

Wild Connemara: A Family Cycling Adventure



6 days / 5 Nights Guided Tour
Castles and Country Lodges (Luxe Option) OR Charming Inns Option

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INTRODUCTION

This family adventure has been created with you and your family in mind. It consists of some of the most remarkable scenery and settings in the West of Ireland. Our introductory drive to Connemara has been described as one of the top ten drives in the world (*Conde Nast Traveller, 2008*) and our journey gets better from there! Connemara has captured the hearts and minds of travellers for centuries. Let it capture yours....

Most definitely one of our best selling biking routes, our Wild Connemara Adventure Trip is acclaimed for it's off the beaten track routes, spectacular cycling, multi sport combination, terrific array of accommodations and unique beauty. We have adapted this programme and combine it with all of the ingredients for a superb family vacation. Add in the exquisite selection of accommodations and caring guides you have an exceptional trip to suit any occasion!

We cycle through remote mountain passes, by majestic mountain lakes and through moors and bogs, by waterfalls and alongside rivers and the rugged Atlantic shore, over the cliffs around Killary Harbour – Ireland's only Fiord.

Come join us on this Connemara family adventure and let your imagination do the rest.....

Our trip was fabulous!. You really know how to organize a tour for the greatest scenery and wonderful accommodations.the little lanes we spent the majority of our time on were so relaxing and fun to ride on. They also got us into the wilderness and I often felt we were a hundred miles from anywhere!"

Dan Peters & Family, Superior, Colorado

'We still talk to one another often and with great pleasure about our trip. We have so many wonderful pictures of our trip. As wonderful as our week in Ireland was, it was hardly enough time to fully capture the depth and breadth of your beautiful country and we all hope to find ourselves back on your roads sometime in the future. ...Thanks again to you for all the effort and attention you gave us.'

Michael Riddell and family, Millburn, New Jersey

"We had such a wonderful time! It was one of our best family vacations. It was so nice to be together, and to be outside on bicycles. The kids would have been bored silly if they were on a tour bus the entire time. Being on a bicycle is so liberating, and just so much fun. And Patsy and Elizabeth were just the most amazing guides. Hopefully more families will do this, when they realize just how fantastic it is! "

Kathleen & Patrick Eaton Robb, Connecticut

Wild Connemara: A Family Cycling Adventure

DETAILED ITINERARY: 6 Day / 5 Night Journey

Trip Highlights:

- Learn about our pirates and Spanish ponies
- Pony rides across sandy beaches
- Surf school or kayaking
- Learn to fly fish and hear regaling tales of magic salmon

Connemara is one of Ireland's best kept secrets. Located in the peaceful and pristine West Coast, Connemara is a haven for activities and the great outdoors. Biking with the kids becomes a terrific adventure, especially as you realise you share the roads with local sheep instead of cars! With our intimate knowledge of small backroads, we prepare daily rides with you in mind. Optional activities include horse back riding, surfing, hill walking, fly fishing and a fjord cruise. Steeped in history, we regale tales of pirates and wild horses as you bike this wonderful coastline. Vehicle support is readily available for tired little legs. Come and see Ireland through your children's eyes!

DAY 1: Untamed Landscapes

Arrival and tour start point in Galway City. We transfer to the heart of Connemara, where your tour begins. Enroute we visit the carefully restored Aughanure Castle where we have a guided tour. Steeped in local history, the castle is located close to the banks of Lough Corrib and conjures strong medieval images of the feuding O'Flaherty clan and their adventures in trading, piracy. You will also learn of Grainuaile, Grace O'Malley, the pirate queen of Ireland's west. We celebrate your arrival with a meet and greet reception and introduction, bike fit out and gentle warm up ride along the shores of Cashel Bay. Evening dinner at an award winning local seafood restaurant where the seafood and produce are all sourced in the West of Ireland. Truly the 'catch of the day'.

Warm Up ride: 5 miles

DAY 2: Seascapes and Stunning Coastline

Early morning start to Roundstone village, the most picturesque fishing harbour in Connemara where traditional Galway Hooker, lovingly cared for over the years, can be seen on Bertraghboy Bay. We visit Malachy Kearns Musical Instrument workshop, the home of the traditional Bodhran. Departing Roundstone to Ballyconneely village via stunning beaches at Dog's Bay and Gurteen Bay, we follow the rugged coastline to Ballyconneely, taking time to visit the Connemara Smokehouse, perched on the water's edge. Here the Roberts family run Connemara's longest established smokehouse, are one of the few specialists in wild smoked salmon. We bike to the Alcock and Brown monument, dedicated to the first transatlantic flight in 1919 from New Foundland. We return home by way of the scenic bog road where sheep are our only distraction.

Daily Miles: custom children's miles, with longer routes from 22 - 30 miles.

