

# IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST



Ireland's Ancient East is a lush green landscape, steeped in 5,000 years of history and heritage. The rich tapestry of a storied past can be discovered through many historical sites of global significance. From UNESCO World Heritage Site, Brú na Bóinne to Hook Lighthouse, the region provides an immersive and educational journey through time.

Storytelling lies at the core of this spirited destination. Inspired by the past but brought to life in a modern and contemporary way, a vibrant arts and culture scene honours the region's tradition, whilst showcasing its evolving ethos and emerging talent.

An authentic taste of provenance enlivens the senses, celebrated by local food producers who offer world-class culinary experiences, drawing inspiration from the abundance of the land. From local and seasonal menus to food trails and festivals, distillers, brewers and live cooking classes, Ireland's Ancient East is renowned as a leading food-producing region.

The sprawling natural beauty of the destination offers a playground for the adventurous, with a scenic coastline for water sports, mountain ranges for hiking and biking, and epic flatlands and valleys for thundering hooves of the world's greatest Thoroughbred horses. Picturesque low-lying pastures take the visitor off the beaten track as they uncover monastic sites and hidden treasures.

Evenings are lively with lots to do. Savour a taste of the land in a local bar or restaurant, take in a traditional Irish music session in an original public house or wander the narrow cobbled streets of a medieval town, as you immerse yourself in the magic of the surroundings.

Appealing to the varying tastes and preferences of today's discerning traveller, Ireland's Ancient East is a diverse destination, where memories are made.



# IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST SAMPLE ITINERARY

## 5,000 YEARS OF HISTORY IN 7 DAYS

TO HELP YOU PROGRAMME IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST, HERE IS A SUGGESTED ITINERARY FOR YOU TO CONSIDER WHICH WILL HELP YOUR CLIENT, BE THEY GROUP OR FIT, TO NAVIGATE THIS AREA. FOR OTHER SAMPLE ITINERARIES IN IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST PLEASE EMAIL [BUSINESSDEVELOPMENT@FAILTEIRELAND.IE](mailto:BUSINESSDEVELOPMENT@FAILTEIRELAND.IE)



Viking Sword, Co. Waterford



Cobh Cathedral, Co Cork



Outdoor Dining, Princes St, Cork City



Rock of Cashel, Co. Tipperary

This is a tour of epic proportions, delving deep into our past and sweeping through more than 5,000 years of history. Along the way you'll be blasted with sea air at lighthouses, walk through haunting passage graves, visit iconic monasteries and get to grips with the mighty Vikings as they swept through the island. It's a journey that will bring you through dramatic green landscapes, peaceful gardens and lovely coastal villages. Welcome to Ireland's Ancient East's 5,000 years of history.

## DAY 1

Start your day at the iconic **Rock of Cashel**, a spectacular collection of medieval ecclesiastical buildings that emerge out of the landscape like a fairytale. This is where St Patrick is said to have converted the King of Munster to Christianity in the 5th century.

From here, it's a short drive through lush green landscapes to the walled town of Fethard. Explore one of the world's largest Thoroughbred racehorse breeding farms at the famous Coolmore Stud after a visit to the beautiful, interactive exhibition at **Fethard Horse Country Experience**.

Alternatively, head to the town of Clonmel and visit the interactive Tipperary Museum of **Hidden History** followed by a stroll along the stunning Suir Blueway.

Take a break for **lunch** in either Fethard or Cahir before setting out south towards Cork.

Your drive south will take you through the ranges of the **Munster Vales**. If you have time, stop and enjoy some of the many walks and spectacular views or for garden lovers, continue on your way to Cork to discover **Blarney Castle Gardens** or **Fota House Arboretum**.

As the sun sets on Day 1 you'll enter the vibrant **Cork City**. This Merchant city sits on an island on the river Lee, its narrow streets, historic buildings and bustling **English Market** are best discovered on foot.

Cork City has an impressive food scene and a host of dining options, indoor and out! Cork has led the way in creative outdoor dining spaces which you now find dotted around the city, our personal favourite is Princes Street, boasting dining options to suit any palate or budget. You will also be spoiled for choice from traditional Irish Music pubs and a lively arts scene, so don't plan an early night.

