



Lough Derg Way

THE COMPLETE GUIDE



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Overview

Lough Derg Way: Limerick to Lough Derg on the Shannon

The Lough Derg Way is a 68 km point-to-point National Waymarked Trail in [Ireland](#), usually walked in 3 days from Limerick City to Dromineer on Lough Derg. It is moderate rather than mountainous: the southern half follows flat riverbank and canal towpaths, while the northern half uses quiet roads and forest track over the shoulder of the Arra Mountains. It suits hikers wanting a short Shannon-side thru-hike with towns, lake villages and flexible accommodation.

Route Overview

The route starts at Limerick City Tourist Office / Arthur's Quay, behind the Hunt Museum, then heads through the University of Limerick and over the Living Bridge. It continues by Clonlara and O'Briensbridge to Killaloe and Ballina, the twin towns on the Shannon, before turning north-east towards the Arra Mountains, the Graves of the Leinstermen, Garrykennedy and the finish at Dromineer in County Tipperary. Five trailheads — Limerick City, Clonlara, Killaloe/Ballina, Garrykennedy and Dromineer — make day-walk logistics easier. For longer Irish routes, compare the [Dingle Way](#), [Beara Way](#) or [Blackwater Way](#).

History on the Lough Derg Way

The Lough Derg Way is one of Ireland's National Waymarked Trails and was reconfigured and relaunched in 2011 to move many sections off-road. It passes through a landscape strongly linked to Irish history: Killaloe was the seat of Brian Boru, the 11th-century High King of Ireland, while the Graves of the Leinstermen in the Arra Mountains is a Bronze Age burial site associated in legend with Brian Boru's era.

Notable highlights

- **Killaloe and Ballina:** Twin heritage towns on opposite sides of the Shannon, linked by a 13-arch bridge. Killaloe was Brian Boru's power base and has medieval St Flannan's Cathedral, with an early-Christian oratory and an Ogham/runic stone.
- **Lough Derg:** The third-largest lake in Ireland and the largest on the River Shannon. The Way reaches its southern and western shores before finishing at the harbour village of Dromineer.
- **Arra Mountains and the Graves of the Leinstermen:** The northern road section climbs into the Arra Mountains past a Bronze Age cairn and standing stone. This is the most elevated part of the route and gives wide views over Lough Derg.
- **Garrykennedy:** A small lakeside harbour village on Lough Derg with the ruins of a 15th-century O'Brien tower house. It is also a useful trail stop before the final stretch to Dromineer.
- **University of Limerick Living Bridge:** Early in the walk, the route crosses the Shannon on this 350 m pedestrian and cycle bridge through the UL campus, a memorable urban-to-riverside transition.

Challenges to expect

Expect easy-going towpaths in the south but more sustained road walking in the north. Sport Ireland notes about 38 km, around 55% of the route, follows local roads, some with fast-moving traffic. The

climb over the Arra Mountains adds the main ascent, and exposed road sections can feel hard in wet or windy weather. Dogs are not permitted on the trail. If you want a steeper day hike nearby, see the [Galtymore Ascent](#).

Key Data

Country	Ireland
Distance	68 km
Duration	3 days
Difficulty	Moderate
Trail type	Point to point
Elevation gain/loss	527 m
Highest point	120 m
Terrain & landscape	Riverbank, Canal, Forest, Rural, Mountain
Trail surface	Towpath, Forest Track, Old Roadway, Minor Road
Accommodation	B&Bs, Guesthouses, Pubs, Hotels
Average daytime temp.	15°C
Chance of rainfall	High
Estimated cost	\$\$
Optimal season	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, Year Round
Accessibility	Family Friendly, Pet Friendly
Facilities	Restrooms, Water Sources, Campsites, Picnic Areas
Permits & fees	No permits or fees

Introduction

The Lough Derg Way is a compact Shannon-side thru-hike from Limerick City to Dromineer, linking river paths, canal towpath, lake villages and a crossing of the Arra Mountains. At around 68 km, it suits walkers who want a three-day route with real variety but without technical mountain ground.

The opening half is the easy-going side of the walk: Arthur's Quay, the University of Limerick, Clonlara, O'Briensbridge and the old Limerick Navigation Canal. It is a good route for settling into a steady rhythm, with the Shannon close by and Killaloe/Ballina making a natural overnight hub.

North of Killaloe the character changes. Minor roads, lanes, old roadway and forest track climb towards Tountinna and the Graves of the Leinstermen, with broad views over Lough Derg before the route drops towards Garrykennedy and the lake shore.

What the walk asks for is not scrambling ability, but stamina, road awareness and sensible wet-weather kit. Around 55% of the Way is on local roads, some sections can carry fast traffic, and lakeside stretches such as The Callows may be wet or overgrown.

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

Stage-by-Stage Guide

Day distances on the Lough Derg Way should be treated as approximate. The waymarked line is usually walked over three days, but published and GPS distances vary slightly, so plan by available accommodation and transport rather than by kilometre figures alone.

Stage 1: Limerick City to Killaloe / Ballina

Approximate distance: 28 km

The first stage is the longest day on the standard itinerary, but it is also the easiest underfoot. From the official start beside the Hunt Museum and Arthur's Quay, yellow-arrow National Waymarked Trail markers lead out from Limerick City along the River Shannon before the route reaches the University of Limerick area and crosses the river on the Living Bridge.

Beyond the city edge the walking becomes flatter, quieter and more rural. The stage follows riverside paths and the towpath of the old Limerick Navigation / Errina Canal, with easy progress beside the Shannon and past the headrace of the Ardnacrusha hydro-electric station.

Clonlara and O'Briensbridge are the main intermediate places on this section. O'Briensbridge is the natural mid-stage stop, with its old multi-arch bridge over the Shannon and a clear change from city-edge walking to slower canal and river country.

The day finishes in the twin towns of Killaloe and Ballina, facing each other across the Shannon and linked by their 13-arch bridge. Killaloe is one of the key heritage stops on the route, with links to Brian Boru and St Flannan's Cathedral close to the trail.

Food and water: Limerick City has full services before starting. Do not assume frequent supplies once beyond the city; carry enough food and water for the canal and river section, with O'Briensbridge the main logical stop before Killaloe/Ballina.

Accommodation: Killaloe/Ballina is the best-served overnight stop on the route, with a better choice of accommodation than the smaller lake villages. Summer weekends can still be busy, so accommodation should be booked ahead.

Transport and access: Limerick City is the easiest access point on the whole trail, with Limerick Colbert station and Bus Éireann services serving the city. Killaloe/Ballina also has bus links to Limerick, making this stage the most practical section to walk independently as a day walk or first leg.

Navigation and cautions: Navigation is generally straightforward on this stage, with yellow arrows on a black background marking the National Waymarked Trail. The main planning issue is the length of the day: the flat towpath can make progress steady, but 28 km is still a long first stage, especially in wet weather or with a full pack.

Stage 2: Killaloe / Ballina to Garrykenny

Approximate distance: 22 km

This is the hill stage of the Lough Derg Way and the most demanding day of the standard three-day schedule. After leaving Killaloe/Ballina, the character of the route changes from flat river walking to

minor roads, lanes, old roadway and forest track as it climbs into the Arra Mountains.

The trail crosses the shoulder of Tountinna rather than the summit itself, but it still reaches the high point of the route at around 440 m. The climb is not technical, but it is sustained compared with the rest of the Way and is much more exposed in poor weather.

The Graves of the Leinstermen are the main landmark on the high section. In clear conditions this part of the route gives the broadest views of the walk, looking over Lough Derg and the Shannon valley before the trail begins to drop back towards the lakeside country around Portroe, Castletown and Garrykennedy.

Garrykennedy is a small harbour village on Lough Derg and one of the most attractive overnight stops on the route. The ruins of a 15th-century O'Brien tower house stand near the harbour, making it a strong finish to the mountain day.

Food and water: Start this stage with a full day's food and water from Killaloe/Ballina. Services are thinner once the route leaves the twin towns, and any options around the road sections should not be relied on without checking in advance.

Accommodation: Garrykennedy has accommodation in the lake-village style of the route, including pubs with rooms and guest accommodation. Choice is limited compared with Killaloe/Ballina, so book ahead, particularly in summer.

Transport and access: Killaloe/Ballina is the more useful transport point at the start of the stage. Road access exists around the settlements and minor-road sections, but the Arra Mountains crossing is not a stage to start casually without a clear plan for onward transport or pickup.

Navigation and cautions: The waymarking should be followed carefully where the route leaves town streets and joins minor roads, lanes and tracks. Carry a map or GPS line as a backup, especially in mist or heavy rain on the Arra section.

Road walking is a real feature of this day. Around 55% of the whole Lough Derg Way is on local roads, and some stretches have fast-moving traffic, so keep visible, walk defensively and take particular care on bends and crests. The exposed high section also deserves proper waterproofs and an extra layer even when the weather is mild at lake level.

Stage 3: Garrykennedy to Dromineer

Approximate distance: 18 km

The final stage is shorter than the first two days and stays close to the Lough Derg side of the route. It begins at Garrykennedy harbour, then continues through a mix of lakeside walking, local roads and softer low-level sections towards Dromineer.

This day is less strenuous than the Arra Mountains crossing, but it should not be treated as a simple promenade. Some lakeside stretches, including sections around The Callows near Dromineer, can be wet, rough or overgrown, particularly outside the main walking season.

The main appeal of the stage is the gradual finish along Ireland's largest Shannon lake. Dromineer makes a fitting end point, with the trail finishing at the harbour village beside the ruined castle and lake pier.

Food and water: Leave Garrykennedy with enough food and water for the full stage. Dromineer has end-of-walk services, but facilities between the two villages should not be assumed unless checked before setting off.

Accommodation: Dromineer has lake-village accommodation, but options are limited and should be booked ahead. If accommodation is unavailable at the finish, onward travel needs planning before starting the stage.

Transport and access: Dromineer has no railway station. The usual public-transport exit is by TFI Local Link bus to Nenagh, taking about 20 minutes, with onward rail and bus connections from Nenagh, including the Limerick–Ballybrophy rail line. Current Local Link and rail times should be checked before travelling.

Navigation and cautions: Keep an eye on waymarks where lakeside vegetation is high or the path underfoot becomes less distinct. A map or GPS track is useful on this final day, not because the terrain is difficult, but because overgrown sections can make the walked line less obvious.

Road sections remain part of the day, so the same care with traffic applies. After wet weather, expect mud and damp grass around low-lying lakeside ground; waterproof footwear is more useful here than lightweight town shoes.

