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# Living

## YOUR WEEKEND

Some Sunday inspiration for things to do today and in the week ahead



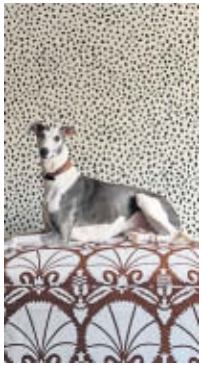
### BOOK

The centrepiece of this year's Bloomsday festivities is a 15-song show called *The Stern Task of Living*, based on James Joyce's *Dubliners*. Created by the Irish folk music artists Gráinne Hunt and Jim Murphy of Hibsén, it will be running at Smock Alley Theatre at 7.30pm on June 9 and 10; tickets cost from €18. [bloomsdayfestival.ie](http://bloomsdayfestival.ie)



### TRY

Stamp Festival of Creativity at the Counting House, the former Beamish brewery on South Main Street in Cork city, from Friday to Sunday, includes more than 50 art, design and craft events. Visitors can try workshops in screen printing, basket weaving and pottery wheel throwing, and view jewellery making, woodturning and oil painting. [stampcork.ie](http://stampcork.ie)



### BROWSE

Interiors Atelier is a new interiors shop and design studio in Ranelagh, which launched with an eight-piece collection of Irish-made furniture. Designed by the partners Sinéad Moore and Lisa Donnelly, each piece is made to order and the range includes a bar cart, console tables and ottomans, such as the Blue, pictured, €1,600. [interiorsatelier.ie](http://interiorsatelier.ie)



### SHOP

The stylist Sarah Rickard, pictured, has curated a unique edit of brands for her online boutique [styledby.ie](http://styledby.ie). Rickard will host a pop-up, *Styled By: In the City*, at Powerscourt Townhouse in Dublin 2. Running from Tuesday through to May 28, shop the SS23 collection, which includes Suncoo, Second Female and Sirens.



### SIP

Bloom is a new cocktail bar in the gardens of Hayfield Manor in Cork, made of glass and with retractable walls and ceiling to make the most of its beautiful setting when the sun shines. The executive chef Mark Staples has designed an exciting new menu showcasing local producers to complement the fruity botanical cocktails. [hayfieldmanor.ie](http://hayfieldmanor.ie)



### GO

The International Literature Festival Dublin has more than 35 events aimed at families and kids, with storytelling, performances, music and crafts at Merrion Square Park. See beloved children's and young adult novelists such as *Artemis Fowl* creator Eoin Colfer, the writer and illustrator Aoife Dooley and *The Storm Whale* author Benji Davies, with events from Friday through to May 28. [ilfdublin.com](http://ilfdublin.com)

## ECO-WORRIER

@jo\_linehan



Room to improve? Interiors fads are fuelling a new wave of overconsumption, discovers *Jo Linehan*

**M**ove over fast fashion — there's a new throwaway industry on the rise. Introducing fast interiors, our latest shopping addiction. In 2021 and 2022, revenue in the Irish homeware market

grew by an estimated 21.6 per cent, reaching €14.95 billion, according to Enterprise Ireland. Globally, the home decor market is expected to grow by 5.33 per cent a year by 2027.

It's no surprise we've become homebirds. Since

the pandemic, we've had to rethink how our homes work for us and we're looking for affordable, easy ways to spruce up our living and dining rooms, as well as our home offices. However, instead of investing in pieces we love and that will last a lifetime, the allure of trend-driven accessories is proving irresistible.

Gumtree, a re-commerce platform based in the UK, found that small homeware items such as rugs, cushions, and lamps are fuelling unnecessary carbon consumption. Twenty-nine per cent of those surveyed regret buying these items, wasting a total of 275kg of carbon per person each year — the equivalent of heating a home for almost five years.

Much like fast fashion, social media is fuelling these purchases. Almost half of those surveyed admitted trends from platforms including TikTok and Instagram had encouraged impulsive purchasing decisions for their home.

Don't get me wrong — I love home decor as much as the next serial scroller and spend far too much time drooling over other people's homes on Pinterest and *Home of the Year*. But with the knowledge that, according to the European Environmental Bureau, EU citizens throw out 10 million tonnes of furniture each year, it's time to acknowledge our impulsive interiors improvement addiction is a growing problem.

Kim Fitzgerald and Lyn Luxford are the founders of A Sorted Affair ([asortedaffair.ie](http://asortedaffair.ie)), which offers home organisation and decluttering.

"TikTok has a lot to answer for, especially in the kitchen," Fitzgerald says. "We have seen an increasing amount of TikTok gadgets, most of which are unopened. They find a new home through our

“**EU citizens throw out 10 million tonnes of furniture each year**”

service as we work with different charities, but there is a definite fast fingers shopping issue where people are unconsciously shopping and not thinking about where an item will live or be stored in a home."

Fitzgerald says buying second-hand goes hand in hand with considered purchasing. "Buying pre-loved needs to be the future. It's not just a trend. We are spreading the word that less is more, and always remind clients to resist that impulse purchase."

Next time you feel the urge to splurge on a novelty cushion or cheaply made rug, ask yourself if it will add to your space or end up adding to your home's clutter or, worse, a landfill.

# Living

## Close Encounters Angela Scanlon

# ‘I’m open to anything’

Candid, no-holds-barred questions are the hallmark of the Ask Me Anything host, who dreams of quizzing Michael D about his Tesco order, she tells *Louise Bruton*

Angela Scanlon leans into the camera on her laptop and, with a glint in her eye, asks, “. . . did you say you were masturbating in the room?” Her voice breaks into a shriek, before mellowing to a chuckle. Rather than accusing me of something untoward, she’s recreating a highlight from last season’s *Angela Scanlon’s Ask Me Anything*, where she suggested the TV presenter Rylan Clark used his *Big Brother* diary room replica in his garden for more than just quiet time.

“I like the idea of not having to follow a script really tightly,” she says. Without a script, Scanlon can be her wildly passionate self and, in return, her guests give more than they set out to do. It’s this mixture of candidness and giddiness, plus a rota of willing star guests, that saw this no-holds-barred Saturday night show return for its third season last month.

She’s had some great TV moments but some of her favourites are still to come. “I loved Oti Mabuse, she is in one of the final episodes, and Una Healy is coming up. I have so much time and respect for Una, it was lovely to have her on the show speaking so candidly. It confirmed the show is a forum where people feel comfortable and safe to have conversations that might not always feel safe – it’s very, very important to me.”

Of course, there are guests that Scanlon would still like to nab, not least the president. “I would love to have Michael D. It would be an honour. I’ve never made the cut, never been on the lawn in the Aras. I would love to have a chat with him.

I think he’s passionate and interesting; a brilliant statesman. What would I ask him? Does he wear boxers or briefs? Does anyone need to know that? Does he blow-dry his hair? And what are his favourite picky bits? Who does the shopping? Does he have a Tesco order on repeat online? Yeah, those kinds of things.”

Growing up in Ratoath, Co Meath, with three equally impassioned sisters, Scanlon was never going to be a wallflower, but a job in media wasn’t in her sights. The 39-year-old studied Business at Technological University Dublin with the idea of establishing a fashion brand like Anthropologie, selling clothing and “candles and forks and f\*\*\*ing everything”. To set her on that path, she freelanced as a personal shopper and worked as a behind-the-scenes stylist on TV.

In 2012, a microphone was thrown into her hands on Virgin Media’s fashion show *Xposé*. They needed someone to dissect red-carpet looks at the Oscars, and that was it. “It was like a fire,” she says, describing the instant infatuation she developed for TV. With *Vogue* dubbing her the new Alexa Chung less than a year later, the redhead’s resumé filled up with presenting gigs, including the RTE documentary *Oi Ginger!*, BBC2’s *Robot Wars* and London Fashion Week.

While she didn’t create the next Anthropologie, her jewellery line fulfils the dream of creating a brand. Launched in 2021 and available in Brown Thomas, Frkl is a great outlet for her boundless energy – during the interview, she leaps up to run downstairs to check on some

“**I think my passion can be a little frightening. When I’m in something I really commit. I can’t do things by halves**”

roasting cauliflower. “I think my passion can be a little frightening for people,” she says. “When I’m in something I really commit. I can’t do things by halves.”

Crediting her self-employed parents with providing “a road map for doing it for yourself”, she also gives the “baller” Diane Keaton some dues. “Have you seen *Baby Boom?*” she says, namechecking the 1987 romantic comedy that sees Keaton’s character become chief executive of a consultancy firm while balancing motherhood and her love life.

As a mother-of-two with her husband, the Irish entrepreneur Roy Horgan, and managing multiple professional avenues, she’s not far from her *Baby Boom* ideal. Her elder daughter, Ruby, was born in 2018 and Marnie Fae was born last year. She loves that she has replicated her own upbringing by having a female-dominant house, but her first few years of motherhood were tough. “I found the first couple of years hard, really hard,” she says, her chipper tone levelling out.

When lockdown hit in 2020, Ruby, who was then two and half years old, was delighted to have her parents at home

and, although Scanlon’s work came to a halt, “there was a pace to it that I really needed after my initial entry into motherhood”.

Before Marnie Fae arrived Scanlon was coming out the other side of her first delivery, “where you’re a bit dazed and in survival mode,” and knew a home birth was the way to go. “I was like, ‘I am not going through labour on my own because somehow everyone and their f\*\*\*ing granny is allowed to do what they want during Covid, except for women who are having babies.’”

Motherhood has taught her how to ask for help. One morning when she was filling in for Graham Norton, the babysitter mistook her 7.30am start time as evening and, instead of getting into a flap, Scanlon called a friend to step in. “Before, I would have thought that I was an absolute failure of a mother to not foresee the multiple things that could go wrong,” she says. “I have to learn to accept that shit will go down quite often.”

Being a mum has meant questioning the things she wants to share as part of her public-facing career.

“I am super protective and private and I kind of get that there is an appetite for me personally when I’m on telly, so I try to balance that. Obviously, I’m the nosiest out there and I want to look behind closed doors about what people are about, what they are into, how they behave when there’s no cameras on. So that’s the tone of the show but that it’s obviously Saturday night.

“We’ve found from the audience and from the people who watch that what they feel is that they’ve dropped in and we’re having a chat on the sofa at home. That kind of candid access is something I crave in other people and expect from other people. I’ve signed up for that but the girls haven’t, and I am aware of that. I don’t want people to recognise them going about their business in the soft play! I find that a bit creepy. I feel very protective of them and, at whatever point they might choose to be online, we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it.”

In front of a live audience on *Ask Me Anything* and bringing on the style in outfits by Irish designers such as Simone Rocha and Lia Cowan, she nudges guests,



**Angela Scanlon is known for her stylish outfits on TV. Left, with Dermot O’Leary, Jacquie Hurley and Des Bishop on *Ask Me Anything* on RTE1**

including Minnie Driver, Sharon Horgan and Tommy Bowe, to dive into the deep end – and jumps right in after them. “I want to laugh and I want to go, ‘Oh my God, did they just say that? Did I just say that?’” she says, adding that the show is a bit like a night out, but without the wait for a taxi. “There’s something about Saturday night telly where you imagine your pals are at home having a drink at the same time, and you’re in it together.”

Whether she is selling necklaces or chin-wagging with celebs, Scanlon claims to make people feel good. “I feel like I’m doing my dream job. But, also, I’ve decided that this year is the year of surprise. Often, I will have a plan and an idea and a clear visual of what it is that I would love to do next and at the beginning of 2023 I said out loud and wrote down ‘Surprise me’. Like literally knock my socks off – or not! I’m open to anything and everything and that feels exciting so, yeah, I’m trying to loosen the grip and see what happens.”

*Angela Scanlon’s Ask Me Anything is on RTE1, Saturdays at 9.30pm, until June 3*

# Living



“**Everyone working in the field has to manage their emotions**”

“You have to be a good communicator, comfortable talking to people about very difficult topics and good around upset people. You also have to be comfortable with the notion of death and dying and what that entails.”

The reality is he's never dealing solely with just one dying person and their family at a time. He could have up to six cases in any one day and for each he needs to treat them with the respect they are due. “You have to be able to get close enough to people to connect with them and realise how important what you're doing is for both the patient and their family,” he explains.

How does he do this while managing not to get too emotionally involved? “I have to balance my emotions because I need to be able to walk out of that room and move onto the next person,” he explains. “And I can't go home and be sad about the six people I saw that day and think about their individual stories, because I need to start all over again the next day.”

Every so often, however, there's a patient that tugs a little bit more at his heartstrings and he finds himself upset. “Something about them will resonate with me,” he says. “Maybe they remind me of a close family member – my mum, my dad or my brother, or else of myself.” He pauses for a moment and his face becomes serious. “But that can't be too often . . .”

Despite the struggle to balance his humanity with professionalism, he describes his work at the hospice as a “privilege”. “You go from never having met someone to having very profound conversations with them, sometimes within half an hour of meeting, and it feels like a privilege.”

Dying people tend to repeat the same messages. “They never say I'm really glad I never made up with my siblings, for example, or I wished I worked harder in the office. But they frequently say they love their family, they're proud of the kids or they loved playing football. These are the things that matter in the end.”

Being less afraid of death is one of the upsides of working in palliative care, but he cautions that this could change as nobody knows for sure how they'll feel until they are dying. But it has, to some extent, made him prioritise what's important in life.

“You'd like to think that we'd all have the wisdom of Solomon as a result of working here, but I can't say that that's completely true,” he says, laughing. “It is partly true, though. It does give you some perspective on what is important.”

“One phrase that I frequently return to as a good guide is: ‘Enjoy yourself.’

It's later than you think.' I think that sums it up.”

*Inside the Hospice will be shown on three consecutive nights on Virgin Media One from tomorrow at 9pm*

## Shining light at the end of life

A new series looks at the work undertaken by hospice staff and the issues they face every day, writes *Erin McCafferty*

People are very often frightened and nervous about coming to a hospice,” Dr Stephen Higgins, consultant in palliative care at Our Lady's Hospice, Harold's Cross, Dublin, says. “They're expecting doom and gloom, dark buildings and sombre music.”

It's one of the reasons the staff at the hospice, founded in 1879 by the Congregation of the Religious Sisters of Charity, agreed to be filmed for a new three-part Virgin Media One documentary, *Inside the Hospice*. “We wanted people to feel reassured when coming here,” Higgins explains. “The hospice is not a gloomy place. In fact it's quite the opposite.”

Visiting the hospice, located off Harold's Cross Road, confirms this. Parking is free in the quiet tree-lined grounds. Friendly staff greet you when you walk through its doors and down airy corridors, their walls adorned with thoughtfully chosen artwork.

Large windows look out on a manicured garden, surrounding the building. It includes gravelled walkways and is filled with shrubs, trees and flowers. There's a modern-looking pod in which to sit and the birds are singing.

Inside, the bedrooms are roomy, bright and spotlessly clean. There's even a spa bath for the patients. There's a waft of freshly brewed coffee and the

atmosphere is peaceful, inviting and nothing like you'd imagine.

And there's also laughter coming from somewhere nearby. This, Higgins says, is not unusual. “There's plenty of humour among the patients and the staff here,” he says. “There has to be humour: it's a coping mechanism.”

The palliative care unit of the hospice is one of four at Our Lady's, which include arthritis and rehab units, and a nursing home. It has 36 in-patient beds, but its staff also provide palliative care to up to 200 people in their own homes.

Most people want to die at home but as they get more ill they frequently change their mind.

“Their care needs change and often they no longer feel safe at home,” Higgins says. “They may need help doing simple things such as going to the lavatory or washing themselves.”

The average age of people receiving treatment from the hospice staff is 71, but there are also a small number of cases that involve young adults and children.

Working in palliative care is not for the faint-hearted, but Higgins has been doing it for more than 20 years and loves his job. “I found early on that I enjoyed this part of medicine and that I was able to have conversations that others find difficult,” he says. “I also like that I can make a difference to people's lives.”

This may sound strange given that he sees people with incurable illnesses and

often with little time left to live. “By the time they get to me, treatment has probably been tried and failed, but we want that person to continue to live comfortably for as long as they've got left,” he says. “Arguably, if you know you only have a finite amount of time left, isn't it best to be as well as possible for that time?”

So while he can't cure the primary problem, he can help with other medical issues that arise. “In fact, there are very few people in palliative care who I can't help,” he says proudly.

People who are dying have very specific fears and part of his job is to allay their worries. “A lot of people I see have been informed already where they're at in terms of prognosis,” he says. “Or maybe they've heard it but they don't understand what it really means. I can explain to them exactly what's going on and what to expect and that allows them to plan for the future.” Sometimes, he says, there's a push too far the other way and the staff have to remember that the person is dying.

While it all sounds relatively straightforward, it can't be easy on a personal level telling people they're going to die. As a result not everyone is suited to the work.

“Everyone working in the field has to manage their emotions,” Higgins says.

**Staff at Our Lady's Hospice have to connect with those who are in their care, says Dr Stephen Higgins, a consultant in palliative care, below**



The Topflight logo is positioned at the top center of the page. It consists of the word "Topflight" in a white, sans-serif font, with a registered trademark symbol (®) to its upper right. Below the text is a stylized orange swoosh that underlines the letters "i", "g", "h", and "t". The logo is set against a dark blue rectangular background that has a slight gradient and rounded corners.

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# Living

## HOW TO... NAVIGATE PREGNANCY AFTER MISCARRIAGE

Try to find pockets of respite from the feelings of anxiety – and don't be afraid to ask for practical help, says *Lynn Enright*



Miscarriage is common – the HSE estimates that at least one in five women will experience it – but this doesn't make it less upsetting. The impact can be profound, influencing how people encounter subsequent pregnancies and even what kind of parents they become.

The journalist Jennie Agg, a mother of one, wrote the non-fiction book *Life, Almost* after experiencing four consecutive miscarriages, each with no obvious cause. Becoming pregnant again after a miscarriage, a stillbirth (when a foetus dies after the 24th week of pregnancy) or a termination for medical reasons is often a fraught and tense experience, she says.

"The difference between my first pregnancy, which ended in a miscarriage, and those that came after is so stark," Agg tells me. "You lose that innocent certainty that things will work out. Instead I felt braced for bad news, almost constantly."

The advice on when you can start trying to conceive after losing a baby will differ depending on your personal

### CHILDREN'S BOOK OF THE WEEK

*The Other Edie Trimmer* is a fun time-hopping adventure from Jacqueline Wilson. Edie is fascinated by Victorian times, and decides she is going to write the best book ever when she is given

a real Victorian notebook. But when she starts writing she finds herself transported to a very different London of long ago, living someone else's life. Out now, published by Puffin at €16.80



circumstances – and you may not feel ready to try again, emotionally or physically, even if you have been given the go-ahead by your healthcare team.

Recurrent miscarriage – when a person has three or more miscarriages in a row – as Agg experienced, is rare, affecting just 1 per cent of couples. The majority of

miscarriages occur before the 12th week of pregnancy, and research suggests that most people who have a miscarriage will go on later to have a healthy pregnancy.

However, as Kate Marsh, midwifery manager for the pregnancy charity Tommy's, says: "During pregnancy after a miscarriage or miscarriages

understandably you might feel a lot more stressed and anxious."

Tell your midwife or doctor if you are worried and want to talk through any concerns, she advises. "You're likely to be hyperaware and worried about any sign that something might be wrong," she says. "You're not wasting anyone's time by calling the hospital as soon as you notice something – it's important to let them know if you have symptoms you might worry about, and to get checked out."

When researching her book, Agg spoke to psychologists who study anxiety and coping mechanisms. "One of them told me that it's not realistic to expect someone to stop feeling anxious or worried altogether – it's about finding small pockets of respite," she says. "This made me feel a lot less guilty about not being able to silence it altogether and not enjoying my pregnancy more."

