

Go Wild Northern Ireland



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The Novel Traveller

MICHELLE WALSH JACKSON

Things to See and Do

MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE BELFAST
SURFING NORTHERN IRELAND
THE BEST BEACHES TO ENJOY
HIDDEN COASTAL GEMS



////////////////////////////////////// Giant's Causeway

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Publisher's Note

Welcome to the 2025 edition of Go Wild Northern Ireland. We're excited to guide you through the endless adventures awaiting you, in Northern Ireland's six counties.

As the publisher of this magazine, it is my pleasure to unveil the breathtaking sights, vibrant sounds and unforgettable experiences that Northern Ireland has to offer.

In this issue, we have features on Music & Nightlife, Surfing, Cycling, the Silent Valley Reservoir, Watersports and hidden Coastal gems for you to discover.

With its rich history, lively culture and welcoming communities, Northern Ireland is a treasure trove of wonders. From the iconic Giant's Causeway to the rolling hills of its picturesque countryside, there's something here for everyone.

Join us on an exploration of Northern Ireland's bustling cities and quaint towns. We'll uncover hidden gems and must-see landmarks, including the world-renowned Game of Thrones filming locations and the charming attractions scattered across each county.

You'll meet the heart and soul of Northern Ireland – its people. From artists and musicians to chefs and entrepreneurs, discover why this land is celebrated for its warm hospitality and inviting spirit.

So, sit back, relax, and let us take you on a remarkable journey through Northern Ireland.

Enjoy the ride.

We hope you have a fantastic adventure!

Bobby Power

Publisher

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For all the latest news, visit www.gowildmagazine.com – your official guide to Tourism in Ireland

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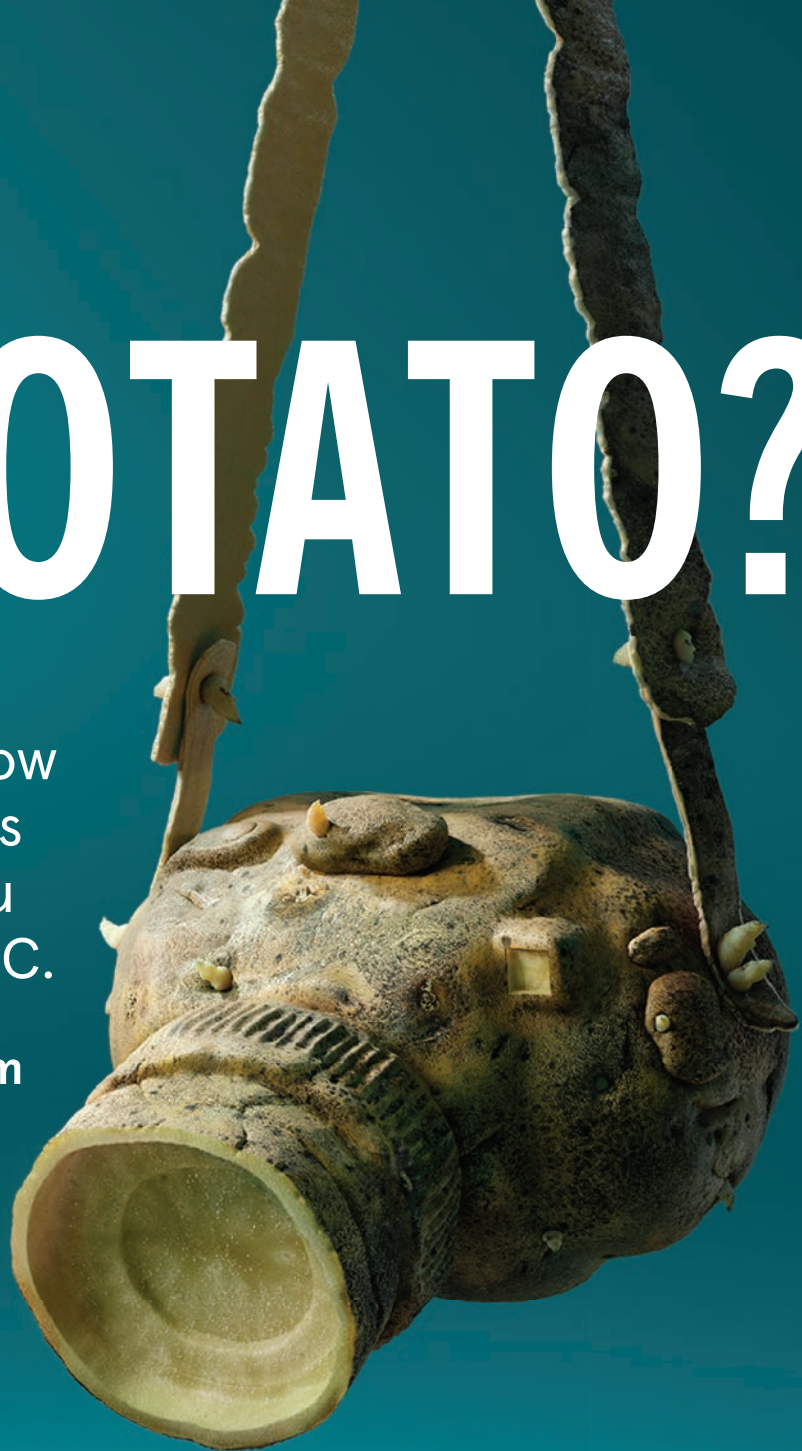
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Head to Armagh and Surprise Yourself: *Top 10 Reasons to Visit*

Armagh is a city that blends ancient history with vibrant modern experiences. Whether you're a culture buff, a foodie, or an outdoor adventurer, Armagh offers something to surprise and delight every visitor. Here are the top 10 reasons to make Armagh your go-to destination:

Armagh Planetarium

A visit to the Armagh Planetarium and Observatory offers a captivating journey through space and time. Visitors can explore interactive exhibits, experience immersive shows in the digital dome theatre, and even launch virtual rockets. For curious children and seasoned stargazers!

Long Meadow Cider Company – Granny's Griddle Bread Experience

Step into the orchard and discover the magic of traditional Irish baking. Enjoy the warm, buttery delight of Granny's Griddle Bread, freshly made and paired with award-winning cider or apple juice. It's a taste of heritage you won't forget.

Dan Winter's Cottage

The cottage is believed to be the longest thatched cob cottage in Ireland at over 98 feet and dating back some 400 years! The present owner was raised in this cottage with his family and visitors are welcome to learn more about its history, life and times.



Navan Centre & Fort – Time Travel Through Summer Tours

Explore the ancient seat of kings at the Navan Centre and Fort. This summer, immersive tours bring to life the myths,

rituals, and daily life of Iron Age Ireland. Meet costumed interpreters, try your hand at ancient crafts, and learn more with changing experiences each day.

Armagh County Museum – A Local Treasure Trove

Northern Ireland's oldest county museum is a hidden gem. With fascinating exhibits that connect Armagh's past to its present, from prehistoric artefacts to Victorian curiosities, it's a must-visit for history lovers. Admission is free.



FE McWilliam Gallery and Studio

Located in nearby Banbridge, this contemporary gallery celebrates the life and work of sculptor FE McWilliam. With rotating exhibitions, children and adults' workshops, a sculpture garden, and a stylish café, it's a cultural haven.

ELN Fleece Making Experience

If you are always on the hunt for the perfect fleece, then ELN fleece making experience in Banbridge is for you. Come into the studio and design your own fleece, pick fabrics, fit, trims, final add ons and create your own bespoke masterpiece. Booking required.

Game of Thrones Studio Tour – Epic Fantasy, Real Locations

Just outside Banbridge, Linen Mill Studios is home to Westeros with the official Game of Thrones Studio Tour. See original sets, costumes, and props from the iconic series, and relive the drama where it all began. Afternoon tea is also a great treat with a specially themed menu.

Mourne Alpacas – Meet the Fluffiest Locals

Take a scenic drive to the Mourne Mountains and enjoy a unique alpaca trekking experience. These gentle creatures are perfect companions for a relaxing walk-through stunning countryside.

And not forgetting the great outdoors! Gosford Forest Park and Loughgall Country Park

are on the go to list. Explore themed trails or simply enjoy a picnic under the trees. Playparks are excellent, suiting little and not so little adventurers!

Amazing Events

Festivals and great events are also on the programme across the year. September brings the Armagh Food and Cider Weekend, a celebration of the orchard and the harvest with a range of curated, exclusive events. November brings Armagh Georgian Festival and a start to the Christmas season with festive events and an artisan market, historical tours, living history characters walking along the streets and a fun family light show. March brings the Home of St Patrick Festival celebrating the saint and his connections to Armagh.

You can eat, sleep and explore more in Armagh. Known as the Food Heartland there are a wide range of fantastic eateries; from cosy cafés to fine dining restaurants serving locally sourced produce. And with accommodation offers starting from just £125 per room, it's an affordable getaway that doesn't skimp on quality.

So, head to Armagh and surprise yourself – with its rich history, warm hospitality, and unforgettable experiences, it's a destination that truly has it all. Plan your trip now and book your stay at visitarmagh.com

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Ireland
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a Giant
Spirit



Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon
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Mourne Mountains, County Down

Set within 220-acres of scenic woodlands just 13-miles from Belfast, Kingfisher Country Estate is a unique destination, where luxury, relaxation and the great outdoors come together in perfect harmony. Whether you're seeking a peaceful retreat, an action-packed escape or a celebration to remember, the estate offers a refined experience steeped in natural beauty and warm Northern Irish hospitality.

Kingfisher

COUNTRY ESTATE

At the heart of the estate lies the newly refurbished **DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel**, offering 129 beautifully appointed guest rooms and suites.

Designed with comfort and style in mind, the accommodation combines classic elegance with contemporary finishes, providing guests with a calm and welcoming atmosphere. Interconnecting rooms and generous suites make the hotel ideal for couples looking for a romantic break, families in search of adventure or groups planning a getaway together. With every stay, guests enjoy the thoughtful touches and warm welcome that the DoubleTree brand is known for.

Wellness and relaxation take centre stage at the luxurious **Halcyon Spa**, a tranquil haven for rest, recovery and rejuvenation. This modern, purpose-built facility, offers a wide menu of treatments and therapies inspired by natural wellness principles. Whether you're indulging in a tailored massage, a nourishing facial or a full spa day experience, every detail is designed to soothe the body and calm the mind. Facilities include a hydrotherapy pool, a Himalayan salt chamber, a sauna, a steam room and serene relaxation spaces. Together, these create a complete sensory escape from the pace of everyday life.

For lovers of the outdoors, the estate offers more than just views. Golfers, in particular, will find plenty to enjoy. **The Templepatrick Golf Course** is a Championship-standard, 18-hole, par-72 course designed by **David Jones** and **David Feherty**. It is set within the estate's rolling parkland and mature trees, offering a challenging yet enjoyable experience for golfers of all skill levels. Supporting

facilities include a driving range, practice putting greens, PGA professional coaching and a well-stocked pro shop for all your equipment and apparel needs.

Dining at Kingfisher is a highlight in its own right. The **Dormy Bar & Grill** serves a menu focused on locally sourced, seasonal ingredients, with a range of dishes that celebrate Northern Ireland's rich food heritage. It is the perfect place for a hearty lunch, a romantic dinner, or a relaxed gathering with friends. For something more casual, the **Terrace Lounge** offers light bites, barista coffees, cocktails, and afternoon tea, all paired with stunning views of the countryside and the golf course.

Whether you are enjoying a full three-course meal or sipping a glass of wine at sunset, the culinary experiences here are rooted in freshness, flavour and comfort.

The estate is also a premier venue for weddings, private events, corporate retreats and wellness getaways. With a variety of flexible indoor and outdoor event spaces, Kingfisher can accommodate both intimate ceremonies and large-

scale gatherings. The stunning natural surroundings and exceptional facilities provide a beautiful and inspiring backdrop for any occasion. The experienced events team is on hand to help plan and deliver seamless, personalised celebrations that leave a lasting impression.

Thanks to its prime location, just outside Templepatrick, Kingfisher is easy to reach from both Belfast International Airport and Belfast City Airport, making it a convenient choice for visitors from across the UK and beyond. Its close proximity to Belfast, as well as to Northern Ireland's spectacular North Coast and Glens of Antrim, makes it an excellent base for scenic day trips and outdoor adventures.

Whether you're planning a relaxing spa break, a luxury golf weekend, a family getaway, or the wedding of your dreams, Kingfisher Country Estate offers a one-of-a-kind setting where nature, comfort, and hospitality come together in perfect balance.

Learn more and plan your visit at: kingfishercountryestate.com





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Things to Do

IN NORTHERN IRELAND

There's nowhere quite like Northern Ireland if you love a good bucket list. Or a great one, for that matter. You've got everything here from World Heritage sites to paradise for walkers and climbers; real-world Game of Thrones® locations to scenery that inspired Narnia; you can stand in the spot where Titanic set out or sleep in the house where George Best grew up. So, bring your bucket list, and a few spare pens.

Buckets to do in Belfast

Walk along the Maritime Mile to explore Belfast's seafaring history on this waterfront trail connecting key attractions along both sides of the River Lagan. You'll start on the city side of the river and follow the historic trail from Sailortown and St Joseph's Church to Clarendon Buildings, passing key sites including the dry and wet docks, the Salmon of Knowledge (known locally as "the big fish"), the SS Nomadic, Titanic Belfast, the Great Light, and Thompson Dock which is the 415ft long dry dock where RMS Titanic was fitted out.

Buckets more for Thronies, bingers and buffs

Unless you have been living under a rock, you will know that Northern Ireland is heaven for Game of Thrones® fans with real-life Westeros locations dotted everywhere. But, serious fan or not, the locations are worth visiting in their own right. In County Down, you have Castle Ward Estate (Winterfell) and Tollymore Forest Park (the Haunted Forest). County Antrim has Cushendun Caves which appear as a Stormlands cove and, of course, the world famous Dark Hedges double as the Kingsroad.

In County Londonderry, Downhill Beach and Mussenden Temple feature as Dragonstone locations, while in County Fermanagh, Pollnagollum Cave became the fictional Hollow Hill secret hideout. There are also lots of immersive experiences and tours to choose from, so fans can get even more of their filmic fix.

However, Northern Ireland locations have enjoyed a starring

role in many other TV dramas and comedies such as Line of Duty, Derry Girls, and The Fall as well as big-budget movies like Miss Julie, Good Vibrations, Philomena and The Lost City of Z.

Speaking of stars...

Pay a visit to the OM Dark Sky Park and Observatory at Davagh Forest, near Cookstown in County Tyrone. Davagh has one of the 'darkest skies' in Ireland, which means there is so little light pollution that there are crystal clear views of star constellations. Or catch the Northern Lights aurora borealis phenomenon in County Londonderry.

Standing on the boulders of giants

You cannot miss a visit to Giant's Causeway...so good we named an entire coastal route after it! Legend has it that it's the remains of a causeway built by an Irish giant Finn McCool in order to meet a challenge to a fight set by a Scottish giant Benandonner. Or maybe the intriguing stones are volcanic. Either way this World Heritage site is an epic experience. As is the legendary challenge to cross the 30-metre deep and 20-metre wide chasm via Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge to its tiny island neighbour. Of course, there's only one way back so you can always say you did the challenge twice.

Marvel at Nature's wonders

Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark in County Fermanagh combine to create Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark where underground rivers, waterfalls, winding passages and lofty chambers, and above-ground flora and fauna let you wonder at the marvels of Mother Nature.

There's buckets more...

In Northern Ireland, your bucket list is only ever half written (try our version for inspiration!) And like we said, bring a few spare pens along. You'll need them.





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HIDDEN GEMS OF NORTHERN IRELAND

Off-the-Beaten-Track Locations

Northern Ireland is a land of breathtaking landscapes, rich history, and warm hospitality. While many visitors flock to iconic attractions like the Giant's Causeway and Titanic Belfast, there are plenty of hidden gems waiting to be explored. For those who love venturing off the beaten path, here are some lesser-known but equally spectacular locations across Northern Ireland.

