

Wildlife Walk – 3½ miles

Crom, Northern Ireland

Discover a tranquil landscape of islands, woodland and historic ruins, on the shores of Upper Lough Erne in County Fermanagh. Crom is one of the UK's most important nature reserves, with the largest area of oak woodland in Northern Ireland. Wildlife includes wading birds, bats, pine martens and a thriving otter population.

Getting there

Bike: 2 miles of National Cycle Network route 91 (the Kingfisher Trail), runs through the property. See www.sustrans.org.uk

Boat: ferry from Derrymore Church (book 24 hrs in advance)

Bus: Ulsterbus 95 Enniskillen-Clones (connections from Belfast), alight Newtownbutler (3 ml)

Road: 3 miles west of Newtownbutler on the Newtownbutler-Crom road or follow signs from Lisnaskea (7 ml). Crom is next to the Shannon-Erne waterway

Map & grid ref: OS Discoverer 27: H332 2442. Simple NT maps available

Facilities and contact

Award-winning visitors centre with tearoom and shop, picnic area, car park, toilets, family activity packs and children's play area. School group visits, guided walks, boat hire, campsite and holiday cottages also available. Tel: 028 67738118; crom@nationaltrust.org.uk; postcode: BT92 8AP

Points of interest

- **Woodland:** the ancient yews in the Old Castle Garden have been named among the '50 greatest British trees'. In the 19th-century, parties of 200 people are said to have dined beneath their branches. The Crom estate is one of the largest areas of semi-natural woodland in Northern Ireland, with a rich variety of uncommon lichens, wild flowers such as dog violet and wood anemone, and many different species of fungi, including waxcaps – bright toadstools that emerge in short grassland in autumn.
- **Shoreline:** see marsh-loving plants like meadowsweet, purple loosestrife, iris and water lilies. Rare plants include fen violet and pointed stonewort. The threatened white-clawed crayfish is also here.
- **Birds:** with so many different habitats, Crom is a haven for woodland, wetland, meadow and hedgerow species, including snipe, curlew, redshank, heron (Crom has one of the largest heronries in Northern Ireland), sedge warbler and kingfisher. See the courtship dance of great crested grebes in March. Migratory birds include whooper swan and Greenland white-fronted goose.
- **Mammals:** in quiet spots around the estate, catch a glimpse of red squirrels, otters (Crom has one of the strongest populations in the UK), fallow deer, Irish hare and bats (eight species). An overnight stay in the mammal hide offers the chance to see the elusive pine marten.
- **Insects:** there are 12 species of dragon and damselflies including the rare, hairy dragonfly. Also present are the purple hairstreak (esp. around oak trees) and wood white butterflies.



A Common frog in woodland. Other amphibians on the estate include the smooth or 'common' newt. Look around ponds and wetland areas, especially during the breeding season in spring and summer

NTPL/Joe Cornish



A sulphur polypore fungus, otherwise known as 'chicken of the woods', on a fallen tree on Inisherker Island

NTPL/Joe Cornish



An ancient yew tree's twisted and entangled roots, sinking into the mud red ground near Crom Old Castle

NTPL/Joe Cornish

'Crom is wonderful all year round but I think it has particular charm in winter when the trees are bare. The wildlife here is special with so many rare species and the herons are fantastic – we've counted forty nests this year'

