



Ireland

Sheep's Head Way - Self Guided Tour 2018

Moderate 7 nights

Although the Sheep's Head is the smallest of the south-western peninsulas, the walk around it has been described as the finest long distance path in Ireland. The peninsula is formed by a narrow finger of hills stretching nearly 25 miles into the Atlantic, but less than four miles wide. Agriculture along the Way is simple, imbuing the landscape with a sense of timelessness.

Treks begin at Bantry at the neck of the peninsula. You climb up onto the hillside heading west past the stone circle of Ahakista. Follow the south coast to the small town of Kilcrohane, then around the dramatic headland to the Sheep's Head lighthouse. The craggy coastline of the northern shore is followed east to the Horseshoe Road and up to Finn MacCool's seat. You conclude by walking the crest of the hills affording spectacular views across the whole peninsula to the mountains of Beara and beyond as you wend your way back to Bantry



Day 1 - Travel to Bantry

A taxi is available (if requested) to take you from Cork Airport to Bantry. Alternatively you may make your own way to Bantry by public transport.

Accommodation – B&B in Bantry

Day 2 - Bantry to Durrus

The first day contains more tarmac walking than we would typically arrange. The lanes, however, are quiet and allow you to adjust to this corner of Ireland. There are splendid views across Bantry Bay and the route meanders through farmland and forests. *(19km, 360m ascent)*

Accommodation – B&B in Bantry

Day 3 - Durrus to Ahakista

The route heads west along the peninsula. You leave the village on an old military road past Durrus Court and then climb up to a gap in the spine. The route then descends with fine views over Dunmanus Bay, and you will be passing Gorteanish stone circle on the way to Ahakista. *(13 km, 210 m ascent)*

Accommodation – B&B in Ahakista

Day 4 - Ahakista to Tooreen

Walk along the old military road then cut down to the shoreline walking past the old Bardic school to Farranamanagh. Pass through the village of Kilcrohane then follow the traditional funeral route from the church to the burial ground at the ruined Kilcrohane church. The route then meanders between the shoreline across fields, along old fisherman's paths and back to the military road. The route then leads away from the shore to follow the course of the old road over the last hill of the peninsula, Ballyroon Mountain, 232 m, where there are ruins of an old signal tower built in 1632. *(19 km, 430 m ascent)*

Accommodation – B&B in Ahakista

Day 5 - Tooreen to Finn MacCool's Seat

The route today hugs the shoreline and provides the finest coastal scenery of the whole walk. You begin by walking out to the lighthouse on the western most point of the peninsula before turning east to follow a cliff path along the northern shore. A choice of routes then gives an opportunity to follow a cliff path up to the old Gortavallig copper mine. You continue with good views across Bantry Bay along the Horseshoe Road to Finn MacCool's seat. *(18 km, 370 m ascent)*

Accommodation – B&B in Ahakista

Day 6 - MacCool's Seat to Glanlough

The route today follows the main spine of the peninsula reaching the highest point of the walk, Gouladane, 310 m. From the ridge there are excellent views to the Fastnet Rock Lighthouse in the south around the Kerry Mountains to the north. *(11 km, 420 m ascent)*

Accommodation – B&B in Glanlough

Day 7 - Glanlough to Bantry

The trail again heads over the spine of the peninsula with fine views over Bantry Bay. The way finally descends as you follow a mixture of tracks and lanes back to Bantry House and town. (15 km, 250 m ascent)

Accommodation – B&B in Bantry

Day 8 - Return home

2018 TOUR DATES AND PRICE

What does the tour price of €770.00 per person include?

- Country homes provide accommodation in Bantry and two farmhouses are the base for four nights on the peninsula. Each of the guest houses is only a short walk from shops and bars. All rooms have shower and WC en suite.
- All breakfast
- Three packed lunches
- Three dinners in Ahakista
- Luggage transfer between your accommodation stops
- Full route details with a map of the tour

Single room supplement €245 (if travelling with others)

High season supplement (July/August) €30 per person

Solo tour supplement €350 (if travelling alone)

Tour can start any day from April until October.

ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS

Accommodation

The accommodation is allocated on a twin sharing basis. We stay in bed & breakfast accommodation, where we hope to fuse the best standard we can get with the warmest welcome. We ensure en suite facilities almost all of the time however in some of the more remote spots one might occasionally have to share a bathroom.

We do reserve the right to change the accommodation around during the week, but we will always endeavor to provide a high standard.

Meals: A picnic lunch is provided on three walking days. Your lunch will normally comprise of sandwiches, a chocolate bar or piece of cake, and a piece of fruit. If you bring a thermos flask, this will be filled with tea or coffee. You should bring a water bottle for drinks during the day. You will be able to buy additional snacks and drinks from local shops for during your walk. Three dinners are included in the tour price.

WHAT TO BRING

Your enjoyment of your walking holiday will be greatly helped by having the right gear. The following list should help you in planning your packing for your trip.

Footwear: Good footwear is vital for a happy walking holiday! We recommend waterproof, breathable, walking boots with good ankle support. Boots which are “broken in” (i.e. not brand new), teamed with **well fitting hiking socks** will keep your feet snug and dry and help to avoid blisters.

