The Atlantic Film Trail
SEE THE LOCATIONS THAT PROVIDED THE BACKDROPS TO FILMS THAT INSPIRED GENERATIONS OF MOVIE-GOERS ACROSS THE WORLD
Ireland has had a long and enduring love affair with the silver screen. It has provided both the subject matter and spectacular panoramas for some of the world’s best loved cinema. Now you can learn about the directors and the stars who breathed life into these storylines, you can experience first hand, as they did, the sheer beauty of the wild and beautiful Atlantic coast and the impact the film industry had on these remote Irish communities.

Follow in the footsteps of Hollywood icons, including John Wayne, Fred Astaire, Meryl Streep, Maureen O’Hara, Richard Harris and Gabriel Byrne, as you trace the series of green plaques that marks the scenic route of Ireland’s Atlantic Film Trail.

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“Call me Ishmael” is one of the most famous opening lines in American literature and this film, based on Herman Melville’s classic novel, was one of three adaptations made between 1926 and 1956 but the only one to remain true to the novel and to its original ending. The story is based around Captain Ahab and his obsession with a huge whale, Moby Dick, who was responsible for the loss of his leg years before. Ahab’s crazed fixation leads him to jeopardise his life, the lives of his crew and his ship in his hunt to bring down his hated nemesis. The film is set in New Bedford in 1841 and told through the eyes of a young whaler called Ishmael, who signs up for service aboard the whaler boat the Pequod. He and his crewmates soon realize that their obsessive captain will stop at nothing to exact revenge on the whale. After a tyrannous voyage, the crew find the whale, but Ahab is dragged out to sea and killed by his enemy, leaving Ishmael as the sole survivor of the doomed voyage. This adaptation is considered to be the most faithful to the novel, despite the fact that the screenwriter Ray Bradbury is reputed to never have even read "the damned thing!!"

Youghal offers a wide variety of water sports, including power-boating, dinghy-racing, yacht cruising, whale watching, even wreck-diving.

Situated in the south east of County Cork, the Heritage Town of Youghal has been a popular holiday destination for hundreds of years. It is one of Cork’s most busy and popular seaside resorts and it is also one of the most historically interesting towns in Ireland. An ancient walled seaport town, it was occupied by the Danes and the Normans and was part of a tract of land granted to Sir Walter Raleigh. It is situated at the mouth of the Blackwater, one of Ireland’s best known salmon fishing rivers. The most notable building in the town centre is the famous clock tower in the main street, built in 1776 as a jail to imprison the renegade Catholics. It was routinely used as a torture chamber and was regarded as a symbol of tyranny. For the more adventurous visitor, Youghal offers a wide variety of water sports along its 8 kilometres of beach, including power-boating, dinghy-racing, yacht cruising, whale watching, even wreck-diving. East Cork has a strong gastronomy tradition, so visitors can enjoy locally sourced produce in its numerous cafés, pubs and restaurants. Youghal is an ideal family destination with its two Blue Flag Beaches and various children’s entertainment. There is a wide variety of accommodation, pubs and restaurants in the town.
Michael Collins

FILM: 1996
DIRECTED BY: Neil Jordan
CAST:
Liam Neeson, Julia Roberts, Aidan Quinn, Stephen Rea, Ian Hart

Neil Jordan’s epic film about the life and death of Irish patriot and revolutionary Michael Collins was a huge success with Irish audiences, although criticized by some for its historical inaccuracies. Its domestic appeal confirmed the enduring influence and legacy of “The Big Fellow”, as Collins was colloquially known, and the continued impact of this turbulent and troubled time in Irish history. Collins came to prominence during the 1916 Easter Rising, where he fought alongside nationalist hero and acclaimed writer Padraig Pearse in the General Post Office (GPO). The film depicts his journey from here up through the ranks of Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers (which later became the Irish Republican Army), working alongside future president Eamonn de Valera in both organisations. Neeson’s powerful performance shows Collins to be a charismatic, witty, strategic and sometimes ruthless leader who went on to play a crucial role in the War of Independence and later in the Irish Civil War, where he led the pro-Treaty faction in the fight against his former comrades, including de Valera. The film shows the personal impact of the split, especially in Collins’ relationship with Harry Boland (Quinn), who, as his best friend and comrade, had also became his rival for the affections of Kitty Kiernan (Roberts).

The entire West Cork region is very popular with tourists, offering resources and activities to cater for every type of visitor.

