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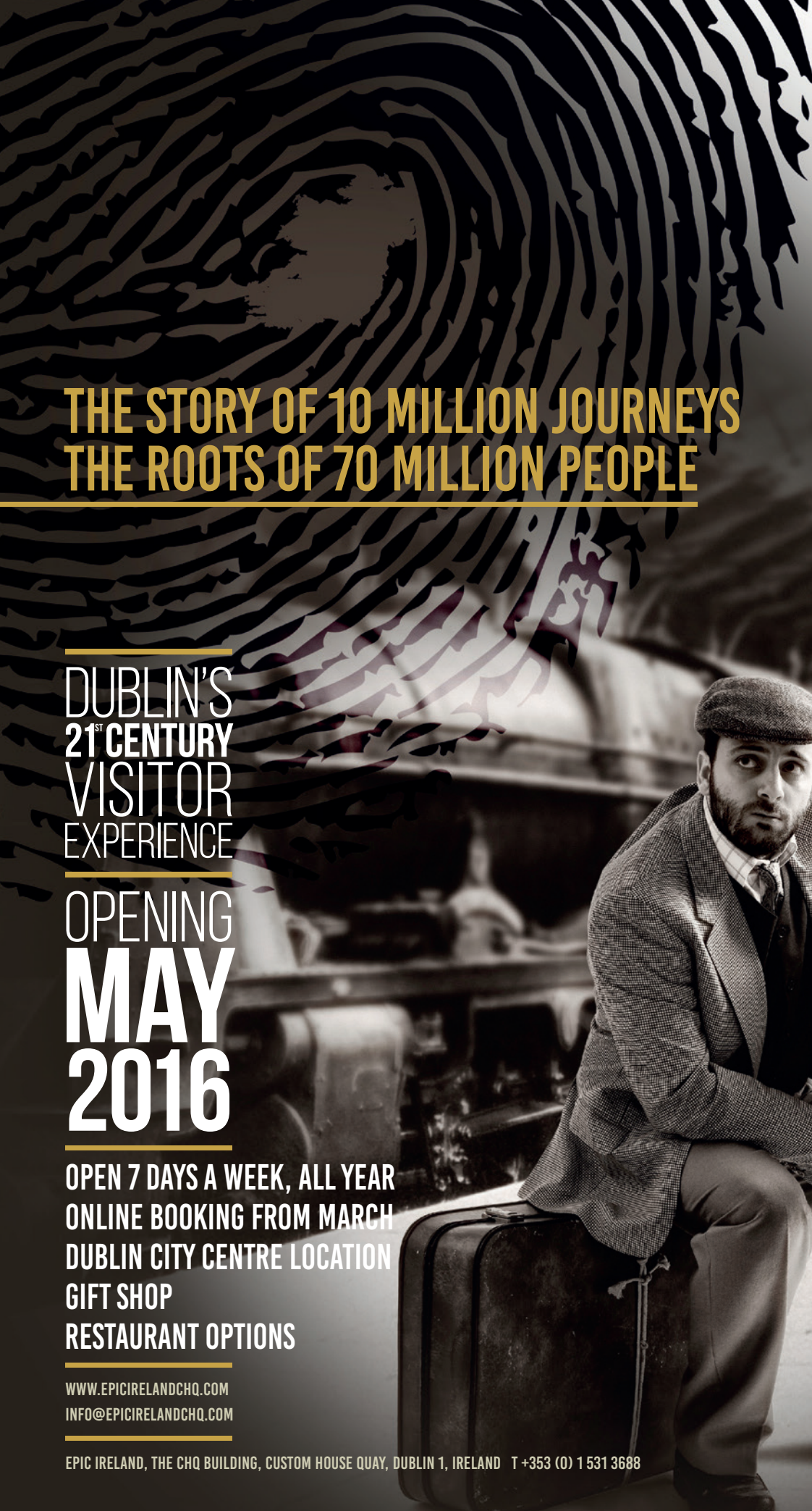
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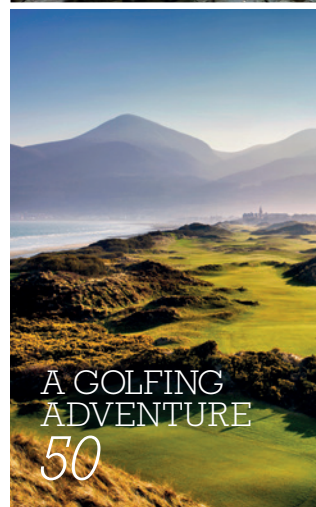
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Ireland Welcome

The perfect escape? The city break you've been dreaming of? The cliff-path walk you'll remember forever? Well, Ireland has you covered. This fascinating 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 Gobbins path, built in 1902, and to entice you with Ireland's Ancient East. The time is now.

Jump into
Ireland



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Tourism Ireland
Marketing the island of Ireland

Picture *This*

When it comes to awesome welcomes, it doesn't get better than the Cliffs of Moher. These magnificent cliffs, which define the island's western coastline, are one of the first places to greet you as you fly over Ireland from America. While the view is pretty incredible from the air, there is nothing like experiencing it up close on the Wild Atlantic Way. Waves crash against craggy sea stacks, sheer rock plummets into the Atlantic Ocean, and a thousand photos beckon.

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Traditional music session

Enjoy an evening of *traditional music*

Bodhráns drumming, accordions hopping, hands clapping: there's nothing like a traditional (trad) music session in an Irish pub. Sessions can start at any time and have been known to continue long into the night. Try the traditional music heartland of County Clare, where the legendary fireside trad sessions will get you singing along in no time. Or head for the House of McDonnell in Ballycastle, County Antrim, where Friday nights are packed with musicians – and locals – creating amazing tunes.



Ireland Escape

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 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.

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



Donaghadee Ulster Scots Festival, County Down

Experience an *Ulster-Scots festival*

The Ulster-Scots community is deeply ingrained in Northern Ireland, and a festival is the perfect opportunity to explore these unique traditions, which stretch back hundreds of years. The Donaghadee Ulster Scots Festival in County Down (July) celebrates the town's strong Ulster-Scots heritage with entertainment, food, re-enactments, and, of course, toe-tappingly vibrant Ulster-Scots dancing.

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, enjoy a traditional music session, or take a stunning coastal walk.



Roundstone, County Galway



Skellig Michael, County Kerry

Take a trip *to an island*

Ancient artifacts, unique locations, fascinating history: Ireland's islands are the ultimate secret hideaways. Explore 370 million-year-old fossils on Valentia, County Kerry; flock to the bird haven of Rathlin, County Antrim; or take in the wild Atlantic scenery of Inishbofin, inhabited as far back as 8000BC. And for a real adventure, why not hop on Ireland's only cable car out to Dursey Island, County Cork, with truly wonderful views.



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Ard na Sidhe, County Kerry



Ireland Accommodation

Ballynahinch Castle, County Galway



Magherally Cottage, County Down



Shola Coach House, County Antrim

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, 19th 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 vacation, whether you're snuggling down in front of the fire, or wandering your own estate.

For a taste of old-school elegance, Ireland's historic country houses are just the ticket, with grand drawing rooms, gracious bedrooms, and lovely gardens. Step into the luxurious Ard na Sidhe Country House in the surrounds of County Kerry. Enjoy a blend of eras at Castlecoote House, County Roscommon, which mixes parts of a 16th century castle with a Georgian mansion. And see how the Dean of Armagh Cathedral lived at the 18th century Dean's Hill in 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 farmhouse B&B, such as the Killiane Castle Farmhouse in Drinagh, County Wexford. Go for tranquil accommodation in Ashley Park House, County Tipperary, on the shores of Lough Ourna. Or try the 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, and traditionally furnished bedrooms that evoke 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.

Reflecting the earthiness of the landscape, thatched cottages have provided the people of Ireland with homes for centuries. And for rustic self-catering holidays, they're great. Try the historic Ardtarmon Thatched Cottage close to the shore of Sligo Bay, and gorgeous Magherally Cottage in County Down.

Ireland is renowned for breathtaking coastal views, and you can put yourself right into the picture postcard with a stay in a lighthouse. Cliff-edge locations, crashing waves, and rugged landscapes make these places a cut above the rest. Just look at the Galley Head Lightkeepers' Houses in County Cork, the Blackhead Lightkeepers' Houses in County Antrim, and super-scenic Wicklow Head Lighthouse, which dates from 1781.

For more information on accommodation, visit: ireland.com



DISCOVER ALL ABOUT... IRELAND AND UNESCO

Fascinating geological formations, wind-battered monasteries on remote islands, a passage tomb that is older than the pyramids – Ireland's UNESCO World Heritage Sites offer an extraordinary glimpse into the past, and are a highlight on any visit to the island. Here's why...



Giant's Causeway, County Antrim

Galway – UNESCO City of Film

Galway was designated a UNESCO City of Film in 2014, acknowledging the contribution of writers, producers, the Galway Film Centre, the Galway Film Festival, the Irish Film Board, and TG4 (the Irish-language television station), all of which are based here. Beyond the city, County Galway has long been a choice for film locations, including The Quiet Man and Marley & Me.



Dunabratton Pier, Copper Coast, County Waterford



The Burren, County Clare



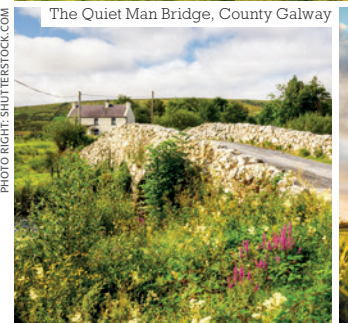
The James Joyce Centre, Dublin

Dublin – UNESCO City of Culture

Dublin's literary heritage is written into the very streets of this ancient city. There are bridges named after writers, festivals dedicated to them, and a thriving contemporary literary scene. Experience the city's theatre at The Abbey, The Gate, and the Project Arts Centre; enjoy one of the many summer literary events; or opt for a lighthearted approach with the Literary Pub Crawl.



