

Mykidstime Family Guide to Clare

Welcome to the Mykidstime Guide to Clare. We have put together some suggestions to make your family's visit to Clare as enjoyable as possible. As parents ourselves, we are delighted to share with you some of the family friendly spots around Co. Clare and we hope you enjoy your time in our beautiful county.

The Mykidstime Team



Top Ten Things to do in Clare

1. Visit [Aillwee Cave](#), Ireland's oldest cave in the heart of beautiful Burren perched high on a mountain side with what has to be one of the most spectacular views across to Galway Bay.
2. Step back in time and visit the Medieval castle and Village at [Bunratty Castle](#) and Folk Park – a real life experience where you can join in the revelry and demonstrations. It's great fun for all.
3. See the amazing [Cliffs of Moher](#) from a different perspective and book a one hour adventure on [Cliffs of Moher Cruises](#)
4. Spend the afternoon riding bikes or strolling through the woods, kite flying or kicking a ball around at [Lees Road Sports & Amenity Park](#). Also, there is a purpose built skateboard park, great for older kids.
5. Spend the day at [Craggaunowen](#) – they have a medieval castle, crannóg, ring fort, 'Brendan boat', interesting animals, walks through the woods, and various events throughout the year
6. Take a bucket and spade, wetsuits and a flask of hot chocolate and head to one of the many great [beaches in Clare](#) – it's fun in the rain or shine!

7. Book a boat trip and see some beautiful scenery and meet the dolphins.
[Dolphinwatch](#) departs from Carrigaholt and Dolphin Discovery departs from Kiltrush
8. Take a ride on the [West Clare Railway](#) – the restored Slieve Callan steam locomotive runs on 2½ mile of track at Moyasta Junction
9. Drive the scenic loop and see fabulous cliffs from Kilkee to [Loop Head Lighthouse!](#)
10. Take a trip on the [Spirit of Killaloe](#) for a relaxing tour cruising north along the River Shannon and Lough Derg departing from the scenic village of Killaloe. The sightseeing top deck of the boat is ideal for getting the best view of the spectacular scenery and beautiful natural landscape of East Clare and County Tipperary.

Free Things To Do In Clare



[Playgrounds](#) - There are some great Playgrounds all over Clare and some are very new. Some favourites include Scariff and Mountshannon as there is an historical maze too!

[Beaches](#) - Don't wait for the sun to come out. Head to the beach with wetsuits, coats, hats and wellies, if need be, and take a walk on the shore. Though, most likely, the kids will want to get wet, so bring towels and a change of clothes even if you don't plan on swimming!

Get the kids out walking in the woods – [Dromore](#) and [Cratloe Wood](#) have great paths away from roads. The new playground beside Cratloe Wood will open soon and it is AMAZING!

[Clare Museum](#) - Visit the Riches of Clare Museum in Ennis for interactive experiences, audio visual, discoveries from archaeological sites and artifacts. The Museum also has a small gallery displaying local artists.

Stop by the [Ennis Tourist Office](#) attached to Clare Museum and they will supply you with maps and descriptions of the Ennis Sculpture Trail or the Historical Trail.



Kilrush town has a [Shannon Dolphin Trail](#) which starts at the Shannon Dolphin Information Board in the town's Market Square. Follow the trail markers and it will take you to the Shannon Dolphin & Wildlife Centre where you can listen to sounds from the bottlenose dolphins, see real skeletons of whales and dolphins, and many more dol-fun educational activities for children.

Why not try the [Kilkee Habitat Trail](#) which follows the beach and cliffs. It's a scenic walk with six panels each one themed to its location illustrating the diverse wildlife habitats of Kilkee. While you're in Kilkee, take the nets and try to catch fish in the rock pools, or play the unique local game of Racquets (a form of outdoor squash) against the West End wall on the beach.

[Libraries](#) – always a great way to spend a few hours with the kids, reading stories or letting them browse for themselves. There are pictures to colour, PCs with child friendly games and often arts and crafts or story telling taking place.

Hit the trails - One of our favourite things to do is pack snacks or a picnic lunch and head to the woods for a hike. Here's some of our [favourite nature trails](#).

[Burren Smokehouse](#) has a free audio visual presentation, mosaics indoors and outdoors, and gift shop to meander through. Sample their award winning smoked salmon, which I'm sure you'll be tempted to buy some to take home.

[The Rock Shop](#) have free audio visual presentations and a stunning showroom of crystals, stones and stone products, and jewelry. There is also a café.

Festivals and events - Check out our [What's On](#) section regularly. Frequently, there are free events and festivals happening around the county.

For a more touristic experience visit the historic and archaeological sites like [Mooghaun fort](#) near Newmarket-on-Fergus, Poul nabrone Dolmen in the Burren, or Quin Abbey just to name a few.

