

PITCH PERFECT: 50 GREAT IRISH CAMPING SPOTS

From high-end luxury to rough and ready, there's something to suit everyone in the great outdoors, writes Róisín Finlay, Saturday, 9th July 2016

Whether you're looking for boho glamping glamour, wild and wonderful, or an outdoorsy digital detox for all the family, you'll find something to suit in our pick of camping spots from around Ireland. Should you choose to go for wild camping, bear in mind that virtually all land here is owned by someone, so the right to camp is not a given. Always ask for the landowner's permission and practise the principles of Leave No Trace (see panel). Oh, and don't forget your midge spray.

Eco friendly

1 Pure Camping Co Clare This eco retreat in Querrin, near Kilkee, is a 15-minute stroll from a shingle beach. Bring your own camper van or tent, use a prepitched one, book into a bell tent furnished with bed and stove, or head into the woods for some wild camping. Kids will love the donkeys, dogs, cats and hens. There's a communal dome for escaping bad weather, plus a rustic sauna for relaxing, and yoga is available most weekends. Solar showers, rainwater harvesting and discounts for cyclists add to the ecofriendly vibe. Tent pitches start at € 9 per adult per night and € 4.50 per child ; furnished glamping accommodation starts at € 55 per night; purecamping.ie

2 Clifden Eco Beach Camping & Caravanning Park Co Galway Also known as Actons, Ireland's first climate-neutral ecocampsite has an Eco Tourism Ireland Gold Award. You'll find it 10 minutes from Clifden, between the Atlantic and the Twelve Bens. Bring your own caravan or camper van, or pitch your own or a hired tent amid the machair-grass sand dunes. (A free shuttle bus runs to Clifden.) Single-use water bottles and disposable barbecues are banned, and you won't find any games rooms here to entertain the kids. Instead it's all about mucking around on the secluded white-sand beach, fishing or cooking sausages on a beach campfire. Pitches for two from €19; www.actonsbeachsidecamping.com

3 Blackstairs Eco Trails Shepherd's Huts Co Carlow This is an ideal option if you're looking to get away from it all but still enjoy creature comforts. Two shepherd's huts, on a romantically lit beech walk and beside a wild-flower meadow, have double beds, heating and electricity. Cooking facilities, showers, chill-out space and a natural-history library are provided in a converted barn. An organic breakfast will be provided, with home-produced bread, fruit and eggs. Near the River Barrow and the Blackstairs Mountains, the huts give you access to foraging walks, the Celtic Tree Experience and yoga. The operation has an Eco Tourism Ireland Gold Award. €65 per night; two-night minimum stay; www.blackstairsecotrails.ie

4 Crann Ó g Eco Farm Co Galway At the heart of an organic working farm, this destination near Drummin Gort is all about reconnecting with nature. Ponies, lambs, puppies, ducks and hens provide the entertainment. Pitch your own tent or choose from a yurt, two bell tents or an A-frame hut made from wooden pallets, all set beside an ancient oak forest. Most of the cooking happens in the Native American-style Hogan building, which has a roof opening to allow for campfires regardless of the weather. Ecocredentials include compost toilets and solar-assisted showers. The farm also has an Eco Tourism Ireland Gold Award. Tent pitches cost €10 per night; glamping accommodation starts at €60 per night; www.ecostayireland.com

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5 Pink Apple Orchard Co Leitrim All guests – all of the adults, anyway – are treated to a carafe of home-made organic cider when they arrive at this glamping site set among the trees of an apple farm on Lough Allen, 20 minutes from Drumshanbo. Almost everything here is home made, including the weatherproof communal area, three yurts, tepee and bow-topped gypsy caravan, all decked out with double beds and stoves. The site sleeps 21 and is ideal for families, couples or quiet hens. It's a back-to-nature retreat with lots of walking nearby. The play area is centred around an old boat. Ecocredentials include compost toilets and an organic garden. Glamping accommodation starts at €50 per person per night; www.irelandglamping.com

