the perfect way to escape
northern ireland

**accessible**
Fly from Great Britain to Northern Ireland in less than one hour.
Drive from Dublin in less than two hours.

**unique**
Paddle Europe’s only official canoe trails.

**variety**
Choose from meandering rivers, peaceful loughs and a remarkable sea lough.

**tranquility**
Find unspoilt countryside dotted with charming towns and villages.

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**we are here**

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FRONT COVER: CRICHTON TOWER, GAD ISLAND, UPPER LOUGH ERNE, COUNTY FERMANAGH
BACK COVER: LOWER BANN, COUNTY LONDONDERRY

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SALT ISLAND, STRANGFORD LOUGH, COUNTY DOWN.

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01  |  canoeni.com  
canoeni.com  |  02
northern ireland
your perfect canoeing experience...

learn from the best...
Interested in taking up canoeing but don’t know where to start? Why not contact one of the many canoeing providers for lessons before you head off.

follow the leader...
Combine local knowledge with safety. Canoeing providers can provide a guiding service to ensure you get the most out of your trip.

just add water...
Don’t want the hassle of organising the trip? Contact a canoeing provider to arrange an itinerary, provide equipment and shuttles. All you have to do is turn up.

go it alone...
Got the knowledge and the gear? All the information needed to plan a trip is available in our waterproof guides and comprehensive website.

contents
05 The Great Escape
Get a sense of the fascinating canoe trails that lie ahead.

07 Lower Bann
...serenity of the Lower Bann.

09 Lough Erne
...enchanting beauty of Lough Erne.

11 Lough Neagh
...fantastic views of Lough Neagh.

13 Blackwater
...gentle waters of the River Blackwater.

15 Strangford
...stunning setting of Strangford Lough.

17 Practical Information
Safety and Accommodation.

18 Canoeing Providers Directory
Comprehensive list of Canoeing Providers.

19 Planning your trip in Northern Ireland
Whether you visit by land, sea or air find all the information you will need!
the great escape...
Canoe trails provide the perfect way to escape the rush and explore Northern Ireland’s countryside.

Each canoe trail will allow you to explore a different part of Northern Ireland’s interesting countryside. Our short description of each canoe trail will give you an idea of what lies ahead. So what are you waiting for?

The Escape begins!

What is a Canoe Trail?

A canoe trail is an interesting or challenging stretch of water which offers public access for canoeists to paddle. It is indicated on a map showing its associated facilities such as jetties, slipways, car parks and toilets. At designated access points, information panels provide additional details of its features and that of the surrounding area. Canoe trails may be paddled as a whole section or in sections.

Planning your trip could not be easier as each canoe trail has its own official waterproof guide, designed by canoeists and available from all Tourist Information Centres. It includes a range of useful information such as maps, campsites, visitor attractions, toilets etc.

tell me more

Armagh and Down Tourism
www.armaghanddown.com

Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
www.gotobelfast.com

Causeway Coast and Glens Tourism
www.causewaycoastandglens.com

Derry Visitor and Convention Bureau
www.derryvisitor.com

Fermanagh Lakeland Tourism
www.fermanaghlakelands.com

Sperrins Tourism
www.sperrinstourism.com

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lower bann

There are two key reasons why Philip McKee, an avid paddler who lives near the Lower Bann, loves getting out on the water in this beautiful part of Northern Ireland. “The first is its peace and quiet and the second is that while enjoying these you are never far from a good pub.”

Starting in Toome, at the edge of Lough Neagh, this broad river runs for 58 kilometres along the borders of Antrim and Londonderry to just beyond Coleraine where it flows into the Atlantic Ocean. On its banks you will find extremely important historical sites and as you paddle you will pass through renowned nature reserves. As McKee puts it, “it’s possible to finish the trail in two days, but you will need longer to take it all in, which is why there are are a number of overnight facilities to avail of including an excellent campsite at Drumaheglis.”

For experienced paddlers there is the added thrill of fast flowing water and rapids downstream of each of the sluice gates and weirs of which there are five in total. For the beginner, there is the comfort of very straightforward navigation channels that allow you to gently bypass these more challenging sections.

Those interested in history will be enthralled from the very beginning. Toome is believed to be the site of one of the first human settlements on the island of Ireland, Movarnagh, a series of forts and raths, dates back to 500 AD.

