

## BALLYPORTRY CASTLE

*The 15th Century Gaelic Tower House*

### OTHER PLACES

**Ennistymon** is about 45 minutes by car from Ballyportry. A long waterfall cascades through the centre of the small town, which is set in a hollow in the hills. The recently renovated 1810 Courthouse is now an exhibition venue. Fresh herbs for cooking can be found in Foley's shop across the way from Unglert's bakery, which is known for its light apple strudel. St. Tolas's creamy white goat's cheese is made on the outskirts of the town. Amongst the many pubs there is an immaculately kept tiny bar called Eugene's which specialises in all kinds of whiskeys. Conway's shop stocks the international newspapers. The Willie Daly pony trekking centre is near at hand, as is the surfing beach of Lahinch.

**Ennis**, the capital of Clare is a busy market town with a winding medieval street pattern and is about 20 minutes from Ballyportry. The Fergus River runs through the town and provides a home for the swans that decorate its margins. There is a weekly Farmer's market on Friday mornings where organic local food, flowers and vegetables can be found. A stall that stands out is Mary Gray's. Her quiches and pies, breads, cakes, chutneys and soups are more than ample to bring home for a lunch or a supper.

**Galway is a University City** about 90 minutes away and worth a visit especially for an evening at the renowned Druid Theatre Company and to enjoy a visit to Sheridan's cheese shop with its array of quality Irish and Continental cheeses.

**The seaside town of Kilkee** is about 2 hours south of Ballyportry and is remarkable for a beach with steps and windbreaks in the middle of the town. The famous Pollock holes have been enjoyed by generations of children because of the warmth of the seawater left behind by the outgoing tide in the rock terraces.

**Loop Head** lighthouse is about 40 minutes further south of Kilkee and marks the end of the peninsula of Clare. From the nearby rugged coastline it is possible to see passing whales and porpoises as they move across the Shannon Estuary in the waters of the Gulf Stream.

**Co. Kerry** is on the other side of the Estuary and it is accessible by a 20 minute car ferry from Kilrush. An extremely long day trip to some of the Dingle peninsula is possible from Ballyportry and will allow the visitor from abroad to have a taste of the famous Kerry mountains and the Kingdom.

However we would suggest that a week in the Burren could only whet the desire to return and explore more of its hidden corners. These other destinations are mentioned to give the visitor from abroad a sense of scale and possibility. The roads are winding and the best of visits can be had by staying still and enjoying what is close to hand.