

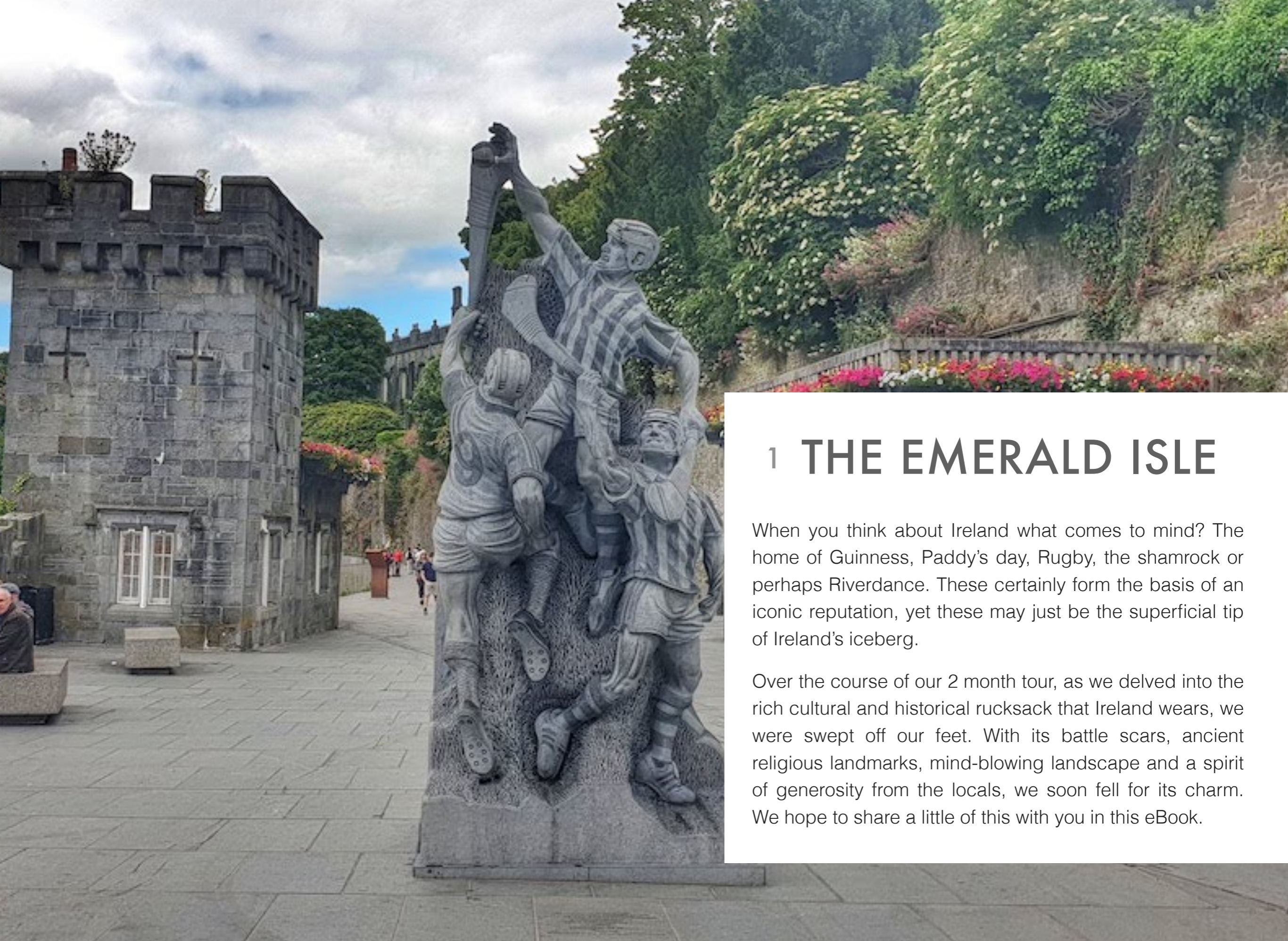


# Irresistible Ireland

Schengen Free travel  
around the Emerald Isle

[www.motoroaming.com](http://www.motoroaming.com)

By The Motoroamers



# 1 THE EMERALD ISLE

When you think about Ireland what comes to mind? The home of Guinness, Paddy's day, Rugby, the shamrock or perhaps Riverdance. These certainly form the basis of an iconic reputation, yet these may just be the superficial tip of Ireland's iceberg.

Over the course of our 2 month tour, as we delved into the rich cultural and historical rucksack that Ireland wears, we were swept off our feet. With its battle scars, ancient religious landmarks, mind-blowing landscape and a spirit of generosity from the locals, we soon fell for its charm. We hope to share a little of this with you in this eBook.

## About your Ireland Guide

It may be a controversial statement although let's go for it. I am feeling very grateful for Brexit as I sit here creating this latest eBook. See I told you it would be controversial. Let me say why without sounding political. Had it not been for the UK leaving Europe, I think it would be fair to say that a road-trip to Ireland would not have been on our radar. Perhaps it just didn't have as sexy an appeal as Europe, with its multi-cultural dimensions, and let's face, its better weather.

Yet as we set about a more focused travel plan to comply with our 90/180 Schengen allowance, we look to places around the continent that we can satisfy our wanderlust and extend our travels without eating into that allowance.

There we have it - Eire, the Emerald Isle, Republic of Ireland. Sat there just across the Irish Sea in all its glory almost with an air of inconspicuous about it.

Yet like a library of books that crosses every genre of author and audience, Ireland holds an indelible and irresistible encyclopaedia, that once opened can never be forgotten. It gets into your heart, under your skin and we want to share with you all aspects of Ireland's personality.

### Who are we?

Formally, we are Karen and Myles; digital nomads who are inspired to discover the world with the freedom and choice that this travelling lifestyle has gifted us. More lovingly we are known as *The Motoroamers* and in March 2016 we packed up and packed in our life in the UK for a gap year of travel whilst we sold property. The grand plan was to put down our roots in the south-west and find the 'good life', once we had sown our travel seeds.

With visions of a small-holding, donkeys, chickens and soil tarnished fingernails put aside, we hit the road in our motorhome Scoobie. We were ready for adventures and exploration that would soothe our curious spirits and satiate our inner-adventurer. Yet a few weeks into our trip we discovered that this was the life we wanted permanently and that 'going back' was not an option. So from that moment, 'home' became the place where Scoobie's tyres rested. We found love in every dawn, each new vista cleansed our eager eyes and fed our desire to live with freedom, fearlessness and choice.

In our first year with our trusty stead, a Pilote 740 (7.5m), we visited 10 countries and covered 12,000 miles; from Spain to Slovenia, to France, Belgium and Netherlands. A rich array of

adventures that satiated our need to feel alive after too many decades of corporate stress and burn-out.

Spring 2017 heralded a new set of adventures as we began an epic journey into uncharted territory. The idea was to travel across to [Greece](#) and then follow a natural passage through the eastern borders of [Bulgaria](#) and [Romania](#). What incredible cultures and natural wonders these countries had to offer. So young on the European stage and yet a whole new set of experiences for the eager traveller.

2018 was all about uncovering the scars of [Poland](#) and [Slovakia](#) and 2019 our adventures took us into the Nordic highlights of Scandinavia's north-eastern trio of [Denmark](#), [Sweden](#) and [Norway](#).

Then early 2020 a magical mystery tour of [Morocco](#) awaited us as we stepped out of our comfort zone and onto the African continent with the leap of a gazelle. Little did we know how poignant this trip would be as Covid struck around us and Moroccan borders locked up within four days of us leaving the country. Since then the memory of our lockdowns are all too real and they have in one way accelerated our passion for travel having been grounded for so long.

And with the crisis diminishing, we hope, we can once again roar our engine, stretch those tyres and set our wanderlust

spirits free again. Albeit with a slightly different philosophy of *slow travel*, we stay true to our ***inspiring you to travel*** roots.

So step into this latest guide and let's see if, with our itineraries, our practicalities and our temptress focus we can lure you westwards to a Schengen-free experience.

## **Karen, Myles and Scoobie**

<https://www.motoroaming.com>



## Forward

We are grateful to Jim McCormick and Ian and Jill Curtis for their endorsements of our eBook.

Jim is behind the brilliant Ireland resource, [Total Motorhome Ireland](#) where he has both a website and a highly interactive Facebook Group, which we made use of regularly whilst we travelled around Ireland.

Ian and Jill are the founders of the highly popular [Search for Sites](#) website and app, which is a resource we have been using since day of our full-time travels and for which we are so appreciative.

"The Motoroamers have squeezed more into their Ireland trip than many Irish Motorhomers have in a few years. Reading their eBook, I learned a few things I didn't know and I'm Irish.

For anyone thinking of visiting or touring Ireland, make sure you read this eBook; it's a guidebook written by Motorhomers, for Motorhomers."

***Jim McCormick, Total Motorhome Ireland***



Karen and Myles have done it again; another comprehensive eBook to add to their expanding collection of country guides for the discerning Motorhome traveller.

If you want to know more about Ireland than just where to stop, this guide is an invaluable resource. It gives an insight into local culture and history, as well as great places to stay and they give ideas about the sights to visit, so you can experience the real Ireland.

***Ian and Jill Curtis, Search for Sites***





## 2 IRELAND INTRO

*"A cead mile fáilte to ye and may the road  
rise before ye and bring ye to happy places."*

Poetry seems to be a fitting way to ease our way into our Ireland adVANTures. Poetry because that's the feel that Ireland evokes the minute you tread onto its Gaelic shores. There is something melodic, lyrical and rhythmic about the soul of this place. So far beyond its perception of Guinness, rain and Irish Dancers, Ireland will delight and surprise you at every turn.



### Donegal crofter's cottage at Glencolumbkille Folk Museum

To set the theme for our *Irresistible Ireland* eBook, we want to take you beyond a Tour Guide brochure. We want to embrace you in the blanket that is Ireland's culture and how its history has shaped mindsets and the way nature carves its physical canvas. After we've thrown you into this delightful pot of Irish charm you will be compelled to surrender to Ireland's appeal and create your own road-trip.

### Ireland's Six Pillars of Culture

A country's culture defines its identity, personality and legacy for future generations to carry forward. And Ireland has *culture* in bucket loads - perhaps more so than any other country we have been privileged to call 'home'. As we dived into Ireland in all its glory, it has been clear that it has a number of pillars that are an

integral part of its culture and we thought we would share what we have learnt and provide a context for our experiences here.

#### 1. Religion and Beliefs

First and foremost, Ireland has been shaped by an unshakeable faith and religious values. Their Christianity has been carved by history, with 5th century saints creating monasteries and seats of learning which have been embedded firmly in the Irish countryside. **Clonmacnoise** is one of the most important religious sites in the country and as such was visited by Pope John Paul II in 1979.



These profound religious structures can be seen in so many ways around Ireland. Road sides are adorned with religious effigies, similar to Greece and every community, however small has a place of worship. And so on a Sunday expect roads, pavements and car parks around churches to be busy with wall to wall people off to mass. Also if you are lucky, you may be privileged to witness a *Graveyard Mass*. It is an annual honouring of those who have past with an open-air service conducted to a throng of locals with their chairs, sat beside the gravestones of their loved ones. Pilgrimages to religious sites are also an important feature of Ireland life, generally driven by the town's patron Saint's day.

## 2. Ireland Historical Legacy

History is a strong feature of any country's culture and Ireland is no different. To many outsiders their historical tales may seem no more brutal than any other, although as a Britain learning about the Anglo-Irish feuds that span over 700 years, you could be forgiven for imagining that the scars of time run deep. Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

We learnt the significance of Ireland's independence from England came only in early 1922. Up until that point, the relationship between the Irish and the English was defined by a force against power and control - with the locals, so often suppressed by the rulers of the time. Revolutionary Irishmen, seen now as heroes, stood up to the ruling faction of the time and their might gathered to bring about a change that would alter the country's fortunes.

The more we spoke to locals about our shared and tempestuous history, the more we warmed to their perspectives on life, shaped by

magnanimity, humility, and forgiveness. It was such a refreshing philosophy, the values of which more countries around the world could learn from. It is not something we were ever taught in school, so to come to this land and understand Irish history has been an eye-opener.

We also came to understand more about the poignancy of the



Green, White and Orange flag. It symbolises the green of Catholicism, the Orange of the Protestant faith and the white of Peace sitting between the two.

Religious issues aside, the heritage that Ireland's rich history leaves behind can be found in almost every village you pass. Whether that is a ruined monastery, railway bridge that was destroyed in a storm or old city walls. Poignant moments in time held in stillness form the very basis of Ireland's identity. From the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915 by a German U-boat, to the *Titanic's* last port of call at Cobh before her sinking in April 1912. The incredible story of how the



iconic *Amazing Grace* hymn was written by slave trader *John Newtown* in 1772 in County Donegal - these all combine to bring a unique tapestry of intrigue and depth to Irish soil.

Encased within Ireland's history books for the last five hundred years is the tale of *mass emigration*. In search for a better life, almost 6 million Irish (not all voluntarily) left their homeland shores with hope in their hearts. Hoards of people joined the mass exodus as the Potato Famine of 1845 hit the country. Whilst hundreds of thousands died from starvation, others sought refuge in distant shores. Even up until as late as 1970 Irish have been leaving their homeland.

### 3. Music, dance and sport

When we think of Ireland, we could be forgiven for thinking immediately of *Riverdance* or a traditional *Ceíli*. Yet Irish *Stepdance* and *jiggs* whilst popularised by *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Rings*, have been embedded in Irish culture for centuries, some suggesting that it was back before the days of Christianity.

In partnership with traditional music there is nothing more authentic than an pub with some music and dance. You will often find bars off the beaten track, where locals will arrive during the course of the evening with an instrument and play impromptu tunes until accompanied by other players who just pick up the beat.



**"Most countries send out oil or iron, steel or gold, or some other crop, but Ireland has had only one export and that is its people."**

John F. Kennedy



Also when it comes to sport, this fine land has talent coming out of its little toe. Go way beyond the fields of the national rugby team and look to their traditional sports of gaelic football, Horse Racing and

Hurling. Passion is unrivalled here for all their sports and you will often see county flags flying during the finals of their sporting calendar in July.

#### **4. Language**

Whilst English is the main language, there are communities who still hold their Gaelic tongue values. County Kerry and Donegal in particular still use their language which is gorgeous to hear. You will also see signposts and information boards all showing both Gaelic and English names and descriptions.

#### **5. People and their values**

Whether it is their religion, heritage or just part of their DNA, the Irish are one of the kindest, most generous-hearted and warm race you can meet. From the lorry drivers who wave, seemingly for no reason, to the 'man in the street' simply saying "How ya doing?" without needing a reply. Ireland is politesse personified and you will be warmed by their infectious smiles and kind eyes. We had so many examples of kind offerings from people who, whilst being strangers, treated you like friends. Offers of beds for the night, washing to be dried, pitches on driveways, it felt so endearing and unusual enough to be recorded here.



The Irish are a proud nation and this is easy to see in so many ways across the country. We found it so noticeable that their houses are definitely considered as home. Their facades are well manicured, loved and elegant. We saw no graffiti on the streets and shops across the land are adorned with flowers, highly decorated walls and quaint dressings. All this gives a feel of the people feeling kindly towards how things look and feel and ultimately that kindness spreads.

#### **6. Ireland and its land**

Ireland is steeped in traditions that still hold true today, especially when it comes to working the land - or the sea. Fishing is still a big employer in Ireland with an estimated 11,000 people in the industry. Most coastal villages have piers for the fishermen to launch their craft and lobster pots are a regular sighting underneath their buoys.

Farming, whilst quite literally blighted by the 1845 Potato Famine, is still a significant trade here. This was one of the things we loved most about touring Ireland; the land is farmed not built on, giving it a lovely airy feel. You will also see a large number of areas of Peat Bog farming, making up almost 1 million hectares although this is now only for private consumption in an attempt to curb climate change, given peat turf is classed as a dirty fuel.

So Ireland's *Six Pillars of Culture* as seen through our eyes, are a distinct influence on how the Irish live their lives aligned to historical, social and personal values. And it was a privilege to live amongst.



## <sup>3</sup> Our Routes Through Ireland

We had 2 months touring the delights of the Republic of Ireland.

We started off in the south east corner in Rosslare, heading round the coast, meandering inland, up through the Hidden Heartlands to Donegal. Then from Galway over to Dublin with a little trundle down to Wexford where we completed a circumnavigation of Eire.

We then left for Cherbourg from Dublin 62 days after our arrival in the country for some European adventures.





## 4 ROUTE 1 - IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST

The next few chapters are dedicated to giving you a detailed peek into our routes through Ireland.

