



Hillwalk Guides – Hiking in Wicklow

Rathdrum to Clara Bridge (*Info Booklet*)

Dear fellow hiker!

We trust that you are looking forward to a wonderful walk in Wicklow, the Garden of Ireland. This relaxing walk, along the beautiful Avonmore River to the peaceful hamlet of Clara, offers a wonderful forest and river scenery and plenty of nature.

In this document, we have put together some information that will help you to maximise the enjoyment of your walk. Please consider the environment when printing this booklet, route notes and map (supplied separately).

- Important Information for your walk
- What to Wear & What to Bring
- A Short History of Wicklow
- The Wicklow Mountains
- Local Attractions
- Where to Eat
- Safety Information
- Emergency Procedure
- Leave No Trace & Countryside Code
- More from Hillwalk Tours

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR YOUR WALK

PARKING: The walk starts from the start/end point of the Avonmore Way at a car park near a place called 'Stump of the Castle' (GPS: 52.9455, -6.2260). It is on the road to Moneystown, 2km from Rathdrum. While walkers and cars are generally safe in Wicklow, we advise that you do not leave anything of value in your car.

WEATHER: This walk stays off the hills and in the safety of the woodlands and forests along the river. Nevertheless, you may wish to check the weather forecast before setting out and we recommend you do not walk during any known weather event. Conditions locally can vary, even in the absence of weather warnings, so always consider your own stamina, confidence and comfort level when deciding if you will go ahead with any walk. See what to wear, what to bring and safety information sections for more details.

BRINGING YOUR DOG: While we could find any official recommendation on dogs for this walk, this part of the Avonmore Way is mostly within woodland and forestry and people walking dogs are a common sight along the route. However, there is ample wildlife about, including deer, so we recommend that you keep your dog on a lead at all times.

COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS & FEEDBACK: Hillwalk Tours take great care in the preparation of all our material. However, we rely on comments and suggestions from walkers to continue to provide the best experience possible. We consider all feedback, make improvements where possible and reply individually to every walker. Send your thoughts to feedback@hillwalktours.com – thanks!

HILLWALK TOURS

Escape to Nature!

What to Wear

BASE LAYER - This is what you wear against your skin and the best options are breathable and wicking fabrics instead of cotton t-shirts. They will move moisture away from the skin so that you feel more comfortable when you are walking.

FLEECE – Will keep you warm in the cooler months, and it will allow you to shed layers when you are working hard in the summer.

LIGHT AND COMFORTABLE TROUSERS - Make sure you choose trousers that are stretchy or allow enough space to move your legs freely. Jeans / Denims are not suitable for hill walking.

WATERPROOF JACKET AND OVER-TROUSERS - You never know when you will need protection from wind and rain so make sure you pack a breathable, waterproof jacket and over-trousers.

WICKING SOCKS - Choose non-cotton socks that fit well and will move moisture away from your feet to stop them feeling sweaty. This will help to reduce the likelihood of blisters.

FOOTWEAR – We recommend you bring comfortable, waterproof, lightweight shoes or boots. Remember that some trails can become quite wet and muddy, after periods of rain.

WARM HAT & GLOVES – Essential, even in summer, at higher altitudes and on exposed places.

CHANGE OF CLOTHES: We advise bringing a change of clothes (which can be left in your car, if preferred) in case you get wet during your hike, ensuring a more comfortable journey home.

What to Bring

MOBILE PHONE – Fully charged it will allow you to call for help in an emergency. If you are planning on using our GPS tracks as a navigational aid or referring to this booklet on your phone during your hike you may need to pack a power-bank to supplement your phone battery.

BACKPACK / RUCKSACK (*with Waterproof Cover or Liner*) - To store all your essentials including extra layers of clothing, your waterproofs, first aid kit, camera and your lunch, snacks and drink

WATER - Don't forget how important it is to stay hydrated and bring at least 1 - 2 litres of water per person, and more depending on the weather!

