

IRELAND – THE WEST - GALWAY & COUNTY MAYO

Centre-based small group guided walking & sightseeing holidays



Duration: 8-days / 7-nights
2009 Departures: May 9th & 23rd, Jun 20th, Jul 4th & 18th, August 8th & 22nd, September 5th & 12th
Cost: AU\$1980 per person twin share. Single room supplement AU\$520.
Grade: Moderate walks of 10-15km per day with gradual ascents of up to 275m including the pilgrimage mountain **Croagh Patrick** at 490m.

Based for the week at the **Clew Bay Hotel** in the picturesque village of Westport, County Mayo this program offers guided walks at a relaxed pace of up to 12km daily, ideal for those who like their walking without too much effort. You will be taken a different direction each day to ramble and explore quiet country lanes, bog roads and wild Atlantic coastal paths.

Westport nestles under the shadow of Croagh Patrick, overlooking Clew Bay and its enchanting islands. There are some wonderful craft & pottery shops, bookshops, restaurants, pubs and art galleries as well as the beautiful tree lined boulevard know as The Mall. The town weaves its spell around everyone it meets.

Tour Highlights:

- Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holy mountain and a place of pilgrimage for 5000 years
- Clare Island - home to legendary pirate queen Grainne Uaile
- Tour the 12th century Cistercian Abbey on Clare Island with its remarkable wall paintings.
- Kylemore Abbey, Neo-gothic home of Mitchell Henry now a boarding school run by Benedictine nuns
- Killary Harbour a fine example of a drowned glaciated valley and a superb coastal walk.

Suggested Itinerary:

Day 1 Arrival

Optional Pick up at Westport train station. Dinner and Briefing with guide at @ 5.00pm.

Day 2 Kylemore Abbey

We begin our day with a visit to Kylemore Abbey (19th C), the Neo Gothic former home of Mitchell Henry & now a girl's boarding school. A 15-minute drive takes you us the head of Ireland's only fiord – Killary Harbour for the first hike of the week. You will walk on an old famine road that was built by the starving Irish peasants during the great famine 1845 – 1849. On the route you will clearly see the ruins of famine villages and lazy beds, the name given to the potato ridges where the starving Irish peasant tried to provide food for his family.

No ascent, good track but wet and boggy in places.

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Day 3 Croagh Patrick

Today we visit Ireland's national famine monument and walk the pilgrim path to the 1st station on Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holy mountain and a place of pilgrimage for 5000 years. Croagh Patrick is Ireland's holy mountain where Patrick, the patron saint, spent 40 days and nights praying and fasting in 441AD.

Uphill climb on a loose stoned, pilgrim track, small section of bog and country lanes.

Day 4 Walk on Clare Island

A short sailing to Clare Island, which is synonymous with Grace O'Malley, the formidable ruler of the Clew Bay district during the second half of the 16th century. The walk takes us to the northernmost end of the island before returning to the quayside for our return ferry (please note that the crossing to the island is subject to wind and weather conditions and may, in some cases be taken earlier in the week at the discretion of the guide.)

Walking on good level surface on backcountry roads - some uphill.

Day 5 Free Day

Today you have the choice of just relaxing and discovering the lovely town of Westport. There are some wonderful craft shops, pottery, art galleries and bookshops. Other options for today are to play golf in Westport, go deep-sea fishing or cycling or simply relax with a good book.

Day 6 Killary Harbour Coastal Walk

We journey south once more to Connemara. Our hike today is through a pine forest with excellent views of the quartzite 12 Bens mountain range. The final 3 miles are on an elevated section with great views down Killary fiord. The walk ends in the village of Leenane - famous as the location for the film The Field which starred the late Richard Harris and Tom Berenger as "The Yank" Leenane has a very small population but don't worry it also has two pubs for you to slake your thirst in.

Walking on a good track.

Day 7 Clew Bay

For our last walk of the week we head to the North side of Clew Bay and walk the foothills of the Nephin mountain range, which is a huge wilderness area. You will see peat or turf cutting as we go along. By mid afternoon, around 3 pm approx we will return to Westport in time for you to catch up on some last minute shopping.

Walking on a good quality bog road.

Day 8 Departure Day

Tour ends after breakfast

Getting there: Transfers to and from Westport railway station are included in the price

By rail: 3 trains daily from Dublin Heuston Train Station to Westport - for further information on times & fares see – <http://www.irishrail.ie>

Private taxi transfer (at your own expense)		
Knock airport to Westport	€90 single	€180 return
Shannon airport to Westport	€200 single	€400 single

Outdoor Travel offer other small group guided walking or cycling holidays in Ireland – including Galway, County Mayo, Dingle and the Wicklow Way and boating holidays on the River Shannon. We also offer holidays in France, Italy, England, Scotland & most other areas of Europe – see our website or ask for details

Contact Outdoor Travel direct for more details and reservations

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