



**CONNEMARA**  
WILD AT HEART

ESCAPE, INVIGORATE, DISCOVER...







Lough Inagh



*Incredible landscapes, white sandy  
beaches, vagaries of nature and a rich  
heritage and culture...*

*Come to Connemara and you'll discover  
it truly is Wild at Heart*







Lough Nafoeey

## WILD & WONDERFUL...

It's no surprise that the *raw beauty, sweeping vistas* and constantly changing moods of the Connemara landscape have *captured the hearts* and minds of generations of artists, writers and musicians.





## INTRODUCTION

Oscar Wilde described it as a 'savage beauty' and its patchwork of brooding lakes, rugged mountains, and windswept bogs certainly gives a sense of splendid isolation. But Connemara is also home to some of Ireland's finest beaches, with wide stretches of pure white sands lapped by turquoise seas, and to picturesque fishing villages, tranquil coves, dramatic islands and some of the richest culture and traditions in Europe.

The incredible landscape and vagaries of nature mean that Connemara remains wild at heart. Embraced by craggy mountains and protected by its relative isolation, the region has remained a bastion of tradition and is home to Ireland's largest Gaeltacht (Irish speaking area). Traditional music, dance and crafts are celebrated in a series of lively festivals and on the islands of Inishbofin and Aran you'll get a rare insight into how life in Ireland once was, their rich heritage embodied in the stone-walled fields and ancient monastic remains.

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Inland, you'll share the deserted valleys and breathtaking scenery with no more than the odd flock of sheep, the expansive views and gentle calm instilling a real sense that you have left the rest of the world behind. The unhurried pace of life is one of the region's hallmarks and the warm welcome you'll receive stems from local pride and a genuine desire to share what is best about the area with anyone lucky enough to make it here.

Stretching from Galway Bay in the south to Killary Harbour in the north, Connemara takes in the rugged peaks of the Twelve Bens, the slate-grey waters of Lough Corrib, and the desolate beauty of the Inagh Valley. Wherever you go you'll find spectacular opportunities to discover the great outdoors with scenic cycling on quiet, twisty roads; magnificent walking on dramatic hills; bracing horse riding on pristine beaches, prize angling, championship golf and a range of adrenaline-fuelled adventure activities that make the most of the dramatic surroundings.

Connemara has a bewitching mix of attractions on offer. It's the kind of place that warms your heart and steals your soul. A place that fuels the fondest of memories and beckons you back year after year. One trip and you'll never forget it.



## YOUR JOURNEY WEST

Better than you ever *imagined* and closer than you think, a trip to Connemara has never been easier. With *regular flights* and ferries and a range of bus and train services crossing the region, you can stake your claim to your *very own* part of Ireland.





The Twelve Bens, Máimean

## BY AIR

Three local airports serve the Connemara region with a range of domestic, UK and European flights landing at **Galway Airport** ([www.galwayairport.com](http://www.galwayairport.com)) and **West Airport Knock** ([www.irelandwestairport.com](http://www.irelandwestairport.com)). To the south **Shannon International Airport** ([www.shannonairport.com](http://www.shannonairport.com)) has daily flights from several US destinations and a range of flights to destinations across the UK and Europe.

## BY FERRY

A range of ferries sail to Ireland from the UK and France with services arriving in Dublin, Rosslare, Cork, Belfast and Larne. For information on routes and services visit [www.discoverireland.ie](http://www.discoverireland.ie).

## BY TRAIN

The nearest train stations to Connemara are in **Galway** and **Westport**, both accessible from Dublin's **Heuston station**. For more information on routes, timetables and fares visit [larnród Éireann](http://larnród Éireann) ([www.irishrail.ie](http://www.irishrail.ie)).

## BY BUS

Express bus services run from major towns and cities across Ireland to Galway and Westport from where you can pick up regional services to Connemara. **Bus Éireann** ([www.buseireann.ie](http://www.buseireann.ie)) is the main service provider, **Citylink** ([www.citylink.ie](http://www.citylink.ie)) operates services to Dublin, Shannon, Cork and Clifden and **Bus Nestor** ([www.busnestor.galway.net](http://www.busnestor.galway.net)) has regular services to Dublin city and airport.

## BY CAR

You'll have the greatest freedom to roam the quiet back roads of Connemara if you're travelling by car. Connemara is only a four hour drive from Dublin or Cork and just over two hours from Shannon.

## GETTING TO THE ISLANDS

Ferries run to the Aran Islands from **Ros a Mhíl** in Co. Galway ([www.arandirect.com](http://www.arandirect.com); [www.aranislandferries.com](http://www.aranislandferries.com)) and **Doolin** in Co. Clare ([www.doolinferries.com](http://www.doolinferries.com); [www.doolinferry.com](http://www.doolinferry.com)). Aran Direct also runs a high speed catamaran service from **Galway City**, which goes to Inis Mór in less than 60 minutes. Regular flights ([www.aerarannislands.ie](http://www.aerarannislands.ie)) to the Aran Islands operate from **Indreabhán** in south Connemara. Ferries to Inishbofin ([www.inishbofinferry.com](http://www.inishbofinferry.com); [inishbofinislanddiscovery.com](http://inishbofinislanddiscovery.com)) run from **Cleggan**, north west of Clifden.

## USEFUL LINKS

[www.discoverireland.ie](http://www.discoverireland.ie)

[www.galwayairport.com](http://www.galwayairport.com)

[www.irelandwestairport.com](http://www.irelandwestairport.com)

[www.shannonairport.com](http://www.shannonairport.com)

[www.irishrail.ie](http://www.irishrail.ie)

[www.buseireann.ie](http://www.buseireann.ie)

[www.citylink.ie](http://www.citylink.ie)

[www.busnestor.galway.net](http://www.busnestor.galway.net)

[www.arandirect.com](http://www.arandirect.com)

[www.aranislandferries.com](http://www.aranislandferries.com)

[www.doolinferries.com](http://www.doolinferries.com)

[www.doolinferry.com](http://www.doolinferry.com)

[www.aerarannislands.ie](http://www.aerarannislands.ie)

[www.inishbofinferry.com](http://www.inishbofinferry.com)

[www.inishbofinislanddiscovery.com](http://www.inishbofinislanddiscovery.com)



# CÉAD MÍLE FÁILTE

Connemara is *unique* in many ways and holds strong ties to *traditional culture*. A stronghold of the Irish language, it is home to Ireland's largest *Gaeltacht area*.





Lough Inagh

## CÚPLA FOCAL

| English                       | Irish            | Pronunciation       |
|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Hello (God be with you)       | Dia dhuit        | Jee-ah gwitch       |
| Goodbye                       | Slán Leat        | Slawn lath          |
| Welcome (100,000 welcomes)    | Céad míle fáilte | Caid meela fawl-che |
| Festival of traditional music | Fleadh ceoil     | Flea keowl          |

For more Irish phrases and information on where to learn the language visit [www.daltai.com](http://www.daltai.com)

## THE GAELTACHT

The Gaeltacht takes in much of Connemara as well as the three Aran Islands. Irish is the everyday language here and you'll see it on signposts and shop fronts and hear it in shops, pubs and on the streets.

