

# 7 DAY IRELAND ITINERARY – THE BEST DEFINITIVE GUIDE



Lifejourney4two

Road tripping  around the world

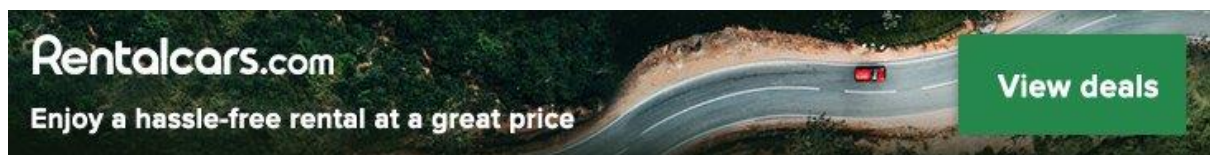
## 7 DAY IRELAND ITINERARY – THE BEST DEFINITIVE GUIDE

## 7 DAY IRELAND ITINERARY – HOW TO DO IRELAND IN A WEEK

A 7 day Ireland itinerary can only be the best if it is full of the things that *you* like to do. In this post, we have highlighted what to see in Ireland in 7 days but have also included alternative options that you might prefer.

On this 7 day trip to Ireland, you'll be visiting some of its most well-known locations as well as a few relatively unknown destinations along the way. If you're looking for panoramic views, quaint Irish villages, picture-postcard scenery and some off-the-beaten-path spots then read-on. You can easily adapt this road trip to suit your own preferences by including our alternative or additional options.

This article sets out how to spend a week in Ireland and takes you along the famous driving routes such as the Wild Atlantic Way, Ring of Kerry, Loophead Peninsula, Sky Road Loop and many more. Road-tripping Ireland is hands down the best way to enjoy all that the Emerald Isle has to offer.



## 7 DAY IRELAND ITINERARY IN A NUTSHELL

### **Day 1 – Dublin to Durrus >** (350 kilometres)

- County Dublin to County Tipperary to County Cork

### **Day 2 – Durrus to Portmagee** via the Ring of Kerry (135 kilometres)

- County Cork to County Kerry

### **Day 3 – Portmagee** (continue on the Ring of Kerry) **to Ballydavid** via Dingle Peninsula (150 kilometres)

- County Kerry

**Day 4 – Ballydavid to Kilkee** via Conor Pass Road and Loop Head Drive (191 kilometres)

- County Kerry to County Clare

**Day 5 – Kilkee to Clifden** via the Cliffs of Moher and Galway (210 kilometres)

- County Clare to County Galway

**Day 6 – Clifden to Westport** via the Sky Road and Kylemore Abbey (86 kilometres)

- County Galway to County Mayo

**Day 7 – Westport to Dublin** via Sean’s Bar in Athlone (268 kilometres)

- County Mayo to County Westmeath to County Dublin

## 7 DAY IRELAND ITINERARY

Our Ireland 7 day itinerary starts and ends in Dublin. As we aren’t big city people, we didn’t schedule a time to explore Dublin. However, you can change any part of your one week Ireland road trip to suit your own interests and time frames. We’ve included alternative options for most of the 7-days – so you have plenty of ideas to help you plan your own perfect Ireland one week itinerary.

### DAY 1: DUBLIN TO DURRUS VIA THE ROCK OF CASHEL

*Dublin > Rock of Cashel > Sheeps Head Peninsula > Durrus*

### THE ROCK OF CASHEL

As you depart Dublin, the drive through the scenic green, rolling hills is a perfect welcome to the Emerald Isle. The first stop on day one of this Ireland itinerary, is *The Rock of Cashel*, (named Carraig Phádraig in Gaelic). These 12th-century medieval buildings sit on a raised limestone outcrop overlooking the surrounding countryside and this spot was once the seat of power for local kings. To grab some nice distance photos of ‘the Rock’, some good viewpoints can be found within 500 metres of Cashel, on the roads arriving from the north of the town. Don’t worry, you’ll see ‘the Rock’ well before you reach the town.



