



THE
FIRST
PLACE

WEAVE YOUR OWN STORY

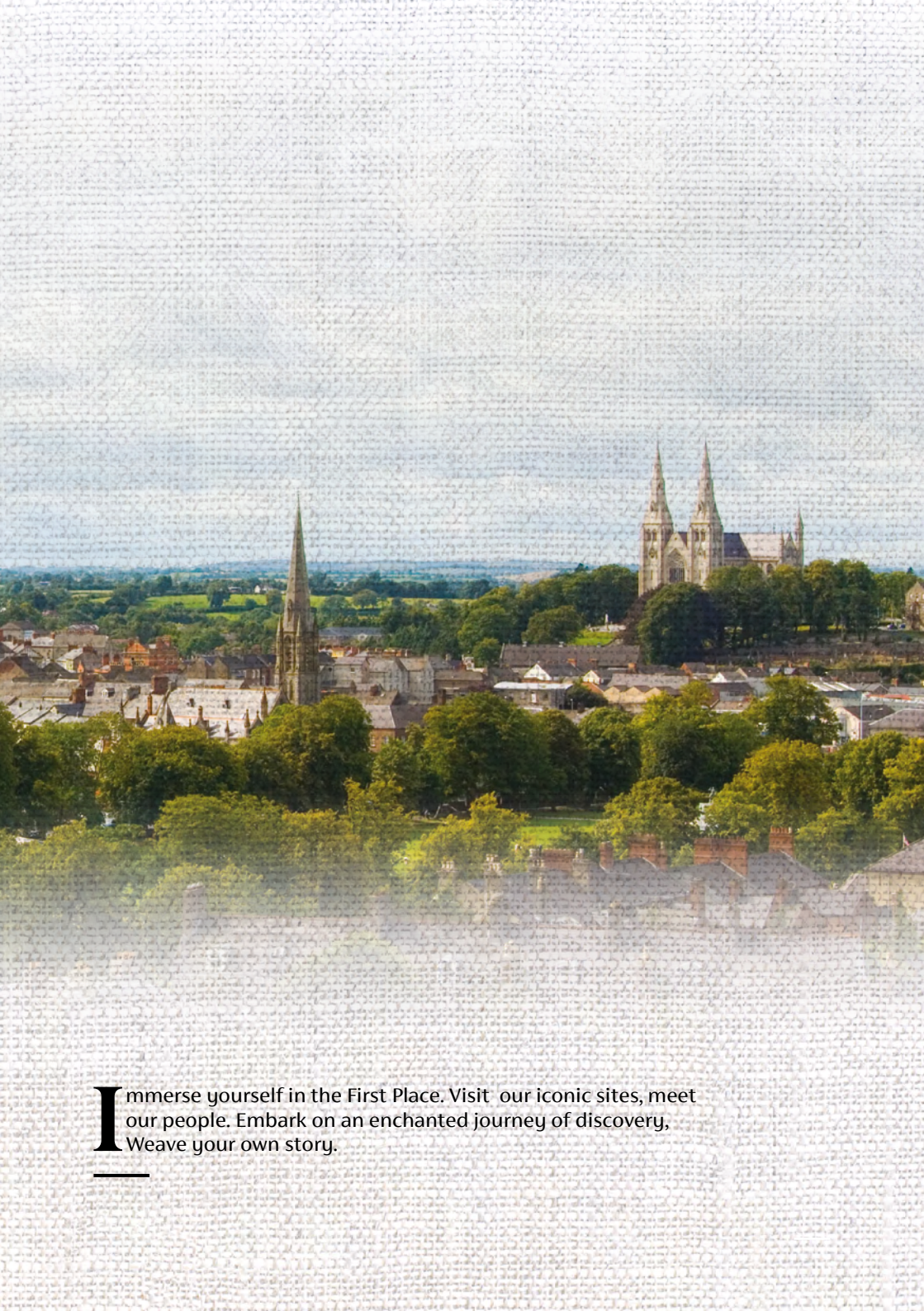
Tales, Trails & Tours

Visit Banbridge.com



Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon
Borough Council





Immerse yourself in the First Place. Visit our iconic sites, meet our people. Embark on an enchanted journey of discovery, Weave your own story.

WELCOME TO THE FIRST PLACE

This handy guide enables you to follow our story from one of Ireland's most ancient spiritual sites and St Patrick's founding of Armagh as the centre of Christianity through to its re-creation as a glorious Georgian city and its marvellous contemporary attractions.

En route you will encounter Celtic goddesses and legendary warriors, Ireland's most famous high king, two magnificent cathedrals and so much more.

