



IRELAND'S
ANCIENT EAST

HORSE COUNTRY

STORYTELLING TOOLKIT



HORSE
COUNTRY

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WELCOME TO HORSE COUNTRY

**IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST
WELCOMES VISITORS FROM
ACROSS THE WORLD TO ENGAGE
WITH OUR UNIQUE EXPERIENCES
AND OUR CAPTIVATING STORIES.**

The story of the horse has been integral to Ireland's cultural heritage for the last 3000 years. Kildare and Tipperary, in particular, have nurtured their unique identity around this heritage which is visible to our visitors as they travel across the landscape in Ireland's Ancient East and experience the region's stables, racing venues, attractions, and world-class studs.

This toolkit aims to help businesses in Kildare and Tipperary co-create the world's best thoroughbred destination in Ireland's Ancient East.

UNCOVER IRELAND'S THOROUGHBRED LEGACY

As part of Fáilte Ireland's Thoroughbred Country Destination Experience Development Plan (TCDEDP), Horse Country CLG (previously Thoroughbred Country CLG) and www.horsecountry.ie were established in 2024 to promote the thoroughbred story nationally and internationally and sell new thoroughbred experiences.



A WORLD CLASS VISITOR EXPERIENCE

THIS TOOLKIT AIMS TO INCREASE VISITOR STAYS AND TOURISM VALUE IN KILDARE AND TIPPERARY, ADDRESSING GAPS IN SECTOR KNOWLEDGE AND RAISING AWARENESS AMONG THOSE ALREADY FAMILIAR WITH THE THEME.

Following consultation from Tourism Ireland, businesses and stakeholders, Horse Country CLG adopted the customer-facing name "Horse Country" to enable greater reach, understanding and consumption to potential visitors domestically and internationally.

The overarching ambition is to deliver on the destination promise and strategic goals set out in the Thoroughbred Country Destination Experience Development Plan, which aims to create the world's leading Thoroughbred destination.



WHO CAN USE IT?

THIS TOOLKIT AIMS TO ENHANCE AND CAPITALISE ON HORSE COUNTRY'S NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL UNIQUE IDENTITY FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES.

The content is aimed at hotels and large visitor attractions, catering to various roles including general managers, sales and marketing managers, event organisers, tour guides, department heads, and front-of-house staff.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

(FOR YOUR BUSINESS)

THIS KIT WILL INDUCT YOUR STAFF FULLY INTO THE REGION'S HISTORY, HERITAGE, PEOPLE, AND STORIES, AND HELP THEM ARTICULATE A SENSE OF PLACE UNIQUE TO KILDARE AND TIPPERARY.

The kit is designed to be a handy reference tool to help you, and your staff apply and implement the Horse Country narrative and experience across your business to attract potential visitors and inspire them to discover more within the counties, encouraging greater lengths of stay and spend locally. Ultimately, it will help your business and staff communicate the thoroughbred story across all facets of your business.

WHAT IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

THIS TOOLKIT WILL HELP YOU AND YOUR STAFF TO LEVERAGE THE RICH AND GLOBALLY UNIQUE STORY OF THE THOROUGHBRED: ITS PLACE, THE PEOPLE, THE HISTORY, AND CRAFT.

SECTION 1—INSPIRATION

Find stories and interviews that will inspire your staff to understand, appreciate and celebrate your region's thoroughbred identity.

SECTION 2—DEVELOPMENT

Explore how to sell Horse Country's identity to your target national and international audiences.

SECTION 3—AMPLIFICATION

Explore ways to amplify and embrace this identity in your business. By making the strategic pillars and stories more accessible as part of your business's sales and marketing approach you can retain guests or visitors, attract new customers, extend your season, and increase length of stay in your region.



SECTION 1 – INSPIRATION



SECTION 1 – INSPIRATION

THIS SECTION HELPS YOU TO CONNECT YOUR GUESTS TO LOCAL THOROUGHBRED STORIES.

OUR THOROUGHBRED STORIES WEAVE TOGETHER PROVENANCE, TRADITION AND LIVELIHOODS ACROSS OUR FOUR STRATEGIC PILLARS:

- 1. THOROUGHBRED HORSE 09**
- 2. THOROUGHBRED PEOPLE 13**
- 3. PLACE AND HERITAGE 18**
- 4. THE WINNING POST 24**



KILDARE AND TIPPERARY: IRELAND'S HORSE COUNTRY

In an island famed globally for its horses, Kildare and Tipperary are at the centre of the thoroughbred industry in Ireland, producing the elite of the horse racing world. Whether it's the green plains of Kildare or the dramatic valley landscapes of Tipperary, the two counties echo with the sound of hooves beating the timeless rhythm of their equine legacy. In Tipperary limestone bedrock infuses the grass with calcium to grow strong-boned thoroughbreds. Young horses thrive here, a fact which attracts buyers from around the world.



THOROUGHBRED TRADITION

Combined, these two counties are home to a quarter of all Ireland's breeders and trainers, who in turn have produced some of the most famous and successful racehorses in the world.

The Curragh in Kildare, Ireland's most historic racecourse, has a tradition of horse racing that dates back centuries to the beginning of the sport. Tipperary wears its equestrian heritage proudly, home to Coolmore Stud, a global powerhouse in thoroughbred breeding whose expertise shapes the bloodlines of champions worldwide. Today, Ireland is the third largest producer of thoroughbreds in the world, and the largest in Europe.



HORSE COUNTRY LIVELIHOODS

Providing livelihoods for over 7,500 people in Tipperary and Kildare, the economic hoof-print of breeding and racing is substantial. It's not just about industry—it's about communities, families, and a shared passion—the people here live and breathe horses.

Similarly, race days; the buzz of the crowd, the calls of the bookies, the clinking of champagne glasses, and the thrill of a close finish—all of it sustains livelihoods and adds sparkle to the region.



PILLAR 1

THOROUGHBRED HORSE

THE THOROUGHBRED HORSE IS A STORY THAT HAS CREATED A SENSE OF PLACE, IDENTITY AND MEANING THAT HAS INSPIRED PEOPLE ACROSS COUNTIES KILDARE AND TIPPERARY.

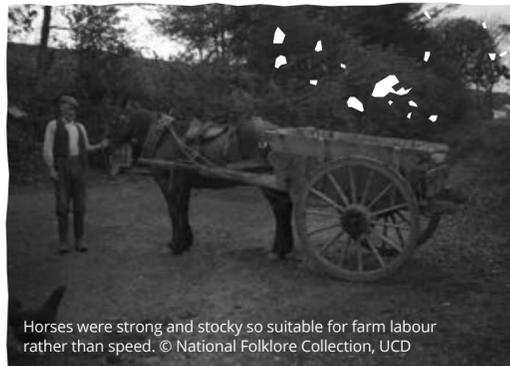
This strategic pillar focuses on the horse story from foaling to the opportunity to meet household names and global equine superstars.

- **BIRTH OF THE THOROUGHBRED LEGACY**
- **THOROUGHBRED STORIES**
 - **GET TO KNOW YOUR SIRES**
 - **GET TO KNOW YOUR MARES**

BIRTH OF THE THOROUGHBRED LEGACY

DID YOU KNOW? ANCESTRY

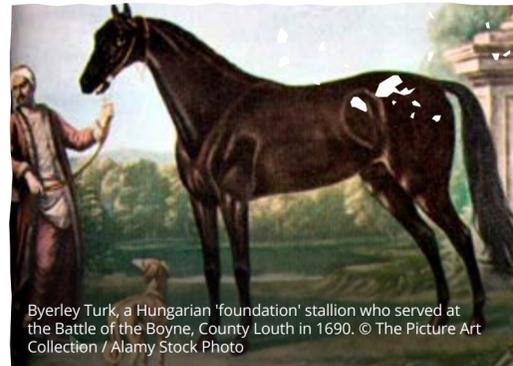
Each thoroughbred horse is descended from a small, select pool of stallions and mares.



Horses were strong and stocky so suitable for farm labour rather than speed. © National Folklore Collection, UCD

A NEW BREED OF HORSE

Before the athletic thoroughbred horse was bred for sport, our ancestors used horses to drive carts, ploughs, to pull carriages or as mounted infantry. These horses were tall, powerful animals but heavy. Arabian horses, imported into Europe for centuries before as military horses, were lighter and more agile. Breeding these Arabian stallions with hunter mares produced a horse that was capable of great speed and endurance. Nobles, keen to find new ways of entertainment, began breeding this new hybrid, the Thoroughbred, in England in the late 1600s.



Byerley Turk, a Hungarian 'foundation' stallion who served at the Battle of the Boyne, County Louth in 1690. © The Picture Art Collection / Alamy Stock Photo

THE FOUNDATION STALLIONS AND MARES

Irish breeders began to see the sporting potential of the thoroughbred and brought the new breed to Ireland. Each thoroughbred horse is descended from a small, select pool of stallions and mares. The stallions (known as foundation stallions) were introduced over a fifty-year period – from Byerly Turk (imported to England in 1687), Darley Arabian (imported 1704), and Godolphin Arabian (imported 1729). Tradition has it that England's foundation mares began with the forty-three royal mares in the King's stables, with more mares covered by the offspring of the foundation stallions later on.



Portrait of Thomas Connolly, Castletown House County Kildare. Photo by Davison associates, courtesy of the Office of Public Works

BREEDING BEGINS

Keen to get involved in the growing sport of horse racing, made fashionable the British royal family in the 1600s, Kildare's landlords began to breed thoroughbred horses. The first known Irish breeders of Irish thoroughbred horses included Thomas and Lady Louisa Connolly of Castletown House, County Kildare. In the 1700s, horse sports were important to the family. They loved hunting and adapted their home to welcome hunting parties with a new smoking room built above their stables.



© Horse Country

HORSE COUNTRY HALL OF FAME

Irish thoroughbreds have earned a global name as being among the best in the world. From Orby's win at the Irish Derby in the Curragh in 1907, to names such as Dawn Run, Sea The Stars, Zarkava, Shergar, Frankel, Nijinsky, Istabraq and High Chaparral among others.

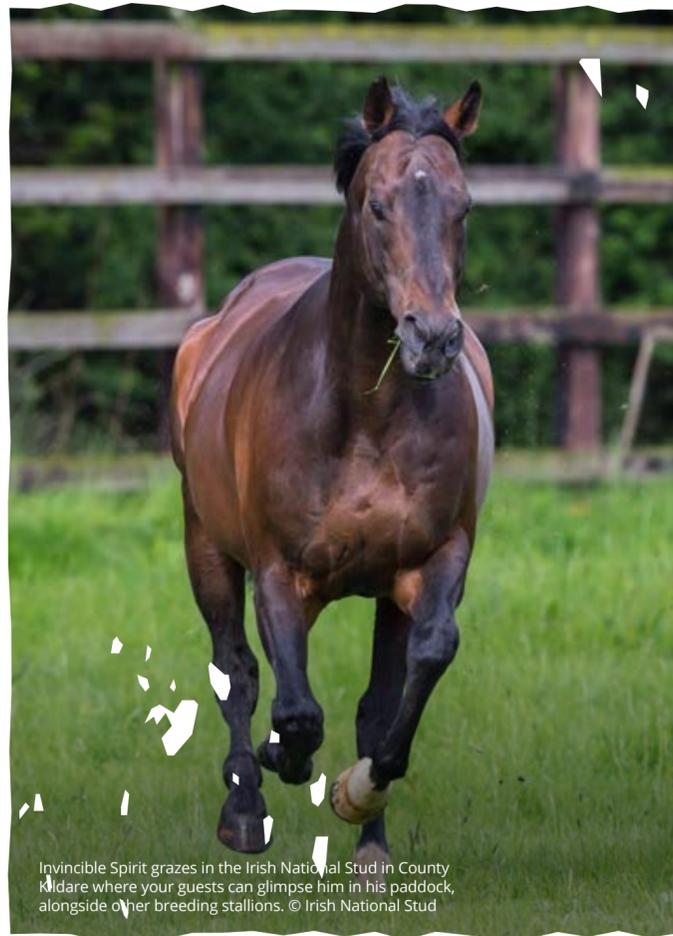


© Horse Country

GLOBAL GREATNESS – FROM BUYERS TO BREEDERS

Today, Ireland is the third largest producer of Thoroughbreds in the world, and the largest in Europe. Young horses thrive in our climate and calcium-rich soil which attracts buyers from around the world. Irish bred thoroughbreds have found new homes as far away as Australia, Hong Kong as well as the US, Britain and France. Some of the most globally successful breeders from the United Arab Emirates, Switzerland and Saudi Arabia have chosen Horse Country as a base for their operations.

THOROUGHBRED STORIES GET TO KNOW YOUR SIRES



Invincible Spirit grazes in the Irish National Stud in County Kildare where your guests can glimpse him in his paddock, alongside other breeding stallions. © Irish National Stud

THE SIRE – FROM THE FINISH LINE TO FATHERHOOD

The legacy of pedigree and careful breeding gives Horse Country its standout stars on the racetrack. A sire - a male parent, is carefully paired with a mare (a dam) to hopefully produce a successful foal. For a sire to father a winning racehorse who in turn fathers winners is rare. In Horse Country we have had not one but two examples of a sire-of-sires – Sadler’s Wells in Coolmore Stud (Tipperary) and Invincible Spirit in the National Stud (Kildare).

SADLER’S WELLS

Sadler’s Wells is one of the most successful sires in history, fathering sons and daughters who would go on to become winners and successful parents themselves. Based in Coolmore, he fathered 323 winners in his lifetime, including his sons Galileo and Montjeu who became sires of sires themselves. His daughters Imagine and Quarter Moon became dams of winners. Retired at the age of 27, he passed away from natural causes at the age of 30 in 2011. His heart is buried in Coolmore Stud, and his skeleton is proudly displayed in the Fethard Horse Country Experience.

DID YOU KNOW? GALILEO

The son of Sadler’s Wells, Galileo is one of the most successful sires in Irish thoroughbred history. Based in Coolmore Stud, he fathered 338 winners in his lifetime – 15 more than his father, with many more coming after his passing in 2021.

INVINCIBLE SPIRIT

Invincible Spirit has been in the top 20 sires in Britain, having so far sired 45 race winners, including 11 Group 1 winners – the highest level of horse races. His sons I Am Invincible and Kingsman are also sires-of-sires. I Am Invincible became the highest priced stallion in Australia, with a covering fee of \$247,500 (€154,000). His daughters have won races all over Europe and have gone on to produce winning foals – his daughter Rosdhu Queen is a broodmare (a mare used for breeding) in Coolmore Stud.



© Irish Photo Archive / © Lensmen Photographers Archive

THOROUGHBRED STORIES

GET TO KNOW YOUR MARES



© Horse Country

THE BLUE HEN – EXCEPTIONAL MARES IN THE MAKING

An internationally famous Irish blue hen mare is Polished Gem, in Moyglare Stud outside Maynooth in County Kildare. Having 'only' won two races herself, she foaled an amazing 8 Group 1 winning foals, and her grandchildren have gone on to become winners as well. Coolmore in Tipperary have two up-and-coming blue hen mares, Maybe and Misty For Me, both daughters of the famous sire Galileo.

A blue hen is a mare that influences the thoroughbred breed not only through her own foals but also through her descendants, giving her a multigenerational influence. She has proved herself exceptional in producing high quality foals, almost regardless of which stallion might be the sire.

A blue hen mare holds a special place as the dam—the mother of stakes winners or champions. Her grandchildren in turn continue the legacy by achieving similar success as the true test of a Blue Hen mare lies in her ability to pass down excellence through several generations. Blue hen mares are relatively rare - they stand out for their consistent ability to produce top-class racehorses, regardless of the stallion chosen for breeding.

DID YOU KNOW? BIDDING ON BOLD

If a horse wins a race of high status e.g. the Irish Derby in the Curragh, then its name will be printed in bold black type on racing and breeding reports. This means buyers and stud owners can easily identify 'better' horses when bidding for them at auction.

THE THOROUGHBRED BREEDING YEAR

WINTER	NOV		Foal sales
	DEC	Mares in last weeks of foal	
	JAN	All thoroughbreds' birthdays - Jan 1st	Irish foaling season
SPRING	FEB	Breeding season starts (February 14th)	
	MAR		
	APR		
SUMMER	MAY		
	JUN	Irish stallions going to stud in Southern Hemisphere begin their travels	
	JUL		
AUTUMN	AUG		Yearling sales
	SEP		
	OCT		



PILLAR 2 THOROUGHBRED PEOPLE

**FROM TRAINERS, HORSE HANDLERS
TO BREEDERS, FARRIERS, AND LOCALS
EACH POSSESS THE INSIDE STORY
THAT COMBINE TO CREATE THE MAGIC
OF THE THOROUGHBRED.**

The word on the track, inside word and the whispers all contribute to the intrigue of the thoroughbred industry. From epic wins to close calls, from disappearing horses to betting coups, sharing the stories of Horse Country will animate and engage your visitors.

- **THOROUGHBRED STORYTELLERS**
- **THOROUGHBRED STORY SHARERS**
- **THOROUGHBRED STORYMAKERS**

GET TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL THOROUGHBRED STORYTELLERS



TIPPERARY THOROUGHBRED BREEDER – MARK MOLLOY, CROSSOGUE STUD

Mark Molloy is a 5th generation horse lover based in his family home of Crossogue House Farm. Mark breeds and trains show jumping and race horses and plays host to visitors from around the world who come to Crossogue to gain experience in horse breeding.

