



**Tourism Marketing Plan & Visitor Experience Bundles for the Munster Vales**  
Tipperary County Council on behalf of Munster Peaks Ltd (Munster Vales)



Boland Marketing and ActiveMe Tourism and Heritage Services  
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# Executive Summary

The objective of the overall Tourism Marketing Plan and Visitor Experience Bundles is to promote the geographical area as a consistent brand, increase the socio-economic benefits of tourism in the area and provide an enhanced visitor experience whilst also ensuring a greater sense of understanding of the history, heritage, folklore and culture in the Munster Vales by connecting with and placing the local business and farming communities of the Munster Vales at the core of the Marketing Plan. The creation and development of Ireland's Ancient East is timely and its proposition offers the Munster Vales the opportunity to showcase its incredible stories and experiences under this new brand whilst leveraging its marketing campaign from the rollout of this new national tourism product.

With Ireland welcoming 17% growth in international visitor numbers in the first two months of 2016 and domestic tourism still at the core of rural tourism, the research highlighted the importance across the county councils and rural development companies for the development of new tourism initiatives such as the Munster Vales. The extensive review of the destination's current tourism offerings highlighted the potential of the Munster Vales and the Facilitated Workshops were integral to the development of the Visitor Experience Bundles.

A Munster Vales database has been developed and will provide an excellent base for the management and development of the destination. Some of the Munster Vales Unique Selling Points include:

- The combination of mountain ranges, valleys, lakes, rivers, coastline and ocean
- Choice and combination of castles, stately houses, cottages, farmlands and gardens
- Copper mines and UNESCO Geopark, Mountain Tops and Lush Valleys
- Living history - where visitors can experience real day to day rural living among communities in splendid countryside
- The wealth of ancient stories that are the Munster Vales which perfectly align with Ireland's Ancient East – Ancient Ireland, Castles & Conquests, and Sacred Ireland - Pilgrim Paths and Fighting Fianna

From the Market Analysis carried out the key target markets proposed initially for Munster Vales include the Domestic, UK and German markets. Key market segments include:

- Domestic – Walkers, Cyclists, Over 55's & Active, Connected Families & Footloose Socialisers
- Overseas – Culturally Curious and Great Escapers

'Content is King' and selling the Munster Vales through original, authentic, high quality, interesting and captivating tourism content telling 'Your Story' is essential. Ongoing supports must be rolled out to capture this content through the local tourism groups, businesses and communities. In order to effectively promote Munster Vales, essential digitised tourism content is required and as budgets increase, investment must be made in its development.

The Munster Vales identity must now be built with a range of Marketing Materials and Products that can effectively promote the region.

3 "Big Win" Munster Vales Visitor Experience Bundles have been created:

1. “Follow in the Footsteps of the Fianna”
2. ‘Castles From Wave to Vale’
3. ‘St. Declan’s Way’

There are 3 key interconnecting strands to the implementing of the Marketing Plan:

1. The Local Market and Communities – building the Munster Vales Brand
2. The Domestic Market – Walkers, Cyclists, Over 55s, Connected Families & Footloose Socialisers
3. The International Market focussing for the first 3 Years (or until resources and budgets increase) on the Great Britain and German markets – Culturally Curious and Great Escapers

The Tourism Marketing Plan acknowledges the importance of supporting the brands and propositions of the 4 counties involved highlighting the connectivity, integration and synergy across the region. It also reflects how critical it is to leverage off the Marketing and Promotional initiatives of the four County Councils as well as Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland and Ireland’s Ancient East.

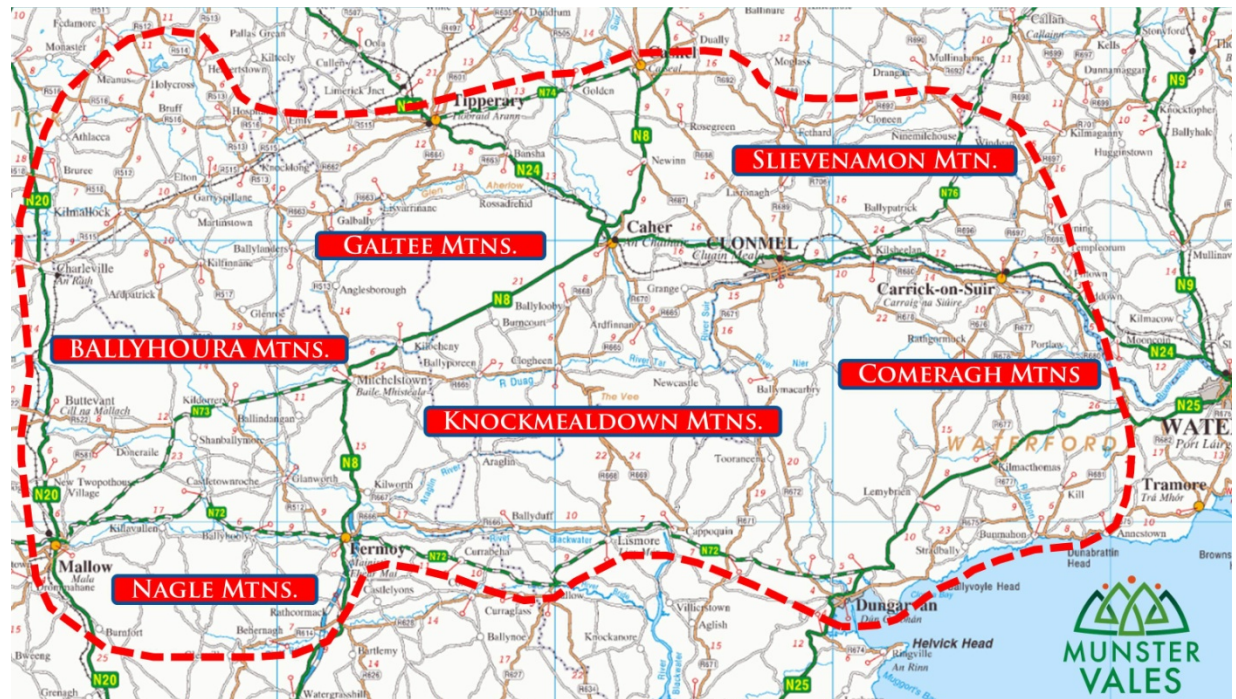
Key areas of implementation: the importance of the role of community tourism groups, clubs and associations; training and mentoring; sustainability and communication. Constructive feedback from the Facilitated Workshops includes broadband, seasonality concerns and gaps in tourism services and information but these are all opportunities that when addressed will assist in the growth and development of the Munster Vales.

The Munster Vales Tourism Marketing Plan has endeavoured to provide a true representative approach that all groups and businesses within the Munster Vales can understand and be happy to be a part of. Knowledge, awareness and ownership are the key elements that all businesses and tourism groups within this region and brand should possess and through this development process, the aim has been to ensure that every stakeholder has had an opportunity to be included with the direction of the Munster Vales Board and Steering Group.

# 1 Introduction

## General

This Tourism Marketing Plan with Visitor Bundle Experiences and Stories is the first step towards building this unique destination. As shown below, the approximate outline of the Munster Vales encapsulates the mountain ranges of Ballyhoura, Galtee, Knockmealdown, Comeragh, Slievenamon and Nagles.



The Tourism Marketing Plan has endeavoured to provide a true representative approach that all groups and businesses within the Munster Vales can understand and be happy to be a part of. This programme has allowed individuals and groups in the Munster Vales to have an opportunity to have a voice for the future of tourism in their region. It should allow all to feel a part of tourism, and local economic development at large. This programme has begun the process to empower all participants to feel more in control of their futures and of future tourism generations to come. Knowledge, awareness and ownership are the key elements that all businesses and tourism groups within this region and brand should possess and through this development process, our aim has been to ensure that every stakeholder has had an opportunity to be included with the direction of the Steering Group.

With the development of Ireland's Ancient East and the aims of Munster Peaks Ltd. (Munster Vales) and this grass roots tourism initiative, the time has never been more appropriate for a programme such as this to be introduced and to leverage on the upcoming national and international marketing campaign of this new proposition.



## 2 Market Research

Tourism Ireland welcomed exceptional +17% growth for December 2015 to February 2016 with 1 million visitors in first two months of the year – for the first time ever. In the period December 2015 to February 2016, Growth was recorded from all of our markets around the world – including Britain (+21%), North America (+13%), Mainland Europe (over +14%) and from Australia and developing markets (almost +9%) – Tourism Ireland Press Release 30th March 2016.

### Market and Market Segment Research

A comprehensive review has been undertaken of current tourism offerings, tourism content and promotional materials available in both print (including brochures, maps, books, guides, posters, etc.) and digital (including, tourism websites, business websites, apps, photography, video, offline databases and other platforms). These have assisted in forming the basis of the Bundles and Itineraries identified and the recommendations in the Marketing Plan for the development of Munster Vales promotional materials.

The following Figure, the Fáilte Ireland Overseas Visitors to Ireland shows the key increases for 2015 on 2014 with the Great Britain market up by 12%, US by 13.2, Germany 12.9% and France 10.8%.

 <b>Overseas Visitors to Ireland</b> <b>January-December 2012-2015 (000)</b>					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	% Change 15vs14
<b>Britain</b>	2,774	2,929	3,164	3,547	12.1
<b>North America</b>	1,017	1,158	1,329	1,514	14.0
USA	904	1,036	1,169	1,323	13.2
Canada	113	123	160	191	19.6
<b>Mainland Europe</b>	2,347	2,463	2,638	3,043	15.4
France	396	434	456	505	10.8
Germany	448	483	557	629	12.9
Italy	252	234	258	321	24.7
Spain	253	263	291	343	18.0
Belgium/Netherlands/Luxembourg	237	265	275	326	18.7
Norway/Sweden/Finland/Denmark	191	210	200	234	16.8
All Other Europe	570	575	602	685	13.9
<b>Other Areas</b>	379	436	474	539	13.7
Australia/New Zealand/Other Oceania	156	188	190	208	9.3
Other areas	223	248	284	331	16.6
<b>TOTAL OVERSEAS</b>	6,518	6,986	7,604	8,643	13.7
<small>Source: surveys are designed to measure area of residence groupings (bold figures). Figures in italics are indicative of approximate overall market size but do not provide a sufficient level of precision to accurately reflect absolute market size or trends over time.</small>					
<small>Note: The above figures include both staying and same day visits to Ireland and do not include any estimates for those who travel via Northern Ireland.</small>					
<small>Source: Central Statistics Office - Overseas Travel 27 January 2015</small>					

Figure 2.1 Fáilte Ireland (FI) Overseas Visitors

## Domestic Tourism in 2014\*

### Domestic trips (000s) by purpose of travel

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Holiday trips	3,978	3,696	3,374	3,460	3,583
- Long (4+ nights)	1,151	1,040	780	920	913
- Short (1-3 nights)	2,828	2,656	2,594	2,541	2,670
Visiting friends/relatives trips	1,997	2,231	2,374	2,452	2,423
Business trips	370	350	322	341	402
Other trips	955	891	960	858	947
<b>Total trips</b>	<b>7,300</b>	<b>7,169</b>	<b>7,031</b>	<b>7,111</b>	<b>7,354</b>

Source: CSO Household Travel Surveys 2010-2014

### Domestic expenditure (€m) by purpose of travel

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Holiday trips	971.9	864.9	784.8	840.3	852.0
- Long (4+ nights)	394.2	348.6	290.9	348.0	328.5
- Short (1-3 nights)	577.7	516.3	493.9	492.2	523.5
Visiting friends/relatives trips	270.5	265.9	269.6	266.7	302.2
Business trips	85.9	76.9	75.7	78.4	98.3
Other trips	232.2	208.2	215.3	187.9	211.5
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>1,560.5</b>	<b>1,415.9</b>	<b>1,345.4</b>	<b>1,373.3</b>	<b>1,464.0</b>

Source: CSO Household Travel Surveys 2010-2014

### Accommodation bednights domestic holidaymakers (%)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Hotels	32	32	39	36	36
Guesthouse/B&Bs	3	3	4	3	4
Caravan/camping	17	13	11	14	13
Self-catering	17	20	18	20	21
Holiday home	19	20	13	16	14
Friends/relatives	10	9	13	10	11
Other	2	2	2	2	1

Source: CSO Household Travel Surveys 2010-2014

### Seasonality of holidaymakers (%) 2014 by length of stay

	1-3 nights	4+ nights
Jan-Mar	18	6
Apr-Jun	26	17
Jul-Sept	33	69
Oct-Dec	22	7

Figure 2.2 FI Domestic Tourism 2014 – Revised 2016

**Study Area Main Settlement Populations (2011)**

	<b>Cork</b>	<b>Waterford</b>	<b>Limerick</b>	<b>Tipperary</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Ballyhoura Mtns Area</b>	25,450		2,413		27,863
<b>Comeragh Mtns Area</b>		2,307		22,934	25,241
<b>Galtee Mtns Area</b>	3,677			8,992	12,669
<b>Knockmealdown Mtns Area</b>	974	2,453		491	3,918
<b>TOTAL Populations</b>	30,101	4,760	2,413	32,417	69,691

**County and Regional Tourism Strategy Summary of Key Elements**

The following County Tourism Strategies were reviewed.