**UNCOVER A RICH
CULTURAL SCENE, WITH
LITERARY FESTIVALS
AND WORKSHOPS,
ART EXHIBITIONS AND
TRAILS AND WONDERFUL
TRADITIONAL MUSIC.**

Tour around the beautiful orchard county, sampling handmade traditional cider and enjoy any


number of delicious artisan food experiences in this famous Food Heartland.

Journey to the stars at Northern Ireland's only Planetarium and enjoy all kinds of outdoor fun including trekking through beautiful nature reserves on the shores of Lough Neagh or ambling along an old canal.

Enjoy drama, arts and entertainment at The Market Place Theatre & Arts Centre and visit Aonach Mhacha, which celebrates local heritage, history and traditions of Armagh.

At the centre of Northern Ireland, the area is a superb driving base to all kinds of iconic locations, including the Walled City of Derry (1 hr, 45 minutes), the Giants Causeway (2 hours), the Haunted Forest in Game of Thrones (1 hour, 15 minutes), Titanic Belfast (1 hour) and the Seamus Heaney Homeplace (1 hour). It's also within an easy drive time to Dublin (1 hr 30 minutes).

THE HEART OF ANCIENT ULSTER



Take a journey through time, from one of the great ceremonial temples of ancient Ireland, through to the dawn of Irish Christianity.

Begin your journey just outside the city, at the Navan Centre and Fort. Navan Fort has been placed on Ireland's new Tentative List for World Heritage Site Status.

Taking its Irish name, Emain Macha, from the curse of a Celtic goddess, this was ancient Ulster's most important sacred site and was at the heart of the Ulster Cycle of Legends.

Discover the stories of King Conor MacNessa and his Red Branch Knights. Greatest among these was

the mighty Cuchulainn, who as Setanta was Ireland's most famous hunter.

Why not enter this world yourself? Living History experiences allow you to dress like a Celtic Warrior and learn the skills needed to survive in the Iron Age world.

The Navan Fort was situated on the ancient road that linked Tara, seat of the Irish High Kings, with Ulster.

St Patrick travelled on this road, no doubt attracted by the importance of the site, when he founded the nearby city of Armagh ('the height of Macha').

PALACE OF DREAMS



Nowhere is this more evident than the 300 acres of beautiful parkland that contains the delightful neo-classical **Archbishop's Palace**.

In the grounds themselves, are several historic buildings to explore too, including a holy well dedicated to St. Brigid and the ruins of a Franciscan friary.

It's not often we get the chance to follow in the footsteps of archbishops. But, when Archbishop Robinson fulfilled his ambition of building a glorious Georgian Armagh, he wanted everyone to share his vision.

THE PALACE WAS HOME TO SUCCESSIVE ARCHBISHOPS FOR OVER 200 YEARS TO 1975

Today Robinson's Palace hosts a magnificent exhibition by an

artist who has come to embody Armagh's culture and traditions, the internationally acclaimed JB (Brian) Vallely.

Growing up in the lovely countryside of County Armagh, Vallely himself is an accomplished musician who became 'besotted' by the pipes. He founded the **Armagh Pipers Club** in 1966 and helped create Armagh's famous **William Kennedy Piping Festival**. Hence the superb paintings of Irish pipers and fiddle players who seem to be actually in motion as they play.

Another famous son of the area was Tommy Makem, an internationally celebrated Irish folk musician, artist, poet and storyteller. The **Tommy Makem Arts and Community Centre** in Keady commemorates his life and times.

THE CENTRE OF IRISH CHRISTIANITY



St Patrick travelled to Armagh to build a stone church on Ard Macha 'the height of Macha', which gave Armagh its name.

ALONG THE SAME ANCIENT ROAD AS ST. PATRICK TRAVELLED, THE GREATEST OF IRISH HIGH KINGS, BRIAN BORU, CAME TO THE CHURCH IN 1004, TO MAKE AN OFFERING OF GOLD AT ITS ALTAR.

In doing so he recognised Armagh as the centre of Irish Christianity. A plaque records this event in the Cathedral grounds where he is buried, while a statue of Brian Boru can be found in the beautiful Cathedral gardens.

The church we see today on the site of St. Patrick's church of 445AD was designed by a 13th century Archbishop of Armagh Mael Padriagh

Ua Scannail. You can explore the atmospheric, ancient crypt he built, where Archbishop Robinson, creator of Georgian Armagh, is buried.

