

Ireland's Ancient East update 2 April 2020

'The Irish Racehorse Experience' at the Irish National Stud, Co Kildare



Due to open in **May 2020**, this multi-lingual highly interactive 'Irish Racehorse Experience,' located on a wide-open greenfield site, will take the visitor from the birth to the retirement of a racehorse.

Upon entry, the visitor will be given a 'horse box' that will also entitle them to an opportunity of 'owning' a racehorse! After learning about foaling, the early years and the history of 'The Thoroughbred,' the visitor will enter an interactive auction where they can purchase an unbroken yearling.

Through a series of beautifully appointed rooms, the visitor will learn about training, racecourses, jockeys and the anatomy and physiology of these magnificent athletes.

Ultimately, the visitor and their chosen racehorse will end up at the race day to experience the fashion, betting and vigorous commentary style that create the dynamic atmosphere that is renowned at Irish race meetings. Through a simulator, visitors even get to sit on their racehorse to find out how their investments work out in a race!

The experience concludes with the Living Legend room, which has large windows overlooking the elite, retired horses as they graze in the paddock. Not only will this room explain life after racing, but also the diaspora of all the famous horses and people around the world.

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Small Grant Projects New Visitors Experiences:



Legends of Kildare @ Kildare Town Heritage Centre

The '**Legends of Kildare**' is a new state-of-the-art immersive 3D experience transporting visitors back in time to discover the rich heritage and mythology associated with Kildare. The stories of St. Brigid and mythological legend Fionn mac Cumhaill are brought to life through virtual reality as well as the history of Kildare's medieval sites including St. Brigid's Cathedral and Round Tower and the ancient Fire Temple. Kildare's horse racing heritage is showcased as part of this new experience. This new 3D experience is available in French, German and Chinese. www.kildareheritage.com



The Gates of Hell @ Wicklow Historic Gaol

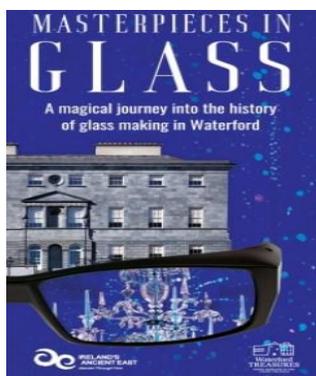
Step in to the past and experience the daily life of this Victorian Prison in the 1700's and a grim three-dimensional world of corruption, rebellion and dark dungeons. The *Gates of Hell* is a new fully immersive virtual reality experience transporting visitors, through the eyes of Gaol inmates to the time of the 1798 Rebellion, the famine era and the War of Independence. Some of Gaol's most notorious prisoners and Haunted Gaol's ghosts will feature. This new experience is available in French and Spanish.

Open daily 10.30am -16.30pm (11am-15.30pm Dec/Jan); www.wicklowshistoricgaol.com



3 Lives, 3 Deaths, One Life Unlived @ Medieval Mile Museum, Kilkenny

Concealed for centuries, 22 skeletal remains were discovered four summers ago during excavations. The fascinating story of the incredibly tough lives of three women who lived in medieval Kilkenny between 1320 and 1640 and their daily struggles is told in this new permanent exhibition. Explore the lives of a woman in her forties, aged beyond her years; a teenage girl whose short life was written on her bones and an adolescent who suffered malnutrition and the story of a deceased infant, discovered alongside the female remains. This new exhibition is available in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian. www.medievalmilemuseum.ie



Masterpieces in Glass – Bishops Palace, Waterford City

A new guided tour begins from the 1800s with Susannah Penrose to guide you through the beautiful Georgian Bishop's Palace with its exquisite collection of Irish 18th century furniture, paintings, porcelain, mirrors, silver and old Waterford glassware. This new 4D experience brings to life the history of glassmaking in Waterford, using augmented reality to enable visitors to explore remarkable rare objects bringing the user through three different centuries of glass-making in Waterford. The experience is available in French and Mandarin.

Costumed tours run every 30 mins

www.waterfordtreasures.com/bishops-palace



The Lismore Castle Experience @ Lismore Heritage Centre, Co Waterford

The new 3D experience at Lismore Heritage Centre is an immersive tour inside the private home of Lord and Lady Burlington at Lismore Castle. Through a virtual reality headset, be transported into the world of Lismore Castle's past where you will see the characters who shaped the site and town including Fred Astaire, Sir Walter Raleigh and John F Kennedy. Discover *The Lismore Crozier*, unearthed in a blocked-up doorway of Lismore Castle and uncover the stories of other objects found in the castle. The experience is available in English, French & German. www.discoverlismore.com



Lafcadio Hearn Japanese Gardens, Tramore Co Waterford

The new and enhanced visitor experiences at the Lafcadio Hearn Japanese Gardens take visitors on a journey through the amazing life of writer Patrick Lafcadio Hearn, an iconic literary figure in Japan. Discover the magic and mystery of the Orient through a shadow casted image of the centuries old Japanese Tea Ceremony in the authentic new Japanese Tea House. The new self-guided audio tour available in five languages, guides visitors through each of the ten garden areas. Audio Guides in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Polish & Japanese.

