



# Counties Derry & Antrim

The north coast of Northern Ireland, from Carrickfergus to Coleraine, is like a giant geology classroom. Here the patient workmanship of the ocean has laid bare the black basalt and white chalk that underlie much of County Antrim, and dissected the rocks into a scenic extravaganza of sea stacks and pinnacles, cliffs and caves, bordered by broad, sandy beaches swept by Atlantic surf. This rugged seaboard has some of the most beautiful coastal scenery in Ireland, but bring your boots as well as your camera – it's also an outdoor adventure playground that offers challenging coastal walks and extreme rock-climbing on the 100m-high crags of Fair Head. It's also home to the North's best surfing breaks.

Tourists flock to the surreal geological centrepiece of the Giant's Causeway, its popularity challenged only by the test-your-nerve tightrope of the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge nearby, but you can escape the crowds amid the more sedate scenery of the Glens of Antrim, where the picturesque villages of Cushendun, Cushendall and Carnlough lie beneath lush green valleys and foaming waterfalls. To the west, County Derry's chief attraction is the historic city of Derry, nestled in a broad sweep of the River Foyle. It is the only surviving walled city in Ireland, and a walk around it is one of the highlights of a visit to Northern Ireland. Derry's other draws include the powerful political murals in the Bogside district and the lively music scene in its many pubs.

Northeast along the coast there are vast sandy beaches at Magilligan Point, Portstewart and Portrush, and from the basalt escarpment of Binevenagh, which overlooks the coast here, superb views across Lough Foyle beckon you towards the blue-hazed hills of County Donegal.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **City Lights** Ancient walls, modern murals and live music in the historic city of Derry (p640)
- **Catch A Wave** Surfing or body-boarding the Atlantic breakers at the beaches around Portrush (p659)
- **Coastal Challenge** A 16.5km hike along the spectacular Causeway Coast from Carrick-a-Rede to the Giant's Causeway (p666)
- **Test Your Nerve** The slender, swaying Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge (p664) near Ballycastle
- **Away From It All** Seabirds and seals at the remote western end of Rathlin Island (p668)



■ TELEPHONE AREA CODE: 028 FROM BRITAIN AND REST OF WORLD, 048 FROM REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

■ POPULATION: 532,000

■ AREA: 4696 SQ KM

# COUNTY DERRY

## DERRY/LONDONDERRY

pop 83,700

Northern Ireland's second city comes as a pleasant surprise to many visitors. Derry (or Londonderry – see the boxed text, p644) may not be the prettiest of cities, and it certainly lags behind Belfast in terms of investment and redevelopment, but it has a great riverside setting, several fascinating historical sights and a determined air of can-do optimism that has made it the powerhouse of the North's cultural revival.

There's lots of history to absorb, from the Siege of Derry to the Battle of the Bogside – a stroll around the 17th-century city walls is a must, as is a tour of the Bogside murals – and the city's lively pubs are home to a burgeoning live music scene. But perhaps the biggest attraction is the people themselves: warm, witty and welcoming.

### History

The defining moment of Derry's history was the Siege of Derry in 1688–89, an event whose echoes reverberate around the city's walls to this day. King James I granted the city a royal charter in 1613, and gave to the London livery companies (trade guilds) the task of fortifying Derry and planting the county of Coleraine

(soon to be renamed County Londonderry) with Protestant settlers.

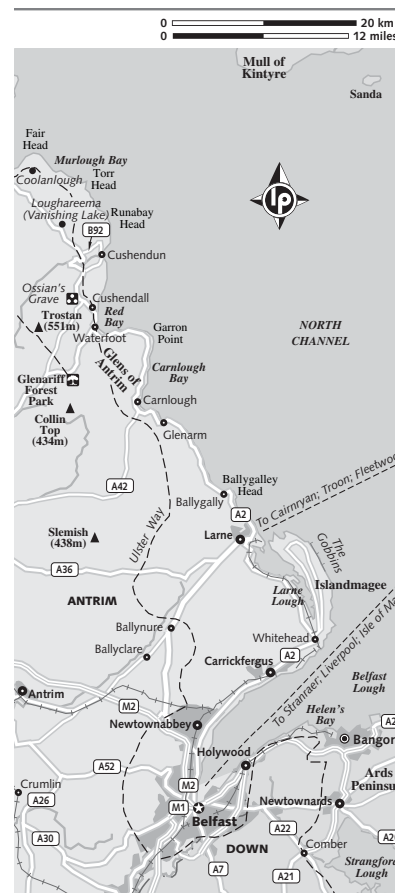
In Britain, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 saw the Catholic King James II ousted in favour of the Protestant Dutch prince, William of Orange. Derry was the only garrison in Ireland that was not held by forces loyal to King James, and so, in December 1688, Catholic forces led by the earl of Antrim arrived on the east bank of the River Foyle, ready to seize the city.

They sent emissaries to discuss terms of surrender, but in the meantime troops were being ferried across the river in preparation for an assault. On seeing this, 13 apprentice boys barred the city gates with a cry of 'There'll be no surrender!'

And so, on 7 December 1688, the Siege of Derry began. For 105 days the Protestant citizens of Derry withstood bombardment, disease and starvation (the condition of the besieging forces was not much better). By the time a relief ship burst through and broke the siege, an estimated half of the city's inhabitants had died. In the 20th century the Siege of Derry became a symbol of Ulster Protestants' resistance to rule by a Catholic Irish Republic, and 'No surrender!' remains to this day a loyalist battle-cry.

In the 19th century Derry was one of the main ports of emigration to the USA, a fact commemorated by the sculptures on an emigrant family standing in Waterloo Pl. It also played a vital role in the transatlantic trade in linen shirts: supposedly, local factories provided uniforms for both sides in the American Civil War. To this day Derry still supplies the US president with 12 free shirts every year.

## COUNTIES DERRY & ANTRIM



### Orientation

The centre of old Derry is the walled city on the western bank of the River Foyle. The bus station is just outside the walls at its north end; the modern city centre stretches north from here along Strand Rd. The train station is on the east bank of the River Foyle, across Craigavon Bridge, in a district known as the Waterside. The Bogside lies to the west of the walled city.

### Information

#### BOOKSHOPS

**Bookworm** (Map p645; ☎ 7128 2727; 18-20 Bishop St Within; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Good for books on Derry, the Troubles and Ireland generally. Also has an in-store café.

**Eason** (Map p645; ☎ 7137 7133; Foyleside Shopping Centre, Foyle St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon & Tue, 9am-9pm Wed-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat, 1-6pm Sun) The city's biggest bookshop, on level 3 of the shopping centre.

**Foyle Books** (Map p645; ☎ 7137 2530; 12A Magazine St; ☎ 11am-5.15pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) Stocks a good selection of second-hand books.

#### INTERNET ACCESS

**Café Calm** (Map p645; ☎ 7126 8228; 4 Shipquay St; per 15min £1; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat) Net access and excellent coffee.

**Central Library** (Map p645; ☎ 7127 2310; 35 Foyle St; per 30min £1.50; ☎ 9.15am-8pm Mon & Thu, to 5.30pm Tue, Wed & Fri, to 5pm Sat).

**MONEY**

**Bank of Ireland** (Map p645; ☎ 7126 4992; 12 Shipquay St)

**First Trust Bank** (Map p645; ☎ 7136 3921; 15-17 Shipquay St)

**Thomas Cook** (Map p645; ☎ 7185 2552; 34 Ferryquay St)

**POST**

**Post office** (✉ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon, 9am-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat); Main post office (Map p645; Custom House St) Bishop St Within (Map p645)

**TOURIST INFORMATION**

**Derry Visitor & Convention Bureau** (Map p642;

☎ 7126 7284; www.derryvisitor.com; 44 Foyle St;

☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun  
 ☎ 7-9pm, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri & 10am-5pm Sat Mar-Jun &



Oct, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Nov-Feb) Covers all of Northern Ireland and the Republic as well as Derry. Sells books and maps, can book accommodation throughout Ireland and has a bureau de change.

**Sights**

Derry's walled city is Ireland's earliest example of town planning. It is thought to have been modelled on the French Renaissance town of Vitry-le-François, designed in 1545 by Italian engineer Hieronimo Marino; both are based on the grid plan of a Roman military camp, with two main streets at right angles to each other, and four city gates, one at the end of each street.

Completed in 1619, Derry's **city walls** (www.derrywalls.com) are about 8m high and 9m thick, with a circumference of about 1.5km, and are the only city walls in Ireland to survive almost intact. The four original gates (Shipquay, Ferryquay, Bishop's and Butcher's) were rebuilt in the 18th and 19th centuries, when three new gates (New, Magazine and Castle) were added. Derry's nickname, the Maiden City, derives from the fact that the walls have never been breached by an invader.

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The walls were built under the supervision of the Honourable The Irish Society, an organisation created in 1613 by King James and the London livery companies to fund and oversee the fortification of Derry and the plantation of surrounding county with Protestant settlers. The society still exists today, though now its activities are mainly charitable, and it still owns Derry's city walls.

See p647) for a self-guided walk around the walls.

**WALLED CITY**

Inside the Magazine Gate is the award-winning **Tower Museum** (Map p645; ☎ 7137 2411; Union Hall Pl; adult/child £4/2; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat & 2-5pm Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-5pm Tue-Sat & bank holidays Mon Sep-Jun), housed in a replica 16th-century tower house. Head straight to the fifth floor for a view from the top of the tower, then work your way down through the excellent **Armada Shipwreck** exhibition, which tells the story of *La Trinidad Valenciera* – a ship of the Spanish Armada which was wrecked at Kinnagoe Bay in Donegal in 1588. It was discovered by the City of Derry Sub-Aqua Club in 1971 and excavated by marine archaeologists. On display are bronze guns, pewter tableware and personal items – a wooden comb, an olive jar, a shoe sole – recovered from the site, including a 2.5-tonne siege gun bearing the arms of Phillip II of Spain showing him as king of England.

The museum's other exhibition is the **Story of Derry**, where well-thought-out exhibits and audio-visuals lead you through the history of the city from the founding of the monastery of St Colmcille (Columba) in the 6th century to the Battle of the Bogside in the late 1960s. Allow a good two hours to do the museum justice.

Built between 1628 and 1633 from the same grey-green schist as the city walls, **St Columb's Cathedral** (Map p645; ☎ 7126 7313; London St; admission £2; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat Easter-Oct, 9am-1pm & 2-4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Easter) was the first post-Reformation church to be built in Britain and Ireland, and is Derry's oldest surviving building.

In the **porch** (under the spire, by the St Columb's Court entrance) you can see the original foundation stone of 1633 that records the cathedral's completion, inscribed:

If stones could speak  
 Then London's prayse  
 Should sounde who  
 Built this church and  
 Cittie from the grounde

The smaller stone inset, inscribed '*In Templo Verus Deus Est Vereo Colendus*' (The True God is in His Temple and is to be truly worshipped), comes from the original church built here in 1164 and dedicated to the city's patron saint, Colmcille.

Also in the porch is a hollow mortar shell fired into the churchyard during the Great Siege of 1688-89; inside the shell were the terms of surrender. The neighbouring **chapter house** contains more historical artefacts, including paintings, old photos and the four huge padlocks used to secure the city gates in the 17th century.

The **nave**, built in a squat, solid style known as Planter's Gothic, shares the austerity of many Church of Ireland cathedrals, with thick walls, small windows, and an open-timbered roof (from 1823) resting on corbels depicting the heads of past bishops and deans. The bishop's throne, at the far end of the nave, is an 18th-century mahogany chair in ornate, Chinese Chippendale style.

The **chancel**, and the stained-glass east window depicting the Ascension, date from 1887. The flags on either side of the window were captured from the French during the Great Siege; although the yellow silk has been renewed several times since, the poles and gold wirework are original.

**OUTSIDE THE WALLS**

Standing just outside the city walls opposite the Tower Museum, the neo-Gothic **Guildhall** (Map p645; ☎ 7137 7335; Guildhall Sq; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) was originally built in 1890, then rebuilt after a fire in 1908. As the seat of the old Londonderry Corporation, which institutionalised the policy of discriminating against Catholics over housing and jobs, it incurred the wrath of nationalists and was bombed twice by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in 1972. From 2000 to 2005 it was the seat of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry (see boxed text, p646). The Guildhall is noted for its fine stained-glass windows, presented by the London Livery Companies. Guided tours are available in July and August.

The small, old-fashioned **Harbour Museum** (Map p645; ☎ 7137 7331; Harbour Sq; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-4.30pm Mon-Fri), with models of ships, a replica of a *currach* – an early sailing boat of the type that carried St Colmcille to Iona – and the bosomy figurehead of the Minnehaha, is housed in the old Harbour Commissioner's Building next to the Guildhall.

As you enter the city across Craigavon Bridge, the first thing you see is the **Hands Across the Divide** monument. This striking bronze sculpture of two men reaching out to each other symbolises the spirit of reconciliation and hope for the future; it was unveiled in 1992, 20 years after Bloody Sunday.

Outside the city walls to the southwest is **Long Tower Church** (Map p642; ☎ 7126 2301; Long Tower St; admission free; 🕒 9am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 7.30am-7pm Sun), Derry's first post-Reformation Catholic church. Built in 1784 in neo-Renaissance style, it stands on the site of the medieval Teampall Mór (Great Church), built in 1164, whose stones were used to help build the city walls in 1609. Long Tower was built with the support of the Anglican bishop of the time, Frederick Augustus Harvey, who presented the capitals for the four Corinthian columns framing the ornate high altar.

The Roman Catholic **St Eugene's Cathedral** (Map p642; ☎ 7126 2894; Great James St; admission free; 🕒 9am-8.30pm) was begun in 1851 as a response

to the end of the Great Famine, and dedicated to St Eugene in 1873 by Bishop Kelly; the handsome east window (1891) is a memorial to the bishop. The bells of St Eugene's still ring every night at 9pm as a reminder of the Penal Laws (in force from 1691 until the early 19th century) which forbade Catholics to attend mass and subjected them to a 9pm curfew.

**BOGSIDE**

The Bogside district, to the west of the walled city, developed in the 19th and early 20th centuries as a working-class, predominantly Catholic, residential area. By the 1960s, its serried ranks of small, terraced houses had become an overcrowded ghetto of poverty and unemployment, a focus for the emerging civil rights movement and a hotbed of nationalist discontent.

In August 1969 the three-day 'Battle of the Bogside' – a running street battle between local youths and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) – prompted the UK government

**DERRY-STROKE-LONDONDERRY**

Derry/Londonderry is a town with two names. The settlement was originally named Doire Calgaigh (Oak Grove of Calgach), after a pagan warrior-hero, then in the 10th century it was renamed Doire Colmcille (Oak Grove of Columba), in honour of the 6th-century saint who established the first monastic settlement here.

In the following centuries the name was shortened and anglicised to Derrie or Derry. Then in 1613, in recognition of the Corporation of London's role in the 'plantation' of northwest Ulster with Protestant settlers, Derry was granted a royal charter and both town and county were renamed Londonderry. However, generally people continued to call it Derry in everyday speech.

When nationalists gained a majority on the city council in 1984, they voted to change its name from Londonderry City Council to Derry City Council. This infuriated unionists, and the name remains a touchstone for people's political views. Nationalists always use Derry, and vandals often deface the 'London' part of the name on road signs. Staunch unionists insist on Londonderry, which is still the city's (and county's) official name, used in government publications, Ordnance Survey maps, rail and bus timetables and Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) literature.

On radio and TV, to avoid giving offence to either side, some announcers use both names together – 'Derry-stroke-Londonderry' – while the BBC uses Londonderry at its first mention in a report, and Derry thereafter (the local radio station avoids the dilemma by calling itself BBC Radio Foyle). Road signs in Northern Ireland point to Londonderry, those in the Republic point to Derry (or Doire in Irish), and some tourism industry promotional material covers all bases, using Derry-Londonderry-Doire.

In 2006 Derry City Council asked for a judicial review in the High Court of Belfast, claiming that the renaming of the council in 1984 effectively amended the charter of 1613, but in January 2007 the judge rejected the claim, saying that only new legislation or royal prerogative could change the city's name.

Luckily, not everyone takes the Derry/Londonderry controversy too seriously. One local radio presenter opted instead for the simpler 'Stroke City!' In fact, the majority of people in Northern Ireland, no matter what their political persuasion, still use 'Derry' in everyday speech, which is why we use the shorter version in this book.

**DERRY CITY CENTRE**

0 100 m  
0 0.05 miles

**INFORMATION**

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COUNTIES DERRY & ANTRIM

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to send British troops into Northern Ireland. The residents of the Bogside and neighbouring Brandywell districts – 33,000 of them – declared themselves independent of the civil authorities, and barricaded the streets to keep the security forces out. ‘Free Derry’, as it was known, was a no-go area for the police and army, its streets patrolled by IRA volunteers. In 1972 the area around Rossville St witnessed the horrific events of Bloody Sunday (see the boxed text, below).

Since then the area has been extensively redeveloped, the old houses and flats demolished and replaced with modern housing and the population is now down to 8000. All that remains of the old Bogside is **Free Derry Corner** (Map p645) at the intersection of Fahan and Rossville Sts, where the gable end of a house painted with the famous slogan ‘You Are Now Entering Free Derry’ still stands. Nearby is the H-shaped **Hunger Strikers’ Memorial** (Map p645) and, a little further north along Rossville St, the **Bloody Sunday Memorial** (Map p645), a simple granite obelisk that commemorates the 14

civilians who were shot dead by the British Army on 30 January 1972.