From St. Patrick's (Church of Ireland) Cathedral, you can glimpse the lofty spires of St. Patrick's (Roman Catholic) Cathedral. Based on the spot on Sandy Hill where St. Patrick saved the life of a fawn, this magnificent cathedral was built in several phases between 1840-1904 and is famous for its beautiful mosaic decorative stone. Tours are available of both cathedrals.

Just north of the Catholic cathedral you will find the Cardinal Tomas O'Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive, which holds internationally significant collections on all things Irish and church history.

Join Armagh Rhymers and the magical world of mumming on a pre-booked urban orchard tour which involves masks, music, merriment and mirth!

THE ARCHBISHOP ROBINSON TRAIL



When Richard Robinson became Archbishop of Armagh in 1765 he vowed to make a City worthy of being Ireland's Christian Capital. And so he did!

Wonder in the delightful grounds of the Bishop's Palace and Stables and from here wind up Sally Hill to the world famous St Patrick's (Church of Ireland) Cathedral, restored by Robinson.

From here nearby is No 5 Vicars' Hill, which he built to house church records and which now hosts all kinds of historical gems, like Roman and medieval coins, Neolithic stone tools, Bronze Age weapons and Irish hand bells.

'The healing place of the soul' reads the (Greek inscription) above the doorway of the Armagh Robinson Library, just around the corner.

Here, at Northern Ireland's oldest public library, you will find the Archbishop's priceless collection of books, as well as an original copy of 'Gulliver's Travels', with Jonathan Swift's handwritten notes in the margins.

Now down to the elegant Mall with space for walking and picnics and you will also find the Royal Irish Fusiliers Museum, Milford House and Armagh County Museum, whose collections capture the stories of Armagh people over the centuries.

Stroll along to nearby Armagh Observatory, which has been recording the weather continuously since 1795 and houses Ireland's oldest telescope. Explore the Astropark, a scale model of the universe, in its grounds and enjoy a dazzling journey through space at the adjacent Planetarium.



Explore the well stocked shelves at the Armagh Robinson Library and take a journey back in time.

Visit [Banbridge.com](https://www.banbridge.com)

THE GREAT HOUSES OF ORCHARD COUNTY



As you journey around the beautiful orchard county of Armagh, be sure to immerse yourself in the fascinating heritage of the area as you go.

Magnificent houses, historic cottages, fascinating museums and even a castle turned crisp factory await!

BEGIN YOUR ODYSSEY AT THE ARGORY, ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER BLACKWATER

Once home to the MacGeough Bond family, it hasn't changed since 1900. Walk its wooded riverside estate and enjoy delicious home baked treats at the Courtyard Coffee Shop.

Continue south to nearby Ardress House. This 17th century farmhouse, remodelled in Georgian times has fine collections of 18th century paintings and early Irish furniture and its own apple orchards.

Near the Battle of the Diamond site, visit the atmospheric Dan Winter's House & Dan Winter's Cottage & Ancestral Home both of which offer a unique insight into that period.

To learn more about the formation of the Orange Order, also visit Sloan's House, Loughgall. It was founded in this building and visitors can learn more about the institution and view a replica parlour scene giving a glimpse of life at that time.

Before leaving Loughgall, stroll the open farmland and orchards of tranquil Loughgall Country Park, once home to the Cope family.

Next on your journey is Elmfield Castle and Estate. Elmfield's focus is on wellbeing and offers various experiences that give visitors a chance to rest and recover from the stresses of daily life, while enjoying an immersion in the beautiful natural surrounds of the historic estate.

THE ORCHARD COUNTY



For a sumptuous exploration of Armagh's countryside, why not leave the historic gems of Armagh City behind you for a time and journey deep into the rolling drumlins of the 'orchard county'.

Travel in early May and it seems the entire countryside around places like Loughgall, Richhill and Kilmore is tinted with apple blossom, varying in hue from delicate pink to vibrant fuchsia.

IT IS SAID ARMAGH AND APPLES FIRST CAME TOGETHER WHEN ST. PATRICK HIMSELF PLANTED AN APPLE TREE AT CEANGOBA

While many traditional varieties of apple are grown, the apple which has dominated the thriving Armagh apple industry is the Bramley. So it's partly thanks to a Mr Nicholson back in 1884, that the Armagh Bramley has been awarded PGI (Protected Geographical

Indication) status. This is thanks to its special taste and composition, characteristics and long shelf life, unlike any other cooking apple in the world.

Our cideries are award winning, producing world-class ciders, vinegars and apple juices.

