

Top 30 IRISH bucket list

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PICK 30 THINGS TO DO IN IRELAND BEFORE YOU DIE

1 TAKE THE DURSEY ISLAND CABLE CAR, CO. CORK

It's not what you'd expect to find at the tip of the Beara Peninsula — a cable car to Dursey Island. The tide is too strong at Dursey Sound for boats, hence the unusual method of getting across. The journey takes about 10 minutes, and once you set foot on the island, just enjoy the walks and views. Although people do live on Dursey, there are no hotels or B&Bs to stay overnight (there aren't any shops or restaurants either, so make sure to bring food) - YG

While you're at it: Also on Beara, visit Garnish Island for its Italian Gardens. Boats are available from Glengariff.

Details: Durseysland.ie; bearatourism.com

2 DRIVE THE CAUSEWAY COASTAL ROUTE

It ticks everything off the checklist of scenic drives — sheer cliffs on one side, the lush green Glens of Antrim

on the other, rock arches to drive through, heritage villages along the way (Cushendall and Cushendun) and the ruins of a mysterious castle on a cliff's edge (Dunluce). Throw in forest parks and an unusual rock formation of 40,000 basalt columns (The Giant's Causeway) and it's no wonder it's often voted one of the world's top drives. **While you're at it:** To calm the nerves after Carrick-a-rede rope bridge, drop into the Old Bushmills Distillery for a tour and a tasting - YG

Details: Causewaycoastalroute.com; bushmills.com

3 DRINK A PINT OF GUINNESS IN KEHOE'S, DUBLIN

The Guinness Storehouse is Dublin's most visited attraction. But the difference between a pint in the Gravity Bar and a pint in Kehoe's (9 Sth. Anne St.) is the difference between experiencing a leopard in the zoo and a leopard in the wild. Regularly packed and possessing some of the best pub details in Dublin — including a buzzer in the snug (you're welcome) — this is a real home of the Black

Stuff. Ignore the state of the carpets, and enjoy your pint (sensibly, of course) - PÓC

While you're at it: Nobody agrees on Dublin's best pub (or pint), and that's the beauty of it. Try Grogan's, Mulligan's and Toner's as alternatives.

Details: guinness-storehouse.com

4 CYCLE THE GREAT WESTERN GREENWAY, CO. MAYO

If you're wondering what all the fuss is about cycling, take this short off-road trip at a leisurely pace along the old railway line from Westport to Achill Island. You'll pass over and under bridges, meet wandering sheep and enjoy the colours of the Nephin Mountains along the way. The 42km-trail can be done in a day, but we stopped off in Mulranny for a night. There, what seems like an ordinary roadside pub, Daly's, opens up to the most magnificent views across Clew Bay from the back. Leave time to explore Achill Island too - YG

While you're at it: Don't miss Westport town with its

lively pubs (said to number 52) — there's a nightly music session at Matt Molloy's.

Details: greenway.ie; mulranny.ie

5 EXPERIENCE GRAFTON STREET AT CHRISTMAS

It doesn't feel like Christmas until Grafton Street is lit up like... well, a Christmas tree. When dusk draws in, and the shop fronts are glittering with baubles and wreaths, even the Scroogiest of folk can't help but be filled with festive spirit. Even if you're just nipping out for a pair of socks - NB

While you're at it: For a break from the high street, pop into the Powerscourt Centre for unique gifts and fabulous independent shops. I love Article for homewares and The Pepper Pot Café for a well-earned slice of cake.

Details: graftonstreet.ie; powerscourtcentre.ie

6 TAKE A SEAWEED BATH IN SLIGO

Nothing beats the feeling of sinking into a piping hot bath.

And if that bath is filled with seaweed harvested from the shore that morning? All the better. A visit to the Voya Seaweed Baths in Strandhill will leave your skin silky soft and your mind struggling to remember exactly what "stress" is. My tip? Skip the fancy shampoo and dunk your head back into the mineral-rich water — your hair will dry in perfect, beachy waves - NB

While you're at it: Take a bracing walk along Strandhill beach, then pop into Shells Café for their unbeatable chicken burger.

Details: voyaseaweedbaths.com; shellscafe.com

7 SEE THE WINTER SOLSTICE AT NEWGRANGE, CO MEATH

Walking into a passage tomb that is more than 5,000 years old is an incredible experience. Especially when, once a year, its passage becomes illuminated with the morning sun and the chamber lights up as the sun rises. Access to the winter solstice experience is limited to 50 people a year, but the good news is that it's decided by lottery — the bad news is that around 30,475 people applied last year and there's no guarantee of sunlight. In truth, of course, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is worth seeing at any time of year - YG

While you're at it: Visit Clonmacnoise, or take the Boyne Valley Drive, learning the ancient stories of the Hill of Tara, Mellifont Abbey and Trim Castle.

