



Blackwater Way

THE COMPLETE GUIDE



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Overview

Blackwater Way: A Complete Hiking Guide

The Blackwater Way is a 168 km National Waymarked Trail across southern [Ireland](#), following the River Blackwater valley from Clogheen in County Tipperary to Shrone in County Kerry. Usually walked east-to-west in about 10 days, it is a moderate point-to-point hike with some strenuous upland sections, especially near Caherbarnagh and The Paps. It suits hikers who want a quieter long-distance route mixing farmland, forest, river valley and moorland, with enough towns for staged accommodation but long rural stretches that need planning.

Route Overview

The route starts at Clogheen, crosses the flanks of the Knockmealdown Mountains towards Fermoy, then continues through Cork via Ballyhooly, Killavullen, Bweeng and Millstreet before finishing at Shrone. It is usually walked east-to-west and is linear, so plan start and finish transport rather than expecting a loop. The Blackwater Way combines the former Avondhu Way and Duhallow Way and also forms part of the European E8 long-distance path. Expect yellow arrows on a black background, but carry maps or GPS for remote upland sections. For other Irish long-distance choices, compare the [Beara Way](#) and [Dingle Way](#).

History of the Blackwater Way

The Blackwater Way follows a long-used corridor along the River Blackwater, an area settled since prehistoric times. Hikers pass standing stones, stone circles, cairns, holy wells and cillini, linking the modern trail with the valley's prehistoric and early-Christian past. The present route was created by joining two separately developed waymarked trails, the Avondhu Way and the Duhallow Way, into one linear long-distance path. It now also forms the Irish section of the European E8 route, which continues far beyond Ireland.

Notable highlights

- **River Blackwater valley:** The trail follows the valley of the River Blackwater, one of Ireland's principal salmon rivers, giving the route its name and a clear landscape thread through farmland and riverside sections.
- **Knockmealdown Mountains:** Early in the walk, the route crosses their flanks out of Clogheen before dropping towards Fermoy, one of the harder opening stages.
- **Ancient monuments:** Standing stones, stone circles, cairns, cillini and holy wells appear along the route, giving regular signs of the valley's prehistoric and early-Christian past.
- **Mushera and the Boggeragh Mountains:** On the Duhallow section, the path crosses the flanks of Mushera through moorland and forest, with broad views from the upland ground.
- **Caherbarnagh and The Paps:** Near the western end, the final section climbs under Caherbarnagh and beneath The Paps of Anu, twin cairn-topped peaks associated with Irish mythology.
- **Fermoy:** The largest town on the route is a practical mid-trail resupply and overnight stop on the River Blackwater. For a separate Irish mountain day, see the [Galtymore Ascent](#).

Challenges to expect

Do not underestimate the road walking: about half the trail is on quiet local tarmac roads, with some sections on roads carrying faster traffic. The rest mixes forestry tracks, bog roads, field paths and wet moorland. Waymarking can be sparse in remote upland areas, so carry maps or GPS. Rain is frequent, winter bog sections are very wet, and accommodation is spread out in rural sections. Dogs are not permitted on several upland sections due to livestock.

Key Data

Country	Ireland
Distance	168 km
Duration	10 days
Difficulty	Moderate
Trail type	Point to point
Elevation gain/loss	2889 m
Highest point	588 m
Terrain & landscape	River Valley, Farmland, Forest, Moorland, Upland
Trail surface	Paved, Forestry Tracks, Bog Roads, Moorland Paths, Field Paths
Accommodation	Hotels, B&Bs, Guesthouses, Hostels, Campsites
Average daytime temp.	15°C
Chance of rainfall	High
Estimated cost	\$\$
Optimal season	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Year Round
Facilities	Water Sources, Campsites, Picnic Areas
Permits & fees	No permits or fees

Introduction

The Blackwater Way is a quiet 168 km crossing of inland Munster, linking Clogheen in County Tipperary with Shrone in County Kerry. It follows the broad story of the River Blackwater while weaving between low mountains, forestry, farmland and long rural lanes.

The route starts strongly, climbing from Clogheen towards the Vee Gap in the Knockmealdown Mountains before turning west through Araglin, Kilworth and Fermoy. From there it threads the Blackwater valley through Ballyhooly and Killavullen, then pushes into the Nagle, Boggeragh and Derrynasaggart uplands.

This is not a technical mountain route, but it is a proper long-distance walk. Expect wet bog, forestry tracks, quiet tarmac roads, occasional sparse waymarking on remote ground, and a strenuous final section beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps of Anu.

It suits walkers who prefer space and self-reliance over busy trail infrastructure. Accommodation and services are spread out, so the best trips are planned around Fermoy, Mallow or Bweeng, Millstreet, and pre-arranged transport at the trail ends.

This guide covers stages, walking days, accommodation, food, transport, terrain and the common planning mistakes to avoid.

Stage-by-Stage Guide

Distances on the Blackwater Way vary slightly between mapping sources, so treat the stage lengths below as planning distances rather than exact GPS figures. Accommodation, food and transport are unevenly distributed, especially west of Fermoy, so each day should be planned around confirmed beds, transfers and resupply rather than simply the nearest village name.

Stage 1: Clogheen to Araglin — approx. 27 km

The opening stage is one of the biggest days on the route. From Clogheen the Way climbs out of the village at the northern foot of the Knockmealdown Mountains, following the yellow walking-man waymarks up towards the Vee / Vee Gap.

Expect a mix of road walking, mountain-flank terrain and wet upland ground. The climb towards the Gap is the first real test of the route, with exposure to wind and poor visibility possible even though the Blackwater Way is not a high-level ridge walk.

The main landmark is the Vee, with broad views over the Golden Vale in good weather. Bay Lough, a corrie lake below the Sugar Loaf, lies just off the early route and is the most notable short detour if conditions and time allow.

Food and water should be sorted before leaving Clogheen. Araglin is a small rural endpoint, so do not assume a full range of services will be available on arrival; this should be checked before travelling.

Accommodation around Araglin is limited compared with the larger towns later on the route. Many walkers will need to use a pre-arranged lift, taxi or accommodation pick-up if staying away from the line of the trail.

There is no public transport at the trailhead itself in the sense of a major hub. Clogheen has local/regional bus links, with Clonmel and Cahir the more useful sizeable transport towns for reaching the start.

Navigation is usually helped by the national waymarking, but the mountain section should still be treated seriously. Carry OSI mapping or a reliable offline GPS track, and avoid relying only on waymarks in mist, rain or fading light.

Stage 2: Araglin to Kilworth — approx. 16 km

This is a shorter and more manageable day after the long crossing from Clogheen. The route continues through quiet rural country, using the typical Blackwater Way mix of local roads, farm tracks, forestry and field paths.

Underfoot conditions are generally less sustainedly mountainous than Stage 1, but wet ground and muddy sections remain likely, especially after rain. The amount of road walking can be noticeable, so comfortable footwear for hard surfaces is useful.

The stage begins to feel more like the Blackwater valley route proper, moving west through north Cork's rural landscape. Views are more pastoral than dramatic, with the route threading between farms, plantations and low upland edges.

Food and water options between Araglin and Kilworth should not be relied on without checking in advance. Start the day with enough food and drinking water for the full stage.

Kilworth is a more practical stopping point than many smaller settlements, but accommodation still needs to be booked ahead. If no suitable bed is available in or near Kilworth, a transfer to a larger accommodation base may be necessary.

Road access is generally straightforward at both ends of the day, which makes taxi arrangements more realistic than on the later upland sections. Public transport details for small settlements can change and should be checked before travelling.

Navigation is mainly about staying attentive at road junctions, forestry turns and field exits. Waymarks can be missed easily where the walking is broken up by minor roads and farm access tracks.

Stage 3: Kilworth to Fermoy — approx. 14 km

This is one of the shorter stages and is often a useful easier day in the first half of the walk. The route continues through farmland and quiet roads towards Fermoy, the largest town on the Blackwater Way.

The terrain is low-level and non-technical, with a practical mix of rural lanes, tracks and valley walking. Mud can still be an issue on field paths, but this is not one of the route's wilder upland days.

Fermoy is a key landmark and service point on the River Blackwater. It is the main mid-route town for resupply, food, accommodation and onward logistics.

Carry enough water and snacks from Kilworth, but Fermoy gives the most reliable end-of-day facilities on the eastern half of the route. This is a sensible place to restock before the quieter stages beyond.

Accommodation is much easier to organise in Fermoy than in the smaller rural stops. Booking ahead is still recommended, especially if walking in holiday periods or needing a specific room type.

Fermoy has bus services and is one of the more useful access points for section-walkers. It is also a practical place to leave or rejoin the Blackwater Way if splitting the route.

Navigation into a larger town can be less obvious than open countryside, so keep following the waymarks rather than assuming the most direct road line is the trail. Take care on road sections and at junctions on the approach.

Stage 4: Fermoy to Ballyhooly — approx. 15 km

From Fermoy the route follows the Blackwater valley westwards, moving through a mixture of riverside country, farmland and quiet roads. This is a low-level stage with a gentler profile than the mountain-flank sections.

The River Blackwater is the defining feature of this part of the walk. The landscape is settled and rural, with the path often feeling more like a linking route between valley communities than a remote hill trail.

Expect road walking and field paths, with wet grass and mud possible after rain. The walking is not technical, but repeated tarmac sections can be tiring over consecutive days.

Fermoy is the place to buy food before setting out. Ballyhooly is a smaller stop, so evening meals, shops and water refills should be checked in advance rather than assumed.

Accommodation at Ballyhooly or nearby may be limited. If a bed cannot be secured locally, staying in Fermoy or using a pick-up from accommodation off the route may be the more practical arrangement.

Road access at both ends makes this stage relatively manageable for taxis or accommodation transfers. Public transport should not be assumed at Ballyhooly without checking current timetables.

Navigation is usually straightforward in valley terrain, but watch for waymarks at minor-road turns and field entrances. Keep gates as found and be prepared for livestock in farmland sections.

Stage 5: Ballyhooly to Killavullen — approx. 14 km

This is another moderate valley stage through the Blackwater corridor. The route continues west through farmland, riverside country and quiet rural roads towards Killavullen.

The day is not especially long, but conditions underfoot can still be damp on field paths. The quieter lanes are useful for progress, although they add to the cumulative road-walking character of the Blackwater Way.

The main interest is the Blackwater valley itself, with recurring rural views and the sense of following one of Ireland's great salmon rivers upstream. Ancient monuments recur along the wider route, although many are small features rather than major serviced attractions.

Food and water should be carried from Ballyhooly unless current services have been checked. Killavullen is a small end point, so do not depend on late-opening shops, cafés or guaranteed evening meals without planning ahead.

Accommodation around Killavullen is likely to require more care than in Fermoy, Mallow or Millstreet. A pre-arranged pick-up can make this stage much easier to fit into a realistic itinerary.

Road access is the main practical transport option at the stage ends. Taxis or accommodation lifts are more dependable for planning than public transport in the smaller villages.

Navigation is mainly about keeping track of waymarks through farmland and road junctions. After heavy rain, allow extra time for muddy field sections and slower going.

Stage 6: Killavullen to Mallow / Bweeng area — approx. 20 km

This stage links the Blackwater valley with the northern flanks of the Nagle Mountains, moving through Ballynamona and towards the Bweeng area. It is a longer day and marks the transition into quieter, more upland-feeling ground.

The terrain mixes country road, field paths, forestry and low upland tracks. It is still not technical, but the navigation becomes more important as the route leaves the more obvious valley settlements.

Bweeng is the key trail area here, while Mallow sits off the line of the route and is the practical service hub. This distinction matters: walkers staying in Mallow need to plan how they will leave and rejoin the Blackwater Way.

Food and water should be carried from Killavullen unless arrangements have been made. Mallow is the sensible resupply and overnight base, but it requires an off-route transfer or planned deviation from the Bweeng area.

Accommodation is concentrated in Mallow rather than directly on every rural section of trail. Booking a bed and arranging a pick-up from the trail can be the cleanest way to handle this stage.

Mallow is the key rail hub for the route and lies on the Dublin–Cork main line. It is the most useful mid-route access point for walkers joining, leaving or section-hiking the Blackwater Way.

Navigation needs attention around forestry tracks, road junctions and any off-route movement towards Mallow. Do not leave the waymarked line for accommodation unless the transfer point and return plan are clear.

Stage 7: Bweeng to Nadd — approx. 16 km

From Bweeng the Blackwater Way enters the western Duhallow half of the route, where services thin out and the walking feels more remote. This stage leads towards Nadd and some of the wettest, quietest country on the Way.

The terrain includes boggy ground, upland tracks, forestry and rural roads. Nadd Bog and nearby wet ground can be slow in all seasons, so waterproof footwear and a realistic pace are important.

This is not a stage with big towns or frequent facilities. Its appeal is the sense of isolation and the shift towards the Boggeragh and Derrynasaggart upland character of the western route.

Carry a full day's food and water from the start. Services around Nadd are limited and should be checked before travelling, especially if relying on an evening meal or a water refill.

