

carrickcraft



route planner

banagher

Starting at Banagher

Lower Shannon

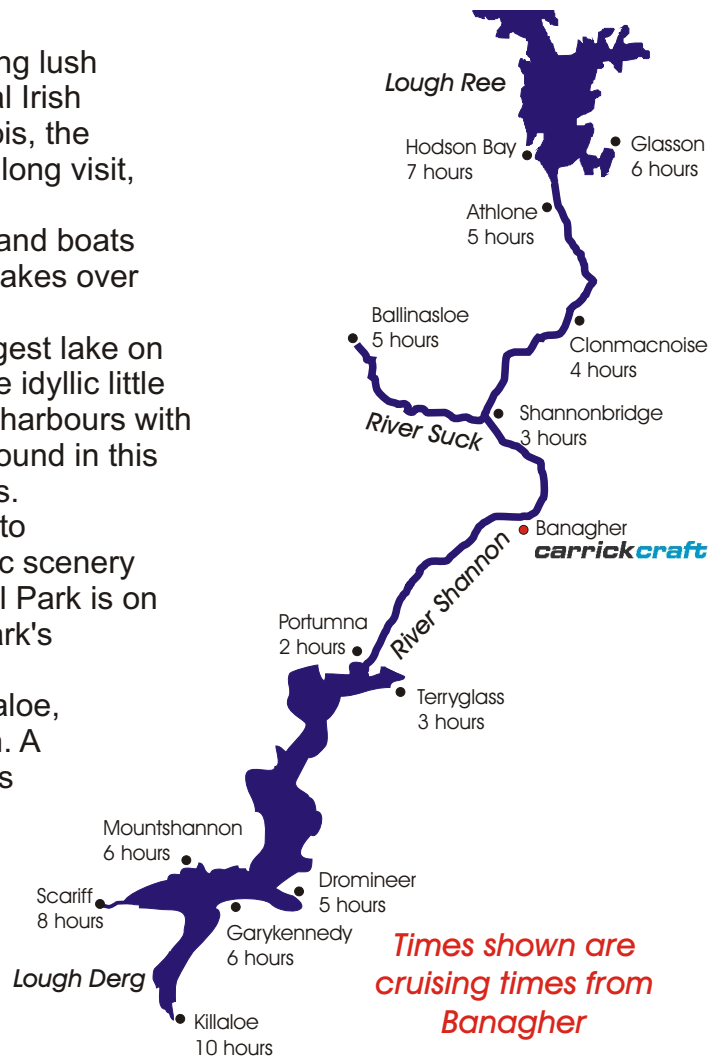
From Athlone, the Shannon lazily flows through undulating lush countryside that is steeped in history as well as real Irish character. The river slowly snakes past Clonmacnois, the ancient Christian capital of Ireland and worthy of a long visit, and finally to Banagher, our third marina station.

Life slows down along this stretch of the Shannon and boats begin to pass less frequently - the noise of nature takes over once more.

To the south looms the mighty Lough Derg, the largest lake on the waterway system. Lough Derg is famous for the idyllic little towns and villages that fringe its shores with small harbours with plenty of moorings. Good restaurants and pubs abound in this area and many a yarn can be overheard in the bars.

This is the place to go to "get away from it all" and to experience the peacefulness, the beautiful dramatic scenery and really good cruising waters. Portumna National Park is on the northern shore with its own harbour and the park's secluded nature trail is well worth a long visit.

Cruising south still further takes you straight to Killaloe, the most southerly navigable point on the Shannon. A warm welcome awaits cruising parties here and this pretty town's restaurants serve fine food and drink with customary Irish hospitality and humour.



Athlone

The largest town on the Shannon with all modern facilities including shops, supermarkets, banks, post office, pharmacy, hotels, leisure centres, theatres and many bars and restaurants. It has always been considered an important crossing point on the Shannon and is known as the Capital of the Midlands. The Tourist Information Centre is located in the Castle and you will find details here of 2 very interesting town trails - The Connaught Walk, 3km long and the Leinster Walk, 2 km long. Both walks start at the jetty and take you around the most interesting historic sites of the town.

