

# Ireland

Experience | Heritage | Food & Drink | Culture | Views & Landscapes | Outdoors | On Location



JOHNNIE FOX'S PUB  
COUNTY DUBLIN

**EXPERIENCE IRELAND**

*From coastal gems to secret rural delights*

**HISTORIC LANDMARKS**

*Drama and romance in Ireland's castles*

**FABULOUS FOOD & DRINK**

*Delicious feasts to tempt the taste buds*

**IRELAND'S CULTURE**

*Urban escapes filled with warm welcomes*

**AMAZING LANDSCAPES**

*Discovering Ireland's incredible scenery*

**THE GREAT OUTDOORS**

*Walking Ireland's tracks and trails*

**IRELAND ON SCREEN**

*Discover real-life Westeros*

Welcome



DUNDRUM COUNTY DOWN

# WELCOME TO IRELAND

If modern life has left you yearning for more authentic experiences, then the island of Ireland is the perfect antidote. You see, Ireland is more than just a destination, it's a feeling.

It's the thrill of standing at the top of Donegal's Slieve League cliffs along the Wild Atlantic Way. It's the sensation you get at a traditional Irish music session, such as the ones that kick off in Matt Molloy's of Westport, County Mayo, or the House of McDonnell in Ballycastle, County Antrim.

It's the cool touch of the ancient stones that dot the island's landscapes, from Wexford to Kerry, and the echoes of the shipbuilding heritage of Belfast, and Titanic Town. It's the chance to see the thrilling real-life locations from HBO's *Game of Thrones*, and *Star Wars Episodes VII and VIII*. It's those 100,000 welcomes that the people are famous for.

Ireland is an adventure waiting to happen. So go on, press the Green Button and discover something new. ♥

 **Ireland.com**

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Press the Green Button for epic views and the warmest of welcomes.



Discover more >

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# EXPERIENCE IRELAND

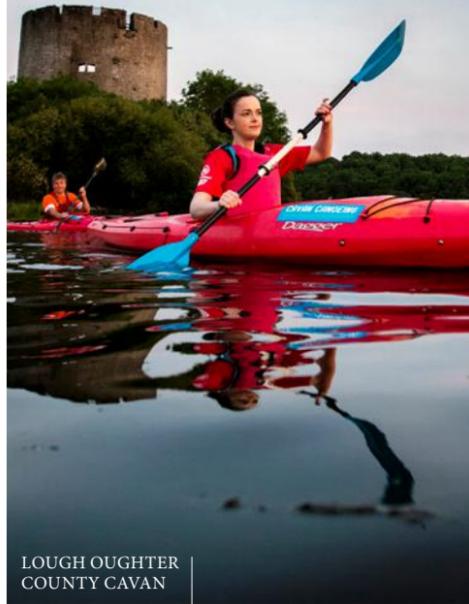
**T**here are moments on the island of Ireland when it feels like you suddenly get it. Where your spirit feels lifted and your soul feels stirred. It might happen on a deserted Atlantic beach in mid-winter as you walk along buffeted by salty breezes, with the roar of waves in your ears, and white-bellied seagulls swooping overhead. It might happen as you stroll an earthy forest trail and discover an abandoned medieval castle filled with crumbling stones and creeping ivy. Or it might happen in the middle of a traditional music session, where you can't stop your toes from tapping along to the beat. But it will happen. At some point you will experience Ireland – you'll feel it.

And there's a good reason why: for a small island on the edge of Europe, the island of Ireland has some truly unique, memory-making experiences. There's Ireland's Ancient East, where thousands of years of history come together in a swirl of Neolithic monuments, Norman castles, abbeys, churches, and lavish country houses. There's Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, filled with under-the-radar attractions from quiet canals to authentic riverside villages. And there's Northern Ireland, which blends a giant spirit with legends, landscapes, and literature. Add to that the friendly, feel-good cities of Dublin and Belfast, and the raw rugged beauty of the Wild Atlantic Way, and it's easy to see why Ireland is one of the most rewarding destinations in Europe.

Travel around the island of Ireland and you'll feel history all around you, from the haunting beauty of 6<sup>th</sup> century monastic sites such as Gougane Barra in the wilds of West Cork, to the ancient stone circles that rest in landscapes such as Beaghmore, County Tyrone. The legacy of the Vikings lingers on in cities such as Waterford and Dublin, while a stroll around ancient Armagh reveals why it has a reputation as the "city of saints and scholars."

But above all, what makes a trip to the island of Ireland unique is the people you meet along the way. There's a good reason why the island is famous for 100,000 welcomes – it's woven into the fabric of our culture, from the chat at the bar in pubs to the hellos you'll get on walking trails around the island. Whether you're reuniting with family, forging new friendships, or just enjoying the "craic" (fun) with affable strangers, you'll suddenly realize that Ireland is a place that feels like home. ♥

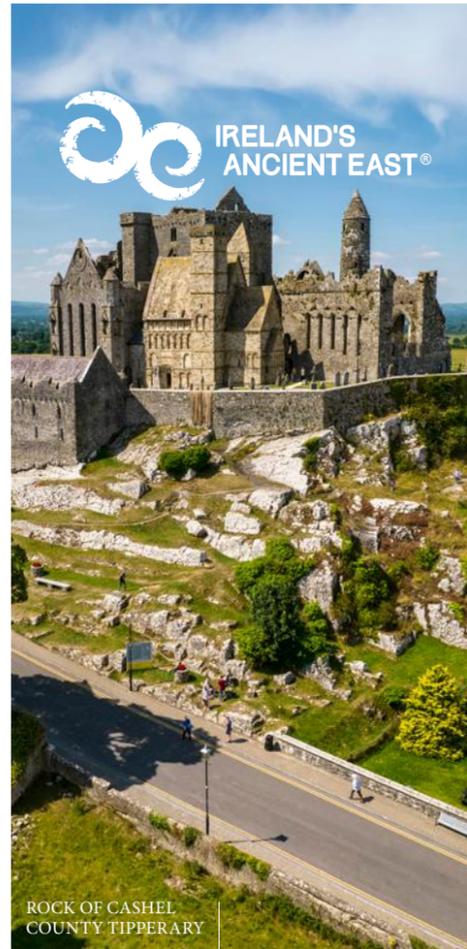
Experience



LOUGH OUGHTER  
COUNTY CAVAN



TEMPLE BAR  
DUBLIN CITY



ROCK OF CASHEL  
COUNTY TIPPERARY



COUMEENOOLE BAY  
COUNTY KERRY



CATHEDRAL QUARTER  
BELFAST CITY



MUSSENDEN TEMPLE  
COUNTY ANTRIM



**IRELAND'S  
HIDDEN  
HEARTLANDS**



**DUBLIN**



**IRELAND'S  
ANCIENT  
EAST**



**THE WILD  
ATLANTIC  
WAY**



**BELFAST**



**EMBRACE  
A GIANT  
SPIRIT**

**BLESSED WITH A LANDSCAPE** of glassy canals, winding rivers, lakes, forests, and bogland, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands is a dream destination for outdoor enthusiasts. Here you can escape into a world of calm and connect with nature in a part of the island that feels unexplored. Discover amazing nature trails filled with history at Lough Boora Discovery Park, County Offaly; paddleboard along County Leitrim's canals; or cycle the off-road Old Rail Trail in County Westmeath.

With such an abundance of natural beauty, it's no wonder the Hidden Heartlands have become a top destination for leisure and wellness – but you'll also find a wealth of history and culture here. Peel back the centuries at the prehistoric Corlea Trackway in County Longford; explore the 6<sup>th</sup> century monastic site of Clonmacnoise, on the banks of the River Shannon; or cozy up in Sean's Bar, Athlone, established way back in 900AD!

**NAMED BY** Lonely Planet as one of their Best in Travel destinations for 2022, Dublin welcomes every visitor with a smile and a story or two. This vibrant Viking city on the River Liffey has inspired artists of every calling – and it loves to celebrate them, too, at wonderful museums and galleries including the National Gallery, the National Museums, the Irish Museum of Modern Art, and the Museum of Literature Ireland.

Uncover the city's political history with a tour of Dublin Castle, Glasnevin Cemetery, or Kilmainham Gaol, while in the hallowed grounds of Trinity College you'll find one of the island's top treasures: a 9<sup>th</sup> century illuminated manuscript called The Book of Kells. And for a fresh take on Dublin, head outdoors. The city boasts a beautiful location on the edge of Dublin Bay, so joining the locals and take a walk along the stunning Howth Cliff Path in north County Dublin.

**AT FIRST GLANCE**, the east of Ireland is all vibrant green fields, busy little towns and villages, and gentle rivers. But this is a landscape that brims with incredible stories, that is packed with astonishing Neolithic monuments and has a castle around every corner.