1. THE DARK HEDGES

– Beyond the Tourist Trail

While the Dark Hedges in County Antrim gained global fame thanks to *Game of Thrones*, many visitors overlook the surrounding area. Take a detour from the well-trodden path and explore **Gracehill House**, a stunning 18th-century estate with a rich history and a fantastic restaurant serving local delicacies. Early mornings or late evenings provide the best experience, allowing you to soak in the eerie beauty of the beech trees without the crowds.

2. MURLOUGH BAY

– Antrim's Secret Coastal Escape

Just a short drive from the famous **Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge**, Murlough Bay is a secluded paradise. This hidden coastal inlet boasts dramatic cliffs, rugged shorelines, and panoramic views of Rathlin Island and Scotland. The winding road leading to the bay feels like a journey through time, offering a sense of peace and solitude rarely found in tourist hotspots.



3. THE SILENT VALLEY

– A Tranquil Retreat in the Mourne

Tucked away in the heart of the **Mourne Mountains**, the **Silent Valley Reservoir** is a haven for nature lovers. This hidden gem offers scenic walking trails, peaceful picnic spots, and breathtaking views of the surrounding peaks. It's the perfect place for a quiet escape, far removed from the hustle and bustle of city life. For an added adventure, take the challenging hike up **Slieve Binnian** for one of the most rewarding panoramas in Northern Ireland.

4. RATHLIN ISLAND

– Wildlife Haven and Island Retreat

Rathlin Island, located off the coast of Ballycastle, is a must-visit for those seeking an authentic and untouched slice of Northern Ireland. With a population of fewer than 200 people, the island is a sanctuary for wildlife enthusiasts, offering some of the best puffin-watching opportunities in the UK. Explore the **RSPB Seabird Centre**, cycle along quiet coastal roads, and take in the stunning views from the **West Lighthouse**.

5. LOUGH NAVAR FOREST

– Fermanagh's Hidden Vista

While many visitors to County Fermanagh head straight for the famous **Marble Arch Caves**, Lough Navar Forest remains a well-kept secret. This sprawling woodland is home to the **Magho Cliffs Viewpoint**,



offering jaw-dropping views over Lower Lough Erne and the Donegal coast. The drive up is an adventure in itself, with winding forest roads leading to one of the most spectacular viewpoints in Ireland.

6. THE GOBBINS

– A Coastal Walk Like No Other

Nestled along the Causeway Coastal Route, The Gobbins is an exhilarating cliffside path that offers a truly immersive experience. Unlike the busy **Giant's Causeway**, this dramatic coastal walk allows you to get up close with the raw power of the Irish Sea. Suspended walkways, tunnels, and caves make for an unforgettable adventure – just be sure to book in advance, as access is limited.

DISCOVER NORTHERN IRELAND'S BEST-KEPT SECRETS

Northern Ireland is brimming with hidden gems that showcase the country's natural beauty, rich heritage, and unique charm. Whether you're an avid hiker, a history buff, or simply looking for a peaceful retreat, these off-the-beaten-track locations offer something for everyone. So, step off the well-worn paths, embrace the adventure and uncover the secret wonders of Northern Ireland.

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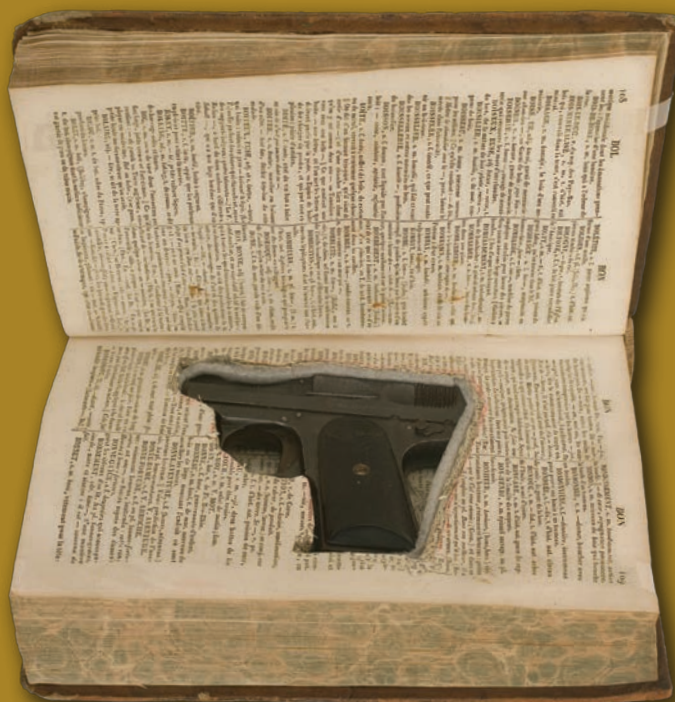
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ANTRIM TOURISM:

Exploring the Causeway Coast and Beyond

County Antrim is home to some of Northern Ireland's most awe-inspiring landscapes and iconic landmarks. From the legendary Giant's Causeway to the breathtaking Glens of Antrim, this region offers a mix of dramatic coastline, lush valleys, and historic sites that captivate visitors year-round. Whether you're a nature lover, an adventure seeker, or a history enthusiast, Antrim's Causeway Coast and beyond promise an unforgettable experience.



THE GIANT'S CAUSEWAY – A GEOLOGICAL MARVEL

No visit to Antrim is complete without exploring the **Giant's Causeway**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most famous natural wonders in the world. This extraordinary landscape features around **40,000 interlocking basalt columns**, formed by volcanic activity over 60 million years ago. The site is steeped in Irish mythology, with legend attributing its creation to **Finn McCool, the giant warrior** who built the causeway to battle a Scottish giant. Visitors can take a guided tour or walk the coastal trails, offering stunning views of the North Atlantic Ocean.

CARRICK-A-REDE ROPE BRIDGE – A THRILLING COASTAL ADVENTURE

For those with a head for heights, the **Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge** offers a thrilling challenge. Suspended 30 meters above the sea, this famous rope bridge connects the mainland to **Carrick-a-Rede Island**, once used by salmon fishermen. Walking across the swaying bridge provides breathtaking views of Rathlin Island and Scotland, making it a must-visit attraction along the **Causeway Coastal Route**. For a quieter experience, early morning or late afternoon visits are recommended to avoid the crowds.



THE GLENS OF ANTRIM – A LAND OF MYTHS AND MAJESTIC BEAUTY

The **Glens of Antrim** are a series of nine picturesque valleys, each with its own unique charm. These lush landscapes are dotted with waterfalls, forests, and hidden villages, making them perfect for hikers and photographers. Some highlights include:

- **Glenariff Forest Park** – Known as the 'Queen of the Glens,' this park offers spectacular waterfall trails and scenic picnic spots.
- **Cushendun** – A charming coastal village with **Game of Thrones filming locations** and an artistic heritage.
- **Glenarm Castle** – A historic estate with stunning gardens and traditional afternoon teas.



CAUSEWAY COASTAL ROUTE – ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST SCENIC DRIVES

The **Causeway Coastal Route** is regarded as one of the most beautiful road trips in the world. Stretching from Belfast to Derry-Londonderry, this coastal drive passes rugged cliffs, golden beaches, and medieval castles. Key stops include:

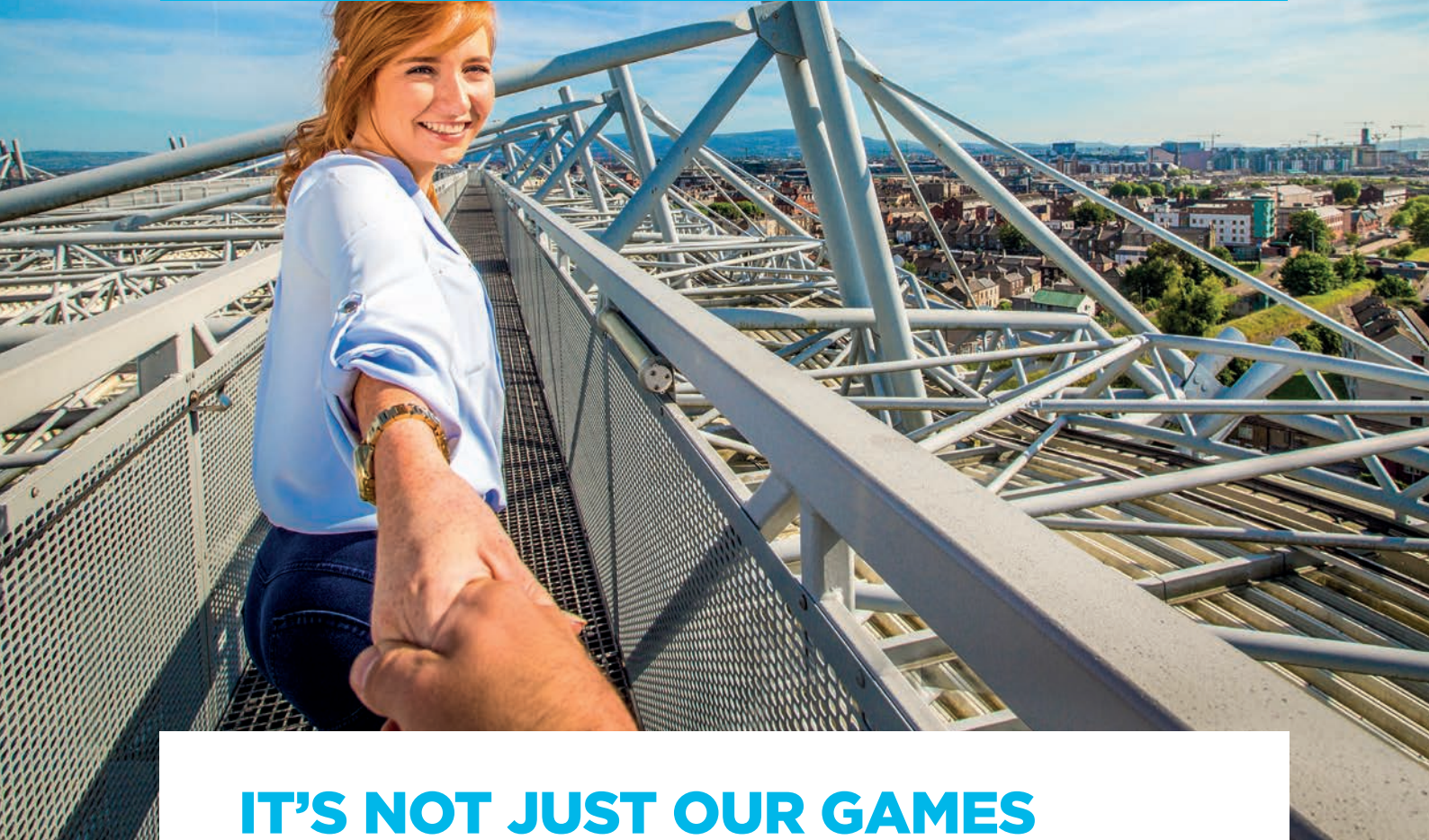
- **Dunluce Castle** – A dramatic 13th-century ruin perched on a cliff edge, steeped in history and legend.
- **Ballintoy Harbour** – A scenic fishing port, featured in **Game of Thrones** as the **Iron Islands**.
- **White Park Bay** – A secluded beach perfect for peaceful walks and wildlife spotting.



WHY ANTRIM SHOULD BE ON YOUR TRAVEL LIST

From the geological wonder of the Giant's Causeway to the thrill of Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge, the serene beauty of the Glens of Antrim, and the unforgettable Causeway Coastal Route, County Antrim is a dream destination for nature lovers and history enthusiasts alike. Whether you explore by foot, car, or bike, this part of Northern Ireland promises an adventure that will leave a lasting impression.

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GAME OF THRONES TOURISM

Exploring Northern Ireland's Legendary Film Locations

Northern Ireland is the true home of Game of Thrones, with its rugged coastlines, ancient forests, and medieval castles setting the stage for some of the most iconic scenes from the global phenomenon. While the last episode may have aired, the world of Westeros is alive and well in Northern Ireland, making it a dream destination for fans and adventure-seekers alike. Here's your ultimate guide to exploring the Game of Thrones film locations scattered across this stunning landscape.

1. THE DARK HEDGES – THE KING'S ROAD

One of the most famous Game of Thrones locations, The Dark Hedges in County Antrim, doubled as the King's Road, where Arya Stark made her daring escape from King's Landing. This eerie yet enchanting tunnel of beech trees is a must-visit, best experienced at dawn or dusk when the mist rolls through, creating a truly cinematic atmosphere.

2. BALLINTOY HARBOUR – PYKE & THE IRON ISLANDS

Located along the dramatic Causeway Coast, Ballintoy Harbour served as the rugged and windswept backdrop for the Iron Islands, home to House Greyjoy. This small, secluded harbour is where Theon Greyjoy first arrived back in Pyke, and it's also where many of the maritime scenes were filmed. Climb the rocky outcrops and take in the spectacular coastal views—just be prepared for the fierce North Atlantic winds!



3. CASTLE WARD – WINTERFELL COMES TO LIFE

A trip to Castle Ward, just outside Strangford in County Down, is a pilgrimage for any Game of Thrones fan. This historic estate was transformed into Winterfell, the seat of House Stark. Visitors can take part in immersive experiences, including archery sessions, medieval banquets, and even dressing up in Stark cloaks to truly feel part of the Seven Kingdoms.





4. TOLLYMORE FOREST PARK – THE HAUNTED FOREST

Nestled in the Mourne Mountains, Tollymore Forest Park was the chilling Haunted Forest where the very first White Walker encounter took place. The ancient trees, meandering rivers, and stone bridges make this an atmospheric location for a walk or a guided GOT tour. Fans will also recognize this setting as the spot where the Stark children discovered their direwolf pups.

5. CUSHENDUN CAVES – THE SHADOW'S BIRTHPLACE

For a darker twist, head to the Cushendun Caves in County Antrim, where Melisandre gave birth to the eerie shadow creature that killed Renly Baratheon. These 400-million-year-old caves provide a dramatic setting with their jagged rock formations and crashing waves.

6. DOWNHILL BEACH – DRAGONSTONE'S FIERY RITUAL

The sweeping sands of Downhill Beach in County Londonderry served as Dragonstone, where Melisandre

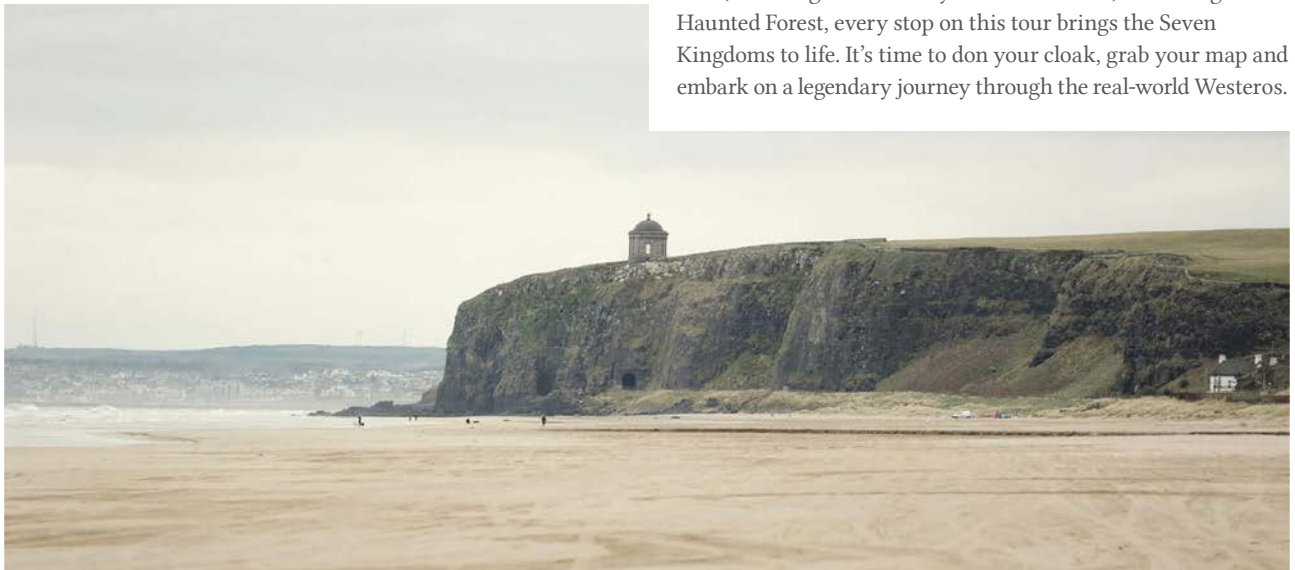


burned the statues of the Seven Gods in a fiery spectacle. The stunning beach is overlooked by Mussenden Temple, perched precariously on a cliff edge, adding to the dramatic scenery.