*The Rock of Cashel*

If you decide to drive directly to the Rock of Cashel then the dedicated, paid parking is found within a couple of hundred metres of the entrance to 'the Rock'. There is well-placed signage once you enter the town which makes it all a bit easier. An hour of wandering the buildings, gravestones and admiring the surrounding view was about the right amount of time for us but you might enjoy spending longer here. *The Rock of Cashel is open each day of the year (except 24/25 Dec) with a paid entry fee. Opening times and further information can be found [here](#).*

## **SHEEP'S HEAD PENINSULA**

Leaving Cashel, we chose to skirt the city of Cork, (on the southern coast of Ireland), and arrive at Durrus with the intention to explore Sheep's Head Peninsula. Unfortunately, it was bucketing down the day we arrived. However, we did manage to take a few photos the following morning.

It's quite usual for the west coast to receive an unbelievable 1000 to 2000 mls of rain per year; that's the secret to Ireland's luscious green scenery. Therefore, keep in mind that you may very well experience rainfall on your one week in Ireland. Therefore, make sure you are well equipped with wet weather gear so you can continue to explore regardless.



*Sheep's Head Peninsula views, County Cork, Ireland*

### **DAY 1: 7 DAY ITINERARY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

1. You may like to break up the journey and take look around Cork. Things to see and do in Cork can be found [here](#).
2. Kissing the Blarney Stone at Blarney Castle. Located within 10 kilometres and north-west of Cork, kissing the Blarney Stone is claimed to bestow one with the 'gift of eloquence'. Fancy puckering up to the bluestone in person, then find [further details here](#).

### **DAY 1: ACCOMMODATION: DURRUS**

We can highly recommend a stay at this [homely B&B run by Marion](#).

### **DAY 2: DURRES TO PORTMAGEE VIA THE RING OF KERRY**

*Durres > Bantry > Glengarriff > County Kerry > Kenmare > Ring of Kerry > Derrynane Beach > Ballinskelligs Beach > Kerry Cliffs > Portmagee*

On day 2 of your Ireland itinerary, leave Durres and drive the back roads north to the town of Bantry and then join the Wild Atlantic Way. ( *A handy downloadable free e-guide book that encompasses the whole 2500 kilometre Wild Atlantic Way drive can be [found here](#)*).

Upon reaching Glengarriff, swing north for approximate 12 kilometres along the N71 and follow the Caha Pass road (opened in the 1840s), crossing into County Kerry from Country Cork.

Here you'll come across a statue of Irish lady, Molly Gallivan, right beside the road and opposite, her early 20th-century farm and dwellings. This entrepreneurial woman

offered food, drink and home-made crafts to passing travellers and this soon became a popular place to break the journey.

Here you can break your own journey and visit the [tea rooms and visitor centre.](#)



*Statue of Molly Gullivan, County Kerry*

## KENMARE

Descending the Caha Pass, about 16 kilometres north of Molly Gullivan's, brings you into Kenmare Old. Just before crossing the bridge into Kenmare itself, swing right and follow the road for about a kilometre to the Kenmare Old Cemetery. During the 1840s potato famine, roughly 5000 people were buried here.



*Old Kenmare Cemetery, County Kerry*

While you're here, it's worth following signs to St Finnian's Holy Well. You'll find it down by the river, a mere 40 metres along the shore. The well is named after St Finnian, a 7th Century Irish monastic saint, and it is believed to have healing powers.



*St Finnians Holy Well, County Kerry*

Re-joining the Wild Atlantic Way, we begin the famed Ring of Kerry travelling westwards from Kenmare towards our stop for the night, Portmagee. In total, the Ring of Kerry encompasses 189 kilometres but we opted to drive about three-quarters of it to Killorglin, deciding to bypass Killarney. There is so much to see but being restricted to a week in Ireland, we had to make sacrifices!



It doesn't matter in which direction you drive the Ring of Kerry but tour buses need to follow an anti-clockwise direction. We drove clockwise as it best suited our travel plans and also avoided any possible delays caused by tour buses. However, to be honest, we only saw a few buses during our September trip.

### **RING OF KERRY: DERRYNANE BEACH**

The drive along the south coast was pretty with some gorgeous views for the first 100 kilometres. Our first stop overlooked Derrynane Beach, a spot popular for windsurfers, although the sea spray made for hazy photo conditions.



*Derrynane Beach, County Kerry*

### **RING OF KERRY: BALLINGSKELLIGS BEACH AND CASTLE**

Continuing on the Ring of Kerry and a further 26 kilometres down the road, we arrived at Ballingskelligs Beach, home to the 16th century Ballingskelligs Castle. This castle, or tower, used to guard the bay and charged tariffs from passing vessels. There's a lovely beach here and the castle provides a great backdrop for photos.