**Overnight and Dinner in Cork.**

## DAY 2

To start your day, there are many walking trails to discover in **Cork** from art to historic trails, these are a great way to discover the city and rest assured, you will not be far from a cool coffee shop or vibrant art gallery on any trail you choose. **Cork City Bus tour** provide a hop on hop off service which will take you to all the major heritage sites if you prefer not to walk.

Take the morning to discover what life was like in 18th century Cork with a visit to **Nano Nagle Place** or discover what life held in store for petty criminals at **Cork City Gaol**.

**Allow 1 hour 30 mins for these experiences.**

**Lunch in Cork City.**

From here we're going to follow the Lee out to discover **Cork Harbour**. You can almost hear the history whispering on the salty sea breezes.

Harbour Tours run seasonally, if you have more time, be sure to get out on the river with **Cork Harbour Cruises** or **Ocean Escapes**.

Set in the middle of Cork's vast harbour and a short boat trip from Cobh is **Spike Island**. Originally a monastic settlement, and now dominated by the fortress built to defend an empire, your day in Cobh could be spent exploring this vast 103 acre island.

Alternatively, explore the colourful town of Cobh, the last port of call for the Titanic and historic departure point for thousands of emigrants over the centuries, Cobh's history is laden with heartache. Take the **Titanic Trail** guided walking tour to hear these stories or step inside the original White Star Line ticket building and enjoy the **Titanic Experience Cobh**, alternatively **The Queenstown Story** is well worth a visit. If you have time to explore the stories of Cobh, why not visit all this seaside town has to offer.

**If you have more time**, stop off to discover the largest pot still in the world at **Midleton Distillery Experience** in **Midleton** or discover the seaside towns of **Ballycotton** and **Youghal**.

**Allow 3 hours for these experiences.**

Your journey now continues to **Waterford City** often referred to as "Ireland's oldest city". Waterford was founded by Norse invaders in 915AD. In its Viking Triangle of historic monuments, you can trace the city's past by taking **The Epic Walking Tour of the Viking Triangle**.

After dinner you might wish to take a walk and explore many of the large-scale mural artworks dotted around Waterford City - Waterford Walls. Since its inception in 2015, **Waterford Walls** has welcomed over 200 artists to paint in **Waterford City**.

**Overnight and Dinner in Waterford City.**

## DAY 3

Start your day by exploring the captivating **Waterford Treasures**, including the **Medieval Museum**, **Bishop's Palace**, **Reginald's Tower**, **Museum of Silver**, **Museum of Time** and **Museum of the Irish Wake**.

Continue your discovery of this fascinating city by visiting the **King of the Vikings** – the world's first virtual reality Viking adventure set in a reconstructed Viking house. Alternatively, you might wish to see world famous Waterford Crystal being crafted in the **House of Waterford**, or rent a bicycle and explore the **Waterford Greenway** - a spectacular 46km off road cycling and walking trail between Waterford and Dungarvan; stop off in **Mount Congreve Gardens** along the way and explore one of 'the greatest gardens of the world', discover interpretation centre, Secret Garden Shop and The Stables Café.

**Allow 1 – 2 hours for each of these experiences.**

While in Waterford, why not try the famous "blaa". Part of the city's history, it's thought they were introduced by the Huguenots in the 17th century. Enjoy at one of the many cafés and restaurants in the city for lunch.

**Lunch Waterford City.**

After lunch, your journey continues to New Ross in **County Wexford**.

Perched on the River Barrow, New Ross is a small but bustling place, anchored by the **Dunbrody Famine Ship**, a replica of an 1840s emigrant vessel. Step on board to uncover the truly emotional history of Ireland's emigrant past. **If time allows**, take a cruise on The **Barrow Princess** - a new river cruise connecting New Ross with Waterford.



Hook Lighthouse, Co Wexford



Kilkenny Castle, Co Kilkenny



Glendalough Co Wicklow



The Curragh, Co. Kildare

**Allow 1 hour for this experience.**

Before leaving New Ross, take a stroll along the Riverside Walkway. Look out for the information signs which tell you stories of the history of the town. Afterwards, take a walk into the town with its rich Norman history and heritage and admire the old laneways which have been lovingly restored. Find Cooke's Lane which is now adorned with Norman family crests and look out for the wonderful murals which adorn the town walls. Stop off at the Cracked Teapot for refreshments before continuing your journey to Kilkenny.

