

Family fun itinerary for Ireland's Ancient East from Hook Lighthouse

2-day itinerary

Featuring: Discover the world's oldest intact working lighthouse, Dig for treasure on Dollar Bay, Get lost in a Yew Tree Maze, 'Sail to America' on The Dunbrody Famine Ship and choose to visit the Vikings in Waterford or explore the Medieval Mile in Kilkenny.

Distance:

Hook Lighthouse to Waterford City: 62 km

Hook Lighthouse to Kilkenny City: 82 km

Explore the world's oldest intact operational lighthouse. Climb the 115 steps of the ancient tower and step back in time to lighthouse life some 800 years ago. As the oldest intact operational lighthouse in the world, it offers a deep maritime heritage and of course knock-out views of the sea east coast. Lonely Planet recently deeming it "the world's flashiest lighthouse". But it's far more than a lonely old beacon... guided tours take visitors right inside a structure that has watched over the rocks here for 800 years, there's a homely cafe and art workshops are available for kids.

Once you've captured your fill of coastal photos, take the road back to New Ross, stop along the way and dig for gold on the sandy Dollar Bay' Treasure was supposedly buried here in the 1700s, when pirates rowed ashore with a cargo of Spanish milled dollars. They were caught and hanged, but the beach has carried an air of mystery ever since...

Continue along your route to Dunbrody Abbey. Founded in 1160, this is one of the finest examples of a Cistercian abbey still standing in Ireland, so you might expect the site to be strictly overseen. Instead, a ticket buys you access - which you gain by taking this key, walking across the road, and inserting it into a chunky old padlock. It's a beautiful experience, miles removed from the queues and polish of Ireland's better-known heritage attractions, and the abbey is a wonderfully atmospheric space to boot. Another small ticket offers access into the fabulous yew tree maze, where you must navigate your way to the central podium or be lost forever in the twists and turns.

Continuing to the nearby town of riverside New Ross. Perched on the River Barrow, New Ross is a small but bustling place, anchored by the Dunbrody Famine Ship, a replica of an 1840s emigrant vessel. Step on board to uncover the truly emotional history of Ireland's emigrant past through an interactive guided tour delivered by skilled performers and themed exhibitions. The last tour of the Dunbrody Famine Ship Experience starts at 5pm, leaving you with just the right amount of time to complete the 45-minute drive to Kilkenny City or

Waterford City where in Kilnenny you can explore the Medieval Mile and the ancient Kilnenny Castle or in Waterford step back in time and see the arrival of the Vikings at The King of the Vikings virtual reality experience and explore the breadth of the Viking Triangle.

For all details and booking information see: www.irelandsancienteast.com