



national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative

**THE
IRISH SPORTS
COUNCIL**



AN CHOMHAIRLE SPÓIRT

Discover Trail Walking

An introduction to trail walking

irishtrails.ie

An Irish Sports Council Initiative

**Recreational walking
is one of the fastest
growing, easiest
and most enjoyable
activities that
anyone can do.**



Contents

Introduction	3
Getting Started	5
Walking and Wildlife	7
Walking with the Family	11
Frequently Asked Questions	15
Trail Walk Options	19
Slí na Sláinte Walking Routes	20
Coillte Forest Trails	21
National Looped Walks	23
Inland Waterway Walking Routes	25
National Parks Trails	27
Long Distance Waymarked Trails	31
Greenways in Ireland	33
Northern Ireland Walking Trails	36
Finding Your Way	37
Walking Groups & Clubs	39
Leave No Trace	43
Nordic Walking	45
Web Guide - Irishtrails.ie	48
National Trails Day	49
Developing Skills	50
National Trails Office	51
Useful Contacts & Links	53

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Introduction

In recent years more and more Irish people are discovering the magic of walking and the simple pleasure of heading off for a walk with family and friends.



This walking guide aims to provide you with information on a growing number of developed walking trails around the country. Many are located in urban as well as countryside areas including parks, forests, along river banks, on the coast, across bogs, on hills and on mountains. All are waymarked with directional arrows and signposts making them easy to use and follow and they range from easy walks that are suitable for people starting out to the more strenuous which are more suitable for experienced walkers.

There is much to observe and enjoy from a wildlife perspective when out walking and wildlife filmmaker Colin Stafford Johnson gives readers advice on what to watch out for in the countryside. Trail walking is also a great activity for the whole family to enjoy and a great way of introducing kids to nature and the great outdoors.

This guide gives lots of ideas, tips and advice to both new and more experienced walkers and we hope it will encourage and inspire many more Irish people to give walking a go, and to start exploring some of the great walking trails around the country.



A note from John Treacy, CEO Irish Sports Council

I have been lucky enough to have been involved with sport all my life and while still getting out for a number of runs every week I also enjoy a regular walk with family members on walking trails near where I live.



Walking is one of the simplest sporting activities that anyone can do, and it's amazing how much can be gained by regularly taking a walk in the open air.

I'm delighted that the Irish Sports Council is involved with the development and promotion of walking trails in Ireland and I would encourage all Irish residents, young and old, to get out there and discover the magic of walking.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'John Treacy', located at the bottom of the teal text box.



Getting Started

By Jean Boydell - Experienced Trail Walking Enthusiast

Walking is a great activity and whether it's walking in your local park or taking on the challenge of a day walk on one of the many trails around the country, good planning and preparation will always make the experience more enjoyable.

The following offers some tips and advice from experienced walking enthusiast Jean Boydell on how to get into trail walking in Ireland and generally how to get organised for your walk.

- If you are new to walking, why not start with well-known walks close to where you live, such as in a local park or along a beach. As you get comfortable with these you can venture further afield, trying something a little harder as you grow in confidence.
- Move on to easy walks, mostly level with a good underfoot surface. It is better to do a walk well within your capabilities than to exhaust yourself.
- Build up slowly to increase your fitness.
- When walking, take your time, pace yourself and enjoy your surroundings. If you are getting tired, don't be afraid to turn back!

Some Advice and Tips - Before you go

Some pre-walk planning is always required to ensure an enjoyable and safe day out.

- Choose a walk that is suitable for you. Allow plenty of time – at least 1 hour for every 4km and add extra time for any uphill sections, rests, eating, taking photos, etc.
- In advance find out as much as you can about the walk and how to get there, referring to some of the websites highlighted in this publication.
- Print off a downloadable map, study it and bring it with you.
- Check the daily weather forecast and be aware of dusk times as you should plan to finish the walk before then.
- Plan and pack whatever you need for your walk including all necessary clothing, a snack, drink and your camera.
- If venturing on a moderate or higher grade walk, in addition to the above bring a torch, whistle and extra clothing.



Tips on Footwear and Clothing

Comfortable footwear and clothing is essential for walking

- Normal outdoor footwear, such as regular runners, is suitable for most multi-access and easy short walks and walks in Coillte Forests. For moderate walks strong walking shoes or walking boots should be worn. For higher grade walks strong walking boots that give your ankles support and keep your feet dry for at least most of the day are essential.
- In terms of clothing, loose light layers are recommended for walking.
 - A wicking layer is the layer worn close to your skin and is designed to take perspiration away from the skin to the outside of the garment, keeping you warm.
 - A light fleece and a waterproof jacket are good items to have and on wet days, a waterproof over-pants is also useful.
 - On colder days a warm hat and gloves help to keep you warm. In hot weather bring sunscreen and a sunhat.
- It can be useful to have a comfortable backpack to hold your gear when out walking.

Safety Advice

- For your safety, it is recommended that you never walk alone in isolated areas, that you always let someone know where you are going and when you should be expected back.
- Bring a mobile phone and make sure it is fully charged.
- If you get lost, stay calm, look at what's around you, think where you have walked and the last place you saw a waymarker or signpost. Study the map and try to work out your location. Look for alternative routes such as tracks or roads to get you back onto the correct trail and be prepared to retrace your steps.
- If it is an emergency or accident assess the situation and work out a plan of action. If there is a casualty make him/her as warm and comfortable as possible. If it is serious call the Mountain Rescue Service and ask for Mountain Rescue (but only in a genuine emergency).

For Mountain Rescue phone 999 or 112

A new Walk Safely leaflet is available on www.irishtrails.ie or from Mountaineering Ireland on www.mountaineering.ie

Walking and wildlife - slow down and enjoy!

By Wildlife Photographer and Filmmaker, Colin Stafford-Johnson

People often say they walk to enjoy nature but in my experience, we don't often slow down enough to enjoy it. Sometimes walking seems to be more about the destination than the journey! If you turn your walk into a wander, you may be surprised at what you might see.

Last week I met a lady who regularly walks the same stretch of river near Limerick. I was sitting quietly by the bank just off the path for some time and she enquired as to what I was looking for. Nothing in particular I said. Just waiting to see what turns up. I have just seen a kingfisher though carrying a fish so I guess it's nesting just upstream in that bank. A big dog otter passed by five minutes ago and had a good search for eels in that bunch of waterweeds over there. And right now, river lamprey are excavating their little nests in the river bed, using their round sucker mouths to shift stones and expose the gravels on the river bed. They have just returned from the sea where they have been feeding leech like on other fish, dining on their flesh and drinking their blood. Yes, they are vampires. The lady sat down beside me.

Now if you look closely you can see that their little cousins, brook lamprey, are shifting pebbles too. You often find them together at this time of year. They don't migrate to sea, so they stay small. In fact, they have lived in juvenile form in the mud as filter feeders for the last 7 years or so and have just become adults so they can breed. They will never eat again and will die after egg laying. The air was full of bird song. Blackcaps, sedge warblers, willow warblers and chiffchaffs, all migrants recently arrived on the fair winds from Africa. Hard enough to see but easy to hear and to identify, once you tune in. Then came an orange-tip butterfly, a male, the one with the orange tip. He was chasing a female. Her wing tips are black and she was seeking out a lady's smock, a delicate pink flower of damp grasslands and her larval food plant. She lays just one egg on each flower head for good reason. For her youngsters have cannibalistic tendencies and she has to be careful not to lay her eggs too close to each other or things will end in tears. Look closely and you can spot the egg, greenish-white when freshly laid but it soon turns bright orange and is one of the easiest butterfly eggs to spot.



