

Cuilcagh Way

A Walker's Guide



WalkNI.com
Your definitive guide to walking in Northern Ireland



**Marble Arch Caves
Global Geopark**



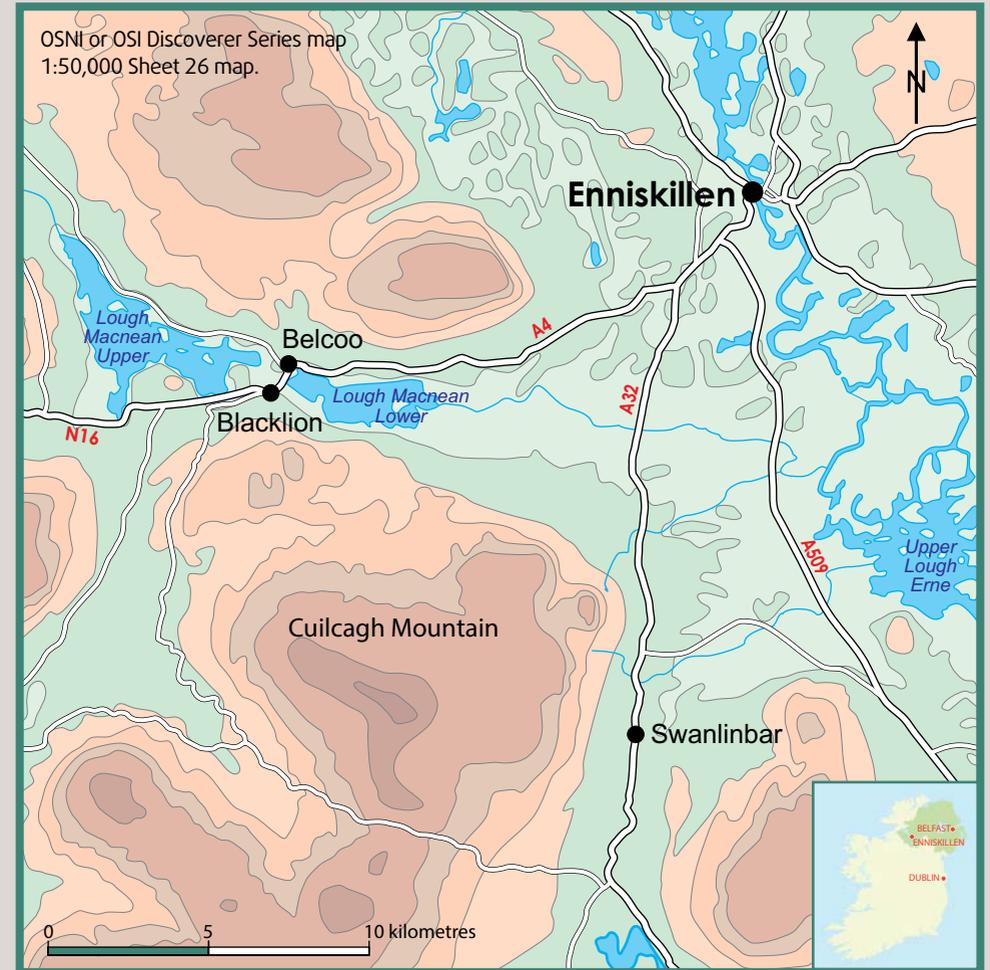
View of Benaughlin from Legacurragh

Welcome to the Cuilcagh Way

The Cuilcagh Way is a waymarked route that stretches for 33km through a breath taking patchwork of habitats in southern Fermanagh. It leads from the lowlands around the Cladagh River, past the Marble Arch Caves, to the blanket bog summit of Cuilcagh Mountain at 666 metres. The route can be walked in sections and provides stunning views, fascinating geology, mystifying wildlife, captivating archaeology and natural history: enough to whet anyone's appetite for adventure.

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Florence Court Forest Trail at Brookfield

STAGES OF THE CUILCAGH WAY

All five stages of the Cuilcagh Way are waymarked, linear routes. There is car parking and interpretation panels at the start locations of all the walks.

Walk 1 - Cladagh Glen Walk

The walk follows the course of the Cladagh River, meandering through a steep gorge that is thickly covered by a long established ash woodland and alive with wildlife.

