

# Lecale Way

Discover stunning views, ancient monuments and a wealth of wildlife on the County Down Coast



**WalkNI.com**  
*Your definitive guide to walking in Northern Ireland*



**Strangford  
Lough**







THE SAINT PATRICK CENTRE

## Section 1 - 17km

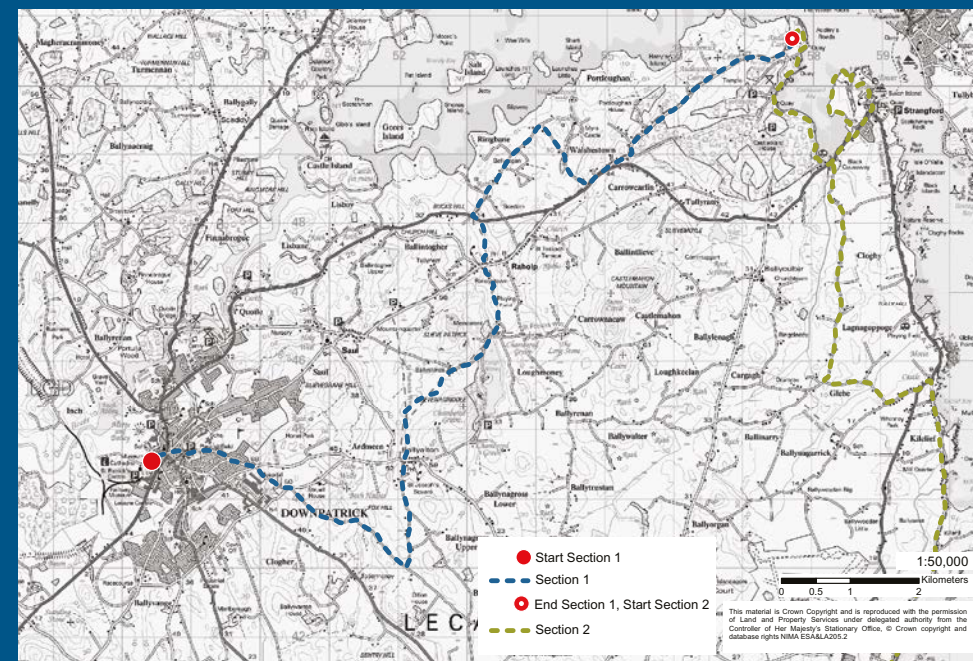
The route starts along a series of tracks and country lanes.

Begin by walking up a flight of stone steps beside the entrance to the St Patrick Centre. This brings you to English Street. Just 100m to the left lies Down Cathedral, and it's well worth making the short detour to visit St Patrick's grave at the left side of the building.

Return down English Street and cross onto the pedestrian area at the bottom of Scotch Street. Follow this road uphill and where the main road swings right, keep straight ahead. Pass through a gateway and follow a footpath up a hillside. This is Gallow's Hill, and a 100m detour from the top of the path affords fine views across Downpatrick town.

Join a road and continue through a suburban housing estate. Follow the signs through four road junctions, and you'll find yourself leaving Downpatrick along the Ballysallagh Road. This minor country road is bordered by high hedgerows, and is typical of many of the quiet roads you'll follow over the next two days.

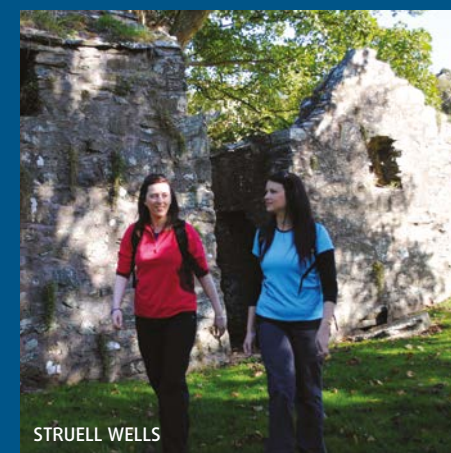
After two left turns you arrive at the route's first off-road section. A grassy footpath leads past hedges, woodland and fields on its way to the charming clachan of Ballystokes. From here a grassy track takes over, descending past the northern tip of Lough Money.