The **Museum of Free Derry** (Map p645; ☎ 7136 0880; www.museumoffreederry.org; 55-61 Glenfada Park; adult/child £3/1.50; 🕒 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 1-4.30pm Sat year-round, 1-4.30pm Sun Jun-Sep), just off Rossville St, chronicles the history of the Bogside, the civil rights movement and the events of Bloody Sunday through photographs, newspaper reports, film clips and the accounts of first-hand witnesses, including some of the original photographs which inspired the murals of the People’s Gallery.

### People’s Gallery

The 11 murals that decorate the gable ends of houses along Rossville St, near Free Derry Corner, are popularly known as the People’s Gallery. They are the work of Tom Kelly, Will Kelly and Kevin Hasson, known as ‘The Bogside Artists’ (see boxed text, p648). The three men have spent most of their lives in the Bogside, and lived through the worst of the Troubles.

Their murals, mostly painted between 1997 and 2001, commemorate key events in the Troubles, including the Battle of the Bogside, Bloody Sunday, Operation Motorman (the British Army’s operation to re-take IRA-controlled no-go areas in Derry and Belfast in July 1972) and the 1981 hunger strike. The most powerful images are those painted largely in monochrome, consciously evoking journalistic imagery – *Operation Motorman*, showing a British soldier breaking down a door with a sledgehammer; *Bloody Sunday*, with a group of men led by local priest Father Daly carrying the body of Jackie Duddy (the first fatality on that day); and *Petrol Bomber*, a young boy wearing a gas mask and holding a petrol bomb.

The most moving image is *The Death of Innocence*, which shows the radiant figure of 14-year-old schoolgirl Annette McGavigan, killed in crossfire between the IRA and the British Army on 6 September 1971, the 100th victim of the Troubles. She stands against the brooding chaos of a bombed-out building, the roof-beams forming a crucifix in the top right-hand corner. At the left, a downward-pointing rifle, broken in the middle, stands for the failure of violence, while the butterfly symbolises resurrection and the hope embodied in the peace process.

The final mural in the sequence, completed in 2004, is the *Peace Mural*, a swirling image of a dove of peace, rising out of the blood and sadness of the past towards the sunny yellow hope of a peaceful future.

The murals can be seen at www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/bogsideartists, and in the book *The People’s Gallery* (available in Derry bookshops and through www.bogsideartists.com). The **Bogside Artists Studio** (☎ 7137 3842; Unit 7, Meenan Sq; tours per person £5) is tucked behind the Bogside Inn; tours are available for groups if booked in advance.

### THE WATERSIDE

Across the river from the walled city lies the largely Protestant Waterside district. At the height of the Troubles, many Protestants living in and around the Bogside moved across the river to escape the worst of the violence.

Here you’ll find the **Workhouse Museum** (☎ 7131 8328; 23 Glendermott Rd; admission free; 🕒 10am-4.30pm Mon-Thu & Sat) housed in Derry’s original 1840–1946 workhouse. Daily life at the workhouse for the 800 inmates was designed to encourage them to leave as soon as pos-

sible, alive or dead. One of the exhibits is the grisly horse-drawn hearse used to carry away the corpses.

Other displays cover the Potato Famine, while the excellent Atlantic Memorial exhibition tells the story of the WWII Battle of the Atlantic and the major role that Derry played.

### Walking Tour

You can make a complete circuit of Derry’s walled city, walking along the top of the walls, in around 30 minutes. There are frequent sets of steps where you can get on and off.

This walk starts from the diamond, Derry’s central square, dominated by the **war memorial** (1).

From the diamond, head along Butcher St to **Butcher’s Gate** (2). At the height of the Troubles the gate reverted to its original, 17th-century role, serving as a security checkpoint controlling entry to the city centre from the Bogside. Turn right before the gate and climb the steps up onto the top of the city walls.

Stroll downhill across **Castle Gate** (3), added in 1865, to **Magazine Gate** (4), named for the powder magazine that used to be close by.

### SUNDAY, BLOODY SUNDAY

Tragically echoing Dublin’s Bloody Sunday of November 1920, when British security forces shot dead 14 spectators at a Gaelic football match in Croke Park, Derry’s Bloody Sunday was a turning point in the history of the Troubles.

On Sunday 30 January 1972, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association organised a peaceful march through Derry in protest against internment without trial, which had been introduced by the British government the previous year. Some 15,000 people marched from Creggan through the Bogside towards the Guildhall, but were stopped by British Army barricades at the junction of William and Rossville Sts. The main march was diverted along Rossville St to Free Derry Corner, but a small number of youths began hurling stones and insults at the British soldiers.

The exact sequence of events is disputed, but it now seems clear that soldiers of the 1st Battalion the Parachute Regiment opened fire on unarmed civilians. Fourteen people were shot dead, some of them shot in the back; six were aged just 17. Another 14 people were injured, 12 by gunshots and two from being knocked down by armoured personnel carriers. The Catholic population of Derry, who had originally welcomed the British troops as a neutral force protecting them from Protestant violence and persecution, now saw the army as enemy and occupier. The ranks of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) swelled with a fresh surge of volunteers.

The Widgery Commission, set up in 1972 to investigate the affair, failed to find anyone responsible. None of the soldiers who fired the 108 bullets, nor the officers in charge, were brought to trial or even disciplined; records disappeared and weapons were destroyed.

Long-standing public dissatisfaction with the Widgery investigation led to the massive **Bloody Sunday Inquiry** (www.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org.uk), headed by Lord Saville, which sat from March 2000 till December 2004. The inquiry heard from 900 witnesses, received 2500 witness statements, and allegedly cost the British taxpayer £400 million; its final report was due to be published in summer 2007.

The events of Bloody Sunday inspired rock band U2’s most overtly political song, ‘Sunday Bloody Sunday’ (1983), and are commemorated in the Museum of Free Derry, the People’s Gallery and the Bloody Sunday Monument, all in the Bogside (p644).

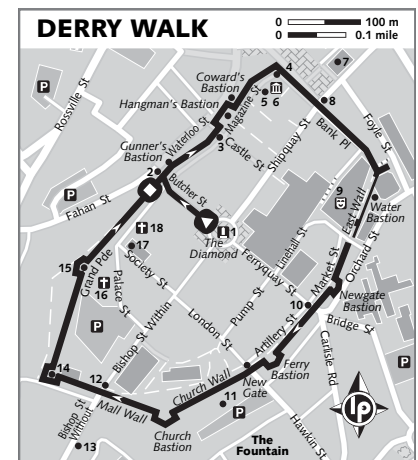
### WALK FACTS

**Start** The diamond

**Finish** The diamond

**Distance** 2km

**Duration** 30 to 40 minutes



### VOICES: THE BOGSIDE ARTISTS

The Bogside Artists – brothers Will and Tom Kelly, and friend Kevin Hasson – are famous as the creators of the murals that make up the People’s Gallery. Tom and Kevin were 10 and 11 years old when the Troubles broke out in 1969, Will in his early 20s.

**What was it like growing up in Derry during the Troubles?** Kevin: ‘One minute nobody knows about us or Derry or even Northern Ireland; the next thing, we are all over the international news. You could watch the daily riot later on TV in your own front room. As kids, you must understand we were still on fantasy island, as most kids are. Soldiers were, to us, aliens from another planet. We painted the soldier as such on our Bloody Sunday mural depicting the death of Jackie Duddy for that reason. That was our perception at the time and kids tend to see things bereft of all historical or other considerations. All in all, our growing up in Derry at that time could be described as very intense and very bitter-sweet.’

Will: ‘We felt that our destiny had come. We were well clued-up on Marxist doctrine and, what with the riots in Paris and the struggle of the black population in America for democratic rights, we truly believed we were part of a global working-class revolution. A new world order was coming into being and we were in the front line. As a young man, the unfolding events faced one with questions of ultimate concern at a time when, in other circumstances, we would likely have been thinking of finding a secure job and starting a family. Individualistic pursuits had to be shelved in the face of imminent threats to oneself and one’s family. In retrospect, the whole experience was very hyper-real. During the Hunger Strikes of 1980–81 it became surreal.’

**Whose art do you admire?** Will: ‘Those old masters like Raphael, Mantegna, the Tiepolos and Michelangelo cannot be equalled when it comes to mural art. Diego Rivera was summoned from Paris 20 years or so after the revolution, so we are not as impressed by his work as those who have bought into the myth of Rivera as a contemporary freedom fighter. Incidentally, he did not portray Mexico’s history as it was. What he did was offer a Marxist *interpretation* of that history. Not that we compare ourselves to Rivera. His body of work far exceeds our own. But we do recall one lady who came to our studio and told us that she had just returned from Mexico and considered our murals to be better than his! Go figure, as they say.’

**Which of the Bogside murals means the most to you?** Tom: ‘The Death of Innocence, for me, is the one that stands out, both the pictorial content of it and the fact that it is a peace and antiwar mural painted long before any of us in Derry thought peace was even possible.’

Inside the walls is the modern **O’Doherty’s Tower (5)**, based on a 16th-century castle that once stood nearby. It houses the excellent **Tower Museum (6; p643)**. Outside the walls is the red-brick, neo-Gothic **Guildhall (7; p643)**.

The River Foyle used to come up to the northeastern wall here, and the stretch from Coward’s Bastion to the Water Bastion (demolished 1844) once had ships moored just outside. In the middle is the **Shipquay Gate (8)** built in 1805 to link the port with the market area. Symbols above the arch show the cornucopia (horn of plenty) and the rod of Mercury (a symbol of trade and commerce).

The walls then turn southwest and begin a steep climb beside the modern **Millennium Forum (9)** theatre and concert venue. At the top of the hill is the **Ferryquay Gate (10)**, where

the apprentice boys barred the gate at the start of the Great Siege of 1688–89. In those days there would have been a drawbridge as well as a padlock on the gate. Both padlock and key can be seen in the chapter house of St Columb’s Cathedral.

Above the gate is the image of the Reverend George Walker. Below in the arches to either side are metal rings; these were used to tether horses, which were not allowed into the inner city on market days.

The stretch of wall beyond overlooks the **Fountain housing estate (11)**, the last significant Protestant community on the western bank of the Foyle (the vast majority of Derry’s Protestants have moved across the river to the Waterside area or further afield). The round, brick-paved area on the ground out-

Kevin: ‘Our *Peace Mural* means most to me, as we decided to do that 10 years before we were actually able to get around to realising it. Also, it had a strong community input where both Catholic and Protestant kids worked together to help design it. The dove, in fact, is not just a cliché – it refers to our city’s patron saint, St Columba, whose Latin name Columbanus means ‘dove’.’

Will: ‘They’re like our children – it’s unfair to single any one out at the expense of the others. That said, it would be dishonest not to admit that our first-born, *The Petrol Bomber*, is a wee bit special.’

**What is Derry like to visit?** Will: ‘We all agree that Derry is a very special city that is fast becoming the cultural focus of not only the North of Ireland but Ireland as a whole. It is a big city with the ambience and character of a village. The sense of freedom of the people, young and old, is truly infectious. You could pick any Derryman or woman and put them on stage for their wit alone. In short, Derry is fun. The girls here are very pretty too!’

Above all, get to meet the locals, whom you will likely find enjoying a Guinness or two in the pubs. Have they got stories to tell! There’s also a great view of the city and the lough from the hill of Creggan.’

Tom: ‘Peadar O’Donnell’s is the best place for traditional Irish music. The Craft Village I would recommend for lunch or a quiet drink.’

Kevin: ‘For older visitors the Tower Hotel has good Irish music sessions that are very popular.’

Will: ‘A short trip over the border to Buncrana will present you with more options, as well as a neat little beach where you can nurse your hangover the next morning.’

**How do you see the future of Derry over the next 10 years?** Will: ‘There is a covert rivalry going on between Derry and Belfast with regards to the creative arts, that is reminiscent of the rivalry between Rome and Florence during the High Renaissance. It is a healthy rivalry that will bring out the very best in both cities. Alas, Dublin has sacrificed its old-world charm to commercialism, to the extent that neither Joyce, Beckett nor Behan would be able to recognise it if they came back. Dublin has painted itself out of the picture, frankly. It is fast becoming another Blackpool.’

Tom: ‘With massive investment from Britain and America, the rapid growth of tourism and stronger economic relations between North and South, things can only get better for the people of Derry, especially for those of us who have lived through over 30 years of conflict. When you know how bad it can really get, you become grateful for what you have. Thankfully, we have plenty here to enjoy.’

side New Gate is where a 10m-high bonfire is lit on the night before the annual Apprentice Boys’ march.

**Bishop’s Gate (12)**, which bisects the southern flank of the wall, was rebuilt in 1789 for the 100th anniversary of the Great Siege. Bishop Harvey, a keen antiquarian, had a hand in the reconstruction and requested a triumphal arch in honour of King William I. During the Great Siege, it was here that King James II demanded the surrender of the city.

Outside the gate on Bishop St Without is the one remaining turret of the 1791 **Old Gaol (13)**. Theobald Wolfe Tone, founder of the United Irishmen, spent some time in prison here following the failed rebellion of 1798.

The **Double Bastion (14)** at the southwest corner of the walls is dominated by an

army observation tower, bristling with listening and watching devices and splashed with paint bombs hurled from below the walls. Here you’ll find Roaring Meg, the most famous of the cannons used during the Siege of Derry; the noise it made was said to be more terrifying than any physical damage it managed to inflict.

The next section of wall is known as the Grand Parade, and offers an excellent view over the Bogside estate. The prominent murals on the houses below were painted by the Bogside Artists (see boxed text, opposite).

An empty plinth on **Royal Bastion (15)** marks the former site of a monument to the Reverend George Walker, joint governor of the city during the Great Siege. The 27m-tall column, erected in 1826 and seen by local nationalists

as a symbol of unionist domination, was blown up by the IRA in 1973. The restored statue of Walker now stands in a memorial garden next to the Apprentice Boys' Memorial Hall.

Behind the Royal Bastion is the 1872 Church of Ireland **Chapel of St Augustine** (16), built on the site of St Colmcille's 6th-century monastery. A little further along is the **Apprentice Boys' Memorial Hall** (17), its windows protected by steel grilles and, like the army observation tower, splashed with paint bombs. Behind it is the grand Corinthian temple of the **First Derry Presbyterian Church** (18).

Just past the church is the Butcher's Gate, from where you can return to the diamond, head down Magazine St to the Tower Museum, or descend Fahan St to the Bogside (p644) and the People's Gallery (p646).

## Tours

**City Sightseeing Bus Tours** (Map p642; ☎ 9062 6888; www.city-sightseeing.com; adult/child £8/5;

🕒 10am-4pm Mar-Oct) Runs open-top bus tours of the city departing hourly from the Derry Visitor & Convention Bureau, and also picking up passengers at the Guildhall.

**City Tours** (Map p645; ☎ 7127 1996; www.irishtour guides.com; Carlisle Stores, 11 Carlisle Rd) Runs one-hour Historic Derry walking tours starting from Carlisle Stores at 10am, noon and 2pm year-round and costing £4/2 per adult/child. There are also tours of the Bogside and of Derry's murals.

**Derry Visitor & Convention Bureau** (Map p642; ☎ 7126 7284; 44 Foyle St) Offers 1½-hour guided walking tours of the walled city for £6/4 per adult/child, starting from the bureau at 11.15am and 3.15pm Monday to Friday in July and August, and at 2.30pm Monday to Friday November to June. The price includes admission to St Columb's Cathedral.

**Foyle Cruise Line** (Map p642; ☎ 7136 2857; www.foylecruise.com; Harbour Museum, Harbour Sq) Operates daily cruises on the Foyle estuary. Trips to Culmore Bay (1¼ hours) cost £6/4.50 per adult/child and depart at 2pm; four-hour evening cruises to Greencastle with bar and entertainment cost £12/8 per adult/child, and depart at 8pm.

## Festivals & Events

**City of Derry Jazz Festival** (☎ 7137 6545; www.cityofderryjazzfestival.com; early May) Four days of jazz at various venues.

**Foyle Regatta** (☎ 7137 5055; www.cruisenorth-west.com; early Jul) River-based festival with tall ships, yacht races, boat trips, live music and shore-side street entertainment.

**Gasyard Wall Féile** (☎ 7126 2812; www.freederry.org/gasyard.html; early Aug) A major cultural festival that

features live music, street performers, carnival, theatre and Irish-language events.

**City of Derry Guitar Festival** (☎ 7137 5550; www.cityofderryguitarfestival.com; late Aug) The grounds of University of Ulster host performances and master classes from guitar great around the world, including classical, acoustic, electric, flamenco and bass.

**Halloween Carnival** (☎ 7137 6545; www.derrycity.gov.uk/halloween; 27-31 Oct) Ireland's biggest street party has the entire city dressing up and dancing in the streets.

**Foyle Film Festival** (☎ 7126 7432; www.foylefilm festival.com; Nov) This week-long event is the North's biggest film festival.

## Sleeping

It's best to book accommodation in advance during festival events.