Irish is a truly musical language with a cadence and rhythm unlike English and a beautiful, poetic turn of phrase. In Gaeltacht areas traditional music, song and dance are gently nurtured and widely celebrated, and in many ways the Gaeltacht has become the cultural heartland of Ireland, protecting the rich heritage, culture and folklore of the country.

Taking a month-long trip to the Gaeltacht for summer school is a right of passage for teenagers from all over Ireland and a wonderful chance to improve their Irish, learn about traditional culture and make new friends.

As you travel around Connemara try to make the connection between the English place names and their Irish origin. The easiest ones to spot are those that have changed little in their Anglicisation. The Irish word for island, inis, has merely been changed to inish; lakes still use the Irish name lough and a mountain pass, máim, has become Maam or Maum. Look out for the word baile, a town, used in place names like Ballyconneely or Ballynahowan; cill, a church, in names such as Kilbrickan; or gleann, a valley, in names like Glentrasna.

Although all Gaeltacht residents are bilingual, any attempt visitors make to speak the language will be met with broad smiles and lots of encouragement. The table above will get you started with a cúpla focal (few words).

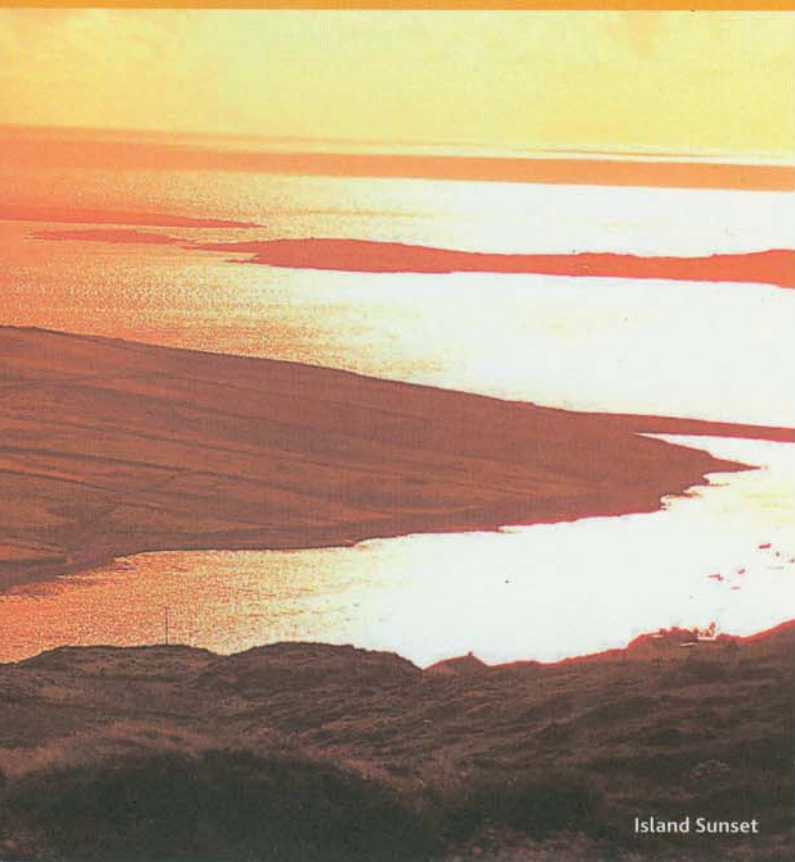




# ISLAND ADVENTURE

Flung out into the Atlantic and shaped by the *sheer force* of the sea, Connemara's islands are *spectacular remnants of life long lost* in other parts of Ireland.





Island Sunset



## INISHBOFIN AND ARAN ISLANDS

Staunchly proud of their traditions and as famous for their culture as their dramatic landscapes, Inishbofin and the Aran Islands are a patchwork of tiny, tightly packed fields, rambling stone walls, pristine beaches and craggy shores.

The islands' relative isolation has fostered a profound sense of peace and protects a rich traditional heritage. They're wonderful places to walk or cycle, and famous for their live music and traditional dances.

Situated in the choppy waters of Galway Bay, there are three Aran Islands in the Gaeltacht region.

The largest and most developed island is **Inis Mór**, a place blanketed in fissured limestone and snaking stone walls. The island's most famous sight is **Dún Aonghasa**, a breathtaking semi-circular stone fort perched dramatically on top of a 100m cliff. Other prehistoric forts dot the island, as well as numerous early Christian remains. The heritage centre, Ionad Árann, gives a great insight into the island's history and traditions but you'll also experience them first hand in the nightly music sessions, regular dances and impromptu storytelling.

**Inis Meáin**, the Middle Island, is the quietest and least visited of the three Aran Islands and is a rare escape from the modern world. A maze of narrow winding roads, sheltered paths and way-marked trails criss-cross the island, and there are numerous examples of early Christian settlements. Inis Meáin is well known for its Irish language courses, traditional singing, story-telling and dancing and is home to the **Aran Islands Dive Centre**.

**Inis Óirr**, the Eastern Island, is the smallest of the three Aran Islands and regarded by many as the most beautiful. The barren and rugged landscape is perfect for quiet contemplation and relaxed walks. It's easy to see the island entirely on foot and on remote laneways you'll quickly get the impression that you've left the rest of the world behind.

Further north, **Inishbofin** has been home to fishermen, farmers, exiled monks and fugitive pirates for over 6,000 years and today the island supports a population of 200 full-time residents. Famous for its traditional music, excellent fishing and clear blue waters beloved by scuba divers, Inishbofin also has a wealth of historical sites, fine white sand beaches and rare flora and fauna.

For more information visit: [www.irelandsislands.com](http://www.irelandsislands.com)



Sunrise in Roundstone







Fishing at Kylemore

# A TASTE OF TRADITION

Connemara's *rich tapestry* of history, *culture and heritage* is woven into the very fabric of *the landscape* and is one of the greatest appeals of the area.



## CULTURE & HERITAGE

Connemara's rich traditions of music, song, dance and story-telling are very much alive and one of the greatest pleasures of the area.

Musicians gather for informal 'sessions' in many pubs across Connemara and if you're lucky enough to join one, it's a great way to witness the wild heart of Connemara with lively music, song and dance going on late into the night. In Carna and An Casla you may also get the chance to hear the hauntingly beautiful tradition of **sean-nós singing**. Another great way to tune in to local culture is to attend one of the many arts festivals across the region where you'll find workshops and performances of drama, dance and music.

