



The Blackstairs Mountains and Mount Leinster

walking in carlow – valleys, vales and views

If you are in need of a relaxing break, wide open spaces, fresh air and stimulation, then Carlow is the natural choice for a walking trip – the opportunities are endless! Catering for everyone from the casual walker to the veteran hiker, Carlow is a treasure trove of walking routes.

Looped walks are located throughout the county at Oak Park Forest Park and Clogrennane Wood, both close to Carlow Town, Kilbrannish North and South Forests on the Blackstairs Mountains, Clashganny Forest, south of Borris and Bahana Forest near the village of St. Mullins.

Flat walking is available along the beautiful Barrow Way and hiking for the more adventurous along the scenic South Leinster and Wicklow Ways. The 113km-long Barrow Way starts in County Kildare and follows the towpath alongside Ireland's second longest river to the monastic village of St. Mullins in south Carlow. Enjoy the surrounding landscape, scenic mountains, and a rich expanse of woodlands. The South Leinster Way runs from Kildavin in east Carlow as far as Carrick-on-Suir in County Tipperary. It features the majestic Mount Leinster, the highest hill in the Blackstairs Mountains (795m), and stunning views of Brandon Hill and the Barrow Valley. From Kildavin to Borris and onwards to Graiguenamanagh, the route is rich in flora and fauna. The Wicklow Way ends in the Carlow village of Clonegal. En route, it passes mountain lakes, rolling countryside and the beautiful Glendalough Valley. From Clonegal, the South Leinster Way is a short distance of 3km from its start in nearby Kildavin.

Discovering Carlow does not have to involve a budget – there are plenty of free and fun things to experience and explore. It is a privilege to feel the elation of exertion here, the sense of achievement, the stunning, unspoilt and often remote views of the landscape, the flora and fauna and the sense of well-being.



Clogrennane Wood near Carlow Town.

do it the barrow way

The Barrow Way follows the towpath, originally a path alongside the River Barrow where horses pulled barges and goods for transport. Nowadays, visitors can enjoy excellent flat walking, passing good land where tillage and cattle farming is predominant. The path offers much of architectural interest to the visitor – bridges, many arched, and pretty lock houses, some still in use. The full length of the Barrow Way from Robertstown in Kildare to St. Mullins in Carlow is 113 kilometres. Accommodation is available at regular intervals and varies from hotels to self-catering and B&B.

STAGE 1 of the Barrow Way starts in Robertstown, Co. Kildare and a distance of 23km takes you to the town of Monasterevin. The raised banks of the canal offer beautiful vistas of the surrounding countryside with views of the Hill of Allen and the Wicklow Mountains.

STAGE 2 covers the stretch from Monasterevin to Athy – 23km. This stretch offers the visitor much of historical and architectural interest with many old bridges and houses.

STAGE 3 runs from Athy to Carlow – 19km. This is the first of four stretches which pass through the county of Carlow. Starting from the heritage town of Athy, the route passes many interesting lifting bridges and old mills before reaching Carlow Town.