Both Armagh Cider Company & Long Meadow Cider offer pre-arranged groups the experience of a guided tour - walking through the orchards, learning and understanding about apple growing, viewing apple storage and cider production. You can even help with apple picking at harvest time! It's the perfect opportunity to explore the heritage and techniques of this traditional industry.

Or, why not consider a sumptuous dining experience at the Nicholson family home, Crannagael House...the place where it all began. Enjoy the Orchard Experience.

Journey at any time from May - September and be fascinated by the lush orchards, transforming from pink blossom to bountiful apple crop at harvest time.





F.E. MCWILLIAM GALLERY & STUDIO



It's conveniently located off the A1 at the entrance to Banbridge and hosts an award-winning restaurant, **Quails**, which specialises in delicious local produce.

One of the finest sculptors to emerge from the UK or Ireland, Frederick McWilliam was inspired by the landscape around him as he grew up in Banbridge. Later he made his way to England where he became a close friend of legendary sculptor Henry Moore.

FREDERICK MCWILLIAM WAS INSPIRED BY THE LANDSCAPE AROUND HIM

The gallery not only hosts McWilliam's own work - including the extraordinary 'Women of Belfast', a hugely powerful series of small bronzes that depict The Troubles but a rolling line-up of international artists and sculptors that changes four times a year.

Walk through the tranquil garden space, where you will find several McWilliam pieces. Explore his recreated studio and trace his remarkable artistic development through the years. The dimensions are exactly those of the studio he built in his London garden in the early 1950s and where he worked until shortly before his death in 1992. His work can also be found in the Museum of Modern Art, New York and Tate Britain in London.

Next door are many personal items that enable you to sense the presence of the sculptor as he worked - a pair of slippers, an overcoat, his set of tools, the cans of paint he used, even the original wood from which he carved his masterpieces.

In Banbridge town, pass by colourful street art on the way to view the Captain Crozier monument, commemorating his expedition to discover the North West Passage in the 1840's.



THE SCUTCHING MILL

Local farmers brought raw flax to **McConville's Scutching Mill**, just outside Dromore from the late 1800's until its closure in the 1950's. The mill remains in the same family today.

In the process of making linen, a pre-arranged visit will show how flax was scutched (isolating the fibres which will be spun into linen yarn) in both ancient and recent times. Then the mill's great water wheel is set in motion to power the rollers and scutching machines. Then the parts of the stalk are separated between two metal rollers and the chaff is removed on a turning wheel to leave the fibres ready for the next stage - spinning.

Ferguson's Irish Linen's in Banbridge makes luxury linen products, moving through all steps from design to packaging on site. The company is over 165 years old!




While in the area, take time to explore the charming town of **Dromore** and its lovely stone cathedral. In 510 AD


St Coleman built a "daub and wattle" church on this site, made of woven lattices or wooden strips, probably with a roof of reeds taken from the nearby River Lagan. A motte and bailey, built by John De Courcy after the Normans arrived in the 13th century, overlooks the town.

Now southwards down the A1 back to Banbridge, making a visit to The Boulevard, the premier outlet shopping destination in N.Ireland. Travel south again and enjoy the lovely drive towards Rathfriland. Patrick Brontë, father of the famous Brontë sisters - Charlotte, Emily and Anne - was born in the area in 1777.


Take a well signposted tour of the **Brontë Homeland**, which starts at **Drumballyrone Church and School**. Follow the story of the family through the buildings which survive in the area like Alice McClory's cottage, Patrick's mother's childhood home, Glascar School, where he taught in the 1790s, and his birthplace at Emdale.