DID
YOU
KNOW?

Walking in your local park or in the great outdoors is one of the greenest ways to exercise as it doesn't leave a carbon footprint!

WILDLIFE TO WATCH OUT FOR

In the mountains, listen out for skylarks and meadow pipits, the evocative calls of the raven and the peregrine falcon, the fastest creature on the planet that may be nesting on the steepest slopes. In the heather, keep an eye out for red grouse and the hare. In October, listen for the roaring calls of red deer stags.

On the cliff tops on the south coast in autumn, watch for the blows of the fin whale, the second biggest animal that has ever evolved and one that would have dwarfed the dinosaurs. From the same cliffs in early summer, keep an eye out for basking sharks, the second biggest fish in the world. If you see a large black bird with scarlet beak and legs, that's a chough – the sea crow.

In the woods, sit on the edge of a woodland glade and you may spot foxes and badgers in the evening light. If you hear lots of different birds alarm calling, that means there is a predator on the move and that may turn out to be a pine marten. Autumn is a time for fungi, bring a guide and try to identify them!



I was delighted when the otter came by again. For this lady had never seen one. And when the kingfisher landed with a fish and she saw it through my binoculars, she was thrilled. She had only seen one as a flash of colour before, because she had never really stopped, listened and looked!



Hedgerows are a part of most walks. A good mature hedgerow may have over 2,000 or more different species living within it. A great place to find flowers of every shape and hue, hoverflies, soldier beetles, bumblebees and all kinds of insects. Large white cow parsley flowers and other members of the umbellifer family are great landing pads for insects and make viewing platforms for their human observers. Bring a magnifying glass and see creatures in a new light! Watch closely as these great wildlife habitats change with the seasons. Yellowhammers, bullfinches and chaffinches find plenty of singing posts. Listen to the song, spot the bird and soon you'll be able to use your ears alone to know what birds are in an area.

In rivers, watch out for mayflies and all the different swarming insects that emerge from the river over the summer season. Damselflies and dragonflies are easy to spot and identify. If you spot a dark-looking bird with a striking white chest that continually bobs up and down, that's a dipper – the only perching bird that hunts underwater. For a large animal, otters can move quietly and often go unnoticed, but can be seen at any time of day, if you're quiet. Salmon, trout and lamprey all excavate their nests in shallow water.

Bring a magnifying glass and see creatures in a new light!

TIPS AND ADVICE

For someone new to natural history, there is now a vast range of first class guides available. Many of them are lightweight too! Having the ability to identify the birds, butterflies, fungi and flowers you see will really transform any walk anywhere. Small digital cameras for taking pictures of what you see and identifying afterwards are really useful. Birds can often be best identified by song. I met someone recently who was recording different songs on their mobile phone and checking them on the web afterwards. Initially they sound confusing but once you learn a few, the rest will soon follow. A magnifying glass that turns little bugs into monsters is great for kids. Small, light-weight binoculars are invaluable. Why not do a night walk? Bring a torch to find moths of all sorts. Many are just as colourful as butterflies. Invest in a bat detector. This will turn the high pitched calls of bats that are inaudible to the human ear into a sound we can hear. Now learn to tell who's who. Each species sounds different. Try using the same detector by a hedgerow during the day and you can pick up the high pitched calls of small mammals like shrews.

If you do want to get close to wildlife, sitting quietly in a likely spot like a riverbank or a woodland edge is the way to go. Let the wildlife come to you. That is often the key. Now try to make yourself look as unlike a human as you can. Covering your face with some sort of camouflage net works wonders and is the single most important thing to do. Army disposal stores have all sorts of disguises. It's the round, human face that animals can spot a mile away. Once that is camouflaged, it's amazing how things change. Balaclavas work well. They keep you warm in winter and are very effective at keeping the midges at bay in summer! Remember to note what way the wind is blowing. Always try to stay downwind from any direction you feel your quarry is likely to appear. Scent is of supreme importance to many mammals and human scent is unfortunately seen as a sign of danger in the animal world.

DID YOU KNOW?

A growing body of research shows that interacting with nature can positively impact our health and well-being; relieve stress; and promote concentration and clear thinking?

Walking with the family - it's all about adventure

By mother of three, Una May

Going for a walk together as a family can be a fun, healthy and a precious opportunity to get some quality time together. Most children consider walking to be a boring adult occupation but it can be really good fun if planned well to take their needs into consideration. Many walking guides will suggest a nice flat level walk in a park to start with but unfortunately, although this is manageable physically, it is generally not very exciting for children. Kids like adventure and being outdoors should be all about adventure!

It is tricky to recommend a length of walk which different ages can cope with so it's best to start with a short walk of no more than a couple of kilometres and plan other walks based on this one. A walk of this length could take from 30-60 minutes depending on the ability of the children and the adventures they meet along the way.

The key to walking with kids is to keep their interest and not to put pressure on keeping moving. Expect a walk with children to be slow and, for some adults, even laborious! Kids will enjoy the challenge and sense of achievement of reaching a summit. If you can start your walk close to the summit then they will enjoy reaching the top and stopping for a picnic to look at the views (bring binoculars!). However, some may not be able for a climb and a flat walk may be better. In this case, try and aim to walk along smaller interesting tracks rather than walking along major forest roads/surfaced park paths. Your route may be determined by the need to be buggy friendly but the sooner you can manage without the buggy the more fun for any older children. Occasional piggy backs and stretches of walking will get you a long way and will get younger children into walking rather than always expecting to be pushed. A rucksack style baby-carrier is a great way of providing greater flexibility for your walks when they're very young.

To keep the interest of the children there are so many fun things for them to do which may not always occur to those of us who have long since forgotten about the fairies and trolls that live in the great outdoors.



- First and foremost a good search for a nice walking stick takes the first 5-10 minutes of a walk – this mission may require leaving the path into the woods a bit to find the best specimen – make sure no-one treads on the home of any of the forest creatures – live or imaginary – get them looking around for these.
- At any point along the way there may be many trees to climb, puddles to jump in, streams and ponds to poke around in (using the walking stick which becomes a fishing rod, or telescope!).
- Tree stumps and big rocks must be climbed and the king of the castle has to sing their chant from the top – if there are more children there may be races to get the best castles.
- It's always good to let each child be the leader of the group for some of the walk – this empowers them and they often get renewed energy from this.
- If energy levels are flagging then stop for a little distraction break to investigate a hole in the bank – are there any animals or fairies (even Winnie the Pooh and his friends!) living inside? – knock on their door and call to them!
- Of course, if you have the knowledge yourself it's really nice to be able to name the trees, flowers and wildlife or bring a book and get everyone working together to try and identify them.
- The children can be sent in search of leaves, pine cones, etc. on a scavenger hunt. If there are two or more adults then you can occasionally spilt up to take shortcuts with more adventurous/older children and go cross country through the woods, etc. If one adult takes younger children on an adventure it can be a golden opportunity for the other adult to have a peaceful chat with older children with no other distractions.
- ipods, phones etc. should be left at home! – though an adult can carry a switched off phone for safety purposes.

Short races to reach little targets can also move you along the route a bit faster if it's all taking too long.

