

# Ireland

YOUR TRAVEL MAGAZINE

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

 [facebook.com/discoverirelandnordics](https://facebook.com/discoverirelandnordics)

 [twitter@tinordics](https://twitter.com/tinordics)

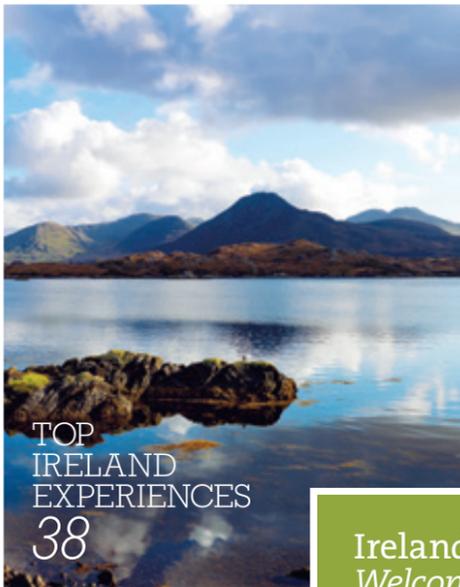
**IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST**  
AN EXCEPTIONAL JOURNEY  
THROUGH 5,000 YEARS

**STAY, SEE, DO**  
INSPIRATIONAL IDEAS FROM  
AROUND THE ISLAND

**A FOOD ADVENTURE**  
INCREDIBLE FLAVOURS AND  
CUTTING-EDGE CHEFS



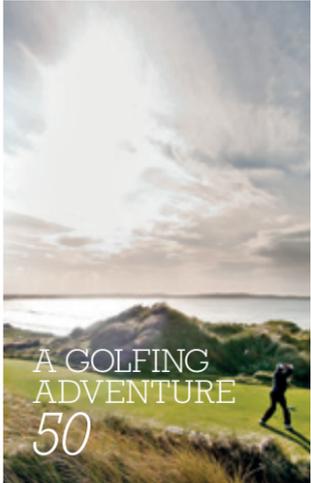
River Barrow, County Carlow



TOP IRELAND EXPERIENCES 38



DISCOVER ALL ABOUT 10



A GOLFING ADVENTURE 50

### Ireland Welcome

The perfect escape? The city break you've been dreaming of? The cliff-path walk you'll remember forever? Well, Ireland has you covered. This magical island is just waiting to thrill you with its stunning scenery along the Wild Atlantic Way, to capture you with its history from ancient sites such as Newgrange to the Edwardian-era Gobbins path, and to entice you with Ireland's Ancient East. The time is now.

Jump into Ireland

## CONTENTS

- 04 PICTURE THIS**  
Experience one of Ireland's most picturesque landscapes
- 06 DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT**  
Enjoy a uniquely Irish experience
- 07 STAY SOMEWHERE DIFFERENT**  
Inspirational places to lay your head
- 08 DISCOVER ALL ABOUT**  
Ireland's exceptional UNESCO sites
- 10 CITY BREAKS**  
The go-to cities for an unmissable weekend break
- 16 IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST**  
Discover more than 5,000 years of history
- 18 FABULOUSLY FOODIE**  
How Ireland's became a top food destination
- 22 THE SCENE-STEALERS**  
Cliff-edge castles, stunning houses, and delightful gardens
- 26 GREAT IRELAND ROADTRIPS**  
From striking scenery to charming villages
- 30 TOP IRELAND EXPERIENCES**  
Some of the best of what the island has to offer
- 34 A MUSICAL TRADITION**  
Experience the magic of a traditional Irish music session in some lovely old pubs
- 38 MONASTIC IRELAND**  
Vanessa Harriss explores abbeys, monuments and monastic sites from Early Christian Ireland
- 42 THE GREAT OUTDOORS**  
Cycle, kayak, walk – great ways to experience Ireland's natural wonderland
- 46 A GOLFING ADVENTURE**  
Golf expert Brian Keogh recommends some of the must-play courses for 2016
- 50 THE PRACTICALS**  
Everything you need to know about organising a holiday to the island of Ireland.



FABULOUSLY FOODIE 22



Copy and design: Maxmedia Ireland Limited  
Printing: Wyndeham Group



Tourism Ireland is the marketing body for the island of Ireland, covering the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Every care has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this brochure. Tourism Ireland and its agents cannot, however, accept responsibility for errors and omissions but where such are brought to our attention, future publications will be amended accordingly. Tourism Ireland does not accept responsibility for the advertising content in this publication. Images used in this publication are sourced from the image banks of Tourism Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Raymond Fogarty, Irish Landmark Trust, Bernie Brown, Derek Robinson, Scenic Ireland, Shutterstock.com and a number of other third party sources (who have given their consent to use of image).





## Picture *This*

This is The Gobbins, an invigorating, sea-sprayed path that clings to the rugged basalt cliffs of north Antrim's coast. Here, you can walk the trail worn smooth by countless forgotten Edwardian footsteps; creep into the sandy smugglers' cave; peer through passages hewn out of rock; and look forward to the sweeping grandeur of the Causeway Coastal Route that lies ahead. It's an incredible experience that you definitely won't forget.

The Gobbins, County Antrim



Hallowe'en in Derry~Londonderry

## Hallowe'en in Derry~Londonderry

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



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 atmospheric House of McDonnell pub in Ballycastle, County Antrim, where Friday nights are packed with musicians – and locals – creating amazing tunes. Before you know it, you'll be swaying, clapping and tapping your feet.

# DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT

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



Bloomsday, Dublin

## Literary Ireland

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

## St Patrick's Festival

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



St Patrick's Day, Dublin



Aran Islands, County Galway

## Visit the Gaeltacht

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



Clare Island Lighthouse, County Mayo



Rose Cottage, County Fermanagh



Ard na Sidhe, County Kerry



Ireland Accommodation

Ballynahinch Castle, County Galway



Shannon-Erne Waterway



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

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

B&B accommodation can be as rustic or

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

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

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

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

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

# DISCOVER ALL ABOUT... IRELAND AND UNESCO

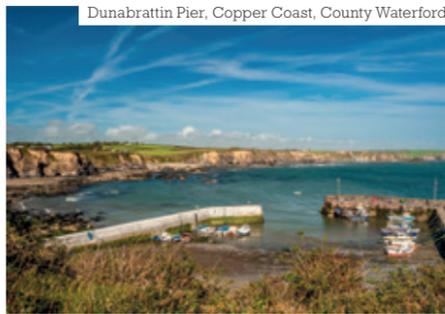
Fascinating geological formations, wind-battered monasteries on remote islands, a passage tomb that is older than the pyramids – Ireland’s UNESCO World Heritage Sites offer an extraordinary glimpse into the past, and are a highlight on any visit to the island. Here’s why...



Trinity College, 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.



Dunabrattin Pier, Copper Coast, County Waterford



Skellig Michael, County Kerry



The Quiet Man Bridge, County Galway

## 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*.



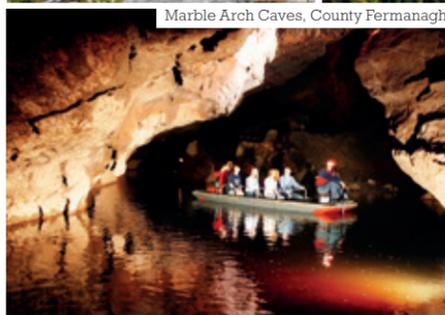
Giant’s Causeway, County Antrim



The Burren, County Clare



Newgrange, County Meath



Marble Arch Caves, County Fermanagh



Dunluce Castle, County Antrim

## The Skellig Islands

There are few words to describe the epic Skellig Islands off the coast of County Kerry. Rising from the Atlantic Ocean, 11km 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 centre, 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 40km 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 – an 80m-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 35km 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 (3km), or venture further with the Causeway Coast Way (32km).



