June 12th 2020

Walking through Ireland's Natural Beauty

With its stunning landscape, structures ancient, modern, natural and man-made and such a rich heritage of its own folklore and fairy tales, Ireland offers a treasure-trove of great movies, TV shows and literature.

No wonder Eire and Northern Ireland are such a favorite with directors and writers.

And I can now give you a hint of one of our new Walks for 2021 - a wonderful extension to our favorite destinations in Northern Ireland and the Republic’s Ring of Kerry.

Yes, we’ll be walking The Wild Atlantic Way. That Bay Coast region of Galway, Mayo and Connemara on the westernmost shores of the island of Ireland, known for its “savage beauty”. Watch this space for more details!

So settle back in your chair and enjoy our recommendations to bring Ireland into your living room, until we can be back there again for the “craic”!

Northern Ireland – Those Thrones and the Titanic

It’s the incredible real-world locations on HBO’s record-breaking Game of Thrones that made it such an addictive watch. Northern Ireland’s been one of the main filming locations since season one and continues to provide the backdrop to some of the show’s most memorable moments.

The scenic Causeway Coast of Northern Ireland is home to several key filming locations. Ballintoy, which is located about 15 minutes from the Giant’s Causeway, stands in for the town of Pyke in the series and Riverlands is the Glens of Antrim.
Watch out for the boy being dubbed: “the new Harry Potter”! **Artemis Fowl**, the brand-new film adaptation of **Eoin Colfer**’s wildly popular sci-fi series about the young criminal mastermind is directed by Belfast-born Sir Kenneth Branagh. He decided to bring the movie home to Northern Ireland and shot much of this Disney production in County Antrim, again along the Causeway Coastal Route.

Talking of the capital, Belfast city provided a stylish background to crime thriller TV hit **The Fall**, starring Gillian Anderson. The game of cat-and-mouse weaves past some of the best-known landmarks.

We can take a virtual tour of the city’s Titanic Experience from the comfort of our own home. **Titanic Belfast** has launched a multi-media guide to their exhibition, giving us the opportunity to see inside and listen to fascinating facts.
While we’re (virtually) in town, let’s pop in to Belfast’s most famous pub. **The Crown Liquor Saloon** is a traditional pub from the Victorian era, which is now owned by the National Trust. The Crown remains a unique visual gem, a masterpiece in bar architecture, which is known to millions the world over. Take a look inside to admire the mosaic tiles, brocaded walls, ornate mirrors, wooden columns and more.

As a backdrop to the north-south divide in Ireland, although set in Dublin, **Rebellion** is a six-part TV mini-series about the birth of modern Ireland and the events surrounding the 1916 Easter Rising. Told through the perspectives of a group of friends on both sides of the conflict, it follows the tumultuous events from WWI that led to the rise of Irish nationalism and the Republic of Ireland’s independence.

**For readers:**

**Silver Linings, Travels Around Northern Ireland**

*Martin Fletcher* gives a fascinating account of travels, as well as the people, politics and traditions of Northern Ireland, infused with the author’s humor and insightful reporting.

**The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne** by *Brian Moore*

An unflinching portrait of a Catholic spinster drifting into alcoholism and isolation against the backdrop of Belfast. Selected by The Guardian as one of 1,000 novels you must read before you die. First published in 1955 and also a movie starring Dame Maggie Smith.

**Troubles**
Set on the eve of the Irish Rebellion, this first novel in JG Farrell’s remarkable series illuminates the British Empire’s decline in Ireland to hilarious, haunting effect. Winner of the Lost Man Booker Prize in 2010.

**The Ring of Kerry – like another world!**

Not long ago, a galaxy far, far away came to Kerry...

Skellig Michael, already a UNESCO World Heritage Site, saw its visitors grow from birders and archaeology buffs to Hollywood stars when *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* came to town to make the most of the rugged monastery ruins and dramatic coastal landscape.

From the opening shot high above the Dingle Peninsula, *Ryan’s Daughter* (1970) captures the drama and romance of Ireland’s west coast. A romantic drama set in 1916, it tells the tale of a married Irish woman who has an affair with a British soldier. One famous scene gives the beach between Slea Head and Dunmore Head its own leading role.
Excalibur, John Boorman’s epic 1981 tale of the knights of the Round Table, was filmed at Derrynane. It launched the careers of the likes of Liam Neeson, Helen Mirren and Gabriel Byrne.

An expression of praise for any feat in the West Kerry Gaelic-speaking area, is "Mo cheol thú" – You are my music! – which is in itself an indication of the indigenous place music has in the life of the area.

For many years the music tradition of the area concentrated on the dance tunes played for the West Kerry Set Dance – mainly polkas, slides (single jigs) and, on occasion, hornpipes. There’s a chance to listen to three Kerry polkas here – we guarantee your feet will be tapping!

For readers:
Opened Ground, Selected Poems by Seamus Heaney

The publication of Heaney’s book Death of a Naturalist in 1966 changed Irish literature -- and poetry worldwide -- forever. Dive into the physical and emotional rhythms of Irish life in this volume.

Irish Fairy and Folk Tales by WB Yeats

Edited by the Nobel Prize-winning poet who spearheaded the Celtic Renaissance in the early 20th century, these enchanting stories introduce a cast of changelings, ghosts, mermaids, demons, saints, priests and fairies.


A remarkably concise, provocative history in the well-regarded series, touching on the major aspects of Irish history, politics, and society in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Galway and Connemara – where Atlantic is wild

In 1951, arguably John Ford’s greatest movie The Quiet Man, starring John Wayne, Maureen O’Hara and Barry Fitzgerald, was made. It was set in the beautiful west of Ireland with filming being centered in the little village of Cong on the Mayo-Galway border.
This Oscar-winning classic takes in Ashford Castle, Thoor Ballylee (once home to WB Yeats) and the Quiet Man Bridge over the Owenriff River.

On our new Walk we’re looking forward to lunching in the village of Leenaun used for the film adaption of John B Keane’s play The Field, starring Richard Harris, John Hurt and Sean Bean.

Into the West (1992) is another heartwarming film that makes you want to head west and stay there forever. It is about two boys who are gifted a horse from their grandfather. But there is more to Tir na nOg, the horse from the land under the sea, than meets the eye. The real journey begins when the horse takes them across the mythical landscape of Connemara before reaching the shores of the Atlantic on the Mayo coast.

For readers:
The Connemara Trilogy by Tim Robinson

Hailed as: “one of the most remarkable non-fiction projects undertaken in English”, Robinson writes about the people, places and history of south Connemara - one of Ireland's last Gaelic-speaking enclaves - with the encyclopaedic knowledge of a cartographer and the grace of a born writer.

Connemara Mollie, An Irish Journey on Horseback

Hilary Bradt (publisher of Bradt Guides) recalls her journey across rural Ireland among the people of Galway, Mayo, Clare and Kerry in the 1980s in this sweet -- and sublimely affecting -- memoir.
Ireland Unhinged, Encounters With a Wildly Changing Country

Seeking the essence of Irish identity, American transplant David Monagan travels the length and width of Eire to explain the people’s mirth, soulfulness and eccentricities that endure despite the country’s troubles and the more recent economic collapse.