

the blackstairs and barrow valley



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Welcome to the Blackstairs and Barrow Valley in County Carlow where you'll be inspired by the beauty and captivated by what the surrounding countryside, towns, villages and people have to offer.

The secret to discovering the true beauty of the Blackstairs and Barrow Valley is to spend time exploring its hidden treasures and getting to know the local people. Each twist and turn of the road will reveal a new delight; beautiful unspoiled towns and villages, breath-taking scenery, interesting rock formations, heather clad hills, grand country homes and ancient heritage sites.

Our terrain is a rich tapestry woven with many coloured threads; fashioned by the forces of nature,

megalithic monuments left by our ancestors and the colourful patchwork of carefully managed farmlands and forests.

Select your own pace, a mountain hike, canoeing along the river or simply exploring and enjoying the unhurried pace of life amongst communities who are eager to share their paradise with you.

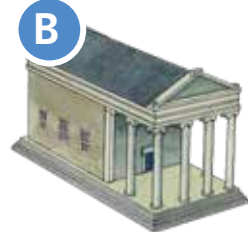
Come encounter our haven, the beautiful Blackstairs and Barrow Valley in Ireland's Ancient East.

A**The Adelaide Memorial Church, Myshall, Co. Carlow.**

GPS: 52.685852, -6.780344

Standing in beautifully maintained grounds and accessed by a yew-lined drive this exquisite church, dating from 1912, was built by John Duguid to honour his wife, Adelaide, and

daughter, Constance, following their tragic deaths. Designed by George Coppinger Ashlin, as a miniature version of the famous Salisbury Cathedral in Wiltshire, England, the building features some stunning interiors including a marble floor inspired by St. Mark's in Venice, Italy, and stained glass windows depicting scenes of the local countryside. The key is held locally by Mrs. Bridie Daly (white bungalow opposite church grounds t: 059 915 7671 – please phone in advance or alternatively contact John Kelly t: 059 9157 584 or 087 929 3661).

B**Bagenalstown Courthouse, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow.**

GPS: 52.702061, -6.958463

Walter Bagenal founded the town of Bagenalstown and had visions of mirroring the city of Versailles. After

he had made an impressive start in the 1700s by building this magnificent square courthouse, his efforts became frustrated due to the re-routing of the coach road away from the town. He left more than enough however, for visitors to enjoy with a series of handsome stone public buildings.

C**Borris House, Borris, Co. Carlow.**

GPS: 52.598644, -6.926618

The ancestral home of the McMorrough Kavanaghs, High Kings of Leinster; Borris House is one of the most beautiful and

historic Irish country houses. There are many things to admire on the house tour from the beauty of the Stapleton ceilings to the unique Chapel of St. Moling, as well as a room by room description of the exceptional architecture, antique furniture, porcelain and paintings on display. Open on selected days from May to September. Check www.borrishouse.com for details.

D**Borris Viaduct Walk, Borris, Co. Carlow.**

GPS: 52.596988, -6.916227

Arthur Mc Morrough Kavanagh instigated the

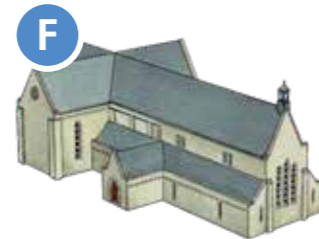
building of the graceful 16-arch viaduct, in Borris village. The railway line, which carried the Great Southern and Western Railway Line between Bagenalstown and Palace East in County Wexford, was opened in 1858 and was in use until 1947. The Borris Viaduct Walk offers a leisurely stroll along the spectacular sixteen arch viaduct with beautiful views to the Blackstairs Mountains and Mount Leinster.

E**Clashganny Viewing Point, Clashganny, Co. Carlow.**

GPS: 52.558383, -6.916525

Panoramic view of Clashganny Lock, the River Barrow and

the surrounding countryside. The lock gates enable boats and canoes to navigate the waters of Ireland's second longest river. Two looped walks through the forest and along the towpath are accessible from the viewing point or from the riverside car park. The Clashganny Lock Loop is 3.5km and the Clashganny Forest Looped Walk is 6km long.

F**Duiske Abbey, Graiguenamanagh, Co. Kilkenny.**

GPS: 52.541436, -6.954730

Duiske Abbey was founded in 1204 by William Marshal who

became Lord of Leinster following his marriage to Strongbow's daughter Aoife de Clare. Situated in the heart of Graiguenamanagh the Abbey has been changed many times over the years but remains one of Ireland's finest Cistercian monasteries.

G**Huntington Castle & Gardens, Clonegal, Co. Carlow.**

GPS: 52.690404, -6.649131

Originally built in 1625 as a garrison, this historic house was converted and developed into a

unique and interesting home for the Esmonde family. In the 1970s the former dungeons were converted into a temple to the Egyptian Goddess Isis. Today, the Durdin Robertson family open their home and extensive gardens to visitors and offer guided tours explaining its history from the 17th century to the present day. The extensive gardens feature impressive formal plantings and layouts including an Italian style 'Parterre', a French lime avenue and a world famous yew walk. Open May to September, 2.00pm–6.00pm daily.