Steven Scarlett, Visitor Centre Assistant

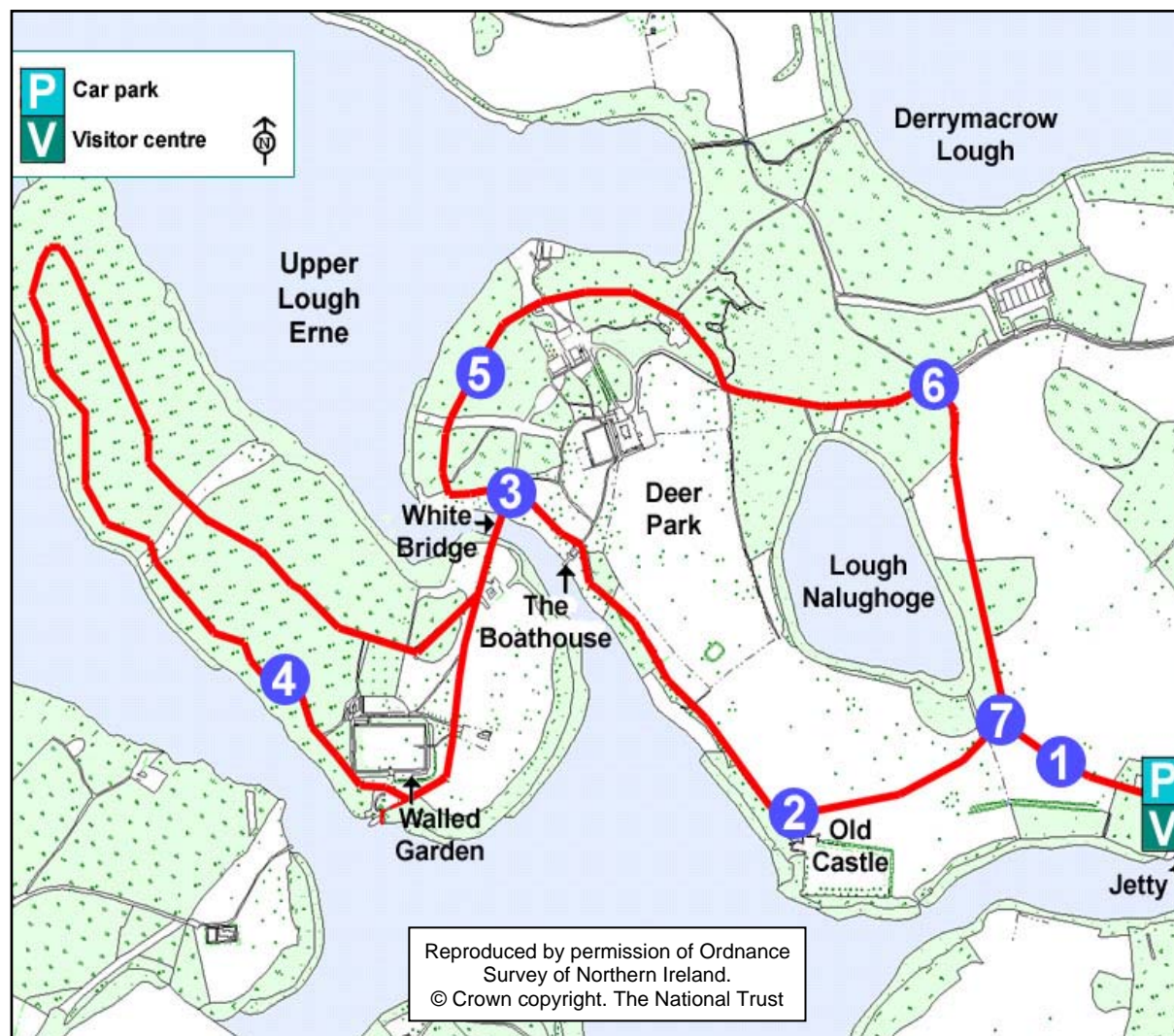
Distance, terrain and accessibility

3½ miles (5½ km). There are other way-marked paths offering shorter walks. The grounds are partly accessible to wheelchair users. The grass and woodland pathways are free of slopes with reasonably smooth and level surfaces, but can be muddy.

Route and directions

Start at the Visitor Centre to discover more about the wildlife at Crom. It's in an old stone estate yard overlooking Upper Lough Erne. Its barns are a roosting site for bats, with seven different species inhabiting this area. Look at the walls to see the little holes that act as their doorways.

1. Turn left as you leave the yard and walk along the old carriageway towards Crom Castle for a short while before turning left again through a gate into the parkland.
2. Follow the path to the Old Castle. Here you'll encounter one of the oldest yew trees in Ireland. Estimates of its age vary between 400 and 1,000 years. Be careful not to stand on its roots as they're quite delicate.
3. Continue along the loughside, past a pretty boathouse, before crossing the White Bridge onto Inisherker Island.
4. Make a little loop of the island, passing a walled garden.
5. Cross back over the bridge and turn left taking a path through trees with Upper Lough Erne on your left and the grounds of Crom Castle to your right.
6. Reach the castle's main drive and continue walking until a path breaks off to your right near the small inland Lough Nalughoge.
7. Rejoin your first path and turn left, returning to the visitor centre and car park.



NT places nearby

Florence Court, Castle Coole, Ballymoyer

As a charity, independent of government, the National Trust relies on the generosity of its supporters to continue caring for our countryside and wildlife, so that everyone can enjoy the beauty of the outdoors for generations to come

Find out more at www.nationaltrust.org.uk