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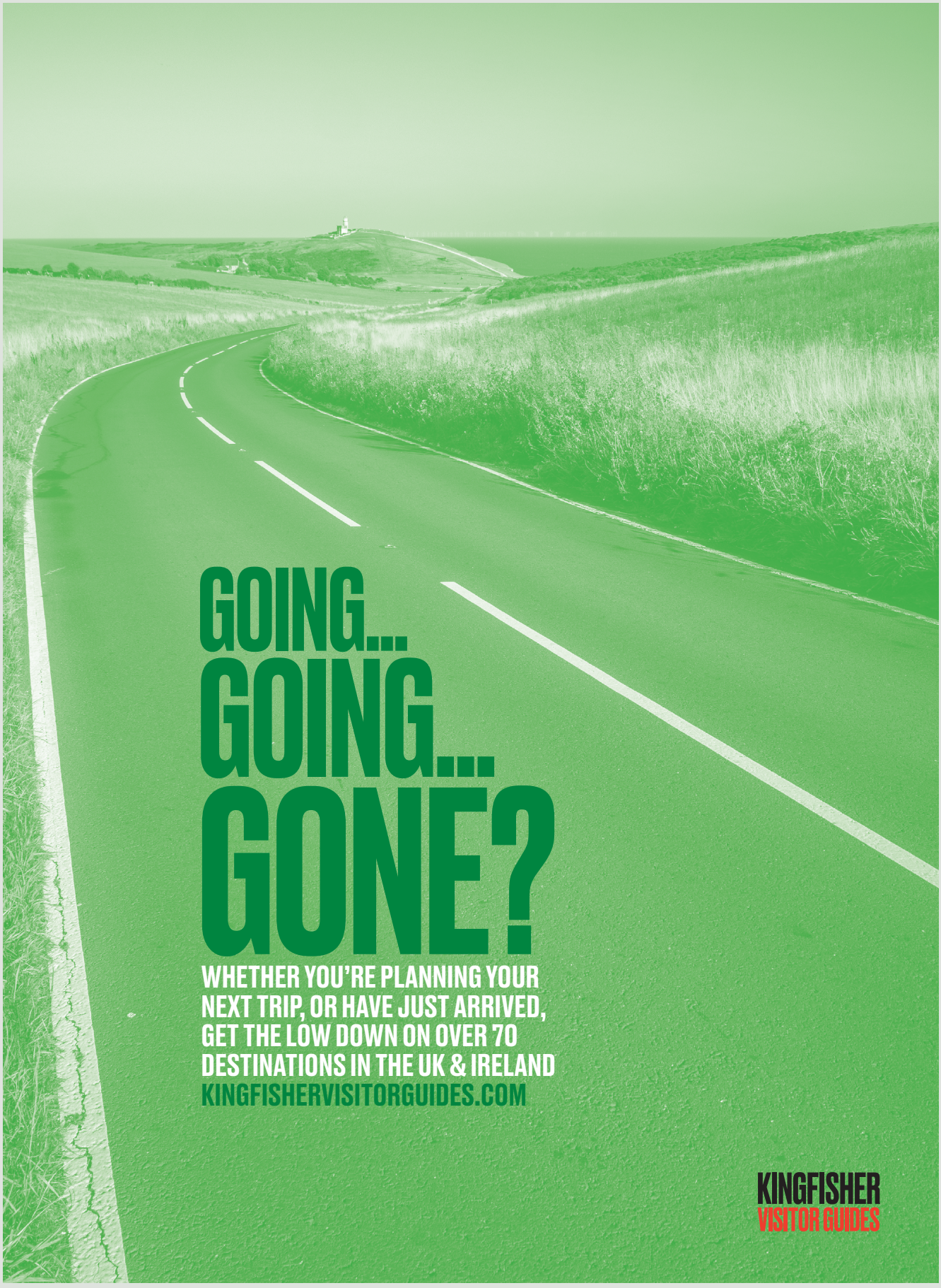
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GOING...
GOING...
GONE?
WHETHER YOU'RE PLANNING YOUR
NEXT TRIP, OR HAVE JUST ARRIVED,
GET THE LOW DOWN ON OVER 70
DESTINATIONS IN THE UK & IRELAND
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This wonderful county draws visitors back like a magnet year after year

Welcome, visitor!

Welcome to County Galway – and may we congratulate you on your choice of destination. It's not all pretty surroundings and lovely vistas, impressive though they undoubtedly are.

County Galway also has great modern shopping, restaurants, arts and culture, and some of the best places to stay in the country. Many attractions are open all year round, so finding something to do is easy. The county has everything from the beautiful Kylemore Abbey, the most photographed castle in Ireland to quaint and inviting pubs filled with traditional music.

People from all over Ireland flock to Galway for its artistic innovation, especially during its festivals. Situated in the west of Ireland, this romantic county is part of the Wild Atlantic Way and Galway is on the doorstep of some of Ireland's most spectacular scenery. Visitors are often drawn back to Connemara and its hauntingly beautiful mountains and white beaches. The county is also ripe for exploring for walkers and cyclists.

All in all, you've picked a great time to visit this wonderful county, so please enjoy everything it has to offer! ■



The peaceful waters of Lough Corrib

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PROMOTION

Aran Island Ferries

Take a journey by sea to the world famous Cliffs of Moher and the wild and welcoming Aran Islands from Galway

Aran Island Ferries sail from Rossaveel in Connemara to the beautiful Aran Islands year-round and to Inis Mór, the largest of the Aran Islands, and Cliffs of Moher from Galway City seasonally. Operating the biggest ferries to the Islands and Cliff of Moher with a total passenger capacity of 1420 seats, bar service and refreshments are available to enjoy on board.

The essence of the Wild Atlantic Way can be experienced through land and sea. Aran Island Ferries gives visitors the opportunity to experience the unique geography off the coast of Galway Bay from the rugged Aran Islands that appear to be carved out of stone to the imposing marvel that is the Cliffs of Moher when viewed from the Atlantic.

Aran Island Ferries full day cruise departs daily (April – Sept.) from Galway City Docks, a 10-minute walk from Galway City centre to the largest of the Aran Islands, Inis Mór. The return journey to Galway City includes a cruise along the iconic Cliffs of Moher. The Cliffs of Moher, Ireland's most famous natural landmark, can be truly appreciated from the water, towering up to 200 metres in height from sea level.

During your trip you will have a few hours to explore Inis Mór which offers visitors a glimpse into a traditional way of life that has long since disappeared from most of the country. Filled with Irish culture, the island offers breath-taking scenery, ecclesiastical ruins and world renowned stone forts including Dún Aengus which is Ireland's most famous hilltop fort. Bikes, manual and electric, are available to hire on the island. Minibus tours with a local guide are a wonderful way to explore the island and learn the about fascinating island histories at a picture-friendly pace.

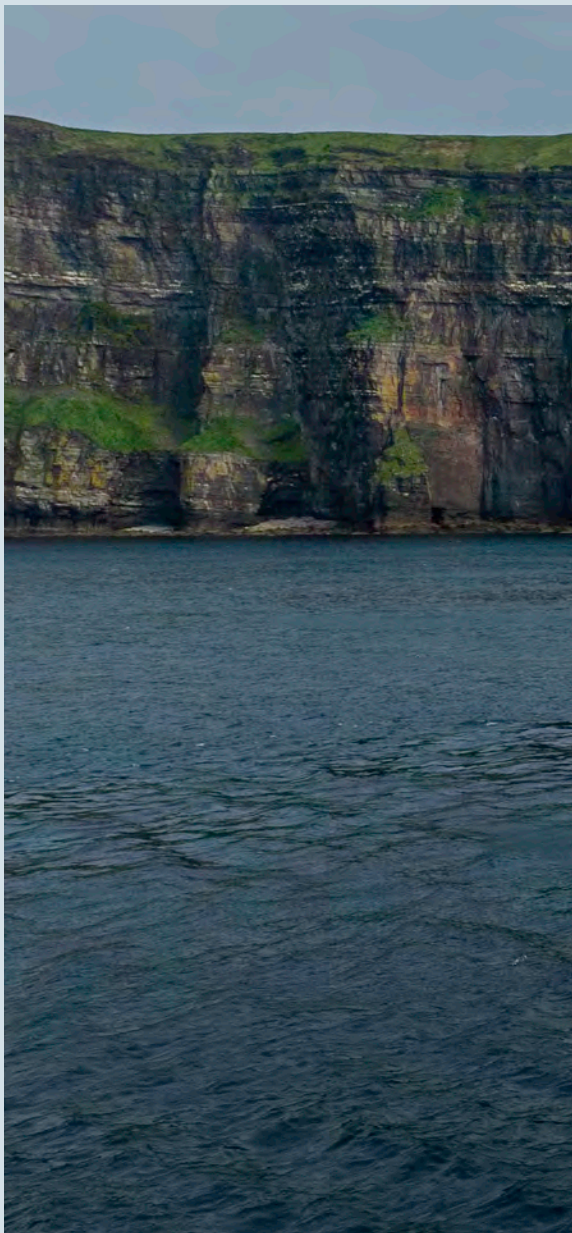
Visitors can also avail of year-round sailings to all three Aran Islands: Inis Mór, Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr from Rossaveel Ferry Terminal in Connemara, Galway which is a one hour drive from Galway City. Customers can enjoy the convenience of a daily bus transfer to and from the ferry terminal from Galway City. ■

Fáilte ar bord
Welcome on board

Don't miss this opportunity to explore the magical Aran Islands from Galway, book online at aranislandferries.com







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Co. Galway
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County Galway offers an abundance of things to do with days out and top attractions for the whole family to enjoy

Great days out



Why not take to the water with a trip up the Corrib River to Lough Corrib?

If you want a change of scenery or a day of exploration in the beautiful west of Ireland countryside, there are some wonderful one-day trips you can take within Co. Galway.

Take to the water with a trip on the Corrib Princess, a 157-passenger boat which sails from Woodquay in the city centre and makes its way up the Corrib River to Lough Corrib. The boat sails every day from May to September, with some sailings also taking place in April and October. You can buy tickets in advance or as you get on the boat, then spend a 90-minute journey on the water, admiring the views and learning about the historical and natural findings in the area. The tour includes an informative live commentary in all major European languages, and questions are always welcomed. The boat has a sun/observation deck and a heated indoor cabin, making this trip a fun choice come rain or shine. The Corrib Princess is also available for private bookings, at which you can request Irish coffee and interactive Irish dancing demonstrations. It's advised that you arrive at Woodquay 15 minutes before the sailing time.

> **“The Corrib Princess sails every day from May to September”**

If you prefer the open road to the open waters, take a drive along the Galway stretch of the Wild Atlantic Way. This breathtaking route stretches the length of Ireland's west coast, reaching from Donegal to Kerry. Along the way there are amazing views, ancient historical sites, and beaches unlike

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The Wild Atlantic Way stretches the length of Ireland's west coast, reaching from Donegal to Kerry

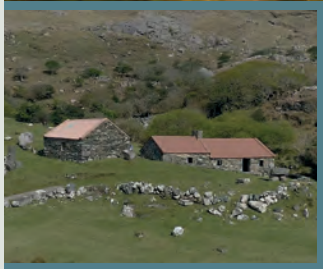
any others in the world. The Galway section of the route can take between one and two days, depending on whether or not you want to make a quick visit to Mayo. How you navigate the Wild Atlantic Way is totally up to you, so feel free to experiment with the journey based on where you want to go. Some great stops along the way include Rossaveal Pier, Sky Road, and the towns of Cliden and Roundstone. As the name suggests, it's a great way to experience first-hand the wildness of the Atlantic coast and the untouched landscape facing it. It's also a great way to see how people have lived in this area for centuries, from primitive people who would have lived on the land as it is now, to those who built the forts and castles that are now ancient ruins.

