

BIKING IRELAND

Premiere Inn Trip



“Ireland, especially the rural West, is a cyclist’s dream,” writes *Bicycling* magazine.

“A network of intertwined little roads ... wind above seaside cliffs and past evenly spaced white cottages with gray slate roofs, each one trailing its signature plume of smoke from a turf fire.” Join Backroads and weave your way through this spectacular landscape. Pedal along the quiet nooks of western Cork and Kerry and past ancient fortresses, crumbling churches and peaceful glens dressed in emerald. From the historic harbor town of Kinsale follow flower-lined country lanes to Baltimore, then round Bantry Bay and explore a handful of charming villages. Cross the Cahra Mountains to Kenmare and venture into the rugged landscape of the Beara Peninsula. Along the way, you’ll be charmed by a local historian, a spinner of folk tales and a whiskey expert, and enjoy warm Irish hospitality in country manors and inns.

Biking



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BACKROADS
THE WORLD'S #1 ACTIVE TRAVEL COMPANY

IRELAND



Cork, Kerry & the Southwest Emerald Isle

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Day 1

Meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks wearing Backroads T-shirts) at 10 a.m. at **Hayfield Manor** in Cork City. **Please arrive dressed in your biking clothes, with your walking shoes in a small daypack for the afternoon activities in Kinsale. Make sure to have your rain jacket handy.** See “Arriving & Departing” for additional logistics information.

Shuttle to Kinsale 30 Minutes

Old Head of Kinsale Biking Loop 18 Miles
(1,700-foot elevation gain)

Optional Walking Tour of Kinsale 1½ Hours
or **Optional Scilly Walk 3.5 Miles**

Welcome to Ireland, where spectacular natural settings, fascinating history and lively village culture combine for a terrific week of cycling. After we arrive in Kinsale, dubbed the “Gourmet Capital of Ireland,” your Backroads leaders fit your bike and give a brief talk on biking techniques and safety. Then you’re off on a warm-up ride into the countryside, following a hilly route to the cliffs at the Old Head of Kinsale. A watchtower from the Napoleonic Wars and castle ruins rise over the headlands. The town is an important historic site—in 1601 Irish forces lost the Battle of Kinsale, a crucial battle in Ireland’s Nine Years War for independence from England.

After lunch, spend the afternoon as you choose. Consider a private guided tour of Kinsale, a walk to Charles Fort, shopping or a visit to Desmond Castle, a former prison with a colorful history. Our home in Kinsale is Perryville House, a charming guesthouse set in a historic building. Though casual and understated, Perryville House is a nice introduction to the accommodations typical of the region and offers privacy, lovely gardens and plenty of Irish hospitality. Tonight we dine at a local restaurant known for its artfully prepared seafood and game. *Lodging: Perryville House*

CONNECTING THE FIRST DAY

If you need to contact Backroads on the day your trip starts, please call Perryville House at 021-477-2731 and leave a message for your Trip Leaders.
(From outside Ireland, dial 353-21-477-2731).

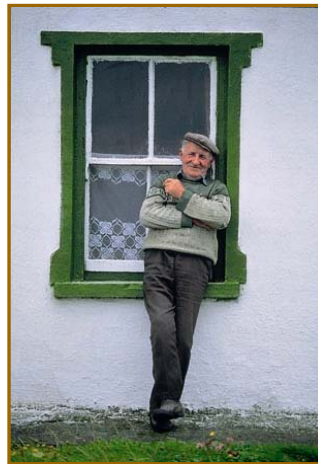
Day 2

Clonakilty Route 29 Miles with Shuttle
(1,050-foot elevation gain)

Longer Options: Leap 45 Miles with Shuttle
(2,600-foot elevation gain)
or **Baltimore 59 Miles**
(3,450-foot elevation gain)

Optional Beacon Walk 3 Miles

This morning we depart Kinsale along rolling, wildflower-lined country roads with views of the ocean. After dropping down to ride along the coast, stop to look at the ruins of the 13th-century Timoleague Abbey. Bike through the countryside until you reach the bustling market town of Clonakilty, where you can rest your legs and eat lunch on your own. If you’re ready to take it easy, hop in the van for a lift to Baltimore. Otherwise, continue pedaling through the fertile farmland, taking a short detour to Woodfield, the birthplace of famous Irish rebel Michael Collins. The stretch from here to Leap (and on to Baltimore, if you’re feeling ambitious!) is a classic Irish scene of green hills, small farms, quaint cottages and woolly sheep, with sweeping coastal vistas the whole way.



The history of Baltimore and its bay reads like a classic adventure novel. In 1631, Algerian pirates stormed the harbor, massacring the inhabitants and taking survivors to Africa as slaves. Above the town stands the ruined 16th-century castle of the O’Driscoll clan, while just offshore the ruins of a 15th-century Franciscan friary crumble onto Sherkin Island. We spend the night at Casey’s of Baltimore, a family-run hotel and traditional Irish pub overlooking the harbor. For a real taste of local color, head to the pub for a pint of ale if you arrive early. Or walk to Beacon Point for wonderful views of oceanside cliffs and the lighthouse across the harbor.

After dinner in the hotel’s cozy dining room, we enjoy an evening of entertainment: Perhaps we’ll listen to the stories of a local *seanachie* (storyteller), take in the sounds of traditional Irish music or join locals for a fun dance lesson. *Lodging: Casey’s of Baltimore*

Day 3

Ferry to Schull 1 Hour

Ballylickey Route 20 Miles

(1,000-foot elevation gain)

Longer Option: Sheep's Head Loop 38 Miles

(1,500-foot elevation gain)

This morning we take a scenic ferry ride across Roaringwater Bay to the lively hamlet of Schull. (It can be chilly on the water, so bring some warm layers.) Wedged between the harbor and Mount Gabriel, Schull was founded as a school more than 1,000 years ago by the monks of nearby Rosscarbery. Today, this small yet popular resort destination has several fine restaurants and a lively fishing trade. Our ride to Ballylickey follows a network of quiet country roads and charming towns. You can opt to take a longer ride on Sheep's Head Peninsula, with views of Dunmanus and Bantry Bays along the route. Enjoy lunch on your own in Durrus—you can't miss its ten brightly colored buildings!—or continue on a mostly uphill stretch to the bustling port town of Bantry, where you'll find more restaurant options.

Tonight's inn, the Victorian-style Seaview House, sits on the edge of Bantry Bay in Ballylickey and offers up plenty of Irish charm, old-world comfort and a warm family-style welcome. This evening we stroll to Mannings' Emporium for a tasting of Irish cheeses, an experience that shouldn't be missed. Save plenty of room for a delicious meal in the hotel's dining room. *Lodging: Seaview House Hotel*

OUR ACCOMMODATIONS PREMIERE INNS*



PERRYVILLE HOUSE

(1 night) Overlooking the marina, this cozy manor house offers privacy and a welcoming atmosphere in the heart of Kinsale.

Kinsale, County Cork
phone: 353-(0)21-477-2731
www.perryvillehouse.com

CASEY'S OF BALTIMORE

(1 night) Exuding classic Irish charm, Ann and Michael Casey's cheery casual inn with an inviting pub is tucked in a traditional fishing village.

Baltimore, West Cork
phone: 353-(0)282-0197
www.caseysofbaltimore.com

SEAVIEW HOUSE HOTEL

(1 night) A quaint country house on the shore of Bantry Bay where owner Kathleen O'Sullivan pampers us with personal attention. Highly acclaimed cuisine and warm hospitality make this a local favorite.

Ballylickey, County Cork
phone: 353-(0)275-0073
www.seaviewhousehotel.com

PARK HOTEL KENMARE *(above)*

(2 nights) *Travel+Leisure* calls the service at this member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World "an irresistible combination of French efficiency and Irish friendliness." The five-star Victorian mansion overlooks Kenmare Bay.