Route: Red | **Distance:** 2.5km

Terrain: Gravel pathways, boardwalks and steps.

Walk 2 - Cuilcagh Legnabrocky Trail

The route meanders through one of the largest expanses of blanket bog in Northern Ireland, traversing over tracks, boardwalk and mountain path. A steep climb is required to reach the 666 metre summit of Cuilcagh Mountain.

Route: Blue | **Distance:** 7.4km

Map: OSNI or OSI Discoverer Series Map - Sheet 26

Terrain: Gravel track, wooden boardwalk and exposed mountain path. Full mountain precautions and experience required.

Walk 3 - Cuilcagh Hiker's Trail

A vigorous and exposed route through expansive blanket bog, involving a steep climb to reach the summit cairn of Cuilcagh Mountain, offering breathtaking views over the surrounding landscape.

Route: Pink | **Distance:** 9km

Map: OSNI or OSI Discoverer Series Map - Sheet 26

Terrain: Mostly mountain blanket bog, crossing wet, uneven ground. Full mountain precautions and experience required.

Walk 4 - Legacurragh Valley Trail

Meander through limestone landscape, blanket bog and deep woodland before reaching Florence Court House Estate.

Route: Green | **Distance:** 6.7km

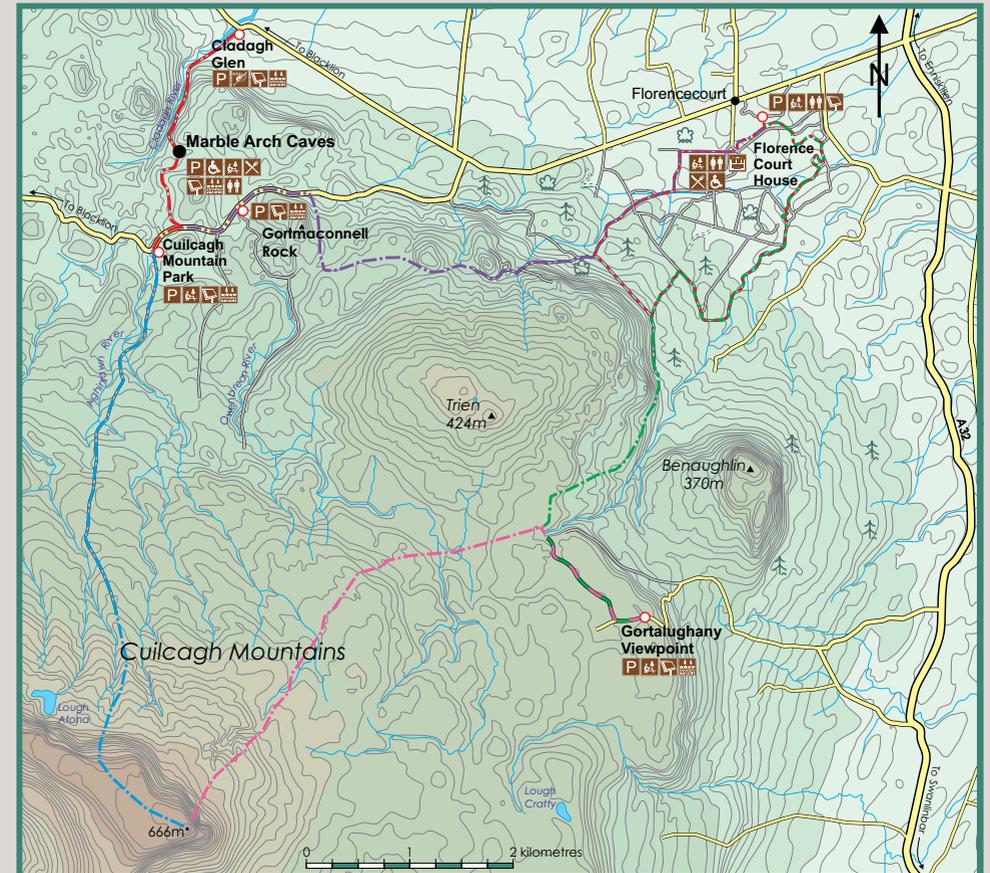
Terrain: Heathland trail crossing wet, uneven ground, forest track and woodland path.

Walk 5 - Florence Court Forest Trail

Weave your way through the Florence Court Forest Park before reaching the rolling Marlbank hills with their species rich grassland and exposed rocky outcrops of limestone.

