

INFORMATION ON STOPS
ALONG THE WAY

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Introduction

In this booklet, we share a little bit about each of the stops that you be staying at throughout your trip. Depending on the number of days you are adventuring in the wagon will determine the stops that you will visit.

Keep in mind that most of the stops belong to local farmers; therefore may not be able to assist you straight away when you arrive. It also means that facilities vary from stop to stop. This booklet helps with understanding what facilities are available at each of the stops.

The idea of this kind of holiday is to get back to basics and strip the complexity of modern-day life. We hope you relax and enjoy your time in the countryside of county Laois.

Ballybrophy (home base)

Ballybrophy is a well-known railway junction connecting the Cork and Dublin railway lines. The station was opened around 1855 in the Tudor revival style.

The site you are staying in has, in fact, been an old coach inn and public house serving travellers using the Railway line and the main road passing by in the past before becoming a private residence and then abandoned in the early 2000s. In the present day, the house is being transformed back into a place for the public again with the opening of Making Tracks.

Within a short walk of the site, there are:

- Donaghmore Workhouse Museum
- Green Roads Inn (pub)
- Donaghmore Maltings & Mill

Ask for opening times at the Workhouse Museum and Green Roads Inn.

If you have time, it's worth wandering out to Donaghmore village. When you arrive, the most imposing building you see will be a large rubble stone building. This is the old malting house for the surrounding area & would have supplied Perry's Brewery with the malted barley for the production of their ale in Rathdowney.

This area would have been a hub for production in this part of Laois for much of the late 19th and early 20th century.



Onsite facilities

- Toilets are located around the back of the main building in a grey cabin.
- The shower is located inside the toilet cabin.

Offsite facilities nearby in Rathdowney are an 8-minute drive

- SuperValu supermarket Rathdowney
- Pharmacy
- Bank and ATM
- Takeaways that can deliver:
- Maska pizza + kebab phone: 050548737.
- New Bonanza phone: 050546608

Castletown (community centre)

The castle from which this town takes its name was built in the 13th century. It was taken by the Fitzpatrick family and burned to the ground in 1600 to prevent the English from seizing control of it. You can still visit the ruined foundations of the site of Fitzpatrick's Castle just across the river.

Behind the community hall are picnic benches and a small fenced-off area to place the horse. After settling in you should explore the village. In Castletown, you will find a village shop to stock up on supplies for the following days.

Just under the bridge, you will find benches next to the river Nore. If you like a swim, this river is safe to dip into (but may not be the warmest!)



Contact of the stop: Mary 0872283476

Onsite facilities

- Toilets and showers are located at the side of the building.
- Bins
- Picnic bench

Offsite facilities nearby

- Village shop
- The Castletown inn
- Gash Gardens is open by appointment if you call +353 87 273 7883.
- Mountrath Golf Club (serves food)

Phelan's Hostel

Marty Phelan's Traditional Hostel is located on a working farm where the principal enterprise is sheep, but there are also cattle and horses. It is a converted grain loft and stable constructed with limestone over 100 years ago. The building has been tastefully converted to a comfortable living.

While exploring the neighbouring countryside, you may spot falcons, field birds, foxes, and hares.

Dinner & breakfast is available at this stop on request.

If you want, you are welcome to assist them with the daily work on the farm.

This area is known for producing the best hurlers in Laois, winning the county's only All-Ireland Hurling trophy in 1915.

Also, worth noting is within a short walk towards Ballacolla, there is a fairy ring in a field to the left. You can usually tell these in Ireland by an untouched ring of trees in an otherwise cultivated field.



Contact of the stop: Katie Phelan 0879625195

Onsite facilities

- Toilets and showers are located around the right side of the hostel building.

Offsite

- Ballacolla is your nearest village (4.5km) with two pubs.

Ashbrook Arms Durrow (farm field)

Your stop for the night is a field located behind Ashbrook Arms. The building was originally one of the Bianconi coach houses built around the country where weary 18th-century travellers could rest on long journeys. It was purpose-built by Lord Ashbrook, proprietor of Durrow, in 1777.