## BUDGET

**ourpick Derry City Independent Hostel** (Map p642; ☎ 7137 7989; www.derry-hostel.co.uk; 44 Great James St; dm/d from £11/36; 📺) Run by experienced backpackers and decorated with souvenirs of their travels around the world, this small, friendly hostel is set in a Georgian town house, just a short walk northwest of the bus station. They have an annexe nearby called Dolce Vita, with stylishly decorated double rooms aimed at couples travelling together.

**Derry Palace Hostel** (Map p645; ☎ 7130 9051; www.paddyspalace.com; 1 Woodleigh Tce, Asylum Rd; dm from £11; 📺 (P)) Part of the Ireland-wide Paddy's Palace chain, this hostel is central, comfortable and as friendly as they come. There's a sunny garden, a good party atmosphere and the staff regularly organise nights out at local pubs with traditional music.

## MIDRANGE

**Laburnum Lodge** (☎ 7135 4221; www.laburnumlodge.com; 9 Rockfield, Madam's Bank Rd; s/d £30/45; 📺 (P)) Readers recommended this suburban villa on a quiet street on the northern edge of town, impressed by the friendly welcome, spacious bedrooms and hearty breakfasts. If you don't have your own transport, the owner can pick you up from the train or bus station.

**Sunbeam House** (Map p642; ☎ 7126 3606; www.sunbeamhouse.activehotels.com; 147 Sunbeam Tce, Bishop St; s/d £35/48) This attractive red-brick terraced house is a five-minute walk southwest of the walled city. The four cheerfully decorated rooms are a bit on the small side, but there's nothing cramped about the hospitality. Or the size of the breakfasts!

**ourpick Merchant's House** (Map p642; ☎ 7126 9691; www.thesaddlershouse.com; 16 Queen St; s/d £35/50) Run by the same couple as the Saddler's House, this historic, Georgian-style town house is a gem of a B&B. It has an elegant lounge and dining room with marble fireplaces and antique furniture, TV and coffee-making facilities in all rooms, and home-made marmalade at breakfast. There are even bathrobes in the rooms. Call at the Saddler's House first to pick up a key.

**Saddler's House** (Map p642; ☎ 7126 9691; www.thesaddlershouse.com; 36 Great James St; s/d £35/50) Centrally located within a five-minute walk of the walled city, this friendly B&B is set in a lovely, Victorian town house. All seven rooms have private bathrooms, and you get to enjoy a huge breakfast in the family kitchen.

**Abbey B&B** (Map p642; ☎ 7127 9000; www.abbeyaccommodation.com; 4 Abbey St; s/d £35/50; 📺) There's a warm welcome waiting at this family-run B&B just a short walk from the walled city, on the edge of the Bogside. The six rooms are stylishly decorated and include family rooms with up to four beds.

**Clarence House** (Map p642; ☎ 7126 5342; www.guesthouseireland.co.uk; 15 Northland Rd; s/d £35/60; 📺) A grand, red-brick Victorian town house, this place opened as Derry's first-ever B&B back in 1962. The Clarence's comfortably old-fashioned rooms are crammed with everything from trouser presses to hair dryers, the choice of breakfast stretches from porridge to fruit salad to full fry-up, and there's a bar in the lounge where your host, in true Irish fashion, can talk the hind legs off a Donegal donkey.

**Da Vinci's Hotel** (☎ 7127 9111; www.davincishotel.com; 15 Culmore Rd; r £50-85, ste from £120; 📺 (P)) This sleek boutique hotel on the west bank of the Foyle is the accommodation of choice for visiting celebrities, business people and politicians, offering spacious, stylish rooms and a hip cocktail bar and restaurant. It's located 1.5km north of the city centre.

## Eating

### BUDGET

**Boston Tea Party** (Map p645; 15 Craft Village; snacks £2-4; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Home-made soups, hot lunches, freshly baked cakes, friendly service and the best apple pie in town – what more could you want from a café?

**Café Artisan** (Map p645; ☎ 7128 2727; 18-20 Bishop St Within; mains £2-5; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) This

cool little café is tucked away at the back of the Bookworm bookshop and serves delicious home-made soups, deli sandwiches, *panini* (type of Italian sandwich) and excellent cappuccinos.

**Sandwich Co** (sandwiches & salads £3-4; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat); the Diamond (Map p645; ☎ 7137 2500); Strand Rd (Map p642; 61 Strand Rd) White bread, brown bread, baguettes, *panini*, ciabatta – this place offers good-value, choose-your-own sandwiches and salads.

## MIDRANGE

**Encore Brasserie** (Map p645; ☎ 7137 2492; Millennium Forum, Newmarket St; mains lunch £6, dinner £10-13; 🕒 noon-4pm & 5-9pm) Set in the lobby of the city's main cultural venue, the Encore is a stylish little place with friendly, efficient service and a crowd-pleasing menu of perennial favourites from home-made lasagne to slow-braised lamb shanks served with honey-glazed carrots.

**Fitzroy's** (Map p645; ☎ 7126 6211; 2-4 Bridge St; mains £8-13; 🕒 11am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun) Informal Fitzroy's does café-style, burger-and-chips lunches till 5.30pm, and then bistro-style dinners, including Moroccan-style lamb kebab, baked cod with leek risotto, and Thai vegetable stir-fry. The set two-/three-course dinner for £12/15 (available from 8pm Monday to Thursday) is good value. There's a second entrance on Carlisle Rd.

**Brown's Restaurant** (Map p642; ☎ 7134 5180; 1 Bond's Hill, Waterside; mains £10-15; 🕒 noon-2.15pm Tue-Fri, 5.30-10pm Tue-Sat) From the outside, Brown's may not have the most promising location, but step inside and you're in a cool little enclave of brandy-coloured banquettes, chrome and mesh chairs, zebra-striped drapes and squiggly metal light fittings, with the odd Rothko print adorning the walls. The ever-changing menu is a gastronome's delight, making creative use of fresh local produce in dishes such as collops of monkfish in a sherry, roast pepper and chorizo cream sauce.

**Mange 2** (Map p642; ☎ 7136 1222; 2 Clarendon St; mains £10-18; 🕒 noon-2.45pm & 5-10pm) Tea-lights flickering in pierced pottery bowls lend a bit of atmosphere to this Georgian-style dining room, an elegant venue for a bit of a splurge. The French fusion menu includes lots of Irish ingredients – try plump Strangford Lough mussels à la Basquaise (in a thick broth of roasted red pepper, garlic, wine and cream) – and a handful of good vegetarian dishes, and

there's an 'early bird' three-course dinner (£32 for two including a bottle of wine, 5.30pm to 7pm Monday to Thursday).

### SELF-CATERING

**Tesco** (Map p642; ☎ 0845 677 9639; Quayside Shopping Centre, Strand Rd; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-9pm Fri, 8.30am-8pm Sat, 1-6pm Sun) Self-caterers can stock up at this big supermarket, just north of the walled city.

### Drinking

Whatever you do in Derry, don't miss an evening in the city's lively pubs – for the craic rather than the beer, which is nothing to write home about. They're friendly and atmospheric, mostly open until 1am, and are within easy walking distance of each other – there are six within dancing distance along Waterloo St.

**Peadar O'Donnell's** (Map p645; ☎ 7137 2138; 63 Waterloo St) A backpackers' favourite, Peadar's goes for traditional music sessions every night and often on weekend afternoons as well. It's done up as a typical Irish pub-cum-grocer down to shelves of grocery items, with a pig's head and hams hanging off the ceiling.

**Badgers Bar** (Map p645; ☎ 7136 0763; 16-18 Orchard St) A fine polished-brass and stained-glass Victorian pub crammed with wood-pannelled nooks and crannies, Badgers overflows at lunchtime with shoppers enjoying quality pub grub, and offers a quiet haven in the evenings when it attracts a crowd of more mature drinkers.

### Entertainment

#### CLUBS & LIVE MUSIC

**Sandino's Café-Bar** (Map p645; ☎ 7130 9297; www.sandinos.com; 1 Water St; admission free; ☎ 11.30am-1am Mon-Sat, 1pm-midnight Sun) From the posters of Ché to the Free Palestine flag to the Fairtrade coffee, this relaxed café-bar exudes a liberal, left-wing vibe. There are live bands on Friday at 9.30pm, and occasionally midweek, and DJ sessions on Saturdays. On Sundays there's a traditional Irish music session at 3pm, and live jazz/soul or DJs from 9.30pm, plus regular theme nights, fundraising nights and political events. Check the website for details.

**Mason's Bar** (Map p645; ☎ 7136 0177; 10 Magazine St; admission free) The city that spawned the Undertones is still turning out raw, rumbustious live music and Mason's Friday night sessions, kicking off at 6pm, are the place to catch the

latest offerings from local talent. There are three or four acts each week, as well as open-mic sessions on Monday and occasional live bands on Saturdays at 10pm; check out what's on at www.myspace.com/masons629.

**Earth@Café Roc** (Map p642; ☎ 7136 0556; 129-135 Strand Rd; admission free-£5) Derry's main nightclub and bar complex, close to the university, has a student night on Tuesday, chart hits and dance anthems on Friday, and guest DJs on Saturday.

**Gweedore Bar** (Map p645; ☎ 7126 3513; 59-61 Waterloo St) Next door to Peadar O'Donnell's and part of the same complex, the Gweedore Bar hosts live rock bands most nights, with a DJ bar upstairs.

### CONCERTS, THEATRE & CINEMA

**Millennium Forum** (Map p645; ☎ 7126 4455; www.millenniumforum.co.uk; Newmarket St) Ireland's biggest theatre auditorium is a major venue for dance, drama, concerts, opera and musicals.

**Nerve Centre** (Map p645; ☎ 7126 0562; www.nervecentre.org.uk; 7-8 Magazine St) The Nerve Centre was set up in 1990 as a multimedia arts centre to encourage young, local talent in the fields of music and film. The centre has a performance area, a theatre, a cinema (with an art-house programme), a bar and a café.

**Playhouse** (Map p645; ☎ 7126 8027; www.derryplayhouse.co.uk; 5-7 Artillery St; ☎ box office 10am-5pm Mon-Fri) This community arts centre stages dance and theatre performances. It also houses the Context Gallery, which hosts exhibitions by local artists.

**Waterside Theatre** (☎ 7131 4000; www.watersidetheatre.com; Ebrington Centre, Glendermott Rd; ☎ box office 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Housed in a former factory 500m east of the River Foyle, this theatre stages drama, dance, comedy, children's theatre and live music.

**Magee College** (Map p642; ☎ 7137 5679; www.ulster.ac.uk/culture; University of Ulster, Northland Rd) The college hosts a variety of arts, theatre and classical-concert performances throughout the year.

**Strand Multiplex** (Map p642; ☎ 7137 3900; www.cineplex.ie; Quayside Shopping Centre, Strand Rd) This seven-screen multiplex is the place for mainstream movies.

### Shopping

**Ogmíós** (Map p642; ☎ 7126 4132; 34 Great James St) Housed in the An Gaeláras Gaelic language

centre, this craft shop stocks a good range of Irish-language books, traditional music CDs, musical instruments, pottery, prints and jewellery.

**Donegal Shop** (Map p645; ☎ 7126 6928; 8 Shipquay St) A long-established craft shop, the Donegal is crammed with Irish knitwear, Celtic jewellery, Donegal tweeds, Irish linen and souvenirs.

**McGilloway Gallery** (Map p645; ☎ 7136 6011; 6 Shipquay St) A commercial gallery that provides a showcase for the best of contemporary Irish art, the McGilloway sells work by local artists and stages around half a dozen exhibitions each year.

**Whatnot** (Map p645; ☎ 7128 8333; 22 Bishop St Within) The Whatnot is an interesting little antique shop crammed with jewellery, militaria, bric-a-brac and collectables.

**Cool Discs Music** (Map p645; ☎ 7126 0770; 6/7 Lesley House, Foyle St) One of Northern Ireland's best independent record shops, Cool Discs has a wide selection of music by Irish artists old and new.

**Austins** (Map p645; ☎ 7126 1817; 2 the Diamond) The world's oldest independent department store (established 1830), Austins is a good place to shop for Irish linen (they can ship your purchases overseas).

**Foyleside Shopping Centre** (Map p645; ☎ 7137 7575; Orchard St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon & Tue, 9am-9pm Wed-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat, 1-6pm Sun) This is a huge, four-level mall just outside the eastern city walls, which contains a Marks & Spencer, Virgin Megastore, Dixons and other high-street chain stores.

The little courtyard of Craft Village (Map p645) is home to a handful of craft shops selling Derry crystal, hand-woven cloth, ceramics, jewellery and other local craft items. Enter from Shipquay St, Magazine St or Tower Museum.

### Getting There & Away

#### AIR

**City of Derry Airport** (☎ 7181 0784; www.cityofderryairport.com) is about 13km east of Derry along the A2 towards Limavady. There are direct flights daily to Dublin and Glasgow International (British Airways), London Stansted, Liverpool, Nottingham East Midlands and Glasgow Prestwick (Ryanair).

#### BUS

The **bus station** (Map p645; ☎ 7126 2261) is on Foyle St, just northeast of the walled city.

Bus 212, the *Maiden City Flyer*, is a fast and frequent service between Derry and Belfast (£9, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes Monday to Saturday, 11 on Sunday), calling at Dungiven. Goldline Express 274 goes from Derry to Dublin (£14, four hours, every two hours daily).

Other useful Ulsterbus services include the 273 to Omagh (£7, 1½ hours, hourly Monday to Saturday, six Sunday) and the 234 to Limavady and Coleraine (£6, one hour, five daily Monday to Friday, two Sunday), continuing to Portstewart and Portrush twice daily.

**Lough Swilly Bus Company** (☎ 7126 2017) has an office upstairs at the bus station, and runs buses to Buncrana, Carndonagh, Dungloe, Letterkenny (£5, 30 to 45 minutes, nine daily Monday to Friday, five on Saturday) and Greencastle (one hour, three daily Monday to Saturday) in County Donegal. There's also a bus from Derry to Malin Head (£6, 1½ hours, two daily) via Carndonagh on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday – a very scenic trip.

**Bus Éireann** (in Donegal ☎ 353-742 1309) service 64 runs from Derry to Galway (£13, 5½ hours, two daily) via Letterkenny, Donegal and Sligo; another four a day terminate at Sligo.

The **Airporter** (Map p642; ☎ 7126 9996; www.airporter.co.uk; Quayside Shopping Centre, Strand Rd) bus service runs direct from Derry to Belfast International (one-way/return £15/25, 1½ hours) and George Best Belfast City (same fare, two hours) airports. Buses depart hourly Monday to Friday, every two hours on Saturday and Sunday.

#### TRAIN

Derry's train station (referred to as Londonderry in Northern Ireland timetables) is on the eastern side of the River Foyle; a free Rail Link bus connects it with the bus station on Foyle St. Trains to Belfast (£10, 2½ hours, seven or eight daily Monday to Saturday, four on Sunday) are slower but more comfortable than the bus, and the section of line between Derry and Coleraine is very scenic. There are also frequent trains to Coleraine (£7, 45 minutes, seven daily), with connections to Portrush (£8, 1½ hours).

### Getting Around

Bus 143A to Limavady stops at City of Derry airport (30 minutes, five daily Monday to Fri-



day, three Saturday); otherwise a taxi costs about £10.

The local Ulsterbus Foyle buses leave from Foyle St, outside the bus station, with 13 routes leading to the suburbs and surrounding villages; a day ticket giving unlimited travel on these buses costs £1.20.

The **Derry Taxi Association** (☎ 7126 0247) and **Foyle Delta Cabs** (☎ 7126 3905) operate from the city centre to all areas.

The Foyle Valley cycle route runs through Derry, along the west bank of the river, on the way to Strabane.

## LIMAVADY & AROUND

pop 12,000

Enchanted by a folk tune played by a blind fiddler outside her window in 1851, Limavady resident Jane Ross (1810–79) jotted down the melody – then known as O’Cahan’s Lament, and later as the Londonderry Air. She had written down for the first time the tune that came to be known around the world as ‘Danny Boy’ – probably the most famous Irish song of all time.

Limavady was granted to Sir Thomas Phillips, the organiser of the Plantation of County Londonderry, by James I in 1612, after the last ruling chief, Sir Donnell Ballagh O’Cahan, was found guilty of rebellion (see p41 for more on the Plantation). Its original Gaelic name Léim an Mhadaidh means ‘The Dog’s Leap’ and commemorates one of the O’Cahans’ dogs that jumped a gorge across the River Roe to bring warning of an unexpected enemy attack.

The **tourist office** (☎ 7776 0307; 7 Connell St; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri year-round, to 5.45pm Jul & Aug, also 9.30am–5.30pm Sat May–Sep) is northeast of the town centre in the Limavady Borough Council Offices.

### TOP FIVE B&BS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

- Anna’s House B&B (County Down; p620)
- Briers Country House (County Down; p626)
- Fortwilliam Country House (County Down; p611)
- Merchant’s House (County Derry; p651)
- Whitepark House B&B (County Antrim; p665)

## Sights & Activities

Today Limavady is a quiet and prosperous small town. There’s not much to see except the **blue plaque** on the wall at 51 Main St, opposite the Alexander Arms, commemorating the home of Jane Ross. The town hosts a **jazz and blues festival** (www.limavadyjazzandblues.com) in early June.