Recommended Itinerary

The Lough Derg Way is most neatly walked in three days, using Killaloe/Ballina and Garrykennedy as the two overnight stops. This keeps the first day long but straightforward on river and canal-side terrain, then gives a full day for the Arra Mountains crossing before a shorter final stage to Dromineer.

Distances on this route are quoted slightly differently by different mapping sources, so treat the figures below as planning distances rather than exact GPS totals. Check official mapping before booking if a precise daily distance matters.

Standard 3-day itinerary

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Limerick City / Arthur's Quay	Killaloe / Ballina	28 km	The longest day, but mostly on the easier southern section beside the River Shannon, through the University of Limerick area, Clonlara and O'Briensbridge. It gets you to the main accommodation hub before the hillier northern half.	Limerick City has the widest choice before starting. Killaloe/Ballina has good accommodation and services compared with the smaller lake villages, but summer weekends should still be booked ahead.
2	Killaloe / Ballina	Garrykennedy	22 km	This is the key hill day, leaving the Shannon towns and climbing through the Arra Mountains over the shoulder of Tountinna, near the Graves of the Leinstermen, before descending towards Lough Derg. The distance is moderate, but the climb, road walking and exposure make it a proper walking day.	Garrykennedy is a small harbour village, so accommodation choice is thinner than in Killaloe/Ballina. Book ahead, especially in summer.
3	Garrykennedy	Dromineer	18 km	A shorter final stage along the Lough Derg side of the route. This gives useful time for any slow going on wetter or more overgrown lakeside sections before finishing at Dromineer harbour.	Dromineer is the finish, not a transport hub. Plan onward travel by TFI Local Link bus to Nenagh, then onward rail or bus connections; current times should be checked before travelling.

Slower 4-day option

This suits walkers who prefer shorter days, want more time in the Shannon-side towns, or are concerned about the 28 km first day. The obvious split is to overnight around O'Briensbridge, then continue to Killaloe/Ballina the next day.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Limerick City / Arthur's Quay	O'Briensbridge	Check official mapping before booking	Breaks up the long southern stage and keeps the first day on the flatter river, campus and canal-side sections.	O'Briensbridge is a small village, so accommodation and meal options should be arranged in advance.
2	O'Briensbridge	Killaloe / Ballina	Check official mapping before booking	Leaves a shorter day into the twin towns, giving time to resupply or rest before the Arra Mountains section.	Killaloe/Ballina is the best service stop on the route after Limerick City.
3	Killaloe / Ballina	Garrykennedy	22 km	Keeps the hill crossing as a single focused day without adding extra distance either side.	Book Garrykennedy accommodation ahead; options are limited compared with larger towns.
4	Garrykennedy	Dromineer	18 km	A manageable final day to Dromineer, with time in hand if the lakeside path is wet or slow.	Check the TFI Local Link bus from Dromineer to Nenagh before committing to a same-day onward connection.

Faster 2-day option

A two-day crossing is only sensible for strong walkers who are comfortable with long road-walking days and can carry a light pack. The practical overnight is Killaloe/Ballina, because it has the best mid-route services, but this creates a very long second day over the Arra Mountains and on to Dromineer.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Limerick City / Arthur's Quay	Killaloe / Ballina	28 km	A long but logical first day on the easier southern half, ending at the strongest accommodation and food stop on the trail.	Book in Killaloe/Ballina before setting out, particularly at busy periods.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
2	Killaloe / Ballina	Dromineer	40 km	Combines the Arra Mountains crossing with the Garrykennedy–Dromineer lakeside stage. This is a demanding day because the distance, road sections and hill crossing all come together.	Start early and check onward transport from Dromineer in advance. This should not be planned around a tight same-day connection unless current bus times allow it.

Planning the Route

How many days to allow

Most walkers should plan the Lough Derg Way as a 3-day walk. That fits the natural overnight stops at Killaloe/Ballina and Garrykennedy, keeps the daily distances manageable, and leaves enough time for the road walking and the Arra Mountains crossing without turning the route into a forced march.

A faster 2-day crossing is possible only for fit walkers comfortable with long days on tarmac and limited flexibility if accommodation or transport does not line up. It is not the best way to enjoy this route, especially because the northern half includes the main climb and some exposed, higher ground.

A slower 4-day itinerary can work well if accommodation is available in the right places, particularly by splitting the long first day with a stop around O'Briensbridge. This should be booked carefully, as accommodation is much thinner outside Limerick City, Killaloe/Ballina, Garrykennedy and Dromineer.

Natural stages

The standard 3-day plan is shaped more by accommodation and settlement spacing than by terrain alone.

Stage	Usual overnight	Planning notes
Limerick City to Killaloe/Ballina	Killaloe or Ballina	A long but straightforward opening stage on the Shannon-side and canal sections, with easier underfoot conditions than the northern half.
Killaloe/Ballina to Garrykennedy	Garrykennedy	The key hill day, crossing the Arra Mountains over the shoulder of Tountinna and passing the Graves of the Leinstermen. Allow for slower progress in poor visibility, wind or rain.
Garrykennedy to Dromineer	Dromineer or onward travel	A shorter final stage along the Lough Derg side, but do not assume it will be fast if lakeside sections are wet, overgrown or awkward underfoot.

Killaloe/Ballina is the strongest mid-route base, with the best choice of accommodation and services on the trail after Limerick City. Garrykennedy is a natural final overnight stop before Dromineer, but capacity is more limited, so summer bookings should be made well ahead.

Direction and pacing

The route is normally planned from Limerick City to Dromineer, following the official start from Arthur's Quay beside the Hunt Museum. This direction also makes practical sense: Limerick is the easier transport gateway, while Dromineer is a quieter finish that needs onward planning via Nenagh.

Do not underestimate the effect of road mileage. Around 38 km of the Way is on local roads, including stretches with fast-moving traffic, so comfortable footwear, visibility in poor light and realistic daily pacing matter more here than technical hillwalking ability.

The first half is generally the easiest to schedule as a steady walking day. The second half needs more margin for weather, navigation checks, traffic awareness and the climb over the Arra Mountains.

Shortening, extending and section hiking

Section hiking is practical, but it is easiest where public transport and accommodation line up. Limerick City, Killaloe/Ballina and Dromineer are the most useful access points; Dromineer requires a TFI Local Link connection to Nenagh for onward rail or bus travel.

A simple short version is to walk the Shannon and canal section from Limerick City towards Killaloe/Ballina. This keeps to the flatter southern part of the route and avoids the Arra Mountains crossing.

Walkers with more time can slow the journey by adding an extra overnight around O'Briensbridge or by staying longer in Killaloe/Ballina or Garrykennedy. Any extra stop should be planned around actual accommodation availability rather than assumed village services.

Extending the official route beyond Dromineer is not part of the Lough Derg Way itinerary. Any onward walking around Lough Derg should be treated as a separate plan with its own mapping, transport and accommodation checks.

What needs booking first

Accommodation is the main constraint. Limerick City and Killaloe/Ballina offer the most flexibility, while the lake villages have fewer beds and should be booked ahead in summer.

The finish also needs planning before setting off. Dromineer has no railway station, so onward travel normally uses TFI Local Link to Nenagh, with onward bus and rail connections from there. Current Local Link and rail times should be checked before travelling, especially if aiming to leave Dromineer the same day.

If relying on buses from Killaloe/Ballina to Limerick, check the current timetable before building a section-hike plan around it. Rural services can be useful, but they should not be treated as turn-up-and-go transport.

Food, water and services

Plan food around the main overnight places rather than expecting regular options between them. Limerick City and Killaloe/Ballina are the most dependable service centres on the route; beyond them, opening hours and availability should be checked locally.

Carry enough water and food for each full stage. This is particularly important on the Killaloe/Ballina to Garrykennedy stage, where the route climbs onto higher, more exposed ground and services are not the main feature of the day.

Navigation and mapping

The Lough Derg Way is a National Waymarked Trail, marked with yellow arrows on a black background. Waymarking reduces the navigation burden, but it should not replace a map or offline route line, especially on the road-and-track sections north of Killaloe/Ballina and near any overgrown lakeside ground.

Recommended paper mapping is OSI Discovery Series sheets 58, 59 and 65. The route is also commonly divided into five downloadable section maps: Limerick City–Clonlara, Clonlara–O'Briensbridge,

O'Briensbridge–Killaloe, Killaloe–Castletown and Castletown–Dromineer.

Check current trail status before travelling. Some lakeside sections, including around The Callows near Dromineer, can be wet, overgrown or in poor condition, and live diversions may affect the exact line walked.

Weather and equipment

This is not a technical mountain route, but it still needs proper walking kit. The Arra Mountains section reaches exposed ground on the shoulder of Tountinna, where wind, rain and low cloud can make a moderate day feel much harder.

Waterproofs, warm layers, a charged phone, offline mapping and footwear suitable for both towpath and long tarmac sections are sensible year-round. In darker months or poor weather, high-visibility clothing is useful for the road sections.

The route is most straightforward from May to October, when the higher road section is less likely to be harsh and the wetter lakeside stretches are generally easier to manage. It can be walked outside that window, but shorter daylight, wet ground and exposed weather should be built into the plan.

Access rules

Dogs are not permitted on the Lough Derg Way. This is a firm planning point and should be treated as part of the route's access conditions, not as an optional recommendation.

Towns, Villages and Overnight Stops

The Lough Derg Way is usually walked with overnight stops at **Killaloe/Ballina** and **Garrykennedy**, finishing in **Dromineer**. Limerick City is the obvious pre-walk base, while the smaller settlements between the main stops are useful for breaking up the day but should not be relied on for full walker services unless arrangements have been made in advance.

Book ahead in the lake villages in summer. Accommodation is available in the main towns and villages, but choice becomes thinner away from Limerick City and Killaloe/Ballina.

Place	Best use for walkers	Overnight suitability
Limerick City / Arthur's Quay	Start, transport hub, pre-walk night	Excellent
University of Limerick / Living Bridge	Early landmark and route transition	Not a normal overnight stop for this walk
Clonlara	Small settlement on the southern section	Limited; check before relying on it
O'Briensbridge	Shannon-side village, possible break point	Possible, but book ahead
Killaloe / Ballina	Main first-night stop	Very good
Arra Mountains / Graves of the Leinstermen	High section, no services	Not suitable
Portroe	Near the route on the northern section	Limited; check before relying on it
Castletown	Small settlement before the Garrykennedy approach	Limited; check before relying on it
Garrykennedy	Main second-night stop	Good, but limited choice
Dromineer	Finish village and exit point	Possible, but transport must be planned

Limerick City / Arthur's Quay

Limerick City is the practical start base for the Lough Derg Way. The official start is at Arthur's Quay beside the Hunt Museum, with yellow-arrow National Waymarked Trail markers leading out along the River Shannon.