**If you have more time to explore County Wexford:** Make your way to [Hook Head and Lighthouse](#) – this amazing lighthouse is over 800 years old and is the oldest intact operational lighthouse in the world, with stunning views of the sea. Visit [Johnstown Castle Estate, Museum and Gardens](#) where you can take in stunning gardens, lake walks and woodlands, picnic by the lake and enjoy a tour of the restored 19th century castle and unique servants' tunnel. Visit [Irish National Heritage Park](#) a 35 acre living history park recounting life in ancient Ireland via tours with costumed guides. Take a visit to [Wells House and Gardens](#), a 17th century Victorian manor house with fabulous gardens and woodland walks. If you have more time, why not overnight in one of the many accommodation options that Co. Wexford has to offer.

**Allow 1 hour for each of the experiences.**

Your journey continues to [Kilkenny City](#), a vibrant medieval city bustling with live music, charming small streets and a great food and shopping offering.

In the evening, enjoy a live celebration of Irish culture, music and dance at the [Kytlers Inn](#). The show has live musicians, Irish dancers and brings guests through a journey of Irish culture, song and dance.

**Dinner & Overnight Kilkenny.**

## DAY 4

The following morning, stop off at the [Kilkenny Design Centre](#) and experience the very best of Irish craft and design. Enjoy a visit to the iconic [Kilkenny Castle](#) and extensive parklands, located just across the road.

Just a short stroll from the castle, explore the [Medieval Mile Museum](#), a 13th century church, to learn about Kilkenny's medieval history through interactive displays, ancient artefacts and tombs, or climb the round tower at [St Canice's Cathedral](#). [Butler Gallery](#) is Kilkenny's free art gallery and museum showcasing contemporary art in the middle of the city. Or for something a bit different, visit [Smithwick's Experience](#) to learn how the local beer has been brewed here for over 300 years or take the [Shenanigans Walking Tour](#) and discover the fun, magical, historical and hysterical way to experience Kilkenny's Medieval Mile. [Boatrips.ie](#) can take you down the ancient river Nore in a traditional Irish open-boat with storytelling skippers.

**Allow 1 hour for each of these experiences.**

**Lunch Kilkenny City.**

**If you have more time;** explore the county further and visit the picturesque town of Graigueanamanagh and pop into a sixth-generation family business, [Cushendale Woollen Mills](#). Delve further into Kilkenny's craft heritage with a stop at [Jerpoint Glass](#), home to the magic of mouth-blown, hand-made glassware. In the same area, [Jerpoint Abbey](#), founded in the 12th century, is one of the best examples of a medieval Cistercian Abbey in Ireland.

Leaving Kilkenny, it's a picturesque drive across [County Carlow](#) to the fairytale [Huntington Castle and Gardens](#), a Carlow landmark since 1625. Uniquely, it is still home to the same family that built the castle.

**If you have more time,** why not explore the oasis of peace and tranquillity that is [Delta Sensory Gardens](#) or take a wander around an excellent plant collection in Carlow's stunning 19th century Robinsonian style [Altamont Gardens](#).

Or delight in the historical floral varieties in the universally accessible and restored [Duckett's Grove Walled Gardens](#).

Continue your journey to the "Garden of Ireland", [County Wicklow](#).

**Dinner & Overnight Wicklow.**

## DAY 5

This morning's first stop is one of the county's newest additions – [Beyond the Trees Avondale](#). Begin with a leisurely stroll along the fully accessible 1.4km walkway. Your journey culminates at the magnificent viewing tower, the first of its kind in Ireland. Take the gentle incline up through the tower to the impressive viewing platform, 38 metres above the forest floor, and enjoy a 360-degree view of Wicklow. For the adventure seekers, speed your way back down to earth via the gigantic spiral slide or take a leisurely stroll back down the boardwalk.

**If you have more time,** connect with nature at [Avondale Forest Park](#), with over 500 acres of mature woodland walks and trails or discover the story of the Parnell family with the tour of [Avondale House](#). Explore the Coillte Pavilion and learn about the essential role forests play in all our futures. Take some time out for a coffee and a treat in the Seed Café.

