



Ireland's Hidden
HEARTLANDS

The Shannon and Shannon-Erne

Discovering the Real Hidden Gems

Personal
Recommendations
from 50 Locals
who know the
place best!

THE SHANNON AND SHANNON-ERNE WATERWAYS



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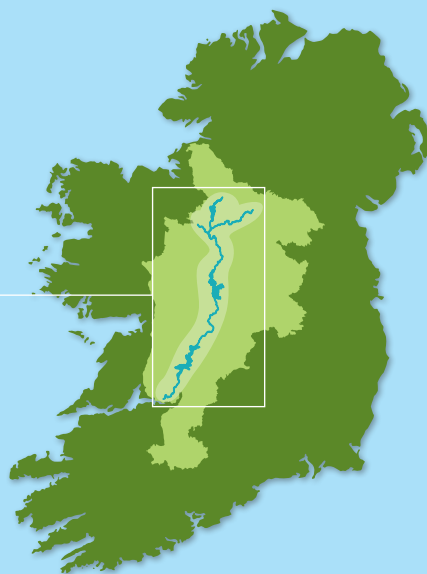


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IRELAND'S HIDDEN HEARTLANDS

Shannon/Erne
Waterways



EXPERIENCE THE BEST OF THE SHANNON AND SHANNON-ERNE WATERWAYS AS YOU EXPLORE THIS PART OF IRELAND'S HIDDEN HEARTLANDS WITH THE REGION'S LOCALS AS YOUR EXPERT GUIDES.

You'll soon see why the people who live here take such pride in this part of the world as you follow their lead into the rich landscapes of the Shannon and Shannon-Erne waterways.

Our proud ambassadors share the best places to grab a delicious coffee on the go, settle in for a pint after a day's exploring, listen to skilful musicians play and enjoy amazing fresh produce and brews too. When you take on their tips, you'll get to meet the people and immerse yourself in the places they love best and hear the stories that will help you connect with the heart of Ireland.

There are layers upon layers of Ireland's history just waiting for you to uncover at every turn. Let our locals lead you to the impressive castles and fortifications once built along the mighty Shannon. Discover inspiring traces of Ireland's monastic past and sacred traditions, and share their wonder at the majestic prehistoric monuments left by older generations. Why not journey along the Shannon on a cruising craft at a leisurely pace for a week or two and on through the Shannon-Erne canal? Along the way, call in to mingle with the locals in varied and vibrant communities connected by the energy and stories of this majestic river.

If adrenaline-filled adventure is what you're after, find your thrills on ziplines and high-wire obstacles, kayak safaris and horse-riding treks that reveal the natural beauty around you.

Of course, there are lots of ways to get out on the water, whether you're exploring on a Viking boat, relaxing on an angling trip, or bouncing an afternoon away with the family at one of the region's amazing water parks.

For a quieter pace, seek sanctuary in peaceful woodlands and hike the many walking trails that criss-cross verdant landscapes or bring you to impressive heights where stunning views often reach across several counties.

The canals and boglands that once hummed with industry are wonderful places to stroll and encounter the natural biodiversity of Ireland's midlands. Our locals will point you towards the wonderful parks and sculpture trails where the myths and legends passed down through generations are imaginatively brought to life.

You'll soon have your own list of brilliant experiences along the Shannon and Shannon-Erne waterways you'll want to share with others too!

Cavan



Clough Oughter Castle, Co Cavan



Fergal and Neal Tully

Ireland's former Gogglebox stars

 @fergaltully

We're Fergal and Neal Tully, twin brothers from Cavan who appear on a TV show called Gogglebox. We are from a very picturesque part of the country that goes unnoticed by most from outside the county. Anyway, we are going to tell you guys about 6 activities we get up to pass the time.

My Hidden Gems

Take a hike on Cavan's trails

coillte.ie/killykeen-forest-park

When the pandemic started, we took up walking with great vigour. We're currently on walk 55,678. Killykeen Forest Park is great for kids with scooters and skateboards because many of the trails are smooth, and the loop around Killeshandra lake is lovely. You're only a mile or two from a walking route wherever you are in Cavan. We haven't run out of trails yet!

Play golf (better than we do!)

thisiscavan.ie/things-to-do/golf

The less said about how well we play the better, but we're surrounded by fantastic golf courses, from Cavan Golf Club to Slieve Russell, which has PGA status, and Farnham Estate. You'll see where Leona Maguire got her inspiration! When people see how myself and Neal play golf, they mistake it for footling turf. But, on fantastic courses like these, you're sure to have a sensational game!



Make a great catch in the lakelands

clonandra.ie/angling

Lakes, rivers, more lakes, pikes, perch, trout and bream ... all we are missing in Cavan is sharks! Killykeen, Gowna and Sillan are brilliant places for angling, but you can't beat the private lake by Clonandra cottages in Redhills. You'll find every kind of fish there including the exclusive, hard-to-catch carp. Just stop wishing and go fishing!



Make up and eat out

thisiscavan.ie/things-to-do/food-drink

If by some chance we forget an anniversary or get in the bad books with our other halves, we book dinner somewhere special like Murph's Gastro Pub at the Derragara Inn in Butlersbridge or the fabulous Old Poste Inn in Cloverhill. For a great Sunday lunch or night out, you can't beat Shantully Inn, Meadowview or The Imperial.

Explore Lough Oughter by kayak

cavanadventure.com

Tell Seán Thornton we sent you, and he won't do you wrong! Kayaking Cavan's waterways, seeing Lough Oughter castle on its lake island and hearing great stories throughout your adventure makes for a great day out. Whether you've tried kayaking before or are taking to the water for the first time, it's an experience not to be missed.

Try our favourite pastime - pints!

 @macseainsgolf

The Abbey Bar in Cavan is a proper boozier - no TV, and full of aul' fellas who know everything about anything that's happened since Michael Collins was a pup. Love it! MacSeains is our local - nuff said. Plus, it has a par-3 golf course out the back where you can see us footling turf again. There are many, many more we could mention. Anyway, come to Cavan. It mightn't be the Wild Atlantic Way but, we guarantee you, it's WILD!





Heather Brett & Kim Doherty

Droimín Creatives Cavan

droimincreative.ie

We're Heather Brett and Kim Doherty, and together we are the artistic backbone of Cavan's Droimín Creatives. Kim is an artist and art therapist, while I am a poet, editor and artist. For over 40 years we have been promoting literature, facilitating artistic projects and enhancing awareness of creativity through memorable literary and arts-based experiences within, and inspired by, the wonderful Cavan landscape.

My Hidden Gems

Hear ancient tales about St Mogue's Island

discoveringireland.com

In the centre of Templeport Lake, you'll find a picturesque island with a vivid history rich in saints and magic. Enjoy the knowledgeable local boatman's tales as he shares the island's ancient lore. Then explore the island itself to experience its natural beauty and visit the ruins of the church established there by St Mogue in the 6th century.



Kayak to Lough Oughter Castle

cavanadventure.com

Kayak to this romantic island castle with guides from the Cavan Adventure Centre. They'll share stories about the castle and the biodiversity of Lough Oughter as they introduce to you some of the most romantic and scenic vistas in Ireland. We love being part of some of their trips, supplying music and poetry to amplify the atmosphere of this gorgeous part of the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark!

Relax by Lough Sheelin at the Crover House Hotel

croverhouse.ie

Stroll along the wooded walkway at Crover House Hotel overlooking Lough Sheelin or play a round of golf in the fabulous grounds before enjoying beautifully prepared local food on the hotel's patio as you watch the sun set over the lake. Crover House is a wonderful place to relax and an idyllic base for a few days exploring Cavan's great fishing waters.



Enjoy a tasty lunch at Cavan's Latte Da café

latte-da-cafe.business.site

Our favourite place to go in Cavan town is Latte Da on Ash Street. Everything is made by hand and sourced in Cavan, from the organic soups and gourmet breads to the tasty desserts. It's all delicious, and there's even poetry inscribed on the café's window, which makes us feel at home!

Visit the river's source at the Shannon Pot

cuilcaghlakelands.org/shannon-pot

It seems every place in Cavan has an inspiring legend attached to it, and the Shannon Pot is no exception! This glistening, aquifer-fed, oval pool, set in the limestone landscape of the Geopark, is traditionally said to be the source of the River Shannon. It makes an interesting as well as beautiful stopping point for walkers on the Cavan Way from Blacklion to Dowra.





Heather Bothwell

Naturalist & Geopark Ambassador

www.cavanburrenpark.ie

I'm Heather Bothwell, and as a naturalist and a Geopark ambassador, I'm always keen to help people explore the natural beauty of west Cavan and appreciate its extraordinary rivers, wetlands, woodlands and grasslands. I also act as a guide with Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark, where I encourage everyone to look a bit more closely at Cavan's amazing plants and insects!

My Hidden Gems

Watch the river go by in Dowra village

irelandnorthwest.ie/Dowra

The bridge in Dowra village connects counties Cavan and Leitrim, and it's a wonderful place to pause and view the Upper Shannon River at its most northerly navigable point – the river begins just 9 miles away! Dowra is always bustling on Saturdays when farmers gather to trade animals at the mart, but, if it's peace you're looking for, the small riverside park is a lovely place to read or reflect.

Explore Lough Allen's legendary waters

askaboutireland.ie/lough-allen

Lough Allen, nestled between Sliaabh an Iarainn and the Arigna mountains, is the first major lake on the Shannon system. According to local legend, its name honours the goddess Aillion who is said to dwell beneath its waters. Visit Corry Strand to start exploring the lake which is home to many fascinating plants and insects, including rare 'Irish Lady's Tresses' orchids.

Walk The Cavan Way to the Shannon's source

sportireland.ie/cavan-way

From Dowra, walk The Cavan Way along country paths and quiet roads to the source of the river at the magical

Shannon Pot. Visit in midsummer and you'll see stunning evidence of this region's rich biodiversity: wildflowers, butterflies, and other insects thrive in abundance along this lovely walking route. I always take along a pair of binoculars to catch sight of the local birds too.

Walk on limestone bedrock on the Garvagh Lough Looped Walk

thisiscavan.ie

Your walk around the tranquil lake at Garvagh will bring you across a scenic landscape with limestone bedrock and underground streams beneath your feet. Traces of the past abound, including the Pollnaowen sinkhole, megalithic tombs and abandoned farmsteads, and the views of Cuilcagh mountain and the area's rich surviving flora are beautiful. Listen out for cuckoos if you visit in May!

Visit the holy well at Tobar Mhuire

glangevlin.com/lostvillageoftobar

Between Blacklion and Dowra, where the lost village of Tobar once stood, you'll find its trace in a Holy Well called Tobar Mhuire – Mary's Well. Layers upon layers of ancient local culture have left their mark here in stone and in the stories that survive about the well's healing powers and the community that once flourished around it.

Take in panoramic views from Cornagee

cuilcaghlakelands.org/cornagee

The stunning Cornagee viewing point in the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark rewards you with views across Cavan and Fermanagh's mountains and valleys that will give you a fine sense of Ireland's rich geological heritage. It's a particular joy to walk the by-road that leads up from Blacklion if you enjoy stopping to admire local wildflowers, wild thyme, harebells and butterfly orchids.





Concepta McGovern

Family History Researcher, Cavan Genealogy

www.rootsireland.ie/cavan-genealogy

I'm Concepta McGovern and I've been a family history researcher at Cavan Genealogy for many years. I absolutely love helping people across the world explore their family histories and trace their Cavan roots back through the generations, whether they visit in person or begin their research on our main database at www.rootsireland.ie.

My Hidden Gems

Seek out Finn McCool's Fingers

megalithicmonumentsofireland.com

Take a walk on Shantemon mountain to find the fingers of a mythical giant. 'Finn McCool's Fingers' is the popular name for the five megalithic standing stones that form the Shantemon Stone Row. In medieval times, this ancient place served as an inauguration site where the clans gathered to pledge their allegiance to the O'Reillys, whose castle stood close by at Tullymongan Hill.

Visit Saint Dymphna's well in Lower Lavey Parish

kilmorediocese.ie/st-dympna

It's said that, in the 7th century, Saint Dymphna broke a long and tiring journey with a restorative four-day stay here, and her visit hasn't been forgotten. Today, people call to pay their respects to the patron saint of stress, depression and mental health problems and to find peace by the fast-flowing river.

View three provinces from Flemings Folly

thisiscavan.ie/views-flemings-folly

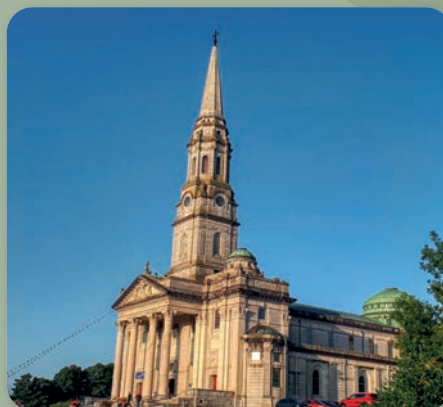
The moderate climb up to Flemings Folly outside Ballinagh rewards you with splendid countryside views across Ulster, Connacht and Leinster on a fine day. Rumour has it that when Captain James Fleming ordered its construction

in 1803 his hope was it would reach high enough for him to see as far as Dublin Bay!

Admire the stained glass wonders at Cavan's Cathedral

kilmorediocese.ie

Take time to experience the beauty and tranquillity of Cavan's Cathedral of Saint Patrick and Saint Felim, which opened its doors for the first time in 1942. Inside, you'll find the most exquisite stained glass windows, created by Harry Clarke, a leading figure in the Irish Arts and Crafts Movement. It's well worth taking a gentle stroll through the gorgeous grounds too.



Enjoy American retro classics at Smith's Diner

smithsdiner.ie

Children will love the atmosphere in Smith's Diner - a classic American-style

restaurant just two minutes outside of Cavan town. Take a seat in the '50s-style dining booths before ordering from a menu packed with treats from delicious gourmet burgers and tasty hot dogs to knickerbocker glories and divine American cheesecakes. The service and the food here are just wonderful!

Find peace in the ruins of St Mary's Abbey

thisiscavan.ie/st-marys-abbey

Pause for a while to reflect on the past in the quiet ruins of St Mary's Abbey, not far from Cavan town. The abbey was built as a Franciscan friary in 1300 by Giolla Iosa Rua O'Reilly, King of the Gaelic Kingdom of Bréifne. Today, only the old bell tower remains but it's a lovely place to take a coffee and relax for a while.





Seán Thornton

Company Director, Cavan Adventure Centre

cavanadventure.com

I'm Seán Thornton, and I'm passionate about activities on the water! I thoroughly enjoy meeting everyone who joins us at the Cavan Adventure Centre, from toddlers to elders, and showing them what Lough Oughter – one of Cavan's many lakes and a Special Area of Conservation – has to offer. I love bringing groups of people by kayak to Clough Oughter Castle, enjoying the craic and making new friends and memories along the way.

My Hidden Gems

Cycle to Killykeen Forest Park for a picnic

discoverireland.ie

Take in Cavan's lakeland scenery in the picturesque Killykeen Forest Park where you'll find a network of charming woodland walking routes wrapped around the idyllic Lough Oughter lake system. A 12km greenway for walkers and cyclists leads to the park from Killeshandra, and it's a lovely place to take a picnic to enjoy at the lakeside picnic benches.

Discover Ireland's geological heritage at the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark

cuilcaghlakelands.org

Connect with Cavan's amazing geological heritage in the Cuilcagh Lakelands, recognised by UNESCO with Global Geopark status. As you explore the peaceful, rolling countryside, you'll find heritage sites that connect you to ancient communities. The park's excellent guides are a mine of information about these sites and the deep and complex earth history of one of the finest archaeological and geological landscapes in Ireland.



Enjoy a tasty meal at Murph's Gastropub

murphsgastropub.ie

Don't forget to book a table at this award-winning, family-run gastropub at the Derragarra Inn, where you'll enjoy really fabulous local food, as well as a great atmosphere. Whether you make yourself at home in the friendly bar or take in the views from the beautiful outdoor area overlooking the water, you'll find Murph's is a brilliant place to relax with friends and family.



Explore layers of our county's past at Cavan Museum

cavanmuseum.ie

The inspiring displays of historical artefacts and artwork at Cavan Museum, as well as excellent exhibitions about Cavan's agricultural and sporting traditions, provide intriguing insights into our county's heritage and culture. I find the World War One trench experience particularly moving and thought-provoking.



Savour modern Irish cuisine at The Olde Post Inn

theoldepostinn.com

What was the local post office in Butlersbridge village is now a thriving family-run restaurant deservedly listed in the Michelin Guide, thanks to the exceptional quality of its food and welcome. The inn's cosy surroundings and open fires make this a gorgeous place to enjoy Cavan's fresh, seasonal produce prepared expertly by Gearóid Lynch and his friendly team.



Leitrim

A person wearing a red jacket and blue jeans stands on a rocky outcrop in the middle of a calm lake. They are looking towards a large, forested mountain in the background. The mountain's upper slopes are covered in dense green trees, while the lower slopes and the area around the lake are shrouded in a thick mist or fog. The sky is a mix of soft pinks, oranges, and blues, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Glencar Lake, Co Leitrim



Carole Coleman

RTÉ journalist and author

 @Carolecoleman

I'm Carole Coleman and, as an RTÉ journalist and author, my work life has involved reporting and presenting from near and far. But home is where the Shannon waters flow, and I've been lucky to be able spend a lot more time exploring it lately. I grew up along the river in Carrick on Shannon, and its magic has been a constant in my life.

