

The town of Cashel is best known for the iconic Rock of Cashel, a medieval stronghold perched above the town. The Rock is steeped in history and religion, a symbol of over 1,000 years of royal and ecclesiastical power. It was the seat of the kings of Munster from the 4th century to the 12th century. In 1101, King Muirchertach O Briain gave the Rock of Cashel to the church and it soon became the seat of the Archbishop, thriving as a religious center for five centuries. In 1647, the town was sieged by Lord Inchiquin and his Cromwellian army, who slaughtered 3,000 townsfolk on the grounds of the Rock. It was handed over to the State and declared a national monument in 1874.

The Rock is also the subject of many legends. In 432, St. Patrick arrived in Cashel to baptize the pagan King Aenghus, who became Ireland's first Christian ruler. It is said that during the baptism St. Patrick used a shamrock to explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity, thereby giving Christian Ireland a new symbol.

The creation of the Rock itself is steeped in religious lore. Some legends claim that when St. Patrick banished the devil from his cave, he took a bite out of a nearby mountain and spit it out as he flew over the site. Others claim that the devil was flying overhead with a large stone in his mouth and dropped the rock in surprise when he caught sight of St. Patrick standing ready to found a new church. The locals will tell you that there is a striking gap in the mountain range to the northeast known as the Devil's Bite.

A few historical sites on Main St

Kearney's Castle - Across from the tourist information center on Main St is a stone tower, part of the original 15th-century castle. It was used by the Kearney family for many years, until Fr John Kearney was hanged there in 1642. It was also used as a garrison by the infamous Lord Inchiquin (Murough O'Brien).

Croke Memorial - At the end of the plaza is a cross commemorating the Silver Jubilee of Archbishop



Thomas Croke, one of the founder patrons of the Gaelic Athletic Association. The base of the memorial depicts the baptism of King Aenghus by St. Patrick at the Rock of Cashel, where you can see that St. Patrick's crosier (staff) is piercing the king's foot. At the end of the ceremony, when St. Patrick noticed the wound, he asked the king why he hadn't complained and he replied that he thought it was all part of the baptismal ceremony.

Cashel Palace - Just beyond the cross is the Cashel Palace Hotel, built in 1730 in Queen Anne and early Georgian styles. The 28-acre garden to the rear of the Palace is older than the house itself. The two Mulberry trees were planted in 1702 to commemorate the coronation of Queen Anne. The gardens also contain the descendants of the original hop plants used by Richard Guinness.

Rock of Cashel (Carraig Phádraig)

It is also known as St. Patrick's Rock and Cashel of the Kings. The name Cashel comes from *cai-seal*, meaning stone fort. Evidence of burials and church buildings dates back to the ninth century, and the frescoes in Cormac's Chapel (consecrated in 1134) are the oldest Romanesque wall paintings in Ireland. The site includes a round tower house, a 15th-century hall of vicars choral, Cormac's Chapel and a Cathedral built between 1235 and 1270, with a five-story tower house added in the 15th century. The grounds include an extensive graveyard with

several beautiful high crosses, and the entire plateau atop the rock is walled.

From its elevated position, the west side of the Rock of Cashel provides expansive views of the ruins of Hore Abbey as well as the surrounding plains.

To visit the Rock:

Head east on Main St, take a left (north) on Chapel Ln/Dominic St/Moor Ln, turn left onto Rock Ln and follow it up the hill.

Hore Abbey

The name is thought to derive from *iubhair*, meaning yew tree. The Abbey was founded by the Benedictine order in 1266. However, the Archbishop gave it to the Cistercian monks from Mellifont Abbey just six years later after he had dreamt that the Benedictine monks were about to kill him. He

also bestowed the Abbey with land, mills and other buildings previously belonging to the town, which caused local resentment. Most of the Abbey was built in the 13th century with some 15th century additions.

To visit the Abbey:

Head west on Main St, take a right (north) on Camus Road and turn left at the sign for Hore Abbey. (Approximately 10 minutes, .5 miles)

Path of the Dead

If you wish to visit both the Rock of Cashel and Hore Abbey, you can take the path of the dead (marked G on the map). This was the route used for funeral processions to bring the dead to the graveyard at the Rock.