Luxury/Romantic

6 Rock Farm Slane, Co Meath Set among ancient trees, this glamping option offers double beds in yurts and shepherd's huts, or bell tents for groups, where mattresses on the floor are made up with pristine linen. All can accommodate children, and have stoves and lanterns for atmosphere. On-site activities include kayaking, electric biking and recreational tree climbing. Or get to know the animals, including miniature Dexter cattle and Tamworth pigs. The outdoor hot tub and pizza oven are other nice touches. Organic barbecue, breakfast and pizza packs with products from the farm are available. Glamping accommodation starts at €40 per person; www.rockfarmslane.ie

7 Ballyvolane House Glamping Co Cork Wisteria and bluebells, croquet and salmon fishing: this is a chance to experience a genteel Georgian way of life, set in the gardens of this 1728 house. Guests can choose between a glamping ark with a proper double bed and 11 bell tents with beds raised off the carpeted floor. Mattresses are stuffed with recycled denim and organic lambswool, and hot-water bottles will be slipped into your bed. Twinkling tea-light chandeliers and lanterns add to the atmosphere. Breakfast is served (until noon!), and guests are also welcome to enjoy country-house cuisine at communal dinners. Glamping starts at €150 per night B&B for two people; www.ballyvolanehouse.ie

8 Dromquinna Manor Co Kerry Billed as luxury camping rather than glamping, Dromquinna offers seven South African-style safari tents for couples and seven two-roomed tents for families, all dotting woodland on Kenmare Bay. Goose-down duvets, cotton linen and covered decks to soak up views complete the picture. In the morning you'll be treated to fresh coffee, croissants and juice. Facilities include the Boat House Bistro, covered barbecue area, playground and table tennis. Accommodation starts at €150 per night for two; www.dromquinnamanor.com

9 Grove Lane Glamping Co Kerry Just far enough outside Killarney to offer peace but near enough to go out for dinner or a few pints, this glamping site offers five bell tents, all protected from bad weather by wooden coverings. They are decked out with Moroccan lamps, a stove and double beds. They sleep two (or four by adding camp beds or travel cots). The place is showered with personal touches such as shabby-chic upcycled furniture and cute covered outdoor kitchens and dining areas – perfect for an evening drink. You'll have access to picnic blankets, an iPod dock, board games and books. Accommodation starts at €70 per night for two; www.killarneyglamping.com

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10 Emerald Glamping Co Offaly Set amid wild-flower meadows, this pretty glamping site can sleep 18 comfortably in four beautifully decked-out yurts and two cabins. Think handmade wooden beds and chairs and lots of soft furnishings. This is a popular spot with hen parties; attractions include a wood-fired pizza oven, barbecues, kayaking on a nearby canal, cycling and the option to take a minibus to the pubs of Daingean or the brighter lights of Tullamore. A roaring campfire awaits back at base. Families and couples also come on non-hen weekends. A kids' play yurt and a thatched crannóg for hanging out provide weatherproof options. Glamping accommodation starts at €130 for two; www.emeraldglamping.ie

11 Legan Castle Farmhouse Co Kilkenny A 20-minute walk from Thomastown and 15 minutes' drive from Kilkenny, this 200-year-old farmhouse is a foodie haven that you book in its entirety. The farmhouse can sleep six, but if your group is bigger than that three luxury bell tents are available in the cottage garden. With all the trimmings of a good hotel room, they each have superking-size beds, Egyptian cotton linen and hot-water bottles for chillier nights. This is not a cook-your-own, campfire-style affair. Bespoke breakfasts, ranging from wheat shots to gourmet omelettes, are served in the main house. Evening meals can also be provided. Glamping accommodation starts at €65 per person per night B&B; www.legancastle.ie

12 Portsalon Luxury Camping Co Donegal Perched on a hill at one end of Ballymastocker beach, this site has spectacular views of Knockalla mountain, Lough Swilly, Mulroy Bay and the Inishowen Peninsula. Five yurts with king-size beds, double sofa beds and wood-burning stoves are spread out, to offer privacy and unbroken views. Each has its own fire pit and table for alfresco dining. Guests can also enjoy organic vegetables and free-range eggs. Aimed mostly at families, couples and quiet groups, the site can accommodate 22 people by adding extra camp beds. A generous communal area has a comfortable sitting area, a library and two kitchens. Accommodation starts at €65 per person per night; www.donegalglamping.com

