IRISH COUNTRY MAGAZINE

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Roz Purcell
ON COMING HOME TO HERSELF

WIN
A LUXURY STAY AT THE MONTENOTTE

IS FORAGING THE NEW **NORMAL?**

IRISH MADE AWARDS:
THE FINALISTS

TELLING TALES
MEET THE MODERN-DAY SEANCHAÍ

FRESH WAYS
TO STYLE ARAN KNITS

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THE IRISH **POITÍN REVIVAL**
& RECIPES TO TRY

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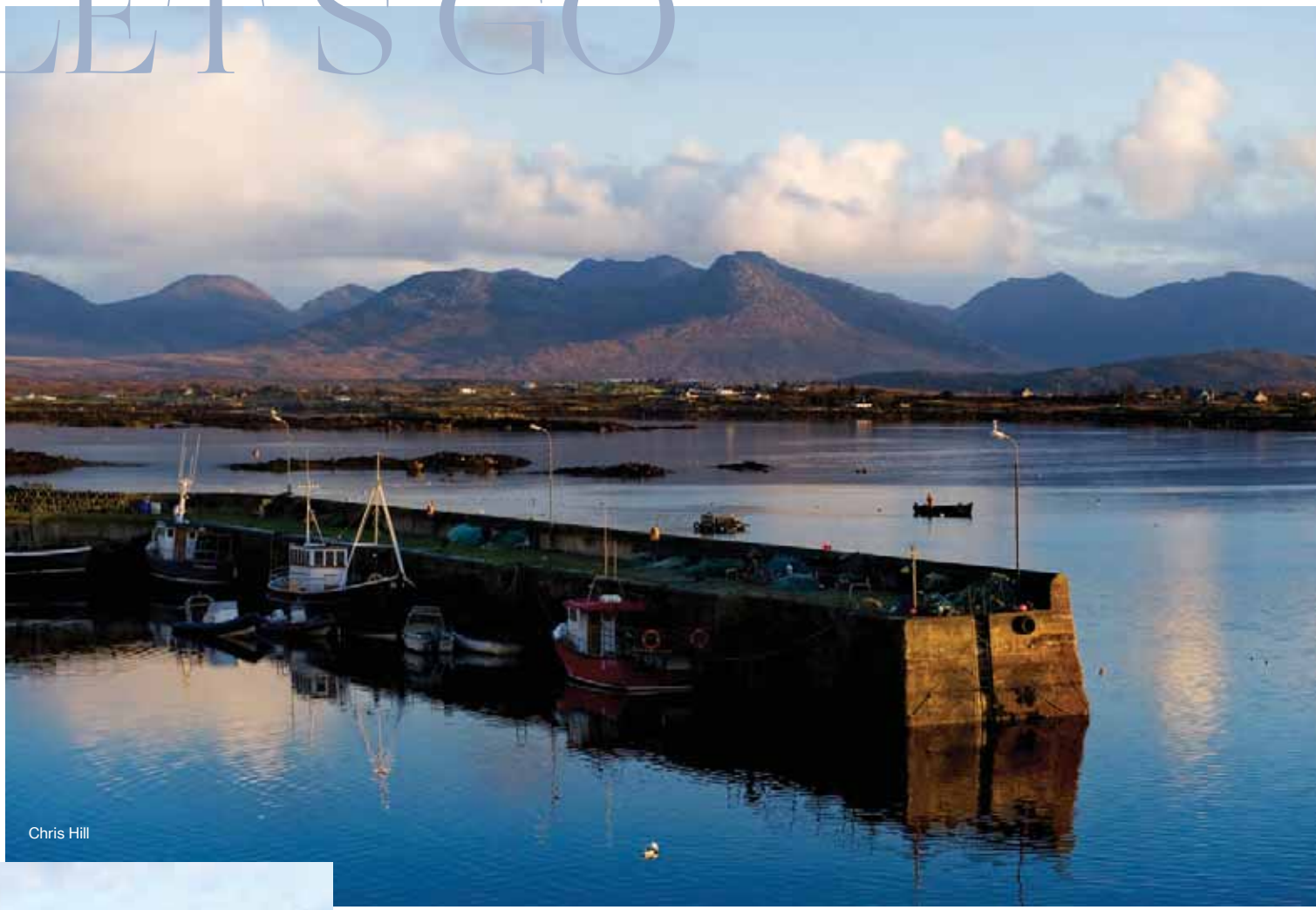

Chris Hill

INSIDER'S GUIDE TO:

ROUNDSTONE

Maria Murphy, Keith Kissane, and his sister, Lorna, are childhood friends who founded Within the Village in 2023. A passion project in Connemara, Co Galway, it saw them transform Connolly's pub and guesthouse into a collection of luxury cottages, townhouses and an event space

Compiled by Megan Fox

Cliodhna Prendergast

What is it that you love most about this area?