St George's Market, Belfast



Octopussy's, Howth, County Dublin



Derry-Londonderry



Crown Liquor Saloon, Belfast

# 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 at Powerscourt Townhouse Centre, Dublin



Cobh, County Cork



Temple Bar, Dublin



Canty's pub, Cork



White House Bar, Limerick



Viking Triangle, Waterford



Galway



Trinity College, Dublin



Ha'penny Bridge, Dublin



Dame Lane, Dublin

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



Coliemore Harbour, Dalkey, County Dublin

## DUBLIN

**The Fair City.** This historic capital pulses with 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 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 medieval core, and the area where Vikings built forts. One of the oldest parts of the city lies where Dublin Castle now stands. Creep down into the Medieval Undercroft and you can see the foundations of the old city walls. Nearby is Christ Church Cathedral (1028), with one of the largest medieval crypts in Ireland and Great Britain.

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

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

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

## DUBLIN FIVE TO SEE

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

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

**TRINITY COLLEGE/BOOK OF KELLS**  
Walk through the impressive entrance of Trinity College Dublin, and it feels like you're transported back centuries. The Book of Kells here is a must-see.

**GUINNESS STOREHOUSE**  
The story of one of Ireland's most famous drinks is told in an excellent interactive exhibition. Finish with a pint in the 360° bar.

**TEELING WHISKEY DISTILLERY**  
This new distillery is bringing a tradition back to one of Dublin's oldest areas. Make sure to take the tour, which finishes in some whiskey tutoring.

## Hidden Gems

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



Titanic Belfast

## BELFAST

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

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

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

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

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

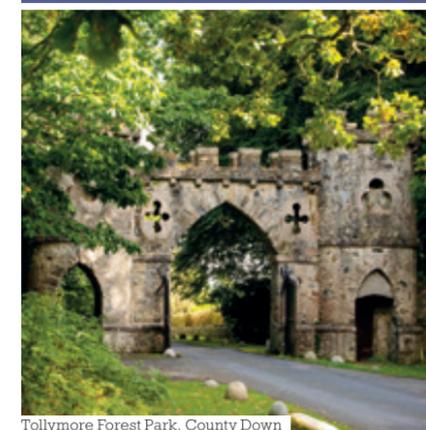


City Hall, Belfast



Crown Liquor Saloon, Belfast

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



Tollymore Forest Park, County Down

## BELFAST FIVE TO SEE

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

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

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

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

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

## Foodie favourites

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



Galway

## GALWAY

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

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

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

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

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



Galway



Connemara, County Galway

### Beyond Galway

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



Galway Oyster Festival

### GALWAY FIVE TO TRY

#### LIVE MUSIC SESSIONS

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

#### THE SPANISH ARCH

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

#### MY SHOP... GRANNY LIKES IT

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

#### GALWAY CITY MUSEUM

Overlooking the Spanish Arch on the banks of the River Corrib in the city centre, this modern museum tells the story of Galway through the years.

#### 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.



Rothe House, Kilkenny

## CITIES TO EXPLORE

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



### CORK

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

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



### LIMERICK

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

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



### WATERFORD

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

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



### KILKENNY

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

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



### ARMAGH

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

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



### LISBURN

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

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



### NEWRY

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

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



### DERRY~LONDONDERRY

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

Bridge, the intact city walls and the Edwardian Guildhall. Also explore the Bogside murals, the award-winning Tower Museum and the Walled City Brewery, with its restaurant and brewhouse.



Rock of Cashel, County Tipperary



Glendalough, County Wicklow



Holy Cross Abbey, County Tipperary



Kilkenny Design Centre



Dunbrody Famine Ship, New Ross, County Wexford

# IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST

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

## LAND OF 5,000 DAWNS

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

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

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

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

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

## THE HISTORIC HEARTLANDS

**Go time travelling** through the counties of Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Offaly, Tipperary and east Limerick, and you'll discover grand houses, sacred valleys and a few surprises along the way. Here in the historic core of the island, verdant pastures 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 neighbouring County Laois, the **Rock of Dunamase** rises from the land on a steep crag of rock. Rich with history and boasting beautiful views of the valley below, the castle was once part of the dowry of Aoife, princess of Leinster, on her marriage to legendary Norman lord Strongbow in 1170.

There is fascination to be found in

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

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

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

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

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

## CELTIC COAST

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

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

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

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

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

### COLLON HOUSE

*Collon, County Louth*

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

### WINEPORT LODGE

*Glasson, Athlone, County Westmeath*

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

### MACNEAN HOUSE & RESTAURANT

*Blacklion, County Cavan*

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

### THE HAPPY PEAR

*Greystones, County Wicklow*

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

### THE TANNERY RESTAURANT

*Dungarvan, County Waterford*

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

### CAMPAGNE RESTAURANT

*Kilkenny*

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



A taste of Ireland's seafood

# FABULOUSLY FOODIE

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



1826 Adare, County Limerick



Kai, Galway



Loam, Galway



Babushka Kitchen Café, Portrush, County Antrim



Harry's Shack, Portstewart, County Londonderry



The Woollen Mills, Dublin

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

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

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

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

## Did you know?

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

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

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

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

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

## Exceptional cooking

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

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

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



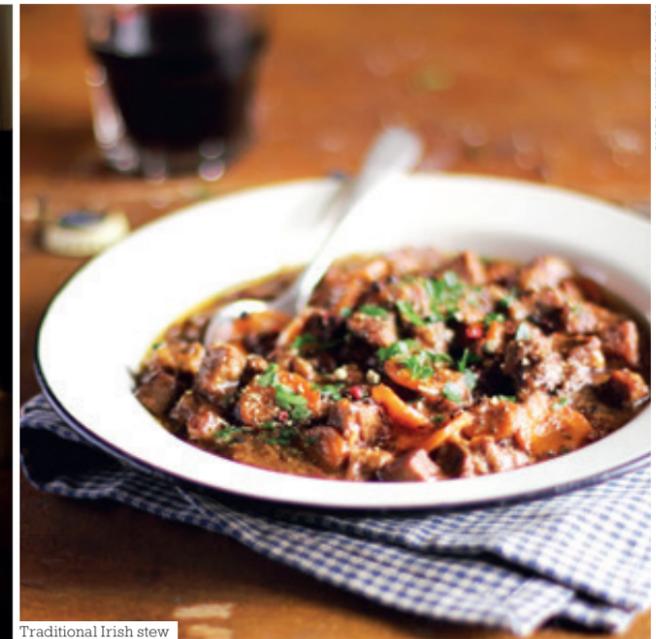
Graze, Belfast



Forest Avenue, Dublin



Frank Hederman, English Market, Cork



Traditional Irish stew

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

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

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

**Keeping it casual**

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



Belfast Bred food tour



Dunbrody Cookery School, County Wexford

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**An abundance of ingredients**

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

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

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

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



Roberts fish shop, Dalkey, County Dublin

**Unique foods and where to try them**

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

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

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

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

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

**NATURAL LARDER**

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

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

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

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



Bantry House, County Cork

# THE SCENE STEALERS

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

## BANTRY HOUSE County Cork

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

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

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



Powerscourt, County Wicklow

## 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 19 hectares filled with hidden treasures and bordered by the delightful colours of the Sugar Loaf mountain.

