

From cool coves and hidden hikes to the best chips and ice cream, *Pól Ó Conghaile*, *Nicola Brady* and *Yvonne Gordon* have the ultimate summer guide to Ireland's coastline

1 INISHOWEN'S ULTIMATE ADVENTURE

Where: Inishowen, Co Donegal
Why: Donegal joined the ranks of galaxies far, far away when *Star Wars* touched down for a location shoot. Join Bren Whelan on a stellar journey of your own at Inishowen Head, where challenges over a half-day include hikes, scrambles, climbing and abseiling, as well as a ridge walk across the narrows of Inishowen Head. You'll see hidden sea caves, ridiculous wildlife, and take Instagrams for the ages. — *PÓC*
Details: donegalcombing.ie; from €55pp.
Next up: You've earned a treat. Get it at Caffé Banba (caffebanba.com), Ireland's most northerly bakery and shop.

2 PIZZA & BEER IN RATHMULLAN

Where: Rathmullan House, Co Donegal
Why: Is there anything better than a perfectly blistered pizza with an ice-cold beer on the side? No, there is not. In the Blue Book's gorgeous Rathmullan House, you can indulge in both in The Tap Room. Order up a Funghi, topped with mushrooms and wild garlic foraged on site, along with an Irish craft beer from local Kinnegar Brewing. It's exactly what you need after a long walk on the beach. — *NB*
Details: rathmullanhouse.com; pizzas from €12.50.
Next up: Head to the Fanad Peninsula for a spot of sea kayaking; donegalseakayaking.com

3 A BEACH WITH NO ROADS

Where: Trá Mór, Dunfanaghy, Co Donegal
Why: You won't find cars lining the roads to this beautiful beach on Horn Head. That's because there are no roads. Access is via a 30-minute-or-so walk through the sand dunes from the old stone arch bridge near Dunfanaghy. As you walk, the sound of traffic recedes, the roar of waves rises, and you soon find yourself on a wild and windswept strand. Alas, swimming is unsafe. — *PÓC*
Details: govisitdonegal.com
Next up: Stay at Breac House (breac.house) for coolly curated design and food on the Horn Head peninsula.

4 THE WORLD'S MOST SCENIC AIRPORT

Where: Carrickfinn, Co Donegal
Why: This tiny strip has been voted the world's most scenic landing for two years running — besting the likes of London City Airport and Saint Martin in the process. Flights operate from Dublin and Glasgow with Aer Lingus Regional, and if the weather co-operates, you're in for a treat on take-off and landing. Last time I visited, I went from airplane steps to exit in just over one minute, and the sole security guard was chatting away with passengers in Irish. — *PÓC*
Details: donegalairport.ie; aerlingus.com
Next up: Grab a window seat at the Bar Bistro in Dungloe's refurbished Waterfront Hotel (waterfronthoteldungloe.ie).

When we see the sea, something clicks. Round that last band, catch first sight of the water, hear the roar of the surf, feel the air on your face, taste the salt on your lips. It's a chemical reaction. It carbonates us.

Why? Of course, there's the obvious stuff. The sense of escape, the views, the stolen moments. The fact that good weather is so rare, we know to treasure it. And we do treasure it.

But it goes deeper. The sea stokes childhood memories — of seaside resorts, of racing down to the water only to feel the first freeze hit your toes and racing back out again. Of 99s and the shocking pleasure in a sneaky bag of chips. Of poking jellyfish with sticks, forgetting the Factor 50, and finding sand in places you didn't even know you had.

And it goes deeper still. We're an island nation, after all. Nobody lives more than 100km from the coast. We've grown up with legends of storms and seal people, stories of Vikings, St Brendan and the Spanish Armada, the legacy of famine ships and emigration over the water, the real lives of fishing communities and seaside tourism. On one coast, James Joyce opened *Ulysses* with views of the 'snot-green' sea. On the other, Seamus Heaney found a shoreline to "catch the heart off guard and blow it open".