My Hidden Gems

Practise morning Pilates on the Carrick on Shannon boardwalk

leitrimtourism.com/towns-villages

I've always enjoyed a weekly Pilates class. One recent morning, I decided to try my bending and stretching on the boardwalk by the river. It changed the whole experience. The gentle current, curious swans and the sunrise made me feel like I could walk on water!

Call to the Barista on the Blueway

 @baristaontheblueway

You earn your stop here by completing part of the Shannon Blueway between Leitrim village and Kilclare, either cycling or on foot. Hot or cold drinks and baked goodies are served from a delightful little caravan along the canal-side route. I find the promise of a treat here is a clever way to encourage teens to walk or cycle!



Step inside Costello's Chapel

costellomemorialchapel.com

I grew up 100 metres from Costello's Chapel, which is Europe's smallest

church. Hidden away in the heart of Carrick on Shannon, it's an exquisite work of art, a burial chamber and a place for quiet prayer or contemplation. Commissioned by local businessman Edward Costello as a final resting place for his wife who died in 1877, the tiny chapel takes just two minutes to visit, but it lives long in the memory.

Strike the right note at Geraghty's

 @geraghtysmusicshop

crumbssandwichbar.ie

When I want to relive a bit of my childhood, I call to Geraghty's on Carrick on Shannon's main street. Leitrim's most popular building, it's a musical instrument store that doubles as an old curiosity shop. I love the art deco tiling and the penny-farthing bike that's been there since I was little. Then I go to Crumbs Café on Bridge Street – a spot that ticks all my lunch-date boxes and is a great source of news as well as sustenance!

Stroll along the Jamestown Canal at sunset

 @jamestownvillage

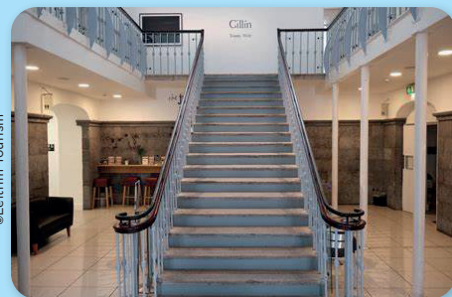
As a reporter and writer, I'm always seeking inspiration. An evening stroll along the Jamestown Canal, which bypasses an unnavigable section of the Shannon, is my perfect thinking spot.

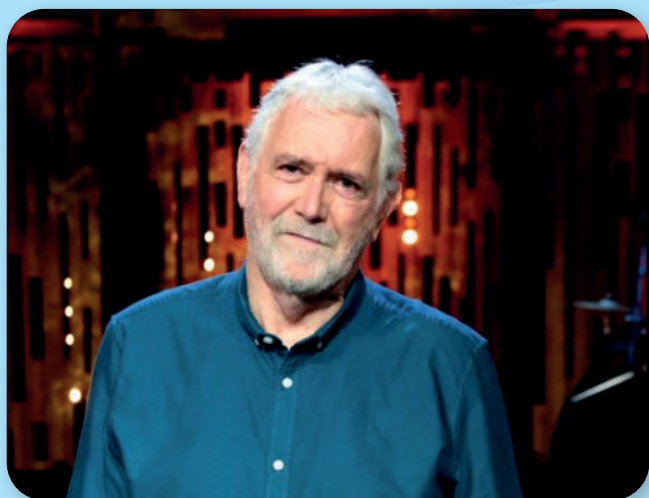
I park opposite the old Drumsna train station and follow the canal walk to Albert Lock. It's a road less travelled and an ideal place for reading or writing a book!

Catch a show at the Dock Arts Centre

thedock.ie

Allie Blunnie, Eleanor Shanley, Vladimir and Anton and the local Breffni Players have all raised the roof of Carrick on Shannon's intimate Dock Arts Centre. I especially loved seeing Sharon Shannon up close in concert. I never miss the free exhibition upstairs and a browse in the Leitrim Design gift shop.





Charlie McGettigan

Singer-Songwriter

 @CharlieMcGettiganMusic

I'm Charlie McGettigan and, as a singer-songwriter, I've written songs like "Feet of a Dancer" for Maura O'Connell and "If Anything Happened to You" for Eleanor Shanley. I joined forces with Paul Harrington and Brendan Graham to win the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest for Ireland with "Rock 'n' Roll Kids", and my songs have been recorded by artists including Dé Danann, Mary and Frances Black, Ray Lynam and Daniel O'Donnell.

My Hidden Gems

Go underground at The Arigna Mining Experience

arignaminingexperience.ie

Just five miles from Drumshanbo, you can take a tour underground in the actual coal mines where up to three hundred miners worked until the early 1990s. The guides, who once worked in the mines, have great stories to tell. It's a really interesting tour for both adults and children, who'll love the great exhibition about the local community and how energy is produced.

Taste Leitrim at the Drumshanbo Food Hub

thefoodhub.com

Tour the Shed Distillery where Gunpowder Gin is made with traditional distillation methods using medieval copper pot stills. Then take a look around the hub, which brings together Leitrim's most innovative food and drink producers. I love to call to the Jackalope Restaurant where the food is just wonderful and the atmosphere is warm and relaxing.



Trek the lakelands from Moorlands Equestrian Centre

moorlands.ie

The Moorlands Equestrian Centre is a brilliant place to take short riding lessons or try pony-trekking cross-country. This welcoming family-run riding school on the shores of Lough Allen is in a scenic, off-road setting between Sliabh an Iarainn and Arigna mountain. It provides a perfect base for lakeside and mountain treks that show you the very best of Leitrim!

Walk on water at Acres Lake

leitrimtourism.com/walks-and-trails

Step onto Ireland's first floating boardwalk as you set out on the picturesque walking trail that begins in the charming village of Drumshanbo. There's lots of wildlife to observe along the Shannon Blueway, and there's lots of fun to be had too at the tennis courts, swings and lovely heated outdoor pool close by.

Glimpse Drumshanbo's past and present

leitrimtourism.com/towns-villages

 @glimpsesofthepastdrumshanbo

Take a stroll through Drumshanbo town at the foot of Sliabh an Iarainn. When the An Tóstal festival and the Joe Mooney Summer School are on, the place comes alive with traditional music! And don't miss a

visit to the fine "Glimpses of the Past" exhibition which houses artefacts and photographs showing what life was like in Drumshanbo a hundred years ago.

Enjoy a shore walk at Lough Allen

leitrimtourism.com

allen.ie

This lovely walkway brings you along the shores of Lough Allen. The peaceful setting of Spencer Harbour offers you stunning views of Sliabh an Iarainn. There are lots of boating activities around the lake too if you're looking for adventure. The Lough Allen Centre will help you get out on the water with their kayaking and sailing sessions, as well as boat hire services.





Fionnuala Maxwell

Traditional singer and songwriter

www.soundcloud.com/fionnuala-maxwell

I'm Fionnuala Maxwell. I'm a traditional singer and songwriter, and I have the pleasure of waking up to the view of beautiful Lough Boderg, Annaduff, on the River Shannon every morning. I am also a mother of four and an educator and researcher with a particular interest in the songs and culture of lovely Leitrim. I feel lucky to live in this unsung county and I love to sing its praises wherever I go!

My Hidden Gems

Walk in historic Derrycarne Wood by the shores of Lough Boderg

coillte.ie/site/derrycarne

Steeped in history, beautiful Derrycarne Wood was once part of a larger estate. Now it is a haven for swimmers, dog-walkers and nature-lovers. As it's on my doorstep, my family, myself and our dog have spent many happy days exploring the various trails and their traces of the past remains or simply dipping our toes in the waters while enjoying a picnic and waving at the passing boats.



Try the tasty eateries in Dromod and Drumsna

[@harkinscafe](https://www.facebook.com/harkinscafe)

coxs-steakhouse.com

My kids love the friendly service and the tasty bites that can be enjoyed in the gorgeous Harkins café - and so do I! There is always something interesting on the menu and it's a great place for catching up with friends. If it's dinner you're after, or somewhere for a special evening out, then Cox's cannot be beaten.

Fire your imagination on the Drumsna Riverside Walk

drumsna.com

On a fine day, my children will beg for the chance to lick an ice-cream and sit at the picnic benches on the riverbank in Drumsna. Although we have two lovely playgrounds to enjoy in nearby Dromod and in Drumsna itself, this peaceful spot with its mix of trees and tranquil views is where their imaginations run wild. I love to sit and contemplate whilst watching the swans and ducks gliding by, and I'm always secretly hoping to bump into local woodturner and fount of knowledge Jim Gannon. Drumsna jail, the Franciscan convent, The Doon ... there's nothing he hasn't an interesting story about!



Find crafts and craic in Carrick on Shannon

leitrimdesignhouse.ie

bushhotel.com

An ideal day in our county town of Carrick on Shannon involves a wander along the boardwalk and a visit to the Leitrim Design House, which is stocked with beautiful, handcrafted items from

local makers and artists. After that, I'd head to the Market Yard where I've often had the chance to play a few tunes with other local musicians or perhaps catch Thursday's thriving farmers market. And I couldn't leave without a meander through The Bush Hotel's lovely gardens!



Join local musicians at Cryan's Teach Ceoil

[@cryansteachceoil](https://www.facebook.com/cryansteachceoil)

I am not a great one for pints, and nights out can be rare enough, but - when the chance arises - this is the ideal destination for music and song. Liam is such a welcoming host and you never know who you might end up playing a tune with. The beer garden is a lovely addition - you'd never think you were in the centre of town!





Máirín Martin

Chair, Ballinamore Area Community Council

www.ballinamoreareacc.ie

I'm Máirín Martin and, as chairperson of Ballinamore Area Community Council, I am a deeply passionate community activist, continuously striving to improve facilities for all. I am very passionate about nature and sustainability too, and I love helping visitors to enjoy our local environment through activities like walking, cycling and boating.

My Hidden Gems

Enjoy a swim at the Poll an Easa waterfall

leitrimtourism.com/treasured-landscapes

At *poll an easa* – the bathing place – not far from Ballinamore, join the locals for a swim where two waterfalls meet in a tranquil pool. Jump in or take a picnic and just watch the fun when the weather is warm. The unspoilt beauty of this lovely spot makes it a gorgeous place to spend time at any time of the year.



©Leitrim Tourism

Find the Mass rock at Mullagharve

Cleverly concealed behind the tall pinnacle of Sliabh an Iarainn, you'll discover a stone altar – *Carraig Aifrinn an Mullach Garbh*. It was built into a large rock cleft in the cliff face and used in penal times as a place for Catholic worship. The Mass Rock of Mullagharve may be hard to find, but the spectacular panoramic views you'll find there are always worth the effort of the climb!

Explore John McGahern's Ballinamore

We are proud to share with visitors the story of world-renowned author John McGahern, who was born just outside Ballinamore. McGahern spent his early years here with his mother, who was a local primary school teacher, and Leitrim and Roscommon became important landscapes in his powerful, lyrical fiction. Our self-guided tour begins at the McGahern Reading Room in Ballinamore Tourist Office and ends in Glenview Museum, where there is a section dedicated to the late author.



©Leitrim Tourism

Walk the canal banks of the Shannon-Erne Blueway

leitrimireland.com/listings

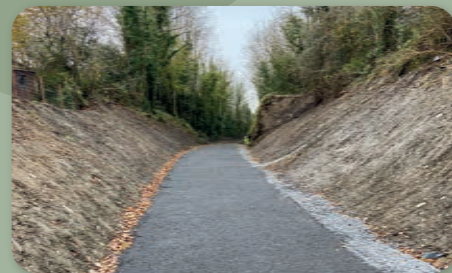
Join these scenic trails opposite the iconic Island Theatre, and look out for the local heron as you cross the footbridge. I love to pause at Lock 6 to watch the cruisers and barges go by, then join the walk just past the Canal Basin to return to the town via Aghoo

Bridge before a coffee and a treat at the Corner Café, overlooking the Ballinamore-Ballyconnell canal.

Try out the Ballinamore cycle path

ballinamore.ie

Join this gentle trail at the old railway station at the top of the town, and cycle or walk to the former Corgar Railway House. When you return on the 5km loop, grab a bite to eat at 'Prior's @ High Street', The Commercial Hotel or Smyth's Síopa Ól. Don't forget to pop into Murphy's Newsagents to pick up your daily paper, and savour their amazing selection of ice-creams while you're there!





Seamus O'Rourke

Author

seamusorourke.com

I'm Seamus O'Rourke and I live in South Leitrim, between Carrigallen and Newtowngore - not far from the Shannon-Erne Waterway. I'm a writer... I write about rural people and their various levels of discomfort and joy. I've just written my memoir, *Standing in Gaps*, and I upload my poems and observations to YouTube and social media. I always look for the fun in people - it's never far from the surface, if you give it a poke.

My Hidden Gems

Why not eat where 3 provinces meet?

kilbrackanarms.com

[mitchellscarrigallen](https://www.facebook.com/mitchellscarrigallen)

[Charley-Farrellys-Bar-Carrigallen](https://www.facebook.com/CharleyFarrellysBarCarrigallen)

Carrigallen is a perfect setting for an evening out after a day exploring the lakes close by where the provinces of Ulster, Leinster, and Connacht meet. Take yourself (or the entire family) to the Killbracken Arms for an evening meal - you'll find great food and fine company there. Mitchell's Bar, down the street, will have music and dancing, and Charley Farrelly's Bar (one of the oldest pubs in Ireland) is a favourite place to go for a quiet pint.



Be inspired at the Corn Mill Theatre, Carrigallen

[cornmilltheatre](https://www.facebook.com/cornmilltheatre)

The Corn Mill is a beautiful purpose-built theatre in a village with a centuries-old dramatic tradition - the local group has reached the All-Ireland Drama Festival Finals in Athlone on

twenty-one occasions. There's always music or drama or comedy on there. You might even catch the odd Seamus O'Rourke play starting out on the road!

Step into the past at Glenview Folk Museum

glenviewmuseum.ie

If there's a rainy day, take the family to Glenview Museum, near Ballinamore, and see how people in Ireland lived in the last century. Wonderfully captivating, this charming museum gives you a sense of the old Ireland. There are loads of rural settings on display, including shops and pubs, as well as endless items of memorabilia.



city's poor with a devotion that is remembered to this day. Learn about Margaret through storytelling and music, or take a book and simply enjoy the quiet location.



Explore Leitrim's lanes and trails

leitrimtourism.com/things-to-do

Take to your bike anywhere in this part of the world and discover the labyrinth of byroads and winding lanes that will lead you into the heart of Leitrim's rural landscape. If you're looking for a gentler pace, Garadice Lough is a beautiful spot for a walk at any time of the day. The trail forms a 1.5km loop with water at your side almost all of the way... It's a great place to have a picnic.



Visit the birthplace of Margaret of New Orleans

leitrimtourism.com/heritage

The cottage at Tully, Carrigallen is a delightful place to visit. Margaret Haughey was born here in 1813 and went on to become The Bread Lady of New Orleans, taking care of the



Sham Hanifa

Chef, Cottage Restaurant

cottagerestaurant.ie

I'm Sham Hanifa and, in The Cottage Restaurant in Jamestown outside Carrick on Shannon, I combine Asian flavours from my native Malaysia with my love of all things Irish. I've been cooking in Ireland for over 20 years now, inspired by Irish produce, memories from my grandmother's kitchen and this scenic spot by the River Shannon and the weir.

My Hidden Gems

Trace the history of Carrick on Shannon

carrickonshannon.ie

Take an afternoon to walk around Carrick on Shannon when you follow its heritage trail. In Carrick on Shannon – the cruising capital of Ireland – you'll find Costello Memorial Chapel, reputedly the smallest chapel in Europe; a 19th-century courthouse, now a centre for the arts; and St George's Heritage Visitor Centre where you'll find documents telling the story of Leitrim and The Great Famine.



Move through the trees at Lough Key Forest Park

loughkey.ie

Explore the grounds of Lough Key Forest Park with an audio guide that shares stories about Rockingham House

(tragically destroyed by fire in the 1950s) and its setting. The Tree Canopy Walk, which is wheelchair and buggy accessible, gives you spectacular views across the island-studded lake. The Zipit hi-ropes course is an unforgettable, if slightly scary, experience as well!

Go off-road with Carrick Quads

carrickquads.com

Pick up speed over 100 acres of Leitrim farmland, through hills, woodlands and riverside trails. Carrick Quads offers an exhilarating quad-biking experience for all the family, no matter what the weather is like. This off-road, motor-powered adventure is perfect for the novice as well as the experienced quad biker, so rev up for a fantastic afternoon of fun!

Create a splash of colour at Battlebridge

[f @battlebridge-paintball](https://www.facebook.com/battlebridge-paintball)

Just five minutes outside Carrick on Shannon, paintballing in Battlebridge is a brilliant outdoor activity if you're looking to have fun with friends or family. Older children will love the thrill of competing with you as they work through the challenging gaming zones which make up this truly brilliant paintballing attraction. I'm keen to try the Zorbing which is the latest addition to the complex at Battlebridge.

