

Special Feature

Ireland's Waterways



Navigating one of the canals.

Rivers are an important feature in our landscape. From earliest times, people have made their homes near rivers, where they could get fresh water, food and easy access to transportation. Over time, large settlements grew up and a majority of major cities in the world today are located near rivers. Most of the big cities and towns in Ireland are situated on the banks of rivers – Dublin, for example is built on the River Liffey, while Limerick is built on the River Shannon.



Waterways in Ireland:

Waterways Ireland is responsible for the following systems:

- The Barrow Navigation;
- The Erne System;
- The Grand Canal;
- The Lower Bann Navigation;
- The Royal Canal;
- The Shannon-Erne Waterway;
- The Shannon Navigation; and
- It is also responsible for the restoration of the Ulster Canal between Lough Erne and Clones.

Can you locate these waterways on the map?

Rivers drain the land and benefit agriculture. Much of the fish we eat comes from the sea, but fresh water fish such as pike and perch are found in rivers, lakes and canals. In the past, Ireland's inland waterways were used to transport goods.



Today they are used for a wide variety of recreational activities such as sailing, kayaking, cruising, angling and water sports. Many tourists visit Ireland each year to spend time enjoying the benefits our waterways have to offer.

Rivers are also powerful sources of energy and in some cases this power has been harnessed to generate electricity. An example of this in Ireland is at Ardnacrusha Power Station on the River Shannon and Ballyshannon Power Station on the River Erne.

Who are Waterways Ireland?

Waterways Ireland has been given the responsibility of managing, maintaining, developing and restoring certain inland navigable waterway systems throughout the island of Ireland, principally for recreational purposes.

Waterways Ireland is one of six North-South Implementation Bodies established in 1999 under the British-Irish Agreement Act, 1999, and the supplementary North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

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