

Wild & Wonderful County Mayo: Best Things To Do In 2025

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As someone who was born and raised in Mayo, I am delighted to present my list of things to do in the county if you appreciate wonderful landscapes and nature.

You could say this post has been over 30 years in the making, so what we will show you today is a list of sights and attractions that I have personally visited time and time again. They have all left a lasting impression on me and are places I return to time and time again.

In our guide, we are going to cover the must-see destinations and also give advice on where to go if you seek more hidden gem locations.

We'll also be looking at what to do when it rains (and it certainly does!) along with some unique attractions and sights dotted around the county.

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Where is County Mayo located?



County Mayo is located in the province of Connacht, in the west of Ireland. It's bordered to the south by County Galway, to the east by County Roscommon and to the north east by County Sligo. To the west lies the North Atlantic Ocean.

County Mayo is the third largest county in Ireland (5,586 km sq.) behind County Galway and County Cork. It is also one of the most sparsely populated counties on the island of Ireland, with only 23.3 inhabitants per sq. km.

Mayo also has **Ireland's longest coastline (1,168 km)**. Its coastline is characterised by a series of bays, cliffs, beaches, sand dunes, headlands, inlets, river deltas and large offshore islands, such as **Achill**.

Best Things to Do in Mayo

Below, we have compiled a map of all locations we will cover in this particular article.

Explore The Wild Atlantic Way



Keem, one of the world's great beaches

The Wild Atlantic Way stretches for a distance of 543 km along County Mayo's coastline. The route will take you via some memorable landmarks, such as Downpatrick Head, Clew Bay and glorious Achill Island.

In Mayo, the route also skirts inland, via the spectacular Doolough Valleay, a place of great beauty and a harrowing history. Travelling from north to south, you'll then come across Ireland's only true fjord, Killary.

The main beauty of Mayo lies in its coastlines and mountains and making your way along the world-famous coastal route will give you an excellent all-round experience in our view.

You can base yourself in many of the lovely towns and smaller coastal villages such as Westport, Mulranny, Newport or Belmullet and enjoy the local cuisine and pub culture, making for a memorable west of Ireland trip.

Visit Achill Island



The view from Minaun Heights, Achill

The island of superlatives. Achill is Ireland's largest offshore island and is home to Ireland's tallest sea cliffs, the mighty **Croaghnaun**. It's also home to one of the world's greatest beaches, Keem, along with being an all-round magical place...when the weather is fine!

Achill is an outdoor lovers' Mecca. Visitors come in their droves to partake in cycling, hiking, surfing, windsurfing, kitesurfing...the list goes on. The natural topography and coastal location ensures adventurous types won't be bored on a trip to Achill.

For those not so adventurous, why not drive along the majestic Atlantic Drive or take in the hauntingly beautiful Deserted Village.

Achill really does have that 'edge of Europe' feel about it and if you are lucky enough to visit in fine weather, get out and explore the fine beaches on offer, such as **Keel** or the beauty we're going to get on to next.

There's also a very decent range of accommodation of offer too. However, due to the *Banshees of Inisherin* which was filmed on the island, Achill was booked out months in advance in 2023. Have a scan around **[here](#)** for places to stay.

We have a guide to Achill **[here](#)**.

Stroll Along Keem Beach



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A place which once was regarded as a hidden gem, but is now almost world-famous. Thanks to numerous spectacular images and videos online showcasing what makes this such a special place, Keem Beach has gained a reputation as one of Ireland's great beaches.

What's the fuss all about? Well, for someone who grew up near the beach and has visited more times than I can count, Keem Beach's allure lies in its spectacular setting. Nestled perfectly in the western shores of Achill Island and surrounded by almighty cliffs, it has to be seen in person to be believed.

Added to the mix, during the months of early summer, the bay comes alive with basking sharks and dolphins. On your way down to the beach, you'll have to navigate your way along a narrow clifftop road, which may be quite intimidating for those not too keen on heights!

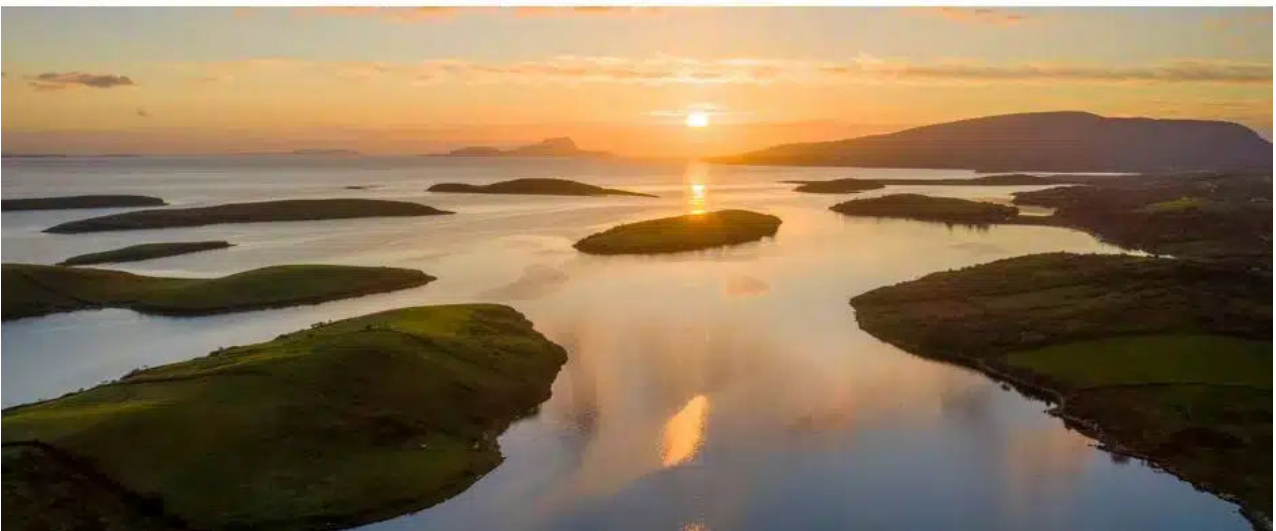


[Shark spotting on the way to Keem/ sweetisleofmine.com](https://www.sweetisleofmine.com)

All of these factors make for a truly memorable beach and location; one of my very favourite places.

Have a look at our detailed guide to Keem [here](#).

Explore Majestic Clew Bay



images: [sweetisleofmine.com/Gareth McCoramack](https://sweetisleofmine.com/Gareth%20McCoramack)

A large natural ocean bay located west of Westport, Clew Bay is certainly Ireland's most unique bay, and many claim its most picturesque.

The bay is home to hundreds of drowned drumlins, or glacial hills. These beautiful green islands are dotted around the eastern side of the bay and once drew the attention of Mr. John Lennon, who purchased Dorinish Island in 1967.

On the southern shores of Clew Bay, you'll see the imposing conical peak of Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holy mountain and a place which, in our eyes, offers some of the finest views in the country.



Beautiful Bertra Beach/copyright: Michael McLaughlin

Scattered around the bay are numerous beautiful, sheltered beaches such as Bertra, Old Head and to the north the pristine beaches of Mulranny. On a fine day, you'll find the local sailing club making the most of the natural beauty and when the sun does shine, there are few places I'd rather be than on the summit of Croagh Patrick or the nearby beaches.

