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TOP IRELAND EXPERIENCES 38



DISCOVER ALL ABOUT 10



A GOLFING ADVENTURE 50

## 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 scenery along the Wild Atlantic Way, to capture you with its history from ancient sites such as Newgrange to the Edwardian-era Gobbins path, and to entice you with Ireland's Ancient East. The time is now.*



FABULOUSLY FOODIE 22

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## Picture *This*

Spectacular sights hang like pearls on a necklace along the Causeway Coast. There are dramatic geological formations, crumbling cliff-top castles and stunning beaches such as White Park Bay. Sitting between two headlands, this secluded sandy arc is backed by golden dunes and deep green fields, and is cradled by the craggy north Antrim coastline. Enjoy gentle seaside strolls and some of the best scenery the island has to offer.

White Park Bay, County Antrim





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Hallowe'en in Derry~Londonderry

## Hallowe'en in Derry~Londonderry

The Banks of the Foyle Hallowe'en Carnival is the biggest Hallowe'en celebration in Europe. Party with the supernatural at the Gothic Ball (appropriately hosted in a 19th century church); get swept away by the dreamy spectacle of light and movement at the Awakening of the Walls; and dare to take a tour through a haunted house. One of the big highlights? The Carnival Parade through the city streets with music, theatrics and breathtaking performances. Guaranteed to blow those cobwebs away.



Ireland Escape

Traditional music session

## Music and dance

Music and dance is a magical coupling in Ireland. The lively, soaring melodies of a traditional music session in a pub are catching; before you know it you'll be swaying along. And where there's music, you'll often find impromptu céilís, where you can get up and dance with the locals. A great place to get a sense of the skill, passion and charm of Irish music is at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. This is the biggest single festival of Irish music on the planet, which in 2016 will take place in Ennis, County Clare. Expect lively street music, classes, tours and an unbeatable atmosphere.

# DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT

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



Bloomsday, Dublin

## Literary Ireland

Ireland has produced some exceptional writers, including Oscar Wilde, W.B. Yeats, George Bernard Shaw and James Joyce, whose masterpiece Ulysses is celebrated annually in Dublin on 16 June. Get to know the island's literary heritage with a visit to the Dublin Writers Museum, or have some fun on the city's Literary Pub Crawl. In Belfast, you can walk in the footsteps of C.S. Lewis, or visit Yeats's final resting place at the foot of Ben Bulbin mountain in Drumcliff, County Sligo.

## St Patrick's Festival

St Patrick's Day is celebrated all over the world on 17 March, but where better to enjoy it than in Ireland. Follow in Patrick's footsteps in Armagh with a packed five days of music, song, dance, theatre, and, of course, history. Or head to Dublin, where the annual street parade is an explosion of colour, creativity and thrilling street performances. Taking place from 17 to 20 March, events include treasure hunts, street theatre, cultural talks, concerts and a funfair.



St Patrick's Day, Dublin



Aran Islands, County Galway

## Visit the Gaeltacht

Cultured, traditional and utterly unique, Gaeltacht areas are Ireland's Irish-speaking regions. Scattered along the west coast, along with parts of counties Cork, Meath and Waterford, these are great places to engage with locals who are happy to share their enthusiasm for the Irish language. Try a traditional activity such as basket-weaving or bodhrán-playing, visit a pub to meet locals and enjoy a traditional music session, and take a walk in some of the island's most rugged landscapes.





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## STAY SOMEWHERE DIFFERENT

*Accommodation in Ireland is more than just a place to lay your head – it's somewhere to connect with locals, somewhere to feel a sense of history, somewhere to really relax*

When it comes to unique accommodation, Ireland certainly knows how to impress. If you like the sound of miniature castles, 17th century gate lodges and Gothic towers, then look to the National Trust and Irish Landmark Trust. With dramatic architecture, fascinating histories and incredible landscapes, you're guaranteed to find a memorable self-catering holiday, whether you're snuggling down in front of the fire or wandering your own estate.

Ireland's historic country houses boast grand drawing rooms, gracious bedrooms and sumptuous gardens. Just look at the luxurious Ard na Sidhe Country House in the surrounds of Killorglin, County Kerry. Or how about a blend of eras at Castlecoote House, County Roscommon, which mixes a 16th century castle with a Georgian mansion. And see how the Dean of Armagh Cathedral lived at Dean's Hill, built in 1772, in College Hill, Armagh.

B&B accommodation can be as rustic or

as indulgent as you like, but the best thing about it is definitely the people. Enjoy the atmosphere of a genteel farmhouse, such as 17th century Killiane Castle in County Wexford. Go for tranquil accommodation in Ashley Park House, County Tipperary, on the shores of Lough Ourna, or try the lovely Shola Coach House in Portrush, County Antrim, named 2015's second-best B&B in the world by TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Awards.

It's hard to imagine a more perfect place to rest than an Irish castle hotel. You'll find interiors laden with antiques; landscaped gardens with archery, golf or tennis; and traditionally furnished bedrooms that evoke the spirit of a bygone age. Seek out a lakeside castle, such as Ashford Castle in County Mayo and Ballynahinch Castle in County Galway. Or try the modern-meets-traditional style of Ballygally Castle Hotel on a 17th century estate in County Antrim.

Ireland is renowned for breathtaking coastal views, and you can put yourself in the heart of the picture with a stay in a lighthouse. Cliff-edge locations, crashing waves and rugged landscapes make these places a cut above the rest. Savour the rustic charm of the Wicklow Head Lighthouse in County Wicklow, the Blackhead Lightkeepers' Houses in County Antrim, and the boutique style of Clare Island Lighthouse in County Mayo.

While Ireland may be famous for its coastline, the interior of the island offers a complete contrast, with tranquil canals, rivers and lakes. Experience the atmosphere of riverside hamlets with a cruising holiday on the Shannon-Erne Waterway. From traditional old barges to modern cruisers, it's the perfect way to discover Ireland at a different pace.

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

 [ireland.com](http://ireland.com)



# DISCOVER ALL ABOUT... IRELAND'S ISLANDS

Sprinkled around Ireland's coastline and lakelands are wild, romantic and fascinating islands. Their ancient history, close-knit communities and unspoiled beauty make them ideal for a great escape BY MARK FOLENS



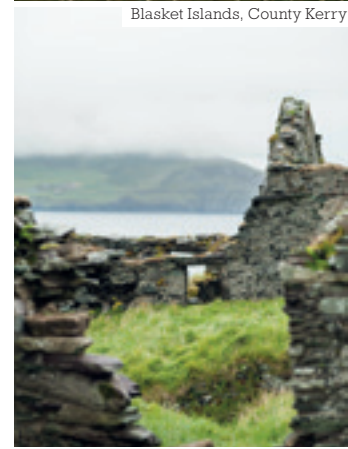
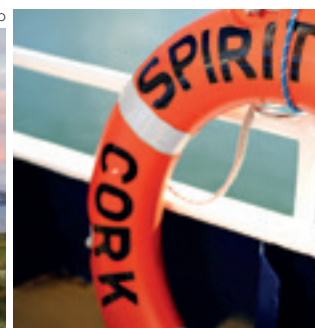
Clare Island Lighthouse, County Mayo

## Easy islands

Not all of Ireland's islands are remote – Dalkey Island and Ireland's Eye are a short boat trip from the coastline of County Dublin. Achill in County Mayo, tiny Cruit Island in County Donegal and Valentia Island in County Kerry are linked to the mainland by bridges. Or why not hire a kayak and discover the scattering of islands in Lower Lough Erne. It's a great way to explore some of the smaller spots including Inis Rath and Boa.



Achill Island, County Mayo



Blasket Islands, County Kerry

## Deserted islands

The Blasket Islands are lands that time forgot. Situated off the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry, the once-inhabited islands were evacuated in 1953 when the elements became too extreme. Thankfully, when weather permits, you can still visit them by ferry from tiny Dunquin Harbour. The abandoned stone buildings that remain here serve as a constant reminder of a previous way of life.



Rathlin Island, County Antrim



White Island, County Fermanagh



Aran Islands, County Galway



Dursley Island, County Cork

**What makes Ireland's islands special?** Is it their remote location? Is it the richness of their traditions, which flourish and thrive? Is it their wild beauty, their luminous landscapes, their white, sandy beaches? Truth be told, it's all of the above. An island visit offers something special: a glimpse into a different life, a chance to hike incredible walking routes, to taste super-fresh seafood and to meet some of the friendliest people around.

## Get out there

Ireland's islands are perfect for getting active. Walk around the cliffs of Keem Bay in Achill Island, County Mayo, hike over craggy Tory Island (the most northerly inhabited island) off County Donegal or roam around the rugged Copeland Islands off County Down, and you'll feel like you're at the edge of the world.

For an unforgettable experience, head to Dursley Island. Separated by a narrow but treacherous reef at the tip of the Beara Peninsula in West Cork, the island connects to the mainland by Ireland's only cable car. There are looped walks, Napoleonic landmarks and stunning views of West Cork's rugged coastline.

Rathlin is Northern Ireland's largest offshore island. Shrouded in myth, the waters are ringed with centuries-old shipwrecks. Today, it's a Special Area of Conservation, with tens of thousands of seabirds making it popular with birdwatchers and walkers.

Or why not hire a bike and explore an island at your own pace? There's nothing quite as tranquil as pedalling around Inis Oírr, County Galway, stopping off for a swim in crystal clear waters and finishing up with a creamy pint of Guinness.

## Traditions preserved

Whether it's Aran sweaters, traditional music, local currach boats, intricate dry-stone walls or crafts such as basket-weaving and bodhrán-making, traditions feel very much part of modern life on Ireland's islands. Call into the local pub, and you'll find a thriving sense of community, as islanders come together in the evenings for a bit of "craic agus ceoil" (fun and music). You'll hear the Irish language being spoken with ease, too, as many of the islands are in Gaeltacht areas.

## Incredible history

The isolation of these islands has allowed ancient structures to lie undisturbed for hundreds of years. Just look at Devenish Island, one of the many lake islands in Lough Erne, County Fermanagh. The Augustinian Abbey here was founded in the 6th century and still remains to this day. Across the waters on the east shore is another island with a storied past. Like Devenish, White Island has a ruined church but more interesting still are the archaic stone figures inside. There are eight in total, and although archaeologists place them between the 9th and 10th centuries, their origins continue to be debated.

For more history, seek out the prehistoric fort of Dun Aengus on Inis Mór, County Galway, perched on the edge of a cliff; the monastic site on Holy Island in Lough Derg; and Skellig Michael 7 miles/12km off the coast of County Kerry. Here, around 1,500 years ago, a group of hardy monks withdrew from civilisation and created a monastic site that has survived to this day. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it's an incredible place to visit.

## DON'T MISS

Every year, island communities host unique arts and culture festivals. **Cape Clear International Storytelling Festival** (September) has been regaling visitors with stories – some on boats – for over two decades. There are intimate movie screenings at the **Clare Island Film Festival** (September/October), and traditional cookery demonstrations at **Bia Bó Finne** (Inishbofin, October). You can enjoy some island sounds, too, at the **Rathlin Island Festival** (July), or keep it traditional at **Craiceann** – the Bodhrán Summerschool (June) with concerts and "craic" on Inis Oírr.





St George's Market, Belfast



Octopussy's, Howth, County Dublin



Trinity College, Dublin



Ha'penny Bridge, Dublin

# CITY BREAKS

*Ireland's cities have a deserved reputation for being packed with history, entertainment and culture. These are places that buzz with vibrant nightlife, show their cultural side with galleries, studios and literary heritage, and boast fascinating backstories. From the Georgian grace of Dublin to the buzzing foodie city of Belfast and the bohemian cool of Galway, here's a pick of the best things to see, do and enjoy*



Fun in the rain at Powerscourt Townhouse Centre, Dublin

## DUBLIN

This historic city pulses with an inimitable energy, wears its beauty with pride and shows off its sense of humour with quick-fired wit. Dublin is all about good times: the gracious city streets bustle with convivial old pubs and cafés, and buzz with cutting-edge restaurants. This is a city of literary heritage, a place so connected to the written word it has been named a UNESCO City of Literature.

Peel back the centuries and you'll uncover Dublin's medieval core, and the area where Vikings built forts. One of the oldest parts of the city lies where Dublin Castle now stands. Creep down into the Medieval Undercroft and you can see the foundations of the old city walls. Nearby is Christ Church Cathedral (1028), with one of the largest medieval crypts in Ireland and Great Britain.

For all its ancient charm, much of Dublin's architectural grace comes from the Georgian period, which saw the narrow streets of the Middle Ages widened and developed. From the quayside Custom House and Four Courts, to the residential enclaves of Merrion Square, Fitzwilliam Square and North Great George's Street, the Georgian era gave the city space and elegance.

Dublin's mix of lively districts lends it an ever-changing edge. There's Grand Canal Dock, where you can eat seafood at the Mourne Seafood Bar overlooking the rippling water. There's the Liberties, one of the city's oldest areas, with historic buildings, traditional pubs and the Teeling Whiskey Distillery. And there's Portobello, with red-brick Victorian houses, cafés, bakeries and canal walks.

The perfect day? Visit the 9th century Book of Kells in Trinity College, browse the shops around South William Street and take in some trad music in Temple Bar.

Whatever you do in Dublin, the city will stay with you long after you leave.



Dame Lane, Dublin

## DUBLIN FIVE TO SEE

**LITTLE MUSEUM OF DUBLIN**  
Located in a beautiful old building overlooking verdant St Stephen's Green park, this eccentric museum tells the story of 20th century Dublin through artefacts donated by the Irish people.

**KILMAINHAM GAOL**  
One of the largest unoccupied gaols in Europe, Kilmainham was at the centre of some of Ireland's most tragic and dramatic events. As well as an exhibition on the penal system, a visit includes a tour of the prison.

**GEORGE'S STREET ARCADE**  
Ireland's first purpose-built shopping centre retains much of its Victorian charm thanks to its quirky shops, stalls and cafés.

**POWERSCOURT TOWNHOUSE CENTRE**  
Once a vast and elegant mansion built for entertaining, this shopping centre is a pure delight with lovely boutiques and bars.

**NATIONAL MUSEUM**  
A fascinating collection of Bronze Age artefacts makes this museum a must-visit. The collection also includes an exhibition of Iron Age bog bodies.

## Beyond Dublin

Take the Dart train to the northern coastal suburbs of Malahide and Howth, with cliff walks, castles and cafés. Or head south to the town of Dun Laoghaire for a walk on the pier. If you want to experience both the northern and southern suburbs, then jump on one of the Dublin Bay Cruises from Dun Laoghaire to Howth. The cruise lasts 90 minutes and takes in the stunning coastal landscapes of County Dublin.



Coliemore Harbour, Dalkey, County Dublin

## Hidden Gems

Get to know the city with a walking tour: try the Dublin Tasting Trail hosted by Fabulous Food Trails for under-the-radar hotspots; Pat Liddy's Walking Tours for history and literary routes; or do it yourself with the Dublin Discovery Trails, which stretch from College Green to Kilmainham. Dublin's Creative Quarter is the place to go for interior shops, hip cafés and galleries. Or relax in the leafy Iveagh Gardens park – perfect for picnics.



Derry-Londonderry



Canty's pub, Cork



Rothe House, Kilkenny



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As the play... rewind... pause theme suggests, you can explore the area at a pace that suits you. Enjoy!



Titanic Belfast

## BELFAST

Belfast has a dramatic setting on the shores of Belfast Lough. So dramatic, in fact, that the towering Cave Hill, overlooking the city, reputedly inspired writer Jonathan Swift to create Gulliver's Travels.

Drama, literature and history lurk round every corner of this great city... on the cobbled streets of the Cathedral Quarter, in the façades of the commanding Victorian buildings and in great historic marketplaces such as St George's Market, which bursts into action from Friday to Sunday every week. You can delve into the city's museums and uncover more of Belfast's past at the Ulster Museum, City Hall, Belfast Castle and the Linen Hall Library.

Leafy areas such as the Botanic Gardens in the University Quarter stand alongside great architectural edifices that reflect Belfast's prosperous shipbuilding heritage. In the cultural district of the Cathedral Quarter you'll find galleries, studios, arts venues and cocktail bars.

