




# The Antrim Coast

Featuring the famed  
Causeway Coastal Route

Produced by Lonely Planet for  Tourism Ireland



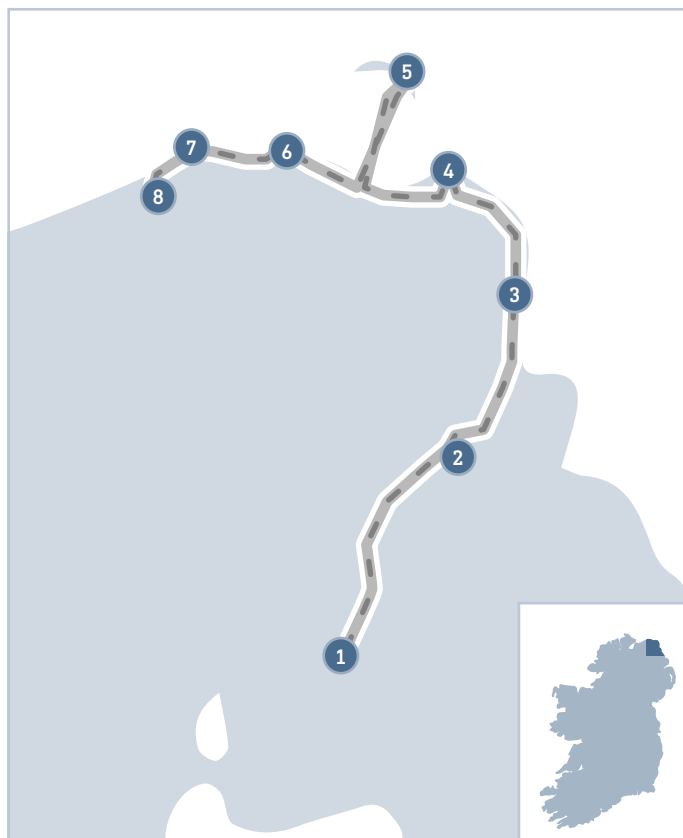


 Cushendun, County Antrim

# The Antrim Coast

Many visitors belt around the Antrim coast, cramming the big-name sights into a day. But this trip delights those who take their time. The reward? In-depth explorations of those big-name attractions, and the chance to marvel at less obvious sights.

- 1 Ballymena**  
Home to the Braid Museum.
- 2 Glenariff Forest Park**  
Waterfalls and steep gorges.
- 3 Cushendun**  
Pretty seaside village famous for its distinctive Cornish-style cottages.
- 4 Fair Head**  
180m-high basalt cliffs known for extreme rock-climbing.
- 5 Rathlin Island**  
Rugged island famous for its coastal scenery and bird life.
- 6 Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge**  
Heart-in-the-mouth walk from cliff face to island.
- 7 Giant's Causeway**  
The coast's biggest draw.
- 8 Bushmills**  
Small town with a world-famous distillery.



## Trip at a Glance

 Duration

**3 Days**

110km/68 miles

 Best Time to Go

**Jul & Sep**

Avoiding August means less crowded sights; Easter to July and September should mean brighter days.

 Essential Photo

**Giant's Causeway**

You standing on the Giant's Causeway's basalt columns.

 Best for Solitude

**Fair Head & Rathlin**

Stops four and five see you well away from the crowds.





Glenariff Forest Park, County Antrim

forest is a mix of native species (look out for oak, elm and hazel) and introduced trees – notably pine and Douglas fir. You've a fair chance of spotting red squirrels, hen harriers and Irish hares darting among the trees. The tea house beside the car park offers the chance to refuel, and gives more stunning gorge views.

### 3 Cushendun

To best explore pretty Cushendun, head across the road to the beach. Follow the sandy shore to the right, skirting the front of the Cushendun Hotel. After about 800m you come to



### The Causeway Coastal Route

From the vibrant city of Belfast to the walled city of Derry/Londonderry, the Causeway Coastal Route traces the coast and retraces the outsized footsteps of mythical giant Finn McCool. Hit-the-brakes sights include the weathered ruins of medieval Dunluce Castle, and luminous limestone cliffs framing pristine White Rocks Beach.

