

Rural Tourism



Foreword

While agriculture will continue to be the cornerstone of rural areas, the need to generate a second income in order to attract a successor and ensure viability is a reality for most farm families. Teagasc runs annual Options workshops in regional centres, where a range of diversification opportunities are presented to farm families, by a mixture of entrepreneurs, local development agencies and rural professionals. Each year, Rural Tourism is one of the most popular diversification opportunities and requests for further in-depth information have resulted in this booklet.

Drawing on many years of experience as a former Rural Tourism Specialist with Teagasc, Maria Heneghan has collated a wide range of material in this easy to read publication, which will help you to explore the potential for a rural tourism enterprise on your farm or in your local community.

Developing a rural tourism enterprise can bring many benefits, but as with any enterprise, there are challenges. The checklists in this publication are designed to ask probing questions relating to those challenges, ranging from the initial idea development, to the business set up and operation. The main aim in developing a rural tourism enterprise is to ensure economic viability on the farm but it also has potential to provide many societal benefits such as, educating visitors and projecting a positive image of Irish agriculture and quality food production; preserving farms and farmland; sharing the story of our agricultural heritage and rural lifestyles with tourists, and preserving rural heritage and traditions. It is equally important that the heritage-related benefits of rural tourism are more widely promoted among farmers which can lead to the conservation of their heritage assets and to the attraction of culturally-oriented high spending visitors.

The economic benefits of rural tourism and the continued development of this sector have huge potential to revitalise local economies, provide job opportunities for farm household members and enhance the quality of life of rural communities.

Supports in relation to development, training, funding and marketing are readily available but sometimes can be challenging and confusing for newcomers to the tourism industry. While Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland Limited are the statutory bodies charged with the responsibility for tourism in Ireland, there are many other organisations, agencies and bodies offering help to develop a rural tourism enterprise. This publication lists and provides web-links for many of these contacts.

Many farms have untapped resources which could form the basis of a second income generating enterprise, such as rural tourism. This booklet will help individuals and communities to become more aware of the potential benefits, challenges, costs and rewards associated with developing rural tourism projects. It will also assist in developing a marketing and promotion programme by providing much of the information required.

As with any new venture, information is the key to success. This booklet is a must for those considering any kind of rural tourism project.



Professor Gerry Boyle

Director, Teagasc

Acknowledgement



ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION:

The Teagasc Rural Tourism booklet is designed to quickly provide answers for readers seeking information on any aspect of rural tourism development opportunities. The easy to read “straight-talking” style sets out to provide guidance for rural entrepreneurs in developing a rural tourism initiative, based on the experiences and insights of Maria Heneghan’s career in the rural tourism sector.

The booklet is also designed to act as supporting material for Teagasc “Options Plus” Rural Tourism courses and is available as a web publication on the Teagasc Rural Development website.

To download, visit: www.Teagasc.ie/RuralDev

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Section 1.1 Rural Tourism: Adapting to change



Rural areas around the world are becoming more innovative with their environment. New opportunities such as; on-farm accommodation, traditional countryside pursuits, education trips, mountaineering, angling and the increasing popularity of kayaking, canoeing and health breaks are helping to generate supplementary income on farms.

Rural tourism is nothing new. Interest in countryside recreation grew in the nineteenth century as a reaction to the stress and squalor of the expanding industrial cities. Rural tourism in Ireland was initiated in the 1960s with the foundation of 'The Irish Farmhouse Association' a national organisation for B&Bs on farms. The last 35 years have seen a growth in rural tourism as urban populations are increasingly seeking leisure and relaxation in the countryside. Rural areas around the world are offering opportunities ranging from traditional countryside activities, walking, mountaineering, cycling, horse riding, angling, bird watching and foraging, to the increasingly popular watersports of kayaking and canoeing. Rural areas are endowed

with the required natural resources and quiet picturesque settings necessary to enable tourists to experience tranquillity and a slower pace of life, as an alternative to the perceived pressures and constraints of urban life. While rural tourism is not the only answer to overcoming the complex and deep-rooted problems of rural areas, it will provide at least one option amongst others, for rural survival. Starting your own rural tourism enterprise is undoubtedly a challenge and should never be entered into lightly or without due consideration. With a feasible idea, effective planning and strong determination on your behalf, you can and will succeed.

Section 1.2 Rural Tourism: Improving farm income

Rural areas are experiencing huge changes and challenges such as population decline and reduced incomes. Many farmers are considering rural tourism as an opportunity to generate income and overcome the challenges facing farming by providing accomodation and/or activities for tourists.



Traditionally agriculture was central to rural life and the main source of income within the rural economy. Farming had a powerful influence on traditions, power structures and lifestyles, determining rural land use and the landscape. At present, rural areas are experiencing huge changes and challenges to this traditional way of life, as land-based occupations are in decline and younger rural residents are migrating to cities for work, as well as for social and cultural opportunities.

Rural tourism offers a possible solution to some of the problems associated with the lost economic opportunities and population decline that

accompany these challenges. Many farmers and rural dwellers have embraced rural tourism as an opportunity to bring in 'new money' to rural areas, stimulating growth, providing employment opportunities and attempting to halt rural decline. Rural tourism offers many opportunities including the provision of accommodation, recreational activities, rural amenities, a chance to showcase local culture and heritage, and interesting countryside pursuits. Rural communities have the resources and are well-placed to capitalise on the move away from mass tourism products to fulfill the tourist's desire for the more niche-type holidays which can be found in rural areas.



Checklist 1

Becoming involved in tourism is not as simple as 'open the door and paying guests will come.' Initially it is important to consider a number of issues and give honest answers as to why you and your family are planning to get involved in the tourism industry.

When considering a tourism venture answering the questions below as honestly as possible is essential.

**Answer
Yes/No**

**Comment on why you
choose Yes or No**

1 *Dedication and commitment from all the family are important. Are you and your family committed to a change in lifestyle by getting involved in a tourism venture?
Good communication makes for good decisions*

2 *Are you happy to become a host to paying guests?*

3 *Are you happy to allow people to share your home, as is the case with the B&B business?*

4 *Are you happy to allow strangers to treat your home as their own?*

5 *Do you like people? Are you interested in people and are you able to make people smile?*

6 *Are you devoted to making your guests happy, welcome and feeling special?*

7 *Are you prepared to devote yourself to the 'hard graft' and dedication which the hospitality business demands such as: meticulous housekeeping; marketing; inspections; following up with guests; taking bookings; advising guests on places to eat; being a local tourist guide and happily dealing with criticism of what 'you believe you offer' as a top class product?*

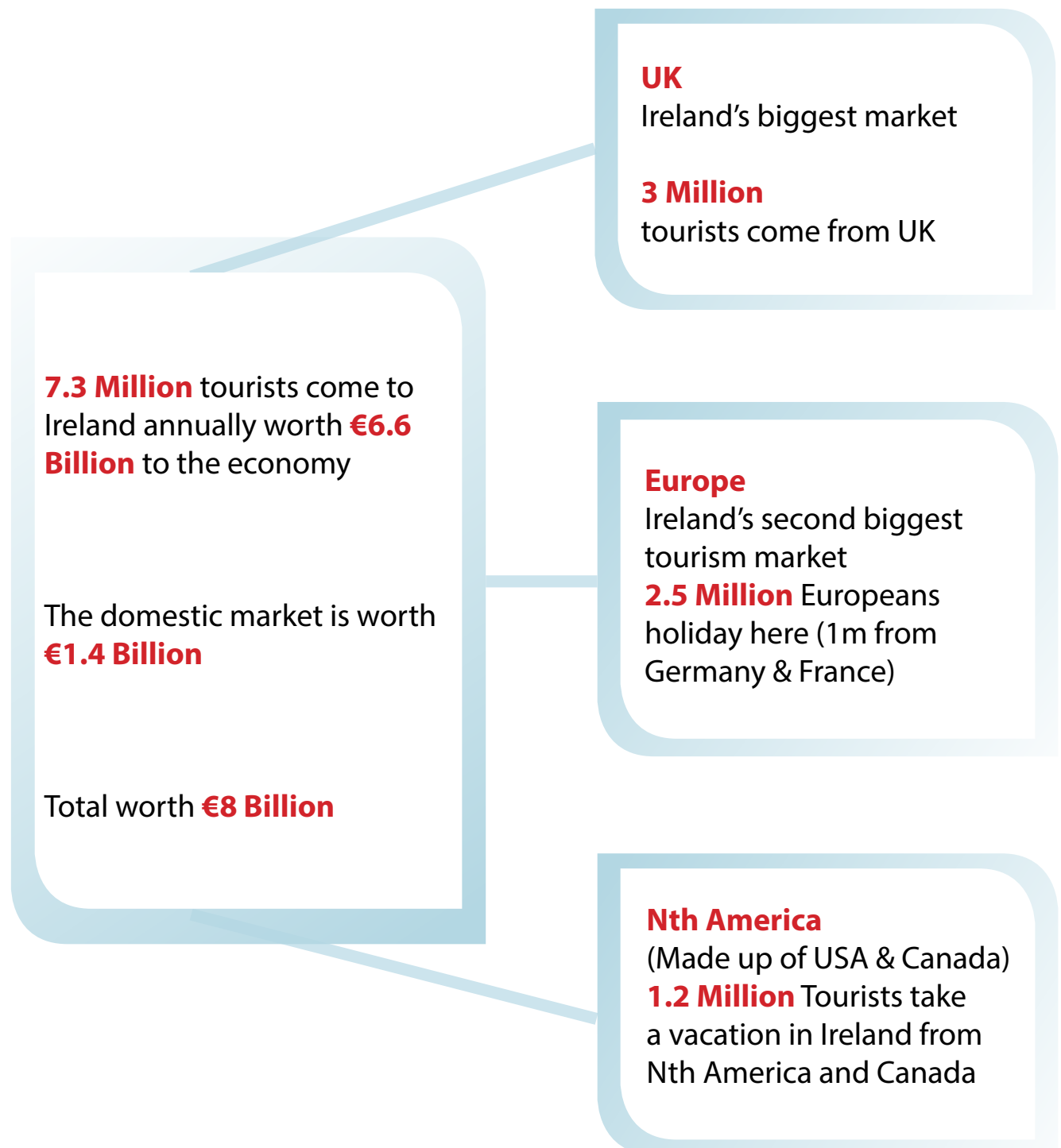
8 *Are you happy to go any distance to ensure your guests have a holiday to remember?*

9 *Are you happy to be available and provide service with a smile - 24hrs?*

Section 1.3 Tourism: a growing industry in Ireland

Central Statistic Office (CSO¹) figures for tourism in Ireland show that 7.6 million foreign visitors come to Ireland bringing €6.5 billion to the Irish economy. Visitors from the UK constitute 3.1 million of our tourists, followed by Europe's 1.3 million (with German and French visitors accounting for a million of the European visitors. North America delivers 1.6

million tourists to Ireland and 160,000 come from Canada. When considering a tourism enterprise it is important to know your markets e.g. the UK which is our biggest market is on our door-step and we speak the same language.