Béal na mBláth is a tiny village in West Cork, still best known as the location of Collins’ assassination. There is a commemoration service every year on the Sunday closest to the date of his death (22 August 1922). Béal na mBláth is situated between the small village of Crookstown and the village of Cappeen on the R585 on the main Cork to Killarney Road (N22) about 70 kilometres west of Cork City. The nearest large towns are Macroom and Clonakilty in which a statue of “The Big Fella” has been erected. Visitors can also take a trip to the Michael Collins Centre in Clonakilty. Special presentations can be organised for groups which include storytelling and baking on the open fire. Renowned for its great natural beauty and dramatic seascapes, West Cork is very popular with the sailing community. Watersports of all kinds are easily accessible in the area, which also offers, amongst other attractions, fishing, horse riding, golf, whale and dolphin watching, walking trails and a number of local farmer’s markets. The area has a very well-developed tourist infrastructure and therefore offers a diverse range of excellent accommodation, atmospheric pubs and quality restaurants for its many visitors.

www.discoverireland.ie/Southwest
Winner of the 2006 Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival, Ken Loach’s historical drama follows the relationship between two County Cork brothers, Damien (Cillian Murphy) and Teddy (Padraic Delaney) during the turbulent period of the Irish War of Independence (1919 – 1921) and the Irish Civil War (1922 – 1923). While Teddy is already the leader of an IRA squad fighting for the independence of Ireland, Damien, a medical graduate, is heading to London to further his training. However, shortly before his departure, he happens to witness atrocities committed by the ferocious Black n’ Tans and postpones his studies. He joins Teddy’s unit and together the two brothers fight against British occupation, Damien even going as far as to shoot a childhood friend for being an informer. However, the brothers soon find themselves siding with opposing factions, with Teddy advocating the acceptance of the Treaty and Damien arguing to continue the fight for full independence. Damien is captured and imprisoned by his brother, in the very cell that they once shared. Teddy begs Damien to save himself by informing on his comrades but he refuses and instead chooses to face the firing squad. In an emotional conclusion Teddy reluctantly presides over the execution of his own brother.

On the road from Macroom to Dunmanway, there is a monument commemorating the 1920 ambush that occurred here during the War of Independence. The incident was subsequently remembered in the song “The Boys of Kilmichael”. The nearest town is Macroom, a busy market town in the valley of the Sullane River. Keeping to a military theme, a visit to the Prince August Toy Soldier factory in Macroom is an absolute must. Visitors can see the toy soldiers being made and meet the people who mould, cast and paint these mini-men! Macroom is a great base for exploring the local area, which has a range of historical sites. The town itself has a colourful history and provides visitors with a variety of outdoor activities, such as hill walking, cycling, fishing in the local river and golfing at Macroom Golf Club.
Loosely based on a 1912 French novel by Louis Pergaud, the War of the Buttons tracks the battles of two rival gangs of youths in rural Ireland. Narrated by Marie (Eveanna Ryan), the story charts the escalating rivalry that exists between the kids of Ballydowse and the neighbouring village of Carrickdowse. They wage war on each other over everything from hospital raffle tickets to the definition of the word “tosspot”. The winners of their various battles cut the buttons from the clothes of their prisoners as a symbol of their success – and to get them into trouble with their parents. This leads to one battle taking place without the hindrance of any clothes at all! Over the course of the film, the boys come to develop a grudging but unspoken respect for each other. War of the Buttons is a light-hearted and nostalgic portrayal of childhood although it is also concerned with the actions and consequences of war in all its forms.

Union Hall is steeped in history and there are many areas of archaeological interest, with castle ruins and forts to be explored.
This successful 1980s TV drama was based on a series of books by novelists Edith Somerville and Violet Florence Martin (who wrote under the pen name of Martin Ross). The cousins were Anglo-Irish residents of Castletownshend in County Cork and drew on their own experiences of their local community to create their light hearted books. Set in the West of Ireland at the turn of the century, the books chart the experiences of Major Yeates (Peter Bowles), an ex-British army officer turned Resident Magistrate (RM) who moves to Ireland to take up his new position. The series avoided any overtly political angle but its humour was grounded in the relationship between the British and Irish community at this time in history. The RM has to deal with a stream of colourful everyday events in his new community but is often outfoxed, bewildered and baffled by the Irish residents. He is advised, not always objectively, by Flurry Knox (Bryan Murray), his Anglo-Irish friend who understands the workings of the community and uses that power to his own advantage. The series charts the Major’s journey as he comes to understand that the British legal system needs a good deal of adaptation and reinterpretation when it comes to dealing with the eventualities of every day Irish country life.

Situated in West Cork, Castletownshend is an attractive village, not far from Skibbereen. It is interesting to note that the village originally occupied a more westerly location but the present village sprang up around the castles built by the Townshend family during the 1600s. The local Saint Barrahane’s Church, with its host of beautiful Harry Clarke stained glass windows and historical relics is well worth a visit. The graves of Somerville and Ross can still be seen in the cemetery of Saint Barrahane’s. The picturesque marine lake of Lough Hyne is nearby, an ecological curiosity in itself, in that it was Europe’s first Marine Nature Reserve, is the perfect spot for a quiet stroll or a sneaky dip! Castletownshend is located within easy reach of the rest of the charming towns and villages that dot West Cork’s breathtakingly beautiful coastline.
John Boorman’s beautiful and dreamlike interpretation of this classic tale is a fantasy epic that traces the story of the magical sword Excalibur and the dark romantic characters of Arthurian legend. The film begins with the sword being embedded in a rock by the evil Uther Pendragon (Gabriel Byrne). And there it remains until it is withdrawn by Uther’s illegitimate son Arthur. Arthur uses the sword to defeat invaders and goes on to establish Camelot and the Knights of the Round Table. Arthur lives out his glory years in the castle until he is undone by the discovery of a love affair between his wife Guinevere and his favoured and most revered knight, Lancelot. Guinevere flees Camelot taking Excalibur with her. Arthur instigates a quest for the Holy Grail, believing this may bring prosperity back to the land, only serving to cost him the lives of many of his knights. Adapted from Malory’s La Morte d’Arthur, Boorman creates a dazzling yet realistic netherworld and the film manages to remain faithful to the spirit of the legends. The film’s beautiful camera work by Alex Thomson gained him an Oscar nomination.

