

## Key Principles

As water sports enthusiasts, your main responsibilities are to:

- care for the environment;
- take responsibility for your own actions;
- respect the interests of other people.

These key principles apply equally to paddlers, sailors, anglers, swimmers, other water users and land managers; in fact, everyone who either works or takes recreation in the outdoors should follow them.

## Rivers

Our rivers support several sports and recreational uses. In popular areas it can be a challenge for all users to enjoy the free flow of a river and the resource it provides. From kayakers to anglers, every user has a responsibility to minimise their own impact and consider the right of others to enjoy this natural environment. Observing some simple 'river etiquette' such as stopping upstream to attract an angler's attention before passing, helps all users to enjoy their sport in a shared environment.

## Lakes

Irish lakes host rich biodiversity as well providing freshwater resources. Activities such as kite surfing, stand up paddle boarding and fishing share this wonderful resource with the natural world. It is important that users do not contribute to the spread of invasive species such as zebra mussels.

## Sea

Our coastline provides valuable habitat for nesting birds and other wildlife. Take extra care to avoid causing damage or disturbance.

## Canals

On canals be aware of other traffic and give way to motorised craft. On some canals, access is managed, and you may be required to register your activity with the operator. Follow any regulations or local guidance.



## 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](http://leavenotraceireland.org)

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Website: [dldc.org](http://dldc.org)



Responsible Outdoor Recreation  
Watersports



Ireland's lakes, rivers, wetlands, and coastlines are places of enjoyment and have increased in popularity. However, with increased use has come increased impacts. These include unsightly and dangerous rubbish, increased erosion, and the spread of invasive species and aquatic disease.

Help us protect our lakes, rivers, wetlands, beaches and the ocean by abiding by the Principles of Leave No Trace.



## 1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

Follow the local regulations or permits governing recreational use of the waterbody you are planning on visiting. If access to the water body requires you to cross private land, ask the landowner's permission and respect their rights. Have you informed someone of your route? Always check the weather forecast and local tide times. Be prepared to adjust your plans if necessary. Water safety is paramount, and planning is essential. Be sure to take note of signage and notices for safety areas. Make sure the water body you plan to recreate on is appropriate for your activity, ability and the numbers involved.



## 2. Be Considerate of Others

People visit lakes, rivers, wetlands, beaches and the ocean for different reasons. Respect the rights of other visitors and observe local etiquette. Be courteous and stay in designated areas for your chosen water sport. Tune into the wonderful sounds of nature, as loud noises can disturb other visitors as well as wildlife. In motorised craft, keep to a speed that is safe and doesn't disturb others. Be sure your gear, including boats and kayaks, do not cause obstruction and be especially mindful in high winds. Never interfere with public safety equipment, fishing equipment or navigation marks.

## 3. Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife

Use binoculars to enjoy wildlife and be sure to keep your distance from marine mammals and birds (especially if they are nesting). Pets can easily cause disruption to wildlife and should be kept well clear of birds and other wildlife. In places where dogs are permitted, ensure that you keep your dog under control and on a lead if required.

Ensure that you do not leave any fishing lines or bait as these may harm birds and other wildlife. Ensure food waste is not introduced into the ecosystem. If using motorised craft, keep to speed limits which are designed to minimise impacts on wildlife nesting and foraging.

## 4. Travel and Camp on Durable Ground

Many of our coastal environments, riverbanks and lakeshores are fragile habitats and, in some cases, form natural flood defences. Vehicles, horses and even heavy footfall in sensitive areas such as sand dunes and estuary boundaries can cause permanent damage.

Stay on established roads and tracks and use designated car parks. Use existing boat ramps, launching sites, and mooring sites to minimise the disturbance of the edges of waterways. Use designated campsites or camp on durable surfaces when camping by beaches, riverbanks or on islands.

## 5. Leave What You Find

Leave rocks, plants, fossils, artefacts and other items of interest as you find them, so passing the same gift of discovery on to those who follow. Observe features of archaeological and historic interest, but do not disturb them. Take only photos, drawings and memories. Prevent the spread of invasive species on our waterways by cleaning your watercraft and trailers thoroughly after every trip, preferably before you leave the site. Leave fishing and navigation buoys alone, they keep other people safe.

## 6. Dispose of Waste Properly

Plan your visit to reduce rubbish by repacking food into recyclable containers before you leave home. Careless packaging in areas open to the elements can often result in ocean litter.

Disposal of toilet waste in the wrong place can contaminate water, damage the environment and is culturally offensive. Use land-based toilets where available. Otherwise, bury human waste in a shallow hole at least 30 metres away from water sources. Be careful with chemicals. Careless use of soaps, detergents, fuels, oils, paints and anti-foulants can harm plants and animals and affect the health, safety and enjoyment of other water users. Avoid leaving fishing line and bait where they can harm wildlife.

Leave no mark of your visit or any rubbish behind. Whenever possible pick up any rubbish you see along the way to leave your environment better than when you found it. Often an impromptu beach clean can set a great example and encourage others to do the same.

## 7. Minimise the Effects of Fire

Water sports participants, particularly canoeists and sailors, often enjoy multi-day trips or expeditions. Check first that campfires are permitted in the place you want to camp. A portable stove is the best way to minimise your impact and it is cleaner and more efficient. If no stove is available, then use an established fire ring. Learn the skills of setting a low impact mound fire to avoid scorching or scarring the soil. Keep fires small, using only dead material for firewood. Always be sure a fire has fully burned out and clear all traces. Do not leave food buried underground.