

# Biking Ireland: Western Shores



## **2011 Departures:**

*June 11-17*

*July 24-30*

*Sept 3-9*

## **Tour Price:**

*\$3,195 per person (double occupancy)*

*\$600 single supplement option*

Steeped in history and loaded with charm, County Clare and Connemara are the ideal setting for our easiest Ireland bike tour. You'll pedal a mix of country lanes and coastal roads, where rush hour traffic might consist of a local farmer and his herd of cows. Tap your toes and raise a pint in Doolin's pubs, longtime favorite gathering places for Irish musicians. Take in the view from atop the Cliffs of Moher and marvel at mysterious Poul nabrone Dolmen. Ferry back in time to ancient Inishmore, largest of the Aran Islands. With its panoramic views of haystack-dotted fields and the peaks of the Twelve Bens, our bike ride along the Sky Road may be your all-time favorite. Our cycling tour finishes in five-star style with a night at Ashford Castle, world-renowned as one of the finest hotels in Europe.



800.488.8332 • 978.463.6955 • [www.easyridertours.com](http://www.easyridertours.com) • [info@easyridertours.com](mailto:info@easyridertours.com)

**Highlights:**

- *Scenic rural cycling through County Clare and Connemara*
- *Visit the Cliffs of Moher, Poul nabrone Dolmen, and Dun Aengus ring fort*
- *Two nights in Doolin, famous for its pubs and music seisiuns*
- *Evening of storytelling with a well-known Irish shenachie*
- *Guided hike through the Burren with a local naturalist*
- *Overnight stay on Inishmore in the Aran Islands*
- *Stay at Ashford Castle, one of Europe's premier hotels*
- *Shop for all things Irish, from bodhráns to hand-knit sweaters*

## Hitting the Road: Itinerary

**Day 1:** Our guides will meet you in Shannon at 10:00 a.m. for a complimentary transfer to Doolin, a lively fishing village on the Atlantic coast. Our first bike ride takes in one of Ireland's signature landmarks: the Cliffs of Moher. The ocean view from the clifftops (over 700' high), is one of the most spectacular in Ireland. Walk a scenic trail along the cliffs, watching for puffins, razorbacks, and gannets. From the viewing platform on the roof of O'Brien's Tower, you can see all the way to the Aran Islands and the mountain peaks of the Twelve Bens in Connemara.



Back on the bikes, a longer ride option leads to 6000-year-old Poul nabrone Dolmen and medieval high crosses at Kilfenora Cathedral before returning to Doolin. Figures and symbols were carved into the stone crosses not only for decoration, but also as storytelling "visual aids" for those who could not read. After our welcome dinner, we'll walk into town for pints and traditional music at the pubs. Musicians from around the globe gather at McGann's and O'Connors for nightly seisiúns, Irish music jams.

**Accommodations:** Atlantic View Guesthouse in Doolin, County Clare is a comfortable B&B in the village, just a short walk away from pubs and shops. The rooms have lovely views of Galway Bay and the Aran Islands.

**The Biking/Terrain:** 11 or 26 mile options. Moderately rolling, with short climbs up to one-half mile.

**Day 2:** Today's ride hugs the Atlantic coastline where the stony hills of the Burren National Park meet the sea. Easy cycling leads past bucolic scenes of grazing cattle, trim cottages and gardens, crashing ocean waves. Stop in the pretty fishing village of Ballyvaughan for a harborside lunch. Afterward, we'll meet up with a local naturalist for a walk through the Burren, undoubtedly Ireland's most unusual landscape: a limestone plateau eroded by centuries of weather, leaving an almost moonlike surface behind. Yet over 600 plant species thrive in its cracks and crevices, and our naturalist guide is sure to point out a least a dozen different wildflowers. Our hike ends at Corcomroe Abbey, with a visit to the tomb of legendary Clare chieftain Conor O'Brien.

Take a lift back to Doolin in our support van, or pedal a challenging route back to town over the switchbacks of Corkscrew Hill. After dinner this evening, a traditional storyteller will regale us with tales of old Ireland.