¹ Central Statistics Office (2014)

Section 1.4 The tourist's €uro - how is it spent and what type of rural tourism accommodation sells in Ireland? ²

When considering rural tourism as an enterprise on one's farm, be guided by information like: how does the tourist spend their Euro; what type of accommodation do they choose; what does the visitor do while in Ireland. All this information is updated annually on www.Failteireland.ie/research

The Tourist buys a 'holiday experience', not just accommodation or a two hour trip to a local visitor attraction. Research shows that for some people, if the activities are interesting and sufficiently absorbing, simple accommodation such as hostelling, camping or staying in a pod, a bunkhouse barn, a hobbit, a shepherd's hut, may be sufficient. While for others their choice of activity may be peaceful and tranquil and involve the opportunity to read and relax in a comfortable B&B or self-catering cottage. But simplicity does not mean poor quality.

When considering investing in a rural tourism venture note how the tourist spends their Euro: 7 cents goes on an activity, 31 cents on accommodation and 34 cents on food. Accommodation, Food and Activity takes 72 cents of every euro they spend. Can you provide all three? Remember; activity is a low-spend area, so volume of visitors is important. Therefore make use of community activities such as walking, cycling, golfing, forest walks, historic trips, cultural events and activities in the rural area.

Note that a day tripper to an area is worth €40 whereas a person staying is worth €83. Fáilte Ireland tourism research indicates that 34 jobs are generated for every million euro spent by tourists. Research also indicates that every 55 international tourist visits to Ireland, supports one job.

This information is available on a year by year basis on the Fáilte Ireland website:
www.Failteireland.ie/Research-Insight



² Fáilte Ireland (2014)

How does the tourist spend their €uro?

31 cent:	Accommodation
34 cent:	Food & Snacks
7 cent:	Activities
14 cent:	Shopping
11 cent:	Travel
3 cent:	Other

What type of accommodation do tourists choose to stay in while in Ireland?

18%	Stay in Hotels
6%	B&B
28%	Self-Catering
1%	Caravan & Camping
3%	Hostels
26%	With Friends / Relations
18%	Other



Checklist 2 (Check previous page for prompts)

Knowing how the tourist spends their Euro provides a guide on what areas can deliver best income.

Can you deliver on two or more from the list below?

How does the tourist spend their Euro?

Cents

Accommodation	
Food and Snacks	
Activities	
Shopping	
Travel	
Other	



Self-Catering accommodation can be integrated with the farm operation. Some accommodation providers offer access to the farm.

Section 2.1 Creativity and Innovation are essential

Albert Einstein is quoted as saying '*Innovation is the ability to see change as an opportunity – not a threat.*' Creativity and innovation are very important when considering a new enterprise to generate income on the farm. Farmers should not view diversification as a threat to farming but more as a guarantee that the farm will survive and attract a successor.

The opportunities for enterprise development in rural tourism are vast, and basically break into three broad areas: a place to stay, something to eat and something to do.

While the local attractions and activities which bring tourists to an area, these only account for seven cent in every Euro spent by the tourist. The volume of visitors coming through is important when considering an attraction or activity. Provision of some form of accommodation can attract up to 31cents from the visitor's Euro and there is ongoing demand for all kinds of accommodation.

Accommodation Statistics

B&Bs - Clare, Cork, Galway and Kerry have the highest number of B&Bs in Ireland ranging from 104 premises approved in Clare to 219 in Kerry. Leitrim, Longford and Monaghan have the lowest number of B&Bs with as little as three B&Bs in Longford, eight in Leitrim and nine in Monaghan.

Self-Catering - Kerry, Cork, Clare have the highest number of self-catering units while Westmeath have lowest at 55.

Hostels - 11 counties in Ireland have no hostel accommodation. Dublin city and Galway have the highest number of bed spaces.

Caravan & Camp Sites - Clare & Kerry have the greatest number of sites with nine counties having none.

Other types of accommodation are not recorded to date.

Remember

The 'holiday experience' is what the tourist is buying:

A sense of community involvement, space, freedom, cleanliness, quality, environmentally sensitive practices and IT facilities are at the core of a rural holiday, all of which add contrast to the urban holiday and ensure authenticity.

Identifying what's authentic, special or different about your area makes it more difficult for competitors to replicate.

The rural Tourism Sector - how big is it?

1,324	B&Bs in Ireland (less than 6 bedroom)
3,346	Self-catering units
110	Hostels
226	Guest houses (over 6 bedroom)
93	Caravan & Camping parks with 5,312 pitches

³ Fáilte Ireland (2014)

Section 2.2 Steps to finding the best idea

The big challenge is finding the idea that suits your lifestyle and your customer. Don't try to develop the idea around what you think potential customers might buy. Too often, potential rural tourism providers get an idea and jump right in with the JCB instead of first researching what the target market requires. The research must come before the JCB or you may find that the market does not want what you are offering. Even if you have a resource on your farm such as an unused second house, quality cut stone barns, a field running by the lake or river with prospects for development or potential for a nature trail, you still need to research your idea.

When considering any enterprise, acquiring the business idea and clarifying that it is the best idea is the first step. A 'Eureka' moment where one gets a special inspiration is rare. Searching and "re-searching" is essential in clarifying or finding your idea. Visit other providers; stay in B&Bs/self-catering cottages; partake in activities and visit attractions;

attend seminars; talk to agencies; take advantage of conferences at home and abroad. All will help with your idea formation and help develop a conviction about what you intend to do.

Get to know the rural tourism sector. Get to know the emerging trends – who would ever think that 'scare' could become a trend. Learn from your research and what other rural tourism providers tell you about what the customer needs. This will lead you to the perfect idea. Knowing what motivates your potential consumers to come to you and building your rural tourism product to meet those motivations will get customers beating a path to your door. Developing a conviction: Researching your idea helps to form a conviction. This leads to a belief and confidence in what you wish to develop and gives a foundation to your vision. This is essential when selling your idea to funding organisations and customers.



1. Establish what you want from your idea

- Increased income
- Untapped resources need to be put to use
- You want to make the farm attractive to a successor
- You want to create an income for another member of the family

2. Generate the Idea

- Search and re-search, visit successes, gather information
- Attend seminars and conferences; talk to agencies
- Develop a conviction about your idea.
- Evaluate and dissect only when you have a conviction

3. Be aware of common impediments

- Conformity - what will others think? Will I look foolish? Better to stick to what we are comfortable with?
- Passiveness - no vision, just copy someone else
- Entrenchment - once a farmer always a farmer; you must drive your own business with help from agencies and others



Section 2.3 Looking for help with your idea

When researching your idea, existing data are easily obtained through industry analysis, trade journals, newspapers, magazines, census data, and demographic profiles. Thanks to the internet, this type of research is now far more accessible than ever before. Be aware though, that it is not unusual to

'fall in love' with your idea to the extent that you can ignore the warning signs thrown up by the research. It is good to be passionate about your proposals but you need to remain entirely objective too and judge the findings of your research impartially.

Essential steps in researching your tourism development idea whether as an individual or a community

- Identify success stories in rural tourism
- Visit a number of products at home and abroad and stay if it's an accommodation idea you are considering?
- Ask questions about the product?
- Evaluate it yourself - what do you think of the experience?
- What changes would you make if you were providing the same service?
- Take a close look at how others promote themselves - would you do it differently?
- What channels do they use for promotion - web-site, social media, brochures, Christmas/Easter greetings, newsletters to past customers?
- Does the experience match what is promoted? List the agencies that can help with product development in the form of training, advice, regulations, planning, those offering financial supports and grant aid and the agencies and associations that provide marketing supports, market linkages and promotional opportunities.
- Be clear and convincing about your ideas before approaching any agencies for financial or marketing support.
- Remember your business plan is your guide - even a basic plan initially will help to focus your thoughts.

Section 3.1 Options in Accommodation

The range of accommodation options is vast. Knowing what suits your situation is important. B&B will not appeal to someone who may not want to share their family home with the public. On researching your idea you will discover that most providers scale their development and grow as they become familiar with the additions that customer require. Some may start with a self-catering house or cottage and the next stage of their project may be to add on wigwams or pods or even more self-catering units. If peace and tranquillity is what attracts visitors to your product then it would be unwise to place a 20 bedroom hostel on the same

site as a cottage which you are promoting for a get-away-from-it-all holiday. More and more, the growth seems to be in a mix of provision such as a B&B followed at a later stage with self-catering units and maybe offering breakfast as an option to the self-catering guests. Be creative and innovative. Under Irish law, Fáilte Ireland has responsibility in relation to the registration, grading and approval of Irish tourist accommodation and they in turn contract the implementation of that responsibility to certain contractors such as tourismservices@southwestern.ie.

Options in Rural Tourism accommodation are vast



Section 3.2 Potential Income: A Bed and Breakfast

No one can afford to invest in an enterprise that has limited income potential; this is not the case with tourism which is part of the ever growing service industry.

Tourism as a service industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. In the USA in 1980, just 28% of the workforce worked in industry. By 2000 it had dropped to 11% and is expected to drop to 3% by 2030. More people now work in McDonald's than in U.S. steel, which demonstrates the rate of growth of the service industry. The opportunities in tourism are vast. One of the first options that people consider when thinking of a tourism enterprise is B&B. There is a fundamental question which should be considered when contemplating a B&B enterprise. Are you happy to share your family home with strangers/visitors? It is important to provide guests with a sense of 'visiting' rather than 'staying' which is a much different experience to a hotel. Approved B&Bs in Ireland can offer up to 5 bedrooms (preferably en-suite) to guests, after the family is accommodated.

A national organisation known as B&B Ireland

supports, coordinates and markets the B&B sector www.bandbireland.com.

B&Bs and Guest Houses are defined differently. Guest Houses fit into the category of 'registered' rather than 'approved' and have more than 6 bedrooms. Generating a reasonable profit from a B&B will depend on a number of variables such as overheads, debt payments, location, improvement costs, advertising expenses, number of rooms, occupancy rate (number of paying guests staying), and what extras you offer for sale such as packed lunches, dinner or items from the farm kitchen such as home made preserves. A five bedroom B&B free of debt may generate a profit with 10% occupancy while an eight bedroom with a big mortgage may not turn a profit without 60% occupancy. Some of the downsides to running a B&B include long working hours, concerns about privacy and the occasional over-demanding customer.

TERMS: Bednight (BN) refers to number of people staying - 6 BN means 6 people staying. Occupancy refers to total number staying - 50% occupancy means full for half the year or period of opening.



Bed and Breakfast potential income - open all year with 50% occupancy

4 bedrooms = 8 bed nights BNs

8 x 7 days = 56 BNs (56 People Staying)

56 x 52 wks. = 2,912 (guests)

50% occupancy = 1,456 staying

1,456 x €40 pp €58,240 gross

ANNUAL COSTS

Running costs 30% €18,286

Marketing 5% €3,049

Casual labour €4,600

Repayment on loan €15,700 pa

Total Costs € 41,635

ANCILLARY ITEMS SOLD

100 pots homemade jam € 450

100 evening meals € 1,250

20 technical farm tours €1,000

€ 2,700

€58,240 + €2,700 = €60,940

Net cash income before tax

€60,940 - €41,635 =

€19,305 (50% occupancy)



Checklist 3

Use the step by step guide below to calculate the potential income from a Bed and Breakfast

Take the time to answer the key questions below and fill in the answers in the right hand column

Fill in answers to questions on left in columns below

1 How many Bedrooms do you plan to offer guests in your B&B?
(For Fáilte Ireland Approval it can be 3, 4 or 5 bedrooms).

2 How many guests can you keep for one night at two persons per room?
(Multiply number of rooms by number of persons per room)

3 How many people can you keep for one week
(Multiply answer at 2 above by 7 days)

4 How many guests can you keep for one year if you had a full house
(Multiply answer at 3 above by 52 wks)

5 Occupancy may be only 40% or 50%
(Divide answer at 4 above by 40% or 50% to get real number of visitors you may have)

6 Gross Income from a Bed and Breakfast for 1 year @ 50% occupancy (before costs)
(Multiply answer at 5 above by what you intend to charge €35; €40; €60; per person / night/. Rates per night are your decision but it must be realistic and based on what you have to offer (i.e. a special B&B or a basic B&B).