Kenmare, County Kerry
phone: 353-(0)64-664-1200
www.parkkenmare.com

* With 2 Casual Inn nights at Perryville House and Casey's of Baltimore



Day 4

Kenmare Route 25 Miles

(1,900-foot elevation gain)

Shorter Option: Glengarriff 8 Miles with Shuttle

(340-foot elevation gain)

Longer Option: Glengarriff Nature Reserve 31 Miles

(2,100-foot elevation gain)

Optional Visit to Garinish Island 1 Hour

Today's route begins with a rolling spin along rural back roads. After a short, fairly steep hill, drop down into a deep valley and the little town of Glengarriff. Here you can board a ferry for a ten-minute ride to Garinish Island, a lush and unexpected Italian garden on what used to be a barren rock ledge. The warm Gulf Stream currents of the southwest coast help maintain the island's almost subtropical climate and unusual beauty. Ultimately, however, the gardens owe their existence to Scotsman John Annan Bryce, who had every shovelful of soil brought over by boat from the mainland. He also commissioned the building of fountains, statues and replicas of Roman temples, and imported exotic plants from around the world.

You're on your own for lunch in Glengarriff. Afterward, it's time to get back on the road and head to Kenmare on a route that includes a gradual five-mile climb to Caha Pass. If you need a little energy boost after conquering the hill, you're in luck! A fine chocolatier waits in Bonane, ready to reward your efforts with something sweet. Your sugar high, as well as sweeping views of Kenmare Bay, will sustain you on the exhilarating downhill ride into County Kerry.

A long, rolling stretch through the countryside brings you to Kenmare and the renowned Park Hotel Kenmare. This prestigious hotel is widely regarded as the finest in southwest Ireland. This afternoon, you may want to reward yourself with a spa treatment at Sámas, the Gaelic word for "indulgence of the senses." (Spa treatments are not included in the trip price. We recommend making reservations well in advance; see "During Your Trip" for more details.)

Tonight, dinner is on your own in Kenmare—your leaders will point you in the right direction for a great meal, a pint of Guinness and some live music. *Lodging: Park Hotel Kenmare*



ALWAYS IMPROVING

While the information presented here details this trip's planned routes, activities, accommodations, and meeting and departing times, we are constantly seeking new opportunities to enhance this itinerary and your experience. Naturally, we will keep you up to date on any changes that may affect your arrival, departure or lodging.

Day 5

Beara Peninsula Route 31 Miles

(1,000-foot elevation gain)

Longer Option: Healy Pass 64 Miles

(2,800-foot elevation gain)

Today's route lets you explore the sparsely populated Beara Peninsula, named for a Spanish princess who fell in love with an Irish warrior. It's the land of fertility, according to legend, and probably looks today much like it did to the ancient Celts. Ride past quiet bays, stately cliffs and remnants of ancient oak forests to the subtropical gardens of Derreen House. You'll find exotic plants, such as bamboo, rubber trees and giant New Zealand tree ferns. The garden sits beside Kilmakilloge Harbor and underneath 1,000-foot Mount Knockatee—a great place to enjoy your pack lunch. When you're ready, loop back to Kenmare over rolling country roads or, if you're itching for more miles, head for Healy Pass at 1,084 feet, which offers views of the peninsula stretching out to the sea. Then ascend into the high country, passing glacier-carved peaks and lakes, including the sunken, sheer-sided Glanmore Lough. Back in Kenmare, check out the many craft shops and coffeehouses, take a relaxing walk along the River Finnihy or visit the nearby prehistoric stone circle. Ancient people left these monuments to mark the sites of burials, battles or mythological events—the one at Kenmare is among the largest.

If you prefer not to bike, enjoy an afternoon at the spa or on the golf course. The 18-hole course at the Kenmare Golf Club, next to the hotel, is a great introduction to golfing in Ireland. Or, play at the renowned Ring of Kerry Golf and Country Club, just five miles away. Other options you might consider today include a sailing, kayaking or fishing excursion on idyllic Kenmare Bay; contact locally owned Star Sailing & Adventure Centre for more information. (These activities are not included in the trip price; see "During Your Trip" for more details on golfing.)

For our final night, we gather for cocktails with John Moriarty, our resident whiskey aficionado, for a private tasting of Ireland's finest spirit. Then we enjoy an elegant five-course meal in the dining room and raise a glass to toast a wonderful week in Ireland. *Sláinte!* (To your health!)

Lodging: Park Hotel Kenmare

Day 6

Moll's Gap Loop 13 Miles

(800-foot elevation gain)

Longer Option: Blackwater Valley 27 Miles

(1,100-foot elevation gain)

Shuttle to Cork 2 Hours

After an early breakfast of tea and scones, take one last gorgeous ride up to Moll's Gap. Spin through Killarney National Park and set your eyes on the Gap of Dunloe, a narrow pass cutting between the Purple Mountains and MacGillycuddy's Reeks. Spot Carrauntoohil, Ireland's tallest mountain which is part of the MacGillycuddy's Reeks range. To lengthen the ride, continue toward the town of Sneem,

passing through the Blackwater Valley, and follow a quiet country road back to Kenmare.

Or if you prefer, relax over a leisurely breakfast and take a stroll around the hotel grounds. You might also run into Kenmare for last-minute souvenirs. There's time to shower and change before we gather for brunch, then board a private coach bound for Cork. Please see "Arriving & Departing" for end-of-trip logistics.



Arriving & Departing

After reviewing the following information, please inform us of your arrival and departure plans on your Personal Information Form.

All prices are in U.S. dollars and are subject to change; as of October 2009, U.S. \$1.00 = .68 euro. For more information on money matters, please see “Destination Details.”

MEETING TIME & LOCATION

On the first day of the trip, we meet at **10 a.m.** at **Hayfield Manor in Cork City** (Perrott Avenue, College Road). Look for a Backroads leader (wearing a Backroads T-shirt) at the front desk. (For more information on Hayfield Manor, see “Where to Stay Before & After Your Trip.”) From here we shuttle about 30 minutes to Perryville House in Kinsale. **Please arrive dressed in your biking clothes, with your walking shoes in a small daypack for the afternoon activities in Kinsale. Make sure to have your rain jacket handy (just in case)!**

Because of our 10 a.m. meeting time, it **may be necessary for you to arrive in Ireland the day before our trip starts.** Please see “Where to Stay Before & After Your Trip” for a list of suggested accommodations.

If you're delayed on the first day of the trip and miss the Backroads shuttle in Cork, it's possible to get to our first night's hotel on your own. (Please check to see if the coach is outside before assuming that you missed it.) Taxi service is available from Cork to Kinsale for approximately \$55. Please call Perryville House at 021-477-2731 and leave a message for your leaders, letting them know when you plan to arrive. (If you're calling from outside of Ireland, dial 353-21-477-2731.)

If you're spending time in Ireland prior to your Backroads trip and plan to meet your leaders at Perryville House, please be in the lobby by 10:30 a.m. If you're flying into Shannon Airport, a taxi to Kinsale takes about 2½ hours and costs around \$320.

CONCLUSION OF THE TRIP

On the last day of the trip, we shuttle from Kenmare to Cork, arriving at the Cork Airport at about 1:30 p.m., the train station at 2 p.m., and the Hayfield Manor at 2:15 p.m. If you plan to use this airport shuttle, please schedule your flight out of Cork for after 3:30 p.m.

If you need to get to the airport or train station earlier, the hotel can arrange car service from Kenmare to Cork for approximately \$250, and the ride takes 1½ hours. Or, you can use coach service from Kenmare to the airport (with a connection in central Cork). Please consult the Bus Éireann Web site (www.buseireann.ie) for the most current schedules and fares. If you're flying out of Shannon Airport, your leaders can help arrange transportation. A taxi from Kenmare takes close to 2½ hours and costs around \$380.

FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

We recommend flying into Cork Airport (airport code: ORK; www.corkairport.com). A few airlines, including Aer Lingus, American and British Airways, offer flights from North America to Cork via London or Dublin. (Of course, lots of airlines fly to London and Dublin; connecting flights from both cities are available on Aer Lingus, Aer Arran or RyanAir.)

You can also fly into **Shannon** (SNN; www.shannonairport.com), but keep in mind that it's a 2-hour drive to Cork (there is no train station in Shannon). A taxi ride from Shannon to Cork costs about \$300.

Airlines including American, Delta, Continental, United, US Airways and Aer Lingus offer flights to Shannon from major North American cities.

For help arranging air transport to and from your Backroads trip, please work with your own travel agent, the airline directly or an online travel site. For assistance locating a travel agent, please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. (Note that most travel agents and online travel sites charge a fee for their consulting services.)

TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN THE CORK AIRPORT & CENTRAL CORK CITY

Cork Airport is approximately 5 miles from the city center. Transportation options between Cork City and the airport include taxis (fare is \$15–\$25) and Bus Éireann (www.buseireann.ie; one-way tickets are approximately \$6).

RAIL TRAVEL BETWEEN DUBLIN & CORK CITY

If your Irish gateway city is Dublin, you might want to travel to and from Cork City by train. The trip takes about 3 hours,

PRICES & SCHEDULES

All prices and schedules were current at the time of printing, but are subject to change at any time.

and trains run every hour. The Cork train station is 2 miles from Hayfield Manor, our meeting location on Day 1.

For more information on rail travel in Ireland, visit the Iarnród Éireann Web site at www.irishrail.ie. You can purchase tickets from this site, but keep in mind that tickets can't be mailed to a United States address. They are available for pickup, however, at many train stations in Ireland; check out the list of pick-up stations online before you purchase your tickets. (Go to FAQs and select, "How Do I Make a Reservation?")

We suggest purchasing rail tickets and making reservations through your own travel agent. For assistance locating a travel agent, please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. In addition, you can purchase tickets and make reservations through Rail Europe by visiting www.raileurope.com. Please note that all online orders are subject to a shipping and handling fee of \$18. You can check schedules and buy tickets online, but for the most detailed and up-to-date information, it's best to speak directly with one of Rail Europe's agents by calling 877-257-2887. Just keep in mind that if you make reservations by phone, the shipping and handling fee is \$33.

RIDING THE EUROPEAN RAIL

Most trains require reservations. A seat reservation will appear as a separate coupon along with your actual train ticket; it will specify the date of travel, destination, train number, class of travel, car number and seat number.

To find your platform, which will be listed at least 10 minutes prior to departure, check the small TV screens or the larger schedule boards in the main station area (larger stations only). Four columns will be listed: destination, type of train, platform number and departure time.

If you're traveling without reservations, you must validate your "open" ticket by stamping it on the day of travel to avoid a supplementary fee on the train. Look for the conveniently located machines on each train platform. (The machine stamps the date and time on the "open" ticket to prevent multiple use; if your seat is reserved, validation isn't necessary because your ticket is already imprinted with your date of travel, destination and seat number.) If you forget to stamp your ticket before boarding, tell the on-board ticket inspector immediately to avoid a supplementary fee. If you're using a European Railpass, it must be activated at a ticket counter before first use.

During Your Trip

ACCOMMODATIONS

The accommodations on our itinerary have been carefully chosen to bring you an authentic Irish experience that melds the best of old-world European charm and hospitality with the benefits of recent economic development. One of the things we love about Ireland, in particular Cork and Kerry, is that old-world character! With that said, keep in mind that most hotels in these regions are pretty simple compared to the European hotels you may be used to. Park Kenmare deserves the Premiere Inn designation, but still isn't lavish when juxtaposed with other European hotels; Seaview Inn is also more simple and understated than hotels elsewhere on the continent. While Perryville House and Casey's of Baltimore are closer to the accommodations you might find on one of our Casual Inn Trips, they are the nicest in the area. So, though the rooms might be smaller, the bathrooms a bit older, and you won't find a flat-screen television in your room, we're certain that the warm Irish hospitality and authenticity will more than compensate for the lack of such amenities. Besides, wouldn't you rather be spending time swapping stories and making new friends in the pub downstairs?

All rooms have private baths. Please keep in mind that in Europe, double beds are often two twin beds pushed together. Also note that single rooms are often smaller than double rooms, although they may cost more per person. Single room availability is limited. Our hotels do not have air-conditioning, but with Ireland's generally cool climate, you probably won't miss it.

ROOMMATES

Backroads will try to find a roommate (of the same gender) for guests wishing to share a room. If you sign up more than 95 days in advance of your trip and no roommate is available, 50 percent of the private room charge will be due at final payment. Should a roommate be found before your trip departs, the private room charge will be refunded. If you sign up less than 95 days in advance of departure and no roommate is available, the full private room charge will apply. If a roommate is found before your trip departs, the private room charge will be refunded. On some trips, twin availability is limited; a private room charge applies if a shared twin room is not available, regardless of the number of days before departure. On rare occasions, twin rooms consist of one bed and one rollaway or fold-out sleeper. Please be sure to speak with your Trip Consultant to confirm your room arrangements.



During Your Trip (continued)

MEALS

All meals except for one dinner and three lunches are included in the trip price. If your diet is restricted, note that vegetarian, high-fiber, low-carb and low-fat dishes are not always available at restaurants in Ireland. If you have special dietary requirements, please indicate them on the Personal Information Form.

Please note that alcoholic beverages at meals are not included in the trip price, unless otherwise noted.

RECOMMENDED DINNER ATTIRE

We eat dinner in fairly elegant restaurants. On most nights, the dress is smart-casual. For men we suggest a nice shirt and slacks, and for women we suggest a dress, skirt or dressy slacks. On Day 5 we dine at the Park Hotel Kenmare, where the dress is more elegant. A jacket and tie is appropriate for men, though not required. On Day 2 we dine at Casey's of Baltimore, which is more casual; jeans are fine.

RAIN

To us, Ireland is one of the few places on the planet that looks exactly like the postcard. Rolling green hills. Windswept coastline. Peat bogs. Of course, this lush scenery is due in large part to—you guessed it!—rain. Though we often experience nothing but sunshine on many of our trips, it's also quite common to have an afternoon (or two or three) of rain. But have no fear! We've built our itinerary to get you to our favorite spots in Cork and Kerry regardless of the weather. Just as you can count on the rain in Ireland, you can count on Backroads to support the bike rides and make your day as comfortable and fun as possible. We also keep a few options in our back pocket should the rain be fierce enough to force a retreat into a warm pub. So pack that rain gear—the verdant Irish countryside awaits.

SPA TREATMENTS AT PARK HOTEL KENMARE

On Day 4 or 5, you can indulge in a treatment at the Park Hotel Kenmare's spa, Sámas. The spa offers a signature 3-hour experience: Spend 1 hour in the Thermal Suites (sauna, steam room, mist shower, infinity pool), 1 hour enjoying a treatment of your choice, and 1 hour in the Relaxation Room (unwinding on a bed with an adjustable backrest and headphones tuned to soothing sounds). Now that's some

serious pampering! The 3-hour signature treatment costs around \$220. The price is the same if you choose a one-hour treatment by itself. We recommend booking well in advance; visit www.parkkenmare.com for a description of treatments and to make a reservation. Spa treatments are not included in the trip price.

Day 4: If you plan to bike the shorter option, please schedule your appointment for after 3 p.m. If you choose the basic or longer option, please book your spa treatment for after 4 p.m. (please note that you will only have time for a 2-hour spa experience, as the spa closes at 6 p.m.)

Day 5: If you plan to bike today, please schedule your appointment for after 3 p.m. If you plan to skip the bike ride, anytime is fine.

GOLF

You have the opportunity to golf on Day 4 or 5 at the Ring of Kerry Golf and Country Club or at the Kenmare Golf Club. Greens fees are not included in the trip price and reservations should be made several weeks in advance. We recommend a 9:30 a.m. or later tee time for either day. If you plan to golf on Day 4, you'll need to take a taxi from our hotel in Ballylickey to Kenmare that morning, as the leaders will be providing van support for the biking route. A taxi ride to Kenmare is about \$75.

- Ring of Kerry: 353-(0)644-2000; www.ringofkerrygolf.com. Greens fees: 18 holes for \$95, or 36 holes for \$155. The taxi ride from the Park Hotel Kenmare and back costs \$15 each way.
- Kenmare Golf Club (adjoining Park Hotel Kenmare): 353-(0)644-1291; www.kenmaregolfclub.com. Greens fees on weekdays: 9 holes for \$48, or 18 holes for \$78. On weekends: 9 holes for \$55, or 18 holes for \$86. Trip Guest List

During the trip, your leaders will distribute a guest list that includes the names and contact information of everyone on the trip. If you do not want your contact information to appear on the guest list, please inform your Trip Consultant at least 30 days prior to the trip start.

