

The Ards Peninsula

Route Name: Ards Peninsula Quiet



STEPHEN MCCRORY
Stephen is chair of the Ards and North Down Cycle Campaign

Ways Trail
Start/finish: Bangor Station (no bikes on trains before 9:30) or via Comber Greenway and its new extensions. North Down Coastal Path is also possible but is narrow and rough in places
Finish: Portaferry
Maps: OS

Discoverer Series sheets 15 (Belfast) and 21 (Strangford) **Ride length:** 66.4km (41.27 miles) **Climbing:** 340m **Bike type:** Road, touring, hybrid, e-bike **Ride level:** Regular
GPX file: cyclinguk.org/weekender-ards-peninsula

01

Bangor

A small city retaining the charm of its Victorian seaside heyday, with plenty of places to eat and stay. For those in a hurry to be off, 'Trax' in the station can provide the ideal cyclist's breakfast: the Ulster fry. If you have more time, the castle grounds above the station hosts an excellent small museum, café and enchanting walled garden.

02

Ballycopeland Windmill

The last survivor on what was once a landscape dotted with a hundred mills. Built in the late 1700s, with a rotating cap and three mill wheels, it was cutting edge technology in its day. Today, cyclists can visit the mill and relax in the café, which is due to reopen this year. For opening times, see visittardsandnorthdown.com.

03

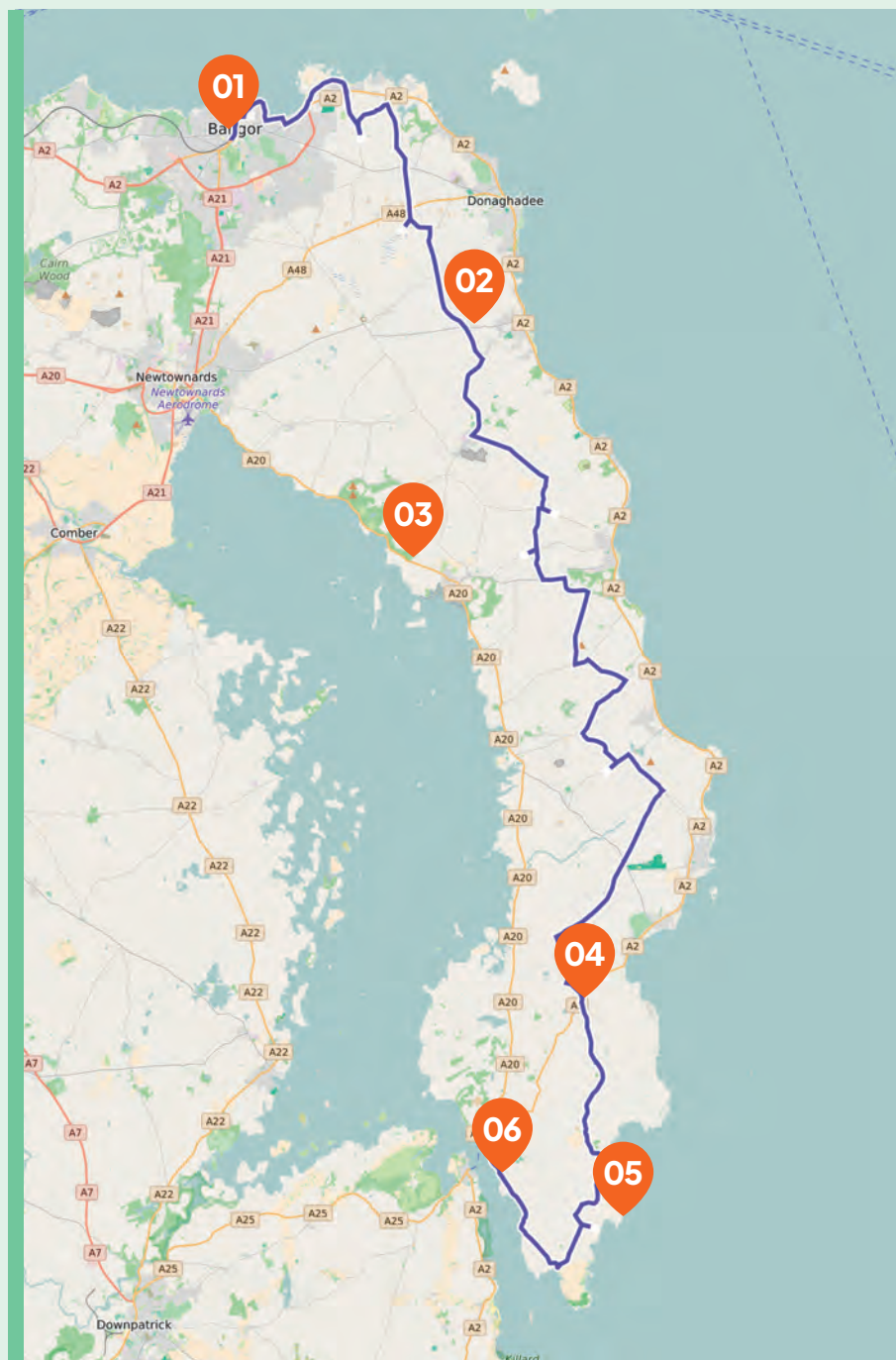
Mount Stewart House

A short diversion at this point allows a visit to the magnificent house and gardens of this National Trust property. It lies just north of the charming village of Greyabbey, with its cafés, pub, antique shops and Norman abbey. (Getting here does necessitate using a stretch of A road.)

04

Broom Hill

At a staggered junction, the route offers a choice. Tired legs or wild weather make going straight ahead tempting, dropping past Lough Cowey until Marfield Road arrives at the wooded shores of



Map: OpenStreetMaps, created with inkatlas.com. Photos: Stephen McCrory and Andrew McClean

Strangford Lough. Turning left keeps to the main route, heading for the Irish Sea coast, which is increasingly wild and rocky. Camping is available at nearby Ardminnan.

05

Millin Bay

As one approaches the tip of the peninsula, there is an abundance of ancient history present, particularly relating to the Stone and Bronze Ages. It is a land of standing stones and raths (circular earthen ramparts). St Cowey's Wells merit a visit for a

refreshing taste of (healing?) spring water and the views of the salt marshes.

06

Portaferry

A small town with plenty of options for food, drink, shelter and possibly some traditional music. The views over the narrows towards the village of Strangford are stunning. You can take the ferry across if you want to visit another splendid National Trust property, Castle Ward, which also offers a campsite and cycle trails.