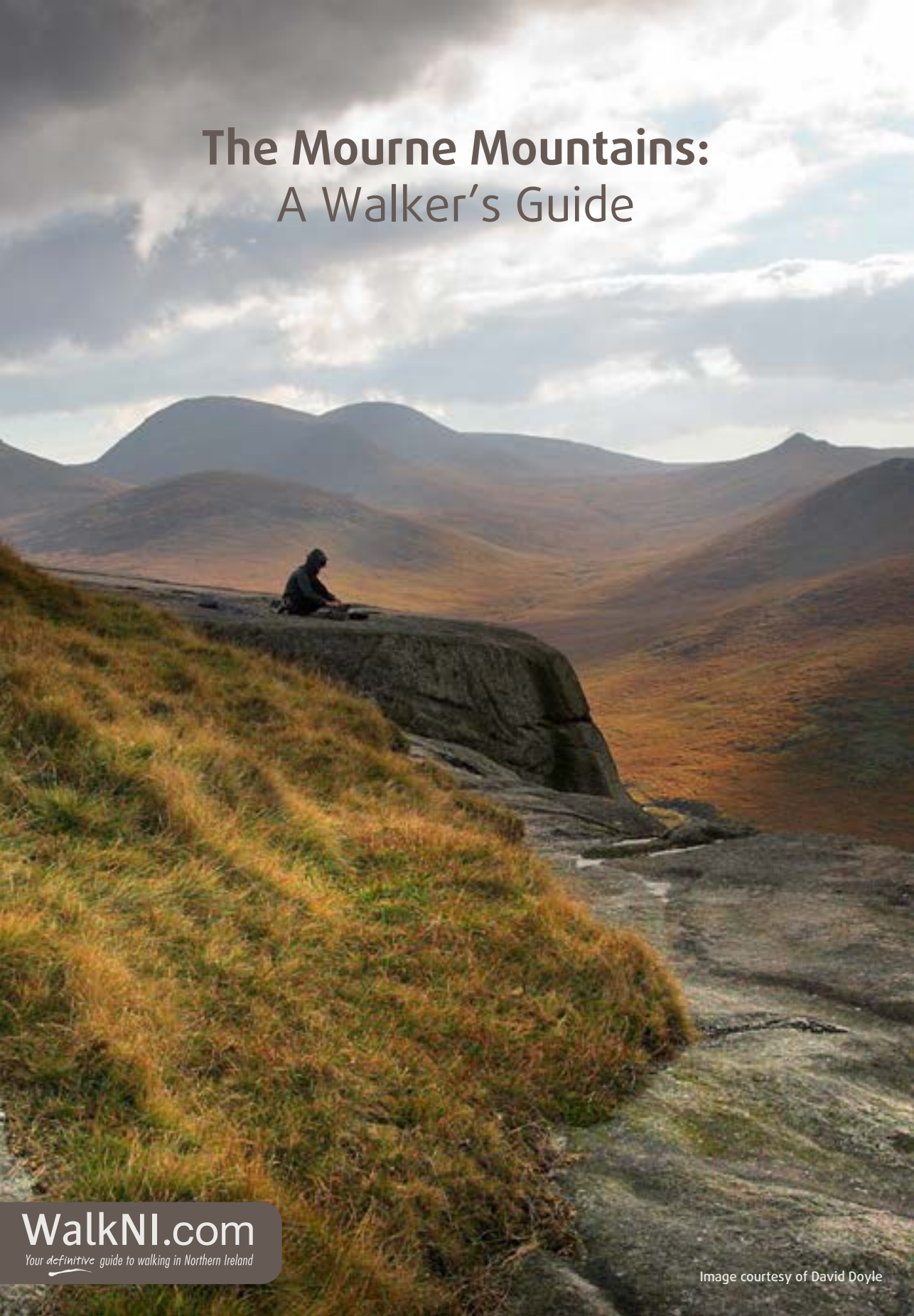


# The Mourne Mountains: A Walker's Guide



**WalkNI.com**

*Your definitive guide to walking in Northern Ireland*

Image courtesy of David Doyle

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Also available is [The North Coast and Glens of Antrim: A Walker's Guide](#). This guide will outline the key walking areas across the North Coast and Glens of Antrim, offering 3 varied itineraries sampling the best walking this unique area has to offer.

## Introduction: A Walker's Guide

*"Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves."* John Muir

Hillwalking is an outdoor pursuit enjoyed by millions of people throughout the world and Northern Ireland is widely recognised as an attractive destination with tremendous opportunities for unparalleled hillwalking. Spectacular scenery with a diversity of landscape and physical features offers a simply unique walking experience.

John Muir's quote above typifies what walking in Northern Ireland is all about. This 'Walker's Guide' is not going to 'glam up' our key walking areas by claiming that visitors need not pack anything other than shorts and t-shirts! Similarly we're not looking to avoid any possible negative issues, such as access limitations to certain walks. Rather, this document is designed to be an informative walker's guide to enable visitors to better enjoy the natural beauty of Ireland's dramatic, rugged landscape all year round. Our ever-changing natural environment shapes the Northern Irish

walking experience and we are proud of having 4 distinctive seasons, each bringing their own inspirations.

Northern Ireland is rapidly becoming a 'must see' destination on the world map and in turn, some incredible landscapes are being revealed to walkers of all ages and abilities. Deceptively, this 'wee' country has numerous walking areas each offering their own distinctive take on natural beauty. From the rugged cliffs of the North Antrim Coast to the rounded summits and lush pastoral valleys of the Sperrin Mountains, Northern Ireland really is a walker's paradise if you know where to look!

This Walker's Guide will give you enough information to plan your walking trip and make your own discoveries in the Mourne Mountains.



# The Mourne Mountains

“The Mourne Mountains have a varied and complex character which means you can walk there for a lifetime and still discover new places yet compact enough to allow you to climb many mountains in a single day.” Dawson Stelfox, first Irishman to summit Everest.

The Mourne Mountains are the highest and most dramatic mountain range in Northern Ireland, its summits crowned by granite tors. The Mourne upland is dominated by a compact ring of 12 mountains, each rising above 600m, with the highest peak, Slieve Donard, reaching 853m.

This unique range lies 31 miles (50km) south of Belfast and just over 62 miles (100km) north of Dublin hugging the County Down coastline. With many small towns and villages dotted across the foothills of the Mournes there is plenty to keep visitors entertained and many high quality accommodation providers, happy to take groups of tired out walkers! The mountains themselves are criss-crossed by an unrivalled network of paths and tracks, providing enthusiastic walkers with incredible opportunities for exploration. Whilst many of the walks in the Mournes are mountain walks, there are also several, less strenuous, hillwalking options through the heart of the mountains, without any serious ascents.