A WESTEROS ADVENTURE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

With its breathtaking landscapes and rich medieval history, Northern Ireland is the ultimate destination for Game of Thrones fans. Whether you're wandering through the King's Road, standing in the courtyard of Winterfell, or braving the Haunted Forest, every stop on this tour brings the Seven Kingdoms to life. It's time to don your cloak, grab your map and embark on a legendary journey through the real-world Westeros.



THE BEST IRISH PUBS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

A Guide to Live Music, Guinness, and Craic

Northern Ireland is home to some of the best Irish pubs in the world—where the Guinness flows, the music is lively, and the craic is unbeatable. Whether you're looking for a traditional session of folk tunes, a cozy corner by a roaring fire, or a bustling bar filled with laughter, these iconic pubs offer an authentic Irish experience. Here's our guide to some of the best Irish pubs across Northern Ireland.

1. THE DUKE OF YORK - BELFAST'S MOST INSTAGRAMMABLE PUB

Tucked away in the historic **Cathedral Quarter**, **The Duke of York** is a Belfast institution. The pub's cobbled alleyway, adorned with fairy lights and vintage Guinness signage, makes it one of the most picturesque drinking spots in the city. Inside, you'll find an extensive whiskey selection, a lively atmosphere, and regular live music sessions that capture the true spirit of Irish hospitality.



2. THE CROWN LIQUOR SALOON - VICTORIAN ELEGANCE IN BELFAST

No pub guide to Northern Ireland would be complete without mentioning **The Crown Liquor Saloon**. This legendary Belfast pub, dating back to the 19th

century, is famous for its beautifully preserved Victorian interior—stained glass windows, handcrafted woodwork, and private snugs. With a perfectly poured pint of Guinness in hand, it's easy to see why this historic watering hole remains one of Northern Ireland's most beloved drinking spots.



3. GRACE NEILL'S - THE OLDEST PUB IN IRELAND

Located in Donaghadee, **Grace Neill's** is said to be the oldest pub in Ireland, dating back to 1611. Steeped in history and folklore, the pub offers an enchanting atmosphere with its dark wooden beams and open fires. Whether you're here for a quiet drink or a lively night of traditional music, Grace Neill's is a must-visit for lovers of old-world Irish charm.



4. CROSSKEYS INN - A STEP BACK IN TIME

If you're looking for an authentic Irish pub experience, **Crosskeys Inn in Antrim** is the place to be. This 300-year-old thatched pub is one of the most traditional drinking establishments in the country, with its low ceilings, flagstone floors, and roaring turf fire. Renowned for its warm welcome and weekly traditional music sessions, Crosskeys offers a truly magical atmosphere for any visitor.



5. THE FRONT PAGE - DERRY'S LIVE MUSIC HAVEN

For those who love **live music**, **The Front Page** in Derry/Londonderry is an essential stop. This vibrant pub has long been a favourite among locals and visitors alike, offering an electric atmosphere with nightly performances from some of the best musicians in Northern Ireland. Whether it's a raucous trad session or a contemporary band, the energy in this pub is infectious.



6. THE HARBOUR BAR - COASTAL CRAIC IN PORTRUSH

Situated along the stunning **Causeway Coast**, **The Harbour Bar** in Portrush is an iconic spot for locals and tourists alike. With its friendly bartenders, top-quality Guinness, and unbeatable location overlooking the Atlantic, this pub is a fantastic place to soak in the coastal charm of Northern Ireland. Don't miss their legendary seafood chowder to accompany your pint.



EXPERIENCE THE BEST OF IRISH PUBS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Whether you're after a historic pub, a lively music venue, or a seaside escape, Northern Ireland's pub scene has something for everyone. Each of these pubs brings something unique to the table—be it their atmosphere, history, or live entertainment. So, pull up a stool, order a pint, and let the stories and music of Northern Ireland's best pubs transport you to the heart of Irish culture.

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TASTE NI

A Deep Dive into Local Food Festivals & Must-Try Dishes

Northern Ireland is a food lover's paradise, brimming with fresh local produce, world-class chefs, and an exciting calendar of food festivals that celebrate the best of its culinary traditions. Whether it's artisan cheese, fresh seafood, farm-to-table delights, or traditional Irish recipes, Northern Ireland is home to some of the most unique and delicious food experiences. From the bustling Belfast Food & Drink Festival to the legendary Oyster Festival in Hillsborough, here's a deep dive into Northern Ireland's must-visit food festivals and essential dishes that every visitor should try.

1. Belfast Restaurant Week – A Celebration of Local Flavours

Belfast has become a rising star in the UK and Ireland's culinary scene, and the annual **Belfast Restaurant Week** is proof of that. This week-long festival in September showcases the city's best dining experiences, featuring special tasting menus, street food pop-ups, and food trails that guide visitors through Belfast's gastronomic gems. Must-visit spots include Michelin-starred restaurants like **Ox**, alongside hidden gems such as **Mourne Seafood Bar** and **The Muddlers Club**.

2. The Bushmills Salmon & Whiskey Festival – Where Food Meets Tradition

Set in the heart of County Antrim, this festival celebrates two of Northern Ireland's most prized products: wild Atlantic salmon and world-renowned whiskey. Taking place in October, visitors can enjoy whiskey tastings at the **Old Bushmills Distillery**, seafood cooking demonstrations, and delicious pairings of salmon dishes with Irish whiskey. It's a must-visit for food and drink enthusiasts looking for authentic Northern Irish flavours.

3. The Hillsborough Oyster Festival – Seafood at Its Finest

A highlight for seafood lovers, the **Hillsborough International Oyster Festival** is a lively celebration of **Lough Foyle oysters**, some of the best in the world. Taking place in County Down, the festival features oyster-eating challenges, gourmet seafood dishes and live music, creating a vibrant atmosphere for locals and visitors alike. If you're a seafood enthusiast, this is the place to sample fresh oysters, crab and langoustines, straight from the Northern Irish waters.

4. The Armagh Food & Cider Festival – The Orchard County's Finest

Armagh, known as the Orchard County, is famous for its apples, making it the perfect host for the **Armagh Food & Cider Festival**. Held in September, this festival is a celebration of farm-to-table dining, featuring craft cider tastings, orchard tours, and gourmet dining events that highlight the region's fresh produce. Must-try drinks include **Armagh Bramley Apple Cider**, which pairs beautifully with local cheeses and charcuterie.

5. Must-Try Dishes in Northern Ireland

No visit to Northern Ireland is complete without indulging in its signature dishes. Some of the best include:

- **The Ulster Fry** – A hearty breakfast featuring potato farls, soda bread, black pudding, sausages, bacon and eggs.
- **Boxty** – A traditional Irish potato pancake, crispy on the outside and fluffy on the inside.
- **Dulse & Yellowman** – A surprising combination of dried seaweed and honeycomb, traditionally found at Auld Lammas Fair in Ballycastle.
- **Lough Neagh Eel** – A delicacy unique to Northern Ireland, often smoked or served fresh with local herbs.
- **Comber Early Potatoes** – A variety of new potatoes with protected geographical status, best enjoyed simply boiled with butter and sea salt.

A Taste of Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland's food scene is a perfect blend of traditional flavours, modern creativity, and world-class ingredients. Whether you're sampling fresh seafood on the Causeway Coast, sipping artisan cider in Armagh, or indulging in an Ulster Fry in Belfast, one thing is for sure—every bite in Northern Ireland tells a story. So, grab a fork, take a sip and embark on a culinary adventure through NI's best food festivals and dishes.

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WEEKEND GETAWAYS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Spa Retreats, Adventure Escapes & City Breaks

Whether you're looking for a luxurious spa retreat, an adrenaline-pumping adventure, or a vibrant city escape, Northern Ireland has the perfect weekend getaway. With stunning landscapes, world-class hospitality, and an abundance of activities, here's your guide to the best weekend breaks across the six counties.

1. SPA RETREAT

- *Ultimate Relaxation at Galgorm Spa & Golf Resort*

For those in need of relaxation, Galgorm Spa & Golf Resort in County Antrim is the pinnacle of luxury. Nestled in lush parkland along the River Maine, this award-winning spa offers a **Thermal Village & Serenity Garden**, outdoor hot tubs, saunas, and riverside infinity pools. Indulge in aromatherapy treatments, hydrotherapy pools, and private hot tub experiences, before dining in one of Galgorm's exceptional restaurants. This is the perfect getaway for couples or those looking for pure indulgence.

2. ADVENTURE ESCAPE

- *Mourne Mountains & Tollymore Forest*

For the thrill-seekers, a weekend in the **Mourne Mountains** delivers breathtaking hikes, rugged landscapes, and outdoor adventure. Start your journey with a hike up **Slieve Donard**, Northern Ireland's highest peak, offering panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. For a gentler experience, explore **Tollymore Forest Park**, known for its enchanting trails, ancient trees, and **Game of Thrones** filming locations. Wrap up the day with a cozy fireside meal in a local pub in Newcastle.

3. COASTAL ESCAPE

- *Luxury & Charm in Portrush*

Few places in Northern Ireland offer a better seaside escape than Portrush. Famous for its golden beaches and world-class golf courses, Portrush is a perfect mix of relaxation and adventure. Stay at the **Bushmills Inn**, a charming retreat close to the iconic **Giant's Causeway**. Spend the day exploring the **Causeway Coastal Route**, visit the historic **Dunluce Castle**, and cap off the night with a drink at the legendary **Harbour Bar**.

4. CITY BREAK

- *Belfast's Food, Culture & Nightlife*

For a dynamic and exciting weekend, Belfast offers the perfect blend of history, food, and nightlife. Book a stay at **The Merchant Hotel**, an opulent five-star retreat in the heart of the city. Spend your days discovering **Titanic Belfast**, **St. George's Market** and the **Cathedral Quarter**. For foodies, sample local flavours at **OX** or **The Muddlers Club**, two Michelin-starred restaurants. As night falls, enjoy live music in **The Dirty Onion** or **The Duke of York**, or catch a show at the **Grand Opera House**.

5. FERMANAGH'S LAKELAND RETREAT - *Lough Erne Resort*

For a tranquil retreat, escape to the serene waters of **Lough Erne**. Stay at the **Lough Erne Resort**, where you can unwind with a luxurious spa treatment or take a sunset boat cruise around the lake. If you're feeling adventurous, explore the mysterious **Marble Arch Caves**, one of the most stunning underground cave networks in Europe.

PLAN YOUR PERFECT NI WEEKEND GETAWAY

From luxurious spa retreats to thrilling outdoor escapes and bustling city breaks, Northern Ireland has something for everyone. Whether you seek adventure, relaxation, or a mix of both, a weekend in Northern Ireland is always time well spent. Pack your bags and discover the best weekend getaways this incredible region has to offer.



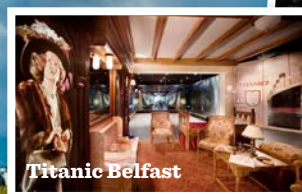
OX Restaurant



Bushmills Inn



Galgorm Resort



Titanic Belfast



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MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

There is more entertainment in Northern Ireland than you could shake a proverbial stick at. A night out is a night out to remember so why not try several?

Whether it's classy cocktails or some pints with friends, a gig or a bop on a dancefloor every city, county, town and village has something to offer every night owl. Around here we get busy after dark so let's go and have some craic.

BIG IT UP IN BELFAST

Let's kick it all off in the capital. Belfast comes alive at night and if you're sipping cocktails from the fifth floor **Perch** or the boho **Treehouse** at AM:PM then you're sure to see it starting to sparkle. After you've treated yourself with some early evening drinks why not get down into the Cathedral Quarter and check out some traditional Irish music in the funky **Dirty Onion** or some toe-tappin' bluegrass in the rootsy **Sunflower**. This part of town is also home to some of the city's finest restaurants like **The Muddler's Club** and the buzz about the place is infectious.

If you're chasing down some comedy then try the weekly stand-up night at **The Pavilion Bar** on Belfast's Ormeau Road or get yourself a ticket for Wednesday night at **Queen's Comedy Club**. Theatre buffs should watch for what's on at **The Lyric** or **The Mac** while fans of cinema will love the quirky **Queen's Film Theatre** near the University. Speaking of Queen's, don't forget to grab a pint at **The Crown Liquor Saloon** in town before seeing a musical at The Grand Opera House or catching a glimpse of Northern Ireland's next

big thing at a gig at the **Empire Music Hall**. You can get the lowdown on the latest from the city's avant-garde at the **Black Box** and at the **Boombox**, you'll find a quirky gay club that attracts huge audiences and pop culture headliners. For more of the same but on a grander scale, get yourself to **Kremlin**.

If that's whet your appetite, dress up and fly along to **The Foundry** for their Thursdaze night. Club-goers with the most eccentric and edgy outfits get in free. Keep it all going at the **Gypsy Lounge**, a three-room clubbing space with its DJ booth in a gypsy caravan or get chatting to the well-heeled party-goers at **Alibi** and see what their story is - boom, boom.

DOWN AND AROUND

Enjoy sitting out in the garden at **Daft Eddy's** on Sketrick Island in Strangford Lough before an evening meal at **Mourne Seafood Bar** in Dundrum. Alternatively, you could head over towards Craigavon for a Sunday settler in the lawned sanctuary of **The Four Trees** before dinner at the five-star **Newforge House**.



THROUGH TOOME TO THE SPERRINS

There's a world of folk and trad under the cosy thatched roofs of **Seán Óg's** in Omagh and **The Crosskeys Inn** in Toomebridge. From here you can travel to the roof of Ireland if you journey through the mists of the Sperrin Mountains to Ireland's highest pub, **The Ponderosa**. Live music awaits those who make it to the summit and if you're hungry they'll give you a right good feed.

FOUR TO THE FLOOR IN PORTRUSH

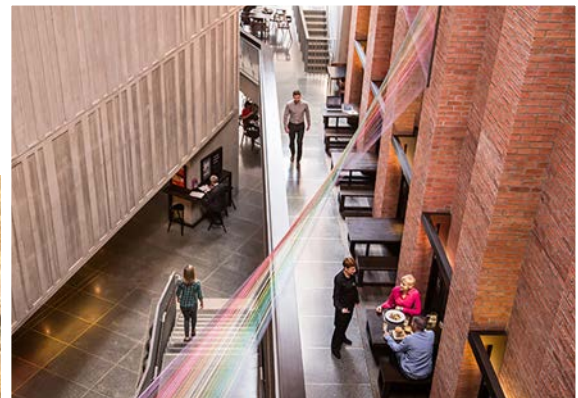
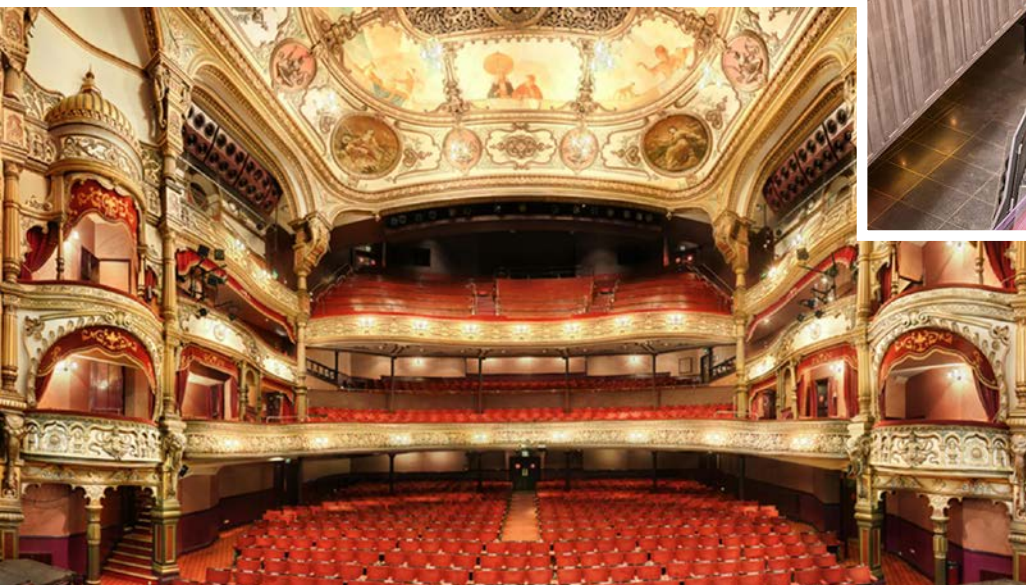
Closer to the sea, get your night in the resort town of Portrush off to a gentle start with a cocktail at the **Ramore Wine Bar** before hitting the tiles again at the bar and nightclub that is the legendary **Lush**.

