

THE HILLTOWN FARM TRAVELOGUE

Special Spots & Walks Around the Hilltown Farm

1. Murvagh Beach (Map 11)

Turn left out of the driveway. Go past the graveyard entrance and all the way to the end of the road and turn left at the sign for Murvagh Beach. This road takes you out to the beach.

Turn right on the beach and you have a beautiful walk as far as you want, with the option of walking along the road that parallels the beach just on the other side of the dunes, on the way back. This road ends/begins near the lifeguard box. (Aprx Round Trip 1-1.5 hours)

Turn left on the beach and you can go as far as you want and return the same way, or, as you walk around the first point, continue on, passing about three farmsteads and about 100 yards after the homestead on the dunes, start looking for a small vehicle accessible track leading off the beach which shortly joins a road that parallels the beach. Turn left on this road and go to where you have to bear left or right at an intersection with a pretty house on the left. Bear left all the way to the Hilltown driveway. (Aprx Round Trip 1-1.5 hours)

2. Bell's Isle and Fosters Castle (Map 11)

Walk out to Murvagh Beach (see #1) and take a right. Follow the beach all the way around to the right until your facing a heavily wooded hill. This is Bell's Isle and hidden from view are the *haunted* ruins of an old manor house called Fosters Castle. Follow the bank around to the left until you come to the remains of the old road leading across the bay and up onto the island. At this point, attempt to follow a faint path up onto the island - *enter at your own risk*. You'll eventually reach the remains of the castle - *explore and enjoy but watch your back!* (Aprx Round Trip 2-3 hours)

3. Drumlongfield (Map 11)

This is the field/hill behind the Hilltown. During a beautiful afternoon and/or sunset, simply follow the steps up the hill behind the house, through the gate and walk to the top of the hill (this is the Hilltowns' land that we rent to our neighbor Geoffrey McClay). It's a spectacular view, unique to the Hilltown and a great spot to relax, read and have a glass of wine - with the cows.

4. Drumhome Parish Graveyard (Map 11)

This is the graveyard you can see out the front windows. A childhood favorite and a challenge to find the oldest gravestone. We have ancestors buried here. Simply take a

left out of the driveway and you'll soon come to the entrance to the graveyard on your left.

5. Dromhome, Dromore and Dromoske - The Lake Loop (Map 11)

Turn right out of the driveway and continue straight on this road (do not turn left towards McClay's). Bear right at the V (small bridge) then bear left at the next V and continue up the hill. Continue straight on this road, eventually curving left and down the hill towards the lake. At the T turn left, passing two homesteads on your left and soon after the second homestead, turn hard left up a rather remote looking road (quite a steep hill). Continue straight on this road all the way to a four-way intersection where you'll turn left and fairly soon after bear right and continue straight until the Hilltown driveway on your left. (Aprx Round Trip 1 hour)

Favorite Day/Camping Trips

6. St. John's Point (Map 10)

Drive through Donegal town and bear left out of the diamond, following signs to Mountcharles, Inver and Dunkineely. Take a left at St. John's Point and Castle Murray signs on the left, just beyond the village of Dunkineely. The peninsula is about 5 miles long, absolutely beautiful, with a lovely crescent beach near the end and plenty of excellent camping sites between the beach and the lighthouse at the very end. You can either park in the Castle Murray parking lot (just ask to make sure) and walk along the road out to the point (Aprx Round Trip 4 hours) or drive out to the beach or lighthouse and explore from there. The large rock at the end, slightly separated from the mainland, is a nesting place for sea gulls. See the 'Restaurants' section for a description of the wonderful Castle Murray Restaurant located near the beginning of the road out to St. John's Point

7. Lough Eske/Doonan Waterfall Hike (Map 11)

Drive through Donegal town and bear left out of the diamond towards Killybegs and very soon after take a right onto Lough Eske road. Follow the rest of route as marked on Map 11, all the way up to Edergole - don't take right down towards the lake, follow the road up towards the mountain. Hike will begin on turf road that leads up the mountain. Doonan Waterfall is a ways up the mountain, hidden from view but audible!! The view of Lough Eske is great! A fairly easy climb - as always, wear waterproof footwear. (Aprx Round Trip 2 hours)

8. Mullaghnadreesruhan Hike (Map 11)

Highest of the Blue Stack Mountains - 2,219 feet. Follow the same road as Lough Eske/Doonan Waterfall Hike, only turn left at a V in the road with a small sign that says Family Homes of Ireland, just before Ardnamona Estate and follow the road as map

indicates. Follow the middle branch of the Eglisk River up the mountain. This hike is a challenging one and quite steep near the top. The view is spectacular! (Aprx Round Trip 5 hours)

9. Doorin Point (Map 11)

Drive through Donegal town and bear left out of the diamond towards Killybegs into Mountcharles. Turn left in middle of Mountcharles near top of hill at old-fashioned water pump. Follow this road all the way to the end. At low tide rocks are great for exploring and the large rock out on the point can be reached at low tide (be careful, the tides come and go quickly).

