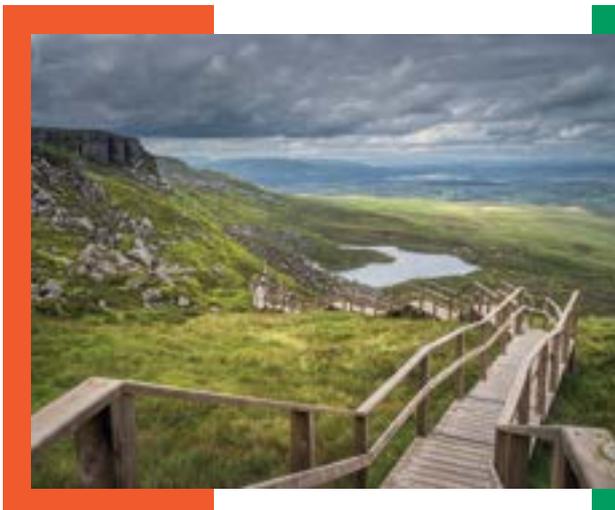




EXPLORE MORE



THE NORTH IN FULFILLING IRELAND'S TOURISM POTENTIAL

OCTOBER 2021



Introduction

The last decade has seen the tourism sector grow on the island of Ireland. While the sector is important to the economy on the island of Ireland as a whole the economy in the North falls well behind that of the south with GDP in the South estimated at around six times the size of the GDP in the North.¹ Maximising the potential of tourism in the north by closing the gap in terms of revenue raised here compared with the south is particularly important to the development of the northern economy.

Tourist experiences, and how they are marketed, are fundamentally important to the attractiveness of any destination to potential visitors.

A number of major tourism experiences have been developed on the island in recent years, namely the Wild Atlantic Way; Ireland's Ancient East; and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. Currently each of these attractions, while adding significantly to the island's tourist offering, are limited to the south despite the obvious relevance of adjacent areas in the north of Ireland.

The Atlantic Ocean doesn't stop at the Donegal coast – so why should the Wild Atlantic Way?

This document sets out the case for extending these three major regional tourism experiences into the north.

By doing so this will help the north develop further the economic potential of its tourism sector, and it will also enrich each of these major tourist attractions to domestic and international visitors. This will benefit the tourism sector on the island as a whole - and allow visitors to **Explore More**.

These objectives are consistent with those of Tourism Ireland established following on the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) which made tourism an area of all-island cooperation.

CAOIMHE ARCHIBALD MLA

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistical-atlas/gis/viewer/?year=&chapter=06&mids=BKGCNT,BKGNT22016,C-06M01&o=1,1,1&ch=ECO,C06¢er=49.97812,19.97593,3&>



Good Friday Agreement – Good For Tourism

The current level of success in the North's tourism sector is in stark contrast to what it was during the years of conflict on the island. At the time of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 it was hoped that increased cross-border cooperation could revive the fortunes of the ailing tourism industry in the north.

The Good Friday Agreement established tourism as one of the six areas of cross border cooperation. This was a recognition that marketing the island as a single entity would be mutually beneficial to both jurisdictions in attracting tourism, but particularly so to the North.

To achieve the desired cross-border cooperation, an all-Island body called Tourism Ireland was set up, which is responsible for marketing the island of Ireland overseas as a leading holiday destination. Its stated remit is to increase tourism to the island of Ireland and to support the North of Ireland to realise its tourism potential.² It operates under the auspices of the North/South Ministerial Council through the Department of the Economy in the North, and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, in the South.

All promotional material which is used to attract visitors in international markets are designed and delivered by Tourism Ireland. As the island is marketed as a whole to an international audience, it makes sense that major regional tourism experiences should also reflect this, by being cross-border in nature, where there is a clear rationale for doing so.

The all-Ireland approach has been a key factor in the growth of tourism. It has provided a platform to promote the many attractions the north has to offer visitors which had previously been very difficult to do during the decades of conflict.

The development of the tourism sector is reflected in the rise in the number of out of state visitors that came to the North in the years after the Good Friday Agreement, where there was year on year increases, from 1.4 million³ in 1998, to a high of 3 million in 2019.⁴ However, as is outlined below, the North has not reached the levels comparable to those in the South.