Connemara has also inspired and attracted generations of artists and craftspeople over the years. The **Aran sweater** is one of the region's most famous crafts and was traditionally knitted by fishermen's wives on the Aran Islands. The intricate family patterns, which are full of symbolic meaning, were kept closely guarded secrets.



Today, you'll find a great choice of galleries and craft shops across the region including the **Spiddal Craft Centre** ([www.ceardlann.com](http://www.ceardlann.com)), where you can visit artists' studios, and the **Roundstone Music and Craft Shop** ([www.bodhran.com](http://www.bodhran.com)), where bodhráns (traditional goatskin drums) are still made by hand.

The arts are only one side of Connemara's rich cultural heritage however, and if you have the chance there's little more thrilling than joining the crowds to watch a Gaelic football or hurling match. **Féile Patrún Inis Mór**, a festival of traditional sports held on Inis Mór each June, is a golden opportunity to join the action. Don't miss the currach racing; you'll marvel at the skills of the hardy oarsmen who row these traditional boats. It's also worth looking out for **Féile an Dóilín**, held in An Cheathrú Rua each August, for a chance to see the beautiful Galway Hooker, a majestic red-sailed boat, dance on the sea.



Kylemore Abbey

## EXPLORING THE SLIGHTS

Connemara is famous for its *incredible landscapes*, moody lighting and white *sandy beaches*, but between the rugged mountains and *boggy plains* you'll find a huge range of attractions to keep all the family happy.



### Kylemore Abbey, Kylemore

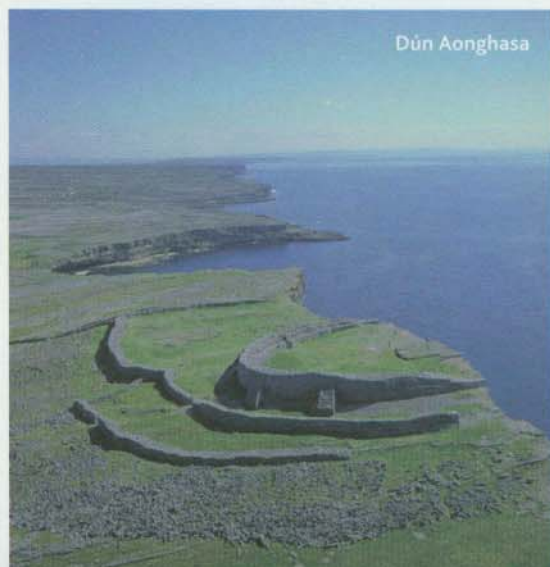
T: 00353 (0)95 41146  
[www.kylemoreabbey.com](http://www.kylemoreabbey.com)

A romantic 19th century castle nestled between the shores of brooding Kylemore Lake and heavily wooded hills, Kylemore Abbey is a magical spot, now home to the Benedictine order of nuns. The fairy-tale castle was built by English textile tycoon, Mitchell Henry, as a home for his new bride but she died tragically soon after. He built the beautiful Gothic Revival church in her memory. The original castle is now an abbey and school and although some rooms are open to the public, the main attractions here are the beautiful church, gardens and grounds.

### Pearse's Cottage (Teach an Phiarsaigh), Rosmuc

T: 00353 (0)91 574292  
[www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie)

Patrick Pearse (1879-1916), leader of the 1916 Rising used this small cottage overlooking some of Connemara's most glorious scenery, as his summer residence. Now restored, it contains an exhibition about his life and a collection of personal mementoes.



Dún Aonghasa



Cnoc Suain

### Cnoc Suain, An Spidéal

T: 00353 (0)91 555 703  
[www.cnocsuain.com](http://www.cnocsuain.com)

Dating back to 1691 but recently refurbished, Cnoc Suain is a reconstructed village of thatched and slated stone cottages which offers residential and half-day courses in Celtic mythology and spirituality, the Irish language, herbal cures, traditional music and watercolour painting.

### Dan O'Hara's Homestead, Clifden

T: 00353 (0)95 21808  
[www.connemaraheritage.com](http://www.connemaraheritage.com)

Set at the foot of the rugged Twelve Bens, the Dan O'Hara heritage centre gives visitors an insight into the life of the 19th century Connemara tenant farmer. The restored cottage and pre-famine farm guides visitors through the history of the region with audio-visual tours, demonstrations of traditional farming techniques and reconstructions of a crannóg (prehistoric island home), ring fort and clochán (corbelled dry stone hut).

### Connemara Smokehouse, Ballyconneely

T: 00353 (0)95 23739  
[www.smokehouse.ie](http://www.smokehouse.ie)

One of the last remaining traditional smokehouses in Ireland, you can see wild and organic salmon being smoked and marinated here.

### Dún Aonghasa, Inis Mór, Aran Islands

[www.visitaranislands.com](http://www.visitaranislands.com)

Set on the edge of mesmerising cliffs, the semi-circular fort of Dún Aonghasa is one of Ireland's most dramatic prehistoric monuments. Three massive stone walls and a barrier of tortuous rock enclose an enormous stone fort that perches 100m above the crashing Atlantic waves.



### **Brigit's Garden, Roscahill**

T: 00353 (0)91 550905  
[www.galwaygarden.com](http://www.galwaygarden.com)

Brigit's Garden reflects the four Celtic festivals through a beautiful woodland nature trail, meadows and Ogham trees. Between the floral attractions you'll find a thatched roundhouse, ring fort and stone chamber as well as a children's trail and play area.

### **Killary Cruises, Killary Fjord, Leenane**

T: 00353 (0)91 566736  
[www.killarycruises.com](http://www.killarycruises.com)

Take a closer look at some of Connemara's most stunning scenery on a cruise at Killary, Ireland's only fjord. Guided tours give a unique insight into this wonderful area where steep sided-mountains slip into the sea and leaping dolphins often accompany the boats.

### **Oceans Alive Visitor Centre,**

Renvyle Peninsula, Connemara  
T: 00353 (0)95 43473

Connemara's marine heritage is brought to life at Oceans Alive where an exhibition, aquarium and maritime museum explain the region's strong sea-faring history. There's also a sea angling centre, children's play area, panoramic views of the coast and the opportunity to join a sightseeing cruise.

### **Leenane Sheep & Wool Centre, Leenane**

T: 00353 (0) 95 42323  
[www.sheepandwoolcentre.com](http://www.sheepandwoolcentre.com)

For many years the people of Connemara survived on the wool trade and this wonderful museum gives a rare insight into the history and development of the industry. There are demonstrations of traditional spinning, carding and weaving, as well as information on dyeing and breeding techniques and a look at woolen handicrafts.

### **Glengowla Mines, Oughterard**

T: 00353 (0)91 552021  
[www.discoverireland.com](http://www.discoverireland.com)

The historic 19th century silver and lead mines in Glengowla give a glimpse of life in the mines with an underground tour and an exhibition on the history of the mine in the restored powder house, blacksmith's workshop and agent's cottage.

