



Causeway Coast Way

THE COMPLETE GUIDE



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Contents

- 01** Overview
- 02** Key Data
- 03** Introduction
- 04** Stage-by-Stage Guide
- 05** Recommended Itinerary
- 06** Planning the Route
- 07** Towns, Villages and Overnight Stops
- 08** Getting to the Start
- 09** Getting Home from the Finish
- 10** Which Direction Should You Walk?
- 11** Accommodation Along the Route
- 12** Camping and Wild Camping
- 13** Food, Water and Resupply
- 14** Navigation and Waymarking
- 15** Terrain, Conditions and Difficulty in Practice
- 16** Weather and Best Time to Walk
- 17** Safety Notes
- 18** Gear Recommendations
- 19** Budget and Costs
- 20** Luggage Transfer, Guided Tours and Support Services
- 21** Shorter Hikes and Best Sections
- 22** Highlights and Points of Interest
- 23** Common Mistakes and Planning Tips
- 24** Final Advice

Overview

Causeway Coast Way: Northern Ireland's Basalt Coast Walk

The Causeway Coast Way is a 51 km waymarked coastal trail on the north coast of County Antrim, Northern Ireland. Usually walked from Portstewart to Ballycastle, it is an official Causeway Coast & Glens Quality Walk and part of the Ulster Way. The official guide treats it as a 2-day route, though many walkers take 3–4 days. Difficulty is moderate: suitable for fit walkers, with cliff paths, beaches, road sections, Atlantic weather and tide planning. For wider island-of-Ireland route ideas, see [Ireland hiking](#).

Route Overview

This is a linear, point-to-point walk from Tubber Patrick opposite Portstewart Golf Club to The Diamond in Ballycastle. It is generally walked west to east, but can be done either way. The official sections run Portstewart–Portrush, Portrush–Portballintrae, Portballintrae–Giant's Causeway, Giant's Causeway–Dunseverick Castle, Dunseverick–Ballintoy Harbour and Ballintoy–Ballycastle. Expect Portstewart Strand, Portrush, Dunluce Castle, Runkerry, the Giant's Causeway, Benbane Head, White Park Bay, Ballintoy Harbour and Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge. Accommodation and public transport links are available along the coast in towns and villages including Portstewart, Portrush, Bushmills, Ballintoy and Ballycastle. For another Atlantic cliff walk, compare the [Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk](#), or for a longer multi-day coastal trail elsewhere on the island see the [Dingle Way](#).

Basalt, castles and the Ulster Way

The route follows one of Northern Ireland's most storied coastlines. The Giant's Causeway was formed from cooling lava around 60 million years ago and is tied to the legend of Finn McCool. Dunluce Castle was a medieval MacDonnell stronghold, with the wreck site of the Spanish Armada galleass Girona nearby. Dunseverick was an early fort associated with St Patrick and later Viking raids. The modern Causeway Coast Way is one of the Causeway Coast & Glens Quality Walks and forms part of the wider Ulster Way.

Notable highlights

- **Giant's Causeway:** A UNESCO World Heritage Site of interlocking basalt columns formed by ancient volcanic activity. The stones are free to access, while the visitor centre experience is ticketed.
- **Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge:** A National Trust suspension bridge to tiny Carrick-a-Rede Island, originally used by salmon fishermen. It is an optional paid attraction just off the walking route.
- **Dunluce Castle:** A ruined medieval castle on a basalt outcrop above the surf. It is a short signed detour and one of the most striking historic stops on the coast.
- **Hamilton's Seat / Benbane Head:** The high point of the route, around 100 m above the sea, on the wilder cliff section beyond the Giant's Causeway.
- **White Park Bay:** A broad sandy bay backed by limestone cliffs and dunes. It is a major tide-planning point because the beach route is not passable at high tide.
- **Portbraddan / St Gobban's Church:** A small coastal hamlet below steep slopes, known for tiny St Gobban's Church.

Challenges to expect

The main difficulties are not altitude but conditions. Cliff-top paths are exposed to Atlantic wind and rain, beach sections can be slow, and White Park Bay is impassable at high tide unless you use the A2 diversion. A landslide near Dunseverick requires a short inland road detour. The final Ballintoy-Ballycastle section includes road walking with fast traffic and no footpath in places.

Key Data

Country	Ireland
Distance	51 km
Duration	2 days
Difficulty	Moderate
Trail type	Point to point
Elevation gain/loss	500 m
Highest point	100 m
Terrain & landscape	Coastal
Trail surface	Dirt, Rocky, Gravel, Boardwalk
Accommodation	Hotels, Hostels, Campsites, Wild Camping Spots
Average daytime temp.	15°C
Chance of rainfall	High
Estimated cost	\$\$
Optimal season	Spring, Summer, Autumn
Accessibility	Family Friendly, Pet Friendly
Facilities	Restrooms, Water Sources, Campsites, Picnic Areas
Permits & fees	No permits or fees

Introduction

The Causeway Coast Way is a compact but serious coastal walk along Northern Ireland's north coast, linking Portstewart with Ballycastle over 51 km. It suits hikers who want big Atlantic scenery, good waymarking and straightforward public transport without committing to a remote mountain route.

The route moves from Portstewart Strand and Portrush towards Dunluce Castle, Portballintrae and the Giant's Causeway, then continues onto the wilder North Antrim Cliff Path. Beyond the Causeway, Hamilton's Seat at Benbane Head gives the walk its highest point, with exposed clifftop walking above a hard-edged basalt coast.

This is not a technically difficult trail, and there are no mountain ascents, but it should not be treated as a casual promenade. Slow beaches, rocky shore sections, Atlantic weather, road walking and tide-dependent passages at White Park Bay and below Portbraddan all need proper planning.

Most walkers take 2–4 days, depending on fitness, tide timing and how much time they want for places such as the Giant's Causeway, Ballintoy Harbour and the optional Carrick-a-Rede detour. Accommodation and services are good in the main coastal towns, but the central section is thinner, so overnight stops should be planned before travelling.

This guide covers stages, daily planning, accommodation, food, transport, terrain and the common mistakes to avoid.

Stage-by-Stage Guide

The six stages below follow the official section breakdown, but most end-to-end walkers combine some of them into 2–4 walking days. The short middle sections are useful for planning around tides, bus access and accommodation, especially on the wilder stretch between the Giant's Causeway and Ballintoy.

Stage 1: Portstewart to Portrush — 10 km

The walk begins at Tubber Patrick / St Patrick's Well, opposite Portstewart Golf Club on the western edge of Portstewart. This first stage is a relatively gentle introduction, with open coast, sand and dunes rather than sustained climbing.

Expect beach and dune walking around Portstewart Strand, followed by coastal walking towards Portrush. Sand can make progress slower than the distance suggests, especially in soft sections, and the shore is exposed to Atlantic wind and rain.

Portstewart is the last full-service town before setting out, so it is a sensible place to buy food and fill water bottles. Portrush has a wide range of services and is one of the easiest overnight stops on the route, with hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and other visitor accommodation.

Public transport is straightforward at this end of the trail. Rail reaches Portrush on the branch line from Coleraine, and local buses link Portstewart, Portrush and Coleraine; current Translink timetables should be checked before travelling.

Navigation is generally uncomplicated: follow the Causeway Coast Way waymarks, marked by the orange fern-frond symbol on a blue background. In poor visibility or strong wind, take care not to drift along informal dune or beach tracks away from the signed route.

Stage 2: Portrush to Portballintrae — 9.3 km

This stage leaves the resort town of Portrush and moves onto a more varied coast of beaches, headlands, minor roads and cliff scenery. It is still a moderate walking day, but the route starts to feel more like a point-to-point coastal trail than a promenade walk.

The main places and landmarks on this section are White Rocks, the short signed detour to Dunluce Castle, and the approach to Portballintrae. Dunluce Castle is not directly on the Way, but the detour is one of the route's most worthwhile short side trips, with the ruined medieval stronghold standing on a basalt crag above the sea.

Terrain is mixed: expect firm paths, road or pavement sections, and coastal ground that may be muddy after rain. White Rocks and the cliffs around Dunluce give some of the best views on this stage, but the coast is exposed and can feel harsh in poor weather.

Food and water are readily available in Portrush before departure. Portballintrae is a small coastal settlement rather than a major town, so do not assume late-opening shops or a wide choice of food without checking ahead.

Accommodation is available in the wider coastal strip, with Portrush and Portballintrae both used by walkers depending on itinerary. Some walkers also base themselves in Portrush or Portstewart and use buses to reach daily start and finish points.

For transport, Portrush has the rail link via Coleraine. Buses on the Causeway coast corridor connect the main settlements and attractions, including Portrush, Bushmills, the Giant's Causeway and Ballycastle; confirm current Translink services before relying on a specific journey.

Navigation is usually clear, but take care around any road sections and at the Dunluce Castle detour so that the side trip does not become confused with the through-route. In wet or windy weather, cliff-edge paths should be treated with respect even where the walking itself is not technically difficult.

Stage 3: Portballintrae to Giant's Causeway — 4.3 km

This is the shortest official stage, and many walkers combine it with either the Portrush–Portballintrae or Giant's Causeway–Dunseverick section. It is still useful as a standalone planning unit because the Giant's Causeway is a major stop, transport point and decision point for onward walking.

The route continues from Portballintrae towards Runkerry and the Giant's Causeway. Around Runkerry and the Causeway area, the route includes more managed path and boardwalk-style sections than the wilder clifftop path beyond.

The Giant's Causeway is the key highlight: around 40,000 interlocking basalt columns formed by volcanic activity roughly 60 million years ago, also tied to the legend of Finn McCool. The stones are free to walk on, while the visitor centre is ticketed; opening times and prices should be checked if planning to use the centre.

Food, drink and visitor facilities are much better here than on the cliff section that follows. This is a good place to refill water, eat, use facilities and reassess weather and daylight before continuing east.

Accommodation can be found in the wider Giant's Causeway and Bushmills area, though the route itself becomes less well supplied once it leaves the Causeway. If stopping here, book ahead in busy periods rather than assuming availability on arrival.

The Giant's Causeway is one of the better-served points on the route for buses, with services on the coastal corridor linking Coleraine, Portrush, Bushmills, the Giant's Causeway and Ballycastle. Current Translink timetables should be checked, especially outside peak visitor season.

Navigation around major visitor sites can be more confusing than open countryside because of car parks, visitor paths and crowds. Look for the Causeway Coast Way waymarks when leaving the Causeway area for the North Antrim Cliff Path.

Stage 4: Giant's Causeway to Dunseverick Castle — 7.3 km

This is one of the most memorable sections of the Causeway Coast Way and the point where the route becomes a serious exposed coastal walk. It follows the North Antrim Cliff Path beyond the Giant's Causeway, with sustained cliff scenery and fewer immediate services.

The stage climbs to the route's high point at Hamilton's Seat on Benbane Head, about 100 m above sea level. The ascent is modest by mountain standards, but the exposure, wind and cliff edges make conditions feel much more serious than the height suggests.

Underfoot, expect grassy and earthen clifftop paths, with sections that can be slippery after rain. This is not technical walking, but it demands attention, especially in strong wind or poor visibility.

Food and water should be carried from the Giant's Causeway or earlier in the day. There are no major service towns on this short cliff section, and the immediate finish at Dunseverick Castle should not be treated as a reliable resupply point.

Dunseverick Castle is a historic coastal site with scant remains, associated with early settlement and St Patrick. It is an atmospheric finish, but facilities and accommodation nearby are limited, so many walkers either continue to Ballintoy, use transport, or plan an overnight elsewhere on the coast.

Road access exists at or near Dunseverick Castle, but bus logistics for this exact stopping point should be checked before travelling. The broader coastal bus network links the Giant's Causeway and Ballycastle corridor, but services vary by season and timetable.

A live trail check is important before this stage because diversions have affected the Dunseverick area, including issues linked to landslip. If a diversion is signed, follow it rather than attempting to force the cliff path.

Stage 5: Dunseverick Castle to Ballintoy Harbour — 7.8 km

This stage links Dunseverick with Portbraddan, White Park Bay and Ballintoy Harbour, and it is one of the sections where planning matters more than raw distance. The walking is short on paper, but tide timing can decide whether the beach and lower coastal route are practical.