Cliffs of Moher, County Clare



The Quiet Man Bridge, County Galway



Newgrange, County Meath



Marble Arch Caves, County Fermanagh



Skellig Michael, County Kerry

The Skellig Islands

There are few words to describe the epic Skellig Islands off the coast of County Kerry. Rising from the Atlantic Ocean, 7 miles west of Valentia Island, it was here, between the 6th and 8th centuries, that devout Christian monks sought extreme isolation on Skellig Michael. And they certainly found it. One can only imagine the hardship of the monks' lives in this extraordinary place on the edge of the world. With a staircase that clings precariously to the rock, the monastery is made up of six dry-stone beehive huts and two boat-shaped oratories.

Historians tell of the monks descending over 600 stone steps to the water's edge, where they would catch fish for breakfast. Beaten by storms, lashed by winds, and faced with undoubted hunger, they endured here until the 13th century when it's thought that worsening weather drove them to Ballinskelligs on the mainland. Skellig Michael has long captured the imagination of visitors, but it was Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw who put it best when he described Skellig Michael as an "incredible, impossible, mad place." It is, he wrote, "part of our dream world."

The Giant's Causeway

The Giant's Causeway is a geological oddity in every way. Described as the "8th wonder of the world," it overflows with hexagonal columns that tumble down to the sea like a giant piece of honeycomb. There may be a famous myth about its origin (it is said to have been created as a result of warring giants), but geology maintains the columns resulted from volcanic activity 60 million years ago. You can learn all about the mythical tales and geological facts at the award-winning visitor center, before taking a walk down to the Causeway itself. Hop the stones, walk the cliff-top trail, or just sit and take in this stunning landscape. It's like nowhere else on earth.

Newgrange, Brú na Bóinne (the Boyne Valley)

In a quiet part of Ireland, close to the River Boyne, County Meath, is one of the most important prehistoric landscapes in the world. Here, just 25 miles north of Dublin city, human activity can be traced back an astonishing 5,000 years. And it is here that you will find a passage tomb that predates both Stonehenge and the Pyramids at Giza in Egypt. Even from the outside, Newgrange (3200BC) looks impressive – a 262ft grassy mound, with spiral-engraved kerbstones and white Wicklow quartzite – but it's the inside of this passage tomb that really captures the imagination. Standing in the cool, dark heart of this ancient tomb is a profound, moving, and magical experience.

UNESCO Global Geoparks

As well as World Heritage Sites, the island of Ireland boasts three UNESCO Global Geoparks, "extraordinary examples of the geological heritage of our planet." Explore the secret beauty of the Copper Coast in County Waterford, a stunning stretch of coastline whose name derives from its metal-mining industry in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Marble Arch Caves in Fermanagh and Cavan date back 895 million years and boast one of the finest show caves in Europe. Or head to the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher for panoramic views and stunning landscapes.

DON'T MISS See the Giant's Causeway Three Different Ways...

By boat: A wonderful way to appreciate this dramatic coastline is by boat. Portrush Sea Tours takes in some of the area's sights, including White Rocks and Dunluce Castle, as well as the Causeway itself. **By bike:** The Giant's Causeway to Benone Cycle Route is a 22-mile coastal cycling route with sections along traffic-free paths and is a perfect way to take in the coast's scenic areas at a quieter pace. **By foot:** Take the short cliff walk to get a great view of the Causeway (1.8 miles), or venture further with the Causeway Coast Way (20 miles).



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 streetlife, 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 outside the Powerscourt Townhouse Centre, Dublin

DUBLIN

The Fair City. This historic capital pulses with an inimitable energy, wears its beauty with pride, and always has a wisecrack up its sleeve. Dublin is all about good times: no wonder it's been named as one of Lonely Planet's Top Ten Cities for 2016. This is a city of literary heritage, a place so connected to the written word it is now a UNESCO City of Literature. James Joyce, W.B. Yeats, and Seamus Heaney all called Dublin home, and you can explore their legacy at the Dublin Writers Museum.

Peel back the centuries and you'll uncover Dublin's ancient 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 original city walls. Nearby is Christ Church Cathedral (1028), with one of the largest crypts in Ireland and Great Britain.

For all its enduring medieval 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 striking beauty of the quayside Custom House and Four Courts, to the glitzy residential enclaves of Merrion Square, Fitzwilliam Square, and North Great George's Street, the Georgian era gave the city a real sense of 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 cobbled streets, traditional pubs, and the Teeling Whiskey Distillery. And there's Portobello, with red-bricked Victorian houses, cafés, bakeries, and canal walks.

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



Temple Bar, Dublin

DUBLIN FIVE TRADITIONAL PUBS

MULLIGAN'S *Poolbeg Street*
From tobacco-colored walls to garrulous barmen, this delightful Dublin pub is pure charm. It's been here since 1782, so it must be doing something right.

THE PALACE BAR *Fleet Street*
Craft beers, specialist whiskeys, and stained glass make this Fleet Street institution a favorite of writers past and present.

STAG'S HEAD *Dame Court*
Marble-tiled floors, a long mahogany bar, and traditional food attract a never-ending stream of students, actors, and Dublin characters to this Victorian star.

O'DONOGHUE'S *Baggot Street*
Bric-a-brac-laden interiors, walls lined with pictures, and lively trad music keep O'Donoghue's at the center of the city's pub scene.

KEHOE'S *South Anne Street*
There's a low counter in Kehoe's that whispers of its past as a "grocery-bar," and today this place still feels paused in time with its snugs, dark wood, and "sitting room" style bar upstairs.

Beyond the city

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, 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 award-winning Dublin Tasting Trail to uncover the city's foodie side; Pat Liddy's Walking Tours for history and literary routes; or do it yourself with the Dublin Discovery Trails, from College Green to Kilmainham. Dublin's Creative Quarter is the place to go for cool interior shops, hip cafés, and an arty atmosphere. Or relax in the leafy Iveagh Gardens.



Derry-Londonderry



Canty's pub, Cork



White House Bar, Limerick

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Titanic Belfast

BELFAST

Belfast has a dramatic setting on the shores of Belfast Lough and a real sense of history filters through the city's streets. You'll find it in the cobbled lanes of the Cathedral Quarter, in the façades of the commanding Victorian buildings, and in the buzz of St George's Market, built 1890-1896. Uncover more of Belfast's past at the Ulster Museum, City Hall, Belfast Castle, and the Linen Hall Library.

Genteel, verdant areas such as the Botanic Gardens in the University Quarter stand alongside great architectural edifices that speak to Belfast's prosperous shipbuilding heritage. In the cultural district of the Cathedral Quarter, you'll find galleries, studios, arts venues, and cocktail bars. It's this incredible mix of old, new, cultural, and creative that makes Belfast so exciting.

Near the city center, the River Lagan is where Belfast's fortunes were founded. The area is now dominated by the futuristic Waterfront Hall, coffee shops, restaurants, hotels, and art galleries. From here, perhaps with a glass of creamy stout, you can watch the evening mist creep up the river and drift across the Harland and Wolff Shipyard, where legendary Titanic was built. At the very slipway where the famous liner set sail is Titanic Belfast, the world's largest Titanic-themed visitor attraction. Afterwards, visit Titanic's Pump-House and Dock, where the luxury liner last rested on dry ground. Nearby is 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. Currently under restoration, the ship will open as a visitor attraction in 2016.

It's a compelling place, Belfast, a bit Victorian, a bit modern. Its story is enthralling, its people welcoming, and its culture utterly absorbing. This vibrant city will undoubtedly cast its spell on you.



City Hall, Belfast

Ireland City Breaks



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 splendor. Many of the fixtures and fittings were originally intended for the Titanic, but instead were used to pay bar bills by local shipyard workers.

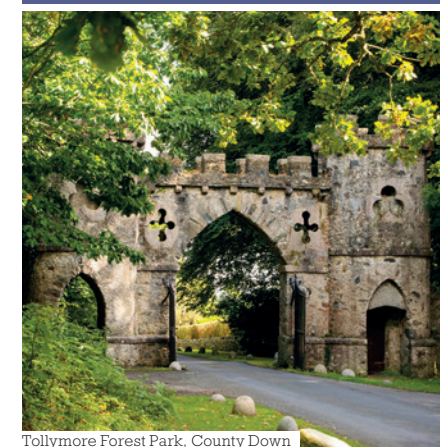
LINEN HALL LIBRARY
This unique institution (1788) houses one of the definitive collections of material on Irish politics and culture – not to mention an intoxicating smell of old leather chairs, polished wood, and books.

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. Great fun.

Beyond the city

As well as the stunning Causeway Coastal Route and The Gobbins path, there's a huge amount to see near Belfast. Ireland's patron saint, St Patrick, takes his eternal rest in the peaceful grounds of Down Cathedral in the town of Downpatrick, County Down. Or head to the beautiful Tollymore Forest Park. This haven of rare plants and Victorian follies includes views of the Mourne Mountains.



Tollymore Forest Park, County Down

Foodie favorites

Belfast has a vibrant culinary scene and with 2016 being Northern Ireland's Year of Food & Drink, it's the perfect time to explore. Start off with a visit to the historic St George's Market, packed with local producers. 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, with simple French-influenced food using the best seasonal ingredients.

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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 Shop, William, High, and Quay Streets, though, Galway's energy fizzes and crackles with an army of buskers that keep the city moving to a musical beat. And in terms of food, Galway is one of the most exciting places on the island right now. Take your pick from the fresh creativity of Ard Bia or the super-innovative style of Loam. You can go casual with excellent fish and chips at McDonagh's or gourmet 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 harbor or explore its medieval history. Either way, stay a while – you won't be sorry.



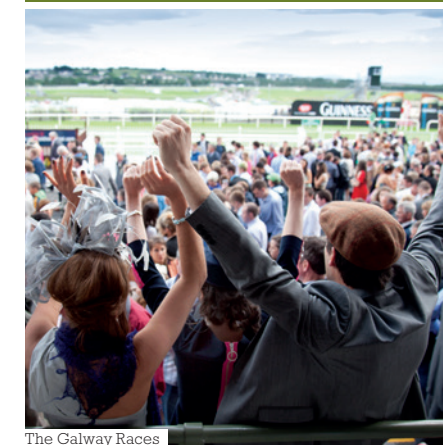
Galway



Dogs Bay, Connemara

Beyond the city

Galway is right on the Wild Atlantic Way; head northwest and you'll reach the wilds of Connemara; south and the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher will be easily within your reach. Inland, there's the quiet beauty of Lough Corrib, or take an adventure out to visit the Aran Islands. The islands are made up of Inis Mór, Inis Meáin, and Inis Oírr, all with their own distinct character, and all holding fast to their traditions.