The Mournes are divided into 2 very distinctive areas – the Eastern or ‘High’ Mournes and the Western or ‘Low’ Mournes. Any newcomer to the Mournes will be simply amazed at the variety of landscapes that can be encountered within such a confined geographical area. Everything from the rocky outcrops that can be found on several of the peaks, to upland heath habitat, wooded valleys and the agricultural planes of the lower Mournes, the entire Mournes Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is simply unique. The most distinctive feature of Northern Ireland’s highest mountain range is the Mourne Wall, a 22-mile (35.5km) stone wall, enclosing 9000 acres of land all of which drains into the Silent Valley and Ben Crom reservoirs. The wall itself spans over 9000ft (2743m) of ascent, rising and falling over 15 of the highest peaks in the Mournes. Built over 18 years between 1904 and 1922, the Mourne Wall is a remarkable structural feat and frames some of the finest mountain views in Ireland.

## The Big Six!

Heights of the six largest peaks in the Mourne Mountains are provided below.

- Slieve Donard ..... 853m / 2,798ft
- Slieve Commedagh ..... 765m / 2,509ft
- Slieve Binnian ..... 747m / 2,450ft
- Slieve Bearnagh ..... 739m / 2,424ft
- Slieve Meelbeg ..... 708m / 2,322ft
- Meelmore ..... 704m / 2,309ft

If scaling the highest peaks in the Mournes isn’t for you, don’t worry, there are plenty of other fantastic walking opportunities for you in this area. In fact, much of the appeal of this area actually lies in the unspoilt scenic charm of the wider Mourne region. Walkers can enjoy the rich landscape of woodlands in Tollymore and Castlewellan Forest Parks or the Kilkeel and Annalong coastline which is soaked in heritage with an array of wildlife on show. Visit [www.walkni.com](http://www.walkni.com) for a full list of the short, medium and long distance routes in and around the wider Mournes area.

When walking in the Mournes use the Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland (OSNI) Mourne Activity Map 1:25 000. Walkers will be able to buy these maps from Tourist Information Centres in Newcastle, Kilkeel and Newry. These maps are also available from the Belfast Welcome Centre located in Belfast City Centre or from the Ordnance Survey website [www.osni.gov.uk](http://www.osni.gov.uk)

# Walking Itineraries

The WalkNI team have put their heads together and designed a variety of walking itineraries to enable visitors to get the best out of a day or short break in the Mourne Mountains. We have put together 5 itineraries of what we judge to be the best walking in the Mourne Mountains. There are of course many other combinations of walks and part of the joy of hillwalking is mixing and matching routes to create your own personal adventures. Use these itineraries as a guide.

- **Conquer the Peaks**

23.4 miles (37.7 km)

It does what it says on the tin!

A 3 day itinerary scaling the 6 highest peaks in the Mournes. Suitable for experienced walkers with a high level of fitness.

- **Flavour of the Mournes**

23 miles (37 km)

A more moderate walking itinerary. Again over 3 days, these suggested daily routes will give walkers a true taste of what the Mournes are all about.

- **The Best of the Mournes**

15.3 miles (24.6 km)

A 2 day itinerary summiting Slieve Binnian and Slieve Bernagh, two peaks widely regarded as two of the best mountain hikes in the Mournes. A reasonably strenuous option suitable for confident walkers.

- **Mourne Way**

26 miles (42km)

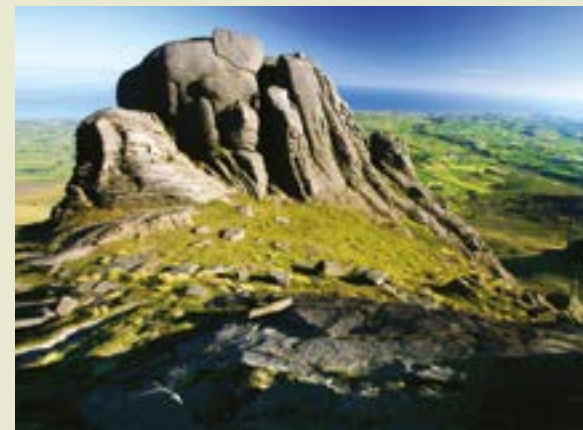
Another 2 day itinerary however the Mourne Way doesn't scale any peaks, instead this route follows mountain paths through the foothills of the Mournes. Suitable for walkers with moderate levels of fitness, approximately 13 miles (21km) per day.

- **Mourne Wall Challenge**

19 miles (30.5 km)

A 1 day challenge following the 22 mile (35.5km) Mourne Wall. This route is not for the faint hearted and can take between 10 and 12 hours to complete. Only recommended for confident hill-walkers with high stamina and experience in mountain challenge walks.

All the walks included in these itineraries have been fully assessed and are deemed to be Quality Walks. In total, there are over 20 Quality Walks in the Mournes region as part of the Quality Walk Scheme, accommodating all levels of fitness. From traversing the foothills and valleys of the range to attempting a summit challenge walk, the Mournes experience really can be dictated by the walker's own personal preference. To learn more about the Quality Walk Scheme click here... [www.walkni.com/useful-info/quality-walks](http://www.walkni.com/useful-info/quality-walks)



## 'Conquer the Peaks'

23.4 miles (37.7 km)

A challenging 3 day itinerary climbing the 6 highest peaks in the Mournes including Slieve Donard, Northern Ireland's highest summit at 853m / 2,798ft. With walking up to 5 to 6 hours a day, the other peaks 'conquered' in this route are Commedagh, Binnian, Bearnagh, Meelbeg and Meelmore. As the name would suggest this itinerary requires a high level of fitness but rewards walker's efforts with breath-taking views out over the Irish Sea and beyond!

### Walker's Highlight

In a recent WalkNI Facebook survey Slieve Binnian came out on top as Northern Ireland's favourite mountain hike. Seeing as Binnian won this poll we thought it only right to mention it in our Walker's Highlight. Day 2 of this itinerary scales Slieve Binnian taking in the spectacular North and South Tors on the summit.

This 3 day itinerary has starting points in the northern, eastern and southern regions of the Mourne Mountains and the days can be taken in any order. This means that you can base yourself in any area which is accessible to the mountains. For more accommodation information in and around the Mourne Mountains go to section 4 of this Walker's Guide.

### Day 1: Slieve Donard, Commedagh and Bearnagh

10.9 miles (17.5 km)

This is a challenging circular walk with some strenuous ascents, but it is certainly worth it. The route takes in 3 of the 4 highest peaks in the Mourne Mountains (Slieve Donard 853m, Slieve Commedagh 765m, Slieve Bearnagh 739m) rewarding walkers with wonderful views out to the Irish Sea and back into the High Mournes.

