

Minding our landscape while mountain biking.

Ireland's wild and beautiful outdoor environment has never been more prominent in the public eye, and for good reason. Our mountains, forests, and islands have become increasingly popular locations for mountain biking. This growth in popularity has been significant and rapid, and not without an impact on our rural and upland environments. This guide will demonstrate practical ways, in which we can use the Principles of Leave No Trace, to play our part in looking after our special places for our own activity, for our visitors, and for future generations.



LEAVE NO TRACE NÁ FÁG AON LORG

Leave No Trace Ireland is a not-for-profit company made up of partner organisations with a shared interest in encouraging responsible enjoyment of Ireland's natural environment. Our mission is to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research and partnership throughout the island of Ireland.

For more information visit:
leavenotraceireland.org



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Responsible Outdoor Recreation
Mountain Biking



Mountain biking in Ireland provides an opportunity for outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy a network of trails in an outstanding and diverse natural environment. This guide, based on the 7 Principles of Leave No Trace, is designed to equip users with a knowledge of minimum impact skills and tools that mountain bikers can utilise to help protect and preserve Ireland's natural and cultural heritage.



1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

Consider where you are going and what you might come across. Is it an official mountain bike trail? If you are using your car to get to your route, try to decide on an appropriate parking location before setting off. If you are heading out alone, have you let someone know where you are going and what time you expect to return? Do you have a plan B? Check if any permits are needed for your route, who owns the land or if any special conditions apply to the area you intend to visit, such as being a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Check the weather forecast. Have you packed what you need? A helmet, a multi-tool, puncture and repair kit, a first aid kit, food and water, extra clothing? Is your bike in good working order? All of these are important considerations. Try to visit popular destinations at quieter times and keep group numbers small.

2. Be Considerate of Others

Be courteous – we share our environment with many recreational users and other species, and we all enjoy the outdoors in different ways. The little things are often the most important.

If approaching fellow trail users, a friendly greeting or bell ring are a good way to politely let them know you are there. Keep control of your bike and be ready to yield to walkers and horse riders.

Allow the sounds of the natural world to be heard. Keep a low profile and noise levels down. Avoid the use of very bright lights on night cycles. Respect safety signs and trail diversions, they are there to protect and keep you safe.

3. Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife

Your mountain biking journey may take place in an area of richly diverse wildlife, and open or enclosed farmland and animals. Always leave farm gates as you find them. To help keep wildlife wild, give animals and birds a wide berth and observe them from a distance – if an animal moves in response to your presence, you are too close. Never feed farm animals or wildlife.

4. Travel and Camp on Durable Ground

Make the most of official mountain bike trails. These have been developed to provide quality mountain biking experiences and to provide durable surfaces. Mountain bikes cause vegetation damage and soil erosion in virtually every environment. Recognise which surfaces are more durable, such as gravel, rock, sand and compacted mud. If going off-trail, especially in winter, avoid wet, boggy or soft ground and avoid churning up surfaces. If camping use existing camp areas where possible. Protect water sources by camping at least 30 metres from lakes, rivers and streams.

5. Leave What You Find

Part of a great biking experience is the exploration of our beautiful natural landscapes. However, simply by biking, we can unintentionally cause the spread of invasive species. To prevent this, wash down your wheels/tyres and footwear after every trip. Try to bring a drum of water so you can do this on site before you leave if there are no facilities. Take only photos, drawings and memories and respect heritage and archaeological features by cycling around them.

6. Dispose of Waste Properly

Even biodegradable material, such as orange peel, apple cores, banana skins and other foodstuffs take many years to breakdown in our natural environment. Think about packaging on your snacks to avoid the chance of littering on your route. Be particularly careful with energy gel wrappers and, if possible, avoid using them. It is too easy to unintentionally discard them. Only take reusable water bottles or rehydration vessels.

7. Minimise the Effects of Fire

Fire causes lasting impacts and can be devastating to forests, natural habitats, wildlife and property. If your route includes an overnight camp, minimise the damaging and unsightly scorch marks and scars of campfires by using alternatives such as a portable stove or fire pan. Remove all traces when you are finished.