



# Day Trips from Dublin

## **Brú Na Bóinne p150**

Neolithic passage tombs that are a highlight of any visit to Ireland.

## **Glendalough p154**

The remains of an early Christian monastic settlement nestled in a beautiful glacial valley.

## **Howth p158**

Seaside village with terrific restaurants at the foot of a bulbous head with fine walks.

## **Enniskerry & Powerscourt Estate p160**

A Palladian mansion with a stunning garden and even better views of the surrounding countryside.

## **Castletown House & Around p161**

Ireland's largest Palladian home, built for the 18th-century's richest man.

## **Dalkey & Around p165**

Compact village by the sea with a nice harbour and coastal walks.



## TOP SIGHT BRÚ NA BÓINNE

The vast Neolithic necropolis known as **Brú na Bóinne** (the Boyne Palace), a thousand years older than Stonehenge, is one of the most extraordinary sites in Europe and a powerful testament to the achievements of prehistoric humans.

The area, 40km northwest of Dublin, consists of many different sites, with the three principal ones being Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. Allow plenty of time to visit: an hour for the interpretive centre alone, two hours if you wish to include a trip to Newgrange or Knowth, and a half-day to visit the interpretive centre and sites (Dowth is not open to tourists).

To get here, take the M1 north to Drogheda and then N51 west to Brú na Bóinne. Bus Éireann (return €12.90, 1½ hours, one daily) and Newgrange Shuttlebus run to the Brú na Bóinne visitor centre from central Dublin.

### Visitor Centre

The superb **interpretive centre**, whose spiral design echoes that of Newgrange, features an excellent series of interactive exhibits on all aspects of pre-Celtic history, including a full-scale replica of the burial chamber at Newgrange. There's a good film introducing the complex, a decent **cafe** (dishes €4.50-12; ☺breakfast & lunch; 📶) and a bookshop.

### Newgrange

The star attraction is **Newgrange**, with its white round stone walls topped by a grass dome. Just the size is impressive – 80m in diameter and 13m high – but underneath it gets even better: here lies the finest Stone Age passage tomb in Ireland, and one of the most remarkable prehistoric sites in Europe. It dates from around 3200 BC, predating the pyramids by some six centuries.

No one is quite sure of its original purpose. It could have been a burial place for kings or a centre for ritual – although the tomb's precise alignment with the sun at the time of the winter solstice also suggests it was designed to act as a calendar. Over time, Newgrange, like Dowth and Knowth, deteriorated and was at one stage even used as a quarry. The site was extensively restored in 1962 and again in 1975.

A superbly carved **kerbstone** with double and triple spirals guards the tomb's main entrance, but the area has been reconstructed so that tourists don't have to clamber in over it. Above the entrance is a slit, or roof box, which lets light in. Another beautifully decorated kerbstone stands at the exact opposite side of the mound. Some experts say that a **ring of standing stones** encircled the mound, forming a great circle about 100m in diameter, but only 12 of these stones remain, with traces of others below ground level.

Holding the whole structure together are the 97 boulders of the **kerb ring**, designed to stop the mound from collapsing outwards. Eleven of these are decorated with motifs similar to those on the main entrance stone, although only three have extensive carvings.

The white quartzite that decorates the tomb was originally obtained from Wicklow, 70km to the south – in an age before horse and wheel, it was transported by sea and then up the River Boyne – and there is also some granite from the Mourne Mountains in Northern Ireland. Over 200,000 tonnes of earth and stone also went into the mound.

You can walk down the narrow 19m passage, lined with 43 stone uprights (some of them engraved), which leads into the **tomb chamber** about one-third of the way into the

### DON'T MISS

- ➔ Newgrange
- ➔ Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre

### PRACTICALITIES

- ➔ ☎041-988 0300
- ➔ [www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie)
- ➔ Donore
- ➔ adult/child visitor centre €3/2; visitor centre & Newgrange €6/3; visitor centre & Knowth €5/3; visitor centre, Newgrange & Knowth €11/6
- ➔ ☀9am-5pm Nov-Jan, 9.30am-5.30pm Feb-Apr, 9am-6.30pm May, 9am-7pm Jun-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Oct