The amazing thing about this part of the island is the sheer volume of history contained within it. Just look at Newgrange, an astonishing megalithic monument that dates back over 5,000 years, or the Rock of Cashel – a spectacular archaeological site. You can trace Ireland's medieval history through castles, abbeys, and churches here, too, from the vast hulk of Trim Castle, County Meath, to the 13<sup>th</sup> century Black Abbey in Kilkenny. And if gardens are your thing, there's no better place to be, with Powerscourt House and Gardens, Mount Usher Gardens, and the gardens of Lismore Castle all star attractions.

**THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY** is a rugged coastal gem that will wow you with epic moments and warm you with its friendly spirit. One of the longest coastal driving routes in the world, it boasts 1,500 miles of raw beauty, traditional culture, cozy pubs, and unforgettable experiences. Stand on the iconic Mizen Head footbridge in County Cork and you'll witness a spectacle of jagged rocks lashed by waves; explore authentic island life on the Aran Islands in County Galway; or visit the most extensive Stone Age monument in the world at Céide Fields, County Mayo.

With sky-high cliffs, craggy peninsulas, quiet bays, and deserted beaches – the Wild Atlantic Way's landscapes are nothing short of spectacular. But there's more to this coastline than just stunning scenery – there's the warmth of the people; the vibrant culture, from music sessions to literary festivals; and fantastic local foods that you'll remember forever.

**IT MAY BE FAMOUS** for building the Titanic, but right now, Belfast is all about the music. In November 2021, UNESCO granted Belfast a City of Music status in recognition of its rich musical heritage and if you're looking to experience toe-tapping trad music, alternative jazz or a bit of punk rock, there's no better place.

Beyond the great tunes, Belfast is a city that's full of surprises. Wander St George's Market for a taste of the city's buzzing food scene, or dine out on refined local dishes at Michelin-starred Ox. Fancy finding out more about Belfast's maritime and shipbuilding history? Then head to Titanic Belfast and SS Nomadic. And for a view that you won't forget, make your way to Belfast Castle on the slopes of Cave Hill Country Park.

All in all, Belfast is a compelling place; a bit Victorian, a bit modern. Its story is enthralling, its people welcoming, and its contemporary culture utterly absorbing.

**WITH SO MUCH TO DO** in Northern Ireland, it's hard to know where to start. First stop? It's got to be the Causeway Coastal Route. This staggeringly beautiful road weaves and winds along the edge of the north Antrim coastline and serves up pulse-racing delights such as Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge and the Giant's Causeway, a UNESCO World Heritage site. There's the breathtaking beauty of Torr Head, the drama of Dunluce Castle, and thrilling Game of Thrones® locations to explore!

Away from the coast, Northern Ireland will keep you charmed with its giant spirit and gorgeous landscapes. Soak up the haunting beauty of the heather-flecked Mourne Mountains, dive into local culinary traditions with a bread making class or a whiskey tasting, and explore some of the region's fascinating history in places such as the Ulster American Folk Park. So come and embrace a giant spirit for yourself. ♥

# HISTORIC LANDMARKS

Ireland's historic landmarks are not all about bricks and mortar. As you walk up the 800-year-old stone steps in Hook Head Lighthouse in County Wexford; wander through the 17<sup>th</sup> century pleasure gardens at Loughcrew in County Meath; or stare up at a round tower built nearly 900 years ago by monks at Devenish Island in Lough Erne – two interconnected lakes in County Fermanagh – it's good to take some time to absorb the history embedded in these walls.

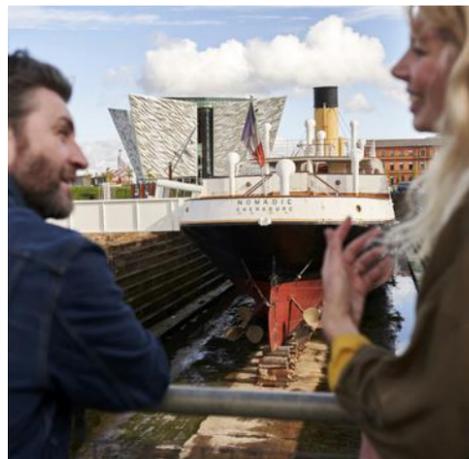
Nothing captures the imagination quite like a good story, and on the island of Ireland, you don't have to look far to find one. In towns and villages, on hillsides and cliff-edges—especially around Ireland's Ancient East – you'll find battlements, fortifications, and historic mansions filled with tales of parties, fascinating characters, and even a ghost or two. Take the eerie 16<sup>th</sup> century Leap Castle in County Offaly, which claims to be the “world's most haunted location.” Or Carrickfergus Castle, a Norman stronghold in County Antrim, which has been besieged by the Scots, Irish, English, and French over its 800 year history. And just because the island's country houses look genteel, it doesn't mean they don't have their own tales of intrigue, like Westport House in County Mayo. Today, it may be the very picture of aristocratic elegance, but venture down into the dungeons and you'll see the remains of a castle owned by 16<sup>th</sup> century pirate queen, Grace O'Malley.

Ireland's early Christian history is also packed with compelling stories and beautiful settings. Dating from the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century, Clonmacnoise was established by St Ciarán on an idyllic site on the River Shannon – stroll around here and you're catapulted back to an age of “saints and scholars.” At Skellig Michael in County Kerry – a Star Wars filming location – you can still experience what drew monks to this remote island hundreds of years ago: heart-stirring views of Little Skellig and the wild Atlantic Ocean. And on St Patrick's Trail, which weaves through key sites linked to Ireland's patron saint in counties Armagh and Down, beauty abounds, especially at tranquil Saul Church.

It's inevitable that a journey into Ireland's past will lead to Ireland's cities, whether it's the Viking history of Dublin and Waterford, or Titanic-era Belfast. And, whichever one you visit, a compelling piece of history awaits. Walk the 400-year-old walls in Derry-Londonderry, where cannons roared during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Travel back to the Middle Ages with a stroll along Kilkenny's Medieval Mile. Or imagine the life of a Norman soldier in the 13<sup>th</sup> century King John's Castle in Limerick. On the island of Ireland, you can experience history right under your feet. ♥



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# CASTLES OF DREAMS

*Ireland's castles are set in some of the most beautiful parts of the island, from tranquil lakefronts to the edge of dramatic coastal cliffs. We look at three of the most captivating...*

DUNGAIRE CASTLE  
COUNTY GALWAY

## STEP INTO THE STORIES

*Museums, galleries and visitor attractions on the island of Ireland bring the past to life, from the hopes and dreams of emigrants to the creativity of the Celts*

**1 EPIC – THE IRISH EMIGRATION MUSEUM** *Dublin*  
Winner of Europe's Leading Tourist Award at the World Travel Awards in 2019, 2020 and 2021, EPIC is a must-see on a visit to Dublin. Situated in the heart of the reinvigorated Docklands, this immersive museum traces the story of Ireland's emigrants, some of whom went on to become scientists, singers, artists, poets and presidents in the US and beyond.

**2 TITANIC BELFAST** *Belfast*  
This monumental museum stands at the head of the slipways where the "Ship of Dreams" was built. Inside, nine interactive galleries with original artifacts, dramatic recreations, and interactive features allow you to fully immerse yourself in the history of the Titanic and the vibrant city that built her.

**3 WATERFORD TREASURES** *Waterford*  
Reputed to be Ireland's oldest city, Waterford is packed with history and the best place to uncover it is in the trio of museums

called the Waterford Treasures. Here, the Medieval Museum, Bishop's Palace, and Reginald's Tower (pictured) recount the story of the city, from its foundations 1,100 years ago by the Vikings to an era of Georgian opulence in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**4 THE ARIGNA MINING EXPERIENCE** *County Roscommon*  
With a beautiful location on top of a hill in rural County Roscommon, Arigna was once a busy coal mine that operated from the 1700s until its closure in the 1990s. Today, you can take a tour right into the heart of the earth led by ex-miners who can explain first-hand about the conditions, typical working day, and general life of a miner.

**5 SEAMUS HEANEY HOMEPLACE** *County Londonderry*  
This award-winning arts and literary museum is all about the life and work of one of Ireland's greatest writers, Seamus Heaney. Located close to where Heaney grew up, the museum is a fascinating glimpse into what inspired the Nobel Laureate, with a curated collection of poetry, photographs, and stories from his life.

**6 JOHNSTOWN CASTLE** *County Wexford*  
Located just outside Wexford town in Ireland's Ancient East, Johnstown Castle, Gardens and Museum boasts a history that dates back over 800 years. Offering three attractions in one – a Gothic-Revival Castle, the Irish Agricultural Museum, and gardens that boast lake walks and woodlands, Johnstown Castle is a fabulous destination filled with intrigue. Explore the servant's tunnel, stroll the scenic lower lake walk, and learn all about rural life and farming in Ireland. ♥

**T**ravel around Ireland and you'll quickly discover that castles here have the power to stop you in your tracks with their sheer good looks. Whether it's a crumbling 12<sup>th</sup> century pile overlooking a glassy lake, a gracious Baronial mansion set in glistening green fields, or a dramatic cliffside ruin pounded by waves, these structures never fail to surprise and delight.