For any film buffs who love The Quiet Man, the village of Cong is a must-see. The iconic 1952 movie was filmed in this small village that straddles the border between Co. Galway and Co. Mayo. You'll see a lot of resemblance to the film's fictional village Inisfree, in part because the local community has kept their connection to the film alive with features like The Quiet Man Museum and a statue of John Wayne and Maureen O' Hara. Even if you aren't a fan of The Quiet Man, Cong is still a great place to visit. There are tours of the area that show nature trails you can follow, as well as some stunning historical monuments such as Ashford Castle and the Royal Abbey of Cong. A popular way to see the local sights is to take a stroll along the river – simply follow the path through the woods and soak in the peaceful atmosphere. You might even find something to explore! Climb up the spiral staircase of the Guinness Tower, discover the Pigeon Hole Cave, or take a step inside history by exploring The Monk's Fishing House. For such a small village, Cong has a lot packed into it.

Kylemore Abbey is a truly amazing place to visit, both because of its breathtaking beauty and unique history. Nestled between the base of Druchruach Mountain and the shore of Lough Pollacappul, this gorgeous Victorian castle is not what you'd expect to see in the depths of Connemara. Built in 1868 by Henry Mitchell, this castle was initially dedicated to his beloved wife Margaret, who you can see depicted as an angel above the front door. In 1920, the castle became Kylemore Abbey when a Belgian order of Benedictine nuns adopted it as their home after fleeing destruction during World War I. The nuns still live in and run Kylemore Abbey, holding religious ceremonies every day and making chocolates, soaps, pottery, and baked goods in their workshops. All of these items are for ▶

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With its pristine, unspoiled and widely diverse high nature value landscape and seascape, untouched by the modern world, The Lost Valley offers a unique window into the cultural heritage of The West of Ireland. Indeed this is Ireland of yesteryear and probably the finest authentic memorial of The Great Hunger that remains today. Visit the ruined famine village and see the multitude of potato ridges that have lain undisturbed and unattended for nearly two centuries.

For over three centuries the Bourke family traversed over one mile across the mountainside to reach their home in the valley. It was only after 1989 when a roadway was put in place that machinery could access the valley and consequently it remains uniquely unspoiled.

As The Lost Valley is now an active working farm, visitors can experience life on the farm with a working sheepdog demonstration.

LOST VALLEY UGGOOL

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Kylemore Abbey is a truly amazing place to visit

sale in the Abbey's gift shop, and the food is sold in their cafés, creating a perfect picnic spot in the grounds with beautiful scenery for the adults and a play area for the kids. There are several great sights within the Abbey's walls, such as the Victorian walled garden and the Neo-Gothic Church. The Abbey holds spiritual retreats all year round and also hosts special family-friendly events around Easter and Halloween.

If you want to immerse yourself in traditional Irish culture, make sure you take a trip to Cnoc Suain. This unique cultural retreat is held in 17th-century cottages in the Connemara Gaeltacht (the Irish-speaking section of Connemara), where you can experience both traditional and contemporary Irish language, music, and culture. Cnoc Suain offers a range of visiting options, from private cottage rental to one-day experiences. These events are often only open to people over the age of 18, with some options open to those over 14. Cnoc Suain can only be accessed through their official bus which leaves from Galway city. Due to these factors and the limited numbers for each event, it's essential that you book in advance. Depending on the experience you choose, you can explore the unique ecosystem of the Connemara mountains and boglands,

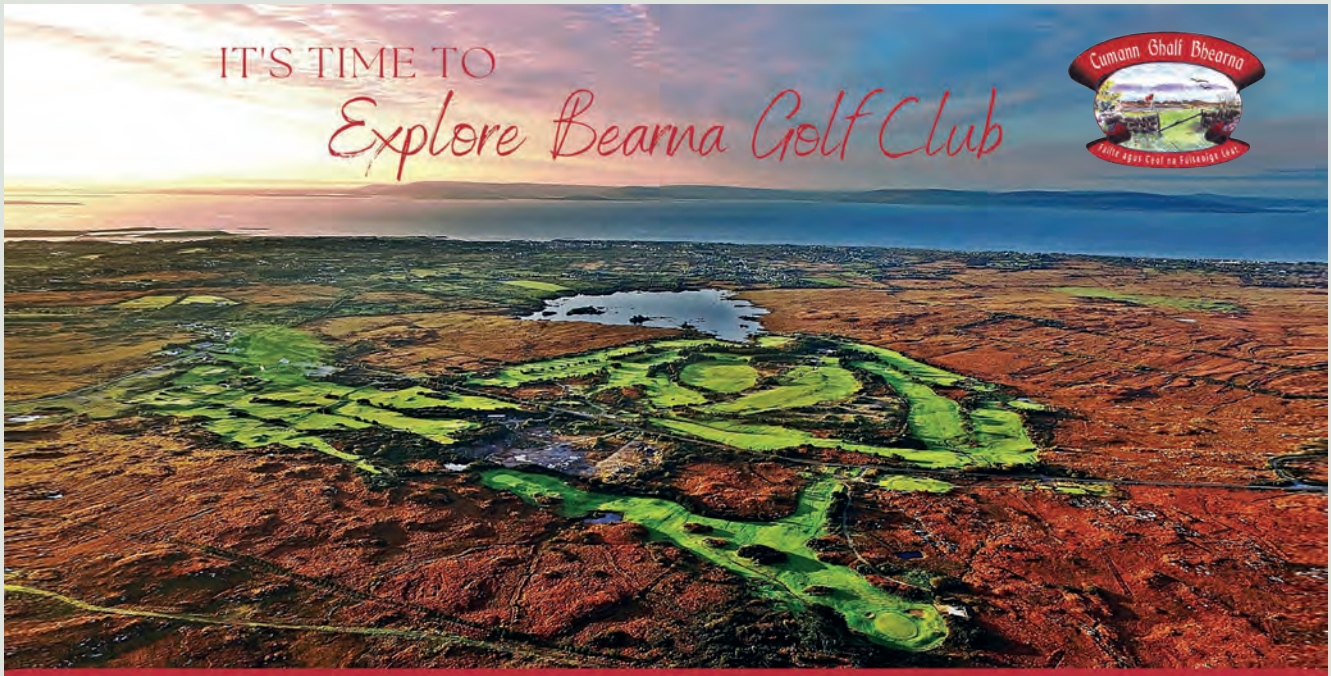
“Kylemore Abbey nestles between Druchruach Mountain & the shore of Lough Pollacappul”

or listen to traditional Irish music and learn a few steps on the dance floor. Cnoc Suain has received a lot of praise over the years for its dedication to both west of Ireland culture and landscape. Cnoc Suain has taken great pains to become one of the most eco-friendly retreats around, meaning that the fragile ecosystem has been maintained for future generations to enjoy.

Visiting a coastal county like Galway means that there's one thing you're bound to find – great beaches! There are terrific beaches all along Galway's coast whether you're a swimmer or just enjoy a relaxing stroll along the sand. Salthill is a popular choice among Galwegians, featuring the longest promenade in Ireland and a public diving board at the end. This is a great spot for swimming, and you can walk from beach to beach along the prom. Dog's Bay is a ▶



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Bearna Golf Club, just five miles from Galway city, offers stunning views of Galway Bay, the Aran Islands, and The Burren.
Built on Connemara moorland, this scenic course features gorse bushes, ditches, and authentic Irish peat bog, making for a thrilling and sensory filled round of golf, which is available seven days a week.

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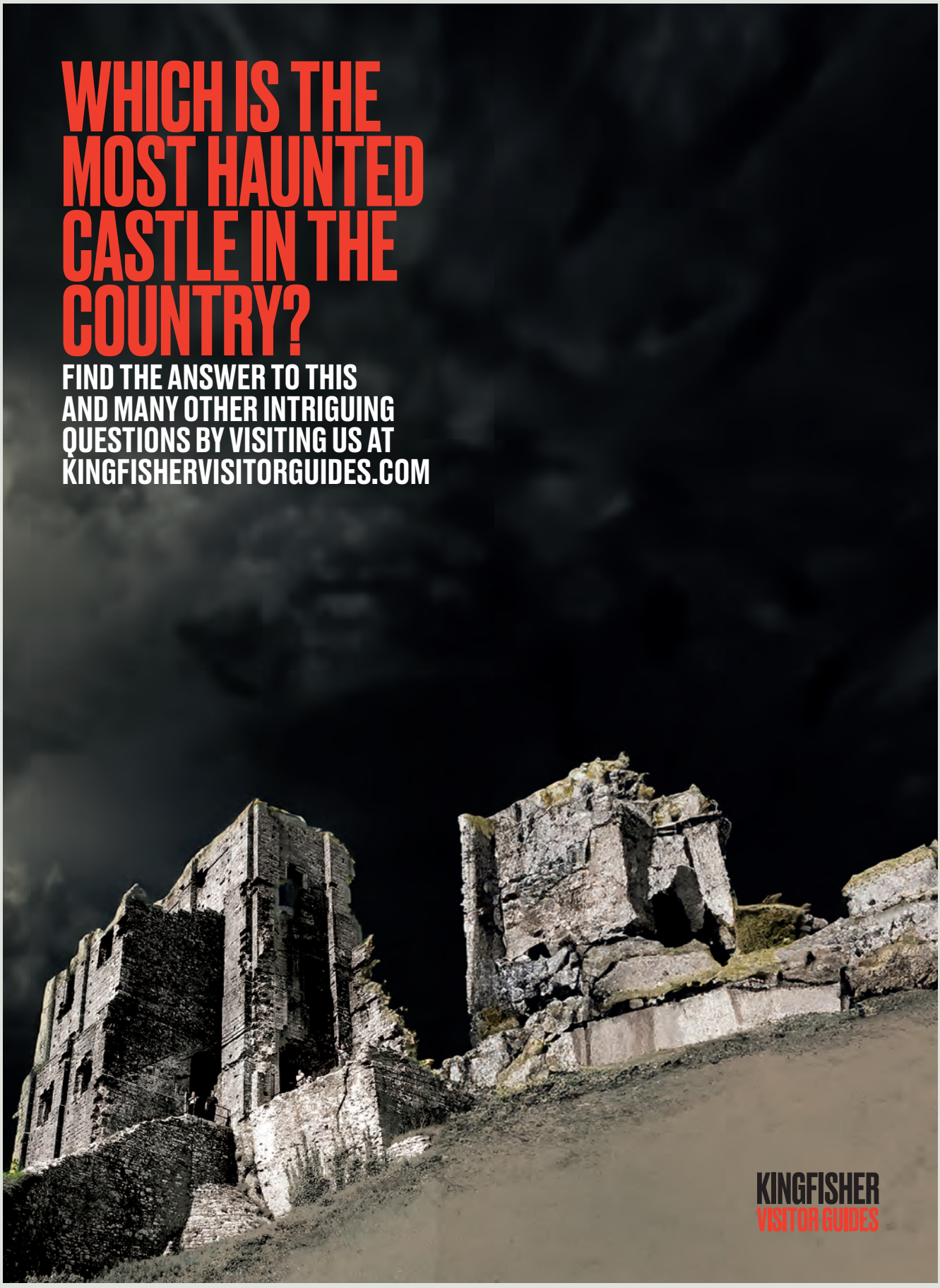
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Connemara National Park: one of the most amazing natural spots in Galway

