

Trail Gazers is a European funded project, working to stimulate rural economic development by linking investments made into walking and recreational infrastructure to the surrounding small towns and villages, encouraging footfall into these places - thereby sustaining local communities.

This project has 8 pilot sites and 10 partners, it is led by Donegal County Council - Trail Gazers will guide future investment in walking and cycling trails and this new model can be applied to trail sites throughout our county and to all our partner regions.

The Lost stories

INCH LEVELS WILDFOWL RESERVE

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- <http://www.trailgazers.eu>
- TrailGazers Bid
- TrailGazers Bid
- Trail.Gazers



Welcome to the northwest corner of Ireland, to Donegal, the ‘coolest’ place on the planet and visit one of its many gems - the Inch Levels Wildfowl Reserve Trail - an 8 km loop of waterways, hedgerows and wild and wonderful habitats.

Experience a place filled with magic and mystery spanning thousands of years. Visit the ancient castles and fortresses, walk in the footsteps of Gaelic Kings and Viking warriors. It’s hard to imagine that these lands were once covered by seawater. Two thousand acres were reclaimed creating these rich, lush farm lands and wildlife sanctuaries.

This is Inch, Explore for Miles !

Seo í Inis, bí siúlach bí scéalach!



Hello my name is Inche; I came to this area many, many years ago when the land you are standing on now was still under the sea. I was beached up near Burnfoot (a local village) and was very frightened because I could not get home to the sea; however pirates who were hiding out in a nearby cove came to my rescue. 12 strong pirates carried me back to sea but by this time the lands were being reclaimed from the sea and my only hope for survival was to make my home in the beautiful rich waters of Inch Lough; it is here I have remained since guarding all the wildfowl. Remember it is very important to respect the environment and all my wildfowl friends. See you soon

“An Endless Trail of Possibilities”

« Raidhse deiseanna os do chomhair amach »

1

CONSERVATION

Inch Levels is one of Ireland's most important wildfowl reserves.

Steal yourself away into a bird hide, or and catch a glimpse of the many migrating birds feasting happily on this rich landscape.

The trail at Inch Wildfowl Reserve is pretty unique because of the massive diversity of wildfowl, a breeding site for some species and a wintering site for a lot of others. The site is a special protected area of conservation.

Indeed conservation is nothing new to these parts as the four great embankments of Inch Level Trail created these fresh water breeding grounds and flatlands.



2

GRIANÁN OF AILEACH

The Stone Fort of Grianán of Aileach is a magical place which sits on a hilltop, overlooking Inch Island, in Inishowen County Donegal.

250m above sea level, the stone fort was probably first built on an earthen rath.

The view from Aileach is breathtaking out over the glistening waters of Lough Foyle and Lough Swilly.

The origins of the Grianán of Aileach fort are dated back to 1700 BC.

3

BURT CASTLE

Burt Castle which was one of the clan O'Dochartaigh's strongholds in Inishowen, it offers spectacular views over Lough Swilly.



Built in the 1300's, the walls are filled with the intrigue of a bygone age.

Hear how the Spanish Army were involved here in the 1600's.