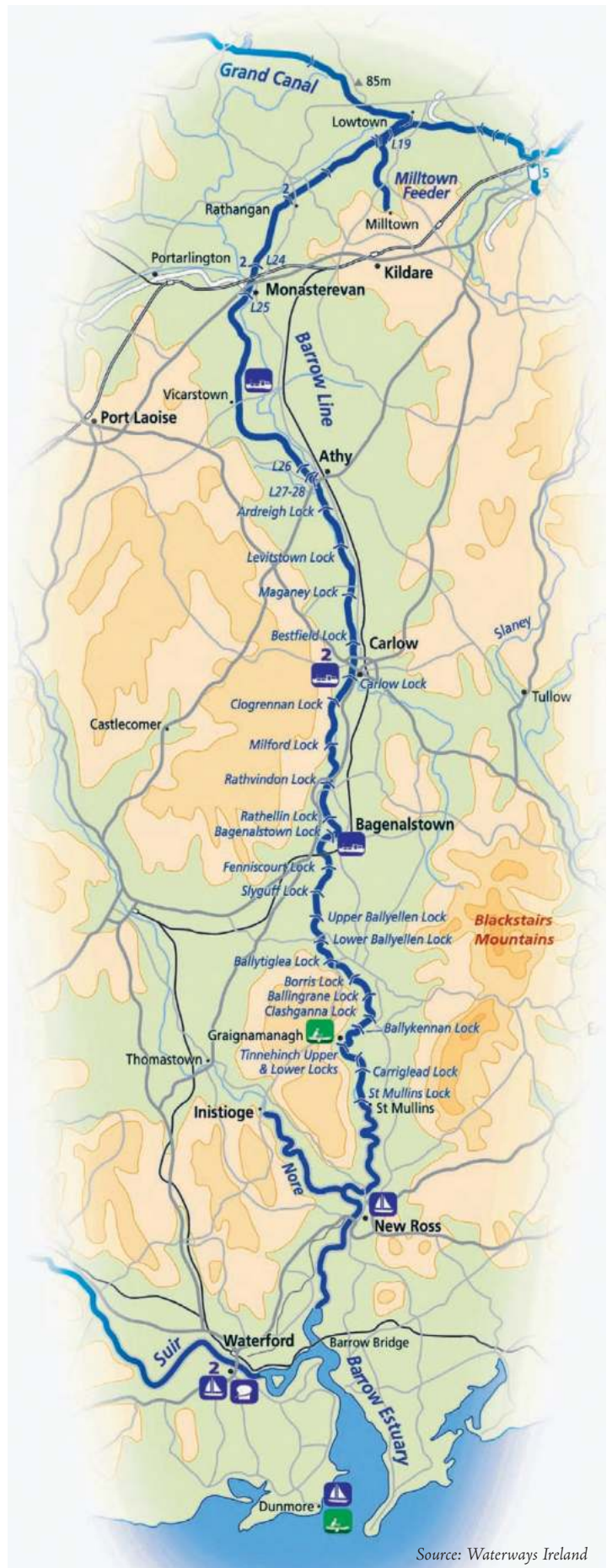
STAGE 4 Carlow to Bagenalstown – 16km. Milford, approximately 7km south of Carlow is one of the most attractive stretches along the River Barrow. Set in an idyllic location with three bridges, mill buildings and a large wooded area, it is famous as an aquatic triangle with regular sightings of herons and kingfishers. This stretch of walk is rich with historical buildings and castles including the Black Castle at Leighlinbridge and the many architectural and industrial gems in the town of Bagenalstown, where this section of the walk ends.

STAGE 5 takes the walker from Bagenalstown to Graiguenamanagh – 26km. This route passes the pretty villages of Goresbridge and Borris before ending in Graiguenamanagh, a picturesque abbey town and a popular boating centre. Overlooking the River Barrow is Duiske Abbey founded by Norman monks from Stanley Abbey, Wiltshire in 1204.

STAGE 6 Graiguenamanagh to St. Mullins – 8km. This stretch has beautiful woodland surroundings with a strong ecclesiastical theme in the religious settlement at St. Mullins. The lower settlement is set on a glorious stretch of the Barrow Valley and includes a picnic area.



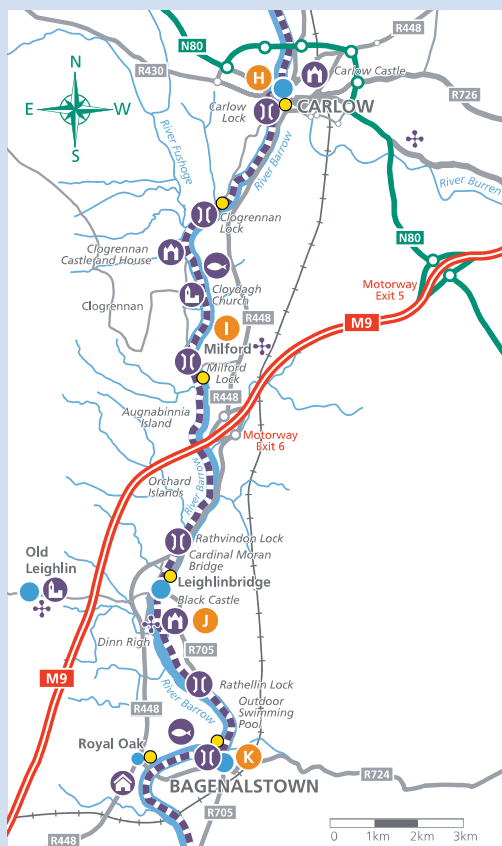
Walking the Barrow Way at Tinnahinch.



