



# Cycling

Our famous cycling routes through the beautiful scenic country will inspire and exhilarate those who appreciate and enjoy nature at its very best. Whether you wish to cycle in forests, valleys, mountains or on the coast, the Down, Newry and Mourne region offers it all. You can choose from the tours described here or take one of the many guided tours on offer.



### Cycle Hire Shops

#### Clearsky Adventure Centre

Castleward, Strangford  
UK Head Office, The Gables, Newcastle  
t: 028 4372 3933  
f: 028 4372 7300  
e: admin@clearsky-adventure.com  
w: www.clearskyadventure.com  
For Further information please see Family Fun Section

#### Life Adventure

The Grange Yard, The Forest Park  
Castlewellan t: 084 4770 5477  
For Further information please see Family Fun Section

#### McCumiskey Cycles

3 Low Killeavy Road, Killeavy, Newry  
t: 028 30 888593

#### Mourne Cycle Tours

**Ronan Maginn**  
79 Tullyree Road, Kilcoo, BT34 5LD  
t: 028 4372 4348  
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e: mourne.cycle@which.net  
w: www.mournecycletours.com  
Mourne Cycle Tours have a range of Mountain and Road bikes that can be delivered to your holiday accommodation or we provide a number of guided or self-guided tours in the Mourne area such as Dolmens and Cashels. During the summer we offer 'Downhill All the Way' where we meet you at the highest road point in the Mourne and you can cycle leisurely back to Newcastle.

#### Quinn Cycles

4-6 Bridge Street, Kilkeel BT34 4AD  
t: 028 417 62654

#### Ross Cycles

44 Clarkhill Road, Castlewellan. BT31 9BL  
t: 028 4377 8029  
We offer a wide range of cycles. We

re-new these cycles every 4-6 months to make sure that up to date cycles make this activity enjoyable and safe. Every bike is serviced after every individual hire. We also include helmet hire and insurance. We can offer collection and pick up services for both a small or large group. We are located beside Castlewellan Forest Park which provides a great location for both enjoyable and safe cycling. Located just outside Castlewellan, signs on the A25 direct drivers 1.5 miles along the Clarkhill Road

#### Stewart Cycles

1 Havelock Place, Warrenpoint BT34 3NE  
t: 028 417 73565

### General Information

Always cycle on the left in Northern Ireland and do not cycle on pavements.

Cycling helmets are not compulsory – the choice is yours whether you wear one or not. Remember wearing a helmet will reduce the risk of head injury.

Cycling at night – your bicycle must have a rear reflector and back light must be working.

Wear sensible clothing and footwear.

For long forays into the countryside cyclists should take some provisions for their trips – water and some food.

Remember insurance.

### Guided Cycling

#### Iron Donkey Bicycle Tours

Norman Trotter, 15 Ballyknockan Road, Saintfield, BT24 7HQ  
t: 028 9081 4708  
e: info@irondonkey.com  
w: www.irondonkey.com  
Iron Donkey Bicycle Touring offers wonderful bicycle tours in the Mourne, St Patrick's Country and the Ards

Peninsula. Our self-guided itineraries offer the greatest degree of flexibility with regard to start date, duration of tour, level of support and type of accommodation. Guided supported tours are all inclusive packages for those who prefer to tour with others in the company of knowledgeable local guides. There are scheduled departures and most itineraries are for one week. Custom tours can be designed for clubs and organisations, for groups of professional colleagues, for families or for groups of friends. The group can be large or small – we will be happy to talk to you, with no obligation on your part, about custom tour for any number of people.

#### Outdoor Ireland North

Loretto Coyle MLC, 14 Shimnavale, Newcastle, BT33 0EF  
t: 079 7640 8056  
e: loretto@outdoorirelandnorth.co.uk  
w: www.outdoorirelandnorth.co.uk  
Loretto is a qualified Blue Badge Tourist Guide who takes guided Bicycle Day Tours in the Mourne, St Patrick's Country and Ards Peninsula. Cycling tours range from easy to challenging. Heritage tours visit places of historical interest. Half day or full day rides available from March – October. Based in Newcastle. Meeting point arranged for different cycle tours.