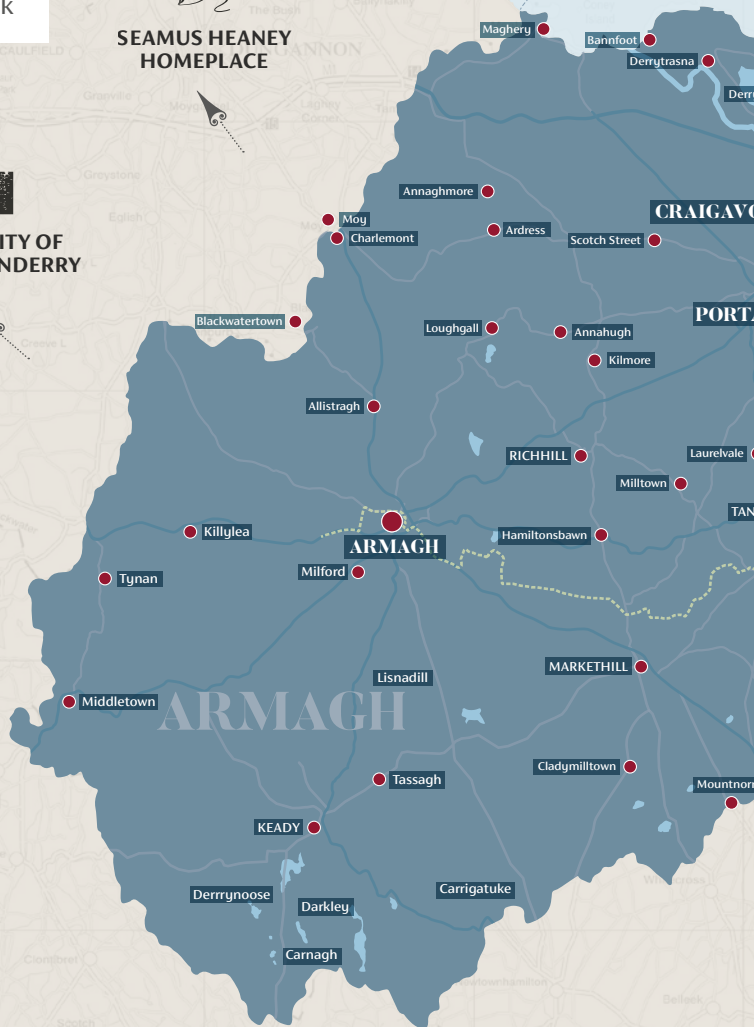
KEY

-  A Roads
-  B Roads
-  Rivers
-  St. Patrick's Way:
The Pilgrim's Walk

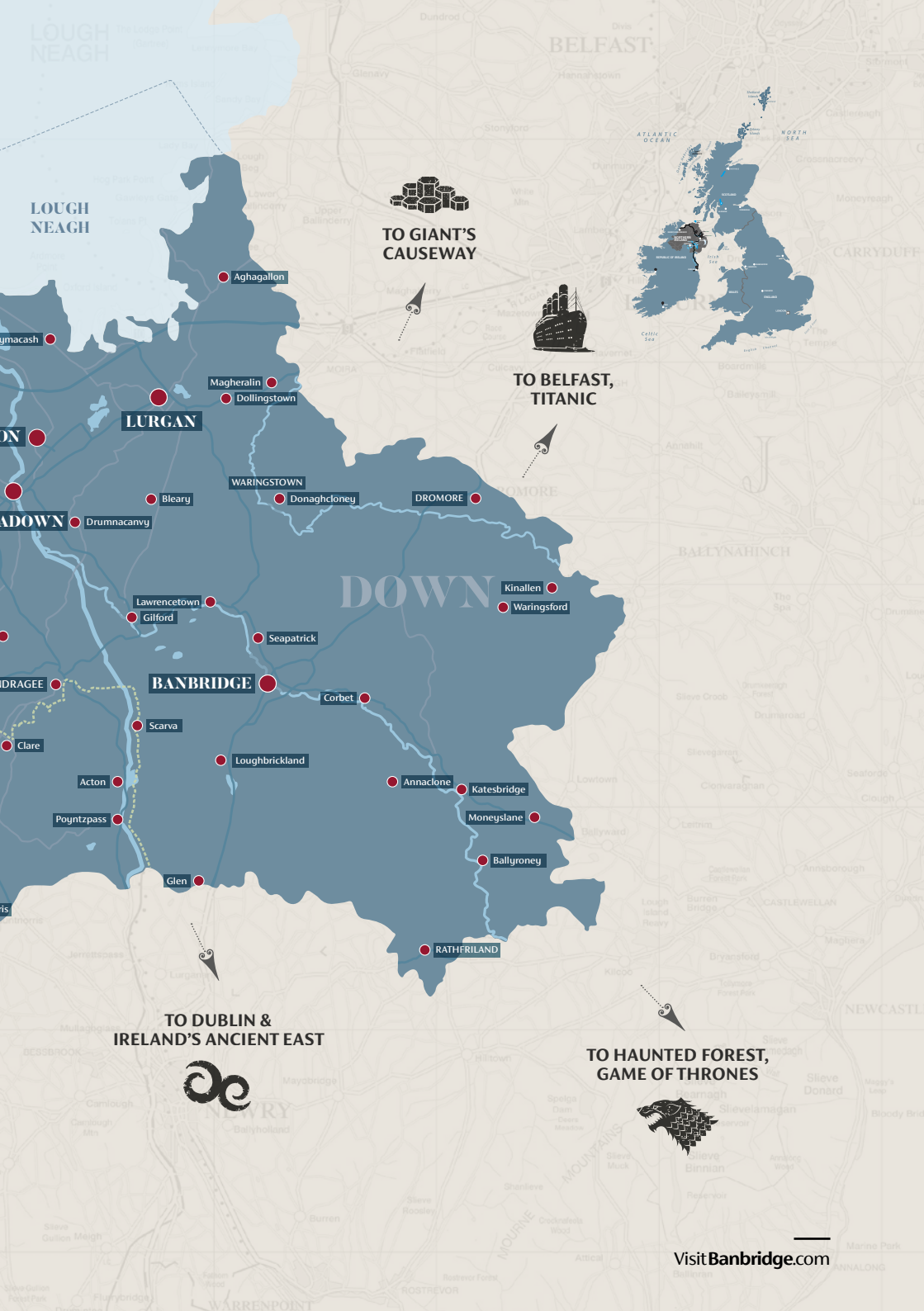

**SEAMUS HEANEY
HOMEPLACE**


**TO WALLED CITY OF
DERRY/LONDONDERRY**


**TO WILD
ATLANTIC WAY**



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LOUGH
NEAGH

LURGAN

BANBRIDGE

TO GIANT'S
CAUSEWAY

TO BELFAST,
TITANIC

TO DUBLIN &
IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST

TO HAUNTED FOREST,
GAME OF THRONES

Visit Banbridge.com

FOOD HEARTLAND



From the rolling drumlins of the orchard county to the shore of Lough Neagh, welcome to the Food Heartland.

The Food Heartland has been developed by the award-winning chefs and artisan food producers for which the area is now famous.

Here, where two of Northern Ireland's three PGI (Protected Geographical Indicator) - Armagh Bramley apples and Lough Neagh eels - are proudly celebrated, the region has now taken a leading role in the renaissance of Northern Ireland's food scene.

As well as the award-winning traditional cider makers and the growing popularity of smoked Lough Neagh eel (available in several local eateries), the area is famous for its bakeries, breads, potatoes and meat, including pork (Portadown was the centre of Ireland's pork industry).

At the wonderful leading restaurants which belong to the Food Heartland Group, as well as cafes and delis, you can savour tantalising dishes, old favourites with a local twist and new, made from home grown and locally sourced products. Vegetables freshly dug, herbs just picked from the garden, local honey, meat from locally reared livestock and fish fresh from the Atlantic Ocean abound.

Hearty breakfasts and sumptuous dinners are also part of our accommodation offer, whether it's friendly B+B's, Georgian guesthouses or fine hotels.

**WELCOME TO A
GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCE
YOU'LL NEVER FORGET.
WELCOME TO THE FOOD
HEARTLAND**

GAME OF THRONES STUDIO TOUR