### [Full Route Description, Photos and Ordnance Survey Maps](#)

#### Best place for a quick snack:

Meelmore Lodge – Set in the tranquillity of the Mourne Mountains at the bottom of the Trassey track, Meelmore Lodge offers a wide variety of foods accompanied with wonderful mountain views. Tel +44(0)28 4372 5949 or visit [www.meelmorelodge.com](http://www.meelmorelodge.com).

#### Best place for a drink after the walk:

The Tonn Ruray, Dundrum – Renowned for its warm welcome, a great place to quench your thirst after a long walk. Tel +44(0)28 4375 1284.

### Did you know?

This walk takes you along part of "The Brandy Pad", a track created by the boots of smugglers and the hooves of heavily laden ponies, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries. Illicit cargoes of tobacco, wine, spirits, leather, silk and spices would be spirited through the mountains from the east coast to be distributed inland. So popular was the trade that by 1835 in the village of Hilltown, almost half the houses were pubs on the summit.

## Day 2: Slieve Binnian

7 miles (11 km)

This fantastic circular walking route follows the Mourne Wall to the summit of Slieve Binnian (747m). It then traverses between the spectacular South and North Tors before descending along a track past the Blue Lough, Annalong Forest and back to Carrick Little car park near Annalong village.

### Did you know?

It took over 18 years to complete the Mourne Wall. Between 1904 - 1922 many skilled people were employed seasonally to build this stone wall which stands up to 8ft high and 3ft wide. It is 22 miles (35.5km) in length and connects the summits of no less than 15 mountains in the Mournes, including Slieve Donard.

[Full Route Description, Photos and Ordnance Survey Maps](#)

### Best place for a quick snack:

The Galley Take Away & Café – Award winning fish and chip shop in the village of Annalong. A range of sandwiches and paninis are also available in their adjoining café. Visit [www.thegalleyannalong.co.uk](http://www.thegalleyannalong.co.uk)

### Best place for a drink after the walk:

The Harbour Inn, Annalong - Beside the Annalong Cornmill, overlooking the harbour, this pub/restaurant offers thirsty walkers a welcome drink and food with entertainment at weekends.

Tel +44(0)28 4376 8678 or visit [www.harbourinnannalong.co.uk](http://www.harbourinnannalong.co.uk)

## Day 3: Meelmore and Meelbeg

5.5 miles (9 km)

This is a moderate circular walk in the Mournes, summiting 2 of the 7 highest peaks in the region, Slieve Meelmore and Slieve Meelbeg. The walk starts and finishes from Ott car park.

### Did you know?

There are still a number of working quarries in the Mournes today and Mourne granite was used in the September 11th British Memorial Garden in New York.

[Full Route Description, Photos and Ordnance Survey Maps](#)

### Best place for a quick snack:

Cnocafeola Centre – Will provide good wholesome food and soft drinks. Tel +44(0)28 4176 5859.

### Best place for a drink after the walk:

The Cnocafeola Centre will provide food and soft drinks and will be more than happy to point walkers in the right direction should you be needing anything stronger! Tel +44(0)28 4176 5859.



## 'Flavour of the Mournes'

23 miles (37 km)

This 3 day walking itinerary will give walkers a true taste of what the Mourne Mountains are all about but at a bit more of a relaxed pace. Suitable for walkers with good fitness levels, it ascends a number of dramatic peaks, with an option to climb Slieve Donard whilst also traversing through the sweeping foothills of the High Mournes.

### Walker's Highlight

We asked WalkNI's Diane Patterson to give us her 'walker's highlight' for this itinerary. "A personal highlight for me would be clambering up the rocky slope towards Hares Gap, over the Mourne Wall and being rewarded with stunning views of the inner Mournes, ranging from the peaks of Slivelamagan, Slieve Beg and Ben Crom mountain down to the depths of Ben Crom Reservoir. It feels like a different world and one that not many get to experience".

Walkers can opt to stay in a number of locations when walking this 3 day itinerary. Somewhere close to the coastal resort of Newcastle would probably be best suited to access these walk suggestions as there is good transport links from here, especially in July and August when Translink run the Mourne Rambler Bus service. To find out more about accommodation and transport information for the Mournes region have a look at sections 4 and 11 of this Walker's Guide.

## Day 1: Trassey to Bloody Bridge

7.3 miles (11.7 km)

A moderate linear walk linking Trassey Track and Bloody Bridge via the Brandy Pad, taking in sights such as the Mourne Wall, Slieve Commedagh and Slieve Donard. There is the option of an even more challenging alternative route by also summiting Slievenaglogh and Slieve Commedagh, then following the Brandy Pad down to Bloody Bridge.

### Did you know?

Bloody Bridge reputedly gets its name from a massacre during the 1641 rebellion when a wagon load of prisoners were being transported to the nearby town of Downpatrick were ambushed and slaughtered.

[Full Route Description, Photos and Ordnance Survey Maps](#)

### Best place for a quick snack:

Sea Salt. Located on Newcastle promenade this delicatessen and bistro serves delicious home made food.

### Best place for a drink after the walk:

O'Hares – Lively traditional pub in the centre of Newcastle, also serves hearty pub food. Tel +44(0)28 4372 2487

## Day 2: Hen, Cock and Pigeon Rock

5.9 miles (9.5 km)

A circular route in the western Mournes giving a taster of views that can be experienced in the region. Walkers will ascend Hen, Cock and Pigeon Rock Mountains using open mountain terrain before descending through a valley and following Rocky River back to Hen car park.

### Did you know?

The Mournes are a uniquely compact mountain range consisting of 12 peaks over 600m but are only 7 miles in breadth. This means that walkers can sample much of the Mournes in only 1 day.

### [Full Route Description, Photos and Ordnance Survey Maps](#)

#### Best place for a quick snack:

Hilltown Chippy – Located on the main street in Hilltown, traditional chip shop with friendly staff. Tel +44(0)28 4063 8130

#### Best place for a drink after the walk:

The Downshire Arms Hotel, Hilltown - A warm and friendly establishment, offering high standards of food and beverages. Tel +44(0)28 4063 8899 or visit [www.downshire-arms.com](http://www.downshire-arms.com)

## Day 3: Central Mournes

9.9 miles (16 km)

A circular route in the central Mournes taking in sites such as Annalong Wood, Slievelamagan, Ben Crom Reservoir, Cove Mountain and Annalong Valley. This day's walking rewards walkers with views over the Irish Sea and to the Isle of Man.

