

GREAT IRELAND ROADTRIPS

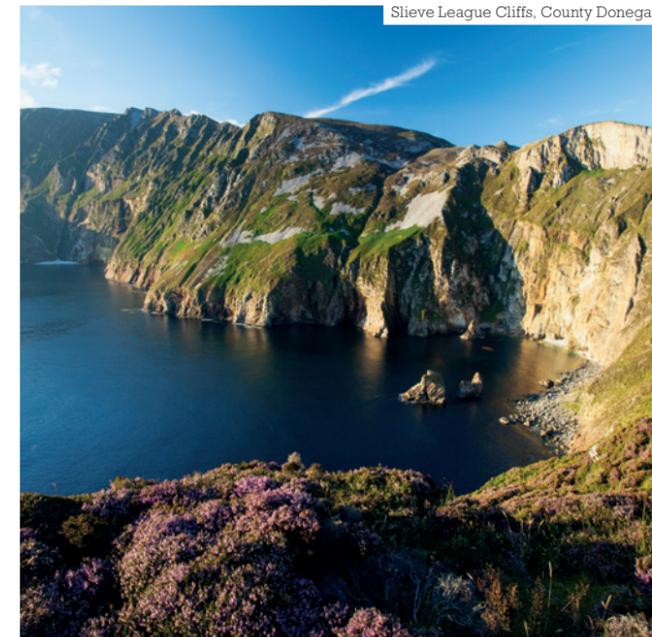
From charming coastal villages to spectacular natural wonders, taking to the road on the island of Ireland reveals surprises at every turn



Mount Errigal, County Donegal



Clew Bay, County Mayo



Slieve League Cliffs, County Donegal

THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY

By Yvonne Gordon

We're standing at the summit of Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holiest mountain, warmed by the sun as we marvel at the scene before us. From a height of around 2,500ft, we have a bird's-eye view over Clew Bay in County Mayo, with its vast scattering of islands. Across the bay, there's the Nephin Beg Range of mountains and Achill Island, while below us is the village of Murrisk, where we went horse riding on the beach earlier that morning.

We're exploring the Wild Atlantic Way, a 1,500-mile fully defined coastal touring route through some of Ireland's most beautiful places, from wild and rugged Donegal in the northwest, down along a coastline that has been shaped and carved by the Atlantic, to the village of Kinsale in County Cork, famed for its delicious seafood.

As we admire the scenery, a cloud passes below, completely transforming the tones of the bay. As it clears, a double rainbow forms. This is what happens on the edge of western Europe – colors and scenes change dramatically as you explore the mountains, beaches, islands, and heritage sites along the coast.

There's so much to do and see along this coastline. Even in just one area of County Mayo, we've swapped four wheels for two and cycled the 26-mile Great Western Greenway, an off-road trail set on an old railway line. We've driven the Atlantic Drive on Achill Island, Ireland's largest



🕒 1,500 miles 🕒 Up to 20 days

island, and we've toured Westport House, an 18th century stately home.

We started our drive in County Donegal, exploring the dramatic Fanad Head peninsula before traveling south, stopping off at the Slieve League cliffs, which reach to 2,000ft. We've had fun surfing lessons, visited the grave of poet W.B. Yeats, driven along a fjord, and marveled at ancient passage tombs.

We've had adventures all along the way and there will be lots more to come, as we drive south towards Dingle and the Ring of Kerry in County Kerry, with all the wonderful possibilities that await there.



Liss Ard Estate, County Cork

Along the way

VISIT

Visit the award-winning Mizzen Head Signal Station on the Mizzen Peninsula, with a bridge that spans a stunning gorge. Watch the big-wave surfers at Mullaghmore in County Sligo or explore the mountains, lakes, forests, and castle of Glenveagh National Park, County Donegal.

EAT

Taste smoked Atlantic salmon at the Burren Smokehouse in Lisdoonvarna, County Clare. Enjoy fresh Galway oysters, brown bread, and creamy Guinness in a thatched cottage at Morans Oyster Cottage in Kilcolgan, County Galway. Or try the award-winning Kitchen restaurant in Sligo town, where traditional dishes are given a contemporary twist.

SLEEP

For five-star luxury with beautiful views, choose the award-winning Park Hotel Kenmare in County Kerry, or to hear the Atlantic waves rolling in, make your way to The Sandhouse Hotel on Rosstown Beach in County Donegal. The delightful Liss Ard Estate in Skibbereen, County Cork, makes an excellent choice for a modern take on traditional Georgian luxury in beautifully scenic surrounds.