

Laois & Kildare



Discovering Laois & Kildare



The midland counties of Laois and Kildare are a glorious blend of fascinating heritage sites, beautiful country manors, natural wildlife and lively urban towns. Discover the never-ending list of things to see and do in Ireland's farming heartland.

Embrace the beauty of the past with a visit to one of Laois and Kildare's many historic sites. In Laois, the Rock of Dunamase is an ancient Celtic fort atop a hill. The ruins of the castle are as picturesque as the panoramic views of the surrounding countryside and make for a beautiful spot to view the sunset. In Kildare, discover the site where one of Ireland's patron saints, St. Brigid, founded a nunnery in the 5th century, now marked with a majestic Gothic cathedral. Here you will find ancient religious artefacts and if you walk around the grounds, you will see Ireland's second highest round tower. There is another impressive tower at the Hill of Allen, also known as the Hill of Almuin or "the Great Neck" which is said to have been the site and training grounds of Irish mythology's Fionn MacCumhail and his army, the Fianna.

Much of the midland's charm is found outdoors, in the many gardens and parklands on offer. The Japanese Gardens are an oriental oasis of plants, flowers, rocks, trees, statues and ponds that symbolise a journey through life. The iconic red bridge over the lily pond is the perfect spot for a stunning photo. Spend a day wandering around the vast parklands and peaceful lake at Emo Court in Laois. There are more exotic flowers to be found at Gash Gardens just outside Portllington. See if you can to have been the site and training grounds of Irish mythology's Fionn MacCumhail and his army, the Fianna.

Kildare is known as the Thoroughbred County for its international reputation as a major horse breeding centre. See these animals in action and experience the thrill of a day at the races with a trip to Punchestown Racecourse or the Curragh Racecourse. You can even take a Behind the Scenes tour of the Curragh Racecourse. For a closer look explore the Irish National Stud, where you'll come eye to eye with some of world's most prized stallions. If you visit early in the year, you might even spot a new-born foal.

Take the wheel with an adrenaline-filled visit to Mondello Park, where you can try rally driving or bike racing around Ireland's famous motorsport venue or test the more hilly terrain of any of Slieve Bloom's mountain-biking trails.

Activities & Adventure Laois



- Barrowline Cruisers**
www.barrowline.ie
Narrowboat & barge cruising on the Grand Canal and River Barrow. Vicarstown, County Laois.

Barrow Way Bike Hire
www.barrowwaybikes.ie
Electric and hybrid bike trips along the Barrow Way. Vicarstown, County Laois.

Blueway Boat Trips
www.irishcountryroads.com
Boat trips on the River Barrow and Grand Canal. Vicarstown, County Laois.

Castleview Open Farm
www.castleviewopenfarm.ie
Family activities, farm activities. Cullochill, County Laois.

Maize Maze
www.maizemaze.ie
Maze, family activities. Shanahoe, County Laois.
- Midland Escape**
www.midlandescape.ie
Hiking, yoga, meditation, paddle boarding, kayaking, biking. Ballacolla, County Laois.

Pedal Vintage
www.irishcountryroads.com
Guided bike tours on Vintage Style bicycles. Durrow, County Laois.

Roll 'n Bowl
www.bowlingireland.com
Bowling, laser quest, soft play. Portlaoise, County Laois.

The Blueway Man
www.irishcountryroads.com
Canoe, kayak, boat hire. Durrow, County Laois.

Discover More in Laois



Rich in history, Laois has been home to the Vikings, Quakers, French Huguenots to name but a few. All have left their mark around the county making it a wonderful place to step back in time. Discover lavish country estates and woodlands, ancient castles and a round tower.

Portarlington was founded in 1666 by Sir Henry Bennett – Lord Arlington, the town features exceptional Huguenot, Georgian and Victorian buildings. A refuge for French and Flemish Huguenots, it became the home of 16 classical schools, a financial centre and silversmithing centre of excellence.

A short drive away, **Mountmellick** is where a small group of Quakers settled in 1659. Over the next century the village was turned into a thriving textile industry and the remnants are still visible today in its fine buildings and embroidery heritage.

Nearby in **Portlaoise Town**, the historic building of the old town jail now houses the Dunamase Arts Centre, a multi-arts venue and visual gallery space showcasing both local and touring arts. **Dunamase** is a short drive east of Portlaoise Town and enjoys spectacular views of the surrounding countryside. The Rock of Dunamase is an imposing and magnificent example of a Celtic fortification overlooking the valley of the O'Moore's. **Timahoe**, southeast of Portlaoise is where St. Mochua founded a monastery over 1,000 years ago and the Heritage Centre holds a museum dedicated to the monastic site and round tower. The sean-na-gig (a stone carving depicting a mythical figure) is a must see for history enthusiasts. View the tower and explore its history with an audio-visual presentation.

