

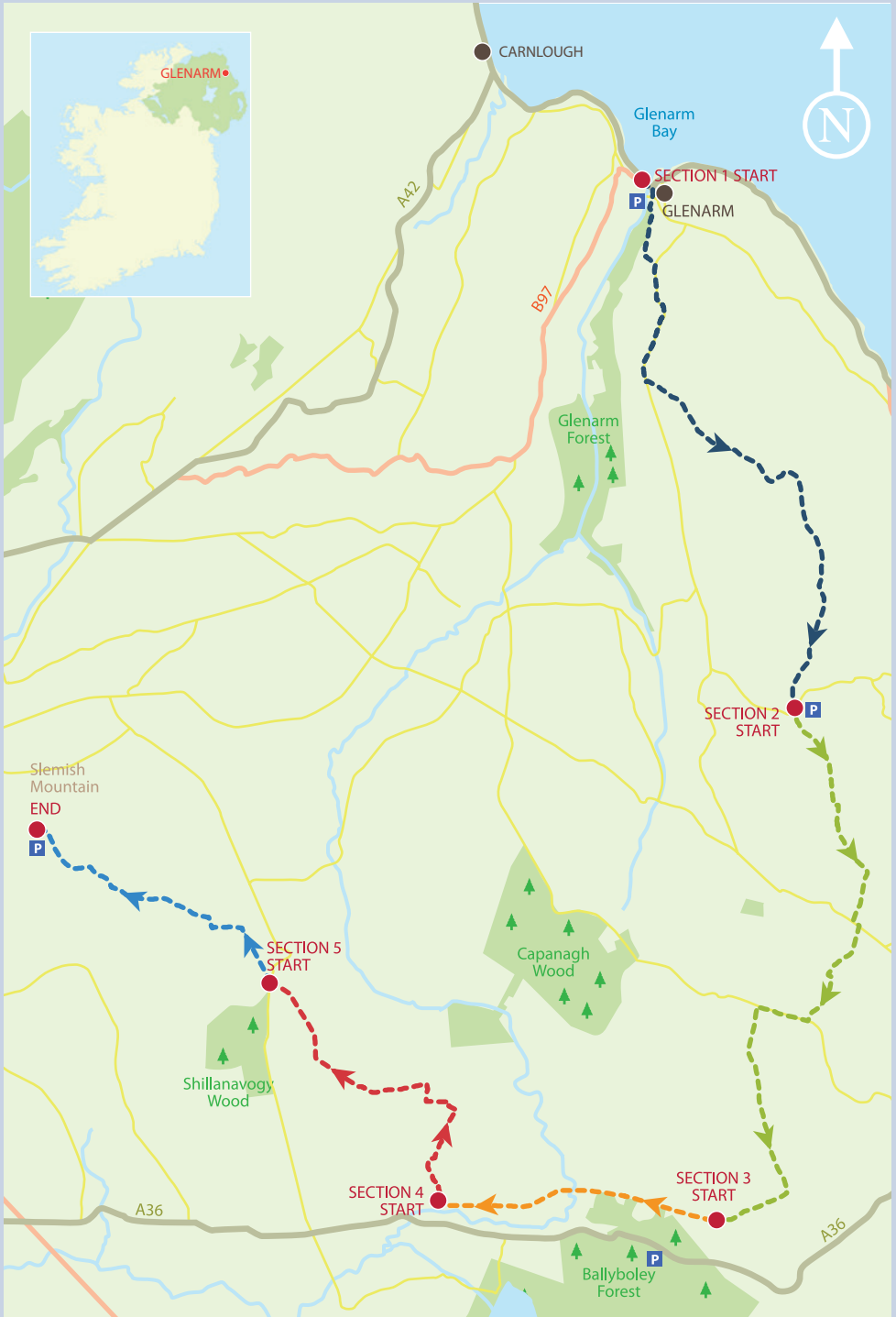
# Antrim Hills Way

Featuring expansive panoramas and challenging climbs, this 35km walk traverses cliffs, moorland and country tracks before leading to Slemish Mountain.



**WalkNI.com**

*Your definitive guide to walking in Northern Ireland*



# Welcome to the Antrim Hills Way

Crossing some of the most scenic upland areas in the Antrim Glens, this is a great 2-day walk that provides uninterrupted views over many miles of Northern Ireland including a 15 mile vista across the sea to Scotland. Mountain walkers will love the challenge of the steep climbs to an exposed landscape, negotiating ground cover of heather, tussocky grasses and reeds and jumping over streams and damp bogs.



