



cycling on www.cycleni.com websites. Gullion can be found on www.walkni.com and Further information on walking in the Ring of

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visit or things to do, contact: For further information on where to stay, places to **Nisitor Information** Eolas don Chuairteoir

services including hotels. provide a full range of Crossmaglen and Dundalk Newry and the towns of the area. The City of available throughout accommodation are catering Breakfast and self located. Bed and restaurants are easily public houses, cafes and convenience shopping,

range of local services, surrounding the area. A centres both within and of Gullion with vibrant and attractive Villages and village life are integral parts of the Ring Village Services Seirbhísí an tSráidbhaile

canal has recently been restored to its former glory. 1974. Victoria Sea Lock at the southern end of the last commercial vessel streamed out of the port in and dock at the Albert Basin in Newry although the capacity of Newry. Vessels continue to use the canal form in 1850 in order to increase the ship handling network within Ulster. It was completed in its present navigation route into Newry Port and the canal the canal has, in the past, been an important Located on the eastern edge of the Ring of Gullion, The Newry Canal

and scrub woodland with Alder and Willow. is surrounded by an extensive fringe of reed swamp Horsetail and White Water Lily. The Lower Lough water plants such as Common Reed, Water type lake with clean unpolluted water containing oplongus. The Upper Lough is an attractive upland Beetle Stenus nitens and the Water Beetle Lacconis ground beetles. Notable species include the Rove beetles, 15 species of spider and 10 species of invertebrates including 30 species of water wildlife. They support a wide range of Carrigans Lough are important habitats for The upper and lower loughs and the smaller

> Cashel Loughs Lochanna an Chaisi

Heron and Warblers. Mute Swan, Great Crested Grebe, Moorhen, provide cover and nesting sites for birds including nutrients. Along the banks marsh and scrub characteristic of unpolluted water and low levels of noted for its diverse aquatic plant life largest lake in the Ring of Gullion. It is name from its irregular shape. It is the Cam Lough (Crooked Lake) takes its

Armagh Drumlins. Mountains, Cooley Peninsula and Ring of Gullion, Mourne top of the mountain across the There are stunning views form the the north side of the mountain. to Cailleach Beara's Lough and down summit of Slieve Gullion, continuing on leads from the scenic drive to the south garden and toilet facilities. A way-marked trail Reserve and woodland trail, an ornamental walled mile scenic drive, Hawthorn Hill Forest Nature Centre where refreshments are available, an eight Public facilities in the park include the Courtyard managed by the Northern Ireland Forest Service. Slieve Gullion Forest Park is owned and Slieve Gullion Forest Park orite Foraoise Shliabh gCuillinn

importance. Interest (ASSI) in recognition of their designated an Area of Special Scientific Both the above sites have been including March and Butterfly Orchids. support a rich and varied flora offen near Lislea and Fathom Upper near Newry slopes of the mountains such as Levallymore of plants. Rich wet flushed fields on the lower intensive use, many fields retain a natural diversity Although the grassland has been in many years of

grassland and cattle dominate. grown some crops of oats and potatoes but now wildlife. In the past many farms would have provide a haven for wild flowers and panks, hedges and stone walls which boundaries are associated with earth originally worked as one farm. The rectangular fields, each strip to sqints of ni babivib si bnalmnat ring dyke hills. In these areas between Slieve Gullion and the ridges through the lowlands deposits which run in rounded the area are those of the glacial farms predominate. The best soils in with tarming a major activity. Small The Ring of Gullion is a living landscape Farm Landscape Lirdhreach Taluntais

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Northern Ireland BT35 9HG Crossmaglen 25-26 O'Fiaich Square O'Fiaich House Ring of Gullion AONB Officer contact details:

Bessbrook can use the Ring of Gullion Way. 9 from Newry and walkers from Newry and Mewry. Cyclists can use the National Cycle Network the main hub being

