BOYNE VALLEY

Discover Ireland's rich heritage!

![Boyne Valley logo]

BOYNE VALLEY
wander through time

Discover Ireland's rich heritage!

To Belfast (120km from D…

Ardee

N2

Oldcastle

12

Slane

7

14 **13**

8

KELLS

M3

Brú na Bóinne
Newgrange

15

NAVAN

Athboy

9

10 **11**

TRIM

M3

N

rogheda)

Dunleer

DROGHEDA

M1

M1

M1

N2

To Dublin (50km from Drogheda)

KEY

01 Millmount Museum

02 St Peter's Church, Drogheda

03 Beaulieu House

04 Battle of the Boyne

05 Mellifont Abbey

06 Monasterboice

07 Slane Castle

08 Brú na Bóinne (Newgrange)

09 Hill of Tara

10 Trim Castle

11 Trim Heritage Town

12 Kells Heritage Town Round Tower
   & High Crosses

13 Loughcrew Gardens

14 Loughcrew Cairns

15 Navan County Town

16 Drogheda Walled Town

Belfast

The Boyne Area

Dublin

Discover Ireland's rich heritage!

BOYNE VALLEY
wander through time

Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority

The Boyne Valley

The Boyne Valley is situated in the east of Ireland. It is at once Ireland's ancient capital and its most sacred and mythical landscape. In 1849 William Wilde, father of Oscar, wrote of the Boyne that the history of Ireland may be traced through its monuments. This remains true today. Moreover, its sites and monuments are amongst the best examples of their kind in Europe and are all within a short distance of each other. In one day you can visit the great prehistoric tombs at Brú na Bóinne (Newgrange) and the site of the infamous Battle of the Boyne. You can look out from the Hill of Tara, sharing the view with the ancient High Kings of Ireland, or be mesmerised by the detail of the Celtic Crosses at Kells.

You can stand in awe at the gates of Trim Castle, the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Europe, or pay your respects at the shrine of St. Oliver Plunkett.

Boyne: River & Valley

The River Boyne is the principal waterway in Leinster, the most easterly of the Irish provinces. The river rises at Trinity Well, near Cadbury, Co. Kildare and meanders slowly north-eastwards through the gentle and fertile plains of Co. Meath before entering the Irish Sea at Drogheda, Co. Louth. The valley through which it flows is a landscape of large farms, celebrated for their fine pastures, picturesque villages and thriving towns. There is a long history

of continuous human settlement along the banks of the Boyne – stretching back over five millennia. So why did prehistoric people settle and thrive along the banks of this river? The answer lies in the landscape and climate of the region.

The richness of the soil in the lands bordering and drained by the Boyne was ideal for Neolithic farmers (who began to arrive in Ireland around 4,000 BC). Moreover, the east coast of Ireland, between Dublin and Drogheda, is the driest part of the country and ideally suited to growing crops. The river was valuable as a source of food and, long before roads, its waters were vital for travel and trade. The River Boyne, which derives its name from the legendary Celtic goddess Bóann (see Myths & Legends, p. 38), has long been recognised as one of Ireland's most important waterways.

In the 2nd century AD the Greek geographer, Claudius Ptolemy recorded the outline of the island of Ireland in the form of a set of coordinates showing different geographical features such as headlands and rivers. He included on this map, in his own language, the names of several Irish tribes, cities and rivers, including 'Bouvinda' – the Boyne.

Boyne Valley

Archaeological & Historical Timeline

	Mesolithic Period 7000 – 4000 BC	**Neolithic Period** 4000 – 2200 BC

Our journey begins 9,000 years ago after the great ice sheets that covered Ireland during the last Ice Age had retreated. The island was wild, uninhabited and heavily wooded. The first people – Stone Age hunters – were drawn to Irish shores in search of food.

c. 7000 BC
First Mesolithic hunter gatherers arrive in Ireland

c. 4000 BC
First wave of Neolithic farmers arrive in Ireland

c. 3200 BC
Newgrange, Dowth & Knowth

c. 3000 BC
Loughcrew

Viking Age 790 – 1169 AD	**Medieval Period** 1169 – 1550 AD	**Post-Medieval Period** 1550 – 1800 AD

804 AD
Kells monastery founded by monks from St. Columba's foundation, Iona

980 AD
Battle of Tara

1007 AD
Book of Kells stolen

1022 AD
Tara abandoned as seat of the High Kings of Ireland

1142 AD
Mellifont Abbey is founded by St. Malachy of Armagh

1152 AD
Synod of Kells

1169 AD
Anglo-Normans arrive in Ireland

1172 AD
Henry II grants Meath to Hugh de Lacy

1173 AD
Trim Castle built by Hugh de Lacy

1194 AD
Drogheda-in-Meath granted charter and 'officially' founded

1494 AD
Poyning's Law passed in Drogheda

1512 AD
Slane Abbey is constructed

1641 AD
Rebellion

1649 AD
Cromwell's Siege of Drogheda

1681 AD
St. Oliver Plunkett martyred

1690 AD
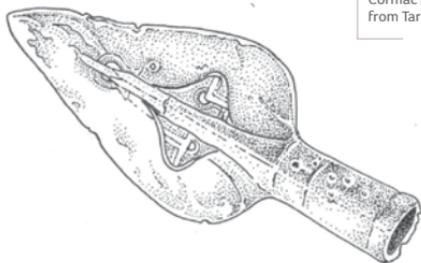Battle of the Boyne

1699 AD
Newgrange is 'discovered'

1785 AD
Slane Castle is reconstructed

1798 AD
Rising

Bronze Age 2200 – 600 BC	Iron Age 600 BC – 400 AD	Early Christian Period 400 – 790 AD

Early activity at Tara

227 - 266 AD
Legendary King of Ireland
Cormac Mac Airt reigns
from Tara

433 AD
St. Patrick returns to
Ireland & lights Paschal
fire at Hill of Slane

521 AD
St. Buite, founder of
Monasterboice, dies

Industrial Age 1800 – 1900 AD	**Modern Age** 1900 – present

1808 AD
Millmount Mortello Tower is
constructed

1843 AD
One million people attend
Daniel O'Connell's 'monster
meeting' at Tara

1847 AD
Worst year of the Great
Famine, known as 'Black '47'

1855 AD
Boyne Viaduct railway bridge
completed

1887 AD
Francis Ledwidge, poet, born
outside Slane, Co. Meath

1953 AD
Pierce Brosnan, former
James Bond, & honorary
OBE, is born in Navan

1986 AD
Freddy Mercury & Queen
play Slane Castle

1993 AD
Newgrange, Knowth &
Dowth become UNESCO
World Heritage sites

May 2008
Visitor Centre at the
Battle of the Boyne
site officially opened
by Taoiseach Bertie
Ahern and First
Minister of Northern
Ireland, Dr. Ian Paisley

Millmount Museum and Martello Tower are situated on high ground in the heart of Drogheda near to where the river Boyne finally meets the sea

Shortly after the Anglo-Norman King Henry II granted him the Kingdom of Meath in 1172, Hugh de Lacy constructed a motte and bailey on a huge mound overlooking the River Boyne. A more substantial stone fort replaced the earlier structure.

According to Irish mythology, the mound was the burial place of Amergin mac Míled, druid, bard and judge of the Milesians. Amergin was the son of Míl Espáine and brother of Éremón (see Myths & Legends, p. 38). The true origin of the mound is unclear, however, it is thought that it may be a large passage tomb, similar to those at nearby Brú na Bóinne.