Unique

13 Trannish Island Bothy Co Fermanagh If you love the idea of boating or kayaking to your camping spot, this is for you. Located on the Lough Erne canoe trail, this bothy sleeps 12 on sleeping platforms. It has self-composting toilets (one has disabled access) and a stove. Users must bring their own bedding, drinking water, cooking equipment, candles and firewood – although you might be lucky to find some goodies left by previous users. The tradition behind bothies is that they provide simple shelter and that you leave them as you find them – or improve them. Camping is also available on the grounds. Camping costs £2 (€2.40) per person per night; bothy accommodation costs £8 (€9.60) per person per night; bit.ly/29bi5qnwww.sharevillage.org/caravan-and-camp-site/trannish-island-bothy/

14 Finn Lough Forest Domes Co Fermanagh These forest domes, featuring 180-degree transparent walls, give you a chance to enjoy the splendour of the forest and the night sky, from bats to the Big Dipper, from your four-poster bed. There are currently four domes, each with fluffy robes, star maps and a woodland guide. Two more, with freestanding baths, will be added soon. Meals are available from the Kitchen restaurant on the estate. Domes cost from £195 (€234) for two people; www.finnlough.com

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15 Burren Glamping Co Clare This quirky farm near Kilfenora will see you sleep in a converted horse truck. With a stove, electric shower and flushing toilet, it's ideal for close-to-nature joys without the hardship. There are two double beds in the cabin; a settle bed acts as sofa by day and twin bed by night. The farm is full of characters like the free-range saddleback pigs Bianca, Betsy and Lucy, as well as cattle, ducks and hens. Free-range eggs, sausages and bacon are on the menu for breakfast. The location is ideal for exploring the Burren with Stephen the farmer, who is an approved guide. Costs €120 per night for two to six people; www.burrenclamping.com

16 The Westin Hotel Dublin The latest offering from this city-centre hotel is tented accommodation for youngsters to spice up their five-star experience. Each child gets a two-man tent to themselves, decked out with an air mattress, down duvet and torch. A book butler will also visit the room, so they can choose their reading material. Of course, parents will have to book a suite to accommodate the tent(s)! From €360 B&B per room, plus €60 per tent; www.thewestin dublin.com

17 Teapot Lane Co Leitrim If you want to bring your camping to new heights, this site in Tawley has a tree house floating a lofty 3m off the ground. It sleeps two or three people and has a pot-belly stove, a small kitchen and a deck for lounging among the leaves. Other accommodation includes a dinky 1970s caravan, four yurts (sleeping two to six people) and a cottage (sleeping eight). Woodland campfires surrounded by rustic seating, jars of marshmallows for roasting, spa treatments, a fairy garden and kids' tree house all add ambience. Professional catering, DJ or acoustic musicians can also be organised. Accommodation costs from €150 per night for two people; www.glampingireland.ie

18 Belmullet Coast Guard Station Co Mayo It doesn't get much more remote than the coastguard station on Claggan Island, in Erris. You'll find two glamping pods here, sleeping up to four adults. You can make use of a fire pit, a barbecue and picnic tables for alfresco dining and ogling the views. Shower and kitchen facilities are in a nearby converted barn. Children's entertainment comes in the form of ducks, hens, donkeys and cows, and a sandy beach is a five-minute walk away. The famous Carne links golf course is nearby, too, and Belmullet is just 12km away. Pods from €70 a night; www.belmulletcgs.com

19 Pod Umna Village Co Galway Unusual because of its utterly urban setting, this site is in the heart of Portumna, a two-minute walk from shops, pubs and restaurants. No wonder it's popular with hen parties. It also caters for groups and families at separate times. Forty people can be accommodated in three bell tents, a shepherd's hut and six heated, electrified pods, which are all wheelchair friendly. Choose from beds or mattresses on the floor, and if you'd like the site decorated a particular way, just ask. Cook or barbecue yourself, or if you're with a group opt to be catered for. Pods from €80 a night; www.podumnavillage.ie