Within the AONB, services operate Dublin. Bus with Belfast and connected by rail and Dundalk are also and Armagh. Newry lead to Belfast, Dublin Major road arteries drive from each. and only 10 minutes South-East of Ulster and Dundalk in the situated near Newry I he Ring of Gullion AONB is How to Get There Treoracha

# Limistéar Sáráilleachta Nádúrtha **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

The Ring of Gullion Area of **Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** is one of nine AONB's in Northern Ireland. It was designated in December 1991 under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. This designation formally recognises that Slieve Gullion, its

surrounding farmland and ring of

hills, is a landscape of national importance. The purpose of designation is to protect and enhance the environmental qualities of the area, both for the benefit of those people living in the area and for visitors who come to see and enjoy its natural beauty.

# Oidhreacht Gheolaíoch

# **Geological Heritage**

The Ring of Gullion is the most spectacular example of a ring-dyke in the British Isles and has featured in a number of new theories that have been put forward to explain unusual rock formations. The oldest rocks in the area were formed in an ancient ocean more than 400 million years ago during the Silurian period. Masses of molten granitic rock or magma were later intruded into these rocks which underlie Newry town and much of the Slieve Gullion area. These granites are some 390 million years old and date from a major period of mountain building in

In the Tertiary period commencing some 65 million years ago, the area once again became the centre of volcanic activity. This probably began with the development of a very large volcano of which little

now remains. Along the contact zone between Silurian rocks and the Newry granite, a circular fracture developed into which was intruded acidic lavas which cooled to form a ring-dyke consisting of two rings of very hard granophyre and felsite

Slieve Gullion itself is more recent than the ring

I Rith na hAoiseanna **Through the Ages** 

People have lived in the Ring of Gullion for over 6,000 years. The shared traditions of the people have forged a unique culture which is warm, friendly and welcoming.

The area contains the remains of 20 or so large

The Ring of Gullion has rich associations with Irish legends and myths. In the Tain Bo Cuailgne (the Cattle Raid of Cooley) CuChulainn is reputed to have defended Ulster singled-handed against hordes of Queen Maeve of Connacht.

dyke and is made up of layers of granitic and basaltic rocks. There has been some debate as to their origins. One suggestion is that a huge explosive eruption of the volcano created a cast crater or caldera into which lavas were extruded in layers. Another more plausible explanation is that the lavas were intruded deep underground in a layer like manner to be unearthed by subsequent erosion.

#### Bithéagsúlacht **Biodiversity**

Biodiversity is the rich and varied diversity of plants, wildlife and habitats that occur within an area. The Ring of Gullion has a rich biodiversity associated with a range of habitats, plants and animals. The most diverse habitats are the heath of Slieve Gullion and the ring-dyke hills, residual areas of bogland at lower elevation, the rivers that flow through the area, lakes associated with glacial scouring, deciduous woodland and scrub, coniferous plantation and the farmed landscape of small fields and species rich hedgebanks.

Neolithic stone tombs amongst them some of the best examples in Ireland. There are also a number of important early Christian Monuments and buildings dating from the 5th Century as well as fine examples of traditional cottages and vernacular architecture.

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During the 18th Century, the last great age of Irish literature, the Ring of Gullion was known as the District of Poets and the District of Songs. Well known poets include Seamus Mor Mac Murphy, Art McCooey and Peadar O Doirnin who is best remembered for his love song, UrChnoc Chein Mhic Cainte.

#### Ag Blaiseadh na Tuaithe **Enjoying the Countryside**

The Ring of Gullion offers a variety of opportunities for visitors to enjoy the countryside. Driving along the attractive country roads, visiting the historic monuments and scenic viewpoints, offers a relaxing day out for the family

Long distance hikers can walk the 36 mile long. Ring of Gullion Way. Those who prefer shorter walks can avail themselves of the opportunities on and around Slieve Gullion.

Cycling on the country roads makes for a pleasant day with direct access to the Ring of Gullion from Newry via the National Cycle Network Route 9 to Slieve Gullion.

