



Hillwalk Guides – Hiking in Wicklow

Trooperstown Loop (Info Booklet)

Dear fellow hiker!

We trust that you are looking forward to a wonderful walk in Wicklow, the Garden of Ireland. This easy loop walk across Trooperstown Hill, south of Laragh offers good views into the heart of the Wicklow Mountains. On clear days, the Wicklow coast can also be seen to the east and maybe even the Welsh Mountains beyond.

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
- The Wicklow Mountains
- A Short History of Wicklow
- 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 Lynham's of Laragh (GPS: 53.0082, -6.2974) in the village of Laragh, near Glendalough. There are usually some on-road parking spots available here or at the little square beside the Glendalough Green, a little way back the road towards Dublin. While walkers and cars are generally safe in Wicklow, we advise that you do not leave anything of value in your car.

WEATHER: Check the weather forecast before hillwalking and do not do so 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. Weather can change unexpectedly, especially on higher ground, so always be prepared for this. See the What to Wear, What to Bring and Safety Information sections for more details.

BRINGING YOUR DOG: This hike crosses an upland area sometimes used for sheep grazing so we recommend that you do not bring any dogs.

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!

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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 of 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 of 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.

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.

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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

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.

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/

VICTOR'S WAY, Roundwood - Meditation garden & a spiritual sculpture park

During summer months you can visit 'Victor's Way', a privately owned meditation garden and spiritual sculpture park. The garden is notable for its black granite sculptures, crafted in India. The 9-hectare property includes a number of small lakes and forested areas.

Victor's Way is located on the L1036 road, between Lough Tay and Roundwood (GPS: 53.0857, -6.2196). For opening times, prices and more information please visit victorsway.eu.

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VARTRY RESERVOIR, Roundwood – A Victorian water source for Dublin

The nearby Vartry Reservoir was built in the 1860's to meet much of Dublin's water requirements. It was created by damming the river Vartry in two places and the two reservoirs have a combined volume of 17 billion litres. This work was particularly important in the improvement of living conditions and public health in Dublin city where it helped to reduce outbreaks of cholera, typhus and other diseases. Those with extra time to spend in Roundwood, can follow one of the lovely signposted trails around the reservoir.

The walks can best be accessed from the UpperVarty Reservoir Car Park on the R765 road (GPS:53.0716, -6.2049) or from the Lower Varty Reservoir Car Park on the R764 road (GPS: 53.0503, -6.193516).

For more information and a downloadable map visit visitwicklow.ie/item/roundwood-varty-reservoir-trails

POWERSCOURT ESTATE, HOUSE & GARDENS, Enniskerry – World famous house and gardens

Voted by National Geographic Powerscourt is one of the world's greatest gardens.

It offers visitors a beautiful mix of formal gardens, beautiful terraces, statues and ornamental lakes with secret hollows, rambling walks, walled gardens and over 200 variations of trees and shrubs. Highlights include the Italian and Japanese Gardens.

The 18th century house incorporates the Terrace Café overlooking the garden, speciality shops, garden pavilion, Interiors Gallery (offering furniture, soft furnishings and accessories) and an exhibition on the history of the Powerscourt Estate.

The rich history of the estate goes back to the Anglo-Norman times in the 12th century. By the year 1300, a castle had been built by the le Poer (*Power*) family from which the estate takes its name. In 1603, Powerscourt Castle and lands were granted to a new English arrival in the area: Richard Wingfield. The Wingfield's began the creation of the current gardens in the 1740s.

The estate now includes a golf course, a 5-star hotel - and a whiskey distillery, which offers guided tours.

The estate is 2 km west of Enniskerry Village on the Bray Road. For opening times, prices and more information please visit these websites: www.powerscourt.com and www.powerscourtdistillery.com

POWERSCOURT WATERFALL, Enniskerry - Ireland's Highest Waterfall

Powerscourt Waterfall is one of Ireland's highest at 121m (398ft.) and is located 6km from the Main Powerscourt Estate. It is set in one of Ireland's most beautiful parklands at the foothills of the Wicklow Mountains.