€

Proceed to complete **Checklist 4 and 5** to arrive at Net Income or Profit from your B&B

Understanding costs - know the bottom line

All operating expenses for B&Bs can be broadly categorised as either variable or fixed costs. The words fixed and variable mean exactly what they say, fixed are the costs that don't change whereas

variable costs vary. Fixed costs exist even if no guests stay. In order for a business to survive it must have sufficient income to cover fixed costs.

Checklist 4

Fixed Costs for B&B

Euro

Mortgage Payments per year	
Insurance	
Property tax	
Water charges	
Depreciation	
Utilities: telephone charges; web hosting	
Other	
Total Fixed Costs	



Variable costs or running costs are the main operating costs for a B&B. Understanding these costs will help you identify key areas where you can cut back on expenses and increase your profit margins

while ensuring a good service. Variable costs vary according to the revenue you generate. Variable costs are usually in the region of 30% for a B&B while marketing costs should be 5% to 10%.

Checklist 5

Variable costs

Euro

Food costs	
Casual labour	
Marketing	
Replacements, crockery, furniture and furnishings	
Cleaning	
Other	
Total Variable Costs	

Net Income or Profit from your B&B

Add your totals from [Checklist 3](#) and [4](#) and deduct from your total Gross income on [Checklist 2 \(page 12\)](#) to arrive at Net Income or Profit before tax from your B&B enterprise.

€



Section 3.3 Self-Catering Accommodation



Self-Catering accommodation as opposed to Bed and Breakfast, covers a wide variety of accommodation such as: stand-alone self-catering houses, cottages, apartments, well-designed and spacious log cabins or any type of accommodation where the visitor caters for themselves. All types of self-catering options fit very comfortably with farm life. When deciding on a self-catering venture the same principles apply as regards searching and re-searching your idea. Define, describe and evaluate your proposal; if you cannot define and describe, then your vision is incomplete and your conviction when trying to sell will be weak. To be approved as an individual self-catering provider, you can have one or more units (cottages/houses/apartments) with up to a maximum of seven on one site.

Holiday camps, another category in the self-catering section, incorporate a variety of self-catering types of accommodation on one site such as hostels, caravans and camping, glamping/yurts, hobbits, bunkhouse barns, pods, shepherd's huts and log cabins. Many providers mix the offering

in self-catering with, for example, a hostel initially and later add on yurts, camping or log cabins. The choices are wide and varied. Yurts described as glamping or 'glamorous camping' have become very popular and vary from basic to very luxurious. Fáilte Ireland registration, at this point, only caters for complexes (holiday camps) with sleeping accommodation for a minimum of 50 persons and one reception area located on one site. Smaller complexes may suit a farm situation. Fáilte Ireland has statutory responsibility for registration and approval of all accommodation in Ireland and they contract the responsibility for inspections to South Western Services in West Cork: tourismservices@southwestern.ie (phone 1890 697000). Hotels are inspected by a different body appointed by Fáilte Ireland. It is advisable to refer to the Fáilte Ireland requirements and work to them, even if you are not going for registration or approval straight away. You may decide to in the future and at least the basics will be in place and major reconstruction will be avoided ⁴.

⁴ Fáilte Ireland 2014 & 2015 www.failteireland.ie/research

Options in Self-catering type accommodation

Self-catering cottages/houses /apartments



- Demand for self-catering grew by 38% in 2015.
- These are usually 2 - 3 bedroom stand alone units.
- Rates vary from €300 - €700 weekly depending on location, quality and facilities.
- Some providers may offer breakfast.
- Self catering ratings go from Approval to 5 stars.
- Refer to Fáilte Ireland requirements.

Caravan and Camping



- Rates for camping for 2 adults and 2 children vary from €25 - €30 per tent.
- Basic requirements must be provided as outlined in Fáilte Ireland regulations.
- Star ratings go from 2 stars to 4 stars depending on the facilities on offer.
- Only 9 counties in Ireland do not have caravan/camp sites.

Holiday Hostels



- Holiday hostelling is growing in Ireland due to an improvement in standards and offerings. Many hostels now offer family rooms, budget breakfasts and entertainment as part of the package.
- Rates range from €13 to €20 per person per night for dormitory accommodation to €30 to €70 for individual rooms.
- 11 counties in Ireland do not have hostels.

Pods/Wigwams/Shepherd's huts/Glamping/ Log cabins/Hobbits all fit into the category of 21st century camping

Pods



- Pod sizes can vary to accommodate two to four individuals or family members. Rates per pod per night vary from €80 to €140 depending on the level of luxury and what's on offer to accompany the stay. Some providers offer breakfast, BBQ facilities or additional activities.

Wigwams

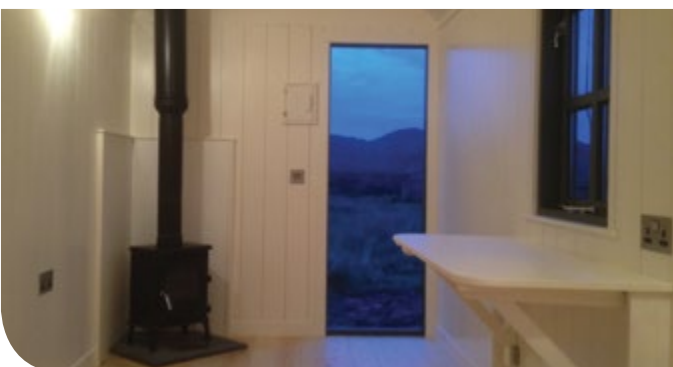


- Wigwam Holidays can be as simple as sleeping on a floor mat in a sleeping bag or have the comforts of home.
- They are attractive to individuals and families who like the outdoors; nature-cravers; adventure-chasers; peace-and-quiet-seekers; stargazers and memory-makers.
- Rates vary from €10 to €30 per night per person.
- Food can be prepared in the campers' kitchen.

Shepherd's Hut



- The shepherds' hut was used by the herdsman for large farms in the UK in the 19th century during the lambing season.
- A shepherd's hut is an inexpensive and unique way to add to other types of accommodation and offers a retreat away from the hustle and bustle.
- The hut can be as sparse as just one bed and a kettle and lantern with toilet facilities away from the hut, or it can be as luxurious as a self-catering house.
- Rates vary from €40 per person per night upwards, to include a breakfast basket.



Log Cabins



- Log cabins are a novelty form of self-catering and appeal to individuals who like a more rustic type holiday.
- Rates vary from €350 per week upwards, depending on quality and size.

Glamping /Yurts



- Glamping holidays are becoming popular and are described as glamorous boutique luxury.
- Glamping is for visitors who want to experience nature without the hassle of carrying, erecting and dismantling a tent.
- Rates vary from €90 for 2 people for one night to €300 for 1 week.



Hobbits



- Hobbits are for the camper who love the outdoors, but without the tent.
- There are family sizes and smaller hobbits to accommodate 2 adults.
- Hobbits can be placed to make the most of the rural surroundings.
- A hobbit holiday suits artists, nature lovers, walkers and families wishing to be at one with the environment.
- Facilities usually include a hot shower and basin and a portable WC alongside.
- Guests (as with most tent replacement holidays) provide their own bedding and camping equipment, torches and walking boots or wellingtons.
- Rates vary from €35 for a standard hobbit to €55.00 for the family hobbit per night.

Bunkhouse Barns



- Bunk house barns are common in the UK and were originally developed to provide undercover facilities for campers.
- Most of these bunk houses have been converted from traditional stone barns used to store hay and house cattle in winter.
- Simple accommodation (generally dormitory style).
- Common kitchen and dining areas with shower and toilet facilities.
- €10 per person per night.
- More commonly used by groups.

Potential Income from Rural Self-Catering House/Cottage
For 30 wks occupancy
4 star quality accommodation
3 bedrooms en-suite

In order to extend occupancy it is essential to consider various offerings outside of the main peak season such as mid-week breaks and weekend breaks. It is also good to look to the corporate market that may have foreign visitors needing a quiet top quality place to stay or a post-graduate student who may want a quiet time to study or write a thesis. Providing a special Easter or Christmas

package with all the trappings of the season can achieve peak season rates. When developing one self-catering unit or cottage why not consider two? Two may cost less to build and will generate a good income with reduced variable costs. Our peak season is May/June/July/August - 43% of tourists come at that time.⁵

Checklist 6

OCCUPANCY

16 weeks peak season @ €700
 (May June, July, Aug)

8 weeks shoulder season @ €500
 (April, Sept)

8 off-peak season weeks @ €350
 (Jan, Feb, March, Oct, Nov, Dec)

4 mid-weeks @ €250

4 week-end breaks @ €250

2 weeks Specialist Christmas and Easter breaks
 @ €600

Total Gross Income (income before costs)

POTENTIAL INCOME

⁵ Fáilte Ireland research 2014

All operating expenses for self-catering can broadly be categorized as either variable or fixed costs. The words fixed and variable mean exactly what they say, fixed are the costs that do not change whereas variable costs vary. Fixed costs exist even if the house is not occupied. In order for a business to survive it must have sufficient income to cover the fixed costs.

Variable costs or running costs are the main operating costs for self-catering. Understanding these costs will help you identify key areas where you can cut back on expenses and increase your profit margins while ensuring a good service. Variable costs vary according to the revenue you generate and are within your control providing you do not compromise on quality standards.

Checklist 7

VARIABLE COSTS: SELF-CATERING

EURO

Utility bills /electricity/heating/gas

Cleaning for change-over /laundry/welcome packs

Replacements, crockery/damages

Marketing/promotion/commission costs/web - hosting

Redecoration/painting

Other

Total Variable Costs



Checklist 8

FIXED COSTS: SELF-CATERING

EURO

Mortgage Payments per year	
Insurance	
Property tax	
Water charges	
Depreciation	
Furniture/furnishing/equipment replacement	
Approval/ Registration costs	
Other	
Total Fixed Costs	

PROFIT FROM SELF-CATERING:

(Total **Checklist 7 and 8** and deduct from your total Gross income on **Checklist 6** to arrive at Net Income or Profit from your self- catering enterprise)

€



Section 3.4 A Business Plan is essential

A Business Plan

A Business Plan is:

- ***The Plan for your Business***
- ***The C.V. for your Business***
- ***Not having a Business plan is like going on a self drive tour of a multi language Europe without a map or a Sat. Nav.***
- ***Would you apply for a job without a CV?***
- ***Your Business needs it's CV!***



Who needs a Business Plan?

1. You do.
Its your map.
Its your guide.
2. Funders may need a financial picture of your business for grants and loans.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

'First impressions count'. The executive summary gives a snap-shot of your Business Plan and can influence the reader to read further.