² <https://www.tourismireland.com/About-Us>

³ <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/ni/tourism.htm>

⁴ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/Tourism-Statistics-Annual-Publication-2019.pdf>



Economic Importance of Tourism on the Island

The importance of rebuilding our tourism sector following the pandemic cannot be overstated. Studies show that investment and development of tourism and hospitality delivers benefits across the economy as a whole. Industries and supply chains particularly in the food and drinks sector can benefit from a thriving tourism market which relies on their produce.

Supporting a growing tourism sector therefore is important in maintaining jobs and businesses not just in the tourism sector itself but across the economy.

Another benefit of rebuilding and developing the tourism sector is the potential to tackle the longstanding issues of regional inequalities which exist throughout the island. Figures in the north have shown that over recent years 60% of visitor spend is located outside Belfast and 70% of jobs are located outside of Belfast.⁵ This underlines the key role that tourism can have in economic development amongst local towns and villages which often struggle to attract jobs and investment on the same scale as major cities.

Tourism has been one of the most resilient and successful sectors of the local economy in the north over the last decade, with higher returns on investment compared to other sectors and higher than average job creation. In 2016, Tourism NI estimated that the tourist sector in the north accounted for 5.2% of GDP and supports over 65,000 jobs. The latest figures from NISRA show that in 2019, the North recorded 5.3 million overnight trips, from both foreign and domestic visitors, which led to just over £1 billion being spent in the local economy.

Similarly, in the south the number of out of state visitors increased from 7.5 million in 2012⁶, to 10.9 million in 2019⁷, which is roughly a 45% increase. In terms of revenue spent, this equates to €9.5 billion euros. There have been a number of highly successful regional tourism experiences which have contributed to the rising numbers in the south, which we will look at in further detail below.

If we compare the tourism sectors in each of the two jurisdictions it is clear that the south remains far ahead, both in terms of overnight stays and revenue generated. The figures for 2019 show that 80% of overnight stays by foreign visitors to the island of Ireland are in the south, whilst only 20% are in the north. Similarly, in terms of "staycations" by people resident in Ireland, 77% choose a destination in the south as opposed to 23% who choose the north.⁸

More significantly the disparity is reflected in the revenue generated from tourism: The south generated €9.5 billion euros in 2019 whilst the North only generated just over £1 billion pounds in the same period. What we can deduce from these figures is that the success of the tourism sector is felt across the island however the North, which started from a lower base, continues to underperform in comparison to the south.



5 NI Tourism Alliance: Tourism Performance Report 2019
6 https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/3_General_SurveysReports/Tourism-facts-2013.pdf?ext=.pdf
7 https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/4_Visitor_Insights/KeyTourismFacts_2019.pdf?ext=.pdf
8 https://www.tourismireland.com/TourismIreland/media/Tourism-Ireland/Research/TI_FactsandFigures_2019.pdf?ext=.pdf



Our Island's Attraction to Overseas Visitors

Market research by Tourism Ireland identifies Britain, the USA, and Germany as the three main markets for overseas visitors to the island of Ireland, making up 73% of all overseas visitors. Given the importance of these markets to our tourism industry an analysis of each is useful to informing us what it is about the tourism offering on the island that attracts overseas visitors.

Britain is the largest of the three markets in terms of visitor numbers, making up 42% of all overseas visitors to the island. This equates to 4.8m overnight stays and roughly €1.4billion euros of revenue spent.⁹

The USA market is the second biggest market to Ireland, with 22% of all overseas visitors coming from the USA. On average American tourists stay for longer and spend more money, so this market is actually the most valuable in terms of revenue spent, which comes in at €1.6 billion. The USA market in particular has seen massive growth on the previous five years, with an increase of 61%.¹⁰

The third biggest market is Germany, which made up 9% of overseas visitors to the island and contributed £400m of revenue spent.¹¹

Tourism Ireland's research has focused on the people who have chosen to holiday in Ireland, particularly in terms of what they look for in a holiday and what really motivates their decisions in choosing a holiday destination and categorises them accordingly.