South Armagh offers the angler quality game and coarse angling. Trout can be fished at Carrigans Lough, Cashel Loughs and Mullaghbane Lake. Premier coarse angling locations are Cam Lough and the Newry Canal. There is also a jetty for water sports enthusiasts at Cam Lough.

There is a centrally located equestrian centre near Forkhill.

#### Frooch agus Portach **Heath and Bog**

The craggy hills of the Ring of Gullion with thin acidic soils overlying granitic rocks have an extensive cover of heather. In the Autumn, the purples of Ling and Bell Heather, yellows of

Dwarf Gorse and orange of Bracken, create rich mosaics of colours that contrast with the many green hues of fields and hedges. Cross-leaved heath also occurs in wetter areas with Deer Grass, Bog Asphodel and Cotton Grass.

Slieve Gullion is by far the largest area of heather moorland and has been designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in recognition of its ecological importance. Other notable areas are located on and around the ring-dyke hills.

Only small fragments remain of the once extensive lowland bogs of the Ring of Gullion. These bogs were formed on waterlogged sites were Sphagnum bog moss accumulated, building up to form thick peat deposits. The bogs so essential to rural life in the past have mostly been disturbed by centuries of turf cutting, drainage and reclamation. Those that survive contain mixtures of bog mosses with drier banks of Heather and Bilberry.

# Bogaigh

The Forkhill River, Cully Water and Flurry River wind their way through the Ring of Gullion on their way to the sea in Dundalk Bay. The rivers are an important habitat for wildlife and plants. Water Crowfoot can be found in the Forkhill River.

> Lakes are often associated with hollows scoured out by past glaciations. They have a range of vegetation from open water to adjoining fen, bog, wet heath and rush pasture. Marsh St John's Wort, Bur Reed, Waterwort, Spike Rush and Reed Canary Grass are characteristic plants at the water margins. The lakes

provide important habitats for diving birds and ducks. Two of the most important sites are Cashel Loughs and Cam Lough, both an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI).

Wading birds such as Redshank, Snipe and Oystercatcher inhabit Carlingford Lough.

### Coillearnach

Woodland

Within the Ring of Gullion trees and small deciduous woods are significant landscape features and valuable wildlife habitats. Red squirrels and Pine Martins have been observed in the forest surrounding Slieve Gullion. In the farmed countryside, small groups of trees in shelter belts or hedges provide beneficial shelter and help screen farm buildings.

On the steep slopes of valleys and hillsides, small semi-natural woodlands of Hazel and Ash with Sycamore, Oak, Rowan and Willow are notable features. Willow, Birch and Alder scrub are typical of cut over peatland in the valley bottoms. The most mature woods are those which have been planted in old estates notably at Killevy Castle, Hawthorn Hill and Forkhill.

Forestry plantation comprises mixed coniferous species primarily Sitka Spruce, Lodgepole Pine, Japanese Larch and Scots Pine. These are typically planted in irregular blocks adjacent to areas of unplanted hillside and pre-existing broad-leaved



### 1. Dolmain an Bhaile Chaoil

**Ballykeel Portal Tomb (Dolmen)** 

The Neolithic burial site dated between 4000 and 2500 BC has a huge capstone supported on upright stones over an octagonal burial chamber. It is known as the 'Hag's Chair'.

#### 2. Tuama Cúirte Bhaile Mhic Dhiarmada

**Ballymacdermott Court Tomb** 

The monument is an extremely well preserved Neolithic burial site with three chambers. It can be dated between 4000 and 2500 BC.

# 3. Carn Chluian Lom Clonlum Cairn

This is an unusual megalithic monument thought to date from the end of the Neolithic period (4000 to 2500 BC). It consists of an irregular burial chamber, once covered by a massive capstone, set within a 12.5m long irregular cairn.

