

Cycling Safaris

CONNEMARA ~ BEST OF THE WEST

Guided Tour 2018

Guide in a support van | 202/235/260km | 8 days/7 nights



This tour continues to take in the best of our existing Connemara route but to add to this the fantastic Great Western Greenways Cycle. At 42km, this is by far, the longest dedicated cycling route in the country. The route connects the picture perfect town of Westport to the stunning Achill Island utilising the old railway line. The cycle provides great views of Clew bay and the surrounding mountains in a traffic free environment. Since it was opened this route has proved very popular with cyclists and walkers alike and won several awards.

As with our other Connemara tour we will start and finish in Galway, one of Ireland's most lively cities. The route will take in the Partry Mountains en route to a nights stop in the village of Leenane as well as the un-missable cycle through the Delphi Valley. Our rest day is in the beautiful town of Westport. At the end of the week we visit the wonderful Achill Island with its magnificent beaches and labyrinth of quiet roads. The tour finishes up in the "Museum of Country Life" in Castlebar.

This tour does not involve any major climbs and it is a good option for those looking to take it a bit easier.

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 CLONBUR TO LEENANE (32 kms)

We head north along quiet back roads through rolling green fields full of grazing sheep.

We cycle along beautiful backroads via Lough Nafuoey, en route to our overnight accommodation, the small village of Leenane looking out over Killary Harbour, Ireland's only fjord.

There is an option in the afternoon of cycling to the beautiful Kylemore Abbey or else relaxing in the spa in our hotel!



DAY 3 MONDAY LEENANE TO WESTPORT (52 kms)



In the morning we head north through one of the highlights of the tour, the stunning Delphi Valley with its beautiful lakes overlooked by Ben Bury the highest mountain in Connemara.

Our lunch stop is the charming village of Louisburgh before we continue on our journey between Croagh Patrick and the beautiful Clew Bay with its many small islands to the town of Westport where you are staying two nights

DAY 4 TUESDAY REST DAY IN WESTPORT

In 2012 Westport was voted by readers of the "Irish Times" newspaper as the best place to live in Ireland and it is easy to understand why. The town is beautifully located at the top of Clew Bay, it is one of the few towns in Ireland that was formally planned and it has a great beauty and charm about it. You can spend the day relaxing in the town, visiting Westport House www.westporthouse.ie, or there is golf and horse-riding available nearby. For something a bit different you could visit Clare Island (you would need to take a taxi for 14 miles to Roonagh Quay. In the summer, there are numerous ferry sailings from Roonagh to Clare Island during the day. The boat crossing takes about 20 minutes.

DAY 5 WEDNESDAY WESTPORT TO ACHILL ISLAND - Greenway Cycle (54kms)



Another highlight to the trip is today's cycle.

The day is spent on the "Greenway Cycle", a route that offers gentle gradients and some of the most idyllic scenery in the west of Ireland. The cycle forms part of the National Cycle Network and it is the longest dedicated cycling path in the Country!

The route brings you all the way to Achill Sound, the gateway to Achill Island (via a bridge) where we are spending the night.

DAY 6 THURSDAY ACHILL ISLAND ROUND TRIP

We spend our day exploring Achill Island where there are so many options for cycling.

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.

14km, 47km, 72kms (different options!)





The first 17km of our day we head back on the Greenway cycle (there is only one way realistically in and out, which is lucky it is so lovely!), before we make a detour to Lough Beltra in the heart of Mayo.

The final part of our tour will take us to the Museum of Country life of Castlebar where there is nice coffee shop and where you can visit the museum

(www.museum.ie/en/list/overview-tp.aspx). A coach will meet us here mid-afternoon and bring us back to Galway city for a final night on the trip

2018 TOUR DATES

June 16

August 11

2018 TOUR PRICE

- €805.00 per person sharing May, June & September
- €840.00 per person sharing July & August
- €255.00 single occupancy (on request only)

WHAT THE BROCHURE PRICE INCLUDES

- Seven night's accommodation with full Irish breakfast
- One evening meal
- 24 speed touring bike with bag carrier, mudguards, water bottle carrier and a small pannier bag.
- Route maps and details,
- 24 hour emergency helpline
- Luggage transfer each day
- Transfer from Galway to Cong at the tour start
- Transfer from "Museum of Country Life" to Galway at the tour end
- GPS tracks available (on request)

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.

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 in Galway and Westport (open Monday - Friday: 10.00am - 4.00pm). Credit cards are also widely accepted. Cashpoint machines are available in Galway and Westport. It is probably best though to have any cash you might need for the week organised before you leave Galway.

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 & FITNESS

In 2018 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.

ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation is allocated on a twin-sharing basis. We stay in a mixture of B&Bs and small hotels, where we 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 happens if I am delayed on the first night?

Please contact the guesthouse to let them know if you are arriving late. If you are seriously delayed and may not even make it in till the next day please also call your taxi transfer to let them know so that you can arrange a new time to meet up.









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 in Galway 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.

Accommodation list – subject to availability

Day 1: Clonbur Fairhillhouse Hotel fairhillhouse.com		Day 5 & 6: Achill Island Achill Island Hotel achillislandhotel.com	
Day 2: Leenane (Dinner included) Leenane Hotel leenanehotel.com		Day 7: Galway Consilio B&B consiliobandb.com	
Day 3 & 4: Westport Waterside B&B watersidebb.com		Day 7: Galway Rock Lodge rocklodgegalway.com	
Day 3 & 4: Westport Rosmo House rosmo-accommodation.com		Day 7: Galway Liskea House B&B bandbireland.com/accommodation/26549/liskea-house	

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 lightweight waterproofs.

***We do not provide helmets on our self led tours, please make sure you bring one with you.**

*Don't forget **sun cream, sunglasses, sun hat** as well as a bathing suit for that refreshing Atlantic Ocean.

*Our rental bikes don't have **lights** - no problem on the long summer evenings, but if you are travelling in May or September, please bring your own light or high-visibility vest.

*Finally if you wish to use **toe clips** please bring your own pedals with toe clips (and spanner) which can be attached to our bikes (the pedals on our bikes do not accommodate toe clips).

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 official website providing a wealth of information on all regions.

www.connemara.ie - a good source of information on the region you 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 the U.K. - 0800 039 7000

Calling from any other country - +353 66 979 2083

www.dublinuncovered.net

www.indublin.ie

www.irishfolktours.com