How to prepare:

- Check out possible walks in your locality, by checking out websites like www.irishtrails.ie, www.coillteoutdoors.ie and others.
- Start with short walks of no more than 2-3 km and then get longer as you get to know the ability of the children.
- Make sure everyone is dressed appropriately. Bring a change of clothes to allow (even encourage!) children to get dirty. Make sure footwear is of the variety which is allowed to get dirty and wet – either wellies or old trainers. If they fall and get dirty let them understand that it's OK to be dirty and that they can wipe their hands in their clothes on this occasion!
- If they're anxious about dirty hands then bring some wipes but remember to bring used wipes home with you – overall it's much better for them to learn that it's not the end of the world to get dirty now and again!.
- Bring layers of clothing which can be removed as they get warm or added to if they get cold. In cooler weather make sure to carry hats, gloves and scarves and in sunny weather make sure to wear sun hats and sunscreen.
- Make sure everyone has a raincoat/windcheater depending on the weather. Remember there's no such thing as bad weather just inappropriate clothing. In addition to the basic clothing needs it's no harm to carry a very basic first aid kit e.g. plasters, anti-septic wipes etc, a map and binoculars.
- Bring a drink for everyone and then snacks/lunch depending on the length of the walk and time of day. Always carry an emergency supply of little treats (e.g. jellies) – sometimes bribery is called for in the latter stages of a walk if you overestimate the abilities and get the distance wrong! Or sometimes a cut knee can be cured by a kiss and a jelly!
- It's good to encourage each child to carry a small bag containing his/her own drink/snack.

Let them know it's OK to be dirty on this occasion!





OUR FAVOURITE WALK!

Name: Mullen Family (John, Treasa, Tiernan & Katie)

From: Lucan, Co. Dublin

Favorite Walk: Enniscoe House Loop Walks, Crossmolina, Co. Mayo

There are several walks recently opened near Crossmolina in North Mayo varying in length from 4 to 11km and we find these walks great when down visiting home over weekends and during the summer. The Keenagh Loop is the more challenging trail, but for a family with kids or those preferring a less strenuous outing the Enniscoe walk is an easy hour's stroll through mature native woodland interspersed with exotic species planted as part of the Enniscoe estate.

The walk starts in the car park of Enniscoe Heritage centre and winds its way through beautiful woodland, skirting the shore of Lough Conn where you get a wonderful view of Nephin Mountain and of course the lake itself. The trail is a mixture of gravel path, woodland trail and boren. Good footwear would be a necessity on a wet day. The woodland is a natural playground for small children, with trees to climb, bridges to cross and lots of places to explore. The trail ends at the Heritage centre where you can enjoy a tour of the museum and a visit to the walled garden and tea rooms.



Frequently Asked Questions

There is a growing number of well developed walking trails now available for people to use and enjoy throughout Ireland. Some of the walking trail options highlighted in this guide include Sli Na Sláinte walking routes, National Looped Walks, canal towpaths, walking trails located in forestry sites and National Parks and longer distance National Waymarked Trails. Walking trail options range in length from longer multi-day trails to shorter trails which can be completed in less than an hour.

The following are some frequently asked questions about waymarked walking trails in Ireland?

WHAT ARE WAYMARKED WALKING TRAILS?

Waymarked walking trails are developed walking routes that have directional signs to help you find your way and usually have other features such as information boards, stiles and boardwalks. Waymarked walking trails can vary in terms of grade (easy, moderate, strenuous and very difficult) and distance (short, day or multi-day). Waymarkers used on walking trails include marker posts, signposts or finger posts, arrow plates and stone markers.

WHERE CAN I WALK?

See *Trail Walk Options*.



HOW ARE WALKING TRAILS RATED IN TERMS OF DIFFICULTY IN IRELAND?

Walking trails in Ireland are usually described as being easy, moderate, strenuous or very difficult. What these terms mean is described below. The difficulty level of a trail is normally highlighted on promotional websites, trail information boards and other trail information sources.

Easy

Generally flat trails with a smooth surface and some gentle slopes or shallow steps.

Suitable for family groups, including children, and the elderly.

Moderate

Have some climbs and may have an uneven surface where the going is rough underfoot with some obstacles such as protruding roots, rocks, etc.

Suitable for people with a moderate level of fitness and some walking experience.

Strenuous

Will typically have some sections with steep climbs for long periods and underfoot can be extremely rough including many obstacles.

Suitable for people used to walking on rough ground and with a high level of fitness.

Very Difficult

Predominantly in remote upland areas and will typically include steep slopes and very variable and rough underfoot conditions on sometimes indistinct trails. They may be unmarked so the use of a map and navigational skills will be required.

Suitable only for the very fit and competent mountain walkers with a high level of fitness.

WHERE CAN I GET INFORMATION ON DEVELOPED WALKING TRAILS IN IRELAND?

- From the website www.irishtrails.ie
- From other websites like www.discoverireland.ie/walking and www.coillteoutdoors.ie
- From local tourist offices around the country



HOW FIT DO I NEED TO BE TO GO ON A WAYMARKED WALKING TRAIL?

You do not need to be super fit or very experienced to walk a waymarked trail. If you are new to waymarked trail walking choose a shorter, less challenging trail graded easy. To walk the longer trails it is recommended that you have some experience of walking in the countryside.

AM I TRESPASSING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY WHEN WALKING ON A WAYMARKED TRAIL?

All waymarked trails have been developed with the kind support and agreement of the landowners along the line of the route so you are not trespassing.

DO I NEED TO BE ABLE TO READ A MAP TO WALK A WAYMARKED TRAIL?

It is not necessary to be able to read a map as all trails should be well waymarked. To be able to read a map can enhance your enjoyment of a trail. On the longer, multi-day trails it is recommended that you be able to locate your position on a map and recognise prominent features along the trail, in case some waymarkers are damaged or missing. (See *Finding Your Way*)

DO I NEED SPECIAL CLOTHING OR EQUIPMENT?

No special clothing is required although it is always a good idea to wear suitable footwear and be prepared for a change in weather! On longer, more challenging trails where the surface is uneven, walking boots, some warm layers of clothing and good quality waterproof gear is recommended. (See *Getting Started*)



WHERE DO I GET MAPS AND GUIDEBOOKS FOR WAYMARKED TRAILS?

- Most waymarked trail maps can be downloaded from www.irishtrails.ie
- Some trails also have guidebooks which may be available from the local tourist office, good outdoor activity shops or bookshops.
- Some guidebooks and maps are available from info@eastwestmapping.ie.
- Ordnance Survey Ireland - Discovery Series Maps are available from www.osi.ie.

ARE WAYMARKED WALKING TRAILS SUITABLE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN?

Walking trails that are described as being easy would normally be suitable for younger children. Young children should always be supervised by adults when out walking.

HOW DO I FIND OUT ABOUT A TRAIL AT THE START?

Most trails have a map board at the start which gives an overview of the walking trail and helps you to decide whether a trail is suitable or to choose which trail to walk.

CAN I BRING MY DOG ON A WALKING TRAIL?

Dogs are generally not permitted on walking trails which cross farmland. In other areas and on most Coillte walking trails dogs under effective control are allowed.



Trail Walk Options

Slí na Sláinte Walking Routes
Coillte Forest Trails
National Looped Walks
Inland Waterway Walking Routes
National Parks Trails
Long Distance Waymarked Trails
Northern Ireland Walking Trails
Greenways in Ireland

Trail Walk Options

SLÍ NA SLÁINTE WALKING ROUTES - PATHS TO HEALTH

The Irish Heart Foundation is the national charity dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. Today in Ireland more people die from heart and stroke-related illnesses than from any other cause of death. The Irish Heart Foundation recommends that every Irish adult should accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity 5 days of the week. Regular walking can give you more energy, help relieve stress, help manage weight, build muscle strength and it reduces your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.