*Ballingskelligs Castle, County Kerry*

### **RING OF KERRY: KERRY CLIFFS**

Continue your drive for 30 minutes northwards and you'll come to Kerry Cliffs. These are County Kerry's highest cliffs at about 300m in height. From here, on a clear day, there are views out to Skellig Rocks and Puffin Island.

Parking is close by the entrance to the cliffs, which will have you parting with 4 Euro per adult. A short, sharp-ish walk will soon have you at the cliff face at the closest viewpoint.





*View of the Northern Kerry Cliffs, County Kerry*

Veering off either left or right from here and within a few hundred metres are two other viewpoints. We thought that the best views were to be found at the northern-most viewpoint. Don't miss the replica beehive huts (or clochans) – examples of the huts built around 2000BC. They are about 300m from the entrance point.



*Bee-hive stone huts at the Kerry Cliffs, County Kerry*



*View of the Southern Kerry Cliffs, County Kerry*

## DAY 2: 7 DAY IRELAND ITINERARY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

- 1) **Skelling Islands** – boat tours traverse the 12 kilometres journey off the coast of Portmagee to both *Skellig Michael and Little Skellig*. Skellig Michael is a 6th-century monastic settlement with beehive huts and is also home to various bird colonies including Puffins, Terns, Gulls and other sea-going birds. See [here for more details](#).
- 2) **Puffin Island** – a small island just a few hundred metres from Ireland’s mainland. It is a wild bird conservatory that may be seen from the mainland or during boat tours. Depending on the season, you may see Puffins, Manx Shearwaters, Storm Petrels, Guillemot and other sea-going birds. Special dispensation to land on the island is only given for bird research.
- 3) **Killarney National Park** – Ireland’s oldest national park covering an astounding 26,000 acres of wilderness that is shared with many types of wildlife. Find more information on Killarney National Park [here](#).

## DAY 2: ACCOMMODATION – PORTMAGEE

We stayed in Portmagee on day two of this 7 day Ireland itinerary, but can’t recommend the Airbnb we stayed in. For accommodation around Portmagee check out [booking.com here](#)

## DAY 3: PORTMAGEE (CONTINUE ON THE RING OF KERRY) TO BALLYDAVID VIA DINGLE PENINSULA

*Portmagee > Valentia Island > Bray Head > Leacanabuile and Cahergal Ringed Forts > Ballycarbery Castle > Kells Beach > Rossbeigh Beach > Dingle > Sleah Head Drive > Coumeenoole Bay > Dunmore Head > Ballydavid*

### BRAY HEAD, VALENTIA ISLAND

Day 3 of this Ireland itinerary begins in Portmagee with Valentia Island right on your doorstep.

It’s definitely worth a visit to hike Bray Head to enjoy some tremendous views. However, you’ll need to make a slight detour by crossing the Maurice O’Neill Memorial Bridge in Portmagee as the Ring Of Kerry bypasses this island. Driving to the westernmost point of the island brings you to a dedicated decent-sized paid

parking spot. From here follow the uphill trail for 2-kilometres. Bray Head is a steady climb to the top.



*Bray Head Signal Tower, Valentia Island ( the two 'Skelligs' in the background)*

It's worth the time and effort for the views of Portmagee, the Skellig Ferry plying its route to both Skellig Michael and Little Skelling islands and for the distant views of the Cliffs of Kerry. The ruins of Bray Head Signal Tower, near the western-most point of this walk, is worth a wander through and also offers a respite from any intermittent rain showers.



*Views from Bray Head*

All up, we spent three great hours here. We found some geocaches and even befriended some 4-footed 'locals' on the way. For more information on Valentia Island.

## LEACANABUILE AND CAHERGAL RINGED FORTS

Bidding farewell to Valentia Island, we briefly re-joined the Ring of Kerry before again detouring at Cahersiveen, just 15 kilometres away. Our goal – to walk the impressive Leacanabuile and Cahergal Ringed Forts, dating back to the 7th century AD.