Near the city centre is the fascinating Titanic Belfast, the world's largest Titanic-themed visitor attraction. To complete the Titanic experience, visit Titanic's Pump-House and Dock, where the luxury liner last rested on dry ground. Nearby you'll see H.M.S. Caroline, a World War I light cruiser and the last survivor of the Grand Fleet, with its own dramatic tales to tell of the infamous Battle of Jutland. The ship will open as a visitor attraction in 2016.

It's a compelling place, Belfast – a bit Victorian, a bit modern. You can enjoy its history during the day and spend the evening taking in its lively music scene and buzzing nightlife. With great pubs like the Garrick and the Duke of York, and elegant bars like the Cocktail Bar at The Merchant, it won't be long before this vibrant city casts its spell on you.



Ireland City Breaks

City Hall, Belfast



Crown Liquor Saloon, Belfast

## BELFAST FIVE TO SEE

**TITANIC BELFAST**  
Inside this magnificent building, the story of the Titanic is explored from every angle. It's Belfast's big must-see.

**CROWN LIQUOR SALOON**  
The Crown Liquor Saloon, on any list of the world's top bars, glories in Victorian splendour. Many of the fixtures and fittings were intended for the Titanic, but instead were used to pay bar bills by shipyard workers. And it's a great spot for lunch, too.

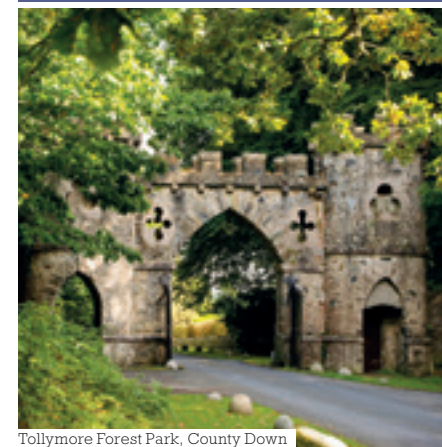
**LINEN HALL LIBRARY**  
This unique institution (1788) houses one of the definitive collections of material on Irish politics and culture – not to mention an intoxicating smell of old leather chairs, polished wood and books.

**S.S. NOMADIC**  
Beautifully restored and close to Titanic Belfast, this is the last remaining White Star Line ship in the world, and was used to ferry first- and second-class passengers to Titanic.

**BLACK TAXI TOUR**  
Take in the city with the acclaimed Black Taxi Tour, which brings you to the political murals, the Titanic Quarter, University Quarter and museum district.

## Beyond Belfast

As well as the Giant's Causeway, Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge and Dunluce Castle, there's so much to see beyond Belfast. Why not try the Game of Thrones™ tour around some of the major filming locations in Northern Ireland? Walk along the incredible Gobbins path (see page 40 for more), or head to the Tollymore Forest Park, with rare plants, follies and views of the Mourne Mountains.



Tollymore Forest Park, County Down

## Foodie favourites

Belfast has a vibrant culinary scene, and with 2016 being Northern Ireland's Year of Food & Drink, it's the perfect time to explore what the city has to offer. Start off with a visit to St George's Market, packed with the finest fresh produce from cheese to local delicacies. Ox, on the banks of the Lagan, is a critically acclaimed restaurant with views of the river. Or head to the Lisburn Road brasserie of Shu, which uses the best seasonal ingredients.

# Make your day

With varied, stunning panoramas in a compact space, it's a perfect destination for visitors looking for thrills or relaxation. The mountains and beautiful beaches are just the beginning.



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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. The Castle is a consistent winner of high profile awards; World's Best Luxury Country Hotel for five consecutive years, Trip Advisor's Choice Award 2013, Condé Nast Gold List for 2014 and Best Luxury Castle Hotel & Spa with Luxury Travel Guide Awards in 2015. This lovingly restored castle hotel in Ireland blends its historic past with a dash of contemporary elegance and renowned innovative service.



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Galway

## GALWAY

A cool, bohemian city with a love of traditional music – Galway is hard to resist. Its glorious seaside setting, medieval architecture and critically acclaimed food scene add to its allure.

Famed for its artistic outlook (Galway is a UNESCO City of Film), friendly locals, and up-tempo atmosphere, you might get the impression that Galway doesn't do downtime. Visit during one of its festivals and it genuinely feels like the city is one big party, but there are plenty of quiet moments to be cherished in this medieval beauty. Walk the promenade out to the seaside town of Salthill, or stroll over one of the River Corrib's bridges, and you'll experience Galway's gentle sway.

In the criss-cross of city streets, though, Galway's energy can be keenly felt, thanks to the army of buskers that keep the city moving to a musical beat. And in terms of food, this western gem has become a go-to for foodies. Take your pick from restaurants that burst with fresh creativity, such as Ard Bia, or try the relaxed style of Cava Bodega. You can go casual with excellent fish and chips at McDonagh's or upscale with a Michelin-starred adventure at Aniar.

Galway is the gateway to Connemara, the Aran Islands and the Burren. But while the city may be surrounded by epic landscapes and island escapes, it's definitely worth staying put for a few days. This delightful small-scale metropolis encapsulates the very best of the west of Ireland, and the region's traditional culture is distilled into shops selling Aran sweaters and Claddagh rings (traditional Irish wedding rings), pubs with traditional music sessions, and a love for the Irish language.

Catch some tunes at the Crane Bar, feel the salty air of the harbour or explore its medieval history. Either way, stay a while – you won't be sorry.



Galway Races



Galway Oyster Festival

## GALWAY FIVE TO TRY

### LIVE MUSIC SESSIONS

Galway has a reputation for the quality of its music scene, and on nearly every night of the week there's something going on. Keep an eye out for traditional sessions in atmospheric pubs such as Monroe's, Taaffes and Tíg Cóilí, all in the city centre.

### THE SPANISH ARCH

Built in 1584 on the banks of the River Corrib, the Spanish Arch was originally an extension to the city walls and is now home to the Galway City Museum.

### MY SHOP... GRANNY LIKES IT

This quirkily titled shop stocks the best that Ireland has to offer in terms of craft and design, with candles, textiles, ceramics and jewellery. A lovely little spot.

### TRADITIONAL JEWELLERY

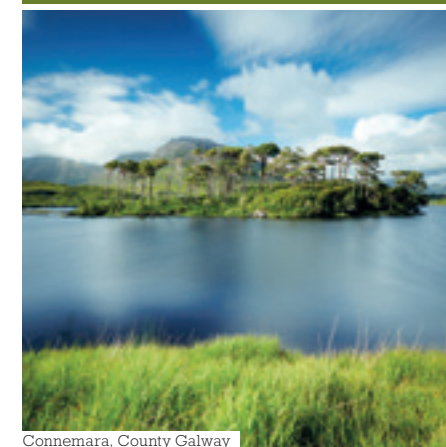
Thomas Dillon's Claddagh Gold is home of the Claddagh ring, Ireland's most famous traditional ring. Rings have been made at this shop in Quay Street since 1750.

### GALWAY FARMERS' MARKET

This weekly food market takes place in Church Lane in front of St Nicholas's Collegiate Church, and showcases the best of local produce.

## Beyond Galway

Galway is right on the Wild Atlantic Way; head northwest and you'll reach the wilds of Connemara (a special and beautiful area of County Galway), south and the Burren (with its remarkable limestone plateau) and the Cliffs of Moher will be within your reach. From the nearby port of Rossaveal, you can take an adventure out to visit the Aran Islands of Inis Mór, Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr, all with their own distinct character.



Connemara, County Galway

## Galway festivals

The Galway Races in July boast thrills, racing, fashion and fun at the Ballybrit Racecourse for seven days. July is also a highlight for culture, with the Galway International Arts Festival and the Galway Film Fleadh. And if you're after an unbeatable food festival experience, visit the Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival. It takes place on the last weekend of every September.



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# CITIES TO EXPLORE

Whether you're planning a quick city trip or a longer getaway, you'll find that the cities on the island of Ireland are as diverse as they are fascinating

Cork



## CORK

Centred on the River Lee, Cork is a lively mix of quaint side streets, broad thoroughfares and artistic districts. You could easily lose several hours to the English Market, which dates back to 1788, as you sample local cheeses, lunch at the Farmgate Café and browse the many food stalls. But make sure to keep some time

for Cork's other attractions. Explore the history of Cork City Gaol, enjoy art at the Crawford Municipal Art Gallery or sample some craft beers at the Franciscan Well Brewery.



## LIMERICK

Limerick is a place with culture at its heart. Overlooking the River Shannon, this charismatic medieval city is known for its festivals, galleries and museums. There's the faded Georgian elegance of the Newtown Pery district; the Hunt Museum, with its collection of precious art and antiquities; and the Frank McCourt

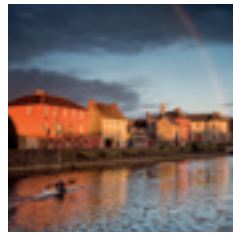
Museum, based in the author's old school. See rugby at Thomond Park; try local food at the Milk Market's Saturday market; or explore the fortifications of the 13th century King John's Castle.



## WATERFORD

The atmosphere in Waterford is more small town than big city, but you'll find lots to do in this mini medieval metropolis in Ireland's Ancient East. Founded by the Vikings, Waterford's history is covered in the Viking Triangle, which contains the Medieval Museum, Bishop's Palace and Reginald's Tower.

See beautiful cut glass at the House of Waterford Crystal; taste a freshly baked "blaa" (bread roll) at the Granary Café; or visit the food market at Merchant's Quay.



## KILKENNY

Located in Ireland's Ancient East, Kilkenny mixes nightlife, great food and culture to perfection. This city will wow you with medieval showpieces by day, and keep you entertained in traditional pubs by night. Walk the Medieval Mile and be catapulted back centuries with Tudor inns, old merchant townhouses,

hidden alleys and historic big-hitters such as Kilkenny Castle and St Canice's Cathedral. The city also boasts great craft shops, design studios and workshops.



## ARMAGH

Ireland's ecclesiastical capital? Welcome to Armagh, proud possessor of two cathedrals, both dedicated to St Patrick. A compact city, Armagh is perfect for exploring on foot. Wander through the gracious tree-lined Georgian Mall (once a rather scandalous racecourse); watch out for the 22 quirky bronze gargoyles

and angels hidden around the city; or try stargazing at the planetarium. With a great collection of restaurants including the Moody Boar and Uluru Bistro, Armagh is a city to be savoured.



## LISBURN

In terms of heritage, Lisburn goes way back, as you'll discover when you wander down the 18th century streetscapes to the Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum. The city was once a large centre of linen production during the 19th century, but today it keeps things lively with a dynamic arts scene, great little

restaurants and excellent shops. It's also just a short drive from the city to Hillsborough Castle and Gardens, the official residence of Her Majesty the Queen in Northern Ireland.



## NEWRY

Scratch the surface of this modern urban hub and you'll discover a history that stretches over 850 years. Bagenal's Castle, a 16th century fortified house with an adjoining 19th century warehouse, is a good place to start. It now houses the Newry and Mourne Museum, which traces the city's story back to prehistory.

Afterwards, walk or cycle along the Newry Canal Path – a towpath that was used by the horses pulling the canal boats – before you relax in the buzzing bars, clubs and restaurants.



## DERRY~LONDONDERRY

Ancient city walls, great pubs and a rich cultural scene are making Derry~Londonderry one of the most exciting cities to visit on the island of Ireland. The gorgeous natural setting is complemented by structures that really set Derry~Londonderry apart: the Peace

Bridge, the fully intact city walls and the Edwardian Guildhall. Also explore the Bogside murals, the award-winning Tower Museum and traditional pubs, such as Peadar O'Donnell's.

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Cliffs of Moher, Co. Clare





Rock of Cashel, County Tipperary



Glendalough, County Wicklow



Holy Cross Abbey, County Tipperary



Kilkenny Design Centre



Dunbrody Famine Ship, New Ross, County Wexford

# IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST

*Dramatic castles, Stone Age passage tombs, aristocratic mansions and lush, green landscapes... Ireland's Ancient East will keep you captivated as you wander through 5,000 years of history*

## LAND OF 5,000 DAWNS

**History and myth** collide in the counties of Cavan, Longford, Louth, Meath, Monaghan and Westmeath, where almost every village and townland is home to its own legend or ancient monument. This is a place of wonder, with megalithic dolmens, Iron Age trackways and Early Christian settlements.

Take **Newgrange** in County Meath. Sealed for millennia, this UNESCO-protected Neolithic passage tomb is older than the pyramids, and is a fascinating feat of Stone Age construction.

Move further north and you'll discover County Louth's **Cooley Peninsula**: a European Destination of Excellence, rich in attractions such as the Proleek Dolmen and the medieval town of Carlingford. In County Louth, you'll also find the monastic site of Monasterboice.

And it doesn't stop there. Uncover an incredible prehistoric landscape in the **Cavan Burren**, a remarkable limestone plateau that once nurtured Neolithic settlers; see the **Cathedral Church of St Mel** in Longford, with exquisite Harry Clarke stained glass windows; take

afternoon tea in the eccentric **Castle Leslie Hotel** in County Monaghan, home to the Leslie family since the 1600s; and delve into the intriguing stories that lurk within **Belvedere House**, County Westmeath.

## THE HISTORIC HEARTLANDS

**Go time travelling** through the counties of Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Offaly, Tipperary and east Limerick, and you'll discover grand houses, sacred valleys and a few surprises along the way. Here in the historic core of the island, verdant pasturelands meet stunning landscapes, while your imagination will soar as you walk through charming gardens, explore incredible monastic sites and see spectacular castles.

The tranquil setting of **Clonmacnoise**, on the banks of the River Shannon in County Offaly, is reason enough to visit, but this Early Christian site, founded by St Ciaran in the mid-6th century, has a captivating history, too. There's a cathedral, seven churches, round towers, high crosses, and tales of Viking attacks, plagues and celebrity monks.

It's hard not to be impressed by



**Castletown House** in County Kildare. The first and largest Palladian house in Ireland, Castletown was built in 1722 in an estate that stretched to 550 acres. The beautiful print room here is a real must-see.

In neighbouring County Laois, the **Rock of Dunamase** rises from the land on a steep crag of rock. Rich with history and boasting beautiful views of the valley below, the castle was once part of the dowry of Aoife, princess of Leinster, on her marriage to legendary Norman lord Strongbow in 1170.

There is fascination to be found in



Castletown House, County Kildare



Lough Gur, County Limerick

the most unlikely of places around here. Look at the **Brownshill Dolmen** in County Carlow. Sitting just off a road, surrounded by beautiful green fields, the capstone on this dolmen is thought to be the heaviest in Europe.

**Kilkenny Castle** offers history of a different kind. Sold to the people of the city in 1967 – for just £50 – this grand Norman castle sits like a medieval jewel in the heart of Kilkenny city.

Perched on a vast craggy outcrop, the **Rock of Cashel** doesn't just loom over Tipperary's Golden Vale, but over Ireland's

history, too. It's where St Patrick is said to have baptised Aengus, King of Munster.

Finally, in east Limerick, folklore and history combine at **Lough Gur**, where the ancient landscape is dotted with stone circles, hill forts and castles, and ripples with ghostly tales and marvellous myths.

## CELTIC COAST

**Heading south, seafaring** stories and monastic ruins merge in the counties of Wicklow, Wexford, Waterford and east Cork. A sense of peace and tranquillity pervades the valley of **Glendalough** in County Wicklow, where St Kevin founded his 6th century monastic site. Walk the trails, explore the monastic village and gaze out at the stunning glassy lake.

Further south, Ireland's famine story is uniquely preserved in County Wexford onboard the **Dunbrody Famine Ship** in New Ross. This reproduction of an 1840s Famine ship details the experiences of 19th century Irish emigrants, with a guided tour, costumed performers and themed exhibitions.

Founded by Vikings in the 9th century, **Waterford** is one of the oldest cities on the island of Ireland. In its excellent museums, you'll find the world's oldest piece of Waterford glass, a relic of the Holy Cross, and the Cloth of Gold vestments, regarded as one of the greatest gems of medieval Europe.

From here, you can journey to the colourful town of **Cobh** in east Cork. This scenic spot was the last port of call for the Titanic and the story of the Ship of Dreams is told at the **Titanic Experience Cobh**, situated in the original White Star Line Offices. It's a dramatic end to an incredible journey.