## Did You Know?

The Lecale area has a strong association with St Patrick, patron saint of Ireland. This route begins just metres from his grave, and passes within a kilometre of Ireland's first church at Saul, and the country's most extensive Holy Well complex at Struell Wells. St Patrick founded both places, and you'll pass several similar sites as you progress along the walk.

Cross straight over the next road in the hamlet of Raholp and follow another track to a field, which you should cross diagonally to the right. At the next road, taking care on the main Strangford Road, head right for 400m, then turn left. Follow a series of minor country roads for 3km, passing the entrance to Myra Castle. Turn left at the next two junctions, again taking care due to traffic on the main Strangford Road, then a further 3km of walking brings you along the stone wall marking the National Trust estate of Castle Ward to an informal parking area near Audley's Castle.



STRUELL WELLS



## Section 2 - 12.3km

The off-road trails along the shore of Strangford Lough provide the highlights of this section.

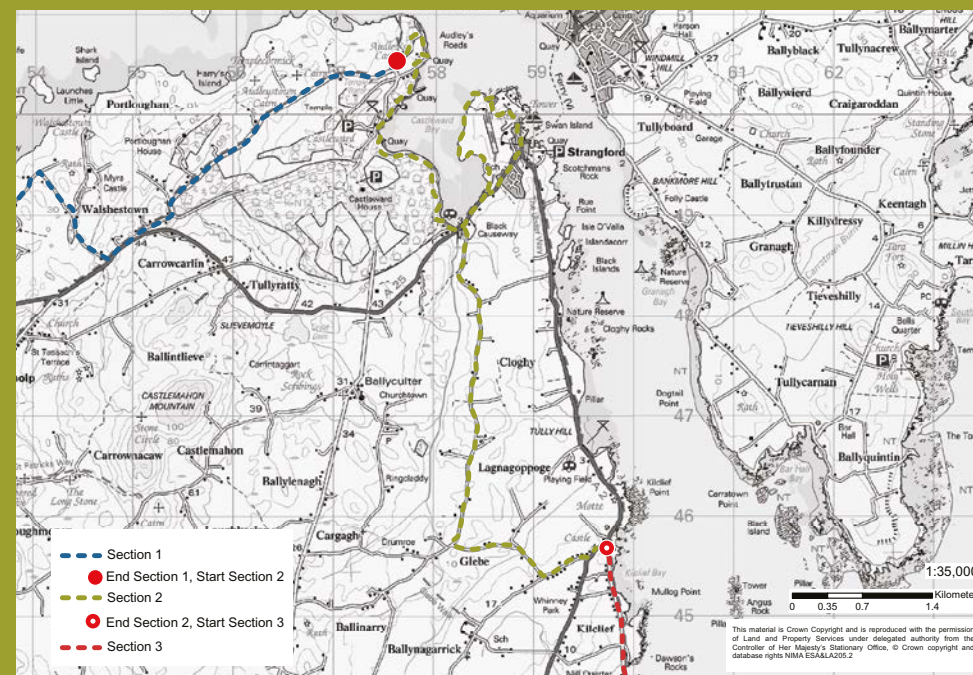
From the parking area beside Audley's Castle, turn left onto a track which then swings around the headland, displaying fine views across Strangford Lough to Portaferry.

You now pass Audley's Quay and arrive at an entranceway to the National Trust estate. Rather than going through the gates, turn left along the shore, then head through an archway on the right. Join a gravel avenue and turn left, walking through the trees above the shore.

After 1.5km you exit the estate onto the main Strangford road. Here you have a choice of routes – either make a 3km loop around the charming village of Strangford (parts of which are rocky underfoot), or continue directly south towards Kilclief.

If you opt for the Strangford loop, head left along the main road, taking care with the traffic. After 500m, turn left onto a footpath beside a house. A track and footpath now bring you to the pebble-strewn shore of Strangford Lough, with the old tower house of Castle Ward guarding the opposite side of the bay. At the end of this section, follow a series of tracks up a wooded hill, then descend to the top of Castle Street in Strangford village. Take the first left to reach the pretty quayside, then follow the main road away from the ferry pier. Turn left after 1km to rejoin the direct route to Kilclief.

The road to Kilclief continues through pastoral surrounds for some 3.5km before arriving at a T-junction. Turn left here, then negotiate three more junctions before passing Kilclief church and arriving at the base of Kilclief Castle.