Have an electric cycling experience!

electricbiketrails.com

If you want great scenery and a bit of adventure without getting too energetic, hire an electric bike from Séamus Gibbons at the Electric Bike Trail Shop in Leitrim village. Séamus has a great selection of bikes to hire, including options for people with limited mobility, and he'll suggest some wonderful routes for you too!



©Leitrim Tourism



Roscommon





Jim Callery

Owner, Strokestown Park House

www.strokestownpark.ie

I'm Jim Callery, and my passion for history led me to purchase Strokestown Park House where my discovery of the Famine Archive Papers led directly to the setting up of the National Famine Museum. I was born and reared close to Elphin in Co. Roscommon where my family has lived for hundreds of years, and I have been a keen boating and watersports participant on the Shannon all my life.

My Hidden Gems

Set the sails at Elphin Windmill

visitroscommon.ie

A hidden gem in my home village of Elphin, this fully restored working windmill represents an important part of Ireland's industrial heritage. Climb to the top to help set its sails and enjoy great views over rural Roscommon and learn about the mill's story in its fascinating visitor centre.

Eat in Tarmonbarry after a harbour stroll

keenanshotel.ie

purpleonion.ie

In my view, the culinary epicentre of Roscommon is Tarmonbarry, where you'll find two amazing restaurants to choose from, close to the banks of the Shannon. A pre-dinner stroll around Tarmon Harbour and the lock is strongly recommended before you enjoy great local food and a warm welcome at Keenan's Hotel or the Purple Onion.

Have fun on the water at Grange and Kilglass Lakes

roscommon/the-silver-eel

fishinginireland.info/coarse/strokestown

I have spent decades boating, waterskiing and relaxing on these two beautiful lakes in the backwaters of the Shannon. They're hugely popular with

anglers too. Retiring to the Silver Eel in Strokestown for a meal with views over the water has marked the end of many fun-filled family days over the years.

Walk in the footsteps of Strokestown's famine emigrants

nationalfamineway.ie

A new long-distance trail from Strokestown to Dublin follows the route taken by the 1,490 people who – records show – left Strokestown as famine emigrants. The 165km National Famine Way joins the Shannon in Clondra before continuing along the banks of the Royal Canal. Walking a stretch of it offers you powerful insight into their struggle, their resilience and Ireland's recovery.

Cycle from Boyle Abbey to Lough Key Marina

heritageireland.ie/boyle-abbey

visitroscommon.ie/lough-key

For a refreshing and scenic day out, plan a cycle from Boyle to Lough Key, stopping at scenic and historic sites along the way. In the abbey's impressive ruins, you'll learn about Ireland's monastic past, and the abbey's excellent guides have great stories to tell about its sacking by Cromwellian forces and its role as a military garrison too. There's an excellent interpretive centre to visit too before you cycle the pleasant

route to Lough Key Marina, which is the perfect spot to enjoy a picnic and watch the boats go by.



Explore the Slieve Bawn trails

sliabh-bawn-trim-trail

If you're feeling energetic, take on the Slieve Bawn Trim trail where you'll find 12 fitness stations on your way to one of Doughill Forest's two mountain peaks. The Trim Trail is one of six looped walks. The trails introduce you to the area's rich heritage and offer great vantage points for viewing the local countryside.





Charlie Finneran

Owner, Derryglad Folk Museum

www.derrygladfolkmuseum.com

I'm Charlie Finneran and, with my family, I own and run the Derryglad Folk Museum. It houses over 7,500 items that reflect our local and national heritage and folk culture. It's a place of education, entertainment and fascination for our visitors, and we enjoy giving people a real insight into the life and traditions of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

My Hidden Gems

Learn about ancient Ireland at Drum Heritage Visitor Centre

drumheritage.ie

The exhibitions and collections of documents and memorabilia at the heritage centre in the village of Drum will give you wonderful insights into the lives of the people who have lived in this part of Roscommon over the centuries. The 12th-century abbey beside the centre is well worth a visit too.

Visit St. Brigid's Well and an ancient portal tomb

visitroscommon.ie/drum-heritage

A pleasant tree-lined pathway leads from Drum Heritage Visitor Centre to St Brigid's Well, where locals have called over the centuries in search of cures and comfort. Beyond it, you'll find an ancient dolmen (portal tomb) which dates back to 3500 BC - a reminder that this place has had powerful significance for millennia.

See traditional crafts revived at the Clay Pipe Visitor Centre

visitroscommon.ie

Ethel Kelly has revived the tradition of clay pipe making in Knockcroghery, which was renowned for almost 300 years for the production of clay tobacco pipes or *dúidíns*. Almost the whole village used to be involved in their manufacture! Call in to the centre to

learn about the history of clay pipes and watch, or even get involved in, pipe-making demonstrations.

Call to Lecarrow when you're sailing the Shannon

discovertheshannon.com/listings

If you're sailing the Shannon, be sure to stop at the modern marina in the village of Lecarrow to the northwest of Lough Ree. It's just a short walk from the marina to Coffey's bar, a lovely traditional pub which is beloved by boaters. It's a great place to catch live music on a Wednesday night!

Meet the animals at Glendeer Pet Farm

glendeerpETFarm.ie

For a family day out, rain or shine, you can't beat Glendeer Pet Farm. There are 50 species of animals for you to get to know, and children will love exploring the playgrounds, the play barn, and the fairy trail - and most of the farm's activities are wheelchair accessible. For adults, the cottage restored to the style of an 1850s' home is a fascinating place to visit, as well as the coffee shop, of course!

Enjoy the thrill of the chase at Roscommon Racecourse

roscommonracecourse.ie

For an adrenaline-packed evening out, head to Roscommon Racecourse where you'll see stunning Irish racehorses in

action and witness the skill of Ireland's Flat and National Hunt Racing jockeys. A race meet gives you a great way to meet the locals, and the food is wonderful there too.

Admire the ruins of Roscommon Abbey

visitroscommon.ie

A more serene setting can be found at Roscommon Abbey on the outskirts of the town. There you'll find an effigy of a king among the ruins. It's thought to represent the abbey's founder, Felim O'Connor, king of Connacht, who was buried there in 1265.





Ronan Brady

Physical artist, public speaker, coach and author

www.ronanbrady.me

I'm Ronan Brady and, while I often travel the world through my work as a physical artist, I love spending time at home on the banks of the River Shannon in Athlone. I enjoy conversations with strangers, and the opportunity for those are plenty in a town where boating tourism is thriving. I am drawn to water and I just love living so close to Lough Ree and the Shannon.

My Hidden Gems

Encounter Ireland's heroes at Rathcroghan Visitor Centre

rathcroghan.ie

At Rathcroghan's Visitor Centre, learn about Roscommon's ancient landscape and hear stories of the hero Cú Chulainn before you walk in the footsteps of Medb, the great warrior queen, and explore a royal landscape studded with burial mounds, ring forts and standing stones. You can even take a trip to the underworld at Oweynagat.



Work up an appetite for dinner at Savoury Fare

savouryfare.ie

visitroscommon.ie/monksland-way

Talk a walk along Roscommon's Monksland Way, where you'll discover the story of Ireland's monastic past and see historic sites like Ballintubber Castle, or enjoy a round of golf at Athlone Golf Club before retiring for a well-earned, tasty and locally sourced dinner at Savoury Fare.

Take a tour of Hodson Bay

hodsonbayhotel.com

hodsonbayhotel.com/yew-point

Listen to local history from Viking Mike on his boat tour up Lough Ree, then take a break at the Hodson Bay Hotel for some lunch. Before catching the return trip back into town, be sure to explore the magnificent 140-acre peninsula on which the hotel is set. The 5km Yew Tree Loop will give you a wonderful experience of this unspoiled meadowland and native woodlands. On our last trip to Hodson Bay, Viking George passed out treats to the local kids swimming from the pier in exchange for dives, cannonballs and backflips. It was great fun.

Find tranquil spots to moor your boat

Recently, I was gifted a book – *Lough Ree, An Illustrated Guide to Tranquil Moorings* – researched and compiled by my neighbour, Pat McManus, who lives full time on his boat Reelax. It's brilliant that he's sharing his deep knowledge of the river and I cannot wait to check his recommendations out!

Submerge yourself in the Shannon

hodsonbayhotel.com/location

I simply love going down the jetty and completely submerging myself in Lough Ree on the Shannon. It's invigorating and I always feel empowered coming

out. Make sure to swim with others and know where the closest ring buoy is, just in case. Hodson Bay and Coosan Point are two of the safest locations around Athlone for a paddle.

Enjoy the outdoors at Lough Ree

fishinginireland.info/trout

visitroscommon.ie/rinn-duin

Spend a day enjoying life on and around Lough Ree – the second largest lake on the River Shannon system. The lough is a popular destination for anglers fishing for trout and pike, while Judy's Harbour in Rindoon Bay is a beautiful scenic spot to take gorgeous photographs across the water, after a refreshing walk through the ancient woodlands of St. John's Wood.





Úna Burke

Leatherworker, Studio at Riversdale House

www.unaburke.com

My name is Úna Burke and I'm a leatherworker based in Knockvicar. My studio in Riversdale House (the former home of actress Maureen O'Sullivan) is where I produce sculptural fashion accessories, figurative art pieces and costumes for TV, film and theatre. I've had the privilege of dressing Michelle Yeoh in Star Trek, Jennifer Lawrence in The Hunger Games, and various musicians including Janet Jackson, Lady Gaga and Rihanna.

My Hidden Gems

Take a relaxing break at Riverhaven log cabins

riverhavenselfcatering.ie

unabhan.ie/una-bhan-legend

For a truly relaxing break, stay at Riverhaven Log Cabins, a beautiful eco-tourism development that's just a stone's throw from our studio. From here, row a boat out onto Lough Key in the morning to visit Castle Island and Trinity Island. According to local folklore, these islands formed the backdrop to the tragic love story of Úna Bhán.

Wander along the riverside path to Clarendon Lock

thewaterfrontrestaurant.ie

The riverside path by the lock makes for a relaxing walk and leads you up towards our workshop. Call in to see pieces worn by celebrities or maybe sign up for a beginners' leatherworking course. Then grab a bite to eat in the Waterfront Restaurant in Cootehall and watch the sun go down over Riverhaven Marina.

Meet the friendly characters at Knockvicar Alpaca Farm

KnockvicarAlpacas

Right here on our doorstep, you can meet the friendly fluffy alpacas at Knockvicar Alpaca Farm. Afterwards, why not pick up fresh produce at the

Knockvicar Organic Garden next door or visit Ardcarne Garden Centre, which is home to a really lovely café and gift shop.

Discover Roscommon's history at King House

visitkinghouse.ie

This magnificent Georgian mansion, elegantly restored, has served as home to the King family and a barracks for the Connacht Rangers. It's now a museum where you can learn about Roscommon's past and famous characters including Maureen O' Sullivan, best-known for her role as Jane Parker in the original Tarzan movies, who grew up locally and lived in Riversdale House where we have our studio.

Have an adventure at Lough Key Forest Park

loughkey.ie

Test your mind and body with friends at Boda Borg, whizz through the trees at Zipit, make a wish on the wishing chair or shelter from the rain under the meandering branches of the fairy tree in Lough Key's stunning forest park. Then explore the underground tunnels of the old Rockingham mansion or venture upwards to enjoy treetop walks and the spectacular 360-degree views from the top of the Moylurg tower.



Connect with the stories of John McGahern

mcgahernbarracks.ie

The Rockingham estate was immortalised in the fiction of John McGahern, one of Ireland's most acclaimed 20th-century novelists and short story writers. Much of his work is set against the landscape of the Roscommon-Leitrim border where he grew up and spent much of his later life, and you can learn about his fascinating story at the John McGahern Barracks museum.





Paddy Joe Barber

www.paddyjoe.com

I'm from Kinnity, Four Mile House, Co. Roscommon, and I've worked all my life as a barber, which means I'm always in touch with Roscommon's news! I'm a passionate GAA supporter, and my love for the 'Rossies' would be known nationally. I love everything about Roscommon. In fact, I think it is one of the greatest 'cities' in the world!

My Hidden Gems

Explore the ruins of Roscommon Castle

visitroscommon.ie/roscommon

The dramatic ruins of Roscommon's Norman Castle are an imposing presence in the town. Built in the 13th century on lands seized from an Augustinian priory, it was once in the hands of Hugh O'Connor, king of Connacht. You'll learn lots on the guided tours that run there several days a week, and when the castle is lit at night it looks spectacular!



Meet Ireland's heroes in Loughnaneane Park

visitroscommon.ie

Today, the castle is surrounded by the beautiful Loughnaneane Park. Its imaginative heritage trail connects a series of handcrafted statues of Irish heroes from the stories, true and legendary, that have shaped Ireland. Children will love clambering onto the park's gorgeous ornate nature seat and feeding the ducks on the lake, and it's a wonderful place for a picnic.

Watch our local heroes play hurling or Gaelic football

roscommongaels.ie

If it's modern Roscommon heroes you're looking for, get yourself a ticket and watch a match at Dr Hyde Park close by, where all the county's famous Gaelic footballers and hurlers have played. You'll find a statue of our greatest player, Gerry O'Malley, in his home village of Brideswell.

Find heritage treasures in Roscommon town

abbeyhotel.ie

Did you know that the tomb of the first high king of Connacht lies in the picturesque ruins on the grounds of the lovely Abbey Hotel? Close by, the Sacred Heart Church is an amazing work of art from a different era. Its Italian mosaics and stained glass are spectacular, and the church grounds are impressive too.

Remember Lady Betty at Roscommon's Old Gaol

roscommontownheritage.com

As you wander through the town, take a moment to pause at the Old Jail where Lady Betty gained infamy as Ireland's only hangwoman. The tragic tale of this murderer-turned-executioner serves as a haunting reminder of harsher times past.

Stroll on forest trails in Mote Park

coillte.ie/site/mote-park

On the outskirts of Roscommon town, you'll find the forest at Mote Park, for centuries the seat of the Crofton family. The various looped trails there are the perfect setting for beautiful, scenic and romantic walks, and the park holds great appeal for families, hikers and birdwatchers throughout the changing seasons.

Visit the National Famine Museum at Strokestown Park

strokestownpark.ie

Ireland's National Famine Museum is located in the courtyard of the 'Big House' at Strokestown. It tells the story of the Great Famine in the very shadow of this beautifully preserved Georgian Palladian house. The stark contrasts between its intertwined stories of the past are used powerfully, and it is a joy to explore the Victorian walled pleasure and vegetable gardens and woodland walk.





David Keenan

Pub owner, Keenans of Tarmonbarry

www.keenanshotel.ie/dining

I'm David Keenan, and I'm the sixth generation to run Keenans of Tarmonbarry, our family gastro-pub located where the mighty River Shannon and the N5 east/west road meet. I really enjoy meeting all the different people who cross the threshold, and I love our location on the ever-changing river – it's a privilege to live here. In my spare time, I'm a passionate sports fan and a senior Roscommon football player.

My Hidden Gems

Explore the Shannon by kayak

shannonriveradventure.com

I'm a real outdoors person, and I just love to get out on the river to paddle. It's an amazing way to see the world from a different perspective and let your cares drift away. I have my own kayak, but you can rent them locally too.



Cycle the Royal Canal Greenway on a summer evening

visitroscommon.ie/trails

stmelsbrewing.com

The new Royal Canal Greenway starts just a few minutes away from Tarmonbarry, and cycling along the towpath from Cloondara is a great way to spend a summer evening. Sometimes a cold beer hits the spot at journey's end, and one of my favourites is from our local brewer, St Mel's in Longford. It's perfect at the end of a balmy, sunny day or beside a winter fire!

Trace the footsteps of Roscommon's famine emigrants

nationalfamineway.ie

This incredible walk starts in Strokestown and goes all the way to EPIC, the Emigration Museum in Dublin, mainly along the Royal Canal, its route poignantly marked with little bronze children's shoes. I have to confess I haven't done all of it, but I've really enjoyed the sections I've walked so far. There's an app to guide you and a Famine Way passport which you can get stamped at any of the 27 stamping stations, including Keenans of Tarmonbarry.



Hear the music of the Shannon

thesession.org/sessions

I've inherited a love of music from my mother Annette, who is a violinist and was a music teacher before she became involved in the family business. I've

played the piano since I was a child and find it a wonderful way to relax. I also love catching a live music session at The Shannon Bar or one of the other charming pubs along the river.

Explore Roscommon's Sliabh Bawn trails

visitroscommon.ie

I like to stay fit all year round, not just during the football season, so my dog and I head to Sliabh Bawn a few times a week and we both get a chance to stretch our legs and shake off the cobwebs. I often choose the Trim Trail which has outdoor gym stations along the way. You can see six or seven counties as you look across the meandering curves of the Shannon. Sometimes the great views even reach as far as the distinctive peak of Croagh Patrick on the Atlantic coast.



Longford



Clondra Village, Co Longford



Fiona Egan Cookery School Owner

www.fionaegan.com

My name is Fiona Egan. Originally from Kenagh in Longford, I live in Abbeyshrule where myself and my husband Michael Farrell have our farm. We welcome visitors here for hands-on cookery classes along with farm and garden walks. I was the lucky recipient of the Local Food Hero (Leinster) award at the Irish Restaurant Awards 2020, and it was wonderful to accept that accolade for celebrating local Longford food!