"I'm very passionate that people see racing in the context of what a wonderful sport it is, what wonderful people are involved, the passion, commitment and love within racing for everything to do with the animal. The whole story needs to be told for people to have that experience."



KILDARE'S WORLD-RENOWNED TRAINER – JESSICA HARRINGTON, COMMONSTOWN STUD, MOONE

Jessica Harrington is a world-renowned professional horse trainer often called the "First Lady" of Thoroughbred training. She trains horses for both flat and jump racing and has had horses win major Group 1 races – the top level in horse racing, in Ireland, the UK and France.

"It used to be very male dominated. You go back not that long ago and women weren't allowed to hold the trainer's licence, not until the 1960s. It had to be held either in their husband's or their head man in the yard's name, even though they did the work."

GET TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL THOROUGHBRED STORY SHARERS



HORSE COUNTRY'S HISTORIAN – JIM KAVANAGH, KILDARE

Jim Kavanagh is a retired racehorse trainer and local historian from the Curragh, Co Kildare. Every summer he curates the pop-up Racing Legends Museum in the Old Courthouse in Kildare Town as part of the Curragh Irish Derby Festival.

“What do I consider my biggest achievement in my racehorse training career? Lasting as a trainer for over 20 years!”



JOCKEYING FOR POSITION IN KILDARE – JODY MCGARVEY, FREELANCE JOCKEY, KILDARE

Jody McGarvey is a freelance jockey represented by agent Gary Cribbin. He is a regular rider for well-known Thoroughbred horse owner JP McManus and has ridden in several of the major jump races, including the Aintree Grand National and the Irish Grand National.

“I love going to Punchestown and the Punchestown Festival is probably my favourite race meeting of the year. Just the buzz and that there, you know, you'd ride there for free.”

GET TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL THOROUGHBRED STORY SHARERS



DAVID WARDELL – TOUR GUIDE, THE NATIONAL STUD, KILDARE

David Wardell is the Tourism Development Manager in the Irish National Stud. He is responsible for all aspects of the visitor experience and encouraging visitors from around the world to visit the Stud.

"Did you know that there is one horse for every 250 people in Ireland? And there are 50 thoroughbreds to every 10,000 people living in Ireland? That might not seem that much, but in Australia there's only 28, and in the UK there's only 5 thoroughbreds per 10,000 people. It shows how integral the horse is to our country and our culture."



DALE CONDON – TOUR GUIDE, FETHARD HORSE COUNTRY EXPERIENCE AND COOLMORE STUD, TIPPERARY

Dale Condon is from Cahir in County Tipperary and is the Sales and Marketing administrator with Cashel Palace Hotel. Part of his role is welcoming visitors to Fethard Horse County Experience. Ticket options include a guided tour of nearby Coolmore Stud.

"Our visitors are a mix of backgrounds, some with more knowledge of the thoroughbred industry than others. A lot of our Australians and American guests would be familiar with the Coolmore studs over there."

GET TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL THOROUGHBRED STORYMAKERS



FAMED TIPPERARY FARRIER – JOE CHANNON, CLONMEL

Joe Channon is a third-generation blacksmith and farrier based at his forge in Clonmel, County Tipperary. He travels to stables and stud farms to shoe horses.

“When I joined my father in the business, we would see 80 to 100 horses a week, now I would see about 25 to 30 which is a day’s work – you could shoe 20 horses in a day if you were any way efficient at all. I’m the only farrier left in the county with a premises – most farriers have mobile businesses. The day of bringing the horse to the farrier is gone. There were 9 or 10 forges in Clonmel when my Dad moved here in 1954 - 70 years ago – now we’re the only one left.”



THOROUGHBRED TEACHER – ANNE O’CONNOR, TREO EILE, KILDARE

Based at the Irish National Stud in Kildare town, Anne O’Connor, Treo Eile, an organisation that helps racehorse owners and trainers find new homes and disciplines for their horses after racing. With a long career in the Irish horse industry, Anne has experience in retraining racehorses and training and coaching young riders.

“I worked in Goffs for 19 years in administration in the sales office. While there I took on a thoroughbred that was too slow for racing from a trainer. I retrained him - I showed him, I evented with him, I hunted with him - he was fantastic.”



PILLAR 3 PLACE AND HERITAGE

ANCIENT PLACES ASSOCIATED WITH HORSES AND RACING ARE INTERTWINED WITH FOLKLORE AND LEGENDS THAT HAVE MADE HORSE COUNTRY A PLACE WITH AN ABUNDANCE OF STORIES EMBEDDED ACROSS EVERY COMMUNITY.

Sharing this legacy will be important to establishing the destination profile as a guardian of thoroughbred heritage. This strategic pillar will become a key destination orientation theme providing the main experience venues for the visitor.

- **FOLKLORE FINDER**
- **LEGACY OF ANCIENT KINGS & QUEENS**
- **KILDARE'S HORSE COUNTRY – THE CURRAGH**
- **TIPPERARY'S HORSE COUNTRY – FETHARD**
- **THE SALES**
- **MEET YOUR STORY SHARERS**

FOLKLORE FINDER



KEDRAH, CO. TIPPERARY

The local O'Doherty brothers ensured their race horses drank only pure water even bringing barrels of local stream water with them to race meetups.



DRANGAN, CO. TIPPERARY

Buried for good luck and protection, a horse skull discovered in the foundations of an old schoolhouse is now on display in The Museum of Hidden History, Clonmel.



DROMBANE, CO. TIPPERARY

A blacksmith could help locals improve the churning of their butter by striking a red iron on the anvil.



CURRAGHCLONEY, CO. TIPPERARY

People could marry by jumping over the blacksmith's anvil for a fee of five shillings. It was also warned that if you blew the smith's bellows you would never get married.



ATHGARVAN, CO. KILDARE

Folklore tells of a cure for warts using the forge's water trough. Sufferers just needed to dip their hands in three times and bless themselves.



OLDKILCULLEN, CO. KILDARE

Late 1800's, Mrs Bagnal recalled "horse racing was far different, there were no railings or stands on a course... most of the jockey's smoked pipes when riding!"

LEGACY OF ANCIENT KINGS AND QUEENS

ANCIENT ROYALTY AT THE CURRAGH



THE PHRASE “SPORT OF KINGS” CONJURES IMAGES OF THUNDERING HOOVES, SILK-CLAD JOCKEYS, AND THE THRILL OF THE RACE. BUT IN HORSE COUNTRY, THAT CONNECTION RUNS EVEN DEEPER WITH AN ANCIENT LEGACY.

Drawing of men surrounding a chieftain while he baths in the blood of a white mare according to a Welsh priest who visited Ireland in the late 1100s. Image from Topographia Hibernica, NLI ref. Ms. 700, Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

DÚN AILINNE CEREMONIAL CENTRE, COUNTY KILDARE

Visible from the Curragh, Dún Ailinne on the Hill of Cnoc Ailinne (Knockaulin), has its beginnings over 5000 years ago when the first farmers came to Ireland in the Neolithic period. Around 2,500 years later, in the Iron Age, it was said to be the seat of royalty and the place where Kings of Leinster were inaugurated. A curious rite practiced at another royal site of Tara, County Meath is recorded in medieval sources suggests a white mare was part of the inauguration rite of a chieftain. The mare was sacrificed, her blood consumed and the chieftain bathed in her blood while sharing her meat among the tribe to strengthen the new kingdom. Could this have occurred at Dun Ailinne? We will never know!

CASHEL OF THE KINGS

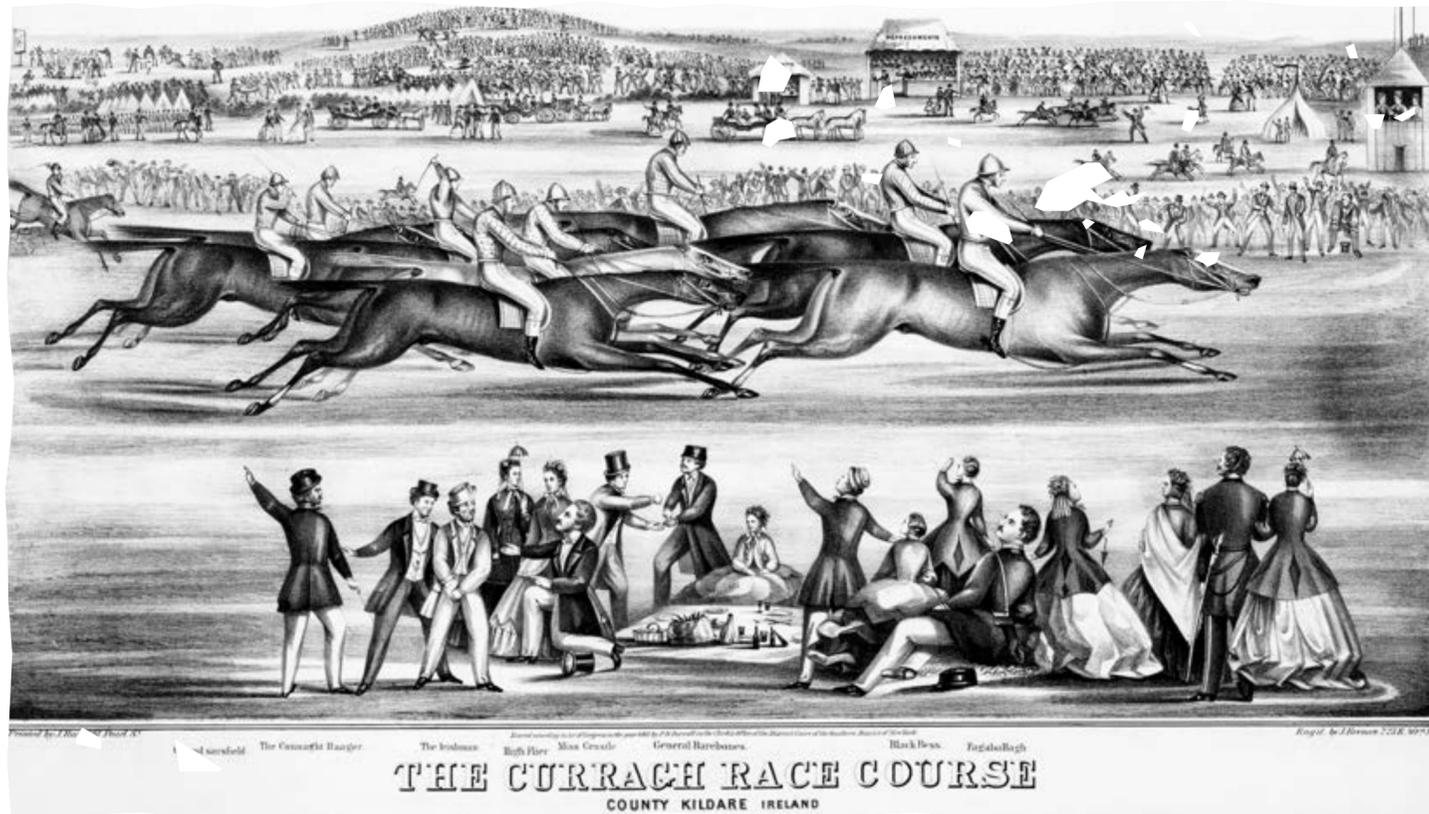
The Rock of Cashel was a centre of power and kingship around 400AD. Some of Cashel's kings were religious figures holding supreme authority over the land. Saint Patrick, powerful symbol of religion, is said to have baptised warriors there and brought them into the religious faith. Centuries later, in 1101, it's king donated Cashel to the clergy changing its status as a royal site of kings to an ecclesiastical site of religious power. Today your guests can visit the Rock of Cashel to walk in the footsteps of ancient kings and even see the remains of medieval wall paintings preserved in Cormac's chapel.

“The land in Kildare has the best land for raising horses and Tipperary is terrific land - it's what they call limestone land.”

**Jessica Harrington,
Thoroughbred Trainer,
County Kildare**

HEART OF KILDARE'S HORSE COUNTRY

THE CURRAGH



Nine-horse race at the Curragh in 1867 watched by crowds of people watching on the course route. © De Luan / Alamy Stock Photo

THE CURRAGH PLAINS

The Curragh Plains could be described as the beating heart of Horse Country in County Kildare. It is a vast, grassy plain that has been largely uncultivated for at least 1500 years allowing its own unique flora to thrive. It has national and international importance due to its environmental, historical and cultural heritage and today is home to the Defence Forces, the Horse Racing industry and many, many sheep!

Stories of gods, warriors, wars and even saints give clues to its ancient significance. In a hymn to Kildare's Saint Brigid, recorded in the 7th century, she is referred to as "In Cailleach reidhed Curreeh," - the wise or holy woman who races over the Curragh. Medieval manuscripts describe the Aonach Lífé - a large ancient festival held in the Curragh, with feasting and games including horse racing. In more recent centuries, British armies used the plain as a training ground for their troops - including the horses, for over 200 years. The British cavalry trained

here before going some of the biggest battles in history - the Crimea, the Boer War and the First World War.

The Curragh's racecourse, located to the east of the plain, is over 200 years old. The first known race meeting was recorded in letters between the nobility in 1727 where they watched the races from their carriages as ordinary folk walked for miles to be part of the excitement.



Historical wood engraving from 1853 celebrating the opening of a new grand stand at the Curragh, County Kildare. GRANGER - Historical Picture Archive / © Alamy Stock Photo

HEART OF TIPPERARY'S HORSE COUNTRY

FETHARD



Ireland's Ancient East heritage town of Fethard, County Tipperary.

MUNSTER'S FERTILE PLAIN

In Tipperary, the heart of Horse Country is across the rich lands of the Golden Vale known in Irish as 'Munster's Fertile Plain'. Home to the historic Norman town of Fethard, prestigious stud farms, such as Coolmore Stud have made these plains their home.

The sight of horseboxes are a daily occurrence for locals, while trucks and tractors with the Coolmore brand travel through the town, impossible for visitors shopping or having lunch to miss. The town also boasts another exclusive – Ireland's only museum dedicated to horses, The Fethard Horse Country Experience, based in the beautiful Tholsel (a Norman Town Hall). Here your guests can not only learn about horses and Irish history, but they can come face to face with greatness –and view the skeleton of the champion sire Saddler's Wells.

As part of the museum visit your guests can also walk the town's defensive Norman walls – built in the 1300s to provide protection from lawlessness in the locality. The town's original layout included a market area, a church, and a pattern of streets. Its economy thrived on arable farmland. Even today the farmers' market still takes place on Fridays in the town, carrying on a century's old tradition.



Main street Fethard, County Tipperary.

LOOK OUT FOR...

Located inside the Augustinian Abbey in Fethard is a stained-glass window depicting 'Our Lady of Fatima' by the famed Harry Clarke Studio. Outside in the graveyard's wall your guests can view the Abbey's Sheela na Gig – a medieval grotesque of a naked woman, believed to bring protection.

DID YOU KNOW? THE THOLSEL

Home to Fethard Horse Country Museum the building was originally an alms house which offered accommodation for poor people until the town council adopted it as its home from the 1600s. On the pavement outside is a weighing machine, dating back to its life as a market hall in the 1840s.

GOFFS AUCTION HOUSE THE SALES



GOFFS AUCTION HOUSE, COUNTY KILDARE

From the quiet study of the buyers, the tension building with the impossibly quick call of the auctioneer, ending the crescendo with the gavel hitting the block, the auction house is an exciting place to be. Even more so in Horse Country, where one of the oldest Thoroughbred horse auction houses in the UK and Ireland is located, creating history with every sale.

Goffs was established in the late 1800s and since then has been in the very heart of the Irish racing and breeding industry. Founded by Robert J. Goff, an auctioneer from Newbridge, the first sale of horses was held at the RDS grounds in Ballsbridge, Dublin in 1887. Nearly 90 years later, in 1975, they opened the world's first purpose-built horse sales complex in Kill, Co Kildare, where they still operate today.

Goffs hold a pivotal point on the global Thoroughbred stage, where hooped hopes are bought and sold by the dream makers. With a sales catalogue that reads like poetry – Arkle, Familiar Dreams, Be My Guest, Aonoch, Grand Parade, Alpha Centauri – the turnover in sales for 2023 alone amounted to a stunning €184 million.