## PLACES TO STAY AND EAT IN IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST

### COLLON HOUSE

*Collon, County Louth*

This beautifully restored country house was built in 1740, and retains all the charm of the era. It's perfectly placed for accessing the nearby sites of Newgrange, Monasterboice and Slane Castle.

### WINEPORT LODGE

*Glasson, Athlone, County Westmeath*

This luxury lodge-style hotel overlooks the tranquil waters of Lough Ree and is surrounded by native woodland. As well as water-side rooms, there's a great restaurant and small spa.

### MACNEAN HOUSE & RESTAURANT

*Blacklion, County Cavan*

This award-winning guesthouse, restaurant and cookery school offers excellent fine dining in a relaxed, warm environment.

### THE HAPPY PEAR

*Greystones, County Wicklow*

With a focus on natural, ethical ingredients, this popular spot in the pretty coastal village of Greystones draws a loyal following to its busy daytime café and night-time restaurant.

### THE TANNERY RESTAURANT

*Dungarvan, County Waterford*

The Michelin-starred **Cliff House Hotel** may be the stellar County Waterford place to eat, but the **Tannery**, with its restaurant, cookery school and guest rooms, is definitely worth a visit, too. Expect contemporary Irish cuisine, with classical base notes.

### CAMPAGNE RESTAURANT

*Kilkenny*

With an elegant interior and refined Michelin-starred cuisine, Campagne has helped cement Kilkenny city's reputation as one of Ireland's food capitals. And for fine dining, the prices here are great, with lunch menus starting from €27 for two courses.





A taste of Ireland's seafood

# FABULOUSLY FOODIE

Pure flavours, super-fresh ingredients and a vibrant restaurant scene have made the island of Ireland one of the top food destinations for 2016. Aoife Carrigy finds out why



1826 Adare, County Limerick



Kai, Galway



Loam, Galway



Babushka Kitchen Café, Portrush, County Antrim



Harry's Shack, Portstewart, County Londonderry



The Woollen Mills, Dublin

A glorious countryside of woodlands, lakelands and beautiful coastlines; famously friendly folk who love music and literature; and a history preserved in ancient texts, artefacts and amazing archaeological sites – there are many things that people come in search of when they visit Ireland. Even the famous Irish weather has its appeal, with the light of an ever-changing sky lending a mercurial quality to the land.

Recently, though, word of Ireland's gastronomic culture has been spreading, giving people a new and exciting reason to visit. The green pastures and wild waters that surround the island have been producing some of the best ingredients for many centuries. There's no doubt about it: the quality of the local produce here is second to none.

Food has fast become an integral part of contemporary culture on the island of Ireland, with young Irish folk gathering in restaurants, cosy cafés and gastropubs. And more and more chefs and diners are celebrating that rediscovered natural resource: a true connection between place and plate.

The result is that Ireland has become one of the most exciting food destinations in Europe. And the sheer speed of that transformation has the place buzzing. New restaurants and eateries pop up at a dizzying pace in the island's major cities,

## Did you know?

Famed for its oysters plucked fresh from local waters, artisan bacon from the likes of Fermanagh Black Bacon, great baking, flavoursome beef and an incredibly vibrant restaurant and café scene, Northern Ireland is fast gaining attention as a food destination. 2016 is **Northern Ireland's Year of Food & Drink**, so keep your eye out for an exciting calendar of events that will seriously tempt your tastebuds.

and in some gorgeous locations: on remote windswept beaches or craggy coastlines, in quirky market cafés or as travelling food trucks.

One such newcomer, Harry's Shack on Portstewart Strand, County Londonderry, has been wowing people with its combination of gutsy authentic flavours and wild beachside setting. Chef Derek Creagh may have cooked with some of the biggest names in modern British food – The Fat Duck's Heston Blumenthal is a former employer – but today he's back home delivering masterful takes on local favourites. Try the excellent haddock, which comes fresh from nearby

Greencastle. It's cured in salt water and deep-fried in a buttermilk batter and is honestly the best fish and chips going.

The restaurateur behind Harry's Shack, Donal Doherty, believes that this is the best time ever for Irish food, partly because of the increased availability of excellent Irish ingredients. From wonderful cheeses to grass-fed beef and organic vegetables, the quality of produce on the island has never been higher. Talk to various chefs and food writers about contemporary Irish food culture, and they echo similar views.

## Exceptional cooking

Food writer John McKenna also is of the opinion that things have never been better in the culinary sphere in Ireland. He and his wife Sally recently launched a series of McKennas' Guides apps to help visitors touring Ireland discover the best food the island has to offer.

And while there is some serious fine dining to be found – from relative newcomers such as Belfast's Ox, Dublin's Forest Avenue and Galway's Loam, as well as the very reasonably priced Michelin-starred stalwarts – the rise in culinary standards has trickled across the traditional pubs, gastropubs, cafés and eating houses.

Many of these more relaxed places to eat are standing out for the quality of their cooking. As Georgina Campbell of >





Graze, Belfast



Forest Avenue, Dublin

According to food writer John McKenna, “Craft bakers, craft brewers and artisan producers have revolutionised what we can expect of a bacon sandwich and a glass of beer”

the Georgina Campbell Guide points out, these chefs are classically trained, but are creating “fine dining without the fuss”. She points to Derek Creagh as a great example, alongside Aidan McGrath of the gorgeous Wild Honey Inn in County Clare. The lovely thatched-roof restaurant, 1826 Adare, in the County Limerick village of Adare, Delahunt in Dublin (in a beautiful Victorian building), and Aldridge Lodge in Duncannon, County Wexford, all encapsulate this description, too.



Belfast Bred food tour

But even without classical training, Ireland’s chefs and cooks are learning that it’s all about celebrating the great quality of Irish produce. As McKenna explains, “Craft bakers, craft brewers and artisan producers have revolutionised what we can expect of a bacon sandwich and a glass of beer.” Just look to the wave of high-grade gastropubs, such as Annie’s Gastropub in Cork or how the relaxed, casual style of Graze in Belfast, which works with local growers and purveyors and features a different farmer every month.



Dunbrody Cookery School, County Wexford

#### Keeping it casual

Coffee has never been taken so seriously and there’s no shortage of local roasteries and cafés serving up a great brew, from hipster magnets such as Espresso Project in Celbridge, County Kildare, and Belfast’s Established Coffee, to small spots such as Babushka in Portrush. These now co-exist alongside traditional teahouses, serving tea and simple home-style baking – check out their wholesome cakes, soda breads and buttermilk scones. “The sort of thing

that would always have been on an Irish farmhouse tea table,” as Campbell puts it.

Dublin’s Pepper Pot Café in the Powerscourt Townhouse Centre takes pride in making feather-light scones by hand every morning. Indeed, all their breads are homemade, including their bagels, which are served with Burren Smokehouse organic smoked Irish salmon and crisp County Wicklow salad leaves.

Or step into a uniquely Irish tea room at the super-pretty An Fear Gorta in the lovely village of Ballyvaughan, County >

### Not to be missed... food and drink experiences

**Smokehouse tours:** As well as selling great smoked salmon, smokehouses in Ireland do tours (generally in the summer months). Try the Burren Smokehouse in County Clare, and the Connemara Smokehouse in County Galway.

**Skelligs Chocolates:** Ireland’s reputation for excellent chocolate is growing, and Skelligs is one of the best. Step inside the small factory in County Kerry, just beside St Finian’s Bay, for a tour.

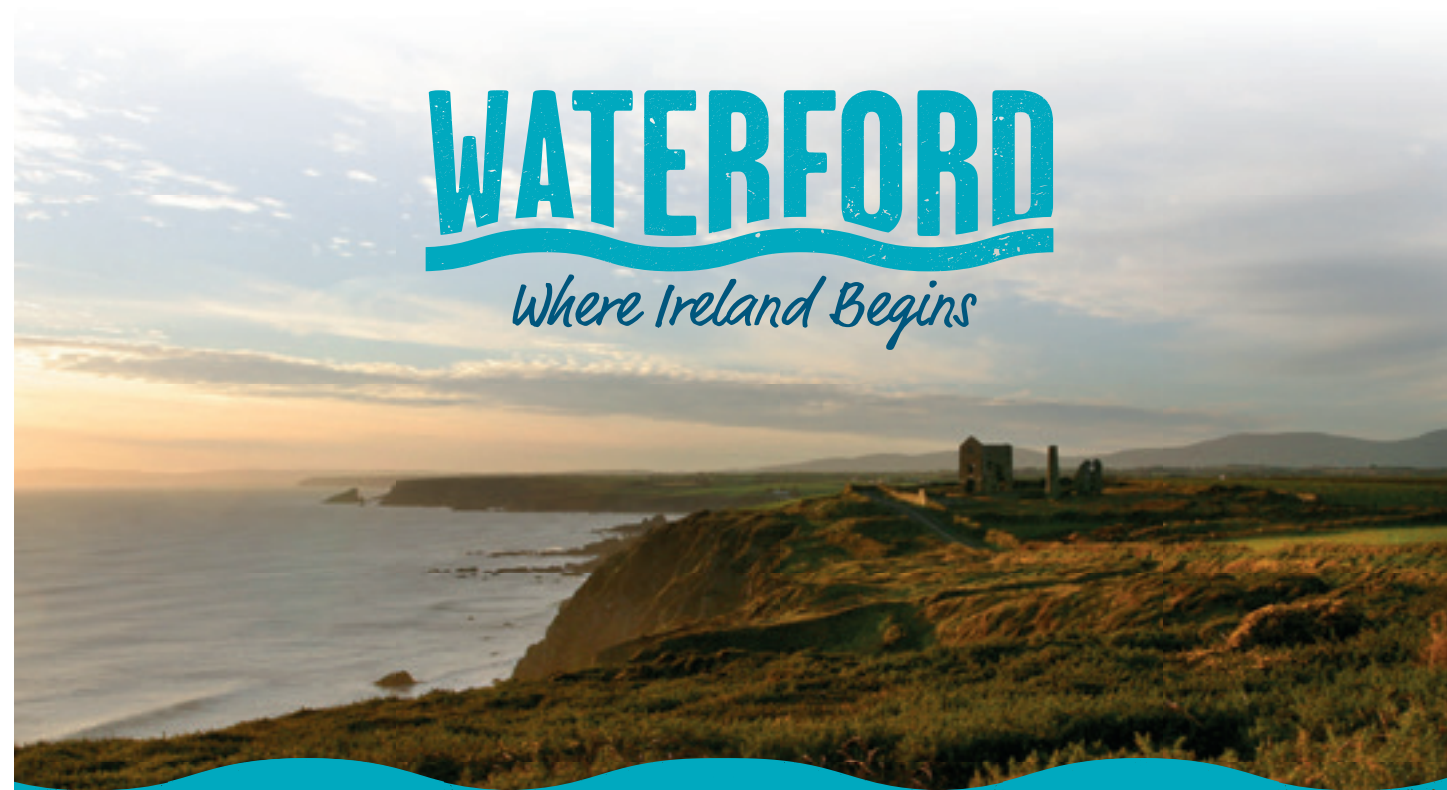
**Food trails:** A food trail is a great way to experience Ireland’s food from the inside out. Try the Fabulous Food Trails in Dublin and Cork, or the Belfast Bred food tour.

**Cookery schools:** Mix scenery with culinary skill at Belle Isle Cookery School in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh; learn how to cook seafood and shellfish at the Dunbrody Cookery School in County Wexford; or perfect your skills at Ghan House in Carlingford, County Louth.

**Food festivals:** Highlights include the Armagh Apple Blossom Festival (May), Taste of Dublin (June), and the Kinsale Gourmet Festival (October).

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Frank Hederman, English Market, Cork



Traditional Irish stew

Ireland Food

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

In Galway's Kai, chef Jess Murphy has been experimenting with seaweed. She uses it in baking, to boil potatoes and for simple summery broths of sea spaghetti, cockles and crab

Clare; the charming Teach Nan Phaidi cottage on Inis Mór, County Galway; and the Old Post Office Tea Room with thatched roof in Lisbane, County Down.

**An abundance of ingredients**  
Near-forgotten traditional foods such as seaweed have been making a comeback. In Galway's Kai, chef Jess Murphy has been experimenting with what she describes as this "beautiful natural resource". She uses it in baking ("our dillisk and carrot cake is going really well, and we put it in our brown soda bread and our cheese scones"), to boil potatoes and for simple summery broths of sea spaghetti, cockles and crab.

Even staple everyday products such as Irish butter are being enjoyed to the full. Many restaurants take pride in serving local farmhouse butter, such as County Down's Abernethy or Mayo's Cuinneog, or even two types of butter, as you'll find at Ballymaloe House in County Cork.

Others, such as John Wyer of Dublin's Forest Avenue, celebrate this national treasure in creative ways. If he's not drafting in one of the island's best artisan smokers to smoke a batch of butter to serve with his potato brioche, Wyer is gathering and freezing the toasty solids from caramelised brown butter to grate over delicate vegetable salads.

"There's a great energy around food here now," says John Wyer. "We're recognising the potential that we have... We're saying, this is what we can bring to the table." And what a finely laid table it's proving to be.



Roberts fish shop, Dalkey, County Dublin

## NATURAL LARDER

The 40 shades of green for which Ireland is famed are more than just a pretty sight. High-quality grass-fed beef and lamb are the norm rather than the exception – while herb-fed mountain lamb, such as Comeragh Mountain Lamb in Waterford, Achill Mountain Lamb in Mayo and Connemara Hill Lamb in Galway appear on menus all over the island.

That green grass also gives some of the best dairy produce in the world. Ireland's milk was traditionally preserved as butter, but in recent decades, farmhouse cheeses have developed into a thriving artisan sector. Look out for Corleggy, Durrus, Knockdrinna, St Tola and Young Buck, a raw milk blue cheese from Newtownards in County Down.

The west coast is well known for its top quality cold-water seafood, including crab and lobster, while the east coast is famed for its Dublin Bay prawns. Chefs do indeed make the most of our wonderful seafood. Down in Vaughan's Anchor Inn in County Clare, they use the salt water to boil their crab and lobster and to make a sourdough batter for their tasty fish and chips.

Farmers' markets are great places to try local produce, and they take place all over the island. Pick up some excellent picnic fare at Middleton Farmers' Market in Cork, Howth Farmers' Market in County Dublin, and Newry Farmers' Market. Or else take it indoors with a fabulous covered market, such as the English Market in Cork city, and the Victorian-era St George's Market in Belfast. So good you could stay the whole day!

## Unique foods and where to try them

**Potato boxty:** Head to Holohan's at the Barge in Belfast for this traditional potato cake served with dressed leaves.

**Coddle:** This famous Dublin dish of sausages, bacon, potato and onion is experiencing a revival of late. Try some for yourself at The Woollen Mills in Dublin.

**Black pudding:** Try Kelly's of Newport in County Mayo and McCarthy's of Kanturk, County Cork, for some excellent black puddings.

**Smoked fish:** Sample a selection of Burren Smokehouse mackerel and salmon at Hatch & Sons, Dublin.

**Native oysters:** Heaven is a half-dozen local oysters and a pint of the black stuff at the Mourne Seafood Bar, Dundrum, County Down.

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Bantry House, County Cork

# THE SCENE STEALERS

*Cameras at the ready – these epic houses, castles and gardens have a picture-perfect beauty that will take your breath away. From world-famous gardens to craggy castles, here are some to try*

## BANTRY HOUSE County Cork

Stand at the top of the 100 stone steps in the gardens of Bantry House, and you are treated to a view that can only be described as magnificent. From here, it feels as if you are looking out at a painting, as your eyes sweep over this gracious 18th century house and formal gardens to the misty blue and green of Bantry Bay beyond.

Set in an idyllic corner of West Cork, on the edge of Bantry town, Bantry House has been in the same family since the 1700s, and is owned by the eighth and ninth generations of the Shelswell-Whites. But it is the second Earl of Bantry who is to thank for the house's distinctive style. During the 1820s, the Earl embarked on a Grand Tour of Russia and Europe, bringing back the furniture, paintings, tapestries, carpets and artefacts that adorn Bantry House today.