Don't be surprised if you feel more anxious generally: the anxiety and hypervigilance may carry over, affecting how you parent your other children or how you feel about work. There may be triggers for your anxiety, such as scans or

**“You're not wasting anyone's time by calling the hospital as soon as you notice something**

certain dates. Marsh advises telling your healthcare team about any dates that may be particularly difficult for you.

"Look after yourself extra carefully," Marsh advises. "Grief is tiring, even more so if you are pregnant. Try to give yourself time out and do things you enjoy or make you relax every day."

What that looks like will differ from person to person. It could be journalling, exercise or watching *Love Is Blind* while lying on the sofa.

Preparing for the baby's arrival can be difficult. Marsh says that she often hears from women who are worried about "jinjing" a pregnancy by packing a hospital bag or choosing a name.

It's a feeling familiar to Agg. "Something I struggled with a lot was feeling like everything was somehow a jinx," she says. "That if I was too happy, or bought something for the baby on a whim, it would be bad luck."

If you are feeling unprepared and find the idea of packing a hospital bag or buying clothes or equipment too daunting, perhaps your partner or a family member or friend could get a

**“if you can find glimmers of joy, it's still a win, even if you feel worried underneath**

few essentials together for you, Marsh suggests.

Agg says that she eventually learnt to embrace "the happiness and hope alongside the anxiety, which never truly went away".

"It's easy to avoid things, assuming that the less you think about the pregnancy the better, but if you can find glimmers of joy, thinking of how to decorate a nursery or choosing a maternity dress, it's still a win, even if you feel worried underneath or the happiness ebbs and flows," she says.

For more information see [hse.ie/conditions/miscarriage](https://hse.ie/conditions/miscarriage) and [tommys.org](https://tommys.org)

## SARAH BREEN

@sarahjaybee



### I am tired of the Catholic Church and the grip it has over our schools. By all means practise religion, but, like karate, it should take place outside the classroom

Sometimes I wonder why I continue living in Dublin. I'm a culchie through and through, a proud Carlow woman. My husband works in another county and I can do my job anywhere that has a plug socket. Yet here we are, tucked into a terraced house on a street the clampers visit daily with a back garden the size of a postage stamp.

I was walking through the Ilac Centre when I stay where we are. Like a mushroom in a damp forest, a new kiosk had bloomed, heaving with personalised first holy communion dressing gowns. I had forgotten May is sacrament season. Living in a city gives us choice, and a huge one is the opportunity to send our kids to a primary school where they learn about myriad world religions but practise none.

The decision not to baptise our children was easy. I am 40 years old. I was raised on a diet of 11 o'clock mass on Sunday, confessing my made-up sins and decades of the rosary murmured at wakes. I remember the moving statues. I was briefly obsessed with the children of Fatima. I played many roles in the nativity over the years. Being 40 also means I was two when Ann Lovett and her newborn son died beside a grotto, the same year as the Kerry Babies case. I was 14 when the last Magdalene laundry closed its doors and 23 when the Ferns report was published. I was 33 when a Vatican official said Ireland legalising gay marriage was "a defeat for humanity". And I was 36 when I voted to repeal the eighth amendment.

I am tired of the Catholic Church and the grip it has on this country. Why would I indoctrinate my children into an organisation that has done, and continues to do, so much harm? They are free to sign up when they're old enough to understand what they're getting into.

Many parents don't have the luxury of choice when it comes to where their kids are educated, especially in rural areas. Almost 90 per cent of Irish primary schools are still under Catholic patronage. In junior infants kids are taught that God made the world in seven days and the ins and outs of a crucifixion. Come second class, the little girls put on miniature wedding dresses and the boys waistcoats and rosettes and they amass a small fortune in one day. They do much the same for their confirmation in sixth class.

Every year I'm surprised when I see the latest slew of pictures on Facebook because I know their parents. I know they don't willingly go to Mass. I watched them broom jumping and hand-fasting at their humanist weddings. Given the choice, they would prefer their children to be painting, not praying, in school.

**“Almost 90 per cent of Irish primary schools are still under Catholic patronage**

People of faith have a right to practise religion, but it should take place outside the classroom, like karate and chess and gymnastics. It certainly shouldn't dominate the day for weeks and months as it does when the sacraments are looming. There is an alternative for nonreligious children or those of minority faiths: "opting out" of religion lessons. These kids are typically moved to the back of the classroom, where they colour and practise the valuable lesson of staying inside the lines. There is often only one or two of them in this situation. They are excluded. They feel othered. Knowing this, their parents decide it's pointless and unfair. And so the cycle continues.

Irish children have a right to be educated without attending religious classes. It's outlined in Article 44 of the constitution. The target set by the government of increasing the number of multid denominational schools to 400 by 2030 would still bring the total percentage to just 13. It's not enough, and it doesn't reflect our society. But until parents opt out their kids in numbers so large it becomes a headache for the Department of Education, nothing is ever going to change. It's a big price to pay for a day out and a bouncy castle.



Religion dominates the school day for weeks every year

## Food

# Bring me my spear ... of 'proper' asparagus

In his new column, *Tom Doorley* welcomes us into the polytunnels at his Cork home



DARRAGH KANE

**Doorley shows off the product of his labours. Growing asparagus is not easy, but it's worth the effort**

cut any. In year two, you can cut one spear from each plant or "crown", two in year three and thereafter you can let rip. But only for six weeks. After that, it has to be left to produce its ferns so as to replenish the energy reserves.

If, like me, you have the space and an unbridled enthusiasm for the stuff, it's worth it. Otherwise, frankly, life is too short.

I treat the first of the crop with almost sacramental respect and awe. I simmer it in a shallow pan until just done, then apply melted butter and a touch of sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper. As the all-too-brief season proceeds, I throw caution to the winds and dish it up with some hollandaise sauce.

This is very easy to make but, like growing your own asparagus, it requires patience, albeit a lot less. I take an egg yolk, pop it into a double boiler (or a bowl over warm water) and let it thicken slightly and very gently. Then I take cubes of cold butter and whisk them in, one or two at a time, until I have a lovely, thick emulsion. At this stage, all you need do is add some lemon juice to sharpen it up and you're ready to roll. It's almost therapeutic, a bit like standing over a pan of nascent risotto.

Harvesting the last few spears, I adopt an almost devil-may-care approach and place them, just cooked, in an oven-proof dish, slather on the hollandaise and – recklessly, I know – grate on a fluffy layer of parmesan. Flashed under a hot grill, this is sheer decadence on a plate.

So, having got this far, what to drink with it? Asparagus is not the most wine-friendly of delicacies but it's less challenging than, say, globe artichokes, which kill virtually every wine without mercy. We'll come to that later in the year. No, asparagus is a lot easier. The purists will tell you that a Savennières, bone dry and made from chenin blanc in the Loire, is yer only man. Well, it's a very good partner, but far from cheap.

My advice is to go with sauvignon blanc. After all, many examples even smell of asparagus (the fresh aroma rather than what happens after it has been through your kidneys). And I'm recommending one in particular this week.

Asparagus has dominated in our kitchen over the past week or two and there has been a lot of salad culled from a small patch of cut-and-come-again mixed lettuces sown in early March in the polytunnel. It's so fresh that the milky juice from the cut stems swirls into the vinaigrette in the salad bowl. Now that's a dressing you can only get at home. And it's time to sow outside right now.

Having done that, outside this time, I'll go and admire the bluebells.

**Y**ears ago, having lunch with the great Hugh Johnson, pioneer of modern wine writing and a master gardener, he told me about his days as a cub journalist with *Vogue*. He was despatched to cover a talk that Lady Rothschild was giving to her local Women's Institute. "No garden," she told them, "however small, should be without its few acres of rough woodland."

Little did I know then that I would end up owning just that, where east Cork merges imperceptibly into west Waterford. The challenges include keeping the paths relatively clear and, while doing so just now, I can enjoy the swathes of bluebells that must have been planted almost a century ago.

This, despite the physical labour,

**“ Searching for it is a lot easier than growing your own ”**

makes a welcome respite from the busiest time of the year in the polytunnel: sowing, planting, watering and mulching with organic spent mushroom compost, so rich and lovely you could almost eat it.

Outside, there's not much happening thanks to our very cold and hesitant spring. The asparagus bed, the product of more digging than I care to remember and over a decade in action, is making valiant

efforts to deliver. I live in hope of warmer weather and some lush growth. Maybe.

In the tunnel there's a smaller asparagus bed, a bijou one if you like, and it's delivering modest quantities of utterly divine spears. The amount is in inverse proportion to the joy.

Proper asparagus, not the all-year-round stuff from Peru and Mexico, is one of the finest things you can eat. Just now you will find it in the odd farmers' market and there are scattered outbreaks of good English stuff in Marks & Spencer, Fallon & Byrne and the like.

Searching for it is a lot easier than growing your own. For a start, you need space and good drainage. And patience. Plant in the autumn and watch, helplessly, as it produces a few weedy spears the following year. But you mustn't

## AND TO WASH IT DOWN ...

Choosing a sauvignon blanc to enhance your asparagus is a matter of personal taste. If you like pungent Kiwi ones, go for it. Or the slightly more restrained Chilean versions. My choice would be the almost self-effacing — by contrast — examples from the Loire. Sure, have a sancerre or, preferably, a pouilly-fumé if you're in

funds, but my choice would be a steely, minerally one from Touraine. A fine candidate would be Le Grand Cerf Touraine Sauvignon (€12.95, O'Brien's, down from €15.95) with its classic crushed blackcurrant leaves (seriously!), green freshness, zippy acidity and mineral tang.





**Left: Renee Moore, a member of staff at Fisk, serves up Mulroy Bay mussels, fish tacos and panko prawn bao, below**

# A trip up to Downings shows small is beautiful

When you tire of the tongue-twisting road signs, the thought of Fisk and chips will help the journey fly by, say *Russell Alford and Patrick Hanlon*

## RESTAURANT REVIEW

@gastrogays



### FISK

The Harbour Bar, Downings, Co Donegal  
fiskseafoodbar.com |  
@BarFiskDownings  
★ **RATING 7.5/10**

No-reservations spots can be both a blessing and curse. Spontaneity is one of the most supreme seasonings for any meal. The spur of the moment and the unexpected can often offer up the best dining experiences. Selfishly, it also becomes far easier to do this job when you can just rock up. Restaurants requiring more than a little diversion, several counties away, with a short window and no bookings are a touch trickier. “Open 1pm-5pm” an Instagram update announces, and as we make our way through the Donegal countryside aiming for that short window of service we’re secretly hoping a sudden rush of custom hasn’t arrived to spoil our spontaneous plans. This particular route to

Donegal involves endless N roads punctuated by a couple of Rs for good measure. Always avoid L roads where you can, as, without fail, you will always meet a tractor hurtling towards you on a bóithrin. That’s just how these byways roll.

Remarking on the road signs passes the time. Past Attaeduff and Skinnahegna, saluting Seskinore and Raflaconnny (yes, three Ns), each one seemingly more of a tongue twister than the last. Craigadoes, Labadish, Legnahorey... and we thought Termonfeekin, Co Louth, was a gas. Once past Letterkenny it’s just a 30-minute schlep – broadcasting stunning scenery – till you find the village of Downings.

Na Dunaibh is one of those well-known coves perfectly positioned for holidaymakers. Nestled in a nook of Rosguill peninsula by Sheephaven Bay, this is Donegal in all its rugged beauty and this corner of Tir Chonail is also a prime stretch of postcard-pretty seaside. Long, curved, sandy strand, crystal clear, azure-hued water, a fancy golf club to one end and a famous bar to the other. No wonder it’s thronged from spring to September.

The Harbour Bar boasts the village’s best view and is a traditional Irish pub laden in memorabilia. Old photos, signs, medals and trinkets. Stoop your head inside for the visual assault of “stuff” on every surface. They take a “the floor is lava” approach and appoint most things on the ceiling. It’s like the best traditional Irish pubs – more a museum you can drink in than anything else, and as good for cosy pints by the fire in the colder months as it is for its

“There’s fresh dill, which feels odd but must link to the Swedish thing



popular terrace with sea views when the climes allow coats to be cast off and sunnies slid on en masse. It’s got a secret weapon, a little fish restaurant alongside called Fisk.

The chef, Tony Davidson, and his wife, Lina Reppert, met in Sydney, moved to Sweden and then settled in Donegal. From childhood visits, Davidson had fond memories of Downings and when the pair returned to Ireland they took a passionate punt on a little side building at the Harbour Bar to turn it into their dream seaside seafood restaurant. Fisk (“fish” in Swedish, a nod to Reppert’s heritage) opened in spring 2018, and has been a fixture for the five years since – not solely summers.

It’s tiny inside, just five tables with a further couple of counter seats and a neat, two-person kitchen to one side. Honouring its heritage and feeling like a traditional Donegal front room, it’s all stone floor, stove in the corner, exposed beams overhead painted white, and black-and-white vintage photographs on the wall of the nearby pier with its trawlers and fishermen. Contemporary touches include beautiful fish and shellfish illustrations hand-painted on the walls, fabric cushions on the benches and wraparound pale blue wainscoting.

Seeing the kitchen it’s no shock the menu at lunch is petite. We order almost all the “small plates” and split a main of buttermilk-battered cod and chips. There’s a small selection of wines, but any other drinks are ordered and paid for in the adjoining Harbour Bar. The tacos are Fisk’s signature, beautiful fingers of battered cod atop a crunchy slaw, dappled in fresh pico de gallo and drizzled in spicy mayo. There’s fresh dill, which feels odd but must link to the Swedish thing. They are well-filled but we wish these were corn tortillas rather than wheat.

The opposite is the case with the prawn bao, a curious case of under-filling. Juicy prawns are panko-coated and sprinkled in two-tone sesame seeds with skinny slivers of pickled cucumber and the same spicy mayo. All it cries out for is the crunch, sour and spice of kimchi. A healthy

## WHAT WE ATE

2 x panko prawn bao €13  
2 x fish tacos €12  
Mulroy Bay mussels in curry broth €10  
Scallops with black pudding and apple puree €14  
Buttermilk-battered cod and chips €19.50  
**TOTAL: €68.50**

clatter of stunning-shelled mussels, from Mulroy Bay up the road, arrive in a pot steeped in an elegant broth sitting somewhere between an Iberian escabeche and a Thai red curry. The bread alongside does its duty but we request spoons to lap up every last drop.

Scallops are the most expensive of the small plates and the tiniest portion. Oceans sit between four minute scallops on a petite plate, each atop a nicely sharp apple puree but interrupted by mealy sprinklings of dried black pudding crumb. It’s a tried and tested combination and the wobbly, alabaster scallops come nicely cooked but the size probably limits the opportunity for pan caramelisation. This riff on a classic strikes a bum note.

Buttermilk cod, the main event, is battered fresh and fried to order, coming in pentagonal “portion” size rather than a whole fillet (the same cod is cut for the tacos). Chips are skinny, skin-on and ordered in, but arrive with perfect crunch ‘n’ fluff, seasoned perfectly. We approve of their use of the Belgian technique of tossing the fries with seasoning in a bowl when removed from the fryer to simultaneously cool and crisp. The vibrant mushy pea puree (mint-free, hooray!) and sharp house tartare are a pair to be held up as benchmarks to all fish shops across the land, such is their supremacy.

Downings has long been a destination, but Fisk is worth the journey.

## IF THAT, THEN THESE...

Fantastic seafood spoils in cosy coastal corners? Try three more: **The Fish Box, Co Kerry** Run by the Flannery family, a trip to Dingle is incomplete without visiting here.

*thefishbox dingle.com* **King Sitric, Howth, Dublin** Declan McManus is the second generation steering this brilliant ship – a jewel in Howth’s crown for half a century.

*kingsitric.ie* **Julia’s Lobster Truck, Co Clare** Popping up at Pot Duggans from June, Julia Hemingway’s delicious shellfish sorcery finds a new home. *@juliaslobstertruck*

# Thinking Of Selling? Tailored, Expert Advice.

# Mullery O'Gara.

ESTATE AGENTS

PSL No. 004302

## 10 Grosvenor Road, Rathmines, Dublin 6. Semi-Detached House. PRICE: €2,500,000



4 4 c. 4,090 SqFt / 380 SqM

BER Exempt

A truly impressive Victorian residence built c. 1859 and designed by famed architect Edward Henry Carson. Standing on c. 0.4 acre original garden with ample parking to front, coach house to side and rear vehicular access off Grosvenor Lane. Enjoying a prime position on this popular road a short walk to Rathmines village, bus routes, schools, parks etc. Magnificent period features including ornate plasterwork, marble mantelpieces, timber doors, floors, windows etc. The generous accommodation over 3 levels comprises Rec Hall, 3 reception rooms, bathroom. Upstairs are 4 bedrooms, study/Bedroom 5, bathroom. At garden level with separate entrance are 4 principle rooms. Outside the grounds are extensive with parking to front, vehicular access to rear off Grosvenor Place. Beside a wide range of schools, shopping, the M50 and easy access to the city centre.

## 5 Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6. Terraced. PRICE: €1,795,000



6 6 c. 2,550 SqFt / 237 SqM

BER D2  
No. 116422494

A most attractive 3 storey period res meticulously maintained with elegant proportions, off-street parking to front and secluded South facing garden to rear. With large inter-connecting reception rooms, open plan kitchen/living, master bedroom with ensuite bathroom. Wonderfully positioned beside Rathmines village, Beechwood Luas, parks, a variety of schools and easy access to Dublin 2 and city centre. Comprising Hall, W.C. WHB, 2 rec, family room. 3 bedrooms upstairs (master ensuite), bathroom. At garden level open plan kitchen/living, bedroom 4, showerroom, GFCH.

## 9 Dartry Road, Dartry, Dublin 6. Semi-Detached. PRICE: €1,900,000

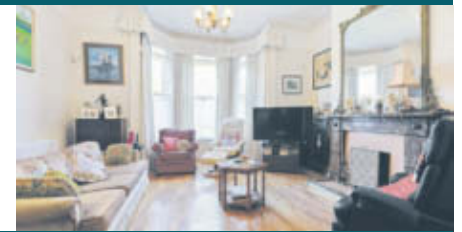


6 6 c. 2,680 SqFt / 249 SqM

BER Exempt

A deceptively spacious c. 2680sq.ft. 249sq.m. bay windowed period residence, well set back from road with South-West garden to rear and side access, Retaining fine original features with elegant proportions throughout. Comprising Hall with W.C., WHB. 2 inter-connecting rec, kitchen, family room, utility, 6 beds, 2 baths. GFCH. Beside Dodder Linear Park, Palmerston Park, schools, Luas, shopping etc. Ample parking.

## 44 Brighton Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6. Semi-Detached. PRICE: €1,500,000



6 6 c. 2,637 Sqft / 245 SqM

BER Exempt

A very fine bay windowed red brick Victorian residence c. 2637 sq.ft. 245 sq.m. set in well kept gardens South West to rear with vehicular access from Tower Avenue. Wonderfully proportioned with magnificent period features throughout, rear parking, situated on one of Rathgar's most favoured roads beside village, schools, bus routes. Comprising Hall, W.C. WHB. 2 rec kitchen, utility, sunroom, 5 bedrooms (one ensuite), bathroom. GFCH.

## 49 Rathfarnham Park, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14. Semi-Detached. PRICE: €1,250,000

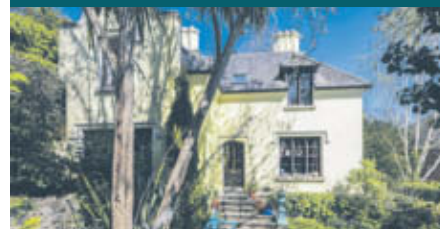


4 4 c. 1,776 Sqft / 165 SqM

BER D2  
No. 116140807

Exceptional 4 bedroom family residence enjoying an enviable position with a large 105ft beautifully landscaped South East facing garden on one of the most sought after roads in the area. Well proportioned with high ceilings & original features & carefully maintained over the years. Superb potential to extend (sub to pp). Accom: Hall, interconnecting dual aspect rec rooms, dining, kitchen, 4 bedrms, bathrm, w.c., garage. 5 minute walk to Terenure & Rathfarnham village, park, schools etc on doorstep.

