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Publisher's Note

Welcome to our bumper summer issue of Go Wild Tourism & Go Ancient East combined, where we offer the best staycation options coast to coast, in two great magazines, for one single price

The Wild Atlantic Way and The Ancient East continue to draw us closer to the coast for weekends away, birthday getaways, celebrations or simply just a reason to escape and rediscover who we are.

With 'staycationing' being the new buzz word, we hope that you will enjoy our bumper summer issue and discover some new places for you and your family to make lifetime memories.

Don't forget to take some time to discover the amazing wealth of natural and built heritage, galleries, museums, curated collections, gardens, attractions and experiences that are located in every single county across Ireland. You will be warmly welcomed, and your custom will be appreciated.

Our Go Wild titles are all now on sale nationwide so thank you for joining our tribe!

Digitally, you can catch us on Pressreader.com, www.gowildmagazine.com. Issuu.com/gowildmagazine and Ireland.com (Tourism Ireland international website)



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Editor's Note

A summer to make lifelong memories

Some of my favourite childhood memories involve summertime staycation trips to the seaside. Having grown up close to some of the most beautiful beaches along Waterford's Copper Coast, these holidays were as much about the journey to get somewhere new as it was the ocean views.

Blissful weeks in Cork staying in Trabolgan, popping over the Fota Wildlife Park before visiting the attractions on offer in Cobh and Midleton turned into carefree teenage summers in Co. Clare's Miltown Malbay for the annual Willie Clancy Festival.

My more talented and musically inclined siblings enjoyed the classes, while I was free to wander barefoot along a golden sandy beach before heading for town's market stalls to pick up a tie-dye sarong or silver toe ring. Yes, there are always those special holiday memories that stay with you no matter how many years go by.

This past pandemic year has tested us like no other in recent times, it's changed the way we think, live and travel. For a time, even, everything just stopped. And yet, despite all it has set limits on and stolen from so many, it has not been able to take away our desire for adventure, our wandering spirit.

This summer, Ireland will do what it does best by sharing its spectacular landscape and stunning coastline with us. In this special Coast-to-Coast Go Wild edition, we journey page to page from the Wild Atlantic Way to the Ancient East, sampling all that lies in between.

We hope you enjoy our selection of people, places and possibilities to guide you on your next staycation.

Enjoy your memory-making adventure!

Siobhán Breathnach
Editor, Go Wild



For all the latest news, visit www.gowildmagazine.com - your official guide to the Wild Atlantic Way and Ancient East

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Drive on to Dingle

The Dingle Peninsula, in Co. Kerry, is one of the country's most stunning routes. Sleah Head Drive will take you on a journey through landmarks, historic Beehive huts, Irish-speaking villages, The Dingle Famine cottage and Coumenole Beach. Take your time and enjoy the drive over a few hours or even days so you can take advantage of

the many detours and stops along the way. On the route, you'll discover dramatic views of Peig Sayers' Blasket Islands and the Skellig Islands on the southwestern horizon. This circular driving route forms part of the Wild Atlantic Way, beginning and ending in Dingle.
Photography: Gareth McCormack/Fáilte Ireland



A day in the life of ... Sue Uda



The driving force behind A Touch of Ireland

Born in Cork, Sue Uda graduated from UCD with an arts degree – she didn't want to be a teacher, which was the female option in those days, so she headed for London and got a job working in the Grand Metropolitan hotel chain – a move which introduced her to the world of travel. Six years later she moved to the tour operator side of the business, working for an Italian company operating package holidays from Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria and Portugal, to the UK. She later took on a role running a very high-end company selling stays and visits to private stately homes and castles around the UK before deciding the time had come to move back to Ireland and set up her own company.

How does your normal day begin?

It's very boring really, a cup of tea, open new emails and decide priorities for the day. Then head down and get it done!

What are your biggest daily challenges?

At the moment surviving! But in the normal course of business the challenge is managing the ebb and flow of requests, events and staffing.



What do you love most about your job?

I love the variety, never knowing what is coming next, dealing with people of different nationalities, speaking different languages and laughing with my team. The amazing places and experiences I have seen all over the world.

What do you do to relax?

Gardening, sewing, knitting and painting - very simple things that are calm, creative, hopefully with beautiful results.

Favourite staycation destination in Ireland?

West Cork – a lovely house belonging to friends on Reen Pier near Union Hall. It has it all - scenery, good food, water activities, good pubs, tranquillity!

Favourite holiday destination worldwide?

Su Gologone near Nuoro in the centre of Sardinia – a charming hotel which has grown from an amazing restaurant – filled with local art, colourful, relaxing and the most amazing scenery as well as great food.

Favourite Business motto?

Never ask your staff to do something you wouldn't do yourself. Stretch your staff – 99 per cent of the time they will surprise you and rise to the challenge with great ideas.

Advice for young business entrepreneurs?

Work hard. Nothing comes easy, trust your gut and be prepared to make mistakes, don't take yourself too seriously and laugh a lot. You spend the majority of your day in work so it must be fun.

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STREET LIFE REIMAGINED

Building up an appetite for Eat on the Street in Cork



One of the better things to come out of the pandemic has been the emergence of European-like café culture spilling out onto Irish streets.

And Cork has embraced this new approach to streetscaping to the full.

Billed as a one-stop shop for food, retail and fun, the city's Princes Street has had an al fresco makeover to transform it into an outdoor destination that will leave food lovers begging for more.

Better known as Eat on the Street, the initiative is the perfect pairing of clever city planning and design coupled with the creative culinary offerings of the area's bars, restaurants, and takeaways.

Princes Street has always been a foodie haven – serving as the entrance to the drool-inducing English Market and home to venues like Quinlan's Seafood Bar, Clancy's Bar, Kings Cork, Burnt Pizza, Nash 19, and Ristorante Rossini to name but a few.

So forget about needing to travel to France, Italy or Spain for those picture-perfect plazas, Cork's umbrella-covered pedestrianised street brings a continental vibe worthy of any European city. From wine bars to cafés, this new look style of

eating and socialising is all part of council plans to create a more pleasant, safer, and greener city.

Princes Street is also home to several small independent stores like traditional craft shop J Joyce & Co and Cork Art Supplies, perfect for picking up supplies to keep those lockdown hobbies going. The new Princes Street dining experience is part of a wider pedestrianisation push called the 'Reimagining Cork' programme to help with social distancing and outdoor eating.

"The Cork City spirit is nothing if not resilient," former Lord Mayor of Cork Cllr. Joe Kavanagh said last year. "Just over a century ago it faced down the devastation of the Burning of Cork and now we find ourselves again ready to rise from the ashes of Covid-19, with new and innovative ways of living, working and doing business."

Pandemic proofing has spread outside the city too.

Last year, outdoor canopies were put up in Macroom and Millstreet to encourage locals and visitors to take time to enjoy all the Cork towns have to offer.

A mural depicting Millstreet town in the late 19th century was also completed on Main Street by artists Cormac Sheil and Denis Reardon.

Bon appetit or maybe that should now be sláinte!



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Cork is Ireland largest county and sits on the hinde of both The Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East.

Cork will welcome visitors back to our City, Towns & Villages in a safe & meaningful manner in 2021. Our tourism businesses and partners have made every effort to ensure safety is of the utmost importance. Visit www.purecork.ie.

The land, the people and their culture will allow you to discover quirky ways to stimulate your senses.

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Summer Longing

Queen of traditional music, Sharon Shannon, shares childhood memories and what's coming next, with Siobhán Breatnach

There was usually blue murder in the back seat playing a game called turns and squashing each other against the side of the car. Daddy used to put down the boot and try to get the old Volkswagen Beetle up to 90-miles per hour, with the four of us shouting excitedly, roaring and squealing, with the excitement of the speed, shouting 'up to ninety, up to ninety Daddy'.

Summer brings back joyous childhood memories for Sharon Shannon - carefree days on the farm and holidays to the beach. "I hated school, so I lived for the summer holidays. We had a fantastic idyllic childhood," she says. "We had great freedom on my parents' farm, running through meadows and climbing trees, playing with neighbours' kids and training the family pets to do tricks. Surrounded by nature and animals - dogs, cats, goats, cattle and sheep - Shannon's true love is horses. "My father used to breed Connemara ponies and we trained them to jump," she says. "My younger sister Mary and I did a lot of competitive show jumping as teenagers. It was a big obsession. We were lucky that it was also a huge passion for our father IJ, so he gladly nurtured our love of the ponies and horses. We often had pet lambs and calves," she adds. "I loved the farm animals equally as much as I loved the cats, dogs and horses."

"My father had lots of old-fashioned farm equipment. I remember him using the plough with a horse to plough a field to sow spuds and a hay-turner to turn the hay. He still has that hay-turner at the old family farm. I remember well the pains we all had in our backs from sewing spuds," she says. "They had to be planted a foot apart. My father would give each of us a 12-inch-long stick for measuring."

Carnival day in Corofin, with its bumpers, swinging boats and candy floss was always met with great enthusiasm and excitement. As was the annual summer trip around the windy roads of the Burren, Doolin,

Black Head and Gregans Castle in Ballyvaughan. "We had many trips to the beautiful beach town of Lahinch on what seemed like the only stretch of good road in the whole of Co. Clare," she says. Not much has changed these days, though she now lives in Galway. "At the moment, I'm loving being at home with the animals," she says. "Lots of walking and swimming with the dogs and some jumps off the top diving board in Salthill, with my two sisters Mary and Majella. I visit my father down in Clare every chance I get. He's 93 now and he's doing great."

'I'm loving being at home with the animals. Lots of walking and swimming with the dogs and some jumps off the top diving board in Salthill'

As one of the finest traditional musicians to come out of Ireland, the pandemic called a halt to touring in 2020. "I miss meeting the lovely people that come to my shows and having the chance to go to fantastic places all over the world but at the same time, I'm very much a home person and I love being in Salthill. With all this time at home, I'm getting way more inspiration for writing new music. I just finished a week of filming a TV show called 'Heartlands on the River Shannon', which will be airing later in the summer," she adds. "We had a fabulous time on the river and it's something that I'd love to do again. A great friend of mine has a cruiser boat, so it's on the cards big time."

When she's not performing, Shannon says there's no shortage of amazing sessions to enjoy across the country year-round. "The places that I love to go are Doolin, Kinvara and Galway City, Valerie's in Aughrim, mainly because

they're the handiest for me, location-wise. At the moment I'm listening to superb fiddlers Claire Egan, Bríd Harper and Dónal McCague and box players Conor Conolly, Dermot Byrne and Josephine Marsh."

Though very much a home bird, one of her favourite holidays was a three-week break in Thailand with her band and manager. "Thanks to an extremely generous friend, we had the use of a house for free on a beach in Phuket. It was a gap in the middle of a tour of Australia and Japan and it was cheaper for us to stay that side of the world than come home for the three weeks. We travelled out to beautiful Islands every day on the colourful long-tail boats. It was my first time spending Christmas Day on the beach. The whole thing was an incredible experience and I'd love to do it again sometime."

In a post lockdown world, Shannon hopes to return to playing live gigs around Ireland and European festivals. "And hopefully Australia and New Zealand at some stage," she says. "I'm hoping to record. Every so often I get a fit of writing tunes. It could last a few weeks and as a result, I have loads of new tunes that I'm very happy with. I'm playing loads of guitar and hoping to record a new version of 'The Beast from the East' from my 2020 album, 'The Reckoning', with the guitar playing the lead melody instead of the accordion. "We already have a fantastic new backing track for it with an orchestral arrangement by composer and arranger Brian Byrne in Los Angeles."

A few gigs have started to trickle in but in the meantime, she's hoping for another one of those glorious carefree summers. Is there a soundtrack she'd choose to go with it? A song that best encapsulates summer in Ireland? "There are several," she says. "Off the top of my head, I think of 'Song for Ireland' by Phil and June Colclough and 'Ireland for the Summer' by Pádraig Stephens."

Sounds good to us. Play on.

OUT OF THIS WORLD

THREE BEACHES YOU WON'T BELIEVE ARE IN IRELAND

GLASSILAUN BEACH, CO. GALWAY

Golden sand and turquoise waters are usually synonymous with holiday heaven. And this striking white sandy beach delivers clear water and a stretching shoreline. Located between Tully and Killary Bay, stop by for a swim, snorkel or a stroll. Leenane coastal views at their best.

Photography: Gareth McCormack



SILVER STRAND, CO. DONEGAL

This spectacular horseshoe beach at Malin Beg near Glencolmcille will make you feel like you're closer to the Caribbean than Co. Donegal. Tag it on to a trip when visiting the nearby Slieve League. Incredible views all around.

Photography: Peter Maguire

FANORE BEACH, CO. CLARE

One of the most natural beaches along the Wild Atlantic Way, Fanore is a popular spot for surfers. Backed by beautiful dunes, it's home to some unique flora and fauna. It's also believed to have been a habitat for ancient humans in the Stone Age - clearly proving the test of time.

Photography: AirSwing Media/Clare County Council



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Clare Tourism Strategy

2030

*Guiding our Journey
to a Vibrant New Future*

County Clare Tourism Strategy 2030

In early 2019 Clare County Council embarked on the development of an “evidence based, forward looking, innovative tourism strategy, which ... (would) set the direction for tourism product development, marketing / promotion and public and private investment over the next ten years”.

Main Briefing

At the outset of the planning process, led by Clare County Council, facilitated by TEAM Tourism Consulting and partnered with Fáilte Ireland and Shannon Group, there was recognition that the spectrum of development across the county and the level of benefits being derived from tourism varied significantly. The onset of the pandemic, before completion of the process, only accentuated the importance of ensuring that the ten-year strategy having real potential to drive change and sustainable tourism growth in order to spread the benefits of Tourism across all communities of the County.

Overview of the Strategy: Vision 2030

CLARE is a globally renowned sustainable and vibrant destination, recognised for its compelling array of adventure activities and its remarkable experiences portraying our rich culture-scape of age-old spirituality, power and influence; our contemporary vitality arising from our deep-rooted traditions in music, sport and innovation; our dynamic rural towns and villages where our hospitality excels

– all set within our stunning backdrop of unique and varied living landscapes.

Tourism is a core sector of County Clare’s economy. In assessing the natural and cultural assets (as can be demonstrated on www.clare.ie/share) of County Clare, it became apparent that the county had a diversity of landscapes, a depth of history, and an independence of spirit that is difficult to find anywhere else in Europe. Areas such as the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, the Wild Atlantic Way, the inland waterways of Lough Derg and Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands as well as the Shannon estuarine waters, combined with the trail networks, the wide array of cultural legacies of past eras, the contemporary arts, traditional music and local foods, and the inherent sense of well-being – together form a strong resource base for tourism. The strategic assessment undertaken for the process clearly demonstrated that the many communities of Clare are proud of what they have to offer and are focused on maintaining the integrity of everything that makes Clare a special place to visit.

Key to building a stronger and more dynamic destination, is the development of a narrative that encapsulates what Clare has to offer and simplifies the messaging in the minds of the visitor, the trade and industry. A creative framework was developed around the ‘promise’ – DISCOVER CLARE – FEEL VIBRANT - in a land that pulsates with the “heartbeat of ancient stones”. Four experiential themes highlight areas that particularly align destination strengths with market trends, and offer the most potential for development – namely:

- Experience our HOLISTIC LANDSCAPES
- Explore our HIGH TOWERS AND HIGH POWERS
- Pursue our ADVENTURE AND FAMILY FUN
- Celebrate our CREATIVE VITALITY

Launch of the Strategy to include the Integration of all Key Stakeholders

A new Tourism Advisory Forum has been convened by Clare County Council and Fáilte Ireland in order to stimulate dialogue, strengthen links between stakeholder groups and provide advice to Clare County Council on issues and opportunities relating to tourism in Clare. The Clare Tourism Advisory Forum is Chaired and Vice Chaired by the local Tourism Industry.

The Clare Tourism Advisory Forum began its work on implementing the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030, by their rounded approach to the online launch of the Strategy, through presenting a unified message that profiles the entire county and brings our narrative to life. This is one of the first of its kind in terms of a long-term Tourism Strategy to be launched with full consideration given to the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The message of the Clare Tourism Advisory Forum builds a sense of cohesion and common understanding within the tourism community that has been established through scheduled and actively participated Meetings, ultimately bringing the context within the Strategy to Action.

Footnote - the above is an excerpt of a paper written for the LGIU on the same topic, which will be published week commencing 21st June 2021.

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You can't stop the beat – the year dance went viral



While theatres, performance spaces and pubs might have been closed during the pandemic, it didn't mean the party had to stop.

Irish music and dance have been stepping out on hip, new digital journeys, with young people around the globe, thanks to the power of social media.

Riverdance, the incredible seven-minute 1994 Eurovision Song Contest interval act, catapulted Irish dancing onto the world stage. It changed the face of Irish dance forever and now a new crop of young people are juxtaposing traditional poses and intricate footwork with the pop hits of the moment - and it's all going viral online.

Last year Morgan Bullock from Richmond, Virginia, was one of the first to demonstrate just how thrilling Irish dance moves can be, when matched up with mainstream music. The 21-year-old American captured a wave of international attention after her dance routine to the Savage remix by Megan Thee Stallion (feat. Beyoncé) went viral on TikTok.

TikTok has also made stars out of a group of seven lads from the west of Ireland, who have had incomparable success with their take on viral dance trends.

Cairde, which means 'friends' in Irish, have been rivals in dance competitions since they were kids. The group fuses jazz dancing, tap and even hip hop with Irish dancing to take the traditional genre to a whole new level.

They started uploading videos to TikTok during the pandemic for a laugh, soon becoming viral sensations and garnering tens of millions views and an army of followers along the way. The group's boy-band charm was on display throughout their

performance of Bad Guy by Billie Eilish, which took place at the famous Cliffs of Moher on St. Patrick's Day this year – it was even beamed live into the UK talk show This Morning, as well as Good Morning America.

Now Cairde are planning for a world tour in 2022 and with other projects in the pipeline and their global popularity on the rise, the future is bright for this group of friends and college students.

Other Irish dancers repurposing traditional steps to fit modern beats and songs are the Gardiner brothers, Michael and Matthew. US-born but now living in Galway, they created Irish dancing history in 2015 by winning their respective world titles as brothers in the same year in Montreal.

While the digital space has been a boon for sharing Irish dancing during the pandemic, you can't beat seeing some live-action once indoor venues and arts centres fully reopen again.

One of the best places is Ireland's National Folk Theatre, Siamsa Tíre in Tralee, Co. Kerry. It recently launched a series of on-demand and live dancing workshops to share the captivating Munnix style of dancing, which has survived since the 1700s.





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GRAND TOUR

Bunratty guide Anya Hertel shares her unique view of an iconic landmark



When Anja Hertel first came to Ireland almost 16 years ago, she saw an advert looking for a German tour guide at Bunratty Castle.

She applied and the rest, as they say, is history. So too, is the focus of the job she has proudly undertaken, at one of the country's most iconic landmarks. "I studied English and I used to be an accountant, believe it or not, but I loved history, even as a child so when I was taken to castles that would make my day," the official Bunratty Castle tour guide says. "I'm originally from Germany and I came to Ireland about 15 and a half years ago and this was the first job I landed. "They were looking for a German tour guide and everything's just worked out. I've stayed all these years. I found the right place to be."

Over the years, Anja's knowledge has at times been put to the test but her expertise and passion for the task at hand is evident - right down to the last details, including the Medieval costume she wears while showing visitors around.

One of a team of eight tour guides, though through the pandemic that has been temporarily reduced to four, Anya is delighted to be back interacting with guests. "It's good to be open and people are enjoying being out and about," she says.

"People are exploring their heritage and country, it's very interesting how things have changed over the year. There's no day the same, every day is different."

She doesn't miss a beat when asked to share a little of her knowledge about Bunratty. "The thing about castles is that they were built for defence and the first thing our visitors learn as they enter the castle is how this defence was organised; the draw bridge, the trap door and everything that was done to keep the attackers out," she says. "People are always amazed to find out how well it worked. Our castle was never taken during an attack. The castle itself took 25 years to complete and with life expectancy so low you would be lucky to see the castle completed in your lifetime. Nowadays you build a house in a few days," she jokes.

And those visiting are in good company, she adds, with former First Lady of the United States Jackie Kennedy among the castle's visitor alumni. When she's not in tour guide mode, Anya is a fan of touring her adopted country. "Usually we go to the Burren, down to Doolin, Lahinch, it's a lovely drive around," she says. "Then there's the Giant's Causeway, Donegal is lovely."

Though Ireland's castles are hard to beat. "In Dublin, you can do loads, the GPO, Malahide Castle is very interesting. Nearby we have

Craggaunowen - a prehistoric site with Crannógs. In Limerick you have St. John's Castle, there are loads to do," she adds. "There is so many castles on the island and then you have the beautiful landscape and coastline."

History and mystery

"I have no hesitation in asserting that Bunratty is the most beautiful spot I have ever seen. Nothing like its ponds and parks and its three thousand head of deer."

The year was 1646 and the 6th Earl of Thomond was in residence when Cardinal Rinnuccini, the Pope's Nuncio, wrote in praise of Bunratty Castle. Centuries on and it remains one of the most complete, authentic and furnished castles in Ireland. The Great Hall is brimming with features and furnishings including the ancient fertility symbol 'Sheela na Gig' and walls adorned with fine tapestries of French and Flemish origin. From the top of the castle towers there are views across the Shannon Estuary, Cratloe Hills and towers and spires of Limerick City.

In Bunratty Folk Park, you'll also find Irish wolfhounds, red deer, Connemara ponies, pigs, goats and more. The interactive Fairy Trail is the perfect way to spend an afternoon wandering through woodland trails.

Mr. O'Regan's Café, named after the late Dr Brendan O'Regan who was deeply involved in the early development of Bunratty Castle and Folk Park, offers a place to catch up.

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When the Falls Hotel & Spa in County Clare reopens later this year, guests will leave no carbon footprint once they step foot on hotel grounds - thanks to a series of waste reduction and innovative energy initiatives on the property.

The 140 bedroomed hotel, which is located in the scenic Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, was awarded the carbon neutral status by Green Hospitality Ireland for eliminating its carbon output over a 5-year period.