White Park Bay is the key feature: a broad sandy bay backed by limestone cliffs and dunes. It is also a key tide-planning point, as the beach route is not passable at high tide.

The area around Portbraddan also requires attention to tides and current route advice. At high tide, the A2 / inland-lane diversion is needed for the cliffs below Portbraddan; tide times should be checked before setting out.

Terrain includes beach walking, rocky shore, dunes and coastal paths. Soft sand and wet rock can slow progress, and the exposed bay can feel much longer in strong wind than the distance implies.

Food and water options between Dunseverick and Ballintoy should be treated as limited. Carry enough for the full stage, especially if walking early, late, or outside the main visitor season.

Ballintoy Harbour is a small working harbour tucked below the cliffs and one of the most photographed places on the route. Accommodation exists in and around Ballintoy, but choice is thinner here than in Portrush, Portstewart or Ballycastle, so booking ahead is sensible.

Transport and road access are possible around Ballintoy, with coastal buses serving the broader corridor. Timetables should be checked carefully if using Ballintoy Harbour as a start or finish, as the harbour sits below the village and exact bus-stop locations and walking time matter.

Navigation is generally by waymarks, but this is not a stage to improvise at the water's edge. If the tide is wrong, use the signed or advised inland alternative rather than trying to squeeze through below cliffs or across the bay.

Stage 6: Ballintoy Harbour to Ballycastle — 12.6 km

The final stage is the longest of the official six sections and is more demanding than its modest distance suggests because of road walking and limited footpath in places. It links Ballintoy Harbour with the finish at The Diamond in the centre of Ballycastle.

Leaving Ballintoy, the route passes through a busy part of the Causeway coast visitor corridor. Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge lies about 1 km off the Way and is a paid National Trust detour, not part of the route itself; check opening times and prices if adding it.

The terrain is mixed, but the main planning issue is road walking. The final Ballintoy-to-Ballycastle stretch includes sections with fast traffic and limited footpath, so visibility, road awareness and poor-weather judgement matter.

There has also been a re-routed busy-road section beyond Ballintoy via Glenstaughey Road. Live route information should be checked before walking this stage, and any signed diversion should be followed.

Food and water should be topped up in Ballintoy if available, but do not rely on frequent services between Ballintoy and Ballycastle. Ballycastle has the best end-of-stage services, with food, shops and accommodation in the town.

Ballycastle is the official finish of the Causeway Coast Way, at The Diamond in the town centre. It has hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and other accommodation, making it the natural final overnight stop for walkers not travelling straight on.

There is no railway at Ballycastle. Public transport is by bus, including coastal services linking Ballycastle with places such as the Giant's Causeway, Bushmills, Portrush and Coleraine; verify current Translink timetables before making onward plans.

Navigation into Ballycastle is usually straightforward if the waymarks are followed, but road junctions and diversions can make this stage less intuitive than the cliff path. Keep the route map or offline mapping available, particularly around any temporary re-route.

Recommended Itinerary

Distances below are approximate sums of the listed route sections. Check official mapping before booking accommodation or fixed transport, especially if using nearby towns rather than staying directly on the line of the Way.

Standard itinerary: 3 days

This is the best balance for most fit walkers: long enough to enjoy the coast, but still efficient for a short walking trip. It keeps the two biggest walking days to the western and central sections, then leaves a shorter final day into Ballycastle.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Portstewart	Portballintrae	19.3 km	Combines the Portstewart–Portrush and Portrush–Portballintrae sections into a solid but manageable first day. This also puts Dunluce Castle and the approach to the Causeway coast within the first stage.	Portstewart and Portrush have the strongest western-end accommodation choice. Portballintrae is a useful overnight point before the Giant's Causeway section; book ahead in busy periods.
2	Portballintrae	Ballintoy Harbour	19.4 km	The key coastal day: Runkerry, the Giant's Causeway, Hamilton's Seat at Benbane Head, Dunseverick, Portbraddan and White Park Bay. This stage needs the most careful tide planning.	Accommodation choice is thinner on this central section than in Portrush, Portstewart or Ballycastle. Ballintoy is a logical overnight stop, but availability should be checked before committing to this split.
3	Ballintoy Harbour	Ballycastle	12.6 km	A shorter final stage leaves time for the road-walking sections and any optional detour towards Carrick-a-Rede, which is off-route and ticketed.	Ballycastle has end-of-walk services and onward bus connections, but no railway station. Check current Translink bus times before relying on same-day onward travel.

Slower itinerary: 4 days

This suits first-time long-distance walkers, family groups, photographers and anyone wanting more time at the Giant's Causeway. It also gives more flexibility around the tide-dependent sections near White Park Bay and Portbraddan.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Portstewart	Portrush	10 km	A gentle opening day over beach, dunes and coastal paths, useful if arriving by public transport the same morning.	Portrush is one of the easiest overnight bases on the route and has rail access via the branch from Coleraine.
2	Portrush	Giant's Causeway	13.6 km	A varied day through White Rocks, the Dunluce Castle area, Portballintrae and Runkerry before reaching the Causeway.	The Giant's Causeway stones are free to walk on; the visitor centre is ticketed. For an overnight here, look at the Giant's Causeway, Bushmills or Portballintrae area and check the transport plan before booking.
3	Giant's Causeway	Ballintoy Harbour	15.1 km	This keeps the wild North Antrim Cliff Path, Dunseverick, Portbraddan and White Park Bay as a focused day rather than burying them in a longer push.	This is still the stage where tide planning matters most. White Park Bay and the cliffs below Portbraddan are not simple high-tide passages; use the inland/A2 diversion where required.
4	Ballintoy Harbour	Ballycastle	12.6 km	A contained final day, with time to manage the road walking and any off-route visit to Carrick-a-Rede.	Ballycastle is the natural finish for accommodation and buses. There is no train at the finish, so verify current Translink services before travelling.

Faster itinerary: 2 days

The official guide presents the Causeway Coast Way as a 2-day walk, but this is best reserved for strong walkers who are comfortable with long coastal days, tide timing and limited spare time for detours.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Portstewart	Giant's Causeway	23.6 km	A long but logical western half, combining Portstewart Strand, Portrush, Dunluce Castle, Portballintrae and Runkerry before the Causeway.	Overnight planning around the Giant's Causeway area needs care; Bushmills and Portballintrae may be more practical depending on availability and transport. This should be checked before travelling.
2	Giant's Causeway	Ballycastle	27.7 km	The harder day on paper, with the North Antrim Cliff Path, Benbane Head, Dunseverick, White Park Bay, Ballintoy and the final road sections to Ballycastle.	Start early and plan around the tide at White Park Bay and Portbraddan. Do not assume there will be enough time for Carrick-a-Rede unless the detour, ticketing and transport have all been planned in advance.

Planning the Route

The Causeway Coast Way can be walked quickly, but it plans better as a coastal journey than as a mileage challenge. The official guide presents it as a 2-day route; most independent walkers should allow 3 days if fit and organised, or 4 days if using public transport, visiting side attractions or wanting more margin around tides and weather.

The route is not physically high, but progress is often slower than the map distance suggests. Beaches, rocky bays, clifftop paths, road walking and sightseeing pressure points around the Giant's Causeway all make time management more important than ascent.

Choosing a schedule

Accommodation and transport naturally shape the itinerary. The main overnight bases are Portstewart, Portrush, Bushmills, Portballintrae, Ballintoy and Ballycastle, with the thinnest choice on the wilder central section between the Giant's Causeway and Ballintoy.

A 2-day crossing suits strong walkers travelling light and prepared for long coastal days. A 3-day plan is the best default for many hikers, while 4 days gives more flexibility for tide windows, the Giant's Causeway, Dunluce Castle and the optional Carrick-a-Rede detour.

Pace	Best for	Planning notes
2 days	Fit walkers wanting a fast end-to-end	Long days; tide timing and onward transport need to work cleanly. Less time for detours.
3 days	Most experienced walkers	A good balance of distance, transport practicality and time for the main coast sections.
4 days	First-time long-distance walkers, families, photographers, mixed-ability groups	More forgiving around weather, tides, bus links and accommodation availability.

The six official sections are short enough to be recombined in several ways. They are also useful for judging where the route changes character: resort walking around Portstewart and Portrush, a more varied coast towards Portballintrae and the Giant's Causeway, then the wilder North Antrim Cliff Path and the final approach to Ballycastle.

Official section	Approx. distance	How it helps planning
Portstewart to Portrush	10 km	A manageable first stage, especially if arriving by public transport.
Portrush to Portballintrae	9.3 km	Includes the White Rocks and access for the short signed detour to Dunluce Castle.
Portballintrae to Giant's Causeway	4.3 km	Short but easily expanded with time at Runkerry and the Giant's Causeway.
Giant's Causeway to Dunseverick Castle	7.3 km	A key clifftop section including Benbane Head and Hamilton's Seat.

Official section	Approx. distance	How it helps planning
Dunseverick Castle to Ballintoy Harbour	7.8 km	Requires particular attention to tide-dependent coastal passages around Portbraddan and White Park Bay.
Ballintoy Harbour to Ballycastle	12.6 km	The longest official section, with road walking, fast traffic in places and limited footpath.

Tides and diversions matter more than mileage

The most important planning check is the tide. White Park Bay is not passable at high tide, and the cliffs below Portbraddan also require care with tide timing; the A2 or inland-lane diversion is needed when the coastal line is not safe or passable.

Live route diversions should also be checked before travelling. Known issues to check include the landslide area near Dunseverick, the re-routed busy-road section beyond Ballintoy via Glenstaughey Road, and the final Ballintoy-to-Ballycastle stretch where road walking includes fast traffic and limited footpath.

Build slack into the day that includes White Park Bay and Portbraddan. A schedule that looks neat on distance alone can become awkward if it puts the walker on a beach or shore section at the wrong state of tide.

Accommodation, food and water

Book accommodation early in Portstewart, Portrush, Bushmills, Portballintrae, Ballintoy and Ballycastle, especially in the main walking season. The choice is broadest in the resort towns and more limited around the central cliff sections, so the overnight plan should be set before committing to daily distances.

Food planning is straightforward in the larger towns and villages, but do not assume every stage has convenient resupply at the exact point needed. Carry enough food and water for the full day, particularly between the Giant's Causeway, Dunseverick, Portbraddan, White Park Bay and Ballintoy.

Camping is possible only where suitable campsites are available in the coastal towns and villages. Any plan relying on camping locations, late check-in or luggage transfer should be checked before travelling.

Transport and section hiking

Section hiking is practical on this trail. Rail reaches the coast at Portrush via the branch from Coleraine, which sits on the Belfast–Londonderry/Derry line, and local buses link the start area with Portstewart.

There is no railway at Ballycastle, so the finish depends on bus or private transfer logistics. Translink Ulsterbus services, including the 402 Causeway Rambler and Goldliner coastal services, link Coleraine, Portrush, Bushmills, the Giant's Causeway and Ballycastle; current timetables should be checked before relying on them.

Using Portrush or Portstewart as a base can work well for walkers completing the route in sections. This is especially useful if accommodation is scarce in the smaller places or if weather makes it sensible to rearrange the cliff and beach stages.

Detours and extensions

Dunluce Castle is reached by a short signed detour and is easy to include if the day is not already tight. The Giant's Causeway stones are free to walk on, while the visitor centre is ticketed.

Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge is not on the Way itself. It lies about 1 km off-route, is a paid National Trust attraction, and should be treated as an optional detour rather than part of the core walking plan; opening times and prices in £ should be checked before travelling.

At Ballycastle, the route links with the Moyle Way, so stronger walkers can extend beyond the Causeway Coast Way if planning a longer trip. That extension needs separate route, accommodation and transport planning rather than being treated as a simple extra hour at the end.

Towns, Villages and Overnight Stops

Accommodation is easiest at the two resort ends of the walk and in the larger coastal settlements. The central section around the Giant's Causeway, Dunseverick, Portbraddan and White Park Bay is more exposed and has fewer practical stopping options, so accommodation and food need booking before committing to a short-stage itinerary.

Many walkers use Portrush, Portstewart, Bushmills, Ballintoy or Ballycastle as overnight bases, with Translink buses used to connect stages. Current bus timetables should be checked before travelling, especially if relying on the 402 Causeway Rambler or coastal Goldliner services at the start or end of a walking day.