DAY 3: Carpe Diem

Today is a day with splendid opportunities to explore the little antique stores and galleries of nearby Clifden town. There are optional activities today including Horse back riding along the shores of Omev Island from the village of Cleggan; Golfing at the Connemara Golf Club at Ballyconneely or Fly fishing at Ballynahinch Castle. We bike the Sky Road. 'C'est Magnifique', I heard one day as we absorbed the island vista before us. We make our way to Connemara National Park and Letterfrack village, arriving at the splendid neo-gothic, Kylemore Abbey, nestled between the cliffs of Doughruagh and Poulacappal Lough. Tonight we recap our day's adventure with regaling tales.

Daily Miles: custom children's miles, with the average miles to day covering 32 miles. Extensions available.

DAY 4: Sand, Sea and Sky

Today our route will take us through the Lough Inagh Valley, one of the finest valleys in Ireland. On this morning's bike ride you'll see a stunning vista of peatlands, lakes, and forests. Today we take a cruise on the Killary Fjord, Ireland's only fjord, on 'the Connemara Lady'. We then continue biking around Killary Fjord surrounded by Maamturk and Mweelrea mountains. Through the village of Leenane, the setting for the Oscar winning film "The Field" with Richard Harris. Ease into the evening as you watch the sunset and enjoy some local gourmet delights and shared tales of the day's adventure.

Daily miles: Daily Miles: custom children's miles. Day's average 35miles with extensions.

Day 5: Clew Bay Biking

Immerse yourself in your surrounds this morning. We spin onward through the mountain pass between Mweelrea, Connemara's highest mountain and the Sheefry Hills. Pedal by Doolough, spectacular in its dark beauty. This route is often referred to as the Famine Trail, dating back to tragic local events during the famine years of the 1840's. We reach Louisburgh, which translates to the delightful name of 'Meadow of the Buttercups' a quiet, traditional village and continue westward along Clew Bay. We arrive at Croagh Patrick, the west of Ireland's pilgrim mountain. Explore Murrisk Abbey, hike part of the holy mountain - or climb to the summit (2300 ft). Onward to the lively heritage town of Westport, a charming planned town with a unique blend of the old and new. Walk along the tree lined river at 'The Mall' and enjoy a late afternoon drink to unwind from your day. We enjoy an evening of traditional, local fare, followed by traditional Irish Music where the lass faint hearted can join in and sing or dance should you so desire!

Daily miles: Daily Miles: custom children's miles with optional extensions.

DAY 6: Castle Extension or Departure

Today, sadly, today we bid you farewell. This morning you depart from Westport to your next point. We can assist you with any planning, be it rail, flight or car hire. Please also see our 'trip arrival and departure' instructions' for transport options.

You also have the option of extending your bike trip by one further day. Transfer or bike from Westport to Cong, and stay overnight at the historical, five star, Ashford Castle Hotel. This is a magnificent opportunity to visit the historic village of Cong, most famed as the setting for the John Forde movie 'The Quiet Man' starring John Wayne and Ireland's famed Maureen O'Hara. Ashford Castle, perched on the edge of Lough Corrib, was built in 1228 and in later years home to Sir Benjamin lee Guinness, of the famed Guinness family. Avid gardeners, Sir Guinness and his son, Lord Ardilaun created the beautiful gardens and surrounding acreage of woodlands. Nearby, the 12th century ruins of the Augustinian Abbey stand as a legacy to this fine castle.

Activity options include: horseback riding, falconry, fishing, golf in lieu of biking. These activities as options, are costed as extras to your trip but can be booked on your behalf on advance. You may also elect to take a leisurely cruise on Lough Corrib from Ashford Castle. This option includes a visit to historical Inchgoill Island, where the remains of 5th Century St. Patrick's church lies nestled in the woods. Outside is a memorial stone with the inscription ' Lie Luguaidon macci Menueh' (the stone of Luguaidon, son of Menueh), one of the oldest inscribed stones in Ireland dated to 500 A.D.

Enjoy an evening dinner overlooking the castle grounds, often accompanied by music from the Drawing Room's grand piano.
Transfer next day to Galway Airport or Rail Station for departure to your next point.

Overnight at Ashford Castle Hotel

Daily miles: chose between a private castle transfer or bike ride. Daily Miles: custom children's miles. Extension through Tourmakeady and Clonbur: 42 miles.

Important Note: The hand chosen list of properties we use for our itineraries are much in demand and often book up well in advance. We urge you to make your reservations as early as possible in order to guarantee availability on your preferred dates.