As well as enjoying the elegant interior and uncovering its fascinating history, visitors can relax in the tea room, which serves great homemade local food, or take afternoon tea in the gracious surroundings of the library. After that, explore the beautiful garden, which is laid out in the Italian style and features seven lovely terraces. If it sounds perfect, that may be because it is.



Powerscourt, County Wicklow

Vast swathes of manicured grass slope down to the Triton Lake, majestically framed by a pair of life-size winged iron horses. Make no mistake, these gardens are lush, playful and enchanting



Powerscourt, County Wicklow

## POWERSCOURT HOUSE & GARDENS County Wicklow

It was the vision of the 1st Viscount Powerscourt that transformed the medieval castle at Powerscourt, County Wicklow, into an exceptional 68-room mansion, completed in 1741. Praised at the time for possessing the "massive dignity of a great Italian Renaissance villa", it is now a delightfully eclectic venue with an Avoca food and homewares store, café and an adorable Doll's Palace. But the crowning glory of this enchanting estate is the Italianate garden – a remarkable 46 acres/19 hectares filled with hidden treasures and bordered by the delightful colours of the Sugar Loaf mountain.

Vast swathes of manicured grass slope down to the Triton Lake, majestically framed by a pair of life-size winged iron horses. Make no mistake, these gardens are lush, playful and enchanting. Hours can easily slip away wandering from the pretty Japanese garden to the wooded valleys and back to the quirky pet cemetery, which sits in a quiet part of the gardens surrounded by azaleas, rhododendrons and roses in the summer.

Make it a memorable day by including a visit to the nearby Powerscourt Waterfall. It's the highest waterfall in Ireland, and is located about 3 miles/5km from the estate.



**Ireland Castles and Houses**



Mount Stewart gardens

Beauty abounds in the Italianate formal sections at Mount Stewart, while there is real mastery at play in the grand wooded areas, with rare and beautiful plants from all over the world



Mount Stewart, County Down

**MOUNT STEWART**  
*County Down*

Many of Ireland's most majestic stately homes are defined by the characters who lived in them. In the case of Mount Stewart, it is Edith, Lady Londonderry. An esteemed and respected society hostess with a circle of friends that included Winston Churchill, Edith was an intriguing character who went on to create exceptional gardens in the grounds at Mount Stewart.

Here, beauty abounds in the Italianate formal sections, while there is real mastery at play in the grand wooded areas, with rare and beautiful plants from all over the world. Mount Stewart is a must-visit by any standards, and Edith's passion, personality and unique vision have combined to elevate this spot into something unique.

Once you've wandered the scenic grounds, head inside to enjoy the newly restored interior, which has brought the house back to its original glory. Within this grand neoclassical property, you'll find portraits, silver collections and other interesting family treasures on show. Visitors can also now access a selection of rooms that have never been opened to view before, including the butler's silver store and the billiards room, as well as family and guest bedrooms.



Trim Castle, County Meath

**TRIM CASTLE**  
*County Meath*

Drive into the town of Trim and you'll be confronted by a massive, 20-sided tower surrounded by high stone walls and bordered by the River Boyne. Built in the 12th century by Hugh de Lacy, Lord of Meath, this is Trim Castle, the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Ireland, and one of the most perfectly preserved in the British Isles.

Step into the towering central keep and you'll see the story of this building etched into the stone. Windows are thin slits in the thick walls, designed for defence not light, and the spiral staircases are incredibly narrow. On your tour,

you'll visit the tiny stone chapel, cross suspended walkways and stand in what archaeologists believe was the minstrel gallery of the Great Hall. In its heyday, Trim Castle was said to be the tallest building in Ireland (a medieval marvel at 69ft/21 metres) – continue up those steep stone steps to the roof and you can literally see for miles around.

Trim Castle has been many things in its history: fortress, home, prison, even film set (Mel Gibson's Braveheart was filmed here), but throughout it all, it has retained its stern grandeur and is a highlight of any tour of Ireland's Ancient East.

COMPOSED BY **BILL WHELAN**      PRODUCED BY **MOYA DOHERTY**      DIRECTED BY **JOHN MCCOLGAN**

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Glenarm Castle, County Antrim

## GLENARM CASTLE

County Antrim

There is a formidable beauty to Glenarm Castle, which sits in the Antrim countryside just a 40-minute drive from Belfast. Ancestral home of the Earls of Antrim and current residence of Viscount and Viscountess Dunluce, a castle has stood here since the 13th century.

Home to a wide variety of events in the summer months (from May to September), the castle is famous for its idyllic natural setting and superb gardens, including what happens to be one of the oldest walled gardens on the island of Ireland.

Wandering around here is a real joy as you lose yourself in the lovely historic circular yew hedge, amble through the herb garden and enjoy the bright pinks, reds and oranges of the herbaceous border. And after that, there's no better way to relax than with tea and cake in the charming tea room, overlooking the splendid garden.

## CAHIR CASTLE

County Tipperary

Pitched on a rocky island in the middle of the River Suir, County Tipperary, Cahir Castle has everything you'd expect from an Irish castle: it's big, dramatic and imposing. Built and rebuilt from the 13th to the 15th centuries, Cahir's incredible design reflects its main objective: defence. Having endured centuries of onslaught, this great hulk of rock is a paean to military architecture. Originally built on an older fortification named Cathair (meaning "Stone Fort" in Irish), the castle's history is told expansively with a great audio-visual show.

There's plenty of exploring to be done here, with narrow staircases and darkened niches that have plenty of medieval atmosphere. Don't be surprised if Cahir Castle looks familiar, either. In Excalibur, his retelling of the Arthurian legend, director John Boorman set major battle scenes in the building.

Behind the castle is a small but pretty park made lush by the River Suir's waters. It's a perfect spot to take some photos in the shadow of one of Ireland's finest castles.



Cahir Castle, County Tipperary



Mussenden Temple, County Londonderry

## NINE TO TRY

### BLARNEY CASTLE

County Cork

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### DUNLUCE CASTLE

County Antrim

Perched on the edge of a craggy cliff, this castle has a fairytale quality that's enhanced by its compelling history.

### DUBLIN CASTLE

Dublin

Located in the very oldest part of the city, Dublin Castle was built in the 13th century and has served as a military fortress, a prison and a court of law.

### KYLEMORE ABBEY

County Galway

Romance, legend and beauty intertwine at Kylemore, where a church and abbey overlook a beautiful Connemara lake.

### MUSSENDEN TEMPLE

County Londonderry

Modelled on the Temple of Vesta near Rome, this striking cliff-edge temple overlooks a beautiful sandy beach.

### MUCKROSS HOUSE

County Kerry

Set in the stunning Killarney National Park and on the shores of Muckross Lake, this 19th century house has a palpable charm.

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County Wicklow

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# GREAT IRELAND ROADTRIPS

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



Mount Errigal, County Donegal



Clew Bay, County Mayo



Slieve League Cliffs, County Donegal

## THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY

By Yvonne Gordon

We're standing at the summit of Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holiest mountain, warmed by the sun as we marvel at the scene before us. From a height of around 2,500ft/762 metres, we have a bird's-eye view over Clew Bay in County Mayo, with its vast scattering of islands. Across the bay, there's the Nephin Beg Range of mountains and Achill Island, while below us is the village of Murrisk, where we went horse riding on the beach earlier that morning.

We're exploring the Wild Atlantic Way, a 1,500 mile/2,500km fully defined coastal touring route through some of Ireland's most beautiful places, from wild and rugged Donegal in the northwest, down along a coastline that has been shaped and carved by the Atlantic, to the village of Kinsale in County Cork, famed for its delicious seafood.

As we admire the scenery, a cloud passes below, completely transforming the tones of the bay. As it clears, a double rainbow forms. This is what happens on the edge of western Europe – colours and scenes change dramatically as you explore the mountains, beaches, islands and heritage sites along the coast.

There's so much to do and see along this coastline, with the Cliffs of Moher, Skellig Islands, the Beara Peninsula and Loop Head Lighthouse. Even in just one area of County Mayo, we've swapped four wheels for two and cycled the 26 mile/42km Great Western Greenway, an off-road trail set



🕒 1,500 miles/2,500km 🕒 Up to 20 days

on an old railway line. We've driven the Atlantic Drive on Achill Island, Ireland's largest island, and we've toured Westport House, an 18th century stately home.

We started our drive in County Donegal before travelling south, stopping off at the Slieve League cliffs, which reach to 2,000ft/609 metres. We've had surfing lessons, visited the grave of poet W.B. Yeats, and driven along the fjord of Killary Harbour.

We've had adventures all along the way and there will be lots more to come, as we drive south towards Dingle and the Ring of Kerry in County Kerry, feeling exhilarated and refreshed.



Liss Ard Estate, County Cork

## Along the way

### VISIT

Visit the award-winning Mizzen Head Signal Station on the Mizzen Peninsula, with a bridge that spans a stunning gorge. Watch the big-wave surfers at Mullaghmore in County Sligo or explore the mountains, lakes, forests and castle of Glenveagh National Park, County Donegal.

### EAT

Treat yourself to tasty homemade ice cream at Murphy's in Dingle, County Kerry. Enjoy fresh Galway oysters, brown bread and creamy Guinness in a thatched cottage at Morans Oyster Cottage in Kilcolgan, County Galway. Or try the award-winning Kitchen restaurant in Sligo town, where traditional dishes are given a modern twist.

### SLEEP

For beautiful views and relaxed comfort, choose the Sea Shore Farm Guesthouse in Kenmare, County Kerry, or to hear the Atlantic waves rolling in, make your way to the Sandhouse Hotel on Rossnowlagh Beach in County Donegal. The delightful Liss Ard Estate in Skibbereen, County Cork, makes an excellent choice for a contemporary take on traditional Georgian luxury in beautifully scenic surrounds.





Lough Tay, County Wicklow



Japanese Gardens, County Kildare



Dark Hedges, County Antrim



Ballintoy Harbour, County Antrim

## THE GRAND TOUR

By David Fallon

I've come to a crossroads. Not metaphorically (well, not for now, at least), but literally. For miles around there is nothing but blanket bog, blue sky, russet mountains and the curve of a stream that will soon become the River Liffey. I'm at Sally Gap in the Wicklow National Park and I've got a decision to make.

I'm following the Grand Tour of counties Wicklow and Kildare in Ireland's Ancient East. This is a route that takes in everything from stately homes to Early Christian heritage sites, with some gorgeous landscapes along the way.

Starting at the university town of Maynooth, I have explored a 13th century castle (Maynooth Castle), wandered through aristocratic estates (Castletown House and Russborough House), and kayaked on the Blessington Lakes.

Now, here I am, surrounded by intense quiet at a crossroads at Sally Gap. Where next? Onwards...

Onwards, to picture-postcard villages such as Wicklow's Enniskerry; promenade strolls in Bray; gardens of sublime Robinsonian splendour (Mount Usher); and an eerie afternoon at the "glorious yet infamous" Wicklow Gaol.

Further, past Lough Tay, surrounded by scree-covered slopes and fed by a waterfall. On to Glendalough, St Kevin's green and lush monastic site. In the 6th century, it was his retreat from the world. Today, it's Wicklow's don't-miss experience. There are a variety of walks here from short,



Mount Usher, County Wicklow



Carton House Hotel, County Kildare



📏 201 miles/324km 🕒 Up to 3 days

### Along the way

**VISIT** Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park, County Kildare, follows a 9,000-year-journey through Irish history. Stop off and watch the world-famous horse races at the Curragh in County Kildare. The grounds of Avondale House in County Wicklow, built in 1777, are a delight to explore, with trails that cover over 500 acres/202 hectares.

**EAT** A respect for the best ingredients makes the Ballymore Inn, County Kildare, a favourite among local foodies. Head for the popular coaching inn of Hunter's Hotel, just a short drive from the stunning Mount Usher gardens, for a lovely Sunday lunch. Avoca in Kilmacanogue, meanwhile, is the perfect hunting ground for picnic essentials.

**SLEEP** Carton House Hotel, County Kildare, offers an upscale choice with golf, a spa and fine dining. Rathsallagh House has a peaceful location in Dunlavin, County Wicklow, and is a historic and comfortable country house. And The Manor bed and breakfast at the foot of Sally Gap is a great base for visiting nearby Russborough House.

## THE CAUSEWAY COASTAL ROUTE

By Mal Rogers

I stared at Dunluce Castle for a long time. I always do. A castle has stood here on the north coast of Ireland since pre-Christian times. But it was the Normans who transformed it into what it is today – a spectacular stone fortification perched above the ocean. It is dramatic, beautiful and mesmerising – come to think of it, those are words that could probably sum up the entire Causeway Coastal Route.

My journey along this road, clinging to a rocky coastline from County Antrim to County Londonderry, begins further south in the city of Belfast. En route I pass through villages that read like a poem and look as if they've tumbled out of a fairytale – Glenarm, Carnlough, Waterfoot, Cushendall, Cushendun. And I cross a bridge that is every bit as wobbly as it sounds: the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge sways between the coastline and the tiny Carrick Island – the views from the other side make it worth the challenge.

My first stop, though, is pretty little Carnlough. In this quaint village, small pastel-coloured houses vie for space with neat little shops, cafés and cosy pubs.

I continue north, the beautiful Glens of Antrim on my left. Soon I come to Ballintoy Harbour where I head down a steep, winding road, with plunging cliffs either side. The harbour and surrounding beach have been widely featured in Game of Thrones™, and it's easy to see why. Cliffs enclose the bay, and the old stone harbour seems tailor-made for adventure.



Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, County Antrim



Bushmills Inn, County Antrim



📏 146 miles/235km 🕒 1-3 days

### Along the way

**VISIT** Wander around the medieval Carrickfergus Castle, or climb Slemish Mountain where St Patrick worked as a shepherd. Stop for a tour of the Old Bushmills Distillery in Bushmills, or explore the newly opened and dramatic Gobbins path, with a truly stunning cliff-side coastal location.

**EAT** Eat homemade pastries, cakes and sandwiches at Roark's Kitchen tea room perched at the edge of Ballintoy Harbour. Try the lobster at Tartine Restaurant at the Distillers Arms in Bushmills; eat local home-cooked dishes at Dora's Tea Room in Portrush; or sample rustic cooking and fine wines at Bartali in Portballintrae.

**SLEEP** Bed, breakfast and stunning views are all part of the deal at award-winning Whitepark House, Ballintoy. Great views and old-world charm are provided at the Londonderry Arms Hotel, which overlooks Carnlough Harbour, while at the luxurious 17th century Bushmills Inn, you can relax in the library or one of the many nooks and crannies before dinner.





# TOP IRELAND EXPERIENCES

The island of Ireland is bursting with incredible things to see and do, from epic landscapes to compelling visitor attractions. Get inspired with ten of the best

## CONNEMARA County Galway

Connemara is a place of legend, folklore and beauty. Writer and cartographer Tim Robinson speaks of the landscape's "huge, luminous spaces", so it's no surprise that it's a favourite destination of artists and photographers. The region offers endless panoramas with gorgeous rust-coloured bogs dotted with grey-blue lakes, grassy fields, dry-stone walls, and coves, bays and sandy beaches perfect for summer swims. Connemara is not just about the great outdoors, though – it's about the Irish language; it's about the charming villages of Leenane and Roundstone, and towns like Clifden. It's about native ponies, traditional music and the pure flavours of the local food. It's about as good as it gets!

## GIANT'S CAUSEWAY County Antrim

Described as the "8th wonder of the world", the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Giant's Causeway overflows with hexagonal columns that spill and tumble down to the sea like a giant piece of rocky honeycomb. Myths may abound about its origins (it is said to have been created as a result of warring giants), but in this case, truth is stranger than fiction: these basalt columns are the result of volcanic activity an incredible 60 million years ago. Pounded by the North Atlantic, and surrounded by dramatic cliffs, this place is one of a kind. Hop the stones, spend time in the award-winning visitor centre, walk the cliff-top trail or just sit and watch the changing tones of this stunning landscape.