Portstewart

Portstewart is the western start of the Causeway Coast Way, with the route beginning at Tubber Patrick / St Patrick's Well opposite Portstewart Golf Club on the western edge of town. It is a sensible place to stay the night before starting, especially if planning an early crossing of Portstewart Strand or wanting an unhurried first day to Portrush.

As a coastal resort, Portstewart has a good choice of accommodation compared with the smaller villages further east, including hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and camping options in the wider area. Food, cafés, pubs and basic shops are much easier to arrange here than on the central cliff sections.

There is no railway station in Portstewart. Access is usually by train to Coleraine or Portrush, then local bus; current Translink connections should be checked before travelling.

Portrush

Portrush is the first major overnight stop east of Portstewart and sits about 10 km into the official stage breakdown. It is one of the most practical bases on the route because it has both coastal accommodation and the rail link to Coleraine, which connects with the Belfast–Londonderry/Derry line.

For walkers splitting the route into short stages, Portrush works well as a first night or as a base for day-walking the western sections. It has a stronger spread of accommodation, food and evening services than the smaller places between the Giant's Causeway and Ballintoy.

Portrush is also useful for walkers who want to travel in by public transport and start the trail without staying in Portstewart. From here, a local bus or taxi can be used to reach the official start at Portstewart; this should be checked before travelling.

White Rocks

White Rocks is a scenic coastal section rather than a practical overnight stop. Treat it as a route feature between Portrush and Dunluce/Portballintrae, not as a place to rely on for accommodation, shops or evening food.

Because this part of the walk includes beach and shore terrain, progress can be slower than the map distance suggests. Carry enough food and water from Portrush if continuing towards Portballintrae or Bushmills.

Dunluce Castle

Dunluce Castle is reached by a short signed detour from the Way and is best treated as a visit rather than a stopping base. It is not a natural overnight point for most walkers.

If planning to visit the castle, allow time within the Portrush to Portballintrae stage rather than assuming it can be fitted in at the end of a long day. Opening arrangements and any admission costs should be checked before travelling.

Portballintrae

Portballintrae is an official stage end in the six-section breakdown and is well placed for walkers who want a short day between Portrush and the Giant's Causeway area. It sits before the Runkerry and Giant's Causeway section, making it useful if tide timing or sightseeing plans mean a shorter day is preferable.

Accommodation and food options should be checked and booked in advance rather than assumed on arrival. If Portballintrae itself does not suit the itinerary, nearby Bushmills is often the more practical service base for this part of the route.

Bushmills

Bushmills is not listed as a main trail point in the stage sequence, but it is one of the most useful near-route bases for this walk. It is particularly handy for the Portballintrae, Runkerry and Giant's Causeway sections, where accommodation directly on the coast can be thinner.

The village has a broader practical role than the smaller coastal hamlets, with accommodation and food options commonly used by walkers. It is also on the public transport corridor serving Portrush, the Giant's Causeway and Ballycastle, though current Translink times should be checked before relying on buses for stage logistics.

Runkerry

Runkerry is a route section near the Giant's Causeway rather than a conventional overnight stop. The path here includes boardwalk sections and leads into one of the busiest visitor areas on the coast.

Do not plan around Runkerry as a service point unless accommodation or facilities have been specifically booked nearby. For practical purposes, most walkers look to Portballintrae, Bushmills or the Giant's Causeway area for staging.

Giant's Causeway

The Giant's Causeway is a key stage point and a natural place to break the route if walking a slower 3–4 day itinerary. The stones are free to walk on, while the visitor centre is ticketed; opening times and prices in pounds sterling should be checked before travelling.

This is a major visitor area, but that does not make it a guaranteed evening service hub for walkers. Food and facilities linked to visitor operations may depend on opening hours, so carry what is needed if continuing along the North Antrim Cliff Path towards Benbane Head and Dunseverick.

The Giant's Causeway is served by the coastal bus network, including Translink services linking Coleraine, Portrush, Bushmills and Ballycastle. It is one of the better places on the route for arranging a bus-based start or finish to a day stage.

Benbane Head / Hamilton's Seat

Benbane Head and Hamilton's Seat form the high, exposed clifftop section beyond the Giant's Causeway. This is not an overnight or resupply point; it is a committing walking section where wind, rain and visibility matter more than height gain.

Carry food, water and waterproof layers before leaving the Giant's Causeway area. The next realistic planning points are Dunseverick and then the Portbraddan/White Park Bay/Ballintoy section, where services remain limited.

Dunseverick Castle

Dunseverick Castle is used as an official stage end in the six-section itinerary, but it should be treated primarily as a route landmark rather than a village with dependable walker services. Anyone planning to finish a day here should have onward transport or accommodation arranged in advance.

This area is also one where live route information matters. Diversions, including around landslip-affected sections near Dunseverick, should be checked before travelling.

Portbraddan

Portbraddan is a small coastal hamlet on the approach to White Park Bay. It is not a robust overnight base for most walkers, and accommodation, food or transport should not be assumed without specific arrangements.

This is one of the important tide-planning areas on the Causeway Coast Way. At high tide, the beach and cliff-foot route around Portbraddan and White Park Bay may require the A2 or inland-lane diversion, so tide times should be checked before setting the day's plan.

White Park Bay

White Park Bay is a major route feature rather than a service stop. It is a long sandy bay where walking can be slow, and it is one of the key places where tide timing affects whether the coastal line is passable.

Do not plan to arrive here at high tide without knowing the diversion. Food, water and onward transport should be arranged around Portballintrae, Bushmills, the Giant's Causeway, Ballintoy or Ballycastle instead.

Ballintoy Harbour and Ballintoy

Ballintoy Harbour is one of the most useful eastern stopping points before the final push to Ballycastle. Ballintoy is listed among the route's accommodation villages, but choice is thinner than in Portstewart, Portrush or Ballycastle, so booking ahead is important.

This is a sensible overnight stop for walkers taking 3–4 days, especially because the following section to Ballycastle includes road walking with fast traffic and limited footpath. Starting that final stage fresh is preferable to adding it to a long day from the Giant's Causeway or Dunseverick.

Check current bus options before relying on Ballintoy for public-transport stage logistics. Also check live route information beyond Ballintoy, including any re-routing via Glenstaughey Road.

Carrick-a-Rede

Carrick-a-Rede is not on the Causeway Coast Way itself; it is an optional paid National Trust detour about 1 km off the route. It is best planned as a side trip from the Ballintoy section rather than as an overnight stop.

The rope bridge has ticketing and opening arrangements, with prices in pounds sterling. These should be checked before travelling, especially if the detour is central to the day's plan.

Ballycastle

Ballycastle is the eastern finish of the Causeway Coast Way, with the trail ending at The Diamond in the centre of town. It is the most practical place to stay at the end of the walk, with accommodation, pubs, cafés, shops and onward transport easier to arrange than in the smaller villages to the west.

There is no railway station at Ballycastle. Onward travel depends on Translink bus services, including coastal services linking back towards the Giant's Causeway, Bushmills, Portrush and Coleraine; timetables should be checked before booking trains or onward accommodation.

Ballycastle is also a useful base if the final Ballintoy-to-Ballycastle section needs to be walked as a day stage. This can be a pragmatic choice in poor weather or where road-walking conditions make a shorter, better-timed day preferable.

Getting to the Start

The Causeway Coast Way starts at **Tubber Patrick / St Patrick's Well**, opposite **Portstewart Golf Club** on the western edge of **Portstewart**. This is not the same as simply arriving in Portstewart town centre, so allow time to reach the actual start point before beginning the first stage.

Because this is a point-to-point walk finishing in **Ballycastle**, the easiest logistics are usually by public transport: travel to the north coast, walk west to east, then leave Ballycastle by bus. If using a car, plan the end-of-walk return before committing to parking at the start.

By train

The railhead for the route is the north coast railway network around **Coleraine** and **Portrush**. **Coleraine** is on the Belfast–Londonderry/Derry line, and **Portrush** is reached by a short branch line from Coleraine.

From either Coleraine or Portrush, continue to **Portstewart** by local bus or taxi. Portrush is close to the walking route corridor and is a common base before starting, but the official start is at the western edge of Portstewart, so a final local transfer may still be needed.

Train times, connections and same-day onward buses should be checked with **Translink** before travelling, especially if aiming to start walking on the day of arrival.

By bus

Translink Ulsterbus services link the coastal towns and villages along the route. Services including the **402 "Causeway Rambler"** and coastal Goldliner services connect places such as **Coleraine, Portrush, Bushmills, the Giant's Causeway and Ballycastle**, making the route relatively straightforward to reach and leave without a car.

For the start, the usual approach is to travel by bus to **Portstewart**, then walk or take a short taxi to **Tubber Patrick / St Patrick's Well** by Portstewart Golf Club. Check the stop location against the trailhead before setting off, as starting from the wrong side of town adds avoidable road walking before the route has properly begun.

Timetables vary by season and day of week. This should be checked before travelling.

By car

Driving to Portstewart is straightforward in principle, but parking is the main planning issue. The trail does not return to Portstewart, and the finish at **Ballycastle** has no railway station, so leaving a car at the start means arranging a bus-and-taxi return or a private transfer at the end.

Do not assume that parking beside the start at Portstewart Golf Club is suitable for multi-day use. Long-stay parking arrangements, restrictions and any accommodation parking should be checked before travelling.

For many walkers, a simpler car-based plan is to stay in **Portstewart** or **Portrush** the night before, leave the car with accommodation where permitted, and use buses or taxis to manage the start and finish. If parking in public car parks, check maximum stay rules and whether overnight parking is allowed.

From the nearest airport

There is no airport directly on the Causeway Coast Way. The practical onward plan is to reach the Translink rail or bus network, travel to **Coleraine** or **Portrush**, then continue to **Portstewart** by bus or taxi.

If arriving by air and starting the same day, allow a generous buffer. A missed rail or bus connection can easily turn a planned first walking day into an evening arrival on the coast. Airport-to-coast public transport routes and times should be checked before travelling.

Where to stay before starting

The most convenient pre-walk bases are **Portstewart** and **Portrush**. Portstewart puts you closest to the official start at Tubber Patrick / St Patrick's Well, while Portrush has the advantage of rail access via the Coleraine branch line.

Accommodation on this route is mixed, with hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs, hostels and campsites in the coastal towns. In summer and around weekends, book ahead rather than relying on same-day availability.

If staying in Portrush before starting, plan the short transfer to Portstewart in advance. If staying in Portstewart, check how far the accommodation is from the western edge of town, as the official start is opposite Portstewart Golf Club rather than in the central seafront area.

Getting Home from the Finish

The Causeway Coast Way finishes at The Diamond in the centre of Ballycastle. There is no railway station at the finish, so onward travel normally starts with a Translink Ulsterbus service or a taxi connection.

By train

Ballycastle has no rail station. For rail travel, use a bus or taxi from Ballycastle to connect with the Northern Ireland rail network at Coleraine or Portrush.

Coleraine is on the Belfast–Londonderry/Derry line, while Portrush is on a short branch line from Coleraine. This makes rail a practical option for onward travel, but not a direct one from the trail finish.

Do not rely on being able to walk into Ballycastle late in the day and make an easy same-evening rail connection. Check current Translink bus and train times before fixing accommodation, onward tickets or flights.

By bus

Ballycastle is served by Translink Ulsterbus. The key route for walkers is the 402 “Causeway Rambler”, with coastal services linking Ballycastle with places along the route such as the Giant’s Causeway, Bushmills, Portrush and Coleraine.

Goldliner coastal services also link the Causeway Coast corridor. These are useful if returning west along the route, heading for rail connections, or positioning for an overnight stay in Portrush, Portstewart or Coleraine.

Timetables are the critical detail. Service patterns can vary by day and season, and evening options may not suit a slow final walking day from Ballintoy to Ballycastle. Verify current Translink timetables before relying on a same-day onward connection.

By car/taxi

For a point-to-point walk, the cleanest car plan is usually to leave the car at the finish in Ballycastle and use public transport or a taxi to reach the start before walking. If the car is left at Portstewart, allow enough time after finishing for the bus or taxi journey back west.

