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You're Welcome  
to **DISCOVER**

**ESCAPE  
EXPLORE  
DISCOVER  
EXPERIENCE  
PLAY  
WANDER  
LET LOOSE  
ENJOY  
LAUGH  
CHILL  
REMEMBER  
& RETURN**

# You're Welcome

Adventure awaits, stories of intrigue abound, and all against the backdrop of the warmest welcome you can imagine.

Don't just visit our proud county. Soak up our rich Viking, Quaker, Anglo-Norman, Huguenot, native, and mythical legacies. Celebrate with us like there's no tomorrow. And when tomorrow comes, taste our incredible local foods and enjoy real Irish hospitality, as it should be. Immerse yourself in all things Laois.

For just a day, a week, or more, be one of us.





# You're Welcome

to our **OUTDOORS**

By bike or on foot, Laois has a treasure trove of natural beauty waiting to be discovered.

Our unspoilt environment is both a bountiful habitat for local wildlife and a scenic delight for all to enjoy. With nearly 500km of routes, including 30 looped walks all around the county, walkers and hikers are in for a treat.

For cyclists and mountain-bikers, Laois is a push-bike paradise, offering everything from gentle spins to challenging trails.

And remember...there'll always be car parking close by and you're never more than a few miles from a country pub with a warm welcome.





## Where **LEISURE PURSUITS** abound

Anglers, both coarse and game, flock every year to test their skills on our many lakes and rivers. And the legendary waters of the river Barrow yield more award-winning specimen coarse fish than anywhere else in Ireland.

Kayakers and canoeists of all levels are drawn to our waterways, while cruisers are welcome to amble down the Grand Canal.

# You're Welcome





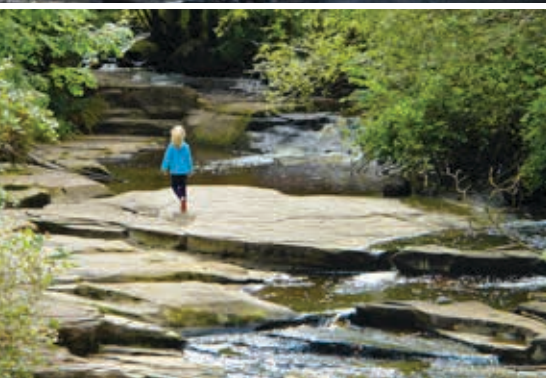
# You're Welcome to **CHILL**

An easy retreat from the bustle  
of life is never far away in Laois.

Miles of tracks and trails offer natural solitude amid sunlight-filtered woodland walks. And our peaceful bog and heath landscapes are steeped in silence and serenity, leaving you to enjoy some of Ireland's richest flora and fauna.

Once you step away from nature, indulge in five-star spa experiences, practise yoga at our many studios, or escape to retreats dotted throughout the county. Mindfulness sessions ranging from meditation to sound baths are on hand to refresh your body and soul.

Before you leave us in Laois, you'll  
feel refreshed, rejuvenated, and  
ready for road.





## **WANDER** through our **GARDENS**

**Home to a rich and fertile landscape, Laois has always been a popular garden destination.**

Attracting visitors all year round, these established works-of-art are now complemented with garden creations by some of Ireland's leading contemporary designers. Be inspired by both maestros from a golden era of garden design, and our modern landscape architects who now build a legacy for the next generation.

### **Enjoy the LAOIS GARDEN TRAIL**

12 wonderful gardens from stately homes to smaller elegant spaces with biodiversity and organic gardening to the fore.



# You're Welcome

to enjoy the **ARTS**



An idyllic rural landscape has inspired local artists, musicians, and poets for generations.

A vibrant arts programme lives and breathes through our three arts centres, libraries, and galleries, all hosting cultural events of all types – all year round.



From internationally-acclaimed movie screenings, writers' workshops, and drama festivals, to local photography exhibits, and much more in between, artistic tastes are covered for all.

With something to savour every night of the week, our live music knows no limits. Artists from the worlds of traditional Irish, jazz, blues, rock, and more play and sing the night away in a choice of venues. All the while, sculptors, painters, and writers continuously showcase their work right across the county, illustrating Laois as a hive of artistic life.







# You're Welcome

to our **FESTIVALS**

From ancient festivals in the Slieve Bloom Mountains to modern day merry-making, Laois has enjoyed a party more than most for thousands of years.