Details: heritageireland.ie; boynevalleydrive.ie

8 GO COASTEERING ON CLARE ISLAND

I've been on Clare Island and struggled to stand upright as fierce winds pushed me sideways. I've also gotten sunburnt, before dipping into translucent waters in coves that resemble tropical beaches. Both incidents occurred within days of each other — such is life on this



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wildly rugged, unpredictable island. Throw yourself into the spirit of the place (quite literally) with a coasteering session. A combination of wild swimming and cliff jumping, you'll be guided around the shores of the island and leap from its craggy peaks - NB

While you're at it: Embrace the wilderness with a stay in the Clare Island Lighthouse.

Details: clareislandadventures.ie; clareislandlighthouse.com

9 GO NIGHT KAYAKING ON LOUGH HYNE, CO CORK

I've kayaked on more than a few lakes in Ireland. We've no shortage of drop-dead gorgeous waters to explore, but the one trip buried deep in my heart is a night kayak on Lough Hyne in Cork. We set out at dusk, paddling as the night sky turned an inky black. The clincher? As I moved my oar through the water, the sparkle of bioluminescence left a trail of glitter in its wake. Paddle in the summer, and this phenomenon is at its peak - NB

While you're at it: Warm your cockles with a pint in nearby Skibbereen.

Details: atlanticseakayaking.com

10 TAKE A BLACK TAXI TOUR IN BELFAST

Belfast's transition from Troubles to Titanic-inspired hotspot is one of the stories of the century thus far for Irish tourism. For all of its flashy architecture and interactive exhibits, however, Titanic Belfast can't lay a finger on the humble Black Taxi Tour for authenticity. Sure, there are flaws (tours vary in quality, length and are not centrally managed), but the like-a-local exposure to the city's political murals and 'Peace' Walls in the company of drivers who experienced the Troubles first-hand are unlike any other on the island - PÓC

While you're at it: Take a tour of the People's Gallery in Derry with one of the artists who painted the murals.

Details: visit-belfast.com; bogsidedartists.com

11 WATCH MUNSTER AT THOMOND PARK, LIMERICK

Limerick's original fortress is the recently revamped King John's Castle, but its modern-day battles are fought up the road at perhaps Ireland's most iconic rugby stadium. Munster's fortunes may wax and wane, but the atmosphere here can still raise the hairs on your neck — with a museum including artefacts once belonging to legends like Tony Ward, Ronan O'Gara and Paul O'Connell (including a photo of Padre Pio he once carried in his sock). After seeing the changing rooms, you can even walk the walk... out towards the hallowed turf itself - PÓC

While you're at it: Take in a hurling or football match at Croke Park. And don't forget the sambos...

Details: munsterrugby.ie; thomondpark.ie

12 RIDE A HORSE ON THE BEACH

With so many beautiful beaches around our coast, it's an exhilarating experience to gallop along the water's edge and feel the salt spray in your hair. If you're not at that level, fear not - you'll find beach-riding treks for all ages and experiences. It was while we were trotting on the beach at Murrisk Bay at the foot of Croagh Patrick in Co Mayo on a drizzly day, that, as if the backdrop of the mountain on one side and Clew Bay on the other weren't enough, a double rainbow appeared.

While you're at it: Climb Croagh Patrick — allow about two hours to get to the sacred mountain's 764m summit... and views of Clew Bay's islands - YG

Details: murrisk.ie; croagh-patrick.com

13 GO TO GLASNEVIN CEMETERY

There's something so quintessentially Irish about Glasnevin Cemetery. Weave between the headstones and your guide will know the intertwining secrets of practically each soul who rests there; the friends who became enemies, the lovers and the arch adversaries now buried a hop from one other. It's probably the best history lesson you can get in the city - NB

While you're at it: Get nostalgic with a visit to the Little Museum of Dublin, one of the quirkiest museums around.

