

Top to bottom: Towpath
Coffee, Jerrettspass.
Finegan & Son, Newry.
The path is tarmacked and
flat. Hollie Berrie Tea Rooms.



Weekender

Newry Canal Way

This flat and scenic Northern Irish towpath is an ideal route for families and beginners.

Andrew McClean is your guide



ANDREW MCCLEAN

Cycling UK's Northern Ireland engagement officer

Ask a leisure cyclist in Northern Ireland to recommend a ride and the odds are good they'll say the Newry-Portadown canal. The waterway is lined with bullrushes, with views over rolling hills and yellow rapeseed fields. And there are lots of coffee stops along the way.

The ride is a straight shot between the two towns, which are connected to each other and Belfast by train. The surface, gradient and distance are suitable for almost any bike and rider, with a tarmac path the entire length and no discernible climbs on it. Our group managed on two heavy, folding electric bikes and a singlespeed road bike with skinny tyres.

There are two things to note if you're considering the bike-train combo. Firstly, check the train times before you leave; they aren't frequent. Secondly, take the train to Newry to start there if you're only riding one way. We rode from Portadown to Newry, which requires a long, steep slog from the canal up to the railway station to finish. It would be much nicer as a downhill start.



Explore Belfast

Ride the Maritime Heritage Trail:

cyclinguk.org/route/maritime-heritage-trail



Weekend ride

NEWRY CANAL WAY

• **Route name:** Newry Canal Way. • **Start/finish:** Canal Quay, Newry, BT35 6BP or The Old Pump House, Francis Street, Portadown, BT62 1AZ. • **Maps:** not required but covered by OSNI Discovery Series Sheet 29 (The Mourne) and Sheet 20 (Craigavon). • **Ride length:** 32.2km (20 miles). • **Climbing:** 11 metres. • **Bike type:** any. • **Ride level:** beginner. • **GPX file:** cyclinguk.org/weekender-newry-canal-way

1 Portadown
The start (or end) of the cycle path takes you along the River Bann to its confluence with the Cusher River and the Newry Canal, which you follow. Ground Espresso, a riverside coffee shop in Portadown, is an ideal place to start or finish.

2 Craigavon
Just north of Portadown, and not actually on the route, is Craigavon, which had Dutch-style infrastructure before the Dutch did. Devised in the 1960s, the town was built to completely separate man and motor. For details, visit blackpaths.org.

3 MONEYPENNY'S FORGE AND LOCKHOUSE
Guided tours, a bee garden, a history of the canal, a blacksmith's workshop, metalworking classes, and demonstrations celebrating the ancient craft of blacksmithing.



4 Scarva
A village that distinguishes itself in three ways: by re-enacting the Battle of the Boyne; its flower displays; and the best selection of home-baked goods this side of the River Bann! Hollie Berrie Tea Rooms right on the canal is a must visit. I recommend the rice crispy buns!

5 Lough Shark/ Acton Lake
The place for an overnight stop if you want to make a weekend of it. Lisnabrague Lodge sits right beside the lough and is home to three timber glamping pods and a hot tub. The owners have also converted the old boathouse if you fancy more select accommodation.

6 NEWRY
Sitting in the foothills of the Mourne Mountains, it is well worth a look around before dashing for the train or beginning your ride. There's a wide array of eateries, but it is hard to top Finegan and Son, a speciality coffee shop with a lovely atmosphere, a locally sourced menu, and fish tacos to die for.