One of the most significant measures taken by the hotel was the installation of a €1.3m hydroelectric turbine on the nearby River Inagh, which generates enough electricity to power the hotel. Other projects included switching to renewable electricity and Bio LPG gas, using water from the hotel's own well and planting 350 native Irish trees on the hotel grounds.

A green team was also set up to encourage staff to become fully involved in all of the hotel's sustainability initiatives. These include using chemical-free cleaning products, compostable cups and straws and cutting back on food waste.

Being based in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark and a member of the Burren Ecotourism Network, the McCarthy family were conscious of trying to reduce their

environmental impact on the area around them. The move to renewable energy was also driven by demand from guests, locals and staff.

Michael McCarthy, General Manager, Falls Hotel, said "We are delighted to receive this recognition, especially given the huge investment we have made with our hydroelectric plant. We are extremely proud of this award. With 140 bedrooms, a leisure centre and a spa complex, we went from having a large carbon footprint to being carbon neutral in five short years; it's a massive achievement."

"Being based in an area of such natural beauty, as the Burren, we felt compelled to do our best to minimise our impact on the area around us. Utilizing the power of the river alongside us seemed the best place to start our sustainability journey."

The idea of harnessing energy from the nearby river Inagh is not new. In the 1960's, the hotel's previous owners Bridget and John F Woods, recognised the potential of the cascades to generate electricity for the then 20-bedroom hotel. The couple had installed a 30-kWH hydroelectric plant on the site, which was then upgraded by the McCarthy family into the current 220 kWH hydroelectric turbine. By 2020, a year after it was completed, the property had reduced its energy consumption by 830,000 kWh of electricity. This counteracts the emission of an estimated 550 tonnes of

carbon and is the equivalent of offsetting three return trips, by car, to the moon.

The 220kw turbine, which is located next to the Inagh River, provides up to 70% of the hotel's annual energy needs. In winter this can reach 100%, when the river is in full flow. During drier spells, the hotel tops its energy from renewable electricity sources. Any excess electricity will be sold back to the national grid and there are plans to install a battery unit, which can store electricity, which can be used by the hotel later.

Sustainability not only guides the management of all operations at the hotel but is at the heart of the guest experience. All guests are encouraged to play their part, whether it's reusing towels, using less water, turning off lights and heat or dividing their rubbish into separate bins in their rooms. It's all part of a concerted effort to educate visitors on the importance of sustainability.

The story of the hotel's journey to sustainability will be told on storyboards located around the hotel and next to the hydro-electric pump house beside the river. More trees will be planted annually and guests will be encouraged to offset their own carbon footprint by adopting a tree.

"It is our responsibility to take direct action to minimise our environmental footprint and we have additional plans to further reduce our absolute consumption and drive even greater levels of sustainability within the hotel" Mr McCarthy added.



The Falls Hotel Ennistymon. Michael McCarthy, General Manager and John McCarthy, Deputy Manager with Isabella, Sofia and Daniel McCarthy. Pic Arthur Ellis.



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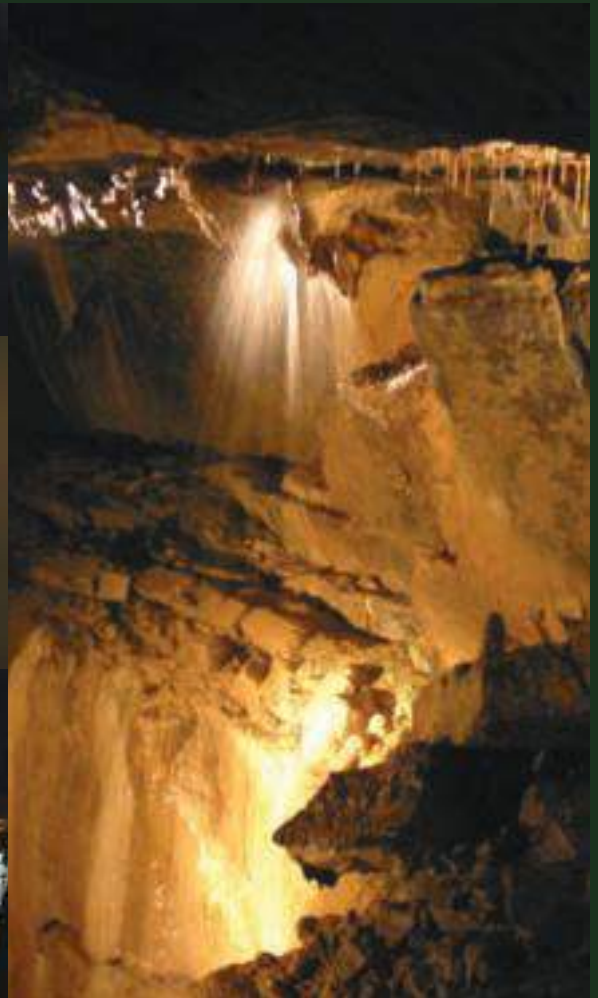
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The joy of PAUDCAST

With a little help from dad Brian, 11-year-old Pádraig O'Callaghan launched his positivity video series 'Paudcast' at the start of lockdown. Its joyful content, cheeky style, and lovable presenter has since won hearts around the world. Siobhán Breatnach meets the dynamic duo behind the internet hit that's challenging people's perception of disability.

What was the inspiration for Paudcast?

Brian: Initially the videos were a way of keeping Pádraig entertained during the first lockdown last year. Pádraig's first videos were product promotional videos for my business EcoStraws. ie. The response to these review videos was phenomenal but I felt the need to move away from the salesy type videos, for fear of incurring any criticism. We are very involved with Down Syndrome Limerick and also Special Olympics Ireland, and the fact that their positive mental health mantra is so prevalent encouraged us into doing a Monday Motivational piece, and so The Paudcast was born.

Why do you think the series has struck such a chord with people?

Brian: His videos have always received an amazing reaction, albeit family and friends initially. In the past six months however, the reach and the reaction has grown



exponentially. It sounds like an old cliché but we have received comments and messages of support from literally around the world, from New Zealand and Australia across to America and Canada. The generosity of people never ceases to amaze me and if anything, it reiterates the need for some positivity. People are crying out for something positive that they can relate to and identify with. If people can take some joy, or motivation, and determination to give it one last push to overcome this pandemic, then it can only be a good thing and

we are delighted to be able to help.

What's been the best thing about Paudcast?

Pádraig: Well, I love making people happy, and keeping them motivated. And I love reading all the nice comments people write on my social media pages, it is very kind of people. I love spending time with my Dad too, we have lots of fun recording the videos and I get to do some really cool stuff. I got to go in an ambulance and drive a train, and I also address the Special Olympics World Forum, chaired by



Continued on page 24 >>

Bridging the best of Ireland's West

WILD ATLANTIC WAY
SLÍ AN ATLANTAIGH FHIÁIN



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Tim Shriver. He is JFK's nephew and his mum founded the Special Olympics. Oh, and I won Limerick Person of the Month last month.

What makes Limerick such a great place to visit?

Brian: All stakeholders in Limerick, led by Limerick City & County Council, have done remarkably well in reestablishing Limerick as a gateway city to the Wild Atlantic Way. It is the sporting capital of Ireland and now boasts two amazing universities. The city has so much going for it, the history, the culture, the industry, the hospitality, the sport, the education but most importantly, the warm welcoming people. Geographically speaking, Limerick is perfect. It is one of the most prosperous cities in Europe and one we can justifiably be proud of.

Where are your favourite places to travel in Ireland as a family?

Brian: We love to head off along the Wild Atlantic Way when we can. The scenery and tranquillity is just mesmerising, from the hills



of Kerry to my favourite beach in the world – Keem Strand on Achill Island. Unfortunately, Pádraig doesn't share that idealistic notion with me and much prefers to be active at Dublin Zoo or Fota Resort or the Model Train Museum.

Pádraig: Ya, driving all day is boring, I love to stop and get ice cream. There's an ice-cream shop called Spoonies, in Lahinch, which I love.

Where are the best staycation spots for children and young people?

Brian: We are spoilt for choice here in Limerick just now with the amazing hospitality offering available. It's funny, when travel was restricted, we were nearly forced into rediscovering what was available on our doorstep, and Limerick has so much to offer. Accommodation-wise, I challenge anybody to come up with a more suitable staycation spot than Woodland's House Hotel in Adare. It has everything – Mary's Organic Garden, the Pet Farm, the Fairy Trail, the two-kilometre walk, the amazing

pool and spa facilities, the gym, and now after recent investment, the new Treehouse offering.

What's next for Pádraig and Paudcast?

Brian: Some agents have been in touch with different commercial offers, but I fear that will take the fun out of it, so we have graciously turned them down thus far. I always said, as long as Pádraig enjoyed making the Paudcast, then it didn't matter how many viewers it received, I would facilitate it. To date, it has been an amazing adventure, and he is loving every minute of it. As long as he is happy to, I would like to continue spreading the overriding message of inclusion and challenging people's perception of disability.

Pádraig: We would love to continue inspiring people with messages of hope and encouragement, and help as many causes and charities as we can along the way.

Follow Pádraig on all social media channels and website at Paudcast.ie



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SOCIAL LEASE OF LIFE

Celia Holman Lee tells Siobhán Breatnach how lockdown has inspired her and her home city of Limerick

“Sometimes it’s the worst ill wind in the world that can blow some good,” says Celia Holman Lee. The fashion entrepreneur, TV presenter and model spent lockdown in her beloved home city of Limerick.

Despite the obvious commercial fallout from the pandemic - ‘business went over a cliff but the family is happy and healthy’ - she has discovered a whole new lease of life through social media. Having turned 70 at Christmas, Holman Lee became a mega-hit on Instagram last March after posting an impromptu posture tips video.

Viewed more than 50,000 times, it’s sparked a fresh creative outlet for the grandmother-of-five. “I’m nearly 50 years in this industry and there’s never been a spring, summer, autumn or fall that I haven’t put my foot on the ramp, or my agency hasn’t put its foot on a ramp,” she says. “I started using Facebook and Instagram and doing some work on those. It has helped me mentally to keep going, to communicate with people, even if it’s a different way to how my generation would be used to.

“I only got into social media at the beginning of Covid. It happened by accident. I was always on it promoting the fashion show but not too much about myself ever,” she adds. “I just decided one day, everybody was on doing something - cutting hair, doing make-up, talking about different things, health, exercise - so I said right, I’m going out to the back garden and I’m going to do a bit of deportment.”

Ger Lee, her partner in life and now in social media, was quick to step into Instagram husband mode and after a few technical false starts, filming soon got down to a tee for Celia’s 47,000 followers eager to see the latest fashion and beautifully posed staycation shots. “It went viral. Imagine being my age, I couldn’t believe it,” Holman Lee says. “It woke me up to the reach of social media. It’s been incredible. I get the odd kick in the backside at times, but I don’t blame them. People are entitled to their own opinions. I also get beautiful comments and that inspires me. I feel if I’m out there wearing cropped trousers and looking the best I possibly can, being as current as I can and they’re getting a little inspiration, then I’ll keep going. Covid gave me that.”

Holman Lee’s glamorous and classic style has seen her appear on countless best-dressed lists since she began modelling at the age of 15. Seven years later, at the age of just 22, she started the Holman Lee Agency, which is now



run by her daughter and daughter-in-law. The determination, tenacity and all-round sparkle that has led to her success today, has also been what has helped her shine during the pandemic. “I didn’t let Covid get to me, didn’t let it stop me,” she says. “I just said right this is a huge blip, it’s the whole world, besides my industry, it’s hundreds of industries - you’re not in this alone so get up and get out there and keep pushing in the way that makes your brain tick over.”

As for summer plans, Holman Lee says she’ll be doing a lot of day tripping. “I love down by King John’s Castle, that’s such a beautiful place. They’ve got a super restaurant,” she says. “Lahinch, Kilkee, Ballybunnion, up around the Burren, Fanore, you could not be in a more magnificent place.” “Covid has given us all outdoor dining and hopefully it’s here to stay,” she adds. “Maybe there’ll be a realisation that the city has to stay like that especially in the summer months. “If you go down and sit around by the Shannon River it’s just so beautiful, especially the sunsets. There are so many areas where you can sit out. The atmosphere in the city is incredible at the moment because everybody is outside. I hope that never goes.”

Once the pandemic starts to abate and restrictions recede, Holman Lee has plans for a roadshow tour. “Afternoon tea with Celia Holman Lee or something like that,” she laughs. “Talking about myself, lockdown, 50 years in the industry.” And if her recent social media success is anything to go by, you can bet her fans will be eager to follow.

FÁILTE IRELAND LAUNCHES LIMERICK WILD ATLANTIC WAY GATEWAY CITY STRATEGY

On Monday, 21st June, 2021, Fáilte Ireland launched a new strategy to develop Limerick as a compelling visitor destination and base for exploring the Wild Atlantic Way. Limerick has been designated as a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City, based on its geographical and cultural position in the West of Ireland and its close proximity to the Wild Atlantic Way. The 'Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy' builds on a number of development projects that will bring local experiences to life and leverages the opportunities the Wild Atlantic Way presents to sustainably increase the economic benefit of tourism to Limerick over the next five years.

The strategy has been two years in development between Fáilte Ireland and Limerick City and County Council in collaboration with industry partners across the county.

Speaking at the launch of the strategy, Paul Kelly, CEO of Fáilte Ireland, said:

"The 'Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy' provides a framework for tourism businesses and stakeholders to work in partnership over the next five years to create new and improve existing visitor experiences while maximising the city's role as a base to explore the Wild Atlantic Way. The strategy will be hugely important as we work towards recovery and will motivate both domestic and international tourists to visit Limerick. The implementation group, made up of representatives from the industry, was central to the development of the strategy and Fáilte Ireland will be working closely with the group over the coming months to progress the key development projects identified. I'm delighted to be in Limerick for the launch of the strategy and look forward to meeting tourism and hospitality businesses on the ground."

Mayor of Limerick City and County, Michael Collins, said:

"Limerick is a city of character, full of stories and heritage and has so much to offer visitors. Fáilte Ireland's new Wild Atlantic Way Gateway



City Strategy will help the city realise its potential to become an international urban tourism destination while maximising its proximity to the Wild Atlantic Way route. To mark Limerick's designation as a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City, Limerick City and County Council will be launching a new marketing campaign to promote Limerick's emerging status as one of Ireland's leading destinations for value, welcome and excitement."

Patricia Roberts, No. 1 Pery Square Hotel & Spa and Stephen O'Connor, The Limerick Strand Hotel, Co-Chairs of the Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy for Limerick Implementation Group, said:

"The designation of Limerick as a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City comes at an exciting time for Limerick tourism as businesses begin to open their doors again. The Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy for Limerick gives us the platform to leverage the opportunities the Wild Atlantic Way presents, while also encouraging our visitors to experience and explore all that Limerick has to offer."

Things to Do in Mayo



Croagh Patrick

Croagh Patrick is a well-known mountain and an important site of pilgrimage in Co. Mayo. You can find it 8km from Westport, above the villages of Murrisk and Lecanvey. It is the third highest mountain in Co. Mayo after Mweelrea and Nephin. If you visit, you may be joined by pilgrims who make the journey which Saint Patrick himself once did.

Achill Island

Achill Island is the largest island off the coast of Ireland and situated off the west coast. It has a small population of 2,700 and is attached to the mainland by Michael Davitt Bridge. Achill Island occupies an area of some 57sq miles but its actual coastline, including all the inlets and spars, measures over 80 miles. Two particular stretches of road have been designated as Achill's Atlantic Drive; a spectacular journey with breathtaking views, which can be completed in a vehicle, by bicycle or on foot.

Moynes Abbey

Moynes Abbey has to be one of most impressive ecclesiastical ruins in Mayo and is recognised as a national monument. It was built by the Burke family, consecrated in 1462 and is located north of Ballina on the west side of Killlala Bay. The friary was built in the late Irish Gothic style and has extensive ruins, consisting of a church and domestic buildings situated around a central cloister.

The Coffin Ship

This piece of art by John Behan is an impressive monument showing a ship full of skeletons, a symbol to remember all the people who died on the ships to America when they wanted to escape Ireland's potato famine in the 19th Century. The monument was unveiled in 1997 to mark the 150th anniversary of the famine.



Keel Beach

Keel Beach is a beautiful beach, one of Mayo's finest. It is quite popular with tourists and locals as a surfing location. If you are not into surfing, you can still enjoy the beautiful sand and excellent views.

Clew Bay

Want to see an amazing island formation without having to travel to the Caribbean? Then go to Clew Bay, a natural ocean bay, which contains Ireland's best example of sunken drumlins.

Downpatrick Head

Just a few miles north of Ballycastle village, is the windswept outcrop of Downpatrick Head. This is the perfect place to park up and stretch your legs with an invigorating coastal walk. The name Downpatrick is derived from a time when Saint Patrick himself founded a church here. You can still see the ruins of the church building, a stone cross and holy well today.



Keem Bay

Keem Bay is a heavenly secluded valley at the very western tip of Achill Island. It is extremely popular during warmer months when the strand is a magnet for beach-goers and those interested in scenic walks. This bay was formerly the site of a basking shark fishery and a British Army lookout post.

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Kelly's Kitchen is an award winning café in Newport town, near Westport, in the heart of the Great Western Greenway. Located at the top of the Main Street beside the family butcher shop; Kelly's of Newport.

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WHEEL INTO YOUR STAYCATION

Exploring Ireland on two wheels is fast becoming one of the best ways to see the island, thanks mainly to the creation of a wonderful network of greenways connecting some of the country's most scenic beauty spots.

From the Wild Atlantic Way to the Ancient East, cycling is all about the scenery, the joy and the experience. Here are three top cycle routes to try where the pedalling is pure pleasure.

THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY

Cycling the entire 2,500km Wild Atlantic Way would be an epic, though not impossible challenge for those who have the stamina. If the full route is too tall an order, you can decide which and how many of the six awe-inspiring zones, each with their character and signature discovery points, to take on. Ireland's western seaboard is just teeming with scenic vistas, culture, wild places, and miles and miles of stunning roads. So, it will be an amazing experience, even if you just fancy carving out a leisurely slice for yourself in places like the spectacular Great Western Greenway in Co. Mayo, or Valentia Island in Co. Kerry.



A DUBLIN CITY BIKE TOUR

Dublin Castle, the General Post Office, the city's cathedrals, College Green, Merrion Square, Parnell Square, the Grand Canal Dock and more - get a comprehensive handle on the Irish capital and all its charms from the saddle of a Dublin Bike, under your own steam. Or with the likes of Dublin City Bike Tours entertaining guides who will give you well-researched information on the history of the city and the characters, events and stories that shaped its character and culture. You can even choose an electric bike, cool, comfortable and eco-friendly, from Lazy Bike Tours.

THE WATERFORD GREENWAY

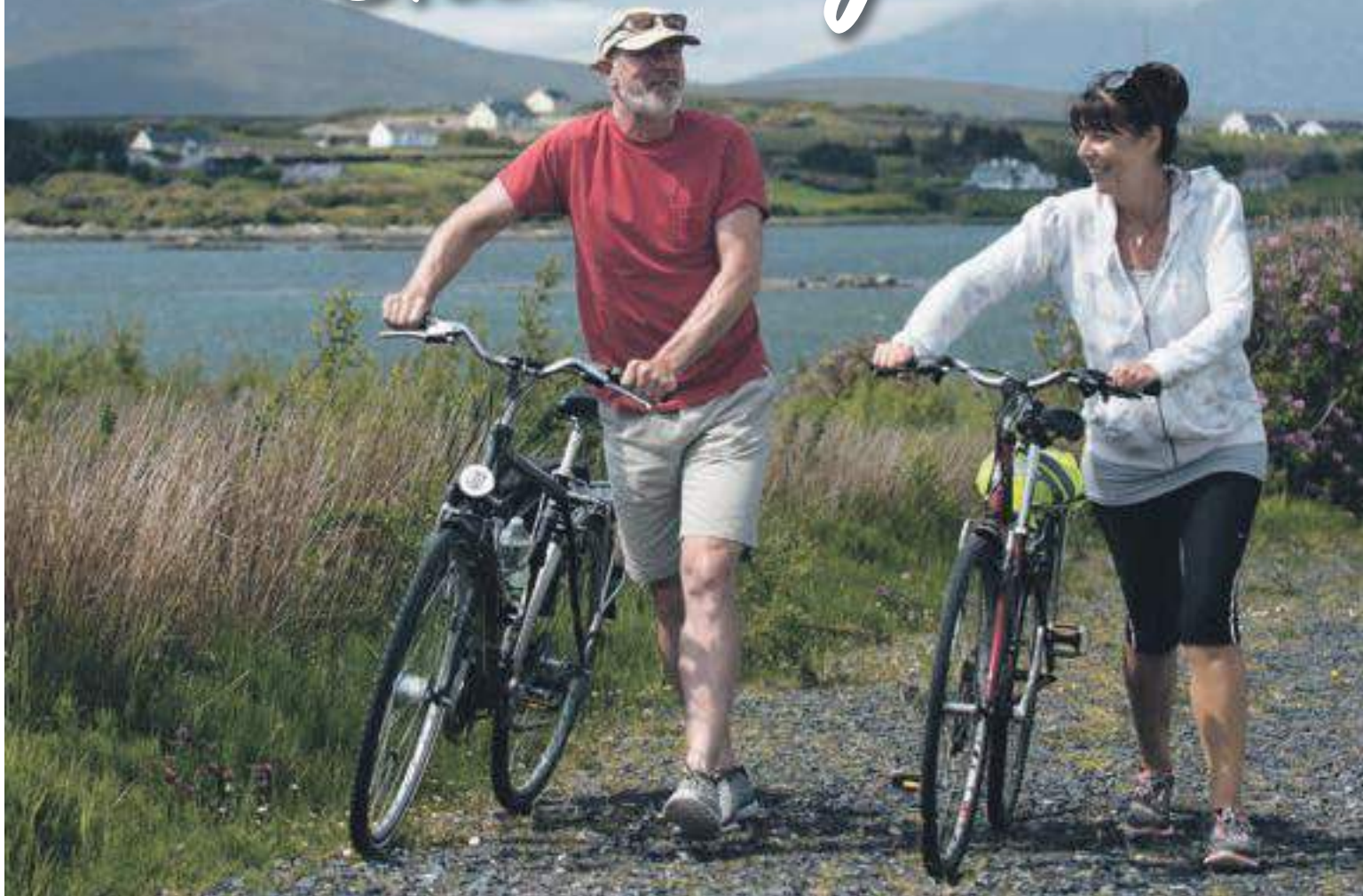
Ireland's longest greenway offers a relaxing ride through nature and history. This spectacular off-road cycling and walking trail meanders for 46km from river to sea along an old railway line in Ireland's Ancient East. Start at the riverside quays of Waterford, a city founded by the Vikings, then pedal to the vibrant seaside market town and historic port of Dungarvan. The area is rich in Irish heritage, and the route embraces 11 bridges, three tall viaducts, an atmospheric 400m tunnel, and some of the most beautiful scenery in the country.