This is the strongest place on the route for accommodation, food and transport. Limerick Colbert station gives access by Irish Rail, Bus Éireann serves the city, and Shannon Airport is about 40 minutes away.

For most walkers, Limerick is the best place to stay the night before starting. It also gives the simplest logistics if arriving late, needing supplies, or wanting to start early without depending on rural transport.

University of Limerick / Living Bridge

The route reaches the University of Limerick early on and crosses the Shannon by the Living Bridge. This is more of a route landmark than a stopping point, marking the transition from city walking into the riverside and canal section.

It is not normally used as an overnight stop on a three-day itinerary. Treat it as a useful navigation checkpoint rather than a place to plan accommodation around.

Clonlara

Clonlara sits on the southern part of the route between Limerick City and O'Briensbridge. It can be useful as a progress marker on the long first day towards Killaloe/Ballina.

Do not assume full walker services will be available here without checking. Accommodation and food options should be arranged in advance if planning to stop short of O'Briensbridge or Killaloe/Ballina.

O'Briensbridge

O'Briensbridge is a quiet Shannon-side village on the canal-and-river section, with the route passing through before the final part of the day into Killaloe/Ballina. It is a natural place to pause on the first stage.

The wider accommodation mix for the trail includes B&Bs, guesthouses, pubs with rooms and hotels in places including O'Briensbridge, but choice is not as broad as in Limerick City or Killaloe/Ballina. If using O'Briensbridge as an overnight stop, book ahead rather than arriving speculatively.

It can also work as a shorter first-day target for walkers splitting the route more gently than the standard three-day schedule. Any onward transport or transfer arrangements should be checked before travelling.

Killaloe / Ballina

Killaloe and Ballina are the key first-night stop on the standard three-day itinerary, reached after the long opening stage from Limerick City. The two towns face each other across the Shannon and are linked by a 13-arch bridge, so accommodation on either side can work for the route.

This is the best-served overnight stop outside Limerick City. Choice is good compared with the smaller lake villages, with accommodation available across the twin towns and better scope for food and evening services.

Killaloe/Ballina also has bus links to Limerick, making it useful for section-hiking or for ending a shortened walk. Current bus times should be checked before travelling.

Arra Mountains / Graves of the Leinstermen

The Arra Mountains section is not an overnight stop. It is the high, exposed part of the route, climbing over the shoulder of Tountinna near the Graves of the Leinstermen before dropping towards the Lough Derg side.

There are no walker services to rely on in this section, so leave Killaloe/Ballina with enough food, water and weather protection for the crossing. The road and track over the high ground can feel much more

serious in wet or windy weather than the flat Shannon towpath earlier in the route.

Portroe

Portroe lies near the route on the northern section after the Arra Mountains crossing. It may be relevant for walkers looking at shorter stages or escape options, but it is not one of the usual main overnight stops on the three-day itinerary.

Accommodation, food and transport arrangements here should not be assumed. This should be checked before travelling.

Castletown

Castletown comes before the approach to Garrykennedy on the second half of the Way. It is useful as a route marker between the higher Arra section and the Lough Derg harbour villages.

It is not listed as one of the main accommodation bases for the trail, so plan on continuing to Garrykennedy unless a booking or pickup has been arranged. This should be checked before travelling.

Garrykennedy

Garrykennedy is the standard second-night stop on the Lough Derg Way. It is a small harbour village on Lough Derg, with the ruins of a 15th-century O'Brien tower house and a practical position before the final stage to Dromineer.

Accommodation is available in the lake villages, including Garrykennedy, but the choice is thinner than in Killaloe/Ballina. Book ahead, particularly in summer, and do not rely on turning up late in the day without a reservation.

This is also the point where poor weather, tired legs or slower progress on the road sections can affect the final-day plan. Check the condition of lakeside sections before travelling, especially where wet or overgrown ground has been an issue.

Dromineer

Dromineer is the finish of the Lough Derg Way, at the harbour village on Lough Derg beside the ruined castle and lake pier. It can be used as a final-night stop if you want an unhurried finish rather than travelling out the same day.

Accommodation exists in the lake villages, including Dromineer, but options are limited compared with larger towns. Book ahead in the main walking season.

Dromineer has no railway station. The usual public-transport exit is by TFI Local Link bus to Nenagh, taking about 20 minutes, where there is a station on the Limerick–Ballybrophy line and onward bus and rail connections towards Limerick and Dublin. Verify current Local Link and rail times before relying on them.

Getting to the Start

The Lough Derg Way starts in central Limerick City at Arthur's Quay, beside the Hunt Museum. Yellow-arrow National Waymarked Trail markers lead out from the city along the River Shannon, so the start is straightforward to reach once in Limerick.

By train

The nearest railway station is Limerick Colbert station. From there, continue into the city centre to Arthur's Quay, either on foot through central Limerick or by local taxi if carrying full kit or arriving late.

Limerick is well connected by Irish Rail, making train travel the simplest public-transport option for many walkers starting the trail. Timetables and any engineering works should be checked before travelling.

By bus

Limerick City is served by Bus Éireann and other intercity bus connections. Arthur's Quay is in the city centre, so bus arrivals in central Limerick are usually convenient for reaching the start without a long onward transfer.

If arriving by bus on the morning of Day 1, allow enough time to find the first waymarkers at Arthur's Quay before leaving the city. Current bus times, arrival points and first/last services should be checked before travelling.

By car

Driving to Limerick is possible, but the Lough Derg Way is a point-to-point route finishing at Dromineer in County Tipperary, not back in Limerick. Do not plan around leaving a car at Arthur's Quay unless the return from Dromineer has been arranged.

Dromineer has no railway station. The usual public-transport exit is by TFI Local Link bus to Nenagh, then onward by rail or bus; current Local Link and rail times should be checked before relying on this connection.

There is no trail-specific long-stay parking arrangement at the start. If leaving a vehicle in Limerick for several days, arrange secure long-stay city parking in advance and check opening hours, overnight rules and charges before travelling.

From the nearest airport

Shannon Airport is the most relevant airport for the start of the Lough Derg Way, about 40 minutes from Limerick City. From the airport, continue to Limerick by available public transport or taxi, then make your way to Arthur's Quay in the city centre.

Airport transfers can be the weak link if arriving late in the day or on a reduced timetable. Check current onward transport times before booking flights, especially if planning to start walking the same day.

Where to stay before starting

Limerick City is the practical place to stay the night before beginning the trail. It gives the easiest access to Arthur's Quay, food shops, evening meals and last-minute supplies before the first stage to Killaloe/Ballina.

Staying in the city also avoids relying on an early-morning transfer to the trailhead. If starting after a long journey, an overnight stop in Limerick is the safer option than trying to combine travel with the first full walking day.

Getting Home from the Finish

The Lough Derg Way finishes in Dromineer, a small harbour village on Lough Derg. It is not a railhead, so the key onward step is getting from Dromineer to Nenagh, then connecting onwards by rail or bus.

Do not leave finish-day transport vague. The Dromineer connection is timetable-dependent, and walkers finishing late in the day should either pre-book onward transport or stay locally.

By train

Dromineer has no railway station. The nearest practical rail connection is Nenagh, reached from Dromineer by TFI Local Link bus or taxi.

Nenagh is on the Limerick–Ballybrophy railway line, with onward rail connections for Limerick and Dublin. Current train times should be checked before travelling, especially if trying to make a same-day connection after finishing the walk.

A sensible exit plan is:

1. Finish at Dromineer harbour.
2. Take the Local Link bus or a taxi to Nenagh.
3. Continue by rail from Nenagh towards Limerick or via onward connections towards Dublin.

By bus

TFI Local Link Tipperary runs the Dromineer–Nenagh connection, with the journey taking about 20 minutes. This is the main public-transport link out of the finish village.

From Nenagh, there are onward bus and rail connections towards Limerick and Dublin. Times are not something to assume on arrival: check the current Local Link Tipperary timetable and onward connections before relying on them.

If finishing late, allow for the possibility that the last useful bus connection has already gone. In that case, a pre-booked taxi to Nenagh or an overnight stay in Dromineer is the safer plan.

By car/taxi

A taxi is the most flexible way to leave Dromineer, particularly if finishing outside the Local Link timetable or travelling with a group. Pre-booking is strongly recommended, as Dromineer is a small lakeside village rather than a transport hub.

Most walkers using a taxi will use it for the short transfer to Nenagh, then continue by train or bus. A longer taxi transfer back towards Limerick City may be possible, but prices and availability should be checked before booking.

If a car has been left at the finish, plan the start-day logistics carefully: the official start is at Arthur's Quay in Limerick City, while the finish is in Dromineer. Do not rely on an easy same-day public-transport shuttle between the two without checking the Local Link and rail timings.

From the nearest airport

Shannon Airport is the relevant airport for Limerick, with Limerick City about 40 minutes away. From the Dromineer finish, the usual public-transport route is first to Nenagh, then onwards towards Limerick before making the airport connection.

Dublin is also reachable by onward bus or rail connections from Nenagh, but this depends on the day's timetable and interchange times. Check live transport times before booking flights, and avoid tight same-day flight plans after finishing the walk.

Where to stay at the finish

Dromineer has accommodation in and around the harbour village, but choice is limited compared with Limerick City or Killaloe/Ballina. Booking ahead is sensible in summer, especially if the final day's walking leaves little margin for catching onward transport.

Staying overnight at the finish is a good option if you want a less rushed final day, if Local Link times do not line up with your walking pace, or if continuing to Limerick, Dublin or Shannon Airport would require several onward connections. Garrykennedy is the previous lakeside stop on the route, but for completing the full trail and leaving the next morning, Dromineer is the natural place to stay.

Which Direction Should You Walk?

The Lough Derg Way is best planned in its official direction: **Limerick City to Dromineer**. This is the way the route is described as a National Waymarked Trail, starting at Arthur's Quay beside the Hunt Museum and finishing at Dromineer harbour on Lough Derg.

Reverse walking is possible in principle, but it is usually less convenient because Dromineer has no railway station and depends on onward bus links via Nenagh. If walking southbound, you need to solve that transport leg before even starting the trail.