GLENARM MARINA

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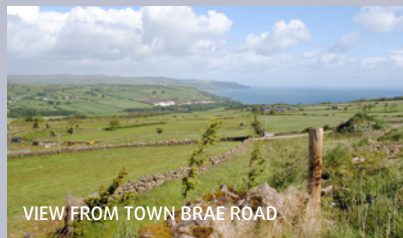
## Key to Map

- SECTION 1 - GLENARM TO LINFORD 9.5km
- SECTION 2 - LINFORD TO DONAGHY'S BRIDGE 11km
- SECTION 3 - DONAGHY'S BRIDGE TO GREENMOUNT HILL FARM 4km
- SECTION 4 - GREENMOUNT HILL FARM TO SHILLANAVOGY ROAD 5.5km
- SECTION 5 - SHILLANAVOGY ROAD TO SLEMISH 5km



## Section 1 - 9.5km

**From the information panel in Glenarm's Coast Road car park, head left past St Patrick's Church. This attractive, eighteenth-century building is the oldest Gothic-style church in Ireland.**



Cross the bridge and at the roundabout, turn right into Toberwine Street. This widens into Altmore Street which has rows of stately Georgian houses. A stone archway at the end is the entrance into Glenarm Forest Park.

At the park entrance, the road veers left onto Town Brae Road. Climb steeply along the tarmac to reach a T-junction after 1km. Turn right and

continue your ascent, which is more gentle now. The increasingly expansive coastal views will provide compensation of the effort of the climb. After another kilometre, a sign indicates the start of the off-road mountain section. Cross a stile and follow a track up the left-hand side of a field, passing between several thickets of gorse.

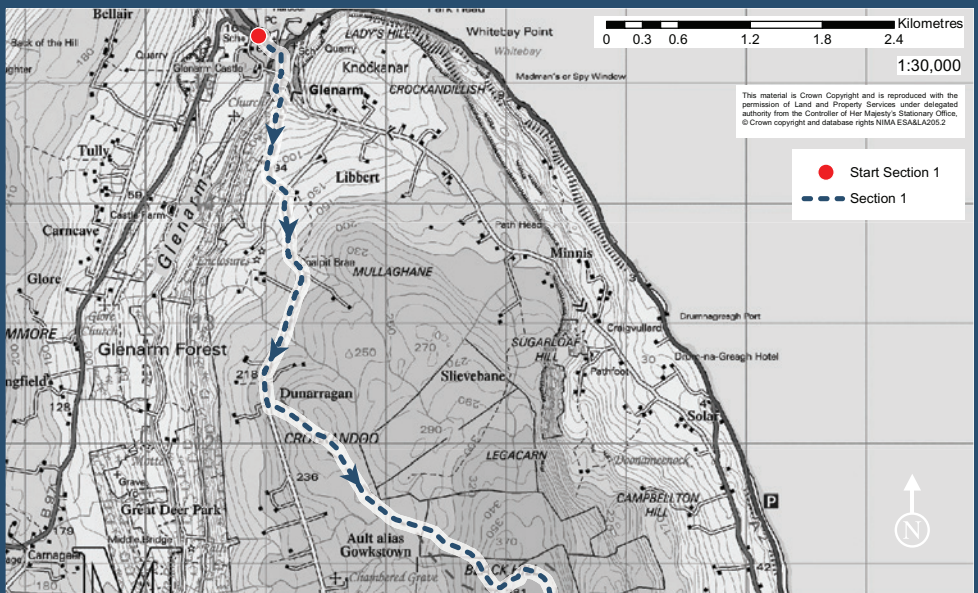


As you pass over the brow of a hill, the first summit of the day comes into sight ahead. Standing atop a ridge to the southeast, you should just be able to make out a pillar on the skyline, marking the top of Black Hill.

To reach the summit, first follow the posts across rough grassland, then veer left and climb across the peaty hillside. The 381m-high trig pillar makes a great vantage point, with the outlines of the Belfast Hills, the Mourne Mountains and the Sperrins decorating the horizon all around. It's a wonderful view and a good spot for a break, as you relax in the knowledge that the most significant climb of day 1 is now behind you.