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Mayo

Mayo really is the Ireland of your imagination, a beautiful and inspiring county. Located right at the heart of Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way, Mayo embraces the Atlantic Ocean with many of the county's unforgettable landmarks dotted along its coastline - Croagh Patrick, Clew Bay, Achill's majestic cliffs, the great lighthouses of Erris and the Ceide Coast. In addition, Mayo's Atlantic coastline is a playground for those with an adventurous spirit, offering all kinds of outdoor activities and attractions. The visitor offering is based on an impressive and pristine natural environment.



Here are a couple of our recommendations! **Explore Mayo's Greenway Network** – the Great Western Greenway from Westport to Achill, The Monasteries of the Moy cycleway from Ballina to Killala, Lough Lannagh, Castlebar to the National Museum of Ireland - County Life and Lough Lannagh to Rehins Wood. Bike hire is available along the entire Greenway Network. www.greenway.ie

Live like an islander on your next trip to Achill – Ireland's largest island. Embrace the fresh weather and uncover a truly raw landscape on the edge of Ireland. Find calm as you explore award-winning golden beaches and swim in the clear waters. Learn about our sea creatures at the Achill Experience aquarium. Taste seafood plucked from the ocean and mingle with friendly locals in traditional charming pubs. The remoteness and tranquillity of Achill is less than an hour's drive from Westport – getting away from it all has never been so near. www.achilltourism.com



Westport House - explore the gorgeous grounds and travel through 300 years of history in the Big House, on the site of Pirate Queen Grace O'Malley's home. www.westporthouse.ie
Walk for miles in the wilderness and learn about the flora and fauna of the vast active blanket bog system of **Wild Nephin Ballycrocy National Park**. At night, enjoy pristine unspoilt skies in Mayo's International Dark Sky Park. www.wildnephinnationalpark.ie



Go Wild in the waves of Erris! Whether it's a boat trip to the breathtaking Inishkea Islands, some sea kayaking or coasteering, or perching on the edge of the Atlantic at Dún na mBo, you're bound to feel alive. Walk onto Ireland's newest island, Claggan Island, or follow the Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail all along the North Mayo coast. www.visitbelmullet.ie

Ballina offers every kind of outdoor adventure! Kayak with Paddle and Pedal or paddleboard with Harbour SUP on the River Moy, or hop on an electric bike with Rachel's Irish Adventures. Get up close and personal with Harris hawks and peregrine falcons at Mount Falcon Estate or try your hand at clay

pigeon shooting or archery. www.mayonorth.ie

Forage for your supper in **Killala with Denis of Wild Atlantic Cultural Tours**. Walk through crystal clear waters with shrimp dancing at your feet, watch the seals playing nearby, admire the huge skies across Killala Bay, gather some edible sea plants and forage for mussels, periwinkles and cockles. www.wildatlanticculturaltours.weebly.com

A towering yellow door, a red chair that belongs in the world of Roald Dahl's Big Friendly Giant, an enormous set of keys that can never be lost, dangling from a random tree and a caged T-Rex dinosaur – these are just some of the sights to **behold at the Land of the Giants Walk in McMahon Park, Claremorris**. Picnic areas, and 4,000 years of history on Clare Lake with its two crannógs and lots of curious ducks make it the perfect family day out.



Castlebar is the ideal adventure destination, with **Mayo Adventure Experience** at Lough Lannagh catering for everyone from families looking for adventure to elite athletic team bonding sessions. Mayo Adventure Experience aims to create an enjoyable experience in the outdoors, reconnecting with nature, whether through stand-up paddling, canoeing, open boating,

Make a Break For it this Summer!

orienteering, pilates, yoga and more. www.mayoadventureexperience.ie

Weave an unforgettable experience with a visit to **Foxford Woollen Mills**. Enjoy lunch in the airy Foxford Café, and browse the beautiful showrooms with their variety of colourful throws, craft produce and stunning Scandinavian designs. www.foxfordwoollenmills.com

The **Jackie Clarke Collection** in Ballina, housed in the old Provincial Bank is the most important private collection of Irish history material in public hands, comprising over 100,000 items spanning 400 years – all collected by one man and generously donated to the people of Ballina after his death. Hear his story, browse this treasure trove and enjoy the peace of the award-winning walled heritage garden in the heart of town. www.clarkecollection.ie



Marvel at the **Museums of Mayo**, from the Michael Davitt Museum, to the National Museum of Country Life, Turlough, to Hennigan's Heritage Farm, to our genealogy centres. There is something here for everyone with an interest in history. www.museumsofmayo.com

Spend a day along the **Céide Coast from Belderrig to Killala**, exploring the sea cliffs, visiting the Céide Fields, the Ballinlen Museum of Contemporary Art in Ballycastle, Downpatrick Head, walking the beautiful strands of Lacken and exploring the historic town of Killala. www.northmayo.ie/ceide-coast

Find some peace at the **Father Peyton Memorial Centre in Attymass**, and hear the fascinating story of the Rosary Priest, Fr Patrick Peyton, who had a following worldwide. Take the video tour, and enjoy a

homemade treat in the café. The Centre also acts as a base for those wishing to explore the beautifully scenic Attymass Loop Walks. www.fatherpeytoncentre.ie

Nephin's Haven and Crossmolina offers some of the most beautiful remote scenery at Moygownagh and Keenagh, the historic Enniscoe House and North Mayo Heritage Centre, the Lahardane Titanic Memorial Park, and of course, Nephin Mountain, the tallest free standing mountain in Ireland, now with a waymarked route to the summit. www.nephinshaven.ie

With its pristine, unspoiled and widely diverse landscape and seascape untouched by the modern world, **The Lost Valley at Doolough** offers a unique window into the cultural heritage of The West of Ireland. It is arguably the finest memorial of The Great Famine that remains today. Visit the ruined famine village and see the multitude of potato ridges that have lain undisturbed and unattended for nearly two centuries. As The Lost Valley is now an active working farm, visitors can experience life on the farm with pet lamb feeding, a working sheep dog demonstration and a sheep shearing demonstration in season on request. www.thelostvalley.ie

A visit to **Cong** not only offers a trip back in time to the days of The Quiet Man, but also offers scenic woodland walks, curious

limestone caves, the beautiful Cong Abbey and of course, the stunning Ashford Castle. The town is also known as a top food destination.

Corrib cruises is lovely way for visitors to explore the area on the historical tour "Step on board and join local historian and boat captain Patrick Luskin as he takes you on a fascinating journey through time. Lough Corrib is the largest lake in the Republic of Ireland and reputedly has 365 islands - one for every day of the year. Patrick will tell you about the history and folklore of the lake and the surrounding area as the landscape unfolds before your eyes. <https://www.quietmanmuseum.com/> <http://www.corribcruises.com/>

Mayo lends itself beautifully to a bit of island-hopping, with some of the most beautiful sights to be found off the coast. We boast the largest and newest islands in Ireland – Achill Island and Claggan Island respectively, the breathtakingly beautiful uninhabited Inishkeas off Erris, Bartagh Island in the Moy Estuary, Clare Island, Inishturk, Inishbiggle and Inishglora. And of course, the famed islands of Clew Bay will keep you island-hopping for years!

Make a Break for Mayo – we live it, you'll love it!



LEADING LOCATION

Filmed along the Wild Atlantic Way, scenic Mayo is the star of Hollywood rom-com Wild Mountain Thyme

One thing you can't fault about American Irish rom-com *Wild Mountain Thyme* is the scenery. Filmed on location in Co. Mayo, lead actor Emily Blunt learned to pull a pint at the Thatch Inn in Crossmolina during her time in the heather county. "You just feel completely transported, you are in this other world," she says. "It's a fairy-tale. It's incredibly enchanting, the whole experience."

Blunt is in good company in this John Patrick Shanley film, starring alongside Oscar-winner Christopher Walkin, Jamie Dornan, and Jon Hamm. Written and produced more with an Irish-American audience in mind, this lyrical romance is a story about star-crossed lovers (Blunt and Dornan) whose families are caught up in a feud over a hotly contested piece of land separating their two farms. Filmed in 2019 and released digitally this year, the film also features Irish actors Dearbhla Molloy, Danielle Ryan and Barry McGovern.

Most of the movie was shot around the village of Crossmolina and the town of Ballina - the ancestral home of US President Joe Biden.

While the Irish accents might be a little harsh on the ears, Mayo's Nephin Mountains are a treat for the eyes. Patchwork fields and green landscape comes alive on the big screen - the West of Ireland's countryside earning its place as a star among the movie's stellar cast.



Among the spots you'll see in the film and can experience when you visit, is the Thatch Inn and Hiney's pubs in Crossmolina, and the luxurious Mount Falcon Estate, which saw parts of its interior transformed into a New York bar. It was also home to the cast and crew during filming. Actor John Hamm, who shot to worldwide fame as Don Draper in *Mad Men*, described his time in Ireland as a 'once in a lifetime' experience. Christopher Walken, who bagged an Oscar for his role in *The Deer Hunter*, joked: "My difficulty was being Irish, especially in the middle of all these Irish people. They're the real deal. I'm from Queens." And Jamie Dornan, who is originally from Co. Down, added: "It's beautiful to get a chance to shoot in Ireland. People all over Ireland, I mean I'm biased, but they're the best people in the world."

If you fancy venturing further during your time in Mayo, the Wild Atlantic Way's coastline won't disappoint. Achill Island's pristine beaches and soaring cliffs are too close not to add to the travel itinerary, while the Great Western Greenway is great for walking and biking. Croagh Patrick, overlooking Clew Bay and its 365 islands, is also in Mayo. The holy mountain should be on any staycation bucket list, the views from the top are incredible.

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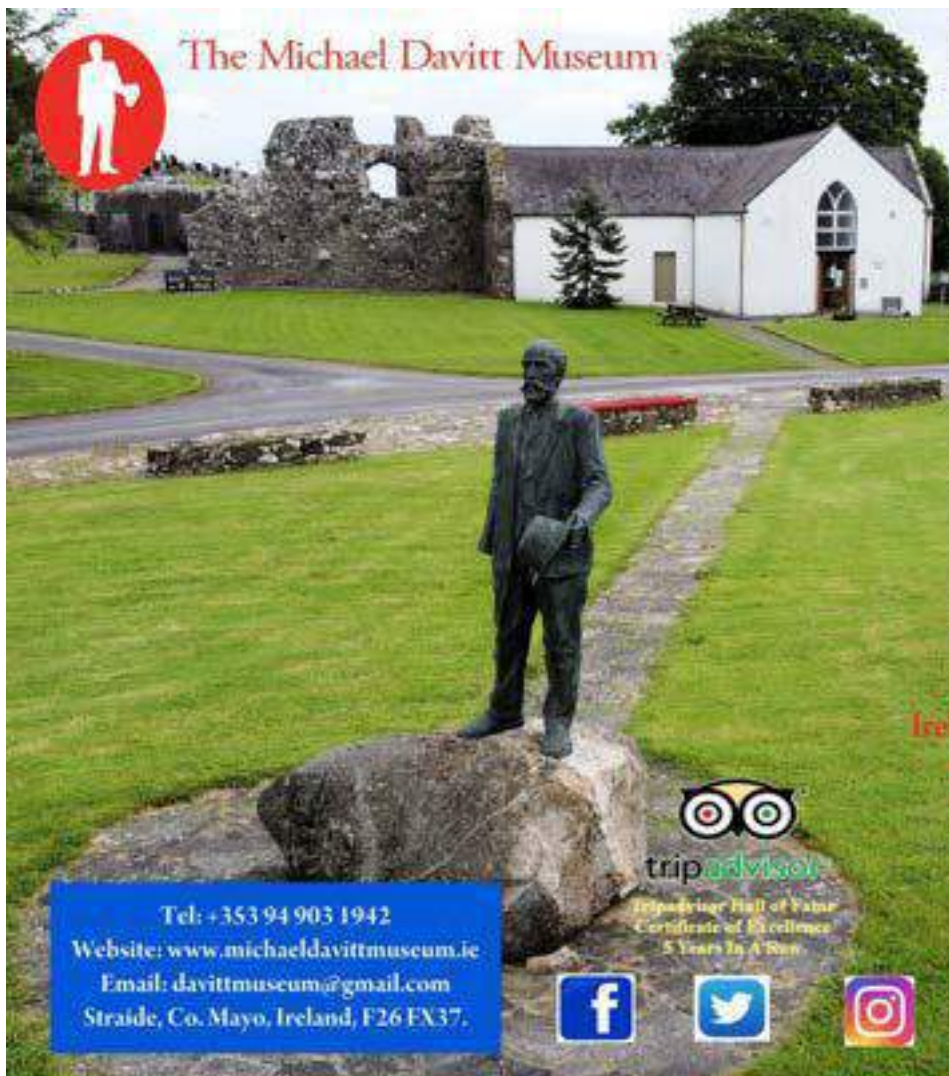


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Things to Do in Cork



The English Market

In the heart of Cork City and with an eye-catching fountain at its centre, this quirky roofed food market has been trading since 1788. Under the possession of the Cork City Council, it's one of the world's oldest municipal markets. Artisan breads, fruit, and freshly caught seafood are just some of the specialities on offer. In recent years, the market gained worldwide fame when Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain dropped by on her first-ever state visit to the Republic of Ireland in 2011.

St. Patrick's Street

This has remained Cork's main shopping hub. An easy couple of minutes' stroll from The English Market and known locally as 'Pana' the broad, curving street boasts many fine shops. Various architectural styles reflect change over the past 200 years or so.

Cork City Gaol

Another of Cork city's must-dos is the atmospheric and historic City Gaol, which opened in 1824 and closed in 1923. Originally the prison housed both male and female prisoners who committed crimes within the city borders. In 1878, the City Gaol became an all-female prison, which it remained until men opposed to the 1920 Anglo-Irish Treaty were incarcerated there in 1922-1923. The complex then deteriorated until its restoration and re-opening to the public as a tourist attraction in 1993.

Crawford Art Gallery

A two-minute walk from St. Patrick's Street, art-lovers may like to take in this regional museum dedicated to the visual arts, both historic and contemporary. The gallery receives in excess of 200,000 visitors per annum and hosts a range of permanent exhibitions including 18th Century European and Irish sculpture, a collection of Greek and Roman sculpture casts, and contemporary video installations.

St. Finbarre's Cathedral

A leisurely 10-minute walk from St. Patrick's Street takes visitors to this Anglican Cathedral. If preferred, a bus hop (No's 214, 208, 203) will shave a couple of minutes off the journey time. The eye-catching structure in French Early Gothic style was designed by William Burges and consecrated in 1870. It's situated on a site where Christian worship has been taking place since the 7th Century. By its completion, in excess of £100,000 was spent on the building, an enormous amount of money at the time.

Farmgate Cafe

An unmissable experience at the heart of the English Market, the Farmgate is perched on a balcony overlooking the food stalls below, the source of all that fresh local produce on your plate - everything from crab and oysters, to the lamb in your Irish stew. Due to Government restrictions it has been operating a market stall just inside the Princess Street entrance until safe to reopen the restaurant.

Cork Opera House

Given a modern makeover in the 1990s, this leading venue has been entertaining the city for more than 150 years with everything from opera and ballet to stand-up comedy, pop concerts and puppet shows. Around the back, the Half Moon Theatre presents contemporary theatre, dance, art and occasional club nights. Check online for what's coming up once theatres reopen. Get those dates in the diary.

Franciscan Well Brewery

The copper vats gleaming behind the bar give the game away, the Franciscan Well brews its own beer. The best place to enjoy it is in the enormous beer garden at the back. The pub holds regular beer festivals together with other small independent Irish breweries. The beer garden opens from June 7 for pints and pizzas and you can also order their craft beers straight to your home.



Triskel Arts Centre

A fantastic cultural centre housed partly in a renovated church building - expect a varied programme of live music, installation art, photography and theatre at this intimate venue. There's also a cinema (from 6.30pm) and a great café once lockdown restrictions lift. Check out their great online programme of events in the meantime.

Eccles Hotel & Spa

An iconic destination once more



Glengarriff has been renowned for its mild and humid micro-climate for centuries. At the mouth of Bantry Bay and the base of the mountain, with shelter from prevailing winds, it's a place that is picture perfect beautiful. It's no wonder that Eccles Hotel & Spa was a destination health and wellness resort right through the Victorian era.

Visitors didn't come here for faddish treatments, they knew better than that. They came for the sea air, the freshest seafood and locally grown produce, the warm West Cork welcome and Eccles classic style and effortless charm.

Today, General Manager David Manning and his team have brought the Eccles back to its glory days. Now a charming 4 star hotel and spa and acclaimed as one of 'Ireland's **Fab 50 Places to Stay**' the Eccles has been sensitively restored and refurbished without losing the rich history and charm that makes this place so special.

"History and legend permeate every inch of this wonderful hotel. William Makepeace Thackeray, William Butler Yeats, George Bernard Shaw and Maureen O'Hara were inspired, indulged and revitalised right here. You can imagine them holding court at the bar or relaxing on the veranda as the light danced on the islands that stretch across the bay."

With 3 luxurious treatment rooms, a deluxe double treatment suite overlooking Bantry Bay and the ultimate selection of VOYA organic Irish seaweed based therapies and experiences, you will be completely pampered in a world of your own at The Spa at Eccles Hotel. But that's only part of this exciting story. **In the kitchen, magic happens!**

"...even if a dish reads simply on the menu, it will be a work of art on the plate."

Lucinda O' Sullivan, Sunday Independent

Helmed by renowned Chef Eddie Attwell, the food celebrates the very best of what's fresh, local and in season.

"There's a lot of history at The Eccles Hotel. In Victorian times it was a wellness spa with a seawater pool outside and glass houses covering the land at the back where they grew fruit and vegetables. I'm going back to that — like a rebirth of the hotel, back to where it started from. It's nice to be able to tip the hat to what the hotel was 250 years before I ever got here."

With a great team, an amazing environment and the best produce in Ireland, Eddie has

all the ingredients he needs to surprise and delight with every plate.

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The buzz of home travel

Skincare entrepreneur Sonia Deasy reveals her favourite family staycation spots

There's something magical about taking time to explore places closer to home. With native holidays firmly on the vacation agenda again this summer, staycationers are embracing all that Ireland has to offer. Finding those hidden gems, exploring those off-the-beaten-track locations, or stumbling upon an unexpected beauty spot can turn a good trip into an unforgettable experience.

Sonia Deasy, co-founder and co-CEO of Irish skincare company Pestle & Mortar, loves nothing more than discovering those lesser-known tourist places that showcase Ireland at its very best. She founded her business in 2014, having previously worked alongside her husband in their portrait photography studio and she looks forward to spending precious time out with her family. No surprise, given that over the last seven years she has built a thriving business – products in 21 countries across three continents – rooted in the philosophies of her Indian heritage in natural healing and a family history of practicing Medicine Men that goes back six generations.

“The thing is, when people think about staycationing and vacationing in Ireland, names like Killarney, Connemara, West Cork, and Mayo spring to mind,” says the mum of five who is based in Kildare. “But the

lesser-known Blackwater Valley is truly worth experiencing too.”

From its birth in the Mullaghareik Mountains on the Kerry-Cork border to flowing through Fermoy and Mallow onto Co. Waterford towns such as Lismore and Cappoquin, the River Blackwater meets the sea in the Ancient East harbour port of Youghal. “I’m excited to visit The Blackwater Way, which follows the valley of the River Blackwater. My in-laws live along the North Cork stretch and before Covid, we would pack the kids into the car and drive down to stay in a traditional cottage beside their property. It’s idyllic,” she adds.

The entrepreneur says she loves nothing more than an action-packed holiday. “You’ll find the best places for fishing, horse riding, canoeing, kayaking, golf, walking, cycling, mountain biking, and eating out along the Blackwater Way,” she says. “It’s a fantastic place for families. Our kids absolutely love it.”

A trip along the south coast also affords precious time with extended members of the family and the chance for all the Deasy clan to indulge in some genuine Irish homemade produce. “Their Grandad keeps bees and makes the most delicious local honey for us to enjoy with breakfast every morning,” she says. No wonder she’s buzzing about the family staycation this summer.

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The road less travelled in West Cork

The People's Republic of West Cork is famous for its hospitality, breath-taking beaches and intriguing islands. This year, Fáilte Ireland is encouraging visitors to turn off the main driving routes and get lost in the culture of a region surrounded by the waters of the wild Atlantic. Here are some day trip ideas to get your started.



Take the Macroom Road (N22) from Cork and discover a different route to West Cork. Turn left just after Lissarda onto R584 and travel through the Múscraí (Muskerry) Gaeltacht to Gougane Barra - around 70 minutes from Cork City.

The area around Gúgán Barra (Gougane Barra) is part of this Gaeltacht and made up of the villages of Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh (Ballingeary), Cúil Aodha (Coolea), Bhaile Mhúirne (Ballyvourney) and Cill na Martyra (Kilnamartyra).

Gougane Barra was home to the first ever Irish-language teaching college in the country, opened in 1903.

The Irish-language movement contributed significantly to Ireland's struggle for independence around a hundred years ago.