Shopping

The location of Athlone in the centre of Ireland makes it a very busy shopping town attracting both locals and visitors. You'll find a good selection of Celtic crafts and souvenirs in the many gift shops and shopping centres. Athlone Town Centre is a large shopping mall and has many high street shops and department stores. For groceries, Golden Island shopping centre has a number of supermarkets as well as a multiscreen cinema. Athlone Farmers Market takes place on Saturdays from 10am to 3pm in the Market Square.

Visitor Attractions

[Athlone Castle and Visitor Centre](#)

Tel +353 (0)90 64 92912

This Norman Castle dominates the town centre and features exhibitions and audio visual presentations on the siege of Athlone, John Count McCormack, River Shannon wildlife and history with folk and military museums. Tearooms, gift shop and Tourist Information Office on location

[Derryglad Folk Museum](#)

Tel +353 (0)90 6488192

www.derrygladfolkmuseum.com

View a wide range of indoor and outdoor rural artifacts from farm and folk life in Ireland dating back to the 18th century.

carrickcraft

Glendeer Pet Farm

Tel +353 (0)90 64 37147

A 6 acre open farm with over 50 species of animals and birds. Also has a coffee shop and a large picnic and play area.

Leisure Activities

Athlone Regional Sports Centre Tel +353 (0)90 64 7097 www.athlonesportscentre.ie

This state of the art health, sports and fitness centre includes a 25m heated indoor swimming pool, a toddler's pool, separate family changing areas, jacuzzi, sauna and steam-rooms, children's outdoor playground and the recently developed outdoor skatepark. The Centre also has a coffee shop and crèche service.

Athlone Leisure World

Tel +353 (0)90 6494766

Featuring Kids Adventureland, Ten Pin Bowling, Quasar, Pool tables, video game simulators and a fully equipped leisure centre. A great alternative for a rainy day!

Multiplex Cinema

Tel +353 (0) 90 64 76655

Located at the Golden Island shopping centre.

Krazy Kids

Tel +353 (0)90 64 86882

Children's indoor play area with ball pools, climbing frames, slides and mazes - great fun for the under 12s. Separate section for under 5s.

Taxi

Athlone Cabs

Tel +353 (0)90 64 74400

Dial-a-Cab

Tel +353 (0)90 64 93030

Athlone City Cabs

Tel +353 (0)90 64 74888

Car Hire

Hertz Car Hire

Tel +353 (0)90 64 92325

Lower Shannon

Clonmacnois

Founded by St. Ciaran in 545 AD, Clonmacnois was one of the great monastic cities of early Europe. There are now a number of churches (10th to 13th century), 2 round towers, 3 high celtic crosses and stone temples. The long and varied history is recounted in an audio-visual presentation shown in the visitor centre. Guided tours of the site are available. The visitor centre also has a coffee shop, a gift shop and a tourist office.

Shannonbridge

Shannonbridge is the first stop north of Banagher, just where the River Suck meets the Shannon. The strategic location made it very important during the Napoleonic era and the fortifications can still be seen today. Known as the Shannon Callows, this is an important nature conservation area and is surrounded by boglands. Home to the Bord Na Mona power station, which harvests the peat from the surrounding area and transports it using a narrow gauge railway. The famous 16 arch bridge is one of the oldest across the Shannon and was completed in 1757. The Tourist Information Centre is located in the lockhouse at the harbour and there is a post office, 2 shops and 3 pubs. Also a Supermacs fast food takeaway is available.

Visitor Attractions

Clonmacnois and West Offaly Railway

Tel +353 (0)90 9674114

A narrow gauge railway, principally used to transport the peat to the power station from the surrounding area. The guided Bog Rail Tour takes a 5 mile circular route around the Blackwater Bog, providing an insight into the history and present use of the bog. An opportunity to see the wonderful flora and fauna in this area. Lasts 45 minutes and departs every hour.

Shannonbridge Pottery

Tel +353 (0)90 9674333

A full range of table and giftware produced at their factory shop in Shannonbridge

Ballinasloe

Just north of Banagher, a deviation on the Shannon leads to the River Suck, which is navigable as far as Ballinasloe. It is a large town with all modern facilities including ATM machines, post office, shops, hotels and tourist information centre (in the local travel agents during July and August). With 3 hotels, over 20 pubs and numerous restaurants and coffee shops, you won't have any problem finding an eating house here. It is well known for the Ballinasloe Horse Fair, which is one of the oldest in Europe and takes place at the beginning of October each year.

