

Oileáin Árann, Co. na Gaillimhe

The Aran Islands, Co. Galway



Three legendary islands

Set out in Galway Bay, the three rocky limestone outcrops that make up the Aran Islands are a bastion of traditional language, culture and music, unique in their geology and archaeology and unrivalled in their potent sense of history.

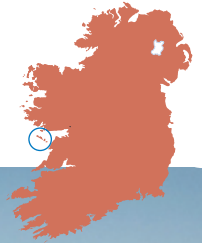
Each of the three islands, Árann, Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr have their own distinct atmosphere and character, but the dramatic landscapes and endless sea form a backdrop to a labyrinth of meandering stone walls and tiny, tightly packed fields. In between, a network of narrow winding roads and grassy lanes sweep from pristine beaches and craggy shores to the dizzying cliffs that mark the edge of Europe.

The islands have lured legions of writers, artists and visitors over the centuries, their enigmatic ancient monuments, early Christian remains, holy wells and historic lighthouses adding to their sense of timelessness and mystery.

The pace of life is slow here and a profound sense of peace accompanies any walk or cycle down the narrow grassy lanes. This serenity makes the islands a precious sanctuary from the rush of modern life, and their isolation guarantees their place as a stronghold of traditional culture. The nightly music sessions, lively dances, traditional crafts, seagoing currachs and wonderfully warm and welcoming spirit are inimitable parts of Aran.

Over the next three pages we profile each of the three Aran islands.

Oileáin a bhfuil saibhreas staire agus scandálaíochta ag baint leo.



FACT FILE



Set out in Galway Bay, the Aran Islands comprise three islands, Árann, Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr. Árann is the largest of the three islands (see page 19), Inis Meáin is the middle island (see page 20) and Inis Oírr is the smallest of the three islands (see page 21)



Population: Over 1,300 live on Aran's three islands, increasing in the high season. All three islands are Gaeltacht islands.



Take me to the Island

By Ferry

The Aran Islands are accessible by Ferry from both Co. Galway and Co. Clare. The ferry services to each island feature on their profiles pages 18 to 20.

By Air

You can fly to all three Aran Islands with Aer Arann Islands from Indreabhán, Co. Galway, just over 27 kms west of Galway City. There are several flights daily (hourly during peak season). Flight time is approx 8 minutes. A shuttle bus to the airport is available from Galway City. Capacity: 9 passengers.

Aer Arann Islands

Tel: +353(0)91 593034
Book on-line at
www.aerarannislands.ie



Tourist Office

Ireland West Tourism.
Tel: +353(0)91 537700.



Árainn, Co. na Gaillimhe

Árainn, Co. Galway

The largest of the Aran islands. Vibrant history

Árainn is the largest and most developed of the Aran Islands and combines a vibrant history with excellent facilities and lively nightlife. Blanketed in fissured limestone and a patchwork of fields, you can walk, cycle or ride the laneways here to discover the island's most celebrated monument, Dún Aonghusa. One of the most famous and most important prehistoric sites in Europe, this semi-circular stone fort sits dramatically on top of a 100m drop into the sea. Elsewhere circular forts, early Christian remains, 12th century high crosses and medieval churches dot the island.

The heritage centre, Ionad Árann, gives a good fascinating into the island's history, charting the lives, times and traditions of the people of Aran. However, traditions are very much alive here and nightly music sessions and regular dances, impromptu storytelling and even currach racing are part of everyday life. Whether you wander the flower-strewn laneways, watch the seals, relax on the beach, or visit Ionad Árann, you'll be smitten by the people, culture and heritage of this incredible island.

HIGHLIGHTS

Dún Aonghusa fort and visitor centre; Na Seacht dTeampall (the seven churches); Ragús - a spectacular show of Irish music, song and dance; flora and fauna; live music.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Walking, cycling, swimming, horse-riding, diving, basket-making, learning Irish and cultural courses.

Tabhair sciúrd thart timpeall an oileáin agus cuir colas ar thraidisiúin, cultúr agus gnáthshaol na n-oileánach.



FACT FILE



-  19 kms from Ros an Mhíl in Connemara; 48km from Galway City and 12.5 km from Doolin, Co. Clare.
-  Approx 14 km long and 3.8 km wide.
-  Population: Over 800, increasing in high season. A Gaeltacht island.
-  Hotel, guesthouses, holiday homes, B&B's, hostel, cafés, restaurants, pubs, shop, crafts. Bike-hire, tour bus, taxi.
-  Best time is April to Oct., but busiest time is June to Sept.



Take me to the Island

Flights: Aer Arann fly daily (see page 18)

Sailings from Ros an Mhíl, Co. Galway.

Island Ferries Teo.

Daily, year round. 294 Passengers
Tel: +353(0)91 568903
www.aranislandferries.com

Caol Díreach go hÁrainn.

Daily, year round. Also island hopping service. 257 Passengers
Tel: +353(0)91 506786
www.aranislandsdirect.com

Sailings from Doolin, Co. Clare

Aran Doolin Ferries

Daily from April to Oct. 100 Passengers
Tel: +353(0)65 7074455
www.doolinferries.com

Doolin Ferries Ltd

Daily from April to Oct. 100 Passengers
Tel: +353(0)65 7075555
www.doolinferry.com



Tourist Office Contact:
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Did You Know?

