

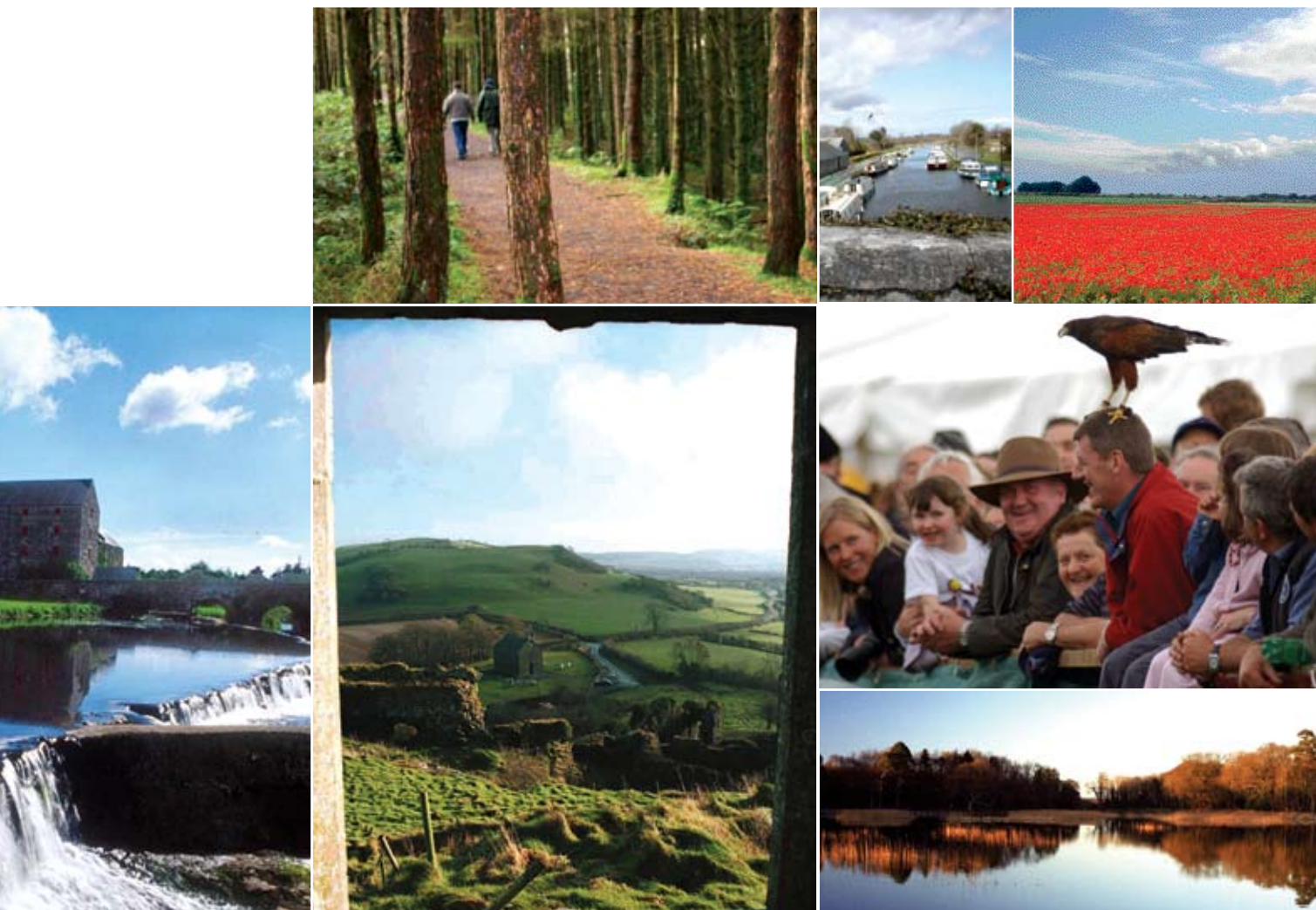


SOMETHING REAL,
SOMETHING AUTHENTIC,
SOMETHING TRULY OUT OF THE ORDINARY...



CONNECT WITH NATURE, DISCOVER THE PAST
IN THE PRESENT, LEARN A DIFFERENT WAY OF
LIFE, SURPRISE YOURSELF, COME TO LAOIS.