H**Herb Gardens at Kilgraney House, Kilgraney, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow.**

GPS: 52.653681, -6.957602

The herb gardens at Kilgraney look down on the very heart of the Barrow Valley and demonstrate nature's infinite creativity. Consisting of a series of interconnecting gardens and courtyards planted with herbs, fruits and vegetables so visitors can admire the foliage, colours and breathe in their wonderful fragrant notes. You'll find a large enclosed kitchen garden or potager, a medicinal herb courtyard, a medieval monastic herb garden, a garden of aromatic and fragrant herbs, orchards, lawns and woodlands. For opening dates and times visit www.kilgraneyhouse.com.

I**Ecclesiastical Ruins, St. Mullins, Co. Carlow.**

GPS: 52.489361, -6.928844

This important monastery was founded by St. Moling in the 7th century and had close links with ecclesiastical centres

such as Ferns in Co. Wexford and Glendalough in Co. Wicklow. It has been a place of pilgrimage since the earliest of times and St. Moling's Well is still venerated for its powers of healing. The ecclesiastical ruins are situated in the back of the graveyard and they include five churches and the remains of a round tower. The remains of a medieval motte and bailey stand close by.

J**Walsh Whiskey Distillery, Royal Oak, Co. Carlow.**

GPS: 52.7032174, -6.9808888

Walsh Whiskey at Royal Oak is a world-class distillery producing hand-crafted Irish whiskeys. It is situated on an

18th century estate set deep in the heart of barley-growing country on the banks of the River Barrow. Visitors can experience the ancient craft of distilling in a fully guided, multi-sensory tour of one of Ireland's largest operational whiskey distilleries, and see first-hand how all three styles of Irish whiskey, pot still, malt and grain, are created under one roof. For opening times see www.walshwhiskey.com.

LOCAL TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Borris is a Georgian estate village, full of charm and heritage nestling in the fertile River Barrow valley and is an ideal gateway for exploring nearby Blackstairs Mountains. On one side of the steeply rising main street, houses, mostly built of local granite, have retained an authentic character with many original shop fronts and facades. On the South side of the street you'll find the impressive gate of Borris House; home to the McMorrough Kavanagh family, descendants of the Kings of Leinster.

Bundlody sits in lush farmland where the Slaney and Clody rivers meet in the foothills of the Blackstairs Mountains. A beautiful mall with a central stream and two rows of lime trees create a notable main street that is lined with quaint shops, cafés, traditional pubs and restaurants.

Clonegal or 'Cluain na nGall', which translates as 'Meadow of the Stranger' in English, is set in a valley between the Blackstairs and Wicklow Mountains. Straddling the meeting place of the rivers Slaney and Derry where the counties of Carlow, Wicklow and Wexford meet, the village is a key access point to the Wicklow Way walking route. The entrance to Huntington Castle and gardens is just off the main street.

Kildavin is a small picturesque village nestled beneath the Blackstairs with the River Slaney running through it. The old monastic Cranavane Well, on the outskirts of the village, dates back to pre-Christian times. Kildavin marks the start of the South Leinster Way walking route.

Myshall and its surrounding area enjoys a long religious history. St. Finian and St. Columbanus were both born in the village. The village contains the remains of a Romanesque church that St. Finian founded in the 6th century and the more recent Adelaide Memorial Church dating from 1912.

Fenagh is an estate village known for its architectural design and beautiful granite buildings. One of the most famous families associated with the area was the Lecky Watson's, a Quaker family, who first settled here in the early 18th century. Descendants of the family recorded the first written rules for playing polo. Another member of the family hunted down the last recorded wolf in Ireland on the slopes of Mount Leinster.

Bagenalstown also known as Muine Bheag, is sited on a pleasant reach of the River Barrow and derives its name from Walter Bagenal, who founded the town in the 18th century. Bagenalstown has many architectural gems including a neo-classical train station and courthouse and a legacy of mill buildings, grain-stores and malting houses that date from the industrial revolution. There are many water-based activities along the tree-lined riverbank. Bagenalstown is also home to the world famous O'Hara's beer, where brewery tours can be arranged by prior appointment, visit www.carlowbrewing.com.

St. Mullins is one of the country's most significant archaeological sites, standing in importance with Glendalough and Clonmacnoise. The area gets its name from St. Moling (614 – 696 AD). St. Mullins has architectural examples from many significant periods in Irish history – an early Christian monastic settlement, a Norman Motte and Bailey, a large graveyard with many insurgents from the 1798 Rebellion and 19th century flour and woollen mills along the River Barrow.

Ballymurphy is a hillside village, resting on the slopes of the Blackstairs Mountains close to the picturesque Sculloge Gap. The community spirit of this village is evident in the beautiful display of flowers throughout the summer.

Leighlinbridge is home to the Black Castle, one of Ireland's earliest Norman castles built in 1181. The focal point of Leighlinbridge is its wonderful nine arch bridge across the River Barrow, built in 1320. It is said to be one of the oldest functioning bridges in Europe and its structure is softened by wild valerian blooms during the summer months.

Rathanna is a rural gem set at the foot of Mount Leinster, offering stunning views of the Blackstairs Mountains and the lush, green countryside synonymous with Ireland's Ancient East.

Tinnahinch, on the Carlow side of the River Barrow, and Graiguenamanagh on the Kilkenny side, are popular boating centres whose character reflects a bygone time when the area was an important focal point for commercial traffic on the river. Both towns are connected by a beautiful bridge, constructed in 1767 when the canal system was being built. A beautiful 8km walk along the River Barrow can be enjoyed from here to the ecclesiastical ruins of St. Mullins.

