

Wexford

With a spectacular coastline, a wealth of historic sites and attractive towns and villages, it's little wonder that Wexford is a favourite holiday destination for visitors and locals alike.

The county offers a mix of mountainous scenery, river valleys with fine fishing, and mile upon mile of fine, unspoiled beaches such as Courtown, Rosslare, Duncannon and Curracloe. The South East Coastal Drive is perhaps the best way to take in part of Wexford's 200 kilometres of stunning coastline.

Wexford is a historic county with bustling towns such as Enniscorthy, Gorey, New Ross and Wexford Town. It has many fascinating visitor attractions to choose from including the remarkable Hook Lighthouse, the Irish National Heritage Park, the "living history" of the Dunbrody Heritage Ship and the Ros Tapestry in New Ross, the Irish Agricultural Museum at Johnstown Castle Estate. Wexford is also home to the new state of the art venue – The Wexford Opera House. Wexford is a county of spectacular parks and gardens, such as The John F Kennedy Arboretum – ideal for a family walk and picnic. It is also world renowned for the diverse range of bird-life that inhabits and passes through its nature reserves.

A full calendar of events, including the world famous Wexford Festival Opera and Wexford Fringe Festival, the Co. Wexford Strawberry Festival and the Duncannon Sand Sculpting Festival, ensures there's always something fun to see and do.





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Wexford towns and villages

The towns and villages of Wexford are full of character. Here are some places that you are sure to enjoy:

Dating back to the 2nd Century, **Wexford** is a lively town with winding streets, a pretty quayside and an array of pubs, cafes and fine restaurants. It's a shopper's paradise with an excellent range of shops, from small boutiques to craft shops with unique hand crafted goods. Places of interest just outside the town include the Irish National Heritage Park, The Irish Agricultural Museum and the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve. The town hosts a colourful calendar of events throughout the year, including the world famous Wexford Festival Opera. Within easy reach of many fine beaches, coastal drives and walks, Wexford is the ideal base to explore the county and region.

Rosslare Strand is a popular Blue Flag seaside resort with quality self-catering accommodation and great watersports, golf and walking trails. **Rosslare Harbour** is a small yet busy port town providing passenger ferry services to Wales and northern France. To the south, **Carnsore Point** and **Lady's Island** are noted for bird watching, good beaches and many historic sites.

New Ross is a thriving town set in rich rolling countryside on the mouth of the River Barrow. New Ross is home to the Dunbrody Famine Ship, a recreation of the actual 19th century timber-built ship on which actors re-enact the hardships of transatlantic crossings of the 1840s. New Ross is also the ancestral birthplace of John F. Kennedy, and five generations of the Kennedy clan are celebrated at the Kennedy Homestead. A life sized statue of John F. Kennedy has recently been unveiled on the quayside in New Ross. Also in New Ross, The Ros Tapestry exhibition is well worth a visit.

South of New Ross, the Ring of Hook Drive takes visitors along a scenic coast road through **Ballyhack, Arthurstown, Duncannon, Campile** and **Fethard on Sea**, taking in some of the county's finest heritage sites along the way.

Enniscorthy is a cathedral town on the River Slaney overlooked by the 1798 Vinegar Hill battle site. An early Norman settlement, Enniscorthy is dominated by the town's Castle built in 1205. The National 1798 Rebellion Centre in the town



DUNBRODY FAMINE SHIP, NEW ROSS

gives an insight into the birth of modern democracy in Ireland. The colourful Co. Wexford Strawberry Fair is held in the town every year. Enniscorthy also boasts a strong tradition in the creation of craft and quality pottery.

To the north, **Ferns** is a pretty village with a long and fascinating history. Ferns Castle stands a shattered fortress which was built by the Normans in the 13th century. The village also features a 12th century Abbey and four high crosses, dating back to the 8th and 9th centuries.

Further north, **Gorey** is a thriving market town with striking architecture from the 18th and mid-19th centuries. This is an excellent base from where to explore the outlying countryside of Wexford and Wicklow. There's also great golf at a number of courses including the Seaford Golf and Country Club.

Bunclody is a pretty market town at the foot of the Blackstairs Mountains, bordered by the sweeping River Slaney. Bunclody offers angling and canoeing facilities and is a good base for cycling and walking tours.

Just a few miles north of Wexford Town, **Curracloe** has a celebrated Blue Flag beach, and is a popular location with holiday makers. It was also the location for the film 'Saving Private Ryan'. **Blackwater** and **Kilmuckridge** are seaside towns with good self-catering and camping facilities. Further north, **Courtown** is a popular holiday resort, with a beautiful Blue Flag beach. With miles of sandy seafront, Courtown offers a wide variety of leisure facilities for all the family, such as Forest park Leisure Centre, not to mention walking routes, local amusements and quality self-catering accommodation.

On Wexford's south coast, **Kilmore Quay** is a pretty fishing village with whitewashed thatched houses, a harbour and marina. This well renowned angling centre is a popular destination for visitors and is a sea angling centre of excellence. Boat trips can be taken around the uninhabited Saltee Islands, popular with bird watchers. To the north of Kilmore Quay, the village of **Foulksmills** is surrounded by lush countryside and dotted with pleasant walking trails.

For more information on all of Wexford's towns and villages, visit one of our Discover Ireland Centres and Tourist Offices (see the inside back cover for contact details) or our website www.discoverireland.ie/southeast

For a variety of one day self drive tours see page 78.