



THE CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS

NORTHERN IRELAND

your guide
to cycling

14 CYCLING ROUTES



Cycling highlights include the natural beauty and inspiration of the breathtaking Nine Glens of Antrim, the river valleys of the Bann and the Roe, and 100 miles of the most stunning coastal views in Europe.

Of course you'll want to visit the famous Giant's Causeway - there's a new cycle path to take you there from Bushmills, home of the world's oldest whiskey distillery - but be careful getting back in the saddle if you decide to try a sample! Or perhaps you'll take the ferry from Ballycastle and ride across the wonderful open spaces of Rathlin Island, where there are thousands of sea-birds - and very few cars! Or maybe even cycle around spectacular Slemish Mountain where Saint Patrick looked after sheep as a young boy.

The Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens has an entire network of quiet country lanes; take a trip inland to experience rural life, close to nature and miles away from the hustle and bustle. On a clear day you can see for miles - green fields, stone walls and forests with stunning mountains as a backdrop - and all the way to Scotland across the North Channel.

These are journeys not to be hurried; take time to enjoy the scenery, the people, the story-telling and the craic!



14 cycling routes on quiet roads through magnificent scenery

It's a journey not to be hurried, every twist and turn in the road will reveal new sights

1 Dunluce
Traffic 2
Terrain 2
Distance 12 miles
OSNI 4, 5

This is a circular route between Portstewart and the Giant's Causeway and includes traffic-free paths at each end. On the outward journey the route leaves Portstewart on the coastal cycle path beside the main road, then follows the coast road between Portrush and Bushmills, which is spectacular but can be busy with traffic on summer weekends. There is a narrow footway for children to cycle on. Travel through Portballintroe, past the golf course to access the cycle and walking path to the Giant's Causeway which runs alongside the tourist railway. Coming back to Portstewart you use the signed route of NCN 93 which is lightly trafficked with good views from a higher road. Attractions along this route include



2 Ballycastle
Traffic 3
Terrain 3
Distance 35 miles
OSNI 5

This circular route links the coastal resort town of Ballycastle to the Giant's Causeway using the spectacular Causeway Coast Road and returning via Bushmills and country roads of North Antrim, which are signed as part of NCN 93. Starting from Ballycastle a steady climb takes you west past the caravan parks. This is also the main coastal drive and can be busy with cars. Leave yourself time to walk the famous Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge before a steep decent into Ballintoy village where refreshments and accommodation are available. Two miles further and you see the white sand of White Park Bay with the quaint village of Portbradden the next attraction. Passing the castle at Dunseverick you arrive at the Giant's Causeway visitor centre where you park your bike and walk to the famous stones. From the Causeway take the traffic-free path along side the tourist railway into Bushmills, home of the famous whiskey. The inland route on the return is less dramatic but offers tranquillity and very enjoyable cycling away from traffic, on a signed route using quiet roads. You are cycling towards the dome shaped Knocklayd mountain. After crossing the main road close to Knocklayd you can follow the signed route NCN 93 to Ballycastle or turn right and cycle around the mountain entering Ballycastle from the east.

3 Rathlin
Traffic 1
Terrain 2
Distance 12 miles (return)
OSNI 5

There is only one road on Rathlin and mostly it has a good surface. As visitors cannot bring cars to the island traffic is very light and cycling is a great way to see it. Rathlin is the only inhabited island in Northern Ireland and is delightfully tranquil, except in the busy pub in the evening! The island is famous for its sea birds, especially the puffins. There is a fantastic bird sanctuary at the West Lighthouse and you get a special badge if you cycle there! To the south of the village you pass the lakes where local people sail their home-made model yachts. There are some way-marked trails to the north of the island where you can walk through heather to the cliffs looking over to Scotland, which is just 14 miles away. You can take your own bikes on the 45 minutes ferry ride from Ballycastle (Tel: 028 2076 9299 for times) or hire bikes at the harbour on arrival on Rathlin.

4 Roe Valley
Traffic 2
Terrain 2
Distance 16 miles
OSNI 7

The river Roe flows gently between Limavady and Dungiven in the shadow of the dramatic Binevenagh and Benbradagh mountains. The route leaves Limavady Bus Station along dedicated level cycle paths through the town centre linear park, which leads to the Roe Valley Country Park some two miles away. Here you can park your bike, get refreshments and go for a lovely riverside walk. Visit the Dog Leap, where legend says that during a siege, O'Cahan's dog leapt over the river to run for help and save the clan. Back on your bike you cross the river at a narrow bridge from where you use quiet country roads with little traffic in the heartland of rural Ireland on NCN 93. Include the loop off this linear route which goes to Burnfoot with a riverside path and shop, returning to the Polly's Brae road through Gortnahey. Take care on the last 200m into Dungiven and inexperienced cyclists should use the footway or walk.