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

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

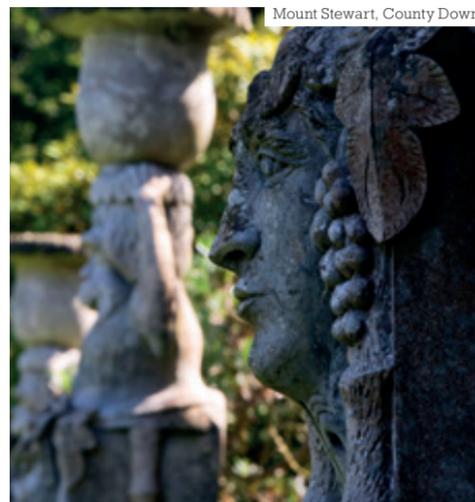


Powerscourt, County Wicklow



Mount Stewart gardens

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



Mount Stewart, County Down

## MOUNT STEWART

County Down

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

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

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



Trim Castle, County Meath

## TRIM CASTLE

County Meath

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

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

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

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



Glenarm Castle, County Antrim

## GLENARM CASTLE

County Antrim

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

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

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

## CAHIR CASTLE

County Tipperary

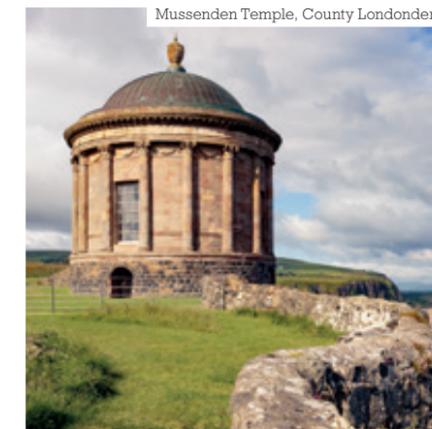
Pitched on a rocky island in the middle of the River Suir, County Tipperary, Cahir Castle has everything you'd expect from an Irish castle: it's big, dramatic and imposing. Built and rebuilt from the 13th to the 15th centuries, Cahir's incredible design reflects its main objective: defence. Having endured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

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

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



Cahir Castle, County Tipperary



Mussenden Temple, County Londonderry

## NINE TO TRY

### BLARNEY CASTLE

County Cork

Kiss the famous Blarney Stone, explore 59 acres/24 hectares of parkland, and unearth the 600-year history of this icon.

### DUNLUCE CASTLE

County Antrim

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

### DUBLIN CASTLE

Dublin

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

### KYLEMORE ABBEY

County Galway

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

### MUSSENDEN TEMPLE

County Londonderry

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

### MUCKROSS HOUSE

County Kerry

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

### ALTAMONT GARDENS

County Carlow

Located on a 98-acre/40-hectare estate, Altamont is a tantalising mix of formal and informal gardens with mountain views and river walks.

### 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.

### MOUNT USHER

County Wicklow

A bounty of over 5,000 plants and shrubs grace the winding paths that arc either side of the River Vartry at this County Wicklow gem.

# GREAT IRELAND ROADTRIPS

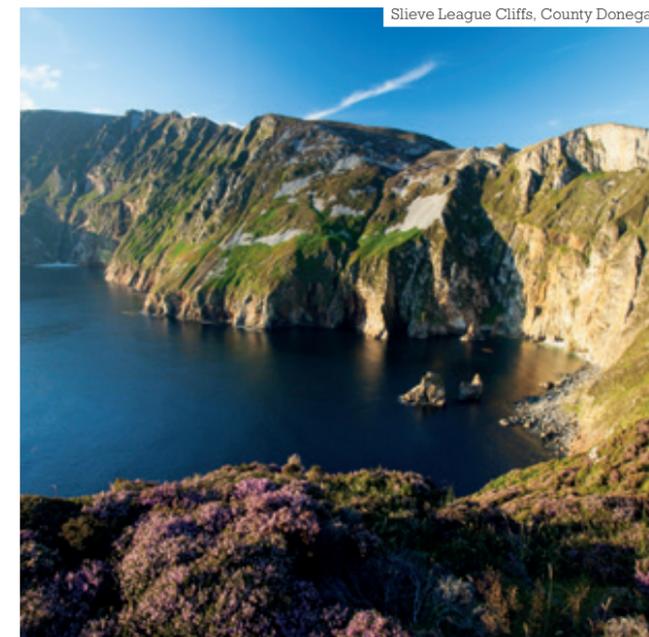
From charming coastal villages to spectacular natural wonders, taking to the road on the island of Ireland reveals surprises at every turn



Mount Errigal, County Donegal



Clew Bay, County Mayo



Slieve League Cliffs, County Donegal

## THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY

By Yvonne Gordon

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

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

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

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



🕒 2,500km 🕒 Up to 20 days

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

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

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



Liss Ard Estate, County Cork

## Along the way

### VISIT

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

### EAT

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

### SLEEP

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



Lough Tay, County Wicklow



Japanese Gardens, County Kildare



Dark Hedges, County Antrim



Ballintoy Harbour, County Antrim

## THE GRAND TOUR

By David Fallon

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

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

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

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

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

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



Glendalough, County Wicklow

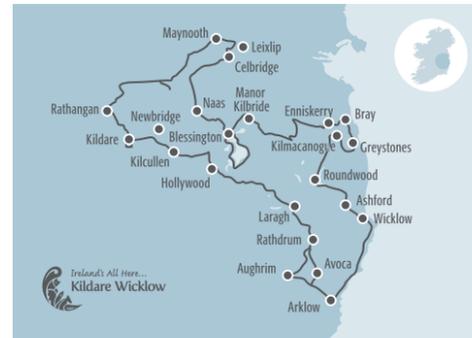


Carton House Hotel, County Kildare

hour-long trails to more substantial hikes through the valley.

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 outfits worn by Princess Diana, Grace Kelly and Marilyn Monroe, and will have quiet moments at St Brigid's Well in the grounds of the Black Abbey.

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



324km Up to 3 days

### Along the way

#### VISIT

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

#### EAT

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

#### SLEEP

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

## THE CAUSEWAY COASTAL ROUTE

By Mal Rogers

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

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

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

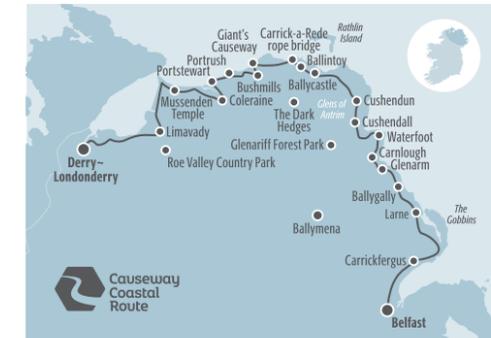
I continue north, the beautiful Glens of Antrim on my left. Soon I come to Ballintoy Harbour where I head down a steep, winding road, with plunging cliffs either side. The harbour and surrounding beach have been widely featured in Game of Thrones™, and it's easy to see why. Cliffs enclose the bay, and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



Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, County Antrim



Bushmills Inn, County Antrim



235km 1-3 days

### Along the way

#### VISIT

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

#### EAT

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

#### SLEEP

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



# TOP IRELAND EXPERIENCES

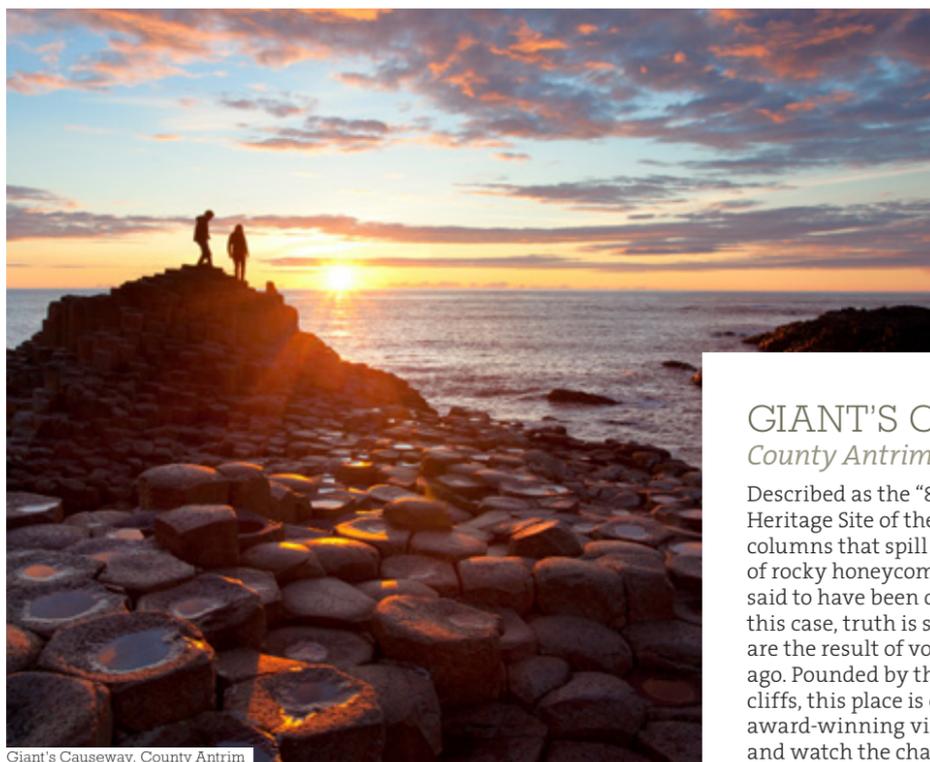
*The island of Ireland is bursting with incredible things to see and do, from epic landscapes to compelling visitor attractions. Get inspired with ten of the best*

## CONNEMARA County Galway

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

## GIANT'S CAUSEWAY County Antrim

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



Giant's Causeway, County Antrim



Newgrange, County Meath

## NEWGRANGE County Meath

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

## 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 baptised 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, but it's definitely intriguing – a place that captures the imagination. 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.