DRINKING AND DANCING IN DERRY-LONDONDERRY

Speaking of legendary, let's move on to Derry-Londonderry where you'll find a glut of great places for trad and tasty beverages and of course a bit of a laugh. You can get some giggles at the comedy nights in **Mason's Bar** or start your

night off like a slow train at **The Grand Central Bar** on the lively Strand Road before taking it up a notch at the famous **Peadar O'Donnell's** - a lively bar which hosts conventional and contemporary music each and every night. Fans of the stage should keep an eye out for what's happening at **The Waterside** and there's plenty on in **The Playhouse** too. **The Coppins Bar** in the City Hotel is the spot for those colourful cocktails and if you're not quite ready for bed then the **Sugar Nite Club** in the city centre is a sweet place to begin your night anew.

It doesn't really matter where you go in this part of the world. In Northern Ireland it only matters that you're up for a bit of craic and a bit of banter. Come and join us for the fun, there's a pint on the go for you.



The Novel Traveller's Northern Ireland

Michelle Walsh Jackson



I just love heading north and Belfast is now easier to get to from Dublin than ever, since the opening of the new **Grand Central Station**. Buzzing with atmosphere, there's much to do, especially

for arts and food lovers. I recently spent a night in the **Europa Hotel**, its claim to fame as one of the most bombed hotels in Europe is an old story – it is now an oasis of calm in a thriving city. Other luxurious stays including the **Grand Central** for opulence and history and further along the coast the **Culloden Hotel**, which was originally the Bishops of Down's Palace. See www.hastingshotels.com

If you're tempted to step right back in time, an overnight at the **Titanic Hotel** is a real treat set in a stunning renovation of the original **Harland and Wolff drawing offices**. The **Titanic Quarter** is where you will find the multi award-winning **Titanic Belfast**. Currently on display is a free exhibition celebrating the work of the Artist **Lucian Freud** – giving visitors the chance to view over 60 of the renowned artist's famous etchings as well as a new immersive experience created by the world-famous attraction. The exhibition runs until Tuesday 30th September in the **Andrews Gallery on Level 2 of Titanic Belfast** and charts Freud's development as an etcher, from his early, tentative explorations to



his later mastery of flesh and form through line. www.titanicbelfast.com.

Belfast was awarded UNESCO City of Music in 2021 and a wonderful way to explore this side of the city and its heritage is with **Creative Tours**.

Meeting point is at **The Ulster Hall**, where guitar legend **Rory Gallagher** played annually, taking his tour up north, especially during the late 1970's, with this being an important gesture, while many other artists avoided Belfast during the troubles. He wasn't the only great artist to perform in the city as over the years, many others have graced the stage. From **Handel** to **Van Morrison**, every taste has been catered for. Foodies will just love the **Taste and Tour 5 Stop Brunch** that kicks off at **Bittles Bar** in Belfast's only Flat Iron building. It includes a stop off at **Bert's Jazz Bar** for a cocktail. Don't leave Belfast without visiting **The Crown Liquor Saloon** – a Victorian pub and city jewel.

A drive from Belfast along the north Antrim coast will take you to Derry and a city filled with history and stories. Along the way, bucket list sites that featured in the epic TV series **Game of Thrones** abound – such as **Carrick-A-Rede rope bridge** and **Dunluce Castle**. For huge fans, a stop off at the **Game of Thrones Studio Tour in Banbridge** has to be done but be sure to book online first.

The highlight of the **Causeway Coastal Route** is the **Giant's Causeway**. For the complete experience the visitors centre is open until 5:00pm daily. However, if you want to understand the landscape and hear the tales and legends surrounding this wonder an audio guide is helpful and Mac the tour guide cracks jokes along the way. If you just want to breathe in the stunning scenery and make up your own stories you can park up and enjoy the Giant's Causeway free of charge anytime. The hexagonal basalt rock formations come in three stages from low to medium and then the pillars, which are easy to navigate like steps of stairs.

I almost forgot to mention that Northern Ireland has some of the best spas in Ireland; **Galgorm Resort** and **The Rabbit Hotel** are two of my favourites. **The Old Inn at Crawfordsburn** is another gorgeous spa and where **CS Lewis** enjoyed his honeymoon 1958. Check out the www.discovernorthernireland.com website before you go – you'll be glad you did.

For more from Michelle check out www.thenoveltraveller.com or www.novelireland.com



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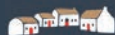
The Folk Village is an ideal attraction to visit on your excursion to Sliabh Liag cliffs we are only 20 minutes along the coast. Tá fáilte an Ghleanna romhat nuair a thugann tú cuairt ar Chlachán Ghleann Cholm Cille.

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DOWN TOURISM:

Exploring the Mourne Mountains, Newcastle & Castle Ward

County Down is one of Northern Ireland's most breathtaking destinations, offering a mix of dramatic mountain landscapes, stunning coastal walks and rich historical sites. Whether you're looking for an outdoor adventure, a tranquil escape by the sea or a journey through cinematic history, County Down has something for everyone. From the majestic Mourne Mountains to the charming town of Newcastle and the Game of Thrones-famous Castle Ward, here's how to make the most of your visit.



THE MOURNE MOUNTAINS – A HIKER'S PARADISE

The Mourne Mountains are the crown jewel of County Down, offering some of the best hiking and scenic views in Ireland. Whether you're an experienced climber or a casual walker, there's a trail for everyone.

- **Slieve Donard** – At 850m, Northern Ireland's highest peak rewards hikers with breathtaking views of the Irish Sea, Belfast Lough and even Scotland on a clear day.
- **Silent Valley Reservoir** – A tranquil escape nestled within the Mournes, offering gentle walking trails, picnic spots and spectacular reflections of the mountains in the water.

- **Tollymore Forest Park** – Famous for its Game of Thrones filming locations, this enchanted woodland features stone bridges, hidden grottos and cascading rivers, making it a must-visit for nature lovers.



NEWCASTLE – BEACH WALKS & SEASIDE CHARM

The coastal town of Newcastle is the perfect spot to unwind after an adventure in the Mournes. With the famous tagline 'Where the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea', Newcastle offers a stunning seaside setting with plenty to see and do.

- **Newcastle Beach Walks** – Enjoy miles of golden sands and fresh sea air, with the Mourne Mountains as your backdrop.
- **Royal County Down Golf Club** – One of the world's top-ranked golf courses, attracting players from across the globe.



- **The Promenade & Harbour House** – A bustling area filled with cafés, seafood restaurants, and charming independent shops.
- **Murlough National Nature Reserve** – A protected sand dune system offering stunning coastal walks and wildlife spotting opportunities.

CASTLE WARD – A GAME OF THRONES EXPERIENCE

For **Game of Thrones fans**, Castle Ward is a must-visit. This 18th-century National Trust estate served as the backdrop for Winterfell, the home of House Stark.

- **Winterfell Tours** – Dress in Stark cloaks, wield replica swords, and take part in archery sessions at the exact filming locations used in the series.
- **Castle Ward House & Gardens** – Beyond its Game of Thrones fame, Castle Ward is a stunning estate with scenic trails, cycling routes, and beautiful gardens overlooking Strangford Lough.
- **Strangford Lough Ferry** – Take a scenic ferry ride across Strangford Lough to explore more of County Down's beauty, including Portaferry and Exploris Aquarium.



DISCOVER COUNTY DOWN'S NATURAL BEAUTY & HISTORIC CHARM

From the rugged peaks of the Mournes to the golden shores of Newcastle and the cinematic grandeur of Castle Ward, County Down is a must-visit destination in Northern Ireland. Whether you're hiking, relaxing by the sea, or stepping into the world of Westeros, County Down delivers an unforgettable experience.



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Here in Northern Ireland, tucked between the Atlantic Ocean and the Irish Sea, you're never far away from water. Which means you're never far from the fun either! And there's plenty of fun to be had in, on, under and around the water in Northern Ireland no matter what water sport you choose or what sort of activity break you're looking for.

Navigate the waters of the Mournes

In the heart of the Mournes, the experienced and energetic team at Life Adventure Centre are on hand with a range of water activities to suit all ages and abilities. Whether it's a family kayak experience on Castlewellan Lake, a Stand Up paddle boarding session, or a canoeing trip around the Lake Trail, these guys have you covered and can provide all the equipment and facilities you need for a splashing day out - you just bring the energy and paddle power!

Dive into our depths

The spectacular coast of Northern Ireland has seen many a ship get into trouble - from Spanish Armada galleons to World War 1 frigates and even World War II submarines. These wrecks are huge diving adventures in themselves, but there's also our sub-sea marine life to be explored and discovered in our pristine clear waters. Fortunately, there's a plethora of dive centres all around our coast who are more than happy to hire you the right gear and bring you along to some of our best diving spots.

Aquaholics Dive Centre and Sea Safari (PADI certified) in Portstewart, offers 'Try a Dive' sessions in the sea for complete beginners - and can take the more experienced to some fascinating finds. Explore the ancient wrecks and reefs of Rathlin Island, swim with seals along the Causeway Coast or discover caves under the island at Carrick-A-Rede Rope Bridge. A day's diving will work up one hell of an appetite and a longing for a soft pillow. **The Strand House B&B** (5*) is the place to slip between linen sheets for the night, while with pub grub and live music on offer, **The Anchor Bar Complex** will be more than happy to oblige on the food and drink front.

Explore uninhabited islands on lakes and loughs

A kayak is a great way to tour our lakes and loughs as they get you into and out of all sorts of places so easily. You're welcome to bring your own or hire one from the many operators here.

The largest inlet in the British Isles, Strangford Lough has astonishing scenery, hundreds of wild islands and an abundance of marine creatures and beautiful wildlife.

The best way to experience this spectacular place is by sea kayak on the Strangford Lough Canoe Trail. Get up close to the shoreline and rock pools for a chance to see seals and look out for porpoises and otters bobbing in the waters.

The calm waters in the north of the lough are contrasted by the fast-flowing waters of 'the narrows' in the south, where a high level of expertise is required. Kayak hire and guided sea kayak experiences are available from **Mobile Team Adventure and Clearsky Adventure Centre**. If you need to rest for the night while dreaming of sea swells and swell seas, then head for **The Shoreline at Mount Stewart** (5*) and dine at **The Saltwater Brig**.

Lough Erne's historic Devenish Island is also worth a visit by kayak to see its round tower and other ecclesiastical remains. It's a short paddle from the shoreline and you can hire kayaks from **Castle Archdale Marina Boat Hire & Water Sports** in Lisnarick, amongst others.

Coasteering the clifftops, castles and coves

Coasteering allows you to experience body-surfing waves, scramble up waterfalls and cliffs and fling yourself into deep water from heights of up to 20ft.

With shallow coastal caves and hidden coves, the unique



Causeway Coast is the perfect place for this daredevil activity any time of year. The enthusiastic team at **Causeway Coasteering** in Portrush are only too ready to supply everything you need for a few hours or more on the rocks: wetsuits, gloves, boots and helmets. They'll also guide you to and through the best marks for beginners and more experienced coasteers, including caves below the medieval Dunluce Castle, perched dramatically on the coastal cliffs.

Once the jumping and whooping is over, you'll want to leap into somewhere dry, warm and filling. **The Bayview Hotel** (4*) in nearby Bushmills has wonderful rooms while you'll find great food at Tartine at The Distillers Arms just a short walk away.

Wakeboarding in the shadow of the city

You can even get some watersports action without leaving the embrace of Belfast's big city! At **Let's Go Hydro** in Carryduff you'll find a fully-equipped cable-pulled wakeboarding and kneeboarding course – the only one of its size in Ireland. Board rental is available at the site and you can purchase hourly and daily passes, as well as joining the classes for beginners. You can even stay and eat on site, because Let's Go Hydro has glamping to suit everyone.

Windsurfing in Portstewart

This is Northern Ireland's longest beach and once you arrive it's easy to see why it's so popular with windsurfers. There's miles of immaculate soft sand here, a steady wave and loads of room to manoeuvre well out of the way of bathers and day-trippers. Once your sail is up and you're on the wave, there's rarely a reason to be down again before sunset! **Troggs** in nearby Portrush is the place to head for gear and advice, while **At The Beach** (5*) on Strand Road offers plenty of luxury bedrooms with views of those amazing waves.

Water-skiing on Lough Erne

Inland to the mighty Lough Erne is the place to go to try your hand at water-skiing. Can there be a more thrilling way to travel this lake than zipping past the forested shoreline

as the waves roll and skid beneath your skis? **Tudor Farm Watersports** at Boa Island near Kesh, County Fermanagh offers water-skiing and wake boarding tuition from an Irish Water Skiing Federation accredited instructor. All equipment is provided and while you're there you can make it more than a lesson because there's plenty of en-suite accommodation in the on-site B&B at Tudor Farm.

On, off and under the water, Northern Ireland offers more water sports options, more places, more thrills and more wonder than perhaps anywhere else you'll find.



THE SOUND OF NORTHERN IRELAND

A New Wave of Northern Irish Musicians

Northern Ireland has long been a breeding ground for musical talent, producing some of the most iconic artists in rock, folk, and pop. From **Van Morrison** to **Snow Patrol**, the country has left an undeniable mark on the global music scene. But today, a new generation of musicians is emerging, bringing fresh sounds, diverse influences, and a distinctly Northern Irish voice to the world stage. From indie rock to electronic beats, from folk revivalists to hip-hop innovators, here's a look at the rising stars shaping the **Sound of Northern Ireland**.

1. Lucy Gaffney - Belfast's Indie Darling

Hailing from Belfast, **Lucy Gaffney** is quickly making a name for herself with her dreamy indie sound and emotionally charged lyrics. Having previously been part of the band Southern, Lucy's solo career is gathering momentum, earning her comparisons to **Mazzy Star** and **Wolf Alice**. Her tracks, including the ethereal *Star Sign Lover*, have gained major airplay, cementing her place as one to watch.

2. Jordan Adetunji - The Face of NI's Hip-Hop & R&B Scene

Northern Ireland's hip-hop and R&B scene has long been overshadowed by traditional rock and folk, but artists like **Jordan Adetunji** are changing that. Fusing Afrobeats, alternative rap, and soulful melodies, Adetunji's music is unlike anything else coming out of Northern Ireland. His hit track *Insecure (Love Yourself)* has propelled him to national attention, proving that Northern Irish music is more diverse than ever.

3. TraviS & Elzzz - Belfast's Rap Duo on the Rise

Adding to Northern Ireland's growing hip-hop movement, **TraviS & Elzzz** are bringing a fresh, dynamic energy to the scene. Their slick beats, bilingual flows, and socially conscious lyrics have earned them a strong following. Their recent single *Pricey* blends drill influences with authentic Belfast storytelling, marking them as pioneers of a new sound in Northern Ireland.

4. Dani Larkin - The Folk Revivalist

For fans of traditional Irish music with a modern twist, **Dani Larkin** is a must-listen. Drawing inspiration from Irish mythology and folklore, Dani's music is deeply poetic and hauntingly beautiful. Songs like *The Red (Maca's Return)* showcase her ethereal vocals, intricate guitar work, and storytelling prowess, making her a standout in the folk revival movement.