Source: Waterways Ireland

The Barrow Way long distance walking route.

carlow - bagenaltown



the barrow way

- H-I** From Carlow the Barrow Way switches to the right or west bank of the River Barrow at Wellington or Graiguecullen Bridge. The 13th century Carlow Castle which protected the river crossing and around which Carlow town developed, is well worth a visit. The landscape changes south of Carlow town, flat plains are replaced by hills on either side with wooded valleys. The Castlecomer Plateau rises up on the west side. Below Carlow, the ruins of Clogrennan Castle and Clogrennan House, seat of the Rochforts can be seen on the right or west bank.
- I-J** Milford is a pleasant spot on the River Barrow and is particularly rich in plant and bird life – spot the herons, kingfishers and swallows among the many species of birds. The ruins of Milford Mill (1790-1965), established by the Alexander family are nearby and were once the site of a busy flour, malting and tannery business. In the 1890s the present day mill was used as a generating station for electricity with Carlow the first inland town in Ireland and the UK to have electric street lighting.
- J-K** Leighlinbridge is another old town built on a crossing point which was guarded by the Black Castle. The bridge at Leighlinbridge, built in 1320, is the oldest on the River Barrow. The Way now switches to the left bank and as you leave the village behind, the ancient site of Dinn Righ lies up on your right, said to be a fort of one of the former Kings of Leinster. Bagenaltown is reached shortly after passing the outdoor swimming pool. In modern times the village has won numerous awards in the Tidy Towns competition.

Trailhead: Carlow

Services: See below and map

Distance/Time: 18km (5 hours)

Difficulty: Easy

Terrain: Road, track and river towpath

To suit: Beginner or experienced walkers

Minimum gear: Suitable walking footwear, rain gear, fluids, snacks and mobile phone.

OSI map: No. 61 www.osi.ie

Type of trail: National Way Marked Trail
– yellow arrow on black background.

Emergency services: 999 or 112

Carlow town



Leighlinbridge



Bagenaltown



the barrow way

- K-L** A small village called Muine Bheag existed here in the Middle Ages but in the 18th century Walter Bagenal designed a new town, supposedly based on Versailles of France and called it Bagenaltown. Pleasing features of this period include the impressive courthouse, now a public library and a fine neo-classical railway station.
- L-M** Goresbridge named after Colonel Gore was built in 1756 and features a beautifully maintained picnic area and riverside park. Ballytiglea Lock and then Bridge is reached where you may exit if you wish to visit Borris. Borris is a Georgian, granite village, full of charm and heritage whose houses and Victorian shop fronts have remained largely intact. There is a wonderful 3.5km walk around and under the old Railway Viaduct at the end of the village, offering superb views to the Blackstairs Mountains and Mount Leinster. A dedicated car park and picnic area have been developed at the site.
- M-N** Continue on the towpath, with the wooded estate of Borris House on your left. Clashganny Lock and weir is reached some 6kms from Borris and is a popular beauty and picnic spot with wonderful walks through Clashganny Forest.
Approaching Graigueanamanagh the river begins to cut its way between the hills with attractive tree-lined slopes.

Trailhead: Bagenaltown

Services: See below and map

Distance/Time: 26km (7 hours)

Difficulty: Easy

Terrain: Road, track and river towpath

To suit: Beginner or experienced walkers

Minimum gear: Suitable walking footwear, rain gear, fluids, snacks and mobile phone.

OSI map: No. 61 & 68 www.osi.ie and the Blackstairs, Mount Leinster and Barrow Valley by East West Mapping www.eastwestmapping.ie

Type of trail: National Way Marked Trail
– yellow arrow on black background.

