

# Donegal maritime trail



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# Donegal Maritime Trail



Some say the best way to experience and explore the beauty of Ireland's Most Northerly County is to do so by sea.

County Donegal has a strong connection with the water, and has been influenced by the Atlantic Ocean, its many Loughs, Rivers and lakes over the centuries.

The Donegal Maritime Trail will take you on a journey from the Gaeltacht Islands of Tory and Arranmore, to the historic and beautiful Loughs Swilly and Foyle. Whether this journey is taken by sea or land, there are plenty of surprises on the way in the picturesque towns of Killybegs, Rathmullan and Greencastle.

Fine Food, freshly caught, coupled with fantastic visitor attractions for all the family provide the perfect Donegal Maritime Recipe.

And of course, no visit to County Donegal would be complete without a story from the Spanish Armada or a tale of Gold lost from the many shipwrecks around this iconic coastline.



Killybegs Harbour

## 1 Killybegs

Killybegs is a cruise ship destination and the perfect place to base yourself when touring the south west of County Donegal. A lively fishing town, with Ireland's largest fleet of trawlers, Killybegs has no shortage of excellent restaurants, shops and eclectic markets.

### Must See...

Take the **coast road** from Killybegs to Europe's Highest Sea Cliffs at Slabh Liag. Travelling high above the ocean and into the heart of **Donegal's Gaeltacht**, the road is popular amongst travellers for its stunning views of Donegal Bay, Benbulbin Mountain.

### Why Not...

Visit the **Killybegs Maritime & Heritage Centre** You will have the opportunity to view the largest fishing fleet in Ireland in its natural harbour; step into the boots of a fisherman via the Bridge Simulator replica of a boat wheelhouse, and experience the virtual reality of the ocean. Website: [www.killybegs.ie](http://www.killybegs.ie)

### Try This...

**Europe's Highest Sea Cliffs - Slabh Liag.** Leave your car at the car park, walk the few miles to the cliffs and prepare yourself to be blown away by the majesty and beauty of the 600m high cliff face.

### Did you know

In 1588, Killybegs was the last port of call for the Spanish vessel, La Girona, which had dropped its anchor in the harbour.



Flight of the Earls Statue, Rathmullan Beach

## 5 Rathmullan

This delightful and unassuming sea side town on the **Fanad Peninsula** looks out onto Lough Swilly, Inch Island and across to Inishowen. Rathmullan played a major role in Irish History, as it bore witness to the 'Flight of the Earls' in 1607. Nowadays, it hosts regular festivals and provides a well deserved stopping point for the many sailing enthusiasts who moor up daily.

### Must See...

Learn all about a seminal period in Ireland's tumultuous history at the **Flight of the Earls Heritage Centre**. The superb exhibition is located in the Napoleonic fort built in the 19th Century, to guard against a possible French invasion. Website: [www.flightoftheearls.ie](http://www.flightoftheearls.ie)

### Why Not...

Check out the hauntingly elegant 'Flight of the Earls' statue by John Behan, commissioned by Donegal County Council to commemorate the 400th Anniversary of the historic event. A stroll along the beach provides stunning views of Inishowen and Inch Island.

### Try This...

The annual **Rathmullan Sea Fest** in late June showcases the best of Inishowen food & produce, as well as taking in the ever popular **Lough Swilly Regatta**. There are also guided walks, storytelling and a variety of events to suit families, groups and weary travellers. Website: [www.seafestloughswilly.com](http://www.seafestloughswilly.com)

### Did you know

Wolfe Tone, a leader of the 1798 rising and an important figure in Irish history, was captured in the waters off Rathmullan.



Arranmore Island Lighthouse

## 2 Arranmore Island

There is a feeling of enchantment from the moment you step aboard the ferry at **Burtonport** and steam past the surrounding islands of **Inisiscoo** and **Innishkeragh** and arrive at one of Ireland's largest inhabited Islands, Arranmore. Populated from the Iron Age onwards, Arranmore has been a centre of Gaelic culture for centuries.

### Must See...

The **Sli Arainn Mhor (Arranmore Loop Walk)** is part of the Bealachta na Gaeltachta, National Waymarked Way, and begins and ends at the **Ferry Port**. The views in all directions along the walk are stunning and the western half of the route is particularly remote. Highlights include: **Birdwatching** along the cliffs, the famous **lighthouse**, the **Old Mill & Courthouse** and the historical 'Cave of Slaughter'.

### Why Not...

Check out the **Donegal Film and Radio Islands Archive**. This unique digital collection of newsreels, television, radio news and documentaries tells the story of Donegal Islands.

### Try This...

The crystal clear waters surrounding Arranmore provide great **dive sites** and **sea angling**, while the Island's freshwater lakes are home to brown and rainbow trout.

### Did you know

During World War II a look out post was set up on the Island to watch for German U-Boats.



Mount Errigal

## 3 Gweedore

Gweedore is located in the heart of the **Donegal Gaeltacht**. A spectacular collection of townlands, situated on the scenic North West coast, Gweedore is a mecca for visitors with beautiful beaches, enchanting mountains, music, literature, poetry and a vibrant people - Gweedore truly is the heart and soul of Donegal.