Once home to the infamous pirate queen, Grace O'Malley, the bay is home to numerous castles and forts dating back to the 16th century. Clew Bay is of Ireland's true gems and a region we highly recommend visiting.

We have Clew Bay covered in detail [here](#).

Experience Magnificent Doolough Valley & Nearby Mountains



images: [sweetisleofmine.com/Failte Ireland](https://sweetisleofmine.com/Failte_Ireland)

Located in a criminally overlooked region of Ireland, south-west Mayo, Doolough Valley encompasses all that is wild and raw about the west of Ireland. This is one of Ireland's great roads.

Formed over millennia by the sheer force of glaciers, the valley gets its name from the large lake located in its centre, namely Doo Lough (or Black Lake)

Aesthetically the name makes perfect sense when you witness it for the first time, but symbolically it represents a horrible time in Ireland's history. Here is the place where the Doolough Tragedy occurred, a cruel and needless event amongst many during the Great Famine.

I visited recently and was in awe at the natural surroundings. The Sheeffry Hills and Mweelrea (Connaught's highest peak) seem to loom over the valley and although only around 800 metres in height, they seem so much higher and imposing.

We have Doolough and the Doolough Tragedy covered [here](#).

Get A Cracking Photo At Downpatrick Head and Dun Briste



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Once again, a natural wonder of County Mayo and one of the Wild Atlantic Way's most photographed locations.

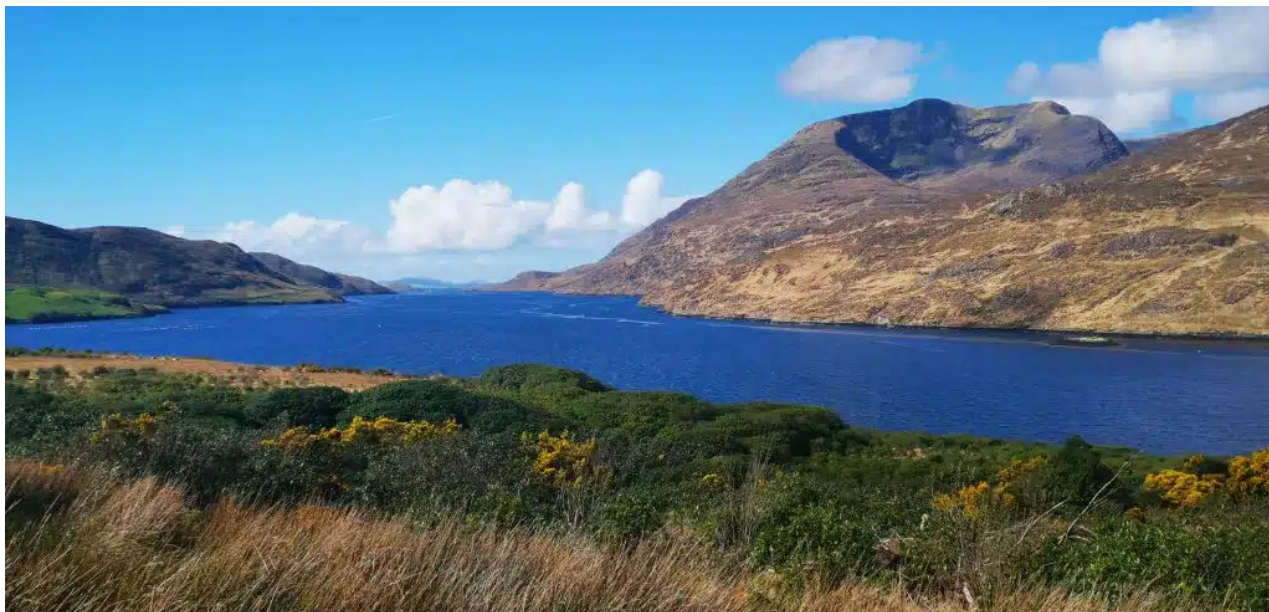
Dun Briste is an iconic sea stack located off the coast of Downpatrick. When you see it in person, it almost defies logic, nestled in the middle of the ocean with a perfect patch of green grass on top!

Locals will tell you the stack was once inhabited, with a natural bridge linking it to the headland. A storm in the 14th century led to it becoming isolated from the mainland. It's also claimed there were people actually stranded on the headland before being rescued by nothing but ropes and boats.

Hard to believe as it is a vertical rockface of over 45 metres in height. A place we believe should be on your Mayo bucket list, but make sure you visit on a calm day – it gets quite breezy here!

We have Dun Briste covered in detail [here](#).

Visit Unique Killary Harbour



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It's back down to south-west Mayo we are off to now and the uniquely beautiful Killary Fjord. This 16km long inlet is also a result of the last ice-age and is definitely worth a visit.

Although Ireland may not be known worldwide for its mountains, in my view the ranges of the west of Ireland are certainly unique. Almost void of any sort of vegetation, they carry their own special character. Being located along the coast also adds to their beauty.

That's why I really love this part of Ireland and am always drawn to south-west Mayo. The region in and around Killary is an outdoor lovers' paradise with ample activities on offer, be it hiking, kayaking, swimming and countless more.

We have Killary covered in detail [here](#).

Feel At Home In Westport



Westport is located on the shores of Clew Bay in western Mayo. It's a town that will be familiar to many as it has in recent years developed into a tourism hub for most visiting Mayo.

However, the word 'developed' should not be misunderstood. The town still maintains its wonderful character to this day and is an excellent base for exploring the surrounding Clew Bay/Achill/Connemara regions.

I recommend staying here for a minimum of 3 nights to make the very most of your stay. Anybody who visits Westport comments on its 'charm' and this can be experienced in a multitude of ways. From one of Ireland's finest houses, Westport House, to a cracking pint of Guinness at Matt Molloys, Westport has it all.



There's also a fine selection of places to stay, many of which have great indoor facilities such as pools and wellness, and this may be a godsend for many who get to experience some good ol' west of Ireland rain!

For me personally, having visited the town literally 100s of times, Westport's draw lies in tastefully decorated and perfectly maintained streets, shops and businesses, its cracking food scene and its proximity to beautiful scenery.

We have Westport covered in detail [here](#).

[Here](#), we have our pick of the best hotels in Westport.

Don't Overlook Mulranny



image copyright: Mulranny.ie

A village that may be unknown to many and a place that I can't recommend highly enough! Mulranny is located on the northern shores of Clew Bay, around 20 minutes from Achill Island and 30 minutes from Westport.

What makes Mulranny so special?

Mulranny is home to some glorious beaches and beautiful coastal scenery. It's also perfectly located along Ireland's longest defined bicycle lane, The Greenway.

Nearby is the stunning Atlantic Drive, one of the most overlooked road trips in Ireland. There's a golf course, some great little pubs and an iconic hotel in the village. In order to truly appreciate Mulranny, I advise visiting during good weather.



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When I visit, I make sure to cycle the stretch from Mulranny to Newport and if it's warm enough go for a dip at one of the beaches. Then spend the evening in Doherty's pub with a few tunes and a pint of two of Guinness. Now that's a great day out in Mayo!

