

Killybegs Harbour Centre & South West Donegal, Ireland

Area Information

Killybegs is situated on the North West Coast of Ireland with the newest harbour facility in the country which opened in 2004.

The area around the deep fjord-like inlet of Killybegs has been inhabited since prehistoric times. The town was named in early Christian times, the Gaelic name *Na Cealla Beaga* referring to a group of monastic cells. Interestingly, and perhaps surprisingly in a region not short of native saints, the town's patron saint is St. Catherine of Alexandria. St. Catherine is the patron of seafarers and the association with Killybegs is thought to be from the 15th Century which confirms that Killybeg's tradition of seafaring is very old indeed.

The area is rich in cultural & historical history having a long association with marine history dating back to the Spanish Armada.

Donegal is renowned for the friendliness & hospitality of its people and that renowned '*Donegal Welcome*' awaits cruise passengers & crew to the area from where a pleasant travel distance through amazing sea & mountain scenery of traditional picturesque villages with thatched cottages takes you to visit spectacular castles and national parks. Enjoy the slow pace of life for a day while having all the modern facilities of city life.

Access to the area

Air access

Regular flights are available from UK airports and many European destinations to [Donegal Airport](#) which is approx an hour's drive from Killybegs

[City of Derry Airport](#) approx 1 hour 20 mins drive from Killybegs

International flights available to and from

[Knock International Airport](#) 2 hours and 20 minutes drive with public transport connections.

[Dublin Airport](#) 3 hour 15 mins drive with regular public transport services available.

[Belfast International Airport](#) 3 hour drive

[Belfast City Airport](#) 3 hours 30 minutes drive

Road access

From Dublin

Driving time to Killybegs just approx. 3 hours

From Belfast

Driving time is approx. 2 hours 40 minutes

Sample Half Day Excursions

- **Donegal Castle** Standing on the banks of the Eske River in Donegal town is this 17th century castle. It houses a fine collection of Persian rugs, French tapestries, and a Jacobean fireplace.
- **Franciscan Friary** was founded 1474 and richly endowed by the Lady Nuala O'Connor and the Lady Nuala O'Brien, wives of successive O'Donnell Chieftains. The Friary followed the usual Franciscan layout of church on the south side, with cloisters and conventional buildings to the north. Its present ruinous state dates from 1601. Four of the friars made the community immortal by their compilation known as 'The Annals of the Four Masters; (1632-6), which is one of the most important sources of the early history of Ireland.
- **Scenic drive to Sliabh League** highest accessible sea cliffs in Europe with a visit to Sliabh League Cultural Centre where a team of experts in the fields of Archaeology, History & Folklore are happy to share their knowledge.
- **Glencolmcille Folk Village Museum** replicating dwellings used in the 1700, 1800 and 1900's allow a window into a period now gone.
- **Belleek China Centre** was established in 1857. Belleek Pottery holds a very special place in the cultural and commercial heritage of County Fermanagh. Nestling on the banks of the River Erne this imposing building is home to the world famous Belleek Fine Parian China and also to one of Ireland's top five visitor attractions.
- **Fintown Narrow Gauge Railway** is a unique three mile return journey along the shores of Loch Finn, through spectacular mountainous scenery steeped in tradition, myth and folklore. The railway embankment runs parallel to the road most of the way to Glenties, winner of Irelands tidiest town ten times, and there are many impressive cut stone bridges along the way. Described by Brian Friel, International Playwright born in Glenties
"What is on offer is a unique journey.... along the shores of a lake as grand as any in Switzerland or Minnesota."
- **Scenic Drive to Crolla** in the Rosses area on the West coast which is where the original Crolla dolls were made with a refreshment stop at the famous Leo's Tavern pub. You never know who you might meet there. Leo Brennan the father of the world famous singer Enya and members of the band Clannad is the resident musician and tells a great story of the history of the pub and of course the famous family.

