

YOUR  
**FREE**  
VISITOR  
GUIDE!

BURREN AND  
CLIFFS OF MOHER

**GEO**   
**PARK**   

PEOPLE. PLACE.  
LEARNING. LIVELIHOOD.

*The Burren*  
*Naturally Yours*



## The Burren Ecotourism Network

*The Burren Ecotourism Network (B.E.N.) is a network of tourism enterprises with the objective of establishing the Burren as a premier internationally recognised sustainable tourism destination*

*It seeks to support continued training, mentoring and accreditation in sustainable tourism for its members*

**Are you interested in becoming a member?**

For full information on the training programme and to obtain an application form, please contact Tina O'Dwyer, Sustainable Tourism Co-ordinator, Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark [todwyer@burren.ie](mailto:todwyer@burren.ie) or on 065 707 2297



[www.burren.ie](http://www.burren.ie)

The Burren Ecotourism Network is supported by the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark



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Designed & Compiled by 

# The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark

*Kelly Humphries*



© Burren Yoga & Meditation Centre

**G**o, stand on the edge of the Burren, on its limestone pavement and listen; hear the waves crash into the unseen caves beneath your feet. Then turn; look at the Cliffs of Moher as they rise majestically from the raging sea, and you will realise why this extraordinary region, with its magnificent landscape, has been awarded the prestigious UNESCO recognised Global Geopark Status.

As a Geopark, the Burren and Cliffs of Moher region has become internationally recognised, though plenty of people, some 800,000 per year, have been aware of this hidden gem on the west coast of Ireland for a long time. Not only does the region have the geological importance that is required of a Geopark, it also has the all-important network of organisations that oversee the tourism in the area as well as the education and conservation efforts.

Making up over 530 square kilometres, the Burren and Cliffs of Moher region offers a diversity that is second to none. There is the natural beauty of over 200 metre high cliffs with its eight kilometres of rugged coastline, and there is beauty in the vast array of flora, including Arctic and Alpine flowers that grow surprisingly alongside Mediterranean species. There is also the staggering amount of history in the Burren region with over 2,700 recorded monuments, some dating back over 6,000 years. This has led to the Burren being described as “one vast memorial to bygone cultures”.

Universally, the Burren is renowned for its landscape and its Ice Age legacy is apparent throughout. From the limestone pavement, the gorges, the springs and the swallow-holes, to the glacial striations, the boulders and erratics; every square metre of this distinctive landscape is understandably important.

“There is beauty in the vast array of flora, including Arctic and Alpine flowers.”



Each doline and polje (flat depressions within the limestone), each dry valley and turlough, along with the hundreds of kilometres of underground caves, make up the uniqueness that is the Burren.

With such a delicate and important landscape, this region must be protected by the people who use it and thus the Burren Ecotourism Network was created. This network, together with regional development agencies and local communities, is determined to care for and keep this pristine region sustainable. Through this network, local businesses have come together to provide visitors with locally produced foods, handcrafted products, and exciting yet environmentally sound experiences within the region.



“One vast memorial to bygone cultures.”

As a Geopark, the Burren and Cliffs of Moher region is set to continue its rise on the world stage, not only as an important geological region, but also as a mecca for sustainable tourism. It was shortlisted in the ‘Best Destination for Responsible Tourism’ category in the 2013 World Responsible Tourism Awards. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) named the Geopark as one of 3 finalists in the destination category for its 2014 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards.

So, go, stand in the centre of the Burren, look around, learn and explore. It is there waiting. It is, naturally yours.

Visitor information relating to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark is available from [www.burrengeopark.ie](http://www.burrengeopark.ie) and [www.facebook.com/BurrenGeopark](https://www.facebook.com/BurrenGeopark).

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*The Geopark is funded by Clare County Council, The Geological Survey of Ireland and Fáilte Ireland.*



# The Burren: A rock of Ecotourism

*The Burren is leading the way for Irish tourism, offering visitors an exciting range of ecotourism experiences. Burren Ecotourism represents a growing collective of tourism operators that are committed to the promotion of responsible travel to this unique region, writes Kelly Humphries.*



**C**ome with us, into the wild Burren we go. Come, and discover all that is waiting for you.

From archaeology to adventure, from geology to botany, discover the pristine beaches, the limestone mountains. Uncover magical caves, hidden churches, and sacred wells. Find yourself hiking, cycling, surfing, kayaking, and caving. Immerse yourself in the fine local foods or sit back and enjoy great traditional music. Come to North Clare, to this magnificent region and find everything you want.

And with that tempting invitation, we packed our bags ready for anything and everything the Burren had to offer.

With its limestone backdrop and Global Geopark status, the Burren has emerged as a top holiday destination in Ireland and with this comes a host of local businesses waiting to show visitors just what the Burren has in abundance—something truly unique.

On my visit to the Burren, what I found was a community that had passion and pride for the region they live and work in. From this community spirit and with the support of local and national agencies, **Burren Ecotourism** emerged, with its philosophy of awareness, conservation and sustainability.

The **Burren Ecotourism** objective is to ensure that every visitor to the area has an exciting and memorable holiday experience, which in turn supports sustainability and conservation efforts in the local community. This business network prides itself on providing genuine and authentic experiences for all visitors coming to the Burren.

**Burren Ecotourism** has also provided tourism-based businesses with a way to maintain a high standard of sustainability with an eco-certification process. Each operator involved with the network has, or is in the process of having, visitor experiences independently certified by Ecotourism Ireland. This assures visitors that when they support such businesses in the area, they are supporting environmentally-conscious operators, who are committed to long-term sustainability and conservation of the Burren.

The network is not just about



**“Come to North Clare, to this magnificent region and find everything you want.”**

certification and conservation. It’s also about building community and this is obvious in the collaboration that occurs between businesses within the network. The Burren, with its fascinating natural environment and abundance of cultural remains, is an important, yet fragile, resource to be enjoyed, respected and conserved for future generations.

To help protect the Burren, **Burren Ecotourism** encourages visitors to follow the principles of Leave No Trace. Leave No Trace is an outdoor ethics educational programme designed to promote and inspire responsible behaviour in the outdoors through education, research and partnerships. Principles include: Plan ahead and prepare; be considerate to others; respect farm animals and wildlife; travel and camp on durable ground; leave what you



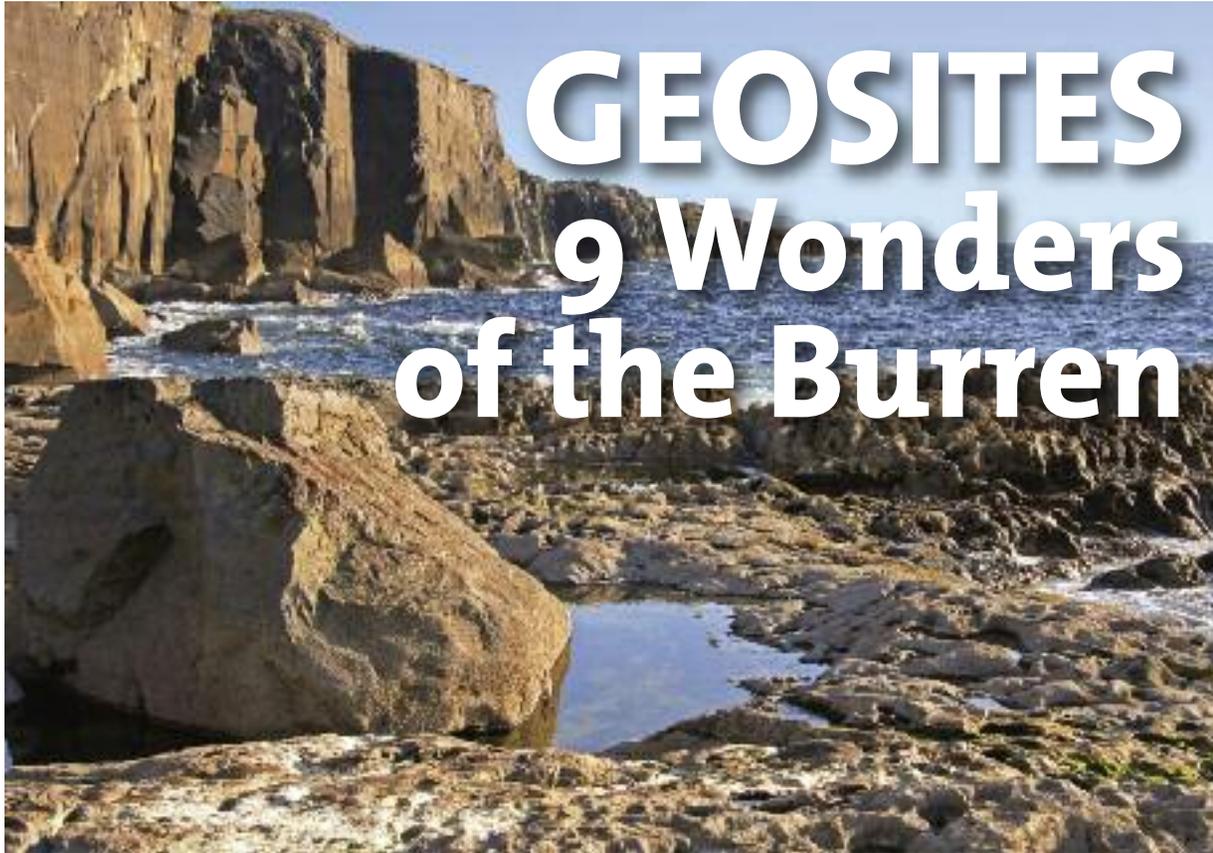
find and dispose of waste properly. There is something refreshing in getting to experience a host of different activities that have been put together especially for you by a number of different operators—operators that are able to work together harmoniously for the good of the visitor. This is a rare and marvellous thing.

There is a feeling in the Burren, a certain way of life and a pride that is evident in each person that calls this region their home. This spirit allows each visitor to take something back with them, not just great memories of a place or an activity, but also great memories of the people. There is truly no other place like this, where businesses work with their surroundings in such a way that allows the natural beauty of the region to shine through above all else.

Whether visiting the Burren for an afternoon outing or for a two-week vacation, there is so much available here to fill each and every moment no matter what your interest.

So explore the rugged and wild Burren and be amazed; be captivated; be free.

*Burren Ecotourism is supported by the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark and Clare Local Development Company.*



# GEOSITES

## 9 Wonders of the Burren

*From beaches to piers, neolithic tombs to disappearing lakes, there are nine fascinating sites of geological importance scattered around the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark.*



**A**s well as geological characteristics, many of these also have cultural or heritage significance too. Whether you come across them on your travels or tour the network itself, these geosites are sure to leave an impression.

From beaches to piers, neolithic tombs to disappearing lakes, there are nine fascinating sites of geological importance scattered around the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark. As well as geological characteristics, many of these also have cultural or heritage significance too. Whether you come across them on your travels or tour the network itself, these geosites are sure to leave an impression.

Stretching from New Quay to the Martello Tower at Finavarra Point, the **Flaggy Shore** is strewn with glacial erratics including pink granite from Connemara, purple sandstone rocks from the Slieve Aughty Mountains and the native grey limestone Burren rocks. Here you can find limestone flags and rounded boulders as well as myriad fossils embedded on the smooth limestone pavement of the upper shore that date back to the carboniferous period.

Any day spent at **Fanore Beach** proves both fun and fascinating. This large sandy beach may be popular with swimmers and surfers but if you are more interested in the geology of the area there are plenty of boulders and

“Poul nabrone, a portal tomb dating back to the neolithic period, is perhaps one of the most recognisable images of ancient Ireland.”

rocks full of ancient marine fossils to find. The Caher River, the Burren’s only above ground river, enters the sea here and the estuary contains many Calcite covered rocks.

In Doolin, a gentle walk along the limestone pavement at **Doolin Pier** shows the sheer power of the Atlantic Ocean. Massive limestone blocks have been thrown onto the shoreline and the rock pools have been carved by centuries of erosion. There are also ‘glacial erratics’ strewn around the area. Giant sheets of ice moved across the land here between 25,000 and 12,000 years ago. The sheets picked up rocks and boulders from the landscape, carried them along and then dropped them as it melted—hence the name ‘erratic’.



Standing 214 metres and stretching for eight kilometres, the **Cliffs of Moher** are one of the most spectacular sights in the Burren. On a clear day one can see as far as Galway Bay in the north to the Blasket islands in the south. The rocks that make this cliff formation were formed over 300 million years ago and one can see the layers of sandstone, siltstone and shale quite easily. A variety of coastal landforms can be found here including sea caves, sea arches, sea stacks and sea stumps formed by the constant erosion of the cliff face. One such example is the great seat stack Branaunmore, which stands at 67 metres in height.

The village of **Lisdoonvarna** is located in a landscape of steep shale hills with deep gorges. A number of mineral rich springs surface here that carry sulphur, iron, magnesium and calcium. Visitors have come here for over 150 years to avail of the healing properties of the water at **Lisdoonvarna Spa Wells**. The grounds of these wells are open to visitors during the summer.

Located in the south east corner of the Burren, **Burren National Park** is 1500 hectares in size and contains many fascinating geological features and natural sites including limestone hills with beautiful folding patterns. The guided tours are a great way to see and learn about the secrets and fascinating history of this park.



“The Cliffs of Moher are one of the most spectacular sights in the Burren.”

**Lough Bunny** has proved an enigma to many as no streams flow in or out. This shallow lake has quite low nutrient levels in the water and the floor is made up of limestone mud on pavement. The ruins by the lake are known locally as Bolton Castle. Make sure to find the unique karst limestone features such as egg-box shaped hollows.

A turlough is a disappearing lake, appearing with heavy rainfall and then vanishing as the water drains. **Carron Turlough** is located on the largest karst depression in northwest Europe. The Carron Loop walking trail will bring you over Termon Mountain to Termon Cross, Temple Cronin Medieval Church and St. Fachtnan’s Holy Well.

**Poul nabrone**, a portal tomb dating back to the neolithic period, is perhaps one of the most recognisable images of ancient Ireland. Poul nabrone means “home of the quern stones”. Approximately 28 adults and children were buried under here with personal items including crystals, weapons and pottery. A close look at the rocks reveals the fossils dating back to 345 million years, long before dinosaurs roamed this earth.

For more information, see [www.burrengeopark.ie](http://www.burrengeopark.ie) or *Stone, Water & Ice: A Geology Trip through the Burren*, an illustrated booklet, which is available widely in shops and centres throughout the Burren and Co. Clare.



# BURREN LIVING Towns & Villages

*When I think of the Burren, the first image that comes to mind is the limestone pavements, which are punctuated by bursts of vividly coloured flora. However, signs of beauty and vibrancy don't just appear between the stone, writes John Hogan, as the region's necklace of gateway towns and villages each offers their own natural energy.*

If you're travelling from Ennis, one of the first pearls on the winding string that you'll meet is Corofin, on the edge of the Burren. This picturesque village is within close proximity of 12 lakes that are populated by a wide variety of fish and is known by many as "The Angler's Paradise".

