

Mykidstime Family Guide to Meath



Welcome to the Mykidstime Guide to Meath. We have put together some suggestions to make your family's visit to Meath as enjoyable as possible. As parents ourselves, we are delighted to share with you some of the family friendly spots around the Royal County!

The Mykidstime Team

Top Ten Things to do in Meath



1. Climb the **Hill of Tara** and pretend that you are an ancient King or Queen of The Royal County - and the views are spectacular too!
2. Visit **Sonairte** (The National Ecology Centre) in Laytown and enjoy the Nature Trail & River Walk, or admire the cool educational products in the eclectic Eco Shop.
3. Did you know that **Trim Castle** (pictured) took more than 30 years to build, back in the 12th century? It's a fascinating place to explore and it also served as the backdrop to the Oscar-winning film, Braveheart.
4. You can easily while away a whole day at the fabulous **Tayto Park**, which is located in Kilbrew (near Ashbourne). Enjoy the Pow Wow Playground, the Potatohontas Native American Village, The Adventure Zone and more. The Park also boasts more than 50 types of animals.
5. Grab a fishing net and see if you can catch anything at **Rathbeggan Lakes**, near Dunshaughlin, where there is a special Kiddy Lake for beginners. You can also hire a rod

and bait and all you need for two hours of fishing fun!

6. Explore the bog at **Causey Farm**, Fordstown, Navan. Learn how to Bog Jump, Make a Rope or Milk A Cow. Causey Farm runs brilliant events throughout the year, from the Fairy & Elf Fairs to the Summer Family Days and the truly scary Hallowe'en Experience!
7. Take a long stroll through the fabulous **Mullaghmeen Forest Park**, near Oldcastle, with more than 1,000 acres of land and a wide variety of walks available.
8. Feed the animals, explore the straw maze and take a tractor and trailer trip - all part of the fun on offer at **Newgrange Farm**, near Slane, which opens from Easter to the end of August each year. Watch out for the Sheep Races!
9. Visit **Loughcrew Gardens**, near Oldcastle. It's a lovely place to explore, complete with six acres of walks and interesting water features. You can enjoy a reviving cuppa and home-made scone in the coffee shop afterwards too.
10. Spend a few hours at the **The Zone Activity Centre** in Navan, where there are a huge range of exhilarating things to do, including karting, paintball and archery.

Free Things To Do In Meath



As parents ourselves, we at Mykidstime know that spending money on children's activities can quickly add up, so it is important to know that there are a wide range of free ideas available too. Here are our top picks.

- Soak up history in the heritage town of Kells, from the ancient stone crosses to St. Colmcille's House and the Round Tower and the Tower of Loyd - the latter has a playground in its grounds too.
- Visit Balrath Wood on the Kentstown Road outside Navan and avail of free car parking, picnic tables, nature walks and playgrounds at this lovely wooded amenity.
- Another place that we like to visit (and it's suitable for buggies) is Dalgan Park, which is located just outside Navan on the old Dublin Road (N3).
- North Meath boasts the magical spot that is Loughcrew Cairns (pictured). It's a bit of a steep hike though, so it's not suitable for buggies or small children. Older kids will enjoy the climb - and it is worth it for the great views from the top of the hill.



