

Places of Interest in the Area

Ennis, Co Clare

Ennis Town

Visit the Town of Ennis, which is a 12th century medieval town with its charming narrow streets. While in Ennis you may choose the following;

The Riches of Clare Museum

Which is located in a beautifully restored former convent built by the Sisters of Mercy congregation in 1861. The museum exhibition "The Riches of Clare: its people, place and treasures," occupies two galleries and incorporates the traditional method of displaying original artefacts from the county with modern interpretive tools such as colourful display panels, audio visual and computer interactive presentations, models, some replicas and commissioned art pieces.

Ennis Abbey - old Franciscan Friary, the oldest surviving building in Ennis Town

Walk in the footsteps of the Franciscans and experience a visit to a medieval building going back to the 13th century. Find out how Ennis got its name and hear the story of why and how the Royal O'Brien's, Kings of Thomond chose this site for the friars.

Clare Abbey - an ancient Augustinian monastery founded in 1189.

Clare Abbey was the first, largest and most important Augustinian house in Clare, founded in 1189. It is situated on an elevated site beside the Fergus River. Despite a turbulent history the abbey remained in use until the 17th century. A number of later additions to the body of the abbey survive as well as later buildings. There are a number interesting sculptural features for the observant visitor.

Bunratty & Craggaunowen

Bunratty Castle

The site on which Bunratty Castle stands was in origin a Viking trading camp in 970. The present structure is the last of four castles to be built on the site. Built in 1425, it now contains mainly 15th and 16th century furnishings, tapestries and works of art, which capture the mood of the times. Medieval banquets are run daily in the Castle at 5.30pm and 8.45pm.

Bunratty Folk Park & Walled Garden

When you visit Bunratty Folk Park you experience a living reconstruction of the homes and environment of Ireland of over a century ago. Set on 26 acres, the impressive park features over 30 buildings in a 'living' village and rural setting. Costumed characters recreate the traditions and lifestyle of a bygone age and animate the Folk Park. Among these well known and loved characters are the Bean a Tí (woman of the house), RIC (Royal Irish Constabulary) policeman, Schoolteacher. Don't miss the beautiful walled garden at Bunratty House. It is a surviving part of the demesne which was originally formed around Bunratty Castle.

Craggaunowen (Quin, Kilmurray, Co Clare)

Craggaunowen is Ireland's original award winning Pre-Historic Park. Situated on 50 acres of wooded grounds, the Park interprets Ireland's pre-historic and early Christian eras. It features a stunning recreation of some of the homesteads, animals and artefacts which existed in Ireland during those time periods. Visitors can, for example, see a replica of a Crannóg (Lake Dwelling), Ring Fort, an Iron Age Roadway, and an outdoor cooking site. A major feature is the 'Brendan Boat' built by Tim Severin who sailed from Ireland to Newfoundland, re-enacting the voyage of St. Brendan, reputed to have discovered America centuries before Columbus.

Quin

Quin Abbey, in Quin, County Clare, Ireland, was built between 1402 and 1433 by Sioda Cam MacNamara, for Fathers Purcell and Mooney, Friars of the Franciscan order. Although mostly roofless, the structure of the abbey is relatively well preserved. There is an intact cloister, and many other surviving architectural features make the friary of significant historical value.

A far earlier monastery had existed on the site, which burned down in 1278. A Norman castle was built soon after by Thomas de Clare, a military commander. The foundations of the castle's enormous corner towers can still be seen. Around 1350 the castle, by then a ruin, was rebuilt as a church by the McNamara clan. It was this structure which the MacNamaras subsequently rebuilt as the present abbey, properly called a friary. In 1541, during the Reformation, King Henry VIII confiscated the friary and it passed into the hands of Conor O'Brian, Earl of Thomond. In about 1590 the MacNamaras regained control of the site and once again set about repairing and restoring it. In about 1640 the building became a college and is alleged to have had 800 students. Oliver Cromwell arrived only 10 years later, murdering the friars and destroying the friary. In 1671 the building was once again restored, but never regained its former status. Eventually in 1760 the friars were expelled, although the last Friar, John Hogan, remained there until his death in 1820, by which time the buildings were ruined by neglect.

The abbey is roughly 9 miles from Ennis. A visitor centre is located near the building and the structure and grounds can be visited free of charge. A caretaker is permanently based at the monument. Floodlighting has recently been installed which produces a spectacular sight at night. The graveyard surrounding the friary is still in use.