5 Garvagh
Traffic 2
Terrain 3
Distance 12 miles
OSNI 8

This spectacular route passes through a delightful area on the western edge of the Causeway Coast. Travelling on quiet lanes every corner offers a panoramic view into the distance, which includes Knocklayd and Slemish mountains to the east, as well as Lough Foyle and Donegal to the west. You start in the market town of Garvagh and pass through the traditional wooded valley of Glenullin with its wild flowers and preserved raised bog. The route even uses a ford to cross the stream – careful not to get your feet wet! Bird song, the trickle of the river and the distant hum of a tractor are the only sounds you will hear. Refreshments, including home-made ice cream are welcome when you finish the route back in Garvagh.



6 Lower Bann
Traffic 2
Terrain 1
Distance 15 miles
OSNI 8

This route along the quiet roads on the east bank of the River Bann provides a great family cycle from the bustling market town of Ballymoney and the Drumaheglis Marina and caravan/camping park. There are two parallel roads only one mile apart with lots of linking roads and so there are a number of circular routes that you can take depending on the distance you wish to travel. From Ballymoney we recommend travelling west through Balmore village towards the marina set on the banks of the River Bann. From here head south towards Kilrea on the quiet road which offers good views of the river. After the Angler's Rest pub you may like to leave the route to explore the old canal and weir at the fish farm. To return take the first left turn south of the canal and travel north along the parallel inland road looking across rich farmland with the Antrim Hills in the background. From Bendooragh you can either cycle the busy "B" road to Ballymoney or travel straight ahead return to Ballymoney via Balmore.



7 Ballymoney
Traffic 2
Terrain 2
Distance 25 miles
OSNI 8

This route links the bustling market town of Ballymoney to the meadows and moorlands of north County Antrim. The area has a variety of raths, mottes and standing stones, testimony to an earlier age. The route is best travelled in an anti-clockwise direction as this gives the best views of the small villages and Antrim plateau. The route mainly uses country lanes but care should be taken whilst crossing main roads and on the short sections of "B" roads near Ballymoney. From Ballymoney town centre go east, crossing over the river and railway line, towards Dunaghy. From here the route turns south easterly and uses minor roads through rich farmland in the direction of Cloughmills. After a short climb the route descends towards Loughguile, passing the picturesque Lisanoire Estate with its lake and old castle set among beautiful woodland. After Loughguile the route reaches its highest point at 185m where superb views can be had of the Maine and Bush river valleys as well as distant forests. The return journey affords pleasant views of the River Bush and passes near the picturesque village of Stranocum. On the remainder of the route keep a watchful eye for remnants of the former railway which ran between Ballycastle and Ballymoney.



8 Cushendall
Traffic 3
Terrain 4
Distance 25 miles
OSNI 5, 9

This route rises from sea-level to 290m and links the beaches at Glenariff and Cushendun to the hills of the Antrim Plateau passing through some of the famous Glens of Antrim. Following mainly minor roads which are sometimes hilly, the route also uses approximately 3 miles of the coast road which can be busy at times. From Cushendall the route climbs around the east side of Cross Slieve rewarding the cyclist with stunning views over the Irish Sea. After a short descent care is needed at the junction of the "B" road where the route turns right into Cushendun. Cyclists should then travel inland following a minor road underneath the dramatic viaduct before slowly climbing Glendun, with its wooded slopes giving way to open moorland. Turning back towards Cushendall at the stone bridge a further short climb reaches the high point of 290m, and gives panoramic views of the surrounding hills and distant Irish Sea. The route then descends Glenaon before meeting the main road northwest of Cushendall. After Cushendall the route follows the coast road to the beaches at Waterfoot from where a minor road leads towards the scenic waterfalls of Glenariff. From the waterfalls return via the second minor road on the left to join the road to Cushendall.

9 Portglenone
Traffic 2
Terrain 3
Distance 21 miles
OSNI 8

Starting from the market town of Portglenone by the River Bann this route takes you through a tranquil, rural setting where farming is the predominant way of life. We recommend you ride in a clockwise direction. The quiet country roads are generally lightly trafficked and are suitable for novice cyclists. Heading north you travel alongside, but out of view of the river. On turning south, towards Cullybackey a gradual but moderate climb offers magnificent views to the west over the Lower Bann valley and the rolling hills of the Sperrin Mountains. Fork left on the Mayboy Road before you have a gentle downhill to reach Cullybackey – another gentle climb cross the river and skirt around the west of Gracehill. This historical village with its Moravian church and interesting burial ground is worth a visit. At Ahoghill leave the Diamond via Brook Street towards Portglenone taking care on the steep hill approaching the town. For more cycling to the south cycle past Lough Beg which has excellent bird watching and onto the Lough Neagh Cycle Way, NCN 94 at Toome.