The Galway Races

GALWAY FIVE TO TRY

TRADITIONAL MUSIC SESSION
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 sessions in atmospheric pubs such as Monroe's, Taaffes, and Tíg Cóilí, all in the city center.

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.

WALKING TOUR OF GALWAY
Enjoy a leisurely introduction to the city with a free walking tour from Galway Civic Trust. The walks run every Tuesday and Thursday at 2pm (May to September) from the Hall of the Red Earl.

GALWAY CITY MUSEUM
Charting Galway's history, this museum includes photos of President John F. Kennedy's 1963 visit to Galway city.

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.

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.

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

Rothe House, Kilkenny



KILKENNY

Located in Ireland's Ancient East, Kilkenny mixes nightlife, great food, and culture to perfection. This city will wow you with its medieval showpieces by day, and keep you entertained in its 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. Or browse its excellent craft shops, design studios, and workshops.



ARMAGH

Armagh has a close relationship with St Patrick. The saint is said to have founded his first church on the hilltop site of the Church of Ireland Cathedral in the 5th century, which faces the Roman Catholic Cathedral just a short distance away. The city has its own planetarium; boasts a delightful stretch of lawn called the Mall, lined with terraced houses, a cricket pitch, and pavilion; and has a great collection of restaurants including the Moody Boar and Uluru Bistro. Turn the clock back and enjoy.



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 center 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 story of the city right back to prehistory. Afterwards, walk along the Newry Canal Path – a towpath that was used by the horses pulling the canal boats – and browse the quirky stores, before hitting the 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.

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.



CORK

Centered 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 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 flavors at the Milk Market's Saturday food market; or explore 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 metropolis in Ireland's Ancient East. Founded by the Vikings, Waterford's history is expertly covered in the Viking Triangle, which contains the superb Medieval Museum, Bishop's Palace, and Reginald's Tower.

Enjoy the craftsmanship of the House of Waterford Crystal; try a freshly baked "blaa" (bread roll) at the Granary Café; or visit the great food market at Merchant's Quay.

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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 traveling 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, County Kildare



Lough Gur, County Limerick

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 neighboring 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

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 (about \$80) – 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 baptized 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 marvelous 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 tranquility 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, which are regarded as one of the greatest gems of medieval Europe.

From here, you can journey to the colorful 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**, which is 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 \$30 for two courses.



Carlingford Oyster Festival, County Louth

FABULOUSLY FOODIE

Pure flavors, 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, artifacts, and amazing archeological sites – there are many things that people come in search of when they visit the island of Ireland. Even the 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 the 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, 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

Did you know?

Famed for its oysters plucked fresh from local waters, artisan bacon from the likes of Fermanagh Black Bacon, great baking, flavorsome 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.

cities, and in some delightfully unlikely locations: on remote windswept beaches or lunar-like coastlines, in quirky market cafés or as traveling food trucks.

One such newcomer, Harry's Shack restaurant on Portstewart Strand, County Londonderry, has been wowing people with its combination of gutsy authentic flavors 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 favorites. Try the tasty 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. "There is much more confidence in our own ingredients, and customers have become more adventurous and trusting." Indeed, talk to various chefs and food writers about contemporary Irish food culture, and that word "confidence" comes up again and again.

Confident cooking

Food writer John McKenna agrees that "right now is the most exciting time in Irish food, ever." 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. "Confidence amongst chefs and producers has never been higher, and an increasingly discerning audience means that good chefs and food producers get almost immediate attention for the things they do. It's a win-win, on both sides of the swing doors."

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 >



Graze, Belfast



Forest Avenue, Dublin

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

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 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 charming 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 Kai in Galway, with its casual café-style setting, all encapsulate this description, too. Or how about the relaxed, casual style of Graze in Belfast, which works with local growers and purveyors, and features a different farmer every month.

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 revolutionized 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 and The Poacher’s Pocket in Lisbane, County Down.

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



Lost and Found, County Londonderry



Shells Café, County Sligo

in Celbridge, County Kildare, or Belfast’s Established, to small coffee shops, 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 a 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 >

Five great places to eat on the Wild Atlantic Way and along the Causeway Coast

Lost and Found, Coleraine, County Londonderry: As much a community space as a café, with great coffee, hearty hotpots, wholesome salads, traditional sandwiches, and tasty treats such as salted caramel brownies.

Shells Café, Strandhill, County Sligo: With a stunning location overlooking the sea, this friendly little café serves up great home cooking and delicious baked treats.

An Port Mór, Westport, County Mayo: For a true taste of the Atlantic, and with a particular emphasis on the fruits of the local waters, chef Frankie Mallon delivers the goods. Expect excellent Irish ingredients with a creative twist.

Deasy’s Harbour Bar & Seafood Restaurant, Clonakilty, County Cork: A traditional pub perched by the prettiest of bays and recently put on the map by chef Caitlin Ruth’s cooking.

Red Door Tea Room, Ballintoy, County Antrim: Hearty traditional dishes and great home cooking elevate this pretty whitewashed cottage into something particularly memorable.



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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.

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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

bread is homemade, including their bagels, which are served with Burren Smokehouse organic smoked Irish salmon and crisp County Wicklow salad leaves.

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 Wyr of Dublin's Forest Avenue, celebrate this national treasure in creative, refined ways. If he's not drafting in one of the country's best artisan smokers to smoke a batch of butter to serve with his house-made potato brioche, Wyr is gathering and freezing the toasty solids from caramelized brown butter to grate over fresh and vibrant vegetable salads.

"There's a great energy around food," says John Wyr. "We're recognizing 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

Five traditional foods and where to enjoy them

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

Corned beef: Taste the real deal at the Farngate Café in Cork's English Market. Here it's served with parsley sauce and green cabbage.

Irish stew: Try Gleeson's of Roscommon town for the best Irish stew, perfect for its simplicity and quality ingredients.

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.

NATURAL LARDER

Ireland's famous 40 shades of green 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.

Meanwhile, succulent cold-water seafood can be sampled from Dingle in the southwest as far as the northern coastline, while the east coast is famed for its Dublin Bay prawns. Chefs do indeed make the most of our seafood. Down in Vaughan's Anchor Inn in County Clare, they use the salt water to boil their crab and lobster, and make a sourdough batter for their seriously tasty fish and chips.

Farmers' markets are great places to try local produce, and they take place all over the island. Pick up some delicious 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!

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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 artifacts 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 delightful 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 47 acres filled with hidden treasures and bordered by the haunting colors 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 from the estate.



Mount Stewart, County Down

Beauty abounds in the formal sections at Mount Stewart, with Italianate influences, while there is real mastery at play in the 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. As well as being a member of the suffragette movement, she served as Colonel-in-Chief of the Women's Volunteer Reserve, a group of women who replaced men that had been sent to the front lines during the First World War.

But it is in the gardens of Mount Stewart that Edith really made her mark. Here, beauty abounds in the formal sections, with Italianate influences, while there is real mastery at play in the 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 quite unique.

Once you've wandered the scenic grounds, head inside to enjoy a newly restored interior that has brought the house back to its original glamor. Within this grand neoclassical property, you'll find portraits, silver collections, and other family treasures on show.



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 defense 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 archeologists 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) – 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 (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.

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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: defense. 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 Gaelic), the castle's history is told in expansive detail 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

Kiss the famous Blarney Stone, explore 59 acres of parkland, and unearth the 600-year history of this iconic castle.

DUNLUCE CASTLE County Antrim

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

Modeled on the Temple of Vesta near Rome, this striking cliff-edge temple is part of the 18th century Downhill Demesne.

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.

ROWALLANE GARDEN County Down

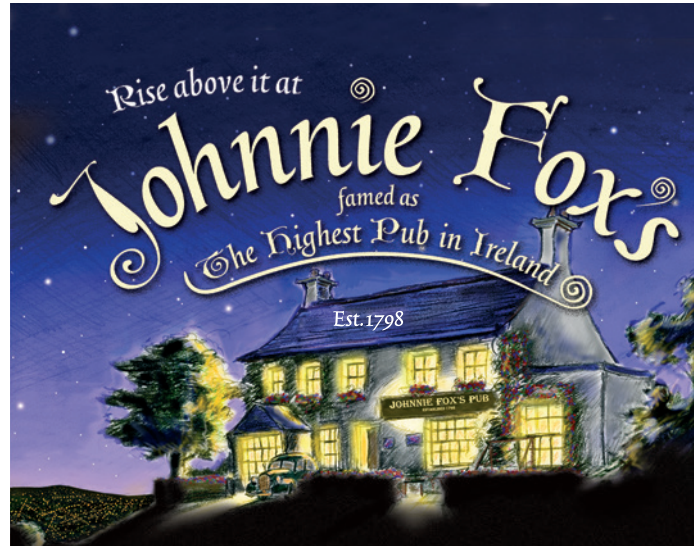
Created in the 19th century by Reverend John Moore, these pretty gardens mix formal and informal spaces with a lovely little café to relax in.

TULLYNALLY CASTLE GARDENS County Westmeath

Walled gardens, woodland, and ornamental lakes make up this delightfully whimsical garden, the layout of which dates back to the 1800s.

MOUNT USHER County Wicklow

A bounty of over 8,000 plants and shrubs grace the winding paths that arc either side of the River Vartry at this County Wicklow gem.