5. ROE - The Electro-Pop Powerhouse

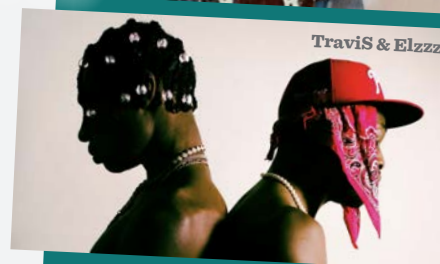
If you're looking for anthemic electronic pop, look no further than **ROE**. A Derry native, **ROE (Roisin Donald)** has already made waves at **Glastonbury** and on the **BBC Introducing stage**. Her single *Girls* is a synth-driven anthem of empowerment, and her unique fusion of indie-electro continues to win over fans globally.

6. Dea Matrona - Rock & Roll Reimagined

This all-female rock band from Belfast is bringing back the raw energy of **classic rock** with a fresh, modern attitude. With influences ranging from **Fleetwood Mac** to **Led Zeppelin**, **Dea Matrona** is proving that guitar-driven rock is alive and well in Northern Ireland. Their viral street performances and tracks like *Make You My Star* have earned them a growing international fanbase.

The Future Sound of Northern Ireland

This new wave of musicians is breaking boundaries, redefining genres, and



proving that Northern Ireland's music scene is more diverse and exciting than ever. Whether you're into indie, folk, hip-hop, electro, or rock, there's a Northern Irish artist making waves in that space. Keep an eye—and an ear—on these rising stars, because the Sound of Northern Ireland is louder than ever.



Escape to Carrygerry Country House for a Relaxing Getaway with Someone Special



Carrygerry Country House,

Near Newmarket-on-Fergus and just minutes away from Shannon, is a 200 year old Manor tastefully restored to its former glory, set in a idyllic mature country setting. On arrival, you will experience a relaxed and unique country house atmosphere with open fires and antique furniture. There are 11 bedrooms, all individually styled in keeping with the house.



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Right out here in the north-western corner of Europe you'll find clean, bracing water, mile upon mile of unspoilt beaches, fresh salty air, and some of the best waves anywhere. Best of all you'll have it mostly to yourself! So, whether you're a complete beginner or a well-travelled wave-rider, there's a beach, a surf school and a wave that's just right for you in Northern Ireland.

Begin in Benone, County Londonderry

The seven-mile Benone Strand in County Londonderry is a great place to start for surf beginners and there are multiple breaks to choose from, with its reputation for small, clean waves. The waves get a bit more challenging towards the east end of the strand at Downhill, within sight of Mussendun Temple. It's also the first fully inclusive beach in Northern Ireland, with provisions including a wheelchair surfboard and beach wheelchairs.

The **Long Line Surf School** in Benone hires out all the kit you need, offers lessons and advice on where to catch the right breaks for your skill level. It also runs kids' camps for children aged 6 to 12, along with teenage summer camps.

If you'd like to extend your trip to this stunning location, there are glamping lodges which can accommodate up to six people at the **Benone Holiday and Leisure Park (4*)** in nearby Limavady. There's also a great refuelling station at the Sea Shed coffee shop on the beach itself, and plenty more food to be had at the nearby **Anglers' Rest** pub.

Catch a break at Castlerock Beach

Just beyond Benone Strand and Downhill Demesne with its iconic Mussenden Temple is Castlerock, another gorgeous beach. Castlerock is well-suited to more experienced surfers, who come to enjoy the right-hand wave which breaks off the pier at the river mouth. You won't find many surfers here, but if you do get tired of that right-hand break then it's a short paddle across to the Portstewart side of the river.

Portstewart Strand is a vast and very popular beach, with countless breaks and which is also home to the famed Harry's Shack, serving up great coffee and fresh locally-sourced food. It's also a great spot to treat yourself to an après-surf glass of craft beer while you watch others catch those same breaks.

Wet and wild on the West Strand at Portrush

In Northern Ireland, Portrush is like shorthand for surfing. The coast here has two main strands for surfing - the West Strand and the smaller, more sheltered East Strand. While the East Strand is less exposed to the bigger swell, it still has powerful waves in winter. The West Strand, meanwhile, is more consistent for waves and you'll almost always have a wave there, all year round. Portrush attracts surfers from as far afield as Hawaii and Canada who come to enjoy the clean, barreling waves, and the easy-going surfing lifestyle that is everywhere here. It's still relatively uncrowded and you'll find plenty of breaks to put your name on.

No visit to Portrush would be complete without dropping into **Troggs Surf Shop and School** overlooking the East Strand. Not only is it one of the best surf shops in Europe, but amongst the staff is Andrew Hill, a six times Irish national surfing champion, he's been riding waves for 40-years. If he can't put you on a wave then nobody can.

There are so many breaks here that one day is never enough. Amongst the best-known places to stay in Portrush are the Royal Court Hotel (3*) with its dramatic views over the sea and the waves that are lining up for you, Adelphi Guesthouse (4*) or Blackrock House B&B (5*) (Winner Best B&B/Guest House at the Giant Spirit Awards 2022), which is an immaculately restored Edwardian terraced house offering a stylish, boutique experience.

Waves with a view at Whiterocks Beach

Located just off the Causeway Coastal Route, a couple of miles from Portrush and beside the **Royal Portrush Golf Club**, is Whiterocks Beach. It's named after the limestone cliffs of the White Rocks, which span from Curran Strand to Dunluce Castle. With its dramatic views of the castle and the rocks, it's one of the most scenic locations to surf, and

on a good day you can also see the Scottish islands. Surfing is the main pastime on this beach, but you'll find kayakers, body boarders, horse riders and plenty of families too.

Nearby, the **Portrush Surf School** offers a Surf 'n' Spa experience in conjunction with local beauty therapist **Aura Portrush**, so you and your companions can enjoy a relaxing après surf treatment after a day on the waves.

Away from the world at White Park Bay

White Park Bay in County Antrim is located about 10-minute drive from the Giant's Causeway but feels like a whole world away when you get there. A peaceful and secluded beach with beautiful blue waters, it isn't manned by lifeguards and is best suited to experienced surfers, as its waves can break quite far from the shore. The waves here really come into their own when a prevailing northwest swell meets a southerly offshore wind that pushes them right up.

There are more waves to be caught all around Northern Ireland's coast. No matter where you're off to, from the Causeway Coast to counties Antrim or Down, there are waves to be had and breaks to be worked, so don't ever leave home without strapping your board to your roof rack.



DERRY TOURISM:

The Historic Walled City, Peace Bridge & Derry Halloween

Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland's second-largest city, is a vibrant destination steeped in history, culture, and some of the country's most exciting events. Known as the only fully walled city in Ireland, Derry is a fascinating blend of medieval charm, modern attractions, and lively traditions. From its iconic 17th-century walls to the stunning Peace Bridge and its world-famous Halloween celebrations, this city is a must-visit for anyone exploring Northern Ireland.



THE HISTORIC WALLED CITY – A WALK THROUGH TIME

One of the city's defining features, the **Derry Walls**, date back to 1613–1619 and stand as one of the best-preserved fortifications in Europe. Walking along the 1.5km circuit of walls, visitors can enjoy breathtaking views of the city and experience Derry's rich heritage firsthand.

- **The Four Gates** – The original Shipquay Gate, Bishop's Gate, Butcher Gate, and Ferryquay Gate offer insight into Derry's strategic importance.
- **St. Columb's Cathedral** – A stunning example of Planter Gothic architecture, this historic cathedral showcases artifacts from the city's past.
- **Murals & Bogside History** – A short walk from the walls, the Bogside murals tell the story of Derry's civil rights movement and The Troubles, offering a powerful glimpse into Northern Ireland's history.

THE PEACE BRIDGE – A SYMBOL OF UNITY

Since its opening in 2011, the Peace Bridge has become one of Derry's most iconic landmarks. This elegant, curving footbridge spans the River Foyle, connecting the historically divided Cityside and Waterside areas.

- **A Scenic Walk** – Stroll across the bridge for stunning views of Derry's skyline and riverside scenery.
- **Guildhall Square** – Located near the Peace Bridge, this beautiful Neo-Gothic building is home to the Derry City Council and a must-visit attraction.
- **Live Events & Festivals** – The bridge is often a focal point during major city celebrations, offering a spectacular backdrop for concerts, fireworks, and cultural events.



DERRY HALLOWEEN – THE WORLD'S BIGGEST HALLOWEEN FESTIVAL

Recognized as the best Halloween celebration in the world, Derry's spine-tingling festival attracts visitors from across the globe. Taking place over several days in late October, this citywide event transforms Derry into a spectacular spooky wonderland.

- **The Awakening of the Walls** – A mesmerizing light, music and performance art show bringing the city walls to life.
- **The Samhain Parade** – A jaw-dropping costume parade that winds through the city, featuring mythical creatures, fire displays and dancers.
- **Haunted Tours & Events** – From ghostly storytelling sessions to **Ebrington Square's Halloween Carnival**, there's something for every thrill-seeker.
- **Fireworks Over the Foyle** – The festival's grand finale is a breathtaking fireworks display, lighting up the River Foyle in a truly unforgettable spectacle.

WHY VISIT DERRY?

Derry is a city full of character, resilience, and celebration. Whether you're walking the ancient walls, crossing the Peace Bridge, or getting caught up in the Halloween magic, this city offers a one-of-a-kind experience that blends history, culture, and fun. No matter the season, Derry's charm and energy make it an essential stop on any Northern Ireland adventure.



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- April - Go Wild Tourism Wild Atlantic Way
- May - Go Wild East Coast
- June - Go Wild Dublin
- July - Go Wild Staycation Ireland
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FESTIVALS & EVENTS GUIDE 2025

NORTHERN IRELAND'S MUST-VISIT GIGS, FOOD FAIRS & CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

Northern Ireland is known for its vibrant festival scene, bringing together music, food, culture, and the arts in some of the most breathtaking locations. From electrifying music festivals to artisan food fairs and traditional cultural celebrations, 2025 promises an unforgettable lineup of events. Whether you're a foodie, music lover or culture enthusiast, here's your ultimate 2025 festival guide for Northern Ireland.

MUSIC FESTIVALS & LIVE GIGS

1. Belsonic – Belfast (June 2025)

Belfast's biggest outdoor music festival, Belsonic, returned in June 2025 with major international headliners at Ormeau Park. It featured a mix of rock, indie, pop, and electronic acts, with previous years featuring Liam Gallagher, Calvin Harris and The Killers. A must for festival-goers looking for big names and an electric atmosphere. Don't miss it in 2026.

2. Stendhal Festival – Limavady (July 2026)

Northern Ireland's leading independent music and arts festival, Stendhal takes place in the stunning Roe Valley. Featuring a mix of emerging and established artists across multiple genres, it's a haven for folk, indie, rock, and electronic music lovers. Expect immersive art installations, family-friendly entertainment, and a laid-back festival vibe.

3. Open House Festival – Bangor (August 2025)

Held in the charming seaside town of Bangor, Open House Festival is a month-long celebration of live music, comedy, theatre, and literature. Known for intimate gigs and unique venues, the festival showcases both homegrown talent and international acts.

4. AVA Festival – Belfast (May 2026)

For fans of electronic music and digital arts, AVA Festival is the ultimate experience. Featuring world-class DJs, underground club acts, and immersive audio-visual installations, AVA brings the underground music scene to life in the heart of Belfast.



FOOD FESTIVALS & CULINARY EVENTS

5. Belfast Restaurant Week – Belfast (September 2025)

Foodies won't want to miss Belfast Restaurant Week, where the city's top chefs and eateries showcase exclusive tasting menus and special events. Expect Michelin-star dining experiences, street food pop-ups, and whiskey-pairing nights.

6. Bushmills Salmon & Whiskey Festival – Antrim (October 2025)

A celebration of fine whiskey and fresh seafood, this festival in Bushmills is a food and drink lover's paradise. Visitors can enjoy whiskey tastings, live cooking demos, and local artisan markets while soaking in the atmosphere of this historic distillery town.



7. Armagh Food & Cider Festival – Armagh (September 2025)

Highlighting the best of Northern Ireland's apple orchards and cider-making traditions, this festival features orchard tours, craft cider tastings, and gourmet food pairings. A must-visit for farm-to-table dining enthusiasts.

CULTURAL & HERITAGE FESTIVALS



8. Belfast International Arts Festival – Belfast (October 2025)

Northern Ireland's flagship cultural festival brings together the best in theatre, dance, visual arts, and literature. Expect world-class performances across the city's galleries, concert halls, and outdoor spaces.

9. Féile an Phobail – West Belfast (August 2025)

The largest community arts festival in Ireland, Féile an Phobail celebrates Irish culture, music, theatre, and political discussions. With events ranging from ceilí dancing to headline music gigs, this festival is a true showcase of Belfast's cultural richness.

10. Halloween at Derry~Londonderry (October 31, 2025)

Ranked among the world's best Halloween celebrations, Derry transforms into a spooky wonderland of parades, fireworks, haunted tours, and street performances. If you love immersive storytelling and eerie festivities, this is not to be missed.

Plan Your 2025 Festival Adventure

Whether it's dancing under the stars at Belsonic, indulging in local flavours in Armagh, or soaking in the arts in Belfast, Northern Ireland's 2025 festival lineup offers something for everyone. Get ready to experience the best of NI's music, food, and culture – and make unforgettable memories along the way!

Keep Discovering



IRELAND'S
ANCIENT EAST®



Cycling & Mountain Biking



To really feel at one with the spirit of Northern Ireland, we suggest getting on your bike! Cyclists young and old love coming here. With our forests and parks, there's something for every level of rider and kids can enjoy safe trails as far as their little legs will take them. For experienced mountain bikers, you have one of the most exciting biking destinations in Europe. And if you're a foodie, combine your love of the outdoors with your interest in good food via one of our delicious cycling culinary tours. Grab your helmet and fearless spirit... you're in for a thrilling ride!

Five epic mountain bike trails

For those seeking a two-wheeled thrill, there's over 140 km of purpose-built trails across Northern Ireland, meaning it's high time you tackled our epic mountain bike experiences.

Rock it out at Davagh Forest

Located well off the beaten track in the heart of the Sperrin Mountains, this pocket rocket of a trail will win your heart – and give it a few jolts. This high-octane singletrack trail also throws in some hair-raising rock features, like the iconic Eagle Rock and Boundary Rock for proficient bikers looking for a red trail rush. Younger or less experienced riders can spin their wheels on Davagh's green and blue trails.

Take a shot at #KodakCorner Rostrevor

At Rostrevor Mountain Bike Trails on Carlingford Lough, you'll find some of the most exhilarating mountain biking in the land. Whether you use Northern Ireland's only uplift service or rely on pedal power, your rewards are the same stunning coastal views and mind-blowing singletrack descents. If downhill's your game, both purpose-built trails knock it out of the park. A selfie at #KodakCorner on the 27km red trail is a must.

Epic Mourne views at Castlewellan

Picture yourself riding with the incredible Mourne Mountains as your backdrop. That's what you get at Castlewellan Mountain Bike Trails. More easygoing than Rostrevor, Castlewellan has trails for all abilities, so you can bring your

entire gang along. Enjoy family-friendly green and blue trails or take on the challenging red trail yourself, packed full of technical features - including two optional black descents.

The team at **Life Adventure Centre** pull out all the stops to make sure your mountain biking experience in the Mournes is a memorable one. From providing top of the range mountain bikes and e-bikes (plus safety gear) to guided and self-guided experiences, not to mention the stunning scenery and landscapes, this is a must-do for thrill seekers when you're visiting the majestic Mournes and is suitable for both beginners and seasoned mountain bikers.

Catch some air on Ireland's only official dirt jump park

Make Barnett Demesne Mountain Bike Trails & Jumps Park the perfect addition to your Belfast city break. You'll find it in South Belfast and boasts Northern Ireland's only jumps park. This is more suited if you're a rider aspiring to elite level technical ability...definitely not for the faint-hearted. If you're not quite yet at that level, take on the family-friendly green and blue trails, or red trail for an adrenalin rush.

Impressive speed through a stately estate

You'll find the unique Blessingbourne Trails in the grounds of this stonking 550-acre country estate in the Clogher Valley. It's a cracking mix of wide-flowing blue trails and more technical red trails. The snaking singletrack trail has lots of features including jumps, table-tops, berms, rock-gardens and drops - as well as chicken-runs for your kids.

Five tasty cycle routes for foodies

With amazing scenery combined with delicious food, these cycle trails will take you on a culinary tour of some of the best local produce in Northern Ireland. Paniers at the ready...