## Did You Know?

The village of Glenarm was established around the time of the Normans. In the twelfth century it was granted a royal decree by King John, making it the oldest chartered village in Ulster. Modern visitors can still explore the 800-acre forest park that once formed part of Glenarm Castle estate.

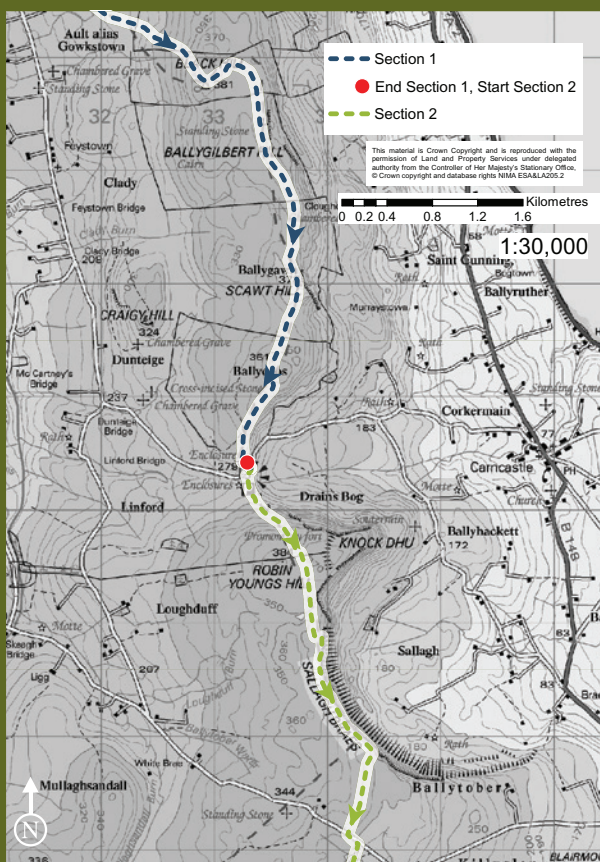


The coastal cliffs of all the hills on this route are a legacy of the last ice age. The most striking formation is Sallagh Braes, a semi-circular basalt escarpment that was created when glaciers cut into unstable slopes and caused a massive land slip. The cliffs of this natural amphitheatre are now some 100m high and 2km long.

The route swings east at the summit of Black Hill, crossing uneven, hummocky grass-covered ground along the edge of the plateau.

The coastal views improve as you progress, with the hills of Scotland and the rocky outcrops of the Maidens, or Hulin Rocks, all clearly visible out to sea. It's an expansive panorama, and one that stays with you for the duration of the day.

The terrain becomes easier underfoot as you head south along the eastern edge of the plateau. Keep to the high ground and cross a series of grassy undulations to arrive at the 378m summit of Scawt Hill. A gradual descent and ascent then brings you to the top of Ballycoos (361m). From here, descend easily across cropped grass to reach the road and car park at Linford.





DRAINS BOG WITH KNOCK DHU IN THE BACKGROUND

## Section 2 - 11km

Recent archaeological digs have shown that this whole area was a thriving community during the Middle Bronze Age (ie, 4,000 years ago).

Today, the evidence for this is hard to see because the ancient structures have collapsed and decomposed into the soil which has formed around them. However, some notable features have survived such as the two circular mounds (original purpose unknown) located close to Linford car park.

The route itself continues south, climbing around the impressive cliffline. Now pass over the shoulder of Robin Young's Hill, and descend to heather moorland at the edge of Sallagh Braes. Follow a fence around the rim of the escarpment, with steep gullies allowing an occasional glimpse into the void below. The airy sensation and the view over the curving cliffs make this a very memorable piece of walking.

A section of rough, peaty ground now brings you to the firmer surface of a farm track. Pass through a series of gates to reach Mullaghsandall Road.



VIEW OF SLEMISH



Head left along the tarmac for roughly 120m, then turn right onto a track enclosed by stone walls.

You'll need to cross a stream on stepping stones and negotiate two wooden gates before reaching open grassland. The posts now lead past an artificial lough, where you must cross another stream and another field to reach a road.

