the period.

Griffith's and the Tithe Books are both free to search online, Griffith's at [askaboutireland.ie](http://askaboutireland.ie) and the Tithes at [genealogy.nationalarchives.ie](http://genealogy.nationalarchives.ie)

**From the humblest mud cabin to the grandest Georgian mansion, every single property on the island is listed in Griffith's Valuation (1847-1864) along with the name of its occupier**

### Along the way

As a general rule, the limit for research is the start date of the relevant parish registers. This varies, with records beginning in the late 1700s in Dublin and some of the more prosperous parts of the east of Ireland, but not until the 1840s or 1850s in many places in the west.

The glory of family history is that families don't obey the laws of history or statistics, so there's always an element of surprise – you can't say what you might find until you start looking. Good luck!

### Did you know?

In 1841, the population of Ireland was 8.25 million. By 1861, it was less than 6 million. Over those 20 years, more than a million died and more than a million fled the island.

More than 40 million Americans claim some Irish ancestry.

According to the Ulster Scots Agency, 17 of the 44 American presidents have Ulster-Scots ancestry, including Harry S. Truman, Bill Clinton and Theodore Roosevelt.



Cobh, County Cork



### The ancestry experience

When actor Martin Sheen went about tracing his ancestry on the popular TV show *Who Do You Think You Are?* his reasons for taking part were simple: "I'm 71 years old and I don't know how much longer I'll be around. I was doing it for my grandchildren and their children."

Whatever your motivation for getting started, one thing is for sure: it is a journey unlike any other. As many of those who have delved into their past can testify, visiting the place where your forebears came from can be a profound experience. "My tree was really only a map that led me to the people, the land, and the culture that had shaped my family for hundreds of years," says Irish-American blogger Gerry Brit. "When I finally got to Ireland the sense of comfort was overwhelming, but the sense of community was even stronger."

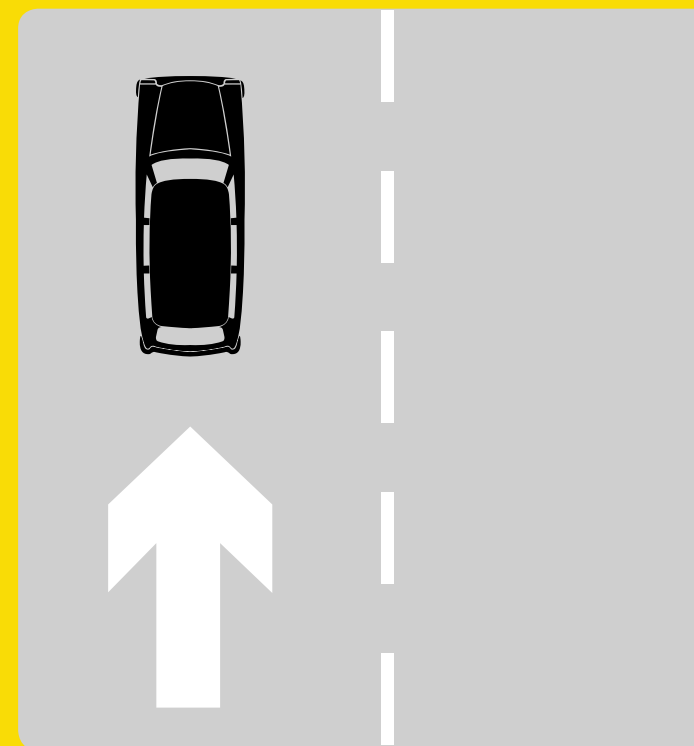
As well as meeting family members, and visiting places that have a direct relationship with your ancestry, there are also wonderful genealogy experiences on the island where you can feel part of the bigger picture.

For a sense of how the Great Famine impacted on Irish communities, the **Irish National Famine Museum** in the original Stable Yards of Strokestown Park House (Strokestown, County Roscommon; [strokestownpark.ie](http://strokestownpark.ie)) is unmatched. Also reflecting what emigrant ancestors endured, the **Dunbrody Famine Ship** (New Ross, County Wexford; [dunbrody.com](http://dunbrody.com)) hosts a uniquely hands-on interpretation of the Famine emigrant experience.