10 Slemish
Traffic 2
Terrain 3
Distance 21 miles
OSNI 9

Starting at Ecos, the environmental centre in Ballymena, take the cycle lanes on the main road to Broughshane, known as the "Garden Village of Ulster". The village is adorned with colourful flowers and has a traditional Thatch Inn on the Main Street. Take care turning right at the Slemish Tavern, and you pass the unusual red lynch-gate at St. Patrick's church. Slemish Mountain gradually appears ahead and will be the dominant feature for the rest of the ride. According to legend, Slemish is where St. Patrick tended sheep as a boy slave before escaping, later to become a missionary and Patron Saint of Ireland. Use the picnic area as your starting point for a climb up the mountain. Approaching Carnalbanagh along quiet lanes you have a long but gentle climb, where hedges abruptly give way to amazing dry-stone walls criss-crossing green fields. This spectacular wild, moorland offers great views across the rolling hills of the Antrim Glens. The reward for the effort of the climb is an enjoyable 6 mile downhill run to Broughshane via the village of Buckna, before returning to Ecos where locally grown organic food is served.

11 Coast Road
Traffic 5
Terrain 2
Distance 70 miles
OSNI 15, 9, 5

This route is an ideal gateway to the Causeway Coast and Glens linking into several of the routes described elsewhere in this brochure. Beginning at the ferry terminals and the Lagan Weir in Belfast, this route follows the picturesque coast road from Larne to Ballycastle passing Carnlough and Cushendall. Initially following Route 14 to Whiteabbey it continues through historic Carrickfergus on the very busy A2 and climbs slowly to the Blow Hole overlooking Belfast Lough and County Down. Continuing towards Whitehead, and Route 12, the route passes by the busy ferry terminals at Larne. Soon the majesty of the coast road is revealed as white limestone cliffs, with their topping of black basalt, tower overhead and dominate the route towards Carnlough. Rounding Garron Point the square outline of Lurigethan rises above Cushendall with the glaciated valley of Glenariff reaching the sea at Waterfoot. Crossing Route 8 the route swings across the viaduct over Glendun then slowly climbs inland towards Ballypatrick Forest from where the cyclist is rewarded with a gentle descent into Ballycastle. This route can be busy with car traffic so please exercise caution, especially during holiday periods. An alternative challenging route from Cushendun to Ballycastle using the coastal Torr Head Road is spectacular but the hills are extremely steep and only for very fit and experienced cyclists.



12 Islandmagee
Traffic 3
Terrain 3
Distance 17 miles
OSNI 9

The most exciting way to get to Islandmagee is to take the short ferry ride from Larne. The boats, called the Mary-Ann or the Adrienne, depart from Larne harbour close to the main ferry terminal and the journey takes only one minute. Take care when embarking and disembarking with your bicycle. This cycling route takes you to the popular beach at Brown's Bay which has a very pleasant coastal walk and is also good for swimming. Further on, you take the road to the picturesque secluded fishing harbour of Port Muck which is at the foot of a very steep road. Islandmagee which is a peninsula and not actually an island has a host of interesting historical sites, is popular for horse-riding and has good coastal walking paths north of Whitehead. For sailing times of the ferries telephone 028 2827 4085.



13 Knockagh
Traffic 4
Terrain 4
Distance 11 miles
OSNI 15

From Carrickfergus Castle, go inland following Ellis Street, then Woodburn Road to take you to Knockagh Road passing Woodburn Forest (not signed for bicycles). By this time you will be at a height of 240m so don't be surprised at having to push your bike at times! Knockagh Monument, (a memorial to those killed during the two World Wars), is a spectacular landmark and is a popular place for picnics and photography. In the distance you can see the Copeland Islands, Bangor, Belfast harbour and, on a good day, the Mountains of Mourne. Return downhill to Greenisland where there is a footway beside the road if you choose, but watch out for thorny bushes! In Carrickfergus relax along the beautiful seafront beside the famous castle, where can look back up at Knockagh while enjoying a well deserved ice cream!