Trip Includes:

5 nights Accommodations
Breakfasts on tour days
5 evening dinners
Experienced tour guides
Support vehicle and luggage transfer
Courtesy fruit & snacks
Guided tours of select locations
Daily briefing on tour routes,
Points of interest and
safety issues

24 Speed Trek hybrid bikes
Kids bikes and Tagalongs available
Water bottles,
Helmet
and front handlebar panniers
Detailed maps and tour directions
Cycle at your own pace
of 15-45 miles per day

Trip Highlights

Aughanure Castle
Roundstone Musical Centre
Scribble House
Patrick Pearse's Cottage
Connemara National Park
Kylemore Abbey and Gardens
Killary Fjord
Croagh Patrick
Cong Abbey (optional extension)
Ashford Castle Grounds (optional extension)

**** Contact CycleWest if you wish to include any of the above multi sport options in your trip.***

Option 1: (LUXE) ACCOMMODATIONS: Award winning Country Houses and Castle Hotels



Ballynahinch Castle Hotel, Ireland

As one of the premier Castle Hotels in Ireland, Ballynahinch Castle has a charm and aura, which can best be described as 'Casual Country Elegance', which few forget and most return for. Savour the rich ambience that makes Ballynahinch Castle the jewel in the crown of Connemara (two night stay)



Lough Inagh Lodge, Recess, Connemara

Lough Inagh lodge was once part of the magnificent Ballynahinch Estate. Today it is a remarkable location situated in what is referred to as one of the most beautiful valleys of Connemara. Enjoy the ambience and relax in the wonderful surrounds.



Delphi Lodge, Leenane

Located in a valley of unparalleled beauty, the 1000-acre Delphi lodge is one of Ireland's well known fishing and country lodges. Built in the 1830's, it is surrounded by the tallest mountains in Connemara and overlooks Mweelrea – the highest mountain in Connemara.



Ashford Castle, Cong

What better way to end your trip than this historical setting and wonderful array of activities? Enjoy the magnificent surrounds and explore vast surrounds of the estate. Something here for everyone.

Option 2: Charming Inns, Private Hotels and Guesthouses

Our Charming Inns Bike Tour Options are renowned for their unique and quality guesthouses and small private hotels.



The Quay House, Connemara

The Quay House is Clifden's oldest building, dating from the 1820's. Originally the Harbour Master's house but later became a Franciscan monastery and is now run as a town house by the Foyle family, whose forebear's have been entertaining guests in Connemara for nearly a century.



Ballynahinch Castle, Connemara (optional upgrade at extra cost) One of the most renowned castle hotels in Ireland. Ballynahinch Castle hotel has a charm and an elegance which can best be described as 'Country Elegance' which few forget and most return to. (2 nights). **Euro 300.00 per person sharing for a two night stay**



Renvyle House Hotel, Renvyle, Connemara

Renvyle House is an historic country house hotel, situated in the wild splendor of Connemara on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. The hotel is located on 200 acres which include a private lake, a 9-hole golf course, a beach, woodlands, gardens and numerous activities on site



Portfinn Lodge, Leenane, Connemara

Set amidst the beautiful scenery of Killary Fjord, Ireland's only fjord; Portfinn Lodge offers warmth and personal charm. The lodge & restaurant is renowned for its local seafood and gourmet fare. Enjoy the guesthouse and its hospitality.



Atlantic Coast Hotel, Westport

The Atlantic Coast Hotel is one of the best known Westport Hotels, carefully restored from an 18th Century mill. The hotel embodies the best that Irish traditional hospitality has to offer. Located in the relaxed surrounds of Clew Bay and Westport Harbour.

Optional Adventure Activities

Kayaking

Kayaking is a fantastic way to explore the water around us. We use individual watercrafts, propelled with a double paddle, with the option of open top or closed cockpit design. Our Kayaking takes place on the shores of Killary harbour, Irelands only fjord.



Surfing

Nothing quite beats the thrill of catching your first wave and shooting along back towards the beach. After a soft landing, it's paddle out again for the next great wave. It won't be long before you're hooked for life.



Spa and Wellness

A place where time stands still... we want you to relax, unwind, and take time to yourself. As all our treatments include complementary access to our Thermal Suite and Relaxation Room, please take the time to reflect and enjoy these areas while taking in our inspirational views.



Horse Back Riding

Horse riding options available in Roundstone, Clifden and Westport during the trip. Half day and full day alternatives – beach riding tide dependant. Omey Island adventure is my favorite route by horse back in this region.



Fly fishing

Enjoy the very finest of fly fishing that Ballynahinch Castle Hotel Estate or Delphi Lodge has to offer. Superb sorrounds and stunning vistas.



