



Slieve Gullion Forest Park

Experience Gullion



Mourne
Mountains
& Ring of Gullion

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Slieve Gullion Forest Park

Slieve Gullion Forest Park offers the unmissable opportunity to experience tranquil woodland trails, stunning views across the Ring of Gullion, Mourne Mountains, Cooley Peninsula and Armagh Drumlins and top class facilities for walkers and families. Play in the Adventure Playpark; explore the Giant's Lair in the wonderful Hawthorn Hill Forest Nature Reserve and woodland trails, or take a turn in the ornamental walled garden, where you will find picnic benches, an outdoor performance stage, an al fresco coffee bar (open in the summer) and a wildlife pond with covered seating areas.

Head off on Slieve Gullion Scenic Drive, through 10km of woodland and mountain heath which turns a glorious purple in the summer, taking in amazing sights along the way. A way-marked trail leads from the scenic drive to the ancient passage tomb on the south summit of Slieve Gullion, continuing on to Cailleach Beara's Lough and Bronze Age tomb and down the north side of the mountain.

Slieve Gullion Forest Park is easy to visit, with ample car parking and handy public transport links and no visit would be complete without a visit to the see the listed buildings at Slieve Gullion Courtyard, built in the 1820s. Refreshments, Visitor Information Office, toilet facilities and baby change are available in The Courtyard and there is a full events programme throughout the year.

Slieve Gullion Forest Park was awarded the Green Flag in 2014 and awarded 4 stars in Tourism Northern Ireland's prestigious Visitor Experience Star Ratings in the same year. The Playpark has also attained the 'Green Apple Environment Award' and 'NITB Best Tourism Partner Initiative Award'.

For events happening in the area,
check out ringofgullion.org and
visitmournemountains.co.uk



Adventure Play Park

Cake? Check. Zipline? Check. Wildlife pond? Check. Let's Go!

Set in the beautiful grounds of Slieve Gullion Forest Park, the perfect start to any family trip to the Forest begins with a stop off at our action-packed Adventure Playpark. We have something for everyone and the Slieve Gullion Adventure Playpark is guaranteed to keep kids of all ages delighted and thoroughly entertained. It includes a specially designed toddler's area, adventure and play equipment for the older kids, the "Slieve Gullion ZIP" and even a trim trail for the adults. And once you have all burnt off some energy on the slides, climbing frames and outdoor gym equipment, treat yourselves to a delicious treat at the Slieve Gullion Courtyard – you've earned it!

The Forest trails, magnificent 10km Scenic Forest Drive, Red Squirrel Safari and the mysterious trek to the Giant's Lair all begin nearby so there is plenty on offer to explore and enjoy. The Slieve Gullion Forest Adventure Playpark is a must visit for the young and young at heart alike, providing award winning play facilities for children and young people.



The Giant's Lair Children's Story Trail

Do you dare enter the Giant's Lair?

The most ambitious children's arts project commissioned in Northern Ireland, the brand new Giant's Lair at Slieve Gullion is open to boys, girls, elves and dragons alike. A must-see landmark cultural attraction, The Giant's Lair is an innovative magical living storybook, taking visitors on an unforgettable trail of intertwined fairy houses and arts features creating a fantastical childhood land of mystery, dragons, giants, witches and fairies, all inspired by the rich tapestry of local legend and mythical folklore on over a mile of woodlands at Slieve Gullion Forest Park. Follow in the footsteps of Flynn the mischievous fairy, who has one important job – not to allow anyone to wake Slieve Gullion. It might look like a mountain but it's really a sleeping giant! Drop in for a cup of dandelion tea, grab a seat at the Giant Table, stroll along to the Ladybird House and sneak a peek at local witchy trickster, the Calliagh Berra. The Giant's Lair is, without a doubt, the premiere outdoor attraction for children from far and wide, capturing a genuine sense of enchantment and mystery in the beautiful setting of Slieve Gullion Forest Park. Situated beside the Slieve Gullion Adventure Playpark, The Giants Lair is free to walk round and explore The trail takes you into plenty of nooks and crannies so a backpack carrier or baby sling is recommended for tots. The Giant's Lair takes you on a journey of magic and imagination so get ready to encounter the unexpected and enjoy!

Walks & Drives

The Forest trails, magnificent 10km Scenic Forest Drive, Red Squirrel Safari, waymarked running trails and the mysterious trek through the Giant's Lair all begin in the park so there is plenty on offer to explore and enjoy.

Short Walks

HAWTHORN HILL FOREST NATURE RESERVE: THE GIANT'S LAIR CHILDREN'S STORY TRAIL (1.6KM)

Even though fairies, elves and trolls live here this Forest Nature Reserve has plenty else to offer. This is a woodland walk exploring Slieve Gullion Forest Park, utilising trails on the lower slopes of Slieve Gullion. The woodland comprises oak, ash, birch, beech, sweet chestnut and horse chestnut in which was once part of the Chambre Demesne. There are magnificent views of the Ring of Gullion mountains, including Croslieve, Slievebrack and Mullaghbane Mountains, from the path. The walk starts and finishes in the car park of Slieve Gullion Forest Park.

SLIEVE GULLION RED SQUIRREL SAFARI (1KM)

Information panels will tell you about the local habitats and feature pictures of wildlife from Slieve Gullion on this linear walk along the Gunclub Forest Road. There are two hides where you can watch out for Red Squirrels at monitored feeding stations. The best time to see squirrels is dawn and dusk. Check out our Ring of Gullion and Cooley Red Squirrel Group to help save the squirrels. Go online to find out more – www.ringofgullion.org

Running Trails

All running trails are way marked.

BLACK ROUTE – 3 MILES (LINEAR)

Takes in part of the Giant's Lair and Red Squirrel Safari Path. Most of the Black Route is tarmac, with fine gravel path in parts. Mostly flat.

