



Counties Meath, Louth, Cavan & Monaghan

POPULATION: 440,000 / AREA: 6387 SQ KM

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Best Places to Eat

- » MacNean House & Restaurant (p563)
- » Eastern Seaboard Bar & Grill (p550)
- » Coastguard Seafoods (p556)
- » Olde Post Inn (p561)
- » An Tromán (p545)

Best Places to Stay

- » D Hotel (p550)
- » Ghan House (p558)
- » Ross Castle (p562)
- » Hilton Park (p566)
- » Farnham Estate (p560)

Why Go?

The fertile fields of Counties Meath and Louth attracted Ireland's first settlers, making it the birthplace of Irish civilisation. Although the counties are now part of Dublin's commuter belt, their legacy endures at the mystical tombs at Brú na Bóinne and Loughcrew – both of which predate the Egyptian pyramids – and at Tara, gateway to the otherworld and seat of the high kings of Ireland. Following St Patrick's arrival, the faithful built abbeys, high crosses and round towers to protect their treasured manuscripts. Magnificent ruins throughout Meath and Louth still whisper tales of a time when Ireland was known as the Land of Saints and Scholars.

By contrast, the emerald hills and fish-filled lakes of Counties Monaghan and Cavan offer a far quieter pace. Outdoor activities abound in this little-visited corner of Ireland: boats cruise the Shannon–Erne Waterway, while walking trails take in the wild scenery and expansive views of the Cuilcagh Mountains.

When to Go

Many of Meath, Louth, Cavan and Monaghan's most famous sights have reduced hours or are closed altogether in the chilly low-season months (at least November to March). But once the daffodils appear and new leaves emerge on the trees, the area bursts into life. Tiny villages teem with visitors during dozens of festivals throughout the region in late spring, summer and early autumn. Festival highlights include several in Drogheda, such as its famous Samba Festival, and Carlingford's lively Oyster Festival.

Counties Meath, Louth, Cavan & Monaghan Highlights

- 1 Exploring the prehistoric remains at the ancient burial sites of **Brú na Bóinne** (p534), especially the dramatic dome of Newgrange
- 2 Soaking up the water views, slurping oysters and listening to live music in the medieval village of **Carlingford** (p557)
- 3 Rambling among the evocative ruins and mighty castle of the unassuming town of **Trim** (p542)
- 4 Following in the footsteps of poet and author Patrick Kavanagh on the quiet roads of **Inniskeen** (p567)
- 5 Shunning the crowds and setting out for the hilltop tombs of the **Loughcrew Cairns** (p546)
- 6 Discovering the secrets of the massive earthworks, passage graves and 'stone of destiny' at **Tara** (p539)
- 7 Checking out the art, architecture and bustling pubs of **Drogheda** (p547)
- 8 Reeling in fish from the lakes of **County Cavan** (p559)