The Ring of Kerry is also renowned for having some of the finest beaches in Europe that provide all the facilities for a traditional seaside getaway.
Often considered David Lean's overlooked masterpiece, *Ryan's Daughter* is a triangular love story set against the turmoil of 1916 Ireland. Loosely based on Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, it tells the story of a young Irish girl (Sarah Miles) who has an affair with a British officer, despite the opposition from her nationalist community and her marriage to the local school teacher (Robert Mitchum). Following closely on Lean's epic success with *Dr Zhivago* and *Lawrence of Arabia*, the film was made for a massive $14 million – a colossal budget for the time. However it was poorly received and is said to have led directly to a ten year hiatus in Lean's career. Despite this, cinematographer Freddie Young won an Oscar for his spellbinding images of the Dingle Peninsula's rugged and dramatic coastline and John Mills won Best Supporting Actor for his depiction of the village idiot, Michael. The village in the film was built from scratch from stone by the production company and many locals from Dunquin and surrounding villages were used as extras in the film. At the time, that area was suffering serious economic hardship and the amount of money spent in the town revived its economy, led to increased immigration and sowed the seed of its massive popularity with visitors that persists to this day.

Slea Head is renowned for its stunning beaches and incomparable views of the Blasket Islands.

Coumeenole Beach is located on the spectacular Slea Head on the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry. Slea Head is renowned for its stunning beaches and incomparable views of the Blasket Islands, the Ring of Kerry and Skellig Rock. While few of the beaches are suitable for swimming, the area is popular with surfers, walkers, cyclists, whale watchers and divers. Visitors can follow the circular drive past the ancient Kilmakedar Church, the Ogham stones and the famous Gallarus Oratory. They can also see many examples of the monks' beehive huts, dating from the 12th century when the incoming Normans forced the Irish off the good farmland and out to the periphery of the peninsula. Coumeenole Beach itself, which lies below the Slea Head drive, is an unspoilt cove, where in 1588 four ships from the Spanish Armada were wrecked. Other local attractions include the Louis Mulcahy pottery centre, the Blasket Centre and of course the nearby town of Dingle, which is renowned for its music, restaurants and pubs.
Although *Far and Away* was not well received by critics (with Tom Cruise’s Irish accent a particular talking point), audiences took Ron Howard’s old fashioned epic to their hearts, making it an international box office success. Shot on giant 70mm film and sweeping across two continents, this adventure romance tells the story of Joseph Donnelly, a 19th-century Irish tenant farmer, who finds love and land in America with his tempestuous and fiery companion Shannon Christie (Nicole Kidman). Although divided by class, Shannon and Joseph run away to America together in search of a new life in the land of opportunity. He becomes a bare knuckle boxer and she a dancer, demeaning herself to make ends meet. Their stormy relationship is tested by their straitened economic circumstances and they are eventually separated and left to make their way in the new continent without each other. They are unexpectedly reunited at the 1893 land run in Oklahoma. After a frosty reception, Shannon supports Joseph in the race, betraying her true feelings to her fiancé Stephen (Thomas Gibson). After laying stake to their land, Joseph is viciously attacked by Stephen – but Shannon’s tears and proclamations of love bring him back to life again.

The Dingle Peninsula is renowned not just for its beautiful scenery but for its first class musical tradition, excellent restaurants and world famous pubs.
Adapted from John Millington Synge’s play of the same name, this 1962 film tells the story of a handsome young stranger Christy Mahon (Gary Raymond) who suddenly turns up in a remote coastal Irish village. He claims to be desperately fleeing the law after having murdered his own father by hitting him over the head with a shovel. His colourful and dramatic account very quickly earns the admiration of everyone in the local inn and stirs the lust of all the unattached women in the village, especially the pretty young barkeeper Pegeen (McKenna) and the aggressive man-starved widow Quinn (March), who tries unsuccessfully to seduce him. However, the young hero’s status dwindles abruptly when his father shows up just ahead of the police. To prove himself to the townspeople and especially to Pegeen, Christy again kills his father. But this time the townspeople turn on Christy and prepare to hang him. Christy is saved when his father appears, battered and bloody, having survived the murder attempt. He and Christy depart together, leaving Pegeen to lament the fact that she has forever lost Christy, the Playboy of the Western World.

