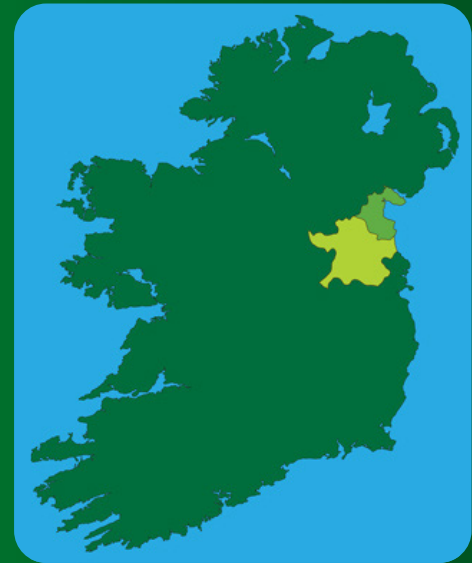


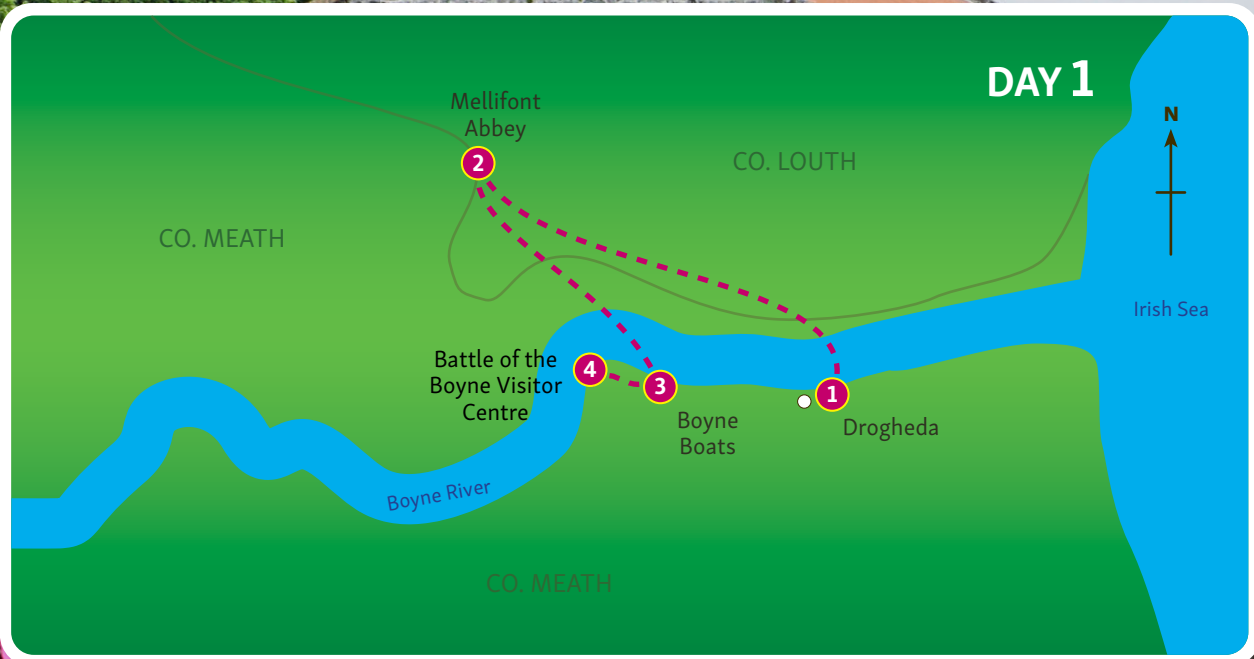
Memorable Experiences in the **BOYNE VALLEY**



3DAYS | 15STOPS

The cultural heart of Ireland's Ancient East, the Boyne Valley is home to one of the world's most important prehistoric landscapes & enjoys a reputation as one of Ireland's leading food-tourism destinations. Renowned for the quantity & quality of its cultural visitor attractions & for its natural beauty, the Boyne Valley represents the best of Ireland's historical and contemporary culture.





DAY 1 - morning

We're going to begin our journey through the Boyne Valley in the walled-town of Drogheda where you'll find a number of great galleries and museums that tell the fascinating story of this medieval town.

Join a walking tour from the [Tourist Office](#) on West Street or take a stroll around the town at your own leisure enjoying some of the town's many fantastic **medieval monuments**.