Towpath from Belfast to Lisburn, County Antrim - 11 miles linear route

The Lagan and Lough Cycle Way is a mostly flat, off-road route along which you are guaranteed to be in foodie heaven. Start from the city centre on a Belfast bike outside **St George's Market** where you'll be guided by the aromas of fresh produce on weekend mornings. A traditional Belfast Bap is a must - or try something more exotic from the many fresh fruit & veg, fish, cheese, bread and pastries stalls.

Whiterock and Mahee Island, County Down - 27 miles circular route

This trail on Whiterock and Mahee Island is a 27-mile route on public roads with climbs along the western edge of Strangford Lough and Drumlin country. You will be rewarded with some of the finest views and tasty treats along the way. Set out from Comber town centre (from Belfast via the Comber Greenway if you want to add more mileage) and visit Comber Market for everything from fudge to fadge (another name for potato bread) - or enjoy a freshly-baked scone from the Georgian House. From here follow signs to Castle Espie Wetland Centre and onto Mahee Island, stopping off at the beautiful Nendrum Monastic site. The coastal views from here into Whiterock are simply stunning. Cycle back around Whiterock to **Daft Eddy's** for a cuppa al fresco or some freshly caught fish. Then head inland through the hamlet of Kilmoody to the **Old Post Office Tearooms** or **The Poacher's Pocket** in nearby Lisbane where a quick detour is a must. Then, head back to Comber.

Newcastle & Lough Island Reavy, County Down - 25 miles circular route Reservoir.

Head past Castlewellan Forest Park and pump those legs uphill where spectacular views of the Mourne Mountains, Dundrum Bay and Newcastle await. Back in Newcastle, spruce up for dinner in Vanilla or Percy French. While here, try a Mourne Mountains Brewery artisan beer produced using fresh water from the Spelga Dam in the heart of the mountains. You'll have earned it.

Ballycastle Loop, County Antrim - 35 miles circular route

This links the coastal town of Ballycastle to the Giant's Causeway using the spectacular Causeway Coastal Route, returning via Bushmills and the country roads of North Antrim. Carb load at **Ursa Minor artisan bakehouse** in Ballycastle, or try some North Coast smokehouse fish at **Thyme and Co Café**. Start opposite the Marine Hotel, travel west along the Coastal Route through Kinbane Castle and continue to Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge and Ballintoy. Leave here and pass the sweeping sands of Whitepark Bay, quaint hamlet of Portbradden and Dunseverick Castle ruins until you reach Giant's Causeway before returning to Ballycastle via Bushmills - and a tour of the famous whiskey distillery.

Faughan Valley Cycle Way, County Londonderry - 22 miles

Experience the best of both worlds - the bustling cultural city of Derry-Londonderry and its stunning rural surroundings on the Faughan Valley Cycle Way. Start from the city and follow the traffic-free National Cycle Network along the River Foyle where you will pass the Third Bridge sculpture. Continue on quiet country roads past Shoal Observation Point before returning to the city. Once back, enjoy a pint in **Peadar O'Donnells Bar** - famous for its live traditional music. Or try a refreshing craft beer from the unique Walled City Brewery brewhouse in Ebrington Square whose restaurant serves scrummy beer-braised pulled pork and Irish potato boxty.

So with stunning scenery, spirit-lifting pursuits and gastronomic delights only a bike ride away, it's time to pump those legs and get out exploring!



Northern Ireland's hidden coastal gems

Northern Ireland's coastline is full of beautiful beaches, perfect for families, walking the pooch, water sports, picnics and enjoying the sun. While famous beaches like Portrush and Portstewart often steal the spotlight, there are many lesser-known beaches that offer equally stunning vistas and serene escapes. Here's a look at some of Northern Ireland's hidden coastal gems that are perfect for those seeking tranquility and natural beauty.

1. Ballyhornan Beach, County Down

Nestled along the Lecale Peninsula, near Downpatrick, Ballyhornan Beach is a secluded spot that offers a peaceful retreat from the more popular tourist destinations. This pebble and sand beach is backed by rugged cliffs and rolling fields, making it a scenic spot for a quiet walk or a relaxing day by the sea. The beach is relatively untouched, providing an ideal habitat for wildlife and a perfect place for birdwatching. The nearby Ballyhornan Bay and Coney Island are also worth exploring for their natural beauty and historical significance.

2. Helen's Bay, County Down

Just a short drive from Belfast, Helen's Bay is a hidden treasure along the North Down coast. This small sandy beach is part of Crawfordsburn Country Park, which offers beautiful woodland walks and stunning coastal views. The beach itself is clean and well-maintained, with calm waters that are perfect for swimming and paddleboarding. Helen's Bay is popular with locals but remains relatively unknown to tourists, making it a peaceful spot for a day out. The nearby Grey Point Fort, a historic coastal defence site, adds a touch of history to your visit.

3. Tyrella Beach, County Down

Tyrella Beach is a Blue Flag-awarded beach located near Downpatrick. It boasts a long stretch of golden sand backed by dunes, providing a picturesque setting for sunbathing, picnicking, and beach-combing. The

beach is part of a conservation area, ensuring its pristine condition and rich biodiversity. Tyrella is a great spot for families, with shallow waters that are safe for swimming and plenty of space for beach games. The nearby Mourne Mountains offer a stunning backdrop, adding to the beach's scenic charm.

4. Ballintoy Harbour, County Antrim

While Ballintoy Harbour is not a traditional beach, its unique landscape makes it a must-visit destination. Located along the Causeway Coastal Route, this small fishing harbour is surrounded by rugged rocks and hidden coves. The area is famous for its appearance in "Game of Thrones," but it remains relatively quiet and unspoiled. The rock pools and caves around Ballintoy are perfect for exploring and the views of the North Atlantic Ocean are simply breathtaking. It's a great spot for photography and enjoying the wild beauty of Northern Ireland's coastline.

5. White Park Bay, County Antrim

White Park Bay is a stunning crescent-shaped beach located between Ballintoy and Bushmills. This secluded beach is known for its golden sands, rolling dunes, and striking views of Rathlin Island. It's a haven for wildlife, with grazing cows often seen on the beach and diverse birdlife in the





surrounding cliffs. White Park Bay is perfect for a tranquil walk, fossil hunting, or simply soaking in the natural beauty. The nearby Giant's Causeway and Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge add to the area's appeal, making it a perfect day trip destination.

6. Murlough Beach, County Down

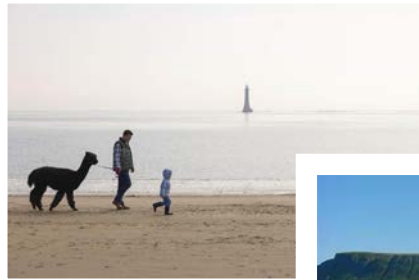
Murlough Beach, near Newcastle, is part of the Murlough National Nature Reserve, the oldest nature reserve in Ireland. This expansive beach features a mix of sand and shingle, backed by an extensive dune system that provides a habitat for numerous plant and animal species. The beach offers stunning views of the Mourne Mountains, creating a dramatic and picturesque setting. Murlough Beach is ideal for long walks, birdwatching, and enjoying the natural serenity of the area. The nearby village of Dundrum offers charming accommodations and dining options.

7. Benone Strand, County Londonderry

Benone Strand is a hidden gem on the north coast, stretching for seven miles between Magilligan Point and Downhill. This Blue Flag beach features soft golden sand and clear waters, perfect for swimming, surfing, and kite-flying. The beach is backed by dunes and lush green fields, providing a scenic backdrop for a day by the sea. Benone Strand is one of the longest beaches in Northern Ireland, ensuring plenty of space even during peak times. The nearby Binevenagh Mountain offers spectacular views and hiking opportunities.

8. Waterfoot Beach, County Antrim

Waterfoot Beach is a beautiful, crescent-shaped beach located at the foot of Glenariff, one of the nine Glens of Antrim. This sandy beach is framed by rolling hills and lush greenery, creating a tranquil and picturesque setting. Waterfoot Beach is less crowded than other coastal spots, making it perfect for a peaceful day out. The nearby Glenariff Forest Park offers stunning waterfalls and walking trails, adding to the area's natural allure. The village of Waterfoot provides a quaint and welcoming atmosphere with local amenities.



9. Cranfield Beach, County Down

Cranfield Beach is located near Kilkeel and offers stunning views of Carlingford Lough and the Mourne Mountains. This sandy beach is ideal for families, with safe swimming conditions and plenty of space for picnics and beach games. The beach is well-maintained and has excellent facilities, including parking, toilets, and a café. Cranfield Beach is also popular for water sports, such as windsurfing and sailing, thanks to its calm and shallow waters. The nearby Cranfield Caravan Park makes it a convenient spot for a seaside getaway.

10. Ballywalter Beach, County Down

Ballywalter Beach is a long, sandy beach located on the Ards Peninsula. This quiet and unspoiled beach is perfect for a peaceful day by the sea, with plenty of space for walking, sunbathing and beach-combing. The village of Ballywalter offers a charming and laid-back atmosphere, with local shops and cafés to explore. The beach's gentle slope and clear waters make it ideal for swimming and paddling. Ballywalter Beach is also a great spot for fishing and watching the local wildlife.

Northern Ireland's lesser-known beaches offer a diverse range of landscapes and experiences, from secluded coves and rugged cliffs to golden sands and serene dunes. These hidden gems provide a perfect escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, allowing you to connect with nature and enjoy the stunning coastal beauty that Northern Ireland has to offer. Whether you're looking for a peaceful retreat, a family-friendly spot, or an adventurous day out, these beautiful beaches are sure to leave you with unforgettable memories.

TYRONE TOURISM:

Exploring Gortin Glens, the Ulster American Folk Park & The Sperrin Mountains

County Tyrone, the largest county in Northern Ireland, is an untamed paradise for nature lovers, history buffs and outdoor adventurers. With rolling landscapes, captivating history and hidden gems, Tyrone is the perfect place to escape the crowds and uncover authentic Irish experiences. From the breathtaking Sperrin Mountains to the immersive Ulster American Folk Park and the scenic Gortin Glens, here's why Tyrone should be on every traveller's radar.



GORTIN GLENS – A HIDDEN NATURAL RETREAT

Nestled just outside Omagh, Gortin Glens Forest Park is a lush woodland haven, offering some of the most scenic walks in Northern Ireland. This family-friendly park is a must-visit for those looking to connect with nature and explore Tyrone's wild beauty.

- **Forest Trails & Scenic Views** – Wander along picturesque forest trails, from gentle strolls to more challenging hikes, with stunning views over the Sperrin Mountains.
- **The Gortin Lakes** – A peaceful spot for fishing, birdwatching and photography, perfect for a quiet retreat into nature.
- **Mountain Biking & Adventure Trails** – Thrill-seekers can tackle the purpose-built mountain bike trails, offering exhilarating rides through the dense forest.
- **Picnic Areas & Wildlife Spotting** – Keep an eye out for red deer, foxes, and rare bird species as you relax in the dedicated picnic spots.

ULSTER AMERICAN FOLK PARK – A JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY

One of Northern Ireland's most unique cultural attractions, the Ulster American Folk Park tells the fascinating story of Irish emigration. This living history museum, located outside Omagh, offers an immersive experience that brings the past to life.

- **Thatched Cottages & Historic Buildings** – Wander through meticulously recreated 18th and 19th-century Irish homesteads, learning about the lives of those who left Ireland in search of a new life in America.
- **The Full-Scale Emigrant Ship** – Step aboard a life-size replica of a 19th-century emigrant ship, experiencing the harsh realities of the journey across the Atlantic.

- **Living History Demonstrations** – Meet costumed actors who bring history to life with traditional crafts, blacksmithing, farming and storytelling.



- **Annual Events & Festivals** – The park hosts seasonal events, including the **Appalachian & Bluegrass Festival**, celebrating the deep-rooted cultural connections between Ireland and America.

THE SPERRIN MOUNTAINS – A LANDSCAPE OF LEGENDS

Stretching across Tyrone and Derry, the Sperrin Mountains offer one of the most breathtaking and unspoiled landscapes in Ireland. Recognized as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Sperrins are ideal for hiking, driving, and stargazing.

- **Hiking & Walking Trails** – Tackle famous routes such as the **Robbers Table Trail** or explore the mystical **Beaghmore Stone Circles**, an ancient archaeological site steeped in legend.
- **Sperrin Scenic Driving Route** – This stunning road trip winds through remote valleys, picturesque villages, and panoramic mountain passes.
- **Davagh Forest Dark Sky Observatory** – One of the few places in Ireland with minimal light pollution, making it a top spot for stargazing and astrophotography.



WHY VISIT TYRONE?

From the tranquil beauty of Gortin Glens, to the historical storytelling at the Ulster American Folk Park, and the untamed wilderness of the Sperrin Mountains, County Tyrone is a must-visit destination for those seeking adventure, culture, and stunning natural landscapes. Whether you're hiking rugged trails, stepping back in time, or gazing at the stars, Tyrone offers an unforgettable escape into the heart of Northern Ireland.



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ARMAGH TOURISM:

The Orchard County Experience

Known as The Orchard County, Armagh is a destination rich in history, heritage, and natural beauty. Famed for its apple orchards, centuries-old cathedrals, and world-class stargazing at Armagh Planetarium, this charming county offers visitors a unique blend of food, culture, and outdoor adventure. Whether you're sipping on locally crafted cider or walking in the footsteps of St. Patrick, here's how to make the most of your trip to Armagh.

APPLE COUNTRY - CIDER TOURS & ORCHARD ADVENTURES

Armagh's lush countryside is home to over 4,000 acres of apple orchards, producing some of the finest Bramley apples in the world. The county is at the heart of Northern Ireland's cider-making tradition, with local producers offering immersive tours and tastings.

- **Armagh Cider Company** – A family-run orchard where visitors can explore the apple-growing process, sample award-winning ciders and enjoy guided tours through the orchards.
- **Long Meadow Cider** – This farm-based cidery offers hands-on experiences, including cider pressing, orchard walks and cider tastings.
- **Armagh Food & Cider Festival (September 2025)** – A celebration of artisan food, craft cider, and farm-to-table dining, this annual event is a must for foodies.



ARMAGH PLANETARIUM - A JOURNEY TO THE STARS

For those fascinated by the wonders of the universe, a visit to Armagh Planetarium is an unforgettable experience. Established in 1968, this world-renowned observatory allows visitors to explore space through interactive exhibits, digital dome shows, and guided telescope sessions.

- **The Dome Theatre** – Featuring state-of-the-art projections of galaxies, black holes, and space missions.
- **Astrophysics Workshops** – A chance to learn about the mysteries of the cosmos through hands-on exhibits.
- **The Armagh Observatory** – One of the oldest observatories in the UK and Ireland, dating back to 1790, offering stunning views of the night sky.



ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL - A SPIRITUAL & HISTORICAL LANDMARK

Armagh is the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland, home to not one, but two St. Patrick's Cathedrals—both Roman Catholic and Anglican.

- **St. Patrick's Cathedral (Church of Ireland)** – Founded in 445 AD by St. Patrick himself, this historic site stands on a hill overlooking Armagh City, offering visitors a deep dive into Ireland's Christian heritage.
- **St. Patrick's Cathedral (Roman Catholic)** – A stunning 19th-century neo-Gothic cathedral featuring impressive stained-glass windows and breathtaking architecture.
- **St. Patrick's Trian Visitor Centre** – Learn about St. Patrick's life, legacy and the city's role in Irish Christianity.



WHY VISIT ARMAGH?

From wandering through apple orchards to gazing at the stars and exploring centuries-old cathedrals, Armagh is a county that seamlessly blends history, science, and gastronomy. Whether you're a food lover, a history buff, or a curious explorer, The Orchard County offers a truly unique Northern Irish experience.

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SUMMER STROLLS

through stately homes and gardens

Northern Ireland's grand estates are the ideal place to discover the region's rich history and enjoy leisurely walks in stunning gardens.

What better way to while away a day than with a visit to a stately home and a stroll around gorgeous, manicured gardens. In Northern Ireland you'll have the pick of the best.

