

Explore Carlingford Lough

Explore the east coast of Ireland and you'll find an astonishing variety of landscapes.

You'll also discover a place that's been exciting sailors for centuries. This is a journey in a world of constant surprise.

The approach is spectacular. The Haulbowline lighthouse towers 34 metres.

Here the tide reaches four and a half knots so although the channel's well marked, careful navigation is needed.

And remember, small sailing boats cannot enter or leave against the tide.

On the portside, the Cooley Mountains, rich with legends of giant heroes and epic battles.

To starboard, the Mountains of Mourne, famed in song and famous for their prized grey granite stone.

In the distance, Slieve Gullion, another mountain peppered with folklore.

This region is designated by the government as an area of outstanding natural beauty with the lough at its heart

It's 4 km wide and there's a deep water channel running its entire length of 10 km

Some people believe that Ireland's patron saint, St. Patrick, arrived here to start his ministry in the fifth century.

This is certainly where the Vikings arrived four centuries later to start their reign of terror. They're remembered in the names they left. This is the Norse – Carlinn – fjord.

Today's sailors will find safe berths at various places around the lough, including the main port, Warrenpoint.

This neat little town is a popular holiday venue. It also has a busy commercial life with daily passenger, vehicle and container sailings across the Irish Sea

In summer, there's also a passenger service across the lough to Omeath.

A short distance inland is Narrow Water castle, a 16th century reminder of the earlier Norman stronghold.

The castle was built to protect Newry at the head of the lough.

This city's connection to the sea is the Clanrye river which flows under the main municipal building.

The city's elegant cathedral was built using granite from the Mourne Mountains.

So too was the Craigmole viaduct – the highest viaduct in Ireland – carrying the main railway line.



Newry is well placed, roughly half way between the two main cities, Belfast to the north and Dublin to the South.

It's home to what's believed to be the first Protestant church in Ireland, St. Patrick's, built on the orders of Sir Nicholas Bagenal, who's remembered in Newry museum housed in Bagenal's Castle

The ship canal here was the first to be built in Britain or Ireland. It provides access to the heart of the city from Victoria Lock.

The Albert Basin has moorings alongside a modern shopping and entertainment centre.

The canal towpath is a flat, 32 km route that's very popular with walkers and cyclists.

On the other side of the Lough, Slieve Foy hovers over the town of Carlingford, the original Viking settlement .

It has a remarkable number of medieval buildings. These include the 13th century King John's Castle and the remains of an ancient Dominican friary.

There's an abundance of outdoor activities. Horse riders enjoy trekking along the many quiet trails in the mountains.

There are several superb golf courses and golfers can enjoy magnificent views across Carlingford Lough.

The rivers feeding the lough are popular with trout anglers. The clean, clear water of the lough supports a healthy fishing industry, commercial and recreational.

There's a festival each year to celebrate the local oysters and this is where one angler caught Ireland's record tope –

that's a type of shark.

The local charter boat skippers have vast experience and their guests catch a wide range of species.

Shore fishing is also very popular and many sea anglers have now started flyfishing for bass.

Carlingford Lough has a multitude of attractions. It's a convenient sailing destination – 100 km from Dublin and a little more from the Isle of Man.

And here you'll find some things as constant as the sea – a warm welcome, excitement and relaxation and a hope that you'll soon return.



Explore The Foyle

The Foyle, in the north west of Ireland, is a small region offering big opportunities.

Adventure, excitement, sports, arts, history and total relaxation. It's all here in abundance.

Sailing along the north coast, you'll discover this enormous and fascinating sea inlet.

Lough Foyle is a huge bay, 30 km long and 10 km at its widest point.

Although quite shallow on the eastern side, there is a marked shipping channel running along the western side of the lough.

The entrance lies between County Donegal to starboard, and on the port side the gigantic sweep of Magilligan Strand, 10 km of golden beaches and soaring sand dunes. This well managed and designated Blue Flag Beach at Benone is popular throughout the year.

It's host to a range of activities. These include shore angling, power kiting, body boarding.

Further east is the Mussenden Temple. This was built by the Bishop of Derry in 1785. It's perched dramatically on a 40 metre cliff top high above the Atlantic Ocean on the north-western coast of Northern Ireland.

There are spectacular views westward towards Magilligan Point and County Donegal

Visitors can reach this area by travelling along the Causeway Coastal Route. This is recognised internationally as one of the most spectacular road journeys in the world.

The western shore of the lough is bounded by the mountainous Inishowen peninsula. This offers shelter to the fishing fleets at Carrickarory, Moville and Greencastle, once a stronghold of the Normans.

At each side of the lough entrance, there are ancient Martello towers, one at Magilligan and one opposite at Greencastle.

There was once a series of Martello towers around the British isles, built two hundred years ago, as protection against Napoleon's invasion forces.

Today, it's a peaceful scene as a ferry carries tourists and local people across the lough.

Sailing is extremely popular. Lough Foyle Yacht Club races Foyle punts, a traditional, clinker built boat used by fishermen in years gone by.

The club operates from Culmore Fort, at the mouth of the River Foyle and there is a well-established training programme for younger sailors.

The Moville Boat Club caters for keelboats. Each year it runs a series of sea races to Scotland and to other ports on the north coast.

Whether you're participating or spectating, there's no shortage of excitement in Lough Foyle.

The north coast has some wonderful surfing areas. It's particularly noted for its variety with waves to suit everyone from the beginner to the more advanced enthusiast



This is an anglers' paradise. Whether your interest lies in freshwater or sea fishing there is an enormous range of opportunity.