Sample Full Day excursions

- **Glenveagh National Park Castle, Visitor Centre and Gardens** is situated in the North West of Co. Donegal and contains 14,000 hectares of mountain, raised bogland, lakes and woodlands. Henry McIlhenny, the last owner of the castle, served the Philadelphia Museum of Art as Curator of Decorative Arts and his expertise in this field is evident throughout the castle.

The park has the largest herd of red deer in Ireland if not in Europe. The golden eagle, which was extinct, was recently introduced to the park.

- **The Yeats Trail & Sligo Drumcliffe** is in an area of exceptional scenic beauty under the awesome Benbulbin Mountains and has religious associations stretching back to the very dawn of Christianity in Ireland. The area is best known as the last resting place of the great poet W. B. Yeats who drew his inspiration from the beauty of the area for some of the world's best known poems. There is a unique 11th century, sculptured High Cross at Drumcliffe.

Killybegs Town & surrounding area

Maritime & Heritage Centre is housed in the old Donegal Carpets Factory where carpets were hand tufted and now grace the floors of Buckingham Palace, The White House, the Vatican and many state buildings around the world. This is a very interesting place to visit where you can watch a video of the history of the carpet making followed by a tour of the factory and an opportunity to make a knot.

The centre has the most sophisticated ship simulator in the country which offers 3 levels of mastery. There is also a display of local handmade jewellery, local seaweed products and crafts.

St Catherine's Well close to the Harbour Centre. . There is a long tradition of devotion at this well, which probably dates back to pagan times.

Local tradition says that a party of sailors dedicated the well to St Catherine of Alexandria when their boat was wrecked and they were saved from drowning. The well retains its special air of prayerful solitude for all who make a visit.

Bruach na Mara

This Philadelphia type town house on St Catherine's Road is the headquarters of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation, one of the most powerful groupings of fishermen in the

country. The building was once the retirement home of Bishop John Bernard Mac Ginley of Killybegs.

St Mary of the Visitation RC Church and the Mc Swyne Grave Slab

The foundation stone of this church was laid on February 2nd, 1842. The first mass celebrated was Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve 1844. On this night there were no seats and the floor was just clay. The story goes that a haystack nearby was much smaller after mass as people pulled a piece of hay to put under their knees!! According to tradition it cost £7500.

The Mc Swyne Grave Slab is 16th Century style carved stone slab was brought from the Friary at Ballysaggart, St John's Point in the dead of night by 4 local men who risked their lives at the request of the Parish Priest. The three stained-glass windows above the high altar were designed by Mayer & Co., from Munich, Germany probably around the year 1880.

St John's Church of Ireland was consecrated and dedicated to St John on June 6th 1828. The building was a straight forward rectangular church until 1860 when the polygonal Chancel was added. The west porch supports a bellcote spire.

Bridge Street

Before the main street was built Bridge Street was the main street in the town and housed most of the important buildings such as the church, school, courthouse, a hotel, and shops and boarding houses. It is thought that some of the original quaint small houses are some of the smallest houses in the county.

Corn Store (Fawltys Bar)

This building was originally a grain store dating from the late 18th Century. Ships delivered cargoes of grain directly to the store at high tide. The store was used by the Government to hold Indian meal for distribution during the Great Famine. Up until the early 1930s it was a store for flour to supply the many bakeries in the town.

Fintra Blue Flag Beach

An 8 minute drive from the town centre is the fabulous Blue Flag Beach at Fintra. The beach is part of the historical Hamilton Fintra estate and today it is the Clock Tower Bar & Restaurant retaining the original clock tower of Fintra House. The dramatic landing of an American Flying Fortress bomber on Fintra Beach shortly after 6:00 p.m. on the evening of February 20th, 1944, was one of the more dramatic episodes of World War II in Killybegs.

The plane, with a crew of ten, was forced to crash land on the beach when it ran out of fuel after a dramatic flight from Newfoundland. Locals brought the crew to Fintra House and gave them a warm Killybegs welcome.

