



Prepared by: VisitIreland

HERITAGE TOWNS



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HERITAGE TOWNS

COUNTY CLARE

- **Killaloe – (Cil da Lua - Church of Do-Lua)** is named after St. Lua, an abbey from the sixth century, whose place of prayer can still be seen at Friar's Island. Located by the River Shannon and the Southern end of Lough Derg, Killaloe was one of the leading ecclesiastical centres in Munster. One of the focal points of Killaloe is St. Flannan's Cathedral, built by King Donal Mor O'Brien. An Ogham stone was found buried on the church grounds with Ogham and Runic (Celtic and Viking) inscriptions requesting a blessing for Thorgrim, who carved it.
- **Kilrush – (Cill Rois - Peninsula Church)** is located near the mouth of the Shannon Estuary. Kilrush has a restored walled garden and 420 acres of woodlands. The town has an interesting maritime history; Scattery Island is two miles off shore and was a monastic settlement at the time of the Viking raids along the West coast. The round tower that served as their refuge still stands today. The waters around Kilrush are inhabited by Bottlenose Dolphins.

COUNTY CORK

- **Clonakilty** – Is a place of tall spires, towers and historic buildings. The town has a trading and industrial history. It offers splendid scenery and many local attractions and activities including: gardens, horse riding, water sports and nightlife with traditional music and dance.
- **Cobh – (An Cobh - haven)** Pronounced "cove" was the principal port of emigration for over two million Irish departing in search of a better life. The Interpretive Centre tells the history of Irish emigration from the "Great Hunger" to the end of the great ocean liner era. It also contains an extensive collection of Irish, British and American military history. Cobh has the dubious distinction of being the last port of call for the ill-fated voyages of both the RMS Titanic and the RMS Lusitania.

There are three islands in Cork Harbor joined by bridges. Cobh is on Great Island. The other two islands are Little Island and Fota. Fota Island is an impressive animal park with over 70 species of exotic wildlife in an open, natural environment.

- **Kinsale – (Cionn Tsaile -tide head)** was founded by the Anglo-Normans in 1177. A major turning point in Irish history took place at the Battle of Kinsale in 1601 when the Irish and their Spanish allies fought the English. Unfortunately, the English won. The Irish Earls, O'Neill and O'Donnell fled to the continent a few years later. Their exodus is referred to as "The Flight of Earls". The Flight of Earls marked the end of the "Gaelic Order" in Ireland. After the Battle of Kinsale the English began the "Plantation of Ulster" with loyal English and Scottish settlers.



Kinsale is a small fishing village and has become a popular tourist spot. Kinsale is often referred to as the "Gourmet Capital of Ireland" and offers an exceptional array of restaurants. It is also bursting with unique shops and studios. The best way to enjoy Kinsale is to walk, visiting the many sites, such as, Kinsale Harbour, Charles Fort and Desmond Castle.



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- **Youghal** – (**Eochail** -yew wood) has a rich past with the earliest civilization dating back approximately 8,000 years. The Celts arrived in the area about 500 B.C. Christianity was introduced in the 5th century at the Church of Coran and nearby hermitage. The Vikings used Youghal as a base for their coastal raids. After the Battle of Clontarf in which Brian Boru defeated the Vikings, Youghal became a trading port. In the 12th century, Henry II granted Youghal to Robert Fitzstephen and the Normans, who rebuilt and extended the Viking fortifications of the town.

The Munster Plantation began here in the 16th century as a result of the fall of the Earl of Desmond. The Crown parceled out his confiscated lands in Limerick, Kerry, Cork, and Waterford to its loyal subjects and military officers. The new landlords were instructed to establish English colonies with English citizens. In addition, they were ordered to cultivate the land in the English manner, build defenses and provide soldiers.

Youghal is a walled, medieval town at the mouth of the River Blackwater. It is a great place to visit with fantastic mediaeval streets, quality restaurants and shops. *Tyntes Castle* is the last remaining tower house castle. Other noteworthy local attractions include: greyhound racing, beaches, deep sea and shore fishing.

COUNTY DUBLIN

- **Dalkey** – (**Deilginis** - Thorn Island) is located on the Coast Road, South of Dublin overlooking Dublin Bay and is accessible via the DART (Dublin Area Rapid Transit). The history of this mediaeval town dates back 3500 years to Stone Age settlers. Its patron saint is St. Begnet, to whom a church was dedicated in the 11th century. This church is now part of the Heritage Centre at Goat Castle. Dalkey became a main seaport of Dublin in the 15th century.