Taxis are useful for late finishes, missed buses, or shortening a complicated return to Coleraine, Portrush or Portstewart. Availability and fares should be checked before travelling, especially outside busy visitor periods or if finishing in the evening.

The final approach into Ballycastle includes road walking, so build in a realistic finish time rather than planning a tight onward connection. A pre-booked taxi or an overnight stay is the safer option if the final stage is likely to run late.

From the nearest airport

There is no airport at Ballycastle, and airport transfers are not a direct part of the trail logistics. Public-transport journeys from the finish should be planned through Translink, usually by first taking a bus

from Ballycastle towards Coleraine or Portrush and then connecting onwards by rail or coach.

Airport-specific routes, connection times and late-day options should be checked before travelling. Do not assume that a same-day finish in Ballycastle will line up neatly with an evening flight.

Where to stay at the finish

Ballycastle is one of the main accommodation bases on the route, with hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs, hostels and campsites. Staying overnight at the finish is often the simplest plan, particularly after the longer final stage from Ballintoy Harbour.

An overnight stop also avoids having to rush the road-walking sections near the end of the route to meet a bus. It gives more flexibility if weather, tide timing earlier in the day, or trail diversions slow progress.

Which Direction Should You Walk?

The Causeway Coast Way is usually walked **west to east, from Portstewart to Ballycastle**. That is the standard direction used for the route description, and it gives the walk a logical build-up from resort coastline and beaches towards the Giant's Causeway, the North Antrim Cliff Path, White Park Bay and the final approach into Ballycastle.

Walking east to west is perfectly possible, but it is less common and does not remove the main planning issues: tides, exposed clifftop weather, road walking and accommodation gaps still need the same attention.

Direction	Best for	Main drawbacks
Portstewart to Ballycastle	Following the usual direction; a strong scenery progression; starting near the rail-linked Portrush/Coleraine transport corridor	Finish has no railway, so onward travel from Ballycastle depends on bus services
Ballycastle to Portstewart	Finishing closer to Portrush/Coleraine rail connections; useful if accommodation or transport works better that way	Starts with one of the less satisfying logistical sections, including road walking towards Ballintoy; less common direction

Transport logistics

For most walkers, **Portstewart to Ballycastle is the simpler direction to start**. Rail reaches the coast at Portrush via Coleraine, with local bus connections onwards towards Portstewart, so getting to the western end is relatively straightforward.

Ballycastle has no railway station, but it is served by Translink Ulsterbus services, including coastal links such as the 402 Causeway Rambler and Goldliner services connecting places including Coleraine, Portrush, Bushmills, the Giant's Causeway and Ballycastle. Current Translink timetables should be checked before travelling, especially if relying on an end-of-walk bus.

The reverse direction can make sense if ending near the rail network is the priority. In that case, the more awkward bus leg to Ballycastle is handled at the start rather than after the walk.

Scenery and route rhythm

West to east gives the better overall progression. The walk begins with Portstewart Strand and the settled coastal stretch through Portrush, then builds through White Rocks, Dunluce Castle, Portballintrae, Runkerry and the Giant's Causeway.

Beyond the Causeway, the route becomes wilder along the North Antrim Cliff Path, reaching Hamilton's Seat at Benbane Head before continuing towards Dunseverick, Portbraddan, White Park Bay and Ballintoy Harbour. This order gives the strongest sense of the coastline opening out as the walk develops.

East to west reverses that pattern. It puts the more exposed and logistically awkward eastern stretches early, then finishes through the busier resort coastline around Portrush and Portstewart.

Climbing and difficulty by direction

There is no major climbing advantage either way. The route has modest total ascent for a long-distance walk, with the high point at Hamilton's Seat around 100 m above the sea, and the difficulty comes more from coastal exposure, beaches, rocky going, road sections and tide timing than from sustained uphill walking.

Short clifftop rises and descents are unavoidable in both directions. Direction should therefore be chosen for logistics, tides and accommodation rather than gradient.

Weather, wind and tides

The route is exposed to Atlantic wind and rain in either direction. There is no dependable direction choice that makes the weather problem disappear, so the practical approach is to check the forecast, carry proper waterproofs and be prepared for slower progress on exposed clifftop and beach sections.

Tide planning matters more than direction. White Park Bay and the cliffs below Portbraddan can be impassable at high tide, with an A2 or inland-lane diversion needed. Whichever way the route is walked, daily start times should be planned around the relevant tide windows.

Accommodation flow

The standard west-to-east direction works well with the main overnight places in route order: Portstewart, Portrush, Bushmills or Portballintrae, the Giant's Causeway area, Ballintoy and Ballycastle. Choice becomes thinner on the wilder central cliff section between the Giant's Causeway and Ballintoy, so booking ahead is sensible in either direction.

Reverse walking may suit a specific room availability pattern, especially in busy periods, but it should be planned carefully around the same thin central section and the tide-sensitive coast near White Park Bay and Portbraddan.

Recommendation

For most walkers, the best direction is **Portstewart to Ballycastle**. It is the standard and most intuitive line, starts from the easier rail-and-bus side of the route, gives the strongest scenery progression, and finishes clearly at The Diamond in central Ballycastle.

Walk **Ballycastle to Portstewart** only if transport, accommodation availability or personal scheduling makes that direction work better. It is a valid option, but not the default choice.

Accommodation Along the Route

Accommodation on the Causeway Coast Way is straightforward at the larger resort towns, but noticeably thinner on the central cliff-and-bay section between the Giant's Causeway, Dunseverick, Portbraddan and Ballintoy. This is a good route for inn-to-inn walking, provided overnight stops are planned around the places that actually have services rather than simply following every scenic landmark on the map.

The strongest accommodation choice is at Portstewart, Portrush and Ballycastle, with further options in Bushmills and some provision around Ballintoy. Expect a mix of hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs, hostels and campsites in the main coastal settlements. Choice is more limited at smaller places such as Portballintrae and around the Giant's Causeway, and there is effectively no meaningful accommodation choice on the wilder cliff sections themselves.

Best overnight bases

Portrush is one of the most practical bases on the western half of the route. It has good accommodation choice, rail access via the branch from Coleraine, and bus links along the coast, making it useful both for a first overnight and for walkers splitting the route into day stages.

Portstewart also works well before starting, especially if travelling in the day before. The trail begins on the western edge of town at Tubber Patrick / St Patrick's Well, opposite Portstewart Golf Club, so staying locally keeps the first morning simple.

Bushmills is not directly listed as a route stage in the day-by-day breakdown, but it is one of the main accommodation/service centres for the Giant's Causeway area. It can be a practical overnight base for walkers who do not find suitable accommodation at Portballintrae or near the Causeway itself.

Ballycastle is the natural finish-point base. The trail ends at The Diamond in the centre of town, and staying overnight avoids having to rely on an evening bus connection after the final road-walking section from Ballintoy.

Accommodation table

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Portstewart	Good	Night before starting; western trailhead logistics	Convenient for the start at Tubber Patrick / St Patrick's Well. Also useful if combining accommodation with local bus access.
Portrush	Good	First overnight; transport-based itineraries; short-break walkers	One of the strongest choices on the route, with rail access via Coleraine and coastal bus links. A practical base for day-stage walking.
White Rocks	None	Passing-through point	Treat as a route feature rather than an overnight stop. Continue to Portrush, Portballintrae, Bushmills or another booked base.

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Dunluce Castle area	None / very limited	Short signed detour, not an overnight hub	The castle is a detour highlight rather than a service centre. Do not assume accommodation here. This should be checked before travelling.
Portballintrae	Limited	Shorter-stage itineraries before the Giant's Causeway	Useful for breaking the western half of the walk, but choice is not as strong as Portrush or Ballycastle. Book ahead or use Bushmills as a nearby service base.
Bushmills	Good	Giant's Causeway-area overnight; fallback for Portballintrae/Causeway	A practical accommodation and service base for the central part of the route, especially if walking shorter days. Transport links should be checked before travelling.
Giant's Causeway / Runkerry area	Limited	Early start onto the North Antrim Cliff Path	Useful if accommodation is available, but do not rely on turning up without a booking. The visitor centre is ticketed; the stones are free to walk on.
Dunseverick Castle area	None / very limited	Stage break only if using transfer logistics	This is a poor place to assume accommodation. Walkers using it as a stage end may need bus, taxi or pre-arranged pick-up logistics. This should be checked before travelling.
Portbraddan	None / very limited	Passing-through point before White Park Bay	A small coastal hamlet, not a dependable overnight base. Tide timing matters here because the cliffs below Portbraddan may require an inland/A2 diversion at high tide.
White Park Bay	None	Tide-planned walking section	Do not plan to overnight on the beach. The beach route is not passable at high tide, so accommodation timing should support a safe crossing window.
Ballintoy / Ballintoy Harbour	Limited	Final overnight before Ballycastle; breaking the eastern section	Some accommodation is available in the Ballintoy area, but choice is limited compared with the larger towns. Book ahead, especially in the main walking season.
Ballycastle	Good	Finish night; onward travel buffer	The most practical end-point base. There is no railway at Ballycastle, so check current Translink bus times before planning onward travel.

Booking ahead

Booking ahead is strongly advised in summer, at weekends and around holiday periods. This coast is popular with walkers, general visitors, Giant's Causeway traffic and short-break travellers, so the best-

value rooms in Portrush, Portstewart, Bushmills, Ballintoy and Ballycastle can go early.

Advance booking matters most if following a fixed 2–4 day itinerary. The smaller overnight points give little flexibility if accommodation is full, and the central section does not have the density of villages found on some lower-level trails.

Handling awkward gaps

The awkward accommodation gap is the wilder central and eastern part of the route, particularly between the Giant's Causeway, Dunseverick, Portbraddan, White Park Bay and Ballintoy. This section is scenic but not accommodation-rich, and tide planning at White Park Bay can affect the day's timing.

Many walkers solve this by staying in stronger bases such as Portrush, Bushmills, Ballintoy or Ballycastle and using bus connections where they fit. Translink Ulsterbus services, including the 402 Causeway Rambler and coastal Goldliner services, link the main settlements and visitor points, but current timetables should be checked before relying on them.

Taxi transfers or luggage transfer can also make the route easier, especially for walkers who want short stages or prefer not to carry overnight gear. No specific service should be assumed without booking; arrange transfers directly with accommodation providers or local operators, and confirm availability before travelling.

Camping and hostels

The route has a mixed accommodation pattern that includes campsites and hostels in the broader coastal towns and villages, but it is not a trail where every stage end has a guaranteed camping option. Plan camping nights as carefully as B&B nights, particularly around the Giant's Causeway to Ballintoy stretch.

Wild camping should not be treated as the default solution for accommodation gaps. Use established sites where available, and check current access rules and landowner requirements before travelling.

Camping and Wild Camping

Camping is possible on the Causeway Coast Way, but it is better treated as a campsite-to-campsite coastal walk than a wild-camping route. The trail passes popular resort towns and villages with mixed accommodation, including campsites, but it also crosses protected coastline, beaches, dunes, working harbour areas and exposed clifftops where informal camping is not something to assume.

Campsites and camping logistics

Campsites are available in or near some of the main coastal settlements on the route, including Portstewart, Portrush, Bushmills, Ballintoy and Ballycastle. Exact sites, opening seasons, pitch availability and prices change, so these should be checked before travelling.

The easiest camping plan is to use the bigger settlements as overnight bases and link stages with Translink buses where needed. This is particularly useful because the central section between the Giant's Causeway and Ballintoy has thinner accommodation choice and includes exposed cliff and beach walking rather than obvious camping infrastructure.

For a 2-day itinerary, camping can be awkward unless accommodation lines up with the long stages. A 3- or 4-day plan is usually more practical for tent users, giving more flexibility around tides at White Park Bay and the Portbraddan cliffs, and avoiding a forced late finish on the road-walking sections near the eastern end.

Wild camping

Do not assume wild camping is permitted along this coast. Much of the route crosses private land, managed visitor sites, dunes, beaches, harbour areas and protected coastal landscapes within the Causeway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as well as passing the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site.

Wild-camping rules, landowner permission and any local restrictions must be checked locally before relying on an overnight pitch. Without clear permission, use an established campsite or booked accommodation instead.

The most sensitive places are also some of the most tempting: Portstewart Strand, the Giant's Causeway area, White Park Bay, Ballintoy Harbour and the clifftop path around Benbane Head and Dunseverick. These are not places to treat as casual overnight stops without explicit permission.