### Cycle Routes

#### Castle Ward

Strangford, Co Down  
**Gradient:** Easy with some hills  
Bring your bikes to Castleward and you'll discover even more than the fabulous Victorian house – your wheels can take you down to the jetty past the boathouse, along the shores of Strangford Lough, to Audleys Castle and much much more. *So come explore!*

#### Castlewellan Forest Park Family Cycling Trail

Castlewellan, Co Down  
**Distance:** 3.8 Km  
**Gradient:** Easy

The route is a circular route which surrounds Castlewellan Lake. The trail starts and finishes in the main car park and is suitable for cyclists with basic off road cycling skills. The forest also has some points of interest, which include the ice house, various sculptures along the trail and the Autumn Wood. Located in a setting of mountains and sea, this is one of the most outstanding tree and shrub collections.

**Directions:** From Newcastle take A50 to Castlewellan. At roundabout turn right to top of hill, turn left following signpost into forest park

**Admission:** Car: €4, Minibus: €10, Coach: €25, Motorcycle: €2, Annual Permits – Car: €35, over 60's concessionary rate €17.50, Minibus: €70. (Prices Subject to review)

## Cranfield / Greencastle Route

**Distance:** 12 miles (19km)

**Advice:** Essentially a gentle cycle mainly on the flat

**Maps:** Detailed laminated route maps with further information on points of interest are available from Tourist Information Centre's. Begin at Lower Square, Killeel Town Centre. Head west out of the Square straight across the traffic lights onto Greencastle Street, you pass the Kilmorey Arms Hotel on your left. After about 2 miles note the large house on your left called Eastwood, shortly afterwards the road divides. Take the right fork and proceed to a T-junction, turn right. At the next junction turn left to pass Grange School and Chapel on your left. The road now meanders through the marshy flood plain of the Whitewater River. You come to a staggered crossroads, turn left. About a mile straight-ahead is the Blue Flag Beach of Cranfield. However your route turns immediately right following the directions to Greencastle about 1.7 miles. At Greencastle crossroads turn left to cross the old bridge over the Whitewater River (a fine game fish river). The reed marshes on your left are a nature reserve for wild fowl and are known locally as the 'Bents'.

A little further along your route turns right onto the Corcreighan Road taking you through a typical 'Mourne' rural landscape of drumlins backed by the mountains. Continue along the Corcreighan Road crossing the Whitewater River once again and up Chesney's Brea to the Ballyardle crossroads. Turn left onto the Ballyardle Road and then after 150 meters, at the fork; turn right onto the Belmont Road. At the end of the Belmont Road turn left onto the Newry Road and then turn right onto the Drumcro Road. Follow the Drumcro Road past Massforth Chapel on your right. At the end of the Drumcro Road there is a junction, turn right onto the Mountain Road follow it back to the Lower Square in Killeel Town Centre.

## Dundrum Coastal Path

**Distance:** 1.5 miles/ 2.4 Km

**Gradient:** Easy

This short, entirely traffic-free coastal path is simply breathtaking! You follow the path of the former GNR railway line, hugging the shoreline and getting close to the many wading birds, which frequent Dundrum Bay. Isambard Kingdom Brunel's ship the Great Britain famously grounded here in 1846 during a transatlantic voyage. In early summer the path is a riot of colour when the yellow Whin blossom is at its finest, whilst the Mourne Mountains provide a spectacular backdrop as they sweep majestically down to the sea at nearby Newcastle.

**Open:** All year

## Lecale

**Distance:** 37 Miles

**OSNI:** Sheet 21

The Lecale district of County Down, made famous in song by Van Morrison, is criss-crossed with a network of roads most of which are nearly traffic free. At 37 miles this route may appear long but it can be easily reduced by taking any one of the many alternative roads. This route meanders through an area abundant in pre-historic and more recent buildings and artefacts. Starting in Downpatrick close to the Down Cathedral, you will pass close to the Racecourse and Ballydugan Lake before reaching Loughinisland and historic churches. Re-crossing the A25, you pass close to the mysterious Ballynoe Stone Circles before reaching the coast at Ballyhornan and its Golden Beach. Following the shoreline north to Kilclief Castle the route turns inland then southwards through the villages of Ballyculter and Ballycruttle before turning towards Downpatrick.