## Vallombrosa, Mill Close, Orwell Road, Dublin 6. Detached. PRICE: €1,250,000



5 5 c. 1,410 Sqft / 131 SqM

BER D1  
No. 116331208

Standing on elevated site with split level secluded gardens Vallombrosa is a spacious detached residence built c. 1990 and comprising c. 2626 sq.ft. 244 sq.m. living space. With the benefit of garden level accom with separate entrance ideally suited home/office, sep unit etc. The accom comprises 2 large rec, kit/dining, W.C. WHB, 5 bedrooms (main ensuite), bathroom. At Garden level living room, study/bedroom, shower room. Garage.

## 14 Greenmount Road, Terenure, Dublin 6. Semi-Detached. PRICE: €1,595,000



6 6 c. 2,852 SqFt / 265 SqM

BER E2  
No. 116384132

Wonderful opportunity to acquire a double fronted semi-detached family home - one of only a pair, Stringer built and situated on this ever popular road. Completely upgraded in recent years with magnificent gardens, original features, side access. Comprising Hall, W.C. WHB, 6 bedroom (2 ensuite), bathroom, W.C. WHB. Double glazed. GFCH. Well stocked gardens. Beside Terenure Village, Bushy Park, schools.

## 32 Mountainview Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6. Semi-Detached. PRICE: €1,250,000



4 4 c. 1,829 Sq.ft / 170 Sq.m

BER E1  
No. 115396582

Red brick bay windowed period residence on the sunny side of this much sought after road with magnificent original features throughout. Excellently maintained and tastefully presented and full of natural light. Beside Beechwood Luas, shops on Dunville Avenue, Ranelagh village, schools. Comprising Hall, W.C. WHB, 2 rec, kitchen, family room, utility, 4 bedrooms, bathroom. Secluded gardens, side ent. GFCH.

## 92 Bushy Park Road, Terenure, Dublin 6 Semi-Detached. PRICE: €995,000



4 4 c. 1,860 Sq.ft / 173 Sq.m

BER E1  
No. 115584062

A most impressive and characterful Bailey built family residence located on the verge of the village. High ceilings & exceptionally well proportioned accom, carefully maintained throughout. Accom wide entrance hall, interconnecting receptions, kit/din, 4 beds, westerly aspect. Garage to side. Generous parking. Superb potential to further extend.

## 51 Crannagh Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14. Detached. PRICE: €850,000



3 3 c. 1,690 SqFt / 157 SqM

BER G1  
No. 116405564

Rare Opportunity - A most attractive dormer style bungalow boasting a landscaped West facing patio garden. High ceilings, functional layout, modern & impeccable condition. Accommodation: Hall, open plan living/dining, kitchen, 3 bedrooms, 1 ensuite and bathroom. Quiet setting, superb location with all amenities on doorstep.

## Killeadan, Leopardstown Road, Foxrock, Dublin 18. Detached.. PRICE: €1,200,000



5 5 c. 2,281 SqFt / 212 SqM

BER D2  
No. 116373788

An impressive 5 bed, double fronted red brick family home set back from Leopardstown Road. Full of warmth and original features throughout. Comprising inner hall, ent hall, 2 rec rms, diningrm, kit/breakfastm, utility, 5 bedrms (one ensuite) & bathroom. Ample off street parking to front and private, well stocked rear garden. Positioned in an ever popular location with every amenity on your doorstep to include schools, shops and restaurants.

## 10 Merton Crescent, Mount Saint Annes, Milltown, Dublin 6. Terraced. PRICE: €1,150,000



5 5 c. 2,368 Sq.ft / 220 Sq.m

BER B2  
No. 116436098

Well presented five bed property set in the prestigious & award winning development of Mount Saint Annes. Deceptively spacious, in turn key cond with beautifully landscaped sun trap West facing garden. Comprising Hall, liv rm, open plan kit/din/liv, utility, W.C. 1st floor has an impressive liv rm, master bedrm (ensuite) & bathrm. Top floor has 4 spacious bedrms (2 ensuite), main bathrm. Walking distance to Ranelagh, Milltown, Donnybrook. Luas stop on site.

## MOVE



**Matthew Greer works for a wedding videography company from the Station House co-working space in Monaghan town**

**M**onaghan calls itself the “enterprising county”, and has the statistics to back it up. It punches way above its weight when it comes to entrepreneurs, with 21.3 per cent of the workforce defined as such, as compared with a national figure of 16.9 per cent. And Monaghan town itself is going with the flow as there will soon be three digital co-working hubs in a town with a population just shy of 8,000.

The first to open was in January 2021, during the dark days of Covid. The Station House had been the station master’s house before the railway stopped running to Monaghan in 1969. The building was rescued from dereliction and redeveloped by Paul and Ann Bowe, and is now a vibrant co-working centre. Charlie Cox, the general manager, had worked for Paul Bowe’s company, BD Foods, for many years before it closed in 2020. “After BD closed, I think that Paul was restless without a business to run and it was his sons, David and Tommy [the former Ireland and Lions rugby international] who suggested developing a digital hub.”

Sean McKenna was the first tenant. “I was practically breaking down the door, begging them to let me in,” he says. “I was very happy to see the back of the madness of driving around doing my VAT returns in a van.” McKenna started Blasta: Gourmet Street Food in 2017 with his partner Nikita McCrory and, two years later, started Streat School, a one-stop shop for buying a mobile retail truck, and exports trucks to the UK and Europe. “I see the remote working model as 100 per cent the future, it eliminates the whole concept of unnecessary presenteeism and box-ticking and frees a business from the bills, insurance and admin involved in a bricks-and-mortar operation,” McKenna says.

Neill Dunwoody left Monaghan with the intention of never returning. “At that time there were no jobs on a large scale in Monaghan, and I didn’t see that happening; you had to go to the cities.” Dunwoody works from the Station House running the digital healthcare start-up Spryt, which uses analytics and behavioural science to eliminate missed oncology appointments, a costly problem for health services.

“I moved into the Station House in February 2021. Monaghan is a great place to be an entrepreneur; I enjoy the monthly networking ‘Montrepreneur’ meetings organised by Sean McKenna of Blasta here in the Station House.”

Grace Cotter is an editor and producer for Fuel HQ, a live and virtual events production company with offices in Dublin and London. She moved back to Monaghan from Dublin with her partner in January 2020. “I’m not great at the WFH model, and prefer the separation of home and work life. I saw the Station House on social media and applied. A digital hub enables me to work from my home town. The change I see in Monaghan is that when I left during the last recession everyone was leaving, now everyone is moving back, especially those with kids.”

One of those is Matthew Greer, who does filming for a wedding videography company called Dear Oliver. “We were living in Dublin in 2020 when we had a baby,” Greer says. “Wedding work stopped with the lockdown, so we moved home for a while, then back to Dublin, but we discovered it was a very different experience living there with a small child.”

**Continued on page 14 →**

## Going Places

# Enterprising Monaghan

This close-to-the-border county is a bustling hub of vibrant businesses and co-working spaces, discovers *Barbara Egan*

19  
PLUSH RUGS  
HOW TO GET  
MORE FROM  
YOUR FLOOR



# Move



“I like Monaghan – it’s vibrant and has everything you want. There’s lots going on. Digital working is here to stay”

**Continued from page 13 →**  
 One thing that stands out about the Station House is its visual appeal; it has a unique character that has been beautifully restored. In the old railway station next door, I meet the architect Ronan Fitzpatrick of Craftstudio, who was responsible for the refurbishment. Fitzpatrick is from Cavan and his partner Peter McGonigle is from Donegal, but in 2011 they fixed on Monaghan town to open a practice in as the town had no architect working there. “We rented offices originally but were looking for a property; Monaghan train station had been used by various businesses since the railway closed, but in 2019 was close to derelict. It’s a beautiful building, so we bought it and developed part of it as our offices. We now employ 11 people.” Fitzpatrick has completed several digital hubs, the Station House, Co:Worx in Edgeworthstown, M:Tek’s digital hub, also in Monaghan town, and has several more in the design phase.  
 Another new digital hub in Monaghan, opening in the next few weeks, is the Railway Exchange. This is Fitzpatrick’s vision of a communal incubation space for creative industries, now having the finishing touches put to it in the remaining part of the old Victorian train station. It has meeting spaces, exhibition spaces and offices of varying size.  
 The digital hub at Monaghan’s M:Tek opened in October 2022; it was developed by Enterprising Monaghan’s chief executive, Finbarr Daly. Dora Mac Elwain is the manager. With Enterprising Monaghan and the Monaghan local enterprise office in-house at M:Tek, the hub offers assistance and advice on

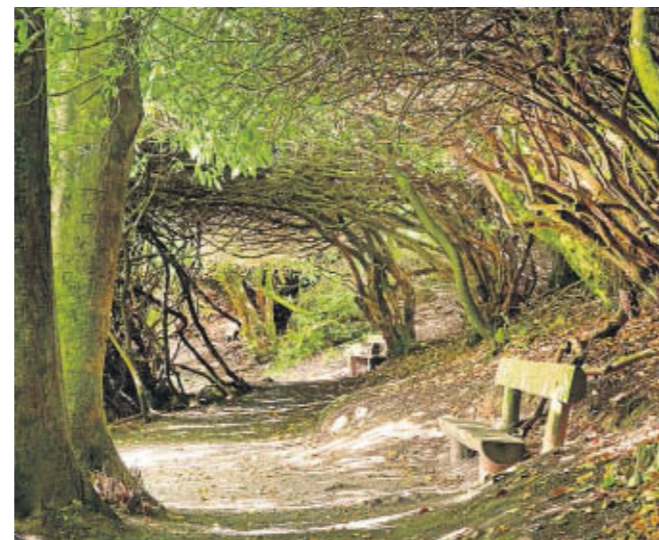
entrepreneurial development and funding. “We need to attract high-wage businesses into the county as well as convincing high-wage people to remain in Monaghan, even when working for firms headquartered in other locations,” Mac Elwain explains.

The digital hub was designed by Craftstudio, the interiors in consultation with Mac Elwain. “Digital hubs help people to become part of their own community; as they don’t commute they have time to mix in the community, play sports and help with kids’ teams,” Mac Elwain says. “Enterprise Monaghan has developed a remote working course for managers and team members called Remote Success, which helps businesses get the best out of remote working. One of the specific attractions of remote working here in Monaghan is the location close to the border; because of Brexit and GDPR regulations, some forms of information cannot be brought across the border, so a desk or office in the south may be the solution.”

And indeed, downstairs I find Francis Maye from 3C Global Group, an international supplier to the world’s largest recruitment agencies, corporate businesses and independent contractors. Maye lives in Armagh where the company business centre is, but travels to M:Tek two days a week. “As a result of Brexit we need a European base, so the team is split between Monaghan and Amsterdam,” Maye explains.

Upstairs I find Niall Glancy, who works for John Paul Construction as a quantity surveyor. Originally from Leitrim, he married a Monaghan girl. “I work two days a week on site in Dublin, the rest here on a hot desk in M:Tek. It’s 20 minutes from home, open from 7.30am to 10pm and suits perfectly. I like Monaghan – it’s vibrant and has everything you want. There’s lots going on with the Garage Theatre, cinema, cafés, activities for the kids and Rossmore Forest Park. Digital working is here to stay in my opinion, a lot of my colleagues do so and we connect via Teams.”

One buzzy café, Cottontail, is run by Samantha Hawe, who originally left Monaghan in 2004 to study fashion design in Manchester. After a stint



working for Manchester United in visual merchandising, she qualified as a teacher before returning home in 2014. Teaching art to a class of doctors from Monaghan Hospital, she had the idea to start an art studio café in an empty unit in the Diamond and moved in 2015.

“It went so well that in 2019 I took the unit next door, doubling the café seating and adding an art studio. Then came Covid and everything closed. The thing was, some people really rely on the art classes, especially the retired. So I set up a WhatsApp group, moved the art classes online and as not all were tech-savvy, donned my protective gear and headed off to their homes to get them set up.”

“In the end, Covid actually improved my business model in some ways as now I offer both in-person and online classes, as well as delicious food.”

The Monaghan-born sisters Kathy Sherry and Caroline Quinn run a destination shop in nearby Glaslough Street called Dirty Fabulous. On her travels in Australia, Thailand and Tokyo, Sherry was taken with the fabulous vintage boutiques, and sent Quinn a long email explaining why she thought they should open one. She waited three days, then got a reply: “Let’s do it!”

They left their jobs and opened in a shop in Dublin’s Baggot Street in 2008, moving to Wicklow Street in 2013. The business was very successful but, for her and her husband, finding the right home for their two children was not. “We bid on maybe 30 houses between 2005 and 2013, but nothing ever sold within our budget,” Sherry says.

“It was a huge decision, but houses were just getting more expensive. We found a 1950s two-up-two-down with a huge garden and room to extend in

Monaghan town, bought it in 2013 and moved in 2015. Caroline and the shop were still in Dublin, but I found her a lovely old schoolhouse in need of a complete retrofit, and we moved the business here, had a great six months, then the country was locked down.

“When we started up again it was by appointment only, but we get people from everywhere. We love being a resource for Monaghan, but there are plenty of other great boutiques in the town too.”

“Joined up thinking” is a phrase I encounter a few times, so I wonder, is there a master plan? I head back to M:Tek digital hub for my last interview, where, handily, I borrow one of the meeting rooms.

“The Department of Rural and Community Development was set up as a standalone department in 2017,” its minister, Heather Humphreys, a Monaghan native, says. “By 2019, we knew that the biggest opportunity for future work in Ireland was remote; we had seen it in action in the US. Then in 2020 Covid catapulted the whole thing forward. We had to grab it with both hands. We invested €100 million. The buildings acquisition measure, along with the Croí Conaithe [grants for the renovation of empty homes], infrastructure redevelopment and the trading online vouchers are all designed to work in unison to revitalise and regenerate rural towns. There are 318 digital co-working hubs registered on ConnectedHubs.ie. The possibility of working in a digital hub brings people back to small towns. It also means that people living in the US or Australia can come home to visit their families, and stay all summer if they wish,” she says.

It sounds like joined-up thinking to me.



## AMENITIES, ATTRACTIONS AND EVENTS

- Monaghan Town Farmers’ Market runs every Friday from 10am to 2pm in Church Square.
- Monaghan Street Food Festival runs every year.
- Monaghan Taste Club runs themed dining events every month.
- The Cottontail Café runs combined food and art events for children and adults.
- Monaghan Garage Theatre has extensive events and a youth theatre programme; Monaghan has a five-screen Omniplex.
- Rossmore Forest Park has extensive

trails through the old Rossmore Estate and boasts a great playground, ice cream and snacks at the Coffee Doc, and the ever-growing tribe of Rossmore Giants, whimsical mythical wooden sculptures by the artist Marc Kelly.

- The Monaghan Greenway, a 4.5km paved walking/cycling track, follows the course of the Ulster Canal.
- Sliabh Beagh or Bragan Mountain is an upland bog of outstanding natural beauty with assorted walks and trails.
- Sliabh Beagh Adventures offer guided walks and cycles.

# Move

# New to the market

Grainne Rothery's pick of the properties available to buy in Ireland this week

## CO MAYO

Completed in 2006, No 3 Cill O Seighin is a two-bedroom, two-bathroom home at one end of a terrace of three located just over 1km from the centre of Ballinrobe.

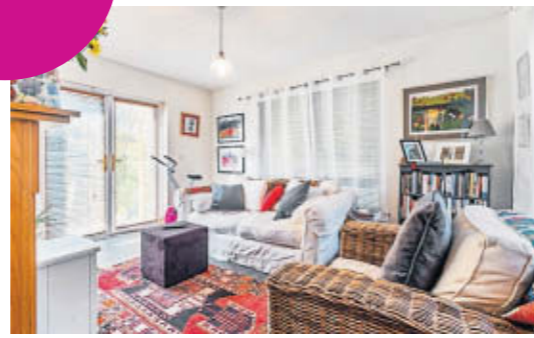
Downstairs accommodation in this 75 sq m house includes a triple-aspect living room with a fireplace and double doors to the garden, a kitchen, a bedroom and a guest WC. There's another bedroom with fitted wardrobes and a full bathroom upstairs. To the rear and side there's an enclosed garden, with a patio area next to those doors from the living room. The house has oil-fired central heating and a C1 energy rating.

Cill O Seighin is just off the N84, which links Galway and Castlebar. Galway is 45km away and Castlebar 30km.

**Agent** propertypartners.ie  
**What we love** The bright aspect and the huge built-in bookcase in the hallway.  
**Good to know** No 3 is located at the end of a cul-de-sac.



€165,000



## CO MEATH

The relatively modest exterior of this property in Tankardstown near Clonaly conceals a 270 sq m interior with six bedrooms and four bathrooms.

Three of the bedrooms are downstairs, along with a living room, the kitchen and a huge family room with a dining area, a corner fireplace with a solid-fuel stove, a built-in bar and access to the garden. There's a bathroom at this level.

Three more bedrooms, including the main, which has an en suite shower room and a balcony, are upstairs, along with another bathroom.

The property, which is set behind electric gates, has a large front garden and private space to the rear, including a patio, lawn and a barbecue hut.

**Agent** dng.ie  
**What we love** The amount of space, inside and out.  
**Good to know** The property has solar panels and a C2 energy rating.



€645,000



## DUBLIN 11

No 99 Old Finglas Road is a 120 sq m semi-detached four-bedroom home with off-street parking at the front.

Downstairs accommodation includes a storm porch, an entrance hall, a living room with a marble fireplace and a solid-fuel stove and, connected by pocket doors, a large kitchen/dining room. There's also a guest WC at this level. The bedrooms — three doubles and a single — are upstairs, along with the family bathroom. The back garden, accessed via French doors, has a sandstone patio with steps to a raised lawn.

The house has uPVC double-glazed windows, oil-fired central heating and a C3 energy rating.

**Agent** lisney.com  
**What we love** The timber staircase with its 1960s wrought-iron balustrade.  
**Good to know** There's a detached garage at the end of the garden that's accessed from Cremore Lawns at the rear.



€595,000



## DUBLIN 4 SPACIOUS, AIRY AND A COMMERCIAL UNIT

Built in 1966 and completely refurbished by the current owners 20 years ago, Seafield Lodge on Stillorgan Road is more than just a large and well maintained house and garden. Set on a quarter acre site on a side road that runs parallel with the N11, the property has a commercial unit attached to the house that's being used as a dental and aesthetics surgery.

This space has its own entrance and includes a reception area, three clinic rooms and a WC. The agent suggests it could continue as a commercial entity, be converted into student or guest accommodation or be integrated back into the main house.

Not that there's any shortage of living space at present. The house is entered through a porch that leads into a generous hallway with walnut flooring.

On the right, the living room, which has a sandstone fireplace with a marble hearth, looks onto the front garden and has double doors to the side garden and a patio.

Next to it, the family room has built-in cabinetry and more doors to the patio.

The huge L-shaped kitchen/breakfast/dining room has an island unit with a limestone worktop, an integrated double oven and four-ring electric hob, plus a gas ring, a microwave, a fridge, a freezer and a dishwasher. More double doors lead out to the patio, which wraps around the back and side of the house.