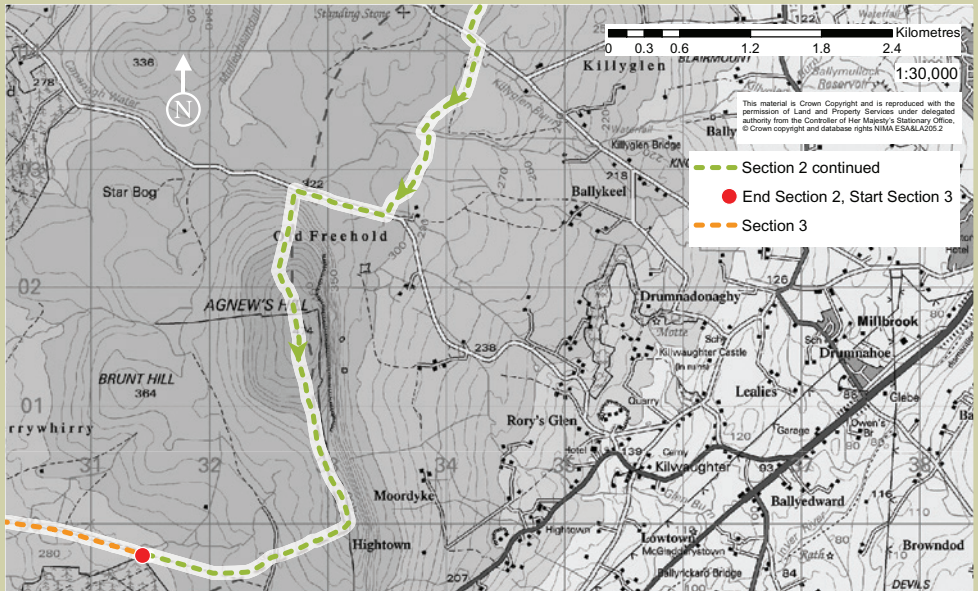
Turn right and follow the road for almost 1km, with good views across the sheer eastern cliffs of Agnew's Hill. This mountain presents the last challenge of the day, and the ascent begins as soon as you leave the tarmac. Climb steeply along the western side of the ridge, with a fence providing guidance on your left.

Cross the fence near the top of the slope, and climb the final metres to the summit cairn. At 474m this is the highest point of the route, and an opportunity to survey your surroundings once again. From Black Hill in the north to Slemish in the west, almost the entire Antrim Hills Way is visible from here.

Follow the ridge south and descend to a col (the saddle between 2 peaks). A brief final climb now brings you to the mountain's southern cairn. This is where the route leaves the ridgeline and begins to head west. Descend gradually to a track that once formed part of an old droving road, and turn right.

### Did You Know?

The entire Antrim Hills Way lies within the Antrim Coast and Glens Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The AONB covers 73,000 hectares and includes the 9 Glens of Antrim, extending to Ballycastle and Rathlin Island on the north coast. Northern Ireland has 7 AONBs.



This part of the Antrim Hills Way finishes at the end of the track, at Donaghys Bridge. If you have left a vehicle at Ballyboley Forest car park, follow the markers for the Ulster Way instead, passing through a section of forestry to reach the parking area beside Shane's Hill Road or Upper Ballyboley Road.





### Section 3 - 4km

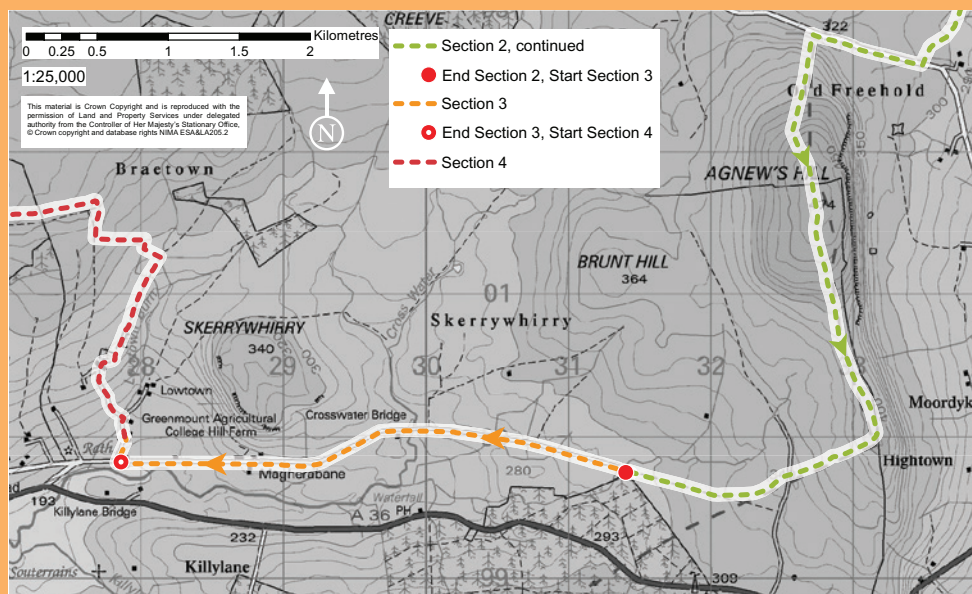
**The second day of the walk starts near a wooden footbridge, where the track from Agnew's Hill turns into a tarmac lane.**