Route: Purple | **Distance:** 7.2km

Terrain: Forest track and heathland trail. Surface is largely firm, but some rough sections too.



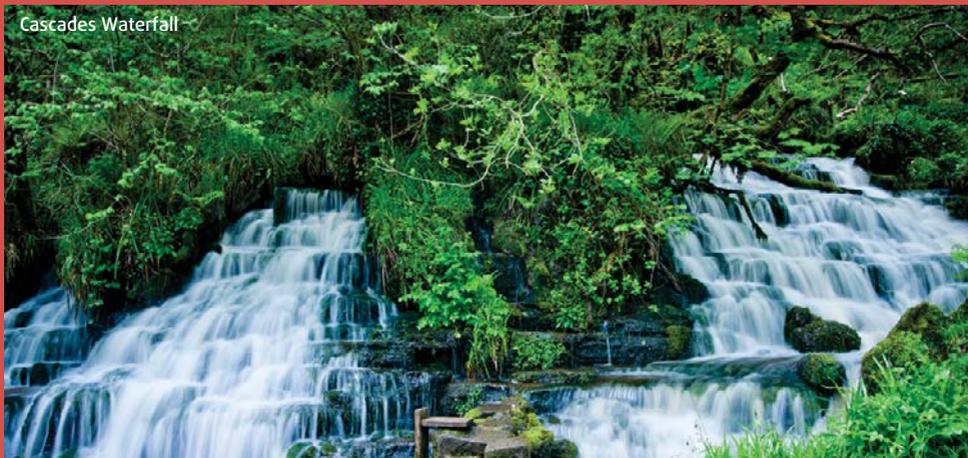
MAP LEGEND					
	Cladagh Glen Walk		Parking		Geological site
	Cuilcagh Legnabrocky Trail		Access for the disabled		National Nature Reserve
	Cuilcagh Hiker Trail		Picnic area		Roads
	Legacurragh Valley Trail		Restaurant		Vehicle Track
	Florence Court Forest Trail		Public Toilets		Footpaths
	Red Trail Florence Court		Florence Court House and Gardens		Forest Area
	Walk start/finish points		Information panel		Contours
					Rivers

Finding your way

The Cuilcagh Way is fully waymarked.



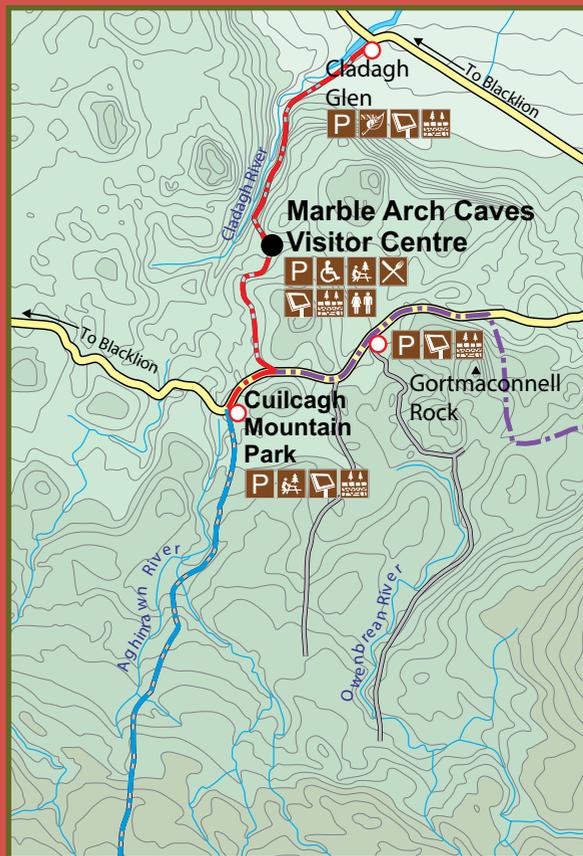
Cascades Waterfall



Cladagh Glen Walk
The path starts at the car park at the bottom of Cladagh Glen and meanders through the woods following the course of the Cladagh River.

The river gurgles and splashes on its journey towards the Erne lowlands, bringing life to the woodland. If you are lucky you may spot a grey heron or dipper feeding in the rock strewn water.

