

# DUBLIN & EASTERN IRELAND

CHAPTER FROM



Edition **1st edition, March 2013**

Pages **124 (p34–p157)**

Includes **13 Trips**

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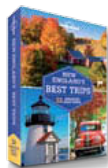
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# Dublin & Eastern Ireland

**A SPIDER'S WEB OF ROADS** – from motorways to tiny rural routes – spreading from Dublin's city centre transport you to myriad delights and distractions, all within easy reach of Ireland's capital.

Within an hour's drive from Dublin you can find yourself on a lonely mountain pass with only the odd sheep for company, or be transported back 3500 years in time to explore a passage grave built before the pyramids were a twinkle in a Pharaoh's eye.

And just a little further afield is a collection of historic towns, beautiful seaside resorts and a wealth of monastic monuments that all serve to remind you of Ireland's breathtaking cultural patrimony.



# Dublin & Eastern Ireland



### Classic Trip

#### 1 Ireland's Highlights 7 Days

The best of Ireland's five-star attractions: cultural treasures, stunning scenery and traditional music. (p39)

### Classic Trip

#### 2 The Long Way Round 14 Days

Ireland's crenellated coastlines, vibrant port cities and island treasures – the ideal drive. (p55)

#### 3 A Week Around Dublin 3 Days

Seaside villages, monastic ruins and palatial Palladian mansions. (p69)

#### 4 East to West 7 Days

Cut across Ireland's midriff, from the capital to Connemara. (p77)

#### 5 The Boyne Valley 2 Days

A shortish trip that's long on history – from neolithic tombs to bloody battlefields. (p85)

#### 6 Ancient Ireland 4 Days

Salivate at the thought of exploring 4000 years of history in four days. (p93)

#### 7 Monasteries, Mountains & Mansions 3 Days

A heritage trip that skirts on and off the beaten path. (p101)

#### 8 Wicklow Mountains 3 Days

Heritage and history along the spine of eastern Ireland's most scenic mountain range. (p109)

#### 9 Carlow Back Roads 3 Days

A trip to uncover the hidden delights of Ireland's second-smallest county. (p117)

#### 10 Kilkenny's Treasures 3 Days

The very best of a medieval city and its surrounds. (p125)

#### 11 Wexford & Waterford 5 Days

The sunny southeast revealed – from bustling port villages to moody monastic ruins. (p135)

#### 12 Blackwater Valley Drive 2 Days

Follow the river from the sea and discover its hidden treasures. (p143)

#### 13 Family Fun 3 Days

Adventure, heritage and distractions for the whole family. (p151)



### DON'T MISS

#### Brú na Bóinne

Ireland's most important neolithic monument is a breathtaking feat of prehistoric genius and imagination. Let yourself be wowed on Trips **3** **5** **6** **13**

#### Dublin

Most visits to Ireland begin and end in the capital, so be a latter-day Dubliner on Trips **1** **2** **4** **13**

#### Monasterboice

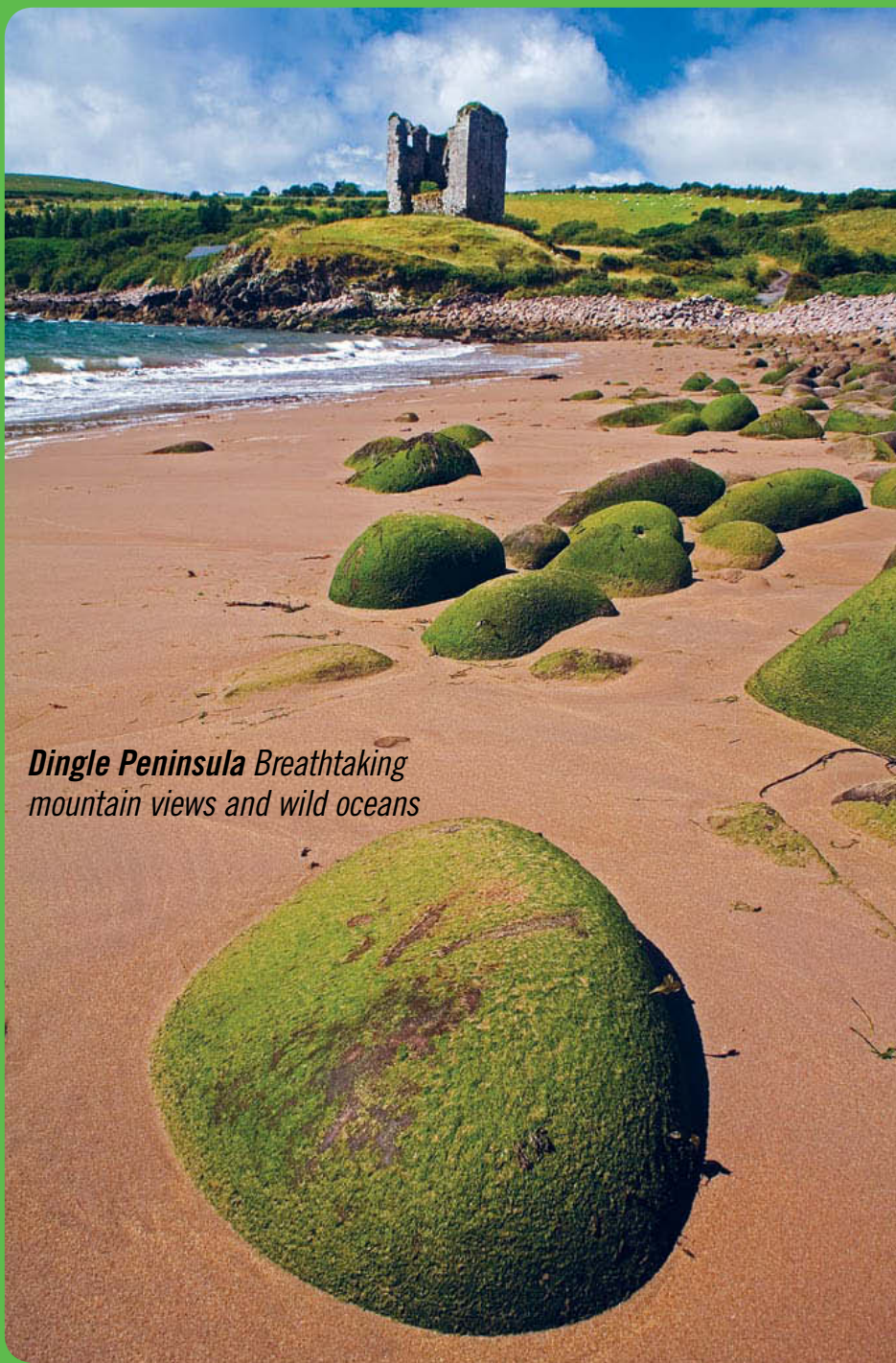
Best experienced on a summer's evening with only cawing ravens for company, contemplate the high crosses and ruins on Trip **5**

#### Clonegal

An arched stone bridge over a river populated by swans and banked by a multitude of flowers? Visit Ireland's real fairy tale village on Trip **9**

#### Ballysaggartmore Towers

A Gothic folly in the middle of a forest that is testimony to love's foolish ambition. Let yourself dream on Trip **12**



***Dingle Peninsula** Breathtaking  
mountain views and wild oceans*

# Classic Trip

## Ireland's Highlights



# 1

*This trip gives you a glimpse of the very best Ireland has to offer, including the country's most famous attractions, most spectacular countryside, and most popular towns and villages.*

### TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

0 km

#### Dublin

World-class museums, superb restaurants and terrific nightlife

Roundstone

5

Ennis

460 km

#### Cliffs of Moher

Majestic sea cliffs rising over 200m from a churning sea

7

Killorglin

Killarney

Kenmare

FINISH

670 km

#### Dingle

Traditional pubs, enticing craft studios and music, music everywhere

7 DAYS

959KM / 596 MILES

GREAT FOR...



BEST TIME TO GO

April to September for the long days and best weather.



ESSENTIAL PHOTO

The iconic Ladies' View on the Ring of Kerry.



BEST TWO DAYS

The Connemara peninsula and the Ring of Kerry.



# Classic Trip

## 1

## Ireland's Highlights

Every time-worn truth about Ireland will be found on this trip: the breathtaking scenery of stone-walled fields and wave-dashed cliffs; the picture-postcard villages and bustling towns; the ancient ruins that have stood since before history was written. The trip begins in Ireland's storied, fascinating capital and transports you to the wild west of Galway and Connemara before taking you south to the even wilder folds of County Kerry.

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

#### 1 Dublin

World-class museums, superb restaurants and the best collection of entertainment in the country – there are plenty of good reasons why the capital is the ideal place to start your trip. Get some sightseeing in on our walking tour (see p52) before ‘exploring’ at least one of the city’s storied – if not historic – pubs.

Your top stop should be the grounds of **Trinity**

**College** (walking tours 01-896 1827; www.tcd.ie; tour €10; ☀ tours every 30min 10.15am-3.40pm Mon-Sat, to 3pm Sun mid-May-Sep), home to the gloriously illuminated **Book of Kells**. It's kept in the Old Library's stunning 65m **Long Room** (East Pavilion, Library Colonnades; adult/student/child €9/8/free; ☀ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat year-round, noon-4.30pm Sun Oct-Apr, from 9.30am Sun May-Sep).

🍷🍺 p50

**The Drive** ☛ It's a 210km trip to Galway city across the



country along the M6 motorway, which has little in terms of visual highlights beyond green fields, which get greener and a little more wild the further west you go. Twenty-four kilometres south of Athlone (about halfway) is a worthwhile detour to Clonmacnoise.





## 2 Galway City

The best way to appreciate Galway is to amble – around Eyre Sq and down Shop St towards the Spanish Arch and the River Corrib, stopping off for a little liquid sustenance in one of the city's classic



## LINK YOUR TRIP

### 17 Southwestern Pantry

From Kenmare, it's a 42km drive south to Durrus and the start of the mouth-watering Southwestern Pantry trip.

### 18 West Cork Villages

You can explore the gorgeous villages of West Cork from Kinsale.

## Classic Trip

old pubs. Top of our list is **Tig Cóilí** (Mainguard St), a fire-engine-red pub that draws them in with its two live *céilidh* (traditional music and dancing sessions) each day. A close second is the cornflower blue **Séhán Ua Neáchtain** (17 Upper Cross St), known simply as Neáchtain's (*nock-tans*) or Naughtons – stop and join the locals for a pint.

 p50

**The Drive** » The most direct route to Roundstone is to cut through Connemara along the N59, turning left on the Clifden Rd – a total of 76km. Alternatively, the 103km coastal route, via the R336 and R340, winds its way around small bays, coves and lovely seaside hamlets.

### 3 Roundstone

Huddled on a boat-filled harbour, Roundstone (Cloch na Rón) is one of Connemara's gems. Colourful terrace houses and inviting pubs overlook the dark recess of Bertraghboy Bay, which is home to lobster trawlers and traditional *currachs* with tarred canvas bottoms stretched over wicker frames.

Just south of the village, in the remains of an old Franciscan monastery, is Malachy Kearns' **Roundstone Musical Instruments** (www.bodhran.com; Michael Killeen Park; ☎9am-7pm Jul-Sep, 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-Jun). Kearns is Ireland's only full-time maker of traditional bodhráns. Watch him work and buy a tin whistle, harp or booklet filled with Irish ballads; there's also a

small free folk museum and a cafe.

**The Drive** » The 22km inland route from Roundstone to Clifden is a little longer, but the road is better (especially the N59) and the brown, barren beauty of Connemara is yours to behold. The 18km coastal route along the R341 brings you through more speckled landscape; to the south you'll have glimpses of the ocean.

### 4 Clifden

Connemara's 'capital', Clifden (An Clochán) is an appealing Victorian-era country town with an amoeba-shaped oval of streets offering evocative strolls. It presides over the head of the narrow bay where the River Owenglin tumbles into the sea. The surrounding countryside beckons you to walk through woods and above the shoreline.

 p50

**The Drive** » It's 154km to the Cliffs of Moher; you'll have to backtrack through Galway

## CLADDAGH RINGS

Not much remains of Claddagh, a former fishing village that once had its own king, customs and traditions but is now subsumed by the Galway city centre. The Claddagh rings have survived though, as both a timeless reminder of the village as well as a timeless source of profits.

Popular with people of real or imagined Irish descent everywhere, the rings depict a heart (symbolising love) between two outstretched hands (friendship), topped by a crown (loyalty). Rings are handcrafted at jewellers around Galway, and start from about €20 for a silver band to well over €1000 for a diamond-set blinged-up version worthy of Tony Soprano.

Jewellers include Ireland's oldest jewellery shop, **Thomas Dillon's Claddagh Gold** (www.claddaghring.ie; 1 Quay St), which was established in 1750. It has some vintage examples in its small back-room 'museum'.

city (take the N59) before turning south along the N67. This will take you through the unique striated landscape of the Burren, a moody, rocky and at times fearsome space accented with ancient burial chambers and medieval ruins.

#### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 5 Cliffs of Moher

Star of a million tourist brochures, the Cliffs of Moher (Aillte an Mothair, or Ailltreacha Mothair) are one of the most popular sights in Ireland.

The entirely vertical cliffs rise to a height of 203m, their edge falling away abruptly into the constantly churning sea. A series of heads, the dark limestone seems to march in a rigid formation that amazes, no matter how many times you look.

Such appeal comes at a price: mobs. This is check-off tourism big time and busloads come and go constantly in summer. A vast **visitor centre** ([www.cliffsofmoher.ie](http://www.cliffsofmoher.ie); admission to site adult/child €6/free; ☀9am-9.30pm Jul & Aug, 9am-7pm May, Jun & Sep, 9am-6pm Mar, Apr & Oct, 9.15am-5pm Nov-Feb) handles the hordes.

Like so many overpopular natural wonders, there's relief and joy if you're willing to walk for 10 minutes. Past the end of the 'Moher Wall' south, there's a trail along the cliffs to Hag's Head – few venture this far.



## DETOUR: THE SKY ROAD

### Start: 4 Clifden

If you head directly west from Clifden's Market Sq you'll come onto the Sky Rd, a 12km route tracing a spectacular loop out to the township of Kingston and back to Clifden, taking in some rugged, stunningly beautiful coastal scenery en route. It's a cinch to drive, but you can also easily walk or cycle it.

**The Drive** » The 39km drive to Ennis goes inland at Lahinch (famous for its world-class golf links); it's then 24km to your destination, through flat south Clare. Dotted with stone walls and fields, it's the classic Irish landscape.

### 6 Ennis

As the capital of a renowned music county, Ennis (Inis) is filled with pubs featuring trad music (see the boxed text, p46). In fact, this is the best reason to stay here. Where's best changes often; stroll the streets pub-hopping to find what's on any given night.

If you want to buy an authentic (and well made) Irish instrument, pop into **Custy's Music Shop** (☎065-682 1727; [www.custysmusic.com](http://www.custysmusic.com); Cooke's Lane), off O'Connell St, which sells fiddles and other musical items as well as giving general info about the local scene.

  p50

**The Drive** » It's 186km to Dingle if you go via Limerick city, but only 142km if you go via the N68 to Killimer for the ferry across the Shannon estuary to Tarbert. The views get fabulous when you're beyond Tralee on the N86, especially if you take the 456m Connor Pass, Ireland's highest.

#### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 7 Dingle Town

In summer, Dingle's hilly streets can be clogged with visitors, there's no way around it; in other seasons, its authentic charms are yours to savour. Many pubs double as shops, so you can enjoy Guinness and a singalong among screws and nails, wellies and horseshoes.

  p51

**The Drive** » It's only 17km to Sleah Head along the R559. The views – of the mountains to the north and the wild ocean to the south and west – are a big chunk of the reason you came to Ireland in the first place.

# Classic Trip



HOLGER LEUE/GETTY IMAGES ©



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## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

CATHY KELLY,  
DUBLIN-BASED  
BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

The best way to experience Dublin is to get walking – the city is compact so you can walk to most places. Failing that, take a Viking Splash tour ([www.vikingsplash.com](http://www.vikingsplash.com)) in an amphibious vehicle. It's a lot of fun, like being on a school trip again. Be sure to visit the National Gallery, my favourite museum. I love marvelling at the fire inside Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ*.

Top: Derrynane Estuary near Caherdaniel  
Left: Staigue Fort  
Right: Clifden village







JOHN ELK/GETTY IMAGES ©

## 8 Sleah Head

Overlooking the mouth of Dingle Bay, Mt Eagle and the Blasket Islands, Sleah Head has fine beaches, good walks and superbly preserved structures from Dingle's ancient past, including **beehive huts**, forts, inscribed stones and church sites. Dunmore Head is the westernmost point on the Irish mainland and the site of the wreckage in 1588 of two Spanish Armada ships.

The Iron Age **Dunbeg Fort** is a dramatic example of a promontory fortification, perched atop a sheer sea cliff about 7km southwest of Ventry on the road to Sleah Head. The fort has four outer walls of stone. Inside are the remains of a house and a beehive hut, as well as an underground passage.

**The Drive** » The 88km to Killarney will take you through Annascaul (home to a pub once owned by Antarctic explorer Tom Crean) and Inch (whose beach is seen in *Ryan's Daughter*). At Castlemaine, turn south towards Milltown then take the R563 to Killarney.

## 9 Killarney

Beyond its proximity to lakes, waterfalls, woodland and moors dwarfed by 1000m-plus peaks, Killarney has many charms of its own as well as being the gateway to the Ring



## Classic Trip

of Kerry, perhaps *the* outstanding highlight of many a visit to Ireland.

Besides the breathtaking views of the mountains and glacial lakes, highlights of the 10,236-hectare Killarney National Park include Ireland's only wild herd of native red deer, the country's largest area of ancient oak woods and 19th-century Muckross House (see p171).

  p51

**The Drive** » It's 27km along the N71 to Kenmare, much of it through Killarney National Park with its magnificent views – especially Ladies' View (at 10km; much loved by Queen Victoria's ladies-in-waiting) and, a further 5km on, Moll's Gap, a popular stop for photos and food.

### 10 Kenmare

Picturesque Kenmare carries its romantic reputation more stylishly than does Killarney, and there is an elegance about its handsome central square and attractive buildings. It still gets very busy in summer, all the same. The town stands where the delightfully named Finnihy, Roughty and Sheen Rivers empty into Kenmare River. Kenmare makes a pleasant alternative to Killarney as a base for visiting the Ring of Kerry and the Beara Peninsula.

  p51

**The Drive** » The 47km to Caherdaniel along the southern stretch of the Ring of Kerry duck in and out of view of Bantry Bay, with the marvellous Beara Peninsula to the south. Just before you reach Caherdaniel, a 4km detour north takes you to the

rarely visited Staigue Fort, which dates from the 3rd or 4th century.

### 11 Caherdaniel

The big attraction here is **Derrynane National Historic Park** ( 066-947 5113; www.heritageireland.ie; Derrynane; adult/child €3/1;  10.30am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Wed-Sun Oct-late Nov), the family home of Daniel O'Connell, the campaigner for Catholic emancipation. His ancestors bought the house and surrounding parkland, having grown rich on smuggling with France and Spain. It's largely furnished with O'Connell memorabilia, including the restored triumphal chariot in which he lapped Dublin after his release from prison in 1844.

**The Drive** » Follow the N70 for about 18km and then turn left onto the R567, cutting

## ENNIS' BEST TRAD SESSION PUBS

- » **Ciaran's Bar** (Francis St) Slip into this small place by day and you can be just another geezer pondering a pint. At night there's usually trad music. Bet you wish you had a copy of the Guinness mural out front!
- » **Brogan's** (24 O'Connell St) On the corner of Cooke's Lane, Brogan's sees a fine bunch of musicians rattling even the stone floors from about 9pm Monday to Thursday, plus even more nights in summer.
- » **Cruise's Pub** (Abbey St) There are trad music sessions most nights from 9.30pm.
- » **Poet's Corner Bar** (Old Ground Hotel, O'Connell St) This old pub often has massive trad sessions on Fridays.
- » **John O'Dea** (66 O'Connell St) Unchanged since at least the 1950s, this plain-tile-fronted pub is a hideout for local musicians serious about their trad sessions. Gets some of Clare's best.

through some of the wildest and most beautiful scenery on the peninsula, with the ragged outline of Skellig Michael never far from view. Turn left onto the R565; the whole drive is 35km long.

## 12 Portmagee & Valentia Island

Portmagee's single street is a rainbow of colourful houses, and is much photographed. On summer mornings, the small pier comes to life with boats embarking on

the choppy crossing to the Skellig Islands.

A bridge links Portmagee to 11km-long **Valentia Island** (Oileán Dairbhre), an altogether homier isle than the brooding Skelligs to the southwest. Like the Skellig Ring it leads to, Valentia is an essential, coach-free detour from the Ring of Kerry. Some lonely ruins are worth exploring.

Valentia was chosen as the site for the first

transatlantic telegraph cable. When the connection was made in 1858, it put Caherciveen in direct contact with New York. The link worked for 27 days before failing, but went back into action years later.

The island makes an ideal driving loop. From April to October, there's a frequent, quick ferry trip at one end, as well as the bridge to Portmagee on the mainland at the other end.



### DETOUR: SKELLIG MICHAEL

#### Start: 12 Portmagee

The jagged, 217m-high rock of **Skellig Michael** (Archangel Michael's Rock; like St Michael's Mount in Cornwall and Mont Saint Michel in Normandy) is the larger of the two Skellig Islands and a Unesco World Heritage Site. It looks like the last place on earth where anyone would try to land, let alone establish a community, yet early Christian monks survived here from the 6th until the 12th or 13th century. Influenced by the Coptic Church (founded by St Anthony in the deserts of Egypt and Libya), their determined quest for ultimate solitude led them to this remote, wind-blown edge of Europe.

It's a tough place to get to, and requires care to visit, but is worth every effort. You'll need to do your best grisly sea-dog impression ('argh!') on the 12km crossing, which can be rough. There are no toilets or shelter, so bring something to eat and drink, and wear stout shoes and weatherproof clothing. Due to the steep (and often slippery) terrain and sudden wind gusts, it's not suitable for young children or people with limited mobility.

Be aware that the island's fragility requires limits on the number of daily visitors. The 15 boats are licensed to carry no more than 12 passengers each, for a maximum of 180 people at any one time. It's wise to book ahead in July and August, bearing in mind that if the weather's bad the boats may not sail (about two days out of seven). Trips usually run from Easter until September, depending, again, on weather.

Boats leave Portmagee, Ballinskelligs and Derrynane at around 10am and return at 3pm, and cost about €45 per person. Boat owners generally restrict you to two hours on the island, which is the bare minimum to see the monastery, look at the birds and have a picnic. The crossing takes about 1½ hours from Portmagee, 35 minutes to one hour from Ballinskelligs and 1¾ hours from Derrynane.

# Classic Trip

**The Drive** » The 55km between Portmagee and Killorglin keep the mountains to your right (south) and the sea – when you're near it – to your left (north). Twenty-four kilometres along is the unusual Glenbeigh Strand, a tendril of sand protruding into Dingle Bay with views of Inch Point and the Dingle Peninsula.

DUBLIN & EASTERN IRELAND 1 IRELAND'S HIGHLIGHTS

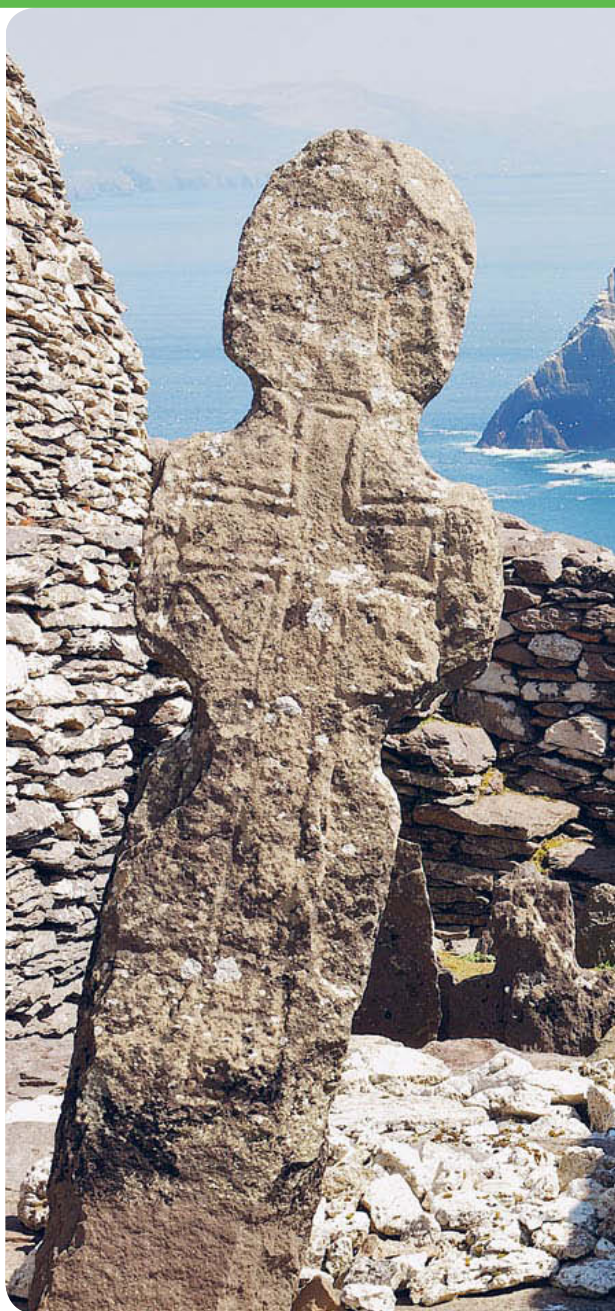
## 13 Killorglin

Killorglin (Cill Orglan) is a quiet enough town, but that all changes in mid-August, when the town erupts in celebration for Puck Fair, Ireland's best-known extant pagan festival.

First recorded in 1603, with hazy origins, this lively festival is based around the custom of installing a billy goat (a poc, or puck), the symbol of mountainous Kerry, on a pedestal in the town, its horns festooned with ribbons. Other entertainment ranges from a horse fair and bonny baby competition to street theatre, concerts and fireworks; the pubs stay open until 3am.

Author Blake Morrison documents his mother's childhood here in *Things My Mother Never Told Me*.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAULMCARD/GETTY IMAGES







**Skellig Michael** The view from the largest Skellig island

## Eating & Sleeping

### Dublin 1

#### **Green Nineteen** Irish €€

(☎01-478 9626; 19 Lower Camden St; mains €10-12; ☀10am-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun) Proof that good food doesn't have to be expensive resides in this sleek restaurant that specialises in locally sourced, organic grub. We love it, but so does everybody else. Book ahead.

#### **Number 31** Guesthouse €€

(☎01-676 5011; www.number31.ie; 31 Leeson Close; s/d/tr from €100/140/240; 📶) This elegant slice of accommodation paradise, designed for his own use by modernist architect Sam Stephenson (of Central Bank fame – or infamy), is unquestionably the most distinctive of Dublin's hotels. Children under 10 are not permitted.

### Galway City 2

#### **Quays** Irish €€

(Quay St; mains €12-25; ☀11am-10pm) This sprawling pub does a roaring business downstairs in its restaurant, which has hearty carvery lunches and more ambitious mains at night. The cold seafood platter is a symphony of the bounty from Galway Bay.

#### **House Hotel** Hotel €€€

(☎091-538 900; www.thehousehotel.ie; Spanish Pde; r €100-200; 📶) It's a design odyssey at this boutique hotel. Public spaces contrast modern art with trad details and bold accents.

### Clifden 4

#### **Mitchell's** Seafood €€

(☎095-21867; Market St; mains €15-25; ☀noon-10pm Mar-Oct) Seafood takes centre stage at this elegant spot. From a velvety

chowder through a long list of ever-changing specials, the produce of the surrounding waters is honoured. The wine list does the food justice. Book for dinner. (Lunch specials include sandwiches and casual fare.)

#### **Dolphin Beach** B&B €€

(☎095-21204; www.dolphinbeachhouse.com; Lower Sky Rd; r €80-180; 📶) It's hard to find the bones of the 19th-century manor house that forms the basis for this posh B&B set amid some of Connemara's best coastal scenery. It's 5km west of Clifden.

### Ennis 6

#### **Rowan Tree Cafe/Bar** Mediterranean €€

(Harmony Row; mains €7-20; ☀food 11am-9pm) On the ground floor of Ennis' new hostel, there's nothing low-rent about the excellent Med-accented fare served here. The gorgeous main dining room has a wondrous old wooden floor from the 18th century, while tables outside have river views. The food is locally and organically sourced.

#### **Zest** Bakery, Cafe €

(Market Pl; meals €5-10; ☀8am-6pm Mon-Sat) A much-welcome addition to Ennis' fresh food scene, Zest combines a deli, bakery, shop and cafe. Excellent prepared foods from the region are offered along with salads, soups and much more.

#### **Old Ground Hotel** Hotel €€

(☎065-682 8127; www.flynnhotels.com; O'Connell St; s/d from €90/140; 📶) Parts of this rambling landmark date back to the 1800s. The 83 rooms vary greatly in size and decor – don't hesitate to inspect a few. On balmy days, retire to tables on the lawn.



## Dingle Town 7



### Doyle's

Seafood €€€

(☎066-915 2674; www.doylesofdingle.ie; 4 John St; mains €25-30; 🍴dinner) Recently reopened, the scarlet-fronted Doyle's has reconfirmed its reputation for serving some of the best seafood in the area (which in these parts is really saying something). Starters such as tempura of fish, seafood risotto and seafood pie team up with mains such as warm shellfish salad, seafood linguine and lobster.



### Out of the Blue

Seafood €€€

(☎066-915 0811; The Wood; lunch €10-20, mains €15-30; 🍴dinner daily, lunch Sun) 'No chips', reads the menu of this funky blue-and-yellow, fishing-shack-style restaurant on the waterfront. Despite its rustic surrounds, this is Dingle's best restaurant, with an intense devotion to fresh local seafood; if they don't like the catch, they don't open.



### Pax House

B&B €€

(☎066-915 1518; www.pax-house.com; Upper John St; s/d from €90/120; 📞@📺📶) From its highly individual decor (including contemporary paintings) to the outstanding views over the estuary from room balconies and the terrace, Pax House is a treat. Choose from cheaper hill-facing rooms, rooms that overlook the estuary, and two-room family suites opening to the terrace. Wi-fi is available in the lounge. It's 1km from the town centre.



### Crystal Springs

B&B €€

(☎064-663 3272; www.crystalspringsbb.com; Ballycasheen; d €80-110; 📞@📺📶) You can cast a line from the timber deck of this wonderfully relaxing riverside B&B or just laze about on the adjacent lawn. Rooms are richly furnished with patterned wallpapers and walnut timber; bathrooms (most with spa baths) are larger than many Irish hotel rooms. The glass-enclosed breakfast room also overlooks the fast-flowing River Flesk. It's about a 15-minute stroll to town.

## Kenmare 10



### Horseshoe

Pub €€

(☎064-664 1553; www.horseshoebarkenmare.com; 3 Main St; mains €14.50-26.50; 🍴lunch & dinner) Ivy frames the entrance to this gastropub, which has a short but excellent menu that runs from Kenmare Bay mussels in creamy apple-cider sauce to local lamb on mustard mash and Kerry's best burgers.



### Parknasilla Resort & Spa

Hotel €€€

(☎064-667 5600; www.parknasillahotel.ie; d from €180; 📞@📺📶) This hotel has been wowing guests (including one George Bernard Shaw) since 1895 with its 500 acres of pristine resort on the edge of the village of Sneem and the broad expanse of the Kenmare River separating it from the Beara Peninsula to the south (oh, the views!). Irish hospitality at its very best.

## Killarney 9



### Chapter 40

Irish €€

(☎064-667 1833; www.chapter40.ie; Lower New St; mains €22.50-28.50; 🍴dinner Tue-Sat) Popular with Killarney's stylish bounders (and chefs on their nights off), this beautiful dining room is all polished wood and cream leather. Starters like grilled polenta with wild mushrooms are followed by classy mains such as pork Wellington with pea and crab salsa. The wines by the glass show a deft hand in the cellar.