At Portglenone, you will come across Our Lady of Bethlehem Abbey, a Cisterian monastery founded in 1948 with its modern coffee shop. To get an idea of the beautiful surroundings, just consider that Murtaugh MacNeill, an Irish prince, said of Agivey, that it was “not more beautiful to be in paradise”. Wildlife enthusiasts will want to go slowly through parts such as Lough Beg and the area near Coleraine marina. Species to look out for throughout the length of the Lower Bann include otter, kingfisher, whooper swan and wading birds, while common seals can be seen in the estuary downstream of the Cutts at Coleraine.

Elaine Alexander is a fanatical paddler from Monaghan and just can’t speak highly enough of the Lower Bann. “I love paddling on this trail,” she says. “Everything about it makes for a great trip and you can have a blast both on and off the water.”
Lough Erne

Drop in on Enniskillen, an island town, or come ashore at Devenish Island and check out its 12th century round tower.

Dolores McWeeney, a canoe club member, paddled Lough Erne with 8 others recently, and now loves it. Her trip started in Carrybridge, took in a night paddle to nearby Inish Rath where there is a Hare Krishna visitor’s centre and an overnight stay on Trannish Island before finishing back at Smith’s Strand.

“The area is so lush and green and the water is easy to paddle,” she says.

Split into two sections the lakes of Upper and Lower Lough Erne are linked by the river of the same name and boast 365 islands in total. The Lower Lough is expansive and more suitable to experienced paddlers. Whilst the Upper Lough is calmer with plenty of sheltered channels. The wildlife too is spectacular and includes otter, pine martin, peregrine falcon, deer and whooper swan. As Robert says “you just won’t find better.”

“The area is so lush and green and the water is easy to paddle,” she says.

It’s not just Robert who speaks highly of the UK’s first ever canoe trail. An award-winner, Lough Erne has gained acclaim all over the world for its wonderful nature, historical sites, fantastic islands and superb access and facilities. Just peek at a map of the 50 kilometre trail and spot the number of bars, restaurants, camp sites, visitor attractions, towns and villages. These are all within easy reach of a waterway where you are unlikely to bump into too many people in your kayak or canoe. Spend anything from a few days or longer and you will have a chilled, but also entertaining and interesting break. Visit Crom Estate, a 2000 acre nature conservation site.

Robert Livingstone, a canoeist for over 40 years, thinks there is no better canoe trail than Lough Erne and he should know. He lives on the water’s shore near Lisnaskea in Fermanagh. “Every day on the Lough is different, but always beautiful,” he says.

“I love pushing out first thing in the morning when there is mist over the water or at night when the sky is clear. As you paddle, you move so quietly, you feel part of the stillness.”

It’s not just Robert who speaks highly of the UK’s first ever canoe trail. An award-winner, Lough Erne has gained acclaim all over the world for its wonderful nature, historical sites, fantastic islands and superb access and facilities. Just peek at a map of the 50 kilometre trail and spot the number of bars, restaurants, camp sites, visitor attractions, towns and villages. These are all within easy reach of a waterway where you are unlikely to bump into too many people in your kayak or canoe. Spend anything from a few days or longer and you will have a chilled, but also entertaining and interesting break. Visit Crom Estate, a 2000 acre nature conservation site.

County: Fermanagh
Distance: 50km
Type/Grade of Water: Lough/Flat
Maps: OSNI Sheet 27 Upper Lough Erne, OSNI Sheet 17 Lower Lough Erne and Lough Erne Activity Map
Points of Interest: Crom Estate, Enniskillen and Devenish island.
Lough Neagh is such a big expanse of water that it borders 5 counties, links two canoe trails and even boasts one of its own.

This is most easily achieved by scouting the picturesque west shore from Maghery to Toome at the north end, but more daring types may attempt the longer way around the south and east where many of the area’s excellent campsites can be found.

If neither of these options floats your boat, the trail’s many access points are perfect for those who want to simply spend some time exploring this beautiful conservation area to find out what it has to offer. There is just one proviso according to John Hubbucks, local canoe guide. That is weather on the Lough may change quickly and wind conditions can lead to rough water at times, but John, an experienced canoeist, says this shouldn’t put would-be paddlers off. “Certainly, people need to be careful. That is a given. But in the right conditions and with a guide or instructor, there are loads to do and see. The shoreline is beautiful and the view is amazing. There are also lots of cool places and unique historic sites you can visit,” he says. Among the latter he counts Rams Island, a one-time monastic settlement with a round tower and Oxford Island, where the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre is based.

