

Connemara Mountain Walking Festival Leenane

Weekend Hiking Itinerary

Saturday

Derryclare

Length: 14km

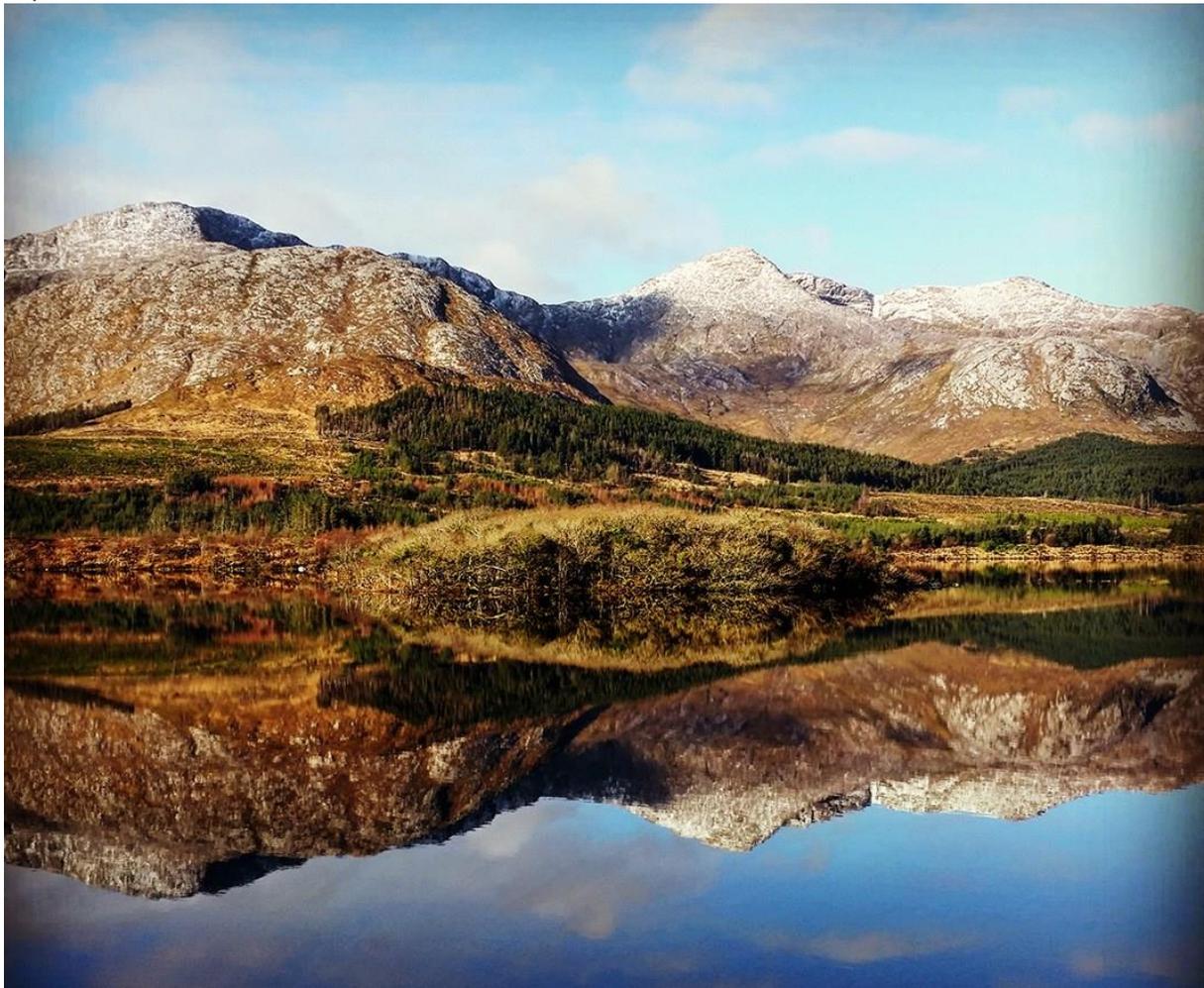
Time: Approx. 8hrs

Height gained: 1700m

Highest Point: 711m Bencorr

Difficulty: A Walk (Hard)

Derryclare (in Irish Binn Doire Chláir or Peak of Derryclare) is one of the Bins of the 12 Bins mountain range. The 12 Bins are synonymous with soul of Connemara. The walk starts at the bottom of Lough Inagh and the route leads northwards through a forest track to a river, which you follow upstream until you leave the forested area and ascent the heathery slope to the rugged westerly spur of Derryclare. There are excellent views of low-lying lake perforations to the south and the quartz valley of Glencoaghan to the west. The route maintains the north-western ridgeline onto Bencorr with some fantastic views of the quiet and extensive Gleninagh Valley. The unforgiving terrain remains consistent through the narrow exposed col onto Binn Dubh and continues westward onto the pass at at Mám Eidhneach. The mass rock gateways the access downhill onto the Gleninagh valley which lies beneath the face of heighest point of the 12 Bins, BenBaun. The narrow sheep track crosses several torn gravel filled streams down onto a narrow spur jutting onto the valley floor. The walk parallels the northern section of the river and connects to an old track and concludes at a nearby farmhouse. The walk is tough due to terrain and height but rewarding in views and experience.