# STRETCH YOUR LEGS DUBLIN

**Start/Finish** Trinity College

**Distance** 4.9km

**Duration** 3 hours

Dublin's most important attractions are concentrated on the south side of the Liffey, split between the older medieval town dominated by the castle and the two cathedrals, and the handsome 18th-century city that is a showcase of exquisite Georgian aesthetic.

Take this walk on Trips



## Trinity College

Ireland's most prestigious **university** ( walking tours 01-896 1827; [www.tcd.ie](http://www.tcd.ie); tour €10; tours every 30min 10.15am-3.40pm Mon-Sat, to 3pm Sun mid-May-Sep) is a masterpiece of architecture and landscaping, and Dublin's most attractive bit of historical real estate, beautifully preserved in Georgian aspic.

**The Walk** » From Trinity College, walk west along Dame St and turn into Dublin Castle.

## Chester Beatty Library

The world-famous **library** ([www.cbl.ie](http://www.cbl.ie); Dublin Castle, Cork Hill; admission free; 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun), in the grounds of Dublin Castle, houses the collection of mining engineer Sir Alfred Chester Beatty (1875-1968). Spread over two floors, the breathtaking collection includes more than 20,000 manuscripts, rare books, miniature paintings, clay tablets, costumes and other objects of historical and aesthetic importance.

**The Walk** » Exit the castle and walk west; you'll see Christ Church directly in front of you.

## Christ Church Cathedral

Its hilltop location and eye-catching flying buttresses make this the most photogenic by far of Dublin's three **cathedrals** ([www.cccdub.ie](http://www.cccdub.ie); Christ Church Pl; adult/senior/student €6/4/3; 9.45am-6.15pm Mon-Fri, to 4.15pm Sat, 12.30-2.30pm & 4.30-6.15pm Sun mid-Jul-Aug) as well as one of the capital's most recognisable symbols. It was founded in 1030 on what was then the southern edge of Dublin's Viking settlement. The Normans rebuilt the lot in stone from 1172.

**The Walk** » Go south along Nicholas St (which becomes News St); St Patrick's is 400m along.

## St Patrick's Cathedral

It was at this **cathedral** ([www.stpatrickscathedral.ie](http://www.stpatrickscathedral.ie); St Patrick's Close; adult/child €5.50/free; 9am-6pm), reputedly, that St Paddy himself dunked the Irish heathens into the waters of a well. Although there's been a church



here since the 5th century, the present building dates from 1190 or 1225 (opinions differ).

**The Walk** >> Just south of St Patrick's, turn left onto Kevin St and keep going until you reach St Stephen's Green; turn onto Kildare St.

## National Museum of Ireland – Archaeology & History

The star attraction of this branch of the **National Museum of Ireland** ([www.museum.ie](http://www.museum.ie); Kildare St; admission free; ☀10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 2-5pm Sun) is the Treasury, home to the finest collection of Bronze Age and Iron Age gold artefacts in the world, and the world's most complete collection of medieval Celtic metalwork.

**The Walk** >> Walk north on Kildare St and turn right on Nassau St, then stay right on Clare St.

## National Gallery

A magnificent Caravaggio and a breathtaking collection of works by Jack B Yeats – William Butler's younger

brother – are the main reasons to visit the **National Gallery** ([www.nationalgallery.ie](http://www.nationalgallery.ie); West Merrion Sq; ☀9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, to 8.30pm Thu, noon-5.30pm Sun), but not the only ones. Its excellent collection is strong in Irish art, but there are also high-quality collections of every major European school of painting.

**The Walk** >> Walk south along Merrion Sq W.

## National Museum of Ireland – Natural History

Dusty, weird and utterly compelling, and a window into Victorian times, this **museum** ([www.museum.ie](http://www.museum.ie); Merrion St; ☀10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 2-5pm Sun) has barely changed since Scottish explorer Dr David Livingstone opened it in 1857 – before disappearing into the African jungle for a meeting with Henry Stanley.

**The Walk** >> Turn right onto Merrion Row, skirt St Stephen's Green and go right into Grafton St to head back to Trinity College.



*Dublin Full to the brim with art,  
literature, music and nightlife*

# Classic Trip

## The Long Way Round



# 2

*Why go in a straight line when you can perambulate at leisure? This trip explores Ireland's jagged, scenic and spectacular edges; a captivating loop that takes in the whole island.*

### TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

244 km

**Giant's Causeway**  
One of the natural wonders of the world

600 km

**Westport**  
Photogenic Georgian town with a musical reputation

9

Doolin The Burren

Ring of Kerry

**Inishmór**  
Wind-lashed, cliff-protected World Heritage island

740 km

Dublin  
START

1300 km

**Ardmore**  
Secluded seaside village with ancient Christian ruins

14 FINISH

Belfast

3

14 DAYS  
1300KM / 807 MILES

### GREAT FOR



### BEST TIME TO GO

You'll have the best weather (and crowds) in June and August, but September is ideal.



### ESSENTIAL PHOTO

Killyhoey Beach from the top of Horn Head.



### BEST TWO DAYS

Stops 7 to 9 allow you to experience the very best of the wild west, including a day trip to the Aran Islands.



# Classic Trip

## 2

## The Long Way Round

There's a strong case to be made that the very best Ireland has to offer is closest to its jagged, dramatic coastlines: the splendid scenery, the best mountain ranges (geographically, Ireland is akin to a bowl, with raised edges) and most of its major towns and cities – Dublin, Belfast, Galway, Sligo and Cork. Each is worthy of attention, but don't ignore the bits in between.

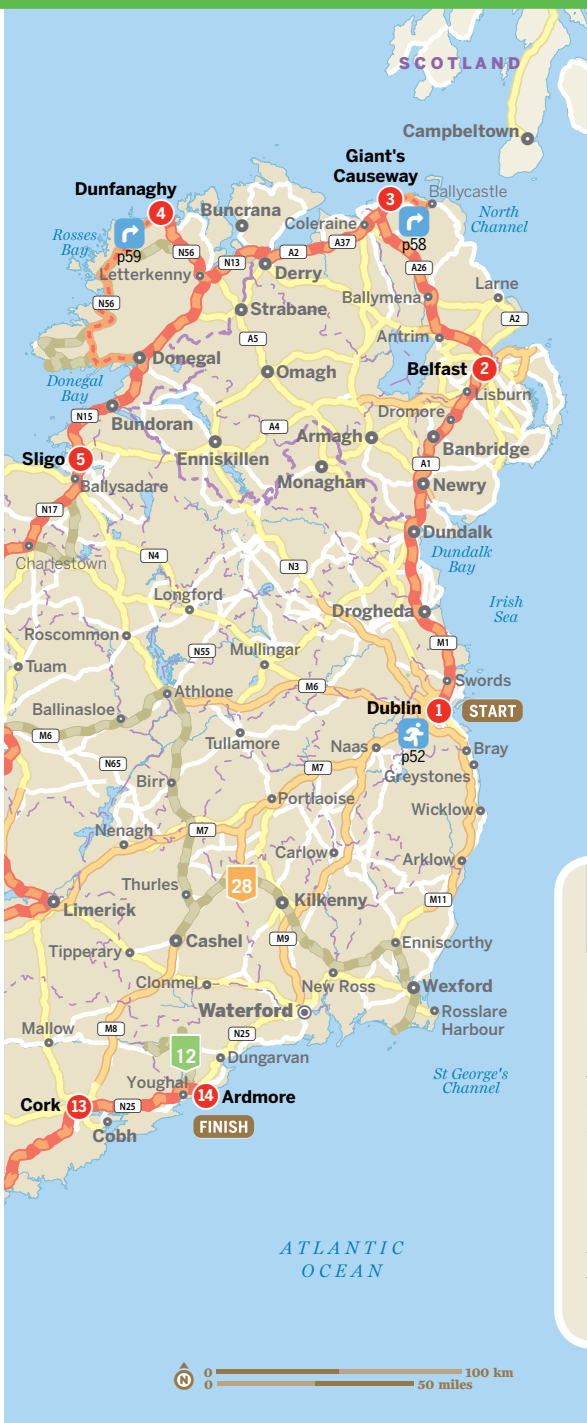
### 1 Dublin

From its music, art and literature to the legendary nightlife that has inspired those same musicians, artists and writers, Dublin has always known how to have fun and does it with deadly seriousness.

Should you tire of the city's more highbrow offerings (see our walking tour, p52), the **Guinness Storehouse** (☎01-408 4800; www.guinness-storehouse.com; St

James's Gate Brewery; adult/child/under 6yr €15/11/free, ☎9.30am-5pm Sep-Jun, to 7pm Jul-Aug) is the most popular place to visit in town; a beer-lover's Disneyland and multimedia bells-and-whistles homage to the country's most famous export and the city's most enduring symbol. The old grain storehouse is a suitable cathedral in which to worship the black gold; shaped like a giant pint of Guinness, it rises seven impressive





storeys high around a stunning central atrium.

p66

**The Drive** » It's 165km of motorway to Belfast – M1 in the Republic, A1 in Northern Ireland – but remember that the speed limit changes from kilometres to miles as you cross into the North.

**2 Belfast**

Once lumped with Beirut, Baghdad and Bosnia as one of the four 'Bs' for travellers to avoid, Belfast has pulled off a remarkable transformation from bombs-and-bullets pariah to a hip hotels-and-hedonism party town.

There's plenty to see in Belfast, but given that 2012 was the much-trumpeted centenary of the world's most famous liner,

**LINK YOUR TRIP**

**12 Blackwater Valley Drive**

From Ardmore, it's only 5km to Youghal, where you can explore the gorgeous valley of the Blackwater River.

**28 Tip to Toe**

Kilmore Quay is 134km east of Ardmore, where you can pick up the toe part of this trip and do it in reverse.

## Classic Trip

a visit to the Titanic Quarter is a must. It's best done as part of a tour – the reputable **Lagan Boat Company** (☎028-9033 0844; www.laganboatcompany.com) run the excellent **Titanic Tour** (adult/child £10/8; ⌚12.30pm, 2pm & 3.30pm Apr-Sep, 12.30 & 2pm Oct, 12.30 & 2pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar), which explores the derelict docklands downstream of the weir, taking in the slipways where the liners *Titanic* and *Olympic* were launched, and the huge

dry dock where they could fit with just 9 inches to spare. Tours depart from Donegall Quay near the *Bigfish* sculpture.

If you're keen on learning more about the city's troubled history, take the walking tour of West Belfast (see p328).

✂️ 🚗 p66

**The Drive** » The fastest way to the causeway is to take the A26 north, through Ballymena, before turning off at Ballymoney – a total of 100km – but the longer (by 16km), more scenic route is to take the A8 to Larne and follow the coast through handsome Cushendall and popular Ballycastle.

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

#### 3 Giant's Causeway

When you first see it, you'll understand why the ancients believed the causeway was not a natural feature. The vast expanse of regular, closely packed, hexagonal stone columns dipping gently beneath the waves looks for all the world like the handiwork of giants.

This spectacular rock formation – a national nature reserve and Northern Ireland's only Unesco World Heritage Site – is one of Ireland's most impressive and atmospheric landscape



### DETOUR: GIANT'S CAUSEWAY TO BALLYCASTLE

#### Start: 3 Giant's Causeway

Between the Giant's Causeway and Ballycastle lies the most scenic stretch of the Causeway Coast, with sea cliffs of contrasting black basalt and white chalk, rocky islands, picturesque little harbours and broad sweeps of sandy beach. It's best enjoyed on foot, following the 16.5km of waymarked **Causeway Coast Way** between the Carrick-a-Rede car park and the Giant's Causeway, although the main attractions can also be reached by car or bus.

About 8km east of the Giant's Causeway is the meagre ruin of 16th-century **Dunseverick Castle**, spectacularly sited on a grassy bluff. Another 1.5km on is the tiny seaside hamlet of **Portbradden**, with half a dozen harbourside houses and the tiny, blue-and-white **St Gobban's Church**, said to be the smallest in Ireland. Visible from Portbradden and accessible via the next junction off the A2 is the spectacular **White Park Bay**, with its wide, sweeping sandy beach.

The main attraction on this stretch of coast is the famous (or notorious, depending on your head for heights) **Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge** (www.ntni.org.uk; Ballintoy; adult/child £5.60/2.90; ⌚10am-7pm Jun-Aug, to 6pm Mar-May, Sep & Oct). The 20m-long, 1m-wide bridge of wire rope spans the chasm between the sea cliffs and the little island of Carrick-a-Rede, swaying gently 30m above the rock-strewn water.



## DETOUR: HORN HEAD

### Start: 4 Dunfanaghy

Horn Head has some of Donegal's most spectacular coastal scenery and plenty of birdlife. Its dramatic quartzite cliffs, covered with bog and heather, rear over 180m high, and the view from their tops is heart-pounding.

The road circles the headland; the best approach by car is in a clockwise direction from the Falcarragh end of Dunfanaghy. On a fine day, you'll encounter tremendous views of Tory, Inishbofin, Inishdooyey and tiny Inishbeg islands to the west; Sheep Haven Bay and the Rosguill Peninsula to the east; Malin Head to the northeast; and the coast of Scotland beyond. Take care in bad weather as the route can be perilous.

features, but it is all too often swamped by visitors – around 750,000 each year. If you can, try to visit midweek or out of season to experience it at its most evocative. Sunset in spring and autumn is the best time for photographs.

Visiting the Giant's Causeway itself is free of charge but the overcrowded, council-run car park charges £6 per car. It's an easy 1km walk from the car park down to the causeway.



**The Drive** » Follow the A29 and A37 as far as Derry/Londonderry, then cross the invisible border into the Republic and take the N13 to Letterkenny before turning northwest along the N56 to Dunfanaghy. It's a total of 136km.

### 4 Dunfanaghy

Huddled around the waterfront beneath the headland of Horn Head,

Dunfanaghy's small, attractive town centre has a surprisingly wide range of accommodation and some of the finest dining options in the county's northwest. Glistening beaches, dramatic coastal cliffs, mountain trails and forests are all within a few kilometres.



**The Drive** » The 145km south to Sligo town will take you back through Letterkenny (this stretch is the most scenic), after which you'll follow the N13 as far as Ballyshannon and then, as you cross into County Sligo, the N13 to Sligo town.

### 5 Sligo Town

Sligo is in no hurry to shed its cultural traditions but it doesn't sell them out either. Pedestrian streets lined with inviting shopfronts, stone bridges spanning the River Garavogue and *céilidh* sessions spilling from pubs contrast

with genre-bending contemporary art and glass towers rising from prominent corners of the compact town.



**The Drive** » It's 100km to Westport, across the western edge of County Clare – as you follow the N17 (and the N5 once you pass Charlestown), the landscape is flat, the road flanked by fields, hedge rows and clusters of farmhouses. Castlebar, 15km before Westport, is a busy county town.

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 6 Westport

There's a lot to be said for town planning, especially if 18th-century architect James Wyatt was the brain behind the job. Westport (Cathair na Mairt), positioned on the River Carrowbeg and the shores of Clew Bay, is easily Mayo's most beautiful town and a major tourist destination for visitors to this part of the country.



# Classic Trip



JULIE COOMBE/GETTY IMAGES ©



RIEGER BERTHOLD/HELMIS IV/GETTY IMAGES ©

## WHY THIS IS A CLASSIC TRIP

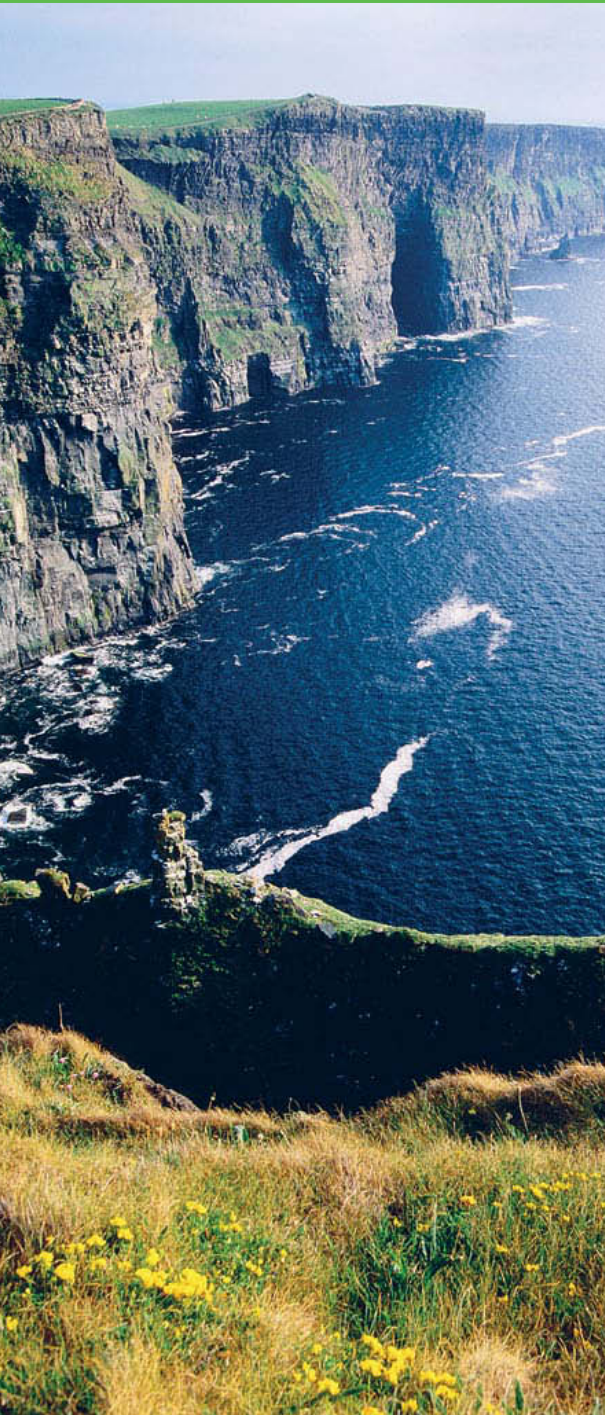
FIONN DAVENPORT,  
AUTHOR



A trip that explores the edges of the island is an opportunity to drive through its most spectacular landscapes of mountains and jagged coastlines, but also to explore the modern incarnation of the country's earliest settlements, taking you from prehistoric monuments to bustling cities.

Top: Doolin's main street  
Left: City Hall, Belfast  
Right: Cliffs of Moher





JOHN ELK/GETTY IMAGES ©

It's a Georgian classic, its octagonal square and tidy streets lined with trees and handsome buildings, most of which date from the late 18th century.

**The Drive** » Follow the N84 as far as the outskirts of Galway city – a trip of about 100km. Take the N18 south into County Clare. At Kilcolgan, turn onto the N67 and into the heart of The Burren.

## 7 The Burren

The karst landscape of The Burren is not the green Ireland of postcards. But there are wildflowers in spring, giving The Burren brilliant, if ephemeral, colour amid the arid beauty. Soil may be scarce on The Burren, but the small amount that gathers in the cracks is well drained and rich in nutrients. This, together with the mild Atlantic climate, supports an extraordinary mix of Mediterranean, Arctic and alpine plants. Of Ireland's native wildflowers, 75% are found here, including 24 species of beautiful orchids, the creamy-white burnet rose, the little starry flowers of mossy saxifrage and the magenta-coloured bloody cranesbill.

**The Drive** » It's 36km southwest to Doolin along the R460 and R476 roads which cut through more familiar Irish

# Classic Trip

landscapes of green fields. The real pleasures along here are the villages – the likes of Kilfenora and Lisdoonvarna are great for a pit stop and even a session of traditional music.

## 8 Doolin

Doolin is renowned as a centre of Irish traditional music, but it's also known for its setting – 6km north of the Cliffs of Moher – and down near the ever-unsettled sea, the land is windblown, with huge rocks exposed by the long-vanished topsoil.

Many musicians live in the area, and they have a symbiotic relationship with the tourists: each desires the other and each year things grow a little larger. But given the heavy concentration of visitors, it's inevitable that standards don't always hold up to those in some of the less-trampled villages in Clare.

**The Drive** » Ferries from Doolin to Inishmór take about 90 minutes to make the crossing; see p296 for details on getting to and from the Aran Islands from Doolin.

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

## 9 Inishmór

A step (and boat- or plane-ride) beyond

## AN ANCIENT FORT

For a look at a well-preserved *caher* (walled fort) of the late Iron Age to early Christian period, stop at **Caherconnell Fort** ([www.burrenforts.ie](http://www.burrenforts.ie); adult/child €6/4; ☎10am-6pm Jul & Aug, to 5pm Mar-Jun, Sep & Oct), a privately run heritage attraction that's more serious than sideshow. Exhibits detail how the evolution of these defensive settlements may have reflected territorialism and competition for land among a growing, settling population. The drystone walling of the fort is in excellent condition. The top-notch visitor centre also has information on many other monuments in the area. It's about 1km south of Poul nabrone Dolman on the R480.

the desolate beauty of Connemara are the Aran Islands. Most visitors are satisfied to explore only Inishmór (Árainn) and its main attraction, Dún Aengus, the stunning stone fort perched perilously on the island's towering cliffs.

Powerful swells pound the 60m-high cliff face. A complete lack of rails or other modern additions that would spoil this amazing ancient site means that you can not only go right up to the cliff's edge but also potentially fall to your doom below quite easily. When it's uncrowded, you can't help but feel the extraordinary energy that must have been harnessed to build this vast site.

The arid landscape west of Kilronan (Cill Rónáin), Inishmór's main settlement, is dominated by stone walls, boulders,

scattered buildings and the odd patch of deep-green grass and potato plants.

 p67

**The Drive** » Once you're back on terra firma at Doolin, it's 223km to Dingle via the N85 through Ennis as far as Limerick City. The N69 will take you into County Kerry as far as Tralee, beyond which it's 50km on the N86 to Dingle.

## 10 Dingle

Unlike the Ring of Kerry, where the cliffs tend to dominate the ocean, it's the ocean that dominates the smaller Dingle Peninsula. The opal-blue waters surrounding the promontory's multihued landscape of green hills and golden sands give rise to aquatic adventures and to fishing fleets that haul in fresh seafood that appears on the menus of some



of the county's finest restaurants.

Centred on charming Dingle town, there's an alternative way of life here, lived by artisans and idiosyncratic characters and found at trad sessions and folkloric festivals across Dingle's tiny settlements.

The classic loop drive around Slea Head from Dingle town is 50km, but allow a day to take it all in – longer if you have time to stay overnight in Dingle town.



p67

**The Drive** » Take the N86 as far as Annascaul and then the coastal R561 as far as Castlemaine. Then head southwest on the N70 to Killorglin and the Ring of Kerry. From Dingle, it's 53km.

## 11 Ring of Kerry

The Ring of Kerry is the longest and the most diverse of Ireland's big circle drives, combining

jaw-dropping coastal scenery with emerald pastures and villages.

The 179km circuit usually begins in Killarney and winds past pristine beaches, the island-dotted Atlantic, medieval ruins, mountains and loughs (lakes). The coastline is at its most rugged between Waterville and Caherdaniel in the southwest of the peninsula. It can get crowded in summer, but even then, the remote Skellig Ring can be uncrowded and serene – and starkly beautiful.

The Ring of Kerry can easily be done as a day trip, but if you want to stretch it out, places to stay are scattered along the route. Killorglin and Kenmare have the best dining options, with some excellent restaurants; elsewhere, basic (sometimes very basic) pub fare is the norm.

**The Drive** » The Ring's most popular diversion is the Gap of Dunloe, an awe-inspiring mountain pass at the western edge of Killarney National Park. It's signposted off the N72 between Killarney to Killorglin. The incredibly popular 19th-century Kate Kearney's Cottage is a pub where most visitors park their cars before walking up to the gap.

## 12 Kenmare

If you've done the Ring in an anticlockwise fashion (or cut through the Gap of Dunloe), you'll end up in handsome Kenmare, a largely 18th-century town and the ideal alternative to Killarney as a place to stay overnight.



p67

**The Drive** » Picturesque villages, a fine stone circle and calming coastal scenery mark the less-taken, 143km route from Kenmare to Cork city. When you get to Leap, turn right onto the R597 and go as far as Rosscarbery; or, even better, take twice as long (even though it's only 24km more)

## DOOLIN'S MUSIC PUBS

Doolin's three main music pubs (others are recent interlopers) are, in order of importance to the music scene:

- » **McGann's** (Roadford) McGann's has all the classic touches of a full-on Irish music pub; the action often spills out onto the street. The food here is the best of the trio.
- » **O'Connor's** (Fisherstreet) Right on the water, this sprawling favourite packs them in and has a rollicking atmosphere when the music and drinking are in full swing.
- » **MacDiarmada's** (Roadford) Also known as McDermott's, this simple red-and-white old pub can be the rowdy favourite of locals. When the fiddles get going, it can seem like a scene out of a John Ford movie.



# Classic Trip

and freelance your way along narrow roads near the water the entire way.

## 13 Cork City

Ireland's second city is first in every important respect, at least according to the locals, who cheerfully refer to it as the 'real capital of Ireland'. The compact city centre is surrounded by interesting waterways and is chock full of great restaurants fed by arguably the best foodie scene in the country. See our walking tour (p196) for more.

 p67

**The Drive** >> It's only 60km to Ardmore, but stop off in Middleton, 24km east of Cork along the N25, and visit the whiskey museum. Just beyond

Youghal, turn right onto the R671 for Ardmore.

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

## 14 Ardmore

Because it's off the main drag, Ardmore is a sleepy seaside village and one of the southeast's loveliest spots – the ideal destination for those looking for a little waterside R & R.

St Declan reputedly set up shop here sometime between AD 350 and 420, which would make Ardmore the first Christian bastion in Ireland – long before St Patrick landed. The village's 12th-century **round tower**, one of the best examples of these structures in Ireland, is the town's most distinctive architectural feature, but you should also check out the ruins of St Declan's church and well, on a bluff above the village.



### TOP TIP: THE HEALY PASS

Instead of going directly into County Cork along the N71 from Kenmare, veer west onto the R571 and drive for 16km along the northern edge of the Beara Peninsula. At Lauragh, turn onto the R574 and take the breathtaking Healy Pass Road, which cuts through the peninsula and brings you from County Kerry into County Cork. At Adrigole, turn left onto the R572 and rejoin the N71 at Glengarriff, 17km east.

JOHN ELKADLETT/MAGS ©





Harbour on Ireland's west coast

## Eating & Sleeping

### Dublin 1

#### **Coppinger Row** Mediterranean €€

(www.coppingerrown.com; Coppinger Row; mains €12-17; ☀ noon-10pm; 🍴) The chefs at this relatively new eatery have combined to create a tasty, unfussy menu of Mediterranean treats, to be enjoyed as main courses or as bar bites. We like the roast guinea fowl with borlotti beans but will settle for the meatball linguini.

#### **Cliff Townhouse** Guesthouse €€€

(☎ 01-638 3939; www.theclifftownhouse.com; 22 North St Stephen's Green; s/d from €145/155; @📶) As pied-à-terres go, this is a doozy: the sister property to the much-heralded Cliff House in Ardmore, County Waterford, it has 10 exquisitely appointed bedrooms spread across a wonderful Georgian property whose best views overlook St Stephen's Green. Downstairs is Sean Smith's superb restaurant.

### Belfast 2

#### **Ginger** Bistro £££

(☎ 028-9024 4421; www.gingerbistro.com; 7-8 Hope St; mains £17-22; ☀ lunch Tue-Sat, dinner Mon-Sat) Ginger is a cosy and informal little bistro with an unassuming exterior, serving food that is anything but ordinary – the flame-haired owner/chef (hence the name) really knows what he's doing, sourcing top-quality Irish produce and turning out exquisite dishes such as scallops with crisp black pudding and chorizo butter.

#### **Merchant Hotel** Hotel £££

(☎ 028-9023 4888; www.themerchanthotel.com; 35-39 Waring St; r/s from £140/200; 🍴@📶) Belfast's most flamboyant Victorian building (the old Ulster Bank head office) has been converted into the city's most

flamboyant boutique hotel, a fabulous fusion of contemporary styling and old-fashioned elegance.

### Giant's Causeway 3

#### **55 Degrees North** International ££

(☎ 028-7082 2811; www.55-north.com; 1 Causeway St, Portrush; mains £10-18; ☀ dinner) One of the north coast's most stylish restaurants, 55 Degrees North boasts a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows allowing diners to soak up a spectacular panorama of sand and sea. The food is excellent, concentrating on clean, simple flavours and unfussy presentation.

### Dunfanaghy 4

#### **Mill Restaurant & Guesthouse** Irish €€€

(☎ 074-913 6985; www.themillrestaurant.com; Figart, Dunfanaghy; 3-course menu €43.50; ☀ dinner Tue-Sun mid-Mar–mid-Dec; 🍴) An exquisite country setting and perfectly composed meals make dining here a treat. Set in an old flax mill that was for many years the home of renowned watercolour artist Frank Eggington, it also has six high-class guestrooms (single/double €70/100). The mill is just south of the town on the Falcarragh road. Book in advance.

### Sligo Town 5

#### **Source** Irish €€

(☎ 071-914 7605; www.sourcesligo.ie; 1 John St; mains €15-20; ☀ 9.30am-5pm Mon, to 9.30pm Tue-Sun) Source is all about traceability in the food chain, and it champions local suppliers and foodstuffs. Large, arty photos of its favourite fishermen, farmers and cheese producers grace

the walls of the ground-floor restaurant, while there's wine and tapas on offer upstairs in the **wine bar** (dishes €4-9; ☺ 3-11pm Tue-Sun).

### **Pearse Lodge** **B&B €€**

(☎ 071-916 1090; www.pearselodge.com; Pearse Rd; s/d €50/74;   ) Welcoming owners Mary and Kieron not only impeccably maintain the six stylish guestrooms at their cosy B&B but are also up on what's happening in town. Mary's breakfast menu includes smoked salmon, French toast with bananas and homemade muesli (and Illy coffee!). A sunny sitting room opens to a beautifully landscaped garden.

## **Inishmór** **7**

### **Kilmurvey House** **B&B €€**


(☎ 099-61218; www.kilmurveyhouse.com; Kilmurvey; s/d from €65/110; ☺ Apr-Sep) This grand 18th-century stone mansion lies on the path leading to Dún Aengus. It's a beautiful setting, and the 12 rooms are well maintained. Hearty meals (dinner €30) incorporate vegetables from the garden, and local fish and meats. You can swim at a pretty beach that's a short walk from the house.

## **Dingle Town** **10**

### **Doyle's** **Seafood €€€**

(☎ 066-915 2674; www.doylesofdingle.ie; 4 John St; mains €25-30; ☺ dinner) Recently reopened, scarlet-fronted Doyle's has reconfirmed its reputation for serving some of the best seafood in the area (which in these parts is really saying something). Starters such as tempura of fish, seafood risotto and seafood pie team up with mains like warm shellfish salad, seafood linguine and lobster.


### **Pax House** **B&B €€**

(☎ 066-915 1518; www.pax-house.com; Upper John St; s/d from €90/120;   ) From its highly individual decor (including contemporary paintings) to the outstanding views over the estuary from room balconies and the terrace, Pax House is a treat. Choose from cheaper hill-facing rooms, those that overlook the estuary, and two-room family suites



opening to the terrace. Wi-fi is available in the lounge. It's 1km from the town centre.

## **Kenmare** **12**

### **D'Arcy's Oyster Bar and Grill** **Irish €€**

(☎ 064-664 1589; www.darcyskenmare.com; Main St; mains €14.50-25.50; ☺ dinner; ) Local purveyors supply the best in organic produce, cheeses and fresh seafood, all served in modern, low-key surrounds. The raw oysters capture the scent of the bay; the hazelnut-crusted, twice-baked crab and prawn soufflé is divine. Guests staying in its antique-adorned rooms (doubles €50) get discounted evening meals.

