

Daily Programme

Day 1

Arrive in Oughterard (20km from Galway, there are regular buses from Shannon Airport or trains from Dublin to Galway), easily reached by bus or taxi from Galway. Stay the night in guesthouse/B&B. If bicycle rental has been arranged we will meet you in the evening or first thing the following morning (depending on arrival time) to adjust the bicycle for you and talk you through the week ahead.

For the next two days there are two options, depending on if you wish to go to the island or not (island visit not possible during month of April - mid May and after mid Sept due to the ferry service being suspended)

OPTION A:

Day 2: Oughterard – Carna (42km (climb 160m) or 57km (480m))

For the longer option you cycle on a very quiet back road onto a plateau of bogs, moorland, lakes and forests. There are stunning views back over lake Corrib and then onto the Atlantic. From there you turn west into South Connemara and along the beautiful coast line via the small village of Kilkieran to the village of Carna. This area is still Irish (Gaelic) speaking and has some wonderful sandy beaches to dip your toes into the Atlantic waters.

Day 3: Carna - Clifden (ca 45km (165m) longer option 59km (257m))

You continue north along the beautiful coast to Cashel from where you turn west and there are great views towards the Twelve Bens (the 12 mountains at the centre of the Connemara National Park). Turning west you ride across the peats bogs (where you can watch peat digging in progress) to Cashel and across another Bog Road to Clifden. This colourful small town is often labelled the metropole of Connemara. Here you will stay for two nights, and you may enjoy traditional Irish music in its pubs.

OPTION B

Day 2: Oughterard – Rosaveal – Aran Islands (25km climb 288m plus extra on the island)

Cycle to the ferry port of Rossaveal to catch the ferry (ticket not included) to the island of Inishmore, the biggest of the Aran Islands. The route brings you on a very quiet back road onto a plateau of bogs, moorland, lakes and forests. There are stunning views back over lake Corrib and then onto the Atlantic. There are restrictions on carrying bicycles on the boats, resulting in it there being a small risk that you may not be able to take it with you, in which case you can lock them securely in the office building and then hire bikes again once on the island. The ferry crossing takes about 45min and the rest of the day is spent exploring the island by bicycle and on foot. Highlights include the cliff top fort of Dun Angeus, the Seven Churches and the coast road to the west of the port village of Kilonan. The island is famous for the knitwear that bears the Aran name.

Day 3: back to Rossaveal by ferry - Clifden (ca 58km (205m) longer option available)

After a morning spent exploring the island further and perhaps visit the fantastically located Black Fort (a 3,000 year old promontory fort), you take the ferry back to Rossaveal at noon. You will be heading north into Connemara proper. There are great views towards the Twelve Bens (the 12 mountains at the centre of the Connemara National Park). Turning west you ride across the peats bogs (where you can watch peat digging in progress) to Cashel and across another Bog Road to Clifden. This colourful small town is often labelled the metropole of Connemara. Here you will stay for two nights, and you may enjoy traditional Irish music in its pubs.

Day 4: Clifden loop rides (ca 40km climb 152m, 58km (320m), 90km)

There are 3 options to choose from, the core describing a figure of eight loop based on Clifden. On the way you can visit the village of Ballyconneely where Alcock and Brown crash landed their biplane after completing the first transatlantic flight in 1919. There are some very beautiful beaches here. In Roundstone you can see traditional musical instruments being made by hand. There is a wonderful ride out along the Sky Road to enjoy some sublime coastal scenery, and for the enthusiastic rider you continue along more coastal scenery to Claddaghduff and Aughrusbeg.

Day 5: Clifden – Leenane (65km – shortest 36km (247m) or 75km – climb 486m)

Leave Clifden behind to cycle through the beautiful Lough Inagh Valley to Kylemore, where you may like to visit Kylemore Abbey. From here there are choices to cycle along the coast to Lettergesh or to go a more direct route to Leenane. This small village is located on Killary Harbour, Ireland's only fjord. It was the location for the film "The Field".

Day 6: Leenane – Westport (ca 62km climb 162m for shortest to 682m for longest option)

A beautiful and gentle day in the hills of Connemara and Mayo on very quiet roads, as you cycle along the lakes of Lough Mask and Lough Nafoeey. Westport where you stay for 2 nights is a colourful market town in County Mayo. Here it is not difficult to find pubs with traditional Irish music.

Day 7: Westport Loop day (54km, 68km - climb: 487m – can be extended)

This is a beautiful loop ride around Croagh Patrick (Ireland's holy mountain) visiting the village of Louisburgh and heading back to Westport along Clew Bay. Along the way visit the National Famine Memorial, Murrisk Friary and the Croagh Patrick visitor centre. Or hike up this mountain on a pilgrims path.

Day 8: Departure

Breakfast, followed by farewell and departure for your onward journey.