### Did you know?

Between 1947 and 1951, a workforce of over 150 courageous men drove a tunnel nearly two and a half miles long underneath the Mourne Mountains. The purpose of the tunnel was to carry water from the Annalong valley to top up the Silent Valley Dam which had been completed just twenty years earlier. The task of cutting such a tunnel was undertaken by two work squads of men, starting at either end and meeting in the middle nearly 800 metres under the roof of Slieve Binnian.

### [Full Route Description, Photos and Ordnance Survey Maps](#)

#### Best place for a quick snack:

The Galley Take Away & Café – Award winning fish and chip shop in the village of Annalong. A range of sandwiches and paninis are also available in their adjoining café. Visit [www.thegalleyannalong.co.uk](http://www.thegalleyannalong.co.uk)

#### Best place for a drink after the walk:

The Harbour Inn, Annalong - Beside the Annalong Cornmill, overlooking the harbour, this pub/restaurant offers thirsty walkers a welcome drink, with entertainment at weekends. Tel +44(0)28 4376 8678 or visit [www.downshire-arms.com](http://www.downshire-arms.com)



Image courtesy of David Doyle

## 'The Best of the Mournes'

15.3 miles (24.6 km)

For those only in the Mournes for the weekend, these 2 invigorating days are perfect to fit in some of the highlights of this spectacular range. This itinerary summits Slieve Binnian and Bearnagh with the option of scaling Slieve Donard, all of which will reward walkers with breath-taking views over the South Down and County Armagh landscapes.

### Walker's Highlight

The nature of this particular itinerary is such that both days are designed to sample the best of what the Mourne Mountains have to offer. The beauty of hillwalking is that everyone's personal preference ultimately dictates their own choice of favourite walking spots. We actively encourage walkers to form their own opinions of a destination backed up by stories that will hopefully inspire others to come and explore this area for themselves.

Walkers may like to consider accommodation options in the coastal town of Newcastle or smaller neighbouring villages of Bryansford or Maghera. If you would like to make a comment on any of the walks in this Walker's Guide or indeed wish to comment on the guide itself please email [info@walkni.com](mailto:info@walkni.com). Where possible we will try and feature these comments on [WalkNI.com](http://WalkNI.com)

## Day 1: Reservoir Views

9.3 miles (15 km)

A strenuous linear walk linking the southern end of the High Mournes to Newcastle via Slieve Binnian, Slivelamagan and the Glen River. Impressive views of Silent Valley Reservoir can be enjoyed from Slieve Binnian and of Ben Crom Reservoir from Slivelamagan, both of which supply Belfast with piped water. The walk starts near Annalong and finishes in Newcastle.

### Did you know?

From the top of Slieve Donard, on a clear day, walkers can see out over to England's Lake District, Dumfries and Galloway in Scotland, Snaefell on the Isle of Man, the Scottish island monolith of Ailsa Craig and the Isle of Arran.

### [Full Route Description, Photos and Ordnance Survey Maps](#)

#### Best place for a quick snack:

The Galley Take Away & Café – Award winning fish and chip shop in the village of Annalong. A range of sandwiches and paninis are also available in their adjoining café. Visit [www.thegalleyannalong.co.uk](http://www.thegalleyannalong.co.uk)

#### Best place for a drink after the walk:

Percy French Inn - Pub style bistro located within Slieve Donard Resort & Spa grounds in Newcastle. A relaxed atmosphere make this a popular choice for walkers. Tel +44(0)28 4372 1066.

## Day 2: Bearnagh and Meelmore

6 miles (9.6 km)

A strenuous walk in the Mournes taking in the peaks of Slieve Bearnagh and Slieve Meelmore, finishing by walking down Happy Valley and along a section of the Ulster Way. This is a circular walk using the Trassey Track as the gateway to the core of the High Mournes.

### Did you know?

There is an annual Hill & Dale series mountain race up Slieve Meelmore and neighbouring Meelbeg. Local runner Eddie Hanna currently holds the race record for completing the 3.5 mile (5.5km) course in 29 mins 2 secs.

### [Full Route Description, Photos and Ordnance Survey Maps](#)

#### Best place for a quick snack:

Meelmore Lodge – Set in the tranquillity of the Mourne Mountains at the bottom of the Trassey track, Meelmore Lodge offers a wide variety of foods accompanied with wonderful mountain views. Tel +44(0)28 4372 5949 or visit [www.meelmorelodge.com](http://www.meelmorelodge.com)

#### Best place for a drink after the walk:

O'Hares – Lively traditional pub in the centre of Newcastle, also serves hearty pub food. Tel +44(0)28 4372 2487.



## 'Mourne Way'

22 miles (35 km)

This 2-day long distance linear walking route follows a mixture of forest trails and mountain paths through the foothills of the Mournes, from Newcastle to Rostrevor on Carlingford Lough. This itinerary provides more moderate walking as the route contours the peaks rather than climbing them.

### Walker's Highlight

"Having walked up Butter Mountain, along the Mourne Way, the highlight for me is descending Spelga where the views really open up along the valley at Spelga Pass. Beneath, the River Bann meanders from its source near Slieve Muck, through Spelga Dam and on to Lough Neagh. It's a great point to view the next section of the walk heading around Hen Mountain and on towards Rostrevor". WalkNI.com Development Manager Clare Jones

There are a wide range of B&Bs, guesthouses, hotels and hostels in Newcastle and Rostrevor, at both ends of the Mourne Way. There are no significant refreshment stops along the route between Newcastle and Rostrevor but Meelmore Lodge offers hostel accommodation, camping and a coffee shop (Sat and Sun 9am - 6pm) approximately 7.5 miles (12km) along the route. The Cnocnafeola Centre based just off the route in Attical also offers prearranged transfers to and from Ott Car Park on the Mourne Way. More accommodation information can be found on [section 4](#) of this Walker's Guide.

Note: This walk crosses open hillside with no waymarking so please ensure you are adequately prepared.

## Day 1: Newcastle to Ott Car Park 8 miles (12.8 km)

Following the Shimna River out of Newcastle the route heads towards Tollymore Forest Park. From here walkers reach the 'Brandy Pad' an old smuggler's trail up to Fofanny Dam Reservoir. This day's walking finishes at Ott car park.

### [Full Route Description, Photos and Ordnance Survey Maps](#)

#### Best place for a quick snack:

Sea Salt – Unique deli and café on the central promenade in Newcastle, not far from Donard Car Park. Uses high quality local produce. Tel +44(0)28 4372 5027.

#### Best place for a drink after the walk:

Cnocnafeola Centre will certainly provide good wholesome food and soft drinks. They will also be able to point you in the right direction should you be needing anything stronger! Tel +44(0)28 4176 5859.

### Did you know?

In 2005 Tollymore Forest Park celebrated its 50th anniversary.

