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MUMMYPAGES MUM'S  
PLACES TO SAY 'HI'  
TO AN ANIMAL

# PLACES TO SAY 'HI' TO AN ANIMAL

## DUBLIN ZOO

Dublin Zoo, located in the Phoenix Park in the heart of Dublin city, is Ireland's most popular family attraction and welcomed over one million visitors last year. As one of the world's oldest and most popular zoos, the 70 acre park is home to some 600 animals in an environment where education and conservation combine for an exciting and unforgettable experience.

Roam the African Savanna and spot giraffes, rhinos and zebras as you go. Hang out with the gorillas at the new Gorilla Rainforest, proudly sponsored by Freddy Fyffes, then travel through the Kaziranga Forest Trail to see the magnificent herd of Asian elephants. The Asian Forests is the newest development to open at Dublin Zoo where visitors can see Asian lion cubs, Sumatran tigers and Sulawesi crested macaques!

### **MummyPages Mum's Say:**

"Without a doubt this is the best zoo our little family have been to. The staff are brilliant, the animals are amazing and obviously really happy and you feel like you get to see them in a really natural environment. The whole place is really well planned out; there are lots of loos, picnic areas which is great when you are walking little legs around for the day."

## DINGLE BAY FERRIES (FUNGI THE DOLPHIN)

Trips entail a short journey to the harbour mouth, home of the long term resident dolphin "Fungi". The dolphin's friendly antics and apparent love of people are an enormous source of joy to adults and children. The breath taking scenery, abundance of wild birds and feeling of oneness with nature make this an experience not to be missed while on holiday in the Dingle Peninsula.

### **MummyPages Mum's Say:**

"Saying hi to fungi best childhood memory with my sisters and sharing it with my little ones now was just as special. The kids LOVED our boat trip to see Fungi, he swam beside the boat and was definitely not shy. He seemed to positively enjoy the company and we definitely enjoyed seeing him."

## DINGLE OCEANWORLD

Fota Wildlife Park is a joint project between the Zoological Society of Ireland and University College Cork.

Fota Wildlife Park cares for several different animal species in danger of extinction. Through long-established breeding programmes, which are run cooperatively with other institutions around the world, the park is helping restore populations of some species while protecting the very survival of others.

Some of these endangered and exotic species from around the world include cheetahs, giraffes, penguins, and zebras to name but a few. What makes Fota Wildlife Park different from the rest is that visitors come face to face with the animals as they roam freely around the park or observe twice-daily feeding times. Fota also offers education programmes and a host of child-friendly facilities such as a playground and picnic area or visit the Serengeti giftshop and Oasis restaurant.

### **MummyPages Mum's Say:**

"We had a great family day out at Fota Wildlife Park! The kids LOVED it there!! Really good value and a great variety of animals to view. Also the fact that a lot of the animals are roaming free adds a great twist to your typical zoo."

## SECRET VALLEY WILDLIFE PARK WEXFORD

Fourteen acres of fun-filled adventures await you at Secret Valley Wildlife Park near Clonroche, Co Wexford! From bottle-feeding the hungry kid goats, to riding Snowball the pony, we promise you unforgettable, great value, family fun! Each day is packed with loads of fun events. If you like a challenge, you can join in our adventure hunts or go wild in our large outdoor and new indoor play areas. You can also play crazy golf throughout the day.

You are welcome to bring a picnic along or enjoy a snack from our coffee shop. Donkeys, llamas, alpaca, rheas, sheep and goats fill the paddocks outside. In our purpose-built animal shed, you can meet the bunnies, guinea pigs, lizards, raccoons, prairie dogs etc. and our lemurs Roxy, Lenny and Penny. Whatever the weather, you will have a ball discovering Secret Valley. All activities on the farm are included in the admission price, except our Quad Train, which has a nominal charge of €2 per person.

### **MummyPages Mum's Say:**

"We went for a family day out to Secret Valley Wildlife Park. Our youngest really enjoyed the goats and feeding them grass! He also enjoyed the small animals in the barn. He was a bit small for a ride on the horses but the older kids loved it!"



## MOHER HILL OPEN FARM

Moher Hill Open Farm and Leisure Park is beautifully situated overlooking Liscannor Bay in County Clare. Visitors to this open farm will interact with a variety of beguiling animals, from typical Irish farm animals to those from more exotic locations such as emu, ostrich, llama and even a family of Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs.

Moher Hill Farm facilities also include purpose-built indoor go-karting, a bouncing castle and ball pool. These are combined with outdoor activities such as animal paddocks, mini-golf, a fully-equipped children's play area and a picnic area. An interesting display of antique farmyard machinery also provides an insight into farming practices of yesteryear.

Whatever the weather, there's lots of fun to be had at 'Award Winning' Moher Hill Open Farm.