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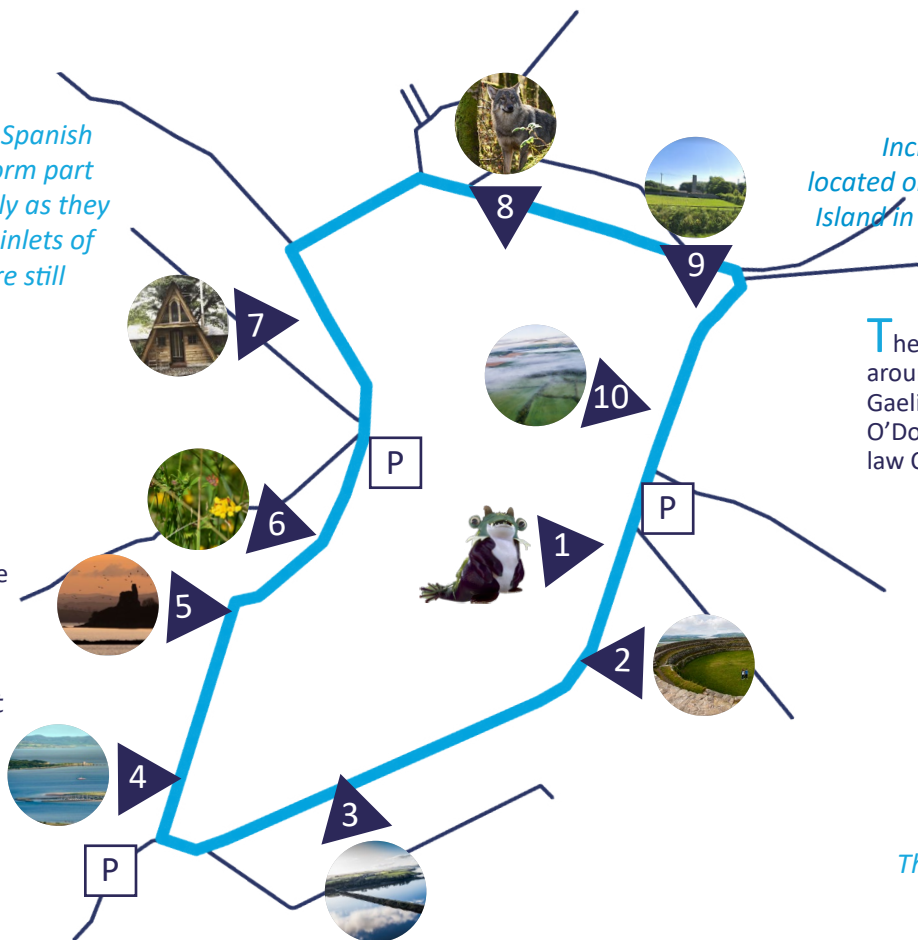
THE SEA O' THE SEA

Sea faring ships, Vikings, Spanish Armada and pirates all form part of the folklore of the Swilly as they were no strangers to the inlets of the area. Is there treasure still buried nearby ?

Hear the story about the idea to build a canal from Burnfoot to Derry but it never happened due to the different tidal reaches of the Swilly and the Foyle.

There was also a story from an old man, who said when he was a boy his grandmother told him the story of a type of a whale beached up at Burnfoot - which shows the difference in the landscape as this is now reclaimed land.

I wonder did this beautiful animal ever make it back to the sea ? Inche ?



INCH CASTLE

Inch Castle is a ruined castle located on the southern tip of Inch Island in County Donegal, Ireland.

The castle was constructed around 1430 by the Gaelic Irish lord Neachtain O'Donnell for his father-in-law Cahir O'Doherty.

Hear how Inch Castle played a pivotal role in the O'Donnell family disagreement over the ruling of Inishowen.

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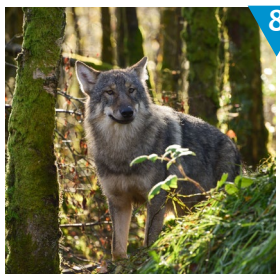
HEDGEROWS

Everything has a story in our hedgerows ...

Everything is seasonal from gathering the blackberries for jam and the textile industry and having it done before the 29th September as the fairies needed them after this.

To springtime and collecting the blossoms from the wind bushes (gorse) for conditioner for blonde hair.

While dark haired women used the fresh green growth.



8

WILD IRELAND

Many years ago, around 5,000 years ago to be exact, wild bears and wolves roamed freely here in Donegal.

Long extinct, they have been brought back home to Wild Ireland, a few kilometres away from our Inch Levels Wildfowl Reserve Trail.

Wild Ireland is an ancient Celtic woodland where they have turned back the hands of time.

You will see bears, wolves, lynx, wild boar and a whole menagerie of other animals that have come from different backgrounds - they have been rescued and offered sanctuary at Wild Ireland.

This area is rich and fertile and was very favourable for growing barley.

Until it closed in the late 1930's as they had a whiskey giant in Derry producing over 80,000 gallons and the illicit poteen makers of the hills on the other side.

THE DISTILLERY

Chimney stacks from the old Lattin Distillery still can be seen.



9

GOLDEN TREASURES

Local storytellers are filled with stories from Fairies to Gold to Poteen which is no surprise in a location dotted with ringforts and castles.

Hear about the 17th century coinage which was found in a nearby stone wall, or the local sutranes - the underground dwellings of the little people.

Or the strong local tradition that if you can find the spot where you can see Burt Castle, Inch Castle and An Grianan Fort - that is where the gold is buried!

Whether or not these stories are true, all locals agree that the Golden Treasure is the beautiful landscape which surrounds the area.

10