Explore the town of **Abbeyleix**, stroll down the elegant streets to unpeel its layers of history. Abbeyleix Heritage House is a museum dedicated to local history and culture. This area was once home to a carpet factory and famous for supplying the fated ship HMS Titanic state rooms with their hand tufted carpets. A vintage carpet display showcases this fascinating fact. Embrace the outdoors and visit **Abbeyleix Bog**. Stroll on the boardwalk and venture out into the bog, enjoy the lovely landscapes and hidden vistas within the bog. Follow the **Laois Heritage Trail** to uncover the beauty of the county. Explore many delightful gardens along the **Laois Garden Trail**.

North west of Abbeyleix in the quaint village of **Aghaboe** is Aghaboe Abbey. The beautiful Abbey dates back to when St. Canice founded the Abbey in 576. Still noted today for the doorway with its carved limestone head from the Middle Ages.

Durrow, a charming town overlooking the River Erina. Wander down the woodland trails at the enchanting Bishop Woods or take a spin on the Leafy Loop, one of the many cycle trails available. Stroll around the grounds of the Durrow Castle mansion and tour the beautiful walled gardens.

Discover the stunning **Slieve Bloom Mountains** rising from the central plains of Ireland between Laois and Offaly. Explore the Glenbarrow Eco Walk with its waterfalls and steep valley in an area of natural beauty, peace and tranquillity. Soak up the serenity and marvel at the panoramic views from the Ridge of Capard. Be adventurous and follow a **Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trail**. Cycle the challenging Baunreagh Trail with its constant twists and turns and rises up and down. At the foot of the Slieve Bloom Mountains in the little village of Camross, look out for Poets Cottage, a replica thatched cottage depicting the type of house of the average person in rural Ireland in the 19th century.

Activities & Adventure Kildare



- Airstactic Entertainment Centre**
www.air-tastic.com
Bowling, laser tag, arcade games, mini golf, soft play. Celbridge, County Kildare.

Athy Boat Tours
www.athyboatours.com
Boat tours on the Grand Canal & River Barrow. Athy, County Kildare.

Targetrip.ie
www.targetrip.ie
Boat trips on the Grand Canal. Salins, County Kildare.

Barrow Blueway Bikehire
www.barrowbluewaybikehire.ie
Electric and hybrid bike trips. Monasterevin, County Kildare.

Clonfert Pet Farm
www.clonfertpetfarm.com
Family activities, farm activities. Maynooth, County Kildare.
- Fluid Flow**
www.fluidflow.ie
Kayaking, supping. Naas, County Kildare.

Golden Falls Water Ski Club
www.goldenfallswateriski.com
Find us on Facebook
Water skiing lessons. Ballymore Eustace, County Kildare.

Grand Canal Greenway Bike Hire
www.grandcanalgreenwaybikehire.ie
Hybrid bike trips. Salins, County Kildare.

Horse Country
www.horsecountry.ie
Tailor made equine experiences. County Kildare.

Irish Working Sheepdogs
www.irishworkingsheepdogs.ie
Sheepdog demonstrations. Ballymore Eustace, County Kildare.
- KBowl**
www.kbowl.ie
Bowling, soft play, arcade games. Naas, County Kildare.

Kildare Farm Foods Open Farm & Shop
www.kildarefarmfoods.com
Family activities, farm activities. Rathmuck, Kildare, County Kildare.

Mondello Park
www.mondellopark.ie
Motor racing circuit. Naas, County Kildare.

Redhills Adventure
www.redhillsadventure.ie
Archery, paintballing, airsoft, assault course, team building. Redhills, County Kildare.

Shannon SUP
www.shannon-sup.com
Stand up paddle board tours. Digby Bridge, County Kildare.



Tip

Please check with operators for opening arrangements before visiting.

For more info on activities, visit:

- Cycling
www.cyclingireland.ie
- Fishing
www.fishinginireland.info
- Golf
www.golfireland.ie
- Horse Riding
www.gohorseridinginireland.ie
- Walking
www.sportireland.ie

Discover More in Kildare

Kildare is renowned as the Thoroughbred County, with annual festivals and regular meetings at the Curragh, Naas and Punchestown racecourses. Experience a Behind the Scenes tour at the iconic Curragh Racecourse.

