

THE CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS GAME OF THRONES ITINERARY IS A WHISTLE-STOP VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY...

SEVEN KINGDOMS IN A DAY

HBO'S AWARD-WINNING TELEVISION SERIES GAME OF THRONES COMBINES THE CUT AND THRUST OF MEDIEVAL WARFARE WITH MURDER, MYSTICISM, AND INTRIGUE. THE BATTLE FOR CONTROL OF THE IRON THRONE WHICH RULES OVER THE SEVEN KINGDOMS OF WESTEROS, HAS CAPTURED THE IMAGINATION OF FANS ALL OVER THE WORLD THAT REVEL IN EVERY TWIST AND TURN OF THE STORYLINE.

JUST AS PETER JACKSON'S LORD OF THE RINGS USED VARIOUS LOCATIONS ACROSS NEW ZEALAND, SO TOO THE MAKERS OF GAME OF THRONES CHOSE NORTHERN IRELAND, WITH EXTENSIVE FILMING ALONG THE STUNNING CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS TO REPRESENT EVERYTHING FROM WINTERFELL TO THE KING'S ROAD, THE IRON ISLANDS TO STORMLANDS. NOW YOU TOO CAN STAND ON THE SPOT WHERE LANNISTERS SCHEMED, STROLL IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF STARKS, AND GAZE ON GRASSLANDS CROSSED BY THE DOTHRAKI HORDE.

GAME OF THRONES

1 DAY ITINERARY

THE CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS GAME OF THRONES ITINERARY LETS YOU EXPERIENCE THE FANTASY WORLD OF AUTHOR GEORGE R.R. MARTIN FOR YOURSELF. PLOTTING A PATH THROUGH THE SCENIC SPLENDOUR OF THE SEVEN KINGDOMS, IT TAKES YOU TO WHERE SO MANY OF THE PIVOTAL SCENES WERE SHOT.



Ballintoy Harbour - courtesy Helen McCall

The **Game of Thrones** itinerary not only brings to life the drama of the series, but also provides a front row seat at locations steeped in local myth and legend, where ancient warriors walked long before leading men. So why not step on to a set like no other, where you can indulge your fascination for **Game of Thrones**, investigate what the **Causeway Coast and Glens** has to offer, and still have time to enjoy the sort of hospitality for which this small corner of the globe is famed. Welcome to the real wild Westeros!



@HBO

"The Causeway Coast and Glens looked amazing on film and suited Game of Thrones with the rugged, barren, and at times, wild backdrops... Coming back to film Game Of Thrones was meant to feel like home, and it did. It's an area I love and you can never tire of looking at the stunning scenery."

Michelle Fairley (Lady Catelyn Stark)



A sound night's sleep and a hearty breakfast are the order of the day before setting out from Northern Ireland's capital city of Belfast along the M2 (branching onto the A2) and on to the famed **Causeway Coastal Route**. Celebrated as one of **The World's Great Road Journeys**, this twisting trail of tarmacadam is about to test your stamina for small screen scripts, sights, and sound bites as it takes you to seven mythical kingdoms in one day.



Cairncastle

Seven is indeed the magic number for it is only seven miles past **Larne**, know as gateway to the **Glens [of Antrim]**, that you will come across **Cairncastle** (near the village of Ballygally). It was here that it all began, so to speak, and where you encounter your first dilemma. It was here on the windswept **Antrim Plateau** that Game of Thrones kicked off in dramatic fashion with Ned Stark beheading the Night's Watch deserter, witnessed by Jon Snow, Theon Greyjoy, and the Stark brothers Robb and Bran; and where Catelyn captures Tyrion Lannister whom she suspects of trying to kill her son. When Bran, Rickon, Osha, and Hodor head north to The Wall it is also from the land above Cairncastle that they take a last look back at Winterfell.