### **Virginia's Guesthouse** **B&B €€**

(☎ 064-664 1021; www.virginias-kenmare.com; Henry St; s/d €60/80;  ) You can't get more central than this award-winning B&B, whose creative breakfasts celebrate organic local produce (rhubarb and blueberries in season, for example, as well as freshly squeezed OJ and porridge with whiskey). Its eight rooms are super comfy without being fussy. Outstanding value.

## **Cork City** **13**

### **Market Lane** **International €€**

(☎ 021-427 4710; www.marketlane.ie; 5 Oliver Plunkett St; mains €10-26; ☺ noon-late Mon-Sat, 1-9pm Sun) This bright corner bistro has an open kitchen, and the menu is varied: how about braised ox cheek stew to challenge the palate? Steaks come with awesome aioli.

### **Imperial Hotel** **Hotel €€**

(☎ 021-427 4040; www.flynnhotels.com; South Mall; r €90-220;   ) The Imperial's 130 rooms are of four-star hotel standard, and include writing desks, restrained decor and modern touches, such as digital music library. A posh Aveda spa is a recent addition – something unheard of when Charles Dickens stayed here.





*Howth Yachting and fishing hub  
just north of Ireland's capital*



# A Week Around Dublin



# 3

*You don't have to venture far from the capital in any direction to find distractions, including cosy seaside towns, stunning monastic ruins and palatial 18th-century mansions.*

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

120 km

**Castletown House**  
Magnificent Palladian pile of the 18th century's richest Irishman

Brú na Bóinne

222 km

**James Joyce Museum**  
Visit the Martello tower featured in *Ulysses*

START  
Howth

FINISH

Russborough House

Glendalough

**Powerscourt Estate**  
Georgian mansion, magnificent gardens and breathtaking views

206 km

3 DAYS

222KM / 138 MILES

GREAT FOR



BEST TIME TO GO

April to September sees big crowds, but the sun also shines the most then.



ESSENTIAL PHOTO

Sugarloaf Mountain, from the entrance drive to Powerscourt Estate.



BEST FOR CULTURE

Russborough House, a Palladian pile with a top-notch art collection.

# 3 A Week Around Dublin

You can plunge into the very depths of Irish history, be awestruck by some of Ireland's most beautiful buildings and lose yourself in stunning countryside without ever being more than 50km from Dublin. This trip explores the very best of what the capital's environs have to offer – from coastal breaks to mountain retreats and a rip-roaring trip through 3500 years of history.

## 1 Howth


The pretty little port town of Howth is built on steep streets running down to its small but busy harbour, which has transformed itself from shipping port to yachting and fishing hub. Only 11km north of Dublin's city centre, it has long been a desirable residential suburb.

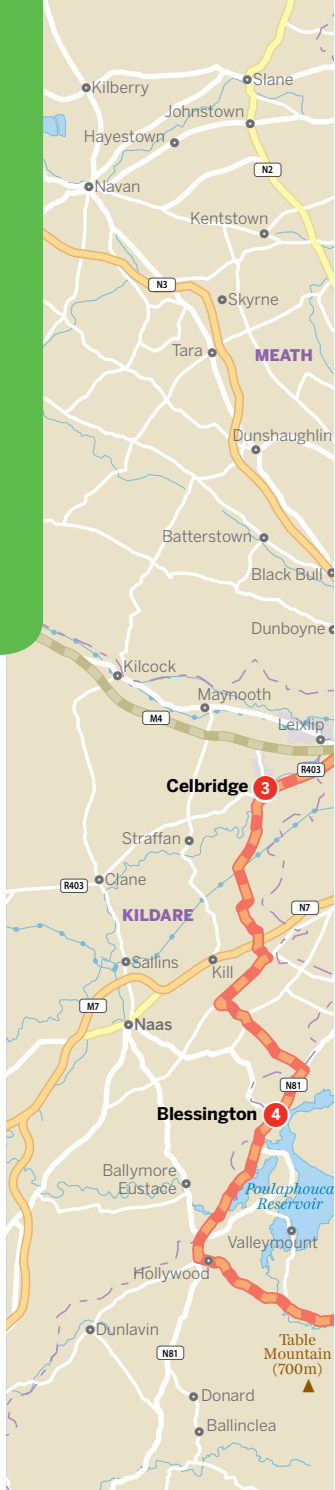
Howth is essentially a very large hill surrounded by cliffs, and the summit (171m) has excellent views across Dublin Bay right down to Wicklow. From the peak you can walk to the top of the Ben of Howth, which has a cairn said to mark a 2000-year-old

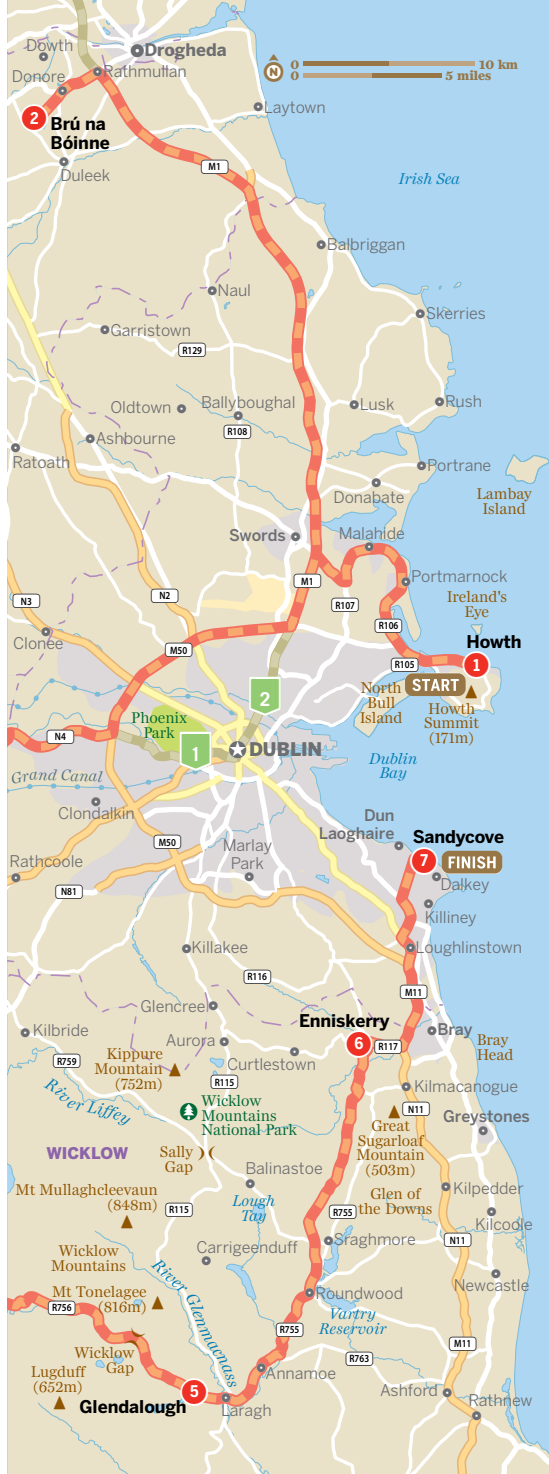
Celtic royal grave. The 1814 Baily Lighthouse, at the southeastern corner, is on the site of an old stone fort and can be reached by a dramatic cliff-top walk. There was an earlier hilltop beacon here in 1670.

Besides the views, the other draw is the busy weekend market and the collection of good seafood restaurants huddled around the harbour.

 p77

**The Drive**  Take the right at Sutton onto Harbour Rd (R105) towards Baldoyle; you'll have the Malahide estuary on your right and, on the spit of land beyond it, the famous Portmarnock Golf Links. Turn left onto Moyne Rd and take the M1 north, exiting at Junction 9 for Donore.





## 2 Brú na Bóinne

Pharaoh hadn't even conceived of the pyramids when the neolithic pre-Celts were using mathematical equations unknown to the ancient Greeks to build this vast necropolis on the banks of the River Boyne. Collectively known as Brú na Bóinne (the Boyne Palace), the passage tombs (and superb visitor centre) are one of the most extraordinary sites in Europe and shouldn't be missed. For more information, see Trip 5, The Boyne Valley (p85).

**The Drive** » Double-back onto the M1 and take the M50 around Dublin; take the exit at Junction 7 for the N4 and go west for 7km as far as Junction 5. Follow the R403 as far as Celbridge. The 71km trip should take about an hour.



LINK  
YOUR  
TRIP

### 1 Ireland's Highlights

Dublin is the starting point of this classic trip that delivers the country's five-star attractions.

### 2 The Long Way Round

From Dublin, take a couple of weeks to explore the country.

## TRIP HIGHLIGHT

**3 Celbridge**

The magnificent **Castletown House** (☎01-628 8252; www.castletownhouse.ie; adult/child €4.50/3.50; 🕒10am-4.45pm Tue-Sun Easter-Oct) simply has no equal. It is Ireland's largest and most imposing Georgian estate, and a testament to the vast wealth enjoyed by the Anglo-Irish gentry during the 18th century.

Built between 1722 and 1732, the house

was commissioned by Speaker of the Irish House of Commons William Conolly (1662-1729), who wanted a house suitable to his position as Ireland's richest man.

The original '16th-century Italian palazzo' design of the house was by the Italian architect Alessandro Galilei (1691-1737) in 1718. In 1724 the project was entrusted to Sir Edward Lovett Pearce (1699-1733).

The house is full of Palladian touches, including the terminating pavilions

and the superb Long Gallery, full of family portraits and fancy stucco work by the Italian Francini brothers. Thomas Jefferson was such a fan of the style that much of Washington, DC is designed accordingly.

**The Drive** » The 30km drive will first take you south along the R405, through the western stretch of Dublin suburbia. Take the N82 for 2km. Turn left onto the N81 and travel uphill into the Wicklow Mountains. The huge Poulaphouca Reservoir, which delivers drinking water to the capital, is on your left just before you reach Blessington.

**4 Blessington**

Dominating the one-street town of Blessington (pubs, shops, a handful of 17th- and 18th-century town houses) is magnificent **Russborough House** (☎045-865 239; www.russborough.ie; adult/child €10/6; 🕒10am-6pm May-Sep, Sun & bank holidays only Apr & Oct), one of Ireland's finest stately homes, built for Joseph Leeson (1705-83), later the first Earl of Milltown and, later still, Lord Russborough. The Palladian pleasure palace was built between 1741 and 1751 to the design of Richard Cassels, who was at the height of his fame as an architect. Richard didn't live to see it finished, but the job was well executed by Francis Bindon.

**RUSSBOROUGH HOUSE: THE TERRORISTS, THE THIEVES & THE ART LOVERS**

In 1974 the IRA decided to get into the art business by stealing 16 paintings from Russborough House. They were eventually all recovered, but 10 years later the notorious Dublin criminal Martin Cahill (aka the General) masterminded another robbery from the Russborough House collection, this time for Loyalist paramilitaries. On this occasion, however, only some of the works were recovered and of those, several were damaged beyond repair – a good thief does not a gentle curator make. In 1988 the owner, Sir Albert Beit, decided to hand over the most valuable of the paintings to the National Gallery; in return, the gallery agreed to lend other paintings to the collection as temporary exhibits. The sorry story didn't conclude there. In 2001 two thieves drove a jeep through the front doors, making off with two paintings worth nearly €4 million, including a Gainsborough that had been stolen, and recovered, twice before. To add abuse to the insult already added to injury, the house was broken into again in 2002, with the thieves taking five more paintings, including two by Rubens. Incredibly, however, both hauls were quickly recovered.



Enniskerry Powerscourt Estate

The house remained in the Leeson family until 1931. In 1952 it was sold to Sir Alfred Beit, the eponymous nephew of the cofounder of the de Beers diamond-mining company. Uncle Alfred was an obsessive art collector, and when he died, his impressive haul – which includes works by Velázquez, Vermeer, Goya and Rubens – was passed on to his nephew, who brought it to Russborough House.

The admission price includes a 45-minute tour of the house, which

is decorated in typical Georgian style.

 p77

**The Drive** » Follow the N81 south and cut across the Wicklow Mountains on the R756 via the stunning Wicklow Gap. It's a 20km stretch to Laragh; Glendalough is only 3km further on.

## 5 Glendalough

Location, location, location. When St Kevin came to this spectacular glacial valley in the heart of the Wicklow Mountains in 498 to found a small monastic

settlement, did he realise that the settlement would grow into one of Ireland's most important centres of learning and, 15 centuries later, one of the country's most popular tourist attractions? Probably not. See p98.

 p77

**The Drive** » Overall distance 28km. Head northeast on the R755 for 16km, skirting the eastern edge of Wicklow Mountains National Park, then follow the road signs for Enniskerry.





## DETOUR: POWERSCOURT WATERFALL

### Start: 6 Enniskerry

Signposted from the Powerscourt Estate is the 130m **Powerscourt Waterfall** (admission €5; ☎9.30am-7pm May-Aug, 10.30am-5.30pm Mar-Apr & Sep-Oct). It's the highest waterfall in Britain and Ireland, and is most impressive after heavy rain. A nature trail has been laid out around the base of the waterfall, taking you past giant redwoods, ancient oaks, beech, birch and rowan trees. There are plenty of birds in the vicinity, including the chaffinch, cuckoo, chiffchaff, raven and willow warbler. It's also a popular 7km walk to the waterfall.

#### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 6 Enniskerry

Backing onto the pretty village of Enniskerry is the expanse of **Powerscourt Estate** (☎01-204 6000; www.powerscourt.ie; adult/child €8/5; ☎9.30am-5.30pm Feb-Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Jan), which gives contemporary observers a true insight into the style of the 18th-century super-rich. The main entrance is 500m south of the village square.

The estate has existed more or less since 1300, when the LePoer (later

anglicised to Power) family built themselves a castle here. The property changed Anglo-Norman hands a few times before coming into the possession of Richard Wingfield, newly appointed Marshall of Ireland, in 1603. His descendants were to live here for the next 350 years.

Unfortunately, a fire in 1974 gutted most of the house, which remains largely off-limits, so the biggest draw of the whole pile is the simply magnificent 20-hectare formal **gardens** and the breathtaking views that accompany them.

 p77

**The Drive** » Continue onto the M11 north and take the exit for Dun Laoghaire. The Wyatville Rd becomes Church Rd; keep going north and follow the road signs for Sandycove. It's only 19km from Powerscourt to Sandycove.

#### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 7 Sandycove

The handsome seaside town of Sandycove is now just part of greater Dublin, but it is renowned for its excellent restaurants, pretty beach and a Martello tower – built by British forces to keep an eye out for a Napoleonic invasion – now housing the **James Joyce Museum** (☎01-280 9265; www.visitdublin.com; Joyce Tower; adult/child €6/4; ☎10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sat, by appointment only Sep-Mar). This is where the action begins in James Joyce's epic novel *Ulysses*. The museum was opened in 1962 by Sylvia Beach, the Paris-based publisher who first dared to put *Ulysses* into print, and has photographs, letters, documents, various editions of Joyce's work and two death masks of Joyce on display.

 p77

# Eating & Sleeping

## Howth 1

### Aqua

Seafood €€

(📞01-832 0690; www.aqua.ie; 1 West Pier; mains €29-32; 🕒12.30-3.30pm & 5.30-10.30pm Tue-Sat, 4-8.30pm Sun) A contender for best seafood in Howth, Aqua serves top-quality fish dishes in its elegant dining room overlooking the harbour, in a building once home to the Howth Yacht Club.

### House

Modern Irish €€

(📞01-839 6388; www.thehouse.ie; 4 Main St; mains €16-22; 🕒9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 11.30am-3pm & 6pm-11pm Sat-Sun) A wonderful spot on the main street leading away from the harbour, where you can feast on dishes like crunchy Bellingham blue cheese polenta or wild Wicklow venison stew as well as a fine selection of fish.

### King Sitric

Boutique Hotel €€

(📞01-832 5235; www.kingsitric.ie; East Pier; r €150-180) One of Howth's best-known restaurants (mains €30 to €45) – always praised for the superb seafood and prize-winning wine list – has eight marvellous rooms to its premises right on the port. Each is named after a lighthouse and is extremely well decorated with wonderful views of the port.

## Blessington 4

### Rathallagh House & Country Club

Hotel €€€

(📞045-403 112; www.rathallaghhousehotel.com; Dunlavin; s/d from €135/260) About 20km south of Blessington, this fabulous country manor, converted from Queen Anne stables in 1798, has splendidly appointed rooms, a marvellous golf course and exquisite country-house dining (mains €33 to €42), offering some of the best food you'll eat anywhere in Ireland.

## Glendalough 5

### Glendalough Hotel

Hotel €€

(📞0404-45135; www.glendaloughhotel.com; s/d €110/150; 📞📧📺📶) There's no mistaking Glendalough's best hotel, conveniently located next door to the visitor centre. There is no shortage of takers for its 44 fairly luxurious bedrooms.

## Enniskerry 6

### Emilia's Ristorante

Italian €€

(📞01-276 1834; Clock Tower, The Square; mains €12-16; 🕒5-10.45pm Mon-Sat, noon-9.30pm Sun) A lovely 1st-floor restaurant to satisfy even the most ardent craving for thin-crust pizzas. Emilia's does everything else just right too, from the organic soups to the perfect steaks down to the gorgeous meringue desserts.

### Summerhill House Hotel

Hotel €€

(📞01-286 7928; www.summerhillhousehotel.com; r from €90; 📞📧📺📶) This truly superb country mansion, about 700m south of town just off the N11, is the best place around to lay your head on soft cotton pillows surrounded by delicate antiques and pastoral views in oils. Everything about the place – including the top-notch breakfast – is memorable.

## Sandycove 7

### Caviston's Seafood Restaurant

Seafood €€€

(📞01-280 9245; Glashule Rd; mains €18-27; 🕒noon-5pm Tue-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat) All self-respecting crustacean lovers should make the trip to Caviston's for a seafood meal to remember.

***Clonmacnoise*** Ancient  
monastic ruins at their best





## 4

# East to West

*Music, landscape and history are the keys to this trip, which transports you across Ireland's midriff from the bustling capital to the pastoral splendour of the west.*

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS



**7 DAYS**  
435KM / 270 MILES

### GREAT FOR...



### BEST TIME TO GO

The warmer months (April to September) are festival time in Galway.

### ESSENTIAL PHOTO

Dún Aengus just before sunset.

### BEST TWO DAYS

From the Aran Islands back to Connemara and down to County Clare and The Burren.





**The Drive** » The 130km drive to Clonmacnoise is largely uneventful, courtesy of the convenient M4/M6 tolled motorway, from which you see fields and little else. Take exit 7 towards Moate and get on the R444 – Clonmacnoise is signposted as you go.


the main reasons Ireland got the moniker of ‘land of saints and scholars.’ For greater detail, check out p96.

 p83

**The Drive** » From Clonmacnoise, take the R357 for 22km towards Ballinasloe, Galway’s county town and the first town you’ll come to as you enter the county across the River Suck. Here you can rejoin the M6; it’s 61km to Galway City.

TRIP HIGHLIGHT

**2 Clonmacnoise**

**Clonmacnoise** ([www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie); adult/child €6/2; ☀9am-7pm mid-May–mid-Sep, 10am-5.30pm mid-Sep–mid-May; , straddling a hill overlooking a bend in the Shannon, is one of

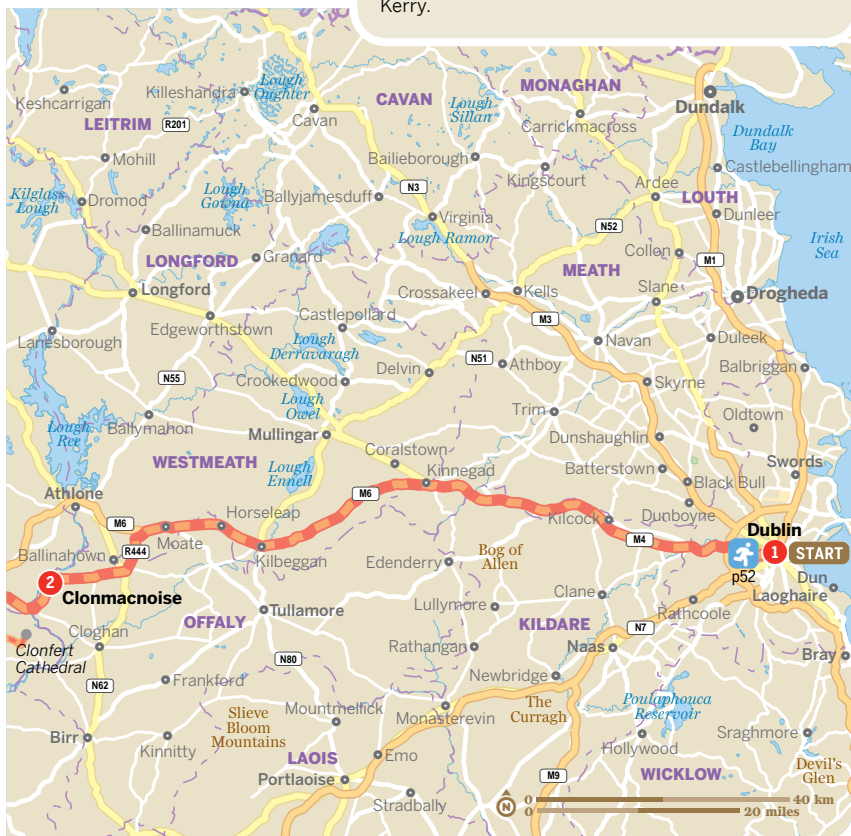
 **LINK YOUR TRIP**

**21 Best of the West**

In Galway you can connect with this trip, which brings you from Sligo south to County Kerry.

**27 County Clare**

Explore the rest of lyrical County Clare by travelling the 40km from Doolin to Ennis.





## DETOUR: THE MAN WHO REALLY FOUND AMERICA?

### Start: ② Clonmacnoise

About 21km southeast of Ballinasloe along the R355 is the 12th-century **Clonfert Cathedral**, built on the site of a monastery said to have been founded in 563 by St Brendan 'the Navigator', who is believed to be buried here. Although the jury is out on whether St Brendan reached America's shores in a tiny *currach* rowing boat, there are Old Irish Ogham (the earliest form of writing in Ireland) carvings in West Virginia that date from as early as the 6th century, suggesting an Irish presence in America well before Columbus set foot there.

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### ③ Galway City

Galway is the long-established, self-proclaimed and generally accepted capital of bohemian Ireland, with a long-standing tradition of attracting artists, musicians and other creative types to its pub- and cafe-lined streets. For our suggestions for

the best pubs in town, check out p41.

  p83

**The Drive** » The N59 cuts through the heart of the region – in the distance you'll see Connemara's mountain ranges, the Maunturks and the Twelve Bens. After about 58km, just before Recess, take a 5km detour north along the R344 and take in the majesty of the Lough Inagh Valley before rejoining the road and continuing towards Clifden, 28km further on.

### ④ Clifden

Connemara's principal town is a genteel Victorian-era fishing port that makes a good stopover, especially during the summer months, when it casts off its wintry covers and offers visitors a nice taster of what drew 19th-century tourists to it. You can amble about its narrow streets or stare at the sea from the head of the narrow bay into which falls the River Owenglin.

 p83

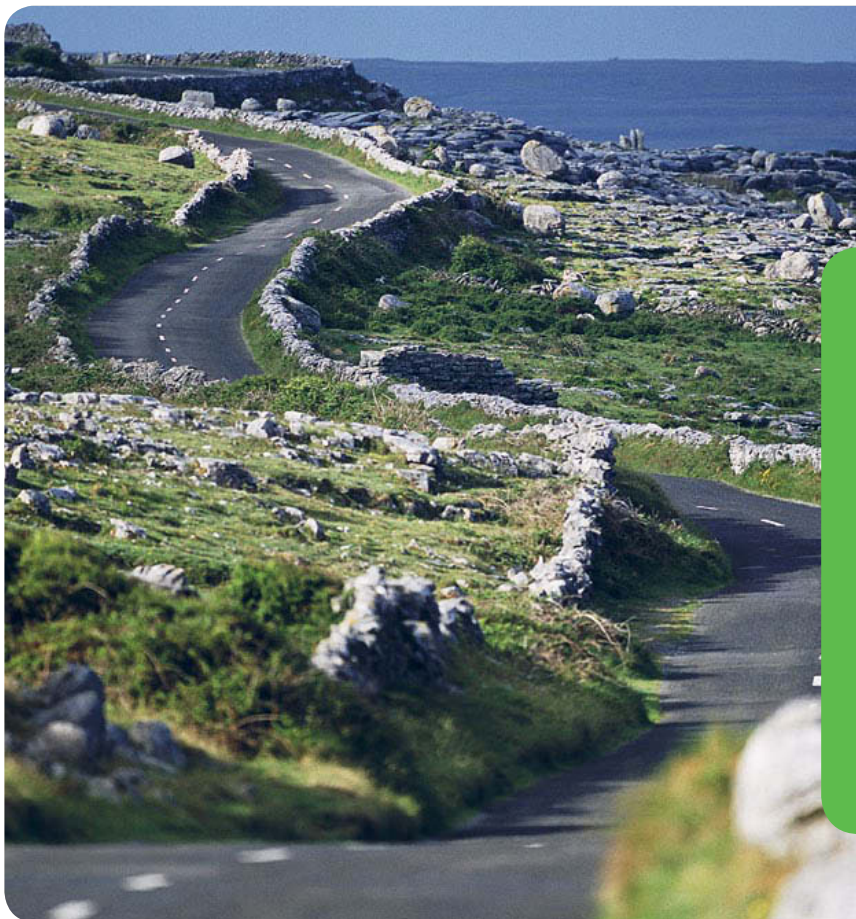
**The Drive** » Take the R341 coast road towards Roundstone, but at Ballinaboy cut through the Roundstone Bog, where you might see turf harvested by hand. It's a bad road, but worth the scenery. Rejoin the R341 at Toombeola and go left, taking the N59 for a few kilometres before turning right onto the R340 for either Rossaveal or Minna. You can catch a ferry to Inishmór from Rossaveal or fly from Minna, so it's either a choppy ferry ride or a twin-prop flight. From

## CLARINBRIDGE OYSTER FESTIVAL

South of Galway, Clarinbridge (Droichead an Chláirín) and Kilcolgan (Cill Cholgáin) are at their busiest during the **Clarinbridge Oyster Festival** ([www.clarinbridge.com](http://www.clarinbridge.com)), held during the second weekend of September. However, the oysters are actually at their best from May through the summer.

Oysters are celebrated year-round at **Paddy Burke's Oyster Inn** ([www.paddyburkesgalway.com](http://www.paddyburkesgalway.com); Clarinbridge; mains €10-24; ☎12.30-10pm), a thatched inn by the bridge dishing up heaped servings in a roadside location on the N18.

**Moran's Oyster Cottage** ([www.moransoystercottage.com](http://www.moransoystercottage.com); The Weir, Kilcolgan; mains €14-24; ☎noon-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) is a thatched pub and restaurant with a facade as plain as the inside of an oyster shell. Find a seat on the terrace overlooking Dunbulcaun Bay, where the oysters are reared before they arrive on your plate. It's a well-marked 2km west of the noxious N18, in a cove near Kilcolgan.



**The Burren** Stone walls along the winding coastal road

Clifden, it's 57km to Rossaveal, 64km to Minna. See p296 for more information on getting to and from the Aran Islands.

#### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 5 Inishmór

Do not doubt that the effort you made to get here isn't worth it, for a visit to the largest of the Aran Islands (indeed, any of the three) is one of the

more memorable things you'll do in Ireland. The big draw is the spectacular Stone Age fort of **Dún Aengus** (Dún Aonghasa; [www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie); adult/child €3/1; ☀10am-6pm), but don't forget to explore some of the island's other ruins, scattered about the place like so much historical detritus. There's also a lovely beach at **Kilmurvey** (west of Kilronan), while

up to 50 grey seals sun themselves and feed in the shallows of **Port Chorrúch**.

 p83

**The Drive** » You'll have to go back to Minna or Rossaveal to pick up your car, but on your way back the R336 to Galway, stop off in Spiddal, in the heart of Connemara's *Gaelteacht*, or Irish-speaking, heartland. Beyond Galway city, turn off the N18 and go 10km along the N67 to Kinvara.



## THE BURREN

Stretching across northern Clare, from the Atlantic coast to Kinvara in County Galway, The Burren is a unique striated limestone landscape that was shaped beneath ancient seas, then forced high and dry by a great geological cataclysm. In The Burren, land and sea seem to merge into one vast, moody, rocky and at times fearsome space beneath huge skies, accented with ancient burial chambers and medieval ruins.

### Visitor Information

The Burren Centre in Kilfenora is an excellent resource.

- » **Burren Ecotourism Network** ([www.burrenecotourism.com](http://www.burrenecotourism.com)) A vast compilation of all things related to Burren tourism.
- » **Burren National Park** ([www.burrennationalpark.ie](http://www.burrennationalpark.ie)) Portions of The Burren in the southeast have been designated a national park, although it has yet to develop visitor facilities; the website has good info on the natural landscape.
- » **Burrenbeo Trust** ([www.burrenbeo.com](http://www.burrenbeo.com); Main St, Kinvara, Co Galway) A nonprofit dedicated to promoting the natural beauty of The Burren and increasing awareness. Its website is a tremendous source of info.

### 6 Kinvara

The small stone harbour of Kinvara (sometimes spelt Kinvarra) sits snugly at the southeastern corner of Galway Bay, which accounts for its Irish name, Cinn Mhara (Head of the Sea). It's a posh little village, the kind of place where all the jeans have creases in them. It makes a good pit stop between Galway and Clare.

Dominating one end of the harbour is the chess-piece-style **Dunguaire Castle** ([www.shannonheritage.com](http://www.shannonheritage.com); adult/child €6/3.40; ☀10am-5pm Easter-Sep), erected around 1520 by the O'Hynes clan and in excellent condition following extensive restoration. It is widely believed that the castle occupies the former site of the 6th-century royal

palace of Guaire Aidhne, the king of Connaught. Dunguaire's owners have included Oliver St John Gogarty (1878-1957) – poet, writer, surgeon and inspiration for James Joyce's fictional Buck Mulligan, one of the cast of *Ulysses*.

The least authentic way to visit the castle is to attend a **medieval banquet** (☎061-360 788; [www.shannonheritage.com](http://www.shannonheritage.com); banquet adult/child €50/24; ☀5.30pm & 8.45pm Easter-Sep). Stage shows and shtick provide diversions while you plough through a big group meal.

**The Drive** » The N67 from Kinvara skirts along the western edge of the Burren; this particularly desolate-looking (but no less beautiful) landscape is in evidence beyond Ballyvaughan, about 20km on. Doolin is a further 23km away;

just past Lisdoonvarna, take a right onto the R476.

### 7 Doolin

Only 6km north of the Cliffs of Moher (see p294), Doolin's rep as a terrific spot to spend a couple of days isn't just down to its proximity to one of the bone fide stars of the Irish tourist trail. It helps, sure, but Doolin's popularity is largely due to its pubs, or, rather, to the musicians that play in them: the area is full of talented players whose exquisite abilities can be enjoyed almost every night. There's lots of pubs to choose from, but if we had to pick one, it'd be **McGann's** (Roadford), complete with turf fires, darts board and great grub.

 p83

# Eating & Sleeping

## Dublin 1

### **Green Nineteen** Irish €€

(☎01-478 9626; 19 Lower Camden St; mains €10-12; ☀10am-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun) This sleek restaurant specialises in locally sourced, organic grub and shows that good food doesn't have to be expensive. We love it, but so does everybody else. Book ahead.

### **Number 31** Guesthouse €€

(☎01-676 5011; www.number31.ie; 31 Leeson Close; s/d/tr from €100/140/240; 📶) This elegant slice of accommodation paradise, designed for his own use by modernist architect Sam Stephenson (of Central Bank fame – or infamy), is unquestionably the most distinctive of Dublin's hotels. Children under 10 are not permitted.