1

1. YOUR DETAILS

Name, address, phone, e-mail.

2

2. BUSINESS

Details of the business.

Name and type of business e.g. company/sole trader.

3

3. YOUR PRODUCT

- What are you offering /selling?
- Describe your product/your business.
- What are the characteristics of your product - strengths & opportunities.
- What is unique about your product. Unique Selling Point (USP).

(If you can't describe your product you can't sell it).

4

4. WHY YOU?

- your successes and achievements.
- your strengths, motivation, experience.
- how will you add to your strengths?
- what are your training needs?
- how will you overcome the weakness?

5

5. OUTLINE WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE

- Objective 1.
- Objective 2.
- Objective 3.

(Objectives set out what results you wish to achieve).

6

6. HOW WILL YOU SELL YOUR PRODUCT?

A Marketing Strategy

- Who wants your product - describe the market, customer profile, your image, price.
- How will you access that market and find the channels to the market .
- How will you promote to that market - web site/promotional material/ events/linkages/ media/trade shows/keepsakes).
- What's needed to get to the market? /contacts /organisations/agency help/linkages

www.Failteireland.ie

7

7. THE FINANCES

A Financial Strategy

- What are your development costs, running, marketing costs.
- How will you fund the investments-- personal finance, loans, grants.
- Income and returns on investment expected.
- Cash flow projections.

Checklist 9

SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats):

A simple test for your tourism business proposal .

State what you are assessing here. It can be accommodation, an activity or a community group.

(This particular example is for a tourism enterprise. Many criteria apply to more than one sector. Identify criteria appropriate to your own SWOT situation.)

Strengths

(What makes this a good proposal?)

Criteria for your strengths

What are the strengths of your proposal/your community?

What is your competitive advantage/why are you better than another supplier?

What is your USP (unique selling point)?

What is your experience/ knowledge of the tourism business?

Do you know the likely returns?

Innovative aspects?

What are you offering over competitor?

Your Location- what are the strengths?

Do you have Access advantages - planes/trains/busses?

Quality - is it superior?

Are there activities/ attractions/ facilities for tourists?

Are there good supports for marketing? Have you identified these supports?

What are your marketing strengths / are there family members with skills in marketing/finance/hospitality?

Weaknesses

(Where can improvements be made?)

Criteria for weaknesses

Are there gaps in capabilities?

Is there challenging competition locally?

Where are your vulnerabilities?

Financial capacity - is it weak/limited?

Family commitment?

Leadership to drive the project?

Accreditations, training etc?

Are you lacking in IT skills?

Is there limited access to the area?

Resistance to tourism development.

Have you any background in tourism?

Competition - does it exist and how will it affect you.

Opportunities

(Where are the opportunities to succeed?)

Criteria for opportunity

- Market developments in this area?
- Massive growth in tourism?
- Competitors' vulnerabilities?
- Lifestyle trends?
- Technology development and innovation?
- New markets for your product?
- Niche target markets?
- New research.
- Grant aid.
- Business and product development?
- Information and research?
- Partnerships, agencies, distribution?
- Seasonal? Weather? Trends?
- Supportive family with expertise in marketing and IT.

Threats

(What are the risks with this proposal?)

Criteria for threats

- Regulation/planning.
- Competitive rates charged locally.
- Broadband.
- Competitors intentions.
- Is there Market demand?
- Are there new technologies, services, ideas coming on stream?
- Sustaining capabilities?
- Obstacles faced?
- Limited finance?
- Seasonality, weather effects?
- Is my product marketable?
- Am I clear on what I have to sell?

Checklist 10 - Have you got what it takes to run a rural tourism venture?

Do you have what's needed?

Your response - comment

1. Do you have a well-researched idea?	
2. Have you got energy & drive?	
3. Do you know who wants your product?	
4. Have you got a tolerance for uncertainty?	
5. Are you good at taking initiative?	
6. Have you access to money/capital?	
7. Are you a problem solver and a risk taker?	
8. Are you good at tapping into and making best use of resources?	
9. Are you aware of the competition and how it may affect you?	
10. Have you the necessary contingency plans in place to deal with strong competition?	
11. Are you committed and do you have the conviction to make your idea convert to a successful business?	
12. Have you identified the agencies /bodies that can help?	
13. Have you adequately scoped out the financial, health and safety, insurance and environmental consequences of your potential venture.	

Remember it is much easier to exploit, update and expand an existing idea than create demand for something new. The market may be tough but as long as it exists, you can fight for your share.

Section 4.1

Activities and Attractions that encourage visitors to stay longer

Activities and Attractions have a twofold function. They allow visitors to access the landscape which is why tourists come here in the first instance and they provide the vital component of the holiday experience which is 'something to do'. Activities, Attractions and Adventure are terms used in tourism to indicate what one might do while on holidays in a locality. Adventure tourism is an outdoor leisure activity for paying guests and

generally takes place in an unusual, exotic and remote or wilderness setting and can be associated with low or high levels of physical activity. It entails an element of risk and can range from 'getting wet' to 'getting faster'. Activities and attractions on the other hand are usually a "softer" type holiday and include walking, cycling, cultural experiences and events and are often more rural and community based.



Without a clear understanding and common vision of your community's "niche" as defined by its attractions and activities, success in the market place may be severely difficult and limited. An audit and an analysis of the attraction mix in your locality defines your area as a pass-through, day trip, touring option or an overnight destination.



Participants in activity tourism spend 54% more during their trip and stay 30% longer than the average tourist (up to 8 days).⁶

While landscape is the main motivator for tourists coming to Ireland in the first place, it is attractions and activities that 'draw' tourists to your area. Linkage with your community is essential. Make a list of the attractions and cultural events in your area; visit them as a tourist so you know exactly what they offer, then you in turn can sell them to your visitors. Your tourism venture won't survive if there isn't 'something to do'. Almost half or 45% of Ireland's activity market comes from Europe.

Each area /community has its own unique resources for attracting tourists. The more you offer the tourist in relation to things to see and do, the better the opportunity for an income from tourism and

return visits. Attractions and activities pull tourists to one place instead of another. Select your most distinct attraction / activity initially. Familiarity with one's own area can blinker one from seeing something very special, so be vigilant. A good selection of activities can make your area into a destination as opposed to a 'stop-off'. Without a clear understanding and common vision of your community's "niche" defined by its attractions and activities, success in the market place may be severely difficult and limited. An audit (e.g. checklist 9) and an analysis of the attraction mix in your area define your area as - *a pass-through, day trip, touring option or an overnight destination.*



The activity market globally is worth \$360 billion, with 4 in every 10 travellers choosing to become involved in an activity holiday. 90% of activity is “soft” and includes walking, cycling, fishing, bird watching, archaeology, and interaction with nature, cultural events and meeting the local community, all available in Rural Ireland. Other activities described as “high octane” such as abseiling and sea kayaking are attractive but demanding and can be high risk with associated high insurance costs.

Recent research from Fáilte Ireland tells us that attracting tourists to a destination is ‘not needs based’ but is incentive based. In other words, we need to take note of ‘what motivates’ visitors in the first place. In Ireland, that is landscape and scenery. Attractions and activities that are unique, authentic and have drawing power are essential.

Fáilte Ireland figures show that we get 2 million activity tourists.

At 45%, the European market is our biggest market for activity tourism (11% come from France and 10% from Germany).



What tourists do in Ireland?

- 72% explore
- 72% enjoy the landscape
- 70% spend time with family
- 65% have fun and laughter
- 60% soak up atmosphere
- 60% spontaneity
- 60% want peace and quiet
- 45% want to experience activity
- 41% visit a craft fair
- 42% attend a cultural event

In what activities do tourists partake while in Ireland?

1.2 million	Walking
290,000	Cycling
176,000	Golfing
168,000	Angling
86,000	Watersports
82,000	Equestrian

Section 4.2 Opportunities in Activity, Attraction and Adventure development are numerous



Section 4.3 Walking offers the greatest potential

Walking 'tops the poll' as opposed to any activity from both the domestic and overseas markets. Fáilte Ireland's research shows that our walking product is rated highly and our beautiful landscape is the greatest motivator for walkers. Ireland's unique selling point (USP) is not the activity itself but the landscape. Walking or indeed any other

activity is the means by which the tourist enjoys the landscape. Fáilte Ireland figures show that 33% of the domestic market partake in walking as an activity while 1.2m overseas visitors to Ireland go hiking and cross-country walking

www.walkingroutes.ie

www.irishtrails.ie and [Irish Trail app](#)



Services that walkers require:

- Quality accommodation with drying facilities for wet clothes following a days walking
- Easy access from airport to accommodation
- Wholesome breakfast each morning
- Packed lunch for each days hike
- Dinner in the evening
- Luggage transfer between accommodations
- Pickups or transfers facilities if required during hike (Poor weather, tiredness or injury)
- Good phone coverage for contact use at any time
- Latest laminated walking notes for the route
- Weatherproof maps
- Guidebook and walking poles
- Access to walking guides if required.

- Among dedicated walkers, Ireland's walking offering is well rated.⁷
- Across all activities, beautiful landscape is the main reason for coming to Ireland.
- Activity tourists think destination first and their second concern is whether it would be good to undertake a particular activity in that location.
- The holiday experience is first in destination choice; country set-up for activities comes second.
- Ireland's USP is scenery and landscape for general marketing; the activity is a means of enjoying the Irish experience.⁸
- Ireland has 785 trails and 43 way marked ways in 25 counties.
- A Guide to Planning and Developing Recreational Trails in Ireland gives all the information.⁹

^{7, 8} Fáilte Ireland 2013 research on walking

⁹ Irish trails

Section 4.4 Cycling holidays

In recent Fáilte Ireland research, it is interesting to note that when asked what makes a good cycling destination, tourists reply that scenery and landscape, attractive towns and villages were important elements of the holiday. Visitors choose a destination based on the overall experience of what they will see and do and cycling is an enjoyable means of experiencing other activities.

- It is important that any cycling route allows visitors to have the 'holiday experience' which frequently includes interesting places to visit.
- Beautiful scenery is easily the most important destination feature, with regard to cycling.
- Scenery needs to be varied; too much of the same aspects will become boring.
- Weather also ranks highly but not an essential.

Of the 290,000 tourists who engage in cycling¹⁰ ...

- the market preference is for scenic, flat, traffic-free routes, which are safe, with lots of things to see and do and with short distances between services.
- a feature of the cycling tourist is that they often travel with children.
- 47% favour cycling as their main activity but like routes which include access to historical/cultural attractions.
- 42% enjoy cycling routes which included attractive cities and towns.
- 41% rate easy access to cycling routes as important.
- 53% of the domestic market rate cycling highly as a holiday activity.
- The greatest potential is with the German market, due to the high proportion of people who cycle at home.

Cycling route services

Services should not be more than 20km apart - less than 15km if possible.

- Food, drink, toilets and places to sit are important services.
- Accommodation can be simple, but one must do the basics well.
- Clothes drying facilities are a good option.
- Detailed route maps should be provided, with



attractions and services clearly marked.

