

Cycling Safaris

CONNEMARA, GALWAY & MAYO

SUPPORTED GUIDED TOUR 2017

Guide in support van | 265km | 8 days/7 nights



This tour explores the beautiful region of Connemara famous for its rugged granite landscape as well as its beautiful lakes and rivers. The route offers an incredible variety of scenery each day. In the morning you can be cycling along beautiful coastline while in the afternoon you could be on a quiet bog road with stunning views of the surrounding mountains.

The roads are all tarmac and the route is designed to ensure that you spend most of the week on quiet back roads, away from the main tourist routes. The emphasis of our cycling holidays is to give you the freedom to fully enjoy Connemara 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.

TOUR ITINERARY

DAY 1 SATURDAY

GALWAY CITY / OVERNIGHT CLONBUR

Meeting with the guide at 6pm in the centre of Galway city



We take a coach transfer to the village of Clonbur which lies on the peninsula between Lough Corrib and Lough Mask, on the Galway/Mayo border.

Once there, dinner and an introductory chat from the guide will be in the Hotel restaurant.



There is also a chance to enjoy a drink and some traditional Irish music.

DAY 2 SUNDAY

CLOMBUR TO WESTPORT

38 miles / 60 kms

We head north along the quiet back roads through rolling green fields full of grazing sheep, before descending down to Lough Mask and a wonderful cycle along the shores of the lake.

After lunch we have our biggest climb of the week over the Partry Mountains and then cycle along a quiet back road with stunning views of the surrounding landscape all the way to colourful village of Westport.



DAY 3 MONDAY

WESTPORT TO LEENANE

33 miles / 52 kms



We cycle between Croagh Patrick and the beautiful Clew Bay with its many small islands, to the village of Louisburgh where we stop for lunch.

In the afternoon we head south through one of the highlights of the week, the stunning Delphi Valley with its beautiful lakes overlooked by Ben Bulbin, the highest mountain in Connemara.



That night we stay in the small village of Leenane which looks out over Killary Harbour, Ireland's only fjord.

DAY 4 TUESDAY

LEENANE TO CLIFDEN

35 miles / 58kms

We cycle into the heart of Connemara overlooked by the Twelve Bens mountain range and visit Kylemore Abbey, a wedding gift from a wealthy Liverpool businessman to his wife in 1868.

We then cycle along quiet backroads past small fields with grazing cattle to the seaside village of Cleggan where we stop for lunch. In the afternoon we follow the scenic coast road to Clifden where you can watch cars travel across the beach to Omev Island only accessible when the tide is out! Clifden, the capital of Connemara, where we spend the next two nights is a pretty and bustling town of art galleries, cafes, pubs and restaurants established 200 years ago at the whim of John D'Arcy



DAY 5 WEDNESDAY

REST DAY IN CLIFDEN



The day can be spent in rest and relaxation or you can take part in a variety of activities including walking, golf or horse riding.

You can also spend the day just relaxing on one of the many beautiful white sandy beaches which line the indented coast line or visit the landing site of the first transatlantic flight by Alcock and Brown.

The town itself is a nice place to spend time visiting the museum, art galleries and book shops and cafes. In the evening there are a number of bars which have traditional music sessions.

DAY 6 THURSDAY

CLIFDEN TO ARAN ISLANDS

35 miles / 58 kms

We cycle out of Clifden along beautiful waterside roads crossing extensive wild bogs with freshly cut peat waiting to be harvested against a backdrop of the Twelve Bens Mountains.

Our afternoon cycle takes us through Gaelic speaking areas to the ferry in Rossaveel which will bring us to Inis Mor, the largest of the Aran Islands where we will spend the night.



DAY 7 FRIDAY

ARAN ISLANDS TO GALWAY

22 miles / 35kms



The day can then be spent touring the unique landscape of the island with its wealth of ancient stone forts and monastic sights.

In the late afternoon we return to the mainland and take a bus back to Galway city. We have a final dinner and night on the town together before going our separate ways the following morning.