<http://lafcadiohearngardens.com/>



Tipperary Museum of Hidden Histories – Clonmel, Co Tipperary

This new state-of-the-art interactive visitor experience brings Tipperary’s rich hidden history vividly to life through memorable historic characters and amazing stories. The journey through the museum crosses seven distinct sections and takes a new look at history through the eyes of characters from our past. With over 25,000 artefacts it is one of the largest museum collections in Ireland. The museum caters for international visitors with audio guides in six languages; English, Irish, French, Spanish, German, Italian.

www.hiddenhistory.ie



Birr Castle, Gardens & Science Centre, Co Offaly

The astounding scientific history of Birr Castle and the story of the Parsons family who lived there since 1620 is brought to life in new interactive exhibitions. Marvel at the wonders of early astronomical instruments and photographic equipment from the middle and late 1800s, used by the Third and Fourth Earls and Mary, Countess of Rosse. See the electrical and engineering equipment originally belonging to Charles Parsons, inventor of the steam powered turbine and used in his experiments. The Science Centre welcome video is available in German and Mandarin. www.birrcastle.com



The Viking Voyage at Tayto Park, Co Meath

The Viking Voyage is a brand-new interactive and sensory experience at Ireland’s largest water flume attraction. This immersive queuing experience transports you back in time to 1014AD with the rallying calls of Viking Odin to join the Viking raiders and beat the mighty Irish clans. Put your Viking skills to the test – including speed and agility - to make it onto the long ships and have the opportunity to feast like a Viking at the Halls of Valhalla before making your way onto the Viking Voyage boat.

www.taytopark.ie/theme-park/viking-voyage-at-the-park

New Experiences to launch in 2020

- Ducketts Grove Walled Garden, Co Carlow
- Fota House & Gardens, Co Cork
- Old Cork Waterworks, Cork City
- Cork Public Museum, Cork City
- The Patrick Kavanagh Visitor Centre, Co Monaghan
- Belvedere House, Gardens & Parklands, Co Westmeath
- Irish National Heritage Park, Wexford

OPW PARTNERSHIP New & Improved Visitors Experiences:



1. **Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre, Co Meath** www.heritageireland.ie/en/midlands-eastcoast/brunaboinnevisitorcentre/

Following an extensive upgrade to the visitor centre, a new immersive visitor experience at Brú na Bóinne showcases the archaeological and historical heritage of Brú na Bóinne in a way that is evocative, absorbing and entertaining for visitors. The visitor centre interprets the Neolithic monuments of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. The extensive exhibition includes a full-scale replica of the chamber at Newgrange as well as a full model of one of the smaller tombs at Knowth. New tour options available for visiting Newgrange & Knowth www.heritageireland.ie/en/midlands-eastcoast/brunaboinnevisitorcentre/

New Experiences: CORK – KILKENNY – LAOIS - TIPPERARY WATERFORD

- 1. Statio Bene – Maritime Exhibition in Crawford Art Gallery** - Cork has for centuries benefited from the natural maritime haven that is its harbour, the largest in the northern hemisphere. Addressing the maritime traditions of the south of Ireland, STATIO BENE considers the concept of a 'safe harbour' as a social, cultural, naval, and political anchorage. This visual art exhibition is inspired by Cork's motto – Statio Bene Fide Carinis (a safe harbour for ships) – and is fittingly presented in the Long Room of the city's old Custom House (Crawford Art Gallery). It also coincides with the 300th anniversary of the world's oldest established yacht club: Royal Cork Yacht Club. (details below)

From 20th March 2020 COVID19 Gallery is currently closed <https://crawfordartgallery.ie/>

- 2. Crawford Art Gallery** will have a **Rembrandt** on display 22nd May – 23 Aug in 2020

KLM have agreed a promotion partnership with the gallery. [This is the first time to have a Rembrandt in Ireland.](#)

Rembrandt in Print presents 50 of the finest works from the Ashmolean's world-class collection of over 200 etchings and drypoints by Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669).