Visit The Irish National Stud & Gardens, take a guided tour and test out your skills as a trainer, owner and jockey at the Irish Racehorse Experience. Relax in the gorgeous Japanese gardens with magical woodland walks.

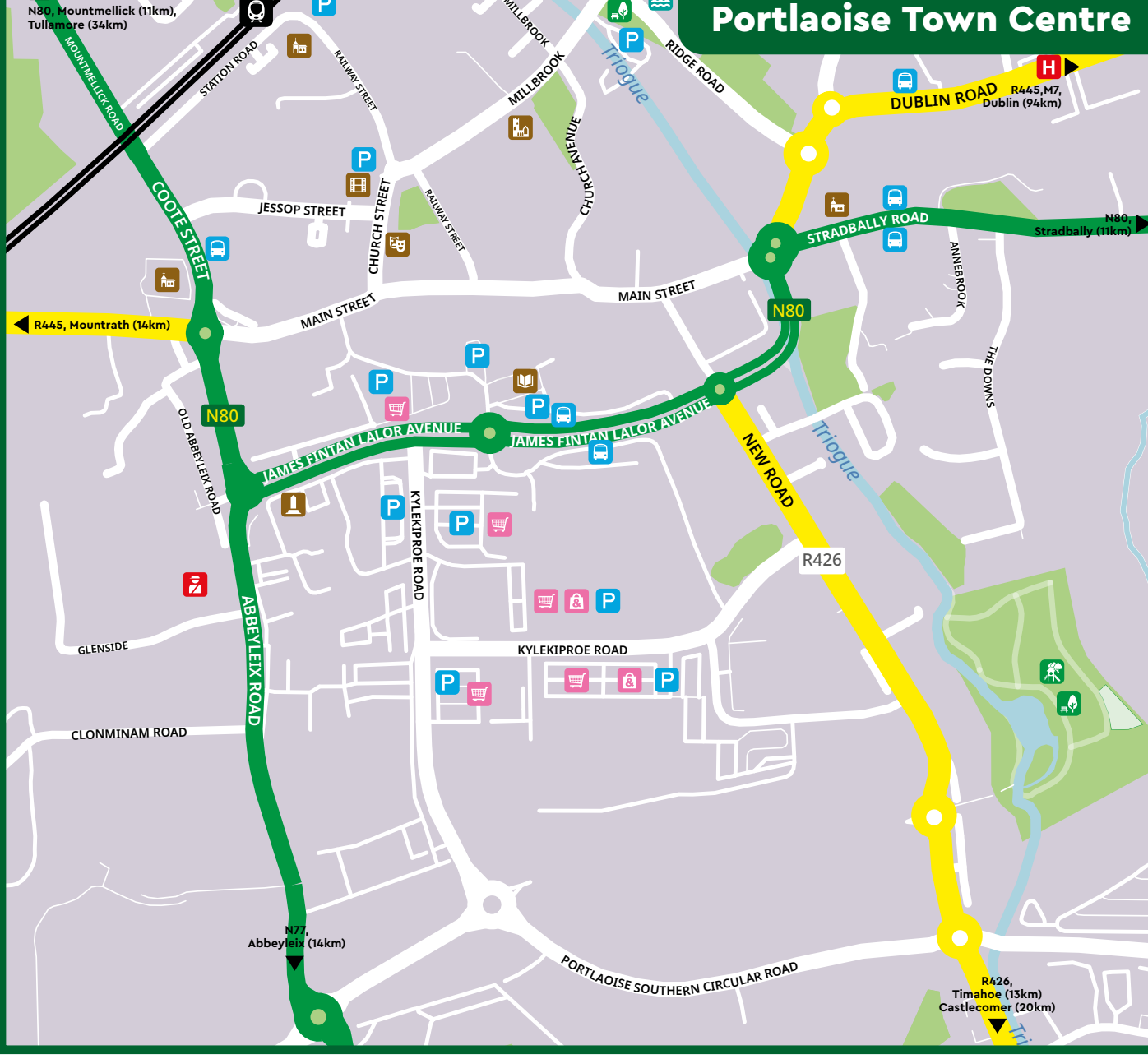
Discover the ancient cathedral town of **Kildare**. Climb the 1,000-year-old round tower built on the original site of St. Brigid's monastic settlement for amazing views of St. Brigid's Cathedral. Visit **Kildare Village**, a designer shopping experience with luxury fashion and homeware boutiques. Crookstown Craft Village, outside Kildare Town, is a creative space for craftspeople and a must see for those who love crafts.

