

# WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



## WEST COAST OF IRELAND

### CONNEMARA, GALWAY & COUNTY MAYO

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- Dramatic Atlantic Coastline
- Omey Sands
- Lough Corrib
- Kylemore Abbey
- Pristine beaches
- Rock architecture of Moyrus
- Roundstone Peatbog landscape
- The Twelve Bens
- Galway Harbour City
- Achill Island
- Dun Briste Sea stack
- Loch Inagh Valley
- Ballinasloe Horse Fair

#### INTRODUCTION

Introducing a visually exciting new photographic adventure exploring the coastline, landscapes and culture of Connemara, Galway and County Mayo. Connemara comprises a well known and scenic broad peninsula between Killary Harbour and Kilkieran Bay to the west of County Galway. Its name is derived from Conmhaicne Mara meaning descendants of the sea. County Mayo stretches further west into the Gulf Stream and is one of Western Europe's wildest parts. Here we will encounter a scenic vista of bogs, valleys and lakes. The spectacular and intricate coastline enclosing the dramatic Twelve Pins, Na Beanna Beola, Maamturk Mountains plus the holy mountain of Croagh Patrick commonly known as

'The Reek'. Facing west where the wild Atlantic waves break dramatically onto the shore, this area of Ireland boasts quiet little winding roads, quaint, traditional villages and a majestic landscape awash with greenery and soft light. Nowhere on the Emerald Isle is this palette of colour, light and bluster more striking than in the heart of 'Gaeltacht'. The culture and ancient landscape have long entranced poets and painters. Artists and writers have talked often about the strange and illuminating impression the Connemara landscape has had on them. Many have returned time and again to dig a little deeper into its soul.

More recently, photographers have begun to explore the wilder frontiers of Ireland. Our own journey will be influ-

enced by the tides and weather. Broadly speaking we will shimmy along the wild coastline of County Mayo before heading south to explore the landscape around the four Connemara settlements of Clean, Clifton, Ballyconneely & Roundstone. There may be an opportunity to visit the Island of Inishbofin, a short ferry ride from Cleggan. A highlight of our time in Galway will be the Ballinasloe Horse Fair, Europe's oldest and largest. Combining elements of both documentary and landscape photography, we will work on developing your appreciation of the landscape together with an understanding of the elements that make up the bigger picture story. You can expect to return home with a unique and descriptive portfolio of professionally crafted images.

#### **DAILY ITINERARY**

Our itinerary will depend on the local weather conditions and state of the tides but broadly speaking we plan to visit as much of the cultural and physical landscapes as is possible with emphasis on building your own visual story of Connemara. Given favourable weather, we will aim to catch dawn and dusk most days. All but the worst conditions will see us out in the landscape, hamlets and villages. There will also be time for viewing and critiquing of the images we take.

#### **Day 1: Arrival in County Mayo**

Today there will be a transfer from Knock airport to our scenically located hotel in Westport, please refer to joining arrangements for further information. Our hotel base is perfectly located for exploring the County Mayo coastline.

Accommodation Hotel Westport

#### **Days 2,3: County Mayo**

The dramatic sacred mountain of Croagh Patrick rises above our initial base of Westport. Over the next two days we will take our time to explore and venture along the south coast of Mayo, where we will find rock strewn beaches, crashing Atlantic rollers and interesting fishing village. Beyond the patterned wetlands of Mulranny lies Achill island, the largest of Ireland's isles and the remote Mullet Peninsula. To the North at Downpatrick Head we encounter the gloriously weathered sea stack of Dun Briste 'the broken fort', once home to the ogre Geodruisge who plagued the life of St Patrick.

Accommodation Hotel Westport

#### **Day 4,5,6,7: Connemara, Ballyconneely**

After sunrise and a hearty breakfast we take time driving to our next base in Connemara. Our accommodation for the next four nights is a lovely house where all guests will have their own room with private bathrooms. The spacious and beautifully situated house is perfect for socialising and working together on our images. Here we will be privately catered for by Sian who will cook us some lovely meals with locally sourced products. The house is situated in the village Ballyconneely, ten kilometres south from Clifden. It is the entry point to the Errismore Peninsula an ideal place from which to explore the many fine beaches situated along the nearby Ballyconneely and Mannion Bays. The following are locations we will visit while we are based in Connemara.

#### **The Twelve Bens**

Northeast of the village of Roundstone lies an extensive mountain range known as the Twelve Bens or Twelve Pins

rising to just over 700m. The traditional name of 'Na Beanna Beola' refers to Beola, a giant chieftain of an ancient tribe called, Fir Bolg. Shrouded in sea mist or catching first and last light, these mountains can be seen from just about everywhere in Connemara. They provide us with a wonderful backdrop to the surrounding valleys, lakes and peat bogs.

#### **Kylemore Abbey**

Set at the foot of a wooded hill Kylemore Abbey is a Benedictine monastery founded in 1920 on the grounds of Kylemore Castle. The Estate includes an extensive walled Victorian Garden.

