

Waterside wonders

With an abundance of activities, accommodation to suit all budgets, and heritage and culture just waiting to be explored, the Lough Derg Lakelands region offers a unique and enchanting holiday experience

Lough Derg
LAKELANDS

LAKELANDS &
inland WATERWAYS

Top 5 Family Days Out

Tired of hearing the words 'I'm bored' while on holidays. With so much to do in Lough Derg we guarantee that you'll only hear cries of excitement. Here are our favourite things to do with the family while visiting the region

1. Explore the countryside on four hoofs

Travel down quiet country roads, through woodlands and hills and view some truly magnificent sights. Riding centres are located in Whitegate, Clonlara, Nenagh and Slieve Aughty.

2. Go fish

Fishing For Kids is located in Ballina Killaloe in Co Clare. They offer day courses to introduce young people to fishing in a friendly and safe environment.

3. Relax on a Blue Flag Beach

Mountshannon Beach in Co Clare is a great location to swim, enjoy some water sports or build a sand castle.

4. Castles Galore

Packed with history and amazing views visit the castles in Nenagh and Portumna for an insight into life in centuries gone by.

5. Pack a picnic

Many of the lakeside parks in the Lakelands Lough Derg region have BBQ and picnic areas, playgrounds and plenty of open space for children to play. So why not explore Dromineer, Twomilegate, Mountshannon, Garrykennedy, Terryglass or Portumna?

What makes a memorable holiday? If you're planning a family getaway that often means plenty of fun and adventure.

For a holiday with friends, you'll no doubt be looking for a destination with plenty of atmosphere, pubs and stunning waterside restaurants. Or if you're thinking of whisking your loved one away on a romantic retreat you'll want comfortable accommodation, breath-taking scenery and lazy days by the lakeshore. But is there such a place in Ireland that offers the above? Anyone who has visited Lough Derg will already know the answer.

Situated on the southern reaches of the Lakelands and the River Shannon, Lough Derg is a magnificent area, with shores in counties Clare, Tipperary and Galway.

This mixture of waterside and inland areas results in a wonderful combination of action-packed harbour towns and traditional villages such as Portumna, Mountshannon, Terryglass, as well as the twin towns of Killaloe and Ballina, from which you can explore modern adventures and ancient folklores!

To the waters and the wild

The second largest lake in Ireland, Lough Derg and the surrounding area is home to innumerable water-based activities.

Hire a sailing boat at Shannon Sailing in Dromineer or let someone else do the driving and sit back and relax on-board a Spirit of Killaloe Cruise. To inject some culture into your boating experience why not take a guided tour with local historian Ger Madden who organises trips from Mountshannon Pier to the Holy Island where you can see the area St Patrick is said to have stayed.

Looking for something more action-packed? Why not try your hand at some of the high adrenaline water sports on offer. Everything from swimming to diving and water skiing to windsurfing is available. But if you want to try something a little different, choose Stand Up Paddle Boarding in Killaloe Ballina with Soulkite who offer basic lessons or lake tours for the more adventurous paddler.

The great outdoors

If you prefer to keep your feet firmly on the ground why not take on two of the most scenic walks Ireland has to offer: Lough Derg Way and East Clare Way. After all there is no better way to enjoy a region than to roam its countryside.

The Lough Derg Way is a 64 km stretch



beginning in Limerick City and follows the bends of the River Shannon all the way to the lakeside village of Dromineer. Along the way you will discover quaint towns such as the village of O'Briensbridge and Killaloe, which was once the home of Brian Boru, the high king of Ireland.

If you want something a little more challenging you can hire bikes and cycle the Nenagh Cycle loop. There are three routes to choose from, varying in distance, with the shortest comprising of 11 km and the largest 67km.

Alternatively, explore Portumna's lush Forest Park and Gardens. Located on the Northern shore of Lough Derg, the park spans 1,500 acres and is a great location for bird, fallow deer and red squirrel spotting. Be sure to pack a picnic, as this is a great place to wile away a sunny day and an



excellent location for a leisurely cycle or walk. Hire bikes at Murrays Cycle Hire in Portumna or bring your own.

If you're an animal lover be sure to make a stop at The Mountshannon Bird Hide a priority. This is one of the best places in Ireland to view White Tailed Eagles.

History at every corner

Over 100 heritage sites straddle the region. Heritage centres can be found in almost every town, along with Christian artefacts such as round towers and Celtic crosses. So if you're a history buff or just looking for some information on the area's past, where do you begin?