- Tipperary Tourism Development Strategy: Strategic Tourism Marketing, Experience & Destination Development Plan 2016-2021
- One Waterford: Local Economic & Community Plan 2015 – 2020
- Visit Cork: Growing Tourism in Cork – a Collective Strategy
- Munster Vales Feasibility Study – Concept Development and Feasibility Study – Munster Peaks (Working Title)
- Ballyhoura Country 2020 – The Way Forward

The Munster Vales Marketing Plan and Visitor Experience Bundles and Itineraries will integrate, support and strengthen the Marketing Strategies and Plans of Waterford, Tipperary, Cork and Limerick County Councils.

Likewise, it will be vital that all the counties and regional groups support and integrate the Munster Vales Brand, Proposition, Marketing Plan and Visitor Experience Bundles and Itineraries into their own promotion platforms and activities. This will be a defining element of the Marketing Plan.

**Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland**

The following elements are recognised for the Munster Vales Tourism Marketing Plan and are defined and sought by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland for their promotional use both in the domestic and overseas markets:

**Signature Experiences**

Truly iconic experiences within an overall proposition (such as Ireland's Ancient East and the Wild Atlantic Way), that deliver on the proposition promise. Such experiences can be a combination of products, activities, attractions and interactions that combine to enable visitors to forge deep connection with the area.

Signature Experiences may be story based, thematic or geographical in nature, or a combination of all three, but they are of sufficient scale and appeal to serve as motivators for visitors to come to a particular area within the wider proposition.

**Supporting Experiences**

Add value to signature experiences and really bring them to life for visitors. Supporting experiences (primarily at the business level) may not have the sufficient individual power to attract international visitors to an area in their own right, but they offer the necessary variety within a certain radius of the Signature Experience and are key to engaging visitors in a seamless and immersive experience.

**Ancillary Experiences**

The wider tourism offering that must also deliver a memorable and pleasurable experience - for example the interaction with local people.

The above experiences are the essence of the promotional material that is required for Ireland's Ancient East.

# 3 Existing Offering & Visitor Numbers

## Introduction

This section contains a review of current tourism offerings, tourism content and promotional materials available in both print (including brochures, maps, books, guides, posters, etc.) and digital (including, tourism websites, business websites, apps, % mobile friendly, photography, video, offline databases and other platforms). Personal visits, emails and phone calls were also made to tourist offices and other attractions and businesses to gain a more local evaluation of the Munster Vales tourism offering and general issues and opportunities. A key finding of this research was the obvious duplication of efforts and resources across the Munster vales by various Local Authorities, Tourism Groups and more in terms of printed material, websites, online information and more. To address this issue, it is recommended that all relevant stakeholders and representatives work together in a coordinated way (such as the structure of the Munster Vales Board) to present each other's activities and identify key areas of cooperation and coordinated activity – promotional, development, infrastructure, etc. to prevent this type of duplication.

## Current Tourism Performance

Blessed with large inland mountain ranges, rivers, rolling hills and grassy vales, the study area is Ireland's historic heartland and ideally located on the borders between counties Tipperary, Waterford, Limerick and Cork and can therefore exploit the existing visitor numbers in each county. Munster Vales is also serviced by high quality road and public transport infrastructure and key gateway towns which can be used to attract visitors into the area.

Information supplied by Fáilte Ireland gives an indication of the volume of overseas visitors to the four counties that the study area spans. This is not an accurate indication of the total number of visitors to the study area given the data cannot be subdivided into those sections of each county covered by the study area. For example a relatively small area of County Cork lies within the study area boundary.

### Overseas visitors (000) to counties

County	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Cork	955	1,123	1,228	-	1,542	Not Available
Limerick	333	383	391	-	494	N/A
Tipperary (South)	101	116	124	-	134	N/A
Waterford	201	210	225	-	255	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,590</b>	<b>1,832</b>	<b>1,968</b>		<b>2,425</b>	

*Table 3.1: Visitor Numbers to Study Area Counties 2010-2015 (source Fáilte Ireland)*

### Visitor Numbers to some of the Munster Vales Attractions 2014

Attraction	Region	Visitor Numbers
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Doneraile Park	Ballyhoura	460,000
Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trails	Ballyhoura	70,000
Lough Gur	Ballyhoura	35,000
Donkey Sanctuary	Ballyhoura	50,000
Rock of Cashel	Galtees	255,338
Holy Cross Abbey	Galtees	150,000
Cahir Castle	Galtees / Knockmealdowns	67,713
Brú Ború Cashel	Galtees	50,000
Swiss Cottage	Galtees / Knockmealdowns	22,558
Cashel Heritage Centre	Galtees	20,000
Farney Castle	Galtees	14,100
Mitchelstown Cave	Knockmealdowns / Galtees	10,900
Lismore Heritage Centre	Knockmealdowns / Comeraghs	20,000
Lismore Castle	Knockmealdowns / Comeraghs	18,500
Ormonde Castle	Comeraghs / Slievenamon	9,922

It is recommended that above figures are updated annually in the Munster Vales Master Database and used as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) into the future.

### **Munster Vales Unique Selling Points**

- The combination of mountain ranges, valleys, lakes, rivers, coastline and ocean
- Home to some of Irelands most ancient people and settlements
- Choice and combination of castles, stately houses, cottages, farmlands and gardens
- Richness in song, story, people, place and welcome
- Copper mines and UNESCO Geopark, Mountain Tops and Lush Valleys
- Charming villages and market towns brimming with local buzz to heritage towns offering stories of great feats and endeavours
- Living history - where visitors can experience real day to day rural living among communities in splendid countryside
- Heritage found nowhere else in Ireland such as Fethard's Walled Town
- The wealth of ancient stories that are the Munster Vales which perfectly align with Ireland's Ancient East – Ancient Ireland, Castles & Conquests, and Sacred Ireland - Pilgrim Paths and Fighting Fianna

## 4 Market Analysis

### Introduction

The following gives an overview of the Market Analysis particularly paying attention to Ireland's Ancient East as part of the overall brief as it is the key proposition that is being marketed and promoted both nationally and internationally in 2016.

### Ireland's Ancient East

What does Ireland's Ancient East offer the international visitor? Ireland's Ancient East offers a personal experience of 5000 years of Europe's history. Your journey of discovery in this relaxing, off the beaten track, lush beautiful landscape, that attracted warring settlers for millennia, will be made illuminating by stories from the best storytellers in the world. Discover tombs older than the pyramids, from Pagan and Celtic Ireland. Be moved at monasteries, the masterworks of our Christian heritage. Explore a Viking settlement, walk a Medieval mile, brave a battleground. Discover the stories of a time of contrasts, the time of empire, rebellion, innovation and industry.

Ireland's Ancient East Priority Global Customer Segments? The two priority segments for Ireland's Ancient East are:

1. Culturally Curious
2. Great Escapers

Ireland's Ancient East Target Sales Message?

- 5,000 years of European history in a compact, accessible area
- Stories told by the greatest storytellers in the world
- It's easy to take it all in » To go at your own pace
- To dip in or delve in » To meet great people
- And to enjoy unique and diverse places that have inspired for thousands of years

Ireland's Ancient East Priority Markets? The two priority markets are:

1. Great Britain
2. North America

With promotional activity in the following markets: Germany and France

Key learnings from Ireland's Ancient East – Managing Sales Channels for International Growth:

#### THE KEY LEARNINGS FROM THIS RESEARCH ARE:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Ireland trades in a digital world and Ireland is not world class</li> <li>» Evocative imagery &amp; 'hero' product stories key to visitors destination selection</li> <li>» Activities &amp; attractions explored before travel and are an important reassurance to visitor that they have chosen the right destination</li> <li>» Visitors use social channels whilst here but only where Free WiFi exists</li> <li>» Paper, TIOs, other tourists, locals all influence in holiday purchases. Practical info is key.</li> <li>» Only the very happy/upset post reviews</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Flights, accommodation &amp; car hire are booked before travelling. Hotel accommodation messaging is key influencer to the booking decision.</li> <li>» Activities &amp; attractions explored before travel but only booked if scarce or big savings on offer</li> <li>» Relative strength of distribution channels/players varies by market. Tourism Industry needs to excel on distribution and stay alert to changing market</li> <li>» 'Front of house' staff critical for both service and sales, telesales skills critical for closing direct sales; and they can cross sell other local providers.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

**Figure 4.1** Ireland's Ancient East – Managing Sales Channels for International Growth

## Key Target Markets

Thus from the market research carried out for Munster Vales, the key markets recognised for the Munster Vales includes primarily:

1. Domestic Market – Full direct access and very important due to the fact that Irish visitors will travel practically all year round with December and January (excluding the Christmas and New Year period) being the most challenging months. The Domestic Market accounted in 2014 for €1.5 billion in domestic tourism expenditure. Without the domestic market, many of the existing small and medium sized businesses would not survive.
2. Great Britain – our largest source of overseas visitors. Key access links through Rosslare and Dublin Harbours / Ports and the airports of Waterford, Cork, Kerry, Shannon and Dublin.
3. Germany – our largest Mainland Europe market. Key access links through Waterford (onward connections through London Luton), Cork, Kerry, Shannon and Dublin Airports. Ferry access through Rosslare Harbour as many German visitors will transit via England and Wales.
4. US – key with diaspora links and are avid touring visitors. Key access links through Shannon and Dublin Airports.
5. France – our second largest Mainland Europe market. Key access links through the Port of Cork and Rosslare Harbour, and the airports of Cork, Shannon, Waterford (onward connections through London Luton), and Dublin.

## Key Overseas Market Segmentation

Overseas – as highlighted through the research and analysis carried out, the key market segments include the Culturally Curious and the Great Escapers. These 2 significant market segments have been identified and are currently being targeted by all the marketing and promotional activities directed by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. This is also true of Ireland's Ancient East proposition.

### Culturally Curious

They tend to be middle aged (35-54) and are likely to travel as a couple or with other adult friends. They want to broaden their minds and expand their experiences through landscape, history and culture. They are curious and keen to learn about the places they travel to and are independent 'active' sightseers. They want to encounter new places and out-of-the-ordinary experiences.

### Great Escapers

Great Escapers tend to be younger (25-45), with 40 per cent under 35. They are often couples, some with young children, or travelling with friends and older family members. They need time out from busy lives and careers and travel as a couple or family. They are specifically interested in rural holidays and are interested in getting connected to nature especially the more remote and exciting places. They are more likely to take part in slightly more strenuous, but not extreme, exploration. For a full Analysis of the Culturally Curious and Great Escapers, please see Appendix E.

## Domestic Market Segmentation

The Domestic Market is vital to all year round tourism. It is on our doorstep and Irish people annually demonstrate their love of leisure breaks and home holidays. It is also essential to the continued existence of small family run businesses be they accommodation, food, pub, activity, attraction or service providers. Without the domestic market, many of the rural destinations and communities within the Munster Vales would cease to exist.

Fáilte Ireland has identified market segments here too and whilst the “Connected Families” and “Footloose Socialisers” are the two most relevant to the Munster Vales, we have added the key Special Interest / Segments of Walkers, Cyclists and the Active Retirement Market.

## Domestic Market Priority Special Interest Sectors

### *Activities engaged in by domestic holidaymakers (%)*

Hiking/walking	22
Houses/castles	20
Visits to spas	19
National parks	18
Watersports (excluding swimming)	18
Gardens	16
Heritage/ interpretive centres	15
Museums/art galleries	11
Cycling	8
Golf	6
Angling	2
Attending horse racing	2
Equestrian pursuits	2

Source: Fáilte Ireland Domestic Omnibus 2014

Due to the incredible uniqueness of 4 mountain ranges, Slievenamon, valleys, farmlands, gardens, lakes, rivers, UNESCO Geopark and Copper Coast, heritage sites, castles and stately homes, cultural richness (particularly with traditional music), it is important to identify and include 3 key market segments to focus on. These include walkers, cyclists and the Active Retirement market.