Direction	Best for	Main drawback
Limerick City → Dromineer	Easiest start logistics, natural scenery progression, lake-harbour finish	Need to leave Dromineer by Local Link bus to Nenagh
Dromineer → Limerick City	Finishing in a major transport hub	More awkward start logistics; mountain/lake section comes early

Why the Standard Direction Works Best

Starting in Limerick City is the simplest option for most walkers. Limerick Colbert station, Bus Éireann services and the central location of Arthur's Quay make it straightforward to arrive the day before or on the morning of departure.

The route also builds well in this direction. The first half follows the River Shannon, the University of Limerick area, Clonlara, O'Briensbridge and the old navigation canal before reaching Killaloe/Ballina. The harder and more exposed walking then comes later, with the climb over the Arra Mountains and the approach to Lough Derg.

There is a clear psychological reward in finishing at Dromineer. The trail ends at a small harbour village beside the lake pier and ruined castle, which feels more like a defined journey's end than walking back into a city.

What Changes in Reverse

Walking from Dromineer to Limerick puts the most committing part of the route near the beginning. The Arra Mountains crossing, minor-road walking and higher ground come early, before the route settles into the flatter riverbank and canal towpath sections south of Killaloe/Ballina.

The main advantage is logistical at the end. Finishing in Limerick City gives easier onward rail and bus options than finishing in Dromineer.

The main disadvantage is getting to the start. Dromineer has no railway station, so southbound walkers normally need to travel via Nenagh and use the TFI Local Link connection to Dromineer. Current Local Link and rail times should be checked before travelling.

Climbs, Weather and Exposure

Neither direction avoids the main climb. The route still has to cross the Arra Mountains over the shoulder of Tountinna, reaching the high ground near the Graves of the Leinstermen.

There is no strong route-specific reason to choose a direction based on prevailing weather. The practical point is that the Arra section is exposed compared with the Shannon towpath and should be treated with more care in wet, windy or low-visibility conditions, whichever way the trail is walked.

Accommodation Flow

The standard three-day flow works naturally northbound: **Limerick City → Killaloe/Ballina → Garrykennedy → Dromineer**. This gives a strong first-day target in Killaloe/Ballina, where accommodation choice is better than on the more rural road sections.

In reverse, the same overnight places can be used, but the start is less forgiving. If public transport times do not align well with the first walking day from Dromineer, it may be necessary to stay locally before setting off. Accommodation in the lake villages should be booked ahead in summer.

Recommendation

Walk the Lough Derg Way **from Limerick City to Dromineer** unless there is a specific transport reason to do otherwise. It gives the easiest start, the best progression from city riverfront to canal, mountain and lake, and the most satisfying finish on Lough Derg. Reverse direction is workable, but only really makes sense if finishing in Limerick is more important than straightforward start-day logistics.

Accommodation Along the Route

The Lough Derg Way works well as an inn-to-inn walk, provided accommodation is booked around the actual stage ends rather than left to chance. The practical overnight pattern is Limerick City before the start, Killaloe/Ballina after day 1, Garrykennedy after day 2 and either Dromineer at the finish or onward travel after completing the route.

Choice is strongest at the two ends of the first day: Limerick City has the broadest range, while Killaloe/Ballina is the best-supported trail stop on the route. Accommodation becomes thinner north of Killaloe/Ballina, particularly across the Arra Mountains and on the smaller lake-village sections, so Garrykennedy and Dromineer should be booked ahead in summer and at busy weekends.

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Limerick City	Good	Pre-walk night; late arrivals by rail or bus	Best range of hotels, guesthouses and city accommodation. The official start at Arthur's Quay is central, so an early start is straightforward.
University of Limerick / Living Bridge	Limited	Passing-through point, not a normal overnight stop	Close enough to Limerick City that most walkers will not use it as a stage base. This should be checked before travelling if trying to shorten the first day.
Clonlara	Limited	Possible short-stage stop	Useful only if deliberately splitting the long first stage. Do not rely on finding last-minute rooms here.
O'Briensbridge	Limited	Intermediate overnight between Limerick City and Killaloe/Ballina	A sensible option for walkers who do not want to cover the full Limerick City to Killaloe/Ballina stage in one day, but availability is limited compared with the main towns.
Killaloe / Ballina	Good	Main first-night stop	The strongest accommodation choice on the trail after Limerick City. This is the natural base before the Arra Mountains crossing.
Arra Mountains / Graves of the Leinstermen	None	No overnight stop	Treat this as an exposed crossing section, not a place to look for accommodation. Carry what is needed between Killaloe/Ballina and the next booked stop.
Portroe / Castletown area	Limited	Possible transfer or contingency area	Accommodation should not be assumed on the line of the Way. If using this area to break the mountain/lake section, arrange accommodation and any taxi transfer in advance.
Garrykennedy	Limited	Main second-night stop	A popular lakeside trail stop before the final stage to Dromineer. Book ahead, especially in summer and at weekends.

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Dromineer	Limited	Finish-night stay; relaxed end to the walk	The trail finishes at the harbour village. If not staying, plan onward travel carefully as Dromineer has no railway; bus connections via Nenagh should be checked before travelling.

Best overnight strategy

For most walkers, the simplest accommodation plan is:

1. **Night before:** Limerick City
2. **Night 1:** Killaloe/Ballina
3. **Night 2:** Garrykennedy
4. **Finish:** Dromineer, or travel onward via Nenagh

This gives a clean three-day itinerary without needing complicated transfers. It does mean accepting a long first stage from Limerick City to Killaloe/Ballina, so walkers who prefer shorter days should investigate O'Briensbridge as an intermediate stop before committing to dates.

Booking ahead

Booking ahead is strongly recommended for Killaloe/Ballina, Garrykennedy and Dromineer. The route passes through small lake villages where the number of rooms is limited, and availability can tighten quickly in summer, on weekends and during local events.

Limerick City is the easiest place to arrange at short notice, but even there, city-centre accommodation is worth booking early if arriving on a Friday or during busy periods. Confirm current prices, cancellation terms and check-in times before booking.

Transfers and awkward gaps

The Lough Derg Way does not have a continuous chain of large towns, so taxi transfers can be useful if accommodation is full at Garrykennedy or Dromineer, or if a walker wants to split the Limerick City to Killaloe/Ballina stage. Any taxi arrangement should be made in advance, as relying on an ad-hoc lift from the smaller villages is risky.

Luggage transfer may be possible through local accommodation providers or private arrangements, but there is no route-wide service specified here. This should be checked before travelling. If walking without luggage support, pack for exposed road and track walking over the Arra Mountains, where there is no accommodation refuge on the high section.

Dog-friendly accommodation

Dogs are not permitted on the Lough Derg Way, so dog-friendly accommodation is not a practical planning factor for this route.

Camping and Wild Camping

Formal campsites

The Lough Derg Way is better suited to B&Bs, guesthouses, pubs with rooms and hotels than to a classic campsite-to-campsite itinerary. The main overnight stops are Limerick City, Killaloe/Ballina, Garrykennedy and Dromineer, but formal camping options are not a defining feature of the route.

Do not assume there will be a public campsite at the end of each stage. If planning to camp, check directly with local accommodation providers or tourist offices before travelling, especially around the lake villages where accommodation choice can be thinner in summer.

Wild camping and permission

Wild camping should not be treated as a guaranteed option on this route. Much of the Way follows riverside paths, canal towpath, local roads, lanes, lakeside sections and tracks through settled countryside, where suitable discreet pitches may be limited and land ownership may not be obvious.

Do not pitch on farmland, canal banks, lakeshore, forestry tracks or near villages without permission from the landowner or land manager. Where local rules are unclear, they must be checked locally before relying on a wild-camping plan.

The route also has a high proportion of road walking, including stretches with fast-moving traffic. Road verges and field entrances are not appropriate camping places.

Where camping is least and most practical

The Limerick City to O'Briensbridge and Killaloe/Ballina section is not a natural wild-camping stretch. It is flat and easy underfoot, but it passes through urban, riverside, canal and village environments where privacy, permission and responsible siting are likely to be difficult.

The Killaloe/Ballina to Garrykennedy section crosses the Arra Mountains and is the most remote-feeling part of the route, but it is also exposed and includes road and track over high ground near Tountinna and the Graves of the Leinstermen. It should not be used for an improvised camp in poor weather, strong wind or poor visibility, and any pitch would still require permission.

The Garrykennedy to Dromineer section follows the Lough Derg side of the route, including lakeside ground that can be wet or overgrown in places. This makes it unreliable for finding a dry, low-impact pitch, particularly after rain or outside the May–October walking season.

Water and cooking

The route is never far from the River Shannon or Lough Derg, but natural water should not be treated as automatically drinkable. Carry enough water between towns and villages, and refill from reliable taps, cafés, pubs or accommodation where possible.

If using natural water in an emergency, it should be properly treated. Do not wash, cook or dispose of food waste directly beside the river, canal or lake.

Use a stove rather than lighting a fire. Open fires are inappropriate on this route, particularly near farmland, woodland, dry vegetation, canal banks and lakeshore areas.

Leave No Trace expectations

Any camp must be small, late, discreet and leave no visible trace. Pack out all rubbish, food waste and hygiene products, and avoid camping close to houses, farms, roads, heritage sites, harbours or the trail itself.

Human waste must be dealt with well away from watercourses, paths and dwellings. The better option on this route is usually to plan nights in established accommodation and use camping only where a legitimate pitch has been arranged in advance.

Dogs are not permitted on the Lough Derg Way, so camping with a dog is not a viable plan for this trail.

Food, Water and Resupply

The Lough Derg Way is not a remote wilderness route, but it is not a continuous village-to-village resupply walk either. Food is easiest at the start in Limerick City, in Killaloe/Ballina, and at overnight stops such as Garrykennedy and Dromineer. Between these places, especially on the Arra Mountains crossing and the smaller road sections, you should carry what you need rather than assume there will be a shop or café.

For a typical 3-day itinerary, plan to leave each overnight stop with lunch, snacks and enough water for the day. Rural opening hours can be short, seasonal and affected by Sundays or public holidays, so any intended pub, café or shop stop should be checked before travelling.

Practical resupply strategy

Limerick City is the best place to buy food before starting. Stock up here if walking straight through to Killaloe/Ballina, as the first day is long and you should not rely on finding full resupply on the river and canal section.

Killaloe/Ballina is the most useful mid-route resupply point. It is the logical place to buy food for the Arra Mountains section, where services are limited and the walking becomes more exposed.

