



Top 5 Coillte forests for family-friendly, low cost summer staycations, day trips & visits

- *Forests can provide visually stunning, relaxing and inspiring summer experiences for little and larger feet*
- *Top forests include: Kildare's Donadea, Donegal's Ards, Limerick's Curraghchase Galway's Portumna and Dublin's Ticknock*
- *56% of Irish adults are unaware there are 260 recreational forests they can visit mostly for free or relatively low cost*

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Looking for ideas to entertain the family that don't cost the earth, are visually delightful and when it gets too hot, allow you to escape to the shade of the nation's trees? Look no further than the 260 forests spread across the country, managed and cared for by Coillte.

The suggested family forest activities range from gentle walks, feeding the ducks, picnicking, playgrounds, red squirrel and deer spotting to orienteering.

- *#A Red C survey reveals 56% of Irish adults did not know there are 260 Coillte recreational (with marked walking trails) forests they can visit.*
- *Entry to all of Coillte's forests is free for pedestrians and cyclists with onsite carparking available for just €5* for the larger forest parks. Annual membership to visit all forest parks, on an unlimited basis is €40*.*

"Seven out of ten people will spend their summer holidays in Ireland this year, according to the CSO~, "said Daithi de Forge, head of recreation, Coillte. "Families are always looking for new, fun activities to do with the kids that don't cost the earth, especially during the holidays. Most people don't know these options are available to them. We think Coillte's recreational areas and forest parks will prove an undiscovered gem for many," he said.

De Forge added: "These are just a taster of what Coillte has to offer families. Some people will prefer more action-oriented parks or quieter forests for a peaceful walk. It depends what you're looking for," he said.

Coillte's top 5 suggested summer family friendly forests

1. Coillte's Portumna Forest Park, County Galway (450 hectares with 120 car parking spaces.)

- The perfect place for aspiring David Attenboroughs! Can your kids spot the park's local wildlife, including red squirrel, fallow deer and white-tailed sea eagle?

- A specially designed wheelchair accessible trail and “Wheel-O” including wheelchair orienteering.
- Great for family cycling with a 1.5km loop along a tarred surface, it is ideal for teaching kids to cycle.
- Cyclists might like the two leisure cycle trails both open and flowing with gentle slopes through beautiful woodland and along the lake shores. These are suitable for almost all riders.
- Ideal for outdoor picnics with stunning views of Lough Derg.

2. Coillte’s Ards Forest Park, County Donegal (480 hectares with 150 car parking spaces)

- Create great family memories in this stunning forest park which offers an amazing mix of beaches, woodlands and sand dunes. Think of the pictures!
- If a walk in the sea air doesn’t tire the kids out, the on-site playground might just do the trick.
- Explore and reconnect with nature by visiting the bird hide located on the Salt marsh trail.
- Enjoy an outdoor picnic in this untouched, idyllic corner of Ireland.
- The park boasts an impressive nine walking trails to choose from, for various ages and ability levels including a buggy accessible 1km walk.

3. Coillte’s Donadea Forest Park, County Kildare (243 hectares with c460 car parking spaces)

- Feed the ducks on the lakeside accessible walk suitable for families with buggies or wheelchairs.
- Outdoor tables available to those who come ready with a picnic.
- There is also an on-site café with plenty of tasty delights.
- View the historic buildings and castle remains, the ice house, St. Peter’s Church and the walled gardens.
- Why not try your hand at one of the three permanent orienteering routes on-site?

4. Coillte’s Curraghchase Forest Park, Co.Limerick (313 hectares, c200 car parking spaces)

- Over 300 hectares of rolling parkland, walking trails, mixed woodland, lakes and an arboretum (garden devoted to trees) to see.
- Six walking trails to suit all levels of fitness, the Lake Trail (1.1km, 20mins) is suitable for families with buggies or wheelchairs with great views of the old ruined house.
- Nature lovers will be spoilt for choice, be sure not to miss the yew woodland and the lake with all its diverse birdlife.
- There are ample picnic tables next to the main carpark and two playgrounds to explore.
- Why not bring the camper van, caravan or tent with a lovely caravan and camping site within the park?

5. Coillte’s Ticknock Forest, County Dublin (148 hectares with c 140 car parking spaces)

- Located in the heart of the Dublin Mountains and only a half hour by bus (44B) or car from the centre of Dublin.
- Ticknock is one of the most popular Mountain Bike centres on the east coast, with more than 15kms of red-grade trails – aimed at experienced mountain bikers.

- It offers up to 10 km of mountain and forest walks for all the family with spectacular views of Dublin City, Dublin Bay, Bray Head and the Wicklow Mountains.
- Don't miss the iconic three large rock formations (Three Rock Mountain), great to sit on and enjoy the picturesque mountain view, the coast and the city below.
- Bring a packed lunch to enjoy on the picnic tables or treat yourself to a delicious barista coffee in the Trails Café.
- Ticknock like all the Dublin mountains forests can become busy, if so, please come again at a quieter time or visit one of the other Dublin Mountains forests.

Tip tips:

- Bring a picnic, know which forest you want to visit and what you want to do. Prepare for a potentially fabulous day out.
- Consider purchasing the Coillte Access Card if you think you/your family/friends would be frequent forest visitors throughout the year. accesscard@coillte.ie

Coillte operates a Leave no Trace policy and asks all visitors to bring their litter home and leave the forests in a beautiful state for everyone to enjoy.

In addition, to prevent forest fires and the destruction of trees and wildlife, forest visitors should not use barbeques or open fires at any stage.

For more information and maps of these 5 forests visit: <http://www.coillte.ie/>.

Ends

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Notes for Editors

A RED C poll was conducted amongst 1,000 adults, aged 18+ between March 3 and 10, 2021.

*There is a car-parking fee of €5 at some forest parks, which typically helps maintain the car park, playgrounds, toilets and café's. Note the car parking fee is payable by contactless payment card or online payment app -coins and cash are no longer accepted. Debit and credit cards are accepted. For app – check out: <https://websales.coillte.ie/>

The Coillte Annual Access card provides unlimited annual entry into the forest parks on a per vehicle basis.

~CSO – seven out of ten people plan to staycation this summer. Source:

https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2021/intentiontotravelurveyapril2021/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=IntentionTravelSurveyApr2021