PICNIC LUNCH: Even on shorter walks it is essential to bring some food with you. Traveling to the start point, weather/trail conditions on the day as well as wanting to capture that perfect photo can all add time to your walk and make breakfast seem like a distant memory!

FIRST AID KIT – For longer hikes it is a good idea to have a small, basic first aid kit to deal with little injuries such as sprains, scrapes, cuts and blisters.

WHISTLE & TORCH – In the very unlikely event you need to signal for help (whistle/torch) or if your walk takes longer than expected (torch).

Additional Suggestions

SUN CREAM, SUNGLASSES AND SUNHAT

– Let's hope you'll need those ☺

MIDGE/TICK/INSECT REPELLENT – A good idea, especially if you are prone to get bitten

CAMERA – Vital for capturing photos of the stunning scenery

WALKING POLES – Assist forward movement and balance, reduce impact on your knees, and help with balance in difficult terrain. A pair is best, but many hikers also just use one.

SIT MAT – A small, foldable mat that provides comfort when sitting on the ground during breaks.

A Short History of Wicklow

Back in the 6th century, the hermit monk Saint Kevin first sought solace and contemplation in the idyllic surroundings of nearby Glendalough (meaning 'Valley of the two lakes'). After his death, his followers established a monastery here, which would become one of the most important monastic sites and centres of learning in Europe at the time.

Vikings first landed in Ireland around 795 AD and began plundering monasteries and settlements for riches and to capture slaves. In the mid-9th century, Vikings established a base at the natural harbour at Wicklow Town. The name Wicklow probably comes from the old Viking word 'Vykyngelo', which means 'meadow of the Vikings'.

Despite attacks by Vikings and others, Glendalough thrived as one of Ireland's great ecclesiastical centres and a school of learning until the Normans destroyed the monastery in 1214.

As a result of the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, from the 12th century, the Irish clan of the O'Byrnes was forced into the mountains of Wicklow. Despite this, the O'Byrnes ruled much of Wicklow and defended their land against repeated English attempts to gain control of Wicklow for centuries. However, at the end the 16th century they were defeated, and their lands taken from them.

A large part of the O'Byrnes' land, later called 'The Coolattin Estates', were given to Henry Harrington an English adventurer by the Queen Elizabeth I of England. In 1630 the land was transferred to Thomas Wentworth, Lord Deputy of Ireland. When Oliver Cromwell came to power in England (overthrowing the King) all Royal lands were taken. However, King Charles II later restored the monarchy and these lands went back to the Wentworth's. The Coolattin Estate was now 85,000 acres covering almost one-third of the county of Wicklow and was home to 20,000 tenants.

This estate, together with much of the rest of Wicklow, was eventually divided among English Landlords who began to transform the local landscape. Using a huge labour effort from the native Irish tenants, a wild landscape of trackless woodland was transformed into the modern countryside with rich farmland we see today. The local landlords also built large estates (parklands) which commonly featured grand mansion houses and impressive gardens. Many of these, like Powerscourt, still exist and add to Wicklow's 'Garden County' name.

The 18th century brought prosperity to the Protestant landowners. Catholics, however, were denied many basic rights in relation to property and voting and lived in great poverty under this British 'tenant system'. In Wicklow, records show that about 25% of families lived in one room mud or stone huts with thatch roofs and uncovered mud floors.

Demands for Independence from the English crown began to build and in 1798 the United Irishmen rebelled. County Wicklow experienced some of the most ferocious fighting and here was an enormous loss of life, destruction of property and large-scale transportation of rebels to the penal colonies of Australia.

Michael Dwyer was one the rebellion's leaders and, active in many parts of Wicklow, he defied capture for three years while based around Glenmalur. To assist the British army in defeating the rebels in the Wicklow Mountains the British army built the Military Road, crossing the mountains north to south.

After the famine, the nationalist movement became stronger and in the late 19th century, the Irish Land League was established by Charles Stewart Parnell (**born in Rathdrum**). This political organisation wanted to abolish landlordism in Ireland and enable tenant farmers to own the land they worked on.