Giant's Causeway, County Antrim



Newgrange, County Meath

## NEWGRANGE County Meath

In a quiet part of Ireland, in the county of Meath close to the River Boyne, is one of the most important prehistoric landscapes in the world, where human activity can be traced back 5,000 years. The passage tomb of Newgrange is older than the Egyptian Pyramids of Giza, and even from the outside, it looks impressive – a 262ft/80-metre grassy mound with spiral-engraved kerbstones and white Wicklow quartzite. Creep down the narrow passageway, and you'll find yourself in a cool, dark chamber which gets illuminated every year on the winter solstice. The Boyne Valley (Brú na Bóinne) also includes the passage tombs of Knowth and Dowth, making it the largest assemblage of megalithic art in Europe. Unmissable.

## BOOK OF KELLS AND TRINITY COLLEGE Dublin

Stroll through the main entrance to Trinity College and you emerge into Front Square, a huge cobbled area with grand lawns and 18th century architecture. It's a delightful introduction to this elegant university that can trace its history back to 1592. Here, in what has to be one of the most beautiful libraries in the world, you'll find the Book of Kells. This extraordinary 9th century gospel manuscript is on display in the Old Library's Treasury, but as part of the exhibition you'll also enter the Long Room, a stunning repository for over 200,000 books. On campus you can also visit the Douglas Hyde Gallery with contemporary art, and the innovative Science Gallery, with a range of exhibitions.



Long Room, Trinity College, Dublin



The Burren, County Clare

## THE BURREN County Clare

It's certainly an arresting sight, this huge sheet of limestone rock that creeps across County Clare. Reaching down to the Atlantic Ocean, this is a strange and unusual habitat, and is one of the "finest Glacio-Karst landscapes in the world". The best way to appreciate the Burren's charms is to walk it. This lunar-like surface surprises at every turn – Arctic-Alpine plants peek through cracks in the rock, orchids burst with colour, and the deep blue ocean beckons in the background. With traditional music villages, such as Kilfenora and Doolin; sandy beaches such as Fanore; and attractions such as the Aillwee Cave and the megalithic Poulnabrone portal tomb, exploring this part of Ireland is a joy.

## MOURNE MOUNTAINS County Down

Crowned by craggy granite tors, the Mourne Mountains boast the highest peak in Northern Ireland, Slieve Donard. Beauty comes thick and fast here with crystalline lakes, pale grasses, huge rocks and expansive views. Take any of the walking trails that weave through the mountains, and you'll enter a world that inspired The Chronicles of Narnia author C.S. Lewis to create Narnia itself. You'll find awesome sights, such as the dramatic Mourne Wall, which took over 18 years to build; you can enjoy walking festivals, such as the Mourne International Walking Festival (June); or follow the "Brandy Pad", a trail used by 18th and 19th century smugglers. Fantasy made real.



Mourne Mountains, County Down





Cliffs of Moher, County Clare

### CLIFFS OF MOHER County Clare

Jutting out into the Atlantic and soaring 702ft/214 metres at their highest point, the Cliffs of Moher deserve all the accolades they get. These huge, craggy precipices are truly magnificent, offering vast views of the coastline as it weaves north to the village of Doolin and south to Liscannor. On a clear day, you can see as far as the Aran Islands and Galway Bay, over to the Twelve Bens Mountains in Connemara, and south to distant Loop Head in County Clare. Bring your camera, bring a head for heights and bring your walking shoes – one of the best ways of getting to the cliffs is from Doolin via the Cliffs of Moher Cliff Path (5 miles/8km). Stunning, in every way.

### THE GOBBINS County Antrim

Waves crash against ancient cliffs, seabirds wheel and cry, hearts pound with excitement. This is The Gobbins, a dramatic cliff-face walk over spectacular bridges and into tunnels hewn through solid rock. The trail clings to the edge of Islandmagee – a small peninsula just a short drive north of Belfast – and it's about as close to walking on water as you can get on the island of Ireland. This triumph of Edwardian engineering lay crumbling for decades, lashed by the elements and almost forgotten, but the path has been restored to its former glory. The guided tour will take you over bridges, down steps that snake around the edges of cliffs, through caves and past unique rock formations. It's a perfect introduction to the glories that lie ahead on the Causeway Coastal Route.



The Gobbins, County Antrim



Titanic Belfast

### TITANIC BELFAST Belfast

Much has been made of the beauty of Titanic Belfast's shimmering titanium exterior, and it certainly doesn't disappoint. Overlooking the slipway where the Titanic was launched on 31 May 1911, the vast prow-like shape of the building opens up to reveal an exhibition that has been described by Titanic director James Cameron, as "one of the most well thought-out Titanic museums in the world". The main galleries are remarkable, and allow you to explore everything from the shipyard history of Belfast to footage from the wreck. Hologram, multimedia, special effects, animation and simple storytelling combine to make this an unbeatable experience. It's one that you won't forget.

### DINGLE PENINSULA County Kerry

It would be easy to arrive on the Dingle Peninsula and not leave the town of Dingle itself. Bohemian, artistic and with some of the best pubs on the island, this is a place that prides itself on its great music scene, excellent food and friendly locals. But it's only half the story. Push out beyond the town and you're heading into 6,000 years of history, and some of the most beautiful scenery on the island. There's Gallarus Oratory, thought to be an Early Christian church overlooking Smerwick Harbour; there's Coumeenole Beach, on the Sleat Head Drive, with its views of the deserted Blasket Islands; and there's the Conor Pass, the highest mountain road in Ireland. Exceptional is everyday here.



Coumeenole Beach, County Kerry

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# A MUSICAL TRADITION

There's nothing quite like the atmosphere of a traditional music session (*seisiún*) in Ireland. Here you can experience the raw beats of Ireland's native instruments, feel the pulse of the island's ancient heritage, and join in a unique and intimate musical experience that is at the very heart of Ireland's culture. Margaret Scully, Mark Folens and Mal Rogers enjoy some singing, dancing and fun

Traditional Irish music session, County Galway



Fisherman's Thatched Inn, County Laois

PHOTO: JOHN WATERS

## What is a *seisiún*?

A *seisiún* is an informal gathering of musicians, generally in a pub, to play Irish traditional music.

## The instruments?

The bodhrán (a one-sided drum), the uilleann pipes (pipes that are regarded as the most melodic in the world) and the Irish tin whistle are indigenous traditional instruments. The fiddle (violin) is also a popular trad instrument.



Bodhrán and uilleann pipes

## TUNES IN A THATCHED COTTAGE, COUNTY LAOIS

By Margaret Scully

It's Tuesday night in Fisherstown, County Laois, and we're in search of a traditional music session. It's not the kind of night where much happens in this part of the world, but as luck would have it, Tuesday is *seisiún* night at the Fisherman's Inn.

Perched at a crossroads, this whitewashed thatched cottage pub is like something out of an old movie. Dating back to the 1600s, it sits on its own, like a beacon – there are no shops, no village and no church in sight, just a little white building gleaming in the moonlight.

Inside, locals are seated on high stools discussing the day's events, and a turf fire gives the place a warm, welcoming glow. But there's no mistaking the sound of the fiddle that floats through the room. A *seisiún* is underway.

Local maestros, the Fitzharris brothers, are warming up. Within half an hour the group has grown to 12, with the addition of a guitar, accordions, concertinas, banjos and uilleann pipes. With All-Ireland Champion flute player Tommy Fitzharris in the mix, the standard is high and the pace fast. The pub is full to the rafters and the audience responds with loud applause.

A small bunch of American golf enthusiasts land in halfway through. Sean and Peggy from St Louis, Missouri, tell me "we feel like we've arrived on the downstairs decks of the Titanic, as in the film. This is where the party's happening and we're mighty pleased we've found it."

Meanwhile we're all getting into the swing of things, chatting to the locals and enjoying the tunes. According to publican Sean Ward, "there's no telling who or how many musicians will show up any Tuesday. They come from all corners of the country, especially County Clare."

Having reached a crescendo with fast-paced jigs, polkas and reels, the uilleann piper brings proceedings to a melancholy close with a slow air. The haunting sound follows us out the door and we bid farewell until the next time, which will hopefully be at another magical *seisiún*.



Musician on the Aran Islands, County Galway



Cobblestone pub, Dublin

PHOTO: DEREK SPEIRS

## MUSICAL DELIGHTS IN DUBLIN CITY

By Mark Folens

Dublin's Cobblestone pub hosts sessions seven nights a week. Tucked away in a terraced house in Smithfield, it's one of the best places on the island for Irish trad.

On the night I visit, barmen are pouring smooth pints of Guinness (rumoured to be the best in Dublin) as a circle of musicians settle around wooden corner benches. The walls behind them are lined with retro ads for stout, yellowed maps, stoneware jugs and photographs of past *seisiúns*, which makes walking into the Cobblestone a bit like entering a time warp.

A lone fiddle begins a lilting melody and the pub quickly quietsens to a hush. As the tune picks up speed, it's met by the rising swell of instruments: mandolins are plucked, flutes flutter, fiddles are bowed and accordions squeezed. I'm in awe. Looking around the bar, I can tell I'm not alone as scattered groups of regulars listen with closed eyes while a group of Italians stamp their feet in time to the beat.

"Isn't this incredible?" a student turns to me to shout. She explains that it's her second time here after her family stumbled upon the pub earlier in the week. As we chat, the voice of an elderly >





Trad music session, County Donegal



Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann, Cavan

gentleman suddenly fills the room with a sweet, sorrowful melody, sending chills down spines as it floats through the crowd. It's called *sean-nós*, a traditional style of a capella singing that has been handed down through generations. He's met with rapturous applause as the rest of the musicians launch into a fast-paced number and people have a go at Irish dancing. The results are enjoyably mixed, which is all part of the fun.

One of the most impressive aspects of a *seisiún* – musicianship aside – is its casual, communal nature. As we listen, musicians come and go with little more than a nod, including a County Sligo man who introduces himself before pulling up a stool and unpacking a set of uilleann pipes. This is music to be shared. As the night goes on, conversation hums between fellow travellers, drinks are enjoyed with friends old and new, and memories are made that will last a lifetime.



Annual Appalachian and Bluegrass Music Festival, County Tyrone

## TOE-TAPPING TUNES IN COUNTY DOWN

By Mal Rogers

In every town, in every county on the island, a small drama can be witnessed every evening of the week. The unlikely setting is the pub. And the experience is a unique musical delight.

The Dufferin Arms in the High Street of Killyleagh, County Down, is renowned for having a very eclectic atmosphere. Unusually for a traditional Irish session, it begins in the late afternoon on a Saturday. It's all starting to kick off when I arrive, as two fiddlers, an accordionist and a bodhrán player get things going. The atmosphere within the walls of this 120-year-old pub is already electric as the beat of the bodhrán sets the pulse for a brace of reels including The Earl's Chair.

In terms of execution, what you hear in the County Down fiddle style is similar to that of Donegal, with lots of drive, plenty of energetic bowing, yet subtlety and real skill, too. Before long, the embellishments and ornamentation that are so typical of Irish music come to the fore, with a flute player "humouring" the tune with a lovely series of

tightly executed triplets and grace notes.

People turn to smile at one another as the first tune, which has picked up steam, has a jaunty, soaring and effortless air. Then a dramatic key leads into The Star of Munster. An uilleann piper joins in, playing in a tightly controlled fashion, and giving the tune a melancholic and poignant feel. It's this change of moods that can make an Irish music session so utterly memorable. One minute you're tapping your toes; the next you're wiping a tear from your eye.

As the afternoon segues into evening at the Dufferin Arms, the musicians are joined by a harp player, someone playing the Scottish lowland pipes, and Billy, a double bass player. Billy's day job is playing in a Belfast jazz band but he always comes to the session in the Dufferin when he can. It's that sort of place.

A rollicking set of polkas kicks off at breakneck speed – probably too fast for anyone to seriously dance a polka to, but nobody cares. It's raw, passionate and invigorating. Mandolins and tenor banjos join the ensemble, and soon the music fills every snug and bar in the many rooms that make up the Dufferin Arms. The magic of the moment feels like it'll never end.



Ulster-Scots dancing

## ULSTER-SCOTS TRADITIONS

The Ulster-Scots community in Northern Ireland has an incredible musical heritage, which includes the accordion, fiddle, Lambeg drum and marching band traditions. The amazing thing about it? How the music has evolved over 400 years. Iain Carlisle from the Ulster-Scots Community Network explains: "Little is known about the popular folk music or dance traditions of the Scots settlers who made their way to Ulster in the early 1600s. Yet the legacy of their cultural influence can be seen throughout the province. Scots language, song and dance traditions became commonplace throughout Ulster. The revival of interest in Ulster-Scots cultural traditions during the 1990s helped shape a whole new generation of musicians and dancers."

There are plenty of ways to experience Ulster-Scots music throughout Northern Ireland. The Annual Appalachian and Bluegrass Music Festival in Omagh, County Tyrone (August), is alive with strumming and dancing, while County Down's Donaghadee Ulster Scots Festival in July has historical displays, live music and dance performances. But as Iain says, you can enjoy the music pretty much anywhere.

"It's largely informal and based mostly in rural areas outside of Belfast. There are numerous local pipe band contests and band parades as well as Scottish ceilidh dances and music clubs."

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# MONASTIC IRELAND

*Ireland's early saints and their followers led tough, pious lives, but they left behind a rich history of learning and culture, says Vanessa Harriss*

**They must have fallen** to their knees in thanks when they saw Glendalough, those 6th century monks who travelled with St Kevin. The two lakes, the woods, the waterfall and the secret atmosphere of this remote and peaceful valley made it the perfect place to set up a small religious community. So perfect, in fact, that it thrived for 800 years. Many of the buildings – probably dating back to the 10th to 12th centuries – are still almost completely intact, clustered around the 108ft/33 metre-high round tower.

There is a visitor centre to explain the history of this extraordinary spot in County Wicklow, but there is plenty to do besides. Walker and author Christopher Somerville claims this as his favourite walk in all Ireland – or you can simply sit and absorb the peaceful atmosphere, which is at its best in the early morning.

Perhaps it was the climate and the wildness of the landscape that contributed to a rigorous life, because Early Christianity in Ireland was famous for its austerity. In Bangor Abbey, County Down, which was founded around 50 years earlier than Glendalough, even milk was an indulgence. Fasting, study, penitence and prayer were central to existence. Food was scarce and plain, but scholasticism was just as rigorous: mathematics, geometry, logic, music and the classics were all studied here. Indeed, the abbey became so famous that it

appears on the Hereford Mappa Mundi, the elaborately decorated 13th century map of the world.

Little now remains of the original buildings that housed Bangor's thriving religious community, but you can get a flavour of a similarly harsh life at the monastery founded by St Molaise on Devenish Island in County Fermanagh. Devenish was the most important of many religious settlements sprinkled across Lough Erne – it is on a pilgrimage route to Croagh Patrick – and the ruins of the abbey, the round tower and the walls of the oratory still stand. You can get a boat to the island from the town of

## St Patrick's Ireland

Many places around the island have a deep connection with Ireland's patron saint. Saul Church, County Down, was built to commemorate St Patrick's first church, and Down Cathedral is where the saint is believed to have been buried, his memorial marked with a huge granite slab. Struell Wells, near Downpatrick, County Down, and St Patrick's Well, County Tipperary, are just two of the wells that claim blessings from St Patrick. Or climb Croagh Patrick, County Mayo, where he fasted for 40 days in 441AD.



Skellig Michael, County Kerry

PHOTO: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



Glendalough, County Wicklow



Devenish Island, County Fermanagh

Enniskillen; it's only a short hop over, and the tranquillity and unspoiled beauty of this quiet idyll feel timeless.

Island refuges such as Devenish offered isolation, sanctuary and a certain safety. You'll find the remains of a similar settlement at Nendrum – dating from the 5th century – on Strangford Lough's Mahee Island in County Down. Regarded as the best pre-Norman monastic site in Northern Ireland, ruins here include a round tower, huts and one of the world's oldest excavated tide mills (619AD).

There are certain places where the atmosphere isn't so much holy as downright worrisome. Even today, the rocky crag of Skellig Michael off the coast of southwest Kerry, with over 600 steps to

## Even today, the rocky crag of Skellig Michael off the coast of southwest Kerry, with over 600 steps to the top, presents a dramatic experience for the visitor

the top, presents a dramatic experience for the visitor. The monks who created this monastic site finally left in the 13th century and the place became a site of pilgrimage. You can take the 7 mile/12km crossing by boat from Portmagee, Valentia or Ballinskelligs – and once you've braved the climb, its wild, strange air brings the lives of those ancient monks very close.