A good place to start is with Dunguaire Castle. Nestled on the south shore of Galway Bay, this 16<sup>th</sup> century tower house is built on the site of a 7<sup>th</sup> century fort. It's fairly modest – as castles go – but its history takes in the clans of Ireland, Queen Elizabeth I of England, the Celtic revival of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and a divorce case so scandalous that it triggered a change in the law. With the waters of Galway Bay to the north, and the barren, rocky landscape of County Clare's Burren to the south, Dunguaire has one of the most scenic locations on the island. No wonder it's one of the most photographed castles in the west!

It's hard to imagine how James Arthur Butler, 6<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Ormonde, owner of 13<sup>th</sup> century Kilkenny Castle, and last in line in his family, must have felt as he handed over the keys to his ancestral home back in 1967. In an act of supreme generosity, James transferred the castle to the people of Kilkenny for a mere £50. With a commanding position on the River Nore, the castle today is at peace. Instead of sieges, battles, and a rise and fall in its fortunes, the 13<sup>th</sup> century Kilkenny Castle has a firm

“DUNGAIRE HAS ONE OF THE MOST SCENIC LOCATIONS ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND. NO WONDER IT'S ONE OF THE MOST PHOTOGRAPHED CASTLES IN THE WEST”

position within the city's social and cultural life with classical music recitals and art exhibitions held here. Take the castle tour and you'll find rooms that reflect the excess and elegance of the 19<sup>th</sup> rather than the 13<sup>th</sup> century, with sumptuous furnishings, decorative plasterwork, and Venetian Gothic motifs.

For a total contrast, go north to Antrim on the dramatic Causeway Coast where you'll find the ruin of Dunluce Castle. Perched on a craggy outcrop that's pounded by the waves, Dunluce is accessible over a footbridge, with a stout heart and steady feet. It seems a remote and dangerous place to live – a ship from the Spanish Armada was wrecked on the rocks, and a pair of lovers met their end below the castle – yet this wild place has had fans for centuries. The Earl of Ulster built the first castle here back in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, on an old Viking fort, and by the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century it was fought over by rival clans – it's even attracted the banshee (a mythical wailing female spirit), according to legend. And you can see why: this coastal stretch of County Antrim lifts the heart and refreshes the soul with its stunning views. ♥

# FABULOUS FOOD & DRINK

**S**eafood chowder by the fire in a wind-whipped coastal pub. Traditional Irish stew in the surrounds of an 18<sup>th</sup> century market. Afternoon tea overlooking a misty lake. Food in Ireland isn't just about the taste; it's about the place, the experience, the land and sea, and the people who created it.

Whether you're enjoying beautifully crafted dishes of local, seasonal produce in Wine & Brine, Moira, County Armagh, or savoring a bowl of Killary Harbour mussels at the Misunderstood Heron food truck in the wild surrounds of County Galway's Killary Fjord, it's bound to be memorable.

To get to the heart and soul of food on the island of Ireland, a farmers' market is a good place to start. Here, busy stalls laden with artisan cheese, local charcuterie, beech-smoked Irish salmon, soda breads, and mountain lamb reflect the richness and variety of what's on offer. Farmers' markets take place all over the island, usually – but not exclusively – on the weekend. Some to look out for include the Middleton Farmers' Market in County Cork, Kilkenny Farmers' Market in the medieval city of Kilkenny, and the Walled City Market in Derry~Londonderry.

Occupying a special place in the hearts of Cork city locals, the English Market (closed Sun) has been around since 1788 and is a great place to pick up traditional specialties such as drisheen (blood pudding) and pigs' feet, as well as freshly baked bread, fish, cheese, and the Cork favorite – spiced beef. In Belfast, in-the-know foodies favor the historic 19<sup>th</sup> century St George's Market (Fri-Sun) for everything from wild venison to gourmet fudge.

Beyond the markets, the island is packed with pubs, Michelin-starred restaurants, and cafés where you can taste traditional Irish food. Order a glass of Guinness and settle down to centuries of tradition with an Irish stew at Hargadon's grocery-pub in Sligo or an Ulster fry (a traditional breakfast dish) at Maggie May's in Belfast. And keep your eye out on menus for boxty (a potato pancake), coddle (a Dublin dish of bacon, sausage and potato), Waterford blaa (a soft, floury bread roll unique to the city), and, of course, Irish whiskey, stout, local craft beers, and artisan gins.

Travel around and it's not hard to see the excitement surrounding the food scene right now, from street food pop-ups to Michelin-starred gems. But for a great mix of atmosphere, tradition and great flavors, a festival is where it's at. Celebrate the very best of local oysters at the Carlingford Oyster Festival in August; head to the Orchard County for the Food & Cider Weekend in September in Armagh; or live it up at the Kinsale Gourmet Festival in October. ♥

# GREAT FOOD TOURS

*Food tours are the perfect way to experience the pure flavors and traditional foods of each locality on the island of Ireland...*

Ireland has undergone a food revolution as the farmers, fishermen, producers, and chefs appreciate the pure, rich flavors that can be found around the island. And food tours have become a popular way for locals and visitors alike to experience the best of each locality.

“People always tell us they wish they had done the tour at the start of their trip,” says Caroline Wilson, who runs *Taste & Tour NI*'s food and drink-focused walking tours of Belfast city. “They’re amazed at the variety on offer – and they love that they’re getting to meet locals and not just other tourists.”

Each tour has its own distinct personality, too. About an hour and a half down the road from Belfast, *Enniskillen Taste Experience* uncovers several sides to this historic town’s food – from local butcher Pat O’Doherty’s Fermanagh Black Bacon, reared on the peaceful pastures of Lough Erne’s Inish Corkish island, to contemporary fine-dining at 28 Darling Street.

Want to find out more about the foodie city of Cork? The knowledgeable guides of *Fab Food Trails* will give you the inside story of Cork’s historic English Market, as well as little local places that are off the usual food route. Galway Food Tours’ *Around the Marketplace* starts with Atlantic oysters and Irish farmhouse

cheese at the medieval city’s beloved farmers’ market before meeting the producers and tasting the flavors of award-winning restaurants and cafés. And in Derry~Londonderry, the *Made in Derry Food Tour* takes in street food, craft beers and local cheese on a four-hour stroll to discover over 25 local food and drinks in the surrounds of this historic walled city.

Alternatively, you could dive deep into Ireland’s amazing landscape. *The Burren Food Trail* is a self-guided tour that boasts five themed trails that take you from field to plate in a region of Ireland that is fast becoming an eco-tourism hub. And if you’re interested in whiskey, you can opt for a guided distillery tours, as well as trails and tastings. Delve into the history of Old Bushmills Distillery on the Causeway Coast, Dingle Whiskey Distillery in County Kerry, and Tullamore D.E.W in County Offaly.

But what all these tours have in common is this: the chance to mingle with local people for a few memorable hours, while joining them in rediscovering their ancient food heritage and creating a place for it in the island’s identity. ♥

“PEOPLE ARE AMAZED AT THE VARIETY OF FOOD ON OFFER, AND LOVE THAT THEY’RE GETTING TO MEET THE LOCALS AND NOT JUST OTHER TOURISTS”

ROE & CO WHISKEY TOUR  
DUBLIN



Ireland.com



TASTE THE WILD  
ATLANTIC WAY



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- 1 Pyke 'N' Pommies Derry~Londonderry
- 2 Sheridans Cheesemongers Galway
- 3 Harry's Shack County Londonderry
- 4 Glenarm Shorthorn County Antrim

## IRELAND'S NATURAL FLAVORS

*Great tastes, passionate producers, and traditions handed down through generations: there's never been a better time to enjoy a true taste of Ireland*

With bountiful oceans and fertile fields, Ireland’s produce translates into pure deliciousness on the plate. Take beef for starters... Rich green pastures and small-scale farming make grass-fed beef the standard on the island of Ireland. Want to try it for yourself? Check out the Wagyu beef burgers at Derry~Londonderry’s Pyke ‘N’ Pommies food truck, or Hannan’s Glenarm Shorthorn Himalayan salt-aged sirloin at Balloo House in County Down.

Lamb is the bedrock on which one of Ireland’s most famous dishes, Irish stew, is built. This casserole of lamb, potatoes, onions, and carrots might be simple, but it’s enduringly popular and reflects a culinary tradition of cooking over an open fire.

From its origins in the late 1970s, Ireland’s farmhouse cheese scene has grown into one of the most exciting in Europe, with punchy new styles like Young Buck raw milk blue cheese and well-established favorites such as Durrus, Killeen, and St Tola. A visit to a cheesemaker, such as Cashel Farmhouse Cheese in County Tipperary, is a great way to find out more about the cheese-making process, and farmers’ markets are ideal for meeting local producers and tasting artisan products.

The flavors of the shoreline are showcased on the Taste the Atlantic trail along the Wild Atlantic Way, with tours of smokehouses, seafood producers, and oyster farms. Keep your eye out in restaurants all along the island’s coastline for smoked Atlantic salmon, oysters, mussels, and crab.