The film was shot entirely on Inch Strand in Co. Kerry. Three miles of sandy beach provide visitors with a peerless resource for bathing, surfing, and sea angling. The film’s charm comes from its faithfulness to the original play and the very regional tone of the drama. The film was shot entirely on Inch Strand in County Kerry. Three miles of sandy beach provide visitors with a peerless resource for bathing, surfing, and sea angling. There is excellent bass fishing at Inch Strand, Bunaneer Strand and Minard Strand, all in the Inch/Annascaul area. For nature lovers, sea otters and seals can be spotted in the rocks around the Strand. The area is very popular with walkers, on account of the variety of trails and the breathtaking views. The Annascaul and Inch Walking Festival is a three day guided walking tour which takes place over the October bank holiday weekend. To find out more about the history and heritage of the area, the West Kerry Museum is a good starting point! Located in the old schoolhouse in Ballyferriter, the museum has an interesting programme of visiting exhibitions. The more westerly part of the Dingle Peninsula is Irish speaking, in evidence on the signposts and in the lilting conversations you may overhear between the locals! Inch Strand is located on the Dingle Peninsula so visitors to Inch have easy access to all the attractions of Dingle town, excellent restaurants, pubs and traditional music sessions.
Ennistymon in County Clare is an ideal base to explore some of the most famous tourist destinations in Ireland, such as the Cliffs of Moher and the geological phenomenon that is the famous Burren region. This unique karst landscape is home to a range of Alpine, Arctic and Mediterranean flora, and is a perfect destination for those in search of a holistic break or a painting holiday. Shannon International Airport is situated a stone’s throw from the Burren region. The much-loved town of Lahinch is also in the vicinity, recognised as one of the best surfing locations in the country. The “parochial house” in Fr. Ted is located in nearby Kilfenora, home to the famous Kilfenora Ceilí Band and gateway to the unique Burren region. The opening credits of Father Ted, (the theme song to which was composed by the Divine Comedy) feature an aerial view of Craggy Island, which was actually shot over the most easterly Aran island, Inis Oírr (also known as Inisheer and Inishere), a haven for hikers, birdwatchers and home to Arás Eanna, the only arts centre to be found on an Irish island. Ferries run regularly from both Galway and Doolin.

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TV SERIES: 1995-1998
CAST: Dermot Morgan, Ardal O’Hanlon, Frank Kelly, Pauline McLynn

Filmed between 1995 and 1998, Father Ted was a breakout comedy TV series that followed the misadventures of three Roman Catholic priests in their parochial house on Craggy Island, located off the west coast of Ireland. Father Ted Crilly (Morgan) is the nominal head of the household who has been exiled to Craggy Island for an apparent misappropriation of church funds: “It was just resting in my account”. His companions there are Father Jack Hackett (Kelly), a raging alcoholic with an eye for the ladies, and Father Dougal Maguire (O’Hanlon), an entirely incompetent but adorable simpleton. They are looked after by their long-suffering yet neurotic housekeeper Mrs Doyle, who seems to spend an inordinate amount of time making tea and cleaning the living room window. The series revolves around their lives on this remote island, wrestling as they do with matters of the church, their role as parish priests and with events thrown up by everyday island life. Although it featured almost exclusively Irish talent both in front of and behind the camera, the series was made by Channel 4: yet it went on to become one of the most successful and popular series in Ireland. It also launched the career of a host of Irish comedians such as Ardal O’Hanlon, Graham Norton, Pauline McLynn, Tommy Tiernan and Pat Shortt to name but a few. Appreciation of the series is so great that it spawned a much loved festival called ‘TedFest’, which includes such notable events as the Craggy Cup football tournament, the ‘Ted’s Got Talent’ competition and music from DJ Altered Boy.
As with many of Ireland’s most successful films, *The Country Girls* springs from a literary source. Author Edna O’Brien, born in 1932 in County Clare, published her first novel, *The Country Girls* in 1960. The novel tells the story of Kate (Caithleen) and Baba (Bridget), two Irish girls coming of age in County Clare. The story hinges on the friendship of Kate, the “good” girl who is damaged by her relationship with her father and the early death of her mother, with the rebellious Baba. The pleasure and tension of the film lies in seeing Baba lead Kate into temptation. The viewer feels that Kate needs to be liberated but Baba’s is an unsteady hand. The urge to cheer the girls on mingles with genuine anxiety that they will come to ruin. O’Brien’s seminal work was coloured by her strong feelings about Irish women, the narrow choices available to them and their suffering under the then all-pervasive sexual repression in rural Ireland of the fifties. At the end of the film, the country girls leave for London and a stake a claim on their destinies, as did O’Brien herself. But ultimately it is a paean to female friendship of a kind rarely seen on screen.

