

National Trails Day 2011 - Sunday, October 2nd – Get to know your local walks.

Earlier this year, the famous and much-loved broadcaster Micheál O’Muircheartaigh launched the upgraded Lough Derg Way and at the time he commented that “You have this wonderful asset near you, it’s no good having an asset near you unless people know about it”. NATIONAL TRAILS DAY on the 2nd of October is your opportunity to get to know your local walks and whether you’re an ambler or a rambler, North Tipperary Trails Group has organised a series of guided walks for you to choose from.

National Trails Day is a celebration of Ireland’s wonderful variety of trails and a chance for everyone to enjoy some of our most beautiful countryside, forests, mountains and lakes. With miles and miles of trails to explore, there is a trail to suit everyone.

North Tipperary Trails Group, in conjunction with local communities have organised a series of walks, all of which will be guided by an experienced leader and are suitable for all standards of walkers. The choice of walks as well as the improvement and development of walks in North Tipperary has progressed year on year through the collaborative work of the North Tipperary Trails Group which is made up of representatives from agencies such as North Tipperary LEADER, North Tipperary County Council, Shannon Development and the Rural Recreation Officer for Tipperary. Community groups, Coillte, FÁS, The Rural Social Scheme and land owners throughout the county have also played an important role in this process.

According to Ruairi Deane, Tourism Product Development Executive with Shannon Development and Chairperson of the North Tipperary Trails Group, “walking is not just an amenity for locals but is also an important attractor for tourists to the county. Walking and hiking is by far the most popular outdoor activity for overseas visitors to Ireland. The North Tipperary Trails Group will continue to work to develop and promote the walking product in North Tipperary in order to grow its contribution to the county’s tourism economy.”

Con Ryan, Rural Recreation Officer, with the responsibility of developing walks in Tipperary adds that “The standard of way marked ways and looped walks in North Tipperary is second to none in the country, however, many local people are unaware of these assets on their doorsteps. National Trails Day is their opportunity to become familiar with walks in their locality, where it begins, how to read the trailhead map and what to expect in terms of gradients and surface. Information on the walks we are showcasing for National Trails Day are all available on the website www.nationaltrailsday.ie”

Walks planned for National Trails Day by the North Tipperary Trails Group and communities are;

1. **Knockanroe Loop** in the Silvermines. Leaving at 12p.m, the meeting point for this walk is at the trailhead which is located 2Km’s from the Silvermines village. Following the signs for Stepp viewing point you will eventually come to the trailhead at the top of the hill. The walk is approximately 5Kms in length and the estimated time to complete the trail is between one and a half to two hours. The trail is a scenic walk offering splendid views of surrounding counties and Lough Derg.
2. **The Devil’s Bit Loop** in Templemore. Leaving at 10a.m, the meeting point for this walk is at the trailhead in the village of Barnane which is approximately 6Km’s from Templemore . The walk is 5Km’s in length at a moderate grade. While the trail offers views of surrounding counties and countryside, there is a white cross erected in 1953 at the summit which stands forty five feet high and has a span of twenty five feet and is presently illuminated at night.

3. **Upperchurch National Looped Walk** (Birch Hill Loop). Leaving at 11a.m, the meeting point for this walk is at Dempsey's Pub in Rosmult, 3 Km's from the village of Upperchurch. This is a moderate walk of 7Km through forestry and agricultural land. The folklore of the area tells of a Robin Hood figure that roamed the hills of West Tipperary in the 17/18th century and was known as Eamonn a Chnoic (Ned of the Hill). His ancestors were extensive landowners, whose lands were confiscated and Eamonn a Chnoic became one of a band of rapparees who championed the cause of the poor, dispossessed natives and harassed the English planters. Many legends are told of these men and their deeds. This loop explores the area around Birch Hill, which may in times past have sheltered Eamonn and his 'merry-men'!
4. **Kilcommon Pilgrim Trail**. Leaving at 11a.m, the meeting point for this walk is at the trailhead in Kilcommon village by the community centre. The walk brings you along the old mass path to the lower slopes of Mother Mountain and from there it will loop back to the village of Kilcommon. It provides beautiful views of the countryside and lots of fresh hilly air. It is a moderate walk of 7Km's in distance.
5. **Lough Derg Way – Garrykennedy to Dromineer, Walk & Cruise!**
Leaving from the trailhead in Garrykennedy at 11a.m which is opposite Ciss Ryan's pub, this is your opportunity to undertake some of the Lough Derg Way. The distance of this section of the National way marked way walk is 20Km's and should take approximately four hours to complete. The walk finishes in Dromineer with the opportunity for walkers to take a lake cruise back to Garrykennedy Harbour to collect their cars. (€5 to take the cruise)

Different types of walks

It appears that the walker in North Tipperary is now spoilt for choice with the different categories of walks that are available. There are two **way marked ways** in North Tipperary which are long distance, multi-day routes offering the experienced walker challenge and enjoyment. These are the Lough Derg Way and the Slieve Felim Way. There is a wonderful selection of **looped walks** which are shorter walks ranging from one hour to four hours and they start and finish at the same trailhead and are suitable for both serious and leisurely walkers, examples include Graves of the Leinstermen Loop, Kilcommon Pilgrim Loop Walk and The Upperchurch National Looped walks. (Knockalough, Eamonn an Chnoic & Birch hill). **Linear walks** which start and finish at different locations such as the Slí Eala, a stunning scenic walk along the Nenagh River from Dromineer to Nenagh have also been developed in recent times to improve the choice of routes for walkers. **Treks** are four to six hour walks following a section of one of the way marked ways. Many treks traverse forestry, waterfalls, weirs and small villages and an example of a trek is Keeper Hill. To find out more about the variety of walks in the county visit www.shannonregiontrails.ie

Ends

For any queries contact Áine Mc Carthy, Tourism Development & Liaison Officer,
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