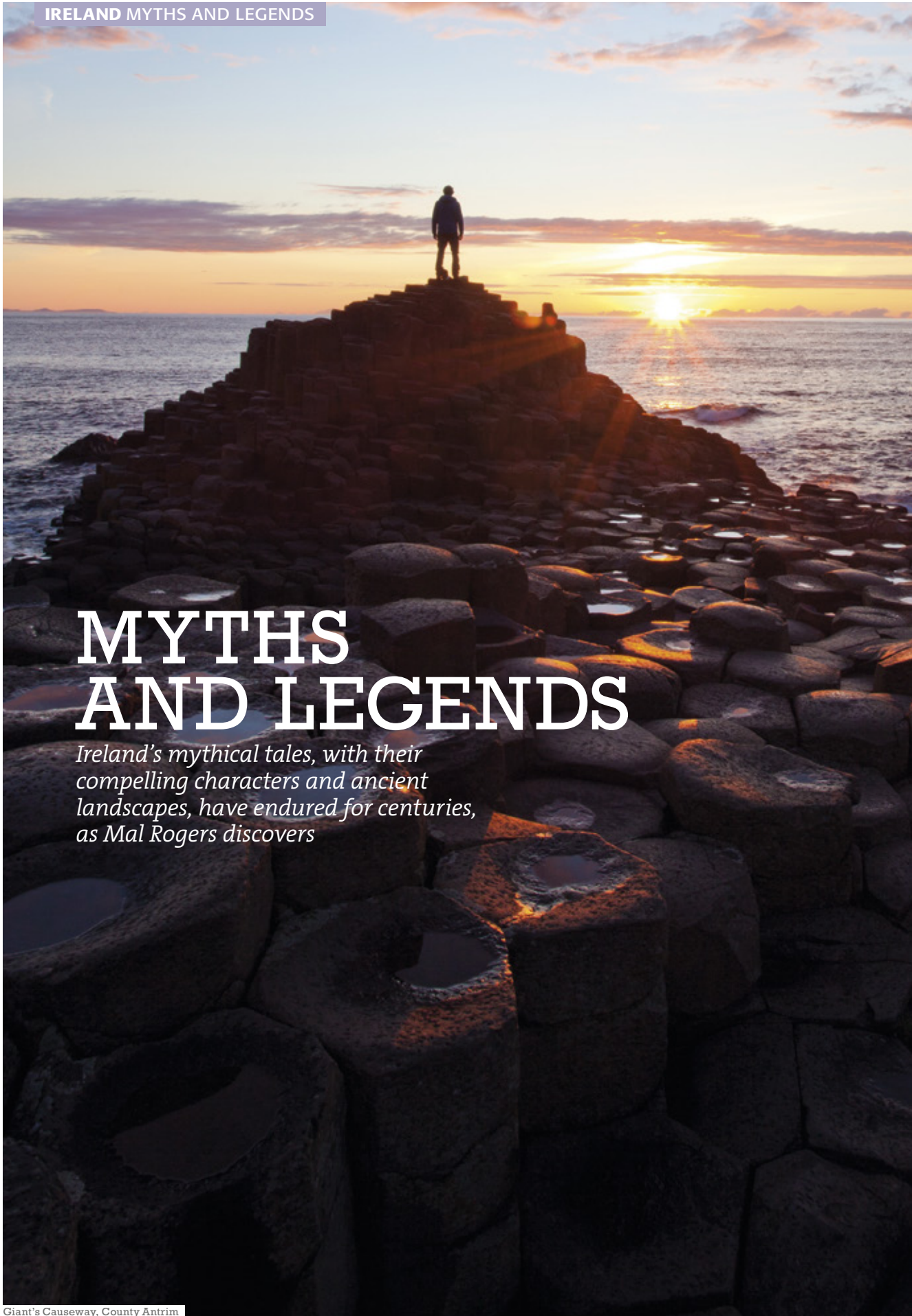
**The Country Life National Museum of Ireland** (Turlough, County Mayo; [museum.ie](http://museum.ie)) vividly represents and celebrates the traditional way of life in rural Ireland, while **The Ulster American Folk Park** (Omagh, County Tyrone; [nmni.com](http://nmni.com)) follows the Irish emigrant story from the cottages of Ulster to the log cabins of the American Frontier. It's a fascinating journey.