PILLAR 4 THE WINNING POST

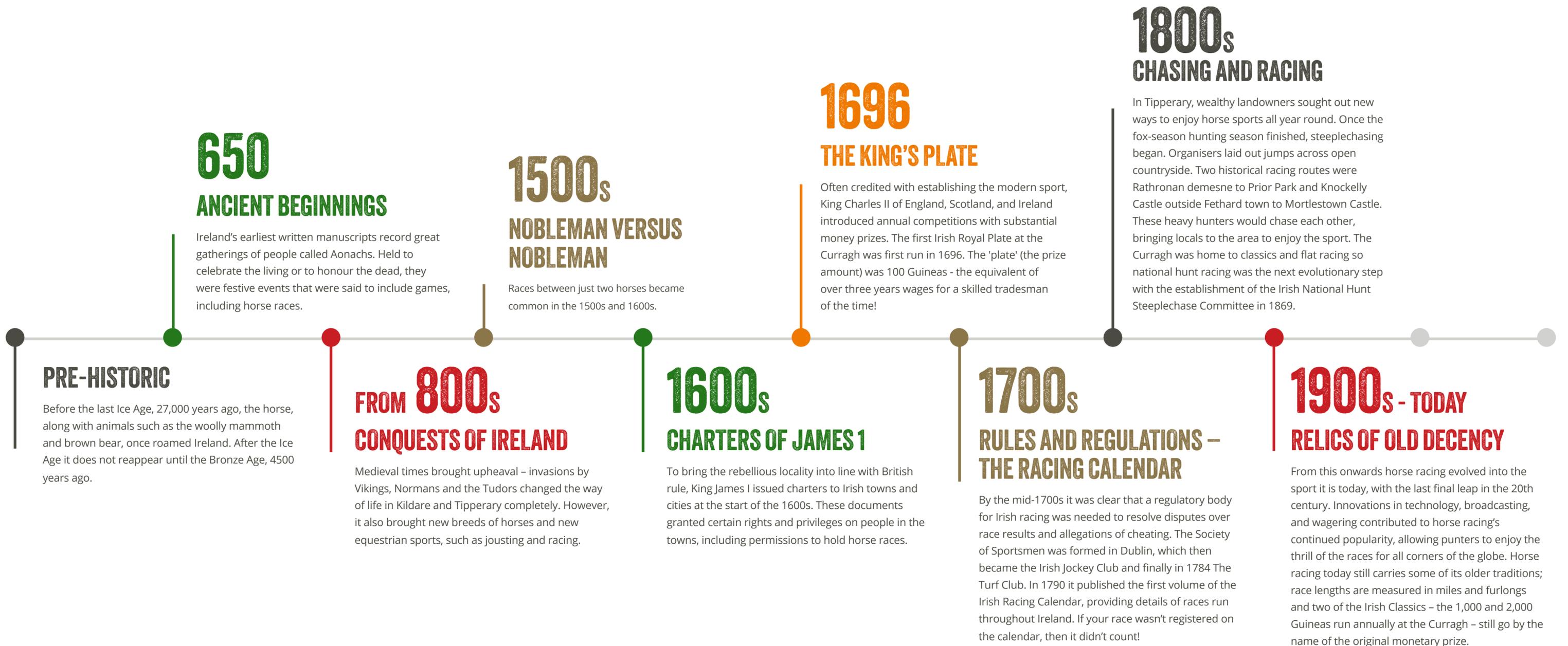
**THE LIVELINESS OF THE TRACK
AND THRILL OF THE BET CONTRIBUTE
TO THE UNIQUENESS OF A RACE
DAY EXPERIENCE.**

The destination possesses a calendar of events that provide access to some of our greatest national sports occasions. The destination must embrace its key festivals through collaboration and destination innovation to add value to the visitor's experience.

- HISTORY OF HORSE RACING
- THE STEEPLECHASE
- LADIES' DAY
- THOROUGHBRED RACING YEAR
- HORSE COUNTRY'S RACECOURSES

THE HISTORY OF HORSE RACING

From ancient chariots to modern racetracks, Thoroughbred racing galloped through time, leaving hoofprints in history.



650 ANCIENT BEGINNINGS

Ireland's earliest written manuscripts record great gatherings of people called Aonachs. Held to celebrate the living or to honour the dead, they were festive events that were said to include games, including horse races.

1500s NOBLEMAN VERSUS NOBLEMAN

Races between just two horses became common in the 1500s and 1600s.

1696 THE KING'S PLATE

Often credited with establishing the modern sport, King Charles II of England, Scotland, and Ireland introduced annual competitions with substantial money prizes. The first Irish Royal Plate at the Curragh was first run in 1696. The 'plate' (the prize amount) was 100 Guineas - the equivalent of over three years wages for a skilled tradesman of the time!

1800s CHASING AND RACING

In Tipperary, wealthy landowners sought out new ways to enjoy horse sports all year round. Once the fox-season hunting season finished, steeplechasing began. Organisers laid out jumps across open countryside. Two historical racing routes were Rathronan demesne to Prior Park and Knockelly Castle outside Fethard town to Mortlestown Castle. These heavy hunters would chase each other, bringing locals to the area to enjoy the sport. The Curragh was home to classics and flat racing so national hunt racing was the next evolutionary step with the establishment of the Irish National Hunt Steeplechase Committee in 1869.

PRE-HISTORIC

Before the last Ice Age, 27,000 years ago, the horse, along with animals such as the woolly mammoth and brown bear, once roamed Ireland. After the Ice Age it does not reappear until the Bronze Age, 4500 years ago.

FROM 800s CONQUESTS OF IRELAND

Medieval times brought upheaval - invasions by Vikings, Normans and the Tudors changed the way of life in Kildare and Tipperary completely. However, it also brought new breeds of horses and new equestrian sports, such as jousting and racing.

1600s CHARTERS OF JAMES I

To bring the rebellious locality into line with British rule, King James I issued charters to Irish towns and cities at the start of the 1600s. These documents granted certain rights and privileges on people in the towns, including permissions to hold horse races.

1700s RULES AND REGULATIONS - THE RACING CALENDAR

By the mid-1700s it was clear that a regulatory body for Irish racing was needed to resolve disputes over race results and allegations of cheating. The Society of Sportsmen was formed in Dublin, which then became the Irish Jockey Club and finally in 1784 The Turf Club. In 1790 it published the first volume of the Irish Racing Calendar, providing details of races run throughout Ireland. If your race wasn't registered on the calendar, then it didn't count!

1900s - TODAY RELICS OF OLD DECENCY

From this onwards horse racing evolved into the sport it is today, with the last final leap in the 20th century. Innovations in technology, broadcasting, and wagering contributed to horse racing's continued popularity, allowing punters to enjoy the thrill of the races for all corners of the globe. Horse racing today still carries some of its older traditions; race lengths are measured in miles and furlongs and two of the Irish Classics - the 1,000 and 2,000 Guineas run annually at the Curragh - still go by the name of the original monetary prize.

THOROUGHBRED STORIES

THE STEEPLECHASE



© PA Images / Alamy Stock Photo

DID YOU KNOW? STEEPLECHASE

A steeplechase is a thoroughbred horse race run over large, fixed obstacles. The obstacles are made up of a fence and a ditch.

THE ORIGINS OF THE STEEPLE CHASE

The steeplechase originated in Ireland. Today it is a race that is run all over the world. The steeplechase (or simply the chase) is the most physically and mentally demanding race for both horse and rider. The distance is longer and the jumps are higher and wider than lower obstacle hurdle races. It is said that an account of the first steeplechase was stored in the library of the O'Briens of Dromoland Castle, but its whereabouts are unknown today.

To get to the origins of this race, we need to travel back nearly 300 years, to 1752, just outside Horse Country in Co Cork. The story tells us of two friends - Edmund Blake and Cornelius O'Callaghan, who enjoyed hunting and gambling. What started as an argument over whose horse was faster led to a challenge - a race from the church of St John's in Buttevant to St Mary's Church in Doneraile - a distance of four miles (roughly 6km). The churches' steeples were handy for marking the starting and ending points and there were obstacles such as fences and ditches to be negotiated along the way - giving the modern race its name and design.

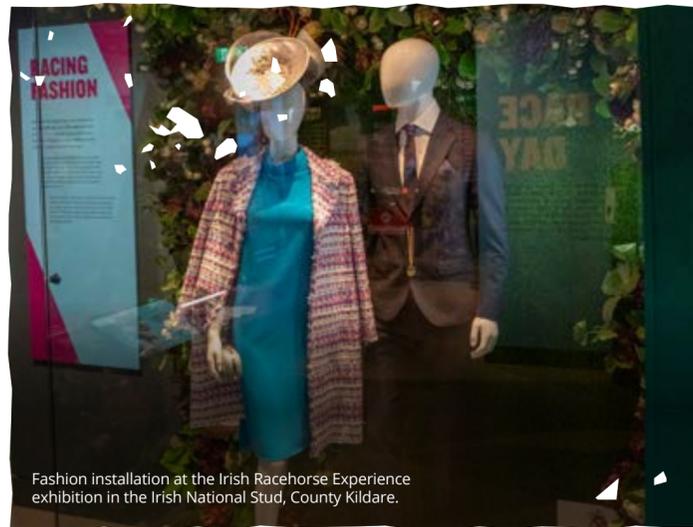
The wager was a cask of wine for the winner. Unfortunately antiquity failed to record whose horse won the race!



Steeplechase at Punchestown Races. Illustration for The Illustrated London News, 7 May 1870. © The Print Collector / Alamy Stock Photo

THOROUGHBRED STORIES

LADIES' DAY



Fashion installation at the Irish Racehorse Experience exhibition in the Irish National Stud, County Kildare.

THE ORIGINS OF LADIES' DAY

The term "Ladies' Day" originated in 1823 at Royal Ascot, when an anonymous poet described the Thursday of that year's event as "Ladies' Day... when the women, like angels, look sweetly divine." This poetic reference captured the allure of the day, emphasising the elegance and grace of female attendees. Women were enticed to attend race meets with free or discounted tickets for the third day of Royal Ascot.

Beau Brummel, a friend of the Prince Regent, introduced a dress code for men in the early 1800s, emphasising pantaloons, waisted black coats, and white cravats. This tailored style influenced men's attire in the royal enclosure at Ascot. Later, Queen Victoria's adoption of hats at the races encouraged women to wear headpieces as well.

By the 1960s, Ladies' Day was an established tradition at Ascot and race organisers across the UK and Ireland began hosting Ladies' Day events during their festivals. Some prestigious fillies and mares races, such as the Epsom Oaks, Irish Oaks, and Prix de Diane, coincide with Ladies' Day.

SHORT FACT – MOST STYLISH RACEGOER

The Irish Derby held in the Curragh, Co Kildare don't hold a traditional Ladies' Day – rather they award the Most Stylish Racegoers each day that are open to all race goers, not just the ladies!

DID YOU KNOW? DRESS TO IMPRESS

There is no official dress code in Irish racecourses – racegoers are advised to dress in smart casual, and for the weather. Many of the race festivals in Horse Country have a Ladies' Day. One of the most successful participants is Faith Amond, a 71-year-old fashionista originally from Co Carlow. She has won best dressed titles at all the major Irish racing festivals – nearly 50 titles in total over the last 40 years, including back-to-back titles in Punchestown in 2023 and 2024.

At Cheltenham festival, Ladies Day is now known as Style Wednesday, where vintage pieces of 'slow fashion' are celebrated.



Faith Amond from Carlow who won the Best Dressed award at Winter Ladies Day at Naas Racecourse, 2023. © Naas Racecourse

THOROUGHBRED RACING YEAR

WINTER	JANUARY		FLAT SEASON	JUMP SEASON
	FEBRUARY			
SPRING	MARCH			
	APRIL	Punchestown Irish National Hunt Festival		
	MAY	Irish Classic - Irish 1,000 & 2,000 Guineas and Gold Cup in The Curragh		
SUMMER	JUNE	Irish Classic - The Irish Derby at The Curragh		
	JULY	Irish Classic - The Irish Oaks at The Curragh		
	AUGUST			
AUTUMN	SEPTEMBER	Irish Champions Festival at Punchestown Irish St Leger at The Curragh		
	OCTOBER	Last of the Flat Season races		
	NOVEMBER	Punchestown Winter Festival		
WINTER	DECEMBER			

HORSE COUNTRY'S RACECOURSES

FORGOTTEN COURSES

The placename 'Racecourse' frequently appears across Horse Country landscape. Some can still be seen signposted today while others are preserved on old maps such as Racecourse townland south of Cashel, marking a once-important location for race goers.

KILDARE



The Curragh racecourse is a 2 mile, (or sixteen furlong) course.

CURRAGH RACECOURSE

Perhaps the most important racecourse in Ireland, the Curragh, hosts all five Irish flat-racing Classics, including the oldest, The Irish Derby, originating in 1866. From its historic links to the modern racecourse, there is a legacy of horse and land here that is unequalled anywhere else in Ireland.

NAAS

Formed in 1922 at the height of the Irish Civil War, the visionary Naas Race Company purchased over 100 acres of farmland to establish a formal racecourse. In 2024 Naas Racecourse celebrates its 100th anniversary - it has become a significant venue in Irish horse racing, hosting both flat and jump races.

PUNCHESTOWN

For all the wrong reasons the first race meeting of the Kildare Hunt Club at Punchestown on April 1, 1850, was a dramatic event. A reporter described the meeting in scathing detail – from the lack of a viewing stand, the “exceedingly thin attendance from Dublin (i.e. high society)” to the weather, with the race taking place “amid a perfect hurricane”. Today, Punchestown is one of the premier venues for National Hunt racing in Ireland and hosts the renowned Punchestown Festival each year. It has seen dramatic finishes, such as Dawn Run’s win against Buck House in 1986, and clear winners, such as Arkle’s astonishing win by 15 lengths in the Festival’s John Jameson Handicap Chase in 1963.

TIPPERARY



Rachael Blackmore © News Images LTD / Alamy Stock Photo

CLONMEL

Established in the early 1800s, Clonmel Racecourse at Powerstown Park is regarded as one of Ireland’s most picturesque racecourses. The course features two tracks: a right-handed flat track and a national track used for National Hunt racing, which includes a challenging uphill finish. It was in Clonmel that Minella Times ran his novice chase in 2019, before bringing Tipperary jockey Rachael Blackmore to glory in 2021 when she won the Aintree Grand National, making Rachael the first woman to win that famous race.

THURLES

Thurles Racecourse is one of the oldest jump racecourses in Ireland. Unlike in Kildare, the sport of horse racing in Tipperary has roots in the hunt, with race meetings often marking the end of the hunting season. The only family-owned racecourse in Ireland in ownership of the Molony family for over a century. Crucial to trainers preparing horses for the Cheltenham Festival in Spring each year, Kinloch Brae Chase winners Don Cossack and Sizing John both went on to win the Cheltenham Gold Cup.

TIPPERARY

Not always held in its current location, the first recorded Tipperary race meeting was at Barronstown Course in 1848. The current track at Limerick Junction hosted its first meeting in September 1916 but the name was officially changed from Limerick Junction to Tipperary in 1986. The highlight of the year is the “Super Sunday” meeting, held on the first Sunday of October. This unique event is the only one to feature both Graded National Hunt races and a Group race on the flat on the same day. It attracts the largest crowd of the year and is a major draw for racing enthusiasts.

COURSE	LOCATION	RACE TYPE
Clonmel	Tipperary	Flat, Jump
Curragh	Kildare	Flat
Naas	Kildare	Flat, Jump
Punchestown	Kildare	Jump
Thurles	Tipperary	Jump
Tipperary	Tipperary	Flat, Jump

SECTION 2 – DEVELOPMENT

SECTION 2 – DEVELOPMENT

**THIS SECTION COVERS
THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:**

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KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE: PROFILES

UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE IS KEY TO PROMOTING THE RIGHT EXPERIENCES ACROSS KILDARE AND TIPPERARY.

Different visitors have varied expectations – families may be drawn to interactive experiences like pony rides or educational tours at the Irish National Stud, while racing fans could be more interested in exclusive access to Coolmore Stud or attending iconic races at The Curragh. By identifying who your visitors are and what they're looking for, you can tailor your offerings to make them more engaging and relevant. This ensures visitors leave with a memorable experience, encourages them to explore more of the destination, and boosts positive recommendations, helping your business and the greater Horse Country to thrive.

"Our guests at the Irish National Stud and Horse Country don't know much about horses when they arrive... When they leave, we want them to feel empowered at what they have learnt - about the incredible connection we have in Ireland to the thoroughbred."

David Wardell,
Tourism Development Manager,
Irish National Stud, County Kildare



1. CULTURALLY CURIOUS

Demographics: Often mature couples, solo travellers, or groups of friends, typically aged 45 and above, with a strong interest in culture, history, and authentic local experiences.

Motivations: Eager to immerse themselves in the local heritage and traditions, they seek out enriching experiences that provide a deep understanding of the cultural significance of horse racing in Horse Country. They appreciate storytelling, historical contexts, and authentic interactions with locals.

Preferences: They prefer guided tours, cultural events, and historical sites that highlight the history and legacy of the thoroughbred horse. They value high-quality, informative experiences that offer insight into the local way of life and equine heritage.

2. DABBLER – DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE WITH AN INTEREST IN EQUINE THEMES OR SPORTS FOLLOWERS

Demographics: Individuals and families with a general interest in horse racing and equine themes, including sports enthusiasts who have a moderate awareness of thoroughbred sports. This segment ranges from casual racegoers to those curious about equine culture, typically aged 25 to 55.

Motivations: They enjoy the excitement of horse racing and the charm of equine experiences but are not deeply immersed in the world. They are attracted by the spectacle, social aspects, and unique experiences associated with thoroughbreds.

Preferences: They look for accessible and engaging activities that provide a taste of the equine world without requiring extensive prior knowledge. They appreciate family-friendly events, introductory tours, and opportunities to experience the culture of horse racing.



3. THE ENTHUSIAST – THE EXISTING HORSE RACING SEGMENT

Demographics: Avid horse racing fans, often including seasoned racegoers, punters, and includes both domestic and international visitors, generally aged between 30 and 60.

Motivations: Passionate about horse racing, they are keen to experience the thrill of the sport firsthand. They follow racing events closely and are knowledgeable about the industry.

Preferences: They seek out top-tier racecourses, exclusive behind-the-scenes tours of stud farms, and opportunities to meet jockeys and trainers. They appreciate detailed insights into the breeding, training, and care of thoroughbreds.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE: VISITOR SOURCES

THESE THREE CORE AUDIENCE PROFILES ARE UNDERPINNED BY A NUMBER OF VISITOR SOURCES.



1. INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS

Who are they?