**Accommodations:** Second night at the Atlantic View Guesthouse in Doolin.

**The Biking/Terrain:** 22 miles over easy terrain, or 42 miles with Corkscrew Hill option (moderately steep 3-mile climb).



*"The beauty of the routes, friendliness of the innkeepers, and of course, the scenery, music and people of Ireland made it a once-in-a-lifetime trip."*

– B. S. and J. K., California

*"Having Irish guides was a great asset—their knowledge, experience, and humor added immensely to the enjoyment of the trip."*

– K. V., Connecticut

*"The best-kept secret of Ireland is its food!"*

– B. T., Massachusetts

*"Seeing Ireland from the saddle is the only way to experience such a dynamic and beautiful country."*

– L. K., Colorado

**Day 3:** We'll catch a morning ferry to Inishmore, largest of the Aran Islands, for a free day to explore by bike or foot. After debarking in Kilronan, our first stop is The Heritage Centre for an introduction to the islands. Pedal on along the "high road" past mysterious Megalithic ruins and early Christian sites. Graceful ruins are all that remain of The Seven Churches. The dome-shaped ruins of centuries-old monastic "beehive" huts have doorways so low you may need to get down on hands and knees to enter.

Dún Aengus ring fort overlooks the pounding Atlantic surf 300 feet below; the bravest souls inch out to the very edge on their bellies to get the best view! We'll receive a warm welcome at Kilmurvey House, a gracious Georgian manor and twenty-year Easy Rider favorite.

**Accommodations:** Johnston Hernon's Kilmurvey House on Inishmore is a handsome 250-year-old manor house located near a beach and the path leading up to Dún Aengus ring fort. Our hosts, Treasa and Bertie, come from a long line of islanders. Treasa's mother Brigit first opened the guest house in 1947; her legendary personality lives on in Leon and Jill Uris' book, *Ireland: A Terrible Beauty* and Tim Robinson's *Stones of Aran*.

**The Biking/Terrain:** Options of 7-18 miles on Inishmore island, plus plenty of opportunities for walks and short hikes. Moderate with short climbs.

**Day 4:** Follow the coast road back to Kilronan Harbour to catch the noon ferry to Rosaveel, County Galway on the mainland. Heather-covered mountains and the Connemara coast line our view as we pedal tiny lanes across the Cashel bog. You may even spot wild Connemara ponies. The locals harvest turf from the bog to be used as fireplace fuel; watch for tidy stacks of peat bricks laid out to dry. With luck, we may even see turf-cutters at work. The scenery changes to lush semi-tropical vegetation as we approach the sheltered harbor of Clifden.

**Accommodations:** Two-night waterfront stay at stylish Quay House in Clifden, originally built as the Harbour Master's residence. Our hosts are world travelers and collectors with a wonderfully eclectic sense of style. It's just a two-minute walk into the village.

**The Biking/Terrain:** 41 miles. Easy to moderate, with a gradual climb over the Bog Road.





### What's included:

- 6 nights accommodations in country inns, a traditional B&B, and a five-star castle (double occupancy, private bath)
- 4 dinners, 2 picnic lunches, and all breakfasts
- Use of a top-quality 24- speed Trek hybrid bicycle
- Detailed maps, written directions, and background information
- Daily choice of mileage options; total mileage of 119-210 miles
- Two experienced Irish guides
- Support van to carry luggage, provide snacks, and offer assistance and lifts
- Guided Burren walk, storytelling evening
- Ferry trip to the Aran Islands
- Transfers from Shannon and to Shannon or Galway at specified times
- Gratuities for all accommodations and group meals
- Comprehensive tour preparation information and training tips
- Easy Rider T-shirt and water bottle
- Airfare is not included.

**Day 5:** Today's a layover day, so you can choose either to bike or take the day off for shopping and sightseeing in Clifden. Artisan shops and inviting cafes line the handsome streets of 19th-century Clifden Town.