2017 TOUR DATES

May 20
June 3, 24
July 8
August 5, 19
September 2

2017 TOUR PRICE

- €815.00 per person sharing May, June & September
- €860.00 per person sharing July & August
- €245.00 single occupancy (on request only)

WHAT THE BROCHURE PRICE INCLUDES

- Seven nights accommodation with full Irish breakfast
- One Evening Meal (in Leenane)
- 24 speed touring bike with bag carrier, mudguards, water bottle carrier and a small pannier bag.
- Route maps and details
- Luggage transfer each day
- Support van and tour guide
- Ferry ticket to the Aran Islands
- Coach transfer from Galway to Clonbur & and from Rosaveel to Galway

Meal expenses

All breakfasts are included in the tour price. Clients buy their own lunches and dinner throughout the trip. You should budget between €10 and €15 for lunch each day and an evening meal each night costing somewhere between €20 and €30. 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 optional cruise of Killary Harbour is approx €13.00.

The entrance to Kylemore Abbey is approx €7.00.

Are there facilities to change money?

There are banks in Galway, Westport and Clifden (open Monday - Friday: 10.00am - 4.00pm).

Credit cards are also widely accepted. Cashpoint machines are available in Galway, Westport and Clifden.

GROUP, GUIDE AND BACK UP SERVICE

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 include some hill climbing.

The group size varies from 10 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.

What happens if not enough people book on the group tour?

We require at least 8 bookings on the tour to organise a guide to accompany you. On rare occasions we may have to cancel the guide if there are not enough clients booked on, but you have a number of options in this case:

We can still organise the tour on a self guided basis. We still organise all your accommodation, bike rental, your route details, advise you on all the best places to eat and visit and we organise for your luggage to be transferred locally each day. We are also at the end of a phone line in case of any problems, but you head off without a back up guide.

Alternately on most occasions we can offer another guided tour in Ireland for you to join instead.

Or of course we will fully refund you any payments already made if neither solution above works for you.

We don't envisage this happening but always good to be prepared for every scenario!

BIKE

In 2017 we will be using the **GIANT CITY** bicycles for our tours.



To see the specification for this you can visit the website:

www.giant-bicycles.com/gb/escape-city (Gents model)

www.giant-bicycles.com/en-ie/bikes/model/alight.2.city/28581/99470/ (Ladies model)

Bikes come in different sizes and in gents and ladies style frames.

It is very important you give us your height on booking so that we can allocate the correct bike to you.

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 nights B&B to collect at the end of the week and the other bag to take with you on the tour.

ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation is allocated on a twin-sharing basis. **Please see below for the full list.**

We stay in a mixture of B&Bs (in Galway & Westport) and small hotels (in Clonbur, Leenane, Clifden & Aran Islands). 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.

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 there are a huge range of websites offering a reservation service. A good starting place is Dublin Tourism – their website (www.visitdublin.com); www.booking.com is also a good website if you need extra accommodation in Dublin.

Other accommodation websites for Dublin/Ireland

www.discoverireland.ie www.dublinhotels.com www.irelandhotels.com www.goireland.com www.hiddenireland.com

Accommodation list – subject to availability

Day 1: Clonbur Fairhillhouse Hotel fairhillhouse.com		Day 6: Inishmore Pier House pierhousearan.com	
Day 2: Westport Rosmo House rosmo-accommodation.com		Day 6: Inishmore Aran Islands Hotel aranislandshotel.com	
Day 2: Westport Waterside B&B watersidebb.com		Day 7: Galway Consilio B&B consiliobandb.com	
Day 3: Leenane Leenane Hotel (Dinner inclusive) leenanehotel.com		Day 7: Galway Rock Lodge rocklodgegalway.com	
Day 4 & 5: Clifden Foyle's Hotel foyleshotel.com		Day 7: Galway Dormers B&B bandbireland.com/accommodation/26163/the-dormers	

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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.

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.connemara.ie - a good source of information on the region we will be exploring

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!