# 4. Tuama Cúirte Chluainte Gabhra

**Clontygora Court Tomb** 

Towering stones, 2.7m high, mark the entrance to the Neolithic burial site. It is known as the 'King's Ring' and can be dated between 4000 and 2500 BC.

## 5. Na Doirse

The Dorsey

Dating from the Iron Age period around 100 BC, the enclosure comprises two roughly parallel massive earth bank and ditch ramparts over a mile long.

It lies astride an old route way to Eamhain Macha (Navan Fort), the ancient capital of Ulster near Armagh.

Castleblayney

# 6. Sean - Séipéal Chill Shléibhe

**Killevy Old Church** 

Killevy is the site of one of Ireland's most important early convents, founded by St Moninna in the 5th Century. The earliest of two churches on the site dates from the 10th Century.

Crossmaglen

# 7. Gallán Chill na Sagart

Kilnasaggart Pillar Stone

A long Irish inscription on the Kilnasaggart Pillar Stone records the dedication of the place by Ternoc, son of Ceran Bec under the patronage of Peter the Apostle. The inscription can be dated to around AD 700, making it the earliest cross-carved stone in Ireland.

### 8. Caisleán na Maighre

**Moyry Castle** 

In 1601 Lord Mountjoy built a three storey castle on a rocky hillock overlooking the Gap of the North in order to secure the area for the Crown.

#### 9. Carn Shliabh gCuilinn Theas agus Tuama Pasáiste

Slieve Gullion South Cairn and Passage Grave
The 573m high south summit and cairn marks the highest point in Co. Armagh. It is the site of the highest surviving Neolithic passage grave in Ireland dating back to between 4000 and 2500 BC. It can be entered from beneath the summit.

# Limistéar Sáráilleachta Пádúrtha The Ring of Gullion

# Area of Outstanding Hatural Beauty



DUNDALK



# 10. Carn Shliabh gCuilinn Thuaidh

**Slieve Gullion North Cairn** 

On the north summit of the mountain is a multiple cist cairn dating to the Bronze Age (2500 to 1500 BC).

# Ionaid Radhairc agus Láithreáin Só

**Viewpoints and Recreation Areas** 

All of these locations have ample parking.

- 11. Bernish Viewpoint
- 12. Cam Lough Viewpoint
- 13. Cashel Loughs Recreation Area
- 14. Flagstaff Viewpoint
- 15. Forkhill Recreation Area
- 16. Slieve Gullion Forest Park
- 17. Victoria Lock

#### Ionaid Chultúrtha agus Gníomhaíochta

**Cultural and Activity Centres** 

- 18. Cloverhill Golf Course, Mullaghbane
- 19. Greenvale Equestrian Centre, Forkhill
- 20. Old School Theatre, Lislea
- 21. Belmont Bait & Fly, Mullaghbane
- 22. Slieve Gullion Courtyard Centre, Killevy
- 23. Ti Chulainn Cultural Activity Centre, Mullaghbane

# Áiteanna Inspéise Eile Gar do Chompall gCuilinn Other Places of Interest Outside Ring of Gullion

- > Ashfield Golf Course, Cullyhanna
- > Bessbrook Model Village
- > Cardinal O Fiaich Heritage Centre, Cullyhanna
- > Craigmore Viaduct, Bessbrook
- > Creggan Church, Graveyard and Poets' Glen, Crossmaglen
- > Derrymore House, Bessbrook
- > Faughart Church and Graveyard, Dundalk

# Cód Tuaithe

**Country Code** 

- > Respect the people who live and work in the countryside
- Know where you are allowed to go
- > Keep to public paths across farmland
- > Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls
- > Leave gates as you find them
- > Do not interfere with machinery, livestock and crops
- > Keep dogs under control
- > Protect wildlife, plants and trees
- > Take your litter home
- > Guard against all risk of fire
- > Make no unnecessary noise
- > Respect other recreational users
- > Take special care on country roads
- > Plan ahead and be prepared for inclement weather

