

TOUR 3

NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland's reputation as a tourist destination and a gastronomic centre has grown rapidly over recent years with a renewed interest in the region's distinctive local food. This 80-mile route takes a sample of some innovative culinary experiences on the journey from the south east of Northern Ireland to the spectacular north coast.

We cannot resist suggesting you begin the night before, staying at **Anna's House**. This is a real treat with stunning surroundings and splendid lakeside accommodation – and the organic Ulster fry breakfast should set you up proudly for the day. From here take the road left into Lisbane, and turn left onto the A22 before turning quickly right. The next left should bring you to Ballydrain Road and **Millview Farm**. Here, you can pick up the finest quality organic berries, fruits, potatoes and eggs from the family run farm along the shores of the beautiful Strangford Lough.

Continue as the road twists back to the A22 and into Comber. The A22 carries on out of town and into Dundonald, on the outskirts of East Belfast. The road merges with the A20 heading directly for the city. Turn right onto the A55, the outer ring road, which then merges into the A2 for Holywood. On the High Street you'll find **The Bay Tree Coffee House**, a great place for lunch – don't forget to buy a bag of cinnamon scones to take with you.

Once back on the road, head towards Belfast centre along the A2, past the airport. Rejoin the A20 at the heart of the city and pick up the A23 heading out of town. **Aunt Sandra's Candy Factory** is situated on Castlereagh Road, not far from the city centre. Here since the 1950s, it is a local institution; Sandra herself is retired, but her famous honeycomb candy, traditional fudge and chocolate macaroon cake live on and you can see how they are all made on the

factory tour. All the candy is hand made to recipes that date back as far as 100 years, and there's plenty to take away from the 1950s style gift shop.

Head back once again to Belfast's centre and join the M2 motorway, sweeping around to junction 1, confusingly located just after junction 7. Here, take the A26 northwards, following signs for Coleraine. A separate portion of the M2 guides you round Ballymena, and the A26 continues around Ballymoney, then Coleraine a pleasant, University town on the River Bann. A short dash up the A29 brings you to the world famous Causeway Coast and Portrush. Here you will find two long sandy beaches, backed by dunes and Royal Portrush Golf Links, one of the most challenging in Northern Ireland. You might like to walk along the beach, or venture along the A2 to gaze in awe at the incredible igneous extrusion that is the **Giant's Causeway**. Either way, **The Harbour Bistro**, a bustling, innovative establishment on the harbour in Portrush makes a perfect place to round the day off with dinner.

This drive has been created in association with Caroline Workman and Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle. Caroline is a food writer and Fionnuala works at the Taste of Ulster.

Portrush
The Harbour Bistro

A29

Coleraine

Ballymena

A26

M2

Holywood

The Bay Tree

M3

A1

Comber

A55

A20

A23

Aunt Sandra's
Candy Factory

A22

Lisbane

Anna's House