Where to Stay



Please mention Mykidstime when Booking

Falls Hotel & Spa

Ennistymon
Co. Clare
Tel: +353 (0)65 7071004
Email: reception@fallshotel.ie
Web: www.fallshotel.ie

The Falls Hotel is nestled in a wooded vale beside the tumbling waters of the River Inagh at the outskirts of Ennistymon Village. It is a family run hotel with two restaurants, a Spa and Aqua and Fitness club and offers regular family breaks with fun activities. A cottage and duplex apartments can also be rented. It is only 10 minutes from Lahinch Beach.

The Auburn Lodge

Galway Road
Ennis
Co. Clare
Tel: +353 (0)65 6821247
Email: stay@irishcourthotels.com
Web: www.auburnlodge.com

The Auburn Lodge in Ennis is a great family hotel with a leisure centre, restaurant and kids club. It is an ideal base for touring Bunratty, the Burren and Cliffs of Moher and is one of the most popular hotels in the area. It has a playroom for kids and 400 metres from the hotel is Barneyz Kids Club.

The Lakeside Hotel & Leisure Centre

Ballina/Killaloe
Co. Clare
Tel: +353 (0)61 376122
Email: info@lakesidehotel.ie
Web: www.lakesidehotel.ie

This hotel is in a beautiful setting and has great leisure facilities that include a 17m deck level pool, kids pool, kiddies splash pool, 120ft. figure of 8 slide, sauna, steam room, gymnasium, jacuzzi, aerobics studio, and supervised creche. Babysitting is available in the evening on request. Also, they will be implementing a healthy options menu for kids cleverly called "Not a Nugget in Sight". The family rooms easily accommodate a double, two twin and cot (if required).

The Clare Inn Hotel & Suites

Dromoland,
Co. Clare
Tel: +353 (0)61 368161
Email: info@clareinnhotel.ie
Web: www.clareinnhotel.ie

The Clare Inn is an ideal location for visiting Ennis, Limerick or Bunratty Castle and commands panoramic views across the Clare Hills and Shannon Estuary. There are large family rooms available and the Clare Inn is renowned for its Blue Dolphin kids club running all year round at weekends and various additional kids activities during holidays and mid terms.

Where to Eat



There are times when a quick trip to a fast food joint hits the spot and there are other times and occasions to be marked with a fun family meal out. In our opinion, a family-friendly restaurant should have an imaginative children's menu, plenty of high chairs, colouring materials and changing areas for babies. Here is a selection of child-friendly eateries:

- Italian Restaurants in Clare include Milano's in O'Connell Street in Ennis and L'Arco Italian Restaurant in Ballyvaughan.
- For the good old fast food try Eddie Rockets in Ennis or many of the Irish owned Supermacs – sometimes it has to be done!
- For Café Style menus and lunch menus try the Bagel Factory in Ennis, Wood Brothers in Kilalloe, Zest in Shannon.

For lunch and dinner where kids are welcomed and really catered for we recommend the following:

- Gallaghers Seafood Restaurant in Bunratty. Thatched restaurant in Bunratty that specializes in seafood. Approved as providing healthy kids menus, based on nutritional guidelines, by RTE's The Afternoon Show. Look out for the 'Improved Tasty and Healthy Menu For Kids' sticker and charter in the restaurant.
- Stonecutters Kitchen in Doolin. A traditional stone built cottage that has indoor and outdoor seating. They have toys for kids to play with inside and a walled garden with playground outside. Home cooked, traditional Irish cuisine. They have a lengthy kids menu and will do 1/2 portions of most dishes. Approved as providing healthy kids menus, based on nutritional guidelines, by RTE's The Afternoon Show.
- The Harbour Restaurant, Kilrush & Kilkee. Family friendly restaurant with high chairs, kiddies menu, coloring activities, and lots of space for push chairs/prams.
- Vaughan's Pub in Kifenora. Vaughan's serves traditional Irish food in the pub and restaurant. Kids are always made to feel welcome. It's a very relaxed atmosphere with indoor and outdoor seating. They have céili dancing twice weekly in the barn
- The Lakeside Hotel, Killaloe. They've created a special menu for kids called "Not a Nugget in Sight" which encourages healthy eating for kids. Approved as providing healthy kids menus, based on nutritional guidelines, by RTE's The Afternoon Show.

Playgrounds



In the past year, Clare has seen lots of funding poured into community playgrounds. It was much needed and, as parents, we can be thrilled to have a choice of playgrounds. I've included on my list all the ones built and still in planning. I'll keep updating the details as playgrounds are newly opened.

Ballynacally - Small but nicely designed park amongst the trees with grass and matting. Totally enclosed with gates at front. Play structure with slide, house, train, seesaw, two springers, small roundabout and spinner bowl. It's perfect for smaller kids.

Corofin - Built near the GAA pitch, it's enclosed with fencing. Small climbing structure for little ones with slide, 3 types of roundabouts, two baby swings, butterfly and chicken springer, large climbing structure with slide, rope bridge, fireman's pole, hopscotch, springer seesaw, and zip line.

Cratloe Woods – due to be ready end of 2011 and will be an amazing playground with new and very different equipment – more like an outdoor adventure park.