Alastair Scott-McKinley and his wife Alison, are Bed and Breakfast owners in Ballyronan, one of the friendly villages on the Lough’s west shore. They are also keen paddlers who love exploring in their double kayak. “We might drive to Traad Point and launch from there. There is a little river called the Moyola where you always see herons or kingfishers. Other times we might go to Toome and connect to the Lower Bann Trail. You can visit Church Island on Lough Beg which is a great spot,” Alastair says. For him, the area’s magnificent wildlife, which includes coots, hares and migratory birds make it a special place. He says the best way to experience this is from the water where all you have to do is “relax and take it all in”.

As a connecting paddle between the River Blackwater and the Lower Bann, it allows adventurous canoeists to travel from the southern part of Northern Ireland all the way to the Atlantic Ocean on the north coast.
Running 20 kilometres in length, it meanders through the beautiful borders of counties Armagh and Tyrone before opening out onto the breathtaking Lough Neagh at Maghery, where the magical Coney Island awaits, just 1 kilometre or a short paddle, from shore.

Matt Peach, a devoted canoeist, is a big fan. “The thing I love about the Blackwater is that it gets prettier the further along you go. You can complete the trail in a day, but I prefer to take two days and just keep it really mellow. For a family or a couple it makes the perfect weekend,” he says. The most magical aspect of the Blackwater is that although you are never far from the villages or the various access points that dot its banks, it’s so quiet in parts that you feel as though you are in the middle of nowhere. Perhaps this is why the river and its surrounding environment is a haven for wildlife including kingfishers, otters, herons, dippers and, if you are lucky, a barn owl.

For beginners, the trail is great because it’s suited to short trips. For experienced paddlers, it can serve as a gateway to Lough Neagh, which has its own more challenging trail, and a link to the Lower Bann. Fiona Russell and husband, Bik Adam, from Glasgow, spent half a day exploring the area from an access point at the quaint village of Moy.

“...it gets prettier the further on you go”
An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and one of the UK’s three marine nature reserves, it’s best explored from the water and what more intimate way to do this than from a canoe or sea kayak? “The trail has absolutely everything you need to make a trip unforgettable,” says Mike McClure, an enthusiastic paddler. “The surroundings and islands, about 70 in total, are beautiful, the area is steeped in history and home to an amazing variety of wildlife.” Mike’s other reasons for loving the trail are the interesting towns and villages you can visit and their excellent pubs and restaurants, and the wonderful places to camp. “When you add all of this to the fact that you can find both easy-going, sheltered paddling or more challenging sections, you start to get an idea of why the trail is so perfect,” he adds. Covering 80 square nautical miles (140 kilometres), the Lough is approached from the Irish Sea through a long, fast-running tidal section known as ‘The Narrows’. Here the conditions are exciting, but can be very tricky, so inexperienced paddlers need to be accompanied by a qualified instructor familiar with the water conditions.

Below this area the Lough widens and the islands, Mike mentions, are divided by numerous channels which you can explore. Lucinda Manoush from Canoe & Kayak magazine, checked out the trail recently. “Strangford Lough is a fantastic place to kayak. I wanted to go ever since I saw an aerial photograph of the islands on a website of top beauty spots,” she says. Lucinda stayed overnight on Salt Island at the bothy, a camping barn with excellent facilities, that has to be visited on any trip. “You could see seals out in the water and look across to other islands. It was stunning,” she adds. Of the 2,000 marine animals and plants species in the Lough and surrounding area, the common and grey seals are the most engaging. They will shadow small boats, keeping an eye on you from close by. Other wildlife to spot includes porpoises, Brent geese and even basking sharks. Those interested in heritage will want to check out the monasteries, abbeys, tower and estate houses along the trail, but for Lucinda, watching the sun set after a day exploring was the “best part of her trip.”

To paddle on the clear, shallow waters of Strangford Lough is an unforgettable experience. County Down’s almost-landlocked sea inlet is a unique and enchanting place.