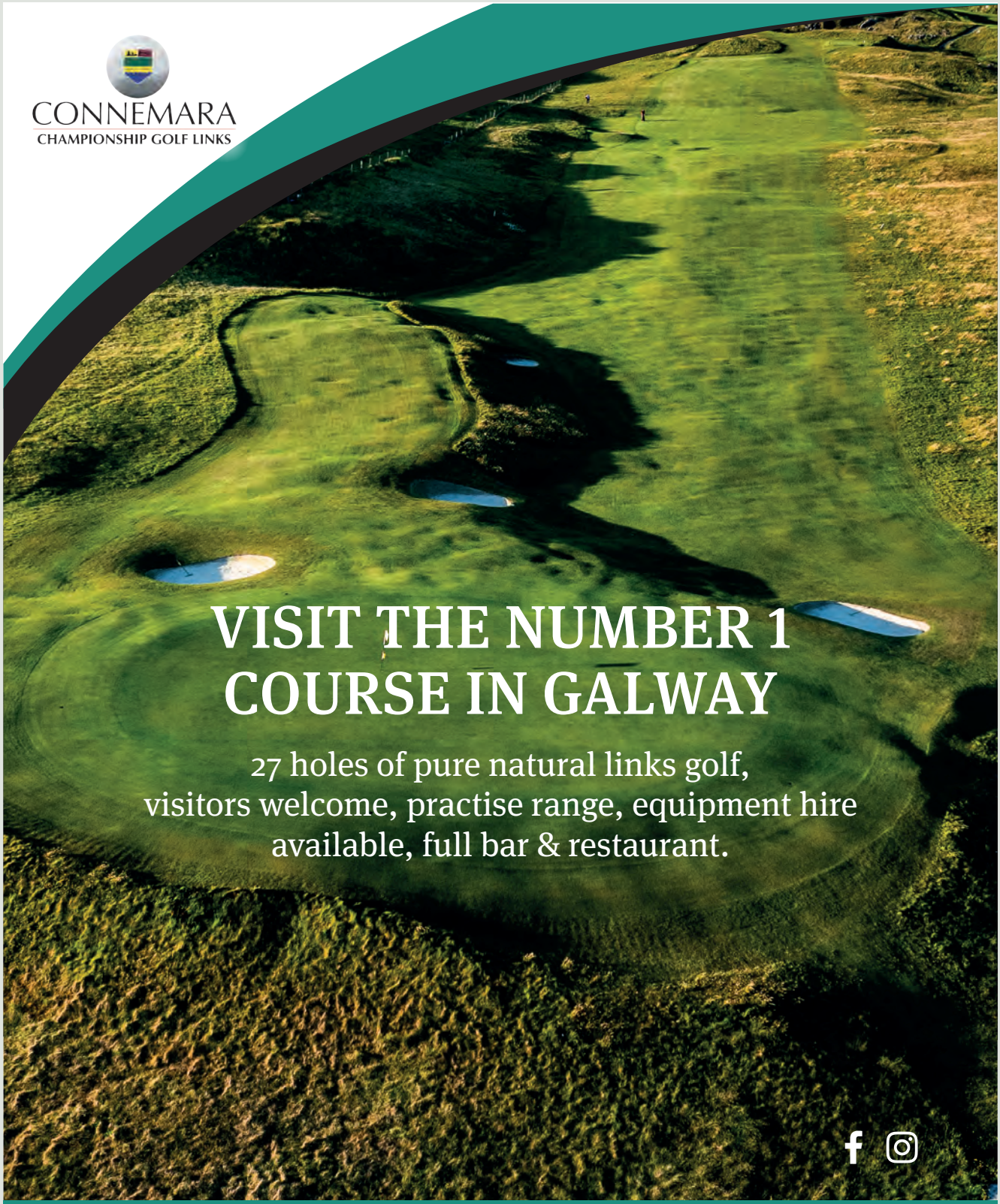
stunning horseshoe beach of white sand just a few miles from Roundstone, so you can take a day trip to the beach and explore the small village when the sun begins to set. If you're on the Aran Islands, Kilmurvey Beach on Inis Mór is sheltered and safe for swimmers of all ages, and is also a great picnic spot. Trá an Dóilín (also known as the Coral Strand) in Carraroe is unlike any other beach in Connemara due to the presence of very fine coral. It's a popular spot for snorkelling and diving due to its pristine water, and also has many rock pools to explore.

One of the most amazing natural spots in Galway is Connemara National Park, a 2,000 hectare space that encompasses mountains, boglands, walking trails, and opportunities to spot local wildlife. Open since 1980, the Park is free to enter and had a Visitors' Centre that can show you what you can do and where to explore. This area has a long history that can still be seen today, such as 4,000-year-old megalithic court tombs, 19th-century features like a road, houses, and wells, and sections of land that used to belong to the famous Kylemore Abbey. These days, the land is owned by the State as a National Park, and is used for leisure and wildlife conservation purposes with the exception of the bogs, which are still used for fuel. There are some amazing walks in the Park that can show you the local wildlife, such as the purple moor grass that gives the land its distinctive colour, wild birds of prey, and animals such as rabbits, foxes, bats, and stoats. The largest animal in the Park is the Connemara pony, a domestic animal that is a famous symbol of the area. Connemara National Park's herd of ponies are descended from a herd that was gifted to the Park over a hundred years ago by former Irish President Erskine Childers.

Of course, there are several amazing natural areas to explore across Co. Galway. If you enjoy hiking, there are several options for any experience level. Diamond Hill in Connemara National Park is a popular option for families or less experienced hikers, whereas those who want a challenge like to take on The Twelve Bens, a mountain range that offers incredible views that stretch all the way to the ocean. If you prefer a flatter trail, there are several trails in the Clifden area that can be walked or cycled, with lots of options for different experience levels. The Aran Islands are also a great spot for walking and cycling trails, and there are several trails you can take to cover different section of the islands, depending on how much time you have and which of the islands' sights you'd like to visit. ■



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DON'T MISS

Our top things to see and do when visiting this picturesque region

1

See a Druid show

Druid is an internationally-renowned, Tony Award-winning theatre company founded in Galway by local artists in 1975. It's still based on Druid Lane in the city and the shows are unmissable.

2

Take a pilgrimage

Holidays can be the perfect time to unwind and reflect, and Galway's peaceful rural setting makes it a great place for pilgrimages and retreats. One great option is a weekend away with Burren Yoga Retreat, where you can try yoga, Tai Chi and hill walking, accompanied by deep restful sleep, delicious healthy vegetarian food and a complete digital detox

3

Get on your bike

Cycling is a wonderful way to see Galway's landscape and you can hire a bike in almost every town in the county. You can go on a solo adventure or sign up for a guided tour, where you can learn about local landmarks and history. Some great local companies include West Ireland Cycling, Galway City Cycle Tours, and Aran Island Bike Tours.

4

Go to a festival

There are festivals across the county and taking place all year round, so no matter when you visit you're bound to find something great. Wander through a city of tents and take in the atmosphere as arts, food, or history is celebrated.

5

Discover castles

Ireland is a country full of ancient castles, and Galway is no exception. You can visit ruins taken over by nature, castles that have been preserved as visitor centres, and everything in between. Some of the best are Oranmore Castle with the scenic backdrop of Galway



©RIHARDZZ/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Bay, Portumna Castle, and Clifden Castle.

6

Visit the Aran Islands ▶

The Aran Islands have so much to offer, from traditional culture to historical monuments and stunning scenery, that a trip to Galway really isn't complete without visiting. Boats go in and out from the mainland every day, making it an easy option for an impromptu day trip.

7

Take the plunge

It might be a bit chilly, but taking a dip in the Atlantic is an incredible experience. With its three platforms, the Blackrock Diving Tower in Salthill is a must for confident swimmers. Advanced scuba divers can also join guided trips to the Wormhole on the Aran Islands; a naturally-formed rectangular pool.

> **The Connemara Mountains are wonderful to climb, but did you know you can go under them too? Glengowla Mines gives you a fascinating look into the depths of historic silver & lead mines**

8

Grab a bite

While fine dining can add glamour to an evening, Galway is so full of delicious casual dining options that it's definitely worth trading the white table cloth for a booth. Some great options in the city are Handsome Burger, Dough Bros (pizza), Boojum (Mexican food) and McDonagh's (fish and chips).



9

Explore the mines ▼

The Connemara Mountains are wonderful to climb, but did you know you can go under them too? Glengowla Mines gives you a fascinating look into the depths of historic silver and lead mines, with guided tours and a museum to tell you all about the treasures that can be found.

10

Have a night in the pub

Whether you're in Galway city centre or a tiny rural village, there'll always be a pub nearby. Even if you don't drink, Galway's pubs are a great place to kick back, soak in the atmosphere, and usually hear some live traditional music. If you do drink, make sure to get a pint of the black stuff! ■



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SHOPPING

Shopaholics will love it here for the eclectic mix of boho-chic boutiques, high-street staples and quirky independents



From the bustling streets of Galway city to the rural villages of Connemara, beautifully crafted items can be found for sale almost everywhere. For some local craftspeople, these pieces are made using ancient skills that have been passed down through generations, from a time when you didn't have something unless you made it yourself. For others, inspiration to create comes from the natural beauty of the landscape. There's no better place to find a souvenir, tasty treat, or one-of-a-kind item that wears its place of origin like a badge of honour.

"Beautifully crafted items can be found for sale almost everywhere"

There are some items that Galway is known for all over the world, and some that every Galway local has in their home. If you want an authentic Galway item, there are a few great places to check out.

If you want to shop and soak up culture but feel like you don't have enough time for both, a visit to Thomas Dillon's Claddagh Gold is the perfect way to discover some Galway history and take a piece of it home, too! While many jewellers claim to be the home of the Claddagh Ring, Thomas Dillon's have been producing them the longest. Playfully described as "the

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smallest museum in Europe with the biggest gift shop", you can learn about Galway and the Claddagh's history and pick up an iconic Claddagh ring in one trip. If you do purchase a Claddagh ring, you'll receive a guide on how to wear it according to the ancient Irish custom that goes along with it.

Another Irish classic is the Aran sweater – locally known as an Aran jumper. There are fantastic Aran sweater providers across Co. Galway, but one of the best is Aran Islands Knitwear. This family-run company has been selling Aran sweaters in Galway for generations, and have a few shops scattered across the county. You can find them at the Galway Woollen Market in Galway and Cong, and at Aran Islands Knitwear on Inis Mór in the Aran Islands.

