


A GUEST GUIDE

# A Weekend in *Lismore*

An honest guide to the castle town on the Blackwater — the walks worth taking, the places worth eating, and the corners most visitors drive straight past.

LISMORE · COUNTY WATERFORD · IRELAND

BEFORE YOU SET OFF

# Ireland's best-kept *heritage secret*

Most people driving between Cork and Waterford pass the turn for Lismore without taking it. That is our good fortune, and now yours.

Lismore is a town of about 1,300 people sitting above the River Blackwater, in the foothills of the Knockmealdown Mountains. It has a castle that has stood since 1185, a cathedral tracing back to a 7th-century monastery that drew scholars from across Europe, and a main street you can walk end to end in ten minutes.

What it does not have is crowds. There is no tour-bus car park, no queue for coffee, no need to book weeks ahead for dinner. It is the kind of place where the pace drops the moment you arrive — which is rather the point.

### How to use this guide

This isn't a list of everything. It's a list of what we'd actually send a friend to do, with honest notes on what's worth your time and what isn't. Everything here is within a short walk or a half-hour drive of the cottage.

If you only have one day, skip to the itinerary on page 6.

## A note on the weather

It will probably rain at some point. This is Ireland. The good news is that Lismore is at its most atmospheric under a low sky — the castle looks better in mist than in sunshine, and the Blackwater runs high and fast after rain. Bring a proper coat rather than an umbrella, and plan indoor options for the worst of it. Nothing here is ruined by weather.






WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE

# The town *on foot*

Everything on this page is a five- to fifteen-minute walk from the cottage door. No car required.

## Lismore Castle Gardens 5 MIN WALK

The oldest continually cultivated gardens in Ireland, laid out in two parts: a walled upper garden with yew walks, and a wilder lower garden dropping toward the river. Contemporary art is installed through the grounds each season, which sounds incongruous and somehow isn't.

> *Open daily, roughly mid-March to late October, 11am–6pm (last entry 5pm). Around €11. The castle itself is a private home and closed to visitors — but the best view of it is free, from the bridge on the Cappoquin road.*

## St Carthage's Cathedral 8 MIN WALK

Built on the site of the monastery St Carthage founded in the 7th century. The current building is largely 17th-century with a graceful spire added later. Quiet, rarely busy, and genuinely beautiful inside — worth twenty minutes even if churches aren't usually your thing.

> *Free. Generally open during daylight hours.*

## Lismore Heritage Centre 7 MIN WALK

In the old courthouse on the main street. Covers the monastic history, Sir Walter Raleigh's period as owner of the castle, and the curious Fred Astaire connection — his sister and first dance partner, Adele, married into the Cavendish family who own Lismore Castle.

> *Around €5. Open year-round, which makes it a reliable wet-afternoon option.*

## The Blackwater riverbank 2 MIN WALK

Down past the bridge, the river path runs along the water beneath the castle walls. Best in the first hour of daylight, when the mist sits on the water and you'll likely have it to yourself. Herons, occasionally otters.

## Farmers & Craft Market 5 MIN WALK · SUNDAYS

Castle Avenue, Sundays 10am–4pm, March to October. Local produce, baking, crafts and a well-loved burger stall. Go early.




*The Sunday market on the castle avenue — worth planning a weekend around.*

BOOTS ON

# Walks worth *the effort*

Three walks, in ascending order of commitment. The first starts from the door; the other two are a short drive away.

## Lady Louisa's Walk EASY · 40 MIN

An easy, idyllic riverside path along the Blackwater, with lovely views back up to the castle and a small fountain along the way. Flat, sheltered, and almost empty on a weekday — about forty minutes at a relaxed pace, or loop back through town.

## Ballysaggartmore Towers EASY · 30–40 MIN

Our favourite short walk, and the one guests most often thank us for. A 2km woodland loop on a good gravel path leading to two extraordinary Gothic gate towers and a stone bridge spanning a ravine — all built in 1834 by a landlord named Arthur Kiely-Ussher, who spent so lavishly on the entrance that he ran out of money during the Famine and never built the house it was meant to lead to. A folly in the truest sense.

