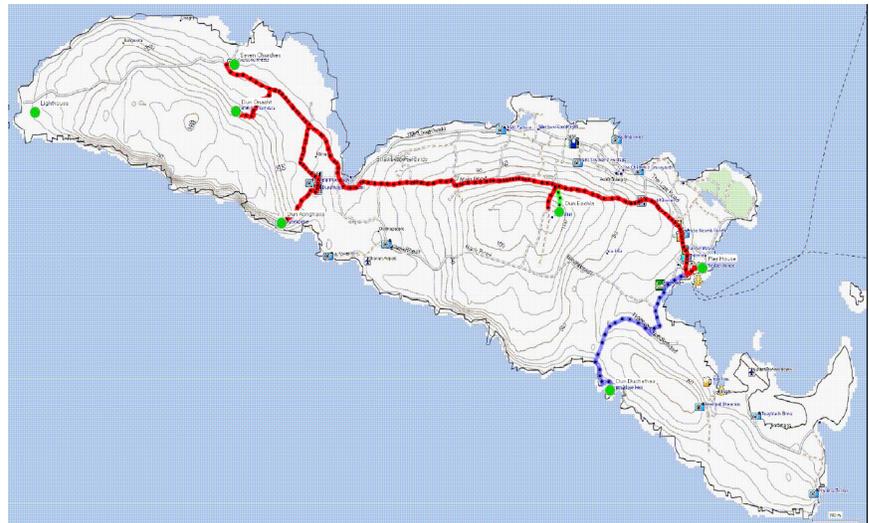




Dún Eoghanachta

A Day Exploring Inis Mór

This report (available with a large map as a PDF and as a GPS track, both from my website) describes a day exploring antiquities on Inis Mór, one of the Aran Islands in Ireland. I spent two nights on the island so as to enjoy one full day of walking and exploration. I arrived by ferry from Doolin, but there is also a ferry west of Galway at Rossaveal. What I found notable about the Doolin ferry was I had a 2 hour layover on the nearby Aran Island of Inis Oirr allowing me to enjoy a quick exploration of that island, but you should confirm the layover period from a future voyage because times may vary depending upon the prevailing tide. In any case, my full day to explore Inis Mór was stupendous.



Castle near Dún Eochla



Burial Tomb near Dún Eochla

My accommodations on Inis Mór were at the Pier House (www.pierhousearan.com), located just a few steps from the ferry pier. Not only was this locale convenient upon arrival, but nearby were numerous pubs, dining, and the information center.

On my exploration day, I had a truly wonderful time walking the length and width of the island, and that walk lasted nearly 9 hours. Of course I flailed a bit, but that was all in the fun. My walking route is demarked in red on the map, although I suggest considering the segments in green and blue - read on.

So on that day I began my walk at 8:30, an early start that turned out to be ideal. From the Pier House, I walked west along the Main Road. My first stop, what I thought at the time, was Dún Eochla, a stone fort located near the island's center. I later learned I visited a nearby castle ruin, and I should have turned south about 60m earlier from the Main Road along a track which is highlighted green on the map. This locale is about 3.5km from the Pier House. So while other tourists were likely still breakfasting, I was able to enjoy these expansive ruins in complete solitude, and I assume you'll also view the stone fort here plus the numerous other nearby antiquities on the ridge top.

From the castle I continued walking west, still on the Main Road. Along the way were thatched roof cottages and wind swept landscapes. Another 7-1/2km of walking, and to my most western locale on the island, brought me to The Seven Churches.

At one time the Seven Churches, or Dísert Bhreacáin as it was known for centuries, was a large monastic foundation and center of pilgrimage along the west coast of Ireland. It is believed the site dates back to around the 8th-13th century. Although the name implies seven churches, there are in fact only two churches with a number of domestic buildings. The title seven is possibly an allusion to the pilgrimage circuit of Rome which incorporated seven churches¹. In any case, the Seven Churches is rich in history and is a worthy visit. By arriving early, I was able to enjoy these antiquities in complete solitude. I completed my visit at 11:30, a time when tour buses, with throngs of tourists, arrived from their morning Rossaveal ferry crossing.

Leaving the tour buses behind, I now retraced my steps, walking east. After 1km I headed south up hill 3/4 mile to Dún Eoghanachta. This small fort is nearly perfectly circular with thick stone walls. Like my previous two antiquity visits, I too had complete solitude while there. I suspect this fort is lightly visited, so scheduling a time to visit here can be flexible.

My next antiquity visit was Dún Aengus. From Dún Eoghanachta I again retraced my steps by first heading north 3/4km to the Main Road, then east 1km to a junction, and then I walked mostly south. Another 1km brought me to junction where there were some tourist shops and a café. With hunger pangs howling, I stopped for a well deserved lunch. After lunch I continued south for 1/4km to reach the formal entrance into Dún Aengus where I paid a nominal entrance fee. Another 1km south and I reached the stone fort.

Of the antiquities I visited that day, Dún Aengus was my least favorite. Although the stone fort is massive, it lacked the varied details that I enjoyed in the vicinity of Dún Eochla and at The Seven Churches. It was also a place with throngs of tourists. In retrospect, I would have skipped Dún Aengus and should have used the waning hours of that day to explore Dún Duchathair (or The Black Fort) which I did not visit. This alternative would have added about 2km to my day's journey, and you can do it by following the blue route on the map. All told, I walked about 25-30km over 9 hours. It was an absolute wonderful day, and that evening I enjoyed a well earned pint of Guinness and a fine dinner.



Seven Churches



Cottage



Windswept



Dún Aengus

¹ See http://www.aranislands.ie/Inis-Mor-Main-Attractions/na-seacht-dteampaill-the-seven-churches_38.html