In Tourism Ireland's 2019 Market Profiles, the category which represents the highest percentage of people is the "culturally curious" group defined as those interested in meeting local people; getting off the beaten track to explore; and more likely to leave the cities and travel to less accessible locations. They also have an interest in historical and cultural attractions and tend to seek out natural beauty in landscapes. Within the three main markets the "culturally curious" make up 32% of American, 19% of British, and 49% of German, visitors.

The other significant category of overseas holidaymakers identified by Tourism Ireland are the "Social Energisers". This group are somewhat similar to the culturally curious in that they seek to mix socially with local people. They also prefer to experience interactive and activity-based attractions. This group makes up 23% of the British; 22% of Americans; and 24% of Germans; who visit Ireland.

The research also underpins the importance of tourist attractions to overseas visitors. It's clear as an island we do well among these types of holidaymakers in particular because of the attractions we have on offer. Our attractions in terms of historical and cultural sites, attractive landscapes and activity based attractions have proved hugely successful, particularly in the three largest overseas tourist markets discussed, and beyond.

9 <https://www.tourismireland.com/TourismIreland/media/Tourism-Ireland/Research/GB-Market-Profile-2019-v1-0.pdf?ext=.pdf>
10 <https://www.tourismireland.com/TourismIreland/media/Tourism-Ireland/Research/US-Market-Profile-2019-v1-0.pdf?ext=.pdf>
11 <https://www.tourismireland.com/TourismIreland/media/Tourism-Ireland/Research/Germany-Market-Profile-2019-v1-0.pdf?ext=.pdf>



Regional Tourism Experiences

In recent years Fáilte Ireland – the tourism development authority in the south - has developed a number of “regional experience brands”¹² or regional tourism experiences. These regional experiences are the Wild Atlantic Way; Ireland’s Ancient East; and Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands.

Each of these experiences focuses on particular themes and experiences by way of attracting visitors. It is clear that Fáilte Ireland are targeting the types of visitors that tend to choose the island of Ireland as a destination and that can be categorised as “culturally curious” or “social energisers” - as identified in Tourism Ireland’s market research, referenced in the previous section.

According to Fáilte Ireland’s Tourism Facts 2019^{13 14 15} the regional experience brands brought in to the south a combined €2.967bn (€2.9bn; €889m; €178m) from overseas visitors.



Taken together with Dublin - which has its own separate tourism brand or experience, as the capital and largest city on the island - these three regional tourism experiences comprise the entire jurisdiction of the south of Ireland, with a little overlap in parts of the midlands.

Currently the north of Ireland is not included in any of these regional tourism experiences.

While the north has capitalised on attractions such as the Dark Hedges and Ballintoy Harbour (to name just two of many) which featured prominently in the television epic Game of Thrones, it does not have a regional tourism experience comparable in scale to those in the south. Tourism NI has recently developed the ‘Embrace a Giant Spirit’ campaign, however this markets the north as a whole to the southern market and Britain; it does not highlight the unique offerings in the different regions across the north.

While Tourism NI and Fáilte Ireland are responsible for the development of tourism in the north and the south respectively the establishment of Tourism

12 <https://www.thejournal.ie/failte-ireland-midlands-hidden-heartlands-3953993-Apr2018/>
13 https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/2_Regional_SurveysReports/IHH_Tourism_Facts_FINAL.pdf?ext=.pdf
14 https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/2_Regional_SurveysReports/IAE-Tourism-Facts-FINAL.pdf?ext=.pdf
15 https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/2_Regional_SurveysReports/WAW-Tourism-Facts-FINAL.pdf?ext=.pdf



Ireland after the Good Friday Agreement was a recognition that, in international terms at least, the island is best marketed as a single destination.

Therefore, the north’s tourism sector would undoubtedly benefit from inclusion in the regional tourism experiences of the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland’s Ancient East and Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands.

These regional experiences already focus on the themes and unique characteristics of the island that attract overseas visitors here, as established by Tourism Ireland’s research. These themes are as applicable to the north as they are to the south.

Tourism Ireland statistics¹⁶ show that the north and border area along with the Midlands are the areas which are least likely to attract overseas tourists. The statistics show that tourists from north America, Britain, and Europe are more likely to visit places like Dublin, Cork and Galway. In 2019, Fáilte Ireland found that seven out of ten bed-nights are spent in Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, and Clare.¹⁷

Adopting a comparable tourism experience specifically for the north which incorporates these themes would put the island in competition with itself, contrary to the principle of cooperation in tourism; lead to duplication; and cause confusion within the international market.