STRANGFORD VILLAGE



VIEWS OVER STRANGFORD LOUGH

## Did You Know?

This section passes two tower houses on the shore of Strangford Lough, and finishes at a third. The region is dotted with similar buildings, which date back to the period when Portaferry was a major port. Most were constructed during the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, spurred on by King Henry VI's offer of £10 to anyone who would erect a tower to protect the coastline.



### Section 3 - 11.6km

This section incorporates dramatic natural scenery around the Ballyhornan Coastal Path.

From the base of Kilclief castle, turn right and head along the road towards Ballyhornan village. After 2km the coastal heath of Killard Nature Reserve can be seen to the left. This merges into Ballyhornan Bay, which is backed by a wide stretch of sand a kilometre long. Once at the car park in Ballyhornan, take the next left onto Rocks Road. This becomes a lane bringing you down to the shore, where there are good views across to Gun's Island.

The lane soon dwindles to a track, then becomes a footpath running along the top of the foreshore. **Please note: this stretch of path is rough and exposed in places with steep drops.**

Continue past a ruined coastguard station and around several more coves. The coastline becomes wilder and more dramatic as you continue, and you're soon forced to the top of the cliffs by a steep inlet. The Mourne Mountains can now be seen to the southwest, while the Isle of Man is visible out to sea.

KILCLIEF CASTLE



Continue through longer grass to Sheepland, an abandoned settlement that was once home to a corn mill. The path now returns to sea level and continues to the wooden cross and enclosure surrounding St Patrick's Well, a site associated with the saint's arrival in County Down in 432 AD.

Shortly beyond the well you arrive at a grassy lane. Follow this inland to a minor road, then turn left. After 1.5km you arrive at the main A2 Strangford-Ardglass road. Taking care of the traffic turn left here and follow the tarmac for 1km to arrive in the centre of Ardglass.

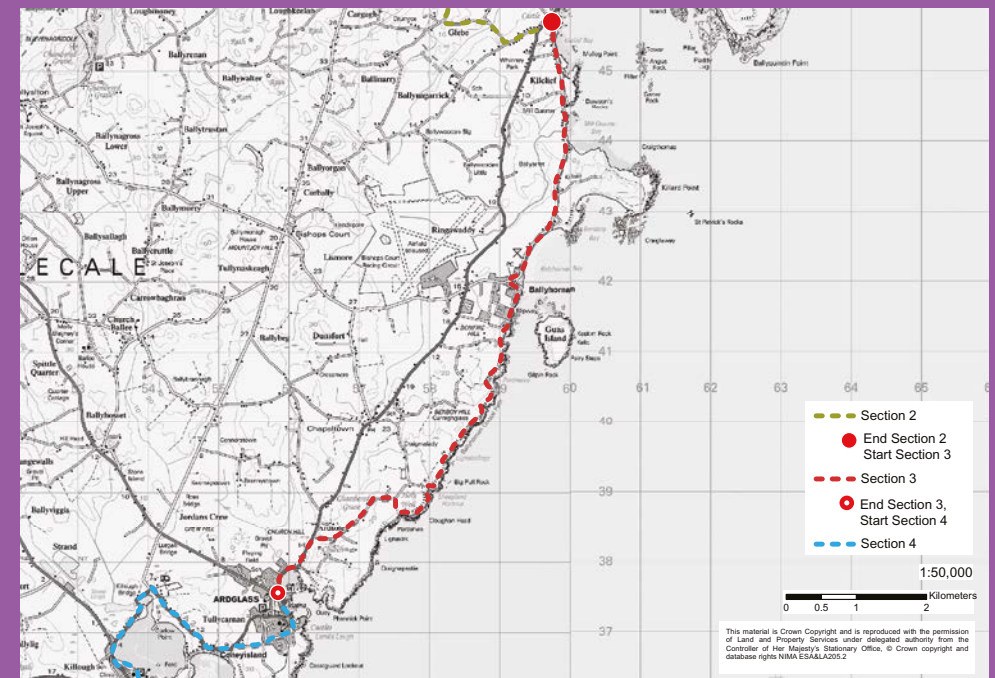
Please note - the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) may close the path between Ballyhornan and St Patrick's Well during October each year, to facilitate habitat conservation along the Sheepland Coast.