*Entry is free and quite accessible from the nearby car park.*



*Cahergal ringed fort, County Kerry*



*Leacanabuile ringed fort, County Kerry (with Cahergal ringed fort and Ballycarbery Castle in the background)*

*A word of warning: in one of the car parks, one of the locals was offering tourists a hold of one of his lambs and encouraging them to take a photo, but then requesting money for this afterwards. It was not done in good faith as there was no sign saying it was a paid service.*

## BALLYCARBERY CASTLE, COUNTY KERRY

From the ringed forts, you can spy the ruins of the 15th century Ballycarbery Castle. We drove up to the surrounding fence line but unfortunately it was signed as 'no entry' so we didn't get to wander the ruins. However, it still made for a great photo.



*Ballycarbery Castle ruins, County Kerry*

## KELLS BEACH, COUNTY KERRY

Undeterred, we pushed on for a further 15 kilometres and detoured down to Kells Beach to have a look around and stop for lunch. It didn't take long to walk the 50m and we were soon tucking into some fish and chips from the local convenience store right by the car park.

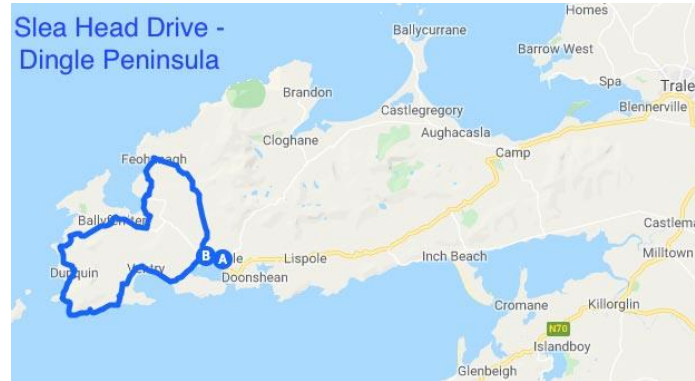
Driving east on the northern part of the Ring of Kerry you can catch glimpses of Rossbeigh Beach.



*Kells Beach, County Kerry is a nice, quiet place for a stop*

## SLEA HEAD DRIVE, DINGLE PENINSULA

Pushing on in our mission to see Ireland in 7 days, we passed through Dingle and veered onto the R559 or Sleah Head Drive. We picked up this looped 47-kilometre drive in Dingle and drove a spectacular 41 kilometres along the route to Feohanagh.



The roads on Sleah Head are tight and mostly single lane. Even using the pull-overs to let opposing traffic through, it is often a squeeze and that's in a car. Don't let this deter you as it is so worth the views. Keep an eye out for some old, abandoned stone buildings by the road-side that are nice to wander around.



*Narrow roads on the Sleah Head Drive, County Kerry*

If you can't stop then don't fret, there's a dedicated pull-over a bit further on with views to Coumeenoole Bay. Once you reach Coumeenoole Bay, park up and hit the trail for a 1-kilometre hike up the steep hill. Don't be put off, the views are just fabulous.



*Views over Coumeenoolle Bay to Dunmore Head*

## **DUNMORE HEAD**

The final destination for day three of our Irish road trip... Dunmore Head. Ring a bell? Parts of 'Star Wars – The Last Jedi' was filmed here. Any direction you look from up here, the landscape is just outstanding.



*Star Wars territory: Dunmore Head, County Kerry*

## **DAY 3: ACCOMMODATION – BALLYDAVID**

On day 3 of our Ireland trip, we overnighted at a fantastic, homely BnB run by Bridie at [Gort-A-Phump in Ballydavid](#).

This place is absolutely fantastic and the breakfast is above and beyond anything we experienced elsewhere on our road trip through Ireland.

## **DAY 4: BALLYDAVID TO KILKEE VIA CONOR PASS ROAD AND LOOP HEAD DRIVE**

*Ballydavid > Dingle > Conor Pass > Lough Doon > Lough Adoon > Glanteenassig Forest Park > Taubert > Killimer > Kilkee > Loop Head Peninsula > Bridge of Ross > Kilkee*

## CONOR PASS

Day four of the Ireland itinerary takes us back through Dingle. Looping back to Dingle is pretty much the only way to continue the drive north and then onto the Conor Pass.

This 12-kilometre Mountain Pass is one of the highest in Ireland. It weaves past steep drops whilst tantalising you with sweeping views of the surrounding valleys. The road going north-east past the summit carpark of Conor Pass is **restricted to vehicles less than 2 tonnes**.

## LOUGH DOON

Continue approximately 1.5 kilometres north past the Conor Pass summit and look for a pullover. Here you can see a cheery little waterfall from the carpark. If it's not too slippery, walk to Lough Doon, a secluded lake sitting above the level of the road. Unfortunately, due to recent rain, the trek proved too slippery so we decided to tackle that one at another time.

