



## Top 5 Coillte Forests for view seeking walkers/hikers this summer

- Over 3,000 kilometres of beautiful walking trails whatever your fitness level
- Explore Kerry's Glanteenassig, Dublin's Kilmashogue, Mayo's Sheskin South, Tipperary's Glen of Aherlow and the Slieve Bloom Mountains bordering Laois/Offaly
- 56% of Irish adults don't know there are 260 recreational forests they can visit mostly for free or relatively low cost

**Date: 9 August, 2021**

If you enjoy a nice walk or hike surrounded by nature, trees, water and beautiful views, Coillte has one for you, whether it's a quick 20 minute amble with the children or a 25km more demanding trail. Explore one or more of its top five forest picks for walkers/hikers this summer.

Coillte forests have experienced significant increases in visitor numbers~ since the Covid pandemic started. Many people have revealed that visiting local forests has been important for their overall wellbeing during Covid-19. Coillte is highlighting five of Ireland's best hiking spots for walkers and trekking enthusiasts.

*"Ireland is a hiker's dream come true, with breath-taking views from forests across the country that can be enjoyed by both amateur and experienced walkers/hikers alike,"* said Deborah Meghen, director of recreation, Coillte. *"Pick a new forest to explore with family or friends and get ready for a fantastic day out,"* she said.

- #A Red C survey reveals 56% of Irish adults did not know there are 260 Coillte recreational forests they can visit.
- Entry to 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\*.

### 1. **Coillte's Glanteenassig, County Kerry** (Free entry, c450 hectares)

- This forest translates into the Valley of the Waterfalls in English as the water streams down the surrounding and imposing Slieve Mish mountains on wet days.
- Oscar award winning actress Olivia Coleman (played the Queen in The Crown, Netflix series) filmed an Irish written and directed movie called Joyride against the backdrop of this stunning forest and its three lakes, last month.
- An unmatched site for outdoor enthusiasts with an impressive >450 hectares of woodlands, mountains, lakes and peatlands to explore.
- The wild, untamed landscape also offers rivers, streams and sky-high mountain views over Mount Brandon and Tralee Bay to the Maharees beyond.

- There are 3 marked trails with over 8 kilometres of hiking on-site, just a short drive from the town of Tralee and the Castlegregory beaches.
- Renowned for both its scenic strolls and challenging hikes, Glanteenassig is a must-visit for anyone looking to escape to an untouched corner of Ireland this summer.

### 2. **Coillte's Kilmashogue Forest, Co. Dublin** (Free entry, 46 hectares)

- Kilmashogue in the Dublin Mountains offers panoramic views of Dublin Bay on a hike known for both its beauty and history.
- About 30 mins by car or bus (44B) from the centre of Dublin city, a bronze age megalithic tomb welcomes walkers not far from Kilmashogue's carpark.
- 10 km of hiking is on offer, with stunning views of the surrounding countryside where Dublin meets the Wicklow mountains.
- While you enjoy your hike, see if you can spot any of the local wildlife which include deer, hares, rabbits and foxes .
- A scenic getaway on the city's edge, Kilmashogue offers trails for those of all fitness levels and is a perfect hiking spot this Summer if travelling alone or with friends and family.

### 3. **Coillte's Sheskin South, County Mayo** (Free entry, 2,280 hectares)

- Sheskin Forest stretches from near Ballycastle to Bellacorrick in rural County Mayo and offers a significant challenge to experienced hikers.
- This remote walking route is up to 25 km long and those willing to take up the challenge should be appropriately dressed and come equipped with a map, compass and supplies.
- One of Ireland's wildest hiking locations, large sections of the route are fully remote with company provided only by the scenic surroundings of rolling hills and boglands.
- Part of the 'Western Way', hikers will come across some signs of North Mayo's previous populations with Sheskin Lodge, a former hunting lodge a notable site to stop and rest on this challenging trek.

### **Coillte's Glen of Aherlow Forest, Co. Tipperary** (Free entry 133 hectares)

- The Glen of Aherlow forests are located on both the northern slopes of the Galtee Mountains and the southern slopes of the Slievenamuck Hill. They overlook the picture-perfect pastures of Aherlow or the 'low land between two high lands'.
- In addition to a Nature Park, there are five looped walking trails on Slievenamuck Hill, ranging from 2 to 10 km, suitable for all family members.
- There are car parking facilities on the Galtee mountain side to facilitate mountain access to the stunning corrie lakes and mountain peaks.
- The Aherlow forests provide a home to many animals including the pine marten and red squirrel.
- Finish up an ideal summer stroll with a feast at the onsite picnic facilities at the Christ the King viewing area or dine at the local eateries and plan your return visit to the 'Glen', one of Munster's best kept secrets.

### 4. **Coillte's Slieve Bloom Forests, Counties Laois/Offaly** (Free entry, 9,000 hectares)

- The Slieve Bloom mountains offer a network of forests with over 80km of hiking on offer on the border of Counties Laois and Offaly.
- The highest point, called Arderin or 'the height of Ireland' reaches to 527 metres, offering a significant challenge even for skilled hikers.

- The Slieve Bloom forests feature both a marked trail called the Slieve Bloom Way and wild, untouched forest paths ripe to be explored.
- These forests offer great variety from dense forest tracks to stream-side paths, rugged rocky terrain and open mountain moorland.
- This is home to one of Ireland's rarest birds of prey, the hen harrier whom you just might be lucky enough to spot!

To plan your family's next trip to a Coillte park, visit: <http://www.coillte.ie/>.

#### Top tips:

- Plan ahead and know which forest you want to visit, what you want to do and 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](mailto:accesscard@coillte.ie)

Coillte operates a [Leave no Trace](#) policy and asks all our visitors to bring their litter home and leave the forests as you found them 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.

You can find more details and maps of these 5 forests and all Coillte's recreational areas on: <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.

~Overall, visitor numbers to the Coillte's top 50 forests were 2.2 million from the beginning of March to the end of December 2020. This represents an overall increase of 38% from 1.6 million# for the same period in 2019. #Visitor numbers to Coillte from the beginning of March 2019 to the end December 2019 were 1,591,498. Numbers supplied by Nomad Counter. Nomad Counter uses infra-red heat sensors to measure visitors to the forest. A Magnetometer/vehicle counter) measures cars and assumes 2.5 people per vehicle.