

*Mini Travel Journals:  
Volume Two - In the Shadow  
of the Mournes*

**A PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMOIR BY MICHAEL GRAHAM**

# A FEW WORDS BEFORE WE WANDER OFF

## Summary

This journal is a personal account of a family adventure through Newcastle, the Mourne Mountains, and the quiet beauty of glamping life above the Irish Sea. It is written as a gentle travel memoir, shaped by early-morning sunrises, forest wanderings, unexpected sea swims, cosy fireside evenings, and the small discoveries that happen when phones are off and time slows down. Every detail is drawn from lived experience and each chapter aims to capture the humour, warmth and simple joys of travelling as a family in the Irish landscape.



## Copyright

© Michael Graham. All rights reserved.

Text and photographs copyright of the author.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means — electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise — without the prior written permission of the author, except in brief quotations used in reviews or critical articles.

All photographs featured or referenced in this book were taken by the author during the journeys described. Any resemblance to actual persons met along the way is entirely intentional; they were part of the charm.

# CONTENTS

3 CABIN BY THE SEA



7 SUNRISE, CASTLEWELLAN  
AND SEASIDE INTERLUDE



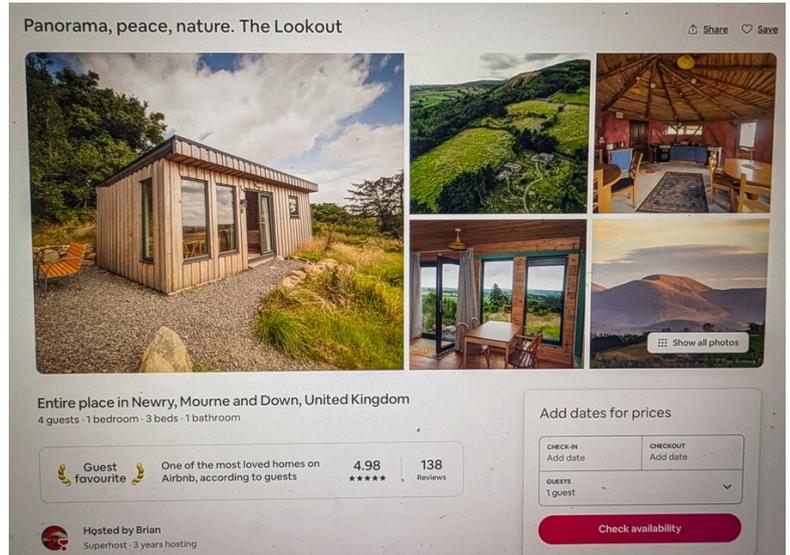
12 TOLLYMORE FOREST AND  
SEA SWIM



15 DEPARTURE AND  
HOMEWARD REFLECTIONS

## Half-Term Adventures: The Cabin Above the Sea

Half-term holidays have a funny way of creeping up. One moment you're buried in emails and meal prep, the next you're looking at the calendar thinking, if we don't plan something now, we'll blink and it will be here. So began the search for somewhere unique, not too far, with a touch of adventure and a chance to unplug from the daily grind.



Our original hopes for an autumn escape to Germany's Eifel region or another alpine wander had been put paid to by circumstance and timing. But adventure doesn't have to involve airports. A bit of research, the same kind that had led us to Donegal's wild coast, unearthed a gem closer to home — a glamping log cabin set in the rural countryside north of Castlewellan, County Down, Northern Ireland, with the Mourne Mountains on one side and the Irish Sea on the other. Ninety minutes from home yet promising the same peace and wildness one usually travels hours to find.

Packing was straightforward: camping mode but without the tent. Sleeping bags, warm clothes, basic kitchen supplies, a gas stove, and the electric grill — simple meals and a good dose of optimism. The journey north was peaceful on a Sunday morning. We stopped at The Boulevard in Banbridge, a shopping outlet, to pick up Mark & Spencer Thai fishcakes and duck spring rolls for the adults, and lasagne for our daughter — a promise of a leisurely cooking night ahead. From there, the sat nav earned its keep on the winding backroads that cut through hedgerows and rolling fields. The directions were clear enough, but the turnoffs were small, and second-guessing became part of the fun.

On arrival, two signs greeted us. One pointed to where we should park, about two hundred metres away down a steep hill from the camping pod. Normally a short stroll — which I'd usually relish for exercise — but a knee still carrying the battle scars of a recent injury, swelling around the kneecap, turned it into a cautious