With over 25 festivals held throughout the county every year, you are most definitely invited to celebrate with us.

And from major international music weekends to local fiestas covering everything from scarecrows and storytelling, to drama and literature, you're sure to find your tribe.

Come join us as we celebrate the length and breadth of the county – morning, noon, and night...

# You're Welcome to **TASTE**

With a bounty of wonderful fare on offer, Laois is home to so many sumptuous, locally produced foods, loved by tourists and natives alike.

Matching every budget and palate, five star dining stands shoulder to shoulder with award winning gastro-pubs, cafés and restaurants. And thanks to some of Ireland's most fertile land, our food culture is thriving.

For generations, Laois has also been home to legions of committed growers, farmers, makers, bakers, and brewers of only the finest products. All of which are nurtured, grown and crafted for farmers' markets, kitchen tables and homes all over Ireland.







# You're Welcome to **STAY**

Wherever you lay your head in Laois, you're sure of a warm welcome and a great night's sleep. Fabulous hotels are on hand to give you a taste of the high life while rustic guesthouses will relax the busiest tourist in the heart of the countryside.

Closer to the action, our towns and villages are packed with accommodation options of all shapes and sizes, with warm hosts ready to greet you.

One thing's for sure. The longer you linger, the more you'll love about Laois. And even our short-term stays will tempt you into making longer-term plans...

## ROCK OF DUNAMASE

Perched on a hill-top, halfway between Portlaoise and Stradbally, historic stories of bloody vengeance, kidnapping, and intrigue await you.

For well over a thousand years, the iconic Rock of Dunamase has seen Vikings, Normans, native tribes, and even Cromwell himself fight tooth-and-nail to seize control of this commanding site.

Today, you can wander to the very top and soak in the history, before taking in the most incredible views of our rich Laois landscape.

And while you're there... listen closely, for you might still hear the battle cry of a Viking warrior, or even the ominous thunder of approaching raiders on horseback.

**Open:** daylight hours | **Admission:** Free

**Address:** Aghanilly, Co. Laois R32 E170



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**Open:** The parklands and café are open all year round and the house opens seasonally. **Admission:** Parklands are **free**.

House tours **€8** per adult, **€6** senior, **€4** child, family tickets available.

**Address:** Emo, Co. Laois R32 C44V | **T:** +353 (0)57 862 6573 | [www.emocourt.ie](http://www.emocourt.ie)

## EMO COURT AND PARKLANDS

Almost halfway between the towns of Portlaoise and Portarlinton, take a leisurely step back in time and imagine life as a lord or lady of the manor. The stunning neo-classical mansion at Emo Court and Parklands simply hums with stories of debutante balls, society weddings, and war stories from the 1800s. Today, wonderful tour guides take you through beautifully furnished rooms, immersing you in tales belonging to a truly bygone era.

Impeccably cultivated grounds proudly surround the main building. Woodland walks meander around a 20-acre lake to create a refined atmosphere, inviting leisurely picnics and offering plenty of room for the young and old to roam free.





## DONAGHMORE WORKHOUSE AND AGRICULTURAL MUSEUM

Not far from the town of Rathdowney in southwest Laois, the stark reality of a tragic era in Ireland's past unfolds before your very eyes.

The Donaghmore Workhouse and Agricultural Museum paints a vivid picture of life during and after Ireland's great potato famine in the mid 1800s.

**Open:** Weekdays 11am – 5pm.  
Weekends during summer season from 2 – 5pm

**Admission:** Adult €5,  
family €10,  
student/senior €3

**Address:** Donaghmore,  
Co.Laois R32 PC58

**T:** +353 (0)86 829 6685

Resilient families sought refuge in the workhouse throughout this period, and their stories of determination and courage can be felt through every wall, floor, and ceiling. From the moment you walk through the gates, you are taken back in time to what was truly a place of last resort.





A photograph of the Timahoe Round Tower, a tall, cylindrical stone structure with a conical roof and several small, narrow windows. It stands on a grassy field next to a stone wall. In the background, there is a stone church with a gabled roof and a chimney, surrounded by trees. The sky is blue with some light clouds. The bottom right corner of the image features a decorative graphic with overlapping green, blue, and magenta shapes.

## TIMAHOE ROUND TOWER

Only fifteen minute's drive southeast of Portlaoise, you'll uncover a story of redemption and faith at the medieval masterpiece that is Timahoe Round Tower.