Tuamgraney County Clare is situated on the banks of Lough Derg on the Shannon waterway, one of Ireland’s best loved holiday destinations – whether you’re looking for a relaxing cruise, a spot of fishing or to spend an energetic day on water-ski! The small county of Clare can be easily explored by car or bicycle and its boundaries encompass many coastal attractions including The Aillwee Caves, The Burren, Bunratty Castle and Folk Park, Dysart O’Dea Castle and Archaeology Centre and the world famous Cliffs of Moher. The nearby sandy beaches are sheltered and are ideally suited to swimming, fishing, sailing and surfing. There are also many yoga and health centre retreats to avail of in County Clare, not to mention the growing popularity of painting and photography workshops in the area. Clare is known as a destination for quality traditional Irish music, most notably the towns of Ennis and Doolin. Festivals abound during the summer months when Clare enjoys its best weather and welcomes a regular influx of likeminded visitors in search of relaxation, good music and good company.
Hear My Song was big hit with Irish and international audiences when it premiered in 1991. The film’s setting opens amongst the Irish diaspora in Liverpool. Adrian Dunbar plays Mickey O’Neill, an Irish-Liverpudlian club manager who sets out to Ireland to find the reclusive Irish tenor Josef Locke. He wants to bring him back to Liverpool to perform at his club and restore him in the eyes of his sweetheart Nancy. Mickey’s journey explores the effects of exile and being separated from one’s mother country and mother tongue, a recurring theme in Irish writing. Hollywood character actor Ned Beatty gives an unexpectedly passionate and pitch perfect performance as the real Josef Locke who is inspired by Mickey’s search for him to sing his song once again.

The cliffs command excellent views: the Galway Bay and Maamturk mountains can be seen to the North and Loop Head to the South.
Accessible by either plane or boat from Galway Bay, Inis Mór is the biggest of the three Aran Islands and boasts one of the most spectacular landscapes in Ireland. The island’s capital is the picturesque village of Kilronan, which is home to a first class selection of restaurants and bars. Beyond the village, the island is a virtual desert of limestone rock, which supports its rare and beautiful flora and fauna. Ancient promontary forts look out over the wild seascapes of the Atlantic, the most famous being Dún Aonghus, perched on a clifftop, where you can watch the waves crashing 150 metres below. There are many clean and safe beaches for swimming. The island is also immersed in cultural heritage, being a virtual outdoor museum. Its numerous stone forts date from the Bronze Age. Irish is still the first language of its residents. Visitors can also take a trip to the neighbouring Aran Islands of Inis Méáin, erstwhile home and creative sanctuary of the writer John Millington Synge, and Inis Oírr, home to the only arts centre to be found on Ireland’s offshore islands.

Man of Aran

FILM: 1934
DIRECTED BY: Robert J. Flaherty
CAST: Colman "Tiger" King, Maggie Dirrane

Renowned for its stunning visuals, this classic docudrama depicts the lives and hardships of life for inhabitants of the Aran Islands. It charts their struggle to make ends meet and eke out a living from farming potatoes, fishing from the high cliffs and hunting for basking sharks. The film was made by renowned American director Robert Flaherty, sometimes credited as having pioneered the documentary film form. His earlier acclaimed film Nanook of the North was a portrait of the lives of the Eskimo peoples of the Belcher Islands off Canada. The film explored one of Flaherty’s central themes in his work: the duel between man and nature, clearly revisited in Man of Aran. The documentary aspect of the film is somewhat compromised by the fact that islanders had not hunted sharks in this way for fifty years at the time of filming. Also many of the family members featured were not related and were actually cast for their looks and to create the right impression of island life. However the spectacular black and white cinematography of the awesome land and seascapes of the island of Inis Mór remains impressive to this day and the drama that emerges from the everyday lives of the islanders’ primitive existence, even with its embellishments, is fascinating. At the time, the film was internationally acclaimed and resulted in establishing the Aran Islands on the international tourist trail. It won the Grand Prix at the Venice Film Festival in 1935. In more recent times, the film gained added notoriety when playwright Martin McDonagh (In Bruges) set his 1997 play The Cripple of Inishmaan on the Aran Islands at the time Man of Aran was filming.

The island’s capital is the picturesque village of Kilronan, which is home to a first class selection of restaurants and bars.

www.discoverireland.ie/West

LOCATION: INIS MÓR, ARAN ISLANDS

Inis Mór (GPS) Sat Nav.    Lat  53° 07’ 17”   Lng  -9° 40’ 06”
Carraroe is located in Connemara, County Galway and is one of Ireland’s premier tourist destinations. It’s one of the country’s main Gaeltacht (Irish speaking) areas and Irish culture is very much a part of the visitor experience. Connemara is home to breathtaking scenery, the hills of the Twelve Bens, meandering rivers, gilttering lakes, thick forest, miles of unspoilt sandy beaches and the wonderful Connemara National Park. With such landscapes and natural beauty, Connemara provides visitors with a varied choice of many outdoor activities, sightseeing and much more. Walkers, cyclists, bathers and adventurers are all well provided for in the region. Connemara extends westwards from Lough Corrib and is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean. The area is strongly defined by its relationship with the sea, with plenty of small fishing villages and market towns in the locality. Other towns and villages in the area include Carna, Clifden - the capital of Connemara, Spiddal, Letterfrack, Roundstone and the picturesque island of Inishbofin, famous for the quality of its traditional music. Visitors to the area can also take in the imposing Kylemore Abbey, the Connemara Heritage and History Centre, the Connemara National Park and a range of archaeological and heritage walks.

