

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE EMERALD ISLE

# IRELAND'S BEST 2020

**150**  
Places to  
visit

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Home to three of Ireland's  
Michelin starred restaurants

## BELMOND GRAND HIBERNIAN

Ireland's most luxurious  
sleeper train

## CÉAD MÍLE FAILTE

Celebrate St Patrick's Day  
in Ireland's lively pubs

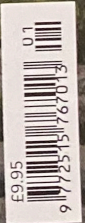
## GALWAY'S BIG MOMENT

This year's European  
Capital of Culture

## THE WILDE WEST

Visit the rugged landscapes that inspired Ireland's best writers

CASTLES | WHISKEY & GUINNESS | ATTRACTIONS | GAME OF THRONES







# LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

*We follow the WB Yeats trail in and around Sligo and discover  
the places that inspired the much-loved poet and his peers*

*Words by Megan Eaves*

One of Ireland's most celebrated literary sons, poet William Butler Yeats spent his childhood in Sligo and the county's sorrowfully majestic landscapes are infused throughout his writing.

Though he lived mainly in London and Dublin, Yeats never gave up his love of Sligo, visiting often throughout his life and penning the county's soft romance in bouts of nostalgia.

Born in Dublin, Yeats' parents moved him to Sligo, where his mother's family owned a small estate at Mcerville. He was the eldest

of four children, and all of his siblings were creatives that went on to be inspired by the storied, ancient scenery of Connacht. Jack B Yeats, William's younger brother, became one of Ireland's most celebrated painters, with many of his Sligo landscapes adorning the walls of the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin today.

The spirit of Yeats is never very far away in Sligo, from the lumbering mountains and waterfalls immortalised in his writing to artworks and exhibitions in his honour. Here are the places most associated with him. >



*Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half-light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet:  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.*



## DRUMCLIFF

*Under bare Ben Bulbin's head  
In Drumcliff churchyard Yeats is laid*

Among Yeats' most famous poems, 'Under Ben Bulben' has become known as his self-eulogy. Published in 1938, a year before his death, it describes the hulking Sligo mountain (sometimes spelled Benbulbin) and Drumcliff (or Drumcliffe) Churchyard where Yeats would be buried, even detailing the lines that would be inscribed on his headstone: Cast a cold eye / On life, on death. / Horseman, pass by.

St Columba's Church, where Yeats' grandfather was rector from 1811-46, is a simple neo-gothic chapel, built in 1809. The site itself is much older, said to be founded by St Columba in the 6th century. The remains of an early monastery are marked by a leftover round tower and a high Celtic cross outside. Yeats' grave and that of his wife, Georgie (listed on her headstone as 'George'), are in the cemetery, which has broad views of the verdant Ben Bulben to the north.

[sligotourism.ie](http://sligotourism.ie)

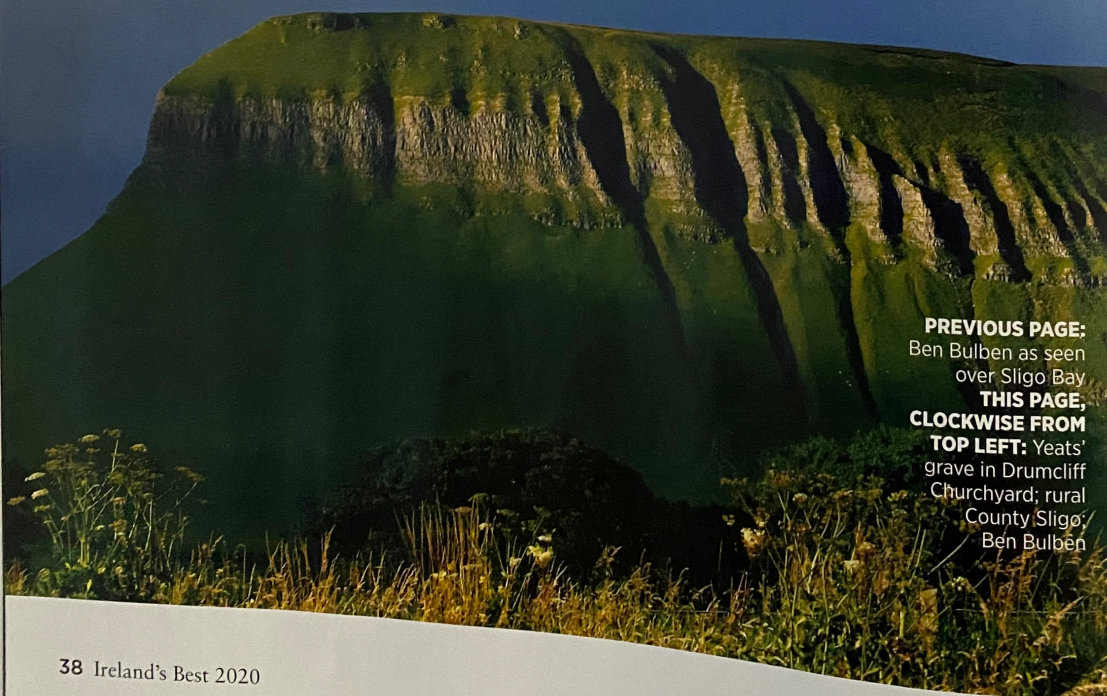
“ Among Yeats' most famous poems, 'Under Ben Bulben' has become known as his self-eulogy ”