© HBO | Slemish - Shillinavogy Valley

However, even the most imaginative scriptwriter would have trouble topping Cairncastle's own tale of the nobleman supposedly drowned along the coastline in 1588 as part of the ill-fated Spanish Armada. He was laid to rest in **St Patrick's Church** graveyard and on the spot where he was buried stands the gnarled and twisted branches of a Spanish chestnut tree. Samples taken from the tree reveal it does

indeed date from the 16th century.

The beauty of this itinerary is that there are always options and you decide where to stop and for how long. However, to cover many of the main locations you may have to pick and choose.

For some the temptation may be to view Cairncastle from afar and instead continue the few short miles to picturesque **Glenarm**. The first of the famed nine **Glens of Antrim**, Glenarm [Gleann Arma], meaning Valley Of The Army, boasts **Glenarm Castle** (seat of the Earls of Antrim for 400 years), the beautiful **Glenarm Forest Park**, and a craft workshop that Game of Thrones fans will want to visit.



Glenarm Castle

Steensons Jewellery Economusee is where many of the stunning pieces for the series were crafted such as Joffrey's crown, Lannister lion pendants, stag pins, and silver fish brooches. What's more, you'll be welcome to watch the craftsmen at their work and perhaps purchase something special for yourself.



Joffrey's Crown - courtesy Steenson's Workshop



The clock is ticking, though, and there are more choices to be made. Leaving Glenarm you can either travel inland for just under 10 miles until you reach the Shillanavogy Road in the shadow of **Slemish Mountain** (OR) carry on along the coast road to the beautiful villages of **Cushendall** and **Cushendun**. Slemish is where **St Patrick**, Ireland's patron saint, tended sheep after being brought to the area by pirates who slaughtered his family. It's the sort of barbarism that would have won favour with the warlike Dothraki horde and a suitably appropriate setting for the Game of Thrones scenes where Daenerys Targaryen first learns what a Khaleesi is, and she, Ser Jorah Mormont, and the Dothraki horsemen ride through the grasslands en route to Vaes Dothrak.



(l-r) Cushendun Coves, Larrybane Head
(courtesy richardgregg.co.uk)

Again the dictates of time may necessitate leaving Slemish to a future visit and heading instead to **Cushendun**, a village favoured as a holiday destination by Hollywood star Liam

Neeson. It was in the caves at Cushendun, easily accessible on foot, that the Game of Thrones crew filmed the dramatic scene from Season Two in which Davos Seaworth, on the orders of Lord Stannis, takes the sorceress Melisandre ashore where she gives birth to a shadowy baby (that eventually killed Renly).

Once again you, the visitor, has control over your Game of Thrones destiny (sorry destination!). After Cushendun you can choose to spend time at magnificent **Murlough Bay** with its views of **Rathlin Island**, Mull of Kintyre, and the Scottish Islands. Used as the road to Pyke on which Theon Greyjoy and his sister Asha ride on horseback, Renly and Stannis meet to

discuss a resolution to the succession issue in the 'Garden Of Bones' episode, and where Davos Seaworth is shipwrecked after the Battle Of Blackwater Bay, it's a location close to the



heart of Michelle Fairley (Lady Stark). **"I was particularly pleased when I heard Game of Thrones was going to be filming at Murlough Bay. I used to go swimming there as a child."**

You can also choose to bypass Murlough Bay and travel on through the nearby town of **Ballycastle**, a popular seaside resort that also has close ties with another cast member. Birthplace of Conleth Hill (Lord Varys) Ballycastle leads us on to **Larrybane**, meaning 'the ancient white site', a classic Storms End situ with its panoramic views of the limestone cliffs and ocean. Larrybane was the site of a promontory fort dating back to 800AD and the caves below were home to boat builders and a safe haven during winter storms (how apt!).

Several key scenes were shot at this dramatic coastal location, including Brienne beating Ser Loras and earning a place in Renly's Kingsguard as a reward. At Larrybane Renly

swears to Lady Stark that he will avenge Ned's death, then meets his end at the hands of Melisandre's shadow baby; Margaery confides to Littlefinger (following Renly's death and with Stannis' fleet off-ashore) that she wants to be Queen; and Davos tries to tell



Stannis what he witnessed in the cave with Melisandre. Take time to put down your camera, stand on Larrybane Head with the wind in your hair, look out to sea, and it will all become obvious. You'll find yourself nodding in agreement with the programme makers who chose this view for their generic panning shots of the coast.

