

Appendix 1: Portmagee –

A Snapshot of Ireland’s First National Tourism Town

The Tourism Towns Assessment Panel found the sense of place in Portmagee palpable. The village, through the way it has woven its fishing past and present into its story, provides a perfect example of how a tourism town works well.

Its location facing Valencia Island makes it unique and it has enjoyed a connecting bridge with the island since the late 1960s. Its rich and colourful history is well recognised and the village gets its name from the notorious Captain Theobald Magee, a smuggler with a high reputation.

The village is compact and its closeness to the sea enables visitors to experience a host of sea activities, e.g., fishing, ferry, and allied sea activity with adequate seating facilities for visitors.

The tradition of fishing is evident at every turn and today the town enjoys great vibrancy in the form of Portmagee Seafoods, a company which exports shell fish to Europe.



However, it is the village itself that exudes friendship to the visitor. Its colourful facades are bright and enticing with a great variety of retail, accommodation and food promoters. Buildings are well presented with many traditional features well maintained. The village is well equipped to deal with the traffic demand and on festival occasions stewarding is provided by the locals who are well experienced in dealing with large numbers.

The seafood ethic is important and local restaurants provide a superb service in facilitating the needs of visitors seeking good food and drink.

The tourism products are in good supply and use of the environment, wildlife, cliff walks, flora and fauna, village flower displays feature strongly in the supply of products. The coastal walking tours are of great importance and offer a plethora of wildlife en route.

Not surprising the UNESCO site at Skelligs Rock, (one of only three in Ireland) is the honey pot of this area. The development of the Skellig Experience Interpretative Centre is of monumental importance to the infrastructure of Portmagee. Now privately run, it

attracted a record number of 35,500 visitors in 2011. The Centre is to be much enjoyed with the visitor well catered for, including a mini Theatre accommodating 80 visitors.



From Portmagee, one can visit the Skellig Rocks by boat and sample first-hand the beauty and uniqueness of this monument. It takes just 45 minutes to reach the Rock from the village.

The village is currently embarking on the development of a new Pontoon that will further enhance the ferry service to the Skellig. When complete the Pontoon will facilitate increased numbers of boats to enter the village and overnight at Portmagee.

Other activities in the area include coarse and sea angling, diving trips, Heritage Trail, Hill Walking, Golf and water sports and Swimming Camps within walking distance of the village. Furthermore, the village plans on developing a local "boat museum" from a boat currently docked at the ferry.

Retail outlets offer a wide selection of souvenirs including local craft and the village boasts of its own chocolate factory. There is a healthy supply of accommodation including self-catering, an approved hostel and many local B&Bs. There are 700 beds in the area, adequate to cater for visitor demand.