Bob Quinn’s seminal film was the first feature film to be made in the Irish language. Cyril Cusack plays a poitín (Irish moonshine) maker in the West of Ireland, who lives in an isolated cottage with his adult daughter. In an attempt to get their hands on his drink, two locals terrorise the man, threatening to kill him and rape his daughter. Eventually the man outwits the two wouldbe thieves, luring them to their deaths. When the film was first aired on RTE (Ireland’s national TV station) in 1979, it created a stir amongst audiences, with many objecting to the depiction of the Irish as drunken louts, in particular to its “spud” fight. Indeed the film seems to set out to contradict the idealised and romantic view of the Irish which was made famous in John Ford’s The Quiet Man and is unapologetic in its gritty view of the impoverished lives of its characters. That said, the film is lightened with a highly comedic tone that runs throughout the narrative.
Roundstone, County Galway provided the backdrop for the dénouement of the film. It is one of the most popular destinations on Ireland's Atlantic coast amongst Irish people and would be a great recommendation for visitors from further afield. It is an exceptionally pretty village with many attractions, located a 48km drive from Galway city along one of the most beautiful driving routes in Western Europe. There are many fine seafood restaurants in the town as well as top quality pub food to be enjoyed after a day of fresh air and exercise. Dog Beach is one of the finest in the West, with golden sand and sheltered coves. Swimming and sailing are the most popular activities in Roundstone but shopping, dining and live music are also well catered for. The Roundstone Regatta is a key date in the calendar as are Roundstone Arts Week and Roundstone Pony Week, which celebrates the famed Connemara Pony. Roundstone has a rich cultural life with many resident artists, reflected in the presence of art galleries, bookshops, music shops, arts and crafts workshops and regular traditional Irish music sessions.

FILM: 1993
DIRECTED BY: Mike Newell
CAST:
Gabriel Byrne, Ellen Barkin, Colm Meaney, Brendan Gleeson, Ruaidhri Conroy

Director Mike Newell (*Four Weddings and a Funeral*) accepted a big challenge with this story, which begins as a gritty inner-city drama which gradually fuses more and more with the ethereal. Jim Sheridan scripted the film, drawing upon Celtic myths and his own urban upbringing to subtly blend the realism and the magic of the story. The story starts in Dublin where two young brothers, Tayto and Ossie spend their days playing truant, busking and begging. Tayto and Ossie are members of Ireland’s Traveller Community who have been “settled” or housed in grim high-rise flats, putting an end to their itinerant lifestyle. The boys are given a gift of a horse from Grandpa Ward who they name “Tír na nOg”, meaning “Land of Eternal Youth” in Irish, inspired by an ancient Irish legend. They try to keep Tír na nOg near their high-rise flat but when a crafty horse dealer takes the horse, they steal him back and ride together *Into the West*.

This film evokes the enchantment that the Atlantic coast holds for Dubliners, who know it as the location of childhood holidays, native Irish speakers, unbridled freedom and a wilder land and seascape than that of the more cultivated east coast of Ireland. As the boys progress further west, the magical themes hinted at start to become manifest but, unfortunately, there can be no neat resolution.

Swimming and sailing are the most popular activities in Roundstone but shopping, dining and live music are also well catered for.
The areas of Cong, Maam Cross and the nearby beaches were chosen by Ford for how well they matched his vision of Ireland as a rural idyll and this dramatic landscape remains virtually unchanged for today’s tourists. The filming of a big budget Hollywood movie was an event of seismic proportions in the area where many of the stories and locations are still carefully treasured. There is even a Quiet Man Cottage Museum, whose ground floor is a meticulous replication of the White-o-Mornin’ cottage that features in the film. You can also book a guided Quiet Man Tour of the area that promises to accompany visitors on a journey through the locations, the stories and the personalities involved in the making of The Quiet Man in this remote corner of the West of Ireland. Cong is situated between two lakes, Lough Corrib and Lough Mask, and surrounded by impressive mountain ranges. So it comes as no surprise that popular activities in the area include fishing, cruising, canoeing, golf, horse-riding, hiking and mountain climbing. The area is served by nearby airports at Galway and Knock, and is only a short drive away from the vibrant university city of Galway.

The filming of a big budget Hollywood movie was an event of seismic proportions in the area.

**FILM:** 1952  
DIRECTED BY: John Ford  
CAST:  
John Wayne, Maureen O’Hara, Barry Fitzgerald

Ford stepped away from his usual genre to make this labour of love in Ireland. John Wayne plays Seán Thornton, a returning emigrant, who, like Ford himself, was reared in America on romantic tales of The Old Country. One day he spots a red headed woman leading a flock through the fields and the next time they cross paths at the church, he learns her name, Mary-Kate Danagher. He falls for Mary Kate, played by Wayne’s regular screen sweetheart Maureen O’Hara, but has to overcome local prejudices, Mary Kate’s fiery temper and his own dark past to win her affection. Ford brought a loving eye to the lush local scenery and the film won a well-deserved Oscar for cinematography. Its tendency towards whimsy actually adds to its charm as does its treatment of the old-fashioned rules of courtship that prevail in this rural Irish area. This is Ford’s only comedy and he shows a deft hand and lightness of touch, which may be the main reason it has won so many hearts. Maureen O’Hara referred to Mary Kate as her ‘role of a lifetime’.

