

# Murlough



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|----------|--|--|---|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>P</b> | Parking area   |  | Woodland<br><i>open access, some restricted areas</i> |  | Access point to Murlough area    |
|          | Boardwalk  |  | Woodland<br><i>open access, some restricted areas</i> |  | Access point to dunes from beach |
|          | Footpath   |  | Sandy beach<br><i>shows extent at low tide</i>        |  | Wooden post with coloured top    |
|          | Walking route along beach<br><i>Usually accessible even at high tide</i> |  | Dunes<br><i>open access, some restricted areas</i>    |  |                                  |
|          | Walking route along estuary<br><i>Floods at high tide</i>                |  | No access   |  |                                  |

Mourne Heights Self-Catering Cottage  
122 Tullybrannigan Road, Newcastle  
BT33 0PW 028 437 22550

## Parking areas

### **P1** Twelve Arches car park

- Take care when crossing main road
- Parking also possible on side of main road
  - Take care when opening car door etc

### **P2** National Trust car park

- Charges in summer and peak times
- Free at other times
- Locked at night
- Cafe and toilets in summer and at weekends

### **P3** Dundrum village

- Parking on main and side roads
- Blue Bay cafe (shut Mon, Tues) and Paws For Tea "dog friendly" cafe
- 15 minute walk to Murlough area

### **P4** Keel Point parking area

- Only space for 4 cars

### **P5** Dundrum Road

- Play area
- Toilets in summer
- A long walk on main road to Murlough area

### **P<sub>NT</sub>** National Trust members only

## Access Points to Murlough Area

- ➔ From Twelve Arches car park** (take care when crossing road)
  - Boardwalk to beach - lifeguard station in summer
- ➔ From National Trust car park**
  - Boardwalks to beach. Northerly walk ends at lifeguard station (summer only)
- ➔ Through Mourne View Caravan site**
  - Pedestrian access only. About 2 mile walk from Newcastle. Bus route.
- ➔ From Dundrum**
  - Via Keel Point causeway and Downshire Bridge. About 15 min walk from Dundrum.
- ➔ Along beach from Newcastle**
  - Usually accessible, but small section just beyond Slieve Donard Hotel may be difficult at high tide. More pleasant when tide is lower. About 1.5 miles.

## Access Points to Dunes from Beach

### 1 → Golf course boundary path

Walking up the beach from Newcastle, the path is just past two parallel rows of large wooden stakes in the beach. It follows the golf course boundary fence before ending at one of boardwalks and the Mourne View caravan site. Access is possible through the site to the main road.

### 2 → Southerly boardwalk

Start is marked by a dark-blue topped white wooden post. Leads to Mourne View caravan site and National Trust car park - access to main road is possible

### 3 → Northerly boardwalk

Start is marked by a plain white wooden post and, in summer, a lifeguard station. Leads to National Trust and Twelve Arches car parks.

Note that between access points 3 and 4 there is a black-topped white wooden post that does not appear to mark any path.

### 4 → Dunes path

Start is marked by a large yellow-topped white wooden post. Passes through remote dunes area. There are some branches off, but main path leads to the agricultural track around the perimeter of farm fields.

Note that between access points 4 and 5 there is a wooden gate that does not appear to mark a main path.

### 5 → Dundrum path

Start marked by a wooden bench. Passes through a gate and green area. Leads to tarmac road which serves Murlough House (private) and Dundrum (via Downshire Bridge)

### 6 → Murlough House path

Start is at top of steep sand bank. Can be a little difficult to find. Marked by a small gap in the bushes and, possibly, marks in sand. Path actually easy to follow once started, leading around Murlough House and through wooded dunes area. Various branches off path, some leading down to estuary path.

## Paths and Tracks

----- **Boardwalks** Wooden slats set in sand. Lead from National Trust and Twelve Arches car parks to beach. No steep sections but some hills.

———— **Footpaths** There are many paths through the dunes. Only main paths shown on map. There are some steep sections and some loose sand. Paths in grassy area have small holes in them (rabbits?) - take care.

----- **Route along beach** It is possible to walk from Newcastle along beach to Dundrum estuary. Apart from a little section just beyond the Slieve Donard Hotel it should be passable at high tide, but is much more pleasant when tide is lower. Sand can be quite soft in places. Seals can often be seen at estuary mouth on opposite side - binoculars useful.

..... **Route along estuary** Floods at high tide. Various access points to inland paths not shown on map.