TRIP LEADERS

Each of your Trip Leaders plays many roles during your vacation: Guide. Host. Caretaker. Naturalist. Chef. Historian. Trouble-shooter. Interpreter. These remarkable individuals have highly developed instincts for making people comfortable, for smoothly handling the logistics of travel and for successfully navigating a wide range of unexpected situations. They're passionately committed to ensuring you enjoy an exceptional vacation—smooth, flexible and tailored to your needs. According to past guests, the caliber of our leaders is what sets Backroads apart from all other travel companies. With their knowledge, professionalism, enthusiasm and service ethic, they're the number-one reason people return to travel with us again and again. We look forward to having you meet them.

GRATUITIES

Gratuities for most services during your trip are covered in the overall cost. We are often asked, however, whether it is appropriate to tip the Backroads Trip Leaders and what a reasonable amount might be. While we have considered including such gratuities in the overall trip cost, we always come back to the belief that recognizing excellent service is a personal matter. If you feel your leaders have provided an exceptional trip experience, gratuities are encouraged—and welcomed—at the end of the trip. The amount is at your discretion, but a sum of about 4 percent of your trip price can be considered a general tipping standard; this will then be divided among your leaders.

INTERNATIONAL PHONE CALLS

For instructions on placing international phone calls, see International Dialing Instructions in the "Destination Details" section.

Destination Details

CLIMATE

Ireland is known for its unpredictable and often windy and rainy weather; however, showers can quickly turn to sunny skies. Please come prepared with quality rain gear (waterproof and windproof jacket and pants) that can be worn while cycling. Your trip will be much more enjoyable if you're ready for all types of weather. Please see "Suggested Packing List" for more details on clothing and gear.

Cork

Average:	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
High °F	46	46	48	52	57	61
Low °F	38	38	39	40	45	50
Precip. inches	4.9	3.7	3.4	2.6	2.7	2.4
Average:	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
High °F	65	64	60	55	50	47
Low °F	53	53	50	46	41	40
Precip. inches	2.7	3.2	3.3	4.2	4.4	5.0

Temperatures in Europe are measured in degrees Celsius. Zero degrees Celsius is 32 degrees Fahrenheit. For a quick conversion when traveling in Europe, double the Celsius reading and add 30 to determine approximate temperature in degrees Fahrenheit.

TIME ZONE

During our visit, Ireland is 1 hour ahead of Greenwich mean time, 5 hours ahead of Eastern time and 8 hours ahead of Pacific time.

MONEY MATTERS

As of October 2009, U.S. \$1.00 = .68 euro. The euro is divided into 100 cents. Paper currency notes are in denominations of 500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of 2 euro, 1 euro and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents. For the most up-to-date exchange rate, please check with your bank, a newspaper or online at www.xe.net (Universal Currency Converter).



Destination Details (continued)

MONEY MATTERS (CONTINUED)

You can exchange money at the airport, banks and ATMs during your trip. Most European ATM keyboards have only numbers, so if your PIN contains letters, make note of their corresponding numbers before you leave home.

Additionally, European ATMs only accept four-character PINs, so if yours is longer, be sure to have it changed before your trip. Please contact your bank for more information.

PHONE FACTS

Many U.S. mobile phones can operate in Europe. Before you leave home, check with your service provider on international calling plans and get details on making and receiving calls from Europe. If your mobile phone cannot operate in Europe, or if it is prohibitively expensive, it is possible to rent a phone to use during your international travels. We recommend Cellhire, which offers a wide range of wireless rental options, including cell phones and BlackBerrys in more than 180 countries. Visit www.cellhire.com or call 866-CELL-HIRE (235-5447) for details and reservations.

Mention Backroads for special pricing.

Phone cards, rather than coins, are typically used when placing a call from a European public phone. Phone cards can be purchased at post offices and from some newspaper and tobacco vendors. Using the card is easy: simply take the receiver off the hook, insert the card, wait for the dial tone and then dial your local or international number. The window at the top of the phone shows how many units are being deducted from the card.

The most expensive option for international calls is to use your calling card. Should you choose to do so, AT&T, MCI and Sprint provide access codes that will connect you to an English-speaking international operator.

INTERNATIONAL DIALING INSTRUCTIONS

The international phone numbers in this Travel Planner are listed using the following format:

353-(0)##-###-####

The first number (353) is Ireland's country code, followed by a "0" (used only when dialing from within Ireland), and a local number varying from seven to nine digits.

To place an international call to Ireland, dial the international access code of the country from which you're calling (e.g., "011" from the U.S.) + 353 + local number. Always omit the "0" when calling from outside Ireland.

To place an international call from Ireland, dial Ireland's international access code (00) + country code of the country to which you're calling (e.g., "1" for the U.S.) + area code + local number. For example, to call the United States, dial: 00 + 1 + area code + local number.

To place a call within Ireland, drop the country code (353) and dial: 0 + local number.

ELECTRIC CURRENT

Ireland's standard current is 220 volts, 50 cycles. You should bring a plug adapter if you're bringing electrical appliances. (Plugs in Ireland have three rectangular prongs that form a triangle.) Hotels usually have dual 220/110 sockets, but you may also need a converter. Many newer appliances, such as computers and digital devices, are designed to work/charge over a wide range of voltage levels. Check the manufacturer's label on the back of your appliances to see what level of input they can handle. Converter/adapter kits can be purchased at travel, hardware or electronics stores for \$40-\$60; an adapter alone costs about \$4.

TOURIST INFORMATION

For more information and literature on traveling in Ireland, contact Tourism Ireland at 800-223-6470 or visit www.discoverireland.com.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

Visit www.backroads.com/trip_prep for links to other Web sites offering helpful travel information.

Where to Stay Before & After Your Trip

For help arranging pre- or post-trip hotels in conjunction with your Backroads trip, please work with your travel agent or the hotels directly. For assistance locating a travel agent please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. (Note: most travel agents charge a fee for consulting services.)

Of course, we also recommend extending your stay at any of the hotels we visit on this trip; see the sidebar on page 5 for details. **If you stay at Perryville House**, our first night's hotel, before the trip starts, let the reservationist know that you're traveling with Backroads; that way you may be able to avoid changing rooms.

Please refer to the Hotel Room Rate Guide chart for starting double-occupancy rates. Note that the ratings reflect Internet and/or best available rates, which were current at the time of printing, but **hotel rates are always subject to change**.

★ **Special Backroads savings:** Backroads has negotiated special rates at many hotels around the world that we're delighted to share with you. At the time of printing, the hotels with a green star provide Backroads guests with exclusive savings. Because the participating hotels and their offers are subject to change, please visit www.backroads.com/hotelsavings for the most current listing and details on booking.

CORK CITY

Hayfield Manor Hotel ★ (Our meeting location on Day 1 & a drop-off location on Day 6)

Set on 2 acres of gardens just 1 mile from the city center, this five-star Small Luxury Hotels of the World member looks more like a private noble residence than a hotel. The secluded and peaceful property includes refined antiques, a library, a swimming pool, a fitness room and spa services. Breakfast is included with your stay. Perrott Avenue, College Road; Phone: 353-(0)21-484-5900, www.hayfieldmanor.ie; 88 rooms & suites. Rates: ★★☆☆

Ambassador Hotel Best Western Cork

Located on a quiet hilltop overlooking Cork, the Ambassador is a short walk from the city's main shopping and cultural areas. Originally built in 1872 as a military hospital, it was restored and transformed into a luxurious hotel. Military Hill, St. Lukes; Phone: 800-780-7234 or 353-(0)21-453-9000; www.ambassadorhotel.ie; 70 rooms. Rates: ★★

Jurys Cork Hotel

This sophisticated urban retreat set on the River Lee creates a soothing environment with light airy spaces, simple lines and contemporary furnishings. Guest rooms, done in muted colors, feature crisp linens, spacious bathrooms and modern amenities. After a day of sightseeing, relax in the hotel's library, dip in the pool or indulge at the spa before dining at the Jurys' elegant riverside bistro. Lively shopping districts, restaurants, bars, museums and galleries are all close at hand. Western Road; Phone: 353-(0)21-425-2700; www.doylecollection.com; 182 rooms. Rates: ★★

HOTEL ROOM RATE GUIDE	
(U.S. DOLLARS PER NIGHT)	
Up to \$100	◆
\$101 to \$200	◆◆
\$201 to \$300	◆◆◆
\$301 to \$500	◆◆◆◆
\$501 and up	◆◆◆◆◆