#### **Strands of Connemara – Moyrus, Gurteen, Ballyconneely**

Characteristically white and pristine, the beaches, which pepper the convoluted coastline of Connemara are a wonderful source of imagery, especially where they merge with rocky promontories and shorelines.

#### **Currachs & Hookers**

The use of traditional boats are still very much a part of daily life along the coast of Connemara. Once a busy trading and fishing boat between the islands, with its distinct dark red and orange sails, the Galway Hookers now compete in local races from Kinvarra to Clifden. During the Great famine of the 1840s, John Bailey stated that "If you owned a hooker you would be classified as a millionaire".

#### **Cleggan**

'An Cloigeann' is the Gaelic word for head or skull and generally refers to the nearby coastal headland. It is a traditional fishing village and also the jumping off point

for the ferry to Inisbofin Island. It also has one of the most atmospheric pubs in Galway – Oliver’s Bar.

### **Omev Island**

One of the most beautiful strands in Connemara is revealed in its entirety at low tide and enclosed with dark crimson granite rocks allowing foot access to the island. It was the ancestral home of the Connemara O’Toole’s, who moved westward with the O’Flahertys in the middle ages. It was also one of the key sites for the monastic order of St Fechin, an important figure in the spreading of the Irish monastic tradition in the 7th Century.

### **Aughrus Peninsula**

About 20 mins drive north west of Clifden lies a dramatic rocky peninsula, one of the most westerly points of Connemara, and indeed of Ireland. The lichen covered rock above the tideline contrasts with seams of quartzite exposed as the tide recedes. On a windy late afternoon, the elements coincide to give a real sense of being on the edge of the world.

### **Day 8,9,10: Galway Harbour City**

This morning after breakfast we will drive the very scenic coastal route to Galway a small but vibrant town on the west coast. Galway is popular with local Irish and tourists alike, it is often referred to as the “Cultural Heart of Ireland” as it is most associated with the Irish language, music, song and dance traditions. Galway City is on the doorstep of Galway’s Gaeltacht, an area where Irish is spoken. While it’s considered to be the gateway to Ireland’s Wild Atlantic Way the great pubs and traditional live music scene have given this west coast city the reputation of having the best craic in Ireland. In the best tra-

ditions of street photography we will collect images from Eyre Square, along the River Corrib and the Latin Quarter liveliest part of the city with its colourful shops, flags and banners. We have timed this particular trip to enable a day visit to the Ballinasloe Horse Fair. This is one of the oldest fairs in Europe. While now predominantly associated with the horse, in its heyday the October Fair was an agricultural event of much greater significance, serving as a market for the sale of cattle and sheep by the farmers of the West to their counterparts in the East of Ireland. Today, the horse fair still attracts horse sellers, enthusiasts, gypsies and tinkers from across Europe and beyond. The characters and horse trading on the Green provide a wealth of photographic potential during our penultimate day in Ireland.

Accommodation Hotel Galway Town

### **Day 11: Transfer to Knock Airport**

This morning after breakfast there will be a transfer to Knock Airport. These will be included if your flight departure time coincides with the departure of the trip leaders. If not, please refer to joining arrangements below.

### **JOINING ARRANGEMENTS & TRANSFERS**

The tour officially starts on Day 1 at our Westport Hotel. Transfers to/from Knock Airport will be available depending on your flight arrival/departure times. For information please contact the office for advice, we will do our very best to accommodate you. There is also a [regular bus service from Knock Airport](#) to Westport (our first night hotel) and Galway (our last night hotel) to Knock Airport.

Note there is a €10 airport departure tax at Knock Airport.

### **FLIGHT INFORMATION**

[Flybe](#), [Aer Lingus](#) and [Ryanair](#) have regular scheduled flights from London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol and Edinburgh.

[Aer Lingus](#) and [British Airways](#) fly direct to Knock Airport and [United Airlines](#) fly via Dublin.

<https://www.flybe.com>

<https://www.aerlingus.com>

<https://www.britishairways.com>

<https://www.ryanair.com>

<https://www.united.com>

### **WHAT’S INCLUDED**

- 10 nights accommodation
- No extra charge for single rooms
- All meals
- Airport transfers

### **WHAT’S NOT INCLUDED**

- Alcoholic drinks
- Travel & medical Insurance
- International flights
- Anything not mentioned above

### **FOOD**

All meals are included. Breakfasts will always be taken at our accommodation. Dinners will be either at our accommodation or in restaurants close by. We will sometimes have picnic lunches on location or in a variety of

other places such as a local pub or at our accommodation.

## **ALCOHOL**

For lovers of Guinness, it doesn't get any better !

### **Spending Money**

It is advisable to bring a small amount of € euros, but if not there are plenty of ATM's in and around Connemara and Westport. There are good local arts and crafts on offer locally in Recess, Roundstone and Clifden

## **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

It is recommended that you take out appropriate insurance to cover personal accident, medical costs, repatriation and loss of baggage. We will need a copy of your travel insurance at the time of booking.