Slí na Sláinte, meaning "Path to Health", is a simple innovative scheme developed by the Irish Heart Foundation to encourage people of all ages and abilities to walk for leisure and good health. It uses attractive signage at kilometre intervals on established nationwide walking routes to help walkers identify the distance they walk. Slí na Sláinte is designed to encourage people to walk more frequently and to enjoy the benefits of a healthier lifestyle.



Over 170 Slí na Sláinte walking routes nationwide have been developed in partnership with local authorities, communities, Local Sports Partnerships, the HSE, Walking Leaders and Tidy Towns Committees. With more Slí na Sláinte routes being developed and installed all over the country there is bound to be a Slí na Sláinte near you.

Walking Tips

- Walk at a slow pace for the first few minutes of your walk to warm up
- Relax your arms and allow them to swing freely by your side
- Maintain a good posture by keeping your back straight and your stomach pulled in
- Take strides using heel to toe to reduce joint strain
- Walk at a brisk pace and feel an increase in your breathing and heart rate
- To cool down, walk more slowly towards the end of your walk
- Most importantly listen to your body and stop exercising immediately, if you feel unwell or feel pain.

For details on Slí na Sláinte routes in your area or to enquire about developing a Slí na Sláinte route visit www.irisheart.ie/sli.

Trail Walk Options

COILLTE FOREST TRAILS - MUCH MORE THAN TREES

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

Robert Frost



That prospect of encountering new experiences and the sense of adventure and exploration is one of the elements that make a walk in a forest so interesting to so many people.

Coillte (the Irish Forestry Board) provides some of Ireland's best outdoor recreation opportunities for walking and hiking and fun family days out.

There are now over 250 walking trails located in forest sites around the country, all waiting to be explored. Forest walking trail options include multi-access trails along sand dunes in north Donegal and mountain access trails in Wicklow, simple forest loop walks, National Looped walks and sections of the long distance National Waymarked Trails all over the country.

Many of Coillte's walking trails are located close to large towns and cities, are all graded from easy through to strenuous and all have trail head signs indicating the distance and time the trail will take. So, there are lots of options and many miles to explore – the choice is yours!

For full details on all walking trails located on Coillte properties around the country and plenty of useful information on enjoying the outdoors visit www.coillteoutdoors.ie

Get Out, Get Active, Be Alive



MY FAVOURITE WALK!

Name: Olive Loughnane (Irish Athlete and mum)

From: Galway, living in Cork!

Favorite Walk: Farran Wood, Co. Cork

As my job as an athlete suggests, I love being out and about. Luckily my husband Martin and daughter Eimear are big fans too. I grew up with a wood across the road. Many childhood hours in Dunsandle, Athenry were spent going for walks with my mom and brothers and sisters in "the woods" as we called them. We were out in all weathers but I particularly loved when the wild strawberries and raspberries were on the go.

Now Martin, Eimear and I have Farran Wood in Cork on our doorstep. Farran is a treasure. There's an activity area and of course a place to picnic. Eimear loves to feed the ducks and the deer. Martin has been teaching her how to skim stones down by the river. It's amazing the little things that fascinate children. The trees provide ideal cover for a game of hide and seek. Every so often we pack a picnic, for ourselves, the ducks and the deer. We might spend up to two hours wandering around Farran. Other times we're passing the woods on the way home from somewhere and we get out for 20 minutes for a game of hide and seek. Our friends and their children often join us. I have a sneaking suspicion that Farran is one of the reasons that most of our play dates come to us.

We hope to have many more adventures in Farran in the next few years. Farran has a permanent orienteering course and I look forward to doing the routes as a family. I think I'll be the one teaching Eimear to map read if she's to have any chance!!

Trail Walk Options

NATIONAL LOOPED WALKS - SHORT AND SCENIC!



There are amazing areas all over Ireland to discover the outdoors on foot. Did you know there are over 175 National Looped Walks developed throughout Ireland and on some of our off shore islands. Ranging from short strolls to longer walks (30 minutes to 6 hours) these are all waymarked with directional arrows and offer a great option for leisurely walks with family and friends.

They are rated easy, moderate and hard and are also themed into such categories as heritage, nature, mountain, coastal and island so there are plenty of options to choose from.

A small sample of some great looped walks you might like to try includes;

- Howth Head Loops, Dublin
- Lighthouse Loop, Sheep's Head Peninsula, Co. Cork
- Black Head Coastal Loop, Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare
- Inishturk Island Loops, Co. Mayo
- Cong Loops, Co. Mayo
- Rinn Duin Loops, Co. Roscommon
- Bonane Loops, Kenmare Co. Kerry
- The Dolmen Loop, Glen of Aherlow, Co. Tipperary
- Tinahely Loops, Co. Wicklow
- Brittas Forest Loop, Clonastee, Co. Laois
- Horn Head & McSwyne's Gun Loop, Co. Donegal
- Lough Easkey Loop, Co. Sligo



Detailed information including descriptions and downloadable maps can be obtained on all National Looped Walks from the website www.discoverireland.ie/walking.

Walking Festivals

Walking festivals are a fantastic way to try walking for the first time, meet likeminded people and above all have great fun in the outdoors! There are great walking festivals all over Ireland throughout the year offering great packages and a guaranteed weekend of fun! Details on walking festivals can be found on www.discoverireland.ie and www.irishtrails.ie.

Trail Walk Options

INLAND WATERWAY WALKING ROUTES

There is no better way to explore the countryside and enjoy the wonderful inland waterways that Ireland has to offer than by foot. The waterways are host to a number of approved long distance Waymarked Trails and include the Lough Derg Way, the Grand Canal Way, the Barrow Way and the Royal Canal Way.

Some of the walking opportunities along our inland waterways include;

The Shannon

Located along the banks of the River Shannon the Lough Derg Way is a mix of river bank, canal bank, forest tracks and country roads – a linear route, stretching from Limerick City, past the hydro-electric power station at Ardnacrusha to the twin towns of Killaloe/Ballina and then northwards offering some spectacular views of the majestic River Shannon. The walker will experience the wonderful charm of the lakeside communities of Garrykennedy and Dromineer and will experience lush countryside, forests and spectacular views of Lough Derg from Tountinna in the Arra Mountains.

The Royal Canal

The Royal Canal Way is an ideal trail for walkers of all abilities. Being a canal walk the lack of gradient makes it ideal for beginners to long distance walking or it can be enjoyed as a series of short walks. Stretching from the River Liffey in Dublin to Clondra beside the Shannon the Royal Canal Way is a well maintained and signposted walk. The recently restored canal runs for 145.6km with the towpath along the canal a walker's paradise. Following grassy towpaths, gravel and sometimes canal-side roads the route for the most part takes walkers along a linear corridor of unspoilt countryside.

The Grand Canal

The Grand Canal Way makes its way from the busy Dublin metropolis to Shannon Harbour on Ireland's longest river. Much of the landscape through which the route passes is a linear oasis for the flora and fauna populating the countryside. Part of Dublin's Grand Canal is the newly designated Green Route, an 8.5km pedestrian and cycle route along the canal. Stretching from the 3rd Lock, Inchicore to the 12th Lock, Lucan the Green Route is promoted as an off-road, secure and safe alternative for commuters and leisure users.

The Barrow

The 114km long Barrow Way follows the River Barrow along its surviving canal towpaths and riverside roads from Lowtown in County Kildare to the beautiful village of St Mullins in south County Carlow. This peaceful route through a quiet scenic landscape is a delightful journey of tranquillity and discovery. Among the interesting places the route passes through are the towns of Leighlinbridge, Bagenalstown and Graiguenamanagh (meaning "village of the monks") where a book festival is held every year.