Finally, the colorful little harbor of **Cobh**, County Cork (formerly Queenstown), makes for a great day trip from Cork city. The town was the main point of embarkation for Irish emigrants to North America in the late 19th century. Make sure to visit **The Cobh Heritage Centre** ([cobhheritage.com](http://cobhheritage.com)) which tells their story with a unique multimedia experience. The Titanic Experience is also well worth a visit when in town.

# ATTENTION / ACHTUNG



## Drive on left Conduire à gauche Links fahren



# MYTHS AND LEGENDS

*Ireland's mythical tales, with their compelling characters and ancient landscapes, have endured for centuries, as Mal Rogers discovers*

Giant's Causeway, County Antrim



Rock of Cashel, County Tipperary

**"Every field in Ireland** contains a tale; there's a myth on every mountain. For legends, follow the stream of any river, and soon you'll understand why Ireland's national art form is the story..."

So says author and broadcaster Frank Delaney. Once called "the most eloquent man in the world" by National Public Radio in the US, Delaney has lived a life immersed in literature. Growing up in County Tipperary, this best-selling writer would have been surrounded by local legends.

The county, so famous for the Rock of Cashel (a spectacular group of medieval buildings located in the place where Saint Patrick is reputed to have converted the local King of Munster to Christianity), also has more modest landscapes that are rich in legend.

Northwest of Carrick-on-Suir, the mountain of Slievenamon reflects Tipperary's prehistoric heritage, with two cairns (stacks of stones) studding its slopes. Slievenamon's unusual name owes its origins directly to mythology – it means "mountain of the women."

According to folklore, Fionn Mac Cumhaill (Finn McCool) chose his wife by picking the winner of a race to the top of the mountain. That winner was the very beautiful Gráinne. Lucky girl!

A hero to end all heroes, Mac Cumhaill was a golden-haired mythical warrior (and sometime giant) who had a hand in creating some of Ireland's most dramatic landscapes.

Just look at the Giant's Causeway. Several theories exist to explain this astonishing rock formation on Antrim's Causeway Coast. Is it the work of giants or geology? Some 60 million years ago, molten lava erupted then cooled, shrinking into these weird shapes, say the scientists. But those who tend towards a supernatural dimension focus on Mac Cumhaill, who built the causeway to walk to Scotland in order to do battle with another giant, Benandonner. However, it was Fionn's wife who cleverly managed to scare off the Scot. Tricking the giant, Mrs Mac Cumhaill showed him the door, and watched as he tore up the causeway behind him. The basalt rock columns are all that remain...

His fame extends to the massive Cloughmore Stone... its location above Rostrevor a result of his strength as he threw it towards an enemy.

Landscape and weather fire the imagination, and Ireland's terrain has produced a huge cannon of folklore in which surreal rock shapes, such as the Proleek Dolmen in County Louth, were created by giants; the island's numerous ring forts were said >



Poulnabrone Dolmen, The Burren, County Clare

## Folklore favorites

### Three tales

#### THE CHILDREN OF LIR

The Children of Lir is one of the most famous and enduring of Ireland's mythical tales. It tells of four children turned into swans by a jealous stepmother. The story describes how the children spent 900 years on Lough Derravaragh, County Westmeath; the Sea of Moyle, off the Antrim coast; and Inisglora, County Mayo.

#### THE SALMON OF KNOWLEDGE

This magical fish was said to impart the gift of knowledge to anyone who ate it. That lucky chap was Fionn Mac Cumhaill!

