



# The Midlands

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## Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Bastion B&B (p478)
- ➔ Lough Key House (p475)
- ➔ Castle Durrow (p491)
- ➔ Roundwood House (p492)
- ➔ Maltings Guesthouse (p484)

## Best Pubs

- ➔ Oarsman (p469)
- ➔ Sean's Bar (p478)
- ➔ Giltraps Pub (p485)
- ➔ JJ Houghs Singing Pub (p486)
- ➔ Morrissey's (p491)

## Why Go?

Often passed through on the way to someplace more vaunted, the Midlands is brimming with verdant pastoral landscapes, stately homes, archaeological treasures and sleepy towns where the locals are genuinely glad to see you. Getting lost along the twisting back roads of these six counties is an unhurried pleasure and you're virtually guaranteed to happen upon a local village shop, pub, garage or post office and find it little changed in decades. It's refreshingly free of tour buses and souvenir stalls and well worth at least a pause in your journeys.

The Midlands is dominated by the River Shannon, which meanders through fields and forests, drawing boaters and fishers in shoals. Plush hotels and gourmet restaurants have sprung up along its banks, making it a wonderfully scenic and surprisingly cosmopolitan way to travel. If you're in search of a genuine slice of rural Irish life, this area makes the perfect retreat.

## When to Go

- ➔ Spring is a great time for revelling in Ireland's famous greener-than-green countryside, reflected in the many waterways and lakes; accented by fields of wildflowers.
- ➔ During summer, fairs, festivals and special events take place throughout the region as locals spend the long days outside.
- ➔ July through September is the ideal time for cruising the Shannon with everything open, better weather and a spirited summertime crowd in the riverside pubs and restaurants.
- ➔ Many museums and other attractions are closed or have greatly reduced hours during the short days from November to March.

- ➊ Slow down a gear and discover the rolling landscapes along the **Shannon–Erne Waterway** (p471).
- ➋ Contemplate the lost land of saints and scholars at Ireland's finest monastic site, **Clonmacnoise** (p486).
- ➌ Join in the locally sourced, seasonal-food revolution sweeping the Midlands at the **Gallic Kitchen** (p491) in Abbeylax.
- ➍ Roam the Georgian streets and explore the castle grounds in elegant **Birr** (p483).
- ➎ Learn about Ireland's greatest disaster at the harrowing Irish National Famine Museum at **Strokestown Park** (p473).
- ➏ Explore the Iron Age oak trackway unearthed at **Corlea** (p476).
- ➐ Wander the corridors and gardens of magnificent **Belvedere House & Gardens** (p480) and marvel at its spiteful history.
- ➑ Visit the emerald-green **Fore Valley** (p481), and discover impressive Christian ruins and other-worldly views.

