



Westport: 3 Day Cultural and Heritage Experience



Day 1

Morning:

Get your bearings with a fun, light hearted, guided tour of Westport town - an easy start to the day.

The Westport Train Tour is an all-weather experience, telling the fascinating story of Westport. It starts at Westport House's town centre gate, runs through the estate to Westport Quay and then back to Westport town. The train tour - lasting 45 minutes and hitting 46 sights along the way - runs from March through to October. Plan your trip by visiting www.westporttraintour.ie for the schedule and pick-up spots. Now familiar with the town, why not take another stroll around? This time wandering in and out of the boutiques and stores that caught your eye during the tour.

Shopping in Westport offers something that little bit different. Buy unique locally produced goods such as knitwear and pottery, or browse through the rails of contemporary fashion boutiques, book stores and music outlets.

Afternoon:

No cultural visit to Westport is complete without a tour of the iconic Westport House & Gardens.

Designed by the famous architects Richard Cassels and James Wyatt in the 18th century, Westport House is

one of Ireland's most beautiful historic homes, open to the public. It enjoys a superb parkland setting with lake views, terraces, wonderful gardens and a magnificent panoramic vista of the surrounding Clew Bay. It was built and is still privately owned by the Browne family, who are direct descendants of the 16th century Pirate Queen, Grace O'Malley.

Discover Westport House through self-guided tours, fascinating exhibitions and a range of reading materials. With over 30 rooms on show, visitors can immerse themselves in life as far back as the 16th century when Grace O'Malley ruled the land and seas around the estate as well as in the six exhibitions on display throughout the house.

More information: www.westporthouse.ie

Evening:

Attend a concert or play at **Westport Theatre** - check www.westporttheatre.com for current listings.

Or catch some live traditional music in one of the many local pubs or enjoy a 'Folk & Trad' session on Thursdays, Fridays feel free to bring your own instrument and join in.

Visit www.DestinationWestport.com for more details!

 www.facebook.com/DestinationWestport





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Day 2

Head to Achill, stopping off along the way to explore a variety of heritage sites.

Morning:

Visit **Rockfleet Castle** and **Burrishoole Abbey**.

Take the Newport/Achill road out of Westport. Passing through Newport town, keep following the Achill road (N59) for just over 8km.

Burrishoole Abbey (just over 3km from Newport) is a beautiful ruin, standing beside a quiet, tidal estuary. It was founded by Sir Richard de Burgo for the Dominican order in 1469, who resigned his lordship before entering the friary, where he remained a friar until his death four years later.

It fell into ruin in the 18th century and the roof finally collapsed in 1793. Today, the nave, chancel, tower and south transept remain and there are ruins of domestic buildings and a cloister to the north.

The cemetery is still in use; take a stroll around the grounds and seek out the oldest inscribed tomb in the Abbey, that of Alan O'Kelly which has a Latin inscription dated 1623.

Rockfleet Castle (just over 8km from Newport) is a tower house that was built in the mid-16th century. It was home to Pirate Queen Grace O'Malley and her husband Richard Burke 'Richard of Iron' from 1566. O'Malley is believed to have died here.

The castle, restored in the 1950s, can now be explored by the public during the summer season.

Afternoon:

Continue on to Achill Island and explore the heritage sites there:

Kildamnait Castle, on the south east coast, is a 15th century tower house associated with the O' Malley Clan, who were once a ruling family of Achill. Named after St. Damhnait (or Dymphna), there is also a 16th century church, graveyard and holy well to be explored.

Achill Mission (The Colony), situated at Dugort, is one of Achill's most famous historical sites. In 1831 the Protestant Reverend Edward Nangle founded a proselytising mission at Dugort, which included schools, cottages, an orphanage, a small hospital and a hotel (the former Slievemore Hotel). The 'Colony' was very successful for a time and regularly produced a newspaper called the 'Achill Missionary Herald'. The Reverend Nangle expanded his mission into Mweelin, where a school was built. The Achill Mission began to decline slowly after Nangle was moved from Achill and was finally closed in the 1880s. Edward Nangle died in 1883.

Close to Dugort, at the base of Slievemore mountain lies the Deserted Village. There are approximately 80 ruined one-room houses which were built from unmortared stone. In the surrounding fields and right up the mountain, you can see the tracks in the fields of 'lazy beds', where the potato crop was grown. The village was habited until 1845 when the Great Famine struck. At that time, most of the families moved to the nearby village of Dooagh, which is beside the sea (enabling seafood to be substituted for the failed potato as a food staple), while others emigrated.

More information on www.achilltourism.com/history

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Day 3

Morning:

Visit *Clew Bay Heritage Centre at Westport Quay*.

Situated in a 19th century building, just two kilometres from the centre of the historic town of Westport, **Clew Bay Heritage Centre** traces the history of the planned town and the Clew Bay area from pre-Christian times to the present. Artefacts, documents and photographs connected with the general Westport area provide a basis for the presentation of local history, customs and traditions. Open from 10.30am - 2pm, Monday to Friday all year round. June to September, the centre is open until 5pm and in July and August, it also opens from 3 - 5pm on Sundays.

[More information on www.westportheritage.com](http://www.westportheritage.com).

Afternoon:

Visit the beautiful and iconic Croagh Patrick mountain and the national famine memorial at the base of it.

Depending on your ability, you might decide to head for the summit or simply stop at the shoulder. Rest assured that if you only go as far as the statue, you'll still be guaranteed stunning views of Clew Bay. Be sure to visit the Visitor Centre at the base of the mountain to learn all about this national pilgrimage site - from its pagan days of old to the present day.

Stroll across the road to visit the National Famine Memorial - this magnificent piece of sculpture by John Behan was unveiled by President Mary Robinson in 1997. It depicts a Coffin Ship with skeleton bodies and commemorates the anniversary of the Famine. A sad and very moving commemoration.

Evening:

Visit one of the many famous traditional pubs in Westport, all of which host live music.

[More information on www.destinationwestport.com](http://www.destinationwestport.com)

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