We recommend starting your historical journey at the heritage towns of Killaloe and Ballina. Killaloe in Clare is made up of charming narrow streets, flanked by old shops along the steep hill looking down over the 13th century St. Flannan's cathedral. The town was home to Brian Boru, the High King who united Ireland against the Vikings. Meanwhile, Ballina, located in Tipperary, was an important stopping point for barges travelling up the Shannon to Dublin to deliver their goods. However this began to decline when train lines were set





delicious home baked scones and cakes and a hot cup of coffee, you should stop off at one of the fantastic cafes in Killaloe or Ballina like The Wooden Spoon or Wood Brothers. The bustling town of Nenagh is only 6km from the lakeshore and offers an array of eateries like Country Choice, The Pantry and The Peppermill.

The Jewel of Lough Derg

Holy Island or Inis Cealtra in Co Clare is one of the most famous monastic sites in Ireland and a great option for a day trip.

The island holds an enormous amount of history and you will discover artefacts 7000 years old that have survived almost intact thanks to its island location. Its many attractions include a well, six churches, a Confessional, and a bargaining stone. The bargaining stone was used during the 18th century to seal deals including marriage contracts. Marriage vows are still renewed here today by the couple placing their hands through an opening in a stone about three feet long. Will doing this mean a long and prosperous marriage? You'll have to see for yourself!

For more information on everything Lough Derg has to offer visit www.discoverloughderg.ie

oldest building. In fact it's construction in the 13th century laid the foundation for the development of the whole town. Built of limestone rubble, the castle rises to a whopping 100 feet. It's a glorious structure to see. Climb the 101 steps to the top!

Portumna Castle and Gardens in Galway – which was built almost four centuries ago by the de Burgo family – is a beautiful and tranquil place to spend an afternoon. If you like gardening you won't be disappointed as the grounds feature a large variety of plants, trees and herbs.

Dine in style

The Lough Derg region has an extensive range of eateries on offer that will satisfy your appetite, whether you are looking for a sumptuous meal or light pub bites.

In the mood for Italian? Head to the Tuscany Bistro in the heart of Ballina Killaloe. For local, fresh produce visit The Derg Inn in Terryglass or Le Bouchon in Portumna, Co Galway.

And if you just want to relax with some



Photo courtesy of www.clarevirtually.ie



up to link it to other major lines.

Why not make your next stop St Cronan's church at Tuamgraney, this is the oldest church in continuous use in Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales. While here you can even see the doorway through which the legendary Brian Ború entered over 1,000 years ago.

Then it's time to visit real Irish castles. Nenagh Castle in Tipperary is Nenagh's

DID YOU KNOW?

- You can dive in a quarry with gin clear visibility at Portroe Dive Centre in Co. Tipperary
- Lough Derg Yacht Club in Dromineer is the third oldest in the world!
- According to folklore, Brian Bóru was named after the Beal Bóru Fort in Co Clare.

FREE THINGS TO DO

Keeping the family entertained throughout your holiday doesn't have to break the bank. Lough Derg has many free activities available that will keep you busy for a whole afternoon

1. Browse the local markets

There is no better way to enjoy a taste of your holiday destination than by visiting local markets and sampling some of the finest local produce in Nenagh, Killaloe, Mountshannon, Portumna and Scarriff.

2. Spend the day sightseeing

Drive the Lough Derg loop and take in the Arra Mountains in Co Tipperary from the Ballycuggeran woods in Co Clare or look across at Co Clare from the Look Out point at Portroe in Co Tipperary.

3. Become a culture vulture

Explore the Brian Bóru exhibition in the Brian Bóru Heritage Centre in Killaloe. It traces the story of Ireland's greatest king.

4. Take a hike

Walking is one of the best ways to fully appreciate the beauty of Lakelands Lough Derg. An abundance of looped, linear and way marked trails follow the River Shannon and loop around Lough Derg.

5. Go apple picking

Drop into Irish Seed Savers and visit the eight hectare site with beautiful organic seed gardens, orchards and woodlands.

Enjoy the festivities

A Taste of Lough Derg June-September

Throughout the summer a series of food events will take place showcasing the delicious food produced in the area. From chocolate making to cheese tasting, a mouth-watering event is guaranteed. www.atasteofloughderg.ie

Fleadh Cheoil Na Mumhan 13-19 July

Taking place in Nenagh, Co Tipperary, expect an action-packed programme featuring everything from indoor concerts to street sessions. www.munsterfleadh.ie

Terryglass Arts Festival 12-16 August

An eclectic mix of visual arts, music, film, workshops, comedy, street performance and food and crafts market.

Scarriff Harbour Festival 31st July-2nd August

A multi-disciplinary street festival combining music, entertainment, arts, children's activities and outdoor pursuits.

Boru 3 Peaks - Run, Walk or Crawl 10-11 October

Whether you are the speediest hill walker or a casual walker, you'll have a great time at this event in Killaloe Ballina. www.boru3peaks.com