A Christian icon for the ages, the tower was a beacon for a once-thriving monastic community and now proudly overlooks a peaceful village green.

Founded by soldier-turned-saint Mochua, the tower's bells would both summon for prayer and sound the alarm following an era of regular Viking plunder.

Haunting bells toll no more, and the serenity of this picture-postcard setting is broken now only by the laughter of children across the road in the village playground.

**Open:** Tower: daylight hours, Heritage Centre: Apr – Sept 11am to 4pm, Thurs – Sun , Oct – Apr 11am to 4pm Mon – Thurs

**Admission:** Free | **Address:** Timahoe, Co. Laois R32 F627

You're Welcome

**Open:** Oct – Mar: 8.30am to 5pm | Apr & Sept: 8.30am to 7pm,  
May – Aug: 8.30am to 9pm | **Admission: Free**  
**Address:** Ballinakill, Co. Laois R32 K4V6 | [www.laoisgardens.ie](http://www.laoisgardens.ie)

The parklands include lakes to ponder, follies to discover, and fishing to enjoy. Bring a picnic and spend an afternoon in absolute serenity.

## HEYWOOD GARDENS AND ESTATE

Just outside Ballinakill, a gem of garden design awaits you. Designed by eminent architect Sir Edwin Luytens, most likely in collaboration with renowned landscaper Gertrude Jekyll, the wondrous Heywood Gardens and Estate stand still in time.

As well as being home to quirky folly pieces including a sham castle, and gothic ruins, the surrounding lakes and woodland all contribute to a surreal and mythical atmosphere. One of only three Luyten gardens in Ireland, the centrepiece boasts a characteristic circular water feature. And along with Jekyll's soft planting, it brings this unique landscape to life beautifully.

You're Welcome



**Open:** Oct – Mar: Weekdays 9am to 5pm | Apr – Sept: 9am to 5pm  
Last entry for self guided tours is 4:30pm **Admission: €5** self guided tour,  
**€10** guided tour with archivist (Daily 11am & 2pm)  
**Groups: €7pp** (4min– 15max) | **Address:** Ballyroan Road, Abbeyleix,  
Co. Laois R32 H244 | **T:** +353 (0)57 873 1653 | [www.abbeyleixheritage.com](http://www.abbeyleixheritage.com)

## ABBEYLEIX HERITAGE HOUSE

Just a twenty-minute drive south of Portlaoise, Abbeyleix Heritage House & Visitor Centre will reveal the secrets of one of Ireland's prettiest towns.

Inside, the hustle and bustle of life in the 1800s runs thick in the atmosphere. With a flour mill, brewery, and many local enterprises, Abbeyleix was right at the heart of Ireland's early Industrial Revolution. In fact, the town's carpet weaver even supplied the Titanic for its tragic maiden voyage. Folklore antiquities and ancient history exhibits sit side-by-side, painting a complete picture of the local region at several stages in history.

Both group and individual tours are available. And with a professional genealogy service at hand, who knows... you might even form a closer bond with Abbeyleix than you ever thought possible.



**Open:** All year, 9.15am – 5pm | **Admission:** €5

**Address:** Irishtown, Mountmellick, Co. Laois R32 Y191

**T:** +353 (0)57 862 4525 | [www.mountmellickdevelopment.com](http://www.mountmellickdevelopment.com)



## MOUNTMELICK EMBROIDERY MUSEUM

Wander off the beaten track and find out how the Quakers left their mark on a small town in north Laois. Mountmellick Embroidery Museum invites you to travel back in time. A captivating experience is led by generous tour guides who bring to life the magical art of Mountmellick Embroidery, a specialist craft unique to the town and entirely Irish in origin and design.

Once the site of a vibrant craft industry employing more than 50 ladies in the late 1800s, today it stands strong but silent as a dignified memorial to an art almost lost in time.





From guided tours to self discovery, we're ready and waiting to welcome you. And now that you've enjoyed this whistle-stop tour of Laois, why not visit [www.laoistourism.ie](http://www.laoistourism.ie) and plan your trip in more detail.

*You're Welcome*



# You're Welcome to **OUR PLACE**

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The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development (EAFRD)  
Investing in our future.



IRELAND'S  
ANCIENT EAST™  
*Wander Through Time*