



48HRS IN ATHLONE (COUPLES)

Day 1: The art of Athlone...

Time	Activities & Attractions	Details
AM	<p>Ready to explore? A walking tour of Athlone makes an ideal way to start your stay in the urban capital of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. Begin by visiting historic Athlone Castle, built as a defence point along the Shannon in the 13th Century, while the town's iconic Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, known for its Baroque style and stained glass windows, is also well worth a visit. There are natural wonders too: wander the town's scenic 5km Shannon Trail which loops from Athlone Castle around the town's biodiversity-rich surrounds.</p>	<p>Athlone Castle Visitor Centre, Castle Street, Athlone Co. Westmeath, N37 EA32 e: info@athlonecastle.ie w: athlonecastle.ie t: 353 (0) 90 644 2130</p>
	<p>To fuel-up with a brunch to-go, pop into Bastion Kitchen for a jolt of their excellent gourmet coffee and artisan sandwiches (think delicious pork and chive baps).</p> <p> Duration: 2hrs</p>	<p>Bastion Kitchen, Bastion Street, Athlone Co. Westmeath, N37 A2N7 e: bastionkitchen@gmail.com w: bastionkitchenonline.ie t: 353 (0) 90 649 8369</p>
	<p>To really feel the ebb and flow of the Shannon, you need to get afloat! Athlone is one of the river's pleasure craft hubs with several outfitters like Lakeside Day Boat Hire offering handy half-day rentals from the Lakeside marina. No experience? No problem. Novices are welcome with full navigation training provided. Once you've skippered up, head west to Lough Ree where you can moor your boat at the Hodson Bay Hotel. Enjoy a delicious lunch here or anchor up alongside one of the lough's many islands for your own lakeside picnic!</p> <p> Duration: 4hrs</p>	<p>Lakeside Day Boat Hire Ballykeeran, Athlone, Co. Westmeath e: lakesidedayboathire@gmail.com w: lakesidedayboathire.ie t: +353 (0) 87 350 5250</p>

Time

Activities & Attractions

Details

PM

Back in Athlone, enjoy some art with a visit to the town's stellar Luan Gallery. Opened in 2012, the gallery offers one of Ireland's finest hauls of contemporary art, while its modernist design, framing the river Shannon, will also wow architecture buffs. Displays range from sculptures, textiles and art with resident collections and touring exhibitions to view. Don't forget to visit the gallery gift shop to pick up some souvenir Irish prints.

Luan Gallery,
Grace Road, Athlone,
Co. Westmeath, N37 TH22
e: info@luangallery.ie
w: luangallery.ie
t: 353 (0) 90 644 2154

 Duration: 1hr

Dinner

Come evening, head to Dead Centre Brewing; Athlone's vibey new craft brewery and taproom, right on the banks of the Shannon. As well as creating their own great house-brewed ales and IPAS, they offer great wine and gin menus while their artisan pizzas, topped with the likes of Horan's ham and local mozzarella make the perfect dinner pairing.

Dead Centre Brewing,
Custume Place, Athlone,
Co. Westmeath, N37 N1F2
e: info@deadcentrebrewing.com
w: deadcentrebrewing.com
t: 353 (0) 90 642 0883

For another dining option in the heart of town, local favourite The Fatted Calf offers a true taste of the Midlands with farm-fresh, locally sourced ingredients. Meat-lovers can relish dishes like treacle braised John Stone shortrib while vegetarian options like celeriac and cep mushroom risotto are just as mouth-watering.

The Fatted Calf,
Church St, Athlone,
Co. Westmeath, N37 P383
e: info@thefattedcalf.ie
w: thefattedcalf.ie
t: 353 (0) 90 643 3371

Fancy a night cap? Head to the legendary Sean Bar's on Main Street which lays claim to being Ireland's oldest bar, with a reported opening date of around 900AD.

Sean's Bar,
Main Street, Athlone,
Co. Westmeath, N37 DW76
e: info@seansbar.ie
w: seansbar.ie
t: 353 (0) 90 649 2358

 Duration: 3hrs

Stay

With its iconic twelve storey tower offering views right over the town, the Sheraton Athlone Hotel is the prime location to relax in Athlone - while still feeling like you're part of the action. If you can squeeze in some downtime, the hotel also features a luxury spa, fitness centre and 20m pool to unwind.

Sheraton Athlone Hotel
Gleeson Street, Athlone,
Co. Westmeath, N37 D953
e: info@sheratonathlonehotel.com
w: sheratonathlonehotel.com
t: 353 (0) 90 645 1000

Day 2: Lough Ree & historic wonders...