The lovely **Roe Valley Country Park**, about 3km south of Limavady, has riverside walks stretching for 5km either side of the River Roe. The area is associated with the O’Cahans, who ruled the valley until the Plantation. The 17th-century settlers saw the flax-growing potential of the damp river valley and the area became an important linen-manufacturing centre.

The **Dogleap Centre** (☎ 7772 2074; Roe Valley Country Park, 41 Dogleap Rd; admission free; ☎ 9am–6pm daily Apr–Sep, to 5pm Mon–Fri Oct–Mar) houses a visitor centre and tearoom. Next door is Ulster’s first domestic **hydroelectric power station**, opened in 1896; it opens on request at the visitor centre. The nearby **Weaving Shed Museum** (admission free; ☎ 1–5pm daily Jul & Aug, 1–5pm Sat & Sun May & Jun) contains old photographs and relics of the valley’s flax industry. The scutch mill, where the flax was pounded, is a 20-minute walk away, along the river, past two watchtowers built to guard the linen when it was spread out in the fields for bleaching.

The River Roe is famous for its **trout and salmon fishing** (www.roefishing.com). Day tickets cost £15, and are available from **SJ Mitchell & Co** (☎ 7772 2128; Main St, Limavady), the Dogleap Centre and the Alexander Arms Hotel. The season runs from the third week in May until 20 October.

The park is signposted off the B192 road between Limavady and Dungiven. Bus 146 from Limavady to Dungiven will drop you at the turn-off; the park is about a 30-minute walk from the main road.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Alexander Arms Hotel** (☎ 7776 3443; 34 Main St; s/d £28/45; ☎) A long-established hotel and pub dating from 1875, the centrally located Alexander Arms is now a friendly, family-run place that offers B&B and serves pub grub and restaurant meals.

**Hunter’s Bakery & Oven Door Café** (☎ 7772 2411; 5 Market St; mains £3–6; ☎ 9am–5.30pm Mon–Sat) If you fancy a quick snack, this homely bakery has a comfy cafeteria at the back, serv-

ing good coffee, cakes and light meals. It’s a local institution, patronised by a cross-section of the community, with a pleasantly old-fashioned feel.

**our pick Lime Tree** (☎ 7776 4300; 60 Catherine St; mains £14–17; ☎ 6–9pm Tue–Fri, 6–9.30pm Sat) Unfussy décor in shades of burgundy and beige, softened by flickering tea-lights, makes for a relaxing atmosphere in Limavady’s top eatery. The menu promotes local produce – from succulent Malin Head crab cakes, and seafood thermidor made with Donegal fish, to fillet steak from award-winning butcher Hunter’s of Limavady, served with red wine and tarragon sauce – and includes vegetarian dishes that are a cut above the usual, such as spiced chickpea cakes with roast red pepper dressing. There’s also a three-course set menu (£22), and an early-bird menu (two/three courses £12.50/15) available before 7pm Tuesday to Friday.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 143 runs between Derry and Limavady hourly (four daily on Sunday). There’s no direct bus to Belfast from Limavady but connections can be made at Coleraine or Dungiven. Bus 146 goes from Limavady to Dungiven (40 minutes, five daily Monday to Friday).

## DUNGIVEN

pop 3000

As the main road from Belfast to Derry sweeps down from the bleak moors of the Glenshane Pass it sweeps right through the small market town of Dungiven (Dún Geimhin), 14km south of Limavady. The traffic-choked main street is almost as bleak as the moors, but it’s worth stopping to take a look at the old priory.

You can get **tourist information** (☎ 7774 2428) from the reception desk in Dungiven Castle.

## Sights

The remains of the Augustinian **Dungiven Priory**, off the A6 on the eastern edge of town, date back to the 12th century when it replaced a pre-Norman monastery.

In the chancel of the church is the magnificent **tomb of Cooney-na-Gal**, a chieftain of the O’Cahans, who died in 1385. It’s difficult to see in the dark of the blocked-off chancel (bring a torch if you’re really keen), but the tomb bears figures of six kilted *gal-lowglasses*, Scottish mercenaries hired by

Cooney O’Cahan as minders – they earned him the nickname ‘na-Gal’ (‘of the Foreigners’). It’s topped by a beautifully sculpted canopy of Gothic tracery.

Near the entrance to the churchyard is a **bullau**, a mossy, hollowed stone originally used by the monks for grinding grain, but now collecting rainwater and used as a site of pilgrimage and prayer by people seeking cures for illnesses. A nearby tree is covered in prayer rags left by visiting pilgrims.

## Sleeping

**Flax Mill Hostel** (☎ 7774 2655; www.flaxmill-textiles.com; Mill Lane, Derrylane; dm £6; ☎ Mar–Oct; ☎) The owners of this converted 18th-century flax mill grow their own organic veggies and generate their own electricity, but their main business is creating hand-woven textiles. There’s basic hostel accommodation too. The mill is 5km north of Dungiven, signposted off the B192 road to Limavady.

## Getting There & Away

The hourly Maiden City Flyer bus 212 between Derry and Belfast stops in Dungiven, as does the 246 from Limavady (£3, 25 minutes, six daily Monday to Friday, four Saturday, two Sunday).

## COASTAL COUNTY DERRY Magilligan Point

The huge triangular spit of land that almost closes off the mouth of Lough Foyle is mostly taken up by a military firing range, and is home to a once-notorious prison. Still, it’s worth a visit for its vast sandy beaches – **Magilligan Strand** to the west, and the 9km sweep of **Benone Strand** to the northeast. On the point itself, watching over the entrance to Lough Foyle, stands a **Martello tower**, built during the Napoleonic Wars in 1812 to guard against French invasion.

**Benone Tourist Complex** (☎ 7775 0555; 59 Benone Ave; camp sites £9, caravans £13–15; ☎ 9am–10pm Jul & Aug, to dusk Apr–Jun & Sep, to 5pm Oct–Mar), adjacent to Benone Strand, has an outdoor heated pool, a children’s pool, tennis courts and a putting green. Note that dogs are not allowed on the beach from May to September.

The **Lough Foyle Ferry** (in the Republic ☎ 074-938 1901; www.loughfoyleferry.com; car/motorcycle/pedestrian £7/3.50/2) runs between Magilligan Point and Greencastle in County Donegal all year round. The trip takes 10 minutes and runs every 15

minutes from 7.20am Monday to Friday and 9am Saturday and Sunday. The last ferry is at 9.50pm every day April to September and 7.50pm every day October to March.

### Downhill

In 1774 the eccentric Bishop of Derry and fourth Earl of Bristol, Frederick Augustus Hervey, built himself a palatial home, Downhill, on the coast west of Castlerock. It burnt down in 1851, was rebuilt in 1876, and was finally abandoned after WWII. The ruins of the house now stand forlornly on a cliff top.

The original demesne covered some 160 hectares, which is now part of the National Trust's **Downhill Estate** (☎ 2073 1582; admission free; ☼ dawn-dusk). The beautiful landscaped gardens below the ruins of the house are the work of celebrated gardener Jan Eccles, who became custodian of Downhill at the age of 60 and created the garden over a period of 30 years. She died in 1997 aged 94.

The main attraction here is the little **Mussenden Temple** (admission free; parking at Lion's Gate £3 per car; ☼ 11am-6pm Sat, Sun & hols Mar-May & Sep, 11am-6pm daily Jun, 11am-7.30pm daily Jul & Aug, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun Oct), built by the bishop to house either his library or his mistress – opinions differ! The randy old clergyman continued an affair with the mistress of Frederick William II of Prussia well into his old age.

It's a pleasant, 20-minute walk to the temple from Castlerock, with fine views west to the beach at Benone and Donegal, and east to Portstewart and the shadowy outlines of the Scottish hills. Begin at the path along the seaward side of the caravan park; halfway there, you have to descend into a steep-sided valley and climb the steps on the far side of the little lake. On the beach below the temple, the bishop used to challenge his own clergy to horseback races, rewarding the winners with lucrative parishes.

On the main road 1km west of the temple, opposite the Downhill Hostel, the scenic **Bishop's Road** climbs steeply up through a ravine and heads over the hills to Limavady. There are spectacular views over Lough Foyle, Donegal and the Sperrin Mountains from the **Gortmore** picnic area, and from the cliff top at **Binevenagh Lake**.

**our pick** **Downhill Hostel** (☎ 7084 9077; www.downhillhostel.com; 12 Mussenden Rd; dm/d from £10/30, f from £35 plus £5 per child; Ⓟ) is a beautifully restored

late-19th-century house, tucked beneath the sea cliffs and overlooking the beach, which offers very comfortable accommodation in six-bed dorms, doubles and family rooms. There's a big lounge with an open fire and a view of the sea, and you can hire wetsuits and body boards when the surf's up. You can even paint your own mugs, plates and bowls in the neighbouring pottery. There are no shops in Downhill so bring supplies with you.

Bus 134 between Limavady and Coleraine (20 minutes, 12 daily Monday to Friday, seven Saturday) stops at Downhill, as does the 234 between Derry and Coleraine.

### Castlerock

Castlerock is a small seaside resort with a decent beach. At the turn-off from the main coast road towards Castlerock is the late-17th-century **Hezlett House** (☎ 2073 1582; guided tour adult/child £3/2; ☼ 1-6pm Wed-Mon Jul & Aug, 1-6pm Sat & Sun Jun), a thatched cottage noted for its cruck-truss roof gables of stone and turf strengthened with wooden crucks, or crutches. The interior decoration is Victorian.

Bus 134 between Limavady and Coleraine (20 minutes, 12 daily Monday to Friday, seven Saturday) stops at Castlerock, as does the 234 between Derry and Coleraine.

There are nine trains a day from Castlerock to Coleraine (£2, 10 minutes) and Derry (£7, 35 minutes) Monday to Saturday, and four on Sunday.

## COLERAINE

pop 25,300

Coleraine (Cúil Raithin), on the banks of the River Bann, is an important transport hub and shopping centre. It was one of the original Plantation towns of County Londonderry, founded in 1613. The University of Ulster was established here in 1968 much to the chagrin of Derry, which had lobbied hard to win it.

### Orientation & Information

The mostly pedestrianised town centre is on the east bank of the River Bann. From the combined train and bus station turn left along Railway Rd to find the **tourist information centre** (☎ 7034 4723; colerainetic@btconnect.com; Railway Rd; ☼ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) then turn right at King's Gate St for the main shopping area and **Col-**

**eraine Library** (☎ 7034 2561; Queen St; ☼ 9.30am-8pm Mon-Thu, 9.30am-5pm Fri & Sat), which has public internet access for £1.50 per 30 minutes.

### Sights & Activities

The tourist office has a *Heritage Trail* leaflet that will guide you around what little remains of the original Plantation town, including **St Patrick's Church**, parts of which date from 1613, and fragments of the town walls.

On the second Saturday of each month the **Causeway Speciality Market** (☼ 9am-2.30pm) is held in the Diamond, selling a range of local crafts and organic produce from hand-turned wooden bowls and home-made candles to farmhouse jam from Ballywalter and sheep-milk cheese from County Derry.

Just 1.5km south of the town centre, on the east bank of the river, is **Mountsandel Mount**, a massive and mysterious earthwork that may have been an early Christian stronghold or a later Anglo-Norman fortification. From the Mountsandel Forest parking area on Mountsandel Rd, a 2.5km circular walk leads high above the River Bann to the mount, where you descend steeply down to the riverbank and return upstream past the Victorian lock and weir at Cutts.

You can take a 1½-hour river cruise on the **Lady Sandel** (☎ 07798 786955; www.riverbanncruises.com; adult/child £8/5) from the jetty on Strand Rd (across the river from the town centre) upstream to Macfynn via the lock at Cutts, or downstream to the river mouth. Boats depart at 3pm Saturday and Sunday from Easter to September, plus 11am and 2pm Monday to Friday from June to August.

### Sleeping & Eating

There's not much accommodation in the town centre; most B&Bs are on the fringes.

**Lodge Hotel & Travelstop** (☎ 7034 4848; www.thelodgehotel.com; Lodge Rd; s/d from £63/78; Ⓟ) The Lodge offers a choice of rooms with all mod cons in the main hotel, or slightly more basic rooms in the motel-style annexe (family rooms that sleep two adults and two kids from £63 per room without breakfast). It's fairly central too – less than 1km southeast of the town centre.

**Camus Country House** (☎ 7034 2982; 27 Curragh Rd, Castlerock; s/d £30/50; Ⓟ) This lovely, ivy-clad, 17th-century house with views over the River Bann occupies the site of an 8th-century monastery, with an old Celtic cross in the

adjacent cemetery. The owner can organise fishing trips on the river. It's on the A54, 5km south of town.

**Ground** (☎ 7032 8664; 25 Kings Gate St; mains £2-4; ☼ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) This cheerful and child-friendly coffee shop serves excellent Fairtrade coffee and tasty organic grub, including soups, sandwiches, *panini* and home-baked cakes, as well as offering organic baby food, bibs, wipes and a nappy-changing room.

### Getting There & Away

Goldline Express bus 218 links Coleraine to Belfast (£8, 1¼ hours, hourly Monday to Friday, seven on Saturday, three on Sunday), while bus 234 goes to Derry (£5.90, one hour, six to nine daily Monday to Saturday, two Sunday) via Limavady. See also Getting There & Away, p659.

There are regular trains from Coleraine to Belfast (£8, two hours, seven or eight daily Monday to Saturday, four on Sunday) and Derry (£7, 45 minutes, same frequency). A branch line links Coleraine to Portrush (£1.60, 12 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday, 10 on Sunday).

## PORTSTEWART

pop 7800

Ever since Victorian times, when English novelist William Thackeray described it as having an 'air of comfort and neatness', the seaside and golfing resort of Portstewart has cultivated a sedate, upmarket atmosphere that distinguishes it from populist Portrush, 6km further east. However, there's also a sizable student community from the University of Ulster in Coleraine.

The fantastic beach is the main attraction, along with a couple of world-class golf courses, a combination that has created the North's highest property prices and a large demand for holiday homes, which has led to concerns about overdevelopment.

### Orientation & Information

Central Portstewart consists of a west-facing promenade with a harbour at the north end. A coastal walk, paralleled by Strand Rd, runs south for 1.5km to the beach of Portstewart Strand.

The **tourist information office** (☎ 7083 2286; Town Hall, the Crescent; ☼ 10am-1pm & 2-4.30pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug) is in the library in the red-brick town hall at the south end of the promenade.

## Sights & Activities

The broad, 2.5km beach of **Portstewart Strand** is a 20-minute walk south of the centre, or a short bus ride along Strand Rd. Parking is allowed on the firm sand, which can accommodate over 1000 cars (open all year round, £5 per car from Easter to October).

The **Port Path** is a 10.5km coastal footpath (part of the Causeway Coast Way) that stretches from Portstewart Strand to White Rocks, 3km east of Portrush.

Portstewart is within a few kilometres of three of Northern Ireland's top **golf courses** – the championship links at Portstewart Golf Club (green fees weekday/weekend £70/90), Royal Portrush (£110/125) and Castlerock (£60/75).

In early May the **North-West 200 motorcycle race** (www.northwest200.org) is run on a road circuit taking in Portrush, Portstewart and Coleraine. This classic race – Ireland's biggest outdoor sporting event – is one of the last to be run on closed public roads anywhere in Europe, and attracts up to 150,000 spectators; if you're not one of them, it's best to avoid the area on the race weekend.

## Sleeping

Don't even think about turning up without a booking during the North-West 200 weekend in May.

## BUDGET

**Causeway Coast Independent Hostel** (☎ 7083 3789; rick@causewaycoasthostel.fsnet.co.uk; 4 Victoria Tce; dm/tw from £10/30) This neat terraced house just north-east of the harbour has spacious four-, six- and eight-bed dorms plus three twin rooms, and good power showers. It has its own kitchen, laundry and welcoming open fire in winter.

**Portstewart Holiday Park** (☎ 7083 3308; 80 Mill Rd; camp & caravan sites £14) This is the nearest place to the promenade (a 15-minute walk away) that

you can pitch a tent. Coming from Coleraine on the A2, turn right at the Mill Rd/Strand Rd roundabout.

## MIDRANGE

**Cul-Erg B&B** (☎ 7083 6610; www.culerg.co.uk; 9 Hillside; s/d £35/70; 📍) This family-run B&B is in a modern, flower-bedecked terraced house just a couple of minutes' walk from the promenade. Warm and welcoming, it's set in a quiet cul-de-sac; the rooms at the back have a view of the sea.

**Anchorage Inn** (☎ 7083 2003; www.theanchorbar.com; 87-89 the Promenade; s/d from £45/75; 📍) Part of a pub and restaurant complex, the Anchorage has 20 bright and cheerful rooms, some with sea views, just a one-minute walk from the promenade.

**Cromore Halt Inn** (☎ 7083 6888; www.cromore.com; 158 Station Rd; s/d £55/80; 📍 📞 📺) About 1km east of the harbour, on the corner of Station Rd and Mill Rd, the motel-style Cromore has a dozen modern, businesslike rooms with wi-fi and modem connections, and a good restaurant.

## Eating & Drinking

**Morelli's** (☎ 7083 2150; 53 the Promenade; mains £3-7; 🕒 9am-11pm, food to 8pm) Morelli's is a local institution, founded by Italian immigrants and famous for its mouth-watering ice cream since 1911. The menu includes pasta, pizza, sandwiches, omelettes, and fish and chips, as well as good coffee and cakes, and there's a great view across the bay to Mussenden Temple, Benone Strand and Donegal.