Accommodation at or near Nadd is sparse. In practice, many walkers will need to arrange a pick-up from accommodation based elsewhere, commonly around the larger hubs used for the western stages.

Public transport should not be relied on for this stage. Road access and pre-booked taxis or accommodation lifts are the realistic options.

Navigation is a genuine consideration here. Waymarking can be sparse on remote upland and bog sections, and the path may be unclear in wet ground, so carry map/GPS navigation and check official route alerts before setting out.

Stage 8: Nadd to Millstreet — approx. 20 km

This is one of the wilder western stages, crossing the flank of Musheragh in the Boggeragh Mountains. The route uses the old Butter Road over moorland and bog, with wide views when the weather is clear.

The walking is low-mountain rather than technical, but the ground can be wet, exposed and tiring. Bog, moorland paths, tracks and road sections all feature, and progress can be slower than the distance suggests.

Musheragh is the main landmark of the day. The open ground gives the stage a different character from the Blackwater valley sections, with fewer services and more reliance on self-sufficiency.

Start from Nadd with enough food and water for the full day. Millstreet is the practical end-of-day hub, but it is listed as off route, so the final accommodation plan needs to account for any transfer or deviation.

Millstreet is one of the main western bases for accommodation and resupply. Book ahead and agree any pick-up/drop-off arrangements before reaching the upland section, where mobile coverage and timings may be less dependable.

Millstreet has bus services and is a useful access point for the western half of the Blackwater Way. Exact timetables and stop locations should be checked before travelling.

Navigation on Musherah and the surrounding boggy ground should not be underestimated. Waymarking can be thin in the mountains, and poor visibility can make the route harder to follow; an offline GPS track and paper mapping are strongly advised.

Dogs are banned on the Musherah section of the Duhallow Way because of livestock. This restriction should be checked before travelling if planning any part of the western route with a dog.

Stage 9: Millstreet to Shrone — approx. 17 km

The final stage is the hardest sustained hill day on the Blackwater Way. From the Millstreet area the route heads into the higher western uplands, climbing under Caherbarnagh and beneath The Paps of Anu before dropping towards Shrone.

The stage includes around 560 m of climbing and is graded as part of the more strenuous Duhallow section. There is no technical scrambling, but the combination of ascent, wet ground, exposure and sparse services makes this a serious finish.

Caherbarnagh and The Paps are the defining landmarks. The Way contours the mountain flanks rather than aiming for summits, but the terrain feels much more remote than the valley days in the middle of the route.

Food and water should be carried from Millstreet. Shrone is a remote finish near the hamlet and the Clonkeen townland near Rathmore, so do not expect services at the endpoint.

Accommodation at the finish is not something to leave until arrival. Plan a pick-up, taxi or onward transfer in advance, with Rathmore and Killarney the nearest onward connection points mentioned for post-walk logistics.

There is no public transport at Shrone. Rathmore has rail access, and Killarney is the larger onward transport base, but transfers from the actual trail finish need to be arranged before walking the stage.

Navigation is most important on this final day. The open mountain flanks can be poorly waymarked, weather can close in quickly, and tired legs after several days on trail make mistakes more likely.

Dogs are banned on the Shrone / The Paps and Mount Leader Fields sections because of livestock. Check the current route information and access alerts before travelling, especially after bad weather or forestry work elsewhere on the Way.

Recommended Itinerary

The Blackwater Way is usually planned over about ten days, but the practical stage pattern below gives **nine walking days**. Many hikers add a travel day, rest day, or contingency day because accommodation is spread out and several stages may require pick-ups or drop-offs from towns slightly off the line of the route.

Distances are approximate. Check official mapping and current route notices before booking accommodation, especially where forestry closures, route changes or bad-weather alternatives may affect the day.

Standard itinerary: 9 walking days

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Clogheen	Araglin	27 km	A long opening day, but it gets the main Knockmealdown crossing done immediately, climbing from Clogheen towards the Vee / The Gap before dropping west towards Araglin. Start early: this is one of the more committing days because of the upland ground and limited options once underway.	Clogheen is the official start, but start-day transport needs planning via larger nearby towns such as Cahir or Clonmel. Araglin is a rural overnight point; book ahead and be ready to use a lift or taxi if accommodation is not directly on the route.
2	Araglin	Kilworth	16 km	A shorter recovery stage after the long first day. It keeps the itinerary moving west without forcing another big distance immediately after the Knockmealdowns.	Kilworth is a more practical stopping point than trying to push straight to Fermoy. Accommodation and food options should be checked before travelling.
3	Kilworth	Fermoy	14 km	A short, useful stage into the largest town on the route. This creates time for resupply, laundry, banking, or transport adjustments before the quieter Blackwater valley and Nagle Mountains sections.	Fermoy is the main mid-route service stop, with the best spread of accommodation and resupply on the trail. It is a sensible place to build in a rest or buffer night.
4	Fermoy	Ballyhooly	15 km	A manageable day following the Blackwater valley west from Fermoy. The distance is modest, which helps if leaving town later after resupply.	Ballyhooly is a smaller overnight stop. Confirm accommodation and evening food before committing to this stage.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
5	Ballyhooly	Killavullen	14 km	Another moderate valley stage, keeping daily mileage controlled before the route begins to turn towards more rural ground around Ballynamona, Bweeng and the Nagle Mountains.	Services are limited compared with Fermoy. Book ahead or arrange collection from accommodation off the route.
6	Killavullen	Mallow / Bweeng area	20 km	This is the practical linking day towards the Bweeng area, where the Avondhu section gives way towards the western half of the route. Mallow sits off the line but is the key transport and accommodation hub in this part of the Way.	Mallow is the main rail hub on or near the route corridor and is often the most practical overnight base. If staying in Mallow, arrange how to get between the trail and town.
7	Bweeng	Nadd	16 km	A compact but important stage into quieter, wetter country. This sets up the crossing of Mushera and the Boggeragh uplands without making the next day unreasonably long.	Nadd is a rural stop and accommodation may be thin. The surrounding bog can be wet and navigation can be less obvious, so do not rely on finding services late in the day.
8	Nadd	Millstreet	20 km	This stage crosses the Mushera / Boggeragh ground, including wet moorland and bog sections. Millstreet is the natural western hub before the final mountain stage.	Millstreet is off route but is one of the key accommodation and transport bases on the western half. It is a good place to check weather, route alerts and onward transport before the final day.
9	Millstreet	Shrone	17 km	The final stage is not long on paper, but it is the most strenuous part of the route, climbing under Caherbarnagh and beneath The Paps of Anu before descending towards Shrone. Treat it as a full mountain day in poor weather.	Shrone is remote and has no convenient trail-end public transport. Arrange pick-up in advance; Rathmore rail station and Killarney are the nearest onward connection points. Dogs are banned on the Shrone / The Paps section because of livestock.

Slower variant: 10–11 days

A slower schedule suits walkers who want more margin for wet ground, navigation delays and accommodation logistics. It is also the better choice for anyone carrying camping gear, walking in shorter daylight, or relying on pre-arranged lifts from off-route accommodation.

The simplest slower plan is to follow the standard itinerary but add one or two buffer nights at the larger hubs:

- **Fermoy** — useful after the opening Knockmealdown and valley stages, and the best mid-route resupply point.

- **Mallow** — useful where the route logistics become more awkward around Bweeng and the western transition.
- **Millstreet** — useful before the strenuous final stage under Caherbarnagh and The Paps.

Where accommodation cannot be found exactly at Araglin, Ballyhooly, Killavullen, Bweeng or Nadd, a slower itinerary may involve staying off route and arranging daily pick-up/drop-off. Check official mapping before booking if splitting stages differently, as precise intermediate distances are not fixed here.

Faster variant: 7–8 days

A faster crossing is possible for strong, self-sufficient walkers, but it is less forgiving than the headline distance suggests. The route includes extensive road walking, wet bog, forest tracks, poorly waymarked upland sections and a strenuous final mountain day.

The most realistic way to reduce the schedule is to combine some of the shorter valley stages, for example around **Kilworth–Fermoy–Ballyhooly** or **Ballyhooly–Killavullen–Bweeng / Mallow**. This creates long days and should only be done if accommodation, food and transport have been arranged in advance.

A fast itinerary is not recommended for first-time long-distance walkers on this trail. It suits experienced hikers who are comfortable navigating with map/GPS, starting early, carrying food for long rural stretches, and using taxis or accommodation lifts where the route does not line up neatly with overnight stops.

Planning the Route

How many days to allow

Most walkers should plan the Blackwater Way as a **nine- to ten-day walk**, with ten days giving a more realistic margin for wet ground, transport links, accommodation availability and the more strenuous western stages. The route is not technically difficult, but it is not a trail to rush: boggy sections, road mileage and spread-out services make steady, well-planned days more practical than trying to force a fast schedule.

The eastern **Avondhu Way** section, from Clogheen to Bweeng, is commonly planned over **five to seven days**. The western **Duhallow Way** section, from Bweeng to Shrone, is shorter but harder underfoot and more remote, and is commonly walked over **two to three days**.

A faster itinerary is possible for fit walkers who are happy with long road sections and limited service options, but it leaves little room for poor weather on Mushera, Nadd Bog or the final crossing beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps. A slower itinerary is usually better if accommodation pick-ups, off-route nights in Mallow or Millstreet, or uncertain waymarking need to be built in.

Let accommodation shape the itinerary

Daily stages on this route are dictated less by ideal walking distances and more by where beds, shops and transport actually exist. Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet are the main practical hubs, but Mallow and Millstreet sit a little off the line of the route, so some itineraries need short transfers or accommodation lifts.

Accommodation is thin or absent across several rural and upland stretches. Book ahead, especially if walking a continuous end-to-end route, and ask accommodation providers about pick-up and drop-off options where the day's endpoint is not convenient for a town or village stay.

A practical planning sequence is:

1. Secure nights in the main hubs first: **Fermoy, Mallow/Bweeng area and Millstreet**.
2. Work backwards to arrange the more awkward rural nights around **Araglin, Kilworth, Ballyhooly, Killavullen, Bweeng and Nadd**.
3. Arrange start and finish transport before committing to dates.
4. Check the official route map and access alerts shortly before departure.

A workable stage framework

The following stage pattern is a useful planning framework, but exact distances and overnight arrangements should be checked before booking. The route has published distance variations, and some walkers will need to adjust stages around available accommodation.

Stage	From	To	Planning note
1	Clogheen	Araglin	Long opening day over the Vee / Knockmealdown ground; allow time for the climb out of Clogheen.

Stage	From	To	Planning note
2	Araglin	Kilworth	Shorter day, useful after the opening stage.
3	Kilworth	Fermoy	Fermoy is the main mid-route town and an important resupply point.
4	Fermoy	Ballyhooly	River Blackwater valley walking with services becoming more limited beyond Fermoy.
5	Ballyhooly	Killavullen	Another shorter valley stage, but plan food and overnight logistics in advance.
6	Killavullen	Mallow / Bweeng area	Mallow is off route but is the key rail and service hub for this part of the walk.
7	Bweeng	Nadd	More upland and bog influence; navigation and wet-foot planning become more important.
8	Nadd	Millstreet	Crosses the Mushera / Boggeragh ground; expect wet going and check weather.
9	Millstreet	Shrone	The most strenuous final section, climbing beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps before dropping to Shrone.

Walkers using a ten-day schedule can split one of the longer or logistically awkward stages, or use the extra day to absorb transfers, poor weather or limited accommodation availability. This should be planned around actual beds and transport rather than assumed on the map.

Section hiking

Section hiking is practical, but it needs transport planning. The most straightforward split is between the **Avondhu Way** and **Duhallow Way**, using the Bweeng / Mallow area as the hinge between the two halves.

Mallow is the most useful rail hub near the middle of the route, while Fermoy and Millstreet have bus services. The start at Clogheen has only local or regional bus links, with Clonmel and Cahir the nearest sizeable transport towns; the finish at Shrone is remote, with Rathmore and Killarney the nearest onward connections.

For shorter section walks, plan around the named towns and villages rather than assuming easy exit points from the uplands. Taxi links, accommodation lifts and current bus or rail times should be arranged before travelling.

What matters most when planning

Planning issue	What to do
Accommodation	Book ahead and expect some nights to depend on off-route accommodation, especially around Mallow/Bweeng and Millstreet.
Transport	Arrange both trail-end transfers in advance. There is no simple public transport access at Clogheen or Shrone.

Planning issue	What to do
Navigation	Carry mapping and GPS. Waymarking is generally present, but can be sparse on remote uplands and wet bog sections such as Mossy Bed and Nadd Bog.
Food	Treat Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet as the main resupply hubs. Do not rely on frequent shops between smaller villages.
Water	Carry enough between settlements and overnight stops. Do not assume upland water is suitable without treatment.
Weather	Spring, summer and autumn are the normal planning seasons. Winter conditions on wet bog and exposed uplands are for experienced, well-equipped walkers only.
Access	Check blackwaterwalkingtrails.ie before setting out for forestry-harvesting closures, route changes and bad-weather alternatives.
Dogs	Dogs are banned on the Shrone / The Paps, Mushera and Mount Leader Fields sections of the Duhallow Way because of livestock.

