

# RESOURCES – THE CODE OF PRACTICE



## GEOPARK BASICS

**Useful information on UNESCO Global Geoparks for your website, guest materials, and guided experiences.**

Section 1: What are UNESCO Global Geoparks?

Section 2: About the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark

Section 3: Top Geology Facts about the Burren and Cliffs of Moher

## 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 recognises sites of exceptional global significance through three international designations:**

1. World Heritage Sites (cultural or natural heritage)
2. Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Reserves (people–nature interaction)
3. UNESCO Global Geoparks (UGGp) (geological heritage & sustainable development)

## **UNESCO Sites on the Island of Ireland**

**For UNESCO Global Geoparks, there are now three in Ireland:**

1. The Burren & Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark (County Clare)
2. Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark (County Waterford)
3. Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark (Cavan-Fermanagh border) - formerly known as Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark

**There are 2 UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserves:** Dublin Bay (1981) and Kerry/Killarney (1982)

**There are 3 UNESCO World Heritage Sites:** Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast (1986), Brú na Bóinne (1993), and Sceilg Mhicíl (1996).

**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 **September 2025**, there are **229 UNESCO Global Geoparks** in **50 countries**.

According to the European Geoparks Network, the European Network comprises some **109 Geoparks** in **28 countries**.

## 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 working 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 **2023**.

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.*

## **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.