GREEN ROUTE – 5 MILES (LOOP)

Takes in the Forest Drive and the Giant's Lair. Most of the Green Route is tarmac, with fine gravel path in parts. Some hilly sections.

BLUE ROUTE – 8 MILES (LOOP)

The Blue Route follows the Forest Drive and is quite steep in places. It is tarmac with brilliant views of the area.

Medium Walk

SLIEVE GULLION (15.3KM)

Steeped in history, with sites spanning from the Neolithic through to early Christian period, this circular route is suited to more experienced walkers and hikers. It works its way uphill through deciduous woodland for about 1km before joining the forest drive along the southern slopes of Slieve Gullion. The path becomes steeper as you climb for about 2km, traversing areas of peaty and rocky ground. As the path reaches the summit of Slieve Gullion it takes in the Neolithic Passage Grave before continuing North-West along the summit plateau arriving at Calliagh Berra's Lough. The path continues past the lough to the North Cairn (a Bronze Age burial chamber) and then descends back down the mountain, continuing on to take in the renowned Killeavy Old Churches, Clonlum court Tomb and Killeavy Castle before returning to the starting point.

This walk is situated in a working forest environment and may be subject to diversion and closure from time to time.



Slieve Gullion Mountain & Passage Tomb

Slieve Gullion Passage Tomb, dramatically situated on the southern end of the Slieve Gullion summit ridge at an altitude of over 570m, is the highest surviving passage tomb in Ireland with stunning views over the surrounding countryside.

Slieve Gullion dominates the landscape of the area and plays a central role in many local folk tales. Shrouded in magic and majesty, the mountain is without a doubt the most picturesque in Ireland.

Myths & Legends

Take a journey back in time and follow in the footsteps of the legendary warrior Fionn Mac Cumhaill of the Fianna. According to legend, Fionn walked up the slopes of Slieve Gullion to the lake near the summit to find a beautiful young lady sobbing on the water's edge. Being a gentleman he enquired as to why she was crying; to which she replied that she had dropped her golden ring in the bottomless lake. Without a moment's hesitation Fionn ripped off his shirt and dived in, swam down until he found the ring and grabbed it and returned to the top only to find an old withered hag laughing, the Calliagh Berra. The witch had tricked Fionn and he fell out on the lake's shore as an old, withered man. When Fionn came down the mountain, no-one recognised him, not even the warriors of the Fianna! However, when his trustworthy Irish Hounds smelled the old man they knew that he was their Master. Fionn, the Fianna, and the hounds forced the Calliagh Berra to restore Fionn to his youth, but it is said that his hair remained white like an old man's for the rest of his life, and that his fate is said to befall anyone who bathes in the lake to this very day. Are you brave enough to dip your feet in the Calliagh Berra's lake?

The Calliagh Berra's House

The huge burial cairn located on the summit of the mountain, the South Cairn, is known locally as The Calliagh Berra's House and is the highest surviving passage tomb in Ireland. At around 5000 years old, the Passage Tomb was built by Neolithic (New Stone Age) people. The passage is aligned to the setting sun of the Winter Solstice (shortest day), so that as the sun sets, the light shines down the passage and lights up the back of the chamber. You can crawl into the burial chamber via a passageway in the side of the cairn. A skylight allows light to enter, so you don't need a torch.

The earliest documented investigation of the site dates to 1789, when the chamber was opened by locals searching for the old lady Calliagh Berra, but only a few human bones were found, perhaps the Calliagh Berra's?
























Mourne Mountains & Ring of Gullion





Key

-  Visitor Information Office
-  Restaurant/Cafe
-  Toilets
-  Parking
-  Viewpoint
-  Historic Building
-  Ancient Monument
-  Adventure Park
-  The Giant's Lair Children's Story Trail
-  Red Squirrel Safari
-  Forest Drive
-  Slieve Gullion Trail (9.5 miles)
-  Black running route (3 miles)
-  Green running route (5 miles)
-  Blue running route (8 miles)

FACILITIES AT SLIEVE GULLION COURTYARD

-  Visitor Information Office
-  Grounded Café –
You can call ahead to Grounded Café to book large groups on 028 3084 9786.
-  Toilets
-  The car park can accommodate 120 cars, and has space for four 50 seater buses.
-  These are 8 disabled parking bays. The café and toilets have disabled access from the carpark.

FOREST PARK

-  Do drive and park with caution as there may be small children, fairies and trolls about.
-  Dogs are welcome throughout the Forest Park except in the Adventure Playpark area. Dog fouling is strictly prohibited.

CONTACT DETAILS

Newry Visitor Information Centre

+44 (0)28 3031 3170

Ring of Gullion AONB Officer

028 3082 8590

Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership

028 3082 8592

Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

+44 (0)28 308 61949 (Crossmaglen CC)

Translink

+44 (0)28 9066 6630

For weddings or hire rooms contact:

Clanrye Group

+44 (0)28 3084 9220



Mourne Mountains & Ring of Gullion



For further information on general touring, accommodation, short breaks and activity breaks please contact one of the following Visitor Information Centres or visit our website.

Newry Visitor Information Centre

Bagenal's Castle
Castle Street, Newry BT34 2BY
T: 028 3031 3170

Newcastle Visitor Information Centre

10-14 Central Promenade
Newcastle BT33 0AA
T: 028 4372 2222

Kilkeel Visitor Information Centre

Nautilus Centre
Rooney Road, Kilkeel BT34 4AG
T: 028 4176 2525

Banbridge Visitor Information Centre

The Old Town Hall
1 Scarva Street, Banbridge BT32 3DA
T: 028 4062 0232

www.ringofgullion.org

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