The late Bronze age fort of Dún Aonghusa is an incredibly powerful place with spectacular views over Galway Bay. The fort is enclosed by three massive stone walls and protected by an outer defence of jagged upright rocks.






Inis Meáin, Co. na Gaillimhe

Inis Meáin, Co. Galway



Aran's Middle Island. Beauty, tradition and culture combine

FACT FILE

-  14.5 km from Ros an Mhíl in Connemara; 48 km from Galway City and 13 kms from Doolin, Co. Clare.
-  Approx 4 km long and 2.5 km wide.
-  Population: Over 180. A Gaeltacht island.
-  Hotel, holiday homes, B&B's, restaurants, pubs, shop, craft shop.
-  Best time is May to Oct., but busiest time is July and August.

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Usually the quietest and least visited of the Aran Islands, Inis Meáin is truly an escape from the modern world, a place where beauty, tradition and culture combine with a rugged landscape. A maze of narrow winding roads, sheltered paths and trails crisscross the island, from the rocky hillsides of the south to the deserted sandy beaches on the north shore. Wild flowers bloom everywhere and numerous examples of early settlements dot the limestone karst.

The incredible oval fort of Dún Chonchúir is here, and so too are the beautiful Cill Cheanainn and the church of Mary Immaculate with its magnificent stained-glass windows by the famed Harry Clarke Studios. Nearby is Teach Synge, the restored island cottage of writer John Millington Synge, for whom the island was a favourite retreat.

The island also offers a diving centre to explore the clear waters and discover the abundant marine life off shore, and renowned Irish language and culture courses where you can learn about the history and traditions of the island from music, story-telling and poetry to set dancing and environment.

An t-oileán is ciúine d'Oileáin Árann. Siúil na bóithre casta agus na cosáin fhoscúla atá mórthimpeall na háite.

HIGHLIGHTS

Dún Chonchúir; Teach Synge;
Church of Mary Immaculate;
Cill Cheanainn.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Walking, cycling, diving centre, music, language and cultural studies and activity breaks.



Did You Know?

Writer J M Synge favoured Inis Meáin for its simple lifestyle and traditional ways. One of his favourite writing spots, Synge's Chair, can still be visited on the west of the island where a sheltered stone seat overlooks sheer cliffs and pounding surf.

Inis Oírr, Co. na Gaillimhe

Inis Oírr, Co. Galway

The smallest of the famous Aran Islands



The smallest and most easterly of the Aran Islands, Inis Oírr is a tranquil place, perfect for quiet contemplation and relaxed walks. The island is small enough to see entirely on foot and it's easy to get the impression that you have the whole world to yourself.

Inis Oírr has probably been inhabited for 5,000 years but the earliest evidence of civilisation is at Cnoc Raithní, a Bronze Age burial mound dating from 1500BC. Nearby are Teampall Chaomhán, a medieval church ruin half buried in the sand and the 16th century Caisleán Uí Bhriain, an imposing three-storey tower house built within a Stone Age fort. To the north of the island golden sandy beaches offer safe swimming and stunning vistas of Conamara while the eastern shore boasts a shipwreck and breathtaking views of the Cliffs of Moher and the Burren.

The island also has an arts and cultural centre, Áras Éanna, where you can attend workshops, see exhibitions and learn about traditional culture. Visit www.arseanna.ie. If you visit in August you may see the traditional currach boat races offshore.

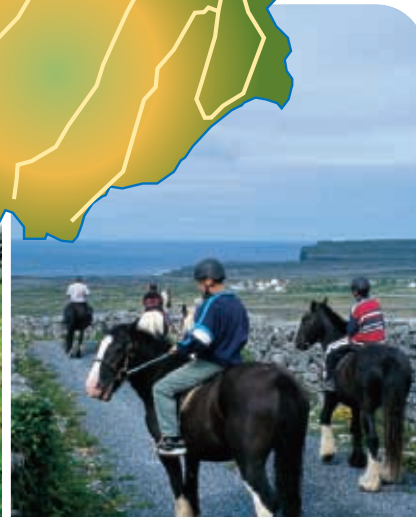
HIGHLIGHTS

Cnoc Raithní; Teampall Chaomhán; Caisleán Uí Bhriain; Plassy wreck; Cill na Seacht nIníon; Lighthouse; Signal Tower; Tobar Éanna.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Walking, swimming, birdwatching, fishing, music, Irish dancing, language learning.

Oileán socair agus togha na háite do thaoscadh na smaointe agus do shealanna siúilóide.



Did You Know?

Inis Oírr has many underground streams and numerous wells, the most revered of which is Tobar Éanna, St. Enda's well. This natural spring never dries up and is reputed to have healing powers!



FACT FILE

- Part of Co. Galway, Inis Oírr lies 8 km off the coast of Clare.
- Approx 3 kms long and 2 kms wide.
- Population: Over 260. A Gaeltacht island.
- Hotel, B&B's, holiday homes and hostel. Coffee shops, restaurants, pubs, grocery shop, arts and culture centre. Bike-hire, hackney service.
- Best time is April to Oct., but busiest time is July and August.

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www.doolinferry.com

Cliffs of Moher Cruises.

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