20 Inishbofin Island Hostel and Campsite Co Galway Life on Bofin is all about getting back to basics and soaking up the peace. Where better to do it than this little campsite for six to 10 tents in the sheltered garden beside the hostel? Campers can use all of the hostel's facilities: kitchen, dining room, sitting room, showers, fire, board games and library. Because the aim here is tranquillity, alcohol is banned in the campsite, and singles, couples and families are welcome but not stags or hens. Bofin offers fantastic birdwatching, historic walks, lovely pubs, and snorkelling and kayaking on the recently mapped Blueway. Camping costs €10 per person per night; www.inishbofin-hostel.ie

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Wild spots

21 Brushers Adirondack Shelter Co Wicklow A small number of Adirondack shelters have been built on Coillte land by Mountain Meitheal, a group of environmental volunteers. Found in remote areas, they are for long-distance walkers; these three-sided shelters offer a basic sleeping platform for five people. Bring a bivvy bag – aka bivouac sack – and everything you need to stay comfortable. One of the most popular is at Brushers Gap, on the Wicklow Way. Just north of Glendalough, it's about a 90-minute hike from civilisation. It has a fire pit, a water butt (water may need to be treated) and a picnic table. You'll find two similar huts on the Wicklow Way, at Mucklagh and Mullacor. Free; www.coillteoutdoors.ie

22 Lough Avoher Adirondack Shelter Co Mayo On the Bangor Trail, Ireland's wildest hiking route, this hut is in a magical spot under Nephin Beg without a sign of civilisation in sight. This designated wilderness area has just been awarded the gold standard for dark skies, too, so if you're lucky to get a clear night you're in for a star-gazing treat. By day you can ogle Glennamong Ridge, a hiking route running all the way to Mulrany. The shelter sleeps five and has a picnic table and water butt. Fires are forbidden in this ecologically sensitive area. Reaching the hut involves a two-hour hike from Letterkeen. Free; www.coillteoutdoors.ie

23 Altnabrocky Adirondack Shelter Co Mayo The Altnabrocky shelter is also in the Nephin wilderness. Located on the Western Way, it's a five-hour hike from Lough Avoher. It has lovely views of Lough Cong and impressive view of the other side of Nephin Beg and Slieve Carr, arguably Ireland's most remote peak. High above you'll find the Scardun Lakes, which offer excellent trout fishing. You'll find no fire pit or water butt here, but there is a stream nearby, and you'll have the modest luxury of an outdoor compost toilet. This hut is on flat ground, so there is some room for tents too. Free; www.coillteoutdoors.ie

24 Glenregan Wild Camping Co Offaly Coillte has designated a number of true wild-camping spots on or near long-distance walking trails. You'll find one in the Glenregan Valley, on the Slieve Bloom Way, before the route heads into the mountains. About 8km from Kinnitty you'll walk through old forest and along the Camcor river to get there. The spot is on the riverbank by a wooden footbridge. There are no facilities here other than a flat grassy spot. Wildlife in the area includes great bird life, deer and pine martens. For permission to remain in place for camping in these spots, Leave No Trace principles must be observed. Campfires are banned. Free; www.coillteoutdoors.ie

25 Cones/Glenbarrow Wild Camping Co Laois This wild-camping spot is a little more rugged than the other official one in the Slieve Blooms. You'll find it a short distance from the Slieve Bloom Way, about 400m downstream from the first bridge on the Barrow, Ireland's second-longest river. This flat, sunny riverside spot, which is sheltered by an old stone wall, has no facilities, and campfires are not permitted. The nearest civilisation is at Rosenallis village, about 90 minutes' walk away. Total solitude is the appeal, as well as plenty of nearby looped walks and a visit to the nearby waterfall in Glenbarrow. Free; www.coillteoutdoors.ie