## Newcastle

**Distance:** 12 Miles

**OSNI:** Sheet 29

The Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea close to the Start and finish point of this short 12 mile loop from Newcastle. The Mountains are always in view as you wind your way along this almost flat route with the sea never far away. Leaving Newcastle by Donard Park your route takes you towards Tollymore Forest Park where you can leave your bike and take a stroll through the arboretum before continuing along the Barbican Road. You continue past Maghera Old Church, with buildings dating back to the 10th Century, to Maghera and shortly you pass a huge standing stone by the roadside just a short distance from the Slidderlyford Dolmen (no public access) in a field to the left. The route continues to Dundrum, with its Castle overlooking

the bay, then turns towards Newcastle, past Murlough Nature Reserve and onto a shared use footway into the town, before turning left towards the eastern end of the promenade with its many new art pieces.

## Newry Canal Towpath

**Distance:** 20 miles (32km)

**Advice:** Moderate

**Maps:** Detailed laminated route maps with further information on points of interest are available from Tourist Information Centre's. The Newry Towpath route stretches from Newry Town Hall to the Bann Bridge in Portadown and is a 20 mile trip on part of route 9 of the National Cycle Network. The route follows the towpath on the western bank of the now non-navigable Newry Canal. The route Starts at Newry Town Hall and finishes in Portadown Dotted along the entire length of the route are historical landmarks and wildlife. In South Down within the Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, seven circular routes have been clearly waymarked with brown and white route markers. Laminated route cards are available and provide detailed route descriptions, maps and points of interest along the way.

## The Head Road Route

**Distance:** 16 miles (26km)

**Advice:** Moderate, with some ascent

**Maps:** Detailed laminated route maps with further information on points of interest are available from Tourist Information Centre's. Begin at the lower square in Killeel Town centre. Head east out of the square over the bridge and up the hill onto Newcastle Street. After about 0.5 miles turn left onto Mill Road and then turn right onto the first road on the right, the Aughnahoor Road. Continue north on the Aughnahoor Road until you come to a T-junction with the Leitrim Road and turn right onto the Leitrim Road. Follow this road until you come to a T-junction. Turn right onto the Head Road and continue onto the Silent Valley. If you wish you can park your bicycle at the security booth at the entrance barrier and walk up into the valley (about 0.5 mile).

Refreshments are available. Leaving the Silent Valley turn left, the road climbs steeply and at the top of the hill to 'gather your wind', cross over to the other side of the road and look down over the unique 'stone wall' landscape so familiar to this area. Continue along the Head Road with its panoramic views of the mountains, coastal plain and sea. You cross a small bridge on a 'S' bend over the Forks River, about 100 metres further on carefully cross the road and view one of the magnificent panoramas of Mourne. Continue along the Head Road until you get to a small car park on your left. Turn right onto the Old



Slieve Croob



The Mourne



Carlingford Lough

Town Road and continue downhill to the crossroads. Turn right onto the Longstone Road and after about 0.5 miles you will see the 'Standing Stone' on your right in the middle of a field. At the end of this road there is a T-junction, turn left onto the Ballyveaghmore Road and follow this road until you come to another T-junction and turn right onto the Ballyveaghbeg Road and then after only about 50 metres turn left onto the Mission Road. Turn left onto the first road on your left, the Brackenagh Quarter Road, (just before you come to Brackenagh School). After about 1 mile turn left onto Anthony's Road. This route takes you through gentle rural countryside and after about 1.25 miles at a T-junction turn right onto the Council Road, almost immediately, at another T-junction, turn left onto the Carrigenagh Road. This will take you back to the outskirts of the town and at the next T-junction turn right onto the Newcastle Road which will take you back to the lower Square in the town centre of Killeel.

