

ENJOY AND PROTECT

Outdoor Living





ABOUT ENJOY AND PROTECT

The Clean Coasts programme works with communities to help protect and care for Ireland's waterways, coastline, seas, ocean and marine life, by organising hundreds of beach clean-ups each year, mobilising thousands of volunteers, and removing large quantities of marine litter from our coastline.

The Irish coast offers breath-taking views, beautiful beaches, epic cliffs, and more, and its unique beauty and character has been attracting visitors from all over the world - did you know that some of the coastal areas in Ireland have been named top tourists' attractions in Europe, ranking higher than other famous landmarks including Buckingham Palace, the Eiffel Tower and the Leaning Tower of Pisa?

The Irish coast also presents its visitors with numerous opportunities to have fun. With the nice weather on the way, we expect that more people will be visiting the beautiful coastal areas around the country, whether it is for sea swimming, water sports, or simply to enjoy the stunning landscape.

With our 'Enjoy and Protect' campaign, we are asking people to enjoy and celebrate our stunning coastline, beautiful beaches, epic cliffs and all outdoors areas, but also to protect these natural treasures. Get out and make the most of Ireland's wonderful coast, but also do your part to preserve our marine environment and keep it safe and beautiful for future generations to enjoy too.

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An Roinn Tithíochta,
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Department of Housing,
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Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority



SECTION 1

GETTING BACK TO NATURE

Leo Tolstoy once said that “one of the first conditions of happiness is that the link between man and nature shall not be broken”. Due to the public restrictions over the last year, many of us have found a renewed connection with our natural world. These connections have given us joy and strength in these trying times.

As restrictions begin to relax throughout the country and we start to move freely around Ireland's terrestrial and coastal landscapes, it is important to continue to develop these strong bonds with nature and to do our best to protect our natural heritage.



SECTION 2

THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Ireland's Wildlife Conservation

In Ireland, we are lucky to have a variety of marine, coastal and inland habitats that host a diverse range of flora and fauna. These habitats are home to 51 mammals, 457 birds, thousands of marine and land plants, over 11,000 insects, hundreds of marine fish and more. Many of these areas require protection as they are of the utmost importance for wildlife conservation. To protect these habitats, EU legislation designates certain areas as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), under the Habitats Directive, and Special Protected Areas (SPAs), under the Birds Directive.



Special Areas of Conservation

The habitats and species within SAC sites are important not only from an Irish perspective but also at a European level. There are currently 439 SACs in Ireland. The Directive lists certain types of habitats and species that must be protected within a SAC. Irish habitats that require protection include raised bogs, blanket bogs, turloughs, sand dunes, machair (flat sandy plains on the north and west coasts), heaths, lakes, rivers, woodlands, estuaries and sea inlets. There are 25 Irish species which must be afforded protection under the Habitats Directive, and these include salmon, otter, freshwater pearl mussel, bottlenose dolphin and Killarney fern.





Sand Dunes

As a coastal protection programme, we work with many Clean Coasts communities who are dedicated to protecting their coastal sand dunes systems. These groups have voiced concerns about an increase in activity on sand dunes along the coastline. Walking, camping, sports training, horse-riding, quad/ dirt biking and lighting fires/BBQ all have a negative impact on these fragile habitats. Dunes are mounds of sands supported by a marram grass root network which helps to stabilise them, as a result they are not as stable as the ground found further inland. Dunes are not only an important habitat, they are also a natural coastal defence safeguarding communities from flooding. Often the public are not aware of this, or they may deem their interaction with sand dunes as low impact. However, if you multiply the many thousands of low impacts interactions made by the public along our coastline you can see where a significant issue might arise.

Once damaged the dunes are left exposed and susceptible to blowouts or collapse resulting in sand blowing onto land, roads and nearby buildings. This often occurs in winter when storms return, and the visitors have long gone home. For this reason, we would ask you to reconsider picnicking and camping in sand dunes.

Special Protected Areas

SPA designation is specific to the protection of birds and focuses on listed rare and vulnerable species, regularly occurring migratory species and wetland habitats, especially those of international importance. In Ireland, we have 165 SPAs including both coastal and inland sites. Many transiting waterbirds find respite in the wetlands of Ireland during our mild and wet winters. Over three-quarters of a million of these waterbirds migrate to Ireland each year as they travel to more southerly sites or spend the whole winter here. While over half a million seabirds make their way to Ireland's coastal habitats to find a suitable breeding habitat each year.