Twenty kilometres to the west is a paradise of the surfing variety in the town of Lahinch, which is internationally recognised for its powerful waves. The town also has an internationally renowned golf course and a great selection of restaurants and pubs for some post-activity relaxation. Just three miles inland from Lahinch is



**Ennistymon**, a market town known for its traditional shop fronts, local crafts and lively pubs.

If you tread the path a few miles north along the coast, you can discover the small village of **Doolin**, which is equally known for both its musical and literary history. The birthplace of renowned whistle player, Micho Russell, Doolin was also a favoured destination of writers including George Bernard Shaw and JM Synge. These traditions are reflected in annual traditional music and writers' festivals.

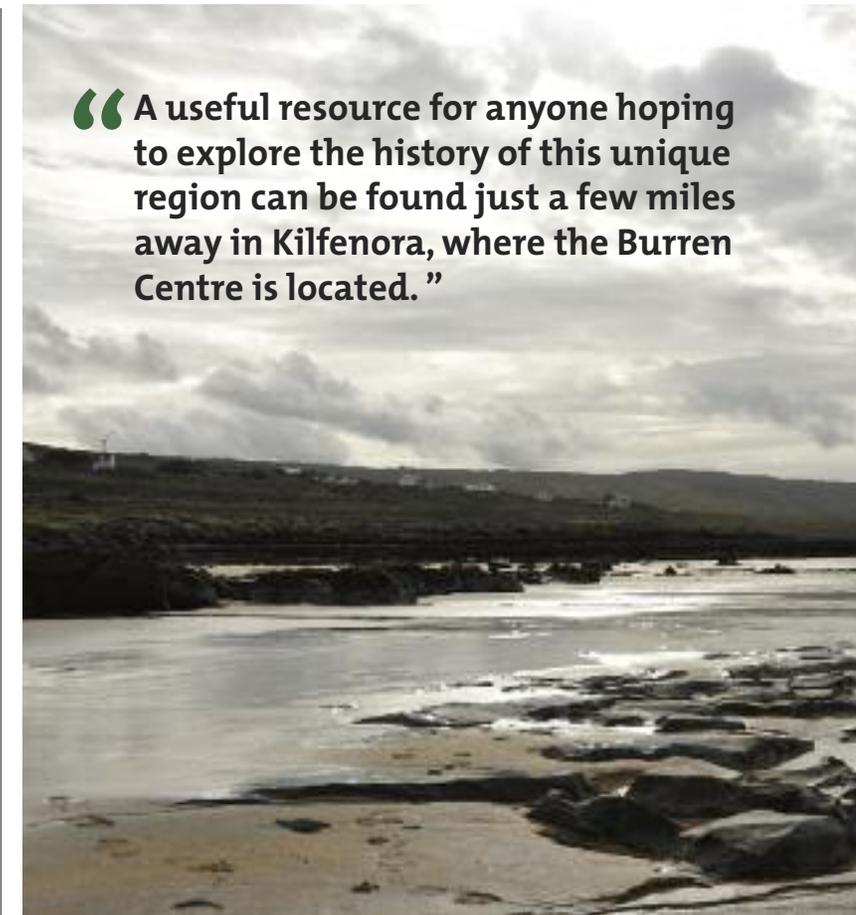


**Lisdoonvarna**, immortalised by Christy Moore in the song of the same name, is just 10 minutes up the road from Doolin. Ireland's only spa town, with less than 1,000 occupants, welcomes up to 40,000 visitors annually for its world famous matchmaking festival. This festival has been going for over 150 years, as have the values of providing great food, music and craic. A useful resource for anyone hoping to explore the history of this unique region

can be found just a few miles away in **Kilfenora**, where the Burren Centre is located. The small town is also home to one of Ireland's best-known musical groups, the Kilfenora Céilí Band, which was founded in the early 20th century. While the band tours both nationally and internationally, they still perform regularly in Kilfenora and nearby towns. Any opportunity to see them should not be missed.

One of the smallest villages that surrounds the Burren is **Carron**. A charming village with a population of just over 100, Carron is the birthplace one of Ireland's most influential sons in Michael Cusack, who inspired and co-founded the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). The village sits in the middle of the Burren and is a starting point for many scenic walks around the almost lunar-like terrain. The stark splendour of the Burren is even rumoured to have inspired fantasy author, JRR Tolkien, who explored the region when he was an examiner in the third level institution, NUI Galway.

**"In an untamed landscape, you are in the presence of some of the most breathtaking scenery Ireland has to offer."**



**"A useful resource for anyone hoping to explore the history of this unique region can be found just a few miles away in Kilfenora, where the Burren Centre is located."**

On the northern side of the Burren, **Ballyvaughan** is a small harbour village on the south shores of Galway Bay. The pier and slipway has made it a base for maritime activities like boating, fishing and scuba diving. With the Burren College of Art just a stone's throw away, its picturesque appearance is paired with the warmth of its hospitality.

Travelling further north into Galway, **Kinvara** sits on the edge of the Burren. A port village, Kinvara has a rich history that can still be seen in the well-preserved waterfront and Dunguaire Castle. The village's legacy of fishing is celebrated every year with the 'Cruinniú na mBád' festival, which translates to 'the gathering of the boats'.

When travelling in between each of these hubs of civilisation in an untamed landscape, you are in the presence of some of the most breathtaking scenery Ireland has to offer. Several of the coastal towns and villages mentioned here are on the route of the Wild Atlantic Way, the longest defined coastal drive in the world which also takes in the magnificent, **Cliffs of Moher**.

Perhaps the most distinctive and often overlooked feature of the Burren is its people. Their friendliness and enthusiasm makes the journey into its rock solid heart all the more memorable.



# Festivals & Events

Although best known for its otherworldly limestone landscape, the Burren also hosts some one of a kind festivals and events throughout the year. *John Hogan* highlights a selection of these occasions for visitors and locals alike to enjoy.

One doesn't have to wait until the summer for the festival season to begin in the Burren, with the **Doolin Writers Weekend** taking place in March. This event invites writers, both aspiring and established, to come and enjoy workshops, talks and readings by leading Irish authors. Doolin has a proud literary history, as the village



was a favoured getaway for authors, including **George Bernard Shaw**. The festival also offers a healthy dose of traditional Irish music in some of the village's renowned pubs.

The Burren's rich and diverse plant growth is celebrated during the **Burren in Bloom Festival**, which runs in May (May 1-31 in 2014). The festival gives people an understanding and appreciation of the botanical, archaeological and cultural wealth of the region.

The **Burren Slow Food Festival** in Lisdoonvarna also takes place in May (May 23-25 in 2014) and is made for foodies who flock to west Clare in their droves for the abundance of high quality dining options. This festival focuses on the social aspect of eating and the understanding of the link between your

food and how it is produced. It includes cookery demonstrations, celebrity chefs, farmers' markets, Burren walks and more.

The region's popularity amongst fans of fine cuisine is also reflected in the **Burren Food Trail**. Trail members run events on Mondays from Easter to October and invite guests to enjoy everything from tastings and meals to tours. For the more adventurously

“Cookery demonstrations, celebrity chefs, farmers' markets, Burren walks and more.”



inclined, there's also the **Burren Outdoor Activity & Adventure Trail**, which runs events on Fridays over the same period.

Once the summer arrives, the rock festivals in the Burren begin...but probably not the sort that you'd first expect! **Burren Rocks** is a geology-based festival that takes place in June (June 5-9 in 2014) in Doolin Cave and the Burren Outdoor Education Centre. It features outdoor exploration, talks by expert geologists and even an **Antique Rocks Show**.

In mid June (June 13-15 in 2014) Doolin pays tribute to its proud musical heritage with the village's very own **Doolin Folk Festival** in Hotel Doolin. The festival features some of the biggest names from Irish traditional and folk music, as well as food stalls and a traditional crafts fair.

Also in June, visitors to the Burren can celebrate the area's folklore by partaking in the **Burren Sacred Wells Midsummer Walking Festival** (June 20-23 in 2014). Participants in the weekend event take walks to historic wells in the north Burren areas of Ballyvaughan, Oughtmama and Gleninagh. There will be crackling bonfires to celebrate the midsummer solstice, feasts of local cuisine and traditional music.

For those who prefer to take to the roads on two or four wheels, June also sees the **Tour de Burren Cycling Event** and the **Classic Car Run** (June 21 and 23 respectively in 2014).

“Trail members run events on Mondays from Easter to October and invite guests to enjoy everything from tastings and meals to tours.”

Later in the summer, brewing connoisseurs can sample the tipples on offer for the **Doolin Craft Beer Festival** (August 22-24 in 2014). For the event, brewers from around Ireland will descend but music and local artisan



produce will accompany the merrymaking.

Literary fans also have a highlight to look forward to in late August as the **Burren Tolkien Festival** takes place. The region is said to have been a considerable influence in JRR Tolkien's writing of the classic, *Lord of the Rings*. The landscape here bears a striking resemblance to some of the descriptions of places in Middle Earth and curiously, there is even a cave called 'Pollnagollum' in the Burren! The festival celebrates Tolkien's work with workshops, debates, guided walks and more.

When the summer ends, the pursuit of romance begins in Clare. The **Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival** every weekend for a month (from August 29 in 2014, and is expected to attract up to 40,000 revellers. Love may well be on the agenda but good fun is a certainty.

Foodies will get yet another treat in October (October 26 in 2014) when Lisdoonvarna hosts the **Burren Food Fayre**, featuring a Masterchef and Junior Masterchef competition, along with cookery demonstrations and artisan talks.

For further information these festivals, events and more besides, visit [www.burrenecotourism.com](http://www.burrenecotourism.com).



*The Burren is home to an array of geological and historical wonders. From the highest height to the deepest depth, the Cliffs of Moher and Doolin Cave are some of the most spectacular examples.*

**T**here's no front gate that says you have arrived at the Burren. Instead you move slowly from being surrounded by green fields, to being immersed in a sea of limestone paving, framed only by the ocean. Sitting on the southwestern edge of the Burren region, the cliffs rise out of the sea to a height of over 200 metres and form some of the most dramatic sea-cliffs in northern Europe.

On a fine day, you will see the Aran Islands in the distance, but without looking beyond the cliffs themselves, you will see much more. The layers of rock in the cliffs tell a story of life in the area over the past 320 million years. O'Brien's Tower—near the highest point of the cliffs—was built by Sir Cornelius O'Brien in 1835. He believed that the development of tourism would benefit the local economy.

The cliffs have been on many a visitor's itinerary for years but now, the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience can tell you all you could possibly need to know about the location. It is also the departure point for guided nature walks, escorted by a Cliffs of Moher Ranger. Walkers head out along the cliff edge paths to view wildlife, geological features and traces of man over the centuries. Katherine Webster, Director of the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience, said "a guided nature walk here is full of excitement".

"On a recent walk, participants witnessed the fly past of an extraordinary flock of 18 choughs together. The chough, or celtic crow, is one of the rarest crow species with only 1,900 pairs nesting in Britain and Ireland, so to see this number together at the cliffs was very rewarding. Groups regularly see puffins, guillemots, razorbills, fulmar, kittiwakes and

peregrine falcons as well as more common species."

Along with welcoming large numbers of visitors each year, management at the Cliffs of Moher are firmly focused on the principles of eco-tourism.

Staff at the centre work closely with the local community in areas from educational outreach to community events to local business initiatives. It has a sustainable purchasing policy and works with tenants and visitors in waste reduction and energy management—measuring reductions achieved in these areas since 2008. The centre is one of few Irish tourism businesses to be certified by Sustainable Travel International.

Visit [www.cliffsofmoher.ie](http://www.cliffsofmoher.ie)  
Contact 065-7086141

**I**n the distinctive landscape of The Burren there is more than meets the eye because underground, Doolin Cave is home to the longest free-hanging stalactite in the Northern Hemisphere.

Eighty feet below the limestone pavement of the Burren, walking in semi-darkness through an underground cave, visitors should keep their eyes peeled for the Great Stalactite. Guides often ask people to touch the walls. Wet with water and calcium deposits, they are a sign that this cave, like the Burren itself, is living and breathing.

Following a 120 step descent into the cave, the guide leads people through the dimly lit cavern, explaining all along it what they can see and what they are about to. The experience of seeing 'Great Stalactite' is second to none. Visitors take a deep breath as the cave is flooded with light.

**“The experience of seeing ‘Great Stalactite’ is second to none.”**

The stalactite resembles a magnificent chandelier suspended from the ceiling of this enormous cathedral like chamber. Visitors can hardly believe it has formed from a single drop of water over thousands of years. At 7.3 metres in length, it has been worth waiting for. Once again, the ever-surprising Burren—very literally—makes its point.

Afterwards, you can extend the adventure from underground to over ground on the charming farmland nature trail that takes a looped walk around the cave setting. The nature trail is home to indigenous species of flora, along with rare and miniature breeds of animals. From the trail, you can enjoy the beautiful views extending to the Twelve Pins of Connemara on a clear day.

Visitors can also enjoy delicious home-cooked foods and cakes in the comfortable surroundings of Doolin Cave Cafe.

For souvenirs, Doolin Cave pottery, handmade using glacial clay found deep within Doolin Cave, is available in the gift-shop too.

[www.doolincave.ie](http://www.doolincave.ie)  
Contact 065-7075761

**“The stalactite resembles a magnificent chandelier suspended from the ceiling of this enormous cathedral like chamber. Visitors can hardly believe it has formed from a single drop of water over thousands of years.”**



**P**eople may travel through the Burren by various modes of transport but fail to comprehend the complex and wondrous nature of the terrain through which they have traversed. In order to appreciate this strange and beautiful habitat a most effective way for a visitor to do so is firstly to visit The Burren Interpretative Centre in the centre of Kilfenora.

The Burren ('boireann' i.e. great rock) is best encountered through experiencing 'A Walk Through Time' exhibition at the centre, which has long been considered as "The Gateway to The Burren".

A 12-minute film helps visitors form a picture of the Burren through discovery. It details how the limestone pavement was formed from an accumulation of fish bones



and seashells when the sea covered this area many millions of years ago. It also broaches the as yet unanswered question as to why Alpine, Arctic and Mediterranean plants which are not native to the region, grow in such abundance in the Burren, requiring as they do very different climates. The resulting kaleidoscope of colours turns the grey landscape into a fabulous natural rock garden, which can be enjoyed even by those whose knowledge of botany or geology is very limited.

The fascinating exhibition and audiovisual display explains in layman's language the complexities and contradictions of the area. The Kilfenora Céilí Band Parlour is a new addition for 2014. Traditional Irish music is enjoyed throughout the world and this exhibition provides a unique opportunity for visitors to trace the music and history of the internationally renowned, Kilfenora Céilí Band.

With the help of top of the range projectors and acoustics, the vibrant music of the band comes to life visually too. It brings visitors on a musical treat, accompanying the band in both old and new incarnations. If you plan on visiting the Burren region in 2014, this exhibition is not to be missed.

**“The Kilfenora Céilí Band Parlour is a new addition for 2014. Traditional Irish music is enjoyed throughout the world.”**

Before you go walking or touring the area, first be informed by going to The Burren Centre, where the wonders of this special place will be uncovered.

[www.theburrencentre.ie](http://www.theburrencentre.ie)  
Contact 065-7088030

## The Russell Gallery

The Russell Gallery is a feast for all the senses, where you can enjoy a sumptuous glass of organic wine or delicious refreshment while taking in the art and architecture.

Established by Stefania and Andy Russell in 1998, it is housed in a beautifully restored 18th century granary building in the lovely surroundings of New Quay. "Our gallery is focused on supporting and promoting Irish artists and Irish producers in general. We also import but we source our products very carefully and buy directly from the producers. We prioritise small producers, organic made, fair trade, high quality and creative innovation," Stephania explained.