Rock of Cashel, County Tipperary

## THE BURREN County Clare

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



The Burren, County Clare

## MOURNE MOUNTAINS County Down

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



Mourne Mountains, County Down



Dingle Peninsula, County Kerry



Cliffs of Moher, County Clare

### CLIFFS OF MOHER *County Clare*

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

### THE GOBBINS *County Antrim*

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



The Gobbins, County Antrim



Titanic Belfast

### TITANIC BELFAST *Belfast*

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



Coumeenole Beach, County Kerry

### 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 Basket Islands; and there's the Conor Pass, the highest mountain road in Ireland. Exceptional is everyday here.



# A MUSICAL TRADITION

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

Traditional Irish music session, County Galway



Fisherman's Thatched Inn, County Laois

PHOTO: JOHN WATERS

## What is a *seisiún*?

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

## The instruments?

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



Bodhrán and uilleann pipes

## TUNES IN A THATCHED COTTAGE, COUNTY LAOIS

By Margaret Scully

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Musician on the Aran Islands, County Galway



Cobblestone pub, Dublin

PHOTO: DEBK SPEIRS

## MUSICAL DELIGHTS IN DUBLIN CITY

By Mark Folens

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

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

A lone fiddle begins a lilting melody and the pub quickly 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 scattered groups of regulars listen with closed eyes while a group of Italians stamp their feet in time to the beat.

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



Trad session, Galway city



Trad music session, County Donegal



Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, Cavan



Ulster-Scots dancing

## ULSTER-SCOTS TRADITIONS

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

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

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

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

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

## TOE-TAPPING TUNES IN COUNTY DOWN

By Mal Rogers

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

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

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

tightly executed triplets and grace notes.

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

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

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



Annual Appalachian and Bluegrass Music Festival, County Tyrone

# 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

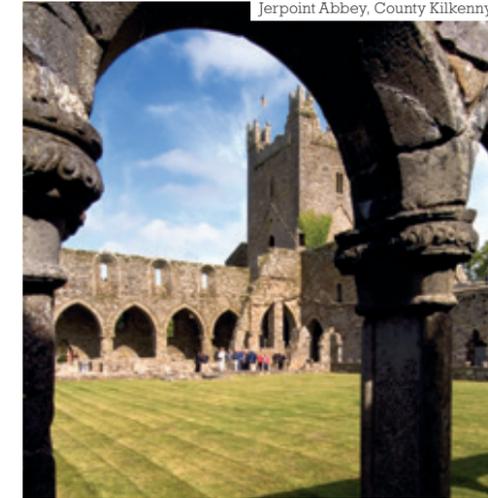
Christian monks chose their sites well – in some cases just co-opting pagan ones. Generations of new structures were built on earlier versions – sometimes sites were even rebuilt from the ground up. Gougane Barra in Macroom, County Cork, for example, derives its name from St Finbarr, who is said to have 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, >



Dun Aengus, Aran Islands, County Galway



Clonmacnoise, County Offaly



Jerpoint Abbey, County Kilkenny



Beaghmore stone circle, County Tyrone

### 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

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.

## 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 118-metre cliff, it's an incredible sight.

### STONE CIRCLES

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

### HILL OF SLANE

*County Meath*

The ancient King Sláine mac Dela is rumoured to be buried 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 29-metre round tower remain today.

# THE GREAT OUTDOORS

From heart-pumping mountain-bike trails, to life-changing encounters with whales, the island of Ireland invites you to get out there and experience it all.  
By Yvonne Gordon



County Mayo

## CYCLING THE GREAT WESTERN GREENWAY County Mayo

With peace, tranquillity and the stunning scenery of the Wild Atlantic Way, the 42km Great Western Greenway is one of the island's great off-road cycling routes. Set on an old railway line and running from the beautiful town of Westport to Achill Island, the Great Western Greenway can be done in one day, or you can break the journey up with several stops along the way.

Hills are gentle and there are plenty of flat sections and picnic spots. The first section, Westport to Newport (11km), takes about 1.5 hours. Leaving the buzz of Westport behind, you'll cross rivers and pass gurgling streams, sheep-filled fields and old cottages.

Stop off in the charming village of Newport for a cup of tea, and allow up to 2.5 hours to get from Newport to Mulranny (18km). Here you'll be treated to magnificent views of County Mayo's island-studded Clew Bay and the famous mist-shrouded Croagh Patrick mountain.

On the final section, Mulranny to Achill Island (13km, around 1.5 hours), the waterside views are spectacular. There are plenty of bike hire providers along the trail (some operate shuttle services and bike storage) and the less fit can even rent an electric bike.



Causeway Coast, County Antrim

## WALKING THE CAUSEWAY COAST WAY County Antrim

A rope bridge to cross, a distillery to sample whiskey, an ancient castle to admire and, of course, the Giant's Causeway itself. The Causeway Coast Way in County Antrim is a fantastic coastal walk, which takes you past some of the island's most compelling places to visit. What better way to fully appreciate the magnificent coastal scenery than to spend two or three days walking the 53km between Ballycastle and Portstewart, where you'll pass bays and inlets, walk on beaches and promenades and see fantastic cliff views.

Along the way, cross the famous Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, explore the dramatic cliff-side ruins of Dunluce Castle, and visit the famous basalt columns at the Giant's Causeway. You can also enjoy a tour and a whiskey tasting at the Old Bushmills Distillery. There are lots of great B&Bs and small villages along the way, too, which make great stop-offs for a well-earned bit of rest and relaxation. You don't need to be super-fit, but paths are grass or gravel so wear good hiking shoes and make sure to have a waterproof jacket.



Kayaking, County Galway

## KAYAKING THE KILLARY BLUEWAY TRAIL County Galway

**Did you know that Ireland has a fjord?** Killary Harbour in Connemara, which is 16km long and more than 45 metres deep, sits between the counties of Galway and Mayo. Take to the water in a kayak and you can admire the dramatic scenery along both sides of the fjord, with the 814 metres-high Mweelrea Mountain on one side and the Twelve Bens and Maumturk mountains on the other.

Killary is sheltered from the open sea and is part of the Blueway Trails, a network of water trails in counties Galway and Mayo where you can do everything from kayaking to snorkelling.

The picturesque village of Leenane is a great place to start the trail, and is where you can get kitted out with equipment, instructions and local knowledge. You'll spot plenty of wildlife, flora and fauna along the way, and maybe even a dolphin or two. Afterwards, the village makes a great place to rest up in one of the two small bars overlooking the fjord, Gaynor's and Hamilton's, which serves up a really great seafood chowder.



Slieve League, County Donegal



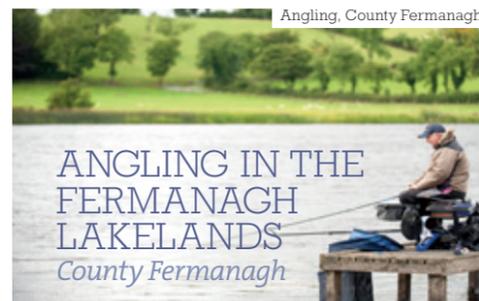
Whale-watching, County Cork

## WHALE AND DOLPHIN WATCHING

County Cork

**Coming face-to-face** with whales is a once-in-a-lifetime wildlife encounter, and the south coast of Ireland is one of the best places in Europe to go whale and dolphin-watching. Take to the water on an organised whale-watching boat trip, with companies such as Whale Watch West Cork and Cork Whale Watch, and you can get up close with minke whales, fin whales or humpback whales, who arrive every year to feed in the rich waters off the coast of County Cork. Cork Whale Watch leaves from Reen Pier, outside of Union Hall, West Cork; while Whale Watch West Cork operates out of the pretty seaside village of Baltimore.