### **MummyPages Mum's Say:**

"We visited Moher Hill Farm with our four children aged between 3 - 11. The kids loved interacting with animals and had an opportunity to feed a kid goat with a bottle. The children didn't want to leave, go karts were a big hit with two older children. A very well thought out farm, great value for money."



# CASTLES TO RESCUE A PRINCESS

## ARDGILLAN CASTLE

Ardgillan is situated on the elevated coastline between Balbriggan and Skerries and is unique among Dublin's Regional Parks for the magnificent views it enjoys.

The park consists of 194 acres of rolling pastureland, mixed woodland and gardens, overlooking the bay of Drogheda. Ardgillan, meaning high-wooded area, is a sanctuary for many species of mammals and birds.

The Castle, the residence at Ardgillan, built in 1738 consists of two stories over a basement which extends out under the south lawns. The ground floor rooms of the Castle, accessible to wheelchair users, are furnished in Georgian/Victorian style and include the Morning Room, Dining Room and Library.

The first floor area of the Castle is used for an annual programme of exhibitions and Ardgillan is also the home of a permanent exhibition of maps including the 17th century 'Down Survey of Ireland'.

### **MummyPages Mum's Say:**

"It's a fabulous family spot and my children love the playground tea rooms and the spectacular view!"

## BLARNEY CASTLE

This historic castle is most famous for its stone, which has the power of conferring eloquence on all who kiss it. The word blarney was introduced into the English language by Queen Elizabeth I and is described as pleasant talk, intended to deceive without offending. The stone is set in the wall below the battlements and to kiss it, one has to lean backwards, (grasping an iron railing) from the parapet walk.

There are pleasant walks along the riverbanks where you can sit and contemplate the reflections of the castle. In springtime the castle grounds are filled with thousands of bulbs and the 'Belgian beds', full of hybrid azaleas are in full flower. In autumn the whole place glows as the leaves turn red, amber and gold.

### **MummyPages Mum's Say:**

"We had a wonderful time exploring the castle and grounds. We watched many kiss the stone too. The gardens made for wonderful walks through the trees and along the creek."

## FERNS CASTLE

Adjacent to the Castle is a wonderfully modern Visitors Centre which houses the 'Ferns Tapestry'. Showing the history of Ferns in stitch work, from the arrival of St. Aidan in 598AD to the coming of the Normans in 1169, it is a credit to the local women who created it.

Originally, the castle formed a square, with large corner towers. Only half of the castle now remains. The most complete tower contains a fine circular chapel, with carved ornament. The tower also has several original fireplaces and a vaulted basement. Archaeological excavations revealed a rock-cut ditch outside the castle walls.

Ferns Castle is one of a number of historic sites in Ferns. Others include St. Mary's (Augustinian); the remains of a 13th century cathedral. St. Peter's, a small nave and chancel church; some High crosses stand in the cathedral grounds. Restricted access to castle for visitors with disabilities. Full access to visitor building.

### MummyPages Mum's Say:

"Took my boys aged 8 & 10 to Ferns Castle. Really great tour guide made it so interesting and great fun for both adults and kids and involved the kids in the whole experience This a great day out and very informative in a fun way."

## CASTLE SALEM

Deep in a secluded valley and surrounded by low hills and trees are the remains of an old castle, originally called Benduff but now known as Castle Salem. It is reached by leaving the main Rosscarbery- Skibbereen road and winding down through unfrequented lanes and anyone who did not know of its existence might easily pass it by, so inconspicuous is it among the trees and the farm buildings of which it is now a part.

Castle Salem was built in 1470 by Catherine, daughter of the Earl of Desmond. Catherine married McCarthy Reagh. Following the rebellion of 1641 the McCarthys were dispossessed and the castle passed to Major Morris who was in the Cromwellian army. Major Morris became a Quaker and changed the name of the castle to Castle Salem. William Penn founder of Pennsylvania often stayed in Castle Salem. The L-shaped house was built in 1682 by Fortunatus Morris at right angles to the castle. The castle was acquired by the Daly family over 100 years ago and they have lovingly restored the once derelict castle to its splendour today.

### MummyPages Mum's Say:

"The children loved the freedom of Castle Salem and had great fun exploring. My son even managed to find GOLD in the stream running behind the castle! The children can't wait to go back and I have to say I feel the same."



## BUNRATTY CASTLE

The castle, built in 1425, was restored in 1954 to its former Medieval splendour and houses the Bunratty Collection, 450 pieces of Medieval furniture and artifacts. At nighttime, the castle is the impressive setting for its popular Medieval banquets, held year round.

Within the grounds is the folk park, where 19th Century life is vividly recreated. Set on 26 acres, the impressive park features over 30 buildings, including a schoolhouse, post office and doctor's house in a living village setting. Bunratty Folk Park also includes Ardcrone Church, a former Church of Ireland building which was painstakingly moved, stone by stone, from County Tipperary, to Bunratty.