If you are unsure if the area where you are planning your outdoor activity is protected, please check out this NPWS (National Parks and Wildlife) [online map](#) displaying all protected sites in Ireland.

Seals

While exploring Ireland's scenic coastlines you may be lucky enough to spot some of our most iconic marine animals: seals! There are two seal species native to Ireland, the Common Seal (born June-August) and the Grey Seal (born August-February).

While it is an exciting experience to spot a seal, it's important to respect them from a safe distance, particularly during their pupping seasons. Seals must come up on land to rest and rear their pups, and this is when they are extremely sensitive to disturbances by humans or dogs, which can result in their being abandoned by their mother, thereby jeopardising their survival.

If you see a seal in the wild:

- Never approach, touch or disturb a seal, as it can cause harm or injury to them. Seals are protected under both Irish and EU law. Remember to observe quietly from a safe distance (at least 100m), keep a low profile, keep children away, and keep dogs on a lead at all times.
- Never put a seal in the water; injured, sick or newborn pups are on land for a reason. Also, a seal pup alone on the beach is not necessarily abandoned; mothers can sometimes leave them for hours at a time but will return to care for them.



- If you think a seal may need help or are concerned about a pup with no mum in sight, please contact Seal Rescue Ireland's 24/7 Rescue Hotline at 087 1955 393. Take photos using the zoom function on your camera and send them through to help SRI quickly determine the seal's condition, and if necessary, a rescue can be organised promptly.
- If you find a dead seal, please take photos and report this to SRI's Rescue Hotline or through the Online Reporting Form found on the website: www.sealrescueireland.org
- If you see an ID tag on the rear flipper of a seal (either dead or alive) please take photos and send them to SRI, as this data is invaluable.

Although SRI can provide care for rescued seal pups, nothing compares to their mother's care in the wild. Therefore it is vital to prevent circumstances where pups end up needing to be rescued.

Seal Rescue Ireland (SRI) is a Registered Charity (RCN 20108519) that works around the clock to rescue, rehabilitate and release seal pups found sick, injured or orphaned across the coast of Ireland. As the only seal rescue centre within the Republic of Ireland, they respond to reports nationwide and aim to rehabilitate the pups back to full health so they can be returned to the wild. SRI promotes ocean conservation and sustainability through proactive education, research, community engagement and habitat restoration programmes, in order to protect our seas and all life within.



Animal Stranding Contact List

During beach cleans or when spending time on our coast, some volunteers may come across stranded animals.

Members of the public are advised not to handle sick or dead animal as they carry diseases that are potentially transmissible to humans.

You should note the location and report the findings to the following contacts:

Dead/ Sick Birds:

Department by Avian Influenza Hotline at 076 106 4403 (office hours) or 1850 200 456 (outside of normal office hours).

Marine Mammals

Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises (Cetaceans)

- If you find an animal **Alive:**

If the animal is still alive please [ring your local National Parks and Wildlife Service](#) ranger for advice on the best course of action to take.

- If you find an animal **Dead:**

You can report stranded dead animals to the [IWDG here](#).

If you are having trouble reaching the contacts above you should also contact your Local Authority's Environment Department.

This [document by the Irish Whale and Dolphin group](#) gives good advice on what to do in the event you come across a stranding.

Seals

You can contact Seal Rescue Ireland at 087 1955 393 or the Irish Seal Sanctuary (www.irishsealsanctuary.ie) at 01 8354370 or info@irishsealsanctuary.ie



Impacts of Litter and Plastics

Up to 80% of marine litter comes from land-based activities and at Clean Coasts we promote the “Source to Sea” approach as the first port of call in preventing litter from getting into our marine environment. Plastics makes up 80% of all marine litter and annually the UN estimates that up to 10 million tonnes of litter is entering the marine environment. If current consumption patterns and waste management practices do not improve, by 2050 there will be about 12 billion tons of plastic litter in landfills and the natural

environment. Plastics can take between 450 and 1,000 years to break down when they enter the marine environment, but rather than disappearing altogether, plastics end up breaking down into smaller fragments known as microplastics, which in turn negatively impacts the natural environment.