The Burren

Dysert O'Dea Castle (Corofin, Co Clare)

The Castle was built in 1480 by Diarmuid O'Dea, Lord of Cineal Fearmaic. The uppermost floors and staircase were badly damaged by the Cromwellians in 1651. Repaired and opened in 1986, the castle houses an extensive museum, an audio visual presentation and various exhibitions. Also on site are 25 other monuments which you can explore at your leisure by taking one of two walking trails

Clare Genealogical Centre, Corofin, Co. Clare

The Clare Genealogical Research Centre is now widely recognised as the leading centre of its kind in the country. The centre houses the most comprehensive research material ant any one location, to enable persons with Clare roots to trace their ancestry. We have indexed all available Parish Registers for the 47 Clare parishes and now hold data on over 500,000 people who were born in this county during the 19th Century. We also hold Civil Records, Maps, and Property Records, Census Returns and numerous other sources.

Clare Heritage Centre, Corofin, Co. Clare

Discover Ireland's past; The award-winning Heritage Museum is housed in what was once St. Catherine's Church, which was built in 1718 by a first cousin of Queen Anne. Its main theme, 'Ireland West 1800 –1860' portrays a traumatic period of Irish history under such headings as 'Land Tenure', 'The Famine', 'Emigration', 'Education', 'Irish Language' and 'Music'.

Burren Smoke house (Lisdoonvarna, Co. Clare)

Visitor centre Established in 1995, to create a window for our own products and other local gourmet products and crafts. It has become a popular tourist attraction in the North County Clare area and welcomes over 30,000 visitors from all over the world each year. Call into the Burren Smokehouse Visitor Centre and get a tasting of the Burren smoked salmon. You can discover mosaics inside and outside our shop, and look at the first kiln used.

The Burren National Park is located in the south-eastern corner of the Burren and is approximately 1500 hectares in size. The Park land was bought by the Government for nature conservation and public access. It contains examples of all the major habitats within the Burren: Limestone Pavement, Calcareous Grassland, Hazel scrub, Ash/Hazel Woodland, Turloughs, Lakes, Petrifying Springs, Cliffs and Fen. The word "Burren" comes from an Irish word "Boíreann" meaning a rocky place. This is an extremely appropriate name when you consider the lack of soil cover and the extent of exposed Limestone Pavement. However it has been referred to in the past as "Fertile rock" due to the mixture of nutrient rich herb and floral species.

Ailwee Caves, the largest cave system in Europe

Located in the heart of the Burren in County Clare. The tour consists of a 30 minute stroll through the beautiful caverns – over bridged chasms, under weird formations and alongside the thunderous waterfall which sometimes gently sprays the unsuspecting visitor!

Burren Perfumery (Carron, Co Clare) This sweet-smelling stop is a creative treasure. The wildflowers of the Burren are the inspiration for some subtle and non-cloying scents. There's an audio-visual presentation on the flora of the Burren, which has a surprising diversity. One example: the many fragrant orchids that grow among the rocks. Many items for sale are packaged in handmade paper. The centre has an organic cafe, and native and herb gardens. Look for perfumery signs at the T-junction near Carron church.

Poulnabron Dolmen, a portal tomb dating back to the Neolithic period between 4200 BC and 2900 BC. The entrance faces north and is almost 2 metres high, The thin capstone is tilted at the usual angle and measures about 3 1/2 metres long and 2 metres wide. Poulnabrone means ' the hole of the sorrows' .

Caherconnell Fort & Sheepdog demonstration (Carron, Co Clare)

Caherconnell is a cultural and historical treasure trove nestled in one of the Burren's most picturesque valleys. Your visit to the exceptionally well preserved fort incorporates an audio-visual presentation, a graphic display area, a virtual reality tour and an audio tour of the fort. The audio-visual presentation deals with the unique history of the Burren's tombs and monuments dating back over 5,000 years including Poulnabrone Dolmen. Ireland's first stone fort virtual tour is an unprecedented re-creation of life, customs and design of the fort.

The brand new Sheepdog Demonstration at Caherconnell is a unique opportunity to witness the combined skill of the Border Collie and the farmer as well as a selection of rare sheep breeds.

Hazel Mountain Chocolates (Oughtmana, Co Clare)

A bespoke bean to bar, stoneground chocolate factory, is located at the foothills of the Burren, on Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way. Unique to this region of Ireland, it is one of only a handful of boutique bean to bar chocolate makers in Europe and has recently been listed in the top ten food destinations in Ireland. Discover how bean to bar chocolate is really made with a guided tour from one of its chocolate makers. Your 45 minute tour will take you through all the stages of our chocolate making, followed by a tasting session.