## Clonmacnoise 2

### **Kajon House** B&B €€

(☎090-967 4191; www.kajonhouse.ie; Creevagh; d from €70; 📶Mar-Oct; 📺) If you want to stay near the ruins, this is your best option, just 1.5km away on the road signposted to Tullamore. It's an incredibly friendly place with cosy rooms, a spacious yard with a picnic table and evening meals on offer.

## Galway City 3

### **Quays** Irish €€

(Quay St; mains €12-25; ☀11am-10pm) This sprawling pub does a roaring business downstairs in its restaurant, which has hearty carvery lunches and more ambitious mains at night. The cold seafood platter is a symphony of the bounty from Galway Bay.

### **House Hotel** Hotel €€€

(☎091-538 900; www.thehousehotel.ie; Spanish Pde; r €100-200; 📶) It's a design odyssey

at this boutique hotel. Public spaces contrast modern art with trad details and bold accents.

## Clifden 4

### **Dolphin Beach** B&B €€

(☎095-21204; www.dolphinbeachhouse.com; Lower Sky Rd; r €80-180; 📶) It's hard to find the bones of the 19th-century manor house that forms the basis for this posh B&B set amid some of Connemara's best coastal scenery. It's 5km west of Clifden.

## Inishmór 5

### **O'Malley's@Bayview** Modern Irish €€

(Kilronan; mains €7-23; ☀11am-9.30pm Mon-Fri, from 9am Sat & Sun) The terrace here has commanding harbour views. The simple menu belies the talents of the kitchen; choices include fine fish chowder, good burgers and pizza, plus fresh fish at night. Even the garlic bread is good.

### **Kilmurvey House** B&B €€

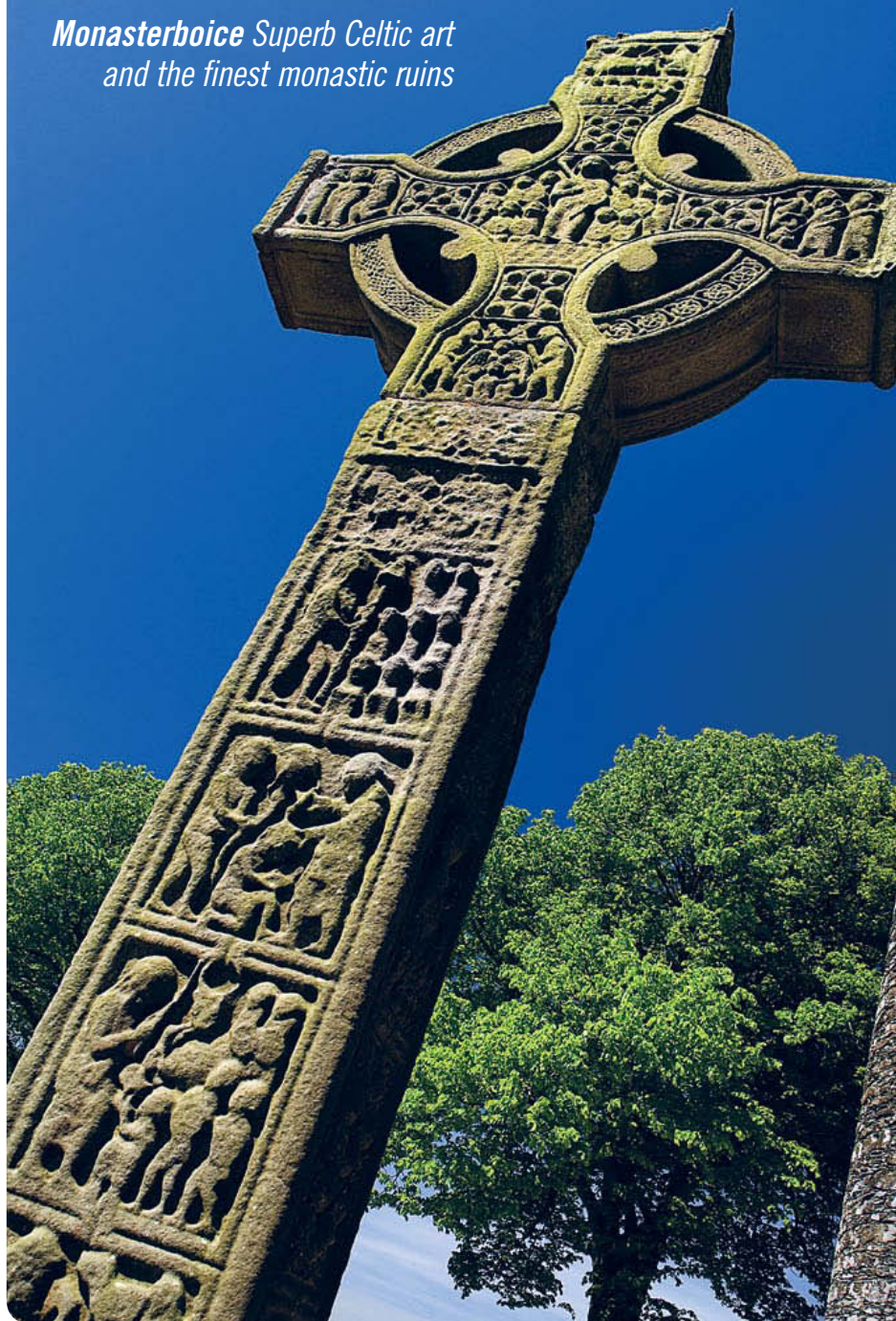
(☎099-61218; www.kilmurveyhouse.com; Kilmurvey; s/d from €65/110; ☀Apr-Sep) On the path leading to Dún Aengus is this grand 18th-century stone mansion. It's a beautiful setting, and the 12 rooms are well maintained. Hearty meals (dinner €30) incorporate vegetables from the garden and local fish and meats.

## Doolin 7

### **Cullinan's Guesthouse** Inn €€

(☎065-707 4183; www.cullinansdoolin.com; Doolin; s €40-60, d €60-90; 📶) The eight rooms here are all of a high standard, with power showers and comfortable fittings. The restaurant is one of the village's best. The owner is well-known local musician James Cullinan.

*Monasterboice Superb Celtic art  
and the finest monastic ruins*





5

# The Boyne Valley

*A trip through the cradle of Irish history, from prehistoric tombs to bloody battlefields, with monasteries and old castles thrown in for good measure.*

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

76 km

### Monasterboice

Monastic ruins with fine Celtic crosses and a round tower

START

1

### Trim Castle

One of Ireland's best-preserved Anglo-Norman castles

0 km

Mellifont Abbey

Brú na Bóinne

7 FINISH

4

Millmount Museum

54 km

### Battle of the Boyne Site

Learn about the most decisive battle in Irish history

2 DAYS

76KM / 47 MILES

## GREAT FOR...



## BEST TIME TO GO

The sun doesn't set until after 10pm between June and July, but September often gets the best weather.



## ESSENTIAL PHOTO

The round tower at Monasterboice.



## BEST FOR CULTURE

The magnificent neolithic passage tombs at Brú Na Bóinne.



## 5

# The Boyne Valley

Only 112km long, the River Boyne isn't especially impressive, but its valley can lay claim to being Ireland's most significant historical stage. The breathtaking prehistoric passage tomb complex of Brú na Bóinne is the main highlight, but the remnants of Celtic forts, Norman castles and atmospheric monasteries are but the most obvious clues of the area's rich and longstanding legacy.

## TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 1 Trim

Remarkably preserved **Trim Castle** (King John's Castle; [www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie); adult/child €4/2; ☹10am-6pm Easter-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Oct, 9.30am-5.50pm Sat & Sun Feb-Easter, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Jan) was Ireland's largest Anglo-Norman fortification and is proof of Trim's medieval importance. Hugh de Lacy founded Trim Castle in 1173, but Rory O'Connor, said to have been the last



high king of Ireland, destroyed this motte and bailey within a year. The building you see today was begun around 1200 and has hardly been modified since, although it was badly damaged by Cromwellian forces when they took the town in 1649.

 p91

**The Drive** » It's only 15km from Trim to Tara. Eight kilometres northeast of Trim, along the R161, is 12th-century Bective Abbey, built in the lush farmland still in evidence today on both sides of the road as you drive.

## 2 Hill of Tara

The Hill of Tara is Ireland's most sacred stretch of turf, an entrance to the underworld, occupying a place at the heart of Irish history, legend



**LINK  
YOUR  
TRIP**

### 6 Ancient Ireland

Connect to this trip from Brú na Bóinne and continue time travelling through Ireland's historic past.

### 2 The Long Way Round

From Monasterboice, head north on the M1 to Belfast and this hugely rewarding two-week trip.



and folklore. It was the home of the mystical druids, the priest-rulers of ancient Ireland, who practised their particular form of Celtic paganism under the watchful gaze of the all-powerful goddess Maeve (Medbh). Later it was the ceremonial capital of the high kings - 142 of them in all - who ruled until the arrival of Christianity in the 6th century. It is also one of the most important ancient sites in Europe, with a Stone Age passage tomb and prehistoric burial mounds that date back up to 5000 years. Although little remains other than humps and mounds of earth on the hill, its historic and folkloristic significance is immense.

**The Tara Visitor Centre** ( 046-902 5903; [www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie); adult/child €3/1;  10am-6pm Jun-mid-Sep) is housed within a former Protestant church (with a window by artist Evie Hone) and screens a 20-minute audiovisual presentation about the site.

**The Drive** » From Tara, the 29km drive to Brú na Bóinne takes you through the county town of Navan, the crossroads of the busy Dublin road (M3/N3) and the Drogheda-Westmeath road (N51). If you stop here, Trimgate St is lined with restaurants and pubs. Two kilometres south of the centre is the relatively intact 16th-century Athlumney Castle.

## 3 Brú na Bóinne

The vast neolithic necropolis known as Brú na Bóinne (the Boyne Palace) is one of the most extraordinary sites in Europe and shouldn't be missed. A thousand years older than Stonehenge, it's a powerful and evocative testament to the mind-boggling achievements of prehistoric humans.

The area consists of many different sites; the three principal ones are Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth, but only the first two are open to visitors, and then only as part of an organised tour which departs from the **Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre** ( 041-988 0300; [www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie); Donore; visitor centre adult/child €3/2; visitor centre, Newgrange & Knowth €11/6;  9am-7pm Jun-mid-Sep, 9am-6.30pm May & mid-end Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Oct & Feb, 9am-5pm Nov-Jan), from where a bus will take you to the tombs. The centre houses an extraordinary series of interactive exhibits on prehistoric Ireland and its passage tombs, and has an excellent book and souvenir shop.

 p91

**The Drive** » The 7km drive from Brú na Bóinne is along a tiny rural road that takes you through the village of Donore. The battle site is 3km north of Donore, signposted off the N51.

## TRIP HIGHLIGHT

#### 4 Battle of the Boyne Site

More than 60,000 soldiers of the armies of King James II and King William III fought on this patch of farmland on the border of Counties Meath and Louth in 1690. In the end, William prevailed and James sailed off to France.

Today, the **battle site** ([www.battleoftheboyne.ie](http://www.battleoftheboyne.ie); adult/child €4/2; ⌚10am-6pm May-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Mar & Apr, 9am-5pm Oct-Feb) is part of the Oldbridge Estate farm. At the visitor centre you can watch a short show about the battle, see original and replica weaponry of the time, and explore a laser battlefield model.

**The Drive** » It's only 6km to Drogheda; almost immediately you'll find yourself driving from fecund landscape into suburban sprawl as you approach Drogheda's outlying expanse.

#### 5 Drogheda

Across the river from the main town of Drogheda is Millmount, which may have once been a prehistoric burial ground but is now home to a Martello Tower and army barracks.

Part of the barracks is now the **Millmount Museum** (☎041-983 3097; [www.millmount.net](http://www.millmount.net); museum adult/child €3.50/2.50, museum & tower €5.50/3; ⌚9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun), which has interesting displays about the town and its history. Exhibits include three wonderful

late-18th-century guild banners, perhaps the last in the country. There's also a room devoted to Cromwell's brutal siege of Drogheda and the Battle of the Boyne. Across the courtyard, the **Governor's House** opens for temporary exhibitions.

 p91

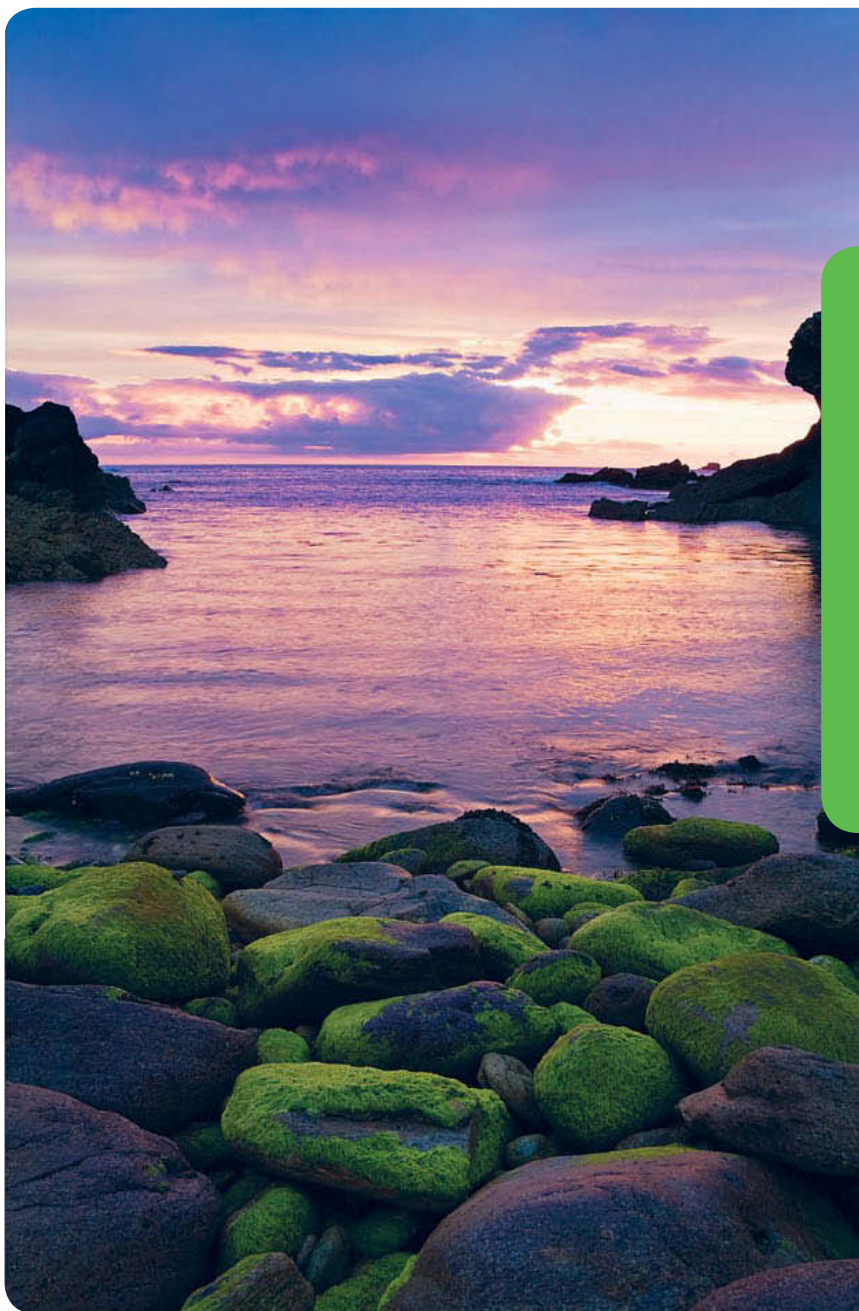
**The Drive** » The rich pastureland that drew the early Irish here has largely disappeared beneath the suburban sprawl, but, after 2km, as you go left off the N1 onto the N51, you'll get a better sense of classic Irish farmland (even though you'll drive under the M1 motorway!). As you get to the Boyne, go right onto the Glen Rd until you get to Mellifont. The whole drive is 11km long.

## CROMWELL'S DROGHEDA INVASION

Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) is lauded as England's first democrat and protector of the people. Cromwell hated the Irish. To him, they were treacherous infidels, a dirty race of papists who had sided with Charles I during the Civil War. So when 'God's own Englishman' landed his 12,000 troops in Dublin in August 1649, he immediately set out for Drogheda, a strategic fort town and bastion of royalist support.

In order to set an example to any other town that might resist his armies, Cromwell taught the defenders a brutal lesson. Over a period of hours, an estimated 3000 people were massacred, mostly royalist soldiers but also priests, women and children. The defenders' leader, Englishman and royalist Sir Arthur Aston, was bludgeoned to death with his own (wooden) leg. Of the survivors, many were captured and sold into slavery in the Caribbean.

Cromwell defended his action as God's righteous punishment of treacherous Catholics, and was quick to point out that he had never ordered the killing of non-combatants: it was the 17th century's version of 'collateral damage'.



**Clogherhead** Sunset on the shore





## DETOUR: DROGHEDA TO CASTLEBELLINGHAM VIA THE COAST ROAD

### Start: 5 Drogheda

Most people just zip north along the M1 motorway but if you want to meander along the coast and see a little of rural Ireland, opt for the R166 from Drogheda north along the coast.

The picturesque little village of **Termonfeckin** was, until 1656, the seat and castle of the primate of Armagh. The 15th-century **castle** (admission free; ☀️10am-6pm), or tower house, is tiny and worth a five-minute stop.

About 2km further north is the busy seaside and fishing centre of **Clogherhead**, with a good, shallow Blue Flag beach at Lurganboy. Squint to ignore the caravan parks and take in the lovely views of the Cooley and Mourne Mountains instead.

The 33km route comes to an end in **Castlebellingham**. The village grew up around an 18th-century crenulated mansion, and generations of mud farmers served the landlord within. From here you can come back on the M1; it's only 25km from Castlebellingham to Drogheda.

### 6 Mellifont Abbey

In its Anglo-Norman prime, this **abbey**

(☎️)041-982 6459; www.heritageireland.ie;

Tullyallen; adult/child €3/1;

☀️ visitor centre 10am-6pm

Easter-Sep; (P) was the Cistercians' first and most magnificent centre in the country. Although the ruins are highly evocative and well worth exploring, they still don't do real justice to the site's former splendour.

Mellifont's most recognisable building, and one of the finest pieces of Cistercian architecture in Ireland, is the lavabo, an octagonal washing house for the monks. It was built in the early 13th century and used lead pipes to bring water from the river. A number

of other buildings would have surrounded this main part of the abbey.

The visitor centre describes monastic life in detail. The ruins themselves are always open and there's good picnicking next to the rushing stream. The abbey is about 1.5km off the main Drogheda–Collon road (R168).

**The Drive** » The easiest way to get to Monasterboice from Mellifont Abbey is to take the Old Mellifont Rd; after 1.5km turn left onto the R168 and then veer right onto The Gables. Three km on, turn left onto the N1 and, almost immediately, right onto the R132. It's only 12km in total.

#### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 7 Monasterboice

Crowing ravens lend an eerie atmosphere to **Monasterboice** (admission

free; ☀️ sunrise-sunset; (P)), an intriguing monastic site containing a cemetery, two ancient church ruins, one of the finest and tallest round towers in Ireland, and two of the best high crosses.

The high crosses of Monasterboice are superb examples of Celtic art. The crosses had an important didactic use, bringing the gospels alive for the uneducated, and they were probably brightly painted originally, although all traces of colour have long disappeared.

Come early or late in the day to avoid the crowds.

# Eating & Sleeping

## Trim 1

### An Tromán

Cafe €

(<http://artisanfoodstoretrim.webs.com>;  
Emmet St; dishes €4.50-7; ☺ breakfast & lunch  
Mon-Sat) Crammed with gourmet goodies,  
this fabulous deli is perfect for picking up the  
makings of a picnic. If it's not picnic weather,  
you can order daily specials like a bowl of soup  
and tuna and sweet-corn sandwich, chicken and  
mushroom pie or a meringue nest with fruit and  
fresh cream.


### Trim Castle Hotel Boutique Hotel €€

(<tel> 046-948 3000; [www.trimcastlehotel.com](http://www.trimcastlehotel.com);  
Castle St; d €65-130;    ) This stylish  
hotel is part of a development that's doing its  
best to spiff up an area close to the castle. The  
68 rooms here have a compact but comfortable  
modern design; facilities include jacuzzis in  
some rooms, as well as a carvery restaurant.


## Brú na Bóinne 3

### Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre Cafe

Cafe €

(dishes €4.50-12; ☺ breakfast & lunch; )  
On the lower level of the Brú na Bóinne visitor  
centre, this surprisingly good cafe's extensive  
vegetarian options include nut and lentil loaf,  
and eggplant and zucchini cake, plus plenty of  
other treats like salmon and leek tart and beef  
lasagne.

### Rossnaree B&B €€



(<tel> 041-982 0975; [www.rossnaree.ie](http://www.rossnaree.ie); Newgrange;  
d €100-120; ☺ Apr-Dec;  ) At a sharp corner  
on the narrow road between Donore and Slane

is this magnificent Italianate country house  
overlooking the River Boyne and surrounded  
by a working farm. The four bedrooms are  
luxuriously furnished. Groups of four or more  
can arrange dinner in advance. The events  
related in the tale 'Fionn and the Salmon of  
Knowledge' are said to have taken place on this  
very spot.

## Drogheda 5

### Eastern Seaboard Bar & Grill

Irish €€

(<tel> 041-980 2570; [www.easternseaboard.ie](http://www.easternseaboard.ie); 1  
Bryanstown Centre, Dublin Rd; mains €10.50-33;  
☺ lunch & dinner;  ) Build it and they  
will come... Despite its unpromising location  
in a business park near the train station, this  
stylised, contemporary space has been packed  
since opening, with switched-on staff and quirky  
details like a backlit decanter collection and  
metallic fish sculptures. Stunning food like  
pig's-cheek terrine with apple slaw, smoked  
mackerel pâté, and coffee jelly and vanilla ice  
cream is served continuously from lunchtime  
on. Or you could just drop by for frothy German  
beers on tap.

### D Hotel Hotel €€

(<tel> 041-987 7700; [www.thed.ie](http://www.thed.ie); Scotch Hall,  
Marsh Rd; d €69-109;    ) Slick, hip and  
unexpected, this is Drogheda's top dog when  
it comes to accommodation. Minimalist rooms  
are bathed in light and decked out with designer  
furniture and cool gadgets. There's a stylish bar  
and restaurant, a mini gym and fantastic views  
of the city. The hotel is popular with hen and  
stag parties, so beware of pounding music on  
weekends.



*Jerpoint Abbey One of Ireland's  
finest Cistercian ruins*



6

# Ancient Ireland

*Go time travelling through middle Ireland's collection of ancient tombs, Celtic sites and monastic cities, and cover 3000 years in four days.*

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS



**4 DAYS**  
529KM / 329 MILES

### GREAT FOR...



### BEST TIME TO GO

April to September for the long days and best weather.



### ESSENTIAL PHOTO

The Rock of Cashel from the ruins of Hore Abbey.



### BEST FOR CULTURE

The passage graves at Brú Na Bóinne.



## 6

## Ancient Ireland

This trip transports you from the neolithic era to the last days of the first millennium, via the signposts of Ireland's astonishing history: the prehistoric treasure trove of Cruachan Aí; the ancient passage graves of Newgrange and Loughcrew; the Celtic capital at Tara; and the rich monastic settlements of Clonmacnoise, Glendalough and Cashel.

## TRIP HIGHLIGHT

## 1 Brú na Bóinne

A thousand years older than Stonehenge, the extensive neolithic necropolis known as Brú na Bóinne (the Boyne Palace) is simply breathtaking, even if at first glance it just looks like a handful of raised mounds in the fecund fields of County Meath.

The largest artificial structures in Ireland until the construction of the Anglo-Norman castles 4000 years later,



the necropolis was built to house VIP corpses.

Only two of the passage graves are open to visitors (Newgrange and Knowth) and they can only be visited as part of a carefully controlled organised tour departing from the **Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre** (☎041-988 0300;

www.heritageireland.ie; Donore: visitor centre adult/child €3/2, visitor centre, Newgrange & Knowth €11/6; ☀9am-7pm Jun-mid-Sep, 9am-6.30pm May & mid-end Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Oct & Feb, 9am-5pm Nov-Jan).

 p99

**The Drive** » Follow the signposts for Slane and the N2 as you wind your way across the Meath countryside for 8km or so; the Hill of Slane is 1km north of the village.



**LINK  
YOUR  
TRIP**

### 10 Kilkenny's Treasures

It's 20km from Jerpoint Abbey to Kilkenny, the first stop in the trip dedicated to the county.

### 20 The Holy Glen

In Cashel you can connect to this trip exploring the very best of County Tipperary.

## 2 Slane

The fairly plain-looking **Hill of Slane** stands out only for its association with a thick slice of Celto-Christian mythology. According to legend, St Patrick lit a paschal (Easter) fire here in 433 to proclaim Christianity throughout the land.

It was also here that Patrick supposedly plucked a shamrock from the ground, using its three leaves to explain the paradox of the Holy Trinity – the union of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in one.

**The Drive** » Go south on the N2 for 8km and turn right onto the R153. After 2km, take the left fork and keep going for 8km until you hit the R147. After 500m take a right and then, after 250m, the first left until you get to the Hill of Tara.

## 3 Hill of Tara

The Hill of Tara (Teamhair) has occupied a special place in Irish legend and folklore for millennia, although it's not known exactly when people first settled on this gently sloping hill with its commanding views over the plains of Meath.

Tara's remains are not visually impressive. Only mounds and depressions in the grass mark where the Iron Age hill fort and surrounding ring

forts once stood, but it remains an evocative, somewhat moving place, especially on a warm summer's evening. To make sense of it all, stop by the **Tara Visitor Centre** (☎046-902 5903; www.heritageireland.ie; adult/child €3/1; ☀10am-6pm Jun-mid-Sep).

**The Drive** » Head north and take the M3, which becomes the N3 after 13km. Keep going for 3km and at the roundabout take the first exit onto the R163. Follow it for 8km; it eventually morphs into the R154. The cairns are along here, just west of Oldcastle. The drive is 43km altogether.

## 4 Loughcrew Cairns

There are 30-odd tombs here but they're hard to reach and relatively few people ever bother, which means you can enjoy this moody and evocative place in peace.

Like Brú na Bóinne, the graves were all built around 3000 BC, but unlike their better-known and better-excavated peers, the Loughcrew tombs were used at least until 750 BC. As at Newgrange, larger stones in some of the graves are decorated with spiral patterns. Some of the graves look like large piles of stones, while others are less obvious, their cairn having been removed.

**The Drive** » The 87km between Loughcrew and Tulsk takes you through the

heart of Middle Ireland, past small glacial lakes and low-lying hills. Follow the R395 to Edgeworthstown and take the N4 to Longford. Take the N5 as far as handsome Strokestown, where you should stop for an ample; Tulsk is 10km west along the same road.

## 5 Tulsk

Anyone with an interest in Celtic mythology will be enthralled by the area around the village of Tulsk in County Roscommon, which contains 60 ancient national monuments including standing stones, barrows, cairns and fortresses, making it the most important Celtic royal site in Europe.

The **Cruachan Aí Visitor Centre** ([www.rathcroghan.ie](http://www.rathcroghan.ie); adult/child €5/3; ☺9am-5pm Mon-Sat) has audiovisual displays and informative panels and maps that explain the significance of the sites.

According to the legend of Táin Bó Cúailnge (Cattle Raid of Cooley), Queen Maeve (Medbh) had her palace at Cruachan. The

Oweynagat Cave (Cave of the Cats), believed to be the entrance to the Celtic otherworld, is also nearby.

**The Drive** » As you drive the 75km south to Clonmacnoise along the N61, you'll have Lough Ree on your left for much of the drive. Many of the lake's 50-plus islands were once inhabited by monks and their ecclesiastical treasures. These days, it's mostly anglers, sailors and birdwatchers who frequent it.

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

## 6 Clonmacnoise

Ancient Ireland is sometimes referred to as the 'land of saints and scholars', and one of the reasons why was the monastic city of **Clonmacnoise** ([www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie); adult/child €6/2; ☺9am-7pm mid-May-mid-Sep, 10am-5.30pm mid-Sep-mid-May, last admission 45min before closing; ) , one of Europe's most important centres of study between the 7th and 12th centuries. It was a top university *before* Oxford was a glint in the scholar's eye.



### TOP TIP: THE CASHEL SHOT

Cashel looks good from pretty much every angle, but the most atmospheric photo is from the ruins of **Hore Abbey**, set in flat farmland less than 1km west of Cashel.



Founded in 548 by St Ciarán, the monastery (whose name in Irish is *Cluain Mhic Nóis*, which means 'Meadow of the Sons of Nóis') that became a bustling city is in remarkably good condition: enclosed within a walled field above a bend in the River Shannon are a superb collection of early



Brú na Bóinne Ancient burial mound at Newgrange

churches, high crosses, round towers and graves, including those of the high kings of Ireland.

 p99

**The Drive** » It's 107km along the N62 to Cashel; overnighing in handsome Birr (which has great accommodation and nightlife) is recommended (p99).

TRIP HIGHLIGHT

**7 Cashel**

Straddling a green hill above the town, the **Rock of Cashel** ([www.heritageireland.com](http://www.heritageireland.com); adult/child €6/2; ☀9am-6.15pm Jun-Sep, to 4.45pm Oct-May) is one of Ireland's most important archaeological sites and one of the most evocative of all

ancient monuments. An important Celtic power base since the 4th century, most of what you see today dates from when it was gifted to the Church in 1101. Over the next 400 years, various bishops ordered the construction of the 13th-century **cathedral**, a wonderfully complete **round tower**, the finest **Romanesque chapel** in



## A NIGHT IN BIRR

Feel-good Birr, County Offaly, is one of the most attractive towns in the Midlands, with elegant pastel Georgian buildings lining its streets, a magnificent old castle, an excellent choice of accommodation and spirited nightlife with great live music. Despite its appeal, Birr remains off the beaten track and you can enjoy its delights without jostling with the crowds. See p99 for one option of where to stay.

the country (1127) and the sturdy walls that surround it all. Although a collection of religious buildings, the rock was heavily fortified; the word 'cashel' is an Anglicisation of the Irish word *caiseal*, which means 'fortress'.

Scattered throughout are monuments, panels from 16th-century altar tombs and coats of arms. If you have binoculars, look for the numerous stone heads on capitals and corbels high above the ground.

 p99

**The Drive** » Tipperary and western Kilkenny are classic examples of good Irish farmland; as you wend your way east along the R692 and R690, you'll pass stud farms and cattle ranches. About 5km north of Cottrellstown, along the R697, is the 29m-high Kilreel round tower and, next to it, a 9th-century high cross. The drive to Jerpoint Abbey from Cashel is 65km.

## 8 Jerpoint Abbey


One of Ireland's finest Cistercian ruins, **Jerpoint Abbey** ( 056-24623; www.heritageireland.ie; Hwy R448; adult/child €3/1;  9am-5.30pm Mar-Oct, hours vary Nov-Feb) near Thomastown was established in the 12th century and has been partially restored. The tower and cloister are late 14th or early 15th century. The 45-minute tours are worth it, as the guides flesh out the abbey's fascinating history.

**The Drive** » As you come off the M9 and take the R756 east towards Laragh and Glendalough, you'll climb into the wildest parts of the Wicklow Mountains, eastern Ireland's most scenic spectacle. Just before you descend into Laragh you'll drive through the Wicklow Gap, between Mt Tonelagee (816m) to the north and Table Mountain (700m) to the southwest. Total distance to Glendalough: 117km.

## 9 Glendalough

Of all Ireland's monastic cities, none has the secluded beauty and isolated majesty of Glendalough, whose impressive ruins are more than rivalled by their setting: two dark glacial lakes at the foot of a forested valley that remain, despite the immense popularity of a visit, a profoundly peaceful and spiritual place.