BALLYHORNAN BEACH



### Did You Know?

As you walk between Kilclief and Killard Nature Reserve, look out across the coastal waters. If the tide is retreating the sea is likely to be turbulent, as 400,000 tonnes of tidal flow empties out of the narrow mouth of Strangford Lough. Little wonder that the Vikings named the inlet Strang Fjörthr, or 'strong fiord'.





## Section 4 - 13.7km

Most of this section follows roads, with a brief interlude along the Killough Coastal Path.

From the centre of Ardglass, pass the pretty marina and head out of the village towards the A2. Pass through Coney Island and continue round the wide tidal flats of Killough Bay. As you approach the centre of Killough village, turn left through a metal turnstile onto a paved footpath. This delightful trail leads around the back of the church to the pier. If the tide is out you may well see locals collecting shellfish from the mudflats below.

Return to the road and walk to the end of the village. Continue south onto Shore Road, where a stile on the left indicates the start of the Killough Coastal Path. **Please note: this stretch of path is rough and exposed in places with steep drops.** Follow a rough trail above the rocky shoreline, negotiating several stiles amid the wild terrain. As you round a series of inlets, the path is sometimes forced up to the edge of the fields to avoid a deep fissure. The lighthouse at St John's Point comes into view near the end of the section, and you rejoin a laneway a short distance away from the building.

Turn right along the lane, soon passing the remains of St John's Point Church and Holy Well, which have survived remarkably intact from the 10th or 11th century. Continue along the quiet country road (laneway) for roughly 3km before arriving back at the A2. Turn left here and follow the road along the shore, with fine open views across Dundrum Bay to the Mourne Mountains. Towards the end of this coastal section you pass Tyrella Beach, a sandy beach some 2km long that is popular with holidaymakers during the summer months.

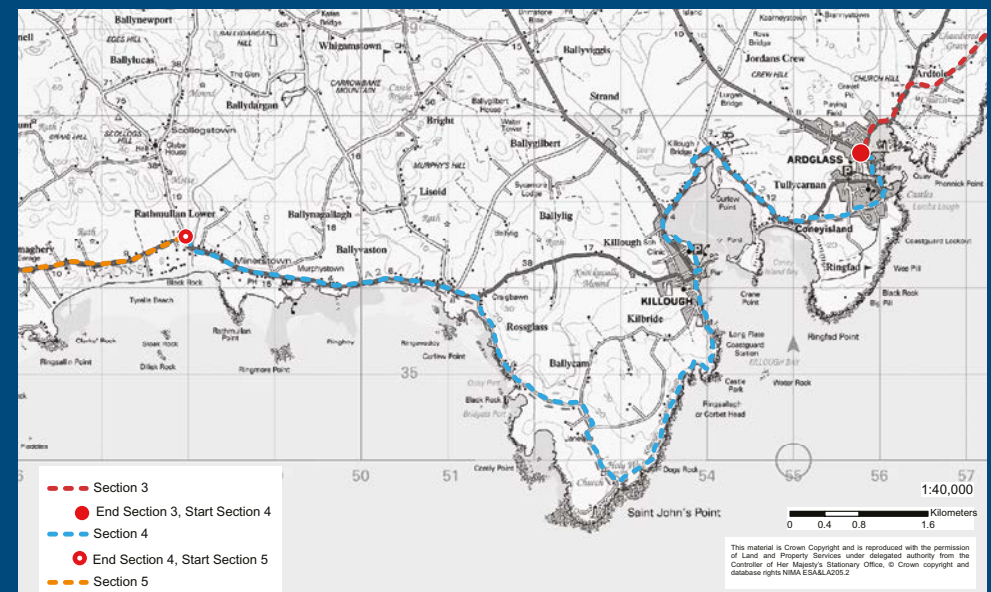


KILLOUGH VILLAGE



### Did You Know?

St John's Point Lighthouse was built in 1844, and was later extended to 40m high. However it was 1981 before the light became fully automatic. Today the distinctive black and yellow stripes of the tower make it stand out amongst the 81 lighthouses dotted around