The Shannon-Erne Waterway

No long distance walk exists for the Shannon-Erne Waterway as there are no tow paths as such, although on some sections of still water canal and river there are footpaths along the banks. A number of unapproved trails and routes will allow the walker to travel through the variety of landscape features common to this area.

Further Information:

Waterways Ireland Publications:

- Guide to the Barrow Navigation
- Guide to the Royal Canal
- Guide to the Grand Canal

Further information on the Barrow, Grand and Royal Canal Ways can be obtained from www.irishtrails.ie.

Contact details for and information on Waterways Ireland can be obtained from www.waterwaysireland.org

Trail Walk Options

NATIONAL PARK TRAILS

Ireland has six national parks, each with unrivalled natural beauty and tranquil surroundings. The National Parks & Wildlife Service, which is part of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, conserves their wide range of habitats and species and develops facilities so that the public can visit and appreciate them. Further information on them can be found on www.npws.ie.

Ballycroy National Park

This Park is located in northwest Mayo and covers almost 12,000 hectares. The park protects several species of fauna and flora as well as one of the last intact active blanket bog systems in Ireland. From the Visitor Centre in Ballycroy Village an easy walking trail has been developed to give a taste of the wild and remote area this is. The long distance waymarked Bangor Trail also passes through the Park. Further details are available at www.ballycroynationalpark.ie

Burren National Park

The Park is located in the south eastern corner of the Burren in County Clare and is approximately 1500 hectares in size. It contains examples of all the major habitats within the Burren: limestone pavement, calcareous grassland, hazel scrub, ash/hazel woodland, turloughs, lakes, petrifying springs, cliffs and fen. There are several waymarked trails around Mullaghmore giving spectacular views and the long distance Burren Way passes through, taking in one of the Mullaghmore Loops. Further details are available at www.burrennationalpark.ie and wwwwww.irishtrails.ie

Connemara National Park

Connemara National Park is situated in north-west Galway and is 2,070 hectares in area. The Park is on the edge of the Twelve Bens mountain range and encompasses blanket bog, heaths, grasslands and exposed rock. There is a waymarked trail on Diamond Hill near the Visitor Centre at Letterfrack. Further details are available at www.connemaranationalpark.ie



Irish National Parks



Glenveagh National Park

Glenveagh National Park lies in the heart of the Derryveagh Mountains in the north-west of County Donegal. It is the haunt of many rare and interesting plants and animals and is famous for its fine herd of red deer. A recent project is the re-introduction of the Golden Eagle and you may catch sight of one of these magnificent birds when visiting the area.

There are a number of walks that visitors can do around the park, either themselves or with a guide including The View Point Trail, giving great views of the castle, gardens and all of the glen, The Tree Trail and scenic Lakeshore Walk. Maps and information sheets can be collected free of charge at the Visitors Centre, or downloaded from our homepage. www.glenveaghnationalpark.ie

Killarney National Park

The Killarney National Park lies south and west of the town of Killarney in County Kerry. It covers 10,289 hectares and contains many features of national and international importance. It includes many opportunities and services for the visitor.

Walking in the more remote parts of the Park you may see the native red deer and there has recently been a project to reintroduce the White Tailed Eagle. There are some waymarked circular trails and nature trails in the Park as well as numerous opportunities for low level walks; in fact the best way to see the park is by foot or on a bicycle and the Kerry Way goes right through the Park. Further details are available at www.killarneynationalpark.ie

Wicklow Mountains National Park

The Wicklow Mountains National Park covers part of the Wicklow Mountains on the east coast over an area of about 20,000 hectares. The most visited site in the Park is the valley of Glendalough where there are 9 waymarked trails varying from 30 minutes to 4 hours. Nature trail notes have been developed to accompany some of these. The two long distance waymarked trails – the Wicklow Way and St Kevin's Way – pass through much of the National Park. Further details are available at www.wicklowmountainsnationalpark.ie.

Nature Reserves

The National Parks & Wildlife Service is also responsible for nature reserves in various parts of Ireland, many of which have waymarked trails. See www.npws.ie for details of the Nature Reserves.

Further information can be found on www.npws.ie



MY FAVOURITE WALK!

Name: Michael Doyle

From: Killarney, Co. Kerry

Favorite Walk: The Fossa Way,
Killarney, Co. Kerry

The Fossa Way offers the ideal opportunity for walkers of any fitness level to access the Killarney National Park. This five-kilometre route starts in the parish of Fossa and extends through lush woodlands to Killarney. Most of the route winds its way beneath a canopy of mature beech trees, which provide shelter for a wealth of wildlife. The scent of wild garlic and bluebells is pungent in late spring, and Sitka and the native red deer roam freely. Red squirrels, foxes, swans, ducks, and rabbits are among the other native wildlife to be glimpsed. The Fossa Way offers a gateway to Killarney National Park, where a range of loop walks of various lengths awaits. These loop walks reveal some of Ireland's finest scenery and provide a glimpse of Killarney's historical sites, including Ross Castle and the ancient copper mines of Ross Island. This beautiful, tranquil place truly is my favourite walk.

Trail Walk Options

LONG DISTANCE WAYMARKED TRAILS

Ireland's first waymarked trail, the Wicklow Way opened in 1982. This 130 km walking trail is located in Co. Wicklow and brings walkers through some of the most scenic parts of the county. 42 other scenic and varied long distance waymarked trails have also now been developed throughout Ireland, including the new Dublin Mountains Way which extends from Tallaght to Shankill in Co. Dublin.



Walking has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety? Many studies have revealed that walking results in an enhanced state of mood and sense of well-being. Exercising outside can also improve concentration for several hours afterwards!

All 43 Long Distance Waymarked Trails are highlighted in the map overleaf and while there is a concentration of routes in the south west of the country (Sheep's Head, Beara, Kerry, Dingle, North Kerry Ways) there are great walking options offered in the Midlands (Slieve Bloom Way), Shannon Region (Lough Derg, Burren and East Clare Way), West & North West (Western Way & Bluestack Way, East Coast and South East (Barrow Way & Nore Valley Walk).

Long Distance Waymarked Trails are suitable for walkers of all ages, of reasonable health and fitness, and usually follow woodland paths, grassy boreens and quiet country roads in the lowlands, and forestry tracks and mountain paths in the uplands. While experienced walkers may wish to walk the trails from beginning to end, sections of these routes can be walked by anybody who wants to get out and enjoy a walk in the countryside.

More detailed information on all National Waymarked trails, including overview and section maps for all routes are available from the website www.irishtrails.ie



Long Distance Waymarked Trails



Trail Walk Options

GREENWAYS IN IRELAND

Greenways are trails that are designed for shared use by walkers and cyclists. They are mainly traffic-free, off-road and have a solid surface, either tarred or compacted.

Greenways can be for leisure use or to commute to and from school, or work, or to link centres of population and facilities.

The main leisure greenways in Ireland are located in some of the larger urban parks including the Phoenix Park in Dublin. New Greenways utilising old rail lines have also been developed in recent years including the Great Western Greenway (see www.greenway.ie) and the Westport Greenway (see www.mayowalks.ie) in County Mayo and the Great Southern Trail (see www.southerntrail.net) in Counties Limerick and Kerry.



Walking provides many of the same health benefits as more vigorous activities and when carried out consistently is associated with many important cardiovascular health benefits.

Trail Walk Options

NORTHERN IRELAND WALKING TRAILS

The beauty and variety of the Northern Ireland landscape, the compact distances and ever-changing vistas make this a wonderful place to explore on foot. Northern Ireland is full of great walking opportunities all of which are listed on WalknNI.com. On offer is everything from strenuous mountain climbs and long distance waymarked trails for the enthusiast, as well as a variety of great walks suitable for those who want to take a short stroll. See below for five of the most popular walking areas in Northern Ireland.