View of Derryclare and Bencorr from Lough Inagh

Ben Gorm

Length: 10km

Time: Approx. 6hrs

Height gained: 780m

Highest Point: 700m Ben Gorm

Difficulty: B Walk (Medium)

Ben Gorm (in Irish Binn Ghorm or Blue Peak) is wild Connemara terrain at its finest. The walk starts at Glendavock which joins onto the northerly ridge towards Ben Creggan. The ridge has excellent views of the Tawnyard valley and Sheefrey Mountains. Many pristine streams web and weave through the lower basin and surge riverwards. The rugged ridgeline tightens as the summit approaches and narrow gorges hasten north towards the Glenamurra River. The panorama rewards of the first spot height at Ben Creggan are undeniable as the weathered southward slope aspects through the famous Doolough Valley and onto the wild Atlantic. From there the trail heads southwards through smooth grassy slopes and boggy outcrops, with long spurs, escarpments and valleys on the left and heathery slopes on the right rolling onto the Delphi valley. The walk reaches onto the highest point at Bengorm. The Killary fjord dominates the landscape with view across to the 12 Bins and Maumturks. Gliding downhill south east to the southern narrow ridgeline the hike edges past the steep cliff face looking down on Lugaharry Lake and some of the best views of Aasleagh and the Erriff Valley. The grassy tussocks challenge the legs at this point but the downhill seems to occur all too quickly. The walk concludes on the tarmac road bordering Aasleagh Falls.



View from Ben Creggan onto Mweelrea and Doolough with Clare Island in the background

Maumean

Length: 13km

Time: Approx. 6hrs

Height gained: 700m

Highest Point: 260m Maumean

Difficulty: C Walk (Easy)

Maumean (In Irish Mám Éan meaning pass of the birds) is a lower part of the Maumturks Mountains where pilgrims visit for prayer and penance. The walk to Maumean picks up on the Western Way at Curr near Maam and leads along a narrow country road south west onto the Failmore River. The walk rises evenly ahead as you enter the secluded pass between these great mountains, the road changes to track which meanders upwards along the mountain side. The trail eventually reaches the holy well and the pre-Christian church built into the jagged cliff face. It is an authentic place for peace and reflection and many people experience a real connection here amid a rugged highland created amphitheatre. The walk then turns downwards towards the 12 Bins and the Derryclare lowlands. The track ends at a car park and turns north westerly along a tarred road towards the bogs and lakes of Lough Inagh. Continuing on along the road the towering Maumturks immediately on the right and the imposing 12 Bins on the left absorb you into great sense of remoteness and sanctuary. The walk finishes on with excellent views of Lough Inagh and the distant 12 Bins.



View from Maumean along the Western Way

Sunday Walk A

Mweelrea

Length: 15km

Time: Approx. 8hrs

Height gained: 1,120m

Highest Point: 814m Mweelrea

Difficulty: A Walk (Hard)

Mweelrea Mountain (Cnoc Maol Réidh meaning Hill of the Bald King) is the highest mountain in Connaught, rising from the bowels of wild Atlantic seascape in dramatic upland ruggedness. The mountain offers one of the finest panoramic views in Ireland on a good day although often shrouded in mist and mystery, the walk is always best undertaken with a guide. This year the walk will commence on the North shore of Doolough and through the gap between the loughs to the natural Ramp path amid house sized boulders. The significance of the mountain is apparent as you slowly climb and witness the airy glacial cliff edges pitch steadily to the first peak of Ben Bury. The route heads westward then skirting the dominant horseshoe to the exposed summit. The views are exquisite in every direction, from fjords, to open ocean, glacial torn valleys to cliffs, beaches and bog. The narrow split ridge leads southwards with surges of long and sometimes steep declines onto Tonatleva hill where a benign track guides you through forests to the fabulous Delphi valley.



View of the ridge line after the Mweelrea summit with Killary in the background

Lough Glenawough Loop

Length: 13km

Time: Approx. 6hrs

Height gained: 630m

Highest Point: 544m Luga Buidhe

Difficulty: B Walk (Medium)

The walk around Lough Glenawough or in Irish Loch Ghleann an Bhua meaning the Lake of the Glen of virtue, is one of the many scenic loops of the corrie Partry Mountains. The loop is rugged among interspersed corries and a diversity of glacial features, long sculpted valleys and plateaus that are surrounded by miles of undulating blanket bog. The walk starts in on the remote tarred road at Derrinkee and follows upwards across the bogland and intersecting with the Cross River. From here the route will connect with the western spur with a moderate climb until the rocky outcrops plateaus out and you get a great view of the first corrie Loughanshee beneath the cliff edge. The majority of the climbing is completed at this point and a short walk later you experience the vast carved corrie of Glenawough. You also have excellent views of the Owenbrin valley and onto one of the great western lakes of Lough Mask. The walk passes down a small windy col at Beal Óg na Croise that was used as a pilgrim route to Croagh Patrick, the route follows the plateau towards the barely there spot height at Luga Buidhe. From there the route descends steadily northwards towards the Erriff valley floor and the ground softens underfoot. The walk concludes at the lowlands of Srahlea.



View looking North across Lough Glenawough

Killary Famine Trail

Length: 11.5km

Time: Approx. 4hrs

Height gained: 260m

Highest Point: 130m Salruck Pass

Difficulty: C Walk (Easy)

The Killary Fjord An Caoláire Rua is the natural boundary between Mayo and Galway amidst dramatic North Connemara landscape. The inlet breaches eastwards alongside the great highland Mountain of Mweelrea and the rugged verges of Foher and Bunowen. A rocky trail is firmly etched on the hillside and meanders along the southern shore side of the Killary. This trail was originally constructed in the 19th century to alleviate communities in the area of deprivation and hunger. The walk starts at Rosroe pier at the tail end of the Killary. The linear ridges of lazy beds and homestead ruins lie despondent along the trail; the sea side has dashed long lines of blue mussel awaiting harvest. The walk enters a more consistent surface by 4km and passes alongside three working farms, one a mussel farm, a salmon farm, the other a sheep farm. This remote trail is nestled peaceful and serene amid the rugged and dramatic Connemara landscape.



View of the Famine trail heading eastwards