In 498 the solitude-seeking St Kevin went to live in a Bronze Age tomb on the south side of the Upper Lake, but most of what you see dates from the 9th century onwards, when Kevin's settlement rivalled Clonmacnoise as one of Ireland's premier universities: huddled around the eastern end of the Lower Lake are Glendalough's most fascinating buildings, including a roofless cathedral, a couple of churches, a gatehouse and a round tower.




**The Glendalough Visitor Centre** ( 0404-45325; www.heritageireland.ie; adult/child & student €3/2;  9.30am-6pm mid-Mar-Oct, to 5pm Nov-mid-Mar) has a 17-minute audiovisual presentation called Ireland of the Monasteries.

# Eating & Sleeping

## Brú na Bóinne 1

### Newgrange Lodge

Inn €

(📞041-988 2478; [www.newgrangelodge.com](http://www.newgrangelodge.com); dm €19.50-21, d €70;   ) Just east of the Brú na Bóinne visitor centre, you'll find this converted farmhouse with a choice of cosy rooms varying from dorms with four to 10 beds, to hotel-standard rooms. All have private bathrooms. Rates include continental breakfast (with scones!).

## Clonmacnoise 6

### Kajon House

B&B €€

(📞090-967 4191; [www.kajonhouse.ie](http://www.kajonhouse.ie); Creevagh; d from €70; ☺ Mar-Oct; ) If you want to stay near the ruins, this is your best option, just 1.5km away on the road signposted to Tullamore. It's an incredibly friendly place with cosy rooms, a spacious yard with a picnic table and evening meals on offer.

## Birr

### Brendan House

B&B €€

(📞057-912 1818; [www.tinjugstudio.com](http://www.tinjugstudio.com); Brendan St; s/d €55/85) Gloriously eccentric and packed to the gills with knick-knacks, books, rugs, art and antiques, this Georgian town house is a bohemian delight. The three rooms share a bathroom, but the four-poster beds, period charm and artistic style of the

place more than make up for this. The owners also run an artists' studio and gallery, offer evening meals on request, and can arrange guided mountain walks, castle tours and holistic treatments.

## Cashel 7

### Cafe Hans

Cafe €€

(📞062-63660; Dominic St; mains €13-19; ☺ noon-5pm Tue-Sat; ) Competition for the 32 seats is fierce at this gourmet cafe run by the same family as Chez Hans next door. There's a fantastic selection of salads, open sandwiches (including succulent prawns with tangy Marie Rose sauce) and filling fish, shellfish, lamb and vegetarian dishes, with a discerning wine selection and mouth-watering desserts like homemade caramel ice cream with butterscotch sauce. Arrive before or after the lunchtime rush or plan on queuing.

### Cashel Palace Hotel

Hotel €€€

(📞062-62707; [www.cashel-palace.ie](http://www.cashel-palace.ie); Main St; s/d from €95/176;   ) Built in 1732 for a Protestant archbishop, this handsome red-brick, late-Queen Anne house is a local landmark. Fully restored, it has 23 antique-furnished rooms in the gracious main building or quaint mews. The **bar** (bar food €10-16; ☺ lunch & dinner) is the place to talk about your upcoming hunt before dining at the vault-ceilinged **Bishops Buttery Restaurant** (2-/3-course menus from €22/25; ☺ lunch & dinner).

*Clonmacnoise*  
*Marvellous monastic ruins*

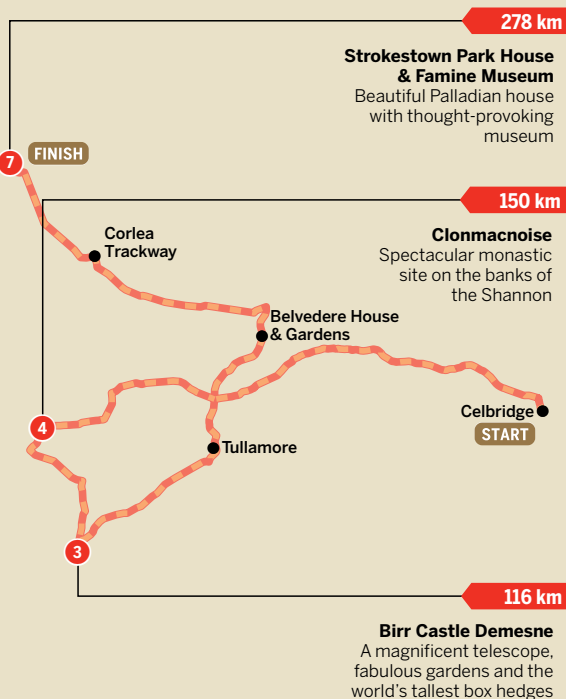


# Monasteries, Mountains & Mansions



*From mountains and monastic ruins to stately homes and historic whiskey distilleries, there's nothing fictional about this trip through middle Ireland.*

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS



**3 DAYS**  
**278KM / 172 MILES**

### GREAT FOR...



### BEST TIME TO GO

Late spring and early autumn are ideal: smaller crowds and good weather.

### ESSENTIAL PHOTO

Immortalise the gardens of Birr Castle Demesne.

### BEST FOR CULTURE

Explore Ireland's tormented history at Strokestown House & Famine Museum.



## 7

# Monasteries, Mountains & Mansions

This is a journey through Irish heritage: handsome towns like Birr and Strokestown may not attract star billing but are all the better for it, while better-known attractions like Clonmacnoise and Castletown House are outstanding examples of monastic splendour and Georgian extravagance, respectively. And did we mention whiskey? How about a visit to the home of the smoothest Irish whiskey of all?

## 1 Celbridge

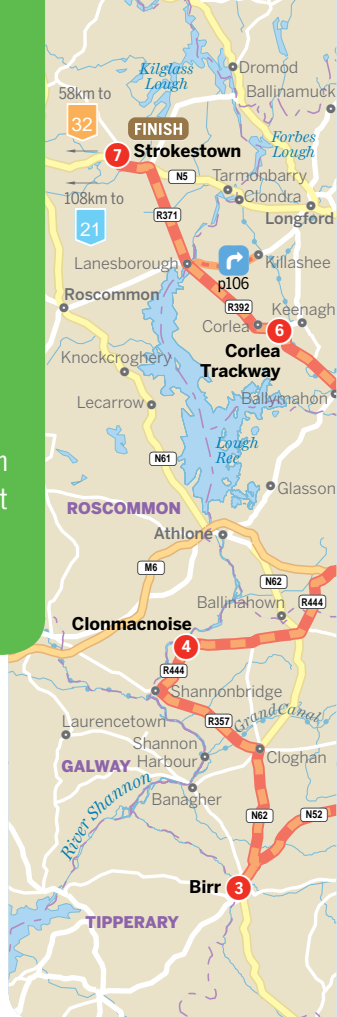
Celbridge, County Kildare, is now a satellite town serving Dublin, only 20km to the east, but in the 18th century it was known as the location for Ireland's most magnificent Georgian pile, **Castletown House** (☎01-628 8252; www.castletownhouse.ie; adult/child €4.50/3.50; ☀10am-4.45pm Tue-Sun Easter-Oct), which simply has no peer.

The house was built between the years 1722 and 1732 for William Conolly (1662-1729), speaker of the Irish House of Commons and, at the time, Ireland's richest man.

Inspired by the work of Andrea Palladio, Pearce enlarged the original design of the house and added the colonnades and the terminating pavilions. In the US, Thomas Jefferson became a Palladian acolyte and much of official Washington, DC is in this style.

A highlight of the opulent interior is the Long Gallery, replete with family portraits and exquisite stucco work by the Francini brothers.

**The Drive** » It's 74km to Tullamore from Celbridge, and most of the route is along the painless and featureless M4 and M6 motorways; at Junction 11 on the M4, be sure to take the left-hand fork onto the M6 towards Galway and Athlone. Exit the



M6 at Junction 5; Tullamore is a further 9km along the N52.

## 2 Tullamore

Offaly's county town is a bustling but workaday place with a pleasant setting on the Grand Canal. It's best known for Tullamore Dew Whiskey, which hasn't



been distilled in the town since 1954, when operations moved to Clonmel, County Tipperary.

But in 2012 it was announced that Tullamore Dew was coming home, when plans were drawn up for a new pot still whiskey and malt distillery for



## LINK YOUR TRIP

### 32 Northwest on Adrenalin

Explore the northwest's heart-racing activities with an easy 61km drive from Strokestown to Sligo.

### 21 Best of the West

At trip's end, head west to Westport and pick up this western extravaganza.

the outskirts of town, which should open in 2014. In the meantime, you can learn about the distilling process and the history of whiskey in the refurbished **Tullamore Dew Heritage Centre** ([www.tullamore-dew.org](http://www.tullamore-dew.org); Bury Quay; adult/child €6/3.50; ☀9am-6pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun May-Sep, 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun Oct-Apr), located in a 19th-century canalside warehouse. At the end of the tour you'll get to sample some produce and, inevitably, be encouraged to buy it for friends and family.

🔪 p107

**The Drive** » It's only 37km from Tullamore to Birr. As you drive the N52 south towards Birr, you'll skirt the northern edge of the Slieve Bloom Mountains, which rise suddenly from the great plain of middle Ireland.

### 3 Birr

The main reason to visit handsome Birr is to explore the attractions and gardens of **Birr Castle Demesne** ([www.birrcastle.com](http://www.birrcastle.com); adult/child €9/5; ☀9am-6pm mid-Mar-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-mid-Mar), built in 1620 by the Parsons family, who still own it to this day.

The Parsons were a remarkable family of pioneering Irish scientists, and their work is documented in the **historic science centre**. Exhibits include the massive telescope built by William Parsons in 1845, for 75 years the largest in the world. It was used to make innumerable discoveries, including the spiral galaxies, and to map the moon's surface. It is currently being restored.

Otherwise, the 50-hectare castle grounds are famous for their magnificent **gardens** set around a large artificial lake. They hold over 1000 species of plants from all over the world; something always seems to be in bloom. Look for one of the world's tallest box hedges, planted in the 1780s and now standing 12m high, and the romantic Hornbeam cloister.

🔪🏠 p107

**The Drive** » You'll see mostly fields of cows as you drive the 32km to Clonmacnoise along the N62; at Cloghan, turn left onto the slightly narrower and lonelier R357. You'll have the River Shannon on your left-hand-side when you turn onto the R444 for the last 5km past Shannonbridge, which has a good restaurant (p107).



## DETOUR: SLIEVE BLOOM MOUNTAINS

### Start: 2 Tullamore

Although not as spectacular as some Irish ranges, the Slieve Bloom Mountains' sudden rise from a great plain and the absence of visitors make them highly attractive. You'll get a real sense of being away from it all as you tread the deserted blanket bogs, moorland, pine forests and isolated valleys.

For leisurely walking, **Glenbarrow**, southwest of Rosenallis, has an interesting trail by the cascading River Barrow. Other spots to check out are **Glendine Park**, near the Glendine Gap, and the **Cut mountain pass**.

For something more challenging, you could try the **Slieve Bloom Way**, a 77km signposted trail that does a complete circuit of the mountains, taking in most major points of interest. The recommended starting point is the car park at Glenbarrow, 5km from Rosenallis, from where the trail follows tracks, forest firebreaks and old roads around the mountains. The trail's highest point is at Glendine Gap (460m).



Birr View of Birr Castle's grounds

TRIP HIGHLIGHT

**4 Clonmacnoise**

One of the most important monastic sites in Ireland, the marvellous monastic ruins of **Clonmacnoise** ([www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie); adult/child €6/2; ☀9am-7pm mid-May-mid-Sep, 10am-5.30pm mid-Sep-mid-May, last admission 45min before closing; **P**) are also one of the most popular tourist attractions in the country, so be prepared to share your visit with other awe-struck tourists and busloads of curious

schoolkids. For more details on the site, check out p96.

**The Drive** » About 20km north of Clonmacnoise you'll rejoin the M6 motorway; if you're feeling hungry, head left to Athlone, where there's a good restaurant (p107). At Junction 4, take the N52 north towards Mullingar; on your left, keep an eye out for Lough Ennell, whose claim to fame is having produced the country's largest-ever brown trout – a 11.5kg monster. The far side of the lake is home to Lilliput House, which was frequently used by Jonathan Swift and gave him the name he used in *Gulliver's Travels*. In total, the drive is 64km long.

**5 Belvedere House & Gardens**

About 5.5km south of Mullingar, overlooking Lough Ennell, is **Belvedere House** ([www.belvedere-house.ie](http://www.belvedere-house.ie); adult/child €8.75/4.75; ☀house 9.30am-8pm May-Aug, to 4.30pm Sep-Apr), an immense 18th-century hunting lodge set in 65 hectares of gardens. More than a few skeletons have come out of Belvedere's closets: the first earl, Lord Belfield, accused his wife and younger brother Arthur of adultery. She





## DETOUR: SHH... ONE OF IRELAND'S BEST TRADITIONAL PUBS

### Start: 6 Corlea Trackway

About 10km east of Lanesborough is the tiny hamlet of Killashee, which is home to **Magan's**, a delightful old bar, grocery and hardware store that seems stuck in aspic, completely oblivious to the pull and push of modern life. It's well off the beaten track, and is rarely frequented by anyone other than locals, which makes it an even better destination for a pint.

was placed under house arrest here for 30 years, and Arthur was jailed in London for the rest of his life. Meanwhile, the earl lived a life of decadence and debauchery. On his death, his wife emerged dressed in the fashion of three decades earlier, still protesting her innocence.

**The Drive** » Head north to Mullingar, where there are a couple of good hotels and restaurants (p107), then drive northwest to cross into County Longford, a quiet place of low hills and pastoral scenes. It has few tourist sights but is a haven for anglers who come for the superb fishing around Lough Ree and Lanesborough. From Belvedere House, the drive to Corlea along the R392 is about 41km.

### 6 Corlea Trackway

Longford's main attraction is the magnificent **Corlea Trackway** ([www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie); admission free; ☉10am-6pm mid-Apr-Sep), an Iron Age bog road near Keenagh that was built in 148 BC. An 18m stretch of the historic track has now been preserved in

a humidified hall at the visitor centre, where you can join a 45-minute tour that details the bog's unique flora and fauna, and fills you in on how the track was discovered and methods used to preserve it. Wear a windproof jacket as the bog land can be blowy.

**The Drive** » Strokestown is 27km northwest of Corlea along the R392 as far as Lanesborough, after which you'll cut through the green, lush countryside along the R371. After 10km, take a left onto the N5, which will take you right into Strokestown, 5km further on.

#### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 7 Strokestown

Roscommon's most handsome town is, for nonresidents, all about **Strokestown Park House & Famine Museum** ([www.strokestownpark.ie](http://www.strokestownpark.ie); house, museum & gardens €12, house or museum or gardens €8; ☉10.30am-5.30pm), the entrance to which is through the three Gothic arches at the end of Strokestown's main avenue.

Admission to this beautifully preserved Palladian house is by a 45-minute **guided tour**, taking in a galleried kitchen with state-of-the-art clockwork machinery, and a child's bedroom complete with 19th-century toys and fun-house mirrors.

In direct and deliberate contrast to the splendour of the house and its grounds is the harrowing **Strokestown Famine Museum**, which sheds light on the devastating 1840s potato blight. There's a huge amount of information to take in, but you'll emerge with an unblinking insight into the starvation of the poor, and the ignorance, callousness and cruelty of those who were in a position to help. Allow at least half a day to see the house, museum and gardens.

# Eating & Sleeping

## Tullamore 2

### **Sirocco's** Italian €€

(📞)057-935 2839; Patrick St; mains €12-25;

(🕒)lunch Thu, Fri & Sun, dinner Mon-Sat; (♿)

Serving a good selection of fresh pasta and pizza, as well as meat, chicken and fish dishes, this simple little Italian bistro is a local favourite. Booking is advised.

## Birr 3

### **Riverbank** Irish €€

(📞)057-912 1528; riverbankrest@msn.com;

Riverstown; mains €14.50-18.50; (🕒)closed

(Mon) This deep-red place set on the banks of the Little Brosna River is well worth the short trip from town for its superb but honest food and friendly atmosphere. There's always a good choice of fish and seafood as well as steaks, grills and traditional favourites on offer. Riverbank is 1.5km south of Birr on the N52.

### **Brendan House** B&B €€

(📞)057-912 1818; www.tinjugstudio.com;

Brendan St; s/d €55/85) Gloriously eccentric and packed to the gills with knick-knacks, books, rugs, art and antiques, this Georgian town house is a bohemian delight. The three rooms share a bathroom, but the four-poster beds, period charm and artistic style of the place more than make up for this. The owners also run an artists' studio and gallery, offer evening meals on request and can arrange guided mountain walks, castle tours and holistic treatments.

## Shannonbridge

### **Old Fort Restaurant** Irish €€€

(📞)090-967 4973; www.theoldfortrestaurant.com; mains €21.50-29.50; (🕒)5-9.30pm Wed-Sat,

12.30-2.30pm Sun) In Shannonbridge, about halfway between Birr and Clonmacnoise in County Offaly, is this impressive bridgehead, built as a defence against a possible Napoleonic invasion, and now serving exquisite posh nosh to a discerning local clientele.

## Athlone

### **Kin Khao** Thai €€

(📞)090-649 8805; www.kinkhaothai.ie; Abbey

Lane; mains €17-19; (🕒)12.30-2.30pm Wed-Fri,

5.30-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-10.30pm Sun) What

is possibly the best Thai restaurant in Ireland is tucked away near the Dean Crowe Theatre and is renowned for its extensive menu of authentic dishes. All the chefs and staff are Thai (with the exception of one half of the husband-and-wife team who run the place) and you'd be advised to book ahead if you want to join the band of loyal Kin Khao devotees.

## Mullingar

### **Ilia** Fusion €€

(📞)044-934 5947; www.ilia.ie; 37 Dominick St;

mains €16-27; (🕒)dinner Tue-Sun, lunch Sun) Be

sure to book in advance for one of Mullingar's most popular haunts. This cosy but clean-cut restaurant serves up a winning array of gourmet comfort food. Think slow roast pork belly, chicken with Puy lentils and roast peppers, or pumpkin and sage risotto, all cooked with attention and flair. You'll be back for more.

### **Annebrook House Hotel** Hotel €€

(📞)044-935 3300; www.annebrook.ie; Pearse

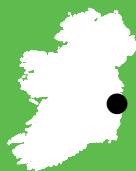
St; s/d from €55/100; (📶) Right in the town

centre, the hub of this modern hotel is a lovely 19th-century house with strong connections to local author Maria Edgeworth. Accommodation is in a new annexe, where modern rooms in neutral colours are extremely comfortable but lack soul.

*Glendalough Home of ancient ruins  
nestled in a forest-covered valley*



# Wicklow Mountains



# 8

*Eastern Ireland's most forbidding mountain range is as magnificent as it is desolate, with narrow roads cutting through the gorse- and bracken-covered hilltops.*

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

53 km

### Glendalough

A monastic gem cradled at the foot of a romantic glacial valley

Glenree

The Featherbed

1 START

0 km

### Powerscourt Estate

Georgian mansion, magnificent gardens and breathtaking views

Luggala Estate

Glenmacnass Valley

4

77 km

### Avondale House

Historic home of Charles Stewart Parnell

6 FINISH

3 DAYS

77KM / 47 MILES

GREAT FOR...



BEST TIME TO GO

From late August to September, the crowds thin out and the heather is in bloom.



ESSENTIAL PHOTO

Looking down on Lough Tay and Luggala from the Sally Gap.



BEST FOR CULTURE

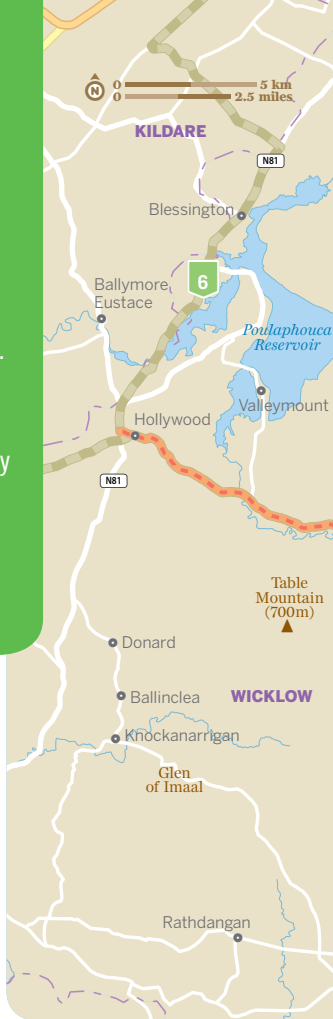
Glendalough: 1500 years of monastic history beautifully nestled in a glacial valley.



## 8

## Wicklow Mountains

This drive takes you down the spine of the Wicklow Mountains, whose dramatic scenery and weather-whipped bleakness make up for what they lack in height. Along the way you'll visit fine Palladian mansions and a beautiful monastic site nestled at the foot of a glacial valley – be prepared to pull over and gawp at the scenery that unfolds.



## TRIP HIGHLIGHT

## 1 Enniskerry

If you're coming from Dublin, Enniskerry is a handsome village at the top of the R117, aka the '21 Bends', but its pretty shops and cafes are merely a prelude to a visit to the superb 64-sq-km **Powerscourt Estate** (☎01-204 6000; www.powerscourt.ie; adult/child €8/5; ☀9.30am-5.30pm Feb-Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Jan), whose workers' domestic needs were the very reason Enniskerry was built in the first place.

Due to a fire, you can't visit the Palladian mansion save the ground floor cafe and outlet

of the popular Avoca handicrafts store, but it's the gardens that will have you in thrall. Laid out (mostly) in the 19th century, they are a magnificent blend of landscaped gardens, sweeping terraces, statuary, ornamental lakes, secret hollows, rambling walks and walled enclosures replete with more than 200 types of trees and shrubs, all beneath the stunning natural backdrop of the Great Sugarloaf Mountain to the southeast.

🍴🏠 p115

**The Drive** » The narrow, twisting L1011 cuts 11km through the northern edge of the mountains, with only a hint

of what's to come further on. As you approach Glencree you'll pass through mostly forest.

## 2 Glencree

Glencree is a leafy hamlet set into the side of the valley of the same name which opens east to give a magnificent view



down to Great Sugarloaf Mountain and the sea.

The valley floor is home to the Glenree Oak Project, an ambitious plan to reforest part of Glenree with the native oak vegetation that once covered most of the country, mostly broadleaf trees, but now only



## LINK YOUR TRIP

6

### Ancient Ireland

At Glendalough you can start this trip through Ireland's ancient heritage...in reverse.

3

### A Week Around Dublin

From Enniskerry, hook up with this trip exploring the best of Dublin's surrounds.



## DETOUR: LUGGALA

### Start: 2 **Glencree**

If you turn right (east) at the Sally Gap crossroads onto the R759, you'll be on the Sally Gap, one of the two main east–west passes across the Wicklow Mountains and a stretch of road surrounded by some spectacular countryside. About 5km on, the narrow road passes above the dark and dramatic Lough Tay, whose scree slopes slide into Luggala (Fancy Mountain). This almost fairy-tale estate is owned by one Garech de Brún, member of the Guinness family and founder of Claddagh Records, a leading producer of Irish traditional and folk music. You can't visit the estate itself, but there's a popular looped walk that circles it from a height. The small River Cloghoge links Lough Tay with Lough Dan just to the south. You can continue on the R759 for another 3km or so, turning right onto the R755 for Roundwood, or double-back onto the Old Military Rd and make your way south via Glenmacnass.

covers 1% of Ireland's land mass.

The village, such as it is, has a tiny shop and a hostel but no pub. There's a poignant **German cemetery** (Glencree Deutsche Kriegsgraberstatte) dedicated to 134 servicemen who died in Ireland during WWI and WWII. Just south of the village, the former military barracks are now a retreat house and reconciliation centre for people of different religions from the Republic and the North.

**The Drive** » At Glencree you'll join Wicklow's loveliest, loneliest road, the Old Military Rd (R115), which cuts through a desolate valley of gorse and brown bog and gets more desolate as you go south. At about 11km you'll reach the Sally Gap crossroads; turn right onto the R759 for the gap itself or continue for another 5km to the Glenmacnass Valley.

### 3 **Glenmacnass Valley**

Desolate and utterly deserted, the Glenmacnass Valley, a stretch of wild bogland between the Sally Gap crossroads and Laragh, is one of the most beautiful parts of the mountains, although the sense of isolation is quite dramatic.

The highest mountain to the west is Mt Mullaghcleevaun (848m), and the River Glenmacnass flows south and tumbles over the edge of the mountain plateau in a great foaming cascade. There's a car park near the top of the **Glenmacnass Waterfall**. Be careful when walking on rocks near the waterfall, as a few people have slipped to their deaths. There are fine walks up Mt

Mullaghcleevaun or in the hills to the east of the car park.

**The Drive** » Beyond the Glenmacnass Valley, the Old Military Rd descends for 13km into Laragh, a busy crossroads village that serves as a supply point for nearby Glendalough. It's a good spot to stop and eat or buy provisions. Glendalough is 3km west of here.

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 4 **Glendalough**

Wicklow's most visited attraction and one of the country's most important historic sites is the collection of ruined churches, buildings, shelters and round tower that make up the ancient monastic city of Glendalough, founded in 498 by St Kevin, who came to the (then) desolate valley looking for a spot of contemplative tranquility. The ruins



Luggala Walkers on track to Lough Dan

are certainly evocative, but it's their setting that makes them special: two dark and mysterious lakes tucked into a deep valley covered in forest.

You could spend a day exploring the ruins

and taking in the local scenery, but whatever you do, your exploration should start with a visit to the **Glendalough Visitor Centre** (☎0404-45325; www.heritageireland.ie; adult/child & student

€3/2; 🕒9.30am-6pm mid-Mar-Oct, to 5pm Nov-mid-Mar), which has a high-quality 17-minute audiovisual presentation called *Ireland of the Monasteries*.

🗺️ 📖 p115

## WALKS IN WICKLOW

### Glendalough Valley Walks

The Glendalough Valley is all about walking and clambering. There are nine marked ways in the valley, the longest of which is about 10km, or about four hours' walking. Before you set off, drop by the **National Park Information Point** (☎0404-45425; 🕒10am-6pm daily May-Sep, to dusk Sat & Sun Oct-Apr) and pick up the relevant leaflet and trail map (all around €0.50). A word of warning: don't be fooled by the relative gentleness of the surrounding countryside or the fact that the Wicklow Mountains are really no taller than big hills. The weather can be merciless here, so be sure to take the usual precautions, have the right equipment and tell someone where you're going and when you should be back. For Mountain Rescue call ☎999.

### The Featherbed

One of the best known sections of the Old Military Rd is known as the Featherbed, which is in the shadow of Kippure Mountain (752m; easily recognised due to its TV transmitter) and two glacial lakes, Upper and Lower Lough Bray. You can park your car in a siding by Upper Lough Bray and take a looped 3km walk that skirts the two lakes via a boggy path – you'll need decent boots, waterproofs and a stick.





## DETOUR: THE WICKLOW GAP

### Start: 4 Glendalough

Between Mt Tonelagee (816m) to the north and Table Mountain (700m) to the southwest, the Wicklow Gap (R756) is the second major pass over the mountains. The eastern end of the road begins just to the north of Glendalough and climbs through some lovely scenery northwestwards up along the Glendassan Valley. It passes the remains of some old lead and zinc workings before meeting a side road that leads south and up Turlough Hill, the location of Ireland's only pumped-storage power station. You can walk up the hill for a look over the Upper Lake. The western end of the gap meets the N81, from which it's only a few kilometres north to Blessington and Russborough House (see p72).

**The Drive** » As you go deeper into the mountains southwest of Glendalough along the R755, near the southern end of the Military Rd, everything gets a bit wilder and more remote. It's an 11km drive to Glenmalure.

**The Drive** » The tiny rural road to Rathdrum is called Riverside; it takes you down out of the mountains through some lush forest for 12km into Rathdrum for Avondale House.

#### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 5 Glenmalure

Beneath the western slopes of Wicklow's highest peak, Lugnaquilla (924m), is Glenmalure, a dark and sombre blind valley flanked by scree slopes of loose boulders. After coming over the mountains into Glenmalure, you turn northwest at the Drumgoff bridge. From there it's about 6km up the road beside the River Avonbeg to a car park where trails lead off in various directions.

 p115

### 6 Avondale House

The quiet village of Rathdrum at the foot of the Vale of Clara comprises little more than a few old houses and shops, but it's not what's in the town that's of interest to visitors, however, but what's just outside it.

#### Avondale House

(☎0404-46111; adult/student & child €7/6.50; ☀11am-6pm May-Aug, Sat & Sun only Apr, by appointment only rest of year) is a fine Palladian mansion surrounded by a marvellous 209-hectare estate, which was the birthplace and Irish

home of the 'uncrowned king of Ireland', Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91), the champion of the struggle for Home Rule and one of the key figures of the Irish independence movement. Designed by James Wyatt in 1779, the house's many highlights include a stunning vermilion-hued library and beautiful dining room.

Surrounding the house, running through the 200 hectares of forest and parkland (all managed by the Irish Forestry Service, Coillte), are many walking trails. You can visit the park during daylight hours year-round.

# Eating & Sleeping

## Enniskerry 1

### Emilia's Ristorante Italian €€

(📞)01-276 1834; Clock Tower, The Square; mains €12-16; 🕒5-10.45pm Mon-Sat, noon-9.30pm Sun) A lovely 1st-floor restaurant to satisfy even the most ardent craving for thin-crust pizzas. Emilia's does everything else just right too, from the organic soups to the perfect steaks down to the gorgeous meringue desserts.

### Coolakay House B&B €€

(📞)01-286 2423; www.coolakayhouse.com; Waterfall Rd, Coolakay; r €75; 📞📶) A modern working farm about 3km south of Enniskerry (it is signposted along the road), this is a great option for walkers along the Wicklow Way. The four bedrooms are all very comfortable and have terrific views, but the real draw is the restaurant (mains around €11), which does a roaring trade in snacks and full meals.

## Glendalough 4

### Wicklow Heather Restaurant International €€

(📞)0404-45157; www.thewicklowheather.com; Main St, Laragh; mains €16-26; 🕒noon-8.30pm) This is the best place for anything substantial. The menu offers Wicklow lamb, wild venison, Irish beef and fresh fish (the trout is excellent) – most of it sourced locally and all of it traceable from farm to fork.

### Glendalough Hotel Hotel €€€

(📞)0404-45135; www.glendaloughhotel.com; s/d €110/150; 📞@📶🚿) There's no mistaking Glendalough's best hotel, conveniently located next door to the visitor centre. There is no shortage of takers for its 44 fairly luxurious bedrooms.

## Glenmalure 5

### Glenmalure Hostel Hostel €

(📞)01-830 4555; www.anoige.ie; Greenane; dm €15; 🕒Jun-Aug, Sat only Sep-May) No telephone, no electricity (lighting is by gas), just a rustic two-storey cottage with 19 beds and running water. This place has a couple of heavyweight literary links: it was once owned by WB Yeats' femme fatale, Maud Gonne, and was also the setting for JM Synge's play, *Shadow of a Gunman*. It's isolated, but is beautifully situated beneath Lugnaquilla.

### Glenmalure Log Cabin Self-Catering €€

(📞)01-269 6979; www.glenmalure.com; 11 Glenmalure Pines, Greenane; 2 nights €200-290, 3 nights €350-550; 📞🚿) In the heart of Glenmalure, this modern, Scandinavian-style lodge has two rooms with private bathrooms, a fully equipped kitchen and a living room kitted out with all kinds of electronic amusements, including your very own DVD library. Hopefully though, you'll spend much of your time here enjoying the panorama from the sun deck. There's a two-night minimum stay, except for July and August when it's seven days.