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26 Coomshanna Wild Camping Co Kerry Located on the Kerry Way, on the Iveragh Peninsula, this camping spot is simply a quiet flat area to pitch your tent, with a stream running nearby. But what views you will have over Dingle Bay. You'll find the site near the Gleensk Viaduct, between Glenbeigh and Cahirciveen, not far from Kells Bay. No fires are permitted, and Leave No Trace rules apply. Ideally, you should spend no more than a night in these wild-camping spots, to minimise your impact, and use a shovel to dig cat holes for toilets. Free; www.coillteoutdoors.ie

27 Knockadav Wild Camping Co Waterford This wild-camping spot in the Knockmealdown Mountains was designated for hikers on the Avondhu and Blackwater Ways. Set higher in the hills, it's a little more exposed than some of the others mentioned, so bring appropriate gear. But the views of the Knockmealdowns and sweeping farmland down to the Blackwater Valley more than compensate. Near Knockchugga, and not far from the scenic point known as the Vee, it's between Lismore and Clogheen, about a 4km hike from Bay Lough corrie lake. Free; www.coillteoutdoors.ie

28 River Barrow Cos Carlow and Kildare From Lowtown, in Co Kildare, to St Mullins, in Co Carlow, a towpath runs beside the River Barrow, making it ideal for combining canoeing, walking and cycling with wild camping. Go for up to a week, and eye up egrets, kingfishers and otters. The loughs are perfect for tent pitching. Or check out the old quarry at Clashganny, which the community has converted into a wild-camping spot. A Kilkenny company, Go with the Flow, can equip you with a boat, tent and fire blanket and will guide you if needed. Free; gowiththeflow.ie, riverbarrow.net

29 National parks Countrywide The rules for wild camping in our national parks vary. In Ballycroy National Park, in Co Mayo, you can pitch your tent without a permit if you're in a group of up to 10 people. Any more than 10, though, or if you wish to light a campfire, you must get permission well in advance. The same system applies in Connemara National Park. The rules are similar in Wicklow National Park, but no fires are currently allowed, and camping is forbidden in Glendalough valley. This rule is vigorously enforced. You will need to walk for at least three hours from the valley before you find a site that complies with the park's wild-camping code. Camping is forbidden in Killarney, Burren and Glenveagh national parks. If you are considering camping in any of the allowed areas, you must strictly adhere to the rules set out and the principles of Leave No Trace. Free; ballycroynationalpark.ie, connemaranationalpark.ie, wicklowmountainsnationalpark.ie

30 Cronin's Yard Co Kerry Cronin's Yard may not quite fit the wild-camping definition, but you'll certainly be bedding down in a remote spot here. Near Beaufort and Hag's Glen, this has been the traditional starting point for scaling Carrauntoohil for 300 years. As well as space for tents, there are two basic camping pods for three or five people. Camping mats and outdoor fire pits are provided, but bedding, electricity and heat are not. There are hot showers, toilets and a tea room, and you're a 10-minute drive from Kate Kearney's Cottage, a pub that serves food. Packed lunches and hiking guides are also available. Pods cost €15 per person per night; www.croninsyard.com

31 Tog go Bog É Co Cork Located in an area known as Mushera, in the wilds of the mountains between Kerry and Cork, this spot offers three basic camping pods, each sleeping up to four adults. They are insulated with wool and a foil roof lining. Visitors bring sleeping bags and bed down on fold-up camp beds. Fresh-water fishing and all sorts of walking and cycling are available on your doorstep, including the Aghinagh Way, with its archaeological sites, ancient forts and stone circles.

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The operation has a bronze certification from Eco Tourism Ireland. Pods cost from €49 per night; www.ecocampingpods.wordpress.com

Young families

32 The Apple Farm Co Tipperary Set in a working orchard in Moorstown, near Cahir, this camping and caravan park is charming. It caters for just 60 people, with plots dotted among immaculately pruned apple trees. A big converted apple store – which you'll share with swallows and other birds – is set up for cooking, eating and escaping bad weather. Fresh fruit and home produce, such as apple juice, organic cider, apple ice cream, apples, plums and cherries – are on offer. You can even pick your own strawberries at certain times. Other great bonuses are the free tennis court and solar-powered hot showers. Tent, camper-van or caravan pitches cost €7 per night for adults and €4.50 per night for under-12s; www.theapplefarm.com

