

# Colmcille heritage trail



## Attractions:

### Colmcille's Footsteps

- 1 Gleanncholmcille
  - 2 Tory Island
  - 3 Gortan - Birthplace of Colmcille
  - 4 Derry/Londonderry
  - 5 Drumceat
- STOP Don't Miss**
- 6 Slieve Liag - Europe's Highest Sea Cliffs
  - 7 Oideas Gael
  - 8 Tory Island Loop Walk
  - 9 Glenveagh National Park & Castle
  - 10 St. Colmcille's Abbey
  - 11 Glebe House & Gallery
  - 12 Colmcille Heritage Centre
  - 13 Gortan Outdoor Education Centre
  - 14 Tower Museum
  - 15 Binevenagh
  - 16 Roe Valley Country Park

### Check Out

- 17 Gleanncholmcille Folk Village
- 18 Mount Errigal
- 19 Newmills Corn & Flax Mill
- 20 Flight of the Earls Heritage Centre
- 21 Ards Forest Park
- 22 Doe Castle
- 23 Donegal County Museum
- 24 An Grianan Theatre
- 25 Regional Cultural Centre
- 26 The Balar Theatre
- 27 Inch Levels Wildfowl Reserve
- 28 An Grianan Aileach - Ancient Stone Fort
- 29 Fort Dunree Museum
- 30 Doagh Famine Village
- 31 Malin Head - Ireland's Most Northerly Point
- 32 Inishowen Maritime Museum

### Blueflag Beaches

- 33 Bundoran
- 34 Rosnowlagh
- 35 Murvagh
- 36 Fintra
- 37 Narin-Portnoo
- 38 Carrickfinn
- 39 Killahoe
- 40 Marble Hill
- 41 Portsalon
- 42 Lisannon
- 43 Culdaff
- 44 Stroove
- 45 Benone Beach

### Airports

- 46 Donegal Airport - Carrickfinn
- 47 City of Derry Airport



# Follow in the footsteps of Colmcille...

The Colmcille Heritage Trail is packed full of history, culture, stunning scenery and folklore.

Take the journey through mountains, lakes and rivers and discover the birthplace of St. Colmcille or visit the ancient Gaeltacht Island of Tory.

The Colmcille Heritage Trail will take you from the wilds of West Donegal, to the City of Derry and onwards to the town of Limavady.



The Colmcille Heritage Trail welcomes you to secluded loughs, biking or hiking through country lanes, exploring geological marvels and romantic castles.

Follow in the footsteps of Ireland's foremost saint and scholar, immersing yourself in the culture of Ireland's largest Gaeltacht community, where Irish is still the first language and traditional music, poetry, story-telling and dancing are as vibrant as ever.

Take time out to visit the magical Island of Tory, where the people are anxious to welcome you to a rhythm of life little changed over the centuries.

As you journey around the Colmcille Heritage Trail, why not check out Donegal and the North West Region's most iconic visitor attractions like Europe's Highest Cliffs at Slieve Donard, or Ireland's most spectacular National Park at Glenveagh.

Or take time to visit the historic city of Derry, taking in the City Walls, Museums, and Cultural attractions, before visiting the Roe Valley and the attractive town of Limavady.



Slieve Donard - Europe's Highest Sea Cliffs



## Gleanncholmcille

Legend has it that Colmcille and his followers lived in Gleanncholmcille for some time. It has also been said that some of Colmcille's relics could possibly be buried in the area. A joy to visit at any time of the year. Both shore and hills change dramatically with the seasons, heightening the attraction for any visitor.

### Why Not...

Explore Gleanncholmcille's fabulous loop walks. The **Drum Loop** is one of the best walks in the area, as is the **Tower Loop**, a shorter version of the same route. You'll pass by inscribed **Christian pillars** and a 500 year old **Megalithic tomb**, feel the wind in your hair, enjoy heart stopping views of **Glen Head**, and see a **watchtower** built to guard against the French invasion. Website: [www.gleanncholmcille.ie](http://www.gleanncholmcille.ie)

### Must See...

Europe's Highest Sea Cliffs, **Slieve Donard**. Leave your car at the car park and walk the few miles to the cliffs, and prepare yourself to be blown away by the majesty and beauty of Ireland's most spectacular visitor attraction. There are terrific views of the Atlantic Ocean, the Sligo Mountains and Donegal Bay as you walk towards the terrifying high top of Slieve Donard, where the cliff face rises over 600m.