Durrow town itself has been a place of inhabitants since the early bronze age, though today is one the larger towns in county Laois. Durrow Castles, now converted into a hotel, is well worth taking a walk around the gardens and admiring the 17th and 18th-century architecture.

Contact of the stop: Tomás Murphy 0863660372

Onsite facilities

- Toilets can be used in the Ashbrook's arms till around 7 pm, which is only a two-minute walk from your field.

Offsite facilities

- Toilets in Bob's Bar across the road till 11:30 can be used.
- O'Murchù's Bar (makes carvery dinners)
- Durrow inn pub
- Durrow Pharmacy
- ATM
- Bowe's food hall and café (ideal for lunch or a nice cup of coffee)
- Gala grocery shop
- Kenna Butchers (supplies local meet)
- Fifty-Seven Boutique and Gift Shop
- Post office
- Dunmore Wood 19-minute walk to the start point of loop walks.

Shirley (field)

This stop is located on a farm that has been in the family for four generations. From your journey so far, you probably have realised the sheer amount of farming done in county Laois. Over 72 % of land in Laois is used for agricultural purposes.

As well as farming, Shirley is a supplier of farm machinery and was the owner of one of the last thrashing machines in the county. This piece of farm equipment threshes grain, which means it removes the seeds from the stalks and husks by beating the plant to make the seeds fall out. These machines were replaced by the modern-day combined harvester.



Contact of the stop: William Shirley 0863821525

Onsite facilities

- Toilet facilities on-site

Offsite facilities (20-minute walk)

- Woodlands Farm shop and café
- Barbers
- Garden centre and gift shop
- Large petrol station shop and Supermac's
- Granstown Lake is a 38-minute walk to the start point of the loop walk.

Woodview Cottage (Tina's)

This stop is your last before returning to Ballybrophy, located at an old country cottage. This land and house were provided by the Irish government in the 1940s for struggling families. It would have been provided with 1 acre of grazing land, 1 acre of bog to cut peat, and the dwelling.

This is Catherine Hyland's family home, where she grew up and always had visitors. Hopefully, the legacy of the past can be continued through the hospitality of making Tracks.



Contact for this stop: Tina Hyland 0879476044

Onsite facilities

- A toilet and shower are provided within the house. Just ask Tina!

Offsite facilities

- Errill village (Dowling and Allen's Pubs) 3km
- Rathdowney (Golfclub, Pubs, Food, Shops) 4km

We appreciate your participation in this survey regarding your holiday once you have returned to Making Tracks. Your feedback will help us improve our offerings and ensure a memorable experience for future travellers. Please take a few moments to answer the following questions:

**1. What aspects of a horse-drawn wagon holiday interest you the most?
(Select all that apply)**

- Connection with nature
- Slow-paced travel
- A unique and nostalgic experience
- Bonding with animals
- Simplicity and minimalism
- Exploring off-the-beaten-path destinations
- Holiday in Ireland
- Other (please specify): _____

2. How did you find the instructions given on handling the horse and wagon?

- Perfect
- Good
- okay
- poor
- Very poor

3. Which of the destinations did you enjoy the most? Rate the stops from 1 to 6, with 1 being the best.

- Making tracks homebase _____
- Castletown _____
- Phelan's Hostel _____
- Ashbrook Arms Durrow _____
- Shirley _____
- Woodview Cottage (Tina's) _____

4. Did the wagon have everything you needed for your stay?

Yes

No. If No was selected, what was missing that you felt that was needed in the wagon?

5. How did you find the facilities at each of the stops? Rate each stops facilities from 1 being very poor to 10 being excellent.

- Making tracks homebase _____
- Castletown _____
- Phelan's Hostel _____
- Ashbrook Arms Durrow _____
- Shirley _____
- Woodview Cottage (Tina's) _____

6. Did you find there to be enough shops along the way to restock for food?

- Yes
- No

7. Did you have any issues with the horse?

- Yes. If yes was selected, what issues did you have?

- No

8. How likely are you to consider doing a horse-drawn wagon holiday in future?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Undecided
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! Your input is valuable to us in shaping the future of Making Tracks