My Hidden Gems

Trace literary history on the Oliver Goldsmith Trail

longford.ie

Learn about Longford's literary past when you trace the life of the world-renowned 18th-century poet and playwright Oliver Goldsmith on a trail from his birthplace in Pallas to many of the locations included in his poems and plays. Move from Ardagh Village - the location of 'She Stoops to Conquer' - to Ballymahon, where Goldsmith lived for many years. This rural Irish town has changed little since Goldsmith's early days!



© Longford County Council

Join the Royal Canal Greenway at Clondra Harbour

discovertheshannon.com/clondra

Cycle or stroll along the canal, taking in the stunning rural scenery as you go - all the way to Mullingar and beyond if you like - and watch out for the wide variety of birds who live around its placid waters.

Dine on the banks of the Royal Canal

rusticinn.ie

I love the delicious, home-cooked food to be found at the Rustic Inn on the banks of the Royal Canal in Abbeyshrule. Whether you are boating on the canal or exploring the Royal Canal Greenway, this is a cosy and welcoming place to eat by the water.

Explore the undulating trails in Newcastle Woods

discoverireland.ie/longford

We love to walk the paths and trails in Newcastle Woods by the River Inny, looking out for kingfishers, skylarks and the many other birds to be seen among the lovely oak, ash, beech, pine and spruce trees. If you're lucky, you may see fallow deer moving between the trees too.



© Longford County Council

See the restored glory of St Mel's Cathedral

longfordparish.com

[@torccafe](https://www.facebook.com/torccafe)

After Longford's historic cathedral was gutted in a fire in 2009, it took seven years to restore it to its former glory. Today the extraordinary modern craftsmanship it displays inspires every visitor who steps inside. It's a great place to find a moment's peace after a wander through Longford town or before you enjoy the fabulous hot chocolate at Torc Café.



© Longford County Council





Joe O'Brien Shop Owner

 @OBriensLanesboro

I'm Joe O'Brien and, with my wife Martina, I've been running a gift shop and newsagents for over 40 years in Lanesborough and Ballyleague, a warm and welcoming town that sits at the top of Lough Ree and straddles two counties. We are steeped in the history of the local area and love to share our knowledge of it with the tourists who call in to us during their stay in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

My Hidden Gems

Go fishing on an accessible Lough Ree boat trip

loughreeboattrips.com

Local fishing trips are now accessible for wheelchair users, allowing more people to enjoy a day on the lake. The roll-on, roll-off Access for All boat is a new addition to Lanesborough, but it is already winning awards. The boat offers a daily, year-round service (weather permitting), and it is great to see more people enjoying an adventure on the water!



© Ciaran Mullooly

Join the locals at a Clarke's Bar music session

 @clarkeslanesboro

There's no Wednesday night like the one you'll enjoy when you experience a traditional Irish music session in Clarke's bar on Lanesborough's Main Street. The quality of the musicians and the warm atmosphere make it, without a doubt, the best music session anywhere along the entire length of the Shannon.

Step into the past at the Corlea Trackway Visitor Centre

heritageireland.ie/places-to-visit

This Iron Age trackway, or togher, near the village of Keenagh, was known locally as the Danes' Road. You can see an amazingly preserved section of the track, which was constructed from oak planks in 148 BC, and learn all about it at the visitor centre before exploring the new bog walk beside it.

Enjoy the Commons North Woodland Walk

longford.ie

For a wonderful relaxing woodland walk, set out from the car park beside the bridge in Lanesborough. The route takes you past two old lime quarries on the northside and on to the harbour area before it enters quiet woodlands. The lovely playground nearby makes a great end to the walk for young families.

Find peace at St. John's Church, Lanesborough

loughree.ie

This charming late-19th-century Church of Ireland building retains its early form, character and fabric, and it is one of the most visited and talked about visitor sites in the area. Churches have stood on this spot since the 5th

century, and the site remains an island of peacefulness just metres from the centre of Lanesborough.

Watch the creation of amazing bogwood sculptures

bogwood.net/caseys-sculptures

No visit to this area would be complete without meeting the internationally renowned father and son team of Michael and Kevin Casey. Near the lovely Barley Harbour, Newtowncashel, witness the work that goes into the creation of their incredible sculptures in bog oak and other bog wood. You'll also find their beautiful sculptures in Quarry Park!





Ciaran Mullooly

Access for All Boat Trips

www.loughreeboattrips.com

I'm Ciaran Mullooly, and I was born by the banks of the majestic River Shannon. Having always been a boat person, I'm so proud that, after a friend's suggestion, I've been able to open up the river so all can enjoy it on our Access for All boat. It's a real eco-experience going out on Lough Ree, and I still remember the thrill of my own first voyage!

My Hidden Gems

Sample a wee drop at Lough Ree Distillery

lrd.ie

If you're partial to a wee drop of gin – in moderation, of course – then why not drop into Peter Clancy and Mike Sorohan and the crew at the Lough Ree Distillery in Lanesborough? Their Sling Shot Gin is delicious – it's the only gin in the world to use peat as a botanical, so it gives a real flavour of Longford, and it is great to see all the processes that distilling involves.



© Brigid Mullooly

Rent a boat to fish the mighty Shannon

loughree.ie/activities/angling/

If you have half a day to spare on your travels, why not rent a boat and head up the Shannon from Ballymahon or Lanesborough in search of what Jack Charlton once said was one of life's unbeaten pleasures? The pike and predators on Lough Ree are legendary, and the area is very popular with international anglers.



Take a break at Center Parcs in Longford Forest

centerparcs.ie

Though Ireland's first Center Parcs is close by, we couldn't resist an overnight visit and thoroughly enjoyed our stay in the woods! The indoor pool is amazing. For me, though, it was lazing around in the spacious wooden chalets and the fabulous pancake restaurant that made the trip unforgettable. While you're there, get up on that mega zip-line and show your kids how brave you are!

Visit the monastic ruins at Cloontuskert

irishstones.org

When St Brendan the Navigator and his brother, St Faithleach, travelled north along the River Shannon, they came ashore close to Ballyleague and founded a monastery at Cloontuskert. The holy well amid the ruins is said to have curative powers.

Sail to the island of Inchcleraun

longford.ie

Private island – access only with permission

The island of Inchcleraun on Lough Ree is a truly magical place to visit. It has the ruins of seven churches and tales to tell from the 6th and 7th centuries. Ask the locals about the dramatic robbery of heritage stones there in the 1990s for an even more hair-raising tale! You can get a boat there from Barley Harbour in Newtowncashel or from Portrunny bay.

Choose your kayaking challenge

Of all the counties along the River Shannon, Longford has the longest shoreline, and its beautiful scenery makes the county a great place to kayak. The Inny and Camlin rivers, as well as Lough Gowna and Lough Ree, are also brilliant places to paddle or take on the exhilarating challenge of navigating moving waters and rapids!





Noel Carberry

Tour Guide/Musician

heritageireland.ie

I'm Noel Carberry, and I work as a tour guide at the Corlea Trackway Centre, where you'll get to see 18 metres of the largest timber structure to survive from the Iron Age. It dates back to 148 BC! I also play the uilleann pipes, and there is nothing I like more than meeting up with fellow musicians in a comfortable hostelry to share songs, tunes and yarns.

My Hidden Gems

Raise a glass to Queen Maeve

lrd.ie

If you're sailing Lough Ree – the lake of the kings – stop off at Inchcleraun (seek permission from landowner), the historic island where Ireland's legendary warrior Queen Maeve was killed. Lough Ree distillery has named its prize-winning gin 'Slingshot' in tribute, so you can raise a glass to her in one of the excellent pubs in Lanesborough – my favourite town on the River Shannon.

Chat with the locals in Newtowncashel

[@thelocalcashel](https://www.facebook.com/thelocalcashel)

When you're in the picturesque village of Newtowncashel on the shores of Lough Ree, be sure to drop in to The Local for a chat with the regulars. It's a great place to relax and enjoy a taste of stress-free rural life, and it's less than ten minutes from the Corlea bog's wonderful cycle trail and walkways.

Get a taste of Longford in Ballymahon

wilderandgold.com

jollyboys.ie

After a walk on Ballymahon's trails, we always call for coffee at Wilder and Gold, a really fabulous independent café. For dinner in the town, we love

Jolly Boys Pizza & Grill. Their beef is all from co-owner Mike's family farm only 2km away, and their new gourmet burger 'The Don' is to die for!

Walk or cycle Corlea's trail

longford.ie

I love to see families enjoying the pleasant looped paths around the trackway centre, taking in views over Longford's natural bogland and noticing the native flora and fauna that thrive there, including carnivorous plants!

Walk the greenway to Clondra

[@Leavysoffoigha](https://www.facebook.com/Leavysoffoigha)

After exploring Corlea's trails, call into the Foigha, a traditional Longford pub, for a wholesome lunch and refreshments. Then, if you have energy for more exploring, spend the afternoon walking the nearby Royal Canal Greenway to Richmond harbour where the canal reaches the Shannon.

Hire a bike to explore the Royal Canal Greenway

midlandscyclehub.ie

Go for a leisurely canalside cycle after hiring a bike from the family-run Midlands Cycle Hub in Clondra, conveniently located at the end of the Royal Canal. You can book guided tours here, set out on the Famine Way

to the Strokestown museum, or simply meander between Longford's attractive towns and villages.

Eat canalside at the Richmond Inn

richmondinnireland.com

After your adventures, mingle with walkers, boaters and locals at the popular Richmond Inn in Clondra. This welcoming, family-run pub was a flax mill in the 1800s before being converted in the 1930s, and today it's a great place to combine a tasty meal, a snack or a creamy pint with lovely views over the canal.





Peter Clancy

Distiller

lrd.ie

I'm Peter Clancy and I co-founded Lough Ree Distillery in 2018, along with my sister Sheila and brother Mike. We established a micro-distillery in our hometown of Lanesborough, a place we're all passionate about, with a simple vision - to bring the finest Irish spirits to the world from our homeplace. Now we're busy expanding the distillery and our visitor experiences beside the Shannon.

My Hidden Gems

Take the plunge in the River Shannon

outdoorswimming.ie

wildswim.ie/swim-spotter

The best area for swimming is at the harbour area down from Lanesborough car park. You won't be there long before you are joined by others, suited, booted and ready to go. It's best to wear a tow buoy and wetsuit if you can for safety so you can concentrate on enjoying the river!

Learn the story of Maria Edgeworth in Edgeworthstown

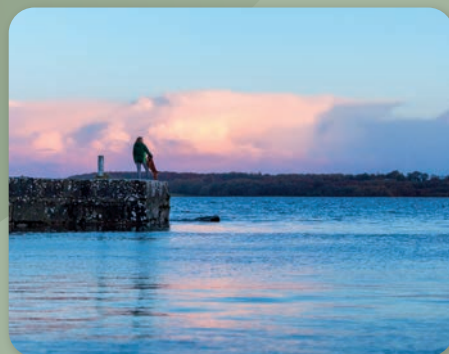
mariaedgeworthcenter.com

Join a local guide to learn about the life and work of Longford's most famous daughter. Novelist and educator Maria Edgeworth made her name as the 18th-century author of *Castle Rackrent*. When you visit the charming grounds of her ancestral home and the schoolhouse built under her family's patronage in the 1840s, you'll be walking in the footsteps of Sir Walter Scott, William Wordsworth and Oscar Wilde, who all came here to pay tribute to her work.

Watch the sunset at Barley Harbour

longford.ie

This limestone harbour overlooking the majestic Lough Ree is just lovely at sunset. Although it was constructed in the 1950s, the harbour looks like it has been part of the lake's landscape forever. Bring your camera to catch the evening light, or visit in the daytime to fish or simply read a book in peace!



Catch a performance at the Backstage Theatre

backstage.ie

Spend an evening at this much-loved midlands arts venue - it's a great place to catch up with productions from Ireland's best touring theatre companies, and it's a cosy and accessible setting for breathtaking dance performances and hilarious comedy too.

Explore the Shannon from Lanesborough

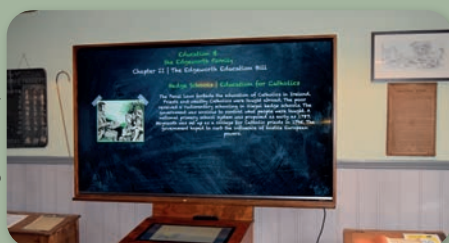
cruiserboatsireland.com

There's no better way to experience the peace, tranquillity and calm of the River Shannon than a cruise or a fishing trip with a group of friends or family. Helen and Paddy will help you to plan your adventure before you set out from Lanesborough, and Paddy is a keen fisherman, so he is well able to recommend the best places to land a great catch.

Cook up a feast at Cloughan Farm

fionaegan.com

Fiona Egan welcomes people of all ages into her kitchen to work with produce that's often freshly picked from her kitchen garden and orchard. A hands-on, 'farm to fork' cookery class with Fiona gives you a lovely way to connect with rural life. And if you visit on a summer's day, don't miss the chance to try one of her delicious, home-made, fruit cordials!





Brigid Mullooly

Secretary, Lanesborough Town Team

 @brigid_mullooly

I'm Brigid Mullooly and, as a keen amateur photographer, I love living in the vibrant town of Lanesborough. Every season offers perfect photo opportunities with changing, awe-inspiring light! It's an idyllic place to watch a stunning sunset, while keeping a close eye on the returning fishermen or to watch a starling murmuration in winter. And autumn brings with it a radiant set of colours along the Shannon banks.

My Hidden Gems

Experience the wildness of Lough Ree

loughreeboattrips.com

Sit back and enjoy panoramic views over Lough Ree on a River Shannon boat trip. View the Shannon's many islands, bays and inlets, and experience the wilderness and beauty that is Lough Ree. The trip introduces you to many species of waterfowl including moorhens, black-headed gulls and cormorants, as well as the impressive mute swans that glide majestically by.



Walk through history on the bog walk

heritageireland.ie

It's exciting to see the first section of the Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park Greenway open! The trail follows the route of Bord na Móna's industrial railway lines, and it is wonderful to see those routes reclaimed so that we can walk or cycle along the edge of the bog and see ancient bog oak in its natural setting.



Enjoy a Distillery Yard Coffee by the river

lrd.ie

Behind Lough Ree Distillery, where award-winning gins, whiskeys and vodkas are created, and opposite the excellent local playground, you'll find a coffee trailer situated a stone's throw from the Shannon banks in an idyllic setting. Seating is provided, but I like to take my coffee and a delicious pastry down to the riverside.

Fish the teeming waters of Lough Ree

loughree.ie/activities/angling/

If you are a coarse angler, the River Shannon offers great fishing opportunities for you. The warm waters released from Ardnacrusha create spots where tench, hybrids, roach and large bream abound, and pike anglers will love exploring the Lough's northern shores. Lough Ree Angling Hub promotes angling in the area, and is a great source of advice!

Stay a while on Lanesborough's Main Street

longford.ie

It's tempting to spend time at The Wooden Spoon restaurant, which serves a scrumptious all-day breakfast and lunch menu with outdoor dining. Joe O'Brien's traditional corner shop offers

the best ice cream '99s' and traditional gifts, while Aidie Farrell's pub menu and music always delight visitors. You'll find great traditional music at The Yacht Bar and Clarke's Bar too.

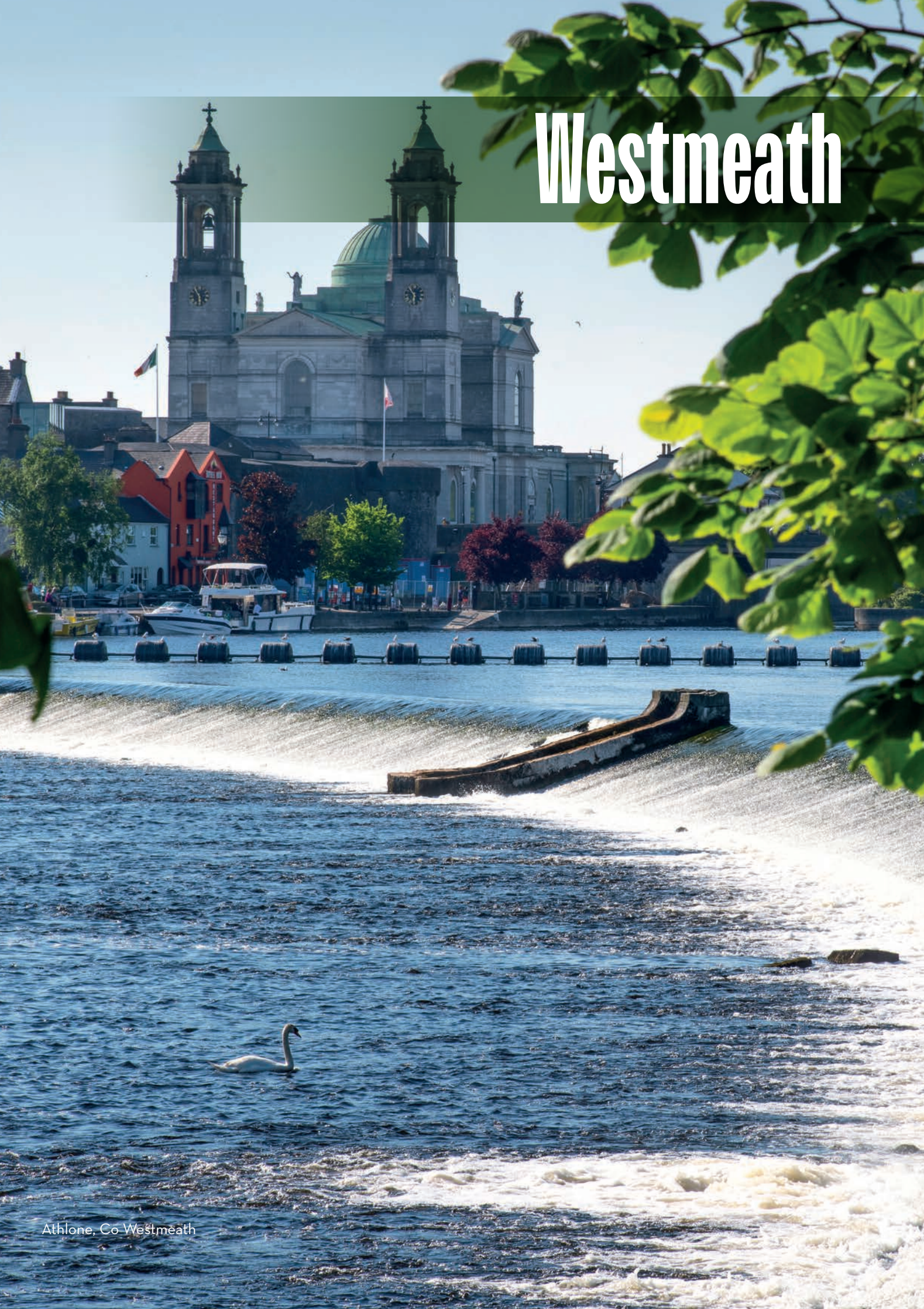
Kayak to an island on the Shannon

 @Vertical-Kayakers

It's great to get out on the water to kayak with local guide and instructor Junior Pat Hannon. He offers kayaking lessons from the old harbour in Ballyleague, as well as evening kayaking trips and tours on the Shannon, all tailored to how experienced you are with a paddle!