Shortening or extending the walk

The easiest way to shorten the Blackwater Way is to walk only one of its two component sections: the Avondhu Way in the east or the Duhallow Way in the west. For many walkers, the Avondhu section gives the longer, more gradual valley-and-upland experience, while the Duhallow section is shorter but more strenuous and remote.

Extending daily mileage is possible, but it may not solve the real constraint: accommodation and transport. A stronger walker can cover longer distances, but still needs somewhere practical to sleep at the end of the day and a way to reach or leave the trail.

The final approach to Shrone should not be treated as an easy half-day escape just because the remaining distance looks modest. The ground beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps is the hardest part of the route, and the onward transport from the finish must be organised in advance.

Towns, Villages and Overnight Stops

Accommodation on the Blackwater Way is unevenly spread. Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet are the most useful service hubs, but Mallow and Millstreet are off the line of the route, and several rural stages require careful booking, a taxi, or a lift from accommodation.

Do not assume that every village has an open shop, pub meal or available bed on the day you arrive. Opening hours, rural bus times and accommodation pick-ups should be checked before travelling, especially outside summer and at the start and finish of the trail.

Place	Practical role for walkers
Clogheen	Official start; limited transport; useful pre-walk night if logistics allow
Araglin	Rural first-night stop area after the Knockmealdown crossing
Kilworth	Small village stop between Araglin and Fermoy
Fermoy	Main on-route town and best mid-trail resupply point
Ballyhooly	Small Blackwater valley stop; limited services likely
Killavullen	Small valley stop before the route turns towards the Nagle/Boggeragh ground
Mallow	Off-route rail hub and major resupply/accommodation base
Bweeng	Route area used for access between the Avondhu and Duhallow sections
Nadd	Remote rural/upland stop area; plan carefully
Millstreet	Off-route western hub before the final mountain section
Shrone / Rathmore	Remote finish near Shrone; Rathmore is the nearest rail connection

Clogheen

Clogheen, County Tipperary, is the official start of the Blackwater Way, at the northern foot of the Knockmealdown Mountains. The route leaves the village on the scenic Vee road, following the yellow walking-man waymarks towards The Gap.

It can work as a pre-walk overnight stop, but it should not be treated like a major trailhead town. Transport is limited to local/regional bus links, with Clonmel and Cahir the nearest sizeable transport towns; start-day travel should be planned in advance and taxi options checked if bus times do not line up.

Accommodation and food options are likely to be more limited than in Fermoy, Mallow or Millstreet. Book ahead rather than arriving speculatively, particularly if starting early the next morning for the long first stage to Araglin.

The Vee / The Gap

The Vee / The Gap is a high scenic crossing in the Knockmealdown Mountains rather than an overnight stop. It is important for planning because the first day out of Clogheen is not a gentle valley start: the trail climbs onto open mountain flanks before descending towards Araglin.

There should be no reliance on services here. Carry food, water and bad-weather layers from Clogheen, and be prepared for exposed conditions even though the route is not technically difficult.

Araglin

Araglin is the usual end point for the first practical stage from Clogheen, after roughly 27 km. This makes it one of the more important early-stage booking points, because the opening day is long and includes the Knockmealdown crossing.

Accommodation availability is limited compared with the main towns. If no suitable bed is available in or near Araglin, arrange a pick-up and drop-off with accommodation elsewhere rather than trying to stretch the day without a firm plan.

Food and evening meal options should be checked before travelling. Carry enough supplies from Clogheen to cover the full day and a contingency snack in case local opening hours are restricted.

Kilworth

Kilworth sits between Araglin and Fermoy and is a useful small-village halt on the eastern Avondhu section. The stage from Araglin to Kilworth is shorter than the opening day, which can help reset the pace after the climb out of Clogheen.

It may be possible to overnight here or nearby, but accommodation should be booked in advance. If staying off-route, confirm whether the accommodation can collect from Kilworth or whether a taxi is needed.

Treat food and shop availability as something to verify rather than assume. The next major service centre is Fermoy, so Kilworth is best used as a planned overnight rather than an improvised resupply stop.

Fermoy

Fermoy is the largest town on the route and the main on-route resupply and overnight stop. It sits on the River Blackwater and is the most practical place to restock food, replace small items of kit, eat a proper meal and reset after the early rural stages.

This is one of the best places on the Blackwater Way for accommodation choice, with hotels, guesthouses and B&B-style options more likely than in the smaller villages. It is also a sensible place to build in flexibility if weather, foot problems or transport disruption affect the first half of the walk.

Fermoy has bus services, but current times and onward connections should be checked before travelling. For walkers section-hiking the Avondhu half, Fermoy is a useful access point, though Mallow remains the key rail hub for the wider route.

Ballyhooly

Ballyhooly is a small village on the Blackwater valley section west of Fermoy. It is a practical stage end for walkers following the route in shorter daily distances, with the Fermoy to Ballyhooly stage listed at about 15 km.

Services and accommodation are much thinner here than in Fermoy. Book any overnight stop in advance, and if staying away from the village confirm pick-up arrangements before setting out from Fermoy.

This is a section where the route feels more rural and linear. Carry lunch and do not rely on finding a full range of food options on arrival unless they have been checked in advance.

Killavullen

Killavullen is another small Blackwater valley stop, commonly used after Ballyhooly. It breaks the route before the longer push towards the Mallow/Bweeng area and the transition into quieter upland and forestry country.

As with Ballyhooly, accommodation should be treated as limited and planned ahead. If no bed is available directly on the route, a pre-arranged transfer to accommodation in a larger centre may be the most practical solution.

Food, pubs, cafés and shops should be checked before relying on them. This is a good point to make sure the following day's logistics are secure, because the next stage is longer and may involve using Mallow as an off-route base.

Ballynamona

Ballynamona lies on the line of villages between Killavullen and the Mallow/Bweeng area. For most walkers it is more of a route point than a primary overnight base.

Do not assume that accommodation or full walker services will be available here. If planning to stop in this area, confirm the exact location of the bed relative to the trail and whether transport is needed at either end of the day.

Mallow

Mallow is a short way off the route but is the key transport and service hub for the middle of the Blackwater Way. It is the main rail hub, on the Dublin–Cork main line, and is often the most practical base for walkers who need dependable accommodation, food shopping and onward connections.

The trade-off is that Mallow is not directly on the trail line. If using it as an overnight stop for the Killavullen to Bweeng area, arrange how to get between the route and the town before setting out; accommodation lifts or taxis may be needed.

Mallow is one of the best places to restock before the western half. It is also a logical join or exit point for section-hikers who do not want to commit to the full Clogheen to Shrone walk in one trip.

Bweeng

Bweeng is an important route area because it sits around the join between the Avondhu Way and the Duhallow Way sections of the wider Blackwater Way. In practical itineraries it is often tied to Mallow, because Mallow has the stronger accommodation and transport options.

Accommodation directly in the Bweeng area should be checked early. If staying in Mallow, confirm the pick-up/drop-off point carefully so that the next day's start is on the correct line of the waymarked route.

This is a good place to reassess supplies before the quieter western stages. The ground beyond here becomes more remote, with wet bog and upland sections around Nadd and Mushera.

Nadd

Nadd is one of the more remote and important planning points on the Duhallow section. The route around Nadd and Nadd Bog is among the wetter and wilder parts of the Way, and waymarking can be sparse on the upland and bog sections.

Accommodation and food options should be arranged in advance. If no suitable overnight is available in or near Nadd, plan a transfer rather than relying on improvisation at the end of the day.

Carry sufficient food for the stage and keep map/GPS navigation available. This is not a section where walkers should depend on frequent villages, regular public transport or easy bail-out options.

Mushera

Mushera, in the Boggeragh Mountains, is a route landmark rather than a service village. The Duhallow Way crosses the flank of Mushera on the old Butter Road over moorland and bog, with wet ground likely even in settled seasons.

There should be no reliance on accommodation, shops or transport on the mountain section itself. Treat it as a self-sufficient walking day between planned stops, with waterproof footwear, navigation and enough food carried from the previous base.

Dogs are banned on the Mushera section because of livestock. Anyone planning to walk with a dog must check the official route information before travelling and should not assume this section can be completed with one.

Millstreet

Millstreet is off route but is the main western hub before the final section towards Shrone. It has bus services and is one of the better places to find accommodation and food before the trail climbs into the higher Derrynasaggart ground.

Most walkers using Millstreet need to plan the transfer between the waymarked route and the town. Confirm the pick-up and next-morning drop-off point with accommodation or a taxi, especially if walking the Nadd to Millstreet and Millstreet to Shrone stages as listed.

This is the place to sort out final-stage logistics. The last section under Caherbarnagh and The Paps is strenuous, climbs around 560 m, and ends at a remote finish with no easy assumption of public transport.

Caherbarnagh and The Paps of Anu

Caherbarnagh and The Paps of Anu are mountain landmarks on the final section, not overnight stops. They matter for logistics because this is the toughest part of the route and should not be treated as a short stroll to the finish.

There are no walker services to rely on across this upland section. Start with enough food, water and poor-weather kit, and allow for slower progress if the ground is wet or visibility is poor.

Dogs are banned on the Shrone/The Paps section because of livestock. This should be checked before travelling if any part of the route is being planned with a dog.

Shrone / Clonkeen / Rathmore

The Blackwater Way finishes near the hamlet of Shrone, at the townland of Clonkeen near Rathmore, beneath The Paps of Anu. It is a remote finish rather than a serviced trail town.

Do not arrive expecting public transport at the finish. Rathmore is the nearest rail connection, and Killarney is another onward transport centre, but the transfer from Shrone should be arranged in advance.

Accommodation at the finish itself is limited or absent for practical purposes, so most walkers should plan onward travel, a taxi, or a pre-arranged lift to Rathmore, Killarney or another booked base. This final-day plan should be fixed before leaving Millstreet or the previous night's accommodation.

Getting to the Start

The Blackwater Way starts in Clogheen, County Tipperary, at the northern foot of the Knockmealdown Mountains. This is a rural start point, not a major transport hub, so the first day should be planned around getting into Clogheen the evening before or arranging an early taxi or lift from a nearby town.

By train

There is no train station in Clogheen. The nearest sizeable transport towns for reaching the start are Clonmel and Cahir, from where walkers generally need to continue by local bus, taxi or an accommodation-arranged lift into Clogheen. Current rail options, connections and taxi availability should be checked before travelling.

Mallow is the key rail hub for the wider route, sitting a short way off the middle of the Blackwater Way on the Dublin–Cork main line. It is useful for section hikers joining or leaving around the Bweeng/Mallow area, but it is not the natural rail approach for the official start at Clogheen.

By bus

Clogheen has local/regional bus links, but services are limited and should not be treated like urban public transport. Check current timetables carefully before booking accommodation, especially if arriving late in the day or travelling on a Sunday or public holiday.

For many walkers, the practical approach is to travel first to Clonmel or Cahir, then connect onwards to Clogheen by local bus or pre-booked taxi. Do not assume a same-day connection will line up with the start of the walk; the first stage from Clogheen to Araglin is a long opening day, so arriving the night before is usually the safer plan.

By car

Driving to Clogheen is straightforward in principle, but a point-to-point trail creates the usual end-to-end transport problem. Leaving a car at the start means returning from the finish near Shrone, which is remote and has no easy trail-end public transport.

If using a car, plan the whole return journey before setting off. Options may include leaving the car at or near pre-walk accommodation, using taxis at one end, or arranging lifts with accommodation providers where available. Long-stay parking in Clogheen should be checked before travelling; do not assume there is a dedicated long-distance trail car park.

From the nearest airport

No airport sits directly on the Blackwater Way. The practical airport plan is to fly into an Irish airport with onward public transport towards Clonmel or Cahir, then use local bus, taxi or an accommodation lift to reach Clogheen. Exact airport choice, rail/bus connections and final transfer times should be checked before travelling.

If arriving from overseas, allow a buffer night before starting. The route climbs out of Clogheen towards the Vee / The Gap on the first day, and a delayed flight or missed rural connection can quickly turn the opening stage into a late and pressured walk.

Where to stay before starting

The simplest pre-walk arrangement is to stay in or close to Clogheen, so the trail can be started on foot in the morning. Availability may be limited, so book early and ask directly about breakfast times, packed lunches, local taxi contacts and whether a lift from Clonmel or Cahir is possible.

If accommodation in Clogheen is not available, Clonmel or Cahir are the more practical nearby bases because they are the nearest sizeable transport towns. In that case, pre-book the transfer to Clogheen and confirm the pick-up time the day before.

The main logistical mistake is underestimating the start. Clogheen is a small rural trailhead, the first stage heads immediately into the Knockmealdown Mountains, and public transport is limited; arrive prepared rather than trying to improvise on the morning of departure.

Getting Home from the Finish

The Blackwater Way ends at Shrone, near the Clonkeen townland by Rathmore, beneath The Paps of Anu. This is a remote rural finish with no public transport at the trail end, so the last-day exit needs arranging before setting out from Millstreet.

