

## 20

## Shannon River Route

Ireland's longest river provides a stunning backdrop to this route, but you'll also get out on the water. The car-ferry crossing from Tarbert in County Kerry to Killimer in County Clare takes just 20 minutes and, because the estuary is sheltered, you can usually look forward to smooth sailing.

### 1 Portumna

In the far southeastern corner of County Galway, the lakeside town of Portumna is popular for boating and fishing.

Impressive **Portumna Castle & Gardens** ([www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie); Castle Ave; adult/child €4/2; ☎9.30am–6pm Easter–mid-Oct) was built in the early 1600s by Richard de Burgo and boasts an elaborate, geometrical organic garden.

**The Drive** » From Portumna, cross the River Shannon – also the county border – into County Tipperary. Take the N65 south for 7km, then turn west onto the R493, winding through farmland. At Hogan's Pass, turn west on the R494, following it to Ballina (52km in all).

### 2 Ballina & Killaloe

Facing each other across a narrow channel, Ballina and Killaloe (Cill Da Lúa) are really one destination, even if they have different personalities (and counties). A fine 1770 13-arch one-lane **bridge** spans the river, linking the pair. You can walk it in five minutes, or drive it in about 20 (a Byzantine system of lights controls traffic).

Ballina, in County Tipperary, has some of the better pubs and restaurants, while Killaloe typifies picturesque County Clare. It lies on the western banks



of lower Loch Deirgeirt (the southern extension of Lough Derg), where it narrows at one of the principal crossings of the Shannon.

**The Drive** » Continue following the R494, then the M7 southwest to Limerick city (about 24km).



## TRIP HIGHLIGHT

**3** Limerick City

Limerick City straddles the Shannon's broadening tidal stream, where the river runs west to meet the Shannon Estuary. Despite some unexpected glitz and gloss, it doesn't shy away

**24** Mountains & Moors

Head 70km northwest of Portumna to discover County Galway's romantic landscapes.

**28** County Clare

It's just 25km north from Bunratty to Ennis for a tour of County Clare's cliff-framed coast, the otherworldly Burren and music-filled pubs.