## Section 5 - 13km

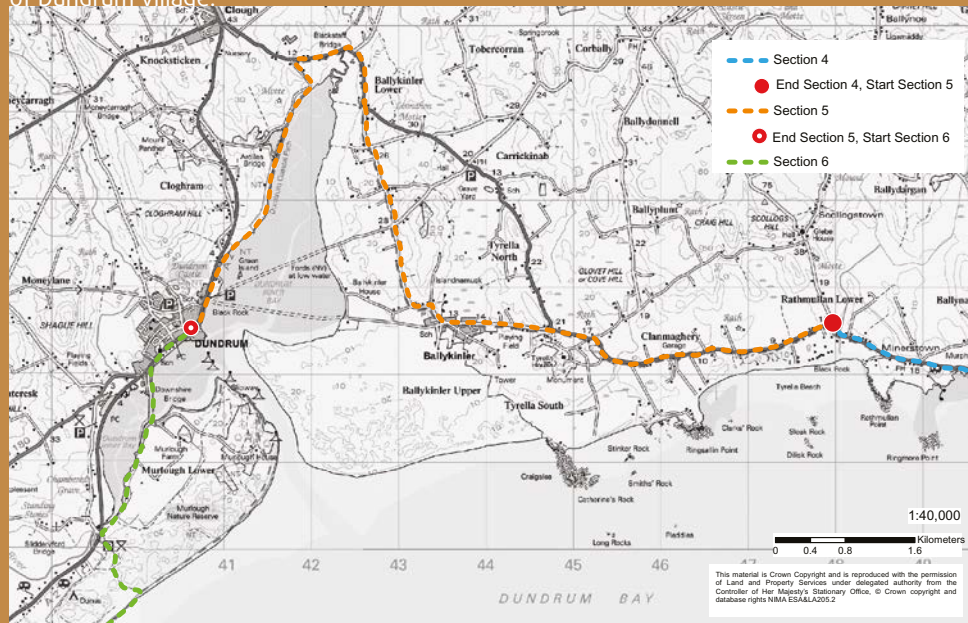
A series of roads now leads to a beautiful stroll along a disused railway line.

Continue past Tyrella Beach on the A2, then turn left onto a minor road that carries you inland through the village of Ballykinler. Follow the road north out of Ballykinler for around 2.5km before returning to the A2.

Turn left and cross Blackstaff Bridge then, 500m later, turn left again onto a minor road. The minor road takes a sharp right turn, leave the tarmac at the apex of the bend, continuing ahead and climbing a set of steps to reach the top of an old, stone railway bridge. You are now on the Dundrum Coastal Path, which follows the line of a dismantled railway along the shore of Dundrum Inner Bay.

This beautiful stretch of trail takes you along a grassy corridor, with woodland on one side and the tidal inlet on the other. One particularly enjoyable section involves crossing your own personal causeway across a subsidiary bay. Wildlife is plentiful here too; rabbits scurry across the path ahead and at low tide you may see large flocks of wading birds picking their way across the mudflats in search of food.

The southern end of the trail is marked by a National Trust sign and car park. Turn left along the main road, following the waymarking, which then leads you through the centre of Dundrum village.



### Did You Know?

The Dundrum Coastal Path follows the line of the old Belfast and County Down Railway, which once ran from Belfast to Newcastle. The Dundrum section opened in March 1869. At its height, the network consisted of 129km of track, with five branch lines covering much of County Down. After operating for almost 100 years, the railway finally closed in 1950.





VIEW OF THE MOURNE MOUNTAINS FROM MURLOUGH BEACH

### Section 6 - 7.9km

Almost all of the final section is off-road, with the dunes and sands of Newcastle Beach providing a fitting finale.



At the southern end of Dundrum, passing St Donard's Church of Ireland on the right, take the next turn left onto an off-road path which leads through a small plantation of trees on to Keel Point. Cross the three stone arches of the Downshire Bridge, then turn right onto a gravel track. If you look back across the estuary towards Dundrum you'll get a fine view of the village, guarded by the hilltop ruins of its medieval castle.

The track leads along the final stretch of Dundrum Inner Bay. Shortly before you reach the A2 road, a footpath veers left into Murlough National Nature Reserve. Follow a wooden boardwalk across the site, undulating through the dunes and coastal heath. As you exit the dunes and drop down onto the beach, a wonderful sight meets your eyes. The Mourne Mountains now seem just a stone's throw away, rising majestically above the sweep of the bay.