- Attractions, towns, villages etc., en route, should offer reliable facilities to lock up bikes.
- An emergency contact for help is welcomed.
- Guides and organisers are not really needed.
- Public transport is not needed by the majority of tourists.
- A luggage transfer facility is welcomed.
- The availability of different drop off points for bike hire is desirable.

www.irishtrails.ie

Checklist for Trail Registration - Cycling Trails

Bicycle Hire

Bicycle hire is becoming more like car hire. It is a specialist area growing mainly through bicycle shops who take responsibility to insure, repair, replace, and guarantee quality bikes. More and more, the facility to pick up and drop off at a point along the way is becoming popular. Check with your insurance company, even if you offer bikes for free.

¹⁰ Fáilte Ireland

Section 4.5 Watersports

In tourism terms “watersports” refers to angling, sailing, kayaking, diving and surfing. Fáilte Ireland and Inland Fisheries research reports show that Germany and Britain have the greatest market potential for watersports, followed by France which has less, but still some potential. The domestic market has high potential with 11% of the population participating in watersports. In Ireland we have a strong tradition of angling and a good

reputation. The quality varies though with the other water sport offerings in Ireland. Products on offer do not rate particularly well, with a noticeable trend towards ‘satisfactory’, across all attributes from value for money, quality of the offer, range of choice, to the practicalities of booking, availability of information, availability of trained guides and availability of equipment.¹¹

Angling

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)

IFI is the state agency responsible for the protection, management and conservation of Ireland’s inland fisheries and sea angling resources. Ireland has over 74,000 kilometres of rivers and streams and 128,000 hectares of lakes all of which fall under their jurisdiction.

Inland Fisheries Ireland:

- Provides advice, assistance and material with regard to the Irish angling product to both national and overseas tour operators and agents;
- Liaises with Fáilte Ireland, marketing groups and travel companies to devise coordinated marketing strategies for the promotion of the angling product;
- Compiles and maintains an up to date databank of angling information;
- Assists at national angling events and provides educational material, lectures and courses on the value of the angling resource, conservation, species diversity, angling methods and techniques;
- Surveys fisheries to identify optimum angling locations and facilities;
- Provides specifications for fishing stand construction.

Angling in Ireland

Ireland gets 157,000 anglers annually:

46% from Britain

**47% Europe
(France 12%; Germany 11%)**

7% Others

Fáilte Ireland research shows that Ireland’s angling product is rated “good” and “excellent” by overseas anglers in relation to “range of choice” and “value for money”. The average length of stay of anglers is 6 to 8 nights and 62% of the angling market is repeat business. Only 8% of anglers stay in hotels while almost 50% stay in B&B and self-catering.

www.fishinginireland.info is an important web-site for anyone considering offering angling holidays. It has all the information needed and more.

A complete guide to all bye-laws and regulations governing angling in Ireland can be found at www.fishinginireland.info/regulations.htm This site also contains an updated list of tackle shops where licences can be purchased. The Irish Fishing Guides and Instructors Directory found in www.fishinginireland.info/guides/ is laid out on a county by county basis and here you will find contact details of all the ghillies, fishing guides and instructors for both fly-fishing and coarse angling in Ireland. Where casting instruction is offered this is noted.

¹¹ Fáilte Ireland research 2013 & IFI report 2012



Angling

What's required?

- Access to local information on angling prior to the holiday and bait available on arrival
- Information on stocks locally
- Permits/ licences to hand on arrival
- Quality accommodation with facilities for the angler with early morning starts and return for breakfast and packed lunches
- Freezers for storing the catch
- Drying facilities/rooms
- Locked shed for gear (some have very expensive gear and want assurances regarding its safety and security)
- Facility for boat hire, ghillies, guides booked ahead if required
- Restaurant advice or BBQ facilities with opportunity to enjoy some of the catch
- Parking
- Accessible angling stands and quality pathways to stands
- Toilet facilities
- Fridges for storing bait
- Information on tackle shops.

www.fishinginireland.info

Adventure

As an adventure-tourism provider, one can offer a single adventure or a combination of adventure pursuits for paying tourists. Unlike other tourism businesses, an adventure tourism enterprise will rely heavily on specialist interest, experience and skills. Therefore, the specialist understanding required for adventure activities is a critical area of experience for a would-be adventure tourism entrepreneur.

Canoeing

Canoeing is the collective term used to describe a wide-ranging sport that encompasses competitive and non-competitive forms of canoeing and kayaking. Non-competitive canoeing includes a number of kayaking and canoeing activities based mainly on journeying and adventure. Powerful mountain rivers, tranquil lakes and spectacular coastlines all provide perfect environments for

canoeists to enjoy their sport. Ireland is tailor-made for canoeing and there is a wonderful variety of locations to choose from. Ireland has a multitude of rivers, canals, and lakes offering everything from simple touring on placid water to challenging white water descents on flooded mountain rivers. For canoeists, Ireland's rugged coastline provides spectacular scenery interspersed with excellent surfing beaches. The coastline offers enormous potential for exploration, and for observing abundant sea wildlife. Sea kayaking in all but enclosed sheltered sites demands knowledge and skill. Visitors should be advised not to undertake canoeing without adequate training. One of the best ways to discover what canoeing has to offer is to join a local group or club. Alternatively, undertake one of the Irish Canoe Union's training courses - they will help you master basic canoeing and safety skills.

Kayaking

Kayaking as a recreational activity provides opportunities for adventure, relaxation, exploration, and competition. The challenges of descending a white-water river or gracefully meandering quiet lakes and canals are all part of a kayak's special appeal with occupants using a double bladed paddle. There are 5 levels of skills training with level one being the basic.

For people with suitable resources such as a lake or a river, kayaking is becoming very popular as an outdoor tourism activity.

The Irish Canoe Union T/A Canoeing Ireland is registered as a limited company and provides liability protection for its members and is also recognised by the Irish Sports Council and the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI) as the governing body of the sport and recreation of canoeing in Ireland. It is affiliated to the International and European Canoe Federation.

The Training and Development Committee (TDC) is involved in making policy decisions, setting operational standards, promoting the training and qualifying of Outdoor Adventure Centre staff, developing resource material, research, training of instructors, consultation, provision of equipment, and promotion of all disciplines through non certificate training courses.

<http://canoe.ie/about-canoeing-ireland>



Kayaking as a tourism activity: what's needed?

- Kayaks with correct design strength
- Trained instructors
- Approved buoyancy aids
- Helmets
- Awareness of hazards
- Paddles
- Knowledge of the water (grades 1 to 6)
- Dry bags
- Storage facilities
- First aid kits
- Drying and showering facilities

Section 4.6 Culture and Heritage: our 'strongest link'

The World Tourist Organisation states that cultural and heritage tourism represents between 35-40% of all tourism worldwide, and that it is growing at 15% per annum – three times the rate of growth of general tourism. More than three out of five (64%) of overseas holidaymakers point to Ireland's history

and culture as a crucially important factor in their decision to come to Ireland. Ireland's heritage is well regarded, both internationally and at home. It is an important motivator in attracting visitors to Ireland and consistently yields high satisfaction scores among the visitors who experience it.

Interpretation, which means telling the cultural or heritage story is essential. It can be done by video, dramatic performance, wall panels and storytelling. The key to success is to Engage the visitor, allow them the chance to Explore, provide Intrigue and make your story Vibrant. Research shows that the human element in telling the story is most effective.



Developing your heritage site

1. What is your story - The story needs to be a compelling human story. Research the story you plan to tell. Find the historic facts and the human element. Look to bodies and agencies for help e.g. Fáilte Ireland and Heritage officers in Local Authorities. Tourism/ Hospitality Departments of Universities or Institutes of Technology may have students who could research this as a project.

2. Delivering your story - Capture people's attention. Bring your story to life. Let them feel like the person in the story. Make the event memorable.

3. Living your story - To live your story you need to show passion, a sense of exploration, and the ambition to exceed customer expectations. Sell a benefit not a claim! Culture and heritage tourists want the chance to explore and find out more.

Heritage and culture tell the story of our past and include five main areas which you and your community can offer:

1. Archaeological past: This includes evidence of human existence e.g. artefacts, monuments, ancient buildings, landscape and seascape.

2. Architecture: Groups of buildings, streetscapes, urban vistas, buildings of historical & archaeological interest such as stately homes & castles.

3. Landscape: Sites, rivers, lakes and canals, scenic features, geological, historical and ecological features.

4. Scientific interest: Bogs, habitats, flora and fauna.

5. Attributes of a society: These are inherited from the past such as folklore, writings, traditions, language, knowledge, skills, crafts, events, fairs and festivals.



The tourist enjoys:

- ***Real involvement as opposed to passive offerings***
- ***Being close to the community and understanding the way of life***
- ***Gaining insights to our identity and sense of place***
- ***Creativity***
- ***Exploring and being involved.***



Section 4.7 Factors to consider for both individuals and communities

1

1. DRAWING POWER:

Can the activity draw a sufficient volume of visitors to generate a good income? Will customers travel to get specifically to your activity or your accommodation? Can they be distracted by another similar activity or place to stay on their journey to you? What is your special story that no one else can tell or offer?

2

2. ATTRACTION QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY:

As well as the basic qualities of a clean, appealing appearance and good customer care and procedures, a special experience is essential. Community attractions or activities must have good and easy access with parking and toilet facilities.

3

3. AUTHENTICITY:

The attraction must reflect local values; an urban product in a rural area is not authentic. The opportunity to partake in what is happening locally adds to authenticity.

4

4. UNIQUENESS:

Tourists are always looking for a new and different experience. Uniqueness is what sets you apart from the opposition.

5

5. DEVELOPMENT AND EXPANSION:

Particularly with activities, expansion and seasonality of events are vital. Variety will allow the visitor to make a repeat visit. A one-trick pony always needs another trick. Make sure your activity is not a one-trick-pony.

6

6. ATTRACTION MIX:

Tourists want more than one activity, so consider what other activities may complement your development.

Important Areas for consideration when embarking on a tourism venture

1. Protection: Some adventure activities (for example quad bikes) are, by their nature, dangerous and can cause injury, and even loss of life to persons and damage to property. Any enterprise providing access to such activities must protect themselves against claims for loss or damage caused to persons who partake in the activities provided by the enterprise. While insurance costs may be high, return on investment may still be attractive. Health and safety requirements should also be investigated and implemented.

2. Training: The first line of protection is to ensure that owners and staff are properly trained and equipped to provide supervision and guidance to participants in the activities, ensuring that equipment is in excellent condition at all times. Ensure that all participants are properly trained in the use of equipment and in the rules of the activity in which they plan to engage. The rules should be designed to make the activity as safe as possible.

3. Legal Requirements/Regulations: Before launching any activity, find out what specific legal requirements if any, pertain to the activity being pursued. This can be obtained from the relevant sport or activity coordinating body. Also check with your solicitor. Many areas do not have specific requirements or regulation and are governed by insurance company requirements and the level of risk.

4. Insurance: Consult a reputable insurer or broker re the exposure to risk and, in particular, ensure that adequate public liability is in place. Before hosting groups of visitors or planning a public event, check with an insurance agent about adequacy of liability coverage. Be guided by the insurer in how to structure your business and ensure you minimise exposure to risk to the maximum extent. Insurance very often governs what regulations are required depending on the level of risk e.g. equestrian versus walking versus cycling. Some public walks and way marked ways are underwritten by local councils.