Their work resulted in often violent clashes and this period in Ireland is known as 'The Land War'. The work of the Land League together with the later Irish rebellion of 1916 saw an eventual transfer of ownership of much of the land from landlords to tenants. In 1922, Ireland, with the exception of Northern Ireland, finally achieved independence from Britain.

Wicklow also has a rich tradition in forestry, boasting **the Avondale Estate near Rathdrum**, which is considered the 'cradle' of Irish forestry. The Irish state purchased Avondale in 1904 and the tree species which are now commonplace in the Irish forest industry were planted and trialled here for the first time in experimental plots.

HILLWALK TOURS

Escape to Nature!

Although most of Ireland was once covered with trees, Ireland's forest cover was dramatically reduced over centuries by human activity. At the beginning of the 20th century, forests comprised only about 4% of Ireland's total land surface area - the lowest level in Europe where 40% is covered by forests.

Today this figure has risen to 11%, which is the second lowest in Europe (but the highest level in Ireland for over 350 years) and Wicklow has the largest proportionate forest cover in Ireland with almost 22% of the land area in forestry.

The Wicklow Mountains

The Wicklow Mountains, just south of Dublin, form the largest area of continuous hills and mountains in Ireland with more than 500 km² above 300 metres. They stretch for almost 70km from Dublin, in the north, to the border with the counties of Wexford and Carlow in the south. The highest peak, Lugnaquilla (925m), is the highest Irish mountain outside of County Kerry, and there are a total of 39 peaks over 600 metres in Wicklow.

Most of the landscape is formed by four main types of very old rocks: granite, quartzite, schist and slate. Those rocks, and the Wicklow Mountains, were created 400 million years ago when, what was later to become North America ploughed slowly into the continent of Europe. This pushed molten rock up through layers of sedimentary rocks that had been formed when Wicklow lay at the bottom of a deep sea.

The core of this upheaval formed into granite rock, with crystals of quartzite embedded in it. The conical Sugarloaf Mountain near Enniskerry, is a prominent quartzite landmark. The sedimentary rocks around the edges formed into two other types of rock, depending on how hot they were: schist (hotter) and slate (cooler).

However, the mountains owe their current shape largely to the effects of the last number of ice ages when glaciers smoothed the shapes of the mountains, deepened the valleys and created the many lakes. Much of the higher ground today consists of bog, heather and upland grassland while the valleys are mostly a mixture of coniferous and deciduous woodland.

Wicklow is known as 'The Garden of Ireland', due to its large areas of undeveloped mountains, valleys, forests and woodlands and the Wicklow Mountains are a major destination for tourism and recreation. The entire upland area is protected by law and the Wicklow Mountains National Park is Ireland's largest national park.

Local Attractions

AVONDALE HOUSE AND FOREST PARK, near Rathdrum – Home of Irish Forestry and one of Ireland's greatest leaders

Note that for much of the 2020 season (and possibly into 2021) the House and Café are closed for re-development. But the Forest Park is expected to remain open.

Avondale House is a museum to the great Irish political leader Charles Stewart Parnell who was born and lived at Avondale House from 1846-1891. Parnell is celebrated as one of the most formidable figures in parliamentary history.

The house was built in 1777 and the land planted with a range of tree species from all over the world. Today Avondale is considered the birthplace of Irish Forestry and the house is set in a magnificent 2 km² forest park near Rathdrum. The park has a number of marked walks and is a must for nature lovers and those interested in Irish heritage.

The Forest Park is situated 1.5 km south of Rathdrum on the L2149 road. For more details, opening times and prices visit www.coillte.ie/site/avondale-forest-park/

GREENAN MAZE, near Rathdrum – A great day out for the whole family

Greenan Maze is a working hill farm that offers plenty of fun for all ages. Activities include two large hedge mazes of different difficulty, three farm museums, play areas, treasure hunt and a fairy tree walk. There are also a tranquil nature walk and many farm animals, including turkeys, hens, geese, ducks, pigs and piglets, sheep and lambs, horses, highland cows and one cheeky donkey.

