

time to

EXPLORE



ELEGANT
The Tree
Castle hotel

OSCAR FAME
Tree Castle was
used as a model
city of Troy in
Branagh's

Mad about the Boyne

Fionnuala Boyle
journeys deep
into the historic
heart of Ireland



LUXURY AT
Donboyne
Castle Hotel in
and Spa

GET THERE

Fly to Dublin airport from a wide choice of UK airports with airlines including Aer Lingus, Ryanair and British Airways.

BOOK IT

Rooms at Donboyne Castle Hotel and Spa in Donboyne, Co. Meath, start at £154 a night (room only). donboynehotel.com or 01846 811111. For a room in Tree, Co. Meath, start at £121 a night. www.treecastle.com

MORE INFO

donboynehotel.com



SPECTACULAR
Kilina Castle

“Boyne Valley is renowned as the birthplace of Ireland's Ancient East”

Rugged Ireland is known for its landscapes, unbridled hospitality, hearty cuisine and a rich and complex history. And perhaps nowhere encapsulates all four better than Boyne Valley – located in the north east of Ireland, just 20 minutes from Dublin airport.

Hidden gem? It might not be the appropriate term for Boyne Valley, which extends across all of County Meath and the southern region of Co. Louth – because its charm, its past and endless possibility for adventure and wonderment will not be lost on those familiar with it.

But like anywhere so close to a capital city, it may be overlooked as a holiday destination for those heading to Ireland. But it shouldn't be, especially as it is considered the birthplace of Ireland's Ancient East, and truly has something for everyone.

If you're interested in Irish history, the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne is the home of the Neolithic passage tombs – or burial monuments – dating back to 3300 BC.

The best known on the site is Newgrange, built by Stone Age farmers and predating Stonehenge by 400 years. The passage tomb complex lies to the west of Newgrange, and the large mound has two graves surrounded by 127 massive kerbstones as well as 18 small tombs.

Step inside the ancient, hewn and marvel at the megalithic art – drawings and inscriptions left by the Neolithic people 5000 years ago.

When your guide turns the spotlights off, watch a single shaft of light flood the passageway. The passage and chamber are aligned with the rising sun on mornings around the Winter Solstice which each year attracts hundreds to Newgrange.

Next, explore Loughcrew Cairns. The Loughcrew complex is a megalithic cemetery with around 30 passage tombs and is situated around the summit of three hills near the town of Oldcastle.

One of the best preserved and most accessible tombs at Loughcrew, known as Cairn T, appears to be the central tomb of the whole complex. It faces the rising sun at the vernal (March) and autumnal (September) equinoxes which shines through the passage to illuminate symbols carved onto the

wall of the chamber. On a clear day visitors will be able to see over half of Ireland from the top of Slieve na Cath (Hill of the Witch).

At the base of the hill is Muggie Heaney's Cottage, a 17th-century house where visitors can get a feel for what life was like in a traditional Irish home.

Those with a penchant for historic feteness should make time for Kilina Castle, which boasts links to Sir Walter Raleigh and Laurence of Arabia. The castle, which lies on top of a hill, has been fully restored by American native, Allen Sanger-Kinney and his wife, who actually live in the castle. They could be credited with quite a feat in bringing the spectacular structure to life.

With guided tours available for the public, it boasts a collection of artwork and artefacts from the Medieval and early Renaissance

periods. And contrary to others of their kind, these works are not concealed behind red rope or glass.

This ability to step back in time while also seeing the castle through the eyes of the present day, makes Kilina Castle possibly one of the most authentic experiences you'll have inside the grounds of an ancient fortress.

Meanwhile, the market town of Trim will impress film buffs having featured in Mel Gibson's Oscar-winning epic, *Braveheart*. Much of the 1996 movie was partly filmed in Ireland and Trim Castle played its part as the fortified city of York. The scenes set in London were filmed inside the castle walls.

Guided tours grant access to the keep, with its panoramic views of the surrounding countryside.

Walking around the castle grounds and along the River Boyne, it's easy to see why the film-makers felt in love with the area.

But the Boyne Valley isn't just all activity, though. Food, drink, and relaxation play a huge part in the region's offerings. At the Twelve Points Restaurant,

a gourmet eatery in the grounds of Kilina Castle, you can back into exclusive Kilina cuisine and other culinary delights.

While in the town of Trim, stop off at Stonewall Coffee to enjoy brunch made with the finest local ingredients while taking in a view of the castle.

In the heart of the seaside village of Bettystown, you can enjoy afternoon tea at the Mary Bettystown cafe while overlooking the Irish Sea before admiring the beautiful coastline with a walk along the popular seaside resort.

If looking for somewhere to stay, Tree Castle Hotel offers all elegant bedrooms and is an ideal location for exploring the region. You'll dine in The Bailey Restaurant with its seasonal Irish home cooking, with flavours inspired by Asia and Europe.

Alternatively, a spa, dinner, and overnight at Donboyne Castle Hotel is a popular choice too.

Nestled in 21 acres of lush green countryside, the hotel offers a spa with a hot stone room, bath house, jacuzzi, hot tub and more. You'll dine in The Ivy Restaurant, which has two AA Rosettes with menus inspired by the finest seasonal produce.

Other

Boyne Valley highlights include the Peppy Gardens, a cottage garden full of quirky butternut and whimsical touches owned by passionate gardener Eilish Parrell, who opened it up to the public in 2023. You'll also have fine views of the Loughcrew Hills. Extend your weekend with a visit to Bective Mill House and The Hot Box Sauna – an outdoor sauna experience on the bank of the river Boyne at Bective Mill House, a wellness and glamping centre.

Fancy a go at bread-making? Chris and Sara at Bread with Benefits invite visitors into their home for a hands-on baking experience.