Cast a cold Eye  
On Life, on Death,  
Horseman, pass by.

W. B. YEATS

June 13<sup>th</sup> 1865

January 28<sup>th</sup> 1939



**PREVIOUS PAGE:**  
Ben Bulben as seen over Sligo Bay  
**THIS PAGE,**  
**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:**  
Yeats' grave in Drumcliff Churchyard; rural County Sligo; Ben Bulben

CHICKS HILL, TORRISHILL AND NOEL KENNEDY/FAULIE, IRELAND/  
ANDRÉ KOSTANTINOV/LEZAR



## INNISFREE

*I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;  
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.*

In 1888, a 23-year-old Yeats was battling the heavy traffic of Fleet Street in London when his mind strayed to the serenity of a Sligo lake that he loved as a child. The 12 lines of one of his most beloved poems followed, and two years later, 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' was published in the *National Observer*.

The islet of Innisfree is a bump of tree-covered soil amid Lough Gill, a freshwater lake straddling the border between Sligo and County Leitrim. Barely big enough to contain the cabin that Yeats dreamed of, Innisfree can be seen on a boat tour with Rose of Innisfree (€20 adult/€10 child), which sails from the lake's northern shore, near 17th-century Parkes Castle, daily from Easter to late October.

[roseofinnisfree.com](http://roseofinnisfree.com) >



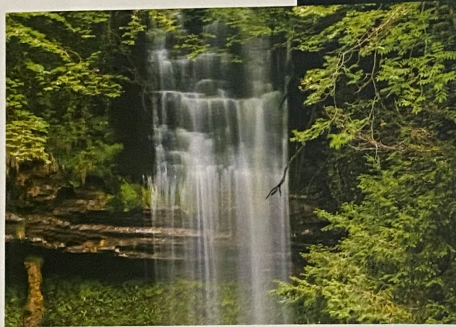


PROVINCES **CONNACHT**

## **GLENCAR WATERFALL**

The mystical cascade featured in 'The Stolen Child' plunges in a wide gush over shale and limestone cliffs into a deep pool, flowing into Glencar Lough below it. A damp path covered in emerald moss leads to the 15 metre-high Glencar Waterfall; it's not hard to imagine that the fairies Yeats imagined in his poem are hiding in the weeping ferns and behind the delicate petals of alpine saxifrage and fringed sandwort that spring up from the banks of the stream. The waterfall is located seven miles (11km) west of Manorhamilton and is free to visit.