Most walkers should plan a pre-booked taxi or accommodation lift from Shrone to Rathmore or Killarney. Do not rely on finding transport on arrival, especially after the strenuous final section under Caherbarnagh and The Paps.

By train

Rathmore is the nearest rail option to the finish. From Shrone, arrange a taxi or lift to Rathmore in advance, then connect onward by train from there.

Killarney is the larger and more useful onward travel base near the western end of the route. If train times from Rathmore do not suit, or if finishing late, it may be easier to transfer to Killarney and stay overnight before travelling the next day.

Train times are timetable-dependent and should be checked before travelling. Build in a generous margin: the final stage includes wet upland ground, around 560 m of climbing, and can take longer than a simple distance calculation suggests.

By bus

There is no bus from the trail finish at Shrone. For bus travel, first arrange a taxi or accommodation lift out to Rathmore or, more practically for wider connections, Killarney.

Bus services in this part of rural Kerry should be treated as limited and timetable-dependent. If the planned bus connection is late in the day, book a night in Rathmore or Killarney rather than trying to force a tight connection from the mountain finish.

By car/taxi

A pre-booked taxi is the most reliable way to leave Shrone. Arrange the pick-up before starting the final stage from Millstreet, and agree a clear meeting point near the finish at Shrone / Clonkeen.

Mobile signal and timing can be unreliable on remote upland days, so carry a charged phone and have the driver's number saved offline. If accommodation in Rathmore, Killarney or Millstreet is helping with the transfer, confirm the pick-up time the evening before.

Leaving a vehicle at or near the finish should only be done where parking is legal and agreed locally. This should be checked before travelling, as Shrone is a small rural hamlet rather than a formal transport terminus.

From the nearest airport

For airport travel after the hike, first get from Shrone to Rathmore or Killarney, then continue by rail or bus to the airport being used. The airport leg is best planned around current public transport times

rather than assumed on the day.

If flying on the same day as finishing, allow for the remote trail end, the taxi transfer and the possibility of a slow final stage. In many itineraries, staying overnight in Killarney before an onward airport journey will be the lower-risk option.

Where to stay at the finish

Shrone itself should not be treated as a dependable accommodation base. The practical finish-night options are to arrange transfer to Rathmore or Killarney, or to return by lift or taxi to pre-booked accommodation elsewhere.

Killarney is the strongest choice if onward transport, food and a wider choice of beds matter. Rathmore is the closest rail-side option, but availability and services should be checked before booking.

For a smooth finish, book the final night and transfer before starting the Duhallow section. The western end of the Blackwater Way is quieter and less serviced than the towns in the middle of the route, and late changes can be awkward.

Which Direction Should You Walk?

The Blackwater Way is best planned **westbound, from Clogheen to Shrone**. This is the official start-to-finish direction, follows the usual order of the Avondhu Way into the Duhallow Way, and gives the route its strongest sense of progression: Knockmealdowns, Blackwater valley, Nagle Mountains, Mushera, then the harder Derrynasaggart finish below Caherbarnagh and The Paps.

Westbound: Clogheen to Shrone

Westbound starts with an immediate mountain feel, climbing out of Clogheen towards the Vee / The Gap in the Knockmealdown Mountains. After that, the route settles into the Blackwater valley through places such as Kilworth, Fermoy, Ballyhooly and Killavullen before becoming more remote again towards Bweeng, Nadd, Mushera and Millstreet.

This direction also makes sense physically. The most strenuous ground is in the western Duhallow section, especially the final section climbing around 560 m under Caherbarnagh and The Paps before dropping to Shrone. Walking west means you reach that harder ground after several days on the trail rather than confronting it immediately with full packs and untested logistics.

The accommodation flow is also more natural westbound. Fermoy is the main mid-trail resupply and overnight stop, Mallow sits a little off-route as the key rail hub, and Millstreet is the western hub before the final upland section. You still need to plan carefully, but the usual stage pattern is built around this westward progression.

The main drawback is the finish. Shrone is remote, with no public transport at the trail end, so onward travel needs arranging in advance, usually via Rathmore or Killarney. That is not a reason to reverse the route, but it is a reason not to leave finish-day transport until the last minute.

Eastbound: Shrone to Clogheen

Walking eastbound is possible, but it is less practical for most hikers. It begins with the remote Duhallow uplands and the strenuous ground below The Paps and Caherbarnagh, so the hardest section comes before you have settled into the route.

Starting at Shrone also means dealing with the most awkward transport logistics on day one. Rathmore and Killarney are the nearest onward transport connections, but the trailhead itself is remote, so a taxi or lift is likely to be needed before the walking even begins. This should be checked before travelling.

Eastbound does have one advantage: finishing in Clogheen may be simpler than finishing at Shrone, as Clogheen has local/regional bus links and is closer to Cahir and Clonmel. However, Clogheen is still not a major transport hub, so the reverse direction does not remove the need for planning.

Weather and navigation

There is no strong directional advantage for weather. The wettest and most exposed sections — including boggy upland ground around places such as Nadd Bog, Mushera and the western mountains — need treating seriously in either direction.

Navigation also argues for westbound. The Duhallow uplands can have sparse waymarking, so it is better for most walkers to reach them after several days of following the trail rather than immediately from a remote start. Map and GPS navigation should still be carried whichever way the route is walked.

Recommendation

Walk the Blackwater Way **westbound from Clogheen to Shrone** unless there is a specific accommodation or transport reason to do otherwise. It follows the official direction, gives the best scenery progression, places the toughest upland walking near the end, and fits the normal accommodation and resupply pattern more naturally.

Accommodation Along the Route

Accommodation is the main planning constraint on the Blackwater Way. This is not a continuous inn-to-inn trail where every stage ends in a well-serviced village; the strongest choice is in the larger towns, while several rural and upland sections have thin or no accommodation directly on the line.

Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet are the key overnight hubs. Mallow and Millstreet sit off the route, so using them may mean a short transfer, taxi, accommodation lift or an adjusted walking line. Between these hubs, plan carefully around smaller places such as Araglin, Kilworth, Ballyhooly, Killavullen, Bweeng and Nadd, where choice is limited and availability should not be assumed.

Booking ahead is strongly recommended, especially if walking the full route in one continuous trip. This is particularly important for weekends, holiday periods and any night outside the main towns, where a single full property can force a major change of stage plan.

Best overnight bases

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Clogheen	Limited	Night before starting	The official start village. Useful for avoiding a rushed first morning, as Day 1 climbs straight towards the Vee / Knockmealdown Mountains. Check availability before building travel plans around an overnight here.
The Vee / The Gap	None	Not an overnight stop	Exposed upland road and mountain-flank section rather than a service stop. Do not plan to finish a day here unless a pick-up is arranged.
Araglin	Limited	End of the long first stage	A practical first-stage target from Clogheen, but accommodation choice is limited. Book early or arrange a transfer from elsewhere.
Kilworth	Limited	Shorter early-stage overnight	Works as an overnight between Araglin and Fermoy, but do not assume walk-in availability.
Fermoy	Good	Main eastern/mid-route hub	One of the strongest accommodation and resupply bases on the route, and a sensible place to pause, split stages or reset plans.
Ballyhooly	Limited	River-valley stage stop	Useful for keeping Fermoy–Killavullen stages manageable. Availability should be checked before committing to a fixed itinerary.
Killavullen	Limited	Overnight before the approach towards Mallow/Bweeng	A practical stopping point on the Blackwater valley section, but with limited choice. Transfers to larger accommodation bases may be needed.

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Mallow	Good	Major off-route accommodation and transport hub	The key rail hub for the trail corridor and a useful accommodation base for the Bweeng area. Expect to arrange transport between the trail and town if using it as an overnight stop.
Bweeng	Limited	Junction area between Avondhu and Duhallow sections	Important for staging the route, but not a large accommodation centre. Many walkers will find Mallow more practical for this part of the walk.
Nadd	Limited	Overnight before/after the Mushera and bog sections	A useful Duhallow-stage stop, but accommodation is thin and the surrounding ground includes wet, remote bog. Have a firm overnight plan before setting out.
Mushera / Boggeragh Mountains	None	Not an overnight stop	Open moorland, bog and mountain-flank walking, not a service area. Plan to cross this section between booked bases.
Millstreet	Good	Main western hub	The strongest base before the final mountain section towards Shrone. Sensible for resupply, a rest night or arranging onward logistics.
Caherbarnagh / The Paps of Anu	None	Not an overnight stop	The final section is strenuous and remote, climbing beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps. Start only with a fixed finish-day transport or accommodation plan.
Shrone	None / very limited	Finish logistics only	The trail finish near Shrone/Clonkeen is remote and has no public transport. Arrange pick-up, taxi or onward transfer in advance; do not rely on finding accommodation at the finish.

Planning an inn-to-inn itinerary

An inn-to-inn walk is possible, but it needs more organisation than better-serviced long-distance trails. The route works best if the itinerary is built around Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet, with smaller overnight stops used only where accommodation is booked and confirmed.

The awkward sections are the rural gaps: Clogheen to Araglin, the villages between Fermoy and Bweeng, the Nadd/Mushera area, and the final approach to Shrone. In these places, a transfer from accommodation off the route can be the difference between a comfortable day and an impractical one.

When booking, ask accommodation providers whether they can help with pick-up and drop-off, especially around Bweeng, Nadd, Millstreet and the Shrone finish. If they cannot, arrange taxis before travelling; mobile signal, availability and rural taxi coverage should not be left until the end of the day.

Camping and luggage transfer

The route has a mixed accommodation pattern, including some campsites, but camping should not be treated as a simple fallback for every stage. Much of the route crosses farmland, forestry, bog and

upland ground where legal access, ground conditions and shelter are not straightforward. Any campsite-based itinerary needs to be planned in advance around known, bookable places.

Luggage transfer can make the Blackwater Way significantly easier, particularly because of the wet bog sections and the amount of road walking. It does not solve the main issue by itself: each night still needs a booked bed or campsite, and several trailheads may still require a taxi or accommodation lift.

Practical booking advice

Book the smaller stops before fixing the rest of the itinerary. Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet give the most flexibility, but the limited villages determine whether a smooth westbound schedule is possible.

Build in contingency for wet weather and slow going on the upland and bog sections, especially around Nadd, Mushera and the final Duhallow ground beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps. If a day has no easy accommodation at the end, do not rely on pushing on late; arrange a transfer point in advance.

For the start and finish, accommodation and transport should be planned together. Clogheen has limited links, while Shrone is remote, so an overnight plan without a confirmed way to reach or leave the trail can quickly become impractical. This should be checked before travelling.

Camping and Wild Camping

Camping is possible on the Blackwater Way, but it is not the easiest way to walk the route. Accommodation is spread out and there are some campsites in the wider trail corridor, but there is no confirmed chain of on-route campsites that neatly matches the usual daily stages. Anyone planning to camp should check current campsite availability before building an itinerary around it.

The route passes through towns and villages such as Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet, which are the most realistic places to look for formal camping or low-cost accommodation nearby. These hubs are also useful for resupply, drying kit and arranging lifts back to the trail if a campsite or hostel is off-route.

Wild camping and permission

Much of the Blackwater Way crosses private farmland, forestry, bog, upland grazing and quiet rural roads. Wild camping should not be assumed to be permitted. If you want to camp away from an official site, seek landowner permission locally and avoid farmyards, enclosed fields, livestock areas, forestry operations and any ground where access is sensitive.

The practical reality is that the route is not well suited to casual wild camping. Long stretches follow farmland and road, while the upland and bog sections can be wet, exposed and poorly drained. The ground around Mossy Bed, Nadd Bog, Mushera and the final uplands below Caherbarnagh and The Paps can be particularly unsuitable after rain.

Do not camp where it would obstruct gates, tracks, forestry access or farm work. If permission is given, use a small tent, arrive late, leave early and keep the pitch discreet. All waste, including food scraps and toilet paper, must be packed out.

Where camping works best

For most hikers, the best approach is to use formal campsites or accommodation near the larger settlements rather than relying on wild pitches. Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet are the main planning hubs, though Mallow and Millstreet are off the line of the route and may require a taxi, lift or pre-arranged transfer.

The valley stages around Fermoy, Ballyhooly and Killavullen are generally more practical for resupply and services, but much of the land is agricultural. The wilder western stages around Nadd, Mushera, Caherbarnagh and The Paps feel more remote, but they are also wetter, more exposed and less forgiving with a heavy pack.

The final section to Shrone is strenuous even without camping gear, climbing around 560 m under Caherbarnagh and The Paps before dropping towards the finish. Carrying full camping kit here should be treated as a meaningful increase in difficulty.

Water and resupply for campers

Do not rely on frequent treated water between villages. The safest planning method is to refill in settlements and carry enough for the upland sections, especially the crossings around the Vee / Knockmealdowns, Nadd and Mushera, and the final Derrynasagart ground towards Shrone.

Streams, bog drains and rivers should be treated before drinking. The River Blackwater is a major feature of the route, but river water should not be considered safe without treatment.

Resupply is easiest in the larger towns and villages, with Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet the key hubs. Rural stages can be thin on services, so food for the next full day should be carried whenever leaving a town.