- One of our favourite places to visit as a family is the Kells Girley Eco Bog Walk, which is located a few miles outside Kells on the Mullingar Road (N52). Again, this is one that is more suited to older children, who will love the diversity of the flora and fauna on display. Remember that it is a Bog and therefore tends to be pretty boggy at certain times of the year. Old clothes and wellies are the way to go. Bring water too.
- Beachcoming is a fun family activity that you can take part in all year around – again, just dress accordingly for the weather! Why not pop over to East Meath and make the most of the lovely beaches at Bettystown, Laytown or Mornington?
- The Slane region also boasts its fair share of interesting places to visit, including the Battle of the Boyne site, the Hill of Slane and Hungry Hall Park.
- Check out the local library branches. They are a wonderful - and free - resource for families. Many branches run storytelling sessions, arts and crafts classes, games and activities sessions and so on. There are 12 libraries in Meath and you can find out more about opening times and events on <http://www.meath.ie/Community/Libraries/>
- There are some great playgrounds (see list below) throughout the Royal County. It's an activity that is both free and good fun! Bring some snacks and drinks or a picnic lunch.
- Arts centres such as The Solstice in Navan and The Venue in Ratoath often host free art or photographic exhibitions. Check in advance if the exhibition is suitable for families.
- Meath is steeped in history and boasts eight different marked Heritage Trails around the county. Explore ruined abbeys, medieval table tombs, Celtic High Crosses, passage tombs and draughty old castles... Some heritage attractions have a small admission fee during peak season, particularly if they have a visitor centre, but many are completely free of charge.
- Keep an eye on the Mykidstime Events page for updated information on regular free events taking place in County Meath. Meath County Council, Meath Tourism, the Arts Council, Chambers of Commerce and many more public and private bodies hold regular free family friendly events such as festivals, carnivals, picnics, food markets, street fairs, treasure hunts and seasonal things to do across the county.

Where to Stay



Please mention Mykidstime when Booking

**The Headfort Arms Hotel,
Headfort Place, Kells.**

<http://www.headfortarms.ie/>

The multi-award winning Headfort Arms Hotel prides itself on its personal touch and has been family run for over 35 years. It boasts 45 newly refurbished bedrooms, the award-winning Vanilla Pod restaurant, casual dining in the Keltic Bar, its own Spa Rooms and more. An in-house babysitter and Kids' Movie Night can be arranged in advance. Winner of the Best 3-Star Hotel in Ireland Award.

**Slane Farm Hostel,
Harlinstown, Slane**

<http://www.slaneformhostel.ie/>

These beautifully restored old buildings and working farm are home to self-catering cottages, hostel accommodation and also have an adjacent camping site (suitable for camper vans too). The location makes it an ideal base for exploring all The Boyne Valley has to offer.

**Knightsbrook Hotel Golf & Spa
Resort, Dublin Road, Trim**

<http://www.knightsbrook.com/>

Set in 186 acres of rolling parkland, this beautiful resort hotel also has lovely holiday homes on site, as well as a golf course, spa facilities and a Health Club with a swimming pool. It is a leading four-star hotel and it is ideally located for exploring Trim and its surrounds.

The Station House Hotel, Kilmessan

<http://www.thestationhousehotel.com>

Established as an hotel in 1982 by the Slattery family, this former train station boasts a colourful history. Enjoy fine dining in the award-winning Signal Restaurant or more informal fare in the Platform. There are also 12 acres of lovely gardens to explore.

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 in Meath.

- If you fancy **fast food**, then Navan has a branch of Eddie Rockets, as well as a McDonalds (Trimgate Street) and a Supermacs (Kennedy Road). There is also a branch of McDonalds in Killegland Street, Ashbourne Town Centre, while Trim has a Supermacs outlet on the Navan Road.
- The Café in Marks & Spencer on Paddy O'Brien Street in Navan does great kids' lunches, as well as lots of sweet treats. Another good bet is O'Brien's Sandwich Bar on Metges Lane, which offers colouring materials for the kids, as well as snacks and sambos. There is also another O'Brien's Sandwich Bar branch at Unit 5, Ashbourne Town Centre.
- If you're in Trim, then check out **Franzini O'Brien's**, which is located on French's Lane, right beside Trim Castle. Franzini's has an international menu and a lively and fun atmosphere. Children are welcome before 8.30pm.
- One of our tried and tested favourites is **The Ground Floor** in Kells. This attractive and funky restaurant welcomes children and it is renowned for its pizzas. A separate children's menu, baby changing facilities and highchairs are available.
- Staying in Kells, **Jack's Railway Bar** is a family-run and family-friendly establishment that has high chairs and a varied menu, including kids' favourites such as pizzas. There is an outdoor patio area and garden for those rare summer days.
- A sister restaurant of The Ground Floor and just as good is **The Loft Restaurant** in Navan. Open since 1995, The Loft offers a broad menu that includes steaks, burgers, chicken, Asian dishes, seafood and pasta dishes. An Early Bird menu is also available.
- Also in Navan and well worth a visit is **Zucchini's Restaurant**. This family-run and family-friendly establishment has an imaginative children's menu that includes pasta dishes, curries and pizzas. Baby bowls are also available.
- There are two branches of **La Bucca** in south Meath: La Bucca in Ashbourne and La Bucca & Novello in Ratoath. Both are fabulous Italian restaurants that feature a children's menu that offers both great variety and value. A new branch has also recently opened in Dunboyne.