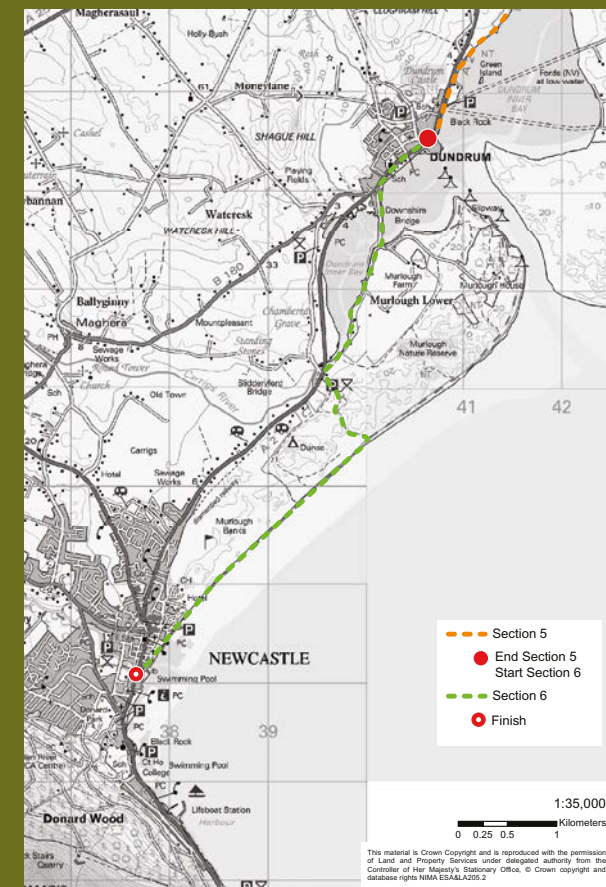


### Did You Know?

The sand dune ecosystem of Murlough National Nature Reserve is 6000 years old, and is regarded as the best and most extensive example of dune heath in Ireland. The area was designated as Ireland's first nature reserve in 1967, and is now home to 22 species of butterfly and an array of wildflowers.

Turn right and follow the beach south for almost 3km. The terrain underfoot varies between firm sand and small pebbles, and depending on the state of the tide you may either have a wide space or a narrow strip at your disposal. As you approach Newcastle town, the first building you encounter is the Slieve Donard Hotel, with its imposing Victorian facade. Shortly beyond this, climb a set of steps to reach the wide pavement of the town promenade.

Make your way south along the waterfront to a white metal footbridge across the Shimna River. Cross the bridge, and keep left along the promenade. Take the next right turn through the small car park to finish at the Newcastle Tourist Information and the official end of the route.





Walker Friendly Accommodation

You will find hundreds of accommodation options in the Lecale area – from 5\* hotels to self catering cottages. For a full list visit [www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com). However the following accommodation providers offer services and facilities specifically to meet the needs of walkers. These include:

- Located within 500m of the Lecale Way
- Packed lunches available to take away in the morning – upon request
- Suitable overnight area for drying wet clothes/boots
- Late meal/early breakfast available - upon request
- Detailed walking information available
- One night bookings available
- Approved by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board