Have a look at our visitors' guide to Mulranny [here](#)

Or The Mullet Peninsula/North Mayo



Erris Head/image copyright: ©Evin Walker

An often overlooked region of Ireland, the Mullet Peninsula just proudly out into the Atlantic and is home to some cracking scenery, excellent walking trails and gorgeous beaches.

Our favourite beach is Elly, which has been featured on our **[top beaches in Mayo](#)**. The beauty of many off-the-beaten-track locations is that they never get too overcrowded and because there is a generous offering of accommodation in the area, there's a great chance you'll find your ideal place to stay.



Beautiful Carrowteigue/sweetisleofmine.com

Belmullet town is a lively spot to base yourself for a night or 2 and has some great pubs and restaurants. Nearby is one of my favourite coastal hikes in all of Ireland, the Carrowteigue loop. Again a hidden west of Ireland gem with incredible coastal views.

The Mullet Peninsula is home to some iconic section of the Wild Atlantic Way, such as Dún na mBó, Blacksod Lighthouse and the stunning Erris Head Loop walk.

Experience The Beautiful Village of Cong



image copyright: ©Sean Tomkins

Cong is my personal favourite village in Ireland. Famed far and wide for the most iconic Irish hotel of all, Ashford Castle, and immortalised through the equally iconic film, *The Quiet Man*, Cong really is an excellent place for a day trip.

I recommend parking near Cong Abbey, a delightful 16th century monastic ruins in the village, making your way to the unique 'Monk's Fishing House', and then entering Cong Woods.

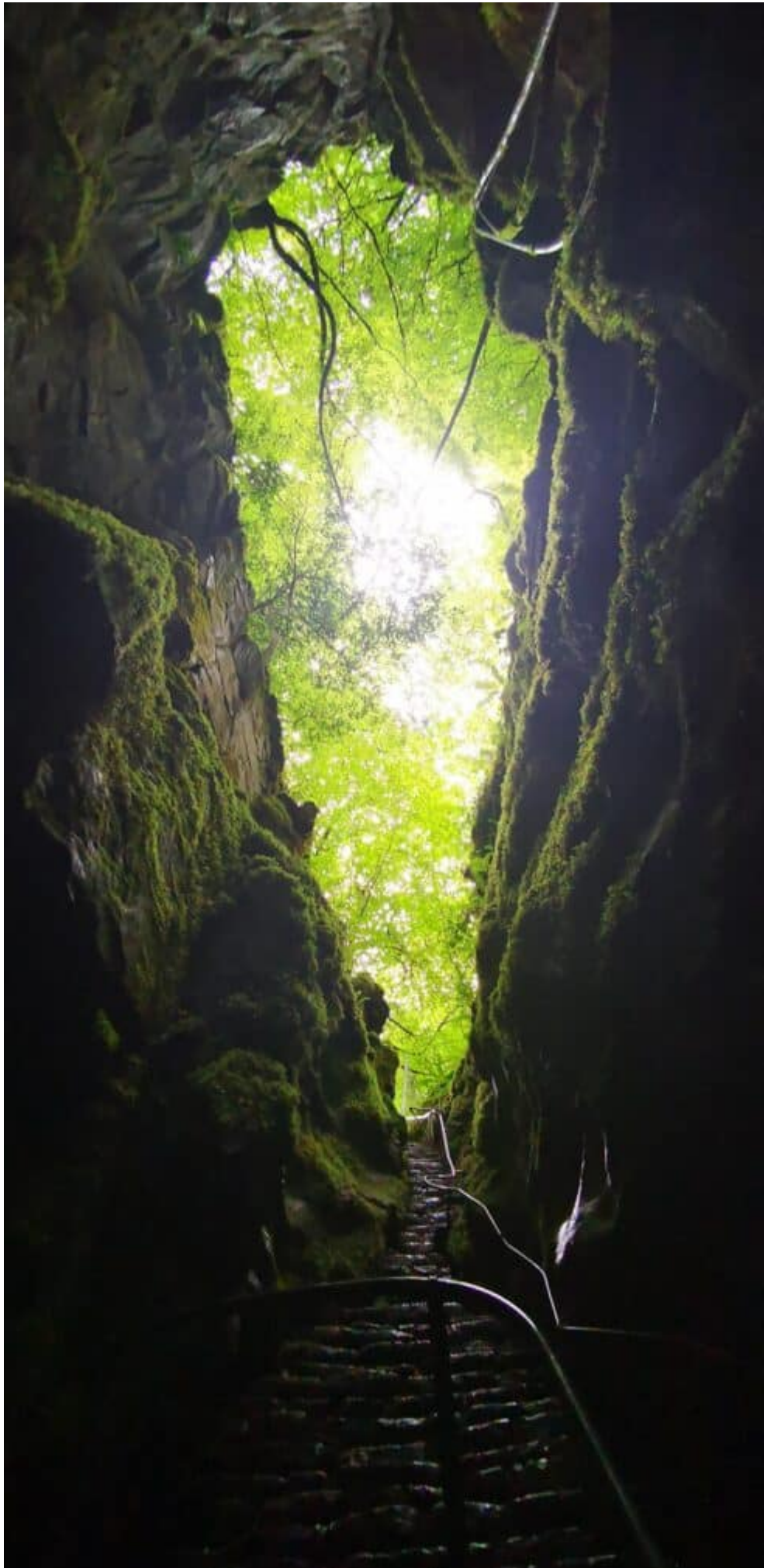




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Here, you'll be surprised by the incredible variety of vegetation, from sequoias to redwoods, spruces to Monterey pines. Carry on along the path till you come to another unique experience, 'The Pigeon Hole Cave'.

Make your way down the steps to the cave if you wish, but I do recommend being careful, as it is a small and narrow stone staircase.



Then make your way back to town and grab a seafood chowder and a pint of Guinness at Pat Cohan's famous pub. When your belly is happy take a stroll around the beautiful quaint village before making your way towards the grounds of Ashford Castle.

You'll need to pay 5€ to see the grounds at the other side of the bridge, but the gardens which you'll witness on the way to the entrance are also beautiful. Grab a coffee at the Irish cottage and admire the beautiful surroundings.

There's something special about Cong and you'll see it gets quite busy in the summer months. Make sure to get your customary photo with the 2 Hollywood stars of the village!

Take In The Lake District of South Mayo



South Mayo is home to some fine lake scenery, which in my eyes, offers something a little different to the coastal areas of the rest of the county.

The main lakes in the region are Lough Mask, Lough Carra, Lough Nafooney and Lough Corrib. A route I like to take when in the region starts at the village of Toormakeady and drives along Lough Mask.

Lough Mask is a large lake, known worldwide for its trout fishing. The World Cup Trout Fly Fishing Championship takes place here every year near the town of Ballinrobe.

Along the western shores of the lake is the village of Tourmakeady, an Irish speaking area.

It's a wonderful drive from here onwards continuing south, where you'll begin to notice some quintessential west of Ireland scenery: rolling hills and dry stone walls as far as the eye can see, with Lough Mask to your left.



©Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark

Continue on to the village of Finny and on over the bridge to Galway. Pass by the lovely village of Clonbur where you'll soon cross the border to County Mayo again and arrive at one of Ireland's prettiest villages: Cong.

Should you be planning on visiting Cong, we recommend taking in this beautiful scenic drive while you're in the region. It will top off a great day in south Mayo.