Water and supplies

Plan water around settlements and booked accommodation rather than natural sources. The route is coastal, with beach, dune, cliff and road sections, so there is no reliable expectation of safe drinking water on the path itself.

Carry enough water for the longer, more exposed central and eastern sections, especially between the Giant's Causeway, Dunseverick, Portbraddan, White Park Bay and Ballintoy. In warm weather or strong wind, beach walking can be slower and more tiring than the map distance suggests.

Leave No Trace and fire safety

If camping with permission, keep the pitch small, arrive late, leave early and remove every item of waste. Human waste, food scraps and toilet paper are especially damaging on dunes, beaches and close-cropped clifftop grass.

Do not light open fires. The route crosses dunes, grassland, farmland edges and busy visitor coastline, and fire scars or wind-blown embers are unacceptable in these places. Use a stove only where it is safe and permitted, and never on dry grass, dune vegetation or close to buildings, livestock or harbour infrastructure.

Seasonal considerations

Spring, summer and autumn are the main walking seasons, and summer weekends can be busy around Portstewart, Portrush, the Giant's Causeway, Carrick-a-Rede and Ballycastle. Campsites and budget accommodation should be booked ahead rather than left to chance.

Wind and rain matter more than elevation on this route. A lightweight tent must still cope with exposed Atlantic conditions, especially on clifftops and open coastal ground, and wet sand or soft dune areas are poor places to pitch even where camping is permitted.

Food, Water and Resupply

The Causeway Coast Way is not a remote expedition route, but food and water still need planning. The easy resupply points are the larger coastal towns at either end and around the western half of the walk; the thinner section is the exposed middle coast between the Giant's Causeway, Dunseverick, Portbraddan, White Park Bay and Ballintoy.

Do not plan to find food at every bay or landmark. Several places on the route are beaches, ruins, cliff viewpoints or small coastal hamlets rather than service villages. Rural and seasonal opening hours can be limited, especially outside summer and on Sundays, so any café, pub, shop or visitor-attraction facility being relied on should be checked before travelling.

General resupply strategy

For most walkers, the simplest approach is to buy breakfast and evening meals where staying overnight, then carry lunch and snacks each day. Portstewart, Portrush and Ballycastle are the most straightforward places to stock up; Ballintoy and the smaller settlements should be treated as limited-service stops unless current opening hours are known.

There is no need to carry several days of food if staying in towns and villages, but it is sensible to carry an emergency meal or substantial spare snacks. This is particularly useful on the Giant's Causeway to Ballintoy stretch, where weather, tide timing, diversions or slower going on beaches and cliff paths can make the day longer than expected.

Water planning

Start each day with full bottles filled at accommodation, a café or another reliable tap. Natural water should not be treated as a routine source on this coastal route: streams and run-off may pass through farmland, settlements or livestock areas, and coastal water sources can be brackish or contaminated. If water must be taken from a natural source in an emergency, it should be filtered and treated.

For typical stages, carry enough water to finish the day without needing a refill. In cool conditions, 1.5–2 litres is a reasonable starting point for many walkers; in warm, windy or exposed weather, 2–3 litres may be more appropriate. The beach and clifftop sections offer little shelter, so dehydration can creep up even on days that do not feel hot.

Food and water by section

Section	Food availability	Water availability	Notes
Portstewart to Portrush	Best supplied at the start and finish; both are coastal towns with the most reliable choice on this part of the route.	Fill before leaving Portstewart; refill in Portrush.	This is a short stage, but Portstewart Strand can feel exposed in wind. Carry snacks and enough water rather than relying on beach facilities.

Section	Food availability	Water availability	Notes
Portrush to Portballintrae	Good starting options in Portrush; more limited once beyond the town. Portballintrae is a smaller stop, so check what is open if relying on an evening meal or provisions.	Fill in Portrush. Refill at accommodation or an open business in Portballintrae.	Do not assume food is available at every landmark or detour. Dunluce Castle is a short signed detour, not a resupply point to depend on.
Portballintrae to Giant's Causeway	Limited once away from Portballintrae. The Giant's Causeway visitor centre is ticketed; any facilities there should be checked for opening times and access before relying on them.	Fill before leaving Portballintrae. Refill only where facilities are open and accessible.	A short stage, but many walkers spend extra time around Runkerry and the Causeway. Carry lunch or snacks if making a slow sightseeing day of it.
Giant's Causeway to Dunseverick Castle	Limited. This is the start of the wilder North Antrim Cliff Path section, with cliffs and viewpoints rather than dependable services.	Leave with full bottles. Do not rely on natural water.	Carry a proper packed lunch, especially if walking on to accommodation away from the immediate route. Exposure, wind and cliff-path going can make this slower than the distance suggests.
Dunseverick Castle to Ballintoy Harbour	Limited through Dunseverick, Portbraddan and White Park Bay. Ballintoy has accommodation options, but food availability should be checked in advance.	Start full. Refill at accommodation or open businesses in Ballintoy if available.	This is one of the key planning sections. White Park Bay and the Portbraddan cliffs are tide-sensitive, and delays may force an inland diversion, so carry spare snacks and water.
Ballintoy Harbour to Ballycastle	Limited at the start unless services in Ballintoy are open; Ballycastle has the best end-of-route choice.	Fill before leaving Ballintoy. Refill in Ballycastle.	The final stage includes road walking with fast traffic and limited footpath in places, so it is better not to be searching for water en route. Carry enough to finish comfortably.

Practical tips

Book accommodation with breakfast where possible, or arrange breakfast supplies the night before. Early starts are useful for tide timing, but they can put you ahead of café and shop opening hours.

Carry food that can be eaten in wind or rain without unpacking much: sandwiches, oat bars, nuts, chocolate, wraps and a flask or hot drink in colder months all work well. There are long exposed stretches where sitting comfortably for a long lunch may not be realistic.

If walking outside the main holiday season, assume fewer casual food stops. Check current opening hours for village shops, pubs, cafés, visitor attractions and accommodation meals before committing to a stage plan, particularly on Sundays and public holidays.

Navigation and Waymarking

The Causeway Coast Way is a waymarked point-to-point route and is generally straightforward to follow in good visibility. Look for the official orange fern-frond symbol on a blue background; the route also uses established coastal paths, including the Port Path and North Antrim Cliff Path through this part of the Ulster Way.

This is not a route where technical navigation is normally the main challenge. The more important planning issues are choosing the correct line at beaches, recognising optional detours, allowing for tide-dependent sections and checking for any current diversions before setting out.

How reliable is the waymarking?

Waymarking is one of the route's strengths, especially through the more popular sections around Portstewart, Portrush, Portballintrae, Runkerry and the Giant's Causeway. In settled weather and daylight, most walkers with basic map-reading ability should find the route manageable.

Do not treat the waymarks as a substitute for navigation. Coastal paths, beach exits, road sections and visitor-area paths can all create uncertainty, particularly where there are several paths, car parks, access tracks or signed attractions close together.

GPX and offline mapping

A GPX file is strongly recommended for the full walk, even though the route is waymarked. It is most useful for checking beach exits, road-walking sections, inland alternatives at high tide and any re-routed stretches.

Download the route for offline use before leaving accommodation each day. Mobile signal can vary on exposed coastal and cliff sections, and battery life is easily reduced by wind, rain and cold conditions.

A mapping app with offline topographic mapping and GPX import is sensible. A paper map or printed route notes are also useful as a back-up, particularly if walking the route over several days or relying on buses at the end of stages.

Places where extra attention is needed

Portstewart start: the route begins at Tubber Patrick / St Patrick's Well, opposite Portstewart Golf Club, on the western edge of town. Make sure the start point is identified before setting off, rather than simply beginning from central Portstewart.

Beaches and dunes: Portstewart Strand and White Park Bay are slower to navigate than a firm path. The walking line can vary with conditions, and the exit point matters, so keep checking position rather than following footprints along the sand.

Dunluce Castle and Carrick-a-Rede: both are detours rather than the main line of the Causeway Coast Way. Dunluce Castle is reached by a short signed detour; Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge lies about 1 km off the Way and is a paid National Trust attraction. Do not accidentally build either into the main route unless deliberately visiting.

Giant's Causeway and Runkerry: this area has boardwalks, visitor paths and heavy foot traffic. The route remains easy in principle, but it is worth checking the onward line rather than following the busiest path by default.

White Park Bay and Portbraddan: these are key tide-planning areas. The beach at White Park Bay is not passable at high tide, and the cliffs below Portbraddan may require the A2 / inland-lane diversion at high tide. Tide times should be checked before travelling and again before committing to the section.

Dunseverick and Ballintoy area: live diversions can affect this part of the route, including issues such as a landslide near Dunseverick and a re-routed busy-road section beyond Ballintoy via Glenstaughey Road. Current route updates should be checked before walking.

Ballintoy to Ballycastle: expect road walking with fast traffic and limited footpath in places. Navigation is not complicated, but staying alert matters more here than on the open clifftop path.

Suitability for less experienced navigators

The Causeway Coast Way is suitable for hikers with limited navigation experience if they are comfortable following waymarks, using a mapping app and making basic decisions around tides and diversions. It is a good first multi-day coastal walk for many people, but it should not be treated as a fully managed promenade.

Walk in daylight, carry offline mapping, know the day's exit points and check tide times before the White Park Bay and Portbraddan sections. In poor visibility, strong wind or heavy rain, the exposed clifftop sections require more caution than the route's modest height gain suggests.

Terrain, Conditions and Difficulty in Practice

The Causeway Coast Way is moderate because of exposure, surface changes and timing constraints, not because of height gain. There are no mountain ascents and the high point is only about 100 m at Hamilton's Seat on Benbane Head, but the route still needs proper coastal-walking judgement.

Expect a repeated mix of sand, dunes, rocky shore, grassy clifftop paths, boardwalk, minor road and pavement. The walking is usually non-technical, but it is not uniformly fast: beaches, rocks, wet grass and road sections can all slow progress, especially with a multi-day pack.

Path surfaces and pace

The western end includes sandy beach and dune walking around Portstewart Strand. Sand is straightforward in good weather but can be tiring over distance, and it often makes progress slower than the map distance suggests.

Between Portrush, White Rocks, Dunluce Castle, Portballintrae and Runkerry the route uses a mixture of coastal path, beach or shore-level walking, pavement and road. Boardwalk sections around Runkerry and the Giant's Causeway make some of this part easier underfoot, though these areas can also be busy.

Beyond the Giant's Causeway the character becomes wilder on the North Antrim Cliff Path towards Benbane Head, Hamilton's Seat and Dunseverick. This is one of the more serious-feeling parts of the route: grassy and earthen clifftop paths, open exposure to Atlantic weather and steep drops nearby make it more committing than the modest altitude suggests.

The section through Portbraddan, White Park Bay and Ballintoy Harbour brings more slow ground. White Park Bay is a major sandy beach section and must be treated as a tide-planning point rather than just a scenic stretch.

The final approach from Ballintoy Harbour to Ballycastle includes road walking, including stretches with fast traffic and limited footpath. This is one of the least relaxing parts of the Way and is often harder mentally than the coastal path because attention has to stay on traffic as well as navigation.

Road walking

Road and pavement are a real part of the Causeway Coast Way, not just short connectors. They occur around the towns and villages and on parts of the eastern end, especially beyond Ballintoy towards Ballycastle.

The road sections are not technically difficult, but they can feel tiring after softer coastal ground. Wear footwear comfortable enough for tarmac as well as beach and path, and plan the final day with enough daylight to avoid rushing along roads with limited verge or footpath.

There may be live diversions affecting the route, including a re-routed busy-road section beyond Ballintoy via Glenstaughey Road. This should be checked before travelling.

Cliffs, exposure and weather

The route is exposed to Atlantic wind and rain for much of its length. Even in spring, summer and autumn, conditions can change quickly on open clifftops and beaches, and there are few natural sheltered alternatives once committed to a coastal section.

The North Antrim Cliff Path beyond the Giant's Causeway is the section where exposure matters most. The walking is not scrambling, but wet grass, gusty wind and poor visibility can make the clifftop sections feel significantly more serious.

