Everything you need to know about

a serious fun camp

BARRETSTOWN

Celebrating 20 Years
Introduction

Barretstown is a specially-designed camp that provides Therapeutic Recreation programmes for children with serious illnesses, and their families.

It was founded by Hollywood actor Paul Newman in 1994 and modelled on his renowned Hole in the Wall Gang Camp in Connecticut, USA.

Excellent, unobtrusive medical supervision helps children with cancer and other diseases forget illness, learn to have fun and rebuild their confidence and self-esteem. Our programmes take place at a fairytale castle in the beautiful foothills of Ireland’s Wicklow Mountains. Barretstown is much more than a holiday – our summer camps for children, and our spring and autumn weekend camps for families, are carefully-directed programmes of Therapeutic Recreation.

Our programmes are overseen by carefully trained ‘Caras’ (the Irish word for friend) who help the children and teens (aged infant to 17) to rediscover their confidence and self-esteem in a safe, secure environment.

Who do we serve?

Children come to Barretstown from Ireland, the UK, the USA, and throughout Europe, diagnosed with a wide range of illnesses. Currently, up to 120 children attend each summer session. Family Camps welcome up to 22 families at a time.

How do we decide who comes to Barretstown?

We have medical criteria in place and if a camper/family meets the criteria they are eligible to attend Barretstown.

Barretstown Illness Criteria

- Childhood Cancer
- Haematology related disease
- Immunodeficiency related disease
  (Ireland only)
- Nephrology
- Rheumatology
- Dermatology
- Gastroenterology
- Neurology
- Endocrinology

How do you apply to come to Barretstown?

When a child/family applies to come to Barretstown, they receive a Physical Examination form to complete. These forms are then forwarded to our Family Liaison Department who work with our Clinical Nurse Manager to ensure each child fits our referral criteria. Once the application is approved, the child/family receive an invitation to camp and additional paperwork to complete.
Barretstown Programmes

Barretstown adopts a holistic approach to its programme recognising the impact of serious illness on the family. Our programme also includes siblings, family and bereavement camps.

Our Camps

Barretstown provides weekend breaks for families, in spring and autumn, where all day-to-day needs are met, so that the families can concentrate on relaxing, having fun and spending time together.

We run our summer sessions within specific age groups in order to ensure that the programme and activities are best suited to their needs and also allow children and teenagers to mix with their own age group.

Family Camp

Family camps offer families a supportive environment where they can spend quality time together; supported by a medical team on site should their child require medical attention over the weekend. The family weekend camps take place during the spring and autumn months.

Summer Camp

The summer camps are specially designed programmes where children and teenagers with a serious illness can attend, have some fun and meet other children and teenagers from all over Europe and the USA.

Parents do not participate in the summer camps.

The summer camps take place between June to August. The countries that we welcome during the summer are Spain, Germany, the UK, USA, Poland, Hungary, Denmark, Sweden, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Russia, and Ireland.
Summer Sibling Camp

This camp is a 6 day camp for siblings who have a brother or sister (aged infant to 17) who is currently being treated for, or recovering from, a serious illness.

The camp will take place mid-summer and we welcome children aged 7-15 years old from Spain, Germany, Greece, Sweden, the UK, and Ireland.

Brothers & Sisters Camp

The Brothers and Sisters camp allows children the opportunity to attend Barretstown together for a weekend camp. They are aged between 7 and 17 years old and currently this camp is only available to Irish and UK children.

Bereavement Family Camp

Bereavement weekends offer support to families who have lost a child (aged infant to 17) from a serious illness. The weekend provides families a supportive environment within which they can spend quality time together, find support, share their experience of loss and find ways to look to the journey ahead.

These weekends take place over the spring and autumn months. A minimum of 20 families will attend each weekend. Families attend a cycle of 3 camps over the duration of 18 months.

Hospital Outreach

We currently run a Hospital Outreach programme in Ireland and the UK.