Westmeath





Helen Conneely

Artist, Celtic Roots Studio

www.celtic-roots.com

I'm Helen Conneely, and Ballinahown village on the edge of Ireland's deep bogs is home to the Celtic Roots Studio, the workshop, gallery and interpretative space where I showcase the ancient history of bog oak, the legacy of bogs in Ireland and the process of turning a 5000-year-old piece of bog oak into beautiful sculptures or pieces of jewellery.

My Hidden Gems

Immerse yourself in the peaceful midlands landscape

visitwestmeath.ie/get-outdoors

My heart feels 'buried' in the midlands, as I love where I live and work. It's a privilege to quietly experience natural beauty every day, either driving on the winding country roads or just sitting on the edge of Lough Ree, close to Portlick Millennium Forest. Walking in this woodland alongside the Lough Ree shoreline is so peaceful and calm and so far from any signs of human activity.



Follow in the footsteps of pilgrims on Slí Mór

visitoffaly.ie/Things-to-do

The deep bogs that envelop our history close to the ancient site at Clonmacnoise form the backdrop to one of my favourite drives along the ancient pilgrim's path from Ballinahown to Clonmacnoise. It is wonderful to see the route revived all the way out to Ballycumber and to see walkers and cyclists tracing this historic route.

See amazing ancient rock art on the Clonfinlough Stone

megalithicireland.com

Clonmacnoise, which dates back to 6th century, is a beautiful place to visit in early morning or at sunrise, particularly off season, and I'm always drawn to stop at the less well-known Clonfinlough Stone close by too. The large glacial boulder decorated with intricate rock art is a constant source of fascination and the local farm animals are often keen to be part of the experience!



Admire St Manchan's Shrine in Boher Church

visitoffaly.ie/Boher-St-Manchan-s-Shrine

In the parish of Ballinahown, you'll find what is probably my favourite piece of ancient Irish Christian art – a stunning 12th-century yew wood and bronze box which contains the relics of St Manchan. The church's Harry Clarke stained glass windows are stunning too. I love to sit quietly and observe the details in these

extraordinary artworks and feel privileged to have these treasures so close by.

Visit the site of Ireland's oldest encampment

slievebloom.ie

Lough Boora's mesolithic site is the oldest camp ever found on the Irish landscape. It's a central part of the Lough Boora parklands, and the 2km walk after the pavilion to the original lake shoreline under the deep bogs through wild and open countryside, is well worth taking!





Miriam Grogan

Owner, Grogan's pub and restaurant

 @grogansofglasson

I'm Miriam Grogan and I own Grogan's pub and restaurant in Glasson. Built in the 1780s, the pub is as old as the village itself! I love welcoming visitors to our cosy front bar with its lovely open fire and traditional flag floor and serving up good food, fine wine and exceptional pints of Guinness for our visitors, as well as sharing tips about our charming village.

My Hidden Gems

Take a stroll through the village of the roses

discoverireland.ie/glasson

The village of Glasson became known as the village of the roses thanks to the tireless efforts of Robert Harris Temple who became the landlord of the Walderstown estate in 1851. He personally took care of the local trees and flowers until the picturesque local cottages were smothered in roses and fuchsias as they still are each summer!

Find beautiful gifts at Glasson Craft Gallery

glassoncraft.ie

While you're visiting our charming village, do pop in to the Glasson Craft Gallery, a wonderful craft shop full of original paintings and prints, as well as contemporary crafts, unique glass work and hand-made jewellery created by incredible Irish artists.



Hire a boat at the Lakeside Marina

loughreecruisers.com

Just a short walk from Glasson along the shores of Lough Ree, you'll find the sheltered harbour at the Lakeside Marina where you can hire a day cruiser to explore the many islands on the lake. Some bear traces of 4th and 5th century monastic ruins while others have yielded Viking treasure.

Tee off (or enjoy a G&T) with lakeside views

wineport.ie

glassonlakehouse.ie

On the way back, why not pop into The Wineport Lodge to enjoy a refreshing G&T by the lakeside while you watch the cruisers float by? Across the water is the Glasson Lakehouse, which is home to one of the most beautiful and challenging golf clubs in the country.

Stroll through native woodland at Portlick Millennium Forest

visitwestmeath.ie/portlick-millennium-forest

Explore the wooded glades and farmlands of Portlick and the Whinny peninsula at Portlick Millennium Forest. The 5km trail there takes you through hazel and ash woodlands, rich in native plants and wildlife. I love visiting the

ruins of Whinny House within the park and looking out across the still waters of Lough Ree.

Enjoy fine dining in and around Glasson

athlone.ie/glasson

After a busy day exploring the Shannon region, take time to sit back, relax and enjoy a fine meal at one of the five exceptional restaurants in and around Glasson. You'll be spoilt for choice between Grogan's, The Villager, The Wineport Lodge, The Killinure Chalets and Glasson Lakehouse.





Liam Tutty

Founder, Dead Centre Brewing, Athlone

deadcentrebrewing.com

I'm Liam Tutty, and in February 2019, I opened the first craft brewery in Westmeath. It's one of the only taprooms in the country where the brewery is located inside a fully licensed pub. We are passionate about crafting the best beers possible, showcasing the processes we use and giving people a taste of Athlone, right here on the banks of the beautiful River Shannon.

My Hidden Gems

Step back in time at Athlone Castle

athlonecastle.ie

A visit to Athlone Castle is a real treat! Kids love the interactive, audio-visual displays, the games and colourful costumes. And you're sure to be fascinated by vivid stories about early settlements and the siege of Athlone, as well as characters from warring chieftains to foreign invaders and local heroes.



© Ros Kavanagh

Sail the river with Viking Mike

vikingtoursireland.ie

It's impossible to miss the Viking boat in Athlone, skippered by Viking Mike. Everyone calls him that - I wouldn't be surprised if that name was on his birth certificate, and he'll share tales that will plunge you 1,200 years into the past, whether you're taking a cruise around Lough Ree or enjoying his novel taxi service from Hodson Bay to town!

Taste Bell Lane Coffee at Fine, Athlone

fineathlone.ie

Bell Lane Coffee is roasted locally in Mullingar and it is served perfectly, along with some really fantastic food, at Fine on Church Street. There's a great selection of local artisan food to be found here and great chats to be had across the counter. Don't miss the cinnamon rolls. Trust me, they'll change your life!

Find fun at Athlone's adventure playground

athlonersc.ie

The Old Rail Trail that runs from Athlone to Mullingar has been a fantastic addition to Athlone. We love using it for a short stroll, alongside a scooter for our daughter and the pram for our son, to the Regional Sports Centre. The kids have brilliant fun there on the adventure playground's swings, slides and climbing frames while we enjoy sneaky flat whites from Spill The Beans coffee trailer.

Treat yourself to the best Irish cuisine at Thyme

thymrestaurant.ie

What can I say about Thyme that hasn't already been screamed about online or in the press? An overnight sensation, this Michelin Bib Gourmand restaurant, run by John Coffey and his wife Tara, is located directly opposite our brewery

in the heart of Athlone. The team there never fail to impress with seasonal, fresh dishes that combine the best of traditional and contemporary Irish cuisine.

Make a splash at Baysports inflatable water park

baysports.ie

The first time I visited the inflatable water park at Hodson Bay, I wasn't sure quite what to expect. The answer is just an insane amount of craic. You'll find unique and award-winning floating slides, rockers and every challenge in between out on the water, and scenic picnic spots and a colourful café add to the fun. It's a great day out for kids, adults...everyone.





Viking Mike

Owner, Viking Tours Ireland

www.vikingtoursireland.ie

I'm Michael McDonnell, but everyone knows me as Viking Mike! I began my sailing journey as a teenager off the west coast of Kerry and I've sailed many well-known Tall Ships, but since I set up my themed boat tours in Athlone over 20 years ago, my passion has been for sharing the waterways and their stories with visitors young and old!

My Hidden Gems

Marvel at the art and views in the riverside Luan Gallery

athlone.ie/visit/the-luan-gallery/

The views across the Shannon from the Luan Gallery on the riverbank in Athlone rival the works of art on the walls! The exhibitions in this bright, airy gallery showcase the work of contemporary artists from across the midlands, Ireland and beyond, and the building is a work of art in its own right.



Discover Athlone's riverside flora and fauna

athlone.ie/shannon-banks-nature-trail

Don't miss the Shannon Banks Nature Trail, a lovely looped 5kms that starts behind Athlone Castle. Follow the tranquil trail along the banks of the River Shannon and the old Athlone canal, learning about nature, wildlife and the river's biodiversity from the illustrated information boards along the route.

Take a picnic to Burgess Park

visitwestmeath.ie/burgess-park-athlone

Athlone is a bustling town, with the river at its heart, and Burgess Park is a super place to soak up the riverside atmosphere while you enjoy a picnic gathered from the town's stores. The wooded trails, parkland and playground attract people of all ages, so there's always a great buzz there on a fine day.

Find vegetarian delights at Al Mezza, Athlone

almezza.ie

I love bringing visitors to Al Mezza - behind the modest exterior, the atmosphere and service are outstanding. The vegetarian 'set mezza' menu is my favourite, but you'll find a wide range of fantastic Lebanese dishes cooked with the best Irish produce, as well as delicious desserts and a great choice of gluten-free options too.

Enjoy beer and pizza at the dead centre of Ireland

deadcentrebrewing.com

If beer, pizza and a great atmosphere are what you're after, you can't go wrong at Dead Centre Brewing, which has award-winning food and a view that's hard to match. A beautiful, copper-clad brewery takes pride of place in the bar where you can learn about the brewing

process, taste fresh beers direct from the tank and see a real micro-brewery in operation.



Be inspired by dramatic bog wood sculptures

celtic-roots.com

Be sure to call in to artist and guide Helen Conneely in the lovely Ballinahown studio where her work with and stories about Irish bog oak will take you on a journey into Ireland's ancient past. Passionate about the rich stories and history of the ancient bogs of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, Helen makes amazing bog wood sculptures that will take your breath away.





Regina Bushell

Director, RTÉ All Ireland Drama Festival & MD Grovelands Childcare

dramafestival.ie

As the busy managing director of 6 early learning and care centres here in the midlands, I love to relax in my home village of Glasson. The inner lakes you'll see as you travel here are the perfect places for me to indulge in my hobbies of nature-watching and photography. My passion for the arts keeps me closely connected with my Athlone birthplace, and I am also the current director of the RTÉ All Ireland Drama Festival which welcomes hundreds of visitors to the town each spring.

My Hidden Gems

Explore Athlone town, past and present

athlonecastle.ie

I love to visit the Athlone Castle Visitor Centre to learn about the town's storied past, and enjoy the stunning views over the Shannon from the top of the castle on a fine day. Then enjoy a spot of retail therapy in the town, where the two shopping centres and a host of independent retailers will leave you spoilt for choice.



Enjoy a scone from the Corner House Bistro

cornerhousebistro.ie

One of my favourite places for lunch in Athlone is the award-winning Corner House Bistro on Dublin Gate Street. Some days, I order a take-away coffee and scone and head for the banks of the River Shannon where there are lovely spots to sit and read a book or feed the swans and the ducks.

Travel not one, but two Greenways!

athlone.ie

If walking and cycling on Ireland's Greenways appeals to you, Westmeath is the place to be. Two Greenways pass through the county, and they cross paths in Mullingar. It is so relaxing to cycle or stroll along the Old Rail Trail that leads to Athlone or along the Grand Canal Greenway, which stretches all the way to Longford via the lovely Coolnahay Harbour and Ballynacarrigy.

Savour life's finer things in Glasson

[@grogansofglasson](https://www.facebook.com/grogansofglasson)

Here in Glasson, you'll have lots of choice for quality places to eat with great service and atmosphere in the middle of the village. Sample the fish in Grogan's where you might also catch some live music on a Friday night. You should also check out the Glasson Craft Gallery next door for unique and original pieces by Irish artists and designers.

Dine with a spectacular sunset view at Wineport Lodge

wineport.ie

If you are looking to enjoy a really special and relaxed evening watching a romantic sunset over the lake, then Wineport Lodge is not to be missed. It is truly a magnificent place to eat or stay and relax at any time of the year.

Drink in the oldest pub in Ireland

seansbar.ie

Enjoy a pint or a glass of wine in Seán's Bar, where an inn has stood since around 900AD. You can choose to enjoy the great company the cosy bar attracts or simply watch the activity on the River Shannon below, where you'll see boats going through the lock gates or swans serenely floating by.





Timmy Donovan

Rowing coach, Athlone Boat Club

www.athloneboatclub.ie

I'm Timmy Donovan, and I worked in the heart of Athlone at Seán's Bar, the oldest pub in Ireland, for 34 years. Since I retired, I've had even more time for my passion, which is rowing on the Shannon. I grew up beside the Shannon and I've been rowing since the age of 10 with Athlone Boat Club, so I feel a great connection with the water!

My Hidden Gems

Learn the lore of the Shannon on a River Run cruise tour

theriverrun.ie

Whatever the weather, you can enjoy touring the river on a covered River Run cruise boat, learning the Shannon's stories on a tour that takes you out onto the water from the centre of Athlone. I've been guiding on The River Run for many years and love talking to visitors about the origin of whiskey, the islands on Lough Ree and the Viking history that shaped our past. Athlone Castle is close, so I'd definitely recommend combining your boat trip with the excellent interactive tour there for a fantastic day out.

Cycle along the Old Rail Trail

athlone.ie

Another pastime of mine is cycling, and I especially love to cycle on The Old Rail Trail from Shannon Marina by the Radisson Hotel all the way up to Mullingar. If you're visiting the area, the route gives you a scenic way to reach brilliant places like Dún na Sí Heritage Park in Moate and Belvedere House, Gardens and Park in Mullingar.



Find the past at Dún na Sí Heritage Park

dunnasi.ie

You can visit Dún na Sí - the 'fort of the fairies' - to simply enjoy the lovely parklands, wetlands reserve, sculptures and playground with the family, or take time to explore the fascinating heritage park, where you can marvel at prehistoric monuments and immerse yourself in recreated scenes of Irish rural life.



Watch the sun rise and set from the water's edge

athlone.ie

I love coaching local children on Lough Ree and along the Shannon Callows with my brother Paul. The tranquillity of those early mornings on the water, watching the sun rise, is wonderful.

Many of the youngsters have been drawn to rowing by the success of West Cork's O'Donovan brothers at the Olympics, and they joke that they have their own Donovan rowing brothers to teach them here in Athlone! I have always appreciated the excitement and wonder of this historic stretch of water, but I particularly love the stillness you find at the start of the day as the sunbeams start to light up the town. You can see Athlone's quiet beauty at sunset too, as life around the river quiets again.

Traditional Irish music at Seán's bar

seansbar.ie

To finish off a day in Athlone, I love to return to Seán's Bar for a traditional Irish music session. These days, I get to relax and enjoy it with a creamy pint of Guinness in hand, and that's as good as it gets as far as I'm concerned.



Galway



Portumna Castle and Gardens, Co Galway



Teresa Roche

Cheesemaker, Kylemore Farmhouse Cheeses

www.kylemorefarmhousecheese.com

I'm Teresa Roche, and I produce speciality cheeses at Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese on the foothills of the Slieve Aughty Mountains in East Galway. I love meeting visitors when they call in to choose fresh baking, local cheeses and other lovely things from our farmshop or to treat themselves to our delicious afternoon tea, followed by a walk and talk tour of our village.