**Allow minimum 2 hours for this experience.**

**Lunch at Avondale.**

**If you have more time,** visit [Wicklow's Historic Gaol](#) in the heart of Wicklow town, one of the most haunted places in Ireland and experience life through the inmates' eyes as the stories come alive.

Continue your drive towards [Glendalough](#) which is famed for its two lakes and spiritual atmosphere. At the monastic village, cast your mind back to what Glendalough must have been like in its heyday – when it was a retreat for peace-seeking monks.

Head north of the county to [Powerscourt House and Gardens](#). The magnificence of the estate here really is quite something, with its grand Palladian frontage and baroque domed towers – so much so that one architecture historian described it as possessing "the massive dignity of a great Italian Renaissance villa." Enjoy a coffee on the terrace, before stepping down the grand staircase into the world-famous gardens, complete with Japanese garden, pet cemetery and gracious statues.

**Allow minimum 1 hour 30 mins for this experience.**

Walk across to [Powerscourt Distillery](#), set in the beautifully restored old mill which uses barley from local fields and water from the Wicklow Mountains to produce Fercullen whiskey. Book in for a distillery tour or the whiskey and food pairing.

**Allow 45 mins to 1 hour for Distillery Tour.**

It's a picturesque drive on to [Russborough House](#) in west Wicklow, where you can view the famous art collection of the Beits. This delightful Palladian house has a fascinating history that takes in everything from art robberies to parties with Fred Astaire.

From one grand expanse of green to another - we now head into the heart of Ireland's [Thoroughbred Country](#) in County Kildare. The flat pastures of [The Curragh](#) have made it world-famous for its thoroughbreds, and it's one of the finest racing tracks in Europe – so make it to a race day if you can, or tour early in the morning and witness the spectacle of long lines of Thoroughbreds training across miles of flat, rich plains.

Take a behind the scenes tour at The Curragh Racecourse to locations that are strictly off limit to the public on race days. Enjoy unique insights into a race day for jockeys, trainers and owners and enjoy stunning views of The Curragh Plains. Or spend some time in the [Museum of Style Icons](#) at [Newbridge Silverware](#) where you can enjoy the fashion of icons.

**Overnight & Dinner in Kildare.**



Knowth megalithic tombs, Boyne Valley, Co Meath



Emerald Park, Theme Park, Ashbourne, Co Meath



Skypark, Carlingford Adventure Centre, Co. Louth



Hill of Tara Co. Meath

## DAY 6

This morning, carry on your exciting thoroughbred experience at the **Irish National Stud & Gardens** where you will get a chance to get up close and personal with a thoroughbred, while gaining new knowledge on Ireland's significant stud industry. Depending on the time of year, guests will have an opportunity to view a new-born foal in the foaling unit, meet the living legends and see how the farm operates on a day-to-day basis. The tour is completed by a visit to the interactive Irish Racehorse Experience where guests learn about the full lifecycle of the thoroughbred. Guests have an opportunity to create their thoroughbred's stories and guide them to glory at the race-day.

**Allow minimum 1 hour 30 mins for this experience.**

Take the opportunity to experience cruising on the Grand Canal with [www.bargetrips.ie](http://www.bargetrips.ie), various packages available including barge & dine. Your skipper is always on hand to share stories past and present on the life and history of the Grand Canal. Or, visit **Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park**. Learn how the peatlands in Ireland formed to become one of the world's most important carbon stores and ecosystems. Discover how its relationship with local people has evolved from pagan worship to a new sustainable future. The guided tour includes a walk on the bog with intermittent stops at exhibitions and traditional turf cutting led by a local expert.

**If you have more time**, continue to Laois's **Emo Court Parklands** which features over 35 hectares of naturalistic landscaped grounds, formal gardens, statues and lake and woodland walks. Or visit the 240-year-old stone farmyard at **Ballykilcavan Farm and Brewery** and meet the owner David, a 13th generation farmer for a guided tour, including family stories, a brewery tour and beer tasting.

