HIDDEN DRIVES

AN EBOOK BY CHILL.IE

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If you want to see the real Ireland, take a road trip. Get in your car and let yourself be blown away by stunning land and seascapes, castles, churches and ancient ruins. Discover hidden treasures along winding routes and fall in love with the unknown. From breathtaking cliffs, to spectacular mountains, to vast lakes, to lush meadows, there's beauty around almost every bend.

To inspire you, we asked Irish motorists what their favourite hidden drives are and invited recommendations from bloggers around the country. In this eBook, you'll also find some of our own favourite routes, as well as expert tips to help you stay safe while enjoying Ireland's more remote beauty spots.

Got a hidden drive you'd like to share? Join the conversation online by tagging **@Chill_Insurance** and using the hashtag **#Hidden Drives**

THE RESULTS

We surveyed **600 Irish people** to get the lowdown on everything from the beauty spots they've discovered while behind the wheel to the music they listen to on their trips. **Here's what they said...**

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

More than 4 in 10 respondents (41%) said they'd got lost on a drive and found a hidden gem that they would revisit. Perhaps it's no surprise that so many people lost their way and stumbled on a beauty spot. Over a third of the people we polled (35%) said they have driven for four or more hours for pleasure, while 58% said they sometimes stop off at landmarks they come across on their drives.

1/ Wicklow Mountains 2/ Connemara Lake, Co. Galway 3/ Altamont Gardens, Co. Carlow 4/ Ards Friary, Co. Donegal 5/ Lough Hyne, West Cork 6/ Dowra, Co. Cavan 7/ Castletown, Co. Laois 8/ Mizen Head, Co. Cork 9/ Howth Summit near Dublin

ALL-TIME FAVOURITE DRIVES

People's all-time favourite drives off the beaten track included...

1/ Wexford coastline 2/ Dunshaughlin to Cavan 3/ Sally Gap, Co. Wicklow 4/ Ring of Kerry, Co. Kerry 5/ Wild Atlantic Way 6/ Wicklow Mountains 7/ Conor Pass, Co. Kerry 8/ Galway to the Cliffs of Moher (along the coast) 9/ Ards Forest Park, Co. Donegal 10/ Connemara Mountains, Co. Galway

POPULAR ROUTES

Putting the popularity of some of Ireland and Northern Ireland's most well-known drives to the test, we asked people if they had been along the following routes. Here's what they said:

1/ Giant's Causeway Coast, Northern Ireland - **21%** 2/ The Sally Gap, Co. Wicklow - **19%** 3/ Slea Head Drive, Dingle Peninsula, Co. Kerry - **16%** 4/ Kenmare to Bantry - **11%** 5/ The Inishowen 100, Donegal - **11%**

MORE THAN JUST SIGHTSEEING

Nearly **4 in 10 people (37%)** revealed that their favourite drives have a sentimental value to them, while **38%** said these routes remind them of something or someone special.

The memories these drives evoke included:

- FAMILY HOLIDAYS
- CHILDHOOD
- LOVED ONES
- ROMANCE
- HOME
- SPECIAL ITEMS
- FRIENDS
- SCHOOL
- HEARTBREAK

WHY DO PEOPLE GET BEHIND THE WHEEL?

Almost one in three respondents **(32%)** said they drive to reflect on things, while even more **(38%)** revealed they drive to let off steam or de-stress.

Other common reasons people climb behind the wheel included:

- GETTING TO WORK
- VISITING PLACES
- PASSING TIME
- ENJOYING SCENERY
- FOR FUN
- TO PICK UP THE KIDS

Partners and spouses seem to be the passengers of choice, with 35% of the people we polled identifying their other halves as their preferred company in the car. Friends came a close second at 33%, followed by family members at 27%.

THE PERFECT SOUNDTRACK

No scenic drive is complete without the perfect soundtrack, so what are people choosing to listen to when they hit the highways around Ireland?

Pop was the most popular genre of music among our respondents, followed by **rock, country, classical and then R&B.**

IDEAS FOR YOUR NEXT HIDDEN DRIVE

If you want to get off the traditional tourist trail and discover some hidden gems, the following drives could be perfect for you.

FANAD PENINSULA SCENIC DRIVE, CO. DONEGAL

Guiding you along the rugged coastline of Donegal, the winding Fanad Peninsula Scenic Drive is just over 70 km long and it offers some of the most spectacular sea views you can find anywhere in Ireland. Start your trip in the town of Ramelton and take the R247 north, travelling along the shores of Lough Swilly up past the beautiful beach at Rathmullan. Highlights along the route include Knockalla Mountain and the spectacular Fanad Head with its distinctive white lighthouse. After reaching this northerly point, head south-west to take in the sights of Mulroy Bay and the small town of Milford, before returning to your starting point.