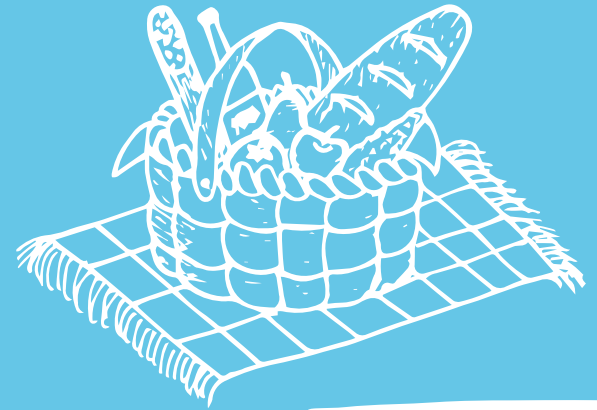
Sources of Ocean Plastics & Marine Litter

- Litter dropped in towns and cities
- Overflowing litter bins
- Litter dropped at the beach
- Poorly managed industrial waste discharges
- Lost shipping containers
- Lost/discharged fishing gear
- Recreational litter blown by the wind
- Poorly managed landfill sites
- Microbeads from personal care products
- Sewage related litter

SECTION 3

OUTDOOR EATING

Venturing into the outdoors is such a wonderful way to spend time throughout the year and especially during the warmer summer months. It also affords us the opportunity to take along a picnic for the day. There is nothing nicer than enjoying some of Ireland's stunning beauty spots over some food al fresco.



Prepare for a reduced waste picnic

As part of Clean Coasts 'Enjoy and Protect' campaign, we are encouraging the public to embrace the outdoors in a responsible fashion. We unfortunately have come all too accustomed to the images shared online of our beaches, parks, and water bodies left in a sorry state after people enjoyed some outdoor dining and drinks but left a complete mess behind. For communities living locally, it can be heartbreaking for them to witness this happening to the areas they love being left in this state.

So, if you are setting out to visit the beach, going for a hike or even just heading to meet the pals in the local park, with a little bit of prep, you can ensure that you leave no impact on the local environment.

One handy tip for outdoor eating this summer is to try keep it as zero waste as possible and avoid plastic packaging. For picnic packing inspiration, check out our outdoor eating checklist at the end of this section for some tips on reducing waste and protecting the environment during camp mealtimes.



Keep in mind that this summer many of our most popular outdoor spots are going to be very busy given the public health restrictions. You may arrive in an area where the bins are full or, if you visit more remote locations, there might be no bins at all. We find the best approach when picnicking or dining on some delicious local takeaway's is that if you can bring it with you, you can bring it home. Bring bin bags for recycling and general waste when you can.



Ireland is famous for the four seasons in the one day weather and that is why it's important not to leave your rubbish beside full bins, both the weather and wildlife can disperse litter items that are left beside bins and in certain areas bins might not be collected daily.

Some of our most scenic areas are also wildlife habitats, so when you are selecting your location for a picnic, try to ensure it is not an environmentally sensitive area. Please check out section 2 of this guide for more details.

When you are leaving and have all your stuff ready to go, why not also undertake a quick clean-up of the surrounding area. Clean Coasts also runs a micro-volunteering campaign called the 2-Minute Beach Clean, so no matter where you are, you can make a quick positive impact on the area you have just enjoyed. Not only is undertaking a quick clean-up a mindful way to spend some time with all the personal benefits, research has shown that littered areas can have a negative impact on our mental health. When you complete the clean-up you're having a triple positive impact on both yourself, the local community and environment.

For some great ideas on what to bring check out our **'Eating Outdoors'** checklist.

OUTDOOR EATING CHECKLIST

Essential:

- Picnic bag
- Blanket
- Waterproof ground sheet
- Water
- Warm layers
- Waterproof gear
- Sun cream
- Insect repellent
- Hand sanitiser

Extra bits:

- Camping chairs
- Folding table
- Compass
- Maps
- Field guides
- Book
- Playing cards
- Binoculars

Eating:

- Meal / snacks
- Thermos
- Bottle opener
- Fabric napkins
- Reusable cups/plates/cutlery (even for takeaway!)
- Chopping board
- Thermos
- Condiments
- Bag for general waste
- Sealed box for composting
- Bag for recycling

SECTION 4

YOUR CAMPING TRIP

Camping offers a great opportunity to escape from the hustle and bustle of life, slow down and reconnect with our natural world. This activity offers something for all age groups and is a relatively cost-effective means of staycationing this summer. To get the most of your camping experience and to help protect the environment, it is

important, however, to be organised and do a little pre-trip preparation. Otherwise, your idyllic camping holiday may be dampened by lack of organisation (or quite literally by a leaky tent). Clean Coasts has put together a few tips to help you out when camping this summer.