Emergency services: 999 or 112

Bagenaltown



Goresbridge



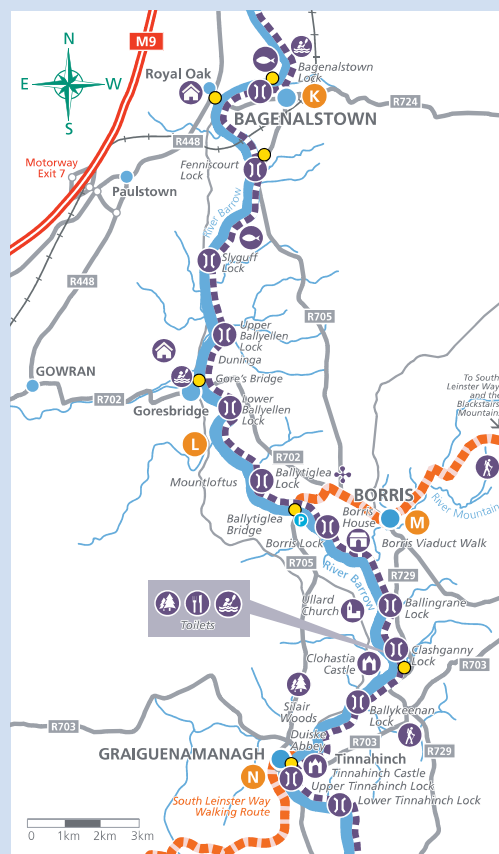
Borris



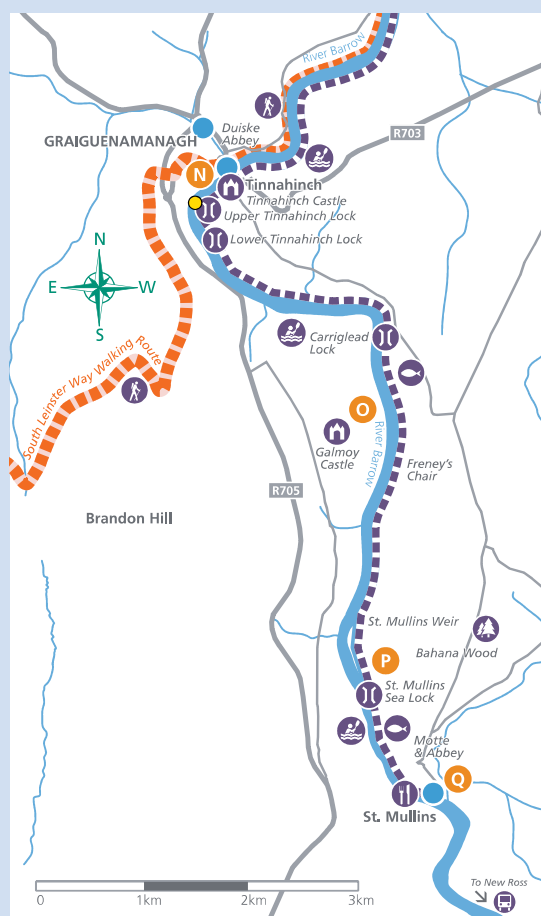
Graigueanamanagh/Tinnahinch



bagenaltown - graigueanamanagh



grauguenamanagh - st. mullins



the barrow way

- N** Grauguenamanagh is a busy town and a very popular mooring place on the River Barrow. It was once the hub of the barge transport business and many families plied that trade. Rail and road transport eventually replaced the barges, last used in 1959. As you leave the town you pass Tinnahinch Castle, a Butler stronghold built to defend the ford.
- O** This section may be short but it is full of beauty and drama with frequent weirs and the lofty Brandon Hill rising up to your right. It is popular with both walkers and people travelling the river by boat, Canadian canoe or kayak.
- P** Soon you reach the mighty St. Mullins Weir, this and the following Sea Lock separate the tidal part of the River Barrow from the upper reaches that you have just followed. Below the Sea Lock boats must wait at St. Mullins for the rising tide to start on their journey to New Ross and the sea.
- Q** St. Mullins village is the start/finishing point of the Barrow Way. Leaving the quay and mill buildings behind, you soon reach the Norman Motte which is a high, man-made hill fortification. Opposite this are the ruins of the ancient Tigh Moling, the house of Moling, an early Christian missionary in Ireland who founded a monastery here in the 7th century. St. Mullins is one of the country's most significant archaeological and ecclesiastical sites, ranking in importance with Glendalough and Clonmacnoise.

Trailhead: Grauguenamanagh

Services: See below and map

Distance/Time: 8 kilometres, 2-3 hours

Difficulty: Easy

Terrain: Road, track and river towpath

To suit: Beginner or experienced walkers

Minimum gear: Suitable walking footwear, rain gear, fluids, snacks and mobile phone.