Time	Activities & Attractions	Details
AM	<p>Athlone's Shannon hinterland ripples with epic highlights and few could beat a morning road-trip to Clonmacnoise. The attraction is one of the best preserved monastic sites in Europe, featuring nine churches and two striking round towers, dramatically set along the river. Whether wandering the ruins or enjoying the interactive visitor centre, you'll truly feel like you've taken a step back in time.</p>	<p>Clonmacnoise, Shannonbridge, Co. Offaly, N37 V292 e: clonmacnoise@opw.ie w: heritageireland.ie t: 353 (0) 90 967 4195</p>
Lunch	<p>Just south of Clonmacnoise in the postcard village of Shannonbridge, Luker's Bar surely ranks as one of Ireland's most gorgeous pubs. A tale of two halves, the newer riverside restaurant offers panoramic views with a menu serving up favourites like local beef dishes & crumbed herbed scampi. On the village-side, the traditional pub which appears like a vision from <i>Vanishing Ireland</i> is where you can expect great Guinness and local lore on tap!</p> <p>Another great option for dining in Shannonbridge is Fallon's Bar. This friendly pub also features a top-notch outdoor organic kitchen with options including beer-battered hake and organic beef or vegan burgers. Don't forget to get a picture with the butterfly wings mural on the bar's gates – a popular Instagram attraction.</p>	<p>Luker's Bar, Main Street, Shannonbridge, Co. Offaly, N37 XK75 e: lukersbar@gmail.com w: lukersbar.com t: 353 (0) 90 967 4995</p> <p>Fallon's Bar, Raghra, Shannonbridge, Co. Offaly, N37 P6Y8 e: info@fallonsbar.ie w: fallonsbar.ie t: 353 (0) 87 850 6630</p>
PM	<p>Fancy some pampering? With its dreamy lakeside setting on Lough Ree, it's hard to beat the magic of a spa afternoon at Wineport Lodge. Their luxury <i>Voya</i> spa woos guests with an array of treatments; try a candle-lit couples bath with hand-harvested Atlantic seaweed and a glass of Prosecco. Afterwards, soak in those lakeside views in their bubbling outdoors hot-tubs. Bliss!</p>	<p>Wineport Lodge, Glasson, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, N37 R2D7 e: lodge@wineport.ie w: wineport.ie t: 353 (0) 90 6439 010</p>

Dinner & Stay

The original location from the popular TV show *The Restaurant*, Wineport Lodge also makes a fine destination to book a table for two. Either indulge in their recently refurbished dining-room or eat al fresco on Wineport's stunning terrace. Menu options include local assiette of pork to sustainable fish & chips and if you're tempted to make a night of it, Wineport Lodge is also one of Ireland's most trending accommodation options. All rooms come with king beds and floor to ceiling windows as standard, creating a luxury in-out flow to Lough Ree and beyond.

Don't forget that during the day, you can also avail of local water taxis who offer pick-ups from various points along the lake.

Insider tip...

Not far from Glasson, either by bicycle or car is Muckanagh Point, a wonderful bay to sit and soak in the peace and tranquillity that Lough Ree offers. There's nowhere nicer on a summer's day to take a break away 'far from the madding crowd'.

Ray Byrne, owner, Wineport Lodge

Three more to explore...

Looking for more inspiration? Consider adding these options into your Ireland's Hidden Heartlands itinerary.

1

Let somebody else do the steering by hopping aboard a replica Viking boat for a guided cruise on the River Shannon or Lough Ree.

Viking Tours,
Athlone Castle, The Quay,
Co. Westmeath, N37 V593
e: vikingmike@vikingtoursireland.ie
w: vikingtoursireland.ie
t: 353 (0) 86 262 1136

2

Ireland's first économuseum, this workspace-meets-gallery is where you'll find an artisan craft-maker creating unique designs from ancient bog oak.

Celtic Roots Studio,
Ballinacorney,
Co. Westmeath, N37 FC43
e: info@celticroots.ie
w: celticroots.ie
t: +353 (0) 87 259 4232

3

Fresh from its recent refurb, the Glasson Lakehouse makes a gorgeous stop for a round of golf, dinner, or overnight escape.

Glasson Lakehouse,
Killinure, Glasson,
Co. Westmeath, N37 HX45
e: info@glassongolfhotel.ie
w: glassonlakehouse.ie
t: 353 (0) 90 648 5120