CAMPING RULE #1

Leave it as you found it (or better):

Not only does this show respect for those who come after us but it is so important to help protect our environment. So make sure if you bring it there, you bring it home or put it in a bin. Do not scorch the earth with fires and if you see some litter, even if it is not yours, please pick it up. Make sure to pack general waste/recycling bags to collect litter and a sealed box to bring home any compostable waste.

1. Check your checklist:

Getting to your camping spot and realising you have forgotten to pack the tent may slightly limit your camping abilities. Create a checklist to make sure you have everything packed and to avoid any forgetful mishaps.

2. Practice pitching your tent:

It may look easy but we're not all camping pros and not all instructions are easy to follow. Set up your tent at home first so you are prepared to pop it up when out in the elements. You can also check for any missing items or damage.

3. Perfect your packing for reduced waste:

With a bit of research, we can easily find sustainable, long-lasting alternatives to single use items. By doing so, we minimise the litter we produce and have a positive effect on the environment. Check out our outdoor eating checklist in section 3

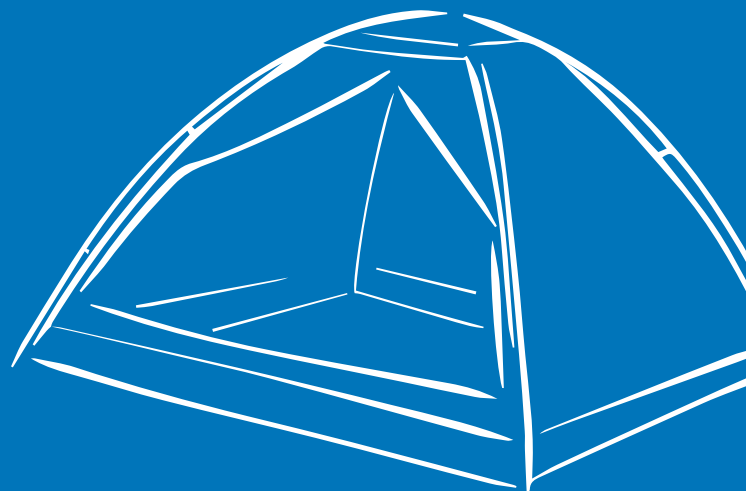
for some tips on reducing waste and protecting the environment during camp mealtimes.

4. Make some meals in advance:

Not only does this help with ease of cooking but it also reduces the waste we need to bring home or dispose of at the campsite.

5. Glamp up your camp:

Just because you've decided to get back to nature does not mean you need to be uncomfortable. Bring some camping chairs, a folding table and make sure you have a good sleeping mat and bag to keep you warm and comfy at night.



SECTION 5

WILD CAMPING

Due to an increase in interest in 'Wild Camping' we have put together these guidelines to help you better plan your next trip in a safe and environmentally friendly way.

Wild camping basically means camping remotely with no facilities. With that in mind, before you head off on your trip, carry out some research on the area you plan to camp in, and only consider wild camping if there are no other options.



WILD CAMPING CHECKLIST

Please take the following into consideration:

- 1. Camp Location:** Find out if the land is public, private, or a protected area. Be discreet, camp at least 400m from roads and nearby buildings. Keep noise levels down so you don't disturb residents, wildlife, and livestock.

Where not to camp:

Sand Dunes – They are very fragile landforms and are easily eroded by human activity such as walking, camping and fires.

Exposed Coastlines – Conditions can change quickly along the coast; onshore winds and the incoming tide could cut your stay short.

Protected Sites i.e. SACs, SPAs and NHAs – These areas are home to vulnerable species of wildlife and sensitive habitats. Camping here can impact wildlife even after you leave. For more information on protected sites please check out section 2 of this guide.