The undergrowth glows a vibrant green, with moss and woodland ferns carpeting the ground beneath native ash trees. A profusion of bluebells, wild garlic and woodland plants add colour during the spring and summer, while elusive animals like red squirrels and pine martens find shelter beneath the trees. Though it was once widespread, this sort of damp ash woodland is now rare in Ireland,



Marble Arch

and the entire gorge is protected as part of the Marbank National Nature Reserve.

After 1km you pass the Cascades Waterfall, a spring in the limestone where crystal clear water can be seen gushing down a natural staircase, after re-emerging from the Cascades cave system.

At the head of the gorge the path reaches the Marble Arch, a spectacular natural archway that spans the river and is the remnant of a former cave. The path takes you up and over the Marble Arch, where craggy holes in the limestone offer glimpses of the turbulent river beneath.

Leaving the river, the path winds slowly uphill through deep woodland. The woodland has several large depressions (shakeholes) where the sound of gurgling water provides evidence of the network of underground rivers making their journey through the Marble Arch Caves, beneath your feet. The trail continues to the Marble Arch Caves Visitor Centre, where you can enjoy a guided tour of one of Europe's finest showcaves or recharge yourself in the Visitor Centre before taking the final jaunt south from the Visitor Centre, along the Marbank country road to the Cuilcagh Mountain Park car park.

Did You Know?

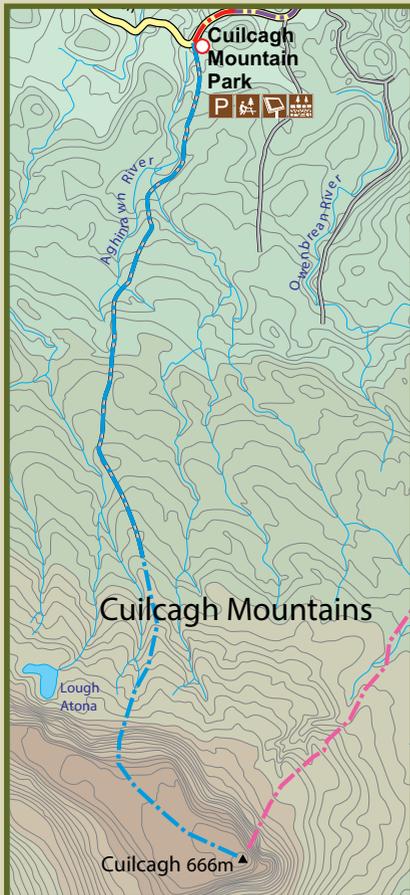
The Cladagh Glen takes its name from the Cladagh River which is formed in the depths of the Marble Arch Caves when the Owenbrean, Shruhcroppa and Aghinraun Rivers come together. The Cladagh River re-emerges from its underground journey at the Marble Arch Rising to make its way winding and twisting down through the narrow -steep sided gorge of the Cladagh Glen.



Cladagh Glen



Cuilcagh Mountain summit ridge



Cuilcagh Legnabrocky Trail
The first part of the walk passes through a fascinating limestone landscape, often referred to as “The Fertile Rock” due to its flower rich pastures.

Visible along the trail you will see abandoned Irish cottages, dry stone walls and potato cultivation ridges (“lazy beds”) all remnants of Ireland’s past heritage.

Continuing along the gravel vehicle track the landscape starts to change to blanket bog where the unmistakable, flat-topped ridge of Cuilcagh Mountain is visible on the horizon. In the spring, an abundance of bog cotton carpets the bog in a blanket of white, while in late summer the purple moor grass glistens with shades of red and purple.

After 4km, you start your ascent of Cuilcagh Mountain. The way is negotiated by a section of boardwalk, providing protection to the sensitive blanket bog beneath. If you’re fortunate you may catch a glimpse of a red grouse. The bird’s most obvious features are its plump shape, white eyelids with bright pinkish-red combs above, and feathered legs and feet. They stay on the heath all year round eating the short, succulent shoots of heather.

Arriving on the edge of the summit plateau, a rough path continues east across the rock-strewn upland. The sweeping view along the summit plateau is broken by a large stone cairn, which is actually the remains of a burial mound dating from the Bronze Age (2,500 – 500 BC). This vantage point, the highest in County Fermanagh provides fabulous 360° views of the surrounding lowlands. On an exceptionally clear day you can see both the Irish Sea and the Atlantic Ocean along with several surrounding counties.

