



Castleward Demesne

With 820 acres overlooking Strangford Lough, Castle Ward is one of the National Trust's most spectacular sites in Northern Ireland. Winding woodland, Lough shore, parkland and lake land trails are on offer making it ideal for outdoor recreation.

At the centre is a quirky 18th century mansion built inside and out in the distinctly different styles of classical Palladian and Gothic. The first house built by the Ward family, in about 1610, was a tower house designed with defence rather than comfort in mind. The house, which stands in the farmyard, is typical of those built by the Anglo-Irish at that time and was surrounded by a fortified farmyard or bawn.

There are pigs, a working Corn Mill and a Wildlife Centre in the Farm Yard and a Tea Room, Bookshop and Gift Shop in the Stable Yard. For children there is also an Adventure Play Area and a Victorian Play Room. Other facilities on offer include self-catering accommodation, toilets, off-road trails and a caravan & campsite. An outdoor pursuits centre is also based onsite.

- Local high water is 2 hours 15 minutes after high water at Belfast.

Strangford

From Strangford the Lough can be accessed from the public slipway in the village.

The harbour is afforded protection from the elements by Swan Island just off shore. This small island is a favourite nesting place for Sandwich, Arctic and Common terns that arrive from the edge of the Antarctic or Africa in their thousands to breed on the islands of Strangford Lough each spring.

Strangford Lough is an excellent area for seal spotting. Both Common and Grey Seals haul out on rocks at low tide. They are relatively easy to distinguish as the Common Seal is smaller with a spaniel dog type head - while the grey seal has a pronounced "Roman" nose. Common Seals come into the shelter of the Lough during June and July to pup. The seals come close to shore but can be disturbed by walking and paddling close by. Please be considerate and keep your distance.

A regular ferry service operates across 'The Narrows' from Strangford to Portaferry crossing time 5-10 minutes. It leaves from Strangford on the hour and half hour and from Portaferry at a quarter past and to the hour.

- Strangford village is located directly across the Lough from the town of Portaferry, and as such, paddlers should be aware of the conditions in "The Narrows" (see Portaferry section).



Kircubbin

A small village on the eastern shore of Strangford Lough, Kircubbin once provided a harbour for 40 ton vessels to deliver coal and to export potatoes and corn. Meanwhile an illicit trade in alcohol, tobacco and other contraband has been immortalised in the story of Daft Eddie and the Smugglers of Strangford Lough. The smugglers were thought to use the "Black Neb", a spit of land south of Kircubbin as a landmark to navigate into Doctors Bay where they unloaded their booty in the dead of night.

When paddling in Kircubbin Bay, low tide will reveal dark green swaths of eelgrass - the staple diet of overwintering Brent Geese and Widgeon. It also provides a nursery area for young flatfish. Also look out for the Common Blue Butterfly and for Pale Bellied Brent Geese. Three quarters of the world population of these blackish-brown and light grey birds winter in the Lough.

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- Wonderful launch point to explore the islands on the eastern side of the Lough.
- Be aware of substantial mud flats during low tide.

Accommodation

A range of self catering, B&B and hotels are available along the trail. For a full list of accommodation providers please visit www.canoeni.com or www.discovernorthernireland.com

Canoe Hire and Canoe Tours

For up-to-date canoe hire and guiding please visit www.canoeni.com

Camping

For up-to-date details of official campsites and rough camping opportunities please visit www.canoeni.com