Fires, livestock and seasonal issues

Open fires are not appropriate on this route. The Way crosses forestry, farmland and boggy upland where fire risk, ground damage and landowner concerns make stoves the only responsible cooking option. Use a stable stove setup and avoid scorching grass, peat or wooden surfaces.

Livestock is a major consideration. Dogs are banned on the Shrone / The Paps, Mushera and Mount Leader Fields sections of the Duhallow Way because of livestock, which is a useful reminder that camping access here depends on respecting working land.

Spring, summer and autumn are the realistic camping seasons for most walkers. Even then, boggy ground can stay wet all year and exposed uplands can be cold, windy and misty. Winter camping on the Blackwater Way is only for experienced, well-equipped walkers who are comfortable with wet ground, short daylight and navigation in poor visibility.

Before setting out, check the official Blackwater Walking Trails information for route changes, forestry-harvesting closures, bad-weather alternatives and current access notices. Local rules and land access can change, so camping arrangements should always be checked before travelling.

Food, Water and Resupply

The Blackwater Way is not a wilderness route, but it should not be treated as a fully serviced trail. Food is straightforward in the larger towns, thinner in the villages, and unreliable on the upland and forestry sections. Plan each walking day from accommodation to accommodation, then add food stops only where opening hours have been checked.

Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet are the main resupply hubs. Mallow is a little off the line of the route but is one of the most useful mid-route places for restocking, especially before the quieter western half. Clogheen is the starting village, while Araglin, Kilworth, Ballyhooly, Killavullen, Bweeng and Nadd should be treated as small rural stops where services may be limited or closed when you arrive.

Practical food strategy

Carry lunch and snacks for the full day whenever leaving a town or larger village. On the longer and more remote stages — especially Clogheen to Araglin, Bweeng to Nadd, Nadd to Millstreet, and Millstreet to Shrone — do not assume there will be a usable food stop on the trail.

A sensible pattern is to resupply properly in Fermoy, then again via Mallow or the Bweeng area before heading west, and again in Millstreet before the final mountain section to Shrone. The finish at Shrone is remote, so leave Millstreet with enough food to cover the walk out and any waiting time before onward transport.

Rural shops, pubs, cafés and petrol-station food counters can have short hours, seasonal hours, early closing, or reduced Sunday service. This should be checked before travelling, especially if your plan depends on buying dinner in a village rather than eating at booked accommodation.

Water

The safest water plan is to fill bottles at accommodation, cafés, pubs or shops whenever available. There is no need to carry several days of water, but there are long rural and upland stretches where treated drinking water may not be available for hours.

Carry enough water for a full stage when leaving Clogheen, Bweeng/Nadd, or Millstreet. For most walkers this means starting the day with around 1.5–2 litres, and more in warm weather or if moving slowly over wet bog, forestry tracks and road sections.

The route follows the Blackwater valley and crosses wet upland country, so natural water is present in places, but it should not be assumed to be safe untreated. Farmland, forestry, bog, livestock and settlement all increase contamination risk. If using streams or other natural sources, filter or chemically treat the water, and avoid stagnant bog pools and water running through fields with livestock.

Resupply by section

Section	Food availability	Water availability	Notes
Clogheen to Araglin via the Vee / Knockmealdowns	Start with food from Clogheen or bring it with you. Do not rely on buying food during the mountain crossing.	Fill before leaving Clogheen. Natural water should be treated if used.	One of the longer opening stages at about 27 km, with exposed upland ground after the village. Carry a full day's food and water.
Araglin to Kilworth	Limited rural-village resupply may be possible, but hours should be checked.	Refill at accommodation or open village services where available.	A shorter stage, but still plan around what is definitely open rather than assumed.
Kilworth to Fermoy	Food becomes more dependable on arrival in Fermoy.	Refill in Kilworth before setting off and in Fermoy at the end.	Fermoy is the first major resupply point and a good place to restock properly.
Fermoy to Ballyhooly and Killavullen	Fermoy is reliable for stocking up before leaving. Ballyhooly and Killavullen are smaller stops, so treat food there as useful if open rather than guaranteed.	Fill in Fermoy; refill in villages or accommodation where available.	The route is closer to the River Blackwater valley here, but natural water still needs treatment.
Killavullen to Bweeng / Mallow area	Food options on the line of the route are limited; Mallow, off route, is the practical resupply hub.	Fill before leaving Killavullen or accommodation; refill via services in the Mallow/Bweeng area where arranged.	If staying off route in Mallow, use it to buy enough food for the quieter Duhallow half.
Bweeng to Nadd	Limited food availability. Carry the day's lunch and snacks from Bweeng/Mallow.	Carry a full stage's water. Treat any natural water.	The route moves into quieter upland and bog country. Do not depend on finding open services en route.
Nadd to Millstreet via Mushera / Boggeragh Mountains	Very limited food until Millstreet. Carry a full day's food.	Fill before leaving Nadd; natural water in boggy upland areas should be filtered or treated.	Wet ground around Nadd and Mushera can slow progress, so carry extra snacks. Millstreet is the key western resupply point.
Millstreet to Shrone via Caherbarnagh and The Paps	Stock up in Millstreet before leaving. No dependable food at the remote finish.	Carry enough water for the full final section; treat any natural sources.	This is the strenuous final mountain stage. Carry food for the walk, delays, and onward travel from Shrone.

Navigation and Waymarking

The Blackwater Way is an Irish National Waymarked Trail and is signed with the standard yellow “walking man” symbol and yellow directional arrows on a black background. In villages, on road sections and through much of the farmland and forestry, the route is generally straightforward to follow if you stay alert at junctions and gates.

Do not treat it as a route that can be followed on waymarks alone. The trail is long, quiet and lightly used, with stretches of wet bog, forestry and open upland where markers can be sparse, weathered or harder to spot in poor visibility. A downloaded route line and paper mapping are strongly recommended, particularly for the mountain and bog sections.

Where navigation needs most care

The easiest navigation is usually on the valley and road-based sections around Kilworth, Fermoy, Ballyhooly, Killavullen and the approaches towards Bweeng. These sections still need attention at minor-road junctions, where a missed arrow can send you a long way off line before it becomes obvious.

More care is needed on the upland and bog sections, especially:

- the opening climb from Clogheen towards the Vee / The Gap in the Knockmealdown Mountains;
- wet and poorly defined ground such as Mossy Bed and Nadd Bog;
- the Mushera crossing on the Duhallow Way;
- the final strenuous section under Caherbarnagh and The Paps before Shrone.

These are not technical mountain-navigation days, but mist, rain and low cloud can make the line much less obvious. The western Duhallow section is also the more demanding part of the route overall, so navigation and energy management matter more here than on the lower valley days.

Maps, GPX and official route information

Use the official Blackwater Walking Trails information before setting out, including the live route map, section PDFs and any access alerts. Forestry harvesting, route changes and bad-weather alternatives can affect the line, so this should be checked before travelling.

A GPX track or offline digital map is strongly advised. Download it before leaving accommodation each day rather than relying on mobile data in the field. Use a mapping app that allows offline topographic mapping and route recording, not just a road-navigation app.

Paper maps are sensible backup for the full route. The relevant Ordnance Survey Ireland Discovery sheets are:

Section	Useful OSI Discovery sheets
Avondhu Way, Clogheen to Bweeng	74, 80 and 81
Duhallow Way, Bweeng to Shrone	79 and 80

Carry the relevant sheets for the days being walked, or use an offline digital equivalent with the same level of topographic detail.

Mobile signal and self-reliance

Mobile coverage should not be assumed on the quieter upland, forestry and bog sections. Keep the day's route available offline, carry a charged power bank, and avoid using a phone as the only means of navigation on the more remote stages.

Accommodation pick-ups, taxis and end-of-day arrangements should be agreed before starting the day where possible. In remote areas around Nadd, Mushera, Millstreet's upland approaches and the finish near Shrone, a missed junction or slow boggy progress can have practical consequences if onward transport is time-critical.

Suitability for less experienced navigators

The Blackwater Way is waymarked and mostly low-altitude, but it is not ideal as a first long-distance trail for anyone relying entirely on signs. Confident hillwalkers with basic map-and-GPS skills should find it manageable in normal spring, summer or autumn conditions.

Less experienced walkers should pay particular attention to the Duhallow Way stages, avoid starting upland sections in poor visibility, and consider shorter days or local support where accommodation is off route. Winter conditions, saturated bog and low cloud make the navigation more serious and are best left to well-equipped, experienced walkers.

Terrain, Conditions and Difficulty in Practice

The Blackwater Way is not technically difficult in the mountaineering sense: it is a low-mountain, waymarked trail with no scrambling and no summit objectives. The practical difficulty comes from its length, wet ground, intermittent remoteness, frequent road walking and the need to navigate confidently when waymarking becomes sparse on upland and bog sections.

Sport Ireland grades the eastern Avondhu Way as **Moderate** and the western Duhallow Way as **Strenuous**. That distinction is useful: the route generally feels manageable through the Blackwater valley and lower farmland, but becomes more demanding on the wetter, higher and more isolated western stages towards Musherah, Caherbarnagh, The Paps of Anu and Shrone.

Underfoot: what the walking is actually like

Expect a mixed surface rather than a continuous footpath. The route uses quiet tarmac lanes, forestry tracks, bog roads, moorland paths, field paths and riverside or farmland sections through the Blackwater valley.

Terrain type	Where it matters	Practical effect
Quiet country roads	Frequent throughout the route	Faster underfoot, but tiring on feet and legs over repeated days; road-safe walking habits are needed.
Forestry tracks	Knockmealdown, Nagle, Boggeragh and Derrynasaggart upland areas	Usually straightforward, but forestry operations can cause diversions or closures. Check current route notices before travelling.
Bog roads and wet moorland paths	Especially Mossy Bed, Nadd Bog, Musherah and the western uplands	Slow, wet and energy-sapping; waterproof footwear and gaiters are useful.
Field and farmland paths	Across the Blackwater valley and rural sections	Can be muddy, churned or awkward after rain; expect livestock areas and close gates where encountered.
Open mountain flanks	The Vee / Knockmealdowns, Musherah, Caherbarnagh and The Paps area	More exposed to wind, rain and poor visibility; waymarking can be harder to follow.

There is a lot more road walking than many first-time walkers expect from a long-distance trail. This makes some stages easier to navigate and quicker in dry weather, but it also increases fatigue, especially when carrying a full pack over consecutive days.

Wet ground and bog

Wet ground is one of the defining features of the Blackwater Way. The mountain and bog sections are wet all year, with Mossy Bed and Nadd Bog among the places where progress can become slow and messy even outside winter.

After prolonged rain, expect standing water, soft peat, slippery grass and indistinct lines across moorland. A lightweight trail shoe may be comfortable on road sections, but many walkers will prefer waterproof boots or robust walking shoes with good grip because the trail changes surface so often.

The boggy sections also make timing less predictable. A stage that looks moderate on distance alone can take longer if the ground is saturated, waymarks are hard to see or visibility is poor.

Climbs, descents and exposure

The full route has about **2,889 m of ascent** on the published full-route profile, with a high point of about **588 m**. These are not high mountains, but the climbing is spread unevenly and some sections feel much harder than the headline figures suggest.

The opening out of Clogheen climbs towards the Vee / The Gap in the Knockmealdown Mountains and gives an early taste of the route's upland character. The path then spends long periods at lower levels through the Blackwater valley before the western half becomes rougher and more strenuous.

The most demanding sustained terrain comes on the Duhallow section. The crossing around Mushera and the boggy ground near Nadd are slower and more exposed, while the final section under Caherbarnagh and The Paps of Anu climbs around **560 m** before dropping towards Shrone. This is the section most likely to feel strenuous in poor weather or with a heavy pack.

Navigation and waymarking

The Blackwater Way is an Irish National Waymarked Trail, marked with yellow walking-man symbols and yellow directional arrows on a black background. In settled farmland, on roads and around towns, these markers usually make the line reasonably clear.

Do not rely on waymarks alone in the uplands. The remote mountain and bog sections can be sparsely waymarked, and poor visibility can make posts or arrows difficult to pick out. A map and GPS track are strongly recommended, particularly for the Knockmealdown crossing out of Clogheen, the Mushera / Nadd area and the final approach beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps.

Forestry work, route changes and bad-weather alternatives can affect the line. Check the official Blackwater Walking Trails information before travelling.

Livestock, fields and access

The route crosses working rural landscapes as well as open upland and forest. Treat field sections as active farmland: keep to the marked line, leave gates as found and avoid disturbing livestock.

Dogs are banned on the Shrone / The Paps, Mushera and Mount Leader Fields sections of the Duhallow Way because of livestock. Anyone planning to walk with a dog needs to check current restrictions before travelling and should not assume the full route is dog-friendly.

Seasonal conditions

Spring, summer and autumn are the most practical seasons for most walkers. Even then, the bog and moorland sections can be wet, and exposed upland ground can be unpleasant in wind, rain or low cloud.

Summer gives the best chance of longer daylight and easier logistics, but it does not remove the need for waterproofs, warm layers and navigation tools. After heavy rain, field paths, bog roads and moorland crossings can still be slow.