- Bunk House Castle Ward

● The Cuan Licensed Guest House

● Swan Lodge B&B

● The Roadhouse B&B

● Burford Lodge B&B
- Tyrella House B&B

● Slieve Donard 5\* Hotel

● Amble Inn B&B

● Clonmore House B&B

● Ashmount B&B

Accommodation	Location	Telephone	Email/Website
The Roadhouses B&B	Downpatrick	+44 (0)28 4461 7490	denistumelty@tiscali.co.uk
Swan Lodge 4* B&B	Downpatrick	+44 (0)28 4461 5542	breaks@swan-lodge.co.uk www.swan-lodge.co.uk
Bunk House Castle Ward	Strangford	+44 (0)28 4488 1204	andrew.russell@nationaltrust.org.uk www.nationaltrust.org.uk
The Cuan Licensed Guest House	Strangford	+44 (0)28 4488 1122	info@thecuan.com www.thecuan.com
Burford Lodge B&B	Ardglass	+44 (0)28 4484 1141	burfordlodge30@aol.com www.burfordlodge.eu
Tyrella House B&B	Tyrella	+44 (0)28 4485 1422	tyrella.corbett@virgin.net www.hiddenireland.com/tyrella
Slieve Donard Resort 5* Hotel	Newcastle	+44 (0)28 4372 1066	gm@sdh.hastingshotels.com www.hastingshotels.com
Ashmount B&B	Newcastle	+44 (0)28 4372 5074	ohausten@hotmail.com
Clonmore House B&B	Newcastle	+44 (0)28 4372 5285	mebgrimely@hotmail.co.uk
The Amble Inn B&B	Newcastle	+44 (0)28 4372 4552	cf.mclean@virgin.net www.bandbnewcastle.com

Where to Eat

The Lecale area is home to an extensive range of eateries catering for all tastes. Many are frequented by walkers – where backpacks and walking boots are very welcome! Please see below for places to eat, as recommended by walkers.

- Downpatrick

Daily Grind – café snacks and meals, +44 (0)28 4461 7173  
Norma J’s – American grill, +44 (0)28 4461 6585  
Mangetout Deli – café and deli, +44 (0)28 4461 4993  
Denvir’s Hotel – home cooked pub grub and restaurant, +44 (0)28 4461 2012
- Strangford

The Cuan - home cooked pub grub and restaurant, +44 (0)28 4488 1222  
The Spinnaker - home cooked pub grub and restaurant, +44 (0)28 4488 1180
- Ardglass

Aldos Restaurant – family restaurant, +44 (0)28 4484 1315
- Killough

The Old Inn – pub lunches, +44 (0)28 4484 3342
- Dundrum

Bucks Head Inn - home cooked pub grub and restaurant, +44 (0)28 4375 1859  
Mourne Seafood Bar – fish restaurant, +44 (0)28 4375 1377
- Newcastle

Anchor Bar – home cooked pub grub, +44 (0)28 4372 3344  
Sea Salt – deli and bistro, +44 (0)28 4372 5027  
Maud’s Coffee Shop – café snacks, +44 (0)28 4372 6184  
Broadway Café – grills and fries, +44 (0)28 4372 2263  
The Strand Restaurant – traditional meals, +44 (0)28 4372 3472

For a full list of where to eat in the Lecale Area please contact the Downpatrick or Newcastle Tourist Information Centres (see page 19).



Other Information

**Other useful maps – available from [www.osni.gov.uk/mapstore](http://www.osni.gov.uk/mapstore)**  
OSNI Discoverer Map Series 1:50 000 Sheets 21 and 29.OSNI The Mournes 1:25,000.  
Walkers are always recommended to carry the relevant OSNI map.

**Leave No Trace:** In order to minimise your social and environmental impacts on the outdoors, please follow the principles of Leave No Trace. Leave No Trace is an outdoor ethics educational programme designed to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research and partnerships. For more information please visit [www.leavenotraceireland.org](http://www.leavenotraceireland.org).

Plan Ahead and Prepare • Be Considerate of Others • Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife  
Travel and Camp on Durable Ground • Leave What You Find • Dispose of Waste Properly  
Minimise the Effects of Fire

**Emergency:** In the event of an emergency call the police on 999 or:  
Police Service NI Newcastle (same number for Mountain Rescue) +44 (0)28 4372 3583  
Downe Hospital A&E, Downpatrick +44 (0)28 4461 3311

**Go Prepared :** Weather conditions in the Lecale area can be changeable – even during summer months. Waterproof and windproof clothing are essential and strong walking boots are advised.

Walking Providers

The Lecale Way is waymarked and should be straightforward to navigate. However, should you wish to explore the wider area including the Mourne Mountains, contact one of the guides specialising in this area to guide you.