> *2.5km from Lismore, signposted from the castle. Small free car park. Gets busy on weekend afternoons — go early. Can be muddy after rain, so wear proper shoes.*

## The Vee Pass & Knockmealdowns MODERATE · HALF DAY

Drive up through the Vee — a hairpin road climbing into the Knockmealdown Mountains — and park at the top for views across three counties on a clear day. You can simply stop, look, and drive on, or strike out on foot toward Sugarloaf Hill. In late spring the rhododendrons along the pass are absurd.

> *About 18 minutes' drive. Bring a flask. The road is narrow and occasionally sheep-obstructed.*

### Mount Melleray Abbey

Fifteen minutes away, a working Cistercian monastery founded in 1832 on what was then bare mountainside. The grounds are open to visitors and the silence is remarkable. Not a tourist attraction in any conventional sense, which is exactly its appeal.

EATING & DRINKING

# Where we'd *actually go*

For a town this size, Lismore eats well. Almost everything here is on or just off Main Street, within a few minutes' walk of the cottage door.

## Coffee & casual bites

### Lizzie Briens 4 MAIN STREET

A proper Irish café and something of a local institution, loved for its full Irish breakfast and paninis of genuinely unreasonable size. The place to start a walking day.

### The Vault Café BY THE HERITAGE CENTRE

Small, friendly, and the obvious stop for coffee and something sweet after the castle gardens. Pairs neatly with a morning at Ballysaggartmore, just up the road.

### Fuller's Bistro 11 MAIN STREET

Locally sourced cooking in a cosy room with a lovely garden behind it. Our pick for an unhurried lunch, particularly if the sun is doing its best.

## Dinner

### Farmgate MAIN STREET

The area's standout restaurant. Intimate, boutique dining built on fresh local produce, with a wine list taken seriously. Not cheap — and worth it.

> *Bib Gourmand in the 2026 Michelin Guide. Small and popular, so book ahead, especially at weekends.*

### The Thairish Castle Lodge IN TOWN

Known locally for hearty, well-priced roasts and an easy family-friendly menu. The sensible choice when nobody can agree on anything.

### Elementary FOOD TRUCK

A much-loved food truck doing standout burgers, waffles and blaas. Seasonal hours — worth checking their Instagram before you set out.

EATING & DRINKING

# Pubs, and *worth the drive*

## Pubs

### Redhouse Inn MAIN STREET

Old-fashioned and full of character, with a great pint of Guinness and good pub food. The kind of room where an hour disappears without anyone noticing.

### The Classroom Bar LIVE MUSIC

Atmospheric, with a large courtyard for a fine evening. Traditional Irish music sessions run through the week — Thursday nights are the ones to catch.

### Rose's West End Bar WEST END

A real local favourite, equally good for a home-cooked breakfast or a quiet pint. Warm welcome guaranteed.

## Worth the drive

CAPPOQUIN · 10 MIN

### Barron's Bakery

Baking in the same brick ovens since 1887. The blaa — a soft Waterford bread roll with protected status — is the thing to try.

DUNGARVAN · 25 MIN

### The Tannery

Paul Flynn's long-running restaurant, and the best meal within half an hour. A proper occasion dinner. Book well ahead.

ARDMORE · 40 MIN

### The Cliff House

Michelin-starred, overlooking the bay. For a significant occasion, paired with a walk on Ardmore beach.

### Stocking up

Two shops cover most of what you'll need. Centra opens 6.30am–10pm (7am Sunday); Mace opens 7am–9.30pm daily. For a bigger weekly shop, there's a SuperValu in Cappoquin, 5km away.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE TWO DAYS

# A weekend, *planned*

Not a schedule so much as a suggestion. Adjust freely — the whole point of Lismore is not being on a timetable.

## *Friday evening*

ON ARRIVAL

### Settle in, then walk the Mall

Drop the bags, put the kettle on, then take the ten-minute stroll into town to get your bearings before dark.