Be sure to watch out for the sheep and cows that occasionally wander onto the roads along this quiet, rural route...

WEXFORD TO WATERFORD (VIA HOOK HEAD), CO. WEXFORD

There's no shortage of picturesque drives in County Wexford, and the route that takes you from Wexford town to Waterford via Hook Head has to be one of the best. Set off south-west following signs for the Ring of Hook coastal drive, keeping your eyes peeled for the points of interest that seem to appear around every turn. Attractions in the Hook Peninsula include Tintern Abbey, Ballyhack Castle, Duncannon Fort, the Colclough Walled Garden and the famous Hook Lighthouse, which at around 800 years old is said to be the oldest standing functional lighthouse in the world. If you like a fright, you can also take a tour to discover the troubled history of Loftus Hall on Hook Peninsula, which is said to be the most haunted house in Ireland.

Continuing the historical theme, your winding coastal journey will lead you to the small and picturesque city of Waterford, which dates back to Viking times and celebrated its 1,100th anniversary a few years ago.

LEENANE TO LOUISBURGH (VIA DELPHI), CO. MAYO

Whether it's a sunny day and the light is bouncing off the Doo Lough or the clouds have closed in around the Sheeffry hills, the drive from Leenane to Louisburgh through Delphi in County Mayo is hard to beat. Leenane provides the perfect starting point for your journey. Located at the head of the 16 km Killary harbour (Ireland's only fjord), this picture perfect village offers incredible vistas in all directions.

If you fancy stopping off en route to make the most of this gorgeous landscape, you can book yourself in at the Delphi Resort. Alternatively, you can complete your journey with a sit down and a bite to eat at Campbell's pub, which is nestled at the foot of Croagh Patrick.

BLOGGER'S CHOICE

Galway has an abundance of breathtaking scenery to enjoy; be sure to take a scenic drive through beautiful Connemara, along Galway's section of the Wild Atlantic Way. The infamous Cliffs of Moher aren't too far away and are definitely not to be missed.

- www.galwaytourism.ie

Visiting the Caves Of Kesh was probably the most adventurous experience we have had. I would recommend to wear good boots. It involves a lot climbing and you certainly get your workout from this. Located on the outskirts of Ballymote, Co. Sligo is a little village called Kesh. It's in the middle of nowhere but the caves from the top give you the most beautiful view.

- www.janineslittleworld.com

From West Cork to Kerry along the Beara Peninsula is, in my opinion, one of Ireland's best road trips. We took a short ferry ride to Garnish Island along the way, which I would highly recommend. Renowned for its beautiful gardens, it also boasts a Martello Tower, which offers stunning views of the bay from the top. The kids loved it too.

- www.thetravelexpert.ie

IRELAND ON SCREEN

With its ancient forts, rolling hills and ragged coastline, Ireland has inspired TV and film makers around the world. From home grown talent to Hollywood legends, many have harnessed the Emerald Isle's beauty to incredible effect on both the big and small screen. Here are just some of the famous places you can drive to that have featured in hit series and movies over the years.

GAME OF THRONES

Head north of the border to explore some of the sets used in the hit fantasy series Games of Thrones. Northern Ireland is home to a whole series of filming locations from this high-budget HBO drama. The National Trust property Castle Warn in County Down served as the ancestral home of the Stark family in the first series. You can book special tours of 'Winterfell' that begin at this striking stone building. Other filming spots that featured in the show included Downhill Strand, County Londonderry (the beach visited by Stannis Baratheon); the Dark Hedges (an otherworldly beech tree-lined road in County Antrim that became the Kingsroad near King's Landing); and the village of Ballintoy in County Antrim (which doubled up as the capital of The Iron Islands).

SAVING PRIVATE RYAN

The harrowing opening scene from the blockbuster war film Saving Private Ryan starring Tom Hanks was hailed for its authenticity. So, you might be surprised to learn that this epic piece of action wasn't filmed at Omaha Beach in Normandy where the allied invasion of German-occupied France took place in the summer of 1944. Instead, Curracloe Strand in County Wexford served as the backdrop to this intense action scene. The location on Ireland's east coast was chosen because of its similarity to the French beach where the fighting happened. Whether you want to sunbathe, swim in the open water or take a stroll in the nearby forest, make this soft-sand, seven-mile, Blue Flag beach a must-visit on your next road trip.