Other Great Things To Do In Mayo

Westport House & Grounds



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Built in the 18th Century near the site of the famous O'Malley clan's castle, this beautiful stately home and grounds are a lovely way to pass an afternoon in the beautiful town of Westport.

Take a guided or an audio tour of the 30 rooms and 6 permanent exhibitions, where you will step back in time to witness exactly how the aristocrats of Ireland lived during the Georgian era.

The grounds are green and lush, with wide open gardens and ancient Irish oak trees giving that touch of old-time elegance and serenity we all need on our holidays! Take a stroll and take in the beautiful location, along the shores of Clew Bay.



image via Failte Ireland/copyright: Christian McLeod

In summer, there is a coffee trailer set up near the outhouses and the barns here have some brilliant activities for the kids. You'll find plenty kicking a ball around in the adjoining greenery or just relaxing under the oak trees.

You can also jump on the little train which takes in the grounds and the town of Westport itself. This is a very popular choice for families in the summer months, along with the 'rentable swans'. Fun for all the family.



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The National Museum of Ireland – Country Life, Turlough



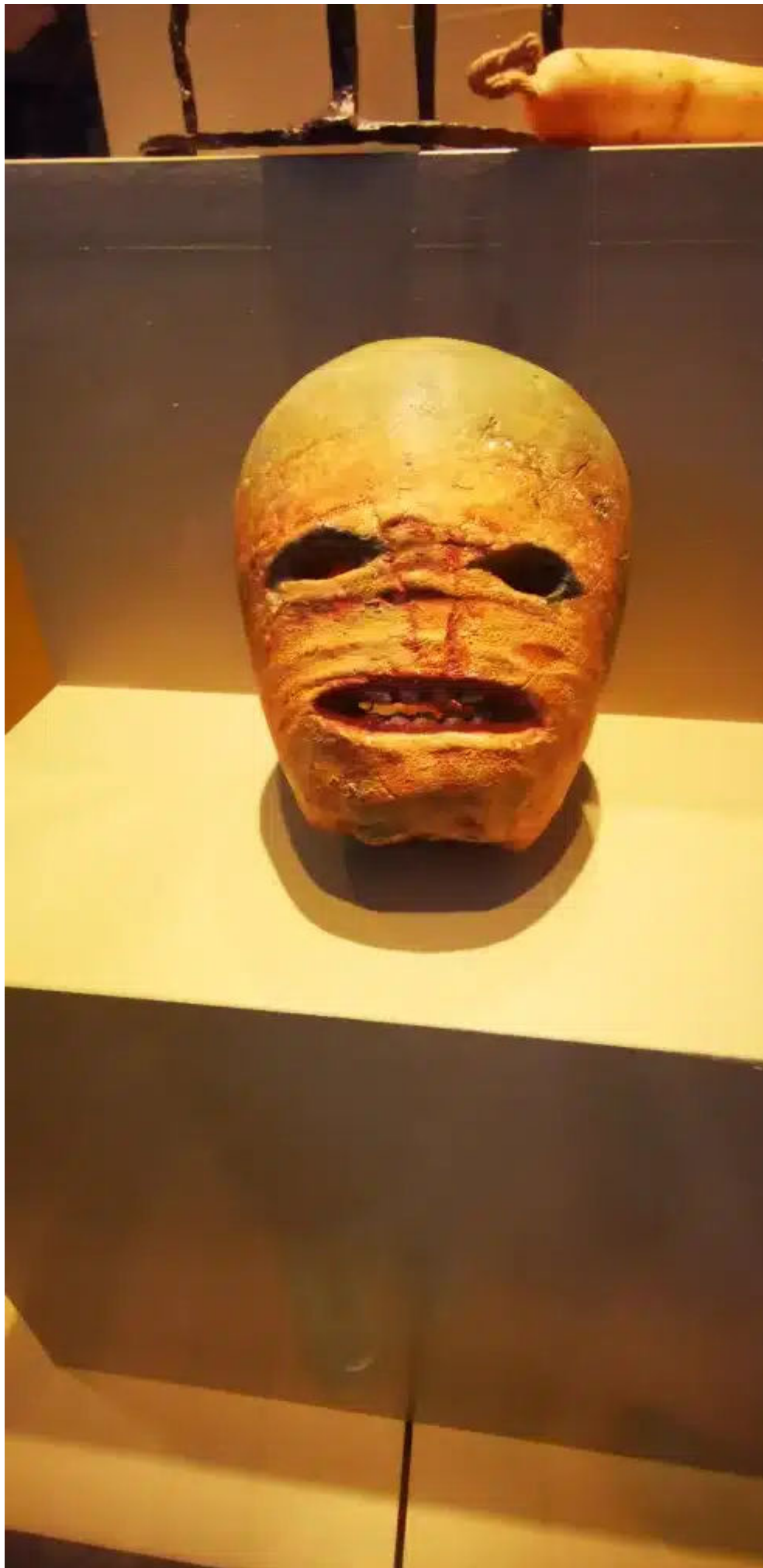
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We visited in July 2023 being one of the wettest Julys on record and was a great way to pass the afternoon!

The museum is located in Turlough, outside Castlebar. Located on the beautiful grounds of Turlough House, this museum showcases life in rural Ireland from the Great Famine up to the 1950s.

Entry into the museum (as with all national museums in Ireland) is **free of charge** and is a wonderful insight into the (hard) life and times of Ireland over the last 150 years or so.

The museum is located in a modern building and the exhibitions are spread over 4 floors. The highlight for the kids is the unusually realistic-looking Jack O 'Lantern and the various Halloween masks, along with the exhibition of old bicycles. A solid option for those interested in life in rural Ireland in bygone days.



Pay a Visit to Knock Shrine



image: copyright Michelle Fahy

Knock Shrine, located in the village of its namesake is a place of spiritual significance in County Mayo.

This sacred site gained international recognition in 1879 when it was witness to a series of apparitions, including those of the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, and St. John the Evangelist. Since then, Knock Shrine has become a haven for pilgrims seeking solace and a connection to their faith.

Visiting Knock Shrine offers a unique experience, even for those who are not religiously inclined. The beautifully landscaped grounds and religious monuments create a beautifully serene environment. The shrine's basilica is a striking architectural gem, providing a majestic backdrop to the village.

Visit the Beautiful Wild Nephin National Park, Ballycroy

As the name suggests this place is truly wild! Labelled 'Ireland's loneliest place', this vast area of bogland and mountains covers an area of 15,000 hectares and its visitor centre is located 20 minutes north of Mulranny.



image via Failte Ireland

It's home to some great walks, one of the most popular being the [Letterkeen Loop](#), a moderately difficult trail which takes in some beautiful river, forest and mountain landscapes. If you wish to get away from the rat-race of life, well I reckon this would be the place to visit.



image via Failte Ireland/Outlier

If you are feeling very adventurous and you have a lot of experience with cross country walking/trekking, then there's the 26km long [Bangor Trail](#). This is without doubt the most isolated place in all of Ireland.

Recently, I made a visit to the visitor centre, which has some interesting exhibitions about the local flora and fauna, a glimpse into the history of local farming practises in the region.

We also got to experience beautiful raised trails around the centre, which provide beautiful views of the surrounding wilderness of the Nephin Bogs. A detailed overview of these trails is [here](#).