EVENING

### Dinner at Farmgate

Book ahead. A slow dinner is the right way to start a weekend here.

## *Saturday*

EARLY

### The riverbank before breakfast

Two minutes from the door. Mist on the water, the castle above you, nobody else about.

MORNING

### Lismore Castle Gardens

Allow two hours. Go when it opens at 11 to have the upper garden largely to yourself.

LUNCH

### Lunch in the garden

Pick up supplies in town, or drive ten minutes to Barron's Bakery in Cappoquin.

AFTERNOON

### Ballysaggartmore Towers

Forty minutes of woodland and the strangest gate you'll ever walk through. Go before 2pm to beat the weekend crowd.

EVENING

### The stove, and nowhere to be

Light the fire. This is the part guests tell us about afterwards.

## *Sunday*

MORNING

### The market on the castle avenue

Then coffee, and a wander round St Carthage's if you haven't already.

BEFORE YOU GO

### Drive the Vee

If you're heading north or west, the Vee pass is barely a detour and an excellent last look at the place.

DAY TRIPS

# Further *afield*

Lismore sits within easy reach of a surprising amount. Everything below is a comfortable day trip and back in time for dinner.

| DESTINATION | DRIVE |
|---|---|
| Ballysaggartmore Towers — woodland folly walk | 6 min |
| Cappoquin — riverside village, Barron's Bakery, SuperValu | 10 min |
| Mount Melleray Abbey — working Cistercian monastery | 15 min |
| The Vee Pass — mountain viewpoint, three counties | 18 min |
| Dungarvan — harbour town, The Tannery, Greenway access | 25 min |
| Cahir Castle — one of Ireland's best-preserved castles | 35 min |
| Ardmore — beach, cliff walk, round tower | 40 min |
| Waterford Greenway — 46km rail trail, bike hire available | 25 min |
| Youghal — walled town, long beach | 35 min |
| Waterford City — Viking Triangle, House of Waterford | 55 min |
| Cork City — English Market, galleries | 60 min |

## Our pick, if you choose one

The Waterford Greenway. A 46km off-road trail on a former railway line between Dungarvan and Waterford, running through tunnels, over viaducts and along the coast. Hire bikes in Dungarvan and ride as much or as little as you like — the Dungarvan end is the prettiest stretch.

## For a rainy day

The Heritage Centre and St Carthage's are both indoors and both in town. Beyond that: House of Waterford Crystal in the city, Cahir Castle, or simply the stove, a book from the shelf, and no particular plans. We'd recommend the last one.

USEFUL TO KNOW

# Practical *notes*

## Getting here

Cork Airport is about 75 minutes, Dublin around 3 hours. There's no train station in Lismore and bus service is limited — a car is effectively essential for a proper visit.

## Parking

Free at the cottage, and free in the town centre and near the castle. This is not a place where parking is a problem.

## Shops & hours

Centra (6.30am–10pm, from 7am on Sunday) and Mace (7am–9.30pm daily) are both in the town. The nearest SuperValu is in Cappoquin, 5km away.

## Phone & internet

Mobile coverage is good in town, patchy in the mountains. There's reliable broadband throughout the cottage, including the garden.

## Best time to visit

May–June and September for the balance of weather and quiet. July–August is busiest. November and January are our quietest months — and our most atmospheric.

## What to pack

Waterproof coat, proper walking shoes, and something warm for the evenings regardless of season. The stove does the rest.

## Staying at the cottage

Check-in from 3pm, check-out by 11am. Self check-in via the lockbox by the front door — arrive whenever suits you.

Three bedrooms (two doubles, one twin), sleeping up to six. Wood-burning stove with logs provided. Private south-facing garden. Free parking. Reliable WiFi throughout. No pets, sorry.



*The sitting room stove — the part most guests mention afterwards.*

# Come back
# *and stay longer*

This guide is yours to keep. If it's useful, pass it on — and if you're thinking of a return visit, book with us directly and you'll always get our best rate.

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UNHURRIED IRELAND