The Outreach programme brings the fun of camp to children with serious illness in hospitals through engaging, developmentally appropriate, unique and creative activities. The Outreach programme is facilitated by Barretstown staff and volunteers and it aims to relieve some of the anxieties children feel when hospitalised.
Your Barretstown Questions Answered

What happens at Barretstown?

Our Therapeutic Recreation programme includes a wide range of all-inclusive activities that appeal to campers on many levels. Each activity has a range of options allowing campers to choose their own level of participation, examples of activities include horse riding, arts and crafts, creative writing, canoeing, fishing, drama, music and lots more. Activity groups during the day are mixed gender. Children of similar age and same gender stay in comfortable, homely cottages and sleep in a dorm with fully accessible bathrooms facilities. For meals children sit in their cottage group in our spacious dining hall and we have a wide range of healthy options available at every meal. In the evenings everyone gets together for special evening programmes such as carnival and cabaret.

Is Barretstown a safe environment for children?

Absolutely! Safety always comes first at Barretstown. The physical, emotional and medical well-being of the children at Barretstown is our primary concern. Our medical centre is staffed 24 hours a day by doctors and nurses experienced in paediatric oncology and other specialities. All activity areas are carefully designed with accessibility and safety as the prime consideration. Activities are supervised with a ratio of at least one Cara for every two children, and each Cara is fully trained in all aspects of safety.

What does it cost for a child to go to Barretstown?

All our programmes are available free of charge. We rely on fundraising and volunteers to help us provide the Barretstown programme.

When do the programmes take place?

Our summer programme runs from mid-June to late August, and we welcome children from all over Europe. We also run family camps in the spring and autumn.

What is Therapeutic Recreation?

Therapeutic Recreation at Barretstown always revolves around FUN.
Children take part in activities with various levels of challenges and are encouraged to choose a challenge that fosters growth and development for them.

The focus is on cooperation, encouragement and peer support rather than competition. Staff facilitate reflective opportunities during the day to help children realise their successes and make discoveries about their true potential for confidence, self-esteem, independence and friendship.

Every step in the process is designed to be fun, and when children and families fully engage in each challenge they get the most from the experience.

**Who will look after my child?**

The staff at Barretstown are called Cara’s’, the Irish word for friend, and the name could not be more appropriate. The staff team is made up of multi-lingual Caras from all over the world who are chosen for their experience, empathy and energy.

All Barretstown staff are selected through a strict recruitment process involving intensive group and individual interviews, reference and police checks before being offered a position at Barretstown. Staff receive intensive training in important aspects of childcare as well as areas such as safety, cultural awareness, reflective listening and the techniques of Therapeutic Recreation. **With a ratio of at least one Cara to every two campers, the children are never far from a trained, skilled and understanding friend.**

**Where do the children/families stay?**

Each child stays in a cottage with approximately seven other children/teens of their own age and gender. Usually two different nationalities will share a cottage. There is a minimum of four staff members living in the cottage with the children, at least two of whom will be able to help with translation.

Bed linen and towels are also provided, and we have complete laundry facilities available. While there may be two families to a cottage the only communal area is the living area, families do not share sleeping areas or bathrooms.

**Should we bring money to camp?**

As the programmes at Barretstown are residential, there is no need to bring money to camp.

During family camps only, we will open our Barretstown merchandise shop where parents can purchase a Barretstown hoodie or other clothing items if they wish.

**What are meals like?**

We provide nutritious and child-friendly meals and snacks for the children, families and staff. Everybody eats together in the dining hall, and there is always a wide range of hot and cold food available. Please be sure to indicate specific dietary requirements on the application form. Families will eat together at meal times on family weekends.
May I contact my child directly during Summer Camp?

Direct contact between children and parents is strongly discouraged while children are at camp, except in cases of emergency. This is in order to allow the child to settle and to adjust to the new environment. However, parents may contact Barretstown any time to speak with the Family Liaison team who will answer any questions and let a parent know how a child is progressing. Please see our mobile phone guidelines on page 12.