Winter walking should be treated as a more serious undertaking. Short daylight, wetter ground, colder exposed hillsides and poorer visibility make the remote upland sections harder to manage, especially where waymarking is thin.

What makes the route easier or harder

The Blackwater Way is easier when planned with realistic stages, light but weatherproof kit and accommodation or transport arranged around the sparse service points. The road sections and valley walking help keep the route within a moderate overall grade for fit walkers.

It becomes harder when treated as a simple lowland stroll. Long road miles, wet bog, remote upland crossings, patchy waymarking and the strenuous final mountain section all add up over several days. The most successful walkers are those comfortable combining waymarks with map or GPS navigation and adjusting plans for weather, ground conditions and accommodation logistics.

Weather and Best Time to Walk

The Blackwater Way is best planned between spring and autumn. It is a low-mountain route rather than a high alpine-style traverse, but the walking is repeatedly affected by wet ground, exposed upland sections, forestry, quiet roads and long rural stretches with limited escape options.

The main weather issue is not altitude; it is underfoot conditions. Mossy Bed, Nadd Bog and other boggy or moorland sections can be wet at any time of year, and prolonged rain makes the upland ground slower, heavier and harder to navigate.

Best season

Late spring through early autumn is the most practical window for most walkers. Summer gives the longest daylight for the longer stages, including Clogheen to Araglin, Killavullen to the Mallow/Bweeng area, Nadd to Millstreet and the final upland section towards Shrone.

Spring and autumn can be excellent, but short daylight and poor visibility matter more on this route than the headline elevation suggests. The Knockmealdown crossing out of Clogheen, the Nagle and Boggeragh uplands, Mushera, Caherbarnagh and the ground beneath The Paps all need proper navigation in mist or low cloud.

Seasonal conditions at a glance

Season	What to expect	Planning advice
Spring	Often wet underfoot, with improving daylight. Bog and field paths may still be saturated after winter.	A good season if carrying waterproofs, warm layers and reliable navigation. Book accommodation ahead because options are spread out.
Summer	Longest daylight and generally the easiest season for completing the full route. Wet bogs still remain wet.	The most forgiving season for long stages, but do not treat the route as dry-weather walking. Carry waterproofs and allow time for slow ground.
Autumn	Shortening days, cooler conditions and a higher consequence for delays on remote upland sections.	Start early, especially on the longer rural and mountain days. Be ready to adjust stages if visibility or wind is poor.
Winter	Short days, wetter ground, colder uplands and poorer margins for navigation errors.	Not recommended as a first Blackwater Way attempt. Realistic only for experienced, well-equipped walkers with map/GPS skills and flexible plans.

Rain, bog and trail surface

Expect wet feet at some point, even in a settled spell. The route includes bog roads, moorland paths, field paths and forestry tracks, and the mountain and bog sections are described as wet all year.

Waterproof boots or trail shoes that handle saturated ground are more important than footwear chosen for technical rock. Gaiters can be useful on the boggy stretches, especially around Nadd and Mushera.

After heavy rain, allow extra time for the upland and field sections. Quiet road sections may be faster underfoot, but poor weather also means reduced visibility for traffic, so a bright layer or reflective detail is sensible.

Wind, fog and exposed uplands

The route reaches about 588 m and spends time on open mountain flanks rather than summits. That still leaves the higher sections exposed to wind, low cloud and fast-changing visibility.

Navigation is most important on the Knockmealdown Mountains out of Clogheen, the Mushera crossing, and the final Duhallow section beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps. Waymarking can be sparse on remote uplands, so a map and GPS track should be treated as normal equipment rather than emergency back-up.

If cloud is down or wind is strong, check the official Blackwater Walking Trails information before committing to exposed sections. Route changes, forestry-harvesting closures and bad-weather alternatives should be checked before travelling.

Snow, ice and storms

The Blackwater Way is not a technical winter mountain route, but snow, ice or storm conditions can make the upland sections inappropriate. The final section towards Shrone is already the most strenuous part of the Way, climbing around 560 m under Caherbarnagh and The Paps, and should not be underestimated in poor winter weather.

If severe weather is forecast, use the towns and off-route hubs such as Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet to pause or re-plan rather than forcing the itinerary. The rural nature of the trail means there are not always convenient bail-out points exactly where they are needed.

Daylight and stage timing

Daylight is a practical constraint because several stages are long and services are thin. The official and practical itineraries often place walkers on 16–27 km days, with rural sections where accommodation may require a pick-up or drop-off.

In spring and autumn, early starts are strongly advised. In winter, the combination of short daylight, wet ground and remote navigation makes a full end-to-end walk much less forgiving.

Accommodation and seasonal availability

Accommodation is concentrated in and around towns such as Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet, with thinner provision across the rural and upland stretches. This matters in every season, not only in summer.

Some places may have seasonal opening patterns or limited availability, and off-route lifts or taxis may be needed at the start, finish and between sparse accommodation points. This should be checked before travelling, and bookings should be made before fixing daily stages.

Safety Notes

Emergency help and communications

In an emergency in Ireland, call **999 or 112**. Give the nearest village, road, townland, grid reference or GPS coordinates if possible; on the Blackwater Way, this is often more useful than naming the trail alone.

Mobile coverage should not be relied on across the whole route, especially on the quieter upland and forestry sections around the Knockmealdowns, Nadd, Musherá, Caherbarnagh and The Paps. Carry an offline map or GPS track, plus the relevant paper mapping, and do not assume a phone signal will be available when needed.

Tell accommodation or a reliable contact where you are heading each day, particularly on the longer rural stages and the final Duhallow section towards Shrone.

Navigation and remote ground

The Blackwater Way is waymarked with the yellow walking-man symbol and yellow arrows, but the upland and bog sections can be sparsely waymarked. Mossy Bed, Nadd Bog, Musherá and the ground under Caherbarnagh and The Paps need proper navigation rather than simple waymark-following.

Carry enough battery power for a full day plus a reserve. A downloaded route line is useful, but it should not be the only navigation tool on this walk.

Before setting off each morning, check the official Blackwater Walking Trails information for route changes, forestry-harvesting closures and bad-weather alternatives. This should be checked before travelling and again during the walk where possible.

Weather, exposure and underfoot conditions

This is a low-mountain route rather than a high alpine walk, but the exposed sections can still feel serious in poor weather. The Vee / Knockmealdowns, Musherá, Nadd Bog, Caherbarnagh and The Paps can be wet, windy, misty and slow underfoot.

Bog and moorland sections are wet all year. Waterproof boots, waterproofs, warm layers and a realistic pace are more important here than the moderate overall grade may suggest.

In cold or windy conditions, treat the final section under Caherbarnagh and The Paps with respect: it is the most strenuous part of the route and comes late in the walk, when fatigue is more likely. In warm weather, the long road and open sections can also be draining, so start with enough water and sun protection.

Road walking

The route includes a lot of quiet country road. Walk facing oncoming traffic where there is no footpath, take extra care on bends and in poor visibility, and use a high-visibility item or light in dull conditions.

Do not assume rural roads are traffic-free. Agricultural vehicles, delivery vans and local traffic can appear quickly on narrow lanes.

Livestock, dogs and farmland

The route passes through working farmland. Close gates, avoid disturbing animals, keep to the marked line and give livestock plenty of space.

Dogs are banned on the Shrone / The Paps, Mushera and Mount Leader Fields sections of the Duhallow Way because of livestock. Anyone planning to walk with a dog must check the current restrictions before travelling and should be prepared for sections where dogs are not allowed.

Water and riverside sections

The Blackwater Way follows parts of the River Blackwater valley and crosses wet boggy ground, but it is not a route where water sources should be assumed safe or convenient. Carry enough drinking water between villages and accommodation stops, especially on the more remote upland days.

After heavy rain, riverside paths, field edges and bog roads may be slippery or waterlogged. Do not enter flooded ground where the line of the path is unclear or the depth cannot be judged safely.

Solo walking

Solo walkers should be comfortable with long quiet stretches, limited services and self-navigation. The route is lightly used in places, so relying on other walkers for help is not a sensible safety plan.

For solo days, leave a route plan, expected finish point and check-in time with someone reliable. Carry extra food, a warm layer and a headtorch, even on stages that look short on paper.

Daily safety checklist

Before starting each stage, check:

- the weather forecast for the relevant upland area, not just the nearest town;
- official trail updates for closures, diversions and bad-weather alternatives;
- that the day's route is downloaded and available offline;
- that phone, GPS and power bank are charged;
- where the next food, water and accommodation stop is;
- whether a taxi or accommodation pick-up is needed at the end of the stage;
- whether the stage includes dog-restricted farmland sections;
- that there is enough daylight for the planned distance and terrain.

Gear Recommendations

The Blackwater Way does not need technical mountain kit, but it does need dependable wet-weather gear, strong navigation and footwear that can cope with both bog and tarmac. The main packing challenge is the mix of long road sections, wet upland ground around Mossy Bed and Nadd Bog, forestry tracks, and remote mountain flanks where waymarking can be sparse.

Footwear

Waterproof walking boots are the safest default for the full route. The bog roads, moorland paths and field paths can stay wet even outside winter, while the final western stages under Musherá, Caherbarnagh and The Paps are more committing than the lowland valley sections.

Trail shoes can work for fit section hikers in settled weather, but they are a compromise. Expect wet feet on boggy ground and less ankle support on rougher upland sections; they are better suited to shorter, lower stages than to a full end-to-end crossing.

Because the route includes a lot of quiet country road, avoid very stiff mountain boots unless they are already well broken in. Cushioning matters on the road-heavy days through the Blackwater valley and between the rural settlements.

Waterproofs and warm layers

Carry a proper waterproof jacket and waterproof trousers, not just a lightweight shower shell. The exposed flanks of the Knockmealdowns, Musherá and the Derrynasaggart Mountains can feel cold and exposed even though the route is low by mountain standards.

A warm mid-layer should be packed year-round. Spring and autumn walkers should also carry hat and gloves, especially for the opening climb towards The Vee / The Gap and the final upland section beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps.

Pack clothing in dry bags or a pack liner. Wet bog, rain and long rural days make dry spare layers more important here than on a short, town-to-town lowland walk.

Navigation

Do not rely on waymarks alone. The route is waymarked with the yellow walking-man symbol and yellow directional arrows, but the remote uplands can be sparsely marked and poor visibility can make the line harder to follow.

Carry offline GPS mapping and a backup. A phone with the route downloaded is useful, but a power bank is strongly recommended for the full route or for the more remote western stages.

Paper mapping is also sensible. The relevant OSI Discovery sheets are 74, 80 and 81 for the Avondhu section, and 79 and 80 for the Duhallow section. Check the official Blackwater Walking Trails map and current access alerts before travel, especially for forestry-harvesting closures, route changes and bad-weather alternatives.

Water and food carry

There are useful service points in towns and villages such as Fermoy, Mallow, Millstreet and the smaller settlements along the valley, but there are also long rural stretches with limited options. Carry enough food for the day and do not assume there will be a shop or café at every stage end.

Water should be carried from known settlements or accommodation where possible. The upland and bog sections are not places to rely casually on natural water, and any untreated water source should be treated appropriately.

A simple packed lunch system works well for inn-to-inn walkers: buy food the evening before or arrange it with accommodation where services are thin. This is particularly important around Bweeng, Nadd and the western upland stages.

Trekking poles

Trekking poles are useful on this route. They help with balance across wet bog and rough field paths, reduce strain on long road days, and are worthwhile on the final strenuous section climbing under Caherbarnagh and The Paps.

Rubber tips are worth carrying if using poles extensively on tarmac. They reduce noise and wear on the long quiet-road sections.

For inn-to-inn walkers

Keep the pack light but not under-equipped. Accommodation may be spread out or off the line of the route, so the daypack still needs waterproofs, warm layers, food, water, navigation, first-aid basics and a power bank.

A small dry bag for evening clothes is useful if luggage is being carried or if relying on accommodation pick-ups. Wet boots and waterproofs are common enough on this route that spare socks and a dry change should not be treated as luxuries.

Because start- and finish-day transport is limited at Clogheen and Shrone, keep essential walking kit with you rather than in a transferred bag. This is especially important if taxis, accommodation lifts or off-route overnight stops are involved.

For campers

Camping is possible only as part of careful planning, not as a way to avoid logistics altogether. Accommodation and campsites are unevenly distributed, and the route passes through farmland, forestry and upland grazing areas where camping arrangements must be made responsibly and only where permitted.

A three-season tent, warm sleep system and robust waterproof packing are appropriate for spring to autumn. Choose gear that can handle wet ground and persistent rain, rather than an ultralight setup suited only to dry conditions.

Campers should carry more food capacity than inn-to-inn walkers, especially before the quieter upland sections. Fuel and resupply options should be checked in advance in the main service towns; this should be checked before travelling.

For fast and section hikers

Fast walkers can trim weight, but should not drop navigation, waterproof trousers, warm layers or emergency power. The apparent modest altitude can be misleading: the route is long, wet, quiet and sometimes poorly waymarked away from the valley.

