

ITS TIME TO VISIT DUBLIN'S GREAT OUTDOORS



By Anne Heffernan

Clongalkin in West Dublin may not be at the top of your bucket-list, as a must see destination, but this suburb only 10 kilometres from Dublin City Centre has long been popular with international tourists coming to Dublin, particularly camping and caravanning enthusiasts. Camac Valley Four Star Tourist Camping and Caravan Park opened its gates over 20 years ago and continues to grow in popularity.

It's open throughout the year and has 113 hard-stand, fully-serviced, pitches for motor-homes and caravans and ample space for 50 tents with a designated space set aside for touring buses, a particular

feature of school tour groups coming to Ireland from mainland Europe.

Summer-time is always busy and at weekends, in particular, so advance booking is advisable to be sure of a space. Visitors can stay for up to three nights, at a peak-time rate of €30 to €35 per pitch per night, depending on the size of the party and the amenities they require. This spacious camping park is well-maintained with up to seven people employed at busiest times to keep it looking its best. It is a safe amenity for visitors with a resident manager on-site, who ensures visitors' security at night, by locking the main gates once it gets dark and a general policy of no late arrivals after 10.00 pm. However, patrons have key-pad

enabled accessibility after hours.

This four star amenity is wheelchair accessible, for the most part, with an accessible kitchenette, seven toilets and six level-entry showers, suitable for wheelchair users, although the manager explained that when patrons using wheelchairs visit he keeps a meticulous eye out for them, as they come and go, as he believes the wheelchair accessibility, after hours should be improved, for better comfort all round.

Camac Valley Tourist Camping and Caravan Park is popular with all nationalities of tourists, those from mainland Europe, the US, Australia and New Zealand, while the majority come from closer to home. Half of all its tourists come from the

UK and half of those come from Northern Ireland.

The location of the park couldn't be better, with views towards the Dublin Mountains, along with a good road network to access many scenic walking and trekking routes, heritage trails, historic buildings and the open countryside, along with Dublin city's ancient treasures. A local Dublin Bus serves the camping ground with regular buses to and from the city, stopping just outside the park's entrance. And, a hop-on-hop-off tour-bus that stops at the city's major tourist attractions also conveniently stops there, seven days a week.

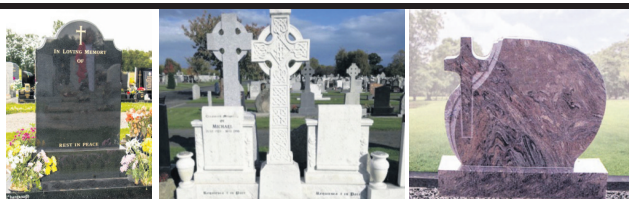
While staying at Camac Valley Tourist Camping and Caravan Park, tourists frequenting the Green Isle Hotel, a stones throw



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from the park, are treated to a 10% discount and use of its leisure centre/ swimming pool, when available.

Right beside the camping ground is 300 acres of municipal parklands - Corkagh Park.

This extensive and well-maintained parklands, stretches all the way down from Camac Valley Tourist Park to the village of Clondalkin, a leisurely 30 minute walk, among well-laid-out, tree-lined walkways and avenues, leading into Clondalkin Park, with the Fonthill road being the only road you must cross to get there, allowing walkers to savour the peace and calmness among nature, and enjoy the feeling of getting away from it all, as they traverse its undulating landscape, spot local wildlife and listen to the myriad birds chirping from the treetops. Wooden seating throughout the park begs you to take a pew and enjoy the views or the silence, while the simplicity and abundance of nature's goodness lifts your spirits - it truly is an oasis of peace, yet so close to Dublin city centre, offering the best of both worlds - an opportunity to enjoy all the attractions of the city and its splendid countryside, all in one visit.

Many visitors to Corkagh Park make a full day of it, bringing a picnic, lounging under a tree or playing with their children or grandchildren.

The Park's playground, of course, is a big hit with little ones as is its small pet farm and fairy woods, complete with toadstools and fairy-doorways. You can take a stroll into the forested areas or around the lakes, the rose garden or the arboretum. The arboretum is close by the pet farm and features 150 species of trees; it was planted in 1995, to mark the 150th anniversary of the Irish famine. The different species of trees here are native to

countries where Irish people have settled abroad. Perhaps you'd like to see how many you can spot?

The Camac river, a tributary of the Liffey, flows through the park and is possibly the reason it got the name Corkagh Park, or Corkagh Demesne, as it initially was called back in 1650 when the beginnings of what would become a stately home, Corkagh House, commenced.

Some of the lands through which the river flows formed part of the

Camac's flood plain and thus this area was marshy land. 'Corcach' is the old Irish word for marsh and Corcach/ Corkagh is most likely a derivative of Corcach, hence the name of the Demesne/ House/ Park.

Corkagh House no longer stands but part of the home's walled garden and some outbuildings remain intact; the outbuildings are currently used as a parks depot.

Continuing your walk you reach the Fonthill road, just cross it over and enter the green space, known as Clondalkin Park, to reach the village. Here, the pedestrian and cycle pathways lead to numerous playing fields, a skate park and the local leisure centre and swimming pool, where those over 55 can take a swim for only €3.00, at certain times.

On exiting Clondalkin Park, just beyond the swimming pool, a few minutes walk will take you to the Mill Shopping Centre, McDonald's and all the amenities of this busy village - shops, restaurants, banks, supermarkets, lively pubs and taxi ranks.

Today, pride of place is given to the oldest, intact Round Tower in Ireland (dating from the 7th century) complete with its recently opened interactive visitors' centre and café, the Happy Pear, run by celebrity twins, David and Stephen Flynn.

Corkagh Park is the only park in Ireland with a purpose-built cycle track and as such attracts many cycling clubs for specific training throughout the year. Booking is essential.

It also has a dedicated space for dogs to run and play freely, off-lead. Dog-owners are asked to keep their charges on a lead at all times, while being walked in the park itself.

To reach Camac Valley Tourist Camping and Caravan Park from the south of the country take exit 2 off the N7 follow the signs for Tallaght/ Grange Castle/ Kingswood and then follow directions for L1003 Green Isle Road and Corkagh Park.

From the M50 travelling either northbound or southbound, take the exit for the Red Cow/ N7. Continue on the N7 southbound, till you pass the Green Isle Hotel on your right, then take the next exit which will be exit 2 and follow the signs as above for L1003 Green Isle Road and Corkagh Park.

From the West: Take exit 3 off the N4, follow the signs for Lucan/Ballyowen - turn right from the slip road and follow the signs for Tallaght and N7, continue through numerous junctions and roundabouts then follow the 2nd exit for Corkagh Park. This will lead you onto Green Isle Road. The camping ground is a little way down this road on your left.