How do children from different countries communicate?

We have skilled and trained interpreters and chaperones from each country that we serve that speak fluent English and translate between staff and children throughout their stay.

What happens before coming to camp?

After being accepted to Barretstown, each child/family is sent an invitation and an application form. This application form provides the information that we need to make each child’s/family’s stay at camp as safe and as fun as possible. If your child has any special needs including mobility or other problems, please state this clearly on the application form, and we will make the necessary arrangements.

Who organises the travel arrangements?

Our European Family Liaison Team works with our Barretstown contacts in each country to organise travel and other arrangements. In Summer each child travels to camp completely free of charge. Our policy requires that a minimum of two chaperones accompany every five children while travelling to summer camps.

If your child is travelling to camp from outside Ireland, a chaperone or our Liaison Co-ordinator will be in touch with you approximately 10 days before departure day. They will arrange to meet you at the airport about two hours before the flight departs. The chaperone will have the airline tickets and will take care of your child’s passport, if necessary, when travelling and while at camp.

On arrival at Dublin Airport, a Barretstown staff member will meet the children and their chaperones in the arrivals hall and will escort them to camp where a warm welcome awaits. It takes about an hour to reach Barretstown from Dublin Airport.

If your child is travelling to camp from within Ireland, we have pick-up points at the main children’s hospitals in Dublin. All details are enclosed with the application form, including a map, if you choose to drive your child to camp. Barretstown is not responsible for children that travel on public transport alone to a pick-up point.
Activities
There are so many activities to do at Barretstown. Here are just some of them!!
Arts and Crafts
The Medshed
Drama
Fishing
Climbing Wall
Music
What do I bring to camp?

The following is a check list of clothes and items necessary for our summer sessions.

We recommend marking clothing and personal items with your name (this will make it easier to return any lost items).

- Your own medication
- Underwear
- Socks
- Nightwear
- Toothbrush and Toothpaste
- Soap and shampoo
- Feminine hygiene products
- T-shirts
- Shorts
- Jeans/tracksuit/long pants
- 2 pairs of trainers/shoes
- Wellington boots/strong boots
- 1 raincoat and rain hat
- 1 warm jacket/coat
- Jumper/sweatshirt
- Hair dryer

Barretstown discourages campers from bringing low cut tops, short skirts, high heels or very loose fitting jeans as these are unsuitable for camp activities.

As the weather can be very varied we recommend that you bring appropriate clothing for cold and rainy weather.

Please adhere to weight restrictions on luggage as Barretstown is not responsible for any payment required with overweight luggage.

Medical Supplies

The Medical Centre contains many of the necessary medical supplies required for your care. However you are responsible for providing your own medication.

Items not required at camp:

Money: As the programmes at Barretstown are residential, there is no need to bring money to camp.

During family camps only we will open our Barretstown merchandise shop where parents can purchase a Barretstown hoodie or other clothing items if they wish.

Valuables: We recommend children and families do not bring valuables to camp. Radios and I-pods are available at camp if children or families require music.

Swimwear: Swimwear is not required as there is no swimming facility.

For family weekends with younger children

- Baby food/formula
- Nappies

Barretstown will supply the following:

- Sheets, towels, pillows, all meals, snacks, night lights, cots, high chairs,
- There is a laundry facility if required.
Examples of items not permitted at camp

- Electronic Games
- Laptops
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Cigarettes (during family camps we have a designated smoking area for adults)
- Knives/sharp tools or weapons of any type
- Pets

Mobile phones will be collected upon arrival at summer camp and placed in a holding area until departure day. This is to ensure the privacy of all campers is respected.  
Barretstown Does Not Accept Responsibility for Items Lost or Stolen at Camp.