It’s not just the fine-dining restaurants or traditional pubs where you can sample the ocean’s bounty, either. Enjoy fish fresh off the boat at Harry’s Shack on Portstewart Strand in County Londonderry or award-winning chowder at Killybegs Seafood Shack, overlooking the fishing port of Killybegs in County Donegal. For something a little different, make sure to try some of the island’s seaweeds, such as dulse and carrageen moss from the Antrim coastline.

And with a new generation of well-traveled chefs eager to explore the island’s extraordinary natural larder, enjoying the great tastes of Ireland has never been easier! ♥



ENNISKILLEN TASTE  
EXPERIENCE


 A group of people are gathered around a table in a pub, playing instruments. A man on the left is playing an acoustic guitar. A man in the center is playing a bodhrán. A woman is playing a violin. An older man is playing a tin whistle. A woman on the right is playing a bodhrán. The setting is a pub with a wooden ceiling and string lights.
 

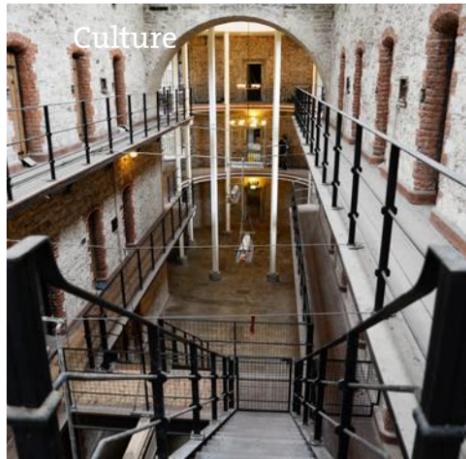
# IRELAND'S CULTURE

Ireland's spirit can't be captured; it has to be experienced. The stories, scenery, songs, and special atmosphere are what bring people back here, time and again.

With nearly 2,000 miles of coastline, the ocean has an inescapable influence on Ireland's culture, especially in the towns and villages scattered along its shores. From the currach boats unique to the west of Ireland to the lighthouses that stand on rocky headlands, the way of life here is dominated by the ocean. Ireland's coastal communities play a huge part in keeping the Irish language alive, with many locals speaking their native tongue every day, in areas that are known as Gaeltachtaí. Visit Achill Island in County Mayo, or the western parts of the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry, and you'll hear locals speaking the language. Further north in County Antrim and along the Ards Peninsula, the same is true for speakers of Ulster-Scots (Ullans), whose vibrant music and dance traditions keep the culture alive.

For a small island, Ireland's contribution to world literature is immense. From playwrights to poets, songwriters to storytellers, Ireland's literary heritage takes in four Nobel prizewinners (George Bernard Shaw, W.B. Yeats, Samuel Beckett, and Seamus Heaney), and continues to thrive today with Pulitzer prizewinning poet Paul Muldoon, and award-winning novelists such as Eimear McBride, Emma Donoghue, Colm Tóibín, and Anna Burns. These writers follow a historic tradition of storytelling across the island of Ireland, which once took the form of folklore, heroic tales, and myths passed down by people known as *seanchaí*. The ancient art of storytelling is today celebrated at events such as the Cape Clear Island Storytelling Festival in County Cork, as well as popular literature festivals such as Listowel Writers' Week (Sept), County Kerry; Dalkey Book Festival (June), County Dublin; and the Hillsborough Festival of Literature and Ideas in County Down (April). And in Dublin – a UNESCO City of Literature – you can get the whole story at the new Museum of Literature Ireland, with multimedia exhibitions and priceless artifacts.

Of course, while many a story has been told in the firelit, stone-floored surrounds of a traditional Irish pub, they're more famous as places to hear a spot of music and dance (known as a céilí). Dotted around the island, from the cities of Cork and Waterford to rural gems such as the 17<sup>th</sup> century thatched cottage of Crosskeys Inn, County Antrim, you'll find hundreds of traditional pubs with a weekly roster of in-house musicians and guest performers. Drop in, sit back, and enjoy the tunes. And if you've got the know-how, pull up a stool and join in... the more the merrier. ♥



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- 1 Cork City Gaol
- 2 The Quays Galway
- 3 Derry Girls mural Derry~Londonderry
- 4 Cork city
- 5 Galway city
- 6 The Guildhall Derry~Londonderry

## THREE CITIES

With 11 cities all boasting great food, easy-going locals and lots of culture, you're sure to be busy on the island of Ireland. We've got three to get you started

### GREAT FOR ATMOSPHERE: CORK

You'll feel it in the pubs, you'll notice it on the city streets and you can't miss it when you talk to the locals: Cork is a place that's proud of its heritage, its culture, and its food. And rightly so! Centered on the River Lee, this buoyant small city has an easygoing vibe and boasts quirky alleys and arty districts, as well as some great pubs and restaurants. First stop? It's got to be the English Market. Packed with food stalls that brim with everything from traditional smoked fish to local cheese, this 18<sup>th</sup> century hub is a great place to get a taste for Cork's famous food culture. Stop for lunch at the Farmgate Café here, before deciding which of Cork's many attractions to head for next. You can explore the history of Cork City Gaol, enjoy art at the Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, or sample some craft beers at the Franciscan Well Brewery, and that's just for starters.

### GREAT FOR STREET LIFE: GALWAY

Big-hearted, bohemian and brimming with energy, Galway is packed with the best of the west. Known as the "City of Tribes" – after the 14 medieval tribes who once ruled it – the people here

have cultivated a culturally diverse haven that remains true to its traditional roots. The streets of this city sing with an upbeat spirit... literally! Galway is famed for its buskers, with Shop Street, William Street and the historic Spanish Arch often alive with music. Just wandering around the city feels like a party. Come evening time, traditional Irish music pours from the doorways of many a pub, with Tig Cúilí, Taaffes Bar, and The Crane Bar all famed for their great tunes.

### GREAT FOR CULTURE: DERRY-LONDONDERRY

Wrapped in 16<sup>th</sup> century walls, Derry~Londonderry is a small city with a big personality. You can see the imprint of the past everywhere, from the fine old buildings and narrow cobbled streets to the award-winning museums that tell the city's compelling story. But Derry~Londonderry isn't content to live in the past – a stint as UK City of Culture nurtured local artists and cutting-edge galleries such as the Void and Eden Place showcase Irish and international artists, while the Bogside Artists illustrate the power of art through their political murals. Music, too, is in the city's DNA, and a night out can begin with a blast of indie pop at the Nerve Centre and finish up with pints and traditional music in Peadar O'Donnell's pub. Add in a world-class Halloween carnival, a lively café culture, and the chance to walk in the footsteps of those Derry Girls from the hit TV series, and you'll find that Derry~Londonderry hits all the right notes. ♥

## FESTIVAL ISLAND

Come rain or shine, festival season never stops in Ireland, where there's always something to celebrate and everyone loves a good party

### SPRING

The island of Ireland springs to life with St Patrick's Day on the 17<sup>th</sup> March. As well as the famous *St Patrick's Festival* in Dublin, there are fantastic festivities happening in Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Sligo, and Kilkenny. In Armagh, where St Patrick built his first church, you can enjoy the wonderful *Home of St Patrick Festival*. Head to Mayo in the month of May and enjoy a month-long series of events including the *Achill Island Film Festival* and *Your Mayo Roots*. Still have room for more? Try the *Belfast Maritime Festival* along the city's quays with Tall Ships, nautical fun and great food.

### SUMMER

Celebrating summer vibes, *Sea Sessions* is the biggest surf and music festival in Ireland, bringing thousands to the charming seaside town of Bundoran in County Donegal. *The Ould Lammas Fair* sees traditional music, dancing, horse trading, artisan markets, and more take over the seaside town of Ballycastle, County Antrim. And if it's culture you're after, you're spoiled for choice with *Bloomsday* in Dublin; and the *Dalriada Festival* in Glenarm Castle, County Antrim.

### AUTUMN

Festival season seriously heats up in autumn, with the *Dublin Theatre Festival* – 18 days of drama and delight – and the *Belfast International Festival*, with theater, dance, and visual arts. In Cork, the famous *Guinness Cork Jazz Festival* takes center stage, with internationally acclaimed blues and brilliance. But it's the spookiest celebration that steals the show every autumn: *DerryHalloween* is billed as the greatest Halloween party in the world, featuring haunted houses, ghost walks, and spectacular costumes. Hot on its heels is the *Púca Halloween Festival* in counties Meath and Louth. Named after the Irish word for "ghost", this fiesta takes scaring seriously!