The gallery—open throughout the year—houses a wide selection of paintings and prints by established

artists. Visitors can acquire gifts and gourmet treats too. It is, exclusively, the home of Andy's Raku Ceramics Studio. He combines imagination and originality to create stunning single ornamental pieces in the Japanese Raku style, which is influenced by the Zen Buddhist philosophy.

The Russells also offer a tasty menu in their café and wine bar, accompanied by organic wines that come directly from their family estate in Tuscany, Italy. It received both the Georgina Campbell and Bridgestone Guide awards in 2013.

Whether you choose a home baked cake, Italian antipasto or a delectable cheese plate, it'll be a work of art akin to those on the gallery walls.

[www.russellgallery.net](http://www.russellgallery.net)  
Contact 065-7078185



## Burren Nature Sanctuary

The Burren Nature Sanctuary in Kinvara, run by Roy and Mary Bermingham, is heaven for anyone with a curious nature, interest in ecology or a general interest in the region, writes Louise Harrison.

Established in 2013, the aim, according to Roy, was "to be a world class interpretive facility for the natural history of the Burren that focuses on learning through engaging with nature" inspired

by their own trips abroad.

"We felt visitors craved information and guidance when visiting the Burren and we could provide a place for them to enjoy visiting, learn and plan their stay. We also wanted to share the beauty of our organic farm that has various different Burren habitats—pavement, grassland, woodland and turlough."

The working IOFGA certified organic farm has ponies, donkeys, sheep, rabbits and alpacas. The fun, relaxed atmosphere is ideal for birthday parties, group visits



and school tours.

One very interesting aspect of the sanctuary is the turlough, a disappearing lake, which is not fresh water, but tidal, and drains twice a day during the summer when it is surrounded by blooming purple loosestrife and meadowsweet flowers.

This feature will be celebrated with a Burren Food Trail event, 'Picnic at the Turlough', in August. It will consist of nature walks and home baked food, transported to the tipi in baskets, by donkey.

Respect for the environment is part of the ethos and the building has a number of sustainable features including a waste water treatment system with sand filters for purifying water before it re-enters the limestone aquifer.

Along with a café, which offers freshly made produce, artisan coffee and guided nature walks, the Burren Nature Sanctuary provides a wonderful back-to-nature adventure for all ages.

[www.bns.ie](http://www.bns.ie)  
Contact 091- 637444/087-4129701



*If you could bottle the essence of the Burren, what would it be? Perhaps a balanced blend of salty air mixed with a hint of delicately scented wildflowers, or a tangy seaweed aroma with back notes of rocky soil? Rachael Finucane visited The Burren Perfumery & Floral Centre, to discover Ireland's longest-established perfume house.*

# SWEET SCENT OF SUCCESS

## The Burren Perfumery

**T**ucked away on a beautiful 10 acre site near Carron, it crafts perfumes inspired by the Burren landscape and natural, organic and plant-based creams, balms, soaps and candles. The area is a perfumer's dream for its vast range of inspiration with 70% of Ireland's wildflower species located on its doorstep.

What's more, all of its creations have a truly personal touch. They are all made by hand in small batches, carefully blended and bottled on the premises in the same traditional way as they have been since its establishment in 1972. The business has been family-run since day one. Its owners since 2001, Sadie Chowen and Ralph Doyle, are the third family to live and work on the premises, described as a "privilege" by Sadie.

Sadie has an international background in perfume and design and she explained what drew her to The Burren Perfumery. "I came first to work here and when the opportunity arose to purchase the business, Ralph and I jumped at the chance to live and work within this unique environment and business."

"Our ethos is simple. We are committed to designing and manufacturing natural, organic and plant-based beauty products and carrying on our traditional expertise as an Irish perfume house. Providing sustainable and fulfilling local employment is also important to us."

The Burren Perfumery & Floral Centre was one of the first tourist destinations to be established in the Burren and quickly grew in reputation. Its Man of Aran fragrance was even carried in the 1970s by Irish airline, Aer Lingus, in the first class section. Testament to its popularity, the product is still available today but it

**“We are committed to designing and manufacturing natural, organic and plant-based beauty products.”**



has been joined by many others, from Arnica Herbal Balm to Rose & Geranium soap to Lavender & Lemon face cream. Visitors can call into the working factory, free of charge, any time of the year to see how these products are concocted and chat to staff.

Ambling about the grounds, you can also stop in at the herb garden, learn about the business in an audiovisual presentation and browse in the shop. In high season, you can enjoy a bite to eat and drink at the Organic Tea Rooms, where the stone building is draped with overhanging plants. Food critic, Georgina Campbell, has recommended the café. Sadie added that 2014 marks a new chapter where the perfumery "is running workshops and talks to share our expertise". The internationally known brand sells goods online too and its organic lip balm garnered a Conde Naste Traveller Award for 2011.

Shying away from mass manufacturing and sensitive to the location, the business is also very eco-friendly. "All the products are made on site at the

**“Visitors can call into the working factory, free of charge, any time of the year to see how these products are concocted and chat to staff.”**

perfumery. The body and face care range are made from natural and organic ingredients and all the products are packaged using glass, aluminium, recyclable plastic (PET) and recycled cardboard," she said.

"Nearly two thirds of electricity consumed in the perfumery is supplied by our own solar panels. The Tea Rooms use local and organic ingredients wherever possible. We have onsite composting for all organic kitchen waste and over 90% of our inbound packaging is recycled/returned. The perfumery is easily accessed from the Carron Loop Walk and we welcome walkers and cyclists. We have bike racks and offer free shipping of products from the shop for cyclists."

For Sadie and Ralph, the sweet smell of success is just being a part of this special place and they hope that it will carry for generations to come.

[www.burrenperfumery.com](http://www.burrenperfumery.com)  
Contact 065-7089102



# TED'S 'STEAD!



*Glanquin House is tucked away on a winding road in a pretty valley against the backdrop of Slieve na Glasha and since 1995, this imposing Georgian-style building has been one of the Burren's most famous landmarks—all thanks to Fr. Ted. Sinead Moran went behind the scenes in the 'Craggy Island Parochial House' to meet the real residents.*

## Glanquin House

**F**or those of you not familiar with the Channel 4 television series, Father Ted Crilly is an iconic comedy character and Glanquin was his 'home' (or at least the iconic exterior was). Today, there is no sign of Ted, Jack, Dougal or Mrs Doyle, as the house is the real-life home of the McCormack family.

The lady of the house, Cheryl, hails from Boston, and fell for Burren farmer, Pat. Life was relatively simple for the couple and their five children until *Fr. Ted* came calling. Glanquin House was one of many places and people in the locale featured. A full house it may be, but tea is always on the menu, along with a warm North Clare welcome. No more than housekeeper, Mrs Doyle, Cheryl is an attentive hostess who regales us with

stories of her experiences with the cast and crew of the series, while we relax by the roaring fire.

The occupants of Glanquin House have been organic and conservation farmers for over 20 years and following the fireside stories, we take a walk around the farm with Pat.

Pat gives a true impression of a land steeped in culture and heritage. We see stone forts, cairns, fulacht fiadhs (ancient field kitchens), a holy well and even an ancient church site, all of which come with a full explanation of their history and place in the lives of past generations. The farm stretches to 225 acres with some meadows and fields for growing organic produce but is also home to sheep, cows, goats and horses.

On our return to the house, we are welcomed back to sample some of the

homemade produce (using only organic ingredients), which includes warm scones, wholesome brown bread, delectable desserts, sweet homemade jams and organic tea.

Though *Fr. Ted* officially finished in 1998, it's as popular as ever due to its cult status. Cheryl tells us that we're in good company in Glanquin House as it has been a destination of choice to many celebrities over the years including Hollywood director, Steven Spielberg, no less.

Between the warm fire and good food, it's hard to leave. As we make for the door, Cheryl tells us we're more than welcome to come back, but advises that she has just one rule: if anyone would like to come to tea in her kitchen, please call to make an appointment!

[www.fathertedshouse.com](http://www.fathertedshouse.com)  
Contact 087-9214694



# GET ACTIVE!

*With hills and caves, the wild Atlantic and tranquil lakes, a nature reserve and national park all within its territory, the Burren is an ideal spot for active pursuits, adventure activities and artistic endeavours.*

# Burren Outdoor Activity & Adventure Trail



*The region's many attractions are no secret but in order to ensure their long-term sustainability, there is now an initiative promoting responsible tourism—Burren Outdoor Activity & Adventure.*

**T**his joint project between the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark and the Burren Ecotourism Network aims to promote tourism that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.

Up to 20 different local providers are involved and all members commit to building a sustainable future for the region. They also commit to providing quality adventure and activity experiences, to the highest standards of safety and instruction, which you can enjoy in the company of qualified, experienced and professional guides.

The Burren Outdoor Activity & Adventure Trail runs a series of outdoor activity events on Fridays. It offers

something for everyone, from the ardent adventurer to the naturalist, the budding artist to the adrenaline junkie.

Activities can be on or below the surface, on dry land or on water, high or low, but



“Activities can be on or below the surface, on dry land or on water, high or low, but all promise a knowledgeable and professional guide to lead the way.”

all promise a knowledgeable and professional guide to lead the way.

The events also offer plenty of variety. On June 20, there's the Burren Sacred (Holy) Wells Midsummer Walk. This is a three hour folklore walk experience to the ancient wells in the Ballyvaughan valley. Deborah Evers of Nature's Compass is the guide and it includes ritual blessing and well wishing as well as lunch from Burren Kitchen Garden.

On July 25, the Sea Kayak and Climb event run by Burren Outdoor Education Centre will take you to the hidden places of the Burren—the untouched bays, the cliffs and crags. On August 22, artist, Doreen Drennan, will lead an oil painting lesson, with the precise location to be decided according to the weather.

**For more information on the Burren Outdoor Activity & Adventure Trail, visit [www.burrenecotourism.com](http://www.burrenecotourism.com).**



## Backwest Adventures

The Burren's vast expanse of caves and hills, nooks and crannies can leave visitors wondering where to even start their exploration so **Rosaleen Regan** decided to dig a little deeper on a cave tour with Terry Casserly and Tim O'Connell, co-founders of Backwest Adventures.

Based at Loughrask, Ballyvaughan the

business is relatively new (starting in April 2013) but cave exploration has long been a passion of theirs. Tim said: “As active cavers in the Burren area it was a natural progression to offer guided tours in caves in the area.”

He described the core activity as offering “environmentally sensitive trips in the

wild caves of the Burren as well as guided hikes on the rugged hills around Ballyvaughan”. They offer bespoke caving tours from beginner's trips to advanced caving challenges. The duo is keen to develop the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts and train as core members with Irish Cave Rescue as well as being active trainers in the local caving club.

Respect for the environment is a driving force for the business. They adhere to the Leave No Trace document produced by the Speleological Union of Ireland (SUI) and have an ongoing involvement with cave conservation locally as active SUI members.

“We are caving guides. As such, the health of the caves and the fragile ecosystems which they are part of are of utmost importance to us,” Terry added. “We are deeply aware of the privileged position we are in, to be guides here; and of our responsibility to this place.”

**[www.backwestadventures.com](http://www.backwestadventures.com)  
Contact 086-0563624**

## Adventure Burren

Would you like to try an easy adventure in the Burren? If so, then Adventure Burren could be just what you're looking for, offering hill walking and rock climbing all over the Burren.

Based in Carron, the team of motivated outdoor enthusiasts will get you hands on with the unique limestone landscape here. Packages here are focused on quality and not quantity, so when taking part in activities with Adventure Burren you get a more personal service.

Adventure Burren is certified by Ecotourism Ireland and it caters for any size group from one to eight, with no extras/supplements for small groups. They also offer visitors the chance to explore some of the more remote areas of the Burren. A day climbing with Adventure Burren can be anything from an introduction to the sport, right up to the most challenging of cliff ascents. They cater to every level of fitness and ability and whatever you choose, you can be assured of a unique and fulfilling experience—how adventurous depends only on how courageous you yourself would like to be.

Rock climbing is an easy but enjoyable adventure—a very sociable pursuit in places of outstanding beauty. Walks are in the lesser seen areas, which are still full of interesting sites.

The activities can be thirsty work and the business supplies water from its own well, in reusable containers to keep energy use

at a minimum. Adventure Burren is also a Leave no Trace trainer.

There are a number of packages available from Adventure Burren where you can interact with the Burren with very knowledgeable and qualified guides, who ensure your experience rewards your spirit of adventure.

**[www.adventureburren.com](http://www.adventureburren.com)  
Contact 087-2244569**



# Immersive Learning

Sinead Moran visits Burren Outdoor Education Centre



**W**hen you come across an organisation such as the Burren Outdoor Education Centre it is very easy to get overwhelmed by all that they have to offer. A simple run down its activities list, which includes rock climbing, sea kayaking and hill walking, shows that you could spend a week immersing yourself in the Burren, literally.

Set up in the 1980s, the Burren OEC endeavours to provide fun, adventure and learning for visitors. The staff hopes to help participants to learn to live and work as a group and solve problems as a team. Sounds a bit idealistic? When you find yourself crawling through a damp, dark cave it all starts to make sense.

Caving is just one of the many activities I tried my hand at during my weekend in the Burren, but it is the one that will stick with me. Climbing down into the cave in the dark I briefly questioned what I was doing, but I chose to trust my guides. It was my first time in an underground cave, and despite it being a tad cold and wet, I was comfortable, if not at home. Such is the region's diversity overground, it comes as quite a stark and awe-inspiring realisation to find that there is another world going on beneath the surface: there are literally hundreds of kilometres of caves underneath the limestone.

**“Fun, adventure and learning for visitors.”**

As we traversed this particular section, I found myself moving with less trepidation and actually learning quite a bit—one trip providing me with a heady mix of physical activity, history and practical geology.

Apart from a hankering for a hot cup of tea, when we reached the end and returned above ground, I found that this experience had actually shown me the Burren in a whole new light.

The OEC offers you another side of the Burren, all that you need to decide is from which angle you'd like to see it.

[www.burrenoec.com](http://www.burrenoec.com)  
Contact 065-7078066



# Heart of Burren Walks

**W**alking guide, Tony Kirby, covers a lot of ground in more ways than one when he unveils the hidden secrets of geology, archaeology, wildlife, flora and farming in the Burren as he takes visitors around this “rare and precious global landform”.

He founded Heart of Burren Walks around 12 years ago and is based in Kilnaboy, close to the Burren National Park, where many of his walks take place.

“I was a civil servant in Dublin, having returned from a career break in Italy and I started doing guided walking tours in Dublin in Italian. Then I decided to move to the Burren for a new life and chose walking tourism as a career. I think walking as a

**“I just love learning about heritage and sharing knowledge about heritage.”**

**“The landscape looks so unusual; it's a rare thing in the world to see so much exposed rock.”**

pastime has increased nationally and globally but the Burren is a splendid walking landscape,” Tony enthused.

This is perhaps why there are several other walking businesses such as Burren Experience Guided Walks and Burren Wild Tours (see pg. 34). Tony described why the Burren is so special.

“The landscape looks so unusual; it's a rare thing in the world to see so much exposed rock. It's not just a very unusual Irish landscape but also abroad. It's of international importance for the geology and the wild flowers; it's one of the top botanical sites in the world and that's no exaggeration. Thirdly, it's an extremely rich archaeological landscape. These and more are what's compelling about it internationally.”