Furthermore, incorporation of the north in these regional experiences will be a positive move in demonstrating that the north is open for business and address some of the “post-Brexit chill” with regards to overseas visitors, particularly from the EU, and also visitors from the rest of Ireland. In February 2020 Tourism NI Chief John McGrillen confirmed that Brexit had caused a “chill factor” amongst tourists from Europe and the south and that demand from Germany was down by between 10 per cent and 30 per cent; “That sentiment issue does have an impact.”¹¹

Extending the existing regional experiences into the relevant parts of the north in this context makes perfect sense on a number of levels. In doing so each of the three regional tourism experiences would be significantly enriched.

Here is the case for incorporating the rest of the island in these regional experiences:



16 <https://www.tourismireland.com/research/market-profiles>
17 <https://www.irishexaminer.com/opinion/commentanalysis/arid-30915555.html>



Extending the Regional Tourism Experiences

Whether we seek to attract visitors with the prospect of exploring our islands Atlantic Coast; discovering the treasures of our inland waterways and towns; or experiencing our ancient history and heritage; none of these tourist offerings are complete without the inclusion of the north of Ireland.



Wild Atlantic Way – The Case for the North Coast

The Wild Atlantic Way was established in 2014 and is a defined touring route which starts at Malin Head, Co. Donegal and encapsulates the entire west coast of Ireland, encompassing nine counties, 157 discovery points, 1,000 attractions and 2,500 activities, ending in Kinsale Co. Cork. It has become synonymous with spectacular coastal landscapes and adventures and includes the Aran Islands, the Cliffs of Moher, Skellig Michael, the Burren, the Ring of Kerry, Galway City and the Donegal coast, to name a few.

The Wild Atlantic Way is the most popular and successful of the three regional experience brands. According to Fáilte Ireland Research Tourism Facts 2019 3.4mn overseas tourists visited the Wild Atlantic Way generating €1.9bn in revenue.¹⁸

Notwithstanding this success the attraction of the Wild Atlantic Way could be further improved by the inclusion of our Atlantic north coast.

According to Fáilte Ireland's The Wild Atlantic Way: Route Identification Report (2013) ¹⁹:

"The route will allow travellers to see and be introduced to many outstanding aspects of the Atlantic coastline as an attraction in its own right... As a long distance driving route, the Wild Atlantic Way will provide the introduction to some of Ireland's most incredible experiences: its coastline, seascapes, history, culture and people. The route will encourage, entice and inspire travellers to explore and engage with these areas, making them eager to journey further. Their spirit of adventure will drive them to seek new experiences as they travel."

The Causeway Coastal Route picks up where the Wild Atlantic Way leaves off and runs from Derry to Belfast and includes many outstanding aspects of our Atlantic coastline and some of Ireland's most incredible experiences. Tourism Ireland website describes the Causeway Coastal Route as:

"Clinging to Ireland's rugged northern coastline between Belfast city and Derry, this is a glorious

¹⁸ https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/2_Regional_SurveysReports/WAW-Tourism-Facts-FINAL.pdf?ext=.pdf

¹⁹ https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/Key%20Projects/WAW_Report_May13_LowRes.pdf?ext=.pdf



mix of remarkable geology, pristine beaches and exhilarating clifftop walks. The scenery is mind-blowingly beautiful – think vast ocean views, rolling green glens, sea arches and butter-coloured coves. And when it comes to epic adventures – there's no better place, with the Giant's Causeway, Dunluce Castle and the Carrick-a Rede rope bridge knocking it out of the park."²⁰