Waterproofs and warm layers are worth carrying even on a short itinerary. A light day on paper can become slow and cold if strong wind, rain and wet ground coincide.

Tide-dependent sections

Tides are one of the main practical difficulties on this route. Some beach and shore sections are slow or impassable at high tide, especially White Park Bay and the cliffs below Portbraddan.

At high tide, the A2 or inland lane diversion is needed around the Portbraddan and White Park Bay area. Tide times should be checked before travelling, and stage timings should be built around them rather than treated as an afterthought.

This is particularly important on a 2-day itinerary, where longer daily distances leave less spare time to wait for the tide. A 3- or 4-day schedule gives more flexibility and reduces the pressure to push on at an awkward time.

Mud, rocks and footing

The route is not highly technical, but footing varies often. Rocky shore sections and bays require care, especially when wet, and grassy or earthen clifftop paths can become slippery after rain.

Beach walking can also be deceptively hard work, particularly on soft sand. On a windy day, exposed beaches may feel slower than equivalent road or path kilometres.

Light hiking boots or robust trail shoes with good grip are more appropriate than urban trainers. The best choice depends on whether ankle support, wet-weather grip or road comfort matters most to the walker, but smooth-soled footwear is a poor fit for the full route.

Climbs and descents

Total ascent is modest at about 500 m, so the Causeway Coast Way is not a hill-walking challenge in the usual sense. Climbs are generally short and linked to headlands, bays and clifftop undulations rather than sustained uphill walking.

The cumulative effect still matters. Repeated drops and rises between shore level, harbour approaches and clifftop paths can become tiring, particularly on the longer Ballintoy to Ballycastle day or when carrying overnight gear.

What makes it easier

Waymarking is generally clear, using the orange fern-frond symbol on a blue background. The route also passes through or near regular settlements such as Portstewart, Portrush, Portballintrae, Bushmills area

access for the Giant's Causeway, Ballintoy and Ballycastle, which makes food, accommodation and transport planning more manageable than on a remote upland trail.

The lack of mountain altitude also helps. There is no need for specialist technical equipment in normal conditions, and most fit walkers used to coastal paths should find the physical demands manageable with sensible daily distances.

What makes it harder

The main difficulty is the combination of coastal exposure, mixed surfaces, tide timing and road walking. A short distance on paper can take longer than expected when it includes soft sand, wet rock, wind, a tide wait or a diversion.

The full point-to-point route is also more demanding than the popular short sections around the Giant's Causeway. Walkers who have only visited the main attractions should not assume the whole Way has the same easy access, surfacing or shelter.

Before setting out, check tide times for White Park Bay and the Portbraddan cliffs, current route diversions around Dunseverick and Ballintoy, and the latest transport options if shortening a day becomes necessary.

Weather and Best Time to Walk

The Causeway Coast Way is best treated as a **spring, summer or autumn walk**. It is not a mountain route, but the weather still matters: the trail is repeatedly exposed to Atlantic wind and rain, with clifftop paths, beach crossings, rocky shore sections and some road walking where poor visibility or strong wind can make progress slower and less comfortable.

The main planning issue is not snow or altitude, but the combination of **wind, rain, tides and daylight**. White Park Bay and the cliffs below Portbraddan need particular attention, as the coastal route is tide-dependent and an inland/A2 diversion is needed at high tide.

Best months

Season	Practical implications
Spring	A good time for the route, with improving daylight and generally manageable trail conditions. Expect wet and windy days, and be prepared for muddy clifftop and dune paths after rain.
Summer	The easiest season for daylight and short-break logistics. Accommodation in Portstewart, Portrush, Bushmills, Ballintoy and Ballycastle should be booked ahead in busy holiday periods, especially if walking fixed stages.
Autumn	Still a realistic and often rewarding season, but daylight becomes a bigger constraint and Atlantic weather can be more disruptive. Build in flexibility for tide timing and poor-weather delays.
Winter	Possible for experienced, well-equipped walkers, but not the natural season for this trail. Short daylight, stronger coastal weather, slippery surfaces and reduced service availability make a 2-day schedule less forgiving. This should be checked before travelling.

Weather hazards that affect the walk

Strong wind is the main coastal hazard. The North Antrim Cliff Path beyond the Giant's Causeway, including the higher ground around Benbane Head and Hamilton's Seat, is exposed; in severe wind it is sensible to delay, shorten the day or use lower-level alternatives where available.

Rain affects both comfort and footing. Earthen clifftop paths can become slippery, rocky bays can be greasy underfoot, and beach walking is slower when sand is soft or churned by weather. Waterproofs and a dry layer are worth carrying even on a short summer itinerary.

Poor visibility is a serious issue on the clifftop sections. If sea mist, low cloud or heavy rain reduces visibility, slow down, keep to the waymarked line and avoid walking close to cliff edges.

Snow is not normally the key planning concern on this low-level coastal route, but winter cold, wind chill and icy patches can still make exposed paths and road sections unpleasant or hazardous.

Daylight and itinerary choice

The official guide presents the route as a 2-day walk, but that schedule leaves less room for tide timing, bad weather and sightseeing. In spring and autumn, a 3- or 4-day plan is more forgiving, particularly if including the Giant's Causeway, the Dunluce Castle detour or the off-route Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge.

In winter, short daylight makes the full route much harder to manage safely, especially the longer Ballintoy Harbour to Ballycastle section, which includes road walking with fast traffic and limited footpath. Starting early and carrying a headtorch are sensible, but winter walkers should still avoid being committed to exposed road or cliff sections after dark.

Tide timing and wet-weather surfaces

Tide planning is essential at **White Park Bay** and below **Portbraddan**. These sections can be impassable at high tide, so check tide times before setting daily start times; in poor weather, allow extra time rather than aiming for a tight tidal window.

After prolonged rain, expect slower progress on grassy and earthen clifftop paths, and take care on boardwalk sections around Runkerry and the Giant's Causeway. Beaches such as Portstewart Strand and White Park Bay may look simple on a map, but they can be tiring in wind or soft sand.

Accommodation and seasonal services

Summer gives the widest practical choice but also the highest demand in the coastal towns and villages. Portstewart, Portrush, Bushmills, Ballintoy and Ballycastle all have accommodation options, but the central stretch between the Giant's Causeway and Ballintoy is thinner, so book early if walking fixed daily stages.

Outside the main season, some accommodation, attractions and local services may have reduced availability. National Trust opening times and prices for Carrick-a-Rede and the Giant's Causeway visitor centre, plus current Translink bus timetables, should be checked before travelling.

Safety Notes

The Causeway Coast Way is a moderate, well-waymarked coastal route, but it should be treated as a serious sea-cliff and beach walk rather than a simple promenade. The main safety issues are tide timing, exposed clifftop paths, slippery rock, road walking and fast-changing Atlantic weather.

In an emergency in the UK, call **999 or 112**. On the more open sections, do not rely on having continuous mobile signal; carry a charged phone, a power bank if using phone navigation, and enough information to keep moving if the signal drops.

Tide and shoreline hazards

Tide planning is essential around **White Park Bay** and the cliffs below **Portbraddan**. The beach route at White Park Bay is not passable at high tide, and the Portbraddan cliff/shore section may require the **A2 or inland-lane diversion** when the tide is in. Check tide times before committing to the day's route, not when already on the beach.

Avoid being tempted onto wet rocks, wave-washed platforms or the edge of the basalt columns in poor conditions. Even on a dry day, rocks around the shore can be polished, uneven and slippery; in wind, rain or swell, stay well back from the waterline.

Clifftop exposure

The section beyond the **Giant's Causeway** towards **Benbane Head / Hamilton's Seat** and onwards along the North Antrim coast is one of the wilder parts of the route. The height is modest, but the path is exposed to Atlantic wind and rain, and cliff edges demand concentration.

Keep to the waymarked line, avoid short cuts near cliff edges, and give yourself more time than the distance suggests in poor weather. Strong wind can make exposed clifftop walking tiring and can affect balance, especially with a large pack.

Road walking and traffic

Several parts of the Causeway Coast Way use minor roads, pavements or roadside walking. The final **Ballintoy Harbour to Ballycastle** stretch is the one to treat most carefully: it includes road walking with fast traffic and limited footpath.

Wear visible clothing, walk facing oncoming traffic where there is no pavement, and be prepared to stop in safely where verges are narrow. Check for live route diversions before setting off, including any re-routed busy-road section beyond Ballintoy via **Glenstaughey Road**.

Weather, heat and cold

This is not a mountain route, but the coast is exposed. Wind, rain and sea mist can change the feel of the day quickly, especially on open cliff sections and long beaches such as **Portstewart Strand** and **White Park Bay**.

Carry waterproofs and an insulating layer even in settled seasons. In warm weather, beaches and dune sections can be slow and exposed, so carry enough water between settlements and protect against sun

and glare from sand and water.

Remote sections and solo walking

The route passes through towns and villages, but the central coast between the Giant's Causeway, Dunseverick, Portbraddan, White Park Bay and Ballintoy has fewer easy escape points and thinner accommodation choice. Solo walkers should be particularly conservative with tide windows, daylight and weather.

Tell someone the day's intended stage and expected finish point, especially if walking alone. If conditions deteriorate, use the road or inland diversion options rather than pressing on along a tidal or exposed shoreline section.

Livestock and dogs

Livestock is not the main hazard on this route, but normal countryside rules still apply where animals are encountered near dunes, fields or cliff pasture. Give animals space, do not feed them, and keep dogs under close control.

Dogs should also be kept well away from cliff edges, traffic and tidal sections. Beach access and dog restrictions can change seasonally or locally; this should be checked before travelling.

Check before setting off each day

Before leaving accommodation or a transport stop, check:

- **Tide times** for White Park Bay and the Portbraddan area.
- **Weather forecast**, especially wind strength, rain and visibility on clifftops.
- **Live trail diversions**, including any landslide-related closure near Dunseverick and any road re-route beyond Ballintoy.
- **Daylight and timing**, allowing for slow sand, rock and photo stops around the Giant's Causeway coast.
- **Transport back-up**, particularly if relying on Translink buses; current timetables should be checked before travelling.
- **Water, food and layers**, especially for the quieter central sections with fewer services.

Gear Recommendations

The Causeway Coast Way does not need mountain equipment, but it does need proper coastal walking kit. The main gear decisions are driven by Atlantic weather, wet rock, sand, exposed clifftops, road sections and tide-dependent beach passages, rather than altitude or remoteness.

Footwear

Choose footwear that grips well on wet rock, muddy clifftop path and boardwalk, but is still comfortable for beach and road walking. Lightweight walking boots or robust trail shoes both work; the better choice depends on ankle support preference and how heavy the pack is.

Waterproof footwear can be useful in wet grass and rain, but it will not solve every problem on this route. Sand, seaweed, rock pools and soft beach sections can still get feet wet, especially around White Park Bay and rocky shore sections, so quick-drying socks and a spare dry pair are worth carrying.

Avoid smooth-soled leisure trainers. The route is waymarked and modest in height, but the clifftop and rocky coastal sections deserve proper traction.

Waterproofs and warm layers

Carry a reliable waterproof jacket even in settled weather. The trail is exposed to Atlantic wind and rain, and there are long stretches where shelter is limited, particularly on the wilder cliff section beyond the Giant's Causeway towards Dunseverick and Ballintoy.

Waterproof trousers are strongly recommended for multi-day walkers. They are especially useful when wind-driven rain arrives on clifftops, or when wet vegetation and spray make the path colder than the forecast suggests.

A warm mid-layer and a windproof layer are sensible throughout spring, summer and autumn. The high point at Hamilton's Seat is only about 100 m above sea level, but the route can feel much colder in strong coastal wind than its elevation suggests.

Navigation and tide planning

The Way is signed with the orange fern-frond symbol on a blue background, but do not rely on waymarks alone. Carry an offline map or route file on a phone, plus enough battery to use it all day.

Tide information is part of the navigation kit for this walk. White Park Bay and the cliffs below Portbraddan can require an A2 or inland-lane diversion at high tide, so tide times should be checked before travelling and again before committing to those sections.

Live diversions should also be checked before setting out, including any changes around Dunseverick and the re-routed busy-road section beyond Ballintoy via Glenstaghey Road. A small paper map or printed route notes are useful back-up if a phone fails or the official line is temporarily altered.