Five bedrooms, one with an en suite shower room, are upstairs as well as a potential sixth, which is being used as a dressing room/gym at present. There's a family bathroom, a separate shower room and a laundry room with a tumble dryer and plumbing for a washing machine.

The outside space includes a large gravel parking area at the front, lawn at the front and side and the patio.

**Agent** huntersestateagent.com  
**What we love** The manicured and private gardens, including the lovely Scots pine at the front.

**Good to know** External insulation was added four years ago.



€1.95m



## CO LEITRIM CHARMING RATHER THAN GRAND

Located next door to the four-star hotel Lough Rynn Castle, Clooncoe House was built in the late 1700s and originally part of its grand neighbour's estate. According to the vendor, the house was used to accommodate stewards and estate managers for the Clements family and Earl of Leitrim-owned land for two centuries. The house sits on its own 5.8 acres of land and has frontage onto the lake, as well as a beech and oak-lined drive, extensive gardens and woodland, a separate stone cottage and stables.

The main house is charming rather than grand and offers 207 sq m of accommodation across two floors. The small entrance hall with Victorian chequered tiles leads on the left to a dual-aspect drawing room with an open fireplace and, straight ahead, to an inner hall. On one side of this is a series of rooms running from the front to the back of the house — kitchen/living room, breakfast room, pantry and bathroom.

On the other side are a formal dining room with wooden floors, a skylight and French doors to a southwest-facing patio with lake views. Next to this is an en suite bedroom. Three more bedrooms are upstairs, along with a bathroom with Jack-and-Jill access from the hallway and one of the bedrooms.

After buying Clooncoe House 23 years ago, the current owners added an extension and converted the detached cottage, which comprises a living room with a kitchen, a bathroom and a bedroom with an en suite bathroom.

The vendors have operated a B&B at the property for the past 15 years. Trading under the name Brooklawn House, it has a five-star rating on TripAdvisor.

**Agent** sherryfitz.ie  
**What we love** The full package — the charming house, beautiful gardens and lake access.

**Good to know** The property is 1.7km from Lough Rynn Castle, 5.3km from the town of Mohill and 22km from Carrick-on-Shannon.



€695,000



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# Interiors

## The one thing: *a plush rug*

*Sarah Macken* chooses some cosy and stylish floor coverings



**A**t a breakfast with the Irish press Peter Eriksson of Kasthall ([kasthall.com](http://kasthall.com)) – the Swedish rug maker that is the last word in craftsmanship – observed that Irish people and Britons are fond of carpets compared with our European neighbours. (On that note, I propose we should scrub our dependency on dreaded grey carpeting from the national agenda.)

What about rugs? Bouclé, the material that is the darling of the fashion world, is popular again, Eriksson observed. In 1998 Kasthall's lead designer, Gunilla Lagerhem Ullberg, developed a machine to create a bouclé yarn. The result is pure luxury. On the high street, find bouclé-style rugs at French Connection and Zara Home – perfect for the minimalist who likes something plush underfoot.

Back to Kasthall: it has teamed up with Nordic Elements in Blackrock, Dublin, to offer a bespoke rug-design service. The heritage brand offers hand-tufted and woven rugs, made from New Zealand wool and French or Belgian linen, with minimal, clean design and an astute use of colour. There are 180 colours, as well as various patterns and sizes, to choose from. And while prices are at the investment end, the fabrication means you could have them for years.

Why? Natural fibres tend to be more expensive than synthetics, but wool and linen are hypoallergenic (wool is flameproof too), which is a plus for the home. Not only do natural fabrics wear well, they are self-cleaning in a way. Wool is high in fat, which

▲ Printed outdoor rug, 120cm x 180cm, €20; at [Dunnes Stores](http://DunnesStores.com) and [dunnesstores.com](http://dunnesstores.com)

naturally repels dirt, and stains don't soak in as easily. If you do – yikes! – spill on a good rug, the best way to treat it, say the experts, is to spot-clean the area with lukewarm water and hand soap.

If punchy colour is your bag, I suggest the Conran Shop's new collaboration with the shopping platform Collagerie. The collection is reminiscent of those pieces you see at a market or a beautiful shop on holidays and you can never fit into your carry-on. The multicoloured Jade Block Stripe runner is a summery home edition that pairs well with open French doors, fresh flowers and alfresco dining (although it's too nice to throw on to your deck). If you are looking for a good outdoor rug, try Dunnes Stores and Ikea or, at the higher end, Lost Weekend in Dun Laoghaire offers striking forever rugs suited to both indoors and out.

A recent Irish find is Cork-based [Rugs.ie](http://Rugs.ie) and its jute and sisal rugs. I love the look of these natural materials. It's worth noting that sisal is a rough fabric, good for high-traffic areas such as hallways and living areas, whereas jute, which is softer underfoot, is better suited to bedrooms. Lastly, the edit of rugs at Howbert & Mays is worth noting – there is a small range of reworked kilims and runners at its branch in Clare Street (from €500). Each one is handmade in Turkey using old yarn from antique kilims that is rewoven and refreshed to make new pieces.



▲ Blending Swedish craftsmanship with a contemporary aesthetic, Kasthall offers a rug designer tool at Nordic Elements where you can plan a bespoke piece, starting at €640 per metre. The lead time is approximately eight weeks; [nordicelements.com](http://nordicelements.com)



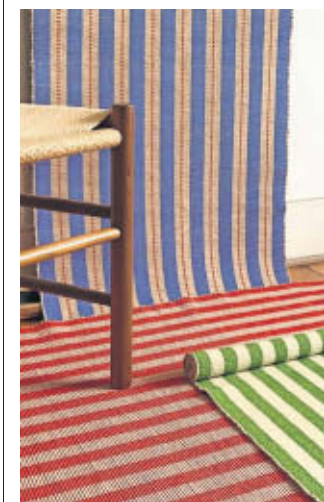
▲ Embraced by the fashion scene, Kasthall has created stand-out rugs for Acne Studios in New York and Max Mara in Milan, as well as the Cos store on Wicklow Street in Dublin



▲ The Anderson wool and cotton runner, 200cm x 70cm, comes in relaxing pastel shades and a bold geometric pattern, €150; [oliverbonas.com](http://oliverbonas.com)

◀ This jade-hued block stripe runner, part of the collaboration between the ecommerce platform Collagerie (helmed by Lucinda Chambers and Serena Hood, the former fashion directors of British Vogue) and the Conran Shop, makes a style statement, 70cm x 250cm, €201; [conranshop.co.uk](http://conranshop.co.uk)

► The Tulip Suzani rug by the British designer Birdie Fortescue features a statement floral design. It measures 170cm x 240cm; €1,064; [birdiefortescue.co.uk](http://birdiefortescue.co.uk)



◀ Handwoven in London, cosy Hearth rugs by Sabine Van Der Sande are designed to warm bare feet in a kitchen. The brand advises to beat rugs outside rather than vacuuming to maintain longevity, 115cm x 58cm, €224.50; [loom.supply](http://loom.supply)



▲ Sisal rug with sage border, from €140 for the 120cm x 180cm version, [Rugs.ie](http://Rugs.ie) at St Patrick's Woollen Mills, Douglas, Cork and [rugs.ie](http://rugs.ie)



◀ A chequered jute rug, such as this one by Amber Lewis for Anthropologie, is a trendy update on a classic piece, 61cm x 91cm, €70; [anthropologie.com](http://anthropologie.com)



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Las Vegas	€593 <sup>#</sup>	€1,919 <sup>†</sup>	Bangkok	€734 <sup>^</sup>	€2,779 <sup>^</sup>	Sydney	€1,156 <sup>^</sup>	€4,745 <sup>†</sup>
Orlando	€620 <sup>^</sup>	€1,727 <sup>^</sup>	Maldives	€815 <sup>◊</sup>	€2,719 <sup>#</sup>	Melbourne	€1,219 <sup>#</sup>	€5,905 <sup>◊</sup>
Los Angeles	€646 <sup>◊</sup>	€1,968 <sup>^</sup>	Tokyo	€859 <sup>◊</sup>	€3,680 <sup>^</sup>	Auckland	€1,553 <sup>^</sup>	€6,136 <sup>#</sup>

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# Travel



# Beyond

# La La Land

The City of Angels is famous for sunshine and movie stars, but dig a little deeper and there's plenty to do and see, whether in the desert or by the ocean, says *Vicki Notaro*



Sunset Boulevard, left, is the perfect place to base yourself for the Hollywood experience. A hike up to the iconic sign, below, is worth it in any weather

**M**any presume Los Angeles to be a one-trick pony, a place where people go for sunshine and to rub off the rich and famous and their showbiz glamour. But there's more to La La Land than just sun and stars; it's actually a vibrant, multicultural place with myriad neighbourhoods to suit all tastes. Pick one area or build an itinerary around a view – variety abounds in the greater area...

## THE CITY WEST HOLLYWOOD (WEHO)

We started our trip in West Hollywood, an area known for its nightlife and restaurants. In the 1970s, it was a lawless place where rock stars and groupies fraternised, thanks to the many bars, venues and clubs along the Sunset Strip. Now the hipsters have landed. There's still a little grunge to be found but a lot of the old places shuttered indefinitely during the pandemic.

We stayed at the Pendry (from €450 a night), a relatively new and modern establishment on Sunset with views over the San Fernando Valley towards downtown LA. Its rooms are small but chic, appointed with brass and animal print, and its signature deep teal shade is seen throughout. There's a fascinating art installation in the lobby, a Moët & Chandon vending machine and a chic rooftop pool. The two restaurants on site are owned by the celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck, famous for his old restaurant Spago and for catering the Oscars.

From the hotel, you can exit on to the Strip where you'll find iconic landmarks such as Mel's Diner (surprisingly great) and the Chateau Marmont (much more dingy than expected). I spotted Sharon Horgan taking a meeting at the Sunset Tower, and had a nose in a brand-new marijuana dispensary that felt more like a designer boutique. Cannabis is now legal in California, and these fancy stores are a far cry from the head shops of yesteryear.

If you exit the Pendry from its main entry, and walk down a steep hill, you'll come to Santa Monica Boulevard. It's the area of WeHo known for going out, with bars and restaurants all the way along and a much more chilled vibe. You can walk to Melrose to visit the famous Pink Wall and Pink's Hotdogs (unrelated) or you can stroll towards Fairfax and the popular Farmers Market and the Grove shopping enclave. You can wander some more and end up on Rodeo Drive, taking in the sights and sounds of

Continued on page 22 →

# 23

TRAVEL CHAOS  
BEZ ON BALLET  
DANCERS AND  
BARBADOS



# Travel



## → Continued from page 21

Beverly Hills. WeHo is known for being an LGBT safe haven, and there are lots of gay bars and clubs.

In a city where it's said nobody walks, we really walked. You can Uber to restaurants but it's eminently strollable and full of sights and sounds you won't want to miss. If hiking is more your thing, the WeHo-based company Bikes and Hikes offers guided tours to the Hollywood sign. We went one rainy morning and despite the weather, it was a wondrous way to spend a few hours and great exercise. Dress accordingly. **Drink** Sur, the Abbey, Laurel Hardware **Eat** Craig's, the Polo Lounge (order the McCarthy salad) **See** The Academy Museum, the Hollywood Walk of Fame [visitweho.com](http://visitweho.com)

## THE BEACH SANTA MONICA

If crashing waves and scenic views are more your style, you may want to base yourself beside the Pacific Ocean in Santa Monica, which has its own more laidback nightlife, with dive bars to beat the band, and if you're renting a car, you can't beat a drive down the Pacific Coast Highway to Malibu.

We checked in to Shutters on the Beach (from €500 a night), a five-star establishment that lives up to its name with its epic location beside the famous Santa Monica pier. I felt instantly relaxed as I sat on the small balcony overlooking the ocean, and the rooms are beautifully

appointed with a beachy glam theme. The hotel has several dining options, but we chose to eat out as the area has so much to offer.

We biked to Venice, viewing the famous boardwalk and Muscle Beach from the safety of our saddles and found the bizarrely beautiful canals nearby. We went on the rollercoaster on the pier, shopped at the Third Street Promenade and even did trivia night (their version of a pub quiz) at Barney's Beanery, where you can have a champagne breakfast consisting of a bottle of Dom Pérignon and a hot dog for \$300. **Drink** Barney's Beanery, the Backyard at Chez Jays **Eat** Chez Jays, Erewhon **See** Venice Beach and canals, Santa Monica Pier, Third Street Promenade [santamonica.com](http://santamonica.com)

## THE DESERT PALM SPRINGS

The area known as Greater Palm Springs encompasses nine distinct areas in the Coachella Valley, each with its own personality. We stayed in downtown Palm Springs, the entryway to the rest, in the achingly hip Ace Hotel (from €183 a night). It's an old Howard Johnson highway motel, transformed into a chic and sustainable enclave with two pools, a bar, a restaurant and young clientele.

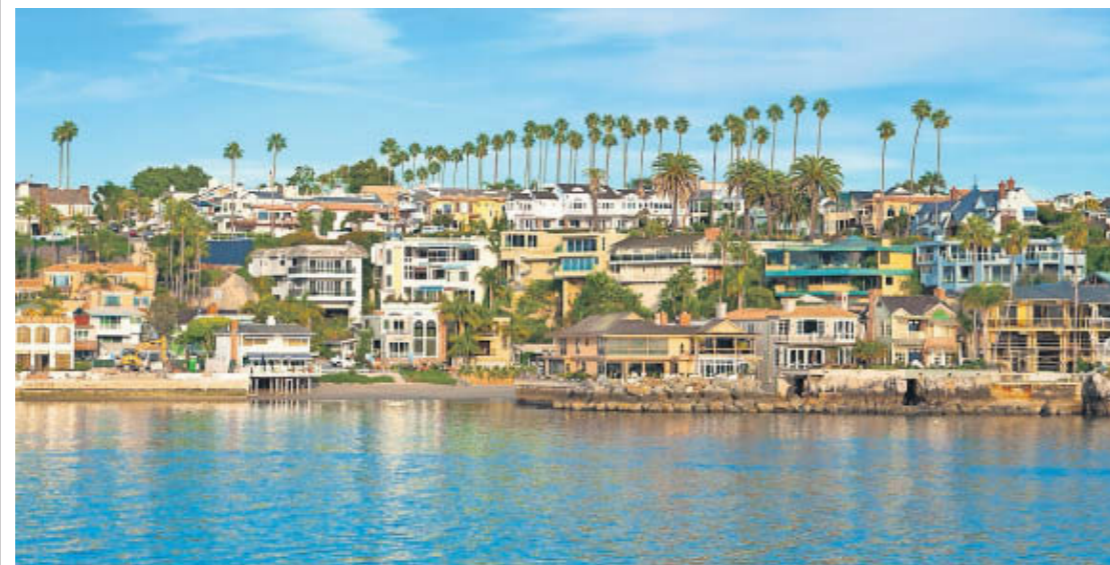
You need a car to get to the desert, and the drive from LA is straightforward. I was struck by how green the area was but was told it had been an unusually wet winter. I loved Palm Springs on sight. It's

beautiful, with cacti, blue skies and glamorous people. It's also got something for everyone; we went shopping in high-end Palm Desert, visited the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens where we fed giraffes, and went for a drive out to Joshua Tree to see the famous national park. It's also gay friendly, with lots of clubs and bars devoted to LGBT nightlife, and many adult-only and even male-only hotels.

For the three nights we were there, I didn't touch my make-up bag, lived in shorts and was bewitched by the sparkling night sky. It's simply out of this world, the ultimate chill-out destination. **Drink** The Parker Hotel's sexy bar **Eat** Breakfast at Elmer's, dinner at Ace **See** The Aerial Tramway, for spectacular views [visitgreaterpalmsprings.com](http://visitgreaterpalmsprings.com)

## THE SMALL TOWN PASADENA

When it was suggested we visit Pasadena, we were reluctant. I was eventually swayed because of its proximity to Universal Studios, because I'm a theme park nut. While this was a plus, I was raging we weren't spending longer in this beautiful part of LA. Forty minutes from WeHo by car, it's like another world entirely. Affluent and beautifully manicured, it looks straight out of a Nancy Meyers movie but has so much personality. On our first night we visited a female-owned winery and olive oil bar,



**Santa Monica beach, above, has stunning ocean views and is the best place to relax. Pasadena, left, has a small-town vibe and is not to be missed, while Newport Beach, below, is the centre of Orange County living**

Leona Lewis's vegan café, a boba tea house for fluffy Japanese pancakes, and a world-class dim sum place.

We stayed at the Langham Huntington (from €250 a night), a sprawling building with a Japanese garden and Chinese spa. The area has a large Asian population, which is reflected in its culture.

We visited the nearby Descanso gardens with 30,000 tulips in bloom, the famous Rose Bowl stadium, which is at the heart of the town, and even took in a comedy night at the Ice House, where we were thrilled to see *Ted Lasso's* Brett Goldstein perform.

**Drink** Playhouse Village or Old Pasadena – so much choice

**Eat** Bar Chelou, Chef Tony's

**See** The Ice House, the Rose Bowl, stroll the shops on South Lake Avenue and Colorado, Super Mario Land at Universal Studios Hollywood [visitpasadena.com](http://visitpasadena.com)

## THE OC NEWPORT BEACH

Made famous by television, from the *Real Housewives* to the series of the same name, Orange County is known for being one of the wealthiest communities in the US. I don't think I've ever seen somewhere where everyone was so thin, so white and so rich.

We stayed at VEA (from €350 a night), a high-rise resort opposite Fashion Island, a pretty outdoor mall. The hotel didn't have a lot in the way of personality, but I suspect it's great in high summer thanks to a huge pool and cabanas.

The area I liked best was a man-made island named Balboa, a strip of small, independent businesses and cute restaurants with distinct New England vibes, and lots of beach houses with private piers and boats parked out back. There were dogs galore, heaps of seafood and bars, and lots of people letting loose at the weekend in their bonus homes.

While there are beaches down the coast, Newport proper is more like a harbour with sandy stretches. We took a tour of the bay in a small electric boat called a Duffy, with sparkling wine and an Insta-friendly cheese board. **Drink** The Jellyfish Lounge at the Cannery **Eat** Joey, buzzy and sexy steak and seafood; or Nobu, classic sushi **See** Sea Señorita Duffys sunset cruise (@seasenoritaduffys) or Balboa Fun Zone, a vintage funfair [visitnewportbeach.com](http://visitnewportbeach.com)

*Aer Lingus flies direct daily from Dublin, from €399 each way. For more information, places to stay and suggestions, see [visitcalifornia.com](http://visitcalifornia.com)*

## MY HOLS MARK 'BEZ' BERRY

The percussionist caused chaos in Barbados and ended up penniless in Morocco

“When I was a kid my favourite trips were to Holimarine holiday camps. Then, all of a sudden, my dad got into hiking and we would go away with my cousins, nana and grandad, climbing every mountain in England, Scotland and Wales. We all hated it, because we had gone from

eating Chipsticks and drinking Coca-Cola on the beach to marching up and down mountains.

I was a bit of a juvenile delinquent and ended up in a borstal. When I got out I decided that I didn't ever want to go back there. I knew I had to escape the environment where I was brought up, so I took the Magic Bus to Greece with two friends. Our first port of call was Corfu, but my mates didn't last very long. They couldn't stand Mediterranean food, which was unlike the typical Salfordian diet of pie, chips and beans.

I met two French girls and travelled with them for a while. I started seeing one of them and arranged to meet her in the south of France. I arrived a week late, so she'd already moved on. One morning I woke up on the beach opposite two ballerinas sitting on a wall. I went from beach bum to resident at one of the top apartment blocks in Cannes – owned by the dad of one of the girls, a Parisian judge – and driving around in a Porsche 944.