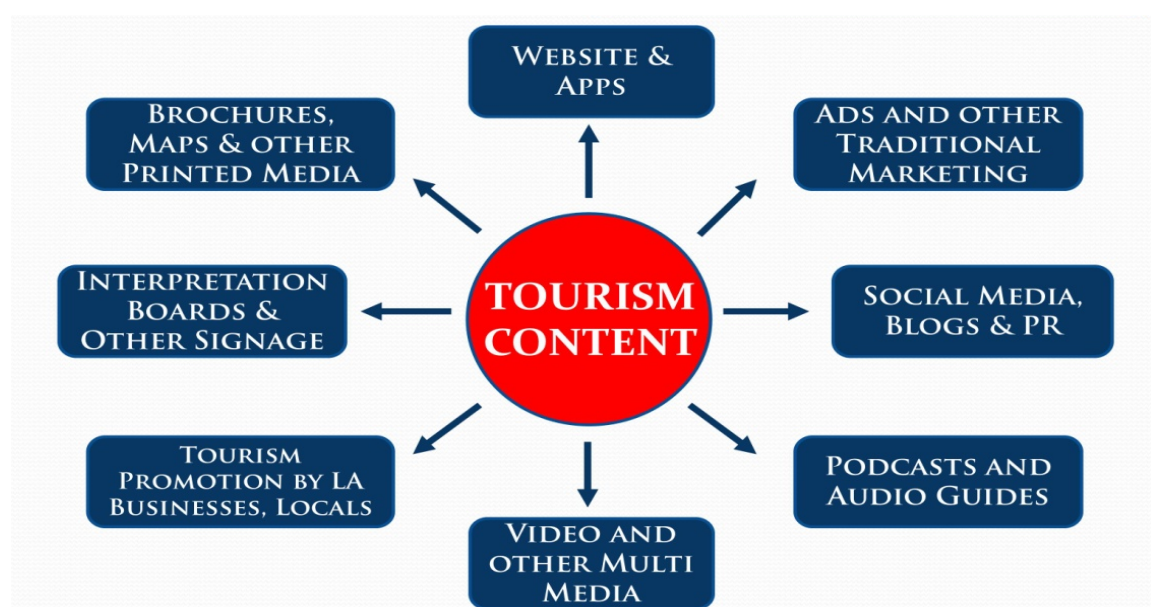
# 5 Tourism Content Strategy

## Introduction

In order to effectively promote Munster Vales, essential digitised tourism content is required for the following tourism experiences; major and minor tourism attraction sites, hidden gems, scenic viewing points, walks, cycles, scenic drives, beaches, water sports, equestrian centres, museums, heritage sites, historical sites, archaeological sites, castles, forts, fishing, bird watching areas, nature areas, golf clubs, Ireland's Ancient East discovery points and much more.

1. Detailed Research (Field and Desktop) and Talking to Locals
2. Descriptive Text/Copy and Interpretation
3. Photography
4. Videography
5. Drone Photo/Video
6. Aerial Photo/Video
7. Digital Mapping – GPS Surveys of Routes and Sites
8. Graphic Design of Mapping and more
9. Audio Recordings
10. Interviews with Local Storytellers and others
11. Visitor Database Design
12. Website Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Whether tourism based or otherwise, the research collection, creation and management of tourism content such as text, maps, GPS info, photos, video, etc. will typically represent 80% of your overall budget of costs/time when creating marketing and promotional products such as brochures, websites, maps, interpretation boards, video and other platforms to display this content.



### **Potential Funding Sources**

Below are a number of direct or matched funding sources for the collection of high quality Tourism and Heritage Content and other important marketing purposes:

- Local Authority Partners
- Fáilte Ireland
- Heritage Council
- Leader
- Development Partnerships
- EU Horizon 2020 Cultural Heritage Research and Innovation Fund
- OPW
- Inland Fisheries
- Irish Trails
- Local Business Sponsorship



## 6 Marketing Material & Products

### Scenic Driving Routes

At present there are a number of existing scenic driving routes in the Munster Vales including:

- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Copper Coast Drive | 2. Nire Drive           |
| 3. Suir Drive         | 4. Knockmealdowns Drive |
| 5. Bianconi Drive     | 6. Butler Trail         |
| 7. Kilpatrick Drive   | 8. The Vee Drive        |
| 9. Comeragh Drive     | 10. Golden Vale Drive   |
| 11. Slí Finn Drive    | 12. Ballyhoura Drive    |

However, many of these drives are not fully or consistently signed and sourcing maps for the routes online or from other sources such as visitor offices is extremely difficult and sometimes impossible. While 60-80% of tourists plan their holiday online you also have opportunity to change their mind when in Ireland through recommendations and spur of the moment decisions. This is where good road signage can be very important for extending dwell time.

At the earliest opportunity, it is also recommended that a single Heritage Trail driving and cycling route be developed covering the entire Munster Vales to ensure that the Munster Vales can exploit and piggyback the upcoming national and international promotion of Ireland's Ancient East. This single route would encompass the 'best parts' of the existing driving routes, will be easier to market and allow tourists to experience the entire Munster Vales in one go and help increase length of stay. This approach should also allow Munster Vales to avail of possible additional direct/matched funding from the Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland and other sources. Importantly, the development of a Heritage Trail includes the collection of valuable tourism content such as photography, local stories, original descriptive text, interviews with locals, maps, gps info and more which can then be used on a variety of other marketing uses such as social media posts, website content, maps, apps and more. Being a first mover in this area will ensure the Munster Vales is at the forefront of peoples mind when they think of Ireland's Ancient East.

### Promotional Materials

The following promotional materials are recommended:

#### Maps

As part of this Tourism Marketing Plan, a basic A2 Map of the entire Munster Vales area has been designed to kick-start the tourism content and marketing process and the promotion of the proposed Visitor Experience Bundles. The forms a template for the future development of a brochure map, possibly A2 to DL and other maps. The map must be modified for viewing at smaller size prints and online viewing by removing some detail and re-sizing font and icon sizes. It is also recommended that as part of the future Tourism Content strategy, that additional tourism content such as GPS route data

for loop walks and other tourism content be collected and displayed (layers) on this and other future maps.

Currently each mountain region has its own map which is produced by Tipperary County Council and others. These maps will need to be adapted to the new Munster Vales identity and updated with any new content that has been produced by this project

It is recommended that the reverse of this map be further developed using various content to allow a 16 panel, A2 to DL brochure be developed. The content would include logos, branding, photographs, website address, social media accounts, text/information, suggested itineraries, Ireland location map for the Munster Vales, travel distances and other useful tourist information including possibly, business locations, if space allows.

This Brochure Map should be a “mini headliner” of the full Munster Vales brochure and website. It is ideal for shows, for distribution within the region – tourist offices, businesses, schools, etc. It is a great way to get the Munster Vales identity recognised across the region. PDF’s should be made available to all businesses for the own individual promotional use.

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### **Visitor Bundles / Packages / Special Offers Booklet**

This booklet should be produced for consumer shows, for distribution across the Tourist Office Network and for businesses to take with them to promotions. It will need to be updated and produced bi-annually because rates will change from season to season and from year to year. It should be designed as a stand-alone booklet but in reality, will complement the main destination brochure at select trade and consumer shows. Limited print runs are recommended and there should also be a digital version on line.

### **Driving Routes Booklet**

From the market research across Tourism Ireland's promotions and themes (where Driving Routes and Holidays are at the fore), and Goodwood Members Meeting, UK, Munster Vales has the variety and choice of driving routes to connect into this niche market immediately. It will have immediate benefits with the domestic and UK market. This book will also be a great way to showcase the Itineraries and Bundles of the Munster Vales.

### **Business Cards**

For trade shows and distribution to Munster Vale businesses to use to support their own business cards when attending trade or consumer shows. Also, visitors will take business cards regularly as they are handy for wallets. They must carry the Munster Vales identity (and use the reverse to promote the destination). Ensure the website and all social media platforms are promoted to encourage engagement and connectivity.

### **Promotional Displays & Materials**

Pop-Up Displays X 5	Ballyhoura Hills, Galtee, Knockmealdown, Slievenamon & Comeragh Mountains under the Munster Vales identity and website
3m Display X 1	Munster Vales showcasing experiences and activities with high quality images – website / call to action
Flags X 2	2 Tear Drop Flags – great for shows and promotions to attract attention
Window Stickers	A great way to brand the region under the Munster Vales identity through shop fronts and vehicles. Very popular at consumer shows

### **Website – Destination and Sales**

With 60-80% of tourists choosing their holiday destination and planning their holiday online a website is a must. From a tourism point of view, a website is only as good as the content it displays and how it sells your destination. Therefore, an initial investment in a good foundation of digital content can be invaluable into the future and not only used to populate your website, but also a variety of other future tourism products and marketing campaigns.

### **Digital Destination Templates**

Digital Destination Templates should be designed for Munster Vales including branded Itineraries and Bundles, Newsletters, Digital “Pop-ups” with Munster Vales What to See & Do or Top 10 Experiences, Digital maps, Digital signatures for business emails, and more.

These can be created to promote the overarching Munster Vales brand / identity or in time, be produced too for the individual mountain areas of the Ballyhouras, Galtees, Knockmealdowns, Comeraghs and Slievenamon once the continuity of the brand, identity and style are carried across the region.

### **Social Media**

- All social media must carry the continuity of the Munster Vales identity, imagery, descriptive elements, themes and geographical elements
- The following are the key Social Media sites to be considered for Munster Vales to reach out to domestic and international target markets and market segments:

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Facebook	Create an interactive “News Feed” for posts, What’s On, Festivals & Events, etc. that can sit on the home page of the website
Twitter	Get into the streams of Ireland’s Ancient East, tourism forums, travel writers, bloggers, clubs and associations relevant to Munster Vales – food writers, walking clubs, etc.
Instagram	Create the Call to Action e.g. #LoveMunsterVales
Snapchat	Teenagers to late 20’s
YouTube	Create a Munster Vales Channel
LinkedIn	Create a Business forum for all stakeholders in the Munster Vales

### **Infographics**

Infographics are an excellent and effective marketing tool and a great way to visualise the tourism information in the Munster Vales. No more text heavy brochures and other materials, some visitors crave clear and concise information that can be quickly consumed, easily understood, shared online and on social media. It is recommended that Munster Vales design a set of infographics that can be continually used and shared online. They may include:

- The Walking Routes of the Munster Vales
- Stats of the Munster Vales: no. of castles, heritage sites, highest mountain, biggest lakes and other facts

# 7 Visitor Experience Bundles

## Introduction

The physical area of the Munster Vales is roughly 4,500 km<sup>2</sup> or 750,000 acres and to put that into perspective, it is nearly the same size as County Kerry at 4,800 km<sup>2</sup>. With an area so large, the creation of the Visitor Experience Bundles in the Munster Vales must take into account a number of key factors.

## Developing the Visitor Experience Bundles

The proposed bundles have been designed to give an inspiring and authentic experience to the visitor aligning with the Vision of Munster Vales and Ireland's Ancient East and form a suggested 3 day itinerary linking various locations, activities, businesses and service providers within the Munster Vales.

Some of the critical and key factors taken into account when creating and building the final proposed 'big win' Visitor Experience Bundles include:

- Large Scale Field and Desktop Research of all available information
- Local Itineraries, Information, Stories and more from the Community Workshops
- For each bundle, consideration was given to:
  - Time to travel or drive between each stop
  - Time to rest and take a break like a cup of coffee
  - Time to savour the views and take photos
  - Time for lunch and evening meals
  - Time for evening entertainment
  - Time for all transfers
- Key Visitor Attractions and Existing Visitor Numbers
- Interesting Stories and Hidden Gems
- Realistic Potential for Influencing the Choice of Holiday Destination for Visitors
- Realistic Potential for Generating Interest, Enquiries and Sales of each Bundle
- Realistic Distances Each Day: Avoid Driving Past (skipping) smaller Areas/Villages/Towns
- Practical and Easy to Understand, Manage and Market
- Potential for Easy Upselling and Increasing the Length of Stay and Spend for each Bundle
- Overarching General Theme for each Bundle
- Good Mix of Heritage & Culture, Attractions, Walking, Cycling, Fishing, Nature Tours, Watersports, Genealogy, Archaeology, Natural Landscape, Bird Watching, Pilgrimage, Local Food, Golf, Equestrian, Events, Festivals and more

The proposed Visitor Experience Bundles contained in Appendix I, can easily be used as a template for the future development of additional bundles. With this in mind and based on past experience where many businesses may wish to remain flexible about their rates, the proposed bundles have been designed to allow businesses to come on board at any time with their agreed rates/fees (an opt-in – opt-out approach). This can be managed easily using the proposed Munster Vales Master Database (See Section 2). Our database and template approach also allow these proposed bundles to be modified and extended if required by adding extra overnight stays or made shorter to suit the requirements of any visitor or group. The structure and map for each proposed Visitor Experience Bundles can be modified and adapted to feature a certain group of businesses who wish to adopt and promote the bundle with the help of Munster Vales and Fáilte Ireland.