Did You Know?

The summit of Cuilcagh Mountain is strewn with boulders lying randomly over the landscape giving it a distinctive barren appearance. These boulders are sandstone rocks, that have been weathered (the process of breaking down rocks) by blustery winds, snow blizzards, freezing rains and scorching sun.



Lough Atona from the Cuilcagh Legnabrocky Trail

Cuilcagh Hiker's Trail

Starting at the Gortalughany Viewpoint, the first part of this walk passes over the dry valley at Legacurragh (known as the Legacurragh Gap), where extensive areas of limestone are concealed by blanket bog.

However patches of limestone, like those at Legacurragh Gap, have become exposed and now show their fossil rich rocks. The area is dotted with potholes, a term used to describe a cave entrance or cave system that is mostly vertical.

Leaving the path the terrain abruptly changes to blanket bog, so at times you may feel you are walking on water! The waterlogged vegetation beneath your feet is roughly 3 metres deep, and formed from partially-rotted plant matter that has accumulated over thousands of years. Bog like this was once common throughout Western Europe, but is now relatively rare, and so is a protected habitat.

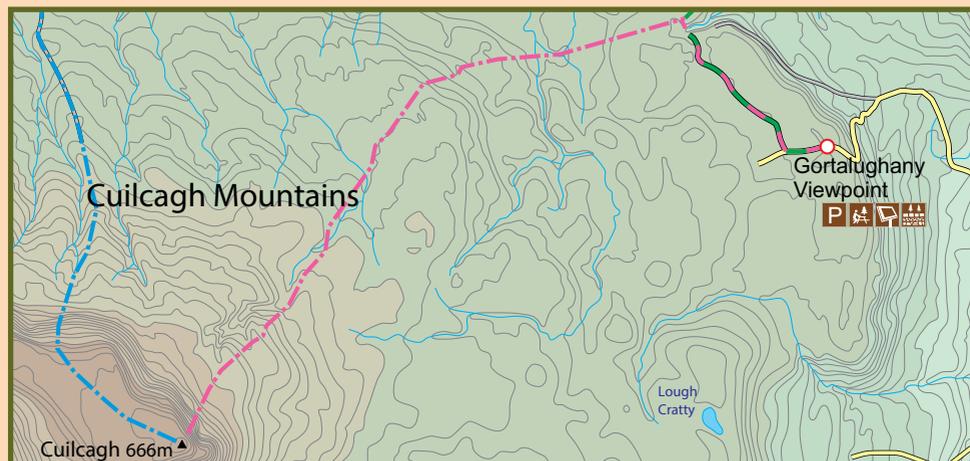
Continue across the bog for 4km, towards Cuilcagh Mountain as it looms on the horizon. Cuilcagh forms a distinctive ridge on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the summit



of which rises to 666 metres and is the highest point of counties Fermanagh and Cavan. All the streams that have their origins on these slopes eventually sink and flow underground before emerging at springs.

A vigorous, steep ascent through blanket bog, heather and boulders leads you to the summit cairn. Here you can discover views of the plateau top, steep stone ridges and craggy outcrops which make the mountain so unique. Cuilcagh's unusual table top shape - with its flat summit and steep flanks - has evolved due to the underlined geology, glacial processes and most recent weathering processes.

Please note that if completing Walk 2 (Cuilcagh Legnabrocky Trail) and Walk 3 (Cuilcagh Hiker's Trail) continuously, the description for Walk 3 should be interpreted in reverse.



