

Walking Trails

The 16,000 hectares of Glenveagh includes most of the Derryveagh Mountains, the Poisoned Glen and part of Errigal Mountain and is a beautiful place to walk the hills and follow trails. The park extends over a large area of north Donegal and you have free access to roam from all points.

Hill walking in Glenveagh National Park can be challenging for the novice, but there are also relatively easy trails described below for all levels within the park. Our popular Trail Walker Bus can bring you to some of our best starting points, conveniently leaving your car in the Car Park for your return.

Lakeside Walk

LENGTH: 3.5km (Not a looped walk)

TIME: 40mins

TERRAIN: A mostly flat gravel path

The walk begins at the bus shelter near the Visitor Centre from where there is a fine view of the valley of Glenveagh and continues along the shores of Lough Veagh. It is possible to walk one way and return by bus by obtaining a ticket at the Castle reception. The walk starts through a stand of mature Austrian pines and scattered native broadleaved trees such as holly, rowan and birch. Past the wooden shingle roofed boathouse is a recently constructed bridge over the Owencarrow river. The bridge was constructed by park staff using seasoned larch and recycled plastic decking. The Owencarrow river is the main outflow from Lough Veagh which eventually meets the sea at the Lackagh Bridge near Doe Castle.

The Owencarrow River is home to breeding salmon, trout, eel, freshwater pearl mussel, and otter. Beyond the bridge the path takes walkers out onto the more open landscape of blanket bog and wet heath habitat that is typical of much of Glenveagh and the west of Ireland generally. These are wet peatland habitats and, although mainly treeless, they are home to a range of plants and animals, many of which are unique to these habitats. As the path meanders along the glen and lake side, there are beautiful views across Lough Veagh and its scattered islets to the cliffs and open hilltops beyond. This sublime landscape offers a taste of a remote and peaceful Irish wilderness where nature comes first. Further along you will find examples of small native scrub woodland and mountain streams. The path ends in the wonderful Castle Gardens, an amazing botanical contrast to the wilder surrounding landscape.

Derrylahan Nature Trail

LENGTH: 2km (This is a looped walk)

TIME: 45mins

TERRAIN: Gravel track, both flat and steep in places

This attractive way-marked walk near the Visitor Centre is an ideal introduction to Glenveagh's natural environment. It offers visitors of all ages and fitness levels a chance to see some of the plants and animals of Glenveagh National Park. The trail passes through a number of habitats along the route. These include both native and planted Scots pine woodlands, and a section of blanket bog. The trail also provides excellent views of the Glenveagh Valley. The name Derrylahan is derived from the Irish Doire Leathan, meaning 'broad oakwood' because this area was originally covered in oak forest. The terrain is mostly gravel paths and visitors should allow approx. 45 minutes to fully explore the trail. A guide to the Derrylahan Nature Trail is available from the Visitor Centre. (Looped Walk start Location. (Grid Ref: C 039232)

The Garden Trail

LENGTH: 1km (This is a looped walk)

TIME: 1hr

TERRAIN: Gravel pathway

Following a well-marked route the trail offers visitors a full tour of the features of the gardens. Started around 1890 by Cornelia Adair and embellished in the 1960s and 1970s by Henry McIlhenny, the garden offers great contrast with the surrounding landscape. Features include an extensive collection of exotic trees and shrubs, an important collection of garden ornaments, a colourful walled garden and a number of locations where the visitor can relax and enjoy the natural environment. The Castle and Garden book gives a full account of the features encountered. The Garden Trail takes an hour to complete and is accessible to wheelchairs although steep in one or two places. (Looped Walk Start Location: (Grid Ref: C 019210)

Glen (Bridle Path) Walk

LENGTH: 8km (Not a looped walk so walkers must return or arrange a drop off or collection)

TIME: 2hrs

TERRAIN: A mostly flat dirt/gravel road rising gently over last 3km

This walk is a natural extension of the Lakeside Walk. It follows the shortest and most easily negotiated natural route through the Derryveagh Mountains. However, before the glen road was built, the route was so rocky and densely wooded as to be virtually impassable. Old settlements, now derelict, and native oak woodland can be seen along the walk which offers spectacular views of Lough Veagh and the surrounding mountains. (Location: Start at the back of the Castle (Grid Ref: C019208))

Lough Inshagh Walk

LENGTH: 7km (Not a looped walk so walkers must return to the Visitor Centre or arrange a vehicle at the Lacknacoo car park at Gartan)

TIME: 1hr 30mins

TERRAIN: Stony dirt track ending on a quiet tarred road

This pathway once connected Glenveagh Castle to the village of Church Hill. The carriages of the Lough Swilly railway brought visitors to the railway station. From here they were transported to Glenveagh Castle over the Lough Inshagh Road by pony and trap. Today the Lough Inshagh Path remains silent except for the occasional red deer browsing on the roadside vegetation, or walkers enjoying the solitude and scenery. This walk gives the walker a real feel of the open landscape of granite mountains and bogs where golden eagles and ravens soar and in summer the wheatear and meadow pipits are busy nesting along the length of the walk. It is an excellent walk to explore the eastern side of the park and brings the walker to the Glebe Gallery and St Colmcille's birthplace in Gartan. (Location: Starts near Loughveagh 0.5km from the Castle).

View Point Trail

LENGTH: 1km (This is a looped walk)

TIME: 35mins

TERRAIN: Steep stony path

The View Point Trail is perhaps the best short walk option in the park. It leads to an ideal vantage point for enjoying views of the rugged scenery, with magnificent perspectives of the Castle below, Lough Veagh and the surrounding landscapes. This circular 1.5km trail starts and ends at the Castle, taking around 50-60 min at a leisurely pace. The surface is good at all stages and very steep for several short distances. Follow the direction of the road behind the Castle, taking the path uphill just outside the garden gates. The route is signposted from here. From the top, the path returns via the lower garden, passing through a wooded gully and into the gardens where the trail returns to the Castle. Location: Start (Grid Ref: C 019209)