Imperial Hotel

Locals are proud of this historic but contemporary hotel, which has served the city for nearly 200 years and hosted such important guests as writers Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray and composer Franz Liszt. Standing above prestigious South Mall, the hotel is ideally situated for exploring the city. Enjoy dinner under the gilded ceilings and sparkling lights of Lafayette's Brasserie, followed by a drink at South's Bar. South Mall; Phone: 353-(0)21-427-4040; www.flynnhotels.com; 90 rooms. Rates: ★

OUTSIDE CORK CITY

Ballymaloe House (20 miles east of Cork City)

Located on a 400-acre farm, this Georgian mansion has Gothic doorways and windows, and a luxurious interior. Foodies will want to enroll in the hotel's nearby cooking school; its kitchen is decorated with intricate mosaics created from the shells left over from preparing regional specialties. Other amenities include formal and vegetable gardens, a heated pool and croquet lawns. Shoppers will love the gift shop showcasing crafts such as tweed jackets and waxed cotton accessories from nearby artisans. Shanagarry, County Cork; Phone: 353-(0)21-465-2531; www.ballymaloe.ie; 33 rooms. Rates: ★★☆☆



Where to Stay Before & After Your Trip (continued)

OUTSIDE CORK CITY

Longueville House (20 miles northwest of Cork City)

A Relais & Châteaux property and 500-acre working farm, this Georgian country home features sprawling gardens with views of the Blackwater River Valley. Known for its outstanding restaurant and luxurious atmosphere in a rural setting, the Longueville House offers a relaxing stay with Irish flavor. You can even take a fishing excursion to the Blackwater River, famous for its salmon and brown trout. Mallow, County Cork; Phone: 800-323-5463 or 353-(0)22-47156; www.longuevillehouse.ie; 20 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦♦

SHANNON

These convenient simpler accommodations are included as options for the night before the trip start if you're flying into Shannon.

Park Inn Shannon Airport

Shannon, County Clare (2-minute walk from the airport); Phone: 353-(0)61-471-122; www.parkinn.com; 114 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

Irish Court Hotels

Auburn Lodge Hotel: Ennis, County Clare (10 miles from the airport); Phone: 353-(0)65-682-1247; www.irishcourthotels.com; 100 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

Shannon Court Hotel: Ballycasey, County Clare (3 miles from the airport); Phone: 353-(0)61-364-588; www.irishcourthotels.com; 54 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

Queens Hotel: Ennis, County Clare (10 miles from the airport); Phone: 353-(0)65-682-8963; www.irishcourthotels.com; 52 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

Queens Hotel: Ennis, County Clare (10 miles from the airport); Phone: 353-(0)65-682-8963; www.irishcourthotels.com; 52 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

DUBLIN

The Merrion

Four Georgian townhouses near Merrion Square make up this luxurious member of Leading Hotels of the World. With Frette sheets, Carrara marble bathrooms, crystal chandeliers, a formal courtyard garden and a basement swimming pool surrounded by frescoes, it's easy to see why the Merrion is one of Dublin's chicest hotels. Be sure to try Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud, holder of two Michelin stars. Upper Merrion Street; Phone: 353-(0)1-603-0600; www.merrionhotel.com; 122 rooms, 20 suites. Rates: ♦♦♦♦♦

Harrington Hall

A centrally located townhouse with an aristocratic flair, Harrington Hall is an ideal base for exploring Dublin. In renovating this 18th-century residence, the designers were careful to preserve the original Georgian details and retain an old-world flavor among the modern amenities. If space is important to you, request a larger suite when booking, as the rooms vary in size. Rates include a full Irish breakfast. 70 Harcourt Street; Phone: 353-(0)1-475-3497; www.harringtonhall.com; 28 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

The Morgan

Situated in the chic and trendy Temple Bar district, The Morgan has a sleek minimalist design. It features soft Egyptian cotton sheets, beech furniture and, in select rooms, circular tubs. The lounge's highlights include streamlined sofas and landscape paintings by Irish artists. Just outside lies the excitement of Fleet Street, so ask for a room on the Liffey River side of the building if you're sensitive to noise. 10 Fleet Street; Phone: 353-(0)1-643-7000; www.themorgan.com; 121 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦



SPECIAL HOTEL SAVINGS

Backroads has negotiated special rates for our guests at many hotels around the world. To find hotels with these exclusive Backroads savings, please visit www.backroads.com/hotelsavings.

LONDON

One Aldwych

Adorned with a Parisian façade, this member of Leading Small Hotels of the World is located in the West End theater district. Contemporary yet comfortable, it features simple rooms with crisp white Frette sheets, beautiful floral arrangements and colorful drapes. Enjoy access to a lower-level swimming pool complete with cobalt blue tiles and underwater music. In the evenings, the lobby bar fills with theater patrons. Be sure to request a room with views of the Thames. One Aldwych; Phone: 44-(0)20-7300-0500; www.onealdwych.co.uk; 105 rooms & suites. Rates: ♦♦♦♦♦

The Lanesborough

Featured on *Condé Nast Traveler's* Gold List, this St. Regis hotel is located within walking distance of Buckingham Palace, Harrods and legendary Sloane Street shopping. Features include polished Regency-style décor with mahogany furnishings, tailored fabrics, rich colors, fine oil paintings and a personal butler assigned to each room. Even if you don't stay here, it's worth having tea in the luxurious Conservatory Restaurant. Hyde Park Corner; Phone: 44-(0)20-7259-5599; www.lanesborough.com; 95 rooms & suites. Rates: ♦♦♦♦♦

Charlotte Street Hotel

This hotel honors its Bloomsbury location by incorporating Bloomsbury-inspired artwork, wallpaper, eclectic furnishings, whimsical décor and a private film-screening room with Ferrari-red leather seats. The theater district, the British Museum and Royal Opera House are all nearby. For exceptional views, book room numbers 500 or 501. 15-17 Charlotte Street; Phone: 44-(0)20-7806-2000; www.charlottestreethotel.com; 52 rooms & suites. Rates: ♦♦♦♦♦

Number Sixteen Hotel

Consisting of a row of four early-Victorian townhouses, and featuring meticulously maintained front and rear gardens, this luxurious hotel is located in the heart of South Kensington, just steps away from the Victoria & Albert and Natural History Museums. Also close to Harrods, Knightsbridge shopping and Hyde Park, the hotel's guest rooms are decorated with an eclectic mix of English antiques and modern paintings with themes such as tartan or maritime. Enjoy breakfast in your room, in the conservatory or in the garden. 16 Sumner Place, South Kensington; Phone: 44-(0)20-7589-5232; www.numbersixteenhotel.co.uk; 42 rooms & suites. Rates: ♦♦♦♦♦

The Levin

Newly reopened in 2007 after a complete renovation, this Small Luxury Hotels of the World member gives other Harrods neighbors a run for their money. Located on a quiet residential street, the hotel is steps from Sloane Street and Hyde Park. Guests have access to the restaurant and concierge services of the plush Capital hotel, run by the same family, a few doors down. 28 Basil Street; Phone: 44-(0)20-7589-6286; www.thelevinhotel.co.uk/main.html; 12 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦♦

The Portobello Hotel

This stylish and quirky private retreat in Notting Hill is located off Kensington Park Road near the Stanley Gardens. Plush draperies, exotic rugs and romantic four-poster beds lend the guest rooms the same air of casual warmth that fills nearby Julie's Restaurant and Bar. 22 Stanley Gardens; Phone: 44-(0)20-7727-2777; www.portobello-hotel.co.uk; 24 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦♦

B+B Belgravia

The contemporary design and modern conveniences at B+B Belgravia, set in two Georgian townhouses in the swanky residential neighborhood of Belgravia, add an edge to the normal bed-and-breakfast collection. Common areas feature black- and white-checked floors and furnishings to match. You can surf the Web using the free wireless connection or the guest computer, watch a DVD on the flat-screen television or relax in front of the fire before adjourning to your comfortable bedroom. Just a 5-minute walk from Victoria Station and the Underground, it's easy to reach London's attractions. If you're a light sleeper, request a room at the back of the building. 64-66 Ebury Street; Phone: 44-(0)20-7259-8570; www.bb-belgravia.com; 17 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