#### THE PURSUIT OF DIARMUID AND GRÁINNE

This romantic tale tells of Gráinne, the most beautiful woman in Ireland. Betrothed to Fionn Mac Cumhaill, Gráinne fell in love with one of Fionn's warriors, Diarmuid, and the pair eloped, pursued by Fionn. In County Sligo, by Ben Bulbin mountain, a wild boar gored Diarmuid. Gráinne implored Fionn to save her beloved by giving him a drink of magical water. But Fionn refused; by the time he was persuaded to change his mind, Diarmuid was dead.

Children of Lir statue, Ballycastle, County Antrim



Cloughmore Stone, Rostrevor, County Down

can be alternately good or bad. Or how about selkies? These mythical beings live most of their time as seals, but can take human form when on land. But don't expect to be making friends with them any time soon. Once a selkie has talked with a human, there will be no contact for a further seven years. Sad, but true.

The folklore of Ireland also helped shape the greatest horror legend of all. Irish mythology largely made up the supernatural cauldron from which Bram Stoker's Dracula sprang. The Dublin man's book was essentially an Irish tale played out in Whitby, London and Transylvania — probably the first time these three areas had ever appeared together in a work of fiction. And maybe the last, too.

Stoker was immersed in the folklore and mythology of Ireland. His mother was from County Sligo, and would regale the young Bram with stories about the 1832 cholera epidemic in the west of Ireland, rumored to have originated in an unknown place in central Europe. Those infected were often buried alive. She also told her somewhat impressionable son grisly accounts of the Famine, when starving people would drink blood from the veins of cattle.

These stories were an echo of earlier Irish folklore with its recurring theme of "the undead" — particularly associated with the Celtic festival of Samhain, now known as Halloween. Today, the island of Ireland celebrates Halloween with a more modern edge, with trick or treating and dressing up. For a bit of fun, make sure to check out the Bram Stoker Festival in Dublin (late October) with parades, parties and literary events.

Of course, you don't need to have an interest in the supernatural to enjoy Ireland. It doesn't matter if you don't believe in giants, fairies, water spirits or even mermaids. You'll still have a wonderful time. And the beings from the otherworld won't mind a bit. Take it from us, they're used to it.



Janus figure, Boa Island, County Fermanagh



St Patrick's Day, Dublin

## Myths and traditions that endure

*In this land of legend and myth, it's not surprising that the Shamrock of St Patrick lays claim to its own story*

According to legend, Patrick used the shamrock's three sepal leaf to explain the concept of the Trinity to the pagan Irish. Today, Ireland's patron saint is celebrated on March 17, with festivals, parades and events all over the island. He's also celebrated in the spiritual home of St Patrick in Armagh city, where not one but two cathedrals are dedicated to the saint.

Many other legends persist in Ireland. The Claddagh ring, associated with Galway since at least the 16th century, can represent faith, trust, loyalty or betrothal depending on its design. Wear it with the heart turned out, and people know you're looking for love; if you have the heart turned in, you're spoken for! You can pick one up in jewelry stores, as well as in Thomas Dillon's in Galway city — the original maker of the ring.

In counties Louth and Kildare, St Brigid's crosses are still a feature of the Celtic first day of spring, February 1. Made out of rushes, they are placed in homes, bringing blessings and good luck throughout the year to all who live there. The practice is said to have its origins in the 5th century, and relates to the legend of Brigid's conversion of a dying pagan. She fashioned a makeshift cross by plaiting rushes together. St Brigid's crosses are still made in this way today.

One of Ireland's biggest festivals is the ancient pagan celebration of Halloween, or Samhain as it was known — the appointed date when the souls of the dead returned to their old homes. Thousands of years ago, great fires were built across the land, but it's all about costumes and trick-or-treating now. The Banks of the Foyle Halloween Carnival in Derry~Londonderry, is an action-packed five-day festival featuring culture, art and a very colorful parade.

