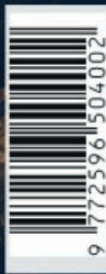




DYK

THE SCANDINAVIAN DIVE MAGAZINE



Den ..
gröna
ön

– dykning på Irlands västkust



VRAKET
I FOKUS

Kostervraket

Dykäventyr i

FLORIDA

TEXT TORBJÖRN GYLLEUS

FOTO TORBJÖRN GYLLEUS & HELENE-JULIE ZOFIA PAAMAND

The Green Island

DIVING ON THE
IRISH WEST COAST

Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus

When you talk about traveling to Ireland on a diving trip, most people will think deep wrecks at Malin Head on the North Coast of the island, but on the Irish West Coast you will find a beautiful Nature along with several dive sites, that fit all levels.



GRASSFIELDS <<

Wavy and lush eelgrass fields, cover the many shallow dive sites around Carraroe.

► Sara Banderby, who is active in the Swedish diving community and collaborates with Dykarna.nu, had made contact with Kirsty Ni Mhóráin, a young enterprising girl who has just started a diving centre in Carraroe, just west of Galway in Ireland. I was asked to come along to write an article and help Kirsty raise awareness of the dive centre and diving in the area. Of course, I wanted it. Also along for the trip was DYK's ambassador Helene-Julie Zofia Paamand, who has a lot of knowledge about marine biology and is very committed to environmental awareness. In addition, Helene is a good macro photographer. Sara, who was going on to Norway and Tustna after the Ireland tour, packed her re-breather, but I myself left mine at home and dove with an open system and single bottle for the first time in a long time. Helene decided to bring only some of her equipment to try on the one that the diving centre offers to its guests, something that would prove to be a good choice.

STARS BELOW ▷

The sandy bottom at Coral Beach consist of maerl, calcified seaweed resembling corals.

LITTLE DETAILS ▽

A colony of microscopic sea cloquirts that form a small bucket around 3 cm tall.

Foto: Helene-Julie Zofia Paamand

Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus



Go West

We rent a car at the airport in Dublin and drive across the green island to the small town of Carraroe. The sun is shining and we understand why Ireland is called the Green Island. In that part of Ireland, Gaelic, or Irish as the dialect is called, is widespread and all signs are in the local language. When we pass Galway and approach Carraroe, we stop at a restaurant, where we meet Kirsty and her partner Sam to have dinner with them. As expected, the food is quite similar to that served in Great Britain, and Kirsty explains a little more about the plans for the next few days before we go on to Kirsty's diving centre Atlantic Scuba Adventure. We drop off our diving gear before continuing to the house we will live in, which is a few minutes' drive away. There will be plenty of space, because we have the whole house to ourselves, with, among other things, a large kitchen, several bedrooms and two bathrooms, and everything is in new condition. We go to bed full of anticipation for tomorrow.

EXITED

The group meets at Kirsty's diving center, Atlantic Scuba Adventures.

EQUIPMENT

You can rent complete set of equipment at the center. They even facilitate technical diving.



Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus



FAKTA



KIRSTY NI MHÓRÁIN

A 23 YEAR OLD young driven diver, captain and organizer of Atlantic Scuba Adventures. Extending her primary job as a soldier in the Irish Army, she also introduces new and returning divers to the underwater world around Carraroe.

KIRSTY has big plans for her diving center, which she started a year ago, where in the future she will also offer technical diving training and make it RB standard.

BEEN A WHILE

We put on our wetsuits,
grab the mask,
fins, lead and snorkel
and head for the water.
It has been a while
since I've been snor-
keling and it is nice to
get back into it.

Snorkeling and Sauna

The next morning, there is breakfast at a restaurant a little further away. The place seems to be a bit of a meeting place for the locals, and at the next table two elderly men are sitting and talking loudly in Irish. With breakfast, consisting of eggs, sausage, scones and coffee, is taken, the trip continues to Coral Beach (or Trá án Dóilín in Irish), an incredible beach, not far from the diving centre. The place is popular, and there are many people who swim and bathe, even though the water is only around 16 degrees. The sand here consists of corals, hence the name. In the parking lot, Kirsty is waiting with snorkeling equipment and we put on wetsuits and take mask, fins, lead, and snorkel in hand and then go down to the water. It's actually been a long time since I've been snorkeling, and it's fun to try it again. The water is surprisingly clear, and very close to the shore a large school of wrasse with small fry passes by. We swim through seaweed and over lush eelgrass beds. There are many fish, large crabs moving across the bottom, and starfish are seen here and there.