The North Coast & Glens of Antrim

This area is justifiably famous for the spectacular Giant's Causeway, wonderful coastlines and a unique natural beauty. Walking is mostly on stunning coastal paths with great views to Scotland. For more details, download the 'Walker's Guide' on WalkNI.com

The Mourne Mountains

The Mourne are the highest and most dramatic range in Northern Ireland with the highest peak, Slieve Donard, reaching 853m. There are incredible opportunities to walk in the mountains and surrounding areas for both enthusiast walkers and those hoping to enjoy an afternoon stroll. For more details, download the 'Walker's Guide' on WalkNI.com

The Sperrin Mountains

The Sperrin Mountains, stretching along the border of Tyrone and Derry, can best be described as wild, untouched and beautiful. The highlight in this area is the Sperrins Hillwalking Festival which takes place on the first weekend in August on an annual basis. Visit WalkNI.com for more details.



Fermanagh

Fermanagh is renowned for its lakelands but also offers some wonderful walking particularly around the Marble Arch Caves and Cuilcagh Mountain. Visit WalkNI.com for more details.

Strangford

Walkers will enjoy mostly flat coastal walking along this unique coastline. Strangford Lough is a Marine Nature Reserve and is a must for those with an interest in bird-life and seals. Visit WalkNI.com for more details.

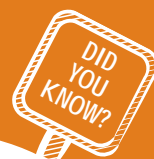
Finding your way

Advice from Cormac MacDonnell in the National Trails Office

Finding your way to the start of a trail!

It can sometimes be difficult for people to find the start of a walk when visiting an area for the first time. The following offers some advice to assist you in getting started on your trail walking adventures.

1. Purchase a good up-to-date road map of Ireland. You can do this online from the website www.osi.ie
2. Do your research on the trail you wish to walk in advance, finding out where it is located, what is the nearest town or village and what the directions are for getting to the trail head car park or start of the walk. Write all this information down. Websites such as www.irishtrails.ie, www.coillteoutdoors.ie and www.discoverireland.ie/walking are all good for sourcing information.
3. If a trail map is available on the website, print off a copy in advance.
4. Try to find the nearest town/village to the start of the trail on your road map or use websites such as AA Ireland Route Planner (www.aaireland.ie). Print the directions from your home to the nearest town/village to the trail.
5. Once you get to the nearest town/village follow the local directions to the start of the walk. If unsure, stop and ask locally for directions and assistance.
6. Many websites now carry GPS coordinates for the start location of walks and these can be very useful if you have a satellite navigation device such as a Tom Tom or a smart phone. Simply type the six digits (latitude/longitude coordinates) into the device and it will direct you to the required location.



Moderate intensity activity is defined as any activity that burns 3.5 to 7 calories per minute; or the effort a healthy individual might expend while walking briskly, mowing the lawn, dancing or bicycling on level terrain.

Finding your way when walking on a trail!

The vast majority of walking trails in Ireland are waymarked so it is not necessary to be able to read a map or use a compass to navigate along them. It is very helpful and reassuring however to be able to follow your progress along a trail when walking. Some tips that may help tracking your location along a trail include;



1. Carry a trail map for your walk and keep this in a see-through plastic bag when out on a trail.
2. Practise following your progress on a map on trails that are familiar to you before progressing to new areas.
3. Before you start walking have a good look at the map/trail information board for the trail to get an idea of what landmarks and features you might expect to see along your walk.
4. Locate the start point of the trail on your map and track your progress along the trail from the very start.
5. As you start out along the trail keep an eye open for definite features such as rivers, roads, historic monuments and buildings and see where these are located on your map.
6. Keep your map in your hand and mark your new location on the map every time you recognise something along your walk. Each time you see a new waymarker post, see if you can also mark its location on your map.
7. If you lose sight of any waymarker posts, retrace your steps to the last one you passed to make sure you followed it correctly.
8. Finally, ask for assistance and seek reassurance from other trail users at any stage along your walk!

Walking Groups and Clubs

Walking is a great sport for meeting people and walking with small groups is a great way of socialising, trying out new trails and enjoying longer walks. Walking groups very often start with two or three like-minded people regularly walking together and gradually grow as others join in.



Benefits of a walking group

- Members keep each other motivated
- Members encourage each other to go out when enthusiasm is flagging
- Walking in a group is sociable
- Walking groups introduce others to walking
- Being part of a walking group can lead to venturing further afield
- Being a member of a walking group can bring the confidence to move up to the next level
- Walking groups help you to get to know your area and people in it
- Walking groups get you out into the fresh air and mean you take exercise on a regular basis

Walking groups will start by walking well-known local paths, Slí na Slainte routes, parks, beaches in their locality and build up by moving to waymarked trails in forests, National Looped Walks and eventually on to the longer distance National Waymarked Ways. All you need is like-minded people and a sense of adventure!

Walking groups often become walking clubs when the numbers increase and more organisation is required in terms of planning walks, various events and even weekends away. Walking clubs can also in time become affiliated to Mountaineering Ireland, the National Governing Body for Walking & Mountaineering Clubs in Ireland, and take advantage of their expertise, advice, and support.

Further information on walking clubs can be picked up from:
The Irish Heart Foundation - see www.irisheart.ie
Mountaineering Ireland - see www.mountaineering.ie

Walking Clubs

Tinahely Walking Club

By Anna Gahan – PRO Tinahely Walking Club

Founded in October 2010, Tinahely Walking Club was established following a series of summer walks by interested locals. Having spent Sunday afternoons exploring local trails and walks from the leisurely Tomnafinogue Wood to sections of the Wicklow Way and having enjoyed the company of fellow walkers from across the generations, there was a unanimous desire to continue with outings into the autumn and winter months.

The club has at present in excess of 50 members who come not only from the local environs but from counties Carlow, Dublin and Wexford. All are affiliated to Mountaineering Ireland and enjoy the benefits of such membership.

A key priority for the club so far has been to meet the needs of its members and as walking schedules are planned feedback from members is sought beforehand. Walking schedules are usually planned 2-3 months in advance and are forwarded via text message to each club member. We are also very fortunate to have the support of the Tinahely Walkers Welcome website where we publish and update information about our club on a regular basis (www.tinahely.ie). The club varies the walks in an attempt to suit as broad a spectrum of walkers as possible in terms of difficulty, duration, starting time, etc. We are continuously evolving as we explore new ideas and opportunities. In January 2011 for example we participated in the Aherlow Festival, Co. Tipperary. We are currently planning a walking weekend in the Mourne Mountains for August/September. Our current schedule includes walks with other clubs.

We recently organized a competition for local primary schools to design a logo for our club. We saw this as an opportunity to get young people thinking about walking as a hobby and we were amazed at the high standard of entries from the five participating schools. The winning logo will become part of our official club logo. We are also delighted to be able to support the Tinahely Walking Festival this year in planning and leading the walks.



The benefits of walking lie beyond the obvious health and environmental realms to community and social involvement and indeed true citizenship!

Walking Clubs

The Galtee Walking Club

By Helen Morrissey

The Galtee Walking Club, Tipperary is now just 10 years in existence and was started by a core group of hillwalking enthusiasts who were born and raised around the foothills of the Galtee Mountains in Tipperary.

From small beginnings the Galtee Walking Club has grown steadily to around a membership of 200 drawn from all over Munster.