Where possible, we have aligned and developed the proposed bundles taking into account Fáilte Ireland's proposed itinerary template and approach for Ireland's Ancient East. This Ireland's Ancient East approach puts local and interesting stories at the core of how suggested itineraries and bundles are presented. This approach was requested during a steering group meeting and requires detailed research of all visitor sites to uncover these stories, fact checking of each story, original descriptive and fresh text to ensure the Bundle is clear and concise whilst also ensuring it is interesting and captivating to potential visitors. These can be edited down or expanded to suit future marketing exercises or products such as a brochure or map.

### **Future Experience Bundles and Ideas**

The creation of various Bundle options is endless. Therefore it is critical that the quality and potential of each bundle and its components are of the highest quality:

- Following a 5000 Year Old Trail
- Famous Ancestors
- Food Trails
- Hidden Gems
- Garden Trails
- Outdoor Activity Bundles
- Family Fun Bundles
- Trail of Irelands First Settlers
- Extreme Adventure Bundles
- Guided Mountain Hikes
- Fishing Bundles
- Ice Age Trail
- Walking Bundles
- Loop Walk Bundles
- Family Walks Bundles
- Cycling Bundles
- And more



## 8 Marketing Plan

There are 3 key interconnecting strands to the implementing of the Marketing Plan:

1. The local market and communities – building the Munster Vales Brand
2. The Domestic Market – Walkers, Cyclists, Over 55s, Connected Families & Footloose Socialisers
3. The International Market focussing for the first 3 Years (or until resources and budgets increase) on the Great Britain and German markets – Culturally Curious and Great Escapers

### Marketing Action Plan Integration & Alignment

The County Councils of Waterford, Tipperary, Cork and Limerick have or are in the process of investing substantially in their own tourism strategies and brands. It is important that Munster Vales:

- Carries the brands of the counties involved highlighting the connectivity, integration and synergy across the region
- Supports the tourism brands and propositions of the four counties
- Develops and integrates branding and communications across the four counties in the roll out of the Munster Vales Marketing Plan and Visitor Experience Bundles
- Leverages off the Marketing and Promotional initiatives of the four County Councils

Likewise, it will be vital that all the counties and regional groups support and integrate the Munster Vales Brand, Proposition, Marketing Plan and Visitor Experience Bundles and Itineraries into their own promotion platforms and activities. This will be a defining element of the Marketing Plan.

### Fáilte Ireland

The Marketing Plan and initial Munster Vales Visitor Experience Bundles have been developed and in the case of the Bundles and Itineraries, designed to fit and align with Ireland's Ancient East. Story telling is at the heart of Ireland's Ancient East and story driven experiences should be developed and provided on an ongoing basis. Munster Vales should link and leverage the stories created by Ireland's Ancient East. The Marketing Plan, though specifically for the Munster Vales, is developed to align with and leverage off the Marketing and Promotional activities of Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland's main markets and specifically, to two of their key market segments.

#### a. Embedding the Brand

To follow on from the momentum developed, the rollout of the brand, proposition and initial Munster Vales Visitor Experience Bundles to all businesses and community groups who participated in the Munster Vales Workshops will be critical. This will promote the Munster Vales identity across the region over the coming summer months and encourage the participants to promote and share it with guests, customers, neighbours, colleagues, staff, etc. It will also ensure that participants are engaged and ready for the autumn / winter programme of initiatives.

### **b. Regional & National Launch**

The Munster Vales Marketing Action Plan must begin with a Regional and National Launch. This should be staged as a complete Showcase of all the unique elements of the Munster Vales. Each region should have its own unique experiences presented through visuals, story-telling, folklore, food, music, activity, etc. It should be fully reflective of the mountains, valleys, coastline, heritage, culture, people, and communities and place.

The results here must be two-fold:

1. Build Munster Vales awareness to both trade and locals across the counties of Limerick, Cork, Tipperary and Waterford
2. Build Munster Vales awareness across the whole domestic market but particularly to key market segments – walkers, cyclists, Over 55's, Connected Families and Footloose Socialisers
3. Find Brand Ambassadors / Influencers - Celebrities and Sports People who would help promote Munster Vales. Suggestions included Olivia O'Leary, Geraldine Kennedy, Pól Ó Conghaile, Kathryn Thomas and Anne Doyle.
4. Get Media and Press interested in the Munster Vales both at local, regional and national level
5. Build trade and industry awareness – Fáilte Ireland Departments, Ireland's Ancient East Team, Tourism Ireland Departments, Irish Tour Operators, Irish Travel Journalists & Guide Book Editors, Tourism Trade within the Munster Vales, etc.

## 9 Implementation

### Introduction

Resources – who is going to do the work? The Tourism Units of the County Councils are ultimately responsible for their own counties with their own tourism strategies and plans, and while the Munster Vales will provide a powerful chance to support the mountain and valley regions across the four counties of Waterford, Tipperary, Cork and Limerick, it will take a coordinator or personnel supports dedicated to its marketing activities and community tourism coordination to ensure its success. This is where the opportunity opens up to support the Tourism Units of these counties. With a dedicated Marketing and Community Tourism Coordinator, it will provide the following benefits:

- Provide a resource or pool resources (such as a combined Social Media Officer) to roll out the Marketing Plan and Visitor Experience Bundles for the Munster Vales
- Support the existing or developing Tourism Marketing Strategies of Waterford, Tipperary, Cork and Limerick
- Ensure the Marketing Activities of the Munster Vales is leveraging off and supporting the marketing activities of Visit Waterford, Tipperary's Tourism Unit, Visit Cork and Limerick's Tourism Unit by working closely with the Tourism Officers and Units of the four counties
- Highlight potential opportunities for the four counties to coordinate marketing activities as opposed to discovering duplication at promotions and events
- Work closely with the Rural Development Companies across the region
- Work closely with the local community tourism groups that operate across the Munster Vales
- Identify and develop new tourism content, bundles, itineraries, etc. that feed in to Munster Vales, the relevant County Council Tourism Units and Ireland's Ancient East

### Implementation Structure Proposal

#### **Munster Vales Board**

#### **Munster Vales Steering Group**

#### **Munster Vales Tourism / Marketing Coordinator**

#### **Community Tourism Groups, Chambers & Clubs / Associations:**

<b>Ballyhoura Hills</b>	<b>Galtee Mountains</b>	<b>Knockmealdown Mountains</b>	<b>Comeragh Mountains &amp; Slievenamon</b>
Ballyhoura Fáilte	Galtee Steering Group	Knockmealdowns Active – KMDA	Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber
Anglesboro Tourism	Glen of Aherlow Fáilte Society	Clogheen Community Council	Lismore Heritage Company
Bruff Community Council & Tidy Towns / Tourism	Tipperary Town Heritage Group	Mitchelstown	Nire Valley Community
Charleville Heritage	Cahir Development	Bishopstown Walking	Ardmore Tourism

	Association & Tidy Towns	Club	
Doneraile Development	Galtee Walking Club		Carrick On Suir Tourism & Economic Group
Doon Heritage	Burncourt Community		Clonmel Tourism
Kilmallock Historical Society	Kilbehenny Tidy Towns & Community		Fethard Business & Tourism Group
Knockainey Community & Knockainey Historical & Conservation Society			Clonmel Cycling Group
Limerick Historic Society			

### Community Tourism Groups

Community Tourism has been in existence for a long time but generally never acknowledged for the importance and role it plays at *grassroots* level. Munster Vales has highlighted the huge role it can play to support rural communities in general across the region and this is reflected in the Board's Structure. This project has established the momentum for Munster Vales and so to build on this, in the autumn, roll out programmes and supports that will empower and promote the individual and unique rich fabric of local rural life and improve the tourism product for all areas and regions in Munster Vales.

However, training is vital. Training programmes must have a natural flow based on the needs observed in each region and to provide practical, understandable workshops that will deliver actual results along the way. To provide tourism workshops that are generic, corporate and remote from community understanding and not comprehensive of the local nuances, needs and challenges of individual areas and regions, will do a disservice and create withdrawal of rural participants and groups.

### Businesses and Communities Working Together

Munster Vales now represents individuals, businesses, communities and groups that have already recognised the importance of collectively marketing and promoting their destination and region. They have now recognised the consideration of reaching out to wider stakeholders, be it directly or indirectly involved in tourism in the region, to be effective in building Munster Vales.

The Munster Vales Board is of course, central to forwarding the vision and aims of the organisation and must understand and allow time and consideration in bringing the stakeholders with them at every stage of development. This will lead to a stronger, resilient and more sustainable destination.

The Community Tourism Groups across the Munster Vales must play their part too. Consideration must now be given to how these groups can effectively:

- Be recognised and acknowledged officially as the local representative organisation at grass roots level (some are already on the Board);
- Be recognised and acknowledged as the cluster / local organisation representing local tourism interests;
- Be kept in communication with all tourism opportunities and particularly local ones for example in the planning of press and trade visits to the region;

- Be afforded support programmes, mentoring and ongoing relevant training to keep the group, local enterprises and stakeholders included and up to date on tourism and marketing development and promotional opportunities.

## Clubs & Associations

There are Walking, Cycling, Historical, Tidy Towns and so many more Special Interest Clubs and Associations across the Munster Vales. These groups are all potential Munster Vales Ambassadors as they go forth and connect with other clubs and associations nationally and internationally. With coordination and connection, these clubs and associations can provide so much tourism content, stories and promotion for Munster Vales.

## Training & Mentoring

Businesses and tourism groups will need co-ordinated supports on the ground in terms of training, marketing and promotional workshops with one-on-one mentoring an essential part of marketing development in more rural areas. It is important to note that rural tourism and its progress is not at the same speed as urban areas where particularly, access to broadband is a key and basic requirement of today's marketing activities.

Also, research has made it clear that while larger tourism businesses may be able to employ in-house marketing and sales teams and so be able to engage in ongoing marketing and promotional activities; this is not possible for smaller businesses or communities where such experience and capacity is not available.

Therefore, the businesses and communities will need further mentoring, training and programmes in the following tourism marketing elements to effectively operate as a destination:

- Destination Building
  - Content Gathering
  - Itinerary, Bundle and Package Development
  - Developing Tourism Ambassadors – Ambassador Training
- Brand Development
- Marketing
  - Research and Benchmarking
  - Promotional Preparation
  - Marketing Material Development
  - Sales and Upselling Skills
- Digital Marketing

Website & Search Engine Optimisation	Social Media
GPS Mapping – Geo Tagging (location information)	eCommerce
Online Marketing such as Google Business	Creating & Uploading Digital Photography & Videos
Affiliated Marketing	Heritage Auditing
Story and Folklore Gathering and Archiving	

All the above must be practical as opposed to generic. The facilitators and trainers must create and provide up-skilling as they are rolled out relevant to the needs of the participants and Munster Vales. They must be practical to ensure that “they are a work in progress” delivering results. They must leave the participants with a clear work plan and direction for the future of Munster Vales.

### **Sustainability – Ongoing Building of Capabilities & Skills**

Recommendations:

- Provide training and practical workshops in the following areas:
  - Marketing
  - Product and Service Development
- For all new initiatives there must be recognition that many stakeholders do not have a wide understanding of marketing and sales
- For all new initiatives there must be recognition that many stakeholders do not have the ability to use social or digital media
- As new initiatives are introduced training and information sheets must be available to allow all stakeholders to be included, have access to information and participate
- To acknowledge that many community groups are giving up their own free time for the marketing and development of their areas and regions and so ongoing supports must be provided by the agencies to support them in practical and progressive ways

### **Communication**

Communication is vital to ensure the sustainability of the Munster Vales and its Marketing Action Plan in the months and years ahead. From this programme, it will be so important for the momentum to stay strong and to stay engaged. Enthusiasm and support has been direct and so with choosing elements of the Plan to prioritise on, stay connected with the people and groups in the communities to have them supporting and working on the elements too. If people and the communities feel a part of the Munster Vales, the destination and communities will blossom and grow together.