Game of Thrones Studio Tour is an immersive family-friendly experience that invites you to go behind the camera to learn the show's secrets and admire the skills that combined to make one of the most successful TV series in history.

**IT IS THE ONLY OFFICIAL
GAME OF THRONES STUDIO
TOUR IN THE WORLD.**

Only at Game of Thrones Studio Tour can you walk through the authentic sets of King's Landing and the Great Hall of Winterfell and discover the role Northern Ireland played in hosting the hit HBO series during a decade of filming.

Visitors can get closer than ever to more than 140 costumes from the show, weapons, jewellery, and the prosthetics used to create the White Walkers, the Night King, and more.

You can even become a King's Guard or White Walker and try your hand at archery on interactive screens.

Game of Thrones Studio Tour is located at Linen Mill Studios in Banbridge - where much of Game of Thrones was filmed. The Studio Tour is located just 30-mins from Belfast and 90-mins from Dublin.



An epic adventure awaits at the world's
only official Game of Thrones Studio
Tour.



Visit [Banbridge.com](https://www.banbridge.com)



Immerse yourself in Armagh's rich Georgian heritage at Armagh Georgian Weekend held annually in November.

FESTIVALS & CELEBRATIONS

Festivals across the year bring together visitors and locals to celebrate the local heritage and culture.

Home of St Patrick Festival

The Home of Saint Patrick Festival celebrates the patron saint's historic and spiritual links to Armagh with a lively and varied showcase of cultural events, pageantry, music, song and dance.

Food & Cider Festival

Celebrating the famous Armagh Bramley, recognised with PGI status, the festival attracts food lovers to events throughout the county during September's harvest time.

Armagh's growing number of artisan food producers and award winning chefs are at the heart of the festival. Thanks to them you can enjoy mouth-watering menus devised by leading chefs, pop-up restaurants and afternoon teas in award-winning cider farms.