Hoxton Hotel

Located in the funky Hoxton neighborhood, a 5-minute walk from the Old Street tube station, this chic hotel blends urban cool and with country comfort. Described by *Condé Nast Traveler* as "hip-industrial, with a touch of luxury," exposed-brick walls, roaring fireplaces and contemporary art welcome you. Air-conditioned guest rooms come with luscious linens, duck-down duvets, flat-screen televisions and Aveda bath products. You'll enjoy a complementary light breakfast and inexpensive calls, both locally and to the U.S. While there are plenty of restaurants nearby, the hotel's own Hoxton Grille offers tasty bistro fare. 81 Great Eastern Street; Phone: 44-(0)20-7550-1000; www.hoxtonhotels.com; 205 rooms. Rates: ♦♦



Where to Stay Before & After Your Trip (continued)

LONDON

The Main House

You'll feel right at home in this elegant Victorian, where your "room" takes up an entire floor of the house. Enjoy your complimentary newspaper and coffee or tea in the comfort of your suite, decorated with stylish furniture and antiques, or savor it on the balcony. When you're ready to head out, the Notting Hill location means you're only minutes from fashionable Portobello Road, shops and restaurants. 6 Colville Road; Phone: 44 (0) 20 7221 9691; www.themainhouse.co.uk; 3 suites (top floor suite can be separated into two rooms). Rates: ♦ ♦

EXTENDING YOUR VACATION

You may want to spend a day or two in historic **Cork City** before or after your Backroads trip. Some recommended sites include St. Finbarre's Cathedral, a beautiful French Gothic structure with a spectacular rose window and an elaborate facade; and the Crawford Art Gallery, which houses a fine collection of paintings and sculptures. Also worth seeing are English Market, Grande Parade and the Coal Quay—a walk through these colorful markets is a great way to rub elbows with the locals. For an interesting day trip, head to Blarney Castle, where legend claims you can acquire the "gift of the gab" by kissing the Blarney Stone.

Getting Active for Your Trip

CONDITIONING TIPS

Terrain

The terrain ranges from gently rolling to hilly with a few steep hills, such as Cahal Pass. There are no flat rides! Due to the constantly rolling hills, the basic route options are considered moderate to challenging. Other conditions, including rain, headwinds and bumpy roads, can make riding tougher. Most days you'll have a choice of mileage options (as shown in the "Itinerary" section), so you can decide how active you want to be—it's always up to you.

To get ready for this trip, we suggest biking regularly beforehand and hitting a few hills whenever you can. We want you to have the best possible vacation, and while there's no need for hardcore training, you should feel comfortable riding at least 20–30 miles a day and still have the strength and enthusiasm to get up and do it all over again the next day.

To ride safely along the narrow, hilly roads in Ireland, it's important to **develop good balance on your bike, and this can only be achieved by riding on the road.** We recognize that not everyone lives in an area conducive to outdoor riding, but please keep in mind that while running, riding a stationary bike, spinning and other aerobic exercise will help improve your

strength, endurance and cardiovascular health, these activities will not help with balance.

Pacing & Endurance

It's important to pace yourself throughout the day, so you have the stamina to ride as far and as long as you'd like. Keep your energy level constant by eating high-energy snacks (your leaders will have plenty on hand). Drink fluids often—before you are thirsty—to avoid dehydration.

ROUTE RATING INFORMATION

The routes on this trip are rated Levels 2–5.

LEVEL 2

21–30 miles/day
2–4 hours/day

LEVEL 3

31–40 miles/day
3–5 hours/day

LEVEL 4

41–55 miles/day
4–6 hours/day

LEVEL 5

56–75+ miles/day
5–7+ hours/day

Cadence & Gearing

The steady rate at which you pedal is called “cadence.” Ideally you should try to maintain a constant high cadence in any gear. This technique not only lets you bike for longer periods without tiring, but also puts less strain on your knees. Shifting to lower gears when riding up hills will help you maintain the same cadence you established on more level terrain and get you up the hills without overextending yourself. Using lower gears also helps you to be more efficient when riding against the wind.

Resources

One book we really like is the *HubBub Guide to Cycling* by Diane Lingelbach. Written in a low-key, highly readable style, it offers valuable tips on how to prepare for an organized bike tour, and includes a comprehensive section on choosing the proper clothing and gear. To order a copy, call 800-888-2027 or purchase online at www.hubbubcustom.com/store; cost is \$14.95 plus shipping.

Visit *Bicycling* magazine’s Web site, www.bicycling.com, and browse for tips on how to improve your biking technique, as well as advice on proper nutrition, gear and safety, and basic bike maintenance.

Your local bike or outdoor store can be an excellent resource too; ask to speak with an employee who is an experienced cyclist.

STAYING COMFORTABLE

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I prevent soreness while bicycling? Think padding! Padded shorts make sitting on the bicycle seat a lot more comfortable, and padded bicycling gloves help prevent blisters and hand numbness.

Should I buy a pair of biking shoes for my trip? Rigid shoes maximize the power of your pedaling stroke, but there’s really no need to purchase a pair of biking shoes just for this trip. Any athletic shoes—provided they have stiff soles—will be sufficient.

It’s not really going to rain, is it? As much as we don’t like to think about it, rain is possible no matter where you travel. Your best bet for staying comfortable during a shower is to wear quality rain gear that is both waterproof and breathable. A jacket and pants made of Gore-Tex will keep you dry even in the fiercest downpour.

Does wearing layers really make a difference? Yes! The trick for staying comfortable in fluctuating temperatures is to wear three basic layers of lightweight clothing: innerwear (to wick moisture away from your skin), insulating garments (for warmth) and outerwear (to protect against wind or rain). The different layers let you add or remove clothing in response to changes in the weather or your internal temperature.



Bicycle Safety & Equipment

RULES OF BICYCLING SAFETY

Good judgment and alertness are the most important factors for safe bicycling. Follow these rules at all times to ensure your safety and the safety of those around you.

- Wear a helmet. Bicycling without a helmet is extremely dangerous. Backroads requires that all guests wear helmets while biking.
- Ride predictably, defensively and in a straight line.
- When biking with others, ride single file and maintain several bike lengths between bicyclists. Allow more distance when riding downhill.
- Do not use headphones while biking; you might not hear traffic coming up behind you.
- Be as courteous to motorists as you would like them to be to you, and get completely off the road when you stop.
- Keep your speed under control on down hills. Use both brakes simultaneously, but be aware that the front brake is more powerful than the rear. Gently pump your brakes on long descents for maximum effectiveness. Check brakes frequently to make sure nothing is loose or dangling.
- Wet slippery roads require extra caution and greater stopping distance—especially on downhill. Wet brakes must be dried by pumping before they have an effect, so start braking early in damp weather.
- When riding on sand or gravel, downshift into low gear so you can spin your pedals faster while still going slowly.
- Obey all traffic regulations. Stop at all stop signs and red lights, yield the right-of-way and use hand signals when turning, slowing down or stopping. Ride on the right side of the road (except in countries where traffic moves on the left), at a safe distance from traffic.
- Be cautious around road obstacles. It is safest to dismount and walk your bike across railroad tracks and cattle guards. If you decide to bike across them, do so at

SAFETY FIRST

Wear a helmet. Bicycling without a helmet is extremely dangerous. Backroads requires that all guests wear helmets while biking.

right angles. Avoid potholes, metal grates, glass, rocks and thorns. Ride at a safe distance from parked cars and watch for vehicles pulling out and/or doors opening in your path.

- Do not ride too close to the bike in front of you; keeping several bike lengths between you and the bike ahead gives you more time to brake or go around obstacles.
- You must yield the right of way to pedestrians. Do not ride on sidewalks.
- When making a left turn (or a right turn in countries where traffic moves on the left), it is safest to pull off the road, dismount, look both ways for traffic and then walk your bike across the road. Never follow other cyclists when turning without confirming for yourself that it is safe to do so.
 - Listen carefully for approaching motorists. (Look over your shoulder only if you can do so without swerving.)
 - We do not bike after dark on Backroads trips. If you decide to do so on your own, you must bring your own bike equipped with a white light on the front, a red light on the rear and reflectors on the spokes and pedals.
- If a dog chases you and you are not able to ride away quickly, stop your bike and walk out of the dog's territory, keeping the bike between you and the animal.
- Wear appropriate clothing for bicycling. Brightly colored clothes make you more visible to motorists. Double-tie shoelaces and tuck them inside your shoes.
- You should wear corrective lenses while bicycling if you use them while driving.