Gougane Barra

Gougane Barra itself is a place rich in history and culture, and set in a spectacular landscape. Visit St. Finbarr's Oratory and Cells, a place of veneration and pilgrimage, sit nestled on a tiny island in Gougane Barra Lake that stretches for a mile along the valley floor and is reached by a short causeway.

St. Finbarr is said to have been led by an angel from the source of the River Lee at Gougane Barra to its marshy mouth, where he founded his most important monastery, 'out of which grew the see and the city of Cork'.

Legend has it that Finbarr banished the great serpent Lú from the lake here and as the beast fled, Lú created the channel, which is now the River Lee.

St. Finbarr's Well and an ancient cemetery are both located near to the island, just next door to the Gougane Barra Hotel.

The Coillte Forest Park at Gougane Barra offers walks for all levels of ability. Walk up the Derrynasaggart Mountains, which ring the lake, accessible from the forest park or oratory.

Stop for a bite to eat at Cronin's Bar & Café, which can be enjoyed by the lake.

Macroom Buffalo Farm

In the afternoon head to the Macroom Buffalo farm for a tour with the 'buffalo lady' Dorothy O'Tuama of O'Tuama Tours, which is located roughly 30 minutes away in Kilnamartyra. Here you can get up close and personal with water buffalo and even get to pet the buffalo calves on Ireland's premier water buffalo farm. Before finding out how buffalo mozzarella is made and even getting to sample some of the farm's artisan creations.

Carriganass Castle

If you have more time travel another 30-minutes from Kilnamartyra to the historic Carriganass Castle on the outskirts of Kealkill village at the heart of West Cork, where you can explore the

picturesque castle grounds.

Walkers take advantage of the way-marked routes that wind their way past this amazing monument at Carraig an Easa - 'the rock of the waterfall' and the Kealkill Stone Circle.

IF YOU HAVE MORE TIME

Before departing this mystical part of Cork, head for the Beara Peninsula. With its end-of-the-world feel, a trip around the Beara Peninsula is the ultimate way to get away from it all. A drive right around the peninsula makes for an unforgettable day.

Take in the immensity of the peninsula's rugged beauty and explore its many national archaeological monuments and colourful towns and villages.

Or rather than driving you could bring your hiking boots and hike your way around a section of the Beara Way a 206km distance trail which can be completed in full over nine days and find some of the best archaeological sites and scenery in Ireland.

These include Dunboy Castle near Castletownbere, which was home to O'Sullivan Bere, Ireland's last Gaelic chieftain or meet the 'Hag of Beara' with a visit Killcatherine Church with its pre-Christian stones.

Make sure to also stop off at Allihies where you can visit the Copper Mine Museum to immerse yourself in history or relax on the sands at Ballydonegan beach.



Spike Island remembers 1,200 Irish rebels held during 1921

2021 is a big year for Spike Island, as the island will commemorate the centenary of a War of Independence prison that opened in 1921. The 'Military prison in the field' on Spike island was opened to house Irish rebels engaged in a bloody War of Independence, that raged from 1919 to 1921. As many as 1,200 prisoners and internees were held on the island, with over 500 at any one time. The island, which is run by Cork County Council, is planning an exhibition dedicated to the lives of the Irish rebels. It will contain the history of the prison, over 130 photographs of the men, a newly discovered audio recording of a prisoner made in the 1980's, and new artefacts on display like diaries written and signed by the prisoners.

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Things to Do in Kerry



Muckross House

At Muckross House, you'll get a glimpse into luxurious 18th Century life at this fantastic, manicured throwback. This is a rural estate that's home to horse-pulled jaunting cars, fantastic gardens, lake views and craft stores. The garden restaurant is open for daily takeaway 10am-4pm.



Skellig Michael

A jagged, difficult-to-access island off the Kerry shoreline, Skellig Michael was once an isolated hermitage and is now almost as well-known for its core role in the *Star Wars* movies. To get there you'll need good summer weather and your climbing legs but toiling amid the puffins is well worth it, for the rustic housing and glorious views.

Fungie the dolphin

Resident in the harbour of gorgeous Dingle Bay, Fungie has long been Ireland's most famous non-human and he plays to the crowds. Heading out on a boat to meet, or better still, to swim with this playful mammal, is a Kerry essential. If Fungie is not in a playful mood, if you don't find him, you don't pay. Fungie caused some alarm when he vanished suddenly at the end of 2020 but according to a local marine wildlife group he has once again been spotted off the coast.

Carrauntoohil

The highest peak of the McGillicuddy Reeks mountain range, Carrauntoohil is a challenging climb for intermediate-level hikers. It rises to just over 1,000 metres via the dramatic, slippery 'Devil's Ladder'. At its peak, you'll find a huge iron cross and spectacular views across the Kerry countryside. A selfie-nut's dream location.

The Ring of Kerry

Not so much a single site as an entire circuit of rugged, rural beauty, this is the one tour you must do while in Kerry. The 'ring' takes you around the Iveragh Peninsula, past a host of gorgeous Atlantic views, quaint towns and tiny, enticing beaches. Around every corner is a photo opportunity, so go under your own steam, if possible.

The Blasket Islands

The Islands once had a thriving Irish-speaking population but were evacuated to the mainland due to harsh Atlantic conditions in the 1950s. Jokingly called 'next parish America', this spot is as 'battered west coast' as you can hope to see. There's a stunning beauty in that.



Gap of Dunloe

A fantastic drive into the Kerry Hills, the Gap of Dunloe is a narrow mountain pass through the McGillicuddy Reeks, a tough trail by car, but easily passable in the popular horse-pulled jaunting cars that are abundant in Killarney National Park. It's popular to hike or bike the route, with Kate Kearney's Cottage - a 150-year-old pubcraft shop - a popular launching spot.

Kerry Cliffs, Portmagee

The Cliffs of Moher in Co. Clare maybe Ireland's most famous cliffs but Portmagee's cliffs also offer incredible walks, dramatic drops and views out to Skellig Michael. Why are they less popular than Moher, yet 85 metres higher? Because buses can't get here. In other words, they're a lesser-known treat. However, to be avoided in strong winds.



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GOOD AS NEW

From sea safaris to cycle loops and pampered pooches, here are just some of the fresh experiences to try along the Wild Atlantic Way

Whether you're an adrenaline junkie, a nature lover or simply someone who thinks they've seen and done all the country has to offer, there's always something new to experience.

At the end of last summer, Galway city welcomed the arrival Wildlands Adventure Park – one of the country's largest aerial, woodland trekking and ziplining courses. Other outdoor activities at this energetic adventure destination include archery, tag archery, disc golf, orienteering, field archery, forest trails, cycling and bush craft. Indoors, there are multiple climbing walls, adventure play, a sports hall as well as yoga and wellness.

Lockdown saw many of us welcome a new furry member to the family – and holiday time doesn't mean having to leave your four-legged friend behind. There are plenty of luxury hotels offering pooch-friendly experiences and with its awesome beaches, the Wild Atlantic Way is a special treat for dog and human alike.

The lakeshore suites at the likes of Harvey's Point Hotel in Co. Donegal come complete with pet-friendly facilities.

In Galway, you'll find The Twelve – home to toys, doggie bowls and a luxury pet suite as part of its Pampered Pet Program.



The Clew Bay Bike Trail is a new bike and ferry route looping magical Clew Bay in Co. Mayo, curving around the coastline, incorporating both Clare Island and Achill Island. New ferry sailings connect the islands on Wednesdays and at weekends for July and August. This glorious route runs through some of Mayo's most attractive seaside towns including Westport, Louisburgh and Mulranny over a distance of 81km, with an optional 10km loop on Clare Island. The total trail distance, including ferries, is 105km.

Also fresh among the attractions for 2021 is a new two-boat service in scenic Co. Cork.

Dursey Boat Trips, leaving from Garnish Pier, has been set up to open up a safari experience of the wildlife, inlets, coves and rocks that lie around the Beara Peninsula.

Coming soon ...

More new attractions are also on their way in the Wild Atlantic way as part of a €73million tourism investment. Fort Dunree and Head in Co. Donegal will feature Ireland's first funicular cable railway. The one-of-a-kind attraction will offer a thrilling ascent to the high fort amid incredible 360-degree vistas. A dramatic glass walkway at the site will jut over the waters of Lough Swilly, providing spectacular views.

Westport House and Gardens Estate in Co. Mayo is also being reimagined to provide a multi-layered, multi-day experience. The new attraction on the 300-acre site will allow visitors to explore ancient Irish rituals and Ireland's connections to the land as told through a series of wild and natural spaces.



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Things to Do in Galway

Great Grub in Galway

Savour the tastes, from fabulous farmhouse cheeses at Sheridan's to the irresistible McCambridge's food emporium, you'll find something to suit in Galway. Your taste buds are guaranteed to be satisfied by a huge array of gastronomic offerings.

Traditional Music on Quay Street

A mecca of pubs restaurants and cafes, Quay Street also has the best selection of live traditional music in bars such as the Quays, Tigh Neachtain and the Spanish Arch hotel.

Visit The Spanish Arch

A true Galway icon, The Spanish Arch was built in 1584 and overlooks the River Corrib. The arches were used to access the quays from the town when Galway was a walled city and this is all that remains.



Galway Crystal

Visit the stunning crystal factory located just outside Galway City. It's easy to pass a full day just staring at the amazing crystal creations. Galway Crystal was established in 1967 by a group of local business people from the Galway Chamber of Commerce. Through the years many well-known people have passed through the doors of Galway Crystal, from presidents to celebrities. Galway Crystal can be found in the most prestigious homes, including our own Áras an Uachtaráin, the residence of the Irish President.

Galway Cathedral

Galway Cathedral was constructed in the late 1950s, at a time when most similar buildings were using concrete. It is, therefore, the youngest of Europe's great stone cathedrals. Dedicated to Our Lady Assumed into Heaven and St. Nicholas, it was designed by J.J. Robinson in a very eclectic style. It includes some Renaissance details mixed with the Romanesque and Gothic traditions. The cathedral also boasts an impressive variety of art, including a statue of the Virgin by Imogen Stuart, a large Crucifixion mosaic by Patrick Pollen, rose windows by George Campbell and more.

Galway Hooker boats

The Galway Hooker is a traditional fishing boat developed in the 18th Century. Many of the boats have been restored by Hooker enthusiasts and can be seen during a festival in Kinvara, Co. Galway, which is a village certainly worth a visit.

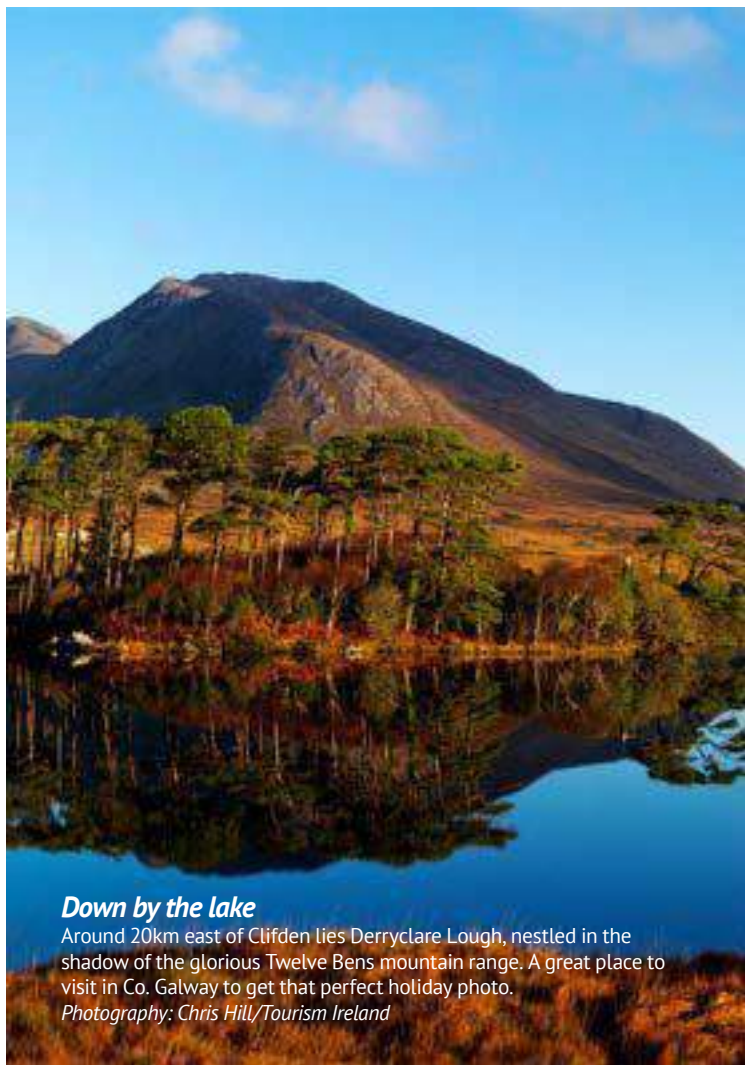


Ballynahinch Castle

Ballynahinch Castle Hotel is one of Ireland's finest luxury castle hotels. Voted #1 in Ireland by the readers of Condé Nast magazine. Set in a private 700-acre estate of woodland, rivers and walks in the heart of Connemara, Co. Galway, this authentic and unpretentious Castle Hotel stands proudly overlooking its famous salmon fishery, with a backdrop of the beautiful 12 Bens Mountain range. Relax in your beautifully appointed bedroom or suite with wonderful views and wake up to the sound of the river meandering past your window before enjoying breakfast in the elegant restaurant.

Dunguaire Castle

Dunguaire Castle lies at the heart of Ireland's literary revival in the 20th century. Dunguaire became the venue for meetings of literary revivalists such as W.B. Yeats, his patron Lady Gregory plus, George Bernard Shaw. Experience the breath-taking views from the Castle Towers following a tour of Dunguaire Castle.



Down by the lake

Around 20km east of Clifden lies Derryclare Lough, nestled in the shadow of the glorious Twelve Bens mountain range. A great place to visit in Co. Galway to get that perfect holiday photo.

Photography: Chris Hill/Tourism Ireland

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Lighting the way

A working lighthouse since 1817, Fanad Lighthouse in Co. Donegal, has been open as a tourist attraction for the last five years. There's also overnight accommodation in three restored keepers' cottages.

The lighthouse tower itself stands at 22 metres, reached by 76 steps in total, while this flagship spot at the mouth of Lough Swilly has been voted one of the world's most beautiful lighthouses. Fanad Peninsula is an area of outstanding natural

beauty and has it all - kayaking, angling, hiking and beautifully secluded sandy beaches.

Fanad is one of 11 lighthouses in the county - the others are Saint John's Point, Rotten Island, Rathlin O'Birne Island, Arranmore Island, Ballagh Rocks, Tory Island, Buncrana, Stroove, Dunree, and Inishtrahull, the most northerly lighthouse in Ireland.

Photographer: Chris Hill/Tourism Ireland/Fáilte Ireland



Things to Do in Donegal



Glenveagh National Park

Glenveagh National Park is one of the six beautiful national parks in Ireland. Situated in the Northwest of Co. Donegal, Glenveagh encompasses some 16,000 hectares in the heart of the Derryveagh Mountains. Such a great wilderness is the haunt of many interesting plants and animals. These lands were managed as a private deer forest before becoming a national park in 1975. With the completion of public facilities, Glenveagh National Park was officially opened to the public in 1986.



Glenevin Waterfall (Clonmany)

This amazing waterfall is located at the top of a short 2km hike through the woods in Clonmany. There are picnic areas on the way to the waterfall which blend in beautifully with the natural landscape. Footbridges towards the waterfall are dotted along the track as visitors criss-cross the stream using the stepping stones.

Malin Head

Malin Head is located on the Inishowen Peninsula, Co. Donegal. Here you will find the most northern point of the whole island of Ireland. The northernmost tip is the headland named Dúnalderagh (Banba's Crown). The views in this area are spectacular and it is a place that any tourist must visit when they come to Donegal.



Mount Errigal

Mount Errigal is a beautiful mountain near Gweedore in Co. Donegal. It is both the tallest peak of the Derryveagh Mountains and of all the peaks in the county. Errigal is also the most southern, steepest and highest of the mountain chain, called the Seven Sisters by locals. The mountain is beautiful in both summer and winter and is a must-see.

Narin & Portnoo Beach

One of Ireland's finest beaches! This beach has everything: beautiful sand, peninsulas and hills in the background. It is an absolute gem and should not be under-estimated. Anyone who has been there will know what we are talking about.



Fáilte go Sliabh Liag



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The social mountain explorer



Kevin Penrose on the top of Mount Errigal in Co. Donegal

With almost five million likes on TikTok and 22.4k followers on Instagram, Kevin Penrose is probably better known online by his handle @WildIrishWanderer. Around two years ago he decided to take his social media life a little more seriously, a move that allows him to mix doing what he loves with creating travel content - though he never expected it would reach so many people.

“I am very appreciative,” the Co. Tyrone native says. “My goal from the beginning was to showcase my travels across Ireland and inspire people to explore what they have so close to home and this still stands today. I feel now is only just the beginning and I have so much more I want to achieve with Wild Irish Wanderer.”

He takes Siobhán Breatnach on a tour of his favourite spots.

What’s the best place you’ve discovered on your travels in Ireland?

There are so many places that come to mind. A lot more comes into it than just the location, for example the weather, who I am with, time of day. So, with that in mind I would have to say Mount Errigal in Co. Donegal. It’s a place I have always loved hiking and recently I hiked it for sunrise - we were so lucky with what we witnessed. The clouds came in but we were able to still get the sunrise from above them. It was unbelievable. Mount Errigal is a place that, no matter what the weather, is truly spectacular.

Where does your love of the great outdoors come from?

Ever since I was little, I was always outdoors and had a sense of adventure. I went to university in Liverpool and worked in America for many summers on and off so I was always exploring. I feel like I didn’t really appreciate what Ireland had to offer until I returned and I have been exploring ever since.

What’s your idea of the perfect holiday?

It would have to be a road trip with some friends, stopping off on different spots along the way. I would make sure we hiked, catch the sunrise and sunset, explore the beaches, go swimming, camp out. Exploring many of the great spots we love like Slieve League, The Giant’s Causeway, Cliffs of Moher but also discovering new places ... oh and sampling some of the black stuff (Guinness) along the way.

Where’s on your bucket list?

Right now, for Ireland I really want to travel to Kerry and climb Carrauntoohil - as it’s the highest peak in Ireland, I would love to tick it off the list, preferably at sunrise or sunset. In the world, my list is endless, as I haven’t done a lot of travelling. I do have plans to travel to Bali, hopefully at the end of this year and once I am there, I will be sure to travel to many different countries.

Where’s your favourite place to hike?

So many places, each of them for many different reasons. One I have really loved is Mweelrea in Co. Mayo. This was the longest hike I have ever done (7-8 hours) and I was completely out in the wild by myself. It was amazing. Again, the weather made it so much better as I had views of Croagh Patrick, the surrounding areas in Mayo and amazing views of Connemara in Galway. It was very challenging mentally and physically but once I reach the peak, I feel euphoric every time.

Beach or mountains?

Mountains for sure. I love beaches too but mountains have that edge as they have so much to offer from viewpoints, lakes, caves and secret waterfalls. It’s basically an adventurer’s playground and I never get sick of them.

Where’s the best place to go wild in Ireland?

Donegal is always a good place. You have all the main spots along the way but there is so much ground left to cover all across Donegal. One place I feel a real sense of wilderness is An Port - it’s so remote and away from everyone.

What other travel influencers do you admire?

Two I have been following for years are Christian Leblanc (@LostLeblanc) and Sam Kolder (@SamKolder) both for travel and photo/video. They really know how to capture each place they visit and put it across perfectly to their followers. In Ireland there are so many I love, just for the common goal of creating content of their travels and showcasing what our country has to offer. They are always up for meeting and going on adventures, which makes it that bit easier to explore. These include Marius Monaghan (@mariusmonaghan), Laura Barton (@live.adventure.travel), Niall Kelly (@NiallKelly), Joshua Nueva (@Joshuanueva) and Tony Smith (@Tonytravels10_). There is a growing community here in Ireland, emerging over the past year, which is amazing to see.



As we open our doors for the 52nd year we are delighted to welcome you to the Glencolmille Folk Village. Glencolmille Folk Village is located in one of Donegal's most idyllic valleys, situated along the dramatic coastline of Glen Bay with its spectacular views of Glen Beach and Glen Head.

We stock the best variety of local hand crafts in the County. When you visit the Folk Village, you will experience a genuine Irish welcome with the thatched cottages offering an authentic glimpse into rural Ireland from 1750 onwards.

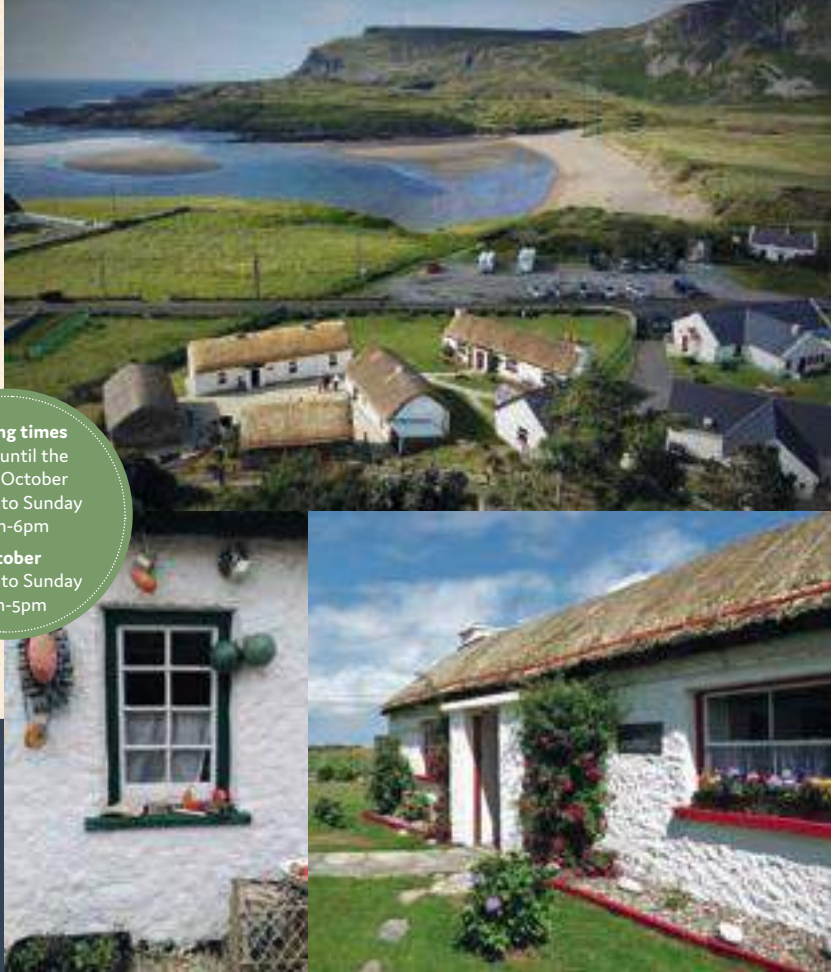
Tour booklets are available in several languages.

