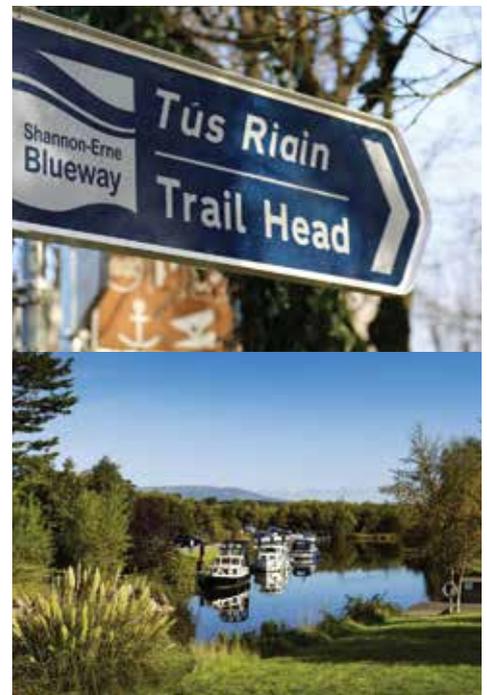




# THE LIFE AQUATIC ON THE SHANNON-ERNE BLUEWAY

The Shannon-Erne Blueway serves up an inspiring mix of new canoeing, walking and cycling trails, all against a backdrop of some of the most idyllic scenery on the island. Weaving through the counties of Leitrim, Cavan and Fermanagh, this is a destination that's guaranteed to delight...





## WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Inky water curls and ripples, birds dart swiftly from the bank, reeds gently sway and rustle. Up ahead, the canal stretches out, glass-like, with reflections so perfect you can almost touch them. This is the Shannon-Erne Blueway, and visiting this serene waterway gives a profound sense of escape – a feeling of being enveloped in nature.

For anyone looking to switch off, slow down or recharge, the Blueway is the perfect destination. And experiencing its tranquillity can radically change the perception of a place, even one we think we know well from afar. The waterway here is a 70km-long mix of canal, river and lake from Leitrim Village to Belturbet and Crom. Along the way, newly developed paddling trails are complemented by scenic walking and cycling routes at various locations, running either directly alongside the water, or stretching into the magnificent surrounding countryside.

Get active with stand-up paddle-boarding, kayaking and even surfing, and then relax in waterside towns and villages with traditional pubs, great restaurants and fascinating visitor attractions.

Paddle, pedal or walk – the great thing about the Blueway is that you can do it your own way.

## A PADDLING PARADISE

With a series of water trails totalling 70km, the Shannon-Erne Blueway is the very definition of an outstanding canoeing adventure. Paddling here, you'll be treated to breathtaking views as you pass pretty riverbanks, lakes dotted with mysterious islands and curious swans.

A perfect way to experience these waters is with a guide, who can bring you out for short hops or even a whole day's exploration. Stephen Wrynn of Way To Go Adventures is one such local who can unveil aspects of this landscape you might not otherwise see. Running tours and excursions in a Canadian canoe, Stephen brings you through a landscape he has known since childhood. And it's not hard to fathom why, like many locals, he has such a passion for the place.

"You can immerse yourself on your own journey on the Shannon-Erne Blueway," Stephen explains. "There's canoeing, trekking, cycling, food, brewing, heritage and so many unique places to stay along the way. But what you really notice here is how slow the pace is. The rolling hills invite you around the next bend in the track, and you are drawn towards the lakes and rivers that dot the landscape."

In literal terms, you go with the flow of the water around here. And it ebbs gently for most of the journey – although there are some stretches designated for more adventurous spirits, with a white water section around Ballyconnell.

So pick up a paddle, take to the water and enjoy the gentle pace of the Blueway. It's an experience you won't forget.

## 5 TO TRY Great places to eat along the Shannon-Erne Blueway

### WALKING AND CYCLING THE BLUEWAY

What really sets the Shannon-Erne Blueway apart are the 30km of walking trails that can be found at various locations, either running alongside the water or looping off it. Cyclists, meanwhile, can enjoy over 12km of purpose-built trails surrounded by idyllic countryside.

A perfect place to start is the pleasant 5km waterside walk from Lock 16, Killarcan. Winding along the line of the water all the way to Kilclare, the trail winds along soft grass, over scenic bridges and beside glassy waters.

At the nearby town of Ballinamore, a newly developed cycle trail sweeps into the countryside from Lock 6 up to Aghoo Bridge. It's blissfully peaceful – the crunch of the bicycle tyres along the track, the rush of the water at the locks and the chirruping of birds are likely to be the only sounds to interrupt the rural quiet. Passing through Ballinamore village, the trail continues on the other side, mixing patches of forest, navy-coloured water and green fields towards Lock 7, Ballyduff.

