

# How the Giant's Causeway Was Formed - Version 2

The Giant's Causeway is in County Antrim in Northern Ireland. A causeway is a raised path or road that crosses low or wet ground. The causeway in Antrim gets its name from the myth explaining how it was formed. The story features an Irish giant and a Scottish giant, hence the name given to the causeway.

The Giant's Causeway consists of around 40,000 large black basalt columns. Scientists believe that it formed about 50 to 60 million years ago because of volcanic activity in the area. Layers of basalt had already built up over the chalk landscape in the locality. The climate was then a major factor in forming a valley. During a time of intense volcanic activity, magma was pushed up through fissures and cracks in the earth. This resulted in a lava 'flood' that filled the valley. As the lava cooled, it contracted and cracked, forming pillars. It is believed that differences in the cooling rate of the lava led to the formation of the distinctive hexagonal shape of many of the columns. The top of the lava would cool more quickly, forming a hardened crust. Deeper down, the lava would cool much more slowly and crack in even patterns. It is believed that the movement of glaciers scraped away upper layers of the rock. As sea levels rose, the water also wore rock away.

Scientists and researchers have found that the slower the cooling process, the taller the basalt columns. Although the majority of the columns making up the Giant's Causeway have six sides, there are also columns with four, five, seven and eight sides. Three outcrops of rock make up the Giant's Causeway: the Little Causeway, the Middle Causeway and the Grand Causeway. The Middle Causeway is sometimes called The Honeycomb. The Grand Causeway is the largest of the outcrops.

