

Cycling Safaris

WEST CORK COASTLINE - Easy Group Tour 2010



The tour covers all types of landscape, from rolling green fields to spectacular coastal rides. West Cork is also best known for its colourful villages, all of which are brightly painted in a wonderful array of vibrant colours, with wonderful hanging baskets brimming with flowers out the front of every pub and shop.

The roads are all tarmaced and the route is designed to ensure that you spend most of the week on quiet back roads. The emphasis of our cycling holidays is to give you the freedom to fully enjoy this beautiful landscape at your own pace whilst having the security of knowing there is a support van there if you might ever need it. It means that during the day you can be an independent traveller, genuinely experiencing all the sights and sounds of Ireland on a bike, while in the evening over a delicious meal you can share your day's experience with a group of like-minded people from all over the world.

Our easy tours are designed for those who still want to explore Ireland by bike but fancy spending less time in the saddle than on our regular tours. With this in mind we have kept the distances lower and thrown in an extra rest day for good measure, giving you the chance to cycle at a leisurely pace and still have plenty of time to stop for coffee/photographs or simply relax and enjoy the countryside

The following details will help you in planning your holiday:

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TOUR ITINERARY

DAY 1 SATURDAY CORK CITY

The group meets at 6.30 pm in the Bar of Jurys Cork Hotel, Western Road (021 4252700). For location map, click on <http://www.jurysdoyle.com/img/maps/pdf/1207.pdf> (NOT to be confused with Jury's Inn Cork on Andersons Quay). **The hotel is only the meeting point and not our actual accommodation.** However if you get there before the meeting time and wish to explore the city you can leave your luggage in the left luggage at the hotel reception.

If you are unexpectedly delayed please call the hotel and leave a message for the guide as to when you expect to arrive. Alternatively ring our office number (01 2600749) where we will have left your guide's mobile number on our answering machine.

An introductory talk from the guide is followed by a *light* bar food menu, while your bags are transferred to our guesthouses. Afterwards you might decide to head into the city for a drink in one of Cork's lively pubs.

DAY 2 SUNDAY CORK TO MACROOM 31 miles / 49kms

After being fitted out with your bicycles, we head out by the banks of the Lee and travel along quiet back roads to the picturesque village of Blarney. We stop here for lunch – and a chance to explore the castle with its world famous “stone of eloquence”. In the afternoon we continue to the market town of Macroom in the valley of the Sullane River where we spend the evening.

DAY 3 MONDAY MACROOM TO GOUGANE BARA 19 miles/ 30 kms

Today we cycle through the rolling countryside of the Lee Valley to the wonderfully peaceful lakeside retreat of Gougane Barra, the source of the River Lee. Our accommodation for the next two nights is in the heart of the Gougane Barra Forest Park.

DAY 4 TUESDAY REST DAY GOUGANE BARRA

The day can be spent in rest and relaxation or you can get out your walking shoes and explore one of the 6 trails of the Gougane Barra Forest Park.

DAY 5 WEDNESDAY GOUGANE BARA TO BANTRY 16 miles / 26 kms

Today's cycle brings us along the coast to the bustling coastal town of Bantry. You will have plenty of time to visit Bantry House and with its beautifully restored Gardens and tasty tearooms. The house overlooks the famous Bantry Bay – if you want to see the Bay from a different angle, why not take the short ferry trip to Whiddy Island.

DAY 6 THURSDAY BANTRY TO SCHULL 16 miles / 26 kms

Our route brings us through the little village of Durrus located at the head of the Sheep's Head and Mizen Head Peninsulas. From here we pedal up to a gap in the side of Mount Gabriel and down to Schull, our home for the next two nights.

DAY 7 FRIDAY REST DAY IN SCHULL

Schull is a lively town with plenty of activities to choose from. The village has numerous busy pubs and interesting restaurants, a good book shop and several arts and crafts shops. There is a watersports centre which rents dinghies, diving equipment and arranges kayaking trips. Another popular option is to take the ferry to Cape Clear which you can explore by bike or foot.