The Folk Village is an ideal attraction to visit on your excursion to Sliabh Liag cliffs we are only 20 minutes along the coast. Tá fáilte an Ghleanna romhat nuair a thugann tú cuairt ar Chlachán Ghleann Cholm Cille.

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SAVOUR THE MOMENT





Table mountain views

Legend has it, Co. Sligo's Benbulbin was a hunting ground for the Fianna, the fierce third-century Irish warriors, who roamed the island.

Today you're more likely to run into walkers enjoying the trails along this distinctive mountain route on the 5.5km Gortaraway looped walk.

Ireland's version of Table Mountain, where over time

limestone and shale has eroded to form the upper cliffs and precipices. The north face is a hazardous climb, bearing the brunt of high winds and Atlantic storms. But if approached from the south face via the paved path to the east near Glencar Waterfall, it's a leisurely walk. Ocean views and Sligo's coastal plains await those who reach the summit.

Photography: Gareth McCormack/Tourism Ireland



Things to Do in Sligo



Mullaghmore Head

Land and sea come together to create something truly special at Mullaghmore Head. This is the home of big wave surfing in Ireland, and surfers come from all over the world to test their skills against epic waves. But there's more to Mullaghmore. There are boat trips to the 6th century monastic ruins on Inishmurray Island, Classiebawn Castle dominating the surrounding landscape with its Gothic splendour and nearby Ben Bulbin, the flat-topped mountain famed in Irish mythology and the poetry of W.B. Yeats.

Streedagh Beach

With easy walking along its 3km stretch, it's one of the most tranquil spots in the west, with the golden sands being a favourite playground for children. Don't miss the site of the Spanish Armada shipwreck from 1588.

Surfing

From the big wave thrills at Mullaghmore and Strandhill's consistent breaks, to the family-friendly swell at Enniscrone, no trip to Sligo is complete without a go on a surfboard. Surf schools can help newbies paddle out with confidence, while pros can hunt for secret spots.

Coney Island

Coney Island is approximately 400 acres and is so named because of the vast quantity of rabbits which can be spotted on the island at any time. It's accessible by driving or walking over the causeway (guided by the 14 pillars) at low tide.

Sligo Abbey

Looking for something to do in Sligo? The medieval Dominican abbey in Sligo Town offers a peek into an intriguing past, with artefacts, lore and a rich history dating back to 1252. It's also one of the best places to see Gothic and Renaissance tomb sculptures.

WB Yeats' Grave

Drumcliffe, Co. Sligo is set against the striking backdrop of the Benbulbin Mountains. It is best known as the final resting place of W.B. Yeats. Found in the churchyard, his grave is marked with a simple headstone with the inscription, "cast a cold eye on life, on death, horseman, pass by."

Carrowkeel

The Neolithic cemetery complex at Carrowkeel is one of the finest examples of a passage tomb in Ireland, consisting of 14 cairns dotted across the beautiful hills of the Bricklieve mountain range in the south of Co. Sligo, near the Co. Roscommon border.



Benbulbin

Benbulbin is known as Co. Sligo's 'Table Mountain' and is part of the Dartry Mountains. It was originally merely a large ridge, however the moving glaciers cut into the earth, leaving a distinct formation, now called Benbulbin. It is possible to climb Benbulbin as there is a looped access trail but it is strongly advised that you have a guide to hike Benbulbin.

Eagles Flying

The attraction for all the family. Nestled in the green hills of south Sligo, Ireland's largest sanctuary for raptors and owls, the Irish Raptor Research Centre/Eagles Flying is situated on more than 27 ha of mature parklands near Ballymote. Currently it is the home of more than 100 eagles, hawks, owls, falcons and vultures. For the ones who prefer it more cuddly, there is also a large supervised petting zoo, where visitors can get hands-on with guinea pigs, pigs, rabbits, lambs, goats, donkeys, ferrets, and many more. The sanctuary reopened May 1.



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Gráinne and the Galway chocolate factory

Chef Gráinne Mullins tells Siobhán Breatnach about how lockdown and the Wild Atlantic Way inspired her sweet new business

Willy Wonka's got nothing on Galway chef-entrepreneur Gráinne Mullins. One of Ireland's lockdown successes, her fledgling but fast-growing company Grá Chocolates has left a sweet taste in mouths across the country.

"The satisfying bit is, people enjoying them, when you get a nice message," she says. "I got a beautiful card during the week from a lady in Scotland in Scots Gaelic, because she saw that we were using Irish. Something like that will put a smile on your face because you'd never expect someone to write you a card. It's those small little personal touches."

Grá's selection of chocolates is a culmination of the award-winning chef's love of local ingredients and her culinary experience. "Having been a pastry chef and worked for so many years, I wanted to express my techniques throughout," she says. "I knew I had a lot of techniques that would generally not be seen in chocolate - adding different techniques, layers and flavours and using Irish ingredients as



much as possible as well. What I wanted to be able to do is fit maximum flavour and texture into one small bite."

The business started at the beginning of the first lockdown.

"I was stuck for things to do," she says. "I was baking and decided to make hand-painted Easter eggs for my friend's family. It's something I'd thought about for a few years but never had the time. I bought the moulds, did all the flavours and started posting them on social media. Then people were reaching out trying to buy them but I didn't have anywhere near the capacity to do that. Afterwards I thought about it and my mum said 'this could potentially be your business Gráinne.'" Having her own business was always a dream for the 2019 Eurotoques Young Chef of the Year who started working in kitchens aged 16 in places such as Ardmore's Cliff House Hotel, Ashford Castle, Ox in Belfast and Lignum near Loughrea, Co. Galway.

"I studied science and worked my way up the ranks as a pastry chef," Gráinne says. "I love pastry so much because it's so calculated, you follow the recipe and get the results. From there, I stuck with it and have always enjoyed that side of the kitchen. I'd always wanted to have my own business but didn't know what it would be," she adds. "Science has always linked in with what I've done but my passion was always food."

It took just three months after those prototype eggs and some market research with the local enterprise office to get her company was up and running. "My family have been very patient and allowed me to take over the house," she says. "I have



a small kiln, which my dad used to use to dry out wood, and that's been converted into this chocolate factory, so it's been the perfect location to start from."

Grá now employs two full-time and three part-time staff to cope with the demand for its confectionary, particularly around peak occasion times such as Valentine's Day, Christmas and Easter. Plans include growing the company's workspace so that it can move away from a pre-order system. "I'm having great fun researching Irish ingredients and I know quite a lot of suppliers luckily already, from my years working through restaurants, so I do try and use ones I know are really good quality," she says.

"Using as local as possible where possible and embracing it. I'm looking at Ryan's rhubarb for the rhubarb season because it's a beautiful product, it's bright pink and it's grown under candlelight - where else can you find a story like that. Not only a story but it tastes amazing. The support has been crazy, it's stemmed from people trusting me from restaurants that I've worked in before. It's been fantastic," she adds.

"Even our surroundings, what we can be inspired by looking out the window or going for a walk around the seaside or up the mountain, I think we're very lucky that it's still quite a bit of a wilderness and there can be inspiration drawn from that at any point."



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Pádraicín's Seafood Restaurant & Bar, Furbo Co. Galway

Their lounge, with a maritime theme, serves excellent food throughout the day. Relax at the water's edge on Furbo Beach or enjoy a pint or two in their traditional bar.

Pádraicín's is your ideal meeting place for cycling, touring and walking. People often stop here to talk, plan, relax, eat and drink. Whether it's a chat over coffee, a family meal or celebratory occasion, Pádraicín's is perfect. They are also within a five-minute drive of nearby Barna Golf Club.

Sliabh Liag

As one of the Signature points of the Wild Atlantic Way, Sliabh Liag currently attracts in excess of 160,000 visitors per year. Enjoy an unforgettable experience at Sliabh Liag, with breathtaking scenery and wildlife. The famous 'One mans Path' and 'Pilgrims Path' are considered a hikers' paradise. Visit www.sliabhliag.com for further information and shuttle bus details.



Mulranny Park Hotel

The 4-Star GN Mulranny Park Hotel is perched on a unique site overlooking Clew Bay and Croagh Patrick Mountain beyond. They are located on the Great Western Greenway, in the most scenic section of the route and the perfect cycling and walking holiday base. They are only a few steps away from the sand and sea of the beautiful Mulranny Beach, which has been awarded the coveted blue flag and is ideal for family breaks. Uniquely located on the Wild Atlantic Way, this is the ideal base for walking, cycling and as a wedding venue or just a relaxing break and a proven place as one of the best wedding hotels in Ireland.

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Bunratty Castle and Folk Park

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Burren Smokehouse

Immerse yourself in the Salmon Experience

Call into the Burren Smokehouse Tasting Room (visitor centre with retail space) located in Lisdoonvarna, just off the Wild Atlantic Way and a short drive from the Cliffs of Moher.

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In May 2019, the honour of a Swedish Royal visit was bestowed upon us. King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden visited the Burren Smokehouse to learn about artisan food production in the Burren and to taste our Burren Smoked Irish Organic Salmon.

Eagles Flying - The Attraction For All The Family

Nestled in the green hills of south Sligo, Ireland's largest sanctuary for raptors and owls, the Irish Raptor Research Centre / Eagles Flying is situated on more than 27 hectares of mature parklands near Ballymote. Currently it is the home of more than 100 eagles, hawks, owls, falcons and vultures. Altogether there are more than 450 birds and animals, encompassing nearly 100 different species, in the centre.

County Clare – Open Spaces, Amazing Places

County Clare is a special place for holiday fun. Experience dramatic cliffs, wonderful blue-flag beaches and seaside resorts along the Wild Atlantic Way, the amazing Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, the River Shannon and the treasures and pleasures of Lough Derg. Visit Ennis, the County Capital, one of Ireland's most picturesque towns - its history, heritage, hospitality and excellent shopping mark it out as special.

For more on the wonders of Clare, check out www.Clare.ie/best



Glencolmcille Folk Village

Glencolmcille Folk Village is a thatched cottage coastal village in South West Donegal. Established in 1967, it tells the story of Glencolmcille through the ages. Original artefacts are on display in the cottages, which were constructed from stone taken from period cottages throughout the parish.

The tours are currently self-guided and are available in more than eight languages. There are three audiovisual programs that tell the story of Father McDyer, the local fishing tradition and cinefilm from the 1950's.

They have adapted a beautiful outdoor dining area and have a great family orientated eating area within this, with a safe area for children to play. They are world renowned for their beautiful vegetable soup and Irish breakfast.

On special occasions you can Meet local crafts people and have a go at making a St. Brigid's Cross or mending a fishing net.



County Cork Tourism

Cork County Council has launched a unique, 'one-stop-shop' tourism app, featuring over 850 places to see and things to do throughout Cork.

The 'Explore Cork' app is the first of its kind by any Local Authority in Ireland and is available to download for free in both the English and Irish languages.

Eccles Hotel

In a world of its own...

Nestled in Glengarriff Bay is Eccles Hotel and Spa, the only 4-Star hotel in Glengarriff, where this 250-year old hotel, is in a world of its own. Guests can take in the incredible views of Bantry Bay, whilst relaxing in the outdoor hot tubs on the spa terrace and then taste the culinary delights from Eccles' own Chef Eddie Attwell who forages for local ingredients for the most authentic meals in West Cork. Book now on eccleshotel.com



The Cork International Hotel has no shortage of Things to do during your stay

The Cork International Hotel have exclusive, great value offers available online with tickets included for these activities catering for couples, groups and families with large, spacious rooms and interconnecting options. They are Failte Ireland Safety Charter Approved. Visit www.corkinternationalhotel.com to see all offers.



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and feel the sea spray in your face, walk for a while on a golden beach, go island-hopping off the coast and indulge in the island's finest seafood as you immerse yourself in the wild, rugged beauty along this unforgettable route.



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The stunning Ring of Kerry is a circular loop around the Iveragh Peninsula passing through some of the most amazing landscapes on the island. The wonderful lakes of Killarney give way to the mountains of MacGillycuddy's Reeks and the peninsula is scattered with picturesque and vibrant towns and villages. Off the Ring of Kerry lies the sixth-century island monastery of Skellig Michael, now globally famous as a filming location for the Star Wars blockbuster.





IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST: THE CELTIC COAST

Peel back layers of history as you travel the Celtic Coast route from Co. Wicklow to Co. Cork and discover the splendour of eighteenth-century stately homes, the treasures of Viking settlements and the remains of Ireland's earliest Christian settlement. Among the must-see stops on the route are the magnificent Powerscourt House and Gardens, atmospheric Glendalough, and the Viking city of Waterford.

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Beach day

If you're looking for soft, wind-swept shores, head to Curracloe beach in Co. Wexford. Stretch your legs on this long white sandy beach that's featured in Hollywood movies such as Saving Private Ryan. A beautiful spot on the Irish coastline.

Photography: Finn Richards/ Fáilte Ireland

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*Go-Ancient
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Things to Do in Wicklow

Grennan Maze

Set amidst the beautiful Wicklow hills on a pretty countryside farm, Grennan Maze has plenty of fun for all ages. It has two mazes, three museums, nature walks, woodlands, ponds, wildlife, farm animals, play areas, treasure hunt and fairy tree walk. Families enjoy spending the day at this heritage hotspot that's been described as 'an antidote to urban living within easy reach of Dublin'. The treasure hunt and fairy tree trail are great fun activities for kids but the large hedge maze is the highlight of most people's day. The tearooms offer plenty of homemade cakes and goodies.

Shekina Sculpture Garden

People first began visiting these gardens over 30 years ago as part of the Co. Wicklow Gardens Festival. This modern sacred space is a one-acre garden that includes a stream, two ponds on different levels, a patio, gazebo, seating areas, shrub beds and undulating lawns. From the joyful sound of birds singing to the calming trickle of water, a unique feature here is a collection of modern sculptures by artists including Michael Casey, Fred Conlon, Clodna Cusson, James Gannon, Leo Higgins, Anne Murphy, Paul Page, Noel Scullion, Alexander Sokolov, Imogen Stuart, Ken Thompson, Alexandra Wejchert and Elke Westen. Located via Rathdrum or Laragh, just two miles from Glenmalure Lodge Hotel, the gardens are open May to September but please phone ahead.

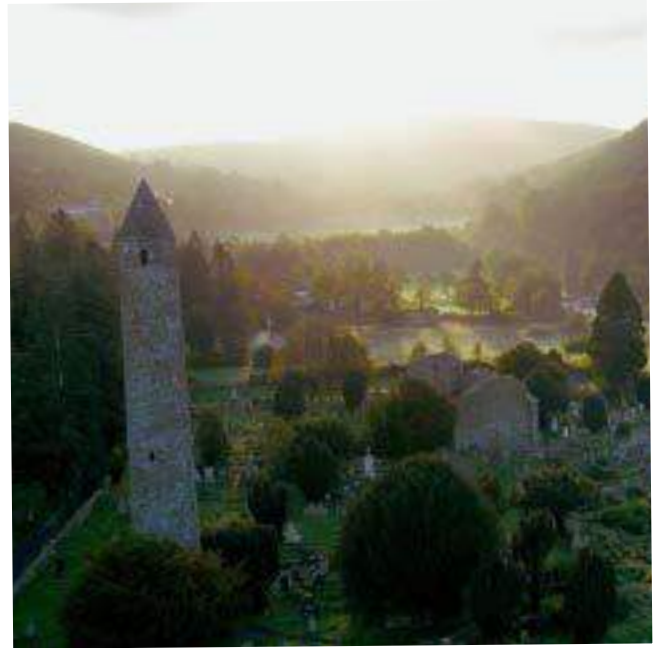
Mount Usher Gardens

Described by Monty Don as one of his favourite gardens ever, Mount Usher is one of only three Irish gardens with a top rating from the UK's The Good Gardens Guide. Mount Usher is also a world-class example of a so-called Robinsonian garden, with its relaxed informality and natural layout. Laid out across 22 acres along the banks of the River Vartry, you'll find over 5,000 species of plants, many of them rare and exotic, all grown organically, creating a tapestry of colour throughout the seasons.

Glendalough Visitor Centre

Go back in time to the golden age of Irish history, to the Ireland of scholars and saints. Here you can follow in the footsteps of St. Kevin, founder of Glendalough. The audio-visual show is available in many languages as well as guided tours of the permanent exhibition. Glendalough is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Wicklow and indeed the island. Unsurprising given the stunning landscape, historic ruins and beautiful walks on offer at this unique location.

Glendalough (or Gleann Da Loch, meaning 'The Glen of the Two Lakes') is situated in the heart of the Wicklow Mountains National Park, which has over one million visitors every year. Set in a glaciated valley with two lakes, the monastic remains include a superb round tower, stone churches and decorated crosses. The round tower is one of the most recognisable landmarks in the area.



Kilruddery Farm Market

The Kilruddery Farm Market takes place weekly on Saturdays from 10-6pm in the charming horse year at Kilruddery House. Here you'll find a wide variety of stalls with artisan crafts, homemade food, farm produce and much more. There's organic vegetables from An Tairseach, baking from Days Kitchen as well as sweet and savory crepes from The Crepe Box. Entry to the Farm Market is free.

Wicklow Way Wine tour

Lovingly crafted in the Garden of Ireland, Moinéir wines are luxurious artisan fruit wines made from 100% Irish fruit, in Ireland's first fruit winery, Wicklow Way Wines. Inspired by the fertile countryside of Ireland, Moinéir is the Gaelic word for 'meadows', where the berries are picked for fruit wines. Made in small batches at this Co. Wicklow winery, entirely from local Irish fruit, the wines offer tantalising aromas, flavours and colours, and are a unique way to savour a little of Ireland's rich bounty. If you'd like to see Ireland's first fruit winery, hear about the wine making process and taste some wine, Brett Stephenson, owner and winemaker will host you at the winery, for a personalised tour and tasting.

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THE PURSUIT OF PATIENCE

Powerscourt Distillery Managing Director Alex Peirce tells Siobhán Breatnach about the art of making whiskey

“An awful lot of what we do ... the harsh truth is, we probably won’t see it. But funnily enough, it’s that spirit that keeps bringing you back,” jokes Alex Peirce.

This dark sense of humour, coupled with a beautifully romantic view of whiskey-making, has led the Dubliner to his latest, and most spirited, venture yet at Co. Wicklow’s Powerscourt Distillery. “The first few years of a distillery are brutally difficult. It’s massively expensive with plenty of wobble moments,” he says. “You need a strong personality and to be very sure of where you’re going long term. What you have to do is lay down the best spirit you can today and build roads for the future, which can be 10, 20, 30, 40 years away.

“You know what you’re doing is good, you just don’t know how it’ll take expression or who’ll be enjoying it or what the context will be. There’s something very rewarding about that.” Sentimentality is non-negotiable when it comes to whiskey. “If you don’t have that you’re

in the wrong industry,” he adds. “Some of our oldest casks come from oak trees that are themselves 100 years old and the barrel itself could be 50 years old.”

“You take huge sentimental pleasure in being in the warehouse and knowing you’re only a few feet away from liquid sitting in barrels for 21 years.” Managing Director at Powerscourt Distillery since its formation in 2016, Peirce – along with co-founders Ashley Gardiner, Gerry Ginty, and Powerscourt Estate owners The Slazenger family – have set about to create a product and story worthy of Irish whiskey’s centuries-old reputation of excellence. Peirce’s own whiskey story goes back to his student days in Edinburgh when, through a university society, he was introduced not just to its taste to the fascinating process that goes into making the perfect dram.

Having arrived in the city to interview for a place at veterinarian school (he went on to study commerce which is another tale in itself) Peirce quickly fell in love with the place. “I went to Scotland back in the early 90s. Like the next eejit off the plane, I didn’t know the first thing about Scotland at all but having had a very enjoyable afternoon post-interview, I decided, whatever happens, I’m coming back here.”

Having joined the Water of Life Society – it was the bottles of whiskey on their stall that enticed him – together with friends he would visit local distilleries and enjoy the various lessons and stories. This in turn saw him introduce his father to the delights of the craft, who then, equally enthused, invested in a distillery on the Isle of Arran on the west coast of Scotland. A break in distilling





followed when Peirce moved to the United States to work in IT in 1996. “It was a lovely time in life,” he says. “Then 2001 happened and by 2003 I was between two different visas, not insurmountable, but I decided to come back. I had family back home, nieces and nephews growing up.”

On his return, he resumed his IT working life – though there was a brief stint helping a friend in the UK to set up a vet practice in Maidstone, Kent. (Some dreams never die!) His focus now, however, is firmly on making Powerscourt both a commercial and critical success. “What we’d seen in Arran, if you’re distilling whiskey, you need a whiskey distiller,” he says. “We wanted to get an expert distiller, somebody who would complement the location because it deserves it. It was always going to be Noel Sweeney (an award-winning master distiller and expert blender) if we could get him. We met for what was supposed to be a one-hour interview, about eight hours later and several cups of tea - and it was tea because he was driving – and really he interviewed me. We did the same the following Sunday and it was obvious we both wanted to work together and we had a match.”