A short drive north is **Newbridge**. Discover the Newbridge Silverware Visitor Centre and see the factory showroom, Museum of Style Icons and browse the unique Irish giftware. Check out **Naas**, a cosmopolitan town well-known for its classic racecourses and electric atmosphere of race days. Follow the Historic Trails of the town revealing hidden gems along the way. Experience Mondello Park, Ireland's premier motor-racing track.

Explore the picturesque town of **Maynooth** in the north of the county. Discover magnificent Maynooth University founded in the 18th century and stroll through its impressive campus. Explore the glorious grounds of St. Patrick's College. Enjoy a stroll along the Royal Canal Way in the picturesque town of **Leixlip**.

Admire the scenic setting of **Athy**, at the meeting of the River Barrow and the Grand Canal in south Kildare. Layers of heritage can be discovered here dating from the 13th century when the town was fortified by Anglo Normans. Follow the exploits of the famous Antarctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton at the Shackleton Experience.

The **Gordon Bennett Driving Route** takes you on a historic journey across spectacular Irish countryside and into the picturesque towns and villages of counties Kildare, Carlow and Laois. This 166km signposted route offers a unique insight into the historic car race from 1903.

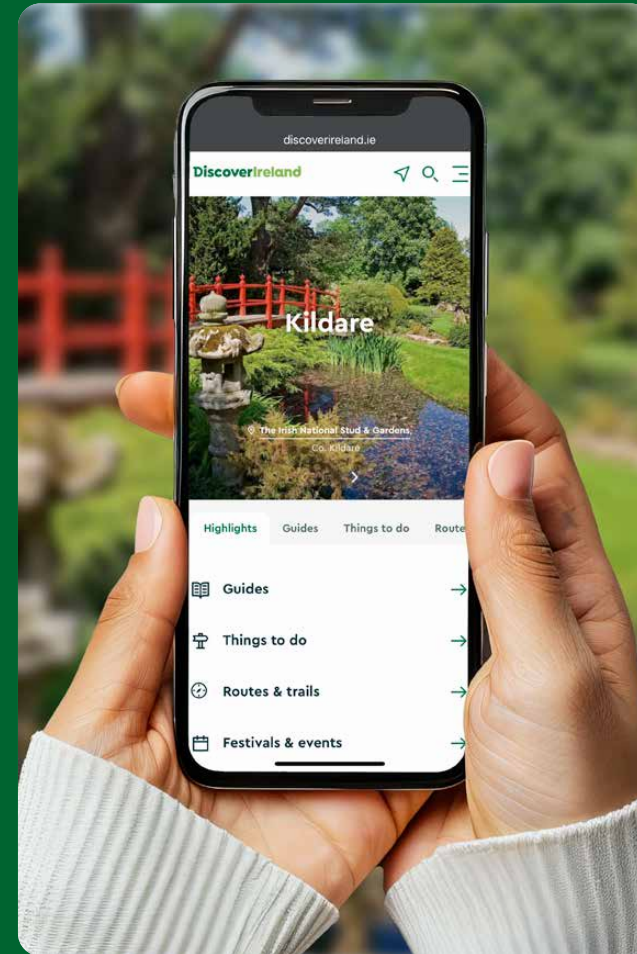


Filled with stories and legends, explore the sights and sounds of the enchanting historical region of Ireland's Ancient East, where vibrant history and modern life meet.

On your travels you will enjoy over 5,000 years of history, buried within the verdant meadows, bustling towns and rugged stone monuments. Enjoy memorable food experiences, wander down the cobbled streets of medieval towns and explore the gorgeous gardens of this scenic region. Discover historical treasures, stroll along beautiful rivers, canals and lakes and experience an Ireland from another lifetime. Whether you are out enjoying the view from windswept hills, ambling by small green fields, or simply at a bend in the road, stories are never far away.

Laois and Kildare share in this enchanting region. Discover Laois and explore rolling hills, blanket bogs, peaceful waterways and interesting historical sites. Relax amidst a rainbow of flowers, glorious green grass and scented woodlands in the gardens of County Laois. Embrace the unspoiled natural beauty of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. Kildare is a glorious blend of old and new with picturesque landscapes, wonderful gardens, wild boglands, colonial estates and waterways to explore. Hear tales of Irish mythological legends, Antarctic explorers, and discover holy wells, high crosses and hill forts. Known as the Thoroughbred County, Kildare is at the heart of equestrian Ireland with horse related experiences to enjoy.

As you journey through the region look out for the branded Ireland's Ancient East orientation signs to find great experiences within 60 minutes drive from your location.



For personalised advice and information, talk to us or visit us online!