### WINTER

Voted best opera festival in the world, *Wexford Festival Opera* brings 12 whole days of operatic majesty to the southeast. Music of a totally different kind can be enjoyed at the *Atlantic Sessions* in Portrush and Portstewart with concerts in restaurants, hotels, bars, and cafés along the Causeway Coast. Dublin is a great place to be in winter with a slew of festivals, including the *New Year's Festival*; *TradFest*, which takes places in a variety of venues in or around the city's Temple Bar area in January; and a brand new *Contemporary Light Festival* in February ♥

PÚCA FESTIVAL  
COUNTY LOUTh



# AMAZING LANDSCAPES

**D**ramatic, impactful, inspirational – the scenery on the island of Ireland encourages you to be at one with it, to stand on a wind-whipped beach and feel the transformative beauty of the Atlantic Ocean. To experience the poetry of the heather-flecked Wicklow Mountains sculpted over millennia and dotted with shaggy white sheep. To sit and gaze at a night sky that dances with swirling lights in one of the most remote parts of Europe, the Inishowen Peninsula.

From the breathtaking northern tip of Malin Head in County Donegal to the safe southern haven of Kinsale Harbour in County Cork, the Wild Atlantic Way will wow you with its cliffs and coves, and charm you with the warmth of its people. There are quiet islands where hardy communities continue age-old traditions; jagged peninsulas surrounded by surging seas; and friendly towns and villages where traditional pubs boast roaring open fires and nightly music sessions. Northeast of Donegal, the Wild Atlantic Way meets the Causeway Coastal Route – one of Northern Ireland's greatest adventures. Here, the road hugs the coastline around craggy headlands, past sandy beaches, and gorse-covered valleys. You can lunch at the pretty harbor of Ballintoy, walk the historic Gobbins Cliff Path, and explore its charming villages, such as Glenarm.

And while Ireland may not have the highest peaks in Europe, the tobacco-colored boglands, heathery ridges, and rich green glens of the mountains here are filled with fascinating myths, legends, and ancient tales. There's Croagh Patrick in County Mayo, where St Patrick spent 40 days in the year 441, and Slieve Gullion in County Armagh, where legendary hero Cú Chulainn received his name. In County Down, you'll find Northern Ireland's largest mountain range, beloved of hillwalkers. It's said that the wintry snow-dusted peaks of the Mourne Mountains inspired Belfast-born author C.S. Lewis to create the icy wonderland of Narnia. Come here in winter, and it's easy to see why.

Looking for somewhere to nourish your spirit? You wouldn't be the first to fall in love with the inky blue waters of Ireland's inland lakes, canals, and rivers. Ancient Celts, Christian monks, and marauding Vikings have all left their mark here, with pagan rocks and crumbling churches charting their journeys over the centuries. Today, their quiet, off-the-beaten track charm will win you over, whether you're following the flow of the mighty River Shannon or exploring the castle-laden shores of Lough Erne in County Fermanagh. There's nothing quite like the amazing landscapes of Ireland. ♥



# THE ANCIENTS

*On the island of Ireland, it pays to look closely. As you stand gazing out on a beautiful view, keep your eye out for some dramatic reminders of the island's ancient past*

NEWGRANGE  
COUNTY MEATH



GREAT BLASKET ISLAND  
COUNTY KERRY



RATHLIN ISLAND  
COUNTY ANTRIM



DALKEY ISLAND  
COUNTY DUBLIN

For a relatively small island, Ireland boasts an astounding number of Neolithic passage tombs, ancient burial grounds, and mysterious stone circles. These structures contain the secrets to the island's early history, and often sit within intensely dramatic locations, such as Céide Fields in the wild boglands of north County Mayo – a field system that's thousands of years old; and the Legananny Dolmen, a 5,000-year-old portal tomb on the slopes of Slieve Croob in County Down.

Considering the fact that some of these sites date back thousands of years, the condition in which they stand is remarkable. Take Newgrange, for example. Built around 3200BC, the passage tomb is older than both Stonehenge and the Great Pyramids of Giza, yet it's perfectly intact – its grassy mound unchanged for millennia; its stones still etched with rock art.

Just up the road is the Hill of Tara, where the ancient High Kings of Ireland would have been inaugurated. Visit on a clear day, and you can stand upon the hill, gaze out upon the endless green fields of County Meath, and see for miles – some even say you can see half the counties of Ireland.

One of the best things about these sites is their accessibility. Rather than being shielded behind ropes and walkways, they are out in the open countryside. Like the stone circles at Beaghmore in County Tyrone, which were only discovered during peat cutting in the 1940s – these Bronze Age structures aren't kept at

“BUILT AROUND 3200BC, NEWGRANGE IS OLDER THAN BOTH STONEHENGE AND THE PYRAMIDS OF GIZA, YET IT IS PERFECTLY INTACT”

the other side of a visitor center, but are free to access among the hills of the Sperrins.

Over in County Clare, you'll find one of the island's most iconic ancient monuments – the Poul nabrone Dolmen. This portal tomb is found in the depths of the Burren, where limestone plateaus are dotted with wildflowers and clumps of moss.

But sometimes you have to know where to go... Deep in County Fermanagh in the scenic waters of Lough Erne sits Boa Island. You can drive onto the island, but once there keep an eye out for signs for the Boa Figures. Down a little country lane, hidden in an old cemetery you'll find the Boa Island Figures – intricately carved Celtic figurines that have an almost totem pole look to them, as they stand silently among crumbling tombstones.

Sites like this can look out of place, as they sit within quiet valleys or in the middle of tiny islands. But the more you familiarize yourself with Ireland, you'll see that these structures, soaked in history and witness to thousands of years gone by, are exactly where they should be. ♥

## IRELAND'S ISLANDS

*From day trips to longer stays, and from traditional culture to wildlife-watching, you'll find beauty, mystery, legend, and more amongst Ireland's many islands*

Scattered all along the weather-beaten coast of Ireland are some of our best-kept secrets: the islands. Here, you'll encounter some truly exceptional landscapes – white sand beaches, clear blue waters, and untouched countryside – as well as a way of life that is distinct from anywhere else in the world.

Take the Aran Islands, for example. From what Oscar Wilde described as the “savage beauty” of Connemara, you can make the short ferry hop to Inis Mór, Inis Meáin, and Inis Oírr (or as an alternative, the aeroplane crossing takes just ten minutes and gives you incredible views of the coastline). These three islands, each with their own distinct personality and charm, all share an inimitable terrain, with giant flat slabs of rock stretching towards cliff tops, stone walls interweaving on rolling fields, and small thatch cottages overlooking the sea.

Kerry's uninhabited Blasket Islands mark the most westerly point in Ireland (and the winding, zig-zagging pathway to the ferry at Dunquin has to be one of the most photographed spots on the island of Ireland). Though the sea-crossing can sometimes

be a little rocky, Great Blasket Island is well worth the trip and has barely changed in hundreds of years. Stroll around these rolling hills and you'll see abandoned cottages, some of which you can peek inside. The island was inhabited until 1953, when the population declined to just 22 and it was officially evacuated.

Unsurprisingly, given their unspoiled natural environments, Irish islands are magnets for wildlife. Nowhere is this more apparent than on Rathlin Island. Just six miles off the coast of County Antrim, the island is such an integral part of bird conservation that the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) has its own seabird center on the cliffs. From there, you'll see rare and beautiful birds, including guillemots, razorbills, and puffins, as well as some of the most beautiful views on the island of Ireland.

### GETTING THERE

Accessing Ireland's islands is easy. Some you can drive to (Achill Island is connected to the mainland by landbridge); some are tidal (Coney Island, County Sligo) meaning that you can walk across at low-tide; and some you can reach by local boat (Devenish Island, County Fermanagh). But for most islands, a ferry is the way to go. With smaller and uninhabited islands, sailings may be seasonal, but larger islands will be accessible all year round, weather dependent. ♥

# THE GREAT OUTDOORS

**A** kayaking trip down a glassy canal draped in greenery. A cycle around a lake overlooked by grand country houses and soaring forests. A walk along a windswept coastal trail by marram grass-tufted sand dunes and crashing waves. Visiting the island of Ireland is all about getting outdoors and getting active, and with such a wide diversity of landscapes from quiet green valleys to wild Atlantic beaches, experiencing the island's natural beauty couldn't be easier.

When it comes to adventures on two feet, Ireland serves up a vast array of trails, paths, routes, and even walking festivals for both the novice and the experienced walker. You can enjoy edge-of-the-world views and blasts of salty sea air on cliff-edge paths around Slieve League in County Donegal, the Causeway Coast in Northern Ireland, and Loop Head in County Clare. You can escape into the rich green beauty of undulating valleys such as the Glen of Aherlow in County Tipperary. And you can weave around the remarkable granite outcrops of the Mourne Mountains in County Down. There are vast walking routes around Atlantic Ocean headlands and short jaunts through ancient woods. Wherever you roam, there's always a warm welcome.

Ireland's waterways have witnessed everything from huge battles on the River Shannon in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to a busy era of trade and commerce on the canals in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Today, they are places of pure beauty, edged with an abundance of ferns and reeds, and humming with birds and wildlife. Head out into the dark on a night kayaking trip on Lough Hyne, County Cork, where bioluminescence lights up the water. Or explore the maze of bays, narrow channels, and islands around both Upper and Lower Lough Erne in County Fermanagh.

