



**WALK  
SAFELY**

**Stay safe  
when walking  
in the Irish  
hills and  
countryside**



**Fáilte Ireland**  
National Tourism Development Authority

# **WALKING IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO APPRECIATE IRELAND'S BEAUTIFUL SCENERY**

Discover our jagged coastline, rolling countryside, quiet forests and remote mountain valleys by following Ireland's network of marked trails. Choose from looped walks that last from one hour up to a day, and multi-day trails. Walkers with map-reading and compass skills can venture off-trail to explore Ireland's rugged mountain areas. Wherever you go, take this leaflet with you. This advice will help you to walk safely and also reduce the demands made on Mountain Rescue Ireland and the other emergency services.

**Remember, your safety is your own responsibility!**

## **THE IRISH WEATHER**

**"THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS BAD WEATHER, ONLY INAPPROPRIATE CLOTHING"** - Ranulph Fiennes

Be prepared for Ireland's changeable weather. It's possible to experience sunshine, strong winds and heavy rain all in one afternoon. If you plan to walk in the hills remember that the temperature will be lower there, the winds stronger and you are more likely to get rain. Mist is a serious problem; you can quickly lose all visibility, especially on coastal hills. Don't forget that heat can also be an issue and that sun hats, sun cream, and water are important to prevent sunburn, heatstroke and dehydration.

## **WEATHER FORECASTS**

[www.met.ie](http://www.met.ie) / [www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/ni](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/ni)

**South** 1550 123 850 / **East** 1550 123 851

**West** 1550 123 852 / **North** 1550 123 853

**Northern Ireland** 0870 9000100





## CHOOSING A TRAIL WALK

- ▶ Decide what type of walk you want and how long you want to walk for.
- ▶ Check [www.discoverireland.ie/walking](http://www.discoverireland.ie/walking), [www.irishtrails.ie](http://www.irishtrails.ie) or [www.walkni.com](http://www.walkni.com).
- ▶ Choose a walk that suits everybody in your group.
- ▶ Print the downloadable map and put it inside plastic to keep it dry.

## PLANNING A HILL WALK

- ▶ As there aren't marked footpaths high in the Irish hills you will need map-reading and compass skills to walk in these areas.
- ▶ Ask locally for advice on where to walk and what kind of terrain to expect.
- ▶ Be realistic; choose a route that matches the skills and ability of your group.
- ▶ Check the weather forecast and think about how the weather will affect your walk.
- ▶ Ensure you have enough time to complete the walk before darkness (*allow 1hr per 3km, add 30 mins for every 300m of ascent*).
- ▶ Leave details of your plans with somebody and don't forget to contact that person later to say you have returned safely.

## CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT FOR EVERY WALK

- ▶ Always bring a waterproof jacket.
- ▶ Wear sturdy shoes or boots suitable for use on wet and rough ground.
- ▶ Bring water and food.
- ▶ Carry a fully charged mobile phone (*mobile phones do not work everywhere, particularly in valleys and remote areas*).

## EXTRA ITEMS FOR LONGER WALKS

- ▶ Additional high energy food and liquids, including a hot drink in winter.
- ▶ Spare warm clothing, plus a hat and gloves are essential all year round.
- ▶ Waterproof overtrousers, torch, whistle, first aid kit and a survival bag or emergency shelter.
- ▶ Proper walking boots that provide grip, protect your feet and support your ankles – over 30% of injuries attended to by Mountain Rescue relate to the lower leg.
- ▶ If going off-trail in the hills you'll need map-reading skills, along with a map and compass (*a GPS can be useful, but it is not a substitute for map and compass; its usefulness relies on your map-reading ability and good judgment*).





## **DURING THE WALK**

- ▶ To avoid getting lost, check where you are on the map at regular intervals.
- ▶ If you are part of a group, keep together.
- ▶ Drink often and eat regularly.
- ▶ Watch for changes in the weather; if it deteriorates be prepared to alter the route or turn back.

## **WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET LOST**

- ▶ Keep calm – think about where you have walked and the last place you saw a marker post or a definite feature.
- ▶ Study the map – where do you think you are, can you see any obvious features that are marked on the map?
- ▶ You may have to re-trace your steps to get back on your route.
- ▶ If the mist is down consider descending to get below the cloud level.
- ▶ If you are still lost – look for large features to head for – such as roads and tracks that will lead you to a definite location.

## **WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY**

- ▶ Stay calm, assess the situation methodically and work out a plan of action.
- ▶ Shout or whistle (6 blasts) for help.
- ▶ Call the Mountain Rescue Service. Phone 999 or 112 and ask for Mountain Rescue, but remember it is a voluntary service and should only be contacted in a genuine emergency.
- ▶ If you need to send people to phone for help, make sure they can find their way and that they have written details of the group's location and the nature of any injuries.
- ▶ If you summon help using a mobile phone, keep it switched on and in coverage, so that Mountain Rescue can call you back.
- ▶ Treat any injuries to the best of your ability and keep the casualty warm and comfortable.
- ▶ Ensure the other members of the group are safe and comfortable – it may take hours for help to arrive.

**LOOK AFTER YOURSELF,  
AND MOST IMPORTANTLY  
ENJOY WALKING  
IN IRELAND**

# RESPONSIBLE ENJOYMENT OF THE IRISH COUNTRYSIDE

- ▶ **RESPECT PROPERTY** – Most of the Irish countryside is privately owned, including mountain land and marked walking routes. As there is no legal right of entry to private land, walkers depend on the goodwill and tolerance of landowners. To maintain this goodwill, walkers should act responsibly and respect the landowner's wishes.
- ▶ **PARK CAREFULLY** – Take care when parking at gateways or on narrow roads, remember that large farm vehicles or emergency services may need access. Do not leave valuables in your car.
- ▶ **DOGS CAN CAUSE PROBLEMS** – Dogs may chase or frighten farm animals, wildlife and other people. Dogs in the countryside should always be on a lead. Avoid taking dogs on the hills at any time.
- ▶ **PREVENT EROSION** – Keep to the path where there is one. This reduces erosion and disturbance of wildlife.
- ▶ **BRING YOUR LITTER HOME** – Litter detracts from the beauty of the countryside and can be hazardous to people and animals. Carry a small bag to take away all litter, including biodegradable items such as fruit peels and tea bags.
- ▶ **PUT SOMETHING BACK** – Support the rural economy by using local shops, pubs and restaurants.

For more information on how you can reduce the impact of your activities on the environment and other people, visit [www.leavenotraceireland.org](http://www.leavenotraceireland.org)



Published by Mountaineering Ireland in association with:



**WalkNI.com**  
Your definitive guide to walking  
in Northern Ireland

For further information on walking in Ireland visit:

[www.irishtrails.ie](http://www.irishtrails.ie)  
[www.discoverireland.ie/walking](http://www.discoverireland.ie/walking)  
[www.walkni.com](http://www.walkni.com)

For further information on walking clubs, training courses  
and the mountain environment visit:

[www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)

For further information on Mountain Rescue visit:

[www.mountainrescue.ie](http://www.mountainrescue.ie)



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