Hillsborough Castle and Gardens, County Down

Northern Ireland's royal residence is a gorgeous Georgian manor set in 100 acres of picturesque gardens. A guided tour of the 'castle' takes you back over the centuries to pivotal moments in British and Irish history that played out in the castle's State Rooms, including the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The castle also has a significant art collection.

Outside you can stroll through the ornamental grounds to the eighteenth-century walled garden and beyond to peaceful woodlands, lakeside paths and picturesque glens.

Mount Stewart, County Down

The gardens at nineteenth-century Mount Stewart are considered to be amongst the most outstanding in the world. They are divided into several unique elements including the Shamrock Garden, where mythological creatures are cut into the hedges, the Italian Garden, the Spanish Garden and the Walled Garden. Beyond the gardens there are 10 miles of walking trails through woodland and farmland.

The house has a fascinating story to tell and on a guided tour you will explore 250 years of history as you journey through

elegant rooms with opulent furnishings.

Events are held in the estate across the year and to mark the summer solstice there will be a Sound Spa Retreat in the beautiful Temple of the Winds.

Castle Ward, County Down

Built in 1766, Castle Ward is famous for its unique combination of Palladian and Gothic architecture. It's said that the Viscount and his Lady wife couldn't agree on what style the house should be built in, and each designed a side to reflect their taste. Guided and self-guided tours are available and reveal many fascinating facts about the décor and furnishings.

The mansion is surrounded by nature trails that winds through gorgeous landscapes along the shore of Strangford Lough and up into the mountains. The grounds of Castle Ward also contain key Game of Thrones shoot locations. The old farmyard doubled as Winterfell and beyond is the Whispering Wood.

Antrim Castle Gardens and Clotworthy House, County Antrim

These stunning 400-year-old gardens feature Anglo-Dutch canals, Victorian parterre elements, and the Platinum Jubilee Clockwork Garden. Located in the extensive grounds of Antrim Castle, of which little remains other than a small tower, the area also has a twelfth-century motte and bailey which would once have been the centre of an Anglo-Norman manor.

On a stroll through the gardens, you will encounter other historic features such as the 300-year-old Deerpark Bridge as well as contemporary additions like the Fairy Trail. A fine nineteenth-century stable-block and coach house, Clotworthy House, is now a heritage centre and café.

Florence Court, County Fermanagh

This beautiful eighteenth-century stately home is set on a sustainable estate with gardens, parkland and woodlands. It is home to a 250-year-old Irish Yew tree, which is the mother plant of every Irish Yew tree in the world. The demesne is dotted with remnants from Florence Court's long history as a self-sufficient estate, including a blacksmith's forge, carpenter's workshop and a sawmill.

A tour of the house reveals the turbulent history of its owners and afterwards you can enjoy excellent locally sourced food in the Stables Tea-room.

The Argory, County Armagh

Built in the 1820s, this Irish gentry house sits on a 320-acre estate overlooking the River Blackwater. The house has an extraordinary collection of art by Ulster artists as well as a barrel organ and many other interesting antiques.

Visitors can explore the small rose garden with its sundial, the pleasure grounds with their charming pavilions and follow woodland trails before enjoying a relaxing snack in the tea-room beside the picturesque Clock Tower.

Castle Coole, County Fermanagh

Castle Coole is a magnificent eighteenth-century neoclassical mansion set in a woodland park. Among its notable features are a Grand Yard, Ice House and Pump House. A tour of the house reveals ornate interiors as well as the basement where the servants worked and lived.

Outside, the estate offers peaceful walking trails along which you can see a rich diversity of flora and fauna.

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Tee up a break at Northern Ireland's *top golfing spots*

New accommodation and another top course ranking have put Northern Ireland's world-class golfing credentials in the spotlight once again.

In February, a beautiful, new five-star hotel opened its doors right on the edge of the prestigious **Royal Portrush golf course**, which hosted the 153rd Open Championship in July.

Dunluce Lodge, County Antrim, has 35 luxury suites as well as a restaurant, wine vault, private dining spaces and spa. Larger groups have the option of staying in **The Stookan** – an eight-suite facility sleeping 16.

The Lodge's interiors have been designed to be authentically Northern Irish using local designers and suppliers to create décor that reflects the stunning landscape of the **Causeway Coast**. The restaurant and bar overlooks the fourth fairway, allowing golf enthusiasts to enjoy a prime view of the golfing action.

The Spa at Dunluce Lodge is another highlight, offering a dynamic treatment and wellness menu that uses products from Irish brand Seabody, which harnesses bioactive compounds from seaweed.

With an onsite putting green and

complimentary private transfers to the nearby helipad which will take you in style to the clubhouses at Royal Portrush and Portstewart Golf Club, Dunluce Lodge promises to be a golfer's paradise.

As well as being a prime location for golfers, the hotel is close to some of Northern Ireland's top attractions. The UNESCO World Heritage Site of the **Giant's Causeway** is just along the coast as is the romantic **Mussenden Temple**, thrill-inducing **Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge** and the dramatic remains of **Dunluce Castle**.

Over in County Fermanagh, known for its gorgeous lakelands, the **Faldo Course at Lough Erne Resort** has secured a top 10 ranking in Golf World's Top 100 Parkland courses in Great Britain and Ireland. The rankings, which are regarded as amongst the most authoritative within the golfing fraternity, place the Faldo Course in sixth position.

Designed by six-time Major winner, **Sir Nick Faldo**, the Par-72 course has been played by golfing greats including

Rory McIlroy and Padraig Harrington.

It combines stunning scenery with a challenging and entertaining layout that includes water in play across 11 of the 18 holes and almost 50 large sand traps.

The five-star Lough Erne Resort is set on a 600-acre peninsula in the Fermanagh lakes and offers award-winning luxury accommodation and dining and a Thai-inspired spa.

The Faldo Course, which can be played year-round, is one of two championship golf courses at the resort, the other being The Castle Hume Course. The resort also boasts a golf academy where golfers can improve their technique using state-of-the-art equipment.

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The Silent Valley Reservoir

Built to gather water from the Mourne Mountains and supply it to Belfast and County Down, the Silent Valley Reservoir is one of Northern Ireland's most spectacular attractions.

Ringed by the **Mourne Mountains**, the Silent Valley Reservoir and nearby **Ben Crom Reservoir** are among the stand-out experiences of the **Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** and **UNESCO Global Geopark**. This landscape is dramatic and atmospheric, with jagged mountains rising out of the sea and rock formations creating images of hags and giants.

No wonder **CS Lewis**, a Belfast man, frequented this area, often getting inspiration for Narnia in places such as the Pot of Legawherry, Buzzard's Roost, Devil's Coach Road or Lamagan Slabs. The names, and the terrain, will have impressed and inspired the great storyteller. The atmosphere too: when the wind blows in these parts you'll swear you can hear some distant ethereal howling. The whole place seems to have tumbled out of a fairytale.

THE MOURNE WALL

A curious stone construction encloses the reservoirs of Silent Valley and Ben Crom – a dry-stone granite wall that extends some 35km across 15 summits. This is the Mourne Wall, which stands 1.5 metres in height and reaches to the top of the highest peak in Northern Ireland, **Slieve Donard**. In days gone by, this mountain view supported an entire postcard industry; today it's an Instagram favourite.

You can find out about the wall – or “the black ditch of Mourne” as it was called by

those who constructed it back in the early 1900s – at the **Silent Valley Mountain Park Visitor Centre**. It was put there by the water supply company, quite simply, to keep livestock away from the water. Today, with sophisticated purification measures, that original purpose has expired; but the wall, crafted from granite using traditional dry-stone walling techniques, remains.

WATERTOWN – THE MOURNE'S DESERTED VILLAGE

The **Silent Valley Visitor Centre** stands at the southerly end of the reservoir. But you'll need to tear your eyes away from the awesome view for a few minutes to see an exhibition that gives you the lowdown on this place.

Within the centre the historical details of the whole Silent Valley project are laid out in imaginative fashion. There's a replica of a section of the **Binian Tunnel**, a key part of the whole enterprise, built from 1949 to 1958 to carry water from the Annalong River to the Silent Valley.

WILDLIFE IN THE SILENT VALLEY

The visitor centre will also give you an overview of the wildlife that calls this place home. Red kites and kestrels miss nothing as they gaze around the terrain hoping to spot a likely snack; ravens tumble through the sky showing off their aeronautic skills; and if you're lucky, you might spot the world's fastest animal. The peregrine falcon, which nests on cliffs throughout the area, catches its lunch by dive-bombing on top of it from several hundred feet up in the sky. If a peregrine is only doing 120km then it's dawdling along. More pastorally, in

spring the larks sing their chorus high in the sky above the heather, and wheatears skip from rock to rock.

WALK THE SILENT VALLEY

Within the **Silent Valley Mountain Park** several trails crisscross the mountains, woodland and parkland. The **Ben Crom Dam Walk**, some 10km, takes you to the **Ben Crom Reservoir**, passing the exit of the **Binian Tunnel**. The **Brandy Pad** skirts both reservoirs. This old smugglers' trail starts at the **Bloody Bridge** – the scene of an ancient battle, as you've probably guessed – overlooking the Irish Sea. The trail heads up through **Poulaphouca**, the **Glen of the Fairies**, onwards to the **Hare's Gap** and the slopes of **Slievenagloagh**. Along this path shepherds have trudged, rebels and outlaws on the lam have scarpered, and smugglers have plied their trade.

North of Ben Crom, just off the Brandy Pad, are the **Diamond Rocks**. Look out here for “Mourne diamonds”: beautiful pieces of smoky quartz and black mica crystals set deep in the granite. Any small crevice in the rock may yield this treasure. Impressive, glittering, but alas worthless in monetary value. The time spent in the Silent Valley, however... that's priceless.



FERMANAGH TOURISM:

Exploring the Marble Arch Caves, Lough Erne & Enniskillen Castle

Nestled in the heart of Northern Ireland, County Fermanagh is a land of breathtaking lakes, caves, and historic landmarks. Whether you're an adventurer seeking underground wonders, a nature lover looking for tranquil waters, or a history buff eager to explore a medieval castle, Fermanagh has it all. Here's your guide to the top attractions in this enchanting county.



THE MARBLE ARCH CAVES – A SUBTERRANEAN WONDERLAND

For those with a sense of adventure, a visit to the **Marble Arch Caves** is an absolute must. This **UNESCO Global Geopark** is home to some of Europe's most spectacular underground caves, offering a magical experience for visitors of all ages.

- **Guided Cave Tours** – Travel through a network of limestone passages, crossing underground rivers and admiring ancient stalactites and stalagmites.
- **The Boat Journey** – Experience an eerie yet thrilling boat ride through the subterranean river, giving you a unique perspective of the hidden world beneath Fermanagh.
- **Cuilcagh Mountain Boardwalk** – Also known as the Stairway to Heaven, this scenic hike near the caves provides panoramic views over the Fermanagh landscape.

LOUGH ERNE – SERENITY ON THE WATER

Fermanagh is famous for Lough Erne, a stunning network of lakes that offer endless opportunities for relaxation and exploration.

- **Lough Erne Cruises** – Hop aboard a luxury boat and enjoy a leisurely cruise, taking in the picturesque scenery, islands and wildlife.
- **Devenish Island Monastic Site** – This island on Lower Lough Erne is home to the ruins of a 6th-century monastery, complete with a well-preserved round tower and ancient stone carvings.
- **Watersports & Fishing** – For those seeking adventure, Lough Erne offers kayaking, paddleboarding and world-class fishing spots.

ENNISKILLEN CASTLE – A JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY

Standing proudly on the banks of the River Erne, Enniskillen Castle is one of Northern Ireland's most iconic landmarks.

- **Fermanagh County Museum** – Learn about the county's rich history, from ancient times to modern-day life, with exhibitions on archaeology, art, and military heritage.
- **The Inniskillings Museum** – Discover the stories of the famous regiments that served in battles across the world, tracing back over 300 years.
- **Riverside Walks & Cafés** – After exploring the castle, take a stroll along Enniskillen's charming riverside, stopping for coffee at one of its cozy cafés.



WHY VISIT FERMANAGH?

From the mystical depths of the Marble Arch Caves to the serene waters of Lough Erne and the historic grandeur of Enniskillen Castle, County Fermanagh is a destination that offers adventure, relaxation, and cultural exploration. Whether you're cruising the lake, hiking the Stairway to Heaven, or uncovering ancient history, Fermanagh promises an unforgettable experience in the heart of Northern Ireland.





Walking & Hiking

High up in the Mourne Mountains

The Mourne Mountains are Northern Ireland's most dramatic mountain range. Naturally, the view from the top is spectacular. However, wander among the foothills and you'll discover even more to love. Follow gentle trails through stunning forests or pause to drink in the views. Enthusiastic walkers will find buckets to explore along the tracks that crisscross the mountains. The highest peak in Northern Ireland, Slieve Donard, stands at 853m - with the remaining peaks which form this famous ring of mountains all rising above 600m.

Along the Causeway Coast

As you explore the breath-taking Causeway Coastal Route and the Glens of Antrim, you won't be surprised to learn that this stretch of Northern Ireland includes not one but three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It's also where you'll discover the nine Glens of Antrim. Glenariff is a special favourite - famous for its woodland waterfalls and sheer plunging gorge. This is an area rich in history and legends.

In and around Belfast

Walkers in Belfast get the best of both worlds - a little bit city and a little bit country.

Colourful parks and peaceful towpaths show you a side of the city you can only fully experience on foot. While the impressive Belfast Hills and 4,200 acres of the 11-mile Lagan Valley Regional Park delight with river paths and panoramic views. There are routes made for fitter walkers and many more (equally interesting and picturesque) perfect for those with limited mobility or for small children. So, there truly is something to inspire everyone whatever your level.



Exploring the Sperrin Mountains

Stretching from Strabane in County Tyrone to the shores of Lough Neagh, the Sperrins are one of Northern Ireland's largest upland areas. Somewhat surprising then, is that they're also one of its best kept secrets. Still, all the more for you to explore. Wild, untouched and exceptionally beautiful, it is also an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. If you're a serious walker, you'll love the adventure of discovering moorland summits using routes such as Robbers Table and the Craignamaddy Circuit. If you're out and about with the family, take a wander through An Creagan or Gortin Glen Forest Park.

On the banks of Strangford Lough

Mostly flat coastal walks along this awe-inspiring coastline are just some of the many attractions you'll enjoy if your journey takes you this way. Northern Ireland's only Marine Nature Reserve is another and a definite pitstop for those who love their bird life or seal colonies. Strangford too, is home to some fine country estates and parklands. Trails around here are especially good for

families, with well-signposted and scenic routes across good walking terrain.

Venture into the Fermanagh Lakelands

Here, interlacing paths and tracks lead you on a never-ending adventure. Ideal for keen walkers and families alike, there are spectacular views, fascinating landscapes and a wildlife culture with a history all its own.