This castle formed part of the defences of the town during Cromwell's siege of Drogheda in 1649. The garrison were massacred when they surrendered to Parliamentarian troops on September 11th, 1649. In the early 1800s the earlier fortifications were demolished and replaced by a Martello Tower as part of a series of defences erected along the Irish coast by the British in expectation of an invasion by Napoleon Bonaparte. Millmount Museum houses various exhibitions dealing with 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, that were once a common sight on the Boyne. Coracles were made of wicker and covered with animal hide, or

more recently with canvas. It was almost square but with rounded corners and was operated by two people – one paddling at the bow, the other manning the nets.

Did you know ... The fort at Millmount was considerably damaged during the Irish Civil War (1922-23) when it was occupied by Anti-Treaty forces and was shelled for several hours by the Irish Free State Army. It was restored by Drogheda Corporation and opened to the public in 2000.

St. Peter's Church is among the finest Gothic Revival churches in Ireland and is famous for housing the shrine of St. Oliver Plunkett

St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, situated on West St., is one of the most notable buildings in Drogheda. The first church on this site was constructed in 1791. The present building was built in the 1880s and incorporates part of this earlier structure.

The imposing façade of St. Peters is Gothic Revival in style and is built of local limestone. The interior of the church is lavishly decorated. The west transept of the church contains a special chapel which houses the preserved head of St. Oliver Plunkett (1625 – 81), the last Catholic martyr to die in England.

Oliver Plunkett was born in 1625 at Loughcrew, near Oldcastle, Co. Meath. He was sent to be educated by the Jesuits at the newly established Irish college in Rome where he was ordained. In 1669 Oliver Plunkett was appointed Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All-Ireland. He was arrested in Dublin in 1679 on trumped up charges of plotting to bring a French Army into the country and of organising Irishmen for rebellion. An initial trial at Dundalk collapsed in 1680. He was then transferred to England where, despite several petitions, he was found guilty of high treason. On the first of July, 1681, Oliver Plunkett was hanged, disembowelled, and quartered at Tyburn, England. His remains were recovered immediately after the execution and were eventually entrusted to the Sienna Nuns of the Dominican Convent at Drogheda. They are presently on view, enshrined in

St. Peter's Catholic Church. The church also contains the door from Plunkett's prison cell at Newgate, London. St. Oliver Plunkett was beatified in 1920, and canonised in 1975 by Pope Paul VI.

Did you know ... When the Roman Catholic Church canonised St. Oliver Plunkett on October 12th 1975, he became the first Irish saint for more than 700 years. St. Malachy, founder of the Cistercian Abbey at Mellifont, was canonised in 1199.

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Notes:
A Mass in honour of St. Oliver Plunkett is held in St. Peter's Church on the last Saturday of every month at 6.15pm.

Beaulieu House is a 17th Century house and gardens with a collection of classic racing cars

Beaulieu House is situated on the north bank of the river Boyne between Drogheda and the Irish Sea. The estate was originally owned by the 'St. Oliver' branch of the Plunkett family and was acquired about 1650 by Sir Henry Tichbourne, who was Marshall of the Army in Ireland and Governor General of Drogheda at the time of the Restoration of Charles II.

Beaulieu House was turned into the house we see today by the Tichbournes in the mid 17th and early 18th Century and has remained largely unchanged since. Originally a stone Plunkett Castle, the present structure is a mixture of brick and stone which was rendered in the late 19th Century, leaving exposed the Dutch brick surrounds to windows and doors. The Dutch style is unique in Ireland.

The walled garden is believed to have been designed by Dutch artist Willem Van Der Hagen, who settled in Ireland in the 1720s, and is one of the earliest examples of a walled garden in Ireland.

Gabriel DeFreitas, the current owner of Beaulieu House, is a tenth generation descendant of Henry Tichbourne. There is a museum on site which displays a collection of classic racing cars and memorabilia. Guided tours of the house, four-acre walled garden and museum are available.

Did you know … The current owner of Beaulieu House, Gabriel DeFreitas, had a very successful career in motor racing in the 1960s and 1970s under the name of Gabriel Konig.

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The Battle of the Boyne is one of the most significant events in Irish history

The Battle of the Boyne was fought between King William III and his father-in-law King James II on 1 July 1690. The kings were rival claimants to the English, Scottish and Irish thrones. Protestant King William (of Orange) had deposed Catholic King James in 1688.

William's army (called Williamites), numbered some 36,000 men and was made up of English, Irish, Scottish, Dutch, Danish and Huguenots (French Protestants). The opposing army (called Jacobites) were mainly Irish Catholics, reinforced by 6,500 French troops sent by King Louis XIV. The Jacobites chose the River Boyne as the best defence against the Williamites progress south towards Dublin. Drogheda was garrisoned and a force of 25,000 men was positioned at Oldbridge, the most likely crossing point. The armies camped on opposite sides of the river.

William's battle plan was to trap the Jacobite army in a pincer movement. He sent a force of 10,000 men towards Slane which drew the bulk of the Jacobites upstream in opposition. With 1,300 Jacobites posted in Drogheda, only 6,000 were left at Oldbridge to repel 26,000 Williamites. All the fighting took place on the south side of the river as the vastly outnumbered Jacobite forces defended their position against the advancing Williamites. William himself crossed at Drybridge with 3,500 mounted troops. The Jacobites retreated across the river Nanny

at Duleek and regrouped west of the Shannon to carry on the war.

William's victory at the Battle of the Boyne was the turning point in James' unsuccessful attempt to regain the Crown and ultimately ensured the continuation of Protestant supremacy in Ireland. Of the 61,000 men that fought in the battle, a relatively small number were killed: 1,000 Jacobites and 500 Williamites. The Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre is located in the recently restored 18th century Oldbridge House, which is on the battlesite.

Did you know ... The Battle of the Boyne was the largest ever assembly of troops on an Irish battlefield.

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Notes:
Events Calendar including details of Living History displays is available at www.battleoftheboyne.ie

Mellifont Abbey was one of the wealthiest and most influential monastic houses in medieval Ireland

Mellifont Abbey is situated in a tranquil valley on the banks of the River Mattock, a tributary of the River Boyne. The Abbey derives its name from the Latin Font Mellis meaning 'fountain of honey'. Many medieval monasteries founded by continental orders bore Latin names. Mellifont is the only one that survives as a current placename in Ireland.

St. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh, along with a community of Irish and French monks (trained at Clairvaux, Burgundy), founded Mellifont Abbey in 1142 on lands granted by Donogh O'Carroll, King of Oriel. It was the first Cistercian monastery established in Ireland and over 20 other Cistercian houses were founded directly or indirectly from it. Mellifont also became one of the wealthiest abbeys in Ireland with vast holdings of land in the fertile Boyne Valley.

The Abbey was consecrated in 1157 amidst great ceremony at a national synod, which was attended by the leading clergy of the time and Murtaugh MacLochlainn, the

High King of Ireland. Mellifont heralded a new era in Irish monasticism. Prior to its foundation, older Irish monasteries (such as Monasterboice) were essentially independent self-governed spiritual centres, under the direction of an Abbott who was largely his own master. These older monastic sites were often not affiliated to any other monastery or even to any religious order.