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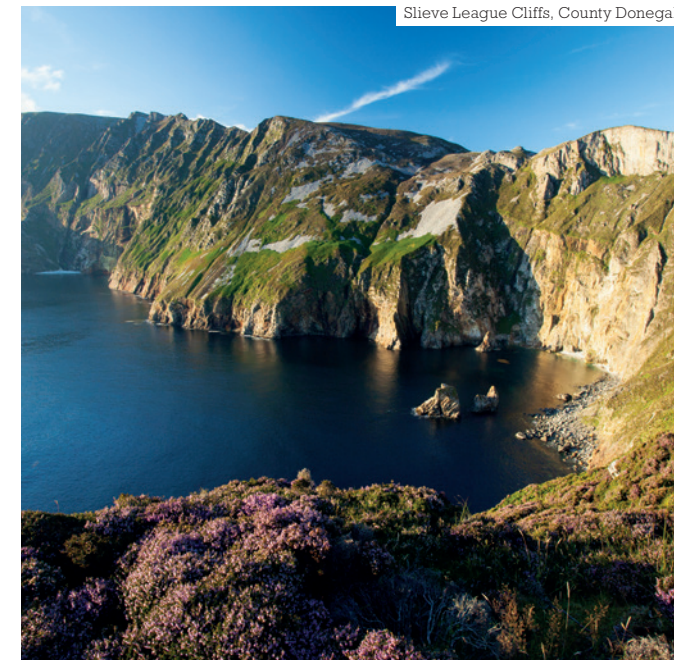
From charming coastal villages to spectacular natural wonders, taking to the road on the island of Ireland reveals surprises at every turn



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, 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 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 – colors 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. Even in just one area of County Mayo, we've swapped four wheels for two and cycled the 26-mile Great Western Greenway, an off-road trail set on an old railway line. We've driven the Atlantic Drive on Achill Island, Ireland's largest



🕒 1,500 miles 🕒 Up to 20 days

island, and we've toured Westport House, an 18th century stately home.

We started our drive in County Donegal, exploring the dramatic Fanad Head peninsula before traveling south, stopping off at the Slieve League cliffs, which reach to 2,000ft. We've had fun surfing lessons, visited the grave of poet W.B. Yeats, driven along a fjord, and marveled at ancient passage tombs.

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, with all the wonderful possibilities that await there.



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

Taste smoked Atlantic salmon at the Burren Smokehouse in Lisdoonvarna, County Clare. 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 contemporary twist.

SLEEP

For five-star luxury with beautiful views, choose the award-winning Park Hotel Kenmare in County Kerry, or to hear the Atlantic waves rolling in, make your way to The Sandhouse Hotel on Rosstown Beach in County Donegal. The delightful Liss Ard Estate in Skibbereen, County Cork, makes an excellent choice for a modern take on traditional Georgian luxury in beautifully scenic surrounds.



Lough Tay, County Wicklow



Japanese Gardens, County Kildare



Dark Hedges, County Antrim



Cushendun, 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 stunning 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 splendor (Mount Usher); and an eerie afternoon at the "glorious yet infamous" Wicklow Gaol.

Further, past Lough Tay (or Guinness Lake as it's known, thanks to the pale beach and dark, turf-colored water) surrounded by scree-covered slopes and fed by a gushing waterfall. On to Glendalough, St Kevin's green and tranquil monastic site. In the 6th century,



Mount Usher, County Wicklow



Carton House Hotel, County Kildare

it was his retreat from the world. Today, it's Wicklow's don't-miss experience.

In the days ahead I will learn of British Army generals with a knack for choosing horses by their star signs, and amble serenely through an oriental garden mirroring the Life of Man (the National Stud and Japanese Gardens, Kildare). At the Newbridge Museum of Style Icons, I will marvel at dresses worn by Tippi Hedren, Grace Kelly, and Marilyn Monroe, and will have quiet moments at St Brigid's Well in the grounds of the Black Abbey.

From Hollywood glam to ancient history – only on the Grand Tour.



📏 201 miles 🕒 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 extending over 500 acres past rivers and through forest.

EAT A respect for the best ingredients makes the Ballymore Inn, County Kildare, a favorite 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 mesmerizing – 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 visit 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 79ft away.

My first stop, though, is picturesque Carnlough. In this little village, small pastel-colored houses vie for space with neat little shops, cafés, and cozy pubs.

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



Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, County Antrim



Bushmills Inn, County Antrim



📏 195 miles 🕒 1-3 days

Along the way

VISIT Wander around the medieval Carrickfergus Castle, or climb Slemish Mountain where St Patrick worked as a shepherd. In Bushmills, stop for a tour of the distillery, 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 full of incredible things to see and do, from epic landscapes to compelling visitor attractions. Get inspired with ten of the best

CONNEMARA County Galway

At times austere, at times resplendent, 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 favorite destination of artists and photographers. The region offers endless panoramas with rust-colored bogs dotted with grey-blue lakes, grassy fields threaded with dry-stone walls, and coves, bays, and sandy beaches. 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 flavors of the local food. It's about as good as it gets!

THE CAUSEWAY COAST County Antrim

Spectacular sights hang like pearls on a necklace along the Causeway Coast. There are dramatic geological formations, crumbling cliff-top castles, vast sandy beaches such as White Park Bay, and championship golf courses. You'll find great restaurants, beautiful hotels, old whiskey distilleries, and magnificent castles. Some highlights? How about crossing the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, swaying 100ft above a rocky chasm? Or hopping over ancient basalt columns at the Giant's Causeway? You can weave through the stunning green Glens of Antrim, walk the century-old Gobbins cliff path, visit the offshore island of Rathlin, or take a waterfall walk at Glenariff Forest Park.



White Park Bay, 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 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 College Green 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 and the innovative Science Gallery, with its changing exhibitions.



Long Room, Trinity College, Dublin



The Burren, County Clare

THE CLIFFS OF MOHER AND THE BURREN County Clare

Jutting out into the Atlantic and soaring 702ft at their highest point, the Cliffs of Moher deserve all the accolades they get. These huge precipices are magnificent, offering vast views of the coastline as it weaves north to the village of Doolin and south to Liscannor. The cliffs are located close to one of the island's strangest habitats – the lunar-like Burren. This glaciokarst landscape is a huge sheet of limestone rock with bursts of color from rare orchids. With quiet beaches, villages filled with traditional music, and attractions such as the Aillwee Cave, exploring this part of Ireland is a joy.



Guinness Storehouse, Dublin

GUINNESS STOREHOUSE Dublin

Walk up to the Guinness Storehouse and you'll pass through one of the oldest parts of Dublin. St James's Gate was once the medieval entrance to the city, but the smell of hops in the air speaks of a more recent history: Guinness. In 1759, Arthur Guinness signed a 9,000-year lease on a disused brewery here. Over 240 years later, the Guinness Storehouse opened and has since become one of Ireland's top visitor attractions. The journey takes you through brewing secrets, iconic advertising, and how to pour the perfect pint. Taste some Guinness-inspired cookery before finishing up with a pint of the "black stuff" in the 360-degree Gravity Bar, with incredible views over Dublin city.



Rock of Cashel, County Tipperary

THE ROCK OF CASHEL County Tipperary

It takes you by surprise, the Rock of Cashel, as it appears on the County Tipperary horizon like a fairytale apparition. But the closer you get to this vast green hill topped by one of the island's most important archeological sites, the more you appreciate what a work of art this ancient place is. The Rock was the seat of the High Kings of Munster and also the site where St Patrick met and baptized Aonghus, King of Munster in the 5th century. The complex is large, with many of the buildings dating back to the 12th and 13th centuries. And a highlight? It's got to be Cormac's Chapel, with its set of rare frescoes that still gleam in the dim light after 800 years.

THE GOBBINS County Antrim

Waves crash against ancient cliffs, seabirds wheel and cry, hearts pound with excitement. This is The Gobbins path, a dramatic cliff-face walk over spectacular bridges and through tunnels hewn out of 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 in 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 Titanic was launched on May 31, 1911, the vast prow-like shape of the building opens up to reveal an exhibition that has been described by James Cameron, director of the film Titanic, 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 Sleah 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.



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 fun

Doheny & Nesbitt, Dublin



Duke of York Pub, Belfast



Cobblestone pub, Dublin

PHOTO: DEREK SPEIRS

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, in the middle of nowhere, 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, local farmers 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 we meet, which will hopefully be at another great *seisiún*.

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 (rumored 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 quiets 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 smiling silver-bearded men listen with closed eyes while a group of Italians stamp their feet in time to the beat.

"Isn't this incredible?" a girl 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 >



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



Trad music session



Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, Cavan



Kelly's Cellars, Belfast

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 spidery set of uilleann pipes. This is music made to be shared. As the night goes on, conversation hums between fellow travelers, drinks are enjoyed with friends old and new, and memories are made that will last a lifetime.

TOE-TAPPING TUNES IN COUNTY DOWN

By Mal Rogers

In every town, in every county in Ireland, 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 mood within the walls of this 120-year-old pub is electric as the beat of the bodhrán sets the pulse for a brace of reels – The Earl's Chair and the Star of Munster.

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 "humoring" 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 feel. Then a dramatic key change leads into The Star of Munster. An uilleann piper joins in, playing in a tightly controlled fashion and giving the tune an air of melancholy and poignancy. It's this change of mood 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 rake 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 honeycomb of rooms that make up the Dufferin Arms. The special atmosphere 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 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 traveled 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-high round tower.

There is a visitor center 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 favorite walk in all of 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 lent themselves 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 flavor 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, County Mayo – 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 Enniskillen; it's only a

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 be 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, a pilgrimage site where he fasted for 40 days in 441AD.



Skellig Michael, County Kerry



Glendalough, County Wicklow



Devenish Island, County Fermanagh

short hop over, and the unspoiled beauty of this quiet idyll feels 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, though, that really take your breath away. Even today, the rocky crag of Skellig Michael – a UNESCO World Heritage Site off the coast of southwest Kerry, with over 600 steps to the top – presents a dramatic experience

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

for the visitor. Dating from the 6th century, monks inhabited this incredible spot until the 13th century. You can take the 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.

While Skelligs was certainly remote and challenging, generally those

Christian monks 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, >



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

parishioners 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 center 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 they erected still stand to this day. Recent archeological 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 visitor center) have revealed that the settlement sprawled out, with a large lay population living in surrounding 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



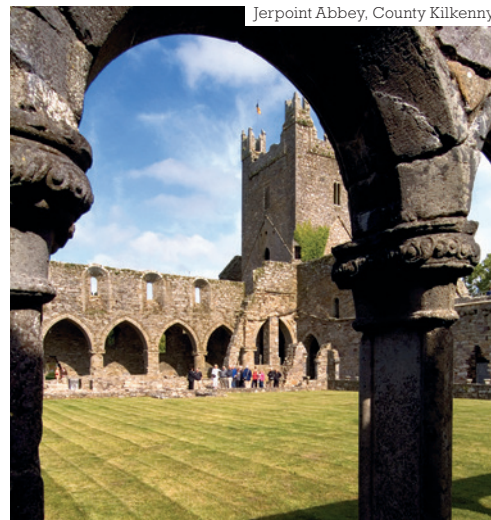
Beaghmore stone circle, County Tyrone

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 contains treasures looted by the Vikings as well as 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 tantalizing 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 artifacts and the buildings they left behind, their ghosts are with us still.