HILLWALK TOURS

Escape to Nature!

The tearooms offer home baked goodies and light lunches while the craft shop sells local arts and crafts and environmentally friendly products.

Greenan Maze is located 6km south-west of Rathdrum. For more details, opening times and prices visit www.greenanmaze.com

GLENDALOUGH MONASTIC CITY & VISITOR CENTRE, Glendalough/Laragh – Famous Early Christian Monastery

Glendalough is home to one of the most important monastic sites in Ireland. This early Christian monastic settlement was founded by St. Kevin in the 6th century and from this developed the “Monastic City”. Most of the buildings that survive today date from the 10th through 12th centuries. Despite attacks by Vikings over the years, Glendalough thrived as one of Ireland’s great ecclesiastical foundations and schools of learning until the Normans destroyed the monastery in 1214 A.D. and the dioceses of Glendalough and Dublin were united.

Set in a glaciated valley with two lakes, the monastic remains include the superb round tower, stone churches and decorated crosses. There are beautiful walks through the valley and around the lakes.

Close to the monastic city is the interactive visitor centre. The visitor centre brings visitors back in time to the golden age of Irish History: the Ireland of Scholars and Saints. Follow the footsteps of St. Kevin in an audio-visual show, available in many languages as well as guided tours of the permanent exhibition. There is also a model of the monastic site on display. You will be welcomed by a friendly and knowledgeable staff where all your questions will be answered.

The visitor centre and the monastic city are open daily throughout the year.

For opening times, prices and more information visit these websites: www.heritageireland.ie/en/midlands-eastcoast/glendaloughvisitorcentre/ and www.visitwicklow.ie/item/glendalough-monastic-city/

Where to Eat

Below is a selection of evening meal suggestions near the end point of your walk, put together based on the recommendations of previous walkers and on the advice of members of the local community. For lighter bites, there are also some lovely cafes in Rathdrum village and nearby Laragh also has some pubs and restaurants.

Bates Restaurant, 3 Market St, Rathdrum: Award-winning restaurant in the centre of the village providing a memorable dining experience. Excellent value early bird menu available on selected days of the week. Reservation recommended. Tel: 0404 29988

Jacob’s Well Gastro Pub, Main St, Rathdrum: Jacob’s Well has won the Black & White Irish Pub of the Year on several occasions and more recently has also won an award for its pub grub menu so you can expect both good food and a lively pub atmosphere here. 0404 46282

HILLWALK TOURS

Escape to Nature!

Safety Information

Even on the best of days there is the possibility that something can go wrong. All it takes is an accidental slip and a badly sprained ankle. In order to know what to do in those circumstances and how to prevent them, if possible, we have provided the following information.

General Advice

- We recommend that, if possible, you **stay on the trail** during your hike.
- Take particular **care on the descent** and/or when you are tired, as this is when most accidents occur.
- Remember, the general rule for **walking on roads** in Ireland is to walk on the right-hand side (facing oncoming traffic). However, if the road is turning to the right, cross over to the left-hand side for better visibility of oncoming traffic.
- Note that the provided walking times do *not* account for breaks taken for lunch/rest/photos/etc. Always ensure that you still have plenty of time to reach the end of your hike before darkness falls.

Impassable & Hazardous Trail

(e.g. due to snow, fog, floodwaters, etc.)

- **Do not take any risks!** If you are not confident at navigating, stick to the trail, or, if necessary, make your way safely to the nearest road where you will come across locals who will help you.
- Rivers and streams may be flooded after heavy rain, particularly in hills and mountains. **Do not take risks by trying to cross flooded rivers** – seek an alternative route on your map *only* if you are confident at navigating. If not, do not take any risks, but make your way back along the trail to the nearest road.

Encountering Animals

DOGS may occasionally be encountered while on the trail. If you are fearful, or the dog is threatening, the general rule is to try to get out of the situation calmly and quickly without making the dog any more upset.

