

My name is Philomena McHugh. Archaeological Tour Guide.

I started studying archaeology in UCC in 2002, graduating in 2008. Most of my field work was done in counties Cork, Waterford and Tipperary.

I have a particular interest in ecclesiastical sites. My passion for archaeology developed when I worked as curator and tour guide at St. Mary's Collegiate Church, Youghal (now a National Monument) in the late 90's.

I am a native of Cork City originally, I have lived in Youghal for 21 years with my four sons. I also drive the school bus for children with special needs on a part-time basis.

The combination of my passion for archaeology ,love of walking, nature and the outdoors makes it very enjoyable for me to share these interests with other people

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Itinerary of Guided Tours

Ardmore

We will partake in a gentle stroll around the cliffs of Ardmore, and Rams Head, incorporating the story of St. Declan, the patron saint associated with the area, and all the sites associated with the Saint. It will be an archaeological tour including, snippets of local history and gems of local folklore. A cross-section look at the culture and social history of Ardmore.

Starting at St. Declan's Hermitage and Holy Well, we move along the cliff absorbing the breath taking ocean views, noticing the native flora and fauna, learning about local history e.g. shipwrecks, look out posts, another holy well and culminating in the fantastic 10th-12th century ecclesiastical site, a startling tribute to St. Declan.

We will see the best example of Round Tower architecture in the country, an early Romanesque cathedral with stunning iconography, and the oldest building on site-8th cent. St. Declan's Oratory.

A stroll down the hill and through the village brings us back to the sea front and a sighting of St. Declan's stone.

This tour is about 2 kilometers in total, will take about two hours and can be altered to suit individual preferences. Can be recommended as being invigorating and informative.

Itinerary for Knockmealdown Mountains, Lismore and River Blackwater

Visitor Options

To-day we will journey across the Knockmealdown Mountains. We will visit Mount Mellery, a modern day working monastery and a vibrant place of pilgrimage.

As we reach Lismore we will notice the awe inspiring 12th century castle built on the banks of the majestic River Blackwater. The renowned scientist Robert Boyle of "Boyles Law" was born here. We can take a stroll in the atmospheric walled garden of the castle.(€ 7)

From the castle garden we stroll through the village to the Cathedral of St. Carthage who founded Lismore in the 7th century. Here we will see the beautiful only pre- Raphaelite stained glass window in Ireland. Lots to see and investigate in this jewel of culture, including Celtic grave markers and an unusual 17th century tomb.

When we leave the cathedral we take a leisurely walk through the village to the local park where some pleasant surprises await us.

Other suggested places to visit en route
Dungarvan, the County Town of Waterford
The Scenic area known as The Vee
The Towers, a folly in the woods
Glencairn Abbey

All of these activities will occupy about 4 hours of your day and can be altered to suit individual preferences.

Itinerary of guided Tours

Youghal

18 Kilometers west of Ardmore, across the River Blackwater, is the historical walled town of Youghal. Youghal is also a sea-side town, boasting a 6 kilometer long, golden, sandy beach.

A walk through a network of medieval narrow streets will bring us to the ancient heart of this once famous port town. Here we will visit the 12th century Collegiate Church now a National Monument. We will visit the Boyle Chapel, where Richard Boyle Earl of Cork is encapsulated in an elaborate tomb.

Situated here also is the home of Sir Walter Raleigh, where he smoked the first tobacco and planted the first potato that he transported personally from "the new world". A maid threw a bucket of water over him whilst he enjoyed his smoke, because she thought he was on fire.

We can walk up through the graveyard, the only one in Ireland in constant use for over one thousand years to visit the town walls, built as defensive barricades originally and enjoy the views of the bay.

Other suggested places to visit

Views of the River Blackwater from Temple Michael

The Alms Houses

Tynte's Castle on Main Street

The Clock Gate

This tour will take 2-3 hours. Youghal is steeped in history and a visit to this town is educational and is a journey into our glorious past.

Itinerary for Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny, and South Tipperary Visitor options.

Our tour begins with a visit to Dungarvan, the market coastal town of county Waterford. We can then travel the coastal route to Waterford via the scenic UNESCO Copper Coast Geo Park. 25 kilometers of spectacular coastline.

A visit to the world famous House of Waterford Crystal is a must do whilst visiting this city. A stroll down the mall, past City Hall will bring you to Reginald's Tower, the 12th century oldest urban civic building in the country. Further down the working port we come to Christ Church Cathedral, a 10th century Viking founded site also here can be found Waterford Museum of Treasures.

If traveling on to Wexford we can take the ferry and travel the scenic coast road through Ballyhack, Arhurstown and Duncannon and on to the Hook Light House visitors centre, one of the oldest operational light houses in the world. Other attractions in County Wexford include Dunbrody Famine Ship, Ros Tapestry, Irish National Heritage Park, Irish Agricultural Museum, 1798 Rebellion Centre, John F. Arboretum, Johnstown Castle Gardens and The Kennedy Homestead.

If traveling to the medieval Kilkenny our first stop is the 12th century Kilkenny Castle, in a stroll through the beautiful, narrow, city streets, we will come across The Rothe House and Garden and St. Canice's Cathedral. Other attractions in Co. Kilkenny include, The Footprints in Coal exhibition at Castlecomer Discovery Park, The Dunmore Caves, The Woodstock Garden and Arboretum, and Jerpoint Abbey in Thomastown.

If traveling to South Tipperary, The Rock of Cashel is one of the most visited heritage sites in Ireland. Nearby is the musical Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Bru Boru Cultural Centre. Other attractions include a visit to the biggest inland town in Ireland -Clonmel to view The Main Guard, The West Gate and good shopping. The fairytale rustic Swiss Cottage in Cahir and The Ormond Castle in Carrick-on-Suir.

Itinerary for Cork City & Environs Visitors Options

A trip to Cork City, the second largest city in the Republic of Ireland, and according to "The Lonely Planet" publication one of the top ten cities in the world to visit.

We can visit the lofty tower of Shandon Church, where each visitor has an opportunity to ring the bells. Each bell weighs 6 ton's and is a very exciting experience. We can then go to the city centre for shopping and a visit to the English Market which was visited by the Queen of England.

Other City options, Crawford Art Gallery, UCC, St Finn Barres Cathedral.
Cork City Gaol, Blackrock Castle Observatory.

Near by the City is the Blarney Castle Estate, where it is traditional to kiss the Blarney Stone for the gift of the Gab.

Kinsale is a popular, picturesque town in the south west of Ireland. After a leisurely lunch at perhaps "Fishy Fishy" restaurant a trip to Charles Fort, a 17th century castle is worth a visit.

There are plenty of places to visit in this historic seafaring little town.

On our return journey we can travel through Cloyne and compare the Round Tower here to the one at Ardmore, and onto Ballymaloe House at Shanagarry in east Cork for refreshment.

Other suggested places to visit en route to Cork, would include:
St. Mary's Collegiate Church, Youghal opening time 10am.
Jameson Distillery Midleton, first tour 11.30 am.
Fota Wildlife Park opening 10am.
Cobh Heritage Centre 9am.