Recommendations:

- That clear channels of communication be established between all the participants, businesses, areas, representatives, steering Group and board
- To look at channels of communication, where, regular updates can be shared with the wider community. This will encourage greater support and volunteering from the community
- To consider the various ways of communicating to ensure that they are inclusive to all in the region e.g.
  - Letters – for introductions and invites
  - Text – reminders and updates
  - Email – for extended news updates and working documents
  - Facebook – a Members page as opposed to Promotional page but may not capture all
  - Linked In – good for businesses but may not capture all



- To build and manage a database including all stakeholders (members, wider community and external stakeholders) to communicate effectively and share information business to business and group to group

### **Broadband and Mobile Coverage**

The roll out of good rural broadband and mobile phone coverage is vital across the Munster Vales particularly for rural areas. This is a key reason for the limited usage of Social Media and digital marketing and it is critical that it is addressed immediately. Rural businesses and communities are feeling increasingly marginalised and isolated as they cannot keep up with digital progress due to their lack of access to activity. A key concern here is that with the national tourism bodies moving so much to digital marketing, the gap gets ever wider. Supports must be put in place to provide better broadband and mobile coverage with ongoing training and mentoring to bring these stakeholders up to the capacity levels of their urban counterparts.

### **Key Gaps and Opportunities Identified through Programme**

Across all the markets, the key areas for opportunities lie in the following experiences that Munster Vales offers – Gardens; the Great Outdoors – National Parks – Munster Vales Mountains and Valleys; Touring – the wonderful scenic drives of the region; Hiking and Cross-Country Walking; Rock of Cashel with Cahir Castle, Swiss Cottage, Doneraile House & Park, Lismore Castle & Gardens, Cappoquin House & Gardens, Dungarvan Castle, Curraghmore House, Ormonde Castle, the Manor House and many more.

### **Food Tourism**

Whilst there are great strides being made in the area of food tourism with the growing choice of artisan producers in the Munster Vales, some very successful restaurants across the region, and great festivals such as Dungarvan's Festival of Food, this is an area where more development, coordination and promotion should happen.

Food Tourism is high on the agenda for Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland with Northern Ireland currently rolling out their Year of Food. This is an area where there is a synergy right across the Munster Vales but needs to become more established over the next couple of years particularly highlighting the incredible local produce that is available across this farming region.

### **Music & Entertainment**

Munster Vales has some extremely important authentic cultural opportunities through traditional music for the future. From the Rambling House of Ballyhoura with the Lough Gur Ramblers, Ceoltas in Kilfinane, Brú Ború in Cashel, the Booley House Show in Ballyduff to Dungarvan's musical trails and events, this is just a taste of what is on offer.

The quality of local performers, Ceoltas groups and so many musical traditions across the Munster Vales offers the chance to bring another distinctly "local Irish rural experience" that fits the synergy of

all the communities across the destination and ultimately, the most popular activity that most of our visitors to Ireland enjoy when they are here – “Listened to the Live Music in a Pub”!

Be it in music trails, festivals, events, and opening these “Hidden Gems” up to both domestic and overseas visitors, the potential already exists for music to capture the essence of the Munster Vales with good coordination and promotion.

### **OPW Attraction Closures / Seasonal Challenges**

Many of the attractions and tourism services are operated on a seasonal basis. Cahir is a great example of this. Whilst they have 2 very popular and highly sought attractions in Cahir Castle and the Swiss Cottage, having them closed for up to 6 months of the year is preventing the opportunity to extend the season and help other local businesses to stay open. These 2 attractions are very important going forward as can be seen through the market research carried out where visits to Irish Castles are one of the top things to do for visitors.

### **Motorhome Based Tourism**

The lack of services and Parking Bays for Motorhomes is an area that should be explored. This is very much big business in the UK and mainland Europe. As can be seen also from the market research, the ferries are bringing in substantial traffic from France and the UK and the number of motorhomes now holidaying in Ireland has grown enormously in recent years.

There are successful Motorhome Bays provided in Cobh and Portumna and this might be the ideal time to look to developing some for the Munster Vales region particularly as the region makes a super touring destination. Please find in Appendix N a submission that has been made by Colin McCarthy of The Phoenix Motorhome Club Ireland in Association with Motor Caravanning Ireland.

*Every visitor to the region should leave as an Ambassador for the Munster Vales*

# Proposed Visitor Experience Itineraries and Bundles

## Visitor Experience Bundle 1 - 'Follow in the Footsteps of the Fianna'

**General Route:** Kilfinnane, Ballyhoura, Kilmallock, Lough Gur, Bruff, Glen of Aherlow, Galtee Mountains, Tipperary, Mitchelstown or Doneraile. Visitors can start at any point along this route

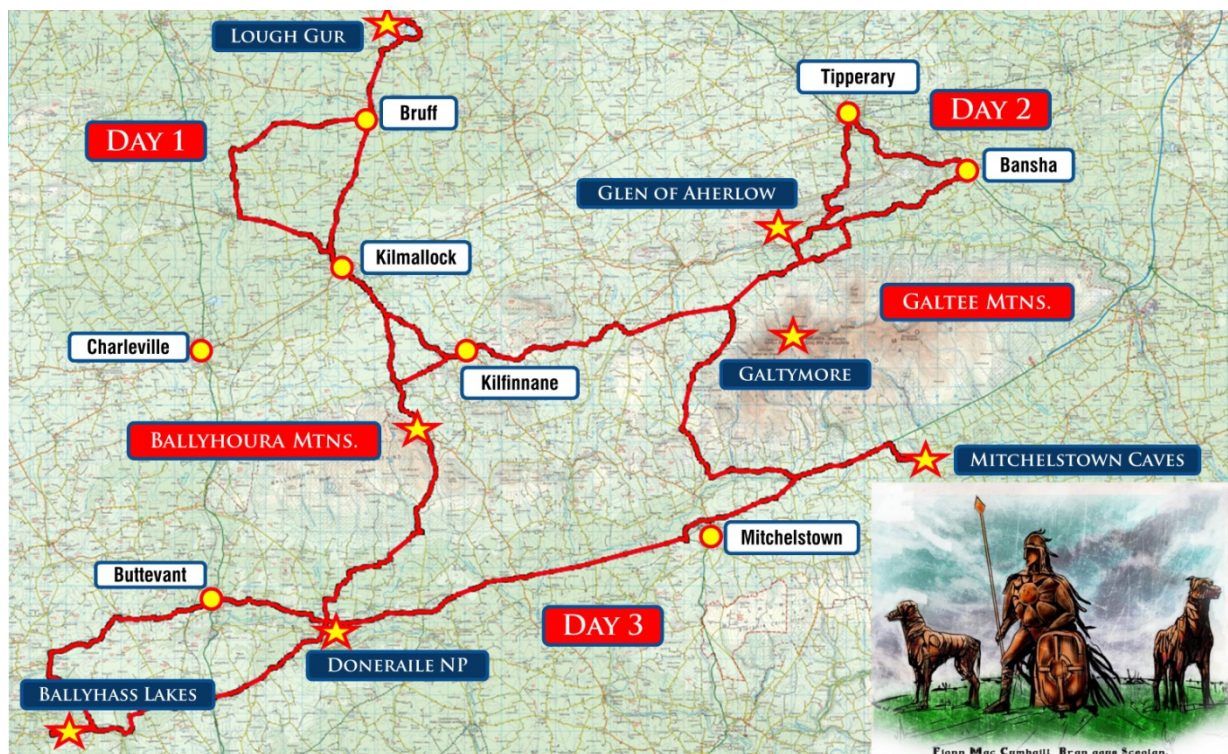
**Areas of Interest:** Activities, Adventure, Heritage

**Themes:** Mythology, Folklore, Ancient Ireland, High Kings and Heroes, Castles and Conquests, Sacred Ireland

**Length:** 250 km or 150 miles

**Duration:** 3 Days

**Bed Nights:** 3 to 5 night stay



Follow in the footsteps of Fionn MacCumhaill, the ancient hero of Irish Mythology and leader of the Fianna, the legendary band of ancient warriors who are said to have lived, hunted and roamed the mountains and valleys of the Munster Vales with their famous pack of 500 Irish Wolf Hounds. So much so, that there many places associated with Fionn including 4 mountains across the **Munster Vales** which bear the name 'Seefin Mountain' or Sui Finn in Irish/Gaelic which means Seat of Fin (or Fionn). The Iron Age 500BC to 300AD in Ireland's Ancient past is associated with the heroic tales of the Fianna and whether you believe in the stories of Irish Mythology, the fact remains that these stories and place names have lasted millennia and will last long into the future.

**Day 1 - 25 Miles (40km):** Only a short distance from your accommodation in the Ballyhoura area, hit the **Ballyhoura Mountain** trails on a mountain bike or on foot to the summit of **Seefin Mountain** (528m) which overlooks the Munster Vales and Glenosheen or the 'Glen of Oisín'. Oisín was Fionn MacChumhaill's son by his first wife Sadhbh and was a poet and warrior who recounted the legends of the Fianna, saving them for future generations. With hunger setting in, travel north through the medieval walled towns of **Kilmallock** and **Bruff** and awaken over 6,000 years of life in Ireland ancient past at the fascinating **Lough Gur**. From the largest stone circle in Ireland and western Europe, the stunning **Grange stone circle** at 50m (160feet) in diameter to the 6,000 year old Neolithic settlements where some of Irelands first farmers tended their crops, we quickly realise that we know very about little of how these people lived, what language they spoke, what clothes they wore and what they believed in. If you're not superstitious, have a unique and magical picnic lunch in the centre of the stone circle. Returning to **Bruff**, step back in time into an old phone box at the **Old Irish Ways** museum. The **Golden Vale** and **Ballyhoura Drives** will finally bring you back for a good meal and entertainment before a good night's rest!

**If you have more time or stay an extra night (s):** Try the horse riding in Ballyhoura or Kayaking on **Lough Gur**. Follow in the footsteps of John F (Fitzgerald) Kennedy's ancestors on the **Fitzgerald Trail** in Bruff, try **Lazy Dog Clay Bird Shooting**, learn how apple juice is made at the **Ballyhoura Apple Farm**, take a Guided Tour of **Griston Bog** or visit the unique **Carrighenry Fort**, one of only a few Inland Promontory Forts in Ireland. For something different, ask someone local to point the way or guide you to the **Secret Diving Pool** near Kilfinnane or try your hand at the old sports of **Road Bowling** or **Hurling**. More options can be added here, if required or requested.

**DAY 2 – 40 miles (65km):** Once an important route between Limerick and Tipperary in the distant past, the **Glen of Aherlow** is now a lush quiet country valley between the rising majestic Galtee Mountains to the south, the low wooded slopes of the Slievenamuck mountains to the north and the villages of **Bansha** and **Galbally** at either end. An early start is recommended to take on a guided hike to the summit of **Galtymore Mountain** (919m/3,015ft), Ireland's highest inland mountain. Your **local walking guide** will navigate the best route, tell local stories, point out the stunning views on offer and the best place for refreshments after. Enjoy a packed lunch on the summit and if the weather is good, you can see all the way to Torc Mountain in Killarney, Co. Kerry exactly 100km away and the summer hunting grounds of the Fianna. With tired legs, you can freshen up before driving the R664 over the **Slievenamuck** mountain ridge with stunning views of the Munster Vales below. Slievenamuck (Mountain of the Pig) gets its name from the story of when the hero Fionn MacChumhaill gave chase and speared a rampaging sow on these hills. It is also said that Diarmuid and Gráinne made love on the ancient Slievenamuck Megalithic Tomb after they fled from Fionn, who was to marry Gráinne after she won a race to the top of the nearby **Slievenamon Mountain**. From here continue onto **Tipperary Town** where you can wander the historic town walks and enjoy a coffee before you decide where to have dinner, maybe some traditional music and accommodation in the area.

**If you have more time or if you stay an extra night (s):** From the Slievenamuck Ridge you can or join the **Dolmen Loop Walk** to the huge ancient Megalithic Tomb at the summit of Slievenamuck (369m). Here you can also join some of the 90km long **Ballyhoura Way Walking Trail** which forms part of the 500km long **Beara Breifne Walking Trail** from Dursey Island in West Cork to Blacklion in Co. Cavan. Explore more of what Tipperary Town has to offer. More options can be added here, if required or requested.