Mellifont was dissolved in 1539 and passed into the hands of Sir Edward Moore who converted the abbey buildings into a residence. In 1603, following Irish defeat at the Battle of Kinsale, Hugh O' Neill, the Earl of Tyrone, formally submitted to Lord

* An Artist Impression, as it might have looked in its heyday, illustration by Uto Hogerzeil

Mountjoy at Mellifont Abbey signing the Treaty of Mellifont. This sounded the death knell for Gaelic civilisation in Ireland. During the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 King William based his headquarters at Mellifont. The house was abandoned and fell into disrepair in the early 1700s.

Although the remains of the Abbey are fragmentary, Mellifont is historically and architecturally significant. It was the first abbey in Ireland to be laid out according to the European cloistral plan – buildings constructed around a central open space. Its distinguishing feature is an octagonal lavabo, constructed about 1200, which functioned as a place for the monks to wash their hands in a symbolic gesture as a preparation for prayer. Lavabo means 'I shall wash'. The lavabo, the chapter house and the late medieval gate house remain partly intact. The layout of the reminder of the abbey can be seen from foundations revealed during excavations.

Did you know ... Devorgilla (often described as 'Ireland's Helen of Troy'), whose elopement with Dermot MacMurrough led to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in 1169 is buried beneath the chancel pavement at Mellifont. In 1157 she donated 60 ounces of gold, along with altar cloths and a gold chalice to Mellifont. She died there in 1193 at the age of 85.

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The Cross of Muiredach at Monasterboice is the finest High Cross in Ireland and is highly regarded as one of the best surviving examples of Irish religious art

Christianity was introduced into Ireland, probably from Roman Britain, during the 5th century AD, around the time of the collapse of the Roman Empire. Monasterboice is one of Ireland's earliest and best-known religious sites. Its name derives from the Irish Mainistir Bhuithe meaning 'the monastery of Buite'.

St. Buite, Buite mac Bronaig, was an Irish monk and follower of St. Patrick. In 480, according to legend, St. Buite on a return trip from Rome raised Nechtan Morbet, the King of Pictland (Scotland), from the dead. Another legend states that he ascended into heaven via a golden ladder lowered from the skies by angels. St. Buite died on the day St. Columba was born (7th December, 521).

The site comprises two churches and a round tower. Although round towers were originally thought to have been places of refuge from Vikings, the Irish name for these towers – cloic theach meaning a bell house – hints at another possible function. The tower at Monasterboice was burned in 1097, destroying the monastic library and other treasures. However, it is still in excellent condition, though without its conical cap. It is the second tallest round tower in Ireland, after the one on Scattery Island, Co. Clare.

The Vikings occupied the site for a period until they were routed by Domhnall, King of Tara, in 968. St. Buite's monastery remained an important centre of spirituality and learning for many centuries until the establishment of Mellifont Abbey in 1142. The site also contains two of the finest High Crosses in Ireland – the South Cross (or Cross of Muiredach) and the West Cross (or Tall Cross) – which date from the 9th century. The sandstone crosses are finely carved and depict biblical scenes from the Old and New Testaments. Today the image of the High Cross is recognised internationally, not merely as a religious icon but also, as a symbol of Irish cultural heritage.

*An Artist Impression, as it might have looked in its heyday, illustration by Uto Hogerzeil

High Crosses

High Crosses, also known as Celtic Crosses, are distinctive ringed crosses that have become a symbol of Celtic Christianity. They are free standing and often of monumental proportion.

Standing almost 5.5m in height and carved from a single block of sandstone, the South Cross at Monasterboice is arguably the finest and best preserved High Cross in Ireland. It is often referred to as the Cross of St. Muiredach because of an inscription at the bottom of the shaft which translates as 'a prayer for Muiredach who had this cross made'. It is thought that this refers to Muiredach Mac Domhnaill, who was Abbott of Monasterboice from 890 – 923.

Did you know …

The West Cross, appropriately named the Tall Cross, is the tallest high cross in Ireland, standing at around 7m. Kirbuddo (near Forfar, Scotland) also derives its name from St. Buite and is twinned with Monasterboice.

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West Face (top to base)

Ascension of Christ (top of cross)

Peter denying Christ (left arm)
Crucifixion (centre of cross)
Resurrection of Christ (right arm)

Christ flanked by Peter & Paul (upper panel)
Thomas meeting the Risen Christ (middle panel)
Soldiers arresting Christ (lower panel)
Dedication to Muiredach (base)

Cross of St. Muiredach
High Cross (known as the South Cross, or Cross of Muiredach), Monasterboice, Co. Louth

West Face (Illustration)

East Face (top to base)

St Paul & St Anthony (top of cross)

The Saved Souls (left arm)
The Last Judgement (centre of cross)
The Damned Souls (right arm)

Adoration of the Magi (upper panel)
Moses Drawing Water from the Rock (upper middle panel)
David & Goliath (lower middle panel)
Cain slaying Abel (lower panel, right)
Adam & Eve (lower panel, left)

East Face (Illustration)

Slane Castle is the residence of Ireland's most famous aristocrat, Henry Conyngham, Earl of Mount Charles

Slane Castle is set on the grounds of a 1,500 acre estate through which flows the River Boyne, a few kilometres upstream from the site of the Battle of the Boyne.

Following the Williamite War (1689 – 91) a half a million Irish acres were confiscated from those who supported James II. The Conynghams purchased the estate in 1701 following the Williamite Confiscations. Prior to this the lands were in the posession of the Flemings, Anglo-Norman Catholics who supported the Jacobites.

Slane Castle in its existing form was reconstructed under the direction of William Burton Conyngham, together with his nephew the first Marquess Conyngham. The reconstruction dates from 1785 and was undertaken by the most distuinguished architects of the day, most notably James Gandon who designed The Custom House and The Four Courts in Dublin and Francis Johnson who is responsible for the GPO, in

Dublin. The parklands were laid out by the renowned landscape architect, Capability Brown known as "England's greatest gardener".

In 1991, a fire in the Castle caused extensive damage and completely destroyed the eastern wing facing the River Boyne. It re-opened to the public in 2001 following a ten-year restoration programme funded by the family.

Over the last quarter of a century Slane Castle has become internationally famous for its summer concerts. Its natural amphitheatre attracts 80,000 music fans annually. Queen, Thin Lizzy, The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, David Bowie, Guns N' Roses, Neil Young, REM, Bryan Adams, U2,

Stereophonics, Red Hot Chili Peppers and Madonna have all performed under the shadow of the Castle. Oasis headlined the Slane Castle 2009 concert.

Did you know ... U2 recorded part of their fourth studio album, The Unforgettable Fire, in Slane Castle; the Drawing Room was converted into a recording studio. The video for the song Pride (In the Name of Love) was shot in the Gothic Revival Ballroom which was created for George IV's State Visit in 1821.

In 2009 Lord Henry and Lord Alex Mount Charles launched the Slane Castle Irish Whiskey at the Oasis concert: chosen by three generations of the Conyngham family, Slane Castle Irish Whiskey is a smooth, well balanced blend of malt and grain Irish Whiskey which has been matured for a least four years in Bourbon casks made of American oak. In the traditional Irish Style, the malt whiskey is distilled in copper pot stills and no peated malt is used. Both the malt content and the carefully controlled maturation give this small batch whiskey its subtle sweetness and depth of character. Private Whiskey Tastings hosted by Conyngham family available upon request.