Our bike ride follows the aptly-named "Sky Road," with bird's-eye views of Clifden's church steeples and Killary Harbor against the backdrop of the Twelve Bens. Add more miles with a spin along tiny coastal lanes of the remote Cleggan peninsula out to its picturesque harbor. From here, you can ferry to Inishboffin Island (population 200) and the remains of a castle built by Ireland's "pirate queen," Gráinne O'Malley.

**Accommodations:** Second night at Quay House in Clifden.

**The Biking/Terrain:** 0, 12, 21, or 35 mile options. Moderately hilly with two steep mile-long hills on the Sky Road. The magnificent views are worth every pedal stroke!

**Day 6:** Our final morning of biking is highlighted by spectacular vistas of Killary Fjord and the Maumturk Mountains. Stop along the way at Avoca Handweavers (great shopping!) and beautiful beaches on the Renvyle Peninsula.

Lunch in Leenane with views of Killary Harbour, where the movie *The Field* was filmed. In the afternoon, continue cycling along a lush glacial valley and the shores of Lough Nafooy to the village of Cong in County Mayo. Pop in at *The Quiet Man* cottage—John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara launched this quiet village into stardom in the 1950s. Tonight we'll celebrate in regal style, with dinner and an overnight at Ashford Castle.

**Accommodations:** Ashford Castle in Cong, now a five-star luxury hotel, was originally an Anglo-Norman castle built by Richard DeBurgo in 1228. Ashford's guest list is long and star-studded: Everyone from John Lennon to Ronald Reagan has enjoyed a visit here.



**The Biking/Terrain:** 48 miles. Moderate to rolling, with one two-mile climb entering County Mayo.

**Day 7:** Ashford is too lovely to leave, so the morning is yours to roam the castle and its grounds, from its formal gardens and forested trails to the shores of Lough Corrib. Our guides provide a complimentary noontime transfer to your choice of Galway City or Shannon. We'll arrive at Eire Square in Galway by 1:00 p.m. and Shannon by 3:00 p.m.





*"Our Easy Rider tour was more than just a cycling trip. It was a total 'immersion' into the country and customs of Ireland."*

*- D. B., Massachusetts*

*"I loved having native Irish guides who were historians, storytellers, expert cyclists, and well-traveled themselves."*

*- A.B., New York*



50 Water Street  
Newburyport, MA 01950  
Mon-Fri 9:00am-5:30pm EST

## **Feeling pumped? How to Get Started**

### **There and Back Again:**

**Meeting time:** Our guides will meet the group at Shannon Airport at 10:00 A.M. on the first day of the tour. From there it's an hour's drive to the Atlantic View Guesthouse in Doolin.

**Departure time:** On the last day of the tour, our guides will shuttle guests to their choice of Galway City (arriving at about 1:00 p.m.) or back to Shannon (arriving at about 3:00 p.m.).

**Getting to Ireland:** There are direct flights from major U.S. cities to both Shannon (on the west coast) and Dublin. Aer Lingus is the national airline of Ireland; Delta, Continental, US Airways, and American Airlines also offer non-stop flights from select U.S. cities.

### **Extending Your Visit:**

**Before and after your trip:** If your schedule allows, we recommend arriving in Ireland a day or two early to acclimate to the time change (and the Irish brogue!). We'll be happy to recommend accommodations in the Shannon area.

After your tour, consider spending a few days exploring Galway or Dublin (or both!). Both are vibrant cities which will give you a glimpse of the cosmopolitan side of Ireland. Once you've reserved your trip, your confirmation packet will include our recommendations on places to stay and things to see and do.

### **Ready to Roll:**

Ready to book your tour? Give us a call today at **800-488-8332**. We'll answer your questions, process your trip deposit, and get your reservation rolling.

**Western Shores** has it all—miles of great biking, magnificent scenery, toe-tapping music, even a stay at Ireland's most famous castle! Join us today.

***This is one vacation you'll never forget!***