**DAY 3 - 60miles (100km):** Our next stop is the wonderful **Mitchelstown Caves** where you can embrace Ireland's natural and geological heritage at one of Europe's major show caves on the lower slopes of the **Galtee Mountains** overlooked by the second Seefin Mountain of this trip or 'Seat of Fionn MacChumhaill' in the Munster Vales. Travelling west after a break in **Mitchelstown** you will unknowingly pass over the amazing remains of a 2,000 year old ancient earthworks wall known as **An Cliadh Dubh** or 'The Black Ditch'. This ditch was 24km long between the **Ballyhoura** and **Nagle Mountains**, 30 feet wide, 20ft deep ditches at either side and a 40-50ft high central mound reinforced with wood. Possibly similar to Hadrian's Wall in the UK, the reasons for its construction are unknown but it may have been a tribal boundary or to protect livestock from predators or rustlers. The charming **Doneraile National Park** now awaits you. Explore 160 Ha (400acres) of family friendly walking and cycling paths, woodland, walks, cycles, rivers, wildlife, a kids playground and more. Finally, if you fancy **wake boarding** in an old flood quarry and many more outdoor activities, then the **Ballyhass Lakes** awaits only 20 minutes away before your day is over.

**If you have more time or if you stay an extra night (s):** Visit the impressive **Labbacallee Wedge Tomb**, **Ballyhooly Castle** and the walks of **Corrin Hill** and **Barnane** near **Fermoy**, great fun on the river and land at **Blackwater Outdoor Activities** near **Blackwater Castle**, Castletownroche or explore the history of the **Nano Nagle Centre** near **Mallow**. The **Kildorrey Heritage Trail** is also a rewarding local experience. Although a small drive away, a guided hike on the **Coumshingaun Loop Walk** on Comeragh Mountains is one of Ireland's best and most scenic walks. More options can be added here, if required or requested.

#### Visitor Experience Bundle Basic Summary

Follow in the Footsteps of the Fianna		
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Stay in Ballyhoura Area	Stay in Glen of Aherlow Area	Mitchelstown Caves
Ballyhoura MTB or alternative	Guided Hike to Galtymore Mtn	Lunch
Lough Gur	Lunch at the summit	Doneraile National Park
Picnic Lunch in Stone Circle	Slievenamuck Scenic Drive	Wakeboarding Ballyhass Lakes
Bruff	Tipperary	Dinner & Entertainment
Dinner & Entertainment	Bansha	Stay in southwest of Munster
Stay in Ballyhoura Area	Dinner & Entertainment	Vales
	Stay in Glen of Aherlow Area	



### 3.1 Visitor Experience Bundle 2 – ‘Castles From Wave to Vale’

**General Route:** Waterford, Dungarvan, Carrick-on-suir, Fethard, Cashel, Cahir, Clonmel, Nire Valley, Clogheen, or Lismore. Visitors can start at any point along this route.

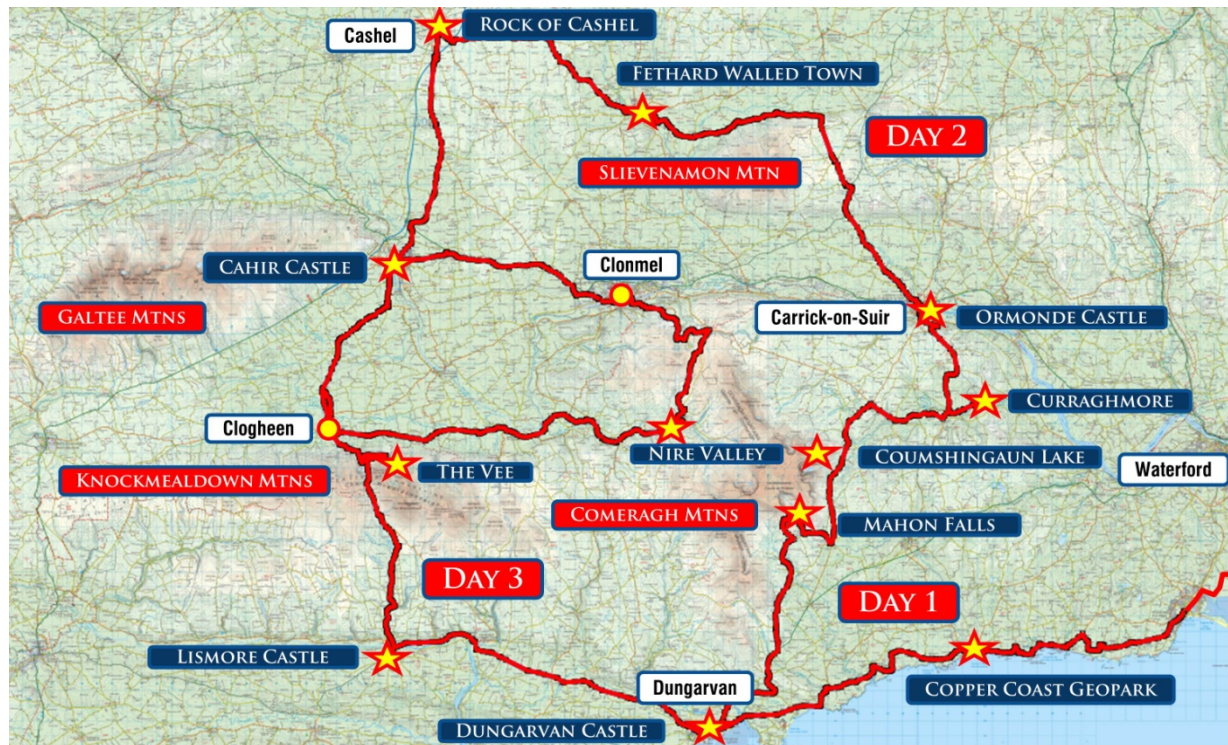
**Themes:** Castles and Conquests, Natural Heritage, Maritime Gateway, Ancient Ireland, Mythology, Ancient, Lakes, Vikings,

**Areas of Interest:** Castles, Heritage, Scenery, Adventure

**Length:** 300 km or 185 miles

**Duration:** 3 Days

**Bed Nights:** 3 to 5 night stay



**DAY 1 – 30 miles (50 km):** Experience over 460 million years of Ireland's Ancient geological history along the **Copper Coast** scenic drive to **Dungarvan** and find out more by visiting the **Geopark Visitor Centre** in **Bunmahon**. Once you are finished with rocks/geology, dip your toes in the waters of the **Bunmahon** Blue Flag beach before you arrive in the maritime town of **Dungarvan**. Some of Ireland's first settlers are said to have arrived via a land bridge from the UK to the green Dungarvan valley and Munster Vales area over 10,000 years while the rest of Ireland was enjoying the Ice Age. Enjoy free entry to the **Waterford County Museum** in Dungarvan where they reveal the fascinating nearby finds including ancient human skeletons and amazingly the bones of a Woolly Mammoth, Giant Deer (Irish Elk), Reindeer, Lynx, Grisly Bear, Brown Bear, Lemming and more who roamed this area of southern Ireland during the last Ice Age. Next, it's time to hire a bike and swap ancient history for a two wheeled adventure and picnic lunch along the stunning new **Deise Greenway** walking and cycling route. If cycling is not your thing, you have the option to join or charter a boat for a fishing, bird watching, diving or sightseeing trip along the coast. On your return in the afternoon enjoy with free entry to **Dungarvan Castle**, built in 1185 by King John of England as a Royal Castle, browse the **Old**



**Market House Arts Centre** and here about the local stories of an assassination attempt on the infamous Cromwell in the 1600's and the unusual shipwreck story of the 1895 Moresby Disaster where the crew firstly refused rescue before 20 people drowned and 5 saved. In the evening take a tour of the **Dungarvan Brewing Company** and learn about the ingredients, brewing process and the all-important beer tasting (pre-booking essential). After enjoy dinner, local traditional music and craic in a local pub or for something different, the local **Dungarvan Cinema** can organise private shows for groups outside of their regular timetable.

**If you have more time or if you stay an extra night (s):** Visit **Tankardstown mines** and try **surfing** or enjoy a lovely walk on **Bunmahon** or **Clonea Blue Flag Beaches** on the Copper Coast. If cycling is your thing why not take on one or more of the **Sean Kelly Cycling Routes** including the Coastal Route (73km/3hrs), The Heritage Trail (99km/6hrs), The Comeragh Challenge (160km/8hrs), The Kelly Legacy Route (105km/6hrs) or the Railway Loop (13km/1hr) which bring you from Youghal in the South to Clonmel in the north and Waterford to the east. More options can be added here, if required or requested.

**DAY 2 – 80+ miles (130km):** If you believe in Irelands Ancient fairy's, folklore and magic, then today is for you. Leaving Dungarvan early on the **Comeragh Drive**, follow the signs for **Mahon Falls** to find a section of this scenic drive known as the **Magic Road** where the Laws of Physics do not apply and fairy magic takes over. Parking with your engine off near an enchanted Fairy tree and large rock, amazingly, your car will travel backwards up the hill with no power! When you are finished defying gravity, enjoy a pleasant 15min walk to the inspiring 80m high **Mahon waterfalls**. From here you will have magnificent views before winding you way back down the hill to re-join the **Comeragh Drive**. Only 10mins away you pass the **Coumshingaun Lake**, formed by glacier movement during the last ice age and one of the best examples of a corrie lake in Europe. The cold water lake is a stunning natural amphitheatre surrounded by vertical cliffs up to 365m (1500ft) and for 40 years, **Jim Fitzgerald** (1891-1959) a WW2 veteran known as the '**Hermit of Lackendara**' lived and died in a cave at the edge of the lake. Next enjoy a break in the riverside town of **Carrick-on-Suir** and visit the beautiful **Ormonde Castle**, built in the 1560's by the Butler Family, it is the best example of an Elizabethan style manor house in Ireland. From here we continue around **Slievenamon Mountain** or 'Mountain of the Women' where two women are said to have raced to the top for the hero **Fionn MacChumhaill's** hand in marriage, with Gráinne the victor. A tour of the unique **Fethard Walled Town** is a must and great for lunch too. The town is filled with stories of 800 year old walls, a street cursed by Cromwell, ancient and intriguing **Sheela na Gig** carvings of naked women, Irelands oldest timber roof from 1489 (3 years before Columbus discovered America) and home of the famous **Cashel Blue Cheese** and more. The **Rock of Cashel** perched high the landscape is the jewel in the crown of the Munster Vales and **Irelands Ancient East** and a castle rivalling any in Europe. Filled with stories, tunnels and dungeons, most of what you see now dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The rock itself was the traditional seat of the High Kings of Munster from before the 4<sup>th</sup> Century and where in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century **St. Patrick** converted to the King to Christianity. Irish hero **Brian Boru** was

crowned Gaelic High King of Ireland here in 1002 and defeated the **Vikings** at the battle of Clontarf in 1014. According to folklore, the Rock upon which the castle is built was originally the top of the nearby Devil's Bit Mountain. It is said that Satan bit the top off this mountain while being banished from a cave by St. Patrick and dropped it in Cashel. A **guided tour** is recommended! From here you can stay the night in the Cashel area or travel onto Clonmel, Cahir, Ballymacarbry or Clogheen for the night.

**If you have more time or stay an extra night (s):** Visit **Curraghmore House and Gardens**, Ireland's largest private demesne at 5,000 acres and the historic home of the ninth Marquis of Waterford, the **De la Poers** family, who came from Normandy around 1170. The 1,000 acres of formal gardens contain Irelands tallest tree, a 55m (180ft) high Sitka Spruce; Irelands oldest bridge, **King John's Bridge** built in 1025 and also The Shell House built in 1751 containing shells from all over the world. In **Cashel** the **Cashel Folk Museum** and **Bru Boru** are well worth a visit with excellent displays and fascinating history and stories. More options can be added here, if required or requested.

**DAY 3 - 70miles (110km):** At the meeting point of Irelands ancient roads is the picturesque town of **Cahir** on the **River Suir**. Famous as a centre of excellence for fishing, it also has one of Irelands largest castles, **Cahir Castle** built in 1142 by Conor O'Brien taken over by the Butler Family in 1375. Enjoy a guided tour of the castle and after enjoy a lovely 2km walk along the banks of the River Suir to the equally impressive **Swiss Cottage**, an ornamental cottage with a distinctive thatched roof, spiral staircase and one of the first commercially available Parisian wallpapers was built in around 1810 by **Butler Family** as a daytime play retreat for the castle's residents. From here travel west to the town of **Clonmel** for a coffee break before traveling deep into the **Comeragh mountains** on a scenic drive nearly 450m/1500ft high before descending again to the secluded **Nire Valley** for lunch. From here head west to **Clogheen** before taking on **The Vee**, one of Irelands most scenic driving and cycling routes through the **Knockmealdown Mountains** and a place of great folklore stories such as **Petticoat Loose**, **The Witch of Baylough**, who haunts the nearby lake. The story goes that a tough local woman died during a drinking contest and was buried without a priest. She then haunted the village as a witch until a priest banished her to Bay Lough until such time as she 'empty it with a thimble'. With most of Europe in the dark ages, Ireland was experiencing an enlightened age, none more so than the charming town of **Lismore** on the **Blackwater River**, a famous 7th century ecclesiastical centre of learning compared to Constantinople at the time and part of **Irelands Ancient East**. With not one but two **Cathedrals**, a **monastery** founded by St. Carthage/Mochuda and more, the **Vikings** really took a shine to Lismore attacking it no less than 8 times. The towns showpiece is however **Lismore Castle and Gardens**, built in 1185 and now owned by the Duke of Devonshire, it has a real section of the Berlin Wall in the gardens and in the past has been home to many including Sir Walter Raleigh and Robert Boyle, 'Father of Modern Chemistry'.