Lost and Found: From time to time some camper belongings may get left behind after a visit to camp. We will try to the best of our ability to ensure that each camper returns home with the same items of clothing and personal property they arrived with. In the event of belongings being left behind the following steps are taken;

If a valuable item has been left behind eg a wallet/purse, mobile phone, camera, glasses, keys medication etc. all efforts will be made to contact the family immediately and arrange postage or collection of the item/items in question

Other miscellaneous items such as jumpers, scarfs, runners, coats, water bottles, books/notebooks etc. will be identified, tagged and stored onsite. If your child has forgotten something please contact us at familyliaisondepartment@barretststown.org

and we can arrange delivery however for items of the variety listed above Barretstown will not cover the postage/delivery costs.

All items of lost property will be stored until the end of the camp season. If the items have not been claimed by then, we will look to donate them to a worthy cause or have them removed off site.

Barretstown does not take responsibility for loss or damage to any items if brought to camp.
Barretstown Policies

We need all children and families to adhere to our policies and procedures whilst in Barretstown to ensure that all campers and volunteers have a great time.

Mobile Phone Guidelines

During camp children are not permitted to have their phone with them for a number of reasons including:

• The potential of the phone getting lost

• The potential of the phone getting damaged

• Many phones have the ability to take photographs, videos, and access and upload onto the internet.

• Potential danger of having phones causing a distraction in more specialised activities such as horses, high ropes and archery.

Where children arrive to camp with their mobiles we will store them in a safe place and return them to children for the journey home.

Children missing home

For many children coming to Barretstown will be their first time away from home and it is understandable that they may miss their families and friends. We aim to create a warm, comfortable and welcoming environment for children where they can talk to staff about their feelings and seek support to cope with missing home. We also have a number of effective strategies we use with children to help them cope with their feelings whilst remaining engaged in the camp programme. Some examples include sending postcards home, letters home, talking to staff about their feelings, creating a child friendly schedule that highlights the activities they are most looking forward to during their stay. It can also help if the child brings a pillowcase, favourite teddy bear, story book, family picture to camp.

When required staff will call the parent/guardian for further guidance on how to best support children that are missing home.

We have found from experience some parents inform their child prior to coming to camp that they will collect them straight away if they are missing home. In such circumstances the child is often keen to move straight to this step and reluctant to engage in some of the effective strategies mentioned.

We therefore ask for the parent/guardians support to prepare their child for their stay at camp. Please be assured a member of the camp team will call the child’s parent/guardian for guidance if our usual techniques are not effective.
Barretstown Camper Contract

Campers must comply to the following:

• There is no alcohol, illegal drugs or cigarettes allowed on site at Barretstown, at any time.

• During family camps we have a designated smoking area for adults only.

• Physical violence will not be tolerated. This includes hitting, pushing, pinching, biting etc.

• Bullying and other forms of intimidation will not be tolerated. This includes name calling, swearing, and derogatory vocabulary.

• In the interest of safety, supporting children to fully engage in the camp programme and develop friendships mobile phones are not permitted during summer camps. If children arrive to camp with their mobiles we will store them in a safe place and return them to children for the journey home.

• The cottage is a respectful environment, and each camper is expected to respect each other’s possessions, personal space, sleeping habits etc.

• Staff supervise campers throughout the day, and campers are expected to let staff know of their whereabouts at all times.

• Vandalism and destruction of camp property is not permitted.

• Failure to abide by this contract can result in not being able to participate in some camp activities, or being asked to leave the programme.

Camper – Staff Communication Policy

At Barretstown, we appreciate that campers and staff develop a unique and trusting relationship during their time at camp. While these relationships are positive during their time at camp, we discourage them from continuing outside of the camp session - including befriending or communicating with campers via social networking sites.

Our staff go through an extensive screening, selection and training process, and are supervised during their contract at camp to ensure their behaviour is professional and appropriate at all times.

We discourage contact with campers outside of camp as we cannot provide the support and supervision to our staff or take responsibility for the behaviour once their contracts have ended.