My Hidden Gems

Experience the artistry of Abbey, past and present

abbey.galwaycommunityheritage.org

Abbey village is simply beautiful. It takes its name from the Abbey of Kilnalahan which dates back to the mid-13th century, and its ruins remain in the centre of the village. Our visitors love to explore it after afternoon tea on a 'walk and talk tour' with the talented local artist who lives here on the farm.



Explore Galway's 'living bog' and trails

galwaylivingbog.com

coillte.ie/site/mountbellew

Carrownagappul Bog, just outside Mountbellew, is one of the biggest, most accessible raised bogs in Ireland and one of the most beautiful in all of Europe. The family walking and cycling trails around Mountbellew's woodlands are also worth exploring. Look out for The Boat House, Forge, Bridge and Mill Race, as well as the old walled garden, to find traces of life as it was once lived on the Grattan-Bellew estate.



Feed the ducks when you picnic at Portumna marina

visitportumna.com

When people pick up a picnic from our shop, I often suggest they enjoy it at Portumna's scenic marina. There's a lovely grassy spot there, where you can relax as you eat. You'll love watching the holidaying cruisers making their way along the Shannon, and the experience isn't complete without feeding the ducks!

Pick up the pace at Pallas Go Karting

pallaskarting.com

If you're after an adventure, get behind the wheel at Pallas Go Karting, which boasts Europe's longest Go Kart track. The paintballing there is a brilliant thing to try too, and there's a version available for younger children that is lots of fun. Whoever's with you, you'll all be telling different versions of who won the paintball warfare for years to come!

Cycle the forest park's Bonaveen trail

dicksbikerehire.ie

The trails in Portumna Forest Park are perfect for exploring by bike, so call to Dick Ridge to hire a traditional or electric bike that's a good fit for you. There's a brilliant family-friendly waymarked route through the forest but, if you're feeling more adventurous, take the twisty Bonaveen loop which rewards you with magnificent views over Lough Derg!





Steve Dolan

CEO of Galway Rural Development

grd.ie

I'm Steve Dolan, and I'm CEO of Galway Rural Development. As the former manager of the Irish Workhouse Centre in Portumna, and founder-manager of the University of Limerick's IWC Certificate in Local History, I'm passionate about helping visitors to understand and connect with Galway's communities and its storied past when they visit our amazing county.

My Hidden Gems

Uncover the past at Portumna Workhouse

irishworkhousecentre.ie

The Irish Workhouse Centre in Portumna is an arts, heritage and cultural centre for the region. It's the only centre in Ireland dedicated to telling the story of the workhouse system. It affected so many lives, and a visit promises you real insight into troubled but important times in Irish history.

Admire Portumna Castle and Gardens

heritageireland.ie/places-to-visit

Portumna castle offers a unique example of the transitional Irish architecture of the early 1600s, and a visit to this landmark and its gorgeous gardens captures so much of Irish history and culture. You're sure of a chat with the locals on your visit, and there are great places nearby to grab a cuppa!



Visit St. Brendan's resting place at Clonfert Cathedral

discoverireland.ie/galway

Clonfert Cathedral, with its distinctive stone doorway, stands on the grounds where Saint Brendan "The Navigator" founded a monastery in the 6th century. It is also his final resting place, and tourists from around the globe who come to learn his story always marvel at the building's famous ornate carvings.



Head east to Eyrecourt Village

heritage.galwaycommunityheritage.org

Eyrecourt village stands at the midway point of the Beara-Breifne Way walking route, and it's well worth a visit to appreciate the beautiful architecture of this once mighty town. It may be on the far easterly border of the county, but Eyrecourt was once the powerbase for the whole of Galway. As a historian, I find the place to be a mine of historical interest.

Visit one of Ireland's oldest Catholic churches

franciscans.ie/meelick-co-galway

My very favourite religious building, Meelick Church, is one of the oldest Catholic churches in Ireland - it has been in continuous use since 1414! Its graveyard also contains perhaps the loveliest epitaph on any tombstone. Hidden to the right of the church you'll find a stone with an inscription from a devastated parent which reads simply, 'he never gave his father any trouble'.

Join the Hymany Way at Meelick Weir

lawrencetown.com/meelick-weir

The magnificent weir and its walkway over the Shannon connect Galway and Offaly, as well as linking into the Hymany Way - a stretch of the Beara-Breifne Way which extends from Cork to Leitrim. In fact, Meelick is a great place to break your hike through Ireland's Hidden Heartlands with an overnight stay by the Shannon too.





Paul Dillon

Manager, Pallas Karting & Paintball

pallaskarting.com

I'm Paul Dillon, and I was born and raised in Portumna. I'm back living here for the last 20 years after running pubs around the county, and for most of that time I've been helping people to have fun at Pallas Karting and Paintball. I'm proud to be raising my family here – we have 2 lovely kids – and I enjoy playing my part in local tourism and community groups too.

My Hidden Gems

Find it all in Portumna

visitportumna.com

Portumna has so much to offer within a small radius – it's amazing what we have within 5k of our doorstep, and so much of it is free! From the Forest Park and Blue Flag bathing waters to the Golf Club and local heritage attractions, there are so many great places to walk, cycle, swim, fish, discover and relax – we're blessed!

Treat the family to an amazing adventure

clare.ie/do/aistear-park

Our young kids just love The Maze in Mountshannon's Aistear Park and spend hours just chasing and messing there. It is a lovely way to pass an afternoon, especially when we follow up with a visit to Wilde Irish Chocolate's factory to pick up a bar, or two or three, to keep the sugar levels up – just yum!



Take in the views around Woodford

woodfordgalway.com

[f](#) @Walshs-Woodford

Working in Woodford for a while, I came to love the views that can be seen from Flesk, The Ben Hill, Derryoover, Lough Atorick and Derrycrag. It may feel like you're on another planet or in the wilderness, but you're never too far from civilisation. Make sure you stop in to Walsh's and say hello to Declan for dinner and a pint on the way home!



Spend a beautiful day kayaking on Lough Derg

wavestowilderness.ie

No matter what your talent in the kayak, Becky and crew will look after you and give you a lovely, fun day on Lough Derg. Whether you're with a group, flying solo or joining a summer camp, you're sure to have a brilliant time. The weather doesn't matter as the lake is beautiful any day!



Find hidden heritage off the beaten track

galwaytourism.ie

We all know of Portumna Castle, Nenagh Castle, Holy Island and stories of Brian Ború, but there are many lesser-known castles, legends and interesting ruins around the area. We just love Pallas Castle and Redwood Castle. Visits to the beautiful heritage village of Lorrha, Lackeen Castle and the Graves of the Leinstermen will help you uncover many more of the amazing stories to be found hereabouts!





Dick Ridge

Owner, Pod Umna Glamping Village

Podumnavillage.ie

I'm Dick Ridge, and Portumna is my home town. When visitors come to Pod Umna for glamping or camping, my family and I are passionate about introducing them to the highlights and hidden gems in the town itself and in the surrounding areas. And since 2016, we've run a bike hire service to help them explore the fantastic landscape along the Shannon for themselves!

My Hidden Gems

Make a splash in Portumna's outdoor pool

outdoorswimming.ie/connaught

Portumna's spotlessly clean outdoor lakeside pool and recreation area give you safe and fun ways to experience swimming and paddling in Lough Derg. There are lifeguards on duty during the summer from early morning to 7pm. Whether you are paddling with children in the shallow area or swimming in deeper waters, you'll be able to take in fantastic views across Lough Derg!

Walk through Portumna Forest Park's bluebell grove

visitportumna.com

A carpet of bluebells covers the forest floor in Portumna Forest Park in the springtime, mingling with the delicate white flowers of wild garlic. It's a beautiful time to take photos there or simply to soak up the peaceful atmosphere and nature's unspoilt beauty.



Explore the walled garden at Portumna Castle

heritageireland.ie/places-to-visit

Portumna Castle is the ancestral home to the Earls of Clanricarde, and this amazing building with its medieval and Renaissance architecture and its ornate gardens are maintained to the highest standards. The jewel in the crown here is the much acclaimed walled kitchen garden – a breath-taking place to visit!



Take a swing at Portumna Golf Club

portumnagolfclub.ie

Enjoy a round of golf on Portumna's stunning parkland course which sweeps through forests and woodlands packed with local wildlife including the deer who sometimes cross your path! After your game, call to the clubhouse for a wonderful meal and spectacular views across the pristine greens and course.

Watch Portumna bridge in action

portumnabridge.weebly.com

Portumna bridge, which links Galway and Tipperary, is an amazing feat of

engineering and the last of its kind in Europe. Sail beneath it as you cruise our local waters or watch it open and close to allow the pleasure cruisers pass from the River Shannon to Lough Derg as you travel across the road above.

Step into the past at the Irish Workhouse Centre

irishworkhousecentre.ie

The brilliant staff and volunteers at the Portumna Workhouse Centre will give you moving insights into the harsh lives of those who became inmates within the walls of this poor house and the bleak famine conditions that brought them there. It's a powerful experience you won't forget.





Éimear Noone

Video game and film composer

@Éimear Noone

I'm Éimear Noone, a video game and film composer, and my life moves between my beloved East Galway and California. I became the first woman to conduct the orchestra at the Oscars there in 2020, but growing up in Kilconnell, alongside the famous composer Paddy Fahy, was what helped me realise that my dream of becoming a composer was possible.

My Hidden Gems

Admire the intricate carvings at Kilconnell's Franciscan Friary

monastic.ie

The 14th-century friary overlooking Kilconnell dominates the landscape, yet the atmospheric church and grounds are on a different scale. Their intricate details will give you a real sense of the creativity that thrives in this part of the world. Look out, in particular, for the owl among the stone carvings under the tower!



Savour dazzling local dishes at Lignum

lignum.ie

Lignum in Bullaun is listed in the Michelin Guide, and it's a really cool place to enjoy brilliantly prepared dishes featuring delicious, local ingredients. As a coeliac, I really appreciate being able to order innovative gluten-free dishes like the sensational whiskey, carrageen, and parsnip combination I last enjoyed there or fresh Irish plaice, which I miss so much when I'm in California.

Sample local game at Ballinderry Park

As a child, I played in the ruins of this small country house, close to my home, and it was wonderful to see Susie and George Gossip painstakingly restore it to its former glory. It's a truly lovely place to go for dinner, and the menu - small and perfect like the house - often features game, which is George's speciality.



Mingle with the locals in the idyllic village of Kilconnell

@Leonards-bar

@Brodericks-Bar

Leonards in Kilconnell is the very best kind of traditional country bar - it always reminds me of the set of a J.B. Keane play. And Broderick's has been in the same family since it opened in 1875. Its beer garden is a fun new addition, and they even buy in my favourite Californian wine, so I really get to enjoy the best of both worlds!

Catch a coffee on the move

littlespoongalway

The Little Spoon is our local roving coffee van, and the very best place to pick up a hot drop and treats, including lots of gluten-free goodies, while we're out with the children enjoying the fresh East Galway air. We track Megan's social media posts to find out which local park or farmers market she'll be visiting next... wherever she goes, all the local parents follow!





Noel Leahy Leahy Beekeeping

leahybeekeeping.com

I'm Noel Leahy, and beekeeping is a proud tradition in my family going back four generations. The land here in Loughrea on the Sliabh Aughty Mountains is natural and unspoiled, and our bees get to roam across lush meadows full of wildflowers and herbs, as well as raised bog areas covered with purple heather and bog cotton, perfect for producing delicious raw honey.

My Hidden Gems

Experience glamping at Pod Umna Village

podumnavillage.ie

There's so much to do along the Galway stretch of the Shannon that it makes sense to spend a few nights here. And with glamping or 'podding' at Pod Umna, you have all the fun of camping without the hassle. Book a bike there, and you can start your adventures by cycling to the nearby lake, castle and forest trail!



Watch the sun set over Loughrea Lake

discoverireland.ie/loughrea-lake

My favourite place to watch the sunset has to be Loughrea Lake. In the summer, it's lovely to see everyone enjoying the water during the day - swimming, kayaking, and paddleboarding. There's a great buzz around the place! But as the sun sets, it's so peaceful and the lakeshore is a good place to gaze at the stars in our dark skies too.



Go hill walking in the Slieve Aughty Mountains

alltrails.com/trail/ireland

There are some marked routes, with one really nice one to Lough Belshra, the hidden gem of Galway East. Bring a picnic and a book, as it's an amazing place to stop and take in the mountain views for an afternoon.

Ride up into the Slieve Aughty Mountains

slieveaughtycentre.com

Ride up into the Slieve Aughty Mountains to escape into special places only accessible on horseback, or bring the kids for a magical journey into an enchanted forest. Graceful and kind horses, as well as the great guides and stunning landscapes all help to make a visit to the Slieve Aughty Centre a must!



Explore Galway's magnificent parklands

dartfield.com

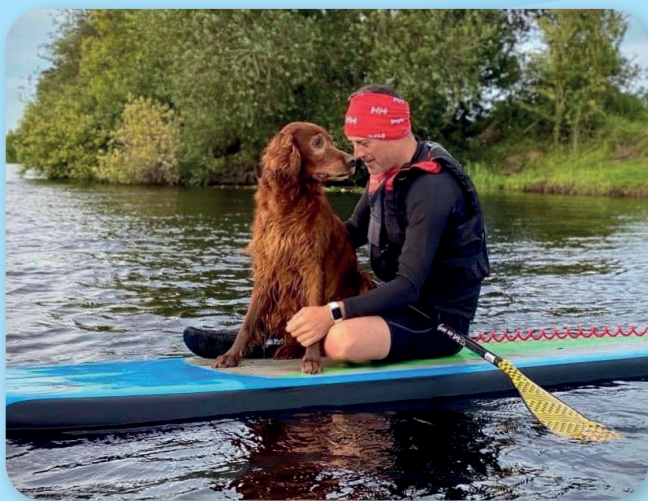
(Temporarily closed - check website)

If you're an experienced horse rider, don't miss the chance to explore Dartfield's 350 acres of varied parkland with the help of expert guides. You can try activities like clay pigeon shooting there too. Or, if you're looking for a more relaxed day out, explore Dartfield's countryside trails on foot before visiting its museum, which is dedicated to Irish horses and the Connemara pony. Its collection includes a great display of vintage farm machinery and carriages, as well as Lord Mountbatten's sidecar and trap.



Offaly





Jonathan O'Meara

Owner, Mid Ireland Adventure

midirelandadventure.ie

I'm Jonathan O'Meara and I'm passionate about our beautiful waterways and mountain ranges here in the midlands. We share our beautiful, natural landscapes and rivers with like-minded people here at Mid Ireland Adventure/The Slieve Bloom MTB Centre in Offaly where they tackle adventure sports and learn the importance of protecting our unspoilt environment. We were proud runners up for the EU's 2019 Rural Inspirational Award!

My Hidden Gems

Bike or hike the Slieve Bloom Mountain trails

slievebloom.ie/biking/mountain-biking

Cycle through wooded valleys and blanket bogs or amble past mountain streams in the glorious Slieve Blooms. This dramatic landscape, home to Europe's oldest mountain range, forms Ireland's largest state-owned nature reserve. Hire a bike to explore or sign up for magical tours guided by fully-qualified trail cycle leaders who will help you to unlock the secrets of this mythical landscape!



Raise a glass in Johnny Hough's Singing Pub

jjhoughs-singing-pub

Why not call to Banagher's world-famous singing pub, Johnny Hough's, to sink a creamy pint after your adventures? The cosy atmosphere of this traditional Irish pub might even prompt you to join the locals in song!

Walk county to county on the Meelick Weir and Walkway

lawrencetown.com/meelick-weir

Cross the new bridge over the River Shannon at Victoria Lock to view a key part of the Shannon navigation system, moving between Galway and Offaly on your way! You can join the Hymany Way - part of the national Beara-Breifne Way walking route - here too, or find a moment's peace in the oldest operating church in Ireland.

Find history and innovation at Birr Castle Demesne

birrcastle.com

Explore Offaly's natural beauty on the peaceful trails in Birr Castle Demesne - home to the 7th Earl of Rosse and Ireland's tallest treehouse! Then learn about the amazing feats of science, astronomy and engineering that Birr Castle has witnessed when you visit the fascinating Science Centre and encounter historic scientific artefacts as well as thrilling stories of innovation.

Watch out for white-tailed eagles at Portumna Forest Park

coillte.ie/portumna-forest-park

On the northern shore of Lough Derg, Portumna Forest Park offers gentle forest and lakeside walks in gorgeous grounds, perfect for walking, cycling

and picnics. Watch out for the area's white-tailed eagles at the park's hides or from the viewing tower which gives you a bird's eye view of the forest, lake and lakeshore.

Explore the wonders of Lough Boora

loughboora.com

Be sure to explore the intriguing sculpture route at Lough Boora Discovery Park, which introduces you to 24 large scale sculptures and artworks inspired by the natural beauty of the bog and its industrial heritage. Today, Lough Boora is a place to be inspired and invigorated. Follow the sculpture park route on foot, or bring a bike and cycle the Turraun trail at a pace that lets you enjoy views across the lakes and rich scenery around you, home to a multitude of wild creatures, plants and wildflowers.