Drawing on the fascinating history here, Tony specialises in pilgrimage walks. “The Burren is a rich pilgrimage landscape too. A lot of the archaeological sites survive because they're made of stone. There are lots of holy wells and early Christian churches.”

Tony has put his journey, literal and metaphorical, to good use in his book, *The Burren and Aran Islands-A Walking Guide*. An updated edition is due in June 2014.

He also runs walking and accommodation packages in partnership with the Wild Honey Inn in Lisdoonvarna.

Tony has a real passion for his work and those accompanying him on his treks will soon share in that.

“I love meeting people from all over the world and having such a fabulous landscape as my ‘office’, as it were. But most of all I just love learning about heritage and sharing knowledge about heritage. It's a really great journey of knowledge.”

[www.heartofburrenwalks.com](http://www.heartofburrenwalks.com)  
Contact 065 6827707/087-2925487



*Situated in the heart of one of Ireland's most beloved seaside towns, Lahinch Seaworld and Leisure Centre has an attraction for every member of the family, all under the one roof.*

**B**uilt in 1996, on the former site of an outdoor pool and community hall dating back to the 1950s, it was intended to serve the community of Lahinch and surrounding areas, as well as the steady stream of tourists that visit the town.

The facility on the promenade boasts a 25m indoor, heated swimming pool as well as a Jacuzzi, sauna, steam room and spacious, fully equipped fitness centre. Manager, Joe Garrihy, explained that the centre provides "indoor family friendly leisure facilities plus educational elements to local and visiting schools".



"The pool complex is monitored by our team of fully trained lifeguards who are on hand for any eventuality, big or small. In our kiddies pool, young children can enjoy a safe environment removed from the main pool. At the same time the adults (over 16s) can enjoy the benefits of a relaxing time in the pool or other facilities. If you are interested in learning how to swim or in improving your technique, we host regular swimming lessons, both group and private one-to-one lessons, for children and adults."

As part of recent developments at the centre, a multi-purpose hall has been added with a state of the art audio-visual system, capable of showing movies, facilitating conferences and training/educational events. The hall can serve as a venue for concerts, plays and comedy gigs. Experienced staff organise both indoor and outdoor activities for birthday parties or any other kind of event, even if it's just a family getaway.

"The fun isn't restricted to the younger members of the family either. Visitors of all ages can walk on water in one of our zorb balls or have a go at conquering one of our obstacle courses. For those who would prefer to unwind, facials, massage or reflexology are all on offer in our brand new therapy suite with our fully qualified therapist. If you'd like to feel the burn, our air conditioned fitness centre has a wide variety of cardiovascular and strength training equipment," Joe said.

The team can help with individual fitness goals and there is a full programme of classes to cater for all interests including Tae Bo Thump, Aqua Fit, Yagalates and Surf Fitness Training.

Joe also emphasised that Lahinch Seaworld and Leisure Centre "partners with two water-based adventure schools in the area, Ocean Scene Surfing School and The Dive Academy scuba diving centre" so there is a huge range of pursuits to pick from. "Action-packed and fun-filled is what we are about here," he added.

Aside from being a big part of the community and making visitors feel welcome, the centre has an environmentally friendly ethos so the heating systems have recently been upgraded to use a renewable air to water heat pump.

[www.lahinchseaworld.com](http://www.lahinchseaworld.com)  
Contact 065-7081900



## Lahinch Adventures

**For a long time, the wild Clare coastline has inspired adventurous souls both into the water and on to the hills. For any visitors to this rugged stretch of Ireland, looking to tap into that spirit, look no further than Lahinch Adventures.**

Ben Bennett is Ireland's longest-working surf coach and has been running his own surf school in Lahinch since 2008, which expanded into an adventure centre in 2013.

**"We teach surfing from start to finish..."**

As well as teaching surfers at every level, Lahinch Adventures specialises in a number of activities, including rock climbing, archery, hillwalking, caving, kayaking and bike hire.

The ethos that Ben applied in the surf school is just as prevalent now that he has broadened the scope of his business. "We teach surfing from start to finish, not just jumping up and down on a board on the beach, and we never teach in groups of more than six people," Ben explained.

"The same applies with the adventure sports. We are focused on introducing them in a safe enjoyable way, while ensuring skills are developed in such a way as to ensure people can develop to whatever level they like. Coaching is done in small personal groups and focuses



on participation and learning by doing." Ben has experience working in adventure centres in Mayo, Donegal and Clare, he holds many surfing qualifications and recently added another string to his bow with a Masters in Sports Psychology. As well as catering to a wide number of interests, Lahinch Adventures is regularly involved in beach clean-ups, while also offering 'Leave No Trace' awareness programmes to local schools.

[www.lahinchadventures.com](http://www.lahinchadventures.com)  
Contact 086-8448622



# TOURS DE FORCE

## North Clare Sea Kayaking

*“Be Adventurous”. Just by their slogan alone you know that when you go paddling with North Clare Sea Kayaking, you are in for just that—a real adventure, writes John Rowan*

**S**pecialising in guided sea kayaking tours up and down the rugged North Clare coastline, and based in Doolin, North Clare Sea Kayaking is the first company of its kind in this spectacular area.

I had the opportunity to join owner and guide Patrick O’Regan on one of his most popular tours—Into the Wild Burren. Not only did Patrick have top of the range sit-in sea kayaks, he also provided an excellent kayaking tutorial before hand, which helped to put me at ease.

The tour itself showcased the unique limestone of the Burren as well as a vast array of wild flowers and wildlife including a huge variety of sea birds. I also got a chance to get up close to some curious grey seals. It was a great way to spend the afternoon exploring the area from the tranquility of the sea.

North Clare Sea Kayaking is run by local man Patrick and his wife Kelly. Together they have created great tours to suit everyone. They offer participants the option of a full day trip or just a few hours on the water. From novice kayaker to the experienced, from birdwatcher to geologist or from nature lover to history buff, each of their tours is something to be experienced.

If you’re not the seafaring type or simply want to get the best of land and sea, there are guided cycling tours too. The mix of quiet back roads and trail cycling makes the Burren ideal for this activity. The Bike & Brew and the Cycling & Kayaking Adventure Combo are two such expeditions.

Growing up with a love of the outdoors, Patrick has travelled all over the globe but he feels North Clare is home to “the world’s most unique and diverse coastline”. Both he and Kelly are delighted that the location is also on the world’s longest defined coastal route, the Wild Atlantic Way.

So get on the water with North Clare Sea Kayaking and you might just be adopting “Be adventurous” as your own personal motto!

[www.northclareseakayaking.com](http://www.northclareseakayaking.com)  
Contact 085-1195489



# Burren Angling? Alan’s your man

*While the Burren is famous for its karst landscape and underground waterways, it is also blessed with bountiful freshwater lakes.*

**D**escribed as “an angler’s paradise” by F. D. Barker in his 1928 memoir of the same name, the lakes of the River Fergus system hold lots of appeal for the avid, or amateur, angler. Burren Angling Guide, Alan Griffith, showed Rosaleen Regan how it’s done.

The River Fergus rises in the heart of the Burren, flowing through seven lakes before it reaches Ennis town and tidal water. It’s easy to see why the region has earned a fine reputation as an angling destination as we sit in a boat on the tranquil waters of Lough Inchiquin, about a kilometre outside Corofin village.

Alan, whose knowledge of the waters and passion for fishing instil a strange mixture of calm and excitement all at once, has been practicing the past-time since childhood.

“My uncle, Bill Griffith, took me fishing on the river Shannon at Plassey when I was about 12 years old. He showed me

how to cast a fly line and how to make flies. This gift has endured and has provided many hours of enjoyment out in the open air,” he said.

“Having completed a degree in Heritage Studies as an adult student in 2012, I saw a gap in the market for a guide service with which could usefully combine my skills and enthusiasm for the outdoors.”

Burren Angling Guide—set up in July 2013—is based at Mohermoylan in Carron. His many interests make Alan a thoroughly engaging guide. The fact that he is also a trained lifeguard helps shed any reserves about going out on the water.

“I’m really interested in establishing links with Tonquédec—the town in Brittany that is twinned with Corofin,” he added, perhaps thinking about how Brittany’s beautiful wild streams mirror those in North Clare.

Alan emphasised that sustainable

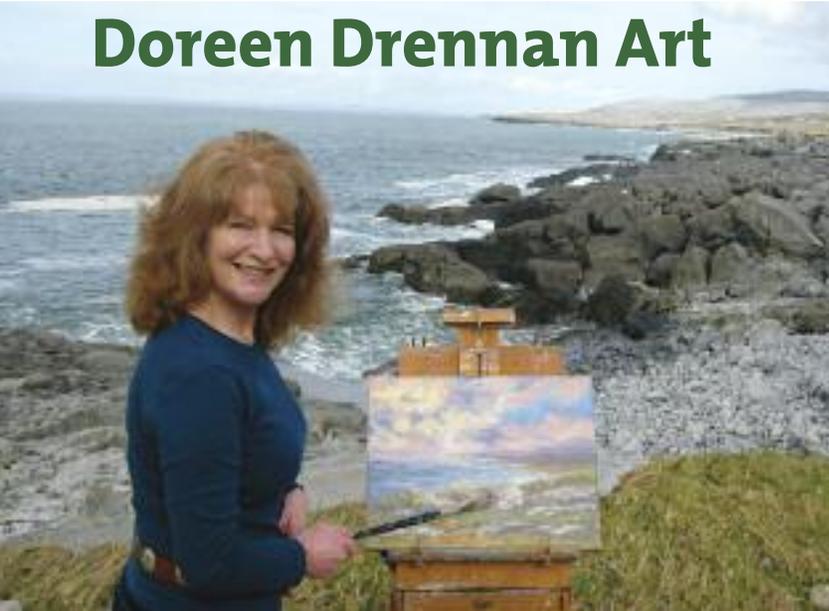
practices are “the key to his long term success” and he combines principles of ‘Leave no Trace’ with practical conservation policies to minimise its impact on the natural heritage.

To quote Issac Walton: “Time spent fishing is not taken from your natural span” and after a grand total of two trout caught and an afternoon spent on Lough Inchiquin, you can only agree.

[burrenanglinguide@gmail.com](mailto:burrenanglinguide@gmail.com)  
Contact 087-6566609

“My uncle, Bill Griffith, took me fishing on the river Shannon at Plassey when I was about 12 years old.”

## Doreen Drennan Art



as a professional artist and visitors are welcome to both the studio and gallery space. My special interest is painting the Burren and the wild Atlantic through the medium of oil on canvas," Doreen said. Her art studio treats visitors to a myriad of exquisite paintings and prints, depicting all of the untamed splendour of the west of Ireland and the Wild Atlantic Way alike.

One of her paintings has even been used as the cover for, *A Week in Summer*—a short story collection by the late, great, Maeve Binchy.

Doreen doesn't just preserve scenes of the Burren through art; she's also actively involved in its upkeep. She recently completed a course on sustainability and works with the Cliffs of Moher and Burren Geopark.

Doreen Drennan's studio is open from March to October (although she is contactable all year around) and is definitely worth a visit from any art-enthusiast or nature-lover.

[www.doreendrennan.com](http://www.doreendrennan.com)  
Contact 087-9303755

It isn't often that you find a painter of the natural world who truly captures the living, breathing beauty of each scene as well as this.

Doreen Drennan trained at the esteemed National College of Art and Design and she has been painting for over 30 years, setting up her studio in 2011. "I am now in a position to paint full time

## Burren Journey

Brendan and Nelleke McGrath began their micro-tour business in 2013 and when hearing them talk about this culturally and historically enriched area, their passion for the Burren is infectious, writes **Aisling Brennan**.

"We are creating a business for ourselves and in collaboration with neighbours and friends that celebrates the Burren and enables us to continue to live in a beautiful place and to do the things that we enjoy," they enthused, from their base at Riverstown Cottage in Corofin.

"There are great rewards to be gained in a journey into landscape and community that does not travel very far. We invite our guests to find out more about an aspect of culture or the environment that really interests them or take the opportunity to learn something entirely new,"

Participants can gain insight into areas like botany, geology, caving, foraging, archaeology, gardening, herbalism and more.

Before setting out for the day, my fellow tourists and I were informed that we

would be cycling first and then walking off-road. The McGraths and other

**“Great rewards to be gained in a journey into landscape and community.”**



specialists accompany tour groups. With geologist, David Drew, guiding us, I felt quite unafraid to get my hands dirty! I was so captivated by the landscape and his fascinating in-depth knowledge that I instantly regretted not signing up for one of the two-day or week-long holiday packages.

Burren Journey provides outings with true purpose and I was thoroughly energised by the experience.

[www.burrenjourney.com](http://www.burrenjourney.com)  
Contact 065-6837555



## Burren Yoga & Meditation Centre

© Burren Yoga & Meditation Centre

**If your normal day sees you stuck inside four walls, and you long to get out and about, we've found the escape for you. Orlaith Howley took a stress-relieving trip to North Clare.**

During the week, a colleague said to me that there's more to life than sitting in the office from 9 to 5. Now, a weekend in the Burren Yoga Centre has convinced me. We all have a tendency to get swallowed up with life, but here I had time to refocus on what's important. As a newcomer to yoga, I was relieved to find that the weekend and week-long retreat holidays are suitable for absolute beginners as well as regular practitioners.

Situated just outside Kinvara, at the northern tip of the Burren, the Burren Yoga Centre has a comfy, cosy and friendly feel from the moment you arrive. Tucked away in fantastic surrounds, you instantly get the impression that you are the most important person there. There may have been over a dozen other people arriving over the course of the weekend, but I still felt like this was all for me.

There are over 40 retreat holidays all year round—from January to December—including Christmas and New Year. Though these breaks are organised with relaxation in mind,

surfing, kayaking or hill walking and a host of other activities can be incorporated into your retreat.

Owner, Dave, is also delighted to guide visits to local attractions or you can take a boat trip to see the Cliffs of Moher. Everything is optional and Dave is as happy welcoming people who would just like to come and put their feet up with a book.

For my part, I had the chance to go kayaking and take a guided hill walk along with a couple of yoga sessions, one of which took place outdoors on the

limestone pavement. I found it totally exhilarating to get out in the fresh air and practice yoga on the rocks of the Burren looking out across the Atlantic Ocean.

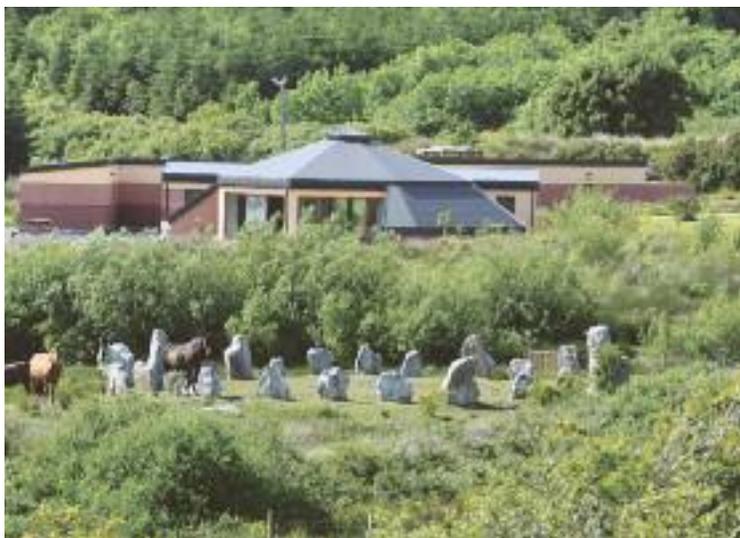
Over my weekend stay I had a chance to meet some great people. The centre's chef, Paddi, spoiled us with some amazing vegetarian meals and I found myself completely winding down. I had an experience second to none and I left mindful of the need for time for myself, something that I had been missing for a while.

