

Cycling Safaris

CLARE & THE BURREN GROUP TOUR 2010



If you want to experience some of Ireland's musical heritage you could not have picked a better tour. Clare is the music centre of Ireland and on this tour you are sure to have your feet tapping to traditional tunes nearly every night of the week. The Burren region is also an amazing limestone moonscape, famous around the world for its wonderful variety of botany. The area is rich in ancient and early Christian historical sites and offers some beautiful coastal cycling overlooking Galway Bay. Finally Clare is home to the breathtaking Cliffs of Moher, one of the best-known images of Ireland.

The roads are all tarmaced and the route is designed to ensure that you spend most of the week on quiet backroads. Occasionally it will be necessary to ride on busier roads which is unavoidable as there may be no minor roads on certain stretches of the route. To experience the majestic scenery of this area the route does have some climbs, so it is worth getting a few weekends training on a bike in varied terrain before coming thus ensuring that you can fully enjoy the week.

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 days experience with a group of like-minded people from all over the world.

The following details will help you in planning your holiday:

- ❖ Tour Itinerary
- ❖ Tour price & expenses
- ❖ What to bring
- ❖ Bikes & level of fitness
- ❖ Accommodation
- ❖ Group, guide & back-up service
- ❖ General information

TOUR ITINERARY

DAY 1 SATURDAY ENNIS, CO. CLARE

You meet up with the guide at 6.30pm in the West County Hotel (065 6828421). Located on the N18 Limerick to Galway road, the West County Hotel in Ennis is on the left hand side as you enter Ennis from Limerick/Shannon. Watch out for sign posts.

You can check in anytime after 2pm. If you arrive earlier you can leave your bags in the left luggage room at the Hotel Reception and then go for a stroll around the town.

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

After an introductory talk, an evening meal is organised in the hotel.

DAY 2 SUNDAY ENNIS TO SPANISH POINT 30 miles / 48kms

Having being fitted out with your bicycle we head out towards West Clare, cycling along quiet country roads through rolling green fields to the coast, where we stay the night at Spanish Point named after those Spanish Ships from the Armada which sank here in 1588. We spend the night in a Hotel overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

DAY 3 MONDAY SPANISH POINT TO DOOLIN 29 miles / 46 kms

Cycling along quiet roads we eventually come to the popular holiday town of Lahinch where we stop for lunch. In the afternoon we visit the Cliffs of Moher rising a spectacular 660ft up from the Atlantic waves below. You can stroll along the cliff face and watch the birds gliding in the updraft. After visiting the cliffs we head to the village of Doolin. That night we have a pub meal and enjoy the wealth of traditional music for which the village is famous.

DAY 4 TUESDAY DOOLIN TO BALLYVAUGHAN 31 miles / 50 kms

In the morning we begin to see the first hints of the limestone landscape of the Burren and visit the monastic site at Kilfenora and its stone high crosses. Kilfenora is also home to the Burren Heritage Centre that gives you an excellent insight into the formation and history of the Burren. Later we stop off for lunch at the matchmaking town of Lisdoonvarna. The afternoon's cycle is a beautiful run where the road hugs the coastline with Galway Bay and the Aran Islands on your left and the limestone cliffs of the Burren on your right. We stop for two nights in a comfortable hotel in the seaside village of Ballyvaughan.

DAY 5 WEDNESDAY REST DAY IN BALLYVAUGHAN

The day can be spent doing a wide variety of activities. The guide can organise a wonderful four-hour walking tour of the Burren with a local man who is a very entertaining character and an encyclopaedia of knowledge on the area. There is also an optional short cycle to the impressive ruins of a Cistercian Abbey or you can visit the nearby Ailwee Caves. Alternatively the day could be spent relaxing in this attractive village.

DAY 6 THURSDAY BALLYVAUGHAN TO KINVARA 24 miles / 38 kms

The cycle heads straight into the heart of the Burren where we visit the localities most famous historical sight, the Poulmabrone Dolmen a small ancient burial site dating back to 2500BC. Veering off the beaten track we stop at the village of Carran for lunch in an old police barracks. In the afternoon we cycle through quiet backroads to visit the Burren Perfumery that makes a wide variety of perfumes using the local flora and has a wonderful slide show illustrating the beautiful and unique botany of this region. You then descend through a limestone lunar landscape to the pretty seaside village of Kinvarra where we spend the night.

DAY 7 FRIDAY KINVARRA TO ENNIS 31 miles / 49 kms

For the last day we head back into the Burren through limestone moonscape, passing Lough Buny and the impressive Mullaghmore before stopping for lunch in Corafin. In the afternoon we visit a 16th Century Tower House and an even older monastic sight. This is also the site of the famous battle of Dysert O'Dea where the Irish Chieftains defeated the Normans and kept them out of Clare for another 200 years. We then cycle back into Ennis for a final farewell night on the town together before heading our separate ways the following morning.

The recommended route involves a total distance of 145 miles / 232 kms. There are some hills on the route but you have all day to do the cycling and you are free to cycle at your own pace. With the exception of the roads in and out of Ennis, the traffic on the route should be quite light. You should however cycle carefully at all times, especially when going downhill or during any rain showers.

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

The guided walk of the Burren costs approx €15.

There is horse riding in Ballyvaughan which is approx €20.

Are there facilities to change money?

There are banks in Ennis and Milltown Malbay (beside Spanish Point) (open Monday – Friday: 10.00am - 4.00pm) and cashpoint machines in Lahinch and Kinvara. Credit cards are also widely accepted. Travellers 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! 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 accommodation 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 there are some hill climbs so 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)..

Other accommodation websites for Dublin/Ireland

www.discoverireland.ie
www.irelandhotels.com
www.hiddenireland.com

www.dublinhotels.com
www.goireland.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.enniswalkingtours.com - guided walking tours of Ennis that give a lively and entertaining way to appreciate this historic medieval town.

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!