OSI map: No. 68 www.osi.ie and the Blackstairs, Mount Leinster and Barrow Valley

Type of trail: National Way Marked Trail – yellow arrow on black background

Emergency services: 999 or 112

Grauguenamannagh/Tinnahinch



St. Mullins



blackstairs eco trails wild things to do in carlow

Blackstairs Eco Trails

Killedmond, Borris, Co. Carlow.

t: 059-9773184/087-2707189

e: blackstairsecotrails@gmail.com

w: www.blackstairsecotrails.ie for workshop details

Want to know more about the birds, flora, fungi, mammals and butterflies

of the Blackstairs Mountains and the River Barrow? Blackstairs Eco Trails can lead you on a relaxing eco walk – low hills to no hills – and also provide eco trails, guided hikes, foraging workshops, wild herbal workshops, wild mushroom events and The Foraging Hen, an elegant hen party

for elegant brides. Other services on offer include teachers courses, school visits, childrens' trails and Fun in the Wild! Recipients of a Gold Standard by Eco Tourism Ireland. Their recently converted barn features the highest eco credentials and is perfect for yoga, mindfulness courses, think-ins, workshops, demonstrations, private Board meetings, school visits, painting courses, meetings and private family events. Features Wi-Fi and parking for 30 cars. Alternatively Blackstairs Eco Trails can travel to give a talk, seminar, field trip or workshop in your area on climate change, GMO's, foraging, fungi, sustainability or biodiversity.

GPS: 52.612718, -6.8555203



the wicklow way



The Wicklow Way covers a distance of 127km in length commencing in Marley Park, Dublin and finishing in the beautiful village of Clonegal located in the River Slaney Valley in the east of the county. A combination of suburban parkland, forest trails, wild and scenic mountain landscape and finally, rolling countryside offers a wonderfully varied, eight to ten day experience. w: www.irishtrails.ie

walking clubs



Tullow Mountaineering Club frequently walk in the Blackstairs – for further details of walks visit w: www.tullowmountaineeringclub.ie

The Blackstairs Ramblers are a group of hill walkers who as their name suggests, enjoy rambling on the Blackstairs Mountains. See www.blackstairsramblers.com for further details.

birdwatch ireland carlow



Birdwatch Ireland's Carlow Branch was set up to encourage local wildlife enthusiasts to get together. If you are visiting the area and are interested in learning more about birds and other wildlife, and their conservation, the branch organises evening talks and weekend walks. Branch events are advertised on the "Wild Carlow" facebook page. Visitors to the county are most welcome.



kildavin - nine stones

Trailhead: Kildavin

Services: See below and map

Distance/Time: 11.6km (approx. 4 hrs)

Difficulty: Hard

Terrain: Minor roadways, forestry tracks and hillside paths

Ascent: 475 metres

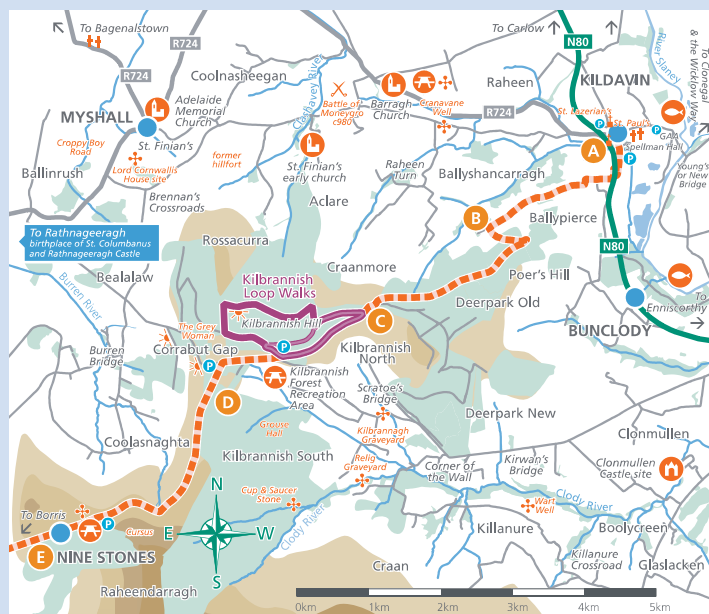
To suit: Experienced walkers

Minimum gear: Hiking boots, rain gear, fluids, snacks and mobile phone.

OSI maps: OSI Discovery Series 68, 75 and 76 www.osi.ie and the *Blackstairs, Mount Leinster and the Barrow Valley* by East West Mapping.

Type of trail: National Way Marked Trail – yellow arrow on black background.