In compiling our 50 seaside secrets, we've tried to choose less obvious moments. The Irish coast is thousands of kilometres long, with brilliant biodiversity and enough nooks and crannies for a lifetime of exploration. We've skipped stuff we all know — the Brittas Bays and Giant's Causeways of this world — to give oxygen to smaller moments. Hopefully, they click for you.

5 WALK ONE MAN'S PASS

Where: Slieve League, Co Donegal
Why: With a sheer drop of 600m to the wild ocean below, the cliffs at Slieve League give a sense of the power of the Atlantic. It's a pleasant walk from the lower car park to the main viewing point, but the extra brave can continue on to One Man's Pass (so named as it's just wide enough for one person) for even more dazzling views right over to the mountains of Sligo and Donegal Bay. — *YG*
Details: sliabhliag.com
Next up: Scoff scampi and calamari at the Killybegs Seafood Shack (facebook.com/killybegsseafoodshack). Its chowder was named best in Ireland this year, too.

6 SWIM AT BISHOP'S POOL

Where: Mullaghmore, Co Sligo
Why: Ever race to the coast on a sunny day, only to be put off by the freezing cold waves when you get there? Well, at Bishop's Pool you won't get any of that. This natural rock pool is like a little protected cove, with deep waters that get far warmer than the sea, and flat, wide stones perfect for sunbathing. Views over Donegal Bay are gorgeous, too. — *NB*
Details: sligotourism.ie
Next up: Grab a bite in Langs of Grange — it's one of the few pubs left with a grocery store in the bar; langs.ie

7 CAFÉ PERFECTION AT PUDDING ROW

Where: Easkey, Co Sligo
Why: Travel the length and breadth of Ireland, and you'd be hard pushed to find a café as wonderful as Pudding Row. Chef proprietor Dervla James came home to Easkey to set up shop in 2015, and since then it's been flying, with people flocking from across the land to get their fill of homemade bagels, sea salt caramel squares and perfect

slabs of Victoria sponge. Save room for one of her devilish doughnuts, too. — *NB*
Details: puddingrow.ie
Next up: Walk the beach and grab a pint at The Beach Bar in Aughris Head; thebeachbarsligo.com

8 STRANDHILL'S SECRET BEACH

Where: Strandhill, Co Sligo
Why: Most visitors to Strandhill walk left at the sea and along the dunes and open sands. But turn right, cross the little runway at the airport (always a thrill), and you'll soon reach the ruins of Killaspugbrone church. And while you can never swim at the main beach in Strandhill, there's a calm little bay just to the right of this old church where you can safely dip into the water (with caution, obviously). — *NB*
Details: gostrandhill.com
Next up: Take a foraging tour with Wild Atlantic Cultural Tours (wildatlanticculturaltours.com), or an old-school seaweed bath in Enniscrone (kilcullensseaweed.net).

9 MULLET OVER IN MAYO

Where: Mullet Peninsula
Why: "Dear Lord, be good to me. The sea is so wide; and my boat is so small." So reads an inscription at Scotchport, a stony beach on Mayo's remote Mullet Peninsula. This wild Erris outcrop, attached like a quotation mark to Mayo's northwest corner, is full of empty beaches, cliff walks (try the 5km Erris Head Loop, looking out for the stony 'EIRE' sign). Standing above the gashes and sea stacks, the sea does indeed seem wide, and the boats seriously small. — *PÓC*
Details: mayonorth.ie; irishtrails.ie
Next up: Stay at Belmullet Coast Guard Station (belmulletcgs.com). Driving east, stop for 'Mr Tipp's Chips' at Patsy and Wanda O'Neill's Tea by the Sea at Downpatrick Head.

10 BASKING SHARKS IN THE BAY

Where: Keem Bay, Achill Island
Why: Keem Bay was once the site of a basking shark fishery that contributed to a drastic decline in species population, but this summer, several sharks were spotted



feeding unhindered in the bay. The sharks, up to 25 feet long, were even joined by dolphins. If you go, of course, we can't guarantee they'll be there... but we can guarantee a beach to take your breath away. — *PÓC*
Details: achilltourism.com; wildatlanticway.com
Next up: Get a bird's eye view of this awesome beach, and nearby coast and corrie lakes, on a guided trek with Walk West Ireland (facebook.com/walkwestireland).