I was excited to soak up cultures I had never experienced before and hitchhiked across Europe, through Spain and Portugal. Everyone used to call me “Manchester” and I was often asked to get my passport out to prove I was English, because no one could understand a word I was saying.

Running out of cash, I returned to France to pick grapes. Once it started to get wintry I moved further south to Turkey, ending up in Morocco with a load of hash and no money. After 11 months I borrowed £40 off my nana to get home.

I had an amazing time,

**As part of his hitchhiking trip around Europe, Bez spent some time living the high life in Cannes**

**Mark “Bez” Berry, 59, from Walkden, Salford, lives in Herefordshire with his wife, Firouzeh. He is best known as the dancing maracas player with Happy Mondays and for appearances on television shows such as Dancing on Ice and Celebrity Gogglebox**



with forever changing circumstances, leaving no stone unturned. I've been on the road ever since and I have great recollections of touring, from playing the Rock in Rio festival in Brazil, holed up in the same hotel as Guns N' Roses, to getting completely wasted on a pilgrimage to Jim Morrison's grave at Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris – that was a good day.

The Happy Mondays always managed to get into crazy situations, narrowly surviving near-death experiences. We've been held up, nearly shot at and DJ'd for Mexican drug cartels in Colombia.

When we went to Barbados to record our fourth album, *Yes Please!*, in 1992, we caused absolute chaos from the moment we arrived to the moment we left. I broke my arm when the Jeep I was driving through sugarcane fields flipped over on my way back from scoring some rum. I've revisited the island since and really appreciated what a beautiful place it is – now I'm no longer in a haze of my own making.

I've been holidaying in Cornwall since my oldest sons, Arlo, 32, and Jack, 30, were young. We go every year, and this summer I'm taking my 14-year-old, Leo, and his mates to stay in my new caravan.

I keep a fishing boat in Porthleven and I try to fish, but it's really hard when you've got kids using your boat as a diving board. We've caught mackerel and lobster, which my friend Kelvin cooks up at his restaurant, the Mussel Shoal.

For our honeymoon last year, Firouzeh and I went to Sardinia. We always have one wild night out when we're away and the rest of the time we like going to different restaurants, eating nice food and visiting new places.

During a DJ tour of Australia we went paragliding through the Daintree Rainforest. We're heading back this year when the Mondays tour Australia and New Zealand. As we're travelling in that direction, I've booked ten days off in Bali.

Interview by Shelley Rubenstein

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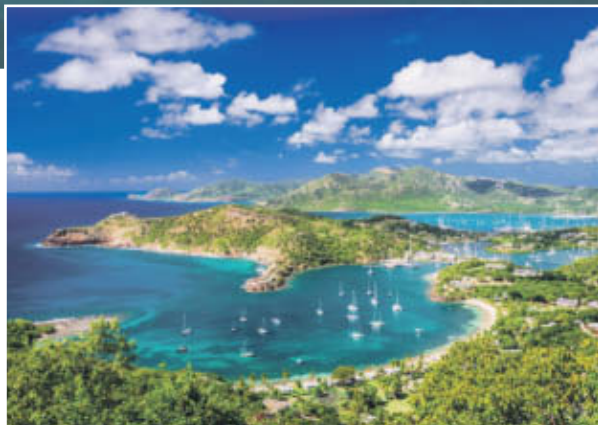
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## Una Healy *exclusive*

The true story, in her own words, p4

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# Living

## YOUR WEEKEND

Some Sunday inspiration  
for things to do today  
and in the week ahead



### VISIT

Shop more than 35 Irish brands in one spot at the Summer Irish Pop-Up Collective, running next Sunday, June 11, in the Carlisle Suite at the Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire. The fashion labels Begley & Bowie, August Night and Capulet & Montague, the natural skincare range Nunaia, the surf shop Orca Boards and the florist Flowerpop, *left*, will be in the line-up. It's open from 10am to 7pm. See [@irishpopupcollective](#) on Instagram.



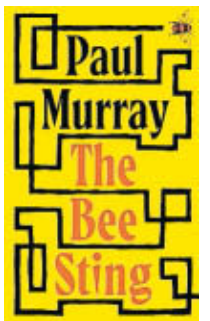
### UPDATE

It's not too late to give your unloved garden shed a new lease of life ahead of a summer spent in the garden. Colourtrend's Paint Your Shed Kit, €99, includes a paintbrush, a mini roller kit, a sanding block and paper, a can opener and a lint-free cloth, along with a 3L can of your chosen shade. There are ten colours to choose from, including Wild Raspberry, *above*. [colourtrend.ie](#)



### WATCH

*Back from the Brink* is an illuminating documentary series, presented by Derek Mooney, that showcases how conservationists are taking action to reverse damage caused to the environment. Discover how a lost native oyster bed in Portmagee in south Kerry could positively impact biodiversity in the area, or why it's good news that wild boar are roaming the suburbs of Rome. The first episode airs tonight at 6.30pm on RTE1.



### READ

The acclaimed author of *Skippy Dies* and *The Mark and the Void*, Paul Murray is back with a new novel. *The Bee Sting* follows the Barnes family, who are in a spot of bother. With a father distracting himself from his failing business with doomsday prepping, while his wife sells her jewellery on eBay, the kids are at crisis point too, binge drinking and planning to run away respectively. It's published on Thursday by Hamish Hamilton, €14.99.



### GO

*Homecoming: JFK in Ireland* is a new exhibition at Epic, the Irish Emigration Museum, to mark 60 years since the 35th president's famed visit. It provides the context for Kennedy's four-day trip in 1963, using original documents, photos and oral history interviews to convey the significance of this event for Irish politics and the population. It opens on Wednesday and will run until September (10am-5pm, daily). [epicchq.com](#)



### BOOK

Is *The Matchmaker* the most popular John B Keane play? Michael Scott's production, starring Oliver Callan, *above*, and Norma Sheahan, returns to the Gaiety Theatre Dublin from Thursday to Saturday. The play follows Dicky Mick Dicky O'Connor's efforts to make matches for the lonely and lovelorn, with Callan and Sheahan playing a colourful cast of characters. Tickets cost from €20.50; [ticketmaster.ie](#)

## ECO-WORRIER

@jo\_linehan



Is there a way to unlearn our consumption habits and break the buying cycle, wonders *Jo Linehan*

Recently picked up a copy of a book entitled *The World Is on Fire, But We're Still Buying Shoes*. It's written by Alec Leach, a former menswear editor at Highsnobiety, a fashion and lifestyle platform.

After years of attending seasonal fashion shows and writing about trends, must-have items and the next "big things" in shoes, jewellery and apparel, Leach became disillusioned with the industry's unrelenting creation of stuff. You know,

all of the things we live adequately without until we are convinced by advertising, social media or people of influence that we need them in our lives.

The book examines our relationship with consumerism and how over decades we've been conditioned to think that more stuff will equate to more happiness, satisfaction and peace. Spoiler alert: it doesn't.

Examining the psyche behind our shopping habits makes for fascinating reading, and it's a psychoanalysis we badly need to undertake. A study by Unicef found that if everybody in the world consumed resources at the rate people do in OECD and EU countries (including

Ireland), the equivalent of more than three Earths would be needed to keep up with consumption levels.

Santis O'Garro is the bestselling author of *The Money Mentor* and founder of the Budget Mindset Club, a platform that offers tools and courses on budgeting and money management. In 2018, as a single mother of two, O'Garro was swallowed by debt. She set about budgeting and realigned her finances and, in 2020, she had become debt-free.

O'Garro sold many of her personal items to help her eliminate her debt as part of her financial restructuring. "It was liberating," she says. "I had a lot of items that brought me no joy. I didn't buy them in a good

headspace; they were masks for my emotional neglect."

For O'Garro, joining the dots between what we spend our money on and how we want to live our lives is an essential piece of the puzzle. "As the saying goes, we sell our time for money. We work a job we hate to pay for a

“

I had a lot of items that brought me no joy. I didn't buy them in a good headspace

house we don't live in and fill it with things we don't use. I'm a big advocate of No Spend Days, a day when you have no unplanned purchases. They provide an opportunity for you to take time out of consumerism and reset your priorities."

Untangling ourselves from our addiction to stuff is not easy. The digital marketing agency Lunio estimates the average consumer is subject to anywhere between 6,000 and 10,000 ads daily.

Still, reading Leach explain just how hard the marketing machine works to keep us wanting more certainly helps put things into perspective. "Shopping is not what defines our value," he writes. "Shopping is something to practise responsibly."

# Living

## Close Encounters Una Healy

# ‘I’ve been really unlucky in love’

The singer tells *Jennifer Stevens* how her brief encounter with the British boxer David Haye has led to so much heartache, anguish and concerns for her children

On a beautiful day in the gardens of the Cashel Palace Hotel Una Healy sits across from me showing me the video for her new single. *Walk Away* is a country pop song with a lot of Shania Twain sass and Healy is beaming. Directed by her friend and *Dancing with the Stars* judge Arthur Gourounlian, Healy is stunning in it. Back to her pop-star best it's a little bit *Coyote Ugly*, with dancers, a bar and a whole lot of attitude. Many people will think this new single is a statement about her most recent relationship but it was written last year and she says it “can be applied to a lot of situations I’ve found myself in”. The video ends and her smile fades a little as she sits back and stares into the sun.

“It’s been the worst six months of my life you know. I just want it to be over and put it all behind me. I really thought it would fade away but it’s gone on so long and it’s still going. I’m hoping now, that by speaking about it, a line can be drawn and it can finally be over.”

The “it” is the relationship she had earlier this year with the British boxer David Haye, which has been written about endlessly online and in the press even though Healy had, until very recently, never said a single word about it.

She thought silence was the best way to handle the situation – if she said nothing it would all blow over. Of course that wasn’t the case and with the benefit of hindsight she says she really wishes she had stood up for herself sooner.

The relationship was almost

immediately branded a “throuple”, everywhere something Healy is quick to say it never was.

“I met him last summer online and he told me he was single. He said that he just broke up with his girlfriend. We’re a similar age, both divorced and he’s got kids as well. I knew that he wasn’t going to be husband material, but I thought, ‘I’ve been single for a while and I just want to have a bit of fun’. I wasn’t looking for a husband,” she tells me.

Haye, she says, was very honest about who he was from the start, something she actually found refreshing, even if what he believed in seemed a little alien to her.

“He told me straight out that he doesn’t believe that the traditional relationship exists any more. They were exactly his words, and I was like, ‘OK, good luck with that’. I did wonder what I was letting myself in for but we actually just became really good friends and chatted every day on the phone.

“He was really pleasant and then when I met him in person he brought me out on a lovely date. We just clicked and had really good banter between us. It was never a full-time thing because I was in Ireland and he was over in London. It was casual and that suited both of us.

“As time went on he was mentioning one other woman, Sian, more than anyone else and I did ask if she was his most recent ex. He said she was but he was also always very clear that she wasn’t his girlfriend and that he is a non-monogamous man. But I was only ever dating him. I wasn’t dating anyone



“He said Sian and I were both really special in his life and it would be good for us to spend some time together”

else and I was happy with that. I’d go home, be with my kids, and then any time I was working in London, I’d happen to meet up with him as well.”

Healy pauses and thinks for a few minutes. It’s easy to see how hard this is for her to talk about. She’s a private person and having to lay out the intricacies of a relationship that ended last January is taking its toll.

“This is very personal stuff I’m sharing and it’s hard. I don’t feel anyone deserves to know everything but I have to talk about it now because of the way it’s been misconstrued in the press, and the way that the story was told, and the narrative that the public were fed was just not true. Why should I have to talk about a brief relationship that I had? The story so quickly became that I met a couple online and joined them as a throuple, which just wasn’t true at all.”

By the time December came around Haye suggested that Healy and Sian meet up.

“He said we were both really special in his life and it would be good for us to spend some time together. I said no. I wanted to see him alone but I was concerned that if we were ever papped together that people would say that he was cheating on his girlfriend with me so I agreed. We went to a show together and we did get on well. At that time he said that she was his girlfriend, but one of many.”

At this point Healy and Haye had been casually dating for close to five months but nothing had been written about them and they hadn’t been photographed together. That was all about to change.

“Christmas came and it was a hard one for me because the kids go to spend it with their dad every second year. I didn’t want to be in Thurles without them so I went to London and had Christmas Day with my best friend who’d just had a baby. Then I said to David, ‘Let’s go away for a few days’. He suggested Morocco, which sounded great but when he booked it he told me that Sian was coming too. I wasn’t sure. How would that work? Was it really strange? I wasn’t sure what to do.

“But then, I think because I don’t get the break or the freedom, I thought, ‘I’m an adult. I can see she’s a nice girl. I’m sure we’ll all get on fine’. This is the thing, the three of us did go to Morocco for three days, and we all used to go for dinner together and sit down. I’m sure everyone was staring at us going, ‘Look at this lad with his two girlfriends’. Nobody knew who we were. A couple of people might have recognised him, but not really. It was missed before any pictures were posted. We had a really nice evening on New Year’s Eve and I posted a picture of the three of us sitting down having a meal.

“I wasn’t next to her, I wasn’t all over her like my girlfriend. Then suddenly ‘a source’ came forward and had this whole story that David’s now in a relationship with two women. They said we met on Raya [the private members-only dating app], which there was an element of truth to. I did meet him on Raya but I didn’t meet her there.

“I came home and then they went out to Costa Rica, where he spends quite a lot of time. He asked me to go out but I had a funny feeling about it. I wasn’t sure but there were some other people with them, some Irish lads that are good friends with him so I decided to go and see what the vibe was like. I thought, ‘What am I doing here?’ I knew that the romance was over then with me and him. I thought, ‘She can have him’. I felt really awkward about it.

Continued on page 6 →

Lace cropped top, €195, and lace pencil skirt, €240, both Reiss

# Living

## → Continued from page 5

“When I came home I messaged him and said, ‘I don’t want to be part of this relationship any more because I don’t want to share a man. If Sian is happy for you to meet other women that’s fine but it’s not for me. I know I’ll never have you on my own, I can never have that, so I’d rather stop now.’

“The fun had gone now for me then. I know now that this is not me. I want one man to share my life with and I don’t want to share him.”

Through all of this Healy doesn’t have a bad word to say about Haye. She says he was upfront about who he was from the start and never lied to her.

“I enjoyed my connection with him. He calls it a connection as well. You can actually have some people come into your life and they’re like – they come in for, as I say, a reason, a season, but maybe not a

lifetime. He was a season and I’ve learnt a lot from it as well, but I also learnt that I want to meet a monogamous man. He’s too complicated.”

It was a short relationship and one she hasn’t been in for more than four months. Explaining what happened is the easy part of our conversation. It’s a straightforward, simple explanation but it’s what came next that has destroyed her and it’s heartbreaking.

“I feel like I can’t escape from it. It won’t go away. There were only ever two photos of us together and I haven’t seen him since January but it just goes on and on. I was literally just living my normal life down in Thurles but there was this whole other existence that the tabloids were pushing, one of me in this relationship that wasn’t real. It

**Red dress, €510, Saloni**

has been relentless, and it was really upsetting. I constantly have this horrible gut feeling all the time. I haven’t committed a crime, I haven’t killed anyone but the abuse online has been horrific.

“I brought the children away a couple of months ago and my phone was just hopping the whole time. I felt sick, I was shaking and I was dreading looking at it because every time I opened it. . .”

Healy trails off and takes a deep breath. “I didn’t want my kids to see me so upset. I was blocking people all the time. There are so many trolls out there, but also it’s interesting how in reality literally not one person, actually not one, not one person said a word to my face. It’s like this whole other world happening online and in print and it’s a nasty old world. It can really play with your mental health.” She knows that a lot of what is being

said about her is because she is a woman and a mother, and that a man photographed with two women would barely be commented on.

“There was a huge amount of misogyny in the way that the whole thing was written about because it’s almost like they were trying to slut shame me or something. That’s what it was.”

Living in Thurles has been a huge comfort to Healy; she’s at the school gates every day and lives right beside her parents who she’s incredibly close to. In the past six months she’s never felt any judgment from anyone in her community; she says they’re a tight-knit town and they know she’s not gallivanting around the world.

“Mam knew the truth. She was just very sad for me. She could see how it was affecting me. The one thing that has really bothered me were people’s comments



“There are so many trolls out there, but also it’s interesting how in reality literally not one person, not one person said a word to my face

**Left: pink and white dress, €210, Anne Louise Boutique. Right: green dress, €179, & Other Stories; heels, €115, Kurt Geiger, Arnotts Photographed by Evan Doherty. Styled by Corina Gaffey. Hair and make-up by Sue Brophy. With thanks to Seamus and all the team at the Cashel Palace Hotel**

about the poor children. The poor children. I’m at home with my children all the time. I very rarely leave their side. I spend so much time with them and I know I’m a really good mother to them, so that’s a really hurtful thing.

“Aoife is old enough to read things or see something, and she has asked me why they’re writing about me. She thinks it’s stupid and she’s very chilled out about it, thankfully, but she shouldn’t have to read anything like that.

“It was all spun to look like I was constantly on a beach holiday, spending months away from my kids. I think that’s how it looked to people but anyone who knows me, anyone who matters, knows that’s not true. It was three days in Morocco and four days in Costa Rica and that was it.”

Healy is defiant when she’s talking about her children, you can tell she’d go to the ends of the Earth to protect them and keep them safe but there’s a sadness to it all too and it’s easy to see how

exhausted she has been by it all.

“Honestly? It’s just been so, so shit. I can’t live my life because I’m constantly being harassed by this perception that’s been built up about me. A lot of people love to see you dragged down. Everything I do now is linked back to that relationship in some way. Anything I say is picked up wrong, any trip I take with my kids is because of him in some way. It’s so frustrating. I don’t want to be asked about it. It was traumatising enough for the past few months when I wasn’t even in a relationship. Do you know what I mean?”

“People feel they have a right to know everything. Some of my friends were driven mad by people asking for the gossip. One woman asked a friend of mine ‘What’s really going on there?’ and she said ‘What does it matter to you’. Wait for this. ‘My husband wants to know.’ Her husband! What? It’s a bit seedy when you think about it.

“I’ve heard a lot of people say that I’ll be labelled with this for ever, that I’ll

never escape this. That’s a really sad, horrible thing to wish on someone. We only have this one short life. If you listen to the lyrics of my last song I say, *It’s your life. Your one and only life*. How cruel is that to almost wish that upon someone to go. ‘This is the end of you. This is going to destroy you’. That’s a very evil mindset.”

Even after all she’s been through Healy is determined that she won’t be painted as someone who made a mistake.

“I wasn’t and I’m still not embarrassed and I’ll stand over that. If they’re a bit embarrassed and blushing for me it’s because they’re just embarrassed about anything. Just grow up. Do you know what I mean? I can’t be like that. I’m not. I don’t regret anything.

“Maybe they’re like, ‘What is she doing? I can’t believe she’d be seeing a fella that’s seeing people’. Well, I was married to a fella that was unfaithful and I didn’t even know it. You know what I mean?”

We’re coming to the end of our

afternoon in the sun and we joke about men, relationships and what’s going to come next for her.

“Oh, you know, just some lovely guy looking for just one woman would do nicely. And doesn’t cheat. A monogamous man that doesn’t cheat. That would be my dream come true,” she says, laughing.

“I’ve had such a horrendous history. I think I’ve been really unlucky in love. Some people just get the luck and they find the one and they settle down young and they have kids. I know people say, ‘Oh, but are they really happy?’, I think lots are actually.

“For now, I’m happy on my own. I’m genuinely happy. This is one of the longest spells of being single and literally not even having a date. You get really used to being on your own. Every night going to bed yourself, your own routine. No one annoying you. No drama. Literally none.”