Details: glasnevintrust.ie; littlemuseum.ie; visitdublin.com



THE LIST



14 TUCK INTO TEA AND SCONES AT KYLEMORE ABBEY, CONNEMARA

It might look like a fantasy castle on the outside, with its magnificent lakeside setting at the foot of a mountain in the middle of Connemara, but Kylemore Abbey is actually a Benedictine monastery and is still home to an order of nuns. You can take a short tour of the house and explore the walled garden, but one of the best parts of the visit is tucking into pots of tea and freshly baked scones with butter and jam afterwards - YG

While you're at it: Take a boat trip on Ireland's only fjord, Killary fjord and also visit the village of Leenane, where film *The Field* was set.
Details: kylemoreabbey.com; killaryfjord.com



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15 TAKE A WHISKEY TASTING TOUR

We're loved for it the world over, so why not appreciate the *Uisce beatha* properly? Bushmills and Jameson offer the best-known tasting sessions, but the Teeling Whiskey Distillery is new to the scene in Dublin. Take a tour to find out how it's made, culminating in a hearty glug of the good stuff - NB

While you're at it: You can't swing a cat without hitting a craft spirit these days, but keep an eye out for tastings led by Shortcross gin. For craft beer, head to Against the Grain in Dublin, where you can try any number of varieties.

Details: teelingdistillery.com; shortcrossgin.com

16 STAY AT BALLYFIN, CO LAOIS

Ordinary folk may have to sacrifice the kids' college fund to stay here, but a visit to Ballyfin is a re-immersaion in the golden age of Irish country house hospitality. From the moment staff greet you on the steps of the Regency-era pile to the lavish stuccowork, sumptuous library and butlers who will unpack your luggage, you'll feel to the manner born. Arguably, it's Ireland's finest 21st century restoration - PÓC

While you're at it: Co Cork's Ballyvolane is another masterful Blue Book bolthole... this one complete with glamping and its own artisan gin.
Details: ballyfin.com; ballyvolanehouse.ie

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17 SEE WILDFLOWER SEASON IN THE BURREN, CO. CLARE

There's no landscape quite like the Burren. At one glance it's lunar and sparse, but peek again and it's teeming with life. When the wildflowers poke up between the wrinkled rocks (typically in May), it makes for a scene that could have been lifted from a postcard. Continue the floral theme with a visit to The Burren Perfumery, where you can stroll through their herb garden and enjoy a pot of tea. Don't leave without driving along the Flaggy Shore, reciting Seamus Heaney as you go - NB

While you're at it: Tread carefully along the Cliffs of Moher, and keep an eye out for puffins from the south platform.

Details: burrenperfumery.com; cliffsofmoher.ie

18 FEEL THE FEAR ON ONE MAN'S PATH, CO. DONEGAL

Admiring sea cliffs is one thing. Experiencing the adrenaline rush of towering over a sheer drop on a cliff edge is quite another — and you'll get that at the aptly named One Man's Path at Slieve League, which is just two-feet wide in parts. The cliffs, rising nearly 2,000 feet from the Atlantic, are some of the highest in Europe. For some people, even driving up from the lower car park to the viewing point at the upper car park is enough of a thrill — there's a drop hundreds of feet on one side. (*My tip: Park at the lower car park and just walk up!*)

While you're at it: Visit Glenveagh National Park and walk through the grounds from the main car park to Glenveagh Castle (rather than taking the shuttle). You might spot a deer or two - YG

Details: slieveleaguecliffs.ie; glenveaghnationalpark.ie

19 GO ON A BAT WALK IN GLENDALOUGH, CO. WICKLOW

Most of the talk about walks in Wicklow centres around the 127km Wicklow Way, and deservedly so. Glendalough has several hiking trails braided around its lakes too, combining beautiful ruins with a delicious breath of fresh air. But my favourite thing to do here is the bat walk. Held in August, an introductory talk is followed by a stroll down to the Information Office, where hundreds of bats spill out from the attic at dusk. You then follow them through the forest using bat detectors... the only thing spoiling the magic is the midges, so bring bug spray.
While you're at it: Spot the white-tailed sea eagles on Holy Island in Lough Derg (see mountshannoneagles.ie for more) - PÓC
Details: wicklowmountainsnationalpark.ie; visitwicklow.ie

20 PATRICK KAVANAGH COUNTRY, CO MONAGHAN

You've heard of Yeats Country. You know Joyce's Dublin. Seamus Heaney is soon to get his own visitor centre in Bellaghy. So why, oh why, is the gorgeously intimate landscape of Patrick Kavanagh's life and poetry so off-radar? Within a 13.5km walk, cycle or drive from the heritage centre in Inniskeen, you'll find the poet's grave (a modest wooden cross), the family homestead, Billy Brennan's Barn and Inniskeen Road, where the bicycles went by in twos and threes on that eponymous July evening. Monaghan has its magic, all right - PÓC

While you're at it: From its little chocolate shop to Castle Leslie, Glaslough is one of Ireland's most picture-perfect villages.