BICYCLE EQUIPMENT

The following items are included with all Backroads bikes. Trip Leaders also have full tool kits on hand and are available to do mechanical repairs.

- bike helmet
- pedals with toe clips (straps) if requested
- two water bottles
- handlebar bag or trunk bag and map case

- safety triangle
- lock and cable
- rear rack and strap
- wide-range gears (27 speeds)
- tube and patch kit with tire levers (if requested on trip)
- bike hand pump (if requested on trip)

If you are bringing your own bike and are comfortable doing minor on-the-road adjustments, you may want to bring a universal tool. If your bike is highly specialized, bring any tools—and extra spokes and tubes!—that are specific to your bike. Use the above list as a guide for recommended equipment if you are bringing your own bike (Backroads provides water bottles for everyone).

BRINGING YOUR OWN GEAR

You're welcome to bring your own gear, such as pedals, seat, helmet and cyclometer, to use with your Backroads bike. If you choose to bring a cyclometer, please be prepared to mount it yourself on your Backroads bike; your leaders will be happy to assist you if time permits. We suggest bringing wireless computers; those with pedal cadence functions are not recommended. If the computer is not wireless, please allow extra time for installation and, if possible, bring the mounting instructions with you.

SAFETY FIRST

When biking with others, ride single file and maintain several bike lengths between bicyclists. Allow more distance when riding downhill.

BRINGING YOUR OWN BICYCLE

If you plan to bring your own bike, it should be tuned and in excellent mechanical condition. Otherwise, you should use a Backroads bike. If your bike is new, ride it at least 50 miles (to break it in) and then have it adjusted by a mechanic. Please bring only one bike per person.

The following items on your bike should be properly adjusted and in good condition: brakes and brake pads; the headset, pedals, cranks and hubs; gears; derailleurs; handlebars; tires and tubes; brake and derailleur cables; and the chain. Make sure the bike is well lubricated, the wheels are true, and the seat, seatpost and handlebars are adjusted and tight.

Transporting Your Bike

If you will be arriving at the trip start by plane, train or bus, find out if there are any special requirements for transporting a bike. You can obtain a bike box from a bike shop or from most airlines. Larger boxes, such as those obtained from airlines, will help you avoid disassembling your bike more than necessary. Most shops will box your bike for a fee. If you will be disassembling and packing your own bike, the Backroads bike mechanics suggest following the steps below. **Please note: You are responsible for reassembling your bike at the trip start;** Backroads Trip Leaders will assist you if time allows.

1. Pad all frame tubes using packing material (available at bike shops and moving stores) or foam pipe insulation (available at most hardware stores).
2. Remove the front wheel, then remove the front wheel's quick-release skewer and tape it to a spoke on the front wheel for safe keeping. Place a fork support (available at bike shops) in the front dropouts.
3. Remove the pedals. The right-side (drive-side) pedal unscrews from the right crank arm counterclockwise; while the left-side pedal unscrews from the left crank arm clockwise. When you remove the pedals, note that they are marked with an "L" or an "R," usually on the end of the spindle. (This is obviously important for reinstalling the pedals.)
4. Place the pedals in a small box or bag to be packed along with the bike in the larger box.
5. Remove the stem from the frame. The handlebar and stem can be removed as a unit; the cables likely can remain connected. Tie, strap or zip-tie the handlebar to the left side of the bike's top tube in such a way that the stem hangs below the top tube.
6. Tie, strap or zip-tie the front wheel to the left side of the bike in such a way that the left crank arm fits between the front wheel's spokes when the crank arm is resting parallel to the floor.
7. Remove the seat/seatpost. Before removing the post, mark your height with a piece of tape. This step will make it easy to refit your bike when building it back up.



Bicycle Safety & Equipment (continued)

RULES OF BICYCLING SAFETY (CONTINUED)

Transporting Your Bike (continued)

8. The bike is now ready to be packed into its box. Place the smaller box containing the pedals inside the box first; then pack the bike and seat/seatpost. (The seat/seatpost will usually fit nicely in one of the corners.)
9. Tape the box closed securely with packing tape. Write “Fragile” and “Up” (with accurate arrows) on the box using a thick marker. Clearly write your name, address, phone number and destination, as well as the Backroads trip name and start date.

WHY A TRAVEL PROTECTION PLAN?

To make your Backroads vacation even more carefree, we highly recommend purchasing our Travel Protection Plan. Our program is designed to protect you around the world in case of lost luggage, a sudden illness or death in the family, or an unavoidable yet costly flight delay. Created for our active travelers, this plan offers comprehensive coverage and peace of mind. For more information, see the brochure in your Pre-Departure Packet.

Trip Documents, Cancellation Info & More

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

A valid passport is required for travel to Ireland. A visa is not required for U.S. citizens, provided you are staying in the country no longer than three months.

Note that some countries require your passport to be valid for a specified amount of time beyond your departure date (up to six months). Be sure to check the expiration date and

physical condition of your passport and verify the travel document requirements with the consulates of the countries you are planning to visit during your trip.

The best way to ensure you have the most current information on entry requirements is by contacting the Embassy of Ireland in Washington, D.C., at 202-462-3939, or your nearest Irish consulate (visit www.embassyofireland.org for details). You may also find helpful information on the U.S. State Department’s Web site: www.travel.state.gov.

IMPORTANT: Each time you renew your passport, you are issued a new passport number. Should you renew your passport after providing Backroads with a passport

number, please make sure to update us with the new information prior to your departure date.

We recommend that you make two sets of photocopies of your airline tickets and the first page of your passport. Leave one set at home with a friend or relative; bring the other set with you, keeping it separate from the original documents.

TRAVEL PROTECTION PLAN

Inside your Pre-Departure Packet is a brochure describing our Travel Protection Plan, which covers trip cancellation for medical reasons, trip delay, medical expenses, accidental death, lost baggage, medical evacuation and airline cancellation charges. **Because so many guests purchase this plan, we have made it convenient for you to obtain by automatically adding the cost to your invoice.** We strongly recommend that you take advantage of this plan. Should you

not be interested, simply deduct the amount from the invoice total. **Please note that deposits cannot be applied toward your Travel Protection Plan** and coverage is not effective until final trip payment has been made. **You must be a citizen or resident of the United States or Canada to be eligible.** Please see brochure for more coverage details.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS

If you must cancel your reservation, a fee will be charged. Please review your trip invoice for cancellation policy details. **Exceptions to this policy cannot be made for any reason,** including those of weather or personal emergencies. There is no refund for joining a trip late or leaving early. Private room charges are considered part of the trip price and are subject to cancellation fees. If you fail to provide signed “Release of Liability, Assumption of All Risks and Arbitration Agreement” and Personal Information forms prior to your trip departure, you will not be allowed to join the trip and will be subject to Backroads’ cancellation policy.

On the rare occasions when Backroads must cancel a trip, all payments received to date will be refunded, which constitutes full settlement. Backroads is not responsible for expenses incurred in preparation for any cancelled trips, such as airline tickets or for costs incurred due to travel delays, flight cancellations or illness.

TRANSFERS

With the exception of Private and Custom Trips, you may transfer from one trip to another without penalty, within the parameters of your trip’s transfer policy. When transferring to a different date or trip, if the trip costs more than your original trip, you are responsible for the difference in cost. Please review your trip invoice for additional transfer policy details. After the allowable transfer date, our cancellation policy applies. Cancellation penalties will not be charged if you are able to fill the vacancy with another guest(s).

ITINERARY CHANGES

If unforeseen circumstances require a change in the trip itinerary, Backroads will make every effort to select alternative hotels of the same high quality and to keep the route modifications minimal.

EXPENSIVE ELECTRONICS & OTHER VALUABLES

Backroads recommends that you not bring valuable personal electronics including, but not limited to, personal digital assistants (PDAs), laptop computers and expensive cameras. While we will transport them from place to place during the trip as a convenience, **we do not assume responsibility for any damage, loss or loss of function to the devices.** This policy also applies to other items such as expensive jewelry, and fragile and delicate accessories, whether purchased on the trip or otherwise.