In 1955 it became the first state forest in Northern Ireland to be designated as a Forest Park.

## Day 2: Ott Car Park to Rostrevor

18 miles (29 km)

The 2nd day's walking begins at the saddle between Butter Mountain and Spelga Mountain. Walkers then cross the Rocky River and make their final descent down into Rostrevor village with spectacular views out over Carlingford Lough.

### Did you know?

There is a "Magic Road" at Spelga Dam! A car (or any other object that can roll) apparently rolls uphill on this short section, which is not a road as such, but a surfaced entrance driveway to a private area of the dam works. The relevant section however is open to the public and accessible from the passing B27 road. Gravitational anomaly? Optical illusion? Whatever the explanation, it's an eerie experience!

### Full Route Description, Photos and Ordnance Survey Maps



Download your free Mourne Waymarked Way Guide from [www.walkni.com/walks/194/mourne-way](http://www.walkni.com/walks/194/mourne-way)

#### Best place for a quick snack:

Cnocafeola Centre – Will provide good wholesome food and soft drinks. Tel: +44(0)28 4176 5859.

#### Best place for a drink after the walk:

The Kilbroney Arms, Rostrevor, is well-renowned in walking circles for good hearty food in a traditional pub. Tel +44(0)28 3831 4325.



Image courtesy of Richard McAleese

## 'Mourne Wall Challenge'

19 miles (30.5 km)

A 1 day challenge following the 22 miles (35 km) of the Mourne Wall. This challenge route incorporates the ascents and descents of 15 peaks in the Mourne Mountains. This challenge certainly isn't for the faint-hearted however it rewards walkers with a truly unique experience.

In the late 1980's hostellers in the area started an annual challenge walk, following the Mourne Wall along the mountain peaks in a single day. Over the years this event grew in popularity and the local hostels used it as a fundraising event. It eventually grew from 50 or 60 people taking part to 3,000-4,000 bringing thousands of supporters with them along the route. However, the challenge event was eventually cancelled due to very severe erosion along the route. It is still possible however to roll back the years and take part in this challenge in your own small groups (no more than 12 people).

This 1 day itinerary provides a highly challenging route taking in 7 of the 10 highest mountains in the Mournes and Northern Ireland.

### Full Route Description, Photos and Ordnance Survey Maps

#### Best place for a quick snack:

The Galley Take Away & Café – Award winning fish and chip shop in the village of Annalong. A range of sandwiches and paninis are also available in their adjoining café. Visit [www.thegalleyannalong.co.uk](http://www.thegalleyannalong.co.uk)

#### Best place for a drink after the walk:

The Harbour Inn, Annalong - Beside the Annalong Cornmill, overlooking the harbour, this pub/restaurant offers thirsty walkers a welcome drink, with entertainment at weekends. Tel +44(0)28 4376 8678.

### Did you know?

The Mourne Wall was originally built in an effort to keep cattle and sheep out of the water catchment area of the Silent Valley reservoir.



## Where to Stay

There are a number of small towns and villages dotted around the foothills of the Mourne Mountains, providing a wide variety of accommodation options for walkers visiting this area.

Newcastle, a coastal resort around 31 miles (50km) from Belfast and 87 miles (140km) from Dublin, is probably the most popular town for visitors to the Mourne Mountains. Located at the foot of Slieve Donard, Newcastle and surrounding area is a great base for walkers visiting the Mourne Mountains on a short break. There are plenty of great places to eat and drink in Newcastle with many hotels, guesthouses and B&B's. For something a bit more tranquil walkers may wish to stay in the smaller coastal village of Rostrevor. Overlooking Carlingford Lough, Rostrevor's beauty is said to have inspired C.S. Lewis's Narnia in his famous novels. Bryansford is a quaint village located beside Tollymore Forest Park roughly halfway between Newcastle and Castletwellan. A sleepy village with great access to the mountains, this village and surrounding area is another popular spot for walkers looking for a bit more peace and tranquillity.

Below is a list of recommended accommodation providers suitable for walking groups or clubs. This list is by no means extensive. Visit [WalkNI.com](http://WalkNI.com) for a list of special offers for walker friendly accommodation in the area. For more accommodation information in and around the Mourne Mountains please visit [www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com)

### Hotels

Name	Nearest Town or Village	Phone	Website	Accommodation Type
Burrendale Hotel	Newcastle	+44 (0)28 4372 2599	<a href="http://www.burrendale.com">www.burrendale.com</a>	Popular country club with restaurant and spa.
Slieve Donard Hotel	Newcastle	+ 44 (0)28 4372 1066	<a href="http://www.hastingshotels.com">www.hastingshotels.com</a>	4 star hotel with luxury spa facilities in Newcastle. On the coast, close to the base of Slieve Donard.
The Whistledown Hotel	Warrenpoint	+44 (0)28 4175 4174	<a href="http://www.thewhistledownhotel.com">www.thewhistledownhotel.com</a>	3 star boutique hotel with 22 double rooms in Warrenpoint.

### Camping

Whilst wild camping is allowed in the Mourne Mountains we recommend that you stay in one of the following official campsites and avail of all the facilities on offer. When camping we encourage walkers to always adhere to the principles of Leave No Trace [www.leavenotraceireland.org](http://www.leavenotraceireland.org)

Name	Nearest Town or Village	Phone	Website	Accommodation Type
Meelmore Lodge	Bryansford	+44 (0)28 4372 5949	<a href="http://www.meelmorelodge.com">www.meelmorelodge.com</a>	Campsite and coffee shop on edge of the High Mourne.
Castletwellan Forest Park	Castletwellan	+44 (0)28 4377 8664	<a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk">www.nidirect.gov.uk</a>	Family friendly site within walking distance of Castletwellan town.
Bloody Bridge Backpackers	Newcastle	+44 (0)77 8812 7730	<a href="http://www.bloodybridge.com">www.bloodybridge.com</a>	Unique campsites and some bunk bed accommodation in converted barn.
Tollymore Forest Park	Newcastle	+44 (0)28 4372 2428	<a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk">www.nidirect.gov.uk</a>	Modern toilets and showers with disabled facilities and laundry room.
Kilbroney Park	Rostrevor	+44 (0)28 4173 8134	<a href="http://www.seenewryandmourne.com">www.seenewryandmourne.com</a>	4 star campsite close to the centre of Rostrevor Village.