Details: patrickkavanaghcountry.com; monaghan-tourism.com

21 CLIMB A SEA STACK OFF THE COAST OF DONEGAL

New frontiers are hard come by in travel. So when an email lands telling you of a place fewer people have visited than the moon, you take note. Ireland's sea stacks are among the least-visited nooks in the land, and more than 100 of them sprout from the sea off Donegal. I drove to the edge of the earth to meet the man behind that email (Ian Miller of Unique Ascent), and he took me on a nerve-jangling taster up Berg Stack, near Glencolmbeille. There was zero signal on my phone, but I never felt more connected - PÓC

While you're at it: You don't have to go to the Arctic Circle to see the Northern Lights. Spot them right here in Inishowen (visitinishowen.com).

Details: uniqueascent.ie; mountaintraining.ie

22 AMBLE AROUND UISNEACH, CO WESTMEATH

If Ireland's Ancient East does one thing in 2016, I hope it is to shine the spotlight on the Hill of Uisneach. Fáilte Ireland's new tourism proposition aims to bring 5,000 years of heritage and storytelling to life, and this unassuming landscape, once held as a gateway to the mythical fifth province of Mide, crystallises the con-

» MORE OVERLEAF

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cept in one sweet site visit. Among the rolling hills you'll find amazing views, ancient eskers, rich Celtic history and modern artworks. Visits are by guided tour — book one before the secret gets out - *PÓC*
While you're at it: The Seven Wonders of Fore include water that won't boil, a tree that won't burn and a monastery in a bog. Intrigued? Take a drive to nearby Fore Abbey and all will be revealed...

Details: uisneach.ie; discoverireland.ie

23 GET TO A FESTIVAL IN GALWAY

In summer, it seems like every weekend is host to a fiesta of some sort, whether it's a ginormous music festival or a tiny village bash. But Galway is the king of festival season — from the summer races to the Film Fleadh, from the September Oyster Festival to the explosion of theatrics, music and art that is the annual Arts Festival. The streets are alive with performance, with illuminated puppetry taking centre stage. There's a cracking food scene in Galway all year round, so keep an eye out for the April food festival too - *NB*

While you're at it: Grab a bite at Kai or Loam, the city's newest recipient of a Michelin star.

Details: giat.ie; discoverireland.ie

24 DRIVE SLEA HEAD, CO KERRY

You can't get more Wild Atlantic Way than this half-day drive on the Dingle Peninsula, with every type of coastal scenery from sea cliffs to golden beaches and those lovely stretches of single-lane cliffside road. Start in the town of Dingle and stop off at Ventry Beach to feel the sand between your toes. Look out for the mysterious Blasket Islands offshore, and learn about them at the Blasket Centre at Dunquin (Dún Chaoin). The stories of island life may make you feel emotional, or just remind you of reading *Peig* in school - *YG*

While you're at it: Kerry's Skellig Islands recently featured in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Boat trips are seasonal and weather-dependent, but you can get a great view from the Ballinskelligs Peninsula too.

Details: dingle-peninsula.ie; skelligexperience.com

25 SLEEP ON AN ISLAND

There's something relaxing about being on an island — as soon as you step onto a boat and take in that sea air, it can feel like you've left all stress behind on the mainland. There are hundreds of islands all around our coast to discover; large or small, grassy or rocky. The Aran Islands in Co Galway are always popular but further north, Inishbofin has long walking trails, deserted beaches, birdwatching and horse-riding - *YG*



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While you're at it: For a royal welcome, take a trip out to Tory Island in Co Donegal where you'll be greeted by the King, Patsy Dan Rogers, or enjoy superb seafood at Inis Meáin suites.

Details: inishbofin.com; theadventureislands.com

26 STEP INTO THE HOLE IN THE WALL, KILKENNY

The first time I chanced on this offbeat wine bar in Kilkenny, I ended up writing words of Irish on a piece of paper while watching a documentary on George Clooney. The second time, I got chatting to a group of Canadian visitors who had just been playing hurling. It's that kind of place — and that's not even starting on the old Tudor building itself, hidden away down one of Kilkenny's magical medieval alleyways.