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Brú na Bóinne is one of the largest and most important prehistoric megalithic sites in Europe

Brú na Bóinne is the name given to an extensive and hugely important archaeological landscape situated on the north bank of the river Boyne, 8 kilometres west of Drogheda. The site is dominated by three large passage tombs – Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth – which were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1993.

Passage tombs consist of a burial chamber reached by a long straight passage lined with stones, and set within a large mound known as a cairn. They are usually sited on hilltops and grouped in cemeteries. Although primarily burial sites, they also served as status symbols, focal points for the community, places to honour dead ancestors and as territorial markers.

It is estimated that there are 700 decorated stones at Brú na Bóinne making it Europe's largest and most important concentration of prehistoric megalithic art. The most famous of these stones is the one marking the entrance to Newgrange where the triple spiral, unique to this site, can be seen.

Constructed during the New Stone Age (or Neolithic Period, from Greek "neo" meaning new and "lithos" meaning stone) the tombs at Brú na Bóinne are around 5,000 years old. Although the people who built these tombs were primarily farmers they also possessed expertise in engineering, geology, art and even astronomy.

At dawn on the morning of the winter solstice, and for a number of days before and after, the main chamber at Newgrange is illuminated by a beam of sunlight for 17 minutes. This alignment is too precise to have occurred by chance. It is thought that Newgrange is the oldest surviving deliberately aligned structure in the world. Although Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth were constructed around 3000 BC activity at the sites continued for many millennia. Knowth for example, served as a burial site in the Iron Age, as the royal seat of the King of Northern Brega in the Early Christian period, and as an Anglo-Norman Motte in the Early Medieval Period.

There is no direct access to Newgrange and Knowth; all admission is through the Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre which is located near the village of Donore. The excellent exhibitions at the Visitor Centre include a full scale replica of the chamber at Newgrange. Visitors are brought from the centre to the monuments by shuttle bus.

Did you know ... Constructed around 3200 BC, Newgrange is 500 years older than the pyramids of Egypt and 1,000 years older than Stonehenge in England.

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Notes:
Visitor Centre and Newgrange is open all year round. (excl. 24-27 December). Knowth is open from Easter to end of October. Last admission to the visitor centre is 45 minutes before closing time. Last admission to visit any of the sites is 2 hours before closing time. Please note this site can be extremely busy during the summer months – early arrival for booking of the tours is recommended. See www.heritageireland.ie for additional information.

The Hill of Tara was the seat of the High Kings of Ireland and the most sacred site in ancient Ireland

The Hill of Tara is a low-lying ridge located between Navan and Dunshaughlin in Co. Meath. It is said that a quarter of the landscape of Ireland can be seen from the hill. Tara gets its name from Teamhair na Rí meaning 'sanctuary of the kings' and it is important as the traditional inauguration site of the ancient High Kings of Ireland. Although few of its monuments survive the test of time, it is an evocative place, much celebrated in Irish myth and legend.

Tara was an important site long before the High Kings. A passage tomb known as Dumha na nGiall (meaning 'the mound of the hostages') is the oldest visible monument and dates from around 3,000 BC. However, Tara became truly important in the Iron Age (600 BC to 400 AD) and into the Early Christian Period. In 433 St. Patrick from the nearby Hill of Slane lit the Paschal fire in defiance of the pagan king of Tara (see Myths & Legends, p. 41).

Tara was the royal centre of Mide (meaning 'the middle kingdom'), the fifth province of ancient Ireland. It incorporated the present Co. Meath and what is now Westmeath and large parts of Cavan and Longford. The title 'King of Tara' always implied a special power, however, it was not until the 9th century AD that the title became synonymous with High King of Ireland.

One of the most interesting monuments at Tara is the Lia Fáil (Stone of Destiny), which is a standing stone located within an area known as the Forrad (The Royal Seat). This was the inauguration stone of the Kings of Tara. According to tradition, when a true Irish or Scottish King placed his foot on Lia Fáil it cried out to announce his rightful reign. Other monuments include Teach Miodchuarta (The Banqueting Hall),

* An Artist Impression, as it might have looked in its heyday, illustration by Uto Hogerzeil

Rath na Rí (The Fort of the Kings), Teach Cormaic (Cormac's House), Rath Gráinne (The Fort of Gráinne), Rath na Seanadh (The Rath of the Synods) and Claoin Fhearta (The Sloping Trenches).

Although Tara was finally abandoned by Mael Shechlainn, High King of Ireland, in 1022 it continued to play an important symbolic role in Irish history into the modern period. In 1843 an estimated one million people gathered there to hear Daniel 'The Liberator' O'Connell speak against the Union of Great Britain and Ireland. In 1902, in a letter to the Editor of The Times, Tara was described by Douglas Hyde, George Moore and William Butler Yeats, key figures in the Gaelic Revival, as 'the most consecrated spot in Ireland'.

Did you know ... A group of British Israelites nearly destroyed Rath na Seanadh (The Rath of the Synods) between 1899 and 1902. They believed the Ark of the Covenant was buried there.

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W: www.heritageireland.ie

Trim Castle is the largest, best-preserved & most impressive Anglo-Norman castle in Ireland

Trim get its name from the Irish Áth Truim, meaning 'The Ford of the Elder Trees', indicating that this was an important fording point on the River Boyne. Such was the significance of this crossing point that by the fifth century a chieftain's dún (fort) and an early monastery were sited here.

In 1172, shortly after the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in Ireland, King Henry II granted Hugh de Lacy the Kingdom of Meath, along with custody of Dublin. The King feared that Srongbow (Richard de Clare) might set up a rival Anglo-Norman kingdom in Ireland.

For strategic reasons, de Lacy decided to make Trim, rather than Drogheda, the centre of his newly acquired lordship. De Lacy converted a ringfort into a wooden castle with a spiked stockade. This structure was seen as a threat by the Gaelic Irish and in 1174 Rory O'Connor,

King of Connacht (and last High King of Ireland), attacked and it was destroyed. The following year work began on a more permanent stone replacement and over the following decades Hugh de Lacy (d. 1186) and his son Walter constructed the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Europe.

Initially a stone keep, or tower, replaced the wooden fortification. The keep was remodeled and then surrounded by curtain walls and a moat. The wall, punctuated by several towers and a gatehouse, fortified an area of about 3 acres. Most of the castle visible today was completed by 1220.

The unique twenty-sided cruciform design of the keep (with walls 3m thick) is an example of the experimental military architecture of the period. It served as both the domestic and administrative centre of the castle. By 1500 much of Ireland was back in the hands of Gaelic Chieftains and the territory under English control had been reduced to an area around Dublin, known as 'The Pale'. By this time Trim Castle was in decline, however, it remained an important outpost protecting the north-western frontier of The Pale.

Over the centuries Trim Castle was adapted to suit the domestic needs of its owners and the changing political climate. However, much of its fabric has remained unchanged since the height of Anglo-Norman power in Ireland. Even today when standing within the walls of the castle

visitors can get the sense of security that would have been felt by the de Lacy family in a hostile landscape. Although, standing outside the walls you can sense the intimidation that must surely have been felt by the native population.

Did you know ... Trim Castle served as a 'castle double' for York Castle in Mel Gibson's 1996 Oscar-winning movie Braveheart.