Jerpoint Abbey, County Kilkenny

ANCIENT IRELAND

Ireland's monastic sites are dotted around an island that is also rich with incredible prehistoric attractions. From ring forts to passage tombs, 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 atop a 388ft 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 rumored to be buried at this site, and the ruined Christian friary probably incorporates a pagan shrine.

DUNSEVERICK CASTLE

County Antrim
This rocky promontory near the Giant's Causeway was a key ancient site – one of the royal roads from Tara ends here – and a ruined 16th century fort still stands desolate guard.

ARDMORE

County Waterford
Located in Ireland's Ancient East near the heritage town of Youghal, this once flourishing monastic city was founded by St Declan in the 5th century. The saint's oratory, a small church, and a 95ft-high round tower remain today.

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St Mary's Church, County Kilkenny

A GOLFING ADVENTURE

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

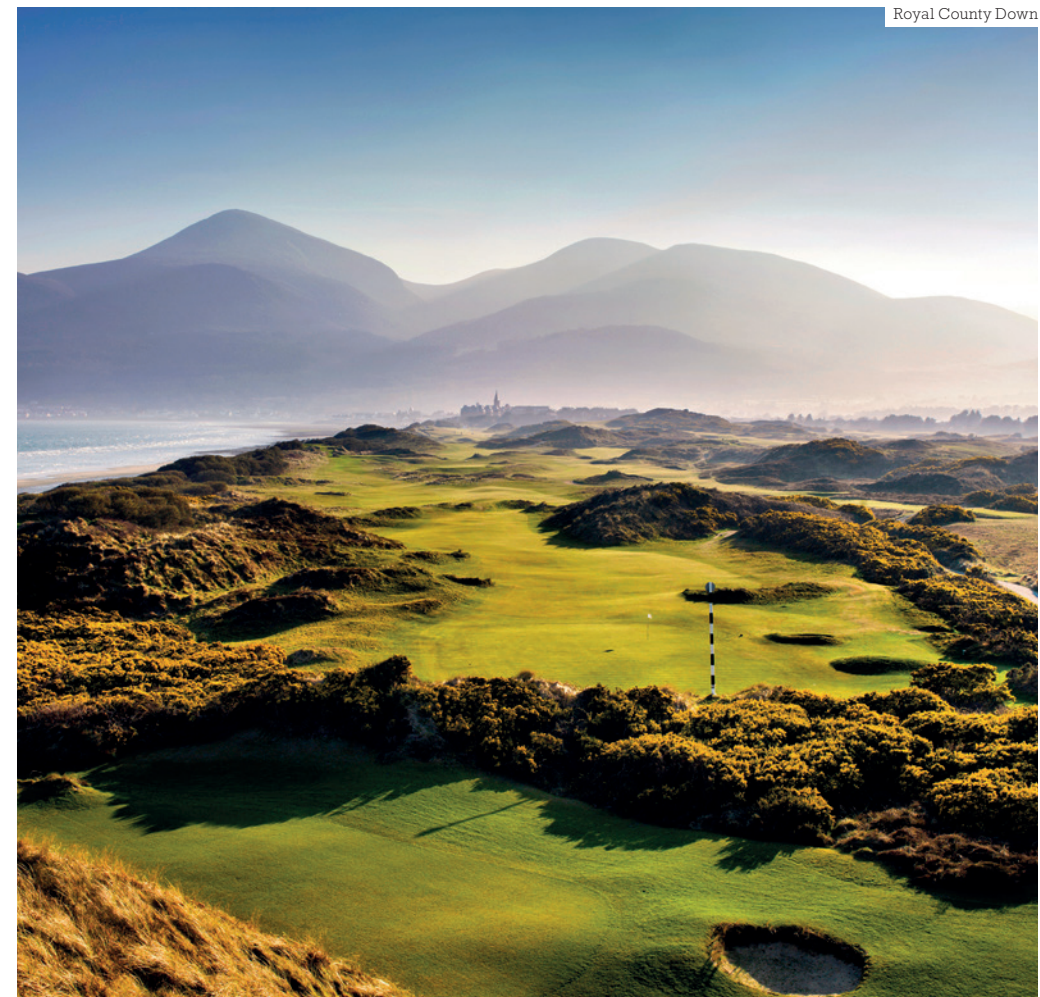
THE DESIGNER CHOICE

Trump International Golf Links, Doonbeg
County Clare

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

Other Designer Choices:

Mount Juliet, County Kilkenny: Jack Nicklaus's parkland course constantly ranks as a must-play. **Tralee Golf Club, County Kerry:** Arnold Palmer's first European design in a beautiful corner of Ireland. **Lough Erne Golf Club, County Fermanagh:** Home to two championship golf courses.



Royal County Down

THE CLASSIC

Royal County Down Golf Club
County Down

Old Tom Morris laid out the holes of Royal County Down where, as Percy French sang, "the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea". They've been refined since, but this course is still so stunning that Golf Digest rates it as the best on the planet outside the United States. It was also host of the 2015 Irish Open. Rory McIlroy, winner of the Open and USPGA Open in 2014, grew up nearby and regularly cites Royal County Down in his list of top courses. McIlroy said, "The more you play it, the more you recognize it for the class place it is." One of golf's finest chroniclers, Peter Dobereiner, once wrote: "The essence of golf is to say that it enhances the feeling that it's good to be alive. The links of Royal County Down are exhilarating even without a club in your hand."

Other Championship Courses:

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



Trump International Golf Links, Doonbeg, County Clare

THE HISTORICAL GEM

Killeen Castle Golf Club
County Meath

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

Other Historical Gems:

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



Killeen Castle, County Meath



Royal Portrush, County Antrim

THE STAR ATTRACTION Royal Portrush Golf Club County Antrim

Just a few minutes' drive from the stunning UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Giant's Causeway, the Dunluce Links at Royal Portrush is a giant of Ireland's golf in every sense: towering dunes, sweeping valleys, and rough so thick that only the greats of the game can conquer it. It's truly awe-inspiring. The honor of hosting The Open Championship in 2019 has been awarded to Royal Portrush, reinforcing its status as one of world's great golf courses. "If you play really good golf, you get rewarded around Royal Portrush," says Rory McIlroy. "It's very fair. But if you hit shots that you shouldn't, you're going to get punished."

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



Rosapenna, County Donegal

Need to know the essential information

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

Nothing is more beautiful than a sunny day in Ireland, but it's best to be prepared – pack a windcheater and waterproofs.

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

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

Playing that dream course is just a matter of paying your green fee, but don't forget to book ahead, especially for the top courses.

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

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

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

For more information, visit ireland.com/golf

THE BEAUTY Rosapenna Golf Resort County Donegal

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

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



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THE BEAUTY The Old Head of Kinsale Golf Links County Cork

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

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

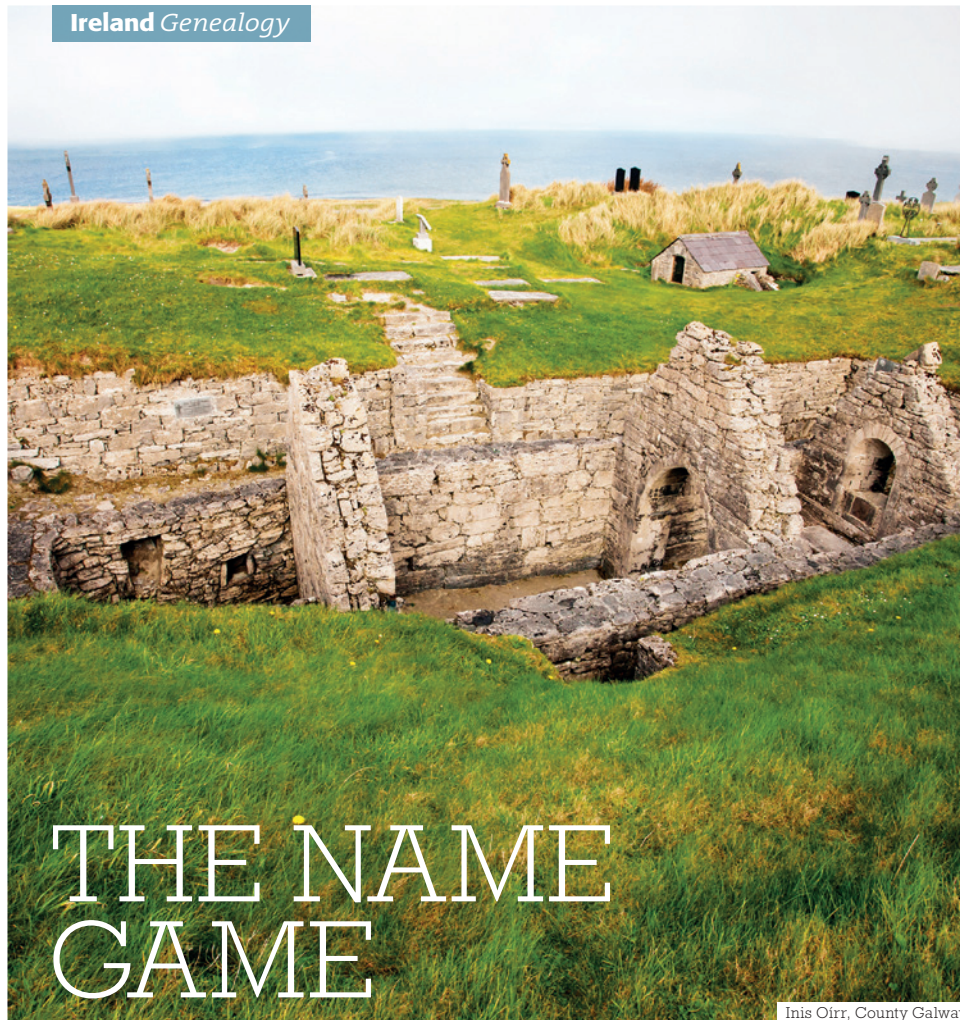
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Inis Oirr, County Galway

THE NAME GAME

What's in a name? If your ancestry leads to Ireland, the answer is simple: lots. David Fallon meets the experts, as well as the people who have traced their ancestry, and finds out what it means to directly connect with your forebears in the land they left behind...