Dr. Michael Conway is the modest visionary behind this little gem. Stay long enough, and you may forget the rest of Kilkenny entirely - *PÓC*

While you're at it: Kilkenny boasts some killer shopping stops around its Medieval Mile — try Folkster and A Slice of Heaven for starters.

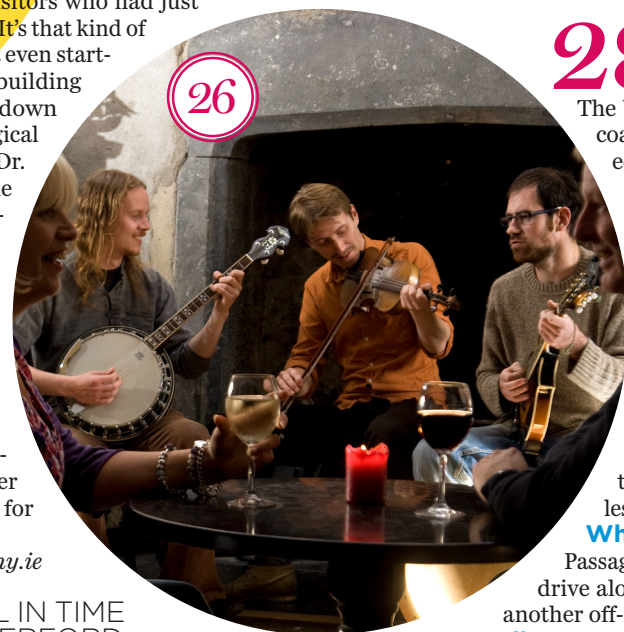
Details: visitkilkenny.ie

27 TRAVEL IN TIME IN WATERFORD

Waterford is Ireland's oldest city,

a port founded by Vikings, bolstered by Normans, and electrified by 21st century festivals like Spraoi and Winterl. It has its unfortunate modern developments, but a stroll around the brilliantly intimate Viking Triangle brings you back through the centuries. Reginald's Tower, the Medieval Museum and Bishop's Palace form the best museum quarter outside of Dublin - and don't miss the hidden gem that is Cathedral Square - *PÓC*
While you're at it: Drive deep into the Comeragh Mountains for a walk to Mahon Falls, followed by a coastal bite at Dungarvan or Ardmore.

Details: waterfordtreasures.com; visitwaterford.com



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28 DRIVE THE HOOK PENINSULA, CO WEXFORD

The Wild Atlantic Way is the Irish coastal drive *du jour*, and deservedly so. But Ireland's seaboard doesn't stop at Kinsale, as you'll discover within a few short minutes of this wonderful Wexford nook. From the old-school ferry at Passage East to the 800-year-old lighthouse at its tip; from the poise of Dunbrody House to the petrifying tours of Loftus Hall (celebrating its 666th anniversary in 2016), it's a day out to cherish. And you'll do it on less than half a tank of petrol, too.

While you're at it: Take the Passage East ferry and continue your drive along Waterford's Copper Coast, another off-radar gem - *PÓC*

Details: hookpeninsula.com; visitwexford.ie

29 VISIT "CRAGGY ISLAND" & FATHER TED'S HOUSE, CO CLARE

It's hard to believe that more than 20 years have passed since *Father Ted* burst onto our screens. It's even harder to find someone who doesn't have a soft spot for the series, which is why catching a glimpse of the parochial house is such a thrill. The house itself is found alongside several other locations in the Burren (including the Ailwee Caves), and the owners do a lovely cup of tea and cake (€10pp). Superfans can up the ante with a ticket to Tedfest, the annual festival on Inis Mór. It's mad, Ted - *NB*

While you're at it: Swap the cassock for a bodhrán at the Willy Clancy festival, held each summer in Clare.

Details: fathertedshouse.com; tedfest.org

30 VISIT THE SOUTHERN TIP OF IRELAND, CO. CORK

When you get to the very bottom of Ireland, at Mizen Head, there's a bridge across a gorge. On the other side, set on a tiny rocky outcrop above the wild waters of the Atlantic is Mizen Head Signal Station which was home to three light keepers until 1993. The Mizen Centre museum sets the scene but it's not until you walk down the 99 steps and then get yourself across the bridge that you feel the power of the ocean and the isolation that the keepers must have experienced in times past.

While you're at it: Ireland's most southerly point is the nearby Brow Head. Check out Ireland's most northerly point too at Malin Head on the Inishowen peninsula in Co Donegal.

Details: mizenhead.ie; malinhead.ie; wildatlanticway.com



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