While the exact origins of Halloween are shrouded in mystery, there's still one thing we can be certain of — in Ireland, they've been celebrating it for some 5,000 years. Now, that's what you call an enduring legend.

to be entrances to the realm of the fairies; while mountains such as Ben Bulbin in County Sligo played home to a mythic band of warriors called the Fianna. And these are just the places you can see...

Irish mythology is full of "otherworldly" locations, beyond the confines of a map. One such place is Tír na nÓg — the "land of the young", where there is no disease and no death. The great warrior Oisín followed the beautiful Niamh to this mythical place, galloping across the waves on a magical horse. But on a nostalgic visit to his homeland, he fell from his horse near the village of Elphin in County Roscommon and the magic spell that had kept him young was broken.

Elphin has another claim to fame: St Patrick visited here in the 5th century and consecrated a church, while nearby at Rathcroghan is a massive archeological site at the very heart of Irish mythology — an area with over 5,000 years of legends.

Warrior Queen Medbh (Maeve) from the epic tale Táin Bó Cúailnge (The Cattle Raid of Cooley) had her palace here; while the Oweynagat (Cave of the Cats) has been in use since the Bronze Age, and is supposedly an entrance to the otherworld.

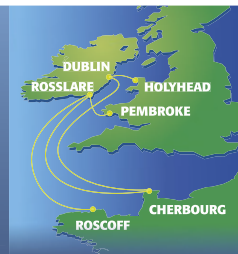
If you do squeeze through the entrance just make sure you come back out again!

Of course, Ireland has also influenced writers from across the world. It's thought that J.R.R. Tolkien was inspired by the bewitching landscape of The Burren in County Clare to create Middle Earth in The Lord of The Rings.

The Burren's spectral limestone pavements loom out of the turf in harsh, haunting fashion. This is a place of bewitching rocks and crags shaped by 350 million years of weather, with more than 90 megalithic tombs and numerous ring forts. And as the setting sun frames the famous Poulnabrone Dolmen (a portal tomb dated between 4200BC and 2900BC), it's easy to believe this is a magical place.

But as well as aspects of the landscape, Irish mythology has made its presence felt with a truly epic cast of characters. As well as the pesky little leprechaun with his mischievous ways, you'll find a compelling collection of villains, heroes and alchemists. Take the banshee, for example. Watch out if you hear this fairy woman scream — it means someone is about to die. The píca is a fairy changeling that can take animal or human form, and

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- 67 MAP OF IRELAND

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## IRELAND KEY TRAVEL FACTS

### SMOKING RESTRICTIONS

Smoking is banned in all public places.

### CUSTOMS

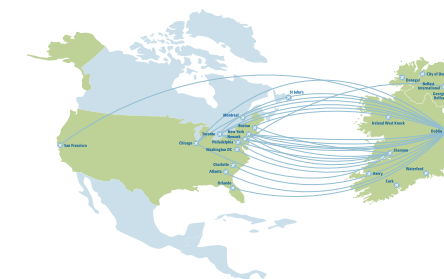
Customs operate green and red channels at most ports and airports. If you need to declare goods over the duty and tax-free allowances for non-EU visitors you must use the red channel. Pass through the green channel if you have nothing to declare. The United States Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) facility at Terminal 2 in Dublin Airport is a purpose-built facility that allows US-bound passengers to undertake all immigration, customs and agriculture inspections at Dublin prior to departure. Shannon Airport also has pre-clearance facilities available.

### WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

The metric system is used in the Republic (not strictly enforced at times); imperial in Northern Ireland.

### VAT (SALES TAX) AND REFUNDS

In the Republic of Ireland, tourism services such as restaurant meals and accommodation benefit from a lower VAT (sales tax) rate of 9%. Visitors to Ireland from non-EU countries can claim back sales taxes on purchases made in Ireland; shopping in Ireland is subject to a sales tax of 23%. Always look for the "Tax-Free Shopping" sign in the windows of participating stores. To avail of your tax refund, complete a valid tax refund document, which you can get from participating stores.