St Laurence's Gate is one of only a handful of town-wall gates which remain intact

today and it is widely regarded as one of the finest of its kind in Europe. Be sure to stop at the fascinating but slightly spooky early-16th century carved cadaver stone at [St Peter's Church of Ireland](#). At seven feet tall, the stone depicts two carved skeletons representing Edward Golding and Elizabeth Fleming, whose family were once the Barons of Slane. There are less than ten of these grim cadaver stones remaining in Ireland.

Designed in the French gothic style, the impressive [St Peter's Catholic Church](#)

is only *five minutes* away and houses the beautifully ornate and slightly macabre shrine to **Saint Oliver Plunkett** in which you can view the 17th century saint's preserved head! After lunch in one of Drogheda's **many fine cafes, restaurants and pizzerias** head to the [Highlanes Gallery](#), located in the town's former **Franciscan Church**, it holds exhibitions both from Drogheda's **Municipal Art Collection** along with **renowned Irish and international artists**.

Just a short distance away and housed within a large fort which played a crucial part in Drogheda's history, [Millmount Museum](#) houses various exhibitions on **Irish archaeology, folklife, local history, geology, industry and military history**. The museum also contains one of the four surviving examples of an ancient type of fishing vessel, called a coracle, which was once a common sight along the River Boyne. You can also pick up some **fantastic craft direct from a number of artisan makers** who are located within the building.

A *10 minute north-westerly* journey will bring you to the historic ruins of [Old Mellifont Abbey](#). The first Cistercian monastery to be founded in Ireland in 1142, the abbey was to become one of Ireland's most influential, housing hundreds of monks by the time of its closure in 1539.



The evocative ruins that remain today include a 13th century 'lavabo' (where monks washed their hands before eating), some beautiful Romanesque arches and a 14th century chapter house. The visitor centre on-site houses an exhibition of Medieval carvings discovered during excavations.

DAY 1 - afternoon

One of the best ways to experience the wonderful **natural beauty of the Boyne Valley** is to head out on the river itself with [Boyne Boats](#), winners of the 'Best Boyne Valley Tourism Experience 2018'. The tours take place in the handcrafted, traditional Kerry **naomhóg currachs** which have starred in the hit TV show, **Game of Thrones!**

Young and old can paddle together as they hear about **5,000 years of the fascinating history of the Boyne Valley**, about the bloody battles that shaped Ireland and the



rich tapestry of characters who have inspired the legends associated with the area today.

Boyne Boats is happily located on the grounds of the [Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre](#) on the **18th century Oldbridge House estate**, so after your paddle you can head into the centre and learn about one of the **most significant events in Irish history**. The Battle of the Boyne was fought between the Protestant King William III and the Catholic King James II in 1690.

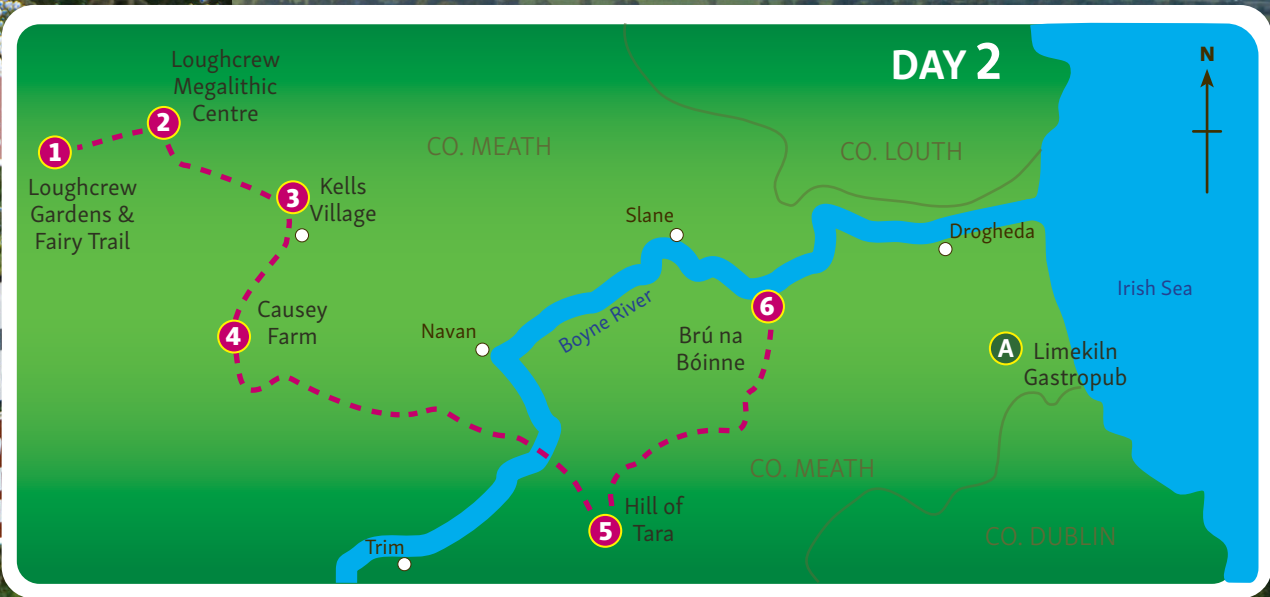
The kings were rival claimants to the English, Scottish and Irish thrones. King William had deposed King James two years earlier and the battle is **vividly brought to life** in the visitor centre with a laser battle site model, an audio visual film, real and replica weaponry and interactive guided tours. The visitor centre is surrounded by **Victorian gardens**, tea rooms and a host of **fascinating battle-site walks**.