With the legendary Noel in place and a plant build underway, with equipment from Forsyths of Rothes, the distillery soon produced its Fercullen range, which is currently being sold across Europe, Canada, China, and South Korea. “We acquired some aged whiskey that Noel himself had formerly distilled and figured that would see us through the first few years,” Peirce says. “We wanted something credible and genuinely authentic. We liked the idea of him releasing it as an expression of Irish whiskey, which is what we’re currently doing.”



Pic. Noel Sweeney

Their own liquid was then put in barrels in August 2018 and in August this year, the first three-year-old spirit will transition from spirit to whiskey. “It’s a very exciting time,” says Peirce. “I don’t use the word passion. It’s a tired expression that’s lost all meaning. Our people are genuinely interested in doing what they do and making it as good as it can be.”

With dozens of new distilleries cropping up across Ireland in recent years, Peirce is someone who worships at the altar of patience. “I think Ireland will always have something special,” he says. “Whiskey isn’t something you can just suddenly jump on. There are so many lessons on so many levels that have to be absorbed, applied, and perfected. Over the next decade, we’ll have an increased depth of newer Irish whiskey that’s had time to develop and mature, which will lead to its own levels of interest. “You have to be patient and understanding of the nature of the product you’re trying to create. That goes on long after the moment of distillation,” he says. But he jokes: “The truth of the matter is you have to be slightly mad too.” Yes, mad about the art of whiskey-making.



Healing Power of Trees

**Discover the mindful art of forest bathing
- the ancient Celtic practice of 'tig allais'**

While the practice of forest bathing might not be anything new, following a year of lockdowns the appeal of getting back to nature has never been greater. These sensory forest experiences can be found across Ireland and are the perfect way to slow down and take some digital time out. In essence, cultures around the world embrace the practice of forest bathing - short, mindful and leisurely walks through a forest setting.

It rose to popularity in the 1980s thanks to the Japanese who call it 'shinrin-yoku' - closer to home the ancient Celts called it 'tig allais'. Studies have shown it has a range of health benefits so if you're looking to unwind and feel refreshed there's a number of certified and trained guides nationwide to explore. So the next time you head for woodland trails, why not switch off those devices, slow down or stop, take a deep breath and take in your surroundings to the full.

A fallen tree near the fernery, sunlight coming through the branches and

flowing water in the background awaits at Birr Castle Demesne in Co. Offaly. The Red Tree Trail has also been introduced for 2021, covering 5km and features 65 different trees. The trail and forest bathing are included as part of the general admission ticket. Forest bathing walks and forest therapy retreats are available among the magnificent oaks of Glengarriff Nature Reserve in West Cork.

Lisa Curran is the creator of Glengarriff Forest Therapy and will take you on a magical wander, helping you to experience the forest as never before. A Shamanic practitioner with a background in yoga, she hosts monthly forest bathing walks and is the reserve's resident forest therapist. Meanwhile, West Cork Forest Bathing offers the chance to immerse yourself in the Wild Atlantic Way's natural habitats. Experiences vary from two to six hours in the forest and include afternoon tea, a forest school or mindfulness workshops.

Allshire-Howe's family farm in Rosscarbery allows you to explore

Ireland's native tree species along with a sandwich made of the best West Cork produce. Further inland in Borris, Co. Carlow, Blackstairs Eco Trails bring the story of the ancient Celts and their reverence for Ireland's native trees to life. The Celtic Tree Trail starts with a specially commissioned 16-minute film showcasing who the Celts were and why they loved their trees. You'll also visit an Ogham Stone set within five acres of oak. Mystery and folklore combine to reconnect you with the power of nature and recharge the body and mind.

What is forest bathing?

Forest bathing, or 'shinrin-yoku', is a way of walking in the woods, developed in Japan in the 1980s. Involving all the senses, it is the practice of walking slowly and at leisure through the woods. As you walk gently and breathe deeply, the trees' essential oils are absorbed by the body, affecting positive feelings, stress hormone levels, parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous activity, blood pressure, heart rate and brain activity. Forest bathing brings together ancient ways and wisdom with cutting edge environmental health science.



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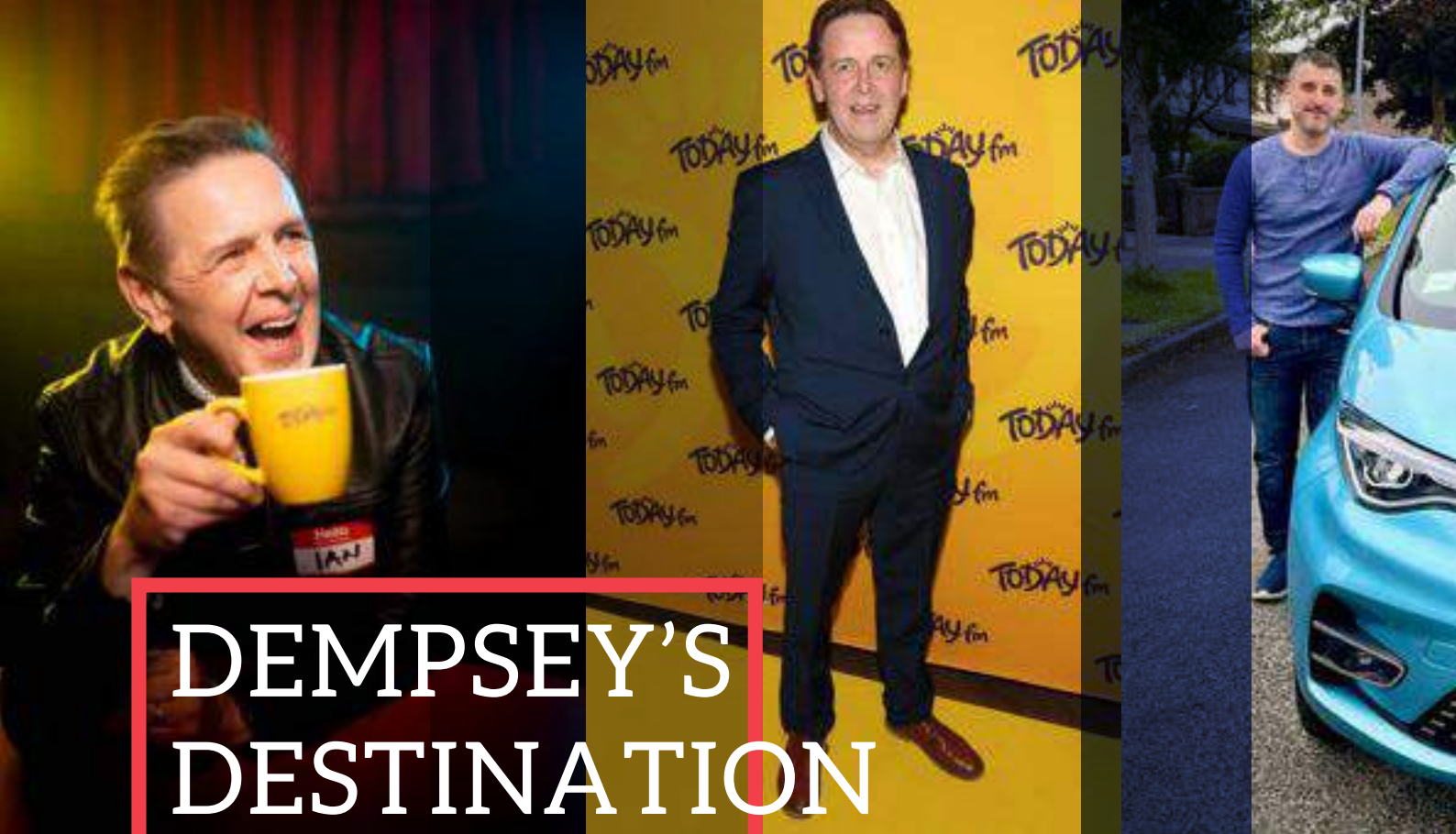
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DEMPSEY'S DESTINATION

Broadcaster and Today FM breakfast show presenter Ian Dempsey tells Siobhán Breatnach about pandemic life, summer plans and the one song his family have banned him from playing ever again

How do you plan to spend your summer holidays this year?

We have two hotels booked in Ireland and have bought flights to Portugal on the off chance that it's okay to leave the country. In Ireland, we are going to Waterford and Killarney. This year we also had a magical time in an unusually quiet Doolin in Co. Clare - normally the buzziest place in the world.

Where are your favourite places to visit in Ireland on a staycation?

Doolin is amazing. A real switch off and always great fun. I also always look forward to going to Cork - the city is so vibrant and the county is exquisite. The people of Cork are something else.

What music would feature on your perfect holiday soundtrack?

Lots of David Bowie of course but I love driving in Ireland with Irish music playing on my speakers. Everything from Paul Brady, Christy Moore, and The Saw Doctors to Picture This, Róisín O and U2.

What's your regular day been like during the pandemic?

For the first part of 2020, I was broadcasting from my

sitting room but thankfully I'm back now in our Today FM studios. It was handy being at home but the novelty wears off fairly quickly. At the moment my routine is very similar every day doing the breakfast show, getting home, having dinner but I really look forward (almost religiously) to 5pm on Fridays, when I have my first G&T of the weekend. I have a Spotify playlist that I use every week and it's timed to start playing 'It's five O'Clock Somewhere' by Alan Jackson, at the stroke of five. My family never want to hear the song again!

What's the first holiday you remember going on and what made it so memorable?

As a family, when I was very young, we stayed in a place called Warrenpoint in Co. Down just beyond Newry. It was by the sea and the house we rented had not only public binoculars across the road but also a locked room with a 'private' sign on it - intriguing when you're seven years old.

What's the best holiday you ever had?

My wife Ger and I went to Sorrento in late 2019 and stayed in the most amazing hotel called Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria, which is in the Centre but cut off by its gardens, so it's really quiet but only meters away from the small streets, restaurants, bars, and



markets. Our bedroom balcony overlooked The Bay of Naples and Mount Vesuvius. Heaven on earth.

What local spots do you enjoy?

I live in Sutton so I'm just minutes away from Howth, which is a self-contained principality. You could really function there quite easily - okay there's no bank or petrol station but apart from that, it's all there. The East pier and the West pier are great to stroll along and there are amazing places to discover up beyond The Summit. Just like they say Howth is magic.

What's the one thing you always pack when you go on holiday in Ireland?

At the moment my Today FM mask but usually as little as possible. These days I look in my wardrobe and pick out loads of things that match each other, so I can make my mind up as I go along and even get dressed in the dark if I have to.

What makes Ireland such a great place to travel?

The most important thing about Ireland is the people who live here. People from Ireland and around the world have a certain way about them when they breathe in the Irish air. Nowadays, the accommodation is world-class, the food is uniquely great quality and we love to talk and drink and get deep and laugh. I hope post-pandemic we can still do all that.

What's new or coming up on The Ian Dempsey Breakfast Show?



It all happens here! You never know what's around the corner. We have just given a car away this week so there was great excitement and with lockdown hopefully easing the plan is to get out and about bringing the show across Ireland. We'll keep you posted.

The Ian Dempsey Breakfast Show airs Monday to Friday from 7-9am on Today FM

Things to Do in Cork



The English Market

In the heart of Cork City and with an eye-catching fountain at its centre, this quirky roofed food market has been trading since 1788. Under the possession of the Cork City Council, it's one of the world's oldest municipal markets. Artisan breads, fruit, and freshly caught seafood are just some of the specialities on offer. In recent years, the market gained worldwide fame when Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain dropped by on her first-ever state visit to the Republic of Ireland in 2011.

St. Patrick's Street

This has remained Cork's main shopping hub. An easy couple of minutes' stroll from The English Market and known locally as 'Pana' the broad, curving street boasts many fine shops. Various architectural styles reflect change over the past 200 years or so.

Cork City Gaol

Another of Cork city's must-dos is the atmospheric and historic City Gaol, which opened in 1824 and closed in 1923. Originally the prison housed both male and female prisoners who committed crimes within the city borders. In 1878, the City Gaol became an all-female prison, which it remained until men opposed to the 1920 Anglo-Irish Treaty were incarcerated there in 1922-1923. The complex then deteriorated until its restoration and re-opening to the public as a tourist attraction in 1993.

Crawford Art Gallery

A two-minute walk from St. Patrick's Street, art-lovers may like to take in this regional museum dedicated to the visual arts, both historic and contemporary. The gallery receives in excess of 200,000 visitors per annum and hosts a range of permanent exhibitions including 18th Century European and Irish sculpture, a collection of Greek and Roman sculpture casts, and contemporary video installations.

St. Finbarre's Cathedral

A leisurely 10-minute walk from St. Patrick's Street takes visitors to this Anglican Cathedral. If preferred, a bus hop (No's 214, 208, 203) will shave a couple of minutes off the journey time. The eye-catching structure in French Early Gothic style was designed by William Burges and consecrated in 1870. It's situated on a site where Christian worship has been taking place since the 7th Century. By its completion, in excess of £100,000 was spent on the building, an enormous amount of money at the time.

Farmgate Cafe

An unmissable experience at the heart of the English Market, the Farmgate is perched on a balcony overlooking the food stalls below, the source of all that fresh local produce on your plate - everything from crab and oysters, to the lamb in your Irish stew. Due to Government restrictions it has been operating a market stall just inside the Princess Street entrance until safe to reopen the restaurant.

Cork Opera House

Given a modern makeover in the 1990s, this leading venue has been entertaining the city for more than 150 years with everything from opera and ballet to stand-up comedy, pop concerts and puppet shows. Around the back, the Half Moon Theatre presents contemporary theatre, dance, art and occasional club nights. Check online for what's coming up once theatres reopen. Get those dates in the diary.

Franciscan Well Brewery

The copper vats gleaming behind the bar give the game away, the Franciscan Well brews its own beer. The best place to enjoy it is in the enormous beer garden at the back. The pub holds regular beer festivals together with other small independent Irish breweries. The beer garden opens from June 7 for pints and pizzas and you can also order their craft beers straight to your home.



Triskel Arts Centre

A fantastic cultural centre housed partly in a renovated church building - expect a varied programme of live music, installation art, photography and theatre at this intimate venue. There's also a cinema (from 6.30pm) and a great café once lockdown restrictions lift. Check out their great online programme of events in the meantime.



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Things To Do In Roscommon

Boyle to Lough Key Cycle Way

Visitors can walk or cycle this scenic route from Boyle Marina along the banks of the Boyle Canal. Expect to see some amazing woodland before you reach the spectacular Lough Key. Along the way there's the opportunity to explore Boyle Abbey to learn about the town and its people in King House.

Elphin Windmill

Who doesn't love a windmill and the Elphin Windmill is the only fully restored windmill in the west of Ireland. Originally used for grinding corn and other grains, it has a spectacular thatched organic rye revolving roof and is now home to a visitor centre where you can learn more about the workings of the windmill. The on-site agricultural museum is home to a threshing machine, winnower and other grain harvesting machinery.

Kilronan Castle lake walk

There's never been a better time to get out and about so why not enjoy a stroll through Kilronan Forest on a path from the castle to the shores of Lough Meelagh. If stunning woodland and lake scenery is your thing, this is the place for you. You can also check off a number of points of interest along the way including Kilronan Castle, Promontory Fort and Doon Point.

Lough Key Forest Park

Steeped in history, Lough Key Forest Park is a vast mix of woodland and islands. It was once called Moylurg where the McDermotts reigned until the 17th Century from their official residence on The Rock, now called Castle Island. Rockingham House was designed by the architect John Nash in 1809/10, while landscaper John Sutherland laid out the park. Today the estate is home to an activity park for all the family to enjoy.



River Shannon Cruise

Ireland's longest river is a true waterway beauty and its longest stretch flows through Co. Roscommon. Relax on the river and take in a number of the spectacular viewing points along the way. These include Boyle Harbour, which is nestled at the foot of the Curlew Mountains and can accommodate up to 28 boats. The Boyle River flows under Knockvillar bridge where the village is home to Tara Marina. Roosky is a popular tourist village along the Shannon famous for its angling. Cootehall, at the foot of the old 'Bawn' also has a 50-berth marina with amazing views.

Tarmonbarry, Lanesborough, Ballyleague and Lecarrow are also among the many other villages worth exploring.



Roscommon Castle

Built in 1269 by Robert de Ufford, Roscommon Castle is a dramatic 13th Century Norman castle with a long history of sieglements. Today you can explore the Castle's past while enjoying the adjacent Loughnaneane Park and Playground, a 14 acre recreational area that has a particular emphasis on wildlife conservation.



Lough Key

Forest and Activity Park

As we all adapt to our current way of living, some words spring to mind immediately when we think of escaping our homes again - Space, Fresh Air, Clear skies, natural surrounds, outdoor facilities and activities.

Lough Key Forest and Activity park is somewhere that encapsulates all those words and more. It is where you can experience a unique cluster of activities and attractions that are suitable for all ages and interests where you can do as much or as little as you like in a historical forest setting surrounded by woodland and water at the centre of 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands'.

You can escape completely and feel free and safe in this stunning natural environment that has an 'off the beaten track' vibe.

Whilst here you can allow yourself to be taken back in time on the 'Lough Key Experience' as you are guided through the old 19th century servant tunnels that once belonged to Rockingham House. You will be blown away by the views from the refurbished Moylurg Viewing Tower and experience Ireland's only Tree Canopy Walk as it gently rises above the forest floor. This is a self-guided tour which allows you to get lost in time and a tour that can be enjoyed at your own pace.

You can climb high through the tree's with Zipit Forest Adventures – an aerial obstacle course linked together with Zip Lines.

You can walk the numerous trails or bring your bike or hire one on site and explore the 8kms of off-road cycling trails within the park or experience the fabulous cycleway recently opened linking the park and the historical town of Boyle.

Appreciate the beautiful vista of castle Island and Lough Key from our Terrace area whilst enjoying some homemade produce from our Food Truck where you can relish Puro Fairtrade coffee with homemade hot and cold savoury snacks finished with mouth wateringly good sweet treats.

Picnic benches are dotted in a socially distanced manner where you can purchase take away options or bring your own picnic and lie on the manicured 'Great Lawn' engrossed in the view of water and land-based activities.

A perfect socially distanced break can be had by staying on site in our Caravan and Campsite which offers secluded woodland sites as well as open tenting spaces. You can also hire a cruiser and moor your boat on our 50-berth marina.

All experiences allow you to immerse yourselves under the clear skies renowned in 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands'.



Website: <https://loughkey.ie/>

Lough Key Forest & Activity Park,
Boyle, Co. Roscommon

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loughkeycamping@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/loughkeyforestpark

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Natalie B Coleman's MOTHER/
SISTER/ GODDESS collection.
Photos: Brid O'Donovan
Jeanne wears NATALIEBOLEMAN
Pink Tulle Ruched Dress, with
Swarovski Goddess Crystals.

'I am a dreamer'

Celebrating a decade in the industry, award-winning designer Natalie B Coleman tells Siobhán Breatnach about her love of Monaghan, finding joy and the future of fashion

Growing up emersed in the natural beauty of her home county of Monaghan, Natalie B Coleman continues to be inspired by freedom and dreams of the countryside. Marking 10 years in 2021 since she launched her studio and eponymous label, her artistry exudes a feminine, yet disruptive quality that has earned her critical success and a legion of fans such as Suki Waterhouse, Mary J Blige and Laura Whitmore.

Having studied at Limerick School of Art & Design and London's Central Saint Martins, it's been a decade of learning and growth. "Surviving in the business," she replies when asked what have been among the highlights of the past decade - perhaps with a hint of humour though as anyone knows building a fashion brand from scratch is no easy task. "Having beautiful people wear my creations," she adds. "Learning a lot about my strengths and weaknesses. Learning to delegate and accepting that not everything can be a success."

"I love working with beautiful people, materials, ideas and creating clothes

that tell stories and make people feel good. Collaborating and learning are also where the joy lies." Coleman uses her creative platform to advocate for social parity and her work embodies a directed hope for modern Ireland. Undertaking a Master of Philosophy in Gender and Women's Studies at Trinity College Dublin, she advocates for women's reproductive rights and has collaborated on campaigns such as Plan International's Because I Am a Girl. "I have always been a supporter of equality and there was an underlying feminism in my work from the beginning, though since starting my studies in gender, it has become more than just informing the process and has embodied all of the recent collections," she says.

Her AW19 collection Sisters, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund was a triumphant celebration of the power women have in creating change in the world. Lockdown saw the designer win the 2020 IDI Designer of the Year Award for that collection. She also created a range of masks in support of other female-focused good causes. "We have been

busy making beautiful masks in organic cotton printed with our own designs and also sexy silk masks and donating a percentage of profits to the charity Women's Aid," she says.

Last Christmas she launched a collection of goddess dresses, titled Sister, Mother, Goddess with prints, embroidery, beading and Carrickmacross lace. "We had the shoot at the Museum of Irish Literature, just off Stephen's Green, the day before lockdown kicked off," she says.

Continued over >>



Boyne Hill House

An Exclusive Country Estate

Eddie Condon (General Manager) describes Boyne Hill House Estate as a “Hidden Gem” and is one of the most romantic destinations in Ireland for weddings. For almost 250 years the estate has stood as a beacon along the banks of the River Boyne.

Now a second-generation Irish owned, family-run business, we continue to offer our couples a truly special and unique wedding experience. What makes us stand out is the attention to detail, which is put into every wedding, together with the beauty and tranquillity of the location. Each wedding is bespoke to our couples, allowing them to tailor make their own

wedding unique to them, with the help from our long serving team of staff that stand as ambassadors of Boyne Hill House.

The luxurious multi award-winning exclusive wedding venue is one of the most sought-after venues in Ireland with up to a two-year waiting list. Boyne Hill House Estate is concealed seductively on 38 acres of idyllic private parkland nestled against the stunning River Boyne. The breath-taking Estate, which is in the heart of the Boyne Valley, together with our magical secret garden, exposed wall indoor ceremony area and our 18th century underground tunnel creates the perfect setting for your wedding



from the moment you arrive. The Boyne View Suite offers a fine dining atmosphere and comfortably seating for up to 180 guests, with the Georgian Mansion House and the Courtyard Mews boasting 43 deluxe guestrooms to accommodate your guests. With full exclusivity on your wedding day, the Estate becomes your own private residence.

