



## LISDOONVARNA

### Geopark Heritage Trail

#### Location Map



#### Map Legend

- Heritage Trail Route
- Trail Shortcut
- National Roadway
- Regional Roadway
- Other Roadway
- Buildings

#### Loop Overview

- 14km on road 14.5 hrs
  - 10km on foot 1.5 hrs
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- Walking shoes, water, fuel, mobile phone



### 1 Rivers and Ravines

Lisdoonvarna is nestled within a landscape of rounded hills of shale rock. This shale was formed approximately 350 million years ago when clay sediments settled on the bed of a deep dark sea.



Underneath this shale rock is the limestone, that is visible on the surface further north in the Burren. Unlike limestone, shale is not dissolved by water and the rivers flow on the surface however, because the shale is made from clay particles it breaks and slips easily flowing to the left of the trail in the Glen hills. The river has dug into the shale over the centuries and created a deep ravine.

### 2 Wetland Vegetation

Walking along the trail, you are surrounded by vegetation which prefers wet conditions. This reflects the respiratory nature of the underlying shale which often causes water logging on the surface when drainage is impeded. Rushes, horsetails, willow herb, ragged robin and sedges grow among the grass of the parkland. The trees that line the banks of the Glen River include birch, alder, willow, sycamore, oak, pine and ash. On the opposite side of the ravine the rounded hills are covered by bog vegetation, including sphagnum moors, black bog rush, sedges and ferns.



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### Lisdoonvarna and its Spa Waters

Three small rivers flow through Lisdoonvarna, the Glen, Gowlaun and Glenison, all in deep ravines. Each has broken through the upper layer of shale and now flows on top of the underlying limestone. The shale is rich in phosphate, iron sulphide, calcium carbonate and organic matter. Where the shale meets the limestone, there is a layer particularly rich in phosphate and a number of mineral springs discharge from the shale at this point. The town of Lisdoonvarna developed around these natural spring wells, famous for their health-giving sulphur water and they became a major spa town attraction in the 19th century.

### 3 The Twin Wells

Ascending the river, you are passing through the shale layer to where the Glen River has reached the underlying limestone. In a short space of time, you have climbed down through approximately 20 million years of geological history. At the bottom of the steps are the 'Twin Wells'. Discovered in the mid-1700s, these wells are a source of hydrocarbon and magnesium and were used by the two separate wells spring from the same rock. Due to the popularity of the wells in the 1800s, steps were made down from the road above in 1870. An attendant working at the Twin Wells in 1909 earned 10 shillings (50 cents) a week.



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### 4 Riparian woodland

As you return to the trail, a second river flows to the right of your left. This is the Glenison stream and it is flowing to meet the Glen River near the Twin wells. As you walk along the banks of the Glenison stream, large trees line the banks. Birch, hornbeam, sycamore, ash, alder and willow adorned with mosses and ferns are undisturbed with a shrub layer of holly hazel, Hawthorn, alder, Blackthorn and beyond a colourful ground layer of speedwell, herb robert, mosses, orchids, cowslip and ferns.



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### 5 Pump House

Continuing straight along the trail, passing to the rear of the Burren Library bookshop, you reach a pedestrian entrance gate to the park. On the opposite side of the road is the Burren Library, housed in the former Pump House of the Glen and Magnesia wells of the Glenison stream. It was recommended that people first took a course of Magnesia before taking the iron water. The magnesia water was used to be beneficial for those with 'acid stomachs' while the iron water was used as a blood tonic and particularly recommended for young and weak people.



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**6 Gowlaun Spa Wells:** Leaving the grounds of the Pavilion, cross to the opposite side of the road, continue over the bridge and turn left into the park. Close to the bridge the Gowlaun River joins the Glen. According to local information, sulphur springs were discovered on the Gowlaun River in the early 1700s when a man-out hunting was enticed by the strong smell of 'rotten-egg'. The smell came from hydrogen sulphide gas which is released from the sulphur rich spring waters. Analyzed in 1715, the springs contain large quantities of sulphur and iron. In 1867 Capt. Macgillivray the landlord, built two small houses over the Gowlaun wells and installed a pump. In 1870 the first bath house was constructed here. By 1878 over 5,000 visitors were recorded. The existing bath house was built between 1908 and 1940.



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**7 The Pavilion:** Returning back into the park through the pedestrian gate and along the path, turn left where the trail divides. The Pavilion was built in 1810 on land acquired for a park and recreation area. Mr Knight of Enniscorthy laid the foundation at a cost of £230 and Humphreys of Dublin constructed it at a cost of £114, with steel from Ireland and buff of Belfast. It is built with a gable roof and a bay window. The floor and ceiling for 1,000 people. It became a venue for the elite, dance and general entertainment. Captain de Valer's address a crowd of 3,000 people in the Pavilion on 30 July 1817 as part of the election campaign. Today managed by the Lisdoonvarna Heritage Development Group it remains a successful venue for varied activities and within a well developed urban park.



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