Widely hailed as the greatest painter of the Dutch Golden Age, Rembrandt was also one of the most innovative and experimental printmakers of the seventeenth century. This internationally touring exhibition will present Rembrandt in Cork as a unique Irish experience as an unrivalled storyteller through a selection of fifty outstanding prints ranging from 1630 until the late 1650s. These works demonstrate Rembrandt's inventive techniques and extraordinary skills. They are displayed together for the first time. This exhibition is in partnership with the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

<https://crawfordartgallery.ie/>

- 3. Castleyard Walking Tour @ Kilkenny Design Centre**

A new 50-minute walking trail experience where visitors will hear the story and the 50-year history that makes Kilkenny the centre of craft and design excellence. Taking place every Monday-Saturday @4.30pm* until September. Alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverage served at end of the tour and visitors receive a discount card to use in Kilkenny Design shops and restaurants. Pre-booking is advised. Priced at €10pp, min of 2 with a max of 15 per group. *additional times of 5.30pm & 6.30pm available to Tour Operator Groups. <https://kilkennydesign.com/> www.facebook.com/KilkennyDesignCentre/

- 4. Medieval Mile Trail, Kilkenny City**

Discover the stories of Kilkenny's Tudor merchants along the streets and laneways of Ireland's Medieval Mile. This new 45-minute walking tour experience of Kilkenny shares the tales of the wealthy merchant families who once lived in Ireland's medieval capital. Tours depart at 2pm & 4pm each Saturday to

Tuesday from the Medieval Mile Museum. Costs €10pp. Trail and Museum Tour takes 1.5hrs and costs €18pp www.medievalmilmuseum.ie/

5. **Donaghmore Famine Workhouse Museum, Portlaoise, Co Laois**

A new interactive app to deliver a more engaging experience at the workhouse museum. A camera is integrated in the app to let the artefacts be scanned and then discover what the artefact is along with detailed description, images, videos and audios. Some of the artefacts have 3D models which will show the artefacts in action. <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/donaghmore-museum/id1476370999>

FYI: They've also been chosen as the rural test site for the National Broadband Plan so the Wi-Fi is excellent for using the app. <http://donaghmoremuseum.ie/>

6. **Coolmore Tours, Fethard Horse Country Experience, Co Tipperary**

Combine a walking tour of Coolmore Stud this summer when you visit Fethard Horse Country Experience in the medieval town of Fethard. The interactive exhibitions explore the rich culture, heritage and history of the region. On the tour of Coolmore Stud you will see first-hand the distinctive relationship this region shares between its people, the land and the horse. Advance booking is required. www.fhcexperience.ie

New Activities: WICKLOW

1. **Splash Valley Aqua Park, at Hidden Valley Holiday Park in Rathdrum, Co Wicklow**

Splash Valley Aqua Park is Ireland's Newest & Largest Aqua Park in Ireland, with over 30 obstacles and 1,800 square metres to conquer! Splash Valley is open to both campers and day-visitors, with hour-long slots. For more see <https://www.irelandholidaypark.com/splashvalley-mobile/>

2. **Belmont Demesne, Greystones, Co Wicklow**

New outdoor adventure offering bike and walking trails for all levels within the Belmont estate. The **Belmont Bike Farm** has 15 kms of fantastic trails that cover a diverse range of natural routes, aimed at bike enthusiasts of all ages and levels. **Fatbike Adventures** are now based at Belmont Estate. Offering guided tour experiences of the breath-taking scenery along beach, forest and mountains settings. With 42 fatbikes (regular and electric) available. **Bak'd at Arthur's Barn** is a brand new Café on site, serving locally roasted coffee, wood-fired sourdough pizza made fresh to order.... Bak'd at Arthur's Barn is a hidden gem with a little bit of history too. Enjoy the freshest food in the original Roman Barn from the set of the legendary film King Arthur. Located in the Walled Garden, with awesome views of Little Sugar Loaf and loads of outdoor green space for the little ones to explore. <http://belmontdemesne.ie/>

Accommodation: Recent approvals: Carlow - Kilkenny - Wexford

- **The Clink Boutique Hotel, Carlow** – Hotel.