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“Aisling Farinella was the stylist and Brid O’Donovan the photographer. Weldon’s jewellers inside Powerscourt loaned all their gorgeous mourning Victorian jewellery.”

Models, ranging in ages from their 20s to their 70s, included Tolu Makay, Eta Connolly, Andrea Horan, Rachael Thomas, Jeanne Nicole Ni Ainle and the Gaffey girls. “Mum Lorna and her three daughters Rachel, Kate, and Suzanne, all stunning redheads,” Coleman says. “It was an empowering representation of modern Irish diverse women. I collected a high-profile cast of women to collaborate with and created a bespoke dress design for each, taking powerful archetypes in women’s lives and linking these back to goddesses.

“The collection is a celestial celebration of women heralding their diverse achievements, multi-faceted talents, different bodies, sexuality, and strength,” she adds. “The message is that there is a goddess in every woman, and inspiration to be taken from all of our lives.”

Merging tradition and innovation is part of the Natalie B Coleman vision. Coleman became the first Irish designer ambassador to Microsoft Ireland in 2013 - bridging technology with fashion. “I am interested in the possibilities of creating stories through fashion and using AI but it is something that I haven’t had any access to yet,” she says. “For me at the moment, I like working with craftspeople in a future craft way and am very much about handwork such as embroidery, needlework, knit, weave,



Andrea wears
NATALIEBCOLEMAN Ivory
Ruched Aphrodite Dress with
Hand Embroidered Lover

“Monaghan was a beautiful place to grow up in terms of been in nature all day and having lots of freedom. I was into books and daydreaming pretty much, I think both of those things have stayed with me”

illustrations and screen printing. I think that we have such a beautiful heritage of traditional craft skills and working these into future craft ideals through concept and materials with sustainability at the core is how the industry will move forward.”

Expect some exciting collaborations later this year and a launch of a very special collection in 2022. In the meantime, the Dublin-based designer is looking forward to spending the summer

with her family. She spent lockdown “throwing myself into the sea regularly and falling in love with it” – no surprise given her love of the great outdoors from an early age. “Monaghan was a beautiful place to grow up in terms of been in nature all day and having lots of freedom,” she says. “I was into books and daydreaming pretty much. I think both of those things have stayed with me. I am definitely a dreamer.” And for Natalie B Coleman those dreams have very few limits.

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She'll be coming down the mountains ...

Waterford's Comeragh Mountains is the gift that keeps on giving. Stretching from the coast near Dungarvan inland to Clonmel in Co. Tipperary, the central part is a boggy plateau with rocky and loughs along the fringes.

It's here that you'll find the rock-walled Coumshingaun and Coum Iarthair, as well as Crotty's Lough - named after the notorious highway bandit William Crotty who lay low in this remote wonderland.

Surrounded by cliffs on three sides, Coumshingaun is a great example of a corrie lake.

A magnificent sight awaits at the top: soak it up. A network of forest tracks is also perfect for walking. Try the 4km Coumshingaun Lake Walk, which should take about two and a half hours. It starts on Kilclooney Bridge on the R676 Dungarvan/Carrick-on-Suir road.

Photography: Tom Deasy/Fáilte Ireland/Tourism Ireland



ART IS LONG, LIFE IS SHORT

Artist Mary Claire Kirwan tells Siobhán Breatnach how nature and a desire for greater sustainability inspired an unexpected collaboration

“I always had a long-term dream of being a full-time artist, living remotely surrounded by nature but I was very logical and level-headed in my 20s and early 30s,” says Mary Claire Kirwan. That desire became reality with a jolt for the former fashion creative director, when a surfing accident in early 2019 left her joy, peace and way of life in shatters. “I had an accident which completely re-shifted my focus, my ambitions, my desires,” she says. “I had a lot of time to think while not being able to move. It hit me that I was on a commercial hamster wheel. I initially started painting for pain relief but it was the happiest I had felt in years, even though I had no structure, no guaranteed income, no plan at that time,” she adds. “I’m very fortunate my family and my husband were encouraging of this new version of me.”

This life-changing experience and the

strength garnered from it, has perhaps guided Kirwan through the pandemic lockdowns. “I think the first lockdown was almost a novelty and I just painted every day, for four months without worry,” she says. “Though I think in hindsight, I was too consumed with the bigger picture of the world, our health, our planet, when I will see my family in Ireland again, to fully shape my art during that time. But it was really interesting and encouraging for everything to slow down - it created a surge in creativity globally.”

As for the digital experience that has become all too familiar in lockdown, she’s not a fan. “The world pre-pandemic was heavily digital but it’s an essential now. I struggle with this, especially for my style and body of work,” she says. Instagram, she adds, is a great tool for business but less so for showcasing her creations. “I have bigger real worlds,” she says. “I want them to live and be enjoyed within and,

in some cases, privately. I find privacy, so beautiful and elegant: I can see it becoming a bigger focus in the future.”

“My first solo exhibition, which was cancelled, was to be a celebration of my art, music, food, drink, our senses. Humans in one space ... social energy.” While that body of work may not have had its public showcase, it has led to a special collaboration with one of Ireland’s historic woollen mills. United by craftsmanship, sustainability and inspired by nature, Kirwan has teamed up with Cushendale to create an heirloom comfort blanket called Touch.

The striking campaign images were shot by actress India Mullen of Normal People fame. Six generations of the Cushen family have devoted themselves to crafting textiles in the small town of Graiguenamanagh, Co. Kilkenny since the 18th century. Cushendale is now one of only two remaining woollen mills in

Ireland, collecting Irish fleece to dye, spin and weave at their heritage mill.

Working closely with Miriam, the daughter of Philip Cushen, Kirwan has produced 50, limited edition, 100 percent woollen blankets, made from wool from the rare and protected sheep called The Galway. "Cushendale is an amazing woollen mill, not too far from my family home in Wexford. To be creating something traceable from flock to fleece makes me really proud," Kirwan says. "I have not been able to travel home to see the sheep or the blankets in production, so this has offered me a connection to home through a physical item during a time of isolation.

"My past life in fashion was about consumption and mass commercials," she adds. "I hold guilt that I have caused damage to our planet from my years within that world, so I want to offer unique, long-lasting items that become family heirlooms, like a piece of traditional art." Kirwan's home and studio is a boat on the River Thames in London, though there are plans for a move to Dubai in the autumn. "It is restrictive in size so if I work on larger bodies of work, I move temporarily to a land-based studio in the Bermondsey area," she says. "I live on a houseboat within the same moorings as my studio - a small friendly community near Tower Bridge.

"I'm excited to see how a change in my living environment will affect my work and painting style," she adds. "I hope to learn more about gold and incorporate it within my work in time. I love absorbing trends, colours, interiors, fashion, art, film and I have always been drawn to beautiful things situated in a realist world. My world is very visual. I just adore 'beauty' whether it be in nature, people, animals, design, architecture. It is the best inspiration."

And what of the future? "Hopefully some roaring 20's and mad parties," she jokes. "Beyond the parties, I hope for a greater understanding about our time on planet earth, and our impact. "My art is constantly evolving but at the moment I hope it represents joy, hope, positivity and comfort. Joy to me is living pain-free with a peaceful mind and a healthy body."



Blanket images by India Mullen

Things to Do in Wexford



Irish National Heritage Park

Located on the banks of the picturesque River Slaney, The Irish National Heritage Park truly is the cornerstone of Ireland's Ancient East. A not-for-profit outdoor museum depicting 9,000 years of re-created Irish history situated within natural forestry and wet woodlands. Take an unforgettable journey through Ireland's past and experience stories, sights and sounds that shaped our country.

So, what are you waiting for?

Tintern Abbey

Tintern Abbey was a Cistercian abbey located on the Hook peninsula, Co. Wexford. The Abbey - which is today in ruins some of which have been restored - was founded in c.1200 by William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, as the result of a vow he had made when his boat was caught in a storm nearby.

Colclough Walled Garden & Maze

A beautiful restored 1800s Georgian walled garden split into two sections - an ornamental and a kitchen garden.

Loftus Hall

Loftus Hall is a large country house on the Hook Peninsula. Built on the site of the original Redmond Hall, it is said by locals to have been haunted by the devil and the ghost of a young woman.

Johnstown Castle & Gardens

The spectacular ornamental grounds and gardens surrounding the 19th Century castle were designed by Daniel Robertson who is famed for the gardens at Powerscourt in Co. Wicklow. Stroll through the grounds with over 200 varieties of trees and shrubs. Relax by the castle lakeside with its Gothic towers, waterfalls and statues. Enjoy a picnic in the sunken Italian garden or museum courtyard. Watch the peacocks strut by and display their finery. View the ruins of Rathlannon Castle.

Wexford Festival Opera

The Wexford Festival Opera is an opera festival that takes place in the town of Wexford in south-eastern Ireland during the months of October and November. October 2021 marks the 70th Wexford Festival Opera.

Wexford Wildlife Reserve

Home to local and migratory birds, this 200-hectare reserve offers a visitor centre with a tower hide.

Dunbrody Famine Ship

Reproduction 1840s emigrant vessel with exhibits, guided tours and costumed interpreters, plus a café for that Irish cup of tea or a coffee.

John F Kennedy Arboretum

The John F. Kennedy Arboretum on the Hook Head Peninsula at New Ross is a park under public administration. On 252 hectares there are approximately 4,500 species of trees and shrubs.



Enniscorthy Castle

Enniscorthy Castle, in the heart of Enniscorthy town, was originally built in the 13th century, and has been 'home' to Norman knights, English armies, Irish rebels and prisoners, plus local merchant families. Why not visit the dungeon to see the rare medieval wall art - The Swordsman, or the battlements at the top of the castle to marvel at the amazing views of Vinegar Hill Battlefield, Enniscorthy town, and the sights, flora and fauna of the surrounding countryside.

Wells House & Gardens

Wells House and Gardens is a Victorian tudor gothic country house museum, located around 7km outside of Kilmuckridge, Co. Wexford. It was designed by Daniel Robertson in the 1830s.



Wells House & Gardens is one of the top tourist attractions in the Sunny South East with beautiful surroundings and a peaceful, friendly atmosphere, Relax, Play, Explore

Explore over 450 acres of the Wells estate that is the perfect day out for young and old, relax in the restored terrace gardens designed by Daniel Robertson, play in our adventure playground, make friends with the resident animals in the animal farm, discover hidden surprises on our Fairy and Mogue's Enchanted woodland walks, transport yourself back in time with a tour of the historic house lead by a tour guide in Victorian dress. Enjoy a picnic with the family on the grounds with treats from Brambles the onsite restaurant.

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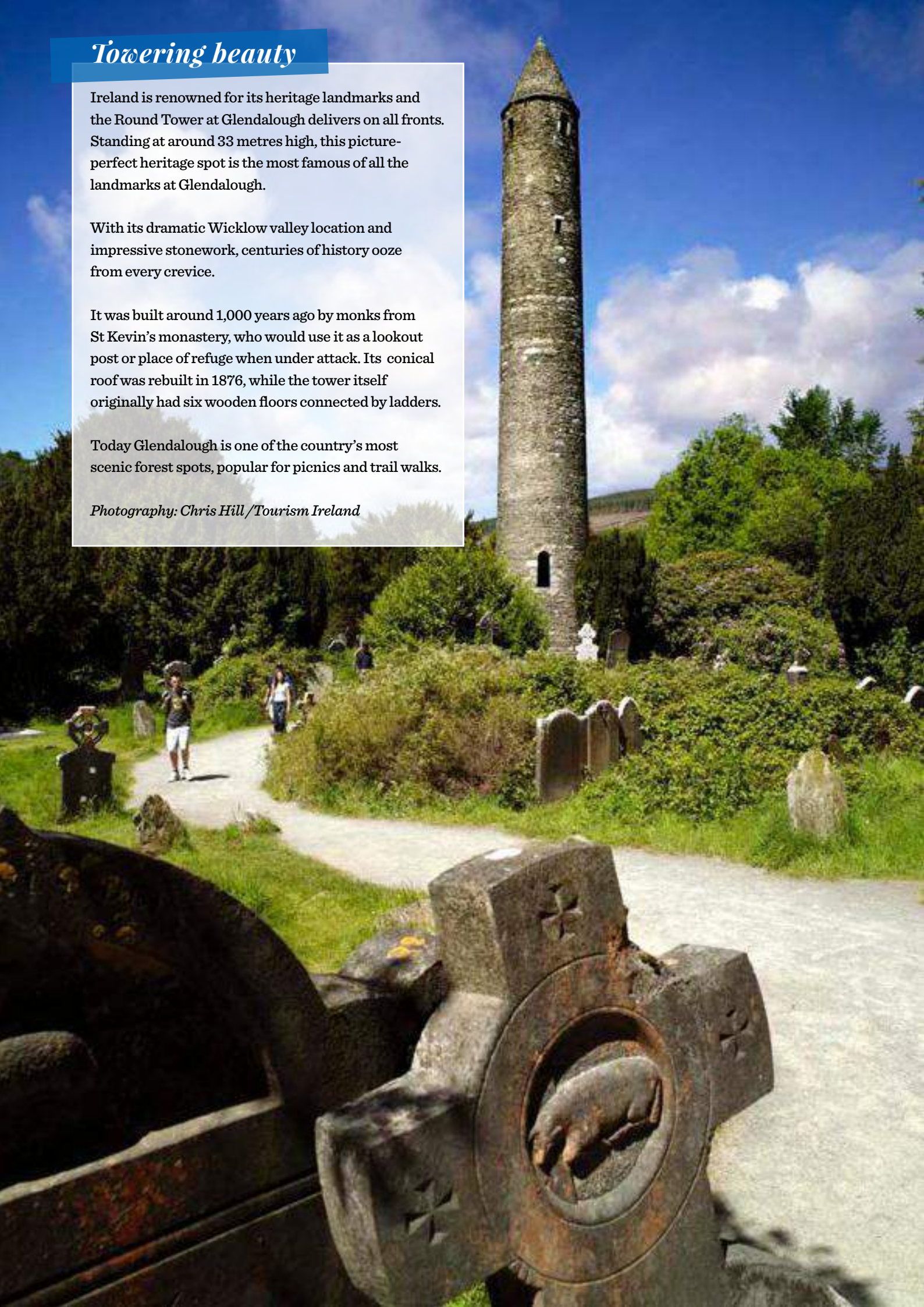
Ireland is renowned for its heritage landmarks and the Round Tower at Glendalough delivers on all fronts. Standing at around 33 metres high, this picture-perfect heritage spot is the most famous of all the landmarks at Glendalough.

With its dramatic Wicklow valley location and impressive stonework, centuries of history ooze from every crevice.

It was built around 1,000 years ago by monks from St Kevin's monastery, who would use it as a lookout post or place of refuge when under attack. Its conical roof was rebuilt in 1876, while the tower itself originally had six wooden floors connected by ladders.

Today Glendalough is one of the country's most scenic forest spots, popular for picnics and trail walks.

Photography: Chris Hill / Tourism Ireland





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VANDERLUST



Wexford native Niamh Mahon tells Siobhán Breatnach about the inspiration behind her camper van renovation project and plans for a summer on the road

I have been wanting to own a camper van for the longest time. Last year my husband and I decided to go ahead and buy an empty van and convert it ourselves. With no holidays and none on the horizon it seemed like the time was right. Little did we know there would be another lockdown. The van was great to give us something to do together on the weekends. We researched a lot on what to do and how to do it. YouTube was a huge help and there are a few Facebook groups too, which are fantastic help with any questions, no matter how silly they seem.

We bought an Opel Movano medium-wheel base van. We decided to buy from our local garage as they had a full-service history and we felt more comfortable knowing that. Certain specs are needed to qualify the van as a camper, so we started from there as to what had to be done. I started following lots of Instagram accounts relating to van builds and we decided what the best layout was for us. My husband is fantastic at anything DIY and I learned so much by doing this conversion with him.



Search #vanlife on Instagram and you'll discover over 10-million posts offering idyllic views and ideas for a more minimalistic and simple way to travel and explore at your own pace. Given Ireland's wide-open roads, its stunning rugged coastline and a network of lively cities, heritage towns and cosy villages, it's no wonder we're embracing the potential for fun and freedom in a whole new way.

Buying and renovating camper vans and motor homes became passion projects for many across the country during lockdown. Gorgeous driving routes like the Ring of Kerry, Wicklow's Braveheart Drive or the Inishowen 100 in Co. Donegal, offers perfect sunsets and picturesque backdrops showing Mother Nature at her best. The Wild Atlantic Way, untamed and natural, stretches gloriously for 1,550-miles along the entire west coast, while The Grand Tour links attractions in counties Wicklow and Kildare and is another great way to explore the stories of the Ancient East. Rolling hills, golden beaches, ancient castles, and medieval ruins, what's not to love about hitting the road in your very own home on wheels.

I am a practice manager in a GP surgery and I also have a photography studio (Beehive Studios). I specialise in new-born photography. Obviously, with lockdown the studio was closed so converting the van was great, as I am used to being busy with both my jobs. We both love to be outdoors and having the van allows us to literally hop in the van and off we go. Even if it's just down to a local beach, it doesn't matter you still get that sense of freedom. We are very lucky we live in Wexford and have some of the best beaches in the country, so we are never stuck for a place to go.

Being back to work now we haven't managed to go further afield as of yet but we are planning on doing the Wild Atlantic Way in a few weeks. I am very excited about this. There are lots of places in Ireland that I have not seen, which I would imagine, lots of people are in the same situation. This is a great opportunity to explore Ireland. One of my top places to visit is the Giant's Causeway. Donegal is another on my list and I am just looking forward to finally seeing and exploring my country, finding places that are off the beaten track, eating in local restaurants and enjoying the freedom the van will give us on a very new type of holiday for us.

Woodenbridge



Nestled in the breath-taking Vale of Avoca, Co. Wicklow, lies Woodenbridge Hotel & Lodge – Established in 1608 Woodenbridge is officially Ireland's Oldest Hotel, but that hasn't stopped us from staying modern.

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Relaxing in your room after exploring everything our bountiful county has to offer, from the golden sand of Brittas Bay to the rolling hills of Glendalough – reveals stunning views over the Golf Course or Vale of Avoca itself. Paired with a level of hospitality carefully crafted over 400 years, Woodenbridge is your home away from home.



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Things to Do in Meath & Offaly

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Slieve Bloom Mountains

This is where the hills really are alive. The wonderful thing about the Slieve Bloom Mountains - besides being the most unspoilt and uncongested in the country - is that you'll find trails to suit every ability from the experienced hiker to the casual stroller. Whether you take on the long-distance Slieve Bloom Way or opt for one of the shorter looped trails, you'll be rewarded by spectacular views stretching across the midlands of Ireland and on a clear cloud free day you can see the four highest points of each of Ireland's four provinces.

Lough Borra Discovery Park

Transformed from its previous incarnation as a commercial bog where peat was harvested to heat homes around the country, today Lough Borra Discovery Park is home to countless species of birds and wildlife, fish-filled lakes and a permanent exhibition of huge outdoor sculptures. These sculptures give the park an other-worldly feel, created using the old industrial materials of the bog such as locomotives, rail-line and timber, all crafted into magnificent works of art.

Clonmacnoise Monastic Site

The site is entered through the visitor centre, where a number of crossslabs are displayed. Multi-lingual guided tours of the site are available and there are also exhibitions that deal with the flora, fauna and landscape of the region. But you don't have to be a history buff to simply enjoy the peace and tranquillity of Clonmacnoise, nestling as it has done for centuries past, on the banks of the majestic Shannon. No visit to Offaly would be complete without a visit to this most special of destinations - even Pope John Paul II stopped by when he visited Ireland back in 1979.

Moneygall

The people of Moneygall will never forget the day the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama and the First Lady Michelle Obama visited their village, his Irish ancestral home. President Obama's late mother Ann Dunham was a descendant of the Kearney family who left Moneygall after the Famine to build a new life in New York in 1850. Maybe you fancy a visit to Ollie Hayes' Bar in the Main Street like Mr President did, or view the President's ancestral home where the Kearney Family left from in 1850 and view the old school house where the shoemaker's family were educated. You can also call into the nearby Barack Obama Plaza Visitor Centre.

MEATH

Loughcrew Gardens

If you're looking for the perfect mix of history, beauty and fantasy Loughcrew Estate & Gardens in Oldcastle is a magical experience that will be right up your street.

The gardens themselves are a breath-taking spectacle of 17th and 19th Century landscaping and pleasure gardens. Take a walk through the central area made up of approximately six acres including a lime avenue, extensive lawns and terraces, a magnificent herbaceous border and physic border. There's also a medieval motte and St. Oliver Plunkett's family church and Tower House within the gardens.

Spire of Lloyd

Ireland's only inland lighthouse was built by the first Earl of Bective in 1791 in memory of his father Sir Thomas Taylor. This mock lighthouse gives panoramic views of five counties. Booking is essential.

Hill of Tara

Explore Ireland's ancient spiritual and political capital at the Hill of Tara. For well over 2,000 years royalty occupied Tara and the Five Ancient Roads of Ireland converged here, linking Crúachan, Rathcroghan in Co. Roscommon, Eamain Macha, NavanFort in Co. Armagh and Dún Ailinne. The views of the surrounding countryside and rich pastureland are stunning. The hill is located 15 minutes from Navan off the N3.

Rock Farm Slane

Rock Farm is an activity enthusiast's dream. Take a spin out by bike, explore by foot or hit the river by kayak, it's a great way to take in the beauty of the Boyne Valley and get a healthy dose of fresh air too. Rock Farm Slane Electric Bikes are also part of the Electric Escapes network. Or you can take part in guided walking tours of the Slane Castle Estate and Demense Woods.

Solstice Arts Centre

Meath's entertainment hub, Solstice Arts Centre offers an exciting range of artistic strands including drama, music, comedy, arts and theatre, incorporating both established international and national and new artists in their events. Check out their online offerings until the centre fully reopens again.