This region of Mayo is also a designated 'Dark Skies' location, meaning it is a world-class location to go star-gazing. Due to the lack of light-pollution in this remote area, photographers have the chance to photograph our Milky Way in spectacular clarity.

Explore the Ceide Fields



image copyright: Outlier

Ceide fields is located close to Downpatrick Head in North Mayo and we recommend combining the two attractions when visiting the area.

It is an archaeological site featuring an extensive Neolithic landscape with well-preserved field systems, stone walls, and megalithic tombs. It provides valuable insights into ancient farming practices and human settlement in this region of Ireland, dating back over 6,000 years.



image copyright: Edel Healy

Incredibly, it is the oldest known field system in the world and was discovered by a local farmer who was cutting his turf here in the 1930s.

Ceide Fields has a visitor centre on site which contains interesting exhibitions, including artist's impressions of how life may have been 6,000 years ago in this location. There is also a cafe on site, as well as guided tours to the field system. The centre can be seen from afar because of its unique pyramid shape.

Ceide Fields also enjoys a spectacular elevated position 110 metres above the Atlantic, providing awesome cliff and ocean views. We recommend walking across the main road to the spectacular viewing platform. Can you spot Downpatrick Head in the distance?

Our Favourite Outdoor Activities in County Mayo

Climb Croagh Patrick



Croagh Patrick Mountain, Murrisk, County Mayo, Ireland

We'll start off with Ireland's most iconic peak, Croagh Patrick. Located on the shores of beautiful Clew Bay and within 10 minutes of Westport, The Reek (as it's known as locally) has been a place of pilgrimage for thousands of years.

On its summit, you'll come across St. Patrick's chapel, a small building erected in honour of our patron saint. Here, on top of the mountain, it is said that Patrick fasted for 40 days and nights.

The mountain itself is both beautiful and iconic, offering some phenomenal vistas out over Clew Bay and beyond. Regarded as a challenging hike, the climb has been made safer in 2023 due to the implementation of natural steps.

For more info about this and more, have a look at our detailed guide to Croagh Patrick [here](#).

Cycle or Walk The Great Western Greenway



image via Failte Ireland

Ireland's longest dedicated cycle and walking lane, The Greenway is one of our very favourite outdoor activities. The good news is that it is very accessible for all ages and levels of fitness as it is pretty much flat the whole way.

Since an extension in 2023, the route is 49 km in length and stretches from Westport to Cashel on Achill Island. There are various sections, namely from Westport to Newport, Newport to Mulranny and Mulranny on to Achill.

My favourite section is the Mulranny to Newport, as it passes some panoramic scenery of Clew Bay to your right and the Nephin Beg mountain to your left. Another reason is you can combine it with 2 great eateries along the way, namely Nevin's in Tiernaur or Kelly's Kitchen in Newport.

This cycling/food tour is a great way to spend a fine afternoon in Mayo and if you don't have your bike with you on holidays, no worries, there is bike rental available in the towns mentioned above.

Hike the Croaghaun Cliffs



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This activity could fall under many different categories i.e. 'Ireland's most spectacular hike', 'Ireland's greatest hidden gem', 'Europe's best coastal views'...

These cliffs are practically unknown to the most people and certainly won't be getting the crowds of the Cliffs of Moher? Why? They are famously difficult to get to and even trickier to see.

Realistically, they can only be seen from Saddle Head or from a boat, although hiking to its summit is a special experience and you'll have the feeling you are way higher than 688 metres. In our eyes, one of Europe's most unique hikes.



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The hike is also known for passing by one of Ireland's most unusual lakes, which we'll get to a little later...

Without giving too much away, have a look at our detailed guide to Croaghaun [here](#).

Explore the Keem Bay Cliff Walk/Croaghaun West



image copyright: Failte Ireland

Located west of Keem Bay lies another breathtaking hike. This walk has taken on a life of its own in recent years as those who climb it claim they have seen the highest cliffs at Croaghaun. Unfortunately this is not the case.

The highest peak in this massive array of cliffs is Benmore (332 metres) but is certainly not to be sniffed at. Start your hike at Keem and make your way to the abandoned hut on Moyteogue Head. Then traverse the cliffs all the way to Achill Head.

To the north, you'll see the towering peak of Croaghaun (which is the highest!). **Word of advice: We do not recommend climbing the main peak of Croaghaun from Keem. Although this route is recommended online, there are numerous reports of it being 'far too steep and exposed to the strong Atlantic winds'**

All in all a magnificent coastal walk and for those who appreciate jaw-dropping cliff scenery and photography.

Take on the Amazing Carrowteige Loop Walk



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Carrowteige is located in north-western Mayo, an area of splendid wild beauty. The walk takes you along some beautiful coastal scenery, with soaring cliffs, jagged headlands, distant craggy islands and sweeping Atlantic views.

There are 4 walks in total, from easy to difficult, all of which start in Carrowteigue village, an Irish speaking area. I have personally completed Benwee Loop, which although involves a good bit of up and down, was never too strenuous.

The views however were memorable. You have the feeling you are on the edge of Europe with the only thing to keep you company being the local hardy sheep and the odd walker or two. The finer details of the walks are [here](#).

In the same vein as the Keem Bay cliff trail, this walk offers bucket loads of beautiful coastal scenery and tranquillity that's hard to beat.

Conquer Mweelrea (Connaught's highest peak)



image copyright: WikiCommons/Britishfinance)

The King of Connaught and one that sits high on the bucket list of many avid Irish hikers. Mweelrea is located near Doolough Valley and at a height of 814 metres is a spectacular outdoor activity in County Mayo.

Beware however. The mountain has a reputation of being very challenging and only for those with good hiking experience and a solid head for heights.

There are 2 main approaches; the infamous 'Ramp', which starts from Dollough and the ascent via Silver Strand on the northern slopes. The Ramp is the most spectacular of the 2 as you'll have to make your way up a steep 700 metres rock wall before the ground levels out.

