



Cuilcagh Mountain Walks - Shannon Pot*

This short, circular walk uses the large car park at Shannon Pot as the starting point. Shannon Pot is signposted off the R206 between Glangevlin and Blacklion.

1. From the car park at Shannon Pot walk back along the lane towards the main road.

A. As you walk along the track there are fine views over The Playbank (or Playground) to your left (due south). The unusual name of this mountain is rooted in the activities of local people who assembled on its slopes during the Celtic harvest festival of Lughnasa. Like Cuilcagh behind and Englishmans Mountain lying directly ahead, The Playbank displays a characteristic stepped profile with a flat, or table-topped summit.

The flat summits of all three mountains are formed by a very hard, resistant sandstone (see “Tropical Seas and Arctic Ice” card). High up on Englishmans Mountain there is an old, and now disused, coal mine. A disused tramway leads up the hillside to the site of the old mine. Local tradition tells of the tragic death of a hunchbacked grouse-beater in the last century whose ghost is still believed to haunt the bleak hillside there.

2. On reaching the main R206 Glangevlin to Blacklion road, turn right and walk towards the north.

B. As you go north you are walking along one side of a broad valley. The valley was formed during the last Ice Age as glaciers carved their way through the soft shale that makes up the valley floor. We know that glaciers, rather than rivers, created the valley because of the presence of the numerous small but well rounded hills, or drumlins, that help fill the valley floor. These drumlins formed as the glaciers advanced during the last Ice Age, moulding the rock fragments contained within the ice into small rounded hills.

3. Continue walking northwards for 650m before turning right at the crossroads and continuing along the road towards Gowlan, a further 2km to the north-east.

C. The ground now starts to rise as the soft shales of the valleyfloor give way to harder limestones. In this area the action of rain and running water has created numerous caves and pot-holes, or sinks, within the limestone. Also in this area, just north of the road in the townland of Moneygashel, is an excellent example of a stone ringfort, or cashel. Dating from early Christian times, cashels were essentially protected farmsteads.

4. At Gowlan crossroads turn right and walk south along the road.

D. This stretch of the walk follows the Cavan Way (Slí Cabhán) for 700 m. In the corner of the field, at the south-west corner of Gowlan crossroads, just opposite the church, is a small sink hole. Another two sinks may be seen on the left hand side of the road just 200m south of the church and another one may be seen a further 500m south on the right-hand side, where the road crosses a stream.

5. Turn left onto a track at this point, temporarily leaving the Cavan Way. Continue along this track ignoring the road to the right into the forest and walk up past the house.

E. For the next 2km or so the walk makes a broad loop passing through Mullaghboy townland. 150 metres after the house a small track leads off to the left (north). About 300m along this path is the Pollboy Cave.

6. However continue on the main track forming a broad loop around the forest and eventually coming back to the Gowlan road. A marker post for the Cavan Way can be found just to the left here and for the next 1km or so the route again follows the Cavan Way. Cross the road into a field and, after another 500m, pass along the edge of another small forestry plantation. Several more sinks are passed before the trail eventually comes out at the Shannon Pot car park completing the loop.

F. A very short walk from the car park leads to the Shannon Pot itself which according to local tradition is the source of the mighty River Shannon, the longest river in Ireland. Shannon Pot is a major spring where water that sank higher up in the limestone resurges here at the base of the limestone where it meets more resistant rocks. The origin of the water appearing here is rather complex and experiments have identified many, and quite widespread sources ranging from some of the sinks in the Gowlan area to sinks further north near Cornagee and even to sinks on the eastern, i.e. the far side of Cuilcagh Mountain. An information panel here explains the story behind this.



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An alternative explanation for the existence of the Pot and of the river itself comes from the annals of Irish mythology. This tells the story of a young girl who was tempted to eat from the “tree of knowledge” that the magical druids had planted at this site. However, as she bit into the forbidden fruit a fountain of water sprang up, drowning the young girl and cutting a course through the countryside before eventually meeting the sea far to the south. The girls name was “Sionnán”, or “Shannon” in English and she gave her name to the river that the flood had left in its place.

*Walks provided by Landscapes from Stone (GSI & GSNI)

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