### **Aughanure Castle, Oughterard**

T: 00353 (0)91 552214  
[www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie)

Stronghold of the 'Ferocious O'Flahertys', a powerful Irish clan that controlled the surrounding area, 16th century Aughanure Castle occupies a dramatic position on the edge of Lough Corrib. The six-storey tower house is full of interesting features such as a secret room, built between the lord's chamber on the top floor and the great hall below.

### **Connemara National Park,**

T: 00353 (0)91 41054  
[www.connemaranationalpark.ie](http://www.connemaranationalpark.ie)

Connemara National Park covers nearly 3,000 hectares of scenic mountains, expanses of bogs, grasslands and woodlands. Some of the park's mountains are part of the famous Twelve Bens range. Walking trails allow the visitor to experience the breathtaking beauty of the mountainous landscape of Connemara which can be followed by refreshments in the park's café.





Cruise on Killary Fjord



Dogs Bay







# THE STUFF OF LEGEND

Connemara's bleak and beautiful landscape and strong tradition of *storytelling* have given rise to fantastic *superstitions*, folklore and *legends* which were passed down through the generations in *tales* told by a winter fire.





Killary Harbour



## FOLKLORE & LEGEND

Connemara's most legendary figure was surely Grainuaile or Grace O'Malley, a fiery 16th-century pirate queen. She married Connemara man, Donall O'Flaherty, one of the ferocious O'Flaherty clan members, and they lived for a number of years at Bunowen near Ballyconneely. Renowned for her bravery, wrath and lawlessness, she became the scourge of any English ship that dared to sail her waters. Confident to the last she reputedly sailed to London to meet Elizabeth I, secure a pardon for her wayward son and a pension for herself.

The small island of **Inishbofin** is itself the stuff of legend. Said to have been cast under a perpetual shroud of fog, the island's curse was only broken when two lost fishermen lit a fire on her shores.

As the fog lifted they spotted an old woman chasing a cow. She finally caught up and hit it with her stick but was instantly turned to stone. Since then the place has been known as **Inishbofin** or the **Island of the White Cow**. The woman and the cow are said to appear every seven years, or to warn of impending disaster.

Another Connemara legend involves the famous **Connemara pony**. According to tales handed down by generations of locals, when the **Spanish Armada** sank off the Connemara coast in the 16th century the Arab horses swam to shore. There they bred with the local wild ponies and began a whole new tough and hardy breed. You can see these in action at the **Connemara Pony Show** in Clifden in August each year ([www.cpbs.ie](http://www.cpbs.ie)).



Kitesurfing, Aran Islands

# A TASTE OF ADVENTURE

Connemara's raw natural beauty, *unspoilt landscape* and sweeping vistas make it an ideal place to get out of the car and into *the great outdoors*.



Whether you choose to cycle down mountain valleys, scale the region's highest peaks, dive in the crystal clear waters or stroll past twisted trees to a perfect white sand beach, the constantly changing moods of the Connemara landscape will remain with you forever.

### WALKING & CYCLING

Connemara makes a perfect destination for walkers and cyclists with a range of locations and terrains to suit every fitness level. **Connemara National Park** near Letterfrack is an excellent spot to start with a magnificent backdrop in the Twelve Bens. The 7km **Diamond Hill** trail (see [www.discoverireland.ie/walking](http://www.discoverireland.ie/walking) for route information) takes two to three hours to complete and offers wonderful views of Inishbofin island on a clear day.

A variety of other trails and waymarked ways cross the Twelve Bens and the nearby **Maamturk Mountains** offer more challenging ascents and panoramic views. Two long distance walking routes cross Connemara: the **Western Way**, which starts in Oughterard and follows the western edge of Lough Corrib before heading into the Maamturks, down into the Inagh Valley and around to Killary Harbour; and **Slí Chonamara**, which takes in the finest scenery in the Connemara Gaeltacht from Galway City through An Spidéal, An Cheathrú Rua, Ros Muc, Carna, Letterfrack, Leenane and Clonbur.

For more leisurely walking the islands make a great get-away with little or no traffic and a network of winding roads and walking trails with stunning views over the Atlantic.

Connemara's beautiful landscape is a fragile environment and outdoor enthusiasts are urged to **dispose of waste properly, camp on hard ground, minimise the effects of fire and respect the farm animals and wildlife you'll find in the area.**

For more tips on leaving the landscape as you find it visit [www.leaveonotraceireland.org](http://www.leaveonotraceireland.org)

If you're looking for something more organised, several operators offer guided walking and cycling tours of the area which can be a great way of learning about Connemara's history and culture as you go. **Connemara Safari** ([www.walkingconnemara.com](http://www.walkingconnemara.com)) specialises in gourmet island-hopping tours which include Inishbofin and Inishturk, while **Croagh Patrick Walking Tours** ([www.walkingguideireland.com](http://www.walkingguideireland.com)) offers fully escorted walking tours in Connemara.

Connemara is also a great place for cyclists with quiet roads and a variety of routes taking in the wonderful coastal scenery, placid inland lakes and more challenging mountain roads. Clifden makes a good base for cyclists and is the hub for three looped cycle routes which head out to **Roundstone, Cleggan and Ballyconneely**. You'll also find bike hire and plenty of local facilities here.



## WATER SPORTS

You can take to the water on a **cruise** of Killary Fjord or Lough Corrib, join an island-hopping boat trip along the coast or even learn to sail a traditional Galway Hooker in An Ceathrú Rua. If **beaches** are your thing you'll find incredible white sands and turquoise waters at Renvyle and Dogs Bay, while in An Ceathrú Rua, Trá an Doilín is famous for its wonderful coral beach.

Anglers too flock here to enjoy the wonderful fishing on Lough Corrib where brown trout regularly grow to over 20lbs. **Sea fishing** is also popular with excellent shore fishing at Clifden, Killary Harbour and Gorumna Island, and deep sea fishing off Clifden, Roundstone, An Spidéal and Cleggan.

## ADVENTURE SPORTS

For anyone looking for more of a challenge you'll find **adventure centres** in Delphi ([www.delphiadventureholidays.ie](#)), Killary ([www.killaryadventure.com](#)) and Petersburg ([www.petersburg.ie](#)) offering a range of sports from canoeing and sailing to caving and orienteering. There's a **dive centre** near Renvyle and on Inis Meáin island and **sailing courses** in Ballyconneely. For the ambitious though, the biggest draw is the **Connemarathon** event held each year in spring in Maam Cross. Come rain or shine, hardy souls battle it out over half, full and ultra marathon distances along one of the most scenic marathon routes in the world.