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GPS +53° 33' 7.92", -6° 47' 25.08"

* An Artist Impression, as it might have looked in its heyday, illustration by Uto Hogerzeil

Trim contains more Medieval buildings than any town in Ireland

Trim is situated on the banks of the River Boyne in an area of fertile plains. The town developed around Trim Castle, straddling the river to the north and west of the castle. In the 13th century the town was enclosed within a circuit of stone walls. Augustinian (1202), Franciscan (1260), and Dominican (1263) friaries were established, indicating the growing prosperity of the town. In the later medieval period Trim became an increasingly exposed frontier, standing between the hostile worlds of the Anglo-Normans and the Gaelic Irish.

Aside from Trim Castle, which dominates the town, the fragments of the medieval town are still clearly visible. The wall which circled the settlement is visible in part, mainly around Castle St. and Emmet St. west of the castle. The Sheep Gate is the only surviving of several medieval gateways to the town. The jagged Yellow Steeple was formerly a seven-storied church tower belonging to St Mary's Augustinian Abbey, it gets its name from the colour of the stonework in the evening sun. St Patrick's Church (Church of Ireland) is primarily a 19th century structure, though with medieval remains.

The tower on its west face incorporates the arms of Richard, Duke of York, Lord of Trim and Viceroy in Ireland from 1449. Interestingly, Ireland's oldest complete and unaltered bridge (dating from 1393) crosses the Boyne at Trim.

A few kilometres downstream of Trim stand the ruins of Newtown Trim – a large medieval cathedral, two monasteries and a small church. These ruins symbolise the failed attempt by the first English Bishop of Meath, Simon de Rochfort, to establish a rival town to de Lacy's Trim.

During the early 1700s Jonathan Swift, author of Gulliver's Travels, lived at Lacacor, near Trim, where he served as vicar to a small congregation. Arthur Wellesey, better known as the Duke of Wellington or 'the Iron Duke', was educated at Trim and spent much of his childhood at the nearby Dangan Castle, his father's country house (now in ruins). He

is credited with Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, and later served as Prime Minister of Great Britain (1828-30). Don Ambrosio O'Higgins (1720 – 1801), the Spanish Viceroy of Peru and Chile, was born at Dangan Castle. His son, Bernardo O'Higgins, went on to become the 'Liberator of Chile'.

Housed in the Old Town Hall building Trim Visitor Centre has an audio visual presentation titled "The Power & the Glory". Here visitors can learn more about life in medieval Trim and County Meath as well as more about how the coming of the Normans affected the area. The visitor centre also has a tourist information point, gift and coffee shop.

Did you know ... There is a small Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking community) at Ráth Cairn (Rathcarne), near Trim. In the 1930s a total of 443 people from Connemara in the west of Ireland were resettled on land acquired by the Land Commission. It received official recognition as a Gaeltacht in 1967. Walk along the River Boyne and see the ruins of S S Peter & Paul Cathedral and the Hospital of St John The Baptist. Visitors can call into the Visitor Centre for a town map and more details about the walk.

Contact Details:

Trim Visitor Centre and Ramparts Coffee Shop, Castle St, Trim, Co. Meath
T: + 353 (0) 46 943 7227
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E: trimvisitorcentre@eircom.net
W: www.meathtourism.ie

The heritage town of Kells contains many fine examples of early Christian architecture

Kells derives from the Irish Ceanannas Mór, meaning 'great residence'. Long before the coming of Christianity, Kells was a royal residence associated with the legendary Conn Céadchatach (Conn of the Hundred Battles) and Cormac mac Airt.

In 550 St. Columba, also known as St. Colmcille, established a religious settlement at Kells. In 563 he went into self-imposed exile on the isle of Iona, off the west coast of Scotland and founded another settlement. The island was raided by Viking fleets in 795, 802 and again in 804 when sixty-eight people were killed. Shortly after, the community of St. Columba's monastery on Iona were granted lands at Kells as a safe haven from invaders.

Generally, monastic settlements were surrounded by a circular boundary wall called a vallum, which acted as a frontier between the holy world within and the secular world outside. They often contained a church, graveyard, high crosses, monk's cells and from the late 10th century round towers also became a feature.

The first church at Kells was completed by 814 and in 878 the relics of St. Columba were relocated from Iona, which was now prospering. However, Kells itself was raided by the Vikings in 919, 950 and 969, and many times throughout the 11th century, this time by the Irish. The most famous treasure created by the community of St. Columba is the Book of Kells, a highly ornate version of the four gospels in Latin. It was written around the year 800, though it remains unclear whether it was written in whole or part at Kells.

Although Kells became an important Anglo-Norman walled settlement, it is its monastic heritage that best survives. Kells' round tower, though roofless, stands at a height of 25m. In 1076 Murchadh Mac Flainn, who was fighting for the High Kingship of Ireland, was murdered in the

tower. The tower is surrounded by several finely carved high crosses, in various states of preservation. A stone church known as St. Columba's House, dating from the 9th century is possibly the oldest surviving structure in the town. It is a classic example of an early Irish church with a steeply pointed stone roof.

The Kells Courthouse was originally designed in 1801 by Francis Johnson, who also designed the GPO on O'Connell St. Dublin. The Market Cross of Kells, which dates from the 9th century and depicts scenes from the Old and New Testaments, can be seen at the junction of the Navan / Dublin (N3) road and the Slane road.

Did you know ... The Kells Crosier, dating from the late 9th or 10th century, is in the British Museum, London. In 1850 it appeared without explanation in a solicitor's office in the English capital.

Contact Details:
Visitor / Heritage Information Centre,
Reception area - Kells Town Council,
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Loughcrew, with a concentration of around 30 passage tombs, is one of the most important prehistoric cemeteries in Ireland

The Loughcrew complex is a megalithic cemetery containing around 30 passage tombs and is situated around the summit of three hills near the town of Oldcastle, Co. Meath. Nearby are the restored 17th Century Loughcrew Gardens which also holds the key to the Loughcrew Cairns site.

Loughcrew is roughly contemporary with Newgrange (3200 BC). Neolithic communities built large communal tombs, or megaliths, for their dead. There are four main types of tombs, each being named after a particular and defining feature (court tombs, portal tombs, passage tombs and wedge tombs). The typical passage tomb is cruciform in plan with a long central passage leading to a main chamber, off which there are three smaller chambers. The dead were cremated and the remains placed in the chambers above the ground. The tombs were then covered in great mounds of earth and stones called 'cairns', though often these do not survive.

A distinguishing feature of Irish passage tombs is the presence of rock art – carved or picked designs on the internal or external stones of the tomb. The art is abstract in form with circles, spirals, arcs, lozenges, triangles, zigzags and flower motifs being common. Certain symbols seem to have been favoured at particular tombs or cemeteries; spirals at Newgrange, concentric rectangles at Knowth and rayed circles at Loughcrew.

One of the best-preserved and most accessible tombs at Loughcrew, known as Cairn T, appears to be the central tomb of the whole complex. It faces the rising sun at the vernal (March) and autumnal (September) equinoxes which shines through the passage to illuminate symbols carved onto the back wall of the chamber. This tomb is reputed to be the resting place of Ollamh Fodhla, a legendary king of Ireland.

Did you know ... Slieve na Callaigh gets its name from the Irish Sliabh na Callaí, meaning 'Hill of the Witch' or 'Hag's Hill'.

Contact Details for Loughcrew Cairns:
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W: www.heritageireland.ie

Contact Details for Loughcrew Gardens & Adventure Course:
Loughcrew, Oldcastle, Co Meath
T: + 353 (0) 49 854 1356
E: info@loughcrew.com
W: www.loughcrew.com

Loughcrew Gardens are generally open March to October every year. The site is full of history, beauty, fantasy, and atmosphere making the Gardens a magical experience. The ancient Yew Walk, medieval moote and St. Oliver Plunkett's family church create a spirit of history with a 'grotesque' grotto with tortured pillars guarding a rockery of fantasy tree fairy sculptures.