[leitrimtourism.com](http://leitrimtourism.com)



“It’s not hard to imagine  
that the fairies  
Yeats imagined in his  
poem are hiding in the  
weeping ferns”

*Where the wandering water gushes  
From the hills above Glen-Car,  
In pools among the rushes  
That scarce could bathe a star*

AN  
Glen  
TOP: Lis  
BOTTOM:  
at Lis



## LISSADELL HOUSE AND GARDENS

Overlooking Drumcliff Bay from northern Sligo's Maugerow peninsula, Lissadell House was the childhood home of writers and suffragists Eva and Constance Gore-Booth. After meeting Constance (more commonly known as Countess Markievicz) in London, Yeats vacationed at Lissadell, including for an extended period from 1894-95. Yeats and his brother Jack spent time playing cricket on the broad lawns here and conversing with the Gore-Booth sisters, particularly Eva, whose poetry greatly impressed Yeats, and so he wrote 'In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markievicz'.

A permanent exhibition at the mansion celebrates the Yeats brothers through sketches, paintings, letters and rare photographs. Lissadell House and Gardens are open April-September (€14 adult/€6 children).

[lissadellhouse.com](http://lissadellhouse.com) ➤



**THIS IMAGE AND FAR LEFT:** Glencar waterfall  
**TOP:** Lissadell House  
**BOTTOM:** The gardens at Lissadell House

*The light of evening, Lissadell,  
 Great windows open to the south,  
 Two girls in silk kimonos, both  
 Beautiful, one a gazelle*

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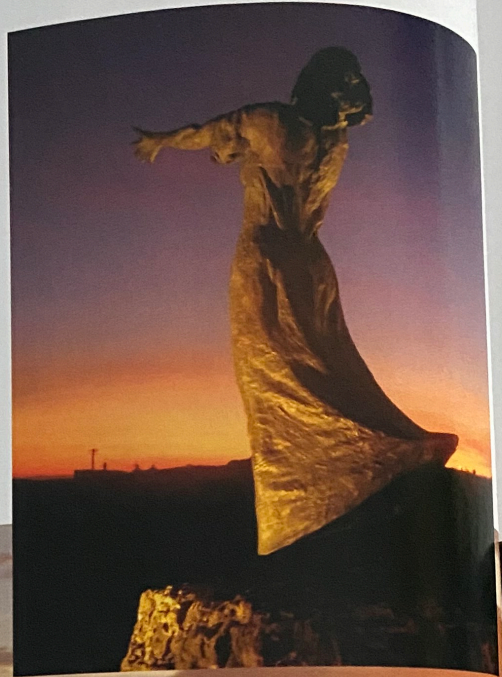


## ROSSES POINT

The Yeats' family holidays were based on Rosses Point peninsula, in the now ruined Elsinore House. The peninsula's sweeping coastal terrain became a constant motif for Yeats, in 'The Stolen Child' (below) and in *The Celtic Twilight*, a collection of essays about fairies and folklore associated with the area.

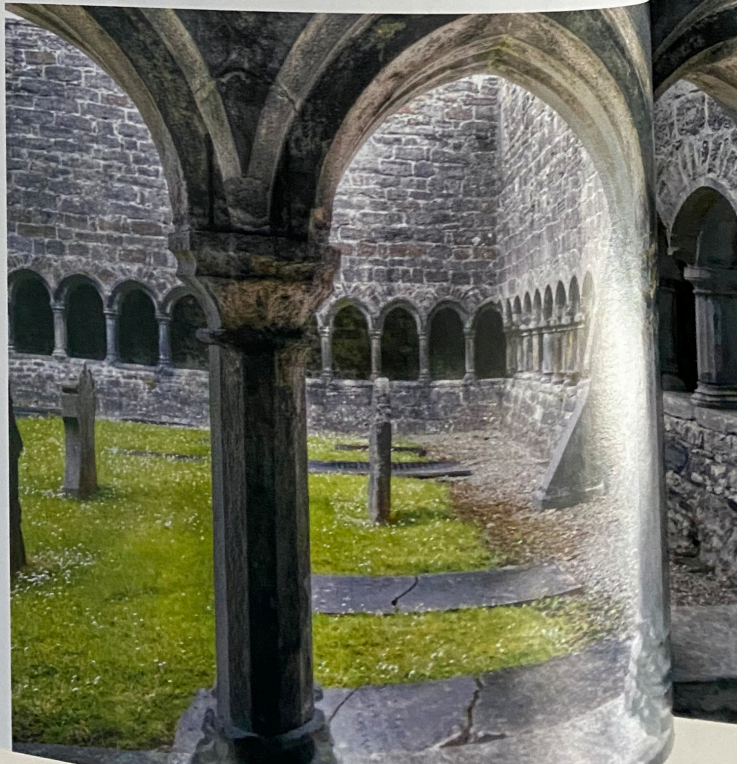
Rosses Point encompasses a pleasant village, coastal promenade and the wind-swept Rosses Point Beach, with its romantic "dim grey sands". The four-star Yeats Country Hotel offers rooms with views of Sligo Bay, and the Little Cottage Cafe overlooking the promenade has hand-roasted coffee and warming seafood chowder should the wild Atlantic weather strike.