# National Trust Trails

Based on

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/murlough-national-nature-reserve/trails/murlough-south-end-nature-trail>

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/murlough-national-nature-reserve/trails/murlough-north-point-nature-trail>

## Southerly Trail



### Trail marked by yellow-topped posts

1. Start at the National Trust car park. Enter the Reserve through the pedestrian gate in the centre of the car park. Turn left and follow the boardwalk.
2. Follow the boardwalk to the junction, where the boardwalks meet.
3. Continue down the boardwalks until you reach a gap in the dunes to the south from which you can take in a great view of the Mourne Mountains.

*This walk offers some great sights and beautiful scenery. You can look out over Slieve Donard and Slieve Commedagh, both of which are mountains cared for by the National Trust. In the opposite direction you can see Dundrum Castle which dates back to the late 12th century and was a fortress built by John de Courcy. The woods you can see around this Castle are now managed by the National Trust.*

4. This brings you out onto Murlough beach. To find 'stop 5' go onto the beach and turn left. Follow on past a black marker post until you reach the next yellow post.
5. Turn left back onto the Reserve from the beach.
6. You have found yourself on the aptly named Archaeology Path, follow this path until you reach the next yellow post.

7. This brings you to the area that is home to colonies of the endangered marsh fritillary butterfly.

*The marsh fritillary butterfly is a beautiful little fritillary which can be seen in flight from late May and June and spends the winter as a caterpillar. Sadly its numbers are declining all over Europe; the UK is considered a stronghold for this butterfly and it's a priority species in Northern Ireland. The caterpillar feeds on devil's bit scabious, a tall purple flowered plant in full bloom in late August and September. Devil's bit scabious also provides a very valuable nectar source for other butterflies, particularly in late summer.*

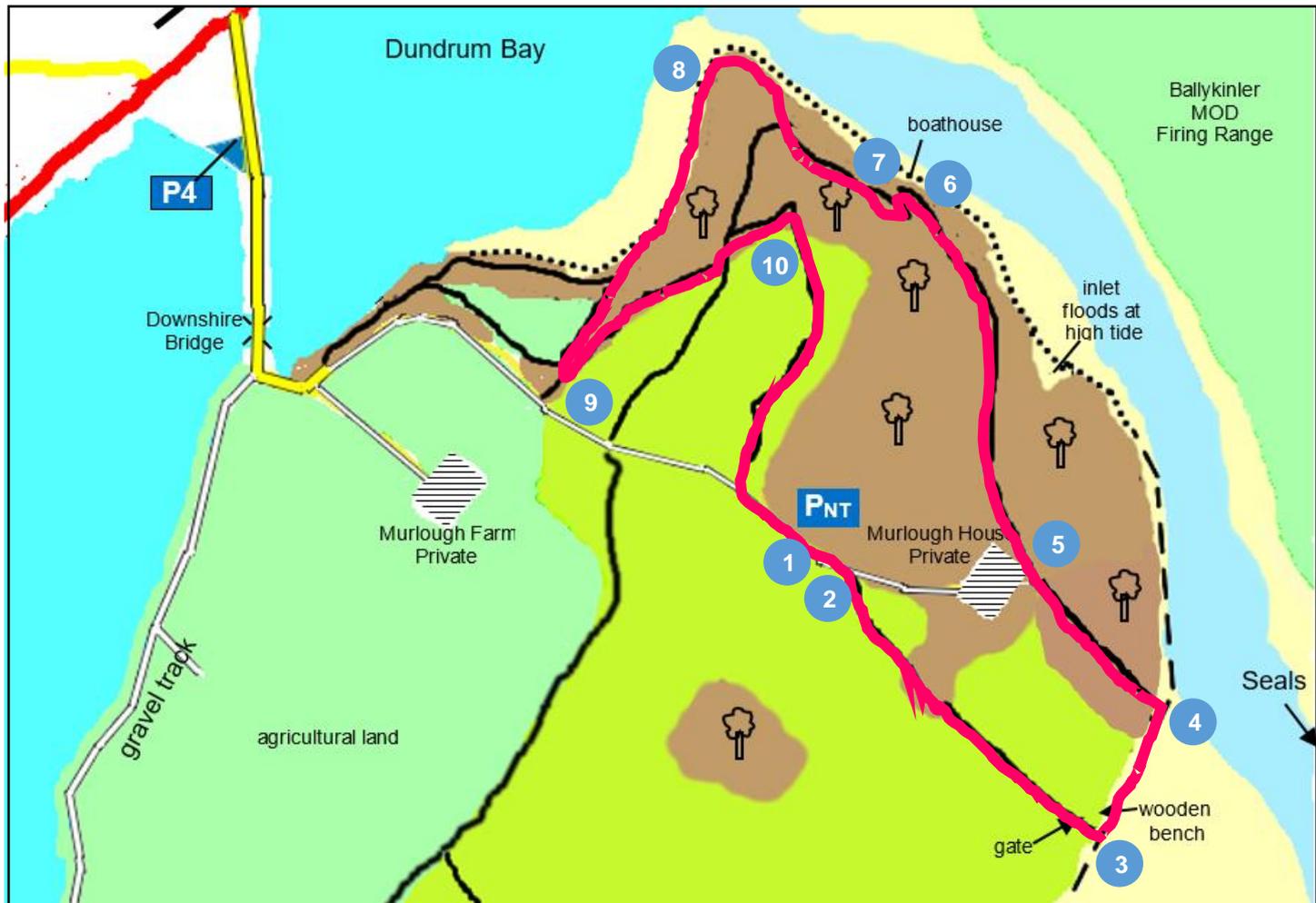
8. When you reach the yellow post marked 8, you'll find 'Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage' site with its vast array of bell and ling heather.

