Walking in the Slieve Bloom Mountains

The Slieve Bloom Mountains are situated in both Offaly and Laois, the picturesque Slieve Bloom Mountains allow visitors to experience and to explore the largest continuous area of upland blanket bog and forestry in Ireland. Mountain streams and waterfalls run into deep wooded valleys and friendly villages nestle at the foothills. Trees, shrubs, heather, bog mosses, bog cotton and other vegetation, as well as wild forest animals and insects, surround the mountains and offer a great experience to the leisurely stroller or energetic hiker. Choose from a variety of walks, eco trails, short and long loops, forest paths and the Slieve Bloom Way.

Over the last four years both Offaly and Laois County Councils have launched a series of new walking routes in the Slieve Bloom Mountains and we invite people to take a trip up the mountains where you will be pleasantly surprised by what you find. This was facilitated by the help and support of local landowners and farmers.

The walks include:

- Eco-Walks
  - A loop starts and finishes at the same trailhead. They range in walking time from 30mins to 4hrs, are graded Easy, Moderate and Hard.

- Loops
  - Ranging from 3km to 16km, these walks focus on areas of outstanding natural beauty and historical significance.

- Ways
  - There are four long-distance walking Ways in or passing through Offaly and Laois. The Ways follow a mix of forest tracks, river banks, old roadways, grassy trails, sandy tracks and minor roads. There are a few rough and rugged sections – but they rarely rise to high altitude and do not demand great stamina.

- Treks
  - The Treks provide you with the opportunity to sample a section of one of the Ways. Treks are of 4-3hr duration and travel from one Trailhead to another.

The Slieve Bloom Mountains are best accessed at one of six key trailheads which provide car parking and are reasonably close to services such as shops, restaurants and provide car parking and are reasonably close to services such as shops, restaurants and

- Glenbarrow Carpark
- Brittas Woods Entrance at Clonaslee Village
- Cadamstown Village Carpark
- Innisfree Forest Entrance near Kinnitty Village
- Glenafely Forest Carpark
- Monacknew Forest Carpark

The routes are all signposted and can be assessed from many different attractive/quiet towns and villages around the mountains i.e. Cadamstown, Kinnitty, Clonaslee, Rosnafellis, Ballyfin, Mountnath, Coolrain, Camross and Ballaghmore.

Mappguides have been developed to make navigation easy. The mappguides can be downloaded from www.offaly.ie/walking and www.laois.ie/walking. These web sites are well worth a visit.

For anyone wishing to spend a day trekking in the Slieve Bloom there are many excellent B&Bs and Breakfast locations and hotels in the Slieve Bloom allowing visitors to stay overnight or for the night of their visit. Throughout the summer months Irish music sessions take place in the local hostels on alternate Wednesday evenings in Cadamstown, Kinnitty and Ballybritt. Singing Sessions are also held every Monday night in Crinkle, Ferbane, Banagher and Ballyboy.

The walks are maintained with the help and support of the Rural Social Scheme, Offaly Local Development Company in collaboration with the Council’s local Area Engineers to ensure that the walks are maintained to a high standard.

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There are a number of Walking Clubs, and of a particular note is the Ardara Walking Club, that organise a programme of walks throughout the year. Each walk has a local guide who is very experienced and has a great local knowledge of the area. If you wish to make contact or partake in any of the walks you could visit www.slievebloom.ie for more information.

Some of the Guides are listed hereunder:

- John Hanlon 086 2405187 / 057 8648629
- Declan Culhane 087 7418536 / 087 9311377
- Mary Bulfin 087 2364188 / 058 246826
- Richard Jack 086 2802573 / 057 8648629
- Emer Ferhlan 087 7965730
- Eddie Span 087 9420652
- Gerry Collins 086 8210056 / 057 8627453
- Emer Collins collins@mac.com
- Richard Jack 086 2802573 / 057 8648629
- Richard Jack richard.jack@coillte.ie
- Emer Ferhlan 087 7965730
- Eddie Span 087 9420652

The Slieve Bloom Walking Festival Committee host an Annual Walking Festival on the May bank holiday weekend. Information on Festival accommodation can be obtained from www.slievebloom.ie. The Festival offers a number of walks graded from ‘A’-most strenuous to ‘C’- moderate, over four days, followed by traditional music sessions. The Programme of Events is also available from this web site.

Why not go and enjoy a day/evening in the Slieve Bloom Mountains. Our motto in Offaly and Laois is ‘Walk a While - Stay a While’ so when you do visit please try and do both, it promises to be a truly great experience that you won’t forget!