5. Land use zoning: Become familiar with all laws applicable to locating an office, licensing and registration, road transportation permits, public driving permits, regulations and bye-laws. Consult the relevant Local Authority and also a solicitor. If you live in an environmentally sensitive area it may be necessary to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

6. Grants: There are several avenues that may help with funding. Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs); Local Development Companies (LEADER) and Fáilte Ireland provide capital grants for the development of tourism activities and facilities. They also give marketing grants, which can help promote tourist ventures. Links for further information: www.pobal.ie and www.failtelreland.ie

*Complete an Activities, Attractions and Adventure audit of your area.
Be honest with your rating.*

Checklist 11

Activities, Attractions List under headings below	Drawing power Rate 1 to 5	Quality and accessibility Rate 1 to 5	Authenticity Rate 1 to 5	Uniqueness Rate 1 to 5	Activity expansion Rate 1 to 5
Natural and Scenic					
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
Recreational					
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
Cultural and Historic					
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
Special Events					
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

A good attraction mix helps to present a strong concise image that gains visibility in the market place.

Section 5.1 Placing your rural tourism product in the hands of the potential customer.

Marketing is everything you do to place your product or service in the hands of potential customers. It is about finding the right people to persuade. Marketing doesn't begin with a great idea or a unique product, it begins with customers - those people who want or need your product and will actually buy it. People don't just "buy" a tourism product, they buy the experience your tourism product will offer, the benefits they can gain, what a holiday with you and your community will do for them.

Take time at the beginning to discover who your potential customers are. Are they outdoor enthusiasts, or do they want an experience that will allow them to explore and partake, as is the case with the culture and heritage enthusiast? Alternatively,

tourists may want peace and quiet with no activity. To that customer, peace and tranquillity is their activity. A marketing plan created in a vacuum, and based solely on your perception of what the visitor wants, without looking at who is coming to your area and what they partake in, gives a blinkered view of the customer needs and will not deliver bookings. Market research, however simple or sophisticated, is important. It allows you to predict the future by studying the past. It reveals what tourists to your region or county have done, and helps predict what people might do - not what people will do. Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland Limited and the Irish Tourist Industry Confederation have all of the insights and information needed on their web-sites as regards who comes, how they travel, where they stay, how long they stay and what they do.



Customer care is at the core of marketing

Offering a tourism experience whether on your farm or in the community may be compared to growing a crop. The seeds must be cultivated, watered, nurtured, and fertilised to get a good crop. A quality product, good customer care and efficient marketing will ensure a good 'crop' in the rural tourism business. It is important to be aware when marketing, that tourism is a service not a tangible product like a television or a car, therefore it is very perishable. A bednight cannot be recycled or reused if not sold. It's gone and replaced by another bednight the next day. In other words it's not saleable the next day. Tourism is often described as a people-pleasing business. Beautiful lakes, historic sites, museums and recreational facilities are of little value if visitors do not feel welcome.

Researching your Market

Establish:

- Where do the visitors come from?
- Who comes to your county?
- What is the size of the various markets?
- How long do they stay?
- What type of tourism products do they use? - is it culture & heritage /walking/ cycling/nature-lovers/anglers/B&B/ hotels?



Section 5.2 Know what your area has to offer and note the numbers coming to your Region/County

If you know that tourists are not travelling in your direction then it is important to examine what your area has to offer and network with other providers locally to deliver the 'holiday experience'. The holiday experience is made up of three major components: a place to stay, something to eat and something to do.

The Director of the European Travel Commission (ETC) 2014 advises that "the match is won by those who can truly inspire, excite and engage potential travellers to experience their destination."

Identifying what is authentic and unique about your area or your individual products is essential when trying to attract tourists. Authenticity, uniqueness and a sense of place are harder for competitors to steal. The essence of rural tourism is co-operation and community involvement, space, freedom, cleanliness, quality, environmentally sensitive practices, IT facilities and a contrast to urban life. These are at the core of rural tourism whether at community or individual level. Within those areas lies your unique selling point (USP).

European Tourism in 2014: Trends & Prospects

Numbers of tourists visiting the regions in 2014¹³

	Foreign	NI	Domestic
Dublin	4.1m	0.448m	1.3m
West	1.4m	0.096m	1.2m
Shannon	1.0m	0.079m	0.686m
Sth East	0.870m	0.103m	0.990m
Mid. West	0.602m	0.673m	0.638m
East & Midlands	0.780m	0.201m	0.911m



¹³ Fáilte Ireland 2014

Remember

- The 'holiday experience' is what the tourist buys.
- A sense of community involvement, space, freedom, cleanliness, quality, environmentally sensitive practices, IT facilities, are at the core of a rural holiday; all of these facilities add contrast to urban holidays ensuring authenticity.
- Identifying what's authentic, special or different about your area makes it more difficult for competitors to replicate.



Promotional materials and finding the correct promotional channels are important sales tools



The lists of promotional material and promotional channels available are vast and cover web-sites, brochures, business cards, social media, trade events, feature articles, competitions to promote your business, press and media advertising campaigns, adverts in magazines, books, specialist publications, sponsorship at events and networking events. It is important to make best use of the promotional opportunity presented. Your promotional materials are sales tools and are meant to cause a response which is a booking. The first question to ask is - what do you want this promotional material to do for you?

Is it to?

- Introduce potential customers to your holiday experience and how easily accessible it is?
- Announce an additional new offer or service?
- Remind past customers of the wonderful service you already give?
- Make customers aware of a special offer they can't refuse?

Remember when putting promotional material together:

- One of the big scarcities is 'time' so your message must be brief and catch attention.
- Know the difference between a feature and a benefit (a nice room is not a benefit, it's a feature).
- Be clear on the 'benefits' and 'opportunities' of staying with you in your area.
- Your promotional material paints a picture of you and allows the travel agent, web-site, and your customer to build an image of what you offer.
- Know what makes you stand out from the crowd and makes you more special than your competitor.
- Have strong 'lead-ins' e.g. Enjoy... Holiday at... Join the excitement at... Prepare for action... Get the opportunity to explore at ... make the customer visualise themselves on the holiday.
- Turn your features into benefits e.g. benefit from the opportunity to..... walking distance from..
- Deliver your message as if you were describing the benefits to a friend.
- Visualise - in recommending you to a friend what would the visitor say about you?
- Keep it simple and uncluttered - have more space than print on the page.
- Good quality photos and videos will tell your story without any language barrier.

Give attention to your web-site

Before developing any promotional material, the first question one must ask is what can I get from my effort - and of course the answer is: more sales. Your web-site is a very important promotional tool and booking channel all rolled into one - so take note:

- As more people use mobile devices, your website should be mobile enabled.
- Your home page is most important. It must paint a picture of the benefits of coming to you and what you have to offer. Allow the reader to visualise themselves exploring, enjoying, taking part in a holiday with you. Use action words like explore, partake, and get involved.
- Again good quality photos and videos will tell your story without any language barrier.
- Ensure that the people in your photos represent your target holidaymaker.
- The language on your website should communicate the benefit and significance of a visit to you.
- When targeting international tourists, remember to internationalise your website i.e. some pages in German if you're targeting the German market. It is not advisable to rely on Google Translate. Get the text translated by a native speaker.
- Give your prices in Sterling and Dollars for UK and US markets.
- Display your phone number with international dialling codes. Don't use brackets so that the number is also Smartphone-friendly i.e. + 353 1 123 4567. If you speak foreign languages, mention it.
- Make it easy for customers to find you online. Shared links with complementary websites and search engine optimisation will help.
- Add your site to Google Maps www.google.com/places
- Answer customer enquiry emails within 24 hours. Answer all their questions. Include contact details in your email signature.

www.failteireland.ie/Market-Your-Business-With-Failte-Ireland



Essential information for a Marketing Strategy

Checklist 11

Areas to consider

Answer

(your answer should not be just yes or no)

1. Objectives: List your key marketing objectives and outline what actions you need to take to make them happen

2. Your product: Can you describe the benefits of staying with you and what is your unique selling point?

3. Your competitors: What are the weaknesses of your competitor that you can capitalise on?

4. Profile of your potential customer:
Can you describe a typical customer that would come to you?

a. Who is your target market? (foodies/artists/walkers/ anglers/culture seekers/watersport interests/ peace and quiet/celebration parties)

b. What is the size of your market?

c. What segment of that market are you aiming at?

d. Is the segment you are aiming at big enough?

5. Finding the route to promote and sell to the identified market: Where does your target market get their information about you? Do they go to specialist magazines like (anglers/ cyclists/walkers/artists), the internet, guide books, trip advisor, travel agents to plan their vacation?

a. What communication channels are you planning to use? (trade shows, web-site , social media, brochures, radio, TV adverts, booking sites e.g. Expedia, Air B&B, Booking.com)

b. Are the communication channels you are planning to use the most effective?

c. How many visitors do you need?

d. Are you networking with other product providers in your area and bundling your offers?

e. What promotional channels will you use? Emails, trade fares, promotional initiatives, competitions, mail shots, internet?

Section 5.3 Create an experience that will make them want to return

There are 7 basic principles for successful marketing known as the 7Ps. Too often the emphasis can be on developing the product and aiming to sell without identifying its specialities or unique selling point (USP); promoting without measuring sales is a very common mistake in a service business like rural tourism.

Product: What is your product? Can you describe it in such a way that the customer sees the benefits and is influenced to buy e.g. the opportunity to relax, the chance to explore a heritage site, partake in a cycling tour or get involved in a cultural event. Are you offering fishing facilities or the opportunity to catch a 5Kg salmon. Are you offering the use of your sitting room to read a book or the opportunity to relax and escape from a busy world? What is your USP, what have you to offer that is special, different and unique? It must be a product that people are prepared to travel to experience.

Price: For a rural tourism experience the price cannot be based on what the local budget hotel charges. That is acceptable if you are offering the same product as the budget hotel but only you can answer that question. What price can be obtained for the rural tourism product that you are offering? If you know from your research that you are offering a special experience - then you can charge what it's worth. You regulate your price. We often underestimate the increase in sales required to compensate for a drop in price. It is bad practice to differentiate yourself on price.

Promotion: How will you promote to the market place? Do you know the target market? Promotion must lead to sales. Don't measure your success on how many hits your web-site receives or how many brochures you distributed, but on what sales your promotional efforts delivered. Promotions can be through the a web site, brochures, follow-up, feature articles, launch, endorsements on social media, trip advisor or events. Find the promotional channels and use them.

Place: Where is the market place? Where can you sell your product? While tourists come from UK, Europe, USA you must find out what channels they use to make the purchase: e.g. web-sites, social media, travel agents, tour operators, Fáilte Ireland's Meitheal initiative and travel fares. Place your rural tourism experience where the customer can buy.

People: Since rural tourism is a service and not a tangible product, the attitude and interaction with people is a vital component. Remember we are noted for our Irish welcome and pleasant personalities.

Physical Evidence: Physical evidence of the quality of your product is important. Being approved, registered and having a star rating with Fáilte Irelad is assurance of a certain standard of quality, in addition to press reviews, trip advisor ratings and comments from guests.

Process: Efficiency in dealing with enquiries, bookings and complaints is fundamental.

Items to note when marketing

- 80/20 Principle: 80% of your business comes from 20% of your customers, so keep in touch with past customers.
- Word of mouth is more effective than advertising so keep in touch.
- Get coverage. Press coverage is 7 times more effective than paid events or offers.
- Advertise wisely - it takes 6 exposures before a customer responds.
- Prominence and uncluttered logos are important for promotion.
- Good quality photos and videos will tell your story without any language barrier.