Carlow's only Boutique Hotel opened its doors in June 2017, with inspiration drawn from San Fran to Shoreditch and everywhere cool in between. The Clink offers a unique experience like no other. 18 rooms www.theclinkboutiquehotel.com/

- **Avalon House Hotel, Castlecomer, Co Kilkenny** – Hotel 4 Star

Located in the heart of Castlecomer and described as a home away from home, this 30 bedroom boutique hotel is ideal for solo guest to groups. The hotel was awarded the Best Irish Breakfast in a 4 Star Hotel at this year's Irish Breakfast Awards as part of the Georgina Campbell Awards.

www.avalonhousehotel.ie/en/

- **Kilmore Quay Camping and Holiday Park, Co Wexford.** FI welcome Standard

www.kilmorequaycampsite.ie/ Kilmore Quay Holiday Park is nestled in the heart of Kilmore Quay Fishing Village and welcomes caravans, Motorhomes/campers and camping tents to our newly developed and modern site.

Recent refurbishments: Cavan – Wicklow



Cabra Castle Hotel, Co Cavan www.cabracastle.com/

- In February 2019, Cabra Castle completed the final phase of a €6m redevelopment project which includes the refurbishment of its 105 bedrooms. The extension of 'The Gallerie Veranda', has allowed for a new private entertainment room, 'The Garden Room' that overlooks 'Mitzie's Garden' an Italian style garden. The newly redesigned Terrace Room includes a cosy bar that leads out to a BBQ area with substantial seating options inside and out.
- Dating back to 1760, this 4-star property stands on 100 acres of parklands and gardens with 105 bedrooms and a conference capacity for up to 220 delegates. It is situated outside the town of Kingscourt, one hour from Dublin Airport and just 20kms from Ardee.

- Is a member of Original Irish Hotel and is part of the Romantic Castles of Ireland, Ireland's largest independent and privately-owned collection of luxury castle wedding venues. The collection includes Bellingham Castle- Louth, Ballyseede Castle-Kerry and Markee Castle-Sligo.



Tulfarris Hotel & Golf Resort, Blessington Lakes, Co Wicklow

- Part of the PREM Group, this luxury 4star retreat consists of 90 deluxe guest rooms, 3 self-catering lodges, The Elk Bar and The Lime Tree Restaurant, and an 18-hole championship golf course, designed by the celebrated golf architect, Patrick J. Merrigan,
- Over €6 million has been invested in the property to return the luxury 18th century Manor House and its surrounding grounds to their former glory. The renovation programme saw 16 new bedrooms being added, while the bridal suite, foyer, drawing and library rooms of the Manor House have been tastefully transformed and the hotel lobby and Elk Bar revamped.
- A new, contemporary, cedar clad golf club overlooks the course. A lot of work has been done on the course itself including completely changing one of the holes. The course hosted the PGA EuroPro Tour for the last two years too.
- Tulfarris is only 45 mins from Dublin but its in a stunning location on the edge of the Blessington Lakes.

Pending Approval:

- **Home to Home Tours – *Let us take care of everything.*** Experience modern Irish life within a family home in County Wexford. Stay with the Cullen family in their home (accommodation approval pending) try the Cullen family experiences which include Traditional Irish Cooking, Traditional Irish Music and the local **GAA** Games and Sports. The Cullen family also provide Tailor-made tours to experience the local History, Culture, Scenery, Rural Living and Viking Ireland. Based on a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 8. <http://hometohometours.ie/>

Food & Dining

- **Meet the Makers Wicklow:** A new food and drink tour that picks up in Dublin, travels to Wicklow to meet some of the county's best food and drink producers, and returns back to the city that evening. This is a collaboration between [Kilruddery House and Gardens](#), [Wicklow Way Wines](#), [Wicklow Wolf](#) beer and [Powerscourt Distillery](#), led by Mia Tobin from [Brewery Hops](#), to bring you on a day of food and drink tasting without the hassle of arranging individual appointments.
<https://www.meetthemakerswicklow.ie/>
- **Key contact person:** Mia Tobin. meetthemakerswicklow@gmail.com
- **Slane Food Circle Tours, Co Meath**
Crafting modern food from ancient methods - meet the producers who draw on the valley's traditions and ancient techniques to produce delicious goats' cheese, cider, organic vegetables, and more! Tours run from 2pm to 3.30pm (1 ½ hours) each day from March to the end of October
<https://slanefoodcircle.ie/>
- **Wild Food Mary** - Health and Heritage in the Heart of Ireland –www.wildfoodmary.com
Prepare for a warm welcome at the front door of Wild Food Mary's home in picturesque, rural surroundings at the foot of the Slieve Bloom mountains. From here, an edible and sensory adventure begins whereby you see the natural world through Mary's eyes. Ramble through her wild home garden to find plants, flowers, fruits, herbs, nuts and fungi for a feast that ends at Mary's kitchen table, followed by a traditional Irish toast of her award-winning wild damson liqueur. Leave with happy memories and Mary's delicious recipes!
Contact: Mary Bulfin **Email:** contact@wildfoodmary.com. **Tel:** +353 (0)87 7418536
- **The Tea Rooms & Emporium @ The Stables, Birr Co Offaly**
A fantastic destination for a stop off / retail experience – the tea rooms offer fantastic food. There is an exquisite store located in the converted coach house, offering a wonderful array of high end lifestyle products including gift wear for all life's occasions, bespoke lighting and small pieces of furniture and a Dress Bar. The B&B townhouse is not registered
Contact: Caroline Boyd **Web:** <https://thestablesbirr.com/> **Email:** caroline@thestablesbirr.com
Tel: 057 9120263