Independent travellers, often referred to as FITs (Free Independent Travellers), prefer to create their own itineraries. They might be solo travellers, couples, or small groups seeking flexibility and authentic local experiences.

What are they interested in?

Freedom to Explore: FITs enjoy the freedom to roam. Many attractions across Ireland's Ancient East appeals to this source. Businesses can extend their offering by customisable experiences like horse-riding at Crossogue Equestrian in Tipperary. They like to discover things at their own pace, so offer activities that allow them to do just that.

Cultural Connections: These visitors appreciate meaningful experiences that connect them to the local culture. A race day at Punchestown or a visit to The Curragh Racecourse could be exactly what they're looking for—especially if it's paired with stories that immerse them in the region's heritage.



2. GROUP TOURS

Who are they?

Group tours often include seniors, leisure groups, or school groups. They usually come with pre-planned itineraries and prefer organised, easy-to-navigate experiences.

What are they interested in?

Smooth Experiences: Group visitors need attractions that can accommodate larger numbers with ease. Locations like Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park and Tipperary Museum of Hidden History are great options because they offer guided tours and educational insights, which make them perfect for groups.

Heritage and Learning: These groups love to learn about the area, especially its rich equestrian history. Think about offering special group tours that highlight the history of Thoroughbred breeding and racing in your region. Tours booked into the Fethard Horse Country Experience can avail of a guided walking tour of Fethard Town and entry into the town's Augustinian Friary.



3. SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Who are they?

Special interest groups have a focused passion, such as equestrian enthusiasts, racing fans, or those interested in heritage. These visitors want a deeper connection to their interests and are often looking for exclusive, immersive experiences.

What are they interested in?

Unique Experiences: These visitors aren't just looking for a basic tour—they want something special. Consider offering them behind-the-scenes access to Johnny Murtagh Racing, private breeding tours at Coolmore Stud, or VIP experiences at The Curragh Racecourse. These deeper, tailored activities will help them feel more that the destination is for them.

Hands-On Learning: Special interest groups love to get involved. Workshops at Berney Bros. Saddlemakers or equestrian clinics at Racing Academy (RACE) could be just the kind of hands-on experience they're after.



4. CORPORATE & MICE GROUPS

Who are they?

MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) groups consist of business professionals or corporate clients. They visit for work-related purposes but often seek experiences that blend business with pleasure.

What are they interested in?

Corporate Packages: MICE groups value high-quality, well-organised experiences. Consider collaborating with businesses to offer team building experiences such as bike hire along the Royal Canal or offer special race-day hospitality at Punchestown to give them a memorable, business-meets-leisure experience.

Luxurious Venues: Corporate groups expect comfort and style. Hosting events at venues like The K Club or Cashel Palace Hotel, where they can enjoy premium services and access to local equestrian attractions, is a great way to meet their needs.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE: MOTIVATIONS

PEOPLE TAKE DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRIPS, EACH WITH THEIR OWN REASONS, SEEKING DIFFERENT AND UNIQUE EXPERIENCES. FROM THE WARMTH OF RECONNECTION TO THE DISCOVERY OF THE NEW, TRAVEL IS DRIVEN BY MANY MOTIVATIONS.

Fáilte Ireland have developed a Travel Motivations Framework that taps into the emotional structures and needs, to better understand the subconscious drivers of consumer decision making. By exploring these deep emotional needs, a business can identify how to best curate travel experiences that will resonate with their audience and provide for longer term domestic success.

THE RESET DYNAMIC

The underlying research reveals that moments of reset fundamentally underpin all motivations for travel. It is on two axes that we can integrate travel occasions and plot motivations.

"We get so many people that bring their elderly parents, who would have been interested in horses and it brings back fond memories for them."

**Emma Mai Roche, Equine Concierge,
Cashel Palace Hotel, County Tipperary**



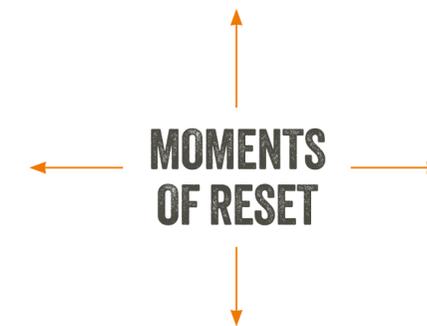
WIND UP

The reset feeds into the need for extra energy stimulation.

Wind Up with a visit to The Curragh Racecourse and feed off the infectious energy and obsessive passion of the horse racing professionals. You'll leave feeling inspired and motivated to excel in your own craft.

NURTURING MY WORLD

The reset focuses on "us". It is about nurturing bonds with those who are closest to us. (People)



ENGAGING THE WORLD

The reset focuses on what's beyond the party travelling. It is about engaging in external stimulation and the world around one. (Place)



WIND DOWN

The reset is about winding down in order to rebuild the energy used in everyday life.

Wind Down with a relaxing stay at The Keadeen – a hotel steeped in racing history, and an exclusive behind-the-scenes visit to one of these renowned lodges and training yard.

BUILDING UPON THE UNDERLYING 'MOMENTS OF RESET', SEVEN MOTIVATIONAL STATES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED.

IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST MOTIVATIONS AND TRAVEL OCCASIONS

Ireland's Ancient East spans several motivations and travel occasions, capturing almost a third of domestic travel. While Exploration is the main motivator, Adventure, Time Out, Bonding and Social Energy are also reasons for travelling in the region.

"The majority of guests are well aware of what Coolmore is - you might have a family where one member is very interested in thoroughbred horses, and the rest of the family may not have as big an interest"

**Dale Condon, Tour Guide,
Fethard Horse Country Experience
and Coolmore Stud, County Tipperary**

AUDIENCE MOTIVATION	MOMENT OF RESET	TOURISM ACTIVITY THE AUDIENCE SEEKS
SOCIAL ENERGY	Reset by embracing vibrant and fun experiences	Interweaves elements of cultural exposure, events and nightlife which are important to activities, attractions and night-time economies.
ADVENTURE	Reset through exciting and personally challenging experiences	Speak directly to discovery, stretching domestic visitors across the country's breadth and depth, expanding experiences such as on the many trails in the Munster Vales region of Tipperary or a visit to the Irish Working Sheepdogs experience in Naas.
EXPLORATION	Reset by exploring new or unfamiliar places and cultural activities	
TIME OUT	Reset by unwinding and treasuring special moments together	Have a greater focus on people than places. However, the hospitality industry has a direct role here in accommodating for the specific needs of travel groups such as families, younger and unconstrained adults 45+ as each requires different facilities and services.
RECONNECTION	Reset through spending time with close friends	
BONDING	Reset by nurturing and strengthening relationships with those closest to me	
CELEBRATION	Reset through the celebration of milestones, achievements, reunions and special occasions	Falls somewhat outside the sphere of influence, as it is centred around visiting family or friends to mark a special occasion or celebrate achievements or milestones.

LEVERAGING HORSE COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

IRELAND HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNISED GLOBALLY AS A LEADER IN THOROUGHBRED BREEDING, ATTRACTING SIGNIFICANT INTEREST BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.

To deepen your understanding of the Thoroughbred Experiences or to share them with your team, view them here.

"The visitors' reactions to the farm tour and The Irish Racehorse Experience are always the same 'We had no idea!'. People don't realise how much work goes into breeding from the foal to the finish line."

**David Wardell, Tourism Development Manager,
Irish National Stud, County Kildare**

The pinnacle of Ireland's equestrian excellence comes alive across the stunning landscapes of counties Kildare and Tipperary. To take full advantage of this unique positioning for the destination, Horse Country has curated a portfolio of equine experiences. From opulent luxury to laid back leisure, they provide unforgettable adventures for all.

Visitors are invited to enjoy the thrill of interactive exhibits, hands-on activities and race day experiences, VIP tours at prestigious stud farms, trainer's yards and racecourses from behind-the-scenes, all delivered through unmatched hospitality and authenticity.



By leveraging the existing Horse Country Experiences, businesses in Kildare and Tipperary have the opportunity to enhance their appeal to target visitors, highlighting the distinctive offerings of the destination and their role as facilitators of these experiences.

They offer visitors an unmatched opportunity to immerse themselves in the heart and passion of Irish racing and breeding. Encourage your visitors to step into the 'INSIDE TRACK,' where they can learn all about the history and heritage of the destination, while connecting with key figures who maintain the world-renowned reputation of the Irish Thoroughbred.



THREE WAYS TO LEVERAGE HORSE COUNTRY FOR YOUR BUSINESS:

- Create an new inhouse experience in your hotel or attraction that thematically connects with the Thoroughbred theme.
- Consider creating a new Horse Country experience with an established equine business or expert. This may be a long term plan that would be supported by Fáilte Ireland through their development process and designed to create strong, new saleable experiences.
- Consider a strategic partnership with Horse Country CLG and identify packages or collaborations with existing experiences that have been developed.

COUNTY KILDARE



**KILDANGAN STUD
FOAL TO FAME TOUR**



**THE IRISH NATIONAL STUD
PRIVATE TOUR**



**JP MURTAGH VIP
RACING EXPERIENCE**



**JESSICA HARRINGTON
RACING EXPERIENCE**



**THE CURRAGH
BEHIND THE SCENES TOUR**



**PUNCHESTOWN
RACECOURSE EXPERIENCE**

THERE'S MORE TO DISCOVER AT...

- 1 Newbridge Silverware Visitor Centre
- 2 Kildare Village Shopping Destination
- 3 Berney Bros Saddle Makers, Kilcullen
- 4 RACE and Irish Farriery School
- 5 The Curragh Plains
- 6 Naas Racecourse

For more details and to book experiences, go to:



COUNTY TIPPERARY



CROSSOGUE EQUESTRIAN



TIPPERARY MUSEUM OF HIDDEN HISTORY



FETHARD HORSE COUNTRY EXPERIENCE & COOLMORE STUD



KEVIN BLAKE GOLDEN STUD FARM

THERE'S MORE TO DISCOVER AT...

- 1 Tipperary Racecourse
- 2 Clonmel Racecourse
- 3 Thurles Racecourse
- 4 Rock of Cashel
- 5 Swiss Cottage
- 6 Cahir Castle
- 7 Hore Abbey

For more details and to book experiences, go to:



ALIGNING TO RACE DAY EVENTS

RACE DAYS AT THE CURRAGH, NAAS, PUNCHESTOWN, THURLES AND CLONMEL ARE MAJOR EVENTS THAT ATTRACT THOUSANDS OF VISITORS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

Whether you're attracting and planning on targeting intergenerational Culturally Curious families, corporate groups, or passionate Enthusiast race goers, aligning your offerings with these prestigious events will help you tap into a wider audience, create memorable experiences for visitors, drive business growth, and strengthen your connection to Ireland's rich Horse Country story.

"Growing up in Kildare Town – the buzz around here for weeks before the Derby, the atmosphere, who's going to win, what horse is coming from France or England, what jockeys are coming with them"

Jim Kavanagh,
Thoroughbred Historian, County Kildare

1. CREATE RACE DAY THEMED MENUS AND SPECIALS

Race days are an exciting opportunity to offer themed food and drinks in your restaurant, bar or café. For example:

Race-Themed Menus: Create special dishes named after famous races or horses. You can have a "Derby Day Feast" or a "National Hunt Nibbles" during major events. Use local, seasonal produce to reflect the best of Irish food.

Pre-Race Breakfasts and Post-Race Dinners: Cater to the early-risers by offering a Racer's Breakfast before they head to the track. After the event, promote a "Winner's Dinner" with race-goers who want to unwind and celebrate after a long day.

Race Day Drinks: Offer special drinks like "Shergar's Choice" or "Champagne for Champions".

Live Screenings: Bars can also host live screenings of the races for customers who couldn't attend, creating a buzz during the event.

Customise Menus: Utilise short, engaging facts about Horse Country across your business such as table talkers or on your menu.

TOP TIP— STAY CONNECTED TO THE RACECOURSES

Consider building a close relationship with The Curragh, Naas and Punchestown, gain exclusive access to meet-and-greets and unique experiences for your guests and visitors.

Experiences might include ticket bundles to include race tickets, overnight stays, meals, and transportation that appeal to corporate clients or racing fans seeking a hassle-free experience.

2. PROMOTE ACTIVITIES AND ATTRACTIONS THAT ENHANCE THE RACE DAY EXPERIENCE

If your business offers activities or operates an attraction, use race days to bring in new visitors. For example:

Family-Friendly Activities: Organise family-oriented activities around the race day such as pony rides, face painting, or mini-horse care lessons. These can take place at nearby farms or attractions.

Pre or Post-Race Entertainment: Attractions could offer family-friendly activities that keep younger visitors entertained before or after a race day.

Promote destination itineraries: Showcase all that the wider destination has to offer, to encourage race goers (particularly those travelling from overseas) to increase their length of stay and dwell time within the destination, beyond the racecourse.

3. OFFER SEAMLESS TRANSPORTATION AND HOSPITALITY PACKAGES

Visitors attending major race days will appreciate convenience. Help make their day stress-free by offering transport and package deals.

Shuttle Services: Consider working with local transportation providers to offer shuttles between your hotel or restaurant and the racecourse. Include race day tickets in your accommodation packages to create an all-in-one experience.

VIP Experiences: Partner with the racecourses to offer VIP hospitality packages. This could include private viewing areas, premium catering, and exclusive access to certain parts of the track.

ALIGNING TO THE THOROUGHBRED CALENDAR FROM FOAL TO HORSE

THE FOAL TO HORSE JOURNEY IS A DEEPLY ENGAGING, EDUCATIONAL, AND AWE-INSPIRING EXPERIENCE FOR VISITORS.

It offers them the opportunity to witness firsthand the life cycle of a champion racehorse—from its first steps as a foal to its training and development into a racehorse.

By promoting this unique story, tourism businesses can attract guests year-round, providing a rich, immersive experience that goes beyond the racetrack. Here are some examples:

1. THE IRISH NATIONAL STUD: THE JOURNEY BEGINS

At the Irish National Stud, visitors can dive into the world of thoroughbred breeding with an experience that traces the life of a horse from birth through to maturity.

Witness the Beginning of Life: During the foaling season (spring), guests can visit the foaling units to observe newborn foals and hear about the care they receive in their earliest days. This intimate look into a horse's life is a truly magical experience, providing visitors with a rare behind-the-scenes view of the beginnings of thoroughbred greatness.

Follow Their Growth: As foals grow, visitors can walk through the paddocks where mares and their foals graze. Expert guides offer insights into the meticulous care and training that young horses receive as they develop, giving guests an in-depth understanding of the journey to becoming a racehorse.

Meet the Champions: The Irish National Stud also offers the opportunity to meet retired racing champions at their *Living Legends* exhibit. This allows visitors to connect the dots between the foals they see and the fully trained racehorses these animals become.



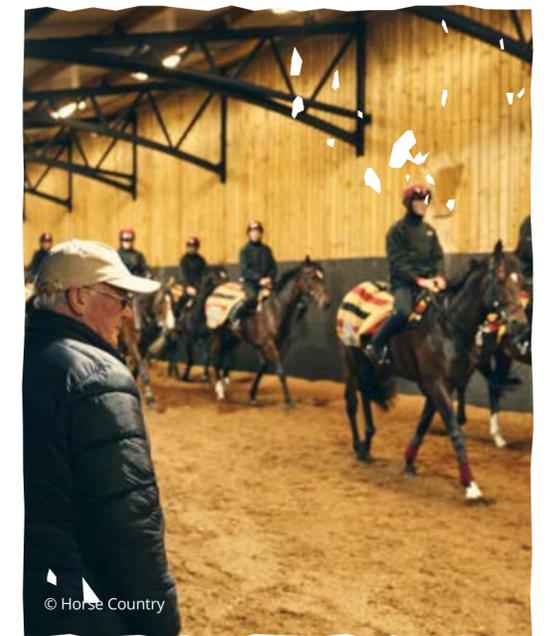
2. KILDANGAN STUD: BREEDING EXCELLENCE IN ACTION

At Kildangan Stud, visitors are invited into the inner workings of a world-renowned breeding facility that plays a vital role in the global thoroughbred industry. The *Foal to Horse* experience at Kildangan offers guests an opportunity to:

Step Behind the Breeding Process: Kildangan Stud is home to some of the finest mares, stallions, and foals in the world. Visitors can take guided tours to see the foaling units, where they will learn about the expert care that goes into raising future champions.

Track Their Journey: Guests will gain insights into how foals are raised with precision and dedication, from birth through to their early training stages. The stud's professional guides provide detailed explanations of the breeding, training, and nurturing processes that turn these foals into elite racehorses.

Explore the Facilities: The scale and prestige of Kildangan's breeding operation are impressive. Visitors will leave with a new appreciation for the expertise and hard work involved in producing some of the world's greatest racehorses.



LINKING THE FOAL TO HORSE JOURNEY WITH LOCAL FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

TO MAINTAIN YEAR-ROUND INTEREST, LOCAL BUSINESSES SHOULD TIE THE FOAL TO HORSE JOURNEY TO THE REGION'S KEY FESTIVALS AND EVENTS.

By aligning these experiences with local celebrations, businesses can offer unique packages and promotions that encourage visitors to experience Horse Country in all its seasons.