- Try to stay calm and don't yell at the dog or scream. Don't throw anything at the dog or pick up a stick as a weapon. Many dogs are simply afraid of you and this will only make their fear worse.
- Never run from a dog as it will outrun you easily. Running triggers a dog's instinct to chase you. Avoid sudden movement.
- Speak to any harassing dog in a firm, calm voice. Don't smile or speak in a pleading voice. When using vocal commands, deepen your voice as much as possible.

MIDGES can become a real nuisance as they often appear in great numbers and their bite can leave an itchy rash. Midges don't like direct sun and prefer calm, humid weather. They are most active in the early morning and late evening. Midges only attack bare skin and can't bite through cloth. In general, you will not be pestered by midges while walking. Nevertheless, it can be a good idea to bring an insect and tick repellent on your walk.

TICKS are tiny (1mm), spider-like blood sucking creatures which feed on many different types of animals, including humans. They are frequently found in moorland and other grassy areas, usually close to the ground, especially in moist, shaded places. Once attached ticks feed for several days and then simply drop off. Through their bite ticks can, **very rarely**, transmit a bacterial infection called Lyme disease or Borreliosis. *For information on prevention of tick bites and what to do if bitten, see www.ticktalkireland.org.*

EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

- **In case of an emergency, try to stay calm. Try to work out your exact location on the map and decide if you can help yourself out of the situation.**
- **In a genuine emergency call 112 or 999 free of charge.** The operator may ask you which service you require. For example, ambulance (*if you are near a road*), mountain rescue (*for inaccessible places*), coast guard (*near the sea*), etc.
 - You can call emergency services using any mobile/cell phone - even if does not have call credit or is locked. Simply type 112 instead of the unlock code.
 - If you do not have a phone signal it may still be possible to contact emergency services. Emergency calls can be made on *any* available mobile phone network. If no networks have signal, you will be told that there is no reception and you cannot make emergency calls. You will have to move to another location to place the call, if possible.
 - Please keep in mind that if your phone does not have network coverage on your own network **others will not be able to call you back. So, do not hang up unless directed to do so!**
- You can also signal for help using your whistle or torch. The International distress signal is six blasts on your whistle or six flashes with your torch. If your whistles are heard, you should hear three whistles in reply. Keep repeating the whistle blasts so that your location can be determined.
- Try to keep everyone safe, warm and comfortable while waiting for help, particularly **if you have an injured person**. Move to a sheltered area if possible. Ensure everyone puts on any spare layers of clothing that they are carrying. Insulate everyone from the ground by placing backpacks underneath them (if it is safe to move them). You may loosen the laces on your boots, but *do not* remove them, even in the case of swelling. Try to keep everyone well hydrated, but only drink bottled water.
- If there is no signal to phone emergency services, and you are not capable of moving to an area where there is signal, do not panic. Someone will always know to look for you, or someone will find you e.g. other walkers using the trail.

HILLWALK TOURS

Escape to Nature!

The Countryside Code

While out walking in the countryside, remember you are walking in areas where people live and work. And we also share the countryside with much wildlife.

The following are a number of important recommendations to abide by when out walking:

- **Be safe - plan ahead and follow signs**
- **Leave gates and property as you find them**
- **Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home**
- **Where you are permitted to bring them, keep dogs on a lead**
- **Consider other people**

Leave No Trace

Hillwalk Tours is a proud supporter of **Leave No Trace** – an Outdoor Ethics Programme designed to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research, and partnerships. An ethic can be defined as knowing what the right thing to do is, and doing it, even if there is no one about to see you do it. Leave No Trace depends more on attitude and awareness than on rules and regulations.

Practising a Leave No Trace ethic is very simple: Make it hard for others to see or hear you and LEAVE NO TRACE of your visit. See <https://www.leavenotraceireland.org> for more information.