10. Killybegs Town (Map 10)

Charming fishing port of Donegal County. Fishing fleet comes in the evening, and fish can be bought on the pier. Colorful fish auctions take place. A good place to eat dinner there is the Sail Inn (opens at 6:00 PM) on Main Street.

11. Slieve League Hike (Map 10)

Take the road out of Donegal Town through Mountcharles, Dunkineely, Killybegs, and the coast road (soon after the Blue Haven Bar bearing left, but only if time permits) to Kilcar and on to Carrick. In the middle of Carrick, just before the Slieve League Pub on the left, turn left and follow the road out to the ocean and Bunglas. Ignore one turn to the right that says "Slieve League." You want Bunglas signs. Road winds all the way up to a car park. Climb on sheep path along the edge of the cliff over "One Man's Pass" to the top. A long, breathtaking hike. Steep cliffs down to the ocean the whole way up (Aprx Round Trip 6 hours). If you want to stop at a wonderful pub on the way back, there is a red/orange colored pub on the road back to the town of Carrick. It is a fascinating place, well worth a stop (can't remember the name but you can't miss the color of the building).

12. Malin Beg and Trabane and the Signal Tower(Map 10)

One of the most beautiful beaches imaginable. Go through Carrick and turn left as shown on map towards Malin More. Go past Malin Bay and through Malin Beg to the parking lot at the very end of the road. There is good camping at the top of the cliff and a glorious beach at the bottom of the long flight of steep steps.

13. Glencolumbkille and the Signal Tower (Map 10)

Go through Carrick and follow main road right to Glencolumbkille. Town itself is interesting and the folk museum there is worth investigating. The climb up to the signal tower at Glen Head above Glencolumbkille is not too demanding and very picturesque.

14. Port (Map 10)

Go to Carrick and turn right just after bridge crossing as you enter Carrick. Bare left after small white and green school house (soon after fish factory). Take a right at the Post Office in Meenacross (green PO Box and red shed). Take a left at the T, following signs to Port. Take a right at the next T with a small sign pointing to Port. This road is long, winding and isolated. One of the very favorite spots. A hidden, uninhabited, perfect little cove, ideal for camping and climbing. It is possible to hike the whole way south along the coast to the Glencolumbkille tower. (easily 10 miles round trip.) The hike along the coast north of the cove is spectacular. Fishermen come in boats in the evening with fresh salmon that we have cooked over a campfire, so take butter and aluminum foil in case you get lucky.

15. Maghera Strand and Caves (Map 10)

Turn right on the last road to Ardara just before you reach Killybegs harbor. There are three roads that lead to Ardara after Donegal town - take the third. Just before the road reaches Ardara, turn to the left where sign says "Caves" - at this turn you'll notice a hiking map if you'd rather hike out to the point. Follow this road along the bay, past the waterfall on left, to the end, (a small parking lot with a sign pointing towards the caves) a very picturesque little village bounded by mountains on one side and fantastic beach on other. Follow the path, through the gate and along the beach beyond the village. At low tide you can explore deep caves at the base of the cliffs. The climb up to the top above the caves is also very nice. Instead of driving back the same way, continue on this road and make a loop back to N56. You'll join N56 very close to the "Caves" turnoff. This is a good day trip to include a morning stroll through Ardara and an afternoon stroll through Killybegs on your way home.

16. Ardara - Shopping (Map 10)

Kennedy's and Campbell's are two good places to buy tweeds, sweaters, and gifts cheaper than in Donegal town. Factory outlet for Molloy's tweeds is on the left as you leave Ardara. If you want a quick, cheap meal, Charlies Cafe and Take Away is on your right before you leave town heading towards Molly's.

17. Benbulbin Hike (Map 16)

Take N15 (main road) South towards Sligo. Climb is short but very steep. View from the top is spectacular over Sligo Bay.