The park is a haven for wildlife, including Sika deer, which were introduced to Ireland in 1858, and red squirrels. A kiosk serves snacks, refreshments and of course ice cream.

For opening times, prices and more information please go to www.powerscourt.com/waterfall

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 Laragh.

The Wicklow Heather Restaurant, Laragh Village: A favourite with Irish food critics, the Wicklow Heather has a lot going for it – excellent food, a beautiful location and a very rare literary collection featuring original works from Jonathan Swift, Samuel Beckett and Oscar Wilde amongst others. But it is the food that will have you coming back for more! Reservation recommended. Tel: 0404 45157

Jake's Bar, Lynham's Hotel, Laragh Village: Originally founded in 1776, Jake's Bar serves a good quality pub grub menu in cosy, friendly surroundings. Live music every Saturday night and on Friday's during the summer. Tel: 0404 45345

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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.

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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 18 different trails with options to suit everyone from the part-time hiker to those with more experience.

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.

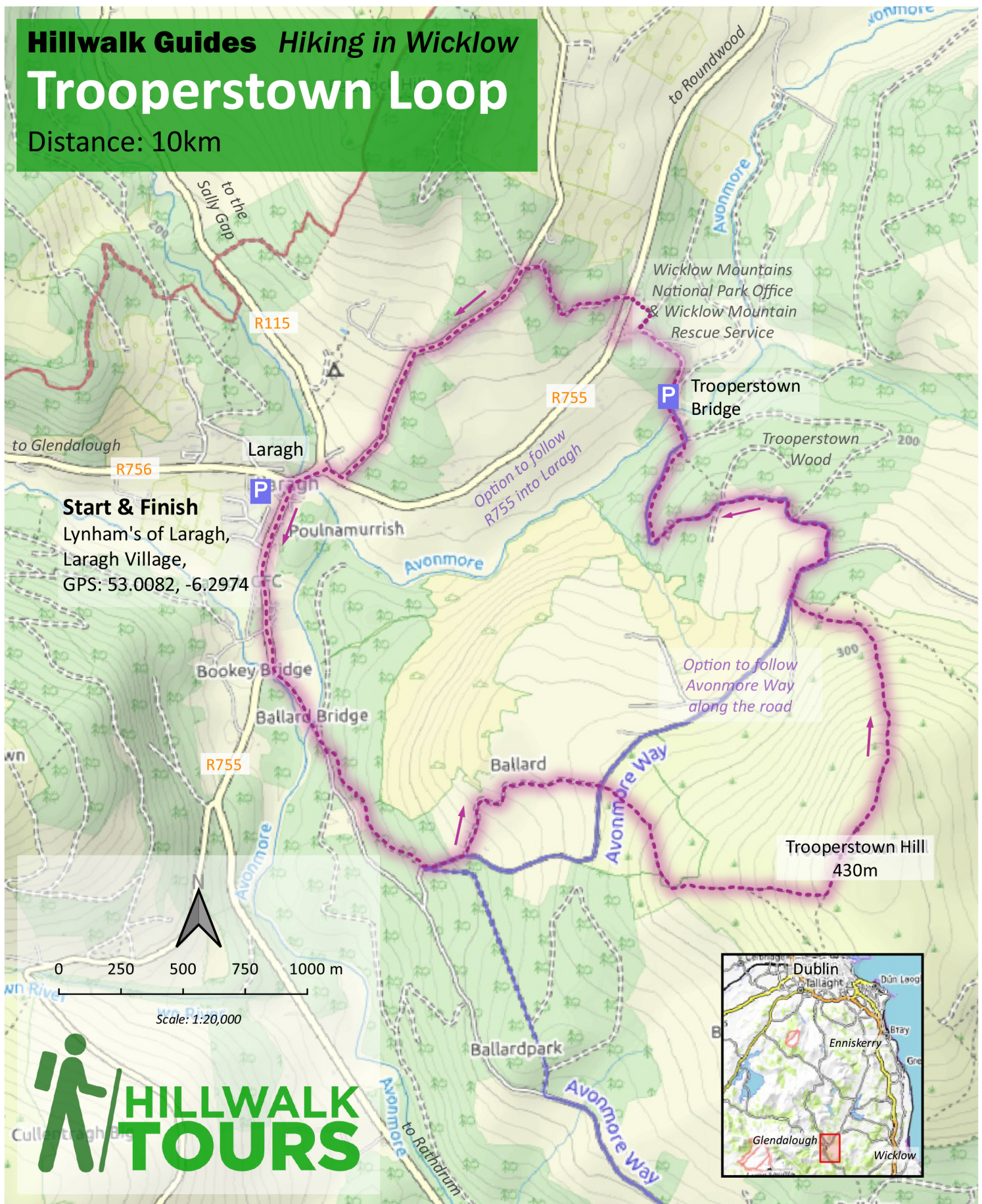


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Hillwalk Guides *Hiking in Wicklow*

Trooperstown Loop

Distance: 10km



Elevation Profile - Trooperstown Loop



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Hillwalk Guides – Hiking in Wicklow

Trooperstown Loop (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: 10km

Walking Time: 3-4 hours

Total Ascent: (↑) 425m

Terrain: Minor roads, country and forest tracks and hill paths. One long but quite manageable climb to Trooperstown Hill followed by a steeper descent. There is an option to bypass the climb though.

Food & Drink: Laragh

Way Marking: The majority of this easy to follow hike is not way marked. However, some sections of the Trooperstown Loop follow 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 Lynham's of Laragh (GPS: 53.0082, -6.2974) in the village of Laragh, near Glendalough. There are usually some on-road parking spots available here or at the little square beside the Glendalough Green, a little back along the road towards Dublin.

From Lynham's of Laragh (GPS: 53.0082, -6.2974):

- Facing Lynham's turn right and follow the road on a footpath which, after 300m, runs between a wall and a fence.
- Where the path ends turn left onto a minor road and then immediately right onto the road you have been following (please take care here).
- As there is a right bend ahead and you will turn left shortly it is a good idea to walk on the left side of the road here.
