

## Topic Page: [Burren \(Ireland\)](#)

Definition: **Burren** from *Collins English Dictionary*

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**1 the Burren** a limestone area on the North Clare coast in the Irish Republic, famous for its wild flowers, caves, and dolmens

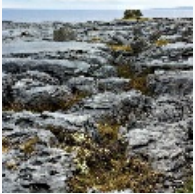


Image from: [IRELAND AND UNITED KINGDOM: GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE in World and Its Peoples: Europe](#)

### Summary Article: **Burren, the**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Barren limestone plateau with caves and subterranean waterways in northwest County Clare, Republic of Ireland; it is the largest karstic limestone area in western Europe. Bounded to the west by the Atlantic Ocean and to the north by Galway Bay, it stretches over an area of 300 sq km/115 sq mi, and is a national park. The Cliffs of Moher rise dramatically on the southwest coast, overlooking the Aran Islands. The region's unique ecological environment shelters an extraordinary mixture of ground-hugging Arctic, Mediterranean, and Alpine plants.

**Physical** Limestone pavements with deep crevices or grykes give way in the south to the black shale and sandstone of the Cliffs of Moher. Ice Age glaciers have scoured and rounded the hills, and deposited enormous boulders. The highest point is Slieve Elva, 318 m/1,109 ft, in an area capped with mud and shale. The Caher is the only permanent river, but turloughs (seasonal lakes) ebb and fill with the changing water table. Rainwater has gouged out vast underground systems, including Pollinagollum, the longest cave known in Ireland, which extends for over 12 km/7 mi. Ailwee Cave, 3 km/2 mi south of Ballyvaughan, is the only system open to the public. The region was once lightly wooded, but erosion occurred after the uplands were cleared for grazing by early inhabitants

**Features** Over 65 megalithic wedge tombs, 500 ringforts, and numerous Christian churches, monasteries, round towers, and high crosses are found in the region. Heritage sites in the Burren are maintained by Dúchas, the Heritage Service, as national monuments. Prehistoric monuments include Gleninsheen Wedge Tomb and Poulnabrone Dolmen, dating from 3800 BC. The 9th-century cliff fort of Cahercommaun, 3 km/2 mi south of Carron, includes souterrains (underground dwellings) opening on to the cliff face. There are also numerous examples of raths (earthen ring forts) and stone cashels (forts), several of which are known to have remained in occupation until late medieval times. Kilmonea contains 12th-century St Fachan's Cathedral with several high crosses, and the Burren Centre (1975).

**Towns** The main coastal settlements are Doolin (or Fisherstreet), a ferry port for the Aran Islands renowned for its traditional music; and Ballyvaughan, a tourist and fishing village on Galway Bay. Inland lies Lisdoonvarna, a Victorian spa town notable for its month-long Matchmaking Festival in September. Kilmonea, a tourist centre on the southern edge of the Burren, is the seat of the smallest Catholic diocese in Ireland, and has the Pope for its bishop.

**Fauna and flora** Rich, limey soils in the warm limestone crevices nurture a wide variety of plants, including mountain avens, Irish saxifrage, maidenhair ferns, and orchids; low-growing holly and hawthorn

are the only trees. The pearl-bordered fritillary, unique to the Burren in Ireland, and the endemic Burren green are 2 of the 28 species of butterfly found here. Among the native birds are razorbills, guillemots, puffins, and hooded crows. Overwintering species include the Icelandic whooper swan. Wild goats and the Irish hare are commonly found and otters and seals inhabit the coast.

In March 2000, following four years of proceedings, the High Court found in favour of a Burren action group for the conservation of the region, and declared that a partially-built visitor centre at Mullaghmore, supported by the minister for arts and heritage, was unauthorized. It said that completion of the centre would lead to an unacceptable degradation of the environment.

### **weblinks**

Burren

### **images**

County Clare

Poulnabrone dolmen

### **APA**

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Burren, the. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/burren\\_ireland](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/burren_ireland)

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## APA

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## Chicago

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## Harvard

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