11 SWIM CLARE ISLAND'S COVE

Where: Clare Island, Co Mayo
Why: The main beach on Clare Island isn't necessarily the prettiest. But hike or cycle to The Cove, and you'll find a gorgeous little wild swimming spot, right between the

craggy cliffs. Probably best for experienced swimmers, this is a little dream of a cove, and just a short hop from the gorgeous Clare Island Lighthouse. — *NB*
Details: clareisland.ie
Next up: Stay in one of the new snugs at Clare Island Lighthouse (clareislandlighthouse.com). Prices from €300 for two including dinner.

12 THE MISUNDERSTOOD HERON

Where: Derrynacleigh, Co Galway
Why: Remember the days when, if you were in the middle of the countryside and peckish, the best you could hope for was a crappy coffee and a plastic sandwich from a garage? Well, those days are gone. Out in Connemara, among the gorgeous backdrop of Killary Bay, this food truck doles out the absolute best in Irish produce and seafood — think smoked salmon on crusty sourdough, gourmet empanadas and, of course, mussels from the bay just behind their backs.
Details: facebook.com/misunderstoodheron
Next up: Head out on the water for a boat tour of the Killary Fjord; killaryfjord.com

13 GO OVER TO OMEY

Where: Claddaghduff, Co Galway
Why: There are no roads to Omeý Island. To get there, you need to wait for low tide, and ease the car or bike over the exposed sandy causeway... a weirdly nerve-wracking sensation even when the sea is miles →



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away. When you get there, walk or drive to the end of the road, or walk around the island to the right, passing the 'sunken' St Feichin's Church and all kinds of *Nat Geo*-style views en route. Just don't forget to return to the mainland before the tide comes in! — *PÓC & YG*
Details: Check tide times at sailing.ie/tides/galway
Next up: Drive the Sky Road, and stay over at carbon-neutral campsite, Clifden Eco Beach (clifdenecocamping.ie).

14 DERRYGIMLAGH BOG
Where: Ballinaboy, Co Galway
Why: We might hop over the pond without a care nowadays (thanks, US Preclearance!), but 100 years ago that wasn't the case. On June 15, 1919, John Alcock and Arthur Brown touched down in the bogland of Derrygimlagh, after setting off from Newfoundland the day before. The pair were the first to successfully fly non-stop over the Atlantic. Rent a bike in Clifden and tour around the area on two wheels. — *NB*
Details: wildatlanticway.com
Next up: Stay at the Connemara National Park Hostel, Letterfrack Lodge (connemaranationalpark.com), and don't leave without eating at its lovely Lodge Restaurant.

15 WALK INISHTURK
Where: Co Mayo
Why: Nine miles out to sea, Inishturk is a small island (it is just 5km x 2.5km), but a beautiful escape for walkers and those interested in nature and bird life. Take to some of the island's country lanes or the two main looped walks to explore rocky cliffs, sea stacks and sandy beaches. Or take a boat trip from the harbour to go angling in the surrounding waters. — *YG*
Details: inishturkisland.com
Next up: Walk on Carraroe's 'coral' beach. Trá an Dóilín's sand is actually made of coralline algae known as maerl.

16 WORM YOUR WAY TO POLL NA BPEIST
Where: Inis Mór, Aran Islands, Co Galway
Why: Translated from the Irish as the 'worm hole', Poll na bPeist is a rectangular-shaped pool set at the base of the cliffs at Dún Aonghasa on Inis Mór. The pool, also known as Serpent's Lair, fills with seawater from beneath the cliffs, and looks more manmade than a natural wonder — make sure sea conditions are calm before planning a visit. Red Bull has held famous cliff-diving events here. — *YG*
Details: Safety first. This walk is for experienced hikers, as there's a cliff and rock walk involved.
Next up: Dine and stay at Inis Meán Restaurant & Suites (inismeain.com). Advance booking is a must.

