

European Destination of Excellence

Adjudicators overwhelmed by the wealth of cultural and traditional arts events and activities around Ireland

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Carlingford and the Cooley Peninsula have been awarded the title of **European Destinations of Excellence** – Tourism & Intangible Heritage 2008, in a competition funded and organised by Fáilte Ireland with support from the European Union.

The competition received entries from areas that have implemented marketing initiatives to preserve local, natural and cultural heritage, while also ensuring the area's social, cultural and environmental sustainability. **Carlingford & the Cooley Peninsula** faced top competition from the other four finalists – **Youghal Co. Cork, Ballyhoura Co. Limerick** and **Listowel and Milltown in Co. Kerry**.

*“With the area's natural resources, a full calendar of events and a strong multidisciplinary tourism association, **Carlingford and the Cooley Peninsula** were worthy winners of this year's competition”* said Sheena Doyle, Marketing Co-ordinator at Fáilte Ireland.

The area hosts a range of events throughout the year focusing on their intangible heritage from the *'Birds on the Bay'* and a *'Traditional Irish Winter School'* in February, to the *Táin Walking Festival* in March and the *Oyster Festival* in September. In addition, following in the steps of Setanta and reflecting its Celtic heritage, the Poc Fada is hosted annually on the mountains and attracts national competitors.

"This award is recognition of the commitment and hard work undertaken by the local community over many years in promoting the area and welcoming visitors. It represents a wonderful opportunity to showcase the Carlingford/Cooley Peninsula area to a wider overseas audience” said Kevin Kidney, General Manager Fáilte Ireland East & Midlands.

The aim of this **European Destinations of Excellence Competition** is to highlight the value, diversity and shared characteristics of European tourist destinations, and to promote destinations where the economic growth objective is pursued in such a way as to ensure the social, cultural and environmental sustainability of tourism.

The adjudicators were very impressed with the variety of products and the high standards and commitment of the local groups. Each group recognised their destination's needs and demonstrated awareness for ongoing improvement of their tourism experience.

The top five finalists had onsite visits from an external^o Adjudication Panel who had expertise in various areas of rural development, traditional arts and cultural tourism from organisations such as the Arts Council and Comhaltas Ceoltoiri. The adjudicators were very impressed with the variety of products and the high standards and commitment of the local groups. Each group recognised their destination's needs and demonstrated awareness for ongoing improvement of their tourism experience.

There is a wealth of activities on the Cooley Peninsula, home of the medieval village. Walking on the spectacular Cooley Mountains will take you strolling past the giant Fionn Mac Cumhaill who lies on the side of the stunning Slieve Foy Mountain with his feet resting

in Carlingford Lough, accurately reflecting the exceptional treasure trove of heritage to be discovered! The area has witnessed the building of Neolithic tombs such as the Proleek Dolmen and Clontygora Court Grave, the footsteps of Cuchulainn, the settlement of the Vikings, the fortification of the Normans, and the laying of the Long Woman in her grave at Omeath.

<http://www.failteireland.ie/eden>

European Destinations of Excellence 2008 - Tourism and Intangible Heritage

The second phase of the European Destinations of Excellence competition is underway. This year's theme of excellence is Tourism and Local Intangible Heritage. Fáilte Ireland is inviting entries to the competition from tourism destinations in Ireland which have developed a tourism offer based on the appreciation of local intangible heritage, for example, traditional arts, culture, crafts and sports. Fáilte Ireland looks forward to discovering Ireland's hidden gems.

Eligible destinations will be those where the visitor density is low; where specific regular events such as festivals, themed exhibitions and visit opportunities are focused on local intangible heritage assets; and where the tourism offer is managed in such a way as to ensure its social, cultural and environmental sustainability.

The closing date for entries is Thursday, 28th February, 2008.

Intangible heritage refers to practices, representations, expressions, as well as knowledge and skills, which communities, groups and individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage.

The aim of the project is to draw attention to the value, diversity and shared characteristics of European tourist destinations and to promote destinations where the economic growth objective is pursued in such a way as to ensure the social, cultural and environmental sustainability of tourism.

The winning destination in Ireland will receive a photo shoot of the destination, €5,000 for business development support initiatives, a certificate of achievement and an awards ceremony. In addition, the E.U will offer the winner in each member state international promotion of the destination, an E.U award ceremony during the 2008 European Tourism Forum, a DVD of the winning destination, e - marketing opportunities, and participation in an E.U network. All applicants will receive a written report on their application with expert feedback.

Fáilte Ireland is appointing a panel of adjudicators - composed of cultural and development experts and representatives of Fáilte Ireland and other relevant government bodies - to select the top destinations in each region of the country and the overall winner. The evaluation process will short - list the top five applications for on site assessments during the week of Monday, 14th April, 2008. This assessment will allow each applicant an opportunity to provide further evidence on the quality of their destination of excellence.

Clonakilty District was awarded the title of European Destinations of Excellence – Best Emerging Rural Tourism Destination 2007 in Ireland, in the first phase of the competition which was devised and supported by the European Commission and organised in Ireland by Fáilte Ireland.

The competition is being promoted in 18 member states of the European Union and 2 candidate countries:

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welcome to a journey through the ever changing landscape of Ireland's eastern border region. Recent changes in the region now allow easy access to many wonderful sites spanning 6000 years of history.

Here you'll find wonderful scenery, warm and welcoming people as well as a wealth of archaeological history.

Our region covers Newry & Mourne, Banbridge and Armagh in Northern Ireland and Monaghan and Louth in the Republic of Ireland.

As well as historical sites, you'll also find plenty to do in our thriving towns, cities and villages.

links:

Discovery Programme

<http://www.discoveryprogramme.ie/>

Irish Archaeology - Thadeus Breen

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~tbreen/ireland.html>

Knowth.com

<http://www.knowth.com/>

The Lunar maps of Knowth

<http://publish.uwo.ca/~pjstooke/knowth.htm>

Light Years Ago

<http://ireland.iol.ie/~tobrien/>

Mythical Ireland

<http://www.mythicalireland.com/>

The Sacred Island

<http://www.carrowkeel.com/>

Sacred Sites Places of Peace and Power

<http://sacredsites.com/index.html>

Shadows and Stone

<http://www.cianmcliam.smugmug.com/>

Some Spared Stones of Ireland

<http://www.beyond-the-pale.co.uk/genius.htm>

Stonelight.ie

<http://www.stonelight.ie/files/main.html>