## USEFUL LINKS

[www.discoverireland.ie/west](#)

[www.delphiadventureholidays.ie](#)

[www.killaryadventure.com](#)

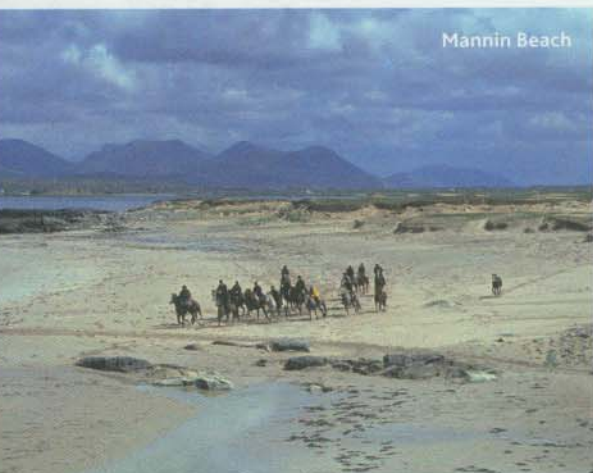
[www.petersburg.ie](#)

[www.connemaragolfinks.com](#)

[www.oughterardgolfclub.com](#)

[www.connemaraaislesgolfclub.com](#)

[www.connemarathon.com](#)



Mannin Beach

## HORSE RIDING

Another great way to see Connemara is on horseback. The lack of traffic, long white beaches and mountain paths make for incredible days out. Equestrian centres are dotted across the region and offer everything from beginners' lessons to long distance treks through the mountains. **Connemara Trails** ([www.connemara-trails.com](#)) offers five-to seven-day riding tours across Connemara taking in famous sights as well as some of the region's most remote and stunning scenery.





Surfing the Atlantic

## GOLF

Connemara also makes a great destination for golfers. The **Connemara Championship Links** ([www.connemara.golflinks.com](http://www.connemara.golflinks.com)) near Clifden is one of the most beautiful and demanding golf links in the country. Nestled between the Twelve Bens and the Atlantic Ocean, this 27-hole course was designed by Eddie Hackett.

Inland, the tranquil 18-hole **Oughterard Golf Club** ([www.oughterardgolfclub.com](http://www.oughterardgolfclub.com)) is a parkland course flanked by Lough Corrib and the Connemara Mountains and scattered with water features, limestone walls and mature native trees. While at the truly unique **Connemara Isles Golf Club** ([www.connemara-islesgolfclub.com](http://www.connemara-islesgolfclub.com)) in Léitir Móir, you'll find nine scenic holes skirting the edge of the Atlantic and cradled by ocean inlets, rocky outcrops and stunning views.

Several other courses are within easy reach of Connemara. For full details visit [www.discoverireland.ie/west](http://www.discoverireland.ie/west)



Connemarathon



Connemara Championship Links



Clifden Arts Festival

## THE FESTIVE SPIRIT

Throughout the year you'll find tourists and locals alike *celebrating* Connemara life at a range of *festivals* and events across the region. Join the fun for a true taste of Connemara's *and vibrant* heart.



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## FEBRUARY

**Friends of Ted Festival, Inis Mór**  
Mayhem and madness Fr. Ted style on Connemara's very own craggy island.

## MARCH

**St. Patrick's Day, March 17th**  
Many towns in Connemara celebrate Ireland's national feast day with lively parades and events.

## APRIL

**Connemarathon, Maam Cross**  
Hardy souls tackle the hills in one of the most scenic marathon routes in the world.

**Clifden Open Boat Competition**  
Popular three-day fishing event attracting anglers from around the world.

## MAY

**Connemara Mussel Festival**  
Renvyle Peninsula

**Leenane Walking Festival**  
Guided walks, events and talks around stunning Killary Harbour and Mweelrea Mountain.

## JUNE

**Bodhrán Summer School, Inis Óirr**  
Bodhrán workshops, lectures and craic on Inis Óirr.

**Currach Racing, Leenane**

**Roundstone Arts Week**  
Popular arts festival with music, drama and dance.

## JULY

**Celtic Spirit & Culture Week**  
Aran Islands. Music, dance, traditional singing and archaeological walks.

**Creative Writers Workshop**  
Aran Islands. Five-day creative writing workshop and walking tours.

**Roundstone Regatta**  
Ireland's oldest traditional sea festival featuring everything from Galway Hookers to currachs.

## AUGUST

**Connemara Pony Show, Clifden**  
Week-long celebration of the native horse.

## SEPTEMBER

**Clifden Arts Week**  
Week-long festival with poetry readings, plays, lectures, concerts and traditional music.

## OCTOBER

**Connemara Sea Week, Letterfrack**  
A celebration of marine heritage with conference, cultural events and traditional music.

## NOVEMBER

**Marconi Festival, Clifden**  
Four-day celebration of Marconi's first radio transmission.

## DECEMBER

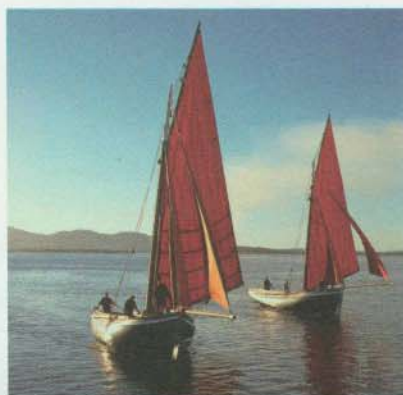
**Clifden on Ice, Clifden**  
Christmas market and ice rink in Clifden Stationhouse courtyard.