Georgian Festival

The Armagh Georgian Festival takes place on the last weekend of November and includes talks, tours and a magnificent Christmas market. It is a celebration of Armagh city's wonderful Georgian buildings, architecture, culture and traditions.

Armagh's Georgian streets buzz with visitors, evocative Georgian costumed figures and mouth-watering aromas of artisan food. A dramatic lightshow illuminates the Market House and heralds the beginning of the festive season.

Other local festivals include the John Hewitt Summer School, Charles Wood Summer School. The famous Uilleann pipe (inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity) tradition of the area is honoured at the William Kennedy Piping Festival each November.

Each September, the Orchard County welcomes visitors to the Armagh Food and Cider Weekend, a festival of carefully curated experiences with the best of local food and drink on offer.



ARMAGH

FOOD AND CIDER FESTIVAL



LURGAN TO PORTADOWN



Lurgan's finest building is unquestionably the magnificent Scottish sandstone **Brownlow House**. Commissioned in the Elizabethan style by Charles Brownlow, the first Lord Lurgan, its 350-acre demesne is now **Lurgan Park**, Northern Ireland's largest public park.

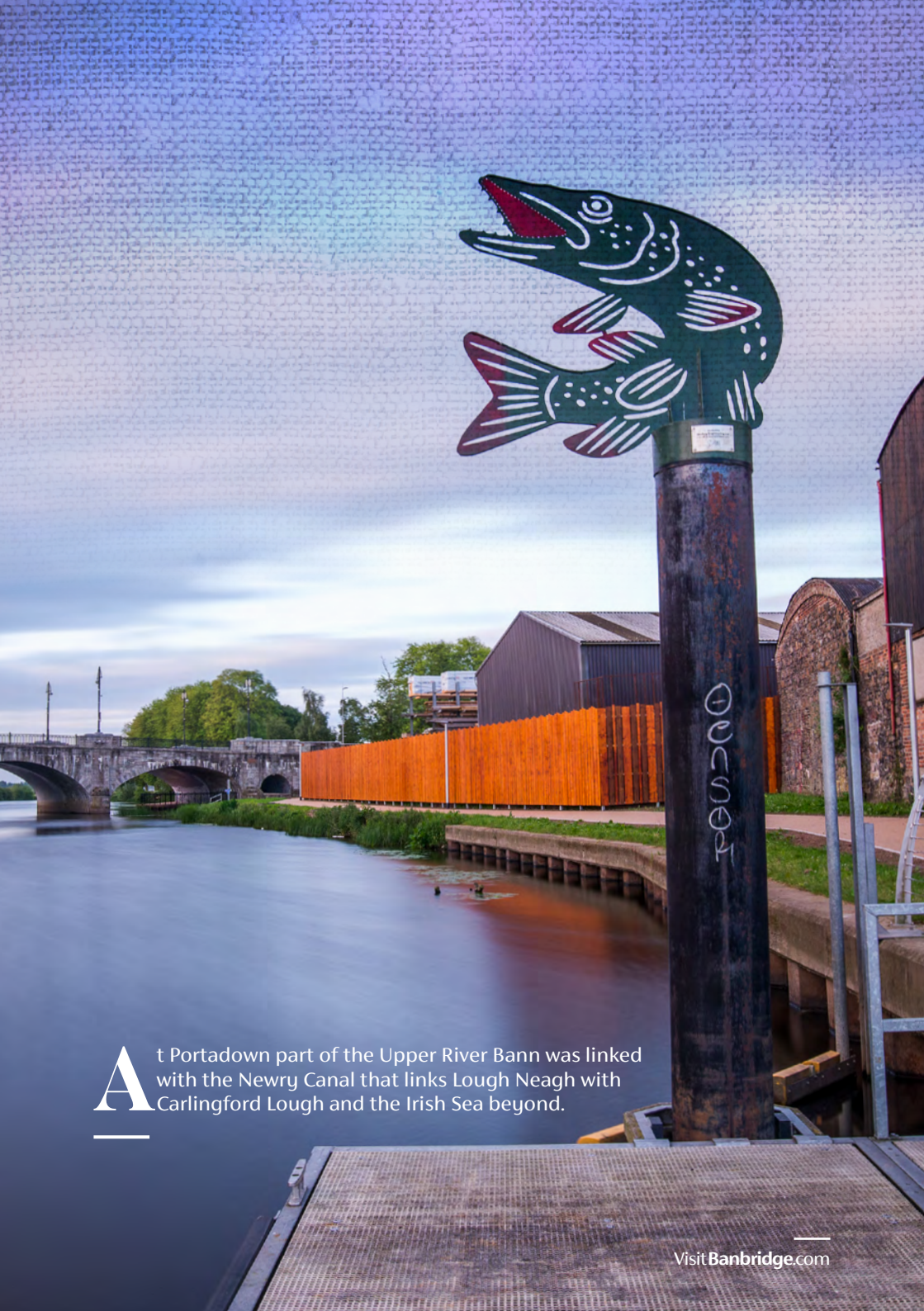
Tours start in the Octagon Room, where the marble panels were worked on by skilled craftsmen from Italy. In the adjacent library you will learn all about Master McGrath, a record-breaking greyhound owned by the second Lord Lurgan and so famous he was presented to Queen Victoria.