### The Knockree Route

**Distance:** 18 miles (28km)

**Advice:** Strenuous, with steep ascent on the Glenloughan Road

**Maps:** Detailed laminated route maps with further information on points of interest are available from Tourist Information Centre's. A beautiful circular cycle route between Killeel and Attical, passing through some lovely countryside with dramatic view of the Mourne Mountains. Begin at Lower Square, Killeel Town Centre. Head west out of the square straight across the traffic lights onto Greencastle Street, you pass the Kilmorey Arms Hotel on your left. Keep to this road, it takes you through the town land of Dunnaval. After about 2 miles note the large house on your left called Eastwood, shortly afterwards the road divides. Take the right fork and proceed to a T-junction, turn right. You come to a staggered crossroads, turn left.

About a mile straight ahead is the Blue Flag Beach of Cranfield. However your route turns immediately right following the directions to Greencastle about 1.7 miles. Retrace your route back to Greencastle crossroads and turn left to cross the old bridge over the Whitewater river. The reed marshes on your left are a nature reserve for wild fowl and are known locally as the "Bents". Further along the route you come to Mill Bay with fine views up Carlingford Lough. Follow the Benagh Road along the shore for about 1.75 miles until you come to the Millbay Road on your right. Your route turns right onto the Millbay Road but if you are interested you can carry straight on for about 0.75 miles to Tamlaght Graveyard, which you will find on the left

side of the road. If you visited Tamlaght retrace your route to the Millbay Road and turn left onto it. This road runs straight up the hill to a T-junction and turn left onto the Newry Road. After about 300 metres turn right onto the Glenloughan Road. This road again climbs steeply with wonderful views of the mountains ahead and of Knockree on your right.

Follow this road until you come to the T-junction at the end and turn left. The Whitewater Brewery is immediately on your left. The small brewery is the only producer of 'Real Beer' in this area, it is highly recommended. Further up this road you again cross the Whitewater River and then note the new Attical Community Centre on your left. Carry on to the centre of Attical village and at the chapel turn left onto to the Attical Road. Note the wonderful panorama of mountains and countryside around you. At the end of this road turn right onto the Moyadd Road and after about 0.75 miles turn left onto the Head Road. The route is now mostly downhill and takes you through a beautiful, yet intensively cultivated, countryside. After about 0.75 miles you cross straight over a crossroads but within 50 metres you need to turn left onto the Aughnaloopy Road. This road takes you downhill to the Ballinran crossroads at which you go straight across once again. Within 0.5 miles you will see a signpost to Hanna's Close down a lane to your left. It is well worth a visit.

After your visit retrace your route back to the road and turn left down the Aughnaloopy Road. This takes you back into the town of Killeel and at the T-junction at the road end you turn left onto the Mill Road. Down the hill to another T-junction and turn right onto Newcastle Street. This takes you back to the Lower Square in the town centre. You pass the ancient ruined church on your right which gives the town its name – Killeel (the Church of the Narrow Place). There are some very interesting gravestones in the associated graveyard.

### The Newcastle/Lough Island Reavy Route

**Distance:** 25 miles (40Km)

**Advice:** A long cycle, with steep sections. Starting in Newcastle follow the A50 towards Castlewellan from the northern part of the town centre. After 1.2 miles turn left into the Tollymore Road and then right into the Middle Tollymore Road. Exiting at the entrance to Tollymore Forest Park, turn right onto the Bryansford Road. At the next T-junction turn left onto the Hilltown Road. Passing through the village of Bryansford the route leads you along the edge of Tollymore Forest Park and past the Tollymore Mountain Centre on your left.

After 2.3 miles turn left into Trassey Road, where you pass the start of the Trassey Track, one of the main routes through the high Mourne Mountains. Continue along this road until you reach the crossroads. Go straight through the crossroads onto the Moyad Road. Here views of Slieve Croob open up immediately ahead of you.