## ONGOING EVENTS

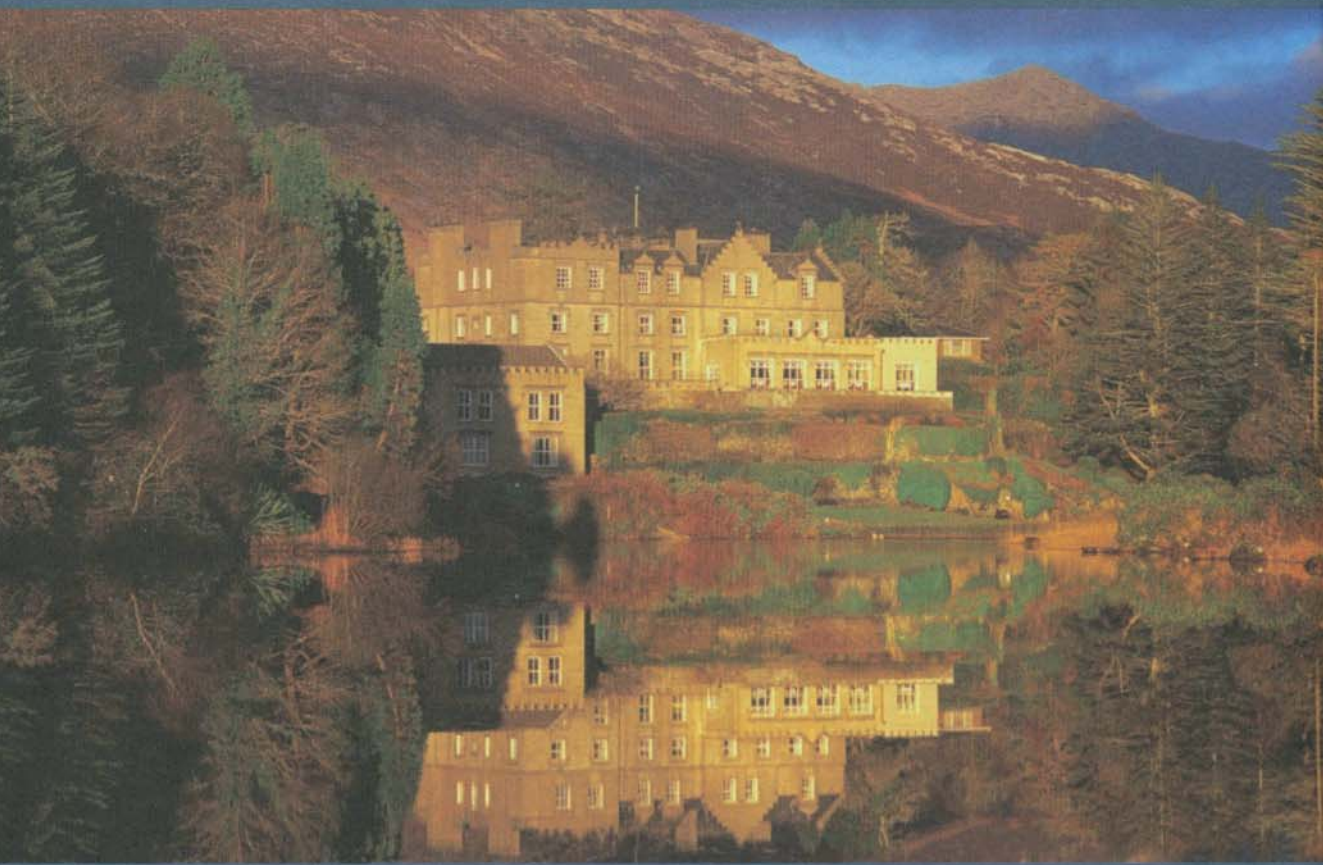
**Clifden Station House Theatre**  
[www.stationhousetheatre.com](http://www.stationhousetheatre.com)  
Full programme of cinema, theatre, comedy, music and children's performances.

**Brigit's Garden, Roscahill**  
[www.galwaygarden.com](http://www.galwaygarden.com)  
Courses in cooking, baking, yoga, Celtic studies and self-improvement.

**Cnoc Suain, Spiddal**  
[www.cnocsuain.com](http://www.cnocsuain.com)  
Irish music and language work-shops, courses on archaeology and Celtic studies, bog walks and painting workshops.



For detailed information on festivals and events in Connemara visit: [www.discoverireland.ie/connemara](http://www.discoverireland.ie/connemara)



# CONNEMARA DREAMS

There's a great range of accommodation available in Connemara from *cosy youth hostels* set in a scenic valleys, to rural B&Bs, *country house* hotels and secluded castles.





Ballynahinch Castle Hotel

## HOTELS

Connemara is home to some of the most memorable hotels in the country. With a choice of **regal castles** set in **magnificent grounds**, romantic country houses renowned for their **good food** and impressive modern hotels with contemporary style, you should have no problem finding your perfect retreat from the rest of the world.

## GUESTHOUSES

If you're looking for **luxury** but craving a more informal atmosphere, Connemara's **glorious guesthouses** combine charm, character and elegance with stunning surroundings. Guesthouses range from sleek, modern townhouses to **historic period homes** in breathtaking locations but all offer a **warm welcome** and personal service.

## BED AND BREAKFAST & FARMHOUSES

You won't go far in Connemara without passing a B&B. Offering excellent **value for money** and the opportunity to get an insight into life in rural Ireland, these small, **family-run** premises have just a handful of rooms and a **warm and cosy** atmosphere.

## SELF CATERING

Get a slice of home away from home with a wide range of self-catering properties scattered across the region. From **traditional cottages** on windswept beaches to purpose-built facilities in towns and villages, this is a great option for groups or families looking for a short-term base.

## HOSTELS AND CAMPING

Budget travellers will be amazed by the quality of Connemara's **youth hostels** and the breathtaking locations in which they're set. Private and dorm rooms are available as well as communal **cooking facilities**. If you fancy a night under the stars, you'll also find a good choice of **camping and caravan** sites across the region.

You'll find a full listing of approved accommodation on our website [www.discoverireland.ie/connemara](http://www.discoverireland.ie/connemara)



Rosleague Manor



Doolough Valley

# TAKE TO THE ROADS

Connemara's *unique* landscape and *quiet roads* make it an ideal place to get behind the wheel and *explore* the countryside.



Roundstone Beach



Driving through Connemara, you'll have the freedom to meander at your own pace, stop for photographs and detour down back roads to discover your very own slice of Connemara life.

This two-day driving tour, with optional detours to the islands, takes in the best scenery and attractions on an easy loop from Galway City.

## DAY 1

Depart from Galway and follow the R336 west along the north shore of **Galway Bay**. As you leave the city behind you'll pass through the small towns of Bearna and Na Forbacha and from there it's an easy jaunt to **An Spidéal**. You'll find a popular blue-flag beach here and also the **Spiddal Craft Centre** where you can see artists and craftspeople at work in their studios.

An Spidéal is the gateway to the Connemara **Gaeltacht** (Irish speaking region) and from here on you'll see shops and signs marked out in Irish. Just past An Spidéal is the town of **Indreabhán** from where you can take a short flight across to the **Aran Islands**. Alternatively you can take a ferry from **Ros a Mhíl** which is only a little further down the road. The three Aran Islands make a wonderful detour and are well worth an overnight stay. With breathtaking scenery, an unhurried pace of a life and vibrant traditional culture, they're a highlight of any trip to the region. On **Inis Mór**, the largest island, you'll find the spectacular Bronze Age fort of **Dún Aonghasa**. Perched on top of a 100m-high cliff, this semi-circular fort is one of the most magnificent in Europe.

Back on the mainland continue on through the picturesque village of **An Casla** to **Scriob** where you turn left on to the R340 towards Gort Mór. Follow the signs to the left for **Rosmuc** and make your way down the tranquil back road to the water's edge and the summer residence of Patrick Pearse (1879 - 1916), national hero and leader of the 1916 Rising. **Pearse's Cottage**, a small, traditional thatched cottage overlooking the sea, contains an exhibition on Pearse's life and a number of his mementoes.