Remember selling is a job interview

Where does the tourist get their information when planning a holiday?

26% use family members for guidance when planning, 41% make a booking based on the experience of family members.

76% use the web when planning a holiday.

60% book their holidays on the web.

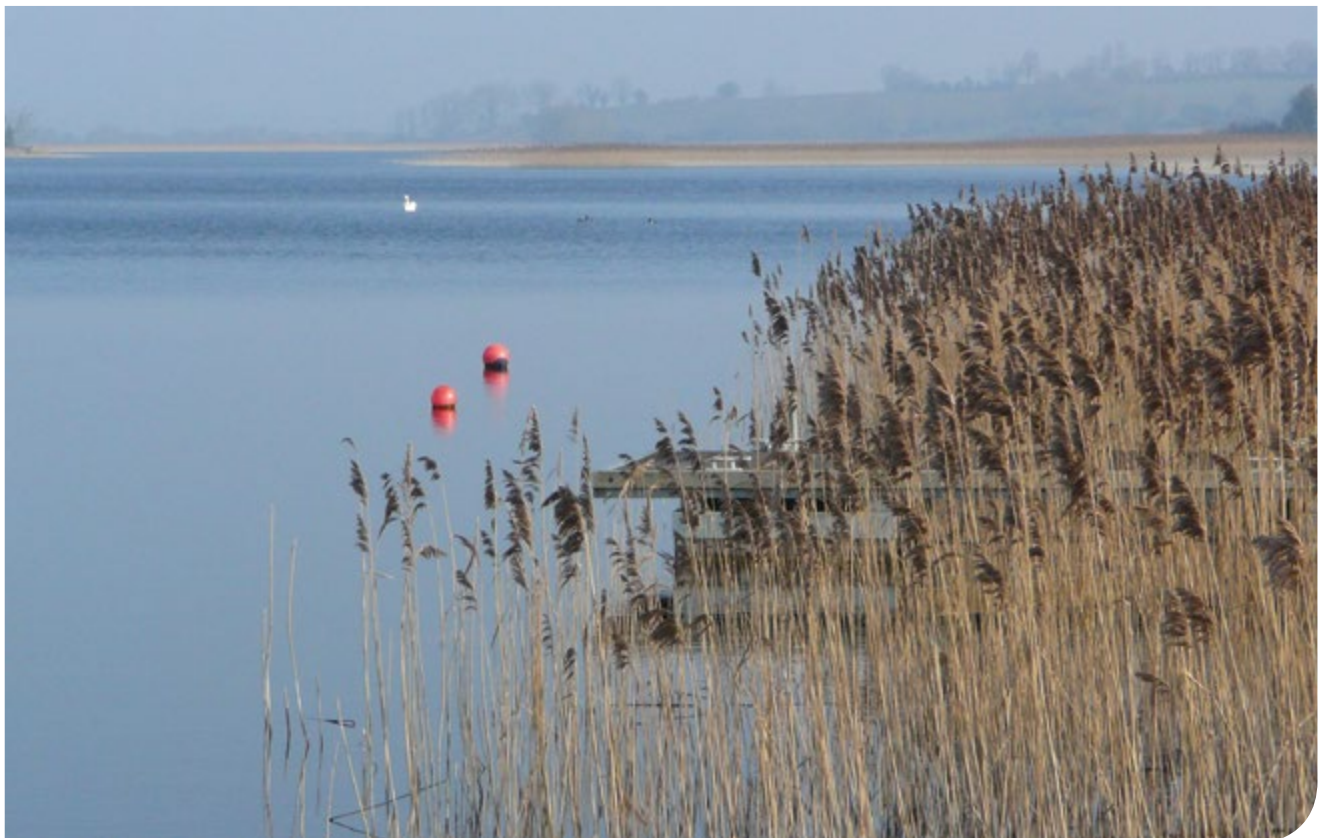
23% refer to guide books for planning information.

25% book through a guide book.

13% refer to a travel agent for planning information.

12% book through a travel agent.

The significance of a good website and the power of the web is demonstrated above.





The four phases to a holiday experience

(All influence a return visit)

1. Preparation, planning & gathering the information about the holiday
2. Travel to destination
3. Holiday experience itself
4. Recollection - what do the memories from all four phases tell us?

(Recollections whether positive or negative at one phase affect all the other phases).



Section 5.4 Knowing the tourism system and how it works

*There are two main bodies responsible for tourism in Ireland.
They provide the linkages to the marketplace.*

Fáilte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland's principal functions are:

1. Development of quality tourism products
2. Domestic tourism marketing
3. Accountability for tourism standards
4. Responsibility for enterprise support
5. Responsibility for capability building and human resource development for the tourism industry
6. Responsibility for initiatives which connect providers with the market place e.g. Meitheal.

www.failteireland.ie

Regional offices with Head Office in Dublin

Tourism Ireland Limited (TIL)

The main role of TIL is to grow overseas markets, generate revenue & visitor numbers.

TIL's main functions are:

1. Provision of promotional opportunities overseas
2. Responsibility for overseas publicity
3. Work closely with the travel trade and air and sea carriers
4. Share market knowledge and insights.

[www.tourismireland.com/
industryopportunities](http://www.tourismireland.com/industryopportunities)

TIL offices are in Colraige and Dublin

TRAVEL TRADE

- **Sea & air carriers**
- **Tour operators, travel agents**
- **Information and booking organisations**

PRIVATE SECTOR BODIES, ASSOCIATIONS & INDIVIDUALS

Individual providers; ITIC Irish Tourist Industry Confederation; B&B Ireland; Irish Self-Catering Federation; Caravan & Camping Council; Restaurants Association Independent Holiday Hostels; Walking Routes Ireland; Inland Fisheries Ireland; Hidden Ireland and others.

Section 5.5 Partnership and collaboration are essential if rural areas are to benefit

Many communities in rural Ireland are a microcosm of Ireland itself. Fáilte Ireland research findings show that the main motivator for tourists coming to Ireland in the first place is our scenic landscape. The mountains, lakes, rivers, architectural heritage, distinct culture, agricultural traditions, and striking geological features, are what symbolise the difference and authenticity of rural areas. Rural areas provide a counter balance to the fast growing urban tourism growth happening in places like

Dublin. Exciting initiatives like The Wild Atlantic Way, The Blue Way and similar projects provide the foundation for rural communities to work together to attract tourists to their locality. It is only with partnership, collaboration and unified thinking that rural communities can provide that special appeal and avail of the benefits that tourism can bring to a rural area. This also allows for the critical mass of products needed to create a destination rather than a stop-off.

What's needed for success?

- A committed group which includes community activists, tourism interests, e.g. accommodation, activity, and other tourism providers
- A workshop to clarify expectations of the group
- Seminars/workshops on groups work/ leadership, it will help your group but may be of interest to others groups in the community also
- Visit successful community initiatives in rural tourism
- Brainstorm on the outcomes of your visit and record learnings
- Link with and involve educational institutions who have programmes on tourism, hospitality, heritage where students may need to undertake research projects
- Do a resource audit of what your area has to offer in order to achieve the critical mass needed for a destination
- Evaluate the audit and set priorities for development and marketing
- Draw up a strategic plan
- Link with development and funding agencies e.g. Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), Rural Social Schemes, Solas, Teagasc, Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and all agencies that can further your plans. (they will vary from time to time)
- Link with tourism agencies regarding commitment and support with branding, promotion, marketing
- Run short courses/workshops on areas of interest - heritage, marketing, IT, applying for funding, developing a web-site, compiling publicity materials; it will attract others to become involved and create interest in the community
- Link with other groups; vintners, drama groups, craft providers, Macra, GAA and get them on board.

In a nutshell - what is required?

- A committed group that includes tourism interests
- A critical mass of product (stop-off versus destination)
- Group development training and ongoing educational workshops
- A strategic plan
- Focused development and marketing
- Buy-in from significant agencies.

Establishing a Rural Tourism network

**Complete a Resource Audit of your locality:
Find out by completing below if the opportunities exist in your area.**

Checklist 12

The 5 As

Amenities	Access to facilities	Accommodation Identify each one	Available services List and name	Activities List and name
<i>Put names on your amenities</i>	<i>Activities without access / facilities don't exist</i>	<i>What is your Bed-night capacity within a 30 km radius?</i>	<i>Be honest - do you have available services?</i>	<i>Are your activities accessible or is it like an obstacle course to get to them?</i>
mountains	airport	hotels	restaurants	walking
	ferry	B&Bs	craft shops	cycling
	trains	guesthouses	banking facilities	mountaineering
lakes	busses	self-catering	hiring - bikes, boats	skiing
	car hire	hostels	kennels	golf
	taxi services	holiday camps	crèche	festival events
forests	golf clubs	caravan & camping	laundry services	cultural events
	tennis clubs		wi-fi	pubs
	agricultural shows		broadband	art & painting
bogs	walking routes		travel agents services	pony trekking
	archaeological sites		garage	angling
	angling			heritage
cliffs	open farms			concerts
	stately homes			drama
	castles			bird-watching
caves	cycling routes			turf-cutting
	nature trails			pot holing
geological				clay-pigeon shooting
				traditional games hurling & football

1. Ballyhoura Development - The building of a World Class Recreation Infrastructure

Ballyhoura Development Ltd., is the rural development company operating in east Limerick and north Cork in south west Ireland. The company identified quality infrastructure for recreation across the rural countryside as a key strategy for economic and social development.



Since 1989 the company has worked in partnership with local landowners, communities and agencies to develop a range of recreational infrastructures. The Ballyhoura Way, a long distance walking route of 90 km, has been successfully followed by the development of a broad range of short way-marked walking loops, fell running, orienteering courses, nature walks, equestrian trails and 4x4 trails.

Trail Development Strategy

Initial studies to identify opportunities within the area identified the main block of the Ballyhoura Mountains as having world-class potential for outdoor recreation. In 2003 an integrated Tourism Cluster Study for Ballyhoura led to the development of the Ballyhoura Recreation Initiative. Mountain Biking was identified as a key product to attract increased visits and generate economic, environmental and social benefits for residents.

Since 2004, a partnership animated by Ballyhoura Development with Coillte, Ballyhoura Fáilte, Cork and Limerick Co. Co, Shannon Development and Fáilte Ireland has designed and built a world class mountain bike trail (MBT) centre in Ballyhoura Forest. The centre offers 97 kilometres of mountain-biking trails serviced by car-parking, toilets, showers

and bike wash facilities. A total of 1.3 million was invested in the initial infrastructure development.

International Learning

The mountain bike trails development in the Ballyhoura Forest was the first such development in Ireland. The initial feasibility for the project led the partners from Ireland to learn from the Welsh experience in trail design and construction and how communities adapted to servicing visitors to the trails. This provided an in-depth understanding of the opportunities and challenges in approaching mountain bike design and opening up working forests for such activity.

Upon completion of the trail development, a number of local entrepreneurs visited Scotland to experience service delivery to the MBT market. The learning has resulted in a bike hire and guiding business being set up and a number of entrepreneurs exploring the associated opportunities.

Ongoing Marketing and Support

Ballyhoura Fáilte, the rural tourism group promoting the area, with the support of Ballyhoura Development and Fáilte Ireland, continue to develop, promote and attract events to the trails. Community engagement has also been central to the success of the trail with newly established mountain bike clubs, newly opened mountain bike sale, rental and tutor businesses and accredited educational courses all combining to create innovative events and increase visitor numbers.