You are free then to make your own way back to Cork anytime on Saturday. We do not arrange this transfer but there is a public bus service (www.buseireann.ie) from Schull to Cork city.

A more comprehensive route description and map will be provided at the start of the tour. With the exception of the roads out of Cork, the traffic on the route should be quite light. However, you should cycle carefully at all times, especially when going downhill or during rain showers.

WHAT THE BROCHURE PRICE INCLUDES

- Seven nights accommodation with full Irish breakfast.
- One evening meal (Gougane Barra)
- 24 speed touring bike with a pannier bag.
- Route maps and details.
- Luggage transfer each day.
- Support van and tour guide.

Meal expenses

All breakfasts are included in the tour price. Clients buy their own lunches and dinner throughout the trip. You should budget between €7 and €10 for lunch each day and an evening meal each night costing somewhere between €15 and €25.

Most people enjoy coming together each evening to discuss their adventures during the day over dinner, your guide will prebook and arrange a suitable venue for you each night. Nearly all restaurants in Ireland now cater for vegetarians but please inform the guide if you are vegetarian so that he/she can organise something for you in more remote places.

Price of other extras (these are only approximate prices and will vary from region to region)

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------|----------------|------------------------------|
| Coffee/tea | €2.00 | Glass of Beer | €2.80 (this is half a pint!) |
| Soft drink | €2.00 | Pint of Beer | €4.80 (this is a full pint!) |
| Bottle of water | €1.70 | bottle of wine | €18.00 |

Extra Expenses

The ferry from Schull to Cape Clear €18 approx.

Bus from Schull back to Cork is €15 approx.

Are there facilities to change money?

There are banks/cash machines in Cork City, Macroom, Bantry, Schull, and Skibbereen (banks open Monday - Friday: 10.00am - 4.00pm). Credit cards are also widely accepted. Traveller's cheques are accepted in banks and post offices.

WHAT TO BRING

*We would seriously recommend that you bring **padded cycling shorts and / or a gel saddle cover** that will definitely make your day's cycling more comfortable. Cycling gloves are also a good investment. You can also bring your own saddle which we should be able to attach to our bikes

*We provide small **pannier bags** (not waterproof) in which you can keep your day-to-day items. Otherwise you may prefer to use a daypack and there are back carriers on each bike for this purpose.

*We do not provide **rain gear** so be sure to bring your own light weight waterproofs.

*Although it is not obligatory to wear a helmet we strongly recommend that you wear one. If you own a **bicycle helmet** please bring it, otherwise there will be helmets available in the van.

*Don't forget **sun cream, sunglasses, sun hat** as well as a bathing suit for that refreshing dip in the Atlantic Ocean.

*Finally if you wish to use **toe clips** please bring your own pedals with toe clips which we can attach to our bikes (the pedals on our bikes do not accommodate toe clips)

Please make an effort to pack lightly. This will make your travels easier and will be much appreciated by the guide when he/she is carrying your bags up a long flight of stairs to your room!

BIKE & FITNESS

In 2010 we will be using the new version of the **GIANT CRS 3.0 City** bicycle for our tours. To see the specification for this you can visit the website <http://www.giant-bicycles.com/en-GB/bikes/lifestyle/2464/32854/> (gents model) <http://www.giant-bicycles.com/en-GB/bikes/women/2585/32844/> (ladies model)

Bikes come in different sizes and in gents and ladies style frames. It is important you give us your height on booking so that we can allocate the correct bike to you.

The advantage of a cycling safari is that because you have your own map and route details you can enjoy each days cycle at your own pace. However we would recommend that you do try to do some cycling before the tour in order to make your week more enjoyable, if possible do it on varied terrain and include some hill climbing. But don't forget...our guide is always close by to help out if you have any problems.

ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation is allocated on a twin-sharing basis. We stay in a mixture of B&Bs and small hotels. The B&B accommodation is a combination of two or three guesthouses in each night stop, where we hope to fuse the best standard we can get with the warmest welcome. We ensure en suite facilities almost all of the time however in some of the more remote spots one might occasionally have to share a bathroom.

We do reserve the right to change the accommodation around during the week, but we will always endeavour to provide a high standard.

What if someone needs to contact me during the week?

If you have a mobile phone which operates on the GSM 900 system, this will be compatible with the Irish system. Alternatively someone can call our office during the day and we will be able to contact anyone on the tour.

Extra Accommodation

We would be happy to help you organise extra accommodation outside of Dublin for the start or the end of the week. If you would prefer to organise it yourself please see the websites below. If you are planning to spend a few days in Dublin at the end of the tour, we recommend that you book accommodation well in advance as the capital is very busy on weekends. We do not actually organise accommodation in Dublin but there are a huge range of websites offering a reservation service. A good starting place is Dublin Tourism (www.visitdublin.com)..

Other accommodation websites for Dublin/Ireland

www.discoverireland.ie

www.dublinhotels.com

www.irelandhotels.com

www.goireland.com

www.hiddenireland.com

GROUP, GUIDE AND BACK UP SERVICE

The group size varies from 8 to 20 people. A guide driving a support van leads each group. She/He will sweep during the day to check on cyclists. In the afternoon they will be gone for about two hours to leave the luggage off at your accommodation, so may not be on hand to give you a lift, but there is no rush and you have all day to complete the ride. As soon as the guide has delivered the luggage to your accommodation they will sweep back to do a final check on cyclists.

Our aim is to allow you feel like an independent traveller, free to cycle each day at your own pace while at the same time having the security of knowing that a support van is nearby just in case you might need it. Most importantly, our guide is there to help in whatever way possible so that all you have to do is leave your worries behind and enjoy the many wonderful experiences that this cycling holiday has to offer.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Weather

Because we are an island located near the gulf stream Ireland has a very mild climate making it ideal for cycling. We recommend that you bring your rain gear as well as your sun hat as a day that starts with rain can end with glorious sunshine! The temperature range during the summer is between 15 and 22 degrees centigrade (60 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit)

Visa requirements

If you hold an EU passport you only need to make sure your passport is valid for the period of your stay. You will need photo identification travelling between Britain and Ireland.

All other nationalities require a passport that is valid for 3 months beyond the intended length of stay. Most nationalities including the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand do not require visas for Ireland and receive an automatic 90 day visitor's visa on arrival. If your nationality is not mentioned here you should check with your travel agent or consular office.

Electrical current/Mobile Phone

The standard electrical supply is 220 volts AC (50 cycles). To use small appliances mainland European visitors may require a plug adaptor to fit our 3-pin flat or 2-pin round wall sockets. The mobile phone system in use is a digital GSM 900 system.

Websites on Ireland

Some recommended websites on Ireland that might help you organise your trip if you are planning to spend more time in the country before or after your holiday with us.

www.discoverireland.com - Irish Tourist Board (Failte Ireland) official website providing a wealth of information on all regions of the country.

www.heritageireland.ie info on historical sites

If you plan to spend some extra time in **Dublin**, the following will give you some more ideas of things to see and do

www.visitdublin.com Dublin Tourism, Tourism Centre, Suffolk Street, Dublin 2

Calling within Ireland - 1850 230 330 Calling within the U.K. - 0800 039 7000

Calling from any other country - 00353 66 979 2083

www.dublinuncovered.net

www.indublin.ie

www.irishfolktours.com

Recommended Reading & Listening

Ireland has a rich literary and musical heritage, some of which you will experience first hand on our tours. Should you like to do a little advance research the following websites should help you...

www.kennys.ie is a long established Galway bookshop with an enormous online catalogue of books of Irish interest.

www.celticnote.com is the perfect place to carry out your acoustic research!