

Birreencorragh

GR G 024 050

Birín Corrach > rocky little spike

698m

Birreencorragh is part of the Nephin Beg range, which includes Ireland's only designated wilderness area. Situated in north Mayo, these hills are some of the most remote and least frequented in Ireland. Their remoteness offers the well-prepared hiker kilometre after kilometre of pristine hillside, where it is rare to encounter another person, even on the busiest of mountain days.



Birreencorragh – Tommy McGibney

Turn north off the R317 beside a school at the village marked as Cloondaff, known locally as Glenhest, and follow minor roads to park at entrance to forestry (G 053 011), just north of Loughanawillan Loughs. There is no one specific parking spot, but a series of individual roadside spaces. Please be careful to leave enough room for forestry machinery to pass safely.

Start walking north on the road into the forestry, after 1.5 kilometres cross a small bridge, and 200 metres further on you reach a crossroads at G 045 023. Continue straight on uphill, in a northerly direction, on a road section that is not marked on the map. After

400 metres this road comes to a junction at G 044 027. Follow the road left and continue for another one kilometre west, still going uphill. You will come to a turning circle and a gate at G 035 024. Turn right here, heading north and climb, steeply at first, keeping a fence on your left and after 300 metres you will come to a corner in the fence close to point 336m.

On a clear day most of the walk can be seen from here with Birreencorragh directly ahead as you approach the fence corner. It's worth taking stock of the surroundings here as you will need to return to this point to get back on the forest road at the end of the walk.

Now on the open mountain, continue northwest to point 564m, Birreen Corrough Beg on the EastWest map, which is marked by three cairns. Take note of an interesting buried line of rocks pointing from the southern cairn to the main centre cairn. This is a common artefact on many of the Nephin Beg mountains. The name Birreen Corrough Beg comes from William Bald's map of Co. Mayo (1830), which included more hill names than the Ordnance Survey maps made a few years later. Continue north towards the western slopes of Birreencorragh passing point 539m on the way. This section of the walk has some peat haggs to negotiate but by staying to the east of the ridge the highest of them can be

MAP(S)

OSi 1:50 000 *Discovery Series* Sheet 31
EastWest Mapping 1:25 000 *Wild Nephin*


POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES


For a quicker alternative, the forest road is open and has a surface that, at time of writing, is just marginal for a normal car to park at the turning circle.


A longer alternative of 16 kilometres with 900m ascent is available and will take between 6 and 7 hours. Start same as walk described, but on reaching the summit of Birreencorragh, a larger circuit can be made by heading north to point 646m and then east to point 467m and on to Knockaffertagh. Then descend to the col at G 058 043 to pick up the waymarkers for the Keenagh Loop, follow them downhill to the west and then south to join a track at G 061 022. Once you reach this track turn right and follow it back to parking at the forestry entrance.

ASCENT DETAILS


 5hrs

 13km

 850m ascent

 **Mossy underfoot and generally pleasant. The descent from the summit is steep and grassy.**

PARKING

 **Moderate**

Contributed by: Jim McHale, Clare Outdoor Club

avoided, however take care not to follow the spur east from point 539m in poor visibility.

Upon reaching the southwestern slopes of Birreencorragh (G 019 045), turn northeast to start the final ascent. After passing a levelling at point 587m the terrain becomes increasingly steep and rocky. The summit of Birreencorragh is marked with a large burial chamber, a stone shelter and the remains of a trig pillar (3hrs, 6.5km, 700m ascent).



On a clear day the views from the summit are magnificent. To the northeast are the plains of north Mayo towards Killala, to the east is Nephin Mór and Lough Conn. To the southeast is Croaghmoyle, topped with a TV mast, which overlooks Beltra Lough. Croagh Patrick, Clew Bay and Clare Island are visible to the south. Finally, to the west and northwest other mountains of the range come into view including Buckoogh, Glennamong, Nephin Beg and Slieve Carr.

Leaving the summit, head east, descending a well-defined steep spur towards the valley floor. As the ground on the right-hand side of the spur becomes less steep, around the

200m contour, leave the spur and aim for a right-angled bend in the river at G 035 045. If the river is in full flow it may be necessary to follow it upstream to find a safe crossing point. There is a bridge downstream but it would be a long slog along the valley floor.

Once across the river aim for point 336m and the fence corner. This leg is 1.6 kilometres in total on gently rising terrain. Once there, follow the fence back down to the forest road and turn left. Follow the road 3.2 kilometres downhill back to the parking spot at the forest entrance.

Below: Clare Outdoor Club members heading towards Birreencorragh – Jim McHale