The River Suck runs deep and slow, providing excellent coarse fishing, particularly for bream and rudd.

Visitor Attractions

[Battle of Aughrim Interpretative Centre](#)

Tel +353 (0)90 96 73939

Commemorates the Battle of Aughrim of 1691, with story panels and audio visual displays. About 3 miles from the town centre.

[Ballinasloe Leisure Centre](#)

Tel +353 (0)90 96 45755

Extensive facilities including swimming pool, childrens pool, leisure centre, sauna and steam room.

[Creagh Pitch and Putt](#)

Tel +353 (0)87 6419415

An 18 hole par 3 course on a 12 acre site.

[Ballinasloe Famine Park](#)

Burial ground for victims of the famine as well as a memorial park.

[Taxi](#) Kenny Kabs

Tel +353 (0)90 96 44444

Shannon Harbour

The historic harbour where the Grand Canal meets the Shannon. Passage is allowed onto the Grand Canal for the Carlow class only.

Banagher

Banagher is an easy-going, modern town with a long history, dating back to the 17th century. It was a strategic river crossing for over 600 years and the most recent bridge was built in the 1800's, along with its Napoleonic fort to protect the town against a French invasion from the West of Ireland. The only inland Martello tower in Ireland, Fanesker, built about 1812, can be seen on the west shore of the river at Banagher. The old walls on the East shore replace an ancient fortification of the 1600's known as Fort Falkland and Fort Eliza is just downstream of Banagher on the east bank. Victorian authors Anthony Trollope and Charlotte Bronte both stayed in Banagher for a time and Bronte's husband, Rev. Arthur Bell Nichols is buried in the Church of Ireland graveyard here.

Banagher is now a very important location for visitors to the River Shannon. Nature lovers will enjoy the variety of bird and plant life and the sound of the corncrake around the meadows and peatlands on both sides of the river in this area, known as the Shannon Callows. This region of the Shannon is also very popular for fishing. A map board is located at the entrance to the marina, which will give more information on the town's facilities and a Tourist Information Centre is in Crank House on Main Street.

The town of Banagher is centred on the main street, which could easily be walked in 10 minutes. All amenities including grocery shops, banks, post office and pharmacy are located in the town centre. Most of the town's supermarkets will deliver your groceries to your boat.

Heritage Sites

[Cloughan Castle](#), 3 miles from Banagher

Tel +353 (0)57 91 51650

Medieval castle in Lusmagh, just south of Banagher which offers tours to pre-booked groups and also offers B&B.

[Birr Castle Demesne](#), 8 miles from Banagher

Tel +353 (0)57 91 20336

A magnificent demesne and castle with picturesque gardens, Ireland's historic science centre and the famous Great Telescope.

[Clonfert Cathedral](#), 6 miles from Banagher on the western side of the Shannon.

12th century Cathedral with a magnificent Romanesque style doorway. There are also traces of a 6th century monastic settlement founded by St. Brendan the Navigator.

Other Activities

[Pitch and Putt](#) Tel +353 (0)57 91 51421 18 hole course located over the bridge.

[Shannon Adventure Canoeing](#) Tel +353 (0)57 91 51411 Canoe hire per day.

[Taxi](#) Pat Cox Tel +353 (0)87 958 9506

Meelick

The first stop to make south of Banagher is at Meelick Quay and lock (Victoria Lock). This remote location is steeped in history, with ruins of ancient fortifications, including a Martello Tower dating from the 1800s and Keelogue Battery on the East Shore. Meelick Church, a Franciscan settlement established around 1414 is thought to be the oldest Roman Catholic church in continuous use. It is still in use today and is within walking distance of the Quay. It is also worth taking a look at the old canal and the disused Hamilton Lock, which is where the very first lock on the Shannon was constructed in the 1750's. This area is teeming with wildflowers and numerous bird species and it is one of the few places where you can still hear the cry of the corncrake. Once you pass through the lock, the great expanse of Lough Derg opens up before you.

Lough Derg

Portumna

There are 2 marinas in Portumna at opposite ends of the town, both with full facilities. Castle Harbour is on Lough Derg and the Emerald Star harbour is north of the lifting bridge. You will find all amenities in this attractive town including a good range of shops, ATMs, Post Office and pharmacy. The Tourist Information Centre is located in Abbey Street and is open from June to September. Gala Supermarket will have everything you need and will deliver groceries to your boat (090 9747135). There is an excellent children's play area located just behind the Castle, near the Shannon Oaks Hotel.