Hiking Clothes

We recommend the “onion look” of layering clothing as the best protection against heat/cold:

- Base Layer –this layer should not retain moisture but transport it away from the skin (there are lots of “wick away” fabrics now on the market.
- Insulation layer – this layer should stop you from losing body heat – fleece is ideal
- Outer Layer – this layer should keep you dry even in a downpour! A waterproof, breathable jacket and over-trousers are as important as your comfy boots. You should bear in mind that clothing tends to lose its “waterproofness” over time so if you have had your gear for many years it might be time to treat yourself with a trip to an outdoor store!
- Walking trousers/ shorts (avoid denim)
- Warm hat and gloves for chilly mornings or high mountains
- Sun hat
- Walking stick/pole (a great help on uneven terrain)

Daypack - a small comfortable rucksack to carry the bits and pieces you will need during the day:

- Water bottle/flask
- Moleskin/plasters/“second skin” – ward off any impending blisters before they become a problem!
- Sun screen
- Camera
- Binoculars
- Mobile phone

GENERAL INFORMATION

Weather

Because we are an island located near the Gulf Stream Ireland has a very mild climate making it ideal for walking. We recommend that you bring your rain gear as well as your sun hat as a day that starts with rain can end with glorious sunshine! The temperature range during the summer is between 15 and 22 degrees centigrade (60 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit).

Money - The Irish unit of currency is the Euro (€), 100 cent = € 1.

To help you budget, here are some common items that you might purchase during your holiday:

3 course evening meal:	€20 - €45 per person	Sandwich/filled roll	€3 - €4.50
Bottle wine:	€17 upwards	¼ bottle of wine	€5 - €6
Tea/coffee	€1.50 - €3.50	Pint of beer	€3.50 - €4.50

Travel Insurance

It is essential to take out holiday insurance to cover cancellation, personal accident, illness, or loss of possessions. This can be obtained from travel agents, airlines.

Electrical current/Mobile Phone

The standard electrical supply is 220 volts AC (50 cycles). To use small appliances mainland European visitors may require a plug adaptor to fit our 3-pin flat or 2-pin round wall sockets. The mobile phone system in use is a digital GSM 900 system.

Websites on Ireland

Some recommended websites on Ireland that might help you organize your trip if you are planning to spend more time in the country before or after your holiday with us.

www.discoverireland.com - Irish Tourist Board (Failte Ireland) official website providing a wealth of information on all regions of the country.

www.enniswalkingtours.com - guided walking tours of Ennis that give a lively and entertaining way to appreciate this historic medieval town.

www.heritageireland.ie info on historical sites

If you plan to spend some extra time in **Dublin**, the following will give you some more ideas of things to see and do

www.visitdublin.com Dublin Tourism, Tourism Centre, Suffolk Street, Dublin 2

www.dublinuncovered.net www.indublin.ie www.irishfolktours.com

Smoking

A no smoking ban has been operated in Ireland since spring 2004. You are not allowed to smoke in public places (i.e. pubs, hotels, restaurants, shops, trains and buses etc.). However, you may smoke outside in the open air.

Electrical current

The standard electrical supply is 220 volts AC (50 cycles). To use small appliances mainland European visitors may require a plug adaptor to fit our 3-pin flat or 2-pin round wall sockets.

Travel

Arrival: You should aim to arrive in Ireland either in the morning or early afternoon of the first day of your tour. If you wish to transfer to your first accommodation by public transport, bus/train timetables should be consulted before you book your flights. If you wish to transfer to your first accommodation by taxi, your arrival time is not as crucial.

Departure: Whether you transfer to the airport by train, bus or taxi, your departing flight should be from late-morning onwards. Please allow ample time for travel to the airport, plus 1 to 2 hours for checking-in your luggage. Again, if you wish to transfer to the airport by public transport, bus and train timetables should be consulted before you book your flights.

You will find the bus and train timetables on the internet.

Bus www.buseireann.ie

Train www.irishrail.ie

Visa requirements

If you hold an EU passport you only need to make sure your passport is valid for the period of your stay. You will need photo identification travelling between Britain and Ireland.

All other nationalities require a passport that is valid for 3 months beyond the intended length of stay. Most nationalities including the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand do not require visas for Ireland and receive an automatic 90 day visitor's visa on arrival. If your nationality is not mentioned here you should check with your travel agent or consular office.

Tour Grading

Walking in Ireland ranges from gentle to very challenging. Our holidays are graded so that you can choose the most suitable for you. Obviously we cannot be precise about grading as weather conditions also affect the difficulty of a walk and the descriptions below are intended as a guide only.

Grade 2 - moderate	A mixture of glen, coastal and moderate hill walking. Much of the walking is on existing tracks and trails, with some open moor land. Up to 1,500 feet (500 m) ascent, 8 miles (13 km). Walking time - up to 7 hours a day, including rests. For most moderately fit people of all ages.
Grade 3 - strenuous	Mainly hill walking on open moor land, with some steep ascent and descents. Up to 3,000 feet (1,000m) ascent, 10 miles (16 km). Walking time - up to 8 hours a day. For hill walkers with some experience.
Grade 4 - very strenuous	All walks are mountain climb up to 4,000 feet (1,300 m) ascent, 12 miles (20 km) each day. Some routes involve crossing steep terrain where a good head for heights is essential. Walking time - up to 9 hours each day. For strong hill walkers.