**Harbour Café** (☎ 7083 4103; 18 the Promenade; mains £4-8; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat) This 'greasy spoon' is a favourite with locals, serving all-day breakfast (including veggie fry-ups), soups, sandwiches, *panini*, fish and chips and daily specials such as pepper steak. It's table service, but pay at the till as you leave.

**Anchor Bar & Skippers** (☎ 7083 2003; 87-89 the Promenade; mains £7-14; 🕒 food noon-9pm) The liveliest of Portstewart's traditional pubs, famed for its Guinness and hugely popular with students from the University of Ulster, the Anchor serves decent pub grub, opens till 1am and has DJ nights on Tuesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. There's also Skippers Wine Bar, which serves more sophisticated dishes such as chilli steak, Thai green curry and monkfish wrapped in Parma ham with pesto cream sauce.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 140 plies between Coleraine and Portstewart (£2, 17 minutes) roughly every half-hour (fewer on Sunday). Also see Getting There & Around, below.

# COUNTY ANTRIM

## Getting There & Around

**Translink** (☎ 9066 6630; www.translink.co.uk) operates several bus services specially designed for tourists visiting the popular Antrim coast and Giant's Causeway areas.

The Antrim Coaster (bus 252) links Coleraine with Larne (£8, three hours, two daily Monday to Saturday) via Portstewart, Portrush, Bushmills, the Giant's Causeway, Ballycastle and the Glens of Antrim. One bus a day continues to/from Belfast's Europa Bus-Centre (£8, four hours), departing Belfast at 9am and Larne at 10.05am and 3pm. South-bound buses leave Coleraine at 9.50am and 3.40pm. A Sunday service operates from July to September only.

From July to mid-September the Causeway Rambler (bus 402) links Bushmills Distillery and Carrick-a-Rede (£4, 25 minutes, seven daily) via the Giant's Causeway, White Park Bay and Ballintoy. The ticket allows unlimited travel in both directions for one day.

In July and August only, the Bushmills Bus 177, an open-topped (weather permitting) double-decker, runs from Coleraine to the Giant's Causeway (one way/day return £3/4.50, one hour, four daily) via Portstewart, Portrush, Dunluce Castle, Portballintrae and Bushmills Distillery.

## PORTRUSH

pop 6300

The bustling seaside resort of Portrush (Port Rois) is bursting at the seams with holiday-makers in high season and, not surprisingly, many of its attractions are focused unashamedly on good, old-fashioned family fun. However, it is also one of Ireland's top surfing spots, and is home to the North's hottest nightclub.

The **tourist information centre** (☎ 7082 3333; Dunluce Centre, 10 Sandhill Dr; 🕒 9am-7pm daily mid-Jun-Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-mid-Jun & Sep, noon-5pm Sat & Sun Mar & Oct) books accommodation and has a bureau de change.

## Sights & Activities

Portrush's main attraction is the beautiful sandy beach of **Curran Strand** that stretches for 3km to the east of the town, ending at the scenic chalk cliffs of White Rocks.

The town is also famous for **Barry's** (☎ 7082 2340; www.barrysamusements.com; 16 Eglinton St; admission free, 50p-£2 per ride; 🕒 1-10.30pm daily Jul & Aug, 1-6pm Mon-Fri, 1-10.30pm Sat & 1-9.30pm Sun Jun, 1-10.30pm Sat & 1-9.30pm Sun Apr & May), Ireland's biggest amusement park filled with classic, family-friendly rides including a carousel, ghost train and dodgems.

There's more family-oriented fun at the **Dunluce Centre** (☎ 7082 4444; www.dunlucecentre.co.uk; 10 Sandhill Dr; admission £3.50-4.50; 🕒 10.30am-6.30pm daily Jul & Aug, noon-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-6pm Sat & Sun May & Jun, noon-6pm Sat & Sun Apr, noon-5pm Sat & Sun Sep & Oct), a hi-tech, indoor adventure playground especially for kids, with interactive games, a computerised treasure hunt and a 'turbotour' motion-simulator ride.

**Waterworld** (☎ 7082 2001; the Harbour; 🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-3pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & noon-6pm Sun Jun, 10am-6pm Sat & noon-6pm Sun May & Sep), by the harbour, has indoor swimming pools, waterslides and spa baths for children to play in (adult/child under eight years £4.50/2.50, family tickets for three/four/five persons £11.75/15.60/19.50), and ten-pin bowling (from £7.50 per land; open till 10pm).

You'll find even more activities for kids at **Portrush Countryside Centre** (☎ 7082 3600; Bath Rd; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm Jul-Sep), including marine-life exhibits, a touch pool, rock-pool rambles and fossil hunts.

In summer, boats depart regularly for **cruises** or **fishing trips**; the tourist office has a list of operators. For horse riding contact the **Maddybenny Riding Centre** (☎ 7082 3394; Maddybenny Farm, Atlantic Rd; lessons & hacking per hr £12); beginners are welcome.

Portrush is the centre of Northern Ireland's **surfing** scene. From April to November the friendly **Troggs Surf Shop** (☎ 7082 5476; www.troggssurfshop.co.uk; 88 Main St; 🕒 10am-6pm) offers bodyboard/surfboard hire (per day £5/10) and wetsuit hire (per day £7), surf reports and general advice. A two-hour lesson including equipment hire costs £25.

## Sleeping

Places fill up quickly during summer so it's advisable to book in advance.

### TOP FIVE VIEWPOINTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

- Binevenagh Lake (p656)
- Fair Head (p669)
- Cliffs of Magho (p686)
- Scrabo Hill (p619)
- Slieve Donard (p628)

**BUDGET**

**Activity Breaks Portrush** (☎ 07834-450893; 1 Hopefield Grange; dm/d from £12/36; 📍 📞) Despite being rather incongruously set in a modern red-brick villa in a housing development 1km south of the town centre, this new hostel has excellent facilities including a spa bath, games room, smart kitchen, garden barbecue and free pick-up from the train or bus.

**Carrick Dhu Caravan Park** (☎ 7082 3712; 12 Ballyreagh Rd; camp & caravan sites from £14 📞 Apr-Oct) This is a small site 1.5km west of Portrush on the A2 towards Portstewart. Facilities include a children's playground and restaurant.

**A Pier View** (☎ 7082 3234; www.apierview.co.uk; 53 Kerr St; s/d £25/50; 📍) Any closer to the harbour and you'd be in it! This cosy B&B has three snug rooms, and great views over the harbour and beach from the luxurious lounge and conservatory-style breakfast room.

**MIDRANGE**

**our pick! Clarmont** (☎ 7082 2397; www.clarmont.com; 10 Landsdowne Cres; s/d from £30/60) Our favourite among several guesthouses on Landsdowne Cres, the Clarmont has great views and, from polished pine floors to period fireplaces, has a décor that tastefully mixes Victorian and modern. Ask for a room with a bay window overlooking the sea.

**Albany Lodge Guest House** (☎ 7082 3492; www.albanylodgeni.co.uk; 2 Eglinton St; s/d from £60/90; 📍) This elegant, four-storey Victorian villa has a great location close to the beach, with spectacular views along the coast. The rooms are spacious and welcoming, with pine furniture and warm colours, and the owners are friendly without being in your face. It's worth shelling out a few extra quid for the four-poster suite on the top floor, where you can soak up the view while reclining on your chaise-lounge.

**Eating****BUDGET**

**Café 55** (☎ 7082 2811; 1 Causeway St; mains £2-5; 📞 10am-10pm Tue-Sun) Tucked beneath 55 Degrees North, this licensed café serves good coffee and breakfast bagels and also has daily lunch specials such as fish pie.

**Coast** (☎ 7082 3311; the Harbour; mains £5-9; 📞 12.30-2.30pm & 5-10pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 12.30-10.30pm Sat, 12.30-10pm Sun, closed Tue) Coast is another harbour-side choice, offering stone-baked pizzas, pasta dishes and a range of steak, chicken and fish dishes.

**Harbour Bistro** (☎ 7082 2430; the Harbour; mains £8-11; 📞 12.15-2.15pm & 5-10pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-3pm & 5-9pm Sun) Quality grub – juicy steaks, homemade burgers, spicy chicken, oriental dishes and vegetarian meals – a family-friendly atmosphere (there's a kids menu) and a harbour-side location make the Harbour one of Portrush's most popular eating places.

**MIDRANGE**

**our pick! 55 Degrees North** (☎ 7082 2811; 1 Causeway St; mains £9-14; 📞 5.30-9pm Tue-Sun) One of the north coast's most stylish restaurants, 55 Degrees North boasts a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows allowing diners to soak up a spectacular panorama of sand and sea. The food is excellent, concentrating on clean, simple flavours and unfussy presentation, with dishes such as sea bass steamed with ginger and spring onion, and roast butternut squash with asparagus risotto. There's an early-bird menu (mains £5 to £9) available before 6.45pm weekdays.

**Entertainment**

**Kelly's Complex** (☎ 7082 6633; www.kellysportrush.co.uk; 1 Bushmills Rd) The North's top clubbing venue regularly features DJs from London and Manchester, and attracts clubbers from as far afield as Belfast and Dublin. Plain and small-looking from the outside, the TARDIS effect takes over as you enter a wonderland of seven bars and three dance floors, with décor ranging from old-world wood panelling and antiques to ultramodern brushed steel and mirrors. It's been around since 1996, but Lush!@Kellys (admission £10, open 9pm to 2am Saturday) is still one of the best club nights in Ireland. The highlight of the year is the **Beach Party** (www.thebeachparty.co.uk) on the East Strand at the end of June, which has attracted headline acts such as Fatboy Slim and Basement Jaxx.

The complex is on the A2 just east of Portrush, beside the Golf Links Holiday Park.

**Getting There & Around**

The bus terminal is near the Dunluce Centre. Bus 140 links Portrush with Coleraine (£2, 20 minutes) and Portstewart (£2, 17 minutes) every 20 minutes or so. Also see Getting There & Around, p659.

The train station is just south of the harbour. Portrush is served by trains from Coleraine (£2, 12 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday, 10 on Sunday), where there are connections to Belfast or Derry.

For taxis call **Andy Brown's** (☎ 7082 2223) or **North West Taxis** (☎ 7082 4446). Both are near the town hall. A taxi to Kelly's is around £5, and it's £10 to the Giant's Causeway.

**DUNLUCE CASTLE**

Views along the Causeway Coast between Portrush and Portballintrae are dominated by the ruins of **Dunluce Castle** (☎ 2073 1938; 87 Dunluce Rd; adult/child £2/1; 📞 10am-6pm Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Mar, last admission 30 min before closing), perched atop a dramatic basalt crag. In the 16th and 17th centuries it was the seat of the MacDonnell family (the earls of Antrim from 1620), who built a Renaissance-style manor house within the walls. Part of the castle, including the kitchen, collapsed into the sea in 1639, taking seven servants and that night's dinner with it.

The landward wall has cannons salvaged from the *Girona*, a Spanish Armada vessel that foundered nearby (see boxed text, below). Below, a path leads down from the gatehouse to the Mermaid's Cave beneath the castle crag.

Dunluce is 5km east of Portrush, a one-hour walk away along the coastal path. All the buses that run along the coast stop at Dunluce Castle; see p659.

**PORTBALLINTRAE****pop 750**

During WWI Portballintrae was the only place in the UK to be shelled by a German submarine. And that's pretty much its only claim to fame. A once-pretty village set around a sand-fringed, horseshoe bay with a tiny harbour, today it suffers from rampant

over-development, with new holiday apartments sprouting everywhere (fewer than half of the houses are permanently occupied). The village is an easy 2km walk from Bushmills, and 2.5km from the Giant's Causeway. The fine sandy beach of Bushfoot Strand stretches for 1.5km to the northeast.

**Sweeney's Wine Bar** (☎ 2073 2405; 6B Seaport Ave; mains £9-12; 📞 food served noon-3pm & 5-9pm), set in a converted 17th-century stable block, combines traditional pub décor – wood paneling, stained glass, old armchairs in front of an open fire – with a stylish two-storey conservatory, and serves good pub grub including steaks, chicken skewers with peanut dip and roast chilli ribs.

**BUSHMILLS****pop 1350**

The small town of Bushmills has long been a place of pilgrimage for connoisseurs of Irish whiskey. A good youth hostel and a restored rail link with the Giant's Causeway have also made it an attractive stop for hikers exploring the Causeway Coast.

**Sights**

**Bushmills Distillery** (☎ 2073 3218; www.bushmills.com; Distillery Rd; adult/child £5/2.50; 📞 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-5.30pm Sun) is the world's oldest legal distillery, having been granted a licence by King James I in 1608. Bushmills whiskey is made with Irish barley and water from St Columb's Rill, a tributary of the River Bush, and matured in oak barrels. During ageing, the alcohol content drops from around 60% to 40%; the spirit lost through evaporation is known,

**WRECK OF THE GIRONA**

The little bay 1km to the northeast of the Giant's Causeway is called Port na Spaniagh – Bay of the Spaniards. It was here, in October 1588, that the *Girona* – a ship of the Spanish Armada – was driven onto the rocks by a storm.

The *Girona* had escaped the famous confrontation with Sir Walter Raleigh's fleet in the English Channel, but along with many other fleeing Spanish ships had been driven north around Scotland and Ireland by bad weather. Though designed for a crew of 500, when she struck the rocks she was loaded with 1300 people – mostly survivors gathered from other shipwrecks – including the cream of the Spanish aristocracy. Barely a dozen survived.

Somhairle Buidhe (Sorley Boy) MacDonnell (1505–90), the constable of nearby Dunluce Castle, salvaged gold and cannons from the wreck, and used the money to extend and modernise his fortress – cannons from the ship can still be seen on the castle's landward wall. But it was not until 1968 that the wreck site was excavated by a team of archaeological divers. They recovered a magnificent treasure of gold, silver and precious stones, as well as everyday sailors' possessions, which are now on display in Belfast's Ulster Museum (p587).

rather sweetly, as 'the angels' share'. After a tour of the distillery you're rewarded with a free sample (or a soft drink), and four lucky volunteers get a whiskey-tasting session to compare Bushmills with other brands. Tours begin every 30 minutes (last tour 4pm) from April to October; from November to March there are six tours daily Monday to Friday, and four daily Saturday and Sunday.

The **Giant's Causeway & Bushmills Railway** (☎ 2073 2844; www.freewebs.com/giantscausewayrailway; adult/child return £5/2.50) follows the route of a 19th-century tourist tramway for 3km from Bushmills to below the Giant's Causeway visitor centre. The narrow-gauge line and locomotives (two steam and one diesel) were brought from a private line on the shores of Lough Neagh. Trains run hourly between 11am and 5.30pm, departing on the hour from the Causeway, on the half-hour from Bushmills, daily in July and August, week-ends only from Easter to June, September and October.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Mill Rest Youth Hostel** (☎ 2073 1222; www.hini.org.uk; 49 Main St; dm £14-15, d £35; ☎ closed 11am-2pm Jul & Aug, 11am-5pm Mar-Jun, Sep & Oct; ♿) This modern, purpose-built and child-friendly hostel is just off the diamond in the centre of town. Accommodation is mostly in four- to six-bed dorms with one twin room with private bathroom. There's also a kitchen, a restaurant, a laundry and a bike shed. The hostel is open daily March to October, Friday and Saturday nights only November to February.

**Ballyness Caravan Park & B&B** (☎ 2073 2393; www.ballynesscaravanpark.com; 40 Castleac Rd; camp & caravan sites £17; ☎ mid-Mar-Oct; ♿) This ecofriendly caravan park is about 1km south of Bushmills town centre on the B66.

**our pick** **Bushmills Inn** (☎ 2073 2339; www.bushmillsinn.com; 9 Dunluce Rd; s/d from £68/98; ♿) One of Northern Ireland's most atmospheric hotels, the Bushmills is an old coaching inn complete with peat fires, gas lamps and a round tower with a secret library. In our opinion, the cheapest rooms, in the old part of the inn, are the best – quirky and cosy – but there are larger, more luxurious ones in the neighbouring Mill House (double from £128). The inn's excellent restaurant (lunch mains £10 to £11, dinner mains £13 to £19; open noon to 9.30pm Monday to Saturday and 12.30pm to 9pm Sunday), with intimate wooden booths set in the old

17th-century stables, serves everything from sandwiches to full à la carte dinners.

**Copper Kettle** (☎ 2073 2560; 61 Main St; mains £3-5; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) This rustic tea-room serves breakfast fry-ups till 11.30am, and has daily lunch specials as well as good tea, coffee, cakes and scones.

### Getting There & Away

See Getting There & Around, p659.

### GIANT'S CAUSEWAY

When you first see it you'll understand why the ancients thought the causeway was not a natural feature. The vast expanse of regular, closely packed, hexagonal stone columns dipping gently beneath the waves looks for all the world like the handiwork of giants.

This spectacular rock formation – a national nature reserve and Northern Ireland's only Unesco World Heritage site – is one of Ireland's most impressive and atmospheric landscape features, but it is all too often swamped by visitors. If you can, try to visit midweek or out of season to experience it at its most evocative. Sunset in spring and autumn is the best time for photographs.