Name	Telephone	Email/Website
Mourne Spirit	+44 (0) 7711847125	<a href="mailto:caroline@mournespirit.com">caroline@mournespirit.com</a> <a href="http://www.mournespirit.com">www.mournespirit.com</a>
Mountain Sojourns	+44 (0) 7740285794	<a href="mailto:info@mountainsojourns.co.uk">info@mountainsojourns.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.mountainsojourns.co.uk">www.mountainsojourns.co.uk</a>
Outdoor Ireland North	+44 (0) 7973408056	<a href="mailto:loretto@outdoorirelandnorth.co.uk">loretto@outdoorirelandnorth.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.outdoorirelandnorth.co.uk">www.outdoorirelandnorth.co.uk</a>
Walks in the Mournes	+44 (0) 28 437 25143	<a href="mailto:domnall.mccomish@btinternet.com">domnall.mccomish@btinternet.com</a> <a href="http://www.walksinthemournes.com">www.walksinthemournes.com</a>

Other Information

**Tollymore Outdoor Centre:** Tollymore Outdoor Centre is Northern Ireland’s National Centre for mountaineering and walking based on the edge of the Mournes. It runs courses on hillwalking and mountaineering mainly based in the Mournes and has accommodation for up to 40 people in twin ensuite rooms. Visit [www.tollymore.com](http://www.tollymore.com)

**Mourne International Walking Festival:** This festival takes place during the last weekend in June every year. A range of guided and self-guided walks including some strenuous mountain routes are available. [www.mournewalking.co.uk](http://www.mournewalking.co.uk) or tel: +44 (0)28 4175 2256

**WalkNI.com:** For further information on the Lecale Way and all other walks across Northern Ireland, please visit [WalkNI.com](http://WalkNI.com). Here you will find short, medium and long distance walks, as well as downloadable maps, suggested itineraries, and everything you need to know when planning a walking trip in Northern Ireland.

**Other Activities & Places to See:** The Lecale area is renowned for its natural beauty, outdoor recreation, culture, tradition, folklore and heritage. In addition to walking, a wide variety of activities and attractions are on offer – including cycling, horse riding, arts and crafts markets, castles, dolmens and ruins. To find out more visit Downpatrick or Newcastle Tourist Information Centres (contact details below).

**Newcastle Tourist Information Centre**  
10-14 Central Promenade, Newcastle, Co Down BT33 0AA  
[www.downdc.gov.uk](http://www.downdc.gov.uk) | [newcastle.tic@downdc.gov.uk](mailto:newcastle.tic@downdc.gov.uk) | +44 (0)28 4372 2222

**Downpatrick Tourist Information Centre**  
The Saint Patrick Centre, 53a Market Street, Downpatrick, Co Down BT30 6LZ  
[www.downdc.gov.uk](http://www.downdc.gov.uk) | [downpatrick.tic@downdc.gov.uk](mailto:downpatrick.tic@downdc.gov.uk) | +44 (0)28 4461 2233

**Outdoor Shops in the area**  
Hill Trekker - Independent Walking Shop selling everything you need for walking in the Mournes  
115, Central Promenade, Newcastle, BT33 0EU | +44 (0)28 4372 3842

**Public Transport::** Downpatrick is well served by buses from Belfast. Buses from Downpatrick link Ballyhornan, Strangford and Newcastle. Downpatrick bus station is within 300 metres of the start point.

Timetables are available from Bus Stations or Tourist Information Centres across Northern Ireland. For more information call (028) 9066 6630 or visit [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk). Over 60s travel free on presentation of a valid SmartPass.

Taxis:  
Downpatrick Taxis, Downpatrick .....+44 (0)28 4461 4515  
Call-a-cab, Downpatrick.....+44 (0)28 4461 3329  
Donard Taxis, Newcastle .....+44 (0)28 4372 2823  
Shimna Taxis, Newcastle .....+44 (0)28 4372 3030



### Disclaimer

Every care has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this guide. The information provided is, to the best of the promoter's knowledge, correct at the time of going to print. The promoters cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions but if any are brought to their notice, future publications will be amended accordingly.

### Land Access

Some popular walking routes in Northern Ireland 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' [www.leavenotraceireland.org](http://www.leavenotraceireland.org).

For any questions on walking in Northern Ireland contact

Outdoor Recreation NI

The Stableyard, Malone Road, Barnett Demesne, Belfast BT9 5PB

Tel: +44 (0)28 9030 3930

Email: [info@walkni.com](mailto:info@walkni.com)

This guide is available on request in alternative formats.

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Route Descriptions by Helen Fairbairn. Design by [www.thinkstudio.co.uk](http://www.thinkstudio.co.uk)