*County Carlow Wind through the picturesque villages of Ireland's second-smallest county*



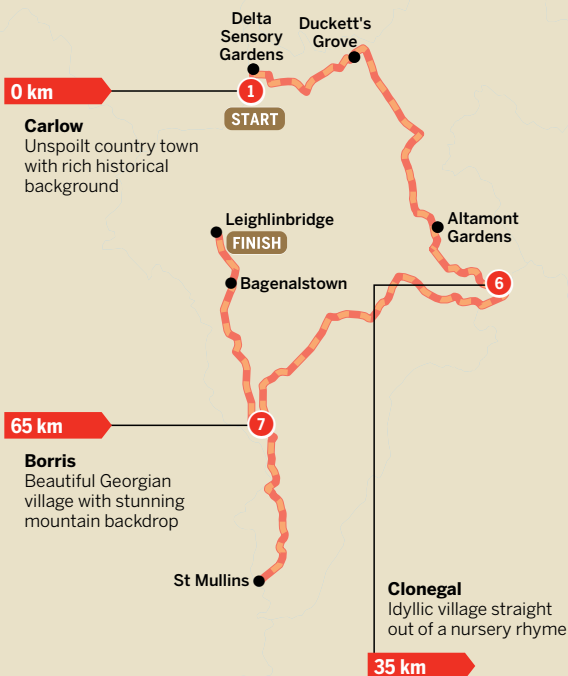


9

# Carlow Back Roads

*A jaunt through Ireland undisturbed by mass tourism, this trip reveals one of the country's most delightful, unexplored counties.*

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS



**3 DAYS**  
118KM / 73 MILES

### GREAT FOR...



### BEST TIME TO GO

Carlow's flower festivals take place throughout July and September.



### ESSENTIAL PHOTO

Immortalise the Black Castle from the banks of the Barrow.



### BEST FOR GARDENS

The Altamont Gardens are the most spectacular of Carlow's beautiful gardens.



## 9

# Carlow Back Roads

Strings of quietly picturesque villages wind through Carlow, Ireland's second-smallest county. The scenic Blackstairs Mountains dominate the southeast, while the region's most dramatic chunk of history is Europe's biggest dolmen, just outside quiet Carlow town. A ruined Gothic mansion and a reputedly haunted castle form the backdrop to two of the county's best flower-filled gardens.

## TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 1 Carlow Town

Carlow town's narrow streets and lanes are quiet these days, a far cry from 25 May 1789, when several hundred Irish insurgents were ambushed and executed by British troops during a ferocious battle in the middle of town. The dead were buried in gravel pits on the far side of the River Barrow, at Graiguecullen.

Built by William de Marshall on the site of an earlier Norman motte-and-bailey fort, the 13-century **castle** (Castle Hill) survived Cromwell's attentions but was later

converted into a lunatic asylum. The evocative portion that survives is a part of the keep flanked by two towers.

Other notable sights include the 19th-century **Cathedral of the Assumption** (College St) and the **Carlow County Museum** ([www.carlowcountymuseum.com](http://www.carlowcountymuseum.com); cnr College & Tullow Sts).

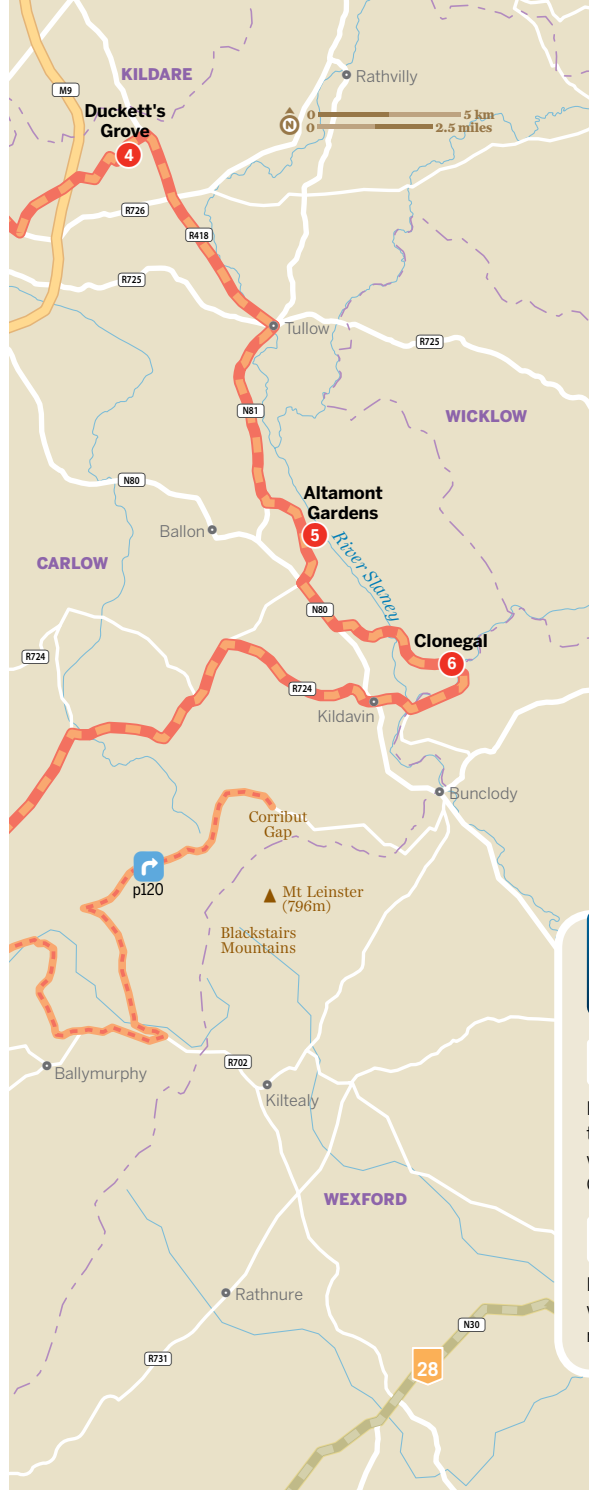
 p123

**The Drive** » Take the Athy road (R417) north for about 1.5km; the Delta Sensory Gardens are on your left.

### 2 Delta Sensory Gardens

Located in an incongruous industrial





estate on the northern edge of Carlow town are these remarkable **gardens** ([www.deltasensorygardens.com](http://www.deltasensorygardens.com); Strawhall Estate, Cannery Rd; adult/child €5/5/free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, from 11am Sat & Sun). **Some 16** interconnecting, themed gardens cover 1 hectare and span the five senses – from a sculpture garden to a formal rose garden, water and woodland garden, willow garden and a musical garden with mechanical fountains. Admission proceeds benefit the adjoining Delta Centre, which provides services and respite for adults with learning disabilities.

**The Drive** » Take the R726 and drive for 3km heading east from Carlow town. You'll have to park the car and walk 300m to the field.



**LINK  
YOUR  
TRIP**

**10** **Kilkenny's Treasures**

From Borris, it's only 10km to Graiguenamanagh, from where you can explore County Kilkenny.

**28** **Tip to Toe**

Travel 14km from St Mullins south to New Ross, where you can join the north-to-south classic trip.

### 3 Browne's Hill Dolmen

Ireland's largest portal dolmen (tomb chamber) sits in a field and, from the road, doesn't look that impressive. But as you get closer you'll begin to appreciate the enormity of this 5000-year-old monster. The entrance to the chamber is flanked by two large upright stones (known as orthostats or megaliths) topped by a granite capstone that alone weighs well over 100 tonnes.

It's unclear how the stones got here in the first place, but experts have narrowed it down to two possibilities: they were deposited here during the ice age, or Stone Age men ate a hell of a lot of spinach and figured out a way of carrying them to the field.

## ARTISANAL GLASS

About 3km east of Kells, in the neighbouring county of Kilkenny, is the small village of Stonyford. The local highlight, the nationally renowned **Jerpoint Glass Studio** ([www.jerpointglass.com](http://www.jerpointglass.com); ☺shop 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun), is housed in a rural stone-walled farm building 1km south of town, where you can watch workers craft molten glass into exquisite artistic and practical items.

**The Drive** » Turn left onto Strawhall Ave (N80) and take the first exit at the Hacketstown Rd roundabout onto the R726. After 2km, take a left at the signpost for Duckett's Grove; the house is 5km on, past the underpass for the M9 motorway.

of an estate that once spread across five counties.

The house dates from the late 17th-century, was transformed into a Gothic mansion in 1830 and was used as a training camp for the Irish Republican Army during the War of Independence. The ruins are still impressive, and surrounding them are the original high brick garden walls that frame two sprawling, interconnected formal gardens.

### 4 Duckett's Grove

Until the main building burnt in 1933, the Gothic fantasy that was **Duckett's Grove** ([www.duckettsgrove.eu](http://www.duckettsgrove.eu); admission free; ☺10am-5.30pm Apr-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar) was Carlow's most impressive building, the centrepiece



## DETOUR: MT LEINSTER SCENIC DRIVE

### Start: 7 Borris

The highest peak in the Blackstairs Mountains, Mt Leinster (796m) has magnificent views of counties Waterford, Carlow, Kilkenny and Wicklow from the top.

From Borris, drive south along the R702 and almost immediately take the signposted left for Mt Leinster. Keep going and take the left for Bunclody at the T-junction. Continue around, keeping the mountain on your right; you'll arrive at the car park at Corribut Gap. The ground falls away steeply, offering stunning views of the Coolasnaghta valley to the north.

This is also the spot favoured by those taking advantage of Ireland's best hang-gliding spot – if you fancy taking off from the mountain, contact the **Irish Hang Gliding & Paragliding Association** ([www.ihpa.ie](http://www.ihpa.ie)) for further information.

**The Drive** » Start the 18km drive by heading southwest on the R418 to Tullow before continuing south along the N81. After 6km, take a right for the Altamont Estate.

RICHARD CUMMINS/GETTY IMAGES ©

## 5 Altamont Gardens

Generally considered to be the jewel in the Irish gardening crown, the 16-hectare **Altamont Estate** ([www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie); near Ballon; admission free; ☀10am-7pm summer, to 5pm other times, Mon-Fri only Dec) is made up of informal and formal gardens, including a walled garden with carefully selected plantings arranged in naturalistic, idealised settings.

The estate's main avenue is lined with trees, including imported species like red oak and swamp cypresses, and it leads down to an artificial lake.

**The Drive** » Take the N80 south for 2km and then the signposted left for Clonegal; the right turn takes you to Ballon, where there are a couple of good restaurants and hotels (p123).

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

## 6 Clonegal

The idyllic village of Clonegal has a tiny little centre out of a nursery rhyme with an arched stone bridge over a river that boasts swans and water flowers.

### Huntington Castle

([www.huntingtoncastle.com](http://www.huntingtoncastle.com); castle & gardens tour adult/



St Mullins Boats on the River Barrow, Graiguenamanagh

child €8/5, gardens only €5/3; ☀house 2-6pm Jun-Aug, by appointment rest of year, gardens 10am-6pm May-Sep) is a spooky, dusty old keep built in 1625 by the Durdin-Robertson family, who still own it and live here today. The family conduct hour-long tours of the property, which, they claim, is haunted by two ghosts. The gardens combine the formal with rural fantasy.

**The Drive** » The R724 cuts across southern County Carlow; Borris is 29km away.

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

## 7 Borris

Handsome Borris is a seemingly untouched Georgian village, strung out like a string bean down the side of a hill, with a dramatic mountain backdrop. That's Mt Leinster, site of an excellent scenic drive.

🏠 p123

**The Drive** » It's 15km from Borris to St Mullins, mostly along the R729 with the Blackstairs Mountains to your left (east).

## 8 St Mullins

Tranquil little St Mullins sits 6km downstream from Graiguenamanagh, which is in County Kilkenny. The village is the maternal home of Michael Flatley of Riverdance fame. Sure enough, the river snakes through here in the shadow of Brandon Hill, as does the River Barrow towpath from Borris. From the river, a trail winds uphill to the ruined hulk of an old **monastery** surrounded by the graves of 1798 rebels. A 9th-century Celtic cross, badly worn down over the centuries, still stands beside the monastery. Nearby, **St Moling's Well**



is a holy well that seems to attract spare change.

 p123

**The Drive** » It's 27km from St Mullins to Bagenalstown via Borris. The 12km stretch of the R705 from Borris to Bagenalstown follows the scenic River Barrow Valley, one of the nicest bits of road in all of Carlow.

## 9 Bagenalstown

About 12km north of Borris is Bagenalstown, which isn't quite as handsome but is home to the **Carlow Brewing Company** ( 059-913 4356; www.carlowbrewing.com; Royal Oak Rd, Bagenalstown; tours by reservation €11) is a microbrewery that offers tours of its O'Hara's-brand beers. Its award-winning Irish stout bursts with flavour and certainly holds its own against that *other* Irish stout.

**The Drive** » Leighlinbridge is 4km on along the R705.



## DETOUR: KILGRANEY HOUSE HERB GARDENS

**Start:** 8 St Mullins

There are herbs as you've never seen them grow in orderly profusion in **Kilgraney House Herb Gardens** (www.kilgraneyhouse.com; Bagenalstown; admission €5; 🕒 2-5pm Thu-Sun May-Sep), which boasts a heady cocktail of medicinal and kitchen plants and also serves as a source of food for the inn and restaurant here. The re-created medieval monastic herb garden is a favourite. It's off the R705 halfway between Borris and Bagenalstown.

## 10 Leighlinbridge

Leighlinbridge would be just another Carlow town if it weren't for the ominous ruins of the **Black Castle** (admission free) on the banks of Barrow. Built in 1181, this was one of the first Norman castles built in Ireland and was bequeathed to John de Claville by Henry II's lieutenant, Hugh de

Lacy. The present castle was built by Sir Edward Bellingham in 1547 but was demolished by Cromwell's army in 1650. There's only half of a 14th-century round tower and a chunk of the bawn (defensive wall) left, but it is one of the most photogenic ruins in the whole county. You can access it from the river towpath.

## CARLOW IN BLOOM

County Carlow is renowned for its gardens, 16 of which form part of Ireland's first dedicated **garden trail** (www.carlowgardentrail.com). Most tourist offices will have a copy of the invaluable (and free) guide *Carlow Garden Trail*. Flower fans shouldn't miss County Carlow's summertime Garden Festival.

Our top five gardens:

- » **Delta Sensory Gardens** A multisensory, fountain-filled oasis.
- » **Huntington Castle and Gardens** Rambling, overgrown grounds in the shadow of a haunted castle.
- » **Duckett's Grove** Restored walled gardens behind a ruined Gothic mansion.
- » **Kilgraney House Herb Gardens** Aromatic gardens filled with medicinal and kitchen plants.
- » **Altamont Gardens** Heritage-listed Victorian splendour, hosting a weeklong Snowdrop Festival in February.

# Eating & Sleeping

## Carlow Town 1

### Lennons Modern Irish €€

(www.lennons.ie; off College St; mains €8-18; ☺ lunch daily, dinner Thu-Sat) Carlow's best dining is found amid the artsy surrounds of the Visual Centre for Contemporary Arts. It's a sleek and appropriately stylish space, with a wide patio outside where you can see sculpture on the centre's grassy grounds. Lunch features creative sandwiches, salads and hot specials. Dinner is more refined with a seasonal menu that emphasises the organic.

### Red Setter Guest House B&B €€


(☎059-914 1848; www.redsetterguesthouse.ie; 14 Dublin St; s/d from €40/70;  ) Great attention to detail and extra touches like gorgeous bouquets of fresh flowers make this otherwise humble B&B the winning in-town choice. Breakfasts are grand and the owners can't do enough to be helpful.

## Ballon 5

### Forge Restaurant Irish €€

(Kilbride Cross; dishes €5-11; ☺9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun) Mary Jordan cooks up steaming soups and hot lunches, as well as baked goods to take away, at this hugely popular roadside inn near Altamont Gardens. Local produce is used, and there's often a wait for a table at weekends. A shop sells local art and crafts.

### Sherwood Park House Inn €€

(☎059-915 9117; www.sherwoodparkhouse.ie; Kilbride; s/d from €60/100; ) Inside a greystone Georgian manor dating from 1730, the five rooms here are huge and boast such period niceties as satin- and velvet-adorned four-poster beds. You can make arrangements for dinner (€40 per person; BYO wine).

## Borris 7

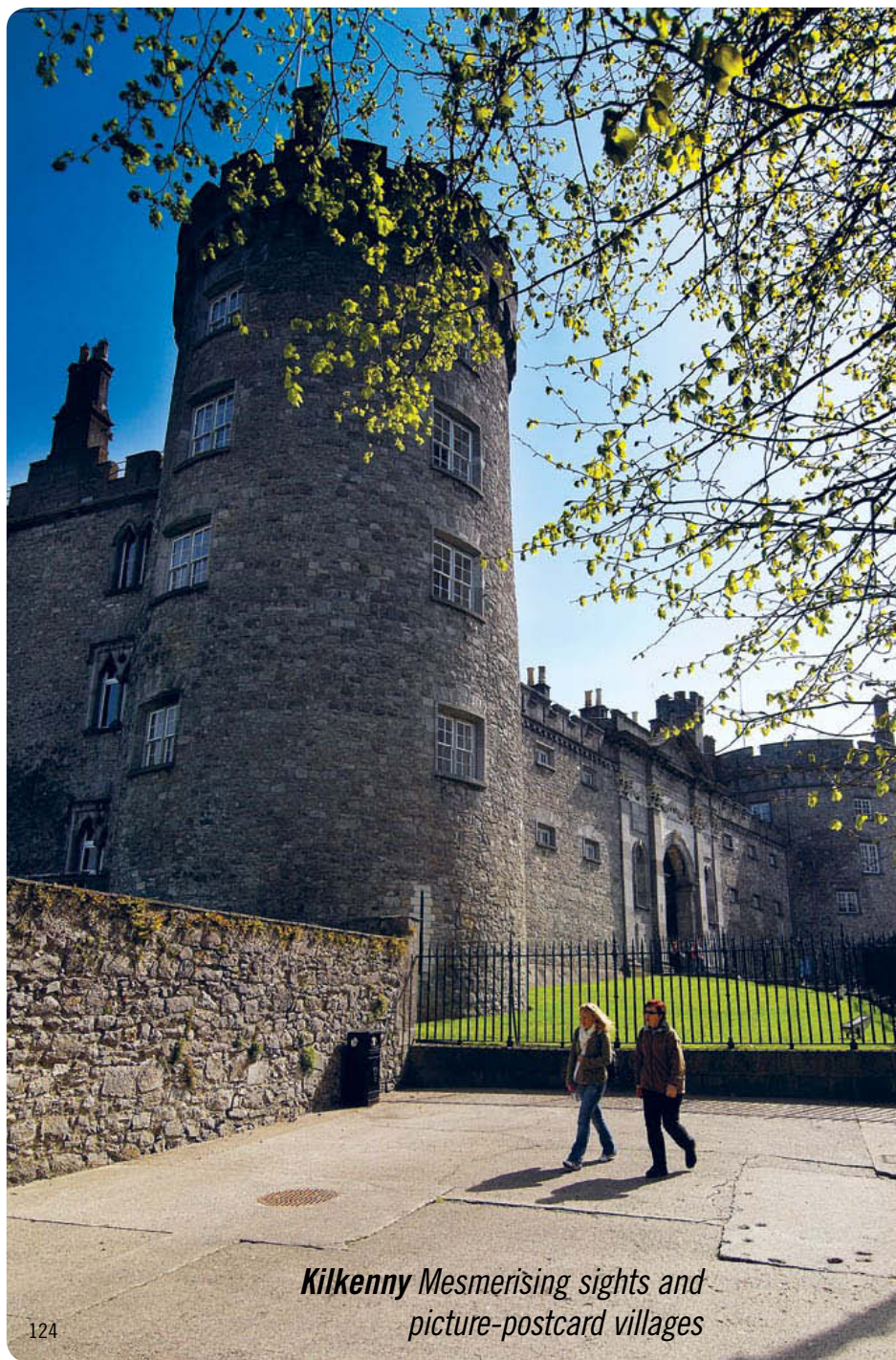
### Step House Hotel Hotel €€

(☎059-977 3209; www.stephousehotel.ie; 66 Main St; s/d from €65/130;  ) At the top end of town, this Georgian home has undergone a stunning makeover in elegant shades of pistachio. Its 23 rooms boast balconies and have a clever opulence. Views are framed by Mt Leinster. Tables in the Cellar Restaurant are tucked in romantic corners beneath vaulted ceilings.

## St Mullins 8

### Old Grain Store Cottage €€

(☎051-424 4440; www.oldgrainstorecottages.ie; per week €300-480) Three self-catering cottages sleeping two to four people are set in the coach house, the forge and the stables. The cottages' interiors are stylish yet homey, with shelves of books and wood-burning stoves. A fabulous cafe here serves fresh meals (open 11am to 6pm Tuesday to Sunday in summer, hours vary at other times).



*Kilkenny Mesmerising sights and  
picture-postcard villages*

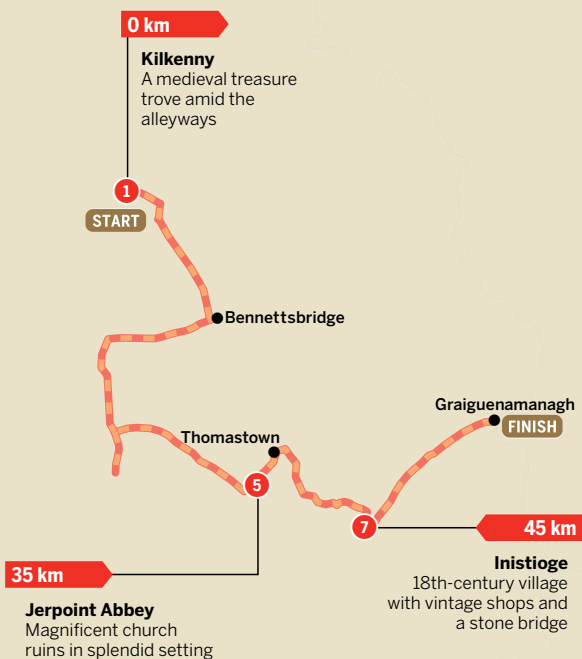
# Kilkenny's Treasures



# 10

*Its namesake city is its marvellous centrepiece, but County Kilkenny's rolling hills, dotted with relics of Irish history, will soon have you running out of adjectives for green.*

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS



**3 DAYS**  
**58KM / 36 MILES**

### GREAT FOR...



### BEST TIME TO GO

Spring and autumn are ideal: the weather's good but there are fewer visitors.



### ESSENTIAL PHOTO

Kells Priory at dusk.



### BEST FOR TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

The exquisitely made artisanal crafts at the Nicholas Mosse Irish Country Shop.

## 10

## Kilkenny's Treasures

The enduring gift of the Normans, Kilkenny mesmerises visitors with its medieval alleys and castle, ruined abbeys and outstanding modern-day nightlife. Beyond the city limits, tiny roads navigate the beautiful valleys past the mementos of 800 years of Irish history, picture-postcard villages and a dynamic contemporary craft industry whose reputation is admired countrywide.

## TRIP HIGHLIGHT

## 1 Kilkenny

Kilkenny (Cill Chainigh) is the Ireland of many visitors' imaginations. Its majestic riverside castle, tangle of 17th-century passageways, rows of colourful, old-fashioned shopfronts and centuries-old pubs with traditional live music all have a timeless appeal, as does its splendid medieval cathedral.

Kilkenny's architectural charm owes a huge debt to the Middle







## DETOUR: DUNMORE CAVE

### Start: ① Kilkenny

Just 6km north of Kilkenny on the Castlecomer road (N78) are the striking calcite formations of **Dunmore Cave** (📞056-776 7726; www.heritageireland.ie; Ballyfoyle; adult/child €3/1; 🕒9.30am-6.30pm Jun-Sep, to 5pm Mar-May & Sep-Oct, to 5pm Wed-Sun Nov-Mar). In 928 marauding Vikings killed 1000 people at two ring forts near here. When survivors hid in the caverns, the Vikings tried to smoke them out by lighting fires at the entrance. It's thought that they then dragged off the men as slaves and left the women and children to suffocate. Excavations in 1973 uncovered the skeletons of at least 44 people, mostly women and children. They also found coins dating from the 10th century.

Admission to the cave is via a compulsory but highly worthwhile guided tour. Although well lit and spacious, it's damp and cold; bring warm clothes.

Ages, when the city was a seat of political power. It's also sometimes called the 'marble city' because of the local black limestone, used on floors and in decorative trim all over town.

You can cover pretty much everything on foot in half a day (see

our walking tour, p132), but sampling its many delights will take much longer.

### 📍 p131

**The Drive** » Drive southwest with the castle and the Nore on your immediate left until you reach the R700, aka the Bennettsbridge Rd. It's only a short 7km drive to Bennettsbridge.

It also sells linens and other handmade craft items (although some hail from lands of cheap labour far from Ireland). Its cafe is the best choice locally for lunch, with a creative line-up of soups, sandwiches, hot dishes and its renowned scones.

On a small road above **Nicholas Mosse**, the **Nore View Folk Museum**

(📞056-27749; Danesfort Rd; adult/child €5/2; 🕒10am-6pm) is the labour of love of Seamus Lawlor, a passionate chronicler of Irish life. The museum is full of fascinating facts about his private collection of local items, including farming tools, kitchen utensils and other wonderful old bric-a-brac. Opening hours vary.

**The Drive** » The 12km drive to Kells takes you across the flat, luscious green plain of central Kilkenny. Follow the Annamult Rd towards the N10, but turn left onto the R697.



## LINK YOUR TRIP



### Ancient Ireland

From Kilree or Jerpoint Abbey you can connect to this trip that visits some of ancient Ireland's most important sites.



### Tip to Toe

Kilkenny is one of the main stops on the classic Tip to Toe trip, which explores Ireland from north to south.

### ② Bennettsbridge

Bennettsbridge is an arts-and-crafts treasure chest, although these treasures are scattered throughout the town, rather than within a concentrated area.

In a big mill by the river west of town, the **Nicholas Mosse Irish Country Shop** (www.nicholasmosse.com; 🕒10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-5pm Sun) specialises in handmade spongeware – creamy-brown pottery decorated with sponged patterns.

### 3 Kells

Kells (not to be confused with Kells in County Meath) is a mere hamlet with a fine stone bridge on a tributary of the Nore. However, in **Kells Priory**, the village has one of Ireland's most impressive and romantic monastic sites. This is the best sort of ruin, where visitors can amble about whenever they like, with no tour guides, tours, set hours or fees. At dusk on a vaguely sunny day, the old priory is simply beautiful. Most days you stand a chance of exploring the site alone (apart from bleating and pooping sheep).

The ruins are 500m east of Kells on the Stonyford road.

**The Drive** » Kilree is only 3km south of Kells along a small country road.

### 4 Kilree Round Tower & High Cross

Standing in an overgrown graveyard is a 29m-high round tower that has lost its cap. It was built sometime between the 8th and 11th centuries, and served as a bell tower, although it was also a handy place of refuge for locals looking to escape the unwelcome attention of invaders.

Next to it, standing more than 2m tall, is a simple early high cross



RICHARD CUMMINGS/GETTY IMAGES ©

that was long believed to be the grave of a 9th-century Irish high king, Niall Caille, who drowned in the nearby river in 847 while attempting the rescue of a servant or soldier, even though experts now reckon the cross is older than that. Still, Niall's resting place lies beyond the church grounds because he wasn't a Christian.

**The Drive** » The 17km drive will have you doubling back towards Kells, but then taking a right on the Stonyford road, past Kells Priory. You'll pass Mt Juliet on your left. Turn left on the R448, and Jerpoint Abbey is a further 1km on your right.

#### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 5 Jerpoint Abbey

Ireland has an abundance of church ruins, but few are quite as magnificent as those of **Jerpoint Abbey** (☎056-24623; www.heritageireland.ie; adult/child €3/1; 🕒9am-5.30pm Mar-Oct, check hours Nov-Feb), a fine exemplar of Cistercian power and church-building. The abbey was first established in the 12th century, with the tower and cloister added sometime in the late 14th or early 15th century. The excellent 45-minute tours happen throughout the day. Set



Kilkenny Flowers in bloom on a Kilkenny street

yourself apart in the remains of the cloisters and see if you can hear the faint echo of a chant.

According to local legend, St Nicholas (or Santa Claus) is buried near the abbey. While retreating in the Crusades, the knights of Jerpoint removed his body from Myra in modern-day Turkey and reburied him in the **Church of St Nicholas** to the west of the abbey. The grave is marked by a broken slab decorated with a carving of a monk.

**The Drive** » Thomastown is only a quick 2.5km northeast of Jerpoint on the R448.

## 6 Thomastown

Named after Welsh mercenary Thomas de Cantwell, Thomastown has some fragments of a medieval wall and the partly ruined 13th-century **Church of**

**St Mary**. Down by the bridge, **Mullin's Castle** is the sole survivor of the 14 castles once here.

Like the rest of Kilkenny, the area has a vibrant craft scene. Look out for **Clay Creations** (Low St; ☎10am-5pm

## TEEING OFF IN THOMASTOWN

Just 4km west of Thomastown, high-fliers tee off at the Jack Nicklaus–blessed **Mount Juliet** ([www.mountjuliet.ie](http://www.mountjuliet.ie); green fees from €100). Set over 600 wooded hectares, it also has its own equestrian centre, a gym and spa, two restaurants, wine master-classes, and posh rooms catering to every whim, right down to the pillow menu (accommodation from €120).

## TOWN OF BOOKS

Graigenamanagh's narrow streets spill over in mid-September with booksellers, authors and bibliophiles during the three-day **Town of Books Festival** ([www.booktownireland.com](http://www.booktownireland.com)). Plans are under way for Graigenamanagh to become a year-round 'book town' in the same vein as Wales' Hay-on-Wye. Meanwhile, there are a couple of good used and antiquarian bookshops.

Wed-Sat), displaying the quixotic ceramics and sculptures of local artist Brid Lyons.



**The Drive** » The 9km drive south to Inistioge along the R700 is a splendidly scenic one through the valley of the River Nore; keep an eye out for the views of the ruined 13th-century Grennan Castle on your right as you go.

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

#### 7 Inistioge

The little village of Inistioge (*in-ish-teeeg*) is a picture. Its 18th-century, 10-arch **stone bridge** spans the River Nore and vintage shops face its tranquil square.

About 500m south of the village is the heavily forested **Woodstock Gardens** ([www.woodstock.ie](http://www.woodstock.ie); ☀9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Oct-Mar), a beauty of

a park with expansive 19th-century gardens, picnic areas and trails. The panorama of the valley and village below is spectacular. Coming from town, follow the signs for Woodstock Estate and enter the large gates (despite appearances, it's a public road), then continue along the road for about 1km until you reach the car park (parking €4 in coins).



**The Drive** » It's 11km from Inistioge to Graigenamanagh on the Graigue road, aka the L4209, so narrow that you'll wonder if there's room for oncoming traffic (there is).

#### 8 Graigenamanagh

Graigenamanagh (*greg-na-muh-na*; known locally simply as Graigue)

is the kind of place where you could easily find yourself staying longer than planned. Spanning the Barrow, an ancient six-arch stone bridge is illuminated at night and connects the village with the smaller township of Tinnahinch on the County Carlow side of the river (look for the darker stones on the Carlow side – a legacy from being blown up during the 1798 rebellion).

The big attraction in town is the Cistercian **Duiske Abbey** (☀8am-6pm), once Ireland's largest and still very much a working parish (thanks to 800 years of changes and additions). To the right of the entrance look for the **Knight of Duiske**, a 14th-century, high-relief carving of a knight in chain mail who's reaching for his sword. On the floor nearby, a glass panel reveals some of the original 13th-century floor tiles, now 2m below the present floor level.






# Eating & Sleeping

## Kilkenny 1

### Butler House

Hotel €€

(☎056-772 2828; www.butler.ie; 16 Patrick St; s €60-120, d €100-180;   ) You can't stay in Kilkenny Castle, but this historic mansion is surely the next best thing. Once the home of the earls of Ormonde, who built the castle, these days it houses a boutique hotel with aristocratic trappings including sweeping staircases, marble fireplaces, an art collection and impeccably trimmed gardens. The 13 generously sized rooms are individually decorated. Just to remind you you're staying in history, the floors creak.