Charter boats are available for deep sea fishing for more than twenty species including conger, gurnard, Pollack, plaice and john dory.

One of the specialities of the area is wreck fishing. There are more than a hundred wrecks in the region and they've produced many specimen fish.

The summer months see many Foyle anglers fishing for tope – a type of shark.

The most popular locations for this speciality are Culdaff Bay and Inishtrahull Sound. This spectacular coastline also provides splendid opportunity for watching whales, dolphins and basking sharks.

Ashore, Benone strand is a famous location for beach angling.

Inland, the rivers feeding the Foyle hold healthy stocks of trout and salmon.

There is a thriving mussel and oyster fishing enterprise in the lough as well as a deep water fishing fleet.

Their produce can be sampled at the many good restaurants in the area.

One of the most exciting sports here is kayaking.

Sea kayaking has become very popular. There's also plenty of opportunity for thrilling whitewater canoeing.

Or perhaps you prefer more placid paddling on the many delightful stretches of river in the upper reaches of the River Foyle system.

Approaching the city of Londonderry, also known as Derry,

you'll see the train on the route of one of the great railway journeys of the world featured in the BBC series.

In the heart of the city, there are good moorings for pleasure craft.

After the second world war the German U boat fleet was moored in the city before being scuttled in deep water off the Irish coast.

Twenty four ancient cannons remind us of earlier wars.

Derry is the only completely walled city in Ireland and these 8 metres high fortifications were built in the 17th century. Three times in the next one hundred years, the city walls withstood siege.

Today, the city has a rich cultural life with festivals throughout the year. There are splendid museums offering a chance to explore Derry's rich and sometimes turbulent history/



St. Columb's cathedral is the city's oldest building. It's dedicated to the memory of the city's patron saint, St. Columba, also known as Colmcille. He left Ireland in the sixth century to establish his monastery in Scotland on the island of Iona.

Today's sailors on Lough Foyle can feel themselves as close to the sea as did Columba fourteen hundred years ago.



Explore The Sperrins to Lough Foyle

Approach Ireland from the north-east and you'll discover a magnificent gateway to the country – the enormous sea inlet, Lough Foyle. This bay is nearly 30 km long and 10 km at its widest point.

To starboard, the Inishowen peninsula and the hills of Co. Donegal.

Nestling on the shore, the town of Greencastle, with its Martello fort built to stop Napoleon from invading.

On the portside is Co. Londonderry, also known as Derry,

with the great sandy sweep of Magilligan strand, 10 km of beach, cradling the bay with the promise of a warm welcome.

More sailors arrive each year from Scotland. It's 55 km from Port Ellen on the island of Islay and there are moorings at several locations near the entrance to the lough and within the shelter of the lough.

A few hours sail takes you to the city of Londonderry, or Derry, with its city centre pontoon marina.

A short walk takes us to the city's historic walls and these reminders of ancient battles.

There's a wide range of lively shops to visit.

There are plenty of restaurants offering delicious local produce.

And in the pubs, you'll find evidence of Derry's famous tradition of music making.

In recent years, there's been an increase in the number of visitors arriving on gigantic cruise liners.

Indeed, it was Derry that led the way in attracting international liners to Northern Ireland.

Derry is famous as Ireland's only completely walled city.

It's a place crammed with fascinating stories, a place with a turbulent past and a vibrant, joyful present

The city stands astride the River Foyle and today, we'll trace the course of the river.

Our journey begins far beyond the city in some of the world's most delightful countryside.

We've travelled more than 60 km south into the Sperrin Mountains.

This is one of the largest and least explored upland expanses in Northern Ireland.

Hidden here in the hills, is the birthplace of the River Foyle. We're in Sloughan Glen near the village of Drumquin in Co. Tyrone.

This stream will soon become the Fairy Water river, gathering power as it starts to thunder through the hills towards the sea.



This is one of a vast network of streams and rivers coursing through the glacial valleys of the Sperrins.

There's the Owenkillew, the Cloghfin and the Camowen, and now the Strule, meandering through the main county town of Omagh.

The rivers' story continues north, with the Strule becoming the Mourne, said to be one of the best salmon fishing rivers in Europe.

Finally, near the town of Strabane, the River Finn sweeps to join the Mourne to form the Foyle, a tidal river along its entire length.

This river course attracted the earliest settlers nine thousand years ago. The countryside is dotted with amazing archaeological sites

Up in the hills near Carrickmore is the Creggandevesty court tomb, a Neolithic burial site from six thousand years ago.

This is a paradise for walkers and cyclists. There are 46 waymarked trails including substantial treks and short strolls.

The Mourne riverside walk here at Sion Mills provides a chance to admire this magnificent suspension footbridge.

There are twelve well-mapped cycle routes.

Plenty of opportunity to enjoy the countryside listening to little more than the sound of the breeze.

Back on the rivers, there's the excitement of whitewater canoeing or perhaps more leisurely paddling along the quiet stretches.

Alongside the River Strule, you can step into the past at the Ulster American Folk Park.

This is an outdoor museum with a huge collection of original buildings telling the story of emigration from Ireland to America in the 18th and 19th centuries.

You'll see traditional crafts like blacksmithing and spinning.

You can also visit a replica of an emigrants'ship. Grim conditions below.

But coming back on deck, the same surge of the sea, unchanged through the centuries.

With Magilligan slipping behind, we can share the emigrants' dream to return. Again and again.