- After 140m, just before a bridge on the right, turn left onto the L6086 minor road. You are soon joined by a little stream on the right. This is the little Glenealo River that flows out of the lakes of Glendalough and past the monastic city.
- Cross a road bridge over the larger Avonmore River, after 300m, and ignore a forest access track and gate on the left just 40m further on.
- Instead continue for another 40m and then turn left off the road onto a narrow path passing between some boulders.
- The path soon veers right and climbs gently through some mixed woodland and commercial forestry.

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- You emerge onto a road, after almost 700m. Ahead is a path leading to Rathdrum along the Avonmore Way, but your route turns left onto the road and follows it uphill (*also along the Avonmore Way, but in the direction of Trooperstown*).
- After 175m, look for a gravel track leading uphill to the left. The Avonmore Way continues on the road, but you follow the more pleasant route along this track, known as Ballard Lane.
- Turn left off the road and follow the track uphill. It levels out, after 270m, but soon starts climbing again.
- You come back to the road, after a little over 550m. The Avonmore Way again crosses your path from right to left on the road, but your route continues straight ahead on a rugged path leading uphill through the heather. (*If you wish to avoid the climb up to Trooperstown Hill simply turn left here instead and follow the road for 1.1km until you meet the trail coming of the mountain from the right near a mobile phone mast.*)
- At first the path bears a little to the right instead of aiming for the top of the hill. After 530m, it then veers left to lead more directly towards the top of Trooperstown Hill. After 300m, as the climb gets steeper, keep left and ignore a path veering off to the right.
- The route ahead now splits into several parallel ‘lanes’ and at the top of the spur, after 320m, another path joins from the right. Turn left here and continue uphill. A gentle climb for a further 300m brings you to the top of Trooperstown Hill, marked by a stone cairn

❶ **Cairns** are man-made piles or stacks of stones which are often erected as landmarks or trail markers, a use they have had since ancient times. However, since prehistory, they have also been built and used as burial monuments, for ceremonies and for defence, among other purposes. The word cairn comes from the Scottish Gaelic “càrn”

❶ **Trooperstown Hill** is one of the westerly outposts of the Wicklow Mountains and, unlike many others, it has not been planted with forestry. As such it gives good panoramic views of much of the surrounding hills to the west, north and south.