Generally, though, those Early

Christians chose their sites well – in some cases just co-opting pagan ones. Generations of new structures were built on earlier versions – sometimes sites were even rebuilt from the ground up. Gougane Barra in Macroom, County Cork, for example, derives its name from St Finbarr, who is said to have built a monastery on an island in the lake in the 6th century. The site is magical, surrounded by darkened hills, and more than 1,000 years later it caught the eye of a priest named Denis O'Mahony who retreated there in 1700.

Gougane Barra's remoteness not only appealed to ascetic priests, but to people anxious to avoid observation. During the time of the Penal Laws, parishioners >





Clonmacnoise, County Offaly

What a nasty shock the monks of Clonmacnoise must have had to see the brilliantly engineered shallow-draft Viking ships sailing their way up the Shannon

would travel miles to celebrate mass away from nosy authorities, and today the tiny, beautiful 18th century church and picturesque ruins are very popular for weddings.

Perhaps the biggest and most impressive monastic site on the island of Ireland is at Clonmacnoise on the banks of the Shannon in County Offaly. By the 9th century, it had become a large and thriving community and a centre for learning, which attracted scholars from all over Europe. Many manuscripts were produced here, and the community's success was reflected in its capacity to build in stone. The beautifully crafted, large structures the monks erected still stand to this day. Recent archaeological surveys around the central cluster of three high crosses, a cathedral, seven churches and two round towers (there's also the 9th century Cross of the Scriptures in the excellent visitor centre) have revealed that the settlement sprawled out, with a large lay population living in wooden houses.

All these thriving communities dotted across the island, although mostly set up during the 6th century, declined over time. It wasn't plague, climate change or lack of faith that killed them, it was thieves. Monasteries were plump targets – well-managed, wealthy and stationary – too tempting for Viking, Irish and Norman pillagers. Communities near the coast expected attacks and slave raids, but what a nasty shock the monks of Clonmacnoise must have had to see the brilliantly engineered shallow-draft Viking ships sailing their way up the Shannon, miles



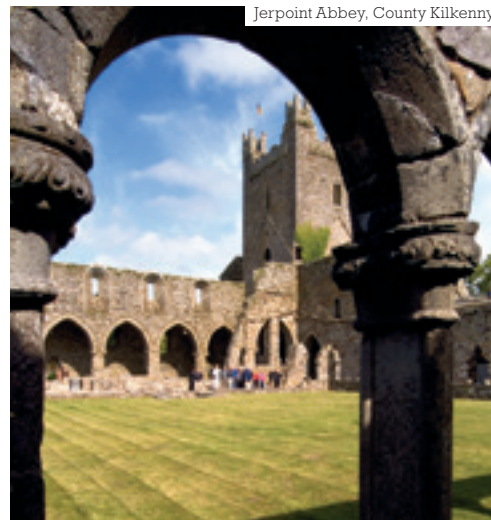
Beaghmore stone circle, County Tyrone

inland, on the hunt for loot. It was undoubtedly a terrifying sight.

What the monks could carry away with them, they did, and their courage has left us treasures. The Book of Kells was repeatedly protected from Irish and Viking attacks. In 1650, it was spirited away again, this time to Dublin to escape Oliver Cromwell's army, finally coming to rest at Trinity College Dublin in 1661, where it is on display to this day. Other treasures open to the public include the Ardagh Chalice, the Bell of St Patrick and its shrine, and the Clonmacnoise Crozier, all in the National Museum in Dublin.

The Ulster Museum has a Viking hoard looted from monasteries and the Clonmore Shrine, made in Armagh in the 7th century and dredged from the River Blackmore – perhaps where it was dropped by monks fleeing Norse raiders.

These treasures, with their beautiful, sensitive craftsmanship, give a tantalising glimpse into the vividly creative and busy lives of Ireland's early medieval monks. Hardworking, pious, clever and brave, these communities flourished all around the island, and through the artefacts and the buildings they left behind, their legacy is with us still.



Jerpoint Abbey, County Kilkenny

## ANCIENT IRELAND

Ireland's monastic sites are dotted around an island that is also rich with historical sites from prehistoric passage tombs to medieval marvels. Here's what to look out for

### RING FORTS

Around 50,000 ring forts are believed to exist on the island of Ireland. Mountsandel, near Coleraine, County Londonderry, is an Iron Age ring fort and home to the oldest remains of human habitation in Ireland, dating back to 7900BC. The most famous ring fort, however, is undoubtedly Dun Aengus on Inis Mór, one of the three Aran Islands located off the coast of County Galway. Perched precariously on top of a 388ft/118-metre cliff, it's an incredible sight.

### STONE CIRCLES

Beaghmore, deep in the Sperrin Mountains in County Tyrone, has seven Neolithic stone circles. These circles are thought to have some religious significance, but their purpose is not entirely clear. Ballynoe near Downpatrick, County Down, is a circle of 50 standing stones and a court cairn.

### HILL OF SLANE

County Meath

The ancient King Sláine mac Dela is rumoured to be buried here, and the ruined Christian friary probably incorporates a pagan shrine.

### ROCK OF CASHEL

County Tipperary

This rocky outcrop in the heart of the County Tipperary countryside contains one of the most important collections of medieval buildings in Europe. There's a 12th century round tower, high cross and Romanesque chapel; a 13th century Gothic cathedral; and a 15th century castle.

### NEWGRANGE

Boyne Valley, County Meath

Older than the Pyramids, Newgrange is a 5,000-year-old Stone Age structure whose inner chamber is illuminated every year on the winter solstice.

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Royal County Down

# A GOLFING ADVENTURE

*Golf writer Brian Keogh has a deep love for Ireland's greens, the warmth of the people and the island's great teaching pros. It's what makes golfing here a cut above the rest*



Royal Dublin Golf Club



Waterville, County Kerry



Trump International Golf Links Ireland, Doonbeg, County Clare

## Home of champions

When Pádraig Harrington won the 2007 Open Championship, he ended a 60-year wait for a successor to Ireland's first Major winner, Fred Daly. Since then, the Majors have come in droves, with Harrington taking three before Graeme McDowell, Darren Clarke and Rory McIlroy landed another six Grand Slam titles. The Irish Open will be hosted at the K Club in County Kildare (2016) and Lough Erne Resort in County Fermanagh (2017), while the honour of hosting The Open Championship in 2019 has been awarded to Royal Portrush. For more information, visit: [ireland.com/golf](http://ireland.com/golf)

a wonderful teacher," Pádraig said after shooting a 65 at County Kildare's K Club on his pro debut in September 1995, thanks to a lesson from Wattie.

## STARTING OFF

While I didn't hit one ball during that first lesson, I came away with a sense that golf in Ireland was more than just a game – it's also about characters you connect with along the way.

Wattie may have told me the importance of the "opening and closing the door"-style of golf swing, but he was also full of little gems that have stayed with me through the years: "Remember," he told me, "golf is like your school exams. There are 18 questions on the exam paper and you can't skip any of them!"

Had I been destined for top-class amateur golf, treating the game like an exam might have worked. But it turned out I was destined to talk and write about the sport instead and, as you'll discover on your Ireland golfing adventure, everyone has a story...

## THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Yes, playing golf on the island of Ireland is about great championship courses and challenging links. It's about taking things to the edge on courses such as the Old Head Golf Links in Kinsale, County Cork, a place that made Tiger Woods simply say: "Wow!"

But the people you meet can really transform your experience. Whether you get to know great amateurs and clubs' pros like Wattie, or simply chat with a friendly face at the 19th hole, you're likely to make friends for life.

Just look at the friendly nature of clubs such as Laytown & Bettystown. This great sporting links near Drogheda, County Louth, is where tour legend Des Smyth learned the game. It's also where you'll meet Bobby Browne.

Go on a Saturday morning and you might find Bobby teaching local schoolkids on the 18th fairway, a huge bunch of them swinging away in unison. It's one of the great sights in golf and he's been doing it since he first arrived at Bettystown 48 years ago, when the course was a lot more rough and ready than the pristine links of today. Many members who helped rebuild those greens and tees are still there, and are more than happy to welcome visitors.

Spending some time with teaching pros is sure to add a personal touch to your golfing adventure in Ireland, so book in with Leonard Owens at The Royal Dublin or Joey Purcell at Portmarnock, County Dublin, if you can. You won't forget it.

## A JOURNEY NORTH

Experiencing Ireland's courses is something to be truly treasured, and I'm lucky enough to have played many of them. My love of the game has taken me north past the wonderful links at Seapoint and the parkland gem of Dundalk. I've headed across the Mourne Mountains through Mayobridge and Hilltown and past Tollymore Forest Park, before descending into Newcastle, where the mountains sweep down to the sea.

An enjoyable diversion is to take the beautiful coast road and play Warrenpoint, Kilkeel and Ardglass, but Newcastle is where so many of the island's great golfing moments have been made. It's here you'll find the great links of Royal County Down, one of the world's Top 10 courses, and host of the 2015 Irish Open. It's a favourite course of top golfers including Rory McIlroy, who once noted: "The more you play it, the more you recognise it for the class place it is."

It's a place that's so tough even the greats like Jack Nicklaus have struggled there, but as the club pro, Kevan Whitson, points out, the views are worth the pain. "It's still the same, still absolutely magical," he says after 24 years at the helm. Relaxing in the Murlough Room bar after a game, it's hard to disagree.





Royal Portrush, County Antrim



Ballybunion, County Kerry

I have been pelted with hailstones, soaked to the skin and then dried out in double-quick time thanks to a roaring west wind and a warming sun. This is golf at its elemental best

### THE BEAUTY OF LONG SUMMER DAYS

Light sticks around a long time in Ireland during summer – a bonus for those who don't like to be rushed. Some of my best memories are of slowly motoring across Northern Ireland towards the sandhills of Royal Portrush and Portstewart. And I'm always drawn even further north to Donegal's spellbinding landscapes, where the mountains appear to crash into the sea and the days seem endless.



Old Head, County Cork

In this little corner of the island, I've looked out on wild and beautiful scenery at courses such as Rosapenna, Ballyliffin and Cruit Island's remote nine-hole gem, linked by a narrow bridge to the mainland. As well as offering excellent golf, these courses bring a smile to my face because of their sheer beauty. It's the same right along the coast: from the slopes of Ben Bulbin and the County Sligo Golf Club, to Carne Golf Links in County Mayo.



Ardglass, County Down

Tracing the Wild Atlantic Way coastline from the championship course at Lahinch, County Clare, to the Trump International Golf Links in Doonbeg, my aim is always to reach Killimer in time for the last ferry across the Shannon to Tarbert in Kerry. I've found so much great golf here that I feel I could stay forever in Ballybunion, Tralee or Waterville.

And as for the weather? I've been pelted with hailstones, soaked to the skin and then dried out in double-quick time thanks to a roaring wind and a warming sun. This is golf at its elemental best in a land that seems impossibly green.

### START YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

With more than 400 courses on Ireland's golfing map and each course with its own unique charm, challenges and characters, this island has something truly unique to offer golfers, from the beginner to the pro.

And no matter how well you swing it, it's the people, as well as the courses, that make golfing in Ireland so great. If you're after memories – and friendships – that last a lifetime, you've come to the right place.

### Need to know the essentials

Ireland's people love to chat, so invite a local member or two to join your group and have a fun fourball.

Ireland's roads are better than ever, but remember you're on holiday and take your time. Give yourself a chance to smell the roses along the way and avoid rushing to make your tee-time.

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

Ireland thankfully enjoys a temperate climate. Just don't forget your wind cheater and waterproofs.

Summer days are long in Ireland, so you can play two games if you get up early. At the height of the season, it's light by 6am and doesn't get dark until after 10pm.

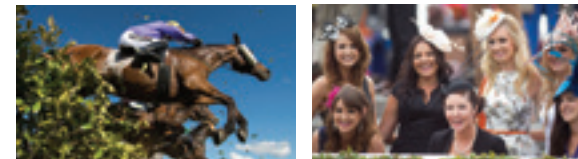
Golf Digest ranks six of Ireland's courses in its Top 100: Royal County Down (4th), Royal Portrush (16th), Ballybunion Old Course (27th), Lahinch (64th), Portmarnock (83rd) and Waterville (93rd).

Remember, there are fewer than 200 true links courses on the planet and Ireland has 50 of them.

For more info visit: [ireland.com/golf](http://ireland.com/golf)

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- PUNCESTOWN**  
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## GENERAL INFORMATION & PLANNING YOUR TRIP

### LANGUAGE

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

### PASSPORT/VISA REQUIREMENTS

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

### EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

**REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**  
For further information contact:  
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Tel: 020 7373 4339  
For a list of Irish Embassies, visit [dfa.ie](http://dfa.ie) and [dfa.ie/irish-embassy/great-britain](http://dfa.ie/irish-embassy/great-britain)  
**NORTHERN IRELAND**  
Further information is available from your local British Embassy or Consulate.  
For details contact:  
**The Foreign and Commonwealth Office**  
[gov.uk](http://gov.uk)

### VISITORS WITH DISABILITIES

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

#### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**National Disability Authority**  
Tel: +353 (0) 1 608 0400

[nda.ie](http://nda.ie)  
**NORTHERN IRELAND**  
**Disability Action**  
Tel: 028 9029 7880  
[disabilityaction.org](http://disabilityaction.org)

### CURRENCIES

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

### PERSONAL SAFETY

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

**REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**  
**Irish Tourist Assistance Service**  
(Mon-Fri), 6-7 Hanover Street East, Dublin 2  
Tel: +353 (0) 1 661 0562  
Email: [info@itas.ie](mailto:info@itas.ie)

[itas.ie](http://itas.ie)  
**Store Street Garda Station**  
(Weekends and public holidays), Dublin 1  
Tel: +353 (0) 1 666 8000

**NORTHERN IRELAND**  
Contact the local police station where support will be available.  
Tel: 101  
[psni.police.uk](http://psni.police.uk)

### EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Tel: 112 or 999

**NORTHERN IRELAND**  
Emergency Services (Police, Fire, Ambulance, Coastal & Mountain Rescue)  
Tel: 999

### SMOKING RESTRICTIONS

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

### PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 2016

<b>New Year's Day</b>	1 Jan
<b>St Patrick's Day Holiday</b>	17 Mar
<b>Good Friday (NI only)</b>	25 Mar
<b>Easter Monday</b>	28 Mar
<b>May Bank Holiday</b>	2 May
<b>Spring Bank Holiday (NI only)</b>	30 May
<b>June Bank Holiday (ROI only)</b>	6 June
<b>July Holiday (NI only)</b>	12 July
<b>Aug Bank Holiday (ROI only)</b>	1 Aug
<b>Aug Bank Holiday (NI only)</b>	29 Aug
<b>Oct Bank Holiday (ROI only)</b>	31 Oct
<b>Christmas Day (substitute day)</b>	27 Dec
<b>St Stephen's Day (ROI)</b>	26 Dec
<b>Boxing Day (NI)</b>	26 Dec

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

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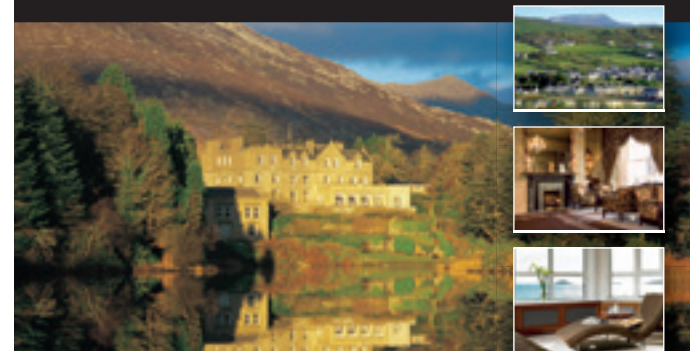

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[www.irishcountryhotels.com](http://www.irishcountryhotels.com)



