

## THE INITIATIVE

by Yvonne Gordon



# Feeling the Blueways

Ireland's waterways are becoming the best avenues for touring the island

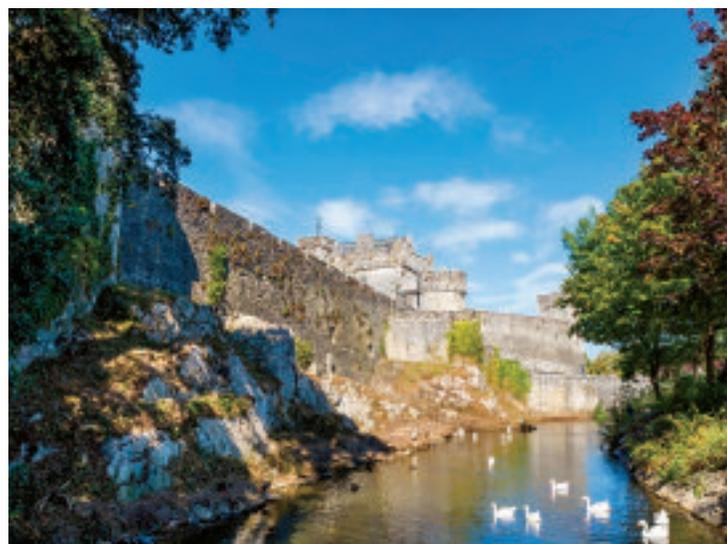
Ireland may be known as the Emerald Isle, but these days it's putting a different color front and center: blue.

Earlier this year, the country became the first in the world to establish accredited blueways—a series of recreational trails for people to explore and appreciate the island's waterways. So far three have been approved, allowing visitors to engage in activities ranging from hiking and cycling to swimming and kayaking along rivers, lakes, and canals, as well as take in historic and cultural landmarks. Here's how to enjoy this trio of trails.

### Suir Blueway Tipperary

Along the 32.9 miles of paddling trails from Carrick-on-Suir to Cahir, a kayaker might find everything from a whitewater slalom course to a placid 17th-century towpath populated with ducks and swans. Among the sites you'll pass are scenic arched bridges, apple orchards that provide fruit for Bulmers

(Magners) cider, and the impressively preserved 12th-century Cahir Castle, one of the largest castles in the country. There are also 13 miles of walking and cycling paths from which you can enjoy views of the Comeragh Mountains, in neighboring County Waterford, and much more. [tipperary.com](http://tipperary.com)



**From top:** kayaking under a bridge on the Suir Blueway Tipperary; the River Suir flows by Cahir Castle

### Lough Derg Blueway

A part of the River Shannon, Lough Derg sits between counties Tipperary, Clare, and Galway. The blueway runs along more than 100 miles of lakeshore, with 21 paddling trails in addition to walking and cycling routes. Those looking to get out on the water can kayak, sail, go paddleboarding, or take a tour on a cruise boat. On dry land, meanwhile, paths range in distance from a 1-mile walk in Portumna Forest Park to a 10.7-mile hike from Twomilegate to Scarriff. Heritage sites abound, with numerous historic castles and churches all around the lake, including the ruins of a 1,500-year-old monastic site on Holy Island. [discoverloughderg.ie](http://discoverloughderg.ie)

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### Boyne Blueway

This 21.7-mile stretch of river in Trim County Meath, 28 miles north of Dublin, is great for anyone looking for a relaxing day on the water. Boyne Valley Activities offers two-hour guided kayaking trips that are perfect for beginners, as well as historical rafting tours on which you can see the magnificent Anglo-Norman Trim Castle, which dates to 1173. (For more serious paddlers, the company also offers race training sessions.) Those who want to explore on foot can follow the Trim River Walk, which runs from the castle to the 13th-century village of Newtown. Either way, end your day with a pint and some traditional Irish music at the 118-year-old, family owned James Griffin Pub. [discoverboynevalley.ie](http://discoverboynevalley.ie)