

Croagh Patrick Heritage Trail - Ballintubber to Aughagower

Trail Surface:	Forest Tracks, farmland, country Roads and boreens.
Difficulty:	Hard
Distance:	25.5 Km
Duration:	6-8 hours
Start:	Car park in Ballintubber
O/S maps 1:50000:	31, 38

This walk features on day two of the Croagh Patrick Heritage Trail Festival walk which was held over the St Patrick's holiday weekend in March. This stage will bring you from Ballintubber Abbey to the picturesque village of Aughagower.

Ballintubber Abbey was founded in 1216 by Cathal Crovderg O'Connor and is an important sacred Irish historical site. The abbey has suffered a turbulent history through suppression and fire however and as poet Cecil Day Lewis wrote, "it refused to die," and worship continued. Today, Ballintubber is recognised as the country's only royal abbey that has been in continuous use down the generations and is currently celebrating its 800-year anniversary. Tioboid na Loing, a son of Granuaile is actually buried in the sacristy.

You will soon come to the little village of Killawalla located in the foothills of the Partry Mountains. Killawalla is an Anglicisation of the gaelic "Coill a Bhaile" meaning "wood of the road or pass". During penal times "Sean na Sagart" was a legendary priest hunter who frequented these areas. He received a large bounty for each priest's head he collected and then he tossed these heads into a lake nearby called Loch na gCeann. He is buried in Ballintubber Abbey where an ash tree marks his grave. He is buried facing north where the sun never rises. This is in contrast to the other graves in the graveyard that face the east and the rising sun.

From Killawalla you journey through the town land of Bellaburke and then on to the Aille River and its famous caves. In 2008, a Polish cave explorer named Artur Kozlowski reached 103 metres (338ft) below ground here. This surpassed the previous British/Irish record of 90 metres attributed to Britain's deepest cave, Wookey Hole, in the Mendip Hills in Somerset.

Then, as you ascend the long slow drag up Teevenish Hill through Coillte forestry, the view from the top is a joy to behold in good weather conditions. To the west you will see the silhouette of Croagh Patrick with the famous round tower in Aughagower, nestling in the valley below.