Trailhead 2

Loop 2C

The Masts Loop

Walking Breaks

The Masts Loop

Howth Head, a peninsula 15km northeast of Dublin City, has been immortalised in James Joyce's Ulysses. Howth is a bustling village that offers visitors a myriad of attractions including Lambay Island, Ireland's Eye, Howth Castle, The National Transport Museum, the Martello Tower and the Baily Lighthouse. Wildlife enthusiasts will adore Ireland's Eye and its bird sanctuary which boasts guillemots, razor-bills, fulmars, gulls and gannets. This loop is one of four which starts at the DART (train) Station in the heart of the village. You are taken along the harbour before climbing away from the village around the Nose of Howth and onto the clifftops. Take in the stunning views of Lambay Island and Ireland's Eye, and be overwhelmed by the heady scent of coconut from the bright yellow gorse on the heath. The Baily Lighthouse - the last of Ireland's lighthouses to become automated - comes into view before you ascend to the highest point at 'The Summit' car park. From here you cross open hillside around the Ben of Howth and return to Howth Village via the route of the old tramline.

At a Glance

The Tramline Loop

Directions	Howth village is situated 15km north-east of Dublin city centre. The trailhead is located at the start of the promenade beside the DART (Dublin Area Rapid Transport) Station in Howth Village. The village is also served by the No. 31 and 31B buses from the city centre.
Ascent	160m
Distance	8km
Estimated Time	2 to 2.5 hours
Grade	Moderate
Trailhead	Howth Village, Co. Dublin
Terrain	Laneways and clifftop paths

A-B. Starting from the DART Station follow the red arrow onto the promenade along the harbour. You are also following green, blue and purple arrows for other loops. At the end of the prom, veer right onto Balscadden Road and ascend to reach Kilrock car park from where you join the well trodden cliff path.

B-C. Follow the cliff path for approximately 3km before turning right (leaving the longer purple loop) and ascending to reach The Summit car park.

C-D. Exit the car park through the height restriction barrier and join Bailey Green Road. Follow this road downhill to reach a junction of roads at The Summit Stores and pub. Turn left here.

D-E. Follow the tarred road past The Summit Stores and, after approximately 100m, turn right onto a grassy pathway. At the end, cross Carrickbrack Road to join another pathway whcih ascends 'Tweedy's Hill'. Joining Windgate Road at the top of the short climb, turn right and travel for approximately 200m to reach the entrance to the hillside at a gateway on your left.

D-E. You now follow a series of paths across an open hilltop section known locally as 'The Masts', where it picks up the purple loop before descending through the grounds of the local GAA Club, and eventually reaching the Balkill Park estate.

E-A. Entering Balkill Park, you pick up the green and blue loops as you join the tramline pathway. Follow the pathway downhill to exit directly opposite the DART Station - picking up the green, red and purple loops along the way.

Walking Breaks, Using Loop Walks - Advice & Safety

Choose your walk carefully

- When selecting and planning your walk, do take into consideration whether you and your walking companions want a leisurely walk or a more energetic walk and also your preferred walk duration. All the loop walks are graded as 'easy', 'moderate' or 'hard'.

Planning your walk - a key to safety

- **Check the weather conditions:** Before setting out on ANY walk, check the weather forecast. If the forecast is not good, consider revising your plans. During your walk, watch for changes in the weather, if it deteriorates be prepared to return to the walk trailhead.

WeatherDial Phone #'s	
South West	1550 123 850
East & South East	1550 123 851
West	1550 123 852
North West	1550 123 853
Dublin	1550 123 854
Website: www.met.ie	

- **Walk in daylight, NEVER in darkness:** Check sunset times and always plan to finish your walk while there is still plenty of light. Make sure the walk is achievable in the time allowed (at least one hour for every 3 km) and make sure to allow for stops along the way.
- **Company:** It is always safer not to go walking on your own and to stay together.
- **Tell someone reliable of your plans:** Leave word of your walking route with someone reliable and do remember to advise them on your return.

Clothing and items to bring

The amount of clothing and other items you may require will depend on the amount of time you plan to walk for, the type of walk and the weather conditions. You should:

- Always bring a waterproof jacket and warm clothing and remember it can be windier and colder on more exposed walks and on high ground.
- Wear walking boots or trekking shoes suitable for use on rough ground. The most common walking injury is to the ankle or lower leg, usually resulting from a simple slip or fall. This is less likely to happen if you wear proper footwear with good ankle support and a rugged sole.
- Bring plenty of snack foods and liquid.
- Carry a well charged mobile phone. However, while a mobile phone may be useful in an emergency, it should not be relied on as a safety aid as network coverage is often poor in the hills and countryside.
- If you are on medication and could have a requirement for it during your walk, be sure to bring it with you.
- Always carry a map or guide of your intended route.

Issues to consider while walking

- Use and mark your map to keep track of where you are and the progress you are making along the loop walk.
- National Loop Walks are waymarked, so are easy to follow. However, if you think you are lost, don't panic. Check your map and try work out your position. If you feel you need to backtrack to get your bearings, do so. If still lost, returning the route you have just walked is an option.

Emergency Services Dial 999 or 112

Care for Our Environment

Ireland's countryside is a fantastic natural resource, yet as increasing numbers of people seek the beauty and exhilaration of outdoor recreation, our collective mark on the environment increases. Litter, water pollution, disturbance to vegetation, wildlife, livestock and other people all impact negatively, so please:

- ✓ Plan ahead and prepare.
- ✓ Be considerate of others.
- ✓ Respect private property.
- ✓ Use gates and stiles to avoid damaging fences and walls and leave gates as you find them.
- ✓ Respect and protect all plants and animals.
- ✓ Do NOT bring dogs on the National Loop Walks.
- ✓ Only walk on the waymarked 'loop walk' route and on durable ground.
- ✓ Dispose of waste.

The National Loop Walk routes are all waymarked, so are very easy to follow.