Just down the road from Dublin is one of Ireland's most surprising pleasures.

Laois, weathered by a turbulent past, rich in heroic mythology, crowned by the windswept Slieve Bloom Mountains, stretches in all its natural beauty across rivers, valleys and lush green countryside.

A county of rich contrast, Laois is a place for people who want a different experience of Ireland. A meeting point for ancient heritage and contemporary culture, for rural tranquillity and busy towns and villages, for sophisticated luxury and rustic simplicity, Laois calls out to people who want to experience...

**SOMETHING REAL,
SOMETHING AUTHENTIC,
SOMETHING TRULY OUT OF THE ORDINARY.**



heywood
gardens



aghaboe
abbey



emo court



donaghmore
museum



fisherman's inn



The story of Laois reveals itself quietly in its landscape. Its wild hills and river valleys bear the scars of a glorious and turbulent past, leaving behind over one thousand heritage sites and a tradition of rich mythology to be explored.

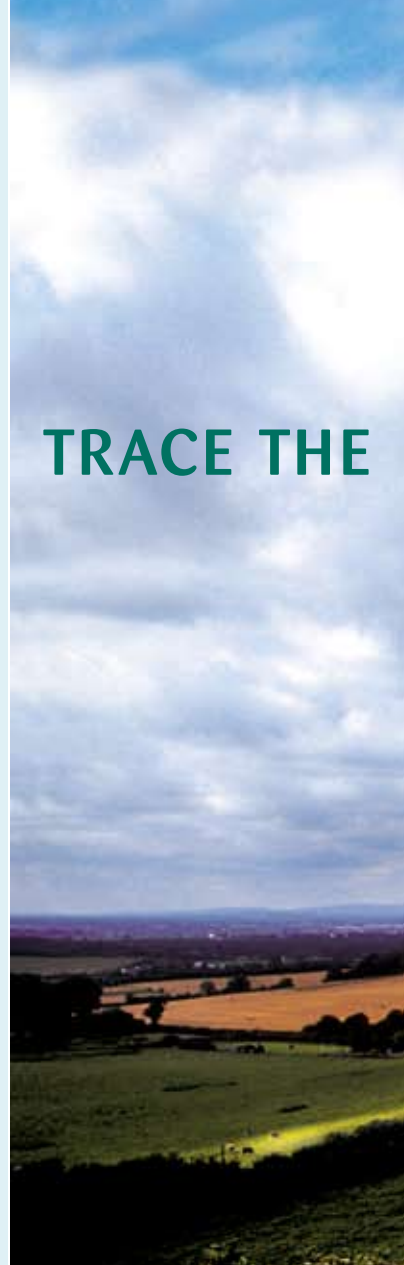
Laois is a proudly independent county and its vein of defiance can be traced throughout its history. From two thousand years ago when Irish tribes battled on the Great Heath of Maryborough, to the 12th century when the Rock of Dunamaise defended against fierce onslaughts by Norman invaders, to the 16th century when English settlers moved in, Laois has fought to retain its autonomy and its own individual culture.

Today, the echoes of the past call out to you at every turn. Many beautiful heritage sites have been restored for the public to enjoy such as Emo Court and Gardens, Timahoe Round Tower, Aghaboe Abbey and Heywood Gardens, while others have been sensitively restored such as Castle Durrrow. Another real treasure is the Rock of Dunamaise, a historic gem which has stood steadfastly through the centuries, peaceful yet powerful reminders of the past.

In more recent times, small museums and heritage centres have sprung up throughout the county. Often privately-run, these are an insight into an era through the eyes of passionate enthusiasts and should not be missed.

A full listing is available from the Portlaoise Tourist office.