Portumna Castle and Forest Park

The main attraction here is Portumna Castle and Forest Park Tel +353 (0)90 9741 658.

The original castle was constructed around 1616, but completely destroyed by fire and rebuilt in 1864. The present castle is actually the third castle to be built on the site and it has recently been restored and is now open to the public. The Forest Park contains 1500 acres of parkland with an abundance of flora and fauna including a herd of rare Irish red deer. There are many lovely walks and nature trails and it is a great site for a picnic. The ruins of the Dominican Priory are also within the boundaries of the Forest Park, close to Castle Harbour.

Terryglass

A charming little village on the eastern shores of Lough Derg.

The marina alone is worth a visit with its picnic area, children's play area and breathtaking views of Lough Derg. The village is around 10 minutes walk from the moorings and is on the site of 6th century monastery, of which little remains. The village is quite small with 2 pubs, a shop and post office located beside the Derg Inn and a craft shop housed in Oldcourt Church. There are 2 historic spring wells, the Eye Well located at the harbour and the Headache Well, located in the village, both of which are said to have curative properties. The 13th century Oldcourt Castle is nearby.

Kilgarvan

A very remote location with a small restaurant, Brockna-on-the-Water about 5 minutes from the marina. The only other place of interest here is a small antiques centre, the Antigone Centre, Tel +353 (0)67 22047. A 20 minute walk from Kilgarvan Quay will take you to the small village of Ballinderry with further pubs and restaurants.

Rossmore

This is a very small remote location on the western shore of Lough Derg. There are no facilities, but is very good for fishing.

Williamstown/Drumman harbour

Williamstown is the base for Shannon Castle Line hire cruisers and just south of it, is the public marina of Drumman. There are no amenities here, but you will find shops and restaurants in the small village of Whitegate, about 30 minutes walk away.

Dromineer

The pretty village of Dromineer is a very popular stop off point. It is home to Lough Derg Yacht Club, one of oldest yacht clubs in the world and the RNLI Lifeboat station. There are many water-based businesses here such as Nenagh Rowing Club and Shannon Sailing. There is a small shop but supplies are quite basic. There is a very good children's play area beside the harbour and a little beach area. The ruins of the 16th century Dromineer Castle are located on the quay, and nearby in the old graveyard, are the remains of a small Romanesque church dating from the 12th century.

Dromineer is the start of the long distance Lough Derg Way which goes as far as Killaloe and it is a pleasant walk for the first few kilometres along the shores of the Lough.

For a taxi from Dromineer, contact Mike Roberts +353 (0)87 6737447

Mountshannon

Built as a model village on a green field site around 1740, Mountshannon sits on a hill with fantastic views of Lough Derg and the surrounding area. It has many amenities and lots of things to do. A map board is located at the harbour with up to date information on local attractions and amenities. There are shops, a post office, pharmacy, and many pubs and restaurants. With the backdrop of the Slieve Aughty Mountains, there are

many opportunities for walking and cycling in the area.

There are 3 grocery shops in the village. One is attached to Keane's Bar in the centre of the village, there is a shop at the petrol station on the Scariff Road and the newly opened Bourke's Grocery Store and Food Emporium which has a very good hot and cold deli counter. The town has 5 pubs and many have live music at weekends.

A number of looped walks, which are part of the long distance East Clare Way, start and finish in Mountshannon. They vary in length from 3km to 16km.

Visitor Attractions

[Aistear Iniscealtra](#)

A community park in the centre of the village between the harbour and the main street. The main feature is a maze with a pathway through the history of spirituality. There is also a childrens play area, a picnic area and a labyrinth.

[Callura Pottery](#)

Tel +353 (0)61 927 909

Makers of unique pieces of colourful pottery on the Main Street

Taxi For a taxi from Mountshannon, contact Patrick Minogue +353 (0)87 6433550

Holy Island

Not accessible on your cruiser, but if you have a dinghy and outboard, you should moor at Mountshannon and take the dinghy to Holy Island. If you don't have an outboard, there are ferry services from Mountshannon harbour to Holy Island.

The Island was once a monastic settlement and is associated with many early Irish Saints. There are churches dating back to the 9th century, high crosses, a holy well and a round tower. It is also home to ancient burial grounds.

Garrykennedy

The views of Lough Derg are spectacular from this location. You can moor in the old harbour or at the new floating jetties. It is a very popular stop for fans of traditional Irish music as both pubs in the village have regular music sessions.

Walking

[Garrykennedy Lakeside Forest Walk](#) . Starts in Garrykennedy, with picnic areas

[Castletrough Lakeside Forest Walk](#), 3 miles from Garrykennedy. On the Lough Derg way.

Scariff

The limit of navigation on the Scariff River will take you to the most western point on Lough Derg and the small town of Scariff - a market town built on a hill, about a 10 minute walk from the harbour. You will find all the main amenities here, including ATM machine, post office, pharmacy and shops. The riverside park at Scariff is a lovely place to pass an hour or so. What looks like a tower house in the grounds of the Spanish owned timber factory is in fact a water tower erected in the 19th century for an infamous workhouse that was built nearby.

A number of looped walks, which are part of the long distance East Clare Way, start and finish in Scariff. They vary in length from 5km to 19km.

Reddan's Quay, Tuamgraney

A short journey along the winding, tree-lined Scariff River will take you to Reddan's Quay, in the small village of Tuamgraney. It is home to one of the oldest churches in Ireland still in use, St. Cronan's, used by the Church of Ireland community. Parts of the church are said to date back to the 10th century and it has links with Brian Boru, the legendary High King of Ireland. It now houses the East Clare heritage centre, Tel +353 (0)61 921351, with exhibitions and audio visual presentations on the history and heritage in the area. Nearby are the remains of a 16th century O'Grady Castle and a Famine Memorial Park. Raheen Oak Wood contains the remains of the primeval wood that once covered all of East Clare. It has some very interesting oak trees, reputedly the oldest in Ireland.

It is about a 10 minute walk from here to the town of Scariff.

Shopping

Tuamgraney is home to some of the traditional Irish industries

[McKernan's Handweavers](#) Tel +353 (0)61 921527 www.mckernanscarves.com

Beautiful handmade scarves. Visitors are welcome in the shop and showroom where the scarves are made on 19th century looms.

[Wildes Irish Handmade Chocolates](#).

Killaloe/Ballina

The most southern navigable point on Lough Derg takes you to the twin towns of Killaloe, on the western side of the lough and Ballina to the east, separated by the 13 arch stone bridge. Killaloe is famous as the home of Brian Boru, the legendary High King of Ireland. It is the largest town on Lough Derg and has all the facilities you would expect including ATM machines, post office, pharmacy and grocery shops. It also has a number of quaint shops and boutiques and a surprising number of hair and beauty salons! Killaloe is characterised by its narrow, winding streets which lead uphill to the RC church while Ballina is mostly concentrated on the road that runs parallel to the river.

For grocery shopping, go to Queally's Supervalu in the Convent Hill Shopping Centre

Tel +353 61 620230 and they will deliver to your boat free of charge.

Although it is a modern town with all the amenities you would expect, it is steeped in history and all around, there is evidence of its past as the capital of 11th Century Ireland..

History and Heritage

Killaloe is an important town in the history of Ireland and had a role to play in most of the major conflicts throughout the years. As a result, there is much here to interest the historians among us. The tourist office is situated in the heritage centre, so make this your first stop and you will find a lot of information on places to visit in the area. Below are a few examples. There are also many church ruins and holy wells with links to the Great High King Brian Boru whose birthplace was Killaloe.

Brian Boru Heritage Centre

Tel +353 (0)61 376866

An exhibition on the life of Ireland's Great High King whose armies defeated the invading Vikings in the Battle of Clontarf. The exhibition also traces the development of the River Shannon as a transport system. The Heritage Centre is located in what was the lock keepers residence and you will also find a Tourist Information Centre and gift shop here.

St. Flannan's Cathedral

13th century cathedral unique for its interesting stone carvings

St. Flannan's Oratory

12th century oratory. The building may have been intended to house the remains of St. Flannan himself and it is currently used to store some early inscribed stones and slabs.

Leisure Activities

Lakeside Hotel and Leisure Centre

Tel +353 (0)61 376122

www.lakesidehotel.ie

Fully equipped leisure centre with indoor pool featuring a figure of 8 waterslide.