Toilets: If you need to answer 'the call of nature' and there are no facilities nearby, please take care to find a discreet spot away from the trail and any water sources. Ensure that you **Leave No Trace** of your visit, i.e. bury your waste and 'pack out' your toilet paper by bringing it with you inside a double zip-lock bag or similar. You can find more info on this at www.trailspace.com/articles/backcountry-waste-disposal.html

More from Hillwalk Tours

Did you enjoy your self-guided walk? Consider one of our walking holidays!

Hillwalk Tours was founded by Kilkenny man, James Byrne, and is based in Galway. We have been organising self-guided hillwalking tours in Wicklow and other parts of Ireland, the UK and Spain for over 10 years, providing thousands of happy hiking experiences to our many loyal walkers. This walk is a perfect introduction to our other offerings that include overnight accommodation, luggage and walker transfers if required. We take care of everything so all you need to do is put one foot in front of the other along some of the most beautiful landscapes in the world!

We have over 200 walks across 20+ different trails with options to suit everyone from the part-time hiker to those with more experience.

Explore our catalogs to learn more about our exciting walking holidays. Discover the diverse range of experiences that await you on each adventure by [clicking here](#).

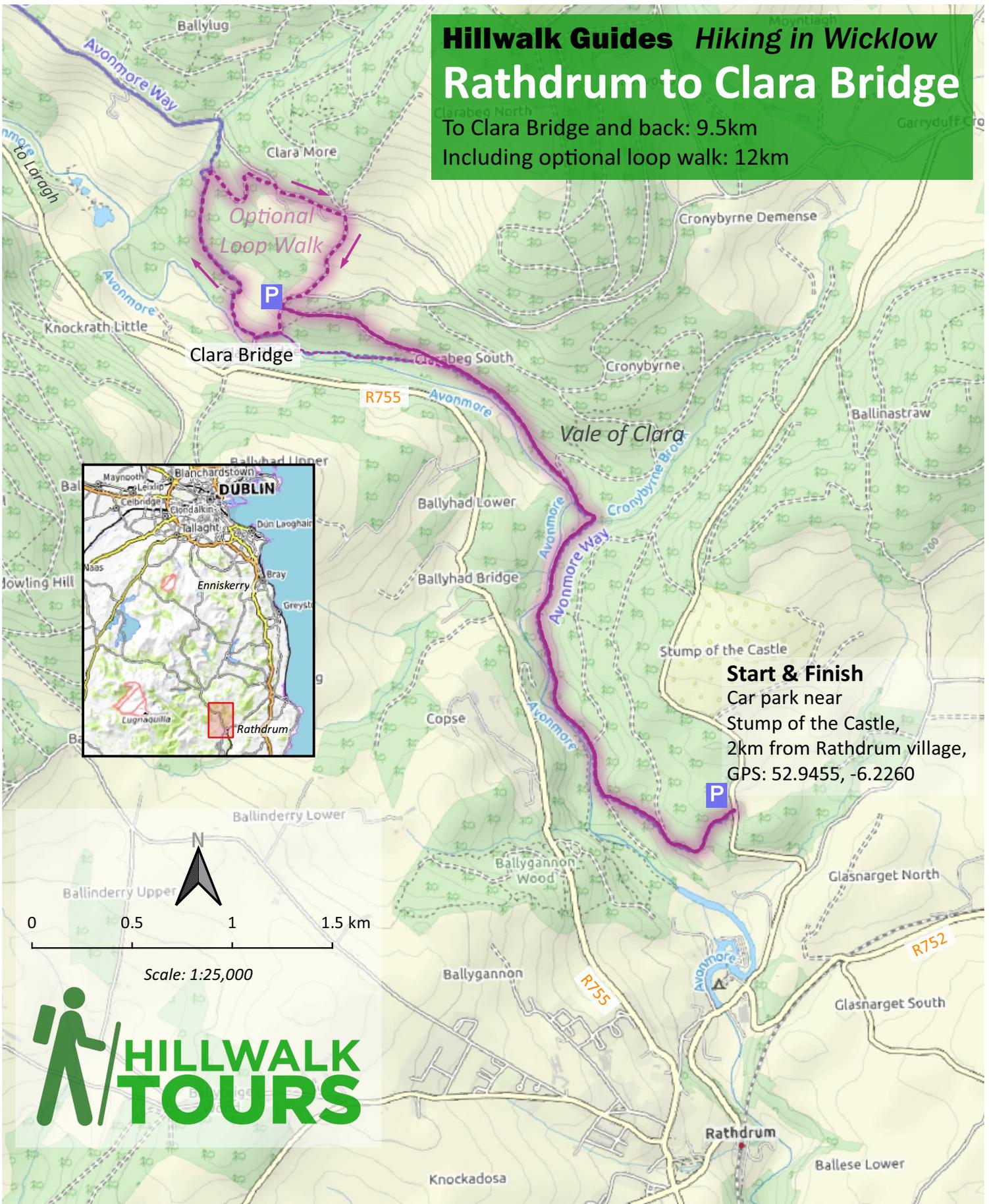
See our website www.hillwalktours.com for more information or contact us at info@hillwalktours.com and one of our team will personally advise you.