Barbara Smyth

Managing Director, Silver Line Cruisers

silverlinecruisers.com

I'm Barbara Smyth and I'm the managing director of Silver Line Cruisers, our family business which operates boating holidays on the River Shannon. For over 50 years, we have been welcoming visitors to Banagher and helping people to explore the river. There's no better way to connect with the Hidden Heartlands than to take a cruise on the Shannon!

My Hidden Gems

Have a refreshing swim in Banagher's outdoor pool

banagher.ie

The outdoor floating swimming pool at Banagher's Shannon Bank Park is a great draw, and it's lovely to see people swimming in the pool or relaxing on the grassy banks of the river. If you've taken a dip, warm up with a delicious take-away coffee from the Martello coffee hut. As you explore the park grounds, look out for 'Cromwell's Castle' and a bridge that commemorates the time that the famous 19th-century novelist Anthony Trollope spent in Banagher.

Enjoy coffee with a smile from the Little Coffee Co.

[@thelilcoffeeeco](https://www.facebook.com/thelilcoffeeeco)

Grab a freshly ground coffee from Banagher's local coffee sommelier and head to the river to absorb the harbour's atmosphere, or take a walk along the riverside looped track and look out for local swans, corncrakes and snipe as you take in the tranquil scene.



Tour the impressive Napoleonic fortifications at Shannonbridge

visittoffaly.ie/Shannonbridge-Fort

Take in gorgeous panoramic views from the Napoleonic fortifications that stand guard over the mighty Shannon, and learn their story in the absorbing free exhibition about their history. Pause a while at the gift shop and the River Café. It's a great idea to fortify yourself with a slice of cake before you take the self-guided trail along the river's banks to appreciate how peaceful Shannonbridge is today!



© Fergal Moran

Sip the best Irish coffee in Ireland

flynnsbar.ie

I always recommend that people finish their cruise on the Shannon with a visit to Flynn's Bar and Restaurant in Banagher's town centre. This cosy pub and restaurant is renowned for its warm welcome and delicious home-made burgers, and, in my view, it offers the best Irish coffee in the country.

Walk in the footsteps of saints and scholars

heritageireland.ie/Clonmacnoise
vikingtoursireland.ie

Walk among the ruins of one of the most important monastic sites in Ireland at Clonmacnoise and let your voice carry across its whispering arch. Founded by St Ciarán in the 6th century, Clonmacnoise became a major hub of religion, learning and craftsmanship at Ireland's heart, and its high crosses and dramatic ruins are a powerful reminder of our learned past. Take time to enjoy the spectacular views of the Shannon on offer at this wonderful site, or go one step further and travel there from Athlone on a replica Viking ship!





Tina Claffey

Nature photographer and author

tinaclaffey.com

I'm Tina Claffey and I'm an Irish nature photographer in Birr, as well as the author of 'Tapestry of Light-Ireland's bogs & wetlands as never seen before'. I have a fascination with Ireland's bogs and wetlands and have been exploring them throughout the midlands for over 10 years, specialising in macro photography.

My Hidden Gems

Discover the wonders of Ireland's bogs

loughboora.com

This boggy paradise is a wonderful treat for the whole family to enjoy! Walk or hire a bike and follow the trails that meander across this lovely landscape where you'll discover amazing art sculptures, including a stone pyramid. A wander through the fairy forest is a delight with smaller children and, if you get hungry, there is a fabulous café with beautiful lake views.



Explore the Hidden Heartland's on a Shannon cruise

silverlinecruisers.com

There's no better way to explore the unspoilt waters of the Shannon and connect with its communities and hidden gems than to hire a Silver Line cruiser, big or small, and set sail on the river for a few days or weeks. Even if you've never tried your hand at navigation, the Silver Line team will help you grasp the principles so you

can set off confidently on your great river adventure. It's such a pleasure to trace a peaceful route through beautiful inland lakes and rivers. Take in gorgeous views across rural landscapes as you cruise along the Shannon, and then call to beautiful historic towns and villages to explore Ireland's Hidden Heartland's for yourself so you can connect with the Shannon's vibrant and hospitable communities en route.

Settle in for dinner at Hennessy's Bar

[@hennessysofferbane](https://www.facebook.com/hennessysofferbane)

If you have a picture in your head of a traditional Irish pub, it probably looks a lot like Hennessy's Bar in Ferbane. Settle in by the fire in this quaint, thatched pub on a rainy day, or take a table in its airy restaurant where one of my favourite dishes is the veggie noodle stir-fry. It's not always on the menu, but when it is, it makes my day.

Connect with Creative Birr

birrvintageweek.com

irishballooningassociation.com

birrtheatre.com

The Georgian beauty of Birr forms a dramatic backdrop for the creativity and ingenuity you'll find reflected at every turn in this wonderful midlands heritage town. Don't miss the wonderful Science Centre and tree house at Birr Castle. Visit Birr Theatre,

which has been restored to its 19th-century glory to become a lively hub for exciting drama and events, as well as the town's plentiful festivals. Join the fun at Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival each August for an eclectic mix of arts, music, street theatre and pop-up events inspired by Birr's quirky past. Or look up to the skies for colour and excitement each autumn, during Birr's fantastic Hot Air Balloon Festival!





Gerald Hough

Owner, JJ Hough's Singing Pub

jjhoughs.com

I'm Gerald Hough, and our family pub – JJ Houghs – is the quintessential traditional bar, home to live music and song, as well as the interesting conversations prompted by its eccentric and creative atmosphere. Join us for a pint of stout by the fire as you listen to Mick Hough and Teresa Mann entertain the masses!

My Hidden Gems

Take a paddle board safari from Banagher Marina

midirelandadventure.ie

Relax your body and unwind your mind on a midlands safari with local experts. Enjoy awe-inspiring outdoor adventures on the majestic River Shannon, or paddleboard up the Grand Canal through ancient waters once navigated by Vikings. The Mid Ireland Adventure team are brilliant guides on land too, where they offer thrilling eco-activities including archery, as well as bike tours and hikes through Offaly's epic landscape.

Try a spice box from Crank Road restaurant

Crank-Rd-Restaurant

It's a bit of a guilty pleasure, but you can't beat a spice box from Crank Rd. restaurant and café in Banagher when you want fast food with great flavour. If Ireland's favourite take-away dish doesn't tempt you, there are lots of great options to choose from on a stylish menu that makes brilliant use of the best local produce.

Stroll around Banagher marina

lawrencetown.com/banagher-marina

A morning dip in the Shannon is one of my favourite things to do, but an evening stroll around the marina is another great

Banagher treat. The marina is a popular starting point for tours on the lower Shannon and Lough Derg, and you can watch the cruisers and the action on the water at sunset before heading into town for a delicious dinner.

Cycle to Clonfert Cathedral

bearabreifneway.ie/clonfert

The 12th-century cathedral, which stands where St Brendan founded a monastery in the 6th century, is a pleasant 9km cycle from Banagher. Clonfert is situated about halfway between Ballinasloe and Portumna, and so it's a natural stopping point for walkers on the Beara-Breifne Way too – the cathedral's ornate Romanesque doorway decorates the stamp for Clonfert in the trail's walk passport!



Jog through the Lusmagh Bog

sites.google.com/site/thelusmaghwalk

The waymarked route through the Lusmagh Bog makes a fantastic backdrop to any run. The bog

cotton, heather and wild orchids are beautiful to see as you cross the bog, and honeysuckle, wild roses and meadowsweet fill the air with scent at different times of the year. Watch out for wildlife trying to match your pace – grasshoppers, frogs, hares, rabbits, and foxes abound here – and listen out for the rare whistling song of the curlews.

Cruise the whole of the Shannon with Carrick Craft

cruise-ireland.com

Wouldn't it be something to say you'd navigated the whole of the Shannon? On a 2-week trip you can relax and take in all the sights and experiences the mighty river has to offer trip as you travel 415km and pass through 10 locks! You'll have Carrick Craft's tips and recommendations to help you make the most of your unforgettable trip.





Fergal Moran

Owner, Shannonbridge Fort

shannonbridgefort.ie

I'm Fergal Moran, the owner of Shannonbridge's unique Napoleonic fort which overlooks the mighty River Shannon. The fort was built, like Ireland's coastal Martello towers, by the British in the early 1800s to fend off invaders. Having restored the fort from 2002 onwards as a free attraction, I'm proud to welcome visitors here to learn its stories and enjoy our café and gift shop.

My Hidden Gems

Amble through Shannonbridge

silverlinecruisers.com

During the summer months, Shannonbridge comes alive. I love to walk around the jetty to see the boats moored there, and on a Wednesday you can catch the River Queen boat for an unforgettable trip to Clonmacnoise, before returning for a great meal and a pint in the Boatyard at Lukers, or calling to our lovely River Café.



© Barbara Smyth

Watch a Shannon sunset at Lukers

lukersbar.com

For great views of the Shannonbridge fortifications, head to Lukers bar and restaurant on the river's east bank for fine food and drink as well as good music. The traditional bar has an old-world charm, while the bright, spacious extension boasts panoramic views across the river. It's a fantastic place to watch a Shannon sunset!

Enjoy a burger with your pint

fallonsbar.ie

If you're looking for an authentic local pub in the heart of Ireland, you won't find better than Fallon's. The bar first opened its doors in Shannonbridge in 1846, and locals and visitors love the warm atmosphere, excellent pints and regular traditional music sessions at weekends. You can choose delicious burgers, steaks and more from The Organic Kitchen in Fallon's too!

Step inside Clonony Castle

discoverireland.ie

(Check with owners)

You'll love meeting Rebecca, the owner of Clonony Castle, for a personal tour. She is a wonderful storyteller, with a deep knowledge of this medieval tower house and its history. You'll learn about Clonony's links to Henry VIII and the family of Ann Boleyn, as well as the painstaking work that went into its restoration.



Walk the boardwalk at Clara Bog

clarabognaturereserve.ie

Clara's looped boardwalk gives you a great wheelchair-accessible way to explore the finest example of raised bog in Ireland. You can learn all about this stunning habitat and the wildlife it is home to in the nearby visitor centre. Check the information boards along the way too for tips on what to look out for in the bog landscape and its deep pools. This might sound crazy, but go when it rains to take the bog's amazing scent!

Walk the Grand Canal Greenway from Shannon Harbour

discovertheshannon.com

If you come to Shannon Harbour, where the Grand Canal meets the Shannon at the mouth of the Brosna River, take time to walk from the lovely village along the Grand Canal to enjoy the tranquil views and the sight of boats crossing paths on their journeys through Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.



Clare





Anke and Eugene McKernan Owners - McKernan Woollen Mills

www.scarves.ie

We're Anke and Eugene McKernan, and at McKernan's Woollen Mills we make scarves. We weave them on antique looms and knit them on modern knitting machines, and we bring interested visitors on a tour of our workshops where they can meet the designers/makers and experience hands-on textile manufacturing, as well as learn about our craft's traditions.

My Hidden Gems

Walk or cycle to Killaloe

waterwaysireland.org
nualas.ie

We're delighted with the new walkway to Killaloe, and we try to walk it and take in the spectacular views weekly. If we feel like we deserve a treat afterwards, we call in to Nuala's Restaurant just across the road from us for a beautiful home-cooked meal.



Gain an appreciation of Irish apples in Scariff

irishseedsavers.ie

Irish Seedsavers are definitely worth a visit, and we especially love their open days. They have been saving heirloom vegetable seeds and Irish heritage apple trees since 1991, and it is a joy to stroll through their 20 acres of beautiful organic seed gardens, orchards and native woodland trails or browse their wonderful shop. Irish Seedsavers maintain Ireland's only public seed

bank, and their summer camps are perfect for kids and adults interested in biodiversity, the environment and conservation. Tasting tours from August to October give you a wonderful flavour of their work too!

Take a boat trip to Holy Island

holysisland.ie

Visiting Holy Island is a fantastic experience for the body and the soul. The local historian, author and boatman Gerard Madden will be your skipper, and his presence guarantees a memorable voyage to what is rightly one of the most famous monastic sites in Ireland.

Immerse yourself in wild water at Two Mile Gate

clare.ie

Swimming in Lough Derg is one of the great pleasures of living in East Clare. The scenery is breathtaking, and immersing ourselves all year round in the wild waters of the lake makes us feel at one with nature. We love following up our swim with a hot coffee at the West Lake Café!

Try kayaking at Derg Isle Adventure Centre

dergisle.com

We enjoy experiencing nature from a different perspective by kayaking the

local waters at Derg Isle Adventure Centre. They also offer the chance to go paddle boarding, which is next on our list of adventures!

Savour coffee and cake at the East Clare Trading Post

[f @eastclaretradingpost](https://www.facebook.com/eastclaretradingpost)

Luckily for us, we live right across from the East Clare Trading Post, which on Tuesdays and Thursdays sells some of the best cakes we have ever eaten. The cakes are made by Gato Cakes from Mountshannon and they look (and taste) like pieces of art.

Climb Mount Moylussa

alltrails.com

When we are feeling brave, we enjoy hiking up Mount Moylussa, Co. Clare's highest peak. The views are worth every bit of the effort it takes to get up there.





Martin Hayes

Musician from East Clare

martinhayes.com

I'm Martin Hayes, and I grew up in the parish of Killanena where the beautiful Lough Graney is located. I have a career that takes me around the world performing music that is based on the musical heritage of this area. East Clare has a significant reputation in the world of traditional music, and it has produced many musicians who reflect the region's own distinctive style.

My Hidden Gems

Take in Lough Graney views on the Cahermurphy Looped Walk

discoverireland.ie

This lovely looped route takes you by White Sands Beach, along the bank of the Bleach River and through Cahermurphy forest, and gives you breathtaking views over the beautiful Lough Graney and right across to Maghera Mountain and Killanena.



Pop in to Peppers Pub for local flavours and music

peppersoffeakle.com

Peppers pub, where you'll find award-winning local food served during the day, is famous in the world of traditional music. There is a session there every Wednesday night when you can hear some of the finest traditional music around.

Join the locals for a music session at Feakle's Shortt's Bar

shortts-bar-feakle

There has been music happening in this bar every Thursday for almost fifty years. It's a long-standing tradition and I can tell you, it's the real deal.

Visit Mountshannon's Aistear Park and its tasty Snug Café

clare.ie/do/aistear-park

Mountshannon is one of the most picturesque villages in East Clare. It is right on the shore of Lough Derg and it has a really beautiful pier. The Snug Café has a great selection of tapas and wine and is a very nice destination after you've walked along the shore of the lake or explored the labyrinth.



Meet Clare's food producers at Killaloe Farmers Market

iomst.ie

East Clare has a strong artisan food culture, and you'll find local makers and their produce, including cheeses, herbal remedies and lots more, in the parking lot next to the bridge of Killaloe every Sunday from 11am to 3pm.



Relax over coffee at the Ponte Vecchio Café

PonteVecchioKillaloe

This is a very nice place to have a coffee and read. Even if you don't bring a book of your own, they have plenty of them there to browse through! It's also a great place for a glass of wine and some gourmet pizza.





Arlene White

Local historian, Killaloe and Ballina

killaloeballinalhs.wordpress.com

I'm Arlene White and I've lived in the twin towns of Killaloe and Ballina for most of my life. I am passionate about the area's past and I'm involved in the local history society and the Féile Brian Ború festival committee. My husband Daragh and I have a lively springer spaniel called Sammy, who loves to be out and about as much as possible. We are spoiled for choice here with so many beautiful places to walk!

My Hidden Gems

Find peace at an ancient fort

discoverloughderg.ie

Brian Ború's Fort or Béal Ború is a short walk from Killaloe and was the homeplace of King Brian Ború, who was born nearby. The information panels here tell you all about the site's dramatic history, but there is something very peaceful about the fort today – all you can hear is the music of birdsong or the gentle sounds of the boats travelling on the river.

Taste sensational pastries at Derg House Café

[@derghouse](https://www.facebook.com/derghouse)

Amélie and Xavier serve the tastiest French pastries. I love to grab an almond croissant and tea before taking a stroll along the Killaloe Boardwalk between the River Shannon and the canal. Walk back via the Aillebhaun path parallel to the canal for amazing views over the twin towns and Lough Derg below you.

Enjoy a bird's-eye view of the twin towns

st-flannans.weebly.com

A visit to St. Flannan's Cathedral is a must. Wander around this spectacular 13th-century cathedral, which is still in use for regular church services, or pre-book a tour that promises you a panoramic view of Killaloe and Ballina from the top of the cathedral's tower. You can try your hand at bell ringing too!

Take a sunset kayaking tour

mynextadventure.ie

Although I live close to the water, I only recently experienced kayaking. There is something really nice about paddling along the river at your own pace and taking in the sights from a completely different perspective. If you don't have your own kayak, My Next Adventure can sort you out. Their sunset kayaking tour is a truly wonderful way to experience the Shannon.



Choose a cold ice-cream or a heated dip!

[@scoopsicecreamparlour](https://www.facebook.com/scoopsicecreamparlour)

tipperarycoco.ie

Pick up a tasty ice-cream from Scoops Ice Cream Parlour in Ballina and take a stroll through Ballina Riverside Park, where there's lots of nature and local history information on display. The playground and outdoor heated swimming pool are great sources of entertainment here as well!