“you could see seals out in the water and look across to other islands. It was stunning.”
practical information

Preparation is the key to any outdoor activity. Now you are sold on the idea of the canoe trails in Northern Ireland the following section will provide all the practical information you require to get the most out of your trip.

safety

Canoeing is an adventure sport and as such should be treated with respect. If you are new to the sport, it is advisable to join an organised club or contact a canoeing provider where expert coaching can be provided. When taking part in canoeing consider the following safety advice:

- Wear adequate clothing and buoyancy in the form of buoyancy aid or life jacket
- You do not need to be a strong swimmer but you will need the water confidence to deal with a capsized boat and get ashore safely
- It is not recommended to canoe alone - three boats is the minimum required for most rescues
- Leave details of your journey with a responsible adult
- Consider attending a recognised training course which explores skills, safety and environmental issues
- Remember - a canoe may be difficult to see from a larger craft so carry a whistle

Each canoe trail will have its own individual safety considerations. These are outlined in each Canoe Trail Guide and on www.canoeni.com

accommodation

A wide range of accommodation is available to suit all budgets. These useful publications will provide you with the information you need:

Useful publications

To order any of these publications, contact Belfast & Northern Ireland Welcome Centre

Belfast & Northern Ireland Welcome Centre
8816 Guide
T: +44(0)28 9024 6669
E: welcomecentre@belfastvisitor.com

Budget Accommodation
Or download online from www.discovernorthernireland.com

www.canoeni.com has a list of accommodation available near to each designated access point

canoeing providers directory

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Action Outdoors</td>
<td>59A Markethouse Road, Ballymena, Co Antrim BT44 0DS</td>
<td>+44(0)7789 754 565 <a href="http://www.actionoutdoors.co.uk">www.actionoutdoors.co.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities Ireland</td>
<td>127 Lower Shankill Road, Belfast, Co Down BT5 7PF</td>
<td>+44(0)28 9024 6609 <a href="http://www.actireland.org">www.actireland.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ardcliff Outdoor Adventure</td>
<td>71 High Street, Tobermory, Co Argyll PA94 1PB</td>
<td>+44(0)1688 775 100 <a href="http://www.arcliff.com">www.arcliff.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Banbridge Adventure Centre</td>
<td>Craigavon Leisure Park, Craigavon, Co Down BT64 1AS</td>
<td>+44(0)28 3834 2669 <a href="http://www.outdooradventure.com">www.outdooradventure.com</a></td>
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<td>Ballyronan Marina</td>
<td>Old Farm Park, Ballyronan, Co Fermanagh BT93 5DZ</td>
<td>+44(0)28 3536 3536 <a href="http://www.ballyronan.co.uk">www.ballyronan.co.uk</a></td>
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<td>Ballynahinch Adventure Centre</td>
<td>1 Lake Road, Ballynahinch, Co Down BT23 4HA</td>
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<td>Instruction</td>
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<td>Guided Tours</td>
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While activity providers generally operate according to what is accepted as current best practice, it is the responsibility of the participant to ensure that the provider is credible and that all appropriate safety standards are adhered to. The Countywide Access and Activities Network and the other funders neither have, nor assume any responsibility or liability for accuracy or completeness of the information supplied or the service and care afforded by any of the canoeing providers listed in this publication.

Canoe Association of Northern Ireland (CANI) recommends that you ensure your provider is working within the guidelines laid down by the British Canoe Union (BCU) and is using suitable qualified staff.

For up to date information on CANI/BCU approved providers check out www.cani.org.uk or email office@cani.org.uk

areas covered

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<td>Blackwater</td>
<td>Canoe Hire, Kayak Hire</td>
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getting to northern ireland

Northern Ireland is easy to get to, easy to get around. Excellent fast ferry links from England and Scotland to Belfast and Larne, three airports with frequent, low-cost flights from the UK and beyond, plus good roads, buses and trains to take you where you want to go.

Belfast International Airport
T: +44 (0) 28 9448 4848
www.belfastairport.com

Bus 300 now operates a 24 hour service between the airport and Belfast with buses departing every 10 minutes throughout the day. The bus leaves from the bus stop located opposite the terminal exit. Bus fare is £1.80. Taxi fare to the city is approximately £22.