### Orientation & Information

Visiting the Giant's Causeway itself is free of charge but the overcrowded, council-run car park charges £5/2 per car/motorcycle. It's an easy 1km walk from the car park down to the Causeway; minibuses with wheelchair access ply the route every 15 minutes (adult/child £1.60/80p return). Guided tours of the site (June to August only) cost £2.50/1 per adult/child.

Although a design for a new, world-class visitor centre for the Giant's Causeway was chosen in 2005, at the time of research there was no sign of it appearing. Meanwhile, a 'temporary' **visitor centre** (☎ 2073 1855; www.giantscausewaycentre.com; admission free, audiovisual show £1; ☎ 10am-6pm Jul & Aug, 10am-5pm Sep-Jun), which has been around since 2000, is housed in a wooden building beside the National Trust's gift shop and tearoom.

### Sights & Activities

From the car park it's an easy 10- to 15-minute walk downhill on a tarmac road (wheelchair accessible) to the Giant's causeway itself. However, a much more interesting approach is to follow the cliff-top path northeast for

2km to the **Chimney Tops** headland, which has an excellent view of the Causeway and the coastline to the west, including Inishowen and Malin Head.

This pinnacled promontory was bombarded by ships of the Spanish Armada in 1588, who thought it was Dunluce Castle, and the wreck of the Spanish galleon *Girona* (see the boxed text, p661) lies just off the tip of the headland. Return towards the car park and about halfway back descend the Shepherd's Steps (signposted) to a lower-level footpath that leads down to the Causeway. Allow 1½ hours for the round trip.

Alternatively, you can visit the Causeway first, then follow the lower coastal path as far as Port Reostan, passing impressive rock formations such as the **Organ** (a stack of vertical basalt columns resembling organ pipes), the **Harp** (a fan of columns) and the **Giant's Eyes** (a pair of rust-red sockets where huge boulders have fallen out of the rock face), and return by climbing the Shepherd's Steps.

You can also follow the cliff-top path east as far as Dunseverick or beyond (see boxed text, p666).

### Sleeping & Eating

**Causeway Hotel** (☎ 2073 1226; www.giants-causeway-hotel.com; 40 Causeway Rd; s/d £50/70; ♿) You can't

beat it for location – the National Trust's Causeway Hotel is within a stone's-throw of the Causeway, a useful base if you want to explore the Causeway early or late in the day when the crowds are not around. Rooms 28 to 32 are the best, with outdoor terraces that enjoy sunset views over the Atlantic.

**National Trust tearoom** (☎ 2073 1582; snacks £2-4; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Jul & Aug, 10am-4.30pm Sep-Jun) Serves tea, coffee and light meals.

### Getting There & Away

Bus 172 from Coleraine and Bushmills to Ballycastle passes the site year round. Also see Getting There & Around, p659.

### GIANT'S CAUSEWAY TO BALLYCASTLE

Between the Giant's Causeway and Ballycastle lies the most scenic stretch of the Causeway Coast, with sea cliffs of contrasting black basalt and white chalk, rocky islands, picturesque little harbours and broad sweeps of sandy beach. It's best enjoyed on foot, following the 16.5km of waymarked **Causeway Coast Way** between the Carrick-a-Rede car park and the Giant's Causeway (see boxed text, p666), although the main attractions can also be reached by car or bus.

About 8km east of the Giant's Causeway is the meagre ruin of 16th-century **Dunseverick**

### THE MAKING OF THE CAUSEWAY

#### The Mythology

The story goes that the Irish giant, Finn MacCool, built the Causeway so he could cross the sea to fight the Scottish giant Benandonner. When he got there he found his rival asleep and, seeing that the Scot was far bigger than he, fled back to Ireland. Soon, Finn's wife heard the angry Benandonner come running across the Causeway, so she dressed Finn in a baby's shawl and bonnet and put him in a crib. When the Scottish giant came hammering at Finn's door, Mrs MacCool warned him not to wake Finn's baby. Taking a glance in the cot, Benandonner decided that if this huge baby was Finn's child, then MacCool himself must be immense, and fled in turn back to Scotland, ripping up the causeway as he went. All that remains are its ends – the Giant's Causeway in Ireland, and the island of Staffa in Scotland (which has similar rock formations).

#### The Geology

The more prosaic scientific explanation is that the causeway rocks were formed 60 million years ago, when a thick layer of molten basaltic lava flowed along a valley in the existing chalk beds. As the lava flow cooled and hardened – from the top and bottom surfaces inward – it contracted, creating a pattern of hexagonal cracks at right angles to the cooling surfaces (think of mud contracting and cracking in a hexagonal pattern as a lake bed dries out). As solidification progressed towards the centre of the flow, the cracks spread down from the top, and up from the bottom, until the lava was completely solid. Erosion has cut into the lava flow, and the basalt has split along the contraction cracks, creating the hexagonal columns.

**Castle**, spectacularly sited on a grassy bluff. Another 1.5km on is the tiny seaside hamlet of **Portbradden**, with half a dozen harbourside houses and the tiny, blue-and-white **St Goban's Church**, said to be the smallest in Ireland. Visible from Portbradden and accessible via the next junction off the A2 is the spectacular **White Park Bay** with its wide, sweeping sandy beach.

A few kilometres further on is **Ballintoy** (Baile an Tuaigne), another pretty village tumbling down the hillside to a picture-postcard harbour. The restored limekiln on the quayside once made quicklime using stone from the chalk cliffs and coal from Ballymoney.

The main attraction here is the famous (or notorious, depending on your head for heights) **Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge** (☎ 2076 9839; Ballintoy; adult/child £3.30/1.80; ☎ 10am-7pm Jun-Aug, to 6pm Mar-May, Sep & Oct). The 20m-long, 1m-wide bridge of wire rope spans the chasm between the sea cliffs and the little island of Carrick-a-Rede, swaying gently 30m above the rock-strewn water.

The island has sustained a salmon fishery for centuries; fishermen stretch their nets out

from the tip of the island to intercept the passage of the salmon migrating along the coast to their home rivers. The fishermen put the bridge up every spring as they have done for the last 200 years – though it's not, of course, the original bridge.

Crossing the bridge is perfectly safe, but it can be frightening if you don't have a head for heights, especially if it's breezy (in high winds the bridge is closed). Once on the island there are good views of Rathlin Island and Fair Head to the east. There's a small National Trust information centre and café at the car park.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Whitepark Bay Hostel** (☎ 2073 1745; www.hini.org.uk; 157 White Park Rd, Ballintoy; dm/tw £15/35; ☎ Apr-Oct; Ⓟ) This modern, purpose-built hostel, near the west end of White Park Bay, has mostly four-bed dorms, plus twin rooms with TV, all with private bathroom. There is a common room positioned to soak up the view, and the beach is just a few minutes walk through the dunes.

**Sheep Island View Hostel** (☎ 2076 9391; www.sheepislandview.com; 42A Main St, Ballintoy; camp sites/dm

£5/from £12; Ⓟ Ⓟ) This excellent independent hostel offers dorm beds, basic shared accommodation in the camping barn, or a place to pitch a tent. There's a kitchen and laundry, a village store nearby, and a free pick-up service from the Giant's Causeway, Bushmills and Ballycastle. It's on the main coast road near the turn-off to Ballintoy harbour, and makes an ideal overnight stop if you're hiking between Bushmills and Ballycastle.

**our pick Whitepark House B&B** (☎ 2073 1482; www.whiteparkhouse.com; Whitepark Rd, Ballintoy; s/d £50/90; Ⓟ) A beautifully restored 18th-century house overlooking White Park Bay, this B&B has traditional features such as antique furniture and a peat fire complemented by Asian artefacts gathered during the welcoming owners' oriental travels. There are three rooms – ask for one with a sea view.

**Roark's Kitchen** (☎ 2076 3632; Ballintoy Harbour; mains £2-5; ☎ 11am-7pm daily Jun-Aug, Sat & Sun only May & Sep) This cute little chalk-built tearoom on the quayside at Ballintoy serves teas, coffees, ice cream, home-baked apple tart and

lunch dishes such as Irish stew or chicken and ham pie.

### Getting There & Away

Bus 172 between Ballycastle, Bushmills and Coleraine (six daily Monday to Friday, one on Saturday, three Sunday) is the main, year-round service along this coast, stopping at the Giant's Causeway, Ballintoy and Carrick-a-Rede. Also see Getting There & Around, p659.

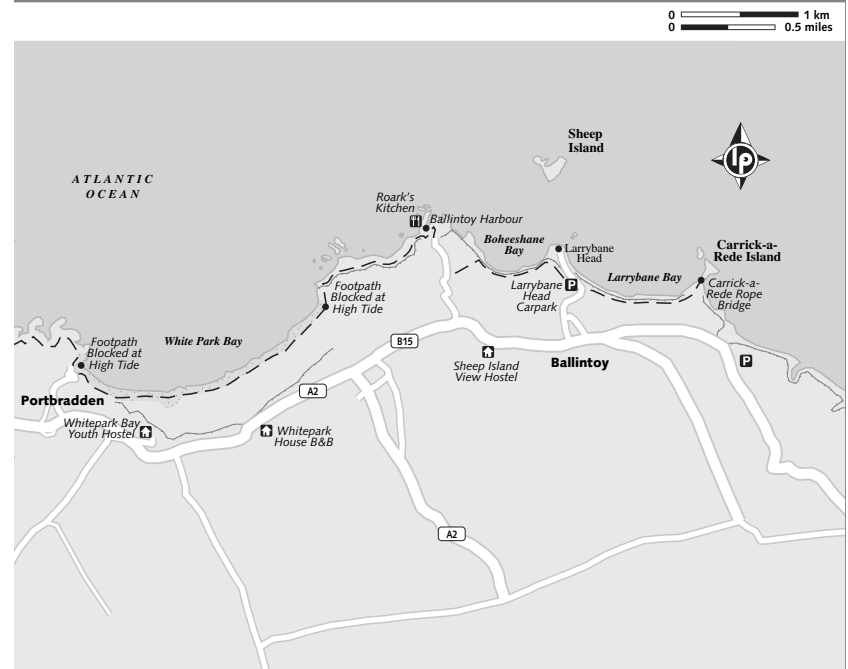
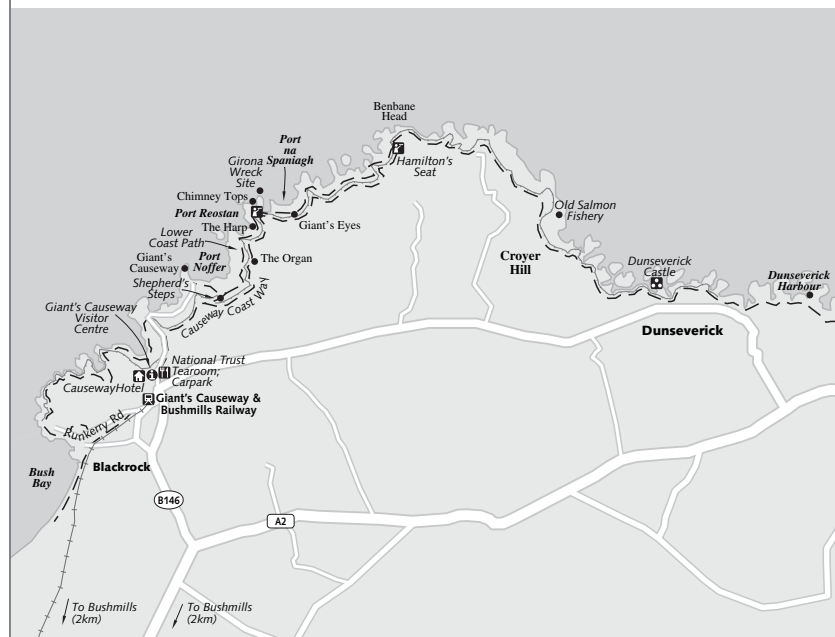
### BALLYCASTLE

pop 4000

The harbour town and holiday resort of Ballycastle (Baile an Chaisil) marks the eastern end of the Causeway Coast. It's a pretty town with a good bucket-and-spade beach, but apart from that, there's not a lot to see. It's also the port for ferries to Rathlin Island.

The **tourist information office** (☎ 2076 2024; tourism@moyle-council.org; 7 Mary St; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Fri Jul & Aug, 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun) is in the district council building at the east end of town. There are a couple of banks with ATMs on Ann St, near the diamond.

### CAUSEWAY WALKS



## Sights & Activities

The town has a family-friendly **promenade**, with a giant sandpit for kids overlooking the marina. A footbridge leads east across the mouth of the Glenshesk River to a good sandy **beach**.

The tiny **Ballycastle Museum** (☎ 2076 2942; 61A Castle St; admission free; 🕒 noon-6pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug), in the town's 18th-century courthouse, has a collection of Irish arts and crafts works.

In the harbour car park is the **Marconi Memorial**, a plaque at the foot of a rock pinnacle. Guglielmo Marconi's assistants contacted Rathlin Island by radio from Ballycastle in 1898 to prove to Lloyds of London that wireless communication was a viable proposition. The idea was to send notice to London or Liverpool of ships arriving safely after a

transatlantic crossing – most vessels on this route would have to pass through the channel north of Rathlin.

Just east of town are the ruins of **Bonamargy Friary**, founded in 1485. It's an attractive site to explore, but sadly the vault – which contains the tombs of MacDonnell chieftains, including Sorley Boy MacDonnell of Dunluce Castle – is not open to the public.

**Sea Treks Ireland** (☎ 2076 2372; www.seatreks-ireland.com) offer a range of high-speed boat trips out of Ballycastle harbour, including cruises along the coast to Carrick-a-Rede and tours around Rathlin Island from £25 per person.

You can go sea-angling with **Ballycastle Charters** (☎ 07751-345791); three-hour trips depart at 11am and 7pm Monday to Saturday,

and cost £15/10 per adult/child including tackle and bait.

## Festivals

Ballycastle's **Ould Lammas Fair**, held on the last Monday and Tuesday of August, dates back to 1606. Thousands of people descend on the town for the market stalls and fair-ground rides, and to sample 'yellowman' and dulse. Yellowman is a hard chewy toffee that's available from a few months before the fair. Dulse is dried edible seaweed. The fruit shop on the diamond often stocks both delicacies.

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Watertop Open Farm** (☎ 2076 2576; www.watertopfarm.co.uk; 188 Cushendall Rd; camp/caravan sites from £8/12; 🕒 Easter-Oct) About 10km east of Ballycastle on the road to Cushendun, child-friendly Watertop is based in a working farm and activity centre, offering pony trekking, sheepshearing and farm tours.

**Glenmore Caravan & Camping Park** (☎ 2076 3584; www.glenmore.biz; 94 White Park Rd; camp/caravan sites from £9/11; 🕒 Apr-Oct) Glenmore is a small and peaceful camping ground with its own trout-stocked fishing lough, about 4.5km west of Ballycastle on the B15 road to Whitepark Bay.

**Castle Hostel** (☎ 2076 2337; www.castlehostel.com; 62 Quay Rd; dm/d from £9/24) Set in a large, bay-windowed Victorian house with a welcoming fire in the common room, the Castle is just a few minutes walk from the bus stop and the beach. It has a bit of an old-fashioned feel, but in a pleasant, homely way, and the owner will point you to the best pubs for traditional music.

**Ballycastle Backpackers** (☎ 2076 3612; www.ballycastlebackpackers.net; 4 North St; dm/tw £12.50/30; 📺) This is a small and homely hostel set in a terraced house overlooking the harbour, with one six-bed dorm, a family room and a couple of twin and double rooms. There's also a cosy self-catering cottage in the backyard, with two twin rooms with private bathroom (£20 per person per night, also available for rental by the week).

### MIDRANGE

**Glenluce Guesthouse** (☎ 2076 2914; www.glenluceguesthouse.com; 42 Quay Rd; s/d from £35/50; 📺) A large Victorian villa with 12 beautifully decorated

rooms, Glenluce has a luxurious lounge, its own tea shop, and a veritable art gallery of local watercolours. It's only a few minutes' walk from the beach.

**Corratavey B&B** (☎ 2076 2845; www.corratavey.co.uk; 40 Quay Rd; d/f £50/63; 📺) Brass bedknobs, polished wood and warm colours lend a cosy feel to the rooms in this Victorian town house close to the beach. The owners are outdoor enthusiasts, and can recommend good walks in the area; they also speak Polish plus a little French and German.

## Eating

**Pantry** (☎ 2076 9993; 41A Castle St; mains £2-4; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Housed in a former printer's shop with a lovely original black-and-white mosaic floor, this brisk and cheerful café serves a wide range of sandwiches, from pitta to *panini* and bagels to baguettes, as well as cappuccino and home-made cakes. It's uphill from the diamond.

**Wysner's** (☎ 2076 2372; 16 Ann St; mains £5-12; 🕒 8am-9pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug, 8am-5pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, 7-9pm Fri & Sat Sep-Jun) Popular with locals and visitors alike, Wysner's has a café at street level serving hearty lunches such as sausages with bacon-and-leek mash and onion gravy, and a restaurant upstairs with more sophisticated fare – steak, salmon or scallops – in the evenings.

