



Suggested Half Day and Day Trips from Roundwood House

1. Emo Court: House, Gardens & Tea Rooms (Half Day Trip)

Spend a relaxed few hours immersed in neoclassical elegance and beautifully landscaped parkland.

- Emo Court: Designed by James Gandon, this stately 18th-century home offers excellent guided tours that include the grand upstairs rooms and the old kitchens downstairs.
- Enjoy a peaceful walk through the surrounding gardens and woodlands.
- Treat yourself to lunch or coffee at the on-site tea rooms, housed in the old stables.

Best visited mid-morning or early afternoon. Guided tour times vary seasonally.

2. Birr Castle and Surrounds (Half or Full Day Trip)

One of Ireland's most fascinating heritage estates, Birr Castle blends science, gardens and history in one elegant setting.

- Wander the formal gardens and marvel at the Great Telescope.
- Excellent guided tours of the castle are available, but they are seasonal and must be booked in advance.
- Visit the science centre and learn about the Parsons family's achievements.
- Stroll through Birr town, full of character, with antique shops and cafés.

Optional add-on: Leap Castle (advance booking advised).

3. Garden Calm and Ruined Grandeur (Half or Full Day Trip)

A gentle, scenic loop of historic ruins and landscaped beauty.

- Heywood Gardens: Lutyens-designed formal gardens with sweeping views over the Laois countryside.
- Rock of Dunamase: A dramatic Norman hilltop ruin of great historical significance, offering panoramic views and centuries of layered history.
- Timahoe Round Tower: A fine example of early Christian architecture in a peaceful village setting.

Lunch options: Mueller & O'Connell in Abbeylaxey or The Pantry in Portlaoise.

4. Famine and Faith: Monahinca, Donaghmore & Aghaboe (Half or Full Day Trip)

A quieter, thoughtful day of local history.

- Monahinca Abbey: A quiet and little-visited monastic site nearby, rich in atmosphere and local history.
- Donaghmore Workhouse Museum: A sobering but compelling insight into Famine-era Ireland.
- Aghaboe Abbey: Ruins of a once-famous early Christian monastery, originally founded in the 6th century by St. Canice.

Good stop-off for lunch, Bowe's Cafe, Durrow.

5. Medieval Marvels: Jerpoint, Kells & Kilkenny (Full Day Trip)

Explore Ireland's medieval heart with evocative ruins and vibrant city streets.

- Jerpoint Abbey: 12th-century Cistercian ruins with fine stone carving.
- Kells Priory: Towered monastic ruins surrounded by sheep and silence.
- Kilkenny City: Visit the castle, explore historic laneways, shop local crafts, or enjoy great food.

Parking tip: Abbey Quarter Car Park for easy access to the city centre.

6. Castles and Kingship: Rock of Cashel & Cahir (Full Day Trip)

A journey through regal ruins and riverside strongholds.

- Rock of Cashel: Towering cathedral ruins on a limestone outcrop. Once the seat of Munster's kings.
- Cahir Castle: Imposing and well-preserved, with working portcullis and riverside charm.
- Swiss Cottage: Optional riverside walk to this fairy-tale lodge.

Great food options in Cahir or Cashel. Try The Bake House or Chez Hans.

7. Sacred Ruins & Sculpture Trails: Clonmacnoise and Lough Boora (Full Day Trip)

A day of quiet reflection and bogland adventure.

- Clonmacnoise: One of Ireland's most atmospheric early monastic sites, beside the River Shannon.
- Shannonbridge: Fortified village and great lunch stop at Luker's or Killeen's Bar.
- Lough Boora Discovery Park: Sculpture trails, bird hides, fairy walk and wide skies. Great for walkers and cyclists alike.

Bring walking shoes or bikes if you'd like to go further afield in the park.

8. Carlow & Ancient Gateways (Full Day Trip)

A day of early architecture, prehistoric mystery and Gothic revival flair.

- Killeshin Church: A 12th-century church with an intricately carved Romanesque doorway.
- Brownshill Dolmen: A colossal portal tomb dating from around 3000 BC with the largest capstone in Europe.
- Duckett's Grove: A ruined Gothic Revival house with restored walled gardens and a scenic parkland setting.

Lunch at the Duckett's Grove tea rooms or in nearby Carlow town.