

Walking allows us to enjoy outdoor spaces and nature in the simplest way

The growth in the popularity of walking and hillwalking has seen a significant and rapid increase which in turn is leaving an impact on our rural and upland environments. There is a wealth of benefits from spending time in the outdoors. Our experiences can be personally satisfying, but they can be costly to the places we visit and the animals we observe. Whatever your walking interest, whether it's straight from your door to walk locally or further afield in the countryside, hills or mountains by practicing Leave No Trace techniques, considerable damage to the environment could be prevented. Good judgement and awareness will allow you to apply the techniques to your own unique circumstances.



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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Website: dldc.org



Responsible Outdoor Recreation
Trail and Hill Walking



Walking is a great way to get out and enjoy the mountains, coastlines and natural landscapes of Ireland. It allows you to get away from it all and be closer to nature. This guide is one of several resources developed to inspire, promote and encourage greater awareness and responsibility in the outdoors. At the heart of Leave No Trace are Seven Principles to help minimise our impact on fragile environments, wildlife and nature, and to enhance the experience for all users.



1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

The importance of having a good plan for your day out in the Irish hills should not be underestimated. Always check the weather forecast and remember that temperatures drop as you gain height, and that mountainous regions often have their own localised weather systems. Plan your route carefully and consider hazards such as river crossings or steep ground. Consider your clothing and equipment. Are you prepared for a prolonged walking period in the outdoors or a change in weather conditions?

Do you have the appropriate footwear for the terrain you will be walking on? Do you have permission to access the land you intend to walk on? Remember that in Ireland, all land is owned by somebody. Gather as much local information as you can and ensure that your own fitness and technical ability is matched to the environment you plan to walk in. Always let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return. Activities such as hillwalking can involve obvious risks and ultimately, we are responsible for our own safety when we choose to participate in such activities.

2. Be Considerate of Others

We all enjoy the outdoors in different ways and we share the outdoors with a variety of different users. Through being polite and courteous, we protect the quality of experience and enjoyment for everyone. Avoid overcrowding and excess traffic by keeping your group size small and scheduling your outing to less busy times. Where possible, carpool to minimise parking needs and park only where permitted, without blocking access routes for landowners or emergency services. Be considerate about those who work in the natural environment. Let nature's sound prevail, try to keep noise levels to a minimum.

3. Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife

Animals are easily startled by an unannounced approach, sudden movement or loud noise. Help keep wildlife wild, by giving animals and birds a wide berth and observing them from a distance. Resist the temptation to feed wildlife or farm animals. Never bring dogs onto farmland or open countryside. In places where dogs are permitted, ensure that you keep your dog under control and on a lead if required.

4. Travel and Camp on Durable Ground

The Irish uplands are a sensitive environment and can be easily scarred by walkers. Stick to established trails and avoid creating new trails and increasing erosion by taking short cuts. Wear suitable footwear and gaiters to allow you to walk in the centre of a trail, even in wet conditions, rather than stepping to the side and widening the existing trail.

5. Leave What You Find

Walkers are very likely to encounter fragile habitats, and artefacts of heritage and cultural interest. Take only photos, drawings and memories to allow others to explore and discover as you have. Always wash down your walking shoes, boots and gaiters straight away. This prevents the spread of invasive species across Ireland. Our boot soles can hold hundreds of tiny seeds in compacted mud.

6. Dispose of Waste Properly

If you pack it in, pack it out. Leave no waste on your walking route. Ensure to take all your waste home and dispose of it properly. Even biodegradable material, such as orange peel, apple cores, banana skins and other waste can take many years to breakdown. Consider toilet options on your route and learn to dispose of human waste properly and away from water sources if on an extended hike.

7. Minimise the Effects of Fire

Fires cause lasting impacts and can be devastating to forests, natural habitats, and property. Never throw a cigarette butt or match away. Barbeques and portable stoves can cause wildfires so avoid using any kind of fire in upland or remote areas. Always remove all traces when you are finished.