*Una Healy’s new single, Walk Away, is out now*



# Living

## HOW TO... REDUCE YOUR CHILD'S INTAKE OF ULTRA- PROCESSED FOODS

Focus on wholefoods and avoid too many artificial ingredients – but there's no need to demonise fish fingers, says *Lynn Enright*

**B**reakfast cereal, sliced bread, fish fingers, potato waffles... Yes, these are all foods that my picky toddler actually likes to eat – but, more alarmingly, these are all foods that fall into the category of ultra-processed foods (UPFs).

UPFs are foods that have been created using methods and ingredients that are not available to the home cook. They often have a long shelf life (handy for harried parents) and are generally moreish (which can feel like a relief when you have a reluctant eater on your hands) but, increasingly, parents are aware of the potential harms of a diet high in UPFs.

Years of research has linked diets high in UPFs with a higher risk of illness, including diabetes, cancer, heart disease and some mental health problems. So what is a parent to do? Bin all the UPFs in the house and serve only freshly prepared wholefoods? Is that sensible – or even possible?

Orla Walsh, a dietitian with her own practice in Dublin, points out that food usually falls into one of four categories.

### CHILDREN'S BOOK OF THE WEEK

*Little Big Sister*, written by the award-winning author Eoin Colfer and illustrated by Celia Ivey, tells the story of Starr, a girl with dwarfism who lives with her mum and younger sister, Babs. Starting primary school is tough for Starr, as she

realises she is shorter than the other children and that her little sister will grow taller than her too. But with encouragement from her mum and her teacher, she discovers a way to shine. Published by Little Island at €14.50.



"Wholefoods," she points out, "are foods that look similar on our plate to how they appear in nature. They're foods of one ingredient. Nothing has been taken from it or added to it."

Then we have minimally processed foods, she explains, "where the inedible parts have been removed or when they've

been dried, roasted, crushed, boiled or pasteurised. This simply makes the food more suitable, tasty or safe to eat or store".

Next up are the foods that have been processed further, with salt, sugar or other ingredients added to them. Finally, there are UPFs, which have, explains Walsh, "lots of ingredients added": "They

are made up of ingredients taken from other foods, or artificial ingredients manufactured in a factory. For example, they may have additives such as colour, flavours or stabilisers." If an ingredient list contains a word you can't pronounce, you probably have a UPF on your hands.

Increasingly, scientists are pointing out that UPFs are uniquely addictive, scrambling the signals that tell our brains that we are full, encouraging us to overeat. They are also, Walsh, points out, far more likely to contain high amounts of salt and sugar, and low amounts of fibre.

It's estimated that the average person now gets more than half of their daily calories from UPFs so it's not realistic for most people to simply cut them out of their diet. However, being able to identify UPFs is a good place to start. There might be simple swaps that you can make to help get more wholefoods and minimally processed foods on your child's plate.

Walsh encourages parents to read the labels of the food they're buying. Look for clues to see if the product is a UPF and take note of the traffic-light label, which will indicate if the food has high, medium

**“UPFs are uniquely addictive, scrambling the signals that tell our brains that we are full**

or low amounts of fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt.

It might not be as simple, she says, as deciding fish fingers are "bad" and taking them off the menu completely. Brands can differ, she points out, with some using white fish and wholegrain breadcrumbs and plant oils. Fish fingers can also be a "gateway food to healthier eating in the future": "Irish people don't eat enough fish, and lots don't eat it at all. If kids eat fish fingers when they're young they may be more likely to eat fish when they are older. A parent may offer fish fingers to a fussy eater, then transition to a healthier brand, then to homemade in a bid to eventually moving to plain white fish."

It's inevitable that some of the UPF swaps we make will be expensive: a loaf of sourdough bread from an artisan baker costs more than €5, whereas a supermarket sliced pan costs a fraction of that. Walsh points out, however, that cutting down on UPFs doesn't always have to be costly or time-consuming. Frozen vegetables, for example, are generally cheaper than fresh ones – and there is less waste as you only use what you need.

**“Take note of the traffic-light label, which will indicate the levels of fat, sugar and salt**

If they don't have any added ingredients, they are just as nutritious, and sometimes even more nutritious, as fresh ones.

"There are lots of minimally processed options that speed up the meal-making process and help reduce the use of UPFs," Walsh says. Look for frozen oven chips that contain only potato and plant oils, for example.

Buying healthy foods can feel confusing and overwhelming – but it is possible to make small, inexpensive changes that will reassure parents while keeping fussy eaters happy.

[orlawalshnutrition.ie](http://orlawalshnutrition.ie)



ILLUSTRATION BY KEESER MCILAMH

## SARAH BREEN

@sarahjaybee



### The head lice have taken up residence on our poor itchy heads again. Could a national day of targeted nit-blitzing send these pesky parasites packing for good?

**A**s I write, my hair and scalp are marinating in a combination of two noxious potions. My vision is slightly blurry because one is giving off a genuinely eye-watering odour. If I didn't have to type, I'd have my head in my hands. Because once again, and for the third time in two months, I have nits.

When my eldest started school five years ago, less than a fortnight had passed before we got the first missive from her teacher. "We have head lice in the classroom. Can everyone please check their child's hair and treat them accordingly?" I had been prepared for this text by parents of older children but I wasn't prepared for my own reaction. Immediately my scalp started to crawl. I knew they were on me. I wanted to shave my head and douse myself in bleach.

According to the chronically online mams who populate certain message boards, my best course of action was to administer a powerful solution and then pin down my child in front of *Frozen* and comb her head forensically to remove all the lice and their eggs. And then I had to repeat the process a week later.

You can't use any common or garden fine-tooth comb either, and certainly not the free one that comes with the solution, it had to be the Nitty Gritty, aka the Rolls-Royce of combs, which boasts some kind of patented technology that I don't really understand. I eventually sourced one through the mam grapevine and spent hours treating and combing every head in the house. I boiled my pillowcases for good measure. But I never found a single louse.

Over the years, similar messages from the school came in every few months, more often when my second child started junior infants, but we remained curiously nit-free. I started to become

confident – nay, arrogant – that we had somehow bred head lice-resistant children. Maybe they would be studied? When desperate parents were sharing Nitty Gritty stockists, and one mother of four daughters with thick, waist-length hair was pleading for mercy in the class WhatsApp, I never found my kids scratching. I gave their heads a cursory glance and got back to my real job of hiding vegetables in their food.

Until, that is, my son started pre-school last year. I'm not saying he is my least favourite child, but in eight months he has brought head lice into our home more times than I've clicked "accept cookies". His hair is quite short and fair, so the lice are easy enough to find and remove, but I'm not so lucky. Although my eldest remains

nit-resistant, the rest of us are regularly riddled. If you haven't encountered head lice recently, let me remind you how vile they are. They lay eggs on the hair shaft – as many as eight a day – and feed on human blood. And although they only live for about 35 days, and never grow larger than a sesame seed, my God are they resilient. I mean, suspiciously so.

Despite three lockdowns, lengthy school closures and several years of social distancing, they are still very much plaguing school-age children – and their parents. While ChatGPT is smart enough to pass Leaving Cert higher English and we're closer than ever to driverless cars, nits are seemingly impossible to eradicate. Why is this not front page news? Why isn't it the lead story on the *Six One* every night?

The conspiracy theorist inside me believes it's because there are too many bald men in power or maybe the government is in bed with Big Nit Solution and head lice are being released into our water along with fluoride. My suggestion is to bring in National Nit Day, when every head in the country is simultaneously treated and combed. Let's make it a bank holiday while we're at it. If they come back after that, you can join me in taking to the streets.

**“In eight months my son has brought head lice into our home more times than I've clicked 'accept cookies'”**



Checking the kids for head lice is one of life's ickier chores

# Food

## TASTING NOTES

Escape for a Co Meath treat and a blend of Irish/Indian flavours



### GARDEN OF DELIGHTS

Tucked away in the quaint village of Kilmessan in Co Meath, the family-run Station House Hotel sits on 12 acres of lush manicured gardens and woodlands, listed on the Boyne Valley Garden Trail. This summer you can literally eat your surroundings with its Taste of the Garden package.

On arrival you'll enjoy a glass of Il Borro Rosé on the stunning Garden Terrace while you take in the gorgeous gardens and woodlands before moving into the Signal restaurant, where the new spring menu sings of garden flavours and includes a Swainstown Farm organic beetroot salad, a wild Irish lobster ravioli, a roast rump of Kilmessan spring lamb with a pesto crust and spring peas and wild Irish monkfish with local Wooded Pig ham, organic kale and beurre blanc.

The Taste of the Garden offer includes one night B&B in the Station House with a glass of rosé on the Terrace before a three-course dinner in the Signal Restaurant and an à la carte breakfast, from €280 for two people sharing. [stationhousehotel.ie](http://stationhousehotel.ie)



### A RARE TREAT

Kinsale has long been a destination for the gastronomes of Ireland, and Rare, in the heart of the town, has been a favourite since opening in 2020. With a new south Indian influence to the menu, the interiors have also been given a facelift to reflect the marriage of Irish produce and Indian flavours.

Locally sourced ingredients extend beyond the food menu, with a carefully curated cocktail menu including locally foraged ingredients and spirits sourced in west Cork distilleries prepared by the restaurant's master mixologist. [rare1784.ie](http://rare1784.ie)

# A celebrity gin can be quite the tonic as summer heats up

MARTIN MORAN



How many swallows make a summer? More than one they say, so I'll settle on two, swallows that is of an ice-cold drink as the grand stretch in the evening heads towards its midsummer zenith. The great outdoors is calling, even if it's only your back garden or a balcony and hanging out with friends and family.

These relaxed occasions are where what's in your glass will be talked over not about, and your drink's main job is to make you as chilled as it is, preferably with a soundtrack of clinking ice cubes. So save that fancy bottle for another day.

Retailers are doing their best to encourage us to enjoy the sun, with Lidl, Aldi, O'Briens and Dunnes all listing new seasonal wines, while the last has 20 per

cent off all its wines until tomorrow, including Roederer Cristal no less, at €223.20 in 14 stores.

You may think that we'd passed peak gin but no, Brad Pitt, Margot Robbie and Emma Watson have each just launched a version. If you want a celeb one for that summer essential, a G&T, I say go local with Graham Norton's. It's made in west Cork and profits go to a dog charity not some star's new sports car.

One summer drink that hasn't peaked is pink wine. The latest vintage of trendy Whispering Angel is delightful if you want to impress guests at your summer bash. However, if you want something more affordable then Aldi and Lidl's summer season listings go big on rosé, as does O'Briens, which has a great one from the top Greek producer Gaia at €12.71.

Few would think of serving fortified wines in summer but, trust me, they can be fab. On a recent press trip to Porto we were regularly offered white port and tonic, which is fine, but the revelation was what a sensational end to a meal a glass of cold ten-year-old white port can be. Ferreira's Dona Antonia, below, is well

“ We were regularly offered white port and tonic, which is fine, but the revelation was what a sensational end to a meal a glass of cold white port can be

worth seeking out. As for the start, an aperitif of a chilled umami-infused fino with olives and almonds is hard to top. Lustau's "En Rama" Fino de Jerez de la Frontera is a classic, in Mitchells at €17.95.

An ocean of cider over ice will be enjoyed this summer, but my tip is ditch the diabetes-in-a-glass sweet big brands and go with a refreshing craft one such as Dan Kelly's, made, incidentally, without added sulphites, which will also impress your hipster, natural-wine-loving friends.

## DRINKS OF THE WEEK

**Laurent Miquel Côte 238 Pech Gentile Albariño 2022**, IGP Aude, 12.5 per cent ABV; €12.80 until tomorrow, then €16, selected Dunnes stores. We Irish love albariño and Laurent Miquel's French one is one of the best value whites available. It now has a big brother and it's delicious with plenty of pear, peach and tangy ruby grapefruit-like fruit to enjoy. 90/100



**Les Cinq Rameaux Rosé 2021**, Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence, 12.5 per cent ABV; €9.99, Lidl. To say Provence pink is popular is an understatement. Whispering Angel, at €25, is lovely and clearly better than this one, but not two-and-a-half-times as good, and this has refreshing tangy pomegranate and Fuji apple-like freshness. 86/100



**Ferreira Dona Antonia Ten-year-old White Port**, 37.5cl, 20 per cent ABV; €19.50-€23, 64 Wine, [wineonline.ie](http://wineonline.ie), **Baggot Street Wines and Spirits**. A delicious dessert in a glass with a bouquet like a basket of fruit and nuts, including candied orange peel, figs, dates and almonds with a great balance of sweetness and acidity that lingers for ages. 95/100



**Mo Chara Irish Gin with Passion Fruit and Mango**, 50cl, 40 per cent ABV; €19.99, Aldi. If you're looking for a tasty gin that's a little different then the latest Mo Chara one features passion fruit and mango, which is brilliantly refreshing with tonic on a warm day, but should also appeal to fans of the popular porn star martini. 89/100



The description of "barbecued" bacon loin, as served at Artis in Derry, appears a little wide of the mark. Below: barbecued mackerel, spicy "Mack" sauce, blood orange, fennel

# More graft needed to complement the craft

Aside from an overdose of blood orange, the beginning and end of the Artis offering covers over the kinks, say Russell Alford and Patrick Hanlon

## RESTAURANT REVIEW

@gastrogays



### ARTIS

The Craft Village, Shipquay Street, Derry/Londonderry, BT48 6AR [artisatcraftvillagederry.com](http://artisatcraftvillagederry.com) | @ArtisDerry ★ RATING 7.5/10

W e've long wondered what an Irish version of Great British Menu would look like. The BBC show has been running since 2006 and pits professional chefs from different regions against one another to win a chance to cook at a prestigious banquet. Plus, all the back-slapping and kudos that follows, which, of course, wouldn't interest chefs in the slightest...

There's something about the gods of the kitchen entering the arena in a spot of culinary jousting that makes for enjoyable TV. Egos at full mast, throwing down the gauntlet, out to one-up each other in technique while fending off kitchen disasters. There's a heartwarming dash

of camaraderie too. Tom Kerridge, Marcus Wareing, Jason Atherton, Simon Rogan, Daniel Clifford, Lisa Allen, Sat Bains – it's the hospitality Hunger Games.

While the clue is in the name, of course it's true to a British heritage, but Ireland has enough culinary chops to warrant its own interpretation of a similar format. Imagine Paul Flynn, Takashi Mizazaki and Aishling Moore for Munster; Jess Murphy, Frankie Mallon and Sham Hanifa for Connacht; and Jumoke Akintola, Cúan Greene and Gaz Smith for Leinster. The culinary equivalent of an All-Ireland final.

Northern Ireland's GBM heats have showcased familiar heavyweights such as Paul Rankin, Richard Corrigan and Chris McGowan. Later, newer names took the spotlight: Danni Barry, Chris McClurg and Gemma Austin, while Phelim O'Hagan's win in 2021 first gave us the gist of his talents.

Hailing from the Walled City, O'Hagan trained in Killybegs, then worked in a couple of Michelin-star kitchens (the Cliff House in Ardmore and Restaurant Andrew Fairlie in Gleneagles), before returning to Derry to join Browns Bonds Hill, where he became head chef. He opened Artis in December 2021 with his wife, Serina Macari, and Ray Moran of the adjoining Soda & Starch.

The room is elegantly styled in rich fabrics and luxe carpet with simply dressed tables. A seven-course tasting menu is £70 (€81), with an optional wine pairing bumping that up to £120 per person. Though it may appear aimed solely at the deep-pocketed, there are two and three-course set menus for £30 and £35 and an

“ Short-season ingredients deserve supreme celebration, but let's stop shy of overkill



à la carte, which we opted for. How to make butter better? Not that it needs to be, but imbue it with Marmite and slather on spring onion bread and it's an instantly delicious elevation of what usually begins a meal on one note. Next, an unexpected taster dish of pulled beef lavished in a creamy celeriac espuma (which could use deeper celeriac notes) with crunch from an intense parmesan and herb crumb atop. "This is all a bit brilliant," we said to ourselves.

Starters continued dispensing delicious surprises. The first a torched mackerel dish with fennel and blood orange set in a herb oil. Then an earthy, edging on autumnal, maitake mushroom dish with smoked bacon and leek with a slow-cooked 62C egg at the centre.

Mains then nosedived in disappointment. Skeghanore duck arrived unevenly cooked. Pink, lightly firm and juicy on the top half, the bottom purple, wobbly and as good as raw, plus the skin, while crispish, needed more time rendering its fat. Cherry was eschewed for blood orange and an oddly tangy polenta cake was an unusual flavour and texture on the plate. A tablespoon's worth of pulled confit leg with a gremolata-like crumb was the best thing about it.

Similarly, the bacon loin suffered from bad marketing: though cooked nicely, the "barbecue" as mentioned was absent and the braised lentil, carrot and wild garlic were – neither together nor individually – spectacular enough to save the plate from being underwhelming.

Sides stole focus, though. Wee Derry salad is a cheeky little reimagining of the iconic mammy salad, with cubes of ham, pickled beetroot and red onion dappled amid designer leaves. A raw egg yolk hides under a grating of smoked cheddar.

Potato gratin arrived as individual pavés of crisp, golden potato lengths slicked in caramelised onion topped with Coolatin cheddar. A must-order. In fact, order a portion per person and savour every bite. Desserts brought back joy to the table. A lemon meringue soufflé came

## WHAT WE ATE

### STARTERS

Barbecued mackerel, spicy "Mack" sauce, blood orange, fennel **€31**  
Maitake mushroom, 62C egg, leek, smoked bacon **€10**

### MAINS

Skeghanore duck breast, Mooncoin beetroot, black cabbage, confit leg, polenta, sour cherry **€31**  
Barbecued bacon loin, braised lentil, carrot, wild garlic **€28**

### SIDES

Wee Derry salad **€4.50**  
Crispy potato gratin, Coolatin cheddar, caramelised onion **€5**

### DESSERTS

Lemon meringue soufflé, curd, rhubarb sorbet **€8**  
Hazelnut Entremet, blood orange sorbet **€8.50**

### DRINKS

1 glass Pinot Blanc **€8.50**  
2 glasses Chardonnay **€16**  
1 sparkling water **€4.50**  
1 Negroni Sbagliato **€9**

TOTAL: £142 (€162)

perfectly peaking above its mould, dotted with curd and rhubarb gel before hot custard was glugged in the middle. An entremet offered a decadent and supremely skilled ode to chocolate and hazelnut in distinct, uniform layers. Two of the nicest desserts we've had in a long time. Though for one of us, with accompanying blood orange sorbet, it marked blood orange in all three dishes. Short-season ingredients deserve supreme celebration, but let's stop shy of overkill.

A nice selection of wines, charming, personable service, an elegant space and an intriguing menu of great Irish possibilities. With some kinks ironed this could well be the shining star of the northwest, not least Derry's destination fine-dining spot.

## IF THAT, THEN THESE

Great Irish Menu: chef-patrons and their fine-dining restaurants worth knowing... **Woodruff, Stepside, Dublin 18**  
Run to the 'burbs for an elevated take on seasonal dishes by Simon

Williams, with Colm Maguire's wines and service. [woodruff.ie](http://woodruff.ie)  
**Oar, Doolin, Co Clare**  
Find rustic fine dining (with rooms!) in Doolin from restaurateur Kieran O'Halloran and the chef

Cezary Sodel. [oardoolin.ie](http://oardoolin.ie)  
**Lignum, Loughrea, Co Galway**  
Danny Africano's commitment to wood fire and his Italian-Irish heritage delivers memorable dishes. [lignum.ie](http://lignum.ie)

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ESTATE AGENTS

PSL No. 004302

52 Lower Kimmage Road, Harold's Cross, Dublin 6W.  
Semi-Detached. PRICE: €1,100,000



4 4 c. 1,615 SqFt / 150 SqM

BER D1  
No. 108360462

Bay windowed period residence full of warmth with elegant proportions and many fine original features, Excellently presented throughout with extended contemporary kitchen/dining, South facing garden and patio, off-street parking. Beside all local amenities and easy access to city centre. Accom Hall, W.C. WHB, utility, 2 rec, kitchen/dining, 4 beds, bath. Parking. South facing garden, patio, side ent. Double glazed. GFCH.