With something for all the family, the hidden story of Alice In Wonderland and a small playground keep the younger visitors happy, while the insect walk with giant bugs and hidden reptiles appeals to the older children. The canal, ponds, the water mill and cascades all create a stunning atmosphere.

Situated in the heart of the Boyne Valley, Navan is an ideal base from which to explore the nearby attractions of Brú ná Bóinne, the Hill of Tara, and the historic towns of Kells and Trim

The burgeoning town of Navan lies at the confluence of the rivers Boyne and Blackwater. It is the county town, or administrative capital, of Co. Meath. The name Navan has long confused etymologists. It is thought that it may take its name from the Irish An Uaimh, meaning 'the cave' or perhaps from Nuachongbhail, meaning 'new habitation'.

Navan lies at the confluence of the rivers Boyne and Blackwater which has long been a site of strategic importance. A burial site close to where the two rivers meet has been identified as Dún Dubhchomair, where a Viking fleet is reputed to have landed. The Anglo-Normans also recognised the importance of this location and around 1185 Joselyn de Angulo converted a nearby glacial mound into a motte and bailey castle. Legend tells that this mound was the burial site of Odhbha, the wife of Éremón, a Milesian invader from Spain (see Myths & Legends, p. 38). In the later medieval period Navan was a walled town and, like Trim, was an outpost of The Pale.

The ruins of Athlumney Castle facing Navan across the Boyne are located a short distance from the town. It consists of two distinct buildings; an original tower house built in the 15th century and a Tudor mansion built around 1600. The house was burned by the Maguire's in 1649 rather than allow Oliver Cromwell shelter within its walls.

Navan is famous for being the birthplace of Francis Beaufort (1774 - 1857), who developed the Beaufort Scale of wind force. In 1805 Commander (later Admiral) Beaufort published a method of measuring the wind at sea based on the sails a frigate

Solstice Arts Centre

could safely hoist. The Beaufort Scale, as it came to be known, was adopted by the Royal Navy in 1838 when it became mandatory for all ship's log entries. The 13-point scale ranges from 0 (calm) to 12 (hurricane); with this scale also came descriptions of the state of the sea. From this standard, sailors were able to predict how ships would react in certain wind speeds.

Navan is also the childhood home of Pierce Brosnan, the fifth actor to play the acclaimed role as James Bond. Comedians Dylan Moran and Tommy Tiernan, and television personality Hector Ó hEochagáin also hail from the town.

Navan, offers a variety of quality accommodation, restaurants and bars, and is an ideal base for touring the Boyne Valley. There are enjoyable walks around the town, particularly along the Boyne River and canal at the Ramparts.

Did you know ... Navan is the only palindromic place in the Republic of Ireland, meaning that its name is spelled the same from left to right, or right to left. Europe's longest palindromic placename is Assamassa, Portugal and the shortest is Ee, Netherlands (Holland).

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Drogheda was an important Anglo-Norman settlement and one of the largest walled towns in Medieval Ireland

Drogheda derives its name from the Irish Droichead Átha meaning 'Bridge of the Ford'. It is the largest town in Co. Louth – Ireland's smallest county – which is named after Lugh, the great god of the Celts. Although the origins of the settlement are obscure, the town certainly owes its development to the coming of the Anglo-Normans.

Drogheda proper began as an Anglo-Norman port founded by Hugh de Lacy after whom the de Lacy Bridge in the town is named. Around 1180 as two settlements on opposite banks of the Boyne estuary, downstream from the ford from which it gets it name. Drogheda was granted its charter in 1194. The Anglo-Normans made Drogheda one of their primary strongholds, completing the town walls in the mid 13th century. The walls enclosed and fortified an area of 43 hectares, north and south of the Boyne, making it one of the largest walled towns in Medieval Ireland. Drogheda-in-Louth was the larger of the two towns with a walled area of 32 hectares. After years of conflict and rivalry, the two boroughs were conjoined as a single town in 1412, and in 1898 the southern portion of the town was transferred from Co. Meath to Co. Louth.

St. Laurence's Gate, which led to the Friary of St Laurence, is widely regarded as one of the finest of its kind in Europe. It consists of two lofty circular towers, connected together by a wall, in which there is an archway. It was originally known as the east gate but it was renamed in the 14th century because the street led to the Hospital of St. Laurence. Visitors can appreciate the spectacular dimensions of the medieval walls south of the gate at Featherbed Lane. Twice the walls and gates of Drogheda held strong against invasion, firstly when Edward Bruce attacked the town in 1317 and again in 1642 when Sir Phelim O'Neill attempted to take Drogheda.

In 1494 Parliament met at Drogheda and enacted the infamous Poynings' Law, (introduced by Lord Deputy Edward Poynings) which subjected the Irish Parliament to the control of the English king and council. Poynings' Law remained in force until 1801 when The Act of Union made it redundant. In 1649 Cromwell breached the walls and sacked the town, massacring 3,500 soldiers, civilians and clergy, and deporting captives as slaves to Barbados. Drogheda surrendered to King William after the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Millmount Tower & Museum and St. Peter's Church, housing the shrine of St Oliver Plunkett are also within the town.

Did you know ... Drogheda, having recently surpassed its near neighbour Dundalk, is the largest town in Ireland with just over 35,000 inhabitants (2006 Census). The Boyne Viaduct at Drogheda is Ireland's greatest example of Victorian industrial architecture. The bridge, which carries the Dublin-Belfast railway line, was opened in 1855.

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Myths & Legends

The Boyne Valley is central to many of Ireland's most famous and fantastic myths…

Boyne: Mythical Origins

The River Boyne derives its name from the legendary Celtic goddess Bóann (or Bóand). The story goes that there was once a magical well – the Well of Wisdom (Tobar Segais in Irish) – which belonged to Nechtain, King of Leinster and husband to the goddess Bóann. Nechtain was very protective of his magical well and no one but he and his three cup bearers were permitted to visit it. One day Bóann decided to visit the well and see for herself its wonders. Some say she walked around the well three times counter sun-wise, others say she merely peered into its magical depths. Whatever the case, the waters of the well rose up – blinding, mutilating and drowning the goddess – and then rushed seawards turning into a river. Though nothing remains of the mythical well, its waters remain in the form of the River Boyne, named after the drowned goddess Bóann.

The Milesians

According to Irish mythology a man by the name of Míl Espáine is the common ancestor of all of the Irish. The story goes that there was a tribe in the north of Spain known as the Milesians, or the Sons of Mil. They invaded Ireland, dispossessing the Tuatha Dé Danann, and divided Ireland into provinces: Ulster in the north, Munster in the south, Connacht in the west, Leinster in the east and, at the centre, Tara. According to tradition, Éremón mac Míled was the first Milesian king of all Ireland, and a contemporary of King David (biblical King of Israel, who ruled c. 1000 BC). He is the ancestor of the Úi Néill and the rulers of Leinster, Connacht and Airgiallia.