SPRING EVENTS	SUMMER EVENTS	AUTUMN/WINTER EVENTS
<p>JANUARY-MAY</p>	<p>JUNE-SEPTEMBER</p>	<p>OCTOBER-DECEMBER</p>
<p>St Brigid's Festival, Kildare Kildare's annual festival aligns with foaling season. Consider offering exclusive foal tours where visitors can meet the new arrivals while also enjoying a festival experience.</p> <p>Easter at the Irish National Stud: Promote the foaling season during Easter Celebrations, offering exclusive tours where visitors can witness the birth of future champions.</p> <p>Punchestown Festival: Leading up to this major racing festival, businesses can offer pre-festival tours at the Irish National Stud or Kildangan Stud to provide visitors with a deeper understanding of the foal-to-horse journey, enriching their race-day experience.</p>	<p>Kildare Derby Festival: In the run-up to the Derby, offer "Behind the Scenes" tours at the Irish National Stud and Kildangan Stud. Visitors can see how these elite racehorses are raised and trained, adding a new dimension to their festival experience.</p> <p>Family Day at Tipperary Racecourse: Pair family-friendly equine experiences, such as the foaling tours at Kildangan or the Irish National Stud, with this event to attract families seeking a day of racing and learning.</p>	<p>Taste of Kildare: Combine a visit to the Irish National Stud or Kildangan Stud with this food and drink festival to create an experience that mixes equine heritage with local culinary delights.</p> <p>Winter Festival Weekend: Promote quieter, off-season tours at the studs during the Winter Festival. This allows visitors to explore the breeding side of the industry when the racetrack is less active, offering a more relaxed but equally captivating experience.</p> <p>New Year's Eve Countdown: Encourage visitors to kick off the New Year by learning about the breeding and early training of foals with special holiday-themed tours.</p>

PROMOTE YEAR-ROUND THOROUGHBRED EXPERIENCES WITH LOCAL FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

THE CULTURALLY CURIOUS PROFILE MAKES UP 50% OF VISITORS TO HORSE COUNTRY.

Ireland's Ancient East and Horse Country are brimming with a variety of festivals and events throughout the year, from arts and music festivals to heritage and food celebrations.

These events draw visitors who may not initially be seeking equine experiences, yet they present a valuable opportunity for local tourism businesses to cross-promote Ireland's Ancient East and Thoroughbred-themed experiences. Here's how:

1. DEVELOP COLLABORATIVE FESTIVAL PACKAGES

Collaborate with hotels, restaurants, and other local businesses to offer combined festival-and-Thoroughbred experience packages. These packages can be tailored to different types of visitors, from Culturally Curious tour groups attending a cultural festival to Dabbler FIT couples visiting during a food and drink event.

How to Create Collaborative Packages:

Festival + Stay + Experience Packages:

Offer packages that include accommodation, festival tickets, and Thoroughbred experiences. For example, during the *Cashel Arts Festival* (12th-15th Sept), bundle an overnight stay with a cultural tour of local art and a behind-the-scenes equine experience at Kildangan Stud.

Themed Promotions: Work with local hotels and restaurants to create promotions that combine Horse Country's equine offerings with festival experiences. For example, during *Quest Lough Derg* (21st Sept), create a "Day of Adventure" package that includes participation in the sporting event followed by a visit to the Irish National Stud.



2. CREATE THEMED CONTENT FOR FESTIVAL AUDIENCES

Use festivals as inspiration for creating themed content that will resonate with visitors during the event. Leverage this content in your marketing materials, on social media, and in guest communication.

How to Build Themed Content:

Tailored Blog Posts & Social Media:

During festivals such as *St. Brigid's Day* (February) or *St. Patrick's Day* (March), create blog posts or social media content that links Irish heritage to the history of Thoroughbred breeding. Share stories, videos, or fun facts about how the Irish equine tradition is intertwined with the region's culture.

Email Campaigns: Send out tailored email campaigns to festival attendees, offering them exclusive access to Thoroughbred experiences during or after the event. Include special offers, festival-related equine packages, or behind-the-scenes insights into Horse Country.

Incorporate Festivals into Visitor Guides:

Update your guest guides to reflect the year-round festival calendar, integrating how and when visitors can experience Thoroughbred tours and events in combination with local festivals.



DEVELOPING YOUR OWN INDIVIDUAL THOROUGHBRED STORY

**AS A TOURISM BUSINESS
LOCATED IN HORSE COUNTRY,
YOUR STORY IS AN ESSENTIAL
PART OF THE REGION'S RICH
EQUINE TAPESTRY.**

1. FIND YOUR STORY

Every business has a story to tell. Perhaps its the tale of a famous horse, a curious character who lived nearby or the area your business is located. Delving into the regions stories can be easier than you think.

2. FIRST STEPS - TALKING

Talk to those around you. Have you (or your staff) memories, stories or tales that could be investigated and authenticated.

- Does the business owner have a legacy that aligns with Horse Country themes?
- Are there stories your guests regail that you could delve into?
- Is there a local historian or heritage group who you could meet to ask about the region or place's heritage?
- Can you draw inspiration from the narratives in the Story Toolkit and build your own story

Look at Your Location:

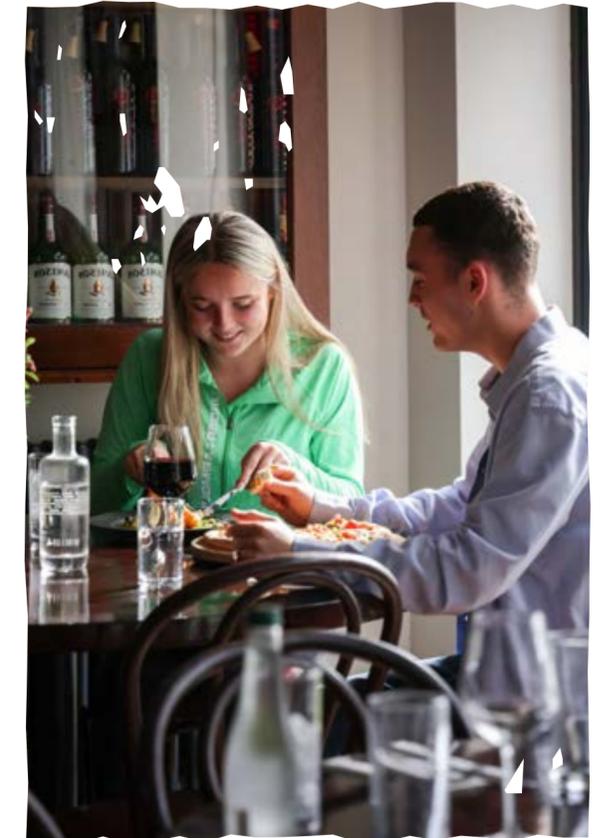
- Are you located near a famous racecourse or stud farm such as The Curragh, Naas Racecourse, or Coolmore Stud?
- Has your area played a role in key moments of Ireland's horse racing and breeding history?

- Do you offer accommodation near to a key attraction? Are you the perfect pitstop for lunch or dinner?

Get Involved in Local Events:

- Research how your business has been or can be connected to major equestrian events like the Irish Derby or the Punchestown Festival.
- Consider hosting or participating in local horse-related events, such as providing accommodations for racing fans or partnering with stables for horse-riding experiences.

Example: Baileys Hotel in Cashel has aligned with the Horse Country story by offering a unique experience that celebrates the region's rich equine heritage, beyond the hotel. By partnering with renowned racehorse trainers and jockeys to host a Fireside Chat. The hotel provides guests with a personal and immersive look into the world of Irish racing. The initiative mirrors Horse Country's core themes of passion for horse racing, storytelling, and Ireland's renowned racing legacy.



DEVELOPING YOUR OWN INDIVIDUAL THOROUGHBRED STORY

AS A TOURISM BUSINESS LOCATED IN HORSE COUNTRY, YOUR STORY IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE REGION'S RICH EQUINE TAPESTRY.

Refer to the Marketing Guidelines in Section 3 for additional ways to promote Horse Country and Experiences.

3. IDENTIFY WHAT MAKES YOUR STORY UNIQUE

Every business has a distinct angle, and it's crucial to differentiate your story from others in the region.

Your Business's Personality:

- Consider your brand identity. Are you a luxury establishment or a family-friendly venue? Do you focus on tradition, or are you known for innovation? This will help guide how you present your equine story.
- Think about your offerings. Do you provide bespoke experiences like horse-riding tours, or do you offer a unique culinary experience with a connection to the equine world?

Your Unique Audience:

- What type of visitor do you currently attract? Racing enthusiasts? Families? Couples looking for a rural escape? Tailor your equine story to appeal directly to your audience's interests and passions. Look beyond your current customer base also and explore the opportunity to leverage Horse Country as a hook to attract any aspirational audiences.

Example: If you run a family-friendly B&B near Kildangan Stud, your equine story could focus on family traditions around horse breeding, offering educational tours or pony rides for kids.

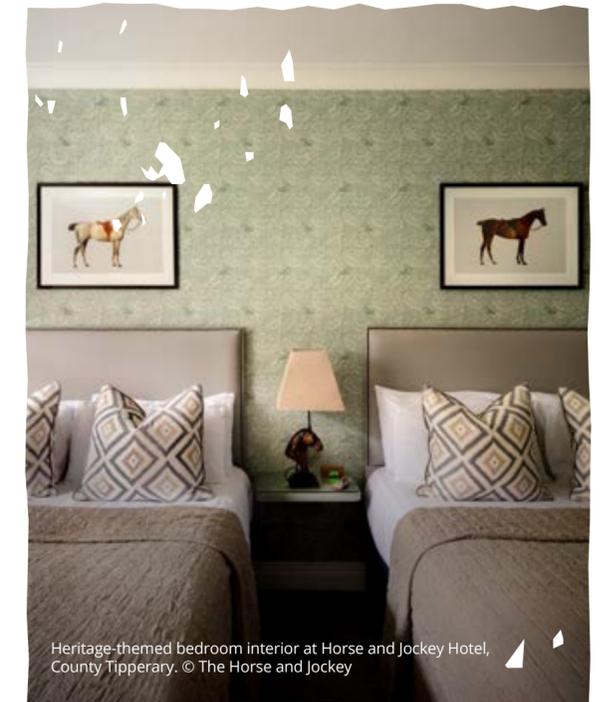


4. WEAVE YOUR STORY INTO EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR BUSINESS

Once you've identified your equine connection, it's time to integrate that story into your marketing and operations.

Branding and Messaging:

- Incorporate your equine story into your website, brochures, and social media. Use imagery and language that connects your business to Horse Country's racing legacy.
- Consider renaming rooms, dishes, or products after famous local horses, races, or jockeys.



DEVELOPING YOUR OWN INDIVIDUAL THOROUGHBRED STORY

STORIES TO INSPIRE — THE RICH HERITAGE AND VIBRANT CULTURE OF HORSE COUNTRY OFFER ENDLESS INSPIRATION FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES.

By weaving equine stories and themes into various aspects of your business, you can create unique and memorable experiences for your guests. Drawing inspiration from the captivating narratives shared in the Inspiration section of this toolkit, here are some ways on how to integrate them into your design, service and guest experiences.

SERVICE: EMPLOYEE CULTURE AND PRIDE

Inspiration: The deep-rooted pride and passion of the local community for Horse Country's equine heritage can be reflected in the service you provide.

Examples:

- 1. Training Programs:** Leverage Fáilte Ireland supports and resources, such as this toolkit, to educate and immerse staff in the history and significance of horse racing and breeding across the destination. Equip them with the fascinating stories and facts to share with guests, fostering a deeper connection and enriching their experience.
- 2. Uniforms:** Consider equine-inspired uniforms for your employees, such as polo shirts with embroidered horse logos or accessories like scarves and ties featuring subtle equestrian patterns.
- 3. Team Engagement:** Encourage your team to attend local races and equine events to build their knowledge and enthusiasm. Hold regular briefings or storytelling sessions where staff

can share their experiences and learn more about Horse Country.

EXPERIENCE: CURATED ACTIVITIES AND PACKAGES

Inspiration: Offer your guests curated experiences that celebrate the equine culture and allow them to immerse themselves in the spirit of Horse Country.

Remember:



SECTION 3 – AMPLIFICATION



SECTION 3 – AMPLIFICATION

AS A TOURISM BUSINESS IN HORSE COUNTRY, ALIGNING YOUR MARKETING WITH THE DESTINATION BRAND IS A POWERFUL WAY TO ATTRACT VISITORS AND ELEVATE THE LOCAL EXPERIENCE.

Sustained impact in the destination will be achieved through the ability to motivate and attract increased levels of Culturally Curious visitors.

MARKETING GUIDELINES

By consistently promoting the Ireland's Ancient East brand and Horse Country logo across your channels, you can strengthen your business's connection to the region and contribute to its broader tourism goals.

To define your target audiences refer to the Development section of this toolkit. Once you have a clear understanding of who you want to target, you can tailor your marketing channel mix to reach them in the most effective way. This mix should include owned media (such as your website, social media, and email newsletters), where you have full control of your messaging; earned media (such as PR coverage, reviews, and social shares), which builds credibility and trust; and paid media (such as digital ads or sponsored content), which allows you to target the Culturally Curious visitor profile and specific audiences with precision.

The channels you select should be thoughtfully chosen to resonate with your audience—whether that's families on Instagram, corporate clients via LinkedIn, or racing enthusiasts through equestrian publications. By balancing your media mix across these touchpoints, you will be able to engage your audience more meaningfully and drive stronger results.



THIS SECTION COVERS THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

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WEBSITE

TOP TIP—

Click here to access Ireland's Ancient East Brand toolkit and get inspiration and resources on 'The Sport of Kings' (horses) story.

YOUR WEBSITE IS OFTEN THE FIRST POINT OF CONTACT FOR POTENTIAL VISITORS. IT IS VITAL TO MAKE THE HORSE COUNTRY DESTINATION STORY CLEAR AND ENGAGING.

1. CREATE A DEDICATED DESTINATION LANDING PAGE

Develop a section on your website that highlights the rich heritage of Ireland's Ancient East and Horse Country. Include key information about the region's iconic racecourses (The Curragh, Naas, Punchestown), stud farms (Irish National Stud, Coolmore Stud), and other major attractions. This page should also connect your business to the destination's story. Reference the Story Toolkit for inspiration that you can draw from.

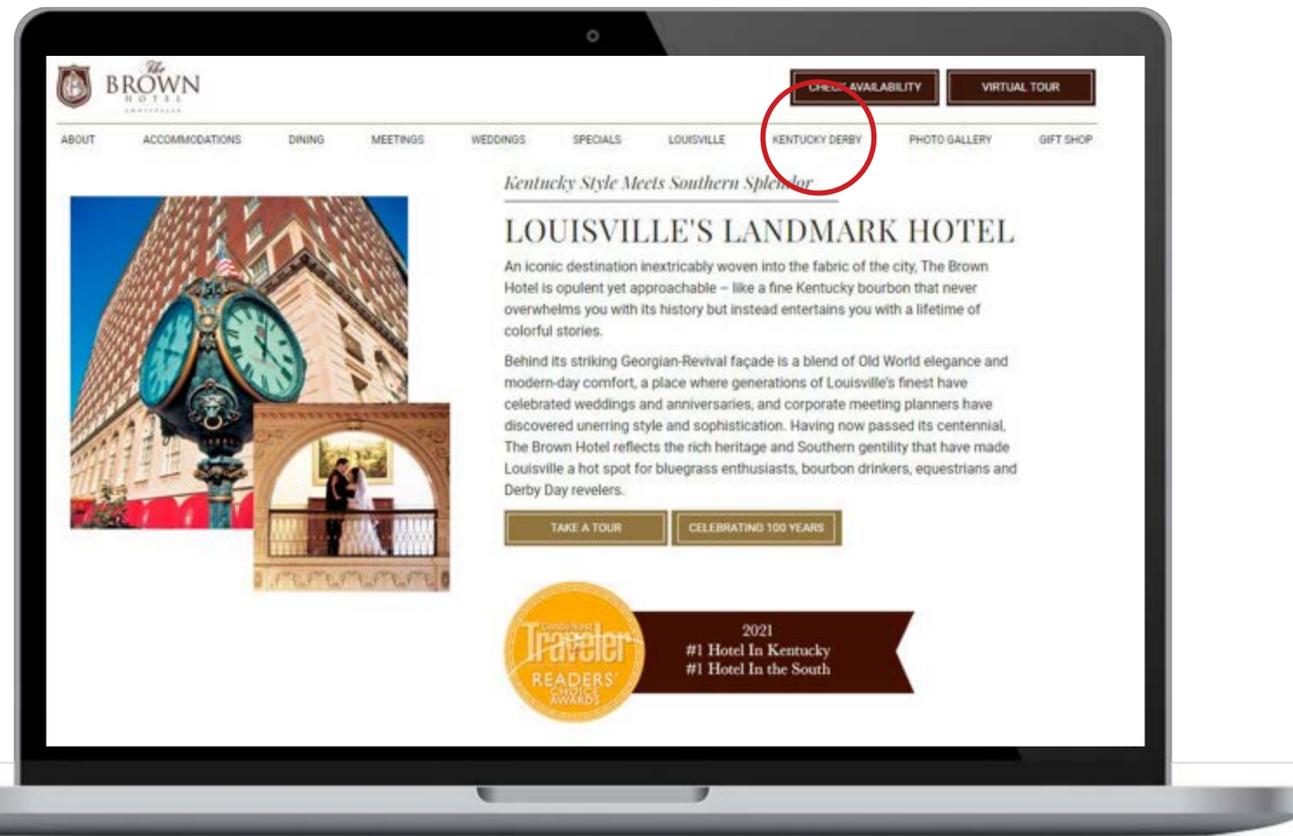
2. USE DESTINATION-THEMED VISUALS

Add high-quality images and videos that showcase key Horse Country experiences. For example, photos of local races, beautiful landscapes and key cultural attractions, or families enjoying equine attractions can help tell the brand story.