Alternatively, the region has an abundance of wonderful gardens which can be explored through the [Boyne Valley Garden Trail](#). The trail encompasses a rich diversity of gardens - historic and modern, large and small, country and village gardens, in private and public ownership, all lovingly tended and waiting to be explored. Three **award-winning designers' garden centres** are listed on the trail along with cafes, garden shops, galleries and information about guided tours and **summer outdoor events**.

DAY 2 - morning

Begin the day at the beautiful [Loughcrew Estate](#) just outside the town of Oldcastle where you will find the best of three centuries of landscape and garden design. Hidden along the looped walks you will find a Medieval motte, the foundations of a Long House, dating to the early 1600s and the magnificent 'Yew Walk'.



The ruins of **St Oliver Plunkett's family church** can be also be found on the estate. It is said that the Plunkett family resided at Loughcrew and this is where the well-known Saint was born. The smallies and tweenies will love the charming and interactive **Fairy Trail** also located on the estate where they can make their way through an **atmospheric garden full of magic doors, beautiful fairy houses and wishing trees.**

A visit to this area would not be complete without a visit to the fascinating **Loughcrew Cairns** or 'passage tombs', as they are also known.

At over 5,000 years old, these tombs are even older than Newgrange! **Loughcrew Megalithic Centre** offers guided tours of this breathtaking landscape, recounting the myths and legends associated with the tombs and the witch who is credited for creating them! You can also enjoy a visit to 'Maggie Heaney's' **traditional Irish cottage** or a bite to eat in **Nelly's Kitchen Cafe** also located at the centre.

Afterwards, head *10 minutes south* to the historic town of **Kells**, where you can soak up the **rich monastic heritage** of the town where St Colmcille established a religious settlement

in 550AD. It is said that this is the **place where the iconic Book of Kells was produced.**

The village has a treasure trove of superb heritage sites to discover such as the **impressive round tower**, the old market cross, **five early-medieval High Crosses** and the tiny early Irish church known as 'Saint Colmcille's House', which local tradition suggests is the building in which the Book of Kells was completed! **Kells Courthouse** is now a tourist information and cultural hub, housing an interactive exhibition, the Toradh2 Visual Art Gallery and offering **guided-walking tours** of the town.



Later you may wish to experience a taste of Ireland's more recent culture! A *25 minute drive west* through the valley brings you to the fantastic **Causey Farm** which offers traditional Irish farm experiences along with some **typically rural-Irish activities**. Before the adventure begins, visitors **make some traditional Irish soda bread** and pop it in the oven to enjoy at the end of their visit.

Guests can take part in some traditional Irish dancing, learn how to play Ireland's traditional Irish drum - **the bodhrán**, take a **stroll around the farm trail** meeting farm residents such as hens, geese, pigs, Connemara ponies, goats and donkeys and watch the resident collie round up a flock of sheep!

DAY 2 - afternoon

Heading *further west* into the valley you'll come to the fantastic **UNESCO World Heritage Site at Brú na Bóinne** - one of the world's most important prehistoric landscapes, containing the **largest concentration of megalithic artwork in Western Europe**. Brú

na Bóinne is dominated by the three well-known and celebrated passage tombs of Knowth, Newgrange and Dowth, built some 5,000 years ago, they are older than both Stonehenge the Egyptian pyramids! Newgrange and Knowth are both accessible from the visitor centre at Brú na Bóinne (*to access the chamber at Newgrange prebooking is essential*).