Wild Connemara Family Adventure

6 days / 5 nights

GUIDED TOUR

TRIP NOTES

2012 Family Tour Dates:

****Please contact us about dates that would suit your needs******

LUXE Option: Castle Hotels & Country Lodges

Castle Hotels and Country Lodges

Euro 1995.00 pps

6 Days & 5 Nights

Ashford Castle Extension

1 night plus dinner

Euro: 400.00 pps

**price subject to availability*

Charming Inns Option

Charming Inns Option

Euro 1450.00 pps

6 Days & 5 Nights

Ballynahinch Castle Upgrade

2 nights plus dinner

Euro: 300.00 pps

**price subject to availability*

TRIP NOTES:

2012 DATES:

June 07-12

July 05-10

Aug 02- 07

Aug 18 -23

Aug 30- Sept 04

Sept 13 – 18

OUR GREEN FOOTPRINT

We have arrived at an incredible moment in the history of travel. This is a time for us to show stewardship and leadership by embracing a new, greener set of principles, and by extension, the growing number of customers who now follow us. We know that, increasingly, international travellers are looking for unique, authentic experiences that are sustainable. Consumers today care about the environment, local communities and locally-produced food when they travel.

We have been integrating sustainable practices into our business operation as well as into our trips. By incorporating change into the areas of heating, lighting, water usage, printing and paper usage we have incorporated a green strategy into our business practise.

When you travel with CycleWest Ireland you will be supporting local Irish communities, local food producers and artisans, local business and by doing so, you creating your very own rewarding experience! At CycleWest Ireland, we celebrate the authenticity, the diversity and quality of Irish country homes and hotels. Each location has been selected for its personal and charming qualities. Typically family owned and run, we offer a superior selection of Bed and Breakfast guesthouses, country houses and hotels have been tried and tested on your behalf!

A wonderful breakfast made of home grown, organic or locally sourced produce is provided at the beginning of each day's cycling. At the end of each day, we have selected a variety of restaurants, many award winning, that are known for the finest Irish ingredients: local seafood, freshwater fish, vegetables and farmhouse cheeses all featured, often from their own gardens, farms and rivers.

CycleWest offers cycling tours in Ireland that combine authenticity and ambiance by emphasizing small groups, a relaxed cycling pace and charming accommodation. In this way, we hope to deliver a unique biking experience amidst the legendary countryside of Western Ireland. By travelling by bike we introduce a greater immersion into local communities and families on our trips. You get to meet and engage with local villagers and learn more about local Irish culture. Our guided tours are designed for individuals from all walks of life and of varied interests and abilities. We usually limit the number of participants to a small group: 8 – 10 persons in each group. This way we can offer a uniquely personalized experience to each of our guests. We provide vehicle support and luggage transport. By travelling as a small group we can truly have a positive interaction and social exchange with the people we meet and visit.

We give you the opportunity to learn some of the Gaelic language. By learning a few phrases and greetings in the Gaeltacht (Irish Speaking areas) you visit shows that you have an interest in the Irish history and culture.

Many places have special environmental and historical significance. We like to give you the opportunity to learn about places you visit and their impact upon our lovely country, areas of natural focus and our heritage here in Ireland.

CycleWest Ireland is a member of the Ecotourism Ireland Network and we are currently preparing for Eco Tourism Certification. Ecotourism Ireland is among the first labels in Europe to be formally recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

Travel Notes

- **Deposit**
€250 per person. Final payment due 60 days prior to your tour (Money Order, Euro Bank Draft, Credit Card - Visa, MasterCard)
- **Cancellation Policy**
If you cancel:
61 days or more, prior to your tour we will return your tour payment, less your tour deposit. 60 days or less from the date of the tour you must pay the full tour price.

We strongly recommend you purchase Trip Cancellation Insurance as soon as possible. See www.insuremytrip.com for trip insurance or visit your local travel agent. **Please see our Terms and Conditions attached.**

Terrain: Intermediate

- Average Daily Mileage: 25 Miles (40 km)
- Average Daily Mileage with Optional Alternatives: 30 Miles (49 km)

Please limit your luggage to 15kg per bag - Mark your luggage clearly with your name, address and phone number.

Arrival to Ireland - Dublin Airport is the closest and most convenient International airport to our tour starting points. Dublin Airport is often a less costly alternative for flights into Ireland. From Dublin we recommend a coach transfer directly from Dublin airport to Galway City. Coach and rail services are readily available and frequent to Galway City. See the below links.

Start Point: Galway City

Departure Point: Westport

Departure from Ireland - Departure from Westport to Dublin is available by coach and also by rail. Departure from Westport to Shannon is available by coach only. CycleWest Ireland can offer assistance with private transport arrangements to and from the airport as well as car hire for those of you who wish to avail of this service. A Dublin Airport to Galway City flight is available.

Coach Service: www.citylink.ie
 www.buseireann.ie
 www.gobus.ie

Rail Service: www.irishrail.ie