

Geopark Basics... some useful information on UNESCO Global Geoparks for your websites and guided experiences.

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Section 1:

What are UNESCO Global Geoparks?

UNESCO Global Geoparks are internationally recognised places with unique geology, landscapes, history and culture. Geoparks are managed with a focus on education, conservation, sustainable tourism and community engagement.

What is UNESCO?

- UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- UNESCO was created after World War II to help build peace through international cooperation and standards in Education, the Sciences and Culture.
- Its core aims and values are to foster dialogue, mutual understanding, access to quality education, and an appreciation of all cultural heritage.
- UNESCO contributes to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

UNESCO has **three types of designations** for places of global scientific, natural and cultural importance: World Heritage Sites, Man and the Biosphere Reserves and Global Geoparks. All three designations celebrate heritage while conserving cultural, biological and geological diversity, and promoting sustainable economic development.

On the island of Ireland there are:

- 2 UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserves: Dublin Bay (1981) and Kerry/Killarney (1982).
- 3 UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast (1986), Brú na Bóinne (1993), and Sceilg Mhicíl (1996),
- 3 UNESCO Global Geoparks: Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark (cross-border counties Fermanagh and Cavan), Copper Coast Global Geopark, and Burren and Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark (all inscribed in 2015)

Global Geoparks differ from the other two UNESCO site designations in that they..

- Use Geology to look at how we use our earth's resources sustainably, how we can mitigate the effects of climate change and reduce natural disasters-related risks.
- Have a bottom-up approach of involving landowners, community groups, tourism businesses, indigenous people, and local organisations.
- Work together to establish Global Geoparks all around the world.

As of 2021 there are 161 UNESCO Global Geoparks spread across 44 countries.

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/earth-sciences/unesco-global-geoparks>

There are 83 Global Geoparks in Europe. <http://www.europeangeoparks.org/>

Section 2:

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark

We are a UNESCO Global Geopark because we adhere to the UNESCO criteria to celebrate heritage while conserving cultural, biological and geological diversity, and promoting sustainable economic development.

We do this in the following ways:

- Our landscape tells a fascinating **geological** story that spans over 330 million years.
- Only here can you find an extraordinary **botanical** combination of Artic, Alpine and Mediterranean flowers growing side by side.
- We have over 3,000 **archaeological** monuments that record 6,000 years of history.
- We have farming and musical **cultural traditions** that are thriving and celebrated.
- **Local communities** feel a deep connection to their landscape, history and culture and have a strong desire to manage this in a sustainable way for the benefit of all.
- The Geopark manages a **Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism Business**, which the **Burren Ecotourism Network** commits to using.
- The Geopark is **managed by Clare County Council in partnership with** local communities, tourism businesses and organisations and government agencies.

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher became a member of the Global Geoparks Network in 2011.

Global Geoparks were inscribed as UNESCO designated sites in 2015.

UNESCO Global Geoparks go through a rigorous revalidation process every 4 years. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark was last revalidated in 2019.

The area of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark **covers 530 square kilometers.** Its boundary is marked to the West and North by the coast from Hag's Head to the county border at New Quay. It then runs south along the county border to Tubber and westwards through Corofin, Kilfenora, north of Kilshanny and on to Hag's Head.

Mission Statement

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark supports people and organisations to work together to ensure a cared-for-landscape, a better understood heritage, more sustainable tourism, a vibrant community and strengthened livelihoods.

<https://www.burrengeopark.ie>

Section 3:

Top 10 Geology Facts:

1. The rocks of the Burren were formed around 330 million years ago.
2. The Burren limestone was formed in a shallow tropical sea near the equator.
3. Fossil corals, crinoids and brachiopods are common in the Burren limestone, they are also 330 million years old.
4. The layers of rock that make the Cliffs of Moher were formed by rivers flowing into a sea, forming a delta like the Mississippi delta.
5. The patterns in the Moher flagstones were made by an unknown creature burrowing just below the surface of sand layers on a shallow coast.
6. The cracks in the limestone and the Cliffs of Moher were formed by plate tectonic collision almost 300 million years ago and have been enlarged by weathering.
7. The gentle curves of the layers of limestone on Mullaghmore in the Burren National Park were also formed by tectonic collision almost 300 million years ago.
8. During the last Ice Age c.200m thick flowing ice sheets shaped the valleys and hills of the Burren.
9. The limestone in the Burren is dissolved by weakly acidic rain and groundwater, forming caves, so most of the water is underground.
10. In 5 million years the Burren will have been dissolved completely.