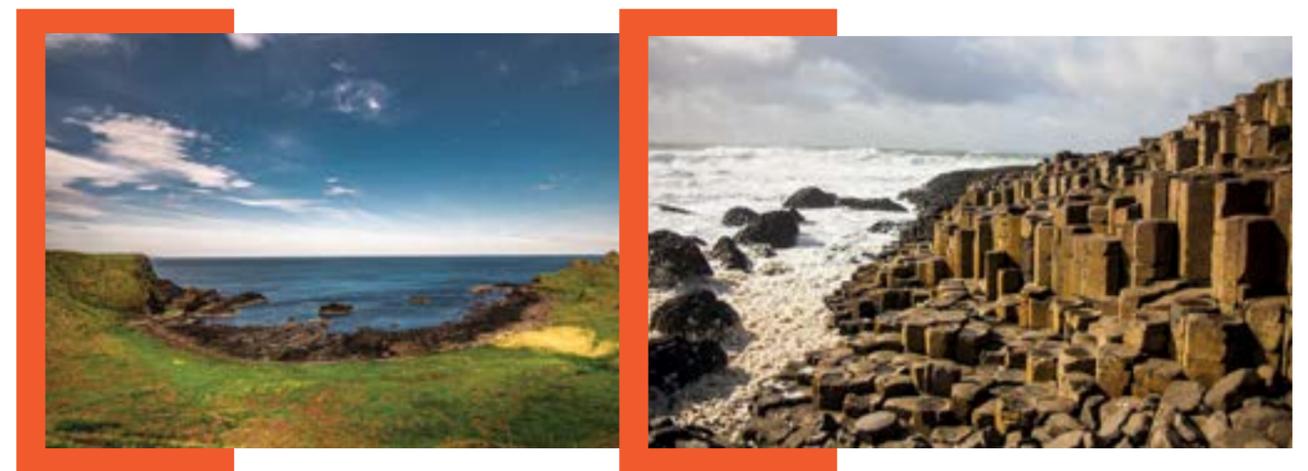
The case for expanding the Wild Atlantic Way to incorporate the Causeway Coastal Route is compelling. As well as adding dramatic Atlantic scenes and historic and cultural experiences to the route it would also incorporate Derry (the only remaining completely walled city in Ireland ²¹), the capital of the north west as well as Ireland's second biggest city, Belfast.

Both Derry and Belfast have international airports which would mean visitors could fly almost directly into the Wild Atlantic Way route and start their journey immediately. Similarly, people could access the Wild Atlantic Way by ferry entering via Belfast or Larne Port from Britain - particularly important given the British market is the largest in terms of visitor numbers.

Including the Causeway Coastal Route into the Wild Atlantic Way does not mean its displacement. Currently, the route is divided into 14 stages, such as the Inishowen Peninsula; Connemara Coast; and the Ring of Kerry; each maintaining their own local identities and brands within the broader Wild Atlantic Way.

The north coast should be a new additional stage of the Wild Atlantic Way or potentially make up two new stages for example the Causeway Coast and the Glens of Antrim Coast – itself designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

This would provide visitors with the opportunity to explore even more of our rugged Atlantic coastline.



²⁰ <https://www.ireland.com/en-gb/destinations/regions/causeway-coast/>

²¹ <https://discovernorthernireland.com/things-to-do/17th-century-city-walls-p685431>



IRELAND'S
ANCIENT EAST

Ireland's Ancient East – The Case for the North East

Ireland's Ancient East was launched in 2016 and was developed around the theme of Ireland's rich history stretching back to pre-Christian times. It encompasses 17 counties on the eastern/south-eastern part of the island, starting in County Monaghan in Ulster, taking in the entire province of Leinster, and down as far as Waterford in Munster.

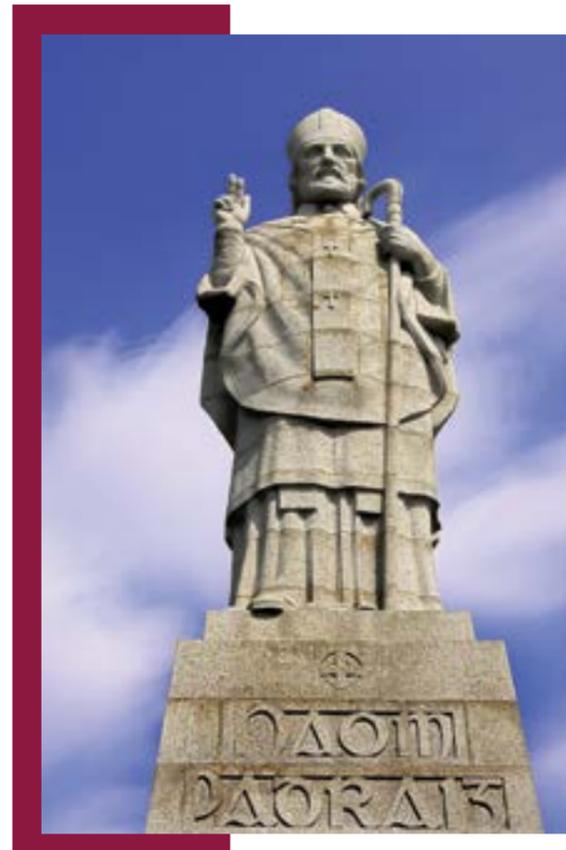
Some of the main attractions include the 5,000 years old burial site at Newgrange; the ancient monastic site at Clonmacnoise, founded in 544 AD; the Hill of Tara, where the High Kings of Ireland were crowned; and Kilkenny Castle, scene of a brutal siege by Oliver Cromwell - to name but a few.