### 1 Ballymena

Start exploring the Antrim coast with the superb potted history offered by the Braid Museum. Here interactive, audio-visual displays evoke a rich history stretching from the county's prehistoric inhabitants to the present. Prepare for stories of Irish chiefs, the mass settlement of Scottish and English Protestants (called Plantation) and the historic events behind the island's political banners. The *Modern Times* film montage is another highlight, encompassing the *Titanic*, WWI, the Depression,

Civil Rights, footballer George Best and former US president Bill Clinton.

#### Trip Highlight

### 2 Glenariff Forest Park

The pick of the trails at Glenariff Forest Park is the Waterfall Walk. This 3km way-marked, circular trail goes beside the Glenariff River and past the Ess-na-Larach and Ess-na-Crub waterfalls, along paths cut into the sheer gorge sides, up stairways and along boardwalks set on stilts above the water. The

a pocket-sized, pebbly beach, where the sea has sculpted mini-caves out of porous-looking rock. Head back along the seafront and over the bridge, this time going straight on to the village itself. Its central cluster of Cornish-style cottages was built between 1912 and 1925, and designed by Clough Williams-Ellis, the architect of Portmeirion in north Wales. They were commissioned by Lord Cushendun and his Cornish wife, Maud. Her grave in the village churchyard bears the inscription: 'To a Cornish woman who loved the Glens and their people.'





Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge

#### 4 Fair Head

Approaching from Cushendun, the 180m-high basalt cliffs of Fair Head rear to your left. Walk towards them, following a 1km moderate cliff-top path (way-marked by yellow circles) to the top. Once there, look out for rock climbers (this is one of the region's best climbing sites) and the spectacular gully bridged by a fallen rock, called Grey Man's Path. A stunning panorama sweeps from Rathlin Island in the west to Scotland's Mull of Kintyre in the east. Keep an eye out, too, for whales and dolphins swimming offshore.

#### 5 Rathlin Island

Overnight on Rathlin Island, a 6.5km by 4km windswept slab of rock that lies 6km offshore. From mid-April to August it's home to hundreds of seals and thousands of nesting seabirds; the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' West Light Viewpoint provides extraordinary views of sea stacks thick with guillemots, kittiwakes, razorbills and puffins. Scottish hero Robert the Bruce hid here in 1306 after being defeated by the English. Inspired by a spider's determined web-spinning, he subsequently triumphed at Bannockburn. His cave is beneath the East Lighthouse.

#### Trip Highlight

#### 6 Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge

The Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge is a 20m-long, 1m-wide assemblage of wire rope and planks that sways 30m above rock-strewn water. It spans a chasm between cliffs and a tiny island that has sustained a salmon fishery for centuries; fishers use the bridge to stretch their nets out from the island's tip to intercept migrating salmon. The fishers still put the bridge up every spring as they have done for the last 200 years. It's a heart-in-the-mouth walk across the bridge. Once on the island, the panorama includes





Giant's Causeway, County Antrim

Rathlin Island and the sheer cliffs of Fair Head.

#### Trip Highlight

### 7 Giant's Causeway

When you first see it you'll understand why the ancients believed the causeway couldn't be a natural feature. The spectacular expanse of regular, closely packed, hexagonal stone columns dipping gently beneath the waves looks for all the world like the handiwork of giants. It's a sloping 1km walk to the

causeway. Once you've clambered around on the geometric rocks, don't miss the stack of pipe-like basalt columns known as the Organ – access them on the lower coastal path that heads towards the Amphitheatre Viewpoint at Port Reostan.

#### Trip Highlight

### 8 Bushmills

What better way to finish a trip full of the flavour of the Antrim coast than with a true taste of Ireland

– Bushmills Irish Whiskey. Old Bushmills Distillery is the world's oldest legal distillery, having been granted a licence by King James I in 1608. During ageing, the alcohol content drops from around 60% to 40%; the spirit lost through evaporation is known as 'the angels' share'. After the tour, you can enjoy a free sample of your choice from Bushmills' product range.



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