33 Nore Valley Camping and Caravan Park Co Kilkenny Specialising in old-fashioned fun for kids, this campsite offers everything from hay bounces and trailer rides to crazy golf and feeding animals in the petting farm, including rabbits, goats, sheep and Gail and Ragsy, who are two ostriches. Other attractions include taking a spin in a pedal-powered go-kart and navigating a wooden maze. Located near Bennetsbridge and Kilkenny city, this spot has tons of other things to do on its doorstep, such as swimming in the new river pool at Thomastown. Bring your own tent or motorhome, or hire a simple caravan, and enjoy homemade pizza and bread during your stay. Tent pitches from €8; motorhome pitches cost €11 and caravans €12; mobile-home rental €300-€450 per week. An additional charge of €5 per adult and €4 per child over two applies; www.norevalleypark.com

34 Chléire Haven Co Cork This site on Clear Island, off Baltimore, offers fantastic watery views from its tent pitches, eight yurts and two tepees. Tepees sleep eight on slim mattresses. The yurts have a double bed, two single beds, (optional) camp beds or travel cots, a mini kitchen and a wood-burning stove. You can also hire fire drums. This is a place of simple pleasures: walking, kayaking and snorkelling are popular, as are going for a pint in the local pub or for coffee and cake in the tea rooms. The site has a strict no-noise policy after 11pm, so it's ideal for families. Accommodation from €90 per night for two; www.yurt-holidays-ireland.com

35 Wildflower Glamping Co Cavan Overlooking the Cavan countryside, this glamping site can host 20 people in a motley collection of cute accommodation. Choose from a yurt, a bell tent, the hobbit hut or a Wanderly Wagon -style caravan. All have real beds and stoves to keep them cosy. In July and August it's a family and couples affair, but hen parties are welcome from April to June, with a minibus laid on at disco time. Other amenities include a campfire, football goals, a kids' play area and a communal roofed area with picnic table for escaping bad weather. Accommodation from €180 for two people; www.wildflowerglamping.ie

Old school camping and caravanning

36 Hidden Valley Holiday Park Co Wicklow This campsite, in Rathdrum, is like those from your childhood but with infinitely better facilities. Camper vans, motorhomes and tents sit side by side with smart wooden huts and self-catering accommodation. But it's the range of facilities that makes this destination a hit with families. The Avonmore river runs through the site, so you can fish or take out kayaks and bumper boats. Riverside campfires, a kid's adventure fun park and cinema nights with beanbags complete the picture. And, of course, you have all the hiking, biking and scenery

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ogling that Wicklow's mountains offer. Tents, camper-van and motorhome pitches from €10. An additional charge of €6 per adult and €5 per child applies. Other accommodation from €85 per night; www.irelandholidaypark.com

37 Wave Crest Caravan and Camping Co Kerry Overlooking Kenmare Bay, 1.5km from Caherdaniel, this site strikes a nice balance between civilisation and wildness – a rarity for a large campsite. Most of the southwest-facing pitches have sea views, and many are tucked away in private spots. This is water-sports heaven, with access to the sea via a stony beach and a pontoon for boats. Visitors can take wildlife boat trips and use nearby sandy beaches. Facilities include a cafe, shop, deli, play area, games room and TV room. And all the joys of the Ring of Kerry are nearby. Tent pitches from €9 per night; motorhome and caravan pitches from €28 for two adults; www.wavecrestcamping.com

38 Morriscastle Strand Holiday Park Co Wexford This large campsite near Kilmuckridge offers about 150 pitches for caravans, camper vans and tents, as well as catering for private mobile-home owners. The safe beach next door, with pretty dunes, is perfect for chilly dips and low-tide rock-pooling. Open since 1969, the campsite now includes a playground, tennis courts, all-weather football pitch, games room, pool tables, shop and takeaway (in high season). In July and August, and on bank holidays, there's a full schedule of football and sandcastle competitions, surfing and fishing lessons, and teddy-bear picnics, among other activities. Tent pitches from €8; motorhome and caravan pitches from €20 for two; www.morriscastlestrand.com

