

Achill Island & Mayo Coast



This Guided Walking holiday offers a region of Ireland that seems to have been missed by others, thankfully. The North-Western Coast of Mayo, rich in archaeological landscape, with its flourishing flora and fauna, majestic cliffs and rocky coves, is just waiting to be discovered by the walker.

The Mullet Peninsula, as it “hangs off” the Mayo Coast, dominated this region and we have selected two walking days on Benwee Head and Erris Head that will give you a great feeling and understanding of this wild and rugged coast.

The area is known for its interplay with light and water. The rocks and cliffs are given a magical pink or reddish hue when sunlight falls on them as it sets in the evening Western sky. Irish is spoken in these districts and the people are just waiting to welcome you with a warmth that has to be experienced to be appreciated. For the history lover and heritage, mythology or folklore lovers – this area has everything!

Achill Island (24kms x 19kms) is the largest island in the country and was first inhabited over 5,000 years ago. It is now accessible from the mainland by a new bridge completed in 2008. Its magnificent blue flag sandy beaches, sea cliffs, open mountain tops and raised peat bogs together with the warm hospitality of the “locals” bring visitors back again and again for holidays.

Visit and walk the beautiful villages of Dooagh and Keel, the high cliffs at Achill Head, the magnificent beaches at Keel and Keem, Slievemore and Minaun, the highest mountains on the island.

The island has a wealth of archaeological remains with a very strong historical and cultural heritage which goes with West Coast Island life. Achill has a thriving local craft-making tradition with Irish music playing a big part in the islands entertainment. Irish is still being spoken in many of the villages and townlands. You have to discover for yourself what makes Achill unique and a place apart ... join us for this walking holiday!

Trip Outline

Mullet Peninsula, Benwee Head and Achill Island

Day 1 We offer a Courtesy Transfer from Castlebar Railway Station at 16.00hrs. We transfer to our first overnight on the Mullet Peninsula in the townland of Clogher which is nestled between the Atlantic Ocean and Blacksod Bay. Surf and sand abound everywhere. Evening meal together and a general chat about the coming week’s walks. We stay here for three nights.

Day 2 Our morning transfer takes us North East for a lovely loop walk with start/finish in the village of Carrowteige. The views across Broadhaven Bay to Erris Head, Belmullet Peninsula and South to Achill and Slievemore are breathtaking. We follow the trail along rugged and stunning cliff tops to Benwee Head returning via the “Children of Lir” sculpture in the village. Overnight and Evening Dinner.
Walk Details - Distance: 15kms. Height gain: 75mts. Walking time: 4 to 5 hours.
Hiking boots essential. Transfer time from B+B to walk start - about 45 mins.

Day 3 Today's walk takes us around the Northern tip of the Belmullet Peninsula and Erris Head. Here we have the reverse views across Broadhaven Bay to Benwee Head and Kid Island. We follow the cliff top coastline to Erris Head and down the Atlantic Coast side of the Peninsula. Small coves and rocky inlets dominate this area giving it that wild, rugged appearance resulting from the endless pounding of the ocean ... A place to reflect and ponder. Overnight and Evening Dinner.

Walk Details - Distance: 14kms. Height gain: 80mts. Walking time: 5 hrs. Hiking boots essential. Transfer time from B+B to walk start - about 20mins.

Day 4 Traditionally this has been our "free day", "island day" or "transfer day". We may have the opportunity, weather and tide permitting to visit Inishglora and its monastic settlement founded by St. Brendan. Legend also has it this island is the burial place of the "Children of Lir". Iniskea is also a possibility with its monastery founded in the 6th century by St. Columcille. Afternoon transfer to Achill and our accommodation for the rest of the holiday. Evening walk along the secluded valley of Keem and its sandy beach on the Western tip of Achill. Keem Bay is an idyllic spot tucked between the Croaghnaun Mountain in the North and spectacular cliffs in the West. Overnight and Evening meal in Dooagh.

Walk Details: Transfer time Mullet to Achill. 1 hr. ... plus stop times !! Evening Walk and Island trips will NOT require hiking boots.

Day 5 After breakfast we walk past an old quartz quarry, walk up to an old Signal Tower that overlooks the island, then onward towards the 'Deserted Village' at the foot of the majestic Slievemore Mountain. Three villages of about 80 abandoned stone cottages make up the settlement and are linked by an old pathway on which we will walk to get an insight into life on Achill in the past. After snack lunch in one of the old houses, we will return home via Keel, the largest village on the island with its 3kms. of sandy beach. Overnight and Evening Dinner in Dooagh.

Walk Details - Distance: 12 kms /8 kms. (pick-up in Keel possible); Height: insignificant

Walking Time: 3 hours / 4 hours

Day 6 Today we will walk up the "Coffin Trail" to a lookout point at the Minaun Heights. The walk will lead us past one of Achill's children's cemeteries where in the past un-baptised children were buried. The trail ends at a hill-top viewing point, giving a breathtaking panoramic view of Achill Island. Continuing our walk to the other side of the cliffs, we will be collected and returned to our B&B. Overnight and Evening Dinner in Dooagh.

Walk Details - Distance: 6/8 kms. Height: 460 mts. Walking Time: 4/5 hours

Day 7 On today's walk we will go towards Lough Acorrymore, a lake created by glacial erosion and which today is a water supply for the entire island. North of it lies the corrie lake of Corrynatawy at an unusually low elevation. We will walk down to it and then on to the sandy beach of Annagh Strand which is spectacularly located and usually deserted. After lunch at the beach we will start our way back to our B&B. Overnight and Evening Dinner in Dooagh.

Distance: 12 kms. Height: 230 mts. Walking Time: 4.5 hours

Day 8 After breakfast we bid farewell to this most beautiful and breathtaking part of Ireland. We offer a courtesy transfer to Castlebar Bus/Rail station for your onward transfer to International Airports, and/or other areas of the country. There is a good bus and train service to all major towns and cities in Ireland from Castlebar.

Recommended reading: 'Achill Island – Archaeology, History, Folklore' by Theresa McDonald. 'To Hell or Connaught' by Michael Mullen. Within the Mullet by Rita Nolan OR Where the Sun sets by Fr. Seán Noone.

Holiday Includes:

- 7 nights bed in room with private shower/ bathroom
- Full Irish breakfast each morning
- Picnic lunch (on walking days only)
- 7 Evening Dinners
- 6 days walking with expert Irish Guides who accompany the group for the duration of the holiday
Transport to/from each day's walking locations. Luggage transfers when required. Courtesy Airport Transfer from airport to the start of the holiday to the first night's B+B.

If we do not hear from you within two weeks of the start date of the tour, we will assume that you will make your own way to the first night's accommodation. Your guide will meet you at 18.00 hrs. for a Briefing Session followed by dinner with the group at 19.00 hrs. We can also arrange a meeting in Westport so please enquire at time of booking.

Should you require extra night's accommodation before or after your holiday, please advise us at the time of booking.

Please note that Ireland can be a bit 'damp' both underfoot and overhead, with some liquid sunshine! Irish weather is unpredictable and the nature of walks can change quickly and dramatically because of the weather. This is one of the many pleasant aspects of walking in Ireland. We reserve the right to alter this itinerary due to weather conditions or the walking ability of each group.

2012 Tour Dates:

May 5 – 12

June 2 - 9

June 30 - July 7

August 25 - September 1