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands is filled with an amazing array of off-the-beaten track adventures in forest parks and bogland, as well as along canals and rivers. Try a slow adventure on a kayak down the Lough Allen Canal in County Leitrim, take it up a level with a tree-canopy walk at the Lough Key Forest Park in County Roscommon, or stroll amongst 360 million years of geology at the Cavan Burren Park in County Cavan.

One of the most incredible aspects of being outdoors on the island of Ireland is the wildlife. West Cork is a top European destination for whalewatching, while the Blasket Islands in County Kerry is known as the grey seal capital of Ireland, with a colony of over 1,000. And for some of the best birdwatching on the island, don't miss a trip to Rathlin Island in County Antrim where you can spot puffins, guillemots, and corncrake. ♥



# CYCLING BLISS

*Quicker than walking but slow enough to allow you to soak up the sights and atmosphere of the countryside, Ireland's Greenways are the perfect trails for a vacation without cars*

KILMACTHOMAS VIADUCT  
WATERFORD GREENWAY

If you haven't heard of a Greenway before, the clue is in the name. This is a network of off-road trails for cyclists and walkers that often follows the course of Ireland's old railways. Having kicked off with the stunning Great Western Greenway in County Mayo, the concept has grown to take in all parts of the island, with one of the latest being the 80 mile-long Royal Canal Greenway from Maynooth in County Kildare to Cloondara in County Longford. Whichever Greenway you choose, you'll find that this truly is an elemental way to travel: the countryside really comes alive when you're on a bike, and you can stop to take it in at your leisure.

So where to start? Well, if you're looking for a great adventure, east coast-style, the Waterford Greenway is ideal. This route crosses eleven bridges and three impressive Victorian viaducts before arriving at Dungarvan Bay. On the way, you'll encounter many of the nooks and crannies of Irish history. Castle ruins, 18<sup>th</sup> century paper mills, historic viaducts, and welcoming villages — they're all part of the rich tapestry of this region.

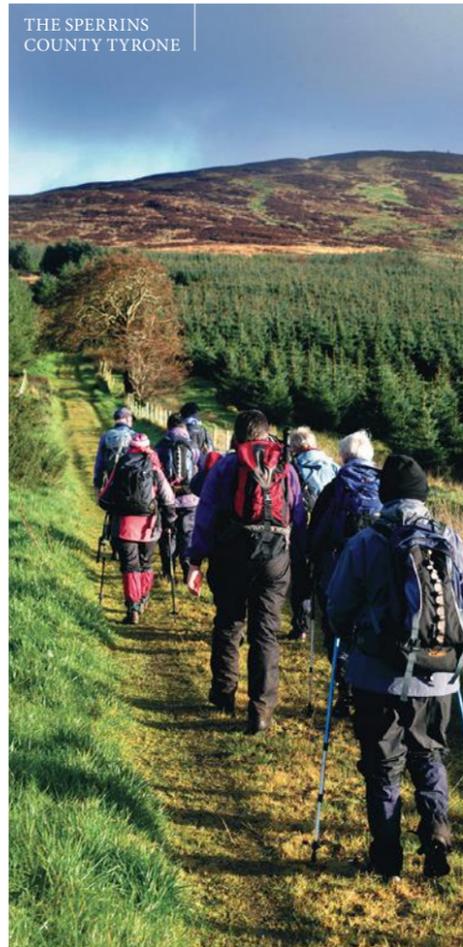
Long before the coming of the railways this was Viking territory. You'll come across traces of their ancient settlements, and will probably be struck by how much those Norse people liked a good view. Ireland is sometimes wet, it's true; so if the weather isn't going your way, nip into a cozy pub, and listen as the gentle rain turns the Greenways even greener.

**“ THIS IS A TRULY ELEMENTAL WAY TO TRAVEL: THE COUNTRYSIDE REALLY COMES ALIVE WHEN YOU'RE ON A BIKE AND YOU CAN STOP AND TAKE IT IN AT YOUR LEISURE ”**

These routes cross extraordinarily beautiful countryside all around the island. The Boyne Greenway begins in Dominic's Park on the south bank of the River Boyne in Drogheda, County Louth, and ends at the Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre in Oldbridge, County Meath. It's a short one, at only 1.1 miles, but has a lovely section along the Boyne Canal.

Taking in aspects of Belfast's unique history is the Comber Greenway, which goes off-road close to the old Harland & Wolff shipyard (which built Titanic) and runs along an old railway line. A tranquil green corridor through the city eventually reaches open countryside, where you can spot Scrabo Tower in the distance. In case you're wondering — it was built in honor of a local man who fought in the Napoleonic Wars. You're never very far from history here.

No matter where you cycle on Ireland's Greenways you'll be assured of a gentle way of seeing dramatic sights. And the great thing about going by bicycle is that you always get a seat with a good view. ♥



THE SPERRINS  
COUNTY TYRONE



LOUGH DERG  
COUNTY CLARE



GRAIGUENAMANAGH  
COUNTY CARLOW

## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

*All over the island of Ireland, you'll find secret corners that are perfect for walking, cycling, horse riding and kayaking... All you have to do is look*

In the uplands of counties Tyrone and Londonderry, the wind whips across the time-weathered stones of the Sperrin Mountains. Bog cotton, heather, and foxgloves dance in the breeze across bogland, quiet valleys, and undulating hills. This is walking country — where civilization drifts away and mountain summits beckon. The Sperrins is one of the island of Ireland's largest upland areas, but the landscape feels undiscovered, with ochre-colored moorlands that go on for miles. At the western gateway to the mountains and close to the friendly town of Omagh is Gortin Glen Forest Park, which offers walking of a different kind over trails through beautiful woodland.

From its source in County Laois's Slieve Bloom Mountains, the River Barrow flows 119 miles to Waterford Harbor. But one of the most beautiful sections is the Barrow Navigation in counties Carlow and Kilkenny. Bordered by gentle woodland, grassy towpaths, and rolling green fields, it's tailor-made for off-grid adventures. "Undiscovered is an understatement for the Barrow," says Martin O'Brien of the Mullichain Café in the

scenic waterside hamlet of St Mullins. "Glide along these waters and you'll pass through farmland, gurgling lock gates and old villages — it's like a glimpse of times gone by." There are plenty of places, like Go with the Flow River Adventures, to rent kayaks and canoes to explore for exploring this pretty slice of the island. There's lots to do for walkers and cyclists, too. Rent a bike from the Waterside Guesthouse or pull on your hiking shoes and walk the towpath from the town of Graiguenamanagh to St Mullins (4 miles). You'll soon be into a wonderland of wildlife, where otters and kingfishers dart from the riverbanks.

Lapping the shores of Tipperary, Galway, and Clare are the waters of Lough Derg. On the lough's northerly shores, the wildlife sanctuary of Portumna Forest Park is threaded with quiet cycling and walking trails. Keep your eye out for the fallow deer that call the park home, along with fox, badger, and even a white-tailed sea eagle. As well as activities such as horse riding which you can enjoy in the hills around Mountshannon, Lough Derg offers plenty, all types of hikes, from waterside strolls to heart-pumping climbs. For a walk into Irish mythology, head for Tountinna and the Graves of the Leinsterman. Tountinna means "hill of the waves" and legend has it that when the great flood came, the only people who survived were on this hill... Get to the top and you'll see why — as the entire Lough Derg valley tumbles out before you. ♥

# IRELAND ON SCREEN

Like Skywalker meditating on his rocky island retreat. Dragons soaring over the Westerosi coast. John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara falling in love against a background of green fields. There's one place that links these memorable moments – the island of Ireland.

Maybe it's the drama of the landscapes that attracts so many location scouts. When soaring sea cliffs lashed by wind and rain were required for *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*, there was no more fitting location than the Cliffs of Moher in County Clare, a highlight of the Wild Atlantic Way. The rocky landscapes of County Mayo and Galway make an impressive backdrop for *The Quiet Man*. And anyone who's watched the harrowing opening scenes of Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* will marvel at the real-life serenity of Curracloe Beach in County Wexford, where they were filmed. Curracloe also made an appearance in the movie *Brooklyn* starring Saoirse Ronan. And when Disney needed a fairytale village for *Disenchanted*, the picturesque Enniskerry in County Wicklow stepped right up.

Of course, it's not just the island's natural beauty that appeals. Some of Ireland's greatest stars are the historic landmarks that have graced our screens. In County Meath, Trim Castle, which dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, starred in both Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* and *The Last Duel* with Matt Damon. Elegant mansions such as Castle Coole in County Fermanagh (*Miss Julie*) and Killruddery House in County Wicklow (*Far and Away* and *The Tudors*, among others) are instant film sets, showcasing a bygone age of privilege and luxury. And when it comes to genuine drama, the real-life tales of crime and punishment that haunt the cells of Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin and Crumlin Gaol in Belfast almost overshadow their appearances in films such as *The Italian Job* and independent drama, *Starred Up*.