Minke whales are the first to appear, in spring, while late summer is a good time to spot fin whales, which can reach up to 23 metres in length. Humpbacks, meanwhile, are the stars of the show, with acrobatics that include fin-slapping, tail-fluking and breaching (leaping out of the water). Keep an eye out, too, for basking sharks – the gentle giants of the sea – seals, and rare seabirds, too. Unforgettable.



Angling, County Fermanagh

## ANGLING IN THE FERMANAGH LAKELANDS

County Fermanagh

**What better place** to enjoy an angling break than in a county so full of lakes, rivers and waterways, that a third of it is under water. County Fermanagh is known as the Lakelands and this precious waterworld is an angler's paradise.

Game anglers will discover waters hopping with salmon, brown trout and rainbow trout, while coarse anglers will find bream, roach, perch and tench at the end of their lines. Spend the day on Lough Erne – either the Upper Lough, east of the town of Enniskillen, or the Lower Lough which runs 24km to Belleek. There are lots of islands and bays, providing the perfect shallow waters and shores, ideal for fishing, and great places to eat and relax including the Lough Erne Resort, the Watermill Restaurant, and the very tasty Dollakis Restaurant.

The Fermanagh Visitor Information Centre in the town of Enniskillen will point you in the right direction for permits, rod hire and other information.



Mountain biking, County Limerick

## MOUNTAIN BIKING IN THE BALLYHOURA MOUNTAINS

County Limerick

**Tucked into the beautiful** Ballyhoura Mountains, which cover parts of south County Limerick and north County Cork, the Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trail Network is the place to be if you're looking for an afternoon of adrenalin, adventure and thrills.

The network is a set of mountain biking trails running over 98km. This is the largest mountain bike trail network of its kind in Ireland and there's no better place to challenge your off-road cycling skills. You'll be tackling some tough forest climbs – followed by fast descents, plus twisty narrow single tracks and varied surfaces.

Trails here are organised into five different loops, all marked. The shortest is the 6km Green Wood loop, which runs through the hills under Seefin Mountain and Black Rock, and provides the perfect place for an introduction to the trails, with easy climbs and fun descents.

For very experienced bikers, the 52km-long Castlepook Loop serves up big climbs (one is 5km long) and some steep descents. The trail starts at the small village of Ardpatrick, with parking, maps and shower facilities.

# 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*

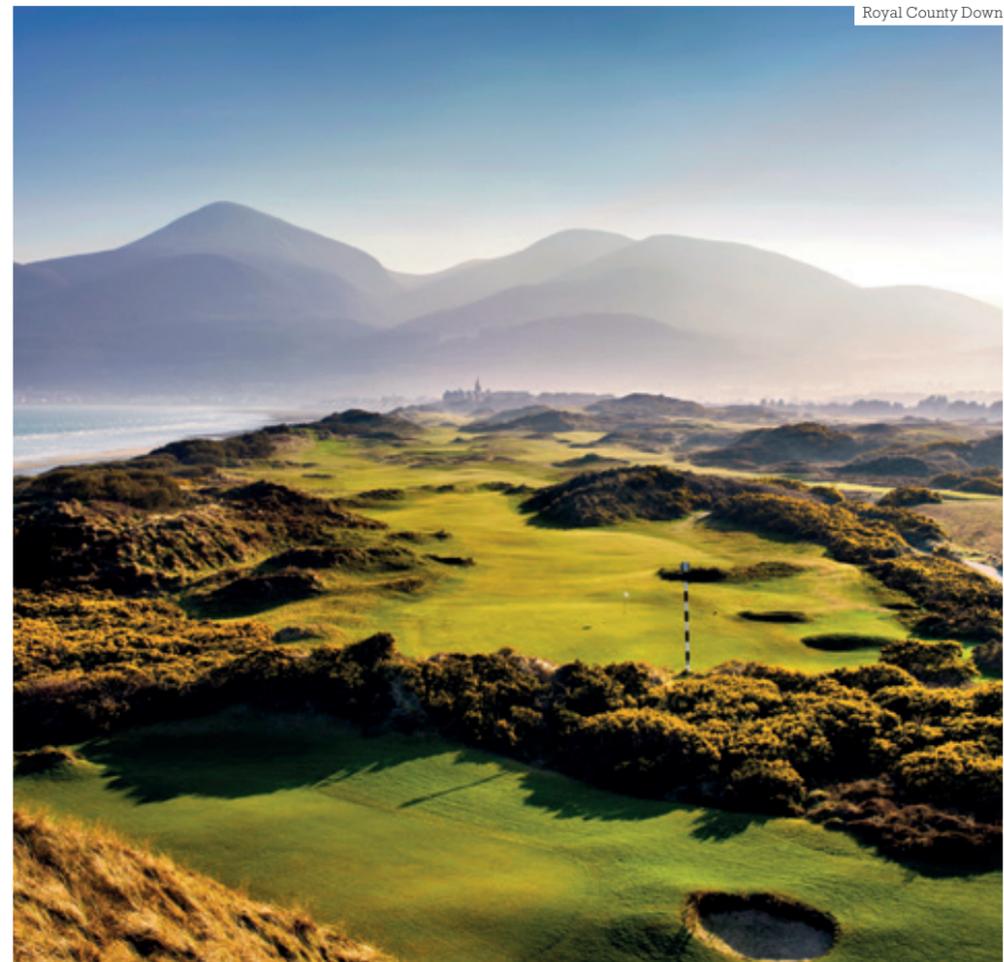
## THE DESIGNER CHOICE

**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 USGPA 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 recognise it for the class place it is." One of golf's finest chroniclers, Peter Dobereiner, once wrote: "The essence of golf is to say that it enhances the feeling that it's good to be alive. 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 centrepiece of one of Ireland's great golf destinations, designed by 18-time major winner Jack Nicklaus, with a little help from the fairies. Only in Ireland would the "Golden Bear" be forced to redesign a golf hole for mystical reasons. When planning the 12th, Nicklaus wanted to tuck the green further in to the left, but that would have meant cutting down a hawthorn tree, considered by the Irish to be a fairy tree. The great man was taken aback when workmen told him it was bad luck to remove the tree, so he reworked his plans and the result is beautiful: a big drive leading to a small green protected on the right by the Rock River. This is where the magic happens.

### 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



Ballyliffin Golf Club, County Donegal



Royal Portrush, County Antrim



Old Head, County Cork

### 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.

### 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 favourite of two-time Masters winner Bernhard Langer. **Hollywood Golf Club, County Down:** Rory McIlroy 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](http://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!



## CONTENTS



GENERAL  
INFORMATION  
& PLANNING YOUR  
TRIP



TRAVELLING TO  
IRELAND BY SEA



TRAVELLING TO  
IRELAND BY AIR



TRAVELLING  
AROUND IRELAND



THINGS TO SEE & DO



WHERE TO STAY



MAP OF IRELAND



## GENERAL INFORMATION & PLANNING YOUR TRIP

### GEOGRAPHY, POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

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

### LANGUAGE

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

### PASSPORT/VISA REQUIREMENTS

Visitors from Nordic countries require a valid passport to enter the island of Ireland. Visitors of other nationalities should contact their local Irish embassy/consulate or their local embassy.

