

Get on your bike, cycle Inishowen

A well earned break presents an opportunity to 'get on your bike'; a pursuit that boosts the entire health and wellbeing of visitors to Inishowen. By day, push the peddles around routes that encompass spectacular views along this section of the 'Wild Atlantic Way'. By night, rest weary legs whilst enjoying the "craic" in good company. Local bars and restaurants supply wholesome fare, fresh local food accompanied by a Guinness or two. Whatever the weather; get that feel good factor that only natural physical fatigue and a stress free environment can provide.

Interestingly, according to Fáilte Ireland insights, when asked what makes a good cycling destination particular cycling attributes were not a priority for people. Cyclists prefer to have a route which takes them to places of interest, with plenty to do and see on the way. Specifics desired on preference were scenery and landscape, attractive towns and villages, where less traffic, safe zones, and more picturesque pit stops were available.

A cyclist taking a tour of Inishowen, stated: "The scenery was incredible, even through the rain. Every turn in the road brought new wonders; we stopped at a lovely spot, delicious lunch with a great view. The sun came out, as if on cue. We relaxed on the grassy hillside overlooking the ocean, and dried off in the warmth of the day." Another reviewer summed up cycling in Inishowen as "one of the highlights of our two week trip to Ireland." The majority of visitors haven't the time to cycle long distances while holidaying in Ireland, so the Inishowen Peninsula positioned between two sea lakes; the wild Atlantic Ocean provides a taste of Ireland on a small scale, often referred to as 'Ireland in miniature'.

There are cycling routes for people of different abilities and fitness levels. Perhaps visit An Grianan of Aileach first, where visitors can get a panoramic view of Inch Island and surroundings from this elevated position. From here, cyclists can plan their itinerary from one or all of the suggested routes.

Inch Wildfowl Reserve - 8 km off road trail – Easy

Inch Wildfowl Reserve is a beautiful trail, shared with pedestrians; suitable for the less confident cyclist, or parents with children. An 8km loop utilising parts of the old railway track, accessed from all three car parks. The loop links via a bridge onto the island, forming a

'causeway' between the lagoon and Lough Swilly. Bird watching huts make ideal stops for taking a break. For keen bird watchers a pair of binoculars is a must.

Carndonagh, Malin, Culdaff – 25km on road – Moderate

A flat terrain which most cyclists will cover in less than two hours precedes this route. Locals recommend taking the Moss road and Corvish road to re-join the main road, avoiding the main road which is more enjoyable. The route is easily followed from Carndonagh to Malin. Take a break at the Malin Townhouse before turning right at the green onto the Culdaff road. On reaching Culdaff, an alternative stop is McGuinness' or McGrorys Bars. Anyone feeling very active could include a walk on the beach, or use the picnic area there. There is no bike rack but there are some signs you can lock a bike to. Refreshed, continue to the Bocan church. Take a right alongside the hall and past the Cloncha Church, rejoin the Merville to Carndonagh main road, which returns cyclists to Carndonagh in no time.

Merville, Stroove, Kinneigo – 30km on road – Difficult/steep

This route is defined as 'difficult'; for the more experienced cyclist. If you're a club cyclist out every weekend this is just normal. From Merville this route follows the Inishowen 100, through Greencastle and Stroove. Stroove has one of the Blue Flag beaches in Donegal, ideal for a dip! This section forms the warm up; the difficult section is ahead. Climbing over Cnockaulin and into Kinneigo, there are a series of steep twists and turns. The breath-taking views and beautiful beach invites the cyclist to linger a while. Coming up out of Kinneigo, (avoiding the 100 towards Tremone, which is a right turn), brings the journey back onto the Carndonagh road to Merville. Freewheel the descent into the town! Highlights of this route include the castle and the lighthouse.

Inis Eoghain Cycleway – is a 55km loop connecting the River Foyle in County Londonderry to Lough Swilly in Donegal.

For the avid cycling enthusiast, the recommended Inishowen 100 route, or the national cycle route over An Grianan into Derry will provide a suitable challenge.

Forthcoming dedicated cycling activities will be on our events. A popular Malin Head to Mizen Head event for cycling challenges those avid enthusiasts from the Northern most point to the southernmost point of the land. The distance between these two extremes is almost exactly

400 miles (640km). The routes will seek to stay away from main roads and maximize the scenery, whilst at the same time avoiding adding extra kilometres to these already challenging rides.

Visit the Inishowen Tourist Office if you pass by us in Bunrana or alternatively at our website at www.govisitinishowen.com for all the information on planning individual itineraries and for further information on cycle tours, bike hire, and accommodation.