17 SHUCK OFF!
Where: Flaggy Shore, Co Clare
Why: Learn how to shuck oysters (and not chop your fingers off) thanks to this expert experience from local oyster experts Redbank Food Company. It's part of a Taste the Atlantic foodie trail initiative by Fáilte Ireland and Bord Iascaigh Mhara, which aims to get visitors up close and personal with the places their seafood comes from. All in a landscape which inspired poet Seamus Heaney. — *PÓC*
Details: Booking essential (airbnb.ie/experiences/231945). Workshops cost €45pp with oysters and wine.
Next up: Nab an ice cream at Café Linnalla, created using milk from a family farm (linnallaiycecream.ie).

18 WALK TO THE CLIFFS OF MOHER
Where: Doolin, Co Clare
Why: Over a million people visit the Cliffs of Moher every year. A tiny fraction walks. Join them by starting out from Doolin, following the 8km cliff path as it rises to heights of over 700 feet. Developed together with local land-owners, the trail is a stunner — from pops of pink sea thrift to teeming bird life and, of course, the cliffs themselves. You can also continue south from the cliffs towards Hag's Head and Liscannor — 20km in total. — *PÓC*
Details: cliffsofmoher.ie; wildatlanticway.com
Next up: See the cliffs from below on a cruise (doolin2aran-ferries.com), and follow in Metallica's footsteps with a bite at Vaughan's of Liscannor (vaughans.ie).



19 100PC PURE CAMPING
Where: Loop Head, Co Clare
Why: If you fancy camping, but not the bit where you wrestle with tent poles as the wind whips around you, then head to Pure Camping, where all of the work is done for you. You can book one of their canvas bell tents or eco wooden cabins, and reap all of the benefits without any of the effort. — *NB*
Details: purecamping.ie; bell tents from €60 a night. See also loophead.ie
Next up: Dip into The Long Dock in Carrigaholt for a dreamily cosy fireside pint and sumptuous local *seafood*; thelongdock.com

20 SEE SCATTERY ISLAND
Where: Off Kilrush, Co Clare
Why: Sitting at the mouth of the River Shannon, Scattery Island is the perfect peaceful escape for a few hours. Boat trips depart regularly from Kilrush marina (taking around 20 minutes) and once you get to the island, you can take a (free) tour of the monastic site, walk to an old military battery, have a picnic or just enjoy the wild bird and plant life, spending around two hours in total. — *YG*
Details: scatteryislandtours.com; adults €20, children €10.
Next up: Make it a combo package by adding on a mini estuary cruise or a dolphin-watching trip.

21 DRIVE THE SHANNON ESTUARY WAY
Where: Co Limerick and Co Clare
Why: The Shannon Estuary Way is a 207km looped drive taking you from Limerick City along the shores of the estuary, with all sorts of heritage sites along the way — from the Franciscan Friary at Askeaton to the Foynes Flying Boat Museum. Walk the short Knight's Walk in the village of Glin, then take the ferry from Tarbert to Killimer, keeping a look out for dolphins, before driving back along the Co Clare side, stopping at Clarecastle village or Bunratty Castle and Folk Park. — *YG*
Details: wildatlanticway.com; limerick.ie
Next up: Rest your head with Estuary views at Beds of Silk (bedsofsilk.com), a luxury glamping site at Labasheeda.

22 NUN'S BEACH
Where: Ballybunion, Co Kerry
Why: Ballybunion has its old Men's and Ladies' beaches. Follow the Cliff Walk along the coast, however, and you'll find one even more beautiful — Nuns' Beach, a horseshoe-shaped cove just north of the castle. It's beneath a convent, and the sea stack in the middle is known as the Virgin Rock. Admire the view, but don't climb down here — head back to the main beaches for swimming. — *PÓC*
Details: ballybunion.ie; gokerry.ie

Next up: Look for the Nine Daughters blowhole. After hearing that his daughters were set to elope with nine Vikings, a local chieftain is said to have tossed them into it!