Emergency services: 999 or 112



south leinster way

The South Leinster Way is a long distance walking route which runs from Kildavin in the east of County Carlow to Carrick-on-Suir in County Tipperary, some 102km in length. Further details at www.irishtrails.ie

- A-B** From the trailhead beside Conway's Pub, follow the footpath south gently uphill towards Bunclody. After 500m, reach the main road and turn right to follow it for a short distance. Cross the main road to gain a minor tarmac road on the far side. Follow this for 2km as it climbs uphill.
- B-C** Reach Mount Leinster Cottages and turn left and steeply uphill on a rough unsurfaced track to enter a forest. Follow the forest road uphill to reach a junction after 500m. Turn right and follow the forest road as it climbs more gently along the slopes of the forested hillside. After 2.5km reach the crest of the hill and a short gap between two forests, that yields good views.
- C-D** From the crest of the hill, continue on downhill, passing a right turn after a short distance. There are signposted loop trails here, so take care to follow the yellow arrows. Continue on downhill for 1.5km to reach the Kilbrannish Forest Recreation car park. Turn right and follow the tarmac road with care uphill to reach Carroll's Crossroad just before Corrabut Gap.
- D-E** Turn left at Carroll's Crossroad and follow the tarmac mountain road with care. This climbs steadily with excellent views down into Coolasnaghta on your right. After 3km reach the large Nine Stones car park.

Borris

Kildavin

Buncloidy

nine stones - borris

Trailhead: Nine Stones

Distance/Time: 10.6km (3 hours)

Difficulty: Hard

Terrain: Minor roadways, forestry tracks and hillside paths

Ascent: 20 metres

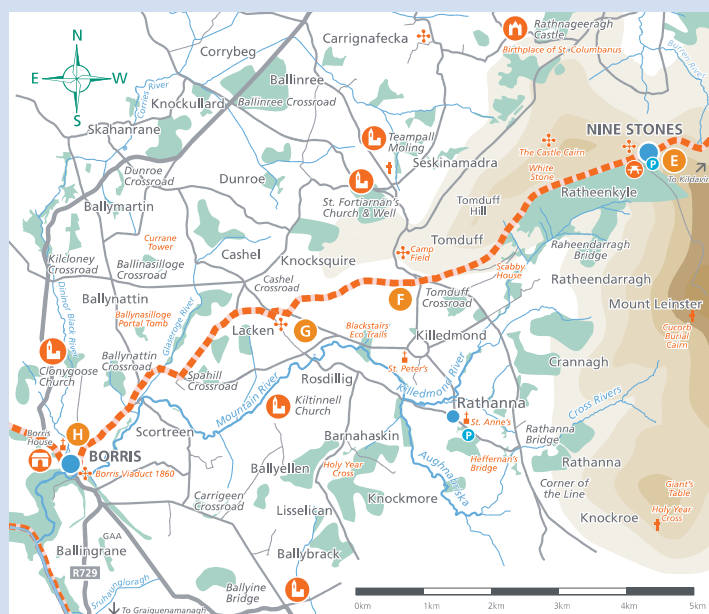
To suit: Beginner or experienced walkers

Minimum gear: Hiking boots, rain gear, fluids, snacks and mobile phone.

OSI maps: OSI Discovery Series 68, 75 and 76 and the *Blackstairs, Mount Leinster and the Barrow Valley* by East West Mapping.

Type of trail: National Way Marked Trail – yellow arrow on black background

Emergency services: 999 or 112



south leinster way

- E-F** The Nine Stones Viewing Point provides an unrivalled vista of the rich and colourful Carlow countryside. Eight counties can be viewed from this spot and, on a clear day the coast of Wales. On the lower side of the road, you will see an alignment of nine small stones in the ground, said to commemorate nine shepherds lost on Mount Leinster in some distant winter storm. Continue on along the tarmac road from the Nine Stones car park which descends steadily, passing two notable landmarks: the White Stone on your right and later the Scabby House on your left just after a cattle grid. Reach Tomduff Crossroads.
- F-G** At Tomduff Crossroads, walk straight through two crossroad junctions. Nearby is the monument to the Tomduff Campfield, where a large force gathered in the 1798 rebellion. Continue downhill on a tarmac road to reach the T-junction of Cashed Crossroad. Turn right for a short distance and then left on a minor road.
- G-H** From Cashed Crossroad, the road continues to descend. Keep left at the next junction and drop downhill to reach Spahill Crossroad where you turn right. The road soon drops on the final descent to the village of Borris. There is a wonderful 3.5km walk around and under the old Railway Viaduct at the end of the village offering superb views to the Blackstairs Mountains and Mount Leinster. A dedicated car park and picnic area have been developed at the site.