### EMBASSIES & CONSULATES REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**Denmark**  
Østbanegade 21  
2100 København Ø  
Tel: 35 47 32 00  
Fax: 35 43 18 58  
Email: copenhagenembassy@dfa.ie  
[www.embassyofireland.dk](http://www.embassyofireland.dk)

**Finland**  
Erottajankatu 7 A  
00130 Helsinki  
Tel: 09 682 4240  
Fax: 09 646 022  
Email: helsinkiembassy@dfa.ie  
[www.embassyofireland.fi](http://www.embassyofireland.fi)

**Norway**  
Haakon VIIs gate 1  
0244 Oslo  
Tel: 22 01 72 00  
Fax: 22 01 72 01  
Email: osloembassy@dfa.ie  
[www.embassyofireland.no](http://www.embassyofireland.no)

**Sweden**  
Hovslagargatan 5  
PO Box 10326  
100 55 Stockholm  
Tel: 08 5450 4040  
Fax: 08 660 1353  
Email: stockholmembassy@dfa.ie  
[www.embassyofireland.se](http://www.embassyofireland.se)

### NORTHERN IRELAND

**Denmark**  
Kastelsvej 36-40  
2100 København Ø  
Tel: 35 44 52 00  
Fax: 35 44 52 93  
Email: enquiry.copenhagen@fco.gov.uk  
[www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations/british-embassy-copenhagen](http://www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations/british-embassy-copenhagen)

**Finland**  
Itäinen Puistotie 17  
00140 Helsinki  
Tel: (09) 2286 5100  
Fax: (09) 2286 5262  
Email: info.helsinki@fco.gov.uk  
[www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations/british-embassy-helsinki](http://www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations/british-embassy-helsinki)

**Norway**  
Thomas Heftyesgate 8  
0264 Oslo  
Tel: 23 13 27 00  
Fax: 23 13 27 41  
Email: britemb@online.no  
[www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations/british-embassy-oslo](http://www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations/british-embassy-oslo)

**Sweden**  
Sjögatan 6-8  
Box 27819  
115 93 Stockholm  
Tel: 08 671 3000  
Fax: 08 662 9989  
Email: stockholm@fco.gov.uk  
[www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations/british-embassy-stockholm](http://www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations/british-embassy-stockholm)

### MEDICAL

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

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

### VISITORS WITH DISABILITIES

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

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**National Disability Authority**  
Tel: +353 (0) 1 608 0400; [www.nda.ie](http://www.nda.ie)

### NORTHERN IRELAND

**Disability Action**  
Tel: 028 9029 7880; [www.disabilityaction.org](http://www.disabilityaction.org)

### PETS

Pets entering Ireland must comply with Ireland's requirements under the EU Pet Passport System to avoid quarantine. Pets entering the UK from the EU can travel into Ireland without quarantine, provided they satisfy the requirements of the UK Pet Travel Scheme and are cleared on arrival in the UK.

Tel: 0845 933 5577 or visit [www.gov.uk/take-pet-abroad](http://www.gov.uk/take-pet-abroad) for more information.

For further information contact:

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food**  
Tel: +353 (0) 1 607 2000; [www.agriculture.gov.ie](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie)

### NORTHERN IRELAND

**Department of Agriculture and Rural Development**  
Tel: 028 9052 4999; [www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)

### CURRENCIES

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

### BANKS

Banking hours are generally 09.30/10.00 to 16.30hrs Monday to Friday. Some banks are open on Saturday in Northern Ireland. ATM (cash) machines are located at most banks and accept most credit and debit cards.

### CREDIT CARDS

Visa, Mastercard, and American Express are widely accepted in Ireland. Visitors with other cards should ask in advance or see if the card is on display where they wish to use it.

### VAT AND TAX REFUNDS

Visitors from the EU are not entitled to any VAT or tax refunds. Norwegians are entitled to VAT or tax refund. Look for the "Tax Free Shopping" signs in shop windows. You must fill out a valid refund document and give this to the customs authorities when you travel out of the EU.



### TELEPHONE

#### Mobile phones

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

#### Pay phones

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

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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

[www.goldenpages.ie](http://www.goldenpages.ie)

### POSTAL SERVICES

Post offices are generally open from 09.00 to 17.30hrs, Monday to Friday. Main post offices also open on Saturday between 09.00 and 12.30hrs in Northern Ireland and 09.00 and 17.00hrs in the Republic of Ireland. Please note that exact opening hours vary depending on the size and location of the branch.

### SHOPPING

Shops are generally open Monday to Saturday from 09.00 to 17.30/18.00hrs with late-night shopping until 20.00hrs or 21.00hrs on Thursdays at many large stores. Sunday opening hours are generally midday until 17.00hrs or 18.00hrs (13.00 – 17.00hrs in Northern Ireland).

### TIPPING

In restaurants, when a service charge is not included, 10-15% of the bill is appropriate. Taxi drivers are usually tipped by rounding up the fare to the nearest euro or pound and porters about €1.50 or £1 per bag. In pubs, tipping bar staff is at the customer's discretion.

### ELECTRICAL CURRENT

The standard electricity supply on the island of Ireland is 230/240 volts AC (50 cycles). Visitors will require a transformer and plug adaptor (to convert 2-pin plugs to the standard 3-pin plugs) which can be bought at airports or electrical suppliers.

### PERSONAL SAFETY

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

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**Irish Tourist Assistance Service**  
(Mon-Fri), 6-7 Hanover Street East, Dublin 2

Tel: +353 (0) 1 661 0562  
Email: [info@itas.ie](mailto:info@itas.ie); [www.itas.ie](http://www.itas.ie)

**Store Street Garda Station**  
(Weekends and public holidays), Dublin 1

Tel: +353 (0) 1 666 8109

### NORTHERN IRELAND

Contact the local police station where support will be available.

Tel: 101

[www.psn.police.uk](http://www.psn.police.uk)

### EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

#### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**Emergency Services (Police, Fire, Ambulance, Coastal & Mountain Rescue)** Tel: 112 or 999

#### NORTHERN IRELAND

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

### PUBS

The legal drinking age is 18 years. Some pubs will insist patrons are over 21 years and carry some form of identification. Legislation in the Republic of Ireland stipulates that children under 18 years are not allowed in premises that serve alcohol after 21.30hrs.

### SMOKING RESTRICTIONS

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

### PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 2016

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

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



## TRAVELLING TO IRELAND BY SEA

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



### SEA ROUTES

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

### FERRY AND COACH OPERATORS CONTACT DETAILS

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

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



## TRAVELLING TO IRELAND BY AIR

### DENMARK

DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE
Copenhagen	Dublin	Aer Lingus
	Dublin	Norwegian Airlines
	Dublin	Ryanair
	Dublin	SAS

AIRLINE	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Aer Lingus	7025 4020	<a href="http://www.aerlingus.com">www.aerlingus.com</a>
Norwegian Airlines	7080 78 80	<a href="http://www.norwegian.dk">www.norwegian.dk</a>
Ryanair	+44 871 246 0002	<a href="http://www.ryanair.com">www.ryanair.com</a>
SAS – Scandinavian Airlines	7010 20 00	<a href="http://www.sas.dk">www.sas.dk</a>

### FINLAND

DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE
Helsinki	Dublin	Finnair
	Dublin**	Norwegian Airlines
	Dublin*	SAS

\*via Stockholm or Copenhagen \*\*operates end of March – end of October

AIRLINE	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Finnair	0600 140 140	<a href="http://www.finnair.fi">www.finnair.fi</a>
Norwegian Airlines	09 231 01 600	<a href="http://www.norwegian.com">www.norwegian.com</a>
SAS	06000 25 831	<a href="http://www.sas.fi">www.sas.fi</a>

### NORWAY

DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE
Oslo	Dublin	Norwegian Airlines
	Dublin	SAS
Oslo Rygge	Dublin	Ryanair

AIRLINE	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Norwegian Airlines	815 21 815	<a href="http://www.norwegian.no">www.norwegian.no</a>
Ryanair	0820 040 02	<a href="http://www.ryanair.com">www.ryanair.com</a>
SAS – Scandinavian Airlines	05400	<a href="http://www.sas.no">www.sas.no</a>

### SWEDEN

DEPART	ARRIVE	AIRLINE
Stockholm Arlanda	Dublin	SAS
Gothenburg Landvetter	Dublin*	SAS

\*operates end of March – end of October

AIRLINE	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
SAS – Scandinavian Airlines	0770 727 727	<a href="http://www.sas.se">www.sas.se</a>