Another reconstructed feature is Hazelbrook House, (rebuilt in the folk park in 2001) which was the family home of the Hughes Brothers. They produced HB ice cream, which became an Irish household name and visitors to Hazelbrook House will learn about ice cream making, from farm dairy to the modern day production plant.

During the summer months, meet folk park characters such as the 'Bean An Tí' (woman of the house), schoolteacher and policeman as they go about their daily lives. As the Bean An Tí is often found baking brown bread, porter cake, apple tart and griddle bread, you may be able to sample some delicious home baking.

### MummyPages Mum's Say:

"I brought my six yr old to Bunratty Castle recently. He loved it all! What a great attraction; it has everything. The castle with it's spiral staircases and so many interesting features. And the folk village, with everything from the many different types of cottages from the poor to the not so poor. It's interesting, educational and fun."



# MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB

## GLENDALOUGH

Back in the 6th century, hermit monk Saint Kevin first sought solace and contemplation in the idyllic surroundings of Glendalough. His followers established a monastery here, which would become one of the most important monastic sites in Europe. The focal point was the 33m high round tower, where the monks could hide away, keen to keep their precious manuscripts from the hands of invading Vikings.

The Glendalough Valley is now part of the Wicklow Mountains National Park. Established in 1991, it now extends to more than 170sq km. Only an hour's drive from Dublin city, there is a vast array of routes at all levels of difficulty. But Glendalough is best explored on the Spink and Glenealo Valley Route, a high quality loop walk with excellent waymarking and a well-maintained trail.

### **MummyPages Mum's Say:**

"If you like walking and the great out doors you'll love Glendalough, you can bring a picnic and enjoy the views, a lovely family day out"

## SUGAR LOAF

This route follows the blue route to the Paddock Ponds (and back from the Paddock Ponds). From the ponds the route follows up a switch back road which now has panoramic views north and east over the Sugarloaf, Bray, Killylin Hill and Dublin Bay to Howth.

Ballinastoe Slí - Located just over 5km from Roundwood village, the Ballinastoe Slí na Sláinte is a 5km looped route. From the carpark and picnic area, the route continues uphill along forestry tracks.

The forest consists mainly of mixed conifers on the slopes of Djouce Mountain and provides a habitat for fox, badger, red squirrel and sika deer. Many species of birds, including grouse can also be seen.

### **MummyPages Mum's Say:**

"Our whole family loves climbing the Sugarloaf! Our 5 year old took off like a mountain goat the first time... there was no stopping him. There is enough of a challenge to keep it interesting and all felt a sense of achievement."



## KILBRANNISH LOOP

This loop is one of two National Loops in Kilbrannish Woods, (also refer to Trailhead 90a Windfarm loop) which also accommodates part of the long-distance South Leinster Way. The wood predominantly comprises spruce, fir, larch and pine. Vantage points provide magnificent views of the surrounding lowlands, Mount Leinster with its mast tower, and the Blackstairs Mountains.

The turbines of a windfarm situated on the summit of nearby Greenoge Hill, are also visible and have an estimated annual output to supply the electrical needs of about 4500 people.

### MummyPages Mum's Say:

"We love Kilbrannish Woods! Great spot to get a bit of exercise in while taking in some fabulous views!"

## KNOCKNAREA MOUNTAIN

Take the neatly paved path from the car park. The walk to the summit of the mountain takes an average of 40 to 45 minutes. Once you reach the top there lies the cairn of Queen Maeve of Connacht.

The cairn is about 10 metres high and is visible for miles around. It has not been excavated, but it is thought to cover a passage tomb similar to that of Heapstown Cairn. Queen Maeve and Knocknarea Mountain are mentioned in several of Yeats' poems and are of keen interest in Irish myth. There are spectacular views around County Sligo. Always take care when climbing rugged or mountainous areas. For further information contact the tourist office.

### MummyPages Mum's Say:

"We climbed Knocknarea on a beautiful, sunny day. The views are just spectacular, but you do have to work for them a bit. The walk is gradual up to the last part, which is a little tougher. But it is so worth it."

## EAST CLARE WAY

The East Clare Way is a 172km circular route and crosses the Slieve Bernagh Mountains before descending to the Clare Lakeland areas around Tulla and Feakle. Circling Lough Graney, the route then climbs again over the rugged boglands of the Slieve Aughty Mountain back towards Lough Derg.

The Way returns through the hills towards Scarriff and on to complete its circuit back at Killaloe. For the more casual walker, there are many well-signposted local loop walks of varying length centred on each of the towns and villages along the route.

### **MummyPages Mum's Say:**

"The views along the East Clare Way are magnificent! There are so many loop walks available to suit any kind of ability!"



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