6 Sunbury Gardens, Dartry, Dublin 6.  
Semi-Detached. PRICE: €1,500,000



6 6 c. 2,583 SqFt / 240 SqM

BER Exempt

Victorian bay windowed family home c. 2583 sq.ft. / 240 sq.m. overlooking private green to front with secluded c. 70 ft South facing garden to rear. Magnificent period features throughout, wonderful layout and room to extend subject to p.p. Comprising 2 rec, breakfast, kit, W.C. utility, 6 beds, 2 baths, garage, GFCH. Beside Luas, Palmerston Park, shopping, schools etc. Ample room to extend subject to p.p.

9 Dartry Road, Dartry, Dublin 6.  
Semi-Detached. PRICE: €1,900,000



6 6 c. 2,680 SqFt / 249 SqM

BER Exempt

A deceptively spacious c. 2680sq.ft. 249sq.m. bay windowed period residence, well set back from road with South-West garden to rear and side access, Retaining fine original features with elegant proportions throughout. Comprising Hall with W.C., WHB. 2 inter-connecting rec, kitchen, family room, utility, 6 beds, 2 baths. GFCH. Beside Dodder Linear Park, Palmerston Park, schools, Luas, shopping etc. Ample parking.

14 Greenmount Road, Terenure, Dublin 6.  
Semi-Detached. PRICE: €1,595,000



6 6 c. 2,850 SqFt / 265 SqM

BER E2  
No. 116384132

Wonderful opportunity to acquire a double fronted semi-detached family home - one of only a pair, Stringer built and situated on this ever popular road. Completely upgraded in recent years with magnificent gardens, original features, side access. Comprising Hall, W.C. WHB, 6 bedroom (2 ensuite), bathroom, W.C. WHB. Double glazed. GFCH. Well stocked gardens. Beside Terenure Village, Bushy Park, schools.

49 Rathfarnham Park, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14.  
Semi-Detached. PRICE: €1,250,000



4 4 c. 1,776 SqFt / 165 SqM

BER D2  
No. 116140807

Exceptional 1930's family residence enjoying an enviable position with a large 105ft beautifully landscaped South East facing garden. Well proportioned with high ceilings & original features & carefully maintained over the years. Superb potential to extend (sub to pp). Accom: Hall, interconnecting dual aspect rec rooms, dining, kitchen, 4 bedrms, bathrm, w.c., garage. 5 minute walk to Terenure & Rathfarnham village, park, schools etc on doorstep.

2 Charville Square, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14. Semi detached. PRICE: €525,000



2 2 c. 1,066 SqFt / 99 SqM.

BER C3  
No. 116243932

A rare opportunity to acquire a 2 Bedroom home - one of only a pair within this exclusive gated development. Wonderful room proportions & ceiling heights throughout, creating a spacious and airy home. Comprising hall, kitchen/breakfast room, large living, lounge, 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. The development enjoys superb privacy and has beautifully landscaped grounds. Walking distance to Rathfarnham village.

7 Darley Street, Harold's Cross, Dublin 6.  
Terraced. PRICE: €350,000



2 2 c. 656 Sqft / 61 SqM

BER G  
No. 1164467887

A rare opportunity to acquire a property in this location requiring complete refurbishment throughout. An ideal renovation project for someone seeking to put their own stamp on and future proof a home in this highly sought after location only minutes from St Stephens Green. Comprising living room, kitchen, bathroom, 2 bedrooms. Generous parking. Eligible for vacant homes refurbishment grant.

34 Lisalea, Blackrock, Co. Dublin  
Apartment. PRICE: €425,000



2 2 c. 678 Sqft / 63 SqM

BER C3  
No. 116270679

Top floor 2 bed apt with balcony & impressive sea views. Beautifully landscaped grounds, private pedestrian gate to Frascati shopping centre & Blackrock village. Small exclusive development of only 39 apartments. Stroll from Dart & superb selection of cafes, restaurants. Parking. Spacious accom: Hall, liv/din, kit, 2 beds (1 en-s), bathrm. Perfect downsizing/ investment opportunity.

92 Bushy Park Road, Terenure, Dublin 6  
Semi-Detached. PRICE: €995,000



4 4 c. 1,860 SqFt / 173 SqM

BER E1  
No. 115584062

A most impressive and characterful Bailey built family residence located on the verge of the village. High ceilings & exceptionally well proportioned accom, carefully maintained throughout. Accom wide entrance hall, interconnecting receptions, kit/din, 4 beds, westerly aspect. Garage to side. Generous parking. Superb potential to further extend.

51 Crannagh Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14. Detached. PRICE: €850,000

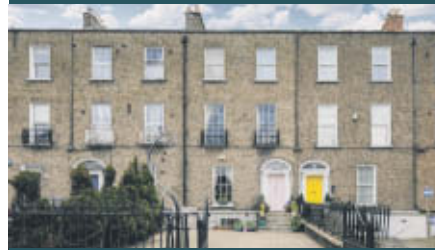


3 3 c. 1,690 SqFt / 157 SqM

BER C1  
No. 116405564

Rare Opportunity - A most attractive dormer style bungalow boasting a landscaped West facing patio garden. High ceilings, functional layout, modern & impeccable condition. Accommodation: Hall, open plan living/dining, kitchen, 3 bedrooms, 1 ensuite. bathroom. Quiet setting, superb location with all amenities on doorstep.

28 Rathmines Road Lower, Rathmines, Dublin 6. Terraced. PRICE: €1,500,000



7 7 c. 3,065 Sqft / 285 SqM

BER Exempt

Fine three storey over basement level with 50ft garden in Rathmines village within walking distance of St. Stephens Green. 11ft high ceilings, all original features intact with generous off street parking to front. Accommodation comprises living room x 3, kitchen/dining x 3, bedroom x 7 and bathroom x 4. Well maintained. Excellent potential, home/business.

31 Brighton Gardens, Rathgar, Dublin 6.  
Terraced. PRICE: €725,000



2 2 c. 1,120 SqFt / 104 SqM

BER D2  
No. 102016203

Totally restored and extended period home wonderfully presented throughout, full of light and South facing to rear. C. 1120 sq.ft. 104 sq.m. of well planned living space including lounge/living room, kitchen/dining, study area, bathroom, 2 beds, attic room. GFCH. Double glazed. Beside Rathgar & Terenure villages, Bushy Park, schools and bus routes.

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# MOVE

GETTY IMAGES

## The case for (and cost of) change



# 20

COASTAL COOL  
BRING THE  
SEASIDE INSIDE



Home improvements that make the most of what you already have are often more effective and better value than extensive works, says *Grainne Rothery*

**M**aking a significant and impactful change to your home doesn't always have to mean the big project of adding on an extension at the back. Upgrading or converting what you already have, or even knocking down a wall or two, will usually be quite a bit cheaper – and whole lot less disruptive – than building on and can also make a big difference to how you use and enjoy your space.

So what's involved and how much can you expect to pay for some of these smaller projects?

### REPLACING THE WINDOWS

Upgrading the windows in a standard three-bedroom semi-detached home should set you back a minimum of about €10,000. You could be paying up to about €30,000, depending on the house type, the size of the openings, the window type and whether you opt for double or triple glazing.

As regards materials, uPVC is the cheapest, while the most expensive of the standard offerings is alu-clad or composite, a combination of timber and aluminium.

Clodagh Doyle of the property



**The most common home improvements are designed to increase space and light, whether it be redesigning a kitchen, top, or brightening a room by turning windows into doors**

renovation company Placelift recommends visiting showrooms to see and touch the different kinds of windows and materials before deciding on exactly what you want. "That gives a great sense of what you're getting," she says.

### UPGRADING THE BATHROOM

Putting in a new bathroom suite and the  
**Continued on page 14 →**

# Move



Money can be saved by keeping the location of sanitaryware in a bathroom, above and left. Upgrading windows and doors is the best way to bring light and a sense of space into a room, right, while a well-designed kitchen can offer a high-spec feel without blowing the budget, far right and below

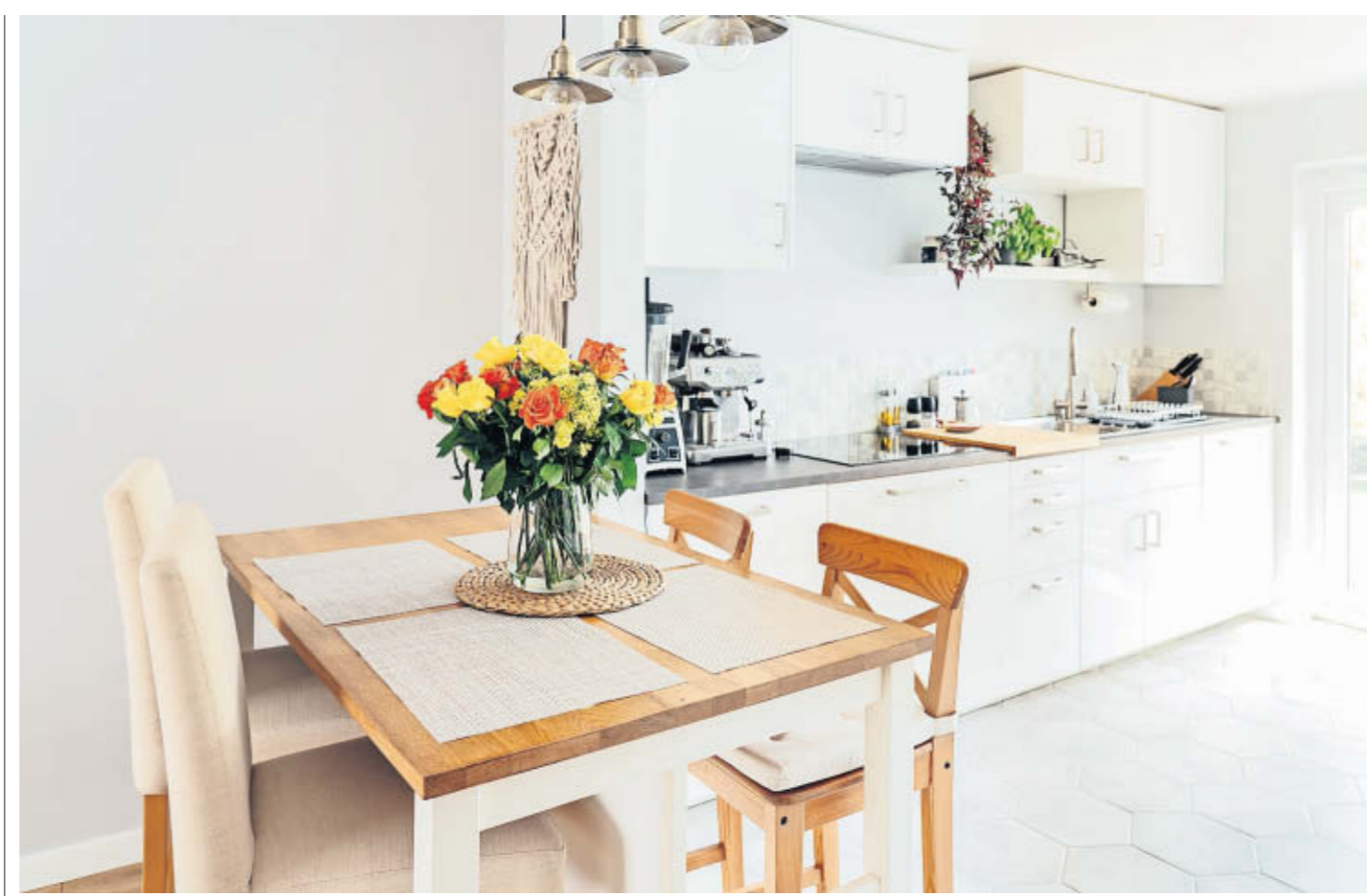
→ Continued from page 13 associated works – including tiling – should cost from about €6,000 but can easily rise to €15,000 or a lot more, depending on the room size, how high-spec you want to go with the sanitaryware, fixtures and accessories, and whether you plan to tweak the layout. Keeping the location of the existing sanitaryware as is will help keep costs down, says Michael Walsh at the quantity surveying firm Walsh Associates. “Altering the plan of these will result in additional plumbing and building expenses, which could double the expected costs.” However, if you can afford to push the boat out, Doyle says it’s a good opportunity to think about how the layout could work better for your future needs. Project managing the job and bringing in trades as needed could work out cheaper but may be more trouble than it’s worth. “Co-ordinating each of these trades individually is difficult in the current, heated construction market,” Walsh says. “We would recommend that people source a one-stop shop to undertake the full project. Many of these are sourced from sanitaryware suppliers and offer a very good service. It will avoid headaches and disruption.” If you do decide to project manage the job yourself, Doyle advises having everything – from the sink to the tiles to the accessories – on site or ready to be on site from the outset.

**UPGRADING THE KITCHEN** If you think the cost of replacing a kitchen is the sum of the units, the worktops and a bit more for the work, think again, Doyle says. “It’s never just that with a kitchen,” she notes, adding that plumbing, electrics, tiling and flooring may all need to be factored into the budget. Again, she says it’s a good time to consider changing the layout, including possibly adding an island. “It’s also an opportunity to future-proof and maybe go for open plan,” she says. In terms of cost, expect to pay a minimum of €7,000 or €8,000 for a basic kitchen, including fitting. The sky’s the limit at the other end of the scale. When deciding how much to spend and, if you can afford to, whether to really go large, it’s worth thinking about how long you intend living in the house. According to the chartered building surveyor Noel Larkin of Noel Larkin & Associates, investing big in kitchens and bathrooms doesn’t typically pay off in terms of the value added to your home. “If you’re staying for the long haul, it may make more sense to spend a lot of money on the kitchen than if you think you’ll be moving on in four or five years’ time,” he says. If you do want to give your new kitchen a high-spec feel without completely blowing the budget, Doyle recommends going for a mid-range

Expect to pay a minimum of €7,000 or €8,000 for a basic kitchen



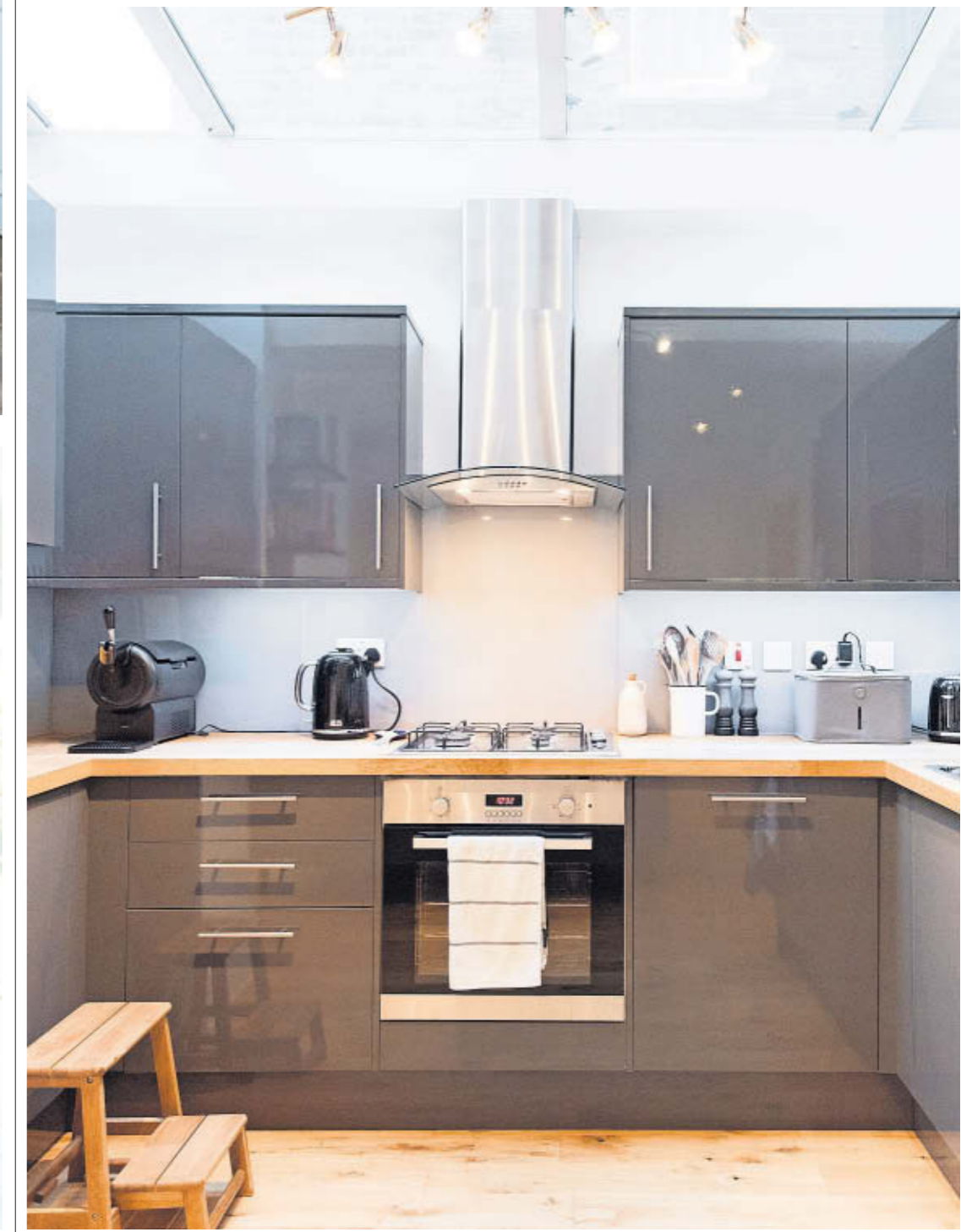
kitchen and adding quartz worktops and high-end door handles, taps and sink. If the budget is very tight but you still want to give this space a facelift, consider just replacing the doors or, if they’re still in good shape, getting them repainted. Ikea doors start at €15 each and you can expect to pay from about €1,000 to have the units painted. **OPENING UP A SPACE** Removing an existing wall to create an open-plan living space sounds simple but it is the kind of job that can have legs, says Joey Farrelly of Farrelly Developments, a building contractor. As a rough estimate, taking down an existing wall, putting in steel reinforcement if needed and patching up the ceilings and walls could cost €4,000 to €5,000. However, putting in new flooring and repainting the space will also add to the price. “Plus, if it’s a structural wall an engineer needs to be involved,” Farrelly says. “A builder can’t sign off on that.” **CONVERTING A WINDOW INTO A DOOR** Turning a window into French doors can vastly improve the connection between the inside and outside living spaces and is a relatively straightforward project, Farrelly says, particularly if the width of the original opening stays the same. As a ballpark figure, the whole job



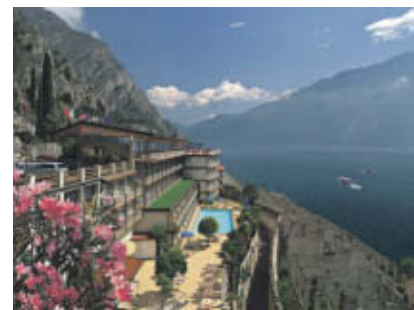
“If you get ten builders you get ten opinions. I think an architect is important

could cost about €4,500 for removing the wall below the existing window, putting in standard uPVC French doors and fixing everything up afterwards, including plastering and painting. Widening the opening and putting a concrete lintel above it might add another €1,500 or so. **CONVERTING THE GARAGE** If you’re lucky enough to have a garage to the side of the house there’s great potential for adding space – and value to your home – relatively cost-effectively. Estimates for converting a standard garage into a room with an en suite vary substantially from about €25,000 to €60,000. Larkin leans towards the higher figure to get the job done right, which could include taking up the floor and insulating, upgrading the rest of the insulation and wiring, adding an en suite bathroom and creating access from the house, plus all the finishes. “You might get away with less,” he says. “I’m talking about a job that’s going to comply with the building regulations.” Farrelly strongly recommends talking to an architect before starting this kind of project. “People often go on the advice of the builder,” he says. “If you get ten builders you get ten different opinions. I

think an architect is important so you can spec and insulate it properly and it’s done to regulations. And if you’re selling on the house it will need to be certified.” **ATTIC CONVERSION** Again, estimates vary considerably for converting an attic in a standard three-bedroom semi, but are typically from about €45,000 to €65,000 for a room with an en suite bathroom. Larkin stresses the importance of complying with the relevant regulations if the new space is on the second floor and is to be used as a bedroom – this can involve upgrading ceilings and doors to ensure they are more fire resistant and putting in fire alarms. “Many people get the attic converted and say it’s not really a habitable space and that it’s used for storage only,” he says. “That gets them out of having to comply with the building regulations. To my mind that’s dangerous and shouldn’t be encouraged.” When it comes to attic conversions, it’s always a good idea to get professional advice, Larkin adds. “Velux windows going on at the side or the front of the house may need planning permission. Also, a building surveyor or architect can certify works on completion.”



