

THE WORLD AROUND US — GEOGRAPHY & SCIENCE · P4–P7

Na Beanna Boirche — Mountains of Mourne

Geography & Science — P4–P7

Key facts

1

Location

County Down, southeast Northern Ireland. The range sweeps to the sea near Newcastle and Dundrum. Visible from Belfast on a clear day.

2

Slieve Donard

850m — the highest point in Northern Ireland and in the province of Ulster. Named after St Dónán, a 5th-century monk. On a clear day the summit offers views of Scotland, the Isle of Man, Wales, and the Wicklow Mountains.

3

Granite geology

The Mournes are made of Tertiary granite — formed approximately 55 million years ago when magma cooled underground. The granite is exposed on the summits; the lower slopes are covered in peat and heather.

4

The Mourne Wall

A dry-stone granite wall, 35km long, built between 1904 and 1922 to enclose the Silent Valley reservoir catchment area. Runs over 15 summits. One of NI's most remarkable engineering achievements.

5

Silent Valley Reservoir

Belfast's main water supply. Built in the Mourne uplands 1923-1933. The river Kilkeel was dammed. The area is now a popular visitor destination.



6

Narnia connection

C.S. Lewis (born east Belfast) described the hills of Down as the landscape of his imagination. 'They taught me longing.' The gentle, rounded Mourne hills with the sea beyond directly inspired his vision of Narnia.

Habitats and wildlife

What lives in the Mountains of

- UPLAND HEATHER MOORLAND: heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), bilberry, bog cotton, sphagnum moss. Red grouse nests here.
- BLANKET BOG: peat accumulation on the high plateaus. Peregrine falcon hunts over the bog.
- RIVER HABITATS: the Kilkeel, Shimna, and Bann rivers rise in the Mournes. Dipper, grey wagtail, brown trout.
- GRANITE CLIFFS: peregrine falcon nest on rock faces. Common buzzard soars overhead.
- RED SQUIRREL: the Mournes are one of the last strongholds of the red squirrel in Ireland.
- IRELAND'S DARK SKY PARK: the Mournes are designated a Dark Sky Park — very low light pollution. Excellent stargazing.