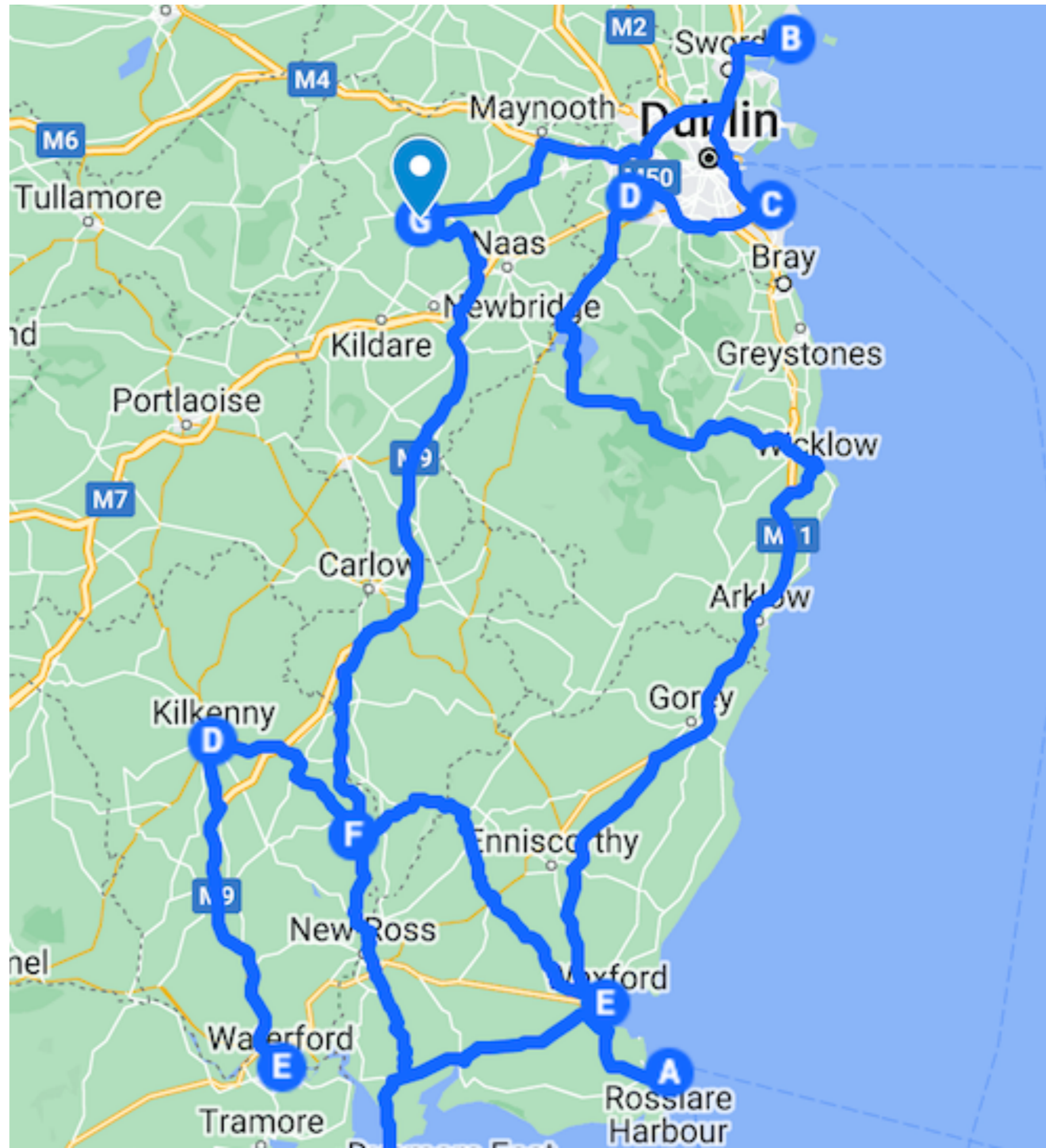
We started and finished our tour in the south east of the country. We initially landed by ferry from Fishguard in Wales. A journey that took a mere 3.5 hours. This landed us nicely in County Wexford. This Ancient East region of Ireland is known for its history, is home to the Kennedy family (US President), the Norman Way, some gorgeous little towns, a world famous lighthouse and of course the capital Dublin. Come on in and we'll show you around.


## Route 1

### Ireland's Ancient East

Must-sees;

- \* Our Lady's Island
- \* Kilmore Quay
- \* Hook Lighthouse
- \* JFK Arboretum Memorial
- \* Graiguenamanagh
- \* Kilkenny
- \* Dublin
- \* Wicklow
- \* Wexford
- \* Lowtown Marina





*Oileán Mhuire*  
**OUR LADY'S ISLAND**

**[www.ourladysisland.ie](http://www.ourladysisland.ie)**

## OUR LADY'S ISLAND - PILGRIMAGE SITE AND NATURE RESERVE

For every new country that we land in, we always take a couple of days to ground ourselves and not put too much pressure on ourselves to explore. Having said that there is only so much chilling I can do. On this trip, I started getting itchy feet by about 10.30am on day 1. So off with the bikes, allowing our adventurous spirits to take us just 3 miles away from our Aire to *Loch Tóchair*.

The site has pre-Christian roots and has been a draw for pilgrims for centuries. A 6th century monastery was constructed here, followed by a 16th Century abbey and a Norman Church. It's a real passage through history, which the sacred grounds and remains lay testament to.

And if the religious and historical factors weren't enough of a wow, then perhaps Mother Nature's influence on proceedings will seal the deal. This stretch of water is pretty unique, being one of only two in

Ireland. It is known as a *back-barrier seepage lagoon*. There is no direct access from the sea, it simply filters its way through the sandbank into the lake, mixing with the run-off water from the land. This is classed as a *Special Area of Conservation* thanks to the ever-changing salinity levels, which challenge the wildlife who call this place home.

That said this is a thriving environment for the red listed **Roseate Tern** and is the second largest colony in Europe. The noise is quite an experience as they dart above your head looking for food for their young, which all adds to the very special nature of this lake.

This place has a very surreal feel to it, where nature, religion and history fuse together in seamless harmony and is so far off the Tourist Trail that it has to be seen.







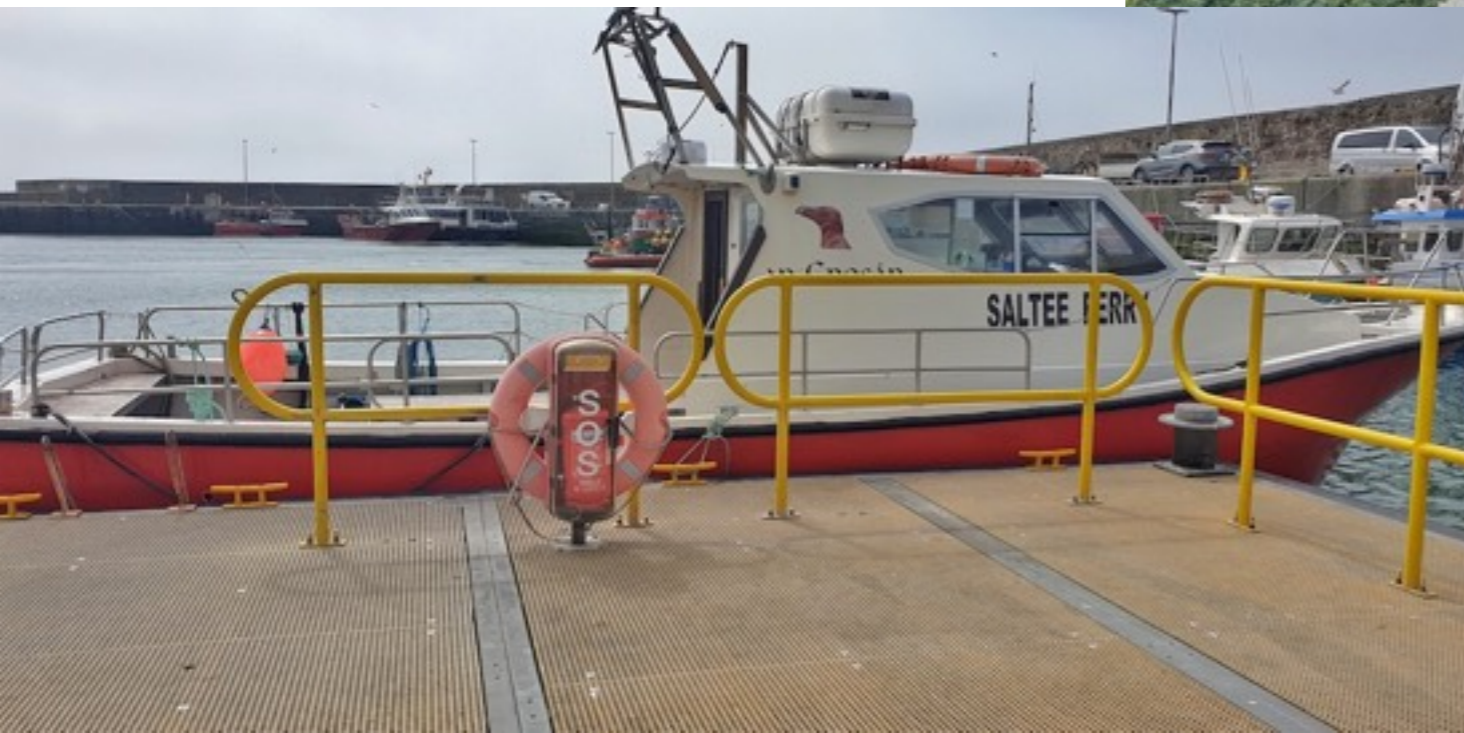
## KILMORE QUAY - CUTE ALTHOUGH UNDERWHELMING

You often hear Kilmore Quay being mentioned by people crossing over from *Rosslare* as their first port of call. So it felt important to check it out. I had already sussed out that there were no free overnight parking opportunities here from the helpful Facebook group [Total Motorhome Ireland](#), although there is a popular [campsite](#).

One of the best entries to this authentic fishing village is on the *R739 from the east*. The most unusual thatch cottages line the route as they signal a slightly misleading charm offensive. I am pretty sure that back in the day, when we hired a motorhome, we came to this spot - it certainly felt familiar. Since those days of my youthful exuberance, Kilmore Quay has certainly altered its philosophy on motorhome parking as all the car parks now have height barriers.

We did find a Community Parking area next to the *Bird Rock Cafe and Community Hall*, which was free for daytime parking although no overnights are allowed. (**52.174854 -6.587926**).

The town we felt was cute yet lacked something. I'm not sure what I was hoping for given that its primary 'raison d'être' is centred around fishing. That said, had it been a calmer day, we might have taken the ferry across to the *Saltee Islands* for some birdwatching. And you can get the best seafood fresh in from the trawlers just along from the Quay beside the fish factory. It just generally left us feeling a little bit underwhelmed, if we're honest.





Scoobie's home at Hook Lighthouse

## HOOK LIGHTHOUSE - THE WORLD'S OLDEST WORKING LIGHTHOUSE

When you think of something old, how old is old? Grandma old, a century old or further back? Well if you want really old, then you must come to *Hook Lighthouse* just south east of Waterford. This place is a real testament to history, given that it was built in the 13th century. That's over 800 years of old. Yet if you go back another 700 years this that was when the first 'lighthouse' activities started here.

A Welsh monk called St Dubhán (Old Irish for Hook) arrived at this place and established a monastery just half a mile from Hook Point. He was so passionate about warning seafarers of the impending danger from this treacherous coastline that he and his fellow monks would keep a beacon alight day and night to provide fair warning.

Centuries later, the greatest Knight that ever was arrived on these shores; *William Marshal* built the nearby Tintern Abbey, the port at

New Ross and decided that a lighthouse was needed to protect his ships coming up the river. So Marshal commissioned the building of this massive tower. His legacy continues today thanks to his ingenious design that includes 4m thick walls.

From coal-lit fires kept aglow by monks, a long line of Lighthouse Keepers, to state-of-the-art mirrored lenses, this lighthouse is now fully automated and continues to save lives. It is now the oldest, in tact, operational lighthouse in the world. There is a 40 minute tour which takes you up into the belly of the lighthouse to see how the custodian monks used to live. You also get to climb the 115 steps to the viewing platform that awards you incredible views on a good day. Your guides are very passionate and your investment is a mere €10pp, which I think is cheap as chips. You can book on line [here](#).



Bookings are taken up until 12 midday on the day of a visit, after this you can turn up on spec and buy your tickets directly from the ticket desk in the café. I would highly recommend it.

Add to this, the joy of staying here overnight with a bit of off-grid camping and it puts Hook on our Wall of Fame Highlights.

Did you know that the term 'By hook or by crook' is thought to originate from here? And did you also know that every lighthouse has a different flashing sequence so that mariners can tell their position on the seas? I never knew that. Every day continues to be a school day and that is why I love travel.

[St Dubhán's Church where it all began](#)







JFK Arboretum, nr New Ross

## JOHN F KENNEDY ARBORETUM AND MEMORIAL

When checking out my good old-fashioned Ireland road map looking for inspiration, I was distracted by a JFK Memorial Arboretum. My interest was piqued; why would there be a memorial to the deceased US President?

Isn't that just one of the amazing things about travel? It inspires you to research and learn. So I delved into my encyclopaedia - Google, and sure enough Kennedy's blood-line is Irish; his great-grandad lived in Duganstown near New Ross although he emigrated to America during the Potato Famine in the mid 1800's.

So as America's first Irish-Catholic president, JFK had strong links to his homeland and in 1968, the arboretum was created in his honour. With over 250 acres, the estate is home to 4,500 species of trees and bushes, native to temperate lands and new trees are being

added to the estate each year. 1300 are expected to be planted in 2022.

You can enter the park for free, park for free and wander the gardens and the Kennedy exhibition for free. Despite the website saying it is a €5 entrance, there was no one at the entrance and when we asked a local and he said that they hadn't charged for 20 years.

There is plenty of parking in the over-flow car park for larger vehicles. Expect to indulge in this natural architectural extravaganza for an hour or so, perhaps more if you come during May and October when the seasonal colour will be, we imagine at its best. We thought it was a delightful diversion and great for the kids and dogs.





River Barrow at Graiguenamanagh

## GRAIGUENAMANAGH - SO GOOD WE WENT TWICE

Drawn by the water course on the map, that weaved its way south to New Ross, we knew in an instant that we needed to find somewhere to stay along its passage, en route to Kilkenny.

Lo and behold there was a campsite at a pretty unpronounceable location, right beside the river. As we were soon informed, it is simply Graig-na-mana. What a joy this place was with a burst of Mother Nature and history colliding in perfect unison.

At the foot of Brandon Hill, the highest in the county, Graiguenamanagh is a sweet little town with the most highly decorated Pizza Takeaway we have ever seen. Named as the 'Town of monks', thanks to its historic abbey, more pubs than you can

shake a stick at and water pursuits galore, it certainly has plenty to offer the visitor for a couple of days. Blessed by not being on the major tourist trail, the town is pretty chilled out and easy to get around. The campsite is superb and for a mere €11 no EHU and €16 with, we loved it so much we came back.

The town itself was put on the map after the River Barrow became a commercial enterprise with its barges carrying cargo down to William Marshal's New Ross port in the mid 1700s. And, on top of this, its historic 18th century, seven arch limestone bridge has seen plenty of action. It certainly is a visual focal point for the town and its water activities.







As we left New Ross heading north, the coastal landscape we had become accustomed to morphed into luscious forest and curvaceous countryside. We drove towards Graiguenamanah on the top road, giving us sneaky peaks of the watercourse below. We had no idea of its commercial importance and links with the port of New Ross.

The river which carves its way through the valley, has a pretty significant status, if for no other reason than it is the second longest river in Ireland at 120 miles. The first is the River Shannon. It is part of Ireland's inland waterway system and in its day provided an essential route through its 23 locks en route to New Ross and Waterford.

Today, the river acts as a leisure route, as the cargo boats stopped in 1959. For us as outdoor lovers, its tow-paths provided excellent opportunities to cycle and walk. In fact if you love a serious hike, then the Barrow Valley provides a **[Long Distance National Way-mark Trail](#)** of 72 miles starting in County Laois going through some of Ireland's most picturesque countryside.

We enjoyed the water sports, walking and cycling in both directions along this river, on which you will pass locks every mile, whispering weirs and reed beds teeming with wildlife. Head down to St Mullins, which is just 5 miles south along the canal and have lunch at **[Mullichain's Cafe.](#)**





Right in the heart of Graiguenamanagh your eye cannot miss the seemingly oversized **Duiske Abbey** that looms large over the river.

It is one of the longest and largest of the 34 Cistercian monasteries in Ireland. Although today's renovated church body is a tiny part of the the original abbey estate, first built in 1204 by our famous and very active knight, William Marshal.

By 1228 there was a significant community of 37 monks and 50 lay-brothers who called Duiske their home, many of whom had come from Wiltshire, England.

The Abbey began to struggle after King Henry VIII's dissolution efforts and it soon began to crumble. Although it was still used as a place of worship until it was given back to the Roman Catholic

community in the early 19th century. And more significant renovations were carried out through the centuries on this historic building to maintain its heritage - more recently in 1980s' leaving the abbey as a parish church and music venue.

It is free to enter the abbey and see the full extent of the monastery that Marshal created over 800 years ago. It is a very peaceful place to wander and sit a while imagining the monk's lifestyles within these walls.



Barrow River Scenes from  
Graiguenamanagh to St Mullins





## KILKENNY MEDIEVAL CITY

I was really excited about Kilkenny and oddly for me, I had actually done very little research as this one was Myles' find. So I went with the flow and what a great call it was too.

After a mere 30 minute's drive from Graiguenamanagh, we snuggled up in an Aire at the back of a car park. Not a salubrious home although it was the location that nailed it for us and perhaps the lack of alternatives. Still for just €10 with services we were very happy with our choice. By lunchtime we were ready for some action and having caught up on my research obsession, it was clear to see that there would be at least two visits, to do this place justice.

As we often do, we headed straight for the Tourist Info office for a map and to pick the brains of the experts. All the research in the world cannot match those in the know. Interestingly, they hadn't

heard about our Aire at 'Joe's place', so it was lovely to be able to do a trade.

Armed with a map of the *Medieval Mile* that stretches from the Kilkenny Castle in *Englishtown* to the 6th Century St Canice Cathedral in *Irishtown*, we had our strategy. The Tourist Info is slap bang in the middle of the two so it makes for a perfect starting point.

There are 22 historic buildings in Kilkenny and so a map is essential to make sure you don't miss anything. Kilkenny is one of the most heart-felt, authentic and warm cities we have visited - and if you've been following us for a while, you know that we are not city lovers.

Well Kilkenny certainly got underneath our skin and into our hearts.



Kilkenny is one of the top heritage and cultural destinations in Ireland that will transport you through time and throw you into the heart of the Ancient East. With castles, cathedrals and everything in between, you will not be disappointed by a diversion north. It has a church with *the world's largest stained-glass window* and a self-guided, free tour of the city's old Workhouse where you learn about the life of the poor and the role that the Potato Famine had on the city.

River walks bring you back to nature, whilst a drink at the eclectic **[Bridie's Bar and General Store](#)** will whisk you away into a fantasy land. You will need at least 2 days to delve into the nooks and crannies of this fantastically cultured city that will demand your respect and plead for your love, both of which you will surrender to.