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# Move

# New to the market

Grainne Rothery's pick of the properties available to buy in Ireland this week

## CO DUBLIN

Wee Willows is a two-bedroom cottage at the end of Talbot Lane in Killiney with its own private laneway leading up to the property's outside space, which includes a gravel driveway, a patio and a shed.

The front door opens straight into the living room, which is also home to a wood-burning stove and the stairs to the larger of the bedrooms. On the right the kitchen has two glazed doors to the patio and a roof light, along with integrated Bosch appliances.

Beyond is a smart shower room and the second bedroom.

At 61 sq m this cottage is wee, but planning permission has been granted to build a 121 sq m house in its place.

**Agent** hmd.ie

**What we love** The painted stone wall in the upstairs bedroom.

**Good to know** Wee Willows has solar panels, an EV charger and a C1 energy rating.

€595,000



## CO DOWN BIG VIEWS AND ALL MOD CONS

Super contemporary and very high spec, Matsu is a brand-new 425 sq m home on Carnbane Road near Hillsborough with fabulous views over Belfast.

Clad in charred larch, the house is designed to be inconspicuous. It's single-storey from the front and the main door has glazed panels on either side that give direct views through the entrance hall and a picture window to the mountains.

On the right of the entrance hall are a boot room, a utility room and a guest WC. Jutting out at the back is a huge – 13m long – open-plan kitchen/living/dining room with a balcony. The black gold slate-effect units include an island with an induction hob. Other integrated appliances include a Slide & Hide oven, a combination microwave, a warming drawer, a dishwasher and a tall fridge. A concealed pantry contains an integrated freezer and a dual temperature wine fridge.

A bedroom wing on the left of the entrance hall includes the main bedroom – with big views at the back – and guest bedroom suites.

A walnut and glass floating staircase leads to a family living/entertaining room on the lower ground floor with a built-in bar and access to a patio and terraces with a hot tub and a fire pit.

A series of rooms on one side include a small kitchen, a gym and adjoining sauna, and an office. On the other are three en suite bedrooms, a family bathroom and a cinema room with a 305cm screen.

Designed and built to passive house principles, Matsu has triple-glazing, an air source heat pump, underfloor heating with automated climate control and a whole-house ventilation system with heat recovery.

The property also has terraced lawns, a car port and a detached triple garage.

**Agent** colliersni.com

**What we love** The black cladding and amazing views.

**Good to know** A wine store on the lower-ground floor has capacity for 400 bottles.

**Continued on page 18** →



€1.4m



# Move

→ Continued from page 17  
**CO WATERFORD**

Located 600 metres from Tramore Strand, No 1 Ebrington Terrace on Doneraile Drive is a late 1800s-built, three-bedroom home that's been fully refurbished since it last sold in 2011.

The end-of-terrace house has a long front garden with off-street parking, lawn and a private terrace.

Inside, the kitchen and living room are on either side of the hall. The living room has a solid-fuel stove and double doors to a patio. The back hallway, which leads from the kitchen to a shower room, has French doors to the garden.

Three bedrooms, one with an en suite bathroom, are upstairs, as is another shower room.

**Agent** griffin-auctioneers.ie

**What we love** The glazed French doors to both rooms off the hall.

**Good to know** The house is four doors away from Tramore tennis club.



€450,000



**CO MAYO**

At the end of a cul-de-sac in a scheme of 23 homes built off Quay Road in Westport 17 years ago, No 1 Cluain Pdraig is a 162 sq m, end-of-terrace, three-bedroom, three-storey townhouse with a self-contained apartment.

Accommodation in the main house includes a hall and an en suite bedroom on the ground floor, an open-plan kitchen/living/dining room on the next level and two more bedrooms and a bathroom at the top.

The apartment, which has its own entrance, comprises a kitchen/living area and a bedroom with an en suite shower room. There's parking at the front, a gravel and paved rear garden and a balcony at first floor level.

**Agent** tot.ie

**What we love** The huge windows and the private balcony.

**Good to know** The house has a B3 energy rating but it's a D1 for the apartment.



€395,000



**DUBLIN 8**  
**TERRACED HOUSE**  
**WITH LOTS OF LIGHT**

No 24 Hamilton Street is a two-bedroom terraced red-brick with an extension to the rear that was added by its current owners, who also fully refurbished the property when they moved in more than 20 years ago.

Sharing a pretty tiled front path with its neighbour, No 24 also has its own small front garden set behind railings. The front door, which has a stained-glass panel above it, opens into a hall with original wooden floorboards, a dado rail and decorative coving, as well as understairs storage. A door at the rear leads to a WC.

The front room on the left has more timber flooring, a sash window, a picture rail, built-in shelving units and a solid-fuel stove. Next door, the kitchen is fitted with white Shaker-style units, wooden countertops, a gas hob and an integrated oven and microwave and is open to the extension at the rear, a living/dining room.

This space has an angled back wall with floor-to-ceiling glazing and huge sliding doors to the garden. Back towards the kitchen, an unusual slanted high window feature in one corner brings in additional light.

Outside, the back garden is landscaped and has a brick patio and steps, a gravelled main area and raised planters, a vegetable patch and shrubs and trees along one wall. There are more planters in the laneway to the rear, which has secure gates at either end. Many of the residents with access have been doing their bit to help maintain the space, which is also handy for getting bikes and bins in and out of the property.

Upstairs, both bedrooms have floorboards, sash windows and open fireplaces. The smaller of the two has built-in wardrobes. The bathroom has a bath with a tiled surround, a shower and a bidet.

**Agent** sherryfitz.ie

**What we love** Looking in and out of the wall of glazing at the back of the house.

**Good to know** It has a C3 energy rating.



€650,000







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# Interiors

## The one thing: *coastal cool*

Take yourself back to those carefree holidays by the sea, says *Sarah Macken*

At the time of writing, the #coastalgrandmother aesthetic has two million views on TikTok. In case you haven't heard of it, the trend fetishises affluent white women who live in ridiculously well-decorated homes by the sea. In fashion, the look is being phased out for something called Rich Mom Energy (don't ask: as far as I know it hinges on a good blow-dry, a love of Goop and swathing oneself in cashmere). Happily, the coastal trend is returning to its rightful place: interiors.

I love a good beach house, having long crushed on the seaside homes depicted in the films of Nancy Meyers. The director of *Something's Gotta Give* has become a pin-up of the coastal grandma movement and an icon for millennials. Who wouldn't fancy themselves as a Diane Keaton type lingering at the farmers' market, resplendent in cream jeans and turtlenecks, in between learning Italian and penning a novel, naturally. Equally, interiors aficionados wax lyrical about Meryl Streep's Santa Barbara ranch in Meyers's *It's Complicated*: a decorating scheme that's a love letter to stripes, calming colours and lush linens.

Denmark excels at coastal decor too. It's not surprising: come summertime, the Danes have a long-standing tradition of going off grid, retreating to a summer house, or *sommerhus*, to embrace nature. (The government actually mandated second homes for the working class in the 19th century: jealous much?) These bolt holes are tiny, simple spaces – often dotted along the coastline or by the shore of a lake – that are extremely chic. Think wooden structures with white painted windows; less flashy than Malibu, less stuffy than East Hampton. The key phrase

is “laid-back”, says Helle Moyna, herself a Dane and the founder of Nordic Elements ([nordicelements.com](http://nordicelements.com)). “It's all about vintage pieces, different textiles and colours mixed in a ‘non-perfect’ way. The aim is to create a cosy and warm place where we don't have to worry and can just be,” she says.

The buzzword around coastal interiors right now is subtlety – meaning novelty lighthouses and boats take a back seat (sorry, but phew!). Experts are heralding pale blues as the new way to add zen to your interior, particularly if you have “neutrals fatigue” (ie you're bored of beige). I recently spotted a bathroom with joinery in Pale Wedgwood by Little Greene that was incredibly serene (from €54; [littlegreene.eu](http://littlegreene.eu)). (On that note, adding tongue and groove is a surefire way to go coastal.) Oval Room Blue by Farrow & Ball is slightly more stately but equally delectable (€69 for 2.5 litres at B&Q). Craving crisp white? Loft White by Little Greene is the paint of choice for those in the know (from €35; [littlegreene.eu](http://littlegreene.eu)).

The elevated look – like everything these days – exudes a quiet luxury, though, as the interior designer Eilish Rickard notes, this doesn't mean revamping your whole look. Think about easy accessories: a rattan placemat, a linen cushion. Swap a wool rug for a jute one, she says. Speaking of textures, natural ones are, I think, the easiest way to make your interior look super luxe (regardless of the trend). Plus, a woven lampshade will fill a room with the softest glow imaginable. Look to Hedgeroe Home's woven rattan pendant shade (€362; [hedgeroe.com](http://hedgeroe.com)); it reminds me of an Ibiza coastal getaway. You'll be glad of it every time it rains.



▲ When creating this seating area, Sophie Rowell of Côte de Folk, an interiors consultancy, avoided coastal clichés. “‘Beach this way’ signs are strictly forbidden!” Rowell says. The sofa is upholstered in Tynemouth Ticking from Robert Kime, in a relaxed denim blue. The mirror was sourced at an antiques store in Rye. The green upholstered coffee table is a custom product made by Côte de Folk



▼ A palm-print platter by Niki Protopapa is a decorative piece for your table or your wall, €225; [greekbearingifts.com](http://greekbearingifts.com)



▲ “The coastal look appeals as it takes us back to memories of holidays by the sea, being relaxed, taking in the sea air and walking along sandy beaches,” the interior designer Eilish Rickard says. The aged brass cordless table lamp, €395, circular raffia tray with glass insert, €122, and selection of summer cushions, from €23, are all Dwell by Eilish Rickard; [dwellbyeilishrickard.com](http://dwellbyeilishrickard.com)



◀ Bring the outdoors in: natural finishes like rattan, wicker and jute are key to the coastal look. Festival basket, from €39.95; [meadowsandbyrne.com](http://meadowsandbyrne.com)



◀ Tap into the trend with a linen cushion cover in calming coastal blue, €95; [hedgeroe.com](http://hedgeroe.com)

▲ Stripe tease: add a striped jug with a hand-painted rim to your tablescap, €46; [oka.com](http://oka.com)



◀ Coffee table books with kudos: Hamptons Private by Dan Rattiner, €105; [net-a-porter.com](http://net-a-porter.com)



▲ Bring a hint of French style to your kitchen with the La Plage linen tea towel, €26; [eu.toa.st](http://eu.toa.st)



▲ Off for a dip? Pack this cotton velour beach towel with classic stripes, €25.99; [zarahome.com](http://zarahome.com)

▼ The Dexter table in oak wood in a white oil finish is perfect for a hallway or between twin beds, €1,550; [interiorsatelier.com](http://interiorsatelier.com)



▼ Say it with . . . a decorative shell bowl: the seascape themed accessory is all over Instagram, €45; [dwellbyeilishrickard.com](http://dwellbyeilishrickard.com)





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# Travel



## A taste of Charentes

This lesser-known part of western France packs a real punch, writes *Kevin Gleeson*

Topics of conversation that get lost in translation often make for some of the best anecdotes to take back from your travels. “Mental souvenirs”, as I like to think of them. I seem to have a knack for gathering them on my own trips abroad in the same way that others return home with fridge magnets.

On my first evening in the French department of Charentes we took a drive to Les Sources de Fontbelle, a restaurant that is surrounded by dense woodland on the edge of the city of Angoulême. It’s led by Guillaume Veysièrre, the head chef, and as soon as we walked through the door we sensed that we were about to experience something special.

Seated at the chef’s table next to the relaxed and very smoothly run kitchen we feasted on bread with smoked butter, crispy cones of tuna tartare and snail croustilles. Veysièrre then offered us the first taste of a new dish he had been working on, which consisted of roasted ceps freshly foraged from the forests and placed between a bed of tapioca risotto

and a blanket of translucent parsley gel. It was sublime.

Yet this is where the wheels started to, ever so slightly, come off. Veysièrre was interested to hear our thoughts on the dish and my excitement got the better of me – I described his masterpiece as tasting like the damp forest floor. I knew what I meant. A slightly puzzled look came across the chef’s face before we all got back to enjoying his fabulous hospitality.

A day or so later I received a message to say that the dish had been given the rather more romantic sounding name of “Promenade en forêt après la rosée du matin” or “A walk in the forest after the morning dew”, which just goes to prove that everything sounds better in the language of love. The meal was rounded off with a cauliflower sorbet so delicious as to defy its main ingredient.

The whole experience is quite telling because for a relatively small city Angoulême packs quite a big punch. With attractions ranging from a cathedral adorned with glass sculptures by the

From Cognac, top, to La Rochelle, right, via the cathedral at Angoulême, above right, the Charentes area is full of places to see



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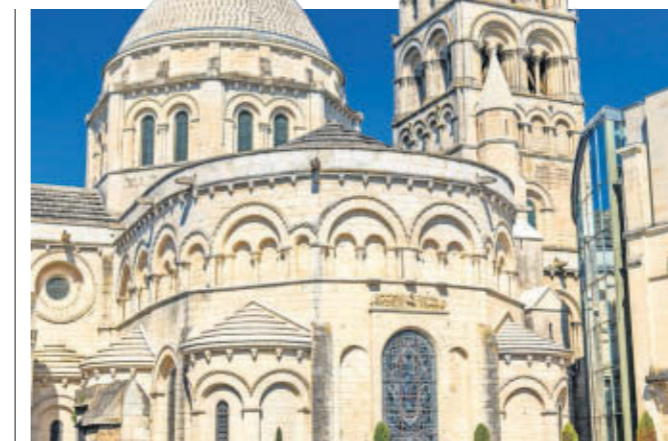


renowned contemporary artist Jean-Michel Othoniel, of Paris’s Palais Royal-Musée du Louvre Métro station fame, to street murals and classic car events, it’s not hard to see why the eccentric filmmaker Wes Anderson chose the city as the location for his 2021 movie *The French Dispatch*. In fact, our base, Hôtel Angoulême Le Saint Gelais, was where the cast and crew stayed during filming. Photographs signed by some of the film’s stars, including Tilda Swinton and Bill Murray, line the walls as well as a massive movie poster overlooking the grand staircase. Le Saint Gelais is a destination in its own right for Anderson fans.

One of the main highlights of Angoulême’s cultural calendar is its International Comics Festival. Held every January, it’s Europe’s second-largest event of its type. So enamoured is the city of the art form that all of its street signs are presented in cartoon-style speech bubbles.

Somewhat unusually for France it wasn’t bubbles, or even wine, that was on the menu the following day as we made our way the short distance to the town of Cognac. Maison Hennessy has been the home of the world-famous brandy since 1765 when it was founded by Richard Hennessy, who was originally from Cork. Today there is a variety of experiences on offer for visitors, all of which include a short boat ride across the river Charente from the maison to its historic cellars.

After the tour and a tasting we swung



by the Hennessy Boutique to explore the full library of its cognacs, from rare blends to artist collaborations. And if the thought of a cognac tasting makes your mouth water, some of the boutique’s prices will do the same to your eyes. It’s safe to say that people come to Cognac with one thing in mind but there’s plenty more to this beautiful little town.

Following a stroll around its cobbled streets we stopped for lunch at Le Bistro de Claude. The large leg of cured ham resting on a very expensive-looking slicer nearby offered an indication of what was to come. We feasted on pumpkin velouté with hazelnut oil, house pâté, fresh breads and fish. It was the kind of meal that reminds me why I love France so much.

“Visitors come to Cognac with one thing in mind but there’s plenty more to this town”

We rounded off our trip to Cognac by getting back out onto the river for a cruise on the newly launched La Demoiselle and watched dragonflies flitting across the water for a couple of hours. Alas, this idyll couldn’t last for ever and so we moved on to La Rochelle, in the neighbouring department of Charente-Maritime, our final destination.

The harbour at sunset was alive with boats sailing past the medieval towers that guard its port and the quay was buzzing with diners. We headed for La Yole de Chris, the more relaxed sister of the chef Christopher Coutanceau’s eponymous restaurant, which has two Michelin stars.

La Yole is named for the type of boat from which the chef and his father would fish, and the seafood and fish counter in front of the open kitchen is positioned atop one of these wooden vessels. There are steel buckets inset into our long communal table to discard mussel shells and there’s an emphasis on sharing, which signified we were in for a good night, and we weren’t disappointed.

We ended our evening in the old fishermen’s district of Saint Nicolas. Tucked behind the Old Port, by day the area is full of quirky shops and quiet places for a spot of lunch, but come evening it’s where you go if you want to grab a drink and hang out with the locals.

The following morning our excellent guide, Anne Lepelletier, took us on a tour

of La Rochelle’s old town to discover its half-timbered houses, covered arcades and the 17th-century town hall. But the heart of La Rochelle undeniably lies in its port. Dating from the 14th century, the Saint Nicolas Tower and the Chain Tower dominate the city’s waterfront. The Lantern Tower, a short stroll away, is relatively new, having been erected in the 15th century, but it is no less impressive.

The Saint Nicolas Tower is the only surviving medieval lighthouse on France’s Atlantic coast and has also served as a jail to house errant sailors and prisoners of war. Today the carvings that remain on the tower’s sandstone walls offer a unique and fascinating insight into those men’s harrowing experiences.

And if it is a unique experience you’re after while in La Rochelle, you need not look far. Walk 15 minutes from the ancient port and you will find yourself at one of the world’s largest marinas, Port des Minimes. We arrived to spend our final evening as guests of Captain Bertrand aboard Kelone, the boat he calls home. We set sail in perfect time to catch the sun drop below the horizon of the Bay of Biscay and having enjoyed Bertrand’s excellent company, canapés and wine I couldn’t think of a better way to say adieu to this beautiful part of France.

Kevin Gleeson was a guest of the Charente-Maritime department

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Officially named Ho Chi Minh City in 1976 to celebrate the reunification of Vietnam, many in the country's largest city still call it Saigon, especially when talking about the city centre. Visit Cholon (Chinatown) in District 5 — wander its narrow streets and picturesque pagodas, and step foot in the incense-filled Thien Hau Temple. Then, fill up on spicy beef noodles at Ben Thanh market. See the massive dragon carpet inside Independence Palace, the former home of South Vietnam's president before reunification, or learn more about what the Vietnamese call the American War at the War Remnants Museum.

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