the little book of great walks near you

Northern Ireland
Hello

Whether you’re looking for tranquil woodland, wild coastline, or lazy lakeside meanders, Northern Ireland has some very special places to explore on foot.

Discover some of them with the help of this handy guide. We’ve put it together with our outdoor rangers and friends at Cotswold Outdoor, who’ve recommended some top spots and a few of their favourite strolls.

How to use this guide

Walks are listed under ‘themes’, and there is a map on page 22, so you can clearly see where they all are and those that are local to you. Why not have a look and see what’s nearby or pick somewhere further afield and make a day of it?

Each walk is rated so you can pick a grade that works for you, and we’ve also given a rough indication of the time the walk will take.

.easy, moderate or hard
.in hours and minutes
Find the walk for you

Once you’ve found a walk you’d like to try, head to our website and search for it there. All our walks are in a print-friendly format with full route details, a map and things to spot along the way.

Backpack essentials

The walking experts at Cotswold Outdoor show us what’s inside their kitbag.

- **A dry bag.** Keep all your spare layers and electronic devices inside one of these waterproof wonders, stuff it into your rucksack, and shrug off the rain.

- **Quality socks.** However far you roam, a pair of quality walking socks will go a long way to keep your feet dry and happy.

- **Comfy footwear.** They’re with you every step of the way, so having the correct footwear will make the miles fly by.

- **A waterproof jacket.** The famous Northern Ireland weather. There’s no getting around it, so we always pack for December in July, just in case.

- **Repair tape.** From patching torn waterproofs to sealing broken zips, this miracle tape has proved its worth countless times.

For top tips, expert advice and exclusive offers to help you to get the most out of the outdoors, please visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/cotswoldoutdoor

Don’t forget National Trust members receive 10% discount* at Cotswold Outdoor.

*Simply show your membership card in store, full T&C’s apply.
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Water’s edge

From beachside ambling to clifftop scrambles, walking by water is a shortcut to happiness. Whet your appetite with these strolls.

Search for your walk at:

nationaltrust.org.uk/walksnearyou

Giant’s Causeway

Power, drama and myth

Giant’s Causeway red trail. With the wild wind howling along the jagged cliffs, spraying salt into the air, head out across the dramatic grassland overlooking the Causeway’s bays.

Giant’s Causeway green trail. Look out for breeding skylarks, stonechats and choughs on this peaceful clifftop walk with stunning views of the Causeway’s mythical rocks.
Carrick-a-Rede

A walk above water

**Carrick-a-Rede coastal walk.** Setting off from the traditional fishing village of Ballintoy, trace the line of coast over windswept grasslands and winding rocky paths to Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge. As you cross the bridge, you’ll get a bird’s-eye view of the clear green water and ancient caverns far below – if you dare to look down, that is.

Castle Ward

A living shoreline

**Castle Ward boundary trail.** From waterside to woodlands to parkland, discover the varied landscapes and rich habitats surrounding Castle Ward.

**Castle Ward loughside trail.** Keep your eyes peeled for the large seal colony and thousands of waterfowl and waders that inhabit the sheltered waters of Strangford Lough.
Woodland

From medieval forests to dappled woodlands, we look after places filled with birdsong and the sound of the wind dancing in the trees.

Search for your walk at:

nationaltrust.org.uk/walksnearyou

Strangford Lough

Wild woodland, serene shoreline

Nugent’s Wood walk.
With Strangford Lough’s tranquil waters at your side, follow the tree-lined paths deep into Nugent’s Wood. This is one of the few places in Northern Ireland where you can still see red squirrels playing in the boughs, not to mention thousands of waterfowl flocking to the lough and seals resting on the islands.
**Florence Court**

Where the trees whisper

**Florence Court blue trail.** Wander through native Irish woodland as you discover the estate’s many historical features, including one of the most important trees in Ireland.

**Florence Court red trail.** This challenging hike takes you through the wild forest, rising above the canopy for an unforgettable view of Fermanagh’s glistening lakes and hills.

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**Ardress House**

Enchanting woodland

**The Lady’s Mile.** The short Lady’s Mile Walk guides you through a peaceful belt of woodland surrounding Ardress House. Pause for a moment and through the gaps in the trees you can glimpse charming views of the white-walled farmhouse with its quiet apple orchard nestled in pastoral farmland.
Wildlife and nature

The outdoor places we look after are living breathing worlds. These walks are a chance to glimpse Mother Nature in her element.

Search for your walk at: nationaltrust.org.uk/walksnearyou

Crom

Nature at its richest

*Nature’s harvest walk.* Discover a living landscape of islands, waterways, marshland and forest as you stroll through one of the UK’s most important nature reserves.

*Crom wildlife walk.* Red squirrels, otters, fallow deer and herons are just a few of the animals you can see living side by side in Crom’s brilliantly varied landscapes.
Portstewart Strand

Sculpted by the sea winds

Sand dune and estuary walk. Meander through a 6,000-year-old maze of sand dunes where orchids and other wild flowers dance in the sea breeze and butterflies flit about the tall grass. Then to the Bann Estuary, a salt-marsh where you can watch green, white and brown shelducks swimming alongside other waders in the gentle river water.

Portstewart Strand

Murlough National Nature Reserve

Nestled between mountains and sea

Murlough north point nature trail. Follow sandy paths, heathland tracks and quiet woodland trails, where you can spot sparrowhawks hunting amid the sycamore trees.