For more information and your own private tour of Kilkenny and its atmospheric city tales, click on this **[link](#)** which takes you to a 51 minute audio tour.



Kilkenny's Black Church and record-breaking stained-glass window.



**Kilkenny's best;** Top - Castle and St Canice Cathedral  
Bottom Bridies' Bar and River to Castle view





JOIN THE FESTIVAL





River Liffey, Dublin

## DUBLIN - CAPITAL HEART OF IRELAND

Any capital city holds the key to a country's heritage and offers the humble visitor an array of delights, whether that be shopping, cultural pursuits or simply people watching. Dublin seems to do all three particularly well and is often at the heart of Ireland's archetypal reputation of Guinness, partying and rugby. Although much like cities across the world, when you look beneath its superficial facade, it will share with you far more humble roots.

We have visited Dublin in our dim and distant past as a young married couple, although our return was triggered by a Bucket List trip to the **Gaiety Theatre** to see the 25th Anniversary of the iconic *Riverdance*. If you get a chance to see it somewhere around the world, we would highly recommend it, as it will take you on a sensory journey of delight. We would, aside of that also recommend

a trip to the Gaiety Theatre, which is an intimate venue dating back to 19th Century and still very much holds its charm and character.

Aside of that, much like many cities in Europe, they are so big and often overwhelming that knowing how best to explore them can be a tough call. So we would absolutely recommend taking a **Hop on Hop off Bus Tour**, which combined with the entertainment of your Irish guide, will take you around the hot spots with humour and camera-clicking ease.

We stayed at **Dun Laoghaire West Pier** car park, which is an ideal spot for day-time and night-time parking for just €4 for 24hrs. It is safe, picturesque and, within 10 minutes you have the Dart Line station at Salthill which takes you into the smoke within 20 minutes and a mere €5 pp return ticket.



Dublin's many faces from the Temple Bar Quarter to its medieval centre





Wicklow Harbour

## WICKLOW - NATIONAL PARK AND COASTAL TOWN

Wicklow is easy to by-pass if you take the motorway south towards Wexford and Waterford. We know because it was the very route we took on our inaugural visit 20 odd years ago when we hired a motorhome from Dublin. Given we only had a 2 week window due to work commitments in the corporate Matrix, it's understandable that destinations had to be prioritised.

So this longer tour gave us the opportunity to explore some uncharted territory and with our friends convoying with us, a chance to explore together. And glad we are that we uncovered the delights of Wicklow.

A charming town full of colour as you head through its main streets full of bars, vibrant boutiques and independent shops. The old Gaol is now a museum and if you veer off-piste towards the *Vartry River*,

you get to see the heart of the town, shaped around the ocean and its fishing heritage.

Wicklow is named after a ship of monks that was attacked at the site of the Black Castle, one of whom was struck in the mouth and lost all his teeth. So rumour has it that Wicklow is named after the Irish for 'The Toothless One'.

As is often the case along the entire stretch of Irish coastline, the winds blow relentlessly, it seems. So where better than Wicklow to be the home to Ireland's 'Round the Island' Yacht Race. And when you visit, you will see why. A fleet of boats with their billowing sails tack between the squalling winds and even from the lofty edge of the castle ruins, you can hear their sails flapping - it's like an auditorium. It's a gorgeous little town to spend a couple of hours.





Wicklow National Park  
en route to Wicklow town





Wexford Skyline

## WEXFORD - HOME OF THE VIKINGS AND A BLUE WHALE

55 miles south of Wicklow is **Wexford**, which on the face of it seems to struggle with its identity. A high street that has branded stores yet little personality, as it tries to fit in with the modern commercial expectations.

When you spend some time making friends with this small town, you soon feel the warmth of a flirtatious romance brewing. We had three days here and although we were initially disappointed to have no direct beach access from our **Ferrybank Campsite**, just across the arching bridge opens up a town built on its Viking and medieval routes and, of course fishing. Much of the town's fortunes are based on the sea, as with many along Ireland's coast.

With mussel dredging on the salt flats and huge fishing vessels, you'll not be surprised to get some amazing seafood here, if that's your thing.

Historically, Wexford claims a World War influence, where the US Airforce took camp on the site of the campsite from 1914, to support the Allies in defending the coast from German submarine invasion.

Also slightly further back in time, a large, female **Blue Whale** was beached up on the mudflats and her untimely death brought controversial wealth to the town with the sale of her oil. Such is her fame, that her skeleton is in London's National Museum.

As a medieval walled-town, Wexford will surprise you, if you let it. With its abbey ruins, castle gates and river promenade, there is plenty of insight and interest here. Drop in to **The Riverbank Hotel and Restaurant** that has great food and service if not a tad expensive. Also the **Curracloe Beach**, famed for the filming of Saving Private Ryan is a beautiful Blue Flag beach great for whiling away a hot summer's day - and it does happen!









Lowtown Marina

## LOWTOWN MARINA - ALLENWOOD

I think what makes our guides unique, is that we share with you our off-the-beaten track spots that are typically not on the tourist trail. *Lowtown Marina* is definitely one of those little gems that we just have to offer up as a secret worth uncovering during your stay.

Ireland's *Inland Waterways* was one of our biggest surprises, with a network of rivers, loughs and canals that straddle across the country. We had absolutely no idea how integral to the country's culture the waterways have been and still are to this day.

Sat just an hour to the west of Dublin, pretty much in the middle of nowhere, we came across this delight, thanks to Search for Sites. Whilst a bit disconcerting as you approach the marina along the single track tow-path, once parked up at the well-established spot you start to get a feel for the enormity of the country's canal system. With the *Grand Canal* heading into Dublin in one direction and the

country's longest river, the Shannon the other, branches of waterways weave their way to Graiguenamanagh and St Mullins. The journey, back in the 19th Century was fraught with danger thanks to pirate attacks, so often barges were accompanied along this route by police. These days, there is no commercial interest, just purely pleasure as the weeded canals will demonstrate.

With tow-paths leading you for miles, this is like a little Venice without the hype and so is a great place to hang out. Watching the fishermen determined to catch a pike, kayaks, paddle-boards and leisure craft all make this home, alongside the wildlife that teems on the water's edge and below its surface. We absolutely adored it here and with the Inland Waterway's philosophy of welcoming land and water vehicles, it is a great place to call home away from the crowded cities and coast.







## 6 ROUTE 2 - THE SOUTH COAST AND WAW

Ireland's south coast is, perhaps the most popular of all her coastline. In part because it is easy to access from Dublin ports and Rosslare and that maybe it has marginally better and more consistent weather.

It is also the start - or end depending on how you see it, of one of Ireland's greatest tourist commodities, the Wild Atlantic Way.

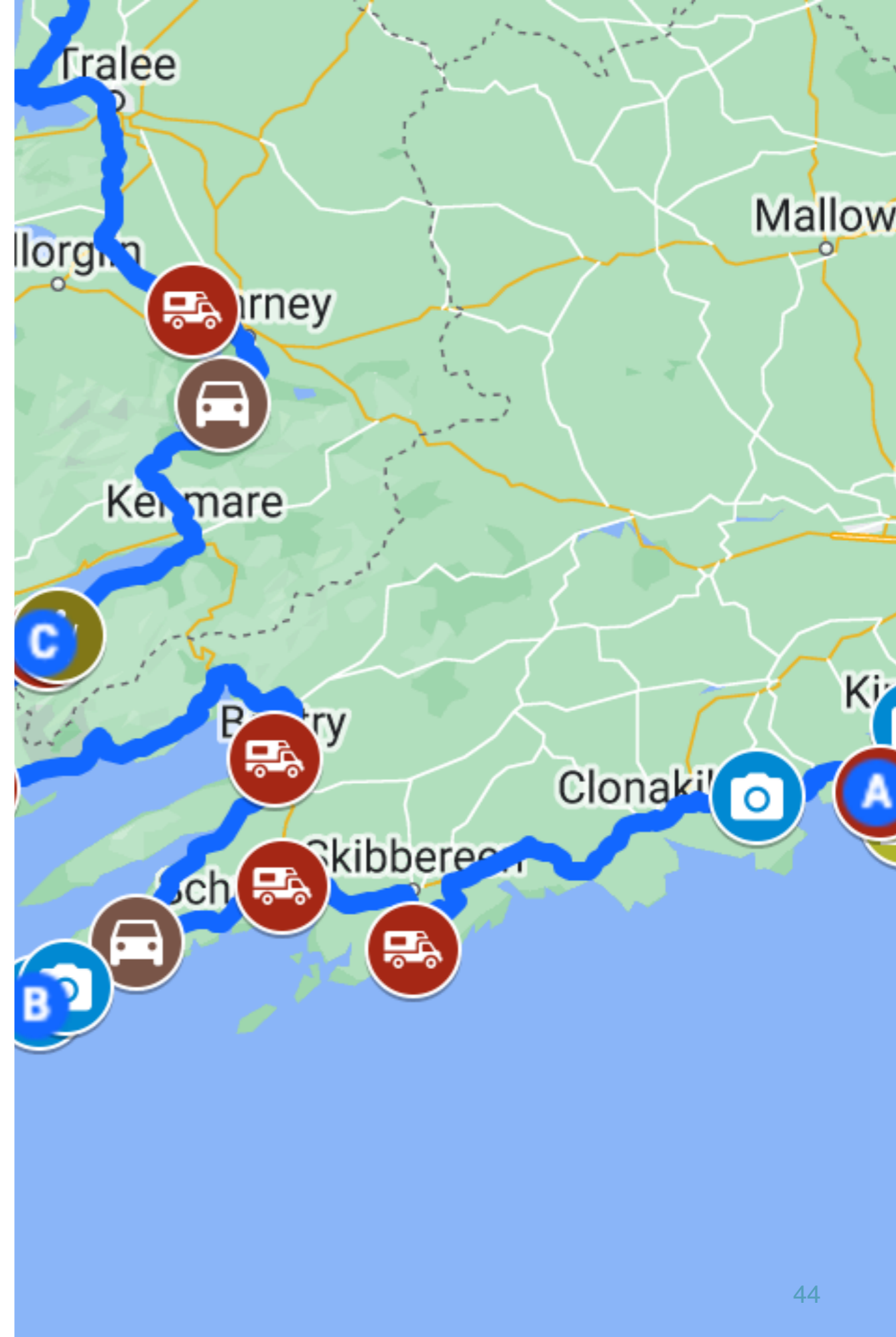
There is no doubting the south coast's beauty, yet alongside its

## Route 2

### Ireland's South Coast and Wild Atlantic Way

Must-sees;

- \* Waterford - not a highlight for us yet feel we need to include it for completeness.
- \* Dunmore East
- \* Comeragh Drive and Mahon Waterfall
- \* UNESCO Copper Coast
- \* Ardmore
- \* Kinsale Gateway to WAW
- \* Cobh
- \* Mizen Head
- \* Ring of Beara
- \* Killarney National Park





## VIKING TRIANGLE - WATERFORD, HIT OR MISS?

Whilst we remember visiting the Waterford Crystal factory on our last visit, we have no recollection of the city itself and given its accolade of 'The best Irish city to live in' by the Irish Times, it held good reason for us to explore.

It started off well as we drove over the bridge and along the merchants' quay. Instantly we were hit by the enormity of the city's role back in the day as this bustling port was alive with ships bringing in and exporting goods. What a hive of activity it must have been. Sadly for us, that was really our only highlight of this disappointing city. Perhaps because we had just left the infectious buzz and charm of Kilkenny, anything coming after that would have been a tough act to follow.

Parked up at one of Waterford's three motorhome friendly car parks, (that are free to stay overnight at from 1830 to 0830), we set off for a butcher's hook. Having this time done a little bit of research, I knew that there was an historic Viking Triangle that held secrets from days of old, the 10th century to be exact.

So this was our focus and armed with maps.me, we headed off for our first landmark, full of anticipation. Of course we timed our visit after supper, so we knew that nothing would be open. Also we were a little city weary after Kilkenny that morning, so wanted to avoid the crowds.

The instant we saw the replica Viking boat we had an inkling about what lay ahead. Following the Triangle route map, we then found a replica Viking sword, carved from a tree trunk and it had the sense of something created just for tourists. We continued in the hope that our early impressions would be unfounded as we passed the 3 epoch museum and the cathedral. Then no sooner had we turned right, the Triangle was 'done'.

We wandered through the streets in search of something that we must surely have missed. Yet the city High Street was deserted; no life, no vibe, nothing. We were left so disappointed. In fact after an hour we felt as if we had seen as much as we wanted and needed to and decided that there was no need to return in the morning.

So shocked by the city were we, that I even had to look again on Google to make sure that there wasn't something significant I had missed, a street I hadn't turned down. Alas not. The most colourful and vibrant part of the city were the street art walls, which were terrific.

This really was the tale of two cities, at their extreme. Kilkenny with its rich tapestry of history, colour, folklore and sporting prowess to Waterford's artistically designed tourist trap that felt so disingenuous.

Of course you must go see it for yourself as we realise that everyone's travel experiences are unique and shaded by our own life perspectives.





## DUNMORE EAST

One of the reasons I was hesitant about heading to Kilkenny was my desire to see Dunmore East with its quaint thatch cottage community that look like something off a Devonshire Fudge box. I had even sussed out the ferry that would take us from the Hook Peninsula straight across to this region just south of Waterford. So I agreed to our visit north on the understanding that we came back south.

I was really disappointed after so much research about where to park, to find my chosen spot also had a steel restrictor to prevent our entry, like so many along this southern coast. So disheartened we almost turned tail, although Myles, resolute as ever, pushed on towards the harbour. There was some road-side parking we could have taken advantage of, although we spied a car park with coaches in it, so that was our cue. On the day, neither of us had the

energy to walk back down to the lower town so on this occasion we didn't get to see the iconic village that graces so many brochures. Such a shame. And the upper town was really just the harbour.

A quick note about the [Passage East Ferry](#), which for over 40 years has provided a vehicle ferry service across the River Suir saving time and miles from the 'long way round.' As experience tells us, these ferries are great for 'general vehicles' yet for us big bottom beauties, we have to be a little more cautious. I got in touch with the company to ask whether motorhomes with large overhangs would be ok and the response was "It should be ok." That was enough to shape our decision to go north not west. And were rewarded admirably.





Mahon Waterfall walk

## COMERAGH DRIVE AND THE PURSUIT OF THE MAGIC ROAD

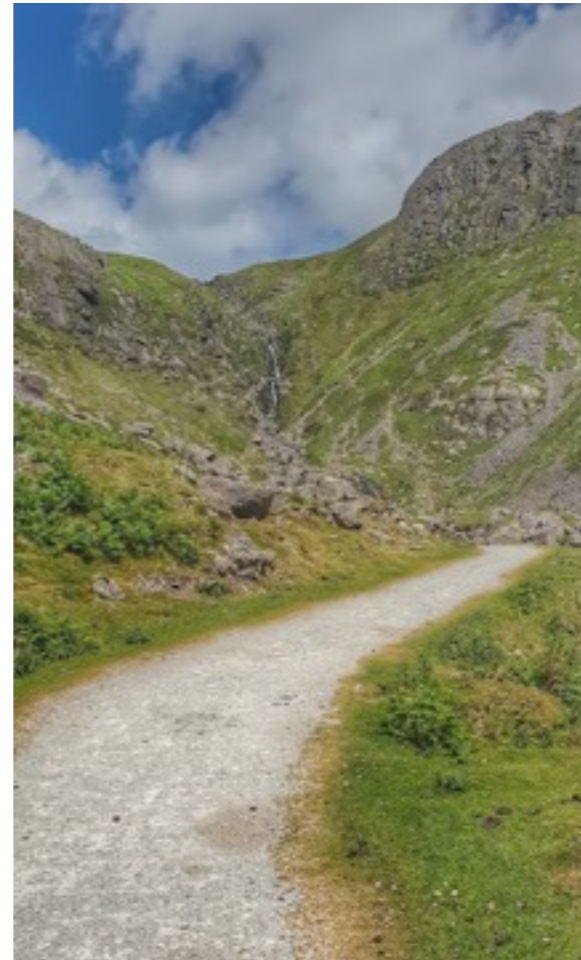
Way back when we decided to come to Ireland, my first research job was to Google 'off the beaten track places in Ireland.' Of the many results that came back, one was a must do for us - **The Magic Road**. Up in the Comeragh Mountains, just north west of Waterford, there is a single track driving route that, legend has it, if you stop at a certain point and take the vehicle out of gear you will roll uphill.

This phenomena is unknown to most visitors, which makes it completely up our street. So after some advice about suitability for a motorhome, we ventured up into the hills behind Waterford, leaving behind the city, that disappointed us so badly.

Anticipation for me was high. I was so looking forward to testing out this optical illusion and as we entered this road, my thoughts were more centred around feeling glad that nothing else was coming the other way.

We searched and yet found nothing to suggest any sort of magical movement. It is clearly subtle if that's not too much of a hyperbole.

Still we had the *Mahon waterfall* in our sights, which on a rather sloping car park, gave us safe passage to do the 20 minute walk into the mountains. It was a pleasant sight with only a handful of people who had come off the tourist trail, so we enjoyed it, although left the area defeated by our 'Magic Road' experience. The drive was wonderful though, so there is always a silver lining.





## UNESCO'S COPPER COAST

### Killmurrin Bay

With a longing for Ireland's highly rated coast, a landscape that energises us into our souls, we headed back from the hills towards a UNESCO site called the [Copper Coast](#). It takes its name from the minerals in the ground in these southern parts and evidence of the old mine shafts is clear as you drive these rollercoaster roads.

We arrived on the last day of a period of gorgeous weather, so we made the most of the drive, checking out the landmarks in the area. In fairness after a big drive, we didn't really do the Copper Coast justice and would definitely return to explore more from the east at Tramore, which is where the drive begins.

As it happens though, we found ourselves a glorious overnight spot at *Kilmurrin Bay* that was busy with locals, many of whom by now were armed with children who had broken up from school.

Swimming is a real thing in Ireland, as I guess it is around the world. Although given their unpredictable and not user-friendly weather, we were surprised to see so many come down for a constitutional dip.