If you'd prefer a souvenir that's not as common but still uses Irish materials, check out Judy Greene on Kirwan's Lane in Galway. Founded in 1982 by potter Judy Greene, the shop has grown to become an eclectic collection of home décor and fashion items, often using local materials such as Galway wool or Connemara marble. Of course, the shop's signature products, hand-thrown terracotta pots made by Judy herself, are still what brings in customers. Almost every home in Galway has a Judy Greene milk jug or sugar pot in their kitchen, featuring hand-painted designs of local flora.

One of Galway's most-loved shops is Charlie Byrne's, an independent bookshop in the city that is adored by locals and visitors alike. It's difficult to not fall in love with this shop as you wander through its higgledy-piggledy format, browsing through stuffed shelves and teetering piles of books before sitting in an armchair and having a quick glance at your choice before you decide to buy it. The shop has a wonderful mix of new titles, second-hand books and vintage copies of the classics. It's the perfect place to lose yourself for a little while, and maybe rediscover a long-lost love of reading.

In a gastronomic haven like Galway, delicious food isn't just found in restaurants. These are some wonderful places to stop off for a snack as you explore the region, or maybe even pack a picnic for the beach or mountainside.

As everyone knows, chocolate, when done right, is one of life's greatest pleasures. Hazel Mountain Chocolate in Galway is evidence of this, selling chocolate made with local ingredients in-store and in their very own chocolate factory in The Burren. Each of their products are made in small batches with a lot of time put in to making them just right. Their products range from individual chocolates and decadent dark chocolate bars to cacao teabags and hot chocolate mixes, though you can also get a delicious hot drink in store to keep you warm as you wander through town.



▲ Spiddal Craft Village
◀ Galway's High Street

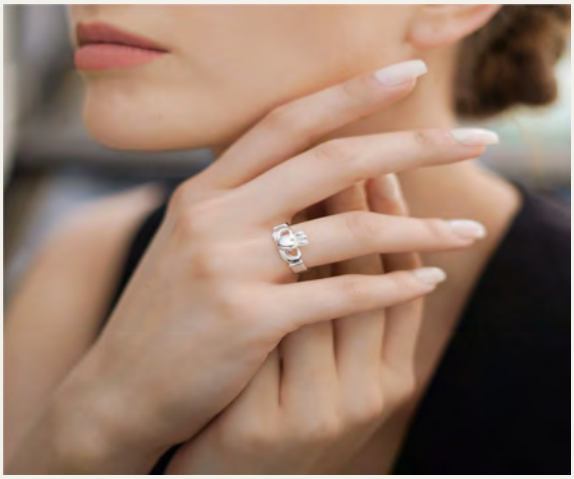
If you want to shop like a local but still treat yourself to a bit of luxury, McCambridge's in Galway is the place to go. Open since 1925, this food hall, coffee shop, and restaurant has been a staple of Shop Street for nearly a century. Nothing says "Galway" like having a coffee in their outdoor seating and people-watching. Inside, the ground floor contains a food hall and spirit shop with local gourmet products and a spirit specialist who can help you choose an Irish whiskey you'll love. Upstairs, the restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner using artisan ingredients, many of which you can buy downstairs so you can recreate your favourite dish at home.

Another great place to sample wares before buying them is Sheridan's Cheesemongers in Galway. You can tell it's a great cheese shop from that first whiff when you walk through the door. Brothers Séamus and Kevin Sheridan have been selling Irish farmhouse cheese here since 1995, and they've done so well that they now have multiple shops across the country. This is the original, though, and it has expanded to also serve food and wine, so you can sample a cheeseboard featuring Sheridans' finest products and then take your favourites home with you.

A new suit might not be your top shopping priority when travelling, but Hanley and Co. just off Eyre Square in Galway might just convince you to find some extra room in your suitcase. Set up in the 1960s by Joe Hanley, this business is still run by the Hanley family and prides itself on bringing the best designer pieces to the men of Galway, selling both casual and formal items. The store features ▶

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> **Standún has been a central part of culture & community in the west of Ireland for over 70 years**



Standún in Spiddal is a family-run shop that has been open since 1946

brands such as Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Superdry, and Armani. Customer care, quality pieces, and generations of experience have made Hanley and Co. one of the leading mens-wear stores in Ireland, so make sure to check them out if you have an event coming up.

Don't worry ladies, Galway has some beautiful boutiques for you, too! In particular, Les Jumelles boasts stunning pieces from designer brands, and is the west of Ireland's exclusive retailer for several designers such as Alexander Wang, Diane Von Furstenberg, and Paule Ka. Established in 1997 by Galway twins Mary and Margaret, Les Jumelles (French for "the twins") has gone from strength to strength thanks to their careful choice of brands and one-to-one customer service.

If you'd like your Irish fashion purchases to reflect the culture a little more, take a trip out to Spiddal and have a browse in Standún, a family-run shop that has been open since 1946 and is currently kept alive by the granddaughters of the couple who founded it. Standún has been a central part of culture and community in the west of Ireland for over 70 years, making it the perfect place to see some of the area's history and be a part of it while you find a beautiful garment. Standún also sells homeware and souvenirs, so you might find yourself leaving with more than you intended to get!

Jewellery is a wonderful way to remember a trip; wearing it can make you feel special on an ordinary day, and it won't add to much weight to your suitcase!

O'Dalaigh Jewellers is run by the O'Dalaigh family, who have been designing jewellery and making custom pieces in Clifden since the '70s. Their work is heavily influenced by Irish history and traditions, and they work with a wide range of metals and stones. Their design influences include Irish cultural icons such as the Newgrange monument and the Book of Kells, though they'll happily incorporate any design element you request in custom pieces. These design choices create pieces that you won't find anywhere else in the world, and their expertise with items like wedding rings and etching mean you can have a custom piece created that you'll cherish forever.

Ór (the Irish word for "gold") is one of Galway's newest jewellery boutiques but has quickly become a popular spot. Featuring many Irish handmade designers like Lynsey De Burca and Áine Breen, you'll find many collections here that beautifully showcase Irish heritage. You'll find excellent one-on-one customer service in this shop, with personalised recommendations and assistance with anything you need.

In Moycullen, milliner and jewellery designer Emily-Jean O'Byrne has her store, Emily-Jean. While she rose to fame through her hat designs, Emily-Jean has also created some gorgeous one-of-a-kind jewellery pieces that should definitely not be ignored. This boutique is a gem on the small town's high street, with stunning jewellery that wouldn't look out of place on a designer catwalk. Of course, it wouldn't hurt to look at the hat selection too!

If you're considering buying something for your (or someone else's) home, you might not have decided what kind of thing you want to get them. An ornament? A wool throw? Or maybe you're holding out in case something unique catches your eye. If this sounds like you, you need to check out Spiddal Craft Village, a small group of craft workshops and shops in tiny thatched cottages where local craftspeople create and sell their wares. The Irish name for the Craft Village is "An Ceardlann", meaning "the must-stop", and it definitely is a must-stop for anyone looking ▶

©STANDÚN

> **Almost every town in Galway has a weekly or monthly market where local vendors get together to buy, sell, & catch-up**

to see traditional Irish crafts and maybe even buy something beautiful.

You might automatically associate Irish crystal with somewhere like Waterford, but the truth is that there are several top-quality crystal manufacturers across Ireland, including in Galway. Connemara Celtic Crystal is a visitor centre and factory in Moycullen where you can purchase stunning crystal pieces and find out how they're made, too! As one of the few remaining crystal factories in Ireland today, this is a rare opportunity to learn about and view traditional Irish crystal production. Founded in 1972, Connemara Celtic Crystal make an effort to show their pride in their Irish heritage by including traditional Celtic designs in many of their products.

Described by customers as "pottery with a difference", Roundstone Ceramics is a workshop and store run by local couple Séamus and Rosemarie. Open since 1981, this workshop has become an integral part of the local community, and you'll see Rosemarie's signature plaques outside many local houses. The couple make the products themselves, with Séamus throwing the pots and Rosemarie decorating them. Their pieces include stoneware, porcelain, artwork on paper, and jewellery. This friendly couple are always up for a chat while you look around.

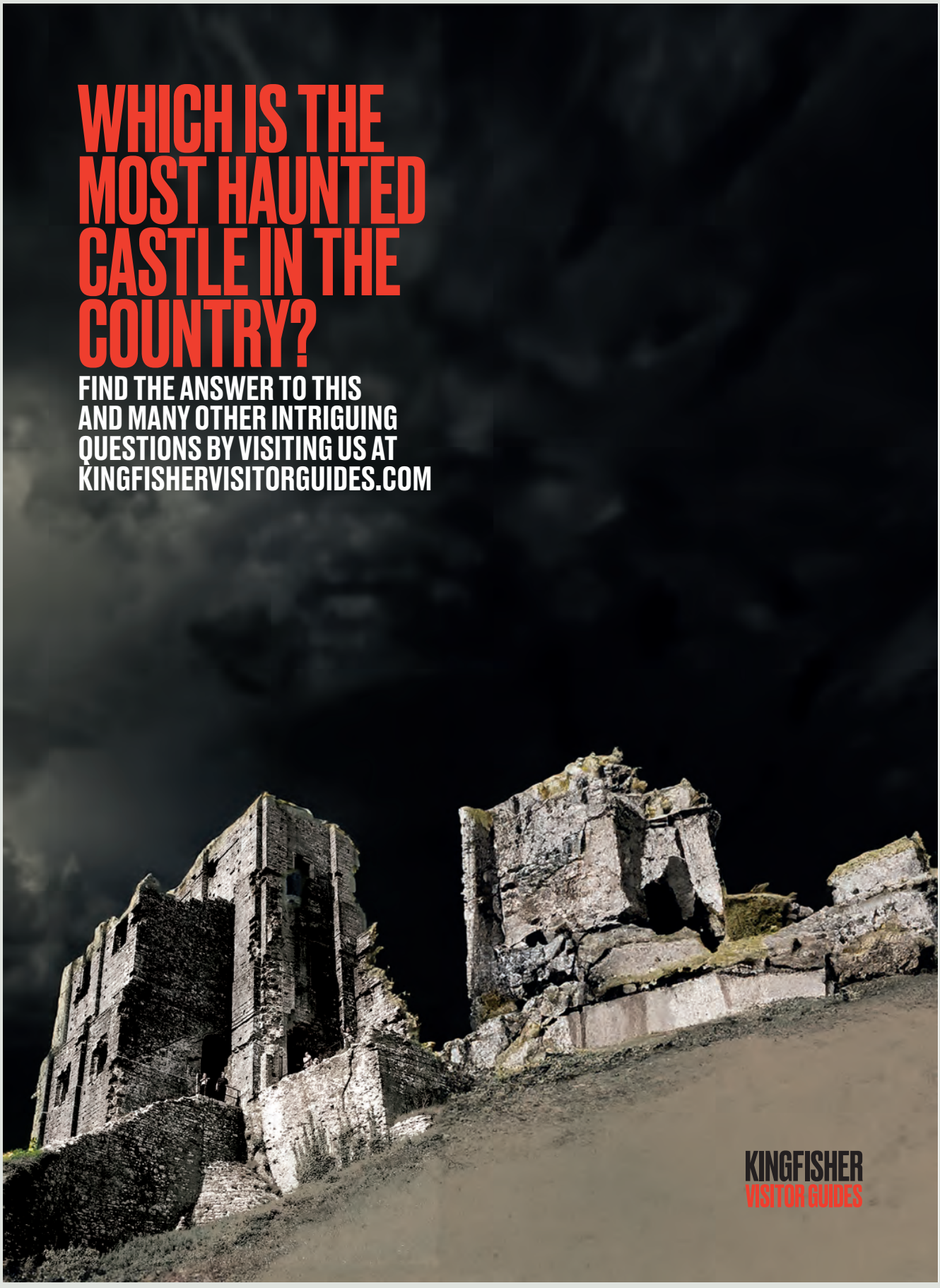
Almost every town in Galway has a weekly or monthly market where local vendors get together to buy, sell, and have a bit of a catch-up. There's always a friendly atmosphere at the market and you might find something special you can't get in shops.