## LOUGH ADOON

Driving on another 4 kilometres you'll reach the junction to Cloghane. You can park up here and look for a not-so-obvious nearby gateway. Following the path takes you to Lough Adoon (not to be confused with Lough Doon just mentioned).

Lough Adoon is a beautiful secluded lake 1.5 kilometres from the gateway. The walk is very picturesque, paralleling and sometimes crossing a bubbly stream – making for some lovely photos. Closer to the lake, the path sort of ceases so it's a case of picking the best line through the grass to reach the shoreline. Waterproof shoes and pants are definitely recommended. All up we spent about 2.5 hours here including the return walk.

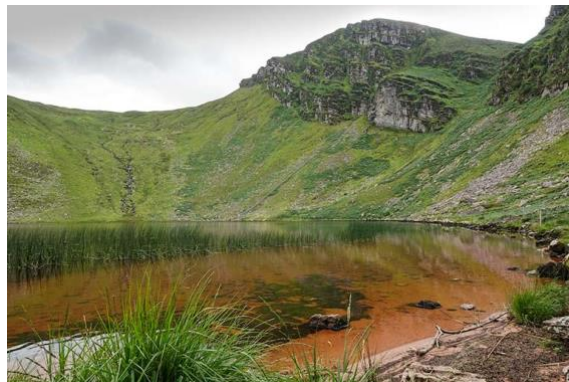




*Lough Adoon is nestled by nearby mountains*

### **GLANTEENASSIG FOREST PARK**

A further 13 kilometres along, take the turnoff to Glanteenassig Forest Park. This park has two beautiful lakes (Lough Slat and Lough Caum), with stunning surroundings. Firstly you can drive close to Lough Slat and walk a short 100m to the lake. This was one of our favourite places to visit on our week in Ireland.



*Lough Slat within Glanteenassig Forest Park, County Kerry*

From here, the road continues to Lough Caum where wooden walkways follow the shoreline. To depart, we recommend that you backtrack on your original route. If you choose to continue, as we did, then this circuitous route covers some pretty sharp, rocky ground. We inched our two-wheel-drive car over the track and made it out unscathed – but be warned!



*Lough Caum*

Re-join the N68 and follow the N69 for another 70 kilometres to Tarbert. This then gives you two options to get to Kilkee. Firstly, you can drive to Kilkee via Limerick, (adds an extra 135 kilometres), or take the second option of a 20-minute ferry ride across the Shannon estuary from Tarbert to Killimer. We did the latter and it set us back 20 Euro. For ferry costs and operating times, check it out [here on the Shannon Ferries site](#).

## LOOP HEAD PENINSULA DRIVE

Reaching Kilkee in County Clare, we headed south-west on the Loop Head Peninsula starting the famous Loop Head Drive. This is another scenic location featured in the Star Wars – Return of the Jedi movie. Kilkee to the Loop Head Lighthouse is a 26-kilometre route (one-way) and there's also a free carpark.



If you choose, you can enter the lighthouse grounds for a fee and visit the museum. You can also climb this 23m high lighthouse built-in 1854. You could also book [online and stay overnight in the Loop Head LightKeeper's cottage](#). We chose to wander the expansive grounds around the lighthouse and admire the staggering views of this wild, rugged coastline.

You can find more information on entrance fees and opening times for the [Loop Head lighthouse here](#).



*Magical views of County Clare coastline*



*Loop Head Lighthouse can be climbed*

Right by the tip of Loop Head is a lone rock that seems to be cleaved from the mainland. This is Sampson's Island. It is home to nesting seagulls, terns, plovers and is a haven for birdlife in general, so don't forget your telephoto lens.

The gap between these two landmasses is known as Cú Chulainn's Leap and at the closest point, it seems to be about 10 metres from the mainland. Back in the 18th century, there used to be a viewing platform overhanging the mainland towards Sampson's Island but this is long gone.



In the grassland in front of the lighthouse, you may come across the word 'Eire' arranged with stones. This tradition dates back to World War II and it indicated to pilots that they were entering neutral airspace. There are also some great geocaches tucked away but I'll not mention where.