### Campagne

Modern Irish €€€

(☎056-777 2858; www.campagne.ie; The Arches, 5 Gashouse Lane; lunch 2-/3-course set menu €24/29, dinner mains €25-30; ☺lunch Fri-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat) Chef Garrett Byrne, who gained fame and Michelin stars in Dublin, is the genius behind this bold, stylish restaurant in his native Kilkenny. He's passionate about supporting local and artisan producers, and he takes the goods and produces ever-changing, ever-memorable meals. There's a French accent to everything he does.

## Thomastown 6

### Blackberry Cafe

Cafe €

(Market St; dishes €4.50-7.50, ☺9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5.30pm Sat) Superb thick-cut sandwiches and warming soups are served with pumpkin-seed-speckled soda bread here. Much is organic and the tarts and cakes are baked daily. Between noon and 2pm, great-value multicourse hot lunches see the place squeezed to bursting. It's right in town.

## Inistioge 7

### Bassetts at Woodstock

Modern Irish €€€

(☎056-775 8820; www.bassetts.ie; mains €10-28; ☺lunch Wed-Sun, dinner Wed-Sat) Adjacent to Woodstock Gardens, John Bassett has turned his family home into an inspired dining experience. Saturday nights feature tasting menus (€9.50 per course) paired with wines (from €5 per glass) served at set intervals from 7.30pm. It's a great way to spend an evening with a table of friends. The food is fresh, local and inventive. Future meals graze right outside the door.

### Woodstock Arms

B&B €€

(☎056-972 4246; www.woodstockarms.com; s/d from €45/70) This friendly pub has tables outside overlooking the square and seven simple rooms that are squeaky clean. The triples are particularly spacious. Breakfast is served in a pretty little room out back with wooden tables and blue-and-white china.

## Graigenamanagh 8

### Waterside

Inn €€

(☎059-972 4246; www.watersideguesthouse.com; The Quay; s/d from €55/80) Down by the boats tied up along the river, this inviting guesthouse and restaurant occupies a converted solid-granite 19th-century corn store. Its 10 renovated rooms have exposed timber beams. The restaurant is well regarded for its interesting modern Irish menu (mains €18 to €26) and its regular 'After Dinner Live' music acts featuring anything from jazz to bluegrass.





# STRETCH YOUR LEGS KILKENNY

**Start/Finish** Kilkenny Castle

**Distance** 2.5km

**Duration** 2 hours

Kilkenny's medieval centre is conveniently compact, with most of the major sights collected between the castle to the south and the cathedral to the north.

Take this walk on Trips



## Kilkenny Castle

Rising above the Nore, **Kilkenny Castle** ([www.kilkennycastle.ie](http://www.kilkennycastle.ie); adult/child €6/2.50; ☀9am-5.30pm Mar-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Oct-Feb) is one of Ireland's most visited heritage sites. Regular 40-minute guided tours focus on the **Long Gallery**, in the wing of the castle nearest the river. The gallery, which showcases stuffy portraits of the Butler family members over the centuries, is an impressive hall with high ceilings vividly painted with Celtic and Pre-Raphaelite motifs.

**The Walk** » Cross Castle Rd; the design centre is adjacent to the castle.

## National Craft Gallery & Design Centre

Contemporary Irish crafts are showcased at this imaginative **gallery** ([www.ccoi.ie](http://www.ccoi.ie); Castle Yard; ☀10am-5.30pm Tue-Sat) in the former castle stables that also house the shops of the Kilkenny Design Centre. Ceramics dominate, but exhibits often feature furniture, jewellery and weaving from the members of the Crafts Council of Ireland.

**The Walk** » Turn left and walk north onto High St until you reach the Tholsel on your right.

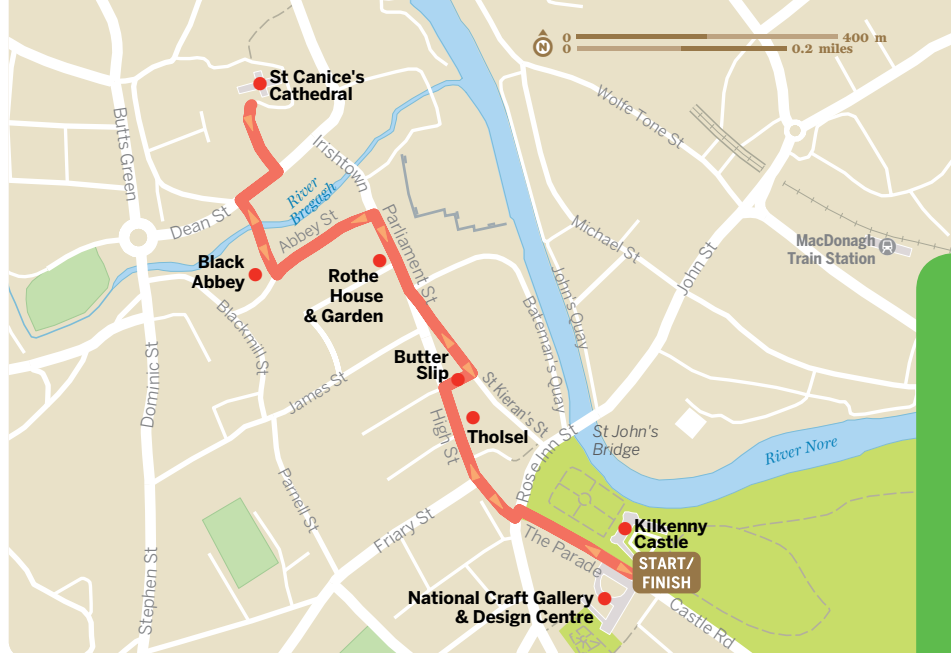
## Tholsel

The Tholsel (City Hall) on High St was built in 1761 on the spot where Dame Alice Kyteler's maid Petronella was burned at the stake in 1324 for witchcraft (even if it was actually Dame Alice who was most likely the guilty party).

**The Walk** » The Butter Slip is a narrow alley just right after the Tholsel.

## Butter Slip

With its arched entry and stone steps, Butter Slip, a narrow and dark walkway connecting High St with St Kieran's St (previously called Low Lane), is the most picturesque of Kilkenny's many narrow medieval corridors. It was built



in 1616 and was once lined with the stalls of butter vendors.

**The Walk** >> Turn left on St Kieran's St and rejoin High St; Rothe House is on your left.

## Rothe House & Garden

Ireland's best surviving example of a 16th-century merchant's house is the Tudor Rothe House. Built around a series of courtyards, it now houses a **museum** ([www.rothehouse.com](http://www.rothehouse.com); Parliament St; adult/child €5/4; ☎10.30am-5pm Mon-Sat year-round, 2-6pm Sun Apr-Oct) with local artefacts including a well-used Viking sword found nearby and a grinning head sculpted by a Celtic artist. Recent changes include new exhibits about the Rothe family and ongoing restorations of the urban gardens out the back.

**The Walk** >> Turn left on Parliament St and after 200m take a left on Abbey St.

## Black Abbey

This Dominican **abbey** (Abbey St; ☎open daily for Mass) was founded in 1225 by William Marshall and takes its name

from the monks' black habits. In 1543, six years after Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, it was turned into a courthouse. Much of what survives dates from the 18th and 19th centuries, but remnants of more ancient archways are evident within the newer stonework. Look for the 13th-century coffins near the entrance.

**The Walk** >> Walk north through the lane and take a right on Dean St, then a left onto Coach St into the cathedral grounds.

## St Canice's Cathedral

Soaring over the north end of the centre is Ireland's second-largest medieval **cathedral** ([www.stcanicescathedral.ie](http://www.stcanicescathedral.ie); St Canice's Pl; adult/child €4/3; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun) after St Patrick's in Dublin. Legend has it that the first monastery was built here in the 6th century by St Canice, Kilkenny's patron saint.

**The Walk** >> Go back down Parliament St to the castle, stopping in a pub or two along the way.

*Tintern Abbey Secluded amid wooded trails, lakes and idyllic streams*





# Wexford & Waterford

*Ireland's favourite beach destinations are dotted along the coastlines of counties Wexford and Waterford, but there's far more to the region than just buckets and spades.*

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS



**164 km**

**Dungarvan**  
Bustling port of pastel-coloured houses and excellent foodie scene

**75 km**

**Tintern Abbey**  
Moody ruins of a once-powerful Cistercian abbey

**START**  
Enniscorthy

Arthurstown

**FINISH**  
Ardmore

**Kilmore Quay**  
Fishing village straight out of a postcard

**43 km**

**5 DAYS**  
219KM / 136 MILES

### GREAT FOR...



### BEST TIME TO GO

April to September for the long days and best weather.

### ESSENTIAL PHOTO

Look down on lovely Ardmore from St Declan's Church.

### BEST FOR CULTURE

Learn about bloody Irish history at the National 1798 Rebellion Centre.





yourself with the story of the rebellion with a visit to the **National 1798 Rebellion Centre** ([www.1798centre.ie](http://www.1798centre.ie); Mill Park Rd; adult/child €6/3.50; ☎9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun), which tells the story of Wexford's abortive uprising against British rule in all its glory, fascinating detail. The rebels were inspired by the French and American revolutions, but were beaten back by English troops, who then massacred hundreds of women and children as reprisal for the uprising.

If you want to walk up Vinegar Hill, from Abbey Sq walk out of town along Mill Park Rd or south along the river.

com) in the second week of July involves all types of seafood tastings, music and dancing.

🍷🍴 p141

🚗 p141

**The Drive** » It's 43km to Kilmore Quay. You'll skirt around Wexford Town on your way south along the N11; beyond the town, follow the directions for Rosslare and take the N25. Turn right onto the R739 to Kilmore Quay. The last stretch of road is the most scenic, as the countryside opens up in front of you.

**The Drive** » It's 29km from Kilmore Quay to the ruins of Tintern Abbey along the narrow R733. The promontory east of the Hook Peninsula, signposted as the Bannow Drive, is littered with Norman ruins, while Bannow Bay is a wildfowl sanctuary. As you cross Wellington Bridge onto the Hook Peninsula, keep an eye out for the remains of medieval Clonmines to the southwest.

TRIP HIGHLIGHT

2 **Kilmore Quay**

Straight out of a postcard, peaceful Kilmore Quay is a small village on the eastern side of Ballyteige Bay, noted for its lobsters and deep-sea fishing. Lining the attractive main street up from the harbour are a series of pretty whitewashed thatched cottages. The harbour is the jumping-off point for the Saltee Islands, home to Ireland's largest bird sanctuary, clearly visible out to sea.

TRIP HIGHLIGHT

3 **Tintern Abbey**

In better structural condition than its Welsh counterpart, from where its first monks hailed, Ireland's moody **Tintern Abbey** (adult/child €3/1; ☎10am-6pm mid-May-Sep) is secluded amid 40 hectares of woodland. William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, founded the Cistercian abbey in the early 13th century after he nearly perished at sea and swore to establish a church if he made it ashore.

The four-day **Seafood Festival** ([www.kilmorequayseafoodfestival.com](http://www.kilmorequayseafoodfestival.com)).

**LINK YOUR TRIP**

12 **Blackwater Valley Drive**

It's only 5km from Ardmore to Youghal and the start of the Blackwater Valley Drive.

28 **Tip to Toe**

You can hook up to this long country-length trip in Kilmore Quay.



St George's Channel



## DETOUR: SALTEE ISLANDS

### Start: ② Kilmore Quay

Just 4km offshore and accessible from Kilmore Quay via local boat (depending on the weather), the **Saltee Islands** ([www.salteeislands.info](http://www.salteeislands.info); ☎11.30am-4pm) constitute one of Europe's most important bird sanctuaries, home to over 375 recorded species, principally the gannet, guillemot, cormorant, kittiwake, puffin and the Manx shearwater. It's a noisier but more peaceful existence than its past as the favoured haunt of privateers and smugglers. The islands are also where you'll find some of the oldest rocks in Europe, dating back 2000 million years or more; findings also suggest that the islands were inhabited by the pre-Celts as long ago as 3500 to 2000 BC.

The best time to visit is the spring and early-summer nesting season; once the chicks can fly, the birds leave. By early August it's eerily quiet.

To get here, try **Declan Bates** (☎053-912 9684, 087 252 9736; day trip €30) but be sure to book in advance. You can park the car in the town.

The abbey is 1.5km from the town of Saltmills, amid wooded trails, lakes and idyllic streams. The grounds are always open, and a walk here is worth the trip at any time.

**The Drive** » The 9km route across the Hook Peninsula along the R753 is the quickest way to Arthurstown, but the most scenic route is the 35km circumference of the peninsula, passing villages like Slade, where the most activity is in the swirl of seagulls above the ruined castle and harbour. Beaches include the wonderfully secluded Dollar Bay and Booley Bay, just beyond Templetown. Don't forget to spot the world's oldest working lighthouse right at Hook Head.

### ④ Arthurstown

Chef Kevin Dundon is a familiar face on Irish TV, and the author of cookbooks *Full On Irish* and *Great Family Food*.

His spa hotel **Dunbrody Country House** (☎051-389 600; [www.dunbrodyhouse.com](http://www.dunbrodyhouse.com); s/d €140/225, multicourse meals from €60; 🅇📶), in a period-decorated 1830s Georgian manor on 120-hectare grounds, is the stuff of foodies' fantasies, with a gourmet restaurant and cookery school (one-day courses from €175).

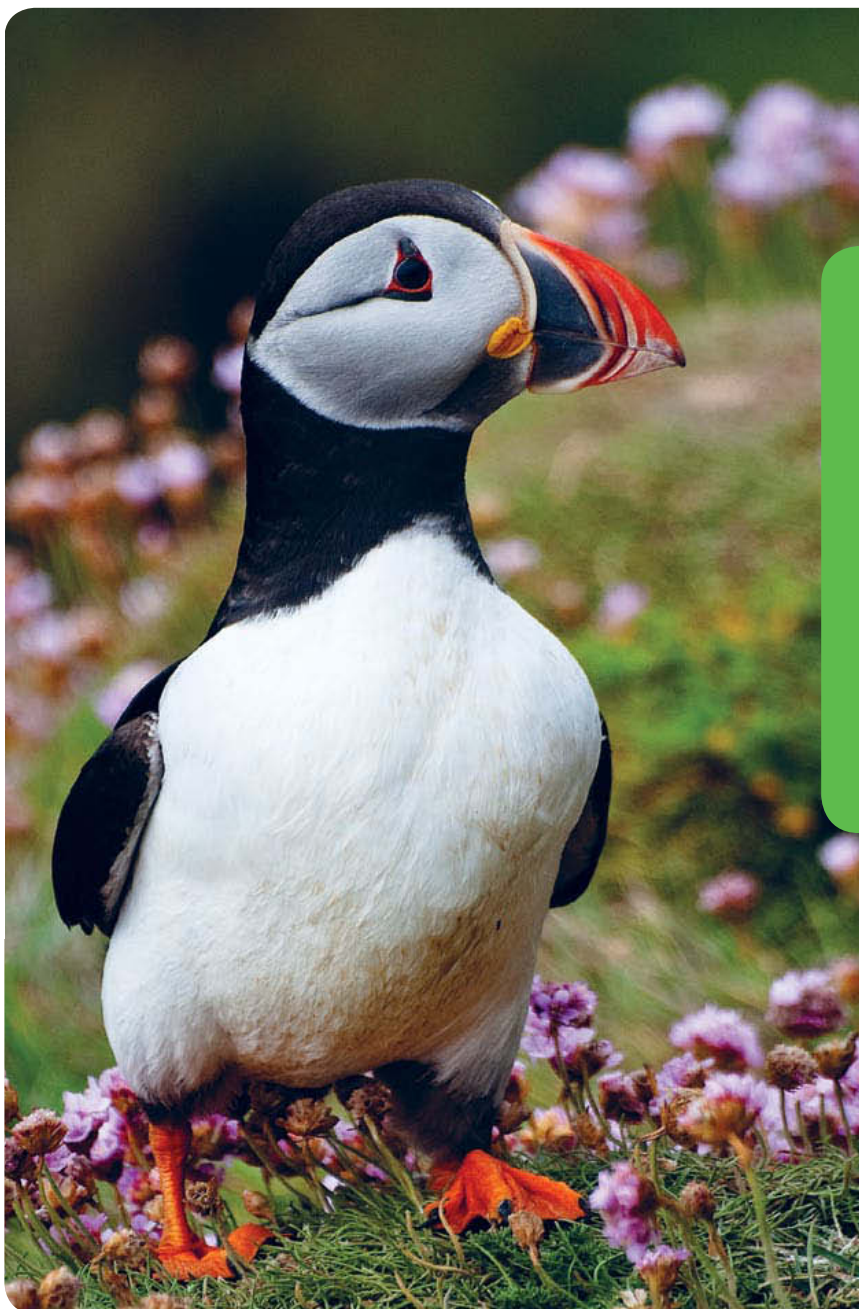
Beside the R733, some 6km north of Dundon's pile, the ruined **Dunbrody Abbey** ([www.dunbrodyabbey.com](http://www.dunbrodyabbey.com); Campile; adult/child €2/1; ☎11am-5pm May-mid-Sep) is a remarkably intact Cistercian abbey founded by Strongbow in 1170 and completed in 1220. A combined ticket (adult/child €4/2) includes a **museum** with a huge doll's house, minigolf, and a very fun yew-hedge **maze** made up of over 1500 trees.

**The Drive** » Instead of going the long way around, cut out a long detour around Waterford Harbour and the River Barrow by taking the five-minute car ferry between Ballyhack in County Wexford and Passage East in County Waterford. Then follow the R683 to Waterford City. This way is only 15km long.

### ⑤ Waterford City

Inhabited since AD 914, Waterford (Port Láirge) is Ireland's oldest city, and much of the centre's street plan has retained its medieval feel.

Waterford's 1000-year history is told in wonderful fashion in a trio of museums collectively known as the **Waterford Museum of Treasures** ([www.waterfordtreasures.com](http://www.waterfordtreasures.com)) and include **Reginald's Tower** (The Quay; adult/child €3/1; ☎10am-5pm), the oldest complete building in



**Saltee Islands** Home to over 375 recorded bird species including the puffin



## DETOUR: PASSAGE COAST ROAD

### Start: 4 Arthurstown

A little-travelled 11km-long coast road wiggles south between Passage East and Dunmore East to the south. At times single-vehicle-width and steep, it offers mesmerising views of the ocean and undulating fields that you won't see from the main thoroughfares. Follow the R708 north to Waterford city.

Ireland; the **Bishop's Palace** (The Mall; adult/child €5/2; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Sat, from 11am Sun), home to a superb interactive museum; and the brand-new **Chorister's Hall** (Greyfriar's St), which tells the story of Waterford life before 1700.

Since 1783 the city has been famous for its production of high-quality crystal, but the factory closed in 2009 and all that's left is the **House of Waterford Crystal** ([www.waterfordvisitorcentre.com](http://www.waterfordvisitorcentre.com); The Mall; adult/child €12/4; ☎9am-5pm), a flashy showroom where you can see some pieces of crystal being blown, but most of the stuff you buy in the shop is made in Eastern Europe.

 p141

**The Drive** » Follow the southern bank of the River Suir and take the N25 to get to Dungarvan, 41km away. Or travel south and take the R675 coastal route along the stunning Copper Coast, where you'll meet cerulean skies, azure waters, impossibly green hills and ebony cliff faces along the way.

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

#### 6 Dungarvan

It isn't enough that Dungarvan has the looks: pastel-coloured houses huddled around a boat-filled port at the mouth of the River Colligan make it one of the southeast's prettiest towns. It now has the charm, in the form of a foodie reputation that makes it a must-stop destination for anyone looking to get the best of Irish cuisine.

At the heart of the town is the Norman **castle** ([www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie); ☎10am-6pm Jun-Sep), which is slowly being restored to its once impregnable glory. But the real draws are culinary: Paul Flynn's **Tannery Cookery School** (☎058-45420; [www.tannery.ie](http://www.tannery.ie); 10 Quay St; courses €50-200), adjoining a fruit, veg and herb garden, is one of Ireland's best. The annual **Waterford Festival of Food** ([www.waterfordfestivaloffood.com](http://www.waterfordfestivaloffood.com);

☎mid-Apr) celebrates the area's abundant fresh produce.

 p141

**The Drive** » It's an easy 25km drive along the N25 to the turn-off for Ardmore, which then becomes the very rural R673 as you move south to the coast. This is rural Ireland at its most pristine, with farmhouses the only interruption to a stretch of undulating fields and stone walls.

#### 7 Ardmore

The enticing seaside village of Ardmore may look quiet these days, but it's claimed that St Declan set up shop here between 350 and 420. This brought Christianity to southeast Ireland long before St Patrick arrived from Britain.

In a striking position on a hill above town, the ruins of **St Declan's Church** stand on the site of St Declan's original monastery alongside an impressive cone-roofed, 29m-high, 12th-century **round tower**, one of the best examples of these structures in Ireland.

If you're looking for a bit of beautiful seclusion, you'll find it on **Ballyquin beach**, home to tide pools, fascinating rocks and sheltered sand. It's 1km off the R673, 4km northeast of Ardmore. Look for the small sign.

 p141

# Eating & Sleeping

## Enniscorthy 1

### Woodbrook House Inn €€

(📞)053-925 5114; www.woodbrookhouse.ie; Killanne; s/d from €95/150; 🍷 📺 📶 🚰) Damaged in the 1798 rebellion, this glorious country estate is now a three-room guesthouse. Green practices are used throughout and you can make arrangements for dinner (organic, of course). It is 13km west of Enniscorthy.

## Kilmore Quay 2

### Silver Fox Seafood €€€ Seafood Restaurant

(www.thesilverfox.ie; Kilmore Quay; mains €18-32; 🕒 noon-10pm May-Sep, reduced hours other times) Just back from the quay, the Silver Fox's fresh-from-the-ocean offerings include a creamy fisherman's pie filled with prawns, monkfish, salmon and cod, plus all manner of specials depending on what arrives at the docks.

### Mill Road Farm B&B €€

(📞)053-912 9633; www.millroadfarm.com; R739; s/d €45/70; 🕒 closed late Dec; 📶 📺) About 2km northeast of Kilmore Quay on the R739, this working dairy farm offers simple rooms and breakfasts featuring homemade bread and free-range eggs. It closes from Christmas Eve to New Year's Day.

## Waterford City 5

### L'Atmosphere French €€

(051-858 426; 19 Henrietta St; mains €12-25; 🕒 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily; 📶) Classic French dishes with modern Irish flair (and Waterford produce) are served with élan. Perhaps hard to imagine, but you really will need to try to save room for dessert – it's superb.

### Waterford Castle Hotel €€€

(📞)051-878 203; www.waterfordcastle.com; The Island, Ballinakill; s €90-150, d €120-

240; 📶 📺 📶) Getting away from it all is an understatement at this mid-19th-century turreted castle, which is located on its own 124-hectare island roamed by deer. A free, private car ferry signposted just east of the Waterford Regional Hospital provides round-the-clock access.

## Dungarvan 6

### Tannery Modern Irish €€€

(📞)058-45420; www.tannery.ie; 10 Quay St; mains €18-29; 🕒 12.30-2.30pm Fri & Sun, 6-9.30pm Tue-Sat, also Sun Jul & Aug) An old leather tannery houses this innovative and much-lauded restaurant, where Paul Flynn creates seasonally changing dishes that focus on just a few flavours and celebrates them through preparations that are at once comforting yet surprising. Book so you don't miss out.

### Powersfield House B&B €€

(📞)058-45594; www.powersfield.com; Ballinamuck West; s/d from €60/90; 📶 📺) Energetic chef and Tannery cookery instructor Eunice Power lives in one half of this Georgian home with her family, and has opened six beautifully decorated rooms in the other for guests. It's a five-minute drive north of town on the road to Clonmel.

## Ardmore 7

### Cliff House Hotel Hotel €€€

(📞)024-87800; www.thecliffhousehotel.com; r €225-450; 📶 📺 📶) Built into the cliff face, all guest rooms at this cutting-edge edifice overlook the bay, and most have balconies or terraces. Some suites even have two-person floor-to-ceiling glass showers (strategically frosted in places) so you don't miss those sea views. There are also sea views from the indoor swimming pool, outdoor jacuzzi and spa, the bar and the much-lauded modern Irish restaurant (menu from €60). Service is discreet but anticipatory.



*Youghul Explore the River Blackwater  
from the ancient seaport*





12

# Blackwater Valley Drive

*Great things come in short drives: the Blackwater Valley trip is only 64km long, but packed with history, culture, stunning views and great places to stay – all off the beaten track.*

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

56 km

### Ballysaggartmore Towers

A wonderful, Gothic woodland folly

Ballyduff Upper

FINISH

53 km

### Lismore

Supremely elegant town that is home to royalty

40 km

### Mt Mellery Cistercian Abbey

A working abbey that is a contemplative retreat

Cappoquin

Youghal

START

2 DAYS

65KM / 40 MILES

## GREAT FOR...



## BEST TIME TO GO

July and August for traditional music.



## ESSENTIAL PHOTO

The architectural folly at Ballysaggartmore Towers.



## BEST FOR FOODIES

Aherne's Seafood Bar & Restaurant in Youghal.

# 12 Blackwater Valley Drive

This short drive takes you through one of the most scenic and historic stretches of southern Ireland. From the mouth of the River Blackwater in Youghal (where you can take to the river by boat), explore the river valley northwards as far as historic Lismore before turning west with the river to find traditional villages, beautiful mountain passes and one of the country's best centres for traditional music and dancing.

## 1 Youghal

The ancient seaport of Youghal (Eochaill; pronounced yawl), at the mouth of the River Blackwater, was a hotbed of rebellion against the English in the 16th century. Youghal was granted to Sir Walter Raleigh during the Elizabethan Plantation of Munster, and he spent brief spells living here in his house, Myrtle Grove. Oliver Cromwell spent the winter here in 1649.

Youghal has two Blue Flag beaches, ideal for building sandcastles modelled after the Clock Gate. **Claycastle** (2km) and **Front Strand** (1km) are both within walking

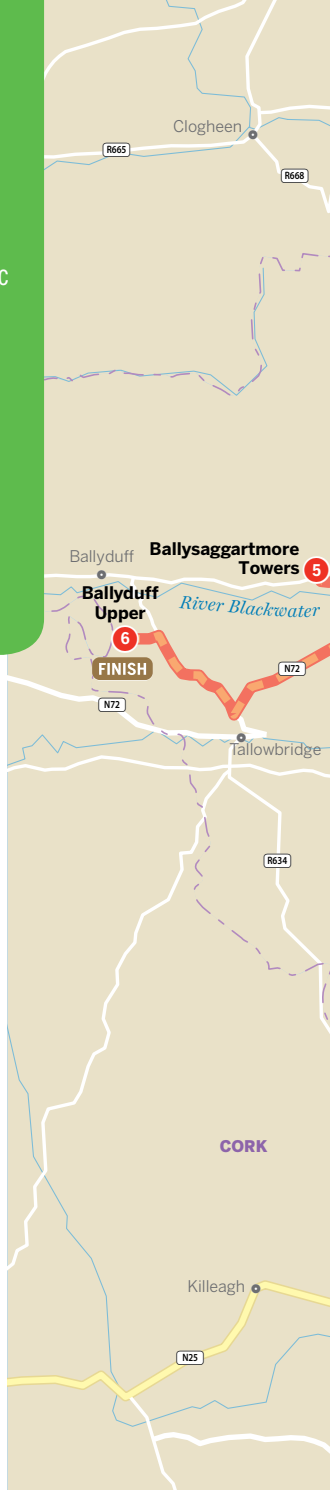
distance of town, off the N25. Claycastle has summer lifeguards.

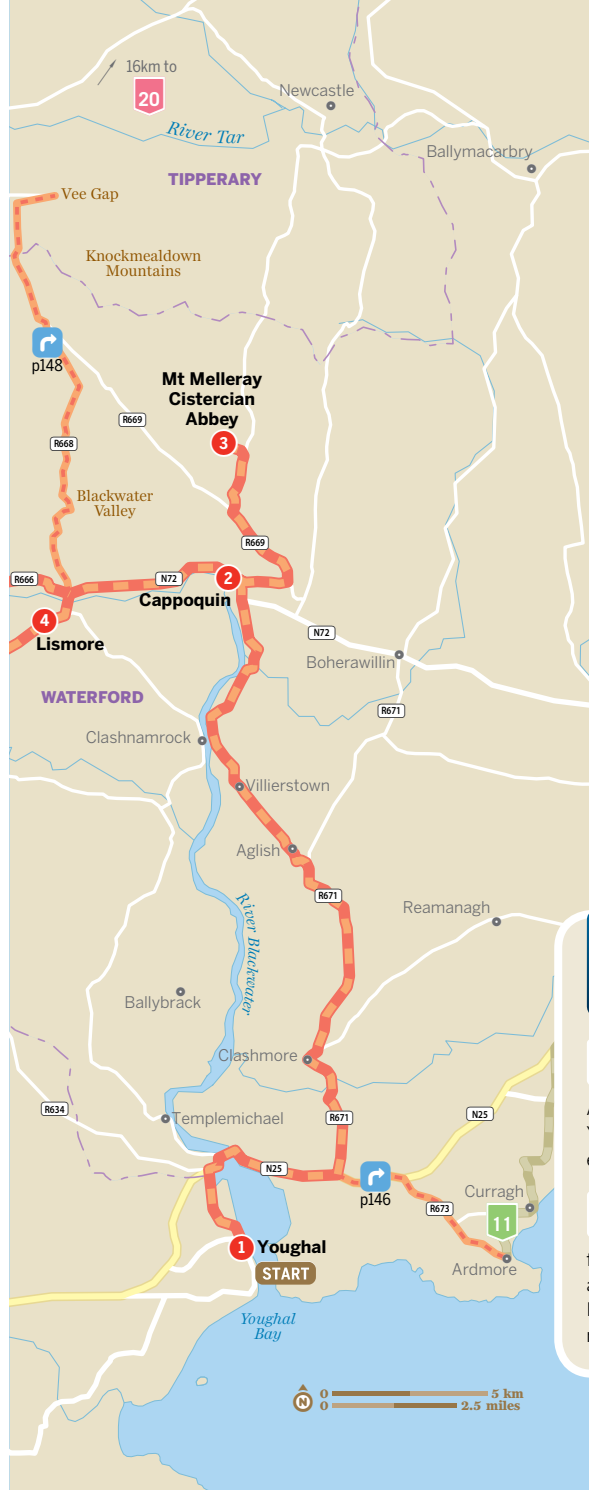
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**The Drive** » Start the 33km drive by taking the N25 east towards Dungarvan and then go north along the R671 (direction Clonmel). Take the turn for Villierstown and follow the route to Cappoquin through the tree-lined road of Dromana Woods. At the bridge over the River Finisk is a remarkable Hindu-Gothic gate, inspired by the Brighton Pavilion in England and unique to Ireland.

## 2 Cappoquin

With the picturesque Blackwater Valley to the west, the small market town of Cappoquin sits neatly on a steep hillside at the foot of the rounded,





heathery Knockmealdown Mountains.

### Cappoquin House and Gardens

([www.cappoquinhouseandgardens.com](http://www.cappoquinhouseandgardens.com); house €5, garden €5; ☀9am-1pm Mon-Sat Apr-Jul, by appointment rest of year) is a magnificent 1779-built Georgian mansion and 2 hectares of formal gardens overlooking the River Blackwater. The entrance to the house is just north of the centre of Cappoquin; look for a set of huge black iron gates.

Cappoquin is also a good spot for anglers, as the town is right at the head of the Blackwater estuary, where there's some of the best game and coarse fishing in the country. The fishing season runs from the beginning of February to 30 September; in order to fish for salmon you'll have to purchase a state licence (one day/21 days €20/400) and a day



**LINK  
YOUR  
TRIP**

### 11 Wexford & Waterford

Ardmore is only 5km from Youghal, from which you can explore the sunny southeast.