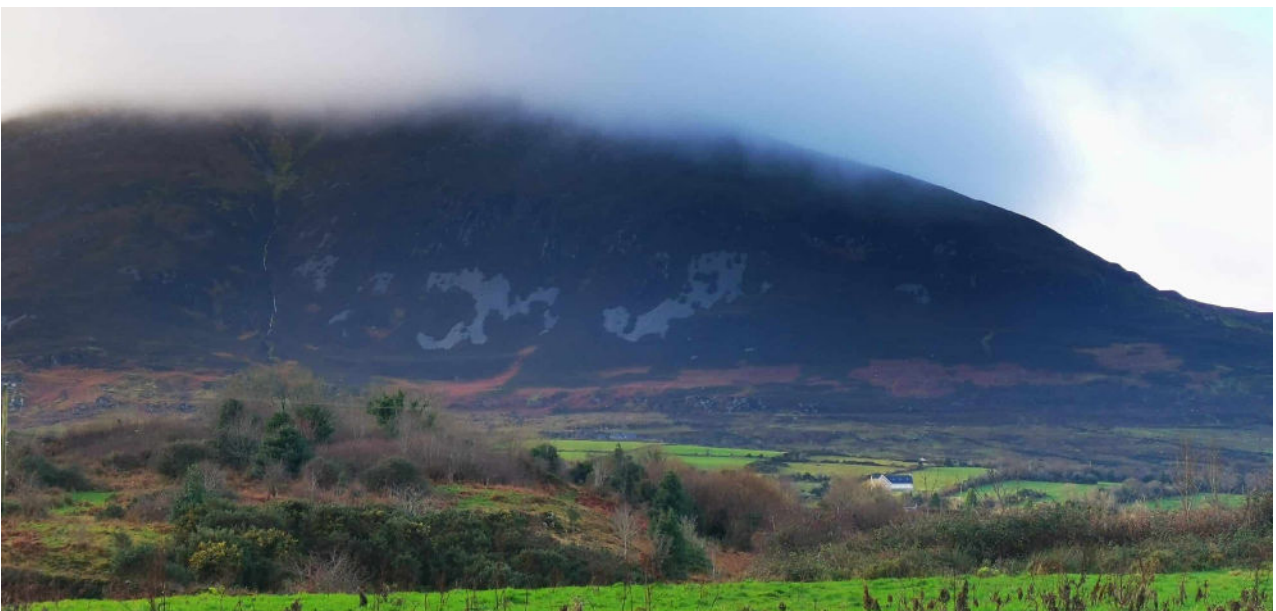


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A recent chat with local John Bourke who owns 'The Lost Valley' nearby informed me that the approach from Silver Strand is certainly easier than via The Ramp. Something to consider before you tackle the mountain.

In any case, the views from the summit are mesmerising. You see it all, from the mountains and glacial lakes of South Mayo/Connemara to the glorious strands and offshore islands, are there many countries where you witness such scenic variety?

Trek to the top of Nephin



Nephin, as seen from Lahardane. Image copyright: sweetisleofmine.com

Ireland's tallest free-standing mountain at a height of 806 metres, Nephin seems like it can be seen from anywhere in Mayo!

Its iconic, almost volcanic shape has become a popular hike of late, and is one for those with a good level of fitness and orientation. There are two main approaches, from the car park near Lahardane or from the western side along the R312.

As of 2023, there is a path from the carpark at Lahardane to the summit but the last section is *very* tricky and steep, with plenty of loose stones. Most will say the approach from the western side is far easier, albeit longer.

Serenity at Cong Nature Trail



As already mentioned earlier, we highly recommend walking the Cong Nature Trail. It starts off in the village and meanders its way through beautiful vegetation.

The 'Pigeon Hole' cave is certainly a unique experience, one of many caves in the region, as the area of south Mayo is predominantly limestone.

The details of all the trails are [here](#). Why not cap off a great day of walking with a seafood chowder in one of the many beautiful pubs and cafes in the village.

Tourmakeady Loop Walk



image: Fionnán Nestor

This beautiful walk is located in the village of Tourmakeady on the shores of Lough Mask. It starts off in the village itself and brings you through some gorgeous woodland before arriving at an equally gorgeous waterfall.

You can either start the walk at the community centre or look for signs for the woods and start from there. Either way, it's around 1 to 1.5 hours long and is suitable for all ages. When I visited in the lashing rain some years back, one thing that stood out was the vegetation.

There is a mix of native plants as well as newly planted trees, which together create its own unique atmosphere. Make sure you have the camera ready for the picturesque waterfall along this lovely walk.

Murrisk Loop Walk



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Murrisk is located at the foot of Croagh Patrick and I have included this walk for those of you who may not be willing to climb Croagh Patrick, but would like to get a feel for the mountain, while taking in magnificent Clew Bay views.

The trail starts at the Croagh Patrick carpark and takes you past the statue. You'll climb a very small portion of the mountain before turning left. Follow the trail along the foothills, past a mass rock and then loop your way back down to the road.

The views out over Clew Bay are stunning. Cross the road (carefully, it's a busy one!) and make your way to Murrisk Abbey and the National Famine Memorial. The variety of history and scenery you experience on this moderate walk makes it one of my favourite *less-demanding* outdoor activities in Mayo.

Various other Walks/Trails/Hikes

In a nutshell, there are countless walks of various difficulties in County Mayo. The ones I have chosen are my very favourites, but there is also a huge selection of local trails to choose from in the county.

Recently, Mayo has developed massively in terms of tracks and trails. Pretty much every locality will have a looped walk of some kind. Your best best bet is to scour through this extensive [list of walks](#) and pick one that suits you!

Try your Hand at Water Sports

Being a coastal location, Mayo has always attracted visitors keen on getting active in the wilds of the Atlantic Ocean. There are countless activities to choose from.

The beaches of western Mayo are known for surfing, the main ones being Keel on Achill, and many of the beaches in the south-west of the county, such as Carrownisky. Depending on the surfing conditions, practically any beach facing the Atlantic will pick up a good swell at any given time of the year.



Kite surfing at Keel

Achill in recent years has developed massively in terms of surf schools and the company 'Pure Magic' has discovered how to make use of the ever-available winds by setting up a kite-surfing school on the island.

Other outdoor adventure centres include Killary Adventure and Delphi, both who specialise in providing first-class training in various water and land based activities. They range from kayaking to windsurfing, to name but a few.

The waters off County Mayo are a calling for any with a fanatic interest in water sports and you'll have endless opportunities to choose from.

Fishing on the world-famous River Moy



image: Anne-Marie Flynn

The first thing that pops into most people's heads when they think about Ballina is 'salmon'! For years the Moy, which flows through the town, has been attracting many avid fishers with dreams of landing a fine big wild Atlantic salmon.

If visiting in the summer months, you'll witness fishers in the famous 'Ridgepool' kitted out in their waders, trying their utmost to catch a beauty. In fact when the waters get especially low, from the bridge you'll catch a glimpse of the fish making their way upstream.

Recently I spotted a single seal who was playfully throwing his recently-caught dinner into the air beside a fisherman, as if taunting him. Needless to say the fisherman was less than impressed...

You'll need a permit to fish the Moy, all details of which are [here](#).

July in the town is marked by the annual 'Salmon Festival', a mighty event which takes over the whole town. There is live music on the streets, as well as various other well-organised events. A festival we highly recommend visiting.

Enjoy a round of golf



Carne Links/image via Discover Ireland

There is a brilliant selection of golf courses in Mayo, many of which are links courses. One of my personal favourites is the course at Mulranny. Here, you are treated to magnificent Clew Bay views and you'll find the free-roaming sheep keeping the fairways in order! The greens however are fenced off to preserve your short game!

Carne Golf Links near Belmullet offers a real challenge and is consistently voted one of the top courses in the UK and Ireland. Just be conscious of the large dunes and windy conditions. Ballinrobe, Castlebar and Westport are beautiful parkland courses, with the latter also being a championship course.

In my eyes, a week touring round Mayo and experiencing the great variety of courses on offer, followed by a few pints in the local, is a unique and great way to explore the county.

Unique Things to Do in County Mayo

Visit the Beautiful Lost Valley



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Having personally visited The Lost Valley in summer 2023, I was left with the impression that this not only is one of the most unique attractions in Ireland, but one of the very best.

It's a 3-hour guided walking tour in some of the west of Ireland's most beautiful scenery, and also a first hand account of the history of the area, all told passionately by John Bourke, who lives on the land.

It is located in south-west Mayo with the peak of Mweelrea providing a beautiful backdrop to the farm on one side and Killary Fjord and the Atlantic coast providing even more beautiful scenery. A more authentic and scenically beautiful region is hard to come by anywhere in the country.