A route information panel marks the spot. Parking is limited at the end of the lane, so a better option is to leave your vehicle at Ballyboley Forest car park. From there, follow signs for the Ulster Way to reach this point.

From Donaghy's Bridge, continue west along the lane. The first part of the road is little more than a track, with a healthy growth of grass splitting the centre of the tarmac. To your right lies an expanse of open grassland, while the dark boughs of a forestry plantation line the road to your left. When the trees drop back, long views open out along the Glenwherry Valley, with the windfarm at the top of Elliot's Hill forming a prominent landmark.

A gradual descent brings you to Crosswater Bridge. The grass has now abated and the road surface has consolidated underfoot. Keep straight ahead, still largely descending past several farms and houses. The noise of the traffic on the busy A36 begins to intrude as you near the end of the section. Continue past a row of mature beech trees, then a short distance later you arrive at the entrance to Greenmount Hill Farm and Agricultural College.

The entrance to the farm is marked by a large sign for the 'College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise'. Turn right and head up the driveway to reach a car park some zoom later. Another information board for the Antrim Hills Way marks the end of the section.





### Did You Know?

The Irish hare (*Lepus timidus hibernicus*) have long powerful back legs that can help them reach speeds of up to 30mph/48kph and jump heights of around 2m. They feed mainly on a variety of grasses but sedges, heather, wild thyme and bilberry may play a part in their diet. Hares do not live in a burrow underground, but shelter in a hollow depression above ground known as a form.



NEAR DOUGLAS TOP

### Section 4 - 5.5km

**From Greenmount car park, continue a short distance north along the driveway, then turn left across a stone bridge.**



HILL FARM SHEEP

Climb past a series of fields to a collection of outbuildings. Here the route is signed through several gates and onto a stone track, which leads away from the farm towards open hillside.

After roughly 500m, turn left onto another track. Follow this along a series of fences, slowly gaining height amid the tussock-covered hills. Along the way you'll need to pass through several gates and junctions, each of which is clearly signed.

You now arrive at a high, flat section of track that contours along the upper slopes of Glenhead. The easy terrain allows plenty of time to appreciate the views. The vista stretches from Agnew's Hill in the east, past Belfast's Cave Hill and the windmills on Elliot's Hill, to the distant peaks of the Mourne Mountains in the south.