According to Fáilte Ireland Research Tourism Facts 2019 2.4mn overseas tourists visited Ireland's Ancient East generating €889mn in revenue.²²

The strategic intent of Fáilte Ireland's Five Year Plan for the Development of Ireland's Ancient East states:

*"Our goal is to make Ireland's Ancient East the most personally engaging cultural destination in Europe by harnessing the authentic character of the real Ireland, its living culture, lush landscapes and hidden history, opening it up for everyone. When we achieve this, we support sustained economic growth and community wellbeing whilst valuing our heritage, history and environment."*²³

The plan to develop Ireland's Ancient East is ambitious but if it is to reach its goal by "harnessing the authentic character of the real Ireland" then it must do so by including the adjacent areas of the north. It is impossible to deliver an experience of Ireland's ancient history and culture by excluding some of the most significant historical landmarks in our history, located in the north, particularly when you consider that



22 https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/2_Regional_SurveysReports/IAE-Tourism-Facts-FINAL.pdf?ext=.pdf

23 https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/Key%20Projects/Ireland's%20Ancient%20East/Failte_Ireland_Ireland's_Ancient_East_Path_to_Growth_Strategy.pdf



partition is merely 100 years old.

The north as part of Ireland plays a significant role in Ireland's story from the very beginning. From early Irish literature, the Ulster Cycle - one of the four great cycles in Irish mythology - is a body of medieval Irish heroic legends centred on the Kingdom of Ulaid (now East Ulster and part of north Leinster) concerning Ireland's most famous myths and heroes, such as Cú Chulainn. Much of these centred around Emhain Macha (today Navan Fort) in Armagh.

The coming of Christianity to Ireland was a significant event in our history and Ireland's patron saint, St Patrick is central to that story.

Down Cathedral, in Downpatrick, is a world-famous site of pilgrimage and the reputed burial location of St Patrick.

The history of Ireland's conversion to Christianity and its reputation as the island of Saints and Scholars cannot be understood with the exclusion of the north-east of the island. Armagh Cathedral, founded in 445 AD today remains the Ecclesiastical Capital of Ireland.

The plantations in Ulster in the 1600s were pivotal events in Irish History which had an immeasurable impact on Ireland for succeeding generations, dispossessing the native Irish of their lands in favour of Scottish and English settlers. At the time Ulster was considered the most Gaelic Irish part of the island and home to the most powerful Gaelic Chieftains' such as Hugh O'Neill. The plantations however significantly altered the political landscape in Ireland - the outworking's of which we are still living through today, including partition.

The inclusion of the north-east in Ireland's Ancient East will allow visitors to experience the "authentic character of the real Ireland" by exploring more of our island's past.





Ireland's Hidden HEARTLANDS

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands – The Case for the Fermanagh Lakelands

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands is a tourism trail launched in 2018, which is based in the midland's region, with the focal point being the River Shannon, and the Beara-Briefne Way. The lakes and waterways, including Lough Ree and Lough Allen, and the Shannon-Erne Waterway, make this an attractive route for river boats. The infrastructure along the marinas enables visitors to dock their boats and explore the towns and villages such as Carrick-On-Shannon and Athlone.