[yeatscountryhotel.com](http://yeatscountryhotel.com)  
[facebook.com/thelittlecottagecafe](https://facebook.com/thelittlecottagecafe)



“Rosses Point Beach,  
with its romantic  
dim grey sands”

*Where the wave of moonlight glosses  
The dim grey sands with light,  
Far off by furthest Rosses  
We foot it all the night*



**THIS PAGE,  
CLOCKWISE FROM  
ABOVE:** Rosses Point;  
'Waiting on the Shore'  
at Rosses Point; WB  
Yeats statue in Sligo;  
a music session  
at Foley's Bar; the  
cloisters at Sligo  
Abbey



## SLIGO TOWN

*How many loved your moments of glad grace,  
And loved your beauty with love false or true,  
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,  
And loved the sorrows of your changing face*

Yeats is everywhere in Sligo Town, the county's largest urban centre. His face and words are memorialised in statues and painted on walls across the town. The most striking of these are the murals by artist Nik Purdy, including one of Yeats on a building on Lord Edward St across from Sligo Station, as well as one of Maude Gonne – Yeats' long-time muse – and the words to 'When You Are Old' (above) at the northwest corner of Union and Wine Streets.

A bust of Yeats on Lower Knox St marks the entrance to the Yeats Building, home to the Yeats Society (€3 entry fee), which maintains an exhibition and runs annual summer and winter schools dedicated to the poet. The Niland Collection at the Model Arts Centre has a collection of Jack B Yeats paintings and a complete collection of William's poems from 1889-1936. The Sligo County Museum also maintains a Yeats collection that includes manuscripts, letters and a copy of his Nobel Prize.

Yeats' face even accompanies you to the bathroom at Foley's pub on Castle St, where the poet's aged visage has been immortalised in spray paint at the entrance to the loos.

Sligo Town is stacked with pubs, but for consistently great arts and music, there's nowhere better than Shoot The Crows, a bohemian pub that hosts weekly traditional Irish, folk and Americana music.

[yeatssociety.com](http://yeatssociety.com)  
[themodel.ie](http://themodel.ie)  
[sligoarts.ie](http://sligoarts.ie)  
[facebook.com/shootthecrows](https://facebook.com/shootthecrows) 



## LITERARY CONNACHT

*Read on to see how Connacht inspired some of Ireland's other great writers*

### OSCAR WILDE

The poet and playwright described Connemara in County Galway as "a savage beauty". His family summered at Moytura House near Lough Corrib in Mayo. Wilde is memorialised in bronze, conversing with Estonian writer Eduard Vilde (1856-1933), on William St in Galway City.

### GEORGE MOORE

Lough Carra in Mayo was the summer retreat for the writer and co-founder of the Abbey Theatre – his novel *The Lake* is set here. It is also believed that English writer DH Lawrence spent several months here in 1919.

### LADY GREGORY

The Abbey Theatre co-founder lived at Coole Park in Galway, which became an important meeting spot for the Irish Literary Revival.

### DOUGLAS HYDE

Ireland's first president was born in Roscommon and spent a large part of his childhood here. His most well-known literary work is *Love Songs of Connacht*, a collection of poetry and verse written in Irish.

### CONNACHT at a glance

**AREA** 17,800km<sup>2</sup>  
**COUNTIES** 5  
**POPULATION** 550,000  
**LARGEST TOWNS/CITIES**  
Ballina, Castlebar, Galway,  
Sligo, Tuam  
**RIVERS** Corrib, Moy,  
Shannon, Suck  
**HIGHEST POINT** Mweelrea,  
814m