23 SLEEP IN PEIG'S COTTAGE
Where: Great Blasket Island, Co Kerry
Why: A boat trip to the Blaskets is one of the best things you can do on this little island of ours. These islands mark the most westerly point in Ireland, and the crystal-clear waters that line the shores are heavenly. Head out to Great Blasket Island to explore Trá Bán and the old stone cottage husks (one has been restored by the OPW). You can even sleep in Peig Sayers' cottage. — *NB*
Details: greatblasketisland.net; private rooms from €100 per night (April–Oct); boat tours from €60.
Next up: Pop into Caifé na Trá in Dunquin for a cuppa; facebook.com/caifenaatra

24 DISCOVER SEAWEED
Where: Caherdaniel, Co Kerry
Why: The Wild Atlantic Way has its big moments, and its small wonders. Seaweed is one of those. Take a Seaweed Discovery Workshop with John Fitzgerald of Atlantic Irish Seaweed, a hands-on introduction to everything from bubbly bladderwrack to "the truffle of the sea" (the peppery-pungent dulse, or dillisk). The workshops wind up with a surprising tasting lunch. — *PÓC*
Details: atlanticirishseaweed.com; from around €50pp.
Next up: Done the Ring of Kerry? Drive the Skellig Ring, with a stop at the Skelligs Chocolate Factory.

25 RIDE THE DURSEY CABLE CAR
Where: Beara Peninsula, Co Cork
Why: OK, this might not be for those with a fear of heights. But if you're able, Ireland's only cable car (and the only one in Europe to go over the sea) is a thrill. The short ride will give you an amazing view over the waters of Dursery Sound below. When you disembark, leave time to explore the gorgeous little island and its walking trails. — *NB*
Details: durseysisland.ie; €10 return.
Next up: Reward yourself with a bowl of mussels and a pint at Helen's Bar in Lauraigh.

26 THE LIGHTHOUSE WALK
Where: Sheep's Head, Co Cork
Why: The Sheep's Head is the forgotten child of Irish peninsulas... with lots of space to yourself.
Details: The short, 4.2km lighthouse loop shouldn't take more than an hour and a half, taking you from the car park at Tooreen (follow the blue arrows), from the Dunmanus to Bantry side of the peninsula with views you'll be Instagramming just as soon as you return to phone reception. — *PÓC*
Details: thesheepsheadway.ie

Next up: Stay at Blair's Cove (blairscove.ie) on Dunmanus Bay. Four courtyard suites overlook the water.

27 TAKE THE FASTNET ROCK TOUR
Where: Schull or Baltimore, Co Cork
Why: Set on a lonely offshore rock, the iconic Fastnet Lighthouse has always had an air of mystery — and for many of those who emigrated to America by ship in past times, it was the last Irish structure they saw. Explore some of the rock's secrets on this new day tour, which includes a stop at the Fastnet exhibition on Cape Clear Island as well as a trip out around the rock by ferry. — *YG*
Details: fastnettour.com; adults €40.
Next up: Explore the Gaeltacht island of Cape Clear (it has a storytelling festival in September (capeclearisland.ie)).

28 SPLITTING HEIRS
Where: Heir Island, Co Cork
Why: There's Paris, France; and there's Paris, Co Cork. Just a five-minute boat trip from Cunnamore Pier, Heir Island is like a little renaissance rock in Roaringwater Bay. Its tiny hamlet is called Paris (just don't expect the Eiffel Tower), and the island hosts a bread-making school (thefirehouse.ie), cookery school (islandcottage.com) and yoga retreat (heirislandretreat.ie). — *PÓC*
Details: heirisland.ie
Next up: Take a starlight/moonlight kayaking adventure with Atlantic Sea Kayaking (atlanticseakayaking.com).

29 TUCK INTO THE FOOD DEPOT
Where: Courtmacsherry, Co Cork
Why: If you're a fan of gourmet street food, you'll go nuts for Food Depot. This funky little food truck is run by *MasterChef* winner Diana Dodog, and from this seaside base she whips up dishes packed with flavour, like pork belly banh-mi wraps and grilled halloumi buddha bowls. It's only open at weekends, and prepare to queue... — *NB*
Details: fooddepotireland.com
Next up: Take a walk at beautiful Dunworly Bay.