Walking along the coast, it is easy to see why this area has been UNESCO designated, with its natural blow-holes and mineral rich environment, where ice, volcanic fire and ocean have shaped the land.

Just a 5 minute walk from our overnight spot, that you can see in the picture, Mother Nature's art is clear to see. We had insufficient opportunity to explore this geological masterpiece, as a bad weather front came in the following day, so this Copper Coast is firmly back on the list for our return visit.





## ARDMORE

Ardmore is a tricky place to visit for a motorhome, especially if the campsite is shut as it was when we visited. If [Seaview Aire](#) is open then not only does it offer staggering views across the sea, it is walking or cycling distance into this Devonian-style village, which is gorgeous personified.

If you happen to be lucky, as we were and find a, rare as hen's teeth parking spot, then Ardmore is absolutely worthy of a couple of hours over coffee or lunch. The beach alone is a stunning stretch of golden sands and one of Ireland's 83 Blue Flags. If that isn't enough to tempt you, then perhaps the short walk up the hill to Ardmore's monastery will suitably impress you instead.

As you meander through the multi-coloured houses that line the main street, with thatch cottages oozing quintessential charm, the history begins to strike you as significant.

### Ardmore's Blue Flag beach

St Declán arrived on these shores back in the 5th Century, bringing with him Christianity to spread to the Irish folk. He made Ardmore his home and built what you can tell was once a fine monastery. Many of its carvings are still evident in the ruins. The monastery also has a fine example of a Round Tower, which is an architectural design unique to Ireland, of which there are thought to be 65 around the country in varying states. Ardmore's tower stretches heavenward in a holy attempt to reach God and as you crane your neck to its summit, you just marvel at its construction let alone its religious symbology.

Unless your visit is for a pilgrimage, we would suggest avoiding **24th July** when thousands of troops descend to honour St Declán in an annual gathering at the monastery.







Cobh city view

## COBH, QUEENSTOWN OR COVE

So good they named it thrice! Cobh its modern name (pronounced Cove), is a small city located on *Great Island* just south of Cork. Of course the glitter of the city will attract most people, although Cobh is the star of the show. Full of colour, history, heritage and one of those unique attributes; a vibe that is really difficult to put into words.

As you walk from the motorhome dedicated Aire, you are likely to pass by a giant cruise liner, docked to allow its thousands of passengers to flood this popular destination. The ship though is just a red herring and a necessary distraction, as Cobh has so much profound history and so many Irish scars to share with willing visitors. Just walking through the streets you get a sense of just how

this city held the hopes and dreams of the millions who flocked here, in search of new lives in the Americas.

Cobh was a centre-piece for Ireland's colossal emigration that took place over 400 years, where millions of Irish families embarked on ships that set sail with their dreams of a better life. And in the mid 1800s emigration spiked thanks to the Potato Famine, as desperation rather than dreams drove people south to escape the poverty and the death that hung in the Irish air.

Queenstown, as it was renamed from 1850 to 1920 to honour Queen Victoria's visit, also holds a painful moment in history. With its White Star Offices, the Titanic made its last port of call here before its



fateful journey across the Atlantic in April 1912. Today, a museum sits in the heart of those administration offices offering an insight into the Titanic's fateful passage and acts as a memorial to those who perished.

Then a second ship tragedy affected Cobh, when on 7 May 1915 the Lusitania was bombed by a German U-boat killing 1,198 people when it sank 12 miles off the Old Head of Kinsale, many of whom were brought to Cobh and have rested here ever since.

So much tragedy and history for one small place to hold. Although it seems to do it humbly and admirably. Despite its dark moments, the town itself is bright, shapely and full of vibrance.

With a [Heritage Museum](#) in the old Railway Offices, the [Titanic Experience](#), memorials throughout the town and trips out to the [Spike Island prison](#) (think Alcatraz), this little hub has so much to offer.

We would recommend at least two days to really make the most of this destination's story book. And that's before you've even contemplated catching the train into Cork.

The fabulous Aire alongside the quay, you can stay for 48 hours, with services included. So it makes for an ideal place to stop and admire this incredible little city that has such huge shoes, broad shoulders and a massive heart.







## KINSALE - GATEWAY TO THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY

Some places just ooze charm and elicit plenty of expletives; and Kinsale is that very place. Even on a drizzly day, this pretty, medieval fishing town would brighten our moods. Having had a gorgeous overnight at the *1670 Charles Fortress* overlooking Kinsale, we glided down the hill to a parking area alongside the river, perfect for wide and long vehicles. With just a five minute walk into town, we located the Tourist Information office and armed ourselves with a map. Then we simply meandered; sometimes this is the best way to see a place - just wander aimlessly.

With a kaleidoscope of colours donning the facade of every single building, it was hard not to smile. It felt like a circus had come to town and waved some magic fairy dust over all the buildings. It was just the prettiest place we have ever seen. With cobbled streets and beautifully dressed shop windows, mooching has never been such a fabulous past-time.

And that's before you soak up its maritime history and of course its links to the *Lusitania* in 1915. Kinsale was the main hub for the disaster and where fishing vessels rushed to sea in a rescue attempt. And the verdict of 'Wilful Murder' was returned by the Court House in the town's square. Its sombre place in history however is not conveyed in its buildings. It is almost as if the town's colourful hue is in spite of its dark past.

Yet Kinsale's history goes far deeper than this, as we look to the 13th century to see bloody battles between the English and the local clans to secure this fertile land and sea port. The famous *Battle of Kinsale* in 1601 was a turning point in Irish history where the English gained supremacy over the Irish and their Spanish allies and the Gaelic way of life changed forever.





A quick mention of the Wild Atlantic Way, before we dive into more of the south coast sumptuousness.

1600 miles of breath-taking, soul-searching beauty that we defy you not to fall in love with. The WAW as it is known, will surpass anything that you will experience on Norway's 5km Atlantic Coastal Route and will have more expletives coming from your mouth than you could throw a Thesaurus at.

From Kinsale, in the south to Muff in the north (excuse me if I titter, that's the child in me!) this coastal route dips in and out, over and above and around and about this fabulous country.

You can of course drive like a demon and try to cover it all in three weeks, or simply breathe in its intoxicating and mesmerising beauty at a steady pace. However you choose to do it, this is probably one of Ireland's best exports, that doesn't even have to leave the island.

Follow the white and blue signs for truly incredible sights with Discovery Points that will submerge you into Ireland's historical legacy with the passion of a history professor, enlightening you about cultural, community and Irish evolution. This is what travel is all about and the Wild Atlantic Way does it with finesse and precision. Whilst you might not travel it all, even meandering just a bit of this route will give you a flavour of this kingdom.



Wild Atlantic Way Discovery Points.





Lusitania Memorial Garden

## LUSITANIA MEMORIAL - OLD HEAD KINSALE

On 7th May 1915 on a voyage from US to Liverpool, the Cunard Liner the Lusitania was attacked by a German U-Boat. Of the passengers and crew combined, 1,198 were drowned and 700 saved in a sinking that lasted just 20 minutes.

In honour of the victims and survivors and their families, a memorial and museum have been created at the Head which is the closest land point to the vessel's sinking, just 12 miles off shore.

The road to the Memorial is narrow with passing places although it is easy enough to reach and there are plenty of parking places for a motorhome. It costs just €5pp to enter the [Tower Museum](#) and explore the garden. It is well worth the entry fee. It is a beautiful and

moving tribute to such a tragic and unprovoked attack that will scar our history books forever.









Mizen Head bridge

## MIZEN HEAD DRIVE, VISITOR'S CENTRE AND BARLEY COVE

As you head along the Wild Atlantic Way from Kinsale, there are plenty of Discovery Points that help us understand Irish history, heritage and natural beauty. Of the many 'fingers' you can explore depending on the time you have, we highly recommend *Mizen Head*. If for no other reason than the end point is a Visitor's Centre and Lighthouse which has direct links with *Guglielmo Marconi* back in the early 20th century, as he attempted to create the first trans-Atlantic communication.

The journey to Mizen Head is beautiful and so reminiscent of our time on the west coast of Sweden. With small islets, craggy coastline and crisp, blue seas that sparkle even in dull skies. At the end point of the Head, you can go to the **[Visitor's Centre](#)** that gains you entry to the famous Mizen Head Walkway.

Positioned at Ireland's most south westerly point, the bridge that spans the chasm leading to the lighthouse is a sight to behold. If you have a head for heights then the walk and the crossing of the bridge is a must. If you suffer from vertigo, I would suggest not paying the entrance fee. The viewing platform that leans over the cliffs, with only fresh air to support you, is another experience altogether and exploring the lighthouse museum is well worth it. There is a good hour's visit to this very special part of the world.

En route to the Visitor's Centre is the delicious *Barley Cove*, which is not motorhome friendly although parking precariously on the side of the road gives you an incredible vantage point.





Barley Cove, Mizen Head





## Beara Peninsula

### BEARA PENINSULA - WAW SOUTH WEST

One finger west from Mizen Head you will find yourself on the incredibly mesmerising *Beara Peninsula*. Once past *Castletownbere* the scenery intensifies in its wilderness. A road-sign warning of vehicles no more than 2.7m gives rise to driving caution and of the road ahead. We continued our journey knowing that when we pull in our wing mirrors we are only 2.2m.

How glad we are that we carried on, as the road, often single track with passing places, was just incredible. We only met two other vehicles during the whole route which took us 90 minutes. With twists, turns, climbs and drops just like a rollercoaster ride, we drove this landscape in awe.

With scenery that reminded us, once again of Sweden's west coast, the camera recorded every single clip so we would forget not one thing.

Check out our video of this route by clicking the image below.







Helen's Bar overnight spot

## BUNAW - HELEN'S BAR AND LADY'S WALK

At the end of our *Beara Head* drive, it was a joy to find somewhere so nourishing to stop and it really is worth a mention. If you arrive in Ireland in mid to late May, then you will be blown away by the veracious Rhododendrons that cover the road sides in this part of the world, like weeds it seems.

We were too late for the floral display although seeing the bushes that line the roads, we could easily imagine what it would look like in full bloom.

Driving down our last, very little *L Road*, which is part of the Wild Atlantic Way, we found our 'home' for the night - Helen's Bar and B&B. This little establishment is fantastic and it was rocking. The pub is well known by locals and their fresh fish and other meals are really good quality. Highly recommend the mussels.

Directly from the [car park](#), which they gave us permission to stay at, is a great walk up through the mountains and along the coast. A quiet and peaceful walk with tremendous views that is about a 5 mile round trip.





## Scoobie at Killarney's Lake District

# KILLARNEY NATIONAL PARK

Ireland has 6 National Parks and Killarney was the first of its kind to be recognised in 1981 and is also a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

The mountain pass drive is actually part of the Ring of Kerry, so you instantly get a feel of *busy* after the quietness of Mizen and Beara Heads. The crowds definitely left their mark on our enjoyment of the Park, both in terms of the driving conditions and the chockerblock car parks. Whilst there was so much we would loved to have explored, there was absolutely no chance of getting Scoobie into any of the parking areas for the waterfalls and mountain walks. So that was disappointing.

That aside, we did get a flavour of the Park and its wilderness. Following the **N71** from *Kenmare* through *Killarney* was 24 miles and

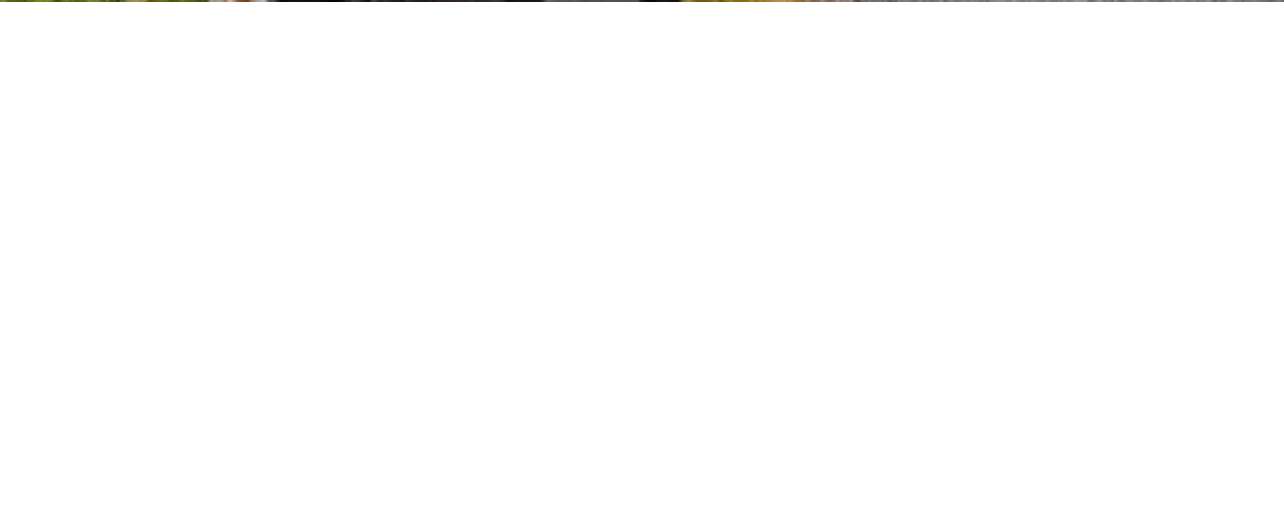
it took us a couple of hours with a lunch stop. The road, despite being a National route, was bumpy and narrow with plenty of dugadugaduga going on with the double challenge of cats' eyes either side of the lane.

The National Park has Ireland's highest mountain range, the *McGillycuddy's Reeks*, which rise to over 1000 metres. At their feet nestles the world famous lakes of Killarney. I can imagine that the partnership between the landscape and the weather can create different personalities making the sweeping mountains, lakes and woodland fuse together to make a picture-postcard moody shot.

For more information for your trip, check out the official website [here](#).









## 7 ROUTE 3 - HIDDEN HEARTLANDS

Ireland's famous Wild Atlantic Way of course is a major draw for many visitors. However we are keen advocates of a country's inner landscape, which has as much cultural sex appeal as its coastal cousin.

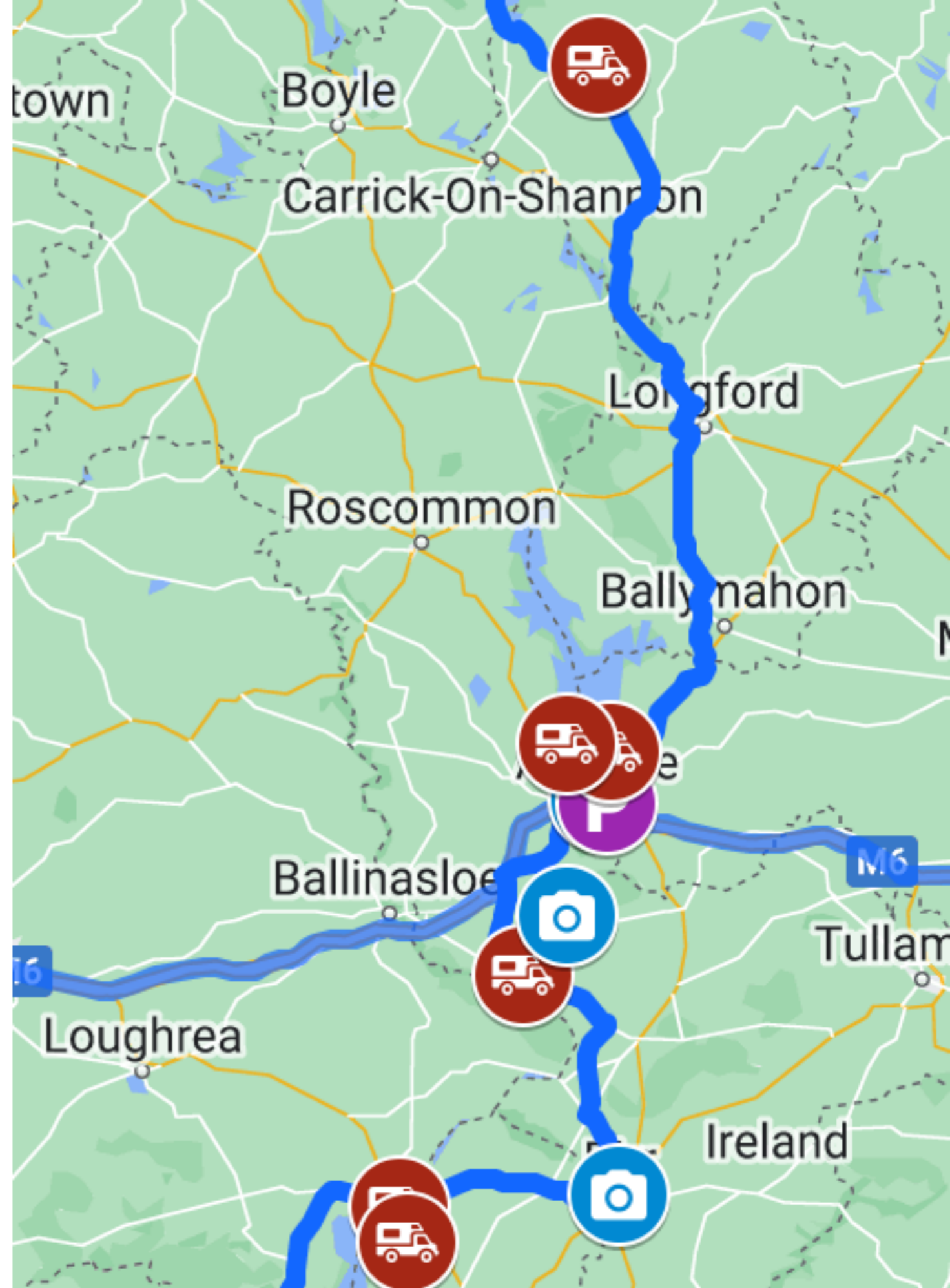
With weather influencing our choice of route, we decided to head up Eire's spine following the River Shannon, Ireland's longest waterway. The Hidden Heartlands is an absolute joy and we want to take you on a journey that shows you great offerings from counties that you are less likely to explore and perhaps only pass through.