During the Second World War **Brownlow House** was the headquarters for US troops in Northern Ireland and you can visit the room where General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, stayed for two nights. An enthralling museum records the American wartime experience.

The traditional market town of Portadown is known for its independent shops and eateries offering local produce. To best appreciate the town's rich heritage join a **Portadown Town Heritage Tour**.

Explore the vibrant industrial town on the banks of the River Bann and follow the development of the town over 400 years with a tour led by Portadown Heritage Tours.

From the centre of Portadown, why not cycle or walk the twenty miles of tranquil countryside to Newry and explore locks and old lock keepers houses along the way, including **Money Penny's Lock**.




At Portadown part of the Upper River Bann was linked with the Newry Canal that links Lough Neagh with Carlingford Lough and the Irish Sea beyond.

TRAILS & WALKS



Why not follow the public art trail through **Armagh city centre**, discovering the secrets of historic venues you encounter? Easy to download guides can be obtained from visitarmagh.com. Be sure to look out for a copy of the historic Armagh trails from local buildings and learn more about the history and character of the city.

Learn more about the city through an organised walking tour. Uncover more hidden gems and interesting facts around every corner. During the summer, there is an organised programme of walking tours which take place Thursday - Sunday and give an introduction to the history of the city. Tickets can be purchased online  visitarmagh.com/walkingtours

**EXPLORE OUR HISTORIC
STREETSCAPES BY
ENGAGING WITH OUR
ARTWORKS**

'For the love of Emer' depicts Cuchulainn, the legendary Irish warrior, while the **'Saints and Scholars'** railings were inspired by St. Patrick. **'Market Days and Fair Days'** depicts the journey from country to market to city. These intricate pieces bring the city centre to life. On your way look out for 22 shy angels and gargoyles, whose eyes follow you from unlikely locations around the city centre.

Having explored the city's many connections to St. Patrick, you can explore further afield on a walking trail. The **Saint Patrick's Way: The Pilgrim's Walk** is an 82-mile trail connecting Armagh and Downpatrick, the two sites most closely related to St. Patrick. This walk is suitable for leisure or pilgrimages. A 92-mile driving version of the trail winds its way to places like Bangor, the Ards Peninsula, Downpatrick, Newry and Armagh, sites all with links to St. Patrick's life and legacy.



A NATURAL WONDERLAND


Oxford Island, this National Nature Reserve offers lots of trails and walks through shoreline, woods and flower rich meadows. Depending on the time of year you've a great chance of seeing a host of birds, such as whoopers, Brent geese, tufted duck, goldeneye and reed buntings.

Lough Neagh is also the source of another famous PGI status food. Its famous eels have been fished commercially for centuries. The prized catch of the local fishermen is largely exported to Europe but you can enjoy smoked local eel in several restaurants in this area.

From **Oxford Island**, head south-east to the **Craigavon Golf & Ski Centre**, just outside Lurgan, the only one of its kind in Northern Ireland, and spend a glorious time skiing down its 200ft slope (there's snowboarding, snow tubing and snowblading too).

Now make the short journey south to experience traditional country life at **Tannaghmore Gardens**. You can see rare traditional farm animals, like Irish Moiled Cattle and saddleback pigs and stroll around the lovely gardens that surround the Georgian farmhouse.


Enjoy a short retail stop at the enticing **Rushmere Shopping Centre** and then drive to **South Lake Leisure Centre** at Craigavon Lakes. Any number of activities are on offer here. Try indoor sports such as swimming and fitness classes and outdoor water based fun like banana boating, water-skiing, windsurfing, sailing or canoeing. There's also excellent cycle and walking routes around the lakes.



Still waters on Lough Neagh, home to the largest eel fishery in Europe. The eels hold PGI status.



For more information about all the places you can visit, where you can stay and events taking place across the destination see

 visitBanbridge.com



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