*August is the month to appreciate the Murlough heathland in its full glory. Look for the two species of heather; bell heather and common heather or ling. Bell heather's flower heads are purple and flower slightly earlier than the pink ling heather, making for an attractive contrast. Thousands of years of rain have washed out the calcium from the sand allowing for more acid loving plants to flourish. Bell and ling heather both grow on the older dunes and this unusual dune heathland is a priority habitat to preserve.*

9. Turn left and follow the path to get good views of Dundrum Castle and the farmland that used to be a landing ground for bombers during the Second World War.

10. Continue on the path that curves to the right to bring you to the Exmoor Kraal. On reaching the gravel lane, turn left (south) and return to the car park - 0.75 miles (1.2 km)

# Northerly Trail



## Trail marked (occasionally) by dark-green-topped posts

1. Follow the avenue from the concrete standing towards Murlough House. Turn right onto the boardwalk which is clearly marked by the 'To Beach' sign.
2. As you follow the boardwalk path down the woodland area, be sure to stop at the gate, where you will be treated to your first glimpse of the sea.
3. Carry on until you reach the beach. Take a moment to enjoy the wide expanse of shingle storm beach that stretches 4 miles (6.4 km) across the bay. Turn left and walk along the beach until you reach the green marker post.
4. Turn left and take the path that climbs up steeply into marram grass and sea buckthorn and then into a sycamore wood. Turn right before reaching the garden of Murlough House.

5. Follow straight along the path into the area of woodland, ignore the turn to the left and continue on the path down the slope to emerge on the beach next to the boathouse.

*The woodland at Murlough has a wealth of different wildlife. The main species of trees in the woodland behind Murlough House is sycamore, with a number of ash but the area also offers a great array of wildflowers and ferns. There are some great woodland birds to see and keep an eye out for the sparrow hawks which are very common. As you leave the woodland it's worth having a look at the beautiful old hazel stands.*

6. From the boathouse, turn left and walk along the beach until you reach the green post. Take the path to the left up the bank and back into the hazel path.

7. At the junction with the main track, turn right and follow the path along the edge (ignoring a turning to the left). Follow the path as it descends into high gorse scrub and turns right onto the beach of the inner bay.

8. Turn left and walk along the beach until you reach a narrow set of steps up the bank. Go up these steps and follow the path back into the Reserve.

*When walking along the beach it's worth looking out for some of our plant species. We have beautiful white bladder campion as well as sea beet and scurvy grass along the top of the shingle in the saltmarsh. Large beds of two fleshy saltmarsh annuals, marsh samphire and seablite can also be spotted slightly lower on the beach.*

9. As you follow the path, you will come to a point where five paths meet. Take the first left and walk through open heathland and through a squeeze stile to join a main track.

*There are plenty of points where heathland can be seen on this walk; it looks its best during spring and summer months. The heathland at Murlough boasts not only ling and bell heather but also a host of beautiful wild flowers such as heath bedstraw, tormentil, eyebright, wild pansy and primrose. Home to lots of creatures, look out for birds like the ground nesting meadow pipits, the dark green fritillary butterfly and kestrels hovering overhead as they hunt. See if you can spot the common lizard which loves to bask in the summer sun.*

10. Turn left and take the next path to the right. This path rises to one of the highest points in this area which provides great views in all directions. From this point continue along the track downhill and to the right which will take you in the general direction of the Mourne Mountains. When you reach the avenue turn left and follow the road back to the starting point.