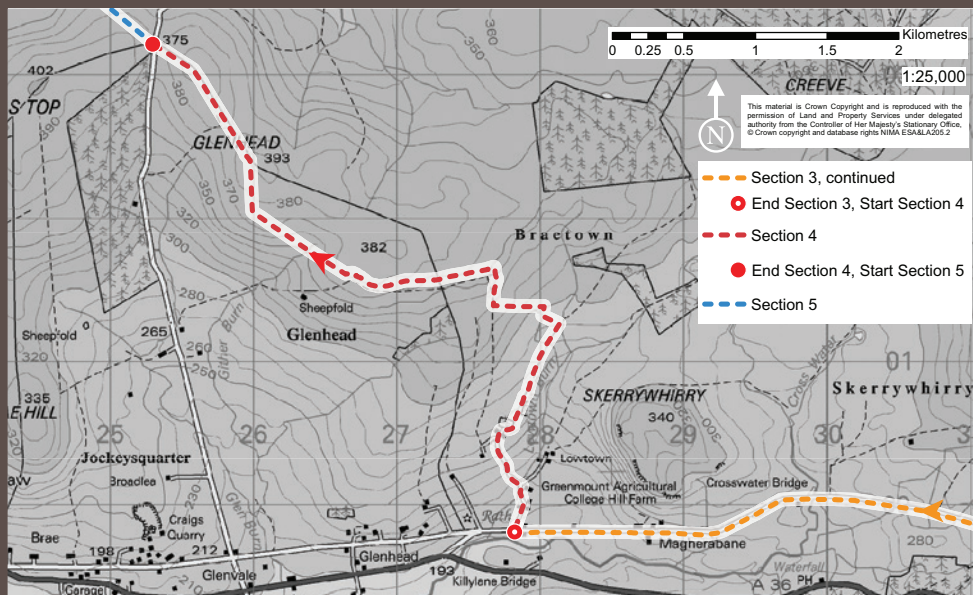


When the track starts to descend, turn right and cross a wooden stile. You are now on open mountainside, and signs indicate that you should 'look for and follow the white posts'. These are weathered and sometimes widely spaced, so it's worth taking your time to locate each one.

Once across the stile, turn left and follow a series of fences over several hummocks. The ground is sometimes wet underfoot, and there are several stiles and small ditches to negotiate. Though the route passes near the summit of Glenhead (393m), there are no distinguishing features to mark the top. A gradual descent along a fence then brings you to the tarmac of the Shillanavogy Road.

## Did You Know?

Red grouse were once common in these hills, but by 2008 the local population had fallen to just six pairs. In response The Glenwherry Hill Regeneration Project, a partnership between the College of Agriculture Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), the Irish Grouse Conservation Trust and the RSPB was launched; protecting a wide range of habitats including those for red grouse, hen harrier, merlin, curlew and snipe.



VIEW FROM SLEMISH PICNIC AREA

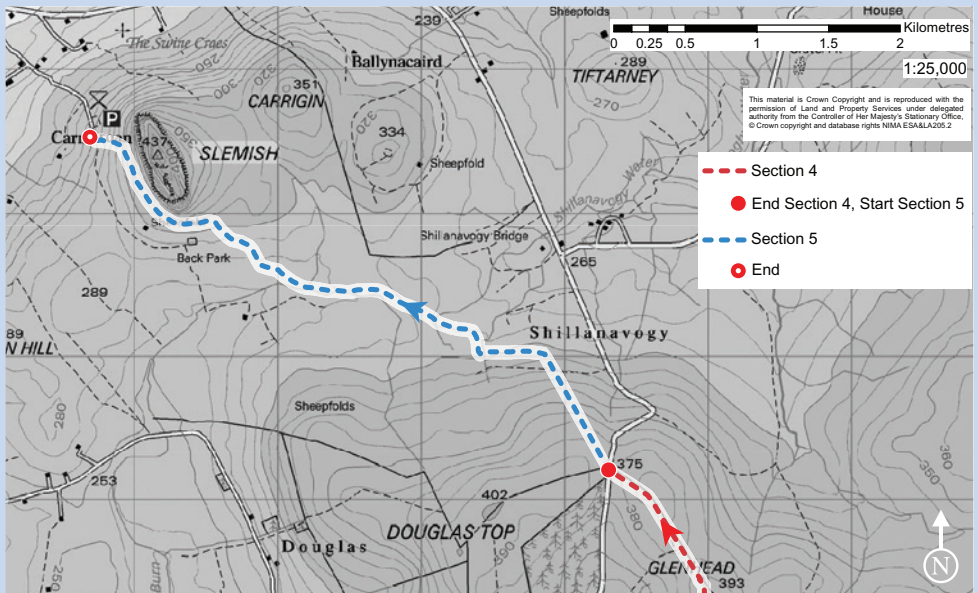


### Did You Know?

Traditionally it was on the slopes of Slemish that St Patrick, the Patron Saint of Ireland, tended livestock during his years of slavery at the turn of the fifth century. Records relate how he and his fellow slaves often spent months alone in the hills, naked and with no food except what they could scavenge.



SLEMISH



## Section 5 - 5km

**Cross directly over the Shillanavogy Road and begin to climb again on the other side.**

Rather than following a fence – as you have been doing for the last couple of kilometres – the route now heads northwest across open ground.