Walking

There are many walks around the Killybegs area taking you along country roads with some spectacular scenery. There are coastal walks, looped walks, long distance way marked routes and beautiful forest walks, and you will be spoilt for choice.

Maps are available at the Information Centre.

Golf

The amazing success of Ulster Golfers on the world circuit must be due in no small way to the availability of outstanding links golf courses throughout the province and within a 30 minute drive there are 2 exceptional links courses.

Naim Portnoo Links Golf Club, is situated in a beautiful seaside resort in southwest Donegal. It is considered one of the finest natural and scenic 18-hole links courses in Ireland, with sweeping views of Gweebarra Bay.

Donegal Golf Club at Murvagh, is an outstanding links golf course in the beautiful and historical Rosstown. It is continually featured in Golf World's Top 100 courses in Ireland and Great Britain. Close to the Golf Club is the Friary which has a Visitor Centre and contains the Donegal Historical Society Museum which houses a small collection including stone age flints and old Irish musical instruments. The Friary also has beautiful gardens and beach walks which are open to visitors an option for the non golfer.

Other Activities

Other activities available in Killybegs are diving, boat trips around the bay with a little fishing. Boats can be booked for a half day angling trip.

Sea Kayaking

Sea Kayaking coaching, canoeing, waveski surfing and much more. Fun and learning for individuals, families & groups of all ages. Fully qualified instructors. (BCU L5 Certification) Lessons can be tailored for any needs and booked through the Information Centre.

Horse Riding

The Equestrian centre is ideally situated between the Donegal hills and the wild Atlantic Ocean, a place of unrivalled natural beauty in south west County Donegal in the village of Bruckless 10 minute drive from Killybegs.

Links to the Successful and Famous

Donegal is in the province of Ulster and these are just a few links

- 16 out of 41 American Presidents have come from this small regional area.
- George W Bush can trace roots back to the region. Mr Bush's ancestor on his mother's side was William Gault, who was first citizen of Tennessee in 1796, and came from the region.
- 8 of the 56 signatories of the American Declaration of Independence on July 4th 1776 were from this small region.
- The great Seal of America was designed by Charles Thomson from Derry, who was Secretary of the American Continental Congress between 1744 and 1789. He was also despatched to inform George Washington that he was to be the first American President.

Sarah Jessica Parker and Mathew Broderick have a holiday home near Killybegs and are regular visitors to the area.

Enya, and her siblings in Clanad grew up in this area and their parents still live here in the family pub. This unique environment and landscapes has inspired much of their mystical Irish compositions.

Tony Blair's grandmother is from Ballyshannon, 30 minutes from Killybegs. He spent his childhood holidays here.

Brian Friel international playwright, comes from Glenties and part of his film 'Dancing at Luanasa' was shot in the area.

Seamus Heaney, poet, and Nobel Prize in Literature (1995) was born in Derry, walled city and little over an hour's drive from Killybegs. Seamus lectures regularly in Berkley & Harvard universities.

John Hume is a former Irish politician from Derry, Northern Ireland who was instrumental in procuring the peace process in Northern Ireland. He was co-recipient of the 1998 Nobel Peace Prize he is also a recipient of the Gandhi Peace Prize and the Martin Luther King Award.

The area of Donegal surrounding the Killybegs Harbour Centre has a great deal to offer to cruise passengers and has the unique advantage of a state of the art facility for ships while retaining the unique rural beauty combining history, culture and an array of activities.

We, at the Killybegs Information Centre aim to provide the best possible service to cruise passengers and our utmost priority is to provide a memorable and enjoyable visit for cruise passengers.

We look forward to hearing from you

Regards

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http://www.killybegs.ie/cruises_offseason.htm

http://www.killybegs.ie/documents/61669_5FIKillybegsBrochureProofN2_000.pdf

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