

Westport – Newport – Mulranny – Achill Island

Leave Westport on the N59 road for Newport. About 1 km from town, on the left hand side at King's Hill, is a monument commemorating an important event in Irish history, as it was here that Michael Davitt and Charles Stewart Parnell addressed a monster meeting of the Land League in June 1879.

Continue on to Newport, a small picturesque town on the north-west corner of Clew Bay. One of the town's most beautiful features is its seven arch viaduct built in 1892, to carry the Westport to Achill Railway line. The viaduct fell into disrepair but has been restored as a walk, in recent years. The town also has an attractive harbour.

After Newport take the Achill Road. You will quickly come to a sign on the right, which leads to one of the most beautiful drives in Ireland, the Nephin Drive. The drive provides a succession of breathtaking views of Lough Furnace, Lough Feeagh together with Bengorm and the Nephin Beg range of mountains.

Returning to the main road, you will find a sign to the left for Burrishoole Abbey, the ruin of a 15th century Dominican Friary, which is of historical interest. The de Burgo O'Malley Chalice, which is now in the National Museum, was made for the Burrishoole Friary in 1494. The cemetery here is the burial place of one of the authors of the Annals of the Four Masters.

A few miles further along the main road turn left again for Carrigahowley Castle, one of the homes of the legendary Pirate Queen, Granuaile (Grace O'Malley). This castle has been renovated by Dúchas and the key is available at the nearby gate lodge.

Back on the main road head towards Mulranny with its fine sandy beaches.

Achill Island is Ireland's largest offshore island and is connected to the mainland by bridge. The island is 15 miles long and 11 miles wide and has a population of approx. 3,000 people. It is a place of sheer beauty, with mountains, lakes, valleys, wild moors and some of the most magnificent cliff scenery in Europe. With long sandy beaches and little villages, it is a must for the traveller who appreciates beauty and culture. Paul Henry, the eminent Irish artist, was a regular visitor to the island and Heinrich Boll, the German author and Nobel Prize winner lived on Achill for some years.

At **Achill Sound** you may opt for the main road to Keel or the **Atlantic Drive**, which is a breathtaking drive along the cliff edge, but not for the unsure driver. **Keel**, a delightful village, with a good selection of coffee shops, has a 5 km sandy beach and is one of Ireland's most famous surfing beaches. At the end of the beach, the Minawn Cliffs and the Cathedral Rocks are a remarkable sight. 8 kms west of Keel is Keem Bay, a beautiful inlet with another fine sandy beach. At Keem Bay you will find the ruins of the house in which Capt. Boycott first lived, when he came to Achill in 1857. To the north and west is the spectacular quartzite peak of Croaghnaun, which plunges into the wild Atlantic waves below, providing some magnificent cliff scenery. Returning to Keel village, take the turn to Dugort. Between Keel and the village of Dugort, at the eastern base of Slievemore is the site of the Deserted Village. This was the location of a proselytising settlement established by Rev. Edward Nangle in 1834, the ruins of which can still be seen. Return to Westport via Bunacurry, Cashel and Achill Sound.