Ensure these visuals are prominently featured on your homepage, booking pages, and event pages.

3. SEO OPTIMISATION FOR LOCAL SEARCHES

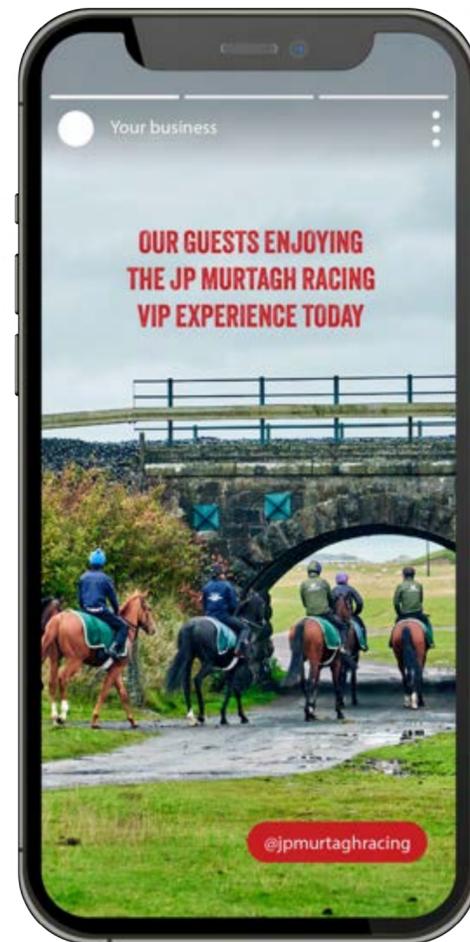
Use SEO-friendly keywords related to Ireland's Ancient East and Horse Country. A twenty minute eModule course 'Introduction to Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)' is available on failteireland.ie in the Business Supports Hub via the learniFI section.



The Brown Hotel, Louisville, USA leverages the internationally renowned Kentucky Derby on its home page.

SOCIAL MEDIA

YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS ARE EXCELLENT PLATFORMS FOR PROMOTING IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST AND HORSE COUNTRY DESTINATIONS IN A COST-EFFECTIVE AND ENGAGING WAY.



© Horse Country

TOP TIP—

Click here to access Ireland's Ancient East Brand toolkit and get inspiration and resources on 'The Sport of Kings' (horses) story.

SHARE DESTINATION CONTENT

Regularly post about local Thoroughbred events, attractions, and stories on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. You could share updates on upcoming races, behind-the-scenes tours of stud farms, point-to-points or spotlights on local equestrian businesses.

Example: Post an Instagram story during Irish Derby Weekend showing race preparations or a family enjoying a day out at Irish National Stud.

COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL INFLUENCERS

Partner with local influencers or equestrian content creators who can highlight Horse Country experiences and your business. They can create posts or videos that promote both the destination and your services, boosting engagement and reach.

USE DESTINATION HASHTAGS

Use relevant destination hashtags like:

#IRELANDSANCIENTEAST

#HORSECOUNTRY

#VISITKILDARE

#TIPPERARYTOURISM

#DISCOVERIRELAND

#KEEPDISCOVERING

#EQUINEEXPERIENCES

#VISITIRELAND

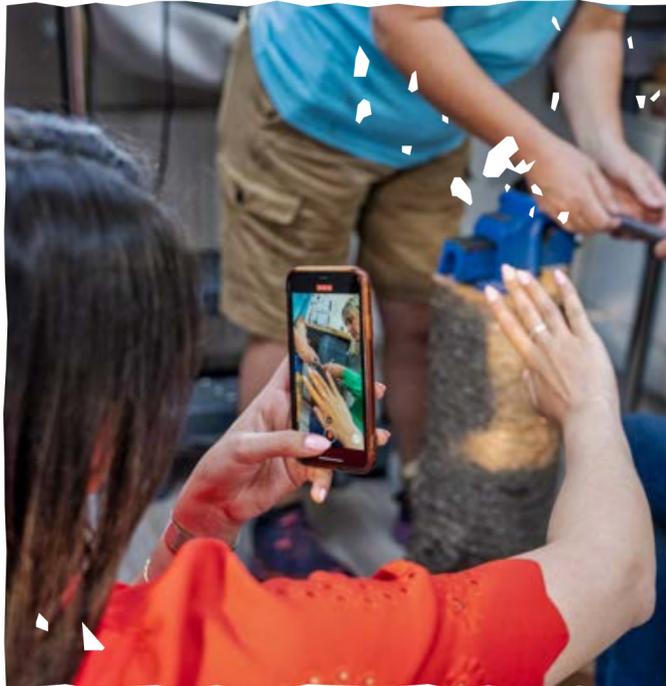
#LANDOFTHEHORSE

This increases the likelihood of being discovered by potential visitors and aligns your business with the broader tourism effort.

Example: "Walk in the footprints of medieval monks on the Rock of Cashel followed by the best of #HorseCountry with a behind-the-scenes tour at Coolmore Stud, followed by a luxurious stay with us!"

EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

EMAIL MARKETING IS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TOOL TO KEEP NEW AND REPEAT AUDIENCES ENGAGED AND INFORMED ABOUT YOUR DESTINATION.



PARTICIPATE IN DESTINATION CAMPAIGNS

Join in on region-wide campaigns run by the local tourism board or organisations like Fáilte Ireland. Participate in joint promotions and showcase the unified brand message of Horse Country.

Example: Leverage Fáilte Ireland campaigns such as Keep Discovering to attract new and repeat audiences by sharing the breath of experiences and attractions within your destination.

TOP TIP— NEWSLETTERS

Horse Country CLG will be sharing regular newsletters to Kildare and Tipperary businesses with lots of content for you to share within your campaigns.

HIGHLIGHT LOCAL EVENTS AND ATTRACTIONS

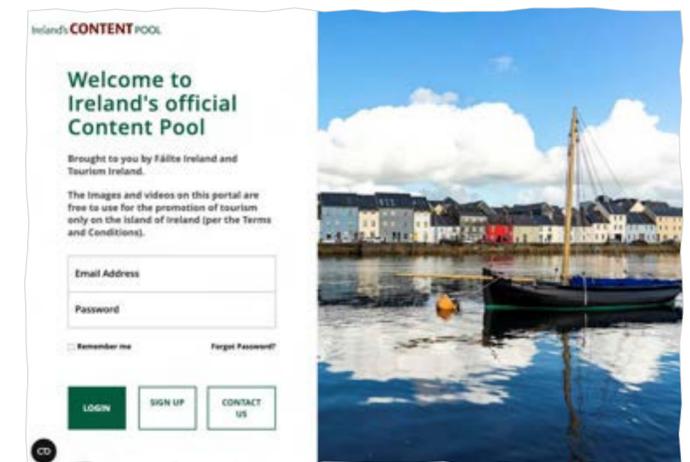
Send regular newsletters that feature Horse Country events like race days, racing festivals, or special tours. Include booking links and suggestions on how visitors can experience the destination while staying at your property or using your services.

Example: "This summer, join us for an unforgettable Irish Derby weekend! Stay at our B&B and enjoy VIP access to the races at The Curragh."

DESTINATION-DRIVEN OFFERS

Use your email campaigns to promote packages and special offers that are tied to the destination's key experiences. Tailor these offers to major events, such as Punchestown Festival, or to off-peak seasonal visits.

Example: "Book our Winter Racing Escape and explore the beauty of Horse Country during the quieter months!"



FREE RESOURCE

Fáilte Ireland's online Content Pool of images and media contains thousands of images free to use to support your social media campaigns.

SHARE VISITOR TESTIMONIALS



USER-GENERATED CONTENT IS ONE OF THE MOST AUTHENTIC WAYS TO PROMOTE THE DESTINATION BRAND AND YOUR BUSINESS.

FEATURE GUEST TESTIMONIALS

Highlight positive reviews from guests who have visited Horse Country and experienced the local equine heritage. Ask them to share their stories or photos from their trip, and feature these testimonials on your website or social media.

Example: Share a guest review on Instagram about their stay during Punchestown Festival, with photos of them at the racecourse or enjoying a tour at Coolmore Stud.

ENCOURAGE VISITORS TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES

Use your social media platforms to encourage guests to post about their trip and tag your business. Run simple campaigns or competitions where visitors share their Horse Country experience using a specific hashtag.

Example: "Share your Horse Country adventure with us! Tag us in your photos using #StayInHorseCountry for a chance to win a free night's stay."

PRINT AND IN-HOUSE STORYTELLING

SIMPLE THEMED DESIGNS INFUSED THROUGHOUT YOUR BUSINESS CAN ENSURE VISITORS GET A SENSE OF THE THOROUGHBRED STORY WITHIN YOUR DESTINATION.

There are several ways to define your business within Horse Country. Small, cost effective design changes may add equine prints to your menus or table talkers. The display of equine-themed objects to accentuate a space can express a heritage feel to your property. Larger investment projects that engage an interior or interpretive design agency to elevate your story can further embed your unique story throughout your business.

EQUINE THEME

Expressing an equine theme throughout your business can be a subtle yet engaging way of positioning your business as a key stakeholder in Horse Country. Expressing this theme can take many forms, from re-imagining interiors to smaller, subtle story points using well-designed print.

Equine-themed design can enhance your existing brand and identity without competing with it. If you have an equine story to express, good design can help bring out this story and set you apart from other equine-themed experiences.

CREATE DESTINATION BROCHURES

Offer a printed guide or brochure in guest rooms or at reception that highlights Horse Country's key attractions. Include recommendations for local racecourses, tours, and events, along with transportation options to get there.

Example: A "Discover Horse Country" guide in guest rooms, featuring a map of nearby attractions like Irish National Stud or Fethard Horse Country Experience.

IN-HOUSE STORYTELLING

If you have common areas such as a café or lobby, use these spaces to showcase the destination's story. Display equestrian-themed artwork, local maps, or historical photos related to the Horse Country heritage.

Example: Create an interactive map in the lobby showing key Horse Country experiences with information about how guests can visit them.



THOROUGHBRED THEMED INTERIOR DESIGN

INTERIOR DESIGN CAN HAVE A SUBTLE YET POWERFUL IMPACT WITHIN YOUR BUSINESS. INTEGRATING THEMATIC TOUCHPOINTS OR BLENDING A THOROUGHBRED THEMED AESTHETIC WITHIN YOUR PROPERTY REENFORCES YOUR IDENTITY AS PART OF HORSE COUNTRY IN IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST.

If you have a story to tell such as a personality, horse or event to celebrate then interior design can help relay this theme to your visitor.

GETTING STARTED

- Speak with a professional interior design agency to understand how a story and theme may be appropriately layered within your existing identity rather than replacing it.
- Identify areas; food and beverage areas, bedrooms, front of house or circulation areas, where the thoroughbred story could be integrated throughout your property.
- Consider how stories or objects could help tell your story. They may be exhibited as touchpoints for visitors to interact with, admire and converse with staff.
- Rare artefacts that express a story may be displayed in museum-like glass cases. Less precious objects can be exhibited more creatively.

COMMISSION AN ARTIST

Commissioning a contemporary artist can help express a thoroughbred theme that can blend with your hotel's existing modern interior. The Club at Goffs exhibit contemporary equine-themed artwork and branding.



HERITAGE COLLECTIONS

Heritage properties may favour using traditional woven materials, heritage artworks and classic heritage collections that provide subtle hints of a thoroughbred theme. Shaffles Restaurant, Castle Leslie, County Monaghan use historical hunting and riding patterns within their soft furnishings.



MEDIA AND PR STRATEGY

TO EFFECTIVELY PROMOTE YOUR HOTEL AND THE HORSE COUNTRY DESTINATION THROUGH MEDIA AND PR, FOCUS ON CRAFTING A STRONG NARRATIVE THAT CONNECTS YOUR PROPERTY TO THE REGION'S EQUESTRIAN HERITAGE.

TOP TIP— INSPIRATION

If in doubt about your 'story' read back over the Inspiration section. By virtue of being located in Horse Country, your business can strengthen its PR narrative.

Build relationships by hosting familiarisation trips, organising Thoroughbred-themed press events, and collaborating with local influencers.

Use press releases to promote race-day packages, partnerships, and year-round experiences, and amplify coverage on your social media channels by sharing media mentions and behind-the-scenes content.

Lastly, engage local media and tourism boards to further position your business as a key player in Horse Country.

DEVELOP A STRONG PR NARRATIVE

Highlight your hotel's connection to Horse Country's equestrian heritage and nearby attractions across Ireland's Ancient East. Use this story in your press materials and pitches to travel, equestrian, and lifestyle journalists.

ENGAGE JOURNALISTS & INFLUENCERS

Host media FAM trips and influencer stays that showcase your property alongside key Horse Country experiences.

LEVERAGE PRESS RELEASES & MEDIA RELATIONS

Use press releases to announce special equestrian-themed packages, partnerships, or seasonal offerings. Engage media to drive coverage that will increase visibility during key events like the Irish Derby or Punchestown Festival.

AMPLIFY VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Share media coverage and influencer content across your social channels. Create engaging behind-the-scenes content that connects your business to Horse Country's race days and equestrian events.



ENHANCING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CORPORATE GIFTING

CORPORATE GIFTING OFFERS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH CLIENTS, PARTNERS, AND VIP GUESTS WHILE PROMOTING THE RICH EQUESTRIAN HERITAGE OF HORSE COUNTRY.

Thoughtful, equine-themed gifts can elevate your brand, connect recipients to the destination, and offer a memorable piece of Kildare and Tipperary.

The key to meaningful corporate gifting is to ensure that the items reflect the destination's story.



EQUESTRIAN-THEMED GIFTS

Select gifts that celebrate the equestrian culture of Horse Country, such as:

- Handcrafted leather goods from Berney Bros. Saddlemakers (e.g. belts, wallets)
- Newbridge Silverware
- Art or photography featuring Thoroughbred landmarks, racecourses, or local horses



LOCAL ARTISAN PRODUCTS

Promote local craftsmanship by gifting products made in Kildare or Tipperary, such as:

- Locally sourced gourmet food baskets or Irish whiskey, packaged with an equestrian twist
- Handmade pottery, textiles, or art from local artisans
- Specially commissioned pieces that highlight the region's connection to horse racing



EXPERIENCE-BASED GIFTS

Provide recipients with an opportunity to experience Horse Country for themselves:

- Vouchers for behind-the-scenes tours at Coolmore Stud or Irish National Stud
- VIP race day experiences or horse-riding lessons at local equestrian centres
- Access to exclusive events or talks with local breeders or racing legends

GLOSSARY



GLOSSARY A-L

A

Amateur – a rider that is not professional and holds a amateur jockey licence.

B

Black-type race – a race of high pedigree (e.g. Group 1 races) who's winner will have their name printed in bold black type on racing and breeding reports for the rest of their career. This accolade allows buyers and stud owners to easily identify quality horses when bidding for them at auction.

Blue Hen – a mare that has had a remarkable and lasting, multigenerational influence on a breed, typically through male and female descendants. The term is used in horse breeding to describe a mare who consistently produces superior foals, regardless of the sire, many of whom go on to become champions.

Bookie – see Bookmaker.

Bookmaker – a person whose job is to take bets (especially on horse races), calculate odds, and pay out winnings.

Broodmare – a female horse kept especially for breeding.

C

Chase – see Steeplechase

Classic – Group 1 races run in Britain and Ireland for top Thoroughbreds usually restricted to three-year-old colts and fillies and run over 3 different distances. The Classics are the Derby, the Oaks, the One Thousand Guineas, the Saint Leger, and the Two Thousand Guineas. The Irish St. Leger is open to horses older than age three and geldings unlike the British counterpart. See also Group 1 Race.

Colours – the racing silks worn by jockeys.

Colt – a male intact horse up to four years old.

Curragh – a racecourse in Co Kildare.

D

Dam – the mother of a horse.

Derby – one of the Classic races – also see Classics.

E

Each Way – a bet where half the stake is placed for a win, and the other half is placed on the horse finishing in a certain place.

Epsom – the British Derby, one of the Classic races – also see Classics.

Eventing – where a horse, sometimes a retired racehorse, and rider compete across three disciplines of dressage, cross-country and show jumping.

Equine – related to horses.

F

Farrier – a person who makes and fits horseshoes.

Filly – a female horse up to four years old.

Fixture – a sporting event arranged to take place on a particular date.

Flat – a race on a level course without obstacles (e.g. hurdles).

Foal – a horse of either sex from its birth until January 1st of the following year.

Furlong – 220 yards (one eighth of a mile or approximately one fifth of a kilometre).

G

Gelding – a castrated animal, especially a male horse.

Going – a description of the conditions underfoot on the racecourse.

Graded Races – see Group Racing.

Grand Dam – grandmother of a horse.

Grand Sire – grandfather of a horse.

Group 1 Race – the highest level of races in Thoroughbred horse racing. They include most of the world's iconic races, such as the Epsom Derby, Irish Derby, the Melbourne Cup and the Kentucky Derby.

Guineas – the 1000 or 2000 Guineas, one of the Classic races – also see Classics. The name is based on the original monetary prize of the race.

H

Hand – unit of measurement of a horse, roughly equivalent to four inches.

Handicap – a race where each horse is allocated a weight, according to its ability, to equalise every horse's chance of winning.