COUNTY GALWAY

- **Athenry** – (**Baile Atha 'n Ri** - The Town of the River Ford) dates back in time to the Stone Age. It was during the 12th century, with the invasion of the Anglo-Normans, that the town came into existence. Meiler de Bermingham founded it upon receipt of a charter granted by Richard de Burgo. Athenry was the scene of many attacks by both the Irish and the Anglo-Normans. Still standing today are the renovated Athenry Castle, the ancient parish church, Dominican Priory, town walls, and five wall towers. At one time the stone town walls around Athenry covered a larger area than any other in Ireland.

The Dominican Priory suffered greatly at the hands of the English. Oliver Cromwell and his soldiers heavily damaged it during their rampage through Ireland. Later, it was closed because of the Penal Laws and the English used it as a barracks. Today it is a national monument. After Cromwell, the lands stayed in the hands of the Anglos. The Great Hunger of 1845 brought death, eviction and emigration to the land. It wasn't until the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century that the Irish were finally able to reclaim some of their lands. The town has been made famous the world over by the song "The Fields of Athenry" by Pete St. John.

COUNTY KERRY

- **Listowel** – (**Lios Tuathail** - The Fort of Tuathail) was an earthen fort. Listowel's history goes back to the 12th century with the Listowel Castle and the Fitzmaurice family. Listowel is a famous literary town. Annually, in May/June it hosts Writers' Week, a literary festival overflowing with art, drama, poetry, film, music and story telling. The Listowel Races are also held here every September. One of Listowel's treasurers is The Garden of Europe, located in the Town Park. It contains over 2,500 trees and shrubs from all over Europe. It is dedicated to the millions who perished during the Holocaust.

Today, Listowel is a lively market town, offering high quality merchandise. The shops are filled with local fashions, crafts, candles, jewelry, lace and pottery. The town is renowned for its ornamental plasterwork that was developed in the 19th century by Patrick McAuliffe, a local stonemason.

HERITAGE TOWNS

- **Kenmare** – is a tranquil little seaside town. It is a uniquely cosmopolitan considering its size. Kenmare is a popular stop for foreign travelers’ and is brimming with interesting shops. The Kenmare Heritage Centre tells the history of the area.

COUNTY KILDARE

- **Athy** – (**Baile Ath ’I** - The Ford of Ae) was a 12th century Anglo-Norman settlement and is located where the River Barrow joins the Grand Canal. From here Richard de Clare (Strongbow) controlled most of Leinster. A French speaking settlement evolved around Woodstock Castle built by Robert de St. Michael. The Irish O’Moore Family of Laois, frequently attacked the Anglo-Norman settlers who took their lands. The attacks prompted the Anglo-Normans to develop the town into a military stronghold.

The Fitzgeralds were one of the most powerful families of the time, and ruled as the “Earls of Kildare” and “Dukes of Leinster”. As the landlords of Athy, they owned Woodstock and Whites Castles. Lord Edward Fitzgerald, was the fifth son of the Duke of Leinster and had twenty siblings. He was an active participant in the 1798 rebellion of The United Irishmen.

- **Kildare** – (**Cill Dara** -The Church of the Oak Tree) is where St. Bridgid established a monastery in the 6th century. St. Bridgid is the Patroness of Ireland and many miracles are attributed to her. While explaining the Christian gospels to pagans, she would weave a unique cross of straw, which is known today as St. Bridgid’s Cross.

Kildare is full of history, with standing stones, stone circles, hill forts, raths, and earthworks of the early settlers. There are a variety of Christian sites, Anglo-Norman mottes, castles, and the estates of the Fitzgeralds, the most powerful family in the 15th century.

COUNTY LAOIS

- **Abbeyleix** – is an estate town with tree-lined streets, period houses and heritage trails. It is near the 12th century Cistercian Monastery that gives the town its name.

COUNTY LIMERICK

- **Adare** – *is a lovely little town* located along the River Maguire. It is often referred to as “the prettiest village in Ireland”. Adare is best known for its cheerful traditional thatched cottages. At the Adare Visitor Centre the legacy of Adare is told through enactments and audiovisual presentations.

COUNTY MAYO

- **Westport** – (**Cathair na Mart** - The Stone Fort of the Beeves) is located at the Southwest extremity of Clew Bay and is the largest coastal town in Mayo. The English architect James Watt designed Westport in the 18th century. Westport is near the popular religious site of Croagh Patrick where St. Patrick fasted for forty days and forty nights. There are excellent beaches and water sports in the area. Unique, locally produced knitwear and pottery is available from merchants. Westport sponsors an Arts Festival each September.

COUNTY MEATH

- **Kells** – (**Ceannanas** - White Head) is a market town located about 30 miles Northeast of Dublin. The earliest mention of Kells is in the Annals of the Four Masters, when a Dun settlement was built there in 1207 B.C. Kells has a turbulent warring history. Consequently, much of the town was destroyed over the centuries. The Book of Kells was completed here at the Columban Monastery. It is now on display at Trinity College in Dublin.