Ennis - This park spans behind the courthouse and has playground equipment on both sides of the green. Various sets of climbing bars, swings, baby swings, large and small slides, basketball hoop, and benches. It has a track and pitch which are nice, but the playground equipment is old and the play area is not fenced in - so not great for little ones.

Ennis Lees Road Amenities Park - Great all round facility with playground for the toddlers and older kids.

Kildysart - Toddler area is fenced in separately from older kids play area and it includes wooden train, ramps, and bridges, slide, baby swings, springers, and benches. The play area for the older ones includes a large rope pyramid, springer seesaw, a few types of roundabouts, nest swing, swings, chair swing, climbing bars, and large slide.

Kilkishen - Very colorful playground with assortment of roundabouts, slides, swings, springer seesaw, nest swing, and more. This playground has a unique climbing structure with stacked 10-sided shapes (a decagon?). They plan on expanding even more activities for the older children.



Killaloe - Excellent playground with various kinds of slides, springer seesaws, swing, roundabouts and the favourite for all - the zip wire! Located beside the Tennis Club in Killaloe there is also great parking.

Lisdoonvarna - One of the largest playgrounds built recently with springer seesaws, nest swing, roundabouts of various kinds, slides and climbing structures for all ages, a log playhouse, large rope pyramid, balance beams, bars, etc. They incorporated various play surfaces with grass and rubber matting and left a few trees to mature in the playground. Pitches and short walking paths nearby.

Mountshannon - new playground built in 2011 and is very modern and caters for both small kids and big kids. The little kids can enjoy their own slide, sea saw and rockers, the bigger kids have the spider climbing frame, spinning wheel, swings and there is a combination of rubber matting and grass with few benches and tables for picnics. The beauty of this one is that it is beside Aistear Iniscealtra - the amazing old maze, and you can also take a walk to the harbour to enjoy the stunning view across the lake.

O'Briensbridge - This is also one of the newer, more colourful playgrounds with all the best of equipment for both the smaller kids and the not so small kids. It is fully enclosed and there are also many great walks along the river nearby so a fun day out can be had by all.

Quin - These grounds aren't quite open yet, but some equipment is installed including rope pyramid, carousel, springer seesaw, climbing structure with slide, nest swing, regular swings and baby swings.

Scariff - Playground with various equipment for ages 0 to 12. Set in a beautiful setting with plenty of parking spaces. A little outside the town so nice and quiet too - except for the kids of course!

Shannon Inis Ealga - Very colourful, fenced in playground with plenty to keep all ages happy. Various structures to climb, large rope pyramid, nest swing, springers, slide, large and small swings, lots of benches, and more.

Sixmilebridge - This playground is behind the Bridge Kids building and enclosed with fencing. Large climbing structure with ropes to climb, two slides, a hammock swing, spring car and motorcycle, playhouse, springer seesaw, spinner bowl, small swing and baby swing, hopscotch, standing carousel, larger swings, rock-it platform and benches.

Tulla - Playground with high walls and nice parking area that conveniently overlooks the playground. It has a good variety for toddlers and older children including: two baby swings, two regular swings, nest swing, seal and pig springer, small climbing structure with hamster tube and small slide, springer seesaw, roundabout, standing roundabout, large climbing structure with slide, rope bridge and fireman's pole, and zip line. There is soft play surface under the equipment and a few benches to sit on. My kids particularly like talking to each other through the telephone tube.

Shopping



Shops that the kids will enjoy a browse in include:

- The Ennis Book Shop, Hughes & Hughes and O' Mahony's all in Ennis town have kids sections and some have separate children's section with tables and chairs and arts and crafts.
- M.F. Tierney in Ennis is an interesting experience selling Hobby Supplies, Cycling and Fishing gear. Also has a bicycle hire service.
- World of Wonder and Tir na nOg Toymaster in Ennis for all toys.
- An Siopa Beag in Killaloe has a beautiful selection of wooden toys and traditional toys as well as arts and crafts, wool and knitting materials.
- Little Ones in Ennis stock a great selection of gifts and wooden toys too.

Other Useful Information

Where can we park?

Many towns and villages have parking restrictions in operation. Make sure to check whether there is a disc parking or pay and display parking wherever you intend to leave your car. Failure to comply can result in heavy fines or your car being towed. Some car parks are for short-term use and some are for long-term use. Always read the signs!

Some shopping centres offer free parking or a refund when you shop there.



Where can we change baby?

You can change baby in these places:

- Shannon Shopping Centre, Dunnes Stores Centre in Ennis both baby changing facilities
- All Super Valu Stores have a baby changing unit
- All major family friendly restaurants
- Most hotels provide a changing area
- Bunratty Castle & Heritage Park, Aillwee Cave, Cliffs of Moher.

We hope that you found this Visitor Guide to Clare to be useful. For further information, details of local events and activities please visit Clare Mykidstime at www.mykidstime.ie or email clare@mykidstime.ie .