**// THE WATER IS
SURPRISINGLY CLEAR,
AND CLOSE TO SHORE A
LARGE SCHOOL OF
WRASSE AND THEIR
JUVENILES SWIM BY.**



Although the water is a bit chilly, I managed to keep warm in the wetsuit, but when we get up, it's nice to step into the mobile wood-burning sauna, which is in the parking lot. It's really hot in the sauna, and after 15 minutes in there it's nice to run out into the cold water and cool off.

The sauna (Driftwood Sauna) is run by Edward and Monique, a couple with a passion for saunas and sauna culture, a bit unusual to find in Ireland! Inspired by their travels in Scandinavia and Northern Europe, they decided to bring the sauna culture back to Ireland, combined with cold water baths. Edward is proud of the mobile sauna, which is built especially for them. It has a wood-burning stove, just behind the bow, with a large window, so you can look out over the sea, but those outside are only greeted by a mirror - privacy is guaranteed.

Edward asks if we've had a Guinness yet. Sara replies that we haven't had time. Edward smiles, "You should, Guinness tastes best in Ireland. I never drink Guinness abroad, only at home."

SCOUTING



Helene is checking out the shallower part of Coral Beach, that is full of life.

FREEDOM



Atlantic Scuba Adventures also offers snorkelling. Here, Kirsty is gliding over the eel grass.

**// WE SWIM THROUGH
KELP AND OVER
FIELDS OF ELL
GRASS. THERE ARE
PLENTY OF FISH.
LARGER CRABS
CRAWL OVER THE
BOTTOM COVERED
WITH STARFISH.**



Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus

Night Dive

We return to Coral Beach to do our first dive, which will be a night dive. It is dusk and there is still little daylight as we sink into the shallow water dive, but there is plenty of life.

The underwater environment is a relatively flat mearl bank covered with seaweed, and everywhere large pollocks swim slowly close to the bank. Sara films with her GoPro, I take wide-angle pictures and Helene focuses on the macro life and takes pictures of the sea's smaller inhabitants. After dark, I notice that the suit is leaking, and it gets a little chilly after almost an hour of diving. Kirsty and I go up a little before the others, and from Land, it's cool to see the glow from the diving lights below the surface. I start my drone to get some footage of the light show. After the dive, my undersuit is wet with salt water, but fortunately, there is both a washing machine and a tumble dryer in the villa. Thanks to that, I can have a completely dry undersuit for the next day.

Sara and Helene continue the dive in the dark and find that the place becomes completely different during the night. The current changes the bottom pattern, crabs and shrimps fight for the eyes of them and the fish almost swarm. While Helene takes macro pictures, Sara uses the opportunity to scout for the next photo subject, which neither takes long nor requires any effort. There is something at each blade of tang. After almost 120 minutes, Sara and Helene emerge and trudge up the coral beach, now in high water and with a significantly shorter distance to walk than when they jumped in. Coral Beach is a fantastic diving site with a depth that allows lots of diving time.

At the current time, there are two restaurants and a pub in Carraroe. This evening we decide to have dinner at one, which is an Asian restaurant. It will be a little too late to reach for a Guinness at the pub, so we save it for the following day.

NO BUBBLES



Sara exploring on her Reve-rebreather.

DUSK



The night finds its way to Coral Beach and the nocturnal animals start their shift.

STEALTH



A spotted dragonet moves slowly over the many coral fossils at the bottom.

ON DUTY



There is full activity on the night dive. A crab backs a bit away, as I move closer.



Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus



Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus



Foto: Helene-Julie Zofia Paamand



Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus

Dogfish and Hookers

The following day there will be another dive at Coral Beach. This time it's daylight with a little different life compared to yesterday. Suddenly I see a perfect photo subject - a beautiful spiny shark lying on the bright coral sandbank. I look in the camera's viewfinder, but it's just black with the text "battery empty". I tie myself up and wonder why the camera has been running and has consumed the battery. Sara managed to get a great video clip with the shark, before it swims further into the seaweed. It's incredible that it just lies there, at a depth of three meters, completely effortlessly.

This particular day happened to coincide with the annual Féile an Srutháin (yes, this is the actual spelling) sailing regatta, which took place in the afternoon in Carraroe. We had the privilege of getting on board one of the old sailing ships, which was over 100 years old.

BABY



A very tiny dogfish with a belt stopper for reference.



