more to Monaghan

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IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST®

A TALE OF TWO WORLDS

This three-day, self-guided tour highlights many of County Monaghan's cultural and natural treasures, from fairy forts and grand castles to fascinating heritage trails through historic villages, along with plenty of opportunities to experience the wild, natural beauty of this special place.

DAY ONE

Your journey starts with a visit to the **Patrick Kavanagh Centre** situated in a beautiful old church in the village of Inniskeen. The centre recounts the life and work of one of Ireland's best-loved poets and provides a performance tour of 'Kavanagh Country', taking in local sites immortalised by Kavanagh - with anecdotes, historical facts, wild rumours and even the odd poem recited along the way.

Set amongst rolling drumlins just a few miles away, you can enjoy flavoursome craft beer, brewed with care and affection at the **Brehon Brewhouse** and take a tour of the old forge, cottage and traditional brewery while you are there.

Having travelled south to the market town of **Carrickmacross**, find out about the town's rich history by following the **Heritage Trail** or visit the **Carrickmacross Workhouse** to discover the tragic tale of the Great Famine in the area. One of the few remaining workhouses in the country, you will hear how one million people died in Ireland through hunger and hardship and how over one million more emigrated.

At the **Carrickmacross Lace Gallery** you will hear the fascinating story of the beautiful lace which adorned Kate Middleton, the Duchess of Cambridge's stunning wedding dress. It began in the 1820s with a determined woman named Mrs Grey Porter who began teaching the local women appliqué so that they could earn a living. Made by the poor for the rich and famous, the exquisite lace became increasingly popular. However, Kate was not the first royal to wear Carrickmacross Lace - the sleeves of Princess Diana's famous wedding dress were also trimmed with it. Today, the exquisite lace is still hand-worked by passionate craftswomen in the town.

With the diversity of accommodation on offer in Carrickmacross, you may choose to finish up your adventure in a luxury hotel, the traditional comfort of a **country house hotel** or in the homily atmosphere of a **country pub guesthouse** or **bed & breakfast**.

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DAY TWO

Start your second day with a 15-minute scenic drive north to the town of **Castleblayney**, founded on the site of an early Christian church, the area was controlled by the local Hanratty chieftains for many centuries. The town itself was later developed by the powerful Blayney family who built the castle from which the town gets its name. The castle later became Hope Castle when it was bought in 1870 by Henry Hope, who also gave his name to one of the most famous jewels in the world, the Hope Diamond.

The castle sits on the banks of beautiful **Lough Muckno**, one of Ireland's finest angling destinations which provides excellent water sports and golf facilities. Surrounded by 200 acres of wooded terrain, this is a wonderful spot for walks or bike rides through beautiful forest glades and lakeside trails.

A 40-minute journey brings you to the fascinating town of **Clones**, where just decades after St Patrick arrived in Ireland, St Tighernach founded a monastery. You can still see the **Round Tower** that was a beacon to weary Christian pilgrims and the bell tower which called all within earshot to prayer. The abbey was attacked time and again by both Vikings and Normans.

After one terrible assault in the 12th century, the abbey, and the town, were destroyed. From the ashes, a new abbey was built, known to locals as '**the Wee Abbey**', which still stands today. The Normans continued to fight a long and bloody war with the Irish chieftains who had previously ruled the area. Standing on the raised bank of the **Norman fort** at the highest point of town, you can imagine the vicious clash of cultures raging around you.

At the **Ulster Canal Stores** in Clones, you will hear how the lace industry flourished here during the late 19th century. At one time there were 1,500 lace-makers in the area and by 1910, Clones had become the centre of crochet lace-making in Ireland. Most local families had their own motifs, taking inspiration from nature around them, designs included plants such as shamrock, fern, thistle, harp and local flowers. Examples of this exquisite work can be viewed in the exhibition and purchased in the gift shop.

Clones has a welcoming family-run hotel in the town centre or you can opt for the Big House experience at **Hilton Park** just outside the town. Built as a family home in 1734, Hilton Park is set among 600 acres of heritage woodlands, gardens and lakes. Here you can expect luxury accommodation and authentic country house food, much of it sourced from the estate.