[www.burrenyoga.com](http://www.burrenyoga.com)  
Contact 091-637680



© Burren Yoga & Meditation Centre

# Basking at Boghill



*If you want to spend some time away from it all, then **The Boghill Centre** in Kilfenora could be for you. **Mark O'Halloran** went to see if this really is the perfect place to unwind.*



**T**he self-styled residential holistic eco-venue is as much about immersing yourself into activities as well as relaxing and the combination works wonderfully.

Situated in a natural bogland setting, The Boghill Centre hosts courses, events and conferences focusing on traditional Irish

music, holistic workshops and eco-training activities.

The centre was established by friends—Sonja O'Brien, Larry O'Brien, Cari Ryan and John Harrison in 1993, and today it is run by Sonja, Cari and John with the help of an ever changing team of working guests from all over the world.

The complex is set on 50 acres of land on which the owners cultivate organic vegetable and fruit gardens, a nature trail, a stone circle, a wildlife pond, a reed labyrinth, a chicken coop, an orchard and native woodland areas.

Workshops offered here range from yoga to sustainable building techniques to ceramics—something to suit every personality. A great option is the

“Situated in a natural bogland setting, The Boghill Centre hosts courses, events and conferences focusing on traditional Irish music, holistic workshops and eco-training activities.”

‘Interacting with Nature’ Tour (half/full day). This theme can be also be extended to one of the week-long holidays like the ‘Boghill Eco Experience Week’.

This package gets you in touch with nature and what it means to live in a sustainable fashion. We began by touring the expansive grounds, including the mini-farm, where the ingredients for our meals are sourced. All around us the centre’s ‘reduce, reuse, recycle’ mantra is apparent. Having built up an appetite, we returned to the centre for our vegetarian lunch.

After lunch, I tried my hand at some sustainable building practices, saw clay processing and pot building and rounded the day off with a meditative walk. Despite being away from the hustle and bustle, staff regularly arrange evening minibus trips to the locality and provide information on things to see and do. It also runs a diverse programme for school students.

The Boghill Centre has a newly built workshop hall with a turf roof and wood gasification stove. The venue is available to hire for a variety of uses and you can stay over in either a hostel or B&B capacity.

However many of the myriad of activities you take part in at the Boghill Centre, you will leave stimulated and reinvigorated.

Visit [www.boghill.com](http://www.boghill.com)  
Contact 065-7074644

## On the road less travelled with Burren Coaches

In 1975, the idea of ‘moving’ people through the amazing Burren landscape was the seed which has blossomed into the personable and conscientious transport business that is Burren Coaches today.

A vast knowledge of places to visit and people to meet coupled with their own love for the Burren’s unique floral, geological and historical offerings leaves the folks at Burren Coaches with a constant appreciation for where they live.

Owner, Brian Farrell and his team are experienced in tailoring journeys and tours to the needs or interests of any type of group regardless of size. For many reasons, a call to Burren Coaches is a perfect starting point for arranging a trip to this limestone wonderland.

In particular, they specialise in combining selections of holiday and activity experiences offered through other



ecotourism partners in the Burren and beyond. Their intimate knowledge of the area, the terrain and the visitor experiences available will lead to well researched itineraries built around your specific requirements and interests taking in the best sites, walks, activities and

eating places. The wealth of experience at Burren Coaches will go a long way towards your enjoyment.

[www.burrencoaches.com](http://www.burrencoaches.com)  
Contact 065-7078009/086-2520971

## E-Whizz Tours

What better way to soak up the serene atmosphere and see the iconic scenery in the Burren than by bicycle? As the wind blows through your hair and your ears are filled with birdsong,

E-Whizz Tours can make sure you see as much as possible with ease.

Based in Kilfenora and run by Janet Cavanagh, E-Whizz operates small group tours on high quality electric bikes in the Burren to sightsee “the easier way”.

“After working with bike tour companies for eight seasons, I saw the opportunity to offer a solution—especially to the older non bike enthusiast, who struggles with hills and headwinds, but still wants to enjoy the scenery and see the landmarks

without being in a car or a coach,” Janet outlined.

In 2012, she set up her own business providing electric bike tours, hire and sales. Since then its stress-free sightseeing has become a hit with visitors—gaining a five star rating from respected tourist review website, Trip Advisor.

E-Whizz Tours can provide tailored tours from one to six days anywhere on the west coast of Ireland, providing everything you need for safe sightseeing such as helmets and maps too. Options include the Father Ted Trail, the Dolmen Tour and the Cliffs of Moher Tour. Groups are capped at a maximum of eight people.

E-Whizz is the only company offering electric bike tours in Clare and this method is distinctive as well as sustainable.

“We have just joined together with a number of similar businesses in Donegal /Sligo, Leitrim, Mayo, Connemara and Slane to offer cross-Ireland and Wild Atlantic Way tour packages,” she concluded.

[www.e-whizz.com](http://www.e-whizz.com)  
Contact 065-7088281/087-6277000



## Burren Experience Guided Walks



Marie McGauran lives in the heart of the Burren. With Mullaghmore mountain on one side, and a lake on the other, she is perfectly placed to give visitors the full Burren experience.

Marie abides by the John Muir quote, “In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks”, and she hopes that walkers will gain from all that this inimitable terrain offers. Mullaghmore Experience Guided Walks take in some of the more remote and beautiful parts of the Mountain within the Burren National Park. The walks are very much about engagement and include insight and interpretation on the historical and spiritual landmarks, botany, geology, and farming of the area.

Marie’s love and passion for her local area is enhanced by the in-depth knowledge

“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”

she gained during the completion of an honours degree in Heritage Studies. Marie also offers accommodation in the Burren National Park for those who want to enrich and deepen their experience. Burren Cottage, stunningly situated, literally on the doorstep of Mullaghmore Mountain, presents a comfortable, self-catering option and the perfect base for walking in the national park, be it invigorating or relaxing!

[www.mullaghmore-burren.com](http://www.mullaghmore-burren.com)  
Contact 086-8219441

## Burren Wild Tours

While his forefathers were farmers, John Connolly is now utilising the family land for a different purpose—uncovering the wonders of the Burren to visitors as the only walking guide in Ireland giving tours on his own land.

Operating from a 300 year old family farm at the foot of the Burren Mountains in Oughtmama, John founded Burren Wild Tours in 2003, shortly after finishing a degree in Irish Heritage. From a young age, John explored the local area and developed an adventurers’ spirit, which has taken him to several

continents. The walking tours are both “fun and educational” due to his familiarity with the terrain and endless enthusiasm. He also worked on cultural and recreational programmes in Alaska for two years, as well as offering guided walking tours on Kodiak Island.

“I feel that Burren Wild’s responsibility,” he outlined, “is to the development of a product that has a positive influence on the community, the natural environment, rural economics and the consumer.”

John was featured on the RTÉ television

series, *Secrets of the Irish Landscape*, and he reveals quite a few secrets about the magical landscape, culture and people of the Burren.

From start to finish, this tour is an enriching trip through history and nature. Ideal for first time hikers and the more experienced, Helly Hansen raingear and hiking sticks are provided free of charge. Car-parking and toilets are available and after a few hours trekking, tours have a sweet ending with Granny’s Farmhouse Café and Hazel Mountain Chocolates based on-site too.

[www.burrenwalks.com](http://www.burrenwalks.com)  
Contact 087-8779565



# FOOD & DRINK HEAVEN!



# Burren Food Trail



*Blazing a trail for high quality food from the Burren region is a dedicated group of local producers and food service businesses. Collectively, they form the **Burren Food Trail**. They are all committed to building a sustainable future for the region and passionate about local food—growing, producing and serving it to the highest of standards.*

**G**oing from strength to strength, the Burren Food Trail has well over 20 members including producers of organic pork and goats cheese, grass-fed lamb and fresh local seafood, organic herbs and vegetables,

wild honey, as well as artisan pastries and chocolate.

Local food service businesses are also highly involved, sourcing and serving the best of this local produce. Each of the featured restaurants offers a Burren Food

“The Burren Food Trail is more than a listing of quality food establishments in the area, however. It actively invites you to discover the path that your food takes from field to plate.”

Trail Signature Dish and every member offers a ‘Customer Promise’, which is that visitors will find staff who are knowledgeable about the regional food story; menus which state the source of local produce; information on local food events and markets as well as a commitment to maximise the use of local ingredients in all prepared food.

The Burren Food Trail is more than a listing of quality food establishments in the area, however. It actively invites you to discover the path that your food takes from field to plate. If you decide to follow the trail, you can stop at every point or else dip in and out along the way, according to your taste, interest and location. You can even plan your route with a handy leaflet and app.

Members and friends of the Burren Food Trail run special food-themed events on Mondays from Easter to October. There is great variety. On June 16, there’s the Electric Bike Food Experience, where you visit the Burren Smokehouse to taste some award-winning Burren Smoked Salmon before travelling by e-bike to Burren Free Range Pork and then onto St. Tola Organic Goat farm to sample their fare. On June 30, there’s a Wild Food Cookery Demo and Supper by the Sea hosted by Wild Kitchen. These experts in foraging will give an al-fresco cookery demonstration and discuss the health benefits of seaweed. On August 4, there’s a Food Safari and barbeque at Burren Free Range Pork Farm.

See [www.burrenecotourism.com](http://www.burrenecotourism.com) for more information on the Burren Food Trail.

*At the foot of the Burren Mountains, Kasha and John Connolly run a 300 year old family farm with a difference where instead of planting and ploughing, you’re more likely to see happy visitors digging into luscious chocolate creations. Rebecca McNamara met head chocolatier, Kasha, to get a taste of Hazel Mountain Chocolates.*

**T**he boutique chocolate factory and shop in the village of Oughtmama offers a one-off experience in the west, probably in the whole of Ireland, to Kasha’s knowledge.

“Hazel Mountain is unique because visitors can see how chocolates and truffles are made in a traditional way and you can purchase chocolate whilst it’s being made in front of you. All chocolates are produced in small batches with only natural ingredients. There are no artificial pastes, flavours or colours,” she explained.

“The flavours are being created from blending natural produce of the Burren such as juniper berries or flower petals with highest quality chocolate. It’s operated from fully eco grass roofed building, which is the only one in the Burren.”

The saying ‘life is like a box of chocolates’ certainly rings true for Kasha. Originally from Poland, she came to Ireland in 2007. She left the corporate sphere in Dublin to move to Clare to run hiking tours with John (whose business is based on-site too).

# Hazel Mountain Chocolate Dream



They renovated the farmhouse and there, she cultivated her love for cooking. She is in the third generation of keen bakers and with the Burren’s beauty being reminiscent of her homeplace, she put that synergy to good use.

Hot drinks and treats from Kasha’s own cookbook, *Burren Wild Baker*, are served in the Farmhouse Café on the grounds too.

“The book, published in late 2013, includes my own recipes with funky photos of the Burren, stories and

traditions. Making chocolates was part of my baking experience and in 2011, I did my first chocolate making course.” Kasha trained with some of the world’s top chocolatiers and she added that “our inspiration comes from our beautiful surroundings and our world travels to Alaska, Argentina, Norway and Iceland”. Her range of moreish chocolate truffles, pralines and bars reflects the wealth of knowledge she gained.

[www.hazelmountainchocolates.com](http://www.hazelmountainchocolates.com)  
Contact 087-9903000



# Food of Love

## Burren Smokehouse

*Birgitta and Peter Curtin have a fervent interest in two things—good food and the Burren. We met the couple who have made a success story out of producing fine fare.*

**O**n first meeting, it's easy to see what drew them together. They share an appetite for business that, over the past 24 years, has seen them succeed at every level. This passion is evident through a commitment to quality that has garnered local, national and international recognition and has made them an obligatory stop for visitors touring the Burren region.

Their love of the Burren and all that it has to offer is obvious and chatting with them in their Lisdoonvarna Smokehouse, it is abundantly clear that this is at the heart of their two thriving businesses.

The other is the Roadhouse Tavern, which has been in Peter's family for over a century.

"We are fanatical about our businesses in the Burren," enthused Birgitta, "We are spoiled with our location here. I mean, how many people can say that when they go to work in the morning they are doing so in an area of jaw-dropping beauty such as this? Sometimes you forget this, but when visitors come and speak to us, we are reminded of just how lucky we are."

This gives them the motivation they need and every product is a labour of love. "We want high standards for our customers, so we carefully source our raw materials for the Burren Smoked Salmon, Trout, Mackerel and Cheese. We control our own quality standards with backup of regular testing from independent laboratories and regular checks from organisations who certify us."

"The smokehouse currently employs 17 and our products are stocked in Irish speciality food shops around the world in stores such as Fortnum & Mason, London; KaDeWe, Berlin and Dean & DeLuca, USA and Kuwait. While we are delighted to have set this precedent, we want to keep it up," she explained. And their many accolades demonstrate this.

**"We carefully source our raw materials."**

The Burren Smokehouse tally of awards over the years includes The Seafood Exporter Award in 2009; numerous gold medals in the Great Taste and Blas na hÉireann awards and a Bord Bia Organic Award. Birgitta is also a member of Bord Bia's Taste Council.

Never complacent, this dynamic couple won't rest on their achievements and "want the best for customers".

"We need to continue coming up with new ideas and trying new things. It has led to nothing but positive changes in the past so why should we stop now?"

[www.burrensmokehouse.ie](http://www.burrensmokehouse.ie)  
Contact 065-7074432



# YOU HERD IT HERE... St Tola Irish Goats Cheese

*For those of us to whom food is not just a means of sustenance but rather a passion that warrants exploration, there is a gem to be found in the market town of Ennistymon. John Hogan got an education in the award-winning St Tola Irish Goats Cheese.*

**T**he cheese has been produced by Inagh Farmhouse Cheese since the early 1980s. A former schoolteacher, Siobhan Ni Ghairbhith, bought it from the original owners, the Gordons, in 1999—having worked on the farm during her holidays for several years.

She has an obvious passion, not only for her artisan produce, but also for the truly green manner in which it is produced. An

**"We believe passionately in sustainable farming to produce the finest quality artisan goat milk cheese."**

examination was recently carried out on all aspects of the farm's fuel, light and water consumption as part of the business's commitment to conservation.

"We believe passionately in sustainable farming to produce the finest quality artisan goat milk cheese. It's something that is good long-term for the land and all those that inhabit it, whether that's humans, animals, insects or birds. We are passionate about providing food that is healthy for those that eat it," said Siobhán.

She has recently opened an ÉCONOMUSÉE information and interpretative centre on the farm, to allow guests to get a real insight into what is on offer and how it is produced.

"We are also happy to provide employment in rural Ireland and to use local suppliers to help keep money in the local economy so that it may not just survive but thrive."