### 20 The Holy Glen

Head 42km north from Lismore to Clonmel and explore some of Ireland's most important monastic sites.



## DETOUR: ARDMORE

### Start: 1 Youghal

Just 5km east of Youghal, and south off the N25 is the beautifully isolated seaside village of Ardmore, whose setting and heritage are unmatched – St Declan brought Christianity here a good century before St Patrick showed up. The ruins of **St Declan's Church** stand on the site of St Declan's original monastery, next to one of Ireland's best examples of a 12th-century round tower.

Ardmore is also home to one of the country's best hotels, the **Cliff House** (📞024-87800; www.thecliffhousehotel.com; r €225-450; 📶📶📶📶), which has a Michelin-starred restaurant (menu from €60). From the hotel, there's a lovely, 5km-circular **walk** that takes you past St Declan's Well, Ireland's oldest Christian ruin; the wreck of a crane ship that blew ashore in 1987; and a WWII lookout post.

permit (€20); you can buy both at the **Titelins**

#### Tackle & Gift Shop

(📞058-54152; Main St).

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**The Drive** » It's only 6.5km to Mt Melleray. Just right off the R669 to Mt Melleray is a signpost for Glenshelane Park, which has lovely forest walks and picnic spots that are popular with locals.

they founded the Abbey of Our Lady of the Southern Star in a remote location near Takapau, on the North Island. There are tearooms (closed Monday) and a heritage centre.

**The Drive** » You'll have to double-back to Cappoquin (6.5km) and then take the N72 west for 6km to Lismore. The Blackwater River will be on your left as you go.

dropped by when his sister Adele married into the Cavendish family, who own the huge, 19th-century **castle** (www.lismorecastlearts.ie, www.lismorecastle.com; gardens adult/child €8/4; 🕒11am-4.45pm mid-Mar-Sep). **You can't visit inside** (unless you rent it for an event) but you can visit the 3 hectares of ornate and manicured **gardens**.

Thought to be the oldest in Ireland, there's a splendid yew walk where Edmund Spenser is said to have written *The Faerie Queen*.

Otherwise, pop into **St Carthage's Cathedral** (1679), deemed by William Thackeray to be 'one of the neatest and prettiest edifices I have seen', and that was *before* the addition of the gorgeous Pre-Raphaelite Edward Burne-Jones stained-glass window.

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#### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 3 Mt Melleray Cistercian Abbey

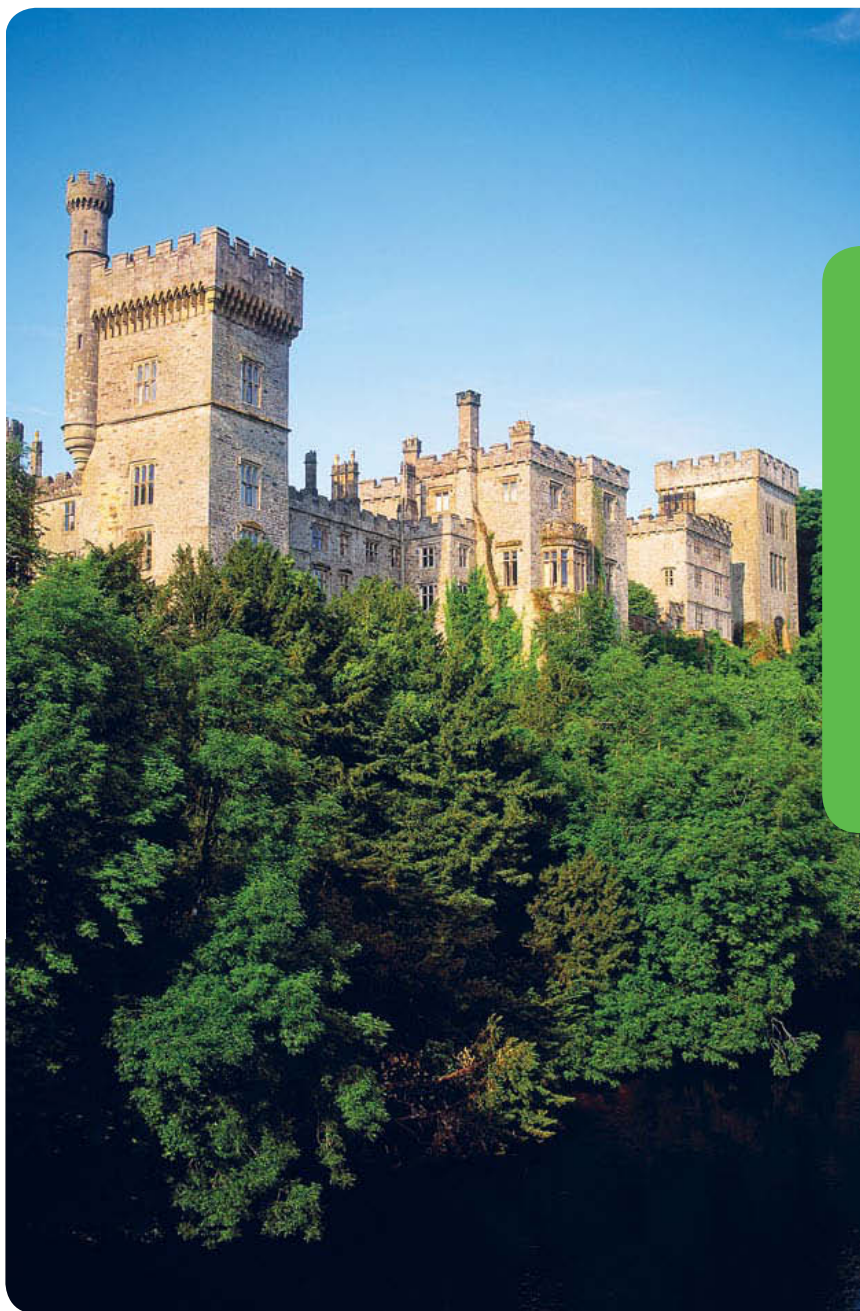
A fully functioning monastery that is home to two dozen Trappist monks, the beautiful 19th-century **Mt Melleray Cistercian Abbey** (www.mountmellerayabbey.org; admission free; 🕒7am-7pm) in the Knockmealdown foothills welcomes visitors wishing 'to take time for quiet contemplation'. In 1954 six of the monks departed for New Zealand, where

#### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 4 Lismore

Over the centuries, statesmen and luminaries have streamed through quiet, elegant Lismore, the location of a great monastic university founded by St Carthage in the 7th century. King Alfred of Wessex attended the university, Henry II visited the papal legate Bishop Christian O'Conarchy here in 1171, and even Fred Astaire





**Lismore** The 19th-century castle and gardens



## DETOUR: THE VEE GAP

**Start:** 4 **Lismore**

The R668 north of Lismore cuts through the Knockmealdown Mountains and crosses the border into southern Tipperary. The road rises sharply through lush wooded countryside for about 10km before emerging onto a beautiful upland plateau. A further 6km on, to your left, is Bay Lough, which makes for a nice amble. Beyond it is the Vee Gap, which cuts through the highest point of the mountains and offers superb views over three counties: Tipperary, Waterford and Limerick. Beyond the gap is the village of Clogheen, from where you can keep going to Clonmel.

**The Drive** » Take the R666 Lismore to Fermoy road, signposted left over the bridge past Lismore Castle. The scenic drive overlooks the Blackwater; the 'towers' are signposted right about 3km out of Lismore.

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

## 5 Ballysaggartmore Towers

One of the more breathtaking bits of architectural folly in southern Ireland are just off the R666 road to Fermoy, in the heart of a woodland that was once the demesne of Arthur Keily-Ussher, an Anglo-Irish landlord with a reputation for harshness, ordering evictions of famine-stricken tenants for nonpayment of rent.

But he had a soft spot for his wife, who in 1834 demanded that he build her an estate to match that of her sister-in-law, so he ordered the

construction of two Gothic-style gate lodges (one which serves as a bridge) as a prelude to a huge mansion. But Keily-Ussher ran out of money and the house was never built, a bit of hubris that, given his treatment of his tenants, left locals to delight in his misfortune.

The lodges are free to visit at any time.

**The Drive** » Head west on the N72 and after 6km turn right onto the smaller rural road for Ballyduff Upper, which is 3km further on.

## 6 Ballyduff Upper

This rural village (not to be confused with another Ballyduff in County Waterford) is a slice of traditional heaven: beautifully positioned on the Blackwater (the views are stunning), it goes about its business largely unperturbed by the demands of modern tourism.

During the summer, the big draw is the **Booley House** (☎058-60456; www.thebooleyhouse.com; adult/child €15/10; ☀8.30pm Wed Jul-Aug), which since 1991 has been showcasing traditional Irish music, dancing and storytelling in its weekly show. The **Lismore Heritage Centre** (Main St, Lismore) has details of upcoming shows.

The village's artistic tradition extends to amateur drama: companies from all over the country descend on St Michael's Hall for the annual **West Waterford Drama Festival** (www.adci.ie), which runs for 10 days in March.

## BLACKWATER CRUISE

If you want to explore the Blackwater River from the water, the jetty in Youghal is where you'll find the *Maeve*, which does 90-minute **tours** (☎087 988 9076; www.blackwatercruises.com; adult/child €20/10; ☀May-Sep) of the river north to the remains of Templemichael Castle, about 8km north of Youghal. Captain Tony Gallagher is one of Youghal's best-known characters, as is his first mate, a dog called Pharaoh.

# Eating & Sleeping

## Youghal 1

### **Aherne's Seafood Bar & Restaurant**

Seafood €€

(☎024-92424; 163 North Main St; bar food €10-18, dinner €24-40; ☺ bar food noon-10pm, dinner 6.30-9.30pm; 📶📶) Three generations of the same family have run Aherne's, an award-winning restaurant, justifiably famous for its terrific menu. Besides the restaurant there is a stylish, cosy bar and a much larger one popular with locals. The pub food is excellent. Singles/doubles here are €130/150.

### **Avonmore House**

B&B €€

(☎024-92617; www.avonmoreyoughal.com; South Abbey; s/d €55/100) This grand Georgian house near the clock tower was built in 1752 on the site of a Franciscan abbey destroyed by Cromwellian troops. Avonmore belonged to the earls of Cork before passing into private hands in 1826. Rooms are basic and multicoloured.

## Cappoquin 2

### **Barron's Bakery**

Bakery €

(The Square; dishes €3-8, ☺8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Barron's has used the same Scotch brick ovens since 1887. Sandwiches, light meals and a mouth-watering selection of cakes and buns baked on the premises are available in its spearmint-green-painted cafe, while its breads are also sold throughout the area.

### **Richmond House** Boutique Hotel €€

(☎058-54278; www.richmondhouse.net; N72; s/d from €70/120; 📶📶) Dating to 1704, Richmond House was built by the Earl of Cork, and is set on 5.5 hectares of woodlands. All

the same, its 10 guest rooms – furnished with countrified plaids, prints and mahogany – are cosy rather than imposing, and service is genuinely friendly. Nonguests are welcome at its modern Irish restaurant (open for dinner nightly April and May, Tuesday to Saturday October to March), where local produce includes West Waterford lamb and Helvick monkfish (five-course menu €55).

## Lismore 4

### **Lismore Farmers Market** Market €

(Castle Ave; ☺10am-4pm Sun) The upscale surrounds attract a fab collection of vendors including Dungarvan's Naked Lunch, whose tasty sandwiches you can enjoy in the park or at tables set up on the gravel path.

### **O'Brien Chophouse** Modern Irish €€

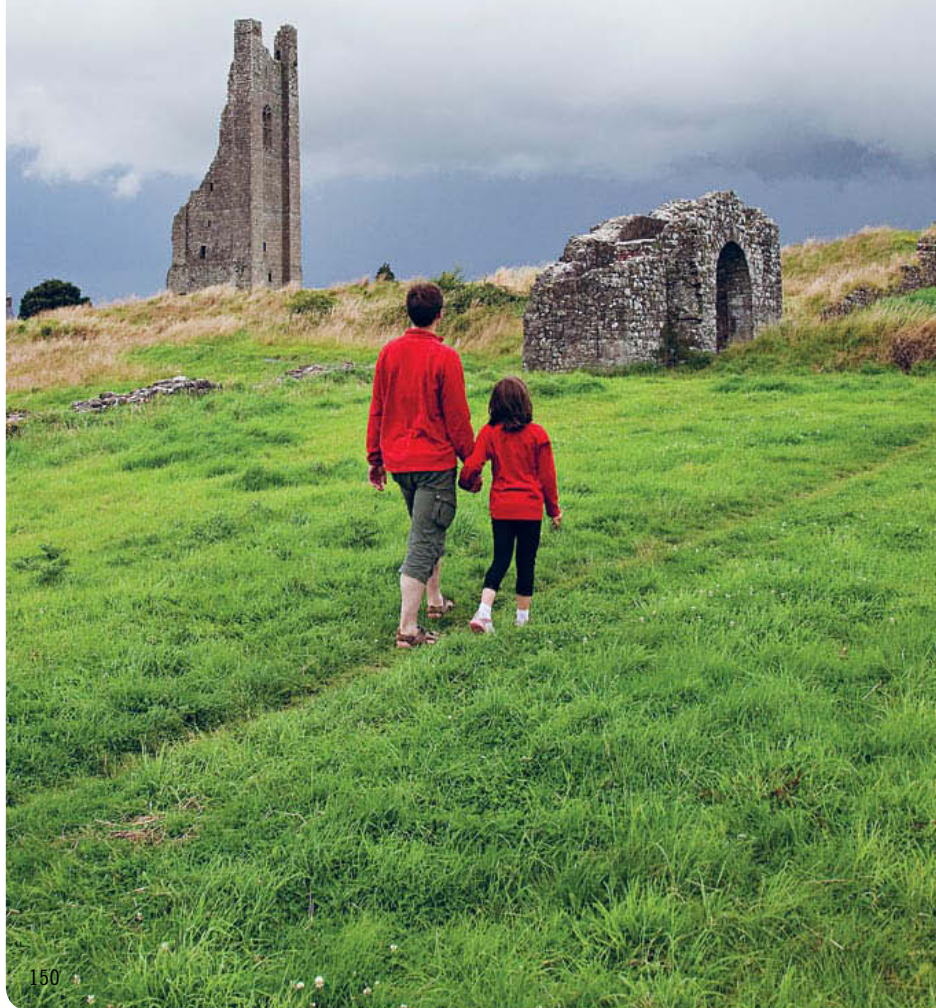
(☎058-53810; www.obrienchophouse.ie; Main St; mains €14-28; ☺lunch & dinner Wed-Sun; 📶📶) Up here in Waterford's hills the sea seems distant, which makes the menu of steaks and chops all the more appropriate at this bastion of traditional cooking. But there's modern flair in the kitchen and always a surprise or two on the specials board. The Victorian decor of this old pub has been beautifully restored.

### **Glencairn Inn & Pastis Bistro**

B&B €€

(☎058-56232; www.glencairninnc.com; Glencairn; s/d from €60/95; ☺closed mid-Nov-mid-Jan; 📶📶) Painted the colour of churned butter, this south-of-France-style country inn has four rooms with brass beds, classic French cuisine (mains €20 to €30, open for dinner Thursday to Saturday and for lunch on Sunday), and a quintessentially Provençal pétanque pitch. Follow the signposts 4km west of town.

*Trim Home of the impressive  
medieval Trim Castle*







# 13

## Family Fun

*Want to keep everybody in the car happy, distracted and entertained? From pet farms to adventure centres, this trip is one for the whole family.*

### TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

164 km

#### Carlingford

Beautiful village with a top-class adventure centre

6 FINISH

Millmount  
Museum

Brú na  
Bóinne  
Visitor  
Centre

90 km

#### Sonairte

A hands-on interpretative centre dedicated to ecology

0 km

#### Dublin Zoo

Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!

START 1

3 DAYS

164KM / 101 MILES

GREAT FOR...



BEST TIME TO GO

April to September for the long days and best weather.



ESSENTIAL  
PHOTO

Medieval Trim Castle is both memorable and impressive.



BEST FOR  
FAMILIES

The revamped Dublin Zoo has something for everyone.



# 13 Family Fun

Within an hour's drive of Dublin is a wealth of child-friendly activities and distractions. The big draws are the interactive exhibits of Brú na Bóinne and the superb adventure centre in Carlingford, but there's plenty more in between, including a popular pet farm where kids get to play with the animals and an ecological centre where they can learn about bee-keeping.

## TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 1 Dublin

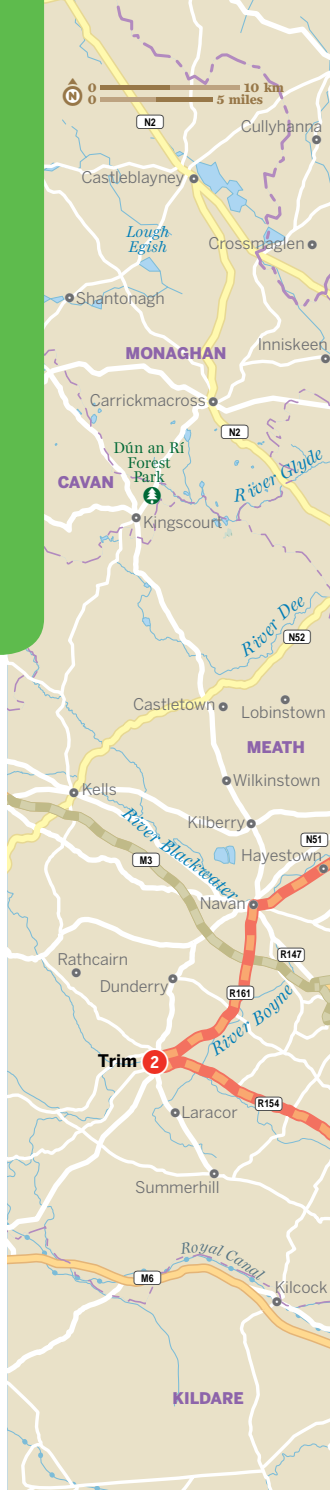
A bit of useless, interesting trivia: the original lion that roars at the beginning of all MGM films was Slat, born in the 12-hectare **Dublin Zoo** ([www.dublinozoo.ie](http://www.dublinozoo.ie); Phoenix Park; adult/child/family €14/9.50/40; ☀9.30am-6pm Mar-Sep, to dusk Oct-Feb) in 1919. The zoo's other claim to fame is that it's one of the world's oldest, established in 1844. The lion-breeding program, established in 1857, is another highlight, and you can see these tough cats – from a distance – on the recently

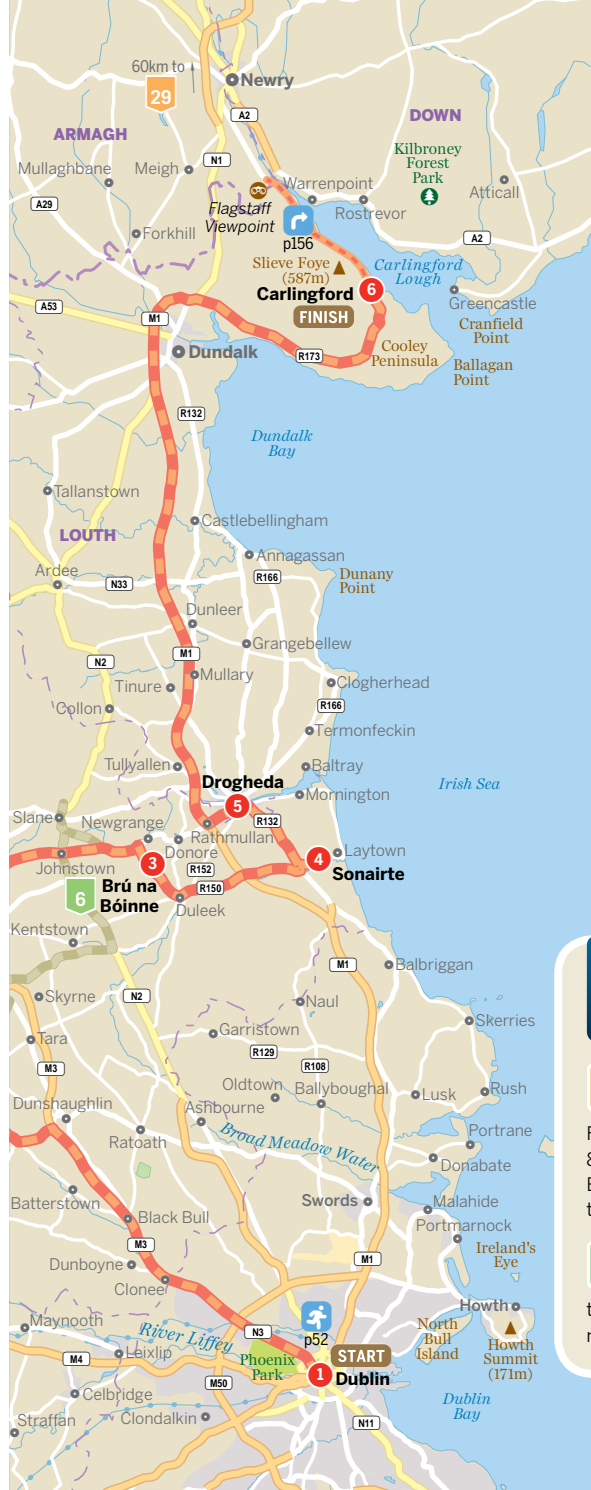
established 'African Plains', part of an expansion that saw the zoo double in size; other areas include 'World of Primates' and 'Fringes of the Arctic'.

Meet the Keeper is a big hit with kids, especially as they get a chance to feed the animals and participate in other activities. The City Farm is also excellent: it brings you within touching distance of chickens, cows, goats and pigs. There's also a zoo train and a nursery for infants.

 p157

**The Drive** » The 44km to Trim will take you through the 337-hectare Phoenix Park on your way north towards the





M1 motorway, passing Áras an Uachtaráin (the residence of the President) and the American Ambassador's residence along the way. Stay on the M3 and get off at the first exit after the toll: Trim is 15km further on along the R154.

## 2 Trim

If you've watched *Braveheart*, Mel Gibson's 1996 epic about Scots rebel William Wallace, then you may recognise the remarkably preserved **Trim Castle** (King John's Castle; [www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie); adult/child €4/2; ☀10am-6pm Easter-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Oct, 9.30am-5.50pm Sat & Sun Feb-Easter, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Jan), which made a very acceptable stand-in for the castle at York.

Founded in 1173 by Hugh de Lacy, this was Ireland's largest Anglo-Norman fortification, but the original was destroyed by Rory O'Connor, Ireland's



**LINK  
YOUR  
TRIP**

## 29 The North in a Nutshell

From Carlingford, it's only 80km along the A1 to Belfast and the beginning of this trip.

## 6 Ancient Ireland

You can connect to this trip through time at Brú na Bóinne.

last high king, within a year of its construction: what you see here is the reconstruction, dating from 1200, and it's hardly changed since (even though it was given one hell of a shellacking by Cromwellian forces in 1649).

✚ p157

**The Drive** » Halfway along the 33km drive to Brú na Bóinne you'll hit the county town of Navan, which is pretty unremarkable except for the traffic – expect delays. Past Navan, the R147 is a classic rural road, with nothing but fields on either side and private houses.

### 3 Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre

Bringing the neolithic period to life and putting the extraordinary accomplishments of Brú na Bóinne's constructors in remarkable and fascinating context is this excellent **visitor centre** (☎041-988 0300; www.heritageireland.ie; visitor centre adult/child €3/2, visitor centre,

Newgrange & Knowth €11/6; ☎9am-7pm Jun–mid-Sep, 9am-6.30pm May & mid-end Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Oct & Feb, 9am-5pm Nov-Jan). It explains in brilliant, interactive detail exactly how people lived 3500 years ago and how they managed to garner the mathematical genius to construct a passage tomb that allows for the precise alignment of the sun during the winter solstice.

A bus will bring you from the visitor centre to the passage tomb itself, where a guide explains how it all came about. The tour finishes with a re-creation of the winter solstice illumination: even with artificial light it's a pretty cool moment.

**The Drive** » The quickest way to go is the 16km via the small village of Donore, passing the site of the Battle of the Boyne (1690). Take the R152 for 3km and then turn left onto the R150. After 6km, take a left then the first right (still the R150) and keep going until you reach Sonairte, on your right about 1km shy of Laytown.

## NEWGRANGE WINTER SOLSTICE

From the Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre take the bus to Newgrange where there lies the finest Stone Age passage tomb in Ireland. From here, at 8.20am on the winter solstice (between 18 and 23 December), the rising sun's rays shine through the roof box above the entrance, creep slowly down the long passage and illuminate the tomb chamber for 17 minutes. There is little doubt that this is one of the country's most memorable, even mystical, experiences. There's a simulated winter sunrise for every group taken into the mound.

DESIGN PICS/THE IRISH IMAGE COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES ©



### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

#### 4 Sonairte

Just outside the seaside village of Laytown, on the road to Julianstown, is **Sonairte** (☎041-982 7572; http://sonairte.ie; adult/child €3/1; ☎10.30am-5pm Wed-Sun), the National Ecology Centre. Dedicated to promoting ecological awareness, the centre is a wonderful place for kids to learn about sustainable living and organic horticulture. You can take a guided tour of the organic gardens and 200-year-old orchard, follow the



**Dublin** A cartload of chimpanzees at the zoo

nature trail or river walk, or take a course in anything from bee-keeping to foraging for wild food and organic gardening. There's a shop and organic cafe

on-site, and a **farmers market** from 10.30am to 4pm.

Laytown itself is best known for the **Laytown Races** ([www.meath.ie](http://www.meath.ie)), the only official beach-run

horse race in Europe, which has been run here in late August or early September since 1876.

**The Drive** » Head west on the R150 for 2km and turn right (north) onto the R132

## NEWGRANGE FARM

One for the kids. A few hundred metres down the hill to the west of Newgrange tomb is a 135-hectare **working farm** (☎041-982 4119, [www.newgrangefarm.com](http://www.newgrangefarm.com); Newgrange; adult/child €9/9; 🕒10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 2-5.30pm Sun Easter-Sep, also 2-5.30pm Sat Jul & Aug). The truly hands-on, family-run farm allows visitors to feed the ducks and lambs, and tour the exotic bird aviaries. Charming Farmer Bill keeps things interesting, and demonstrations of threshing, sheepdog work and shoeing a horse are absorbing. Sunday at 3pm is a very special time when the 'sheep derby' is run. Finding jockeys small enough wasn't easy, so teddy bears are tied to the animals' backs. Visiting children are made owners of their own sheep for the race. There are good family rates (two people €15, four €28, six €42).



## DETOUR: FLAGSTAFF VIEWPOINT

### Start: 6 Carlingford

Travelling along the Cooley Peninsula from Carlingford to Newry in Northern Ireland, a quick 3km detour rewards you with sweeping views of Carlingford Lough, framed by rugged, forested mountains, green fields and glittering blue Irish Sea beyond.

Flagstaff Viewpoint lies *just* over the border in County Armagh. Heading northwest along the coast road (the R173), follow the signs to your left onto Ferryhill Rd, then turn right up to the viewpoint's car park. The quickest way to reach Newry from here is to retrace your steps and rejoin the R173.

for Drogheda, 6km further on. Keep left so as not to cross the river: Millmount will be on your left as you proceed down John St.

### 5 Drogheda

If the younger kids can stomach a little more history, the **Millmount Museum** (☎041-983 3097; www.millmount.net; museum adult/child €3.50/2.50, museum & tower €5.50/3; ☀9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun), across the river from the main town of Drogheda, has 9000 years of it to tell. But it does so in an engaging, interactive way: the various collections touch on all aspects of the area's past, from geology to Cromwell's brutal siege of the town.

The cobbled basement is full of gadgets and utensils from bygone times, including a cast-

iron pressure cooker and an early model of a sofa bed. A series of craft studios allow you to see the work of craftspeople working in a variety of mediums, from ceramics to silk.

 p157

**The Drive** » Carlingford is 60km north of Drogheda along the M1 and, for the last 14km, the R173. Alternatively, you can take the longer, but much more scenic, coastal R166, which wends its way through the lovely villages of Termonfeckin and Clogherhead before rejoining the main road at Castlebellingham.

### TRIP HIGHLIGHT

### 6 Carlingford

Amid the medieval ruins and whitewashed houses, this vibrant little village buzzes with great pubs, chic restaurants and upmarket boutiques, spirited festivals and

gorgeous views of the mountains and across Carlingford Lough to Northern Ireland.

Besides the medieval ruins, attractions include a pretty interesting **heritage centre** (☎042-937 3454; www.carlingfordheritagecentre.com; Churchyard Lane; adult/concession €3/1.50; ☀10am-12.30pm & 2-4pm Mon-Fri) on the town's history, and the beginning of the 40km **Táin Trail**, which makes a circuit of the Cooley Peninsula through the Cooley Mountains. The route is a mixture of surfaced roads, forest tracks and green paths.

We strongly recommend you check out the **Carlingford Adventure Centre** (☎042-937 3100; www.carlingfordadventure.com; Tholsel St), which runs a wide range of activities including sailing, kayaking, windsurfing, rock climbing and archery.

If you're here in mid-August, the **Carlingford Oyster Festival** (www.carlingford.ie) celebrates Carlingford's famous oysters with an oyster treasure hunt, fishing competition, music, food markets and a regatta on Carlingford Lough.

 p157






# Eating & Sleeping

## Dublin 1

### Trinity Lodge Guesthouse €€


(☎)01-617 0900; www.trinitylodge.com; 12 S Frederick St; s/d from €130/170;  

Martin Sheen's grin greets you on entering this cosy, award-winning guesthouse. Not that he's ditched movies for hospitality: he just enjoyed his stay (and full Irish breakfast, presumably) at this classically refurbished Georgian pad so much that he let them take a mugshot. Room 2 has a lovely bay window. There are a number of comfortable family rooms and triples.


 lunch & dinner;   Build it and they will come... Despite its unpromising location in a business park near the train station, this stylised, contemporary space has been packed since opening, with switched-on staff and quirky details like a backlit decanter collection and metallic fish sculptures. Stunning food like pig's-cheek terrine with apple slaw, smoked mackerel pâté, and coffee jelly and vanilla ice cream is served continuously from lunchtime on. The kids' menu is terrific – the smaller portions are reasonably priced (€7) – and the crudités are free. Parents will also appreciate the distracting crayons and colouring sheets.

## Trim 2

### An Tromán Cafe €

(http://artisanfoodstoretrim.webs.com; Market St; dishes €4.50-7;  breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Crammed with gourmet goodies, this fabulous deli is perfect for picking up the makings of a picnic. If it's not picnic weather, you can order daily specials like a bowl of soup and tuna and sweetcorn sandwich, or chicken and mushroom pie and a meringue nest with fruit and fresh cream.

### Salthouse B&B €€

(☎)041-983 4426; 46 John St; d from €40) This Aussie-owned guesthouse is a good bet, with simple but clean rooms with pine furniture and white linen. It's above its namesake **restaurant** (mains €15-26;  breakfast, lunch & dinner), which has a popular bar (with regular live music) and an underutilised terrace overlooking the river.

## Drogheda 5

### Eastern Seaboard Bar & Grill Irish €€

(☎)041-980 2570; www.easternseaboard.ie; 1 Bryans Town Centre, Dublin Rd; mains €10.50-33;

## Carlingford 6

### Belvedere House B&B €€

(☎)042-938 3828; www.belvederehouse.ie; Newry St; d €90; ) An excellent deal, rooms at this lovely B&B are modern but cosy with antique pine furniture, subtle lighting and pretty colour schemes. Guests have access to leisure facilities at the local Four Seasons hotel and breakfast is served in the downstairs Bay Tree restaurant.

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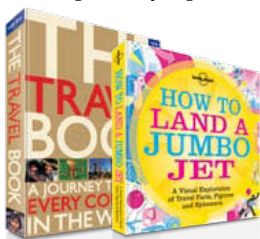
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