At the end of this road turn right and after 300 yards, take the first left onto Bog Road. Lough Island Reservoir will now be visible on your left. At the crossroads turn left into the Tullyree Road towards the village of Kilcoo. At the village turn right into the main Dublin Road and take an immediate left onto the Ballymoney Road, past Kilcoo Graveyard right onto the Lacken Road. After ½ mile the route takes you along the edge of the Lough Island Reavy Reservoir on your right. At the end of the reservoir turn left into Largy Road. Continue to the end of this road and turn left into Altnadun Road. Continue along this road for approximately 1 mile and go straight ahead at the crossroads into the Ballymagreehan Road. At the next T-junction turn right. This is a steep part of the route for several hundred yards and you may wish to consider dismounting. At the top of the hill turn left onto the Leitrim Road. Ahead are views of Slieve Croob and the village of Leitrim in the valley.

Follow the roads downhill towards the village of Leitrim. The route turns right into Ballymaginty Road. However, for refreshments and tourist information you may wish to continue a few hundred yards into the village of Leitrim. On joining the Ballymaginty Road, Castlewellan Forest Park is visible directly ahead of you to the right. At the next T-junction turn right into the Clarkhill Road and after several hundred yards, turn right again into the Old Road. This again is steep upward section of the route for several hundred yards and you may wish to consider dismounting. At the top of the hill you are afforded spectacular views of the Mourne Mountains and Dundrum Bay with the town of Newcastle in the distance.

At the end of this road turn left and after 100 yards turns right into the Drumbeck Road. This route now runs along the edge of Castlewellan Forest Park to your right. At the end of this road turn right into the main Dublin Road. Caution is advised here. The route now turns left into Station Road, however you may wish to continue for several hundred yards into Castlewellan where shops and refreshments are available.

On joining Station Road, turn right after 100 yards into Dundrune Road and follow this road downhill towards Newcastle. This is a steep section so please check your brakes.

At the next crossroads follow this road across into Corrigs Road. After 200 yards you pass the entrance to Maghera Church and Round Tower, an ancient monument, on your left. Continue to the end of Corrigs Road where it joins the main A50 Newcastle to Castlewellan Road adjacent to the Burrendale Hotel and Country Club. Turn left here and follow the road back to your start point in Newcastle.

## The Poets' Trail

**The Ballykeel Loop – in the shadow of Slieve Gullion**

**Distance:** 8 miles (13km)

**Advice:** Mainly minor country roads with moderately steep hills - a small section of Cowans Road, a disused country lane, may get muddy.

**Maps:** A laminated route map is available to accompany this route.

Start at the Ti Chulainn Cultural Activity Centre in Mullaghbane begin the loop by leaving the centre to the right, at the end of the road turn left and almost immediately left onto Mill Road. Continue along and follow the waymarks. At the end of Mill Road go straight across the Crossmaglen – Newry Road onto Mullaghan's Road. Continue, turning left to Cowans Road which is part of the Old Road structure dating back 500 years. Follow the road to the junction with the B30 Crossmaglen to Newry Road, go straight across the B30 to the end of the Old Road, turning left along Tullymacrieve Road. Continue until Ballinaseck Bridge where you can enjoy information on townlands.

Turn right at the Bridge onto Ballinaseck Road at the junction continue left to Cashel Road, left onto Cnoc an Damhsa Road and continue to junction with Cranny Road turning left at your next junction. Once on Cranny Road turn right onto Lough Road, passing Cloverhill Golf Course turn left at the junction with Glendessa Road. Continue along to junction with Upper Road, turn left and left immediately onto Forkhill Road. Proceed into Mullaghbane Village turning right at the sign for Ti Chulainn onto Maphoner Road and back to the centre. This route follows a country lane and minor roads in the outstandingly beautiful Ring of Gullion where you can follow the life and times of the poets of South Armagh.

## The Rostrevor Route

**Distance:** 17 miles (27km)

**Advice:** A long cycle, with some steep sections

**Maps:** Detailed laminated route maps with further information on points of interest are available from Tourist Information Centre's. This is an interesting circular route between

the villages of Rostrevor and Hilltown, passing through pleasant countryside with dramatic views of the Rostrevor and Mourne Mountains and Carlingford Lough.