### Route 3

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands really does what it says on the tin - provides so many secret delights.

#### Must-sees

- \* River Shannon and her Loughs
- \* Shannonbridge Marina
- \* Clonmacnoise Monastery
- \* Athlone and Sean's Bar





River Shannon, Killaloe

## RIVER SHANNON AND HER LOUGHS

One of our greatest Irish surprises was the Inland Waterway network that spans all points of her compass. Connecting inland communities to cities, capitals and oceans, this isolated **Midlands** region suddenly becomes connected in every direction.

The River Shannon, named after **Sionna**, a Celtic goddess, is Ireland's longest river, navigating 224 miles from Co. Cavan down to Limerick dissecting the country pretty much down the middle. Whilst you might think that this is a no-man's-land, this is far from the truth. With rich bog-lands that still, to this day produce turf fuel for private consumers and historical canals that facilitated the movement of commodities back in the day, this region is the spine of Ireland.

With deep loughs and arterial canals navigating along the Shannon, this river is an adventure all on its own, for both wheels and sail. We soon came to learn how embracing this region was to motorhomes

as their philosophy is '**Whatever your vessel whether sail or wheels, you are welcome**'.

Our first glimpse of the Shannon was at her estuary at **Ballybunion**. From here she guides you towards her source via **Killaloe**, which looked gorgeous, although sadly there was nowhere comfortable for us to stop overnight. So our route took us to the west of **Lough Derg**, where at a very popular aire at **Portumna**, we were forced to find our retreat at **Terryglass** across the water. Albeit a car park it was situated at the fringe of the lough where boats moored, jet skis raced and kayaks glided. We highly recommend this spot, which we have detailed in the *Overnight Camping* section later in the book.

You will find spots all along this stretch of the river and you will not be disappointed by their welcome, their views and facilities.



Terryglass Marina,  
Lough Derg





## SHANNONBRIDGE MARINA

Following the Shannon's lead, we took our leave of Terryglass Marina and trundled north, via [Birr Castle](#), which looked worth a visit next time. We had our sights set on Shannonbridge, which looked to be a fabulous stopover from the map. With a fortress, pubs and not too far from **Clonmacnoise** monastery, it was a good un.

Despite a blot on the landscape from the now disused Power Station that used to quite literally fuel the local area, it is incredibly pretty. Peat bogs are profuse in these parts, brought about by the Shannon's watercourse and water table. 1/6th of Ireland is covered in these bogs and although commercial 'turfing' has now ceased due to its environmental issues, farmers with peat bog on their land can still turf for their own private use. You will see peat bog fields all over the island in their characteristic oblong shape with sods laying out to dry.

At Shannonbridge. I sense that because the Power Station is now decommissioned, the village is a shadow of its former self. Whilst the six pubs are reliant now on visitors by land and water to support their livelihood, they still seem to thrive. We adored this spot and over a hot weekend in July, it was incredibly popular.

The Fortress across the road is worth a visit. One of the best examples of a Napoleonic defence in the British Isles, Shannonbridge is a great self-guided walk. Built in 1801 by the British military, it looms over the bridge with its protective gaze.

The Marina is well worth stopping at with its toilet and shower facilities, bars and general buzz from the boats tootling up the river.









## CLONMACNOISE MONASTERY

Just a 30 minute cycle or 10 minute drive is the mesmerising [Clonmacnoise Monastery](#), one of Ireland's best and most important examples of an Early Christian settlement. So important is this site, that in 1979, Pope John Paul II visited at the time of the annual pilgrimage, to give homage to all the faiths across Ireland.

Now I'm more of a spiritual girl despite my Convent School roots, yet I admire the artistry, passion and belief behind our religious icons.

So having the opportunity to cycle over from Shannonbridge to Clonmacnoise to contemplate the history I was witnessing, was quite sobering. Founded by *St Ciarán* in 545AD, this humble community consisting of wooden buildings, soon became increasingly significant as its standing as a seat of learning was acknowledged across Europe.

With a cathedral, 2 round towers, 7 churches and 700 early Christian gravestones, Clonmacnoise is understandably a central destination for Christians around the world. Added to this, are the two iconic 10th century High Crosses that have been preserved from the harshness of Mother Nature inside the Interpretative Museum. The entry fee of €8 is well worth it, as you can while away an hour between the video, museum and Monastery grounds. It's quite a spiritual place and has a very special energy about it.

*A point to note;* **9 September** is St Ciarán's Feast Day and there is a pilgrimage here each year to honour him. You might want to avoid visiting around this time unless you are, of course heading here for that very purpose.





Skyline of Athlone

## ATHLONE AND SEAN'S BAR - GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS!

A stone's throw from Shannonbridge was Athlone, where we had our eye on a couple of points of interest. First was LPG, the second was the oldest bar in Ireland.

Parking was over in the [Golden Island Shopping Centre](#) where we could stay for free, for four hours. Then a quick walk over the bridge and we arrived at the castle and the iconic church of St Peter and Paul.

It didn't take long for us to sniff out [Sean's Bar](#), where there has been a bar for 900 years and is in the Guinness Book of Records. It is suggested that there is a list of all historical landlords going back to the original **Luain Mac Luighdeach** who also gave his name to

the town itself. Another previous owner **Mark Begg**, back in 1736, was also the first man to run a stage coach service from Athlone to Dublin.

A pint and a wee dram was absolutely called for at this historic pub and both inside and out, it was full of character. I wish we could have been there at night, as I am sure the vibe with the Irish music would have been a great craic. It had a slight 'touristy' feel to it although it was good to visit and share in its accolade.

As with most towns in Ireland, there was so much colour that it made us smile, irrespective of the weather.



Scenes from Athlone





## 7 ROUTE 4 - DONEGAL & THE GALWAY COAST

If I could write a whole guide about our 10 days in Co. Donegal it would be both long and well deserved, full of incredible pictures and travel inspiration. So by way of a summary, I shall do my best to keep it snappy and engaging, in such a way that it entices you to find your own way to the **Northern Headlands**.

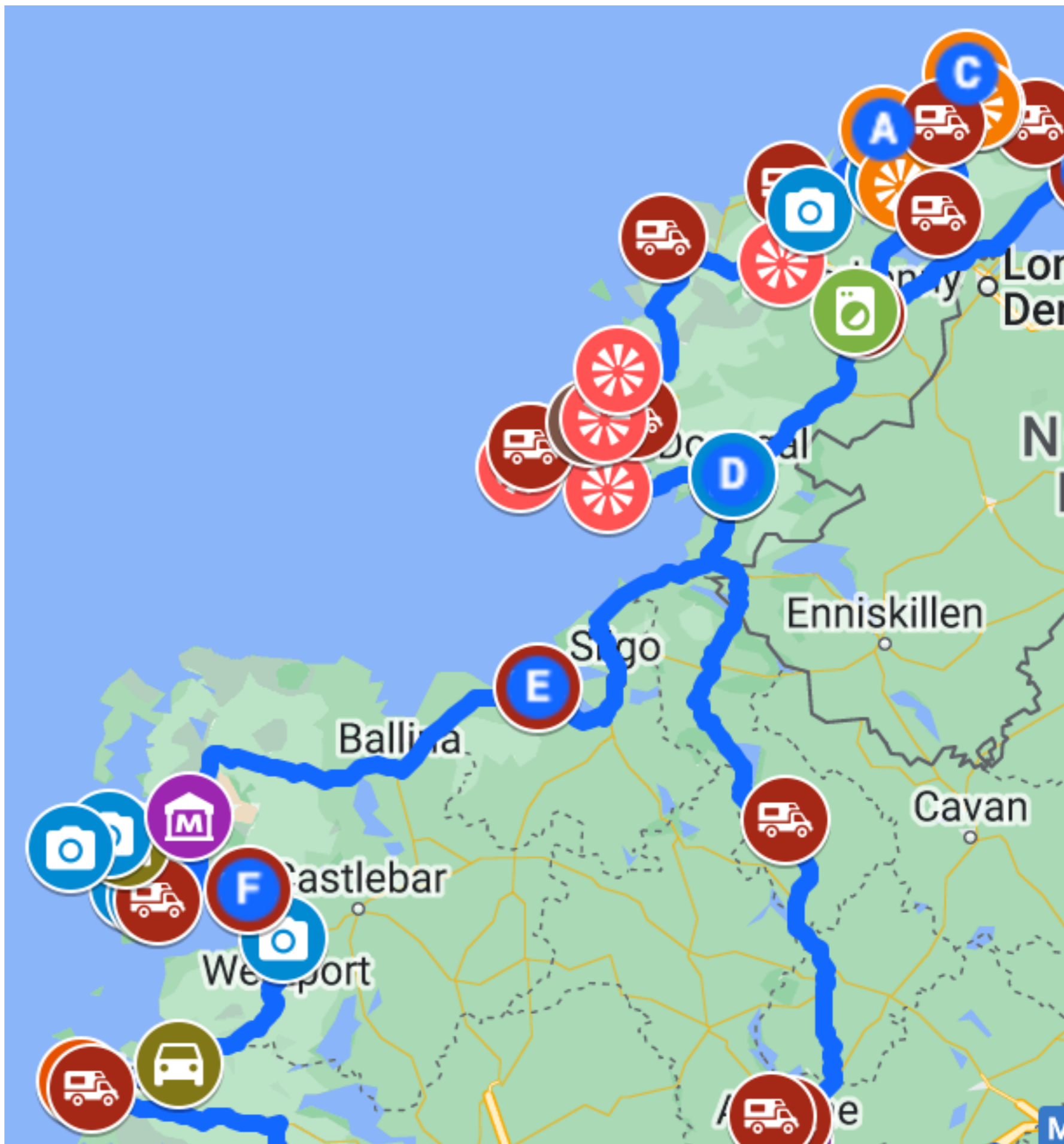
After Co. Donegal's highlights, we wondered whether the west coast could match it. And we have to say that whilst Donegal is firmly lodged in our hearts, Co. Clare and Galway are truly magnificent too. Check this little lot out.

## Route 4

County Donegal and the west coast may be neighbours yet are like chalk and cheese. Here are our highlights;

### Must-sees

- \* Donegal & Reel Inn
- \* Malin Bay, the Secret Waterfall and Glencolumbkille Folk Museum
- \* Glengesh Pass and Assaranca Waterfall
- \* Glenveagh National Park
- \* Inishowen 100 Drive
- \* Wild Nephin National Park
- \* Achill Island
- \* Eco Camping - Clifden and Omey Island





Irish Music and Dance at The Reel Inn, Donegal

## DONEGAL TOWN AND THE REEL INN

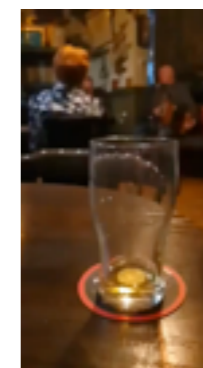
After our last visit to Ireland, we were determined to recreate some of the Irish music magic that we had experienced back then. Donegal was the place where that would happen, we felt sure.

Safely harbouring at [Car Park 4](#), which allows overnight parking for free from 6.00pm to 9.00am, we had a mooch around the town, which is sweet and not too touristy. It has the meandering Eske river, that at high tide gives passage to a 75 minute [Boat Trip](#) out into the estuary and its islands. Then there is Donegal's 15th century [castle](#) that costs €5pp entry fee. With the ruins of the old Abbey at the end of the car park, there is plenty to experience in the gateway to County Donegal.

Best of all was our discovery of live music and dance at [The Reel Inn](#), which has a very authentic feel about, unlike some of the other establishments in the town. Plus it all started at 8.30pm not 9.30pm.

Every night there is a different guest musician, accompanied by landlord John. Then the Irish Dancing begins. Now I must add that this pub is a traditional bar - small, dark and atmospheric, so you can imagine with the kicks and flicks of these masterful dancers, that a little room had to be created. Although it was an outstanding experience and one that I will not forget.

[Check out our Irish Dancing footage by clicking the image below.](#)







Malin Bay

## MALIN BAY, THE SECRET WATERFALL AND GLENCOLUMBKILE MUSEUM

With music still ringing in our ears, we allowed our wanderlust excitement for discovering Donegal to take the reigns of our chariot. As we headed along its southern coast towards Malin Bay, Google Maps showed a waterfall, classed as 'secret'. I wanted to know why.

It didn't take long to find out; firstly it is not signposted and second the hike to reach it is a challenge and definitely not for the faint hearted or unfit amongst us. We found a nice parking spot up at the **Largy Viewpoint** and then walked down to an unmarked farmer's gate. We were soon rock-climbing whilst the tide was out, to reach our secret destination. Encouraged by some people ahead us who said it wasn't far, we continued on. I have never been so grateful for my yoga strengthening my legs and arms. It was so worth the effort as the waterfall, that has no name, descends through a chasm to the

beach below. It was beyond special and we were proud of ourselves for undertaking the hike.

As if things couldn't get any better, we continued our drive down to Malin Bay - a one-way in, one-way out road, which had us drawing in our breath from time to time. It is on the Northern Headlands section of the Wild Atlantic Way so it is a must-see.

When we arrived, the full extent of this bay's beauty couldn't be captured until you walked to the edge. And then boom! This horseshoe bay, sheltered by encompassing cliffs hits you right between the eyes. Golden sands drew us towards its treasure and the Greece-like sparkling seas just invited us in for a dip. Oh how tempting it was. This place was like something out of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. It made my eyes leak such was its serenity.



With no less than 157 sharply descending steps down to the golden treasure beach, I felt the magnitude of the gigantic cliffs around me, feeling like this must be a great auditorium. It was one of those experiences where, as I looked back up towards the car park, knowing those steps must now be ascended, I felt my insignificance in the universe. That was the power of this off-the-beaten track beach. If this is how Donegal's beaches would be, then we were in for a treat.

With reluctance, Myles tore me away from this tranquil spot and on to our 'home' for the night at [Glencolmcille Folk Museum](#). The drive was spectacular as we were treated to a cliff-top master-piece by Mother Nature's very own artist.

The Folk Museum is a collection of clachan - traditional cottages that replicate a village created by **Fr James McDyer**. In 1951 he came to the village and saw the deprivation and isolation of its community where, with no water nor electricity, the young were emigrating. The village was dying. And so he invested his life's work to honour the right of the locals to create their own destiny and become self-sufficient.

The museum is part of his legacy and serves to show the humble lives of those who lived here and how they were enhanced by his efforts. For €8 you can explore inside the cottages, which is a lovely payment for an overnight stay. The walks around Glen Bay Beach are pretty special to boot.





## GLENGESH PASS AND ASSARANCA WATERFALL

From the Folk Museum, thanks to advice from The Travelling Pilchards, we decided to take the path less travelled - as is our wont. Now a word about Ireland's roads, briefly. The Regional roads (R roads) are like the UK's B roads, just generally more narrow. Although when there's an R road in the middle of nowhere, it's more like a farmer's track with grass growing up it. We came to learn that if there's a lot of traffic, then the road tends to be pretty good. If not, despite its R rating, the road will be as bouncy as Tigr and as narrow as a gangplank.

So it was of no surprise that our off the beaten track trip through the Donegal mountains was not going to be a smooth one. It is trips like these though that make us feel alive and we thrive on them and the adrenalin they evoke. That was until we drove over the rise and saw the valley in front of us. Myles' vertigo took a leap and rendered him as static as a stone. So he walked the path until he could regain his

confidence and I drove down. What a site it was and it didn't take him long to be able to appreciate this magnificent valley road. There were so many places that you could stop overnight too.

Our destination for breakfast (as we decided to do the Pass early to avoid any oncoming traffic issues), was **Assaranca Waterfall**, which personifies grace and elegance. It was like a brides veil falling to the floor, as beads of water cascaded to the pool below.

What a great place for breakfast and we were so glad to have taken this route. It rewarded us with plenty of authentic Donegal not shared by too many others.





Mount Errigal, Mountveagh NP

## GLENVEAGH NATIONAL PARK

We are so often drawn to the inland landscape of a country, where many bypass for the sex appeal of the coast. We don't subscribe to that theory, as for us, the interior holds a unique perspective, secrets and culture that enriches our travels.

**Glenveagh** was one of those inland gems that, once again I found just by perusing Google Maps. As one of Ireland's six **National Parks**, Glenveagh has a tranquil presence about it, almost hauntingly peaceful; as if dropping a pin might shatter its stillness.

As we drove towards the looming mountain in front of us, we knew it was going to be something special. **Mount Errigal** towers

up to the skies in a volcanic looking guise. It is 751m tall and one of the chain of mountains called the **Seven Sisters**. If you take a right turn towards the Dunlewey Centre, which was closed when we visited, you can get a glorious shot across the lake with a lovely reflection, if the weather conditions are right.

Driving a little further up on the main road, there is a beautiful viewing point that looks down the valley that sits in the shadow of Errigal. And not more than 15 minutes further along, we came across **Glenveagh Castle**. What a fabulous experience this was. With a large parking area, where you can stay **overnight** and fill up with fresh water, there is then a great cycle to the castle. We



could though either have walked or taken the chargeable bus that runs regularly along the 4km route alongside the lough. The views are stupendous and after 20 mins we arrived at the castle grounds.

It was built in 1867 as a hunting lodge and is now owned by the National Park. The castle itself is currently closed although there is a virtual tour [here](#). The gardens are beautiful and are well worth walking around. If you park up your bikes there is a lovely hike up into the hills with views over the castle and lough. It was a fantastic way to spend a couple of hours and we highly recommend stopping off here.

There's lot more to see and do in the National Park and we will definitely return to uncover more of its mysteries.