Further Information

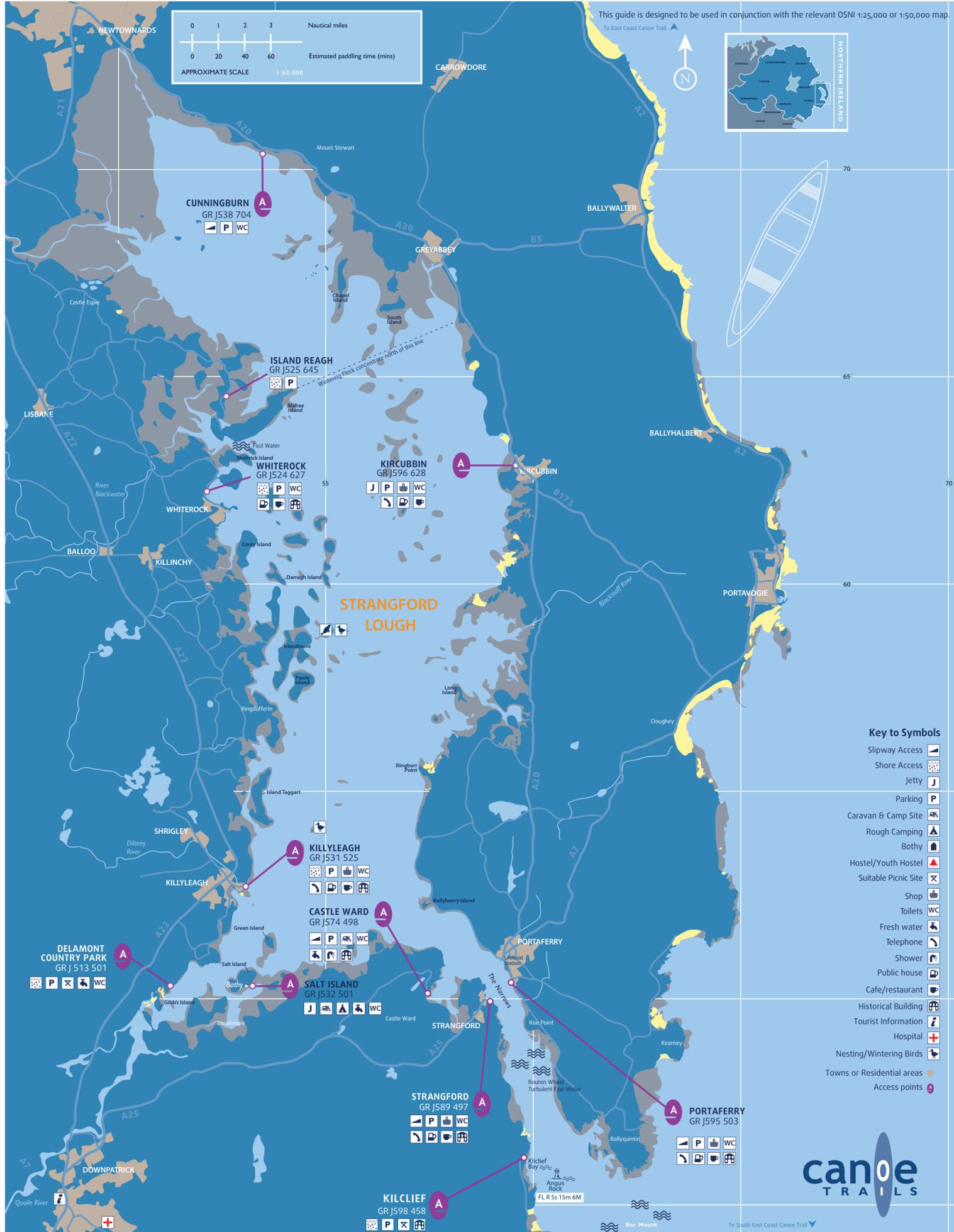
Trail updates: Any changes to the canoe trail that may occur will be updated on www.canoeni.com. Please e-mail any feedback to info@canoeni.com

Other resources
 Canoe Trails - www.canoeni.com
 Canoe Association of Northern Ireland - www.cani.org.uk
 Outdoor Recreation NI - www.outdoorrecreationni.com

NIEA Water Pollution Hotline **Freephone 0800 807060**

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 Outdoor Recreation NI www.outdoorrecreationni.com
 Waterways Ireland (Navigation Authority) www.waterwaysireland.org

Strangford Lough For further information on the Strangford Lough area please visit www.visitstrangfordlough.co.uk



Key to Symbols

- Slipway Access
- Shore Access
- Jetty
- Parking
- Caravan & Camp Site
- Rough Camping
- Bothy
- Hostel/Youth Hostel
- Suitable Picnic Site
- Shop
- Toilets
- Fresh water
- Telephone
- Shower
- Public house
- Cafe/restaurant
- Historical Building
- Tourist Information
- Hospital
- Nesting/Wintering Birds
- Towns or Residential areas
- Access points



Wind Strength and Corresponding Sea Conditions	Beaufort Scale Force	Wind Speed Knots	Wind Speed MPH	Description	Sea State
	0	0	0	Calm	Sea like a mirror.
	1	1-3	1-3	Light Air	Ripples but without foam crests.
	2	4-6	4-7	Light Breeze	Small wavelets, crests do not break.
	3	7-10	8-12	Gentle Wind	Large wavelets, occasional white horses, crests begin to break. Noticeable work paddling into headwind.
	4	11-16	13-18	Moderate Wind	Small waves, frequent white horses, becoming bouncy. Inexperienced should consider heading to shore unless it's an onshore wind.
	5	17-21	19-24	Fresh Wind	Moderate waves, many white horses, some foam and spray. Hard work paddling into wind or across wind.
	6	22-27	25-31	Strong Wind	Big seas with large waves. White foam crests and spray. Rescues difficult to execute, warnings issued to small craft.
	7	28-33	32-38	Near Gale	Big seas with large waves, white foam blown in streaks along the direction of wind. Kayak handling difficult even for experienced paddlers. Communication very difficult.
	8	34-40	39-46	Gale	High waves, crests begin to break into spindrift. Very dangerous conditions; communication almost impossible, rescues impractical, each man for himself.