In 2011 the Single Speed World Championships attracted 650 people from overseas investing an estimated 1.5 million euros in direct and indirect spend to the Irish economy. In 2013 the Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trails attracted in excess of 50,000 visitors. These visitors deliver economic impacts across a variety of local services and facilities through visitor spend on the events and festivals arising as a direct result of the trail investment and related targeted promotion.

The economic and social impact of the trails is continuing to develop, offering year round opportunities for growth to existing and new businesses across the rural area.

2. Fairymount Farm Ballingary, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary

In 1990, John and Linda Kenny addressed the question of generating a viable income for themselves and (in the longer term) for their children on their farm. Their farm has a variety of enterprises including sheep, horses and forestry.

Their first venture - Tourist accommodation



Their first venture in rural tourism was the development of an apartment attached to their farmhouse for self-catering holidays. From this endeavour they discovered that visitors came in numbers and loved their farm, the beautiful views and the peace and tranquillity. Since these early beginnings, the Kenny's have developed every aspect of the farm and exploited its tourism potential to the full. They now have two self-catering units, a bungalow that can take up to seven people and a cottage that will take up to six visitors. "We entertain many of our guests in our own kitchen and, as far as possible we included people in the life of the farm", says Linda. They took pride in showing visitors the various aspects of the farm. "For instance our guests can watch horses being broken, shod and trained. They can also watch us round up the horses on horseback and tend to the flock of ewes and are free to walk through the broadleaf forest".

Walking routes

The Kenny's have developed three marked trails on their farm, which incorporate the amazing views and heritage features on the farm, namely a 5.5 mile Heritage Walk, a 1 mile Hill Walk and a 2 mile Lake Walk. On arrival, walkers can avail of an illustrated booklet with maps and explanations of the various points of interest. Building the walks was not an easy task and support from Tipperary LEADER helped. These facilities are available to individuals and groups and school tours can book in advance and avail of the facilities.

Bike Park Ireland

"In the last few years we have handed down the bulk of the farm to our son Graham and together with his wife Sandi and ourselves we have started

up a major venture Bike Park Ireland – downhill mountain biking". They left nothing to chance here and engaged a professional biker, designer and trail builder to evaluate the site, design, and develop and build the Bike Park. "We put a business plan together and presented it to LEADER who gave us marvellous backing. We now have a very viable business going which includes a fleet of 40 downhill bikes, a café, (the Mucky Boots Café), two army trucks and bike trailers which carry sixty bikers and their bikes up the hill."

Basic camping is also available on-site for cyclists availing of Bike Park Ireland trails.

What are the key elements of their success?

John and Linda, Graham and Sandi are very aware of the hard work involved in a tourism venture combined with a working farm and emphasise that they are constantly looking for new ideas and agree that this does not come easily. They started small with one self-catering unit and with intensive observation of what the customers wanted, researching potential ideas, getting expert advice and support and of course, good business planning, they have arrived at where they are today with a viable farm and tourism and biking venture capable of supporting two families. They also provide employment for full-time and part-time staff.

The Kenny's have won many awards for quality and are fulsome in their praise of LEADER and Shannon Development (now Fáilte Ireland) "The support and the confidence they gave us were as important as the grant-aid," says John. Equally important for the business is the internet. Using the internet is like catching your customers in your own web," says Linda. The personal touch has always been part of the Kenny's Unique Selling Point and together with their friendly staff, every aspect of their experience is made as enjoyable as possible for them. Planning ahead, the Kenny's have a clear vision of what they want. "We want to continue to be professional in what we do and this means having an operation we can control," says John. "We want to integrate the tourism and the farm more and more and we look forward to handing it over to the next generations in good shape. There is a lot of work but we see it as the future for Fairymount Farm"

www.fairymountfarm.com/ Bike Parks Ireland
www.youtube.com James Mc Loughlin

3. Cavan Canoe Centre

Sean Thornton, Dry stock farmer, Co. Cavan

Cavan Canoeing was established in 2007 from humble beginnings by Sean Thornton a dry stock farmer located on the shores of Lough Oughter in Co. Cavan.

He is a native of the area and is a third generation farmer. Sean has been a dry-stock farmer since he started farming at the age of 16. His farming career started with farming 75 acres and over the past 20 years he has developed the farm to in excess of 175 acres, both owned and rented. The farming enterprise consists of a suckler herd of approx. 50 cows and followers with heifers finished to beef, and male cattle sold on at one and half years old. Sean attended the Teagasc run Ballyhaise Agricultural College and received a Certificate in Agriculture. In addition in recent years he attended a Certificate in Horse Breeding course again organized and accredited by Teagasc at Ballyhaise.

The Project

From his farm he operates a centre dedicated to canoeing and kayaking related activities in County Cavan. Cavan Canoeing is located at the gateway to Inishmore Island, Butlers Bridge Co. Cavan and so is perfectly situated in the heart of the county's lakelands. As well as this, Cavan Canoeing offer guided and unguided tours, Kayaking experience, family activities, school tours, summer camps, learning courses and more. Sean identified the unique opportunity to explore the area's waterways, landscape and history as a key strategy for tourism and income development. Tours can be booked to travel by water to the nearby Killykeen forest Park and also Lough Oughter Castle from his centre.

Product development

Due to the somewhat unique location of the farm surrounded by water, the Thornton Family had been involved in provision of services to tourists for the past 20 years, providing accommodation, access to water ways across their lands and guidance and advice to fishermen and tourists to the area. The majority of this work was carried out with no financial gain. There had always been a close association with the waterways and their protection. The promoter has had a keen interest



in water sports, open boating and cruising and fishing all of his life and in 2002 he was chosen as Commodore for the 2002 Erne Boat Rally. The promoter has his own cruiser and is an active member of the Inlands Waterways Association. The promoter and other family members/friends undertook training to acquire skills to become qualified Kayak and Canoe guides and the business was established with grant support from the local LEADER company who assisted in the purchase of equipment and safety gear and the conversion of old farm buildings in to Canoe Centre and changing rooms.

Future plans

New walkways and nature trails on the farm along with accommodation, will add a new dimension and additional income stream to this family-run rural tourism enterprise.

For more information contact Sean at www.cavancanoeing.com

Bodies, Agencies, Associations and Organisations with links to Rural Tourism

Accommodation related

1. www.failteireland.ie Fáilte Ireland
2. www.southwestern.ie approvals body
3. www.bandbireland.com bed & breakfast association
4. www.independenthostelsireland.com hostel association
5. www.selfcatering-ireland.com self-catering
6. www.discoverireland.ie/Failte_Ireland
7. www.hiddenireland.com historic private houses
8. www.irelands-blue-book.ie special accommodation and restaurants
9. www.camping-ireland.ie/Caravan and camping council
10. www.irishlandmark.com/special_accommodation
11. www.tourismireland.com national tourism body
12. www.dttas.ie/tourism Dept. transport tourism and sport
13. www.itic.ie Irish tourist industry confederation
14. www.igs.ie/ Irish Georgian society

Activity linked websites

1. www.irishtrails.ie walking
2. www.leaveonotraceireland.org leave no trace - keep Ireland beautiful
3. www.coillteoutdoors.ie/activities-feature Coillte activities
4. www.irishsportsCouncil.ie walking cycling
5. www.discoverireland.ie Fáilte Ireland
6. www.iwt.ie/ Irish Wildlife Trust
7. www.birdwatchireland.ie Ireland's birds
8. www.fisheriesireland.ie fishing and angling
9. www.canoe.ie canoeing and kayaking
10. www.dttas.ie/tourism Dept. Transport, Tourism and Sport
11. www.cyclingireland.ie cycling
12. www.garden.ie gardens to visit
13. www.archaeology.ie national monuments service
14. www.irishgenealogy.ie genealogical searches
15. www.artscouncil.ie arts in Ireland
16. www.npws.ie national parks and wildlife
17. www.heritageCouncil.ie 28 local authority heritage officers employed by Co. Councils
18. www.hea.ie health and safety authority
19. www.bordbia.ie farmersmarket list of farmers markets
20. www.irishrail.ie rail transport/ timetables
21. www.gaa.ie GAA local games

Marketing

1. www.failteireland.ie International trade shows, events calendars, Meitheal buyers manual, research
2. www.bandbireland.com Bed & Breakfast Association
3. www.independenthostelsireland.com hostel association
4. www.selfcatering-ireland.com self-catering
5. www.discoverireland.ie/ Fáilte Ireland
6. www.hiddenireland.com historic private houses
7. www.irelands-blue-book.ie specialist houses and restaurants
8. www.camping-ireland.ie/ Caravan and camping council
9. www.irishlandmark.com/ castles, townhouses and lighthouses and restoration
10. www.rai.ie restaurants Association of Ireland

Funding, Training and Supports

1. www.localenterprise.ie mentoring, support, funding for certain aspect of development
2. www.pobal.ie funding under the LEADER initiative
3. www.Failteireland.ie funding and training
4. www.ahg.gov.ie Dept. of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
5. www.buildingsofireland.ie inventory of heritage
6. www.hse.ie/eng/services Environmental Health Officer contacts
7. www.heritagecouncil.ie 28 local authority Heritage Officers employed by Local Authorities
8. www.farma.org.uk/ National organisation for farmers who have diversified in UK with a focus on food
9. www.greensod.ie biodiversity
10. www.solas.ie social employment schemes
11. www.etbi.ie Education and Training Boards night classes
12. www.teagasc.ie/ruraldev farmer support and diversification
13. www.irishlandmark.com/ castles, townhouses, lighthouses and restoration
14. Universities and Regional technical colleges with Tourism/hospitality/heritage faculties, can be accessed for resources for education and research

Contributors

The following have contributed either case studies or pictures for this publication. The authors would like to acknowledge their contributions but do not endorse their products or services.

Fáilte Ireland www.Failteireland.ie

Pods at Nagles Seaside Park, Doolin www.camping-ireland.ie

Allen McAdam, MCA Consulting - www.mcaconsulting.ie

Lochness Glamping www.bcclochnessglamping.co.uk/hobbit_houses.html

Giltraps Townhouse and Glamping accommodation www.visitkinnitty.com

Portsalon Luxury Camping www.portsalonluxurycamping.com

Shannon River Adventures www.shannonriveradventure.com

Ballyhoura Development Ltd. www.ballyhouradevelopment.com

Clare Local Development Company www.cldc.ie

John & Linda Kenny - Fairymount Farm www.fairymountfarm.com

Notes



MAP & ROUTE MILEAGE PLANNER

Roads in Ireland range from modern motorways to narrow country lanes, and driving in Ireland can be a magical experience, with scenic treasures around every corner.



- Motorway
- Primary road
- Secondary road
- Mainline Train
- Ferry
- Airport
- Tourist Information (Year round)
- Tourist Information (Seasonal)
- Beach

0 20 40 60 80km
 0 10 20 30 40 50miles

Whilst every care has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this map, Tourism Ireland cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions. Due to the small scale of this map, not all holiday centres can be shown. The information on this map is correct at time of going to press. © 2015 Tourism Ireland. Map creation by Michael Schmeling, www.maps-and-roads.com | Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, CC BY-SA





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