



County Clare

POP 117,000 / AREA 3147 SQ KM

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Why Go?

Clare combines the stunning natural beauty of its long and meandering coastline with unique windswept landscapes and dollops of Irish culture.

Rugged nature and the timeless ocean meet on the county's coast. The Atlantic relentlessly pounds year-round, eroding the rocks into fantastic landscapes, and forming sheer cliffs like those at the iconic Cliffs of Moher and strange little islands like those near Loop Head. There are even stretches of beach where surfers flock to the (chilly) waves. The Burren, an ancient region of tortured stone and alien vistas, stretches down to the coast and right out to the Aran Islands.

But if the land is hard, Clare's soul is not: traditional Irish culture and music flourish. And it's not just a show for tourists, either. In little villages such as Miltown Malbay, Ennistymon, Doolin and Kilfenora you'll find pubs with year-round sessions of trad music.

When to Go

➔ County Clare's pubs hum to the beats of trad sessions year-round, so even in winter you'll find the craic – often warmed, in the countryside, by a peat fire.

➔ While the unsettled seas of winter have a drama that will fill your days with moody idylls, the county literally shines during the more temperate months when long walks along the spectacular soaring cliffs of the coast and among the desolate rocks of the Burren don't require full foul-weather gear.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Buttermarket Cafe (p352)
- ➔ Linnane's Lobster Bar (p370)
- ➔ Naughton's Bar (p353)
- ➔ Vaughan's Anchor Inn (p358)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Rowan Tree Hostel (p340)
- ➔ Old Ground Hotel (p340)
- ➔ Sheedy's Country House Hotel & Restaurant (p364)
- ➔ Grogan's Castle Hotel (p369)



County Clare Highlights

- 1** Swoon to the music in the traditional pubs of **Milktown Malbay** (p355)
- 2** Lose yourself on the vast sweep of powdery sandy beach at **White Strand** (p355)
- 3** Delight in the amazing drives, walks and improbable offshore rocky outcrops of **Loop Head** (p354)
- 4** Find lost dolmens and abandoned abbeys among the rocky expanse of the Burren at **Carron** (p367)
- 5** Become part of the scene in the artful, tuneful town of **Ennistymon** (p357)
- 6** Go pub-hopping in musical **Ennis** (p338), where you can find nightly trad sessions on street after street
- 7** Catch a late-afternoon boat from **Doolin** (p361) to see the soaring **Cliffs of Moher** (p358) in all their radiant glory