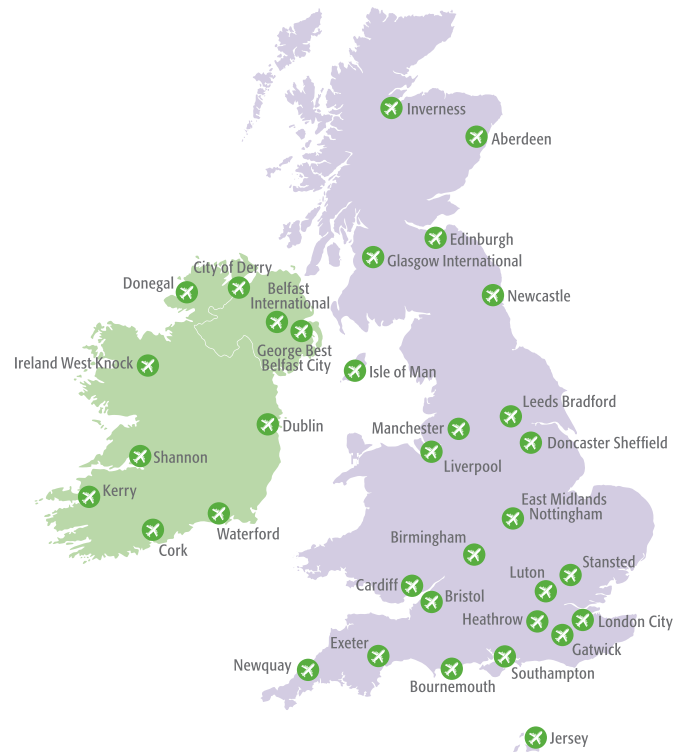




## TRAVELLING TO IRELAND BY AIR

### AIR ACCESS & ROUTES TO IRELAND

DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE
Aberdeen	Dublin George Best Belfast City	Aer Lingus Regional Flybe
Birmingham	Belfast International Cork Dublin George Best Belfast City Ireland West Airport Knock Shannon Waterford	easyJet Aer Lingus Regional Aer Lingus, Ryanair Flybe Flybe Aer Lingus Regional Fly VLM
Bournemouth	Dublin George Best Belfast City	Flybe Flybe
Bristol	Belfast International Cork Dublin Ireland West Airport Knock	easyJet Aer Lingus Regional Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair Ryanair
Cardiff	Dublin Cork George Best Belfast City	Aer Lingus Regional, Flybe Flybe Flybe



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DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE
Doncaster Sheffield	Dublin	Aer Lingus Regional
East Midlands Nottingham	Dublin George Best Belfast City Ireland West Airport Knock	Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair Flybe Ryanair
Edinburgh	Belfast International Cork Dublin George Best Belfast City Ireland West Airport Knock	easyJet Aer Lingus Regional Aer Lingus Regional, Flybe, Ryanair Flybe Ryanair
Exeter	Dublin George Best Belfast City	Flybe Flybe
Glasgow International	Belfast International City of Derry Cork Donegal Dublin George Best Belfast City Shannon	easyJet Ryanair Aer Lingus Regional Aer Lingus Regional Aer Lingus Regional, Flybe, Ryanair Flybe Flybe
Inverness	Dublin George Best Belfast City	Flybe Flybe
Isle of Man	Dublin George Best Belfast City	Aer Lingus Regional Citywing
Jersey	Belfast International Cork Dublin George Best Belfast City	easyJet Aer Lingus Regional Aer Lingus Regional Flybe
Leeds Bradford	Dublin George Best Belfast City	Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair Flybe
Liverpool	Belfast International City of Derry Cork Dublin Ireland West Airport Knock	easyJet Ryanair Ryanair Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair Ryanair
London City	Belfast Dublin	Flybe British Airways, CityJet
London Gatwick	Belfast International Cork Dublin George Best Belfast City Ireland West Airport Knock Shannon	easyJet Ryanair Aer Lingus, Ryanair Aer Lingus Ryanair
London Heathrow	Cork Dublin George Best Belfast City Shannon	Aer Lingus Aer Lingus, British Airways Aer Lingus, British Airways Aer Lingus
London Luton	Belfast International Dublin Ireland West Airport Knock Kerry Waterford	easyJet Ryanair Ryanair Ryanair Fly VLM

DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE
London Stansted	Belfast International City of Derry Cork Dublin Ireland West Airport Knock Kerry Shannon	easyJet Ryanair Ryanair Ryanair Ryanair Ryanair Ryanair
Manchester	Belfast International Cork Dublin George Best Belfast City Ireland West Airport Knock Shannon	easyJet Aer Lingus Regional Aer Lingus, Ryanair Flybe Flybe Ryanair
Newcastle	Belfast International Cork Dublin George Best Belfast City	easyJet Aer Lingus Regional Aer Lingus Regional, Ryanair Flybe
Newquay	Dublin George Best Belfast City	Aer Lingus Regional Flybe
Southampton	Dublin George Best Belfast City	Flybe Flybe



### AIRLINE CONTACT DETAILS

AIRLINE	WEBSITE	TELEPHONE
Aer Lingus	<a href="http://aerlingus.com">aerlingus.com</a>	0871 718 5000
British Airways	<a href="http://britishairways.com">britishairways.com</a>	0844 493 0787
CityJet	<a href="http://cityjet.com">cityjet.com</a>	0871 405 2020
Citywing	<a href="http://citywing.com">citywing.com</a>	0871 200 0440
easyJet	<a href="http://easyjet.com">easyjet.com</a>	0843 104 5000
Flybe	<a href="http://flybe.com">flybe.com</a>	0371 700 2000
Fly VLM	<a href="http://flyvlm.com">flyvlm.com</a>	0845 528 0678
Ryanair	<a href="http://ryanair.com">ryanair.com</a>	0871 246 0000

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





### REGIONAL AIRPORTS AND FLIGHTS

The following internal flights are available within Ireland.



DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Dublin	Donegal	Aer Lingus Regional*	+44 0333 004 5000	aerlingus.com
	Kerry	Aer Lingus Regional*	+44 0333 004 5000	aerlingus.com

\*Operated by Stobart Air  
Please check website for details, as air routes are subject to change.

### TRAVELLING FROM DUBLIN AND BELFAST AIRPORTS INTO CITY CENTRES

#### DUBLIN

Arriving in Dublin Airport, the options to get into the city centre are by bus or taxi. Buses and taxis are located just outside the arrivals hall. A taxi can cost between €20-30\* depending on where you are travelling within the city. Dublin Airport is located on the north side of the city so fares to this part of Dublin will normally be cheaper than if you were taking a taxi to the south side. Direct buses to the city centre and bus and train stations are available from Dublin Bus Airlink; €6\* single and €10\* return. Children travel half price.

#### BELFAST

##### Belfast International Airport

The airport is situated just 18 miles/29km outside Belfast city centre and you can take a bus or taxi into the city. Airport Express 300 now operates a 24-hour service between the airport and Belfast city centre with buses departing regularly throughout the day; £7.50\* single and £10.50\* return. The bus leaves from the bus stop located opposite the terminal exit. A taxi fare to the city centre is approximately £30\*.

##### George Best Belfast City Airport

Airport Express 600 into the city centre runs on the hour (every 20 minutes during peak time); £2.60\* single and £3.80\* return. A taxi fare to the city is approximately £10\*. Trains run from adjacent Sydenham station near the airport to Belfast and beyond.

\*Prices are subject to change.

**i** For information on access to and from airports and ferry ports throughout the island of Ireland, log on to [ireland.com](http://ireland.com)



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

DUBLIN IRELAND

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DUBLIN

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[WWW.STPATRICKSCATHEDRAL.IE](http://WWW.STPATRICKSCATHEDRAL.IE)

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[www.shannonferries.com](http://www.shannonferries.com)





## TRAVELLING TO IRELAND BY SEA

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



### SEA ROUTES

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

\*Mar-Sept

### FERRY AND COACH OPERATORS CONTACT DETAILS

FERRY COMPANY	WEBSITE	TELEPHONE
Irish Ferries	<a href="http://irishferries.com">irishferries.com</a>	0871 730 0400
P&O Ferries	<a href="http://poferries.com">poferries.com</a>	0871 702 3477
Steam Packet Company	<a href="http://steam-packet.com">steam-packet.com</a>	0872 299 2992
Stena Line	<a href="http://stenaline.co.uk">stenaline.co.uk</a>	0844 770 7070
Eurolines	<a href="http://eurolines.co.uk">eurolines.co.uk</a>	0871 781 8181

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

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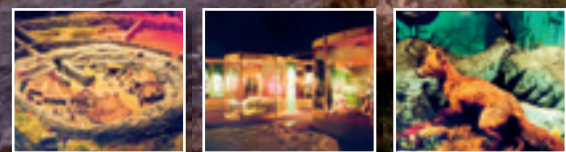


[RAILTOURSIRELAND.COM](http://RAILTOURSIRELAND.COM) | T: 0800-3282899



**A Walk Through Time**

Explore the flora, fauna, archaeology and natural history of the Burren in the Burren Centre. The visitor centre in the historic village of Kilfenora boasts a fantastic exhibition, audio visual film theatre, local craft shop and tea room.



**The Burren Centre**  
 & The Kilfenora Celtic Band Hub

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 IN CRAFT SHOP

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 t +353 (0) 65 7088030 f +353 (0) 65 7088102  
 e info@theburrencentre.ie w www.theburrencentre.ie

OPENING TIMES Mid March to May 10am-5pm;  
 June to August 9.30am-5.30pm; September to October 10am-5pm;  
 Last admission is 30 minutes before closing

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 T: +353 (0)51 425239 E: info@dunbrody.com  
[www.dunbrody.com](http://www.dunbrody.com)



## THINGS TO SEE AND DO

**ATTRACTIONS**

For information on Ireland's attractions, check the Tourism Ireland website, [ireland.com](http://ireland.com). We also recommend you try the following contacts to find out more about the wonderful range of historic houses and gardens, museums, castles, galleries and beautiful countryside when putting together itineraries.

**ALL ISLAND**

Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland

Tel: +353 (0) 87 777 6428; [hcgi.ie](http://hcgi.ie)

Heritage Island

Tel: +353 (0) 1 775 3870; [heritageisland.com](http://heritageisland.com)

**REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

The Heritage Service

Tel: +353 (0) 1 647 6635; [heritageireland.ie](http://heritageireland.ie)

CNCI (Council of National Cultural Institutions)

Tel: +353 (0) 64 662 7384; [museum.ie](http://museum.ie)

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

NI Environment Agency

Tel: 028 9054 0540; [doeni.gov.uk/niea](http://doeni.gov.uk/niea)

The National Trust

Tel: 0844 800 1895; [nationaltrust.org.uk](http://nationaltrust.org.uk)

National Museums of Northern Ireland

Tel: 0845 608 0000; [nmni.com](http://nmni.com)

Northern Ireland Museums Council

Tel: 028 9055 0215; [nimc.co.uk](http://nimc.co.uk)

**ANGLING**

In Ireland, you'll come across a huge variety of species of fish in the large network of loughs, rivers, canals and surrounding sea. There's a superb infrastructure of angling centres and fishing boat operators – plus beautiful surroundings – so it's not surprising that Ireland has become one of the world's favourite destinations for game, sea and coarse angling. For more information visit [ireland.com/angling](http://ireland.com/angling)

**CRUISING & WATERSPORTS**

The three main waterways for cruising are the River Shannon, the Grand Canal and the Erne Waterway System. At present, the most developed are the Shannon-erne Waterway and lakes. Cabin cruisers can be hired, ranging in size from two to ten berths. Experience in handling a boat is helpful but not essential because training is provided. Surfing, rowing, sailing, sub-aqua diving, canoeing, snorkelling or windsurfing – if you love watersports, Ireland is your perfect destination. For navigation advice and watersports information contact:

**ALL ISLAND**

Waterways Ireland

Tel: 028 6632 3004; [waterwaysireland.org](http://waterwaysireland.org)

**CYCLING**

A number of companies provide guided and self-guided cycling tours and you can hire bicycles throughout Ireland. For more information visit [ireland.com/cycling](http://ireland.com/cycling)

**GAELIC GAMES**

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

For further information contact:

Tel: +353 (0) 1 836 3222; [gaa.ie](http://gaa.ie)

**RUGBY**

All four provinces of Ireland have strong rugby teams and the national side, composed of players from each province, is one of the best in the world.

For further information contact:

Tel: +353 (0) 1 647 3800; [irishrugby.ie](http://irishrugby.ie)

**FOOTBALL**

Football is hugely popular throughout the island.

For further information contact:

**REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

Football Association of Ireland

Tel: +353 (0) 1 899 9500; [fai.ie](http://fai.ie)

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

Irish Football Association

Tel: 028 9066 9458; [irishfa.com](http://irishfa.com)

**GENEALOGY**

The following associations may be useful in assisting your search to trace your ancestors in Ireland.

**ALL ISLAND**

The Irish Family History Foundation; [rootsireland.ie](http://rootsireland.ie)

Accredited Genealogists Ireland; [aggi.ie](http://aggi.ie)

**REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

Genealogical Office (National Library of Ireland)

Tel: +353 (0) 1 603 0200; [nli.ie](http://nli.ie)

General Register Office

Tel: +353 (0) 90 663 2900; [groireland.ie](http://groireland.ie)

National Archives Ireland

Tel: +353 (0) 1 407 2300; [nationalarchives.ie](http://nationalarchives.ie)

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

The Public Record Office Northern Ireland

Tel: 028 9053 4800; [proni.gov.uk](http://proni.gov.uk)

General Register Office Northern Ireland

Tel: 028 9151 3101; [nidirect.gov.uk/gro](http://nidirect.gov.uk/gro)

**GOLF**

With more than 400 courses – including 50 of the world's 200 natural links courses, and many championship parkland courses – Ireland is now one of the world's leading golf destinations. Playing here is an unforgettable experience. For more information visit [ireland.com/golf](http://ireland.com/golf)

**HORSE RACING**

Horse racing is a passion in Ireland and you'll find several of the world's most exciting and atmospheric race courses here, from Punchestown and the Curragh in County Kildare to Down Royal in County Down, and the famous Leopardstown and Fairyhouse courses. There are also a number of fabulous horse-racing festivals to look out for, including those at Galway and Downpatrick. That's not forgetting the unique Laytown Races in County Meath; the event, run under the rules of racing on 3 miles/4.8km of golden sand, is the only one of its kind in Europe.

For further information and a full list of events, contact **Horse Racing Ireland**.

Tel: +353 (0) 45 455455; [goracing.ie](http://goracing.ie)

**HORSE RIDING**

Ireland is a beautiful place to explore on horseback and you'll find a large network of equestrian centres around the island. For more information please visit [ireland.com/equestrian](http://ireland.com/equestrian) or Equestrian Holidays Ireland at [ehi.ie](http://ehi.ie)

**AIRE** (the Association of Irish Riding Establishments) is a body that regulates standards at riding schools and equestrian centres in Ireland. Its website contains a list of approved and inspected members that offer a wide choice of riding facilities for every rider, regardless of ability or experience. Tel: +353 (0) 45 854 418; [aire.ie](http://aire.ie)

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<p><b>CASTLETROY</b> PARK HOTEL ★★★★ +353 61 335566 <a href="http://CastletroyPark.ie">CastletroyPark.ie</a></p>	<p><b>CHARLEVILLE</b> PARK HOTEL ★★★★ +353 63 33700 <a href="http://CharlevilleParkHotel.com">CharlevilleParkHotel.com</a></p>

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**TOURISM ORGANISATIONS**  
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**Aran Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 99 61263

**Cork Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 21 425 5100

**Dingle Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 66 9151188

**Donegal Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 74 972 1148

**Dublin Airport Tourist Office (Terminal 1)**  
Tel: +353 1850 230 330

**Dublin Airport Tourist Office (Terminal 2)**  
Tel: +353 1850 230 330

**Dublin O’Connell Street Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 1850 230 330

**Dublin Suffolk Street Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 1850 230 330

**Ennis Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 65 682 8366

**Galway Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 91 537 700

**Kilkenny Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 56 775 1500

**Killarney Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 64 663 1633

**Kinsale Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 21 477 2234

**Letterkenny Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 74 912 1160

**Limerick Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 61 317 522

**Mullingar Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 44 934 8650

**Sligo Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 71 916 1201

**Tralee Tourist Office**  
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**Waterford Tourist Office**  
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**Westport Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 98 25711

**Wexford Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 53 912 3111

**Wicklow Tourist Office**  
Tel: +353 (0) 404 69117

**NORTHERN IRELAND**  
**Visit Belfast**  
Tel: 028 9024 6609  
[visit-belfast.com](http://visit-belfast.com)

**Visit Derry**  
Tel: 028 7126 7284  
[visitderry.com](http://visitderry.com)

**Fermanagh Lakelands Tourism**  
Tel: 028 6632 3110  
[fermanaghlakelands.com](http://fermanaghlakelands.com)



 **WHERE TO STAY**

In a country where hospitality is second nature, Ireland has a wonderful range of places to stay, from the friendliest bed and breakfasts in the world to 5-star hotels. Visit [ireland.com/offers](http://ireland.com/offers) to see hundreds of offers on accommodation in Ireland and to check out a range of attractive inclusive packages available from many tour operators.

