

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

## 3 DAY ITINERARY

THE **CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS GAME OF THRONES** ITINERARY IS A THREE-DAY VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY THAT 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)



## DAY 1: BELFAST TO GLENARM [87.4 MILES/140.7KM]

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 tar macadam 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, known 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.

From Cairncastle it's only a few short miles to picturesque **Glenarm**. With pitched battles between would-be rulers of Westeros a frequent subject matter for Game of Thrones it's fitting that day one should end in a village whose name is taken from the Irish Gleann Arma, meaning Valley Of The Army. For those with sufficient reserves of energy you can explore **Glenarm Castle** (seat of the Earls of Antrim for 400 years), the beautiful **Glenarm Forest Park**, and a workshop that Game of Thrones fans will want to visit.

**Steenisons 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.

Glenarm Castle



Joffrey's Crown - courtesy Steenison's Workshop

## DAY 2: GLENARM TO BALLYCASTLE [75 MILES/120KM]

Slemish Mountain



Leaving Glenarm you travel inland once more for just under 10 miles until you reach the Shillanavogy Road in the shadow of **Slemish Mountain**. **St Patrick**, Ireland's patron saint, tended sheep on Slemish after being brought to the area by pirates who slaughtered his family. It's the sort of barbarism that would no doubt have found favour with the warlike Dothraki horde and an appropriate setting for the Game of Thrones scenes where Daenerys Targaryen, Ser Jorah Mormont, and the Dothraki horsemen ride through the grasslands en route to Vaes Dothrak. From the splendid isolation of Slemish through the village of **Broughshane**, famed for its vibrant floral displays, it's time to head back towards the coast and the beautiful villages of **Cushendall** and **Cushendun**. 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.



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

From Cushendun it's on to the 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



Murlough Bay & Fairhead - courtesy Paddy McLivenna

Greyjoy and his sister Asha ride on horseback, it was 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."**

**Ballycastle**, birthplace of Game of Thrones star Conleth Hill (Varys), will be the last port of call on day two, but first you must pass through the coastal town for one more location of jaw-dropping natural beauty.

**Larrybane**, meaning 'the ancient white site', is classic Storms End with its panoramic views of the limestone cliffs and ocean. It hosted several key scenes, including where Brienne beats Ser Loras in a tourney and is given a place in Renly's Kingsguard as a reward. At Larrybane Renly also swears to Lady Stark that he will avenge Ned's death, but 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. Stand on **Larrybane Head** with the wind in your hair, look out to sea, and you will also truly understand why Game of Thrones came here, and why the programme makers chose this view for their generic panning shots of the coast. However, if you really want to test your head for heights why not take time out and visit nearby **Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge**. One of Northern Ireland's most famous landmarks, the bridge is suspended across a 20-metre chasm between the mainland and the tiny **Carrick Island**, with a 23-metre drop to the water below. Cross Carrick-a-Rede and you will have earned a hearty meal and a glass of Dornish wine when you return for the night to Ballycastle.

## DAY 3: BALLYCASTLE TO LONDONDERRY [86 MILES/130KM]

© HBO | Ballintoy Harbour



With the winding road hugging the coastline and the Atlantic Ocean your constant companion the first stop on day three is the hidden gem that is **Ballintoy Harbour**. Still a working harbour for local fishermen, Ballintoy doubled as Lordsport Harbour (The Iron Islands) and the homecoming of Theon Greyjoy after ten years in Winterfell. The beach at Ballintoy is where Theon was baptized into the faith of the 'Drowned God', cementing his return to the House of Greyjoy. Continue along Whitepark Road for just under four miles and you will see signs for **Dunseverick**, another of the myriad wonderful little harbours and inlets that populate the area. There was little sign of brotherly love but a huge helping of sibling rivalry when Renly and Stannis met here to discuss their claims to the Iron Throne. It was also Renly's first encounter with the 'fire priestess'.

Filming may not have taken place at the **Giant's Causeway** (although the sea beyond featured in several sweeping shots) but no visit to the **Causeway Coast and Glens** would be complete without calling in at the **UNESCO World Heritage Site** with its unique six-sided basalt columns and the wonderful local legend that is Finn McCool.

Dark Hedges

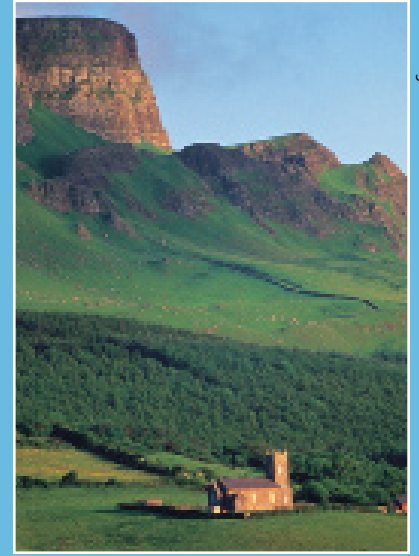


As you reach the village of **Bushmills** (site for one of the Ireland's oldest whiskey distilleries) you will be lured inland to one of the most photographed natural phenomenon in the region, the haunting (and we mean haunting) avenue of trees near **Armony** known as '**The Dark Hedges**'. This is where Arya Stark, dressed as a boy, escaped from King's Landing.

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.

Your journey through the Seven Kingdoms is nearly complete, but one last treat lies in store. Travelling through **Coleraine** on the banks of the River Bann, it's time to follow the **Causeway Coastal Route** signs past **Castlerock** and on to **Downhill Strand**. Standing proudly 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. The beach below is Dragonstone, where the Seven Idols of Westeros were burned and Melisandre, flames dancing into the night sky, proclaimed: "For the night is dark and full of terrors."

The visual feast will continue as you wave goodbye to **Benone** and head for journey's end in the famous walled city of Derry/Londonderry. **Binevenagh, an Area Of Outstanding Beauty**, provides yet another brilliant backdrop as you bring the curtain down on the **Causeway Coast and Glens Games of Thrones** itinerary.



Binevenagh

1 and 2 day Game of Thrones itineraries are also available at [causewaycoastandglens.com/gameofthrones](http://causewaycoastandglens.com/gameofthrones).

Visit [causewaycoastandglens.com](http://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

