

Connemara

A self-guided walking holiday

TOURS AVAILABLE	DURATION	DISTANCE	GRADE
—	—	—	—

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About This Walking Area

The Twelve Bens, Killary Fjord, and the strongest Gaeltacht in Ireland — Connemara is one of Europe's last truly wild landscapes.

Connemara's landscape is the result of some of the oldest geology in Europe — Precambrian quartzite and granite pushed to the surface and then scoured by Atlantic weather for ten thousand years. The Twelve Bens are the most dramatic expression of this: twelve quartzite peaks rising sharply from the surrounding bog, their flanks streaked with scree and pale in certain lights, dark as iron in others. Walking beside them through the Inagh Valley is one of the great experiences of Irish walking — the mountains are close enough to feel massive, the valley floor wide enough to see the full sweep of them.

The blanket bog is the other defining feature of Connemara. It covers vast areas of the interior — not empty land but extraordinarily rich in plant life, colour, and hidden water. Walking the old Galway–Clifden railway line through the bog on the Recess–Clifden stage is a specific kind of pleasure: a perfectly graded track through an open landscape, with the Atlantic glinting in the distance and nothing much between you and the horizon except heather and sky.

To the north, Killary Harbour cuts fifteen kilometres inland from the sea — Ireland's only true glacial fjord. The Green Road along its southern shore follows an old drove road at water level, with the Mweelrea Mountains rising steep on the far bank and mussel rafts floating in the still water below. It is one of the most…

BEST MONTHS

May | June | July | August | September

Why Walk Here

Connemara is the largest and strongest Gaeltacht in Ireland — the Irish-speaking region that stretches from Oughterard through to the coast. Walking here, you will see Irish on road signs, hear it spoken in shops and pubs, and begin to understand that this is not a heritage performance but a living language in daily use. It gives the area a character distinct from anywhere else in Ireland.

Kylemore Abbey is one of Connemara's most photographed landmarks — a Victorian neo-Gothic castle built on the shores of Kylemore Lough by a Manchester merchant as a gift to his wife. It is now a Benedictine monastery, and the restored Victorian walled garden on the lakeshore is one of the best-maintained kitchen gardens in Ireland. Walking the 5km path from the National Park to the Abbey gives you the building in landscape rather than car park — the right way to arrive.

The Connemara pony is one of Ireland's native breeds and survives here in working numbers. The musical tradition is strong throughout — Clifden Arts Festival in September fills the town, and the pubs in Clifden, Leenaun, and Letterfrack carry traditional sessions year-round.

Food in Connemara has a specific identity: Killary mussels farmed in the fjord are served across the region; Connemara lamb from mountain-grazed flocks is on every good menu; and the seafood at O'Dowd's in Roundstone — chowder, crab, and whatever came…

Who Is It For?

The Connemara walking holiday suits walkers who want genuine wilderness without extreme technical difficulty. If you've walked a multi-day route before — the Kerry Way, the Wicklow Way, or similar — and want something equally beautiful but less frequented, Connemara is the right choice.

The 6, 7, and 8-day options add Diamond Hill, Kylemore Abbey, the Killary Fjord, and the Sky Road, giving each additional day a completely different character. The 8-day is one of the most varied itineraries WHI offers anywhere — mountains, bog, coast, fjord, and village within a single week.

Solo walkers find Connemara particularly rewarding — the landscape has a quality of solitude that encourages it. Couples appreciate the accommodation range, especially the Lough Inagh Lodge evening. Small groups work well with the longer tours. This is not the right holiday for those seeking high-altitude ridge routes — Connemara is about immersion in a landscape, not conquest of it.

Terrain & Difficulty

Our Connemara walking holidays are graded Moderate. The core route follows the Western Way and old railway line on well-established paths and tracks. There are no technical sections, scrambles, or exposed ridgelines on the standard itinerary. The main challenge is duration — 14 to 20 km per day over open terrain — and the occasional boggy section underfoot after wet weather.

The longest day is Maam to Recess via the Inagh Valley at 20 km with gentle but sustained ascent. The shortest is the Recess to Clifden stage along the old railway line at 14 km. The Diamond Hill day involves a steep climb to 442m but follows clear, well-maintained paths throughout. The Killary Fjord Green Road is essentially flat, following the fjord shore at sea level for 18 km.

Walkers should be comfortable covering 14–20 km daily on mixed terrain for consecutive days. Good waterproof boots are essential — Connemara's bog drains slowly and path surfaces vary considerably with weather.

Practical Information

Best Time to Visit

Connemara is walkable from May through September. May and June are ideal: the bog comes alive with wildflowers, the days are long, and the trails are quiet. The Atlantic light in June — soft on quartzite, lasting until past nine in the evening — is extraordinary.

July and August are busiest at Kylemore and the National Park, but the walking routes themselves remain uncrowded regardless of season. Weather is warmest and mountain days most comfortable.

September is a strong month — heather in full purple bloom, golden evening light, and Clifden Arts Festival in the third week adding a lively dimension to the final nights of your walk.

April and October are possible for experienced walkers who don't mind variable conditions. Winter is not recommended for the open bog and valley stages.

Time your visit with a festival. Many trails host walking festivals throughout the season — see our complete 2026 walking festivals calendar to plan around one.

Accommodation

Accommodation on the Connemara route ranges from remote valley B&Bs to one of the finest small lodges in the west of Ireland. The contrast is part of what makes the route interesting.

Oughterard, your arrival town on Lough Corrib, has good lakeside B&Bs — small, relaxed, and well-placed for a gentle first evening. The Maam area accommodation is genuinely remote — a valley B&B with Keane's pub at Maam Cross within reach. This is Connemara without the tourist infrastructure, and all the better for it.

Lough Inagh Lodge in the Recess area is in a different category: a Victorian fishing lodge on the shores of Lough Inagh, surrounded by the Twelve Bens, with a serious kitchen and an atmosphere of quiet remoteness that is hard to find anywhere else. It is one of the best places to stay on any…

Practical Information

Getting here: All tours begin in Oughterard, approximately 45 minutes from Galway city. We transfer you from Galway at the start and return you at the end. Galway is connected by train and bus from Dublin (approximately 2.5 hours) and has its own regional airport.

Language: Connemara is a Gaeltacht region — Irish is widely spoken, particularly west of Maam Cross. English is understood everywhere.

Mobile signal: Coverage is patchy in the Inagh Valley and along the Killary shore. Download route maps offline before each stage. Our route notes include GPS tracks for every day.

Services: Clifden has ATMs, pharmacy, and shops. Oughterard has basic supplies. Maam and Letterfrack are small — stock up on water and snacks at accommodation before longer stages.

Transfers: The Diamond Hill, Kylemore, Killary, and Sky Road days involve vehicle transfers to trailheads. All are arranged and included in your tour price. Luggage transfers run daily between accommodations.

Gallery









Connemara, County Galway



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Ready to Book?

See live availability, full daily itineraries and current rates on our website. Each holiday includes accommodation, daily breakfast, luggage transfers and route notes.

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