### Hostels and Self-Catering Accommodation

Name	Nearest Town or Village	Phone	Website	Accommodation Type
Cornmill Quay	Annalong	+44 (0)28 4377 0714	<a href="http://www.onegreatadventure.com">www.onegreatadventure.com</a>	4 self-catering cottages and large hostel in the coastal Annalong village.
Dunnywater Lodge	Annalong	+44 (0)28 4067 1616	<a href="http://www.dunnywaterlodge.co.nr">www.dunnywaterlodge.co.nr</a>	Period property at the foot of the Mourne. Sleeps 6.
Rowanbank	Annalong	+44 (0)78 8503 5698	<a href="http://www.mournescottage.co.uk">www.mournescottage.co.uk</a>	Countryside cottage situated in 9 acres of ground. Sleeps 6.
Cnocafeola Centre	Attical	+44 (0)28 4176 5859	<a href="http://www.mournehostel.com">www.mournehostel.com</a>	Modern hostel for up to 31 people Under 4 miles (6k)m from Killeel.
Meelmore Lodge	Bryansford	+44 (0)28 4372 5949	<a href="http://www.meelmorelodge.com">www.meelmorelodge.com</a>	Hostel for up to 24 people, campsite and coffee shop on edge of the high Mourne.
Millers Close Cottages	Bryansford	+44 (0)28 4372 4177	<a href="http://www.millersclose.com">www.millersclose.com</a>	4 self-catering cottages located close to the Trassey Track.
Tory Bush Cottages	Bryansford	+44 (0)28 4372 4348	<a href="http://www.torybush.com">www.torybush.com</a>	9 self-catering cottages located on edge of the high Mourne.
Hillyard House	Castletwellan	+44(0)28 4377 1999	<a href="http://www.hillyardhouse.co.uk">www.hillyardhouse.co.uk</a>	Just off the main street in Castletwellan. Also has a popular restaurant.
Chances Mourne View	Dundrum	+44 (0)7786 805458	<a href="http://www.ownersdirect.co.uk">www.ownersdirect.co.uk</a>	5 star apartment overlooking Murlough Bay Nature Reserve. Sleeps 5.
Downshire Manor Apartment	Dundrum	+44(0)77 1160 9712		4 star Georgian Apartment in the quiet village of Dundrum. Sleeps 8.
Dundrum Bay Holiday Homes	Dundrum	+44(0)28 4372 4348	<a href="http://www.holidayhomes-ireland.com">www.holidayhomes-ireland.com</a>	A terrace of 8, 4 star self catering houses in the coastal village of Dundrum.
Downshire Mews Apartments	Hilltown	+44(0)28 4063 8899	<a href="http://www.downshire-arms.com">www.downshire-arms.com</a>	7 self-catering style apartments situated beside the Downshire Arms Restaurant.
Hanna's Close	Killeel	+44 (0)28 4176 5999	<a href="http://www.hannasclose.com">www.hannasclose.com</a>	7 self-catering cottages under 2 miles (3km) from the fishing village of Killeel.
Mourne Cottages	Maghera	+44 (0)28 4375 1251	<a href="http://www.mournecottages.com">www.mournecottages.com</a>	7 self-catering cottages in a rural location just north of the Mourne.
Beverley Cottage	Newcastle	+44 (0)28 4372 2018	<a href="http://www.tollymorecottages.co.uk">www.tollymorecottages.co.uk</a>	Stone built self-catering Cottage with traditional feature fireplace. Sleeps 6.
Mourne Heights	Newcastle	+44(0)28 437 22550	<a href="http://www.mourneheights.co.nr">www.mourneheights.co.nr</a>	Self contained cottage with superb views across Dundrum Bay. Sleeps 4.
Newcastle Country Cottages	Newcastle	+44(0)28 4372 5286	<a href="http://www.newcastlecountrycottages.com">www.newcastlecountrycottages.com</a>	10 luxury 5 star self catering cottages set on a farm.
The Hutt Hostel	Newcastle	+44 (0)28 4372 2133	<a href="http://www.hutthostel.com">www.hutthostel.com</a>	Friendly hostel which sleeps 37 in shared dorms as well as 6 in a private family room.
Graceys Barn	Rathfriland (near Hilltown)	+44(0)75 9633 8928	<a href="http://www.graceysbarn.co.uk">www.graceysbarn.co.uk</a>	4 star two bedroom stone barn.
Rostrevor Holiday Homes	Rostrevor	+44(0)28 4173 8727	<a href="http://www.rostrevorholidays.com">www.rostrevorholidays.com</a>	10 self-catering cottages on peaceful farmland in the southern Mourne.

Visit [WalkNI.com](http://WalkNI.com) for a list of special offers for walker friendly accommodation in the area. More information on hotels, hostels, self-catering and camping facilities plus a full range of B&B's and Guesthouses can be found on [www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com)



## Food and Drink

After a hard days walking, some good food and drink is a must. We know that when you are in a new place it is good to have a few local recommendations so here are some of the top eateries loved by walkers in the Mourne area.

Name	Located in	Phone	Website	Cuisine Type
The Galley Take Away & Café	Annalong	+44(0)28 437 67253	www.thegalleyannalong.co.uk	Award winning fish and chip shop with adjoining café.
The Harbour Inn	Annalong	+44 (0)28 4376 8678	www.harbourinnannalong.co.uk	Restaurant & pub on Annalong Harbour, beside the Cornmill.
Maginns	Castlewellan	+44 (0)28 4377 8235	www.maginnsbar.com	Affordable good food in a large family bar.
Mourne Seafood Bar	Dundrum	+44 (0)28 4375 1377	www.mourneseafood.com	Fresh fish dishes at affordable prices in a cosy bistro atmosphere.
The Buck's Head Inn	Dundrum	+44 (0)28 4375 1868		A fine dining restaurant renowned for its excellent food. Well worth a drive.
Maghera Inn	Maghera	+44 (0)28 4372 2236	www.themagherainn.com	Traditional country pub & restaurant serving wholesome & tasty food. Friendly warm atmosphere.
Niki's Kitchen Café	Newcastle	+44(0)28 4372 6777	www.nikiskitchencafe.co.uk	A stylish cafe with high tea menu set at the foot of the Mourne.
Percy French Inn	Newcastle	+44 (0)28 4372 1066	www.hastingshotels.com	Pub style bistro located within Slieve Donard Resort & Spa.
Vanilla	Newcastle	+44(0)28 4372 2268	www.vanillarestaurant.co.uk	Main street restaurant serving delicious food with a great reputation.
Sea Salt	Newcastle	+44 (0)28 4372 5027		Great little deli and café serving home made food.
Kilbroney Arms	Rostrevor	+44 (0)28 3831 4325		Good hearty food in a traditional pub.

## Other Walking Options

The Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty extends much beyond the upland core of dramatic peaks and embraces a wide range of farmed drumlins, lush lowlands and spectacular coastal landscapes. Below is a brief overview of some other popular walking destinations in the Mourne area.