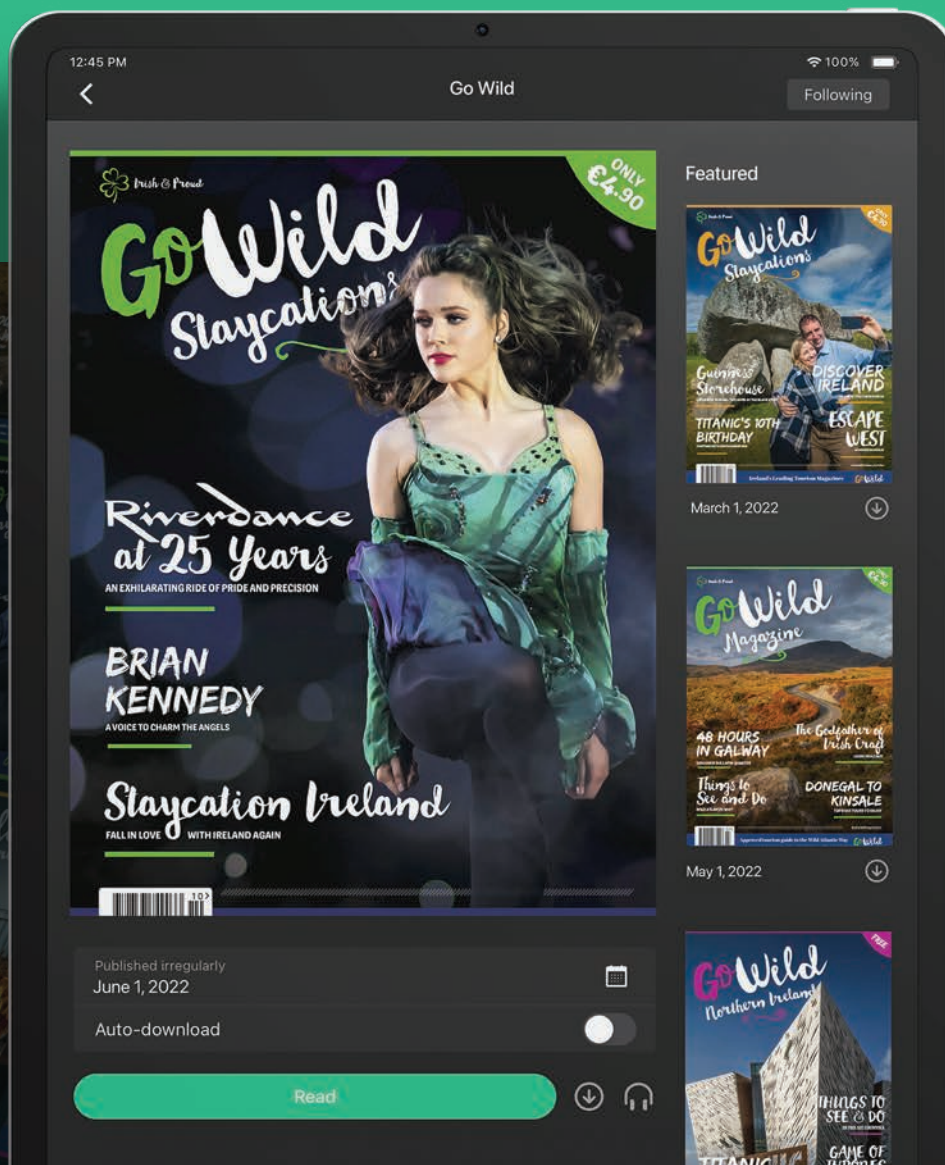
A highlight of any visit to County Fermanagh is Cuilcagh Mountain, site of one of the largest expanses of Blanket Bog in Ireland.

A 12-mile walk from Florence Court, takes you right to it - along the Cuilcagh Boardwalk Trail and ending at the Marble Arch Caves. The Boardwalk is nicknamed the 'Stairway to Heaven' and you'll soon understand why.

There's no better way to get up close and personal with the unexpected sights and experiences this stunning landscape has to offer than on foot. And, if you're ever stuck for inspiration, there'll be local guides with centuries of knowledge on hand to help. Plus plenty of friendly locals, ready with a bit of advice or just ready for a chat. Either way, you'll have a trip to remember.

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Love is in the Air:

Romantic Places to Propose or tie the knot in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland offers countless romantic spots that are perfect for popping the question or tying the knot. Whether you're dreaming of a grand gesture or an intimate ceremony, here are some of the most enchanting places to propose or get married in this beautiful part of the world.

1. DUNLUCE CASTLE

An island castle rises from the water in this fairy-tale. Perched on the rugged cliffs of the Antrim coast, Dunluce Castle provides a dramatic backdrop for a proposal or wedding. The ancient ruins, combined with the breathtaking views of the North Atlantic Ocean, create a magical atmosphere.

2. THE DARK HEDGES

Made famous by "Game of Thrones," the Dark Hedges in Ballymoney is an avenue of beech trees that creates a natural tunnel. This hauntingly beautiful location is ideal for a unique proposal or an ethereal wedding ceremony. The intertwining branches overhead add an element of enchantment, making it a memorable spot for any romantic occasion.

3. GLENARIFF FOREST PARK

For nature lovers, Glengariff Forest Park in County Antrim offers a serene and picturesque setting. The park's cascading waterfalls, lush greenery, and tranquil glens provide a peaceful and intimate backdrop for a proposal or wedding.

4. LOUGH ERNE RESORT

Situated in County Fermanagh, Lough Erne Resort is a luxurious venue for both proposals and weddings. With its stunning views of Lough Erne, elegant interiors, and top-notch service, this resort offers everything you need for a perfect romantic occasion. Propose by the lake or plan a grand wedding in their beautiful ballroom or outdoors with a panoramic lake view.

5. MUSSENDEN TEMPLE

Mussenden Temple, located on the cliffs overlooking Downhill Beach, offers a spectacular and historic setting for a proposal or wedding. The 18th-century temple, inspired by the Temple of Vesta in Italy, provides stunning views of the Atlantic Ocean and surrounding countryside.

6. BELFAST BOTANIC GARDENS

For a proposal or wedding amidst flowers and greenery, Belfast Botanic Gardens is the perfect choice. The Victorian Palm House, filled with exotic plants, and the stunning Rose Garden offer



romantic settings for an intimate proposal or a beautiful wedding ceremony. The gardens' vibrant colours and tranquil atmosphere create a picturesque backdrop for your special moment.

7. CASTLE WARD

For fans of historic architecture and "Game of Thrones," Castle Ward in County Down is an excellent venue. This 18th-century mansion, with its Gothic and Classical architectural styles, provides a unique and picturesque setting. The estate's stunning gardens, woodland trails, and view of Strangford Lough make it a versatile location for both proposals and weddings.

8. GIANT'S CAUSEWAY

For a proposal with a touch of myth and magic, the Giant's Causeway is an iconic choice. The unique basalt columns, formed by ancient volcanic activity, create a surreal and captivating landscape. Propose as you watch the waves crash against the rocks, or exchange vows with the dramatic scenery as your backdrop.

Northern Ireland's romantic charm, with its blend of natural beauty, historic sites and luxurious venues, provides the perfect setting for proposals and weddings. Whether you choose a dramatic cliffside castle, a serene forest park, a secluded beach or a lush garden, you're sure to find the perfect spot to celebrate your love and create unforgettable memories.

And for those that might have wondered where the phrase "tying the knot" originates from, it's an ancient Celtic tradition where couples would symbolise their union by tying their hands together with a ribbon or cord during the wedding ceremony. This practice, known as 'handfasting', was a way to represent the binding of two lives. The tradition dates back to the medieval period and was prevalent in Ireland, Scotland, and other Celtic regions. Today, it remains a popular phrase to describe the act of marriage.

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Nine reasons why ED SHEERAN LOVES IRELAND

Ed Sheeran loves Ireland – and we love him, too!
Here are nine reasons why that feeling is mutual!



1. HIS FAMILY IS IRISH

Ed may have been born in West Yorkshire in England but his family hails from Ireland. His grandmother, Nancy, was born in Gorey, County Wexford, where she lived all her life. Indeed, the song Nancy Mulligan from his album Divide is dedicated to her. Ed's cousin, Laura, meanwhile had the man himself as guest of honour at her wedding in Spiddal, County Galway.

2. HE KNOWS THE TRADITIONAL MUSIC

The always-smiling Ed loves traditional Irish music but he's not just an interested bystander. This music man plays the bodhrán, a type of Irish drum, in his video for Photograph. Irish folk band Beoga also features on his song Galway Girl and it was speculated that fiddler Niamh Dunne was the Galway girl herself but she's happily married to an Irish man, and is actually from Limerick!

3. FOLLOW ED'S LEAD

Ed showed the world just how much fun you can have on a night out in Galway in his video for Galway Girl. Want to follow in his footsteps? Why not check out the craic in O'Connell's Bar on Eyre Square where Ed played darts and met some interesting locals. Or take a stroll down Shop Street where buskers regularly entertain the passing crowds. Then finish the night with a pint at O'Connor's pub in Salthill, where Ed found himself joining in some Irish dancing. Now that's what we call a good night!

4. HE ALWAYS COMES BACK

Before the bright lights and stadium performances, Ed loved to go busking on Shop Street in the City of Tribes, Galway. He still loves to perform in Ireland and enjoys playing smaller venues such as Whelan's in Dublin, just as much as bigger stadiums like Croke Park and Thomond Park in Limerick. He also enjoys the pubs here and was spotted in Fitzgeralds of Sandycove ahead of his last run of Irish gigs. Ed may well have picked up some words in the Irish language on these trips... Just have a listen to his recording of hit Thinking Out Loud in Irish.

5. HE LOOKS GOOD IN GREEN

At some of his shows Ed has been known to don a green GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) jersey. Not only that but Ed – and his beloved shirt – were hard to miss when they appeared together in the film Bridget Jones's Baby.

6. HE LOVES NORTHERN-IRELAND

Ed has gone on the record proclaiming his love for Northern Ireland before. He told Belfast's Cool FM that he thinks it's really beautiful. Given that he once bagged a guest role on HBO's Game of Thrones®, which was filmed in part in beautiful Northern Ireland, he might be visiting again soon!

So, Ed, let us know the next time you're coming to Ireland – we'll roll out the green carpet in your honour.

7. HE'S GOT SOME IRISH MATES

Ed is best mates with musical heavyweights from the island of Ireland, and has been spotted hanging out with Mullingar's Niall Horan from One Direction, and Northern Ireland's Johnny McDaid, famed guitarist of the band Snow Patrol. Keeping up the tradition of joining Irish wedding parties, he accompanied Johnny to his sister Brid's wedding, where they performed for the happy couple.

8. MORE SNOW PATROL

Ed is also good mates with Gary Lightbody from Snow Patrol. Gary asked Northern Ireland's Luthier George Lowden to make a special hand-built guitar for Ed as a gift, which he still plays on stage today.

9. HIS OWN GUITARS ARE MADE IN DOWNPATRICK

After receiving the gift from Gary Lightbody, Ed forged a special relationship with George Lowden and now has two guitars made by Lowden Guitars bearing his name, many of which he gives away to charities for their fundraising efforts.

www.ireland.com





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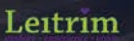
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Things to do on the

Aran Islands

Cycle around the Aran Islands

Cycling is a fantastic way to explore the Aran Islands and bike hire is available on Inishmore, Inisheer and Inishmaan.

Hit the beach

On the northern coast of Inishmore, Kilmurvey Beach is one of Galway's most stunning beaches. Walk barefoot along the strand to feel the powdery white sand between your toes and bask in the

magic of this special place. It's a popular place for birdwatchers with abundant birdlife, see if you can spot the cormorants. The Blue Flag beach has a lifeguard on duty during high season, so it's a safe and scenic spot to take a dip.

Walk scenic trails

The Aran Islands is a must-visit for avid walkers. Discover scenic hikes and leisurely walks with incredible views of land and ocean. On Inishmore, Lúb Dún Eochla is a 10km looped walk that kicks off at Kilronan Pier. Follow the green arrows for a challenging, walk across rich green hills and stony roads. Over on Inisheer, Lúb Ceathrú an Loch begins and ends at the pier. Look out for An Loch Mór, the Big Lake and the Plassey shipwreck along the way.

Go scuba diving

Check out the Dive Academy on Inishmore and book in for a lesson with an experienced

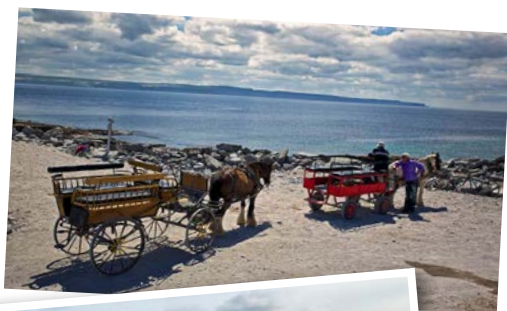
diver. With its vibrant underwater life, the Aran Islands have a reputation for being one of the best places to dive in Europe. Spot vibrant sea anemones, colourful coral and spiny dogfish as you explore life on the seabed. Depending on when you visit, you might even spot friendly dolphins and seals.

Take a pony and trap tour

Book a traditional pony and trap tour around Inishmore. You can call ahead so that you're ready to go once you arrive on the island. Along the historic route you'll see monastic sites, the island's famous stone walls and magnificent Dún Aonghasa.

Kick back on a guided tour

Take the road less travelled in a rugged Land Rover Defender jeep through the wild landscapes of Inishmore with Aran Off Road Experience. This off-road machine reaches parts of the island that no other vehicle can, treating you to magnificent views of the Atlantic Ocean along the way. See the Aran Islands from the comfort of a minibus with Adventure Tours Inis Mor. The guided tour brings you to some of the major sights including the seal colony and the Seven Churches. Enjoy unique food on your visit to the Aran Islands. Take a tour of the Aran Goat Cheese Farm or go seaweed foraging with Bláth na Mara.



Dublin Express

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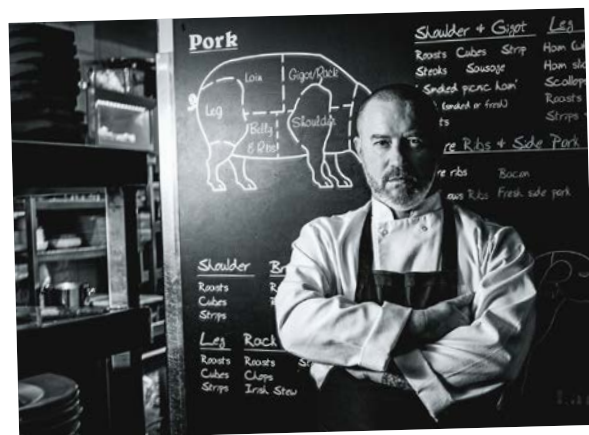
Epic Museum

You won't find leprechauns or pots of gold at EPIC, but you'll discover that 'what it means to be Irish', expands far beyond the borders of Ireland. There are stories of Irish emigrants who became scientists, politicians, poets, artists and even outlaws, all over the world. If you're one of the 70-million people worldwide who claim Irish heritage and ancestry, this museum will feel like the start of a homecoming, connecting you and your story to so many others.



Texas Steakout

For more than 35-years, Head Chef Stuart Ross has been the driving force behind Texas Steakout, one of Ireland's oldest and most beloved steakhouses. Since its inception, Stuart has crafted exceptional dishes using only the finest local ingredients, partnering with trusted Irish suppliers to ensure every plate reflects quality, tradition and taste. *Stuart Ross: The Culinary Heart of Texas Steakout.*



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 audio-visual 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 craftspeople and have a go at making a St. Brigid's Cross or mending a fishing net.



Kingfisher Country Estate

Nestled in 220 acres of rolling parkland, Kingfisher Country Estate is a tranquil retreat where luxury meets nature. Just moments from Belfast, this serene haven offers elegant rooms, a rejuvenating spa, and a championship golf course—inviting you to unwind, celebrate, and reconnect in the heart of the Northern Irish countryside. Kingfishercountryestate.com



Game of Thrones Studio Tour

This summer, unlock a world of epic storytelling at the Game of Thrones Studio Tour. Step onto authentic sets, explore iconic props and costumes and uncover the secrets behind a global TV phenomenon. Ready to journey beyond the screen and into the heart of the action? Book your adventure now! www.gameofthronesstudiotour.com



National Museum of Ireland

The National Museum of Ireland is home to the world's greatest collection of objects related to Irish history and heritage. The collection spans from prehistoric times to the present day and is on display across our museums, two in Dublin and one in Co. Mayo. Exhibitions explore a diverse range of themes from Bronze Age gold to 20th-Century revolution and contemporary design. While our Natural History Collection is relocated, as we commence the first phase of refurbishment of the Museum at Merrion Street, you can engage with all your favourite specimens and programme at the Dead Zoo Lab in Collins Barracks, opening summer 2025.

The main aim of the National Museum of Ireland is to preserve, share, explore and celebrate Ireland's history and culture and its place in the wider world. Join the conversation with guided tours, lectures, creative workshops and more. Admission is free. Please see www.museum.ie for updated information.



OM Dark Sky

Take a journey through time and space with a visitor experience that's out of this world. Book your visit to Northern Ireland's only International Dark Sky Park. Fully guided by an experienced tour guide, the centre will give visitors a unique opportunity to experience the night sky as it is rarely viewed. Combining the latest tech, from holographic installations to virtual reality headsets, to bespoke evening audio-visual shows, visitors to the centre will be able to explore our solar system, star-gaze using telescopes to view the night sky without light pollution as Davagh is the only official 'dark sky' park in NI.



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