The Galway Market has been trading in the tiny square outside St. Nicholas' Church for centuries, with independent stalls featuring everything from hot takeaway food to beautiful paintings and wooden carvings. This market is a firm favourite with locals, and many former Galwegians who move away will insist a trip home isn't complete without stopping by the market for a cup of Madras curry or a bag of doughnuts. The market is open on weekends and every day during special events like the Galway Arts Festival and the week before Christmas.

If you're an early riser, the Clifden Market is a great way to start your Friday. The market is still open in the afternoon, but most of the stalls are sold out by noon – that's how good this stuff is! This market has a large focus on food, selling organic fruit and veg as well as home-baked breads and sweet treats. Even if you aren't hungry, the atmosphere of Market Square is wonderful to be in, especially in the summer when you can sit in the sun and enjoy your surroundings.

The Aran Islands don't have a typical weekly pop-up market, but they do have Kilmurvey Craft Village. This small market on Inis Mór is run by local craftspeople and is a favourite among visitors to the island who are on their way to the nearby fort, Dún Aonghasa. They sell many kinds of souvenirs such as hand-carved stoneware, jewellery, and, of course, traditional Aran sweaters. ■




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EATING OUT

County Galway is a foodie's paradise with a host of fantastic restaurants, cafés and pubs – so make sure you bring a healthy appetite



Aniar Restaurant, Dominick St., Galway

Galway is a unique county featuring rocky mountains, wild countryside, and gorgeous shores that open out to the majestic Atlantic Ocean. Such variety in a relatively small space has led to amazing opportunities for Galway's food to combine local ingredients in unique ways, and to push culinary boundaries while still staying true to the flavours of the region. Galway's food scene has exploded over the last few years, with restaurants across the county earning international accolades and the area holding the title of 2018 European Region of Gastronomy. In small towns across the county, local chefs are using traditional techniques and the food of their ancestors to craft beautiful dishes that hold a strong connection to the history of the west of Ireland.

In Galway city centre, Michelin-starred restaurants sit next to up-and-coming casual dining options, with cosy local favourites on every corner. The refreshing lack of chain restaurants and the hidden gems that can be found down every side street make this small city a treasure trove of mouth-watering experiences. Whether you want fresh Atlantic fare, fine dining without the frills, or a place that focuses on a single item and perfects it, you're bound to find a meal you'll love.

©ANITA MURPHY/ANIAR

Truly exceptional food uses local ingredients in thoughtful ways; this is especially true of Aniar, a restaurant on Dominick St. in Galway that grows its own produce and uses local flavours and methods to create a unique menu. Aniar's exceptional methods earned them the Michelin star in 2013, which they have now retained for 11 years. Head chef and owner J.P. McMahon says that this approach is used "to reveal the distinct and various food stuffs that make up our particular landscape, through our farms, the wildlands and the shores that surround us". Aniar offers a tasting menu consisting of up to 24 servings that draw on the terroir of the west coast of Ireland with a choice of four drinks pairing menus from the sommelier's selection of over 80 artisan wines to alcohol-free juices or their 'Irish' pairings featuring a local sour beer, cider and apple ice wine. This establishment also offers cookery courses to anyone who wants to bring a taste of Aniar home with them, and regularly works with local schools to teach young people about the origins of food and the importance of using organic produce.

If you find yourself taking a wander through the city of Galway, have a stroll through the charming West End, a newly-revitalised area featuring charming pubs and quirky local shops. As you reach the end of your journey, you'll come across Kai, a Michelin Green Star restaurant that creates a cosy atmosphere in every detail, from its grey stone walls and rustic wooden furniture to including the supplier's names on its menu. Sitting in a cosy nook and choosing between "Niamh's Inis Mor Crab" or "Brady's Striploin with Boozy Onions" creates an unusual blend of the elegance of fine dining with the comfort of sitting at country kitchen table. New Zealand-born chef Jess Murphy set up Kai with her husband Dave in 2011, naming their restaurant after the Maori word for food. Kai's menu is driven by organic, seasonal food that provides comfort and excitement, all in one bite.

A journey along the Galway coast is bound to work up an appetite, as well as some curiosity as to what can be found beneath the waves. At several places along the coast, you'll find people with that same combination of appetite and curiosity who have taken it to a whole new level by opening restaurants dedicated to the amazing local seafood. One such place is Mitchell's, a rustic two-storey restaurant in Clifden where Kay and JJ Mitchell have been serving beautiful plates of freshly-caught fish and seafood since 1991. It's a favourite with locals and travellers, earning a place in major food guides such as Georgina Campbell and The Bridgestone Guides.

"Michelin-starred restaurants sit next to up-and-coming casual dining options"

In the quaint fishing village of Roundstone, O'Dowd's Seafood Bar and Restaurant offers everything from a casual snack to an evening of culinary delight. The Seafood Bar has a delicious bar menu alongside a selection of craft beers in a quintessential Irish pub, creating a cosy environment with its turf fire and local staff. O'Dowd's Café is open from March to October and offers in-house or takeaway refreshments, perfect if you've just been climbing the Twelve Bens or want to take a stroll along the harbour. The Seafood Restaurant creates a beautiful atmosphere with its stunning views and seasonal specials, all created thanks to generations-long partnerships with local suppliers. O'Dowd's has been showered in awards in recent years, earning everything from Michelin Bib Gourmand mentions to Georgina Campbell's Pub of the Year in 2017.

Of course, if you're a seafood fan, you should definitely try the local oysters. Moran's Oyster Cottage, also known as Moran's on The Weir, is internationally-renowned for their Clarenbridge oysters, which are sourced from a completely natural bed in Co. Galway. This picturesque white cottage with a thatched roof instantly transports you through Irish history as you eat fresh local seafood the same way generations of Irish fishermen have. This sense of history has been carefully preserved by the Moran family, who have run this business since the 1790s and have been ▶

©XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

> **Cava Bodega serves delicious tapas and traditional Spanish desserts**

serving seafood for nearly 60 years. Now, your oysters will be served by the seventh generation of Morans who keep their delicious family tradition alive.

The best way to find a great spot when travelling is to see where the locals go. If you find yourself tiring of traditional fare and wanting to spice things up, there are quite a few spots that the people of Galway will recommend.

While the view at The Owenmore Restaurant at Ballynahinch Castle is hard to beat, the menu manages to do it. An opulent setting decorated with paintings by famous Irish artists looks out on breathtaking views of the forest, mountains, and salmon river. That very salmon is featured alongside other local ingredients in a menu carefully curated by head chef Gianluca Marongiu. The ingredients of this Connemara-inspired menu come from local producers, wild game, foraging, and garden herbs and are skilfully prepared into dishes even more stunning than your surroundings.

Out on the Aran Islands, the laid-back atmosphere means some of the best food around will be found in the pub. In particular, Joe Watty's serves delicious food while local musicians play lively music. It's located in Kilronan on Inis Mór, at the crossroads between Dún Aonghasa and the Seal Colony. This spot is a great place to treat yourself to a hearty meal and a pint after cycling around the island.







▲ Food festival fayre ▼ Cava Bodega, Galway ▼▼ Moran's Oyster Cottage

©CAVA BODEGA; EMMA HARRIS/STOCK.ADOBE.COM; MORAN'S OYSTER COTTAGE

The people of Galway city are huge fans of casual eateries, as they provide the perfect quick meal before a night out (as well as an initial drink or two with dinner). One such place is Cava Bodega, which serves delicious tapas and traditional Spanish desserts, paired with an extensive wine menu that will satisfy even the most ardent amateur sommelier. Set up by J.P. McMahon, head chef of Michelin-starred Aniar, Cava is a firm favourite in Galway. Choose from a selection of meat, fish and vegetable tapas that have been painstakingly crafted to provide an authentic Spanish experience. The rustic décor mimics this authenticity, creating a fun, warm atmosphere that comes as a welcome change to the wet weather outside.

Also worth seeking out is friendly neighbourhood wine bar The Lane, run by two friends with a serious passion for food and wine. With a relaxed yet cosy vibe, it captures the style of a continental 'enoteca' (an Italian wine bar where you can sample regional wines by the glass), a place to gather with friends and tuck into artisan cheese and charcuterie boards alongside old world wines from beloved regions of the Loire, Languedoc, Ribero del Duero, Rioja and the Jura, alongside wilder wines yielded from Old World wine producing countries such as Georgia. Find it on Kirwans Lane, one of the finest medieval laneways in Galway in the heart of the Latin Quarter.

In terms of brunch options, the most popular spot in Galway is Dela, which has a queue out the door every Saturday and Sunday morning as locals hope to snag a table to eat away the headache from the night before. Get a traditional Irish fry-up featuring local meat and in-house eggs, or try a twist on the classic like a breakfast burrito or pork breakfast burger. The evening menu features as much local and seasonal produce as possible, as well as home-brewed beer. Its natural décor and friendly staff make it a gentle place to recover after a night on the town – just make sure to call ahead.

If you fancy something a little more wholesome, choose from one of the amazing Signature Salads Bowls at WYLDE, a high-end coffee shop and deli around the corner from the HYDE Hotel. You can even build your own açai bowl or try their fresh pastries, gourmet sandwiches, delicious overnight oats and matcha chia puddings.

A great way to experience Galway's food and history at the same time is to dine at Ard Bia, a restaurant inside the 18th-century Custom House that has the Spanish Arch to its left and the Long Walk to its right. Sandwiched between these two iconic Galway landmarks, you'll find fantastic food set in a small, inviting spot that has an incredibly unique look thanks to its mix of vintage, upcycled, and locally designed furniture. This is a great spot to grab a bite before a walk along the promenade.

Every year, thousands of people travel to Galway to indulge in the wonderful creations on offer in its food festivals. If your trip happens to coincide with a food festival, thank your lucky stars and get yourself to a food tent!

On the last weekend of September every year, Galway celebrates its most famous foods in the Galway Oyster and Seafood Festival. Running for 70 years, it's the world's longest-running oyster festival, with Galway city flooding with seafood enthusiasts and chefs. Its events include a late-night oyster tent with champagne and stout, seafood trails, and the World Oyster Opening Championships, affectionately known as the Oyster Olympics.