**LOCATION:** CONG, ON THE GALWAY/Mayo BORDER

The areas of Cong, Maam Cross and the nearby beaches were chosen by Ford for how well they matched his vision of Ireland as a rural idyll and this dramatic landscape remains virtually unchanged for today’s tourists. The filming of a big budget Hollywood movie was an event of seismic proportions in the area where many of the stories and locations are still carefully treasured. There is even a Quiet Man Cottage Museum, whose ground floor is a meticulous replication of the White-o-Mornin’ cottage that features in the film. You can also book a guided Quiet Man Tour of the area that promises to accompany visitors on a journey through the locations, the stories and the personalities involved in the making of The Quiet Man in this remote corner of the West of Ireland. Cong is situated between two lakes, Lough Corrib and Lough Mask, and surrounded by impressive mountain ranges. So it comes as no surprise that popular activities in the area include fishing, cruising, canoeing, golf, horse-riding, hiking and mountain climbing. The area is served by nearby airports at Galway and Knock, and is only a short drive away from the vibrant university city of Galway.

**Image Credit:** The Connacht Tribune  
**Courtesy of the IFI Irish Film Archive**
Unlike an Irish accent however, the spectacular scenery and architecture cannot be faked; this is an unspoiled part of Ireland which has been lovingly photographed many times but perhaps never with more skill than that of Italian cinematographer Tonino Delli Colli, whose other credits include *Once Upon a Time in America* and *Life is Beautiful*. Scenes from the film were shot in and around Cong, situated on the border of counties Mayo and Galway, near where *The Quiet Man* was shot twenty-five years earlier. The dramatic local scenery has been described as a perfect example of harmony at work in nature. The mountain of Croagh Patrick, under an hour’s drive away, is an ancient pilgrimage site. Ashford Castle is a key location in the film and is also one of the most beautiful examples of architecture in the area. Its foundations date back to 1228 and it has hosted presidents and kings in the 20th Century, including President Ronald Reagan and King George V. The castle is now a luxurious hotel, the venue of choice for Irish actor Pierce Brosnan for his 2001 wedding. The castle’s 350-acre estate with its landscaped gardens, golf, falconry, cruising and equestrian centre is open to the general public as well as to the hotel’s residents.

The dramatic local scenery has been described as a perfect example of Feng Shui at work in nature.

**Un Taxi Mauve/ The Purple Taxi**

**FILM:** 1977  
**DIRECTED BY:** Yves Boisset  
**CAST:**  
Fred Astaire, Charlotte Rampling,  
Peter Ustinov, Philippe Noiret

*The Purple Taxi* is notable for Fred Astaire’s last appearance in a feature film and also for a young Charlotte Rampling at the peak of her physical beauty. It was adapted from the book by French writer Michel Déon, who made his home in County Galway. The film made its debut at the Cannes Film Festival in 1977 and is set in a remote part of the West of Ireland. The plot revolves around three expatriates, an Irish-American, a Frenchman and a *soi-disant* Russian, all of whom are trying to either deceive each other or expose each other’s swindling ways. Astaire plays the local Irish doctor, owner of the aforementioned purple automobile, and sporting the same stage Irish accent that served him so well in *Finian’s Rainbow*, which fits in well with the tone of the film. The score was performed by renowned Irish traditional group, the Chieftains. It must be admitted that one has to be prepared to embrace a deliberately exaggerated version of Ireland to enjoy this movie.
Leenane is known as “The Gateway to Connemara” and the wild and rugged landscape with its distinctive palate of colours was immortalised in the art of Paul Henry. A beautiful village in itself, Leenane is situated beside Killary Harbour, Ireland’s only fjord and one-time residence of Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. The area around Killary Harbour caters very well to adventure sports enthusiasts. The impressive Kylemore Abbey with its walled garden merits a stop as does the small but fascinating Granuaile Visitor Centre in Louisburgh, devoted to the memory of Grace O’Malley, the formidable pirate queen whose final resting place can also be seen on nearby Clare Island. The outline of the small fields and ridges in the area around Leenane act as a reminder of the Great Famine of 1845 to 1849 in which the population was decimated by starvation and mass emigration, the roots of the present day Irish diaspora. The area is also perfectly suited to walkers of all levels. You can test your mettle on one of the several looped walks that weave their way through the peaks and valleys of the County Mayo countryside, with routes to try on the islands of Inishturk and Clare Island. It is said that Mayo’s Clew Bay has 365 islands, one for every day of the year! Ferries for both Clare Island and Inishturk depart from the pier in the village of Roonagh.