Ireland's cities have also had their share of the limelight. The riotous TV comedy *Derry Girls* paints a memorable picture of Derry-Londonderry in the 1990s, and now half the fun of a visit to this historic walled city is trying to recognize locations from the show. Belfast starred as itself in *The Fall*, where Jamie Dornan's serial killer mind games with Gillian Anderson's police detective. And Dublin has seen everything from the realism of *The Commitments* and *Once* to the sepia tones of John Huston's *The Dead*, adapted from James Joyce's short story.

For fans of TV and film, the island of Ireland is the perfect location whether you're exploring Galway UNESCO City of Film or touring Games of Thrones® locations in Northern Ireland. ♥

# EXPLORE THE SEVEN KINGDOMS

Take off on a *Game of Thrones*® adventure through the forests, mountains, moorlands, and castles of Northern Ireland

Winter is never truly over in Northern Ireland. The nail-biting saga of *Game of Thrones*® may have reached an end, but the legacy of the hit HBO show lives on in this part of the island, which is home to more Seven Kingdoms locations than anywhere else in the world.

You'll find the world of Westeros in the most unexpected places. There are the *Game of Thrones*® doors – 10 beautifully carved pieces of wood situated in pubs, cafés and inns around Northern Ireland – made out of storm-felled beech trees from the Dark Hedges (Kingsroad). At The Steensons in Glenarm, County Antrim, you can meet the resident goldsmiths who crafted the crowns worn by King Joffrey and his bride Margaery, as well as Daenerys' dragon brooches. And in Banbridge, County Down, just 24 miles from Belfast, you can visit the *Game of Thrones* Studio Tour with amazing imagery and sets, as well as props and shows from the series.

Offering a range of thrilling experiences for fans of the show, Winterfell Tours allows you to really get into the spirit of things.

Plus, it's got a great location in the courtyard of Castle Ward – a spellbinding spot that doubled as Winterfell in the show. "It really felt like we had stepped into Westeros," says fan Emily O'Dwyer. "One of the highlights for me was sword fighting – that's when I really started to feel like a Stark." Authenticity is all part of the experience here. With a fur cloak on your shoulders, you can test your aim with archery, have a go at axe-throwing, and even meet some dire wolves.

A great way to experience several of the filming locations at once is with a tour. And for the inside track, then a trip with McCombs Coach Tour is a good way to go, as you'll be in the company of drivers who worked on the show, ferrying *Game of Thrones*® actors to and from their Northern Ireland filming locations. Traveling along the Causeway Coastal Route, you'll visit a number of locations, including the 400-million-year-old Cushendun Caves, which featured Melisandre giving birth to the shadow assassin, and Ballintoy Harbour, where Theon Greyjoy returned to the Iron Islands. ♥

“ WITH A FUR CLOAK ON YOUR SHOULDERS, YOU CAN TEST YOUR AIM WITH ARCHERY OR HAVE A GO AT AXE-THROWING ”

GAME OF THRONES STUDIO TOUR  
BANBRIDGE, COUNTY DOWN



WINTERFELL  
COUNTY DOWN

PHOTO: LUCAS FILM



LUKE'S ISLAND  
WILD ATLANTIC WAY

## STAR POWER

You don't have to go to a galaxy far, far away to find landscapes that are out of this world. *Star Wars* and the Wild Atlantic Way have created the perfect cinematic double-act

If, at certain points along the Wild Atlantic Way, it feels like you're staring at a film set – that's probably because you are. But while Ireland's cinematic coastline has appeared in everything from *The Princess Bride* to *Ryan's Daughter*, its performance as a Jedi island retreat is undoubtedly its most iconic, with a starring role in both *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and *The Last Jedi*.

First port of call for cast and crew of *The Force Awakens* was the pretty village of Portmagee in County Kerry. It is close to here – seven miles out into the swell of the Atlantic Ocean, to be precise – that you'll find one of the film's most iconic locations – Skellig Michael.

"We were just blown away by it," says Martin Joy, Supervising Location Manager. "It certainly fed into our *Star Wars* universe." Originally inhabited by 6<sup>th</sup> century monks, this UNESCO World Heritage Site has restricted visitor numbers, but you can take a boat from Portmagee and sail around it and the surrounding area, a place Mark Hamill called "indescribable."

Today, in this quiet village it's hard to imagine a huge film crew bustling around, but Portmagee was the epicenter of the action for *The Force Awakens*. B&Bs in the area were filled with production folk, local guides including adventurer Mike O'Shea carried loads up Skellig Michael, and boatmen transported equipment and crew onto the Moorings Hotel (a pre-production site for filming and location for the wrap party) and you can pull your own pint of Guinness, just like Mark Hamill did, as part of "The Force Perfect Pint Challenge."

Travel north and south along this coastline – with its moody skies, pulse-pounding cliffs, and craggy headlands – and you'll encounter even more *Star Wars* locations. For *The Last Jedi*, the 6<sup>th</sup> century beehive huts of Skellig Michael were meticulously recreated on windswept Sybil Head near Ballyferriter, while the cast and crew celebrated the end of filming in Dingle's old grocery-pub, Foxy John's. Filming also took place at Brow Head in County Cork, a picturesque slice of land that edges out into the Atlantic Ocean, and Loop Head in County Clare, famed for its dramatic cliffs and caves that bear the brunt of crashing tides.

And if you're wondering how it felt for locals when the Millennium Falcon and its entourage came to town, then Hugh Farren of Farren's Bar in Donegal's Malin Head tells it like it is. "It was unbelievable that *Star Wars* was filming a mile and a half away from us," he explains... "It was out of this world." ♥



ADARE MANOR  
COUNTY LIMERICK



1



2



3



4



5



6

- 1 Ballynahinch Castle County Calway
- 2 Ballyfin County Laois
- 3 Gregan's Castle County Clare
- 4 Kribben Cottages County Down
- 5 Finn Lough Bubble Domes County Fermanagh
- 6 Wineport Lodge County Westmeath

## PLACES TO STAY

*Ever slept in a lighthouse? Or how about a medieval castle? Whether you're after cool camping or a cozy B&B, Ireland has something to suit*

### HISTORIC HOUSES

If your idea of relaxation is 19<sup>th</sup> century drawing rooms, book-laden libraries, and breakfasts around huge tables, then walk through the doors of a historic Irish country house. Often owned by descendants of the original families who built them, these beautiful houses sit on tranquil estates and offer old-fashioned informal hospitality, blazing fires, antique furnishings, and candlelit dinners. As well as being friendly and relaxed, historic houses also have atmosphere in abundance and many offer the chance to dine in the drawing room at night, using fresh ingredients sourced from the beautiful surrounding countryside and kitchen gardens.

### FARMHOUSES

An Irish farmhouse stay offers up a slice of authentic rural life – enjoy fresh farm produce for breakfast, great walking routes, and a real sense of getting away from it all. This is a wonderful way of getting back to the simple things in life on a working farm. Lots of farms offer extra activities, too, so you can try milking cows, or learn the art of baking Irish soda bread.

### UNIQUE PLACES TO STAY

Looking for accommodation with a twist? You've come to the right place... The island of Ireland has an amazing array of unique accommodation, whether you want to rent a medieval castle or bed down in your very own island resort. Stay in a transparent bubble dome underneath the starry skies at County Fermanagh's stylish Finn Lough resort. Give your vacation in Dublin a twist by renting an early 19<sup>th</sup> century Martello Tower in Dublin Bay, originally built to defend against Napoleonic invasion. Or fall asleep to the sound of water at a converted corn mill on the River Bush in County Antrim, by the village of Bushmills. Whatever way you want to stay, the island of Ireland has lots of special places to choose from.

### LIGHTHOUSES

Tales of shipwrecks, adventure, and tragedy swirl in the waters surrounding the beacons that are Ireland's lighthouses. Perched on cliff edges, keeping a watchful eye over the turbulent seas, and withstanding all the weather can throw at them, these lighthouses are unique places to stay, whether you're cozying up in a lightkeeper's house, or spending a few nights in the lighthouse tower. And the great thing about a lighthouse stay? It's a year-round affair; in winter, light the fire, make yourself at home, and gaze at the wild seas below; in summer, enjoy late sunsets and sublime ocean views.

### B&BS

The Irish welcome is famous. And it's not a myth, either. Step inside a B&B on the island of Ireland, and you'll have smiling faces serving up your breakfast, people making sure you're comfortable, and the owners ready and willing to give you the inside track on where to go in the local area. A B&B stay is a way to connect, first-hand, with Irish culture, and if you're looking for relaxed, affordable accommodation, then they're just the ticket. Ranging from elegant historic houses in the heart of the countryside to low-key and comfortable family homes, the one thing B&Bs have in common is the people: charming, full of character, and warm, they'll make sure you have a vacation to remember.

### ECO-FRIENDLY SLEEPS

Ireland's green accommodation options are growing all the time, with yoga retreats on quiet islands, low impact self-catering cottages, and sustainable hotels and guesthouses. Check out Gregan's Castle in the Burren area of County Clare, a founding member of The Burren Ecotourism Network for special ecotourism packages. Delphi Resort in the beautiful Connemara countryside in County Galway is a member of Green Hospitality Ireland, and The Salthouse in Ballycastle, County Antrim, is a brand new luxury sustainable hotel powered by wind turbines and solar energy.