Visit Historic Ballintubber Abbey

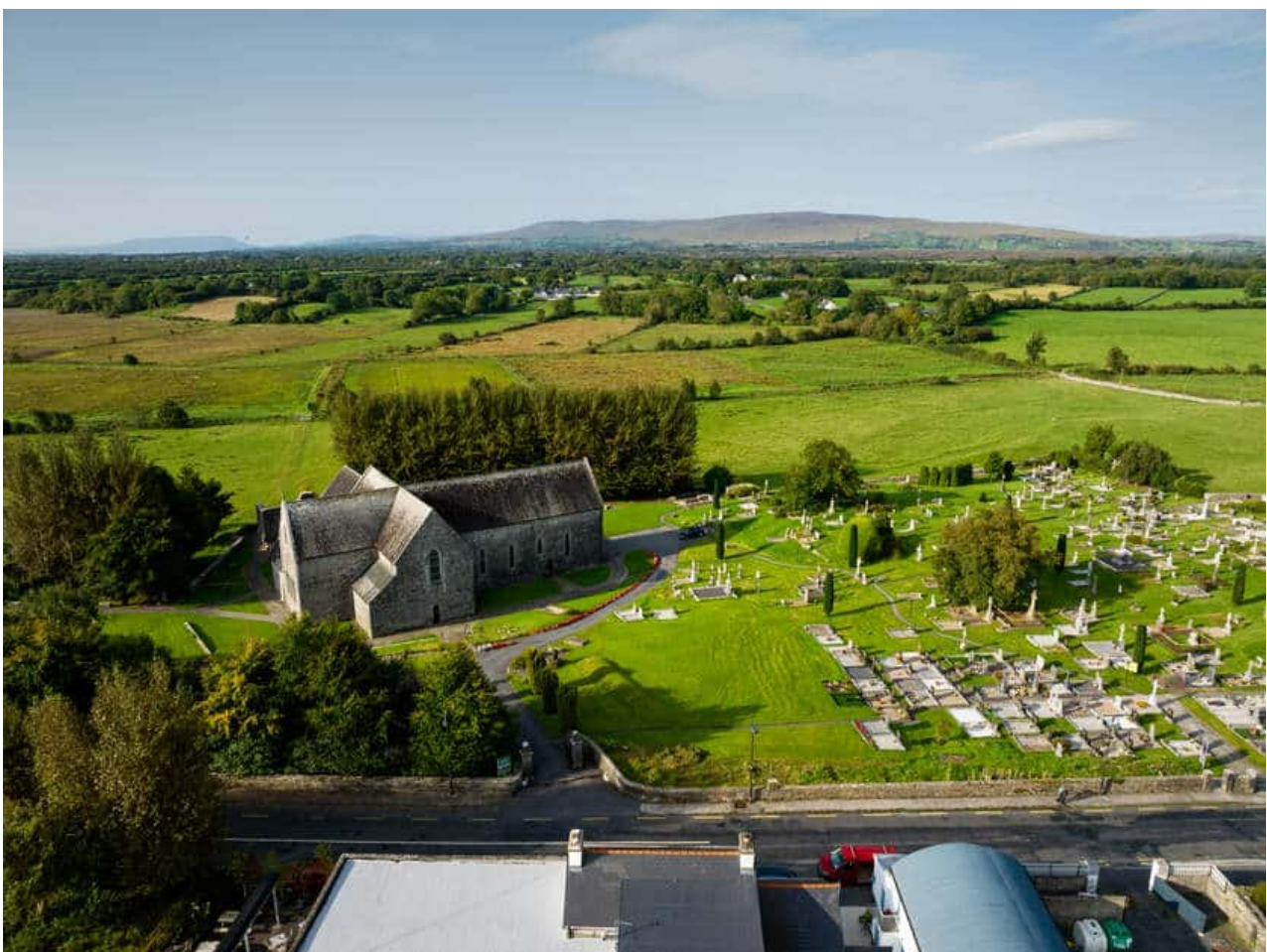


image copyright : Conor Doherty

Ballintubber Abbey is situated about 11 kilometres northeast of Castlebar.

The abbey has a rich history dating back to the 13th century and is one of the few Irish abbeys that has been in continuous use for over 750 years.

It was founded by King Cathal Crovdearg O'Connor in 1216 and has witnessed significant events in Irish history, including battles and religious reforms and is often referred to as the "Abbey that refused to die".

Ballintubber Abbey is known for its annual pilgrimage on the last Sunday in July. This tradition has been going for over 800 years, with pilgrims walking from the “Tochar Phadraig,” an ancient pilgrim route that stretches across the Mayo countryside to Croagh Patrick.

You can partake in a tour of the beautiful abbey and there is also a nice gift shop on site. A real step back in time and a place I like to visit on a rainy afternoon.

Visit Iconic Film Locations



image copyright: Searchlight Pictures

County Mayo's landscape has been attracting filmmakers for many's a year, with the stunning natural landscapes providing the perfect backdrop to many iconic films.

Take for example the *Banshees of Inisherin*, which was filmed in multiple locations on Achill Island. Or the classic *Quiet Man*, a film for the ages which was filmed in various locations in Connemara and Cong.

Jim Sheridan's powerful *The Field* was filmed in and around the Leenane and the Erriff Valley in south Mayo, the raw and untamed natural surroundings fitting seamlessly into the tense, dark atmosphere of the movie. Why not watch these 3 movies, then visiting these beautiful locations?



‘The Widow’s Field’: sweetisleofmine.com

We have planned a road trip for the Banshees of Inisherin [here](#), which takes in some cracking scenery on Achill Island.

Visit a Beautiful Island off Mayo’s Coast



The Magical Inishkeas

A visit to any island off the west coast of Ireland is an absolute must. Geographically, they were the furthest locations from The United Kingdom, therefore culturally speaking they were the least influenced by colonialism.

Mayo's largest offshore island is Clare Island, which is located at the entrance to Clew Bay and is accessed via ferry from Roonagh pier, west of Louisburgh. The island is home to the almost unknown cliffs of Knockmore, rising over 400 metres above sea level.

The Pirate Queen herself, Grace O'Malley's castle still stands strong today near the harbour and along with this historical attraction, there are plenty of other beautiful locations to explore wither by foot or by bike. We advise choosing a good, clear day for your visit to make the most out of it.



image via failte Ireland

The island of Inishturk is known for its excellent walking and spectacular coastal scenery. You can get the ferry either from Roonagh (daily) or Cleggan (only twice a week) The 2 main looped walks can be easily completed in a day and will offer that feeling of 'being away from it all'.

Looking west, you'll have the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean and eastwards, you'll view the Mayo coast from a unique perspective.

A visit to the isolated and uninhabited almost tropical looking islands of the Inishkeas is also something we recommend if staying in the Belmullet region. Once home to a population of over 300 people, the islands were abandoned following a boating tragedy, which claimed the lives of 10 fishermen in the early 1900s.



The ruins of the dellings still stand today and it's safe to say there are fewer beaches as pristine as those on the Inishkeas. Have a look at ferry times [here](#) and choose a nice day for your visit.

We can't recommend visiting an offshore island enough and if you have the time, we recommend staying a night or 2. We guarantee you'll come back a new person!