According to Fáilte Ireland Research Tourism Facts 2019 449,000 Overseas Tourists visited Ireland's Hidden Heartlands generating €178mn in revenue.²⁴

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands should be expanded to include County Fermanagh. Fermanagh fits in perfectly with the theme of inland waterways and hidden treasures. The trail naturally connects to Lough Erne via the Shannon-Erne Waterway. Lough Erne itself attracts thousands of tourists every year from all across the world, as its one of the most idyllic locations in Ireland, popular for water sports and pleasure boating, as well as fishing and hosting major fishing tournaments every summer.

Visitors to Lough Erne also get the chance to explore the many islands within the lough, for example Devenish Island, which is an ancient monastic site and round tower. Fermanagh is also famous for the Marble Arch caves geopark, and the "Stairway to Heaven" mountain boardwalk, which attracts many tourists for the spectacular views.

The recent announcement of further progress on the Ulster Canal Project means that the canal, once finished, will extend from Lough Erne into County Monaghan increasing access to the waterway for visitors.

Incorporating Fermanagh into Ireland Hidden Heartlands, means that the tourism trail becomes much more attractive to visitors who can explore more of our inland waterways and surrounding countryside.



24 https://www.failteireland.ie/Failteireland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/2_Regional_SurveysReports/IHH_Tourism_Facts_FINAL.pdf?ext=.pdf



Domestic Market

The growth in All-Ireland Tourism and the domestic market is fundamental to having a well-established Tourism Product. Domestic tourism within Ireland is the foundation upon which a successful Tourism Product is built. Prior to the Pandemic Tourism NI Chief John McGrillen acknowledged that the north was less likely to be considered a "staycation" destination by people in Britain due to the need for a ferry or flight, however it was considered a good value destination, particularly by holidaymakers from the south.²⁵

This statement bears true and the resilience of domestic tourism was never more evident than over the course of the pandemic where the unprecedented growth in staycations in Ireland kept the sector afloat. Over July and August 2020 visitor's numbers from the south to the north had increased by 200% thereby keeping many businesses open, supporting jobs.²⁶

While the pandemic led to an unprecedented spike in all-Ireland tourism there has been a consistent and lasting trend that shows that there is continued growth in all-Ireland Tourism.

NISRA statistics from March 2021 had shown that visitors from south to north had grown significantly from 345,000 in the year to 31 March 2016 to 626,000 in the year to March 31 2019, representing a growth of 81%.²⁷

Realising the true potential of domestic tourism can be key to reinvigorating the Tourism Sector and helping it recover from the pandemic. The starting point should be about incorporating the same marketing strategies across the island which can help provide a much clearer and easily understood message to visitors from the island, as well as those from overseas.

Tourism is also a sector which can support a more regionally balanced economy with opportunities for local tourism across the region. It can also be an enabler for community wealth-building, giving communities ownership of their economic development and ensuring tourism is sustainable and in harmony with the local community and environment.

The Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East have become world renowned brands and expanding these into the North can increase the likelihood of visitors staying longer in border areas like Monaghan and Armagh, Leitrim and Fermanagh during the course of their holiday. Better promotion and marketing of these areas in collaboration with local businesses and communities will help to unlock the potential and encourage longer visitor stays in these areas.



25 <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/brexit-hits-tourism-numbers-in-northern-ireland-1.4171738>

26 Report to the Economy Committee 30th September 2020 - Department for Economy's Tourism Recovery Group

27 Figures provided to Economy Committee by Tourism NI 11th February 2020



Conclusion

The principle of all-island cooperation in the area of tourism is well established since the Good Friday Agreement and aims to increase tourism to the island of Ireland; and to support the north to realise its tourism potential, as set out under the remit of Tourism Ireland.²⁸

Extending to the north the three regional tourism experiences currently being implemented by Fáilte Ireland in the south is wholly consistent with the principle of cooperation in tourism. It will both, we believe, increase tourism to the island of Ireland by improving the individual offering of each experience and support the north in fulfilling its tourism potential.

It's time to extend the Wild Atlantic Way along our north coast; it's time to continue Ireland's Ancient East northwards up the island's east coast; and it's time to expand Ireland's Hidden Heartland's into the Fermanagh Lakelands.

This will create a number of gateways between the regions across the island and deliver continuity in terms of the visitor experience on the island of Ireland.

It's time to Explore More.



28 <https://www.tourismireland.com/About-Us>



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