Disclaimer: This document and the information it contains remain the property of Hillwalk Tours Ltd. While every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information in this document, Hillwalk Tours Ltd does not accept any responsibility or liability for any damage or loss to any person for the result of any action taken on the basis of this information.

Hillwalk Guides *Hiking in Wicklow* Rathdrum to Clara Bridge

To Clara Bridge and back: 9.5km
Including optional loop walk: 12km



Elevation Profile - Rathdrum to Clara Bridge



Disclaimer: Hillwalk Tours Ltd does not accept any responsibility or liability for any damage or loss to any person for the result of any action taken on the basis of this information.



Hillwalk Guides – Hiking in Wicklow

Rathdrum to Clara Bridge (Route Notes)

Please Note:

- Sections of the route go through areas of forestry. This means that the landscape along those sections is often changing as trees grow, reach maturity, get felled and are replanted within the cycle of commercial forestry.
- Changes to the route may occur of which we are unaware, i.e. due to forestry. This can include changes to the path surface or the surroundings.
- The approximate '**Walking Time**' is based on a moderate walking speed of 4km per hour and does not include any breaks.
- The '**Total Ascent**' is the cumulative elevation gain or climb over the entire distance of the walk.

YOUR WALK AT A GLANCE

Distance: 9.5-12km

Walking Time: 3-4 hours

Total Ascent: (↑) 300m

Terrain: Good forest and riverside tracks and paths; some road walking on the loop after passing through Clara. Just one or two easy climbs near Clara Bridge.

Food & Drink: Rathdrum

Way Marking: The majority of this walk follows the route of the Avonmore Way, which is marked by a yellow 'walking man' and an arrow on a black background together with the words 'Sli Abhainn Mor – Avonmore Way'



Access & Parking: The walk starts from the start/end point of the Avonmore Way at a forest car park near a place called 'Stump of the Castle' (GPS: 52.9455, -6.2260). It is on the road to Moneystown, 2km from Rathdrum. Please make sure that you leave no valuables in the car.

From the car park near Stump of the Castle (GPS Coordinates: 52.9455, -6.2260):

- Follow a track into the woodland and keep left on the lower track, after 400m. At a track junction 450m further on keep right and continue with the Avonmore River on your left.
- i** The **Avonmore River** takes its English name from the Irish name 'An Abhainn Mhór', meaning 'the big river'. It flows from Lough Dan in the Wicklow Mountains west of Roundwood in a southerly direction for approximately 30 km before joining the Avonbeg River at the Meeting of the Waters (Cumar an dá Uisce) to form the River Avoca, which flows into the Irish Sea at Arklow.
- Follow the river and ignore tracks leading off to the right. After 500m, you pass a water level gauge in the river that reports water flow. Cross over a wooden footbridge over the Cronybyrne Brook, after 1.2km. Just past the bridge you will find a stamp box for one of a number of local walks.
- i** You are now in the **Vale of Clara**. The woodlands here are part of the Vale of Clara Nature Reserve, a large area of scenic oak-wood that has been at least partially under woodland since the Ice Age. It contains the largest area of semi-natural woodland in Co. Wicklow and is potentially one of the largest remaining stands of native hardwoods in Ireland.
- Keep left, after 300m, and ignore a track leading up to the right.
- Then, 850m further on keep right on the upper track and after another 800m ignore paths leading off to the left and right. (Your map also show the Avonmore Way using the paths closer to the river. But at the time of our last visit those paths were in disrepair and the main route we recommend follows the upper track.)