For short sections in good weather, lightweight footwear may be acceptable, particularly on the road-heavy stages. For the Knockmealdowns, Musherá, Nadd Bog and the final western uplands, footwear should still be chosen for wet ground rather than speed alone.

Section hikers using taxis or accommodation lifts should carry enough kit to be self-sufficient if a pick-up is delayed. Rural transport is limited, and Shrone in particular should be treated as a remote finish.

Seasonal extras

Spring and autumn require warmer layers, gloves and a more conservative approach to daylight. The route is best treated as a spring-to-autumn walk; winter conditions on wet bog and exposed uplands are for experienced, well-equipped walkers only.

In summer, carry sun protection as well as waterproofs. Long road sections and open upland flanks can be exposed, even when the weather is changeable.

Insect repellent is useful in warm, still conditions around damp ground, riverside sections and forestry. It is not a defining hazard of the route, but it is a sensible small item for summer walkers.

Budget and Costs

The Blackwater Way is not an expensive trail because of permits or access fees; the main costs are accommodation, food, getting to and from the rural trailheads, and occasional taxis or accommodation lifts. Costs vary sharply because accommodation is spread out and the route often needs to be planned around towns such as Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet rather than exactly on the line of the trail.

Use the ranges below as planning allowances in EUR, not fixed prices. Current accommodation rates, taxi fares and any campsite availability should be checked before booking.

Typical daily budgets

Style	Likely daily spend	What it usually means on this route
Budget	€45–€90 per day	Camping or hostel where available, supermarket food, minimal pub meals, limited taxis. Harder to sustain every night because low-cost accommodation is thin on rural sections.
Mid-range	€90–€160 per day	B&Bs, guesthouses or modest hotels, packed lunches, some pub/café meals, occasional taxi or accommodation pick-up/drop-off. This is the most realistic style for many independent walkers.
Comfortable	€160–€250+ per day	Private rooms in hotels or better guesthouses, regular cooked meals, taxis at awkward stage ends, and more flexibility where accommodation is off route.

For the full crossing, allow for roughly 9–10 walking days plus arrival and departure costs. A mid-range independent itinerary can therefore add up quickly once rural taxis and off-route accommodation transfers are included.

Accommodation costs

Accommodation is the biggest variable. Hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs, hostels and some campsites exist in the wider corridor, but they are concentrated around the main hubs rather than evenly spaced along the trail.

Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet are the key places to look first when building the budget. Clogheen, Araglin, Kilworth, Ballyhooly, Killavullen, Bweeng, Nadd and Shrone require more careful planning, and some stages may need a pick-up or drop-off from accommodation away from the route.

As a broad allowance:

Accommodation type	Planning allowance
Campsite pitch, where available	€15–€35
Hostel bed, where available	€30–€60
B&B / guesthouse room	€70–€130+ per person or room, depending on occupancy and season
Hotel room	€100–€180+

Single walkers should budget cautiously: private rooms can make the Blackwater Way considerably more expensive than sharing twin or double rooms. Booking ahead is strongly recommended because the route is lightly served outside the larger towns.

Food and resupply

Food costs depend on how much is bought in towns versus eaten in pubs, cafés or accommodation. Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet are the most useful resupply points; smaller villages may have fewer options and shorter opening hours.

A practical allowance is:

Food style	Planning allowance
Supermarket food, packed lunches and simple breakfasts	€15–€30 per day
Mixed self-catering and pub/café meals	€30–€55 per day
Mostly eating out	€55–€85+ per day

Carry enough food for the quieter stretches, especially across the upland and bog sections around Nadd, Musherá, Caherbarnagh and The Paps. Do not assume there will be a shop, café or reliable evening meal at every stage end.

Transport to and from the trail

Transport is a real budget item on this route. Clogheen has only local/regional bus links, with Clonmel and Cahir the nearest larger transport towns. The finish at Shrone is remote, with Rathmore and Killarney the nearest onward connection points.

Mallow is the main rail hub near the middle of the route, and Fermoy and Millstreet have bus services. Public transport times, connections and fares should be checked before travelling, especially if starting or finishing at weekends or outside normal daytime hours.

Allow extra money for taxis or accommodation lifts at the beginning and end of the walk. This is especially important at Shrone, where finishing late in the day without pre-arranged onward transport can be awkward.

Taxis, pick-ups and off-route transfers

Because accommodation is unevenly spaced, taxis can become part of the walking plan rather than an emergency fallback. A common cost-saving approach is to stay in a hub such as Fermoy, Mallow or Millstreet for more than one night and arrange short transfers to or from the trail.

Taxi fares will depend on distance, waiting time, availability and whether the journey is booked in advance. Agree the price before travelling and do not assume taxis will be available at short notice in the smaller villages or at Shrone.

Luggage transfer and packages

Do not assume the Blackwater Way has the same continuous luggage-transfer infrastructure as busier long-distance trails. If baggage transfer is essential, arrange it directly with accommodation providers or local taxi operators before committing to the itinerary.

Fully guided or self-guided package options are not something to rely on without checking current availability. Independent walkers should plan as though accommodation, transport, baggage movement and stage logistics need to be arranged separately.

Where to save money

The easiest savings are made by booking early, sharing rooms, carrying lunches from larger towns and using public transport where it fits the timetable. Camping can reduce costs, but only where campsites align with the stages; it should not be assumed as a simple end-to-end solution.

The hardest place to save is transport at the trail ends. Clogheen and Shrone are both rural for long-distance-walk logistics, so a realistic budget should include at least one taxi or arranged lift.

Luggage Transfer, Guided Tours and Support Services

The Blackwater Way is not a heavily serviced trail, so support needs more planning than on Ireland's better-known long-distance routes. Accommodation, taxis and lifts are most realistic around Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet, while the trail ends at Clogheen and Shrone require particular attention because neither has straightforward public transport at the trailhead.

Do not assume there will be a daily baggage courier operating the full 168 km route. If walking with luggage transfer, arrange it as a bespoke service through accommodation providers, local taxis or a walking-holiday organiser, and check exactly which nights and pick-up points they will cover before booking the trip.

Luggage transfer

For most independent walkers, luggage transfer on the Blackwater Way means arranging bag moves between pre-booked accommodation rather than relying on a dedicated trail courier. This is especially relevant where overnight stops are off the line of the route, such as using Mallow as the practical hub for the Bweeng area, or Millstreet before the final Duhallow uplands.

Ask each accommodation provider whether they can:

- store a bag before check-in;
- receive a bag from a taxi or previous accommodation;
- arrange a local lift to or from the trail;
- recommend a taxi firm willing to move luggage between stops.

This is most useful on the wetter and more remote sections around Nadd, Mushera, Caherbarnagh and The Paps, where carrying a heavy pack makes slow ground even harder. It is less necessary for fit walkers staying directly on route and carrying a light backpack, particularly on the shorter valley stages through Kilworth, Fermoy, Ballyhooly and Killavullen.

Book luggage arrangements before committing to accommodation. A workable itinerary depends not only on bed availability, but also on whether bags and walkers can be moved between the trail and off-route towns.

Self-guided walking packages

A self-guided package can suit walkers who want the route, accommodation and transfers organised in advance but still want to walk independently. On this trail, a package is most useful for managing the awkward logistics: spread-out accommodation, the off-route hubs at Mallow and Millstreet, limited transport at Clogheen and Shrone, and possible pick-ups from rural trail sections.

Typical inclusions may be accommodation booking, daily route notes or GPX files, luggage movement and trailhead transfers. Exact inclusions, dates and prices vary, so check current details before booking and make sure the package covers the whole Clogheen-to-Shrone route if that is the aim. Some arrangements may only cover the Avondhu or Duhallow sections rather than the full Blackwater Way.

Before paying a deposit, clarify:

- whether the itinerary follows the full Blackwater Way from Clogheen to Shrone;
- how the start at Clogheen and finish near Shrone are handled;
- whether Mallow and Millstreet transfers are included where accommodation is off route;
- whether luggage is moved every walking day;
- what happens if forestry work, bad weather or route changes affect a stage.

Guided walking

Fully guided departures should not be assumed for the Blackwater Way. The trail is quiet, rural and less commercial than Ireland's major walking routes, so guided support is more likely to be arranged privately or as part of a bespoke trip than as a frequent scheduled departure.

Guided support is worth considering for groups that want help with navigation on the more open upland and bog sections, particularly around Mossy Bed, Nadd Bog, Mushera and the final ground below Caherbarnagh and The Paps. Confident walkers with map, compass and GPS skills will usually find a self-guided approach more practical.

If arranging a guide, check their local knowledge of both the Avondhu Way and Duhallow Way, and confirm whether they provide transport support as well as walking leadership. Weather, forestry closures and access alerts should be checked on the official Blackwater Walking Trails information before the trip.

Taxi transfers and accommodation lifts

Taxis and accommodation lifts are one of the most important support services on the Blackwater Way. They are especially useful at the beginning and end of the trail, for off-route overnight stops, and for shortening a stage if accommodation availability forces a non-standard itinerary.

The key transfer points to plan are:

Situation	Practical planning point
Start at Clogheen	Clogheen has only local/regional bus links, with Clonmel and Cahir the nearest sizeable transport towns. A pre-booked taxi or arranged lift may be needed.
Mid-route around Mallow	Mallow is the main rail hub but lies off the route, so walkers using it for accommodation or onward travel should plan a transfer to or from the Bweeng area.
Millstreet	Millstreet is the main western hub before the final upland section and may be used for accommodation before continuing towards Shrone.
Finish at Shrone	Shrone is remote; Rathmore and Killarney are the nearest onward connection points. Arrange pick-up before starting the final stage.

Do not leave the Shrone finish transfer until the day itself. Mobile signal, taxi availability and daylight can all be limiting factors after the final strenuous section below Caherbarnagh and The Paps.

What to book ahead

Book accommodation first, then build baggage and transfer arrangements around it. The towns and larger villages have the best services, but long rural stretches have thin or absent accommodation, so the support plan is part of the route plan rather than an optional extra.

Before setting out, have written confirmation for:

- every night's accommodation;
- any off-route pick-up or drop-off;
- luggage movement, if used;
- the start transfer to Clogheen if public transport does not suit;
- the finish transfer from Shrone or Clonkeen near Rathmore;
- current route alerts, forestry closures and bad-weather alternatives.

Walkers carrying all their gear can keep support simple, but should still pre-plan the start, finish and any off-route accommodation access. For most people, the Blackwater Way is easiest when treated as a partly supported rural trail rather than a fully serviced inn-to-inn route.

Shorter Hikes and Best Sections

The Blackwater Way is easy to divide into shorter point-to-point sections, but it is not a trail with simple public-transport hops at every stage. The most practical short itineraries use Fermoy, Mallow/Bweeng and Millstreet as anchors, with taxis or accommodation pick-ups filling the gaps.

Distances below are approximate and based on the practical stage breaks used for the full route. Check the official route map, current access alerts and local transport before fixing dates, especially on the upland and forestry sections.

Best for	Start–end	Approx. distance	Why choose it	Transport and logistics
Best single-day scenery	Clogheen to Araglin	27 km	The strongest one-day sample of the eastern Way: the climb out of Clogheen towards the Vee / The Gap, open Knockmealdown views and a real sense of crossing from mountain flank into rural Munster. Bay Lough lies just off the early route.	A long day, not a casual stroll. Clogheen has only local/regional bus links, with Cahir and Clonmel the nearest larger transport towns. Araglin onward transport is limited, so arrange a lift, taxi or accommodation pick-up in advance.
Easier day walk / beginners	Fermoy to Ballyhooly	15 km	A lower-level Blackwater valley section with farmland, riverside and village walking, avoiding the wettest and highest uplands. Good for testing the waymarking and road-walking character of the route before committing to longer stages.	Fermoy is the easiest place on the route for services and has bus links. Ballyhooly is smaller, so onward transport or a pick-up should be arranged; this should be checked before travelling.
Short day with the easiest finish	Kilworth to Fermoy	14 km	One of the shortest practical stages, ending in Fermoy, the largest town on the route and the main mid-trail resupply point. Useful for walkers who want a manageable day rather than a remote upland section.	Fermoy has bus services and accommodation options. Getting to Kilworth may require a taxi or lift from accommodation; check local options before relying on public transport.
Best weekend river-valley section	Fermoy to Killavullen via Ballyhooly	29 km over 2 days	A compact weekend on the Blackwater valley, split naturally at Ballyhooly. It gives a good feel for the route's quieter roads, farmland and riverside walking without taking on the wetter Duhallow uplands.	Start in Fermoy for the simplest access. Accommodation and evening food should be booked in advance, particularly at the smaller village stops. Expect to arrange a pick-up or taxi from Killavullen.