As a parent/guardian, we ask that you take responsibility to monitor your child’s contact with other campers, and potentially staff members.
Barretstown Medical Facts

There is a fully equipped medical facility on site staffed by paediatric specialists.

How are the medical needs of the children met?

Our medical team observes the medical regime advised by the child’s doctor. Our medical centre is affiliated with Our Lady’s Children’s Hospital, Dublin, which is only 40 minutes away. We adhere to all medical polices and protocols in place on their haematology/oncology ward.

Upon arrival at Barretstown each child visits the medical centre and meets with a member of the medical team. The nursing staff will check-in the children who are not receiving any treatment. Children requiring treatment while on site are seen by one of the volunteer doctors along with a nurse. The camper’s medication are transcribed onto the Barretstown Medication Administration Record and signed by the doctor.

The medication is stored in the medical centre, to be dispensed by our nurses at the appropriate times (usually at mealtimes or bedtime). Children on treatment are required to bring their own medication in the original container and any equipment required for special medical care.

Who are the medical team?

The Barretstown’s medical centre, the “Med Shed”, is under the direction of the Clinical Nurse Manager, Senior Nurse and Medical Director. Volunteer doctors and nurses from Spain, England, Hungary and many other countries join the Clinical Nurse Manager and Senior Nurse for each session during the summer. The sessions are staffed with two doctors (one of whom is always a Paediatric Oncologist) and three to four paediatric nurses.

Medical Forms

It is imperative the information we receive on the medical form is accurate and legible as this is the information our medical team works from. The more information we receive the better prepared we are to ensure the children have a safe and enjoyable experience at camp.

What if medication has changed since the application form was sent in?

If there have been changes in medication or treatment please fill in the ‘Arrival Day Update’ sheet which you will have received with your application form, and bring it with you to camp. When children are checked-in through the medical centre all medical forms including the arrival update sheet will be reviewed.
Magic Moments

“Two great moments of my life were my 10 days at Barretstown and when my treatment finished.”
– Camper, Aged 14 Ireland

“A big thank you to you all for giving us one of the best weekends we have ever had, and for showing us how much goodness people really have. Many thanks.”
– Camper, Ireland

“My visit to Barretstown opened up my eyes to how other people have coped with their experiences of serious illnesses. It was one of the best things that could teach me I am still a normal teenager, ill or not. Many thanks for giving me a fantastic time.”
– Camper, UK

“My best day in Barretstown was the 15th June, and I think that it is probably the best day of my life. It was the high ropes. I didn’t believe that I could climb it but I did and it was wonderful. That was a wonderful experience and I will never forget it.”
– Camper, Poland

“Now I have a feeling that I am healthy, that everything is possible in my life and that I can manage all obstacles in my life.”
– Camper, Russia

A Typical Day at Camp!

8:00  Wake Up / Early bird activities
9:00  Breakfast
10:00  Cottage Clean Up
10:30  Activities (normally two)
13:00  Lunch
14:00  Rest Time
15:00  Activities (normally two)
17:30  Cottage Time
18:00  Dinner
19:30  Evening Programme
21:00  Return to Cottages
22:00  Cottage Chat
22:30  Lights Out

Remember: this schedule will vary depending on whether it is a Summer or Family Camp and the age profile of the camp will also change the schedule.
How to apply to attend Barretstown

Visit our website – www.barretstown.org – to find out more about Barretstown and to see who to contact in your country.

If you are applying from Ireland or UK you can contact the Family Liaison Team directly and they will give you all the information you need to apply for camp. For more information:

Call: +353 (0) 45 863147 or +353 (0) 45 863130
Email: families@barretstown.org
Visit: www.barretstown.org

Write to: Family Liaison Team, Barretstown Castle, Ballymore Eustace, Co. Kildare, Ireland.

Like us on Facebook to keep up to date: www.facebook.com/Barretstown

Find out more about us on YouTube: www.youtube.com/Barretstown