For details of airline services to Shannon, Dublin and Belfast please see **page 62**

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### PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 2015

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

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



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For details on how to claim tax back on goods bought in Northern Ireland, please visit [gov.uk/vat-consumers/taxfree-shopping](http://gov.uk/vat-consumers/taxfree-shopping)



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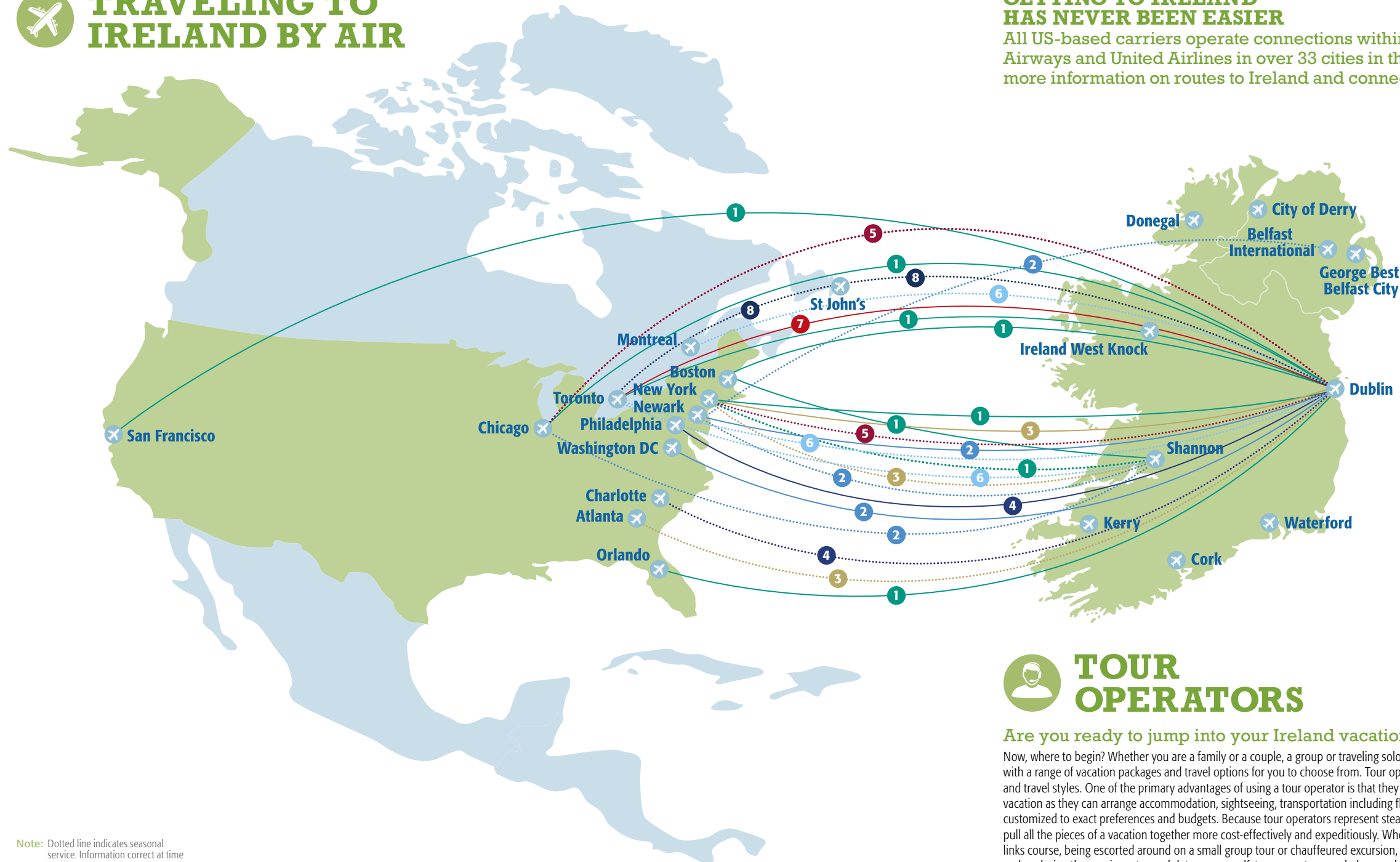
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Note: Dotted line indicates seasonal service. Information correct at time of printing. Map not to scale.