Since Siobhán took over the business, it has gained national and international recognition, including the Supreme Champion accolade at the 2013 Irish Cheese Awards. The business has gone from being a cottage industry to a leading brand in Irish artisan cheese.

Two constant features throughout all these changes has been the fine, consistent quality of St. Tola and the commitment to sustainability. Developing the unique visitor experience to Inagh Farmhouse gives another dimension to an already flourishing home-grown business.

Siobhán added that "everyone who comes here is invited to see our farm, get close to our beautiful animals, taste all our cheeses and get a good understanding of our business".

[www.st-tola.ie](http://www.st-tola.ie)  
Contact 065-6836633



*There are about 8,000 edible plants available globally but most of us only eat a tiny fraction of that number. Oonagh O'Dwyer, the owner of Wild Kitchen, encourages people to broaden their palates by taking them on wild food walks and hosting picnics on land and seashore.*

**O**onagh started the business in 2012 and now regularly brings groups foraging around the Lahinch area, in search of many edible types of seaweed, wild herbs, roots, flowers, fruits and nuts. As part of the experience, cookery demonstrations are put on and participants learn about plant identification and how to forage sustainably. She also produces organic salads and preserves using wild edibles.

"I've been an avid forager since childhood, growing up in the shade of the Galtee Mountains in Tipperary. Finding, cooking and using wild food remains to this day one of my most joyful experiences," said Oonagh, who runs Wild Kitchen from Callura South in Lahinch.

She has studied plants all her life, including a course in Organic Horticulture at An tIonad Glas (The Organic College) in Dromcollogher, Co. Limerick. She is also a partner with 'Leave No Trace' Ireland, an organisation that promotes the responsible recreational use of the Irish outdoors.

"I started Wild Kitchen because of a desire to turn my knowledge and passion for growing and producing good food into a sustainable business," continued Oonagh.

"Our bodies have evolved over tens of thousands of years to deal with a varied diet of hundreds of plants but modern living can often leave us with less than 20 plant sources of food, much of which is processed. So many of us have a nutritional deficit and a taste deficit, and this can all be

addressed through wild food. I delight in taking people on a journey of discovery during our foraging expeditions."

Sometimes, Oonagh's expeditions can even produce some unexpected treats, such as catching sight of a family of seals that frequents her local beach.

She promotes sustainability in her community and facilitated a recent workshop, during which a quarter acre of marginal land was planted with bio-mass willow for fuel logs that will be used for burning, replanting and educational purposes.

[www.wildkitchen.ie](http://www.wildkitchen.ie)  
Contact 065-7081458/087-6877890



As I pull up in Eva and Stephen Hegarty's Kilfenora farm, I am greeted by a unique picture. It's feeding time and the Saddleback and Tamworth pigs are getting boisterous as they wait for their dinner.

"Happy pigs produce delicious meat," quipped Stephen, "And these pigs are happy. They are fed the best of feed and

weh, which we get from the local cheese maker, and they eat fruit and vegetables along with grass and roots. All of this leads to them being super healthy and so far none of our pigs have ever needed conventional medication."

The Hegartys have had a small herd of free range, rare breed pigs since 2007,

At Linnalla Farm, Bríd and Roger Fahy have a proper menagerie with two dogs, two cats and three children, Marie, Padraig and Tomás. They also have 43 seaweed-guzzling cows. This bustling farm is where Linnalla Ice Cream products are made.

The Fahys are consumed by their enthusiasm for ice cream, since starting in 2006. "We started making some simple flavours but we quickly saw that the only limit to what we could do was our imagination. Now, we forage for as many ingredients as we can and try and follow what is in season," Bríd explained.

Linnalla Ice Cream can now be found in stores nationwide and was recently named as one of the 50 secrets of the Wild Atlantic Way. "We also make unusual flavours for our own café. Many of our customers like to return and see what different flavour we have on display today. These include wild lavender and vanilla, sloe gin or wild Burren hazelnut. People like to eat our ice cream and have a coffee while enjoying the stunning views of the Finnera Peninsula, the Burren and Galway Bay. We don't see it as work really. It is our business and we love what we do," Roger added.

They make their own baked goods and sell

and make a point to not overstock so that the pigs have the best conditions at all times. The pigs are outdoors all the time, which allows them to develop a good hide, which in turn leads to a much better crackling when roasting the meat. The pigs are reared in the best possible environment with extensive fields to roam and root in and a warm comfortable shed to retreat to in bad weather. Farm visits are by appointment only but the Hegarty's run Food Safaris in conjunction with the Burren Food and Activity Trail too.

Stephen added that they also offer visitors to stay overnight "in a quirky converted farm type abode".

"They can spend some time in a relaxing environment where the only noise is the birds or the animals, and the only light at night is the moon and the stars. In the morning, you get to pick your own fresh hen or duck eggs for your breakfast. You will be all set for your day's exploring of the beautiful Burren!"

[www.burrenfreerangepork.com](http://www.burrenfreerangepork.com)  
Contact 086-8815974

locally produced goods like preserves too. "There is nothing better than seeing a family leave here after taking the tour of our farm and then head off somewhere with a picnic full of our goodies. It's not only the children who leave with a smile on their faces."

John McKenna of the Bridgestone Guides said of Linnalla: "The highest quality

ice cream I've ever tasted. Let Ben and Jerry get up the yard."

Linnalla incorporates fun, fine produce and stunning scenery in one fell *scoop*.

[www.linnallaicecream.ie](http://www.linnallaicecream.ie)  
Contact 065-7078167/087-7857569



# Burren Fine Wine and Food

# Delicious!

*Cathleen Connole's charming little restaurant is in an idyllic location in a century old stone coach house, nestled between the enchanted hills of the Burren.*

**B**urren Fine Wine and Food is based on the grounds of the former parochial house of Glenaragh Church, two miles south of Ballyvaughan village on the Corkscrew Hill road.

Set in what is often described as a little "oasis", good wine and simple food served in a contemporary way is the ethos behind this charming, casual, daytime eatery. Enjoying lunch, afternoon tea/coffee or of course, a glass of wine in this beautifully restored 1795 building, steeped in history and full of character, is truly one of the experiences of rural Ireland which is not to be missed.

"Fresh local produce is lovingly prepared and served with good old style hospitality in relaxed and peaceful surroundings. You can choose to eat either indoors or outdoors, surrounded by the gardens that produce some of the food on your plate," said Cathleen.

She personally sources the wine from small independent European growers, who are dedicated to producing good quality wines using traditional methods and respecting the land on which the vines grow. Self-guided cycling trips can be arranged here, with the option of lunch in-house or packed lunch included.

"A guided walking tour of the majestic Rathbourny valley takes place twice weekly from Burren Fine Wine and Food (Wednesdays at 11am and Thursdays at 4pm). This valley is rich in antiquities including the ring fort of Dun Torpa, a medieval ecclesiastical site, an 18th century church and a deserted village. Other highlights include stunning examples of the region's limestone pavement and the world famous mix of wildflowers," she added.

The walk itself is at an easy pace and lasts two hours. The cost is €12.50 p.p. or there

**“Good wine and simple food served in a contemporary way is the ethos behind this charming, casual, daytime eatery.”**

is a package including a walk with lunch or afternoon tea for €20. Other days and times may be available by prior arrangement (groups of between five and 10 people desirable).

[www.burrenwine.ie](http://www.burrenwine.ie)  
contact 087-7633241



**“We use organic methods to produce food in season, capturing the taste of the food at its best.”**



## Clareville House Kitchen Garden

**C**lareville House Kitchen Garden is a member of the Burren Food Trail. Situated on the Wild Atlantic Way, in Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare, the garden is in a walled orchard that is being slowly restored.

They grow a wide range of seasonal vegetables, fruit and herbs, with the raw ingredients appearing on the table in the kitchen and used to produce their artisan range of preserves, 'Burren Kitchen



Garden', which can be found at the Ballyvaughan Farmers Market on Saturdays or in Sheridan's Chese mongers all year round.

"We use organic methods to produce food in season, capturing the taste of the food at its best" said Deborah Evers of Clareville House.

The kitchen garden developed from a natural interest in the land, she explained. "We wished to grow our own food to reduce carbon miles, improve the nutrition of what we eat and generally use the resources that are available to us. Seasonal variety is interesting to produce and eat. With the excess, from the garden, we produce preserves using our fruit and vegetables. As the produce is literally out of the ground or off the bush, the taste is great."

There is more than food on offer from Clareville House. It offers guided walks on the Burren limestone and along the Burren shoreline. Deborah shows participants how to use ancient landscape navigation techniques, while highlighting

the unique ecology, flora and fauna. Foraging is also an aspect of the walks.

"Finding food is also part of what we do. Being so close to the Burren, we do have an option for people to take part in some woodland and Burren foraging where they will look for wild foods, such as hazelnuts, blackberries and sloes. These are real hands-on experiences and give visitors a chance to get a genuine feel for what we do," Deborah added.

"Observation is key and you will be encouraged to record with your eyes, camera or sketchbook. Recipes are provided."

For more information contact Deborah Evers. Email booking is essential and the walks run all year, except August and September.

[www.burrenkitchengarden.com](http://www.burrenkitchengarden.com)  
Contact 086-8038477



# Wild Honey Inn

*A perfect blend of contemporary and traditional in the unique setting of the Burren, Wild Honey Inn is owned and run by the McGrath family.*

**A**side from offering delectable, award-winning fare, it has a wealth of old world charm and character, including open log fires, a walled garden and 14 cosy bedrooms.

Husband and wife team, Aidan and Kate, opened Wild Honey in May 2009, after a major refurbishment. Prior to that Aidan worked as a chef in Clare but the rugged beauty and unspoilt landscape of the North of the county drew them here.

“At Wild Honey, our philosophy is to choose the best produce possible and to cook it simply to highlight the taste and natural goodness of the ingredients,” Aidan explained.

“We are fortunate to live and work on the North West coast of Clare. It’s an area where many small producers are dedicated to cultivating the very best of seasonal produce. By connecting directly with the producers, we can ensure that the food we serve is grown and raised to the highest possible standards. Using these meats, fish, cheese, fruits and vegetables as much as

possible enables us to cook with the seasons and also helps the sustainability of the local producers.”

Acutely aware of their surroundings, they also strive for sustainable practices in all facets of the business.



“At Wild Honey, our philosophy is to choose the best produce possible and to cook it simply to highlight the taste and natural goodness of the ingredients.”

Simply scanning the menu and specials in the relaxed atmosphere of the inn, a home-grown presence is strongly felt. Local seafood and produce from named suppliers nearby features prominently. Whether sampling the best of what’s caught from the sea or cultivated on land, the food is superb.

Though the inn incorporates a bar, the dishes Aidan creates are far removed from typical ‘pub grub’. Wild Honey embodies modern bistro cooking more than some standalone eateries.

Aidan’s 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry meant that they had their formula right from the start. He was named as Georgina Campbell’s Ireland Guide ‘Chef of the Year’ in 2012.

Among the many awards are two AA rosettes for food and a Michelin Bib Gourmand since 2010 (this accolade from the Michelin Guide is awarded for “good food at moderate prices”). To add to that, Wild Honey won a Clare Business Excellence Award in 2012 and 2013.

After a gourmet dinner, guests can retire to the garden, homely lounge or their four star guesthouse accommodation.

Providing “warm hospitality” to the highest standards and “continually exceeding expectations” is the McGrath’s ultimate aim and with Wild Honey Inn, they are meeting that goal with room to spare.

[www.wildhoneyinn.com](http://www.wildhoneyinn.com)  
Contact 065-7074300



## The Roadside Tavern

**P**eter Curtin, he of the Burren Smokehouse (pg 38), is heavily linked with music in the Burren region. The Roadside Tavern in Lisdoonvarna is well known for its traditional Irish sessions and Peter is very proud of this.

“We hope that to the visitor, this is the most laid back, full of craic, pub on their trip. However, this doesn’t just happen by accident and behind the scenes we go out of our way to ensure we hit this mark,” he said.

“During the summer months, despite the weather, we have crowds coming from near and far and the bar can be as full of locals as it is with tourists, all coming to soak up the nightly traditional music.”

We’ve had Christy Moore, Davy Spillane, Tommy Peoples, the Fureys, Seán Tyrrell, Christy Barry, Micko Russell, Mickaleen Conlon, Paul Dooley, Sharon Shannon and a lot more musicians of note in the Roadside, and we hope to add to this long list,” he enthusiastically added.

The Roadside also serves up contemporary cuisine in the bar and on-site eatery but the drinks menu is exceptionally varied too. In spring 2011, Peter set up the Burren Brewery in the Roadside. The building, which started off as a pub in 1865, was expanded into a bakery but now also has a microbrewery under its roof!



Peter quickly realised how complicated and time consuming it was to brew his own beer so he hired a master brewer. The result was three signature flavours—Burren Gold, Burren Red and Burren Black—all of which are served here.

With everything needed to eat, drink and be merry under one roof, the Roadside Tavern has a secret recipe, which has been decades in the making.

[www.roadside tavern.ie](http://www.roadside tavern.ie)  
Contact 065-7074084



*John and Martina Sheedy run a quality business offering the very best in service, accommodation and food.*

# Sheedy's Hotel & Restaurant

**S**heedy's Hotel and Restaurant in Lisdoonvarna carries four stars, yet still manages to maintain the charm and intimacy of a family-run hotel. The house is an old farmhouse and has been in the Sheedy family since mid 1700s. It has been a hotel since the 1930s but the couple bought the hotel from John's parents in 1998.

Both Martina and John come from illustrious hotel careers and this experience has melded Sheedy's into the establishment it is today. In the kitchen, John is in charge. During his

career as a chef, he has worked in high profile restaurants including Plaza Athénée in Paris, Longueville House in Mallow and Ashford Castle. Throughout this time he has always held dear the conviction that the best of food should be enjoyed at a moderate price, in a relaxed comfortable environment.

His flair has seen the restaurant awarded two Rosettes from AA Ireland, is also included in the Bridgestone Guide 100 Best Places and has a Trip Advisor Award of Excellence for 2014.



**“We have received an eco label from Green Hospitality Ireland. We have a policy of sourcing as much produce for the restaurant locally and have always supported local suppliers.”**

**“We grow lots of herbs and vegetables in our own herb garden.”**



There are two dining options at Sheedy's, an a la carte menu, served in the restaurant, or a bar menu, served in the cosy bar.

Both menus are heavily reliant on local dishes such as the best of lamb, pork, beef and fish. Almost every element on the menus in Sheedy's is sourced locally. Breads, jams, marmalades and ice-creams are also all made on the premises by John and his team.

“We have received an eco label from Green Hospitality Ireland. We have a policy of sourcing as much produce for the restaurant locally and have always supported local suppliers. We grow lots of herbs and vegetables in our own herb garden,” Martina explained.

Added to the award-winning bar and restaurant, there are 11 well-appointed rooms, which has seen Sheedy's named in the Top 25 small hotels and top 25 romantic hotels in Ireland by Trip Advisor.

[www.sheedys.com](http://www.sheedys.com)  
Contact 065-7074026



## Linnane's Lobster Bar

**F**or a relaxing time-out from your Burren explorations and adventures, Linnane's Lobster Bar is the perfect place to rest weary limbs, satisfy appetites and renew your energy.

Overlooking the Atlantic sea in New Quay, a stroll from The Flaggy Shore, the proprietors are Vincent Graham and Eileen Finn-Graham.