While the Club has many advanced hill walkers and offers challenging routes on a weekly basis, there is a lot of emphasis on bringing in new walkers, offering shorter routes on forest tracks for those wishing to develop their walking skills. The Wednesday evening walks are most popular often using the National Looped Walks in the Glen of Aherlow, Tipperary.

Our full schedule of walks is available on www.galteewalkingclub.ie. The Galtee Club always welcomes new members and visiting walkers.

The Galtee Club will lead all walks for the Glen of Aherlow Walking Festival on the June Bank Holiday weekend.



The Galtee Club always welcomes new members and visiting walkers.

Walking Clubs

The Foxford Ramblers Walking Club

By Des Moore

The Foxford Ramblers Walking Club was formed in March 2010 by a group of like minded people interested in organising and participating in walks in the Foxford area. Since its formation, the club has grown steadily to 50 members with more joining weekly.

Initially the club organised walks on local boreens and quiet country roads. It has progressed to exploring the National Looped Walk Network and the Foxford Way which we are lucky enough to have on our doorstep.

The club hosts walks every Sunday throughout the year. The Foxford Ramblers now have a Facebook page where our schedule of walks along with many photographs is available.



The Foxford Ramblers now have a a Facebook page where our schedule of walks along with many photographs is available.

Leave no trace



All trail users are encouraged to apply the Leave No Trace ethic when walking, hiking or biking in the Irish outdoors.

The Seven Principles of Leave No Trace are:

1 Plan Ahead and Prepare

- Where possible travel by public transport or share cars.
- Consider the availability of parking.

2 Be Considerate of Others

- Respect the people who live and work in the countryside.
- Park appropriately - avoid blocking gateways, forest entrances or narrow roads.
- Take care not to damage property, especially walls, fences and crops.
- Respect other visitors.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Keep noise to a minimum.

3 Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife

- Dogs should be kept under effective control and should only be brought onto hills or farmland with the landowner's permission. Some areas stipulate that dogs must be kept on a lead at all times.
- Observe wild animals and birds from a distance.
- Keep wildlife wild – don't feed wild animals or birds.
- Farm animals are not pets; remain at a safe distance.



4 Travel and Camp on Durable Ground

- If camping along trails either use designated camping sites or seek permission from the landowners.

5 Leave What You Find

- Respect property.
- Leave gates as you find them (open or closed).
- Preserve the past: examine - without damaging.
- Conserve the present: leave rocks, flowers, plants, animals and all natural habitats as you find them. Fallen trees are a valuable wildlife habitat; do not remove or use for firewood.
- Do not build rock cairns, structures or shelters.



MY FAVOURITE WALK!

Name: Tracey Gleeson

From: Dublin City

Favorite Walk: Wicklow Hills

My favourite place to walk is in the Wicklow hills and I particularly enjoy walking on some of the trails around the Sally Gap. It's a real tourist attraction and when you're up there, you can see why. The lovely views and the chance to get out of the city is just great, you can just relax.

Whenever I have a spare day, I make an effort to go up there and just walk for a couple of hours. I love the fact that on any given day, you can see something different, whether it is the sight of deer or just a change in the skyline. I also love the fact that the walking is so accessible and manageable, yet you feel great afterwards.

6 Dispose of Waste Properly

- Pack It In – Pack It Out” - taking home all litter and leftover food (including tea bags, fruit peels and other biodegradable foods).
- Bring home toilet paper!

7 Minimise the Effects of Fire

- Fires cause a lasting impact on the countryside
- Where fires are permitted:
 - Use established fire rings, barbecues.
 - Keep fires small.
 - Avoid burning plastics or other substances: which emit toxic fumes.
 - Burn all fires to ash, put out fires completely, and then scatter cool ashes.

Further information on responsible outdoor recreation is available on www.leavenotraceireland.org



Nordic Walking

By Joy Teo from - International Nordic Walking Association Coach for Ireland

Nordic Walking (NW) is a sport that offers a new dimension to leisure walking in Ireland by using Nordic Walking poles. The use of NW poles increases the number of calories burned while you walk, adds 'whole-body training' for your muscles and joints and at the same time increases the ease of walking as you share the weight of your body with the muscles of your back, waist, shoulders and arms.

Research has also shown that NW can help in the preservation of bone density, so this means NW poles can be used by someone recovering from an injury, or to maintain some fitness in a comfortable way while recuperating from illness or surgery.

On the other end of the scale, NW poles can be used at a high intensity to cross-train for hillwalking, running, triathalons, and other endurance activities. In countries with a ski season, cross-country skiers and biathathletes use NW poles in the off-season for jogging, Fartlek, and hill training.



NW originated from this cross-country skiing background in Finland, and the International Nordic Walking Association (INWA) has been promoting NW worldwide since the year 2000. INWA has developed an Instructor Training Programme so that you can learn the correct NW technique with an Instructor. Learning with an Instructor means you will get the maximum benefit from using NW poles while at the same time avoiding injury from improper technique.

I hope you try Nordic Walking some day and decide to keep it up! It is an excellent activity for health and development of fitness. Any Nordic Walker that you meet will be happy to tell you how good it is.

DID YOU KNOW?

Walking helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints and helps older adults become stronger and better able to move about without falling.

For more information on Nordic Walking or to find an Instructor near you, please see www.nordicwalking.ie and click on 'CLASSES'. For information on the Phoenix Nordic Walking Club in Dublin please see www.nordicwalkers.ie



Web Guide

www.irishtrails.ie



irishtrails.ie is a new website from the National Trails Office, providing information on all developed walking and cycling trails in Ireland. The site also carries information on new greenways, canoe trails and horse riding trails.

The site offers a very good interactive trail search feature where anyone can search for and find trails in any county. It also links with other agency websites which provide information on trails. The site carries detailed information on all Long Distance Waymarked trails and lists trail events being organised around the country each month.

So how does this site work?

To find a trail:

1. You can click on one of the counties on the map on the home page which takes you to a map of that county. Clicking on any of the pins will get you to the information page for the trail you've chosen where there's lots of detail about it. You can also view a full list of the trails in that county and by clicking on the trail name this will bring you to more information about that trail.
2. You can use the drop down menu below the map on the home page to find different types of trails.
3. For almost all of the trails you can print out a map to take with you when you go.



What else can I find on the site?

1. There's a section on trail user advice with information to help you plan your walk and lots of background details.
2. The Trail Events page tells you what is going on around the country.
3. Trail News is full of nuggets of information on what's happening related to trails.

Overall, Irishtrails.ie is a one stop website for information on trails in Ireland and is a great resource for all walkers so click on and see what walking trails are in your locality, just waiting to be discovered.

National Trails Day

National Trails Day is an annual event that celebrates Ireland's wonderful variety of trails and encourages people from all over the country to either organise or take part in trail events around the country. An estimated 10,000 people took part in over 180 events organised as part of National Trails Day in 2010 including guided walks, cycles, paddles, nature walks, runs and many others.

For more information on events being organised as part of National Trails Day in your county or how to get involved with the event, visit www.nationaltrailsday.ie



Developing Skills

For those interested in developing skills in trail walking, including navigation skills and walking group leadership, there are a number of training courses available in Ireland.

Irish Heart Foundation Courses (www.irisheart.ie)

1. Slí na Slainnte - Walk Leader Training

This training is primarily aimed at people wishing to lead a walking group or promote walking in the community or workplace.

2. Walking for Health Workshop

The workshop aims to show participants how to get the maximum health benefits from walking.