While in Spain, Éremón (son of Míl Espáine) married Odhbha, who bore him three sons. After a time he abandoned her in favour of another woman (Tea, who would later give her name to Tara). When Éremón invaded

Ireland, Odhbha followed him but died of grief soon after arriving on account of her husband's rejection. Her three children raised a mound in which to bury her. It is thought that Navan may take its name from the Irish word for cave (An Uaimh) – the cave within the mound in which Odhbha's remains have rested for the past three thousand years.

The Cattle-Raid of Cooley

The Cattle-Raid of Cooley (in Irish Táin Bó Cuailgne, pronounced – Tawn Bow Cool-in-ya), written more than 1,200 years ago, is Ireland's greatest legend and one of Europe's oldest epics. In this saga Queen Maeve of Connacht and her husband Ailill decide one night to compare their possessions. After much discussion, it becomes evident that Ailill owns a great white bull, Finnbennach, of which Maeve has no equal. There is only one bull in Ireland of equal to Finnbennach, the great brown bull of Cooley. Cooley is a peninsula in modern day Co. Louth. Maeve decides she must have the Brown Bull and so begins the story of the Táin. Maeve and her armies set off from the Royal Palace at Rathcroghan, Co. Roscommon (passing near modern-day Kells, Co. Meath) in pursuit of the Brown Bull. The only thing that stands in her way is Cúchulainn, the greatest of all Celtic heroes, who defends the Brown Bull and the lands of Ulster, as his fellow warriors lie asleep under a spell. The Boyne Valley is associated with many of the tales central episodes: Cúchulainn intercepted Maeve's army at the village of Crossakeel, Co. Meath to try to delay their march to Ulster.

The Salmon of Knowledge

The Salmon of Knowledge (in Irish, An Bradán Feasa) is a creature from the Fenian Cycle of Irish Mythology. It features in the narrative The Boyhood Deeds of Fionn, which recounts the early adventures of the legendary Irish hero Fionn mac Cumhaill.

According to Irish mythology the first thing to ever come into creation was a hazel tree, and in its branches was contained all the knowledge of the universe. This hazel tree flourished over the Well of Wisdom (Tobar Segais) within which lived a great speckled salmon. The story goes that the salmon ate the hazel nuts which on occasion fell into the well, thus acquiring all the wisdom of the universe. It was foretold that the first person to catch and eat the salmon would gain this knowledge and that a man by the name of Fionn would be the one to do so. Nonetheless, many tried and failed, until a poet named Finnegas having spent seven years fishing the Boyne caught it. He is believed to have caught the salmon at Féc's Pool (Linn Féic), known as the 'Pool of the Boyne', near Slane, Co. Meath.

Finnegas instructed his apprentice, a young boy named Deimne Maol, to prepare it for him. Deimne burned his thumb bursting a blister on the cooking salmon. Instinctively he put his thumb into his mouth to ease the pain and in an instant he acquired all its knowledge. When Deimne brought the cooked meal to Finnegas, his master saw something in the boy's eyes that had not been there before. When asked by Finnegas, Deimne denied that he had eaten of the fish. When pressed, he admitted his accidental taste. What the old poet hadn't known was that Deimne had another name, given to him by his mother – Fionn, meaning her fair-haired one. It was this incredible knowledge and wisdom gained from the Salmon of Knowledge that allowed Fionn mac Cumhaill to become the leader of the Fianna, the famed heroes of Irish myth. He was killed at Áth Brea or 'Ford of Brea' on the Boyne.

The Coming of Christianity

According to Irish mythology the Fir Bolgs were one of the races that inhabited Ireland before the Milesians, from whom the Irish are descended. The Hill of Slane is said to be a burial mound for their leader, King Sláine, and it was from him the hill is named.

However, the Hill of Slane is most closely associated with St Patrick. According to tradition, in 433, as the druids prepared

to celebrate the Feast of Tara, St. Patrick celebrating Easter lit the Paschal Fire in direct defiance of the pagan ritual. The fire was observed from the Hill of Tara and the druids told King Laoghaire that unless it was extinguished that same night, it would never be put out. The king was outraged, but every time he and his druids challenged St. Patrick with their magic they were defeated. Eventually, and reluctantly, the king and his followers converted to Christianity. St. Erc, who was the only person to pay due homage to St. Patrick during the stand-off, founded a monastery on the Hill of Slane.

The Cattle-Raid of Cooley – Illustrations courtesy of www.celticcolor.com
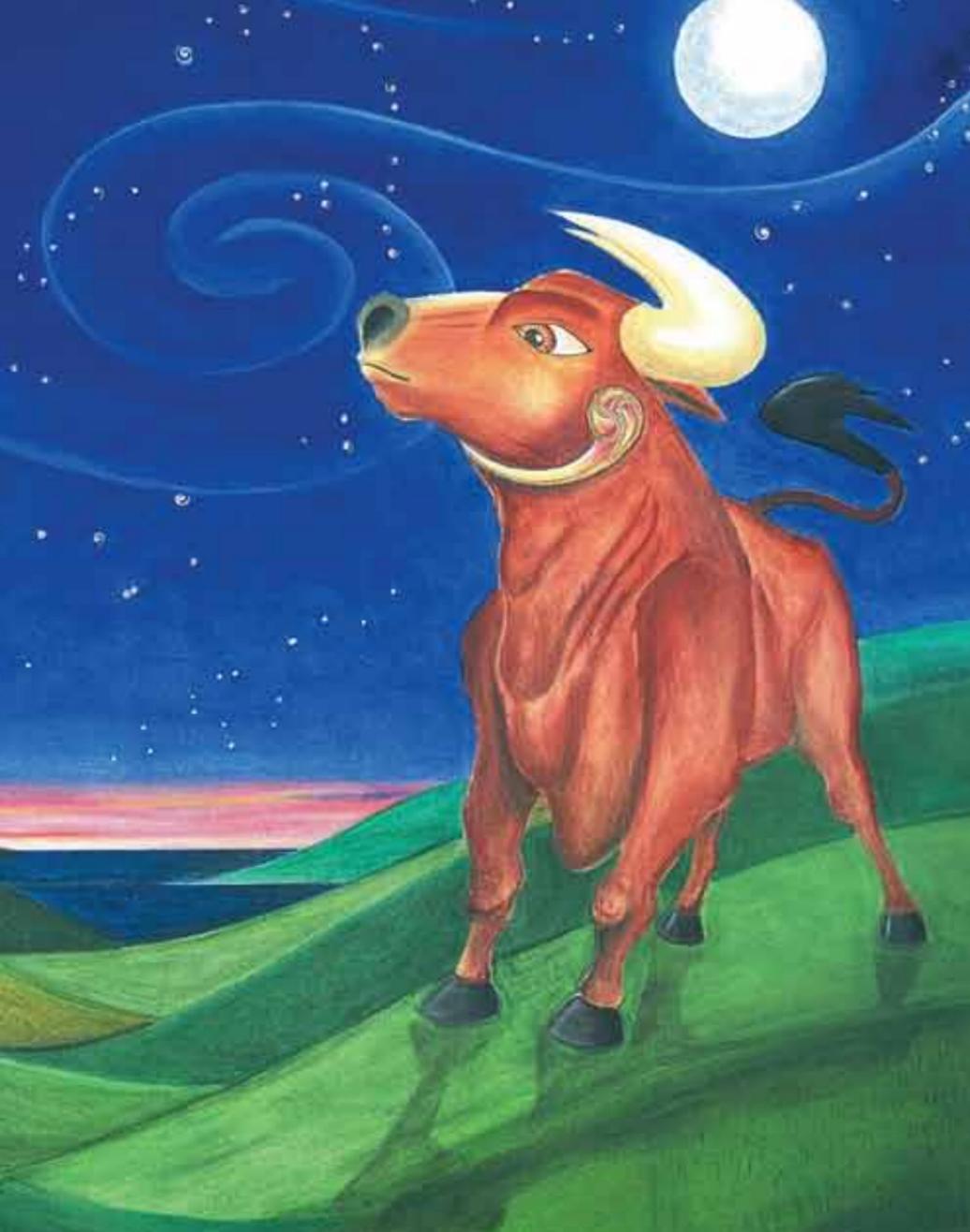
Getting to the Boyne Valley is very direct – the M1 from Dublin Airport will take you to the heart of it in 30 minutes and from Belfast City in just over one hour – once you arrive you can take things at your own pace, by exploring the back roads of this historic valley – discover for yourself its quaint villages & cosy pubs and mingle with the locals who can share their stories with you...