A short ascent brings you to a prominent marker post on the northeastern slopes of Douglas Top. From here a new panorama is suddenly revealed, with the unmistakable profile of Slemish now visible to the northeast. This mountain owes its distinctive shape to the fact that it is an old volcanic plug, and was once constrained within the crater of a volcano. It will act as a beacon for the remainder of the route, beckoning you on to the finish.

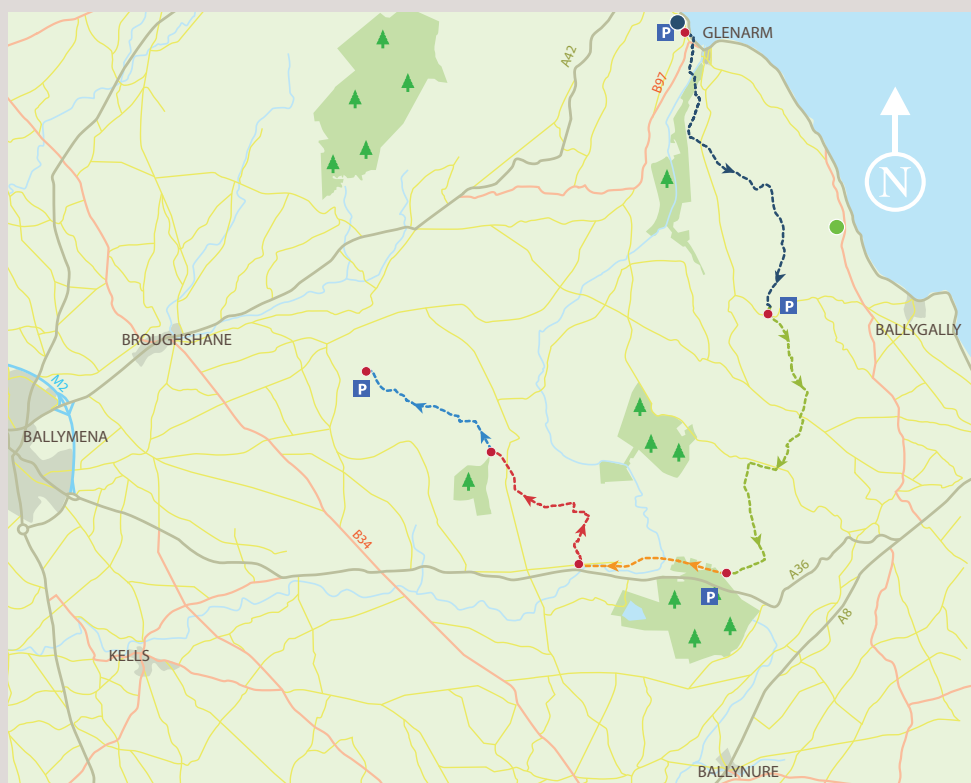
Descend northwest until you meet a track, then turn right. Follow the track downhill to a junction marked by a route information board. Now head left, continuing along another track to a prominent waymarker attached to a large, upright rock. Turn right at the rock and climb across two stiles to reach an expanse of rough heather and grass. A series of white-topped posts leads northwest across the moor, drawing ever closer to the steep, craggy slopes of Slemish.

It is something of a relief to reach the cropped grass and firm ground surrounding Slemish itself. The trail skirts around the southwestern base of the hill, running just beneath a jumble of boulders. After almost a kilometre the car park comes into sight ahead, and a final descent beside a series of wind-sculpted hawthorns brings you to the end of the route.

## Walker Friendly Accommodation

There are a number of new and well established accommodation providers located along the Antrim Hills Way. Ranging from luxury hotels to B&B's and camping barns, these can cater specifically for walkers, offering useful services and facilities which include:

- Location within 500m of the route or up to 5 miles with pick-up/drop-off service for walkers on the Antrim Hills Way (advance noticed required)
- 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 Tourism Northern Ireland - [www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com)



For an up to date and full list of accommodation in the surrounding area visit

[www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com)

[www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/tourism](http://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/tourism)

[www.broughshane.org.uk](http://www.broughshane.org.uk)

[www.glenarmtourism.org/](http://www.glenarmtourism.org/)

## Where to Eat

The majority of the Antrim Hills Way is located in remote, rural countryside – which of course, is part of its appeal. Consequently you will not find a wealth of eateries along the way, so its best to be prepared. The villages of Ballygally, Glenarm, Carnlough and Broughshane provide plenty of shop facilities to prepare packed lunches, while a number of restaurants, pubs and cafes provide eat in and take away catering options.