This picture-perfect coastal village is just over an hour's drive from the busyness of Galway city. It tends to attract the attention of artists, creatives and the discerning traveller looking for an uncommercialised and authentic Connemara experience. To us, it's the perfect place for slow travel and a bit of quiet luxury. We love that it's a busy hub during the months of July and August, but a quiet and sleepy village for the rest of the year. The village also has a lovely selection of resident artists, musicians and craftmakers, and hosts interesting cultural events and immersive photography retreats. Winter is an exceptionally relaxing time, with the backdrop of Bertraghboy Bay and the Twelve Bens mountains standing guard in the distance.

Where is the best place to stay?

A stay at Within The Village allows you to be part of local life in Roundstone. Tucked between the post office and the local shop, the concept is loosely based around the Italian Albergo Diffuso (scattered hotel) model of hospitality. The houses and outdoor space are designed in an authentic style, overseen by a host and are based in a central reception area in the middle of the

Tourism Ireland

Cliodhna Prendergast

Hugh Sweeney

small community. Food and drink are available locally in nearby shops, cafes, restaurants and traditional pubs.

Best place to feel like a local?
Take an early morning walk to Ervallagh Pier to join the locals for a sea swim, followed by a stop at the seaweed baths and sauna overlooking the Atlantic near Gurteen Beach. Sink into mineral-rich waters as waves crash on the pier outside for a serene experience that combines natural wellness with breathtaking ocean views.

Best place to get a coffee?
Following your swim, call down to James in My Coffee Cottage at the pier for a chat and a nice flat white or oat latte to kickstart your day, and pick up a baked treat from Tati's bakery if you're peckish.

Are there any good walks that we should do?
Through a secret coastal route at the end of the village, you can walk to the famous Gurteen and Dog's Bay. If you're feeling more energetic, climb Errisbeg Mountain. It's an easy 6km hike starting behind O'Dowd's Pub & Restaurant.

Is there somewhere that serves fresh local seafood?
Returning from your hike, reward yourself with a bowl of creamy seafood chowder and freshly caught crab claws for lunch in the famous O'Dowd's. Open 12 months of the year, they serve excellent food with amazing harbour views.

Are there many water activities to do?
Damien, a fourth-generation fisherman at Roundstone Bay & Islands Food Tour, is a captivating storyteller. Each tour is tailored to your interests, with options ranging from relaxing on the deserted island of Inishlacken to coastal exploration, wildlife watching and exciting activities like pulling up lobster pots, which you can then take home to cook.

Best place to get a pint?
Often claimed to pour the best Guinness in Ireland, pop into Joe King in King's Pub where you can also chat with some of the locals. If the evening is fine, take your pint over to sit on the wall and watch the boats at the pier. The Atlantic view is hard to beat.

Any must-visit dinner spots?
Ballymaloe-trained chef Siobhan Vaughan is one of the modest foodie secrets of the region. For casual dining, drop in for the best fish and chips and crab salad in the bar at Roundstone House Hotel. For a special treat, book into the dining room for the tastiest local Connemara lamb and homemade banoffee pie. End your evening at The Shamrock Bar & Restaurant for some traditional Irish music.

What is the local produce like in Roundstone?
The standout produce of the area is hill lamb, which has attained PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) status. Farmers allow their sheep to roam freely, picking heather from the hillsides and seaweed from the shore, resulting in a delicate and sweet flavour. Then there's the seafood from the cold, clear waters of the Atlantic. You'll find the sweetest black-blue lobster, scallops, crab, cockles, oysters and mussels in Roundstone.

Are there any local makers or craft shops we should visit?
At Roundstone Ceramics, watch Seamus Laffan at work at his potter's wheel and buy some of his pottery to take home. Afterwards, drop into Roundstone Music & Crafts, the studio and shop of the master bodhrán-maker Malachy Kearns, who fashions the traditional handheld Irish drum from goatskin and adds his intricate designs and storytelling to the experience. **ICM**