### CASTLES

Peat-scented whiskeys by crackling log fires, magnificent medieval interiors, and an old-world ambience... a castle stay is the ultimate in style. Luxurious and indulgent – but friendly and relaxed, too – castle hotels generally sit on vast estates where you can enjoy walks into woodland, go clay-pigeon shooting, try falconry, or enjoy a traditional boat trip along gentle rivers. Super-elegant five-star castle hotels can be found all over the island, from the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East to the Causeway Coast. You can even rent entire castles just for you, your friends and family, with staff who will look after your every need. There are some more affordable offerings around, too, with self-catering castles available to rent for groups both big and small.

### COTTAGE STAY

Whether you're after an extraordinary adventure on the Wild Atlantic Way, an unforgettable tour through Northern Ireland, or a farm stay in the historic pastures of Ireland's Ancient East, you're guaranteed to find a lovely little self-catering cottage to suit your needs. Cottages on the island really do spring up everywhere – on remote headlands, on the edge of vast beaches, and in busy cities where everything is right on your doorstep. And for a real sense of tradition, opt for a thatched cottage because it doesn't get better than that. ♥

BALLYLIPPIN  
COUNTY DONEGALLAHINCH  
COUNTY CLARE

## A GOLF COURSE CALLED IRELAND

*With world-class courses in some of the most spectacular locations on the planet, the island of Ireland is often referred to by golfers as the Green of Dreams. This is why...*

When bestselling American author Tom Coyne was planning his golfing trip to Ireland, he found the island has over 400 golf clubs: true links, impeccable parkland courses, and many hidden gems. Over 16 weeks, he played every single seaside course on foot and his book *A Course Called Ireland* went from his imagination to print.

Coyne's experiences were many, but his golfing marathon was anchored by what makes a golfing trip to Ireland such a dream: "Even though an Irish welcome is always warm," Coyne says, "some of the pockets where people don't often visit are even warmer and the conversation even easier." Actor Bill Murray echoes Coyne's sentiments, too, and his favorite place to play golf is in Ireland: "When you come as a guest, you're treated like a king."

So where to start? Well, you can take your lead from where homegrown champions Shane Lowry (Clara, County Offaly), Rory McIlroy (Holywood Golf Club, County Down), Darren Clarke (Dungannon Golf Club, County Tyrone), Graeme McDowell

(Rathmore Golf Club, County Antrim), Paul McGinley (Grange Golf Club, County Dublin) and Padraig Harrington (Stackstown Golf Club, County Dublin) honed their skills. You can walk in the footsteps of the greats on courses that have made the world stage, including Golf Digest's number one course outside of the US, Royal County Down, or the exceptional greens on display at Royal Portrush, County Antrim, which is set to host The 153rd Open in 2025. You can even get a sneak preview of what's in store for Ryder Cup players at Adare Manor in County Limerick, when Europe plays the US in 2027.

The island of Ireland is also studded with courses that are beloved of top international players, such as Tiger Woods. On occasion, the sublime fairways of County Kerry's Waterville Golf Links have taken Woods's fancy. And he isn't the only one. This was a spot also adored by the late Payne Stewart, whose 19<sup>th</sup> hole was the Butler Arms Hotel in the village, where he famously sang songs, played harmonica, and chatted with locals. A bronze statue of Stewart was unveiled at the golf links course in 2000, and has become an iconic memorial ever since. Waterville, which is located on the Iveragh Peninsula, boasts sensational views of the Atlantic, and is surrounded by the rich natural beauty of the Ring of Kerry. It's this kind of location that makes golf on the island of Ireland so special. ♥

## IRELAND INFORMATION

*So you're coming to the island of Ireland and want to know how to get here, how you'll get around when you arrive and even what currency to bring? We've got the lowdown on all you need right here*

*Travel options and businesses may be affected by local restrictions. Please check on [gov.ie](http://gov.ie) and [nidirect.gov.uk](http://nidirect.gov.uk) before visiting.*

### TRAVELING TO IRELAND BY AIR

It's never been easier to get to Ireland from anywhere in the US. Most airline carriers operate direct flight options from over ten major US cities. Alternatively, all US-based carriers operate connections within the US or Europe. Visit [Ireland.com](http://Ireland.com) for information and to start planning your Ireland vacation.

### SMOKING RESTRICTIONS

Smoking is banned in enclosed public places all over the island of Ireland.

### CUSTOMS

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

### WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

The metric system is used in the Republic of Ireland (not strictly enforced at times) and in Northern Ireland, it's a mix.

### CURRENCY

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

### CREDIT CARDS

Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted throughout the island of Ireland; American Express is accepted in some places but not all. Credit cards can be used for purchases and also to access money from ATMs (although this usually is accompanied by a high fee). You can also withdraw money from ATMs with your US debit card, fees will still be charged but they are not as high as credit cards and the money will come directly from your US checking account. Each ATM has a list of card symbols that can be used. Ireland uses a "chip and pin" system for debit and credit card purchases, which means you key your pin into a pinpad. If your card doesn't have a chip, most retailers will still accept it and you can just sign for your purchases.

### VAT (SALES TAX) AND REFUNDS

Visitors to Ireland from non-EU countries can claim back sales taxes on purchases made in Ireland; shopping in Ireland is subject to a sales tax of 23%. Always look for the "Tax-Free Shopping" sign in the windows of participating stores. To avail of your tax refund, complete a valid tax refund document, which you can get from participating stores.

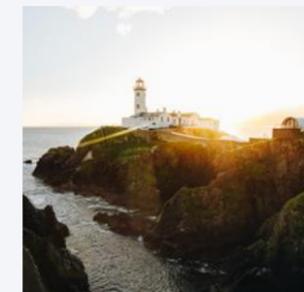
Present this to customs on departure from the EU, and you can receive your refund on the spot at some airports; otherwise, you can mail your tax refund document to the store and a refund will be issued. Select shopkeepers will offer you the Horizon Tax-Free Shopping card, a new paperless method of getting tax refunds brought to you by FEXCO Tax-Free Shopping.

With each purchase, the card is swiped and tax-free eligible items are logged. At the end of your trip, hand in the card to the FEXCO Tax-Free Shopping desk at Dublin or Shannon Airport. You can apply for a card online at [shoptaxfree.com](http://shoptaxfree.com)

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

### LANGUAGE

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



Fanad Head County Donegal

### CLIMATE

Ireland has a mild, temperate climate with summer temperatures generally ranging from 60°F to 70°F. Temperatures in spring and autumn are generally 50°F, and in winter between 40°F and 46°F. Snow is rare but rain showers can occur at any time of the year. For up-to-the-minute weather reports visit [met.ie](http://met.ie)

### PASSPORT/VISA REQUIREMENTS

A valid US passport is required to visit the island of Ireland and no visa is required. However, if you are traveling on a passport issued by another country (although a resident in the United States), please check visa requirements with the embassy.

### PERSONAL SAFETY

The Irish Tourist Assistance Service (ITAS) provides immediate support and assistance, seven days a week for visitors who become victims of crime or other traumatic incidents in the Republic of Ireland. The service operates from **Pearse Street Garda Station** in Dublin and can be contacted on +353-1-666-9354/ 1-890-365-700; email: [info@itas.ie](mailto:info@itas.ie)

For those who are victims of a crime in Northern Ireland, contact **Victim Support Northern Ireland**. Tel: +44 (0) 28 90 244039; email: [info@victimsupportni.org.uk](mailto:info@victimsupportni.org.uk)

### DRIVING IN IRELAND

American visitors to Ireland must bring a valid American driver's license with them. Driving in Ireland is on the left of the road and seatbelts must be worn at all times in the front and back of the vehicle. Drivers should note that they are obliged by law to carry their driver's license at all times.

Motorcyclists and their passengers must wear helmets. There are very strict laws on drinking alcohol and driving, and the best advice is simply "don't drink and drive." The measurement of speed limits on roads in the Republic of Ireland is kilometers per hour (km/h). The measurement of speed limits on roads in Northern Ireland is miles per hour (mph). Drivers are urged to remember the change of driving laws between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

### CAR RENTAL

Most of the major car rental companies have desks at airports, ferry terminals, and cities across Ireland. The trade organization for the car rental industry in the Republic of Ireland is the **Car Rental Council**. [carrentalcouncil.ie](http://carrentalcouncil.ie) In Northern Ireland, contact the **British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association**. [bvrla.co.uk](http://bvrla.co.uk)

For more information on car rental, please visit [ireland.com/en-us/plan-your-trip/travel/getting-around-ireland/](http://ireland.com/en-us/plan-your-trip/travel/getting-around-ireland/)

# Ireland



Whilst every care has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this map, Tourism Ireland cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions. Due to the small scale of this map, not all holiday centres can be shown. The information on this map is correct at time of going to press.  
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