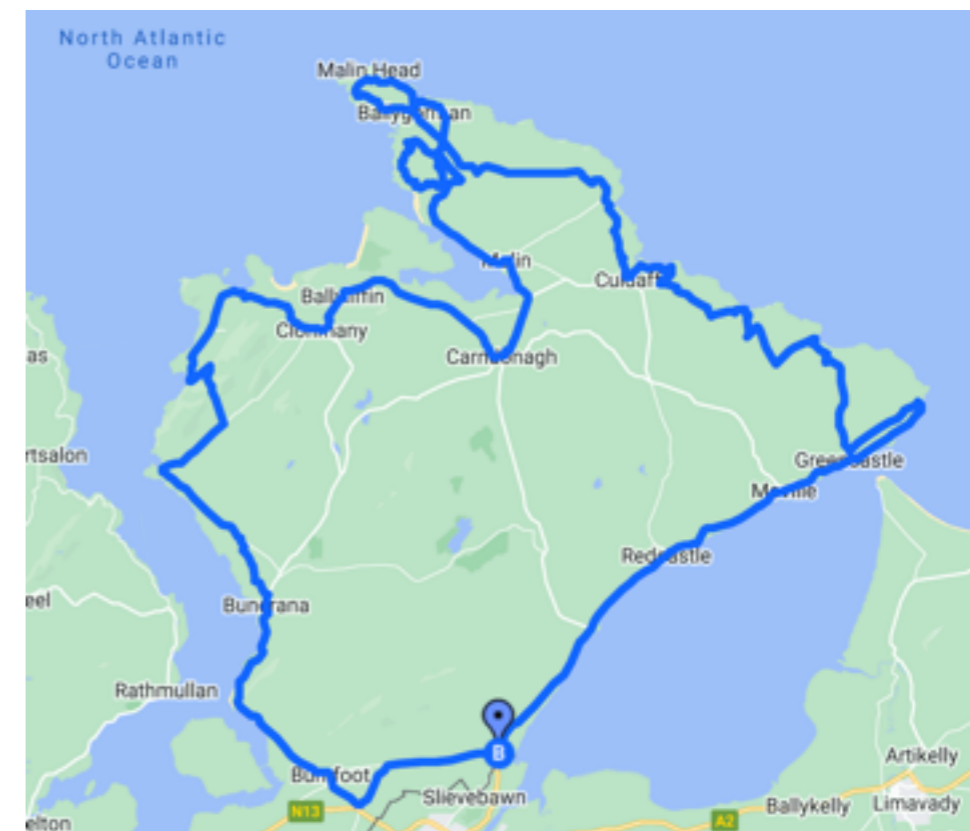
Scoobie at Malin Head

## INISHOWEN 100 DRIVE - MALIN HEAD

Head to the most northern point of Ireland, on its border with Northern Ireland and you will uncover the most spectacular scenery. Still officially part of the Wild Atlantic Way, the **Inishowen 100 Drive** is a dedicated route all by its own self.

We didn't drive it all as Ireland's fickle weather turned once again and so we headed south with a deadline looming for a rendezvous in Dublin with friends.

Mostly hugging the coast, the drive starts at the beginning (or end) of the Wild Atlantic Way in **Muff** on the eastern edge of the peninsula. With teasing glimpses of Northern Ireland along the



eastern board, we zig zagged right to the most northerly point of Ireland at Malin Head. There's not a huge amount of parking for a motorhome, so we used the coach lane so we could have a quick walk around. You need to see the **EIRE 80** sign on the top of cliff that is a wartime waymarker.

There are signs like this all around Ireland, intended as navigational aids for World War 2 pilots, signalling Ireland's neutrality. They have restored this particular sign as a memorial.

This northerly junction is also the location for one of the **Star Wars** scenes and it is said that Mark Hamill fell in love with the traditional Irish Cottage down the hill and nipped in for a cup of tea.

The single track road coming out of Malin Head is beautifully serene. So isolated, so peaceful, just our kind of place. On a clear day you can see Scotland. It's a sublime place to be for a while.





## Tullagh Bay

As you head around the coast, Donegal's stunning array of beaches brought tears to my eyes. We've seen nothing like it, even in Portugal, despite their 'World's Best' status. Donegal, for the sheer number of beaches, their serenity and quietness, wins hands down, in our humble opinion. It might not have the weather, although in terms of adjective-defining exquisiteness, there's no comparison.

From **Tullagh Bay**, where we truly wild camped, overlooking the elegance of nature's perfect arc, we travelled to the **Five Finger Strand** that is home to some of Europe's highest sand dunes at 30m tall. If you keep your eyes peeled, you may even see some

semi-precious serpentine here. There's not a great deal of parking for a motorhome; so we plonked ourselves up by the church on the grass verge, then walked down. (55.320536, -7.324602)

**Culdaff Beach** must surely get a mention as we parked up here for a night, sheltered by the dunes. With a short walk between the grasses we were wowed by the expanse of sand stretching in front of us. Turn left and we had the estuary with its ancient pier offering a picturesque photo opportunity. And to the right, more delightful beaches with rock formations that looked like something from a moonscape - or at least as I image the the moon might look.

This part of Ireland is where magic truly happens and where Mother Nature has effortlessly cast a spell over this land. With a southern landing at Rosslare, it may seem like a long way north, although by 'eck it was truly worth every single mile we covered to reach its haven.

I would return to Donegal in a heartbeat and take more time to explore its nooks and crannies.

### Views from Culdaff Beach





Views from Five Finger Strand





Scoobie at Killary Fjord

## WEST COAST WONDERS - WILD NEPHIN NATIONAL PARK PEAT BOGS

At the start of our Ireland tour, we had a particular campsite in mind that we wanted to retreat to for a couple of days. It looked like just our sort of place. **Eco Camping in Clifden** is right on the western edge of the coast, so after Donegal, with all too little time remaining, we set our sights on Clifden. That meant that we didn't really get much time to explore Co. Clare and Galway. It was really a passing through sadly, for this trip at least.

Where the mountains and coast collide, this western region of Ireland is where the weather has had, and continues to have a massive impact on the landscape.

The craggy coast is littered with Greek-style islands with white sand beaches and azure seas. You really could be forgiven for thinking that you were in some exotic southern state and not Co. Galway.

Inland is one of Ireland's most characterful features - its peat bogs. Historically, these lands that cover 1.2 million hectares used to provide fuel commercially to heat all Ireland's homes. Although now, in an attempt support climate change, peat bog 'turfing' is only allowed privately.

Evidence of the peat bogs is clear to see around many parts of the Emerald Isle, although most particularly on the west coast thanks to its prolific rain. Oblong fields, that have been ‘turfed’ scar the earth and the sight of drying turf sods are commonplace.

The earth squelches without a soul placing their feet upon it, such is its sogginess. This wilderness, that on the face of it doesn’t look so pretty supports a biodiverse ecology, which includes many types of orchids and cotton flowers that dance in the winds which blow in off the Atlantic Coast.

Such is its importance that the [\*\*Wild Nephin National Park\*\*](#) at **Ballycroy** has been set up as a protective site and is well worth a trip to the Visitor’s Centre. There is ample parking for motorhomes and it is possible to stay overnight here too. It is also known as a Big Sky region, so on a clear night the star-gazing is meant to be magnificent.

From the Visitor’s Centre there is a one mile walk around the area’s peat bog park along boardwalk paths, which is well worth doing for an up-close-and-personal view of this landscape. For free, you can learn about the history of the bogs and the life that it used to support. It’s a fascinating place to understand one of Ireland’s most important landscape features.





## Achill Island

# ACHILL ISLAND

Before our Eco Camping retreat, we had heard so much about **Achill Island**, (pronounced Akill) that a quick tour to get a flavour was on the cards. Now whilst *quick* is no longer in our travelling vocabulary, sometimes, just dipping in a toe to the water is enough to convince us that a return is necessary - and this was how we felt about Achill.

Achill is in Co. Mayo and has a fusion of Scandinavian scenery, enormous cliffs and gorgeous beaches. With the Wild Atlantic Way navigating its way around Ireland's largest island, Achill is a-must-visit destination.

We experienced the famous Grace's Tower, queen of all pirates, a village of 80 un-mortared stone houses, deserted during the Famine

in 1845 and five Blue Flag Beaches. One of the best and most isolated beaches is **Keem**, at its northern end; voted as Ireland's best and is on the World's Best Beach list. Amongst the many people who have called this place home, **Captain Charles Boycott** is perhaps the most famous, living here for 20 years. Such was his tough landlord management style his tenants joined together to protest which lead to the phrase 'to boycott'.

Achill is a place we would return to and wander for more like a week than a day, such is its allure, with plenty of places to wild camp and a couple of camps that you share with just 2,500 inhabitants.





Top; Grace O'Malley's Tower, Keem Beach  
Bottom, Scoobie on the Achill coast and the deserted village







Connemara National Park

## CONNEMARA NATIONAL PARK

The Connemara National Park must somehow be related to Norway given its likeness. Each corner we turned, the greater were our acclamations of its similarity. With its majestic mountains, deep reaching fjords and moody ambiance, the whole area looked quite incredible.

As we approached the Park from the cute towns of **Newport** and **Westport**, the shadow of the mountains loomed large on the horizon. Just by their scale we knew there was something special in their midst. This is an area we will definitely come back to to walk and more importantly to feel more of its soul.

For now we had to be content with the teasing taster that it offered us as we passed through to our Eco Camping retreat.





## ECO CAMPING - CLIFDEN, GALWAY

**Clifden's Eco Campsite** is a real delight and you know us, we rarely do campsite reviews - unless they REALLY impress us. It is the sort of place we love when we choose a campsite over off-gridging. In part because the campsite is so natural and wild that we felt like we were off-grid even though there are electrical hook ups if we had wanted.

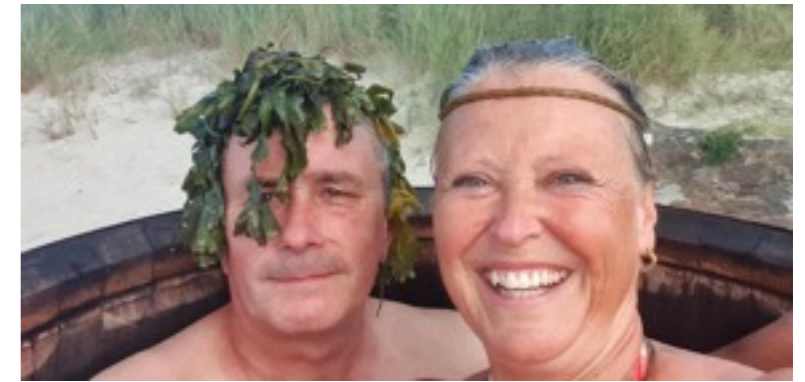
As a campsite that has been around for 50 years, they really know what they're doing when it comes to ecotourism and have won 11 awards to prove it. It has rustic pitches with amazing views across the ocean, its own private beach and **Seaweed Hot Tubs**, exclusively for campers.

The tubs are incredible and well worth the investment in yourself. At €65 for a couple tub and €45 for a single tub, these Irish Whiskey casks are filled with heated, purified and harvested seawater, which after a soak you have the pleasure of having a seaweed massage. It is just a great experience, especially if undertaken at gin o'clock.

Within a 30 minute walk or 10 minute cycle of the campsite, I visited **Omey Island**, which at low tide gives way to a sandy causeway enabling me to explore this magical 1 mile square island before the waters retreated. Thought to date back to 5/6th century when an abbey was at the seat of it Christian routes, Omey is now home to just a few holiday homes. The scenery on this protected little haven is just very special and almost spiritual.



Check out ur Seaweed Hot Tub experience video, filmed at Eco Camping, Clifden



## INTERACTIVE ROUTE-MAP

And so that concludes our four routes through the Emerald Isle. What a joy it was, and one we are going to repeat and soon. I have never been so grateful for Schengen, as it has drawn us to Ireland where we have uncovered a real travel gem.

With the detail of our tour in the summer of 2022, we hope we have whetted your appetite just a little.

With those delectable sights, sounds and senses to experience, perhaps it has left you wanting more. Well more there is.

Here is our interactive map, which gives you the specific roads we travelled, the places we stopped with images and, most importantly the coordinates for each of those overnight stays.

Just click [here](#) or the image to the right to access our library of Interactive Map PDF cards, which allows you to download your very own copy of the map.

# The Motoroamers' Interactive Map Series



ITINERARIES - STOPOVERS - IMAGES - BLOGS

## REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

- Our full Ireland tour routes
- Our Off-grids spots/campsites
- Favourite destinations
- An itinerary to follow

Click the map



## COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS



INSPIRING YOU TRAVEL





## 8 IRELAND PRACTICALITIES

With Ireland comes a bit of complexity; it is in Europe although not part of Schengen. So therefore, a visit here does not blissfully count towards our 90 days. So travel here is an absolute blessing for those of us full-timers or those looking for an extended time away from UK shores.

Even though it's just 3.5 hours away from the Welsh coastline, we are entering Europe and that brings with it some EU practicalities that we need to be mindful of.

## Doing your Research

We're not sure how you like to travel. Perhaps you love to simply wing it and see how things unfold. Or may be you love the challenge of all the research and **planning** your routes in intricate detail. Or perhaps like me you fall somewhere in between the two. My corporate days were all about planning and organising, so research runs, I guess, through my veins. I just love exploring options and then, when we arrive, throwing all those plans up in the air and following our noses.

Whether you love technology and use Google, Pinterest or Facebook groups to get info, or perhaps you prefer the touch and feel of a map or Guide Books, there is a plethora of information just an inch away from your finger tips.

We invested in an A3 map of Ireland which in reality we actually haven't used very much. Although it is good to have.

We also joined a really helpful Motorhome Group called **Total Motorhome Ireland**. They are a friendly bunch of locals and previous visitors who will answer your questions and allay your concerns without judgement.

We also visited Tourist Info offices in most towns and cities to get a collection of local and national maps and info. They are such a great resource and are always our first port of call on arrival. **Tourism Ireland** have a great set of maps available at most Tourist Information offices and are seriously worth getting - and they are all free.



## Free Tourist Info Maps





# Arriving in Ireland

For us motorhome lovers, arriving into Ireland means a ferry. Whether you decide to arrive through Northern Ireland or from a port in the UK, either way crossing the Irish Sea is a necessity. Unless of course you want to hire and fly, which is an option and one we took in LBS - Life before Scoobie many decades ago. Here are your ferry arrival options.

## 1. Ferries from the UK and Isle of Man

There are a total of 16 sailings from 4 different operators. So there are plenty of options depending on where in the country you are starting from. Here are your options;

### Stena Line - 4 Routes

- Fishguard to Rosslare
- Liverpool to Belfast
- Holyhead to Dublin
- Cairnryan to Belfast



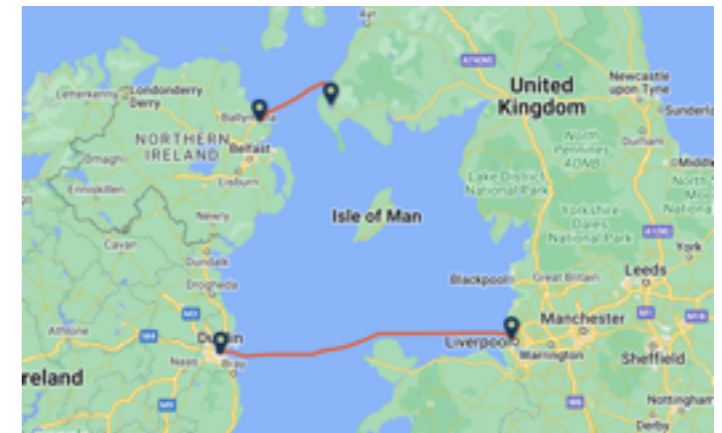
### Irish Ferries - 2 Routes

- Pembroke to Rosslare
  - Holyhead to Dublin
- (Redeem your Tesco Card points)



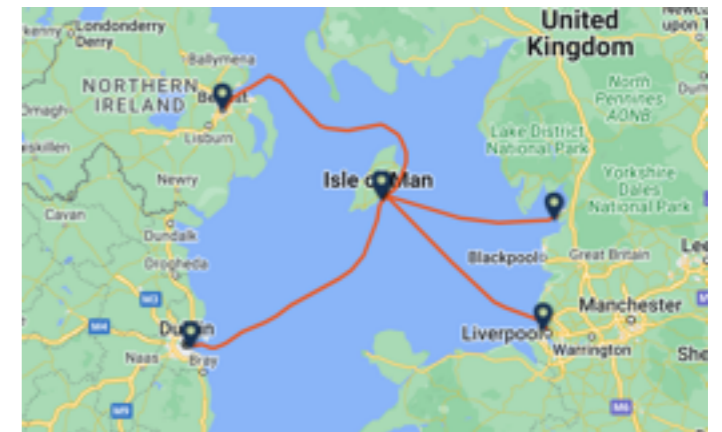
### P&O Ferries - 2 Routes

- Cairnryan to Larne
- Liverpool to Dublin



### Isle of Man SteamPacket - 2 Routes

From the fair Manxland, you can sail to either Northern Ireland into Belfast or into Dublin via their SteamPacket sailings.





## 2. Ferry from France and Spain

If you are travelling from France or Spain either because this is where you live or you want to travel direct from here, bypassing the UK, then you have a couple of options.

### [Brittany Ferries](#)

Cherbourg to Rosslare

Roscoff to Cork

Bilbao to Rosslare

### [Irish Ferries](#)

Cherbourg to Dublin

We chose to sail from Fishguard, Pembrokeshire to Rosslare with a one way ticket. This cost us £240 with **Stena Line**. We joined their Stena Club so we could make use of their membership and gain rewards given they also have other European routes.

An exercise we then carried out was to explore our route into Europe. We had the option of a return booking to Fishguard and then catch a Newhaven to Dieppe ferry or go direct from Ireland to Europe. Whilst the driving through the UK option would have saved us potentially 3 days on our Schengen allowance, when you build in the cost of diesel and two ferries, it actually worked out cheaper to go direct to France from Ireland.

So we booked with **Irish Ferries** from Dublin to Cherbourg (in part because they had cabins available albeit a bit more expensive than Stena). The biggest advantage of Irish Ferries is that with the Tesco Clubcard Voucher scheme, we ended up saving £135 on our sailing. So if you have a Clubcard, it is definitely worth saving up your vouchers as we all dance through the [Schengen Shuffle](#).