Foto: Helene-Julie Zofia Paamand

Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus

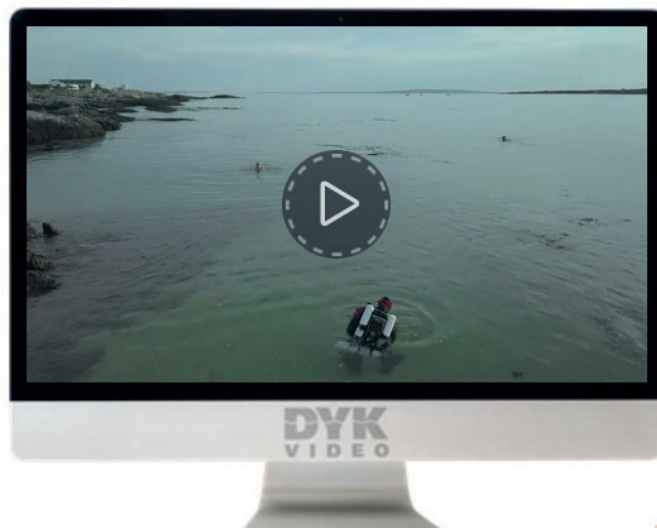


HOOKER



One of the traditional boats, that was racing in the annual regatta.

The traditional sailboats, called hookers, are passed down through generations, and our skipper told us that he inherited the boat from his father. The skipper and his crew skilfully round the buoys, and you have to watch the big boom when it's your time to cross, or the shot will be turned.



VIDEO

Kort video från dykresan till Carraroe på Irland.

Video: Torbjörn Gylleus

Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus



WALL



A nice wall dive at Annaghvaan. The water is green and reminds me of the Baltic.

BOAT DIVING



Sam, that is Kirsty's partner, educates seamen in navigation and RIB handling. A perfect match to Kirsty's dive center.

Wall diving

Sam works to train sailors in navigation and handling of RIB boats, a perfect match with Kirsty's diving centre. The following day we take a RIB out to sea to a site called Annaghvaan. Kirsty looks at the clock and tells us to get ready, and above all to watch the dive time. She points towards the opening of the site: "If you miss your time by too many minutes, it may be difficult for us to collect you due to strong currents in the water due to Spring tides."

SAFETY STOP



An orange horned Tompot Blenny is hiding amongst the sea squirts at Annaghvaan.

Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus



Foto: Helene-Julie Zofia Paamand



There is a strong current, except when the tide turns. I roll backwards and go down quickly. There is a steady, rather strong current and it drops steeply, but as we approach a depth of 30 metres, the current slows down. The water is green and somewhat reminiscent of the Baltic. Here the wall is completely covered in sea squirts and here and there large sea urchins sit. In a crevice, two dogfish hide and only their finely spotted tail fins stick out. Some places a few crabs appear, which seems indifferent to me, when I swim closer. In front of two boulders, I see a huge lobster. It becomes a little uncomfortable and backs up under one of the rocks when I pick up the camera, but I manage to snap a couple of pictures. The current has now turned and reminds us that it is time to surface. We were so impressed with this dive site that we did another dive here a couple of days later.

THE CURRENTS ARE STRONG EXCEPT WHEN THE TIDES TURN. I ROLL BACKWARDS AND THINGS MOVE FAST.

BOULDERS ▶

Here, at about 30 metres, the wall is covered in sea squirts and large crabs are climbing the boulders.

BEEFY ▶

A large lobster hides under a rock as I approach with my camera.

Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus



Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus



Lost in the Kelp

On the fourth diving day, we test a new site. There is an old concrete pier at a place called Céibh an Dóilín, and when we get there it is low tide, so we have to climb down a ladder to get down to the water, which is now knee-deep. After wading out a bit, it gets deep enough for us to start swimming, but it's still shallow. Eventually, it becomes something deeper. This is probably one of the lowest dives I've done, and our maximum depth was three meters. It's a really cool underwater landscape with labyrinths of kelp forest interrupted by sandbanks. Here and there you come across large starfish, and there are lots of small fish. On the way back, I try to take a shortcut through the seaweed, but get lost and have to surface to find out where I am. Fortunately, it is very shallow, so there are no problems. After the dive, we visit a local museum with a lot of things from the past and old photographs. The person in charge of the museum shows us around and tells us enthusiastically about the various things and events that have happened around Carraroe over the years. Right next to it there is also a seaweed farm, where seaweed is grown and harvested for, among other things, cooking and cosmetics. We have time to get a couple of samples, before we continue back to the diving centre.

LABYRIHT



At Cebh an Dóilín, there is a really exceptional underwater landscape with kelp forrest.

SHALLOW



One of the most shallow dives, we did at low tide at Cebh an Dóilín.

Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus





Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus

Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus



MARTHASTERIAS GLASCIALIS
Here and there, you bump into a starfish and there a lot of small fish too.