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1 Aer Lingus	aerlingus.com	JFK - DUB JFK - SNN (seasonal) BOS - DUB BOS - SNN ORD - DUB MCO - DUB SFO - DUB YYZ - DUB
2 UNITED	united.com	EWR - DUB EWR - SNN (seasonal) EWR - BFS (seasonal) IAD - DUB ORD - SNN (seasonal)
3 DELTA	delta.com	JFK - DUB JFK - SNN (seasonal) ATL - DUB (seasonal)
4 U.S. AIRWAYS	usairways.com	PHL - DUB CLT - DUB (seasonal)
5 American Airlines	aa.com	ORD - DUB (seasonal) JFK - DUB (seasonal)
6 Air Transat	airtransat.com	YYZ - DUB (seasonal) YYZ - SNN (seasonal) YUL - DUB (seasonal)
7 AIR CANADA rouge	aircanada.com	YYZ - DUB
8 WESTJET	westjet.com	YYT - DUB (seasonal) YYZ - DUB (seasonal)

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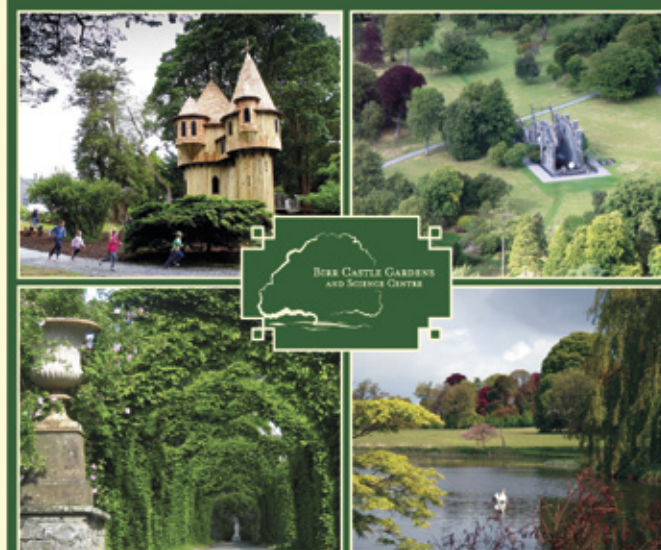
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## IRELAND'S REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ACCESS

### TRAVELING TO IRELAND'S AIRPORTS

The island of Ireland is easily accessible by air, with over 30 airlines flying to Ireland from more than 70 destinations across Europe and the US. There are direct flights from many US airports to Ireland; see page 63 for details.

### TRAVELING TO IRELAND FROM GREAT BRITAIN

Travel to Ireland from Great Britain is convenient with an increasing number of air and ferry routes to the island now available. The island of Ireland has five main ferry ports – Belfast, Dublin, Dun Laoghaire, Larne and Rosslare. If traveling from Great Britain to Ireland, you can bring your car or go as a foot passenger. Visit [ireland.com](http://ireland.com) for further information.

### REGIONAL AIRPORTS AND FLIGHTS

The following internal flights are available within Ireland:

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	Kerry	Aer Lingus Regional	+353 818 365 044	aerlingus.com

All information correct at time of going to press but may be subject to future operator changes. Airlines may also operate/change code sharing and franchise operator agreements. Please see websites for details.