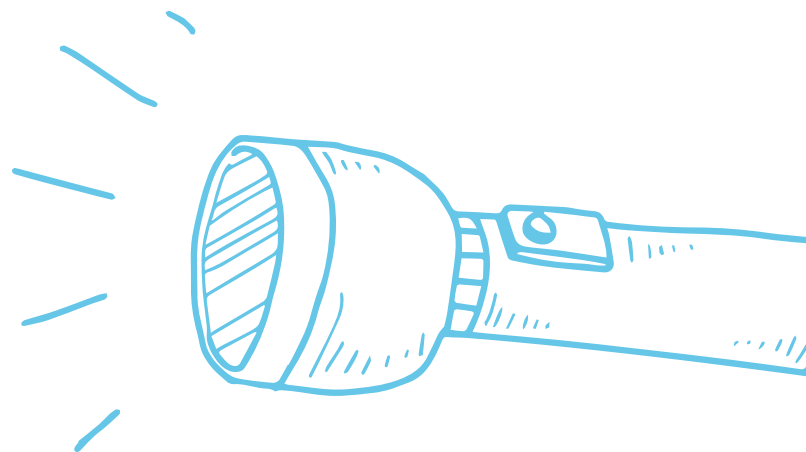
- 2. Toilets:** Consider where you are going to go to the toilet. If there are no toilets close by, make sure to research how to dig a toilet pit which must be 30m from a watercourse. This must then be covered appropriately when leaving, taking all waste such as loo roll and wipes home with you in a sealed bag.
- 3. Hygiene:** How are you going to wash yourself, clothes and dishes?

You should not wash within 30m of a watercourse and do not throw dirty water back into or near a watercourse. Try to use natural biodegradable soaps and detergents.

- 4. Cooking:** Use a camp stove for cooking on instead of a campfire/ BBQ which can cause scarring on the land and may also lead to fires. Also, pack reusable cups, plates, cutlery and water bottles. For more on eating outdoors, check out **section 3** of this guide
- 5. Electronics:** Bring a USB battery pack to charge phones and other devices.
- 6. Camp Duration:** Only stay for 2 nights to allow vegetation to grow back.
- 7. Bring it Home:** Bring a roll of black bags for litter/wet or damaged gear and sealable boxes for food waste. A clean-up of the camp area should also include taking home any litter that was there before your stay. By doing this you are diverting litter away from causing harm to animals and degrading the habitat. You are also giving something back for your wonderful stay in the great outdoors. Check out **section 2** Impacts of litter for more details.

WILD CAMPING HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Plan your route beforehand and check out how accessible it is.
- Research potential hazards, e.g., rocky approach, exposed coastline, fast moving river, grazing livestock, possibility of flooding/ landslide.
- Do you have you the skills and equipment necessary for the route?
- Keep a constant check on weather conditions, forest fire warnings etc.
- Make sure you pack the appropriate gear for all weather conditions, e.g., heat - sun screen, cold - layers and suitable sleeping bag, and rain - waterproofs.
- Keep group numbers small.
- Leave a map of your route with a friend or family member.
- Bring a first aid kit and know how to use it.
- Check all your equipment prior to leaving.
- Pack enough food and water for everyone.
- Bring a spare torch and charged battery pack for phones.
- Bring insect repellent.
- Check if there is a phone signal at the camp or nearby. Make note of the local gardai station number and emergency response numbers 999/112. These numbers also reach the Coast Guard and Mountain Rescue.
- If you are camping/ parking along the coastline, research the tide times and look for evidence of a high tide mark.
- Check what time the sun sets at; this will ensure you reach your destination and set up camp in the daylight.
- Let a local resident/ Gardai know that your car will be left overnight to avoid unnecessary callouts from emergency services.
- Do not light campfires/ BBQs.
- Do not use fuel-burning equipment inside your tent.



SECTION 6

Do a #2minutebeachclean

Making a difference in 2 minutes!
Do a #2minutebeachclean

Are you enjoying the time you are spending outdoors? Then take two minutes to make a difference!

Do you remember Camping rule #1? Leave a place as you found it (or better). A quick and easy way to do this is by doing a #2minutebeachclean.





How to take part in the #2minutebeachclean?

- Follow Clean Coasts – @CleanCoasts on Instagram/ Twitter/Facebook
- Do a #2minutebeachclean
- Take a snap of the marine litter you collect
- Post your snap on Instagram/ Twitter using the hashtag #2minutebeachclean and tagging @CleanCoasts so we can reshare them
- Dispose of the waste you collected properly, recycle it/bin it!
- Be safe when you do your #2minutebeachclean

Why should you do a #2minutebeachclean

- It will have an immediate positive impact on our environment
- You will be an example and inspire other people to take action too
- You will contribute to creating a more sustainable community
- It's an easy way to be active and exercise
- A cleaner environment means better health
- Spending time by the sea and outdoors is good for the body and for the mind
- You will help protect the ocean and marine life
- You will also help protect all life on land