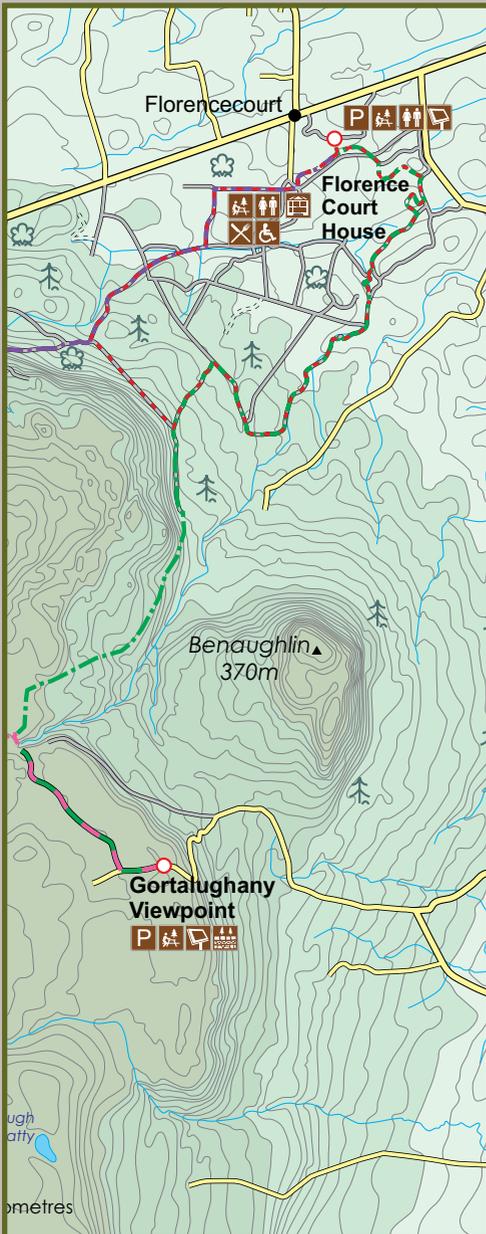
Did You Know?

The walk passes through the townland of Aghatirourke, an important area for Golden Plover conservation work by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). The Golden Plover, a medium-sized bird with distinctive gold and black summer plumage is one of Northern Ireland's rarest birds and is attracted to this area during the summer season.



Legacurragh Valley Trail

Starting at the Gortalughany Viewpoint, the first part of this walk passes the dry valley of Legacurragh, a former river valley that is now dry, the water having sunk into the limestone below.



The steep headwall, located just beside the trail, is thought to have once held a waterfall.

The peat has been removed from the track, allowing another fascinating glimpse into the past. If you look at the limestone beneath your feet, you'll notice the unmistakable fossils of coral colonies, which are normally associated with a shallow sea. The fossils contained in the limestone are a legacy of the time when Ireland lay near the equator and was covered by a shallow, tropical sea. It is remarkable to see how the landscape has changed in the 340 million years since then, the coral and sea bed now lifted to mountainous uplands.



Legacurragh Valley Trail

Continuing over moorland the path cuts between the slopes of Benaughlin Mountain and Trien hill crossing a patchwork of fields and bracken.

In summer, a mass of ferns engulf the moorland while pockets of wild flowers, namely Bog Asphodel and Heath Spotted Orchid lie hidden beneath.

The trail leads through a transforming landscape of 3,500 hectares of young and ancient woodland in Florence Court Forest Park. Here follow the waymarked red trail which leads to the Park car park 1. Walk among a sea of wood sorrel in early spring, a blanket of bluebells in May or through the distinctive smells of wild garlic in June. As you skirt around the edge of the estate, enjoy the fine views of the 18th-century Florence Court House which is owned by the National Trust.

A final stretch of forest trail brings you to the end of the walk back to the Visitor Centre, and car park 1.

Did You Know?

The 370 metre peak of Benaughlin Mountain is one of the more notable landmarks along this trail. Benaughlin – meaning 'The Peak of the Speaking Horse' has a number of legends around it. One local legend centres on a mythical white horse, which appears on the hill and tells the future every Bilberry Sunday (the last Sunday in July).