Ireland Biking

Suggested Packing List

ESSENTIAL

Travel Items

- passport
- wallet (credit cards, traveler's checks, bank cards, ID)
- cash for incidentals, gratuities
- airline tickets/e-ticket confirmation details
- one quart-size, zip-top, clear plastic bag to carry all liquids, gels and aerosols in carry-on luggage (liquids, gels and aerosols must be in 3-ounce or smaller containers)
- medications and copies of prescriptions
- toiletries
- sunscreen and lip ointment
- insect repellent

Clothing & Gear

- clothing and shoes for downtime and restaurants (see "Recommended Dinner Attire")
- bicycling shoes or stiff-soled sneakers
- bicycling shorts
- short-fingered bicycling gloves
- brightly colored cycling jerseys or synthetic T-shirts
- synthetic bicycling socks
- lightweight jacket/vest or warm sweater
- breathable, windproof and waterproof rain jacket
- non-cotton base layers of varying weights (fabric such as polypropylene, Capilene or Coolmax)
- walking/hiking shorts or pants
- waterproof walking/hiking shoes
- hat with brim
- sleepwear
- underwear and socks
- sunglasses

Backroads provides water bottles.



LUGGAGE REMINDERS

Please limit your luggage to one soft-sided medium-sized suitcase and one small carry-on bag. Mark your luggage with your name, address and phone number.

RECOMMENDED

Clothing, Gear & Items

- bicycling tights
- arm and knee/leg warmers (for biking)
- long-fingered gloves (for biking)
- windproof outer gloves (worn over biking gloves)
- heavier-weight long-sleeved, synthetic undershirt
- long-sleeved biking jerseys and synthetic T-shirts
- headband that covers ears (worn under helmet)
- lightweight but warm cycling cap that fits under helmet (skullcap)
- warm jacket
- hiking socks with liners
- swimsuit
- daypack and/or waist pack
- photocopy of front page of passport (kept in separate place from passport)
- money belt

OPTIONAL

Clothing & Gear

- sport sandals
- CamelBak or similar “hydration backpack”
- toe covers or booties (worn over clip-in bike shoes)
- personal biking gear, including helmet*
(see “Bringing Your Own Gear”)

Other Items

- cell phone
- binoculars
- camera, memory card/film, charger/spare batteries
- current converter and outlet adapter
- travel alarm clock
- small umbrella
- reading material
- field guide
- list of important addresses and contact numbers

* Backroads has these items on-hand, but you may prefer to bring your own.

Visit www.backroads.com/gearup for a list of some of our favorite gear and gadget retailers.



WEATHER INFORMATION

Please refer to the “Climate” section for temperature and precipitation information.



Recommended Reading

The more you know about your destination before you go, the more you'll appreciate all that you see when you get there. The following selection of favorite, new and hard-to-find books was prepared for your journey by Backroads' well-traveled staff in collaboration with Longitude, a specialty mail-order book service. For your convenience, you may call 800-342-2164 to order these books directly from Longitude. To order online, and to get the latest, most comprehensive selection of books for your trip, go directly to reading.longitudebooks.com/B43831.

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ESSENTIAL IRELAND READING

The following five items are available as a package for \$83 including shipping, this is 15% off the retail price (**Item no. EXIRE37**). Any additional books ordered are shipped free.

Lindsay Hunt

Fodor's Exploring Ireland

2006, PAPER, 288 PAGES, \$22.00

With its many photographs, great introductory chapters and practical travel information, this up-to-date guide is an excellent overview of Ireland and its attractions for visitors. (Item no. IRE28)

Conor Cruise O'Brien

Ireland: A Concise History

1985, PAPER, 192 PAGES, \$19.95

This book conveys the essence of Irish history and the Irish experience with its lively even-handed tone and hundreds of well-integrated photographs and illustrations. (Item no. IRE20)

Susan Cahill

For the Love of Ireland: A Literary Companion for Readers and Travelers

2001, PAPER, 458 PAGES, \$15.95

A rich anthology of writing about Ireland by such Irish luminaries as James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, Seamus Heaney, William Trevor, Frank McCourt, Edna O'Brien and Samuel Beckett. The well-chosen excerpts, organized by province, evoke the geography of Ireland in wonderful literary detail. (Item no. IRE77)

W.B. Yeats

Irish Fairy and Folk Tales

2004, PAPER, 380 PAGES, \$13.95

This volume combines two books of folklore edited by the Nobel Prize-winning poet who spearheaded the Celtic renaissance in the early 20th century. These stories of changelings, ghosts, mermaids, demons, saints, priests and fairies are enchanting and entertaining. (Item no. IRE04)

Ireland Ordnance Survey

Ireland South: Holiday Map

MAP, \$17.95

A map of south Ireland at a scale of 1:250,000, including Cork and Kerry counties. (Item no. IRE06)

Thomas Cahill

How the Irish Saved Civilization

1995, PAPER, 236 PAGES, \$14.95

This best-selling history tells the generally unknown story of Ireland's preservation of classical learning in the Dark Ages. (Item no. IRE07)

John Banville (Editor)

Magnum Ireland

2005, HARD COVER, 256 PAGES, \$60.00

An evocative collection of 250 photographs of the people, landscapes and changing face of Ireland from the 1950s to the 21st century. Banville has chosen images from a stellar crop of photographers and writers to present the many faces of the country. (Item no. IRE170)

Hugh Palmer (Photographer), Christopher Fitz-Simon

Most Beautiful Villages of Ireland

2000, HARD COVER, 208 PAGES, \$40.00

This handsome oversize picture book is an illustrated portrait of Ireland. Hundreds of color photographs accompany lively essays by Christopher Fitz-Simon. (Item no. IRE136)

Terry Eagleton

The Truth About the Irish

2001, PAPER, 181 PAGES, \$14.95

An irreverent A-to-Z guide to all things Irish by a native son. Eagleton's a shrewd, comic commentator, casting aside many myths, starting with his first entry—A for alcohol (the Irish have the lowest per capita consumption of alcohol in the European Union, after Greece and Italy). (Item no. IRE167)

David W. McFadden

An Innocent in Ireland

1995, PAPER, 320 PAGES, \$18.95

The determinedly eccentric Canadian poet and essayist McFadden abandons a more ambitious journey and simply walks the countryside, exploring modern-day Irish character as well as Ireland's history. (Item no. IRE22)

Pete McCarthy

McCarthy's Bar: A Journey of Discovery In Ireland

2003, PAPER, 352 PAGES, \$15.95

A droll account of McCarthy's encounters on a bar-hopping jaunt from Cork along the west coast to Donegal. His motto, assiduously followed, was never to pass up a bar with his name on it! (Item no. IRE168)

Niall Williams, Christine Breen

O Come Ye Back to Ireland: Our First Year in County Clare

1989, PAPER, 233 PAGES, \$12.00

The first of four engaging chronicles of life on a farm in Kilmihil, in rural County Clare, by an Irish-American couple who realized their lifelong dream of returning to Ireland. (Item no. IRE16)

Tony Hawks

Round Ireland With a Fridge

2001, PAPER, 256 PAGES, \$14.95

A publicity-fueled story of an Englishman abroad, in this case, hitchhiking around Ireland with a refrigerator. It's an entertaining, insightful tale. (Item no. IRE70)

William Trevor

The Hill Bachelors

2001, PAPER, 256 PAGES, \$15.00

No one writes better short fiction than William Trevor. This collection of 12 stories captures the life and people of rural Ireland. (Item no. IRE42)

John B. Keane

The Bodhran Makers

1996, PAPER, \$14.95

This warm and funny novel set in 1950s Ireland by the prolific North Kerry novelist, balladeer, essayist and playwright conjures a now lost way of life. The Catholic Church intervenes when local villagers get ready to perform a traditional January Wrendance. (Item no. IRE142)

John B. Keane

The Teapots Are Out and Other Eccentric Tales from Ireland

2004, PAPER, 192 PAGES, \$12.00

A collection of 17 sentimental, sad, outrageous and just plain fun stories by the prolific Keane, who had an eye (and ear) for Irish rural life. (Item no. IRE144)

Edna O'Brien

Wild Decembers

2001, PAPER, 272 PAGES, \$13.00

A haunting novel of clan enmities and forbidden love in rural Ireland. Few writers have as sure a sense of place as Edna O'Brien, whose lyrical prose builds inevitably toward final tragedy. (Item no. IRE94)