Beautiful walking opportunities come at specific points on the Blueway, with trails at Leitrim Village, Ballinamore, Skelan, Ballyconnell and Belturbet. This really is an escape from the ordinary – a chance for some quiet contemplation in a charming natural environment where life goes slow. And with distances of around 5km, the trails are perfect for old and young alike.



well as great options for kids. The small pub space gives way to a larger space at the back, with chunky tables, flickering candles and a massive stone fireplace. [anglersrest.ie](http://anglersrest.ie)

4 The Seven Horseshoes, Belturbet  
This friendly old pub makes a great place to enjoy a casual lunch, when soft light floods through the windows into the stone-walled interior. Enjoy classics such as roast beef and BLTs, or opt for more refined dishes within the smart dining room in the evenings. [thesevenhorseshoes.com](http://thesevenhorseshoes.com)

5 The Olde Post Inn, Cloverhill  
Tara and Geroid Lynch's beautiful and historic restaurant sits in the genteel village of Cloverhill, County Cavan. Set within the old post office dating from the 1800s, it's an exceptionally charming spot with that places an emphasis on local ingredients, including exceptional cheese from nearby Corleggy. [theoldpostinn.com](http://theoldpostinn.com)

1 The Oarsman Bar, Carrick-on-Shannon  
This award-winning eatery serves up excellent bar food that keeps a keen eye on provenance and quality. Owners Conor and Ronan Maher are members of Slow Food Ireland, and it shows, with crafted dishes using local ingredients. [theoarsman.com](http://theoarsman.com)

2 Smyth's Siopa Ól, Ballinamore  
It's hard to get a better experience than sitting by the fire in Smyth's and enjoying a rich, warming bowl of beef stew, and maybe even a pint of Guinness! This is a fabulous little pub – quirky, friendly, traditional and a delight both at lunchtime or in the evening. [Main Street, Ballinamore](http://Main Street, Ballinamore)

3 The Angler's Rest, Ballyconnell  
This welcoming Ballyconnell pub is a real crowd-pleaser with classic pub grub including fish and chips and lasagne, as



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## WAYS TO ENJOY THE SHANNON-ERNE BLUEWAY

## 1 Adventure On the Water

Don't let all that serenity deceive you, the Shannon-Erne Blueway also has a wild side! Thrills and spills come thick and fast along the adrenaline-filled Ballyconnell White Water Trail, which is perfect for testing the skills of proficient paddlers.

## 2 Family Thrills

Lakeside Activities offer a range of family-friendly entertainment, including pedal boats, fishing boats, rowing boats and guided tours around the lake. Kids get a kick out of a visit to Bear Essentials and its Silver Bear Centre in Bawnboy, where there are workshops, events and crafts, as well as a showcase of old and new teddy bears – and even a teddy bear hospital! Or head for Outdoors and Dirty, where young ones can rev up the action with "Dominator Buggies".

[lakesideactivities.com](http://lakesideactivities.com), [beaessentials.ie](http://beaessentials.ie), [odd.ie](http://odd.ie)

## 3 Festival Fun

Taste of Cavan sees a whopping 40,000 hungry festival-goers descend on the Cavan Equestrian Centre to enjoy two days of great food events and demonstrations. Or try Carrick Water Music Festival in mid-July with everything from jazz cruises, to opera, film, art workshops and a late-night festival club. [tasteofcavan.ie](http://tasteofcavan.ie), [carrickwatermusicfestival.com](http://carrickwatermusicfestival.com)

## 4 Horse riding

The Drumcoura Western Riding Centre lets you unleash your inner cowboy, with western-style riding on local forest trails. Trail riding at Drumcoura is for intermediate or experienced riders only, but if you're a beginner, then hotfoot it over to the Riversdale J Stables in Killeshandra (+353(0)87 387 2222), where all ages and abilities can enjoy treks on quiet country roads. [drumcoura.ie](http://drumcoura.ie)

## 5 Historic Attractions

At the Cavan Burren Park, lies a unique prehistoric landscape that feels like a mosaic of the last 5,000 years, with megalithic tombs, stone walls and ancient rock art. Clough Oughter Castle, east of Killeshandra, may only be accessible by boat or canoe, but that's all part of the fun (Cavan Canoe Centre offers guided tours). And for a real taste of local history, pop into the Glenview Folk Museum, near Ballinamore with over 6,000 items from pre-Famine Irel and [slieverussell.ie](http://slieverussell.ie), [cavanburren.ie](http://cavanburren.ie), [cavancanoeing.com](http://cavancanoeing.com), [glenview-house.com](http://glenview-house.com)



## TOWNS AND VILLAGES ALONG THE WAY

While the waterside beauty here lulls you into a state of relaxation, the villages and towns along the Shannon-Erne Blueway offer a lively balance to all that rural restfulness.

Just look at Leitrim Village. Relaxed, scenic and friendly, the village boasts a pretty marina and little eateries, including The Barge Restaurant and Steakhouse.

With a lovely off-road walking trail, vibrant pubs and great places to eat including Pól O'D's and The Angler's Rest, Ballyconnell in County Cavan is a great base for exploring the area. The village is overlooked by the Slieve Rushen mountain – or the Mountain of the Little Wood – and boasts a history that stretches back to around 3500BC, when it was first settled by hunter gatherers.

Surrounded by delightful pastoral hinterland, the village of Belturbet in Cavan makes another good base and is an attractive spot with a lovely old stone post office, friendly local shops and pubs, and a scenic marina. Delve into tales from the Great Railway Age on display at Belturbet Station or wander around Turbet Island, where the first ever remnants of a woolly mammoth in Europe were discovered.



## A FORK IN THE WATER

Part of the Shannon-Erne Blueway branches out to Belturbet in County Cavan, the other reaches out to Crom Estate in County Fermanagh, into landscapes that undulate across a patchwork of fields, small country roads, pretty lakeside jetties and chunky stone churches.

At the heart of it all lies Crom, a National Trust estate with an abundance of charm. Trails here lead around a vast playground of islands, lakes and historic castle ruins, and the estate is a haven for wildlife and boasts picture-perfect views. Take your time, take a picnic and relax in one of the most beautiful estates on the island of Ireland. This one is something special.

