

Bertra Beach Walk

START 12km from Westport. Drive out the R335 (Louisburgh Road) along the coast. Pass through Murrisk (note the car park at the start of the Croagh Patrick climb on the left, and the dramatic famine memorial opposite). Just over a kilometre past Murrisk turn right (signposted Bertra Beach). This winding road brings you to a car park at the beach.

TIME 1 hour

TERRAIN Beach walk, sandy and stony.

The Town Walk can be enjoyed as one long or two short walks as it is formed of two loops, bringing you back almost to your starting point in the middle. The first loop takes approximately 1 1/4 hours, the second loop about 45 minutes.

From the car park descend the steps or rocks down onto the beach. Turn right and, keeping Clew Bay and the islands on your left hand side, walk along the sandy beach. Follow the coastline right around the spit at the end and make your return journey on the slightly stonier terrain at the Murrisk side.

This is a very pleasant and easy walk with magnificent views all the way. It is best done at mid or low tide to get the full benefit of the sandy beach. On the outward journey many islands are clearly visible – Clare Island’s distinctive humped shape is straight out to sea and the bay sweeps around to Achill in the distance to the north. The other smaller islands, wonderful examples of drowned drumlins, are scattered around the bay. The return journey is dominated by the imposing bulk of Croagh Patrick or “The Reek” as it is known locally. Murrisk village is also clearly visible.

On a calm day, keep a weather eye out for passing seals basking in the sunshine. The beach is a mecca for a variety of seabirds as illustrated on an informative signpost at the start of the walk. Skylarks are common in the dune area and their musical tones are a delightful feature. The dunes themselves are a fragile habitat and are under threat from a hungry sea.

Bertra Beach has attained EC Blue Flag status, testifying to the clarity of the water, cleanliness of the beach, accessibility for the disabled and provision of public conveniences. Mayo has more Blue Flag beaches than any other county in Ireland.