### **BRIDGES OF ROSS**

Continuing your road trip along the coastline back north-east towards Kilkee, and just 6 kilometres away, lie the Bridges of Ross. At one time there were three such natural rock arches but today only one remains standing. From the dedicated parking area, a gentle path leads you to the magnificent rock formations.



*Bridges of Ross*



## DAY 4: ACCOMMODATION – KILKEE

From the Bridges of Ross, you are about 20 kilometres from Kilkee and the night's stopover. For the fourth night of our 7 day Ireland road trip, we stayed in, and can highly recommend, the lovely [Kilkee BnB hosted by Valeria](#) on Airbnb.

## DAY 5: KILKEE TO CLIFDEN VIA THE CLIFFS OF MOHER AND GALWAY

Kilkee > Kilkee Cliff Walk > Cliffs of Moher > The Burren > Galway > Clifden

### KILKEE CLIFF WALK AND POLLOCK HOLES

Before leaving Kilkee, on day five of this 7 day Ireland itinerary, we drove to the coastline and parked at the Pollock Holes carpark close by the Diamond Rocks Cafe. Grab a coffee and stroll the looped 5- kilometre Kilkee Cliff Walk or if you prefer, the 8-kilometre loop.

You won't miss the Pollock Holes as they are pretty much directly in front of the cafe. The Pollock Holes are three natural tidal rock pools, popular with swimmers, varying between 20m to 50m width and depths of up to 2.5m. They get their name from the Pollock (fish) which call this home for six months of the year.



*The Amphitheatre – you can see why!*

There are some really interesting and varied rock formations in this conservation area. Keep an eye out on the foreshore for the 'Amphitheatre' and the 'Puffing Hole', a natural rock blowhole.



*The Puffing Hole is a decent sized hole*

## CLIFFS OF MOHER

The next highlight for the day – the famed Cliffs of Moher. A 50-kilometre drive saw us queued up for the huge carpark.

Some interesting facts of Cliffs of Moher:

- The Cliffs of Moher are Irelands most visited natural attraction with up to one million visitors a year
- The Moher cliffs are 214m at their highest point.
- If you're visiting between April and mid-July, then you have a good chance of seeing puffins.
- There's a tourist centre, eatery and plenty of souvenir shops here.



*Looking south at the Cliffs of Moher – if you look carefully, you can see people at the promontories*

This was the most touristy location we had visited on our Ireland road trip so far. We paid 8 Euro per person because we arrived at the busiest time of day – between 11 am and 4 pm. However, buying your tickets online and visiting outside of these busy hours can give savings of up to 50%.

Check here for [online tickets and opening hours](#).



*The busiest pathways near the main entrance are concreted*

The cliffs of Moher were extremely busy as it was the tourist season, (August) but regardless, we did manage to walk a good portion of the cliffs. What we didn't account for were the biting bugs that we encountered. The biting flies were there in droves. It was insane and really distracting. This wasn't common according to the locals.

For us, the cliff views were pretty good but not as great as all the hype behind it. However, you just don't know unless you see it for yourself. O'Brien's Tower, on the northern part of the cliffs, gave the best views to the south.

If you prefer some solitude then you can [park here](#) to the south of the visitor centre, pay a fee to the local farmer and access the cliff walk going north.

## THE BURREN

Driving north for 16 kilometres, we stopped for a couple of photos at 'The Burren'.

This is a huge landscape of weathered limestone outcrops and a vast contrast to the green rolling hills.

Thinking we were about due a stop for lunch, [O'Donohue's Pub](#) came into sight. We spoke to Pat the publican who was the owner and he told us that this 150-year-old pub had passed down through five generations of his family. Fittingly, we woofed down tasty bowls of Irish Stew and test drove an Irish Coffee and a Guinness – perfect!



*The hard to miss colours of O'Donohues Pub, County Clare*

## GALWAY

Next stop on our Ireland road trip, a 65-kilometre drive to the cheery city of Galway, in County Galway. Arriving in the city, by sheer chance, we scored [a free park](#) right on the doorstep to the city centre.

Galway sure has some colourful shop fronts, pubs and an inviting city vibe. You might not know, but Galway has also been home to the makers of the Claddagh Ring since the 1700s. You may be familiar with the Claddagh emblem though.



*The Claddagh Ring design*

The Claddagh ring is representative of love, loyalty and friendship and only a few select shops lay claim as makers of this traditional artwork.