Water and food carry

The route passes through or near Portstewart, Portrush, Portballintrae, the Giant's Causeway area, Ballintoy and Ballycastle, so it is not a wilderness walk. However, services are thinner on the central cliff and coastal sections, and opening times can affect what is actually available on the day.

Carry enough water for the full day's stage, not just to the next named place. This is particularly important when walking from the Giant's Causeway towards Dunseverick, Portbraddan, White Park Bay and Ballintoy, where progress can be slower on cliff path, beach and rocky ground.

Food planning should be similarly practical. Inn-to-inn walkers can usually keep the pack light, but should still carry lunch and emergency snacks for sections where shops or cafés are not guaranteed to be open. This should be checked before travelling.

Trekking poles

Trekking poles are optional rather than essential. They can help on soft sand, uneven rocky shore, muddy clifftop path and longer days with a heavier pack.

They are less useful on pavement and road sections, including parts of the final approach towards Ballycastle where attention to traffic matters more than rhythm. If using poles, fit rubber tips where appropriate and keep them stowed when they become a nuisance on busy or narrow road walking.

For inn-to-inn hikers

Inn-to-inn walkers should keep the pack compact and weatherproof. A lightweight waterproof liner or dry bags are more useful than a large expedition-style rucksack.

Prioritise:

- waterproof jacket and trousers;
- warm layer and hat or gloves in cooler conditions;
- grippy footwear suitable for wet rock and road;
- offline navigation, tide information and power bank;
- lunch, snacks and enough water for the full stage;
- a small first-aid kit, blister care and any personal medication.

A change of dry socks is especially worthwhile on this route because beach and shore sections can make feet wet even when the weather is good.

For campers

Camping is possible using campsites in the coastal towns and villages, but choices are thinner on the wilder central section between the Giant's Causeway and Ballintoy. Campsite availability, booking requirements and seasonal opening should be checked before travelling.

A camping set-up should be light enough for road and beach walking, but robust enough for coastal wind and rain. A low-profile tent, secure pegs suitable for mixed ground, warm sleeping system and dependable waterproof packing are more important here than specialist mountain gear.

Campers should allow for longer food and water carries between services. Do not assume that every settlement or attraction area will provide supplies at the time of day needed.

For fast and section hikers

Fast walkers and day-stage hikers can travel light, but should not strip the kit down as if this were a simple promenade. The route still includes exposed clifftop path, beach walking, tide constraints and sections of road with limited footpath.

Carry waterproofs, warm layer, water, snacks, phone with offline route, tide times and a small power bank. If using buses to link stages, keep a margin for delays caused by slow beach walking, diversions or high-tide route changes, and verify current Translink timetables before relying on them.

Sun, wind and seasonal extras

In spring, summer and autumn, pack sun protection as well as waterproofs. Coastal wind can disguise sun exposure on open beaches, dunes and clifftops.

Useful small items include sunglasses, sun cream, a cap or warm hat depending on the forecast, and a buff or neck gaiter for wind. In cooler shoulder-season conditions, lightweight gloves are a sensible addition.

Insect protection is not a major defining issue on this route, but a small repellent can be useful in still, warm weather around dunes, campsites and sheltered bays.

Budget and Costs

The Causeway Coast Way is a short UK coastal trail, so the main cost is accommodation rather than food, transport or permits. All prices are in pounds sterling (£), and current prices should be checked before booking, especially in summer and around the Giant's Causeway, Portrush, Ballintoy and Ballycastle.

There is no trail permit. The Giant's Causeway stones are free to walk on, but the visitor centre is ticketed. Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge is an optional paid National Trust detour about 1 km off the Way, not part of the trail itself.

Main cost factors

Cost	What to expect
Accommodation	The biggest variable. Portstewart, Portrush, Bushmills, Ballintoy and Ballycastle have a mix of hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs, hostels and campsites, but choice is thinner on the wilder central section between the Giant's Causeway and Ballintoy. Book early in peak season.
Food	Portstewart, Portrush, Bushmills, Ballintoy and Ballycastle are the practical places to buy meals or supplies. Carry enough food and water for the quieter cliff and beach sections, especially beyond the Giant's Causeway and around White Park Bay.
Public transport	Rail reaches Portrush via Coleraine, and buses link Coleraine, Portrush, Bushmills, the Giant's Causeway and Ballycastle. Translink timetables and fares should be checked before travelling.
Taxis	Useful as a fallback for missed buses, poor weather, tide issues or ending a stage early. Costs depend heavily on distance and availability, so local taxi prices should be checked before relying on them.
Campsites	Camping can reduce costs where campsites are available, but do not assume camping is possible on the wilder cliff sections. Book or check current campsite availability before travelling.
Attractions	The Giant's Causeway visitor centre and Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge are paid National Trust attractions. The Causeway stones themselves are free to access on foot. Check current opening times and prices before planning a visit around them.
Luggage transfer / packages	Not essential for this route because buses make independent logistics straightforward, but luggage transfer or self-guided packages may suit walkers wanting a lighter pack. Availability and prices should be checked before booking.

Budget approach

A low-cost trip means using campsites or hostel-style accommodation where available, carrying supermarket food, avoiding paid attractions unless they are a priority, and using Translink buses and trains rather than taxis.

This works best with a flexible 3- or 4-day itinerary, because it gives more freedom to match overnight stops to cheaper accommodation. The main risk is availability: the Causeway Coast is popular, and budget beds or pitches can disappear quickly in busy periods.

Mid-range approach

Most walkers will fall into a mid-range budget: B&Bs or guesthouses, café or pub meals in the main settlements, and public transport at either end of the walk. This is the most practical style for a 2- to 4-day end-to-end hike.

Budget extra for a taxi if the bus timetable does not match the end of a stage, or if tide timing at White Park Bay or Portbraddan forces a change of plan. A paid visit to Carrick-a-Rede or the Giant's Causeway visitor centre should also be treated as an optional extra rather than a walking cost.

Comfortable approach

A higher-budget trip means staying in hotels or better guesthouses, eating out each evening, using taxis for awkward stage transfers, and adding paid attractions without needing to build the itinerary around bus times.

This can be useful on the central part of the route, where accommodation choice is thinner between the Giant's Causeway and Ballintoy. It is also the easiest option for walkers who want luggage moved, shorter days or a less weather-dependent schedule.

Cost-saving tips

- Book accommodation early for summer weekends and holiday periods.
- Use Portrush or Portstewart as a base for some sections if accommodation on the route is limited, then travel out by bus.
- Check Translink bus times before fixing stage lengths, especially for Ballycastle and the smaller intermediate stops.
- Carry lunch and snacks for the quieter sections rather than relying on finding food at every bay or viewpoint.
- Treat Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge and the Giant's Causeway visitor centre as optional extras; neither is required to complete the walk.
- Build in enough time for tide-dependent sections so that avoiding a taxi does not become a false economy.

Luggage Transfer, Guided Tours and Support Services

Luggage transfer

Dedicated baggage support is useful on the Causeway Coast Way, but it is not essential for most walkers. The route is short, low-level and broken by settlements with accommodation at Portstewart, Portrush, Portballintrae, Bushmills, Ballintoy and Ballycastle, so many hikers simply carry an overnight pack.

If walking with heavier luggage, arrange bag movement before committing to accommodation. Some walkers organise this through their B&B, guesthouse or hotel, or use a local taxi/private-transfer operator to move bags between overnight stops. Availability, baggage limits, pick-up times and prices vary, so confirm current details before booking.

Baggage logistics need a little more care on the central coast between the Giant's Causeway, Dunseverick, Portbraddan, White Park Bay and Ballintoy, where accommodation and services are thinner than in Portrush, Portstewart and Ballycastle. If luggage transfer is important, book overnights and transfers together rather than assuming same-day arrangements will be possible.

Self-guided walking packages

Self-guided walking-holiday packages can suit walkers who want the route planned for them but do not need a guide on the path. These packages typically include accommodation booking, route notes or mapping, luggage transfer and sometimes local transfers at the start or finish.

They are most useful for first-time long-distance walkers, groups travelling without a car, or anyone wanting to avoid stitching together buses, taxis and accommodation around tide-dependent sections. They are less necessary for experienced independent hikers, as the route is well waymarked and public transport links along the coast are relatively useful.

Package inclusions, operating dates and prices change by company and season. This should be checked before travelling.

Guided walking

A fully guided trip is not usually required for navigation on the Causeway Coast Way. The trail is waymarked with the orange fern-frond symbol on a blue background, and there are no mountain ascents or remote upland crossings.

A guide may still be worthwhile for walkers who want local interpretation around the Giant's Causeway, Dunluce Castle, the North Antrim cliffs and coastal geology, or for groups who prefer someone else to manage timing, weather calls and transfers. Guided options are also useful where the aim is a short-break coastal experience rather than an independent end-to-end hike.

The main practical value of any guided or supported itinerary is timing: White Park Bay and the cliffs below Portbraddan require tide planning, and current diversions should be checked before setting out. A guide or operator should be expected to account for those constraints in the day plan.

Taxis, buses and ad-hoc transfers

Local taxi or private transfers are most useful at the beginning and end of the walk, for luggage movement, or for adjusting a day around tide times, bad weather or fatigue. They can also help if a walker chooses not to complete the more awkward road-walking sections near the eastern end of the route.

Public transport is a strong support option on this trail. Rail reaches Portrush via the Coleraine branch, and Ballycastle and the intermediate coastal settlements are served by Translink Ulsterbus services, including the 402 Causeway Rambler and Goldliner coastal services linking Coleraine, Portrush, Bushmills, the Giant's Causeway and Ballycastle.

Do not assume late or frequent services, especially outside the main visitor season or at weekends. Verify current Translink timetables before relying on buses for a stage start, stage finish or connection back to accommodation.

When to book support ahead

Book ahead if any of the following apply:

- walking in peak holiday periods, when accommodation in Portrush, Portstewart, Bushmills, Ballintoy and Ballycastle can be under pressure;
- using luggage transfer between overnight stops;
- relying on a taxi from smaller places such as Dunseverick, Portbraddan, White Park Bay or Ballintoy Harbour;
- planning a tide-dependent day across White Park Bay or below Portbraddan;
- adding ticketed detours such as the Giant's Causeway visitor centre or Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge.

For a lightly loaded 2–4 day walk, the simplest support plan is often accommodation booked in advance, tide times checked, and Translink bus options noted as a back-up. More formal luggage or self-guided support is best treated as a comfort upgrade rather than a requirement for completing the route.

Shorter Hikes and Best Sections

The Causeway Coast Way is easy to break into sections, especially between Portstewart, Portrush, the Giant's Causeway, Ballintoy and Ballycastle. Public transport is useful, but it should not be treated as turn-up-and-go: check current Translink train and Ulsterbus 402 Causeway Rambler / Goldliner timetables before fixing a one-way walk.

Best for	Start and end	Approx distance	Why choose it	Transport notes
Beginners / first taste	Portstewart to Portrush	10 km	The most straightforward introduction to the route, with beach, dunes, resort facilities and simple bail-out options compared with the wilder central coast.	Reach Portstewart by local bus from Coleraine or Portrush. Portrush has the coastal railhead via Coleraine.
Best public-transport day	Portrush to Giant's Causeway	13.6 km	A strong day section with White Rocks, the short signed detour to Dunluce Castle, Portballintrae, Runkerry and the approach to the Giant's Causeway.	Start at Portrush station. Buses link the Giant's Causeway with Portrush, Bushmills and Coleraine; check the return timetable before setting off.
Best short scenic day	Giant's Causeway to Dunseverick Castle	7.3 km	The classic clifftop stretch beyond the Causeway, including the North Antrim Cliff Path and Hamilton's Seat at Benbane Head, the high point of the route.	The Giant's Causeway is well served by coastal buses. Dunseverick is less convenient than the main settlements, so check the nearest usable bus stop and times before committing.
Best big scenery day	Giant's Causeway to Ballintoy Harbour	15.1 km	The most concentrated coastal scenery on the Way: basalt cliffs, Dunseverick Castle, Portbraddan, White Park Bay and the finish at Ballintoy Harbour.	Use coastal buses at the Giant's Causeway and Ballintoy where possible. This section needs tide planning for White Park Bay and the Portbraddan cliffs; the inland/A2 diversion may be needed at high tide.
Best weekend section	Portrush to Ballintoy Harbour	28.7 km	A compact two-day version of the route that includes Dunluce Castle, Portballintrae, the Giant's Causeway, Benbane Head, Dunseverick, White Park Bay and Ballintoy Harbour.	Portrush is the simplest rail start. Ballintoy is on the coastal bus corridor, but services should be checked in advance, especially outside peak season.