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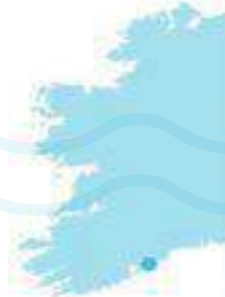
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This largely unspoilt and undiscovered part of South East Ireland is a unique place, full of medieval history which has now been brought to life! We have a number of attractions in Youghal of international significance which can be incorporated into any itinerary, including tours of the newly opened Youghal Clock Gate Tower and St. Mary's Collegiate Church. However, no visit to Youghal is complete without a stroll along the 500m boardwalk. Our tours are suitable for F.I.T Groups, leisure and incentive visits.

For Tourist Information: www.youghal.ie Tel: 024-92447



Things to Do in Waterford



Waterford Crystal

Go behind the scenes and gain a better understanding of the time and work that goes into crystal making on a one-hour tour of the House of Waterford Crystal factory. Your guide explains the step-by-step process of crystal making, as you wander the rooms where different techniques are used along the way. Meet a few of the high-end crystal makers, and visit the retail store where you can explore one of the world's largest displays of Waterford Crystals.

Waterford's Medieval Museum & Bishop's Palace

Visit Waterford's Medieval Museum and Bishop's Palace, and discover two top attractions with ease on this combined admission ticket. Follow a guide through Waterford's Medieval Museum, home to many beautiful pre-Reformation treasures. Explore the 13th Century Choristers' Hall and 15th Century wine vaults, and gain insight into life here those centuries ago. Visit the Bishop's Palace, the town's grand 18th Century Georgian residence. Admire treasures including beautiful silverware and elegant glassware, and explore Waterford's history from the 1700 to the 1970s.



Epic tour of the Viking Triangle

Step back in time and explore Irish history from the Viking to the Victorian era on this one hour Viking Triangle tour in Waterford. Follow your guide through this ancient Irish city and visit six national monuments including Reginald's Tower, Greyfriars Friary, Choristers' Hall, the Mayor's Wine Vault and the Bishop's Palace. Gain insight into Ireland's colourful past and learn of the invasions, battles and victories which shaped the country we know today. Admire archaeological treasures from centuries passed and trace Ireland's architecture through the generations.

Waterford Greenway

Waterford Greenway is a spectacular 46km off-road cycling and walking trail along an old railway line which runs between Waterford and Dungarvan. From the Viking City alongside the River Suir, out by Mount Congreve Gardens, through Kilmacthomas, across 11 bridges, over three impressive viaducts and through a 400m long tunnel with wonderful views of the Comeragh Mountains and Dungarvan Bay.

Comeragh Drive

The Comeragh trail takes you out on the N25 from Waterford towards Dungarvan and at the village of Leamybrien, follow the signs for the Comeragh Drive and Mahon Falls. The Comeragh Mountains are awe-inspiringly beautiful with changing terrain, fabulous views and sheep are grazing everywhere. Mahon Falls are on the way up and cascade down the mountainside to the base. Clouds sit on the mountaintops and add to the picturesque beauty of the place.





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There's only one person to turn to when you want to build a mesmerisingly intricate maze to thrill and entertain. Adrian Fisher, aka, the world's greatest maze maker, has put his magic touch on one of the newest attractions to open in the Ancient East this summer. From water mazes and walk-through parting waterfalls to lasers and mirrors, UK-based Fisher has designed life-size adventure puzzles from as far afield as Mexico to Japan, Thailand and the US. Now the inventor has turned his skills to Ireland's Skypark Adventure Park, who have opened their newest adventure activity - the Ireland's Ancient East Maze.

Getting lost is the best of fun at Skypark's 776m² wooden maze aimed towards kids and adults of all ages. Built from sustainable wood, the maze route can be altered via movable gates meaning there are lots of solutions so people can return numerous times. As well as having to find your way out, the maze also takes people on a whirlwind tour of some of main attractions situated in Ireland's Ancient East. Maze adventurers are tasked with finding 10 attraction points within the maze featuring locations like Brú na Bóinne, Glendalough and Blarney Castle.

Watch out for those ziplining overhead as you try to find your way out.

Built at a cost of €120,000 with help from Louth Leader funding, this newest attraction in Carlingford signals the return of some normality this summer. The Co. Louth located park is expecting huge demand as families and groups of friends look to get back to nature and enjoy the great outdoors. Skypark has acres of open space and can accommodate lots of small groups of people in a socially distant way. Other activities include aerial adventure, foot-golf, mini-golf, archery, mini-jeeps and skypark express train. They also offer an activity combo pass, which means families can stay for a full day, bring a picnic or enjoy the parks' new hot food menu.



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IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST®
Wonder Through Time



HERITAGE GEMS

TO TAKE YOU BACK IN TIME

If you're looking for drama, romance and heart-breaking sagas stretching back over 5,000 years, go no further than the Ancient East. And when it comes to epic history, the city of Waterford and its Viking past has it in abundance. Once one of the great ports of Ireland, today it's famous for its crystal, fabulous new Greenway route and its culture-laden medieval streets.

At its heart is the Viking Triangle, where the Waterford Museum of Treasures displays artifacts from over 1,000 years of history. The Waterford Treasures collection of five museums tells the fascinating story of a city founded by those sea-faring Norse pirates in 914. The country's rich Viking history is now being introduced to a whole new audience through a newly released video game, Assassin's Creed Valhalla/Wrath of the Druids Ireland extension. Take a walking tour with one of the expert guides at Waterford Treasures - your ticket also gives access to the Medieval Museum and Bishop's Palace Museum, as well as the brand-new Irish Museum of Time and the Irish Silver Museum.



Step back into the 13th and 15th centuries at the Medieval Museum, where an exhibition highlights the medieval Cloth-of-Gold Vestments and the 1373 Great Charter Roll of Waterford. The 18th century Bishop's Palace Museum is also home to the oldest surviving piece of Waterford Crystal in the world. Meanwhile, the newest attraction, the Irish Museum of Time, is located in a gothic-style church and houses a fine collection of timepieces.

Explore more along the Ancient East ...

CASTLETOWN HOUSE, CO. KILDARE

Ireland's largest and grandest Palladian-style house was built by an Irish commoner. Ornate and opulent, 18th-century Castletown tells tales of lords, rebels and rock stars.



CLONMACNOISE, CO. OFFALY

Once a great centre of monastic learning, Clonmacnoise boasts impressive high crosses and round towers, the ruins of a cathedral and churches, plus the largest collection of Early Christian grave slabs in Western Europe.

HILL OF UISNEACH, CO. WESTMEATH

Ireland's sacred hill has been at the heart of the island's history over millennia. Here a great fire was lit each year to usher in summer, an event celebrated today in the annual Bealtaine Fire Festival.

WICKLOW GAOL, CO. WICKLOW

For 200 years, this prison held the poor and desperate alongside rogues and rebels. An interactive tour led by costumed actors tells the story of its prisoners.





NEWBRIDGE
HOUSE AND FARM

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Explore Dublin's best kept secret! Located just 10 minutes from Dublin Airport Newbridge House & Farm is wonderful day out for the whole family. Follow the new interactive discovery trail through the courtyard, paddocks and pastures and get up close with some of Ireland's rarest breeds of farm animals. Say hello to the Shetland and Connemara ponies, pigs, goats, baby chicks, bunnies, birds and much more.

Over 350 acres of space for picnics and play.

Visit newbridgehouseandfarm.com



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MALAHIDE
CASTLE AND GARDENS

MAGNIFICENT MALAHIDE CASTLE IS A STONE'S THROW AWAY



Malahide Castle is Dublin's magnificent 12th Century Castle just a stone's throw from Dublin City Centre. Set on 250 acres of parkland, Malahide Castle is bursting with things to do for the whole family. Lose yourself in the West Lawn and along the interactive fairy trail, explore the exotic butterfly house and pack a picnic from the Avoca Foodhall. So many memories waiting to be made...

Visit Malahidecastleandgardens.ie to find out more



Connect with us



Things to Do in Kilkenny, Tipperary, Laois & Louth

Kilkenny

The Medieval Mile

Kilkenny's Medieval Mile is a trail that links Kilkenny Castle to St. Canice's Cathedral. This stretch is filled with shops, pubs, restaurants, picturesque alleyways and tonnes of history. It's fun to do on your own, but if you are a history fanatic or just a story love, consider taking a guided walking tour.

St Canice's Cathedral

Located at the opposite side of the Medieval Mile from Kilkenny Castle, St. Canice's Cathedral is one of the most popular things to do in Kilkenny. This historic building is beautiful and impressive, with two of its biggest highlights being the colourful stained-glass windows and the Round Tower.

The Black Abbey

Kilkenny's Black Abbey dates back to 1225. Throughout the tumultuous years it has faced many changes and, of course, the wear of time. However, it has been restored to its original grandeur complete with ornate stained-glass windows, the most impressive of which is the Rosary Window.

Tipperary

The Lough Derg Blueway

Imagine the scene - 13,000 hectares of clear water surrounded by beautiful and dramatic countryside in three Irish counties (Clare, Tipperary, and Galway), and traversed by a series of trails, on the water and on land, that provide the opportunity for exhilarating activities and wonderful adventures.

Cahir Castle

Cahir's awesome castle enjoys a river-island site with moat, massive walls, turrets and keep, mullioned windows, vast fireplaces and dungeons. Founded by Conor O'Brien in 1142, and passed to the Butler family in 1375, it's one of Ireland's largest castles.

The Rock of Cashel

The Rock of Cashel is one of Ireland's most spectacular historic sites: a prominent green hill, banded with limestone outcrops, rising from a grassy plain and bristling with ancient fortifications. It's a five-minute stroll from the town centre up to the Rock, from where fantastic views range over the Tipperary countryside.

The Swiss Cottage

A 30-minute walk along a riverside path from Cahir Castle car park leads to this thatched cottage, surrounded by roses, lavender and honeysuckle. A lavish example of Regency Picturesque, the cottage was built in 1810 as a retreat for Richard Butler, 12th Baron Caher, and his wife, and was designed by London architect John Nash, creator of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton.

Louth

Monasterboice

Crowing ravens lend an eerie atmosphere to Monasterboice, an intriguing monastic site down a leafy lane in sweeping farmland, which contains a cemetery, two ancient church ruins, one of the finest and tallest round towers in Ireland plus two of the most important high crosses. Come early or late in the day to avoid the crowds. It's just off the M1 motorway, about 8km north of Drogheda.

Old Mellifont Abbey

In its Anglo-Norman prime, this abbey, 1.5km off the main Drogheda - Collon road (R168), was the Cistercians' first and most magnificent centre in Ireland. Highly evocative and well worth exploring, the ruins still reflect the site's former splendour. Mellifont's most recognisable building and one of the country's finest examples of Cistercian architecture is the 13th-century lavabo, the monks' octagonal washing room.

Glyde Inn

Dating from 1770, this wonderful family-run pub and restaurant anchors Annagassan life. It has its own beer, Linn Duachail (named for a local Viking settlement currently being excavated), which is also the name of its excellent restaurant which overlooks the beer garden, Dundalk Bay's tidal shallows and Mourne Mountains beyond.

Sonairte

At this inspiring, not-for-profit ecology centre, 10km southeast of Drogheda in Laytown, on an 18th-century former farm, you can wander through a walled organic garden, visit a beekeeping museum and take a biodiverse nature trail and river walk that incorporates wetlands, woodlands and grasslands. Recharge at its organic cafe or browse its home and garden shops.

Laois

Gash Gardens

Created as a result of the passions of owners Mary Keenan and Ross Doyle, Gash Gardens are situated in Castletown, Portlaoise on the banks of the River Nore. Here you'll find a large rock garden with rare alpine, a heath garden, and a host of colourful flowers. Bask in the birdsong and visit the moon house and relaxing water features.

Emo Court

Designed by architect James Gandon in 1790, Emo Court is a terrific example of neo-classical style. Restored in the 1960s, the house has a long and colourful history and is surrounded by beautiful gardens and parkland including formal lawns, a lake and woodland walks. In 1994 the estate was taken over by the Office of Public Works.



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INTRODUCING

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A SHORT STORY THAT TOOK 30 YEARS

Back in 1989 when the idea of the Steakout was conceived, there were very few restaurants in Limerick City. It was a gamble to open a restaurant with a Western theme and located in a basement was a huge gamble also. Thankfully it was exactly what the Limerick people were looking for, and they responded accordingly. Back then our Waiting Staff were attired in full Cowboy / Cowgirl regalia, complete with Stetsons, Guns & Holsters!!!! This caused quite a stir and was a great talking point in Limerick at that time. Kids especially were fascinated and spent more time playing with the Staff than eating their food!!



Even, way back then the owners and management were adamant to employ staff that were friendly and energetic, with fun personalities and willing to engage and built a relationship with the customers. We to this day have loyal customers coming into to us since 1989. Many have celebrated their Engagements, Marriages, Christenings and sad occasions also with us. This is what makes it all worth while when customers choose to re-visit us time and time again.

In its early days the Steakout had only about 50 seats in one basement, however this wasn't sufficient so another basement was added a couple of years after opening to take us up to about 90 seats. Again the Steakout grew in popularity and another basement was acquired and we added another 50 seats. We remained with approx 140 seats for many many years. But in 2016 we acquired another basement property and extended into that with another 60 seats added. This we think will be our final extension – much to the pleasure of our hard-working staff.



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Castlemartyr Resort

Escape to Castlemartyr Resort this year, with a wonderful selection of seasonal packages to suit all tastes. Nestled amid East Cork's woodlands, the luxury 5-Star Castlemartyr Resort is a destination richly steeped in Irish history. Situated on 220 acres, Castlemartyr Resort consists of a grand 17th-century country manor house that sits adjacent to the ruins of an 800-year-old-castle.

Castlemartyr Resort includes a 10 treatment room Spa and pool overlooking the gardens, while the 18-hole Ron Kirby designed golf course is a perfect challenge for players new and experienced. The hotel offers a variety of dining options, including the award-winning Bell Tower Restaurant serving modern Irish cuisine with a twist, and the all-new TwelveTen: The Grill.

For more information, or to book your escape, visit castlemartyrresort.ie or call 021 421 9000.



Fishers Department Store

Fishers Department Store is a must-visit on any trip to Wicklow. The warm welcome hits you immediately from the smiling team to the tempting displays of gifts, clothing, homewares, health foods and mouth-watering treats. Proud to stock many Irish and sustainable brands, perfect for your holiday - on the beach, mountains or out for dinner!



Slane Castle Estate

Home to the Conyngham family and world-famous concert venue, Slane Castle Estate extends over 1500 acres in the Boyne Valley, near Newgrange. Summer visitors can soak up the history on Castle tours and enjoy a casual menu in the Courtyard or at the Food Truck. Watch out for exclusive fine dining events.



Powerscourt Distillery

Powerscourt Distillery is only 30 mins from Dublin, nestled on the beautiful Powerscourt Estate & Gardens beside the picturesque Enniskerry village.

As one of the few operational distilleries in Ireland with a maturation warehouse on-site, visitors can savour the aroma of sleeping casks and enjoy a full immersion, multi-sensorial grain to cask whiskey tasting experience.

Powerscourt Distillery also offers discerning whiskey drinkers a new twist on time-honoured rituals while those at the beginning of their whiskey journey will be pleasantly surprised by an introduction to Fercullen Irish whiskey with the "Fercullen, Food and Folklore" tasting experience at the distillery. Also available as a hamper and can be ordered through the Powerscourt Distillery website and delivered nationwide.

The hamper includes a link to a pre-recorded presentation which will guide you through the taste experience, explaining the flavour profiles of the whiskies, the provenance of the carefully selected local foods and how they enhance the whiskey tasting experience. It is complemented by lots of Irish folklore about food and drink, with plenty of Irish poetry, Irish whiskey anecdotes and Irish music. A sensory experience not to be missed at the Powerscourt Distillery or in the comfort of your own home.

Lough Key Forest Park

Enter our world of Adventure – where you can do as much or as little as you like.....

Lough Key has for many centuries drawn people to its spectacular views, abundant wildlife, historic buildings and evocative islands. This beautiful landscape is steeped in a rich history.

Lough Key an ideal gateway for gentle leisurely activities or more energetic pursuits in the Park.

The Irish Whiskey museum

The Irish Whiskey Museum opened the doors to the public in 2014 and quickly became one of Ireland's leading visitor attractions. It was the brainchild of the El Travel Group and Keith McDonnell who understood that there was no independent attraction narrating the true story of Irish whiskey and how the industry has evolved through the centuries.

It is centrally located with a prime site opposite the front gate of Trinity College. The tour lasts approximately 45 minutes with a tasting of three different styled Irish whiskeys at the end. If you choose the VIP upgrade option you will also get an aged Irish whiskey. There is McDonnell's bar on the first floor which is open to the public and most visitors will enjoy a tippie before or after the tour. The museum provides entertaining, informative guides and the mix of people, reconstructions, whiskey memorabilia and videos will keep your interest alive for the duration of your stay and leave you with wanting to know more.

Wells House & Gardens

Wells House & Gardens is one of the top tourist attractions in the Sunny South East with beautiful surroundings and a peaceful, friendly atmosphere. It boasts over 400 years of history and was built in the late 1600.

Relax amongst 450 acres of woodland walks and the restored terrace gardens & explore the Fairy and Mogue's Enchanted woodland walks.

The iNUA Collection

It's time to road-trip Ireland with The iNUA Collection's nine stunning four and five Star Hotels, dotted across our beautiful island.

Our dream destinations span from 25,000 acres of tranquillity at Muckross Park Hotel in the heart of Killarney National Park, to boutique charm on medieval cobbled streets at the Kilkenny Hibernian Hotel.

Be pleasantly surprised by what the magical Midlands have to offer at the Tullamore Court Hotel or Hillgrove Hotel and Spa. Head to the hidden gem that is Louth's coastline, where the most stylish Fairways Hotel Dundalk is to be found.

Or how about a tour of the beautiful Radisson Blu Hotels. Awake to waterfront vistas in Athlone, roam endless acres of private woodlands in Limerick, indulge in pure relaxation at The Spa at Radisson Blu Cork, or have it all in Sligo, where breath-taking views stretch from Benbulbin to the sweeping coastline of Sligo Bay. Reunite with nature, catch-up with friends, dine in style and fill your heart with all The iNUA Collection has to offer. Book at www.iNUA.ie with B&B for two people from €120.

Flanagans Lane

It's a long way to Tipperary but worth the Journey. Flanagan's Lane Restaurant, Café, Bakery Deli, 51 Main Street, Tipperary Town, Co. Tipperary is a unique dining experience. We pride ourselves on the basics. This means sourcing responsibly & locally where possible to provide the best and freshest product. We also champion our local food and drink producers by not only using their product on our menu but also you can buy them in our retail section in our Café. We are open 7 days a week serving Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner. Tel: 062 80503 or visit our website www.flanaganslane.ie



Arklow Bay Conference & Leisure Hotel

Overlooking the lakeside wildlife reserve, 4* Arklow Bay Conference & Leisure Hotel is situated on the East coast, in the heart of County Wicklow, Ireland's garden county. Set on idyllic grounds the Hotel offers 91 tastefully decorated bedrooms. The perfect base to explore and discover all Co. Wicklow has to offer. Easily accessible with public transport network plus ample onsite complimentary parking.

See our website for best offers: www.arklowbay.com, email Reservations: reservations@arklowbay.com or call 0402-26200.

Boyne Hill House

Eddie Condon (General Manager) describes Boyne Hill House Estate as a "Hidden Gem" and is one of the most romantic destinations in Ireland for weddings. For almost 250 years the estate has stood as a beacon along the banks of the River Boyne. Now a second-generation Irish owned, family ran business, we continue to offer our couples a truly special and unique wedding experience. What makes us stand out is the attention to detail, which is put into every wedding, together with the beauty and tranquillity of the location. Each wedding is bespoke to our couples, allowing them to tailor their make own wedding unique to them with the help from our long serving team of staff that stand as ambassadors of Boyne Hill House. The luxurious multi award-winning exclusive wedding venue is one of the most sought-after venues in Ireland with up to a two-year waiting list. www.boynehillhouse.ie



WONDERFUL WATERWAYS

Courtesy of Tourism Ireland

A trip along the Shannon-Erne waterway is a wondrous journey through Ireland's rich history and dramatic landscape. Known as the backbone of Ireland, the River Shannon flows through 11 counties from Cavan to Limerick, connecting in Northern Ireland to Lough Erne in the tranquil Fermanagh lakelands. Exploring all or part of these two great river systems is simply an unforgettable experience. Pick up a cruiser at one of the many hire spots along its length and you are ready to go where the river takes you.

Let it take you into Ireland's Ancient East. Moor up at sixth-century Clonmacnoise Monastic Settlement in Co. Offaly, one of Ireland's most sacred sites, or step back into the Iron Age with a visit to the ancient Corlea Trackway in Longford, preserved for 2,000 years in the boglands surrounding the River Shannon. Cruise to 12th-century Athlone Castle, sitting on the riverbank, or explore island-dotted Lough Ree, the Lake of Kings, scene of Viking battles and the death place of the legendary Queen Maeve.

From the river's vantage point, Ireland's lush scenery is a picture-postcard backdrop but to get into the heart of the beauty, stop off and stretch the legs on one of the many walking and cycling trails that flank the waterway. Or swap the cruiser for a canoe and explore the paddling trails around Drumshanbo, Boyle, and Upper and Lower Lough Erne.

Cruising the Shannon and Erne navigations also offers the opportunity to visit some of the island's prettiest and liveliest towns and villages. From vibrant Limerick with its impressive Georgian architecture to the bustling island town of Enniskillen, built on a narrowing of the waters between Upper and Lower Lough Erne, there is much to explore and enjoy. Check out picturesque Carrick-on-Shannon in Co. Leitrim, or the twin towns of Killaloe and Ballina at the mouth of Lough Derg. Linked by a 13-arch bridge, they are best known as the birthplace of Brian Boru, High King of Ireland. There are endless opportunities to sample the local produce along the waterway as there is a host of excellent restaurants and gastro-pubs within easy reach of moorings. For top-class gastronomic treats head for the award-winning MacNean House & Restaurant in Blacklion, County Cavan, run by Neven Maguire one of Ireland's most famous chefs.



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