George Best Belfast City Airport
T: +44 (0) 28 9093 9903
www.belfastcityairport.com

Bus 600 into city centre, runs on the hour and then every 20 min. Taxi fare to city is about £7. Trains run from Sydenham to Belfast and other parts of Northern Ireland.

You can fly directly from:

Belfast Harbour
T: +44 (0) 28 9055 4422
www.belfastharbour.co.uk / 1882 Newry Street.

You can get the Ferry to Northern Ireland from:
- Cairnryan / Birkenhead (Liverpool) / Fleetwood / Douglas (Isle of Man) / Stranraer / Troon / Wallasey / Weymouth / Zeebrugge.

Networked tourism information centres

For more information visit www.leavetracenorthernireland.org
RDC is an independent organisation working to ensure the collective needs and opportunities of rural areas can be realised. RDC works to promote positive and sustainable change helping to develop and regenerate rural areas for the better. Our Mission is to advance rural development; Our Vision is a living, working, sustainable and shared countryside; Our Core work is Providing objective, evidence based analysis; Delivering practical actions & solutions; Sharing best practice. RDC is agent of the International Fund for Ireland.

The International Fund for Ireland is an international organisation established by the Irish and British Governments in 1986 with the objectives of promoting economic and social advance and of encouraging contact, dialogue and reconciliation between unionists and nationalists throughout Ireland. Contributors to the Fund are the United States, the European Union, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Since its inception, the Fund has committed more than £576m/EUR 849m to a wide variety of projects in Northern Ireland and the Southern border counties. The Fund’s budget for 2008 is £33 million/EUR 48 million.

CanoeNI.com is your definitive guide to canoeing in Northern Ireland, providing up to date information on all you need to know about canoeing in Northern Ireland. Whether you are looking for a mad day catching the surf or a gentle day out on the river, it’s all there.

Waterways Ireland is the navigation authority for the waterways covered by two of the canoe trails - Lough Erne and the Lower Bann. Promoting recreation on the inland navigable waterways is a core element of Waterways Ireland’s remit. The development and promotion of the canoe trails are key to getting more users onto the waterways and canoeing is an ideal low impact, high fulfilment activity for all age-groups. We look forward to welcoming more canoeists to the beauty of Lough Erne and the Lower Bann and to the other waterways we manage, the Shannon, the Shannon Erne Waterway, the Grand Canal, the Royal Canal and the Barrow Navigation.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency is proud to have helped to grant aid CAAN’s work on a number of recent canoe trails. There is also an appreciation of the substantial input by the members of CANI in helping to facilitate and promote the development of canoeing here. NIEA is committed to the improvement of water quality and also aims to encourage the continued development and popularity of sustainable countryside recreation opportunities. We are particularly impressed that Northern Ireland now leads the way in the UK with regard to canoe trail provision and have no doubt that local people and visitors to this country will be amazed by the new opportunities to explore and learn about our country’s coastline and inland waterways.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, as part of its remit for promoting and developing the recreational potential of Inland Waterways, is delighted to be associated with this brochure in a part-funding capacity. This is one of several canoe-related projects, including canoe trails, partnership-funded under our water recreation programme. Thanks to CAAN’s initiative and commitment Northern Ireland now has a prestigious product worthy of this brochure and we look forward to canoeists (local and tourists) enjoying all that it has to offer.
For more information contact:
Belfast Welcome Centre, Tourist Information
for Belfast & Northern Ireland,
47 Donegall Place,
Belfast BT1 5AD
Tel: +44 (0) 28 9024 6609  Textphone: +44 (0) 28 9024 6407
Email: welcomecentre@belfastvisitor.com

Tourist Information Centre
16 Nassau Street, Dublin 2
Tel: +353 (0) 1 679 1977
Call Save: 1850 230 230 (ROI Only)
Email: infodublin@nitb.com

This guide is available on request in Braille, audio, large print, computer disk and PDF.

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this brochure.
CAAN cannot accept responsibility for omissions or errors but if these are brought to
our attention, amendments will be published in future brochures. Comments, feedback
and recommendations for inclusion in future brochures should be addressed to:
info@canoeni.com

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Tel: +44 (0) 28 9030 3930 Fax: +44 (0) 28 9062 6248 Email: info@canoeni.com

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