Borris

Rathanna

south leinster way

- H-I** Walk uphill out of Borris on the main R702 towards Goresbridge. Historic Borris House, seat of the McMorrough Kavanaghs, former kings of Leinster is on your left.
- I-J** From Ballytriglea Bridge, keep left and follow the broad towpath downstream with the River Barrow on your right. A little further on the Mountain River rushes in from your left and later you pass Ballingrane Lock. As you approach the scenic Clashganny Lock you will hear the roar of falling water from the adjacent weir.
- J-K** Continue on the towpath from Clashganny, the ruins of Clohastia Castle lie to the right, one of many Norman castles built to control navigation and crossing of the River Barrow. Reach Ballykeen Lock and continue on following the yellow arrows, ignoring the local loop walks that turn left here. The wooded valley sides steepen on the next stretch and after a final sweeping bend, the historic town of Graiguenamanagh comes into view, with moored barges along granite quays and impressive old store houses. One of Ireland's finest Cistercian monasteries, Duiske Abbey, was founded here in 1204 by Norman monks from Stanley Abbey in Wiltshire.



borris - graiguenamanagh

Trailhead: Borris

Distance/Time: 13.1km (3 hours)

Difficulty: Easy

Terrain: Minor roadways, forestry tracks and hillside paths

Ascent: 60 metres

To suit: Beginner or experienced walkers

Minimum gear: Hiking boots, rain gear, fluids, snacks and mobile phone.

OSI maps: OSI Discovery Series 68, 75 and 76 and the Blackstairs, Mount Leinster and the Barrow Valley from East West Mapping.

Type of trail: National Way Marked Trail – yellow arrow on black background

Emergency services: 999 or 112



looped walk – bahana forest, near st. mullins

bahana forest trail

Saint Moling founded a monastery here in the seventh century convenient to the River Barrow, which the Vikings sailed up in the tenth century to raid and destroy. The very impressive ruins of a fourteenth century abbey can be visited on the upper settlement with interpretation in the nearby heritage centre. Adjacent to the monastic site is a well preserved motte and bailey, a large grassy hillock (the motte) which was the site of a twelfth century Norman fortification. This route follows the long distance Barrow Way in part.

Trail Name: Bahana Forest Loop

Type of trail: Local loop walk

Trailhead: Car park at St. Mullins Quay

Services: Car park, picnic area, restaurant and shop (seasonal)

Distance/Time: 4.5km (approx 1 hour)