- Limit for inexperienced paddlers
- Limit for experienced paddlers
- Limit for advanced paddlers

Earning a Welcome

- Please be friendly and polite to local residents and other water users.
- Drive with care and consideration and park sensibly.
- Change clothing discreetly, preferably out of public view.
- Gain permission before accessing private property.
- Minimise your impact on the natural environment and use recognised access points. There are also many unofficial access points along the shore, which may be used with the owner's consent.
- Be sensitive to wildlife and other users regarding the level of noise you create.
- Observe wildlife from a distance and be aware of sensitive locations such as nesting birds and wintering flocks.
- CAAN supports the principles of Leave No Trace and encourages others to do the same when taking part in outdoor recreation. For more information please visit www.leavenotraceireland.org.
- Keep the numbers in your party consistent with safety, the nature of the water conditions and the impact on your surroundings.
- Wild camping should be carried out discreetly, in small parties, and for overnight stays only.
- Have respect for anglers - keep well clear of anglers fishing from banks and boats. Avoid shallow gravel areas of rivers where salmon and trout may spawn, especially from November to January.
- Take care to avoid spreading invasive species. For more advice see www.invasivespeciesireland.com



Provision for people with disabilities

All sites with slips cater for disability access with varying degrees depending on the water level. It is recommended to check before starting a journey. This guide is available on request in alternative formats.



Disclaimer

Every effort has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this publication. Outdoor Recreation NI and its partner organisations cannot however accept responsibility for errors or omissions, but where such are brought to our attention, future publications will be amended accordingly. Canoeing may by its nature be hazardous and involve risk; training is essential for safe participation. It is recommended to take out personal accident insurance. Users must undertake and act on their own risk assessments prior to use of any access site or waterway and review and update during use. The guide must be used in conjunction with an Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 or 1:50,000 map. Neither the publishers, funders, contributors, landowners, site managers, riparian owners nor agents of the aforementioned can be held responsible for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person or persons as a result of information, guidance or advice given in or omitted from this guide.

Acknowledgements
 Design www.thinkstudio.co.uk

This project has been developed by



Other project partners include the Canoe Association of Northern Ireland and the National Trust

Outdoor Recreation NI is core funded by the Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Northern Ireland Tourist Board & Sport Northern Ireland.

- Local high water is 2 hours 15 mins after highwater at Belfast
 - Ringneil Bay is a wonderful windy day option
 - Be aware of deep mud at low water
- South of Delamont is a barrage that protects the town of Downpatrick from tidal flooding.
- Please contact the Park Office on +44 (0) 28 4482 8333 to arrange access through barrier.
- Local high water is 2 hours 15 minutes after high water at Belfast
- Easy access to the very sheltered Ringneil Bay (at local high tide)
- Be aware of the tidal stream, especially between the north ends of Rainey and Mahee Islands.

Island Reagh

- Local high water is 2 hours 15 minutes after high water at Belfast
- Fairly sheltered, good launching points to explore Bortree and Chapel Islands and the Northern end of the Lough.
- Be aware of substantial mud flats during low tide – stay in deeper water to the south of the islands.

Birds make epic journeys to Strangford Lough from their breeding grounds as faraway as Siberia, Iceland, Canada and the Baltic to overwinter in the Lough. To them the mud and sand flats are an enormous restaurant with a rich and varied menu. By the end of the winter they must have packed away enough fuel in the form of fat reserves, to provide energy to undertake their return journey so it is important not to disturb them during this time.

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When paddling in this area you will notice the 41m high Scрабо Tower, overlooking the town of Newtownards and marking the northern end of the Lough. Scрабо Tower, built in 1847 as a memorial to the 3rd Marquess of Londonderry, stands within Scрабо Country Park.

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Cunningburn



At Cunningburn there are two slipways that can be used at high water. This area is known for the reliable and strong off shore winds and has become a popular site for wind and kite surfers as well as sailors. The nearby islands are also frequented by seals.



Portaferry

The picturesque villages of Strangford and Portaferry at either side of 'The Narrows' form the entrance to Strangford Lough. The village dates from the 12th century when a row of fisherman's cottages was built beside an Anglo-Norman castle. Today Portaferry is popular among visitors and well known for Exploris Aquarium with displays of the local marine wildlife.

