

The Rocky Mountain Way

Trail Surface:	Great Western Greenway, bog roads and quiet country roads
Difficulty:	Moderate bike trail for experienced mountain bikers
Distance:	19.35 km
Highest point:	100 m
Duration:	Biking 2.5 hours; hiking 4.5 hours
Dogs:	No dogs allowed as this walk goes through open farmland.

The trail affords magnificent views of Clew Bay, Croagh Patrick to the south and the heather clad slopes of the Nephin Mountains. From Glendahurk, Glenthomas and Glenamaddoo rushing mountain streams hurry onward to Clew bay.

Well before walking became the number one outdoor activity in Ireland, Burrishoole landowners recognised the potential of their countryside for tourism and walking. So much so that in the mid 2000's a whole network of trails was established in the area. This network, stretching from Newport to Mulranny in County Mayo contains 12 loops in total, of which most will shortly be Fáilte Ireland accredited - another first for an area that set the standard for looped walks many years ago.

Over the last few years the Greenway has been developed and has been an incredible success. The Loops now need to reflect this change and adapt accordingly. This is currently being carried out in an exciting new initiative which will see 5 new map boards designed and installed for the loops. Improvements are also being made to the actual routes and new trail furniture and safety features are being added.

This month's walk /cycle is a really interesting one. It reflects many of these changes. It begins and finishes on the Greenway but also takes in all the very best scenery the Burrishoole loops have to offer. It starts or finishes in Newport/ Mulranny, travels on the Greenway for around 2 Kilometres before heading north along the upper spine of the Burrishoole loops.

I couldn't have picked a better time of year to have cycled the trail as the weather in late April was absolutely beautiful. I departed Newport heading west on the greenway before joining the Lettermaghera loop, then up through the Wire Hills to uncover the myriad of spectacular lakes that lie hidden from the main Newport to Mulranny road and off the tourist trail. The final climb takes us through the village of Lettermaghera.

After gaining height, views of Clew Bay and the surrounding area will open up before you. On this day the sky was the clearest blue you could imagine, filled with the sound of skylarks soaring and diving in their courtship rituals. You are now on the Rocky Mountain Way proper, and this route will now take you all the way to Mulranny, whilst looking down at the busier Greenway below.

You will travel through townlands with ancient Irish names like Min Na Clocha Finne, Srahcorrick and Cathreenbrack. By a strange twist of fate, it is here I run into Barry from East West mapping. He is compiling a list of these names to include on a map covering all the Nephin Beg range from Newport to Bangor. This old gaelic heritage is priceless and should be preserved.

I arrive in Mulranny three hours after leaving Newport, delighted to avail of some lunch and refreshments in the Hotel. With the wind now on my back I return to Newport via the Rockfleet Castle Loop, but that's a story for another day.

Next month we start the Epic Western Way which has recently being upgraded and relaunched.

How to get there: From Newport; trail starts at Canon Killeen park in the centre of the town. From Mulranny; Up behind the Mulranny Bay Hotel on the Greenway.