

The award winning gardens of Birr Castle are rich in amazing rare trees, flowers, feats of science and engineering as well as wonderful wildlife. The Parsons family invites you to explore one of the most extraordinary places in Ireland. Created over generations it is an environmental and scientific time capsule. Some of the key points of interest are shown on the map.

1 Science Centre Galleries and Courtyard

Extensive science exhibitions covering Birr and the Parsons family's achievements in astronomy, engineering, photography and botany.

2 Courtyard Turbine

Charles Parsons, son of the Third Earl, invented the first high performance steam turbines for the generation of electricity. These are the blades from one of his turbines from a local power station.

3 Tree House

This adventure area houses Ireland's largest tree house as well as picnic areas, sand pits and dens.

4 Birr Castle

The castle is still the home of the Parsons family, now the Earls of Rosse, who have lived here since 1620. The castle dates back to medieval times.

5 Garden Terraces

The flower gardens of the High and Low Walks frame fine views of the castle, and in spring the magnolias can be seen across the river.

6 Suspension Bridge

This is the oldest iron suspension bridge in Ireland. Designed by the family around 1810 this bridge was built in the original Birr workshops.

7 St Brendan's Well

Fed by spring water from a limestone aquifer this pure water is still used by the castle, and for blessings and christenings.

8 River Garden

On the far side of the River Camcor are some of the garden's most prized plants, including magnificent magnolias and several champion trees.

9 Lagoon Garden

The southern tip of the Lake provides a viewpoint across the water to distant trees and parkland. Below ground, water channels from the river manage the water level of the lake.

10 New Pavilion

11 Great Telescope

This, the largest telescope in the world for over 70 years, was constructed in the 1840s by the Third Earl of Rosse. With it he discovered the spiral nature of certain nebulae – leading to their identification as galaxies.



The Discovery Gift Shop

- Offers gifts and souvenirs to suit every taste.

The Castle Courtyard Café

- Fresh local food, delicious home bakes and whipped ice-creams.

Tree House Adventure Area

- Features Ireland's largest tree house, tree decks linked by rope bridges, secret tunnels, hobbit houses, sand play area, scramble nets and climbing rocks, swings and slides, picnic area and much more.

Castle Tours

- Held during the summer months – tours take place at 9.30, 10.30, 11.30 and 12.30. Please book in advance.

Main Opening hours

16 March – 26 October: 9.00 to 18.00
27 October – 15 March: 10.00 to 16.00
Closed: 25 / 26 December and 1 January

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You will come across wildlife everywhere in the gardens – please respect it, and of course, your fellow visitors.

All children must be supervised in all areas at all times and remain the responsibility of their guardians.

All dogs must be kept on the lead at all times and remain the responsibility of their owners, all dog fouling must be disposed of.



BIRR CASTLE

GARDENS & SCIENCE CENTRE

VISITOR GUIDE



12 Meridian Stones

The N-S alignment of the telescope, marked by these stone pillars, meant that stars could be more easily plotted.

13 Spring Wildflower Meadow and The Carroll Oak

These meadows have not been ploughed since at least 1620. Between the O'Carroll Oak, which is over 500 years old, and the castle moat the grass grows long in spring, and we encourage the native wildflowers to seed.

14 Whirlpool Spiral

This spiral wood was planted with the astronomer Sir Bernard Lovell in 1995, 150 years after the discovery of the Whirlpool Nebula by the Third Earl using the Great Telescope of Birr.

15 Lake

During the early 19th century the Second Earl created the present lake by diverting the River Camcor. He then raised the level of the lake by bringing water from upstream through canals and tunnels.

16 Formal Gardens

These were designed by Anne, Countess of Rosse to mark her marriage to the Sixth Earl in 1935. The white seats at either end have the crossed initials of herself and her husband Michael.

17 Box Hedges

These hedges are over 300 years old. According to the Guinness Book of Records they are the tallest in the world.

18 Victorian Fernery

Created in the 1880s with stone from the local Slieve Bloom Mountains. The fountain in the midst of the stream springs from a holed pipe fed from the lake above.

19 Shell Well

Built over the Well of the Holly, Cuileann Tobar. this well was inspired by the 18th-century architect Samuel Chearnley, and decorated in remembrance of Mariga Guinness with shells from her collection.

20 Water Wheel

At the exit of the lake the Third Earl installed a water wheel and pump in 1855 to drain the lower wet lands. A turbine to drive the pump was added in 1875 – all machinery was removed in 1916.

21 Brick Bridge

This is a fine bridge of three stone arches with a brick parapet. It first appears on the 1839 map when it is named the Ivy Bridge.

22 Yunnan

This area has been used to plant out seeds collected by the Seventh Earl during expeditions to Yunnan and Nepal.

23 Pinetum

This fine collection of over 100 specimen conifers of different ages dating back to the 19th century.

24 Cherry Avenue

This avenue was re-planted in 1988 with Prunus 'Accolade', replacing earlier trees which had become over mature.

25 Teatro Verde

This takes advantage of a magnificent vista across the demesne to the castle. It was planted in 1990, inspired by a design of the 18th-century architect and family member, Samuel Chearnley.

River Garden Loop Walk - 10 mins



Telescope Walk - 20/30 mins



River Walk - 40 mins