TRACE THE





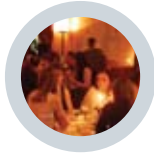
CONTOURS OF TIME

- The Great Heath of Maryborough is one of the most significant archaeological sites in Ireland
- Laois entered a Golden Age for its craftsmanship in the 17th century when Portlington became famous for the skill of its silversmiths
- Turbulent times continued for centuries while the great tribes of Ireland battled among themselves and the invading Normans
- Aghaboe Abbey, founded by St. Canice in the 6th century, marks the arrival of Christianity and the ruins of the Dominican friary survive today
- 8,500 years ago the first small bands of hunters passed through the county, shortly afterwards Ireland's first farmers settled in Laois
- Millions of years ago glacial activity scoured the valleys leaving the heather-clad Slieve Bloom's rising above the plains

There is a well-signposted and well-documented Laois Heritage Trail highlighting the various heritage sites throughout the county telling the story of Laois. (Brochure available from Portlaoise Tourist Office +353 (0)502 21178, or Laois County Council +353 (0)502 64000



musical nights



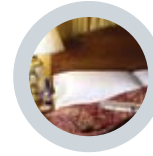
award winning
restaurants



fine food
producers



international
markets



wide range of
accommodation



WAKE UP TO LAOIS...



THE RISING SUN
GLOWS GENTLY
OVER THE SLIEVE
BLOOM MOUNTAINS,
WARMING THE
LANDSCAPE AS
IT STRETCHES
OVER FIELDS
AND VALLEYS,
WILDLIFE STIRS
IN HEDGEROWS
AND RIVERBANKS,
BIRDS CELEBRATE
A NEW MORNING,
ANOTHER DAY
BEGINS IN LAOIS.

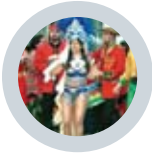


Will you wake up in a thatched cottage or a restored castle? A working farm or a country house? A converted stable or a horse-drawn traditional caravan? A friendly B&B or a luxury hotel? The rich history in Laois means that there are many wonderful places to stay, full of character and genuine hospitality.

On your travels, watch out for country markets with locally-made food. An antidote to fancy labels and fussy packaging, you will find something much more authentic in Laois; real, home-cooked wholesome food, local cheeses, farmhouse breads, home-made cakes, wild berry preserves and much more can be sampled, perfect for a picnic or a special gift.

After a day of exploring, you will find a range of fine restaurants tucked away in the most unexpected of places. From the living rooms of intimate family-run restaurants to the grand drawing rooms of country houses, from thatched cottages to converted banks, you can choose from a varied selection of award winning pubs, restaurants and accommodation where the experience is as much about personalities as hospitality.

The Passport to Laois guide is available from Portlaoise Tourist Office +353 (0)502 21178 or on request from www.laoistourism.ie. The guide highlights the many tourism attractions of the county as well as a detailed accommodation listing.



moundmellick
mardi-gras



dunamaisé
arts centre



laois school
of music



erkina
music festival



stradbally
steam rally
festival



dancing at the
crossroads



gordon bennett
vintage rally



REFRESHINGLY DIFFERENT...

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS LAOIS HAS BEEN A MEETING POINT FOR MANY CULTURES, TODAY IT IS AN EXCITING MIX OF LIVING CELTIC TRADITION AND CONTEMPORARY IRISH LIFE.



From old-time dancing and storytelling in local halls to the best of contemporary art and theatre in the Dunamais Arts Centre, a visit to Laois is a chance to experience a vast array of cultural events.

Some of Ireland's finest traditional musicians are from Laois, and a chance pint in a quiet pub may easily turn into a full-blown Irish seisiún! More recently, contemporary music festivals have been held in beautiful settings in Laois, showcasing the best of modern music in strikingly unexpected places.

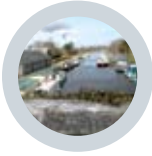
Festivals of all kinds occur throughout the year including the Irish Traditional Music and Dance Festival, Féile an Earraigh, Mayfest, The Gordon Bennett Rally, National Country Fair, The Ossory Show, Laois Fleadh Ceol, the Stradbally Steam Rally, the Electric Picnic and many more.

Early evidence of great craftsmanship is still evident in the exuberant doorway of the 12th century Killeshin Monastery and in the carved entrance to the Round Tower of Timahoe. In later years, Mountmellick Work became widely renowned for its quality and delicacy. This fine craft lives on today as a cottage industry unique to Laois. Many skilled craftspeople create beautiful individual work which can be found in studios and shops throughout the county and beyond.