HERITAGE TOWNS

- **Trim – (Baile Atha Troim - The Ford of the Elder)** is located on the banks of the River Boyne 25 miles Northwest of Dublin. Trim has a rich history and many medieval monuments survive today. The most spectacular is Trim Castle, the largest Norman Castle in Ireland. The castle was a location for the filming of Braveheart. Trim Castle has been renovated and is now open to the public. Trim is near the fabulous archaeological sites of Boyne River Valley including Newgrange and The Hill of Tara. Trim has a visitor centre and lovely craft shop brimming with wonderful Irish made products.

COUNTY OFFALY

- **Birr – (Biorra - Spring Wells)** is the main town in South Offaly. This quaint town is home to Birr Castle and Science Centre. The Birr Science Centre has some interesting relics including a massive telescope, which was the largest in the world for nearly 70 years. Birr Castle Demesne is a Norman fortress and was the seat of the Earls of Rosse for several generations. The castle also has magnificent gardens and grounds.



- **Tullamore – (Tulach Mhoir - The Big Hill)** is in the Irish Midlands. Tullamore is known world wide for its fine whiskey, Tullamore Dew. Daniel E. Williams first distilled his whiskey here in 1829. The name of this famous whiskey comes from the Tullamore town name and the initials of its founder. Although whiskey is no longer distilled in Tullamore, The Tullamore Heritage Centre tells the history of Tullamore and Tullamore Dew.

ROSSCOMMON

- **Strokestown – (Beal No mBuilli - The Ford of the Blows)** is home to Strokestown, an 18th century mansion formerly owned by Thomas Mahon. Located in the original stable yards is The Famine Museum, which chronicalizes the Great Hunger of 1845 –1850. The house gardens have been restored to their original splendor. The herbaceous border at Strokestown is noted in the Guinness Book of Records as being the longest in Ireland and Britain.

COUNTY TIPPERARY

- **Ballina – (Beal an Atha - The Town of the Ford)** is located on the River Shannon and is bridged with Killaloe, County Clare. The bridge has an impressive arched design. Within the town is a ruin of an ancient castle.
- **Cashel – (Caiseal Mumhan - The Stone Fort of Munster)** was once the Seat of Kings and an ecclesiastical centre. You can tour the Rock of Cashel, Hore Abbey, and The Cashel Folk Village with reconstructed thatched shops. The Heritage Centre at the foot of the Rock of Cashel consists of a group of medieval buildings including the original chapel and cathedral. The village is designed around a village green. It is home to the study and celebration of native Irish music, song, dance, theatre, and Celtic studies. It has a restaurant, craft centre, recreation chamber, information center, and genealogy suite.

HERITAGE TOWNS

- **Cahir** – (**Cathair** - Stone Fort) is where Conor O’Brien, Prince of Thomond, originally built Cahir Castle in the 12th century. The castle is located in the middle of town on an island in the River Suir. It has been fully restored and has several exhibitions and guided tours. Nearby is Cahir Abbey. There is a walking tour to a number of other historical sites.
- **Tipperary Town** – (**Tiobraid Aran** - The Well of Ara) is a 12th century town colonized by the Anglo-Normans. It is located on the banks of the River Ara. This region is commonly known as the “Golden Vale”. The Golden Vale is an area of very rich fertile soil and deep green pastures. The Bridewell Gaol (jail) has been restored and now houses the Heritage Centre. Located just South of town are the Galtee Mountains.



COUNTY WATERFORD

- **Lismore** – (**Lois Mor** - Mochuda’s Great Enclosure) is an ancient seat of learning, dating back to 636, when St. Carthage founded a monastery. Today Lismore Castle is privately owned and occupied. However, the castle gardens are open to the public. The history centre is located in the old Courthouse.

COUNTY WEXFORD

- **Wexford Town** – (**Loch Garman** - Lough of Garman) Wexford lies along the banks of the River Slaney. It was one of the major cities which was invaded and settled by the Vikings. The Viking name for Wexford is Weissfiord, meaning inlet of the mudflats. Many of the narrow streets dating back to Viking times remain. Wexford was once the site of a prehistoric Celtic settlement. Legend says that Garman Garbh was drowned on the mudflats by waters released by an Enchantress. The harbor that was created was named Loch Garman. The Irish National Heritage Park at Ferrycarrig has exhibits on the arrival of man in Ireland dating back to 7000 B.C.



COUNTY WICKLOW

- **Baltinglass** – (**Bealach Cughlas** - The Way of Cuglas) is a market town on the banks of the River Slaney in West Wicklow. There is a 12th century Cistercian Abbey surrounded by Stone Age monuments and sites. There is also ancient hill forts and remains of Bronze Age burial chambers.