

Westmeath Tourism Strategy 2021 to 2027

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

3: Athlone & Ireland's Hidden Heartlands

Destination Athlone

Athlone is an important Visitor Destination Town, providing the services and infrastructure needed to encourage visitors to stay in the wider region. This includes a range of accommodation, restaurants, cafés, visitor attractions and guided tours. Athlone is identified as a Regional Centre in the National Planning Framework and is named as a Tourism Hub Town in the [new Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon](#), due to its potential to provide year-round facilities of scale.

The town itself is known for a strong arts and culture scene and signature waterside attractions such as Athlone Castle and the Luan Gallery provide strong visitor experiences. High-quality local food is also renowned in this area, with a concentration of award-winning restaurants. A crossing point on the River Shannon, Athlone is a base for cruising, boat tours, angling and other water-based activities. Nearby villages, tourism assets and attractions include Ballinahown Craft Village, Dún na Sí Amenity and Heritage Park in Moate, Portlick Millennium Forest Walks and the picturesque village of Glasson.

Significant improvements have been made to the streetscape of Athlone in recent years and further public realm enhancements are underway, along with a comprehensive new signage and wayfinding scheme. In addition, the Dublin to Galway Cycleway is being developed through the town on its way westwards, with a new River Shannon crossing point being created in the coming year.

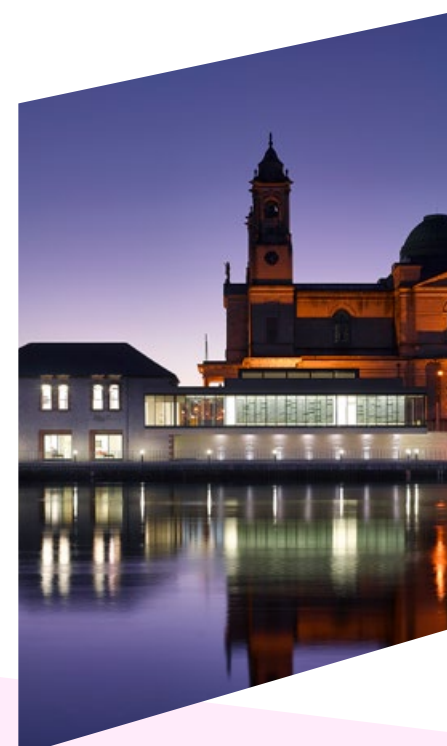
Ireland's Hidden Heartlands

Athlone and its hinterland adjacent to the River Shannon and Lough Ree are part of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, the newest experience brand from Fáilte Ireland. Visitors to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands are promised a slow-paced experience, immersed in the natural environment and culture of the region. Activities such as walking, cycling, boat tours, bird-watching, fishing and watersports are central to this theme, along with the chance for visitors to engage with local communities, their culture, crafts and local food.

Further details on Ireland's Hidden Heartlands can be found on the [Fáilte Ireland website](#) or get in touch for updates on marketing activities.

Working Together

It is essential that a co-ordinated and collaborative approach is taken involving relevant agencies, tourism businesses and communities. Destination Athlone are an industry-led working group which have made significant achievements in collective marketing to date. Further collaborative work will be essential to reach the full potential of this area in the future.



Suggested topics for you to consider

- How can we realise the potential of Athlone as an international tourism destination of excellence?
- What gaps or deficits exist in visitor service provision in Athlone?
- How can we encourage and facilitate visitors to stay in Athlone and the surrounding area for longer?
- How can we make better use of our tourism infrastructure and assets in order to maximise revenue generated from tourism?
- How can we reap the benefits of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands for the Athlone area as this new brand grows?
- What developments, initiatives or projects could be taken to ensure visitors to Athlone have an immersive, memorable and brilliant visitor experience? Who should undertake these initiatives and how?
- How can we expand the tourism season beyond the summer months?
- How can we encourage a stronger evening and night-time tourism economy?
- What undiscovered potential or niche tourism activities exist that should be explored further?
- How can we better connect visitors with our local stories, communities and culture?
- How can we bring forward the objectives of the Shannon Tourism Masterplan for this area?

How to have your Say

You can have your say by sending a submission via the [Public Consultation Portal](#), or by emailing tourism@westmeathcoco.ie.