To plan your walking itinerary, visit these local websites for up to date information on eating providers:

**[www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com)**

**[www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk/tourism](http://www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk/tourism)**

**[www.broughshane.org.uk](http://www.broughshane.org.uk)**



## Other Information

### Emergency

In the event of an emergency call the police on 999

Or: Antrim Area Hospital +44 (0)28 9442 4000

### Go Prepared

Weather conditions in the Antrim Hills can be changeable – even during summer months.

Waterproof and windproof clothing are essential and strong walking boots are advised.

### Respect for Landowners

The entire Antrim Hills Way is made up of ‘permissive paths’. This means that the route has been made possible by a number of landowners giving permission for walkers to cross their land (on the designated route) while undertaking the Antrim Hills Way. Walkers are asked to be respectful of landowners at all times and to note that the route is not a Public Right of Way.

### Dogs

Please note that dogs **are not** permitted on the Antrim Hills Way, even if on a lead, as it alarms the livestock and this can put people at risk. Landowners retain the right to refuse walkers access to their land if they are not behaving in a respectful manner.

### Walking Providers

The Antrim Hills Way is waymarked and should be straightforward to navigate. However, should you wish to explore the wider area, contact the nearest visitor information centre who will recommend local guides for consideration (Page 19)

### Walkni.com

For further information on the Antrim Hills Way and all other walks across Northern Ireland, please visit [www.walkni.com](http://www.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 useful maps – available from [www.osni.gov.uk/mapstore](http://www.osni.gov.uk/mapstore)

OSNI Discoverer Map Series 1:50 000 Sheet 9.

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).

## Other Information

### Other Activities and Places to See

The Causeway Coastal Route is a driving route running between Belfast and Londonderry (passing through Ballygally, Glenarm and Carnlough) and is also Route 93 of the National Cycle Network. There are a number of festivals held in the Antrim Hills area including the Carnlough Carnival (end July), the Dalriada Festival and the Ulster Scots Festival (July). Carnfunnock Country Park offers a café, shop, walks, camping/caravanning and activities for children, while the village of Broughshane is located close to Slemish mountain and is renowned for its floral accolades. Slemish Mountain Interpretive Centre is located at the Slemish end of the Antrim Hills Way, featuring panels depicting the legend of St Patrick, along with toilet facilities and some outside seating next to the carpark. Other activities include golfing at Ballymena Golf Course or Cairndhu Golf Club. There is also fishing at the Braid River. To find out more and to get a Visitor Guide, visit Larne and Ballymena Visitor Information centres (contact details below).

**Ballymena Visitor Information Centre:** The Braid Ballymena Town Hall Museum and Arts Centre, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena, Co Antrim, BT43 5EJ

[www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk](http://www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk) | [tic.reception@midandeastantrim.gov.uk](mailto:tic.reception@midandeastantrim.gov.uk)

Tel: +44 (0)28 2563 5010

**Glenarm Visitor Centre:** Open November to March Mon-Sat 10am-4pm, Sundays 12-3pm and April to October Mon-Sat 9.30am-5pm, Sundays 12-3pm

[www.glenarmtourism.org](http://www.glenarmtourism.org) | [info@glenarmtourism.org](mailto:info@glenarmtourism.org).

**Larne Visitor Information Centre:** Narrow Gauge Road, Larne, Co Antrim, BT40 1XB

[www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk](http://www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk) | [lticreception@midandeastantrim.gov.uk](mailto:lticreception@midandeastantrim.gov.uk)

Tel: +44 (0)28 2826 2495

### Public Transport

Translink operate the following bus services, all of which stop at Glenarm, which is the starting point of the Antrim Hills Way:

Carnlough to Ballymena - Service 128 | Carnlough to Larne - Service 162

Antrim Coaster service runs during July and August. Check Translink for details.

Timetables are available from Bus Stations or Tourist Information Centres across Northern Ireland. For more information call (0)28 9066 6630 or visit [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk). Over 60s travel free on presentation of a valid SmartPass.

### 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.

For any questions on walking in Northern Ireland contact  
Outdoor Recreation NI  
The Stableyard, Malone Road, Barnett's 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)