Best for	Start and end	Approx distance	Why choose it	Transport notes
Best 3–5 day partial route	Portstewart to Ballintoy Harbour	38.7 km	A slower, fuller experience of the western and central coast while avoiding the final Ballintoy–Ballycastle road-walking section with fast traffic and limited footpath. Good for walkers who want the best of the route without completing the whole point-to-point.	Start via Coleraine or Portrush plus local bus to Portstewart. Return from Ballintoy by coastal bus; check current services and any live diversions before travelling.
Best for villages and accommodation	Portstewart to Portballintrae	19.3 km	The most settlement-rich part of the Way, with Portstewart, Portrush and Portballintrae, plus nearby service bases such as Bushmills for accommodation planning. Useful for walkers who want short stages and regular facilities.	Strongest logistics are around Portrush and the Coleraine rail link. Local and coastal buses make this one of the easier sections to organise, subject to current timetables.
Best camping-based section	Portrush to Ballycastle	41.3 km	The best option if building a multi-day plan around established coastal towns and villages with campsites in the wider accommodation mix, rather than relying on the wilder central cliff section.	Start at Portrush by train. Finish at Ballycastle, which has no railway station, so onward travel is by bus. Campsites, opening dates and booking rules should be checked before travelling.

Section-planning cautions

White Park Bay is one of the main tide-planning points on the route and is not passable on the beach at high tide. The cliffs below Portbraddan also require care with tide timing, with an inland/A2 or lane diversion needed when the shore route is unavailable.

Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge is not on the Causeway Coast Way itself. It lies about 1 km off-route and is a paid National Trust detour, so allow extra time and check opening times and prices in £ if adding it to a Ballintoy or Ballycastle section.

The final Ballintoy Harbour to Ballycastle section is 12.6 km and completes the official route, but it includes road walking with fast traffic and limited footpath. It suits end-to-end walkers, but it is not the best choice for a relaxed first day walk or a family section.

Highlights and Points of Interest

The Causeway Coast Way is rich in recognised landmarks, but the best use of extra time is not evenly spread along the route. The biggest stops are around Dunluce Castle, the Giant's Causeway, the North Antrim Cliff Path, White Park Bay, Ballintoy Harbour and the optional Carrick-a-Rede detour.

Key highlights from west to east

Place	On route?	Why it matters	Planning note
Portstewart Strand	Yes	Long National Trust beach of golden sand and dunes near the western end of the walk.	A natural place to slow down early in the route, especially if starting from Portstewart rather than rushing straight to Portrush.
Dunluce Castle	Short signed detour	Ruined medieval MacDonnell stronghold on a basalt crag above the sea. The Spanish Armada galleass <i>Girona</i> was wrecked nearby on the Causeway coast in 1588.	Worth allowing time for the detour rather than treating it as a pass-by view. Check opening arrangements before travelling if planning to go inside.
Portballintrae and Runkerry	Yes	Coastal settlement and approach to the Giant's Causeway area, with boardwalk sections near Runkerry and the Causeway.	A useful slower section before the busiest landmark on the walk.
Giant's Causeway	Yes	UNESCO World Heritage Site of around 40,000 interlocking basalt columns, formed by volcanic activity roughly 60 million years ago and linked with the legend of Finn McCool.	The stones are free to walk on; the visitor centre is ticketed. Allow extra time here, especially if walking a short stage into or out of the Causeway.
Hamilton's Seat, Benbane Head	Yes	Around 100 m above sea level and the high point of the route, with clifftop views on the wilder North Antrim Cliff Path beyond the Causeway.	Best appreciated in settled weather; the clifftop path is exposed to Atlantic wind and rain.
Dunseverick Castle	Yes	Scant remains of an ancient coastal fort and later castle, associated with St Patrick.	A compact but historically important stop between the Causeway cliffs and the White Park Bay section.
White Park Bay	Yes	Sweeping sandy bay backed by limestone cliffs and dunes. One of the most attractive beach sections on the route.	This is a key tide-planning point: the beach route is not passable at high tide. Check tide times before committing to the shore line.
Ballintoy Harbour	Yes	Small working harbour tucked beneath the cliffs and one of the most photographed coastal points on the route.	Good place to pause before the final stretch towards Ballycastle. The following section includes road walking, so do not leave too late in poor visibility.

Place	On route?	Why it matters	Planning note
Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge	About 1 km off route	Famous National Trust suspension bridge to the tiny island of Carrick-a-Rede, originally rigged by salmon fishermen.	Paid optional detour, not part of the Way itself. Check National Trust opening times and prices in £ before building it into the day.

Best viewpoints

Hamilton's Seat at Benbane Head is the principal high viewpoint on the walk. It is not a mountain summit, but at about 100 m above the sea it gives a strong sense of the scale of the North Antrim cliffs and is the high point of the route.

Dunluce Castle is also one of the best visual stops, with the ruined stronghold set on a basalt crag above the sea. It is a short signed detour rather than a main-line waymark, so allow time for it when walking between Portrush, White Rocks and Portballintrae.

The Giant's Causeway area deserves unhurried time rather than a quick photograph. The basalt columns are the defining natural feature of the route, and the surrounding coastal approach adds as much to the walking experience as the stones themselves.

Historic and cultural interest

The Giant's Causeway combines geology and folklore: the columns were formed by volcanic activity roughly 60 million years ago, while the best-known legend links them to the giant Finn McCool. The site is free to walk on, though the visitor centre is ticketed.

Dunluce Castle is the strongest medieval landmark on the route, associated with the MacDonnells and the wider history of the Causeway coast. Its position above the sea is part of the appeal, so even walkers not visiting inside should treat the detour as worthwhile.

Dunseverick Castle is much more fragmentary, but it marks an older coastal stronghold and an early site associated with St Patrick. It is a quieter historical stop than Dunluce or the Causeway.

Beaches, dunes and coastal features

Portstewart Strand gives the route its first major beach-and-dune landscape. It is a good place to take time at the start, particularly for walkers splitting the route into shorter days.

White Park Bay is the standout sandy bay later in the walk, backed by limestone cliffs and dunes. It is also one of the practical cruxes of the route: at high tide the beach line is not passable, and walkers need to use the appropriate inland or road alternative.

Ballintoy Harbour is a small, enclosed harbour below the cliffs, and its setting makes it more than just a waypoint. It is a sensible place for a longer pause before continuing towards Ballycastle, especially if the final road-walking section is still ahead.

Where to spend extra time

If time is limited, prioritise the Giant's Causeway, the North Antrim Cliff Path around Benbane Head, and White Park Bay. These give the clearest mix of geology, exposure, sea views and coastal walking character.

For history, give extra time to Dunluce Castle and Dunseverick Castle. Dunluce is the more substantial and dramatic stop; Dunseverick is smaller but important in the historical sequence of the coast.

For an optional paid add-on, Carrick-a-Rede is the main detour to consider. It adds time and sits about 1 km off the Way, so it fits best into a relaxed itinerary rather than a tight end-to-end schedule.

Common Mistakes and Planning Tips

The Causeway Coast Way is straightforward to follow in good conditions, but many problems come from treating it as a simple seaside stroll. The main planning risks are tides, transport, accommodation gaps, exposed weather and a few awkward road sections.

Common mistake	Better plan
Ignoring the tides at White Park Bay and Portbraddan. These sections can be slow or impassable at high tide.	Check tide times before fixing your daily schedule. At high tide, use the A2 / inland-lane diversion where required rather than trying to force the beach or cliff-base route.
Assuming the official 2-day schedule suits everyone. The route is only 51 km, but beach walking, rocky shore, sightseeing and tide timing can make days slower than expected.	Consider 3–4 days if you want a less rushed walk, time at the Giant's Causeway, or an optional Carrick-a-Rede detour. A shorter itinerary is realistic only with good fitness, light kit and well-timed tides.
Underestimating the central section between the Giant's Causeway and Ballintoy. This is the wilder part of the route, with exposed clifftop walking and thinner accommodation choice.	Book accommodation early, especially around the Giant's Causeway, Ballintoy and Ballycastle. If staying off-route or using a base such as Portrush or Portstewart, check bus times before committing.
Finishing in Ballycastle without a transport plan. There is no railway station at Ballycastle.	Plan the exit by Translink Ulsterbus, including the 402 Causeway Rambler and coastal Goldliner services where useful. Current timetables should be checked before travelling.
Relying only on the waymarks. The route is waymarked with the orange fern-frond symbol, but diversions and re-routes can change the line on the ground.	Carry an up-to-date map or offline route file and check live route information before starting, particularly for the Dunseverick area and the re-routed busy-road section beyond Ballintoy via Glenstaughey Road.
Treating all road walking as easy. Some sections involve minor roads or pavement, and the final Ballintoy-to-Ballycastle stretch includes road walking with fast traffic and limited footpath.	Allow enough daylight and energy for the road sections, wear visible clothing in poor light, and avoid planning the final stage so tightly that it becomes a tired road march.
Assuming every coastal hamlet has full resupply. The route passes towns, villages, bays and harbours, but services are not evenly spread along the coast.	Carry enough food and water for each day's stage, especially before the more exposed central and eastern sections. Shop, café and pub opening hours should be checked before travelling.
Not allowing for Atlantic weather. There are no mountain ascents, but the clifftops, beaches and headlands are exposed to wind and rain.	Pack waterproofs, warm layers and secure headwear even in summer. Strong wind can make the cliff sections more serious than the modest height suggests.
Expecting beach kilometres to be quick. Portstewart Strand and White Park Bay are beautiful but sand and tide lines slow progress.	Build in extra time for beach sections and avoid setting a schedule based only on average road-walking pace.

Common mistake	Better plan
Confusing on-route walking with paid or optional attractions. Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge is about 1 km off the Way and is a paid National Trust detour; Dunluce Castle is a short signed detour; the Giant's Causeway stones are free to walk on, while the visitor centre is ticketed.	Decide in advance which detours matter and add time for them. Check National Trust opening times and current prices in pounds sterling before booking a schedule around them.
Using euros for budgeting. The trail is in Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK.	Budget in pounds sterling (£), including accommodation, buses, paid attractions and food.

Final Advice

The Causeway Coast Way is best for walkers who want a short but genuinely coastal long-distance route: waymarked, manageable in a long weekend, and rich in scenery without the commitment of a mountain trail. It suits first-time multi-day hikers if daily distances are kept sensible, but the full route still needs proper planning because beaches, clifftops, road sections and Atlantic weather can all slow progress.

The key thing to get right is timing. Check tide times for White Park Bay and the Portbraddan cliffs before setting out, and be ready to use the A2 or inland-lane diversion where the shore route is not passable. Also check current trail diversions before travelling, particularly around Dunseverick and the road-walking section beyond Ballintoy via Glenstaughey Road.

The most rewarding walking is the central and eastern coast around the Giant's Causeway, Benbane Head, Dunseverick, White Park Bay and Ballintoy Harbour. This is where the route feels wildest, with exposed clifftop paths, basalt scenery and long views along the North Antrim coast.

For fit walkers with settled weather and good tide windows, the route works as a compact 2-day thru-hike. Most walkers will get more from it over 3–4 days, allowing time for the Giant's Causeway, Dunluce Castle, Ballintoy Harbour and optional detours without rushing the slower beach and rocky sections.

It is also a strong section-hiking route. Portrush, Bushmills, the Giant's Causeway, Ballintoy and Ballycastle are linked by coastal bus services, including Translink Ulsterbus 402 Causeway Rambler and Goldliner services, which makes it practical to walk selected stages from a fixed base. Current Translink timetables should be checked before relying on any connection, especially at the start or end of a walking day.

Do not underestimate the final miles into Ballycastle. The route includes road walking with fast traffic and limited footpath, so visibility, daylight and concentration matter. Start early enough, carry waterproofs even in summer, and treat this as a serious coastal walk rather than a simple sightseeing path.