Return to the main road at **Gort Mór** and continue along the R340 which skirts the coastline and offers spectacular views out to sea and inland to the mountains. You'll pass the villages of **Carna**, **Toombeola** and **Ballynahinch** before arriving at Roundstone, where you can visit **Roundstone Music & Crafts**, a traditional instrument workshop where you can see bodhráns, traditional goat-skin drums, being made. Roundstone also has a pristine white sand beach at **Gurteen Bay**, a great spot for swimming.

From Roundstone follow the road into **Ballyconneely** to visit the **Connemara Smokehouse** where a wide range of smoked and marinated fish is cured in the traditional way. Nearby you'll find the famed Connemara **Championship Links**, a 27-hole golf course with wonderful ocean views.

Head on towards **Clifden** and take a short detour down the N59 to visit the Connemara Heritage & History Centre (**Dan O'Hara's Homestead**) where you can get a glimpse of life in times past. The restored cottage and farm includes a reconstructed crannóg (Neolithic lake dwelling) and clochán (stone beehive hut) as well as a cottage and farm buildings. Exhibitions, demonstrations and commentary bring the rural history of Connemara to life. From here it's an easy 10km back to Clifden, the capital of Connemara.

Overnight you have a choice of staying in some of the best country house hotels in Ireland. The area is littered with historic houses renowned for their spectacular views and fine dining.



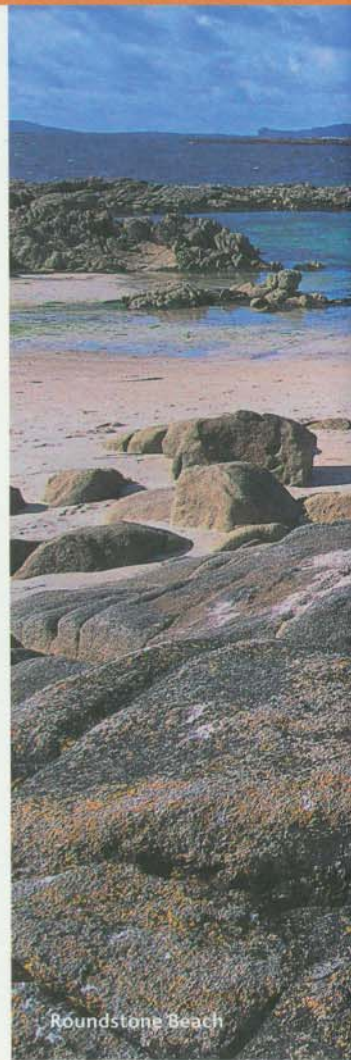
## DAY 2

Well rested and well fed, set off from Clifden and head north on the N59 to **Streamstown**. Follow the signs to the left to reach **Cleggan**, gateway to **Inishbofin** Island. Regular ferries make a day or overnight trip an easy detour while the stunning scenery, vibrant music scene and host of historic sites make it well worth the effort.

Once back on the mainland return to the main road and continue on towards **Letterfrack**. Just before the town you'll enter the majestic **Connemara National Park**. The park encompasses some of the region's best scenery with excellent walking and panoramic views from the **Twelve Bens**.

Driving through Letterfrack you will arrive at **Kylemore Abbey and Garden**, a romantic Gothic abbey now home to the Benedictine nuns. The restored Victorian garden, spectacular neo-Gothic church and cosy tea rooms are well worth a stop.

From Kylemore make your way to the pretty village of **Leenane** at the head of magnificent **Killary Harbour**, Ireland's only fjord. At **Nancy's Point**, before you enter the village of Leenane, you can take a cruise along the nine-mile fjord with Killary Cruises and get an insight into the geography of this natural wonder and enjoy stunning views of the water. The Killary area is also home to two world-class adventure centres which make the most of the region's rugged scenery.



Roundstone Beach

### Ballynahinch



Leenane's picturesque setting made it the perfect location for the 1989 film adaptation of John B. Keane's famous play *The Field*, directed by Jim Sheridan. The town is also home to the **Leenane Sheep & Wool Centre** which explains the history of sheep and wool handcrafts and has demonstrations of carding, spinning and weaving.

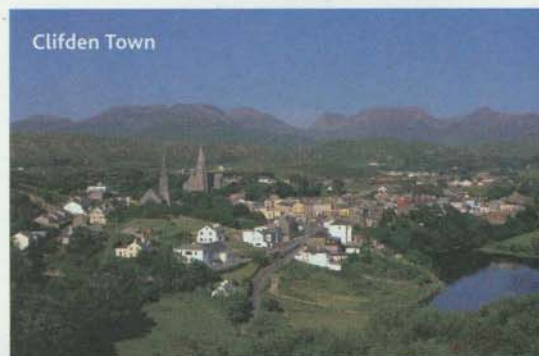
From Leenane head east along the R336 for spectacular views of the **Maumturk Mountains**. Take a right turn at Maum towards Maam Cross and then go left onto the N59 towards Oughterard. Just before the town you can visit **Glengowla Mines**, a historic 19th-century silver and lead mine that throws light on life in the mines through a series of exhibitions, interactive displays and an informative guided tour.





Continue on into **Oughterard**, a picturesque town nestled between the Connemara Mountains and the steel-grey waters of **Lough Corrib**. Renowned for its wild brown trout and salmon fishing, the lake is a mecca for anglers. Just beyond the town on the N59 to Galway you'll pass the turning for the imposing **Aughnanure Castle** on the left. This well-preserved 16th century tower house was built by the O'Flaherty clan and preserves a long and turbulent history.