Garrykennedy and Dromineer are small lakeside villages with accommodation and pub-style services, but they should not be treated like larger towns. If staying there, arrange meals ahead or check current opening hours, particularly outside summer and on quieter weekdays.

Water

The safest refill points are accommodation, cafés, pubs and public-facing services in towns and villages. Start each day with full bottles, and top up whenever there is a reliable indoor stop.

Although the route follows the River Shannon, the old navigation canal and Lough Derg, these should not be treated as routine drinking-water sources. If natural water has to be used, it should be filtered or treated, and care is needed because the route passes through settled, agricultural and lakeside areas where water quality can vary.

Most walkers should carry around 1.5–2 litres from the start of each day, more in warm weather or if walking the Arra Mountains section slowly. The exposed road-and-track climb above Lough Derg is the section where running short of water would be most inconvenient.

Section	Food availability	Water availability	Notes
Limerick City to O'Briensbridge / Killaloe-Ballina	Best resupply is in Limerick City before setting off. Clonlara and O'Briensbridge are villages on or near the route, but specific food stops should be checked before relying on them. Killaloe/Ballina has the strongest end-of-day options.	Fill in Limerick before leaving. Refill at indoor services if available en route, and again in Killaloe/Ballina.	Carry lunch and snacks for the full day. The walking is easy underfoot but the stage to Killaloe/Ballina is long.

Section	Food availability	Water availability	Notes
Killaloe/Ballina to the Arra Mountains / Castletown / Garrykennedy	Buy food in Killaloe/Ballina before starting. Do not rely on food during the Arra Mountains crossing; Portroe is near the route and Castletown is passed later, but any service should be checked before travelling. Garrykennedy may have pub-style food, subject to opening.	Start with full bottles in Killaloe/Ballina. Refill opportunities are limited on the high road and track section, so carry enough for the climb and descent.	This is the key self-sufficiency day. Carry lunch, snacks and extra water, especially in warm, windy or wet conditions.
Garrykennedy to Dromineer	Garrykennedy may provide meals if staying there, but check opening hours. There is no guaranteed substantial resupply before Dromineer. Dromineer is a small harbour village, so onward meals should be planned rather than assumed.	Fill before leaving Garrykennedy. Refill in Dromineer at accommodation or open services. Natural lake water should be treated if used.	The stage is shorter, but lakeside sections can be wet or overgrown, so keep snacks and water accessible rather than packed away.

Navigation and Waymarking

The Lough Derg Way is an Irish National Waymarked Trail, marked with the standard yellow walking arrow on a black background. From the official start at Arthur's Quay in Limerick City, the arrows lead out along the River Shannon, then continue through the canal, road, mountain and lakeside sections to Dromineer.

Navigation is generally straightforward for a walker used to following waymarks, especially on the flat Shannon and canal sections. It should not be treated as a route that can be walked safely with no backup, because the Way includes many road junctions, a high crossing of the Arra Mountains, and some lakeside sections that can be wet or overgrown.

Maps and GPX

A GPX file is strongly recommended. It is most useful through the northern half of the route, where the Way uses minor roads, lanes, old roadway and forest track around the Arra Mountains and towards Lough Derg.

Carry a paper map or have a reliable offline map saved on a phone. The relevant paper mapping is OSI Discovery Series sheets 58, 59 and 65. There are also five route section maps covering Limerick City–Clonlara, Clonlara–O'Briensbridge, O'Briensbridge–Killaloe, Killaloe–Castletown and Castletown–Dromineer.

Do not rely on live mobile data for navigation. Download the GPX and mapping before leaving Limerick City, and keep enough battery reserve for the final day into Dromineer.

Where to pay closest attention

Section	Navigation notes
Limerick City to Clonlara	Urban and riverside walking makes the line logical, but watch for the yellow arrows from Arthur's Quay and through the transition towards the University of Limerick and the Living Bridge.
Clonlara to O'Briensbridge and Killaloe/Ballina	The canal and Shannon-side sections are among the easiest parts to follow. A map is still useful where the towpath, road and village approaches meet.
Killaloe/Ballina to the Arra Mountains	This is the section where navigation becomes more consequential. The route uses minor roads, lanes and tracks while gaining height over the shoulder of Tountinna, so check junctions carefully rather than assuming the main road is always the correct line.
Arra Mountains to Garrykennedy	Use the waymarks with a GPX backup, particularly around the high ground near the Graves of the Leinstermen and on the descent towards the Lough Derg side. In poor visibility, the map line is a useful safeguard.
Garrykennedy to Dromineer	The final lakeside stage is not technically difficult, but sections such as The Callows can be wet or overgrown. If the path is unclear, avoid pushing blindly through vegetation without checking the mapped line and current trail condition.

Suitability for less experienced navigators

The Lough Derg Way is suitable for hikers with limited navigation experience if they are comfortable following waymarks, checking a map at junctions and using an offline GPX track. It is not a technical mountain-navigation route, but the Arra Mountains section is exposed enough that poor weather can make simple route-finding feel more serious.

Before setting out, check the current trail condition and any diversions, particularly for the lakeside sections near Dromineer. Waymarks can be missed, damaged or obscured on any long-distance trail, so the safest approach is to treat the arrows as the primary guide and the map or GPX as the backup.

Terrain, Conditions and Difficulty in Practice

The Lough Derg Way is moderate because of cumulative effort rather than technical terrain. There is no scrambling, no high mountain pathfinding and no difficult rocky ground, but the route asks for long hard-surface days, steady concentration on road sections and one exposed climb over the Arra Mountains.

Underfoot, the route splits into two very different walking experiences: easy Shannon-side and canal walking in the south, then a more wearing mix of minor roads, lanes, old roadway and forest track through the northern half. The official total ascent is 527 m, but most of that effort is concentrated around the Arra Mountains crossing rather than spread evenly across the whole trail.

Surfaces and underfoot conditions

Section	Typical terrain	Practical effect
Limerick City to Clonlara and O'Briensbridge	Riverside path, urban edge, Shannon-side walking and the Limerick Navigation / Errina Canal towpath	Generally flat and straightforward, with easy navigation on a well-defined line
O'Briensbridge to Killaloe / Ballina	Continued river and canal-side walking, then approach into the twin towns	Still relatively easy underfoot, but the day is long if walked from Limerick City in one stage
Killaloe / Ballina to the Arra Mountains	Increasing road and lane walking, then climbing on road, old roadway and track	The character changes sharply: harder on feet, more exposed and more demanding in poor weather
Arra Mountains to Garrykennedy	High road/track over the shoulder of Tountinna, then descent towards the Lough Derg side	The main climb and descent of the route; views can be excellent, but wind and rain make it feel much more serious
Garrykennedy to Dromineer	Lakeside and local-road sections, including areas such as The Callows	Shorter on paper, but some lakeside sections can be wet, overgrown or slower than expected

The canal towpath and riverside paths are the easiest walking on the route. They are relatively flat and well suited to steady progress, though wet weather can still make grassy or unsurfaced sections softer underfoot.

The northern half is more mixed and more tiring. Tarmac and compact tracks are simple to follow, but long road mileage can be harder on knees, hips and feet than softer trail.

Road walking and traffic

About 38 km, or roughly 55% of the Way, is on local roads. This is one of the main reasons the Lough Derg Way can feel tougher than its distance and ascent suggest.

Some road sections have fast-moving traffic. Walkers should be ready for narrow lanes, limited verges and the need to stay alert, especially in poor visibility, around bends and on wet days when vehicles may be harder to hear.

A small high-visibility item is sensible on this route. It is also worth pacing the road sections conservatively: even flat tarmac becomes fatiguing over a three-day walk.

The Arra Mountains crossing

The Arra Mountains are the only substantial upland section of the Lough Derg Way. The route climbs over the shoulder of Tountinna, with the line reaching around 440 m near the Graves of the Leinstermen, while the 463 m summit lies just above the trail.

This is not technical mountain walking, but it is the part of the route most affected by weather. In wind, rain or low cloud, the exposed road and track can feel much more committing than the low-level Shannon sections.

The climb is sustained compared with the rest of the Way. It is best treated as the serious section of the hike: carry waterproofs, warm layers, food and enough water, even if the day begins in settled conditions around Killaloe or Ballina.

The descent towards the Lough Derg side can also be tiring after the climb, particularly on hard surfaces. Trekking poles may help walkers who are sensitive to long descents or repeated road impact.

Wet, overgrown and slower sections

The most likely awkward ground is not rocky mountain terrain but wet or overgrown lakeside walking. Sections around The Callows near Dromineer have been known to become overgrown or in poor condition.

After prolonged rain, expect some slower going on grassy, lakeside or unsurfaced stretches. Waterproof footwear with reliable grip is a better choice than lightweight urban trainers, even though much of the route is on road or towpath.

Current trail condition and any diversions should be checked before travelling, particularly for the final approach towards Dromineer. This should be checked before travelling.

Seasonal conditions

May to October gives the easiest combination of longer daylight, warmer conditions and generally more manageable lakeside growth. Spring and autumn remain good walking seasons, but the Arra Mountains section needs proper bad-weather kit.

The route is walkable year-round in principle, but winter makes the practical margins tighter. Short daylight, colder rain, wind on the high road and wetter low-level sections can turn a moderate trail into a more demanding outing.

Summer brings the best chance of dry towpaths and clearer high-level views, but it does not remove the need for waterproofs. It is also when vegetation on lakeside sections can be at its most intrusive.

How hard is it in practice?

For a fit walker used to 20–30 km days, the Lough Derg Way is a manageable three-day trail. The first day to Killaloe / Ballina is long but mostly low-level; the second day is usually the hardest because of the

climb over the Arra Mountains; the final stage is shorter but can be slowed by wet or overgrown lakeside ground.

The route is easier than a rough upland trail of the same length, because navigation is waymarked and the surfaces are mostly defined. It is harder than a simple riverside walk, because more than half the distance is on local roads and the Arra crossing adds real ascent and weather exposure.

The main preparation priorities are foot comfort on tarmac, weather protection for the high section, traffic awareness on minor roads and flexibility if lakeside sections are in poor condition.

Weather and Best Time to Walk

The Lough Derg Way is walkable year-round, but **May to October is the most practical season**. In these months the Arra Mountains crossing is usually more manageable, the lakeside sections are easier to follow, and there is enough daylight for the standard three-day itinerary without rushing.

The least convenient period is **late autumn through winter**. The route is not technically difficult, but short days, wet ground, exposed road-and-track walking over the Arra Mountains and potentially poor visibility make the northern half feel more serious than the overall moderate grade suggests.