Hurdles – a horse race where the horses jump over obstacles called hurdles.

I

Intact – an animal, particularly a male, that has not been neutered.

Iron – another name for the stirrup on the saddle, where a rider places their foot. If the rider's foot comes out of the stirrup during a race, it is said that they "lost an iron".

J

Jockey – a horse rider who rides horses in races.

Jump Race – a race where the horses jump over obstacles e.g. hurdles, ditches.

Juvenile – a two-year old horse.

L

Length – a unit of measurement for the length of a horse from nose to tail, approximately 8 feet (2.4 m).

Lunging – horse lunging is a training method that involves having the horse move in a large circle. The handler guides a horse with a long rope, a whip, and verbal commands. Lunging is very useful for settling high-strung horses and establishing control.

GLOSSARY M-Z

M

Maiden – a horse which has not yet won a race.

Mare – a female horse, five years and over.

N

Naas Racecourse – a racecourse in County Kildare where both flat and jump races are run.

National Hunt – a form of horse racing particular to France, Great Britain and Ireland that requires horses to jump fences and ditches.

Novice – in flat racing a horse which has not won more than twice, has not won a race of a particular status or has not run more than twice. In National Hunt racing it is a horse which has not won in a particular type of race prior to the start of the current season.

O

Oaks – one of the Classic races – see also Classics.

Odds – how likely a horse is to win, and how much money a punter will get back if they bet on it.

Odds-on – where the bet's winnings are less than the stake.

P

Pattern Races – see Group Racing.

Photo-finish – a electronic photo device which determines minimal distance in a close finish.

Pinhook – the practice of buying yearling horses at auction or privately, overseeing their breaking and training, and eventually re-selling them as race-ready two-year-olds in training.

Plate – a shoe worn by a horse for racing. Also name given to the prize of some races.

Punchestown – a racecourse in Co Kildare where jump races are run.

Punter – a person who bets money on horse races.

S

Saint Leger – one of the Classic races – also see Classics.

Scion – a scion is a descendant or an heir of another horse.

Silks – top and hat cover worn by the jockey that represents the owner of the horse. See also Colours.

Sire – father of a horse.

Stake – money a person uses to make a bet.

Stallion – a male horse who is kept for breeding purposes.

Steeplechase – a steeplechase, or chase, is a race run over fences.

Stirrup – part of a saddle for the rider's foot – see also Iron.

T

Tack – all the equipment and gear required to handle, ride or harness a horse.

Teaser – a teaser stallion is a stallion used to gauge the mare's receptiveness to mating, giving an indication she is in season i.e. at her most fertile, before she's covered by a stud stallion.

Tic-Tac – bookmakers' hand-signalling method to relay odds at a racecourse.

Turf Club – regulated both Flat and National Hunt racing in Ireland. One of the main functions of the club was the provision of stewards to implement Rules of Racing during races. Its remit includes both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and it has members on the board of Horse Racing Ireland.

Y

Yearling – a horse of either sex from January 1st to December 31st of the year following its birth.



APPENDIX



APPENDIX—THOROUGHBRED STORIES

GET TO KNOW YOUR SIRES



THE SIRE – FROM THE FINISH LINE TO FATHER

The legacy of pedigree and careful breeding gives Horse Country its standout stars on the racetrack. A sire - the retired racehorse father of a thoroughbred filly or colt, is carefully paired with a mare to hopefully produce a successful foal. For a sire to father a winning colt who in turn fathers winners is rare. In Horse Country we have not one but two examples of a sire-of-sires – Sadler's Wells in Coolmore Stud (Tipperary) and Invincible Spirit in the National Stud (Kildare).

SHORT FACT – GALILEO

The son of Sadler's Wells, Galileo is one of the most successful sires in Irish thoroughbred history. Based in Coolmore Stud, in his lifetime he fathered 338 winners – 15 more than his father, with many more coming after his passing in 2021.

SADLER'S WELLS

Sadler's Wells is one of the most successful sires in history, fathering sons and daughters who would go on to become winners and successful parents themselves. Based in Coolmore, he fathered 323 winners in his lifetime, including his sons Galileo and Montjeu who became sires of sires themselves, and his daughters Imagine and Quarter Moon who became dams of winners. Retired at the age of 27, he passed away from natural causes at the age of 30 in 2011. His heart is buried in Coolmore Stud, and his skeleton is proudly displayed in the Fethard Horse Country Museum Experience.

INVINCIBLE SPIRIT

Invincible Spirit has been in the top 20 sires in Britain, having so far sired 45 race winners, including 11 Group 1 winners – the highest level of horse races. His sons I Am Invincible and Kingsman are also sires-of-sires. I Am Invincible became the highest priced stallion in Australia, with a covering fee of \$247,500 (€154,000). His daughters have won races all over Europe and have gone on to produce winning foals – his daughter Rosdhu Queen is

a broodmare (a mare used for breeding) in Coolmore Stud. Today, Invincible Spirit grazes in the National Stud in County Kildare where your guests can glimpse him in his paddock, alongside other breeding stallions.

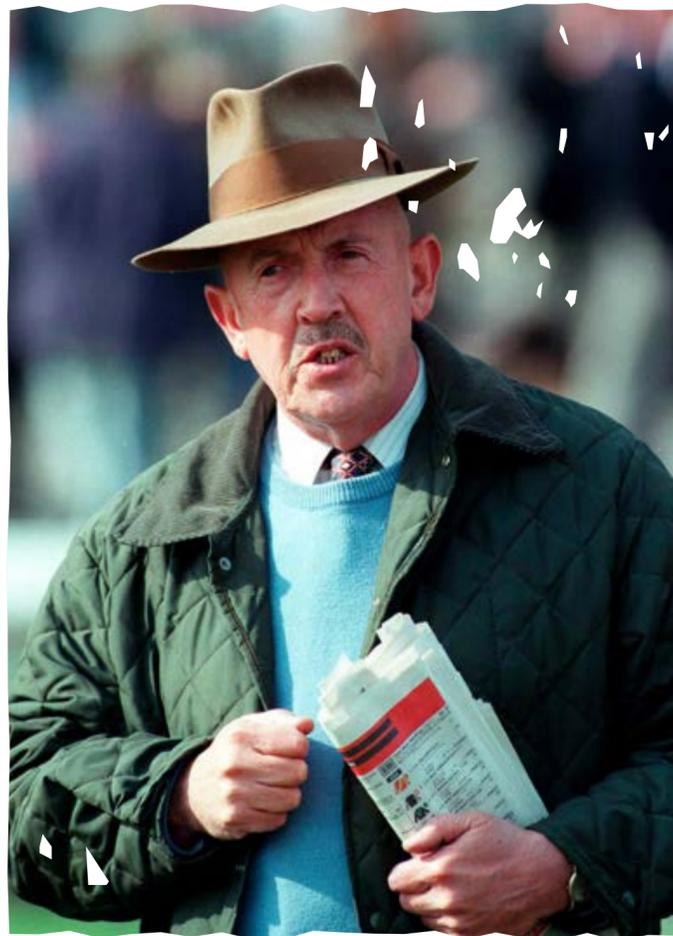
DID YOU KNOW? THE COVERING FEE

To produce a quality foal, you need quality parents. The matchmaking of broodmares and stallions is given careful consideration. Parents who were winners in their race career are more likely to produce successful foals. For a stallion to “cover” a broodmare – to mate with her, a covering fee is charged by the stud farm.

The covering fee is calculated on the previous race successes of the stallion and the successes of his other sons and daughters. The fee can go up or down, depending on the race results of their foals the season before. The equivalent for a broodmare is reflected when she retires from racing and goes for sale for stud - top mares fetch millions of euros in the sales ring.

THOROUGHBRED STORIES

BARNEY CURLEY AND THE BETTING COUP



Barney Curley. © Allstar Picture Library Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

THE DAY THAT BROKE THE BOOKIES

The 1975 Yellow Sam Coup was one of the greatest ever legal betting coups, costing the bookmakers the equivalent of millions of euros in today's money.

The organiser, Barney Curley, owned a horse in Liam Brennan's stables in the Curragh called Yellow Sam. Barney instructed Liam to prepare the horse for the next year's National Hunt Race held at Bellewstown Racecourse in County Meath. He also entered Yellow Sam into several other races on the lead up – races that specifically did not suit the horse, giving poor results and reducing the horse's handicap in the next race.

This "poor form" meant that by the June 1975 National Hunt Race, Yellow Sam was slated at 20/1. Next step was to place the bets – just over £15,000 worth – Barney's life savings, on the day of the race. To avoid suspicion, Barney had dozens of associates place bets all around Ireland ten minutes before the race was due to start.

The placing of multiple bets just before the race on a horse with such poor form would prompt off-course bookies to contact their colleagues at the racecourse and advise them to shorten the odds. However, no one could get through to the racecourse.



Jockeys at Bellewstown Racecourse, County Meath paying tribute to the memory of Barney Curley in 2021. © PA Images / Alamy Stock Photo

The one telephone line at Bellewstown was engaged from 2.35pm until just after 3pm, just after the race started. And this wasn't a coincidence.

A friend of Barney's entered the phone box in Bellewstown Racecourse at 2.35pm stayed in the line for 30 minutes talking about a fictional aunt who was dying. So convincing was his performance that the queue of people waiting to use the phone didn't want to interrupt the call.

Yellow Sam won the race by two and a half lengths, and Barney's total winnings were IR£300,000 (nearly €2 million).

AFTERWARDS IRISH BOOKMAKERS AMENDED THEIR RULEBOOK, STATING THAT BETS OVER IR£100 MUST BE PLACED NO LATER THAN THIRTY MINUTES BEFORE A RACE.

THOROUGHBRED STORIES

SHERGAR – DISAPPEARANCE OF A LEGEND



Shergar arriving in Dublin Airport before the Irish Sweeps Derby at the Curragh in 1981. Some journalists suspected the IRA were involved in Shergar's kidnapping. © Irish Photo Archive / © Lensmen Photographic Archive

ABDUCTION FROM KILDARE

In the flat season of 1981 only one horse's name was on everyone's lips in Kildare and across the country – Shergar. His record-breaking wins in that year's Epsom and Irish Derby's alone would have guaranteed him a place in thoroughbred history. However, no one could have predicted his mysterious and tragic end.

Born on the 3rd of March 1978 at Sheshoon—the private stud of breeder the Aga Khan IV—near the Curragh in County Kildare, Shergar showed promise in his early years. His first season of racing in 1980 he ran two races, winning one and coming second in the other. In 1981 he ran in six races, winning five of them – including two Group 1 Classics, the highest level of race.

Races wins are measured by lengths – the length of a horse. Winning by a few lengths is considered a strong finish and a decisive win. In his first Group 1 race, the Epsom Derby, Shergar won by ten lengths—the longest winning margin in the race's history, a record still unbroken today. Three weeks later he won the Irish Derby by four lengths. Shergar was a Horse Country legend in the making.

Retired to stud the next year in the Aga Khan's Ballymany Stud in Kildare, on arrival he was paraded down the main street of Newbridge. Horse racing author Milton Toby wrote that Shergar was "a national hero... one of the most recognisable sports personalities—horse or human—in Ireland." In his 1982 stud season Shergar covered 44 mares, from which 36 foals were produced.

On February 14th 1983 Shergar's second stud season was due to begin - he was in high demand and expected to earn IR£1 million that year. Tragically it was not to be. On the night of February 8th 1983, three armed men broke into the house of Jim Fitzgerald, the head groom at Ballymany Stud, and forced him to load Shergar into their horsebox. A ransom demand of £2 million was made but the money was never paid. Shergar was never seen again.

Despite Garda investigations, those responsible were never identified and Shergar was never found. His abduction in 1983 remains one of the most shadowy and high-profile cases in the history of horse racing.

DID YOU KNOW? THE RACING SILKS

The colourful jackets and caps worn by jockeys are known as racing silks – they identify the owner of the horse and are designed to be as distinct as possible to identify a horse and rider during the race. Jockeys cannot wear silks of the same design and colour, so if an owner has more than one horse in a race, his jockeys must wear a different coloured caps. The racing silks of the Aga Khan IV, worn by jockeys Lester Piggott and Walter Swinburn when they rode Shergar were retired, and never used again.

THEY ARE DISPLAYED EACH JUNE IN THE RACING LEGENDS MUSEUM IN THE OLD COURTHOUSE IN KILDARE TOWN AS PART OF THE CURRAGH IRISH DERBY FESTIVAL.

APPENDIX—A THOROUGHBRED FOAL'S FIRST YEAR OF LIFE

1 HOUR	A thoroughbred foal typically stands within an hour of birth and starts nursing shortly after. This early period is crucial for bonding with their mother and gaining strength.	4-6 MONTHS	The foal is weaned – they stop drinking milk from their mother. This is a critical time as the foal transitions to solid food and starts to develop independence. Fibre is introduced in the young foal's diet including hay and oats, and digestion aids to prevent complications such as colic, which can be fatal.
1 WEEK	The day after being born, foals are led out with their mother to a nursery paddock - a small enclosure used to keep horses. By the end of their first week, they'll spend up to three hours a day in the paddock, keeping close to their mother.	6-10 MONTHS	The foal becomes independent and socialises with other foals in groups in the paddocks. It spends less time with its mother and gradually they are separated. As the foal grows, its food allowance is increased, and may get their first pair of shoes on their front feet to protect their developing hooves.
1 MONTH	During the first month the foal grows rapidly and begins to explore its surroundings. It also starts to socialise with other foals and horses in the nursely paddock.	10-12 MONTHS	By the time the foal approaches one year old, it is considered a yearling. This period involves more structured handling, exercise and training to prepare for yearling sales or future racing careers. The yearling is taught basic commands and may begin light exercise to build muscle and coordination. They will get their first full set of shoes just before they go to the sales yard, after their 1st birthday.
2-4 MONTHS	The foal has their first meeting with the farrier, who keeps the young one's hooves healthy. They are also getting used to wearing head collars and become more confident in their stable and paddock.		

APPENDIX—INTERVIEWS

THOROUGHBRED STORYTELLERS



© Horse Country

TIPPERARY THOROUGHBRED BREEDER – MARK MOLLOY, CROSSOGUE STUD

Mark Molloy is a 5th generation horseman based in his family home of Crossogue House Farm. Mark breeds and trains racehorses and plays host to visitors from around the world who come to Crossogue to gain experience in horse breeding.

“Crossogue is from the Irish for “The Crossroads of the Young”. The farm is here for five generations, I’m one of six children. We grew up jumping and competing, and we’ve always had guests visit the farm. In my twenties I went away to work and when I came back, I began breeding mares. My first broodmare was called Lady of Sonas – lady of happiness, joy. She bred a few winners and a couple of those I trained.”

“When people visit us, they’re seeing the whole story from foal, yearling to when the horse is ready for the racetrack. I can tell them the history of the pedigree of each animal. So rather than a commercial person who’s breeding and training, this is very much an intuitive way of life. I take the mare to get covered, I’m foaling the

mare and then I’m rearing the foal and nurturing it right to the point of the racecourse.”

“I’m very passionate that people see racing in the context of what a wonderful sport it is, what wonderful people are involved, the passion, commitment and love within racing for everything to do with the animal. The whole story needs to be told for people to have that experience.”

“In breeding emphasis is put on the stallion but I would massively contradict that. To me it’s 80% the mare – you can send a good mare to any stallion, and she’ll produce racehorses. If you have a moderate mare, you can send her to the best of stallions, you mightn’t get racehorses.”

“I try to physically match my mare with a stallion, where there’s a chance you’re going to produce a preferred sort of athlete. A mare may never breed a colt so essentially you have to have a mare that produces competitive females. I look for stallions that have that temperament, are young, I like their pedigree and are proven to produce boys and girls that can win races.”

“I had a mare called Much Appreciated, her first four foals were fillies and then one colt that was small. The legacy of that mare was based on how the four fillies were going to do - and at the end of all five foals won

racers. And they were from five different sires, so that proves the importance of the mare.”

“There are so many challenges, but when you’re watching your horse in the show jumping arena or in the winners enclosure at a race and you’re looking at an animal that you’ve foaled, they’re part of the farm family – that is a very deep, deep resonance and sense of achievement. Not just my achievement but of all the people on the farm. You need good people who are passionate and driven, who do things well care and love the horses and thrives on their development. Our horses are our passion and our way of life.”

APPENDIX—INTERVIEWS

THOROUGHBRED STORYTELLERS



© Jessica Harrington

KILDARE'S WORLD-RENOWNED TRAINER – JESSICA HARRINGTON, COMMONSTOWN STUD, MOONE

Jessica Harrington is a world-renowned professional horse trainer often called the “First Lady” of Thoroughbred training. She trains horses for both flat and jump racing and has had horses win major Group 1 races – the top level in horseracing, in Ireland, the UK and France.

“The land in Kildare has the best land for raising horses – and Tipperary is terrific land for raising horses - it's what they call limestone land. The calcium in the grass creates good bone in horses. When I married Johnny, he always had a few horses that he trained, and I took them on. Then 35 years ago I took out a full trainer's licence and started training. I just sort of fell into it rather than anything else.”

“It used to be very male dominated. You go back not that long ago and women weren't allowed to hold the trainer's licence, not until the 1960s. It had to be held either in their husband's name or their head man in the yard's name, even though they did the work.”

“Horses are all basically trained the same - you start by handling them on the ground and then you get to the stage that you can ride them. Then you progress their training bit by bit. They love routine, you know and so we keep them in a routine, and they thrive under a routine.”