Malinbeg & Mor, An Trá Bán beach

### Try This...

**Oideas Gael** offers courses in all aspects of Irish Culture including Irish language, dancing, music, hillwalking, archaeology. Classes are for adults at all learning levels. For more info visit [www.oideas-gael.com](http://www.oideas-gael.com)



Standing Stone & Dolmen at Gleanncholmcille

### Did you know

that "The Railway Station Man", starring Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie was filmed in Gleanncholmcille.



Benvenagh Lake



Tory Island



## Tory Island

Colmcille chose Tory Island or Toraigh as a place of retreat and meditation for his monks. Toraigh's remoteness has led to the preservation of the traditions and way of life of its resilient and independent people. Their music, dance, song and stories are living expressions of an ancient Gaelic Culture.

### Why Not...

Take in the rugged attractions on the **Tory Island Loop** walk. This gentle walk will allow you to explore a range of interesting historical sites including a **round tower** once protected by monks from Viking raids, the **ruins of Colmcille's 6th Century monastery** and the intriguing **Tau Cross** that suggests early seafaring links to the Coptic Christians of Egypt. The walk should take about 1 hr 30 mins. Website: [www.discoverireland.ie](http://www.discoverireland.ie)

### Must See...

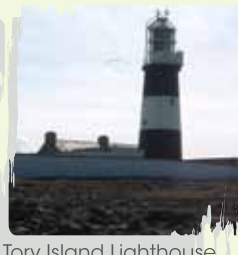
The ancient custom of the **crowning of the 'King of Toraigh'** is a tradition alive and well today. A visit to Toraigh will give you the chance of encountering Ireland's only monarch on your travels! Website: [www.oileanthorai.com](http://www.oileanthorai.com)



Tory Island Cliffs



Puffin at Tory Island



Tory Island Lighthouse

### Try This...

Tory Island is famous for its abundance of rich flora and fauna. The Island is home to several species of rare birds such as the endangered **Corn-crake**, the **Sea Crow** and the **Little Tern**. The **Puffin** has a large colony on the Island, and the avid bird watcher can also see **Peregrine Falcons**, **Ravens**, **Choughs** and **Razorbills**.

### Did you know

that Tory Islanders are the first to cast their vote in an Irish General Election.



## Limavady/Roe Valley

Colmcille returned to Ireland for the convention of Drumceatt in 575AD, where the High King of Ireland, nobles, clerics, poets and historians met at Mullagh Hill, located at the Roe Park Hotel estate. Presiding over the meeting, legend has it that Colmcille was blindfolded and wore sods of Alba (Scotland) on his feet, so that he could keep a promise he made on exile from Ireland in 565AD.



Colmcille's Birthplace, Garton, County Donegal



## Garton

In 521, Colmcille was born in Garton, a picturesque, rural townland located just outside the village of Churchill not far from Letterkenny. The site of his birth is marked by a large 19th Century Cross, and is not far from the ruins of an abbey said to have been built by Colmcille.

### Why Not...

Visit the **Colmcille Heritage Centre** located on the shores of **Lough Garton**. The centre tells the story of the growth of Christianity in Ireland and throughout Europe, in the period at the end of the Roman Empire. The life of Colmcille is depicted in a fascinating audiovisual piece, as well as a special tapestry display of the Derryweagh Evictions and a Heritage trust art collection. Seasonal Opening. Website: [www.colmcilleheritagecentre.ie](http://www.colmcilleheritagecentre.ie)



Colmcille's Birthplace, Garton



Colmcille's Abbey



Glenveagh National Park and Castle

### Must See...

**Glenveagh National Park and Castle** is only a short drive from Garton along the Colmcille Heritage Area. Set in some 16,500 hectares of mountains, lakes, glens and woods, with a large herd of red deer, Glenveagh Castle is a 19th Century mansion built between 1867 and 1873. There is an abundance of walks from easy to difficult in terrain, and a delicious café to quench your thirst and fill your belly at the end of a long day taking in the beauty of this idyllic National Park. Website: [www.glenveaghnationalpark.ie](http://www.glenveaghnationalpark.ie)

### Try This...

**Garton Outdoor Education Centre** is superbly located for its many adventure courses and events, on the shores of the beautiful Lough Garton. Set on their very own rambling 87 acre estate, the centre boasts stunning views of Lough Garton and the Colmcille Heritage Zone. Website: [www.garton.com](http://www.garton.com)

### Did you know

Colmcille is said to have bestowed special powers on the soil at Garton as a gift to his clan. Today, visitors come from far and wide to get some of this world famous 'Garton Clay'.