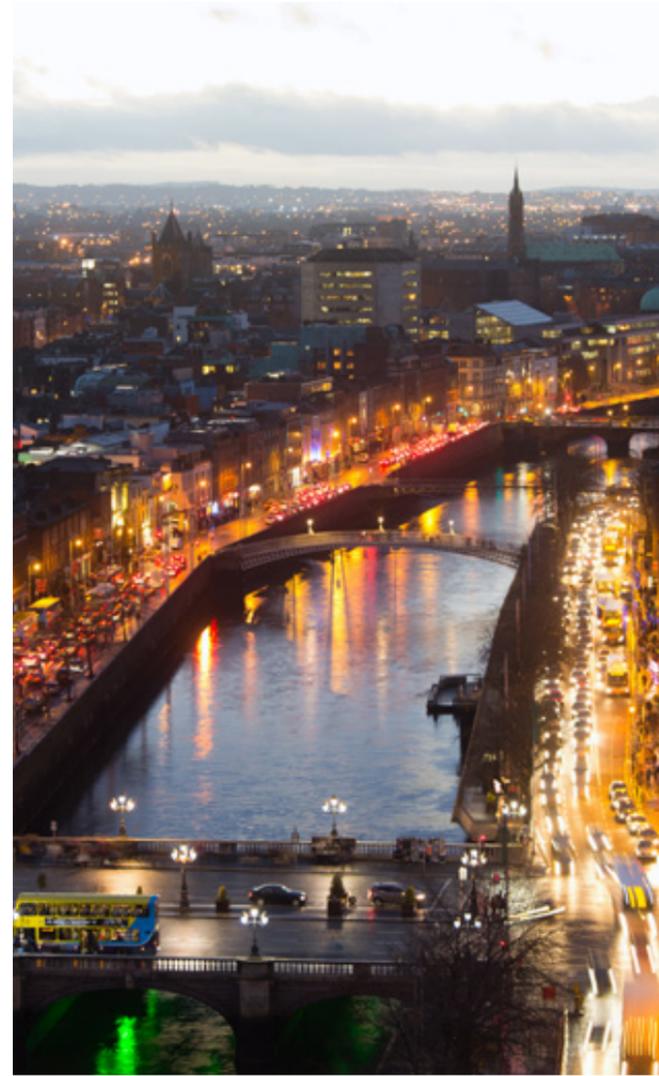


## REGIONAL AIRPORTS AND FLIGHTS

The following internal flights are available within Ireland.

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

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



## TRAVELLING FROM DUBLIN AND BELFAST AIRPORTS INTO CITY CENTRES

### DUBLIN

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

### BELFAST

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

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

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

\*Prices are subject to change.

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



## TRAVELLING AROUND IRELAND

### TAXIS

There are metered taxis in Belfast, Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Cork. In other areas, fares should be agreed beforehand. Taxis are most commonly found at ranks in central city locations.

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The island of Ireland has a reasonably comprehensive public transport system of rail and bus services. The rail network serves many large towns and cities across the island, including the ferry ports of Larne, Belfast, Dublin, Dun Laoghaire, Cork and Rosslare. Bus services link to the rail system as well as providing access to ferry ports and airports. Recent investment in road and rail has provided more comfort for travellers, offered greater frequency of service, improved travel times and opened up new services, including the western rail link between Galway and Limerick. Rail and bus fares offer good value for the traveller, with various discount tickets available that give unlimited travel on bus and rail services.

The Dublin Bus 3-day Freedom Pass offers visitors unlimited travel on tour buses, airport links and regular bus services. Please check for offers when booking. The Leap Visitor card offers 72 hours unlimited travel on Airlink, Dublin Bus, Luas, DART and Commuter Rail services. It is available for purchase at Dublin Airport only, and costs €19.50 for 72 hours.

The Belfast Visitor Pass includes unlimited travel on all scheduled Metro buses, NI Railways and Ulsterbus services operating within the Translink Belfast Visitor Pass Zone, as well as discounts on attractions and tours plus special offers for shopping and eating out.

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**Irish Rail** (Iarnród Éireann)

Tel: +353 (0) 1 836 6222; [www.irishrail.ie](http://www.irishrail.ie)

**Irish Bus** (Bus Éireann)

Tel: +353 (0) 1 836 6111; [www.buseireann.ie](http://www.buseireann.ie)

**Dublin Bus** (Bus Átha Cliath)

Tel: +353 (0) 1 873 4222; [www.dublinbus.ie](http://www.dublinbus.ie)

**DART** (Rapid Transit Rail)

The Dublin area is served by the "DART" rapid transit rail from Howth to Malahide in north County Dublin, and via Dun Laoghaire to Greystones in County Wicklow. [www.irishrail.ie/DART](http://www.irishrail.ie/DART)

### Dublin Luas

The Dublin Luas is a state-of-the-art Light Rail Transit (LRT) system connecting outlying suburbs to Dublin city centre with a high-capacity, high-frequency, high-speed service. When in the Republic of Ireland, call Luas on 1800 300 604 or visit [www.luas.ie](http://www.luas.ie)

If you do not have a validated bus ticket, keep in mind that Dublin Bus services require exact change to be given; notes will not be accepted. Bus/rail/Luas travel tickets are available from most newsagents in Dublin city centre and the surrounding suburbs.

The Dublin Bike Sharing Scheme is another good option for travelling around the city. [www.dublinbikes.ie](http://www.dublinbikes.ie) Cork, Galway, Limerick and Belfast (from February 2015) also have bike schemes. [www.ireland.com](http://www.ireland.com)

### NORTHERN IRELAND

#### Translink

(Northern Ireland Railways, Ulsterbus, Metro – Belfast's bus service)

Tel: 028 9066 6630 or visit [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk)

Check for specially discounted fares when travelling by public transport. For instance, the iLink card provides unlimited bus/train travel for 1 day, 1 week or 1 month.

#### The Enterprise

The Enterprise is a fast, high-quality rail network linking Dublin and Belfast. The journey takes around 2 hours and is probably the most comfortable way to travel between the 2 cities. Catch the Enterprise from Connolly Station in Dublin and Central Station in Belfast.

### INLAND FERRIES AND ISLAND BOAT SERVICES

When visiting any of the offshore islands around the Irish coastline, check out island boat services well in advance – and check again just before travelling as changes in the weather may affect services. Regular island boat services operate to the Aran Islands off the Galway coast, Rathlin Island off the north Antrim coast, Aranmore Island off the coast of Donegal, Clare Island off the Mayo coast, and Sherkin and Cape Clear Islands off the coast of West Cork. There are also several inland ferry services that ease travelling around Ireland and make the journey more interesting, such as the Strangford Lough

ferry at Portaferry, County Down; the ferry across the Shannon Estuary between Tarbert, County Kerry and Killimer, County Clare; and the ferry link between Greencastle, County Donegal, and Magilligan Point, County Londonderry.

### DRIVING IN IRELAND

Visitors to Ireland must bring a valid national driving licence with them, issued in the country of their permanent residence. Driving in Ireland is on the left and seatbelts must be worn at all times, in the front and back of the vehicle. Drivers should note that they are obliged by law to carry their driving licence at all times when driving in the Republic of Ireland. Motorcyclists and their passengers must wear helmets. There are very strict laws on drinking and driving, and the best advice is simply "don't drink and drive".

The measurement of speed limits on roads in the Republic of Ireland is kilometres per hour (km/h) and miles per hour (mph) in Northern Ireland. Motorists are urged to remember the change of driving laws when crossing the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

In Northern Ireland, the speed limit is 30mph in built-up areas, 60mph on the open road and 70mph on motorways unless shown otherwise. In the Republic of Ireland, the speed limit is 120km/h on motorways, 100km/h on national roads and 80km/h on non-national roads. Barrier-free tolling is operational on certain motorways in the Republic of Ireland – visit [www.eflow.ie](http://www.eflow.ie) for further information.

