

The title does not do this publication justice



Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, a step too far for me. Picture by Nigel Duncan Media

The Rough Guide to Ireland (12th edition): £15.99: published July 2018

The title of Rough Guide does not do this must-have publication justice.

It's comprehensive and having just returned from the Emerald Isle I can honestly say this is the perfect travelling companion.

My partner came in handy, however, as navigator.

What to see and what not to miss allows you to plan your trip to this much-changed island.

Gone are the dark days when armoured carriers and soldiers toured the streets and you had your bags searched on entry to a shop.

This rejuvenated land is packed with things to do and see like

the world-famous Giant's Causeway on the Antrim Coast.

There Fionn Mac Cumhaill (Finn McCool) is alleged to have constructed a highway across the sea after becoming besotted with a Scots lassie.

In reality, it is made up of an estimated 37,000 black basalt columns and is more likely to have been as a result of an underground explosion 60m years ago.

I prefer the mythology myself but this site is busy so pick your time carefully.

There are fun places like the Carrick-a-Rede which is packed with tourists who want to cross this swaying rope bridge 30m above the bubbling ocean. Not for me.

And there are surprises. Take The Gobbins cliff path cut into the cliffs near Larne which was re-opened three years ago.

Safety is key here and you are kitted out with a helmet and suitable boots if you have not brought your own.

Pass through Wise's Eye – named after Berkley Dean Wise who conceived the path in the early 1900s – to 3m of tunnels, staircases and suspension bridged.

You can sometimes see porpoise, dolphins, seals and seabirds en route along the jagged coastline shaped by the sea which crashes against the rocks.

Don't forget to visit glorious Portstewart Strand, a 3km beach – we drove our car onto it – which boasts some of the best surfing in the area.

And don't miss Derry. It lies on Loch Foyle and has a rich and sometimes bloody history.

Of course, it is the scene of Bloody Sunday in January 1972 and you see the spot which lies below the remarkable 1.6km

walls.

Derry is, however, much-removed from those dark days.

This is just a snapshot of one part of this glorious island and you can reach it by ferry with P&O and Stena providing the link from Scotland in around two hours.

One personal note. We went on both but do try the first class on Stena. It is worth the extra charge.

And before setting out invest in this Rough Guide. It is money well spent and provides you with fine detail of times, costs and availability – all the things you need to know.