### Must See...

A trip around **Bloody Foreland** is jam-packed with sights, sounds and history. Bloody Foreland (Cnoc Fola) meaning, 'Hill of Blood', takes its name from the way in which the setting sun enhances the natural **red** of the **granite cliffs**.

### Why Not...

Spend some time in **Bunbeg** or go island hopping to some of Donegal's smaller islands such as **Gola** or **Inishinny**. Bunbeg is a busy coastal town and ideal place to plan your Donegal maritime adventure from. With **ferry services** available to Tory Island on a daily basis.

### Try This...

Climb Donegal's Highest Peak, **Mount Errigal** (751m). Heaven is the word that comes to mind to those who climb Errigal's twin summits and gaze from cloud level to the ravishing beauty of mountains, forests, wild parkland and shimmering lakes below.

### Did you know

Famous sister's Moya Brennan and Enya from the world famous band, Clannad, were born in Gweedore. The family-run pub, Leo's Tavern, is a great place for a session.



Tory Island

## 4 Tory Island

Tory Island's name conjures up images of majesty and beauty. In fact, as the northernmost outpost of Donegal's thriving Gaeltacht culture, Tory is home to its own King, Iron Age forts, and medieval round towers. Rare wildlife and wild flowers find shelter on the Island. The finest musicians, storytellers and dancers host sessions that linger into the early hours.

### Must See...

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

### 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 Colmille's 6th Century monastery** and the intriguing **Tau Cross**. Duration approximately 1h 30mins. Website: [www.discoverireland.ie](http://www.discoverireland.ie)

### Try This...

Famous for its abundance of **rich flora and fauna**, Tory is also home to several species of **rare birds** such as the Puffin and the endangered Corncrake.

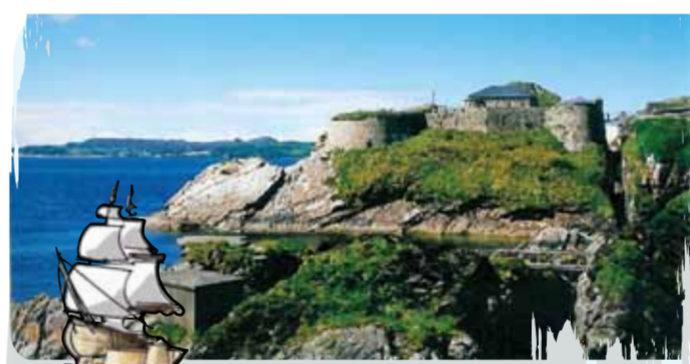
### Did you know

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



discover donegal's history along Ireland's most northerly coast

# Donegal maritime trail



Fort Dunree

## 7 Fort Dunree

In its spectacular natural location Fort Dunree is rich in wildlife, some of it unique to the area. The fort has evolved through time from its humble beginnings as a small fort in the 19th Century, growing into a key military installation during World War I. It stood guard whilst Admiral Lord Jellicoe's fleet anchored in Lough Swilly before engaging the German Navy in the battle of Jutland.

### Must See...

The **Museum of Fort Dunree** is a real highlight for any visitor. From the underground bunkers housing a vast collection of artifacts, to the hugely impressive Saldhana Suite, which houses the Rockhill Collection, Fort Dunree tells the story of Ireland's Defence Forces. There is also a cafe if you find yourself getting thirsty! Website: [www.dunree.pro.ie](http://www.dunree.pro.ie)

### Why Not...

Visit the **wildlife discovery room** where you can get an insight into the diversity of animals that inhabit the surrounding area.

### Try This...

Walking around **Dunree Point** is undoubtedly one of the highlights of a visit to the Inishowen Peninsula. A series of signposted footpaths allow the visitor to explore at their own leisure. The waters surrounding Dunree are home to **Basking Sharks, Bottle Nosed Dolphins** and **Sea Lions**.

### Did you know

Control of Fort Dunree was transferred to the Irish Free State just before World War II.



Maritime Museum From Pier

## 8 Greencastle

Greencastle is a bustling fishing village on the beautiful Inishowen Peninsula. The village is home to an impressive fleet of trawlers and boats from which fresh produce is caught and served on the plates of Donegal's finest restaurants. There are fabulous views of the Causeway Coast from this busy village.

### Must See...

**Inishowen Maritime Museum** is an absolute gem. This wonderful museum and **planetarium** houses extensive nautical exhibits, photographs, and ancient maritime equipment. The state of the art planetarium has its own theatre and stages regular laser light concerts. Website: [www.inishowenmaritime.com](http://www.inishowenmaritime.com)

### Why Not...

Visit everyone's favourite **beach at Kinnego Bay**. This hidden gem is a popular location for divers, where the **wreck of the Spanish Armada's Trinidad Valencera** has lay since sinking in 1588. A plaque near the beach commemorates the event.

### Try This...

The **Inishowen Head Loop walk** is an 8km walk starting at Inishowen Head. This moderate walk takes about 3 hours to complete and provides great views of Lough Foyle, the North Coast and the Inishowen Peninsula. On a fine day, the west of Scotland is visible. Website: [www.discoverireland.com](http://www.discoverireland.com)

### Did you know

Greencastle is the only place in Ireland that you can get a boat and travel south to Northern Ireland.

## For more information contact

Killybegs Tourist Information Centre  
[www.killybegs.ie](http://www.killybegs.ie)  
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