### CAR RENTAL

Most of the major car rental companies have desks at airports, ferry terminals and cities across Ireland. Some companies do not rent cars to drivers under 21 years or over 70 years, but please check with your car rental company before making a booking. All drivers must hold valid licences. It is advisable to book in advance, especially if you are travelling during the high season, as it is generally cheaper. The majority of rental cars are standard shift but automatic cars are available, if booked in advance, for an additional charge. Child seats should also be booked in advance. To avoid misunderstandings, it is recommended that you always check the detailed terms and conditions of your rental booking in advance. Even if you book through a third party (broker, agent, tour operator), you will be required to sign a rental agreement with the car rental company, so spend some time in advance selecting the various insurances, waivers and other options appropriate to your needs and understand the costs involved. For insurance reasons you should advise the car rental company if you intend travelling between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The trade organisation for the car rental industry in the Republic of Ireland is the **Car Rental Council** – email: [info@carrentalcouncil.ie](mailto:info@carrentalcouncil.ie) or visit [www.carrentalcouncil.ie](http://www.carrentalcouncil.ie) In Northern Ireland, contact the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association. Tel: 01484 434 747 or visit [www.bvrla.co.uk](http://www.bvrla.co.uk)



## THINGS TO SEE AND DO

### ATTRACTIONS

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

#### ALL ISLAND

**Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland**

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

**Heritage Island**

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

#### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**The Heritage Service**

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

**CNCI (Council of National Cultural Institutions)**

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

#### NORTHERN IRELAND

**NI Environment Agency**

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

**The National Trust**

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

**National Museums of Northern Ireland**

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

**Northern Ireland Museums Council**

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

### ANGLING

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

### CRUISING & WATERSPORTS

The 3 main waterways for cruising are the River Shannon, the Grand Canal and the Erne Waterway System.

At present, the most developed are the Shannon-Erne Waterway and lakes. Cabin cruisers can be hired ranging in size from 2 to 10 berths. Experience in handling a boat

is helpful but not essential as training is provided. Surfing, rowing, sailing, sub-aqua diving, canoeing, snorkelling or windsurfing – if you love watersports, Ireland is your perfect destination.

For navigation advice and watersports information contact:

#### ALL ISLAND

**Waterways Ireland**

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

#### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**Inland Waterways Association of Ireland**

Tel: 028 3832 5329; [www.iwai.ie](http://www.iwai.ie)

#### NORTHERN IRELAND

**Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**

Tel: 028 9025 8825; [www.dcalni.gov.uk](http://www.dcalni.gov.uk)

**Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland**

Tel: 028 9030 3930; [www.outdoorrecreationni.com](http://www.outdoorrecreationni.com)

**Sport Northern Ireland**

Tel: 028 9038 1222; [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

### CYCLING

A number of companies provide guided and self-guided cycling tours and you can hire bicycles throughout Ireland.

For more information visit [www.ireland.com/cycling](http://www.ireland.com/cycling)

### GAELIC GAMES

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

For further information contact:

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

### RUGBY

All four provinces of Ireland have strong rugby teams and the national side, composed of players from each province,

is one of the best in the world.

For further information contact:

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

### FOOTBALL

Football is hugely popular throughout the island.

For further information contact:

#### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**Football Association of Ireland**

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

#### NORTHERN IRELAND

**Irish Football Association**

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

### GENEALOGY

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

#### ALL ISLAND

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

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

#### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**Genealogical Office (National Library of Ireland)**

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

**General Register Office**

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

**National Archives Ireland**

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

#### NORTHERN IRELAND

**The Public Record Office Northern Ireland**

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

**General Register Office Northern Ireland**

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

### GOLF

With over 400 courses around the island of Ireland, including over 30% of the world's natural links courses and championship parkland courses, Ireland is now one of the world's leading golf destinations. Playing here is an unforgettable experience.

For more information visit [www.ireland.com/golfing](http://www.ireland.com/golfing)

### HORSE RIDING & HORSE RACING

Ireland is a beautiful country to explore on horseback and you'll find a large network of equestrian centres. For more information visit [www.ireland.com/equestrian](http://www.ireland.com/equestrian) or Equestrian Holidays Ireland at [www.ehi.ie](http://www.ehi.ie). Horse racing is a passion in Ireland and several of the world's most exciting and atmospheric race courses are here, from Punchestown and the Curragh in County Kildare to Down Royal in County Down, and Leopardstown and Fairyhouse courses. There are also a number of fabulous horse racing festivals, including those at Galway and Downpatrick. That's not forgetting the unique Laytown Strand Races in County Meath; the event run on a long stretch of golden sand under the rules of racing is the only one of its kind in Europe. For further information and a full list of events, contact **Horse Racing Ireland**.

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

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

### TOURISM ORGANISATIONS

#### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**Aran Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 99 61263

**Cork Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 21 425 5100

**Dingle Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 66 9151188

**Donegal Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 74 972 1148

**Dublin Airport Tourist Office (Terminal 1)**

Tel: +353 1850 230 330

**Dublin Airport Tourist Office (Terminal 2)**

Tel: +353 1850 230 330

**Dublin O'Connell Street Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 1850 230 330

**Dublin Suffolk Street Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 1850 230 330

**Ennis Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 65 682 8366

**Galway Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 91 537 700

**Kilkenny Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 56 775 1500

**Killarney Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 64 663 1633

**Kinsale Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 21 477 2234

**Letterkenny Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 74 912 1160

**Limerick Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 61 317 522

**Mullingar Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 44 934 8650

**Sligo Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 71 916 1201

**Tralee Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 66 712 1288

**Waterford Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 51 875 823

**Westport Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 98 25711

**Wexford Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 53 912 3111

**Wicklow Tourist Office**

Tel: +353 (0) 404 69117

#### NORTHERN IRELAND

**Visit Belfast**

Tel: 028 9024 6609

[visit-belfast.com](http://visit-belfast.com)

**Visit Derry**

Tel: 028 7126 7284

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

**Fermanagh Lakelands Tourism**

Tel: 028 6632 3110

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



## WHERE TO STAY

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

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

Situated in lovely surroundings, Ireland's elegant country houses offer a truly unique place to stay often with access to a variety of pursuits, from angling to country cooking courses. Book in advance if possible. Inexpensive and comfortable, Ireland's large network of hostels give budget travellers great independence. Facilities vary so check in advance.

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

### HOTELS & GUESTHOUSES

**Irelandhotels.com**

Tel: +353 (0) 1 293 9170; [irelandhotels.com](http://irelandhotels.com)

**Northern Ireland Hotels Federation**

Tel: 028 9077 6635; [nihf.co.uk](http://nihf.co.uk)

**Manor House Hotels and Irish Country Hotels**

Tel: +353 (0) 1 295 8900; [manorhousehotels.com](http://manorhousehotels.com);

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

**Ireland's Blue Book**

Tel: +353 (0) 1 676 9914; [irelands-blue-book.ie](http://irelands-blue-book.ie)

**Good Food Ireland**

Tel: +353 (0) 53 915 8693; [goodfoodireland.ie](http://goodfoodireland.ie)

### BED & BREAKFASTS

**B&B Ireland**

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

### COUNTRY HOUSES

**The Hidden Ireland Guide**

Tel: +353 (0) 1 662 7166; [hiddenireland.com](http://hiddenireland.com)

### CAMPING & CARAVANNING

**Irish Caravan and Camping Council**

[camping-ireland.ie](http://camping-ireland.ie)

**Camping Northern Ireland**

[discovernorthernireland.com/A-Guide-to-Camping-and-Caravan-Parks-A30](http://discovernorthernireland.com/A-Guide-to-Camping-and-Caravan-Parks-A30)

### HOSTELS

**An Óige – Irish Youth Hostel Association**

Tel: +353 (0) 1 830 4555; [anoige.ie](http://anoige.ie)

**Independent Holiday Hostels**

Tel: +353 (0) 1862 158 786; [hostels-ireland.com](http://hostels-ireland.com)

**Hostelling International Northern Ireland**

Tel: 028 903 24733; [hini.org.uk](http://hini.org.uk)

**Independent Hostels of Ireland**

Tel: +353 (0) 74 973 0130

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

### SELF-CATERING

#### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**Irish Self-Catering Federation**

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

#### NORTHERN IRELAND

**The Northern Ireland Self-Catering Holiday Association**

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



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