30 WALK BY PARADISE
Where: Ballycotton, Co Cork
Why: The walk from Ballycotton to Ballyandreen beach sets you up with ocean on one side and sloping meadows on the other. You'll pass a legendary local swim spot known as 'Paradise', and the track continues, over plenty of stiles, for five miles to the beach. Admire stonking views of the local lighthouse (boat tours are also available), and finish with seafood at the Bayview Hotel — *PÓC*
Details: ballycotton.ie; thebayviewhotel.com
Next up: Stay at the newly restored lighthouse keeper's house in Youghal (airbnb.ie/rooms/21929963).

31 CHILL ON THE COPPER COAST
Where: Co Waterford
Why: You've heard of the Wild Atlantic Way. But what about Waterford's Copper Coast? Stretching roughly



40km between Tramore and Dungarvan, it's a criminally underrated range of coves, sea stacks and copper mining heritage. Stradbally is a standout beach — from the moment you spot the ocean between little gaps of forest, you'll be in love. Watch out for Tramore's Metal Man, too — it was erected by Lloyd's of London to stave off shipwrecks. — *NB & PÓC*
Details: coppercoastgeopark.com; visitwaterford.com
Next up: Cycle a stretch of the Waterford Greenway. Dungarven to Durrow has champion coastal views.


32 SHIPWRECK & SPA
Where: Ardmore, Co Waterford
Why: You never really need a reason to walk the cliffs at Ardmore. Whether you're desperately scanning the sea for dolphins (top tip — there's a whale-watching post at the top where people share their daily spots) or just out to blow off the cobwebs, you're always in for a treat. Keep an eye out for the rusty shipwreck of the Samson crane barge, which ran aground in 1987. — *NB*
Details: irishtrails.ie; approx 4km (one hour).
Next up: Stay at the Cliff House, one of the finest seaside hotels in the land, and book one of their new outdoor spa treatments. cliffhousehotel.ie, rooms from €199.

33 FISH... ANDCHIPS
Where: Dungarvan, Co Waterford
Why: Anyone who has been to the seaside has had a monstrous hankering for fish 'n' chips. AndChips, a cool new chipper serving whatever's fresh that day, is the place to slake it. You might find hake, plaice or ling, all encased in a perfect, smackable batter, with homemade tartare sauce, mushy peas, and chips you'll be dreaming of for years to come. Take it out to the harbour and eat it right on the water's edge — when I did the same a few weeks back, I saw some beautiful jellyfish swimming by my feet. — *NB*
Details: andchips.ie; fish and chips from €9.50.
Next up: A seaweed bath at Sólás na Mara; solashnamara.ie →



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A morning excursion to the Peterhof Palace and Park

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34 DUNMORE EAST DELIGHTS

Where: Co Waterford
Why: Dunmore East sits right at the mouth of the Waterford Estuary, and its short cliff walk brings you west along a path from the former convent. Look out for seabirds like gulls, fulmars and kittiwakes along the 2km route, as well as passing seals, dolphins or whales. — YG
Details: Start from the parking area behind the Old Convent
Next up: Nab some fresh fish and chips from the East Pier food truck (on Facebook) in the harbour.

35 BURIED TREASURE ON THE BEACH

Where: Dollar Bay, Co Wexford
Why: There's no end of stories along the south-east coast, but my favourite is that of the buried treasure at Dollar Bay. Pirates are said to have stashed a hoard including Spanish dollars here in the 1700s, though they were thwarted before they could come back to recover it (if you find it, we'll accept a 10pc commission). — POC
Details: visitwexford.ie
Next up: Continue your circuit of the Hook, taking in the lighthouse, Baginbun beach and the spooky Loftus House.

36 SALTEES & CHIPS

Where: Kilmore Quay, Co Wexford
Why: The Great and Little Saltee Islands lie a 5km boat trip from Kilmore Quay, offering one of the best birdwatching trips on the coast. The islands are privately owned (the Great Saltee even boasts a self-styled 'prince'), with visits limited to between 11am and 4.30pm. They're ideal for nature walks and bird-watching, with the remains of ancient graves, ring forts and a promontory fort to see, too. — YG & POC
Details: salteeislands.info; visitkilmorequay.ie
Next up: When you get back, order lemon sole and chips from the Saltee Chipper at Kilmore Quay.