Kinvara

The name, has been anglicized, the name of our village in Irish, being **Cinn Mhara**. Translated into English, this means *Head of the Sea*. This name gives one, a very good insight into Kinvara's history. Essentially, Kinvara has grown into what it is today, from its association with the sea.

Dunguaire Castle

In 1924 Dunguaire was bought and repaired by Oliver St. John Gogarty, the famous surgeon and literary figure. This was the time of the great Celtic revival in Irish literature exemplified by the works of writers such as Synge, Yeats Shaw and O'Casey. It became the venue for meetings of the literary revivalists such as W.B. Yeats, his patron Lady Gregory, George Bernard Shaw, Edward Martin and J.M. Synge. Yeats in particular believed strongly in the Celtic Bardic Tradition and set about reviving the ancient oral customs incorporating them into his plays and poetry. In 1954 the castle was acquired by Christobel Lady Amptill who completed the restoration started by Oliver St. John Gogarty. Subsequently the castle became the property of Shannon Development. Today the restored castle gives an insight into the lifestyle of the people who lived from 1520 to modern times. From April to October you can enjoy fabulous entertainment and locally sourced food at the renowned castle banquet.

Coole Park

The National Parks & Wildlife Service welcomes you to Coole Park which, together with the adjoining Garryland, is a Nature Reserve of 405 hectares (1000 acres). The seven woods celebrated by W.B. Yeats are part of the 6 kilometres of nature trails taking in woods, river, turlough, bare limestone and Coole lake. Coole Park was once the home of Lady Augusta Gregory, dramatist, folklorist and co-founder of the Abbey Theatre with Edward Martyn of Tullira Castle and Nobel prize-winning poet William Butler Yeats. Coole Park, in the early 20th century, was the centre of the Irish Literary Revival. Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, John Millington Synge and Sean O' Casey all came to experience its magic. They and many others carved their initials on the Autograph Tree, an old beech still standing today. Although the house no longer stands, one can still appreciate the surroundings that originally drew so many here.

Cliffs of Moher & Doolin

Cliffs of Moher

One of Ireland's most spectacular sights, the Cliffs of Moher rise from Hag's Head and reach their highest point just north of O'Brien's Tower. On a clear day, the views are tremendous: the Aran Islands and Galway Bay, and beyond to the hills of Connemara provide a stunning vista as far as the eye can see.

Doolin Cave - is home to the Great Stalactite. At 7.3 metres (23feet) it is the longest free-hanging stalactite in the Northern Hemisphere. The Great Stalactite, suspended from the ceiling like a chandelier, is truly astounding. Visitors can hardly believe that it was formed from a single drop of water over thousands of years.

The Aran Islands (*From Doolin*)

A 30-minute ferry journey from Doolin takes you to Inisheer where you enter one of the last outposts of Gaelic civilization. The Islands are an extension of the Burren with high cliffs, rugged landscape, ancient forts and prehistoric relics.

Limerick City

St Mary's Cathedral

Construction on St. Mary's Cathedral started in the 12th century, and was completed around 1194. The full title of this Cathedral is the "Cathedral and Parochial Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary". It was started in 1172 by Donal Mor O'Brien, the last King of Munster. The design has strong indications of both Romanesque and gothic styles of architecture with Romanesque arches and doorways and gothic windows. The cathedral is not pure in any one style, with the plan and elevation giving the impression of the design being altered in the course of construction. The original plan of the church was in the form of a Latin cross. Additions were made to the Cathedral, two centuries later, during the episcopate of Stephen Wall, Bishop of Limerick.

The Hunt Museum Custom House, Limerick City

The Hunt Museum located in Limerick City exhibits one of Ireland's greatest private collections of art and antiques. The collection reflects our Celtic past as well as masterworks by De Vinci, Yeats and Renoir. Donated to the 'people of Ireland' by John and Gerturde Hunt, their generosity ranks as one of the most outstanding in the nation history. Examine weapons and tools from the Celtic past and visit our Jewellery Gallery. Treasures include the Limerick Mitre and Crozier dating from 1450 and a Greek coin reputed to be 'one of the 30 pieces of silver' paid to Judas for the betrayal of Christ.