**ourpick Cellar Restaurant** (☎ 2076 3037; the diamond; mains £9-13; 🕒 noon-10pm Mon-Sat, 5-10pm Sun Jun-Aug, 5-10pm daily Sep-May) This cosy little basement restaurant with intimate wooden booths and a big fireplace is the place to try local seafood – lobster grilled with garlic butter and Carrick-a-Rede salmon are both on the menu. There are also good vegetarian dishes such as roast vegetable foccacia and vegetable fajitas.

## Getting There & Away

The bus station is on Station Rd, just east of the diamond. Ulsterbus Express 217 links Ballycastle with Ballymena, where you change to Goldline Express 218 for Belfast (£8, two hours, three daily Monday to Saturday).

Bus 172 goes along the coast to Coleraine (£4, one hour, six daily Monday to Friday, one on Saturday, three Sunday) via Ballintoy, the Giant's Causeway and Bushmills. Also see Getting There & Around, p659.

The ticket office for the Rathlin Island Ferry is beside the harbour.

## WALK: CAUSEWAY COAST WAY

The official **Causeway Coast Way** (www.walkni.com) stretches for 53km from Portstewart to Ballycastle, but the most scenic section – the 16.5km between Carrick-a-Rede and the Giant's Causeway – can be done in a day and offers one of the finest coastal walks in Ireland.

There are cafés and public toilets at Larrybane, Ballintoy Harbour and the Giant's Causeway, and bus stops at Lorrybane, Ballintoy village, Whitepark Bay Youth Hostel, Dunseverick Castle and the Giant's Causeway. Note that parts of the walk follow a narrow, muddy path along the top of unfenced cliffs, and can be dangerous in wet and windy weather. Also, high tides can temporarily block the way at either end of White Park Bay; check tide times at any tourist office.

Begin at Lorrybane, the car park for Carrick-a-Rede. The path starts off along a cliff top with views of Sheep Island then cuts inland straight towards Ballintoy church. At the church turn right and follow the road down to the harbour. Continue along the shoreline past a series of conical sea stacks and arches, and scramble around the foot of a limestone crag to reach the 2km-long sandy sweep of White Park Bay.

The going here is easiest at low tide, when you can walk on the firm sand. At the far end of the bay (the building with the yellow gable above the dunes is Whitepark Bay Youth Hostel), scramble over rocks and boulders at the bottom of a high limestone cliff for 250m (slippery in places) to Portbradden. If you've timed it wrong and the way is blocked by high tide, you can detour up to the hostel and reach Portbradden by walking along the road.

Beyond Portbradden white limestone gives way to black basalt, and the path threads through a natural tunnel in the rocks before weaving around several rocky coves with the high cliffs of Benbane Head visible in the distance. At tiny Dunseverick Harbour you follow a minor road for 200m before descending steps on the right at a waymark. The path then wanders along the grassy foreshore, rounds a headland and crosses a footbridge above a waterfall before reaching the car park at Dunseverick Castle.

From here the cliff-top path, narrow in places, climbs steadily, passing an old salmon fishery (the little rusty-roofed cottage on the shore far below). Near Benbane Head, the highest and most northerly point on the walk, a wooden bench marks the viewpoint known as Hamilton's Seat (William Hamilton was an 18th-century clergyman and amateur geologist from Derry, who wrote one of the earliest descriptions of the Causeway Coast's geology). Soak up the spectacular panorama of 100m-high sea cliffs, stacks and pinnacles stretching away to the west, before you set off on the final stretch. If you want to visit the causeway itself, descend the Shepherd's Steps (signposted), about 1km before the visitor centre and the end of the walk. Total 16.5km; allow five to six hours.

## RATHLIN ISLAND

pop 110

In spring and summer, rugged Rathlin Island (Reachlainn), 6km offshore from Ballycastle, is home to hundreds of seals and thousands of nesting seabirds. The island has a pub and restaurant, two shops and a handful of accommodation options.

The island was raided by Vikings in AD 795 and suffered again in 1575 when Sorley Boy MacDonnell sent his family here for safety only to have them massacred by the English, along with most of the inhabitants. The island's most illustrious visitor was Scottish hero Robert the Bruce, who spent some time in 1306 in a cave on the northeastern point learning a lesson in perseverance. Watching a spider's resoluteness in repeatedly trying to spin a web gave him the courage to have another go at the English, whom he subsequently defeated at Bannockburn.

The chief attraction is the coastal scenery and bird life of **Keble National Nature Reserve** at the western end of the island. **RSPB West Light Viewpoint** (☎ 2076 3948; admission free; ☞ 11am-3pm Apr-mid Sep) provides stunning views of the neighbouring sea stacks, thick with guillemots, kittiwakes, razorbills and puffins in spring and early summer. During the summer a minibus service runs there from the harbour.

If you don't have time to visit Keble, the best short walk on the island is through the National Trust's Ballyconagan Nature Reserve to the **Old Coastguard Lookout** on the north coast, with great views along the sea cliffs and across to the Scottish islands of Islay and Jura.

The **Boathouse Visitor Centre** (☎ 2076 3951; admission free; ☞ 10.30am-4pm May-Aug), south of the harbour, details the history, culture and ecology of the island, and can give advice on walks and wildlife.

### Sleeping & Eating

You can camp for free on the eastern side of Church Bay in a field not far from the harbour. It is essential to book your accommodation in advance.

**Kinramer Camping Barn** (☎ 2076 3948; Kinramer; dm £5) This is a basic bunkhouse located on an organic farm, 5km (a one-hour walk) west from the harbour, where you bring your own food and bedding; book in advance. You might be able to get a lift there on one of the island minibuses.

**Soerneog View Hostel** (☎ 2076 3954; www.n-ireland.holidays.co.uk/rathlin; Ouis; s/d £12.50/20; ☞ Apr-Sep) A private house, a 10-minute walk south of the harbour, Soerneog offers basic hostel-style accommodation in one double and two twin rooms.

**Coolnagrock B&B** (☎ 2076 3983; Coolnagrock; s/d £25/40; ☞ closed Dec) This well-appointed guesthouse is in the eastern part of the island, with great views across the sea to Kintyre. It's a 15-minute walk from the ferry, but you can arrange for the owner to pick you up.

**Manor House** (☎ 2076 3964; www.rathlinmanorhouse.co.uk; Church Quarter; s/d from £30/60) Restored and run by the National Trust, the 18th-century Manor House, on the north side of the harbour, is the island's biggest (12 rooms) and most pleasant place to stay. Evening meals are available by arrangement.

The Brockley Tearoom at the Manor House serves soups, sandwiches, cakes and scones, and you can get pub grub at **McCuaig's Bar** (☎ 2076 3974), just east of the harbour. There's a tiny grocery shop a few paces to the west of the ferry berth (turn left as you come off the pier).

### Getting There & Around

A **ferry** (☎ 2076 9299; www.calmac.co.uk) operates daily (adult/child/bicycle return £10/5/1.30, 45 minutes) from Ballycastle; advance booking is recommended in spring and summer.

From April to September ferries depart Ballycastle at 10am, noon, 4.30pm and 6.30pm, and leave Rathlin at 8.30am, 11am, 3.30pm and 5.30pm. In winter boats leave Ballycastle at 10.30am and 4pm (4.30pm on Friday) and from Rathlin at 9am and 3pm.

You can't take your car to Rathlin, but nowhere on the island is more than 6km (about 1½ hours' walk) from the ferry pier. You can hire a bicycle (£8 per day) from Soerneog View Hostel, or take a minibus tour with **McGinn's** (☎ 2076 3451), who also shuttle visitors between the ferry and Keble Nature Reserve from April to August.

### GLENS OF ANTRIM

The northeastern corner of Antrim is a high plateau of black basalt lava overlying beds of white chalk. Along the coast, between Cushendun and Glenarm, the plateau has been dissected by a series of scenic, glacier-gouged valleys known as the Glens of Antrim.

### WALK: FAIR HEAD

From the National Trust car park at Coolanlough, a waymarked path leads north past a small lake dotted with tiny islands, one of which is a *crannóg* (Neolithic island settlement). After 1.5km you arrive at the top of the impressive 180m-high basalt cliffs that mark Fair Head. The cliffs, one of Ireland's most important rock-climbing areas, are split here by a spectacular gully bridged by a fallen rock, known as the Grey Man's Path. The panorama of sea and islands extends from Rathlin Island in the west (to your left), with the Scottish island of Islay to its right, followed by the three pointed hills of Jura, the dark mass of the Mull of Kintyre and the tiny island of Sanda. To the east is the squat cone of Ailsa Craig with the coast of Ayrshire far beyond.

Turn right and follow the faint trail south along the cliff tops for 1.5km until you reach the upper car park on the Murlough Bay road. From here, another faint path, marked by yellow paint marks, strikes west for 1km back to Coolanlough. (Total 4km. Allow one to two hours.)

Two waymarked footpaths traverse the region: the Ulster Way (p700) sticks close to the sea, passing through all the coastal villages, while the 32km Moyle Way runs inland from Glenariff Forest Park to Ballycastle.

### Torr Head Scenic Road

A few kilometres east of Ballycastle, a minor road signposted Scenic Route branches north off the A2. This alternative route to Cushendun is not for the faint-hearted driver (nor for caravans), as it clings, precarious and narrow, to steep slopes high above the sea. Side roads lead off to the main points of interest – Fair Head, Murlough Bay and Torr Head. On a clear day, there are superb views across the sea to Scotland, from the Mull of Kintyre to the peaks of Arran.

The first turn-off ends at the National Trust car park at Coolanlough, the starting point for a hike to Fair Head (see boxed text, above). The second turn-off leads steeply down to **Murlough Bay**. From the parking area at the end of this road, you can walk north along the shoreline to some ruined miners' cottages (10 minutes); coal and chalk were once mined in the cliffs above, and burned in a limekiln (south of the car park) to make quicklime.

The third turn-off leads you past some ruined coastguard houses to the rocky headland of **Torr Head**, crowned with a 19th-century coastguard station (abandoned in the 1920s). This is Ireland's closest point to Scotland – the Mull of Kintyre is a mere 19km away across the North Channel. In late spring and summer, a salmon fishery like the one at Carrick-a-Rede operates here, with a net strung out from the headland. The ancient ice house beside the approach road was once used to store the catch.

### Cushendun

pop 350

The pretty seaside village of Cushendun is famous for its distinctive, Cornish-style cottages. Built between 1912 and 1925 at the behest of the local landowner, Lord Cushendun, they were designed by Clough Williams-Ellis, the architect of Portmeirion in north Wales. Much of Cushendun is now owned by the National Trust. There's a nice sandy beach, various short coastal walks (outlined on an information board beside the car park), and some impressive **caves** cut into the overhanging conglomerate sea cliffs south of the village (follow the trail around the far end of the holiday apartments south of the river mouth).

Another natural curiosity lies 6km north of the village on the A2 road to Ballycastle – **Loughareema**, also known as the Vanishing Lake. Three streams flow in but none flow out. The lough fills up to a respectable size (400m long and 6m deep) after heavy rain, but then the water gradually drains away through fissures in the underlying limestone, leaving a dry lake bed.

### SLEEPING

**Cushendun Caravan Park** (☎ 2176 1254; 14 Glendun Rd; camp/caravan sites from £8/16; ☞ Easter-Sep) The local council-run camping ground enjoys a pleasant woodland setting just north of the village and a mere five-minute walk from the beach.

**Cloneymore House** (☎ 2176 1443; ann.cloneymore@btinternet.com; 103 Knocknacarry Rd; s/d £35/45; ☞ ☎) A traditional family B&B on the B92 road 500m southwest of Cushendun, Cloneymore has four spacious and spotless rooms named after Irish and Scottish islands – Aran is the biggest. There are wheelchair ramps and a



stairlift, and all rooms are equipped for visitors with limited mobility.

**Drumkeerin** (☎ 2176 1554; www.drumkeeringuesthouse.com; 201A Torr Rd; s/d from £30/50; (P)) Drumkeerin is a comfortable modern bungalow 1km north of the village, owned by retired art teachers who offer courses in painting and drawing. Excellent breakfasts, including home-baked bread and scones, are served in a dining room with great views over beautiful glens down to Cushendun Bay.

**Mullarts Apartments** (☎ 2176 1221; anne@mullarts.fsnet.co.uk; 114 Tromra Rd; d per weekend/week £150/400; (P)) An unusual alternative, Mullarts offers two luxury, self-catering apartments housed in a converted 19th-century church, 2.5km south of the village. Each apartment can sleep two to five people.

### EATING & DRINKING

**Cushendun Tearoom** (☎ 2176 1506; 1 Main St; mains £3-9; ☎ 11am-7pm daily Mar-Sep, 11am-7pm Mon-Fri Oct-Feb) The cosy village tearoom beside the bridge offers tea and cakes, sandwiches and salads, and hot lunch dishes such as fish and chips, grilled chicken and vegetable tortilla wraps.

**Mary McBride's Pub** (☎ 2176 1511; 2 Main St; mains £5-7; ☎ food noon-9pm Apr-Sep, noon-8pm Oct-Mar) The original bar here (on the left as you go in) is the smallest in Ireland (2.7m by 1.5m) but there's plenty of elbow-bending room in the rest of the pub. It has lost some of its charm in recent years, and the food – standard pub grub – is not as good as it used to be, but it's the only place in the village for an evening meal.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus 162 travels from Larne to Cushendun (£6, 1½ hours, one daily Monday to Friday), stopping at Glenarm and Carnlough; there are frequent trains and buses from Belfast to Larne. Bus 162A runs to Ballycastle (40 minutes, one daily Monday to Friday during school terms), departing from Cushendun at 9.25am and Cushendun at 9.36am; the return service leaves Ballycastle at 2.40pm. Also see Getting There & Around, p659.

### Cushendun

pop 1250

Cushendun is a holiday centre (and traffic bottleneck) at the foot of Glenballyeamon, overlooked by the prominent flat-topped hill of Lurigethan. The beach is small and shingly,

though; there are better ones at Waterfoot and Cushendun.

The **tourist office** (☎ 2177 1180; 24 Mill St; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat Jul-Sep, 10am-1pm Tue-Sat Oct-Jun) is run by the Glens of Antrim Historical Society, which also offers public internet access.

### SIGHTS

The unusual red sandstone **Curfew Tower** at the central crossroads was built in 1817, based on a building the landowner had seen in China. It was originally a prison 'for the confinement of idlers and rioters'.

From the car park beside the beach, a coastal path leads 1km north to the picturesque ruins of **Layde Old Church**, with views across to Ailsa Craig (a prominent conical island also known as 'Paddy's Milestone') and the Scottish coast. Founded by the Franciscans, it was used as a parish church from the early 14th century until 1790. The graveyard contains several grand MacDonnell memorials. Near the gate stands an ancient, weathered ring-cross (with the arms missing), much older than the 19th-century inscription on its shaft.

In Glennaan, 4km northwest of Cushendun, is **Ossian's Grave**, a Neolithic court tomb romantically, but inaccurately, named after the legendary 3rd-century warrior-poet. The site is signposted off the A2; you can park at the farm and walk up.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Cushendun Caravan Park** (☎ 2177 1699; 62 Coast Rd; camp/caravan sites from £8/16; ☎ Easter-Sep) This camping ground overlooks the sea, just over 1km south of the town centre.

**Mountain View** (☎ 2177 1246; 1 Kilnadore Rd; s/d £25/40; ☎ Apr-Sep; (P)) The smell of home-baked bread wafts from the kitchen as you enter this good-value Victorian B&B with grand views, only a five-minute walk uphill from the village centre.

**Cullentra House** (☎ 2177 1762; www.cullentrahouse.com; 16 Cloughs Rd; s/d £25/40; (P)) This modern bungalow sits high above the village at the end of Cloughs Rd, offering good views of the craggy Antrim coast. The three rooms are spacious and comfy, and the breakfasts are as big as the owners' hospitality.

**Harry's Restaurant** (☎ 2177 2022; 10 Mill St; mains £9-13; ☎ 12.30-9.30pm) With a cosy country-house feel, Harry's is the village's top eating place,

### WALK: THE GLENARIFF CIRCUIT

This varied 7.5km hike, which ranges from the mossy depths of a waterfall-filled ravine to the edge of the high Antrim Plateau, is one of the best forest-park walks in Northern Ireland. Begin at the Laragh Lodge restaurant, and follow the boardwalk upstream (admission £1.50 Easter-Oct) along the Glenariff River to the foaming cascade of Ess-na-Larach, then continue steeply up the zigzags beyond. There's a junction at a wooden bench – the path to the left leads down to the forest park visitor centre (signposted), but go right on the trail heading upstream with the river down to your right.

At the next junction, turn right and cross a bridge (signposted Hermit's Fall), and follow this path uphill through another ravine with more waterfalls. At the top cross back over the river and bear right uphill for a few metres to a Tarmac road (there's a sign marked Scenic Trail pointing back the way you came). Cross the road and, a few metres further on, cross a second road and follow the obvious path up through the forest. You eventually emerge from the trees to get your first open view along Glenariff. Beyond, the path slowly curves around the right (south; there are more Scenic Trail waymarks, but you are following them in reverse). As you near the head of the next valley (that's the Inver River down below), the path forks near a wooden shelter, the left branch descending steeply; keep right here and continue right to the top of the glen.

