

Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge

The Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge is located on the North Antrim Coast, east of Ballintoy. Spanning a chasm some 80-foot deep (~24 metres) and about 65-foot in length (~20 metres) the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge connects a very tiny island to the mainland. It is a walk out to the rope bridge but the views from the island and the adventure make the hike all worthwhile. Its construction once consisted of a single rope hand rail and widely spaced slats which the fishermen would traverse across with salmon caught off the tiny island to the mainland. The single handrail was subsequently replaced by a two hand-railed bridge; the current, caged bridge was installed by the National Trust during Easter of 2000 as a further safety measure. Although no-one has ever been injured falling off the old bridge, there have been many instances of visitors being unable to face the return walk back across the bridge, resulting in them being taken off the island by boat.



A collection of old photographs in Sheep Island View Hostel show a local man doing various stunts on the bridge which include riding a bicycle across it and performing handstands on a chair in the middle. Primarily a 'seasonal' working bridge for the fishermen, since the demise of salmon fishing along the coast, the bridge is nowadays more widely used by passing visitors and marketed as a tourist attraction.



The area is exceptional in its natural beauty, to the left as you come down the steep hill is Larrybane headland which once stretched out towards Sheep Island and had a promontory fort on the top dating to 800AD, underneath large caves once served as home to boat builders and a safe resting place from winter storms. During the 1950's blasting, quarrying and shipping of limestone removed most of Larrybane Head, it is well worth a walk down to the old quarry area as some incredible views can be enjoyed from here.



Some people even find walking over this 80 foot high, wind swept bridge, scary but worth the scenic views one receives from the island. The County Antrim coast is full of similar views and certainly worth a few hours to explore and photograph as well as to take some fantastic memories back home with you!

A good windproof (and preferably waterproof) jacket is essential as coastal breezes can be quite cool and strong at times, even in the summertime!