However, if you really want to test your head for heights why not plan a return visit and factor in the nearby **Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge**. One of Northern Ireland's most famous landmarks, the constraints of time would almost certainly rule out this particular challenge, but perhaps in the future you could consider walking in the footsteps of many

members of the Game Of Thrones cast and crew who braved the bridge suspended across a 20-metre chasm between the mainland and the tiny Carrick Island (with a 23-metre drop to



© HBO | Ballintoy Harbour

the water below).

Back on the winding coast road, next stop is **Ballintoy Harbour**. Still a working harbour for local fishermen, this picturesque inlet doubled as Lordsport Harbour (The Iron Islands) for the homecoming of Theon Greyjoy after ten years in Winterfell. The beach and bay at Ballintoy is where Theon was baptized into the faith of the 'Drowned God' (in the episode 'What Is Dead May Never Die') cementing his return to the House of Greyjoy, and where the pirate Salladhor Sann met Davos and pledged his support to Stannis Baratheon.

Filming may not have taken place at the **Giant's Causeway** (although the sea beyond featured in several sweeping shots) but, like Carrick-a-Rede, the magnificent **UNESCO World Heritage Site** with its unique six-sided basalt columns and the wonderful local legend that is Finn McCool should be pencilled in for a future visit.

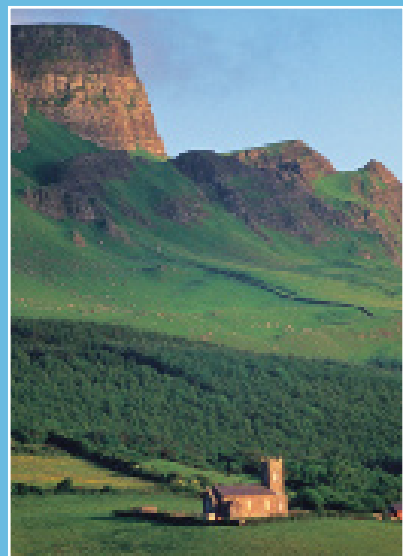
As you reach the village of **Bushmills** (site for one of the Ireland's oldest whiskey distilleries) you will be lured inland to one of the most photographed natural phenomenon in the region, the haunting (and we mean haunting) avenue of trees near Armoy known as '**The Dark Hedges**'. This is where Arya Stark, dressed as a boy, escaped from King's Landing in the company of Yoren, Gendry, and Hot Pie. Don't linger too long, though, as the Grey Lady (a lost spirit from a long abandoned graveyard) is said to appear at dusk amongst the trees.



Dark Hedges

Your whistle-stop journey through the Seven Kingdoms is nearly complete, but there's one last treat in store. Travel through **Coleraine** on the banks of the **River Bann** and following the **Causeway Coastal Route** signs once more, past **Castlerock**, and on to **Downhill Strand**. Precariously perched on a rocky outcrop is the iconic **Mussendun Temple**, built in 1785 as a summer library and modelled on the Temple of Vista in Italy. During filming the beach below became Dragonstone, the golden sands seeing the Seven Idols of Westeros burned and Melisandre, flames dancing into the night sky, proclaim in the episode 'The North Remembers': "For the night is dark and full of terrors."

The visual feast will continue as you wave goodbye to Benone and head for home, with **Binevenagh**, an Area Of Outstanding Beauty, providing yet another brilliant backdrop as you bring the curtain down on the Causeway Coast and Glens Games of Thrones itinerary.



Binevenagh

2 and 3 day Game of Thrones itineraries are also available at causewaycoastandglens.com/gameofthrones.

Visit causewaycoastandglens.com for lots more information on activities, attractions, events and itineraries in Northern Ireland's Causeway Coast and Glens.



Mussendun Temple | Photo courtesy Amanda Killen