Shopping is a pleasure in Laois. An eclectic mix of boutiques and family-run stores ensure that visitors to Laois will enjoy finding the original and the different in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.



visit www.laoistourism.ie for a list of the many annual festivals and special events throughout the county



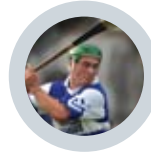
canal barges
at vicarstown



world class
golf courses



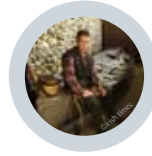
alternative
activities



sports at
o'moore park



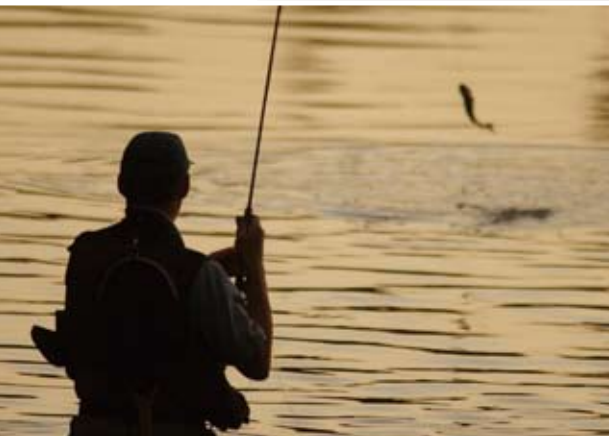
international
bowls



fly fishing
& shooting
museum



OFF THE BEATEN PATH...





If you love nature, you'll love Laois. Walking, cycling, horse-riding, golfing, fishing, polo, trekking, canal-cruising, it's all to be discovered in the beautiful and peaceful countryside.

Through heather-clad peaks, over ancient boglands and past early historical sites, the Slieve Blooms are undoubtedly one of Ireland's most extraordinary mountain walking experiences. This magnificent mountain range, teeming with wildlife and fascinating ecology, offers an almost unlimited range of activities including walking for people of all abilities, cycling, car-touring, heritage tours and equestrian trails. There are many beautiful places for picnics including The Cut, a road hewn out of solid rock by stonemasons in the 19th century, or beside the tumbling water of the Glenbarrow Waterfall.

Golf in Laois challenges the most skilled golfer to use every club in the bag. From world-class parkland courses to picturesque rural courses, the wide range to choose from with competitive green fees, ensures golfers will enjoy a refreshingly different experience.

Fishing is one of the best kept secrets in Laois. Anglers can enjoy excellent game and coarse fishing in the river Nore (a classic trout and salmon river) and the river Barrow. Alternatively, Granstown Lake is a still and quiet gem, surrounded by trees and ringed by a thick belt of reed, or visit a unique treasure in the Fly Fishing and Shooting Museum, the only one of its kind in Europe.

Whether it is stimulating adventure or peaceful relaxation, an escape from the office or a chance for children to run free in natural surroundings, you will find what you're looking for in Laois.

Contact Laois Tourism for more detailed literature on activities available in the county.

Information and maps also available on the Slieve Bloom Mountains

+353 (0)502 21178 / 64000
www.laoistourism.ie

There is much in the Slieve Bloom Mountains that can be visited by car. A suggested day round trip of 80km is detailed in the Holiday Guide to Laois County and on a Laois Heritage Trail information board in Camross which takes in most of the attractions of the area. Included in this are the Roundwood and Ballyfin Houses, Kinnitty Castle, a number of churches and the delightful villages of Clonaslee, Rosenallis, Coolrain, Camross, Kinnitty and Cadamstown. Those in a brave mood can take an icy dip in the waters of the Cathole Falls, situated on the west side of the mountains.





FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR SUPPORTING LITERATURE please contact:

LAOIS LEADER RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY Ltd.

Pepper's Court, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. t: +353 (0)502 61900 e: llrdc@iol.ie www.laois-leader-rdc.ie

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. t: +353 (0) 502 64000 www.laois.ie

Laois Tourism Officer, Laois County Council. e: hdeevy@laoiscoco.ie www.laoistourism.ie

LAOIS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE Ltd.

Coliseum Lane, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. t: +353 (0)502 21598 e: admin@laoischamber.ie www.laoischamber.ie

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Lismard Autoworld Ltd., Portlaoise, Co Laois. t: +353 (0)502 80900 e: info@lismard.ie www.lismard.ie

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