

Chapter Five:

Northwest – Golf, Pubs and Attractions

GOLF: Westport, Castlebar, Swinford, Boyle, Carrick, Tubbercurry, Mulranny, Achill Island, Carne, Ballina, Enniscrone, Strandhill, Rosses Point, Donegal, Narin & Portnoo, Cruit Island, Ballyliffin Old & Glashedy

PUBS: Asgard, Dunning’s Cybercafe, Matt Molloy’s, Tonino’s, Quay Cottage, Campbell’s, *Grainne Uaille*, Beehive, Vitto’s, Crockett’s, Murphy Brothers, Broadhaven Bay, Strand, Harp Tavern, The Loft, Yeats’ Tavern, Bridge Bar, Harbour Restaurant, Pier 1, Blueberry Tea Room, Weaver’s, Annora, The Brewery

ATTRACTIONS: Westport House, Croagh Patrick, Famine Monument, Murrisk Abbey, Boyle Abbey, Knock, Burrishole Abbey, Achill Island, Foxford Woolen Mills, Ceide Fields, Rosserk Abbey, Queen Medb’s Cairn, Carrowmore, Parke’s Castle, Drumcliff Church and Yeats’ Grave, Creevykeel Tombs, Donegal Castle & Abbey, Donegal Studios, Slieve League, Glencolumbkille Folk Village

GOLF

The Northwest of Ireland, counties Mayo, Sligo, Donegal, and the west of Roscommon, is the most remote. Here, too, is where the visitor will find some of the most scenic courses. Beautiful and remote creates a problem. You will want to visit as many as you can, but even in four trips dedicated to tracking down these great hidden gems we’ve managed to miss several courses we know are world class. That just gives us reason to make our next trip.

The well known links courses, such as Ballyliffin, Murvagh, and Rosses Point, are the main draw for golfers. Don't be so quick to pass by the unknown or short courses. Anne and I spent a glorious sun-filled day playing Cruit Island, a 9-hole track that will rival the world's best at holding your interest and demanding your best shots. Though links courses get most of the attention, you would do yourself a disservice if you skipped some of the areas wonderful parkland courses. Premier among the inland gems is Westport Golf Club. The town is a Must Stop for lovers of Irish music and history. The golf course at Westport is a Must Stop as well. Only about 4 hours from Dublin, Westport GC is about 2 miles west of town off N59 and is well signed.

Golf Course: Westport Golf Club

Address: Carrowholly, Westport, Co. Mayo

Web & Phone: www.golfwestport.com (098) 28 262

Style, Length & Price: Parkland, 7086 yards, par 72, Moderate

Amenities: The large modern clubhouse on the bottom floor has changing rooms and a very complete pro shop, with a particularly knowledgeable and friendly staff. The busy upstairs lounge serves tasty meals from lunch until early evening hours. The bar is an ebullient meeting place for all the local players. We played with Pat and Pam McIntyre, members from Dublin, and were treated royally when the clubhouse gang found out we were visiting Americans. Everyone was eager to find out how we liked their course.

Course Comments: In an area of wonderful links courses like Lahinch, Ballybunion, Connemara, Carne, Enniscrone, and Murvaugh, the Westport Golf Club, a parkland oasis in a sea of links, can easily be overlooked. It shouldn't be! Westport is certainly the best parkland course on the west and one of the best in Ireland. As fun as links golf can be, fine parkland challenges like Westport can be equally entertaining. With views of Clew Bay and Croagh Patrick (Ireland's famous holy mountain from which St. Patrick banished all snakes), the vistas here play second fiddle to no other course. Speaking of playing the fiddle, the town itself is a great draw for the traditional music in the pubs—book well ahead if you plan to visit Westport on a Bank Holiday; Dubliners love to spend their long weekends in Westport's music pubs [see Pubs and Attractions].

Though the golf club began in 1908, the present course on the Westport House Estate wasn't laid out until 1973. Architect Fred Hawtree, who was responsible for the latest work on St. Andrew's New Course, designed the current 18-hole layout set in 260 acres of rolling