Seasonal planning

Season	What it means for walkers
Spring	A good time to walk if conditions are settled. Expect wet or muddy stretches after rain, especially on riverside, canal-side and lakeside ground. Carry waterproofs and allow time for the longer first day from Limerick City to Killaloe/Ballina.
Summer	The easiest season for daylight and trail logistics. Accommodation in Killaloe/Ballina, Garrykennedy and Dromineer should be booked ahead, especially in the lake villages where choice is thinner. Overgrown lakeside sections can still be an issue, so do not assume summer means fast walking everywhere.
Autumn	Often still suitable, particularly early autumn. Later in the season, daylight becomes the main constraint and wet, overgrown sections such as parts of the Lough Derg shore can slow progress. The Arra Mountains crossing needs a more cautious weather check.
Winter	Realistic for fit, well-equipped walkers, but less forgiving. Start early, carry reliable waterproofs and warm layers, and avoid committing to the Arra Mountains section in strong wind, poor visibility or icy conditions. Transport and accommodation availability should be checked before travelling.

Where weather matters most

The southern half from **Limerick City through Clonlara and O'Briensbridge to Killaloe/Ballina** is largely flat riverbank and canal towpath. Bad weather here is more about wet feet, slippery towpath surfaces and slower progress than exposure.

The key weather-sensitive section is the climb north of **Killaloe/Ballina over the Arra Mountains**, where the route reaches its high point on road and track near the shoulder of Tountinna. This is the place to pay most attention to wind, low cloud, heavy rain and winter ice, especially because parts of the Way use local roads with traffic.

The final approach towards **Garrykennedy and Dromineer** includes lakeside ground where wet or overgrown conditions can affect pace. The Callows near Dromineer has been reported as overgrown or in poor condition at times, so current trail condition should be checked before travelling.

Daylight and itinerary timing

The usual three-day schedule includes a long first day to **Killaloe/Ballina** and a hillier second day over the Arra Mountains towards **Garrykennedy**. In winter or poor weather, these days need earlier starts and more margin than the distance alone suggests.

In summer, the longer daylight makes the standard stages more comfortable and gives more flexibility for delays on overgrown sections or road walking. Even then, the route should not be treated as a casual lakeside stroll: about 55% is on local roads, and weather can make those road sections less pleasant and less visible to traffic.

Closures and checks before setting off

There are no seasonal closures or permit windows noted for the Lough Derg Way. Dogs are not permitted on the trail.

Before a winter or shoulder-season walk, check current trail condition, any live diversions, accommodation opening, and onward transport from **Dromineer via Nenagh**. This is especially important if relying on TFI Local Link services at the finish.

Safety Notes

The Lough Derg Way is not a technical mountain route, but it does combine long road sections, waterside walking, overgrown or wet lakeside ground and an exposed crossing of the Arra Mountains. Treat it as a proper long-distance walk rather than a casual riverside stroll, especially north of Killaloe/Ballina.

For emergencies in the Republic of Ireland, call **999 or 112**. Carry a charged phone and a power bank, but do not assume mobile signal will be available everywhere, particularly away from towns and on the quieter Arra Mountains and lakeside sections.

Road walking

Around **38 km / 55%** of the Way is on local roads, and some stretches have fast-moving traffic. Wear a bright outer layer, keep to the safest side of the road for visibility, and be prepared to step in carefully where verges are narrow or uneven.

Road fatigue is a real issue on this route. Tarmac miles can be harder on feet than the canal towpath, so use footwear with enough cushioning and check for hotspots early rather than waiting until the end of the day.

Arra Mountains crossing

The main upland hazard is the crossing over the shoulder of **Tountinna** in the Arra Mountains, where the route reaches roughly **440 m** near the Graves of the Leinstermen. The walking is on road and track rather than technical ground, but the section is more exposed than the Shannon and canal stages.

Wind, rain and low cloud can make this part feel much more serious than the route's overall moderate grading suggests. Carry waterproofs, a warm layer and enough food and water before leaving Killaloe/Ballina for the northern half of the trail.

Wet, overgrown and waterside sections

The route follows the River Shannon, the old Limerick Navigation / Errina Canal and the shore of Lough Derg, so expect occasional slippery banks, damp grass and uneven towpath or lakeside ground. Some lakeside sections, including around **The Callows** near Dromineer, can be overgrown or wet.

Take care near canal edges, riverbanks, lake piers and harbour areas, especially in poor visibility, after rain or when tired at the end of a stage. Keep children well back from edges if walking as a family group.

Weather, heat and cold

The easiest walking conditions are generally from **May to October**, but the trail is still exposed to Irish weather at any time of year. Rain can make towpaths muddy, vegetation wetter and road verges more awkward.

In warm weather, the road sections and exposed stretches can feel hot despite the modest altitude. Carry enough water between villages, use sun protection, and do not rely on finding services on every minor-road section.

Livestock and dogs

The route passes through rural areas where livestock may be present near lanes, fields and farm access points. Move calmly, give animals space and leave gates exactly as found.

Dogs are not permitted on the Lough Derg Way, so do not plan this as a dog-friendly long-distance walk.

Solo walking

Solo hikers should be comfortable with long quiet stretches and with navigating minor roads, lanes and tracks independently. The trail is waymarked with yellow National Waymarked Trail arrows, but a map or offline route file is still sensible in case a marker is missed, damaged or hidden by vegetation.

Tell someone the day's intended finish point, especially before the Arra Mountains stage or the quieter approach to Dromineer. If accommodation or transport is being relied on at the end of the day, check timings before setting off.

Daily checks before setting off

Before each stage, check:

- the weather forecast, especially wind and rain for the Arra Mountains crossing;
- current trail condition and any diversions, particularly on wet or overgrown lakeside sections;
- that enough water and food is carried for the day's quieter stretches;
- phone battery and offline navigation;
- accommodation check-in arrangements;
- onward transport times from **Dromineer** via **TFI Local Link** to **Nenagh**, if finishing that day.

Local Link, rail and bus times can change, so transport should be checked before travelling.

Gear Recommendations

The Lough Derg Way does not require technical mountain kit, but it does reward practical choices. The main gear issues are long stretches of tarmac, wet or overgrown lakeside ground, exposed weather on the Arra Mountains crossing, and the need to be visible on local roads with fast-moving traffic.

Footwear

Choose footwear for mixed surfaces rather than rough mountain ground. Much of the route is canal towpath, riverside path, forest track, old roadway and tarmac, with about 38 km on local roads.

Well-cushioned trail shoes or lightweight walking boots suit most walkers. Waterproof footwear is useful for wet grass, muddy edges and sections such as The Callows near Dromineer, but avoid very stiff boots unless they are already comfortable for long road mileage.

Blister prevention matters more here than ankle protection. Road walking can be hard on feet, so use worn-in footwear, good socks and carry blister dressings.

Waterproofs and warm layers

Carry full waterproofs even in settled weather. The Shannon towpath and lakeside sections offer limited shelter in places, and the Arra Mountains crossing can be windy and exposed despite the modest height.

A warm mid-layer is sensible year-round, with hat and gloves outside high summer. The climb over the shoulder of Tountinna can feel very different from the sheltered river and canal sections lower down.

Navigation

The Way is marked as an Irish National Waymarked Trail with yellow arrows on a black background, but do not rely on waymarks alone. Carry offline mapping on a phone or GPS, plus a back-up map option.

Useful mapping for this route is OSI Discovery Series sheets 58, 59 and 65, alongside the downloadable section maps for Limerick City–Clonlara, Clonlara–O'Briensbridge, O'Briensbridge–Killaloe, Killaloe–Castletown and Castletown–Dromineer.

Navigation is usually straightforward on the towpath and road sections, but care is still needed at junctions, on lanes and where vegetation may obscure the line near the lake. Current trail condition and any diversions should be checked before travelling.

Road-walking safety

Because over half the route is on local roads, visibility is a genuine gear consideration. Wear a bright outer layer or pack cover, and consider a small flashing light in poor visibility, especially early or late in the day.

Headphones are a poor choice on this route. Keep ears free for approaching traffic, particularly on narrow roads and bends north of Killaloe/Ballina.

Water and food

For a three-day inn-to-inn walk, carry enough water for several hours between services. A capacity of around 1.5–2 litres is sensible for most walkers, with more in warm weather.

Do not assume frequent resupply between the main settlements. Limerick City, O'Briensbridge, Killaloe/Ballina, Garrykennedy and Dromineer are the key service points, while the road and mountain sections can feel sparse.

Carry lunch or substantial snacks for the Killaloe/Ballina to Garrykennedy day, especially for the Arra Mountains crossing. The final Garrykennedy to Dromineer section is shorter, but wet or overgrown ground can slow progress, so snacks and water are still worth carrying.

Trekking poles

Poles are optional rather than essential. They are most useful on the climb and descent over the Arra Mountains and on wet, uneven or overgrown lakeside sections.

On the long tarmac stretches, poles can become more nuisance than help unless they have rubber tips. Fast walkers may prefer to carry a single lightweight pole or leave them out entirely.

Power and electronics

Carry a power bank if using a phone for mapping, accommodation details, transport times or emergency calls. This is particularly useful because the route is point-to-point and the finish at Dromineer relies on onward transport via Nenagh.

Download maps and any route files before starting each day. Mobile signal and battery life should not be treated as guaranteed navigation tools.

Sun, insects and seasonal extras

In spring, summer and autumn, carry sun cream, sunglasses and a hat. The river, canal, road and lakeside sections can be exposed for long periods.

Insect repellent can be useful around still water, lakeside vegetation and sheltered evening stops. After wet weather, gaiters or long trousers can make overgrown sections more comfortable.

For winter or poor-weather starts, add a head torch, warmer gloves and a more robust spare layer. The route is walkable year-round, but the Arra road section and wet lakeside sections are generally easier from May to October.

Inn-to-inn hikers

Most walkers can keep pack weight low by using B&Bs, guesthouses, pubs with rooms or hotels in Limerick City, Killaloe/Ballina, Garrykennedy and Dromineer. A 25–35 litre daypack is usually enough for waterproofs, spare layer, food, water, personal items and navigation.

Pack for comfort on road mileage rather than for remote mountain travel. Light footwear, spare socks, blister care, waterproofs and visibility gear are the priorities.

Campers

This is not a natural camping-led trail. The route is short, settlement-based and has established indoor accommodation in the towns and lake villages.

Anyone planning to camp should arrange legal overnight places in advance and not assume camping is available along the towpath, roadsides or lakeshore. This should be checked before travelling.

