



Causeway Coastal Route & More

Produced by Lonely Planet for



Tourism Ireland



Giant's Causeway, County Antrim

Causeway Coastal Route & More

From seaside to mountain-side, via ruined castles, stately homes, museums and the Giant's Causeway – this trip blends cracking coastal scenery with blockbuster historic sights, and delivers a true taste of glorious Northern Ireland.

- 1 Bangor**
Victorian seaside town.
- 2 Mount Stewart House**
Plush stately home with opulent interiors.
- 3 Hillsborough**
Official residence of the Royal Family when visiting.
- 4 Belfast**
Bustling city and transformed capital of Northern Ireland.

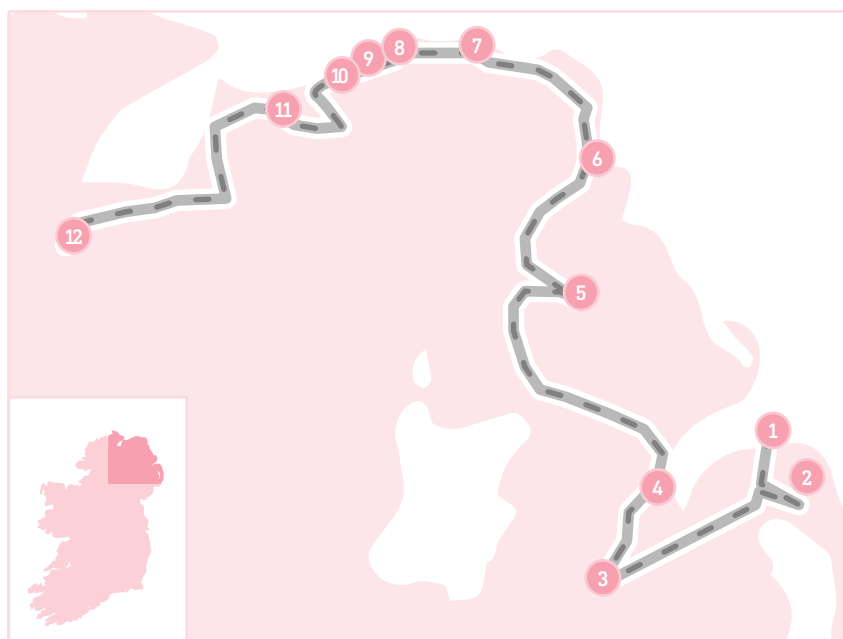
5 Slemish Mountain
Distinctive craggy peak and place of pilgrimage.

6 Cushendall
Picturesque village with coastal path leading to Layde Old Church.

7 Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge
Heart-in-the-mouth walk from cliff face to island.

8 Giant's Causeway
An extraordinary outcrop of ancient, geometric rock.

9 Dunluce Castle
Renaissance-style manor perched atop a dramatic basalt crag.



10 Portrush
Bustling seaside town and one of Ireland's top surfing centres.

11 Downhill Demesne
Cliff-top gothic ruins with spectacular views.

12 Derry/Londonderry
Vibrant, riverside city, encircled by impressive 17th-century fortifications.

Trip at a Glance

Duration

4 Days

330km/205 miles

Best Time to Go

Mar–Oct

For better weather; avoid August to dodge holiday crowds.

Essential Photo

Giant's Causeway

The spectacular Giant's Causeway: your must-have north-coast snap.

Best Two Days

Stops eight to 11 take in the Causeway, castles, ruins and golden sands.



Belfast City Hall, Northern Ireland

1 Bangor

This Victorian seaside town has enjoyed a renaissance as an out-of-town base for city commuters. The Belfast–Bangor train line was built in the late 19th century to connect the capital with the then flourishing resort. The opening of a huge marina and the redevelopment of the seafront have boosted Bangor's fortunes – it's widely regarded as the most desirable address in Northern Ireland.

Trip Highlight

2 Mount Stewart House

Magnificent 18th-century Mount Stewart House is one of Northern Ireland's grandest stately homes. Lavish plasterwork combines with antiques and artworks that include a painting of the racehorse Hambletonian by George Stubbs. Garden highlights include griffin and mermaid statues on the Dodo Terrace, and the Temple of the

Winds, a mock Gothic ruin with great views of the Strangford Lough.