Galway is also a central part of many European food festival circuits, so there's something new every year. The county has previously hosted the Irish Game Fair and Country Lifestyle Festival, which celebrates Ireland's rich agricultural and game heritage, in June, and Food on The Edge, a two-day symposium for chefs and culinary enthusiasts. ■



Only here for the weekend? Fear not! Here are some ideas for a memorable short break

WEEKENDER

DAY ONE

Starting off in Galway city, get your most important meal of the day in Dela on Dominick Street. Get a traditional Irish fry-up or try their delicious pancakes; either way, it'll keep you going all day.

Next, cross the bridge to the city centre where you can see two of Galway's most famous landmarks; the Spanish Arch and the Long Walk. A stroll along the Long Walk only takes a few minutes and it gives you a great opportunity to breathe in the fresh sea air and get some fantastic photos. Right beside it you'll find the Galway City Museum, where you can spend the afternoon (for free) learning about Galway's rich history.

After a day of learning, head over to the West End for some herbal tea and a slice of cake in The Secret Garden, a charming little spot with mismatched tea cups and strings of fairy lights that feels like a bit of everyday magic. Once you're refreshed, you should wander along Shop Street, Galway's main street, which is pedestrianised so you can take your time window shopping in the little boutiques and enjoying outdoor concerts by the buskers.

As the sun begins to set, seek refuge in friendly neighbourhood wine bar The Lane, in one the city's finest medieval laneways, for an artisan cheese and charcuterie board and your pick from their list of fine old world wines. Three minutes walk will bring you to Pálás, a three-screen arthouse cinema, where you can grab a drink in the bar upstairs before catching a film – Pálás shows smaller independent films alongside blockbusters, so they have something to suit every kind of mood.



DAY TWO

It's time to get out of the city and see what rural Galway has to offer. A great way to do this is to follow the Wild Atlantic Way, a path that follows the west coast of Ireland. The first stretch is a 45-minute drive from Galway to Rossaveal, a little fishing village where you can get a boat to the Aran Islands, or listen out for locals speaking Irish in this Gaeltacht village.



Derryclare Lough the Wild Atlantic Way

©MARK_GUSEV/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

From Rossaveal, it's just under an hour's drive to Roundstone, another fishing village that offers great views of the bay and the mountains at the same time. There are some great dining options here, such as O'Dowd's, Eldon's, and Vaughan's. You can also have a quick trip to the beach at Gurteen or Dog's Bay, two beautiful local beaches.

Half an hour from Roundstone is Clifden, the capital of Connemara. This is a great spot for history lovers, as you can visit Clifden Castle from the 1800s, the spot where Alcock and Brown landed their historic cross-Atlantic flight in 1919, and the Connemara Heritage and History Centre for an inside look into traditional Irish life. You can also ride Connemara ponies along the beach with some local companies.

"The Wild Atlantic Way is a parth that follows the west coast of Ireland"

If this isn't enough for one day, you can access Sky Road from Clifden and take in the coastal views along this secluded, winding road. You can follow a loop that will return to Clifden so you can head back to the city after a jam-packed day of exploration. ■

Culture vultures assemble! This county offers the perfect mix of galleries, museums, exhibitions and festivals

Culture Club



Galway International Arts Festival

Named as the European Capital of Culture back in 2020, this is a magnificent time to experience Galway's arts scene. The area is known for its incredible arts festivals, many of which are internationally-renowned. That said, there are cultural experiences to take in all year round and all through the county, so don't worry if your visit doesn't coincide with a festival.

A great centre of Irish culture that you can find in any town is the pub. Many traditional Irish pubs host music sessions on a regular basis, including everything from a trad band playing jigs and reels to soulful sean-nós singers with ancient songs that will make your heart swell. In Galway, you should check out The Crane in the West End, Tigh Neachtain on Quay Street, and An Púcán on the corner of Eyre Square for trad sessions. There are many pubs in the city centre that have regular trad sessions, but these three pubs focus less on attracting tourists and more on local music, giving a more authentic feel to their sessions. If you're on the Aran Islands, two great options are The Bar on Inis Mór and Thatched Pub on Inis Meain.

Another great way to take in Galway's music scene is through buskers, especially in the city centre. Shop Street is famous for its buskers, with everything from magic acts and acrobats to singers and lively bands giving it all they've got. Wander down Galway's main street and take in the atmosphere these performances create, stopping to listen and watch, or even dance on the street! Some people who've busked on Shop Street have gone on to become very famous in the entertainment industry, such as Ed

©ANDREW DOWNES/XPOSURE

Sheeran, who wrote the song "Galway Girl" about the city that's always held a special place in his heart.

If you'd like to catch a show but aren't around during a festival, the Town Hall Theatre is a great venue that has a show on every night. They show a great range of Irish and international acts, including theatre, music, dance, and comedy. They also have a studio space where local emerging artists can show their work, which is one of the reasons why there are so many artists in Galway.

If there's one place that could be described as a "festival town", it's Galway. From about April to September, artists from around the world flock to the area to showcase and take in visual art, theatre, music, and film.

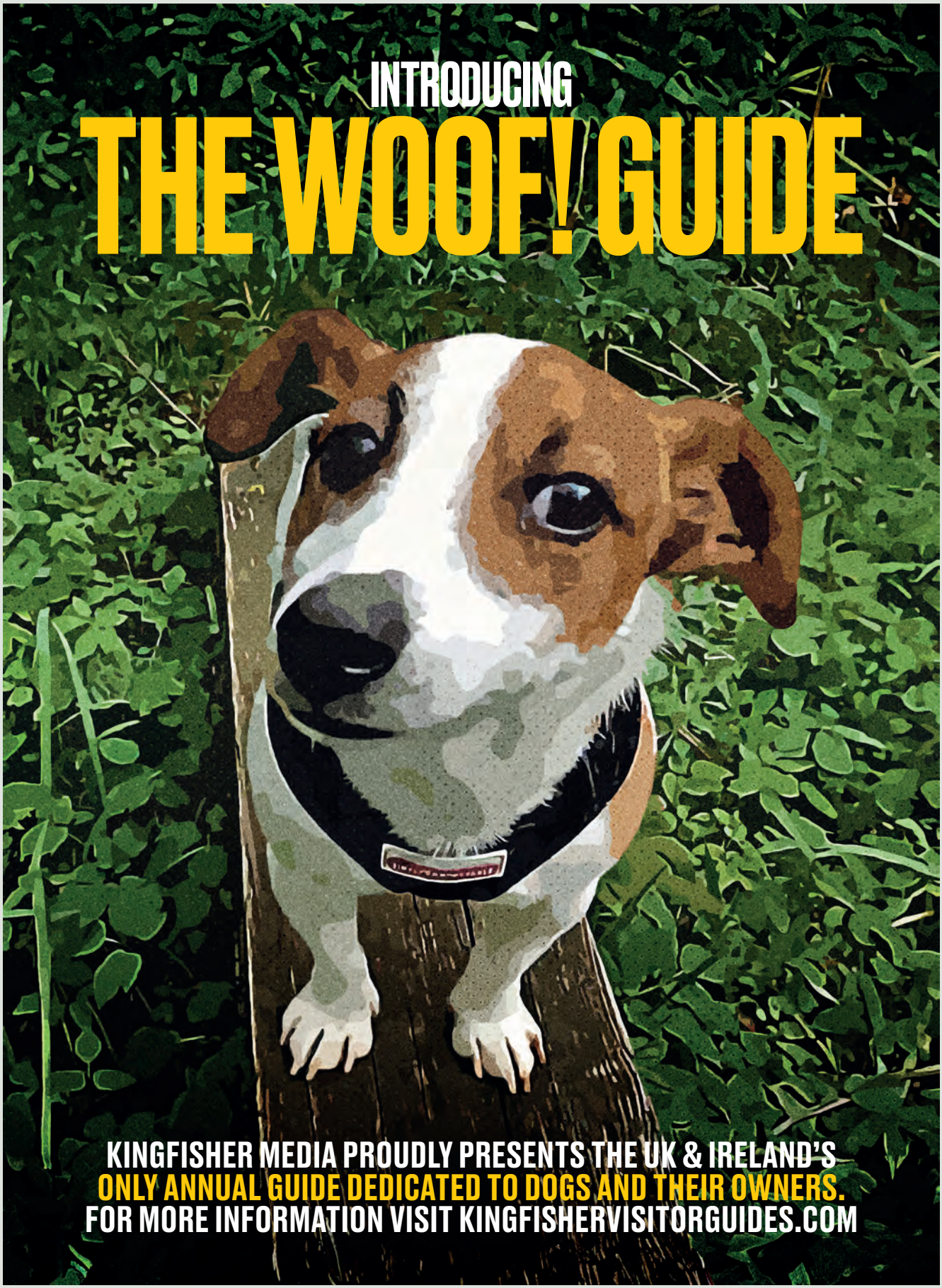
The largest and most famous of these is the Galway International Arts Festival. Taking place every summer since 1977, this festival squeezes over 200 events into a two-week period in July. These events include theatre, live music, street performances, opera, visual arts, comedy, and public talks. Some of the festival's biggest events are their original theatre productions and live music shows in "The Big Top", a giant circus tent that's erected beside the NUI Galway campus. The festival also features wonderful parades that wander through the streets beside pedestrians and interact with the people they meet. The festival has received dozens of national and international awards for its work, and is regularly cited as one of the best festivals in Europe.

> **"Town Hall Theatre is a great venue that has a show on every night"**

The second-largest festival is the Galway Film Fleadh, which takes place over five days in July. Running for over 30 years, the Fleadh attracts film-makers and cinephiles from across the world. There are over 100 cinema screenings each year, as well as Q&A sessions, panel discussions, workshops, and symposiums. It's a great opportunity for burgeoning film makers to get their work to an audience, as well as learn from other people in the industry. The Fleadh also holds a Junior Film Fleadh in November to give young film makers chance to showcase their talents. ▶



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Another internationally-renowned Galway festival is the Cúirt International Festival of Literature, which takes place every April. Founded in 1985, this festival aims to celebrate different forms of literature and their creators, as well as encourage as many people as possible to get involved in reading and writing. In the past, Cúirt has featured Nobel Prize winners, Poet Laureates and award-winning authors from around the world in their events. The Cúirt Festival really creates a sense of being amongst the literature community, connecting people with other lovers of their favourite works and building connections through great stories. The festival features events such as readings, talks, competitions, and live performances.

Events for children

If you're visiting with little ones, the Baboró International Arts Festival for Children is the perfect event to keep them entertained while broadening their horizons and igniting their imaginations. The festival has been running for over 20 years and has brought joy to generations of Galway children, as well as visiting families. Baboró is a local organisation that works year-round to provide creative opportunities to children, with the festival being their largest work each year. The festival features theatre, dance, puppetry, music, art, and literature, with everything from live shows to interactive exhibits and activities. Most of these events are aimed at the under-10s.

Galway is a city steeped in history, and a great way to experience all that has happened on its historic streets is through the Galway Early Music Festival. Every May, outstanding Irish and international musicians come together to celebrate the works of forgotten eras, such as medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque music. The festival fills Galway's streets with music and dancing in a colourful, lively atmosphere. You can attend concerts in historical venues, listen to masters of ancient styles give talks, and take part in workshops and demonstrations that will have you dancing through the streets of Galway.