The trail then curves left and crosses the three streams that feed the Inver River, then switchbacks up the far side and into thick pine forest, only to emerge into a clearing on a cliff top with a stunning view down Glenariff – the valley floor is slung like a green hammock between steep, black basalt crags. A short distance further on there's a very steep zigzag descent, followed by a level traverse to the left. When you reach a forest road turn right. After 1km it descends steeply leftwards down to a gate; take the path on the left and cross a footbridge over the river. Turn right, then right again and you'll find yourself back at your starting point. (Total 7.5km. Allow three to four hours.)

serving pub grub through the day, and an á la carte dinner from 6pm. There's a three-course Sunday lunch for £13/6.50 per adult/child.

**Arthur's Tea & Coffee Warehouse** (☎ 2177 1627; 1 Shore St; mains £2-4; ☎ 10am-5pm) This lively café serves good breakfasts, cakes and coffee, and home-made soups and snacks.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses serving Cushendun (opposite) also serve Cushendun.

### Glenariff

About 2km south of Cushendun is the village of **Waterfoot**, with a 2km-long sandy beach, the best on Antrim's east coast. From here the A43 Ballymena road runs inland along Glenariff, the loveliest of Antrim's glens. Views of the valley led the writer Thackeray to exclaim that it was a 'Switzerland in miniature', a claim that makes you wonder if he'd ever been to Switzerland.

At the head of the valley is **Glenariff Forest Park** (☎ 2175 8232; car/motorcycle/pedestrian £4/2/1.50; ☎ 10am-dusk) where the main attraction is **Ess-na-Larach Waterfall**, an 800m walk from the visitor centre. You can also walk to the waterfall

from Laragh Lodge, 600m downstream. There are various good walks in the park; the longest is a 10km circular trail.

There's hostel accommodation for hikers at **Ballyeamon Camping Barn** (☎ 2175 8451; www.ballyeamonbarn.com; 127 Ballyeamon Rd; dm £10; (P)), 8km southwest of Cushendun on the B14 (1km north of its junction with the A43), and about 1.5km walk from the main entrance to the forest park.

**Laragh Lodge** (☎ 2175 8221; 120 Glen Rd; mains £8, 2-/3-course Sun lunch £10/12; ☎ 10.30am-11pm, food noon-9.30pm) is a restaurant and bar on a side road off the A43, 3km northeast of the park entrance. The cottage-style restaurant, draped with bric-a-brac, serves hearty meat-and-two-veg meals (no vegetarian options), and does a roast lunch on Sunday.

You can reach Glenariff Forest Park from Cushendun (£4, 30 minutes, four daily Monday to Friday, two Saturday) and Ballymena (£4, 40 minutes) on Ulsterbus 150.

### Carnlough

pop 1500

Carnlough is an attractive little town with a pretty harbour and a historic hotel. Many of

the buildings, made of local limestone, were commissioned by the marquess of Londonderry in 1854. The limestone quarries were in use until the early 1960s – the white stone bridge across the main street once carried a railway line that brought stone down to the harbour. The line is now a walkway that leads to the local beauty spot, Cranny Falls.

The **tourist information centre** (☎ 2888 5236; 14 Harbour Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm daily Easter-Sep, to 8pm Mon-Sat Oct-Easter) is in McKillop's general store, next to the Londonderry Arms Hotel.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Londonderry Arms Hotel** (☎ 2888 5255; www.glensof-antrim.com; 20 Harbour Rd; s/d from £55/90; 📞) Dating from 1848, this atmospheric coaching inn was briefly owned by Winston Churchill, who sold it in 1921 (he once stayed in room 114). It has a wonderfully crusty, old-fashioned atmosphere, with various bits of antique furniture, wing-back armchairs and lots of polished mahogany, spoiled a little by 1970s avocado bathroom suites. The restaurant (mains £14 to £18) serves local lamb and seafood, while the wood-panelled bar is a shrine to the famous Irish racehorse Arkle.

**Harbour Lights** (☎ 2888 5950; 11 Harbour Rd; mains £7-12; ☎ noon-9pm Wed-Sun) This pleasant little café-cum-restaurant is set in a 19th-century house beside the former railway bridge, with an outdoor terrace overlooking the harbour.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus 162 runs from Larne to Glenarm and Carnlough (£3, 40 minutes, five or six daily Monday to Saturday); one bus a day on weekdays continues north to Cushendall and Cushendun. Bus 128 goes to Ballymena (£3, one hour, four daily Monday to Saturday). Also see Getting There & Around, p659.

### Glenarm

pop 600

Since 1750 Glenarm (Gleann Arma), the oldest village in the glens, has been the family seat of the MacDonnell family; the present 14th earl of Antrim lives in **Glenarm Castle** (☎ 2884 1203; www.glenarmcastle.com), on a private estate hidden behind the impressive wall that runs along the main road north of the bridge. The castle itself is closed to the public, except for two days in July when a Highland Games competition is held, but you can visit the lovely **Walled Garden** (adult/child £4/2; ☎ 11am-5pm Wed-Sun May-Sep).

The **tourist office** (☎ 2884 1705; 2 the Bridge; glenarm@nacn.org; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sun) is beside the bridge on the main road. It has internet access for £2 per 30 minutes.

Take a stroll into the old village of neat Georgian houses (off the main road, immediately south of the river). Where the street opens into the broad expanse of Altmore St, look right to see the **Barbican Gate** (1682), the entrance to Glenarm Castle grounds. On the left is **Steensons** (☎ 2884 1445; Toberwine St; ☎ 9.30am-5.15pm Mon-Sat year-round, 1-5.30pm Sun Easter-Sep), a designer jewellery workshop and visitor centre where you can watch craftspeople at work.

Turn left here and climb steeply up Vennel St, then left again immediately after the last house along the Layde Path to the viewpoint, which has a grand view of the village and the coast.

**Riverside House B&B** (☎ 2884 1474; faith.pa@bopenworld.com; 13 Toberwine St; s/d £30/45) is a nicely restored Georgian house in the heart of the old village. The two double rooms have chunky pine furniture and views over the river to Glenarm Castle.

See Carnlough section (left) for details of bus services.

### LARNE

pop 17,600

As a major port for ferries from Scotland, Larne (Lutharna) is one of Northern Ireland's main points of arrival. However, with its concrete overpasses and the huge chimneys of Ballylumford power station opposite the harbour, poor old Larne is a little lacking in the charm department. After a visit to the excellent tourist information centre, there's no real reason to linger.

Larne Harbour train station is in the ferry terminal. It's a short bus ride or a 15-minute walk from here to the town centre – turn right on Fleet St and right again on Curran Rd, then left on Circular Rd. At the big roundabout, Larne Town train station is to your left, the **tourist information centre** (☎ 2826 0088; larnetourism@btconnect.com; Narrow Gauge Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat Easter-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Easter) is to the right, and the bus station is ahead (beneath the road bridge).

### Getting There & Away

#### BOAT

For information on ferries from Larne to Scotland and England, see p719.

### BUS

Bus 256 provides a direct service between the town centre and Belfast (£4, one hour, hourly Monday to Friday, six Saturday, plus three on Sunday July to September only).

Heading north to the Glens of Antrim, take bus 162 (see opposite) or the Antrim Coaster (see p659).

### TRAIN

Larne has two train stations, Larne Town and Larne Harbour. Trains from Larne Town to Belfast Central (£5, one hour) depart at least hourly; those from the harbour are timed to connect with ferries. From Belfast Central you can continue to Botanic, City Hospital and Great Victoria St stations.

### ISLANDMAGEE

Islandmagee (Oileán Mhíche Aodha) is the finger of land that encloses Larne Lough to the east. There's a popular sandy beach at **Brown's Bay** at the northern end of the peninsula. Nearby is the picturesque little harbour of **Portmuck** and, just 300m offshore, the North's second-largest seabird nesting colony on **Muck Island**.

On the east coast lie the rugged basalt sea cliffs known as the **Gobbins**. The cliffs were developed as a tourist attraction in 1902, when a railway company engineer built a spectacular footpath along the coast from Whitehead, complete with steps, iron bridges and tunnels cut from the rock. By WWII the path had fallen into disrepair, and was closed for safety reasons. You can see photographs of the walkway in its heyday at the Ulster Museum (p587) in Belfast.

There's a good coastal walk from the car park at the north end of the promenade in **Whitehead**. It follows a walkway around the sea cliffs beneath Black Head lighthouse, past several deep caves, then climbs a steep flight of stairs to the lighthouse itself. From here you can descend a zigzag path to rejoin the shoreline trail back to the car park (3.5km in total).

From May to December the high-speed launch *North Irish Diver II* offers two-hour **boat trips** (☎ 9338 2246) from Whitehead harbour to the Gobbins and Muck Island (adult/child £20/15, minimum six people). It also offers a sea-taxi service to Bangor, a 15-minute trip, from £10 return.

There are also boat trips to the Gobbins from Bangor.

### CARRICKFERGUS

pop 28,000

Northern Ireland's most impressive medieval fortress commands the entrance to Belfast Lough from the rocky promontory of Carrickfergus (Carraig Fhearghais). The old town centre opposite the castle has some attractive 18th-century houses and you can still trace a good part of the 17th-century city walls.

The **tourist information centre** (☎ 9335 8000; www.carrickfergus.org; Heritage Plaza, Antrim St; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat & 1-6pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Mon-Sat & 1-5pm Sun Oct-Mar) has a bureau de change and books accommodation.

### Sights

The central keep of Ireland's first and finest Norman fortress, **Carrickfergus Castle** (☎ 9335 1273; Marine Hwy; adult/child £3/1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun Jun-Aug, 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun Apr, May & Sep, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 2-4pm Sun Oct-Mar), was built by John de Courcy soon after his 1177 invasion of Ulster. The massive walls of the outer ward were completed in 1242, while the red-brick gun ports were added in the 16th century. The keep houses a museum and the site is dotted with life-size figures illustrating the castle's history.

The castle overlooks the harbour where **William of Orange** landed on 14 June 1690, on his way to the Battle of the Boyne; a blue plaque on the old harbour wall marks the site where he stepped ashore, and a bronze statue of the man himself stands on the shore nearby.

The glass-fronted Heritage Plaza on Antrim St houses **Carrickfergus Museum** (☎ 9335 8049; 11 Antrim St; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat & 1-6pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Mon-Sat & 1-5pm Sun Oct-Mar), which has a small collection of artefacts relating to the town's history, and a pleasant coffee shop.

The parents of the seventh US president left Carrickfergus in the second half of the 18th century. His ancestral home was demolished in 1860, but the **Andrew Jackson Centre** (☎ 9336 6455; Boneybefore; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun Jun-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-4pm Mon-Fri, 2-4pm Sat & Sun Apr, May & Oct) is housed in a replica thatched cottage complete with fire-side crane and earthen floor. It has displays on the life of Jackson, the Jackson family in Ulster and Ulster's connection with the USA. Next door is the **US Rangers Centre**, with a small exhibition on the first US rangers, who were trained during WWII in Carrickfergus before

heading for Europe. The centre is on the coast, 2km north of the castle.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Keep Guesthouse** (☎ 9336 7007; www.thekeepguesthousecarrickfergus.co.uk; 93 Irish Quarter S; s/d £30/45) Just across the main road from the marina, and close to the town centre, the Keep has four rooms with attractive, modern décor and original art on the walls; go for the spacious double/family room on the first floor if possible.

**Dobbin's Inn Hotel** (☎ 9335 1905; www.dobbinsinnhotel.co.uk; 6-8 High St; s/d £48/68; mains £6-13; ☎ food 9am-9pm; ♿) In the centre of the old town, Dobbin's is a friendly and informal place with 15 small and creaky-floored but comfortable rooms. The building has been around for over three centuries, and has a priest's hole and an original 16th-century fireplace to prove it.

**Courtyard Coffee House** (☎ 9335 1881; 38 Scottish Quarter; snacks £2-4; ☎ 9am-4.45pm Mon-Sat) This café serves tasty home-made soups and light lunches as well as coffee and cakes, and has a second branch inside Carrickfergus Castle.

**our pick Wind Rose** (☎ 9335 1164; Rodgers Quay; mains £8-12; ☎ food noon-9pm) This stylish, modern bar-bistro, with a more formal restaurant upstairs (open Friday and Saturday evening only), serves a range of dishes from pasta and pizza to steaks and stir-fries. The outdoor terrace overlooking the forest of yacht masts in the marina is a real sun-trap on a summer afternoon.

### Getting There & Away

There's an hourly train service between Carrickfergus and Belfast (£3, 30 minutes).

### INLAND COUNTY ANTRIM

To the west of the high moorland plateau above the Glens of Antrim, the hills slope down to the agricultural lowlands of Lough Neagh and the broad valley of the River Bann. This region is rarely visited by tourists, who either take the coast road or speed through on the way from Belfast to Derry, but there are a few places worth seeking out if you have time to spare.

### Antrim Town

pop 19,800

The town of Antrim (Aontroim) straddles the River Sixmilewater, close to an attractive bay on the shores of Lough Neagh. During

the 1798 Rising, the United Irishmen fought a pitched battle along the length of the town's High St.

The **tourist information centre** (☎ 9442 8331; info@antrim.gov.uk; 16 High St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Jul & Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat May, Jun & Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr) provides a free, self-guided heritage trail leaflet, and has internet access for £1.50 per 30 minutes.

The town centre is dominated by a bleakly modern shopping mall, but a few older buildings survive including the fine **courthouse**, which dates back to 1762. Beyond the courthouse is the **Barbican Gate** (1818) and a portion of the old castle walls.

Pass through the gate and the underpass beyond to reach **Antrim Castle Gardens** (admission free; ☎ 9.30am-dusk Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 2-5pm Sun). The castle burned down many years ago, but the grounds remain as one of the few surviving examples of a 17th-century ornamental garden.

Lough Rd leads west from the town centre to **Antrim Lough Shore Park**, where the vast size of Lough Neagh (see boxed text, p638) is apparent. There are picnic tables and lakeside walking trails.

Goldline Express 219 from Belfast to Ballymena stops in Antrim (£4, 40 minutes, hourly Monday to Friday, seven on Saturday). There are also frequent trains from Belfast to Antrim (£4, 25 minutes, 10 daily Monday to Saturday, five on Sunday) continuing to Derry.

### Ballymena

pop 29,200

Ballymena (An Baile Meánach) is the home turf of Ian Paisley, the founder and leader of the Free Presbyterian Church and the stridently antinationalist and anti-Catholic Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and, since May 2007, First Minister of Northern Ireland. The town council was the first to be controlled by the DUP in 1977 and voted unanimously to remove all mention of Darwin's theory of evolution from religious education in Ballymena's schools. The town is also the birthplace of the actor Liam Neeson, of *Schindler's List* and *Star Wars* fame.

The **Ecos Environmental Centre** (☎ 2566 4400; www.ecoscentre.com; Broughshane Rd; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-5pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun), on the eastern edge of town, is a visitor centre dedicated

### DETOUR: GALGORM

About 6km west of Ballymena is the **Galgorm Resort & Spa** (☎ 2588 0080; www.galgorm.com; 136 Fenaghy Rd, Galgorm; r from £130; ♿), a 19th-century manor house in a lovely setting on the bank of the River Maine. Recently taken over by the owners of Belfast's boutique hotel Ten Square (p595), the Galgorm has been redeveloped and extended to create one of Ireland's top country-house hotels.

The rustic atmosphere of the original **Gillie's Bar** (mains £7-16; ☎ food served 7am-10pm), set in the former stables, has been retained with bare stone walls, huge timber beams, a log fire and cosy sofas, but it has been extended into a spectacular, new, high-roofed barn with a huge, central free-standing chimney and a monumental staircase framed by crouching sphinxes – all in all, a pretty jaw-dropping setting for some of the fanciest pub grub in Ireland.

to alternative energy sources and sustainable technology – the centre's waste water is filtered through reed beds, and used to irrigate nearby willow coppices which provide fuel for heating and electricity, supplemented by solar panels. There are lots of hands-on exhibits to keep the kids amused, plus a picnic and play area, a pond with ducks to feed, and radio-controlled boats to play with.

Goldline Express 219 goes to Ballymena from Belfast (£6, one hour, hourly Monday to Friday, seven Saturday). Bus 128 goes to Carnlough on the coast (£3, one hour, four daily Monday to Saturday).

Trains from Belfast run more frequently (£6, 10 daily Monday to Saturday, five on Sunday); Ballymena is on the Derry-Belfast train line.

### Slemish

The skyline to the east of Ballymena is dominated by the distinctive craggy peak of Slemish (438m). The hill is one of many

sites in the North associated with Ireland's patron saint – the young St Patrick is said to have tended goats on its slopes. On St Patrick's Day, thousands of people make a pilgrimage to its summit; the rest of the year it's a pleasant climb, though steep and slippery in wet weather, rewarded with a fine view (allow one hour return from the parking area).

### Arthur Cottage

The ancestors of Chester Alan Arthur (1830-86), 21st president of the USA, lived in an 18th-century thatched **cottage** (☎ 2588 0781; Dreen, Cullybackey; adult/child £2/1; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat Easter-Sep) in Cullybackey, about 6km northwest of Ballymena. Staff in traditional costume give demonstrations of bread-making and other crafts on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday at 1.30pm throughout June, July (except on the 12th) and August.

Cullybackey is a stop on the Belfast-Derry railway line.

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