Ask any genealogist about how to go about unearthing your Ireland ancestry and the answer will be the same: start at the beginning. Those legendary anecdotes about great-uncle Michael, those wedding photos of your great-grandparents and, should you be lucky enough, that box of jumbled records, can one day be the key to solving your family mystery.

It's a search that can start with the simplest of motivations: a desire to find out who we are and where we come from. For keen genealogist Stuart McGee (who cites being welcomed at the door of a County Meath household with the words "I'm delighted to welcome you as a cousin" as a "memorable highlight" of his ancestral search), the question was fundamental to his journey.

"My wife and I don't have any children," he explains, "but we have nine nephews and nieces between us, and I felt I wanted to know who I was and where I had come from." It's an emotion echoed by many who start on this journey.



Linen Hall Library, Belfast



Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin



Annie Moore Statue, Cobh, County Cork

Annie Moore was the first immigrant to the United States to pass through the Ellis Island facility in New York Harbor. She departed from Cobh, County Cork, accompanied by her brothers Philip and Anthony, aboard the steamship Nevada on January 1, 1892, her 15th birthday.

A good place to start

For many of us, the first place to turn is the internet. As Irish-American blogger and author Gerry Britt remembers, "My Irish-born grandparents all died early. My father had done some research when I was little, but I never had a chance to discuss it with him later, or see the records. I only remembered that we were from County Tipperary, near Thurles. The internet took me from there."

Excellent websites such as the Irish government-sponsored Irishgenealogy.ie are a great place to look for official records. Ancestry.com allows you to build a family tree that you can keep private or share, a benefit of which is that faraway cousins can add to it. And Myheritage.com is cheap and easy to use – you can print out book reports of a family tree and invite others to help.

"I did almost all of my research online – countless late nights, eating cereal and clicking on link after link," Gerry recalls. "It's addictive."



Dunbrody Famine Ship, New Ross, County Wexford

The next step

The internet can only take you so far, though. The next step is a trip to Ireland itself. Here you can access free advice from trained staff in places such as the National Library, National Archives, and General Register Office in Dublin; and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast.

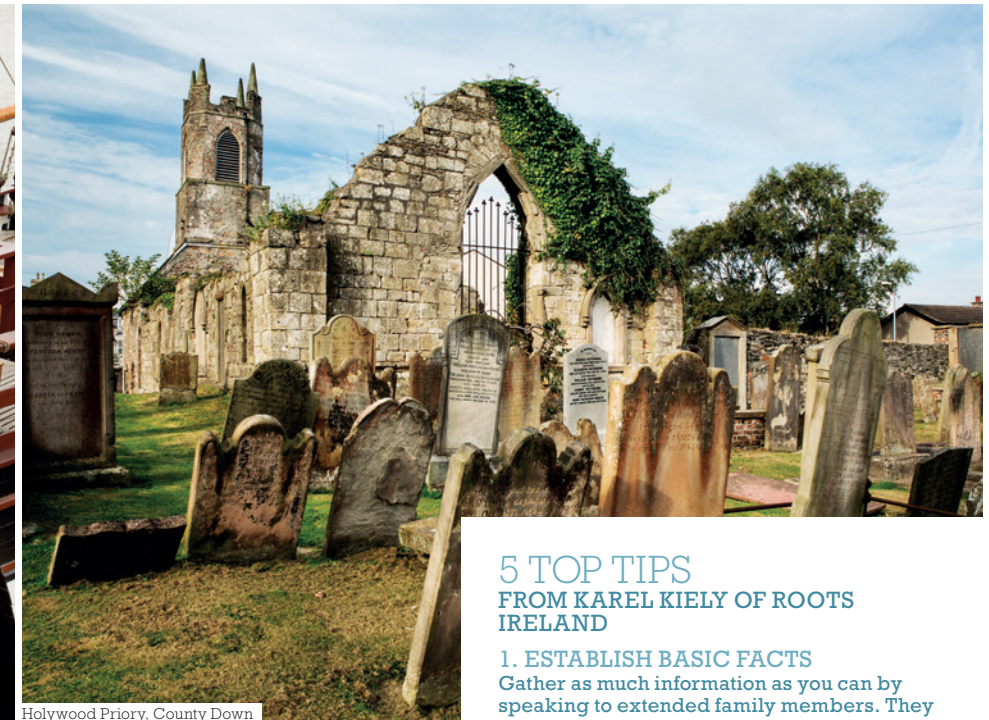
For Robert Lawler, it was a pivotal point in his search. During a visit to Ireland in 2013, Robert was referred by a librarian in Naas, County Kildare, to Karel Kiely and colleagues at Kildare Collections and Research Services in Newbridge.

"All three, after listening to my story, were very helpful and giving of their time, expertise and resources," Robert explains. "They corrected some errors about our Irish ancestors that had been passed down by some members of our family at home, things such as the religion of individuals and dates and places of birth, baptisms and marriage."

Delighted though he was with the information, and with this trip to Ireland, Robert (whose family left Ireland in 1848) found himself "shocked by gaining a fuller understanding of the tragedies faced by Irish people in the 19th century."

Visiting the places that shaped your history

Thanks to the assistance from the folks in Kildare, Robert visited locations in his family's history. "I spent a day in Ballymore, where my great-great-grandfather and great-great-grandmother were married," Robert remembers, "and



Hollywood Priory, County Down

visited Rathasker Road in Naas, which was perhaps the birthplace of my great-great-grandfather."

Robert was to uncover, too, that his great-grandfather Edmund Egan attended Trinity College some time in the late 1840s. No surprise then that the university's Long Room, along with "Kilmainham Gaol, the Cliffs of Moher, a lovely little pub in Kilfenora, and the Aran Islands" topped Robert's list of favorite places on the island.

Family reunions do happen

For those who make the journey to Ireland to connect with their family history, the experience is unforgettable. And while

"I did almost all of my research online," recalls Irish American blogger Gerry Britt. "Countless late nights, eating cereal and clicking on link after link. It's addictive"

many think an emotional reunion with long lost relatives is a far-flung dream, they do actually happen. Just ask Irish-American Mary Whack.

After "inheriting family papers and a photo album with intriguing place names like 'Limavady'" Mary began her search based on the surname of her great-great-grandfather: McCloskey. Via online message boards, Mary's research connected her with local researchers in County Londonderry and the Ulster Historical Foundation (ancestryireland.com) – an >

5 TOP TIPS FROM KAREL KIELY OF ROOTS IRELAND

1. ESTABLISH BASIC FACTS
Gather as much information as you can by speaking to extended family members. They may have documents such as letters, birth, marriage, or death certificates, or memorial cards. Or they may know where family graves are located. Compiling this information before you start gives you the best possible chance of locating your ancestors.

2. FIND A STARTING POINT
It is easier to focus on one or two individuals. Start your research where you know the ancestor spent the last years of their lives. Where did they raise their family? Where did they die? Do they appear in ships' passenger lists, newspapers, naturalization or census records in their adopted country? Are there other Irish families in the same town/neighborhood?

If you start in your ancestor's home county or country and retrace the ancestor's footsteps, you'll be able to pinpoint places where you need to search. If your ancestor emigrated from Ireland, don't start your research in Ireland – names and details may have changed since they left. Working back from the known to the unknown, generation by generation, is the only way to be sure.

3. TRY TO ESTABLISH THESE FACTS: Names (and variants of names); year of birth, marriage, or death; occupation; religion; parents' names; spouse's name; associates; other family members; when they left Ireland. And keep meticulous notes.

4. DO NOT SKIP GENERATIONS
This may sound obvious, but so many things can change in the course of a generation that you'll lose track if you decide to skip one!

5. IF YOU HAVE LIMITED INFORMATION, DON'T GIVE UP
Online databases of Ireland's records and local researchers could help to find a starting point if you don't know a place of origin. It can be possible for people to locate their ancestor because of an unusual first name, or because a combination of a husband's and a wife's name reduces the likely possibilities.



Ulster American Folk Park, County Tyrone

educational non-profit organisation known as UHF, which Mary cites as being instrumental in her successes.

It was from the UHF that Mary sourced the Ordnance Survey Memoirs. “Dry reading” though they were, it was here that Mary discovered “that my great-great-great-grandfather was not only interviewed by the Survey officers in 1835, but actually quoted verbatim, it was like hearing an ancestral voice from beyond the grave.”

Another standout moment from her search occurred at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (Belfast) where Mary “opened a property tax book, fragrant with the scent of a peat fire” and discovered how her great-grandmother (who had lost her mother at age seven) moved from their farm when she was just nine.

“The whole farm life I had imagined for her as she grew up, based on a memoir written by her sister describing the

Mary Whack sourced Ordnance Survey Memoirs in which her great-great-great-grandfather was quoted verbatim: “it was like hearing an ancestral voice from beyond the grave”

farm ten years earlier, was just a myth.” Similar breakthroughs in the city’s Linen Hall Library helped Mary on her way, and, eventually, towards a very special gathering.

“Given that my great-grandmother was the last of her family to emigrate in 1881, I hardly dared hope that I would find living relations,” she says. Mary, in fact, found three: two second-cousins and a distant cousin on the Campbell side. Taken by her distant cousin to a 19th century family farmhouse, she was introduced to the

Epic Ireland

Opening in May 2016, this new diaspora centre is located in the vaults of the CHQ Building on the quays of the River Liffey in Dublin. The state-of-the-art visitor experience will tell the story of the dispersal of the people of Ireland throughout the world. With 21 galleries and using cutting-edge technologies, the exhibition is a fascinating illustration of the resilience, innovation, and influence of the people of Ireland.