Suggested Itinerary

M Morning **L** Lunch **A** Afternoon **D** Dinner

Distance Covered in Kilometres: 44 km

M After a hearty Irish breakfast at your chosen accommodation, explore the streets of Drogheda (p. 38), with a guided tour of this historic walled town. You will discover the impact that historical figures such as Oliver Cromwell and St. Oliver Plunkett had on this town and visit many sites of interest. Hear too some little-known facts from your knowledgeable tour guide. For instance, did you know that a horse named "Drogheda" won the famous Aintree Grand National in 1898! A visit to the St. Peter's Church (p.10) in Drogheda should be an essential aspect of your visit to the town. Indeed it may well be included if you take a Guided Tour. Complete your tour with a visit to Millmount Museum & Martello Tower (p. 8) and enjoy spectacular views of the town and the River Boyne estuary.

L Enjoy a leisurely lunch at one of the many cafes and restaurants in Drogheda before moving on to your next destination on this itinerary.

A Leave Drogheda and travel north about 6 kilometres to visit Monasterboice Round Tower and Muredach's High Cross (p.18). Just a short distance away visit Mellifont Abbey (p.16). In May 2008, a new interpretive centre opened at the site of the seminal Battle of the Boyne (p.14). Here you can learn about this famous battle in the history of Ireland and Europe. Take a stroll along the banks of the River Boyne and you may even catch a glimpse of the famous Salmon of Knowledge!! (p. 42). On your return to Drogheda a visit to 17th Century Beaulieu House and Gardens (p.12) on the north bank of the River Boyne is highly recommended.

D After your busy day why not relax with dinner at a restaurant in Drogheda or in the surrounding area. If you still have some energy left there is sure to be a traditional Irish music session going on in Drogheda – a perfect end to your day in the Boyne Valley!!

Suggested Itinerary 2

M Morning   **L** Lunch   **A** Afternoon   **D** Dinner

Distance Covered in Kilometres: 51 km

M Starting off in the picturesque village of Slane visit the famous Hill of Slane and walk in the footsteps of St. Patrick himself, Ireland's patron saint, where he challenged the Pagan King of Ireland by lighting a fire to signal the arrival of Christianity in Ireland. Then follow in another famous Irish man's footsteps, Bono and U2, and visit Slane Castle (p. 22), home to so many world famous rock concerts, for a guided tour. Continue on to the Brú na Bóinne Interpretive Centre (p. 24) and visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Newgrange. This will be an experience that you will remember long after your visit to the Boyne Valley is over. On route to Navan stop off at the Francis Ledwidge Museum for visit.

L Set off from Slane to Navan town (p. 36), the County town of Meath. Spend a while strolling along the banks of the Boyne at the Ramparts in Navan and enjoy information on the local flora and fauna displayed along the walk. Check out the Solstice Arts Centre in the centre of the town for details of what's on during your stay.

A After lunch set out for the Hill of Tara (p. 26) seat of the ancient High Kings of Ireland. Travelling onwards stay in Trim for the night. Explore this medieval town and the banks of the Boyne by following the signposted walking routes.

D For Dinner check out some of the restaurants in the town. If you are up to it there is sure to be some live traditional music available in the Slane or Navan areas and who knows you might even end up joining in and singing too!!

Suggested Itinerary 3

M Morning **L** Lunch **A** Afternoon **D** Dinner

Distance Covered in Kilometres: 95 km

M No visit to Trim would be complete without visiting the imposing Trim Castle. Learn about the history of this magnificent Anglo-Norman castle and enjoy the views from the top which look out over this fertile countryside. Close to the Castle entrance the Trim Visitor Centre should be your next visit before leaving Trim. Find out more about Dunsany Castle and many other local attractions.

Set off mid morning to the heritage town of Kells (p. 32) where part of the famous Book of Kells was written. Do take time to visit the round tower, Celtic crosses, St. Columb's house and the Hill of Lloyd.

L For lunch do visit one of the restaurants or cafes in Kells.

A In the afternoon take a leisurely drive from Kells along the Athboy road and stop off at Causey Farm (check opening hours) south of Kells. This is a working farm and children will be especially interested. Continue on to the Hill of Ward, where the great Celtic festival of Halloween was first celebrated. You can then continue on your journey to the Loughcrew Cairns (p. 34) near Oldcastle. While in the Loughcrew area do make sure to visit the Loughcrew Gardens & Adventure Course (p. 34)

D Choose from restaurants in Kells for Dinner.

Your Road Map

See detailed touring route map inserted at the back of this brochure

Take your car and explore the Boyne Valley in your own time and space.

There is a driving route that will take you all around the Valley. This route brings you to the main towns and villages and to the sites all mentioned in this brochure. Also there are many sites of historic interest along the way where you can stop and explore in your own time. These are as follows (towns are in bold text):

– Bru na Boinne Visitor Centre
  (Newgrange Monument)
– Duleek Church & Crosses
– Battle of the Boyne Site
– **Drogheda**
– Millmount Museum &
  Martello Tower
– Beaulieu House & Gardens
– Monasterboice Round
  Tower & High Crosses
– Old Mellifont Abbey
– Townley Hall
– Dowth
– Ledwidge Museum
– **Slane**
– Hill of Slane
– Slane Castle

– Donaghmore
– **Navan**
– Donaghpatrick
– **Kells**
– Kells Round Tower
– Tower of Lloyd
– Patrickstown
– **Oldcastle**
– Loughcrew Cairns
– Loughcrew
– **Athboy**
– **Trim**
– Trim Castle
– Bective Abbey
– Hill of Tara
– Ardmulchan Church

Monasterboice

Millmount Museum and Martello Tower

Beaulieu House

St. Peter's Church

Drogheda

Collon

Old Mellifont Abbey

Tullyallen

R132

Hill of Slane

Townley Hall

Francis Ledwidge Museum

Slane Castle

Slane

N51

Donaghpatrick Church

Donaghpatrick

Donaghmore Round Tower

R163

Ardmulchan Church

Brú na Boinne
Newgrange, Knowth & Dowth

Donore

Duleek Church & Crosses

Battle of the Boyne

Duleek

Navan

N51

N3

M3

River Boyne

Bective Abbey

Trim Castle

Hill of Tara

Bective

Tara

Killmessan

Dunsany

Trim

River Boyne

Killeen Castle
Home of the Solheim Cup 2011

M3

Ardee

N33

M1

M2

N52

N3

M1

M2

N2

BOYNE VALLEY

wander through time

For further information please contact:
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