You'll craft your own soundbath bowl while exploring the deep connections between food, gut health, and wellbeing with the couple, who are a former farmer and local GP.

At every turn, Boyne Valley taps into a side of Ireland – and history – that visitors may never have experienced or even considered before.

But you'll be glad of it, and all the better for it.



SCENE
Bettystown beach



INTRIGUING
Kilina Castle museum, and exhibition, left



TRIM
Trim Castle, right

Mad about the Boyne

Fionnuala Boyle journeys deep into the historic heart of Ireland

Rugged Ireland is famous for its landscapes, unrivalled hospitality, hearty cuisine and a rich and complex history. And perhaps nowhere encompasses all four better than Boyne Valley – located in the north east of Ireland, just 20 minutes from Dublin airport.

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But like anywhere so close to a capital city, it may be overlooked as a holiday destination for those heading to Ireland. But it shouldn’t be, especially as it is considered the birthplace of Ireland’s Ancient East, and truly has something for everyone.

If you’re interested in Irish history, the Unesco World Heritage Site of Bru na Boinne is the homeplace of Knowth and Newgrange ‘passage tombs’ – or burial monuments – dating back to 3200 BC.

The best-known on the site is Newgrange, built by Stone Age farmers and predating Stonehenge by 400 years. The passage tomb complex lies to the west of Newgrange and the large mound has two graves surrounded by 127 massive kerbstones as well as 18 small tombs.

Step inside the ancient tomb and marvel at the megalithic art – drawings and inscriptions left by the Neolithic people 5,000 years ago.

When your guide turns the spotlights off, watch a single slither of light flood the passageway. The passage and chamber are aligned with the rising sun on mornings around the Winter Solstice which each year attracts hundreds to Newgrange.

Next, explore Loughcrew Cairns. The Loughcrew complex is a megalithic cemetery with around 30 passage tombs and is situated around the summit of three hills near the town of Oldcastle.

One of the best-preserved and most accessible tombs at Loughcrew, known as Cairn T, appears to be the central tomb of the whole complex. It faces the rising sun at the vernal (March) and autumnal (September) equinoxes which shines through the passage to illuminate symbols carved onto the back wall of the chamber. On a clear day visitors will be able to see over half of Ireland from the top of Sliabh na Cailli (Hill of the Witch).

At the base of the hill is Maggie Heaney's Cottage, a 1700s heritage museum where visitors can get a feel for what life was like in a traditional Irish home.

Those with a penchant for historic fortresses should make time for Killua Castle, which boasts links to Sir Walter Raleigh and Lawrence of Arabia. The castle, which long lay in ruins, has been fully restored by Austrian native Allen Sangines-Krause and his wife, who actually live in the castle. They could be credited with quite literally bringing the spectacular structure to life.

With guided tours available for the public, it boasts a collection of artwork and artefacts from the Medieval and early Renaissance periods. And contrary to others of their kind, these works are not concealed behind red rope or glass.

This ability to step back in time while also seeing the castle through the eyes of the present day, makes Killua Castle possibly one of the most authentic experiences you'll have inside the grounds of an ancient fortress.

Elsewhere, the market town of Trim will impress film buffs having featured in Mel Gibson's Oscarwinning epic Braveheart. Mainly set in Scotland, the 1995 movie was partly filmed in Ireland and Trim Castle played its part as the fortified city of York. The scenes set in London were filmed inside the castle walls.

Guided tours grant access to the keep, with its panoramic views of the surrounding countryside.

Walking around the castle grounds and along the River Boyne, it's easy to see why the filmmakers fell in love with the area.

But the Boyne Valley isn't just all activity, though. Food, drink, and relaxation play a huge part in the region's offerings. At the Twelve Points Restaurant, a gourmet eatery in the grounds of Killua Castle, you can tuck into exclusive Killua venison and other culinary delights.

While in the town of Trim, stop off at Stonewall Coffee to enjoy brunch made with the finest local ingredients while taking in a view of the castle.

In the heart of the seaside village of Bettystown, you can enjoy afternoon tea at the Navy Bettystown cafe whilst overlooking the Irish Sea before admiring the beautiful coastline with a walk along the popular seaside resort.

If looking for somewhere to stay, Trim Castle Hotel offers 68 elegant bedrooms and is an ideal location for exploring the region. You'll dine in The Bailey Brasserie with its seasonal Irish home cooking, with flavours inspired by Asia and Europe.

Alternatively, a spa, dinner, and overnight at Dunboyne Castle Hotel is a popular choice too.

Nestled in 21 acres of lush green countryside, the hotel offers thermal access at The Spa with the crystal steam room, herb sauna, laconium, hot tub and more. You'll dine in The Ivy Restaurant, which has two AA Rosettes with menus inspired by the finest seasonal produce.

Other Boyne Valley highlights include the Poppy Garden, a cottage garden full of quirky features and whimsical touches owned by passionate gardener Ealma Purcell, who opened it up to the public in 2023. You'll also have fine views of the Loughcrew Hills.

Extend your pamper session with a visit to Bective Mill House and The Hot Box Sauna – an outdoor sauna experience on the bank of the river Boyne at Bective Mill House, a wellness and glamping centre.

Fancy a go at bread-making? Chris and Sara at Bread with Benefits invite visitors into their home for a hands-on baking experience.

You'll craft your own sourdough bread while exploring the deep connections between bread, gut health, and wellbeing with the couple, who are a former farmer and local GP.

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Get there

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Book it

Rooms at Dunboyne Castle Hotel and Spa, Co. Meath start from £156 a night room-only. dunboynecastlehotel.com

Rooms at Trim Castle Hotel in Trim, Co. Meath, start at £121 a night room-only. trimcastlehotel.com

More info

discoverboynevalley.ie