**If you have more time or are staying an extra night (s):** Visit the picture perfect **St. Patricks Well** and the **Giants Grave** near Clonmel and Tipperary County Museum in the town itself. Enjoy a walk with a difference as you forage for wild foods growing in the Nire Valley using local ancient knowledge

with Sherpa Mick or alternatively walk to **Lough Coumfea** corrie lake. From the Vee you can join the 75km long **East Munster Way** (east) and the 95km long **Avondhu Way** (west) both of which form part of the 5000km long **E8 European Ramblers Walking Route** from Dursey Island in West Cork to Istanbul in Turkey. Visit the Old Courthouse interpretative centre and try your hand at archery in Lismore. Visit Cappoquin and Mount Malleray. Hire a walking guide to take you the **Coumshingaun Loop Walk** above the lake on the Comeragh Mountains. Although a small drive away, the **Strancally Castle** near Youghal, built in the 14th century had a famous 'murdering hole' trapdoor bed for unsuspecting visitors!!!

#### Basic Summary of Visitor Experience Bundle

Castles From Wave to Vale		
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Copper Coast	Comeragh Mountain Drive	Cahir Castle
Geopark Visitor Centre, Bunmahon	Magic Road	Swiss Cottage
Bunmahon Blue Flag Beach	Mahon Falls	Comeragh Drive
Waterford Country Museum	Carrick-on-suir & Ormond Castle	Nire Valley
Deise Greenway – Walk/Cycle	Lunch	Lunch
OR Boat Trip	Fethard Walled Town	The Vee Scenic Route
Lunch	Rock of Cashel	Lismore Castle & Gardens
Dungarvan Castle	Dinner and Accommodation	
Dungarvan Brewing Company		
Dinner		
Private Showing in Cinema		
Accommodation		

### 3.2 Visitor Experience Bundle 3 - St. Declans Way

**General Route:** Cashel, New Inn, Cahir, Ardfinnan, Clogheen, Knockmealdown Mountains, Lismore, Cappoquin, Aglish and Ardmore. Visitors can start or end the walk at any point along this route

**Themes:** Sacred Ireland, Ancient Ireland, Pilgrimage, Mythology and Folklore, Vikings, Castles and Conquests, High Kings and Heroes

**Areas of Interest:** Walking, Pilgrim Paths, Spiritual, Heritage, Scenery, Adventure

**Length:** 100km or 62 miles

**Duration:** 5 Days

**Bed Nights:** 3 to 7 night

stay



**Introduction:** Step back in time to **Ireland's Ancient past**, where the 'Annals of the Four Masters' from AD 123 speak of five straight principal highways or 'slighe' (roads) radiating from the sacred Hill of Tara and the seat of the High King of Ireland, to the various provincial capitals of Ancient Ireland. Evidence of earlier ancient trackways from before 2,000 BC have also been found throughout Ireland suggesting that from the principal highways radiated more ancient roads and old straight trackways built and used by **Neolithic Traders** to travel across Ireland. With more and more farming and other works, we have now lost many of the old ancient paths and trading routes which crisscrossed Ireland connecting places of importance. Like many unknown aspects of Ireland's ancient prehistory, it is speculated some of the extremely straight rural roads that we now use across Ireland today may in fact have been built upon these ancient roads. Another theory is that many of the ancient sites,

structures and monuments such as standing stones are located in elevated areas which command wide views of the countryside and so may be aligned to these ancient straight roadways, thereby acting as signposts and navigation aids to Irelands prehistoric people travelling long distances across the country.

The modern **St Declans Way Pilgrim Route** is 100km or 60mile long and combines the ancient and sacred roads of '**Rian Bó Phadraig**' meaning 'Track of St. Patricks Cow' from **Cashel** to **Lismore**, '**Bothar na Naomh**' (Road of Saints) from Lismore to Cappoquin, '**Casan na Naomh**' (Path of the Saints) and **St Declan's Road** to **Ardmore** and where possible, it tries to remain faithful to these ancient highways.

The '**Rian Bó Phadraig**' is said to be an ancient ecclesiastical road from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century, linking the ancient ecclesiastical centres of Cashel in Co. Tipperary and Lismore in Co. Waterford. Where the Rian continues southwards from Lismore to the ecclesiastical centre of Ardmore suggests an association with **St. Declan** of Ardmore (350-450 A.D) who preached Christianity in Cashel and the surrounding area prior to **St. Patrick** in the late 5<sup>th</sup> century and is said to have driven his chariot from Ardmore to Cashel which was in turn connected to the primary sites in Thomond (Limerick), Kerry and strongholds of the Decies (Waterford). Like all oral histories and folklore, there can be many versions of a story. First appearing in the written history in 1746 after centuries as Irish oral folklore, the story goes that a white cow owned by St. Patrick in Cashel had her calf stolen and taken to Ardmore in Waterford. The frantic and furious cow gave chase and had the magical ability to plough two deep trenches across two counties using its horns, thereby creating the ancient road known as the '**Rian Bó Phádraig**' or 'Track of St Patrick's Cow'.

This experience outlines the first 3 days of **St Declans Way Pilgrim Path** from Cashel to Lismore which passes and meets sites of ecclesiastical, historical and local interest. Each day is approximately the same equal length and duration which helps to allow everyone irrespective of fitness or time available to experience one of Ireland most interesting pilgrim paths. With the almost 90% of the walk on road, navigation is not an issue for self-guided walkers and importantly, luggage transfers, transport, packed lunches and evening meals can be arranged by your accommodation. If you have more time, it is highly recommend that you continue all the way to Ardmore.

**DAY 1 - 22km (14 miles) from Cashel to Cahir:** Overlooking the surrounding countryside is the **Rock of Cashel**, the traditional seat of the High Kings of Munster and important ecclesiastical centre from the time of **St. Declan**. Most of what you see dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> including the cathedral, chapel, tower and churches and a guided tour is a must before you leave the Rock behind, travelling south along quiet country roads on **St. Declans Way**. From here the route meets or passes close to various sites of interest including **Hore Abbey** and **Ráth Na Drinne** or 'Fort of the Contest', a ring fort like no other in Ireland with a massive potential for discoveries. Used over 3,000 years ago, it is quite rare because it has three rings with an interior area so vast maybe 300-400m diameter, it resembles a sports arena. Passing the half way point, the village of Newinn, you stroll by further ruins of castles and churches including **Castle Coyne** and a nearby Ring Fort before arriving in the picturesque town

of Cahir on the River Suir famous for **Cahir castle**, the Swiss Cottage, fishing and more. With Day 1 over, it's time to relax, have dinner, a stroll around town and maybe some evening entertainment.

**DAY 2 - 19km (12miles) from Cahir to near Goats Br:** After waking up and enjoying a nice breakfast, **St Declans Way** follows the lovely 2km walk along the banks of the **River Suir** to the picture perfect **Swiss Cottage**, an ornamental thatched cottage built in around 1810 by Butler Family as a daytime play retreat for the castle's residents and the nearby **St. Patricks Stone**, an ancient Ballaun Stone, possibly used for rituals and ecclesiastical purposes. Just over the half way point of Day 2 is **Ardfinnan** or 'Hill of Finnian', another ecclesiastical centre and an important ancient crossing point of the Suir River which is overlooked by **Ardfinnan Castle** from 1186, the ancient **Rath Ard** or 'The High Fort' and is where St. Finnian 'The Leper' founded a monastery around the 6<sup>th</sup> century. St Declans Way now combines with the **Tipperary Heritage Way walk** Trail as you pass the ruins of a **famine hospital** from 1846 and **Lady's Abbey** a 14<sup>th</sup> century Carmelite Friary. On the approach to the **Knockmealdown Mountains** you cross the **River Tar** on a footbridge and end Day 2. Your local accommodation will arrange to pick you up and drive the 5 mins back to this lovely village for food, entertainment and a nice place to rest the night.

**DAY 3 - 19km (12miles) from Goats Br to Lismore:** Again transport will be arranged to the start of the walk near Goats Bridge where a more strenuous walk on the actual ancient path into the **Knockmealdown Mountains** awaits. St Declans Way now rises to 540m/1800ft to the important high mountain pass of Bearna Cloch an Bhuideil or '**Bottleneck Pass**' between **Knockmealdown Mtn** (Slave of the Church Hill) at 794m and **Knocknagauv Mtn** (Hill of the Bones) at 655m. One the route you will pass 'Na Staighri' or '**The Stairs**', an old road used to access turf bogs and the ruins of Seipeal na hUltach, an ancient church. On the lower slopes the walk arrives at the **Blackwater River** and **Lismore Bridge** built in 1775 where you enter the picturesque town of Lismore, a famous 7th century ecclesiastical centre of learning compared to Constantinople at the time and a great place to end this section of St. Declans Way. With not one but two Cathedrals, a monastery founded by St. Carthage/Mochuda and more, the **Vikings** really took a shine to Lismore attacking it no less than 8 times. Lismore Castle and Gardens, built in 1185 is spectacular and now a key stop on **Irelands Ancient East**. It contains a real section of the Berlin Wall and has been home to many famous people in the past including **Sir Walter Raleigh** and **Robert Boyle**, 'Father of Modern Chemistry'.

#### Basic Summary of Visitor Experience Bundle

St Declans Way		
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Stay in Cashel area - Start walk	Swiss Cottage	Transfer to Trail
Rock of Cashel	St Patricks Stone	Knockmealdown Mountains
Hore Abbey	Ardfinnan Castle	Bottleneck Pass
Rath Na Drinne	Rath Ard	Knockmealdown Mtn – 794m
Lunch – possibly in Newinn	Old Famine Hospital	Knocknagauv Mtn – 655m
Cahir Castle	Lady's Abbey	Blackwater River
Dinner	River Tar	Lismore Bridge and more
Stay in Cahir area	Transfer to Accommodation	Lismore Castle and Gardens



## Proposed Sample Itineraries / Bundles by Workshop Attendees

# Sample Scenic Driving Tour featuring Cappaquinn and Lismore

9 am - Depart the beautiful scenic harbour town of Dungarvan

Take the N72 toward Cappaquinn passing the Monument to the famous greyhound Master McGrath

*Master McGrath was born in [County Waterford, Ireland](#). A small, weak pup, he went on to become the most celebrated and successful dog of his time. Master McGrath was born in 1866 at Colligan Lodge, the home of James Galwey, a well-known trainer and owner of [greyhounds](#). Master McGrath was one of a litter of seven pups and although small was powerfully built. As a pup his pet name was "Dicksey". He won the [Waterloo Cup](#) on three occasions, 1868, 1869 and 1871 and was the first greyhound to do so. He became such a [celebrity](#) that his owner [Lord Lurgan](#) was asked to take him to be seen by [Queen Victoria](#) and the Royal Family. His success enabled his owner to build a terrace of houses in [Walthamstow](#) from Master McGrath's winnings. These houses now form part of Shernhall Street, but are still clearly marked at one end of the terrace as "Master McGrath Terrace".*

10 am - Arrive at Barron's Bakery, Cappaquinn using the same oven that they used 100 years ago. Take a tour with the owner and have tea and coffee  
€5.00 for tour including free blaa - Tea & Coffee extra

11.30 am - Continue on the N2 to Lismore passing the Kitchen Hole where the river Blackwater makes a turn toward the sea

12 noon - Arrive in Lismore and take photos in front of the iconic Lismore Castle

Take in the History of this fantastic historic town at the Lismore Heritage Centre where your host Brother Declan will take you on a journey of discovery (30 mins) €5.00 per person

Visit Lismore Castle Arts and Gardens €8.00 per person (45 mins – 1 hr). There is a joint ticket for both at €10.00 available at the Heritage Centre

1.45 pm - Lunch at Lismore House Hotel – 2 courses plus tea and coffee €15.00 (other restaurants are also available depending on the size of the group)