HILLWALK TOURS

Escape to Nature!

- You come to a car park, just past a gate, after 160m. Leave the forest and turn left onto a road here. Follow this downhill for 260m to the pretty Clara Church and Clara Bridge.

① *Nestled in the heart of the valley is the tiny, picturesque **hamlet of Clara**. The six-arch stone bridge here dates from the late 17th century and is thought to be the oldest bridge in County Wicklow. The fact that the bridge is narrow and can carry just one lane of traffic is testament to its age. Archaeological excavations in 2014 uncovered evidence of a watermill 100 metres upstream of the bridge which was dated to the last decade of the 17th century.*

The Catholic Church of St Patrick and St Killian is adjacent to the bridge and was built in 1799. The school beside the church came a century later in 1899. Clara also had a post office, an inn and a shop, all of which are private residences today.

You have now walked a little over 4.7km. If you wish, you can simply retrace your steps back from here to the start of the walk for a total distance of 9.5km. However, the directions below will return you via a looped walk through the woodlands of Clara and along minor roads. This will add 2.5km, before you follow the Avonmore Way back to Stump of the Castle, bringing the total distance of your walk to 12km.

- Do not cross the bridge and instead leave the road and pass through the metal gate in front of the church. Walk to the right around the church and then follow a path with a wall on the left.
 - The path starts to climb and, after 120m, ignore a path leading up to the right.
 - Instead continue straight on uphill into the woodland and turn right onto an old track, after 100m and follow this uphill. In the summer you might hear the laughter and shouts from the Clara Lara Fun Park across the river to your left.
 - After 700m, you see a large boulder on a path straight ahead. Leave the track and follow this path for 60m to a track where you turn right.
 - Follow the track uphill, which soon bears left and the right, until you come to a road, after a little over 500m.
 - Turn right onto the road and continue for 400m to a little crossroads of three roads and a track.
 - Turn right again here and follow the road downhill for 600m to the car park near Clara Bridge, where you left the forest earlier.
 - Leave the road and turn left onto the forest track. Follow the main track back along the Avonmore River and through the Vale of Clara until it narrows to a path, after 2km, at the wooden footbridge over the Cronybyrne Brook.
 - Continue on the main path/track with the river on your right and pass the water level gauge in the river, after 1.2km.
 - Ignore a track to the left a little further on and after another 250m, you leave the Avonmore River and take the track on the left.
 - Follow this track for almost 900m and you are back at the car park near Stump of the Castle where you started your hike.
- ① *And in case you were wondering - the nearby 'Stump' is all that remains of **Kilcommon Castle**. It was a four towered keep, built around 1320 by Sir Hugh Lawless, an old Wicklow warrior in his vain attempt to stem the O'Byrne expansion. The O'Byrne's seized the castle after Sir Hugh's death and little is known of its fate after that.*

After Your hike

For refreshments we recommend the nearby village of Rathdrum. Rathdrum (Irish: Ráth Droma, meaning "Ringfort of the Ridge") is a large village of 1,500 people, situated high on the western side of the Avonmore river valley, which flows through the Vale of Clara. In the late 19th century Rathdrum had a healthy flannel industry.

Charles Stewart Parnell, one of the most important political figures in 19th century Great Britain and Ireland, was born in Rathdrum in 1846. He was a nationalist political leader, land reform agitator, and the founder and leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party. His former home, Avondale House, is located in the nearby Avondale Forest Park while in the town there is the Parnell National Memorial Park.