Foto: Helene-Julie Zofia Paamand



ZOOM IN
A small gobi is sitting on the starfish looking back at Chloe, that guides us on this dive.

FAKTA

IRLAND

THE COUNTY IRELAND takes up about 5/6 of the island of the same name. Since 1921 there has been a boarder towards Northern Ireland, that is part of Great Britain.

The country is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean with the Celtic Sea to the South, Saint George's Channel to Southeast and the Irish Sea to the East. The country is today a constitutional republic, governed by a parliamentary elected president, that is head of state. Ireland is a member of the European Union and United Nations. The capital is Dublin.

LANGUAGE The official languages are Irish and English. Irish has been in decline and has practically been replaced by English.

CLIMATE The climate is affected by the warm currents of the Gold Stream. The winters are mild and the summer relatively cool. There is plenty of rain throughout the whole year.

TRAVELS There are daily departures to Dublin from Copenhagen and Stockholm. From Dublin Airport, there is about 3,5 hour by car to Carraroe. It is also possible to take the bus.

CURRENCY Euro.

TIME ZONE GMT (on hour after Danish time).

ELECTRICITY Ireland uses the British standard (type G) plugs. So bring an adaptor.

DIVING You can dive in Ireland throughout the year, even though the risk for storms is larger during fall. The temperature differences are not that large even though the summer months might be the best time to visit the island. The water temperature differs from 10 to 18 degrees, so a drysuit

DIVING SAFETY The nearest hyperbaric chamber is located in Galway, about 50 minutes by car from Carraroe. The number to call in emergencies in Ireland is 112.

DYKCENTER Atlantic Scuba Adventures:

WWW atlanticscubaadventures.ie ➔

FACEBOOK [atlantic_scuba_adventures](https://www.facebook.com/atlantic_scuba_adventures) ➔

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TAMIJOY FARM Catering & Private Dining

WWW tamijoyfarm.com ➔

// TAMI WELCOMES US TO A VERY BEAUTI- FUL HOUSE. IT IS AS IF TAKEN OUT OF AN INTERIER DESIGN MAGAZINE.

DELICACIES



We sit down at a table in Tami's garden before she starts bringing out large amounts of delicious snacks and local dishes.

A Surprise

There will only be a single dive next day, because Kirsty has a surprise for us in the afternoon. We drive into the yard of an old stone house, where we are welcomed by Tami, an American lady with Irish roots, who runs a private kitchen and catering business in the couple's home, and who also grows her own crops! After many years of continuous travel to Ireland, she finally settled down, and her husband also moved there a couple of years later. She welcomes us in an incredibly beautiful house. It's like taken out of an interior design magazine with a focus on country life, and we sit down at a table in the garden, before she starts to appear with lots of fantastically good and well-prepared local dishes.

Tami is proud of her home-grown vegetables, and the other ingredients are also locally produced. Suddenly the local postman pops up. He takes out a "box" and begins to play and sing traditional songs. He also has his daughter with him, who gives us a demonstration of Irish dancing. Helene dares the fur and tries to dance along. There are lots of laughs and happy shouts. After a while, the postman says he will deliver the rest of the mail and waves goodbye. We're really full, but Tami has packed a picnic basket, and now we're going on to a small island off the coast, where more people are waiting.

Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus



This island is the only one that is still privately owned. Coffee, home-baked pies and cakes are offered here. An elderly gentleman, Ba-Ba-Jack, tells stories about storms, shipwrecks and supernatural beings, and how to escape them. Storytelling culture is still strong in this part of Ireland, known as Connemara. It was as late as the 1930s that electricity was brought to the last electricity-free houses, and the last bridges out to the islands were built. In the past, people spent their free time by socializing and telling stories. There are also two musicians playing together, a grandfather and his grandson. The postman, who played at Tami's, is both father and son to these musicians. It can hardly get more Irish than this! The sun is starting to set, and it's time to head back to the dive centre to pack up our things that were hanging out to dry.

HARMONICA

All of a sudden the local post man drops by and start playing a traditional songs on his "box".

Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus





Foto: Torbjörn Gylleus

GENERATIONS

We find two musicians, a granddad and a grandson playing together. It can hardly get more Irish than this.

I'm glad I got the chance to help discover this hidden gem and spread some more information about it and we're already talking about going back to Carraroe to visit all the amazing dive sites and see how Kirsty's dive center is developing.

Ireland has often been associated with the Malin Head dive site, a mecca for deep wreck diving. But it doesn't have to be that way.

Carraroe offers fantastic dives, accessibility for all, regardless of diving level, and an incredible culture if you're not in a rush. 