**Lunch in Trim.**

Three storeys tall, complete with moat, towers and curtain wall, **Trim Castle** is Ireland's largest Anglo-Norman castle and once used its sweeping view of the River Boyne to cast a watchful eye over Meath. Modern walkways now allow you to look down over the interior of the keep – a chance to appreciate the sheer size and thickness of the mighty castle walls.

**Allow 1 hour for this experience.**

Travel northwards to **Emerald Park** for an adrenaline rush on the numerous park rides and slides, or if that's not your thing, admire the animals in the park's mini zoo. Visit the passage tombs of the UNESCO world heritage sites at **Brú na Bóinne**. See the archaeological feats that are Newgrange and the artistry at Knowth. A trip to the pretty village of Slane nearby takes you to **Slane Castle Estate**, site of internationally renowned rock concerts. Visit the castle, **Slane Irish Whiskey Distillery**, wander the grounds or take a farm tour at Rock Farm all within the Estate.

**Allow minimum 3 hours for each of these experiences.**

**If you have more time**, from Trim head to the historic town of Kells, visit the Monastic site and High Crosses in the town. Take the short distance out to see the **Loughcrew Cairns**, the unsung stars of Ireland's Neolithic era, be at one with nature and take in the amazing views.

Next, and in the middle of a swathe of pristine green fields, lies a site that touches at the very heart of Irish history, the **Hill of Tara** – a place with a 5,000-year history, seat of Ireland's High Kings and capital of the mythical god-like race of Tuatha de Danann.

When it comes to grisly relics, none are more legendary than Saint Oliver Plunkett's preserved head in **St Peter's Church** Drogheda – a must visit in this Louth town. View the entire town from the lofty **Millmount Museum and Martello Tower**.

**Allow 1 hour for this experience.**

**Dinner & Overnight Drogheda.**

## DAY 7

Depart Drogheda for the historic coastal village of **Carlingford** and your first port of call is the **Heritage Centre**. Take a guided tour of Carlingford's medieval walled town, built at the time of the Normans in the 12th century and take in the sites of King John's Castle, Taaffe's Castle, the Market Square, The "Mint", The Tholsel and the Dominican Friary before soaking up the views from the hillsides over Carlingford Lough.

**If you have more time**, take a visit to **Carlingford Adventure Centre/Skypark** and enjoy thrilling outdoor pursuits and activities for all ages - ranging from kayaking, archery, ziplining, rock climbing and hill walking to footgolf, water trampoline, canoeing, raft building and their Ireland's Ancient East Maze.

**Allow 2 hours 30 mins for this experience.**

**If you have more time**, hire a bike or walk the beautiful **Carlingford Lough Greenway** to Omeath. The Greenway winds along the lough's southern shore, mostly along the old railway line (14km round trip). As an old railway line it's also very level, making it a great place for a bit of a walk and ideal for novice cyclists. The Greenway provides great views across the lough to the mountains of Mourne, while Slieve Foy towers over it on the Louth side.

**Allow 2 hours 30 mins for this experience.**

**Lunch in Carlingford.**

Depart for the **Patrick Kavanagh Centre** in Inniskeen in the rolling hills of Co. Monaghan. The newly refurbished exhibition centre and events space preserves, interprets, and celebrates the life and works of Patrick Kavanagh and the surrounding environment through collections, exhibitions, research and events that embrace the area's evolution and spirit.

A short road trip now to **Brehon Brewhouse**, a busy micro-brewery on the McMahon family dairy farm in the historic birthplace of Brehon Law. Enjoy a Brewery and Farm Tour with a guided beer tasting in a Famine Cottage in the beautiful historic rural landscape of Co. Monaghan.

**Allow 1 hour for this experience.**

To finish off your afternoon, drop into **Carrickmacross Lace** Gallery – introduced in the 1820s as a way for local women to make money. Since then, the industry flourished and the lace became a favourite of royalty, from Queen Victoria to Princess Diana. The lovely, hand-stitched lace is still a prized possession today.

**If you have more time**, enjoy land and water experiences at **Castleblayney Outdoor Adventure Centre** at Lough Muckno estate in the heart of the county. Or why not check out **Liz Christy's Hand Weaving Studios**, a must for anyone who loves colour and all things fabric and woolly.

Dinner in the Award Winning **Courthouse Restaurant** in Carrickmacross.

**Overnight in Monaghan Town.**