39 Knockalla Caravan & Camping Park Co Donegal Tucked between Knockalla Mountain and Ballymastocker Bay, near Portsalon, this well-established family campsite has about 30 touring pitches for tents, campers and caravans, as well as catering for people who keep their caravans here. The campsite is seven minutes' walk from a stunning sandy beach and has views of the bay, Lough Swilly, Inishowen Peninsula and Dunree Head. Facilities include a playground, tennis courts, pool tables and a cafe serving full breakfasts, home baking and burgers and chips. The area offers lots of water sports and excellent hiking. Tent pitches from €20 for two; motorhome/caravan pitches start at €25 for two adults and two children; www.knockallacaravanpark.com

40 Lough Key Caravan and Camping Park Co Roscommon This site comes with a 350-hectare forest park on its doorstep. Aimed mostly at families, it has 51 touring pitches and three areas for tents. The park offers traffic-free walking and cycling, high ropes and zip wires, Segway trips through the woods and the weather-proof Boda Borg experience, which offers physical and mental challenges for all ages. Swimming near the 50-berth marina is also popular. Many facilities are wheelchair-friendly, including the visitor centre, the tree-canopy experience and the Moylurg viewing tower. Wheelchair orienteering is also on offer. Guests are asked to respect quiet time from 11pm. Tent pitches start at €12 per night; motorhome and caravan pitches from €22 per night; www.loughkey.ie

41 Westport House Co Mayo A stroll from Westport town, this site has 150 pitches for caravans, motorhomes and tents. You can also rent prepitched family bell tents with air mattresses. There's a separate group area for scouts and the like, so they can be a bit more boisterous, but a strict curfew starts at midnight. Free movie nights and other indoor kids' activities are organised in the evenings. The grounds are home to the Pirate Adventure Park, with rides appealing to under-12s. Bigger kids and adults can enjoy zorbing, high ropes and zip wiring. A free playground sits next to a cafe and bar. Tent pitches start at €12; camper-van and motorhome pitches from €32 for two adults and two children; bell tent for six costs €110 per night; www.westporthouse.ie

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42 Rivervalley Holiday Park Redhill, Co Wicklow Open since the 1970s, this large campsite has 190 pitches for tents, caravans and motorhomes. It also has microlodge pods, Kukoo huts, and a tree house for glamping. (It's not strictly a tree house – but it is almost 3m off the ground.) Another big draw is the adults-only Secret Garden, although an 11pm curfew should ensure relative quiet. There are tons of activities, such as, indoors, badminton, football and basketball and, outdoors, golf, tennis and archery. Tent, camper-van and motorhome pitches start at €10, plus an additional charge of €7 per adult and €4 per child; other accommodation from €70 per night; www.rivervalleypark.ie

43 Newtown Cove Caravan and Camping Park Co Waterford If you'd like the fun of the fair but to be able to escape it, too, this Copper Coast campsite is a great option. Just 2km from Tramore's hurdy gurdies, surf beach and buzz, it's just 400m from Newtown Cove, which is ideal for family dipping, and the Guillamene deep-water swimming spot. This quiet family site has 40 pitches for visiting caravans, tents and motorhomes, as well as 50 for regulars. It has a campers' kitchen, a weatherproof eating area, a TV room and a games room. But really this place is about the outdoors. Tent, camper-van and motorhome pitches from €8 per person; www.newtowncove.com

44 Eagle Point Camping Co Cork It's hard to improve on the location of this Ballylickey campsite, on its own 20-acre west Cork peninsula, with its water access and pebbly beaches. Offering 125 (mostly touring) pitches, it's a large, spacious site. Camper-van and caravan pitches are tiered, so everyone gets a view of Bantry Bay. Although it's a busy family site, folks with tents can find solitude at the water's edge. And there is an adults-only motorhome section and TV room. There are two kids' TV rooms, too, as well as football and basketball. Bantry is 6km away. Tent pitches start at €12 per night; motorhome and caravan pitches from €26 per night; www.eaglepointcamping.com