## **PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS**

Citizens of the UK do not need a passport to enter the Republic of Ireland but most airlines will require Passport ID. A European health insurance card is valid in the Republic of Ireland. EU and North & South American Nationals will need a valid passport but do not require an entry visa.

## **LANGUAGE**

English & Gaelic

## **CLIMATE**

Connemara's spectacular ragged coastline stretches out into the Atlantic Ocean and therefore is subject to the whims of the Gulf Stream. Temperature extremes are rare

and October is a transitional month and so we can expect changeable conditions, diverse and often beautiful photographic landscape light.

## **CLOTHING SUGGESTIONS**

As we will often be standing around in one location it's important to have some warm clothes. The best solution to temperature control is to have a number of layers available from lightweight thermal underwear through mid-layer insulation to a windproof jacket. A warm down jacket is great for standing around. For the lower body choose a pair of warm trousers. There are numerous makes and types of warm trousers to choose from, just ensure that the cut is generous to allow freedom of movement. A pair of wellington boots can be useful on the beach but these are not essential if space/weight is an issue.

## **CLOTHING LIST RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Backpack to contain camera gear and few spare items
- Pair warm trousers (fleece lined optional)
- Thermal tops e.g. 'smartwool' (base layer)
- Thermal leggings e.g. 'smartwool' (base layer)
- Light fleece/wool jumper
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Quality warm walking socks
- Leather/waterproof walking boots
- Wellington boots (optional)
- Warm hat
- Fleece neck-warmer
- Light warm gloves

- Casual clothes for inside wear
- Sun cream, sunglasses
- Head torch
- Small, basic first aid to include plasters, blister repair
- and any medication that you normally use

If you have any questions feel free to contact us at any-time before the trip.

## **PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- In addition to your chosen camera equipment you will need to carry a day pack that will also hold a few extra items such as water, spare layer etc. Specially designed camera rucksack like F-Stop, Lowepro and Peak design will be fine.
- You may need a hard case for transporting camera equipment in an aircraft hold, however, a hard case will not be either comfortable or practical when we are on location so you will also need the above.
- Camera and a spare if you have one
- Tripod – not only useful for steadying the camera for long exposures or close-up work but also useful for accurate framing and composition of landscape/plant.
- Wide angle zoom – ideally 16–35mm for full frame camera, 12–24mm for smaller sensor.
- Macro lens or close focusing zoom. 60mm & 105mm are ideal.
- A telephoto zoom such as a 70–200mm

- Separate flash if you have one at hand or head torch as we will have opportunities to experiment with fill in flash and light painting.
- Cable release – mechanical or electronic remote to avoid shake on long exposures
- Neutral density, graduated filters and polariser, if you use these. Please do not buy especially for this tour.
- Lens cloth
- Lightweight ‘trekking’ absorbent towel, for drying cameras and equipment
- Sufficient memory cards for the whole holiday as it may not be possible to buy more during the trip.
- Backup storage device (if you don’t have a laptop)
- Laptop computer ideally with Lightroom, Capture One or Adobe Camera RAW loaded. A laptop is essential for checking and presenting images during the trip and for one-on-one sessions with the tutor. We will have image projection facilities available during our stay.
- Spare batteries and chargers
- Sensor cleaning device
- Film users should bring enough film, as it may not be possible to buy in many places.
- Camera rain cover that can be left on while taking pictures.
- International all-in-one travel plug adapter, if you’re coming from outside the UK. These are on sale at airports. All electrical sockets are UK three-pin.

## MAPS AND BOOKS

We will have a variety of local maps & Guidebooks on hand. Please feel free to bring your own.

**Ordnance Survey Ireland** – Discovery Series (1:50,000)  
-Sheets 37, 38, 44, 45

**Connemara Super-walker** (1:30,000) – essentially a walking map for the Connemara National Park  
Writer Tim Robinson has written a wonderful [trilogy of narratives about Connemara](#)

**Guide to the Wild Atlantic Way**, Ireland’s 2,600km coastal driving route stretches from the north of County Donegal down the West coast to the southern tip of County Cork.

## MORE QUESTIONS?

While we hope that this information has answered most of your questions about the holiday, we know it will not give you all the information you need. If you have any more questions, please get in touch. Talking to us on the phone (we will always call you back) can often be a quick way of sorting out individual questions. It also helps us to get to know each other before the holiday.

## BOOKING THIS HOLIDAY

Fill in the [online booking form](#), or give us a call on +44 (0)1630 647828.

## PARTNERS

Non photographer partners will be very welcome although this primarily a photography holiday we also visit some very beautiful and relaxing places. If any participants do not wish to join the walks/photographic sessions they will

be able to relax in and around the accommodation. The cost will be the same for photographers and non photographers.

## OUTDOOR TRAVEL

This is an outdoor travel holiday and the itinerary is dependent on the weather, local conditions and other variables. Wild Photography Holidays may use their discretion to change the itinerary should conditions dictate this; your health, safety and enjoyment will always be our primary concern when making such changes.

## LINKS

View [images and information for this tour](#) on the website.

Read about [our approach to teaching photography](#)