

Cycling Safaris

WEST CORK & KERRY ~ 4/Overnight Self-Guided Tour 2010



This tour covers some of the most spectacular scenery that Ireland has to offer. Shortly after leaving Killarney you will find yourself cycling between the majestic lakes that have made this area so famous, to be shortly followed by a climb up to Molls Gap with its wonderful views of the Macgillycuddyreeks, Ireland's highest mountain range. The rest of the tour involves more of the same stunning scenery with a wonderful coastal cycle scenery along Kenmare Bay. You then spend a day exploring the relatively unknown Beara peninsula which we feel offers some of the best scenery you will ever see in Ireland. Towards the end of the tour you head inland and stay at a beautiful Lakeside retreat at the source of the River Lee. On the final day you cycle up over the wild and isolated hills of the Coolea region before returning to Killarney.

The roads are all tarmaced and the route is designed to ensure that you spend most of the days on quiet backroads, away from the main tourist routes. The emphasis of our cycling holidays is to give you the freedom to fully enjoy Cork and Kerry and its beautiful landscape at your own pace whilst knowing that your luggage will be waiting for you in your accommodation each night.

The following details will help you in planning your holiday.:

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TOUR ITINERARY

DAY 1 **KILLARNEY**

On arrival in Killarney you should make your way to your accommodation. If you get there early the rooms in the B&Bs will not usually be ready till midday so you can leave your luggage at the guesthouse and explore this bustling town.

You can then phone our bike mechanic and arrange a time to meet him to collect your bikes (these will already have been pre-booked for you). The bikes will be in his private home located near your guesthouse. We will send you on a copy of your accommodation and contact details closer to the tour start. Don't forget to bring all this with you as there will not be a copy in the guesthouse. Your route details and maps will be waiting for you in your guesthouse.

If you have time you could visit Ross Castle a wonderfully restored 16th Century Norman Tower House overlooking Lough Leane. You can even hire a boat from here and row out to a 6th Century monastic site located on one of the nearby islands . Ross Castle is about 1.5 miles from the town.

DAY 2 **KILLARNEY TO KENMARE** **23 miles / 37 kms**

The tour starts off by following a cycle track into the beautiful grounds of Muckross House. Located on the grounds is a Franciscan Abbey founded in the 15th Century. It is now in ruins but is beautifully situated with a large yew tree rising up through the cloisters. After a stroll around the celebrated Muckross gardens there follows a wonderful cycle along a quiet path between two of the Killarney lakes before you return to the main road. A steady climb up to Molls Gap is rewarded with a delicious lunch in a restaurant with beautiful views of the surrounding mountains. In the afternoon you sweep down to the picturesque seaside town of Kenmare.

DAY 3 **KENMARE TO CASTLETOWNBERE** **31 miles / 50 kms**

You follow a spectacular coast road hugging Kenmare Bay with its wonderful views of the MacGillikuddy Reeks mountains before stopping for lunch at a small pub overlooking the bay. In the afternoon you can visit Dereen Gardens with its amazing variety of flora. Leaving the Gardens you can follow a variety of optional routes which allow you to experience one of the highlights of the tour, the Beara Peninsula, with its twisted mountainscapes and breathtaking coastal scenery. That evening you stay in the town of Castletownbere .

DAY 4 **CASTLETOWNBERE TO GOUGANE BARRA** **41 miles / 65 kms**

In the morning you cycle along Bantry Bay where the French, shortly after their own revolution, unsuccessfully tried to land in Ireland in 1796. It is also one of the deepest natural harbours in Europe. After lunch in Glengarriff you cycle a bit further around Bantry Bay before heading inland to the Keimanagh Pass and the beautiful lakeside retreat of Gougane Barra where St Finbar the founder of Cork City established a small monastic site in the 6th Century. You stay in a family run hotel overlooking the glacial lake.

DAY 5 **GOUGANE BARRA TO KILLARNEY** **35 miles / 57 kms**

For the last day you cycle up into the Coolea region via remote, peaceful mountain roads where you can really feel you are away from it all. You can stop for a cup of tea at Ireland's highest pub (Creedons) before descending back down into Killarney.

You should be back in Killarney by mid afternoon when you can head home (or stay the night in Killarney, see below).

WHAT THE PRICE INCLUDES

- Four night's accommodation with full Irish breakfast*
- 24 speed touring bike with a pannier bag.
- Route maps and details.
- Luggage transfer each day.

* There is an option of staying the last night in Killarney for an additional charge.

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.

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+

Are there facilities to change money?

There are banks and cash machines in Killarney, Kenmare and Castletownbere. Banks are open on Monday - Friday: 10.00am - 4.00pm. 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** which will definitely make your days cycling more comfortable. Cycling gloves are also a good investment. You can also bring your own saddle which should be possible 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.

***We do not provide helmets on our self led tours. We strongly recommend to wear one, so please bring your own.**

*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 (and spanner) which you can attach to our bikes (the pedals on our bikes do not accommodate toe clips) .

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

There are a number of hills to climb on this tour so 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.

ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation is allocated on a twin sharing basis. We stay in a mixture of B&Bs and small hotels, 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 tour, but we will always endeavour to provide a high standard.

What happens if I am delayed on the first night?

Please contact the guesthouse to let them know if you are arriving late.

What if someone needs to contact me during the tour?

If you have a mobile phone which operates on the GSM 900 system, this will be compatible with the Irish system. We will send you a full list of where you are staying on the tour before departure

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.dublinhotels.com

www.goireland.com

www.irelandhotels.com

www.hiddenireland.com

BACK UP SERVICE

As this is a self led trip you do not have the back-up of a guide and support van. 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 your luggage will be waiting for you in your next accommodation.

If for any reason you are unable to cycle please contact our Dublin office (01 2600749) so we can liaise with the luggage transfers to organise the transfer of bike(s) and person(s). Please note that you will be charged for any additional runs made on your behalf.

Our bikes are serviced after each tour so they should be humming perfectly! If you experience small problems with the bike (i.e., a puncture) you will have a spare tube, pump and tyre lever. You can of course phone our office if you experience any major problems (01 2600749).

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!