Playgrounds



There are some great playgrounds around Meath:

- Ashbourne (Linear Park)
- Athboy Community Playground
- Balrath Wood
- Dunboyne Skate Park & Playground
- Dunshaughlin Skate Park & Playground
- Fair Green Playground (Kells)
- Laytown
- Navan (AURA Leisuelink)
- Oldcastle (Fairgreen)
- People's Park (Kells)
- Ratoath Steeplechase Play Area
- Slane

Even More Ideas

- Go racing. Meath boasts two fine racecourses in Navan and Fairyhouse, so do check if there are any Race Meetings coming up. Both venues regularly hold family-friendly days, with free admission for children and entertainment.
- Go for a swim. In addition to private pool facilities that are available in many hotels and gymnasiums, there are three pay-as-you-go swimming facilities in Meath: Kells Swimming Pool, Aura Trim Leisure Centre and Aura Leisurelink Navan. You could also travel to the National Aquatic Centre (Dublin 15) or Funtasia Waterpark in Drogheda.
- Catch a movie. There are two cinema complexes in Meath: the Diamond in Navan Town Centre and Showtime Cinemas in Ashbourne Retail Park. Check local papers for film listings. Oh, and the popcorn is compulsory!
- Visit a soft play centre. There are several facilities to choose from, including Jesters in Navan Town Centre, Best O'Matz in Kells Business Park, Funtasia in Bettystown and Fun Galaxy in Ashbourne Retail Park.
- Get active. Check out what activities are on offer at Athboy Karting Centre (Delvin Road, Athboy) or Puddenhill Activity Centre in Garristown.

Shopping



Shops that the kids will enjoy a browse in include:

- Eason in Navan Town Centre (has a separate children's section with tables and chairs), while there is another Eason branch in New Ashbourne Town Centre.
- The Art & Hobby Shop, Navan Town Centre, has an interesting range of arts and crafts products, toys and children's products.
- You'll also find arts and crafts supplies as well as a wide range of books at Ratoath Books, Unit 2, Centerpoint, Ratoath.
- Smyths has a huge and well-stocked toy and nursery shop in Navan Retail Park.
- If you're looking to buy shoes, then visit Little Piggy Shoes, which is located on Haggard Street in Trim.

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!

There are some free car parks available, for example: Ashbourne New Town Centre and Super Valu Shopping Centre in Kells. There are also pay-as-you-go multi-storey car parking facilities in larger towns such as Navan.



Where can we change baby?

You can change baby in these places:

- Navan Town Centre: there is a separate parent and baby room beside the toilets in the North Mall, complete with adult cubicle, changing areas and comfortable seats for feeding.
- The Marks & Spencer store on Paddy O'Brien Street in Navan has baby changing facilities in both the mens' and ladies' bathroom.
- McDonald's, Trimgate Street, Navan (key available from duty manager).
- Super Valu Shopping Centre, Johnstown, Navan has a separate baby changing room beside the main toilets.
- Super Valu, Kells Shopping Centre (key from customer service desk).
- The Marriott Hotel, The Rath, Ashbourne is very family-friendly and has both baby changing and feeding facilities.
- The Huntsman Inn, Gormanston, is another establishment that caters for babies/children.
- The Station House Hotel, Kilmessan, has baby changing facilities.
- Brogan's Hotel in Trim is another place that has helpful friendly staff and baby changing facilities.

Where are public toilets located?

You'll find public toilets in some of the bigger towns, but you are usually better off visiting a shopping centre and availing of their facilities!

We hope that you found this Visitor Guide to Meath to be useful. For further information, visit Meath My Kids Time or email meath@mykidstime.ie