Festivals: CORK - MEATH/LOUTH

- **Commemorations of 1920** – St Peters Cork / Cork Public Museum
Tomás Mac Curtain was shot dead in his home on March 20th 1920. His successor Terence MacSwiney died after 71 days on hunger strike in Brixton prison. His death on October 25th, 1920 brought worldwide attention to the Irish struggle for independence. Burning of Cork on the 12th December 2019
- **Cork Maritime Festivals** – Sea Fest 15-17 May / Cork Harbour Festival 15 May - 8 Jun / Ocean to City 06 June/ [COVID 19 All cancelled to 2021]
- **European Maritime Day** – May 14-15. **COVID19 NEW DATES BEING CONSIDERED** It is the first time that Ireland has been selected by the Council of the European Union to hold this flagship two-day conference which since its creation has become one of the key events in the maritime community's year. European Maritime Day 2020 in Cork will also coincide with the 300 year anniversary of the Royal Cork Yacht Club (RCYC), the oldest yacht club in the world and the second year of Cork hosting the national maritime festival, Seafest, May 15-17 [COVID 19 Seafest is cancelled]
- **Cork 300** - Cork300 1720-2020 will celebrate Royal Cork Yacht Club's 300th anniversary, where it all began in Crosshaven, and Cork's maritime haven, with a series of summer events. July 13 – 19 <https://www.cork300.com/>
- **Oct 30 – Nov 1: Púca – Home of Halloween, Counties Meath [Athboy, Trim] & Louth [Drogheda]** Ireland, the original birthplace of Halloween will come to life with a spectacular, new, fun and otherworldly festival in three locations in Meath and Louth over 3 days. 2019, was the first year of this newly established contemporary and inspiring Púca Festival is designed to capture the original and authentic spirit of Samhain across three breath-taking nights of music, food, light and spectacle. www.pucafestival.com

Transport:

- **Brittany Ferries** New continental service from Rosslare Europort
Two sailings per week to Bilboa in Spain. One sailing per week to Roscoff in France
For sales, reservations and sailing schedules www.brittanyferriesfreight.co.uk

NEW PEOPLE:

- **Powerscourt House & Gardens:** New Sales and Marketing Manager Lisa Moran:
lisa.moran@powerscourt.net
- **Powerscourt Distillery:** COO with responsibilities for Sales and Marketing Gerry Ginty:
gerry.ginty@powerscourtdistillery.com
- **Russborough House:** new Operations and Commercial Manager Robert Kiernan robert@russborough.ie

ACCOLADES:

- Birr Castle is recognised as a European Physical Society Historic Site in recognition of its scientific historical contribution. At one time Birr hosted the largest telescope in the world, which can now be seen today on a visit to Birr Castle. https://www.eps.org/page/distinction_sites
- **National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage** designed to celebrate living cultural heritage practices in Ireland with 30 elements **officially** recognised. Specific IAE experiences
 - [Carrickmacross Lace](#), Co Monaghan
 - Cobh Carillon Playing (bellringing percussion organ) [St Colman's Cathedral](#) Co Cork
 - [Boyne Currach Making](#) Co Meath
 - [Mountmellick Embroidery](#), Co Laois
 - [St Moling's Pilgrim Route](#), Co Carlow
- **Foodie Destination 2019** - Waterford was announced as this year's winner with Taste Causeway in 2nd place and The Food Coast Donegal placed 3rd. Donegal Town was the winner of the Foodie Town 2019. www.foodiedestinations.ie/ There were nine finalists shortlisted for the 2019 award, see table below.

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| 1. Antrim-Mid & East Borough | |
| 2. Causeway Coast & Glen Borough [Taste Causeway] | |
| 3. Cavan | 8. Waterford |
| 4. Donegal Town | |
| 5. Donegal - The Food Coast | |
| 6. Galway | |
| 7. Monaghan & Gaslough | |
| 8. Waterford | |
| 9. Tralee | |