The **new state of the art, immersive visitor experience transports visitors back 5000 years** to the construction of the monuments, explores the seasonal nature of **Stone Age society**, the significance of the solar cycle, and the **tomb-building process**. Visitors can drive directly to Dowth but there is no public access to the passage chambers.

No doubt Brú na Bóinne will have whetted your appetite for the stories and monuments of Ireland's ancient Kings, so after lunch head to the **The Hill of Tara**, a low-lying ridge located a further *25 minutes west*. On a clear day, **hills in all four provinces of Ireland can be viewed from the hill**. The name 'Tara' comes from the Irish, 'Teamhair na Rí'

meaning '**Sanctuary of the Kings**' and it is here that the ancient High Kings of Ireland were inaugurated, the hill is much celebrated in Irish myth and legend. The passage tomb known as **Dumha na nGiall** (meaning 'the mound of the hostages') is the oldest visible monument on the hill, dating from around 3,000 BC. It is said that Saint Patrick lit the Paschal Fire in 433 on the nearby Hill of Slane in defiance of the 'pagan' King of Tara.

One of the most interesting monuments at Tara is the **Lia Fáil (Stone of Destiny), the inauguration stone of the High Kings**. According to tradition, when a true Irish or Scottish King places his foot on Lia Fáil, it cries out to announce his rightful reign! The hill has continued to be a significant landmark in the Irish landscape throughout the centuries. There is a **visitor centre** on site with an informative audio-visual, **guided tours are available between May and September** but visitors can enjoy the monuments themselves any day of the year.



DAY 3 - morning

If you're **travelling with kids** and you'd like the family to take part in some outdoor adventures, then start the day with the dizzying array of activities such as kayaking, white-water rafting, archery or a medieval river tour with [Boyne Valley Activities](#) located in historic [Trim](#). (Alternatively, [Navan Adventure Centre](#) is located further north and is open

all day, every day, from 9.30am until dusk and has a great **Family Activity Package** which includes an inflatables area, mini-golf, pedal go-karting, football-golf and ski-walking.)

If you are in Trim, you cannot leave without visiting the fantastic [Trim Castle](#), one of the largest, best-preserved and most impressive Anglo-Norman castles in Ireland! The kids might be impressed to know that Mel Gibson's

film, **Braveheart** was filmed at Trim Castle!

In Medieval times, this massive, twenty-sided tower stood like an imposing and powerful stone symbol of Norman strength at the edge of the Pale. Tours are available daily during the summer and at weekends in the winter. Don't forget to visit [Trim Visitor Centre](#) beside the castle and take the **Medieval Armoury Tour**.

DAY 3 - Afternoon

A trip to the Boyne Valley would not be complete without a visit to the historic village of Slane and a peek inside the 250-year-old [Slane Castle](#) which has been home to the Conyngham family since 1703. The guided tour of this architectural gem takes in the **sumptuous 18th century interiors** and stories from both the family and the castle's colourful past.

A tour of [Slane Distillery](#), housed within the old stable building of the castle pays homage to 300 years of Conyngham family history at Slane Castle through an **interactive and immersive tour**. The tour concludes with a taste of the distillery's signature triple casked blend, '**Slane Irish Whiskey**' - a must for all those over 18! Visitors under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.



Slane is also a great spot to pick up some fantastic local gifts before heading home. Have a browse in [Pat's Art Studio](#) or look out for the farmer's market at [Rock Farm](#) while you're in the area.

Afterwards, head *10 minutes north* to the Irish Military War Museum & Family Park which offers a hands-on, **interactive museum experience** which includes **handling original weapons, visiting a replica World War I trench and a blank-firing weapons**

display. Other onsite activities include a large inflatable obstacle course and combat archery for some high octane fun!

Alternatively, head to the wonderful [Tayto Theme Park](#) situated just north of Ashbourne, it's worth setting aside a whole day to really explore all that this fantastic 22 hectare park has to offer. All age groups and interests are catered for, from the thrill-seekers looking for an adrenalin rush to younger guests who like to take things a little bit slower!

From the hair-raising rides of the **Adventure Zone** to the more laid-back experiences of the Eagles Nest, to the fantastic array of both **exotic and farm animals** that can be visited in the zoo or the life-like animatronics at **Dinosaurs Alive**, everyone is sure to find something that thrills and enthrals at Tayto Park!