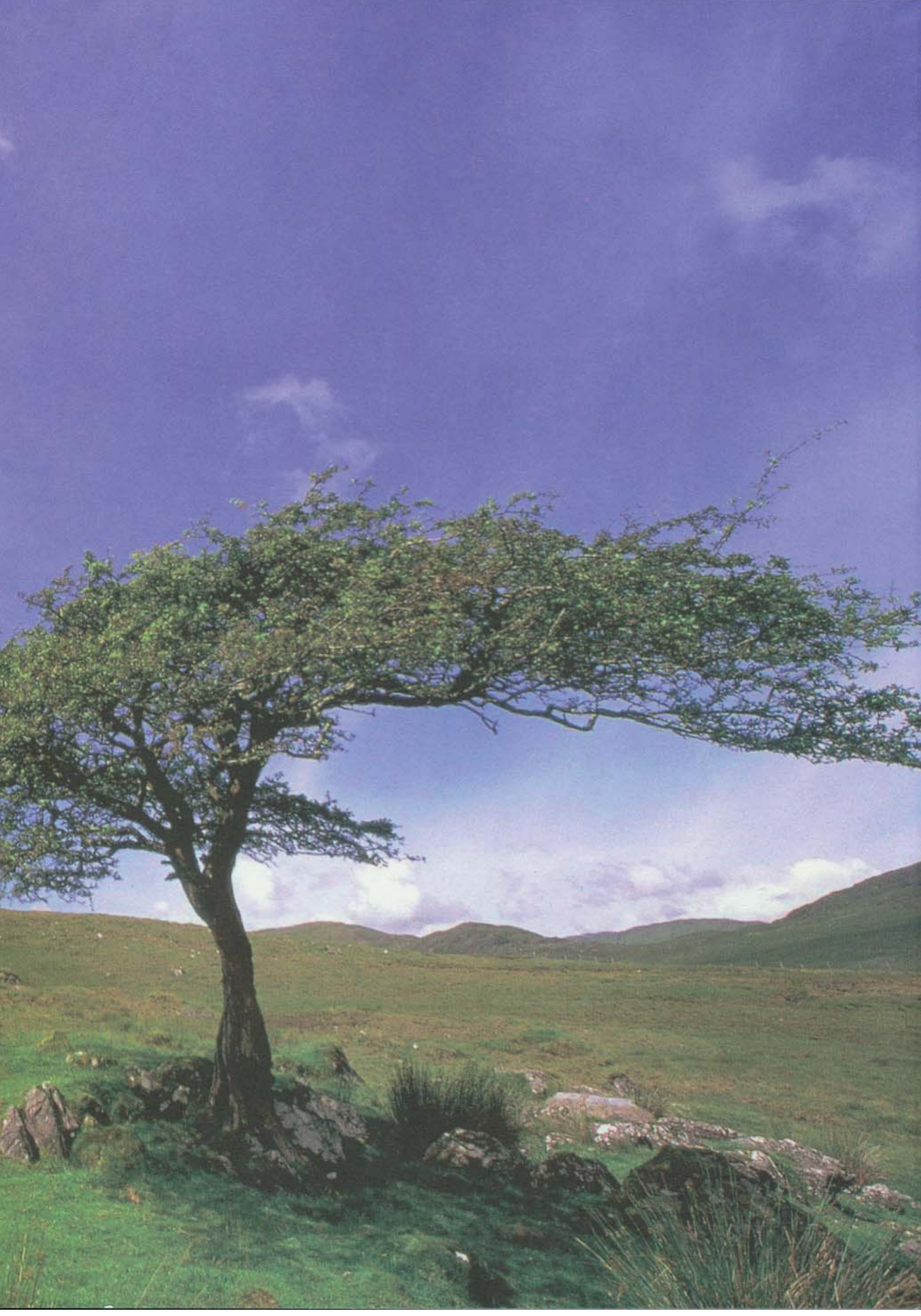
Continue along the N59 to **Roscahill** and take a left turn signposted for **Brigit's Garden**, a woodland paradise with meadows and themed gardens that reflect the Celtic festivals. From here it's an easy drive back through **Maigh Cuilinn** to Galway city.













Leenane

## MAP & USEFUL CONTACTS

Whether it's *adventure* on the Aran Islands, *golf* in Oughterard, or a *cruise* in Killary, find all the information you need to plan your *perfect break*.



## Golf Courses

1. Connemara Championship Links  
[www.connemaragolflinks.com](http://www.connemaragolflinks.com)
2. Oughterard Golf Club T: 353 (0)91 552131
3. Connemara Isles Golf Club  
[www.connemara-islesgolfclub.com](http://www.connemara-islesgolfclub.com)

## Visitor Attractions

4. Aughnanure Castle T: 00353 (0)91 552214
5. Celtic Crystal Visitor Centre T: 00353 (0)91 555172
6. Connemara Marble Visitor Centre T: 00353 (0)91 555746
7. Connemara Smokehouse T: 00353 (0)95 23739
8. Dan O'Hara's Homestead T: 00353 (0)95 21808
9. Dún Aonghasa [www.visitaranislands.com](http://www.visitaranislands.com)
10. Glengowla Mines T: 00353 (0)91 552021
11. Killary Cruises T: 00353 (0)91 566736
12. Kylemore Abbey & Garden T: 00353 (0)95 41146
13. Leenane Sheep & Wool Centre T: 00353 (0)95 42323
14. Oceans Alive Visitor Centre T: 00353 (0)95 43473
15. Pearse's Cottage T: 00353 (0)91 574292
16. Roundstone Music & Craft Shop T: 00353 (0)95 35808
17. Spiddal Craft Centre T: 00353 (0)91 553376
18. Connemara National Park T: 00353 (0)95 41054

## Equestrian Centres

19. Cleggan Beach Equestrian Centre T: 00353 (0)95 44746
20. Errislannan Manor T: 00353 (0)95 21134
21. Knockillaree Riding Centre T: 00353 (0)87 9604517
22. Laragan Stables T: 00353 (0)95 44735
23. Moycullen Riding Centre [www.moycullenriding.com](http://www.moycullenriding.com)
24. The Point Pony Trekking Centre T: 00353 (0)95 23685

## Gardens

25. Brigit's Garden T: 00353 (0)91 550905

## Adventure Operators

26. Delphi Adventure Centre T: 00353 (0)95 42208
27. Killary Adventure Centre T: 00353 (0)95 43411
28. Petersburg Adventure Centre T: 00353 (0)94 9546483
29. Scubadive West T: 00353 (0)95 43922
30. Aran Islands Dive Centre T: 00353 (0)91 584222

## Fishing Guides

- Brian Curran T: 00353 (0)91 505999  
 Michael Faherty T: 00353 (0)91 552388  
 Giles Frazer T: 00353 (0)95 411782  
 Mike Keady T: 00353 (0)91 556326  
 Basil Shields T: 00353 (0)91 552550  
 Tom Doc Sullivan T: 00353 (0)94 9548463

## Sea Angling Operators

- Kevin Macgabhann T: 00353 (0)91 553888  
 Micheal O Conghaile T: 00353 (0)91 572613  
 Pat Conneely T: 00353 (0)95 35952  
 John Ryan T: 00353 (0)95 21069  
 John Brittain T: 00353 (0)95 21073  
 Shane Bisgood T: 00353 (0)95 44738  
 Johnny King T: 00353 (0)95 44649

## Walking

- Connemara Safaris Freephone T: 00353 1850 777 200  
 Walking Cycling Ireland T: 00353 (0) 095 21379

## Boat Trips

- Killary Cruises Freephone T: 00353 1800 415151  
 Western Exposure Safari T: 00353 (0)95 41132  
 Brazen Chaters T: 00353 (0)86 2795118  
 Serious Sailing T: 00353 (0)95 23569











Lough Nafooney

JOYCES COUNTRY

Lough Mask

BALLINROBE  
Baile an Róba

DOUGHTERARD  
Uachtar Ard

GALWAY  
Gailimh

Galway Bay

Inishmaan  
Inis Meáin

THE BURREN

Corcomroe Abbey

Poulnabrone  
Megalithic Tomb

