

Situated in the very heart of Ireland, The Slieve Blooms has some quaint villages steeped in history and folklore. Let me take you on a journey through this magical midland mountainous area where we can delve into the secrets of past generations and uncover a myriad of historical treasures.....



Kinnitty

The Picturesque village of Kinnitty nestles at the foot of Knocknamann on the western slopes of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. Knocknamann is the site where the Festival of Bealtaine was held in pre Christian times.

Saint Finian Cam the patron saint of Kinnitty founded his Monastery where the present Church of Ireland stands, in the year 557. A grave slab standing in the porch of the Church originally marked the grave of one of the Abbots of St. Finians Monastery. Just behind the church is the Kinnitty Pyramid, standing 30 feet in height. It is a replica of the Pyramid of Cheops. It took four years to build and was completed in 1834. It was built by Lt. Col Richard Bernard and is the burial chamber for 5 members of his family.

The Community Centre originally the Old School House and Petty Sessions Court built in 1820 now houses the Slieve Bloom Environment Park Exhibition (on display June - September) and the Tourist Information Point. The tourist office will give you information on walking in the Slieve Blooms. Guided walks take place every Sunday from May to September.

The Pain brothers who re-designed Kinnitty Castle in 1811 designed the modern village of Kinnitty. This Castle is now a luxury hotel, which has become very popular as a wedding venue. Traditional music nights are held on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights in the Dungeon Bar.

The Village has two quaint pubs, beautiful guest accommodation, an excellent bistro restaurant catering for all tastes and 3 village shops. Further afield from the village is Leap Castle on the R421, reputed to be the most haunted Castle in Europe.

Cadamstown

Cadamstown or Baile Mac Adaim, situated at the foothills of the Slieve Blooms, on the banks of the Silver River was at one time home to Charles O'Carroll whose grandson was a signatory of the Declaration of American Independence in 1776.

Cadamstown has many attractions:

- The Silver River geological nature trail
- Old Mill
- Ardara Bridge
- St. Luna's Abbey.

The village has many scenic walks including the start of the Offaly Way – an official and marked walking route. The village also has a picnic area, public house, shop/post office and teashop where tourist information is freely available.

Clonaslee

A largely 19th century village, one of it's finest buildings is the Catholic Church (1813), with it's iron gates and gate piers oddly tucked in behind other buildings. The old Church of Ireland (1814) is now a heritage centre and library. Nearby are the ruins of Brittas House (1869), a gothic mansion set in the remains of grounds still containing exceptional specimens of trees, shrubs and plants.

About 3 kilometres south are the ruins of Castlecuffe, Sir Charles Coote's early 17th century fortified dwelling. Nearby Castletown is home to the Dunne clan rally.

Brittas Lake has a pleasant nature walk and picnic area.

Mountrath

Sir Charles Coote, who was a settler with extensive lands in the area, founded Mountrath, in the mid 17th century. It became an industrial town with a brewery, tanning factory, spinning works and iron foundry. Today, Mountrath has a population of about 1500 and is a busy trading town serving a wide rural hinterland.

Attractions in the vicinity include:

Clonenagh Monastic Site, dating from the 6th century, and Roundwood House, a perfect Palladian Villa offering accommodation restaurant services.

Camross

Camross is a pleasant village nestling close to Ard Erin-the highest peak in the Slieve Bloom Mountains.

Places of interest include:

The Poets Cottage, in the village, which is a perfect replica of a nineteenth century farmhouse.

The old village church and the adjacent millennium garden showing the parish town lands and its inhabitants.

Camross is an ideal starting point for walks in the surrounding mountains.

Coolrain

About 7 kilometres from Mountrath, Coolrain is an historic village close to the ruins of the ancient monastery of Antrim, which had associations with Saint Kavin. The well of Saint Kavin is also located nearby.

Killavilla

Situated north of Roscrea, Co. Tipperary. The Killavilla Stone was discovered a local farm (Roes) in the early 1990's.

Ballaghmore

Ballaghmore Castle, situated between Roscrea and Borris-in-Ossory, was built in 1480 A.D. by the local chieftain MacGillpatrick (now Fitzpatrick). Strategically located as they were on the old Irish Road, they defended North Munster. A sheela-na-gig carved in stone is on the front south facing wall-a pagan fertility symbol to ward off evil spirits.

Killanure (church of the yew)

A gentle hamlet set in the hills, on the route up the Slieve Blooms.

Features in the vicinity include:

Millennium Wood at Lacca contains c. 45000 plants of yew, oak and ash. Each household was assigned a tree to commemorate the new millennium and the trees allotted to residents of Meath and Kildare is in this wood.

Lacca Church is a beautiful crafted stone church completed in 1840.

Rosenallis

Rosenallis is a small village situated on the north east end of the Capard Ridge in the Slieve Bloom mountains. The name Rosenallis is derived from the gaelic Ros-Fionn-Glais (The wood of the clear stream). Because of it's location, there are several 'viewing points in the immediate vicinity which afford a wonderful vista of the lush green central plain of Ireland. It is said that you can see six counties from the 'Stoney Man' on the nearby Ridge of Capard- reputed to be the finest viewing point in the centre of Ireland. This is on the route of the marked walk 'The Slieve Bloom Way'.

Visit the Barrow Valley nearby and walk to the Clamphole Falls (2 miles) or the Cathole Falls on the Owenass River (3 miles) and picnic on the banks of it's dark pool. Better still, swim in the cool and pure mountain water.

St Brigid founded a church and a convent here and a holy spring-well remains in her memory. The present village of Rosenallis is of Quaker origin and dates back to 1659 when the 'Society of Friends' were led here by their founder William Edmundson, who died in 1712 and was buried in Rosenallis in the oldest Quaker burial ground in Ireland.

Ballyfin

The 9th baronet Sir Charles Coote replaced a former plainer dwelling with Ballyfin House in 1823. Richard Morrison, a pupil of James Gandon, did much of the architectural and design work. The exterior of the house is rather plain but the interior is truly magnificent with remarkable plasterwork, especially in the Gold Room, where the plasterwork is gold-leafed.

You can visit the house by arrangement. The gardens designed by Sir Edward Lutyens feature a large lake facing the house and a conservatory at the side of the house dating to 1850.

Roscomroe / Gurteen

Saint Molua's well, dating back to the year 600 A.D. and reputed to have healing qualities, is situated beside the old church and graveyard.