Down by the waterfront and close by the Wolfe Tone Bridge is the Spanish Arch. Built-in 1584, it remains an important part of Galway's historical past. Galway's colourful ambience certainly impressed us. Here's a quick highlights video.

## CLIFDEN

Our final stop for the day, 77 kilometres away was Clifden. And why Clifden? As part of our 7 day Ireland itinerary, we wanted to experience an iconic traditional Irish Pub band and [Lowry's Music and Whiskey Bar](#) was the place for us. It was voted in 2015, 2018 & 2019 as the winner of the 'Best Traditional Bar in Ireland' at Ireland's prestigious National Hospitality Awards.

This Irish pub is open every day, and let me tell you, it's every bit as good as we had hoped. Get there early (an hour before the band starts) to ensure you get a seat otherwise, it's standing room only. We bopped and clapped our way through the medleys of traditional Irish Folk music and ballads. I'd say the Guinness helped too!

## DAY 5: 7 DAY IRELAND ITINERARY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

- 1) **Connemara Seaweed Baths:** If you're in the mood to be pampered, then 15 kilometres past Kylemore Abbey is [Connemara Seaweed Baths](#), located within the Leenane Hotel. The seaweed is hand-cut on a daily basis.
- 2) **Aran Islands:** these 3 tiny islands just off the coast of Galway include a world heritage listed site and boast their own stunning natural beauty including 100m high cliffs. Find out more information on the [Aran Islands here](#).

## DAY 5: ACCOMMODATION – CLIFDEN

Our accommodation for day 5 of our Ireland road trip was [The Lodge](#), right in the heart of Clifden. There was a hearty breakfast to look forward to as well.

## DAY 6: CLIFDEN TO WESTPORT VIA THE SKY ROAD AND KYLEMORE ABBEY

*Clifden > Sky Road Loop > Kylemore Abbey > Croagh Patrick > Westport*

### SKY ROAD LOOP

Right on the doorstep of Clifden lies the Sky Road Loop. This 16-kilometre loop starts and ends in Clifden and gives fantastic views of the Connemara countryside.

So start day six of your 7 day Ireland Itinerary by taking the Sky Road from Clifden going west. At the 3.4 kilometre point, you arrive at a junction where you can choose either the upper road to the right or lower road to the left. We chose the upper road to get the gain in altitude and the better views of the coastline and nearby islands.

Intersecting the N59, we headed north away from Clifden, driving 16 kilometres to reach Kylemore Abbey.



*Views from the Sky Road lookout in County Galway*

## **KYLEMORE ABBEY**

Haven't heard of Kylemore Abbey? Read the history of a tragic love story and how this castle, originally built in 1868, became a world-renowned girl's boarding school under the tutelage of the St Benedictine nuns. The school no longer exists but the nuns maintain their residence here at Kylemore Abbey.

Entering the carpark into Kylemore Abbey, the best photo opportunity is right by the carpark near the lake at a purpose-built viewing platform.



*Seeing is believing – Kylemore Abbey, County Galway*

For an entrance fee of 14 Euro per adult, it may at first seem somewhat expensive but it's definitely worth the outlay. You have access to the abbey, a gothic church on the grounds which was built in memory of the original owner's wife, the expansive 6-acre Victorian walled gardens and the head gardeners cottage. We spent the good part of half a day here.



*The Gothic church is elegant*

When you feel like a break, a teahouse, perfect for cream teas and snacks, is near the gardens. It is serviced by an electric bus running between the abbey and the tea house. Right by the tea-house is the entrance to the Victorian gardens.

A large craft and gift shop nearby the carpark sells all sorts of homemade chocolates and fudge – we can vouch first-hand that the fudge is delicious. Kylemore Abbey opening times are from May-Oct 9.am to 6/7 pm. For more information check the [Kylemore Abbey Website](#).

## **CROAGH PATRICK**

Leaving Kylemore Abbey, we headed north on the R335 hoping to get some great photos over the lake, Doo Lough, but the weather wasn't kind to us so we kept going until we reached Croagh Patrick some 50 kilometres later.

Croagh Patrick in County Mayo, nicknamed The Reek, is the holiest mountain in Ireland and an important pilgrimage site. Croagh Patrick is 764m high with the hike taking roughly 4 hours in total assuming you have an average fitness level. The starting point is the paid carpark near its base.