- **Tollymore Forest Park**

In 1955 Tollymore was opened as the first Forest Park in Ireland to encourage the general public to come and visit the forest environment and enjoy its natural beauty. With the backdrop of the Mourne Mountains, the 2 rivers - Shimna and Spinkwee are surrounded by forested hills and offer a unique walking experience that is unparalleled within Northern Ireland.

- **Castlewellan Forest Park**

Located in a dramatic setting of mountains and sea, Castlewellan Forest Park has one of the most outstanding tree and shrub collections in Europe. The walled garden is a mixture of informal and formal design with terraces, fountains, ornamental gates and flower borders. To walk around the forest park's mile-long lake, encountering some intriguing modern sculptures on the way, is to enjoy one of the finest examples of eighteenth-century landscaping.

- **Kilbroney Forest Park**

The 97 acres which form Kilbroney Park lie close to the shore of Carlingford Lough in the shadow of the forest-clad Slieve Martin. As a backdrop to Kilbroney Park stands the impressive 4,000 acre Rostrevor Forest rising sharply from 30m to 500m above sea level. Open spaces and pathways in Kilbroney Park allow relaxing strolls and links directly into the forest park where trails lead through oakwoods and planted slopes of sitka spruce, douglas, fir and pine.

## Specialist Walking Providers

Using a walking guide will give you unparalleled access to local knowledge, history and insight as to how and why the Mourne have inspired so many over the years. Below is a list of walking guides for the Mourne, a full list of walking providers in Northern Ireland can be found at [www.walkni.com/useful-info/walking-providers](http://www.walkni.com/useful-info/walking-providers)

Name	Contact	Email	Website
Mountain Sojourns	+44 (0)77 4028 5794	info@mountainsojourns.co.uk	www.mountainsojourns.co.uk
Mourne Spirit	+44 (0)77 1184 7125	caroline@mournespirit.com	www.mournespirit.com
Outdoor Ireland North	+44(0)79 7340 8056	loretto@outdoorirelandnorth.co.uk	www.outdoorirelandnorth.co.uk
Walks in the Mourne	+44 (0)28 437 25143 +44(0)78 5542 5778	domnall.mccomish@btinternet.com	www.walksinthemourne.com



## Festivals

### The Mourne International Walking Festival

The Mourne International Walking Festival takes place in the last weekend of June each year. The festival is the ideal time to participate in some wonderful walking whilst meeting other walkers too. Alternating each year between Newcastle and Warrenpoint in County Down, this internationally recognised festival offers walkers of all levels of fitness and abilities stunning routes between 6 miles (10km) and 25 miles (40km) at both high and low level. The festival also includes the Blister Ball on Saturday night, a casual event with a hot buffet supper followed by dancing into the small hours. For more information, log on to [www.mournewalking.co.uk](http://www.mournewalking.co.uk)

### Wee Binnian Walking Festival

The Wee Binnian Walking Festival is an annual festival organised by the Wee Binnians, one of the most prominent walking clubs in Northern Ireland. The festival is based in Newry and covers the Mourne Mountains, The Cooleys and Slieve Gullion with 9 guided walks available over the weekend. With a reputation firmly established around great sociability, combined with an ability to put together a challenging walking programme, the Wee Binnian Walking Festival attracts a large number of walkers from all over Ireland and further afield.

### Celtic Fusion Festival

The Mourne Mountains come alive with the sound of music every June or July when the Celtic Fusion International Musical Arts Festival comes to town. For a free festival programme, accommodation information or to book tickets contact: +44 (0)28 4372 2222 or visit [www.celticfusion.co.uk](http://www.celticfusion.co.uk)

### Dundrum Buskers Festival

In the shadow of the Mourne Mountains, Dundrum is an apt setting for the All Ireland Busking Competition. Usually held in late August the festival attracts performers of all ages and abilities with a great family crowd coming to enjoy the performances and other festival activities.

## What else is there to do in the Mournes?

### Outdoors

If you fancy a bit of variety from just hillwalking, there are a whole host of other outdoor activities available in the area. Everything from the Kilkeel Cycle Route, a 28 mile (45km) circular route around the foothills of the Mournes, to horse trekking around Castlewella Forest Park, not to mention the 350 ancient monuments to be explored in the area. You can be rest assured that on your trip to the Mournes there will be plenty to keep you busy. Visit [www.OutdoorNI.com](http://www.OutdoorNI.com) for more information and a list of activity providers in this area.

### Mountain Biking

With over 25km of exhilarating cross country trails suitable for a range of abilities in Castlewella and just under 50km of lung-busting cross country trails and epic downhill runs in Rostrevor the Mountain Bike Trails in the Mournes, sponsored by Chain Reaction Cycles, are a must visit. Boasting a stunning Victorian Castle, incredible panoramic views of the entire Mournes range and flowing singletrack Castlewella is a must-visit for mountain bikers of all ages and abilities. For the more avid mountain biker, on the shores of Carlingford Lough, the Rostrevor Mountain Bike Trails offer some of the most challenging mountain biking in Ireland where efforts are rewarded with incredible coastal views and mega singletrack descents. Visit [www.MountainBikeNI.com](http://www.MountainBikeNI.com) for more information.

### Relaxation

For some indulgence the [Slieve Donard Hotel Spa](#) is the perfect place to revitalise, re-energise and restore your body and senses. Otherwise, you could visit the multi award winning [Soak Seaweed Bath and Spa](#) who offer a unique experience, a place to be spoiled or simply ease the body and soothe the mind.

### Promenade Walks

Newcastle Town – Famously immortalised by Percy French as the place where “the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea”, Newcastle is situated on the coast of the Irish Sea, with its harbour, sandy beach and award-winning promenade overlooked by the forested slopes and towering, rugged outlines of the Mournes. Newcastle is a lively coastal resort packed full of bars, hotels and eateries.

### Golf

The Royal County Down Golf Club located on the edge of Newcastle and is one of the oldest courses in Ireland and is widely regarded as one of the best in the United Kingdom.

**For more information of things to do in and around the Mournes Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty contact Newcastle Tourist Information Centre on +44 (0)28 4372 2222 or visit [www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com)**

## Transport around the Mournes

In July and August Translink run a Mourne Rambler service from Newcastle, calling at a dozen stops around the Mournes, including Bryansford, Meelmore Lodge, Silent Valley, Carrick Little car park and Bloody Bridge. There are 6 buses daily – the first leaves at 9.30am, the last at 4.30pm; a £4 all-day ticket allows you to get on and off as many times as you like. Contact Translink on +44 (0)28 9066 6630 or visit [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk)

We encourage walkers with cars to park for free in Donard Car Park and use the Rambler service to get out to the start of the walks. Below is also a list of local taxi companies who offer pick up and drop off services from most of the start and finish points.