You will find welcoming bed & breakfasts throughout Ireland, even in the most remote areas, with friendly personal service and delicious full Irish or Ulster fry breakfasts. For true countryside immersion and an opportunity to get to know the locals, try a farmhouse holiday. Be sure to book early, though, as they are increasingly popular.

Situated in lovely surroundings, Ireland’s elegant country houses offer a truly unique place to stay, often with access to a variety of pursuits, from angling to country cooking courses, which are best booked in advance.

Inexpensive and comfortable, Ireland’s large network of hostels give budget travellers great independence. Facilities vary so check in advance.

Camping and caravanning in Ireland’s 200 sites, usually near the most beautiful scenery, is another way to enjoy the countryside on a budget. Self-catering holidays in traditional Irish cottages or modern apartments and chalets can be enjoyed in villages, towns and cities.

**HOTELS & GUESTHOUSES**

**Irelandhotels.com**  
Tel: +353 (0) 1 293 9170; [irelandhotels.com](http://irelandhotels.com)  
**Northern Ireland Hotels Federation**  
Tel: 028 9077 6635; [nihf.co.uk](http://nihf.co.uk)

**Manor House Hotels and Irish Country Hotels**  
Tel: +353 (0) 1 295 8900; [manorhousehotels.com](http://manorhousehotels.com);  
[irishcountryhotels.com](http://irishcountryhotels.com)

**Ireland’s Blue Book**  
Tel: +353 (0) 1 676 9914; [irelands-blue-book.ie](http://irelands-blue-book.ie)  
**Good Food Ireland**  
Tel: +353 (0) 53 915 8693; [goodfoodireland.ie](http://goodfoodireland.ie)

**BED & BREAKFASTS**

**B&B Ireland**  
Tel: +353 (0) 71 982 2222; [bandbireland.com](http://bandbireland.com)

**COUNTRY HOUSES**

**The Hidden Ireland Guide**  
Tel: +353 (0) 1 662 7166; [hiddenireland.com](http://hiddenireland.com)

**CAMPING & CARAVANNING**


**Irish Caravan and Camping Council**  
[camping-ireland.ie](http://camping-ireland.ie)  
**Camping Northern Ireland**  
[discovernorthernireland.com/A-Guide-to-Camping-and-Caravan-Parks-A30](http://discovernorthernireland.com/A-Guide-to-Camping-and-Caravan-Parks-A30)

**HOSTELS**

**An Óige – Irish Youth Hostel Association**  
Tel: +353 (0) 1 830 4555; [anoige.ie](http://anoige.ie)  
**Independent Holiday Hostels**  
Tel: +353 (0) 1862 158 786; [hostels-ireland.com](http://hostels-ireland.com)  
**Hostelling International Northern Ireland**  
Tel: 028 903 24733; [hini.org.uk](http://hini.org.uk)  
**Independent Hostels of Ireland**  
Tel: +353 (0) 74 973 0130  
[independenthostelsireland.com](http://independenthostelsireland.com)

**SELF-CATERING**  
**REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

**Irish Self-Catering Federation**  
[letsgoselfcatering.com](http://letsgoselfcatering.com)  
**NORTHERN IRELAND**  
**The Northern Ireland Self-Catering Holiday Association**  
[authenticnorthernireland.com](http://authenticnorthernireland.com)

 Visit [ireland.com](http://ireland.com) to find links and information on all approved or registered accommodation on the island of Ireland, including hotels, B&Bs, guesthouses, hostels, self-catering, camping and caravanning.



 **TOUR OPERATORS**

COMPANY	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE	Accommodation	Angling	Coach	Cruising	Culture/heritage	Cycling	Equestrian	Gardens	Golf	Motoring	Self-catering	Short breaks	Spa	Walking	Watersports	Other
Andrews of Tideswell Ltd	01298 871 222	andrews-of-tideswell.co.uk																
Anglers World Holidays	01246 221 717 01246 221 753	anglersworld.tv / irelandbreaks.co.uk																
Bakers Dolphin	01934 415 000	bakersdolphin.com																
Barrhead Travel Ltd	0141 222 2223	barrheadtravel.co.uk																
Best of Scotland Holidays	01592 752 990	best-of-scotland.co.uk																
Booking.com	0845 080 5012	booking.com																
Brightwater Holidays	01334 657 155	brightwaterholidays.com																Special interest tours
British Airways Holidays	0844 493 0787	britishairways.com																
Caledonian Travel	08448 153 001	caledoniantravel.com																Special interest tours
CIE Tours	+353 (0) 1 703 1888	cietours.co.uk																
Cottages 4 You	0845 268 0760	cottages4you.co.uk																
Cresta Holidays	0844 879 8036	crestaholidays.co.uk/ireland																
Crusader Holidays	01255 425 453	crusader-holidays.co.uk																
David Urquhart Travel	08448 717 717	davidurquhart.com																
Dodds of Troon Ltd	01292 288 100	doddssoftroon.com																
Driveline Golf	0870 330 1056	drivelinegolf.com																
Ebookers	020 3320 3320	ebookers.com																
Eclipse Breaks	0844 8009424	Eclipsebreaks.com																
Edwards Coaches	01443 202 048	edwardscoaches.co.uk																
Executive Golf & Leisure	01786 832 244	execgolf-leisure.com																
Expedia	0800 783 2384	expedia.co.uk																
GB Tours	0151 652 2222	gbtours.com																
Glenton Holidays	08000 242 424	glentontholidays.co.uk																
Glenton Palmer Coaches	01924 895 849	davidpalmercoaches.co.uk																
Golfbreaks.com	0800 279 7988	golfbreaks.com																
Golf Ireland	01382 522 500	golfireland.com																
Golf Par Excellence	01737 211 818	golfparexcellence.com																
Grand UK Holidays	01603 619 933	grandukholidays.com																
Great Rail Journeys	01904 521 936	greatrail.com																Escorted rail holidays
Harry Shaw Travel	024 764 55544	harryshaw.co.uk																
HF Holidays	0345 470 7558	hfholidays.co.uk																
Hogans Cottages	01 244 357718	hogansirishcottages.com																
Hostelbookers.com	-	hostelbookers.com																
Hostelworld	-	hostelworld.com																
Hotel Connexions	01786 82 5407	hotelconnexions.com																
Hotel Direct	0800 633 8000	hoteldirect.co.uk																
Hotelopia	+353 818 275 725	hotelopia.com																
Hotel Reservation Service (HRS)	+353 (0) 1 524 5122	hrs.com																
Hotels.com	+353 (0) 1 656 9450	hotels.com																
Hotels4u.com	0844 875 3455	hotels4u.com																
Imagine Ireland	01756 707 720	imagineireland.com																



UK TOUR OPERATORS (Continued)

COMPANY	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE	Accommodation	Angling	Coach	Cruising	Culture/heritage	Cycling	Equestrian	Gardens	Golf	Motoring	Self-catering	Short breaks	Spa	Walking	Watersports	Other	
In the Saddle	01299 272 997	inthesaddle.com																	
Irish Ferries Holidays	08717 300 400	irishferries.com																	
Just Go! Holidays	08432 244 244	justgoholidays.com																	
Kings Angling and Activity Holidays	01708 453 043	kingsanglingholidays.co.uk																	
Kirker Holidays	0207 593 2288	kirkerholidays.com																	
Lastminute.com	+353 818 300 064	lastminute.com																	
Laterooms	0844 774 1001	laterooms.com																	
Leger Holidays	08445 046 251	leger.co.uk																	
Leisure Link Golf Holidays	01708 339 300	leisurelinkgolf.com																	
Links Golf St Andrews	01334 478 639	linksgolfstandrews.com																	
McKinlay Kidd Ltd	0844 804 0020	seeirelanddifferently.co.uk																	Wildlife & whiskey tours
National Holidays	08444 779 990	nationalholidays.com																	
Newmarket Holidays	0330 160 7705	newmarketholidays.co.uk																	
On Course Travel	01372 451 910	ireland-oncourse.co.uk																	Horse racing
Opodo	0871 277 0090	opodo.co.uk																	
Osprey Holidays Ltd	0131 243 8098	ospreyholidays.com																	
PAB Coach Holidays	+353 1 871 9819	pabtours.com																	
Parrys International Tours	01922 414 576	parrys-international.co.uk																	
Pitchup.com	-	pitchup.com																	Camping & caravanning
Rambler's Worldwide Holidays	01707 331 133	ramblersholidays.co.uk																	
Responsible Travel.com	01273 823 700	responsibletravel.com																	Adventure, eco breaks
Saga Holidays Ltd	0800 096 0074	saga.co.uk																	
Shearings Holidays	0844 824 6351	shearings.com/ireland																	
Spabreaks.com	0800 043 660	spabreaks.com																	
Stena Line Holidays	08445 768 889	stenaline.co.uk																	
Superbreak	0871 2213344	superbreak.com																	
Take the Family	-	takefamily.com																	
Tangney Tours	01732 886 666	tangney-tours.com																	Pilgrimages
Tayleur Mayde Golf Tours	0131 524 9554	tayleurmayde.com																	
The Camping & Caravanning Club	024 7642 2024	campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk																	Camping & caravanning
The Caravan Club	01342 318 813	caravanclub.co.uk																	Camping & caravanning
Titan Travel Ltd	0800 988 5823	titantravel.co.uk																	
Travel Republic	0208 974 7200	travelrepublic.co.uk																	
Travelling the Fairways	01334 460 789	tfgolf.com																	
Travelzoo	-	travelzoo.co.uk																	
Wilkinson Golf & Leisure	01383 629 940	wilkinsongolf.com																	
Your Golf Travel	0800 1936630	yourgolftravel.com																	

For the most up-to-date list of operators visit [ireland.com/touoperators](http://ireland.com/touoperators). All information correct at time of going to press but may be subject to future operator changes.

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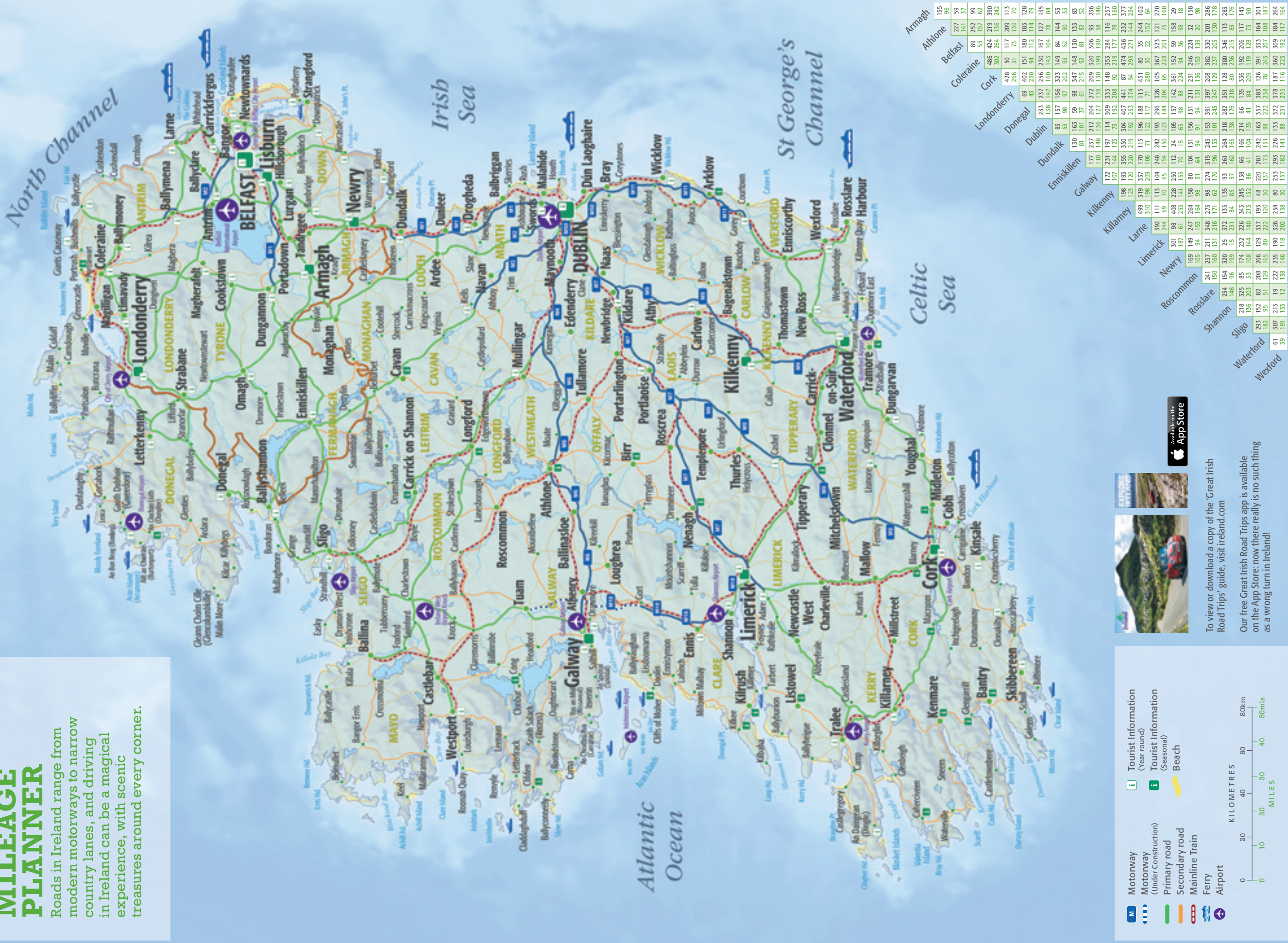
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[www.tullamoredewvisitorcentre.com](http://www.tullamoredewvisitorcentre.com)





# 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** (M icon)  
**Motorway (Under Construction)** (Dashed M icon)  
**Primary road** (Green line)  
**Secondary road** (Orange line)  
**Mainline Train** (Red train icon)  
**Ferry** (Blue ship icon)  
**Airport** (Airplane icon)

**Tourist Information (Year round)** (Blue 'i' icon)  
**Tourist Information (Seasonal)** (Green 'i' icon)  
**Beach** (Yellow beach icon)

**Scale:** 0 to 80km / 0 to 50miles

**Available on the App Store**

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!

Armagh	185	96
Athlone	297	59
Belfast	141	37
Coleraine	89	23
Cork	486	219
Londonerry	502	264
Donegal	266	51
Dublin	69	402
Dundalk	138	147
Emmuskillen	85	157
Galway	177	237
Kilkenny	123	220
Larne	62	111
Limerick	301	96
Newry	169	149
Roscommon	105	94
Rosslare	284	154
Shannon	218	325
Sligo	182	95
Waterford	61	307
Wexford	39	191
Armagh	185	96
Athlone	297	59
Belfast	141	37
Coleraine	89	23
Cork	486	219
Londonerry	502	264
Donegal	266	51
Dublin	69	402
Dundalk	138	147
Emmuskillen	85	157
Galway	177	237
Kilkenny	123	220
Larne	62	111
Limerick	301	96
Newry	169	149
Roscommon	105	94
Rosslare	284	154
Shannon	218	325
Sligo	182	95
Waterford	61	307
Wexford	39	191

Whilst every care has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this map, Tourism Ireland cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions. Due to the small scale of this map, not all holiday centres can be shown. The information on this map is correct at time of going to press. © 2016 Tourism Ireland. Map creation by Michael Schmeling, www.maps.ardicoe.com | Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, CC BY-SA

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