# All things driving

Driving around Ireland is an average experience. With only 4 million people living on the island, congestion is nothing in comparison to the UK. People drive with respect, especially larger vehicles who all seem to pull over to the edge when we approach. That said the roads here are narrower than we are used to in the UK, even the regional roads; think Devon and Cornwall and you'll be fine.

Let's start off with **driving rules** and things to take with you.

- \* Although part of the EU you must drive on the left which means that **headlamp beam deflectors** are not required.
- \* **Speed limits** however are in kilometres until you cross the border into **Northern Island** where they return to mph.
- \* No International Driving Permits are required by UK, US, Canada, EU states or Australia.
- \* Advice is 'Never drink and drive'. The legal **alcohol** limit for fully licensed drivers is 50 milligrams per 100ml of blood.
- \* You must carry your country of origin **Driving Licence** as normal
- \* Carry at least 2 High Vis Vests in the event of a breakdown.
- \* Make sure you carry your **V5** and your insurance documents.
- \* Have a **UK sticker** on the back of your van as we would normally have for trips to EU.
- \* **Dial 999** for an emergency situation or accident and of course contact your EU Breakdown cover supplier where necessary.

\* **Cyclists** must be overtaken at a width of 1.5m.

\* **Yield** means *give way* at a junction.

## Speed limits

There are speed limits on all roads. Road signs on both sides indicate when the speed limit will change.

\* Built-up areas: 30 - 50km/h.

\* Regional and Local Roads: 80km/h.

\* National Roads: 100km/h



- Motorways: 90 - 120km/h depending upon your vehicle type.
- Other speed limits may be imposed at a local level if there are road incidents, road works or closed carriageways.
- The Gardaí may monitor speed limits manually or automated. It is against the law to have any device that detects or interferes with these. Bear in mind that there are also Mobile Speed Camera vehicles that patrol certain areas.

## Road Types

When we first arrived, we soon learnt about the road system. We arrived on the N25 - that's a fast *National Road* that takes all types of traffic and they are really good quality roads.

Then you have the solid *R Roads*. These are Regional routes and generally speaking they are pretty decent around main towns. In the country they tend to be narrower, although these are the roads we tended to look for. In rural areas their quality is not so good as main routes around towns and cities, so be mindful.

As a heads up, for our wide vehicles, you will have to get used to the dugadugaduga of your wheels murdering those cat's eyes and fighting the battle of the bushes as they risk scratching your passenger side. The worst roads were the ones that had those blinking cats eyes on both the inside line and middle line!

The *L Roads*, we laughed calling them L for Little because this is what they are. Often single tracks with passing places and sometimes with grass growing in the middle in more remote places. L actually stands for Local and they are the rat-run roads that link hamlets and small villages.

**Watch out for *L Roads* - they can be unpredictable and *R Roads* are generally speaking narrower than our UK roads and can be VERY, VERY bumpy!**

Whilst we got more comfortable taking these *L Roads* during our road-trip, we generally tried to avoid them if we could, as we did tend to hold our breath anticipating oncoming vehicles going at pace.

We did travel a few and it was a quiet moment in the van. Where there is a wealthy area, then the road has been paid for and so is better quality. Otherwise they can be, what shall I say? Bumpy. They can be as bouncy as Tigger, so low speed is essential. A double bounce nearly caught us out, thankfully we were going slowly so no damage done.

And then there are the motorways...

## Motorways & Tolls

Image courtesy of [etoll.ie](http://etoll.ie)



There are **13 motorways** in Ireland and 7 in Northern Ireland (including motorway grade dual carriageways.)



Some of Ireland's Motorways have tolls, which for up to date information you must use this [website](http://etoll.ie) as this information could

change suddenly and we want to make sure you travel with the latest information.

There are **11 Tolls** on Ireland's Motorways and you can pay via a Barrier operated Plaza, either manually with an attendant,

automatic coin machine lanes or by Electronic Tag Lanes. The M50 which encircles Dublin, is payable online at [eflow.ie](http://eflow.ie). If you are here for a long time and intend to use the tolls frequently then it may be helpful to get an Electronic Toll Tag. You can get more information [here](http://etoll.ie). Watch out for **Waterford** as there is a toll on the **N25 by-pass** road, which can sneak up on you.

Main R and N roads will often have a broken yellow line as in the picture below, indicating a hard shoulder. This part of the carriageway is legally for walkers and cyclists. However large and slow vehicles *may* use it briefly to allow others to overtake.



## Drivers and Driving Conditions

Drivers in Ireland are pretty respectful and most vehicles will often pull over to give you more room especially on those narrow *R Roads*. And so many drivers, of all vehicles, will wave - we never did work out what they were waving for; either they are super friendly, which is our preferred idea or they are thanking us for visiting Ireland. Still we just waved back and smiled.

I guess, as with any other country, there are always the lorries on rat-runs trying to get to their destinations more quickly who don't care about your 'home', or younger drivers looking for a blast on quiet roads. Keep your whits about you and you'll be fine. Generally we encountered very few incidents in our 9 weeks.

And with that in mind, a word of caution about travel distances. We adopted a new travel philosophy this year after too many years of a fast-paced strategy. In Ireland we really did pootle, often not travelling more than 30 minutes a day. If, like me, you have this unerring FOMO (Fear of missing out), then travelling in Ireland can take some time.

Our two longest days were 90 minutes, which had the pair of us shattered in the afternoon slump which leads us to a really important tip... **Be careful how long you travel each day**, because the roads require so much more concentration with their narrowness. 90 minutes will actually feel much more like 2-2.5 hours. So don't over plan your trips. **Hop, Stop and Enjoy.**

Journey times will actually feel longer than they are with the concentration required on these narrower roads.

## Diesel and LPG

Our trip in 2022 was amidst an historic rise in the general cost of living and fuel prices. During our first couple of weeks the prices

averaged around €2.15-€2.20 and as the weeks went on, we saw that price come down to €1.84. There are, like most countries discount garages although we avoided these as we are never sure the quality of their fuel. **Tescos** have standard cheap fuel if you happen to be passing. Otherwise **Circle K** is a dominant station and there are plenty of others to choose from. You may also get the retro style pumps outside grocery stores, which we found quite endearing.

In terms of LPG this ranged from €1.599 and €0.99, which we were grateful for. We used the [LPG.eu](https://www.lpg.eu) app to find our stations easily. We had no issues or restrictions with filling up and we did so every 2 weeks as we were mostly off-grid and in each fortnight period used one 11kg bottle.





## All Things Camping

Ireland has a great range of camping options for us all. From off-grid delights to family style holiday parks for those travelling with children - and everything in between.

### Campsites

We didn't stay at many official sites, until our last two weeks, when we met up with friends who came over for a holiday. Sometimes when the weather drew in, we retreated for a bit of hook up to save the batteries. There are lots of new sites emerging as the motorhome and leisure industry continues to grow.

Most of the sites we stayed at are all pretty decent in their standards and facilities. Interestingly most of them have the all

important drive over grey waste disposal making life a lot easier. Costs ranged from €16 per night to €41 for the commercial sites.

At the cheaper end, you generally have no EHU hook up. Remember that on top of the cost of the pitch you have to add a **refuse** cost of between €2-€5 depending on the size of your bag and showers cost between €1-€1.50 in coins or tokens.

For bigger, commercial sites that accommodate families with the normal associated facilities, expect to pay a lot more - more in the region of €35-€45 per night. Often there is a basic price for a van with 2 adults and then additional charges if you have more in your party or want a separate awning. Sun canopies are included in the price. Also there are more restrictions and rules to contend with.

So it all depends on your desires and circumstances as to what style of 'home' you end up at.

## Wild Camping - off grid homes

For those of you who want to experience a more off-grid style of 'home', then some of the spots along the WAW are, quite honestly blissful and it is generally tolerated. We had no confrontation or resistance anywhere we stayed.

Over the course of our 9 weeks, we had 90% off-grid. In fact many locals we spoke to were absolutely delighted to welcome us as they see us as adding to their economy - how refreshing is that? There are though still plenty of car parks that have new height barriers in place, which does feel unwelcoming although it is more to prevent 'travellers' than visitors. You may well see 'No Camping or Overnight' signs in places, although the general rule is that this is to give the power to the local Garda to be able to remove people who are abusing a place.

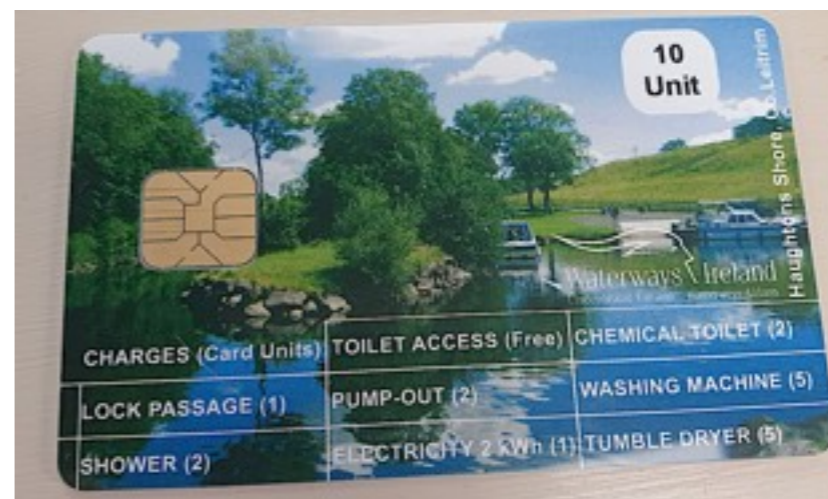
## Aires

The move towards an Aire-style of stopover is being grasped by many communities in Ireland.

We were pleasantly surprised how many places were opening up; fields, hotel/B&Bs and marina car parks to accommodate the increasing number of vans. With facilities sometimes rudimentary yet present, we would often pay just €10 for an overnight with may be water and black waste. It was a joy to have so many places we could choose from.

Worthy of special mention are the **marinas** along the **River Shannon and the Inland Waterway canals**. They were so

embracing of the motorhome culture. The philosophy for the marinas is that whether your motor is on water or on land you are welcome to stay awhile. These were mostly free of charge and they had water, toilet and shower facilities and free refuse bins. The only charge is if you wanted to use the showers, an **Inland Waterways Charge Card**, like the one below is needed. They come in either 10 or 20 units.



We paid €6.35 for our 10 unit card although we understand that the prices can vary. You buy them from the shops or Tourist Information offices of the village where the marina is located. As you might be able to read it is 2 units for a (10 minute) shower and 5 units for a wash or tumble dry. The chemical disposal was often free we found. What great facilities.

We used [Search for Sites](#) and [Park4Night](#) for most of our stopovers. Also [Total Motorhome Ireland](#) have their own directory of stopovers including 135 pub stops.





## Shopping

Our shopping experiences were a breeze. It was a fair bit more expensive than the UK however. Ireland is thought to be the 5th most expensive country in Europe and when we summarised our spends, we did see an increase in our total food bills especially with alcohol being considerably more expensive. We stuck generally to Lidl and Aldi, although we did also find a large Tesco's (your Clubcard **isn't** accepted here, it is worth noting).

Their **Supervalu** store is also a good option and they sell the fabulous if not slightly expensive Dingle Gin, which for ginaholics is a delight. They are more on the Tesco's end of prices and give a better range than Lidl and Aldi.

You will find the local community stores like **Londis** are much more expensive, which is only to be expected. One thing worth mentioning - I found it REALLY difficult to get kale here. As a Keto

Green follower, kale has been pretty much a staple for me and I was only able to pick it up from Tesco's.

One other point to mention is that there is a restriction to the hours you can buy **alcohol** in Ireland. All stores have gates across their drinks departments as a form of segregation and you can't buy any spirits/wine before **10.30am Mon-Sat** and **12.30pm on Sunday**. Also there are no multi-buy schemes here, and have been banned since 2021 in a policy to reduce alcohol consumption.



## DIY Emergencies

For a change we had very few technical issues whilst we were visiting Ireland. We were pleased to see B&Q here and most towns have a hardware store a bit like the Four Candles sketch with The Two Ronnies. So you'll rarely have an issue buying most of the things you need. We had to buy a replacement tap hose which was easy to find even in a small town.

## Every day shopping

You will find Marks & Spencer, Next and Boots in most larger towns. Other shops include Penny, Dunnes and Holland and Barratt who are also present in most large towns.

## Laundry

If you decide to go down the route of more official campsites then they most often have laundry facilities. If like us you enjoy the freedom of off-grid homes, then laundry will be one of your domestic duties during your trip. Rest assured that **Revolution Laundry** have plenty of sites in Ireland making laundry relatively easy. It is worth pointing out however, that we found our first issues ever with Revolution here. One set of machines were vandalised and the other, having completed a washing cycle then wouldn't accept payment for the dryer thanks to some sort of technical glitch. So not a perfect solution, although typically they were pretty decent. Sometimes the marinas on the River Shannon had laundry

although don't rely on them either working or being reliable machines. Revolution or campsites are your best bet.



## Currency

Ireland, as a member of the EU has the Euro and your pre-paid cards like **Caxton** or **Revolut** work perfectly fine. Also our UK credit cards worked in an emergency.

We found most places would accept cards even for the smallest of amounts and most campsites would also take cards. We always had cash with us as some of the aires we stayed on had **Honesty Boxes**, so notes were required. Otherwise even for Revolution Laundry they now take card payments. If you need to take out money from an ATM, you may be charged at minimum of €3.95 for the transaction.

## When to visit Ireland

Much like the UK, a trip to Ireland is best during late spring to early autumn. We travelled from mid-June until mid August and we were surprised how few crowds there were around, overall. Some of the Wild Atlantic Way routes like the **Ring of Kerry** and **Cobh** were busy with tourists, and the campsites in August were understandably busy, although we were pleasantly surprised not to see more campers around.

That said there are a couple of things to mention;

1. Firstly of all, **you cannot expect summer in summer**. We have been to Ireland's south coast twice in June and both times it rained. So as long as you visit accepting that the weather will be changeable then you won't be disappointed. Locals say there are four types of weather; **rain, hard rain, soft rain** and **drizzle**. And the weather really can change in a matter of minutes, especially on the exposed south and west coasts.
2. Even in the height of summer, we didn't experience any **midges** or **mosquitoes** even beside the loughs and river Shannon. Now maybe we were lucky, although I've not heard anyone talk about there being issues with these pesky blighters in Ireland.
3. There are some **Bank Holidays** you need to be aware of;
  - First Monday in May, June and August
  - Last Monday in October.
4. **Schools break up for summer** around the last week in June for two months. Some counties break up earlier. So that may have an impact on the type of campsites you choose to stay at.

5. The last thing to mention is that around the week of **11 July** a lot of guys from Northern Ireland head south as the **Orange Order parades** celebrate the **Battle of the Boyne**. We saw an increase in van presence here during the weekend leading up to this week.

## What to pack

*"We may have bad weather in Ireland, but the sun shines in the hearts of the people and that keeps us all warm." – Marianne Williamson*

Ok let's cut to the chase. This is Ireland and you don't come here for a suntan. It is called the **Emerald Isle** for good reason and sadly the weather can be as wild as the Wild Atlantic Way. One thing is for sure, if you don't like the weather wait five minutes and it will change. We've never seen weather move so fast, especially on the coast where you can see the fronts moving in.

You could get a heatwave and swelter in 25° and then the temperatures could drop over night to 15° with rain and winds. Coming in straight off the Atlantic, Ireland is the first land mass to catch the incoming fronts, so it can be a bit brutal at times. Locals we've spoken to have said that the weather of 2022 is the worst that they've seen for a long while.

***So much like our trip to Scandinavia. Think layers!***

Pack good, strong walking boots.

Pack waterproofs and windproof attire for hiking.

Grab your camera, binoculars and your travel journal.

Rucksack or three.

Bicycles (such great cycling country)

Windbreak (for campsites) if that's your thing

Hats for up north which seems to suffer with higher winds and rain.

And unlike many countries in the summer, we've found no need for mosquito repellent. Not one little pesky mozzie to be seen anywhere.

## Bringing pets to Ireland

Now this is a tricky one, in part because we are not pet owners so have no direct experience to share. Also because there is some controversy over what rules are being applied. And of course if you are sailing into Belfast then there will be no checks at all.

That said, we must recommend you following the rules outlined in this [article](#), which includes micro-chipping, vaccination, Rabies jabs and blood tests to make sure you comply before travelling.

Whilst you can bring your pets on ferries of course, there are some rules to follow. Check out this from [Stena](#) and this from [Irish Ferries](#).

## Communicating

### Data and Telephone Connectivity

Ireland is in Europe and therefore part of the Europe Zone for phone suppliers. You will be subject to your Roaming and Fair Usage policy with your supplier. We have 25GB per month each with O2 and we also have a **Lobster card** that we bought in Spain last year, which we activated without any issues.

We only had one connectivity issue whilst we were away and that was in the mountains north of Dungarvan although it just required us to change supplier. Otherwise we had pretty good coverage and at no time were we ever out of connection with the world.

A word of advice, based on my experiences. I'm with O2 and found that I couldn't access my Voicemail Messages. After endless and unfruitful conversations with O2 we were left with two issues. One was not setting my Voicemail box Pin in my home country. And two was not being able to change network to one that O2 recognise. So just worth bearing in mind before you head over to any part of Europe, make sure your Voicemail pin is activated.

### Getting by in Irish

Of course Ireland speaks English, so communicating is not an issue, even though their accents can be strong at times. There is also Irish Gaelic which you will often hear in certain counties. This isn't a hindrance, this is a cultural joy.