Starting in the village of Rostrevor at the junction of Mary Street and Greenpark Road, follow the Kilbroney Road uphill through the village, past the chapel on your right, to the junction with the Newtown Road. Turn right into the Newtown Road which rises steadily uphill through pleasant countryside between the river and the Forest. At the Yellow Water picnic table, there is an opportunity to take a breather alongside the stream. From here cycle uphill through the forest onto the main road.

The road now passes through open moorland. At the next junction, continue on the main Sandbank Road on the right until it meets the New Line Road on the left. Retrace your journey back to the junction with the New Line Road and turn into it. At the next junction bear right onto the Leitrim Road and follow it until it meets the main Rostrevor to Hilltown Road. Turn right onto it and follow it into Hilltown. Leave Hilltown on the main road to Newry but after about only 400 metres turn left onto the Yellow Road (just before the speed limit end sign). After 1.25 miles the road climbs steeply again to the lovely picnic area of Glenmore. Pause a while and enjoy the breathtaking views to the north and east. After 0.5 mile turn left onto the Lower Knockbarragh Road (the second road on your left). After a short distance the road begins to go downhill following the Ghann River. Continue to follow this road until at a T-junction it joins the Upper Knockbarragh Road, turn left onto this road which becomes the Greenpark Road and it will take you back into Rostrevor on the shore of Carlingford Lough.

## The Slieve Croob Route

**Distance:** Approximately 25 miles (40Km)

**Advice:** A long cycle with steep sections.

From the town of Castlewellan follow the A25 towards Clough. Take the first road on the left onto the Drumbeck Road. This road takes you along the edge of Castlewellan Forest Park. Continue along the Drumbeck Road for approximately 1 1/4 miles until you come to the T-Junction where you turn left into the Clarkhill Road. Continue downhill passing Rosses Cycles on your left. At the next crossroads go straight ahead into the Ribadoo Road. After approx. 1/2 mile turn right into the Ardglass Road.

After approx. 1 mile the route veers to the right onto the Macinish Road up to the T-junction. Turn right into Clonvaraghan Road, where you pass the Slieve Croob Inn on your left. Refreshments and lunch are available here. After the Slieve Croob Inn turn left into Slievenisky Road and continue

along this road until the T-junction where you turn left into the Ballywillwill Road, Slieve Croob is visible on your left.

At the next T-junction, turn left into the Drumnaquoile Road, keeping Slieve Croob on your left. Continue along the road where you will pass the entrance to Drumkeeragh Forest to your right, turn right into Drumboy Road. At the end of the Drumboy Road, turn right into the Drumkeeragh Road. After approx. 4 miles turn right into Cauleys Pipe Road. Continue along this road and straight ahead at the next crossroads with Drumnaquoile Road. At the next T-Junction turn left into Ballywillwill Road and then right into Ballylough Road. Take the second road to the left into Aughlinnafin Road. Follow this road to the end where it joins the main A25 Castlewellan Road to Clough Road. Caution is advised at this point. Turn right onto the Castlewellan Road, then immediately left into Kilmegan historic Church on your right.

Towards the bottom of Kilmegan Road turn right into Old Road. Continue along this road with Dundrum Inner Bay on your left. The route continues to the right onto Flush Road. However, you may wish to continue on a short distance and visit Murlough National Nature Reserve before continuing. On joining Flush Road, spectacular views of the Mourne Mountains open up. You pass Sliderryford Standing Stone adjacent to the road on your right. At the end of this road turn left towards the small village of Maghera. Follow the road through the village towards Bryansford passing Newcastle Riding Centre. Turn right at the next crossroads into Dundrine Road, back to Castlewellan, finishing not far from where you started. This is a steep uphill section and you may wish to consider dismounting at this point.

## Useful Contacts

**Craigavon Watersports Centre**  
t: 028 3834 2669

**Cycle Northern Ireland**  
T: 028 9030 6940  
w: www.cycleni.com

**Mountain Biking Northern Ireland**  
w: www.nimountainbiking.com

**Sustrans**  
t: 084 5113 0065  
w: www.nationalcyclenetwork.org.uk

**The Countryside Access & Activities Network (CAAN)**  
t: 028 9030 3930  
w: www.countrysiderecreation.com