Looking back towards Laragh you might be able to spot the monastic city with its round tower. To its left is the entrance to Glendalough, and beyond it to the right, with bright, white spoil heaps, Glendasan. Further to the left in the distance is the flat top of Lugnaquilla, the highest mountain in Ireland outside of Kerry, while to the north you might spot the distinct conical shape of Sugarloaf Mountain. With just 501m elevation it is one of the smallest mountains in Ireland. On clear days the Wicklow coast can be seen to the east and some say that on exceptionally good days you can maybe even make out the Mountains of Wales beyond that.

The origin of the name Trooperstown has been the subject of discussion. Some local accounts say that it was used as a base by troopers or soldiers during the Cromwellian Conquest of the 1650s or perhaps later during the 1798 Rebellion of the United Irishmen. However, the Irish language version of Trooperstown is “Tigh an Tearmainn”, meaning ‘the house of the church lands’. It is more likely, therefore, that Trooperstown was part of the lands of the nearby monastery of Glendalough and that it is one of the many places which reflects mistranslation from Irish into English. It is also known as Maoilín or Mweeleen, meaning ‘little round hill’.

- Once you have enjoyed the view continue in the same direction as before to descend from the mountain. The descent becomes gets steeper, after 350m, and there are one or two sections that require some care.
- After 600m, keep left at a path junction and where the path forks 140m further on keep right and aim for a mobile phone mast that should be visible above the trees ahead.
- The paths forks again, after 100m, and again you keep right and aim for the mast just ahead.
- You once again emerge onto a road, after 80m, where you turn right (*and re-join the route of the Avonmore Way*).
- After 240m, turn left off the road and follow a track downhill which eventually leads you through some woodland.
- After 1.4km keep left at a track junction and head for a bridge over the Avonmore River, 90m ahead. If you are feeling brave you can try to cross the river on the large stepping stones to the right, or you can just dip your feet into the water here.

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- ① 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.
- Otherwise cross the bridge and, just past it, turn right down towards a car park.
- Follow a track leading uphill at the far side of the car park and you pass an information board for Trooperstown Woods and the Avonmore Way on your left after 100m.
- There are plans to continue the route of the Avonmore Way from here through the woodlands around the back of the nearby Wicklow Mountains National Park offices. But at the time of writing these notes this information board was still the official end of the Avonmore Way.
- However, your destination is Laragh, so we have to keep going. Until the new route around the national park offices is opened, follow the track leading uphill to the right.
- The track changes to a surfaced road, after 250m, as you are passing the entrance to the National Park office on the right.
- Shortly after this, you come to the Wicklow base of the Mountain Rescue Service.

If you continue on the road with the Mountain Rescue Base on your right, you soon come to a main road (R755). The footpath to the left there leads you into Laragh, after 1.6km.

- But if you wish to avoid a long walk along the main road and think you can handle one more short climb, turn right onto a track, before you come to the main gate for the Rescue Base instead.
- After 100m, and just past the back gate for the Rescue Base, turn left onto a narrow path leading you for 100m uphill to the road.
- Carefully cross the road and continue onto a track leading uphill into the trees. This woodland track brings you to a minor road after almost 600m.
- Turn left onto the road, which offers occasional views back towards Trooperstown Hill. After 1.2km you come to the R755 again.
- Turn right and follow the road into Laragh for 200m until you come to a junction beside Lynham's of Laragh, where your hike started.

After Your hike

For refreshments we recommend Lynham's of Laragh.

*Located at the junction of the four principal motor routes through county Wicklow, **Laragh** is right in the heart of the Uplands; this, plus its proximity to famous Glendalough, makes this a lively and busy village. The town also hosts a vibrant community centre - the Brockagh Resource Centre - where you find a an outdoor supply shop and successful organic produce market usually takes place each fortnight.*

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