37 WALK RAVEN POINT

Where: Curracloe, Co Wexford
Why: Raven Point Wood lies between Wexford's slobes and a strand voted *Ireland's Favourite Beach* in this year's Reader Travel Awards: Curracloe. A 7km loop will take you around the forested spit of land here in less than two hours, or you can just dip in for a bit and turn back... it's a spectacular and little-known escape on the east coast. — POC
Details: visitwexford.ie
Next up: Drive the R742 north to Courtown. Open farms, hidden beaches and foodie treats await.

38 BITE INTO A BUFFALO BURGER

Where: Cahore, Co Wexford
Why: "We're a little secret here," Patrick Hanley, who runs The Strand bar and restaurant with his wife, Aileen, told me. He means Cahore Point as much as the bar... though both are true. Wood-fired pizza and the 'Macamore burger' are highlights of a surprising menu — the latter made with local Macamore Buffalo, O'Neill's bacon jam and Wexford cheddar. Chow down after a walk around the Point, and lap up the views. "There are four big screens here," Pat says. "And they're all overlooking the water." — POC
Details: thestrandcahore.ie
Next up: Stay overnight at one of the new pods at Morriscastle Strand (morriscastlestrand.com).

39 SHINE ON SILVER STRAND

Where: Silver Strand, Co Wicklow
Why: The west coast doesn't have a monopoly on magical beaches. Here's a stunner in Ireland's Ancient East — a cove that starred on screen in *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Entry is via a private campsite, Wolohan's, so you'll need to pay €8–10 per car if you're not sleeping on site. — POC
Details: silverstrand.ie
Next up: The Bray to Greystones cliff walk is well known,



but you can also trek from Newcastle to Greystones along the coast.

40 SECRET GREYSTONES

Where: Greystones, Co Wicklow
Why: There's more to Greystones than the Cliff Walk and Happy Pear. Start with a lesser-known hike like the Little Sugar Loaf, before hitting the harbour. One little chipper, Sweeney's, is riding out the development here like Mr Fredrickson's house
Details: greystonesguide.ie
Next up: Head to the village for Pakistani fare, washed down with a Wicklow Wolf beer, at Daata; daata.ie

41 BIG IT UP ON BRAY HEAD

Where: Bray, Co Wicklow
Why: Looking for a seaside adventure near Dublin? Bray Adventures is just a short hop from the city, and from their hub you can leap onto a SUP board, paddle in a kayak or, for the real daredevils, go coastering (€49pp). You'll don a wetsuit and swim in the sea and into caves, climb rocks and then fling yourself off them. — NB
Details: brayadventures.ie
Next up: Go on a fat bike adventure; fatbikeadventures.ie

42 WALK THE GREAT SOUTH WALL

Where: Dublin
Why: Stretching from the foot of the Pigeon House Towers to the Poolbeg lighthouse, the Great South Wall is one of the capital's best-kept secrets. Originally commissioned to combat silting and shelter ships, the structure was completed in Dalkey granite by 1795, and remains a glorious path into Dublin Bay today. From here, views from Terminal 2 to the north to the Sugar Loaf in the south... just watch your step in windy weather. — POC
Next up: Stay in a Martello tower (martellotowersutton.com). It costs from €420 for two nights midweek.

43 VISIT IRELAND'S EYE

Where: Off Howth, Co Dublin
Why: This tiny island off north Dublin is full of interesting sea birds like gannets, gulls and puffins, and there's a long sandy beach which is perfect for swimming and picnics. There are return boats every hour so you can stay on the island as long as you like — check out the Martello tower and the old church ruins while you are enjoying the escape from the mainland. — YG
Details: islandferries.net; €15/€10pp.
Next up: Visit the Hurdy Gurdy Museum in a Martello tower in Howth. It's full of classic and vintage radios.

