

AGRITOURISM CAMPING

Introduction



The range of amenities varies according to the type of site.

Camping is a well-established popular activity in Ireland. A network of campsites exists throughout the 32 counties.

A campsite must provide some or all of the following onsite amenities: camp pitches; showers; toilets; campers' kitchens; and, picnic areas.

The range of amenities varies according to the type of site. To qualify for the minimum standard category, campsites should be easily accessible, and must have

basic facilities such as: water; separate male and female toilet/washing facilities; wet weather shelter (a simple barn structure); and, a camping area capable of providing a secure environment for visitors. Under the Tourist Traffic Acts 1939-2016, any tourism business calling itself a caravan or camping park must be registered with Fáilte Ireland.

In order to register as a caravan and camping park, your business must comply

Setting up a campsite on your farm

To become registered as a campsite the following are broad guidelines. More specific details can be got from Fáilte Ireland. Local authorities will decide ultimately on the suitability of a site. However, a rule of thumb approach would be as follows:

- the density of the pitches should not exceed 50 pitches per suitable hectare;
- suitable reception facilities equipped with a telephone should be provided;
- it is essential that the camping park has disability access;
- toilets, shower units and laundry rooms have to be provided in permanent buildings – they should not be located within 10 metres of any pitch;
- an adequate supply of water (one water supply point for every eight pitches) must be available; and,
- a properly constructed waste disposal unit must be provided.

The presence of farm animals in an area will dictate the need for cattle grids. It is essential to keep animals off the park. At certain times of the year, it may be necessary to secure the park by means of a gate.

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with the current regulations. Since early 2020, caravan and camping parks have new regulations as well as updated classification criteria. The new classification criteria are more focused on the quality of service and hospitality offered, and acknowledge additional facilities, rather than being purely based on a rigid set of physical attributes and the extent of

facilities. The newest change is that businesses now have the opportunity to achieve a five-star classification rating, that was not available until now.

The higher the rating, the higher the quality of service. For example, a top star rating will require a better equipped camper's kitchen with wash-up facilities, worktops and suitable seating. It is often

the off-site amenities that attract people to a camping site, such as the opportunity to go walking or mountain climbing. Some of the best camping sites in Ireland are located in beautifully scenic areas. They serve as an excellent base for campers in which they can easily explore the surrounding area. Most approved camping sites are listed at: www.camping-ireland.ie.

Getting started and marketing



There are several target markets such as clubs, scouts, families, ramblers, hikers, and many more.

Demand for high-grade camping facilities has been on the increase over the past few years. Campers in Ireland are now looking for affordable leisure options that provide a sense of freedom, along with recreation options that go beyond traditional outdoor activities. Therefore, in order to successfully run a camping site you need marketing expertise to

address increasing demands. Joining a marketing group such as Camping Ireland is important for promotion and networking. Basic essentials are needed, such as business cards, brochures and a good website. It is also important to link closely with your local regional tourism authority, as they market and promote your region. They are also your link to Fáilte

Ireland and Tourism Ireland for trade promotions abroad. Catering for both domestic and international market demands is essential. There are several target markets such as clubs, scouts, families, ramblers and hikers, special interests, students, and concert goers. As with all tourism products, only approved camping parks are promoted abroad.

Planning permission



Key considerations will be the roadways and access implications, as well as the size of the site

Any change of use from agriculture needs planning permission. For permanent and larger seasonal sites, full planning permission will be needed. National Government guidance broadly says local authorities should support farm diversification applications

including tourism. Key considerations will be the roadways and access implications, as well as the size of the site, proposed number of pitches and the visual and landscape impacts. This last aspect will become more important where land is subject to a special designation

such as Special Area of Conservation, Special Protected Area, National Heritage Area, or area of outstanding beauty. Any structural works or engineering such as hard standing are likely to need planning permission.

What about tax?

Tax considerations will be both short- and long-term. It is important to consider ownership of the business and whether it should be run as one with the farming business or separately. Making the camping enterprise a limited liability company or partnership may offer some protection for the core farming business assets, but this is not appropriate in all cases. Campsites may be considered a property business for tax purposes, as may glamping, although it is possible that some ventures could

rather be considered as letting out holiday accommodation or a trade. Classification as a property business runs the risk of the venture being treated as an investment business, which could lead to important tax reliefs being lost. Broadly speaking, the more services that are provided to glampers/campers, such as cleaning, linen and meals, the more likely the business will qualify as trading. Taking any land out of agricultural use will remove it from eligibility for Agricultural

Property Relief for inheritance tax purposes, although Business Property Relief should apply, as long as the overall business is deemed a trading business.

Grant aid

Your local LEADER company may provide assistance in setting up a camping park.

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Business planning and budgeting

Labour will be a big cost – maintaining a site well takes a great deal of time. Planning requirements such as landscaping and specialist materials will add to the cost.

Business rates could be an issue for large sites. While it is relatively easy to assess where to pitch your prices, one of the most difficult things to budget for is the occupancy rate.

Budgets should be sensitive to the financial impact of different occupancy rates. Many customers will want internet access, although improving 5G access makes this less of an issue.

In situations where the service needs to be improved, this should be factored into the budget.

Your business will require careful budgeting.



Insurance

Inform your insurer at the feasibility stage about any proposed changes in activity on the land. Farm insurance covers you only for farming, although some policies now automatically include cover for a very small site. Public liability will be the biggest issue – you have a duty of care to anyone on your premises. Slips, trips and falls are the biggest causes of claims on campsites and glampers are more likely to make claims than other campers. Diversification into camping is generally viewed as a relatively low level insurance risk, unless activities such as trampolines and swimming are included. Turnover will be one factor in determining the cost of cover, alongside an appraisal of the site and what activities, services and facilities are offered.



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Potential income

Prices range from €10/night to €50/night. Individual prices of course reflect the attractiveness of the park (Table 1).

Table 1: Potential income at full capacity.*

Income based on 40 pitches on one hectare		€
40 pitches at €10/night with full occupancy (€400 × 365)		14,600
Costs 20%		2,900
Income less costs per hectare		11,700

*Occupancy rates of 20% are common.

Further information

For further Information please contact Barry Caslin, Teagasc, Rural Economy Development Programme at:

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The following resources are also helpful:

www.failteireland.ie/Supports/Get-quality-assured/Caravan-camping-parks.aspx

www.camping-ireland.ie

www.ildn.ie

Fact sheet produced by Barry Caslin, Teagasc, Rural Economy Development Programme.

www.teagasc.ie/ruraldev