Bunafreva Lough West/Annagh Strand

We're back to western Achill Island again and to some of Ireland's greatest hidden gems. Access to these remote locations is only advised for serious walkers/hikers as the terrain is rough and challenging.

Lough Bunafreva is a corrie (glacial) lake that almost defies logic. Perfectly perched over 300 metres above the adjacent cliffs and nestled beautifully under a large coombe, this place must be seen to be believed.



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When I personally saw this for the first time, I couldn't believe what I was witnessing. It almost seemed like a cross between the Alps and the Cliffs of Moher! An odd comparison for sure but because of its truly unique nature, I have returned time and time again as I believe this is Ireland's most spectacular lake.

Directly east of Bunafreva, you'll find what is regarded as the 'Secret Beach', Annagh Strand. Again, a unique gem surrounded by mountains and almost hidden away from the world. Behind this stunning beach is Ireland's lowest corrie lake, Lough Nakeerogue.



image via Achill Tourism

To access the beach of Annagh, most will park at the nearby Deserted Village and follow the road before going veering off cross-country and descending the steep hills. We only recommend this trek for experienced climbers and those with very good navigational skills.

Visit the Haunting Deserted Village on Achill Island



he Deserted Village at Slievemore Mountain, Achill, Mayo

Nestled on the foot of the imposing Slievemore mountain, this stark reminder of times gone by and the pain of emigration is contemplative, atmospheric and certainly worth a visit.

These 100 'booley' or summer farmsteads tell a tale of eviction and resulting abandonment, leaving these buildings exposed to the elements for hundreds of years. The scale of the village is surprisingly large and you'll imagine just how busy this place must have been when inhabited.

Considering the wildness of the local climate, these constructions were incredibly well-built and stand the test of time. We recommend spending at least an hour here to learn about this village and to get a good feel of the place. There is also a very informative info-board at the entrance.

Visit a Local Brewery/Distillery

A unique way of getting a 'taste' for a local area is by sampling the local tipples. A well known brewery in the Westport area is Mescan.



Although you'll need a car to visit this private brewery, it's well worth the trip. This company produces a wide variety of beers from blonds to ales and also offers tours of how they go about their daily grind.

Tours are most Fridays throughout the summer at 2.30pm and Saturdays at 12.30pm. Of course samples and snacks are provided! Give them a shout in advance to make sure you won't be disappointed. Their brew is widely available in most bars in Mayo, with my favourite being the 'Westport Blonde'.

Cool info: Mescan the monk was a good buddy of St. Patrick and his personal brewer! Click [here](#) for more info.

The Connaught Distillery is located in Ballina and has become a popular attraction in the area in recent years. They produce a fantastic variety of drinks including vodka, poitin, whiskey and gin. The visitor centre is open 10:30am to 6pm, Wednesday to Friday and Saturday from 12 noon to 5pm.

Another small, but exceptionally highly rated distillery can be found on Achill Island, namely the Irish American Trading Company. They specialise in whiskey and the tour comes highly recommended. The distillery is open daily from 9-5 pm.

Visiting a local, family owned distillery and brewery is a unique attraction in County Mayo and is also an ideal rainy-day activity. Just be conscious and never drink and drive!

Pay a Visit to the Stunning Moore Hall & Grounds



image: Pedro Souza Photography

A place I have visited many times in all seasons, there really is something very atmospheric about Moore Hall.

Located on the shores of beautiful Lough Carra in south-east Mayo, this old stately home was once the property of George Moore, a wine merchant who built the house in 1792. The building itself is in ruin, but still retains its grand character.

The approach laneway is now home to some beautiful wooden sculptures, the beautiful sculpture of the owl being my personal favourite. Much of the grounds have been restored and a ramble through the woods is something we highly recommend with kids.



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They have ample space to explore the beautiful surroundings, but just don't tell them the house is known world-wide for its paranormal activity!

Rainy Day Activities in County Mayo

Let's be honest, we are on the west coast of Ireland so the rain is never too far away. Here are a list of things I recommend for those soft days:

Museum of Country Life – Turlough

Westport House

Michael Davitt Museum

Knock Shrine

Achill Aquarium

Ballintubber Abbey

The Jackie Clarke Collection, Ballina (Irish historical material)

Foxford Woollen Mills

Distilleries & Breweries

National Park Visitor Centre, Ballycroy

T.F. Royal Theatre, Castlebar

Westport Town Hall Theatre

Afternoon Tea @ Ashford, Mount Falcon

Indoor **Pools** in Castlebar, Claremorris, Mulranny Park Hotel, Ballina, Westport

Where to Stay in County Mayo

There is a wide range of accommodation available in Mayo, from glamping sites to luxury hotels. Have a look at our pick of the best in Westport and throughout the county.

Best Glamping Sites in County Mayo

18 Best Hotels in County Mayo

Best Places to Stay Achill Island

12 Best Hotels in Westport

Cheaper Accommodation in Westport

Your Questions about County Mayo Answered

Over the years, I have been asked many questions about my home county. These are the ones that always crop up in conversation.

What is County Mayo famous for?

County Mayo is renowned for its breathtaking landscapes and rich cultural heritage. Nestled on the west coast of Ireland, Mayo is famous for the rugged beauty of its coastline, including the stunning seascapes at Downpatrick Head and Achill Island. The

county is also home to the iconic Croagh Patrick, a pilgrimage site and Ireland's holiest mountain.

Where are the most scenic places in Mayo?

In our opinion, the most scenic regions of County Mayo lie along the western seaboard, such as Clew Bay, Achill and Killary, as well the mountains of the south-west of the county.

Regions such as **Achill Island and Clew Bay** are outstanding areas of natural beauty. The **lake regions** of the south of the county should also not be overlooked, as well as the stunning Mweelrea, Partry and Sheeffry Hills mountains.

What are some famous places in Mayo?

Westport is the tourist hub in County Mayo, and is its most visited town. It is close to the very famous and well-known holy mountain of **Croagh Patrick**.

Other very well-known places are the county town of **Castlebar**, **Ashford Castle**, **Knock Shrine and Achill Island**, with some of the most stunning coastal scenery in Ireland.

The **Cliffs of Croaghnaun** (Achill Island) are the highest in Ireland and one of the **highest in Europe** (688m)

What are the most unique places to visit in County Mayo?

We would argue that **Wild Nephin National Park** is a truly unique place, due to its sheer isolation. Other special places are **Croaghnaun Cliffs (with nearby Lough Bunafreva West and Annagh Beach)**, **Doolough Valley**, **Killary Fjord** and **Clew Bay**.

What are the main towns in County Mayo?

Castlebar is the county town and also its largest (population 12,068). **Ballina** is the second largest (population 10,171) and the third largest is **Westport** with a population of 6,198.

Final Thoughts

That wraps up our guide on the best things to do for nature enthusiasts in County Mayo. Traditionally most guests will visit Kerry and Galway, but we hope that we have (if even just a little bit) twisted your leg and made you consider a visit to this gem of Ireland.

In terms of beautiful scenery, warm hospitable people and all round great craic, County Mayo is hard to beat. For outdoor lovers, there are few places to match it. For those wishing to experience an authentic west of Ireland experience, the county ticks many boxes.

Is visiting Mayo on your Ireland bucket list?