“You don't always know who's going to be the star when they come in the yard. Basically, you have the raw material in front of you and sometimes what you first see doesn't impress you. But as they get older, they do impress you. It's just, it's an unknown quantity. As I always say, if you could open the bonnet and look at the engine you would be a lot wiser.”

“The owners are putting trust in you, you have to take their views into account always and you need to communicate with your owners. Technology has made communication easy now - in the old days it used to be coming home, picking up the phone and ringing each owner - you wouldn't be finished until 9 at night. But now with mobile phones and all the apps that we have, it's easier.”

“Sometimes it occurs to you this is going to be a special horse - it usually creeps up on you rather than suddenly hits you in the face”

“And you get special horses that, you know, suddenly they just do everything easily, and those are the ones that are talented.”

“It's very special in the winner's enclosure - horses know when they're in the winner's enclosure. They know when they've won. Their ears are up, they're looking alert. They're happy in themselves. Their demeanour is happy and they feel the adoration.”

“I think in the end of the day, it's looking at the horse each morning and seeing what's what - what it looks like that morning because we all get out of bed in the morning and sometimes we feel well, sometimes we feel bad. Don't tell me animals are any different.”

APPENDIX—INTERVIEWS

THOROUGHBRED STORYMAKERS

FAMED TIPPERARY FARRIER — JOE CHANNON, CLONMEL

Joe Channon is a third-generation blacksmith and farrier based at his forge in Clonmel, County Tipperary. He travels to stables and stud farms to shoe horses and manage foal's hooves.

"When I see a foal for the first time, they're about 6 weeks old – but I'm not shoeing them yet. A young horse doesn't walk correctly at birth - they toe out or the toe in - that's natural, just the way they were born. So you have to look after the hoof, correct any anomaly, so the foot leaves the ground correctly in flight when they gallop. I would trim the hoof – a bit like cutting a person's fingernails. If it isn't done then the foot may not leave ground right – it might go out left or right or knock off themselves, hurting the horse."

"First shoes go on usually at yearling stage, unless they needed shoes earlier for correction. They're a bit flighty when they get their first shoes – they're used to me trimming and correcting for a year before. But then they hear noise - that little tap, tap, tap, and feel the vibration - it's a new sensation. You'd often see them

afterwards with their two fronts shoes - they're feeling there's something strange here? They step out the front hooves feeling the weight of the shoes and getting used to the new sensation. Some horses are easier going than others, some don't want anyone else around when they're being shod, others prefer to stand looking into a stable – they're all individuals like ourselves."

"The horses become used to you and they trust you. They will come to recognise your sound and they know your van coming in the yard. You learn to see the horse's view on life and work around them."

"When I joined my father in the business, we would see 80 to 100 horses a week, now I would see about 25 to 30 which is a day's work – you could shoe 20 horses in a day if you were any way efficient at all. I'm the only farrier left in the county with a premises – most farriers have mobile businesses. The day of bringing the horse to the farrier is gone. There were 9 or 10 forges in Clonmel when my Dad moved here in 1954 - 70 years ago – now we're the only one left."

"At the front of the forge you have the horseshoe gate the horse goes in, and the ground there is made up of sleepers. Horses stand more comfortably on a wooden surface – when my Dad moved in here first the floor was cobbled as it was an old stables. When I'm working on a horse there's no other work going on in the forge, no machines running, no sparks flying."



© Tipperary Museum of Hidden History

APPENDIX—INTERVIEWS

THOROUGHBRED STORYMAKERS

THOROUGHBRED TEACHER — ANNE O'CONNOR, TREO EILE, COUNTY KILDARE

Based in the Irish National Stud, Kildare town, Anne O'Connor runs Treo Eile, an organisation that helps racehorse owners and trainers find new homes and disciplines for their horses after racing. With a long career in the Irish horse industry, Anne has experience in retraining racehorses and training and coaching young riders.

"I grew up on a Kildare farm where we had a few broodmares and we'd have foals every year. We lived next door to the famous trainer Pat Taffe and I was riding out thoroughbreds for him when I was 13 years of age. There was always one or two racehorses there that I loved – I was always hoping that I'd be given them to ride out in the morning. Their nature was just fantastic – that's where my affinity with racehorses began."

"I worked in Goffs for 19 years in administration in the sales office."

"While there I took on a thoroughbred that was too slow for racing from a trainer. I retrained him - I showed him, I evented with him, I hunted with him - he was fantastic. He was one of four I took on - this was before the public knew about retraining of racehorses."

"In 2020 my colleagues Caoimhe Doherty and Sarah Sands formed Treo Eile with the support of Godolphin, one of the largest thoroughbred horseracing stables and breeding operations in the world, based in Kildare. "Treo Eile" is the Irish for "another direction" – we are a non-profit organisation funded and supported by the racing and breeding industry to support the aftercare of racehorses. "

"Thoroughbreds are elite athletes - they're quick learners and they're very black and white. When you teach them something they log that in and don't deviate from that. The ability to change career, to be totally accepting of it, and to keep learning as they get older - that's the fascinating thing about the thoroughbred. If you ever watch young racehorses in the field, they'll always race each other around. They love the game, competing, winning - it's in their DNA. When they finish their career or their team find they don't like the game, that's where Treo Eile comes in."

"Retired racehorses have always been retained informally – Treo Eile provides a thoroughbred retraining community. We connect racehorse owners and trainers with families looking to rehome retired thoroughbreds. Our clinics and sponsored events teach the new owners how to retrain their thoroughbred, giving them a second career in a new home."

"Treo Eile support many retraining options including show jumping, eventing, dressage, polo, polocrosse, Pony Club activities. If they have the right temperament some are used in therapeutic settings – recently a retired broodmare and a racehorse were put through all the levels required and passed as therapy horses."

"We've got great support from our Advisory Committee members, including Patrick Mullins, son of famous trainer Willy Mullins. Many of Willy's past racehorses have found great success in their second careers - Al Boum Photo, who won the Cheltenham Gold Cup twice, has an eventing career now."



© Tattersalls Ireland

APPENDIX—INTERVIEWS

THOROUGHBRED STORY SHARERS

DRAWING VISITORS TO COUNTY KILDARE - DAVID WARDELL, THE NATIONAL STUD, COUNTY KILDARE

David Wardell is the Tourism Development Manager in the Irish National Stud. He is responsible for all aspects of the visitor experience and encouraging visitors from around to world to visit the Stud.

“Did you know that there is one horse for every 250 people in Ireland? And there are 50 thoroughbreds to every 10,000 people living in Ireland? That might not seem that much, but in Australia there’s only 28, and in the UK there’s only 5 thoroughbreds per 10,000 people. It shows how integral the horse is to our country and our culture.”

“What is now the National Stud was started in 1900, when wealthy Scottish brewery heir William Hall Walker purchased the lands around Tully, beside Kildare town, next to the Curragh racecourse. During World War 1 Walker gifted his stud to the British Government to aid in the war effort and to eventually lead to founding a

British National Stud. It was known as the English Stud for years, even after the War of Independence. In the 1940s, after the National Stud Act, it became the Irish National Stud under the Department of Agriculture.”

“The National Stud is funded by the taxpayer and the entire shares are held for the people by the state – the Irish people own thoroughbred horses.”

“There are two important rules in thoroughbred breeding – firstly AI (artificial insemination) is not used – everything takes place naturally to protect the gene pool. Secondly Thoroughbred racehorses are born in early spring and are all given the birthday of January 1st.”

“In the northern hemisphere the breeding season starts on February 14th – Valentines Day – that’s when Mummy and Daddy get married, as we explain to our younger visitors! Then 11 months later we have our foals. We have a large maternity unit here on the stud, and we stable our own mares and mares from other farms for a fee.”

“The visitors’ reactions to the farm tour and The Irish Racehorse Experience are always the same – “We had no idea!” – people don’t realise how much work goes into breeding from the foal to the finish line. The

Legends Paddock is very popular – here we have great racehorses who deserve a great retirement, and we provide just that. Faugheen, Hurricane Fly and Beef or Salmon are a massive draw for tourists - they nearly go orange the amount of carrots they get! And of course our stallions, mares and foals are always popular.”

“I’ve seen visitors become emotional and it’s just lovely to see the pleasure that these horses have given people over the years. It’s a unique place with some of the best stallions in the world and it is owned by the Irish people.”



© Irish National Stud

APPENDIX—INTERVIEWS

THOROUGHBRED STORY SHARERS

GUIDING THE VISITORS IN TIPPERARY – DALE CONDON, TOUR GUIDE, FETHARD HORSE COUNTRY EXPERIENCE AND COOLMORE STUD

Dale Condon is from Cahir in County Tipperary and is the Sales and Marketing administrator with Cashel Place Hotel in Cashel. Part of his role is welcoming visitors to Fethard Horse County Experience. Ticket options include a guided tour of nearby Coolmore Stud.

"Our visitors are a mix of backgrounds, some with more knowledge of the thoroughbred industry than others. A lot of our Australians and American guests would be familiar with the Coolmore studs over there."

"The majority of guests are well aware of what Coolmore is - you might have a family where one member is very interested in thoroughbred horses, and the rest of the family may not have as big an interest"

"But the reaction of everyone is the same – there is the sense that this is an unusual place to be, they are struck by how calm the farm is, the Coolmore legacy, how detailed every aspect of the farm is, the money aspect in regard to the horses' earnings. I'm still impressed every time I bring a group out there. And with some guests having worked in the industry for years, guiding sometimes becomes a learning experience for me as well."

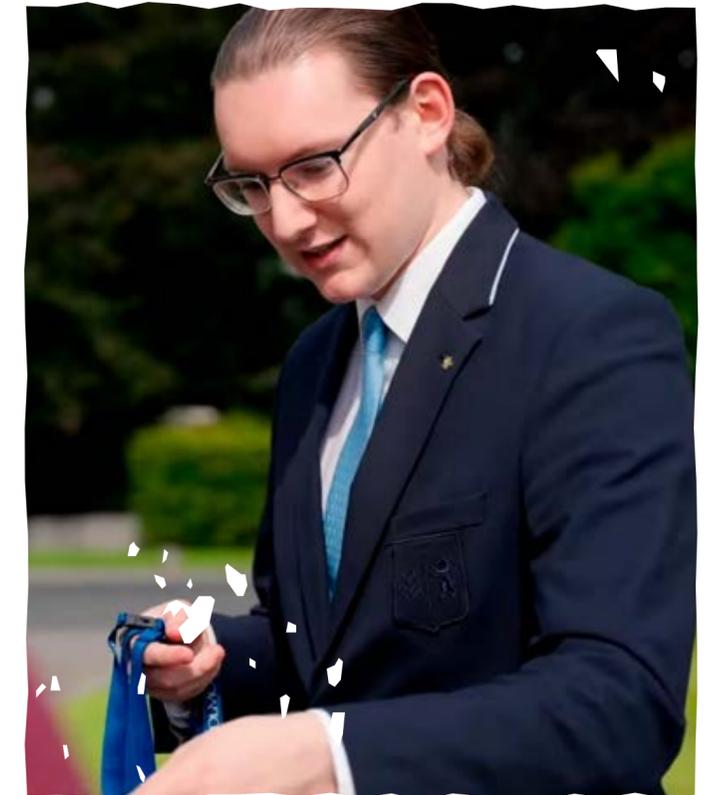
"When the guests see their first stallion on the tour, everyone gets a bit quiet, there is a sense of awe. The stallions are stunning – each with their own personality, and guests don't always expect to be within touching distance of the horses. The first horse most people meet on the tour is Australia who is super sweet, very calm. My favourite is Sottsass – he was a track record holder and has a lovely temperament – and when you scratch his chin, he sticks his tongue out!"

"It's such a detailed oriented industry – there are so many moving parts. I love the idea of flying horses across the world – Coolmore have been doing that since the 1940s. What struck me when I started is the passion of the staff – the sheer unimaginable dedication to the horses, the amount of knowledge they hold and their remarkable personal experiences. For example,

Coolmore don't have automatic water dispensers – the horses are watered by hand to monitor their intake every day. So, if a horse is drinking more than normal or less than normal, they can call in the vet to check them.

When they retire they are treated with such care – they're not ridden, they're hand walked and lunged, they are part of the family. They've seen these horses grow up, sire winners, they're with them morning noon and night – there is that pure pride in the stallions they work with."

"It's a pleasure to give tours and learn here. In the Horse Country Experience, it's incredible to watch footage of horses like Camelot or Australis win a race, then travel only 5 minutes away and actually meet them in Coolmore Stud. They are thriving. You can see how happy they are."



© Cashel Palace Hotel/Dale Condon

APPENDIX—INTERVIEWS

THOROUGHBRED STORY SHARERS



© Horse Country

HORSE COUNTRY'S HISTORIAN — JIM KAVANAGH, COUNTY KILDARE

Jim Kavanagh is a retired racehorse trainer and local historian from the Curragh, Co Kildare. Every summer he curates the pop-up Racing Legends Museum in the Old Courthouse in Kildare Town as part of the Curragh Irish Derby Festival.

"What do I consider my biggest achievement in my racehorse training career? Lasting as a trainer for over 20 years!"

"I always had a love of horse racing, growing up in Kildare town – the buzz around here for weeks before the Derby, the atmosphere, who's going to win, what horse is coming from France or England, what jockeys are coming with them."

"I've attended the races since I was young. Back then, only the wealthy would watch the Derby from the grandstand. If you walked or rode your bicycle across the Curragh you could watch the race from the far side of the course. We would lean on the white railings, with our heads sticking far out onto the course to see the horses coming. We were so close that we could feel

the swish of air from the horses on our faces as they went past."

"I wasn't very fond of school as a young boy. I once asked the teacher if I could be let off school to listen to the Grand National – he wasn't impressed! Unlike my older brother, my parents felt sending me onto further schooling was a waste of time. When I was finished primary school I decided to go look for work in a stables."

"Around the Curragh there were lodges set up as stables, so one Friday I walked up to Conyngham Lodge asking for work, and I was told to come back and start on Monday! My first task was to rake the yard – but I didn't know how to rake the yard properly! You learn that there's a specific way of doing everything in a stables; the way to muck out a stall, the way to groom a horse, the way to tack up a horse. I had no idea at first – these are skills that I learned over time. You know the smell of the horses, the smell of the feed when you walked in each morning, even the mucking out – it was all part of the joy of being part of the thoroughbred world."

"In my twenties I travelled and then returned home to become a horse trainer. I had moderate successes but that one horse – the one you hope to come by in your

career sadly alluded me. I have a link to horseracing history – I trained Maria Cullen, the first Irish female professional jockey. I'm very proud of that, but I don't want to take any credit from her."

"I trained horses for over 20 years, I was the Chief Executive with Irish Racehorse Trainers Association, and I retired in 2013. I now spend my time as a historian for the Curragh, where I run the Legends Museum in Kildare Townhall each June during the Curragh Festival. Every display cabinet there's a story of a trainer, an owner or jockey and I enjoy sharing the part they've played in Irish racing and in Kildare town with the visitors."

APPENDIX—INTERVIEWS

THOROUGHBRED STORY SHARERS



© PA Images / Alamy Stock Photo

JOCKEYING FOR POSITION IN KILDARE - JODY MCGARVEY, FREELANCE JOCKEY, COUNTY KILDARE

Jody McGarvey is a freelance jockey represented by agent Gary Cribbin. He is a regular rider for well-known Thoroughbred horse owner JP McManus and has ridden in several of the major jump races, including the Aintree Grand National and the Irish Grand National.

“When you're a kid looking at racing on the TV you don't dream of riding a winner of a little handicap hurdle on a Tuesday. You dream of winning one of the big races at one of the festivals. I've been very lucky through my association with Mr McManus, I've won a few Grade 1 races and ridden at the highest level - in the Grand Nationals, you know, it's dream stuff, it's a privilege.”

“The mental side of racing is massive. For big races in the Festivals, you get very excited about just riding in it, so you don't get the chance to be nervous. The way I treat it is like any other race, you still ride the same,

you're on the horse and you're just in another race. So that calms the nerves. The Grand National maybe an exception because it's just so exciting, but you get over the nerves fairly quickly because you just want to get out and get at it.”

“When you get on the horse in the ring before the race, you'll see there's a big buzz around the place and massive crowds in the grandstand. The noise of the festival, the people watching – you blank that out in your mind just before a race. I wouldn't know if there's 5 people or 500 million people watching on the television. When you canter off down to start, there's just you and few other horses and few other jockeys and the starter, that's it.”

“I love going to Punchestown and the Punchestown Festival is probably my favourite race meeting of the year. Just the buzz and that there, you know, you'd ride there for free.” My first Group 1 winner was Great Field at the festival in 2017- the public really got behind him because he was a bit unpredictable. He'd just go off in front at 100 miles an hour, he wasn't the best jumper in the world, so yeah anytime you sat on him it was heart in mouth stuff. No one ever expected him to win because he was liable to do anything. With horses, the more you ride them, the more you get to know them,

the way they are and you're learning about them all the time.”

“The wonderful thing about being a jockey is being inside the weigh room. I find even jockeys that have since retired, it's the one thing they miss the most. I suppose the fact it's so dangerous and you can get hurt badly at times and stuff, everyone really looks out for one another. You'll kill each other for an inch out on the racecourse, but we're inside there everybody's family. There's always really good feeling in the weigh room and you know, I know myself that when I eventually have to hang up my boots I'll miss it dearly.”

THANK YOU