14 Belfast Lough
Traffic 1
Terrain 1
Distance 7 miles
OSNI 15

This level, water-side route is all on the National Cycle Network, so you have excellent traffic-free cycle paths. After starting at Whiteabbey use the coastal walking and cycling path from Coastguard Cottages, calling at the pleasant Hazelbank Park. The route then runs on a path parallel to the motorway where you can observe the birds of Belfast Lough from special bird watching hides. The cycle lanes take you through Duncrue Industrial Estate and onto Clarendon Dock where new businesses thrive alongside the old dry docks, where ships were once repaired. On arrival in Belfast, visit the Lagan Weir and learn about the history of the river Lagan and the Titanic. Return north along the same route or take the train to Whiteabbey.

Irish Cycle Tours and Walks

(6 Church Street, Tralee, Co Kerry)
Offering cycling and walking holidays through the magnificent Glens of Antrim and alongside the breathtaking Causeway Coastal Route. Choose from a six day independent walking tour or a one week, long weekend or specifically designed cycle tour to suit your needs. All tours include route notes, maps, named accommodation, luggage transported and bicycle. All offering value for money and top quality service.

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National Cycle Network

Cycling Routes

You can follow the National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 93 where marked; minor roads are signposted and there are cycle lanes to keep you away from traffic. Or why not let someone else do the navigating and take a tour led by an experienced guide? (You'll find a list of companies who can help you on the back of this brochure). All routes start in a town or village which is accessible by public transport. Bicycle hire is widely available so you don't even need to bring your own bike!

Route Number	Route Name	Distance (Miles)	Traffic	Terrain	OSNI Map
1	Dunluce	12	2	2	4,5
2	Ballycastle	35	3	3	5
3	Rathlin	12	1	2	5
4	Roe Valley	16	2	2	7
5	Garvagh	12	2	3	8
6	Lower Bann	15	2	1	8
7	Ballymoney	25	2	2	8
8	Cushendall	25	3	4	5,9
9	Portglenone	18	2	3	8
10	Slemish	21	2	4	9
11	Coast Road	70	5	2	5,9,15
12	Islandmagee	17	3	3	9
13	Knockagh	11	4	4	15
14	Belfast Lough	7	1	1	15

Key

Traffic Rating	Terrain Rating	Local Route (mainly un-signed)
1 = very light	1 = easy	---
2 = medium	2 = medium	---
3 = heavy	3 = tough	---
		National Route (signposted)

getting you and your bike to Northern Ireland

Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens is easy to get to by sea, air, train or road. All carriers transport bikes. Tell the carrier about your bike when you book as they may give you special instructions on how to prepare it for the journey.

- By air**
Three airports serve Northern Ireland – Belfast International Airport near Antrim, Belfast City Airport just on the outskirts of Belfast and City of Derry airport at Eglinton. Flights to Belfast leave from all London and major UK regional airports. There are frequent scheduled flights from New York and Boston via Shannon/Dublin. Airlines often require bicycles to be made easier to load and occasionally the bicycle will have to be boxed. A charge may be requested. Before departure secure all parts carefully and on arrival make a thorough check.
- By sea**
There are frequent daily ferry crossings from Scotland and England to Belfast and Larne.
- By rail and road from Dublin**
The Enterprise express train service between Dublin and Belfast takes two hours, with eight trains Mon-Sat in both directions (six on Sunday). Phone Translink: 028 9066 6630 or Dublin 00353 1 8366222. Bikes are stored in the guards van and charged at a quarter of the full fare. This is the preferred way to transport your bicycle. The Belfast/Dublin express coach runs seven times a day (three times on Sunday) and takes three hours. Translink: Tel: 028 9066 6630 or Dublin 00353 1 8366222. There is a charge of quarter the full fare per bike, subject to availability.
- Travelling by rail or bus within Northern Ireland**
Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens is well serviced by trains and buses. Translink operates all public buses and trains within Northern Ireland. Contact 028 9066 6630 for timetable and booking information. In Belfast, there are 2 main bus stations and 2 main railway stations. Trains carry 4 bikes free of charge after 9.30am. There is no reservation system. When travelling by train in a group, it is advisable to inform Translink in advance to ensure all bicycles can be carried. Express buses can take bicycles in the luggage compartment at the driver's discretion. To avoid disappointment it is best not to travel at peak times.



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A complete copy of the Holiday Map and the 1:50 000 maps which cover the area are available from:

Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland
Colby House, Stranmillis Court
Belfast BT9 5BJ
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www.osni.gov.uk

National Cycle Network Route 9 to Ballyshannon via Armagh

For further details on the NCN
www.nationalcyclenetwork.org.uk

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Northern Ireland
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