Company	Address	Contact
Donard Cabs	1a Donard Street, Newcastle	+44 (0)2843 722823
Harbour Cabs	61 Mourne View Road, Newcastle	+44 (0)2843 727373
J Cabs	53a Castlewellan Road, Newcastle	+44 (0)2843 724222
Shimna Taxis	18 Railway Street, Newcastle	+44 (0)2843 726030

## Further Information on Walking in The Mourne Mountains

### Access and Protection

The majority of the walking routes in the Mourne Mountains are not formally designated public rights of way. Access is on a de-facto basis and depends on the goodwill and tolerance of local landowners. Walkers are advised to respect that they may be walking on private land and are encouraged to make themselves aware of and adhere to the principles of '[Leave No Trace](#)'. Below is some information on an organisation who strive to sustain the beauty of this unique landscape.

### The Mourne Heritage Trust

In 1997, the Mourne Heritage Trust was established as a partnership of central and local government agencies and environmental, community, recreational, landowning and business interests to provide for the management of the Mourne and Slieve Croob Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The trust works in 4 key areas; Natural Environment Enhancement and Protection, Visitor Management and Visitor Services, Built and Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Tourism. For further information on the work of the Mourne Heritage Trust visit [www.mournelive.com](http://www.mournelive.com)

### Leave No Trace

Leave No Trace is an Outdoor Ethics Programme designed to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research, and partnerships. As increasing numbers of people seek the beauty and exhilaration of outdoor recreation, our collective mark on the environment and its natural processes, increases. Litter, disturbance to vegetation, water pollution, wildlife, livestock and other people are all indicators of the need to develop a national ethic that protects both natural and cultural heritage. Techniques designed to minimise the social and environmental impacts to these areas are incorporated into the Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics Education Programme as seven principles.

#### The Seven Principles of Leave No Trace

- 1..... Plan Ahead and Prepare
- 2..... Be Considerate of Others
- 3..... Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife
- 4..... Travel and Camp on Durable Ground
- 5..... Leave What You Find
- 6..... Dispose of Waste Properly
- 7..... Minimise the Effects of Fire

Practising a Leave No Trace ethic is very simple: Make it hard for others to see or hear you and LEAVE NO TRACE of your visit. For more information on Leave No Trace, please visit [www.leavenotraceireland.org](http://www.leavenotraceireland.org).

### Outdoor Shop

Hill Trekker is a camping and outdoor equipment store located in Newcastle, County Down and will be able to advise on suitable equipment for any planned walking in the Mourne Mountains. You can contact the store on +44 (0)28 4372 3842

### Maps of the Mourne Mountains

The best map for walking in the Mournes is the OSNI Mourne Activity Map 1:25 000 available from Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI) website [www.osni.gov.uk](http://www.osni.gov.uk). Also available is the OSNI Sheet 29 1:50 000. Both these maps can be purchased in most Tourist Information Centres.

Further walk descriptions, images and downloadable detailed maps are available free of charge from [www.walkni.com](http://www.walkni.com)

### Tourist Information

For further information contact the tourism organisation for the region on +44 (0)28 4372 4059 or visit [www.mournelive.com](http://www.mournelive.com). You can download a comprehensive visitor guide on their website. Below is a list of all the tourist information centres in the area and respective contact details.

Tourist Information Centres	Contact
Downpatrick Tourist Information Office.	+44 (0)28 4461 2233
Kilkeel Tourist Information Office	+44 (0)28 4176 2525
Newcastle Tourist Information Office	+44 (0)28 4372 2222
Newry Tourist Information Office	+44 (0)28 3031 3170

## Getting to the Mournes

With airports expanding and increased investment in road infrastructure in Ireland the Mourne Mountains have never been more accessible.

- Newcastle is 31 miles (50km) from Belfast
- Walkers can expect to reach the Mournes in 90 minutes from Dublin by car.

Below is some further information on travelling to the Mourne Mountains from both the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain.

### From the Republic of Ireland

#### By Car

If you are travelling to the Mourne Mountains from Dublin by car you can expect to reach Newry in around 90 minutes. If you are planning on basing yourself in Newcastle, from Newry, simply follow the A25 to Rathfriland and continue on to Castlewellan. Drive through Castlewellan and take the A50 signposted Newcastle. For a more scenic drive through the Mournes you may wish to take the B8 Hilltown and B180 Bryansford roads to Newcastle. Similarly, the A2 Coast Road follows Carlingford Lough and passes through the quaint coastal villages of Greencastle, Kilkeel and Annalong before reaching Newcastle, although this route will take considerably longer.

#### By Bus

Aircoach provides a 24hour coach service between Dublin Airport to Belfast. Please follow the link for journey times and prices [www.aircoach.ie](http://www.aircoach.ie) or call +353 (0)1 8447118

Bus Eireann provides bus services to Belfast, Enniskillen and Derry as well as day trips specifically to the Mourne Mountains. Call +353 (0)1 8366111 or visit [www.buseireann.ie](http://www.buseireann.ie)

#### By Train

Translink and Irish Rail offer a joint Enterprise service from Dublin to Belfast. This service stops at Newry. Newry is a large border town about 10 miles from Rostrevor at the foot of the Mourne Mountains. For more information on the Enterprise and buses linking Newry and Rostrevor visit [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk) or call +44 (0)28 9066 6630.

### From Great Britain

#### By Ferry

Northern Ireland has first-class ferry connections with Scotland, England and the Isle of Man. High speed vessels, enhanced on-board amenities, entertainment and shopping, together with lower prices, make the car ferry a very attractive, affordable travel option.

Stena Line offer frequent sailings from Liverpool and Cairnryan direct to Belfast Port. Visit [www.stenaline.co.uk](http://www.stenaline.co.uk) for timetable information and to book. P&O Ferries also operate between Larne, Cairnryan and Troon. Visit [www.poferries.com](http://www.poferries.com) for timetable information and to book.

#### By Plane

Scheduled air services operate to both the George Best Belfast City and Belfast International Airports from nearly all other major UK airports. The George Best Belfast City Airport is around 5 miles (8km) from the heart of Belfast. The Belfast International Airport is located around 18.5 miles (30km) north west of the city with regular bus services to and from the City Centre. Visit [www.discovernorthernireland.com/information/travel.aspx](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/information/travel.aspx) for up to date information on flights operating in and out of Northern Ireland.

Outdoor Recreation NI has provided this information and images. Every care has been taken to ensure accuracy of the information. Outdoor Recreation NI, however, cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention, the information for future publications will be amended accordingly.

If you have any comments or queries regarding this Walker's Guide or require the Guide in an alternative format please contact:

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