Best for	Start-end	Approx. distance	Why choose it	Transport and logistics
Best section for villages and accommodation	Kilworth to Killavullen via Fermoy and Ballyhooly	43 km over 3 days	The most settlement-linked stretch of the Way, using Kilworth, Fermoy, Ballyhooly and Killavullen. Fermoy makes this the most forgiving part of the route for resupply and overnight planning.	Still do not assume walk-in accommodation in smaller places. Fermoy is the main transport and service anchor; trail-end lifts or taxis may be needed at Kilworth and Killavullen.
Best tough scenic weekend	Nadd to Shrone via Millstreet	37 km over 2 days	A demanding western option with Nadd, Mushera, Millstreet, and the final climb under Caherbarnagh and The Paps of Anu. This is the Blackwater Way at its wildest and most strenuous.	Not suitable as a first long walk. Millstreet has bus services and is the practical overnight hub, but Nadd and Shrone require pre-arranged transport. Shrone is remote; Rathmore rail and Killarney are the nearest onward connections. Dogs are banned on parts of the Duhallow Way, including the Shrone/The Paps and Mushera sections.
Best 3-day introduction	Clogheen to Fermoy via Araglin and Kilworth	57 km over 3 days	A strong introduction to the Avondhu half: the Knockmealdown opening, rural villages and a finish in Fermoy. It gives more variety than a single valley day without committing to the full 168 km.	Plan accommodation at Araglin, Kilworth and Fermoy before travelling. Clogheen access is limited and Fermoy is the better transport finish.
Best 3-5 day upland section	Bweeng to Shrone via Nadd and Millstreet	53 km over 3 days	The western Duhallow section is the best short choice for experienced walkers wanting bog, moorland, Mushera, Millstreet and the final mountains beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps. Sport Ireland grades this western half as Strenuous.	Use Mallow as the main approach hub and arrange a lift or taxi to Bweeng. Millstreet has bus services. From Shrone, pre-book transport to Rathmore rail, Killarney or accommodation.
Best public-transport compromise	Mallow/Bweeng to Millstreet via Nadd	36 km over 2 days	Not truly public-transport door-to-door, but it links the Mallow rail hub, the Bweeng area, Nadd and Millstreet more sensibly than the remote trailheads. It is a practical way to sample the western half without finishing at Shrone.	Mallow is off route, so a taxi or accommodation lift is normally needed to reach Bweeng. Millstreet has bus services. Exact bus times and pick-up arrangements should be checked before travelling.

Camping on shorter sections

Camping is possible only where a campsite, landowner permission or other lawful overnight arrangement has been made. The route passes through farmland, forestry, bog and mountain ground, and it should not be planned on the assumption that wild camping will be straightforward or acceptable.

For a camping-based short trip, the safest approach is to choose a section near the larger service hubs — Fermoy, Mallow/Bweeng or Millstreet — and book or confirm overnight options before setting out. Campsite locations, opening periods and access from the trail should be checked before travelling.

Highlights and Points of Interest

The Blackwater Way is at its best where the quiet rural miles open suddenly into mountain, river or bog. The main places worth allowing extra time for are the Vee Gap, the River Blackwater around Fermoy and Killavullen, the Nagle and Boggeragh uplands, Mushera, and the final crossing beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps of Anu.

The Vee Gap and the Knockmealdown Mountains

The opening out of Clogheen is one of the strongest sections of the route. The Way climbs from the village up the hairpin Vee road towards The Gap, reaching the high shoulder of the Knockmealdown Mountains and giving broad views over the Golden Vale.

Bay Lough, a corrie lake below the Sugar Loaf, lies just off the early route. It is a worthwhile short diversion if time, weather and navigation allow, but do not treat it as a substitute for checking the main onward line towards Araglin.

This is also an early reminder that the Blackwater Way is not just a valley walk. Even though the route generally contours the flanks of the ranges rather than taking in summits, the upland ground can be wet, exposed and less forgiving than the modest altitude suggests.

Araglin to Kilworth: quieter rural walking

After the drama of the Knockmealdowns, the route settles into a quieter mix of farmland, lanes, forestry and low hills through Araglin and on towards Kilworth. This part of the Way is less about single headline sights and more about the rhythm of rural north Cork walking.

It is a good section for walkers who enjoy the understated parts of a long-distance trail: small settlements, field paths, local roads and changing views back towards the hills. Services are limited compared with Fermoy, so extra lingering here needs to be balanced against food, accommodation and onward transport plans.

Fermoy and the River Blackwater

Fermoy is the largest town on the Blackwater Way and the main mid-route stop. Set on the River Blackwater, it is a practical place to resupply, rest properly and reset plans before the route continues west.

The town's position on one of Ireland's great salmon rivers gives useful context to the whole trail. From here through Ballyhooly and Killavullen, the Way follows the Blackwater valley more closely, combining riverside, farmland and quiet road sections.

If building in a rest or half-day, Fermoy is the most logical place to do it. Accommodation and services are more concentrated here than on the rural sections either side.

Ballyhooly, Killavullen and the Blackwater valley

The stretch through Ballyhooly and Killavullen is one of the better places to appreciate the route's river-valley character. The walking threads through the settled landscape of the Blackwater, with farms,

riverside sections and small villages breaking up the day.

This is not the wildest part of the route, but it is central to the identity of the Blackwater Way. Walkers interested in the cultural landscape of the valley should avoid rushing these stages purely as approach miles to the western hills.

The Nagle Mountains

Between Fermoy and Bweeng, the Avondhu Way crosses the northern flanks of the Nagle Mountains. Expect quieter upland and forestry walking with broader views back across the valley.

The Nagles are a useful transition: less dramatic than the Knockmealdowns or the final Duhallow uplands, but more remote-feeling than the river stages. Waymarking and surface conditions can vary in upland and forestry areas, so keep the map or GPS active rather than relying only on markers.

Ancient monuments and early-Christian traces

Standing stones, stone circles, cairns, holy wells and cillíní recur along the Blackwater Way. They are part of the route's appeal, giving the valley and uplands a strong sense of long settlement rather than simply passing through open countryside.

Do not expect every feature to be a formal visitor site with interpretation. Many are encountered as part of the walking landscape, so allow time to pause, but stay on the permitted route and respect farmland, boundaries and livestock.

Nadd, Mushera and the Boggeragh Mountains

The Duhallow Way section brings a wilder feel, especially around Nadd and the approach to Mushera in the Boggeragh Mountains. The route crosses the flank of Mushera on the old Butter Road, with moorland, bog and wide views.

Nadd Bog and the surrounding ground are among the wettest and most remote-feeling parts of the Way. This can be a highlight in clear weather, but it is also one of the sections where waterproof footwear, careful navigation and realistic timing matter most.

This is a place to slow down for the landscape, not to cut corners. In poor visibility or after prolonged rain, the bog and sparse waymarking can make progress slower than the map distance suggests.

Millstreet and the western uplands

Millstreet, although off the line of the route, is the key western hub before the final mountain section. It is the practical place to organise food, accommodation and any transport needed before continuing towards Shrone.

The surrounding Boggeragh and Derrynasaggart uplands give the final part of the Way a more mountainous character. Millstreet Country Park is nearby, but any visit needs to be planned around the long-distance walking schedule rather than assumed as an easy add-on.

Caherbarnagh and The Paps of Anu

The final section beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps of Anu is the most strenuous and memorable close to the trail. The Way climbs around 560 m through the western uplands before dropping towards Shrone.

The Paps are twin cairn-topped peaks long associated with the goddess Anu in Irish mythology. The route passes beneath them rather than turning the day into a summit-bagging outing, but they dominate the character of the finish.

This is the section most worth keeping fresh legs for. It is also where weather, wet ground and navigation can have the biggest effect on the day, so avoid planning it as an afterthought at the end of a rushed itinerary.

Common Mistakes and Planning Tips

The Blackwater Way is not technically difficult, but it catches out walkers who plan it like a fully serviced town-to-town trail. The main risks are logistical: thin accommodation, limited transport at the ends, wet upland ground and route changes in forestry areas.

Common mistake	Better plan
Treating “Moderate” as “easy”	Allow for 168 km of mixed surfaces, frequent wet bog, long road sections and a strenuous western finish. Sport Ireland grades the Avondhu Way as Moderate and the Duhallow Way as Strenuous.
Leaving accommodation until late	Book early, especially outside the main towns. Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet are the main hubs, and some nights may require a pick-up/drop-off from accommodation off the line of the route.
Assuming the start and finish are simple by public transport	Plan Clogheen and Shrone transfers before booking walking dates. Clogheen has only local/regional bus links; Shrone is remote, with Rathmore and Killarney the nearest onward transport connections. Taxis or accommodation lifts may be needed.
Relying only on waymarks	Carry a map and GPS, especially for the remote uplands and bog sections around Mossy Bed, Nadd Bog, Musherah and the western mountains. Waymarking can be sparse in the mountains.
Using old maps or GPX files without checking current access	Check the official Blackwater Walking Trails information before travelling for forestry-harvesting closures, route changes and bad-weather alternatives.
Planning long stages without considering the terrain	A 20 km day on quiet roads and tracks is very different from a wet upland day over bog and forestry. Build extra time into the Nadd, Musherah, Caherbarnagh and The Paps sections.
Underestimating the final day	The western end is not a gentle roll-in. The section beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps climbs around 560 m before dropping towards Shrone, and is the most strenuous part of the route.
Assuming every village has reliable resupply	Treat Fermoy as the main mid-route resupply point and plan food around the larger service centres. Smaller villages and rural stages should not be relied on without checking current opening hours.
Bringing a dog without checking access rules	Dogs are banned on the Shrone/The Paps, Musherah and Mount Leader Fields sections of the Duhallow Way because of livestock. This makes the full route unsuitable for most walkers planning to bring a dog.
Ignoring the amount of road walking	The route includes a great deal of quiet country road. Footwear should be comfortable on tarmac as well as wet bog, and high-visibility clothing is sensible on rural roads.

Stage-planning tips that matter on this route

Do not plan the walk solely from the headline distance. The usual end-to-end schedule is around ten days, but the practical stages depend heavily on where accommodation is available and whether transfers can be arranged.

The Avondhu half is commonly walked over 5–7 days, while the Duhallow half is often grouped into 2–3 days. That split can make the western section feel compressed, so check whether the final days suit fitness, daylight and weather before committing to accommodation.

Mallow and Millstreet are both slightly off the line of the route but are important planning points. Mallow is the key rail hub, while Millstreet is the main western hub before the higher ground towards Caherbarnagh, The Paps and Shrone.

Navigation and route information

The Blackwater Way is waymarked with the yellow walking-man symbol and yellow arrows on a black background, but it should not be treated as a waymarks-only trail. The mountain and bog sections are where walkers most need independent navigation.

For paper mapping, the relevant OSI Discovery sheets are 74, 80 and 81 for the Avondhu section and 79 and 80 for the Duhallow section. A phone GPS is useful, but wet weather, forestry tracks and long rural sections make a backup plan important.

Published route figures vary slightly: the full route is normally given as 168 km, while some sources quote 165 km and some component-section measurements differ. Use the stage distances as planning approximations, not as exact timing guarantees.

Weather and ground conditions

Spring, summer and autumn are the most sensible seasons for most walkers. The route is low-altitude, but the bog and moorland sections can be wet all year, and the exposed uplands are less forgiving in poor visibility.

Winter should be treated as a more serious proposition for experienced, well-equipped walkers. Short daylight, wet ground and sparse waymarking on remote sections can turn otherwise moderate terrain into slow, difficult walking.

Check the forecast particularly before the Vee / Knockmealdown opening, the Mushera crossing and the final ground beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps. If a bad-weather alternative is listed by the trail managers, use the current official information rather than an old itinerary.

Final Advice

The Blackwater Way is best suited to walkers who want a quiet, rural Irish long-distance trail and are comfortable managing the practical gaps themselves. It is not technically difficult, but the combination of wet bog, long road sections, remote uplands, patchy mountain waymarking and spread-out accommodation makes it a poor choice for anyone expecting a heavily serviced trail.

The single most important task is planning each overnight stop and transfer before setting out. Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet are the main practical hubs, but parts of the route sit well away from accommodation and the trail ends at Clogheen and Shrone have limited onward transport. Taxis, accommodation lifts or pre-arranged pick-ups may be needed, especially at the start, around Bweeng/Mallow, and from the finish near Shrone.

The most rewarding walking comes where the Way leaves the valley for the higher ground: the opening climb from Clogheen towards the Vee Gap, the crossing of Mushera and Nadd Bog, and the final approach beneath Caherbarnagh and The Paps of Anu. These are also the sections where navigation, weather and ground conditions matter most, so carry reliable mapping or GPS and do not rely on waymarks alone in poor visibility.

For many walkers, the Blackwater Way works well as a section hike. The Avondhu Way and Duhallow Way divide naturally around Bweeng, with Fermoy, Mallow and Millstreet making useful access points, and this avoids forcing awkward accommodation logistics into a continuous schedule. A full thru-hike is very achievable, but it needs more advance booking and a realistic allowance for wet feet, road mileage and rural transport limitations.

Before travelling, check the official Blackwater Walking Trails information for current route changes, forestry-harvesting closures and bad-weather alternatives. Also check the dog restrictions on the Shrone/The Paps, Mushera and Mount Leader Fields sections if walking with a dog. In winter or prolonged bad weather, the boggy uplands can feel much more serious than the headline altitude suggests; spring to autumn is the more practical window for most walkers.