

# Cycling Safaris

## ANTRIM COAST Supported Group Tour 2017



This tour offers you some of the most spectacular coastal scenery in the country, with cliffs and rolling green fields sweeping down towards the Irish Sea along a coastline dotted with ancient forts and castles. We also cycle inland up into the famous Glens of Antrim with some wonderful highland cycling on quiet back roads. Other highlights of this spectacular week include visits to the world famous Giants Causeway and Bushmills, the oldest licensed whiskey distillery in the world.

The roads are all tarmaced and the route is designed to ensure that you spend most of the week on quiet back roads. 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 quite a few climbs, so it is worth getting a few weekends training on a bike in varied terrain before coming. This will ensure that you can fully enjoy the week.

The Antrim Coastline has become increasingly famous in recent years as it is the setting for much of the popular TV series "Game of Thrones"!

### TOUR ITINERARY

#### DAY 1                      SATURDAY                      BELFAST

The cycling safari starts with a meeting of the group at 6.30pm our central accommodation (details of which are provided upon booking).

After a short introductory chat from the guide we will have a meal together giving you a chance to get to know your fellow cyclists.

#### DAY 2                      SUNDAY                      BELFAST TO CARNLOUGH                      40 miles / 64kms

Setting out on a Sustrans Cycle path we cycle out of Belfast along the coast to Carrickfergus and its famous 12<sup>th</sup> Century castle.

We then head inland to avoid the busy Sunday traffic and up into the mountains before descending to the first of the Antrim Glens with beautiful views of the ocean below. That night we stay in the quiet seaside village of Carnlough.



**DAY 3**

**MONDAY**

**CARNLOUGH TO CUSHENDALL**

**35 miles / 56kms**



In the morning we cycle up into the hills and see the Sperrin Mountain. It is here where legend has it that St Patrick spent his youth in captivity as a pig farmer before escaping back to England, only to return as a Bishop to convert Ireland to Christianity.

We then return to the coast for lunch in a seaside hotel. That afternoon we cycle along the beautiful Antrim coastline to Cushendall where we will spend the night.

**DAY 4**

**TUESDAY**

**CUSHENDALL TO BALLYCASTLE**

**35 miles/56kms**

In the morning we explore the pretty and less visited Glen of Glенаan and then return to the coast for lunch in Cushendun. In the afternoon comes one of the highlights of the week, a breathtaking cycle along the coast road to Ballycastle passing along green fields dotted with sheep, while you look out over beautiful views of Scotland and the Mull of Kintyre, just across the sea.



**DAY 5**

**WEDNESDAY**

**REST DAY IN BALLYCASTLE**

One attractive option on the rest day is to take the ferry to explore nearby Rathlin Island which has one of the largest bird colonies in the country as well as a small seal colony.

It is a wonderful place to spend a rest day giving you that sense of being away from it all that you can only experience on an island.



**DAY 6**

**THURSDAY**

**BALLYCASTLE / BUSHMILLS / BALLYCASTLE**

**35 miles/56ms**



We start with a cycle along beautiful coastline to view the hexagonal basalt rock formations at the Giants Causeway, Northern Ireland's most famous landmark. When you see this geographical wonder you will understand why it has been awarded World Heritage Site status. Our next stop on a day of spectacular sights is the Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge. This swinging bridge to Carrick-a-Rede island was originally erected by local fisherman over a 23m-deep and 20m-wide chasm to check their salmon nets. After taking the "rope-bridge challenge" we head on along the coast to Bushmills where we have lunch before heading back to Ballycastle.

**DAY 7      FRIDAY      BALLYCASTLE TO BELFAST      25 miles/40kms**

For our last days cycle we head South back into the Glens towards the ECOS centre. From here we take a transfer back to Belfast and a last night on the town together.



**DAY 8      SATURDAY BELFAST - HOME**

You are free to make your own way home after breakfast.

**2017 TOUR DATES**

July 1

**2017 TOUR PRICE**

£ 705.00 per person sharing  
£ 225.00 single supplement

**WHAT THE TOUR PRICE INCLUDES**

- Seven night's accommodation with full Irish breakfast.
- One evening meal
- 24 speed touring bike with mudguards, bag carrier and a pannier bag.
- Route maps and details
- Luggage transfer each day
- Guide in a support van
- Transport back to Belfast at tour end

**NB - Northern Ireland does not use the euro so be sure to have Sterling with you when you arrive.**

**Meal expenses**

All breakfasts are included in the tour price. Clients buy their own lunches and dinner throughout the trip. You should budget between £5 - £10 for lunch each day. The guide organises an evening meal each night costing somewhere between £15 - £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 .

**Extra expenses**

The boat trip to Rathlin Island is approx £13 return and £2 extra for a bike.  
The tour of Bushmills Distillery is approx £8.

**Are there facilities to change money?**

There are banks and cash machines in Belfast and Ballycastle. Banks are open on Monday – Friday: 10.00am - 4.00pm. Cash point machines are in Cushendall. Credit cards are also widely accepted. Traveller's cheques are accepted in banks and post offices.

## 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 see 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 & FITNESS

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

[www.giant-bicycles.com/en-ie/bikes/model/alight.2.city/28581/99470/](http://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.

## 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.

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](http://www.visitdublin.com)) or [www.booking.com](http://www.booking.com)

### Accommodation list – subject to availability

Day 1 & 7: Belfast  <b>Tara Lodge</b> <a href="http://taralodge.com">taralodge.com</a>	
Day 2: Carnlough (Dinner included)  <b>Londonderry Arms</b> <a href="http://glensofantrim.com">glensofantrim.com</a>	
Day 3: Cushendall  <b>Glendale B&amp;B</b> <a href="http://www.bnb-booking.com/bed-breakfast/cushendall/glendale.html">http://www.bnb-booking.com/bed-breakfast/cushendall/glendale.html</a>	
Day 3: Cushendall  <b>The Meadows B&amp;B</b> <a href="http://themeadowscushendall.com">themeadowscushendall.com</a>	
Day 4, 5 & 6: Ballycastle  <b>Fragrens B&amp;B</b> <a href="http://fragrens.co.uk">fragrens.co.uk</a>	

## 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.**

\*Finally if you wish to use **toe clips** please bring your own pedals with toe clips which can then be attached 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.

## 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.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com) – Northern Ireland Tourist Board's official website

[www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie) info on historical sites