44 KILLER VIEWS AT CLOGHERHEAD

Where: Port Oriel, Co Louth
Why: The short walk around Clogherhead will put salt on your lips in jig time. As the only high, rocky headland between Dublin and the Mourne Mountains, the views are special too — ranging on my visit from Skerries to the Cooley Peninsula. The kerbstones around Newgrange were quarried here, and you can replace any lost calories with a warm bowl of chowder from the little stove bubbling away in Fisherman's Catch in Port Oriel. — POC
Details: fishermanscatch.ie
Next up: Head north to The Glyde Inn and its restaurant, Linn Duachaill. It won Pub of the Year prize at this year's Irish Pub Awards (theglydeinn.ie).

45 CYCLE THE CARLINGFORD GREENWAY

Where: Carlingford, Co Louth
Why: The latest of Ireland's greenways is this little stretch between Carlingford and Omeath, along the shores of the lough. It's only 7km long, so it's an easy one to tackle with the kids, and the views along the way are fabulous, with the mountains, green fields and, of course, the water all alongside you. — NB
Details: carlingfordandcooleypeninsula.ie
Next up: You can't come to Carlingford Lough without scoffing a few native oysters.

46 ST JOHN'S POINT

Where: Co Donegal
Why: There's something so dreamily romantic about lighthouses. And the one at St John's Point is a serious beauty — at the end of one of the longest peninsulas on the island, you couldn't ask for a cooler coastal setting. And you can stay in one of the lightkeeper's cottages, too. All your lighthouse fantasies? Fulfilled. — NB
Details: irishlandmark.com; rates from €451.
Next up: Head to the gorgeous Murlough Beach in Co Down.

47 A GHOST BY THE COAST

Where: Ballygally Castle Hotel, Co Antrim
Why: A ghost room! Climb the spiral staircase at this historic hotel (it dates from 1625) and you end up in a chilly room in which a black cloak is draped over a chair overlooking the ocean. Outside, the Mull of Kintyre can be seen on clear days, and panels tell the tragic story of a lady named Isabella, who leapt from these heights and occasionally returns to haunt visitors with rising temperatures and... the smell of vanilla. — POC
Details: hastingshotels.com/ballygally-castle
Next up: *Game of Thrones*-themed afternoon tea (£24/€27pp; 24 hours' notice required) with Kingslayer cupcakes and Baratheon Bread, anyone?

48 GET TO THE GOBBINS

Where: Islandmagee, Co Antrim
Why: Tie up your shoelaces and brace yourself, because a walk over the Gobbins cliff path isn't for the faint-hearted. What it is, though, is spectacular, taking in the wild coastal terrain of the Causeway Coast via steep steps, narrow pathways and soaring bridges. There have been several closures for renovations in recent years, but it's now open and taking bookings until November. — NB
Details: thegobbinscliffpath.com; £15/€17.
Next up: Call into Carrickfergus Castle, on the shore of Belfast Lough; discovernorthernireland.com

49 MAKE FOR MAEGDEN

Where: Bushmills, Co Antrim
Why: There's an art to making the perfect cheese toastie. And if you ask me, Maegden comes pretty damn close to perfection. From the hatch of this retro caravan parked up on the Causeway Coast, these toasties come overflowing with the best Irish cheeses, oozing out of buttery, tangy sourdough. Oh, and their brownie ice cream sandwiches are pure filth. — NB
Details: cheesemaegden.com, toasties from £6/€7.
Next up: Eat your way around the coast with Causeway Coast Foodie Tours; causewaycoastfoodietours.com



50 STAY AT THE WATERFALL CAVES

Where: Limavady, Co Derry
Why: These three subterranean, self-catering hideaways are like hobbit holes in Westeros. Scenes for *Game of Thrones* were filmed by Binevenagh Mountain nearby, and the Causeway Coast stretches fabulously in front of you. Fish in the lake, slink in the hot tub, and warm yourself by the fire pit — the caves were one of our Fab 50 best places to stay in Ireland for 2019. They're pet-friendly, too. — POC
Details: From £110/€123 per night; waterfallcaves.com
Next up: Check out nearby Dunluce Castle, a majestic medieval ruin perched on the edge of a moody basalt outcrop.

NB: All prices subject to availability and change.

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