Mountaineering Ireland Training Schemes (www.mountaineering.ie)

1. Mountain Skills 1 & 2

This training course provides all the basic skills required for hillwalkers to walk safely and competently in Ireland when accompanied by people of similar ability. It does not include leadership skills or techniques.

2. Walking Group Leader Award

This award trains and assesses people in the skills required for leading parties on the easier hills in Ireland and Britain.

3. Mountain Leader Award

Intended for those who wish to lead others across the mountains of Ireland and Britain.

Both Mountaineering Ireland and the Irish Heart Foundation may develop further courses. Please contact them directly for updates or consult their websites.

The National Trails Office



national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative

The National Trails Office (NTO) is a programme run by the Irish Sports Council building on the work of the former National Waymarked Way Advisory Committee (NWWAC). The programme is focused on supporting the development of a diverse and sustainable recreational trails network in Ireland. This will encourage many more people to become active in outdoor recreation and will contribute to the Council's overall mission of increasing participation among all Irish people in all forms of sport and physical activity.

The NTO seeks to act as a central resource to all individuals, agencies and organisations with an interest in recreational trails in Ireland, be they for walking, cycling, horse-riding or paddling in both urban and rural environments. The corner stone of this support is in setting and monitoring standards for Irish trails and promoting good practice for recreational trail development, maintenance & management. The main areas of work of the National Trails office include:

- **Trail Standards and Classification**
Development of trail management standards and a trail classification and grading system.
- **National Trails Register**
Management and maintenance of a register of all accredited trails in the country.
- **Trails Inspection Programme**
Inspection of new trails and ongoing annual inspections of all accredited trails.
- **Walks Scheme**
Support for National Scheme for landowners undertaking maintenance.
- **Trail Development Advice**
Provision of advice to trail developers at a pre-planning stage in a trail project.
- **Technical Trail Advisory Service**
Provision of detailed technical advice to trail providers regarding the improvement of existing trails or the development of new trails.
- **Education and Training**
Provision of training programmes related to the planning, development and ongoing management of trails.
- **Trail Promotion and Awareness Building**
- **Trail Research**



Useful Contacts & Links

National Trails Office / Irish Sports Council

Tel: 01 8608800
Email: nto@irishsportsCouncil.ie
Web: www.irishtrails.ie

Mountaineering Council of Ireland - National Governing Body for Walkers, Hillwalkers and Climbers

Tel: 01 6251115
Email: info@mountaineering.ie
Web: www.mountaineering.ie

Faillte Ireland - Irish Tourism Authority

Web: www.discoverireland.ie

Irish Heart Foundation

Tel: 01-6685001
Web: www.irishheart.ie

Coillte - State Forestry Company

Tel: 01 2011111
Web: www.coillte.ie
www.coillteoutdoors.ie

Leave No Trace Ireland

Tel: +44 (0) 2890303938
Email: info@leavenotraceireland.org
Web: www.leavenotraceireland.org

MAPS & GUIDEBOOKS:

Ordnance Survey Ireland

Tel: 01 802-5379,
E-mail: mapsales@osi.ie
Web: www.osi.ie

EastWest Mapping

Tel: 053 9377835
E-mail: info@eastwestmapping.ie
Web: www.eastwestmapping.ie

WEATHER INFORMATION:

Met Éireann – Weather Services

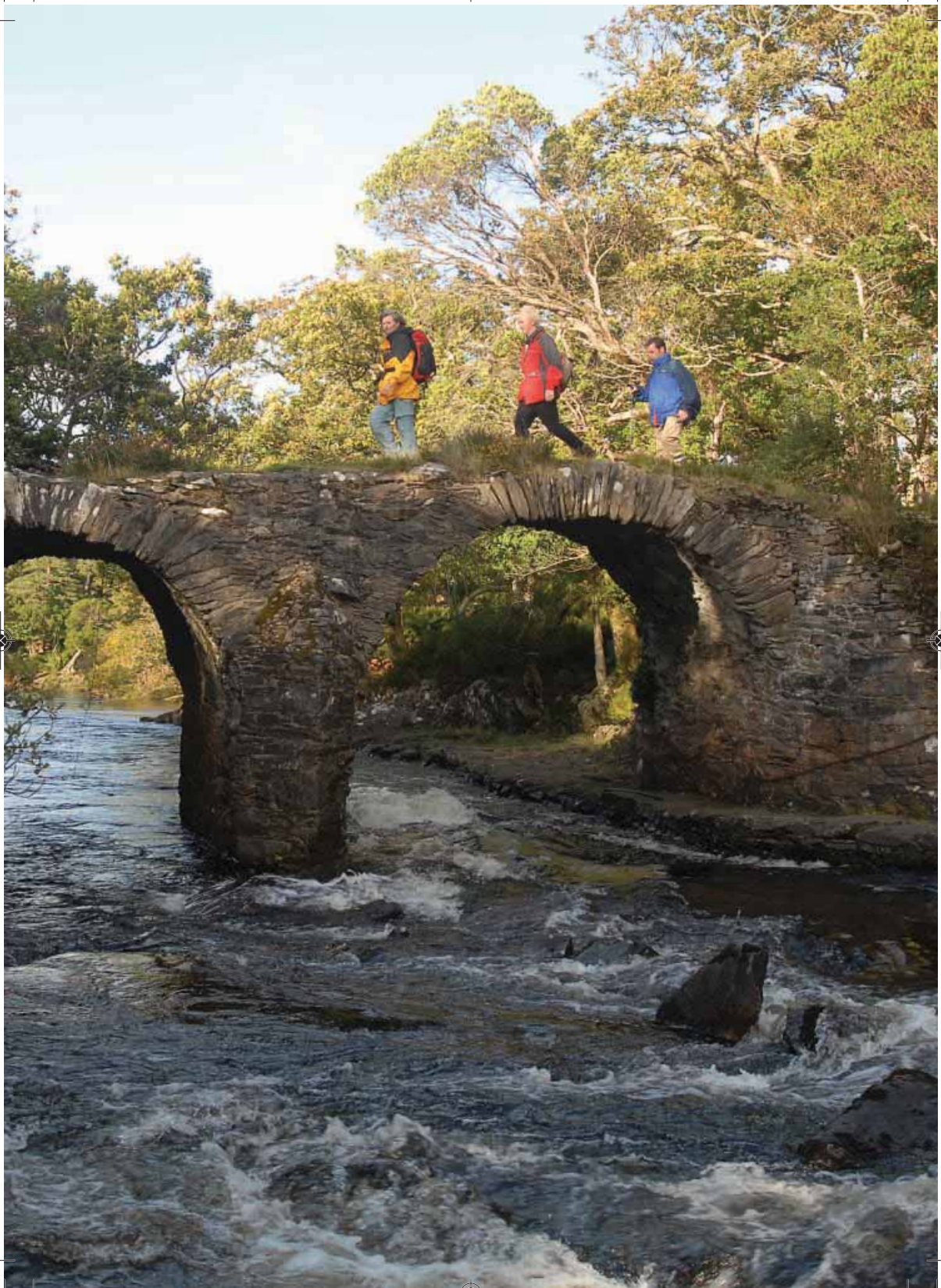
Web Link: www.met.ie
Weather Dial:
Munster 1550 123 850
Ulster 1550 123 853
Leinster 1550 123 851
Connacht 1550 123 852
Dublin 1550 123 854
Sea Area 1550 123 855

EMERGENCY SERVICES:

Diall 999 or 112



If you walk for
30 minutes a day you
can burn off 2,000
calories a week (the
equivalent of six Mars
bars) or 150 calories
per mile.





national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative

National Trails Office

Irish Sports Council, Top Floor, Block A,
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