Murlough south end nature trail. With the Mourne Mountains providing a dramatic backdrop, walk in the footsteps of Neolithic man as you explore ancient sand dunes teeming with life.
‘The views from the newly opened walking trails at Mount Stewart Demesne are breathtaking. Strangford Lough is magnificent and on a clear day you can see the Mourne Mountains and the Belfast Hills from the Temple of the Winds.’
Map

1. Giant’s Causeway
2. Carrick-a-Rede
3. Castle Ward
4. Strangford Lough – Nugent’s Wood
5. Florence Court
6. Ardress House
7. Crom
8. Portstewart Strand
9. Murlough NNR
10. Castle Coole
11. The Argory
12. Springhill
13. Minnowburn
14. Mount Stewart
15. Rowallane Garden
16. Divis and the Black Mountain
17. North Down and Ards Peninsula – Kearney
17a. North Down and Ards Peninsula – Orlock
18. Downhill Demesne and Hezlett House
‘I am extremely fortunate to experience the mountains in all weathers. The best time of the year for me is in February, as the sky is clean, clear, crisp and you can see for miles and miles.’

Dermot McCann, Divis and the Black Mountain Ranger. Find the ‘Divis and the Black Mountain ridge trail’ on page 35.
History

These places meant something special to others, who walked, loved and knew them completely. Discover their stories and see the world around you with different eyes.

Search for your walk at:

nationaltrust.org.uk/walksnearyou

Castle Coole

A patchwork of grandeur and nature

Castle Coole lake walk.
Follow a historic track created by the 1st Earl of Belmore in the late 18th century. As you skirt the lake’s bank, keep an eye out for waders and waterfowl.

Castle Coole beech walk.
Explore a woodland planted around 1709 where 300-year-old oak trees still stand and you’ll find an ancient ‘ice house’ used to store meat and fish.
The Argory

A peaceful riverside estate

Lime tree walk. Stroll along a historic avenue of lime trees where snowdrops and spring flowers unfurl beneath the trees, before returning along the banks of the River Blackwater.

Blackwater River walk. Look out for kingfishers darting across the water as you follow the River Blackwater around the estate, crossing on the industrial-age Bond’s Bridge.

Springhill

Walk through history

Sawpit Hill walk. Enjoy views of Slieve Gallion as the path leads you around Springhill’s estate, waymarked by great oaks and a ring of trees where the sawpit was once located.

Beech Hill walk. Amble down a shady boulevard of beech trees, replanted in 1984 to conserve a 300-year-old pathway, arriving at an ancient tower built in 1731.
Season’s best

From spring freshness to autumn colour, these places really shine at different times of year.

Search for your walk at:

nationaltrust.org.uk/walksnearyou

Minnowburn

A living oasis in the city

Giant’s Ring trail. Crunch your way through the autumn leaves as you explore rolling woodlands, beneath a canopy of copper, bronze and golden hues.

Terrace Hill garden trail. A wonderful summer stroll along the banks of the River Lagan, where you can spot wetland birds such as little grebe, moorhens and tufted ducks as well as marvellous views from Terrace Hill across the Lagan Valley.
Mount Stewart

Chorus of colour

Lake walk. See the changing palette of Mount Stewart garden reflected in the lake, from the vivid colours of spring and summer, through autumn’s fire to the silver beauty of winter.

Mount Stewart red trail.
In summer, keep your eyes (and ears) peeled for red squirrels playing and woodpeckers drumming in the trees while butterflies dance across the fields and meadows.

Mount Stewart, Chorus of colour

Rowallane Garden

Set your imagination free

Garden walks. From spring woodlands carpeted with bluebells and snowdrops to a walled garden bursting with summer fragrance, Rowallane is a garden for all seasons. Follow one of the paths and you’ll discover a patchwork of gardens full of rare and exotic specimens, creative ideas and original artwork.

Rowallane Garden, Set your imagination free
Views and peaks

The wide open sky above and the world before you – the view from the top is always worth it.

Search for your walk at:

nationaltrust.org.uk/walksnearyou

Divis and the Black Mountain

A wilderness on the city’s doorstep

Ridge trail. Keep an eye out for red grouse, skylarks and peregrine falcons as you scale Black Mountain for unbeatable views across the Belfast skyline.

Summit walk. A steep walk through thriving heathland to the summit of Divis Mountain. On a clear day you can see the Scottish, Cumbrian and Welsh uplands rising from the horizon.
North Down and Ards Peninsula

Rugged rocks with timeless views

Kearney Coastal walk. Follow the North Down Coastal Path along a stretch of coastline that has remained untouched for generations and offers up breathtaking views of the Isle of Man.

Orlock. Explore the wild rocky headlands and sheltered beaches of Orlock point, with stunning views across the Irish Sea to the Copeland Islands and Scotland beyond.

Downhill Demesne and Hezlett House

A landscape lost in time

Downhill Demesne walk. Leaving Downhill’s gardens and lost relics behind you, venture out across windswept clifftops in search of a temple perched high above the roaring sea. From here, you can pause for a moment and look out across the glistening waters and emerald grasslands of the Inishowen Peninsula.
For ever, for everyone

The National Trust is a charity that looks after special places so everyone can enjoy them for ever. We’re only able to care for the places in this guide (as well as hundreds of others) thanks to the support you give us.

There are many ways you can help keep these places special. Membership, volunteering and donating all make a big difference. Why not start with a walk at one of the places we look after and take it from there?

Discover special places at

nationaltrust.org.uk
‘I love the diversity of the Northern Ireland landscape, from the Mountains of Mourne looking down onto Murlough and out towards Dundrum Bay, through to the fantastic coastline including Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge and the Giant’s Causeway.’

Dave Astin, Cotswold Outdoor Belfast store manager.
Want to go a bit further?

You’ll find hundreds more walks, events and lots of inspiration on our dedicated walking pages at nationaltrust.org.uk/walksnearyou

(You can search by walk length and suitability)

If you’ve got a favourite walk and want to help others discover, love, and look after it too, share it with #nationaltrust on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.


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