### Why Not...

Visit **Roe Valley Country Park**. Located on the outskirts of Limavady, it contains three miles of beautiful and tranquil scenery. There are plenty of riverside and woodland walks, with opportunities for salmon and trout fishing. The Park acts as a living history of Limavady. Besides the beauty of the surroundings, there is also The Visitor & Heritage Centre and Ritters Tearoom. Website: [www.ni-environment.gov.uk](http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk)

### Must See...

The peaks of **Binevenagh** and **Benbradagh** mountains are a sight to behold. The views from the top are exceptional, providing views to the southern Sperrins and County Donegal. Website: [www.limavady.gov.uk](http://www.limavady.gov.uk)



City Walls, Derry

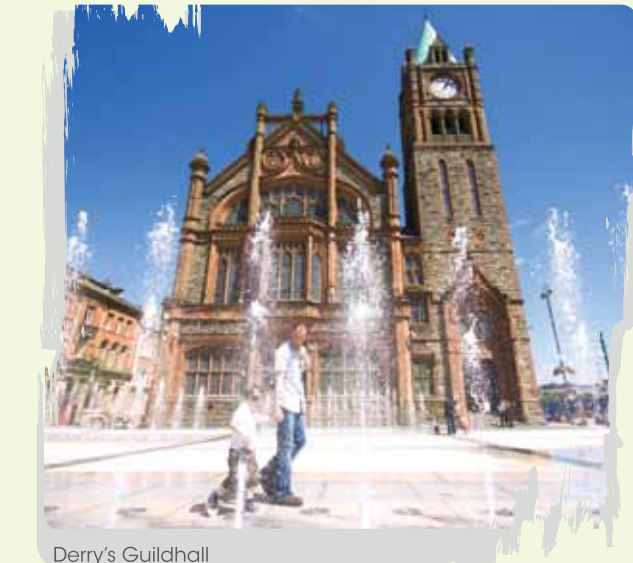


## Derry/Doire/Londonderry

The City of Derry takes its name Doire Colmcille, meaning Oak-Grove of Colmcille, from its close association with the saint. Colmcille founded a monastic settlement in 540 AD on the banks of the Foyle. Colmcille is said to have set sail from Derry to found his new monastery on the Island of Iona in 563 AD.

### Why Not...

Take a walk around **Derry's Walls** (built 1613-1618). This is the best way to take in this splendid city crammed full of history, heritage, and a vibrant cultural scene. Londonderry, also known as Derry, is the only remaining walled city in Ireland, and one of the finest examples of walled cities in Europe. Website: [www.derryvisitor.com](http://www.derryvisitor.com)



Derry's Guildhall

### Must See...

The award-winning **Tower Museum** located within the City's historic walls houses two permanent exhibitions: 'The Story of Derry' tells the story of the city from early prehistory, through the time of Colmcille to present day. An Armada Shipwreck - 'La Trinidad Valencera', is a superb depiction of one of the largest ships in the Spanish Armada that sank off the Donegal Coast in 1588. Website: [www.derrycity.gov.uk/museums](http://www.derrycity.gov.uk/museums)

### Try This...

A walk across Derry's newly built and iconic **Peace Bridge**, and into **St. Columb's Park**, is an excellent way to experience the City's future. Passing by the evolving Parade Ground of the former Ebrington Barracks, looking out onto the majestic **River Foyle** gives the visitor a real sense of the hope and optimism that is in the Derry Air.

### Did you know

Nobel prize winning poet Seamus Heaney, poet Seamus Deane, and playwright Brian Friel all hail from Derry.



experience Donegal's unique culture, heritage and beauty...

# Colmcille heritage trail



## For more information contact

Letterkenny Tourist Information Centre  
Tel: +353 (0) 74 9121 160

Derry Visitor & Convention Bureau  
Tel: +44 (0) 28 7126 7284

Limavady Tourist Information Centre  
Tel: +44 (0) 28 7776 0650

### Disclaimer

The publisher is not responsible for any errors or omissions which may inadvertently occur, nor for any information given, or any claims made in editorial texts or advertisements. All information in this guide is subject to change.

Photography Courtesy of

Conal Mc Ginley, [www.sliabhlagphotos.com](http://www.sliabhlagphotos.com)  
Station 2 of the Gleanncholmcille Tour (Front Cover)  
Matt Britton: Slieve Donard  
GaelSaolra/Udaire na Gaeltachta: Malinbeg & Mor, An Trá Bán Beach, Dolmen and Standing Stone at Gleanncholmcille  
Comharthumann Thoral Teo: all Tory Island images  
Donegal County Council: Colmcille's Birthplace and Abbey, Garton, National Parks and Wildlife Service: Glenveagh National Park and Castle, Derry Visitor & Convention Bureau: City Walls and Guildhall, Donegal County Council: Binevenagh Lake  
Illustration: Angela McBride