Hear a birdsong chorus in Clarisford Park

clarisfordpark.ie

A walk in Clarisford Park in Killaloe always leaves me refreshed. The park is located in a Special Area of Conservation, right along the banks of the River Shannon, and it is full of gorgeous nature and wildlife. While you walk you are treated to a constant chorus of birdsong – this is definitely a place where you can slow down and enjoy your surroundings.





Patricia Farrell

Owner, Wilde Irish Chocolates

wildeirishchocolates.com

I'm Patricia Farrell, the owner of Wilde Irish Chocolates in the picturesque Lough Derg village of Tuamgraney, where we've been making chocolates by hand for over two decades. Visitors love watching the whole process, whether they're here for one of our family-friendly chocolate factory tours (which include tastings of course!), or calling by to choose tasty treats in our shop and hot chocolate café.

My Hidden Gems

Find true peace on Holy Island

holyisland.ie

Take the short boat trip from Mountshannon at a quiet time of day to find the most peaceful place on Lough Derg. You'll feel like you are standing in the base of a crystal bowl on this green island surrounded by the blue lake. Breathe deep as the Clare and Tipperary shores of Lough Derg rise in a green patchwork around you, sheltering you from the stresses of everyday life.



Marvel at the beauty of Irish stained glass treasures

harryclarke.net

If you are exploring Killaloe, take time to visit St. Flannan's Catholic Church at the top of the main street. The two windows flanking the altar in this modest church reflect the brilliance of Irish stained glass traditions. The windows, which depict an early saint and a gospel scene, were created by Ireland's 20th-century stained glass master Harry Clarke and his father Joshua.

Walk the lakeshore at Aughinish Woods

visiteastclare.ie

This little-known 5k walk through the Coillte forests near the village of Ogonnellloe is perfect if you love photography. Capture beautiful views of Lough Derg and of the woodlands filled with a mix of conifers, oak and alder, as well as Scots pine, along the shoreline and on the small islands close by.

Hear the cathedral bells of Killaloe

st-flannans.weebly.com

Take a visit to the Killaloe Farmers market at 11am on a Sunday, and you'll hear the hand-rung cathedral bells peal out over the River Shannon and the twin towns of Killaloe and Ballina. Then stroll over the 13-arch bridge that links the two towns while you enjoy the market's wonderful locally produced artisan food!



Be inspired by design at McKernan's Woollen Mills

scarves.ie

A visit to McKernan's Woollen Mills brightens any rainy day. It's a treat to have a peek into the workshops there and learn how the team transform their design ideas into beautiful hand-finished pieces. The mill tour offers a colourful introduction to textile history, and you're sure to want to bring one of their gorgeous scarves home!





James Whelan

Owner, Killaloe River Cruises

www.killaloeRiverCruises.com

My name is James Whelan, and I started providing boat trips on the River Shannon from Killaloe when I was 14. I grew up here and have always had a deep love and sense of pride for our beautiful riverside location. That pride and passion continues to drive us at Killaloe River Cruises as we strive to help our visitors enjoy their own experience of cruising on this mighty waterway.

My Hidden Gems

Dip your toes in the water at Ballycuggeran bathing area

discoverireland.ie

Killaloe has many peaceful locations, but without a doubt the simple wooden piers at Ballycuggeran provide the best place for you to sit with your toes dangling in the water while you relax, unwind and read your favourite book. The small beach here is a popular spot with swimmers in summer and a draw for birdwatchers who seek sightings of Lough Derg's seabirds in the winter months.



Taste the ultimate hot chocolate in Tuamgraney

wildeirishchocolates.com

Cycle or walk the path from Killaloe to Tuamgraney to take in stunning views over Lough Derg. The 14km trek will give you the perfect excuse to replenish your energies with one of the fabulous Ultimate Hot Chocolates

at Wilde Irish Chocolates' factory tour at your journey's end. Choose from 10 equally delicious variations while you savour the scent of melting chocolate that greets you at the door. There are regular fun and informative chocolate factory tours here too, and you can even sign up to design and make your very own chocolate bar!

Order the best steak in Ballina

brianboruonthehill.business.site

My favourite food is steak, and you won't get better than the ones you'll find in Brian Ború on the Hill in Ballina. Exceptional food in a cosy setting, along with great service, makes this an excellent destination for dinner after a day spent with us on a Killaloe River Cruise!

Connect with megalithic Ireland at the Bohatch dolmen

heritage.clareheritage.org

Step back into the past as you hike to a spot that offers incredible views of the whole of Lough Derg. The megalithic portal dolmen at Bohatch is said to have been the burial place for local chieftains over 3,000 years ago. Visit Keane's in Mountshannon after your trek for a drink, or treat yourself to a bite to eat across the street at Cois na hAbhna.

Walk the Ballycuggeran Crag Wood Loop

coillte.ie

This walk follows forest road, forest track and minor roads through dense forest and open hillside on the shoulders of Feenlea Mountain and Crag. The beautiful expanse of Lough Derg lies below you. To get the best views, walk the trail in an anti-clockwise direction.



Tipperary



Dromineer Harbour, Co. Tipperary



Declan Collison

Owner, Lough Derg & Lake Café

www.loughderghouse.ie

I'm Declan Collison. I first came to Dromineer in the early nineties to work in a local hotel. While I left to work in Dungarvan for a brief time, I really missed the gentle lapping of the lake waters, and I was soon drawn back to work here. The guests who stay with us at Lough Derg House and visit our café always love the lakeshore too!

My Hidden Gems

Watch a Dromineer Bay sunset at the Whiskey Still

discoverloughderg.ie/whiskey-still

At the end of an active day exploring Lough Derg, visit the Whiskey Still's deck to savour their legendary seafood chowder. There's a spectacular view as the sun goes down over the Clare hills, casting long majestic shadows over Dromineer Bay.



Enjoy a coffee at the Lake Café

loughderghouse.ie

Freshly ground beans, supplied by Ponaire in Newport, make for a great cup of coffee paired with Chef Fiona's smoked fishcakes. Or try our delicious coffee cake, made to Fiona's grandmother's recipe. It's a link back to the generations who've lived here before us, and the lake shore is pictured beautifully around the café in prints by talented local photographer Eoin Kelly.

Walk the Lough Derg Way

discoverloughderg.ie

Set out early in the morning to hear bright birdsong around Ryan's Point, or choose a quieter time as the day fades, when most of the sailors, fishermen, kayakers, paddle boarders and swimmers have headed home. The only sound will be the pleasant low hum of the last boats plying the lake waters.

Peddle the lake with Aquasplash

aquasplash.ie

Have a fun day with your kids on the water at Aquasplash, Dromineer's newest water attraction, where the water slides and floating bouncy castle will keep your gang happy for hours. If you're looking for a less boisterous experience, there are peddle boats and kayaks for hire too.



Take a boat trip to discover the lake's hidden treasures

loughdergboatours.com

Hop on board a boat for a scenic way to travel between the towns, villages and harbours around Lough Derg. Or take a tour with Johnny, who has spent over 30 years exploring the lake, to hear its stories, view local landmarks and learn about the communities around it.





Donal Ryan

Novelist & Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Limerick

www.lilliputpress.ie

I'm Donal Ryan, and I'm a writer. Most of my novels and short stories are set in fictionalised versions of the towns and villages on the north Tipperary shore of Lough Derg where I was born and reared. Places like Youghal Quay, Castlelough, Garrykennedy and Dromineer form the land and waterscapes of my childhood memories and of my imagination.

My Hidden Gems

Take in great views from the Arra Mountains Loop

alltrails.com

When I think of home I think of the Arra Mountains and Tountinna. Standing at the Millennium Cross, looking across Lough Derg to Clare, with Galway in the distance, Limerick to the south west and Offaly to the north east, it feels like being at one at the centre of all things, and removed from all the troubles of the world.

Visit Nenagh Castle and explore this charming market town

nenagh.ie/places-of-interest

This perfectly preserved 12th-century keep is well worth a visit. A perfect day for me would involve a visit to John and Catherine Ryan's Nenagh Bookshop in Summerhill to pick up something good to read in the beautifully kept castle grounds followed by a pre-lunch pint in the legendary Rocky O'Sullivan's Pub, lunch in the gorgeous Pantry Cafe and dinner in the award-winning and consistently excellent Peppermill Restaurant.



Experience the warm welcome at Barry's Pub, Newtown

pinterest.ie

I have an undying love for this traditional, family-run pub in the village of Newtown. Jim and Geraldine Barry guarantee the warmest of welcomes to their completely authentic establishment. Treat yourself to a relaxing pint in the lounge and soak up the atmosphere and stories.

Enjoy a night at Reidy's Bar & Skyfarmer Restaurant, Newtown

nenagh.ie/businesses

A stone's throw down the road from Barry's is Bobby Reidy's Bar and Skyfarmer Restaurant, where you can eat, drink, dance, sing and enjoy yourself until the cows come home (or until closing time at least!).

Relax at The Whiskey Still, Dromineer

discoverloughderg.ie/whiskey-still

Dromineer is a beautiful lakeside village offering water sports and activities of all kinds, and The Whiskey Still, serving the finest food from locally-sourced ingredients, is the perfect place to relax and recharge afterwards.

Explore the lakeside village of Garrykennedy

discoverloughderg.ie/garrykennedy

Just downhill from the vertiginous and very lovely village of Portroe is the tiny lakeside village of Garrykennedy, one of Lough Derg's most beautiful hidden gems. There are two bars and restaurants in the village, Larkin's and Ciss Ryan's, beautiful forest walks, a medieval castle keep, and an opportunity to leave the pressure and pace of the outside world behind for a while and breathe the clean lake air.

Discover Silvermines village on the Slieve Felim Way

silvermines.ie

Above the lake, hidden away in the mountains, is the scenic and historic village of Silvermines. This is rural Ireland at its authentic, unspoilt best.





Ailbhe Gerrard

Specialist Farmer at Brookfield Farm

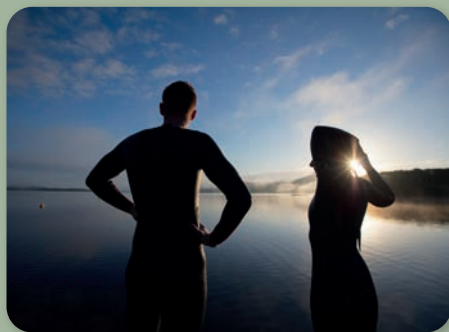
www.brookfield.farm

I'm Ailbhe Gerrard, and I'm passionate about regenerating nature through specialist farming here at Brookfield Farm - a place of rare beauty, nestled on the shores of Lough Derg. I love walking the farm with visitors, sharing my knowledge about biodiversity, beekeeping and the history of agriculture. You can taste the landscape on our honey-tasting tour, make your own beeswax candle and dig your own potatoes too!

My Hidden Gems

Swim at Cleary's Quay at Coolbawn Cross

I learnt how to swim here and charted my progress by its three rocks! The first, near the shore, is in easy reach for young swimmers. Reaching the second rock in deeper water shows you have gained confidence. And I remember my pride when I first placed my feet on the third rock, invisible until you are on top of it! Racing my friends there like little fish is a great memory. Today, I love to watch the sunset on the lovely new benches at the quayside.



Find 'The Lookout' above Castlough

discoverloughderg.ie/lookout-portree

The Cominchas forestry is a hidden gem between Coolbawn Cross and Ballinderry. Enjoy a picnic or a dip at Castlough, then follow the marked paths to 'The Lookout' for a fabulous, peaceful view over Lough Derg.

Find History at Portumna Castle and Gardens

heritageireland.ie/places-to-visit

Portumna is blessed with a magnificent castle set within original Jacobean walls. My niece is fascinated by the story of the dog Fury who lost his life saving a little girl there. Our spirits always lift in the beautiful gardens, and a nice coffee from the café will cheer you up after this sad tale.



Learn to kayak at Kilgarvan Quay

wavestowilderness.ie

It wouldn't be a holiday in Tipperary without some messing about in boats! Becky Kenna of Lough Derg Watersports offers kayaking and canoeing lessons to help you gain confidence on the water, and you can hire her kayaks to start exploring from some wonderful local harbours.

Walk the 'Ballinderry round'

f [Dé-Róistes-Bar-and-Restaurant](#)

This 5km walk on quiet country roads leads you from Ballinderry village in a glorious circle through farmland, forest, and the wetlands we call 'callows'. Walk over the ancient stone toll bridge known locally as the Mousehouse and back to Ballinderry for a well-earned coffee or cold pint in Dé Róiste's, where the tasty barbecue menu is sure to tempt you.

Spend an easy Sunday morning in Terryglass

thederg.ie

The Derg Inn in Terryglass has a coffee and crêpe offering on a Sunday, which gives you the perfect excuse to chill out and catch up with friends before a stroll down to Terryglass Harbour to see the boats.





Seán O'Meara

Owner, Stonepark Lodge Caravan Camping & Accommodation

www.stoneparklodge.ie

I'm Seán O'Meara and, for three generations, my family has been running Stonepark Lodge Caravan Camping and Accommodation in the village of Ballinderry on Lough Derg's eastern shores. With my wife Eileen, I am passionate about making each visit the best it can be for our guests, and my four sons continually surprise me by finding new ways to help make visits to Lough Derg truly special.

My Hidden Gems

Listen to local lore at Lorrha monastic village

discoverireland.ie

Lorrha monastic village is a wonderful place to explore with its high crosses, fascinating ruins and heritage centre. Lorrhalore do great tours there too, and the tales they tell about monsters, monks, mysteries, murderers, High Kings and Vikings are worth repeating around a campfire or pub table!

Eat and explore in the picturesque village of Terryglass

discoverloughderg.ie

theder.ie

Both of the pubs in Terryglass serve delicious local produce, so – as a local lad – my tip is to have lunch in Paddy's Bar and dinner in The Derg Inn. In between, check out the Little Woods Trail that circles the village and harbour to see its stunning wooden fairy trail sculptures and holy well. Then head back to the village for a traditional Irish music session!



Make a splash at Lough Derg Water Sports

wavestowilderness.ie

Our guests wax lyrical about their experiences at Lough Derg Water Sports in Kilgarvan. Its reed trails make it heaven for kayakers of all ages and abilities. Circle the islands in the lake at your own pace, and check the skies for white-tailed sea-eagles as you soak in the peaceful atmosphere and the wildness of the environment around you.



Buy local produce at the Lakeshore Community Market

Lakeshore-Community-Market

Shop at a farmer's market unlike any other when you visit the nomadic market which travels around the stunning villages of Lough Derg. You'll find the best fresh, home-grown vegetables there, as well as hand-made jams and tarts. The chat is mighty, and the gathering is the ideal opportunity to stock up on holiday treats and secret tips about the region. It's the best way to spend a Saturday morning!

Find new flavours in Dé Róiste's Smokehouse!

Dé-Róistes-Bar-and-Restaurant

Elsie Hogan's Pub provided the backdrop to centuries of great stories, celebrations and community gatherings in Ballinderry, but it's taken on new life as the home to food with a Stateside flavour! Now, when you visit this local favourite, you can try unforgettable burgers smoked for between 12 and 16 hours using traditional methods from Alabama and beyond.





Maura Boyle

Owner, Larkins bar and restaurant

www.larkins.ie

I'm Maura Boyle and, as the owner of Larkins bar and restaurant, I live and work in Garrykennedy on the shores of Lough Derg. Our good food starts with the great local produce all around us, and we love sharing Irish produce with people new to the area. Our traditional Irish music sessions are brilliant craic and give people an extra bit of local flavour!

My Hidden Gems

See 4 counties from Tountinna in the Arra Mountains

discoverloughderg.ie/tountinna

When the great floods came, the only people who survived were said to have stayed safe on Tountinna hill. Today, the walk there is part of the Lough Derg Way. Hike up to the picnic area at its top to take in stunning views across Galway, Clare, Tipperary and Limerick.



Explore the paths at Castletlough Woods

discoverloughderg.ie/castletlough

If you visit from May to June, these woods close to Garrykennedy, are carpeted with bluebells. The new forest paths in this area of Arra Forest, on the shores of Lough Derg, are wheelchair-accessible and offer great views year-round. There is a lovely picnic area too, so bring along some tasty provisions!

Visit Nenagh's restful castle garden

nenagh.ie/places-of-interest

The 360°-view of the town and surrounding counties from the top of Nenagh Castle is rightly famous, but take time too to enjoy the beautiful walled garden beside it. This peaceful space is a wonderful place to relax in the cultural and heritage quarter of the town, close to the churches, courthouse and gaol which reflect Nenagh's medieval past.



Sample delicious cocktails at Bistro 41

[@bistro41summerhill](https://www.facebook.com/bistro41summerhill)

nenagharts.com

Don't miss this vibrant new cocktail bar and restaurant in Nenagh town. Its great reviews are attracting visitors from far and wide. The food is gorgeous, and we love to combine a visit with our trips to see wonderful performances at the Nenagh Arts Centre.

Find the past at North Tipperary Genealogy Centre

discoverloughderg.ie

If you have Tipperary links, Nora will leave no stone unturned as she helps you reconnect with the land of your ancestors. The genealogy centre is located in the Governor's House at what was Nenagh's gaol, and, on the upper floors, you'll find fascinating exhibitions about times gone by. The recreated shop-pub on the third floor always impresses visitors.





**Ireland's Hidden
HEARTLANDS**