Camping gear will make the road walking harder, so keep weight disciplined. Water and food planning also need more care, especially north of Killaloe/Ballina and around the quieter lake sections.

Fast and section hikers

Fast walkers and section hikers should still carry waterproofs, water, food, a power bank and proper navigation. The route may look simple on paper, but road exposure, wet vegetation and the Arra Mountains climb can all slow a lightweight schedule.

For one-day or two-day sections, prioritise cushioned footwear, high-visibility clothing and transport planning. Current Local Link and rail times should be checked before relying on them, particularly when finishing at Dromineer and travelling out via Nenagh.

Budget and Costs

The Lough Derg Way is a short 3-day trail, so the main cost is accommodation rather than food or specialist logistics. Plan around two trail nights if starting from Limerick City and finishing in Dromineer on the standard schedule, with possible extra nights in Limerick City before the walk or near Dromineer/Nenagh afterwards depending on transport times.

Prices in the Republic of Ireland are in euro (€). Accommodation, restaurant meals, taxi fares and public transport fares change seasonally, so current prices should be checked before booking.

Main cost items

Cost item	What to budget for
Accommodation	B&Bs, guesthouses, pubs with rooms and hotels in Limerick City, Killaloe/Ballina, Garrykennedy and Dromineer. Choice is best in Limerick City and Killaloe/Ballina, thinner in the lake villages.
Food	Breakfast may be included with B&B-style accommodation, but this should not be assumed. Budget for packed lunches and evening meals, especially where the next day has long road or mountain sections with limited services.
Transport to the start	Limerick City is the easiest access point, with Limerick Colbert station and Bus Éireann services, plus Shannon Airport about 40 minutes away. Fares depend on origin and ticket type.
Transport from the finish	Dromineer has no railway. The usual exit is by TFI Local Link bus to Nenagh, then onward by rail or bus. Current Local Link and rail times should be checked before relying on them.
Taxis	Useful as a fallback from Dromineer, for off-route accommodation, or if public transport does not line up with walking times. Agree the fare before travelling.
Maps and navigation	OSI Discovery Series sheets 58, 59 and 65 are the relevant paper maps, with downloadable section maps also available for the route.
Luggage transfer	Not something to assume on this trail. If baggage transfer is needed, arrange it directly with accommodation providers or local taxi services before committing to the itinerary.
Camping	Do not plan this route around camping unless a specific legal campsite or private arrangement has been booked. The accommodation pattern for the trail is indoor lodging in towns and lake villages.

Budget approach

A low-cost walk means keeping the trip to the standard two trail nights, avoiding unnecessary taxi use, carrying lunches from the larger settlements, and using public transport at both ends. This is most realistic if accommodation is booked early and the Dromineer-to-Nenagh Local Link timing works for the finish day.

The weak point in a tight budget is accommodation availability in the lake villages. If Garrykennedy or Dromineer has limited availability on the required date, the saving from a cheap room can quickly disappear if a taxi is needed to reach off-route lodging.

Mid-range approach

Most walkers should budget for B&B, guesthouse or pub-room accommodation, evening meals in Killaloe/Ballina and Garrykennedy, and a public-transport exit via Nenagh. This gives enough flexibility without requiring a fully serviced walking package.

For the standard itinerary, the key bookings are Killaloe/Ballina after the long first day and Garrykennedy before the final stage to Dromineer. Book ahead in summer, when lake-village accommodation is thinner and demand is higher.

Comfortable approach

A more comfortable budget allows for hotel-style accommodation where available, a pre-walk night in Limerick City, restaurant meals, taxis where public transport is awkward, and possibly luggage movement arranged locally. This is the best approach if walking outside the main season, arriving late into Limerick, or needing a guaranteed onward connection after finishing in Dromineer.

Comfort on this route is less about luxury and more about reducing logistical pressure. The road-heavy northern half and the Arra Mountains crossing are easier to manage if accommodation, meals and the Dromineer exit have already been arranged.

Cost-saving tips

- Book Killaloe/Ballina and Garrykennedy first, then build the rest of the itinerary around those nights.
- Check whether breakfast is included before comparing room prices.
- Carry lunch and snacks from larger settlements rather than relying on small intermediate stops.
- Check TFI Local Link Tipperary times from Dromineer to Nenagh before deciding whether a taxi is needed.
- Avoid assuming that luggage transfer, camping or dog-friendly options are available; dogs are not permitted on the trail.

Luggage Transfer, Guided Tours and Support Services

Luggage transfer

Dedicated luggage-transfer services are not a core feature of the Lough Derg Way in the way they are on busier Irish and UK long-distance trails. Because the route is short, usually walked over three days, many walkers simply carry an overnight pack and use accommodation in Limerick City, Killaloe/Ballina, Garrykennedy and Dromineer.

If baggage transfer is important, ask each accommodation provider before booking whether they can help arrange a local taxi courier or move bags to the next stop. This is most useful for the Killaloe/Ballina to Garrykennedy stage, where the Arra Mountains crossing adds a proper climb and exposed road-and-track walking.

Do not assume luggage transfer will be available at short notice, especially for Garrykennedy and Dromineer. Book accommodation first, then arrange any bag movement directly with hosts or local taxi operators. Prices and availability should be checked when booking.

Self-guided walking packages

The Lough Derg Way is straightforward to organise independently: it is waymarked, short, and links towns and lake villages with normal guest accommodation. A self-guided package is therefore a convenience rather than a necessity.

Where offered, a self-guided arrangement would typically suit walkers who want accommodation booked for them, written route notes or maps, and help with luggage or transfers. Check exactly what is included before paying, particularly whether baggage transfer to Garrykennedy and Dromineer is part of the package or only arranged on request.

Independent walkers should still book the lake-village accommodation ahead in summer. Choice is broader in Killaloe/Ballina, but thinner around Garrykennedy and at the finish in Dromineer.

Guided walking

Guided departures are not essential for this route. The trail follows yellow-arrow National Waymarked Trail markers and has no technical mountain ground, although the road mileage, traffic exposure and the Arra Mountains crossing mean it still needs proper planning.

A guide may be useful for groups, less confident walkers, or visitors who want local interpretation around Killaloe, Ballina, Lough Derg and the Shannon. Availability of guided walks or private guiding should be checked before travelling, as regular scheduled guided departures should not be assumed.

Taxi and transfer support

Taxis are the most practical support option for missed connections, shortening a stage, or returning from the finish. They can be useful between Dromineer and Nenagh, from where there are onward rail and bus connections, and for linking accommodation slightly off the walking line.

Taxi availability in smaller lakeside villages can be limited, so arrange transfers in advance rather than relying on finding one at the end of the day. This matters most at Dromineer, Garrykennedy and on the quieter northern road sections.

For public transport from the finish, use the TFI Local Link bus from Dromineer to Nenagh, then onward rail or bus connections. Current Local Link and rail times should be checked before relying on them, especially at weekends or outside the main visitor season.

When support is worth paying for

Support services are most useful if carrying a full pack would make the Arra Mountains stage uncomfortable, if accommodation availability forces an off-route overnight stop, or if a tight onward journey from Dromineer depends on a reliable transfer.

For fit walkers with light overnight kit and pre-booked accommodation, the route is usually manageable without formal support. The main planning priorities are accommodation in the smaller lake villages, transport away from Dromineer, and a weather-appropriate kit choice for the exposed high section over the Arra Mountains.

Shorter Hikes and Best Sections

The Lough Derg Way is short enough to walk in full, but it also divides well into river, mountain and lake sections. The main practical constraint is transport: Limerick City, Killaloe/Ballina and Dromineer are the easiest places to plan around, while Garrykennedy and smaller intermediate points need more care.

Dogs are not permitted on the trail, including shorter sections.

Best for	Start and end	Approx distance	Why choose it	Transport notes
Best day walk for scenery	Killaloe/Ballina to Garrykennedy	22 km	The strongest single-day sample of the route: the climb over the Arra Mountains, the shoulder of Tountinna, the Graves of the Leinstermen and views over Lough Derg. This is the hillier, more exposed part of the Way, with a mix of minor road, track and lane walking.	Killaloe/Ballina has bus links to Limerick. Onward transport from Garrykennedy should be checked before travelling, and accommodation should be booked ahead if staying there.
Best weekend section	Killaloe/Ballina to Dromineer, via Garrykennedy	40 km	A compact two-day version of the northern half: mountains on the first day, then Lough Derg shore and harbour villages on the second. This gives the most varied walking without committing to the full 68 km.	Start via bus links to Killaloe/Ballina from Limerick. Finish at Dromineer, then use TFI Local Link to Nenagh for rail and bus connections; current times should be checked before travelling.
Best 3–5 day option	Full route: Limerick City to Dromineer	68 km	For anyone with three or more days, walking the whole Way usually makes more sense than cutting it down: the trail is already designed as a short point-to-point route, with clear changes from Shannon-side towpath to Arra Mountains and Lough Derg. A fourth day can make the long opening stage easier if accommodation and transfers are arranged.	Limerick City is the easiest start, with Irish Rail and Bus Éireann services. Dromineer has no railway; leave by TFI Local Link to Nenagh.
Best easy-ground section	Limerick City to Killaloe/Ballina	28 km	The flattest and most straightforward terrain, following the River Shannon, the University of Limerick area, the Living Bridge, Clonlara, the Limerick Navigation / Errina Canal and O'Briensbridge. It is still a long day if walked end-to-end, so less experienced walkers may prefer to arrange a shorter pick-up or overnight split.	Very easy start from Arthur's Quay in central Limerick. Killaloe/Ballina has bus links to Limerick; any intermediate exit or pick-up should be checked before travelling.

Best for	Start and end	Approx distance	Why choose it	Transport notes
Best for public transport	Limerick City to Killaloe/Ballina	28 km	The most practical section without a car, because it starts in Limerick City and finishes in the largest trail settlement outside the city. It also avoids the harder Arra Mountains crossing.	Start at Arthur's Quay, close to Limerick city-centre services and Limerick Colbert station. Return from Killaloe/Ballina by bus to Limerick; check current timetables before relying on them.
Best for villages and accommodation	Killaloe/Ballina to Dromineer, overnight at Garrykennedy	40 km	Links the main lake settlements on the northern half: the twin towns of Killaloe and Ballina, the harbour village of Garrykennedy, and the finish at Dromineer. This is the best section if the appeal is lake villages, pubs, guesthouses and short overnight stops rather than towpath mileage.	Accommodation choice is best in Killaloe/Ballina and thinner in Garrykennedy and Dromineer, so book ahead in summer. Leaving Dromineer depends on the Local Link connection to Nenagh.