Included in the Michelin Guide for pubs, Linnane's promises a warm welcome and delicious home-cooked food that comes recommended by food critic, Georgina Campbell.

“Linnane's uses fresh, seasonal, local produce. There is particular emphasis on seafood where we source as much as possible from Gerry Sweeney whose boat you can see leaving from the pier each morning. Smoked Salmon is sourced from Kinvara Smoked Salmon, cheese from St Tola and salads from Donocha Fahy up the road in Finavarra. Our lobster literally comes from the sea to order. We include meat and vegetarian dishes on our menu too,” Eileen enthused.

“From a pub perspective, we have a good local trade so that there is always a buzz around the bar. Also there is a tradition of music in the area so local musicians having a session isn't unusual. Weather permitting, there is outdoor seating with wonderful views and a sea breeze.”

**“Linnane's uses fresh, seasonal, local produce. There is particular emphasis on seafood where we source as much as possible from Gerry Sweeney whose boat you can see leaving from the pier each morning.”**

Vincent has worked in the hospitality business for years and it shows when you step into Linnane's Lobster Bar.

“We are part of the Burren Food Trail and we have a particular interest in meeting visitors and suggesting walks or sites in the area or places to stay etc,” Eileen chipped in.

[www.linnanesbar.com](http://www.linnanesbar.com)  
Contact 065-7078120/087-4188697



## Kilshanny House

**Kilshanny House is a little family-owned village pub full of character. The proprietors, Mary and Aidan, and the locals are the real treasures in this place, which is a unique haven for evenings of light entertainment in a cosy, intimate setting.**

The locals tell me that they love to come here but sometimes it's hard to tell who is visiting as everyone chats to each other... there's no television!

There will always be banter between the locals and Aidan about anything but it's clear that they're here because they enjoy the place, the Guinness, the craic and the homely atmosphere. They tell me they've enjoyed some lovely evenings of storytelling, supper theatre and intriguing mixes of Irish and international music. A German visitor, Kerstin, tells me she

popped in for a coffee and ended up chatting to local matchmaker, Willie Daly, and joining in an impromptu traditional music session.

"It's quite a thing to witness the music swell from just one or two musicians to a mini-orchestra as more and more join in," said Kerstin.

This house is synonymous with its 'Burren Béilíní'—"a snack or little meal of Irish origin, derived from Gaelic noun béile meaning 'meal'." Mary creates these bite-size tastes using local, seasonal and wild foods embodied with the heart of the Burren and serves them with a smile and a 'Céad míle fáilte!' It is on the Burren Food Trail and the Burren Weekly Food Series, which has special themed food events take place every Monday in the Burren.

Located halfway between Ennistymon and Lisdoonvarna, it is kitted out with an E-Car charging point and free Wi-Fi. It is just five minutes drive from The Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark on The Wild Atlantic Way. Kilshanny House is a real hidden gem.

**www.kilshannyhouse.ie**  
**Contact 065-7071660**

## Stonecutters Kitchen Family Restaurant

**It's not every day you can dine in a 100 year old cottage while tucking into "good comfort food that leaves you feeling like you have had a hug from mammy".**

Snug beneath an authentic flagstone roof, this gorgeous bistro serves up fresh, home cooked food made from locally sourced produce at a mid-range price.

Owners, Karen Courtney and Myles Duffy, have created a warm, family oriented experience. Karen, who runs the front of house with Myles as head chef, confided that "it has been a dream of mine since before I left school to own and run my own restaurant. I thrive on making people happy". This shows in the friendly, efficient team they have formed.

From classic fish and chips to tasty beef and Guinness stews, warm lunch salads to gourmet sandwiches, dreamy desserts to a full drinks menu, it has something for everyone—especially youngsters, with its award-winning children's menu.



It has a garden with swings and a slide; a toddler play area; plenty of toys indoors, ample parking and an E-Car charging point.

Karen added that there is a special reward system 'Skids 4 Kids' that allows younger clientele to earn toys by

ordering healthy foods.

Located only five minutes from the Cliffs of Moher, it is no small wonder that Stonecutter's Kitchen is a popular pitstop for anybody who passes through the area in the high season.

**www.stonecutterskitchen.com**  
**Contact 065-7075962**



**PLACES  
TO STAY**

# Deelin Mór Lodge

*Nestled into the Burren Mountains, at the end of drive lined with dry stone walls and hazel, Deelin Mór Lodge is a dream holiday location where you can experience a little piece of rugged paradise.*

**“It is extremely private and you can walk straight out of the house and experience the Burren landscape, flora and fauna.”**

**L**ocated on the Carron/Bell Harbour Road on a 300 acre working organic farm, the eco-friendly, five bedroom self-catering accommodation is run by Helen and Enda Healy.

The idea behind it was to “provide private, relaxed and comfortable holiday accommodation that feels like home from home at the luxury end of the market and to facilitate guests’ access to local produce, culture and amenities”, explained Helen.

“As such it is extremely private and you can walk straight out of the house and experience the Burren landscape, flora and fauna. There are wild goats living on our mountain, 19 confirmed species of moth and butterfly, hares, foxes, badgers plus farm animals.”

The lodge is surrounded by archaeological sites, natural phenomena and local attractions.

The lodge is filled with character-filled touches like the wood paneled library, open fireplaces as well as wooden and limestone flooring. It includes an ensuite

master bedroom, two king size bedrooms, one twin/triple room, one small double room, a family bathroom, a television, a DVD player, a fully equipped kitchen and dining room and underfloor heating. There are also cards, games, a pool table and a large film library available for guests’ use.

The Healys have truly thought of everything and provide a welcome basket of local organic produce, details of all the local food producers, farmers’ markets, with maps and contact details and if you prefer not to hire a car they will help with transport.

“We aim to make our guests’ stay as easy and enjoyable as possible, offering a concierge service with advice and booking of any activities they’re interested in and a pre-arrival shop to save their holiday time. We hope to help our guests find ‘the real Ireland’ and connect them with the culture and heritage of the area wherever we can,” Enda added.

**www.deelinmor.com**  
**Contact 065-7089009/087-6177240**



# Burren Escape

*Burren Escape in Corofin is your chance to get away from the everyday and experience a holiday on a fine estate in the midst of the stunning landscape of the Burren.*

**O**wners, Martin and Natasha Waldron, live in Cragmoher House and visitors can stay in one of three self-catering cottages, in a self-contained courtyard.

They started their business in 2011 aiming to “give guests a unique holiday experience in a historic house and courtyard with a central location, within easy reach of all parts of Clare with the diverse landscape that is Cragmoher, Corofin and the Burren on the doorstep”.

Built in the 1850s, Cragmoher House has a rich, colourful history. The main house burnt down in 1983 and the then owners refurbished the former coachhouse and stables and lived there instead. Originally owned by the Studdert family, the Waldrons acquired it in 2006 after “falling in love with the location”. They took on the challenging project to refurbish all the houses in the estate and have done this by ‘upcycling’ as much

material and furniture as possible. This reuse is just one example of their efforts to reduce their environmental impact through water, waste, recycling and energy consumption.

As well as restoring the main house to its former glory, they have created comfortable holiday homes finished to a high standard but maintaining their original appeal. A stay here means you can walk in the footsteps of some of the noted people associated with the house, such as Colonel Thomas Blood, a direct descendent of the Studderts who notoriously stole the British Crown Jewels. Lady Gregory, confidante of WB Yeats and founder of the Abbey Theatre, was directly related to Mrs Studdert, and artist Anne Madden, wife of Louis le Brocquy, spent her formative years at Cragmoher House with her godmother, Audrey Douglas.

All three cottages are spacious. The

**“Easy reach of all parts of Clare with the diverse landscape that is Cragmoher, Corofin and the Burren on the doorstep.”**

Ghilies can sleep up to four people; the Stables can sleep up to eight people, and the Coachhouse can sleep up to eight too. They all come equipped with a kitchen, dining room, bathrooms and all modern amenities. As well as being able to glance into the past, this truly tranquil escape comes with panoramic views.

**www.burrenescape.com**  
**Contact 065-6827734/087-2836296/086-8105682**

# Hotel Doolin



*Doolin has long been celebrated in the Irish cultural and traditional music world and in the heart of the village lies a boutique hotel which is in tune with the little things.*

**C**ontemporary and stylish, Hotel Doolin not only offers deluxe bedrooms but has a multitude of facilities and hosts three of the most popular annual festivals in the Burren.

A stay here is a unique experience as the actual hotel itself is built into its very own pleasant streetscape including the elegant eatery the Chervil Restaurant; cosy meeting spots such as Fitzpatrick's Bar, Atrium Bar, Café Sonas and Pizza Café and an array of shops including the Shaggy Sheep Gift Shop & Gallery and The Doolin Pantry. The Tourist Information Bureau is based here too, for all those insider tips on things to see and do.

The hotel's outdoor terrace, 140 seater banqueting suite and marquee on request adds to its appeal as a wedding venue as well its stellar reputation for events like

The Doolin Writer's Weekend in March; The Doolin Folk Festival in June and The

Doolin Craft Beer Festival in August. Facilities can be tailored to requirements.



Whatever the occasion, visitors should treat themselves to a cold glass of the hotel's very own bespoke brew, Dooliner Beer. Hotel Doolin holds a coveted Green Hospitality Platinum Award—only one of eight hotels nationally to achieve this—and is a model of sustainability as well as hospitality. Ducks and hens are kept on-site; herbs and vegetables for its menu are grown in its own polytunnel; the rainwater is harvested and local suppliers are used for 90% of food deliveries.

The Bridgestone Guide (Ireland's 100 Best Award) and Lucinda O'Sullivan's Great Places to Stay & Eat have both recommended Hotel Doolin.

Perfectly located less than three minutes away from all the lively bars and eateries of the village; 10 minutes from Lisdoonvarna and 20 minutes from Lahinch, Hotel Doolin is music to the ears of any weary traveller passing through or eager holidaymaker.

[www.hoteldoolin.ie](http://www.hoteldoolin.ie)  
Contact 065-7074111

## Don't Forget!

There are two other accommodation options that fall into this category highlighted elsewhere in the guide. Both are situated in the spa town of Lisdoonvarna and boast excellent accommodation and dining options as well. **Sheedy's Country House Hotel (pg. 46)** has 11 comfortable rooms and an award-winning restaurant and bar. **The Wild Honey Inn (pg. 44)** includes 14 cosy bedrooms and its bistro has garnered many accolades.

# The Falls Hotel & Spa



**Owned and run by the McCarthy family, The Falls Hotel & Spa is an old world gem with a modern twist, overlooking the spectacular tumbling waters of the River Inagh.**

Boasting 140 sumptuous bedrooms, nine self-catering apartments and a pretty three bedroom holiday cottage, the complex is a natural choice for any visitor to Ennistymon, which is on the Burren's doorstep.

The hotel's walls not only encase an 18th century mansion but a late medieval castle. The site holds a formidable history of four and a half centuries encompassing "clans and warfare, landlords and tenants, poets, dreamers and entrepreneurs".

Another part of the heritage here is excellent service. Whether for a weekend or a wedding, the team of staff ensure a pleasant visit.

The only thing that rivals The Falls' beautiful interior is its surroundings. The hotel is veiled by woodland scenery and is set beside the meandering river, which adds to the serene atmosphere exuded here.

Before or after exploring the Burren and partaking in its many charms, the Riverspa offers over 50 Elemis beauty and relaxing treatments. The Aqua and Fitness Club is perfect for a splash in the pool, a soak in the Jacuzzi, a lounge in the sauna and a refreshing recline in the outdoor hot tub.

**“Clans and warfare, landlords and tenants, poets, dreamers and entrepreneurs.”**

Diners are spoiled for choice with the Thai River Restaurant, the Cascades Restaurant or the Dylan Thomas bar—each offering diverse menus of delectable cuisine.

The bar's name is no coincidence. The Falls has a real life connection with infamous Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas. Francis McNamara, the father of Thomas' one time lover, Caitlin, owned Ennistymon House (the hotel's previous incarnation).

Conscious of the environment that surrounds it, the hotel is currently undertaking a long-term project to build a hydro-generator on the waterfall that runs through the property.

The Falls Hotel & Spa effortlessly combines traditional and modern.

[www.fallshotel.com](http://www.fallshotel.com)  
Contact 065-7071004



## Sea View House Boutique B&B

If you're looking for locally sourced, high quality food in a scenic setting, look no further than Sea View House Boutique B&B.

Located in Doolin, Sea View House is run by Darra and Niall Hughes and sits on the side of a hill that overlooks the Atlantic Ocean and the Aran Islands. The family run

business has graded by the AA as "Four Star Guest Accommodation" and as a "Four Star Country Home" by Fáilte Ireland. With luxurious accommodation, that includes views of the 500-year-old Doonmacfelim Castle, flat screen TV and king-sized beds, the B&B also serves up an exquisite selection of food.

Some breakfast ingredients for guests are sourced from the garden polytunnel, which Niall tends to. Eggs come straight from the family chicken coop, breads and muffins are baked in the kitchen. In season, they use their own home grown organic rhubarb, melons, strawberries, potatoes and tomatoes. They also make all their own yoghurt and salt too.

Whatever isn't directly produced on site comes from the local area—down to the printing of food miles (distance from farm to fork) next to each dish on the menu. The Hughes' also use solar panels to heat all of the water and their electric car charge point is free to use by guests.

[www.seaview-doolin.ie](http://www.seaview-doolin.ie)  
Contact 087-2679617

After many years of living through the hustle and bustle of life in London and Dublin, Patricia and Martin McMahon decided in 2006 to set up their own bed & breakfast in the striking surroundings of Ballinsheen Mór, Lisdoonvarna.

The decision to return to Martin's hometown is one they do not regret, as Greenlawn B&B is now recognised as a top quality 'home from home' in one of the most beautiful corners of Ireland.

As well as providing highly comfortable accommodation and delicious breakfasts, the McMahon house is ideally located for exploring the large number of unique attractions that Lisdoonvarna and the surrounding areas have to offer.

“We are situated in one of the most beautiful parts of the world, as far as we're concerned.”



## Greenlawn B&B

“We are situated in one of the most beautiful parts of the world, as far as we are concerned,” said Patricia.

“It is so different from the lifestyle one gets used to when living in a big city but it suits us perfectly. Our guests are lucky in that we are ideally located for visiting the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher as

well as many other local attractions.” In keeping with their ethos of using environmentally friendly business practices, Greenlawn Bed & Breakfast has solar panels installed, which provide guests with their hot water.

[www.greenlawnbandb.com](http://www.greenlawnbandb.com)  
Contact 065-7074861



## Ballinsheen House

A belief in a unique style of Irish hospitality and a desire to return home prompted Mary and Michael Gardiner to build a guest house in West Clare and they haven't looked back since.

Ballinsheen House in Lisdoonvarna has

gone from strength to strength since the Gardiners came home in 1996. The bed & breakfast has been graded as a Four Star Country Home by Fáilte Ireland and won a 2013 Certificate of Excellence from Trip Advisor.

“I used to work as a travel agent but we

“We make every effort to offer our guests a very warm welcome.”

wanted to move home and decided to build a guest house so as to have more freedom, be my own boss and to be at home for my son as he was growing up. My mum used to run her own B&B so it runs in the family,” said Mary.

“We believe hospitality is a long-standing Irish tradition and we make every effort to offer our guests a very warm welcome.”