Jim Sheridan’s first feature film My Left Foot, announced the arrival of a major new talent in Irish cinema. Sheridan’s gritty urban sensibility was an unusual match for revered playwright John B. Keane’s rural classic but it proved an ideal combination. The Field brings a new appreciation of the stone walls of Connemara; the backbreaking work of generations in clearing small patches of inhospitable land in an attempt to support a family. The hunger for arable land is still the driving force in this community. “The Bull” McCabe is on the verge of buying the field he has worked for years as a tenant farmer, man and boy, thereby lifting his family to the status of landowners. The acquisition of the field would be The Bull’s vindication of his years of privation and penury and no local will bid against him in recognition of his right to the field. But an Irish-American (Tom Berenger) arrives with ideas for development and easily outbids the Bull with apparently limitless resources.

The Field

FILM: 1990
DIRECTED BY: Jim Sheridan
CAST: Richard Harris, John Hurt, Brenda Fricker, Tom Berenger, Seán Bean

Leenane is known as “The Gateway to Connemara” and the wild and rugged landscape with its distinctive palate of colours was immortalised in the art of Paul Henry. A beautiful village in itself, Leenane is situated beside Killary Harbour, Ireland’s only fjord and one-time residence of Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. The area around Killary Harbour caters very well to adventure sports enthusiasts. The impressive Kylemore Abbey with its walled garden merits a stop as does the small but fascinating Granuaile Visitor Centre in Louisburgh, devoted to the memory of Grace O’Malley, the formidable pirate queen whose final resting place can also be seen on nearby Clare Island. The outline of the small fields and ridges in the area around Leenane act as a reminder of the Great Famine of 1845 to 1849 in which the population was decimated by starvation and mass emigration, the roots of the present day Irish diaspora. The area is also perfectly suited to walkers of all levels. You can test your mettle on one of the several looped walks that weave their way through the peaks and valleys of the County Mayo countryside, with routes to try on the islands of Inishturk and Clare Island. It is said that Mayo’s Clew Bay has 365 islands, one for every day of the year! Ferries for both Clare Island and Inishturk depart from the pier in the village of Roonagh.

Leenane (GPS) Sat Nav. Lat 53° 35' 46” Lng -9° 41' 39”

The Field

FILM: 1990
DIRECTED BY: Jim Sheridan
CAST: Richard Harris, John Hurt, Brenda Fricker, Tom Berenger, Seán Bean
The local pubs and restaurants are hospitable places, offering live music and a friendly game of cards.

In this vision of rural Ireland, the price of this particular dance is not just what one pays at the door. The right to privacy is forfeited as the very act of careful dressing and going to the Ballroom of Romance exposes each person's secret longing for love. Crippled by sexual shyness but fuelled by alcohol, middle-aged men peruse the women at the Ballroom of Romance, in the knowledge that they too were nobody's first choice. Over the course of one evening the heroine Bridie, realises her time is up. Unless she is to become another risible old maid, her visits to the Ballroom of Romance must become a thing of the past. The choices available to her are either to renounce her hopes of marriage entirely or accept one of the few men available to her. The idea of compromising herself by marrying a hopelessly inferior mate is repugnant. But it is a long and lonely walk home through the darkness and any company seems better than none as the night draws to a close.
Brian Friel is widely regarded as Ireland’s greatest living playwright. Dancing at Lughnasa is his most autobiographical work, a palimpsest of Friel’s own childhood. It was made into a movie with a stellar cast that includes Meryl Streep and Michael Gambon. In the film, Michael Mundy looks back on his childhood, reared by his mother and her sisters in rural Donegal during the long absences of his charming and feckless father. Lughnasa is the feast of the first of August, a celebration dating from pagan times, the feast of the harvest. As it approaches, the five adult Mundy sisters struggle to make sense of their lives, deal with thwarted dreams and live together with a noticeable absence of men. Their sexual impulses, largely unexpressed, burst forth in one glorious scene when they all finally abandon themselves to the insistent rhythm of the music, brought into their home by Michael’s father, salesman of radios and gramophones and purveyor of romance and seduction.

Friel’s fictional Ballybeg (a common Irish place name, meaning simply Little Village) has featured in many of his works and represents his real hometown of Glenties, County Donegal. Glenties is situated at the point where two glens and two rivers converge. It is a regular winner of National Tidy Towns competitions. Nearby is the Glenveagh National Park, which is open to visitors year round and is free of charge. The national park has a pair of breeding golden eagles amongst other attractions and is an ideal place to experience the unique geographical features of this remote seaward county. Donegal, as one of the most remote counties of Ireland has a well-preserved sense of place, including its own Gaeltacht (Irish speaking area) and dialect. Donegal is a recognised stronghold of traditional music, song and dance, and is home to several cultural centres and Irish speaking island communities. Local museums showcase longstanding maritime customs, which are still vibrant in the locality, as well as the looms that created the world-famous Donegal tweed.

Donegal, as one of the most remote counties of Ireland has a well-preserved sense of place, including its own Gaeltacht (Irish speaking area).
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