3 pm Depart Lismore in the direction of Knockanore, along by the river Bride join the N25 at Youghal bridge. Along the way there are opportunities to visit:

- Dromana House and Gardens owned by the Villers Stewarts family, or
- Ballinatray Gardens, and the
- Site of Molana Abbey, said to be the burial place of Ramond Le Gross

**Molana Abbey** is a 6th-century Abbey located on the south coast of [Ireland](#) in the [Diocese of Waterford and Lismore](#), near [Youghal](#). The abbey lies on an island in the [River Blackwater](#). The monks of the monastery helped co-edit [Collectio canonum Hibernensis](#) in the 8th century. It came under the control of the [Augustinian order](#) in the 13th century before being seized by the [English](#)

[Crown](#) during the [Reformation](#) and gradually falling into ruin. A disciple of [St. Carthage](#), called Máel Anfaid, founded the monastery on an island called Dair Inis on the [River Blackwater](#) in the sixth century.<sup>[7]</sup> Little is known of the founder but it is thought he could have lived to at least 608 AD.<sup>[8]</sup> The early monastery was recorded as having an extensive library including [Greek Vulgate](#) and [African councils](#) resolutions.<sup>[9]</sup> Although it can also be assumed that, as with many other Irish monasteries, Molana was a victim of raids by [Vikings](#), no such records of any attacks have survived. In particular, the prominent location near the mouth of the River Blackwater makes the chances of an attack even likelier.<sup>[10]</sup>

Following the [Norman Invasion of Ireland](#) in 1169, the monks befriended [Raymond Fitzgerald](#), who was one of the Norman commanders of the invasion. FitzGerald provided support to the monastery and it is thought he was buried there sometime between 1185 and 1198.<sup>[11]</sup> The monastery was extensively rebuilt in the 13th century and became an [Augustinian](#) abbey, when it is claimed that the abbey had an international reputation for scholarship. By 1462 the monastery was reported to still have a large number of monks caring for the poor and sick, despite it being in poor structural condition. Later, in 1475, it was reported that the monastery was still impoverished but continuing to function.

Late Afternoon – Take the N25 to Ardmore and overnight at The Cliff House Hotel Ardmore. For rates, visit: [www.thecliffhousehotel.com](http://www.thecliffhousehotel.com)

Other Options include:

Waterford County Museum – preserving and promoting the history of the locality with photographic archive, fascinating stories of the people and genealogy archives particularly featuring the story of The Newfoundland Emigrant Trail

Dungarvan Castle - an Anglo-Norman fortification founded in 1185

The Comeragh Drive featuring Mahon Falls and the Magic Road

The Copper Coast Drive featuring the UNESCO Copper Coast Geopark, Walking and Cycling Trails

The Vee Gap - in the Knockmealdown Mountains is famous for its panoramic views of the Golden Vale

The Waterford Garden Trail

Mount Melleray, Cappaquinn – the home of the Cistercian Monks in their tranquil religious community

Enjoy Lady Louisa's Walk, Lismore

Kayak on the River Blackwater

Guided History Trip on the Blackwater River

St. Declan's Well, Ardmore





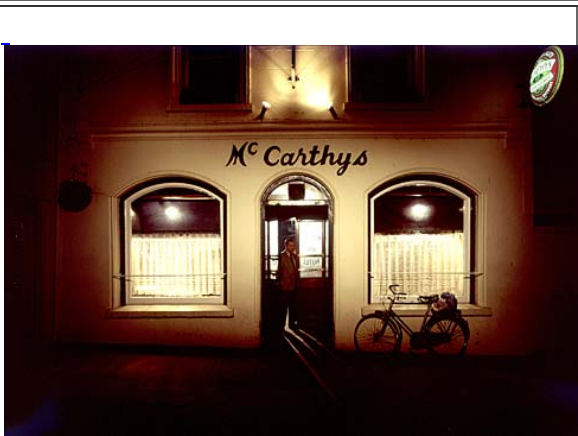
## Local Cycle Tour Company Itinerary


### Munster Vales Cycling Tours

#### Explore the Hidden Ireland of the Munster Vales

**\*SAMPLE\***

<p><b><u>DAY 1</u></b> <b><u>SATURDAY</u></b></p>	<p>Collection at airport and transfer to Cashel. Presentation by Joanne Hughes detailing historical sites that you will see during the week- Tour of Rock of Cashel – lunch Cafe Hans - then cycle Cashel to Cahir via St. Declans way – Exhibition at Craft Granary – Dinner and Stay Cahir House</p>	
<p><b><u>DAY 2</u></b> <b><u>SUNDAY</u></b></p>	<p>Galtee Ring Day 1 Cahir – Bansha- Galbally– Kilmallock - Ballyorgan  Cycle through The Glen of Aherlow - This is a quiet country valley, secluded but not isolated. Bounded by Slievenamuck and The Galtee range  Stay Ballyhoura Forest Luxury Homes</p>	
<p><b><u>DAY 3</u></b> <b><u>MONDAY</u></b></p>	<p>Ballyhoura Day A break from the road today to spend the day at Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trails - the largest trail network of its kind in Ireland. 98 km of trails including forest road climbs, tight twisty single-track with loads of ups and downs. Stay Ballyhoura Forest Luxury Homes</p>	

<p><b><u>DAY 4</u></b> <b><u>TUESDAY</u></b></p>	<p>Galtee Ring Day 2 Ballyorgan – Mitchelstown – Ballyporeen - Clogheen – dinner and overnight at The Old Convent gourmet hideaway - Optional Fly Fishing Demo</p>	
<p><b><u>DAY 5</u></b> <b><u>WEDNESDAY</u></b></p>	<p>Knockmealdown Ring  Clogheen – The Vee - Lismore – Cappoquin - Ballymacarbry – Clonmel  Cycle through The Vee - breath-taking panoramic views through the pass. The journey rises to about 2,000 feet (610m) above sea level at <b>Bay Lough</b>, giving wonderful views of a portion of the 'Golden Vale' - between the Knockmealdown and Galtee Mountain Ranges .- onto Clonmel - Minella Hotel Spa for a well deserved rest</p>	
<p><b><u>DAY 6</u></b> <b><u>THURSDAY</u></b></p>	<p>Slievenamon ring Quiet bye roads cycle Clonmel – Powerstown - Ballypatrick - Killusty - Cloneen – Fethard Picnic from James Whelan – Farewell drinks at world famous McCarthy's Bar. McCarthy's success is based on a mix of the old and the new. The interior is unchanged since Richard McCarthy opened for business in the 1850's. Back to Clonmel</p>	

<p><b><u>DAY 7</u></b></p> <p><b><u>FRIDAY</u></b></p>	<p><b>Comeragh Ring</b> The Comeragh Tour's route travels approximately 100km around the very scenic Comeragh Mountains. Starting in Clonmel the peloton will travel to Dungarvan and onto Lemybrien. After Lemybrien the cyclists will have the choice to climb the iconic Mahon Falls or to continue on to Carrick on Suir. In Carrick there will be the second optional climb of Seskin Hill. Seskin Hill is a short but very sharp climb with the gradient maxing out at about 25% as you approach the golf course at the top. The two optional climbs were made famous by the likes of cycling legends Sean Kelly, Stephen Roche, Martin Early, to name but a few, on the Nissan Classic – the then Tour of Ireland. Then onwards to Clonmel - transfer to airport</p>	
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### **Our Price includes the following:**

7 Nights in "Irish Tourist Board" approved hotels and guesthouses. Typically 4 star or equivalent  
7 full evening dinners, 4 courses.  
Slide Show and Video presentation, detailing historical sites.  
Breakfast is included for each day of the tour  
Mobile phone and 10€ call credit for duration of tour.  
All drinking water, and energy bars required while cycling.  
Transfer from Airport or Train Station at start and finish of your tour.  
Daily luggage transfer.  
Visits to selected historical sites throughout the week  
2 support busses & motorcycle backup available at all times to group throughout tour.  
Trek 4300 disc brakes, suspension forks with 24 gears available sizes 13", 16", 18", 19.5", 21.5", 22.5", 24" Such a wide variety of frame sizes ensures a perfect fit.  
Detailed itineraries and maps.  
Local guides.  
All taxes included in tour price.

## Local Walking Tour Company Itinerary



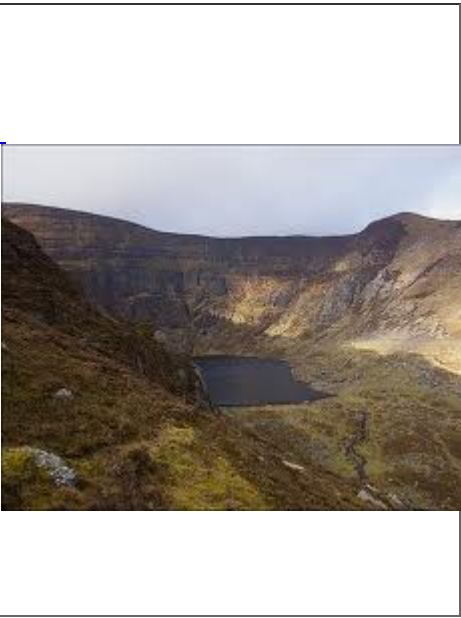

### Twin Valley Walking Tours

#### Explore the Hidden Ireland of the Twin Valleys National Park

**\*SAMPLE\***

<p><b><u>DAY 1</u></b> <b><u>SATURDAY</u></b></p>	<p>Presentation by Joanne Hughes detailing historical sites that you will see during the week- Tour of Rock of Cashel – lunch Cafe Hans - then Walk Cashel to Cahir via St. Declan’s way –Exhibition at Craft Granary – Dinner at Galileo-Swiss cottage evening walk - Music at Irwin’s – Stay Cahir House</p>	
<p><b><u>DAY 2</u></b> <b><u>SUNDAY</u></b></p>	<p><b>Galtees Day 1</b> Bus transfer to Aherlow House Aherlow House Loop – Rock an Torabh Visit Mandy Parlow's ceramics studio Lunch Aherlow House with Michael Moroney local guide and raconteur Afternoon Lake Muskry with optional GPS training Photography talk Jimmy Barry Stay Aherlow</p>	
<p><b><u>DAY 3</u></b> <b><u>MONDAY</u></b></p>	<p><b>Galtees Day 2</b> Stand tall atop the lofty 919m- summit of Galtymore and traverse the ridge to Galtymore Stay Aherlow</p>	



<p><b><u>DAY 4</u></b> <b><u>TUESDAY</u></b></p>	<p><b>Ballyhouras</b></p> <p>Bus transfer to Kilfinane</p> <p>Choice of hiking Ballyhoura half marathon trail or Mountain Biking in single track heaven</p> <p>Stay Ballyhoura Forest Luxury Homes</p>	
<p><b><u>DAY 5</u></b> <b><u>WEDNESDAY</u></b></p>	<p><b>Knockmealdown</b></p> <p>Bus transfer to Goatenbridge</p> <p>Scale five peaks in a single day in the Knockmealdowns</p> <p>– visit Baylough Cheese Farm– dinner and overnight at The Old Convent gourmet hideaway</p>	
<p><b><u>DAY 6</u></b> <b><u>THURSDAY</u></b></p>	<p><b>Comeragh</b></p> <p>Transfer to Mahon Falls Car Park</p> <p>Admire spectacular waterfalls and glacial lakes in the Comeraghs Climb</p> <p>Mahon Falls – picnic from James Whelan gourmet deli</p> <p>Climb Coumshingaum Perhaps the finest example of a corrie or coum in Europe</p> <p>– transfer to Clonmel- Butler Trail - Minella Hotel Spa</p>	
<p><b><u>DAY 7</u></b> <b><u>FRIDAY</u></b></p>	<p><b>Slievenamon</b></p> <p>Transfer to Kilcass</p> <p>Ascend Slievenamon and Farewell lunch at world famous McCarthy's Bar</p> <p>Learn to sing "Slievenamon" and tour of medieval walled town tour - transfer to airport</p>	

**Our Price includes the following:**

**Nights in "Irish Tourist Board" approved hotels and guesthouses. Typically 4 star or equivalent**

**7 full evening dinners, 4 course.**

**Slide Show and Video presentation, detailing historical sites.**

**Breakfast is included for each day of the tour**

**Mobile phone and 10€ call credit for duration of tour.**  
**All drinking water, and energy bars required while walking.**

**Gourmet packed lunch each day from Pat Whelan's award winning deli**  
**Transfer from Airport or Train Station at start and finish of your tour.**  
**Daily luggage transfer.**  
**Visits to selected historical sites throughout the week**