Ballinsheen House offers all ensuite double, king and family rooms. All breakfasts are cooked to order and as many ingredients as possible are sourced from local, artisan producers.

[www.ballinsheen.com](http://www.ballinsheen.com)  
Contact 065-7074806

## Rockyview Farmhouse

Rockyview Farmhouse offers high quality bed & breakfast accommodation in an idyllic setting with panoramic vistas of Fanore.

There are five bedrooms and other facilities include a conservatory (with free Wi-Fi) and a private car park.

Owners, Ita and Noel Walsh, bought Rockyview in 1997 from Ita's mother, Teresa Linnane. The Walshes lend their fishing rods and bikes to guests and it's a real family affair as their three children often help out too.

“As we do not have televisions in the bedrooms our guests usually have a good night's sleep,” said Ita, “The very relaxed, laid-back atmosphere that permeates here is always remarked on by visitors.”

One of the extraordinary aspects of their business is that guests become long time friends so the word 'guest' hardly applies. Very soon, Noel is speaking French to a visitor or Ita is sitting in the conservatory chatting as if she's known you for years.

“The very relaxed, laid-back atmosphere that permeates here is always remarked on by visitors.”

Rockyview Farmhouse is certified in the Green Hospitality Awards and they grow a lot of their own vegetables/herbs; keep hens for free range eggs and use organic fertilisers and cleaning agents.

“We are aware of the beauty and fragile nature of the Burren. We endeavour to pass on to our guest the necessary information to respect and protect our precious landscape,” Noel added.

[www.rockyviewfarmhouse.com](http://www.rockyviewfarmhouse.com)  
Contact 065-7076103





# Doolin Hostel

**O**pting for budget accommodation need not mean sacrificing on comfort with the high quality hostel experience offered at Doolin Hostel.

Run by Anthony and Deirdre Moloney, the hostel is in the centre of Doolin village and not just close to all amenities but is an ideal base for outdoor activities in the locality. It is also at the start of the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Trail.

Doolin Hostel, which has 22 bedrooms, gained a Trip advisor Award of Excellence

2013 and also recently received a Green Hospitality Gold Award—the first and only hostel in Ireland to achieve this.

Facilities include a kitchen; a dining room; a living room; a laundry and drying room, free car parking and Wi-Fi; internet access; a printer; equipment storage and a café. In addition, it offers tourist information and serves as a ticket office for Bus Éireann, with a bus stop located here.

There is a free breakfast buffet with all room rates and it has full separate group

facilities available too.

“This was the first hostel in Clare [founded 1983] and a family business of 30 years. After 15 years of hotel management internationally and in Ireland, I returned home with my wife, Deirdre, and my kids, Emily and Isabelle,” said Anthony. “Since taking over the property in 2012, we have invested heavily into the buildings and have undertaken major renovations. We are constantly developing services and product offerings, increasing the quality and value for money.”

[www.doolinhostel.ie](http://www.doolinhostel.ie)  
Contact 087-2820587

### Don't Forget!

The Boghill Centre (pg. 32) also offers a place to stay in either a hostel or bed & breakfast capacity. In addition, it runs holiday packages paired with activities like sustainable building and living, traditional music and holistic workshops.



## Corofin Camping & Hostel

On the road from Kilfenora to Ennis you will come across the vibrant village of Corofin. At Corofin Camping & Hostel, the Neylon family personally guarantees that you will “go home under the spell of the Burren”. Here you get the chance to become a local in a village famous for its traditional music and dancing, while relaxing in your own four walls in the new tent garden.

While here you can take advantage of the central, main street location to get

involved in village life. In the pubs you can listen to traditional music and dance a Clare set, while the small roads leading out of the village offer you the chance to cycle or walk deeper into the Burren.

The Burren Way starts outside the door of the hostel and the owners have free maps to hand which will help you discover the Burren at your leisure. Initially the site of Neylon’s General Grocery and Hardware Shop, the Neylon family converted the site to the hostel, with the camping coming as a direct result of visitors looking to pitch a tent somewhere. The site has been a labour of love for locals, with family friends

chipping in to rebuild dry stone walls and maintain the blackthorn hedgerows. The Neylon family has a long history in this spot, and if you have time, it is well worth asking the owners to fill you in.

Corofin Camping & Hostel plays a large role in village life, including the promotion of the Corofin Traditional Festival and the Seisiún at Teach Ceoil. The owners are also involved in the Tidy Towns Competition and are members of Greenhospitality.ie.

[www.corofincamping.com](http://www.corofincamping.com)  
Contact 065-6837683/086-8398226

## Kilfenora Hostel

Kilfenora is more than just a destination for a day trip and staying in Kilfenora Hostel gives you a chance to immerse yourself in all aspects of the village. Orla Vaughan is well-known in Kilfenora for her infectious enthusiasm and bubbly personality, and you’d be hard pressed to do anything other than enjoy time spent in her company.

A member of the Vaughan family that runs Vaughan’s Pub next door (forever to be known as the ‘Father Ted Pub’), her father is also the local auctioneer. Such is the connection between the Vaughan family and the village of Kilfenora, that the hostel is built on the site of an old sheep fair which the Vaughan family used to run once a month in times gone by.

From this point of view, you are well connected to get an invitation to



whatever may be going on in Kilfenora during your stay.

Orla loves to welcome visitors to the Burren. And her humour and warmth are

reason enough for you to prefer the hostel as your overnight base.

[www.kilfenorahostel.com](http://www.kilfenorahostel.com)  
Contact 065-7088908





Maintaining the international treasure that is the Burren is of vital importance and one way of doing that is by using **sustainable transport** to travel to and within the area as much as possible. Below is a selection of options for this.

### By Train

Visit [www.irishrail.ie](http://www.irishrail.ie) for information on services, destinations, timetables and ticket sales or telephone:

**Ennis Train Station:**  
+353 (0) 65-6840444

**Gort Train Station:**  
+353 (0) 91-366222

**Galway (Ceannt) Train Station:**  
+353 (0) 91-561444

**Limerick (Colbert) Train Station:**  
+353 (0) 61-315555

### By Bus

Visit [www.buseireann.ie](http://www.buseireann.ie) for information on services, destinations, timetables, ticket sales or to download the Bus Eireann iPhone APP or telephone:

**Ennis Bus/Train Station:**  
+353 (0) 65-6840444

**Gort Bus/Train Station:**  
+353 (0) 91-366222

**Galway Bus Station:**  
+353 (0) 91-562000

**Limerick Bus Station:**  
+353 (0) 61-313333

Clare Bus is a locally operated bus service. Call to book a seat on +353 (0) 61-924375 or 1890-687287 or email: [ourbus@catconnects.ie](mailto:ourbus@catconnects.ie). The Burren National Park operates a bus service into the park from its centre in Corofin during the summer months.

### By Bike

**Pedal Bicycle Hire**  
**Burren Fine Wine and Foods,**  
Ballyvaughan  
Tel: +353 (0) 65-7077046. Email: [info@burrenwine.ie](mailto:info@burrenwine.ie). Website: [www.burrenwine.ie](http://www.burrenwine.ie)

**Burren Bike Rental**  
**The Launderette, Ballyvaughan.**  
Tel: +353 (0) 65-7077061. Email: [info@burrenbike.com](mailto:info@burrenbike.com)

**Lahinch Bikes**  
Tel: +353 (0) 86-8448622.  
Email: [ben@benssurfclinic.com](mailto:ben@benssurfclinic.com).  
Website: [www.benssurfclinic.com](http://www.benssurfclinic.com)

**Electric Bicycle Hire e-whizz**  
Tel: +353 (0) 87-6277000.  
Email: [info@e-whizz.com](mailto:info@e-whizz.com). Website: [www.e-whizz.com](http://www.e-whizz.com)

### Walking/Cycling Routes

For detailed information on cycling and walking routes throughout the Burren, visit [www.burrengeopark.ie](http://www.burrengeopark.ie) or pick up a copy of the Burren Explorer booklet at visitor centres and local shops. It contains detailed maps and route guides.

### Electric Car Charging Points

**Boghill Centre, Kilfenora**  
Tel: +353 (0) 65-7074644

**Kilshanny House**  
Tel: +353 (0) 65-7071660

**Gregan's Castle Hotel, Ballyvaughan**  
Tel: +353 (0) 65-7077005

**Doolin Caravan and Camping Park**  
Tel: +353 (0) 65-7074458

**Hotel Doolin**  
Tel: +353 (0) 65-7074111

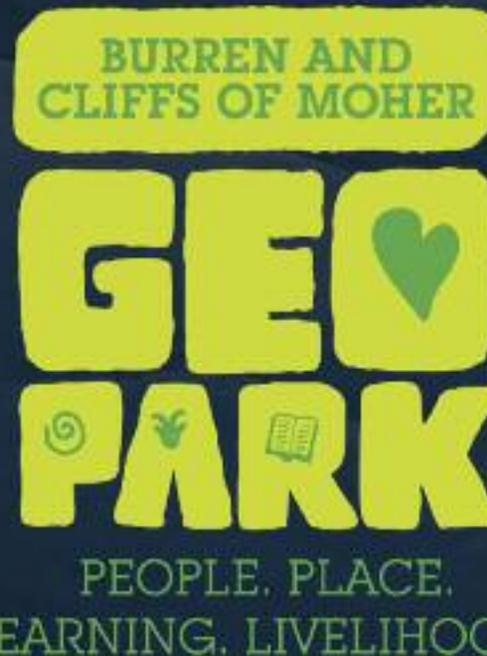
### By Boat

**Doolin2Aran Ferries**  
Tel: +353 (0) 65-7075949. Website: [www.doolin2aranferries.com](http://www.doolin2aranferries.com).

**O'Brienline Doolin Ferry**  
Tel: +353 (0) 65-7075555. Website: [www.obrienline.com](http://www.obrienline.com).

### Finding Your Way Around

The Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark APP is designed to guide you through our landscape and help you locate all the wonderful delights that await you. Information on sustainable transport options is provided and special offers are available to visitors using these options.



Look out for our **FREE Geopark guides** in tourist information spots



### USE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

- Bus Service
- Train Station
- Ferry
- Electric Car Charging Point

### GET ON YOUR BIKE

- Cycling Route Trail Head
- Bike Hire/Repair

### TAKE A WALK

- Geopark Heritage Trail
- Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk
- Looped Walk Trail Head
- Burren Way
- Mid Clare Way

### CHECK THESE OUT

- Geosite
- Visitor/Education Centre
- Monument
- Viewing Point



**GEOPARK GEOLOGY**

- Limestone
- Shale
- Sandstone and Shale

**ROAD NETWORK**

- National Road
- Regional Road
- Link Road



### Map Key

1. Adventure Burren
2. Backwest Adventures
3. Ballinsheen House
4. Wild Kitchen
5. Boghill Centre
6. Burren Angling Guide
7. The Burren Centre
8. Burren Coaches
9. Burren Escape
10. Burren Experience Guided Walks

11. Burren Fine Wine & Foods
12. Burren Free Range Pork
13. Burren Journey
14. Burren Nature Sanctuary
15. Burren Outdoor Education Centre
16. Burren Perfumery
17. Burren Smokehouse
18. Burren Wild Tours
19. Burren Yoga & Meditation Centre

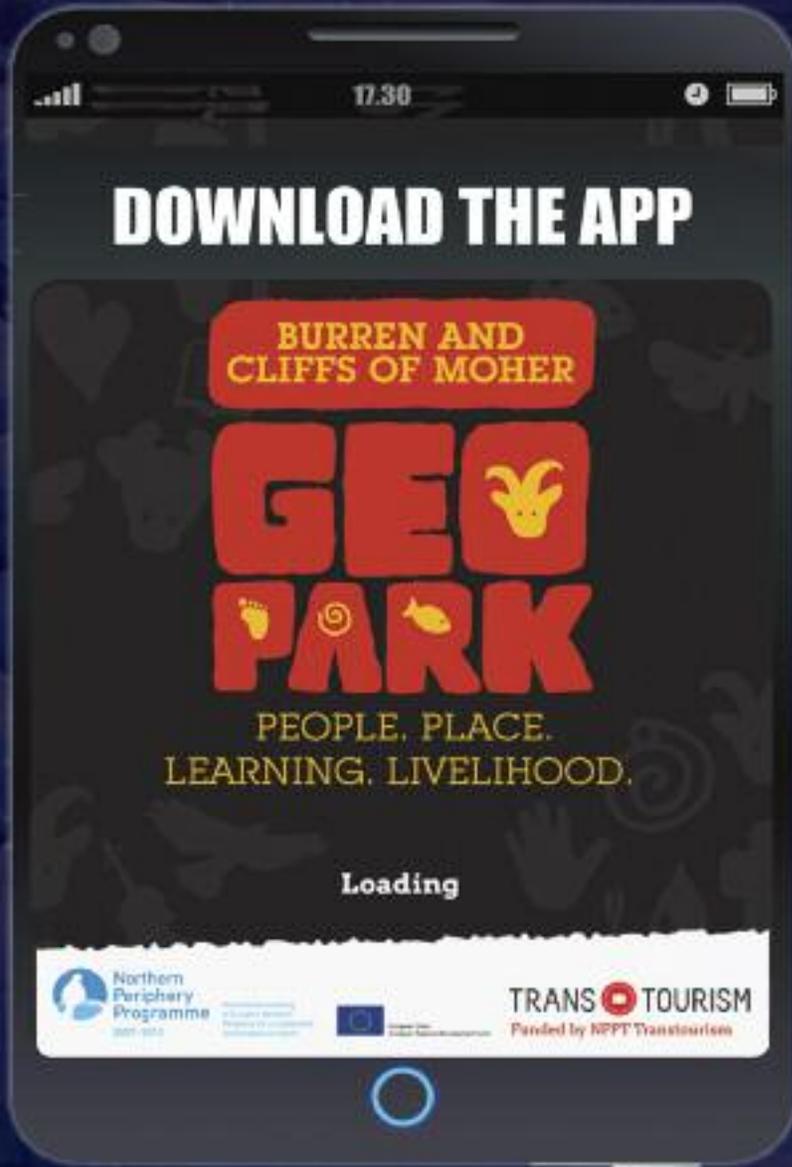
20. Clareville House Kitchen Garden
21. Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience
22. Corofin Camping & Hostel Corofin
23. Deelin More Lodge & Cottages
24. Doolin Cave
25. Doolin Hostel
26. Doreen Drennan Art Studio
27. E-whizz & Ted Tours
28. Falls Hotel & Spa

29. Glanquin House (Fr. Ted Parochial House)
30. Greenlawn B&B
31. Hazel Mountain Chocolate
32. Heart of Burren Walks
33. Hotel Doolin
34. Kilfenora Hostel
35. Kilshanny House
36. Lahinch Adventures
37. Lahinch Seaworld & Leisure Centre
38. Linnalla Ice Cream Cafe

39. Linnane's Lobster Bar
40. North Clare Sea Kayaking Tours
41. Roadside Tavern
42. Rocky View Farmhouse
43. Sheedys Hotel & Restaurant
44. Stonecutters Kitchen
45. St Tola Irish Goat's Cheese
46. The Russell Gallery
47. The Seaview House
48. Wild Honey Inn

# Discover

# The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark



**Free on iPhone and Android**

[www.burrengeopark.ie](http://www.burrengeopark.ie) [info@burren.ie](mailto:info@burren.ie)