Galway International Arts Festival

While many of Galway's biggest festivals take place in the city, there are some smaller festivals in more rural areas that still pack a punch. In Tuam, you'll find several festivals over the course of the year that give local artists wonderful opportunities to share their work with the community. The most popular is the Tuam Arts Festival, which takes place over two weeks in August. It features many popular artists from the region and showcases visual arts, theatre, and music. Nearby Kilconly also hosts The Wild West Country Music and Social Dancing Festival, the biggest country music festival to hit the Wild Atlantic Way.

Venturing further into Connemara, you'll find great festival activity in the town of Clifden. As the longest-running community arts festival in Ireland, the Clifden Arts Festival is a hotly-anticipated event every September. It began as a celebration of the arts aimed at local schoolchildren, and still puts a big focus on showing kids how they can be creative and expressive through things like music, dance, visual arts, and performance. The festival has grown significantly over the past 40 years, and now features events for everyone. Clifden also has a festival dedicated to trad music, knows as the Clifden Trad Fest, which takes place every April. During this festival, the streets of Clifden come alive as music from the pubs spills out into the streets and stages are erected in every available space, turning the town into one huge céilí.

Festivals

In the Aran Islands, the festivals take over the islands and everyone gets involved, creating an incredibly lively atmosphere. The biggest festival is Patrún, which takes place on Inis Mór every summer. This is a great tradition on Inis Mór and many local families have taken part in the same events for years. The most popular events are curragh and hooker boat racing between the islands, tug-of-war, and sandcastle building. These events are all taken pretty seriously by the locals, with teams from across the islands and mainland Galway travelling every year to defeat their rivals. If you're looking for a less competitive and more wacky time, TedFest is unlike anything else you've seen. Held every February on Inis Mór, it's a fan convention for an Irish TV series from the '90s, Father Ted. In the show, Father Ted is a parish priest of a desolate island off the coast of Galway, which is based on the Aran Islands. It's an iconic part of modern Irish culture, and even 20 years later, fans come to honour it with crazy events every year. ■

©BABORÓ INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL FOR CHILDREN

The night-time economy here is really thriving, jam-packed with clubs, pubs, bars and live music venues

After dark



Several pubs on Shop Street are worthy of your attention. Opposite page: O'Connell's, Galway

Because it's a pretty rural area, most parts of Galway won't provide a crazy night out. If you fancy a few quiet drinks in the local then you're sorted, but if you want something more than that, you'll need to head into the city.

There are dozens of great pubs in Galway, and a large part of a classic Irish night out is to wander from pub to pub, so don't be afraid to explore! This is a list of some of the greatest pubs in the city, so you should definitely go inside if you spot any of these names as you walk through Galway's streets.

On Eyre Square you'll find O'Connell's, one of Galway's most interesting-looking pubs. The outside and front room of the pub seem like a classic cosy, old-fashioned Irish pub. As you step into the back rooms, you can explore a higgledy-piggledy maze of nooks and crannies where you can sit in relative peace and quiet with a few friends, all decorated to look like an old-fashioned grocers. Step outside into the smoking area and you'll see an entire row of ancient-looking shop fronts which actually hide the back of the pub and the bathrooms. This smoking area also features an old phone box, a discontinued Galway bus, two bars, and a kiosk selling fresh pizza from local company, Dough Bros. This pub is the perfect blend of Ireland's past and present, with good prices to boot.

Making your way down Shop Street, you'll come across several pubs that all deserve a stop. Garavan's is a great spot for whiskey lovers, having won the title of City Bar of the Year at the 2025 Irish Bar of the Year Awards. The cosy, wood-panelled pub creates an

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intimate space where you can feel the building's history. Some of the features, such as fireplaces and stone work, date as far back as 1650! If you enjoy their whiskey so much you can't bear to part with it, they do wonderful gift sets so you can bring a little bit of Garavan's home with you.

At the beginning of the Latin Quarter you'll come to The King's Head, another pub rich with history, and you can see that as soon as you set eyes on the building. Towering over you with its dark colours and bay windows, it won't surprise you to learn that this building has stood for over 800 years. This Galway icon has served many purposes over the years, with Stubber's Castle attached to the back of the building and grand fireplaces showing its connection to the Tribes of Galway. You can sit at the same fireplace that used to be part of the Mayor of Galway's house in the early 1600s while enjoying a pint or cocktail. The King's Head also has a great bistro that serves lunch and dinner every day.

The Front Door Pub is in the heart of the bustling Latin Quarter, with crowds spilling out into the streets on a busy night. The Front Door is connected to neighbouring bar Sonny Molloy's, so you might be a little confused when you find yourself walking into one bar and out of the other. Don't worry though, there's lots to explore in this space, including five bars, two smoking areas, and spaces for live music and dancing. Next to The Front Door is Tigh Nora, a cosy gin bar that's owned by the same group.

Traditional Irish pun

The Dáil Bar, named after Ireland's Parliament, has the feel of a traditional Irish pub but with the buzz of a city centre. A great whiskey selection, award-winning cocktails, and live music every night are three ingredients that will guarantee a great night in this bar that is equally popular with locals and visitors. The Dáil is also a popular spot for watching big sports games.

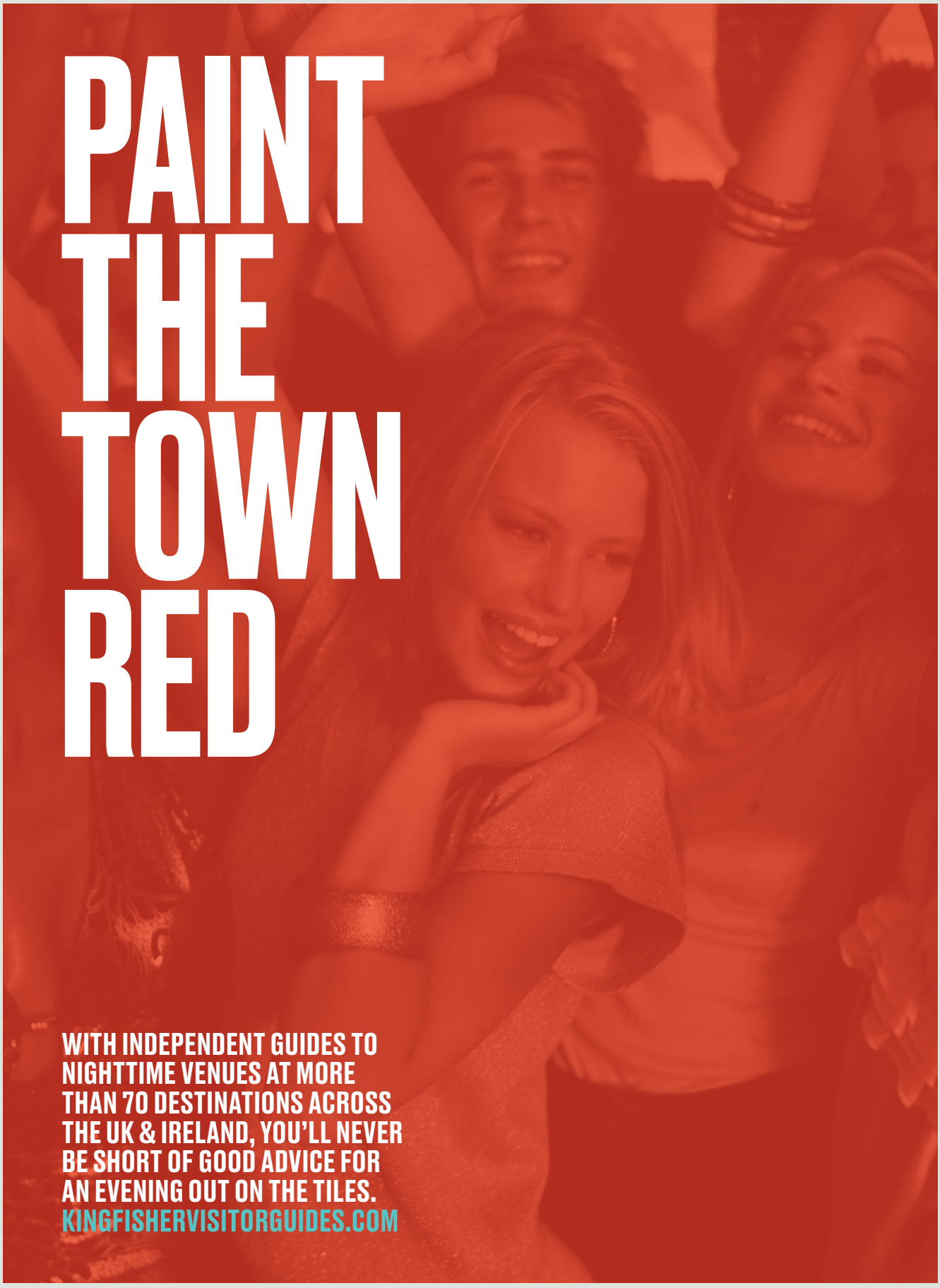
Tigh Neachtain has been open since 1894, something that is clear when you step through its maze of tiny nooks and view the ancient wood that gives the place a traditional feel. This pub is a favourite among Galway's creative scene, and you'll see many posters for performances past and present adorning the walls, as well as some eccentric clientele, perhaps having a drink in costume after a show. Tigh Neachtain is also a favourite among musicians, so you might be surprised with an unexpected session on any particular night. Many patrons choose to sit outside the bar and soak up the atmosphere of the Latin Quarter.

The Quays Bar, aptly located on Quay Street, is one of Galway's most popular pubs. It looks fairly average in size from the front, but as you make your way inside you'll discover multiple storeys, bars, and even a restaurant! There's lots of space to dance to the great live music and if it all gets a bit too hot and crowded, you can step out on to the pedestrianised street at the front door and have a casual chat while you cool off.

A special shout-out has to go to ▶



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Róisín Dubh, known by locals as "The Róisín". This pub is a favourite among locals, with great music and comedy acts, a weekly "silent disco" where the music is played through headphones, and a smoking area that is so popular that many locals say it isn't a proper Galway night out if you don't end up there.

Where you go can depend entirely on what you're looking for, and depending on the day of the week or time of year, you may find some pubs too crowded to be enjoyable. In particular, The Front Door and The Quays are prone to crowding, and Tigh Neachtain has a very small inside space but lots of outdoor seating, making getting a dry seat pretty dependent on the weather.

If you're a beer connoisseur, you should check out Salt House and Bierhaus. A two-minute walk apart, both of these small pubs offer a wide array of local, national, and international craft beers with friendly staff and a cool atmosphere.

Cockails

If you prefer cocktails to pints, check out The Buddha Bar. This Asian restaurant and bar is renowned for its cocktails, which are regularly the cheapest in the city due to their promotional deals. If you prefer a busier environment, go to The Skeffington Arms on Eyre Square, where the cocktail menu is just one section of their many drinks options.

For those who enjoy nightclubs, Galway has lots of great options. Electric is a huge entertainment space, which re-opened in 2024 as a 'multipurpose venue' with a three-storey club, multiple bars, live music, restaurant and cultural events. Meanwhile, Coyotes is a late-night bar with a lively atmosphere that's popular with hen and stag parties.