18. Knocknarea and Maeve's Cairn (Map 16)

Go into center of Sligo and turn right on road to Strandhill. Go around Knocknarea and turn left on smaller road that runs along base of mountain, overlooking Ballysadare Bay. Climb anywhere up this side. Interesting cairn at top and beautiful view.

19. Glenveagh National Park (Map 6)

See the brochure on Glenveagh National Park. Go out of Donegal Town on the road to Ballybofey, Strenorlar, and Letterkenny - N15. Take a left off N15 onto N13 towards Letterkenny. Stay on N13, left to Letterkenny. Stay on N13, at round-about turn left. At the next round-about turn right, towards Kilmacrennan. Bare left at "Oatfield?" (it's on your left - the intersection like a V) At the next round-about, turn right, towards Dunglow. Turn left off N56 at Glenveagh National Park sign, soon after the Lagoon Restaurant and Bar. Follow Glenveagh National Park sign and entrance is on the left. You must park your car in the parking lot and either take the shuttle bus out to the castle and gardens or walk out along the road (walking one way aprx 45 minutes). When your at the castle and gardens be sure to walk up to the viewpoint overlooking the lake and castle. (Aprx Round Trip 6 hours) This is a good trip to combine with #20 Port Marsh and Ballyness Bay.

20. Port Marsh and Ballyness Bay (Map 1)

See #19 Glenveagh National Park directions. Pass the park entrance on your left. Turn right at Falcaragh sign. Following this beautiful valley road, Muckish Mountain should be on your right. Come into Falcaragh and turn left (so Ballyness Bay is on your right side). Drive through Falcaragh, then turn right off of N56 at N.W. Passage sign following "Coast Road and Bloody Foreland" sign. Pass through Gortahork and bare right, following "Coast Road and Bloody Foreland" sign. When three islands and a beautiful beach are in sight, look for a small green and white sign for "Tory Island Cruiser". Turn right here, down a steep hill to a jetty. Park to the right of the jetty. (Aprx Round Trip Walk - to point and back - 1.5 hours). The grassy area between the beach dunes at Port Marsh and Ballyness Bay is excellent for camping. The beach, overlooking the islands of Inishbofin, Inishdooley, and Inishbeg has to be one of the most beautiful in the world. (Aprx Round Trip - excluding Glenveagh National Park - 6 hours)

21. Muckross Head (Map 10)

Bear left on Coast Road (Scenic Route) shortly after leaving Killybegs and passing Fintragh Bay. A small road to the left off the coast road will say "White Strand - Muckross Head." Drive all the way to the end Dramatic coastline with cliffs and pounding surf. Good place for exploring and climbing along rocks. Some sheltered camping sites and great picnic possibilities.

22. Good Bike Ride

Park car in Ardara - there are bike rental places there. Follow road out to Rossbeg and Dawros Bay. Follow road around peninsula to Portnoo and Naran. Make a loop back to Ardara.

23. Classie Bawn Castle and Trawalua Strand (Map 16)

Head South on the N15 (main road) towards Sligo. Pass through Ballyshannon and Bundoran and into Clifony. Take a right in the middle of town and very soon after sharp

curve to the right take a left onto the road with a cattle grid. Follow the end, next to a beautiful soccer field. Follow the stream out to the beach. This is a beautiful beach! If you walk north to the farthest point, you will see the castle on the hill. This castle was formerly the residence of Lord Mountbatten before he was murdered by the IRA. It is still in private ownership.

24. Glencar Lake and Waterfall

Take N15 (main road) South through Ballyshannon and into Sligo. Once in Sligo start following signs for Glencar. Absolutely breathtaking scenery with high dramatic rock faced mountains to one side of lake and the Drumlin hills to the other. Lots of pine trees and the fauna along the way. The waterfall is spectacular.

25. Inishowen Peninsula Day trip

Take N15 north to Ballybofey and gen on N13 north towards Letterkenny and Derry. After Speenoge, look for signs for the Grianan of Aileach. It's a cool ring fort built around 1500 BC, located on top of the hill (visible from the road!). From there, head back out on N13 towards Derry. Turn on R238 towards Buncrana. At Burnfoot, turn onto R239 towards Muff. At Muff, turn north onto R238 towards Moville. From there, you'll follow the coast of Lough Foyle on R241. You can stop and check out Greencastle. Keep on going until you reach Stroove, and there's a little parking lot just west of the lighthouse. There's a neat little beach here with potentially perfect waves, fun rocks to clamber about on, and if you're lucky, you can watch some seals swimming around and watching you! It's about 76 miles from Hilltown to Inishowen Head, the beach.