Activities

45 Battlebridge Caravan, Camping & Glamping Park Co Leitrim In the perfect spot to exploit the Shannon Blueway cycling, walking and kayaking trail, this site offers pods, stilted cabins, shepherd's huts and a vintage caravan, as well as traditional tent and caravan pitches. You're right by the water, with wild swimming, and boat and kayak hire nearby, and there's a small kids' playground too. In the evenings you can kick back in the lovely old pub onsite, where excellent food and regular trad sessions lend a lively atmosphere. Leitrim village is a short walk away if you want a change of scene. Tent pitches start at €15; caravan and motorhome pitches from €20; other accommodation from €200 for two nights; www.battlebridgecaravanandcamping.ie

46 Eastcoast Adventure Glamping Pods Co Down If you're a mountain biker or a hiker you'll love this campsite, which has just six camping pods. It's about 6km from Rostrevor village and 10km from the acclaimed mountain-bike trails in Kilbroney Forest Park, which overlook Carlingford Lough. The guys who own these pods also operate the trailhead at Rostrevor. They can hire you bikes, pick you up, drop you off, and also offer an uplift service, meaning you can avoid pedalling the steep climb. Kayaking, banana boating and stand-up paddle boarding are on offer, too. Pods cost €60 (€75) per night; www.eastcoastadventure.com

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47 Castle Ward Caravan Park and Camping Pods Co Down Strangford Lough must be one of the most overlooked scenic spots in Ireland, so any campsite in the area is a winner. Located on a 400-year-old demesne, and open year round, this one has 28 caravan and motorhome pitches, plus 10 tent pitches. There are also four heated camping pods, which sleep two adults and three children. Activities include visiting the estate house and gardens, water sports, exploring the Game of Thrones set, or cycling a huge selection of trails. Kids will love the adventure playground and driving mini pedal tractors in the farmyard. Tent pitches start at £14 (€17.50); caravan and motorhome pitches from £20 (€25); pods from £38 (€47.50) per night; www.nationaltrust.org.uk/castle-ward

48 Mannix Point Co Kerry Open since 1984, this campsite has an enviable waterfront location looking over a stony strand to Valentia and Beginish islands. It offers 42 touring pitches for caravans, motorhomes and tents. Famous for its campers' sitting room, it has frequent impromptu music sessions, thanks to musical instruments on hand, comfortable armchairs and a turf fire every evening. The kitchen is equipped with everything from crockery to a microwave; there is also a barbecue and picnic area. There are no pool tables, TV or video games here, so family fun is outdoorsy. The site is a 15-minute walk from Cahirciveen. Tent pitches start at €8.50; caravan and motorhome pitches from €25; www.campinginkerry.com

49 Ballinacourty House Caravan and Camping Park Co Tipperary If walking is your thing you'll love this site. Set in the heart of the Glen of Aherlow, between Slievenamuck and the Galtee Mountains, it is close to numerous looped walks. About 12km from Tipperary town, this is a peaceful spot surrounded by old walls and mature trees with lovely views of the hills. Campers can use the campers' kitchen or eat in the very good onsite restaurant. There are some facilities for small children, including a simple play area, a tennis court, and a TV and games room. Tent pitches start at €10; caravan and motorhome pitches from €18; www.camping.ie

Camper vans

50 Campervan hire Countrywide Camper vans and motorhomes offer the option to hit the road and decide from night to night where you want to stay. Choose from our myriad quiet rural and coastal roads, remote piers or many of the campsites listed here. There are several hire companies to let you have a taste of life on the road. Lazy Days, in Co Wicklow, has a fleet of modern VW vans sleeping two to four people. Relatively small and easy to drive, they have a cooker, fridge and sink. If you're the romantic type, Retro Camper, in Co Meath, has a selection of vintage VWs. If space and bringing the kitchen sink are important to you, Cara Motorhomes rents two- to six-berth vehicles with showers and toilets. Lazy Days from € 100 per day; Retro Camper from €945 per week; Cara Motorhomes from €85 per night; wlazydays.ie, wretrocamper.ie, wcaramotorhomes.ie

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