Camping

The Lough Derg Way is better planned around B&Bs, guesthouses, pubs with rooms and hotels than camping. No route-specific camping infrastructure is essential to the usual itinerary, and permission or campsite availability should be checked before travelling if planning to camp.

Highlights and Points of Interest

The Lough Derg Way changes character noticeably as it leaves Limerick City: first the Shannon, canal and towpath, then the heritage towns at Killaloe and Ballina, then the higher road-and-track crossing of the Arra Mountains before the final lakeside villages on Lough Derg. The places below are the main points worth allowing extra time for, in walking order.

University of Limerick Living Bridge

Early in the route, the Way crosses the River Shannon through the University of Limerick campus on the Living Bridge, a pedestrian and cycle bridge of around 350 m. It is one of the clearest transitions on the walk: from the city-centre start at Arthur's Quay into a more open riverside route.

This is a good point to slow down rather than treat as a simple crossing, especially if starting from Limerick City in the morning. The bridge gives a useful first sense of the scale of the Shannon, which remains the defining feature of the southern half of the trail.

Limerick Navigation Canal and Shannon Towpath

The flat canal-and-river section is one of the easiest and most distinctive parts of the Lough Derg Way. The route uses the towpath of the disused Limerick Navigation / Errina Canal, an 18th-century navigation opened in 1799, with straightforward walking alongside the Shannon corridor.

This section is also where the trail passes the headrace of the Ardnacrusha hydro-electric station. It is worth treating this part as more than a warm-up: it is the most level walking on the route and contrasts strongly with the road miles and Arra Mountains climb later on.

O'Briensbridge

O'Briensbridge is a natural pause on the first day's river-and-canal walking. The village sits beside the Shannon and is noted for its old multi-arch river bridge.

For walkers covering the route in the standard three days, O'Briensbridge is useful as a rest point between Limerick City and Killaloe/Ballina. It is also one of the more attractive village stops before the route reaches the larger heritage towns at the head of the lower Shannon section.

Killaloe and Ballina

Killaloe and Ballina are the main cultural stop on the Lough Derg Way. The twin towns face each other across the Shannon and are linked by a 13-arch bridge, making them a strong place to build in extra time or an overnight stop.

Killaloe was the power base of Brian Boru, the 11th-century High King of Ireland. The key historic sight is 13th-century St Flannan's Cathedral, with St Flannan's Oratory and an Ogham-and-runic inscribed stone.

Accommodation choice is generally better here than in the smaller lake villages, so this is the most practical place to linger if the schedule allows. It is also the last major settlement before the route turns towards the more exposed Arra Mountains section.

The Arra Mountains and Tountinna Shoulder

The Arra Mountains crossing is the physical high point of the route and the main scenic viewpoint section. The Way climbs on road and track over the shoulder of Tountinna, whose 463 m summit lies just above the line, with the trail itself reaching roughly 440 m.

In clear weather this section gives wide views over Lough Derg and the Shannon valley. It is also the part of the walk where conditions matter most: wind, rain and poor visibility will make it feel more serious than the earlier towpath walking, even though the terrain is not technical.

Graves of the Leinstermen

On the western slope of Tountinna, the route passes the Graves of the Leinstermen, a Bronze Age standing-stone and cairn site linked in legend to Brian Boru's era. It is one of the most distinctive historic points on the high northern section.

This is a worthwhile stop on the mountain crossing, particularly because it combines archaeological interest with the broader views from the Arra Mountains. Allow time here if the weather is good, but avoid lingering on the exposed section in poor conditions.

Garrykennedy

Garrykennedy is a small harbour village on the Lough Derg shore and a popular stop before the final stage to Dromineer. Its main historic feature is the ruin of a 15th-century O'Brien tower house near the harbour.

For walkers following the usual three-day itinerary, Garrykennedy is the logical second overnight point. It is also a good place to enjoy the lake setting without the pressure of reaching the finish on the same evening.

Lough Derg and the Approach to Dromineer

Lough Derg is the third-largest lake in Ireland and the largest on the River Shannon. The final part of the Way follows the southern and western shore towards Dromineer, giving the route its most open lakeside character.

Some lakeside sections, including areas around The Callows near Dromineer, can be wet or overgrown. Current trail condition should be checked before travelling, particularly if walking outside the main May–October season.

Dromineer Harbour and Castle Ruin

The route finishes at Dromineer, a harbour village on Lough Derg, beside the ruined castle and the lake pier. It is a satisfying end point because the trail arrives directly at the water after crossing from the Shannon corridor to the lake shore.

Dromineer is worth allowing time for at the end of the walk rather than planning an immediate departure. There is no railway at the finish, so onward travel usually requires the TFI Local Link bus to Nenagh, with current times checked before relying on the connection.

Common Mistakes and Planning Tips

Treating the whole route as easy riverside walking

Mistake: Planning for three gentle towpath days because the southern section out of Limerick City is flat and straightforward.

Fix: Allow for a much tougher second half. North of Killaloe/Ballina the Way includes sustained minor-road walking and the climb over the Arra Mountains, reaching roughly 440 m near the shoulder of Tountinna. In wet, windy or low-visibility weather this section needs proper waterproofs, warm layers and enough time in the day to avoid rushing the descent towards Lough Derg.

Underestimating the road walking

Mistake: Expecting a mostly off-road trail and choosing footwear or daily distances accordingly.

Fix: Plan for a route where about 38 km — roughly 55% — is on local roads. Comfortable footwear for tarmac matters as much as grip for wet tracks, and high-visibility clothing is sensible on narrow lanes and any stretches with fast-moving traffic. Walk single file where visibility is limited and do not assume every road section will feel quiet.

Leaving accommodation too late

Mistake: Assuming it will be easy to find a bed at the end of each stage, especially in the smaller lake villages.

Fix: Book ahead, particularly in summer. Limerick City and Killaloe/Ballina have the broadest choice, while places such as Garrykennedy and Dromineer have thinner capacity. If accommodation is full, the alternative may involve a taxi transfer or a reworked itinerary rather than simply walking to the next large town.

Misjudging the first day

Mistake: Starting late from Arthur's Quay and treating the first stage to Killaloe/Ballina as a short warm-up.

Fix: The usual first day is around 28 km, so begin early enough to allow for navigation out of Limerick City, the Shannon-side paths, the University of Limerick / Living Bridge area, Clonlara and O'Briensbridge without pressure. A late start can turn an otherwise simple day into a tiring road-and-towpath push.

Assuming the finish has simple onward transport

Mistake: Reaching Dromineer and only then checking how to leave the trail.

Fix: Plan the exit before booking the final night. Dromineer has no railway station; the usual public-transport link is the TFI Local Link bus to Nenagh, which has rail on the Limerick–Ballybrophy line and onward bus/rail connections. Current Local Link and rail times should be checked before travelling, especially if connecting to Limerick, Dublin or Shannon Airport.

Relying only on waymarks

Mistake: Assuming the yellow-arrow National Waymarked Trail signs will be enough for every junction and every overgrown section.

Fix: Carry offline mapping as well as following the waymarks. OSI Discovery Series sheets 58, 59 and 65 cover the route, and the downloadable section maps for Limerick City–Clonlara, Clonlara–O'Briensbridge, O'Briensbridge–Killaloe, Killaloe–Castletown and Castletown–Dromineer are useful for stage planning. A GPX track is helpful, but it should be current because the route was reconfigured and relaunched in 2011.

Ignoring trail-condition checks near Lough Derg

Mistake: Assuming the lakeside sections will always be clear, dry and easy to follow.

Fix: Check current trail status before setting out, particularly for the final approach towards Dromineer and areas such as The Callows, where sections can be wet, overgrown or in poor condition. Long grass and wet ground slow progress and can make the final day feel less straightforward than its distance suggests.

Planning food and water too casually

Mistake: Depending on finding food, drink or an open stop whenever needed.

Fix: Treat the named towns and villages as planning points, not guaranteed resupply at the exact moment required. Limerick City, O'Briensbridge, Killaloe/Ballina, Garrykenny and Dromineer are the obvious places to plan around, but opening hours can vary. Start each day with enough food and water for the full stage, and check meal options with accommodation in the smaller villages.

Bringing a dog

Mistake: Assuming the route is suitable for walking with a dog because much of it uses towpaths, lanes and lakeside paths.

Fix: Do not plan this trail with a dog. Dogs are not permitted on the Lough Derg Way, so alternative walking plans are needed if travelling with one.

Treating quoted distances and ascent as exact

Mistake: Building an itinerary around a precise kilometre figure from a single map or app.

Fix: Use the headline route length of about 68 km as a planning guide, but allow small variation between maps, section lines and GPS recordings. The official ascent figure is 527 m, yet the Arra Mountains crossing makes the route feel more substantial than a low-level towpath walk. Build in time margins rather than planning tight transport connections immediately after finishing.

Final Advice

The Lough Derg Way is best suited to reasonably fit walkers who want a short, waymarked Irish trail with towns, lake villages and straightforward accommodation rather than remote backpacking. It is not technically difficult, but it should not be underestimated: the road mileage is substantial, the Arra Mountains crossing is exposed, and wet or overgrown lakeside sections can slow progress.

The main planning priority is logistics at the northern end. Book accommodation in Killaloe/Ballina, Garrykenny and Dromineer ahead in summer, and check current TFI Local Link Tipperary times from Dromineer to Nenagh before committing to onward travel. Also check for any trail diversions or condition updates, especially around the lakeside and Callows sections near Dromineer.

The most rewarding part of the route is the contrast between the flat Shannon and canal walking in the south and the climb over the Arra Mountains above Lough Derg. The high section near Tountinna and the Graves of the Leinstermen gives the walk its sense of scale, but it is also the place where poor weather, wind and road exposure matter most.

For most walkers, the route works well as a three-day thru-hike from Limerick City to Dromineer. Section hiking is also practical, particularly between Limerick City, O'Briensbridge and Killaloe/Ballina, where access and services are easier; the northern road and lake sections need more careful transport planning.

Go prepared for long tarmac stretches as much as for trail walking: comfortable footwear, high-visibility clothing, waterproofs and enough food and water between villages are more useful here than heavy mountain kit. Dogs are not permitted on the trail. Treat the Lough Derg Way as a compact but varied point-to-point journey, and it becomes a very achievable way to link Limerick City, the Shannon, the Arra Mountains and the Lough Derg shore on foot.