3 Hillsborough

Set in elegant Hillsborough, the rambling, late-Georgian Hillsborough Castle is the Queen's official residence in Northern Ireland. You'll see opulent state drawing and dining rooms, and the Lady Grey Room, where former UK prime minister Tony Blair and former US president George W Bush had talks on Iraq. Garden delights include yew- and lime-tree walks, an ice house and a lake.

Trip Highlight

4 Belfast

Bustling Belfast has big-city appeal. There's plenty to see, including the Titanic Quarter, where the famous liner was built. It's anchored by the multifaceted visitor experience Titanic Belfast. Another don't-miss attraction is the Ulster Museum.

Highlights of its beautifully designed displays are the Armada Room; Takabuti, a 2500-year-old Egyptian mummy; the Bann Disc; and the Snapshot of an Ancient Sea Floor.

5 Slemish Mountain

Craggy Slemish (438m) is where Ireland's patron saint is said to have tended goats. On St Patrick's Day, thousands of people make a pilgrimage to its summit. It's a steep but pleasant 30-minute climb that's rewarded with fine views.

6 Cushendall

From Cushendall's beach, walk 1km north, scrambling up the coast path to Layde Old Church. Here views stretch as far as the Scottish coast. Founded by the Franciscans, Layde was used as a parish church from the early 14th century. Today the picturesque ruins have grand memorials to the MacDonnells (earls of Antrim from 1620) in



Dunluce Castle, County Antrim

the graveyard, and an ancient, weathered ring-cross by the gate.

7 Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge

A wobbling bridge is an unusual spot to stretch your legs, but it's unforgettable nonetheless. The Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge is a 20m-long, 1m-wide contraption of wire and planks that stretches 30m above rock-strewn water. It sways and bounces beneath your feet

before you emerge onto a tiny island dotted with reminders of its past as a salmon fishery.

8 Trip Highlight Giant's Causeway

The Giant's Causeway is this coast's must-see sight: a remarkable, ragged ribbon of regular, closely packed, hexagonal stone columns that dips gently beneath the waves. The spectacular rock formation is Northern Ireland's only Unesco

World Heritage site, and is one of Ireland's most impressive and atmospheric landscape features.

9 Dunluce Castle


The atmospheric remains of Dunluce Castle cling to a dramatic basalt crag. Built between the 15th and 17th centuries, it was once the coast's finest castle and the seat of the powerful MacDonnell family. A narrow bridge leads from the mainland courtyard across a

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 Derry/Londonderry, County Derry

dizzying gap to the main fortress, where you can roam the shells of buildings and listen to the sea pounding on the cliffs.

10 Portrush

You can't leave the Antrim coast without a post-drive stop beside the sea to clear your head. The bustling seaside town of Portrush is one of Ireland's top surfing centres. The 3km Curran Strand, a dune-backed golden ribbon of sand, also makes for a glorious walk.

Trip Highlight

11 Downhill Demesne

In 1774 the eccentric Bishop of Derry built himself a palatial, cliff-top home, Downhill Demesne. It burnt down in 1851, was rebuilt in 1876, and was finally abandoned after WWII. Today it features follies (ornamental buildings), mausoleums and a giant, ruined house. Trails lead past a dovecote onto a grassy headland and the elegant Mussenden Temple. From inside, the cliff-edge views are extraordinary.

12 Derry/Londonderry

Northern Ireland's second city surprises some with its riverside setting and impressive 17th-century walls. Make sure you drop into St Columb's Cathedral. This stately church was completed in 1633, making it Derry's oldest building. In the porch, look for the hollow mortar shell fired into the churchyard during the Great Siege of 1688; inside the shell were the terms of a surrender that never came.



 Dark Hedges, County Antrim

The Real Westeros

The dramatic shoreline and rolling countryside of County Antrim have provided plenty of locations for the hit fantasy series, Game of Thrones. The picture-postcard village of Ballintoy was Lordsport on Pyke, the island base for the Greyjoy clan. Along the coast, the harbour town of Ballycastle represented the Free City birthplace of scheming eunuch Varys. Inland, Dark Hedges Road, near Ballymoney, stood in for the section of the Kingsroad along which Arya Stark fled from King Joffrey's soldiers.



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