King John's Castle, King's Island Limerick City

Experience 800 years of history - King John's Castle is situated in the heart of Limerick's Medieval District. The Castle dates from between 1200 and 1210 and remains today a most impressive Anglo-Norman fortification. This 13th century Castle reopened in 2013, following a multi-million euro investment. Explore the brand new visitor centre with state of the art interpretive activities and exhibitions,

The Georgian House, 2 Pery Square, Limerick City

Georgian splendour and Angela's Ashes, The Georgian House and Garden at 2 Pery Square in Limerick's City Centre. The building has been fully restored to its original architectural detail and décor. Visitors can enjoy the stunning grandeur of its marbled walls, ornate plaster and amazing rooms contrasting greatly with the unique servants' quarters. An exhibition entitles "A memory of Limerick rising from its Ashes" offers evocative pictures of Limerick when Pulitzer Prize winner, Frank McCourt was growing up and now. It features a life-size reconstruction of the McCourt's house and images of the city as the McCourts saw it.

Limerick County

Foynes Flying Boat Museum, Foynes, Co. Limerick

Re-live pioneering aviation era; From 1939 to 1945 Foynes, Co. Limerick, was the centre of the aviation world. The famous flying boats were frequent visitors, carrying a diverse range of passengers, from celebrities to refugees. The Foynes Museum recalls this era with exhibits and graphic illustrations. You can travel back in time in the authentic 1940's style cinema, while watching the award winning film 'Atlantic Conquest' compiled from original footage shot in days of the flying boats.

Killaloe.

Situated on the banks of the River Shannon, Killaloe is well known as the birthplace of Brian Boru (c. 941 - 1014), and High King of Ireland,(1002 - 1014). While Brian was High King, he ruled from Killaloe making it the "Capital of Ireland." The towns of Killaloe and Ballina are amongst Ireland's most picturesque attractions and are linked by a 13 arch bridge, which links not only the two towns, but also the counties of Clare and Tipperary. St. Flannan's Cathedral, unique for its stone carving inscriptions is in Killaloe, while both villages host restaurants, galleries, pubs, and shops.

Loop Head (90 Km from Dromoland)

Loop Head Peninsula (90km)

The Loop Head peninsula on the west coast of County Clare juts into the Atlantic Ocean like a gnarled finger pointing westward. It is bounded on the north and west side by the Atlantic Ocean and on the south by the River Shannon estuary with barely one mile of land saving it from island status meaning it has one of the highest ratios of coastline to land surface in Ireland. It is in the middle of the Wild Atlantic Way a 2,500 km of finest Coastal Scenery in Ireland. The Loophead lighthouse is overlooking the whole area. The peninsula is bounded to the east by European designated conservation areas. Within this small triangle lies the entire range of coastal ecosystems found on the Atlantic coast of Europe. As such the Ocean provides us with our *raison d'être*, it feeds us, entertains us and provides us with employment opportunities. Loop head Lighthouse is a huge tourist attraction in the area. The Lighthouse was opened to the public June 2011 and visitors can take a guided tour up the tower and go out onto the balcony

The area is sparsely populated with Kilkee being the only centre of population. There are three attractive villages encompassed in the peninsula, in the Loop Head Peninsula, Kilbaha, Cross and Carrigaholt. They are relatively small and untouched by development. The peninsula is extensively farmed, mainly with beef cattle and dairy herds.

Stop at the Church in Moneen near Kilbaha where one of the last remaining little Arks is preserved. **Little Arks (background)** In the 1850s, Father Meehan outwitted the local landowner on Loop Head who refused to allow Catholic Mass to be said on his property. The priest ordered a tiny wooden church to be built with large wheels. At low tide, the church was rolled onto the shore on the land between the high and low tide lines. Based on the law, no one owned that bit of land. The rolling church became known as the Little Ark, and it has been preserved (minus the wheels) and is on display in the church in Moneen near Kilbaha on the Loop Head Peninsula.

En-route visit the fishing village of **Kilbaha village** along the coast past the monument to the Yellow Men and into the historic fishing village of Carrigaholt with its prominent 15th century **Carrigaholt Castle**, home of the mighty McMahon clan, the chiefs of the Corcabasacin Peninsula.

Take the time to visit the nearby early 19th century Napoleonic battery fortress, **Doonaha Fort**, in the village of Doonaha. Alternative option is **Carrigaholt Dolphin Watch**, a 2 hour cruise around the mouth of the Shannon Estuary.