## Our Ireland Spends

Spending	Price in £	Comments
Food	1,625	Ireland is generally more expensive than the UK/EU
Diesel	598	Prices varied from €2.15 and €1.84 during our visit
LPG	47	Prices varied between €1.59 and 0.99c
Campsites	503	Based on 19 nights over 62 days influenced by August high season and using campsites with our friends for 2 weeks, which is not our norm
Tolls	8.60	These were amassed on the M50 around Dublin
Ferry inbound	£240	Stena Line Fishguard to Rosslare
Ferry outbound	£318	Irish Ferries to Cherbourg (using Tesco Club points)
Eating out	155	
Laundry	40	Either through Revolution Laundry or Campsites
Entertainment/Entry Fees	84	This included our 2 tickets to see Riverdance
<b>Total spend</b>	<b>3,618.60</b>	This equates to around £58 per day all inclusive, which given the inflationary influences wasn't too bad.



## 9 CAMPING OPTIONS

Ireland is so generous with its camping options especially when it comes to off-grid spots. Don't get me wrong, car parks are generally sown up and out of bounds for even daytime parking with the dreaded height barriers, although there are plenty of other overnight options. Aires attached to hotels and B&Bs are popping up and some marinas have dedicated facilities and there are plenty of beach car parks that have lots of permitted parking areas.

So you'll not be at a loss for somewhere to stay even in July/August when we were there.



Here's all of our overnight stops with co-ordinates to whet your appetite.

**1. Coral Gables B&B/ Aire (52.243681, -6.393096)**

Our first stop after getting off the Fishguard - Rosslare Ferry. We had 2 nights here and it was a great spot to be just 3 miles from the port.

**2. Hook Lighthouse Off-grid (52.124788, -6.930126)**

A fantastic overnight right beside the coast on the Hook Peninsula with the historic lighthouse as our backdrop.



### 3. Barrow Valley Activity Hub - (52.538072, -6.958497)

What a gem of a campsite at Graiguenamanagh, located on the river/canal with endless cycling and walking opportunities. And all for only €16 inc EHU or €11 without.

### 4. Lime Kiln Car Park, Kilkenny (52.654796, -7.248226)

This private car park Aire is so central; 4 mins to the Famine Experience and 7 mins to the Medieval Mile. With services and only €10 pp night, this is safe, secure and perfectly central.

### 5. Bolton Street Parking, Waterford (52.257931, -7.10551)

After the joy of Kilkenny, Waterford was a let down, although the parking area was appreciated. If you arrive after 1830 you pay nothing until 0830am after which it is a €1ph. You'll need no more.

### 6. Kilmurrin Cove Parking (52.139858, -7.319281)

The UNESCO Global Geopark Copper Coastline has a couple of parking opportunities. This one at Kilmurrin has four dedicated motorhome bays and there are two parking areas further up the hill.

### 7. Getaway Eco-Camping, Dungarvan (52.133425, -7.607638)

We retreated here due to an incoming storm and Hilary has a lovely new campsite. Only opened in 2021 and it is evolving with a new shower block being built. €25pn inc ehu and refuse. Highly recommend for a rural retreat with lovely mountain views.





### **8. Frank's Field - Redbarn Aire nr Youghal (51.924425, -7.872361)**

Close to Youghal is this fabulous Aire overlooking the coast (over the hedge) for just €12pn. There is no EHU here though, although other services are available. Great boardwalk trail to Youghal - 2.5 miles.

### **9. Cobh Camping Aire nr Cork (51.847242, -8.307226)**

A fabulous facility offering 30 pitches dedicated to campers right on the Quay. Just 7 mins walk to Cobh which is an incredible town and the train takes to you Cork in 24 mins. Highly recommend - €10 24hrs.

### **10. Charles Fort overnight (51.697854, -8.499052)**

A slightly slopping parking area, which after 5.00pm is quiet and you can park here overnight. Great views to Kinsale and walks along the coast. €5 entry to see the Star-Fortress.

### **11. Garretstown Strand overnight (51.644556, -8.583203)**

Overlooking a Blue Flag beach, this is a wild yet amazing spot albeit a bit sloping. There is a bin and a water faucet at the end of the beach. Nice spot.

### **12. Trag Beach overnight (51.502884 -9.265321)**

A quiet and beautiful spot which is great for swimming. There are toilets here open during the day and a water faucet. No walking sadly although lovely to chill out.



### 13. Shore Road Quay, Ballydehop (51.560816, -9.457139)

A peaceful location alongside an estuary and ancient port. Room for 3 campers so get here early. Lovely walks and great views with the old railway bridge behind. Locals generally welcoming.



### 14. Westlodge Hotel Motorhome Aire (51.674276, -9.473325)

After a joyful drive around Mizen Head we settled on an Aire that is part of a Hotel one mile from Bantry. €10pn with facilities plus 10% discount on using their leisure facilities. There is a marina aire in town with EHU if you need it for €25 per night.



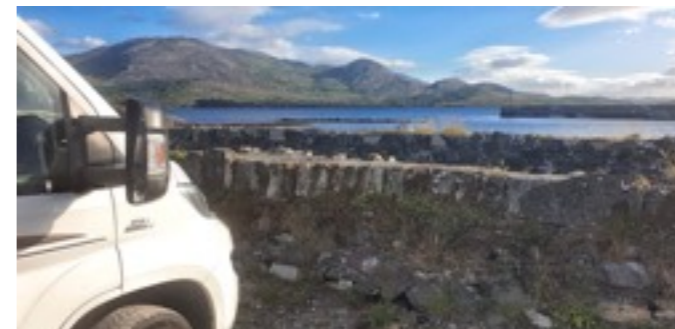
### 15. Castletownbere Overnight Parking (51.649883, -9.912972)

A pleasant parking area with six spaces dedicated to Motorhomes just a few minutes walk from the town and the ferry to Bere Island which is €8 per person return. Great facility.



### 16. Helen's Bar car park (51.780289, -9.805395)

After what was one of our most stunning drives in our first three weeks, we found this amazing spot off the beaten track yet on the WAW. It was a narrow road, and the owner was happy for us to park - just please spend some money at the bar. Cheapest pint of Guinness you will find. Perfect spot and great cycling and walking.



### 17. Douglasha B&B Aire (52.082257, -9.592583)

Another stunning drive this time through the Killarney National Park. Found an Aire just north of the town for €15 per night including refuse with EHU another €5. This place may not be here for long as the Planning Officer was assessing their facility after being reported for not getting planning permission. I hope not for their sake.



### **18. Kilmore Strand (52.479455, -9.695913)**

In the middle of no where, this lovely little beach car park had views out to sea. There was a little walk along the rocky coast around the estuary and an ancient burial ground - nothing else, just peace and quiet.



### **19. Limerick Overnight Camping (52.584151, -8.572188)**

Despite its name this is no where near Limerick - taxi costs €40. It is eclectic and beyond weird. Scruffy, hard to get into pitches, hard to get to services, no welcome.... although €10 with no ehu.



### **20. Terryglass Marina (53.059172, -8.206633)**

After disappointment at not being able to get into Portumna Aire we headed over to our backup plan, Terryglass Marina, just around the lake. What a lovely place. Only a car park although with water, toilets, free bins and showers with one of the Inland Waterway Cards. Loved it here. And Paddy's Bar.



### **21. Shannonbridge (53.278687, -8.049798)**

Another fabulous spot in a gorgeous village with a Napoleonic Fortress, 4 pubs and a Tourist Info. Also water, toilets and showers available with the IW card and free bins. We adored it here and I cycled to Clonmacnoise monastery, which is only 5 miles away.



## 22. Coosan Point RNLI (53.464152, -7.928936)

After a quick visit to Athlone and Sean's Bar, the oldest in Ireland and possibly the world, we stopped overnight at a community park and RNLI car park. It's incredibly slopping, although up at the back there were a few spots that were more level. It was free to stay here overnight.



## 23. Keshcarrigan Marina (54.020183, -7.941404)

What a little stunner this is. Peaceful with great facilities again. You can buy IW Cards from Leitrim village just 15 minutes drive away at the Cycle Shop. Otherwise there's not much in the village. It seems pretty deserted.



## 24. Donegal Car Park 4 (54.651988, -8.112187)

This is a large parking area that allows free overnight parking. You simply pay a small amount per hour between 9.00am and 6.00pm. Payable on line at [www.donegalparking.ie](http://www.donegalparking.ie) Do visit The Reel Inn for traditional music and dance.



## 25. Glencolumbkille Folk Museum - (54.707395, -8.741159)

A lovely parking area that serves the Folk Museum (€8pp entry) although free parking and pretty empty past 5.30pm. Great access to the incredible beach and estuary walk. Stunning spot.



## 26. Ardara town parking - (54.762653, -8.41076)

Only a car park although after the Glengesh Pass it was nice to have somewhere to stay overnight. No charges and bins. The town was pleasant enough with small supermarkets and the Texaco garage allowed you to use water and grey waste for €5.



## 27. Gweedore Off-grid - (55.083487, -8.321494)

A huge area for parking in nooks and crannies depending upon your size and weight. There are no services and it could be exposed in bad weather although well worth the drive here. There is a ferry over to the island within a five minute walk.



## 28. Portnablaugh Pier - (55.181511, -7.928396)

A lovely spot when the locals have gone home. Caution with the access road as cars park both sides making it tricky for wider vehicles. DO NOT park on the lower launching ramp as at high tide you will get water logged. Only park on the upper pier. Looks like ehū may be being installed.



## 29. Donaghey Motorhomes Stopover - (54.946731, -7.704326)

This motorhome dealer has opened up for overnight stopovers in their yard whether they are open or not. EHU is included in the pitch together with services. Just leave a donation. We hear that these guys are sadly closing so the aire will disappear.



### 30. Greencastle Overnight - (55.203067, -6.981193)

A small parking area with free WIFI from the community. The glass bottle banks are a bit noisy although otherwise a peaceful night. There's a lovely coastal walk from the car park and bins.



### 31. Culdaff Beach Off Grid - (55.293785, -7.15145)

An authorised place to stay overnight with access to an incredible beach with walks either way. No services, although this is a top spot that the community encourage.



### 32. Tullagh Bay Off-grid - (55.289709, -7.451212)

6 spots available on rough ground overlooking the bay. This is truly an off-grid spot although it is beautiful. A bumpy access road.



### 33. Dunmoran Strand - (54.262645, -8.724282)

A large and slightly sloping car park with great views. No services or facilities. About a mile's walk along the beach.



### 34. Corraun Picnic Overnight - (53.870255, -9.921674)

A lovely spot in the middle of no where on the WAW. There's room for just one van overlooking the bay and islands where the Spanish Armada crashed in a storm.



### 35. Raigh Pier overnight - (53. 894806, -9.638831)

A quiet and lovely pier overlooking a fishing harbour. The access road is a single track with passing places. No one worried about us being here. There was fresh water on the pier.



### 36. Clifden Eco Campsite - (53.523687, -10.134526)

A stunning eco campsite overlooking the bay and islands. Either with or without EHU (€30 with in July). The Seaweed Hot Tubs are just incredible and well worth the investment. We will return.



### 37. Ballynahown Pier - (53.226176, -9.500573)

A small pier on the WAW where the local Gaelic language is spoken as a daily practice. A super little spot despite the weather.



### **38. Hodson Bay Marina - (53.467077, -7.987973)**

A car park that is shared by the Hodson Bay Hotel and the Marina allows motorhomes to stay overnight. The weekends are busy especially if there is a wedding on at the hotel. Free to stay and there's water, toilets and bins.



### **39. Lowtown Marina - Grand Canal - (53.275041, -6.83491)**

A strange approach along the tow path brings you to a parking area. There's toilet block, shower and water available with an Inland Waterways Card. We loved it so much we stayed twice. Great walks and good for paddleboarding.



### **40. Lynders Campsite, Portrane - (53.49151, -6.098299)**

This is not our sort of campsite; static homes, strict rules, charges for everything on top of an already extortionate fee. Yet it served a good purpose for meeting up with friends. We all have different taste for sure, although not one we would recommend per se.



### **41. Dun Laoghaire, Dublin - (53.297023, -6.142533)**

This is fabulous for visiting Dublin, with space for up to 50 vans. You pay €4 for 24hours and there is water and chemical disposal down by the sailing club so the Harbour Master informed us. The Dart is just a 10 minute walk for a short ride into the city for €5 return. And there is a Revolution Laundry at the Circle K garage up over the bridge. We stayed here twice as just 20 mins from the port.





#### **42. Camac Valley Camping Site - (53.304795, -6.415174)**

This was another commercial site where we met with friends, west of Dublin on a bus route. It was extortionately expensive at €41 per night although had over-sized and serviced pitches. The park next door is good for walking.



#### **43. Woolahans Silver Strand - Wicklow (52.952051, -6.01603)**

This was a huge site set over undulating fields, some with elevated sea views. You could choose electricity or not and it had an excellent camping shop on site. There was though no telephone or internet signal at all. The private beach was nice although not suitable for taking paddleboards or kayaks down to. €27pn no EHU.



#### **44. Ferrybank Campsite - Wexford (52.345225, -6.452241)**

A council run campsite that is packed in summer and not cheap. €34pn. There is no beach access although it is the only place to stay if you want to explore Wexford, which is an endearing town.





## 10 TOP TIPS SUMMARY

I have loved writing this country guide as it reconnects me to such a fabulous destination, that despite the weather has initiated a love affair with Ireland.

With our departure from Europe, Ireland is a real hot-spot for us when thinking about extending our touring time given their non-Schengen status. So there is no better a time to visit Ireland as now.

Here's some tips to help you make the best of your Irish Road-trip.



## TOP TIPS SUMMARY FOR IRELAND

1. **Remember you can only buy alcohol** after 10.30am Mon-Sat and 12.30pm on Sundays, including private Whiskey distilleries.
2. **Sunday mornings are always busy around villages and towns** with church services. Cars will be parked on every available bit of road and pavement making navigation sometimes tricky.
3. **Weather** is changeable in Ireland especially at the coast. So be ready for all conditions and remember that Ireland is green for good reason, so it will be windy and rainy especially north and west. Donegal can be 10° cooler than the east and south.
4. Be mindful of some **R road conditions**. They are unpredictable and inconsistent. Some of them can be **very** bumpy and the bumps are not always noticeable in advance. **So drive slowly to avoid damage.**
5. **Carry some cash with you as some campsites and Aires** will only take cash not cards.
6. If you decide to take motorways that happen to have tolls, the **Toll Plazas** can be paid by pre-paid cards such as Caxton.
7. Be cautious with taking **ferries** across rivers and to islands if you have a large rear end as they can have very steep approaches.
8. **Plan your daily drives** carefully as more concentration is required with the narrow and bumpy roads. Drive slow and short is our recommendation.

9. **Marinas are great overnight options.** Just buy an Inland Waterways card for shower facilities from local shops and bars.
10. **If travelling in July and August and prefer campsites,** it is worth booking ahead especially over the August Bank Holiday which falls on the first Monday in the month.
11. Ireland is a fabulous place to tour if you want to **extend your European travels.** Given that it is part of Europe although not in Schengen, we get free allowance travel here.
12. Once in Ireland, if you then wish to continue your Schengen 90 day travel, it is just as easy and slightly cheaper to **sail from Dublin or Rosslare to Cherbourg.** The sailing takes 18 hours from Dublin, slightly shorter from Rosslare.
13. Remember that Ireland is **Euros** not sterling.
14. Use **Search for Sites and Park4Night** for places to stay. There are plenty of options around the country.
15. Ireland's **L Roads** are local and little roads linking small communities to the main towns. They are often 'rat-runs' and not always great for our size van. Sometimes taking these roads is necessary to reach a site or destination, just build your confidence and drive with caution.
16. **Bring small rubbish bags** so that you can dispose of your rubbish in small amounts in public bins. Refuse is chargeable for locals and so most campsites charge you for your rubbish.
17. There are increasingly more height-barriers at some coastal car parks which does make parking tricky. **Try to assess parking alternatives** via Google Earth before making a journey to avoid being disappointed.
18. Ireland's coastline is fabulous although don't miss the **Hidden Heartlands.** Inland is well worth visiting.
19. There is **no 'best way' to travel around Ireland.** It is really about where you live, where it is best to cross into Ireland (north or south) and where you will be exiting from. Our advice? Just book your incoming ferry and then see how things pan out for your exit.
20. **Spring and autumn are ideal times to visit.** Given our summer visit with crowds in the south and expensive campsites in August, we would definitely return in May or September next time.
21. Even outside of inflationary times, **Ireland is generally more expensive,** so do budget for slightly higher bills. Although these can easily be off-set against the amount of off-grid camping you will be able to do.
22. **Take layers and raincoats** (says Myles). The rain is frequent in Ireland.
23. Other vehicles will **wave** at you; it is a friendly greeting so just wave back.

Follow these guidelines and you'll not go wrong with an Ireland road-trip and you will definitely not be disappointed by what it can offer you. We hope you enjoy it as much as we did.



## 11 CLOSING THOUGHTS

What a great authoring experience. I know it's easy to account for 'recency' for how we feel about our travel, although each page continues to transport me right back to the Emerald Isle.

The diversity that Ireland offers, together with its rich culture, enlightening history and generosity of spirit makes it an incredible place to tour. So many other countries suffer with either busy roads, unfriendly locals or rules and regulations about camping; all the things that Ireland does not.

Ireland is almost lyrical and rhythmic for me. The pace of life is healing, the kindness so endearing and the countryside is so often just beyond words. It is so much more than a road-trip. There is something subtle about Ireland's charm and magic that it is almost spell-bounding.

From the moment we landed on Irish soil, Ireland stole our hearts. From the locals' waves, greetings and generosity to the stunning beaches, the like of which we've never seen in our full-time travels.

There are so many highlights that will sit happily in my basket of memories; from seaweed hot tubs, Donegal beaches, Graiguenamanagh paddleboarding to watching Riverdance at Dublin's Gaiety Theatre. And so many more.

Ireland you have touched our souls with your spirit; your landscape has been a feast for our eyes, your history has been enlightening, your passion is palpable and your culture vibrates in our hearts. Thank you. We will be back.

If you have any questions, why not drop us an email at [themotoroamers@gmail.com](mailto:themotoroamers@gmail.com) or check out the website for all our blogs and vlogs <https://www.motoroaming.com>.

### Karen, Myles and Scoobie



*May the road rise up to meet you. May  
the wind be always at your back.*

*Irish Blessing*