Benaughlin from Legacurragh



Florencecourt Forest Trail

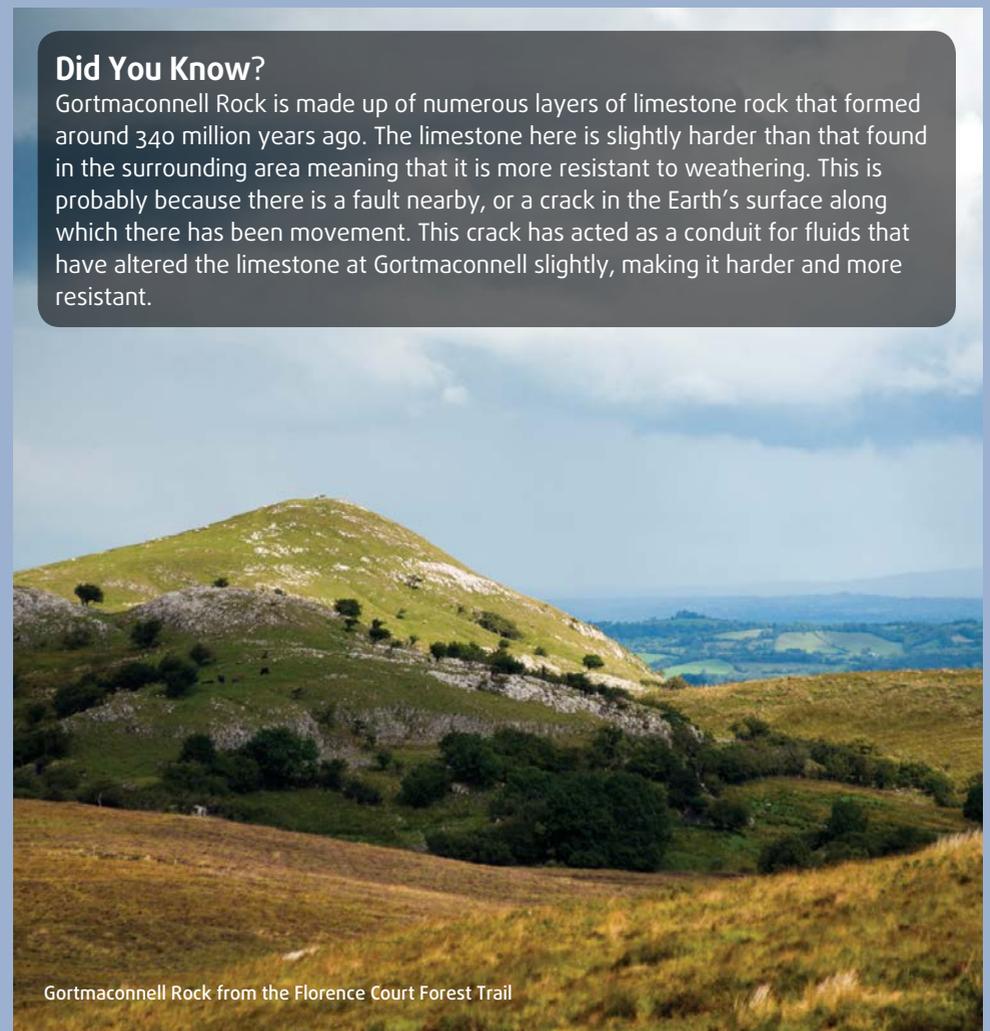
Florence Court Forest Trail
 The initial part of the walk from the Florence Court Visitor Centre car park 1 skirts around the grounds of Florence Court House which enjoys a majestic countryside setting.

The charming 18th century mansion offers guided tours and the estate provides good facilities for relaxation and refreshment in the Stables Tearoom before pressing on with your walk.

When starting your walk from the car park, follow the Florence Court waymarked red trail, for the next few kilometres it takes you along narrow tracks which twist and turn an undulating course past mixed deciduous woodland crossing the Larganess River in several places, the constant burbling of the river making this section a delight. As you reach the edge of the forest you will pick up the trail sign for the Cuilcagh Way (Florence Court Forest Trail).



Did You Know?
 Gortmaconnell Rock is made up of numerous layers of limestone rock that formed around 340 million years ago. The limestone here is slightly harder than that found in the surrounding area meaning that it is more resistant to weathering. This is probably because there is a fault nearby, or a crack in the Earth's surface along which there has been movement. This crack has acted as a conduit for fluids that have altered the limestone at Gortmaconnell slightly, making it harder and more resistant.



Gortmaconnell Rock from the Florence Court Forest Trail



Florence Court

Things get a little more rugged as you traverse across open farmland edged with dry stone walls. If you are vigilant, you may spot the elusive Irish hare. Larger than rabbits, adult hares have black tips on their ears and their longer back legs give them a distinctive walk or 'lope'. Gortmaconnell Rock is a prominent feature on the landscape ahead, the trail skirts around the base of the hill to descend to the country road. The last 1.5km stretch of your journey will take you along the Marlbank country road to the Marble Arch Caves Visitor Centre.

It's your responsibility...