Blasket Islands, County Kerry

Campbell brothers, Barney (96) and Joe (94). Over tea, scones, and pancakes, Mary listened to the stories of Joe’s youth: the first radio he ever saw, the flax harvest, the wildlife teeming in the fields, bogs, and streams...

It was a moment that anyone with Ireland ancestry must dream of. But finding your ancestry in Ireland needn’t be fantasy. The right resource, the right help, and a visit to the right island, could turn dreams into reality.

Now’s the time to get started...



National Famine Memorial, County Mayo

NEED TO KNOW INFORMATION

IRELAND FAMILY HISTORY ON FACEBOOK

This page holds expert sessions and enables you to connect with a valuable community. [Facebook.com/IrelandFamilyHistory](https://www.facebook.com/IrelandFamilyHistory)

GLASNEVIN CEMETERY

This cemetery holds the burial records for 1.5 million people. Its award-winning museum tells their story, and includes a Genealogy Research Centre. The daily tours are highly recommended for an insight into key figures from Ireland’s past. glasnevintrust.ie

NATIONAL LIBRARY AND NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Both have excellent, free walk-in advisory services, while you can search census records of 1901 and 1911 online at the National Archives website. nli.ie and census.nationalarchives.ie

THE IRISH TIMES

The last-name search on this website is a gem of a resource. irishtimes.com/ancestor

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND (PRONI) AND GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (GRONI)

All public records from Northern Ireland are stored at PRONI. There’s a huge range of material including records of historical, social, and cultural importance that can be accessed for free. GRONI registers all births, deaths, marriages, and adoptions in Northern Ireland. proni.gov.uk and geni.nidirect.gov.uk

ULSTER HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

This family history research foundation has been helping people trace their Scots-Irish and Irish roots for more than 50 years. There are family records, as well as a free Ulster-Scots app. ancestryireland.com

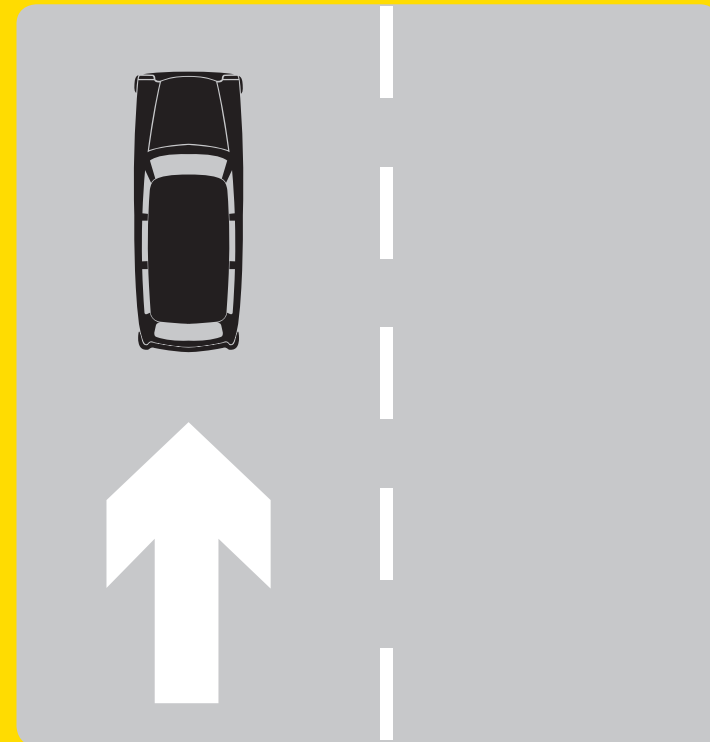
MILITARY ARCHIVES

A diverse body of information for the Republic of Ireland is held on this site. militaryarchives.ie

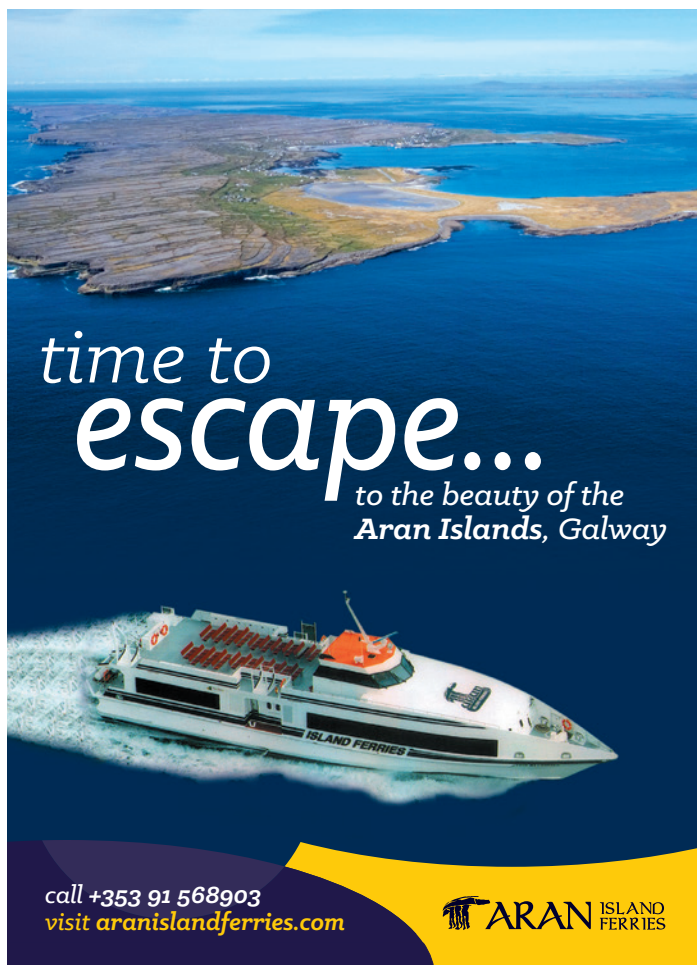
COUNTY GENEALOGY CENTRES

Many counties in Ireland boast their own county genealogy centres and the level of local knowledge there can be quite useful. You’ll find a list on rootsireland.ie

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IRELAND KEY TRAVEL FACTS

SMOKING RESTRICTIONS

Smoking is banned in all public places.

CUSTOMS

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

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

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

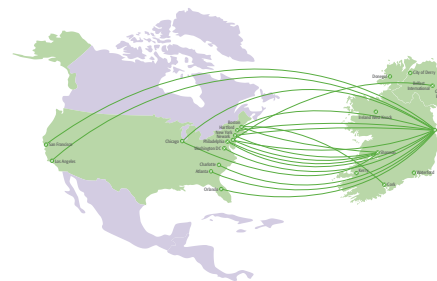
MONEY

Higher denomination notes such as €100, €200 and €500 will not normally be accepted in retail outlets, so bring cash in lower denominations when you're coming to Ireland.

VAT (SALES TAX) AND REFUNDS

In the Republic of Ireland, tourism services such as restaurant meals and accommodation benefit from a lower VAT (sales tax) rate of 9%. Visitors to Ireland from non-EU countries can claim back sales taxes on

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For details of airline services to Dublin, Belfast, Shannon, and Cork, please see [page 62](#)

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PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 2016

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

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



purchases made in Ireland; shopping in Ireland is subject to a sales tax of 23%. Always look for the "Tax-Free Shopping" sign in the windows of participating stores. To avail of your tax refund, complete a valid tax refund document, which you can get from participating stores. Present this and goods to customs on departure from the EU, and you can receive your refund on the spot at some airports; otherwise, you can mail your tax refund document to the store and a refund will be issued. Selected shopkeepers will offer you the Horizon Tax-Free Shopping card, a new paperless method of getting tax refunds brought to you by FEXCO Tax-Free Shopping. With each purchase, the card is swiped and tax-free eligible items are logged. At the end of your trip, hand in the card to the FEXCO Tax-Free Shopping desk at Dublin or Shannon Airport. You can apply for a card online at shoptaxfree.com

For details on how to claim tax back on goods bought in Northern Ireland, please visit gov.uk/tax-on-shopping/taxfree-shopping

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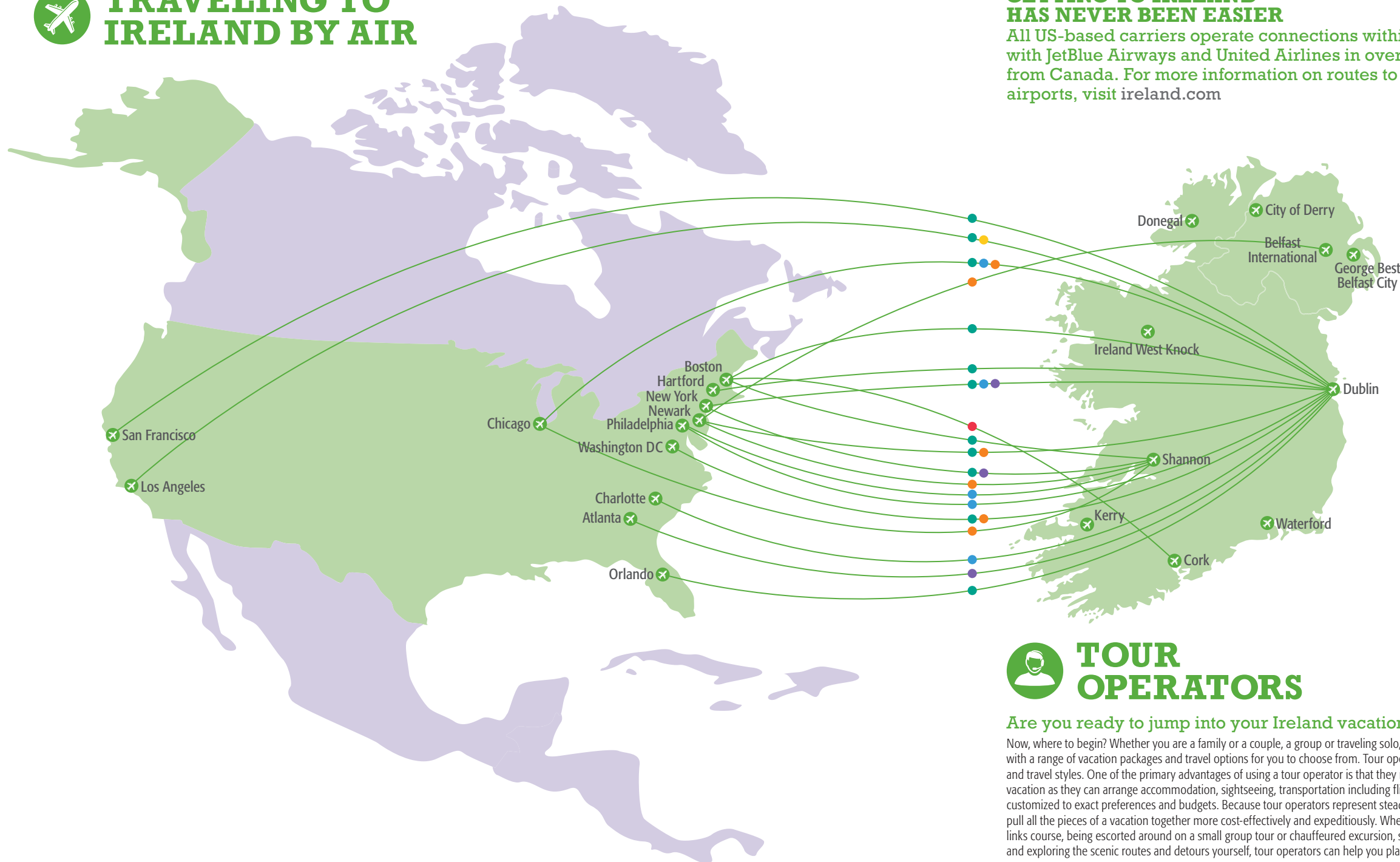
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TRAVELING TO IRELAND BY AIR