DAY THREE

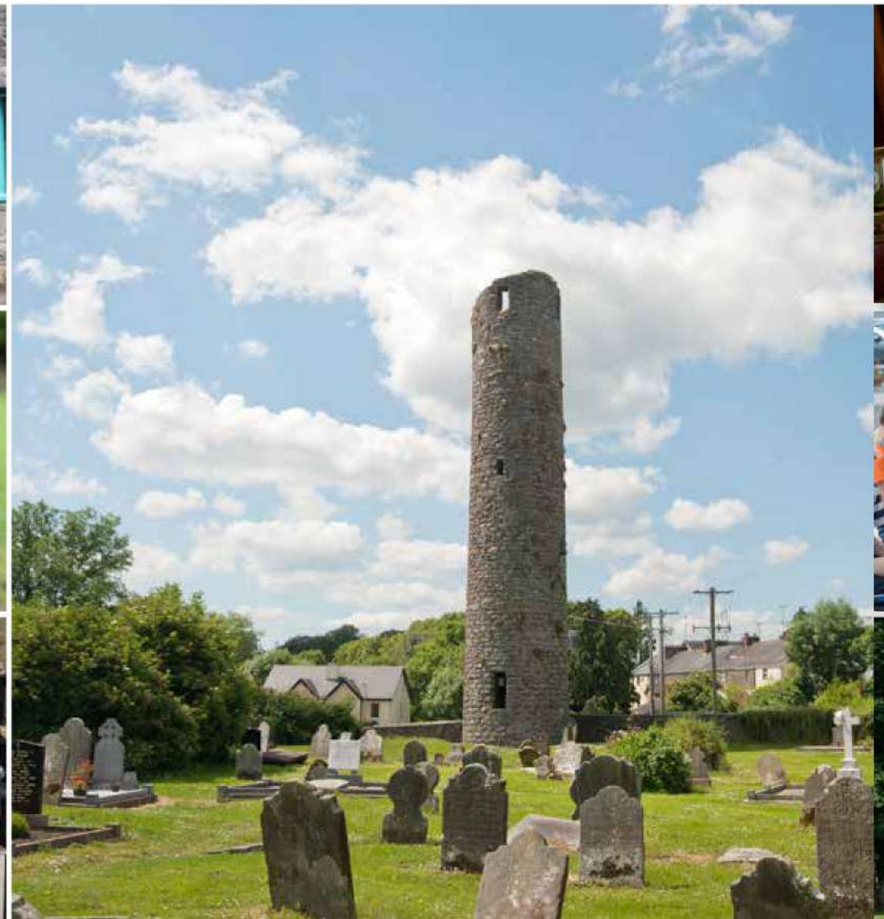
Your final day begins with a journey in a northerly direction to the **Sliabh Beagh Tourism Centre**, sitting at the foot of Sliabh Beagh Hills. Here you will discover the finest examples of blanket bog in Ireland with its native range of beautiful flora and fauna. You can take on the challenge of walking to Sliabh Beagh's highest point while enjoying spectacular panoramic views of Counties Monaghan, Tyrone and Fermanagh along the way or opt for a short family ramble along one of the 36 loop walks that meander throughout the area. Fishing and horse-riding are also catered for locally.

Travelling further north, nestled along the border with County Armagh, you will find the picturesque village of **Mullan**. A place where time has stood still, the village has hardly changed since its days as the centre of the linen industry in the region during the late 18th century. The town continued to prosper when Charles Powell Leslie later built a flax mill and houses for the town's workers. Sadly, Mullan suffered badly during the 'Troubles' and with dwindling industry, the town fell into disrepair. More recently the village has begun to prosper once again. Now part of the beautiful **Blackwater Heritage Trail**, the village is a popular place for those wishing to imagine Irish country life of the past.

A 10-minute drive south brings you to the scenic village of **Glaslough** where you can immerse yourself in the story of the illustrious Leslie family. Owners of the beautiful Glaslough Estate, the Leslie dynasty began over a thousand years ago, when a young Hungarian nobleman named Bartholomew Leslie married the Queen of Scotland's sister. In the 1600s, John Leslie, known as 'the fighting bishop', bought the land around beautiful Glaslough, extending the castle and building St Salvator's Church. Over many generations, the colourful Leslie clan has included several famous diplomats, writers and soldiers.

Today, the castle on the estate is still a family home but is also a luxurious hotel. A host of activities are on offer for residential guests including the famous world-class equestrian centre. But what of the timeless village that grew up alongside the castle? One of Ireland's hidden gems, it is full of characters and stories of its own. The **Glaslough Heritage Trail App** will guide you through this intriguing history for free.

Choose from the splendour of Castle Leslie itself, the 'keepers house' or one of the many 'cosy cottages' available on the estate grounds for your final night's accommodation. Glaslough Village also has a great selection of guest houses to choose from, or travel to Monaghan town to treat yourself to some luxury R&R after your adventure through the heart of County Monaghan.



This is just a taste of what Monaghan has to offer. Visit www.monaghantourism.com for more itineraries, trips and tours around this wonderful county!