'The Narrows' looks like a river as powerful tidal waters rush through this deep but constricted channel approximately every six hours. It is 500m wide at its narrowest point; up to 60m deep, 5 nautical miles long, and is the start of a y-shaped channel that runs most of the length of the Lough. Sea level is raised and lowered up to 3 metres twice a day and approximately 350 million tonnes of water pour through the narrows every 6 hours.

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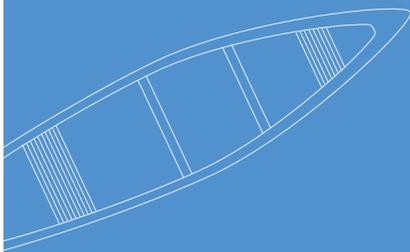
A marine turbine has been located in the centre of the narrows about 500m South of Portaferry and the pillar marking this turbine should be given a wide berth by all boat users.

The Ruten Wheel is a series of whirlpools, boils and swirling waters which is caused by pinnacles of rock on the seabed. The water is much more turbulent on the ebb tide than the flood.

'The Narrows' is a serious undertaking and should only be tackled by suitably experienced paddlers. The outgoing tide is potentially more dangerous than the incoming tide.

When there is a Southerly or Easterly swell in the Irish Sea – the sea state at the Bar Mouth (i.e. where 'The Narrows' meet the Irish Sea) can be very significant with large (4m+) breaking waves. This sea state also occurs with a flooding tide against an opposing wind direction.

- Ebb tide (outgoing): Starts 3 hours 30 minutes after High Water at Belfast
- Flood tide (incoming): Starts 2 hours 30 minutes after High Water at Belfast
- Changeable conditions with strong tidal stream and a rough water environment
- Be aware of other vessels whose movements are restricted to the channel, and the strong tidal stream of up to and including 7 knots.



Further north on Mahee Island is the monastic site of Nenrum, founded by Mochaoi who was said to have been converted by St. Patrick and died at the end of the 5th Century. Early Celtic monks are believed to have occupied the area from the 5th to the 10th centuries. North of Mahee Island lie large expanses of mudflats, although of little interest to paddlers, these support vast numbers of waders. The National Trust has produced 'The Castaways code' and map for those using the Lough for recreational boating. This should be consulted before paddling on the Lough and islands marked 'Birds Welcome' should be avoided.

This fascinating maze of islands offer sheltered and safe navigation for paddlers. Joined to the mainland by a cause-way, Skerick Island is the site of an ancient castle, church, well, graveyard and the famous "Daft Eddy's" restaurant.

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Strangford Lough Canoe Trail

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By contrast, the calmer waters of the main shallow basin further north gave this Lough its old Irish name, Lough Cuan, meaning sheltered haven. Here paddlers will find a myriad of channels and routes to explore, as well as the chance to discover some of the country's finest scenery.

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This trail guide has been designed for canoeists by canoeists. It provides practical information including official access points, campsites and tidal details.

Happy Paddling!

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- Idyllic area, ideal for exploring the southern islands
- Be aware of low tide – which makes circumnavigating the islands impossible
- An outdoor pursuits centre operates on site.

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Just offshore is Gibbs Island recognised by the mature Scots Pines. This is one of the few islands within the Lough to have trees and is owned by the National Trust.

Also of interest in the park is the heronry at Kinnegar Woods where about 25 pairs of herons have made their homes. From early January these large grey birds build huge, untidy nests – up to a metre across, using twigs and branches. Please be sensitive to the nesting birds at the heronry.

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This 200-acre park has mature woodlands, open pastures, rolling drumlins, a Rath, sited on Delamont hilltop, and is home to the Strangford Stone. This is the tallest megalith in Ireland and was erected to mark the Millennium. The Stone, quarried from Mourne granite is 12 metres in length and weighs 47 tonnes. The height above ground is 10 metres or 1000 centimetres, one for each year of the Millennium.

Delamont Country Park

- Local high water is 2 hours 15 minutes after high water at Belfast
- Wonderful launching point to explore the islands on the western side of the Lough
- Be aware of being forced (by the wind) into the main channel of the Lough

Killyleagh, a small town on the western shore of Strangford Lough is dominated by the splendid Killyleagh Castle which was originally built after the Norman invasion of England in the 11th century. It is one of the oldest castles in Ireland that remains a family home.

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Salt Island

This stunning Sea Lough offers no less than 80 square nautical miles of paddling playground!

This island-studded sea Lough is the largest inlet in the UK and Ireland covering 80 square nautical miles. It is approached through the Irish Sea through the (5 Nautical mile) fast running tidal narrows which open out into more gentle waters.

The Viking invaders