Difficulty: Easy

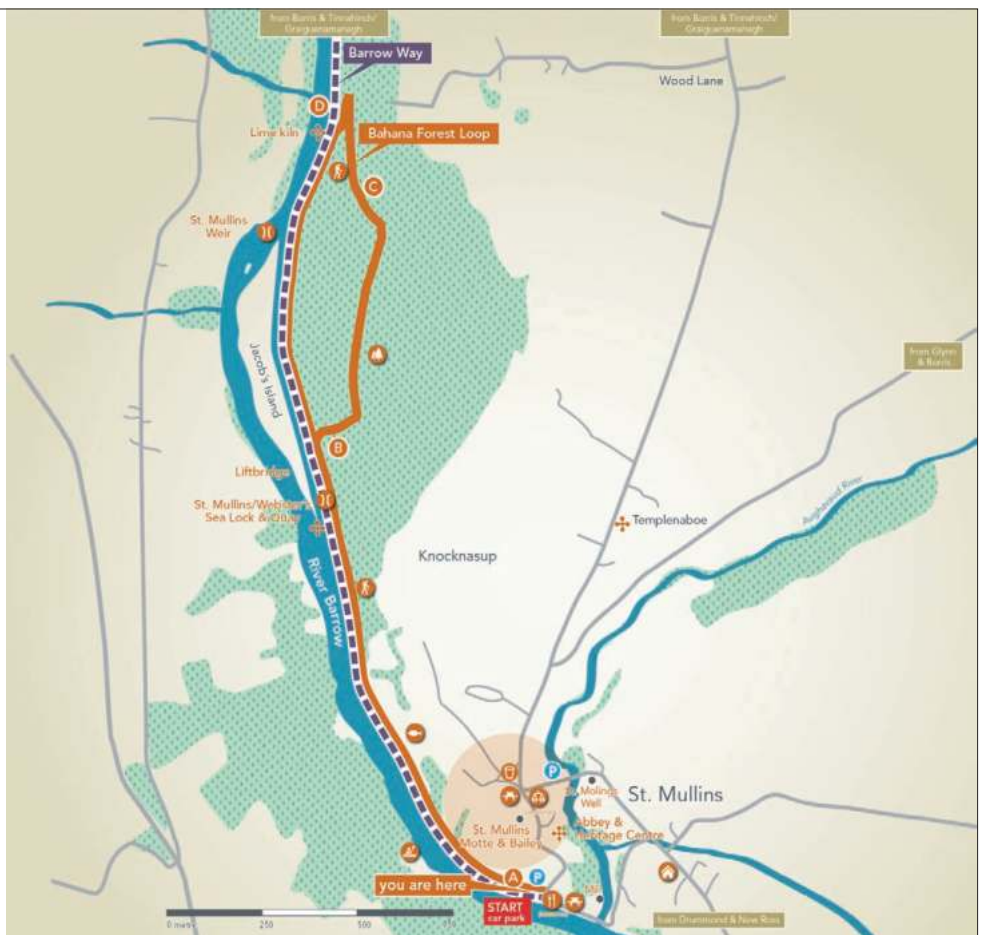
Terrain: River towpaths and forestry track

To suit: Beginner or experienced walker

Minimum gear: Hiking boots, rain gear, fluids, snacks and mobile phone

OSI maps: OSI Discovery Series 68.

The Blackstairs, Mount Leinster and the Barrow Valley from East West Mapping
www.eastwestmapping.ie



Carlow has a selection of great looped walks at Oak Park Forest Park and Clogrennane Wood, both close to Carlow Town, Clashganny Forest and Kilbrannish Forest Recreation Areas, near Borris and Bahana Forest near the south Carlow village of St. Mullins.

oak park forest park



Situated on the outskirts of Carlow Town, Oak Park Forest Park is an oasis of tranquillity and a popular destination for walkers and joggers. The park is a mature, mixed species woodland of over 120 acres with a predominance of beech, oak, scots pine, silver fir, larch and sycamore. Extending over 4km the walks include Butlers Wood Loop (700m), the Lake Path (800m), Fox Covert Track (1,100m) and Sally Island Trail (1,700m). All the walks are wheelchair accessible while a range of visitor facilities include ample car parking, picnic tables, public toilets, outdoor exercise equipment and a universally accessible playground.

clashganny looped walk



Clashganny Forest Trails offer the user gentle walks on forest roads and along the Barrow Way with magnificent views of Clashganny Lock and the River Barrow. Much of the walk is through an old wood which has had forestry cover present since the 1800s.

The Clashganny Lock Loop is 3.5km long and takes approximately 1.5 hours to complete over flat terrain. The Clashganny Forest Looped Walk covers a distance of 6km, taking two hours to complete.

GPS: 52.559831, -6.91537

kilbrannish forests – north & south



Kilbrannish Forest Recreation Area (North) on the Blackstairs Mountains features two signposted trails – the Windfarm Loop is 3km in length and is suitable for families with young children. The Kilbrannish Forest Loop is 5 km in length, taking approx. 2 hours to complete. Three walking trails in nearby Kilbrannish Forest (South) cater for the moderate walker including families to the more serious hiker – the Short Loop (6.5km), the Medium Loop (9.5km) and the Long Loop (10.5 km). All routes offer wonderful views of the surrounding countryside over the plains of Carlow with the village and town of Myshall and Tullow spread out below. A large car park and picnic facilities are available to visitors at Kilbrannish Forest Recreation Area (North).

clogrennane wood



Clogrennane Wood near Carlow Town offers the user a gentle sloping 4km walk on forest roads with magnificent views of Carlow Town and the River Barrow on a clear day. The area is an old wood and has had forestry cover present since the 1800s. The predominant tree species in Clogrennane are beech, spruce, larch and oak with vegetation consistent with that of an old woodland – bluebells, ferns, wild garlic and herb rocket.

GPS: 52.795113, -6.991109