*Statue of St. Patrick holding a shamrock*

You should have sturdy hiking footwear, waterproof clothing and water although if you're just doing the short climb (250m from the carpark) to the [Statue of St Patrick](#) then no special gear is required. Climbing sticks are also available for rent at the centre as guided tours are offered. We climbed past the Statue of St Patrick and enough to get the fabulous views over Clew Bay of the many, many islands.



*Views over Clew Bay on the Croagh Patrick climb*

#### **DAY 6: 7 DAY IRELAND ITINERARY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

1. Hike Connemara National Park. This park covers about 2000 hectares with scenic mountains, heaths, bogs and woodlands. Although the park grounds are open all year, the visitor centre has scheduled opening times: March to October from 9 am – 5.30 pm. Admission is free. If you need more information then you can find it here: [Connemara National Park](#).

## DAY 6: ACCOMMODATION – WESTPORT

The pretty town of Westport (one of our favourites on this Ireland road trip) is only about 9km from Croagh Patrick. We would recommend finding some accommodation nearby as you'll not want to drive much further today.

Check out the deals available in the area on [Booking.com here](#).

## DAY 7: WESTPORT TO DUBLIN VIA SEAN'S BAR IN ATHLONE

*Westport > Athlone > Sean's Bar > Dublin*

### WESTPORT

You'll start your final day of this 7 day Ireland itinerary in Westport which was voted as the Best Place to Live in Ireland in 2012. We loved this town. The people seemed just that bit happier here. The locals were chatty, the shop decor was vibrant and life felt upbeat.



*Pretty Westport shop facades*



*A touch of Westport style*

We armed ourselves with delicious ice-cream from [McGreevy's Westport](#), voted 'Winner of the Best of '99' Ice Cream in Ireland' and ate them overlooking Carrowbeg River, just over the road. Love the colours on this building!



*McGreevy's gets our vote too!*

## ATHLONE

We left Westport and set a leisurely pace heading the 140 kilometres east to Athlone and the oldest pub in Ireland, Sean's Bar. The Guinness Book of Records has traced the pub's heritage right back to 900AD and currently, the bar is vying for the title of 'oldest bar in the world'. Imagine all the stories that have told there!



*Sean's Bar – oh the stories this place must hold*

The bar staff at 'Sean's Bar' were super chatty and explained how the sloping floor used to allow rainwater to flow quickly through the establishment down to the river. The sawdust not only soaked up any spillages but allowed for easier removal of unconscious patrons during the dragging process.

There is plenty of memorabilia adorning the walls and the roof, along with an ample variety of Irish 'brews' to choose from. Needless to say, I walked away with a smile on my face.



*The business end of Sean's Bar*

## DAY 7: ACCOMMODATION – BRAY/DUBLIN

With 125 kilometres to Dublin, the run back was short and we were already discussing our most enjoyable parts of seeing Ireland in 7 days. We decided to stay the night in Bray, a small town just south of Dublin, at [Pat's BnB](#) which was absolutely lovely and also has great reviews.

***Travel Tip: Accommodation is often much cheaper just outside the main cities. If you have your own transport it's normally the best economical option***



*This black beauty needs little introduction – Guinness Beer*

## HANDY TIPS FOR YOUR 7 DAY IRELAND ITINERARY

- You drive on the left-hand side in Ireland
- Ireland's currency is the Euro

- There are toll roads in Ireland. We avoided all of them and it did not greatly impact our driving time. You can set your GPS navigator to 'avoid tolls'. However, if you do not want to avoid tolls you can find more about purchase and payment for an [electronic tag here](#).
- Speed limits in Ireland are signed but generally conform to 50 kilometres per hour (kph) in built-up areas; 80-100 kph on open roads and 120 kph on dual carriageways/motorways
- Some country roads are often narrow and restricted to a single-vehicle, so be prepared to pull over to let opposing traffic past
- Wet weather clothing and footwear is a must-have for *all seasons* as the weather is unpredictable
- When flying drones, restrictions are in effect. Further information on drone usage can be found on [Ireland Aviation Authority](#)
- Be aware of the drink driving laws in Ireland if you are planning to partake – here's a [handy site](#)

There sure is a lot to see and do on an Ireland road trip. We hope that you enjoy it as much as we did and that this 7 day Ireland itinerary helps you plan a fantastic trip. Thanks, Ireland, we had a blast!

*Let us know what you think of this Ireland itinerary and keep us posted of any Ireland road trips you go on – we'd love to hear about them. Just leave a comment below*



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