If you don't want to face the busy streets of Galway on a Friday night, there are great pubs across the county that offer top-quality drinks and atmosphere. Salthill is an excellent spot that's close to the city if you want to take your night up a notch at some point, but far enough away that you won't struggle to get a drink at the bar. One of Satlhill's most iconic pubs is O'Connor's, a long-time local favourite that was featured in the music video to Ed Sheeran's 'Galway Girl'. Some other stellar pubs in the seaside village include craft beer spot The Oslo and the rooftop terrace at O'Reilly's. Pubs in Ireland close sometime between midnight and 2am, but Salthill's largest casino, Caesar's Palace, serves alcohol until late, making it a popular spot for people who aren't ready for the night to end.



Quay Street, Galway

> **"Don't want to face the busy streets of Galway? There are great pubs across the county that offer top-quality drinks & atmosphere"**

Rural areas

In smaller towns, the pubs tend to close earlier than in the city. Pubs usually close around 2am in Galway, but are more likely to close at 11.30pm or 12pm in more rural areas. A night out in Clifden is best spent in Lowry's Bar, an award-winning traditional Irish bar that's a local favourite due to its excellent whiskey selection and live music every night. There are many great pubs on the Aran Islands, but Joe Watty's in Kilronan on Inis Mór will always provide a night of liveliness and enjoyment with its excellent staff and live music. In Kinvara, you can visit the same bar locals and visitors have been enjoying for over 150 years – Green's Bar. With teetering shelves of whiskey and local musicians having a session in the corner, you won't find many places that deliver such an authentic Irish pub night. ■

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Although County Galway has more than enough to keep you busy, a journey further afield can make for an exciting new adventure

Time to explore

The west of Ireland is rich in natural beauty and traditional Irish culture, so it makes sense that you'd want to see as much of it as you possibly can. The best way to do this is to follow the Wild Atlantic Way, a route that has been specially planned along the west coast from Donegal to Kerry to show you all the best spots and some breathtaking coastal drives in between.

From Galway, you can go north through Connemara, past the bays of Mayo and Sligo, to the remote wilderness of the Donegal coast. Going south from Galway, you can travel through Clare and across the Burren to Kerry and Cork, both renowned for their natural beauty. The beauty of the Wild Atlantic Way is that you can tailor it to show you what you want to see, or just follow the coast and see where the road takes you.

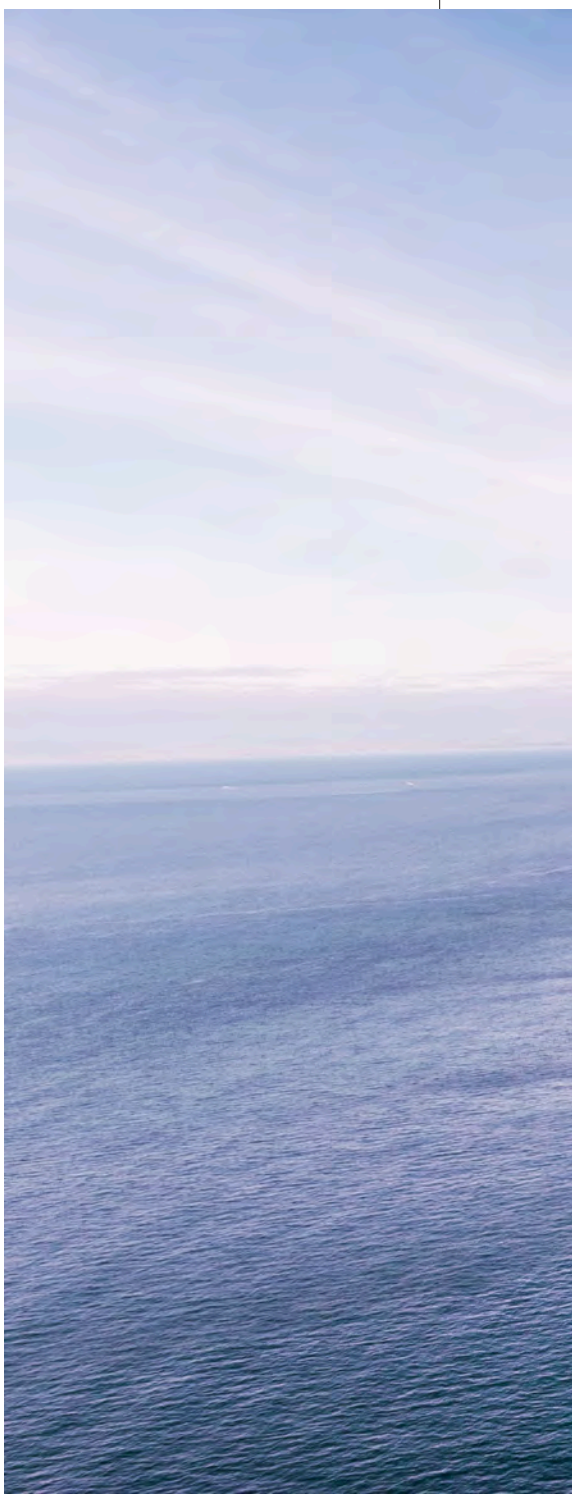
One of the most popular spots to visit is the Burren, a unique rock formation along the coast that has created stunning scenery. You can walk along and explore the Burren through the Burren National Park, which focuses on preserving the unique flora that grows in the area. You can climb mountains and cliffs, walk along the limestone paths, and discover turloughs, springs, and lakes. When you've grown tired of walking, The Burren Centre has a great tea room, gift shop, and series of exhibitions that show how the Burren was formed.

Another incredibly popular destination is the Cliffs of Moher in Co. Clare, a little over an hour's drive from the Burren. There are dozens of tour options for this beautiful attraction, and you can always plan your own tour by picking and choosing what you want to see.

If you don't want to worry about travel, you can book a day trip that picks you up and drops you off in Galway from companies like Lally Tours and Galway Tour Company. If you choose to make your own way to the cliffs, you can save 50% on the entrance fee by booking online at least 24 hours in advance. The nearby village of Doolin is a charming place to visit, and get a boat to the Aran Islands if you wish.

If you're looking for a challenge, take part in one of Ireland's most iconic pilgrimages by climbing Croagh Patrick. This famous mountain near Westport in Co. Mayo is considered one of the holiest places in Ireland, and people from around the country come to climb it every July in honour of Saint Patrick. Many people make this pilgrimage barefoot, but you can climb any time of year and wear whatever footwear you desire. There are many different routes you can take up the mountain, but the most common one begins at the car park and is clearly signposted all the way up. There are some extraordinary views as you climb, and a tiny church at the summit that adds to the spiritual experience. ■

“An incredibly popular destination is the Cliffs of Moher in Co. Clare, a little over an hour's drive from the Burren”



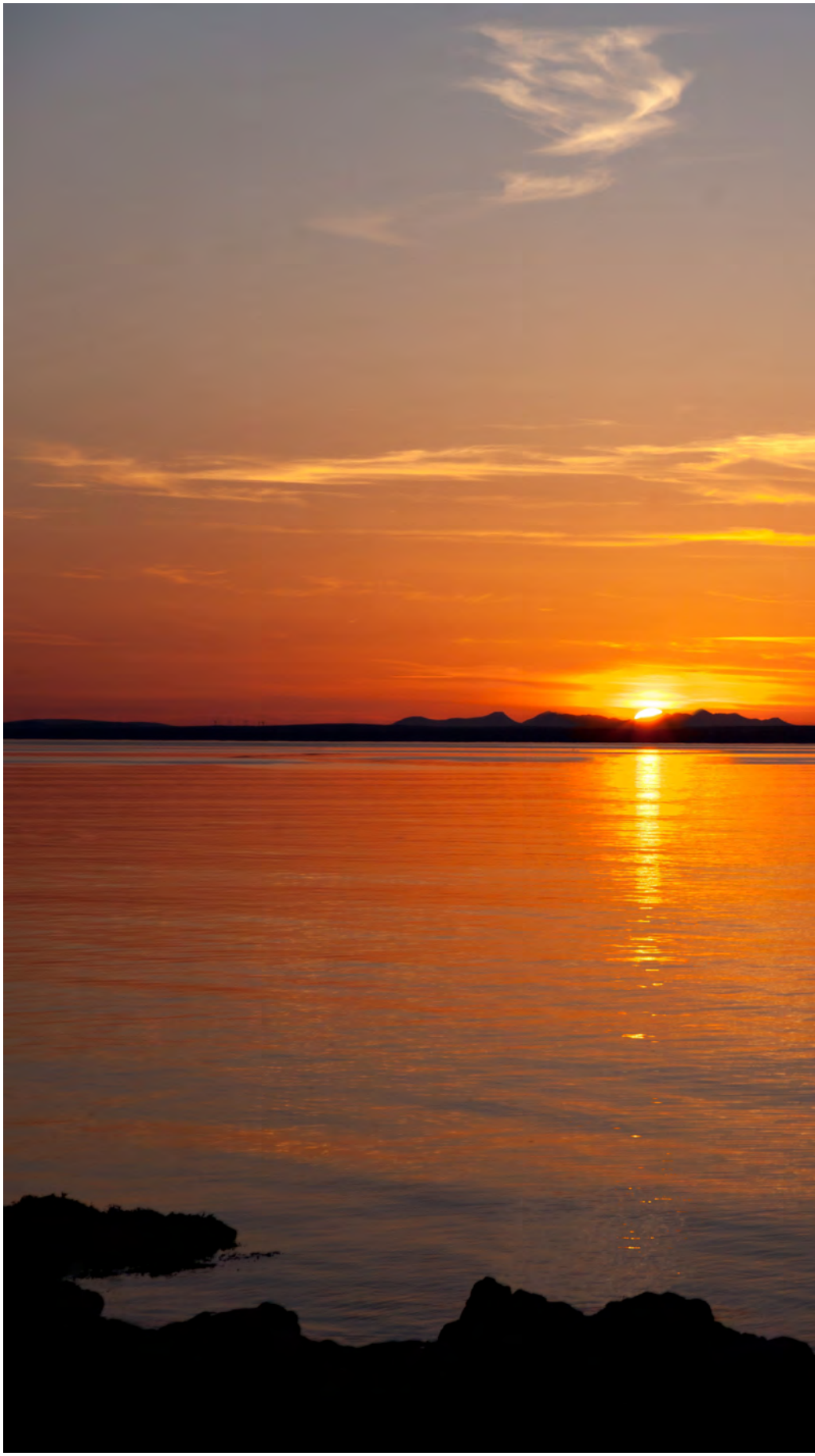
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The Cliffs of Moher in Co. Clare is an incredibly popular destination a little over an hour's drive from the Burren



PHOTO-FINISH

Sunset over Galway Bay





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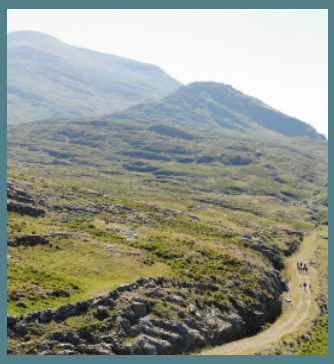


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