Know your route

It is important to choose a route that suits everybody in your group. You are strongly recommended to walk Cuilcagh Mountain with OSNI or OSI Discoverer Series map 1:50,000 Sheet 26 available in most shops and Visitor Information Centres.

Check the weather forecast and plan accordingly

Weather conditions on Cuilcagh Mountain can be quick to change & inhospitable all year round making way finding difficult in poor visibility at any time of the year.

Weather forecast: www.mountaineering.ie

Be prepared for four seasons in one day

Equip yourself for walking in a mountainous area, waterproof clothing, boots, spare clothing, map, compass, GPS, first aid, food, drink etc. Make sure all people in your group are equally prepared.

On the trail

Carry a map and stay to the waymarked trail. Be aware that mobile reception in the area is poor. Let someone know where you have gone and when you are expected back.

In an Emergency

In the event of an emergency call the PSNI on 999 or 101 & ask for Mountain Rescue:

Police Service NI, Enniskillen +44 (0) 845 600 8000

Garda Station: Blacklion +353 (0)49 4368807

South West Acute Hospital A&E, Enniskillen: +44 (0) 28 6638 2000



It's yours to preserve...

Cuilcagh Mountain

Cuilcagh Mountain is designated under European environmental legislation as a Special Area of Conservation, an Area of Special Scientific Interest and a RAMSAR site. Cuilcagh Mountain is predominately blanket bog, a terrain which is highly sensitive to fire, camping, pollution, footfall etc. It is important therefore that visitors are aware of the sensitivity, remoteness and restrictions of walking in such a highly sensitive area which is recognised for its importance on a European scale.

Leave No Trace

In order to minimise your social and environmental impacts on the outdoors, please follow the principles of Leave No Trace www.leavenotraceireland.org. We would also advise you that dogs, bicycles, quads, camping or fires are not permitted on any sections of the Cuilcagh Way. This is predominately to protect the sensitive blanket bog but also to be respectful to private landowners and management authorities.

Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark

Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark is located in the rugged mountainous uplands and the gently rolling lowlands of Counties Fermanagh and Cavan. Providing for a variety of interests the Geopark showcases some of the best walking areas in the region including the Cavan Burren Park, Lough Navar Forest and Castle Caldwell. All the walks are inspected and maintained by Geopark staff and if you have experienced a problem whilst walking the Cuilcagh Way you can report it by contacting:
Geopark Supervisor- Email: mac@fermanaghmagh.com
Telephone: +44 (0) 28 66348855

Events

For safety, conservation and insurance reasons walk leaders and event organisers are not permitted to organise, advertise or run any event of any nature in or along any section of the Cuilcagh Way where the number of participants could exceed 10 participants without prior written consent from the Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark. Relevant application forms are available for the Geopark and should be submitted well in advance of the planned walk or event.

Visitor Information

Information on the wider area, attractions, food and accommodation can be found at the following:

Fermanagh Lakeland Tourism: www.fermanaghlakelands.com
Enniskillen - Telephone: +44 (0) 28 66 346736

The Market House: Visitor Information Centre E: markethouse2@gmail.com
Blacklion - Telephone: +353 (071) 9853941

Information on the Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark, Fermanagh Walks, Events or Festivals can be found at the following:

Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark: www.marblearchcavesgeopark.com
E: mac@fermanaghmagh.com
Telephone: +44(0) 28 66348855

Walk Northern Ireland: www.walkni.com
Telephone: +44(0) 28 90303930 E: info@walkni.com

Fermanagh & Omagh District Council: www.fermanaghmagh.com
Enniskillen: +44(0) 300 303 1777
E: countryside@fermanaghmagh.com

Land Access

The Cuilcagh Way crosses land in the ownership or management of private land owners, farmers, Forest Service NI, the National Trust, Fermanagh District Council and the Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark. Walkers should act responsibly and respect the landowners' and other parties' wishes by adhering to any signage relating to walk closures or diversions to facilitate forestry and other essential operations.

In giving access, landowners and management authorities do not accept responsibility for your safety. These are walks in truly natural surroundings, including steep ground, rocky scree, uneven surfaces or boggy sections - you are responsible for your own safety and that of your party.

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 Demesne, Belfast BT9 5PB

Tel: +44 (0) 28 9030 3930

Email: info@walkni.com

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Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmai

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FOREST SERVICE



**National
Trust**



leave no trace