



**Marble Arch Caves
Global Geopark**

Big Dog Forest, Big Dog Walk

Big Dog Forest offers the opportunity to experience one of Fermanagh's finest upland landscapes. Within an area steeped in myths and legends, the walk meanders through the forest and along the lake shore providing panoramic views of the surrounding area.

Distance: 4km

Time: 1hour 30minutes

Grade: Moderate

Terrain: All types, mostly forest track, some unsurfaced path.

Route: Linear, with circular loop.

Wheelchair accessible: No

Facilities: Parking, onsite interpretation, picnic area, way marked walking route.

Map: Discoverer Series OSNI Sheet 17 Lower Lough Erne; Activity Map OSNI Upper and Lower Lough Erne.

Starting point: Big Dog Forest Car Park

Big Dog Forest gets its name from the larger of the two small hills that dominate the skyline, known as Big Dog and Little Dog. According to ancient folklore the hills are named after the two wolf hounds, Bran and Skeolan, who were owned by the mythical giant, Finn Mac Cool. Legend has it, that one day while hunting, the dogs gave chase to a witch, who cast them into stone to aid her escape. Geologists now know that the two hills are made out of a particularly resistant sandstone, a result of their proximity to a major extinct fault line (or crack in the earth's surface).

The initial part of the walk takes you along forest tracks, through Sitka spruce conifer plantations before opening out onto a causeway that bisects Lough Nabrickboy. Here the study of glacial sediments found on the lake bed has provided vital clues to Ireland's icy past.

Continuing across the causeway, magnificent views of this upland lake can be appreciated and a secluded picnic spot provides the perfect setting for a woodland feast.

Travelling onwards the trail links onto a moorland path which skirts the shores of Loughs Doo and Nabrickboy where many species of damsel and dragonflies can be seen particularly in late summer.

Little Dog viewpoint can be reached by a short but rewarding climb. Once the site of a Forest Service fire tower, the remnants of which still remain today, the viewpoint offers wonderful 360 degree panoramic views of the surrounding area. Many of the smaller lakes are only visible from this dramatic vantage point. To the North is Meenagleragh Lough, further out to the West is Donegal Bay and to the South is the companion hill of Big Dog.