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All US-based carriers operate connections within the US or in Europe. Aer Lingus connects with JetBlue Airways and United Airlines in over 33 cities in the US. You can also fly direct to Ireland from Canada. For more information on routes to Ireland and connecting routes from European airports, visit ireland.com



CARRIER	CONTACT	ROUTE
Aer Lingus	aerlingus.com	Boston (BOS) – Dublin Boston (BOS) – Shannon Chicago (ORD) – Dublin Hartford (BDL) – Dublin (Sept 2016) Newark (EWR) – Dublin (Sept 2016) New York (JFK) – Dublin New York (JFK) – Shannon (seasonal) Orlando (MCO) – Dublin San Francisco (SFO) – Dublin Los Angeles (LAX) – Dublin (May 2016) Washington (IAD) – Dublin (seasonal)
American Airlines	aa.com	Charlotte (CLT) – Dublin (seasonal) Chicago (ORD) – Dublin (seasonal) New York (JFK) – Dublin (seasonal) Philadelphia (PHL) – Dublin Philadelphia (PHL) – Shannon (seasonal)
DELTA	delta.com	Atlanta (ATL) – Dublin (seasonal) New York (JFK) – Dublin New York (JFK) – Shannon (seasonal)
UNITED	united.com	Chicago (ORD) – Dublin (seasonal) Chicago (ORD) – Shannon (seasonal) Newark (EWR) – Belfast Newark (EWR) – Dublin Newark (EWR) – Shannon Washington (IAD) – Dublin
Ethiopian	ethiopianairlines.com	Los Angeles (LAX) – Dublin
norwegian	norwegian.com	Boston (BOS) – Cork (April 2016)

TOUR OPERATORS

Are you ready to jump into your Ireland vacation?

Now, where to begin? Whether you are a family or a couple, a group or traveling solo, there is a large variety of tour operators with a range of vacation packages and travel options for you to choose from. Tour operators cater to all budgets, tastes, interests, and travel styles. One of the primary advantages of using a tour operator is that they make it easier for you to plan your dream vacation as they can arrange accommodation, sightseeing, transportation including flights, and meals. Travel packages can be customized to exact preferences and budgets. Because tour operators represent steady, often bulk, business, they may be able to pull all the pieces of a vacation together more cost-effectively and expeditiously. Whether you fancy teeing off on a world-class links course, being escorted around on a small group tour or chauffeured excursion, setting off on a coach trip, or renting a car and exploring the scenic routes and detours yourself, tour operators can help you plan the trip of a lifetime to Ireland.

Please visit ireland.com/offers for a complete listing of tour operators that Tourism Ireland partners within the United States. Be sure to check out the Vacation Offers page where you will find some great value deals.



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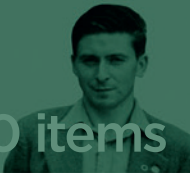
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VISITOR CENTER

'From Moneygall to the White House' is an exciting exhibition that tells a story familiar to so many with Irish ancestry, we highlight on the influence of the Irish across the globe with a particular focus on the USA and the Office of President. The free exhibition will break your journey across Ireland and highlight interesting facts about the global Irish community and is definitely worth a visit.

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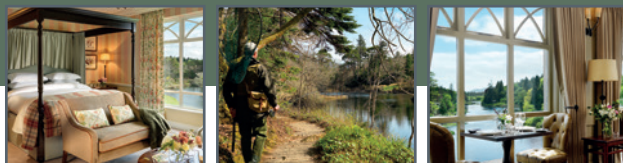


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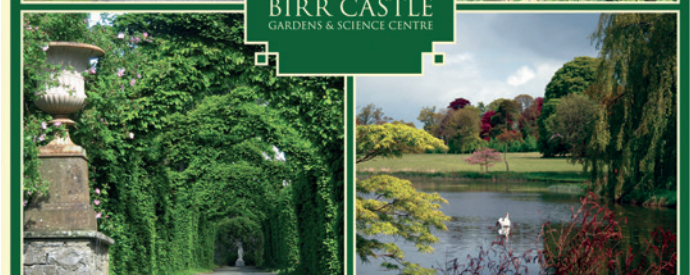
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IRELAND'S REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ACCESS

TRAVELING TO IRELAND'S AIRPORTS

The island of Ireland is easily accessible by air, with over 30 airlines flying to Ireland from more than 70 destinations across Europe and the US. There are direct flights from many US airports to Ireland; see page 62 for details.

TRAVELING TO IRELAND FROM GREAT BRITAIN

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

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

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

*operated by Stobart Air.

AIRPORT CONTACT DETAILS

AIRPORT	WEBSITE
Belfast International	belfastairport.com
City of Derry	cityofderryairport.com
Cork	corkairport.com
Donegal	donegalairport.ie
Dublin International	dublinairport.com
George Best Belfast City	belfastcityairport.com
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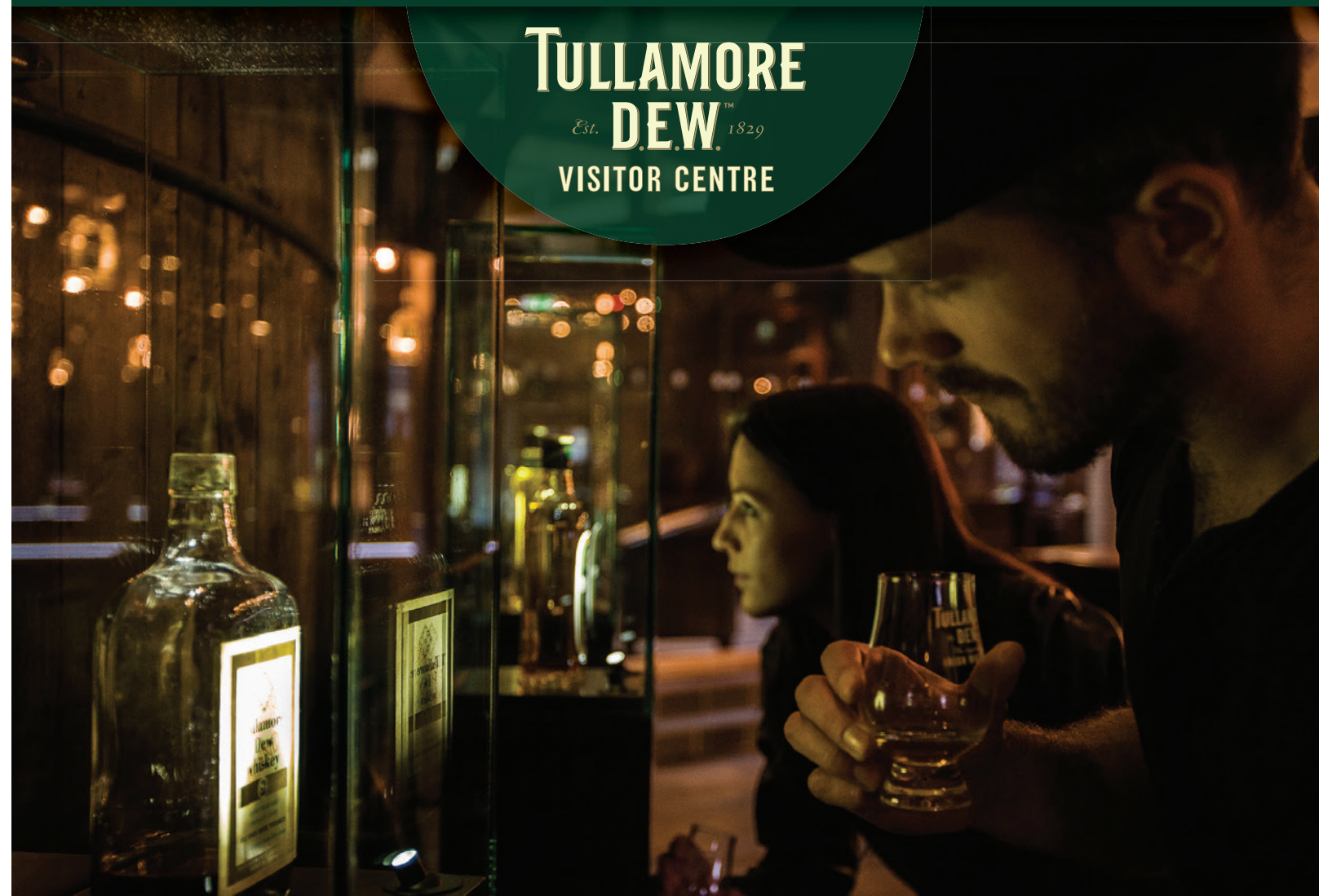


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