### AIRPORT CONTACT DETAILS

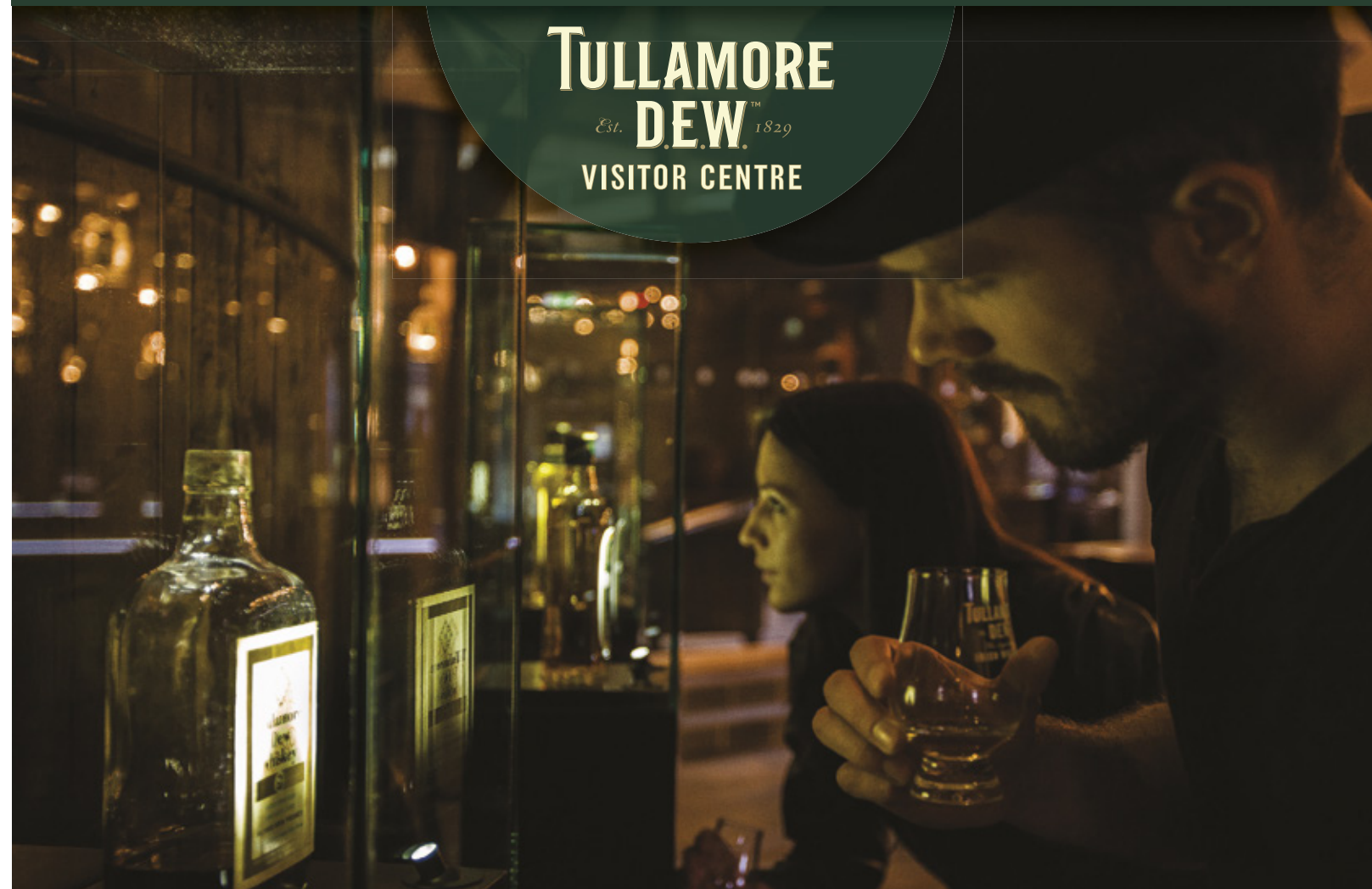
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# MAP & ROUTE MILEAGE PLANNER

Roads in Ireland range from modern motorways to narrow country lanes, and driving in Ireland can be a magical experience, with scenic treasures around every corner.



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

**KILOMETERS**  
0 20 40 60 80km

**MILES**  
0 10 20 30 40 50mi



To view or download a copy of the 'Great Irish Road Trips' guide, visit [ireland.com](http://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!



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