FATHER TED

Unfortunately, the beloved Craggy Island is a figment of imagination. You can however visit the sets of the classic comedy show Father Ted in County Clare on the west coast. The familiar opening titles include shots from the island of Inisheer, while the iconic parochial house can be found on the edge of the Burren National Park. You can even book afternoon tea at the famous 'home' of Ted, Dougal, Jack and Mrs Doyle. Ah, go on, go on, go on.

The following locations have also been showcased on screen:

Cliffs of Moher, Co. Clare - **Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince**

Skellig Michael, Co. Kerry - **Star Wars: The Force Awakens**

Parknasilla, Co. Kerry - **The Lobster**

Trim Castle, Co. Meath - **Braveheart**

1/ Howth Summit
2/ Wicklow Mountains
3/ Castletown
4/ Altamont Gardens
5/ Curracloe Beach
6/ County Cork
7/ Lough Hyne
8/ Mizen Head
9/ Ring of Kerry
10/ Slea Head
11/ Conor Pass
12/ Cliffs of Moher
13/ Galway
14/ Connemara
15/ Kesh
16/ Dowra
17/ County Cavan
18/ Donegal
19/ Ards Friary
20/ Inishowen
21/ Giants Causeway
22/ The Dark Hedges

HOW TO STAY SAFE ON YOUR SCENIC ROAD TRIP

You're spoiled for choice when it comes to fantastic drives in Ireland, but before you hit the highways, it's important to think carefully about safety. The Emerald Isle's most beautiful and intriguing routes aren't always easy to navigate as a motorist, so you'll need to have your wits about you behind the wheel.

To help you make the most of your driving trip, the experts at chill.ie have put together the following information and tips.

HOW TO STAY SAFE ON COUNTRY ROADS

Winding and often narrow, country roads can challenge your skills as a driver. However, there are some simple steps you can take to reduce your risk of accidents.

Always avoid the temptation to drive too fast. Be aware that speed limits are there as a maximum; they're not intended as a target.

Even if you're being tailgated by another driver, resist the pressure to put your foot to the floor.

Instead, always travel at a speed that gives you enough time to react to unexpected hazards.

As a rule of thumb, you should be able to stop in the distance that you can see to be clear. Even on roads you're familiar with, you can never be completely sure what's around the next bend.
Getting stuck behind a slow moving vehicle can be frustrating, but don't overtake unless you're 100% sure it's safe to do so - and always avoid these manoeuvres when you're approaching bends, blind summits, dips and junctions.

If you're passing cyclists, walkers or horse riders, make sure you reduce your speed and give them plenty of space.

DRIVING IN IRELAND FOR THE FIRST TIME?

Although Ireland's country roads and signage have improved a lot over recent years, it's easy to go off-piste. Knowing the names of the villages or towns on your route will help you find your way, and it's always a good idea to have an up-to-date map with you. If you prefer hassle-free navigation, consider using a GPS. (If you're getting a hire car, expect to pay around €15.00 a day extra for a sat nav.)

So that you don't feel under pressure, try to give yourself plenty of time to reach your destination, and if you get lost along the way, don't be afraid to stop and ask for help. People are usually very friendly and happy to give directions.

KNOW THE RULES

There are some rules you should know about before you climb into the driver's seat. For example:

You'll need to have your car insurance certificate with you, as well as a valid licence.
The drink drive limit in Ireland is 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood for fully licensed drivers. (This is lower than the limit of 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood in the UK.)
Some motorways are toll roads. (Make sure you have cash with you as cards aren't always accepted at toll booths.)
The speed limit is 120kph on motorways, 100kph on national roads, 80kph on local and regional roads and 50kph in built-up areas.

MAKE SURE YOU'RE COVERED

You'll need to think about insurance before your trip - whether you're driving your own car or you're hiring one. Inside the EU, your regular policy will automatically provide you with the minimum legal insurance for your own car. However, if you want more than third-party protection, you'll need to speak to your cover provider. You should also consider getting separate breakdown insurance in case you run into technical problems on your road trip.

Hire cars come with insurance, but watch out because your agreement might include a very high excess, and you may be eligible to pay for minor damage such as a small scratch. If you don't want the worry of potentially being landed with a big bill, you can get excess insurance. This can cost as little as €3 a day. Shop around for these policies though because top-up insurance provided by car hire companies may not be competitively priced.

MAY THE ROAD RISE UP TO MEET YOU...

Thank you for downloading and reading this eBook. We hope it's given you plenty of ideas for your next road trip and will help you to stay safe while exploring Ireland's hidden drives.

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WE'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE