Welcome to the Blackstairs and Barrow Valley in County Carlow where you’ll be inspired by the beauty and captivated by what the surrounding countryside, towns, villages and people have to offer.

The secret to discovering the true beauty of the Blackstairs and Barrow Valley is to spend time exploring its hidden treasures and getting to know the local people. Each twist and turn of the road will reveal a new delight; beautiful unspoiled towns and villages, breath-taking scenery, interesting rock formations, heather clad hills, grand country homes and ancient heritage sites.

Our terrain is a rich tapestry woven with many coloured threads; fashioned by the forces of nature, megalithic monuments left by our ancestors and the colourful patchwork of carefully managed farmlands and forests.

Select your own pace, a mountain hike, canoeing along the river or simply exploring and enjoying the unhurried pace of life amongst communities who are eager to share their paradise with you.

Come encounter our haven, the beautiful Blackstairs and Barrow Valley in Ireland’s Ancient East.
The Adelaide Memorial Church, Myshall, Co. Carlow.
GPS: 52.685852, -6.780344
Standing in beautifully maintained grounds and accessed by a gravelled drive this exquisite church, dating from 1912, was built by John Duguid to honour his wife, Adelaide, and daughter, Constance, following their tragic deaths. Designed by George Coppinger Ashlin, as a miniature version of the famous Salisbury Cathedral in Wiltshire, England, the building features some stunning interiors including a marble floor inspired by St. Mark’s in Venice, Italy, and stained glass windows depicting scenes of the local countryside. The key is held locally by Mrs. Bridge Daly (white bungalow opposite church grounds t: 059 915 7671 – please phone in advance or alternatively contact John Kelly t: 059 915 584 or 087 929 3661).

Bagenalstown Courthouse, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow.
GPS: 52.702061, -6.958463
Walter Bagenal founded the town of Bagenalstown and had visions of mirroring the city of Versailles. After he had made an impressive start in the 1700s by building this magnificent square courthouse, his efforts became frustrated due to the re-routing of the coach road away from the town. He left more than enough however, for visitors to enjoy with a series of handsome stone public buildings.

Borris House, Borris, Co. Carlow.
GPS: 52.598644, -6.926618
The ancestral home of the McMorrough Kavanaghs, High Kings of Leinster, Boris House is one of the most beautiful and historic Irish country houses. There are many things to admire on the house tour from the beauty of the Stapleton ceilings to the unique Chapel of St. Moling, as well as a room by room description of the exceptional architecture, antique furniture, porcelain and paintings on display. Open on selected days from May to September. Check www.borrishouse.com for details.

Borris Viaduct Walk, Borris, Co. Carlow.
GPS: 52.596988, -6.916227
Arthur McMorrough Kavanagh instigated the building of the graceful 16-arch viaduct in Borris village. The railway line, which carried the Great Southern and Western Railway Line between Bagenalstown and Palacolin East in County Wexford, was opened in 1858 and was in use until 1947. The Borris Viaduct Walk offers a leisurely stroll along the spectacular sixteen arch viaduct with beautiful views to the Blackstairs Mountains and Mount Leinster.

Clashganny Viewpoint, Clashganny, Co. Carlow.
GPS: 52.558383, -6.916525
Panoramic view of Clashganny Lock, the River Barrow and the surrounding countryside. The lock gates enable boats and canoes to navigate the waters of Ireland's second longest river. Two looped walks through the forest and along the towpath are accessible from the viewing point or from the riverside car park. The Clashganny Lock Loop is 3.5km and the Clashganny Forest Looped Walk is 6km long.

Duiske Abbey, Graigueanamagh, Co. Kilkenny.
Duiske Abbey was founded in 1204 by William Marshal who became Lord of Leinster following his marriage to Strongbow’s daughter Aoife de Clare. Situated in the heart of Graigueanamagh the Abbey has been changed many times over the years but remains one of Ireland's finest Cistercian monasteries.

Huntington Castle & Gardens, Clonegal, Co. Carlow.
GPS: 52.690404, -6.649131
Originally built in 1625 as a garrison, this historic house was converted and developed into a unique and interesting home for the Emmore family. In the 1970s the former dungeons were converted into a temple to the Egyptian Goddess Isis. Today, the Dunrod Robertson family open their home and extensive gardens to visitors and offer guided tours explaining its history from the 17th century to the present day. The extensive gardens feature impressive formal plantings and layouts including an Italian style ‘Parterre’, a French lime avenue and a world famous yew walk. Open May to September, 2.00pm–6.00pm daily.

Herb Gardens at Kilgraney House, Kilgraney, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow.
GPS: 52.653681, -6.957602
The herb gardens at Kilgraney come down the very heart of the Barrow Valley and demonstrate nature’s infinite creativity. Consisting of a series of interconnected gardens and courtyards planted with herbs, fruits and vegetables, visitors can admire the foliage, colours and beauty in their wonderful fragrant notes. You’ll find a large enclosed kitchen garden or potager, a medicinal herb courtyard, a medieval monastic herb garden, a garden of aromatic and fragrant herbs, orchards, lawns and woodlands. For opening dates and times visit www.kilgraneyhouse.com.

Kildavin is a small picturesque village nestled beneath the Blackstairs with the River Slaney running through it. The old monastic Cranavane Well, on the outskirts of the village, dates back to pre-Christian times. Kildavin is just a short drive from the South Leinster Way walking route. Myshall, its surrounding area, and all its long religious history, St. Finian and St. Columbanus were both born in the village. The village contains the remains of a Romanesque church that St. Finian founded in the 6th century and the more recent Adelaide Memorial Church dating from 1912.

Fenagh is an estate village known for its architectural design and magnificent granite buildings. One of the most famous families associated with the area was the Lecky Watson’s, a Quaker family, who first settled here in the early 18th century. Descendants of the family recorded the first written rules for playing polo. Another member of the family hunted down the last recorded wolf in Ireland on the slopes of Mount Leinster.

Bagenalstown also known as Muine Bheag, is sited on a pleasant reach of the River Barrow and derives its name from Walter Bagenal, who founded the town in the 17th century. Bagenalstown has many architectural gems including a neo-classical train station and courthouse and a legacy of mill buildings, grain-stores and malting houses that date from the industrial revolution. There are many water-based activities along the tree-lined riverbank. Bagenalstown is also home to the world famous O’Hara’s beer, where brewery tours can be arranged by prior appointment, visit www.carlowbrewing.com.

St. Mullins Church is one of the most significant archaeological sites, standing in importance with Glendalough and Clonmacnoise. The area gets its name from St. Moling (614 – 696 AD). St. Mullins has architectural examples from many significant periods in Irish history – an early Christian monastic settlement, a Norman Motte and Bailey, a large graveyard with many insurants from the 1798 Rebellion and 19th century flour and woollen mills along the River Barrow.

Ballymophra is a hillside village, resting on the slopes of the Blackstairs Mountains close to the picturesque Scullage Gap. The community spirit of this village is evident in the beautiful display of flowers throughout the summer.

Leighlinbridge is home to the Black Castle, one of Ireland’s earliest Norman castles built in 1181. The focal point of Leighlinbridge is its wonderful nine arch bridge across the River Barrow, built in 1320. It is said to be one of the oldest functioning bridges in Europe and its structure is softened by wild valerian blooms during the summer months.

Rathanna is a rural gem set at the foot of Mount Leinster, offering stunning views of the Blackstairs Mountains and the lush, green countryside synonymous with Ireland’s Ancient East.

Tinnahinch, on the Carlow side of the River Barrow, and Graigue on the Kilkenny side, are the two main bustling centres whose character reflects a bygone time when the area was an important focal point for commercial traffic on the river. Both towns are connected by a beautiful bridge, constructed in 1767 when the canal system was being built. A beautiful 8km walk along the River Barrow can be enjoyed from here to the ecclesiastical ruins of St. Mullins.

For more information on County Carlow visit the Carlow Tourism app, available as a free download from the Google App Store or log on to www.carlowtourism.com

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Produced by Carlow Tourism and the Blackstairs and Barrow Valley Tourism Network.