

# Cycling Safaris

## WILD WEST MAYO Group Tour 2010



The Mayo Tour is the quietest of our routes in terms of traffic and offers up a wild windswept landscape full of changing light. This area has a rich archaeological past – we visit the Ceide Fields – the oldest known field systems in the world. It is also the country of Grace O’Malley (Granuaile), a famous female pirate in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century whose ships attacked fleets all along the coastline and we visit one of her fortress houses. We spend our rest day on Achill Island with its wonderful mountains and white sandy beaches as well as its breathtaking cliff walks. Finally we stop at a wonderful early Christian monastic site situated in a most peaceful setting, before heading back to Westport and the less mystical real world!

The roads are all tarmaced and the route is designed to ensure that you spend most of the week on quiet backroads, away from the main tourist routes. The emphasis of our cycling holidays is to give you the freedom to fully enjoy Mayo and its beautiful landscape at your own pace whilst having the security of knowing there is a support van there if you might ever need it. During the day you can be an independent traveller, genuinely experiencing all the sights and sounds of hidden Ireland on routes most tourists never get to see, while in the evening over a delicious meal you can share your days experience with a group of like-minded people from all over the world.

Although the mileage on this tour might seem longer than on other routes the terrain is more forgiving as there are very few climbs.

The following details will help you in planning your holiday:

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## TOUR ITINERARY

### DAY 1                      SATURDAY                      WESTPORT

You meet up with the guide and the rest of the group at 6.30 pm in the Helm Bar in the harbour area of Westport (098 26398), which is about two miles from the train station. It would probably be best to get a taxi. **This is just the meeting point and may not necessarily be where you are actually staying that night.** There is an introductory talk from the guide followed by an evening meal.

If you are unexpectedly delayed please call the Helm Bar 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. After dinner you can check into your B&B before perhaps returning to a nearby pub for a drink and a music session.

### DAY 2                      SUNDAY                      WESTPORT TO FOXFORD                      36 miles / 58 kms

Leaving the town on the Castlebar Road, after a mile we turn onto the Western Way walking route. The route takes us along quiet backroads passing by lakes and bog land to our lunch stop. After lunch there is some nice lakeside cycling around Lough Conn and then onto Lough Cullin, which brings us to our Hotel in Foxford.

### DAY 3                      MONDAY                      FOXFORD TO BALLYCASTLE                      30 miles / 38 kms

We start the day by visiting the historic Woollen Mills in Foxford after which we head out on back roads to follow along the eastern shore of Lough Conn before stopping for lunch in a pub. In the afternoon we again follow quiet roads to Ballycastle.

### DAY 4                      TUESDAY                      BALLYCASTLE TO BELMULLET                      42 miles / 68 kms

Heading west on the coast road with wonderful views looking out over the Atlantic, we come to the Ceide Fields, site of an ancient 5000-year-old field system. It is the largest Stone Age site in Europe and there is an excellent interpretive centre here that outlines the history of the site. Continuing on from the centre there is a dramatic cycle across open bogland with more wonderful coastal views all the way to the town of Belmullet.

### DAY 5                      WEDNESDAY                      BELMULLET TO ACHILL                      45 miles / 72kms

Today we cycle around the Atlantic Coast through a wild barren landscape, past freshly cut fields of peat, to the village of Mulranney and from there cycle onto Achill Island and our night stop. There may be an option to cycle out on the isolated peninsula beyond Belmullet and take a fishing boat from Blacksod Point across the Bay to Doogort on Achill Island. From here it is a short cycle to the village of Keel where we spend the next two nights.

### DAY 6                      THURSDAY                      REST DAY IN ACHILL

There are several dramatic cycling routes around Achill, the most impressive being the Atlantic Drive, with its wonderful coastal views and beautiful landscape. You can also head to Keem bay for a swim on its white sandy beach. For those feeling energetic you could climb to the top of the nearby cliffs, some of the highest in Europe, where you are rewarded with the most breathtaking views of the week.

### DAY 7                      FRIDAY                      ACHILL TO WESTPORT                      37 miles / 60 kms

Leaving the Island via the bridge at Achill sound, we continue along the Clew Bay coast road and visit a 16<sup>th</sup> Century Tower House, one of the chain of forts built by Granuaile, a female pirate who controlled this whole region. We then visit a small but beautifully situated early Christian monastic site, before heading to Newport for lunch. In the afternoon we return to Westport for a final night on the town together.

## WHAT THE BROCHURE PRICE INCLUDES

- Seven nights twin sharing accommodation with full Irish breakfast.
- One evening meal (in Ballyvaughan)
- 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

If you wish to visit the Ceide Fields the entrance fee is approximately €4.

The fishing boat from Blacksod Point to Achill Island costs around €20.00. This may vary depending on numbers.

### Are there facilities to change money?

There are banks and cash machines in Westport, Foxford and Belmullet. Credit cards are widely accepted and traveller's cheques can be cashed in post offices and some hotels. Probably best to have the cash you need for the week organised at the beginning of the tour

## 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! Alternatively if you are travelling for a long time and do have a lot of luggage, maybe you could consider dividing your luggage into two bags, we could leave one in your first night's B&B to collect at the end of the week and the other bag to take with you on the tour.

## 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 day's cycle at your own pace. This is not a difficult route however we would recommend that you do try to do some cycling before the tour in order to make your week more enjoyable. Try to get out for a few hours cycling during the weekends coming up to your trip and if possible do it on varied terrain and some hill climbing. But don't forget...our guide is always close by 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.

### **Looking for extra accommodation at the beginning or end of the tour?**

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](http://www.visitdublin.com))..

Other accommodation websites for Dublin/Ireland

[www.discoverireland.ie](http://www.discoverireland.ie)  
[www.irelandhotels.com](http://www.irelandhotels.com)  
[www.hiddenireland.com](http://www.hiddenireland.com)

[www.dublinhotels.com](http://www.dublinhotels.com)  
[www.goireland.com](http://www.goireland.com)

## GROUP, GUIDE AND BACK UP SERVICE

The group size varies from 8 to 20 people. A local 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](http://www.discoverireland.com) – Irish Tourist Board (Failte Ireland) official website providing a wealth of information on all regions of the country.

[www.mayo-ireland.ie](http://www.mayo-ireland.ie) – a website packed full of information on history, news and things to do in Mayo

[www.heritageireland.ie](http://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](http://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](http://www.dublinuncovered.net)

[www.indublin.ie](http://www.indublin.ie)

[www.irishfolktours.com](http://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](http://www.kennys.ie) is a long established Galway bookshop with an enormous online catalogue of books of Irish interest.

[www.celticnote.com](http://www.celticnote.com) is the perfect place to carry out your acoustic research!